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A Translation of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī’s Commentary upon Ibn Sīnā’s al-Ishārāt wa’l- Tanbīhāt, al-Namaṭ al-Tāsi‘ fi Maqāmāt al-‘Ārifīn:

Namaṭ Nine on the Stations of the Mystics

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(Ṭūsī): In the previous Namaṭ, since he [Ibn Sīnā] explained that the happiness (*ibtihāj*) belonging to all creatures is through the perfections specialized to them in accordance with their ranks, in this Namaṭ he intends to explain the states of the people of perfection among the human species, clarify the nature of their progress in the stages of felicity, and mention the conditions that they experience during each of their stages.

The Learned Commentator ² has stated that this section is the most important in this book because the author [Ibn Sīnā] has arranged the sciences of Sufism in it in such away that no one before him has reached it and no one after him will surpass it.

Chapter 1: Remark [on the Stations of the Mystics]

(Ibn Sīnā): *In this temporal life, the mystics have certain stations and stages which are specialized to them and not to others. It is as if, while being clothed in the veils of their bodies, they have shed their bodies, become free from them, and attained the world of holiness ('ālam al-quds).*

They possess certain concealed states, while other states are manifested by them which are denied by those who do not believe in them and are praised by those who recognize them. We will relate these things to you.

(Ṭūsī): I say: Veil (*jilbāb*) means “cover” (*milḥafa*), and it is what covers, like a garment and so forth. And the word *naḍā* means “he took it off” (*khala‘a-hu*). By his words “It is as if, while being clothed in the veils of their bodies, they have shed them, become free from them, and attained the world of holiness,” he means that although their perfect souls are outwardly covered by the veils of their bodies, in fact it is as though they are divested of them, free from all material impurities, and have arrived at the world of holiness, where they are united with those perfect essences that are free from deficiency and evil. They are the possessors of hidden states, which are their states of witnessing that which imaginations cannot apprehend and tongues are incapable of explaining, and their enjoyments of that which no eye has seen and no ear has heard. This is the meaning of the words (exalted be the speaker): “No soul knows what delights of the eye are kept hidden for them.”³ The states manifested by them are signs of perfection and excellence that appear in their words and their actions. They include signs that are singled out to them, such as miracles (*mu‘jizāt*) and wonders (*karāmāt*), which are states “denied by those who do not believe in them.” In other words, the hearts of those who neither recognize them nor are favored by them put no trust in them. And “praised by those who recognize them” means that those who are apprised thereof and favored therewith exalt them.

Salāmān and Absāl

(Ibn Sīnā): *Should the tale of Salāmān and Absāl reach your ears among the stories you have heard, and be narrated in detail to you, know that Salāmān is a similitude for yourself, and Absāl is a similitude for your stage in mysticism, if you are a mystic. Solve, then, the riddle (ramz) if you are able.*

(Ṭūsī): I say: ...**The Learned Commentator [Rāzī]** has said about this passage:

If what the Master has mentioned does not belong to the genus of the puzzles to which he refers whose sum is not distinguishable by something incomprehensible, so that guidance is possible by them for it, and they are

not wellknown stories, but rather these are two terms which the Master has invented to refer to certain things and their like that are impossible for reason to understand independently, then, in this case, the Master's charging the reader to solve this riddle is like charging one to discover something concealed....

The best that may be said about this story is that Salāmān stands for Adam (peace be upon him), and that Absāl stands for Paradise. Therefore, it is as though he is saying that Adam signifies your rational soul and that Paradise refers to the stages of your happiness. By Adam's expulsion from Paradise after consuming the fruit is meant the descent of your soul from those stages after indulging in your desires.

I say: The discourse of the Master points to the existence of a story in which these two names are mentioned, whose theme includes a particular seeker of a goal that can only be attained gradually in stages, and through these stages he can achieve one perfection after another. Thus we can say that Salāmān represents the seeker, that Absāl stands for the seeker's goal, and that the states that occur in between these two refer to the riddle the Master has charged us to solve.

It is likely that this story is one of the stories of the Arabs, because the two terms are sometimes used in their proverbs and their tales. I have heard one of the scholars in Khurāsān⁴ say that Ibn al-A'rābi⁵ in his book al-Nawādir has quoted a story in which it is said that two men became captives of a certain tribe. One of the two, known for his goodness, was called Salāmān; and the other, known for his iniquity, belonged to the tribe of Jurhum. Salāmān, because of his reputation for goodness, was ransomed and released from captivity. The man from the tribe of Jurhum, however, because of his reputation for evil, was held captive (*ubsila*) until he died. Because of these two a proverb started among the Arabs which says: "Deliverance is Salāmān, and imprisonment (*ibsāl*) is his companion." I do not remember this proverb, and I have not had an opportunity to read the story in the above-mentioned book, which is recounted the way I heard it. This story [as related by the scholar] does not conform to the Master's intent here, although it does prove the occurrence of these two terms in the Nawādir and the accounts of the Arabs. If this is so, then the Master has not invented the two names "Salāmān" and "Absāl" for certain things and charged others to discover what he has invented. Rather, he has said that if you hear this story, understand by the two terms "Salāmān" and "Absāl" mentioned therein your soul and your stage of progress in mysticism.

Then begin to solve the riddle, which is the theme of the story, and you will find that it corresponds with the states of the mystics. Therefore, the assignment to solve the riddle is not a charge to discover the concealed. It only depends upon listening to the story. In this case, reason may independently comprehend it and be guided to it.

I should also mention that after writing this commentary, I came across two stories connected to Salāmān and Absāl: In one of these stories, which I heard first, it is said that long ago there lived a king who ruled Greece, Rome and Egypt. One of his friends was a philosopher (*hakīm*).

By following the instructions of the philosopher, the king had conquered all the countries. The king wished to have a son who would succeed him without having intimate relations with a woman. The philosopher managed for the king to have a son from his own seed without relying upon the womb of a woman. He named him Salāmān, and a woman who was called Absāl breast-fed him and raised him. After the boy became mature, he fell in love with her and stayed close to her. She invited him to herself and the pleasure of living with her. His father, however, prohibited him from associating with her and ordered him to leave her. The boy, however, did not obey the king, and the two ran away together overseas to the west. The king had some sort of instrument with which he could get information about the continents and the things therein and exercise his control over the inhabitants therein. He found the two with that instrument and he began to sympathize with them. He provided them with what they needed to survive and ignored them for a while. Then he became angry at Salāmān because he continued to live with the woman. The king made each one of them desire the other, but they could not meet with each other despite the fact that they could see each other. They were in grief because this. Salāmān soon realized what was going on, and he returned to his father and apologized, but his father informed him that after his involvement with the indecent woman (*al-fājira*) Absāl, and his intimacy with her, he would not obtain the kingdom he was entitled to obtain. Thereupon, Salāmān and Absāl, holding each other's hands, threw themselves into the ocean. By the order of the king the spirit of the water saved Salāmān after he was near drowning, but Absāl drowned.

Because of this Salāmān became extremely sad. The king appealed to the philosopher about his son's affair. The philosopher called upon Salāmān and told him that if he would listen to him, he would arrange for him to meet Absāl. He obeyed the philosopher, who showed him an image of the woman. This appeased his hope of reunion with her, until after a time he was prepared to see an image of Venus (*al-zuhara*). The philosopher showed it to him after inviting him to see it. He fell in love with it and kept it always with him. Salāmān then began to have an aversion for the image of Absāl. By reason of his separation from her, he was now prepared to have the kingdom, and took charge of the kingdom. The philosopher, with the help of the king, constructed two pyramids, one for the king and one for himself, and this story was placed therein along with their bodies. No one could remove it except Aristotle, who removed it with instructions from Plato and closed the door. The story became public, and Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq translated it from Greek into Arabic.

This story was invented by a layman philosopher in order to attribute the words of the Master to it. It is not conformable to them, however, because it requires the king to represent the agent intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿāl*), the philosopher to represent the emanation (*fayḍ*) that emanates upon him from above, and Salāmān to represent the rational soul (*al-naḥs al-nāṭiqā*). It [the agent intellect] emanates the soul without the association of corporeal things. Absāl would have to represent the animal bodily faculty that helps the soul to achieve perfection and becomes united with it. The love of

Salāmān for Absāl would stand for his inclination towards bodily pleasures. Ascribing indecency to Absāl would symbolize attachment to something other than the specific soul's attachment to its matter after the separation of the soul. Their running away overseas to the west would symbolize their involvement in worldly matters that are far away from the Truth (*ḥaqq*)⁶ Their carelessness (*ihmāl*) for a time would symbolize the passing of time in their case. Their suffering through desire by their deprivation while they are close to each other would stand for the persistence (*baqā*) of the soul's inclination despite the weakening of its powers after aging. The return of Salāmān to his father would symbolize the comprehension of perfection (*kamāl*) and becoming regretful for indulgence in false matters. The action of throwing themselves into the ocean would represent their being entangled in destruction, whether of the body, because of the dissolution of the [animal] faculties and the constitution, or of the soul, because of its partiality toward the body. The deliverance (*khalāṣ*) of Salāmān would stand for its persistence after the death of the body. His acquaintance with the image of Venus would symbolize the soul's delight and pleasure in intellectual perfections. His taking charge of the kingdom would represent his attainment of real perfection. The two everlasting pyramids would stand for corporeal form and matter. Such is the interpretation of the story.

Salāmān conforms here to what the Master has intended, but Absāl does not represent what the Master means, because he intended Absāl to stand for the stages of the mystic in mysticism. But in this interpretation he is impeded from mysticism and perfection. For this reason the story does not suit what Master has said. This indicates the deficiency of the inventor of the story in understanding what the Master intended by it.

As for the second story, I came across it twenty years after completing my commentary. This story is also attributed to the Master, and it seems that the Master has indeed alluded to it because Abā 'Ubayd al-Jurjānī⁷ has listed the story of Salāmān and Absāl in his index of the works of the Master.

The gist of the story is that Salāmān and Absāl were two intimate brothers, and Absāl was the younger one who was brought up by his older brother Salāmān. Absāl grew into a handsome young man, who was intelligent, wellmannered, learned, chaste, and brave. The wife of Salāmān had fallen in love with him (*Absal*), and she asked her husband to let Absal live with his family so that his children could learn from his good manners and knowledge. Salāmān asked his brother to do so, but Absāl refused to associate closely with women. Salāmān said that his wife was like Absāl's mother. Absal went to her home and she was very kind to him, but after some time she expressed her love to him in private. Absal became upset. She realized that he would not obey her. She [the wife of Salāmān] then asked Salāmān to marry her sister to Absāl. She told her sister, "I have arranged this marriage, but not just for you, but so that I can share him with you." On the other hand, she told Absāl that her sister was a virgin (*bikr*) and very shy, so he must not cohabit with her during the day and must not speak to her until she becomes comfortable with him. On the night of the wedding, the wife of Salāmān slept in the bed of her sister. When Absāl

came to her, she could not control herself, and she quickly pressed herself against him. Thereupon Absāl became suspicious and thought that timid virgin girls do not behave like this. The sky was clouded at that time by a dark cloud. Suddenly, a flash of lightning shone in which he saw her face. He pushed her away, left her, and determined to separate himself from her.

He told Salāmān, “I would like to conquer territories for you, and I am able to do that.” He led an army, fought nations, and conquered territories for his brother on sea, on land, in the east and the west, without a power against him.

He was the first Alexander who conquered the earth.

When he came back home he thought she [the wife of Salāmān] might have forgotten about him, but she remembered her love and sought to embrace him. He refused her and pushed her away. Thereafter a war broke out and Salāmān sent Absāl with an army to face the enemy, but she [the wife of Salāmān] gave money to the officers in the army not to support Absāl in the fight. They did as she wanted and the enemy overcame him and left him badly wounded lying in his own blood thinking he was dead. A mother beast sympathized with him and breastfed him, nourishing him until he became strong and his wounds healed.

He returned to Salāmān, whose enemies had surrounded and subdued him while he was grieving for the loss of his brother. Absāl revealed himself unexpectedly, took control of the army and the equipment, attacked the enemy, dispersed them, captured their chief, and secured the country for his brother. Then she [the wife of Salāmān] plotted with his cook and his attendant and gave them some money to kill Absāl, which they accomplished by putting poison in his drink. He was righteous and great in knowledge and practice.

His brother became heartbroken by his death and abandoned his kingdom. He entrusted it to certain of his subjects. He communed with his Lord, who revealed to him the truth of the matter. Then he made his wife, the cook, and the attendant drink what they gave to his brother, and they died. This is what the story is about.

The interpretation of this story is that Salāmān stands for the rational soul and Absāl for the theoretical intellect (*‘aql nazarī*), which develops until it reaches the stage of the acquired intellect (*‘aql mustafād*),⁸ which is his station in mystical knowledge if he is progressing towards perfection.

The wife of Salāmān represents the bodily faculty that incites (*al-ammāra*) appetite and passion, which is united with the soul and therefore appears as a person. Her love for Absāl represents its tendency to control the intellect, as it has controlled the other faculties, so that the intellect will obey it in the acquisition of its passing desires.

Absāl’s refusal stands for the intellect’s attraction to its own domain. Her sister that she controlled represents the practical faculty called the practical intellect (*al-‘aql al-‘amalī*), which is subservient to the theoretical intellect, which is the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-mutma’inna*). Her attiring herself in place of her sister stands for the enticement of the soul that incites to evil, its base pursuits, and its attempts to show itself as the real benefactor. The brilliant lightning in the dark clouds stands for the divine flash that may

happen during occupation with mortal affairs. It is an attraction from among the divine attractions.

His rejection of the woman represents the intellect's turning away from temptation. His [Absāl's] conquest of the territories for his brother represents the soul learning through the theoretical faculty about the realms of the dominion (*jabarūt*) and the kingdom (*malakūt*), its progress toward the divine world, and its power through the practical faculty to properly manage its body and to administer civil and household affairs. This is why he [al-Jurjānī] called Absāl the first Alexander, because this name stands for one who rules both the East and the West. His betrayal by the army symbolizes the severance of the sensory, imaginative, and estimative faculties from the soul upon its ascent to the higher realm and the weakening of those faculties due to his lack of attention to them.

His nourishment from the milk of the beast stands for the bestowal of perfection on him by the incorporeal substances (*al-mufāriqāt*) which are separate from this world.

The deterioration of the condition of Salāmān due to the absence of Absāl represents the perturbation of the soul because of its negligence and its preoccupation with what is beneath it.

Absāl's return to his brother indicates the intellect's attention to its beneficial arrangement with respect to its management of the body. The cook stands for the faculty of passion that is inclined to seek revenge. The attendant represents the appetitive faculty that is attracted to what the body needs. The plot of the two to destroy Absāl points to the fading away of the intellect near the end of life and the soul's use of these two because of increasing need and weakness.

The destruction of the plotters by Salāmān stands for the soul's giving up its use of the bodily faculties at the end of this life and the disappearance of passion and desire and the defeat of their appetites. The abandoning of the kingdom by Salāmān and his leaving it to others stands for the discontinuation of the soul's management of the body and leaving it to the charge of others.

This interpretation agrees with what the Master has mentioned. An evidence in support of this being the intent of the story is that he has mentioned the story of Salāmān and Absāl in his treatise on destiny and fate (*Risāla fī al-Qaḍā' wa'l-Qadar*), and has talked about the lightning from the dark cloud that revealed the face of the wife of Salāmān to Absāl so that he then stayed away from her.

This is what has become clear to us with respect to this story. We have not narrated the story in the Master's own words lest we prolong the book.

Chapter 2: Remark [on the Difference Between the Ascetic, the Worshipper, and the Mystic]

(Ibn Sīnā): One who shuns worldly delights and goods is called an ascetic (al-zāhid). One who is diligent in performing worship by standing for prayer, fasting, and other such acts of worship is called a worshipper (al-‘ābid). One who turns with his thoughts toward the holy realm of the Dominion (quds al-Jabarūt) and continually seeks the shining of the light of Truth in his inmost heart is called a mystic (al-‘ārif). Some of these may be combined with others.

(Ṭūsī): I say: One who seeks something begins by staying away from whatever he believes will keep him away from his goal. Then he turns toward what he believes will take him nearer to his goal, and eventually he reaches his goal. Therefore, the seeker of the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*) must begin by staying away from all else besides the Truth, especially things that would hinder him from seeking, in other words, the goods of the world and its benefits. Then he should devote himself to the practice of those acts that he believes will take him nearer to the Truth. According to the majority of people these are particular acts of worship.

These are asceticism and worship in one respect, and opposing (*tabarrī*) and resisting (*tawallī*) in another respect. Then when he finds the Truth, the first stage of finding Him is to recognize Him (*al-ma‘rifa*). Therefore, these three are the states of seekers of the Truth. For this reason the Master began with their definition.

These states may be found in individuals in isolation, and they may be found in combination. This is due to the difference of accidents and combinations. Twoness amounts to three and threeness amounts to one. The Master has alluded to this by his words: “Some of these may be combined with others.”

Chapter 3: Remark [on the Asceticism and Worship of the Mystic versus Those of the non-Mystic]

(Ibn Sīnā): Asceticism (al-zuhd) to a non-mystic is a kind of contract, as if he buys the delights of the next world by abstaining from the delights of this world. To a mystic it is a kind of detachment from all that would distract him from the Truth, and it is being disinterested in everything other than the Truth. Worship ('ibada) to a non-mystic is a kind of contract, as if he acts in this world to gain a recompense in the next world in the form of rewards. To a mystic it is a kind of exercise for his intentions (himam) and the estimative and imaginative faculties of his soul, to train them by habit from the threshold of deceit toward the threshold of the Truth. In this way, they will become reconciled with the inmost self (sirr) whenever the Truth sheds its light and not in conflict with it. Thus the inmost self arrives at the shining radiance, and this becomes an established aptitude.

Whenever the inmost self desires, it can behold the light of Truth without any interference from the intentions. Rather, they accompany the inmost self in this regard, and it totally enters the path of holiness.

(Ṭūsī): I say: Since the Master has pointed to the existence of a combination of the three states, he intends to instruct about the objective of the mystic and the non-mystic with regard to asceticism and worship in order to distinguish the two minds accordingly. Thus he states that asceticism and worship of a non-mystic are forms of contract, because a non-mystic ascetic is like a merchant who buys goods in exchange for goods, and a non-mystic worshipper is like a person for hire who works for payment. Therefore, the two acts are different although the goal is the same.

In the case of a mystic, he is an ascetic in the state wherein he is attentive to the Truth, turning away from other things and remaining detached from all that may distract him from the Truth, preferring what he has intended.

But in the state wherein he is attentive to things other than the Truth, everything besides the Truth becomes intolerable to him, and he regards them as inferior. Moreover, he is a worshipper when he trains his intentions, which are the principles of his will, and his inclinations to passion and anger, etc., and the imaginative and estimative faculties of his soul, in order to lead all of them from the corporeal world and occupation with it to the real world, accompanying him when he attends to that world. One of the goals of this discipline is to make them used to such association so that the intellect does not conflict with the state of witnessing and the inmost self does not interfere with it. In this way the intellect can attain to that world, and all of the faculties under its command will join with it in attending to that realm.

Chapter 4: Admonition [on the Need for Religious Law and a Prophet]

(Ibn Sīnā): Since man is not able to survive without association with other individuals of his kind, through commutative contract (mu'āwada) and equal exchange that takes place between them, each one agrees to commit himself to an important job on behalf of his neighbor. Were all these things charged to himself, too many responsibilities would pile up upon one individual. It would be very difficult if at all possible. Because of this fact, it is necessary for people to have social interactions and to deal with each other with justice, which is preserved and protected by the divine law (shar') that a law-giver (shāri') has sanctioned. Such a legislator merits obedience due to being singled out by signs which prove they are from his Lord. It is also necessary for the doers of good and the doers of evil to receive recompense (jazā')⁹ from their Lord, the Almighty, the Omniscient. Recognition (ma'rifa) of the Requirer and the Law-giver is therefore necessary, and with recognition a means of preserving it. Therefore, worship, which is remembrance of the One worshipped, is enjoined upon them. This worship must be repeated by them, because remembrance is preserved by repetition. In this way the invitation to justice, which protects the life of the species, is propagated. Those who act accordingly, besides the great advantages they will accrue in this world, will receive abundant rewards in the life to come. For the mystics who practice it there is an additional benefit reserved for them, inasmuch as they have wholly turned their faces toward Him. Look then toward wisdom, then toward mercy and bounty. You will find an excellence whose wonders amaze you. Then rise and be steadfast.

(Ṭūsī): I say: Since he has stated in the previous chapter that asceticism and worship only proceed from the nonmystic for the sake obtaining recompense and reward in the next life, he intends to call attention to the establishment of the doctrine of reward and punishment, which was mentioned.

He then establishes prophecy (*al-nubuwwa*) and religious law (*al-sharī'a*) and what is associated with them by the method of the philosophers, because reward and punishment depend upon the existence of prophecy and religious law, and that in turn depends upon certain principles (*qawā'id*).

The evidence of this is to say: Man is not independent and alone with respect to the means of his subsistence, because he needs food, clothes, shelter, and the means to defend himself, his children and others. Each of these is a work of craftsmanship which is not possible for a single person to produce alone, unless it be in a period of time during which it is impossible or exceedingly difficult to live without it. In contrast, it is easy for a community, where everyone supports each other and participates together in its realization. In such a manner, each one relieves some of the burden

carried by his neighbor, and it is accomplished by equal exchange, which is each person acting in a manner comparable to the actions of his peers.

By commutative contract is meant that each one should give his neighbor a portion from his labor comparable to what he takes from him. Man by nature, therefore, needs to live in a society that will support his well-being and his livelihood. This is the meaning of their words: “Man is civilized by nature.” Civilization (*al-tamaddun*) in their [the philosophers’] terminology consists of the kinds of societal relations just mentioned. Consequently, this is a principle.

Moreover, we say: A society whose members support each other will not come into existence unless social interaction (*mu’āmalā*) and justice (*‘adl*) exist between them, because each person craves what he needs and becomes vexed with one who competes with him in that. His desire and anger cause him to commit injustice to others, and this state leads to chaos and the disruption of the social order.

However, if social interaction and justice occur between them, this will not happen. Therefore, there must be a religious law (*sharī’a*). The term *sharī’a* in classical Arabic means a watering place, and it is named in this sense because everyone drinks water and benefits from it on an equal basis. This is a secondary premise.

Moreover, we say: The divine law certainly comes from an originator who establishes these laws and determines them in the manner which is best. This is the lawgiver (*shāri’*). If the people dispute with each other over the formation of the law, this will lead to chaos and confusion.

Therefore, it is necessary for the legislator to be distinguished among them, by his deserving obedience, so that others will follow him and accept the laws. Deserving obedience is only established by signs which prove that the laws are from the presence of his Lord. These signs are his miracles (*mu’jizāt*), and they come either in the form of words or in the form of acts. Those in the form of words are more acceptable to the educated, while those in the form of acts are more acceptable to the masses. A miraculous act by itself, however, devoid of the miracle of utterance, is not complete, because prophecy and performing miracles cannot be realized without inviting the people to goodness.

Therefore, there must be a prophet who can make the laws and manifest miracles. This is a third principle.

The common people and the less educated may disdain justice (*‘adl*), which benefits them as a species but restrains them from what they covet as individuals, by which they might commit acts contrary to the religious law.

Consequently, for the obedient and the rebellious there is reward (*thawāb*) and punishment (*‘iqāb*) in the next life, the hope and fear of which prompt them to obedience and the abandonment of sin. The religious law cannot work properly without this. Thus, each agent of good or evil must receive the reward that he deserves from God, who is capable of recompensing them and who knows what they do plainly and in private, be it in thoughts, words, or deeds.

Recognition (*ma’rifa*) of the Requirer and the Law-giver is also necessary for those who submit to the religious law.

The recognition of the common people is rarely certain, and therefore it is not stable. Thus, together with it, there must be a cause to preserve it, and this is remembrance tied to repetition, in other words, repeated worship in remembrance of the One worshipped performed at successive intervals, such as daily ritual prayer and similar forms of worship. Therefore, the prophet must invite the people to acknowledge the existence of their Creator, the Almighty, the All-Informed. He must summon them to faith in the truthfulness of the law-giver sent down by Him, and to confession of the promise and the threat in the next life. He must call upon the people to perform acts of worship in which the Creator is praised by His attributes of glory and to obey the religious laws which the people require in their social interactions, so that justice, which gives life to the human race, will continue. This is a fourth principle.

All of this is ordained by divine providence because of mankind's need of it, and it therefore exists for all times and places. It is the object sought, and it is a benefit compared to which no other benefit is more universal. Besides the great worldly advantages for those who observe the divine law, there will be great rewards in the next world according to what they are promised. For the mystics among them, besides the worldly benefits and the rewards of the life to come, there will be the additional achievement of the real perfection mentioned. Consider [God's] wisdom, which is the maintenance of the system in this way, [His] mercy, which is the preservation of ample recompense after great benefit, and [His] bounty, which is real happiness added to these two. Behold the majesty of the One who emanates these good things, whose wonders dazzle, overwhelm, and astonish you. Then elevate the religious law and be steadfast in seeking nearness to His holy presence.

The Learned Commentator [Rāzī] has raised the following objections:

(1) *If you intended by "necessary" in your words "when the people need a legislator, they need his existence," this is essential necessity (al-wujūb al-dhātī), which is impossible. And if you intended that God is obligated, as the Mu'tazila¹⁰ believe, this is not the belief of your school of thought. If you intended thereby that this necessity is a cause for the system that is good, while God is the source of all good, therefore it is necessary for Him to have such a system, this also is not valid, because it is not necessary for the best to come into existence. Otherwise all the people would be created with the disposition to do good, since that is best.*

(2) *Your claim that miracles prove that the legislator is from God is not worthy of you, because, according to you, miracles are a phenomenon of the soul which are achievable equally by the prophets and by their opponents among the magicians (saḥara), as is stated in the Tenth Namaṭ. The only difference between a prophet and a nonprophet is the fact that the prophets call people to goodness and not to evil, and the criteria to discern good from evil is reason ('aql). Thus, there is no proof that those who perform miracles are prophets.*

(3) *Also your statement that a miracle proves the truthfulness of its author is based on assenting to a free agent [i.e., the Creator] who knows temporal particulars. But you do not assent to this.*

(4) *Also, punishment for sins does not agree with your principles. You believe that the punishment for a sinner is the desire of his soul for worldly things when the soul has lost access to them. You will be committed to saying that the forgetfulness of the sinner of his sin will necessitate the lapse of his punishment.*

The following is the answer [to the above objections] on the basis of their own principles.¹¹ As for the first, we say: The dependence of natural acts upon their necessary final causes, along with assenting to divine providence in the way mentioned, suffices to affirm the existence of those acts. It is for this reason that they explain acts through their final causes [i.e., purposes], such as speaking of certain teeth as being suitable for chewing (*al-madgh*), which is their final cause. If the final cause was not necessary for the existence of the act, causation by it would not be a definite result. As for his objection that it is not necessary for the best to come into existence, we reply that the best in relation to the whole is not the same as the best in relation to the part. The former is necessary, while the latter is not necessary. People being created with the disposition to do good does not belong to that category, as was explained.

As for the second, we say that extraordinary things, among which are miracles, appear both in the form of words and in the form of acts, as was mentioned. The miracles reserved to the prophets are not miracles of action alone, but the association of miracles of action with miracles of words is what is specialized to them, and this is what proves their truthfulness.

As for the third, we say besides what was said about knowledge and power, the observation of the miracles that are the signs of the souls of the prophets are proof of the perfection of those souls, and this requires acknowledging the truthfulness of their words.

As for the fourth, we say: The commission of sins is based on the existence of a habit deeply rooted in the soul, which causes its suffering. Forgetting the act does not cause the removal of that habit; thus it will not cause the lapse of a due punishment.

Know that whatever the Master has stated about the prophets and religious law is not absolutely necessary for human survival. They are things without which a system that leads to goodness for everyone in this world and the next cannot be established. It suffices mankind to live in some kind of political system for the protection of society, even if it is based upon dictatorship and the like. The proof of this is that the inhabitants of the world all necessarily live in political systems.

Chapter 5: Admonition [on the Proper Objective of the Mystic]

(Ibn Sinā): A mystic seeks the First Truth (al-ḥaqq alawwal) ¹² not for anything else besides Him, and prefers nothing more than the recognition ('irfān) of Him and worship of Him alone, because He deserves to be worshipped and because such worship is an honorable relationship to Him, not due to desire or to fear. If it were, the thing desired or feared would be the motive for worship and the object sought. The Truth, in this case, would not be the goal but a means to something other than Him, and that other thing would be the goal and the end.

(Ṭūsī): I say: The Master has mentioned the goal of the mystic and the non-mystic in asceticism and worship, and he has established the principles of a different goal, in other words, reward and punishment. In this chapter he has pointed to the objective of the mystic and his aims. Therefore, we say: A mystic who recognizes real perfection has two states in relation to it. One belongs to his soul in particular, and it is his love of that perfection, and the other belongs to both his soul and body, and it is his progress in seeking to draw near it. The Master has expressed the first as desire (or: will *irāda*) and the second as worship (*ta'abbud*). He has further said that the desire and worship of a worshipper are connected to the First Truth (exalted be His remembrance) for Himself; they are not connected to other things for themselves. Indeed, if they are related to anything besides the Truth, they are related for the sake of the Truth as well. Therefore, his statement, "A mystic seeks the First Truth not for anything else besides Him" is an explanation for the relation of his will to the Truth with respect to the Truth Himself. His statement, "He prefers nothing more than the recognition of Him" means that he does not prefer something besides the Truth over the recognition of Him, although the Truth is preferred to His recognition because recognition [as such] is not preferable in itself to the mystic, as the Master will explain later in his statement, "He who prefers recognition ('irfān) for the sake of recognition has accepted the second [goal besides the Truth]."¹³ Whatever is preferred but not preferred for itself is certainly preferred for other than itself. Consequently, recognition is preferred for the sake of something other than itself, and this is nothing but the Truth. Thus, the Truth is preferable to recognition.

He has distinguished the mystic by the fact that he does not prefer anything besides the Truth over the recognition of Him, because the non-mystic, on the other hand, prefers the attainment of reward and protection from punishment over recognition, since he purposes recognition for the sake of reward and safety from punishment. But the mystic does not prefer anything over it [recognition of Him] other than the Truth, Who is solely preferred for Himself. The statement of the Master, "his worship of Him alone," also points to the relation of the worship of the mystic to the Truth alone.

If someone argues that this is contrary to what the Master has said before, that the worship of a mystic is an exercise to discipline his faculties,¹⁴ so that he leads them to the threshold (*jināb*) of the Truth, which is not Him, then he has led the faculties to the threshold of the Truth, not to the Truth Himself - we say, he does not mean that a mystic in his worship seeks nothing besides the Truth in an absolute sense. Rather, he means that the mystic seeks nothing but the Truth essentially. If he seeks something else, he seeks it accidentally, and for the sake of the Truth, as was mentioned. This is a rule insofar as the mystic considers himself in relation to the First Truth, Who is intended for Himself. If the Truth and worship are considered in relation to each other, the dependency of worship upon the First Truth would be found to be necessary in two respects:

- (a) With respect to the consideration of the Truth in relation to worship, which is expressed by his words “because He deserves to be worshipped.”
- (b) With respect to the consideration of worship in relation to the Truth, which is expressed by his words “because such worship is an honorable relationship to Him.”

The Learned Commentator [Rāzī] has responded to this passage as follows:

The worship of the mystics can be either for the essence of the Truth (dhāt al-ḥaqq), for any of His attributes, or for the perfecting of themselves. These categories correspond to three ranks. The Master has alluded to the first with the words “his worship of Him alone,” to the second with his words “because He deserves to be worshipped,” and to the third with his words “because such worship is an honorable relationship to Him.”

I say: In this commentary there is a sanction that allows the mystic to have an essential object of worship other than the Truth, while the rest of the chapter establishes the opposite of this. Moreover, the Master has alluded to “the goal of the mystic being different from the goals of non-mystics,” by his words, “not due to desire or to fear,” in other words, not due to the desire of reward or the fear of punishment. He also has explained the falsehood of this being a goal for the mystic by his words: “If it were...”; in other words, if the two purposes of worship were the above-mentioned desire or fear, so that reward would be the object desired and punishment the object not desired, then this would be the motive to worship the Truth, these two would be the aim of the worshipper of the Truth, and the Truth would not be the goal but a means to obtain reward and deliverance from punishment, which is the goal and the object sought. In this case, it would be the essential object of worship, not the Truth. This is the elaboration of this chapter.

The Learned Commentator [Rāzī] says: “Some people rule out the position of God (exalted be He) being an object desired for Himself. They assert that desire (or: will *irāda*) is an attribute which is only connected to possible things because it requires the preponderation of one of two extremes desired over the other, and this is only reasonable with possible things.” He says: “The Master, in the beginning of Namaṭ Six, also

established that for whoever desires something, the attainment of what one wants must be preferable to its non-existence, and the object intended by primary intention is that attainment.” He deduced from this “that whoever desires something wants perfection.

Therefore, whoever seeks God (exalted be He) does not really seek Him but wants to perfect himself.”

He [Rāzī] answered these two propositions [of Ibn Sīnā] by claiming “they commit the logical fallacy of *petitio principii*, because they are based on the assumption that desire (or: will *irāda*) is only connected to the possible and to that by which the one desiring (*murīd*) seeks perfection.

It is what the critic has caused him to assert.”

Our answer to this is that it [desire/will] is indeed connected to God, not by another thing besides Him as well.

And I say in explanation that the desire connected to what the desiring one performs necessitates the possibility of the object desired and the perfecting of the desiring one, not due to the connection of the will to it [the object desired], but due to its being an act or due to its being something attained for the desiring one by his desire. But in this case the object desired [i.e., God] is not like this! Therefore, the objection is invalid.

Chapter 6: Admonition [on the Difference Between One Who Seeks the Truth as a Means and One Who Seeks Him for His Own Sake]

(Ibn Sīnā): One who considers it permissible to make the Truth a means will receive mercy in some respect, for he has not tasted the sweetness of delight in the Truth so that he would seek it. His knowledge only encompasses imperfect pleasures, so that he yearns for them and is heedless of what is above them. His likeness compared to the mystics is as a boy compared to a wise man. Children are not aware of certain good things to which the sagacious aspire. Their pursuit of games and amusement limits them, and they become surprised by serious people who turn away from such matters, disdain them, and are intent upon other things. In the same way, one whose vision has been hindered from beholding the splendor of the Truth by imperfection ties his hands to the false pleasures surrounding him, then he abandons them in this life grudgingly, and he only does so in order to obtain double their recompense. He only worships and obeys God (exalted be He) in the hope that in the next world He will satisfy him fully with such pleasures and send him to a place with delicious food, sweet drinks, and beautiful women. If it be laid bare, he has no objective in this world and in the next except the pursuit of carnal pleasures. But he who is endowed with understanding, through the guidance of holiness, of the sorrows of love knows the delight of the Truth, has set his face towards it, and asks mercy for this one who has turned away from His guidance towards its opposite, even though what he aspires to through his toil is granted in accordance with His promise.

(Ṭūsī): I say: The meaning of *mukhdaj* (lit. imperfectly formed) is “deficient” (*nāqīṣ*). It is said: “The she-camel brought forth her young one imperfectly formed,” meaning she brought forth her offspring deficiently formed, so the baby animal is imperfect. Ḥanūn [commonly meaning “affectionate”] is used here in the sense of “yearning” (*mushtāq*). [The term *muḥannakīn* pertains to the saying]:

“Age made him sound in judgment and experienced,” in other words, his experiences made him so, so that he is a wise man and experienced. *Azūrra ‘an* (turn away from) is the same as ‘adala ‘an. [The term ‘ā’ifīn, as in] “he disdained food or drink,” means he has an aversion to it, and thus does not partake of it. [The word ‘ākifīn, as in] “he is intent upon something,” means he dedicated himself to it diligently. [The word *yukhawwilu*, as in] “God granted him something,” means He caused him to possess it. *Bu’ithra ‘an* [commonly meaning scattered from] is used here in the sense of “being revealed” or “laid bare.” To direct his eyes toward something [as an objective] means to lift them. *Alqabqab* [commonly meaning “swelling”] refers to the stomach (*baṭn*), and *al-dhabdhab* [commonly meaning “dangling”] to the penis (*dhakar*). The Master has in mind with respect to these two words the saying of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon

him): “He who is protected from the evil of his prattling (*al-laqlaq*), his swelling, and his dangling is indeed protected.” *Al-laqlaq* refers to the tongue. Sorrows (*shujūn*) is the plural of sorrow (*shajan*), which is the path of the Valley (*wādī*). Toil (*kadd*) is intensity with respect to practice and seeking to attain.

The object of this chapter is to justify those who consider it permissible to use the Truth as a means of achieving something other than Him, such as the ascetics of this world and the worshippers of the Truth, whose practices are aimed at reward and safety from punishment. The reason for justifiability is the imperfection in them.

In the statements of the Master there are many subtle points that you should examine and ponder upon. One is describing [inclination toward] the bodily pleasures as a defect in one’s nature which cannot be removed. Another is his likening of one who is unable to behold real splendor to a blind person who seeks something he has lost, and grasps whatever is near him, whether or not it is the object sought.

Another is his drawing attention to the fact that the asceticism of a non-mystic is reluctant asceticism. Although such a person may appear in the garb of ascetics, in reality he is the greediest of creatures for the bodily pleasures, because abstention from something in the hope of receiving double their recompense is closer to avarice than to contentment.

Another is the affinity of his ambition (*himma*) to baseness and weakness. The Master’s words “he has no objective...[except the pursuit of carnal pleasures]” allude to the fact that his station is lower than that he should deserve those base pleasures. Another is the eloquent expression with respect to singling out the pleasure of the stomach and the genitals by remembrance [of the tradition].

At the end of this chapter, he states that the imperfect person who is the object of mercy will attain what he hopes for and seeks in the way of bodily pleasures because of his diligent effort, as the prophets (peace be upon them) have promised. He has alluded to the nature of this state in the Eighth *Namat*, when he discusses the possibility of the attachment of simple-minded souls to bodies that are the subject of their imaginations, and he has considered such happiness as the happiness that is worthy of them.

Chapter 7: Admonition [on Will as the First Stage of the Progress of the Mystics]

(Ibn Sīnā): The first of the stages which are the progresses (ḥarakāt) of the mystics is what they call will (irāda). This is the desire (raghba) that comes to one endowed with understanding (al-mustabṣir), by demonstrative certainty or by the soul's peace through the conviction of faith, to hold to the firm handle ('urwat al-wuthqā), as a result of which he moves toward the holy presence that he may partake of the joy of contact (ittiṣāl). As long as this is his stage, he is a seeker (or willer murīd).

(Ṭūsī): I say: A'tarā-hu means "to come upon him," and i'tilāq is "to cling" to the sure handle. Know that the Master, after setting forth the aims of the mystics and others, intends to set forth their successive states in their journey on the path of the Truth from the beginning of their progress to the end of it, which is their attainment to Him (exalted be He). In eleven chapters, he explains what occurs to them at different stages. The first of them is this chapter, which includes the principles (*mabādī'*) for their progress. He has said that the will is the first stage of their successive stages. It is the principle adjacent to movement,

and its principle is the conception of the essential perfection specialized to the First Principle, Who emanates His signs upon those who are ready among His creatures in accordance with their capacities. The definite acknowledgement of His existence is accompanied by a peace of soul, whether it be certain (*yaqīnī*), acquired by demonstrative analogy, or through faith (*īmān*), attained by accepting the words of the Imāms¹⁵ who guide others to God (exalted be He). Each of these is a conviction which causes its possessor to seek that overflowing grace. Since will (*irāda*) is a result of this acknowledgement, he has defined it as a state which occurs after understanding (*istibṣār*) or the privation mentioned. He then explains that it is a desire to cling to the firm handle, which never ceases or changes.

This, then, is the starting point of progress toward the world of holiness, and its goal is to attain of the joy of contact in that world.

Know that the Master, in the Third Namaṭ, states that for any volitional or animal movement, there are four principles:

(a) perception (*idrāk*), (b) appetite (*shawq*), which is called lust (*shahwah*) or passion (*ghaḍab*), (c) determination (*'azm*), which is called decisive will, (d) and the subservient faculty extended into the organs. The movement under discussion here is volitional, not animalistic, and it has primacy among the principles mentioned. This is what he has called understanding (*istibṣār*) or the conviction connected to the peace of the soul (*sukūn al-naḥs*). The second and the third, which he has called will, are united here because they are only different from each other if there is a difference of occasions and events, and such a difference is not perceptible with the peace of the soul, which he has set as a condition here. The fourth is disregarded, because this movement is not a bodily movement.

The Learned Commentator [Rāzī], in his commentary on this chapter, has set forth the kinds of seekers of the Truth and the religious practices suitable for each kind. That, however, is inadequate, due to what it contains.

Chapter 8: Admonition [on Spiritual Exercise]

(Ibn Sīnā): Furthermore, he is in need of spiritual exercise (*rīyāḍa*) that is directed toward three goals. The first is the elimination of everything besides the Truth from the path of affection. The second is the submission of the soul that incites to evil (*al-naḥs al-ammāra*) to the tranquil soul (*al-naḥs al-mutma'inna*), so that the faculties of imagination and estimation will be drawn to conceptions which are worthy of holy concerns and drawn away from conceptions that are worthy of base concerns. The third is the refinement of the inmost self in order to become awakened and mindful.

Real asceticism will assist him with the first goal. A number of things will assist him with the second goal: worship accompanied by contemplation (*fikr*), the use of melodies by the faculties of the soul that cause the words intoned by him to be acceptable to the mind, and the didactic discourses of an intelligent speaker with eloquent words, a pleasant voice, and rightly guided conduct. As for the third goal, it is assisted by refined thoughts and virtuous love, which are dictated by the attributes of the Beloved, not the rule of the appetite.

(Ṭūsī): I say: The expression *mustann al-ithār* (“the path of affection”) refers to his mystical way (*ṭarīqa*). The term *mashfū'a* means “connected to” (*maqrūna*). The word *rakhīm* (“pleasant”) means “soft” or “gentle” (*raqīq*). It is said: “He mellowed his voice,” meaning he softened it.

The word *al-shimāl*, with the vowel *kisra*, refers to “character” or “disposition” (*khulq*), and its plural form is *shamā'il*.

The purpose of this chapter is to set forth the seeker's need for spiritual exercise and to explain the purpose of such discipline. Before beginning my commentary, I would like to discuss the meaning of the term *rīyāḍa* (“exercise,” “discipline,” “practice,” “training”). The training of animals prevents them from venturing upon actions that would not please the trainer, so that the animal becomes accustomed to obeying the trainer. If the animal faculty, which is the principle of animal perceptions and actions in man, does not have the disposition to obey the rational faculty, it would be like an untrained beast that is sometimes motivated by its appetite and sometimes by its passion, which are affected by its faculties of imagination and estimation, sometimes due to what they recollect and sometimes due to something one of the external senses leads them to which is agreeable to it, as a result of which it performs various animal actions because of these causes. The rational faculty, in this case, is used merely to obtain its [the animal faculty's] desires, as a result of which it is a faculty which incites to evil (*ammāra*). Various acts with respect to the principles would proceed from it, and the rational faculty would be unwillingly commanded and compelled.

However, if the rational faculty trains the animal faculty, and prevents it from indulging in imaginations, estimations, feelings, and acts that activate its appetite and passion, and forces it to obey what the practical intellect requires, until it becomes trained to obey it and to serve it, then the intellect

will be tranquil (*muṭma'inna*), no contrary actions by means of the principles will proceed from it, and all the other faculties will obey the intellect and be submissive to it. Between these two states there are various other states corresponding to the degree of domination of one over the other. Sometimes the animal faculty pursues its desires in disobedience to the rational faculty, and then regrets its disobedience and blames itself. In such a case, it is called the blaming soul or faculty. These faculties are called the blaming soul (*al-naḥs al-lawwāma*), the soul inciting to evil (*al-naḥs al-ammāra*), and the tranquil soul (*al-naḥs al-muṭma'inna*) because of what is said about them in the Holy Qur'ān.¹⁶

Thus, training the soul means forbidding it from indulging in its desires and commanding it to obey its Lord.

Since the goals of the rational faculty are various, the spiritual exercises are various. Among them are intellectual exercises that are mentioned in practical philosophy. And among them are traditional exercises called acts of worship in religious law. The most rigorous, however, are the practices of the mystics, since their object is the Face of God and nothing else. Everything other than Him is a distraction from Him. Consequently, their exercises prevent the soul from turning toward anything other than the First Truth and compel it to be attentive to Him, so that devotion to Him and detachment from all else besides Him becomes part of its natural disposition (*malaka*). It is clear that all forms of spiritual exercise, in reality, fall within the spiritual practice of the mystics and not the reverse. Indeed, their exercises differ in accordance with the differences of their stages in the quest, which may start with the most common forms of spiritual practice and end in the most subtle forms. Now we return to the topic.

The ultimate object of spiritual exercise is one thing: the achievement of real perfection (*al-kamāl al-ḥaqīqī*).

However, this depends on the acquisition of an existing factor, which is the disposition (*isti'dād*) [for that perfection], which in turn depends upon the removal of obstacles, whether internal or external. For this reason, spiritual exercise is directed toward three goals, the first of which is “the elimination of everything besides the Truth from the path of affection.” This is the removal of external obstacles. The second is “the submission of the soul that incites to evil to the tranquil soul,” so that the imagination and the estimation will be drawn from worldly things to holy things, and the other faculties will necessarily follow. This is the removal of internal obstacles, that is, the animal motivations mentioned. The third is “the refinement of the inmost self in order to become awakened and mindful.” This is acquiring the disposition to attain perfection, since the compatibility of the inmost self with a refined or subtle thing is only possible through refinement. The sensitivity of the inmost self consists of a certain readiness, because intelligible forms are rapidly represented in it and it is easily influenced by delightful divine things due to its longing and ardor.

After the Master finished stating the goals of spiritual exercise, he set forth that which will help in attaining each of these goals. As for the first goal, he has mentioned one thing among those things which will assist him to attain it, and it is the real asceticism associated with the mystics. It is their

detachment from all that distracts the inmost self from the Truth, as mentioned before, and this is clear.

As for the second goal, he has mentioned three things among those things which will assist him to attain it. The first is worship accompanied by contemplation (*fīkr*). He means the kind ascribed to the mystics. The benefit of combining worship with contemplation is that worship makes the whole body submissive to the soul, but if the soul together with the body turns toward the threshold of the Truth in contemplation, the individual in his entirety will become attentive to the Truth. Otherwise, worship may be a cause for misery, as the Holy Qur'ān has stated: "Woe unto those who perform the obligatory prayers but are inattentive in their worship."¹⁷ The reason this worship is helpful for the second goal is that it is also a kind of exercise for the intentions (*himam*) of the worshipper and the mystic and the faculties of his soul to train them by habit from the side of deceit to the side of the Truth, as stated earlier.¹⁸

The second [assistance for the second goal] is melodies (*alḥān*), which are helpful both essentially and accidentally.

The reason they are helpful essentially is because the rational soul is attracted to them by its delight in harmonious compositions and regular proportions occurring in sound, which is the matter of speech, as a result of which it is distracted from using the animal faculties, with respect to the goals particular to them, and those faculties instead become submissive to it. Therefore, such melodies are helpful to it. The reason they are helpful accidentally is because they make the speech associated with them more acceptable to the estimation, for they contain a likeness to which the soul is naturally inclined. Thus, if your discourse is didactic and evokes seeking perfection, the soul will become mindful of what is worthy of its action, and it will dominate the faculties which engage it and make them subservient to it.

The third [assistance for the second goal] is didactic discourse itself; in other words, discourse which inspires assent to that which is worthy to do, with the aim of persuasion and the assurance of the soul, so that the soul becomes awakened and dominant over the faculties, especially if it is associated with four things: One is related to the speaker. He must be righteous (*ṣāliḥ*), because this serves as evidence to prove his truthfulness. The admonition of one who is not himself admonished will not be effective because his deeds refute his words. The other three are related to speech: One is that the expression of words must be eloquent (*balīgha*); in other words, they must be commendable, clear in meaning, and show the perfection that the speaker intends to express without excess or diminution, as if a receptacle into which the meaning is poured. Another is that the form and mode of the words should convey a tender melody, because a gentle voice inspires receptivity in the soul, while a harsh voice causes it to reject and withdraw. For this reason, melodies have various effects upon the soul, and each kind suits a different state in the soul. Physicians and preachers use music to cure psychological illnesses and to persuade toward desirable ends. The last is that their meaning should be rightly guided; that is, they should lead to an assent which benefits the seeker in order to travel more quickly on

his journey (*sulūk*). Know that didactic discourse itself, in the art of oratory, is called “the pillar” (*al-‘amūd*), and the things related to it to convince people are called persuasions (*istidrājāt*).

As for the third goal, he has mentioned two things among those things that will assist him to attain it. The first is refined thinking, which needs to be moderate in quality and quantity, and with respect to times. Bodily things, such as excess weight or thinness, and the like, should not distract the soul from intellectual perception, because ample engagement with this kind of thought will prepare the soul to easily perceive the objects it seeks. The second is virtuous love. There are two kinds of human love: real, as mentioned earlier, and figurative. The second kind is either soul-centered love or animal love. The basis of soul-centered love is the similarity between the soul of the lover and the soul of the beloved in substance. Most of the lover’s delight is in the attributes of the beloved, because they are traces that proceed from his soul. Animal love is based on animalistic appetites and on the quest for animal pleasures.

In this case, the lover is most attracted to the external appearance, form, color, and shape of the beloved, because these are bodily matters.

By the words “virtuous love,” the Master is alluding to the first kind of figurative love, since animal love is something required for the dominance of the soul which incites to evil, and it aids it to dominate the rational faculty. For the most part, animal love is associated with indecent acts (*fujūr*) and desire for such things. The first kind of figurative love, on the contrary, makes the soul gentle, kind, compassionate, and amiable, severed from worldly attachments and turning away from whatever is other than its beloved, making all interests one interest. Therefore, turning toward the real beloved is easier for the one who turns than otherwise, because he does not need to turn away from multiple things. The author of the following tradition has alluded to this by his words: “One who loves and is virtuous, who keeps it secret and then dies, he has died a martyr.”

Chapter 9: Admonition [on the Mystical Moment]

(Ibn Sinā): Furthermore, if will and spiritual exercise bring him to a certain stage, delightful raptures (khulsāt) from the light of Truth shining upon him will come to him, like lightning suddenly flashing upon him and disappearing.

This is what they call “moments” (awqāt). Two ecstasies (wajdān) embrace every moment, one toward it and one away from it. These overwhelming moments will multiply for him if he devotes himself assiduously to the spiritual exercises.

(Ṭūsī): I say: Something “coming forward” or “appearing” (*‘anna al-shay’*) means “to present itself” (*i’taraḍa*). The verbs *khalasa* and *ikhtalasa* mean “to steal,” or “carry off” (*istalaba*). [Hence *khulsāt* are literally “stealings away” or “carryings off”.] The image of lightning flashing here refers to a slight flash in an unclouded area. In this chapter, the Master explains the first of the stages of ecstasy and conjunction, which is achieved only after attaining the proper disposition, which is acquired through will and spiritual training, and it increases with the growth of the disposition. When designating this state as a “moment” (*waqt*), they had in mind the saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family): “I have a moment with God with which no messenger or favored angel is able to dispense.” The two ecstasies which embrace the moment are not equal, because the first is grief at the tardiness of ecstasy and the second is regret at its passing.

Chapter 10: Admonition [on the State of Rapture]

(Ibn Sīnā): Should he penetrate deeply into this, until the experience overwhelms him even while not practicing spiritual discipline, then whenever he sees something, he will turn away from it and toward the threshold of holiness.

He will remember from its affair another affair, as a result of which a rapture will overcome him. Thus he all but beholds the Truth in each thing.

(Ṭūsī): I say...He means that if contact (*ittiṣāl*) with the threshold of holiness becomes a natural disposition, then it may be attained outside of the state of spiritual discipline, while he had to prepare to receive it earlier.

Chapter 11: Admonition [on Concealing Reaction to the State of Rapture]

(Ibn Sīnā): It may happen on his way to this stage that his mystical experiences overwhelm him and his peace (sakīna) departs from him, as a result of which his companion will take notice due to his arousal from his settledness.

However, if the spiritual exercise is extended, the experience will not disturb him and he will learn how to conceal it.

(Ṭūsī): I say: ‘*alā* and *ista‘alā* have the same meaning (to “overcome,” “overwhelm”). *Sakīna* (“peace,” “tranquility”) refers to poise (*waqār*). Being aroused in his posture means to sit upright in distraction. Fear and the like is what aroused him. *Talbīs*, similar to *tadlīs*, is concealing the defect. The reason for what the Master has said is that when a man begins to experience such a tremendous affair and suddenly it befalls him, because the soul is not ready for it, he will be defeated immediately. But if such a thing happens regularly and continuously, he will get used to it and the agitation will disappear from him, because the soul is ready and expects to receive it. A mystic will deny from himself the agitation mentioned because of his aversion to feigning perfection. Therefore, he will conceal what has occurred to him and use dissimulation with respect to it.

Chapter 12: Admonition [on the State of Constant Recognition]

(Ibn Sīnā): Spiritual exercise will take him to a stage wherein his moment (waqt)¹⁹ is transformed for him into peace. Thus the state of being carried away will become familiar, and the gleam of light will become an evident flame. He will attain a state of constant recognition, as if it is a continuous companionship, and in it he will enjoy His splendor. Therefore, if he is transported from that state, he will be transported to loss and sorrow.

(Ṭūsī): I say: In some manuscripts the word *waqt* (“moment”) is replaced with *wafḍ* (“arrival”). It is said:

“Such a one came to (*wafada*) the prince,” meaning he came as a messenger to him. Therefore, he is an envoy (*wāfid*). The word *waqt* makes more sense. *Al-kaṭf* is the state of being seized or carried away. *Al-shahāb* is the flame of a bright fire, whose brightness is evident. In some manuscripts *thābit* is used instead of *mustaqarr* (for “constant”); in other words, his recognition of the First Truth is constant. *Āsif* is to lament [upon being transported from that state]. The meaning is clear.

Chapter 13: Admonition [on Being Present while Absent]

(Ibn Sīnā): Perhaps on his way to this stage, what is with him will overwhelm him. But if he penetrates deeply in this recognition, its overwhelming him will diminish, so that he is present while he is absent, and he is at rest while he is moving.

(Ṭūsī): I say: Water penetrates deeply into the tree, meaning it pervades it. The word *za‘ana* means to move or travel. By before this stage, the mystical experience being such that it overwhelms him, he means that joy is caused by the “traveling” (*dhahāb*) and sorrow at the state of reversal, but in this stage the experience overwhelming him is decreased. Consequently, his companion will see him in the state of contact with the threshold of Glory, present with Him, and at rest with Him, while in reality he is absent from Him and moving toward something besides Him.

Chapter 14: Admonition [on Attaining Recognition by Wishing It]

(Ibn Sīnā): Perhaps on his way to this stage, this recognition (ma‘ārifa) is only facilitated for him at certain times, but then he will advance gradually until he can attain it whenever he wishes.

(Ṭūsī): I say: In some manuscripts the verb *tasannā* (“rendered possible”) is used [instead of *tayassara* (“facilitated”)]; in other words, it is opened and made feasible for him.

Chapter 15: Admonition [on Recognition without a Wish]

(Ibn Sīnā): Then he advances beyond this stage, so that his affair is not dependent on a wish, but rather whenever he considers one thing, he considers another²⁰ as well, even if his consideration is not for the sake of consideration. This will enable him to ascend from the world of falsehood to the world of Truth, wherein he will dwell even while the heedless surround him [in this world].

(Ṭūsī): I say: ‘Araja means “to ascend” (*artaqā*) while ‘arraja ‘alay-hi means “he was elevated” (*aqāma*). ‘Arajja ilay-hi and in‘araja mean “to be inclined toward” (*māla and in‘aṭafa*). So ta‘rīf here is either an intensification of “ascension” (*irtiqā*) or in the sense of “inclination” (*mayl and in‘iṭāf*). Ḥaffa and aḥtaffa ḥawli-hi means “to move about him” or “go around him.”

Chapter 16 Admonition [on Becoming a Polished Mirror]

(Ibn Sīnā): When the mystic passes (‘abara) the stage of spiritual exercise to the stage of attainment, his inmost self (sirr) will become a polished mirror facing the direction of the Truth, celestial delights will flow copiously upon him, and he will be rejoiced in himself because of the traces of the Truth therein. He will have a vision of the Truth and a vision of himself, and after that he will vacillate [between the two].

(Ṭūsī): I say: It is said that milk and the like “flowed copiously” (*darra*), meaning it was “poured out” (*inṣabba*) or “flowed forth” (*fāḍa*). The meaning of this statement is that when the mystic finishes the discipline of spiritual exercise and does not need it to reach his goal, which is his constant contact with the Truth, his inmost self will become empty of all besides the Truth, like a mirror polished to have a perfect reflection by constant rubbing. When he voluntarily faces the direction of the Truth, the traces of the Truth will be reflected in him, real delights will shower upon him, he will rejoice in himself due to the signs of the Truth within him, and he will have two visions: one toward the Truth, rejoicing in him, and another toward himself, rejoicing in the Truth. Thereupon, he will be in a state of vacillation (*taraddad*) between the two sides.

Chapter 17: Admonition on [Complete Arrival at the Holy Presence]

(Ibn Sīnā): Then he will become absent from himself and behold only the threshold of holiness. If he beholds himself, it is only insofar as the self is beholding, not insofar as it is adorned with the self. At this stage the arrival is real.

(Ṭūsī): I say: This is the final stage of the mystic's journey to the Truth, and it is the stage of complete arrival (*wuṣūl*). The stages of the journey subordinate to it have this as their goal. It ends with the state of annihilation (*maḥw*) and self-obliteration (*fanā'*) in the divine unity, as will be discussed later. At this stage, the vacillation mentioned in the last chapter ceases, and one's absence from oneself and attainment of the Truth is complete.

The explanation of the following words: "If he beholds himself, it is only insofar as the self is beholding, not insofar as it is adorned with the self" is that if the beholder, insofar as he is a beholder, beholds himself being a beholder, then he has beheld himself. However, this beholding is apart from the beholding which is before it, because he is here beholding the self insofar as it is engraved with the Truth and adorned with an adornment coming to it from the Truth. Therefore, he rejoices in the self, and this rejoicing in the self, although by reason of the Truth, is astonishment in the self and attention to the self.

Therefore, sometimes he is attending to the self, and sometimes he is attending to the Truth. Thus, you consider it to be vacillation. But in this case, he is turning wholly to the Truth, and only beholds the self insofar as he beholds one turning to the Truth who is not separated from the beholding of the turner, as a result of which it is a beholding of the self figuratively or accidentally. For this reason, he judges this to be real arrival. This is a commentary upon what is in the book.

It remains for us to mention the reason for the number of these chapters and the stages mentioned in them. Thus, I say: For every movement there is a beginning, a middle, and an end. If the departure from the beginning, the passing over the middle, and the arrival at the end is not at once [but gradual], then each one of these also has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and the total would be nine. The Master, after the chapter on spiritual exercise, set forth nine chapters in explanation of these stages. The first three stages which he mentions – the beginning of contact called "the moment," its strengthening, such that it occurs outside of spiritual exercise, and its constancy (*istiqrār*) being such that constancy vanishes along with it – comprise the beginning stages. The next three stages – the increasing of contact, which he expresses by the moment becoming tranquil, the strengthening of that so that the sign of attainment is concealed by the sign of non-attainment, and its constancy being such that it occurs whenever he wishes – comprise the middle stages. The last three stages – the attainment of contact (*ittiṣāl*) without need of wishing it, its constancy without spiritual

exercise, and its continuance without beholding the self – comprise the final stages.

Chapter 18: A Remark [on the Imperfection of the Stages before Arrival]

(Ibn Sinā): Attention to what is far from Him is a distraction, and reliance upon that which is obedient to the self is a weakness. Rejoicing in the adornment of pleasures, insofar as they are pleasures, even if it be in the Truth, is going astray, but complete devotion to the Truth is salvation.

(Ṭūsī): I say: Since he has finished explaining the stages of the journey and ended with the stages of arrival, the Master intends to instruct about the imperfection of all of the stages before the arrival stage in comparison to it.

Thus, he starts with asceticism, which is a certain distancing (*tanazzuh*) from whatever distracts one from the Truth.

He states, moreover, that it is a distraction. Thus he said:

“Attention to what is far from Him,” meaning what is other than the Truth, “is a distraction.” Therefore, asceticism leads to that whereby one is guarded from distraction. This is followed by worship, which is making the soul that incites to evil subservient to the tranquil soul, so that the tranquil soul will become strong in its particular acts with the inciting soul supporting it in that. He states, moreover, that it is a weakness. Thus he said: “Reliance upon that which is obedient to the self (or the soul *al-nafs*) is a weakness.”

He means that the reliance of the soul upon that which is subservient to it is a weakness. Therefore, worship also leads to that whereby one is guarded from weakness.

This is followed by the final stages of the journey, which culminate in the stage of arrival. The instruction here is about the existence of imperfection in the previous stages. He explains that delight in that which brings pleasure, insofar as it is pleasure, even if that outcome is the Truth himself, is going astray and perplexity, because it requires vacillation from one side to another side contrary to it. He seeks by this to guide away from perplexity. Thus, he says: “Rejoicing in the adornment of pleasures, insofar as they are pleasures, even if it be in the Truth, is going astray.” Therefore, pausing at this stage of the journey also leads to what guards from perplexity through the journey.

He then states that salvation from all of this is through the arrival which he mentions in the last stage. Thus he says:

“but complete devotion to the Truth is salvation.” This explains the meaning of what they say: “The sincere ones face a great danger.”

Chapter 19: Admonition [on the Beginning and End of Mysticism]

(Ibn Sīnā): *Recognition (or mysticism ‘irfān) begins with the separation (tafrīq), the shaking off (nafḍ), the abandoning (tark), and the rejection (rafḍ) of one who is truly devoted to a whole, which is the sum of the attributes of the Truth belonging to the essence that seeks in truth, and it ends with the One and abiding (wuqūf) there.*

(Ṭūsī): I say: The Master has summed up all the stations of the mystics in this chapter. With respect to his statement, it is well known among the people of taste [i.e., mystics] that two things are necessary for the perfecting (*takmīl*) of imperfect individuals: (a) abstention (*takhlīya*) and (b) beautification (*tahllīya*), just as sick persons are treated by detoxification (*tanqīya*) and nutrition (*taqwīya*).

The first one is a negating process and the second one is an affirming process. Sometimes “abstention” is characterized as “purification” (*tazkīya*). Each of these two has a number of stages.

As for the stages of purification, they have been mentioned above, and the Master has arranged them in this chapter in four levels, namely: separation, shaking off, abandoning, and rejection. “Separation” (*tafrīq*) is the intensified form of separation (*farq*), and it is a parting between two things without any preference of one over the other. An example of this is the parting of hair. “Shaking off” (*nafḍ*) is moving something so that undesirable things are detached from it, like dust from a garment. “Abandoning” (*tark*) is giving up and withdrawing from something. “Rejection” (*rafḍ*) is abandoning together with disregard and lack of interest.

Thus, recognition (*‘irfān*) begins with a separation between the self (*dhāt*) of the mystic and all that would distract him from the Truth. Next comes the shaking off of the effects of those preoccupations, like inclination toward and attention to them instead of his self with respect to perfecting it by detachment from all besides the Truth and contact with Him. Next is abandonment for the purpose of perfection for the sake of his self. After this is rejection of the self altogether. These are the stages of purification.

As for beautification, whose stages the Master will present in the next chapter, it can be summarized as follows:

When the mystic has become detached from himself and come into contact with the Truth, he will perceive every power dependent upon His power, which is connected with all possible things, and every knowledge dependent upon His knowledge, from which nothing is hidden, and every will dependent upon His will, with which it is not possible for any possible thing to be in opposition.

Nay, every existence and every perfection of existence emanates from Him and flows forth from Him. In this case, the Truth becomes the eyes by which he sees, the ears by which he hears, the power by which he acts, the knowledge by which he knows, and the existence by which He exists. In

this case, the mystic becomes adorned with the attributes of God (exalted be He) in reality. This is the meaning of his words: “the recognition...of one who is truly devoted to a whole, which is the sum of the attributes of the Truth belonging to the essence that seeks in truth.”

After that he sees these attributes and qualities as multiple in relation to the many and one in relation to their solitary source. Thus, His essential knowledge is itself His essential power, which is itself the same as His will, and so forth with the other attributes. Since essential existence does not belong to anything but Him, there are no attributes different from His essence and no essence which is a subject for the attributes. Rather the whole is one thing. As he says (exalted be the speaker): “God is only one God.” Consequently, there is nothing in addition to Him. This is the meaning of the Master’s words: “and it ends with the One.”

At this stage there is no praiser and no object of praise, no traveler and no object of the journey, no recognizer and no object of recognition. This is the station of abiding.

Chapter 20: Admonition [on the Stages of the Ocean of Arrival]

(Ibn Sīnā): One who gives preference to recognition (‘irfān) for the sake of recognition has advocated the latter. And one who finds recognition in such a way that he does not find it, but instead finds through it the object of recognition, has dived into the ocean of arrival (al-wuṣūl). Here there are stages that are not fewer than the stages preceding them.

We prefer to be brief with respect to them, because discourse will not make them comprehensible, statements will not explain them, and words will not reveal them except in imagination. He who wishes to become acquainted with them should proceed gradually, step by step, until he becomes one of the people of witnessing, not of those who talk, and one of those who have arrived at the source, not of those who hear the trace.

(Ṭūsī): I say: Recognition (‘irfān) is the state of the recognizer in relation to the object of recognition. Thus it is certainly not the same as the object of recognition [i.e., the Truth]. As for the one whose aim in recognition is recognition itself, he is not one of those who profess God’s unity, because he seeks something else along with the Truth. This is the state of one who rejoices in the adornment of his self (*dhāti-hi*), even though it is through the Truth. But he who has recognized the Truth and become absent from himself is also certainly absent from recognition, which is the state belonging to his self. Therefore, he has certainly found recognition as though he has not found it, but rather he finds the object of recognition alone while he plunges into the ocean of arrival.

There are stages of beautification by existential things which are the divine attributes, and these stages are not less than the stages preceding them, by which I mean the stages of purification from the affairs of created things, which derive from privative qualities. This is because divine things are unlimited and encompassing, while the affairs of creatures are limited and encompassed. His words (exalted be the speaker) allude to this: “Say: If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would dry up before the words of my Lord would run out.”²¹ Progress in these stages is the journey toward God, and within them is found a journey in God. Both journeys end in self-obliteration (*fanā’*) in the divine unity (*tawḥīd*).

Know that explanation of these stages is not possible because words are the subject for meanings conceptualized by the people who speak them, then memorize them, recollect them, and understand them for the purpose of instruction and learning.

As for that which only he who is absent from himself, not to mention the faculties of his body, attains, it is not possible for words to describe it, let alone for an explanation to explain it. Just as the objects of intellection are not perceptible to the estimative faculty, the objects of estimation are not perceptible to the faculty of imagination, and the objects of imagination are not perceptible to the senses, in like manner, that which can only be seen by the eye of certainty cannot be perceived by the knowledge of certainty.²² It

is therefore necessary for those who seek these stages to strive to attain them by means of experience, not by seeking with philosophical proofs. This is the explanation of what the Master has said. He made an exception for imagination when he said, “words will not reveal them except in imagination,” because as he will explain in the Tenth Namaṭ, when the mystics become engaged in beholding the world of sanctity, they may see in their imaginations certain things that remotely resemble what they are witnessing.

Chapter 21: A Remark [on the Characteristics of the Mystics]

(Ibn Sīnā): The mystic is bright-faced, friendly, and smiling. He shows respect to the young out of humility in the same manner that he shows respect to the old. He is friendly with the lowly just as he is friendly with the great.

How could he not be bright-faced when he is joyful in the Truth and through each thing because he beholds the Truth within it? How could he not treat all equally when to him all are in the same station? The people of mercy are occupied with the worthless.

(Ṭūsī): I say: After setting forth the stages of the mystics, he commences to explain their characteristics and their states....The meaning of this chapter is clear. These two qualities – namely, being friendly to all and viewing all creatures alike – are the signs of a single attribute called “contentment” (*riḍā*). It is an attribute which does not allow its possessor to deny anything, to fear the oppression of anything, or to be grieved over the passing of anything.

The following words (exalted be the speaker) allude to this:

“The good pleasure (*riḍwān*) of God is the greatest [bliss].”²³ The interpretation of their saying: “The keeper of paradise is a king whose name is contentment,” becomes clear from this.

Chapter 22: A Remark [on the Mystic's States Before and After Arrival]

(Ibn Sīnā): The mystic has states in which he cannot bear the whisper of rustling let alone greater distractions. They occur in the moments of his turning with his inmost self to the Truth, if a veil (ḥijāb) from his soul or from the progress of his inmost self appears before arrival. However, upon arrival, he is either wholly occupied with the Truth and not anything else, or he is open to both sides due to the range of his power. In like manner, upon departure in the garment of divine favor, he is the most luminous of God's creatures in his joy.

(Ṭūsī): I say: ...His meaning is that the mystic has states in which he cannot bear to sense an external distraction, even if that distraction is almost imperceptible let alone greater. These states occur during the moments when he turns with his inmost self to the Truth, if a veil appears, or is ordained for him, during those moments before arriving at the Truth, either due to his soul (*naḥs*), as when that which removes his disposition for arrival befalls it, or due to the progress of his inmost self (*sirr*), as when it is represented in his thought, as a result of which he becomes attentive to something besides the Truth. In short, he is not fulfilled because one of the two things prevents him from arriving at the Truth. Instead, he remains in a state of bewildered expectation, on account of which disquietude at everything other than the Truth and impatience with whatever distracts him dominates him. Consequently, he cannot bear anything such as we have described. But with arrival and departure, it is not like this. Upon arrival, there must be one of two conditions: The first is that his power (*quwa*) is such that when preoccupied with the Truth he is unable to attend to anything else, either due to his inability or due to the intensity of the preoccupation.

In this case, he is preoccupied with the Truth alone and heedless of whatever befalls himself, so that he does not sense external distractions. The second is that his power is such that it suffices two things at once, so that he is not vexed by external things, because they do not distract him from the Truth. As for departure, upon it, he will be the happiest of men due to his joy, as a result of which he will meet whatever comes to him with gladness and a smiling face.

Chapter 23: Remark [on the Compassion of the Mystic]

(Ibn Sīnā): Inquiry and seeking information do not concern the mystic, nor is he moved to anger upon observing the reprehensible (munkar), since he is filled with mercy. This is because he discerns God's secret in the outcomes of fate.

Moreover, if he admonishes others to the good (ma'rūf), he admonishes with kindness and sincerity, not with harshness and rebuke. And if he magnifies the good, he may guard it from those who do not deserve it.

(Ṭūsī): I say: ...His meaning is that the mystic does not concern himself with inquiring into the affairs of the people. This is because he is occupied with his own condition, not anything else, and does not pursue the imperfection of anyone....Anger does not seduce him upon witnessing reprehensible behavior, but rather mercy imbues him. This is because of his understanding of the mystery of fate. If he admonishes others to goodness, he admonishes them with kindness and sincerity, as a father admonishes his son, not with harshness and reproach. This is due to his compassion for all of God's creatures. If he magnifies the good, perhaps he will facilitate it to protect it from those who do not merit it. The Learned Commentator states in his commentary: "If he magnifies the good without deserving it, perhaps solicitude will befall him from it, not envy."

This interpretation is not conformable with the text.

Chapter 24: A Remark [on the Attributes of the Mystic]

(Ibn Sīnā): The mystic is courageous, and how could he not be when he is free from the fear of death. He is generous, and how could he not be when he is free from the love of falsehood. He is forgiving of sins, and how could he not be when his soul is greater than being susceptible to the injury of another. And he harbors no resentments, and how could he when his remembrance is occupied with the Truth.

(Ṭūsī): I say: Munificence (*karam*) is either through giving something beneficial when it is not necessary to give it, or it is through preventing harm when it is not necessary to prevent it. The first is either through the self, which is courage, or through possessions and the like, which is generosity. These are both existential things. The second is either together with the ability to harm, which is forgiveness, or it is not together with the ability, which is the forgetting of resentments. Both of these are privative. The mystic is characterized by all of these, as the Master has mentioned and explained the reasons.

Chapter 25: A Remark [on the Differing Intentions of the Mystic]

(Ibn Sīnā): The mystics may vary with respect to intentions (himam) in accordance with the difference of their thoughts, which are influenced by different motivating factors. The mystic may consider a life of poverty and a life of luxury to be the same, or he may prefer a life of poverty.

In like manner, he may consider the ill-smelling to be equal to the fragrant, or he may prefer the ill-smelling. This is when he has the idea in his mind to regard all save the Truth as contemptible. However, he may be inclined to adornment, love of the best in every genus, and aversion to the imperfect and worthless. This is when he considers his habit of association with external conditions, so that he has in view the beauty in each thing, since it is an excellence bestowed by the First Providence and nearest to being like that upon which his desire is intent. This may differ in two different mystics, and it may differ in one mystic with respect to two different moments.

(Ṭūsī): I say: ...His meaning is clear. With respect to his words: “since it is an excellence bestowed by the First Providence and nearest to being like that upon which his desire is intent,” there are two reasons for the mystic’s inclination toward beauty. The first is the grace of Providence toward him, and the second is affinity to the holy Command.

Chapter 26: A Remark [on the Mystic's Exemption from Performing Religious Duties During the Time of Contact with the Truth]

(Ibn Sīnā): The mystic may be absent from himself in the state wherein he reaches the Truth, and heedless of everything, as a consequence of which he is not legally obligated to perform religious duties. How could he when religious duties are enjoined upon those who understand them in the state wherein they understand them, and upon those who commit offenses, even if they do not understand the religious duties?

(Ṭūsī): I say: He means that the mystic may be unaware of this world in the state of his contact with the world of holiness. Thus he is heedless of everything in this world, and he commits an infraction of religious duties. But he does not become a sinner because of this, since he is not legally bound to perform religious duties. This is because the performance of religious duties is dependent upon someone who comprehends them during the time he comprehends them, or upon someone who is a sinner by forsaking the religious duties, even if he does not understand them – such as the negligent, the heedless, and immature young men, who are obligated to perform religious duties.

Chapter 27: An Admonition [That Not Every Soul is Suited to Mysticism]

(Ibn Sīnā): His holiness the Truth is far exalted above being a drinking place for every traveler or being revealed except in succession. For this reason, what this discipline contains is a laughing matter to the heedless and a warning sign for the scholar. Consequently, he who has heard it and then recoiled from it, let him accuse his own soul, for perhaps it is not suitable for it. Each is facilitated toward that for which he was created.

(Ṭūsī): I say: ...His purpose is to mention the insignificant number of those who reach the Truth. He points out that the reason the majority reject this discipline, which is explained in this Namaṭ, is their ignorance of it, for the people pass by that which they do not comprehend.

Furthermore, this kind of perfection cannot be attained by acquisition alone, but rather, along with this, it needs a substance (*jawhar*) suited to it with respect to the innate nature.

Notes

1. The text used for this translation is Ibn Sīnā, al-Ishārāt wa'l-Tanbīhāt, ma'a Sharḥ Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, edited by Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo 1960).
2. "The learned commentator" is a reference to Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī.
3. Qur'ān 32:17.
4. Khurāsān is the northeastern state of Iran.
5. i.e., Ibn al-'Arābī, the author of Fuṣuṣ al-Ḥikam and al-Fūtūḥat al-Makkiyyah.
6. al-Ḥaqq, the Truth, or the Real, a name of God often employed by the Sufis.
7. al-Jurjānī was one of Ibn Sīnā's friends and a student of his in philosophy.
8. According to Ibn Sīnā, intellect consists of several different levels: (1) the material intellect ('aql al-hayūlānī), (2) the intellect in habitu ('aql bi al-malaka), (3) the actual intellect ('aql bi al-fi'l), and (4) the acquired intellect ('aql al-mustafād). See H. Davidson, Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect (Oxford University Press 1992), p. 83 ff.
9. The same term jazā' applies to both reward and punishment.
10. The Mu'tazila were one of two theological schools of thought (kalām) that appeared in the second century A.H. (eighth century A.D.), the second school being the Ash'ariya. The Mu'tazila maintained that all of God's attributes are identical to His essence, so He cannot perform unjust or irrational actions.
11. Rāzī follows the Ash'arite school, and Ṭūsī is responding to the principles of that school here.
12. al-ḥaqq al-awwal, the First Truth, means God here.
13. See Admonition for chapter 20 below.
14. See Chapter 3 above.
15. In other words, the Shī'a Imāms, who are considered by the Shī'a to be the divinely guided successors of the prophet Muhammad.
16. See Qur'ān 12:53, 75:2, and 89:27.
17. Qur'ān 107:4-5.
18. See Namaṭ 9, chapter 3.
19. Waqt refers to a time in which the mystic is overcome by a mystical experience.
20. In other words, the First Truth.
21. Qur'ān 18:109.
22. These terms are derived from verses in the Qur'ān. 'Ilm al-yaqīn (cognitive certainty), which is an understanding of things reached by reasoning, such as understanding fire by reading books, is a lower level of certainty than 'ayn al-yaqīn (visual certainty), which is an understanding of things obtained by seeing them with one's own eyes. We see the fire. The third and highest level mentioned in the Qur'ān is ḥaqq al-yaqīn (objective certainty), which is an understanding of things reached by direct experience. We are burned by the fire. (See Yusuf Ali, The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān, vol. 2, footnote 5673.)
23. Qur'ān 9:72.

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