

In the history of philosophical thought in the Medieval Ages, the figure of ibn Sīnā (370/980–428/1037)¹ is, in many respects, unique, while among the Muslim philosophers, it is not only unique but has been paramount right up to modern times. He is the only one among the great philosophers of Islam to build an elaborate and complete system of philosophy—a system which has been dominant in the philosophical tradition of Islam for centuries, in spite of the attacks of al-Ghazālī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and others. This ascendancy has been possible, however, not merely because he had a system but because that system had features of remarkable originality displaying a type of genius-like spirit in discovering methods and arguments whereby he sought to reformulate the purely rational and intellectual tradition of Hellenism, to which he was an eminent heir, for and, to an extent, within the religious system of Islam. The exact terms of this reformulation and their relation to Islam we shall discuss presently in this chapter; it is only to be noted at the outset that it was this kind of originality which rendered him unique not only in Islam but also in the medieval West where the reformulations of the Roman Catholic theology at the hands of Albert the Great, and, especially, of Thomas Aquinas, were fundamentally influenced by him.

Since in this chapter we are mainly concerned with ibn Sīnā's interpretation of Greek philosophical doctrines, we need not give an account of his sources in the Greek and Muslim philosophers. To be sure, the elements of his doctrines are Greek, and certain reformulations of Greek doctrines in his writings are also to be found in al-Fārābī (to whom ibn Sīnā's debt is immense) in varying degrees of development; but our task here is to state, analyse, and appreciate ibn Sīnā's teaching. And, indeed, ibn Sīnā's system, taken as a whole, is such that it is *his*, bearing the unmistakable impress of his personality. This is proved by the fact that he states his cardinal doctrines over and over again in his different works and often gives cross references, which are unmistakable signs of systematic thinking and not of random borrowing from heterogeneous sources.

The most fundamental characteristic of ibn Sīnā's thought is that of arriving at definitions by a severely rigorous method of division and distinction of concepts. This lends an extraordinary subtlety to his arguments. It can often give his philosophical reasoning a strongly scholastic complexity and intricacy of structure which can annoy the modern temperament, but it is doubtlessly true that it is also this method which has resulted in almost all the original

¹ Little can be added to the biography of ibn Sīnā—a quasi-autobiography—which is available in Arabic works, e.g., al-Qiftī's and modern works based upon them. Here it is omitted because it is scarcely important for an appreciation of his philosophical thought.

doctrines of our philosopher. It has enabled him to formulate his most general and basic principle, viz., to every clear and distinct concept there must correspond a *distinctio in re*, a principle on which later Descartes also based his thesis of the mind-body dualism. The fecundity and importance of this principle of analysis in ibn Sīnā's system are indeed striking: he announces it recurrently and at all levels, in his proof of the mind-body dualism, his doctrine of universals, his theory of essence and existence, etc. Examples of this principle are: "that which is affirmed and admitted is different from that which is not affirmed and admitted,"² and "a single conceptual (lit. specific) entity cannot be both known and unknown at the same time except with regard to different aspects."³

This chapter will deal mostly with those concepts and doctrines of ibn Sīnā which are not only capital and bring out the nature of his system, but have also both been influential and originally elaborated by him to a greater or lesser extent.

A

THE DOCTRINE OF BEING

Ibn Sīnā's doctrine of Being, like those of earlier Muslim philosophers, e.g., al-Fārābī, is emanationistic. From God, the Necessary Existent, flows the first intelligence alone, since from a single, absolutely simple entity, only one thing can emanate. But the nature of the first intelligence is no longer absolutely simple since, not being *necessary-by-itself*, it is only *possible*, and its possibility has been actualized by God. Thanks to this dual nature which henceforth pervades the entire creaturely world, the first intelligence gives rise to two entities: (i) the second intelligence by virtue of the higher aspect of its being, actuality, and (ii) the first and highest sphere by virtue of the lower aspect of its being, its natural possibility. This dual emanatory process continues until we reach the lower and tenth intelligence which governs the sublunary world and is called by the majority of the Muslim philosophers the Angel Gabriel. This name is applied to it because it bestows forms upon or "informs" the matter of this world, i.e., both physical matter and the human intellect. Hence it is also called the "Giver of Forms" (the *dator formarum* of the subsequent medieval Western scholastics). We shall return later to these intelligences and these spheres to examine more closely their nature and operations; meanwhile we must turn to the nature of Being.

The procession of the immaterial intelligence from the Supreme Being by way of emanation was intended to supplement, under the inspiration of the Neo-Platonic Theory of Emanation, the meagre and untenable view of God

² K. al-Shi'ā' (Psychological part, henceforth cited as "Psychology").

³ "Psychology," V, 7.

formulated by Aristotle according to whom there was no passage from God, the One, to the world, the many. According to Muslim philosophers, although God remained in Himself and high above the created world, there were, nevertheless, intermediary links between the absolute eternity and necessity of God and the world of downright contingency. And this theory, besides, came very close to satisfying the Muslim belief in angels. This is the first occasion to remark how Muslim philosophers, by a re-elaboration of the Greek tradition of philosophy, not only sought to build a rational system, but a rational system which sought to integrate the tradition of Islam. But what about the Theory of Emanation itself? Would it not destroy the necessary and all-important gulf between the Creator and the creation and lead to a downright pantheistic world-view—*lat tam Asi*—against which Islam, like all higher religions, had warned so sternly? No doubt, this type of pantheism, being *dynamic*, is different from the absolutist and static forms of pantheism; yet it could lead to anthropomorphism, or, by a reverse process of ascent, to the re-absorption of the creature's being into the being of God. Now, the guarantee against any such danger shall be ibn Sinā's doctrine of essence and existence. This celebrated theory again is designed to fulfil equally both religious and rational needs and, once again, to supplement Aristotle.

Early in this section we said that God and God alone is absolutely simple in His being; all other things have a dual nature. Being simple, *what* God is and the fact that He *exists* are not two elements in a single being but a single atomic element in a single being. What God is, i.e., His essence, is identical with His existence. This is not the case with any other being, for in no other case is the existence identical with the essence, otherwise whenever, for example, an Eskimo who has never seen an elephant, conceives of one, he would *ipso facto* know *that* elephants exist. It follows that God's existence is necessary, the existence of other things is only possible and derived from God's, and that the supposition of God's non-existence involves a contradiction, whereas it is not so with any other existent.⁴ A cosmological argument, based on Aristotle's doctrine of the First Cause, would be superfluous in establishing God's existence. Ibn Sina, however, has not chosen to construct a full-fledged ontological argument. His argument, which, as we shall see later, became the

⁴ K. *al-Najāt*, Cairo, 1938, p. 224, ll. 21 ff. It will be seen that the germs of the ontological argument exist in a fairly developed form in this argument. It would then follow that the cosmological argument, based on Aristotle's doctrine of the First Cause, would be superfluous in establishing God's existence. Ibn Sina, however, has not chosen to construct a full-fledged ontological argument. His argument, which, as we shall see later, became the cardinal doctrine of the Roman Catholic dogmatic theology after Aquinas, is more like the Leibnizian proof of God as the *ground* of the world, i.e., given God, we can understand the existence of the world. Here cause and effect behave like premises and conclusion, i.e., instead of working back from a supposed effect to its cause, we work forward from an indubitable premise to a conclusion. Indeed, for ibn Sina, God creates through a rational necessity on the basis of which he also explains the divine pre-knowledge of all events, as we shall see in his account of God.

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From the metaphysical point of view, the theory seeks to supplement the traditional Aristotelian analysis of an existent into two constituent elements, as it were, viz., form and matter. According to Aristotle, the form of a thing is the sum total of its essential and universalizable qualities constituting its definition; the matter in each thing is that which has the potentiality of receiving these qualities—the form—and by which the form becomes an individual existent. But there are two major difficulties in this conception from the point of view of the actual existence of a thing. The first is that the form is universal and, therefore, does not exist. Matter too, being pure potentiality, does not exist, since it is actualized only by the form. How then shall a thing come into existence by a non-existent form and an equally non-existent matter? The second difficulty arises from the fact that, although Aristotle generally holds that the definition or essence of a thing is its form, he nevertheless says in certain important passages (e.g., *De Anima*, Vol. I, Chap. 1, 403a, 27 ff.) that matter is also to be included in the essence of a thing, otherwise we shall have only a partial definition of it. If, then, we regard both form and matter as constitutive of definition, we can never arrive at the actual existence of a thing. This is the rock against which the whole scheme of Aristotle to explain Being threatens to break.

This is why ibn Sina⁵ holds that from form and matter alone you would never get a concrete existent, but only the essential and accidental qualities. He has analysed at some length the relation of form and matter in *K. al-Shi'ā'*, ("Met." II, 4 and "Met." VI, 1), where he concludes that both form and matter depend on God (or the active intellect) and, further, that the composite existent also cannot be caused by form and matter alone but there must be "something else." Finally, in "Met." VIII, 5, he tells us, "Everything except the One who is by His essence One and Existent acquires existence from something else. . . . In itself it deserves absolute non-

⁵ This section has been drawn on F. Rahman's article "Essence and Existence in Avicenna," in *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, Oxford, 1958, although certain new considerations added here have changed the presentation to a certain extent.

existence. Now, it is not its matter alone without its form or its form alone without its matter which deserves non-existence but the totality (of matter and form)." This is why ibn Sina substitutes a three-term analysis of the existent material objects instead of the traditional Greek dyadic formula. It must be noted that it is Aristotle's doctrine which is being developed here. Many scholars have held that ibn Sina is here following a Neo-Platonic line instead of the Aristotelian one, but, from this point of view, the Neo-Platonic doctrine is the same as that of Aristotle, viz., the dyadic scheme of form and matter, except that, according to Plotinus, under the influence of Plato, the forms have a higher ontological status and exist in God's mind who then proceeds to make them existent in matter. It should also be borne in mind that existence is not really a constituent element of things besides matter and form; it is rather a relation to God: if you view a thing in relation to the divine existentializing agency, it exists, and it exists necessarily and, further, its existence is intelligible, but when out of relation with God, its existence loses its intelligibility and meaning. It is this relational aspect which ibn Sina designates by the term "accident" and says that existence is an accident.

Ever since the criticism of ibn Sina's doctrine by ibn Rushd who, among other things, accused ibn Sina of having violated the definition of substance as that which exists by itself, and of Aquinas who, although he adopts the distinction between essence and existence under the direct influence of ibn Sina, nevertheless follows ibn Rushd in his criticism, the unanimous voice of the Western historians of medieval philosophy has been to the effect that existence, according to ibn Sina, is just an accident among other accidents, e.g., round, black, etc. We have said that when ibn Sina talks of existence as an accident *with relation to objects (as distinguished from essence)* he just means by it a relation to God; it is, therefore, not an ordinary accident. Further, if existence were an accident, one could think it away and still go on talking of the object just as one can do in the case of other accidents and, indeed, in that case ibn Sina would have been forced to hold something like the Meinongian view held by many Muslim Mutakallims that non-existents must also "exist" in some peculiar sense of that word. But this is the very doctrine which ibn Sina ridicules. The whole discussion on this point can be found in the article referred to in note No. 5 of this chapter. Here we give only one passage where our philosopher criticizes the view of those who hold that a non-existent "thing" must, nevertheless, "exist" in some sense so that we can talk about it. He says (*K. al-Shi'ā*, "Met." I, 5), "Those people who entertain this opinion hold that among those things which we can know (i.e., be acquainted with) and talk about, are things to which, in the realm of non-being, non-existence belongs as an attribute. He who wants to know more about this should further consult the nonsense which they have talked and which does not merit consideration." Indeed, according to ibn Sina, the ideas of existence and unity are the primary ideas with which we must start. These underived concepts

are the bases of our application of other categories and attributes to things and, therefore, they defy definition since definition must involve other terms and concepts which are themselves derived (*ibid.*, I, 5).

It will be seen that this problem now is not a metaphysical one but has to do with logic. Ibn Sina has attempted to give his own answer to the question: How is it possible that we can talk of non-existents and what do these latter mean? His answer is that we can do so because we give to these objects "some sort of existence in the mind." But, surely, our individual images cannot constitute the meanings of these entities for the obvious reason that when we talk, e.g., of a space-ship, it must have an objective meaning. It is, nevertheless, true that ibn Sina has seen the basic difficulty of the logic of existence. And our modern logic itself, despite its superior techniques and some valuable distinctions, seems nowhere nearer the solution. It has tried hard to contend that whenever I talk of a space-ship, although none exists, I am not talking of a "thing," of an individual object, but only of a generic object or a conglomeration of properties. But is this really so? Is it absurd to say that the "individual space-ship I am talking of now has this and this property"? Besides, the crux is the phrase "conglomeration or set of properties"—what is it to which they belong and of which I profess to be talking?

Besides this meaning of "accident" as a peculiar and unique relation of an existent to God, the term "accident" in ibn Sina has another unorthodox philosophic meaning. This concerns the relationship of a concrete existent to its essence or specific form, which ibn Sina also calls accidental. This use of the term "accident" is quite pervasive in ibn Sina's philosophy and, without knowing its correct significance, one would be necessarily led to misinterpret some of his basic doctrines. Now, *whenever two concepts are clearly distinguishable from each other, they must refer to two different ontological entities*, as we said above, and, further, *whenever two such concepts come together in a thing, ibn Sina describes their mutual relationship as being accidental*, i.e., they happen to come together, although each must be found to exist separately. This is the case, for example, between essence and existence, between universality and essence.

According to ibn Sina, essences exist in God's mind (and in the mind of the active intelligences) prior to the individual existents exemplifying them in the external world and they also exist in our minds posterior to these individual existents. But these two levels of the existence of an essence are very different. And they differ not only in the sense that the one is creative, and the other imitative. In its true being, the essence is neither universal nor particular, but it is just an essence. Hence he holds (*K. al-Shi'ā*, "Isagoge to Logic," Cairo, 1952, pp. 65-69; also *ibid.* "Met." V, 1) that both particularity and universality are "accidents" which happen or occur to the essence. Universality occurs to it in our minds only, and ibn Sina takes a strictly functional view of the universals: our mind abstracts universals or general concepts whereby it is enabled to treat the world of infinite diversity in a summary and scientific

manner by relating an identical mental construction to a number of objects. In the external world the essence does not exist except in a kind of metaphorical sense, i. e., in the sense in which a number of objects allow themselves to be treated as being identical. Existents in the external world are the individual concrete objects, no two of which are exactly the same. He says, "It is impossible that a single essence should exist identically in many" ("Met." V, 2), and again, "It (i. e. absolute manness) is not the manness of 'Amr; it is different from it, thanks to the particular circumstances. These particular circumstances have a role in the individual person of Zaid . . . and also a role in the 'man' or 'manness' inasmuch as it is related to him" ("Met." V, 1). It is clear especially from this last statement that the "essence" virtually undergoes a change in each individual. That is why we must say that *if we regard essence as a universal*, that concrete determinate existence is something over and above the essence; it is something added to the essence, or it is an "accident" of the essence.

Two things must be specially noted here. First, that existence is something added not to the existent objects—this would be absurd—but to the essence. This is because everything whether it exists or not—indeed whether it is existable or not—in fact every concept is "something" of which assertions can be made, whether positive or negative. Indeed, even non-existence is "something," since one can talk about it. But a positive individual existent is more than just "something." (This distinction between "something" and an existent, treated by ibn Sina ["Met." I, 5] which has confusedly returned in present-day logic, was originally made by the Stoics [see, e. g., *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Vo. II, p. 117].) Hence ibn Sina says that when existence is attributed to essences, this existence is equivalent to "is something" and, therefore, such statements are not "profitable." But statements about existents are informative and profitable, since they add to the essence something that is new. Secondly, we must note that although ibn Sina speaks in several places of matter as the principle of multiplicity of forms or essences, he never says that matter is the principle of individual existence. The sole principle of individual existence is God—the Giver of existence; matter is the occasional cause of existence, supplying external attributes of multiplicity.

We have given a considerable number of quotations from ibn Sina in the treatment of this problem not only because it is of capital importance for ibn Sina's philosophy, but also because there has been such a great deal of fundamental confusion in the traditional treatment of the subject that a clarification of the terms "existence," "accident" in this relation, and "essence" is absolutely necessary.

B

THE BODY-MIND RELATIONSHIP

With Aristotle, ibn Sina stresses the intimate connection of mind and body; but whereas Aristotle's whole trend of thought rejects a two-substance view, ibn Sina holds a form of radical dualism. How far these two aspects of his doctrine are mutually compatible is a different question: ibn Sina certainly did not carry his dualism through to develop a parallelistic, occasionalistic account of mind-body relationship. His remarks, nevertheless, on either side are both interesting and profound. We shall first state his arguments for the two-substance view and then discuss their close inter-connection. To prove that the human soul is a substance capable of existing independently of the body, our philosopher employs two different arguments. One appeals to direct self-consciousness, the other seeks to prove the immateriality of the intellect. We can postpone his teaching on the intellect till we discuss his theory of knowledge; here we shall state and discuss his first argument. Indeed, according to him, this is the more direct way of proving the incorporeal substantiality of the soul acting not as an argument but as an eye-opener (*K. al-Shifā'*, "Psychology," V, 7).

The argument is stated by ibn Sina in the first chapter of the psychological book of the *K. al-Shifā'* and then re-stated and discussed in the last but one chapter of the same book. Let us suppose, as he says, that a person is created in an adult state, but in such a condition that he is born in a void where his body cannot touch anything and where he cannot perceive anything of the external world. Let us also suppose that he cannot see his own body and that the organs of his body are prevented from touching one another, so that he has no sense-perception whatsoever. Such a person will not affirm anything of the external world or even the existence of his own body but will, nevertheless, affirm the existence of his self as a purely spiritual entity. Now, that which is affirmed is certainly not the same as that which is not affirmed. The mind is, therefore, a substance independent of the body. Our philosopher is here describing an imaginary case impossible of realization, but his real point, as of Descartes, is that we can think away our bodies and so doubt their existence, but we cannot think away our minds.

The affinity of ibn Sina's argument with that of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* has been justly pointed out by historians of philosophy. Actually, this whole trend of thought is inspired by the argument of Plotinus for the separateness of the mind from the body.⁶ But there is an important difference between ibn Sina's and Descartes' formulations. With regard to Descartes, the question can be and has been raised: Is the existence of the self a matter of inference or an immediate datum of consciousness? Whatever the answer to this question may be, there is no doubt that consciousness or "I think" is constitutively and

⁶ A similar development took place in the West, beginning with Augustine, and, again, under Neo-Platonic influences.

necessarily involved in Descartes' "I am." This is so much so that "I think" and "I am" have the same meaning in Descartes.⁷ This being the position, it is obvious that in this case the consciousness of the self and its existence cannot be logically disengaged from each other. In ibn Sina, however, although the element of consciousness is present since one can "affirm one's own existence," it is nevertheless present only as a way of locating the self: it is a contingent fact and not a logical necessity. In fact, ibn Sina presents a medial position between Descartes and Plotinus, for, according to the latter, consciousness, being a relation, signifies not utter self-identity but a kind of otherness; in complete self-identity, consciousness must cease altogether.

This argument, which seeks to establish dualism by doubting or denying the existence of the body, may be called the argument from abstraction in that it abstracts psychical functions from the total functions of the organism. Its fundamental weakness obviously is to insist that by thinking away the body, the body ceases to play a role in one's total consciousness. If the problem could be solved by a simple inspection of the self in this manner, nothing would be easier. Ibn Sina seems to be aware that the position is liable to objections. He says ("Psychology," V, 7): (If my self were identical with any bodily members) "say, the heart or the brain or a collection of such members and if it were their separate or total being of which I were conscious as being my self, then it would be necessary that my consciousness of my self should be my very consciousness of these members, for it is not possible that the same thing should be both cognized and uncognized in the same sense." He then goes on to say that "in fact I do not know by self-consciousness that I have a heart and a brain but I do so either by sense-perception (experience) or on authority." "I mean by what I know to be my self that which I mean when I say: 'I perceived, I intellected, I acted,' and all these attributes belong to me." But, ibn Sina pauses to consider the possible objection: if you are not aware of your self being a bodily member, you are neither directly aware that it is your soul or mind.

Ibn Sina's answer to this objection is: "Whenever I present bodily attributes to this something which is the source of my mental functions, I find that it cannot accept these attributes," and thus this incorporeal entity must be the soul. Here we clearly see that the argument has taken a new turn and the phenomenon of direct consciousness is being supplemented by a further consideration to the effect that the disparateness between the mental and physical qualities is such that both cannot belong to one substance. And this is the perennial argument for the two-substance theory, viz., that the mental and the physical attributes are of qualitatively disparate *genré*.

⁷ *Meditations* II: "What of thinking? I find here that thought is an attribute that belongs to me; it alone cannot be separated from me. I am, I exist, that is certain. But how often? Just when I think; for it might possibly be the case, that if I ceased entirely to think, I should likewise cease entirely to exist . . . to speak accurately I am not more than a thing which thinks."

From the acceptance of the view, that the mind is a substance, the conclusion that the mind is a unity follows tautologically and ibn Sina lays great stress on it. Indeed, once again, both doctrines, viz., the reality of faculties and the unitary nature of the soul, are stated with equal emphasis by him. The reality of mental faculties was established by Aristotle but was further pursued by his commentators, notably Alexander of Aphrodisias. Ibn Sina has devoted a special chapter to the question ("Psychology," I, 4) where he bases the multiplicity of faculties on the qualitative differences among mental operations. Nevertheless, he repeatedly stresses the necessity of an integrative bond (*ribāṭ*) for the diverse operations.⁸ Indeed, he declares that even the vegetative and perceptual functions in man, for example, are specifically different from those in plants and animals, thanks to the rationality present in man which pervades and changes the character of all his functions. This integrative principle is the mind itself.

The soul in its real being is then an independent substance and is our transcendental self. We shall return to its transcendence when we discuss ibn Sina's theory of knowledge in the next section. Here we shall note only that ibn Sina's arguments for the immortality of the soul are based on the view that it is a substance and that it is not a form of the body to which it is attached intimately by some kind of mystical relation between the two. There is in the soul which emerges from the separate substance of the active intelligence simultaneously with the emergence of a body with a definite temperament, a definite inclination to attach itself to this body, to care for it, and direct it to the mutual benefit. Further, the soul, as being incorporeal, is a simple substance and this ensures for it indestructibility and survival, after its origination, even when its body is destroyed.

But if at the transcendental level the soul is a pure spiritual entity and

⁸ An interesting question may be raised here about the unity of the mind. We have seen that the qualitative disparateness between the mental and physical phenomena has necessitated their attribution to different substances. This argument has been re-stated with great vigour in recent times by G. F. Stout who in his *Mind and Matter* lays down the "Principle of Generic Resemblance" for acts and operations if they are to fall in a single substance. C. D. Broad has rejected this dualism in his *Mind and Its Place in Nature* on the ground that no criterion can be laid down as to how great a qualitative difference there should be to warrant us to assign phenomena to different substances. However, Broad himself favours a "Compound Theory" of mind and body, thus implicitly giving force to the same principle of qualitative resemblance and difference which he seeks to refute. For, why else should there be the necessity for a "Compound"?

Yet, if we accept the full consequences of the principle, what, we may ask, constitutes the resemblance between mental acts so as to attribute them to one substance? For, hoping, desiring, thinking are so mutually divergent phenomena. According to the modern traditional philosophy, consciousness may be a common quality satisfying the principle and, indeed, it has been regarded as the stuff of which mental phenomena are made. If we hold this, it will follow that unconscious desires, fears, and hopes are non-mental.

body does not enter into its definition even as a relational concept, at the phenomenal level the body must be included in its definition as a building enters into the definition of a (definite) builder. That is why ibn Sina says that the study of the phenomenal aspect of the soul is in the field of natural science, while its transcendental being belongs to the study of metaphysics. Now, since at the phenomenal level there exists between each soul and body a *mystique* which renders them exclusively appropriate for each other—whether we understand this *mystique* or not—it follows that the transmigration of souls is impossible. (Transmigration is rejected by Aristotle who does not hold the two-substance view.) Indeed, this *mystique* is both the cause and the effect of the individuality of the self. Ibn Sina, therefore, totally rejects the idea of the possible identity of two souls or of the ego becoming fused with the Divine Ego, and he emphasizes that the survival must be individual. It is a primary fact of experience that each individual is conscious of his self-identity which cannot be shaken by any kind of argument. Indeed, our philosopher is so keen to affirm the individuality of personality that he says ("Psychology," V, 3) that even the qualitative nature of the intellectual operations in different individuals may be different—a statement which would have shocked not only the Platonists and Neo-Platonists, but even perhaps Aristotle, since, according to the universal Greek doctrine, the intellect represents, at least, the qualitative identity of mankind, a doctrine which was later pushed to its logical extremes by ibn Rushd.

The relationship, then, between soul and body is so close that it may affect even the intellect. It goes without saying that all the other psycho-physical acts and states have both aspects—mental and physical. This was emphasized by Aristotle himself. But Aristotle's doctrine, even if it is not outright materialistic, is quasi-materialistic and, whereas it either emphasizes the double aspect of each state or operation, or tends strongly to point out the influence of the body on the mental phenomena, exactly the reverse is the case with ibn Sina. Indeed, his insistent stress on the influence of the mind on the body constitutes an outstanding and one of the most original features of his philosophy. Whereas in Aristotle, life and mind give a new dimension to the material organism, in ibn Sina, under the inspiration of the Neo-Platonic thought and the influence of his own metaphysically spiritual predilections, this no longer remains a mere dimension. The material side of nature is both pervaded and overshadowed by its mental and spiritual side, even though, as a medical man, he is keen to preserve the importance of the physical constitution, especially in the case of the character of the emotions and impulses. Indeed, as we shall see, his medical art helped him to gauge the extent of mental influence on apparently bodily states.

At the most common level, the influence of the mind on the body is visible in voluntary movement: whenever the mind wills to move the body, the body obeys. In his detailed account of animal motion, ibn Sina has enumerated four stages instead of Aristotle's three. The three stages according to Aristotle

are: (1) imagination or reason, (2) desire, and (3) movement of the muscles. Ibn Sina has split up the second into (1) desire and (2) impulsion (*ijmā*) for, he says, not every desire can move to action but only when it is impulsive, whether consciously or unconsciously. The second, and more important difference between ibn Sina and the traditional view is that according to the latter the initiation of bodily movement must always lie in a cognitive state, whether it is imagination or reason. Ibn Sina holds that, while in most cases the cognitive act precedes the affective and the conative ones, this is not true of all cases. We read ("Psychology," IV, 4): "All (the appetitive and conative) faculties also follow imaginative faculties. . . . But sometimes it happens, e.g., in cases of physical pain, that our natural impulse tries to remove the cause of pain and thus initiates the process of stirring up imagination. In this case, it is these (appetitive) faculties which drive the imagination to their own purpose, just as, in most cases, it is the imaginative faculty which drives the (appetitive and conative) faculties towards the object of imagination." Thus, according to ibn Sina, the initiation of the animal motion can lie in the affections as well as in the cognitive states. Psychologically, this is of great significance and marks an advance over the purely and one-sidedly intellectual accounts of traditional philosophy.

Here we reach the second level of the influence of the mind on the body, viz., that of emotions and of the will. Ibn Sina tells us from his medical experience that actually physically sick men, through sheer will-power, can become well and, equally, healthy men can become really ill under the influence of sickness-obsession. Similarly, he says, if a plank of wood is put across a well-trodden path, one can walk on it quite well, but if it is put as a bridge and down below is a chasm, one can hardly creep over it without an actual fall. "This is because he pictures to himself a (possible) fall so vividly that the natural power of his limbs accords with it" ("Psychology," IV, 4). Indeed, strong emotions like fear can actually destroy the temperament of the organism and result in death, through influencing the vegetative functions: "This happens when a judgment takes place in the soul; the judgment, being pure belief, does not influence the body, but rather when this belief is followed by joy or grief" ("Psychology," I, 3). Joy and grief too are mental states, ibn Sina goes on, but they affect the vegetative functions. Again, "We do not regard it as impossible that something should occur to the soul, in so far as it is embodied, and be then followed by affections peculiar to the body itself. Imagination, inasmuch as it is knowledge, is not in itself a physical affection, but it may happen that, as a result, certain bodily organs, sexual for example, should expand. . . . Indeed, when an idea becomes firmly established in the imagination, it necessitates a change in the temperament. . . ." (*ibid.*, IV, 4). Just as, we are told, the ideas of health present in the doctor's mind produce actual health in a patient, so the soul acts on the body; only the doctor produces cure through media and instruments, but the soul does it without any instruments.

If, indeed, the soul were strong enough, it could produce cure and illness even in another body without instruments. And here ibn Sina produces evidence from the phenomena of hypnosis and suggestion (*al-wahm al-'amil*). He uses these considerations in order to show the possibility of miracles which are a part of the discussion of the question of prophethood. Here we will recall what we said before that, according to ibn Sina, a soul becomes exclusively attached to one body. Our newer consideration shows that it can transcend its own body to affect others. This would become possible only when the soul becomes akin to the universal soul, as it were.

It is on these grounds that ibn Sina accepts the reality of such phenomena as the "evil eye" and magic in general. We may note that the influence of the emotions on the body was known and discussed in later Hellenism. Especially since the Stoic conception of the principle of "Sympathy" in nature and Plotinus' elaboration of that principle, the mind-body interaction was explained on these lines. What is scientifically new in ibn Sina is that he also explains phenomena like magic, suggestion, and hypnosis, and, in general, the influence of one mind on other bodies and minds on these lines, i.e., by referring them to the properties of the influencing mind. In Hellenism, these phenomena were accepted, but were regarded as exceptionally occult. And in the mystery-mongering superstition of later Hellenism, "Sympathy" was given an occult twist. Magical properties were assigned to special objects: metals, animals, etc., through which the magician or the hypnotizer worked or pretended to work on the gods or spirits to *intervene* in the realm of nature and to produce occult effects. But the only principle which ibn Sina will accept—and here he strikes a very modern note—is to refer efficacy to the special constitution of the mind itself. This rests on the premise that it is of the nature of mind to influence matter and it belongs to matter to obey the mind, and ibn Sina will have no theurgic magic: "This is because the soul is (derived from) certain (higher) principles which clothe matter with forms contained in them, such that these forms actually constitute matter. . . . If these principles can bestow upon matter forms constitutive of natural species. . . . it is not improbable that they can also bestow qualities, without there being any need of physical contact, action, or affection. . . . The form existing in the soul is the cause of what occurs in matter" ("Psychology," IV, 4). The reason for this great change is that in later Hellenism the human soul had lost its dignity and people relied more and more for the explanation of the "para-natural" phenomena on the intervention of the gods.

C

THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

In accordance with the universal Greek tradition, ibn Sina describes all knowledge as some sort of abstraction on the part of the cognizant of the form of the thing known. His chief emphasis, elaborated most probably by

himself, is on the degrees of this abstracting power in different cognitive faculties. Thus, sense-perception needs the very presence of matter for its cognitive act; imagination is free from the presence of actual matter but cannot cognize without material attachments and accidents which give to the image its particularity, whereas in intellect alone the pure form is cognized in its universality. It is very probable too that ibn Sina elaborated this theory "of the grades of abstraction" to avoid the objection to which Aristotle's doctrine of cognition (according to which all cognition is the abstraction of form "without its matter") was liable, viz., if perception is the knowledge of form alone, how do we know that this form exists in matter? Or, indeed, how do we know that matter exists at all?

Ibn Sina's position on perception is generally that of naïve realism, like that of Aristotle and his commentators, holding a representational view of perception. But under criticism from scepticism and relativism which point out the relativity of perceived qualities, this representational view becomes seriously modified and ibn Sina finally accepts a quasi-causal or, rather, relational view of perceptual qualities, i.e., objects, which have certain real qualities in themselves, appear as such-and-such under such-and-such circumstances and from such-and-such a position. This is responsible for several subjectivist statements in ibn Sina, who comes to distinguish between "primary" and "secondary" perceptions: the "primary" perception being subjective or of the state of the percipient's own mind, the "secondary" perception being that of the external world. He did not clearly see, as we moderns do, the basic difficulties in this position. But his conception reappears in Western medieval philosophy as the distinction between the psychological or "intentional" object and the real object, a distinction which was much later developed by Locke into that of primary and secondary perceptual qualities.

But the great key-stone of ibn Sina's doctrine of perception is his distinction between internal and external perception. The external perception is the operation of the external five senses. Ibn Sina also divides the internal perception formally into five faculties, although he shows a great deal of hesitation on the subject (see "Psychology," IV, I). His chief aim is to separate the different functions or operations on a qualitative basis, and, of course, we once again remember his principle that to every clear idea there must correspond a distinction in reality. Indeed, his doctrine of the internal senses has no precedent in the history of philosophy. The first internal sense is *sensus communis* which is the seat of all the senses. It integrates sense-data into percepts. This general sense must be internal because none of the external five senses is capable of this function. The second internal sense is the imaginative faculty in so far as it conserves the perceptual images. The third faculty is again imagination in so far as it acts upon these images, by combination and separation. In man this faculty is pervaded by reason so that human imagination can deliberate and is, therefore, the seat of the practical intellect. The fourth and the most important internal faculty is called *wahm* which passed into

the West as *vis estimativa*: it perceives immaterial motions like usefulness and harmfulness, love and hate in material objects, and is, in fact, the basis of our character, whether influenced or uninfluenced by reason. The fifth internal sense conserves in memory those notions which are called by him "intentions" (*ma'āni*).

The doctrine of *wahm* is the most original element in ibn Sina's psychological teaching and comes very close to what some modern psychologists have described as the "nervous response" of the subject to a given object. In Aristotle, this function is performed by imagination or perception itself, but ibn Sina contends that perception and imagination tell us only about the perceptual qualities of a thing, its size, colour, shape, etc.; they tell us nothing about its character or "meaning" for us, which must be read or discerned by an internal faculty of the organism. In the Stoics, again, we have the perceptual-moral theory of the *oikeiosis* or "appropriation," according to which whatever is perceived by the external senses is interpreted internally by the soul as the bearer of certain values. But the Stoics, in this doctrine, were primarily concerned with the development of a moral personality in man. Ibn Sina's doctrine of *wahm*, on the other hand, despite its moral significance, is primarily a purely psychological doctrine, explaining our instinctive and emotional response to the environment.

This "nervous response" operates at different levels. At one level it is purely instinctive as when a sheep perceives a wolf for the first time and flees from it, or as the mother instinctively feels love for her baby. This occurs without previous experience and hence through some kind of "natural inspiration" ingrained in the constitution of the organism. Secondly, it also operates at a "quasi-empirical" level ("Psychology," IV, 3). This occurs through association of ideas or images of memory. A dog which has suffered pain in the past from being beaten by a stick or a stone, associates the image of the object and the "intention" of pain and, when it sees the object again, at once runs away. This phenomenon of direct association can also become indirect and irrational. This happens in the case of animals and also in the case of less reasonable human beings. Some people who have irrationally associated the yellow colour of honey with both the colour and the bitter taste of gall, do not eat honey and in fact at its sight exhibit symptoms of gall-like taste. This principle of association appeared later in Leibniz (*Monadology*, translated by R. Latta, p. 232); and the principle of irrational or automatic association has appeared more thoroughly worked out in recent experimental psychology under the name of the "conditioned reflex." Since *wahm* makes perceptual predictions on the basis of association of ideas, for which, says ibn Sina, there are innumerable causes (contiguity, similarity, etc.), its perceptual judgments may sometimes be false. Aristotle had noticed this failure of perception but could not explain it since he did not discern the influence of past experience on present perceptual judgments.

We come next to the doctrine of the intellect which ibn Sina has elaborated

in great detail. He has taken over in his doctrine the theory of the development of human intellect announced by Aristotle very briefly and rather obscurely and then elaborated by Alexander of Aphrodisias and later by Fārābi. But he has added quite new and original interpretations of his own. The doctrine, in brief, distinguishes between a potential intellect in man and an active intellect outside man, through the influence and guidance of which the former develops and matures. Basically, the problem is that of the origin of human cognition and it is explained on the assumption of a supra-human transcendent intellect which, when the human intellect is ready, bestows knowledge upon it.

As against Alexander, al-Fārābi, and probably Aristotle, ibn Sina holds that the potential intellect in man is an indivisible, immaterial, and indestructible substance although it is generated at a definite time and as something personal to each individual. This has important religious consequences, for, when according to al-Fārābi only men of developed intellect survive and others perish for ever at death, ibn Sina holds the immortality of all human souls. (According to Alexander of Aphrodisias, even the actualized intellect is perishable so that no soul is immortal.) The immateriality of the intellect is proved by ibn Sina in an unprecedented, elaborate, and scholastic manner, the basic idea being that ideas or "forms," being indivisible, cannot be said to be localized in any material organ.

But it is in his account of the intellectual operation and the manner of the acquisition of knowledge that the most original aspect of his doctrine of the intellect lies. Whereas, according to the Peripatetic doctrine, accepted by Fārābi, the universal, which is the object of the intellective act, is abstracted from the particulars of sense-experience, for ibn Sina it issues directly from the active intellect. The Peripatetic tradition has given the following account of the rise of the universal from perceptual experience: First, we perceive several similar individuals; these are stored up in memory and after the constant operation the light of the active intellect "shines" upon them so that the essential nature common to all the particulars emerges from them. This theory is neither nominalistic nor realistic: it does say that the universal is more than what the instances of experience have given to the mind, but it holds that the universal *lies* somehow in these instances. For ibn Sina, the universal cannot emerge from the images of sense because it does not lie there. Further, as we have seen already, the essence, according to ibn Sina, is not really a universal: it only *behaves* as such when it is in our minds. Besides, a small amount of particular instances would actually suffice to produce the universal essence which is applicable to *infinite* instances. He, therefore, declares that the task of our minds is to "consider" and reflect upon the particulars of sense-experience. This activity prepares the mind for the reception of the universal essence from the active intellect by an act of direct intuition. The percept of the universal form, then, is a unique movement of the intellective soul not reducible to our perceiving the particulars either singly or totally and

finding the common essence among them, for if so, it would be only a spurious kind of universal.

There is, besides, another vital consideration which leads to this view. If the perception of the individual instances and the noting of their resemblance (which latter, indeed, itself presupposes the possession of the universal by the mind) were sufficient to cause the universal, then acquisition of knowledge would become mechanical and this mechanism would operate necessarily.

It is, however, in fact not true that cognition can be so mechanically and deterministically produced. The origin of knowledge is mysterious and involves intuition at every stage. Of all intellectual knowledge, more or less, it is not so much true to say "I know it" as to admit "It occurs to me." All seeking for knowledge, according to ibn Sina (even the emergence of the conclusion from the premises), has this prayer-like quality: the effort is necessary on the part of man; the response is the act of God or the active intellect. We are, indeed, often not aware as to what it is we want to know, let alone go ahead and "know it." A theory of knowledge which fails to notice this fundamental truth is not only wrong but blasphemous.

All ideas or forms then come from outside. The precise sense of the "outside" we shall try to work out in the next section. But in the meantime we should notice certain other important characteristics of our knowledge. The first is that it is piecemeal and discursive, not total; it is also mostly "receptive" in the sense noted just above. In our normal consciousness we are not fully aware of the whence and whither of our cognition. True, there are people who are receptive in the ordinary sense of the word in that they do not discover either anything, or much that is new and original; they only learn for the most part; while there are others who discover new things. But even these latter are only "receptive" in the sense that, not being fully conscious of the whence and whither of their knowledge—not aware of the total context of reality—they do not know the full meaning of their discoveries. This is because, in the common run of thinkers ideas come and go in succession and, therefore, their grasp of reality is not total. Hence ibn Sina rejects the general and especially later Greek doctrine of the absolute identity of subject and object in intellectual operation, for, he argues, in the case of normal consciousness, there being a succession of ideas, if the mind became identical with one object, how could it then become identical with another? In this connection he rebukes Porphyry for his "mystical and poetical statements." Why he should single out the pupil of Plotinus, is not quite clear, for the doctrine is both Peripatetic and Neo-Platonic, although there are, it must be admitted, moderate representatives like Alexander of Aphrodisias just as there are extremist champions of the doctrine like most Neo-Platonists.

Ideas in this detailed, discrete, and discursive form of knowledge, as we have said, come into the mind and go out of it. Ibn Sina is insistent that when an idea is not actually being used in intellection, it does not remain in the mind, or, in other words, there is, properly speaking, no intellectual memory

as there is a memory of sensible images. There is nothing in the mind which can conserve intelligibles just as there is a conservatory in the soul for sensibilia for the existence of an intelligible in the mind means nothing else than the fact that it is actually being intellected. Absolutely speaking, it should be remarked that the word memory, when applied to sensible objects and individual events of the past, is radically different from the memory of universals or universal propositions, for in the former case there is a reference to the past, while Aristotle himself had indicated this doctrine in his *De Memoria et Reminiscencia* where he says that universals are remembered only *per accidens*. The ordinary human thinking mind, says ibn Sina, is like a mirror upon which there is a succession of ideas reflected from the active intellect. This does not mean that a truth once acquired, because it "goes out of the mind," has to be *learned* all over again when it is remembered. By our initial acquisition we acquire a skill to contact the active intellect and in remembering we simply use that skill or power. Resuming the analogy of the mirror, ibn Sina says that, before acquisition of knowledge, the mirror was rusty; when we reflect the mirror is polished, and it only remains to direct it to the sun (i.e., the active intellect) so that it should readily reflect light.

Even so is the ordinary philosophic (or mystic) consciousness: it is more partial (in varying degrees) even when it is original and creative (again in varying degrees) and it is, therefore, obviously not in total contact with reality, or, as ibn Sina puts it, "is not one with the active intellect." In even in our ordinary cognitive processes, there are serious pointers to the existence of a type of consciousness in which this partiality and discursiveness may be overcome and which may be wholly creative, with the pulse of the total reality in its grasp. These pointers are illustrated by ibn Sina by the example of a man who is confronted suddenly with a questioner who asks him a question which he has never asked himself before and, therefore, to which he cannot give a detailed answer on the spot. He is sure, however, that he *can* answer it because the answer has just "occurred" to him and lies within him. He then proceeds to the details and formulates the answer. "The strange thing," says ibn Sina, "that when this man begins to teach the questioner the answer to his question, he is simultaneously teaching himself as well" the detailed and elaborated form of knowledge even though he previously possessed the knowledge in a simple manner. This simple, total insight is the creator of the detailed, discursive knowledge which ensues. Now, this simple, total insight (the *scientia simplex* of the medieval Latin scholastics) comes from ibn Sina is the creative reason (or the active intellect); the formulated and elaborated form is the "psychic" knowledge, not the absolutely intellectual cognition. A person possessed of this simple creative agency, if such a one exists, may well be said to be one with the active intellect; and since he possesses a total grasp of reality, he is sure, absolutely sure, of the whence and whither of the knowledge (ibn Sina puts a great emphasis on this self-confidence, certainty, conviction, or faith); he alone is aware of the total context of truth and

therefore, in him alone there is the full awareness of the meaning of each term in the process of reality; and, therefore, finally, only such a person can enter (and must enter) most significantly into temporal history, moulding it and giving it a new meaning. This is the prophet; but how to ascertain his existence?

D

DOCTRINE OF PROPHECY⁹

The necessity of the phenomenon of prophethood and of divine revelation is something which ibn Sina has sought to establish at four levels: the intellectual, the "imaginative," the miraculous, and the socio-political. The totality of the four levels gives us a clear indication of the religious motivation, character, and direction of his thinking. Indeed, from our description and partial interpretation of his central philosophical theses so far, his deeply religious spirit has emerged very clearly. His theory of "Being" has led to the dependence of every finite being on God; and his doctrines of mind-body relationship and of the genesis and nature of knowledge have both culminated in the religious conception of miracles in the one case, and of a creative revelatory knowledge in the other. And there is not the slightest suggestion that religiosity is something artificially grafted upon his purely rational thinking; on the contrary, it has organically grown out of a rigorous process of ratiocination, and goes down to the very kernel of his thought.

It may be said that ibn Sina is a citizen of two intellectual-spiritual worlds; the Hellenic and the Islamic. In his own mind he has so intrinsically unified the two worlds that they are identical; the question of disloyalty to either, therefore, does not arise for him at all. Under this circumstance, both traditional Islam and the heritage of Hellenism were inevitably interpreted and modified to a greater or lesser extent. This is apparent in the whole of his philosophy which enters into the technically religious field, but is most palpably so in his doctrine of prophecy. In this doctrine, ibn Sina drastically modifies the Muslim dogmatic theology by declaring that the Qur'ānic revelation is, by and large, if not all, symbolic of truth, not the literal truth, but that it must remain the literal truth for the masses (this does not mean that the Qur'ān is not the Word of God; indeed, as we shall see, it is in a sense *literally* the Word of God); further, that the Law, although it must be observed by everyone, is also partly symbolic and partly pedagogical and, therefore, an essentially lower discipline than philosophic pursuits. (This again does not mean that we can dispense with the Law at any stage of our individual or collective development, for to be social belongs to the essence of man.) The interpretation and modification of Hellenism in this doctrine is obvious:

⁹ This section is based on "Psychology," V, 6, the corresponding parts of the *Najāt* and the *Ishārāt* and the *Risālah fi al-Nubuwwah* (in *Tis' Rasā'il*, Cairo, 1326/1906), also on "Psychology," IV, 3, 4.

although most elements of the Muslim philosophic doctrine of prophethood exist in Hellenism, they nevertheless exist in a nebulous and sometimes in a crude form; further, they are scattered. Indeed, the Greeks had no conception of prophethood and prophetic revelation as the Muslims knew it. In fact, the Muslim conception of prophethood is new and unique in the history of religion. For the Muslim philosophers (especially ibn Sina, for although al-Fārābī had pioneered the way, we do not find all the elements in him, notably, the intellectual and the miraculous), to have evolved out of these nebulous, crude, and disjointed elements an elaborate, comprehensive, and refined theory of prophecy to interpret the personality of Muḥammad, is nothing short of the performance of a genius.¹⁰

At the intellectual level, the necessity of the prophetic revelation is proved by an argument elaborated on the basis of a remark of Aristotle (*Anal. Post*, I, Chap. 34) that some people can hit upon the middle term without forming a syllogism in their minds. Ibn Sina constructs a whole theory of total intuitive experience on the basis of this scanty remark. Since, he tells us, people differ vastly with regard to their intuitive powers both in quality and quantity, and while some men are almost devoid of it, others possess it in a high degree, there must be a rarely and exceptionally endowed man who has a total contact with reality. This man, without much instruction from outside, can, by his very nature, become the depository of the truth, in contrast with the common run of thinkers who may have an intuitive experience with regard to a definite question or questions but whose cognitive touch with reality is always partial, never total. This comprehensive insight then translates itself into propositions about the nature of reality and about future history; it is simultaneously intellectual and moral-spiritual, hence the prophetic experience must satisfy both the philosophic and the moral criteria. It is on the basis of this creative insight that the true prophet creates new moral values and influences future history. A psychologico-moral concomitant of this insight is also the deep and unalterable self-assurance and faith of the prophet in his own capacity for true knowledge and accurate moral judgment: he must believe in himself so that he can make others believe in him and thus succeed in his mission to the world.

This insight, creative of knowledge and values, is termed by ibn Sina the active intellect and identified with the angel of revelation. Now, the prophet *qua* prophet is identical with the active intellect; and in so far as this identity is concerned, the active intellect is called '*aql mustafād*' (the acquired intellect). But the prophet *qua* human being is not identical with the active intellect. The giver of revelation is thus in one sense internal to the prophet, in another sense, i.e., in so far as the latter is a human being, external to him. Hence ibn Sina says that the prophet, in so far as he is human, is "accidentally," not essentially, the active intellect (for the meaning of the term "accidental,"

¹⁰ See F. Rahman's *Prophecy in Islam*, G. Allen & Unwin, London, 1958.

see the first section of this chapter). God can and, indeed, must come to man so that the latter may develop and evolve, but the meaning of God can at no stage be entirely exhausted in man.

But although the intellectual-spiritual insight is the highest gift the prophet possesses, he cannot creatively act in history merely on the strength of that insight. His office requires inherently that he should go forth to humanity with a message, influence them, and should actually succeed in his mission. This criterion leads the Muslim philosophers, although they admit the divineness of the leading Greek thinkers and reformers, to fix their minds upon Moses, Jesus, and, above all, Muhammad who, undoubtedly, possesses the requisite qualities of a prophet to the highest degree. These requisite qualities are that the prophet must possess a very strong and vivid imagination, that his psychic power be so great that he should influence not only other minds but also matter in general, and that he be capable of launching a socio-political system.

By the quality of an exceptionally strong imagination, the prophet's mind, by an impelling psychological necessity, transforms the purely intellectual truths and concepts into lifelike images and symbols so potent that one who hears or reads them not only comes to believe in them but is impelled to action. This symbolizing and vivifying function of the prophetic imagination is stressed both by al-Fārābī and ibn Sina, by the latter in greater detail. It is of the nature of imagination to symbolize and give flesh and blood to our thoughts, our desires, and even our physiological inclinations. When we are hungry or thirsty, our imagination puts before us lively images of food and drink. Even when we have no actual sexual appetite but our physical condition is ready for this, imagination may come into play and by stirring up suitable vivid images may actually evoke this appetite by mere suggestion. This symbolization and suggestiveness, when it works upon the spirit and the intellect of the prophet, results in so strong and vivid images that what the prophet's spirit thinks and conceives, he actually comes to hear and see. That is why he "sees" the Angel and "hears" his voice. That is why also he necessarily comes to talk of a paradise and a hell which represent the purely spiritual states of bliss and torment. The revelations contained in the religious Scriptures are, for the most part, of the figurative order and must, therefore, be interpreted in order to elicit the higher, underlying, spiritual truth.

It is the technical revelation, then, which impels people to action and to be good, and not the purely intellectual insight and inspiration. No religion, therefore, can be based on pure intellect. However, the technical revelation, in order to obtain the necessary quality of potency, also inevitably suffers from the fact that it does not present the naked truth but truth in the garb of symbols. But to what action does it impel? Unless the prophet can express his moral insight into definite enough moral purposes, principles, and indeed into a socio-political structure, neither his insight nor the potency of his imaginative revelation will be of much use. The prophet, therefore, needs to be a

Lawgiver and a statesman *par excellence*—indeed the real Lawgiver and statesman is only a prophet. This practical criterion throws into still bolder relief the personality of Muhammad in the philosopher's mind. The Law (*Shari'ah*) must be such that it should be effective in making people socially good, should remind them of God at every step, and should also serve for them as a pedagogic measure in order to open their eyes beyond its own exterior, so that they may attain to a vision of the true spiritual purpose of the Lawgiver. The Law is not abrogated at any stage for anybody, but only the philosophic vision of the truth gives to the Law its real meaning; and when that vision is attained, the Law seems like a ladder which one has climbed but which it would still be unwise to discard. For those relatively unfortunate souls which cannot see through the Law its philosophic truth, the technical revelation and the letter of the Law must remain the literal truth.

E

GOD AND THE WORLD

We have learnt in the first section that God is unique in that He is the Necessary Being; everything else is contingent in itself and depends for its existence upon God. The Necessary Being must be numerically one. Even within this Being there can be no multiplicity of attributes—in fact, God has no other essence, no other attributes than the fact that He exists, and exists necessarily. This is expressed by ibn Sina by saying that God's essence is identical with His necessary existence. Since God has no essence, He is absolutely simple and cannot be defined. But if He is without essence and attributes, how can He be related to the world in any way? For Aristotle, who held this conception of the Deity, the world presented itself as a veritable other—it was neither the object of God's creation, nor of care, not even of knowledge. His God led a blissful life of eternal self-contemplation and the world organized itself into a cosmos out of love and admiration for Him, to become like Him.

The Muslim philosophical tradition finds the solution under the influence of the Neo-Platonic example which combines God's absolute simplicity with the idea that, in knowing Himself, God also knows in an implicit, simple manner the essences of things. The system is worked out and systematized by ibn Sina, who strives to derive God's attributes of knowledge, creation, power, will, etc., from His simple unchanging being, or, rather, to show that these attributes *are* nothing but the fact of His existence. This is done by an attempt to show that all the attributes are either relational or negative; they are, thus, identical with God's being and with one another. The Deity is, therefore, absolutely simple. That God is knowing, is shown by the fact that being pure from matter and pure spirit, He is pure intellect in which the subject and object are identical.

But God's self-knowledge is *ipso facto* knowledge of other things as well, since, knowing Himself, He also inevitably knows the rest of the existents which proceed from Him. Here ibn Sina strikes an original note. According

to the philosophical tradition of Hellenism, God, at best, can know only the essences (or universals) and not the particular existents, since these latter can be known only through sense-perception and, therefore, in time; but God, being supra-temporal and changeless and, further, incorporeal, cannot have perceptual knowledge. This doctrine of the philosophers was especially repugnant to Islam, for it not only made God's knowledge imperfect, but it made God Himself useless for those whose God He is to be. Ibn Sina devises an argument to show that although God cannot have perceptual knowledge, He nevertheless knows all particulars "in a universal way," so that perceptual knowledge is superfluous for Him. Since God is the emanative cause of all existents, He knows both these existents and the relations subsisting between them. God knows, for example, that after such a series of events a solar eclipse would occur, and knowing all the antecedents and consequences of this eclipse, He knows in a determinate manner its qualities and properties; He knows, therefore, what this particular eclipse will be, and can differentiate it completely from all other events even of the same species, viz., eclipse in general. But when the particular eclipse actually occurs in time, God, not being subject to temporal change, cannot know it. But He also need not know it in this way, for He knows it already (see *K. al-Najāt*, Cairo, 1938, pp. 247-49). Very ingenious though this theory is and, we think, successful in showing that sense-perception is not the only way to know the particulars, it is obvious that it cannot avoid the introduction of time factor, and, therefore, change in divine knowledge. Al-Ghazālī's criticism of the theory in the thirteenth discussion of his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* certainly finds the target at this point, although his view that according to ibn Sina God cannot know individual men but only man in general, is obviously mistaken, for if God can know a particular sun-eclipse, why can He not know, in this manner, an individual person? Indeed ibn Sina declares in the Qur'anic language (*op. cit.*, p. 247) that "not a particle remains hidden from God in the heavens or on the earth."

As regards God's attributes of volition and creation, ibn Sina's emanationist account renders them really pointless as al-Ghazālī has shown. In a thoroughly intellectualist-emanationist account of the Deity, will has no meaning. For ibn Sina, God's will means nothing but the necessary procession of the world from Him and His self-satisfaction through this. Indeed, he defines it in purely negative terms, viz., that God is not unwilling that the world proceed from Him; this is very different from the positive attributes of choice and the execution of that choice.

Similarly, the creative activity of God, for ibn Sina, means the eternal emanation or procession of the world, and since this emanation is grounded finally in the intellectual nature of God, it has the character of unalterable rational necessity. Even though al-Ghazālī's criticism which assimilates the divine activity of ibn Sina to the automatic procession of light from the sun and, thus, rejects the appellation of "act" to God's behaviour, is not quite

correct (since according to ibn Sina, God is not only conscious of the procession of the world from Him, but is also satisfied with and "willing" to it), the term "creation" is nevertheless used only in a Pickwickian sense, and the term "act" (in the sense of voluntary action) is also seriously modified, since as we have said, there is no question of real choice. Rationally determined activity is, of course, compatible with will and choice and can also be said to be done with choice, but this choice has to be brought in as an *additional* element both initially and finally. For, suppose, a man chooses to think about a certain problem. Now, the initial choice is his own to think about this rather than that problem and then at any moment he can also choose or will to terminate this process of thinking. What goes on between the beginning and the end will be a rationally determined process of thought, and not a series of choices, though the process as a whole is also chosen and voluntary. But in the philosophical account of God there is just no room for this additional factor either at the end or at the beginning.

The world, then, exists eternally with God, for both matter and form flow eternally from Him. But although this concept was abhorrent to Islamic orthodoxy, ibn Sina's purpose in introducing it was to try to do justice both to the demands of religion and of reason and to avoid atheistic materialism. For the materialists, the world has existed eternally without God. For ibn Sina, too, the world is an eternal existent, but since it is in itself contingent in its entirety it needs God and is dependent upon Him eternally. We see here the double purpose of the doctrine of essence and existence. Unlike atheism it requires God who should bestow being upon existents; and in order to avoid pantheism, it further requires that the being of God should be radically differentiated from the being of the world.

The chief crux of the eternity of the world, which has been stressed by the opponents of the doctrine throughout the history of thought, is that it involve an actual infinite series in the past. In answer, it has been said, ever since Kant, that it is not impossible at all to imagine an infinite in the past, just as it is not impossible to imagine it in the future, i.e., there is no absurdity involved in starting from any given moment backwards and traversing the past and at no point coming to the beginning of the past. The fallacy of this answer consists in assimilating the past to the future, for the past is something actual in the sense that it has happened and is, therefore, determinate once and for all. But the same fallacy, we think, is implied in the objection itself and it seems that the application of the term "infinite" is inappropriately used for the past: the term "infinite" is used either for a series which is endless (which is both beginningless and endless. According to the thesis, the series is beginningless *in the past*, and endless in the future, whereas the objection seeks to put an end to the series at a given moment of time and then argue for an infinity in the past. Also, whereas beginning is a temporal concept, beginninglessness is a negation and need not be a temporal concept, but the objection obviously implies "infinity in the past" as a temporal concept.

INFLUENCE ON THE EAST AND THE WEST

The influence of ibn Sīnā's thought has been enormous. In the East, indeed, his system has dominated the Muslim philosophical tradition right down to the modern era when his place is being given to some modern Western thinkers by those who have been educated in modern universities. In the *madrasahs* run on traditional lines, ibn Sīnā is still studied as the greatest philosopher of Islam. This is because no subsequent philosopher of equal originality and acuteness produced a system after him. Ibn Rushd, the last great philosophical name in the medieval tradition of Muslim philosophy, did not formulate his thought systematically, but chose to write commentaries on Aristotle's works. These commentaries, because of their superb scholarship and acuteness, had a tremendous impact on the medieval West (which received Aristotle first through him) but were not only not influential in the Muslim East, but most of them are even lost in the original Arabic. His comparative lack of influence, of course, is chiefly due to the destruction of his works. For the rest, the subsequent philosophical activity was confined to the writing of commentaries on ibn Sīnā or polemics against him. Rare exceptions, like Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ṣhīrāzī, who wrote works on systematic philosophy, became less philosophical and more mystical in their intellectual, if not spiritual, temper. Nevertheless, these commentaries and polemics against and for ibn Sīnā and later systems have never yet been studied to any appreciable extent by modern students.

Now, let us determine more exactly the influence of ibn Sīnā within the Islamic tradition. To say that he has dominated the philosophical tradition in Islam is certainly not to say that he has dominated the Islamic tradition itself. On the contrary, the influence of ibn Sīnā—which is equivalent to the influence of philosophy—within Islam suddenly and sharply dwindled after the polemics of al-Ḡhazālī and later on of al-Rāzī and then declined and became moribund. He continued to be read in the *madrasahs* merely as an intellectual training ground for theological students, not to philosophize anew but to refute or reject philosophy. The chief contributory factors to this situation were the formal rigidity of dogmatic theology and the fact that human reason itself became suspect due to the incompatibility of certain tenets of ibn Sīnā with this theology (besides, of course, social, political, educational, and economic causes). Not only did the philosopher's concept of the eternity of the world give affront to orthodoxy but also to those doctrines of his own which were developed with an especial regard for Islam, like the doctrine of prophethood. But perhaps the greatest theological objection was to his rejection of the bodily resurrection. On this point, although he maintains in the *K. al-Najāt* (and the *Shifā'*) that the resurrection of the flesh, while not demonstrable by reason, ought to be believed on faith; in his expressly esoteric work called *Risālat al-Adwīyyah* he rejects it in totality and with vehemence.

Ibn Sīnā's works were translated into Latin in Spain in the middle of the

sixth/twelfth century. The influence of his thought in the West has been profound and far-reaching. We have, while discussing ibn Sīnā's individual theories, alluded time and again to certain definite influences of his. But as it is impossible to do justice to this aspect fully within the space at our disposal, we shall be content with certain general remarks. Ibn Sīnā's influence in the West started penetrating palpably since the time of Albert the Great, the famous saint and teacher of St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas' own metaphysics (and theology) will be unintelligible without an understanding of the debt he owes to ibn Sīnā. No one can fail to observe ibn Sīnā's influence even in Aquinas' later and bigger works like the *Summa Theologica* and the *Summa contra Gentiles*. But the influence of the Muslim philosopher in the earlier formative period of the Christian Saint is overwhelming; he is mentioned by the latter, e.g., on almost each page of his *De Ente et Essentia* which is, indeed, the foundation of Aquinas' metaphysics. No doubt, ibn Sīnā is also frequently criticized by Aquinas and others, but even the amount of criticism itself shows in what esteem he was held in the West.

But the influence of ibn Sīnā is not restricted to Aquinas,¹¹ or, indeed, to the Dominican Order or even to the official theologians of the West. The translator of his *De Anima*, Gundisalvus, himself wrote a *De Anima* which is largely a wholesale transposition of ibn Sīnā's doctrines. Similar is the case with the medieval philosophers and scientists, Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon. Duns Scotus and Count Zabarella, the finest of the late medieval commentators of Aristotle, also bear testimony to ibn Sīnā's enduring influence. Dr. S. van den Bergh in his *Averroes' Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, London, 1954 (Vol. II, *passim*) has traced the influence of certain of the ideas of the *Shaiḡh al-Ra'īs* down to modern times.

But it would be futile to go on giving a mere catalogue of individual authors. In fact, the historic influence of this rich personality is a phenomenon which is being realized only now in the West and Professor Etienne Gilson has started it off notably by his articles: (1) "Avicenne et le point de départ de Duns Scot" and (2) "Les sources gréco-arabes de l'augustinisme avicennisant" (in *Arch. Hist. Doctr. Litt.*, 1927 and 1929, respectively). Since then partial and not very determined efforts have been made on the subject, but there is still no comprehensive treatment. Still less satisfactory is the treatment of the historic influence of ibn Sīnā's scientific thought, although again beginnings have been made, notably by Professor Sarton and Dr. Crombie's work (see also *Avicenna, Scientist & Philosopher*, edited by G. M. Wickens, London, 1952, Chaps. 4, 5, 6).

But the question of his influence on the West and East apart, a very small portion of his original works has ever been edited. In 1951, the Egyptian

¹¹ Miss A. M. Goichon's *La Philosophie d'Avicenne et son Influence en Europe médiévale*, Paris, 1944, may be consulted; in general, however, the author's knowledge of Arabic and philosophy should be taken cautiously.

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Government and the Arab League set up a Committee in Cairo to edit the encyclopaedia, *Kitāb al-Shifā'*. Some parts of it have already been published.

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Besides the works mentioned in the body of this chapter, and the bibliography given by Father Anawati, an account of the works on ibn Sīna between 1945 and 1952 will be found in the *Philosophical Quarterly*, 1953, *Philosophical Surveys*, Vol. VIII, Part 1, "Medieval Islamic Philosophy" by R. Walzer, and in P. J. de O. P. Menasce's "Bibliographische Einführungen in das Studium der Philosophie," 6, *Arabische Philosophie*, Bern, 1948.