

## Philosophy and Religion<sup>1</sup>

Āyatullāh al-‘Uzmā ‘Abdullāh Jawādī Āmulī

Translated by Shuja Ali Mirza

*I seek refuge from the accursed Shayṭān.*

*In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.*

Perpetual praises are due to God Immaculate, Who designated wisdom as the ‘great good’; endless salutations are in order upon God’s holy prophets, who by the graces of his Eminence, the Seal of Prophethood, incessantly kept the house of wisdom open; boundless benedictions are owing upon the Immaculate Family—especially his Eminence, the Seal of Sainthood, the extant and

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<sup>1</sup> **Grußwort von Ayatollah Javodi Amoli an die Teilnehmer der internationalen Weltphilosophie-Tage in Teheran**

Vom 21. Bis 23. November 2010 fanden in Teheran die internationalen Weltphilosophie-Tage statt, zu der zahlreiche Professoren, Gelehrte und Denker aus der ganzen Welt erschienen waren, um Vorträge zu halten und ihre Gedanken auszutauschen. Veranstaltet wurden die Tage vom Iranischen Institut für Philosophie in Teheran in der Nationalbibliothek Teheran. Anlässlich der Eröffnungsfeier am 20. November wurde ein bedeutsames Grußwort von Ayatollah Javodi Amoli aus Qom verlesen, aus dem im Folgenden die wichtigsten Auszüge in englischer Übersetzung zur Kenntnis gebracht werden.

promised Mahdī—who were and are the practitioners of wisdom in human society; we wish to near ourselves in friendship to these sacred souls and distance ourselves from their nefarious foes.

After a warm welcome to all the noble guests, honourable professors, and respected students gathered here, we would like to thank the conveners and sponsors of this important conference. Furthermore, we would like to acknowledge the principal intellectuality of those who indoctrinate in the discourse of Revelation [and the textual tradition], as well as those who critique, incisively investigating the three poles of ‘religion’, ‘philosophy’, and the ‘firm bond between the two’ while exploiting the perfect harmony subsisting between them to definitively establish the subordination of intellection (*aql*) and transmission [of sacred text] (*naql*) to ascendant Revelation. We ask God, the all-wise, to fulfil the aspirations of one and all in forwarding the cause of the truth.

The exposition of the relation between philosophy and religion is [in reality] the responsibility of divine sages and sagacious believers; nevertheless, with regards to this relation, some points can be put forward in this short message for the perusal of academics and researchers:

**First:** The mandate of pure philosophy is to provide absolute understanding, sheer actuality, and knowledge of reality that is not limited by natural, quantitative, logical, or moral conditions. As such, pure philosophy is cast out into a vast shoreless ocean that includes both the danger of drowning as well as the boon of diving [for rare treasures]. To explain, if pure philosophy goes in the direction of the profane, it will not recognize any origin or destination for the world and in fact will deny that such a beginning

or end could exist for it—and this is that ‘danger of drowning’, becoming immersed in the dark depths of ignorance, leading to nothing other than nihilism and disorientation. But if pure philosophy embarks upon a path towards the divine, it will recognize a creator for the world that is its origin, give credence to a day of judgement that is its destination, and posit an Alpha and Omega that is sheer reality, objective nondelimited being, and the source of infinite perfections; in this case, the path comprises human perfection, beatific vision, and eternal felicity—and this is the ‘boon of diving’. In its subject matter, first principles, and conclusions, pure philosophy is not consequent upon anything. Hence in its preliminary approach towards ontology, pure philosophy is neither aware of the profane, nor partial to the sacred; that is to say, it is neutral with respect to both the exception and that from which the exception is made in the maxim ‘there is no deity but God’, as at the outset there is no indication of an entificating origin for being, nor is there any evidence of its unicity. It is only such an incisive and intrepid science that can in any real way pontificate upon the realm of existence.

**Second:** The ‘known’ is apprehended by ‘knowledge’, and the level of ‘knowledge’ accords with the capacity of the ‘knower’. Any person comes to know the world only to the measure of his self. Hence, the material man who identifies with nothing but the sensorial and who does not understand anything unless he physically senses it, has no recourse other than materialism. Such an incapable and “backward” person is obsolete in the face of pure philosophy. The proverbial fly-eating spider cannot do what a phoenix does, as Mawlānā Rūmī writes:

*If the spider had the nature of the ‘Anqā,*

*how should it have reared a tent (made) of some gossamer?*<sup>2</sup>

Even though such a worldling speaks about a ‘worldview’ [that is universal], in reality his thought is grounded to the material and limited by the temporal. This is because such universal thought and intellectuality is not possible for a stone-caged materialist who has not come to know his true identity. For a true intellectual is existentially expansive [and truly free], and he never imprisons this boundless reality of his true self to the confines of the sensorial or imaginal realms. On the contrary, the true thinker deals with each of these realms on their own level and ensures that they are led by the theoretical intellect on the cognitive plane and by the practical intellect on the level of the will. By so doing, such a soul acquires the ability to perceive universals that are beyond space and time, thereby understanding the ‘past’ and the ‘future’ to the same degree that he understands the ‘present’. In maintaining the integrity of the multiple states of being, he employs empirical methods to research natural phenomena, partly empirical and partly abstractive means to assay mathematical problems, and pure abstraction to analyze philosophical principles. Only such a sage and knower is granted permission—to the extent and depth of his dive—to enter the ocean of universalization that pure philosophy represents. But of course, because he swims by way of his intellectual concepts, he is privy to the creatures of the sea only to the extent that such conceptualization allows, and remains ignorant of the inner depths of the ocean. Nevertheless, even with its limitations, such an entry into the water allows him to boast “today all the knowledge of the world is under our wings”<sup>3</sup> This is because it is the prerogative of pure philosophy to establish the subjects of all other sciences and to

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<sup>2</sup> Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawī of Jalālu'ddīn Rumī* (Delhi: Adam Publishers, 1992), vol. 3, p. 223, vr. 3982. The “Anqā” is the mythical creature known in the West as the Phoenix. [Tr.]

<sup>3</sup> This is an allusion to Nasir Khusraw’s *Eagle Poem*. [Tr.]

affirm their primary assertions. More importantly, it is by the grace of pure and sacred philosophy that the Islamic nature of all sciences and the religious quality of all knowledge is proved by the philosopher who knows the true identity of his self and brings forth such proofs by way of deductive abstraction and demonstration. Of course, even higher than the universalization of pure philosophy, is the realization of pure mysticism (*irfān*)—the latter being the lot of those witnesses to the truth who are in communion with the divine, for they have gone from the stage of the knowledge of certainty to the very objective reality of certainty; but such a discussion is beyond the scope of this short message.

**Third:** A materialist can never be a philosopher as he is no longer capable of perceiving suprasensorial existents, while [the truth is that] the beginning and end of the world is a reality beyond the reach of physical senses. If this materialist would want to contemplate upon such an immaterial and boundless reality, then his bare minimum cognitive content must come from pure intellectual abstraction and universal logical demonstration, such as would include eternally necessary propositions. Failing this, the most that such a person could glean would be a superficial awareness of a handful of experimental results. Now, as this level of thinking does not allow him to differentiate between not finding something and its nonexistence, and because the cosmos in its totality cannot be apprehended by sensorial experimentation [alone], he is not able to pass judgement on it. In consequence, he conjectures the absence of evidence to be evidence of absence, and based on such a supposition he denies the reality of the Alpha and Omega, revelation, prophecy, religion, and the sacred law [or normative morality]. In the words of Mawlānā Rūmī:

*So that thy words will be (prompted) by thy immediate feelings  
and thy flight will be made with thine own wings and pinions.<sup>4</sup>*

*Whosoever wilfully adopts a heresy without investigation  
and the utmost efforts to discover the right way,*

*The wind (of self-will) will lift him up and kill him, like (the people  
of) 'Ād: he is no Solomon that it should waft his throne along.<sup>5</sup>*

So if any positivist thinker would want to think philosophically, he would, like the people of 'Ād, become entwined in the whirlwind of profanity and heresy—his half-baked appraisal of reality giving rise to a cyclone that suspends him in midair, making him an easy prey for eagles and vultures or be blown away by the wind far and wide.

وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتَخَطَفُهُ الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهْوَى بِهِ الرِّيحُ

فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ

Whoever ascribes partners to Allah is as though he had fallen from a height to be devoured by vultures, or to be blown away by the wind far and wide. (22:31)

The true intellectual, on the other hand, protects 1) the value of the sensorial by keeping it to the level of material experimentation, 2) the integrity of the imaginal by employing a partially empirical and partially abstractive approach, and 3) the sanctity of the purely intellectual by relying on sheer abstraction. It is such an individual who can, like Solomon, command the providential winds of nature, opening up vast new vistas during the morning course and conquering pristine truths in the evening journey. It is in this light

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<sup>4</sup> Nicholson, vol. 6, p. 516, vr. 4665.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholson, vol. 6, p. 516, vrs. 4673-4674.

that the Qur'ān has given glad tidings to such wayfarers on the path of Truth:

وَلَسَلِّمَنَّ الْرِّيحَ غُدُوها شَهْرٌ وَرَوْاحُها شَهْرٌ

And for Solomon [We subjected] the wind: its morning course was a month's journey and its evening course was a month's journey. (34:12)

The expectation from such principial intellectuality when it turns to philosophical thought is that it posits the existence of one God, knows the heavens and the earth to be His creation, sees the hand of His providence in all events, and envisions the entire realm of existence to be His signs.

**Fourth:** When a person who relies solely on sensorial data and empirical experience for his knowledge leaves his own reserve and encroaches onto the realm of pure philosophy and universalization, he surmises all metaphysical realities to be imaginary and hallucinatory and the moral code and wisdom of the prophets to be mere myths. He is found saying:

إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسْطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

These are nothing but myths of the ancients. (6:25)

He supposes religion, the Creator of religion, those who brought us religion, and the followers of religion, all to be worthless and [consequently] all second-order philosophies,<sup>6</sup> as well as the

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<sup>6</sup> Second-order philosophies are sometimes known as applied philosophies or compound philosophies and include most of those fields that start with the prefix, "philosophy of..." [Tr.]

sciences and fields that make use of the results of these philosophies, are made secular, profane, and heretical. This is because the most important element of any science is the existence of its subject matter—as all the affirmed principles pertain to the affirmation of predicates for the subject, and all of them are causally dependent. So if a materialist confines the causal chain to the material realm, his profane thinking can never give credence to a first active principle that is named ‘God’ and that is free from all matter and its concomitants, nor can such heretical thought give rise to a subject of knowledge and its essential accidents that are attributed to God. Ultimately, such thought leads to a pure “philosophy”, second-order “philosophies”, and the “sciences” associated with them that are entirely profane and heretical. When he sees these first-order and second-order sciences in this way, they become tainted and the discrepancy between philosophy so defined and religion becomes irresolvable. Those verses from Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār Nīshābūrī in which he prefers disbelief to philosophy can be said to be referring to the above mentioned [positivist] “philosophy”.<sup>7</sup>

Religion, which intrinsically contains empirical, abstractive, intuitive, and revelatory methods of understanding and cognition, considers such a positivist philosophy to be sheer ignorance and folly. This is because religion posits the existence of transcendental realities in the realm of being that cannot be apprehended by organs other than the abstractive intellect and the intuitive heart. The positivist and sensationalist, being *ipso facto* deprived of intellection and intuition, is like the proverbial blind man who wants to understand the sun by his sense of touch and man’s spirit by his sense of taste. Hence, when a positivist takes pen in hand, no

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<sup>7</sup> See ‘Aṭṭār’s *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*.

matter what he writes it is against religion. Mawlānā Rūmī writes in verse:

*When authority falls into the hands of one who has lost the (right) way, he deems it to be a high position (jā), (but in reality) he has fallen into a pit (chā).<sup>8</sup>*

*When the pen (of authority) is in the hand of a traitor, unquestionably Mansūr is on a gibbet.*

*When this affair (dominion) belongs to the foolish, the necessary consequence is (that) they kill the prophets.<sup>9</sup>*

In other words, in the eyes of a positivist, there is no relation whatsoever between religion, pure philosophy, second-order philosophies, and the sciences, as the myopia resulting from fixation on the sensorial realm does not allow him a vision of the higher levels and full range of the universe.

Deem the skies and the earth to be an apple that appeared from the tree of Divine Power.

Thou art as a worm in the midst of the apple and art ignorant of the tree and the gardener.<sup>10</sup>

**Fifth:** Cognition, upon rediscovering its original form [in pure philosophy], is said to involve the three stages of acquired knowledge (*ilm al-ḥuṣūlī*): sensation that is purely empirical, imagination/estimation that is partially empirical and partially

<sup>8</sup> Nicholson, vol. 4, p. 352, vr. 1447.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholson, vol. 2, p. 293, vrs. 1398-1399. Cf. Qurʾān 2:61 and 3:21.

<sup>10</sup> Nicholson, vol. 4, p. 376, vrs. 1869-1870.

abstractive, and intellection<sup>11</sup> that is purely abstractive; and sometimes to involve an entry into the realm of immediate or intuitive knowledge (*‘ilm al-ḥudūrī*), where it directly witnesses its true reality—the immaterial spirit. Such an epistemic approach to reality sees all existents to be the creation of an Originator—an absolute Being that possesses all possible perfections in a nondelimited way such that they, in reference to their extension, are all the same and identical with the Essence of this self same Creator. In this approach, causality and the chain of cause and effect is envisioned so as to entail the following: temporal phenomena is referred to the eternal, order ensues from an ordering agent, things in motion require a mover, contingent existents depend upon the necessary existent, and ultimately, indigent beings are nothing but “relations” to the absolutely Self-sufficient.

The result of such pure philosophical thinking is that all knowledge and all sciences become sacred and divine. This is because in this realm we can speak of nothing but creation; all things, from the most sublime to the lowest of the low are nothing but the creations of God. To gain knowledge of this realm is to acquire knowledge of creation, and such knowledge is sacred because not only is its subject matter the creation of God, but its essential accidents—which are considered to be the predicates of its propositions and statements—are the instauration of God (not by simple instauration of each one separately, nor by a composite instauration, but rather by virtue of an intrinsic instauration of the subject itself). Knowledge qua knowledge is a contingent existent itself and a creation of God. The knowing agent is also in need of some being to give it existence. Consequently, no one can speak of [the

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Intellection’ here is being used in its general sense and includes ratiocinative reason; the latter being the main intention of the author here. [Tr.]

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neutrality of] the natural world or the natural sciences and claim that, for instance, geology is indifferent with respect to it being characterized as either “Islamic” or “non-Islamic”. This is because the earth is a creation of God and there cannot be a science dealing with this creation without it being “Islamic”. Of course, it is possible that any particular geologist is indifferent to religion, but the nature of the science itself remains Islamic, and it cannot be otherwise. Hence, it is clear that, this type of philosophy proves the sacred character of itself, establishes the religious nature of all second-order philosophies, and demonstrates the Islamic quality of all sciences.

Pure philosophy has given such results as: the proof of God’s existence, the necessity of revelation and prophecy, the inevitability of religion, the truth of resurrection, and other religious matters. Another special blessing of this philosophical worldview is that it demonstrates the Islamic nature of all sciences.

Now, just as this pure philosophy establishes the necessity of religion, for its part, religion also encourages the study of and research into such a philosophy. If it was not for the insistence of religion on an intellectual vision of the world and the acquisition of a sacred philosophy, some would have become the victims of positivism and sensationalism and like the other materialists they would have ended up worshipping the natural world and becoming servile to human industry and artefacts. Mawlānā Rūmī says:

Had it not been for the efforts of Ahmad, you also, like your ancestors, would be worshipping idols.

This head of yours has been delivered from bowing to idols, in order that you may acknowledge his rightful claim upon the (gratitude of the religious) communities.<sup>12</sup>

You have neglected to give thanks for the Religion because you got it for nothing as an inheritance from your father.<sup>13</sup>

**Sixth:** Sacred philosophy is not only exhorted by religion—on account of which Muslims have aspired to learn it in the past and continue to do so now, but it is a science that is intrinsically religious. To explain, sometimes the education of a science is commanded by Islam, in which case the learning and teaching of that science becomes an Islamic act; but the Islamic nature of the activity does not mean that the science itself is Islamic. For it is possible for something to be intrinsically indifferent to religion, but because it is useful for society, both Muslims and non-Muslims make efforts to acquire it. Hence, the very fact that Islam encourages the study of a certain science does not mean that it is Islamic. In addition, it has been seen that even without any previous encouragement Muslims have taken up the acquisition of a particular science and have even taken the trouble to proliferate it. In this case as well, neither can the Islamic nature of this science be proven, nor can a decree declaring the study of that science to be obligatory or recommended be issued, as there is no valid textual evidence or rational demonstration—neither for nor against.

The “religious” character of sacred philosophy does not stem from either of these two mentioned cases. Rather, the criteria for pure philosophy being “Islamic” are two things: The first, a

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<sup>12</sup> Nicholson, vol. 2, p. 241, vrs. 367-368.

<sup>13</sup> Nicholson, vol. 2, p. 241, vr. 371.

comprehensive principle and universal rule and the second, supportive evidence to collaborate it when found.

To begin with the first, (i.e. the comprehensive principle): Pure philosophy, at its outset, is like love—unrefined, raw, and primitive. It is a stranger to both worlds, whether profane or sacred. The philosopher is as a thirsty man who seeks water—if he goes astray he becomes the victim of the mirage of profanity, but if, however, he finds the Path, he arrives at the holy water and spring of sanctity. For by rejecting the froth and scum on the surface and arriving at the waters beneath, he finds the world to be God's creation and sees the signs of divine will and knowledge manifesting themselves through every part of it. Furthermore, such a person in all his moments of knowing seeks nothing but the acts of God. All this is Islam itself since the demonstrative intellect [or discursive reason] is tantamount to canonical evidence that carries religious authority (*hujjat-e shar'ī*). This intellect discovers nothing but the acts of God; consequently, in principle and concomitantly, it is comprised of nothing but Islam. In effect the sacred philosopher observes and discovers the acts of God and gives reports of his observations, in the same way that an exegete of the Qur'ān studies the words of God, understands their content and explains their indication. Exegesis is the exposition of the words of God, and pure philosophy, along with its concomitant second-order philosophies and sciences, are the explication of the acts of God. So, for instance, if a philosopher or a geologist is asked as to how God created the macrocosmic order or the physical earth, they give correct answers in the same way as when an exegete, jurist, traditionist, theologian, and the like are asked questions pertaining to their specialities and give the proper replies. A correct answer or proper reply here means that the expert in question has, to the extent of his abilities, striven to give a valid report of either an act

or word of God. In the system of Islamic reporting, there is no difference between the demonstrative intellect that speaks of the acts of God and valid transmission (i.e. textual authority) that elucidates the words of God. The intellect and transmission (or tradition) are the two wings of Islamic thought and are both subordinate to Revelation, by which they are guided and managed.

With regards to the intellect it is utterly important that the two extremes are avoided. The one extreme is where the intellect is raised to the level of revelation and the other is where it is seen to be a practical and temporary instrument, like the scaffolding of a building in progress that, once used, is duly disposed of. For it is intellectual and rational demonstration that proves the existence of God, His unicity, His attribution to infinite perfections, the identity of those attributes with each other and with the divine Essence, the necessity of revelation and prophecy, the immaculateness of the prophets, the truth of the afterlife, the necessity of miracles, and the difference between such miracles and the occult sciences such as magic, spells, talisman, lithomancy, and the like. All of these things are Islamic; in fact, Islam itself is proved by philosophical demonstration. This being the case, is it possible to treat philosophy like scaffolding? Is it possible to dispose of that intellectual thought that speaks to the existence and non-existence of the world, the Keeper of the world, and other similar issues—removing it from the body of religion?! Granted, it is possible for a person to accept intellectual thought and valid demonstration but to disdain and refrain from speaking of “philosophy”, but this only amounts to a verbal separation [of philosophy from religion] and not one that is true and real. But of course, the demonstrative intellect is duty-bound to be in harmony with transmission, and, for its part, valid textual authority, can never be in opposition to rational demonstration.

In the case of transmitted textual proof that is general, the intellectual component is commonly present as a qualifying or limiting condition that makes it specific. If, on the other hand, the textual evidence pertains to a particular and not universal matter, it is scientific rationality and not the philosophical intellect that comes on the scene, because philosophy speaks to the total world order and the sciences cover some specific part of the created order. In conclusion, therefore, it can be said that the philosophical intellect is more like a ladder in Islam than its scaffolding, or to use a different analogy, it is more like a lamp than a key, for a lamp actually enters the vault after having discovered the treasure, while the key however gets left in the door and does not find entry into the vault.

The second of the two criteria for why pure philosophy is “Islamic” is the supporting role of a collection of many [specific] philosophical rules that can be found in the verses of the Qur’ān and the traditions transmitted from the People of the House of the Prophet (‘a), such as [directly] allow for the derivation of intellectual first principles and their philosophical corollaries. Some cases in point are the many and much used rules of jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence that can be found in this above-mentioned collection, the details of which are beyond the scope of this short epistle.

**Seventh:** Philosophical thought, like many other fields of knowledge, is coexistent with the human condition, being inseparable from it. It did not come about at the behest of anyone, nor will it retreat on the orders of anyone. The written records of the far and near East, as well as the recorded history of the West,

give credence to this ancient and abiding coincidence between the two. Historical records show that after the Flood that inundated the entire earth during the time of prophet Noah, intellectual universalistic thought that originated from the Abrahamic prophets began to proliferate throughout the Middle East and remains, even now, an unparalleled and firm but dynamic mode of intellectuality. Events such as the breaking of the idols at the hands of Abraham (*'a*), his debate with Nimrod, the biggest tyrant of the time, and the misplaced attempt to burn him alive stood out and commanded the attention of one and all in the Middle East. Even though there was nothing like the modern means of media and communication at the time, the miracle referred to by the verse,

قُلْنَا يَنْتَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَيَّ إِنِّي رَاهِمٍمَ

We said, 'O fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham'! (21:69),

acted as a flash of lightening that lit up the entire region and informed those with vision and understanding. In a similar vein, the demonstration entailed in the verse,

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ

الْأَفْلِينَ

When night darkened over him, he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord!' But when it set, he said, 'I do not like those who set.' (6:76),

reached all the academies and centres of learning and from that time up until the present, various opinions have been and still continue to be given in theological and philosophical circles regarding the middle term of this syllogism—i.e., is the intent implicit [in prophet Abraham's statement] an exposition of the theory of motion, the evidence of contingency, an argument from

order and design in nature, a reference to conceptual possibility or finally to indigent contingency? Moreover, what is the fundamental difference between this demonstration and the proof found in verse 258 of Sūrah Baqarah? In that verse Abraham is found to be arguing in this manner:

رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي ۚ وَيُمِيتُ

My Lord is He who gives life and brings death.

But when faced with the nefarious response of,

أَنَا أَحْيِي ۚ وَأُمِيتُ

‘I [too] give life and bring death,’

why did prophet Abraham change his argument to the following:

فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأَنْتَ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ

Indeed Allah brings the sun from the east; now you bring it from the west.

Finally, how can one make sense of the fact that this argument is apparently in agreement with the astronomy of Ptolemy while it is at odds with the established astronomy in which it is the earth that moves? All these questions and concerns show that philosophical thought inspired by revelation and prophecy has a long history in the Middle East. Furthermore, considering the fact that [the universal and perennial tradition of] Islam is the only divinely accepted and rational religion—all the prophets, in particular the ones belonging to the Abrahamic line, having brought this same Primordial Tradition (*dīn-i ḥanīf*), differing only with respect to the code [of law] and path appropriate to the time and place in

question—divine and sacred philosophical thought must not be ascribed as Hellenic and the like. Rather, it must be conceded that peerless prodigies and paragons such as Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī, Ibn ʿĀmirī, Ibn Haytham, and others—most of whom had neither a teacher nor a student worthy of their pristine intellectuality—were nourished by the Qurʾān and the Immaculate Saints (*ʿitrah*). This is how they were able to become the beacons of light and the expositors of wisdom of human history, and were able to attest that the position of the Leader of the Faithful, his Eminence ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (*ʿa*), was, among the companions of the Prophet (*ṣ*), “like the intelligible is among the sensorial”.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the great sages of Greece and all other lands have benefited from the blessings of sacred scriptures, referred to in the Qurʾān as:

صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ

the scriptures of Abraham and Moses. (87:19)

Hence, interpretive and independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) in the field of philosophy, like the elicitation and deduction (*istinbāt*) practiced in the fields of jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence, existed from ancient times and will continue to exist until the reappearance of his Eminence, the Seal of Sainthood, the extant and promised Mahdī (*ʿa*). Consequently, it can never be surmised or suggested that the intellectual thought of divine sages somehow pre-dates “Islam”, when the latter is taken in its most comprehensive sense.

That which is quintessential to know and which has become our leitmotif of sorts is that: intellection (*ʿaql*) is to be contrasted with

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<sup>14</sup> Ibn Sīnā, *Miʿrāj nāmeḥ*.

transmission [of sacred text] (*naql*), **not** with Revelation (*wahy*). A philosopher is contrasted with and opposed to a jurispudent, not to a prophet. Both intellect and transmission [or tradition] are guided by and nourished by Revelation. The philosopher and jurispudent alike are followers of the Prophet. In the presence of Revelation, there is no place whatsoever for the philosophical intellect [and its discursive truths]; just as there is no place for traditional jurisprudence (*ijtihād-i naqlī*) [and its textual verifications]. Generations ago, Ḥakīm Sanāʿī put these truths to verse:

With Muṣṭafā present in the world,

were someone to discourse with Reason;

Is like the Sun in the celestial sky,

and someone were Alcor<sup>15</sup> to mention.

While reason is a towering mount,

Revealed law bestows its rejection;

But when it becomes chaff once again,

Revealed way becomes its attraction.<sup>16</sup>

Or as Mawlānā Rūmī says in his *Dīwān-i Shams*:

Unbelief has put on black garments;

the Light of Muhammad has arrived.

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<sup>15</sup> Alcor, or *suhā* in Arabic, is a faint star in the Ursa Major constellation and is the second star from the end of the Big Dipper's handle. It is accompanied by the brighter star Mizar. Arabic literature says that only those with the sharpest eyesight can see Alcor. [Tr.]

<sup>16</sup> From the *Dīwān-i Sanāʿī*, original translation.

The drum of immortality has been beaten;

The eternal kingdom has arrived.

Last night a tumult arose amongst the stars,

For from the propitious ones the most auspicious star arrived.

Reason in the midst of that tumult desired to show itself;

A child is still a child, even if it has at the ABC arrived.

For the sake of the uninitiated I have clapped a lock on my mouth;

Minstrel, arise and cry, "Eternal delight has arrived."<sup>17</sup>

One of the gems of wisdom that the sages and philosophers of yesteryear have left for posterity is this: Even if all the people on the earth were of the level of say Ḥakīm Fārābī or Ibn Sīnā, the following verse would still be absolutely true:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا

It is He who sent to the unlettered [people] an apostle... (62:2)

This is because in comparison to the sacred station of prophethood, all people without exception are as pre-schoolers who are learning their ABC's. It is precisely because of this that the greatest efforts towards and the strongest proofs for the necessity of revelation and prophecy have been effected at the hands of the divine sages and philosophers.

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<sup>17</sup> Arthur J. Arberry, *Mystical Poems of Rūmī* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), vol. 1, pp. 135-136, poem 113.

Once again I would like to honour all the dear guests, noble professors and respected students gathered here for this symposium on Philosophy and Religion, and would like to thank the respected officials of the University of Shiraz and the Research Institute for Wisdom and Philosophy.

May Allah grant forgiveness to us and to you and the Peace and Mercy of Allah be upon you.

Jawādī Āmulī

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