More than Heat and Light: Miskawayh’s *Epistle on Soul and Intellect*

**Peter Adamson**  
*LMU Munich and King’s College*  
**Peter E. Pormann**  
*The University of Manchester*

It is a fact that all things which undergo nurture and growth contain within themselves a power of heat without which they could not be nurtured and grow. For everything which is hot and fiery is roused and activated by its own movement; but a thing which is nourished and grows has a definite and regular movement; as long as this remains in us, so long sensation and life remain, but when the heat has been chilled and extinguished, we ourselves die and are extinguished. . . . It has often been observed that when a living thing’s heart is torn out, it beats so rapidly that it resembles the swiftness of fire. Therefore every living thing, whether animal or vegetable, is alive on account of the heat enclosed within it. From this it must be understood that the element heat has within itself a vital power which pervades the whole world.

So says the Stoic spokesman Balbus in Cicero’s *On the Nature of the Gods* (*De natura deorum*). He explains the Stoic theory about the order and functioning of nature, and the presence of life in what lives, by referring to a fiery divine principle. But we also find a fervent advocate of this view — that heat constitutes one of the key principles of the universe — in tenth-century Baghdad. He is the anonymous opponent whom the historian and philosopher Miskawayh (d. 1030) refutes in this *Epistle on the Soul and the Intellect*, the subject of the present article. Compared to the prevalent philosophy of the time, the opponent’s views appear quite radical, especially if one bears in mind that Stoicism had only a limited impact on the Islamic world. The extent of Stoic influence is a matter of ongoing debate. For instance scholars disagree about the degree to which logical discussions in Avicenna and others draw on Stoic logic. But Stoic theology, and the theory that nature

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2 For discussion and references see C. Schöck, “Discussions on Conditional Sentences from the Year 17 A.H./ 638 A.D. to Avicenna (d. 428 AH/1037 AD),” in P. Adamson (ed.), *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception* (London: Warburg Institute, 2007), 55–73; and S. Van Riet, “Stoicorum veterum
depends on the principle of fire, does not seem to have played much of a role in the transmission of Greek philosophy into the Arabic-speaking milieu. It is thus striking to find an Arabic medieval text that defends the primacy of fire as a principle of life and nature, even invoking the example of the dismembered heart that continues to beat.\textsuperscript{3}

Thus Miskawayh’s \textit{Epistle} offers us a rare glimpse at a materialist world view that contrasts strongly with the Neo-Platonized Aristotelianism represented by Miskawayh himself, and for that matter also with the ideas put forward by the speculative theologians (\textit{mutakallimūn}) of the period. But the \textit{Epistle} also presents us with an intriguing riddle: who was this anonymous opponent whom Miskawayh sets out to refute? We know that Miskawayh often entered into disputations with his contemporary al-Tawḥīdī (d. ca. 1023), but the latter cannot really have been the anonymous opponent, as he, like Miskawayh, adhered to a mainstream, Islamicized Platonism that is completely at odds with that of the opponent.\textsuperscript{4} The text quoted by Miskawayh offers some clues as to his identity. He apparently knew Greek (see \textsuperscript{64}) and had a great familiarity with the medical tradition, to judge from the authorities that he cites: Hippocrates, Rufus of Ephesus, and Galen. Indeed, a central point of his argument, that we cannot trust in the results of our rational thought, unless we have confirmation through sense perception, hinges on Rufus’ idea of the melancholic thinker. The opponent adduces Rufus’ view that too much thought leads to melancholic delusion as proof that pure thought cannot be a source for arriving at the truth.\textsuperscript{5} Likewise, his example of the heart beating as long as it is hot is already mentioned by Galen in his \textit{On the Usefulness of the Pulse}.\textsuperscript{6} Clearly, the opponent is steeped in medical learning, and some of his arguments depend on medical ideas and examples. This, then, is another point of interest in Miskawayh’s \textit{Epistle}: it shows us how permeable the disciplines of medicine and philosophy were at this time. But beyond his knowledge of Greek and medicine, the text offers few indications that would allow us to identify the opponent.

The anonymous opponent’s view is also fascinating in terms of its methodology. His materialist theory is set out on the basis of a strident empiricism, according to which sensation provides the sole basis for knowledge, and ideas with no basis in sensation are tantamount to delusions. Also distinctive here is the opponent’s argument that we must content ourselves with the deliverances of sensation: otherwise we will lack “confidence” fragmenta Arabica. À propos de Némésius d’Émèse”, in: P. Salmon (ed.), \textit{Mélanges d’islamologie dédiés à la memoire de A. Abel}, (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 254–65.

\textsuperscript{3} See \textsuperscript{68} in the translation below.

\textsuperscript{4} This view was tentatively put forward by V. Harika in her otherwise very impressive undergraduate thesis, \textit{Miskawayh: De l’âme et de l’intellect. Présentation, traduction critique et notes} (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1993), p. 22, note 47.


\textsuperscript{6} Ed. Kühn vol.v. 158, lines 12–14: “The living being dies very quickly, when you cool the heart. But if you keep it warm, it does not suffer anything.”

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and “certainty,” so that we have no “excuse” for going any further. Here as elsewhere, one would wish that the opponent’s view were more fully developed. Yet he sets forth a strikingly empiricist and foundationalist epistemology: sensation alone can ground our philosophical theories, and it is unjustifiable to make claims that go beyond these grounds.

Of course, we have access to the arguments of the opponent only because Miskawayh preserved them. Our author, ‘Abū ‘Ali ʿAḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb Miskawayh, acquired fame both as a historiographer and a philosopher: he wrote an influential historical work entitled Experiences of Nations (Taḥārib al-Umam)⁷; and he penned numerous philosophical works, among them our Epistle.⁸ In his philosophy, he generally expounded a kind of mainstream Neoplatonism which confidently harmonized the teachings of the ancients with one another, and the resulting synthesis with the message of Islam. In this he was heir to the philosophical tradition of tenth-century thinkers like al-ʿĀmirī (d. 992) and, before him, the pioneering ninth-century philosopher al-Kindī (d. after 870).⁹ Indeed al-Kindī is a direct, albeit unacknowledged, source for Miskawayh in the treatise presented below.¹⁰

As we have seen, Miskawayh confronts an unnamed opponent whose theories could hardly be less compatible with the Neoplatonized Aristotelianism of the Kindian tradition.¹¹ He does so by quoting the discussion of the opponent in ten sections, and repeats phrases from each lemma. This type of refutation through quotation was also used by the slightly older Christian philosopher Yahyā ibn ‘Adī (d. 974), who set out to disprove al-Kindī’s arguments against the doctrine of the trinity in an epistle.¹² We have argued that ibn ‘Adī probably preserved the whole of al-Kindī’s original treatise.¹³ In the case of the present epistle, one should also ask whether Miskawayh quoted the opponent’s views in their entirety, and how faithfully he cited him. We only have the internal evidence to answer the first question. When the quotations from the anonymous

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⁸ For Miskawayh himself and his philosophy, the most useful general study remains M. Arkoun, L’humanisme arabe au IVe/Xe siècle. Miskawayh, philosophe et historien (Paris: Vrin, 1982).
¹³ Adamson and Pormann, The Philosophical Works (as in n. 9), 76.
opponent are put together, they appear to form a fairly coherent text. It is therefore possible that Miskawayh, like ibn ‘Adı¯, quoted the whole text in order to refute it.

Somewhat more difficult is the question of the accuracy of these quotations. For instance, Miskawayh sometimes quotes the same passage from the opponent twice, and when he does so, he is often content simply to paraphrase the opponent’s remarks. Moreover, when we compare the quotations from Aristotle at the end of the treatise with the Arabic translation that has come down to us, we find that the language and content vary quite significantly: it would seem that Miskawayh either used a different version of the text, or simply quoted from memory. These indications suggest that Miskawayh may not have quoted his opponent verbatim, but rather more loosely. On the other hand, in order to confute the opponent’s arguments, Miskawayh may well have felt the need to be accurate in his citations, for otherwise, those who knew the opponent’s text may well have accused Miskawayh of misrepresenting his ideas.

Be that as it may, Miskawayh’s epistle contains many fascinating aspects, as the following survey of the main points will demonstrate. Regarding heat, the opponent writes (in the second section quoted by Miskawayh), “why should we not conclude that the soul is heat, since with our senses we perceive things that come from [heat] at the particular level, both in ourselves and in other things, and [perceive its results] at the universal level in the heavenly bodies and in fire.” As we have seen, the opponent’s identification of soul with heat, and extrapolation from this to the idea that heat is a fundamental principle for the world as a whole, has a Greek precedent in Stoic thought. His skepticism regarding immaterial causes also fits well with Stoic attitudes. Given the opponent’s interests, it seems possible that Stoic ideas may have reached him through the medical tradition. One cannot, however, rule out the possibility that he was re-inventing this particular wheel. Even a passing familiarity with Greek medical literature would have supplied the opponent with the idea of innate heat (Greek ithermon émpbuton; Arabic al-barāra al-gharizīya). Extrapolating from this to make heat a principle of nature as a whole could have been his own idea. The opponent’s invocation of “light” as a further principle is in any case harder to explain with reference to the Stoics, even if light had been closely associated with heat as far back as Parmenides.

Miskawayh, of course, will have none of this. Against the materialist stance of the opponent, he asserts that it is possible to demonstrate the immaterial nature of both soul and intellect. These do not depend on bodies, like heat and light, but are rather “separate substances.” In defense of this claim Miskawayh invokes numerous authorities, especially Aristotle and his commentators (both Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius are

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14 See {91-3} and {97} below.

15 For instance Cicero, at De natura deorum i.11, reports that in his cosmology Parmenides posited an orb of light and heat, which he called god. See also W.J. Verdenius, “Parmenides’ Conception of Light,” Mnemosyne 2 (1949), 116–31; and G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, M. Schofield, The Presocratic Philsophers (2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 255–62. We are grateful to David Sedley for the point that Parmenides already invokes light and heat as fundamental principles.
cited, at [95] and [60]). He is at pains to remove any suggestion that Plato and Aristotle are in disagreement (at [66]), and ends the treatise with a characteristic juxtaposition of wisdom sayings from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

Despite his deferential references to Greek authorities, and his unwillingness to object directly to anything said by Rufus or Galen, Miskawayh’s responses to the opponent show that he was a deft thinker in his own right. Admittedly, he rarely strays far from ideas that can be found in the Graeco-Arabic sources he knew so well (having served as librarian in Rayy, Miskawayh was surely one of the best-read philosophers of his day). Yet he employs these sources with great resourcefulness to respond to the opponent, and this topic deserves further study. We can see this from the way in which he refutes the opponent’s opening epistemological remarks. The opponent has made the strikingly empirical claim that sensation is the basis for all our knowledge. We comprehend universals on the basis of particulars, so judgments of the intellect (which concerns universals) must be grounded in sensation (which concerns particulars). Judgments that are not grounded in this way are tantamount to illusions or vain imaginations, which the opponent compares to the delusional states that arise from melancholy. The point is cleverly ad hominem: Rufus has said that melancholy can be caused by excessive thought. The implication is that philosophers only believe in immaterial things because they are spending too much time in fruitless contemplation. Instead, the opponent continues, we should be confident in rejecting any theory of “spiritual (rūḥānī)” entities. After all, by their very nature such entities could be grasped only by the intellect and not sensation (see [57–8]), but sensation is the basis for all sound use of the intellect.

In his response, Miskawayh turns the tables by arguing that it is in fact sensation that depends on intellection for its validity. He brings up standard (and not so standard) examples of sensory illusions and points out that the intellect must intervene in order to judge, for instance, that the sun is not only a foot wide as it appears to be (the example is from Aristotle; see [62]). Miskawayh also insists that the intellect “has an activity which is particular to itself (anna li-l-aqlī fīlan kbāṣṣan bi-bī)” (at [60]). He justifies this not only on the predictable basis that first principles like the law of non-contradiction are known without sensation (at [58–9]), but also on the more interesting grounds that the intellect is capable of self-knowledge. By this Miskawayh means the intellect’s capacity to know that its own judgments constitute knowledge — this he calls “secondary knowledge” (at [60]). This passage is among the clearest statements in early Arabic philosophy concerning what epistemologists nowadays call the KK principle: one knows if and only if one also knows that one knows.16

As for the existence of spiritual entities, Miskawayh admits that we cannot grasp these through sensation (at [66]). But he rejects the idea that one should think of them

16 Miskawayh’s discussion can be usefully compared to al-Fārābī’s On Certainty, discussed in D.L. Black, “Knowledge (Ilm) and Certainty (Yaqīn) in al-Fārābī’s Epistemology,” Arabic Sciences and Philosophy 16 (2006), 11–45.
as “universals” in the sense that they are wholes made of parts. This point can be made more clearly in Greek and Arabic than in English: the expressions for “universal” (Greek καθόλου, Arabic κُلُّ) relate to the words for “all” or “whole” (Greek hólon; Arabic kull) and the word “particular” (Greek katà méros, an expression used synonymously with kat'h békasta; Arabic juz’i) relates to the word for part (méros, juz’). Miskawayh draws a moral here that will recur throughout his treatise: we are easily misled when we apply analogies drawn from sensible experience to immaterial entities (at [67–8]).

The need to posit such entities becomes the key issue as Miskawayh responds to the next stretch of argument from the opponent. The latter alleges that the soul is nothing but heat. (Notice that the opponent does not deny the existence of soul, but only insists that the soul is heat, like the heat in fire or the sun, at [68]). Miskawayh is happy to admit that there is an intimate connection between heat and life. But he rejects the opponent’s facile conflation of the two, making the obvious point that if this were true everything hot would be alive (e.g. boiling water or hot coals, at [69]); furthermore there are degrees of heat, but no such thing as being more or less alive or ensouled (this point, which appears at [70], is remarkably like a refutation of the theory that soul is attunement at Plato’s Phaedo, 93a–94a).

The opponent next turns to his other main principle, light. Just as vital functions have been explained by appealing to heat, so the opponent appeals to light in discussing cognitive functions — not only sight, but also thinking which is seen as a similar capacity. Of course an association between intellect and light is traditional, not only in Neoplatonism but even in the infamously difficult fifth chapter of Aristotle’s On the Soul, book three. Aristotle also compares thinking to sense-perception (On the Soul, iii.4, 429a13–14; one might add that Greek word theoría has visual connotations, as does the Arabic naz·ar, often used to translate theoría). But to claim that intellect is literally light is, to put it mildly, a novel claim — indeed without further context it is rather difficult to imagine what the opponent even means here. Miskawayh, of course, insists that while light may be a good analogy or metaphor for what occurs in thinking, it is only an analogy or metaphor. The opponent has been misled into taking a mere comparison to be literal truth. Miskawayh makes the critique even more pointed by citing the famous Qur’anic verse 24.35, which compares God’s light to that of a lamp in a niche. Just as we should not literally suppose that God is a light, so we should not think that our intellect is literally light. But Miskawayh does not restrict himself to critical remarks here, instead going on to provide his own positive account of intellect and how it relates to bodily organs. Though he would agree with Aristotle that the mind has no bodily organ, he admits that the soul needs a material instrument, namely the brain, to think and to exercise volition (at [73–4]).

In the fifth quotation from the opponent, an aspect of his view that has so far been implicit becomes explicit. He has argued that one does not need to posit immaterial

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17 For the role of the brain and pneûma in Miskawayh’s psychology, see also Adamson, “Miskawayh’s Psychology,” 42–5.
entities; indeed, doing so risks being tantamount to a delusion. This will eliminate not
only the immaterial soul and intellect from our metaphysical picture, but also God. In His
place, the opponent says that the world itself (“the essence of the macrocosm”) is the
“first cause” (at [77]). Here, the opponent seems to be suggesting that the physical world
stands in no need of an explanation. Miskawayh is naturally outraged by this suggestion,
and launches into his own philosophical theology, including passages on negative
theology and the problem of divine attributes (see e.g. [88–9]). These parts of his
discussion draw on al-Kindı¯’s On First Philosophy,18 who was in turn drawing on John
Philoponus. Miskawayh adapts arguments against the eternity of the world to show that
the world requires a first cause, which itself has no cause.

That idea is pursued in his response to the eighth quotation, in which the opponent
has distinguished between proximate and ultimate causes. Drawing on his theory as
expounded so far, he says that light (the manuscript here, presumably in error, has
“mixture”) and heat are immediate or proximate causes — that is, for vital and cognitive
functions — but there is also an ultimate cause, by which he seems to mean the world
itself (at [82]). This distinction plays into Miskawayh’s hands, since he is eager to deploy
the idea of a chain of more and less proximate causes, in order to explain how God
serves as the end point of such causal chains. Just as the ruler gives a command which
is passed down to the one who implements it, who then uses an instrument (for instance,
a sword, to execute a thief), so God’s command is the ultimate reason for what we see
in this world.

At this point Miskawayh has exhaustively explained his objections to the opponent,
but he takes the opportunity to discuss our epistemic relation to God. The opponent has
said that we should only concede what is demonstrable, but Miskawayh objects to this
(at [87–8]). Here he is on solid ground: Aristotle had already insisted that we must know
some things without demonstration, since the only other options are a regress or circular
demonstration (Posterior Analytics i.3). Miskawayh then applies the point to our
knowledge of God. Since God is the first cause and one demonstrates things through
their causes, we might suspect that any knowledge we possess of God would be
non-demonstrative. Miskawayh, without making this causal argument explicit, does
adopt this position, stating that “one knows Him only as one knows primary objects of
knowledge, for which demonstration is unnecessary” ([88]).

On the other hand, Miskawayh is strongly tempted by the claim that we lack
knowledge of God. God’s transcendence makes him excessively intelligible, so that our
attempt to grasp Him fully is comparable to the way bats are blinded by the sun (at [88];
the image is of course taken from Aristotle’s Metaphysics, see our note ad loc.). So which
is it? Do we grasp God effortlessly, as we grasp first principles, or not at all? Miskawayh
winds up settling for a middle ground: the wise have an incomplete understanding of
God, but the understanding they do have is indemonstrable, like primary axioms (at
[89]).

18 See note 10 above.
Having dealt with these exalted issues and left the opponent’s discussion behind, Miskawayh returns to the topic of soul, and provides a lengthy rehearsal of reasons to endorse the soul’s immateriality. This section depends heavily on Aristotle; for instance Miskawayh repeats the Aristotelian argument that the mind is not overwhelmed by things that are excessively intelligible, as happens with powerful sensibles like bright lights and powerful scents (at 91–2). It is rather unfortunate that Miskawayh has just argued a few pages back that God is excessively intelligible and thus overwhelms our minds, but he does not pause to notice this apparent contradiction. Miskawayh also gives the argument about excessively sensible things in his Shorter Healing (al-Fawz al-asghar). In general the psychological position defended here is consistent with Miskawayh’s other works.19

Also typical of Miskawayh’s philosophy is the ethical point with which he ends, namely that mankind should turn away from the body and towards the intelligible world (at 96–7). This chimes well with the epistemology Miskawayh has just outlined, whereby we begin with sensation and end with a necessarily incomplete grasp of God (see 94–5). Miskawayh’s overall position could hardly provide a more striking contrast with the opponent’s. For the opponent, sensation is the final arbiter in epistemology; for Miskawayh, it is only a fallible starting-point. According to the opponent, we should avoid speculation about anything beyond what we can grasp through the body; according to Miskawayh, continued attention to the body impedes happiness and understanding. For the opponent, all things can be explained through heat and light; for Miskawayh, these are distant effects of an immaterial and transcendent first cause. The mere mention of such physical phenomena in metaphysical contexts can mislead us, if we fall into the trap of taking the metaphorical to be literal. Apparently, Miskawayh wrote this refutation not only because the opponent’s views were so outrageous, but also because those views illustrated the danger of this trap, which could easily ensnare any of us.

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The treatise is preserved in a unique manuscript, Istanbul, Rajep Paşa 1463. It was first published by M. Arkoun in the early 1960s.20 This edition unfortunately contains a


large number of printers’ errors. A.R. Badawi reedited the text some twenty years later on the basis of the same manuscript. Unfortunately, Badawi tended to rewrite classical Arabic texts in order to make them more readable to a speaker of modern standard Arabic, and his edition (while an improvement on Arkoun’s) is not free from errors of its own. For most of our time working on the text, we had access only to these two editions. But while revising our translation for this publication, we were fortunate enough to receive, from Professor Yahya Michot, a copy of an undergraduate thesis written at the Université Catholique de Louvain in 1993 under his supervision. The author, V. Harika, provides not only an annotated French translation with many helpful emendations, but also a facsimile of the manuscript. We have thus been able to take some advantage of this in final revisions to the present study. Nonetheless, a new edition of the text remains a desideratum. We also hope this first published translation of the treatise will facilitate further study of its content, and work on the place of the treatise within Miskawayh’s corpus.

Because the treatise is fairly long, we have kept annotations and discussion of the text to a minimum. We supply the page numbers from Badawi’s edition in wavy brackets.

Translation

(57) A treatise by the Master Abū ’Alī Miskawayh On Soul and Intellect, in answer to someone who asked about them, and a solution for doubts which he had raised about the simple essence subsisting through itself (al-qā’im bi-nafsi-hi).

Section One

“The questioner said:” If no universal can be known through the intellect and no particular through sensation, unless each one of them is accompanied by the other, so that we can trust one of them on the evidence of the other; and if whoever lacks

21 For instance, in the title alone, there are two errors (rasā’il instead of sā’il; and al-‘ā’im instead of al-qā’im).
24 Harika (as in n. 4).
25 P. Adamson would like to record his gratitude to the Leverhulme Trust for its support of the present research; P.E. Pormann acknowledges the support of the Wellcome Trust for its generous funding of his various research endeavours.
26 Arkoun’s fi ‘an yatbiqa needs to be corrected to fi ‘an nabiqa; the first letter is undotted in the manuscript. The phrase remains somewhat problematic. Badawi’s extensive emendations in this sentence are, however, unnecessary.
sensation also lacks accurate thinking (fikr sabih) about the universals just as he does not have [accurate thinking] about the particulars, then on what basis can we trust affirmations about something which is not [grasped by] one of these two [sc. sensation], since it is [grasped by] one of the two [sc. intellect] but does not have the evidence of the other by using its means for arriving at it?

“It is reported that Rufus, the physician, said the following: ‘No-one who devotes too much effort to thinking about a certain science (ilm) can avoid ending up with melancholy.’ How can we be certain, if we firmly believe in illusions (awbām) with no particulars for them, that this description does not apply to us? Sense-perception lies and errs much of the time. Imagination (takhayyul) errs and lies many times more than does sense-perception when it comes to desires, insinuations (waswasa), the rumours people spread, different kinds of fears, wishes and diseases which befall [us]. Finally, the intellect can only grasp things — be it by remembering or by being incited (inqidāh) by one of these two [sc. sensation or imagination].” If this is so, what confidence can we have in our beliefs about these substances assumed by us to be spiritual, if we do not even comprehend their particulars?

The Master Abu’ Ali Ahmad ibn Muhammad Miskawayh — may God have mercy upon him — said: “The questioner based his entire argument and all his questions on the claim that the intellect comprehends the universals only if it takes them from the particulars of sense-perception. It is as if he makes the intellect dependent upon sense-perception. That is incorrect, for sense-perception is really dependent upon the intellect, even if the former exists in us before the latter in temporal terms; I mean that we have sense-perception from the beginning of our existence. The imprint of the intellect appears in us later. Yet, in essential terms it exists prior to sense-perception.”

He left out a premise which is the basis of his answer and through which his doubts [i.e. the doubts which he raises] are dissolved. For had he observed it [the premise] when setting up his argument, I could have contented myself with quoting the text of his argument, moving forward and backward, without any need to add to, or detract from, it. I shall now mention it. It is the following [premise]: not all actions and impressions of the intellect which we have are something that sense-perception has gleaned from particulars, and that the intellect has subsequently simplified and reduced from multiplicity to unity, I mean [to] the universals of things. No, the intellect has another action which is proper to it and not taken from sense-perception. For it possesses the principles by means of which it passes judgement on sense-perception and other things;

27 The text of the manuscript wa-kāna is sufficient and Badawi’s addition wa-li-bādbībī kāna unnecessary.
28 Retaining the reading of the manuscript idh; Badawi silently emends this into aw (“or”).
29 Pormann, Rufus of Ephesus: On Melancholy, fr. 36.
30 Harika suggests nafs for nās, understanding the expression as “self-delusion.”
they [the principles] are not taken from anything other than the intellect itself. For if they were taken from anything else, they would not be principles. We said, however, that they were principles.

For instance, if the intellect forms (jazama) the judgement that there is no middle between two opposites, that is, nothing else between affirmation and negation, then it is a primary judgement which it does not derive from anything at all. Therefore, one does not ask it [the intellect] “why?” or “how?” nor does one seek [to know] the cause and reason of the first principles. For if they did have causes, then they would not be first principles. Likewise, if the intellect knows that sense-perception is either true or false, it does not derive this knowledge from sense-perception.

Furthermore, I say that the whole and the part come under the heading “relation (idāfa)”. For the whole only is a whole of its parts, and the parts are only parts of their whole. One observes relation only between two essences (dbāt), or between two different states of a single essence (dbāt wāhīda fi ḥālayn). If relation fails to apply and is not observed at all, then an essence occurs which has neither part nor whole. That which observes this essence separately and free from relation and accidents is neither sense-perception nor the material intellect.

By my life, sense-perception sees its [the essence’s] universals. The intellect, however, has another, special way of seeing, which does not come under the heading “relation”, nor does it belong to the principles of sensible things. We ought neither to neglect, nor to forget it [this way of looking]. For were we to do so, we would obtain certain intelligible things, namely the universals of things derived from the senses by abstracting them from particulars, but the noble objects of intellection will escape us, those which are elements (basā‘īt) and essences (dbawāt) of things, which are not sensible, nor are they derived from the senses, as Aristotle and those who commented on his books have proven. I shall quote what I can recall from memory at this time, until [a later time] when I will be able to adduce the [exact] text of what he said about this [the topic] from the books, God willing.

I say that Aristotle said the following. “The rational soul or the material intellect are one [and the same].” True, there is debate about their names insofar as one may think that one [i.e. the rational soul] relates to the senses, and the other to the intellect. When we look at objects of sense-perception, something like deflection [of a line] applies to them. If, however, we look at things which are examined by the intellect, without the intermediary of sensation, then they are [like a] straight [line] of vision. These words, even if they are not the exact words of the man [i.e. Aristotle], convey what he meant,
especially according to the explanation which Themistius gives of his [Aristotle’s] account, and his abridgment of his [Aristotle’s] book *On the Soul*. He [Themistius] expressed this meaning elegantly, following his interpretation (*madhhah*) of the text (*kalām*) according to these subtle ideas.

On this subject, it is clear from what the philosophers say that the intellect has an activity which is particular to itself, that is, as concerns contemplation, not the principles of the senses. In this way, the intellect grasps the universals of objects of sense perception, and then knows\(^{35}\) that it has grasped and intellected them. As for the fact that the intellect grasps them [sc. objects of sensation], the doubter claims that it only takes those universals from them [sc. the objects of sensation]. As for the fact that it [sc. the intellect] knows that it\(^{36}\) has known and grasped them, it does not know this\(^{37}\) from sensation or anything else. But it has had knowledge of them and grasped them without knowing them via sensation or anything else. Were this not the case, it would always grasp knowledge through some other knowledge, and this would go to infinity, which is absurd.

Thus, the intellect knows these things, and knows that it knows them. This is secondary knowledge, that is to say, that through which it [the intellect] knows that it has already known. This is the essence of the intellect, and it does not require anything other than its essence in order to grasp what it grasps [and that it grasps it]. Therefore one [should] say that the intellect, the subject of intellection, and the object of intellection are one thing, with no differentiation.

The objects of sensation are material, and that which senses them is not sensed. For were this the case, it would not be an object of sensation. For what senses (*hāss*) does not sense itself [or “its essence”, *dbāṭ*], so that [what senses] and [what is sensed] do not completely coincide; nor does what is sensed sense itself [or “its essence”, *dbāṭ*]. The intellect, by contrast, intellects itself [or “its essence,” *dbāṭ*], whilst it intellects other things by extracting their material form and reducing it, so that it becomes intelligible [or “an object of intellection” (*maqīla*)]. When it becomes like this, it is intellect, intellecting, and intelligible. The objects of intellection only arise in the rational soul, because it [the rational soul] is potentially a subject of intellection. I mean that the intellectual forms potentially belong to it [sc. the rational soul], so that when they are actually in it [sc. the rational soul], it [the rational soul] unites with them and it [sc. the soul] becomes it [the intellect]; therefore it [the rational soul] is called “material intellect.”

The following explains this idea. Everything which is potentially can only be actualised by something else which actually exists. For were it to be actualised by itself [or “its essence (*bi-dbāṭi-bi*)”], it would always be in actuality, and never in potentiality,

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\(^{35}\) Following the emendation *thumma yālamu* proposed by Harika; the manuscript reads *lam yālam*.

\(^{36}\) Following Harika’s emendation *bi-annahu*; the manuscript has *fa-annahu*.

\(^{37}\) Reading *fa-lam yālam-bumā* instead of *fa-lam yālam-bā*.
for it would have its essence (dhāt), whilst being in potentiality. And if its essence were the cause for its being actualised, whilst its essence were still [only] in potentiality, then it would also be necessary for it still to be in potentiality, {61} so that it would always be in potentiality, and never in actuality. But this is impossible. Therefore that which is in potentiality is actualised by something else. Accordingly, that which actualises it must actually exist. For were it [only] in potentiality, such a thing would need to have something [else] which actualises it.

Therefore the soul is potentially intellecting, and actualised only by the intellect which is in actuality. This intellect which is in actuality does not intellect its object by becoming actual. This is not the manner in which it performs its acts of knowledge ('ulūm). Rather, the things which are primary for it [the intellect] have neither cause nor principle apart from the intellect itself [or “the essence of the intellect (dhāt al-'aql)"]. These principles are both the intellect and the object of intellection. Outside this intellect there is something else which causes it. One can only talk about it in an obscure way. Yet, I think that this whole source about which we had occasion to talk here at the beginning leads to obscurity. I shall therefore move on from this and come to another explanation (bayān), God — most high, mighty, and powerful — willing.

I say: When the intellect is not present to the senses whilst they scrutinise the parts [ajzā', probably in the sense of “the particulars"], and does not testify whether they [sc. the senses] are correct or not, they [the senses] are not useful at all, and provide no benefit. For they commit all kinds of mistakes with regard to the things which they perceive. Yet the intellect refutes them without accepting [the mistakes] from them. Rather, it [the intellect] states that they [the senses] do not perceive them at all, even if obstacles are removed from them [the senses] and in them. This happens when thought is absent from them [the senses], or the intellect ignores them. This becomes evident and clear in the case of anybody who engages his thought in an important matter and becomes engrossed in it. For he neither sees nor hears the many things which can be seen and heard, although he is present and the obstacles between the subject and the object of sense-perception have been removed.38

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38 Reading mathīl with Badawī instead of Arkoun’s sabīl.
39 We retain Arkoun’s reading of the manuscript here; al-Badawī inserts laysa yūjadu which would yield: “There is nothing else outside the intellect that would cause it.”
40 Harika suggests the reading bayna-bā wa-bayna-bā, i.e. “between sensation on the one hand and its objects on the other.”
41 Reading zābir bayyin with Harika; this also appears to be the text of the manuscript.
42 Reading yastaghriqu-bu with Badawī and Harika. The phenomenon is also mentioned by al-Kindī in his On Sleep and Dream, §III.3 of our translation in The Philosophical Works of al-Kindī (see n. 9 above).
43 This is a convoluted way of saying that if someone is engrossed in his thoughts, he neither hears nor sees even if sounds and sights are right in front of him or her.
The kinds of mistakes which the senses make are extremely numerous. One of them is the mistake of the eye about near and distant visible things. Mistakes from afar include the eye’s seeing the sun as something small, only a foot wide, although it is roughly one hundred and sixty times as big as the whole earth. The intellect testifies to this, and one accepts it on this basis. Yet although sense-perception testifies to this, one does not accept it. Mistakes from close by include, for example, the fact that we see the light of the sun, when it hits us through small square apertures, such as the interstices of mats used for providing shade. For we see the light which passes through them as being round, although it comes from square and oblong apertures. We do, however, know that it is not as we see it. The eye also errs as regards the movement of the moon and clouds, or a ship and the shore. It also makes mistakes about things which are ruled and even like cylinders, palm trees, and the like. It errs about a point, if it is on something which moves in a circle, so that we see it as a ring or a hoop. It is mistaken about things seen in water, for it perceives some things as bigger than their true size; others as broken, although they are not; yet others bent, although they are straight; and others upside down, although they are the right way up. In sum, it sees all things according to the angle which forms the top of a cone whose base is the object of vision, whereas the top is the cone where it narrows at the eye; what is seen varies in accordance with the variation of the angle. This is deduced by the intellect, for this cone is not perceptible.

The intellect is like a material intermediate (shabi bi-wasat al-madda). This is the case for all senses as regards the errors which befall them and through which they judge until the intellect refutes them and deduces their cause. For the states of taste change to the extent that one perceives water in certain circumstances to be sweet, in others horrible, salty and bitter. Similarly, a choleric finds honey bitter, and a phlegmatic the opposite. Likewise for hearing, as with echoes which one hears coming

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44 The following passage has a close parallel, including the same examples, at Miskawayh’s Tahdib, ed. Zurayk, 8.
45 Reading khalal al-bawari with Badawi; al-bawari is the Arabised broken plural of the Persian word boirtya. See A. Vullers, Lexicon persico-latinum etymologicum (Bonn: Impensis Adolphi Marci, 1855–64), s.v. (p. 275).
46 The manuscript appears to have shajar (“trees”), but this makes little sense here; the text can easily be corrected by looking at the otherwise exactly parallel text at Tahdib 8.10; it should therefore read asbab.
47 Reading bayna-ma with Badawi.
48 What follows suggests that he means that the intellect is always in a state comparable to a sense organ that is in an intermediate condition. For instance, our sense of touch will make mistakes about temperature if our hand is already warm, but if the hand is in a balanced state between warm and cold it will allow us to judge temperature correctly. Since the intellect has no physical properties to interfere with its judgment, it is always in a state like an intermediate or balanced sense-organ. Harika wants to amend the text, reading muthbitu-hu for shabib in the manuscript. This would mean “and the intellect is what affirms through the intermediary of matter.”
from the mountains or from round and smooth surroundings; or with the sound of various [other] things. The case of smell is similar. For those who are used to malodorous things do not sense their stench. And if one is brought from one smell to another, one does not perceive the second one as it really is (ḥaqiqat al-thānī). Sometimes the situation is such that one has no idea what judgment to make about it. Things are similar in the case of touch, for someone used to hard things when he touches something soft. Likewise with the hand: if it is warm and touches something which is less warm, it perceives it as cold. If, however, someone’s hand is cold then he perceives the very same thing as warm. Sense-perception does not grasp what things are well balanced; it is the intellect that makes this judgement.49

It is the intellect that deduces the causes for all things, and to which, as a higher authority, the senses refer back what they have perceived, so that it [the intellect] can judge them, rejecting some, and accepting others. For the one who judges whether the senses are right or wrong, and who considers all of them — their causes and reasons — is none other than it [the intellect]. It [the intellect] is doubtlessly nobler than they [the senses], since the one who judges a thing, declaring it to be false or true, is better than [that thing]. The better does not follow, that is to say that its subsistence does not depend on, that which is below it. Rather, it is more appropriate that the existence of that which is below it depends on it.

His statement that “whoever lacks sense also lacks accurate thinking about the universals just as he does not have [accurate thinking] about the particulars” is correct and acceptable.

When he says: “on what basis can we trust affirmations about something which is not grasped by one of these two”, he judges that those who are ignorant about the subject of relation are also ignorant of everything [else]. Yet, this is not the case. We rather ought to say the following. Those who are ignorant of “half” are also ignorant of “double”. But they are not ignorant of the nature of the number, to which “half”, “double”, and all the other relations (i.e. third, fourth, and so on) apply — [even] if they do not notice its double and half.

[64] Rufus, the physician, said: “Those who devote too much effort to thinking about a certain science (ʿilm) end up suffering from melancholy.” As regards this quotation, if he [the opponent] thinks that this word in that language in which he specialises [Greek] does not specially designate one illness, but rather is a name for thought in general, [then he is wrong]. For otherwise, it would follow according to Rufus’ exposition that true opinions which derive from thought-processes over a long period of time generate a powerful disease. We know that the thinking to which a geometer (ṣāḥib al-bandasa) assiduously applies himself to arrive at something useful in the world, such as extracting water to ground level, or raising a road, or moving something heavy50 with little force;

49 In other words, the warm hand may perceive something warm as balanced, although it is not; only the intellect can correct and establish what is really well balanced.

50 Reading ṭbaqīl with Badawī.
and the thinking to which a general (mudabbir al-jaysh) and the manager of a city (sa'is al-madina) assiduously apply themselves to accomplish a building or victory over an evil foe, are not a disease. How could they be a disease, given that man strives for physical health and trains his body only in order to reach fulfillment in true thought, which leads to every good sought in this world and the next?

Is there a difference between man and beast apart from his ability to think and discern? Indeed, it is this ability which sets him above others: through it he hastens after all good things, whilst shunning everything evil. Indeed, through it he distinguishes between good and evil in things, and discerns the beautiful from the vile in actions, the true from false statements, and the real from futile opinions.\(^{51}\) The physician, however, insofar as he is a physician, has no insight into anything other than the balance which is specific to each individual body, in order to preserve health when it is present, and restore it, when it is absent.\(^{52}\) If he specifically looks at this topic, then he calls “disease” all the things that depart from it [health] according to his art. Likewise, a carpenter is able to use the piece of iron in crooked form which the goldsmith uses [in straight form]: what is crookedness for the carpenter, is straightness for the goldsmith, according to the [requirements] of the art of the goldsmith. Yet, each one of the two, when he observes his companion from the perspective of his own art which is specific to him, calls it [the piece of iron] wrong.

We also say the following by way of refuting this sceptic. Does Rufus’ excessive thinking and his attainment of such a high station in medicine — this being what made him so outstanding in his art — constitute melancholy? And is his thinking in this quotation which you related — and also according to his [Rufus’] own judgement — melancholy? How should we judge him, and what should we say about him? Should we not leave [intact]\(^{53}\) the victory of this excellent man’s words by taking what he says in a correct way? Namely, that Rufus refers to instances of imaginary knowledge (’ulūm wahmīya), and acts of imagination in general (al-aubām bi-asri-hā); if they [the acts of imagination]\(^{65}\) are aroused in excess, they finally lead to melancholy in this way.

Imagination (wahm) depends on sensation. When it [imagination] forms a natural image, it produces [that image] from nature, and then\(^{54}\) puts together innumerable combinations on this basis. Nor does any one [of these combinations] have a natural

\(^{51}\) This phrase echoes characterizations of logic found in the Aristotelian commentary tradition. For instance Elias says, in his commentary on the Prior Analytics, that “philosophy uses logic to show, in the theoretical domain, what is true and what false, and in the practical domain what is good and what is bad” (L.G. Westerink, “Elias on the Prior Analytics,” Mnemosyne 14 (1961), 126–39, at 134.23–4). For the reception of this formula in the Arabic tradition see P. Adamson, “The Last Philosophers of Late Antiquity in the Arabic Tradition,” in Entre Orient et Occident: la philosophie et la science gréco-romaines, ed. U. Rudolph and R. Goulet (Vandœuvres: Fondation Hardt, 2011), 1–43.

\(^{52}\) This echoes the famous definition of medicine at the beginning of Galen’s On the Sects for Beginners: “The physician ought to know through which means one can effect health when it is absent, and preserve it when it is present.”

\(^{53}\) Badawī suggests emending to natadāraka, that is, “should we not set right.”

\(^{54}\) Following Harika’s suggestion to read tbumma rather than lam in the manuscript.
existence in any way. For example, imagination takes the image of a body, that is, something three-dimensional, and applies it to something non-corporeal. Then it imagines that this exists outside the imagination, firmly believing in the void, and that it [the void] is poured around this world and exists — which is impossible. Then in his imagination he conceives of forms which have no existence. He asks about them as if they existed, that is to say that he imagines an individual outside the world, sitting on the surface of the outermost sphere. Then he asks how this absurdly imagined situation occurs, posing the question as if he really thought that it exists. His situation is similar with regard to other such imaginations. As long as he “devotes too much effort (am'ana)” to this sort [of thinking], he is very remote from reality. This is the state of imagination and instances of imaginary knowledge (al-wahm wa-l-uluūm al-wahmiyya), which are followed by futile fantasies (takhayyulât bāṭila) and despicable delusions (wasāwis makrūha). Sometimes it gets as far as absurd desires, or a feeling of dread and doom (istish‘ār makbāwif wa-mabālik) without any basis in reality. This is the idea (sūra) of melancholy.

Yet, thinking about how this occurrence [i.e. melancholy] happens, deducing its reasons and causes, establishing their [the causes’] true nature, and curing it [i.e., melancholy] with something which removes and improves it — none of us would call this melancholy, were it not for the fact that this language [i.e., Greek] employs this expression [i.e., melancholy] in the sense of disease, so that melancholy and thought (fikr) express one meaning. In sum, the intellect owes nothing to imagination, for imagination, as we have said, follows sense-perception. The intellect passes judgment on it [imagination], and is prior to it in existence, even if its [the intellect’s] imprint on man appears after it [imagination]. That imagination depends on sense-perception is indicated by the fact that we cannot imagine anything which we have not perceived, or the like of which we have not perceived. If we solicit this from the imagination [i.e., imagining something we have not seen], we find it entirely unhelpful. It only helps us to combine things which it [the imagination] has taken from sense-perception, that is to say, it combines, for instance, the wing of a bird with a camel. It does not enable us, however, to picture something the like of which has never been perceived — certainly not.

55 In other words, it combines things that are not combined in reality, as when we imagine a centaur by combining man and horse.
56 Compare al-Kindī’s rejection of void at On First Philosophy §IV.8 in Adamson and Pormann, The Philosophical Works.
57 Miskawayh may have in mind a thought experiment like that mentioned in the text On Metaphysics ascribed to al-Rāzi. We are there asked to imagine someone at the edge of the cosmos who sticks their arm out. See al-Rāzi, Rasā’il falsafyya, ed. P. Kraus (Cairo: 1939), 134. The thought experiment goes back to Greek sources, see e.g. Simplicius, Commentary on Aristotle’s De Caelo, 284.28–285.2, cited by Long and Sedley, The Hellenistic Philosophers, §49F.
58 A wordplay on ḥāl (“situation”) and muḥāl (“absurd”).
59 Retaining Arkoun’s reading awwal.
The intellect is not like that. It does intellect the things which it perceives, but rather rejects many of the judgements made by sense-perception. The difference between the imagination and the intellect ought to be taken from the relevant passages, for if we concern ourselves with it [i.e., the difference], we will leave the path of [answering] this question, and wind up composing a discourse on the faculties of the senses, which ascend towards a single faculty called common sense (hiss mushtarak). How this happens and discussing it is a broad [subject], explained in the books which he [Aristotle] has written on the subject.

{66} When he states that “the intellect grasps (ya'kbudbu) things by remembering or by being incited (inqidaḥ),” he takes up something different (ya'kbudbu ghayra l-makbadbat) from what he was talking about at the beginning, namely a discussion handed down from Plato and Aristotle. He thinks that the two differ, and that Plato says that the intellect remembers only the intelligibles which it possessed before being prepared for the material world (al-bayyulaniya), and then forgets them, when it comes into matter, so that it only learns things which it possessed before. He thinks (zanna) that Aristotle said that it [the intellect] arrives at this by inductive thinking from here. Yet the matter is not as many people suppose, namely that there is a difference between the two philosophers. Rather, the views of the two differ as does the view of someone when he looks up and down. The one who is ascending and the one who is descending are at the same distance [from the top], and up and down is not relevant here. Aristotle teaches us wisdom (hikma) by ascending from the natural things, whereas Plato used to descend to them from the divine things. Therefore, the views of the two differ as do their [methods of] teaching, but the content is agreed upon [by them]. Had I not resolved (tasammamta) to proceed to a clearer explanation than that with which I began at the opening of this epistle, I would have obliged myself to elucidate this point in order to connect it to the clarification of what has been asked.

Instead, I continue my discussion as I have resolved. He said: “How can we be sure about the substances which we believe to be spiritual, if we do not even comprehend their particulars?” Yet the things about which he asked have particulars and universals only after they are observed together with bodies. The simple has neither part nor whole; its being (anniya) is established by its apparent effect, not in such a way that one

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60 allati yuhissubah: no subject is mentioned here, and grammatically, the more natural antecedent would be the intellect (aql), but the context makes it plain that it must be the imagination (wahm).
61 Retaining Arkoun’s reading min.
62 A reference to Plato’s famous theory of recollection. This was certainly known in the Arabic tradition; see al-Kindi’s work On Recollection, translated in Adamson and Pormann, The Philosophical Works.
64 This seems to be a bit of a mixed metaphor. The main idea, however, is clear. If I am walking in the mountains, and I pause, I am in the same place, whether I look up or down, even if my perception will differ dramatically. Likewise, if I go up and encounter someone coming down, the two of us are in the same place, even if our experiences of the surrounding landscape again differ.
observes a certain part of it through sense-perception, and then establishes the being of the whole. This [sc. that simple things have “particulars”] is said about them in a homonymous way, because of the necessity arising out of the inadequacy of words (alfa¯z·) compared to the concepts. For we are compelled to use familiar expressions derived from the senses to convey foreign, intellectual concepts (ma‘ānin gharība ma‘qīla). We cannot indicate them without these words. For instance, we speak about the accident “moving” when the body moves in which it [the accident] resides, and say that it is “divided” into its parts. Yet the accident by itself, when it is not considered together with the body, does not move, nor is it divided. Similarly, [67] the incorporeal substance cannot be divided. For such an act of dividing occurs only in magnitudes; and only bodies have magnitudes. The incorporeal has no magnitude, and cannot therefore be divided. If at times we speak of it in this way, we do so by adapting a word (isti‘ārat al-lafz·) and sharing a term (isbtirāk al-ism) [i.e., homonymously]. Therefore, even if we sometimes say that the particular soul is in such and such a state, or that the universal soul has such and such a form, we do not thereby allow the division which one understands [to exist] in bodies.

Rather, we mean by it that the multiple individuals are multiple in that the way in which the soul arranges them is multiple.65 Therefore we call the different instances of arrangement (wujjib al-tadābīr) “particularization (tajzī‘a),”66 even if this is not really the case, in order that one thus understands our indication. An example of this is the following. Humanity (insānīya) resides in humans. Even if they [humans] differ in matter and temperament, they are still truly one with regard to how they are formed (taṣawwur). Likewise the stamp: even if it differs through the clay, wax, lead and silver, because of the difference in matter, it is still by itself one. Similarly we say that the power which forms “humanity” is one, even if the thing differs in matter. Then this power comes to arrange each matter (mādda) according to how it [the power] is received by it [the form].67 For instance, man builds a house of clay, makes a pool for water, and builds a ship from wood. He makes each matter into what it can receive, so that his intended goal is fulfilled. Next, he uses for each of these [sc. artefacts] the motion appropriate to it, so that in the case of the house, he walks with his feet, since this is the appropriate motion for it; in the case of the boat, he moves his hands to use the oars, as is appropriate; and in the case of the water, he moves both his hands and his feet, because the appropriate thing is swimming.

Even if this example does not fit exactly, it gives an indication of the intended idea, and will, I hope, be sufficient. But there is no harm in adducing another example, so that

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65 Reading with Badawī and Harika: anna l-asbbāsā l-mutakabthirata yeridu takatbturu-bå bi-an yaktbura tadbiru l-naﬁl la-hå.

66 Miskawayh is saying here that many things of the same type are one in form. As Platonists, we know that humanity remains one in itself, even if the soul, encountering many items that partake of this form, supposes that there is one particular humanity in Socrates and another in Plato.

67 Retaining the manuscript reading ḥasba qabūl-bå min-hå as reported by Harika; Arkoun and Badawī read ḥasba bayūl-bå min-hå, which does not make much sense.
we may thereby explain this subtle idea. So I say: imagine that an individual is in front of mirrors that vary in substance and shape, in how round, vaulted, and concave and so on they are. Would not each [mirror] receive images that differ in their small and large size, their shape, colour, stature, and appearance? Do you not see that the shapes differ because of the [mirrors] that receive them, even though the individual is one [and the same]?

These and similar examples must be understood as [only] hinting at what they are compared with; one should not consider them to offer an exact correspondence or even a similar one. For these examples are drawn from natural bodies; therefore, in providing [the examples] there is no [exact] correspondence to the substances, which are incorporeal. If one takes the example to be an [exact] comparison with what is adduced in the example, then the examples lead to contradictions that are unnecessary, because what is adduced in the example is very remote from it [what is illustrated].

Section Two

The questioner then said: “The ultimate things in the composition of the universe are in plants, animals, man, the soul and the intellect. Moreover, life cannot exist without the heat of the heart, nor can it fail to exist together with its heat. Therefore, when one cuts out the heart of a large animal, like a bull, it continues to beat as long as there is heat in it, but when it becomes cold, it stops beating. If one cuts out [the heart] and then puts it into [hot] ashes and hot air, then for as long as the heat remains, it [the heart] continues to beat. This shows that it [the heart] only does this [beating] because of the heat, not because of its position in the chest or because it is connected with whatever it is connected to. Furthermore, great actions that take place in the macrocosm are, for instance, the fact that moisture is generated by heat and cold through hydration; that dryness is generated from moisture by dessication; and that fundamental things like minerals, plants, animals, man, meteorological phenomena such as...
clouds, and all the wonderful artefacts made by people — that [all] this is brought about by and from heat, whether of the sun or of fire. So [in light of all this] why should we not conclude that the soul is heat? For we and others perceive things produced by [heat] at the particular level through sensation, and at the universal level in the sublime luminaries and in fire. We can therefore be certain about this, as the universal testifies to the particular, and the particular to the universal."

The Master ‘Abū ‘Ali [Miskawayh] said: What the questioner says in this extract shows nothing more than that heat remains in certain bodies when it is prolonged by another heat source for longer than it would otherwise have done. For the beating of the heart does depend on its heat, but nothing further is proven by this example as regards life. For no one would say that a heart still contains life, when it has been removed from an animal, even if it continues to move because of [some external] heat. It simply behaves like an warm body that does not have innate heat: it remains warm so long as something else prolongs its heat. As soon as that which prolongs it is removed, it gets cold after a short or a long period of time, depending on whether it is dry — in which case the form of heat clings to it for a while — or moist — in which case [the heat] quickly departs. This is what happens to a glowing iron when it is taken from fire, but it is also the situation of water (which is the contrary of fire): it moves through boiling when it is put close to fire. This is much like the beating of the heart. This is the situation for every moist body. Then, when [the water] is moved away from the fire, it inevitably encounters either cold or hot air; and its heat departs from it accordingly. If one places [the water] in hot ash, the boiling motion will continue for a while. But no one would say that the hot water is alive, or that any hot body moved by heat is alive. Nor would anyone claim that anything other than an ensouled animal is alive. It is not enough for an animal to have heat in order to be alive; rather it also needs moisture. If the heat of a living being is devoid of moisture, it ceases quickly. We will show that heat is like an instrument for the existence of life. But is it the same thing as life? Certainly not. If, however, it is not life, then neither is it soul, which provides life as long as it is in it [the living being], as we will show later. At this place, however, we just want to quote accurately what the questioner said whilst showing that he failed to prove what he wanted to. Then, we will establish the correct teaching and deal with any doubts that might be raised against it.

When he says, “furthermore, great actions that take place in the macrocosm are, for instance, the fact that moisture comes about through heat and cold; and that dryness is

77 Retaining Arkoun’s reading wa-jamī‘i a‘jābi l-mībnati li-l-nāsī; the opponent’s point is simply that everything important in this world — from the minerals to weather to the products of man’s ingenuity — is all brought about by heat.

78 In the Arabic, all the preceding sentences form one long protasis, with the apodosis starting now.

79 Al-anwār al-āliya wa-l-nār; this is a word play on nūr “light” or “luminary” (in the sense of bright star) and nār “fire”.

80 Reading maddatu-bu in the sense of the active participle of madda, which is unusual; perhaps the simple emendation muddatu-bu is preferable, in the sense “when its duration ends”, i.e., “when this stops”. 
generated from moisture by dessication (taṭṭif),” this is not [generally] acknowledged. For these four basic properties are all principles of generation, and they are not generated one from another. Natural philosophers have agreed that two of them are active and two passive: heat and cold are active, moisture and dryness passive. Each of the four is a principle in its own right, not generated from any of the others; in their view\(^81\), they only transform from one to another.\(^82\) There is no disagreement among the excellent authors who have discerned the truth about this topic, and this [remark by the opponent] does not amount to an objection against what we undertook to explain [just now]. But we are loathe to pass over an incidental point in the discussion which we do not acknowledge, even if no one has rejected any aspect of our opinion.

To his statement “Why should we not conclude that the soul is heat?” we retort in the following way. If heat were the soul, then necessarily wherever there is heat, soul would exist through its existence. But this is not the case. Rather, heat exists in many things that lack souls: it exists in fire itself with vehemence,\(^83\) but fire has neither soul nor life. Furthermore, heat exists at many degrees, \(^70\) such as the first, second, third, or fourth degree [of heat], as physicians and others have established in the case of many plants and solid minerals. But none of these have soul or life.\(^84\) If someone thinks that the heat proper to animals in particular is life, and we accept his judgment and entertain his fancy [for argument’s sake], then he must necessarily conclude that life in a living being increases as heat increases, and decreases when it decreases. But we find nothing of the sort; on the contrary, heat in the living being increases and decreases, whereas life stays the same.

He states that “the soul is heat. For we and others perceive things produced by [heat] at the particular level through sensation, and at the universal level in the sublume luminaries and in fire.” This is incorrect. For fire (nār) is not light (nūr), nor does heat exist in the sublume luminaries (anwār’āliya). This may be established by demonstration. The heat that fire contains is not its life, and I do not think that the questioner wants to go so far as to say that fire is alive, neither the part of it which is here with us, nor

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\(^81\) That is, the view of natural philosophers such as Aristotle.

\(^82\) The point being made here is that none of the four basic properties is more fundamental than any other; although moist can transform into dry, it is not produced from dryness as from a more basic principle, the way that composite things (like minerals, plants, and animals) are produced from these properties.

\(^83\) Reading \textit{wa-bi̯a fi l-nārī nafsi-hā mawjūdatun fi l-saurati}; this phrase is somewhat odd. Miskawayh plays on the word \textit{nafs} (“soul,” “itself”), but his main point seems to be that the form of fire necessarily contains heat, but that fire still has no soul. Arkoun proposes \textit{fi l-šūrati} (“in form”) instead of \textit{fi l-saurati} (“with vehemence”), but there is no need for this emendation.

\(^84\) This is a reference to pharmacological theories that posit degrees of heat, etc. to explain the efficacy of drugs. The topic was taken up by al-Kindī in a work on compound drugs, for which see L. Gauthier, \textit{Antécédents gréco-arabes de la psycho-physique} (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1939). For the Greek tradition see e.g. A. Debru, \textit{Galen on Pharmacology} (Leiden: Brill, 1997). See also P. E. Pormann, “The Formation of the Arabic Pharmacology: Between Tradition and Innovation”, \textit{Annals of Science} 68.4 (2011), 493–515.
whole of it which is contained just within the celestial sphere, if someone thinks that this heat [sc. the heat of the heavenly sphere of fire] contains universal life, and that this particular [heat] contains particular life, it will not be hard for anyone to contradict and refute him. There is no need for us to be distracted from our main discussion by stooping to this sort of topic.

One can show on the basis of philosophical principles that the sublime luminaries belong to a fifth nature, since they are neither warm nor cold, neither moist nor dry. If the questioner wants to discuss this topic separately, we shall do so in the future, God willing. When we speak later of the soul and of life, and show how they are, establishing by demonstration that the soul is a substance — not an accident or material form, but rather a self-subsisting substance, with no need of matter to subsist — it will then become clear that [soul] is neither heat nor light. For it is known that neither of the two subsists without a body. We will therefore content ourselves with contradicting and refuting those who make false claims about it.

Section Three

Next, the questioner said: “But if we do not do this, and adhere to the doctrine that the soul is a spiritual, subtle substance which is grasped neither universally (71) nor as particular, then what would make us feel safe from what Rufus has said, namely that this is a kind of madness (waswasa) with no truth to it? We know that the intellect is more noble than the soul. We intellect that through this faculty, located in the brain, the actions of the mind (dbibn) and the senses are grasped, and voluntary activities are performed; it is that in us which belongs to the class of light. Furthermore, we witness this with our own eyes, when we examine the pupil: an image forms on the eye of anyone who gazes and looks for a long time at something else. The eye of the soul is of the same genus as the eye in the head, as both are only able to grasp the objects of perception through light that is outside vision in the air, during the day because of the sun, and at night because of the moon or fire. So why should we not conclude that the intellect is the light in which one necessarily perceives the universal and the particular through vision (iyān), in both the macrocosm and microcosm, so that for the universal we put our trust in the testimony of the particular, and vice-versa.”

ʿAbū ʿAli [Miskawayh], may God’s mercy be upon him, said: “What pleases us in Rufus’ discussion about melancholy is that when the right thought proceeds from a
healthy intellect, it leads to the truth of things and accepted opinions recognised by any
man of intellect (āqil). No-one would demand from the intellect testimony based on
sense-perception, whether particular or universal. Only someone not completely trained
in objects of intellection that are free of matter seeks an illustration (mathal) [based] on
sense-perception, which would be a particular testimony. There is a difference between
it [sc. sensation] and the illustration drawn from it; for we may use an illustration taken
from sensation for the object of intellection, without demanding either testimony or
illustration for [sensation] from [the object of intellection]. As God — most high — said:
‘God is the light of heaven and earth. His light resembles (mathal) a niche containing a
lamp.’93 We say: the intellect in the soul may be illustrated (mathal) by the eye in the
body. Moreover, we say that the intellect in the soul may be illustrated by the captain in
a boat. Illustrations alert man and help his thinking towards the contemplation of what
he seeks, and to turn himself away from objects of sense-perception and towards
intelligibles94 in a gentle and gradual way. Finally, after having trained himself [in this
way], he intellects the objects of intellection without any illustration. God, who is greater
than any [other] speaker, said: ‘God coins sayings (amthāl) for people, so they may
remember [them].’95

For the things which are principles in the intellect, or close to principles, we require96
neither comparison nor the testimony of sense-perception in order that they be
taught or learnt. For when we hear an affirmation or negation, we inevitably believe one
of the two about the subject, and require no additional testimony based on sensation.
Likewise, when we are told that the conditions of contradiction are such and such, and
all the principles of demonstration [are such and such], then we do not request additional
testimony. Nor do we need demonstration for everything that we learn, for demonstra-
tion itself is one of the things that we learn. To know it, one needs no demonstration, for
were it the case that demonstration needs demonstration, then this would go on forever
without end. This would result in our knowing nothing through it [demonstration], for
what is without end does not really exist.

It has thus been shown that certain objects of knowledge are more evident than what
one knows through demonstration, as is the case with principles that are the foundations
of demonstration, but not known through demonstration. If someone demands for some
of them [these principles] a testimony based on sensation, then his teacher despairs
about his success; he rejects [instruction] like someone who will never be helped by any
teaching. This is the case with all intellectual branches of knowledge (‘ulūm’aqliyya). The
things, however, which have their origin in the particular, such as natural things, must

92 Reading al-barī’a with Badawî and Harika.
93 Qurān 24:35.
94 ilā al-ma‘qlālāt; these two words are strangely missing in both Arkoun and Badawî.
95 Qurān 14:25.
96 Reading fa-‘innā lā naḥtaṣu with Harika; this is also the text of the manuscript; Arkoun and Badawî
misread this as fa-llatī lā yuḥtāsu.

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be traced back to principles that are sensible, for they [the natural things] too are sensible. Nature itself, however, is not perceived by the five senses. One discusses it [nature] like one discusses intelligible things. This kind of thinking (fikr) and learning has nothing to do with melancholy. No-one would think that this [melancholy] applies to those who learn it [how to discuss intelligible things] and know it; nor would one call them “delusional (muwaswis)”. If someone were to think this, he would be considered a pitiable person of the common crowd who believe nothing without sensing it, as they lack reflection (rawiyya) and contemplation. One only converses with them out of pity, just as one may converse with a blind man when he accuses sighted people of lying about seeing (rawiyya) colours. They are not worth debating (lā yunāzarīna)97, but are just pitiable. Would one go to them, if one wants to know how they imagine any of the colours? Certainly not.

For someone lacking an intellectual understanding [grounded] in necessary principles, intelligible objects have the status of objects of vision in relation to vision; [but this is only] by way of illustration (tamthil), not insofar as a quality such as light or something else would bring them together. Therefore, one always takes illustrations for the former [sc. the intelligible case] taken from the latter [sc. the sensible case].

Just as states called “diseases” that affect vision are treated until it [the vision] returns to health, so the material intellect (aql bayyilānī) suffers from diseases that are treated until it [the intellect] returns to its [state of] health. One of its [the material intellect’s] diseases is melancholy; it is thinking that does not lead to truth, nor does it follow the right path to what it seeks, so that it becomes confused {73} until it is treated through correct thinking by someone who has a sound intellect. Someone who thinks about how to remove his disease98 and conceive a remedy for him is not someone suffering from melancholy, nor is he delusional (muwaswis).

Upon my life, correct thinking requires a sound instrument, a certain mixture in the relevant part of the brain, and a balance of the blood that flows in the blood vessels between the parts99 of the brain. For these are the instruments of thought. The tunics of the eye and their balance are instruments for the visual faculty. If damage affects them, the vision is impaired. Then, when it [the damage] is treated, it [the visual faculty] returns to health, and one can see through it again. The case of the thin blood that flows from the heart through the thin blood vessels and permeates the brain is similar. It has a balance in thinness, and it has a subtle vapour in the cavity of the blood vessel. When it departs from its balance and this vapour becomes turbid, then deficiency and confusion occur in the action that proceeds from the faculty of the soul through this instrument, until it is treated and returned to its balance. Then that which acts through this instrument performs its functions perfectly.

97 A word play on nazara “to see, contemplate” and nāzara “to compete, to debate”.
98 Reading illati-bi with Badawi and Harika.
99 Reading ajzā with Harika; Arkoun’s and Badawi’s ākbir makes little sense here.
Correct thought, which takes the path of the intellect in intelligible things in order to attain the truth, is comparable to the arrow of an archer, which takes the path of the target at which one aims in order to hit the bullseye. [In archery] hitting the goal is what one seeks; there is a mark at which one aims, and the path to reach it is one [and the same] for all those who want to hit the goal when shooting arrows. In order to do this, he needs to learn and train. Failing to do this and to err in shooting arrows is not taught, nor can it be learnt. For this is indefinite. It is similar to the cases of correct thought, melancholy, and delusion, in that these too involve a single method [leading] to the correct [answer (sawab)] and guiding one to it, which one studies and and in which one trains. Failing in it is indeterminate: it is neither taught, nor can it be learnt, nor does it have a teacher. Rather, one applies treatment to it, as we have said.

We promise to discuss our conviction that the soul is a spiritual, imperceptible substance after we finish refuting the [following] argument by the opponent.

He said: “Through the faculty located in the brain the intelleigibles are grasped; it is that in us which belongs to the class of light. We see it [the light] in the pupil of someone who look when he gazes at something else, and looks for a long time. The eye of the soul is of the same genus as the eye in the head.”

This is an unacceptable opinion. For the brain and its parts do not contain anything of the class of the light in the eye, since the light of the eye to which he alludes in his discussion requires a polished, clear, and smooth body in order to accomplish its action; and since the light is not received when the body is not like this. The case of the pupil of the eye is like that of a polished mirror that receives the forms of things when an external light is present, that is, the light of the air that serves as a medium between the one who sees and the object that is seen. Anyone who glances at the pupil [of the eye] only sees an image of himself in it; I mean his face or another part of his body that is opposite the pupil. Or he sees some of the parts that are opposite it as one sees these things in a small mirror. Anybody who looks into a mirror, or a polished body requires the light (daw) of the sun or the light (nur) in the air between him and the object that is seen, so that vision can be accomplished. For vision is potential vision, that is actualised by the presence of light. The same applies to polished and transparent things and how they receive images (suwar).

100 The point is the same made by Aristotle when he says that there are indefinitely many ways to be vicious, but only one to be virtuous. See Nicomachean Ethics II 6, 1106b28–35.
101 Reading jins rather than hads; cf. above n. 91.
102 Reading idb with Arkoun.
103 Reading idb with Arkoun.
104 This alludes to Aristotle’s view that sensation requires a medium between perceiver and perceived. In this case of vision, this is the illuminated air between the viewer and the visible object. See De Anima II 7, 419a9–21.
105 For the point that what is seen is reflected in the pupil of the eye, see Plato, Alcibiades 132e–133a.
Voluntary movement is brought about by the part of the brain out of which the nerves come. What arises through the part\(^\text{106}\) of the brain [is itself] a body, and is a polished, transparent body. Likewise for what arises through the vapour in the hollow space of the blood vessel. For it is only through the hollow nerve that comes out from between the brain that the [different] kinds of voluntary motion of the pupil of the eye are accomplished. The visual faculty is brought about by the vapour that passes through the two openings of these two nerves which end at the tunics of the eye, namely the crystalline [tunic]\(^\text{107}\), the “grape-like \(\text{Cinabīya}\)” [tunic], and the other tunics; and the moisture through which vision is accomplished. When the soul meets these instruments whilst they are deemed to be healthy, it grasps the visual objects. If, however, an ailment befalls one of them, then it [the soul] becomes deficient in grasping [them] in accordance with this ailment. When the ailment is cured so that it disappears, the soul returns to grasping [them] by using its instruments that are in order [again].

Section Four

Then the opponent said: “But if we reject this [that the intellect is light], and imagine a spiritual thing that is intellect in the microcosm [sc. the human being], but is not [75] this light, then what would make us feel safe from what Rufus said? If the most noble and ultimately exalted thing in what we perceive and know is these lights, through which we arrive at perceptions, and heat, which is the cause for all acting and being acted upon in the two worlds [i.e., the microcosm and the macrocosm], then why do we not stop at these two things, without going beyond them, in order to have confidence, certitude, and insight that we do not believe things that are mad (\(\text{mā buwa waswasa}\)) and are free from what Rufus said?

“Galen’s imagination (\(\text{takhayyul}\)) had once been corrupted, and he relates in the Summaries (\(\text{Jawāmi’}\)) that his thinking functioned badly; and that the wool-carder’s thinking had corrupted so much that he thought that the carpet suffered pain, so that he threw it down from above in order to hurt it, because he was very angry with it.

“If we stopped at that to which sensation testifies for the intellect, and the intellect for sensation, given that nothing in a more noble condition is known, then we would be excused. Yet, if we go beyond this and believe in things which [really] are only figments of our imagination that do not have any testimonies for them akin to these testimonies [provided by the combination of sensation and intellection], then how can we be certain that we are not in this [situation], like one of the many nations, each of whom believes in something like this?”

‘Abū ‘Ali [Miskawayh], may God’s mercy be upon him, said: whereas he states that we “imagine something spiritual, which is the intellect,” we would not say that we imagine the intellect. For we have said above that imagination depends on sensation,

\(^{106}\) Reading \(\text{bi-juz’in}\) with Harika; the sentence remains somewhat obscure.

\(^{107}\) Reading \(\text{al-jalīdiya}\); both Arkoun and al-Badawi have “the clear (\(\text{al-jalīya}\))” here, but there is no such tunic of the eye.
and one imagines nothing without having witnessed it, or something like it,\textsuperscript{108} through sensation. Because the intellect, and intelligible things, are neither witnessed nor sensible, we cannot imagine them. If someone tries to imagine it, he will fall into the same trap as the opponent, imagining fire, light, or some other sensible thing. Instead\textsuperscript{109} of his saying “we imagine,” we merely need to say “we intellect,” to save ourselves from invalid suppositions. We shall now confirm this opinion, if God wills.

He states that “we imagine a spiritual thing which is intellect.” We, however, do not relate intellect to spirit, but rather relate spirit to intellect. We therefore contend that spiritual things are intellectual. This is closer to being correct and\textsuperscript{76} to the truth. If it would not take such a long time to explain this idea, which I fear would take me away from the intended topic of the questioner, I would have discussed the difference between the spirit and the soul, and between spiritual and intellectual things. But it would involve what we are trying to avoid [i.e. prolonging the discussion and digressing from the task at hand].

Already in the previous section, we have safely refuted his rhetorical question “what would make us feel safe from what Rufus said?”

His phrase “If the most noble and ultimately exalted thing in what we perceive and know . . . ,” must refer to sensible things. Amongst intelligible things, though, it is not these two [sc. fire and heat] that are the most noble\textsuperscript{110} things we perceive. [Not only that], but neither of these two things even exist there, unless we speak by way of comparison about them (\textit{idbā ḍarābnā bi-bimā mathalan}), [bearing in mind] that the first and the second element in a comparison are very different from each other.\textsuperscript{111} It is, however, unavoidable to resort to the comparison of one thing with another in this case.

To his rhetorical question “why do we not stop at these two things, without going beyond them,” we reply: because demonstration does allow us to stop with these two, but rather urges us on by necessity to go beyond them, as we have promised to discuss them in the future.\textsuperscript{112} We have hinted at this in order to refute the doubt that he raised when discussing heat. We have said that [on the opponent’s view] life must exist in such a way that it increases when heat or light increase, and diminishes when they diminish. Likewise, we say that [on his view] intellect exists merely because light exists, and increases through its increase. But we shall not be satisfied just with this, but shall fulfill our promise to deny with sound demonstrations the claim that a substance exists that is neither body nor accident, I mean, that is not a bodily form. By “bodily form (\textit{sūra jismīyā})” I mean what exists only because the body also exists, as is the case with light, illumination, heat, and the like.

\textsuperscript{108} Reading \textit{nazīr} with Badawi.
\textsuperscript{109} Retaining Arkoun’s reading \textit{makāna}.
\textsuperscript{110} Reading \textit{asbraf mā} with Harika.
\textsuperscript{111} Cf. {67–8} above.
\textsuperscript{112} Cf. {73–4} above.
He [the opponent] talked about Galen whose thought and imagination was corrupted, and about the wool-carder, that is, *Tbu*sýs. In this regard, we have already shown the correct and incorrect way of thinking. The incorrect thinking is treated by correct thinking; the disease through which the patient thinks that the rug feels pain is removed. One has to show [the patient] that what has no sensation cannot feel pain. Pain is only brought about through the nerves emerging from the brain of the living being. What does not have nerves and does not have life, cannot have sensation; furthermore, without sensation, it cannot feel pain.

In the passage “if we go beyond this, we will not be excused, and will be subject to mere imaginings (*awbâm*), like one of these {77} many nations . . . ,” the term “imagination (*wabm*)” is applied to intelligible things, to which I take objection. For imaginations with no grounding in things that are perceived by means of sensation are false and have no truth to them. As regards the beliefs of other nations, the truth is that which guides all minds to acknowledge a substance that cannot be sensed, even it they differ afterwards about [the details].

**Section Five**

Then the questioner asked: “Why is the first cause not the essence (*dhaıt*) of the macrocosm, which is continuous and finite, and which is divided into the seven celestial spheres, the four elements, and things generated by them? What prevents us from stopping with these, and leads us to disdain this and belittle it?”

‘Abú ′Alí, may God’s mercy be upon him, said: What prevents us from saying that the first cause is the essence of the macrocosm is the fact that the macrocosm is caused, whereas the first cause is cause and not caused. The opponent admits that it is first, and if it were caused, it would not be first. We will clarify this further, saying that the absolutely first cause is what has no cause prior to it, in any sense of priority, which is why it is absolutely first. If it were possible for something to be prior to it, then what was prior to it would be more deserving of the name “first.” Therefore, the truly first is that which has nothing prior to it in any way and no cause (*sabab*). Whatever has nothing prior to it has no cause (*illa*) for its existence, because the cause (*illa*) is naturally prior

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114 Adopting the reading *bi-l-asab* suggested by Harika.

115 *al-mawjuđát bi-l-h·iss*; the verb *wajada* is used here in the sense of “to perceive”.

116 If the text should be retained as it stands, namely *al-muttaṣíl al-mutanābí*, the opponent must mean that it is finite in size. But it seems likely that a negation has slipped out and that the sense was rather “continuous without limit,” that is, eternal. Note that Miskawayh does argue against the eternity of the cosmos in his reply.

117 In the manuscript, a phrase identical to the beginning of the sixth quotation from the opponent occurs here; both Arkoun and Badawi omit it from the text.

118 A word play on “*awwal* (first)” and “*aulá* (more deserving).”
to the effect. Whatever has no cause and no prior reason exists always, that is, it has always been (lam yazal).\textsuperscript{119} For the eternal (azalī), which has never ceased, is that which has no before and nothing prior to it. What is like this does not subsist through anything else, nor (78) is its existence due to any of the four causes, namely matter, form, agent, and that for the sake of which something is. What has always been has no matter, form, or agent, or again something else for the sake of which it is. These four are the only causes, and there are no others; and as we have said, what has always been has no cause; thus, [the eternal] has none of these four. When we consider the essence of the world and what it contains, we find that it has matter and form. This is the case for any body, insofar as it has a subject, which is the bearer (ḥāmil), and a form, which is the predicate (mahmūl), I mean the [three] dimensions. No body can be without these. Therefore the essence of the macrocosm has a predicate and a subject. By “bearer” I mean something having length, breadth and depth; and by “predicate” I mean length, breadth and depth. Next comes inevitably this shape\textsuperscript{120} (which is [also] a predicate), and then time, place, and all the other things that necessarily accompany body.

Because the world is a natural body, it is inevitably either moving or at rest from movement. For nature is the principle of motion and rest, so that motion and rest are associated with the natural body: it cannot be without them. I say that [body] is in time\textsuperscript{121} precisely because time and motion cannot precede one another, as is shown in the principles of philosophy. Body does not precede motion because it [sc. body] is natural. Body cannot be without natural motion, and motion cannot be without time.

On this basis it is clear that the body of the world has a bearer and a predicate, that is, something containing length, breadth and depth — these are the [three] dimensions.\textsuperscript{122} I say, though, that the body (jirm) of the world is both bearer and predicate (for the conjunction of these is called either jirm or jism). Because it is natural, it has motion, time, and duration (mudda). Each one of these is necessarily composed; therefore it [sc. the body of the world] is composed. Everything composed is made up of simple elements (basāʾīt), which are prior to it by nature. The body of the macrocosm, then, is not eternal (azalī). For we have shown that what has always been is that which has no cause that would precede it in in any way, and no reason (sabab) whatsoever. Otherwise, it would follow that that which is prior in this sense is the absolutely first, since the absolutely first is that which we mean when we say “eternal (azalī).” This proof shows that what has always been can be neither composed nor multiple in any way. For multiplicity is composed from units.

It is also clear from what we have said that what has always been does not corrupt, because corruption is a change (istiḥāla) that occurs in the predicates, and a replace-

\textsuperscript{119} As becomes clear in what follows, lam yazal means that it is eternal ex parte ante, i.e., it has no beginning; a further demonstration is needed to show that it is incorruptible, that is, eternal ex parte post, i.e., that it has no end.

\textsuperscript{120} That is, the spherical shape of the cosmos.

\textsuperscript{121} This has been stated at the end of the previous paragraph.

\textsuperscript{122} Retaining the reading of the manuscript wa-bādbibī.
ment (\textit{tabaddul}) of one predicate by another whilst the bearer stays the same. If the absolutely first \cite{79} has neither subject nor predicate, then it is affected by neither change nor replacement. Therefore it neither corrupts nor undergoes any sort of change, nor are natural motions associated with it. Similarly, the condition that we impose is not that its [sc. the eternal's] cause must be the first cause, I mean something that has always been and has no prior cause.

So the essence of the world must necessarily be composed. If it is composed, then it contains simple elements (\textit{basā‘it}), which are prior to it. For this reason, it necessarily requires something that composes \textit{[it, i.e. God]}. Were I not following the order of opponent’s questions as they had been put, and making known his philosophical errors, I would add to the discussion of the premises of this demonstration. I would show why we can judge that simple elements are necessarily prior to what is composed from them; for the composed necessarily stands in need of that which makes it up. But this would be to waste words, given that it is obvious and the opponent would agree with it.

Moreover, I would not concede that the essence of the macrocosm is the first cause and that it has always been, because of something that the questioner \textit{[himself]} pronounced about it. This is the fact that “it \textit{[the macrocosm]} is divided into the seven celestial spheres, the four elements, and things generated by them.”\textsuperscript{123} For division occurs only through the distinction of parts, or differences (\textit{fiṣūl}) (with which we divide the various species from one another), or by accidents (which divide the many individuals from one another), or\textsuperscript{124} by some other kind of division which presupposes the ones that we have mentioned. We cannot claim that any of these apply to the first thing, which is not composed, having neither matter nor form. For the dividing differences are predicated of something that has the difference, and is the bearer for \textit{[the difference]; for they divide genus, thus producing species.}

We have shown that the first cause can neither be body, nor genus,\textsuperscript{125} nor species, nor individual. It cannot therefore have any differences that divide it, for it is neither bearer nor predicate. Thus it cannot be divided in any way, nor is there change in it, nor does it receive alteration in any way or for any reason (\textit{sabab}).

When he asks, “what leads us to disdain this and belittle it?” he means the world. We for our part do not disdain it, when we compare it to its parts and species below it, and when we investigate its composition and the different types of wisdom. We can neither fathom nor enumerate them. In fact the most we can do is to understand some of them, and this already dazzles and tires\textsuperscript{126} us; \cite{80} we stand very much in awe before it. Yet the greater and more dazzling something is for someone who sees it, the signs of sublime\textsuperscript{127}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{121} Following Badawi’s emendation of the text.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Inserting \textit{aw} instead of \textit{la-bu} as proposed by Badawi.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Reading \textit{jinsan} with Harika.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Reading \textit{yuhassuru-nā} with Badawi.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Reading \textit{al-jalīla}.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
wisdom appearing in it, the greater is he who has composed it, and the more sublime is he who created it and made it appear, and who set down the different aspects of wisdom in it. If we compare it [the world] to this Creator who brings [it] into existence and orders [it], then even if it is great [in absolute terms], it becomes small [by comparison]; even if it is quite sublime, it becomes vile. For this holds true of every great effect, in comparison to its cause, and everything composed, when it is related to the one who composed it. That is, it is vile by comparison, yet great when compared to its own parts and to all that is under it.

Section Six

Next, the opponent asked: “How can anyone allege that there are spiritual things apart from this, which are more noble than all this, and which we perceive neither in a particular nor in a universal way? What would be our excuse for believing this? What would make us feel safe that we have not succumbed to what Rufus said, and what happened to Galen, the wool-carder, and other such people? If the macrocosm contains these two noble phenomena (athan, sc. heat and light) — one of which [sc. light] gives rise to all perception, while through the other every action and being-acted-upon is achieved, and this provides a reliable testimony through the two methods of perception, namely sensation and intellect, then how can there be, beyond these two, and beyond the essence from which these two come, spiritual things nobler than these two phenomena?

The master ‘Abū ‘Alī, may God have mercy upon him, replied: we have shown that we need to establish something more exalted than bodies and the accidents that pertain to them, namely light, heat and things resulting from these two. For light and heat are accidents in the body; they subsist only through it and exist only in it. The soul and intellect, however, are simple incorporeal things that do not depend upon the body. Rather they govern bodies and judge all the accidents in them on the basis of sensation and perception, as we have shown already and shall show again. But it is more appropriate to state that body exists through these two things [sc. soul and intellect]. For the existence of the body is brought about by composition and nature. These two, however, I mean soul and intellect, are the cause of nature, which [in its turn] is the cause of body. If body is an effect of the effect of these two, then how can they be thought to have the status of accidents, which depend upon the body, exist because the body exists, and disappear when it does not exist?

He stated that “we perceive it neither in a particular nor in a universal way.” In this context, we have mentioned at the beginning of our discussion that intellect has

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128 Reading haqiran with Arkoun.
129 Reading wa-kāna with Arkoun.
130 Secluding the words “alladhaynī humā l-izrāku wa-l-aqīlu (which are perception and action)”, as suggested by Harika.
131 Retaining Arkoun’s reading ashya‘.
neither universal nor particular, because part and whole belong to the class of relation; this is proper to what is composed and to the part. Thus the incorporeal has neither part nor whole.

He asked, “What would be our excuse for believing this?” But what would be a clearer excuse than the necessity of demonstration, which leads and guides us to establish what is necessary, whether we want it or not?

He claimed that “the essence of the macrocosm contains these two noble phenomena, one of which [sc. light] gives rise to all perception, while through the other every action and being-acted-upon is achieved.” We acknowledge that it is through the intermediary of light that we can see. But we will not say that light is vision; certainly not. Similarly heat is not life, even though life is realised in us through the intermediary of heat. For the life in us — the animal’s vitality — requires some heat to come into existence, for [heat] is its instrument. Just as no instrument, whether in art or nature, is the primary agent, even if it is necessary for that which is realised by it. The same applies to heat and light. We will show even more clearly than we have so far that beyond these two phenomena there exists something else, or rather, many things exist that are more noble than these two. I even state that these two have no relation to it, because it belongs to an exalted order of existence, whereas these two have a share in existence that is base, when compared to this.

Section Seven

The opponent said: “The point is not that heat acts when it is mixed with other things, or when it is by itself; rather the point is that the great strength of its action is all pervasive and that we cannot conceive of life without it.”

The master ‘Abū ‘Ali, may God have mercy upon him, said: We concede that many natural actions in our world take place through heat, and that we cannot imagine life without heat. We deny only that heat is life, or the first cause of life. Innate heat (ḥarāra gharīziyya) is the primary instrument of nature; this is something evident. But we say that what uses innate heat, namely nature, is not heat, and what uses nature, namely soul, is not nature.

Section Eight

The opponent asked, “If the dispute boils down to what Hippocrates says, namely that all powers result from mixture, whereas Plato argues that mixture is an instrument for something else, then why does this dispute not come down to the same thing — it would be like someone who strikes with a sword. Sometimes we say: ‘the sword cut’

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132 Reading má‘ib instead of the puzzling má‘bar; this apposition simply states that the principle of life (hayā) is what makes a living being (hayawān) live.

133 Reading lī-gabarihi, as proposed by Harika.

134 Retaining the Arkoun’s reading qata‘a, as the point here is about different agent causes (proximate and remote); this is a widely used distinction, found in even the title of a work by al-Kindī. On the Proximate Agent Cause of Generation and Corruption (for which see Adamson and Pormann, The Muslim World Volume 102 July/October 2012 © 2012 Hartford Seminary.
and sometimes we say ‘somebody cut’. But [in each case] it is [the sword] that cuts. Therefore [to return to the original point], sometimes one refers to the proximate cause of something, namely mixture\(^{135}\) and heat, and sometimes one refers to the essence from which light and heat come.”

Abū ‘Alī, may God have mercy be upon him, said: Hippocrates’ view is correct according to his art, for as a physician he did not need to inquire into anything other than the principles of nature. In this respect [sc. as a physician], it was not his task to investigate what is beyond [the principles of nature], nor to rise in his inquiry to what is beyond nature,\(^{136}\) so as to examine the principles which are above [nature]. If he were to inquire into that, he would not do so as a physician but as a philosopher.

By contrast, Plato had to investigate all the principles, ending with the principle of principles, because he was a philosopher. I know\(^{137}\) an example with which I am satisfied, provided that you give it its due and bear with it, so that you do not stop at one of the principles that is not the first principle; rather you should continue until you reach the final goal.

The following can serve to explain this.\(^{138}\) Iron that is extracted from a mine — this being its cream\(^{139}\) — does not cut until [the form of] a sword is impressed upon it; I mean that it is shaped in the form of a sword and given an edge. When it has become like this, it still only cuts because of someone who cuts [with it]. It might further happen that someone orders this person to cut, and again, that the person who gives the order [83] was ordered to do so by someone else, and so on until one reaches the person who orders without having before him another person ordering him. So if the sword cuts a thief, one may relate the cutting to its proximate cause [i.e., the sword], or to any of the intermediary causes between [the sword] and the ultimate cause that has no [other] cause before it. So to the question “what is it that cut the robber?” one may reply “the iron cut him,” thus relating the action to the most proximate cause that it has. Sometimes one may reply “the sword,” meaning by this iron together with the form which made it into a sword. Sometimes one may reply “the swordsman cut him,” or “the chief of police cut him,” or “the commander (amīr) cut him,” or “the caliph cut him,” or “the legislator cut him,” or one may say “the first commander who has no [other] commander before him cut him.”

Let us now move on to apply this example to our topic. We say that mixture is brought about by things that are contrary to one another, such as hot and cold, or moist

\(^{135}\) Here the opponent talks about mixture (mīzāj), but in the next phrase, he mentions light (nuṣr); this may be an inconsistency in the original argument or have resulted from scribal error.

\(^{136}\) “What is beyond nature (mā ūd al-tābi‘ a)” is the Arabic expression used to refer to “metaphysics.”

\(^{137}\) Retaining Arkoun’s reading wa-qad araftu.

\(^{138}\) The following passage is also translated at M. Arkoun, *L’humanisme arabe*, 200–201.

\(^{139}\) *zubd*, in the sense of “its best part”.

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and dry. Given their mutual antagonism, these things will only mix when something that mixes [them] is present; this is the agent (fāʾil). If this thing that mixes has a further reason and a prior cause, it too is enumerated in the investigation until one reaches the first cause, that has no prior cause. The following example can be adduced. Mixture is only realised when there is something that is mixed, and something that mixes. Mixture is a form, what is mixed is matter, and what mixes is an agent. These three are causes. If the proximate cause, that is, the proximate agent, has another agent above it, then we inquire into it. For it is evident that the proximate agent for the mixture is the motion of the celestial sphere, or rather the motions of numerous celestial spheres. Yet this proximate agent has an agent essentially prior to it, namely the mover of the sphere. So we next inquire into this mover, as to whether it too is moved somehow, and we establish that before it is another mover. Finally, our investigation and inquiry takes us to a mover who is unmoved, a composer who is uncomposed. He is truly one, not multiple in any way. He is truly first, second to none, and needs nothing else to sustain him or make him exist, or that is prior to him in any way. At this point we stop; the investigation is terminated, and the soul finds rest after its restless search, with the advent of certainty.

How can things that follow on from mixture and that are generated from and through it be a primary cause, or anything primary [at all]? For we know that they follow on and are posterior, and that they exist in and through body (fi jismin wa-bi-jirmin). I am talking about the form and the heat which subsist only through body; and body is prior to them in order of existence. For when one thing exists only because something else exists, then this other thing is prior to it in order. Would that I knew how something that is mixture, or follows on from mixture, could be primary, given that what mixes essentially comes before both of them! Especially since there is, beyond what mixes, yet another agent that is prior to it. How then could it be absolutely prior, when in fact it is absolutely posterior? Can we have any doubt, when we seek what is primary, that the investigation must continue until we reach a first cause and a principle\(^\text{140}\) that is truly the principle of principles, if it is impossible for this to carry on to infinity? When we stop at what is absolutely primary then the inquiry ends, and the investigation is completed.

\textbf{Section Nine}

The opponent said: “If the essence (dBāṭ) is in one respect at rest, staying in its place, but in another respect moves essentially (alā dBaṭi-bḥ), [just as] light moves essentially, whereas the celestial spheres move whilst resting (baraḵat al-suḵūn)\(^\text{141}\); and if motion produces heat, whereas rest produces cold; and if heat and cold are the primary contrary [pair] in the world, and all generation is brought about by these two; and if nothing exists

\(^{140}\) Miskawayh plays here with the word “principle (mabda),” which literally means “place where something begins” — thus the investigation ends at the beginning.

\(^{141}\) This presumably means that although the spheres are rotating, they are not moving with respect to their overall position.
except where they both exist, but when they are absent, generation ceases to exist immediately; and if all of this is witnessed and grasped through the two means of perception\textsuperscript{142} — then why would we not be excused to stop at these things\textsuperscript{143}? What is it that would push [us] to go beyond these things to something for which no witness exists, as in the case of these things.

'Abū 'Alī, may God have mercy be upon him, said: The opponent argued that “the essence is in one respect at rest, staying in its place, but in another respect moves essentially, [just as] light moves essentially.” This is a statement that I will not summarise nor deign to answer, because I do not understand it. What I do understand and know is that light is something that exists in the body by way of accident or difference\textsuperscript{144}. Motion and rest can be applied to it only because the body moves. So one may say metaphorically that it moves because of an existence in it\textsuperscript{145}, just as other accidents like heat, colour, taste, and so on are said [to move]. For if the body which is the bearer of these things moves, one supposes that these [accidents] move, because it [sc. the body] moves. If he were to say that the celestial sphere moves around its centre, and that its motion produces heat in the air, so that what is adjacent to it burns and becomes fire, even if the light in fire is deficient\textsuperscript{146}, and that motion is \textit{mabda‘} for both fire and light, then his statement would have a certain insight. But as it is, it does not deserve to be discussed.

He argues that “generation is brought about only through heat and cold, which [in their turn] result from movement and rest [respectively]”. There is no harm in admitting this. But what use is it to him [sc. the opponent] that I admit this? For I say that generation applies to natural bodies which are the principle of motion and rest, with heat and cold following upon motion and rest. [I say further] that there is a reason for motion, I mean that the celestial sphere that moves it in this way has a mover. Then, the investigation must go from [this] mover to the principle that moves without itself being moved at all, that changes [other things] without being changed [itself]. It is without doubt essentially one, with no multiplicity in it, such as to need a principle; its existence has no cause, so that it would need what is before it. It is not composed, and therefore has no simple elements (\textit{basa‘i}) that would be prior to it. Nor does it have a genus, such that a sustaining form would apply to it. Nor does it have the species of a genus, such that it would have a dividing difference. Nor is it sensible, such that it would have part and whole. Nor has it a predicate, such that it would need a bearer. For these things would

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{min tariqayi l-iddrāki}, referring to perception through the senses and the intellect.

\textsuperscript{143} literally “why would we not have an excuse among those who stop at these (\textit{li-ma la yakīnu la-nā ‘inda man waqafa ‘inda bādhi-bī ‘adbrun})”; the phrase is somewhat cumbersome, but the meaning is clear.

\textsuperscript{144} Reading \textit{‘alā sabili l-‘aradī a‘wi l-fasīl} with Badawī and Harika.

\textsuperscript{145} i.e., light as an accident exist in a body and when this body moves, the light can be said to move “metaphorically (\textit{bi-l-majāzī})”.

\textsuperscript{146} Reading \textit{nāqisān}; the point appears to be that the light of fire compared to that produced by the celestial spheres is deficient or lacking in brightness.
preclude one from acknowledging that it is first. Demonstration and correct inquiry compel us, however, to acknowledge that it is absolutely first, and that undoubtedly causes and principles reach an end. For the infinite cannot be rightly said to exist in actuality, as the philosopher has shown.\(^\text{147}\)

If demonstration compels us to believe in something truly and absolutely first, we cannot endorse any teaching that would commit us to saying that it has something prior to, or better than, it.\(^\text{148}\) For the first cannot be subject to any descriptions that would make it depart from its being first, [as is shown] by the demonstrations that we have produced and that we consider sufficiently encompassing. Also, the opponent’s level is too high to bother with extending the discussion on this or related points.

**Section Ten**

Next the opponent said: “Why should the divine powers, soothsaying, and the other things that some people’s [mental] states are able to reach, such as understanding what is absent, knowing and predicting things that are created — why should all this not come from these two effects, which are soul and intellect,\(^\text{149}\) as we ourselves witness? What is there to prevent us from stopping with this? If something has no particular essence, then there is no way to arrive at a universal for it, nor [is there any way to arrive] at something for which no universal is known by demonstration. When we stop at this, we have an excuse for this with respect to both means [of perception, sc. sensation and intellect]. But when we pass beyond that and imagine spiritual things beyond these two effects — namely, light and heat — then there is no demonstration for them, nor any universal in them, and we perceive no particular for them. Therefore, what Rufus said is likely.\(^\text{150}\)"

‘Abū ‘Alī, may God have mercy upon him, said: Everything in this section is repetition, except for two remarks: the mention of “divine power,” and the phrase “something that does not have a universal cannot be demonstrated.” We shall speak to both topics, God willing. Then, as promised, we shall continue our discussing by establishing that a substance exists that is incorporeal and does not depend on body, as do light and heat\(^\text{151}\) (these two being the topic of the questioner’s discussion). We shall discuss, God willing, that which requires us to believe it; this has nothing to do with those who suffer from melancholy, but is rather sound thought and healthy intellect, which guide man of sufficient “bile”\(^\text{152}\) to it, God willing.

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\(^\text{147}\) Cf. *Physics* iii.7.

\(^\text{148}\) Reading *akhyara*; neither Badawī’s *ākhiran* nor Arkoun’s *akhran* make much sense.

\(^\text{149}\) Harika suggests that the identification of the two effects as soul and intellect are a scribe’s intervention, since the opponent probably should refer rather to heat and light.

\(^\text{150}\) Reading *fa-l-ghalibu ’ala l-zanni* with Harika.

\(^\text{151}\) Reading *wa-l-harr* with Harika for *wa-l-juz*’ı given by both Arkoun and Badawī.

\(^\text{152}\) The expression *dhu mirratin sawiyatin* is a pun; *dhu mirratin* is employed in sura 53 (*al-Najm*, “the star”), where this epithet is used of God (in verse 6), and generally explained as “*dhu qiwatin* (having strength)”. But *mirra* means “bile”, so that one may relate it to melancholies as well.
Before one talks about the phrase “divine powers,” one must first discuss what one ought to believe about God’s action — great be His name — in order that we may understand the deeds ascribed to Him on that basis.

We say then that God’s action — holy be His name — occurs in neither time nor place. For time, absolutely speaking, is counted through the motions of the higher, simple celestial sphere, namely the ninth sphere, which makes a revolution each full day and night, so that one revolution takes twenty-four hours. Time in a restricted sense (al-zamān al-muqayyad) is counted through the motions of the other spheres, which relate to one another. For example the sphere of the sun moves so as to complete its revolution in three hundred sixty five days, plus a little bit; this is called “a year (sana)”. Or for example, the moon moves so as to complete a single revolution in close to thirty days; this is called “a month (shabr)”. Time has this status among us and in our world, for it is counted through motions that relate to certain motions of the sphere, as one might speak of the time of Alexander, or the time of this man or that.

[87] If we know what time is, and know that it depends on the motion of a natural body, that it [time] exists because it [the body] exists, and it [time] ceases when it [the body] disappears, then we shall know that the action of the first, which is prior to body and its motion, does not depend on time (which is posterior [to God]) nor on the existence of other things that are posterior [to Him] in existence. We also know that the action of something which is truly one — that has neither composition nor multiplicity in it — cannot result from something else, nor is it due to a cause or reason, as has already been proven. But if my understanding of this is relatively obscure, then this is due to the fact that the topic itself is like that [sc. obscure]: one ought to comprehend it through persistent exploration.

The same goes for place, I mean that it is proper to body (jism) located in place, that is, natural body (jirm). Since it is clear to us that God — the exalted — possesses no body, it is clear too that He possesses neither place nor time, but is rather the Creator of the causes and everything to which time and place, and other things besides apply. If this is the case, then the agent of time must be without time, and likewise the agent of place. Otherwise it would be necessary that the action of time would be time again in a time, and this goes on to infinity. Likewise for place.

Now that we have established this, we continue our discussion. What do we mean when we say “divine powers”? If we do apply this expression [sc. “divine”] to the word “power,” we must mean that it [sc. the divine power] is neither a body nor a bodily condition; nor do its actions occur in place nor time. This is the case with intellect, soul, the powers connected to these two, and the actions ascribed to them. The same goes for those powers which are above nature, though it was not our intention to discuss them.

He argued that “what has no universal cannot be demonstrated,” and we have addressed this issue above. But I suppose that the opponent means in this passage that what cannot be demonstrated should not be reckoned or counted amongst the sciences. Therefore we want to demonstrate that it is not as he thinks. I am going to argue that there are many things that we know, although they have not been demonstrated. They
fall into two types. The first comprises things that are convincing [by themselves]: proofs (adilla) establish them with which we are content to let the soul be at rest and to have confidence, even if we do not call them “demonstration (burhān)”; examples include dialectical, controversial \(^{153}\), and rhetorical arguments. Such things possess different degrees of persuasiveness that are satisfactory for us, even if they do not reach the status of demonstration. An example would be eyesight. We see visible things not only in sunlight, but also in the light present in shady places, and also in conditions which have even less \(^{88}\) light. Now, we should not refrain from using our eyesight [in these last conditions], saying that we do not believe what we see here, just because there is less light than in [direct] sunlight; nor should we say that we cannot see any visible object unless the sun shines on them. For when we do this [i.e., refrain from using sight in low light conditions], then many things that can be seen and that are useful for us would pass us by. Just as there are many degrees of visibility to the eye — some of them better than others — so it is with objects of the intellect. Although some of these are below others, this does not prevent them\(^ {154}\) from being persuasive and having the status of knowledge, even though we do not call them “demonstration (burhān)”. For demonstrable things that we judge to have been demonstrated are few in comparison to the other things we learn and strive for.

The second type ranks above demonstration, and comprises things like primary axioms and demonstration itself. We have said that demonstration is not known by demonstration, since otherwise there would be infinitely many demonstrations. This is the case when someone reaches knowledge of God, great be His name. For most people think they have come to know Him, but there is not a scrap of truth to this belief. As God, the exalted, has said: “most of them believe in God, whilst [still] being idolaters”\(^ {155}\).

For one of them imagined something, I mean that he acquired in his soul a form abstracted from matter, that is, from sensible things. Then he supposed that this was God — Who is greater and mightier than all imagination and much higher than what the iniquitous may say! They were thus beset by perplexity and doubts. But God — the exalted — cannot be imagined, nor is He subject to any imagination or anything else; nor is He universal or particular (as we have discussed and shall discuss again), nor do we know Him through anything\(^ {156}\) from among these objects of knowledge. For this reason, when we describe Him, we do so only by negating these concepts, all of which result from the imagination. For all these descriptions are things created by Him. One knows Him only as one knows primary objects of knowledge, for which demonstration is unnecessary, because they are more evident and higher than demonstration, and whatever is known by demonstration. He is hidden from us precisely because He is

\(^{152}\) Reading kbūlfīya with Arkoun and Harika.  
\(^{153}\) Retaining the reading of the manuscript yamnā’u-bā; Badawī’s correction yamnā’u-nā is unnecessary.  
\(^{154}\) Qurān, 12:106.  
\(^{155}\) Reading bi-sbay’in with Harika.
excessively evident, and because our intellects, in contemplating Him, undergo what happens to the eyes of bats when they look directly at the sun. For they are blind and do not see it [sc. the sun]. This happens not because what is seen is deficient or hidden, but because the eye of the [bats] that see is deficient: they [the bats] are incapable of it, as [89] Aristotle said. He used this image when he was about to discuss divine things. In the intellects of people trained in these sciences and in others, something of [God] does appear, so that it is established for them just as are primary axioms. Then man is filled with happiness, his soul resting from its agitated motion, from search and wandering, by means of reflection (rawīya) and thought. People who get this far are very few; they are clearly characterised by gentleness in the face of raucous heedlessness of those eager to dispute, and by the submission (musālama) of one part of the soul to another.

Let us return to the issue of how we can rightly say that someone knows God, the exalted. Since the knowledge of Him belongs to the class of primary axioms, which need no demonstration, but it is rather through them that every demonstration is known, therefore what one of the masters (a'imma) said about this knowledge is correct. When he was asked, “Through what have you come to know God?”, he replied, “God is not known through anything; only through Him all things are known.” This statement is both profoundly deep and of lofty height, as those who understand profundity and the great amount of its strength will realise.

The time has come to begin keeping my promise to extend the discussion and address this question; I hope to do so in a clear way. I wanted to show that in existence and in what is evident there is something incorporeal that is not part of any body; that is, it neither possesses size nor occupies space, as the theologians (mutakallimu) put it. Nor is it an accident or a predicate of a body, nor is it a bodily faculty. In other words, in order to exist and subsist, it does not need the existence of any body at all. This thing which we have just described in this way is called a simple substance, imperceptible to any of the five senses. It is also divided into degrees. Let us first discuss it in general terms, so that the existence of such a thing may be deemed correct by us; then we will seek out its degrees and distinctions. Our discussion shall proceed from clear, evident premises, but we will then ascend in our explanation step-by-step, until we reach the ultimate point in this question, without undue length or brevity, with the help of God, Who has might and perfect power.

157 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, book 2 (*Alpha Elatton*), 993b, lines 9–12 (tr. Ross): “For as the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all.” On the reception of this image in Arabic philosophical literature see P. Adamson, “Yahyā Ibn Adī and Averroes on *Metaphysics Alpha Elatton*,” *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 21 (2010), 343–74.

158 Reading qalılu jiddan with Harika; Arkoun and Badawi have qabīlu jiddan.

159 Arkoun suggests ‘Ali b. Abī Tālib as the source.

160 Starting here and for the next three paragraphs, we have a close parallel in Miskawayh’s *Tabdhib al-akblaq*, ed. Zurayk, 3–5.
I say that when any body that has a form takes on another form of the same type, it cannot receive that form until it has got rid of the first form completely. For example, when a body has the form of a circular figure, it cannot receive a square form until the circular form is gone from it. The same is the case for every figure, whether triangle, hexagon, or any of the other infinitely many figures: [the body] receives them only one after another, the second replacing the first when its shape is completely gone. This is for instance the case with wax, when it takes on the form of a certain pattern, and then this is replaced by a different pattern. For it can only receive the form of the second pattern after the form of the first one is completely gone and eliminated. If some traces of the first form remain on it, it will not receive the second form completely, but rather the two forms will be amalgamated in it together, so that neither is complete and faultless. Another example is silver: when it receives the form of a dirham, it can only receive the form of a ring after the first form has been removed. Then it can adopt the second form. This holds true for every body that receives a form, be it colour, nature, or some other form. For it receives something of that same type only after the first one is effaced from it, and lacks any trace of it, unless, of course, they are amalgamated. In this case, neither one will be in it completely and perfectly, but rather they will be mixed, as we have illustrated with the example of two forms that are amalgamated and mixed together. Then neither the first nor the second form will be in it perfectly, and the body will not render either one of them completely.

The soul receives all the various forms by means of two faculties. I mean that sensible [forms] are taken into [the soul's] imaginative faculty, and intelligible [forms] into its intellectual faculty, completely and not successively. In other words, the first form remains complete and perfect in it, whilst the second form too comes about completely and perfectly. In this way, the reception of all the forms goes on without their being lost, in an unlimited way (bi-lā nibāyatin). By “in an unlimited way,” I mean that [the soul] does not reach a point where it is too weak to receive forms that constantly come upon it anew. Rather, the more that intelligible forms occur to it, the more it is able to receive other forms of the same type, when they come upon it.

The same is the case for the imaginative faculty. I mean that, whenever other forms of the same type come upon it [the imaginative faculty], it receives them and becomes more able to do so, when they come upon it. Similarly, understanding (fahm) increases, and the mind (dhibn) sharpens the more the sciences become established and the more forms of knowable things accumulate in man, be it from the intellectual [faculty] or the imaginative [faculty]; for both [this applies].

Therefore the soul is not a body. Nor is it an accident, for the opponent knows that accidents are not themselves bearers for accidents — how could there be an infinite regress of accidents? For the accident is in itself predicated, that is, it exists in a bearer and

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161 Following Arkoun’s suggestion to fill a lacuna in the text.
162 Perhaps this should be corrected in light of the parallel text in the Tabdhīb (4.19), which has instead fa-lā takhlusū . . . , giving us: “so neither of them would be completely pure in it.”
only subsists through something else, having no existence in its own right (bi-dhāṭī-bī).
The concept that we have explained [sc. the soul] is something that receives and is a
bearer [for accidents]; it does so more completely and perfectly than the way the body
bears accidents. Therefore the soul is neither accident nor bodily form. In other words,
sits existence does not depend on that of the body. Moreover, the form through which the
body becomes a body — that is, length, breadth, and depth — occurs in the soul [only]
by means of the imaginative faculty. But it [the imagination] does not actually become
long, broad, or deep. These concepts increase indefinitely in [the imagination], but it
does not get any longer, broader or deeper than it was before. In other words, if the soul
receives the imaginary form of a volume that is one cubit by one cubit by one cubit, it
does not thereby turn into a cube-shaped body. Nor, if this volume in it is [imagined to]
multiply in size to infinity, does [the soul] multiply in size because of it. Nor, if it should
receive an infinite range of colours along with the dimensions in this imaginative faculty,
does it [actually] take on these colours. Again, the fact that some [colours] are received
does not prevent others from being received perfectly and completely, without any
amalgamating or mixing. Indeed the fact that they [the colours] have been received
increases the possibility to receive other [colours], whether they belong to the type of the
first forms or whether they belong to a different type. I mean that it [the imaginative
faculty] is not more able to receive certain forms, and others less.

The same is the case for intelligibles. For with every intelligible received the power
to receive others increases, always and without limit. This situation forms a vivid contrast
to that of bodies, so we must judge the former quite differently from the latter.

In book two of On the Soul,163 the Philosopher concludes that the intellect is unlike
sensation, because the intellect is separate from body whereas sensation requires
body. I am going to quote his exact words in what follows. Aristotle said: insensibil-
ity164 in someone who imagines through sensation and in someone who imagines
through the intellect is not similar. This is clear165, since sensation cannot function
when it is overwhelmed by an overpowering object of sensation. For example hearing
[is impaired], when it is hit by a very loud noise, or smell, when [it is hit] by a very
intense scent. Whereas when intellect imagines a powerful166 intelligible, it does not
imagine lesser [intelligibles] in a more deficient way, but rather more strongly. For
sensation165 cannot be without, or separate from, body, whereas this [sc. intellect] is
separate.

[In this way,] Aristotle declares167 his correct opinion that intellect is separate from
body, whereas sensation is not. He shows the difference between the two by way of an

163 The correct reference is actually On the Soul iii.4, 429a25–b5.
164 Reading ‘inma’adama l-infi‘āli; compare the Greek apátheia; the printed text makes little sense.
165 Perhaps we have to assume a lacuna here, as the Greek original has “This is clear from the senses
and sensation.”
166 Retaining Arkoun’s reading shay’ān qawīyān; compare the Greek “something . . . very intelligible
(ti . . . sphōdra noētōn).”
167 Reading sarraḥa with Badawi.
extremely clear and obvious proof: sensation is exhausted by what it perceives when the latter is too strong, and it becomes partially unable to perceive an object of sensation when it is less [powerful] than it [the overpowering object of sensation]. He gives the examples of hearing and smell, but the point applies\textsuperscript{166} to all the senses, because they are faculties that depend on the body, are attached to it, and cannot separate [from it]. For the intellect, the opposite is the case.\textsuperscript{169} For when it perceives a powerful intelligible, it becomes more able to grasp lesser [intelligibles]. For the faculty of the intellect is incorporeal and independent from body; indeed it is separate from it, and remains the same without being affected by effects that lead to corruption and change, which [in their turn] result in annihilation and the destruction of the form. This happens for instance in the case of accidents and bodily forms: they change and undergo transition from certain states to their contraries.

Something else proves that sensation is distinct from intellect: all animals have the senses, whereas not all of them have intellect. If sensation and intellect were one and the same, then everything that has sensation would have \textsuperscript{[93]} intellect; but this is not the case.

In the second book of this work [sc. \textit{On the Soul}], [Aristotle] says this:

\begin{quote}
The intellect seems to be another kind (\textit{jins}) of soul. It alone can be separate, such as the eternal is separated from the corruptible.\textsuperscript{170} But the other faculties of the soul are obviously not separate, as some people say.\textsuperscript{171}
\end{quote}

This is another quotation explaining that the intellect is not of the same class (\textit{jins}) as sensation, nor of the same class as light or heat. For the latter two things exist only so long as the body that bears them exists. For they are two of its forms: they corrupt when it [the body] corrupts.

The Philosopher declared that the intellect is everlasting (\textit{abadi}) and separate from body. Among all that exists in man, it alone can last, because it is eternal (\textit{azali}). Its existence does not depend on that of [the body], nor does it corrupt when [the body] does. Rather it is a self-subsisting substance (\textit{jawhar qa'im bi-dhāti-hī}). If there is a well-balanced mixture [in the body], then [the intellect] will be healthy, because [the intellect] uses [the body] like an instrument, so that [the intellect's] effect (\textit{athar}) on [the body] becomes apparent. This mixture can achieve human perfection through it [the intellect], so long as this mixture remains well-balanced. If, however, it departs from balance, then it does not receive the effect of the intellect, and the mixture is destroyed; this means death. By contrast, the substance of the intellect remains as it is, needing neither mixture nor body (\textit{badan}). For to exist, it requires neither place, nor time, nor

\textsuperscript{166} Retaining Arkoun's \textit{yastamirru}, literally: “it continues in”.

\textsuperscript{169} We follow Arkoun's text here: \textit{fa-ammā l-aqlu fa-amru-bu bi-l-diddi}.

\textsuperscript{170} Following Arkoun's elegant and plausible emendation \textit{qad yumkinu an yufāriqa <ka-mā yufāriqu yufzyninethreetyzyrique> l-abadiyyu l-fāsida}, compare also the Greek “as the eternal [is separated] from the corruptible.”

anything else that is prerequisite for bodies to exist, nor the accidents necessary to [bodies], nor the states are closely connected to [bodies].

One ought to know that intellectual concepts (ma‘ānin ‘aqiliyya) can only be grasped by the intellect. If such a concept weakens in someone, because he trained and practiced too little, then he is affected by the same thing that happens to vision when it is not employed, because [the eyes] are always closed and one frequents dark places. If somebody had remained in a very dark place from the moment of his birth until the end of his youth, but then were suddenly brought into the light, he would not see anything visible, but would be blind. Take the example of a blind man. When he wants to perceive whiteness or distinguish between green and red through the sense of hearing, smell, taste or touch, then these are of no help to him at all. Nor does he benefit from how a sighted person describes colours. Even his best effort and most determined endeavour would only result in his thinking that colours belong to some other class of sensible objects, like void; and he would believe too that other [visible things] are perceived by other senses. For instance, an old philosopher told us that he asked a blind man what he imagined whiteness to be. He replied: “emptiness”. There is a similar situation with someone who has lost the faculty of the intellect with regard to objects of intellection. For he cannot imagine them, nor are his imaginations containing the traces of objects of sensation of any help to him. Nor does he benefit from how intelligent people (‘uqalā) describe to him the intellect and the objects of intellection. Even his best effort and most determined endeavour would only result in his thinking that objects of intellection belong to the class of imagined objects, so that he would attribute them all to objects of sensation and perception in this way.

The only remedy for [this ignorance] is that indicated by the philosophers (ahl al-hikma); they advocated it and employed it for us and [others] who long to attain their rank, without harm or regret, but rather with the utmost mildness and gentleness. [This remedy] is for man to wean himself off these senses slowly and gradually by turning away from them towards the four [mathematical] sciences. Then he should move from these to things that are more hidden and slightly more remote from imagination, namely nature and things having to do with nature; then from these to things still a bit more hidden, namely metaphysical things [lit. “things after nature”]172; then from these to divine things; and then from these to the first God, the Creator (mubdi’) of all things, both intelligible and sensible. One can only reach this rank in this way, by discovering (wuwjūd) the cause.

An exception is [the divine knowledge] given to prophets, may God’s blessings be upon them. For through a mixture which is unique to them, and through divine providence that cares for the well-being of this world, this faculty is created in them directly, not gradually or through practice; it requires neither effort nor endeavour nor aspiration. They behold intellectual things in a higher and nobler way than we do with our exhausted intellects. Thus [the prophets] are forced to fashion metaphors (amthāl)

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172 See note 136 above.
for them [sc. our intellects] based on what we know and can imagine. They use different kinds of indications according to the conditions [prevalent] among their peoples, and suitable for their customs and stations, in order to turn them away — each according to his ability — from their [wicked] ways towards the path that leads to eternal life, everlasting spirit, and divine happiness. And although they cannot picture [this happiness], it still turns their imaginations in some way and bends them in some fashion, so that they become happier than they were, even if they occupy varying degrees in their [ability] to receive and imagine, depending on how prepared they are to receive this faculty. Yet God grants succour and aid to all, and guides us and them onto the straight path, the path of God, to Whom belongs all that is in heaven and upon the earth!

Let us now return to finish the discussion from which we have digressed by talking about miscellaneous points that diverted from it.173 We say: since the intellect is incorporeal, it cannot have form that is specific to it. Rather it is the faculty that perceives all forms, and receives all of them equally. For if it did have a form [of its own], then that form would block it completely from certain things, such that it would not grasp them perfectly.174 For example, because air as such has no colour of its own, it receives all colours equally. If it did have a colour, this colour would hinder it from receiving another colour perfectly.

Perhaps someone may raise a doubt, saying: “the matter that you have ascribed to bodies is something that receives all forms. How then does it differ from the characterisation (ma‘na) you have ascribed to intellect?”

We [retort to this] by saying: even though matter receives all forms, it does so differently from the intellect. For matter receives forms by being essentially altered: it takes on the impression of the thing that it receives in a way that makes it depart from its original state. In other words, it can only receive another form after this one, after it has shed the first one. If it does not shed the first [form], it cannot receive another one.

By contrast, when intellect receives forms it is not essentially altered, since it receives opposite forms at one and the same time. For it may intellectually grasp the form of half and double175, or of affirmation and negation, at the same time, without losing its essence. To put it differently, its receiving certain forms does not prevent it from receiving others.

Someone raised this doubt with Alexander [of Aphrodisias], and this is how he solved it. I am eager to credit him with [the solution], and to say that he was right.176

173 Retaining Arkoun’s reading a‘radat-bu.
174 The argument is from Aristotle On the Soul iii.4, 429a18–27.
175 Retaining Arkoun’s reading surata l-difi wa-l-nisfi.
176 Cf. Alexander’s On Intellect, in R.W. Sharples (trans.), Alexander of Aphrodisias: Supplement to On the Soul (London: Duckworth, 2004), 24. There Alexander explains that the phrase “material intellect” should not be taken to mean that the intellect functions as matter does, but merely that it has the potential to be all things. Following Accattino, Sharples notes (p. 24, n. 48) that this may allude to an objection from Xenarchus, according to which Aristotle had identified intellect and prime matter (see
What we have said shows that the soul is not life itself (bi'-ayni-hâ), but is rather a living substance (jawbar hayy); it [the soul] bestows upon the body a state similar to its own. For were it the life of the body, it would be a bodily form, subsisting and existing only through the body. Yet, it has been shown that this is not the case.

[96] This can be further explained and clearly proven by the following [argument]. If the soul were a state of the body that depends on it and [only] exists so long as it [sc. the body] exists, then it would be prevented from many things that do not complete and develop the body. For if something is only completed, because something else is [also] completed, it is not opposed to or in conflict with the things that perfect this thing that underlies it. For the former exists because the latter exists, and the former corrupts when the latter corrupts. Thus it tends to perfect its subject in order to perfect itself, and wants it to flourish, because the former flourishes in the latter. We find that when the soul pursues the virtues, it disdains, rejects, and dismisses bodily pleasures, for it sees that when the body is strong it is weak, and that when the body increases [its power], it diminishes.

Another proof that the soul’s substance is different from and opposed to the body’s substance, and that it has its own activity, which is distinct from the activity of body, is the following. When man concentrates on conceiving something intellectual, he seeks isolation and makes an extreme effort to stop using his senses. The more he is able to seclude himself and stop using his senses, the more he is able to conceive that intelligible object. It is as if man withdraws into himself in such a situation and seeks something that cannot be completed from without. For external things strongly thwart him in his endeavour. Whenever he stops bodily activities, the activity of his soul becomes stronger; that is, he conceives of the intelligible object in a better and more correct way. For when the soul returns to itself, forsaking the body and the things sensed by it [sc. the body], it [the soul] grasps the intelligible objects that are specific to it, and sees them with an appropriate eye that is not bodily. It can only reach the true sciences in this way, that is, by abandoning the body and forsaking its use, and turning away from being preoccupied by the senses. Socrates is cited as an example of this. For in a passage recording his words he said:

When the philosopher’s soul is strong, he rejects the things of the body as much as he can. Therefore, most people believe that he should not live, because he takes no pleasure in bodily states and does not incline towards this world; and they think that he is close to death. He forsakes the body and the senses simply because he


177 Accepting Badawi’s addition of the negation là, which is confirmed by the manuscript.

178 Reading yuhbibbu with Arkoun.

179 Reading ya‘isha with Harika instead of ya‘bisa, retained by Arkoun and Badawi.

180 This is a fairly accurate report of what Socrates says in Plato’s Phaedo, 65a: “A man who finds no
loves the spirituality of the things that are appropriate for him. For those things truly exist, whereas the body and the senses deceive him and prevent him from perceiving the pure truth. Thus the philosopher’s soul flees the association with the body, longing to separate itself as much as possible. For it desires what truly exists; therefore, it seeks to be isolated and by itself.181

These are the words of Socrates; they illustrate his view about the soul, and that it is a substance separate from the body.

Plato is quoted as another example for this. For he advised his students in his apothegmatic remarks182: “die through nature, but live through [your own] volition.”183 This [saying] has been commented on at great length; [the gist] comes down to what we have discussed, namely that he wants man to kill the desires of his body, as it is necessarily mortal, so that he can give life to his soul that will forever remain in existence.

Similarly, Aristotle said at the end of his Ethics:

The thing in the soul through which it [the soul] discerns and contemplates is something, namely something that knows itself. It [i.e. the rational capacity of soul] is the true man. The life of this [man] is virtuous and happy. He possesses an [ability] to act that is specific to him and that he shares with no one else: he can conceive of himself and masters himself because he intellects himself. This is a clear and distinct difference between him and the senses. For the senses only ever grasp something else, whereas the intellect grasps itself (dbāt). Yet its essence (dbāt) is indeed among the things that exist.184

If we were to comment on this passage, it would demand a lengthy discussion, because it is quite obscure. But this is what we have been avoiding since the start of this epistle. So we ought to restrict ourselves to what we have said, and be satisfied with it.

Praise be to God, Master of the Universe! May His blessings be on our Lord Muḥammad, the Prophet, and his family; peace be upon them.