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Return To

# Knowledge Is Light

Essays in Islamic Studies  
Presented to  
Seyyed Hossein Nasr  
by his Students  
in Honor of  
his Sixty-Sixth Birthday

Edited by  
Zailan Moris

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## Preface

**S**eyyed Hossein Nasr, currently University Professor of Islamic Studies at the George Washington University, Washington D.C. is one of the most important and foremost scholars of Islamic, Religious and Comparative Studies in the world today. Author of over fifty books and five hundred articles which have been translated into several major Islamic, European and Asian languages, Professor Nasr is a well known and highly respected intellectual figure both in the West and the Islamic world. An eloquent speaker with a charismatic presence, Nasr is a much sought after speaker at academic conferences and seminars, university and public lectures and also radio and television programs, in his area of expertise. Possessor of an impressive academic and intellectual record, Professor Nasr's career as a teacher and scholar spans over four decades.

Born in 1933, Professor Nasr began his illustrious teaching career in 1955 when he was still a young and promising doctoral student at Harvard University. Over the years, he has taught and trained an innumerable number of students who have come from the different parts of the world, and many of whom have become important and prominent scholars in their fields of study.

This volume, which is a collection of essays written by students of Professor Nasr to honor his sixty-sixth birthday and

engulfs the self becomes the light which fills it, and the words given to all Christians are reinterpreted and renewed:

*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they . . . will glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 5:14)*

The words of Paul will have acquired new meaning: "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*" (Gal 2:20)

# Afdal al-Dīn Kāshānī's Philosopher-King

*William C. Chittick*

## Introduction

In 1983, as part of his grand project to introduce the unknown riches of Islam in the modern West, Seyyed Hossein Nasr published an article on the twelfth and thirteenth-century philosopher Afdal al-Dīn Kāshānī, usually called "Bābā Afdal."<sup>1</sup> Although well-known in Iran, especially as the author of a large number of quatrains, he has remained a relatively neglected philosopher, partly because he wrote almost entirely in Persian. His prose is remarkably beautiful, but he seems to have paid more attention to crafting his language than to employing terminology that was current in philosophical circles. Hence, his works are sometimes obscure because of his use of Persian words where others would use technical terms derived from the Arabic. In his reliance on Persian, he is highly unusual, since the great Muslim philosophers, though their mother tongue was usually Persian, wrote mainly if not entirely in Arabic. Both Avicenna (d. 428/1037) and Mullā Ṣadrā (d.1050/1640), for example, wrote a few short

treatises in Persian, but these are relatively insignificant when contrasted with the great volume of their Arabic works. Even Suhrawardī (d.587/1191), well-known for his visionary recitals in Persian, wrote far more in Arabic. It should not be surprising, then, that when Mullā Šadrā wanted to revise and expand Bābā Afdal's *Jāwidān-nāma* (The Book of Eternity), he did so in Arabic (with the new title *Iksīr al-ārifīn*, The Elixir of the Gnostics). Thereby he made the text more accessible to students of philosophy, who were not accustomed to reading their own subject matter in their mother tongue.

Little is known about Bābā Afdal's life. He died in about 610/1213, and was buried in the village of Marāq near Kāshān, where his tomb is still a place of pilgrimage. He is the author of some fifty relatively short Persian treatises, most of which were published together in two volumes in 1952-58. As Nasr points out, his philosophy is basically an "autology," which is to say that he asserts the necessity of self-knowledge as a prerequisite for gaining all real knowledge. This puts him onto the Neoplatonic if not Hermetic side of Islamic philosophy, and his works have a certain similarity to those of the Ikhwān al-Šafā'. It also puts his basic teachings into harmony with the masters of theoretical Sufism, as does his sensitivity to beauty, which appears both in the contents of his works and the very form of his prose and poetry. However, unlike the Sufis, he rarely refers explicitly to Quranic teachings (except in the mentioned *Jāwidān-nāma* and some of his letters), and he much prefers philosophical over religious terminology. Like so many other Muslim authors, Bābā Afdal is difficult to categorize neatly.

In what follows, I offer what is, so far as I know, the first translation into English of one of Bābā Afdal's original compositions, *Sāz wa pūrāya-yi shāhān-i purmāya* (*The Makings and Ornaments of Worthy Kings*).<sup>2</sup> This is an especially interesting treatise because, unlike his other works, it offers a political philosophy and at the same time suggests rather clearly his views on the affairs of the world. In it he investigates the meaning of kingship, and he finds that this divine attribute is manifest in specific modes throughout the cosmos and at all

levels of existence and creation. In order to be a proper king, a human being must actualize these cosmic qualities within himself. Thus, the qualities of a true human king accord with the character traits of a human being perfect in intelligence, understanding, and virtue. Finally Bābā Afdal turns to the human kings who exert political power in our own world, and he concludes that few if any of those who have been called "king" truly deserve the name. One could argue that the work reflects the sorry political situation of the time, not to mention the fact that Bābā Afdal is said to have been imprisoned on trumped-up charges by a local ruler, but there is no doubt of the firm grounding of the text in his philosophical views.

## Bābā Afdal's Worldview

Given that Bābā Afdal's argument is rooted in a world-view that is far from obvious today, a few remarks about his basic teachings may help clarify the internal logic of his treatise. His basic project throughout his works is to map out the path of achieving human perfection. In keeping with the philosophical tradition and some of the Sufi tradition, he sees this path to lie primarily in the actualization of human intelligence, whereby one comes to know oneself and all things. This in turn brings about the full manifestation of reality in the cosmos.

Bābā Afdal belongs to that group of Muslim philosophers who consider God or the absolutely Real to lie beyond *wujūd* (being or existence). He does not identify God with *wujūd* itself or with the Necessary *Wujūd*, and he never enters into the typical Peripatetic discussions of the nature of *wujūd*. He refers to God inasmuch as He is the ultimate source of *wujūd* and all things as the "Essence" (*dhāt*), the "Ipseity" (*huwīyat*), and the "Reality" (*haqīqat*). In contrast, *wujūd* is God's effulgent light. Bābā Afdal uses the Arabic term *wujūd* and the Persian *hasī* interchangeably, and I translate the two respectively as "existence" and "being," simply to indicate that he is employing two different words. Moreover, existence and being in English have the same sort of linguistic relationship that *wujūd* and *hasī*

have in Persian, since *wujūd* is a loan word with scientific and learned connotations, while *ḥastī* is derived from the basic "to be" verb.

When Bābā Afdal refers to being as "absolute" (*muṭlaq*), he means being inasmuch as it is found in all things throughout the universe. Thus everything other than God, without qualification, can be said to "exist." He does not mean by "absolute being"—as do the Sufis of Ibn al-ʿArabī's school—God in Himself. Thus in the present treatise he refers to "absolute being" as "the radiance of the Real's Ipseity" (*furūgh-i huwīyat-i ḥaqq*) and "the light of the divinity" (*nūr-i ilāhīyat*) and he says that some authors refer to it as the "First Intellect." In *ʿArḍ-nāma* (The Book of Exposition), he explains the relationship between movement and time and then shows clearly that he considers the Ipseity to lie beyond being. He writes, "The time of disconnected movement is always encompassed by the time of continuous, constant time. Continuous, constant time is encompassed by the aeon [*dāhr*], the aeon is encompassed by existence, and existence by the Ipseity."<sup>3</sup>

In *Rahanjām-nāma* (The Book of the Journey's End), Bābā Afdal explains the final causes of the created things and points out that they are arranged in a hierarchy that leads to the perfection of the whole. Then he writes:

The composition [of things] is for the sake of the equilibrium of the opposite and incompatible natures. The equilibrium of the natures is for the sake of worthiness to accept the soulful, spiritual faculty [*qūwat-i nafsānī-yi rūhānī*]. The worthiness to accept the soulful faculty is for the sake of knowledge and intelligence.<sup>4</sup> Knowledge and intelligence are for the sake of absolute existence. Absolute, general existence is for the sake of the Ipseity and Essence.

This order, arrangement of means, and multiplicity of causes occur in the compound things. The end of the means is at the furthest limit, and the end of the furthest limits is at the Essence, Ipseity, and Reality.<sup>5</sup>

Bābā Afdal frequently discusses four basic levels of existence, representing an ascending hierarchy through which the

full manifestation of being's perfections is achieved. He exploits the literal meaning of the Arabic term *wujūd* to show that it designates two basic levels, that of *būdan* ("being") and *yāftan* ("finding"). The lowest level is potential being, represented by the existence of corporeal things within the stuff that gives rise to them, such as the being of a tree in a seed and the being of an animal in a sperm-drop. The second level is actual being without finding, such as elemental bodies, that is, the bodies of minerals, plants, and animals, all of which are compounded of the four elements. The third level is potential finding, and this belongs to the soul (*nafs*). It is well to remember here that, as Bābā Afdal makes explicit, "The meaning of the word soul and the meaning of self [*khawud*] are one."<sup>6</sup> As for the fourth level, which is actualized finding, that belongs to the intellect.<sup>7</sup> "What is potential in the soul becomes actual in the intellect." From one point of view, this intellect is the First or Universal Intellect, which gives rise to the cosmos, but it is also the entelechy of the human being. It is the goal to be actualized through knowing oneself. Ultimately, it is nothing but the full actualization of all the potentialities of the human soul, and it is "absolute existence."

In another classification, about which more will be said shortly, Bābā Afdal divides the "found things" or "existents" (*mawjūdāt*) into four basic sorts—acted upon (*karda*), actor (*kunanda*), known (*dānista*), and knower (*dānā*). The "acted upon" is the corporeal world, which is represented by the bodies of everything that has a body. The "actors" are the souls and spirits that animate the bodies. The "known" is the disengaged realities (*ḥaqāʾiq-i mujarrad*), that is, all things inasmuch as they exist in consciousness without their corporeal actuality. Everything known to the soul and the intellect belongs to this level. Finally, the "knower" is the soul inasmuch as it is identical with intelligence. The fully actualized knower is the First Intellect, the origin and goal of all existence.

In his frequent discussions of the gradations of existence, Bābā Afdal cites examples from the outside and inside worlds. The movement from mineral, to plant, to animal, and finally to human represents the external unfolding of the universal

movement from the utter potentiality of matter (*mādda*) to the full actuality of form (*ṣūra*) without matter. Each higher level contains in itself all the lower levels. Plants have all the perfections of minerals, plus the specific vegetal faculties (*qūwa*), such as growth. Animals have all the mineral and plant faculties, plus specifically animal faculties, such as appetite (*shahwa*) and wrath (*ghaḍab*). Each higher level perfects and completes the lower level, so each is the actualization of a previous potentiality. The soul or self is the actuality of all the animal perfections. It in turn is gradually transmuted until it becomes the full actuality of Intellect, which is the knower that knows all things in itself and, by knowing them, encompasses and possesses them as its own.<sup>8</sup>

The human task, then, is to actualize all the levels of existence, thereby becoming a "complete human being" (*mardum-i tamām*). This expression is of course reminiscent of the term "perfect human being" (*insān-i kāmil*), made famous by Bābā Afdal's contemporary, Ibn al-ʿArabī, though there is no reason to imagine any historical relationship between the two figures. Bābā Afdal often speaks of achieving "completion" (*tamāmī*), sometimes using the term "perfection" (*kamāl*) in the same way. Like Ibn al-ʿArabī and others, he finds the key characteristic of human completion to lie in bringing together all things of the universe within self-awareness or self-finding. At the beginning of *Madārīj al-kamāl* (The Ascending Degrees of Perfection), Bābā Afdal tells us that he has addressed the treatise to the people in the midst of the path, not to those without the worthiness to reach completion, nor to "the complete human beings, who possess all the excellencies [*fadāʾil*] of the specific human characteristic."<sup>9</sup>

Bābā Afdal's methods and goals are well illustrated in the following passage from the beginning of *ʿArd-nāma*. In the midst of explaining why he wrote the book, which is the longest and most thorough explication of his own philosophy, he tells us much about his project in general. Notice that he describes the book in terms of four "expositions" (*ʿard*), thereby clarify-

ing its title. These four are the explanations of the four basic worlds.

Be aware and know—O you who are worthy of awareness [*ḡāhī*], want knowingness [*dānāʾī*], and seek the light of knowledge [*dānish*].—that the seeker of anything will not reach the object of desire unless he seeks it from its mine and locus. He who wants water and seeks it from the mine of sal ammoniac will never reach the object of desire. A cold-stricken man in need of the heat of fire and sunshine who does not set out for fire and sun but turns toward running water and blowing wind will be nearer to perishment than to the object of desire. In the same way, the seeker and wantor of knowledge, wakefulness [*bīdārī*], and awareness will reach his desire when he sets out for the locus and mine of knowledge, wakefulness, and awareness, not when he turns his face toward the confines of ignorance and the home of unconsciousness [*bī-khabarī*].

The locus of knowledge is the knower, and the mine of awareness is the aware. When the distance between you and the knower and aware becomes less, you will have more hope of finding the intended object from him. No knower and no one aware is closer to you than your own intelligent soul. If you set out to know it and bring the face of your seeking toward it, you will soon win the object of desire. If the lost devil that is your own fancy [*pindār*] should twist you away from the soul's path and turn you from its plumb-line, you will have prepared disappointment and decked out self-loss [*bī-khwudī*].<sup>10</sup>

No impairment is closer to the knowledge-seeker [*dānishjū*] than gazing upon and inclining toward the body and its states and seeking knowledge through bodily instruments. His injury by this state will reach the point that he will forget and lose himself and fancy that the body is the self. He will consider the knower and the finder to be the body. He will judge that whatever is not the body and not in the body is not and cannot be. He will believe that the self is nothing but this embodied similitude [*timthāl-i mujassam*] and that knowledges and perceptions are all found in the body and abide through the body.



When this imagining becomes firm and fixed in the human soul, the soul becomes the same as the body in not-finding [*nā-yābandagī*], unconsciousness, and self-loss. The worst state for the end of the human being is this state.

As for the best of his states, it is that he take the bodily existence as the lowest rung in existence. He should know that, relative to the body, the body's being is not separate from its nonbeing [*nīstī*], for the body [in itself] has just as much awareness of being as of nonbeing.<sup>11</sup> Existence for bodies is just like nonexistence in terms of pleasure and pain, joy and heartache.

If one body is greater than another body in existence, this greatness is from a state and thing other than the body and higher than it in the rung of existence. Thus, living bodies are more eminent and honored than dead bodies, and their life does not arise from corporeal existence, for, if it did arise from the body, whatever is a body would be alive. The living body is more eminent than the dead body, because the living has the trace of the awareness and wakefulness of the existence of the self or of other than the self. But the dead body is unconscious and unaware of the self and of other than the self.

When this knowledge lingers and becomes strong in the human being—I mean knowing that life and wakefulness are not traces of the body and do not arise from the body, because the living does not arise from the dead, and the aware and conscious does not arise from the unconscious—and when he finds himself aware and conscious, he has no choice but to seek that thing from which awareness and wakefulness come. That searching and seeking have no cause but the eminence and highness in existence of the level of the living and the awake, and the lowness in the rung of existence of the self-lost, the knowledgeable, and the dead.

In this seeking, usually he reaches various sorts of knowledge from considering the bodies and the states of the bodies: their stillness and movement, subtlety and density, lightness and heaviness, darkness and brightness, largeness and smallness, hardness and

softness, smoothness and roughness. The human being's awareness and his knowledge's encompassing these bodies and their states, and the bodies' unconsciousness of him and his states, are proof and demonstration of the greatness and highness of the level of the knower over the unknowing and of the encompasser over the encompassed. This kind of knowledge is 'the exposition of the world of nature' [*ard-i 'ālam-i tabī'at*] and the differentiation of the sensory things. Its reality and root appear from finding the instrument of sensation in the human soul.

Once the sorts of the bodies' movements, changes, and states are enumerated and once knowledge has been sought concerning the kinds of bodies, which are the locus of these opposing states, then, if the substance of the seeker is not satisfied and content with this measure of knowledge, he sets out to know the causes of these various sorts of movements and the origins of the bodies. Do these moving bodies move by themselves or by other than themselves? If they accept movement from other than themselves, is the cause of each diverse movement and stirring a single cause or diverse causes? What is the attribute of the substance of these causes and origins? Are they the same attributes as those of the bodies, or other attributes, such that their substance is not similar to the bodily substance and their states [not similar] to the body's? This knowledge is 'the exposition of the World of the Sovereignty' [*ard-i 'ālam-i malakūt*].

The human soul may win these plentiful knowledges while seeking remains predominant. He will have found inside and outside the world no existent other than [1] these bodies, [2] that which exercises free disposal and acts in these bodies—in some through making them move and in some through giving them rest—and [3] that which finds and knows that thing and its states. Then he will come back to himself, to finding and knowing by the self, to the various sorts of perceptions, some with instruments and some without, to the sorts of the objects of knowledge, and to the causes of these cognitive existents. He will not rest until he comes to know and gains awareness of all. This knowledge is 'the exposition of the

universe of eternity without end and the world of Lordship' [*ʿard-i jahān-i azal wa ʿālam-i rubūbiyat*]. The furthest limit, completion, and end of the elect [*khawāṣṣ*] and chosen [*guzidagān*] among human beings is this level.

After this is the level of arrival at and encompassing the profit of the knowledges and the self's final goal and the return to the Origin of origins, the Cause of causes, the Occasion of the occasions, and the Reality of the realities. This knowledge is the final goal and the intended object of all the knowledges and it encompasses all. It is the root, and all the knowledges are its branches. It is the seed of each and the produce and fruit of all. All knowledges are under its encompassment, just as the knowledge of bloodletting, surgery, and ophthalmology are under the science of medicine; the knowledge of definitions and syllogisms under the science of logic; the knowledge of acts of worship, the knowledge of transactions, and the knowledge of penalties and indemnities under the knowledge of the *shariʿa*; and the knowledge of arithmetic, the knowledge of logic, the knowledge of nature, and the other knowledges under the knowledge of Lordship.

The goal in enumerating the fields of science and showing the various sorts of knowledge is to stir up the human soul from heedlessness and unconsciousness of its own substance, and stirring it up is to make it reach the furthest limit and perfection of existence, for existence is four rungs: acted upon, actor, known, and knower.

The acted upon is the lowest rung; it is the corporeal world in its totality. The knower is the highest rung; it is the origin and final end of existence. The actor and the known are between these two rungs.

The bodies are the acted upon, the souls and spirits are the actor, the disengaged realities are the known—I mean, the reality of the actors, the realities of things acted upon, and the reality of the knowledges—and intelligence is the knower. The complete human being is a totality [*majmūʿ*] of acted upon, known, actor, and knower. Thus, in him the acted upon joins with the known and the actor with the knower.

As long as all the sorts of the things acted upon,

which are the bodies, are not enumerated, they will not be known. As long as the human being does not find all the kinds of his own body and all the actors upon these kinds and as long as he does not gaze back upon the acting and the acted upon, his actors will not join with his knowers.

The human soul must be stirred up for the sake of the exposition of these four, so that all may become one through him, all may become fixed and subsistent through his knowledge and encompassment, and he, along with all, may join with the origin of himself, by God's guidance and bounty.

Thus it is necessary to give awareness that the human being is the totality of these four. The traces of acted upon, actor, known, and knower can be found in the human being. This clarification was mentioned in a book whose name is *The Ascending Degrees of Perfection*. From those words will become apparent the fact that human beings are the totality of these four varieties of existence.

Awareness of these four pillars of existence includes four expositions:

The First Exposition. The exposition of the bodies, which are in the rung of passivity and receiving activity.

The Second Exposition. The exposition of the actors and the workers in the bodies of the cosmos and the body of the human being.

The Third Exposition. The exposition of the things known by the human being and of their types.

The Fourth Exposition. The exposition of the knowers and the clarification of the knower's whatness and that-it-is-ness.<sup>13</sup>

Toward the end of *ʿArd-nāma*, Bābā Afdal summarizes the basic thrust of his argument by tying together all the levels of existence and showing that they are united in the self-aware human being.

Knowledge is the existence of the knower and belongs to his essence and reality. This existence includes all existents, so all are among the types and branches of knowledge, for through knowledge one can encompass all, but no one can encompass knowl-

edge through any of the types of existence. This very existence is the first and the last of all existence. For it to have a first origin or a last end is absurd.

The knower is either this existent itself, or its springhead and cause, since, when someone knows something, that thing is either itself or something belonging to itself. That which is itself is its selfhood and knowerhood, since the knower is nothing but reality and self. As for what belongs to it, that is the realities of the species and the genera, which are among its knowns. Subsistence, perpetuity, everlastingness, and foreverness are all among the types of absolute existence. By knowing these, the knower encompasses all—I mean subsistence, perpetuity, and everlastingness. It is absurd for that which encompasses subsistence, perpetuity, and everlastingness to accept disappearance, annihilation, and deficiency. On the contrary, subsistence is subsistence through the knower, and perpetuity is perpetuity through him.

The "aeon" is the duration and measure of foreverness, endlessness, and eternity, and the duration of a thing abides through the thing. Hence the aeon, which is the duration of foreverness and eternity, abides through absolute existence, and absolute existence abides through the knower of absolute existence.

This is the final goal and furthest limit of all the sciences; knowledge is the perfection, final goal, and completion of human beings; human beings are the final goal and completion of life; life is the completion and perfection of the movement of bodies; movement is the perfection of being a body; bodyness [*jismiyat*] is the perfection of reception and acceptance; reception and acceptance are the trace of activity; activity is the trace of yearning and desire; desire is the trace of knowerness; knowerness is the trace of the essence of the knower; and the essence of the knower is the first and the last of being.<sup>14</sup>

## The Treatise

After introductory remarks, *The Makings and Ornaments of Worthy Kings* has three parts and a conclusion. In the first

part, Bābā Afdal describes the various sorts of existent things found in the universe in terms of the two movements that are discernible in relation to the divine—the descent from Him and the ascent to Him. He calls the descent the "(place of) Origin" (*mabdaʿ*) and the ascent the "(place of) Return" (*maʿād*). The latter term is, of course, the common designation for the third of the three principles of Islamic faith, after *tawhīd* and prophecy. The descent follows the scheme already prefigured in the text of Plotinus known in its Arabic translation as the *Theology of Aristotle*. These are the four basic levels of Intellect, Soul, nature (or heaven), and the four elements. Each higher level is king over the next lower level, which in turn is its "vicegerent" (*khalīfa*). Intellect is king over Soul, Soul over nature, and nature over the elements. Through receiving nature's governing activity, the elements combine to produce the lowest level of the Return, which is the mineral kingdom. The three kingdoms are known as the *mutawalladāt*, the "born things" or "progeny," and they represent, along with man, four ascending stages.

Bābā Afdal sometimes develops the imagery of "birth" implicit in the idea that minerals, plants, animals, and human beings are all born of the higher worlds. In *Jāwīdān-nāma* (The Book of the Eternal), he speaks of all things in the universe as born of the human soul, since God created the universe with the human being as the ultimate goal: He compares the soul to a seed planted in the ground, which disintegrates and disappears in order to produce shoots, branches, flowers, fruit, and once again seeds. He concludes that at every stage of God's six-day creation of the soul, births appear from it. On the first day heaven and the stars, on the second fire, on the third air, on the fourth earth, on the fifth water, on the sixth plants and animals. He writes:

When the likeness of the soul reaches plants and animals, it is like a sperm drop that arrives from the father's loins in the mother's womb. When the six days are completed, the signs of the soul appear in the [bodily] figure [*paykar*] and mold [*qālab*] of individu-

als, like the seed that arrives at the time of giving fruit, when it stands up after having fallen. As long as [the soul] is in the changing of the heaven and the elements, it is like a water in the father's loins, and when it reaches plants and animals, this is like arriving in the mother's womb, where it finds the strength to increase. Thus you may know that this cosmos, along with animals and plants, is all the birth [*tawallud*] of the soul. All are necessary so the human soul may stand up, not so that the four elements should come to be, nor so that plants and animals should appear.<sup>15</sup>

Once the human soul has stood up, it must be transmuted into the intellect. Thus, the First Intellect in the Origin corresponds to the final stage of the human intellect in the Return—what Avicenna calls *‘aql fa<sup>c</sup>cāl*, the intellect that is “active,” or perhaps better, “fully actualized.” The First Intellect is king over the Origin, and the human being with fully actualized intelligence is king over the Return. The complete human being is God’s vicegerent in aiding the return of all things to God. He has found the three lower levels in himself, transmuted their very substance into the substance of the soul, and then transmuted the soul into intellect.

In part two, Bābā Afdal addresses human perfection and shows that it demands the presence of the faculties of all the lower levels along with the complete range of human faculties, each in correct proportion and balance. The human characteristics can be divided into two basic sorts, the sensory (*ḥissī*) and the suprasensory (*ma<sup>c</sup>navī*) or spiritual (*rūḥānī*). The first sort are shared by the lower levels. However, perfection of the sensory level or outward form (*ṣūra*) of the human being is no guarantee of perfection of the level of suprasensation (*ma<sup>c</sup>nā*). The suprasensory characteristics pertain to the domain of “courtesy” (*adab*) and “character training” (*farhang*), and achieving perfection in them is extremely rare. Even rarer is being able to help others reach perfection after achieving it oneself.

Only a complete human being of the rarer sort has the wor-

thiness to become a king, since only he can properly govern the lower levels, including the full range of human possibilities, and help others achieve perfection. In governing the levels he employs various modalities of knowing that are named according to the domain to which they apply—*sharī‘ah*, politics, medicine, and so on. This worthiness for governing can only come through intelligence, which alone is able to overcome all antagonism and incompatibility, because it brings all things together harmoniously within itself. So also, the various character traits that a king must possess—justice, independence, clemency, humility, courage—can only be gained through intelligence and self-awareness.

In part three, Bābā Afdal turns to the manner in which the king should govern through deputies and agents. He describes how human beings can be divided into various sorts in terms of their participation, or lack of it, in the qualities of human perfection. The king must govern all people such that each is given the fullest help in achieving perfection, and this may often mean that he must prevent those who have no aptitude for perfection from interfering in the affairs of those who do. He will find the principles for governing the subjects of his realm through knowing himself and recognizing how intellect, God's vicegerent within him, governs his soul and all its faculties and traits, which correspond with the possibilities of human diversity in the external world. Knowing how to govern himself, he then knows how to govern the whole kingdom.

In the conclusion, Bābā Afdal remarks that he was driven to write the treatise because he had observed the dreadful traits and characteristics of a group of kings of his own time. He hopes that if anyone truly worthy for kingship should appear, such a person will be helped by studying the treatise.

Here then is the translation:

## The Makings and Ornaments of Worthy Kings<sup>16</sup>

We begin speaking with the name of Him through whom all

speaking ends. We praise Him, for we became a knower of good through Him. We thank Him, for He has made us receptive to His caress. We rush to know His road, for in knowing it, all rush becomes repose. We entrust ourselves to Him, for He does the work of all. We seek refuge in Him—for we have seen Him closer to ourselves than all things—from that which takes us far from Him.

We send blessings and felicitations to the souls of the past leaders, teachers, and guides—for everyone remaining and yet to arrive has come to know and see through the radiance of their vision and knowledge and has gained religion and right customs [*ā'īn*] through their right customs—and to their friends, fellow travelers, and followers.

The writer of this book says: Through His gentleness and guidance, the Real—exalted and holy is He—made my soul familiar with intelligence, which is the radiance of His being. Through my soul's familiarity and joining [*paywand*] with intelligence, it was cleansed of the defilement of corporeal nature and came to shine with the radiance of intelligence. It became a mirror within which the beings of the cosmos [*ālam*]<sup>17</sup>—the root and the branch, the substance [*gawhar*] and the non-substance, the resting and the moving, the living and the dead, the speaking<sup>17</sup> and the non-speaking—were shown and seen. At the beginning of the seeing, the knowledges were a trace [*athar*] and a similitude [*timthāh*] of the beings of the universe [*jahān*], while the beings of the universe were the root and the reality. In the second seeing, the beings of the universe were the trace and the similitude, while the knowledges were the root and the reality.

Once showing turned into seeing, seeing into knowledge, and knowledge into certainty, I set out to differentiate and distinguish the beings and select some of them over others. I looked for the level of each of them in existence. I found that the substances of the universe were greater than the states, accidents, and attributes, for substances have their own being, but states and attributes have being through substances. Among substances, some are roots [*uṣūl*] and simple things

[*mufradāt*], others branches [*furū'*], progeny, and compound things [*murakkabāt*]. I found that compound things are higher in level and excellence than simple things, since their characteristic is their own composition, while they also have a share in the characteristic of their own simple things and roots.

Among the progeny and compound things, some are inanimate [*bijān*] and some are animal [*jānwar*]. I found the animal greater in level and worth than the inanimate, since the animal is not without a share of the characteristics of the inanimate, while it surpasses it in possessing the characteristic of living-soul [*jān*]. Among the living substances, some are human and some non-human. I found the human beings higher in level and excellence than the non-human, since they possess the characteristics of all the living and dead substances, and on top of that the characteristic of humanness. Among the human beings, some are leaders [*sarwar*] and commanders [*firmān-guzār*], others followers and obeyers. The commander surpasses the obeyer in level and excellence, since leaders and commanders possess the characteristic of every human being, but they surpass them through the characteristic of governing [*tadbīr*] and command [*firmān*].

Among the evident characteristics of human beings, the characteristic of speech [*guftār*] is higher and better than others, since the characteristic of speech is to guide in a short time and with little trouble toward the beings that are hidden from sense perception [*hiss*]. Among speech, I found truthful speech and beneficial words more excellent than false words and unbeneficial speech. Among beneficial speech, that which reaches the most eminent of human beings is more eminent than beneficial speech whose benefit reaches the lowly. The most eminent of human beings are the leaders and kings [*shāh*].

Once I came to recognize these levels, I wished to prepare a reminder composed of the best words and the most beneficial speech for the best sort of human beings, who are the leaders and kings, so I set out to write this concise book. I prepared a guidebook pointing to all the noble character traits [*makārim-i*

*akh-lāq*] that are useful for kings, so that they may keep it before their hearts and eyes and by means of it bring harmony [*sāmān*] to their kingdoms. Within it I chose concision and brevity, so that whenever they decide to know and see this book, they will read it to the end without boredom. Moreover, the goal of words is profit and benefit, not the length of the speaking.

Through this book the seeker of benefit will reach his goal, since the words of this book have taken on the stuff of beautiful meaning. I have called it *The Makings and Ornaments of Worthy Kings*. May both the speaker and the listener be given the success of speaking truth and right and the felicity of listening well and putting into practice, by the gentleness, solicitude, bounty, and guidance of the Lordship!

This book will be complete, with blessedness and auspiciousness, in three discourses and one closing section: First Discourse. On the meaning of the name king and the mention of how many sorts are the kings of the existents of the universe and how kingship reaches an end with human beings; and showing the nearness of the level of the human kingship—compared with the level of other kings—to the King of kings. Second Discourse. On explaining the work and kingship of the human being, and listing the things a person must have to be a king over other human beings. Third Discourse. On the agents and deputies of kings and on teaching them. And one section to close the discourse and book.

### First Discourse

**On the meaning of "king;" mentioning the sorts of the kings of the existents of the universe; and showing the nearness of the level of the human kingship—compared with the level of other kings—**

**to the King of kings**

"King" [*pādshāh*] is an ancient name. In the ancient language *shāh* meant root and lord, while *pād* meant protecting and holding. Thus it means the root and lord of protecting and holding. It is a name derived from the work and attribute of a man of illustrious name, like the names burning for fire and cutting for sword, since protecting and holding are the work

and attribute of the protector, the actor, and the holder. To protect something is to keep it far from its incompatible [*mukhālīf*], since a thing becomes impaired from its incompatible, either through nonbeing [*nīsī*] or deficiency [*nuqṣān*]. But a thing will not become nonbeing or deficient through its compatible [*muwāfiq*]. This situation is clear in the sensory existents, since no impairment—whether through nonbeing or deficiency—reaches the subtle from the subtle, the dense from the dense, the warm from the warm, the cold from the cold, perfection from perfection, or motion [*jūnbīsh*] from motion. On the contrary, each is strengthened and increased. The dense [*kathīf*] impairs the subtle [*latīf*], since it causes its nonbeing or decreases its subtlety, and in the same way cold impairs warm, deficiency perfection, rest motion, and death life.

Whenever you compare two things, they will be compatible in one respect and incompatible in another. Take, for example, a moving substance and a resting substance, or a subtle substance and a dense substance. These are incompatible through motion and rest, subtlety and density, but they are compatible in that they are substances. It is the same with all other states, such as moreness and lessness.

A thing [*chīz*] does not make another thing into a non-thing, since all things are compatible in that they are things, and the compatible does not impair the compatible. In the same way, no being makes a being into a nonbeing, since being is not incompatible with being. Rather, if one of the states of an existent meets the incompatible state of another existent and if the two incompatible states are equal in strength, each will be made deficient by the other. If one of them is greater than the other, the greater will impair the small and make it like itself, as when the heat of fire is greater and warms the coldness of water. Such are all incompatible states in relation to each other. Once it is clear that the incompatible impairs the incompatible and that each brings about the deficiency or nullity of the other's being, then it is clear that the compatible preserves the compatible's being and takes it from deficiency to completion.

Given that the king is the preserver of the beings and the

completer of the incomplete, and given that the incompatible cannot preserve the incompatible, it is necessary that the king not be incompatible with anything over which he is king, and that nothing of them be incompatible with him.

The existents of the cosmos are two—one is the root, and the other the branch. Every root is the preserver of its branch, and every branch endures through its root. Through these two attributes, the existence of the existents of the cosmos became two existences, that is, being the root and being the branch. When we look at being—not at the attribute of the root and branch of being—then duality is nullified, and there is nothing incompatible in being. Absolute being, which includes both the root's existence and the branch's existence, is the radiance of the Real's Ipseity—blessed and high is He! It has no beginning, and its beginninglessness is referred to as "eternity without beginning" [*azal*]. It has no end, and its endlessness is called "eternity without end" [*abad*]. Its period, which is the measure of its being, is called by the name "aeon" [*dahr*].

The root of the existent in the cosmos is the simple things of the cosmos, and the branch is the progeny and compound things of the cosmos.

The root is also of two varieties: Some of it is fixed and at rest in the state of its own being, and some of it is moving and altering from state to state. Fixity is uniform being, while motion is compounded of being and nonbeing, since motion is the repeated arrival of being and nonbeing.

Motion is of two varieties: One is constant and unbroken. It is the motion of the heavenly substances, which are constantly circling. The period and measure of this motion is called "time" [*zamān*]. The second motion is determined and finite, since it begins at an origin and concludes at an end, like the motion of elemental substances from one place to another or from one state to another state.

The first type of being, which is fixity and rest, is the being of the substances of the cosmos. The second type of being, which is motion, is the being of some of the states of the sub-

stances and the nonbeing of others, like the movement of warmth toward cold.

Some of the ancient *'ulamā'* called absolute being, which is the radiance of the Ipseity, the "First Intellect" [*'aql-i auwāl*], others the "Universal Intellect" [*'aql-i kull*], and others the "First Nature" [*tabī'at-i auwāl*].

The substances of the cosmos that move are the heavenly substances and the elemental substances. The mover of the heavenly substances is called the "Soul" by the *'ulamā'*. They refer to the motion of the spheres as deriving from yearning [*shawq*] and desire [*irāda*], not nature. But they call the motion of the elemental substances, when it is toward the root place or state of these substances, "natural" [*tabī'ī*]. If it is toward an alien place or state, they call it "coerced" [*qahrī*] or "constrained" [*qasrī*]. The natural is like the movement of water from a high place to a low place, or the movement of warm water toward coldness. The coerced and constrained is like the movement of water from a low place to a high place or the movement of cold water toward warmth.

The number of the simple things and the roots of the beings come to an end with the elemental substances. The king of the elemental substances—which are water, earth, air, and fire—is nature [*tabī'at*], which preserves the being of each in its own characteristic. It is lower than the other kings in level.

The Soul is the king over nature. The elemental substances remain at rest and motionless through nature. When they move, their motion goes back finally to the motion of the heavenly substances, while the motion of the heavenly substances derives from the Soul. The motion of the elements is finite, from a designated beginning to a designated end. In the spheres, the end of every motion is joined to the beginning of another motion.

The "nature" of the heavenly substances and bodies is called the "Soul." The Soul is king over the heavenly bodies and substances, and the Soul is the vicegerent [*khalīfa*] of the First Intellect, while the Intellect is king over the Soul. The relation of Intellect's kingship to the Soul is the same as the Soul's to



nature. The Ipseity of the Real is the innovator and the holder of the Intellect.

As for the branch existents—which are the compound things and the progeny of the cosmos—you should know that when one thing becomes many, this is called “decomposition” [*taḥḍīf*], and when many things become one, this is called “composition” [*taḥkīb*] and “combination” [*iltiyām*]. Coming together and becoming compound occur through the mixture of things and their becoming joined with each other such that the substances cannot be found separate from each other. The mixing of the elemental substances is the trace of the heavenly movements.

The progeny and compound things of the cosmos are of four varieties: One derives from the mixing of the elemental substances and their joining together until they become one thing. This is named a “mineral substance,” like iron, zinc, lead, tin, gold, silver, ruby, amber, crystal, agate, and the like.

When the elemental substances become joined and one with any of the spirital, motion-causing faculties [*quwā*], which are the faculties of the heavenly substances, this is called a “vegetal substance.”

When the faculty of yearning and desire—which is the trace and characteristic of the Soul—becomes joined and one with these elemental substances and the movement-causing, vegetal substance, this is called an “animal.”

Finally, when one of the traces of the First Intellect becomes joined and one with all of these, this is called a “human being” [*mardum*]. The existents are branches of these four groups.

[The levels] from the Intellect to the elemental substances are counted as the levels of the “origin” [*mabdaʿ*] of existence, while [those] from the mineral constitution to the human substance are called the “return” [*maʿād*] of existence. The levels of kingship decrease through the four levels that are Intellect, Soul, heaven, and elements. Thus the Intellect is higher in level than the Soul, the Soul is higher than heaven's body, and heaven is higher than the elements.

In the same way, the level compounded of the elements sur-

passes the level of the elements, since its stuff takes a share from the characteristic of each, and it surpasses them through the characteristic of its constitution. The level of the plant is higher than the level of the mineral, since it possesses the faculty of the mineral substance and also the faculty of movement. The level of the animal is higher than the level of the plant, since it surpasses it through will and yearning, which are the trace of the First Soul. The level of human beings surpasses that of animals through speech and intelligence, which are the radiance of the First Intellect.

The kingship of God—high exalted and holy is He—has no level, since “levels” arise relative to the coming of beings from Him and their return to Him. Thus a level appears for each existent thing through nearness and distance from Him. That which is nearer to Him has a higher level of existence, and that which is farther from Him has a lower level of being, like the existence of the changing and corruptible things.

In the Origin, no existent thing has the level of the First Intellect, and in the Return, no existent thing has the level of the human being. The eminence and highness of the level of each derives from nearness to the Real—high and holy is He!

The First Intellect is God's vicegerent in the sending forth of being, which is the radiance of His light, to the levels lower than itself, as far as the fourth level, which is the elements.

Human beings are the vicegerent of God in taking the being of the existents level by level until they all return to God. They take the being of the elements through the mineral faculty, the mineral being through the growth faculty, the being of the growing substance through the animal faculty and sensory perception [*idrāk-i ḥissī*], and the animal being through the faculty of perception possessed by the speaking soul. Then they arrive back at God with all these beings.

The faculty of taking [*qūwat-i sūtādan*] is not found in the existents of the Origin, but a taking faculty is found in the existents of the Return, as well as a faculty of giving [*dihanda*] and pushing far [*dūr kunanda*] from itself. Thus they bring the agreeable close to themselves with the taking faculty, and they push away the disagreeable with the giving and repelling fac-



ulty. Hence one finds the "attractive" [*jādhība*] and "expulsive" [*dāfi'a*] faculties in the vegetal substance. Through the attractive faculty the growth faculty seeks food and the stuff that nourishes the vegetal substance. This it entrusts to the retentive faculty, which keeps it so that the digestive faculty, through cooking it, may make it worthy of vegetal substance. The digestive faculty entrusts it to the nutritive faculty, and the nutritive faculty joins it with the vegetal substance. That which is not agreeable to the vegetal substance it gives to the expulsive faculty to be cast away.

In an animal, the faculties of appetite [*shahwa*] and wrath [*ghaḍab*] are like the faculties of attraction and expulsion in the plant. Through the appetitive faculty the animal searches out the compatible and through the faculty of anger it sends away the incompatible.

The sensory faculties were placed in those human beings who are prepared for completion so that they might search out sensory things through perception and bring them close to intelligence. Thereby the sensory thing may be imaginalized [*mukhayya*]—just as the attractive faculty of the plant attracts foodstuffs. Intelligence entrusts it to memory, which corresponds to the retentive faculty of plants. The reflective faculty [*mufakkira*] works on what is in memory—like the digestive faculty in plants—so that it may become worthy of the human soul. As for what is agreeable and has reached the intelligible from the imaginalized, the intellectual faculty joins it to the substance of the human soul.

## Second Discourse

**Concerning the work and kingship of human beings, and mentioning the marks through which a human being becomes a king over other human beings**

It has now become known that the stuff effective in making a human being human is gained from all existents—the root and the branch, the simple and the compound; from the Intellect to the earth, and from the earth to the speaking soul.

Each of the existents gives what it has found from its origin to the human being, and the human being takes it all back to his place of homecoming and return.

Human beings have an instrument for taking each thing. They receive bodies with the bodily faculties, and accidents with the sensory faculty—colors with the sight of the eye, sounds with the hearing of the ear, odors with the faculty of smell, flavors with the tasting of the tongue; cold and warmth, dryness and wetness, roughness and smoothness, hardness and softness, and so on with the sense of touch; compatibility and incompatibility, friendship and enmity, and dominating and being dominated over with the faculty of sense-intuition [*gumān*]; and reality [*ḥaqīqat*] and selfhood [*khwudī*] with the selfhood and awareness [*āghā*] that they possess through the joining [*paywand*] with intelligence. Along with the characteristic of taking existents, they also possess the characteristic of giving the meanings of the intellect to speech and activity. Through activity they write on the outside the intellectual forms that they see written in themselves, and through speech they voice them and make them apparent.

No one should be satisfied with the characteristics that human beings possess through corporeal form and bodily attributes, such as walking on two feet, broad nails, and hairless skin; or through the coming together of animal characteristics, such as finding with sensation, fleeing, calling out, storing away, eating, and sleeping; or through the qualities and characteristics of devilness and satanism, such as pride, stubbornness, disobedience, greed, avarice, and cowardice. After all, having these characteristics is not enough to be a human being. Just as the human body and frame remain deficient without the complete coming together of all the human characteristics and outward guises, so also the reality and meaning of human beings will remain incomplete without the completion of all the suprasensory [*ma'nawī*] and spiritual [*rūḥānī*] characteristics.

All human individuals are largely similar in the body's outward guise and not without a share of joining with the body, but they do not have a complete portion of joining with the Root

Intelligence or joining with the First Soul. That person among the common people most endowed with intelligence is joined with the First Intellect in a measure that, in relation to the radiance of the Intellect, is like the brightness of night compared to the light of the blazing sun.

The mark of reaching and joining with the First Soul is that a person's desire [*irāda*] is compatible with the desire of the First Soul and that he wants what is to come to be. The engendering of the engendered things and the corruption of the corruptible things takes place through his wanting.

The mark of reaching and joining with the radiance of the First Intellect is that certainties [*yaqīn-hā*] come to predominate. Although the vast majority people are aware of a knowledge and its howness only through following authority and listening to accounts, the individual who has gained this joining has certainty. In knowing he gains independence from the assistance of the senses and the teaching of anything other than intelligence.

One of the marks of the completion of a human being is the equilibrium [*i'tidāl*] of the animal faculties within him. Each of them should be complete in its own characteristic. It should not be that one of them is there and another not, or that one is greater and the other deficient. For example, the appetitive faculty may be manifest and dominant in someone, while wrath may be extremely weak and dominated over. Domination over these faculties is a virtue [*hunar*] only when both are equally mastered by intelligence such that they work by the command of intelligence. They should not be deficient in their own substance.

In relation to intelligence, the states of all the animal faculties, habits [*malaka*], and character traits [*akhlāq*] are like the situation of a king's agents. When the agents follow commands, the kingdom dwells in perfection. If these should be deficient in substance, this is like incapable agents and is a deficiency in the kingdom. When the faculties work according to the wishes of their own natures, they are like appointees of a king who rebel against him and leave his command, while he

is unable to do anything against them. In the end, they will take the kingdom away from the king and bring loss down upon themselves and the king.

In the same way, each of the faculties connected to the growth faculty should dwell in perfection—such as the attractive, retentive, digestive, nutritive, form-giving, reproductive, and expulsive faculties. The animal is built on the growth faculty. When the work of growth and the faculties that it employs are not complete in their characteristics, then the animal will either not exist at all or it will be deficient. So also, unless the stuff of motion and sensation becomes strong and well-established, a human being will not come into existence, or he will be deficient, since to be human is built upon being an animal. All of these are among the outward characteristics.

As for the suprasensory, hidden characteristics, these are not like the sensory characteristics, for, at the beginning of body's creation, it gains a full share of each of the latter in actuality. In contrast, when the means [*asbāb*] of animal sensation and movement reach perfection, the hidden, suprasensory faculties and nonsensory characteristics still have not come from potentiality into actuality. It is even possible that they will not come from potentiality into actuality before life comes to an end.

It is difficult to find a human being complete both in form and in suprasensation. Still more uncommon and rare is the person who is himself complete and, in his completion, possesses the level of making the incomplete complete like himself through mastery and domination by his own completion. He is like a fire which, through the characteristic of its own completion, possesses the level of making the thing that is not a fire into a fire through its domination and mastery.

When the human being's characteristic of intelligence comes from potentiality to actuality, then, through his own governing and taking care, he will bring all his animal, vegetal, and natural faculties into harmony—over and above the fact that these are already complete in activity and characteristic through the root of their creation. This giving harmony to and

governing the work of each faculty found by intelligence is called "courtesy" [*adab*]<sup>19</sup> and "character training" [*farhang*],<sup>20</sup> as in the eating, sleeping, seeing, hearing, speaking, and doing of the man of intelligence. When the excellencies of character such as generosity, munificence, truthfulness, and perseverance are stored up through the governing of intelligence, this is a mark of the intelligence's power and strength.

The knowledge through which each faculty and each sort may be taken care of does not have a specific name. Rather, each governance that is connected to a specific kind has a specific name. Thus, knowing how to govern the human growth faculty is called "medicine," while the governance of the growth faculty of trees and plants is called the "science of agriculture."

As for governing and bringing about the wholesomeness of the human animal soul, such that its speaking and doing, movement and rest, seeing and hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching will be in the measure that is beneficial, and such that its leaving aside will be to the extent that gives benefit, while its taking up will avoid loss—some of this goes back to the characteristics of a single individual. That of it which is connected to the governing of the livelihood and the intermixing of a society or a group is called "the science of the *sharī'a* and politics [*siyāsat*]" and "the science of character training." Knowing the noble character traits and the vile character traits as well as the path of reaching the noble and becoming purified from the vile is called "courtesy" and "character training."<sup>21</sup>

When an individual reaches completion in the characteristic of humanness—both outwardly and on the suprasensory level—marks of this will appear in him. The mark of suprasensory perfection will be seen by an individual who has reached perfection, but no one else will be able to recognize it, unless the perfect one should give news of it, since one of the marks of human completion is seeing one's own joining with absolute existence, which is the light of the Divinity. In the measure that each existent thing has found this [joining], that thing's being will be sound. Awareness of this conjunction is a mark that a person himself can see, while others must come to know

of it from him. Inescapably, this is a characteristic that accompanies perfection.

After all, it is correct that the return of the branch existents—that is, the progeny of the cosmos—will be to the Origin of the cosmos. The road of the return is by increasing the levels, and the final end of increasing the levels is at the human being. Reaching the Origin and the Root takes place from the human level. Reaching corporeal form occurs only through the corporeal mixing. Reaching the reality and suprasensation of one's own self and the reality and suprasensation of all existents takes place only through awareness. When there appears awareness of the reality and the suprasensation of absolute existence, which is the radiance of the Lordship, this is a mark of joining and arrival, since the knower has joined with and arrived at the known. So the human being in reality is he who has gained both the suprasensory and the formal characteristics.

We have also said that if a sensory body is lacking one or more members, the sensory form will be deficient. If someone were to call it complete, no one would believe him. So also, if the suprasensory characteristics, whose root and foundation are intelligence and what can be found through intelligence, are lacking, there will not be the characteristic of humanness. If these characteristics should exist in potentiality but not in actuality, the person is incomplete. The perfection of each thing is in its actuality. Thus, it is not sufficient that the sperm-drop should be a human being in potentiality, without completion of the body. As long as there is not a body inscribed in the form and guise of a human body, there is no perfection. When all the qualities come together, humanness becomes necessary, but when they remain at the level of preparedness [*isti'dād*], humanness is only possible.

Once a human being is necessarily a human being, he is worthy to govern through taking care of all the faculties below humanness—as has been said—through governing by the *sharī'a*, politics, medicine, and ethics. The more he increases his own level, the more he has the necessary worthiness to increase his kingdom. He becomes worthy to be king not only

over the animal and vegetal souls, but also over human beings. His relation with complete human beings is the same as the relation of complete human beings with the incomplete human beings; that of incomplete human beings with dumb beasts, predators, birds, and wild animals; that of dumb beasts, predators, birds, and wild animals with trees and plants; that of trees and plants with iron, zinc, and the other mineral substances; and that of the compound substances with the elemental substances.

The noble traits and courteous acts of the king are greater in strength and existence than the noble traits and courteous acts of other than the king, because virtue has strength in others to the extent that they are virtuous, but the king is virtuous and makes others virtuous like himself.

Now that we have numbered the characteristics of human completion, let us also mention some of the characteristics of the king's completion:

You should know that when a human individual is given the preparedness and readiness—through divine confirmation and solicitude—for leadership and kingship over other human individuals, his yearning, wanting, and resolution turn toward awareness, wakefulness, knowledge, and intelligence. Most of his coming and going, speaking and listening, is with intelligent people and the folk of knowledge. When he gains joy and heart-renewal [*tāza-dīlī*] through knowledge, this is greater than his joy through other benefits and goals. When he looks toward taking care of sensory life, he does so to bring about the worthiness and appropriateness for joining with intelligence, not to arrange the work and situation of sensory life.

No matter how much one exerts effort to shore up the foundation of sensory life and establish the equilibrium and well-being of the [bodily] constitution, and no matter how much one brings together the means of well-being, the end will be at ruin and perishment. All the troubles that are taken will remain useless and without result, for life and awareness are alien and accidental to the body, while death and unconsciousness are natural and essential. An alien state will not last, while the

natural state will dominate. It is not easy to keep something alive that is by nature mortal, or to keep something aware that is kneaded from self-loss and unawareness. In the end, the thing will return to its own substance, so the effort will have been useless and wasted, the trouble without fruit. Say: "*Shall We tell you who will be the greatest losers in their deeds? Those whose striving goes astray in the present life, while they think they are doing beautiful works*" (8:103-104). "*We shall advance upon what deed they have done and make it a scattered dust*" (25:25).

So, the king turns his gaze toward governing and ordering the work of the life of himself and his subjects and toward arranging his and their livelihood, so as to convey the possibility of being intelligent to the preparedness and to join this preparedness with reality. Unless human beings, in the means of life, are at ease from each other and from their own ill-thinking, they will not turn from sensory works to the work of knowledge and intellect.

The human possibility of being intelligent reaches the preparedness of knowledge through reflection and thought. So also, the arrangement of the work of those who have found this preparedness becomes the cause for the arrangement of the means of those who are just arriving. In the human species, not only those who are just arriving need the perfection of those who have fully found, but also children in the mothers' wombs and sperm-drops in the fathers' loins have all turned the face of existence toward human perfection, and they keep on seeking it through change and movement. Unless the growing soul works properly, worthiness for life will not be firmly based, and unless sensory perception is put in order and harmony, there will be no intellectual perception. Hence the governing and ordering of sensory life is important because it is the road to reaching and joining with the last life.

When a king is worthy, he never begins a work without seeing its end. When a king's preparedness for perfection reaches reality, then his kingship becomes a reality.

Among the king's qualities are the following:

He is incompatible with no one, for within opposition and

incompatibility is the stuff of destruction and impermanence. The things of the natural world undergo change of state because of the domination of opposites over opposites.

Among all the existents of the cosmos, none is nearer to the level of having no opposites than human beings. This is not because of sensory and bodily characteristics, but because of the characteristic of intellect, since intellect has no opposite. The person of intellect knows all opposites and incompatible things, such as heat and cold, wetness and dryness, life and death, and movement and rest. Knowing a thing is for the known thing to be within the knower. Hence, knowing two opposites is for the two opposites to be within the knower. If the knower had opposites, the one that was compatible with him would exist within him and be known, but its opposite would remain unknown. However, this is not the case, for the knower comes to know the two opposites and the two incompatibles, and their opposition and incompatibility are nullified within the knower, since the two exist together in his own soul.

"Justice" [*ʿadl*] is nothing but nullifying the incompatibility of two incompatibles. When the king's joining with intelligence is complete, nothing is incompatible with him, and the incompatibility of all incompatible things is nullified through him. When one thinks about the requisites of having no opposites, it becomes apparent that, once lack of opposition is achieved by the king through intelligence, God's vicegerency [*khilāfa*] has become his reality.

A second quality is wealth and unneedingness [*bi-nyāzī*], since poverty and need are lack of completion. Inescapably, the needy person serves and seeks that which will nullify his need and his lack of completion, so that he may become without needs and complete. Servanthood and kingship cannot be joined together. The person without needs and wealthy is he who possesses everything that is appropriate for him, but the needy person is he who sees everything that he considers appropriate for himself far from himself, so he strives to join it to himself. No human being can find unneedingness unless intelligence dominates over all his qualities, because, other than

intelligence, no existent thing—whether simple or compound—remains without change, and through change each seeks its own completion. But intelligence has its own perfection within itself. Whatever should be in intelligence is already there. If all things, root and branch, did not exist in intelligence, human beings would not be able to find and know all things through intelligence. He who has all things is without needs and wealthy. Hence the stuff of unneedingness and wealth—which are the characteristic of kingship—is intelligence.

A third quality is clemency [*hiim*] and forbearance [*burdbārī*]. Clemency rises up from patience, and patience is strength over the appetitive and wrathful faculties. The agitation of an impatient person derives from the likes of the appetitive faculty or the dislikes of the wrathful faculty. When the soul of a human being is impatient because of seeing, hearing, or finding the incompatible, or because of not seeing, not hearing, or not finding the compatible, this is a sign of his being subservient to and dominated over by his own workers and servants. He who is subservient to and vanquished by his own workers and servants will not dominate and be king over others.

Another quality is humility [*kawādu*]. The king must never be arrogant. Arrogance [*takabbur*] is to show meanness and miserliness toward others through one's level, and humility is to show munificence and generosity to those below oneself through one's high level. The miserliness of one who is arrogant through his rank and station is a sign of his not having the stuff of elevation, since his elevation cannot put up with expenditure. Humility is a sign that the humble person is full of the stuff of elevation and rank, since he can give a share of it to everyone lower in rank. This is the attribute and state of the person of intelligence, for, in entering into his knowledge, small and great are the same; in knowing, he does not accept the great and reject the small. Intelligence is the stuff of the humility of kings.

Another quality is courage [*shajāʿat*]. The king should not be fearful and faint-hearted, since fear and fright arise from

the domination of the opposite, while he who has no opposite does not fear the opposite.

People's fear of impairment is of two kinds: Either they fear the sensory and bodily impairments that may reach them and bring about deficiency in or nullify the perfection of the life that they possess; or they fear an impairment that will reach the suprasensory characteristic and the faculty of intelligence, thereby making its perfection deficient. Once intelligence dominates over people, they are relieved of this type of fear and fright, since fright is the specific characteristic of sense-intuition [*wahm*]. When people look at intelligence, they know that the being of intelligence dominates over and encompasses all existents, whether these be moving or resting. Were this not the case, one could not know both. Since intelligence encompasses and dominates over the other existents, it is apparent that the object dominated over and encompassed neither nullifies nor brings about the deficiency of the existence of the dominator and encompasser. Hence there is no fear of suprasensory impairment.

As for bodily impairment, which alters the body's sensation and life, an intelligent person knows that the body cannot be protected from change. If it did not change, it would not have the nutritive, attractive, digestive, or expulsive faculties, since it has these faculties for the sake of change. When something of the body is nullified through traces imposed from outside, they give it its like in exchange. If something were not continuously eliminated from the body and if these faculties constantly pulled in its replenishment and food from the outside, it would grow in the measure of the food. Once having consumed a thousand maunds of food, it would weigh one thousand maunds, and if more, then more. To the extent that the body found and consumed food throughout its life—without the food being separated from it by the expulsive faculty—its height, width, and breadth would increase. So also, were it possible to replace everything that became diminished from an animal's body with the same amount of food, the body would never be destroyed, unless impairment came from the outside,

such as killing or wounding. Thus, it is apparent that change and destruction pertain to the root of an animal's body. Every change that you find in the engendered things and the progeny of the world has an origin and a final point. Just as perfection entails increase at the origin of the existence of changing things, so also it comes to its end through decrease. The furthest limit and final end of decrease is nonbeing and nullification.

The intelligent person knows that it is impossible to alter the natural disposition. He also knows that fear is to avoid the incompatible, but the compound existence of the body does not avoid decomposition and nothingness. On the contrary, it tends toward decomposition by its nature. Intelligence does not seek to avoid the destruction of the body, because the form of the body's destruction exists in intelligence, and the intelligent person always knows and sees it. It is intelligence that judges that the body will decompose. How can intelligence avoid its own judgment? Hence, fear belongs neither to the body nor to intelligence, but rather to sense-intuition and imagination. As long as surmise and imagination have mastery, intelligence is weak and humanness deficient.

These several qualities that we mentioned have many other qualities under them. By mentioning these that we have listed, we wish to make clear that the root and stuff of all good things is intelligence. How could it be otherwise? Nothing but intelligence is able to separate the good from the not-good. When intelligence remains in the speaking soul, good things become many and ugly character traits turn into the beautiful. Hurry and impatience turn into cleverness and quick-wittedness; dullness and sloth become clemency and gravity; rashness and impetuosity become courage and strong-heartedness; acts of harshness and punishment become the bestowal of courtesy and character training; profligacy turns into generosity, much speaking into clear explication, suspicion into pardon, deception into intellect, and fear into caution. But when intelligence remains hidden and inoperative, beautiful things turn into ugly things.

Since human completion lies in intelligence, and since he



who is beautiful through intelligence is beautiful, it is even more appropriate that the king's completion be found in intelligence, lest the unintelligent man rule over the intelligent. When a human being has the stuff of intelligence, he is necessarily king over those who have less of its stuff than he. Then he possesses the vicegerency of the Real, since the precondition for a person to be worthy of God's vicegerency is that he be aware of Him who has appointed him. When an appointee is unconscious of the one who has appointed him, his kingship is counted as the kingship of the elemental substances and that of the growing, vegetal faculty, since these are aware neither of themselves nor of their own commander and appointor.

The kingship of the unconscious does not endure and it passes quickly, but the kingship of those who are aware through intelligence endures and subsists. After all, the awareness of the intelligent person is certainty, and certainty subsists, endures, and does not alter. Thus, two times fifty yield one hundred, and ten times one hundred yield one thousand, and this never undergoes alteration, whether or not someone says these words, and whether or not there are human beings. This judgment is never nullified. The enduringness of such knowledge lies in intelligence, while the body never becomes joined with intelligence, since the passing does not become joined with the enduring. The level with which intelligence is joined is only the soul, and the soul, through becoming joined with intelligence, turns into intelligence and gains subsistence through intelligence's subsistence. This situation is clear from the work of thought, which never relaxes in its search until it reaches certainty. Once it reaches certainty, the motion of seeking turns into the rest of arrival.

### Third Discourse

#### On the Deputies of the King

Know that the work of a king is to nurture [*parwardan*], and to nurture is to take those who are worthy of completion to completion. This can be done through two acts. One is that he

brings everything that will help and aid the person worthy for arriving at perfection near to him, and the other is that he keeps everything that will impair his reaching perfection far from him.

It is known that the perfection of human beings comes through intelligence. Hence, to nurture people is to keep the intelligent near them and to choose for them those occupations through which they will become more worthy for the arrival [at perfection]. As for those things that impair reaching intelligence, like occupations that give rise to heedlessness and self-loss, these must be kept far from them.

First, the king must become fully informed about the existence and nature of every sort of folk in the kingdom, for people, although they are near to each other in sensory form, are disparate in their worthiness for reaching suprasensory perfection. Some have the preparedness to reach perfection, and some do not. Those who do not have the preparedness are of two varieties:

One variety do not have the preparedness to achieve human perfection, but they do have the preparedness for some of the qualities that are counted among human perfections. Such are those who have mastered one field of knowledge, like architects, mathematicians, astronomers, physicians, and scribes. Such also are those who are skilled and clever in some of the occupations of craftsmen and are worthy to be guides and teachers for other folk of the same artisanry.

The second group have not turned toward human perfection, nor have they mastered any of the fields of perfection. This tribe is also of two varieties: one tribe of them is the weak. The foundation of their constitution has little stuff in creation and they have a deficiency of creation in their perceptual faculties, or they are lacking in both their perceptual and motor faculties. Nevertheless, although they are far from every worthiness for any of the fields of human perfection, they do not impair those who have the preparedness for it and seek it.

Another tribe is far from the preparedness for perfection and, at the same time, they impair those who have the pre-

paredness. Although this kind has many types, the name "folk of ignorance" is correct for all of them. Their work and conduct are incompatible with the preparedness for intelligence. They are, for example, indolent idlers and good-for-nothings who, to the lack of activity, add unbeneficial and harmful activities and the wasting of life and the moment—like tricksters and the folk of jest and joking. They are also seekers of excessive sensory pleasures, like indulgers, wine-drinkers, fornicators, and other folk of depravity, and like murderers, villains, and thieves, the inclination of all of whom is toward the destruction of the means of livelihood.

When the king becomes fully informed about the sorts, he will know how each sort can be governed, even though the number of these sorts may be many. Once all are held fast by intelligence—not by the body—this is easy, for the scope of intelligence is not reduced through corporeal numbers. No matter how many human beings there are, they are few compared with the other existents of the cosmos, and all the existents can be perceived at once through intelligence.

The easiest path for governing and taking care of the people is for the king to think about himself, the states of his own body, and his own soulful faculties. He should look to see from whence come the wholesomeness [*salāh*] and corruption [*fasād*] of each and from whence come its perfection and deficiency, and which kind of knowledge can be used to nurture each. He should equate the health of his own constitution with his subjects who have sound constitutions. He should equate his own medicinal governing to preserve this and repel the causes of impairment and corruption with the physicians among the subjects. He should equate his own appetitive faculties with the pleasure-worshippers and indulgers among the subjects; his own faculty of indolence with the idlers among the subjects; his own greed and avarice with the thieves, marauders, and looters among the subjects; his own wrath with the murderers and villains among the subjects; his own courage with the brave among the subjects; his own generosity and munificence with the provident among the subjects; and his own faculty of char-

acter training—which takes care of, governs, and brings about the wholesomeness of the character traits—with the '*ulamā'* of the *sharī'a*, the folk of godwariness, and the lords of noble character traits among the subjects.

Governing and bringing about the wholesomeness of the folk of excess and destruction among the subjects are done through the commanders of the army. Just as he keeps the kingdom of his own soul wholesome through knowledge, so also he should keep the business of the subjects and the kingdom wholesome through the knowers among the subjects. He should accept that the root of all acts of governing lies in the correct arrangement of those who have the preparedness for the knowledges of certainty, so that they may reach perfection. He should keep all others in correct arrangement, so that they may be aides and assistants in this work.

When the king takes the measure of governing the subjects from his governing of himself, he will be secure from negligence and error. No one will benefit from his governing while another is deprived of it, since he will be the most complete of human beings. When he is aware of himself, he will be aware of the most complete human being and be able to preserve him in his completion. He who is aware of the complete is also aware of the deficient and is able to preserve him in his preparedness, since the one who has reached completion will never be less than the incomplete.

In the same way, when the faculty of recognizing the levels is at work in the king, he will recognize in each subject the human perfection for which that subject has the preparedness. He will seek from each individual who has a preparedness for perfection only that perfection for which he has the preparedness, so that thereby his seeking will reach the goal and his governing not go to waste. If he sees someone worthy of a craft, he will not ask him to appoint officers, nor will he put the person who has the preparedness for an eminent occupation in a mean occupation.

The king should put himself in order according to the governing and order of the First Nature, for the growing soul never



does the work of the animal soul, the work of the expulsive faculty does not appear from the attractive faculty, the work of the attractive faculty does not come from the expulsive faculty, and wrath cannot do the work of appetite. Then he will be a true leader for the existents in their going back to the Return, and the rightful vicegerent of his Appointor and Commander in nurturing that which is below him.

## A Chapter in Concluding this Book

This book came to be written after I had thought for some time about the business of a group of kings who are happy with the name king. As much as I looked for the characteristic, virtue, and meaning of kingship in them, I found little of it. On the contrary, I saw the king as follows: His inclination toward exercising appetite was greater than that of all the individuals among his subjects, or of most of them. Wrath dominated over his intelligence more than the wrath of his subjects dominated over their intelligence. His greed and avarice for storing away and hoarding impermanent stores were greater than the greed and avarice of the subjects. He was less conscious and more heedless than the subjects of knowledge, noble character traits, and the Root Intelligence through which comes knowledge of certainty and awareness of the outcome of affairs and the Return. All his striving and effort was directed toward satiating his covetousness and satisfying his anger. He saw that satiating covetousness lies in collecting transitory possessions in whatever way they can be more quickly gathered, whether through plundering, harassment, or taking it by force when it was not forthcoming. He satisfied his anger by force toward anyone he wanted, even if the person was not deserving of force or worthy of perishing. I found that in the time of privacy and leisure his business was excessive eating, gathering playthings, heedlessness, meaningless laughter, and unworthy speech. I saw that these states and others that appeared from kings were incompatible with the prerequisites of leadership and the right customs of imperial rule. Or rather, the mastery and domina-

tion of those masters who are overcome by falsehood, the inclination of nature, and the wishes of the appetitive and wrathful soul is more like the mastery of animals—like the lion, the panther, and other predators—and the end of such a kingship is endless ruin and perishment.

Hence I set out to write this book, in which I have mentioned a few of the qualities of the king. If, among the kings and leaders, there is an individual who has been designated by the divine solicitude, whose soul and spirit have the mark of the radiance of intelligence, who by nature turns away from transitory things toward enduring beings, and who recognizes that the path of seeking the soul's deliverance is found in avoidance of joining with that which undergoes destruction—if he should read this book and continue to read it, the path of the soul's salvation and the spirit's deliverance from fear and dread of annihilation will become clear for him. He will gain certainty that what has appeared as kingship to others, such that they have fancied that degree and dignity are found within it, represents the extremity of bondage and captivity. That which the majority of people call "good fortune" and "prosperity" is in reality bad fortune and adversity. After all, what kings recognize as good fortune is a large army, a great quantity of weapons, full treasuries, limitless arrays of clothing and ornaments, the obedience of subjects, the makings and means for pleasure and amusement, and the like. When the heart is taught by and becomes familiar with such things, it becomes tied to them. Every transitory state to which the heart becomes tied turns into an occasion by which the heart is bound and made captive, not freed and delivered.

If all these things that are fancied to be the means and marks of prosperity and good fortune—weapons, armies, mounts, gold, silver, jewels, equipment, houses, fortresses, gardens, palaces—were tied to this person with chains and ropes, such that they could only be separated from him with difficulty, he would suffer the extremity of bondage and misfortune. Such a state would not be the good fortune of the body. In the

same way, when the soul becomes tied to such means with a chain and rope made from the substance of these things and the substance of the soul, this is called "love" [*hubb*]. This is not a mark of the soul's freedom and deliverance, but a mark of its misery and misfortune. When someone sees such ugly things as beautiful, I consider this a defect of sight. But if a king should see without defect and impairment and if the light of his insight should be complete, and if this book becomes the friend of his insight, then he will have no needs in the two worlds.

Although this book is concise in form, it is complete in meaning. I made it concise so that the reader would not be kept from reading it through once every day. It is a prerequisite for him to persevere in seeing it and reading it, because, when any disposition has become settled in human nature over many years, or any disposition has not become settled despite the passage of many years, a little seeing and reading will not remove the former, nor will it settle the latter. The exaltedness of this book will keep on increasing in the measure that the reader's perception and understanding increase, God willing.

This book has now come to an end in splendor and good fortune. Thanks and gratitude be to intellect and spirit, and blessings and felicitations be upon the soul of the pure and the guides! "*God alone suffices us—a good guardian is He!*" (3:173). "*And praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds!*" (37:182).

# The Practice of *dhikr* in the Early Islamic Community

David Dakake

## Introduction

The following essay is an attempt to discern the role of *dhikr* in the practices of the early Muslim community, from the time of the Prophet Muhammad through the first four caliphs. Of course, opinions have ranged widely on this issue within the Islamic world, from Sufi to Salafi perspectives, but as regards scholarly studies within Western languages, little has been written which attempts a thorough and direct examination of the early sources regarding *dhikr*. There are many studies that have been made by Western scholars of the teachings of various Sufis regarding "*dhikr*," but these studies are really "after the fact" for our purposes, which is to determine what was the practice of *dhikr* in the earliest period of Islamic history. One major difficulty with the study of this issue lies in the nature of the Arabic language itself. In Arabic,