

PROLEGOMENA TO THE METAPHYSICS OF ISLĀM

AN EXPOSITION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL
ELEMENTS OF THE WORLDVIEW OF ISLĀM

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas
Founder-Director
International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization
and
Holder
Distinguished al-Ghazali Chair of Islamic Thought



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to
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A seed sown with our prayer that
by God's leave may grow into
'a goodly tree whose roots are firmly fixed
and whose branches are in the heavens.'

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IV

THE NATURE OF MAN AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE HUMAN SOUL

Man has a dual nature, he is both body and soul, he is at once physical being and spirit.¹⁰⁸ God taught him the names (*al-asmā'*) of everything.¹⁰⁹ By the 'names' we infer that it means the knowledge (*al-'ilm*) of everything (*al-ashyā'*). This knowledge does not encompass knowledge of the specific nature of the essence (*al-dhāt*) or the inmost ground (*al-sirr*) of a thing (*shay'*) such as, for example, the spirit (*al-rūh*); it refers to knowledge of accidents (sing. *'araḍ*) and attributes (sing. *ṣifah*) pertaining to the essences of things sensible and intelligible (*maḥsūsāt* and *ma'qūlāt*) so as to make known the relations and distinctions existing between them, and to clarify their natures within these domains in order to discern and to understand their meanings, that is, their causes, uses, and specific individual purpose. Man is, however, also given limited knowledge of the spirit,¹¹⁰ of his true and real self or soul,¹¹¹ and by means of this knowledge he is able to arrive at knowledge about God (*al-ma'rifah*) and His absolute oneness; that God is his true Lord (*al-rabb*) and object of worship (*al-ilāh*).¹¹² The seat of knowledge in man is a spiritual substance which is variously referred to in the Holy Qur'ān sometimes as his heart (*al-*

¹⁰⁸ *Al-Hijr* (15): 26–29; *Al-Mu'minūn* (23): 12

¹⁰⁹ *Al-Baqarah* (2): 31.

¹¹⁰ *Banī Isrā'īl* (17): 85.

¹¹¹ *Hā Mim* (41): 53.

¹¹² *Āli 'Imrān* (3): 81; *Al-A'raf* (7): 172.

qalb), or his soul or self (*al-nafs*), or his spirit (*al-rūh*), or his intellect (*al-'aql*). In virtue of the truth that man knows God in His absolute unity as his Lord,¹¹³ such knowledge, and the reality of the situation that necessarily follows from it, has bound man in a covenant (*al-mithāq*; *al-'ahd*) determining his purpose and attitude and action with respect to his self in his relation to God.¹¹⁴ This binding and determining of man to a covenant with God and to a precise nature in regard to his purpose, attitude, and action, is the binding and determining in religion (*al-dīn*) which entails true submission (*al-islām*).¹¹⁵ Thus knowledge and religion are natural correlates in the nature of man, that is, the original nature in which God has created him (*al-fiṭrah*). Man's purpose is therefore to know and to serve God (*'ibādah*)¹¹⁶ and his duty is obedience (*tā'ah*) to God, which conforms with his essential nature created for him by God.¹¹⁷

But man is also "composed of forgetfulness (*nisyān*)"—as a Prophetic tradition says¹¹⁸, and he is called *insān* basically precisely because, having testified to himself the truth of the covenant he sealed with God, which entails obedience of His commands and prohibitions, he forgot (*nasiya*) to fulfill his duty and his purpose. Hence according to ibn 'Abbās with reference to a passage in the Holy Qur'ān,¹¹⁹ the term *insān* is derived from *nasiya* when he said that man is called *insān* because, having covenanted with God, he forgot (*nasiya*).¹²⁰ Forgetfulness is the cause of man's disobedience, and this blameworthy nature inclines

¹¹³ *Al-A'raf* (7): 172.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ See chapter I, above.

¹¹⁶ *Al-Dhāriyāt* (51): 66.

¹¹⁷ *Al-Rūm* (30): 30.

¹¹⁸ *Kashf al-Khaṣā'*, 2 vols. 4th pr, Bayrūt, 1985, vol. 2, p. 419, no. 2806. Al-Ṭabarānī, al-Tirmizī, ibn Abī Shaybah, from ibn 'Abbās.

¹¹⁹ *Ṭā Hā* (20): 115.

¹²⁰ *LA*, vol. 6, p. 11, col. 1.

him towards injustice (*ẓulm*) and ignorance (*jahl*).¹²¹ But God has equipped him with the powers and faculties of right vision and apprehension, of real savouring of truth, of right speech and communication; and He has indicated to him the right and the wrong with respect to the course of action he should take so that he might strive to attain his bright destiny.¹²² The choice for the better (*ikhtiyār*)¹²³ is left to him. Moreover, God has equipped him with intelligence to know and distinguish reality from non-reality, truth from falsehood, and rectitude from error; and even though his intelligence—or rather his imaginative and estimative faculties—might confuse him,¹²⁴ and provided he is sincere and true to his noble nature, God, out of His bounty, mercy, and grace, will aid and guide him to attain to truth and right conduct. The supreme example of this is the case of the Prophet Ibrāhīm, upon whom be peace.¹²⁵ Man thus equipped and fortified is meant to be the vicegerent (*khalīfah*) of God on earth,¹²⁶ and as such the weighty burden of trust (*amānah*) is placed upon him—the trust and responsibility to rule according to God's will and purpose and His pleasure.¹²⁷ The trust implies responsibility to rule with justice, and the 'rule' means not simply ruling in the socio-political sense, nor in the controlling of nature in the scientific sense, but more fundamentally in its encompassing of the meaning of nature (*al-ṭabī'ah*), it means the ruling, governing, controlling and maintaining of man by his self or his rational soul.

The terms heart (*qalb*), soul or self (*nafs*), spirit (*rūh*),

¹²¹ *Al-Aḥzāb*, (33): 72.

¹²² *Al-Balad* (90): 8–10; *Al-Aḥqāf* (46): 26; *Al-Nahl* (16): 78; *Al-Sajdah* (32): 9; *Al-Mulk* (67): 23; *Al-Mu'minūn* (23): 78.

¹²³ See *Introduction* above, pp. 33–34

¹²⁴ *Al-Ghazālī*, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, Cairo, 1964, p.47.

¹²⁵ *Al-An'ām* (6): 74–82.

¹²⁶ *Al-Baqarah* (2): 30.

¹²⁷ *Al-Aḥzāb* (33): 72.

and intellect (*'aql*) used in relation to the soul each conveys two meanings; the one referring to the material or physical aspect of man, or to the body; and the other to the non-material, imaginal and intelligential or spiritual aspect, or to the soul of man.¹²⁸ In general, and from the ethical point of view, the first meaning denotes that aspect from which originates the blameworthy qualities in man, and they are the animal powers which in spite of their being beneficial to man in some respects, are in conflict with the intellectual powers. The attachment of blameworthiness to the animal powers inherent in the physical aspect of man should not be confused with the idea of denigration of the human body, which is indeed against the teachings of Islām. The human being is created "in the best of moulds", but without true faith and good works he is worse than the lowly beasts.¹²⁹ It is against these non-beneficial aspects of the animal powers that the Holy Prophet urged us when he alluded to the greater struggle (*jihād*) of man, for they are the enemy within.¹³⁰ The second meaning refers to the reality of man and to his essence. To this meaning refers the well known Prophetic tradition: "Whosoever knows his self knows his Lord."

The real essence of man originated from the worlds of dominion (*al-malakūt*) and of command (*al-amr*).¹³¹ When it inclines itself towards the right direction, the divine peace (*al-sakīnah*) will descend upon it,¹³² and the effusion of divine liberality will successively be diffused in it until it achieves tranquility in the remembrance of God and abides in the knowledge of His divinity, and soars towards the high-

¹²⁸ *Iḥyā'*, vol. 3, p. 3; *Ma'ārij*, p. 15 fol.

¹²⁹ *Al-Ṭīn* (95): 4–5.

¹³⁰ Bayhaqī, *Zuhd*, from Jābir. Ibn Hajar says this *ḥadīth* is well known. *Kashf al-Khaṣā'*, vol. 1, p. 511, no. 1362.

¹³¹ *Yā Sīn* (36): 83; *Al-Mu'minūn* (23): 88.

¹³² *Al-Baqarah* (2): 248; *Al-Tawbah* (9): 26;40; *Al-Fath* (48): 4.

est levels of the angelic horizons. The Holy Qur'ān calls this state of the soul and tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma'in-nah*).¹³³ The faculties or powers of the soul are like armies engaged in constant battles of alternate success. Sometimes the soul is drawn towards its intellectual powers and encounters the intelligibles whereby their eternal truths cause it to affirm its loyalty to God; and sometimes its animal powers drag it down to the lowest foothills of the bestial nature. This vacillation in the state of the soul is the state of the soul that censures itself (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*);¹³⁴ it is in earnest struggle with its animal powers. By means of knowledge, moral excellence, and good works it is possible for man to attain to the angelic nature, and when he does, he no longer has in common with his fellow man the animal nature in him except in outward form and fashion. But if he falls into the degrading depths of the bestial nature and remains captive in that condition, then he is severed from the nature common to humanity and appears as man only in shape and construction. This is the state of the soul that incites to evil (*al-nafs al-ammārah bi 'l-sū*).¹³⁵

In its specific sense, and when referring to the heart, the first meaning indicates the pine-shaped lump of muscular flesh situated to the left side in the breast. It is the circulator of blood to every part of the body and the fountain-head of the subtle vapour that is the vehicle of the physical animal spirit. Through this vehicle the animal spirit rises from its fountain-head in the heart to the brain through the veins to all parts of the body. This spirit is the conveyor of animal life and is common to all animals. When it passes away it causes the death of the external senses involving that of the body as a whole. As for the intellect, it performs

¹³³ *Al-Fajr* (89): 27.

¹³⁴ *Al-Qiyāmah* (75): 2.

¹³⁵ *Yūsuf* (12): 53.

abstractions of objects of the external world and contemplates the realities of things, and its functions are localized in various regions of the brain. The soul or self sometimes denotes the individual, concrete existence of a thing or person.¹³⁶

With reference to the meanings of the four terms used in relation to the soul when they pertain to the soul of man, they all indicate an indivisible, identical entity, a spiritual substance which is the reality or very essence of man. In this sense they point to a unifying principle referred to as the *kamāl* or perfection of a being, to the mode of existence of that which transforms something potential to something actual.¹³⁷ This entity, which is a spiritual subtlety (*al-laṭīfah al-rūḥāniyyah*), is a thing created, but it is immortal; it is not measured in terms of extent in space and time, or of quantity; it is conscious of itself and is the lotus of intelligibles; and the way to know it is only through intellect and by means of observing the activities that originate in it. It has many names because of its accidental modes or states (*aḥwāl*). Thus when it is involved in intellection and apprehension it is called ('intellect'); when it governs the body it is called ('soul'); when it is engaged in receiving intuitive illumination it is called ('heart'); and when it reverts to its own world of abstract entities it is called ('spirit'). Indeed, it is in reality always engaged in manifesting itself in all its states.

The soul possesses faculties or powers (*quwā*) which become manifest in its relation to bodies. In plants they are the powers of nutrition (*al-ghādhīyyah*), growth (*al-nāmiyyah*), and generation or reproduction (*al-muwallidah*). These powers, in their general and not their specific senses, exist also in animals; and in man, whose body belongs to the animal species, there are powers of volition or action at will

¹³⁶ *Ma'ārij*, pp. 15–18.

¹³⁷ *Ma'ārij*, pp. 21–22; *Shifā'*, pp. 9–10; *Najāṭ*, p. 197.

(*al-muḥarrikah*), and perception (*al-mudrikah*) in addition to those of nutrition, growth, and reproduction. All these powers belong to the soul, and in view of their common inherence generally in the different bodies as well as their separate inherence specifically in accordance with the natures of the different species, the soul is somewhat like a genus divided into three different souls respectively: the vegetative (*al-nabāṭiyyah*), the animal (*al-ḥayawāniyyah*), and the human (*al-insāniyyah*) or the rational (*al-nāṭiqah*).

The powers peculiar to the animal soul are motive and perceptive, each of which is of two kinds. The motive power operates as the arouser of action (*al-bā'ithah 'alā 'l-fi'l*) on the one hand, and as itself active (*fā'ilah*) or actuator on the other. As the arouser of action it directs movement attracted by what it considers beneficial or harmful. When attracted by what it imagines to be something beneficial to it, its desire for it arouses its active power to attain it. When attracted by what it considers to be harmful to it, its aversion for it arouses its active power to avoid or overcome it. It is appetitive (*nuzū'iyyah*), and its activity is directed by two sub-faculties: the faculty of desire (*al-shahwāniyyah*), and the faculty of anger (*al-ghaḍabiyyah*). As actuator it initiates and communicates movement starting the operation of the nerves, muscles, tendons, and ligaments towards fulfilling its purpose in accordance with what it desires or opposes.¹³⁸

As for the perceptive power, this comprises the five external senses (*al-ḥawāss*) in the developmental order of touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing respectively. These perform the function of perception of particulars in the external world. In addition to these there are five internal senses which perceive internally the sensual images and their meanings, combine or separate them, conceive notions of them, preserve the conceptions thus conceived, and per-

form intellection of them.¹³⁹

The perceptive powers of the internal senses may be classified into three kinds: some perceive but do not retain their objects; some retain objects but do not act upon them; some perceive their objects and act upon them. Perception is either of the form or the meaning (i.e. the intention or denotation) of the sensible objects; and the senses that retain their objects either retain their forms or their meanings; and those that act upon their objects act upon their forms or their meanings. The perceiver sometimes perceives directly and sometimes indirectly through another perceptive power. The difference between the form and the meaning is that the form is what is first perceived by the external sense, and then by the internal sense; the meaning is what the internal sense perceives of the sensed object without its having been previously perceived by the external sense. In the act of perception, the perceiver perceives the *form* of the external object, that is, an *image* or *representation* of the external reality, and not the reality itself. What is perceived by the senses is then not the external reality, but its like as represented in the senses. The external reality is that from which the senses abstract its form. Similarly, with regard to the meaning, the intelligible forms are representations of realities that are imprinted upon the soul, because the intellect has already abstracted them from the accidental attachments that are foreign to their natures, such as quantity, quality, space, and position.¹⁴⁰

The existence of the internal senses is established by way of intuition (*al-wijdān*).¹⁴¹ The first of these internal

¹³⁸ *Ma'ārij*, p. 37 fol.; *Shifā'*, p. 33; *Najāṭ*, pp. 197–198.

¹³⁹ *Ma'ārij*, p. 41; *Shifā'*, pp. 33–34; *Najāṭ*, p. 198.

¹⁴⁰ *Ma'ārij*, pp. 44–45; *Najāṭ*, pp. 200–201.

¹⁴¹ The term *wijdān* is used by al-Ghazālī in the *Ma'ārij* (p. 45). Here it is understood in its general sense as intuition based on introspection.

senses receives the information brought in by the external senses and combines and separates internal images or representations of the external sensible objects. It is the common sense (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*),¹⁴² also called the phantasy (*fantāsiā*). The common sense directly receives the data of the five external senses. It is necessary that the external sensible objects be first present to the external senses before they can be perceived by the common sense. It perceives only their individual sensible particulars, and not their intelligible universals, and it is able to sense pleasure and pain, both as perceived in the imagination as well as in the external sensible objects. It gathers together the sensed forms, combining and separating similar and dissimilar forms so as to make perception possible. This perception of forms, which are internal images or representations of the sensed objects, is called phantasy, and its recorder is the sensitive imagination (*al-khayāl*) or the representative faculty (*al-khayāliyyah*). The common sense, it may be further noted, only receives the data provided by the external senses, gathering together similar as well as dissimilar ones, but does not retain what it receives.

The function of recording and retaining the images or forms of the external objects received by the common sense belongs to the second internal sense called the representative faculty which we just mentioned. This faculty retains the images representing the external objects when the objects are no longer present to the external senses, and thus records the information received by the common sense

¹⁴² *I.e.* an internal sense common to all the five external senses. It unites the sensations of all the senses in a general sensation or perception. On *al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*, see *Al-Shifā'*, pp. 145 fol. The Latin translation is *communis sensus*, from which the term 'common sense' is derived. Here, then, common sense is used as a technical term, and not in its general everyday usage as something quite evident or obvious.

from the external senses and preserves their images, their individual and collective meanings, and representations already existing therein for presentation to the third internal sense, which is the estimative faculty (*al-wahmiyyah*).

This faculty perceives of the individual, sensible particulars, their particular, nonsensible meanings, like enmity and love, and performs the function of judgement concerning right and wrong and good and bad pertaining to its objects as if they were sensible objects of the external world. The estimation is where judgements and opinions are formed, and unless governed by the intellect it and the imaginative powers related to it are the sources of errors of judgement.¹⁴³ By means of this faculty, for example, the soul denies the intellectual substances that are not bounded nor located; by it the soul affirms the existence of a void encompassing the universe; and by it also the soul is made to accept the validity of syllogisms based on sophistical premises and to differ in the arrival at the conclusion. The estimative faculty presides over judgements not in the analytical way that characterizes intellectual judgements, but in the imaginative way determined by memory images through a process of association from past experience, or not by memory images, but by an instinctive interpretation of the image perceived by the soul without going through any process of association from past experience.¹⁴⁴

Just as the representative faculty conserves forms which it receives from the common sense, the fourth internal sense, called the retentive and recollective faculty (*al-ḥāfiẓah* and *al-dhākirah*), retains meanings and conserves them for the estimative faculty which perceives these meanings. The retentive faculty retains particular meanings and memorizes them for close inspection and appraisal by the

¹⁴³ *Mishkāt*, p. 47.

¹⁴⁴ *Ma'ārij*, p. 46.

perceiver for so long as they remain in it. When they become absent from retention and the perceiver wishes to recall them, then it is called the recollective faculty. The relation of the retentive faculty to meanings is like the relation of the representative faculty to sensible things whose images are formed in the common sense.

The fifth internal sense is the imaginative faculty (*al-mutakhayyilah*). It perceives forms, then combines and separates them in an act of classification; adds to them and takes away from them so that the soul may perceive their meanings and connect them with the forms or images. It is the natural disposition of this faculty to perform the function of appraisal in orderly or non-orderly fashion, so that in that way the soul may use it to formulate any order it pleases. The soul uses this faculty for the purpose of classification by means of combining and separating its objects, sometimes through the practical reason and sometimes through the theoretical reason. Its essential nature is to perform the function of combining and separating, and not of perception. When the soul uses it as an intellectual instrument it is cogitative; and when it is used according to its natural disposition it is imaginative. The soul perceives what this faculty combines and separates of the forms through the mediacy of the common sense as well as through the mediacy of the estimative faculty. In its developed form this faculty apprehends ideas beyond the spheres of sense and sensual images. It is a specifically human faculty not found in the lower animals. By means of this faculty are established principles of necessary and universal application.

The fifth internal sense, then, has a dual function which is related to the animal and the human souls respectively. In this sense, this faculty has two aspects: an aspect to the senses, and an aspect to the intellect. In the former case it receives sensual forms as the sense perceives it, that is either as a reality or as something metaphorical. As a reality it presents the form as it is in itself; as a metaphor it presents the form not as it is in itself, but as the form is seen by it to

be as it is in itself, for example, a mirage. In the latter case it receives the intelligible forms as the cogitative faculty apprehends it, that is, as true or false. As something true it is the form as it really is; as something false it is the form not as it really is, but as the form is perceived by it to be as it really is, for example, magic or heresy, or any other erroneous judgment of facts.¹⁴⁵ In relation to the animal soul it is the faculty of sensitive imagination (*al-mutakhayyal*) which is productive of technical and artistic skills; in relation to the human soul it is the faculty of rational imagination (*al-mufakkirah*). In relation to the human, rational soul this faculty is cogitative. It functions as the manager of the data of theoretical reason, combining and arranging them as premises from which it deduces informing knowledge.

Then from this knowledge it derives conclusions, and from two such conclusions it derives another and combines them yet again acquiring new conclusions and so on.¹⁴⁶

These then are the five internal senses explained in a brief and general way. With reference to their classification into three kinds we may now identify them: the perceiver of forms is the common sense, and its conserver is the imagination or representative faculty. The perceiver of meanings is the estimation, and its conserver is the retentive and recollective faculty. That which perceives and acts upon its objects is the imaginative faculty, while that which only perceives and does not act upon its objects is the estimation and the common sense. These internal senses do not have specific sense organs as intermediary instruments performing specific functions like those of the external senses, but they are of an imaginal and intellectual nature and have connections with physical intermediaries, and their various functions are localized in the anterior, posterior, and middle

¹⁴⁵ *Ma'arīj*, p. 77.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 45–47.

regions of the brain.¹⁴⁷

The faculties of the soul are not separate entities each acting differently apart from the soul itself. They appear to be so and perform different functions some of them prior in time to others not because they are essentially different from each other, but because of the localization of functions through different organs, and whose functions become actualized at different times, and due to the different states in which the soul is involved. In this respect, the faculties of the soul are in reality the soul itself as it manifests itself in accordance with its various modes.

The human, rational soul also possesses two powers which are both aspects of the same intellect. One of these is active (*'āmilah*), and the other cognitive (*'ālimah*). In so far as it functions as the active intellect it is the principle of movement of the human body. It is the practical reason, and directs individual actions in agreement with the theoretical faculty of the cognitive intellect. In relation to the motive power of the animal soul, which is responsible for the exertion of willing that desire or aversion shall issue in action, it produces human emotions. In relation to the perceptive power and its representative, estimative, and imaginative faculties it manages physical objects and produces human skills and arts; and in relation to its faculty of rational imagination it gives rise to premises and conclusions. In so far as it governs and manages the human body it induces ethical behaviour in man involving the recognition of vices and virtues.¹⁴⁸

The soul may be considered as having two aspects in relation to receiving and giving-effects: an aspect towards what is lower in degree than itself, such as the body; and an aspect towards what is higher in degree than itself, such as the world of spirit whence it originated. In connection with

what it receives from what is above it for its benefit and its action, it is a recipient of effects; and in connection with what is below it, the soul cannot be a recipient, but a giver of effects.¹⁴⁹ From this aspect of the soul that inclines towards what is lower issues ethical principles and the notion of vices and virtues for the guidance of the body; and from the aspect that looks to what is higher it receives knowledge. As a recipient of the creative power of knowledge through intellection and intuition it is the cognitive intellect. The power of the cognitive intellect is speculative (*naẓariyyah*). It is predisposed to the management of universal forms absolutely separated from matter; its purpose is the abstraction of intelligibles from matter, space, and position; it acts upon concepts of concepts such as the secondary intelligibles (*al-ma'qulat al-thānīyah*).¹⁵⁰ If the universal forms are not completely separated from matter, but are separated only in various degrees of separation which still have material connections, such as concepts of objects of the external world or the primary intelligibles (*al-ma'qulat al-ūlā*),¹⁵¹ then it will effect their absolute separation by means of abstraction. If the universal forms are in themselves abstract, then it takes them as they are.

The process of abstraction of sensibles to intelligibles, which is in reality an epistemological process towards the arrival at meaning, undergoes various grades of completion leading to perfection. It begins already in the initial act of perception by sense; then it attains to a slightly higher degree of completion by means of the imagination, and a more refined one by the estimation even before attaining to

¹⁴⁷ *Ma'ārij*, pp. 47–48; *Shifā'*, pp. 145–150.

¹⁴⁸ *Ma'ārij*, pp. 49–50; *Shifā'*, p. 185; *Najāt*, pp. 202–203.

¹⁴⁹ *I.e.* effects that are good or those that are bad. See the three degrees of the soul mentioned in pp. 146–147 above.

¹⁵⁰ *I.e.* like the concept 'rational animal' as derived from another concept 'man'.

¹⁵¹ *I.e.* like the concept 'man' as corresponding to a particular, existent human being.

complete and perfect abstraction by the intellect.¹⁵²

The sensible, particular forms that have already been imprinted in the estimation, imagination, and sensation before the arrival of intelligible, universal forms in the intellect, reside in physical entities representing perceptive powers and faculties whose functions are localized in the body. When these forms are present in these faculties and are retained by their conservers, they serve as intellectual forms, or forms whose complete abstraction requires the exercise of the intellect. As to the relation of the intellect to the rational imagination, the contents of the imagination serve the intellect as potential intelligibles, becoming actual intelligibles when the intellect appraises them; not in the sense of being transformed into another form from their state of potentiality in the imagination, or of being transferred therefrom, for they remain as they are in the imagination and maintain their character as images. Only that when the intellect appraises the images, they produce an effect like the effect that comes about when light falls upon sensible things enveloped in darkness making them visible. Thus the actual intelligibles are something else other than the forms of the imagination, which only serve to generate other forms in the intellect when the intellect appraises them, that is, considers, compares and analyses them, and then abstracts them from their material attachments and arrives at their universal meanings. The intellect first distinguishes their essential natures from their accidental attachments, their similar and dissimilar characteristics, then from the many meanings in the similars it is able to arrive at their single universal meaning; and from the similar meaning in each of the dissimilars it is able to arrive at their multiple meanings. The intellect then has the power of deriving many meanings

¹⁵² See *Ma'ārij*, pp. 61–62; *Shifā'*, pp. 50–51 fol; *Najāṭ*, pp. 207–210.

from the single, and a single meaning from the many. This intellectual activity becomes manifest in our formulation of the logical divisions of genus, species, and differentia; the formulation of our syllogisms that enable us to arrive at conclusions; the formulation of definitions.¹⁵³

In respect of its being a recipient of effects from what is above it, the speculative power of the cognitive intellect has many relations and operations. It is not a merely passive recipient, for that which is a recipient of something else is a recipient in terms of power and act.¹⁵⁴

Power is meant in three ways in terms of priority and posteriority: as absolute potency (*al-isti'dād al-muḥlaq*); as possible (*mumkinah*) or possessive (*malakah*); and as perfection (*kamāl*). Absolute potency is the state of being mere potentiality capable of receiving effects; it is pure power without the act, like the power in the child to write. As the child grows and develops into a youth, the power in the potentiality of receiving effects becomes gradually actualized by means of the instrument of actualization to that extent which is possible for him to receive at this stage without need of the mediacy of any physical instrument.¹⁵⁵ He now knows how to use the ink, and the pen; and understands the simple letters thus possessing the capacity to write them. Then when he becomes an adult, the power becomes actualized completely by means of the instrument of actualization, such that he can act whenever he pleases without need of acquisition, but that it is sufficient for him merely to intend the act and he acts, like the power in the writer who has reached consummation in his skill and knowledge when he is not writing. Indeed, it is the intellect that is the agent of

¹⁵³ *Shifā'*, pp. 208–211; *Ma'ārij*, p. 126.

¹⁵⁴ *Ma'ārij*, p. 51; *Shifā'*, p. 39; *Najāṭ*, p. 204.

¹⁵⁵ Without need of the mediacy of any physical instrument, because the real instrument of actualization is the intellect, as we state presently.

instrument of actualization of the power that lies in potentiality in the various stages of human development from infancy to maturity.¹⁵⁶

The relations and operations of the speculative power of the cognitive intellect involve four aspects of the intellect governing the stages of human intellectual development from mere potency to perfect actualization. The first aspect is called the material intellect (*al-'aql al-hayūlānī*). It is so called by way of analogy with the Greek concept of primary matter (*al-hayūlā*: Greek *hylē*), which is pure matter without form, but capable of receiving all forms. There is, however, a difference between the Greek concept of primary matter and the material intellect we speak of here; and that is that while primary matter is capable of receiving *all* forms, the material intellect is capable of receiving only forms that its particular potentiality or power is capable of receiving and this latent capacity is not the same for every individual.¹⁵⁷ The second aspect is the possible intellect (*al-'aql al-mumkin*) or the possessive intellect (*al-'aql bi'l-malakah*), which is able, by means of the power that has become activated in it, to receive from the primary intelligibles the first principles established by premises upon which rest self-evident truths, that is, those obtained not by means of deduction nor by verification, but necessarily—such as apprehension of the truth in the statement that the whole of something is greater than the parts, or that things equal to one and the same thing are equal to one another. Related to the material intellect, this intellect is active, for while the former has only the power without the act such that nothing can issue forth from it, nor has the instrument of actualization ever been achieved by it, it is the latter intellect that is the agent for bringing forth what is potential in the former in accordance with the power

to produce that is possible in itself at this stage. Related to the possessive intellect, this intellect that is in action makes possible for the former the reception of speculative forms from the primary intelligibles, by means of which it becomes possible for the former to arrive at the secondary intelligibles. The possessive intellect does not appraise these forms or give insights into their true natures, but merely acts as their repository. In this respect the intellect is possessive because it is able to possess and conserve the forms for further action by what comes after it. At this level, it is again the intellect-in-action that appraises the speculative forms by its act; it performs intellection of them, and perceives that it performs the intellection. It is called the intellect-in-action (*al-'aql bi'l-fi'l*) because it is the agent for bringing forth by act, and it performs intellection whenever it pleases without need of the effort of acquisition. In relation to what comes after it, the intellect-in-action may be called the potential intellect (*al-'aql bi'l-quwwah*); for the active nature of the intellect, in relation to its capacity to act absolutely, appraises further the forms present in it by means of act, and by the same means it performs intellection of them and further performs intellection of its intellection. At this stage of its actualization it is called the acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafād*). It is called acquired because it perceives clearly that when the potential intellect passes over into absolute actuality, it does so by virtue of an intellect that is always in act, and that when this intellect that is always in act makes a specific contact with the potential intellect, it imprints into the latter a specific form, so that the intellect acquires these forms from outside itself.¹⁵⁸

From the foregoing it becomes clear that there are three stages through which the human intellect passes in its intellectual development from pure potentiality to actuality.

¹⁵⁶ *Ma'ārij*, p. 91; *Shifā'*, pp. 39–40; *Najāt*, p. 204.

¹⁵⁷ See below p. 163 and note 160.

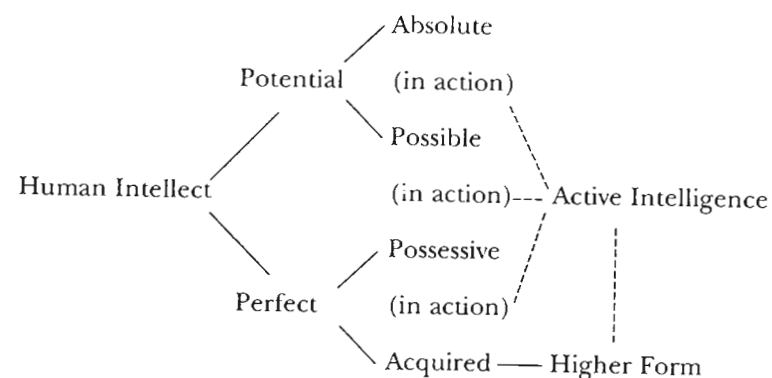
¹⁵⁸ *Ma'ārij*, p. 52; *Shifā'*, pp. 39–40; *Najāt*, p. 205

The first stage is that of the material intellect, which is nothing but a pure potency of receiving intelligible forms. When its dormant state is activated by intelligible impressions coming from the intellect-in-action, it becomes possible for it to possess the intelligible forms without actually thinking upon them. At this stage the material intellect has imprinted upon it the intelligible forms and becomes their conserver. It is no longer in a state of absolute potentiality; it is now a possible intellect possessing principles of knowledge. This is the second stage. Then when at this stage of the possible intellect, it is again activated by the intellect-in-action, it appraises the intelligible forms imprinted upon it. When it has all the speculative forms and acquisition ceases, the possible intellect passes into a state of settled tendency to think upon them. Its former state of relative potentiality has now become perfected potentiality. At this stage the possible intellect as intellect-in-action becomes capable of performing the act of thinking by itself, and the tendency to do so has become habitual to it. This is the third stage wherein the possible intellect becomes the possessive intellect. These developmental stages are common in all mankind, but in some cases there is indeed a fourth stage. When the possessive intellect actually reflects upon its own contents, that is, when it thinks, and thinks the thought it is thinking, it has reached the stage of absolute actuality and becomes the acquired intellect.

Since the potential intellect cannot by itself become actual, the actualization of the human intellect from absolute potentiality to absolute actuality presupposes the existence of an external intelligence which is always in act and which transforms the human intellect from the state of pure latency to that of perfect actuality. This external intelligence is the Active Intelligence (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*) identified as the Holy Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-qudus*),¹⁵⁹ and ultimately as God. In

¹⁵⁹ *Ma'ārij*, p.124. Al-Ghazālī adduces as proof of the identity of

relation to the human intellect, the Active Intelligence is the intellect-in-action which rouses the potential material intellect from its state of dormancy by activating in it the thought of universal forms and eternal truths thereby transforming it into the possible intellect. Then, becoming more and more actualized (*i.e.* as the possessive intellect) by means of the illumination which it receives from the intellect-in-action, the human intellect becomes capable of self-intellection (*i.e.* the stage of the acquired intellect) and resembles the Active Intelligence. In relation to the Active Intelligence, the acquired intellect is like the potential material intellect, becoming transformed into a higher form when it receives illumination from the former. Thus the human intellect may be classified as follows:



These, then, are the various degrees of power in the relations and operations of the speculative nature of the cognitive intellect. In this we see that the consummation of the animal genus and the human species is accomplished in the acquired intellect. Now this acquired intellect attains to

the Active Intelligence the Sacred Texts: *Al-Najm* (53): 5-6; *Al-Shūrā* (42): 51; and *Al-Takwīr* (81): 19-20; *Ma'ārij*, p.123.

higher forms of intellect graded in various degrees of excellence. In relation to the higher planes of existence, the acquired intellect is none other than the holy intellect (*al-'aql al-qudsi*), which characterizes the intellects of the prophets, the saints, and the learned who are established in knowledge, each according to their various degrees of excellence. Although the human soul is common in mankind it differs in potency,¹⁶⁰ and it differs in individuals due to differences in the accidents that make up every personality; and the potential power in the material intellect is therefore not equal in capacity for everyone. The potency in the intellect is ordered according to nobility of soul, the highest being that of the Holy Prophet.¹⁶¹

The intellect is essentially a spiritual substance; it is non-material and separate from matter and only its act is connected with matter. A material or physical entity such as a body can neither receive nor contain intelligibles; nor can intelligibles reside in a body because a physical entity is divisible, and whatever resides in it is also divisible. Since the intelligible is a single, universal form it is indivisible, and it is impossible for it to reside in bodily entities.¹⁶² Intelligible forms, and even forms of the cognitive imagination, have no physical repository. The internal senses in the body receive only sensible, particular forms whose images and meanings are conserved in the representative and the retentive or recollective faculties which serve the imaginative powers. If the soul, which does not retain such forms, wishes to review rational concepts pertaining to them necessitating a reconsideration of the forms through the medium of these faculties, it merely has to recall them as they exist in their repositories. If, however, they no longer exist in their repositories

then their reappraisal by the rational soul necessitates a process of reacquisition. As for the intelligible forms, the intellect utilizes their meanings after they have been imprinted in it. It does not possess the actual intelligible realities themselves, as they are contained neither in the body nor in any physical entity as we have already stated, nor in the soul because if they were the soul would have been aware of them; and its being aware of them simply means the act of intellection by the rational soul or intellect, and this refers to their forms or meanings as imprinted in it, not to the intelligible realities themselves. Since these intelligible realities are neither in the body nor in the soul, they must be external to them. Their separate existence external to them means either their being self-subsistent entities, or entities inhering in a substance whence they originate and whose predisposition is to imprint intelligible forms in the human soul. It is not possible for them to be self-subsistent, for intelligible realities inhere in a substance; and thus it follows that their repository and source of origin is that substance we call the Active Intelligence.¹⁶³

The relation of the Active Intelligence to the soul is like that of the sun to the eye.¹⁶⁴ Without light coming from the sun, the eyes in darkness remain as potential organs of vision; and the objects of sight remain potentially visible. Only when the sun sheds its light do the eyes become actually seeing, and their objects become actual visibles. So in like manner does the potential intellect become actual intellect, and the potential intelligibles become actual intelligibles by means of the light that is shed by the Active Intelligence upon the soul. When the intellectual power of the soul - that is, the potential intellect - appraises the par-

¹⁶⁰ *Al-Baqarah* (2): 286; *Al-A'raf* (7): 42; *Al-Mu'minun* (23): 62.

¹⁶¹ *Ma'arij*, p. 53; *Shifā'*, pp. 212-220.

¹⁶² *Ma'arij*, p. 123. *Najāt*, pp. 213-216.

¹⁶³ *Ma'arij*, p. 124.

¹⁶⁴ *Ma'arij*, p. 125; *Shifā'*, p. 208; *Najāt*, p. 231. See also above, pp. 157-158.

particulars in the imagination, this act of appraisal puts it in a state of readiness to receive the universal intelligible from the Active Intelligence by way of illumination. The arrival at the meanings of the particular images whose material attachments have all been abstracted by the illumination of the Active Intelligence is due to an immediate apprehension in the soul or intellect caused by the illumination that comes directly from the Active Intelligence. The elements of meanings that are in the images are then not the cause of the production of their like in the intellect. The action of the Active Intelligence upon the potential intellect, causing the latter's immediate apprehension which transforms it into an actual intellect, is very much like the immediate apprehension arrived at by the intellect of the necessary connection between the premises and the conclusion in a syllogism. The activity of the soul in the appraisal of the particulars is then simply to bring itself to a state of readiness to receive the intelligibles from the Active Intelligence.¹⁶⁵

In relation to the soul, the intellect is a faculty or power of the soul that becomes manifest in man as the rational soul. This intellectual power is something different from the rational soul, since the active agent is the soul, and the intellect is in this respect its instrument, like the knife and the cutting. But in reality intellect, soul, and mind, point to the same entity, being called intellect because the entity is perceptive; being called soul because the entity governs the body; being called mind because the entity is predisposed to the apprehension of realities.

The human soul, though independent of the body, yet requires the body in this physical world in order to acquire principles of ideas and beliefs. By means of its relationship with the body, the rational soul makes use of the animal powers to gain, among the data supplied to it by the senses,

¹⁶⁵ *Ma'ārij*, p. 125; *Shifā'*, p. 208.

the particulars. Through the particulars it acquires, among other things, four informing matters:

(1) The isolation of single universals from particulars by way of abstraction of their meanings from matter and from material connections and connective relations; and consideration of the common and differentiating factors in their essential and accidental existence. Through this process the soul acquires the principles of ideas by utilizing the imagination and the estimation, such as the genus and the differentia, the general and the particular accident.¹⁶⁶

(2) The establishment of comparative relations and ratios between the single universals in the manner of negation and affirmation.

(3) The acquisition of empirical premises, which are obtained by means of the senses through sensible experience, and by means of the process of reasoning from parallel cases, or analogy, through repeated observation.

(4) Reports that are successively transmitted on which rest true beliefs.¹⁶⁷

We have thus far been explaining in a brief and general way the soul's intellectual activity in the course of its

¹⁶⁶ A genus is a class of objects of knowledge more extensive than the species; for example, 'animal'. A differentia is a property distinguishing a species from other species of the same genus; for example, 'rational' from the genus 'animal'. An accident is an occurrence, a happening, an event, an essential property of substance that is continually being replaced by similars. A particular accident is an inseparable accident of a class of objects, such as the 'blackness' of crows. A general accident is a separable accident which allows some members of a class to differ from other members of the same class, such as the 'white' or 'fat' horses from the 'black' or 'lean' horses; it equally allows a thing to differ from itself at different times, as it happens in all cases of things that grow and decay.

¹⁶⁷ *Ma'ārij*, pp. 101–102; *Shifā'*, p. 197; *Najāt*, pp. 220–221.

cognitive involvement in the material and intelligible domains of existence, the world of gross matter and the world of pure ideas. We pointed out that this activity consists in the abstraction of matter and its attendant attachments by means of its external and internal senses and of the intellect. Since we said that the soul is a spiritual substance independent of the body, and since this explanation of the soul's intellectual activity and cognitive involvement pertains to the worlds of matter and intellect, of body and mind, it may be erroneously construed that when the body no longer lives the soul simply reverts to a purely intellectual world of utter abstraction.¹⁶⁸ But the soul's consciousness of itself is not only something intellectual in nature, it is something imaginal as well; and this means that not only the intellectual power of the soul, but the imaginative power also survive

¹⁶⁸ The psychology of the human soul sketched in the foregoing pages, which we have paraphrased from the *Ma'ārij* of al-Ghazālī, has largely been derived by al-Ghazālī from the *Shifā'* and the *Najāt* of ibn Sīnā as indicated in the reference notes. However, al-Ghazālī has added important modifications of his own. He has in fact also given a résumé of the theory of the philosophers on the animal and rational powers of the soul in his *Tahāfut* (Cairo, 1321H., pp. 70–71), saying that what they affirmed does not contradict religion - on the contrary, religion lends its support to their theory in this matter. Only their claim with regard to the primacy of the intellect as the sole guide to knowledge of the ultimate nature of reality is disputed (*Tahāfut*, p. 71). Religion, apart from stressing the cognitive role of the intellect (*'aql*) emphasizes no less the role of the heart (*qalb*) as a spiritual organ of cognition. The heart, also called *fu'ād*, is the organ of spiritual perception (see for example in the Holy Qur'ān, *Al-Najm* (53): 11). This spiritual perception, which is of the nature of perceptive experience and tasting, is connected with the imaginative faculty of the soul. See the schema of the soul on p. 176 below.

physical death. Imagination is a cognitive power of the soul. We are not here referring to that aspect of the imagination that is called phantasy, but to a spiritual or intelligential 'creative' imagination reflective of a real world of images (*'ālam al-mithāl*) ontologically existing independently between the world of gross matter and the world of pure ideas. This intermediary world reflects realities in the world of pure intelligibles which are in turn projected by it in the form of imperfect reflections in the world of sense and sensible experience.¹⁶⁹ The things in the world of images, which are reflections of realities in the intelligible world, exist in reality, their nature as images being neither purely intelligible nor grossly material. Images, like those in the dream state, have form and extension and quantity, and yet they are not material; they partake of both aspects of reality, the material and the intelligible, but are in nature neither the one nor the other. They are thus unlike the Platonic Ideas which are pure abstractions of the intellect.¹⁷⁰ Thus when we speak of the intellect's abstraction of matter and its accidental attach-

¹⁶⁹ The world of images or *'ālam al-mithāl* corresponds in theological terms to the *barzakh*, that is, an intermediary world into which he who dies enters and remains for a period from the time of death to resurrection.

¹⁷⁰ The idea of a real world of images (*'ālam al-mithāl*) and the science of symbolism pertaining to the interpretation of the reflections of that world in our world of sense and sensible experience, have their roots in al-Ghazālī and perhaps also in ibn Sīnā. In the *Ma'ārij*, al-Ghazālī has given an elaborate though concise explanation of the powers of the imagination (pp. 135–145; see also pp. 125–134). This was developed in Muslim metaphysical thinking especially by ibn 'Arabī, who derived many of his interpretations on the nature of reality from the writings of al-Ghazālī. See further the *Mishkāt* of al-Ghazālī, which is a profound commentary on the Verse of Light in the Sacred Text, and the conclusion to 'Afīfī's general introduction to the *Mishkāt*, pp. 34–35. See also ibn 'Arabī,

ments, it should not be understood thereby to mean that the soul effects a complete denudation of forms in the intelligibles; it is the *materiality* in matter that is abstracted by the intellect, and not the *imaginality* as well, for images are not matter and materiality does not pertain to them. The imagination that we mean, which is a cognitive faculty or power of the soul, like intellect, is immaterial, and therefore does not 'contain' the images. When we speak of intelligible forms being 'in' the mind, or images being 'in' the cognitive imagination, we do not mean that these forms or images are 'contained' in them; it is rather that they are *constructions* of the intellect or mind during the course of its intellection of them such that they are 'present' to the intellect, and hence referred to as being 'in' the mind; and *productions* of the cognitive imagination as it involves itself in projecting the sensible world.

In our present state, the intellect's inability to conceive or perceive abstract entities is not due to its essential nature, nor is it due to the nature of the abstract entities, but rather it is due to its own preoccupation with the body which is needed by it as we have mentioned. This being engrossed with the affairs of the body prevents it from perceiving the abstract realities in their original nature because the body acts as an obstruction. When, however, consciousness of the body and of the subjective self or ego is subdued, the intellect will be able to make contact with the Active Intelligence and will then be capable of perceiving the abstract realities as they are.¹⁷¹

Unlike the intellect, which undergoes a transformation from a state of potentiality to that of actuality, the imagination is from the beginning active. That aspect of the imagination whose powers are directed towards the world of

sense and sensible experience is the sensitive imagination or phantasy. It serves the practical intellect by providing it with the forms or images and meanings of particular objects of knowledge. It is also the source of fictitious productions. In contrast to the sensitive imagination, that aspect of the imagination whose powers are directed towards the realms of the intellect and the spiritual realities is the cognitive imagination, which is capable of reflecting the forms of the real world of images. However, because of the intermediary position of the world of images, and due to the dual function of the imagination that is aligned to it, being involved in the operation of its powers both with the sensible and intelligible realms, the imagination cannot preoccupy itself with its own world of real images without distraction.¹⁷²

We said in a note that the heart (*qalb*) is a subtle organ of cognition connected with the imaginative faculty of the soul. It is like a mirror that is ever-turning in different directions. When forms appear in front of it their images are reflected therein. The forms themselves remain always in their places outside the mirror, so that they are not transferred therein to the extent that the mirror may contain them. Only their images are reflected in the mirror. In like manner also, only when the mirror of the heart is turned towards the right direction without being distracted towards any other, and provided that it is not deficient in its reflective power and has achieved pellucid quality will the human soul be able to perceive clearly the real and true forms of the intelligential and spiritual realm.¹⁷³ Imagine yourself to be inside an opaque sphere. This sphere is within another such sphere, and that other within yet another one, all having each a single aperture. Now all these spheres are turning, rotating in different directions. Only when you have the

Fuṣūṣ, Cairo, 1946, pp. 99–104; and 'Afīfī's *ta'liqāt* to the *Fuṣūṣ*, pp. 74–76; 105–118.

¹⁷¹ *Ma'arīj*, p. 127; see also *Najāt*, pp. 219–220.

¹⁷² *Ma'arīj*, p. 137.

¹⁷³ *Ma'arīj*, p. 93.

power to make the spheres turn and rotate in such a way that their apertures would come in a line of conjunction with each other will the light from outside shine through, enabling you to see both what is within and without.

The power of imagination is not equal in men and differs according to their degrees of intellectual excellence and nobility of soul. In some it is stronger than in others, so that some may be able to see true visions of that intermediary world and others may not. We who affirm prophecy cannot deny the possibility that the forms of the world of images that are reflected in the cognitive imagination may get imprinted in the sensitive imagination or phantasy to the extent that the perceiver of these forms may actually see them in their sensible guise. Indeed, in the case of the Holy Prophet, for example, his cognitive imagination was so powerful that he was able to perceive intelligible realities in their sensible forms (*e.g.* the Angel in the form of a man); and sensible realities in their intelligible forms (*e.g.* the dead as alive in the other world).¹⁷⁴

The function of the imagination is then to create sensible things, or rather it is the soul itself that creates sensible things and perceptible forms from within itself as well as images of unperceived objects. The thinking and feeling entity to which perception, whether sensitive, imaginative and intellective, is attributed is then in reality not the external and internal senses, but the soul itself exercising its cognitive powers of intelligence and imagination. The soul is therefore not something passive; it is creative, and through perception, imagination and intelligence it participates in the 'creation' and interpretation of the worlds of sense and sensible experience, of images, and of intelligible forms or ideas.

The soul, according to a tradition of the Holy Prophet,

¹⁷⁴ *Ma'ārij*, p.78.

is created before the body,¹⁷⁵ meaning it existed long before the body. Some commentators think that the word for 'body' (sing. *jasad*) applied in the tradition, does not refer to organic bodies such as the human body, but rather to celestial or physical bodies. As for the word for 'spirit' (sing. *rūh*) occurring in the same tradition and understood as referring to the soul, they say that it refers to angelic entities. Their view in this matter reflects their position which amounts to a denial of the pre-existence of the soul, and seems to have originated from the position taken by ibn Sīnā, who argued according to the principles of physics, that it is impossible for the soul to exist before the body. Its pre-existence according to those principles entails either its being a simple unity or a plurality, both of which are impossible. Moreover, ibn Sīnā's argument against the pre-existence of the soul is directed against the doctrine of metempsychosis (*al-tana-sukh*).¹⁷⁶ Some Muslim thinkers and writers seem to have taken such arguments as conclusive and deny the pre-existence of the soul. As for the passage in the Holy Qur'ān referring to the creation of man where God says that after having fashioned him (*i.e.* formed him as body), He breathed into him of His spirit,¹⁷⁷ this does not demonstrate conclusively that the existence of the body is prior to that of the soul. It can also be interpreted that the spirit that was breathed into the body already implied the soul's pre-exis-

¹⁷⁵ This is a well known *hādīth* also reported in *Ma'ārij*, p.111. Al-Ghazālī, however, has given an interpretation of it aligned with the position of the philosophers who, following Aristotle, maintained that every soul is created to suit a particular body, thereby denying the pre-existence of the soul. But this position, as we will state presently, appears to have no real cogency and if so must be regarded as untenable.

¹⁷⁶ *Shifā'*, pp. 198–201; 202 fol; *Najāt*, pp. 222–230. See also *Ma'ārij*, pp. 105–115.

¹⁷⁷ *Al-Hijr*, (15): 29 .

tence. Moreover, in another passage in the Holy Qur'ān God says: 'It is We Who created you (i.e. the spirits or souls) and then We formed you (i.e. the bodies).'¹⁷⁸ With regard to the interpretation of the term *jasad* being meant, in the tradition referred to above, to denote not the organic or human body, but the physical or celestial body, the testimony of linguistic usage demonstrates that *jasad* is synonymous with *badan*, which invariably refers to the organic and the human body; whereas a physical or celestial body is usually denoted by the term *jisim*, even though *jisim* too may be employed synonymously with *jasad*. The usual distinction between *jisim* and *jasad* is, however, that the former refers to body in the genus of quantity, whereas the latter refers to body in the genus of animal.¹⁷⁹

But we do not agree with their position on the soul. Their adherence to the principles of physics in denying the pre-existence of the soul reflects the position of the essentialists or those who affirm the primacy of quiddity over existence. We maintain that their position on the soul is confused, and indeed ibn Sīnā himself seems to have contradicted his own position on the preexistence of the soul in his psychology and his oriental philosophy, where the soul's prior existence is implied.¹⁸⁰ We do not admit that the principles of physics must necessarily be brought to bear insofar as the nature of the soul is concerned. Moreover, we do not concede that our affirmation of pre-existence of the soul has

¹⁷⁸ *Al-A'rāf*, (7): 11. More specific, *Al-A'lā* (87): 2

¹⁷⁹ See my *Commentary on the Hujjat al-Ṣiddiq*, Ministry of Culture Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1986, p. 330, note 463. Cp. *Lisān al-'Arab*, vol. 3, p.120, cols. 1 & 2; vol. 12, p. 99, col. 1.

¹⁸⁰ E.g. *al-Najāt*, p. 223; and Fazlur Rahman's commentary in *Avicenna's Psychology*, London, 1952, p. 107, with reference to Ch.XII, p. 57. See also ibn Sīnā's poem on the soul called *Al-Qaṣīdatu 'l-'Ayniyyah*, tr. by A.J. Arberry in *Avicenna's Theology*, London, 1951 pp. 77-78.

anything to do with the doctrine of metempsychosis, which - insofar as it pertains to the world - we likewise reject.¹⁸¹ Nor do we admit, in affirming the soul's pre-existence in relation to the body, that we believe the soul to be necessarily eternal, for we affirm that it is created. Furthermore, in line with those who affirm the primacy of existence over quiddity, our position on the pre-existence of the soul may not simply be equated with Platonism or Neoplatonism. We say, with al-Junayd and others,¹⁸² that the soul's pre-existence refers to a state of being unlike that of existence that is known to us, but to an existence in the interior condition of Being, in the consciousness of God. To this state of existence refer God's words in the Holy Qur'ān when He called to the souls: "Am I not your Lord?", and they answered: "Yes indeed!"¹⁸³ By virtue of the power that God gave them to respond to His call, we infer that the soul knows God as its Lord; it knows itself as His creature; it knows other souls as distinct from itself; and it possesses power to apprehend what knowledge communicates. For this reason - that is, the soul's possession of a cognitive power enabling it to identify its Lord and Creator, itself, and others like itself, and to make distinctions as well as to formulate and communicate meaningful signs by means of an innate power of speech (i.e. *nuṭq* with reference to the term *qawl*) - the soul is called the 'rational' soul.¹⁸⁴ This also means that the soul already has some form

¹⁸¹ See *Tahāfut*, pp. 86-87.

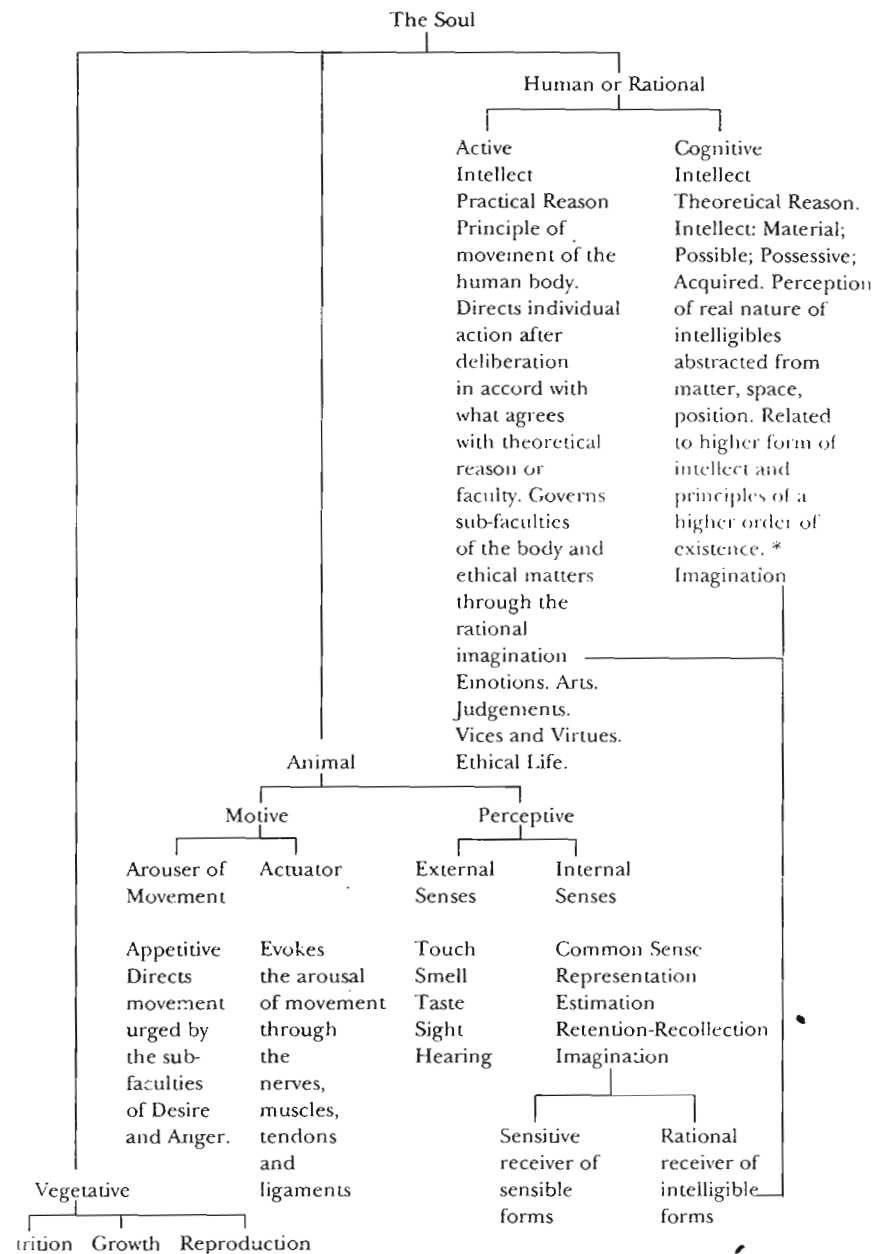
¹⁸² Junayd, *Kitāb al-Mithāq*, pp.40-43; al-Kalābādhi, *Kitāb al-Ta'arruf*; Bayrūt, 1400/1980, p.68.

¹⁸³ *Al-A'rāf* (7): 172.

¹⁸⁴ I.e. *al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*. *Nāṭiq* signifies the reasoning powers, the rational faculty, and corresponds to the Greek *logos* and the Latin *ratio*. It points to an inner faculty that apprehends realities and formulates meaning involving judgement, discrimination and clarification. It is derived from the same Arabic root that conveys the basic meaning of 'speech', signifying a certain

of knowledge of the realms spiritual before its attachment to the body. The human body and the world of sense and sensible experience provide the soul with a school for its training to know God also, this time through the veils of His Creation.

power and capacity to articulate words or symbolic forms in meaningful pattern. *Mantiq*, the Arabic word for logic, is derived from the same root and includes within its semantic structure what is conveyed by *ma'qūl*, which is the intelligible character of a thing as grasped by the mind. In this sense, *ratio* can be understood as being synonymous with *ma'qūl*, which in Latin is *intentio*. According to al-Ghazālī, this entity that we call the 'rational soul' and which we identify with that which is referred to in the Quranic passage mentioned above, signifies the second aspect of the heart (*qalb*) referred to in page 5 above. This entity is also identified by him as the spirit of man (*rūh*) that carries the trust (*amānah*) granted by God, and that is by nature created with the power and capacity to be the abiding center of knowledge. It is, by its saying "Yes indeed!" (*balā*), that which affirms the Divine unity. It is also the original root (*aṣl*) of mankind, to which ultimate state of existence it will return in the world to come. See *Ma'arīj*, p. 17.



* See above, the classification of the human intellect on p. 162.