

A COMMENTARY ON THE CREED OF ISLAM



Sa`d al-Din al-Taftazani
on the Creed of
Najm al-Din al-Nasafi

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INTRODUCTION

& NOTES BY

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Sa`d al-Din al-Taftazani
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TRANSLATED WITH INTRODUCTION

AND NOTES BY

EARL EDGAR ELDER

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A Commentary on the Creed of Islam

شرح العقائد النسفية

Preface by al-Taftazani¹
TO HIS COMMENTARY ON THE
ARTICLES OF BELIEF ² BY AL-NASAFI.³

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, Compassionate One

PRAISE BE to Allah, who is unique in the majesty of His essence and the perfection of His attributes, and who is separated from blemishes and marks of defect through the qualities that belong to His great Power. Blessings on His Prophet Muhammad (S), who has been aided by His forceful arguments and clear proofs, and on his family and his Companions, guides and protectors of the path of Reality.

To continue: The basis of the science of laws and judgments and the foundation of the rules concerning the articles of Islamic Belief is the science of the unity of the Deity and His attributes, entitled *al-Kalam*, which is devoid of the darkness of doubts and the obscurities of fancies.

The brief treatise known as the "Articles of Belief" (*al'aqaid*) is by the painstaking Imam, `Umar al-Nasafi, the example of the learned of Islam and the star of our faith and religion. May Allah raise his rank in the abode of Peace. It includes under the headings of this branch of knowledge the most striking gems and pearls of great value which are the fundamental standards of our religion. Running through the text [of the creed] these [gems and pearls] are jewels and precious stones of certainty, yet at the same time the acme of conciseness and instruction and the last word in good order and arrangement.

I have tried to explain the brief treatise so as to give the details of its general principles and clarify the intricacies of the subject, to straighten out the involved things and reveal those that are concealed, while at the same time keeping the record concise, clearly calling attention to its purpose. The verification of the problems is a result of the

statement of them. The detailed application of the proofs is an effect of their presentation. The interpretation of the doctrines comes after proper introduction. The values of the work are manifold in spite of its conciseness. I achieved this end by ridding my commentary of tautology and weariness, and by striking the happy medium between brevity and tediousness. Allah is the guide to the path of those who are led, and of him we seek preservation from error and guidance to the goal. He is my sufficiency, and excellent is the guardian.

Chapter 1

THE REAL ESSENCES OF THINGS

قال أهل الحق: حقائق الأشياء ثابتة، والعلمُ بها مُتَدَقِّقٌ خِلافًا للسوفسطائية

The People of Reality say that the real essences of things exist in reality and that the knowledge of them is verifiable as real in contradiction to the Sophists.

KNOW THAT of the legal judgments ¹ (*al-abkam al-shar`iyya*) there are some which are connected with practice and are called derived (*fariyya*) and practical (*amaliyya*); and there are others which are connected with dogma and are called fundamental (*asliyya*) and doctrinal (*i`tiqadiyya*). The science connected with the first is called the science of canon laws and judgments because these things are not comprehended except from the canon law (*al-shar`*), and it is only to these that the understanding turns when the [term] judgment is mentioned without further definition. And the science connected with the second is the science of the unity (*al-tamhid*) and attributes (*sifat*) of the Deity, since this [subject of unity] is its most noted investigation and its noblest object.

The earliest of the Companions ² (*al-sahaba*) and their Followers³ (*al-tabi'un*)-Allah be pleased with them all⁴—because the articles of their belief were pure through the blessing of their association with the Prophet—on him be peace; because the period in which they lived was near to his time; because there were few occasions of attack and disagreement and because they were able to go back to absolutely reliable authority; well, because of all these things they dispensed with putting down in writing the material of the two sciences and with dividing it into divisions and sections, and they also dispensed with the statement of their investigations in these two sciences both as to

developments and fundamentals.

This condition continued until controversies arose among the Muslims, pride prevailed among the leaders of the faith (*al-din*), and there appeared a clashing of opinions and a tendency to innovations (*al-bida*)⁵ and to personal desires (*al-abwa*).⁶ There was a multiplicity of legal decisions (*al-fatawi*) and of occasions from which cases arose, and much referring to the Learned (*al-ulama*) in important matters. So they busied themselves with speculation and deduction, with attempting to arrive at a correct opinion and to elicit meaning from the texts, with the establishing of rules and fundamentals, with the arrangement of [the material related to them in] divisions and sections, with the multiplying of proofs to problems and stating the matters in which there were ambiguities and their explanations, with determining the conventional usages and the technical terms, and with pointing out the [various] ways of proceeding and the differences. They gave the name of *al-fiqh* to that which pertained to the science of the practical judgments derived from their detailed proofs, and "the fundamentals of *al-fiqh*" to the science of the terms of the proofs taken together as a whole in proving the judgments; and the science of the articles of Belief as they come straight from their proofs they called *al-kalam*⁷

The reasons for this are (1) because the subject of its investigations was their saying, "The discourse (*al-kalam*) about such-and-such"; (2) because the problem of [the meaning of the term] Speech [predicated of Allah] was the most celebrated of its investigations, the most strongly disputed, and the subject of the most controversy, so much so that some of the leaders killed many of these People of Reality (*ahl al-haqq*)⁸ because they failed to admit the creation of the Qur'an; (3) because it imparts ability in speech in verifying legal matters and in compelling adversaries to submit just as logic (*al-mantiq*) imparts ability in philosophy; (4) because it is the first of the sciences which can be known and learned by speech only, so this term [speech] was applied to this science, and then it was exclusively used for it and not applied to any other science for sake of distinction; (5) because it can be verified only by discussion and interchange of speech from two sides,

whereas others are sometimes verified by meditation and the perusal of books; (6) because it is the most disputatious and controversial of the sciences, so speech was greatly needed for conversing with those of opposite view and for refuting them; because of the cogency of its arguments it has become, so to speak, "the speech" (*al-kalam*) to the exclusion of all other sciences, just as is said of the stronger of two discourses, "This is 'the discourse'; (8) and because it is based on decisive proofs (*adilla qatiya*), most of which are supported by proofs to be believed on authority (*al-sam'iyah*),⁹ it is consequently the strongest in its influence on and penetration into the heart. So it is called *al-kalam* as though derived from *al-kalm*, that is, "the wound." This is the [understanding of the term] *kalam* [in the mind] of the ancients (*al-qudama*).

Most of the controversies about *al-kalam* occurred among the different Islamic sects, especially the Mu'tazilites (*al-Mu'tazila*),¹⁰ because they were the first sect which laid the foundation for both that which contradicts the plain teaching of the Approved Way (*al-sunna*)¹¹ and that which the Community (*al-jama'a*) of the Companions (*al-sababa*)—the approval of Allah on them all—followed in the matter of the articles of Belief. That [beginning of the Mu'tazilites] happened when Wasil b. 'Ata', their leader, withdrew from the circle of al-Hasan al-Basri—Allah have mercy on him—asserting that the one who committed a great sin was neither a Believer nor an Unbeliever and maintaining that he was in an intermediate position. Al-Hasan said, "He has withdrawn from us," so they were called *al-Mu'tazila* (the Withdrawers). But they called themselves the Maintainers of Justice and the Divine Unity (*ashab al-'adl wa l-tawhid*), because they said that the reward of the obedient and the punishment of the disobedient are incumbent on Allah, and they denied that He has eternal attributes. Subsequently they went deep into the science of *al-kalam* and added the fringes of the Philosophers to many of their principles.

Their school of thought spread among the people until al-Shaykh Abu l-Hasan al-Ash'ari said to his teacher, Abu 'Ali al-jubbai, "What have you to say about three brothers, one of

whom died obedient, another disobedient, and the third in infancy?" He answered, "The first will be rewarded with the Garden (*al-janna*), the second will be punished with the Fire (*al-nar*), and the third will neither be rewarded nor punished." Al-Ash`ari answered, "And what if the third should say, 'Lord, why didst Thou make me die in infancy, and not detain me until I grew up and believed on Thee, and obeyed and thus entered the Garden?' What would the Lord—the Exalted—say then?" He answered, "The Lord would say, 'I knew that if thou shouldst grow up thou wouldst disobey and enter the Fire, so it was better for thee to die in infancy.'" Al-Ash`ari said, "And if the second should say, 'Lord, why didst Thou not cause me to die in infancy so that I should not disobey and enter the Fire?' What would the Lord say then?" Al-Jubbai was confounded and al-Ash`ari abandoned his school of thought. He and his followers worked from that time at refuting the Mu`tazilite view and maintaining that which the Approved Way had handed down and that which the community did. Hence they are called the People of the Approved Way and the Community (*ahl al-sunna wa l-jama'a*).

Then when philosophy¹² was translated into Arabic and the followers of Islam plunged (*khada*) into it, they attempted to refute the Philosophers on the points in which they differed from the canon law (*al-sharia*). So they mixed up with *kalam* much of philosophy in order to understand thoroughly the goals of philosophy and so to be put into a position to show the unreality of it. This went on until they included in *kalam* most of physics and metaphysics and plunged ¹³ into mathematics until theology was hardly to be distinguished from philosophy had it not been that it included "things to be believed on authority" (*al-sam'iyat*). This is the *kalam* of the Later Theologians (*al-muta'akhirun*).

In general *kalam* is the most noble of the sciences, first, because it is the foundation of the legal judgments and the chief of the religious sciences; second, because its subject matter is the articles of Belief of Islam; third, because its aim is the attaining of the happiness of this life and the next; and fourth, because its proofs are the decisive

arguments most of which are aided by evidences that are based on authority.

As to what has been reported of the Fathers of the first generations (*al-salaf*) of Islam concerning their attack against *kalam* and their prohibition of it, that was only directed against the religious zealot and the one who had failed to attain certainty, and against the one who purposed to destroy the articles of Belief of the Muslims and the one who plunged needlessly into the obscurities of those who claimed to be philosophers. Otherwise how can one conceive the prohibition of the foundation upon which our obligations rest and the basis of laws regarding practice?

Furthermore the basis of *kalam* is that there is deduced from the existence of originated things (*al-muhdathat*) the existence of the Maker (*al-sani*), His unity, His attributes and His actions, and from these things all the rest of the things which are to be believed on authority. For this reason it was suitable to begin the treatise by calling attention to the existence of that which is observed of substances and accidents and to verify the knowledge concerning both of them, that thereby one might attain the understanding of that which is the most important goal of all.

Therefore al-Nasafi said,

قال أهل الحق

The People of Reality(*ahl al-haqq*) say/Reality is the judgment which corresponds with the actual fact. It is applied in a general sense to propositions, to articles of Belief, to religions, and to different schools of practice (*al-madhabih*) with reference to their inclusion of reality. Its opposite is the unreal (*al-batil*). But as for the term truth (*al-sidq*), it is especially applied to propositions; its opposite is falsehood (*al-kadhib*). The distinction that may be made between these two pairs of contrast is that in the case of reality (*al-haqq*) the correspondence is seen from the

standpoint of the actual fact, and in the case of truth (*al-sidq*), from the standpoint of judgment. And the meaning of the expression "the truth of a judgment" is the agreement of the judgment with the actual fact, and the meaning of the expression "the reality of a judgment" is the agreement of the actual fact with the judgment.

حقائق الأشياء ثابتة

that the real essences of things exist in reality /The real essence (*al-haqiqa*) of a thing and its quiddity (*al-mahiya*) are that which constitutes the identity of a thing (*ma bihi 'l-shay' huwa huwa*), as exemplified by the application of the term "rational (*natiq*) animal" to man in contrast to the application of the terms "laughing animal" and "writing animal"; in which case it is possible to conceive of man as not being described by the terms "laughing" and "writing," inasmuch as they [laughing and writing] are accidents. And it may be said further that that which constitutes the identity of a thing is, with respect to its being verified as having external reality, a real essence; and with respect to its being individualized, it is a certain particular thing (*huniya*), but without respect to either of these it is a quiddity.

Thus in our opinion the term *shay*¹⁴ (a thing) is identical with the term *al-manjud* (that which exists); and the terms *al-thubut* (real existence), *al-tabaqquq* (being verified as having real existence), *al-wujud* (existence) and *al-kawn*¹⁵ (coming-into-existence) are synonymous, and the meaning of them is immediately perceived (*badihi al-tasawwur*). But if it is objected that such a logical statement as that the real essences of things exist in reality is tautological in the same way as our stating that really existent things exist in reality, to this we answer that what is meant thereby is that what we believe to be the real essences of things and designate by certain terms such as "man," "horse," "sky," and "earth" is something existing in the things themselves. It is analogous to the statement that the necessarily existent being (*wajib al-wujud*) is existent. This statement conveys some useful information; in fact it may have to be demon-

strated by argument. It is not like the statement that the really existent things exist in reality, nor is it like the statement that I am Abu l-Najm and my poetry is my poetry, in which case the statement is self-evident [and hence conveys no useful information].

And the verification of this is to be found in the fact that a thing may have different aspects, in consequence of which when something is predicated of it the judgment may be useful when the thing is seen in one aspect and useless when it is seen in another. In the case of man, for instance, when taken with respect to his being a body of some sort, to predicate of him animality conveys useful information, but, when taken with respect to his being a rational animal, then to predicate animality of him is tautological.

والعلمُ بها

and that the knowledge of them/that is, of the real essences, both of that which they are perceived to be (*tasawwur*) and of that which is affirmed of them or of their modes

مُتَحَقِّقٌ

is verifiable as real/Some say that what this statement refers to is undoubtedly the knowledge of the reality of the existence of the essences, for to know the essences themselves as a whole is impossible. In reply to this it may be said that the reference here is to the genus, in refutation of those who say that there is no real existence to any of the essences and also of those who say that there can be no knowledge of the fact whether an essence has real existence or has no real existence.

خِلَافًا لِلْمُؤَسِّطَانِيَّةِ

in contradiction to the Sophists ¹⁶(*al-sufastaiya*)/Forsome

of them deny the real essences of things and maintain that they are fancies (*awham*) and *vain imaginations* (*khayalat*).¹⁷ These are the Obstinate (*al-inadiya*). Others deny the real existence of essences, maintaining that essences only follow from what one happens to believe, so that if we believe a thing to be a substance (*jawbar*)¹⁸ it is a substance, but if we believe it to be an accident it is an accident; or if we believe a thing to be eternal (*qadim*) it is eternal, but if we believe it to be originated (*badith*)¹⁹ it is originated. These are the Opinioners (*al'indiya*). Still others deny that there can be any knowledge of whether a thing has real existence or not. They assert that they are in doubt and that they are in doubt even of their doubt, and so on. These are the Agnostics (*al-la-adriya*).

As for us, however, to prove our point of view we first convince ourselves, either by sense perception or by demonstration, of the necessity of establishing that certain things have real existence. Then from this premise we argue that if the negation of those things is not proven, then the real existence of those things has been established. But if, on the other hand, the negation has been proven, then, inasmuch as that negation by virtue of its being a species of judgment is one of the real essences it necessarily follows, again, that something of real essence has been established and that it is not proper to negate it absolutely. It is evident that this argument applies to the Obstinate only.

[As for the Opinioners and the Agnostics], they say, with regard to those types of knowledge described as necessary (*al-daruriyat*) that (a) some of them are sense perceptions (*al-hissiyyat*), but that sense perception may sometimes err, as in the case of the squint-eyed who sees one to be two, and of the bilious who finds the sweet bitter, and (b) some of them are immediate perceptions (*al-badibiyat*) but that these are subject to differences of opinion and are open to ambiguities for the solving of which there is need of subtle speculation. (c) Another type of necessary knowledge [they say] is that arrived at by means of syllogistic speculations (*al-naẓariyyat*) [from major premises which are either sense perceptions or immediate perceptions]; but as for these

[they argue] with the unsoundness of these major premises, there necessarily follows the unsoundness of the conclusions. And it is for this reason [they add] that thinking human beings have many differences of opinion [concerning conclusions arrived at by syllogistic speculations].

To these we reply:

(a) The error that may occur in sense perception by reason of particular causes in certain instances does not negate the validity of the sense perception in other instances where the particular causes of the error are not present.

(b) The differences of opinion that may occur with respect to immediate perceptions by reason of one's lack of acquaintance with the subject or of one's difficulty in forming a clear notion of the subject on account of its abstruseness do not destroy the possibility of forming immediate perceptions.

(c) The many differences of opinion that may occur in conclusions arrived at by syllogistic speculation as a result of the unsoundness which may sometimes occur in the act of speculation do not destroy in other instances the validity of conclusions arrived at by syllogistic speculation.

But the truth is that there is no way to enter into discussion with them, especially the Agnostics, because they do not admit anything known by which an unknown is to be established. Rather the only way is to punish them with the Fire, that they may either confess or be consumed in the Fire.

Sufasta is a name given to falsified wisdom and specious knowledge, because *sufa* means knowledge and wisdom, and *asta* means the specious and false. And from this is derived *al-safsata*, just as *falsafa* is derived from *faylasufa* (philosopher), which means "the lover of wisdom."

Chapter 2

THE CAUSES OF KNOWLEDGE

وأسباب العلم للخلق ثلاثة: الحواس السليمة، والخبر الصادق، والعقل. فالحواس خمس: السمع، والبصر، والشم، والذوق، واللمس. ويكل حاسة منها يُوقف على ما وضعت هي له: والخبر الصادق على نوعين: (أحدهما) الخبر المتواتر، وهو الخبر الثابت على ألسنة قوم لا يتصور تواطؤهم على الكذب، وهو موجب للعلم الضروري، كالعلم بالملوك الخالية في الأزمنة الماضية والبلدان النائية. (والثاني) خبر الرسول المؤيد بالمعجزة، وهو يوجب العلم الاستدلالي، والعلم الثابت به يضاهي العلم الثابت بالضرورة في التيقن والثبات. وأما العقل فهو سبب للعلم أيضا، وما ثبت منه بالبدئية فهو ضروري كالعلم بأن كل شيء أعظم من جزئه، وما ثبت منه بالاستدلال فهو اكتسابي والإلهام ليس من أسباب المعرفة بصحة الشيء عند أهل الحق

The causes of knowledge for all creation are three: the sound senses, true narrative, and Reason. The senses are five, namely, hearing, seeing, smelling, taste, and touch, and by each of these senses one is informed concerning that for which it was appointed.

True narrative is of two kinds: one of them is the mutawatir narrative, and it is the narrative established by the tongues of people of whom it is inconceivable that they would agree together on a falsehood. It brings about necessary knowledge such as the knowledge of former kings in past times and of distant countries. The second kind is the narrative of the Messenger aided by an evidentiary miracle, and it brings about deductive knowledge, and the knowledge established by it resembles the knowledge established by necessity in certainty and in fixity.

Then as for Reason: it is a cause of knowledge also; and whatever of it is established by immediate perception is necessary, just as the knowledge that the whole of a thing is greater than the part of it; and whatever is established by deduction is acquired. Illuminationis not one of the causes

of the cognition of the soundness of a thing with the People of Reality.

وَأَسْبَابُ الْعِلْمِ

The causes of knowledge¹/Knowledge is an attribute of the knowing subject by means of which any object referred to becomes revealed (*yatajalla*) to him; that is to say, it becomes clear and evident and capable of being described by words, and this regardless of whether that object is something existing (*manjud*) or something non-existing (*ma'dum*). Knowledge includes both the comprehension (*al-idrak*) by the senses and the comprehension by Reason (*al-aql*), and this again both of things conceived (*al-tasawwurat*) and of things asserted (*al-tasdiqat*), the latter of which may be both certainties (*al-yaqiniya*)² and non-certainties (*ghayr al-yaqiniya*).

This is in opposition to the view of the Sophists that knowledge is an attribute [of the knowing subject by means of] which [he] makes an affirmative judgment of which the contradictory (*al-naqid*) cannot be admitted. This definition of theirs, although it includes the comprehension of the senses, provided only that the thing to be perceived is not inaccessible to the senses;] and although it also includes the things conceived [by Reason] provided only, as they claim, that the things to be conceived do not have contradictories; yet it does not include the non-certainties of things asserted. So much for their view. Accordingly the revelation of an object to the knower must be taken to mean a complete unveiling (*al-inkishaf al-tamm*)³ [which has been identified with knowledge] and therefore precludes opinion (*al-zann*)⁴ so that knowledge with them is to be contrasted with opinion.

للخلق

for all creation (*al-khalq*)⁵ / that is, for all created beings, whether angels, men or *jinn*, in contrast to the knowledge of the Creator—who is exalted in and through Himself—for knowledge belongs to His essence and is not due to any

cause whatsoever

ثلاثة: الحواس السليمة، والخبر الصادق، والعقل.

are three: the sound senses (*al-hawass al-salima*), true narrative (*al-khabar al-sadiq*), and Reason (*al-aql*)⁶/This is by way of enumerating the particulars (*al-istiqrā*).⁷ From the standpoint of classification, if the cause of the knowledge is some other person outside the knower, then it is true narration; [but if the cause of knowledge is within the knower himself] then, if there is an organ distinct from the perceptive faculty (*al-mudrik*), it is sense perception; otherwise, it is Reason.

Objection may be raised that the efficient cause (*al-sabab al-mu'aththir*) in all kinds of knowledge is Allah, since they all exist through His creation and His bringing them into existence without any impression (*ta'thir*) being made by the sensory faculty, true narration, and Reason. Reason only appears to be a cause, as for instance fire in the case of burning; and as for the senses and narration, the former are only instruments and the latter a method of comprehension.

Further objection may be raised that the ultimate cause (*al-sabab al-mufdi*)—taken as a whole wherein Allah creates within us knowledge according to the customary way (*fi ar-rūṭba*)⁸ in order to include the percipient (*al-mudrik*) such as Reason, the instrument such as the sensory faculty, and the method such as narration—is not confined to three things, but there are other things such as sensibility (*al-wijdan*),⁹ surmise (*al-hads*)¹⁰ experience (*al-tajriba*)¹¹ and the speculation (*al-naẓar*) of the Reason, meaning the arrangement of principles and premises (*muqaddimat*).

To this we reply that this [threefold division given] is according to the method of the Early Theologians, who limited themselves to the aims pursued and shunned the minute precisions of the Philosophers. When these theologians discerned that some of the things perceived came as the result of the use of the external senses, about which there is no doubt, whether in rational beings or non-rational beings, they, therefore, made the senses one of the causes; and since most of the things known about religion are

derived from true narrative, they made it another cause. Since they were not positive about the internal senses (*al-hawass al-batina*),¹² which are called the common sense (*al-biss al-mushtarak*)¹³ or the estimative faculty (*al-wahm*) or something else; and because they did not attach much importance to the details of surmises (*al-hadsiyat*), experiences (*al-tajribiyat*), immediate perceptions (*al-badihiyat*) and speculations (*al-nazariyat*), and because all these go back to Reason, they made Reason a third cause which ultimately arrives at knowledge by merely giving attention to or by drawing to itself a surmise or an experience or the arrangement of premises. So they made Reason the cause of knowledge in that we have hunger and thirst, that the whole is greater than the part, that the light of the moon is derived from the sun, that scammony is a laxative, and that the world is originated, although in some matters Reason is aided by sense perception.

فالحواس

The senses (*al-hawass*)/The word is the plural of a sense (*bassa*), meaning the sensory faculty.

خمسة:

are five/meaning that of necessity Reason determines their existence. But the proofs for the internal senses, which the Philosophers maintain, are incomplete according to the fundamentals of Islam.

السمع

namely, hearing (*al-sam'*)/It is a faculty (*quwa*) placed in the nerves spread out in the cavity of the ear hole, by which sounds are perceived. This is by way of connecting with the ear hole the air which has assumed the quality of the sounds, meaning that Allah then creates perception in the soul (*al-nafs*).

والبصرُ

seeing (*al-basar*)/It isa faculty placed in the two hollow nerves which meet each other in the brain, thence they separate and go to the two eyes; by this faculty are perceived rays of light, colors, shapes, measures, motions, the beautiful and the ugly, and other things, the perception of which Allah creates in the soul whenever the creature uses this faculty.

والشمُّ

smelling (*al-shamm*)/It isa faculty placed in the two protruding lumps on the front of the brain, which are like the two nipples of the breasts; by this faculty odors are perceived by way of connecting with the cartilage of the nose the air which has assumed the quality of the odors.

والذوق

taste (*al-dhawq*)/It isa faculty spread out in the nerves situated on the organ of the tongue; by this faculty flavors are perceived through the mixing of the saliva which is in the mouth with the thing tasted, and through its reaching to the nerves.

واللمسُ

and touch (*al-lams*)/ It is a faculty spread out into all the body by which heat and cold, moisture and dryness, and the like are perceived at the time of touching and contact.

وبكل حاسةٍ منها

and by each of these senses/that is, the five

يُوقَفُ عَلَى

one is informed/that is, is given knowledge

مَا وُضِعَتْ هِيَ لَهُ

concerning that for which it was appointed/that is, that particular sense. This means that Allah has created each one of these senses to perceive certain things peculiar to it, such as hearing for sounds, taste for that which is flavored, and smelling for odors. Nothing is perceived by one sense which is perceived by another sense, but as to whether that is possible or not there is a difference of opinion. However, the correct position is that it is possible, because it is by a purely creative act of Allah without any impression on the part of the senses. So it is not impossible that Allah create after the loss of sight an added perception of sounds, for example. If the question is raised whether the sweetness and heat of a thing are not both together perceived by the tasting faculty, we reply in the negative; rather the sweetness is perceived by taste and the heat by the sense of touch which is present in the mouth and the tongue.

وَالْخَبْرُ الصَّادِقُ

True narrative/that is, that which is in agreement with the fact, for narrative is [a form of] speech in relation to which there is something external with which the relationship agrees, so it is true; or the relationship does not agree with it, and it is then false. So truth and falsehood are descriptives of narrative. They therefore may be used with the sense of giving information about a thing according to what is or what is not. This means [that narration is] the making [of something] known by a complete relationship which agrees or does not agree with the fact, so truth and falsehood are among the attributes applied to the narrator. And for this reason in some books the term "the true" is used as an attribute of "narrative" (*al-khabar al-sadiq*), and in others it is placed in annexation, "the narrative of the

truthful one" (*khabar al-sadiq*).

على نوعين : (أحدهما) الخبر المتواتر

Is of two kinds: one of them is the *mutawatir* ¹⁴ narrative/It is so called because it does not occur just once, but in sequence and continuity.

وهو الخبر الثابت على ألسنة قوم لا يتصور تواطؤهم

and it is the narrative established by the tongues of people of whom it is inconceivable that they would agree together/that is, Reason does not permit their concurring together

على الكذب

on a falsehood/The thing that proves it is that knowledge takes place without any doubt.

وهو

andIt/of necessity

موجب للعلم الضروري، كالعلم بالملوك الخالية في الأزمنة الماضية والبلدان النائية،

brings about necessary knowledge such as the knowledge of former kings in past times and of distant countries/The latter phrase "distant countries" may be joined to "the kings" or to "the times"; the former, namely "the kings," is more likely although further away in position in the sentence.

Here then are two matters to be noted; one of them is that the *mutawatir* narrative brings about knowledge and that of necessity, for we come of ourselves to the knowledge of the existence of Mecca and Baghdad and that such facts are only gained through narratives. The other matter is that the

knowledge derived from such *mutawatir* narrative is necessary, and that is because it may be obtained by one who is capable of making a deduction and by others as well, even by children who have not yet been brought up to the right way, by the method of the acquisition of knowledge and of arranging the necessary premises. But as for the narrative of the Christians (*al-Nasara*) concerning the killing of Jesus¹⁵ on whom be peace, and that of the Jews (*al-Yahud*) concerning the perpetuity of the religion of Moses, on whom be peace—well, such *mutawatir* narrative is absurd.

Objection may be raised that the narrative of each individual only gives an opinion (*ẓamm*), and heaping opinion upon opinion does not bring about certainty, and also that the possibility of each individual's falsehood brings about the possibility of the whole group's falsehood, for it is made up of the same individuals.¹⁶ To this we reply that it often happens that in the grouping together of individual cases there is something in them collectively that was not in them separately, as for instance in the strength of a rope made of hairs.

It may be objected that in the case of necessary types of knowledge there is no irregularity or contradiction; still, we do find in the case of such knowledge that the knowledge that one is half of two is stronger than the affirmation of the existence of Alexander. Furthermore, some of those people who employ Reason in their investigations, such as al-Sumaniya¹⁷ and the Brahmins (*a/-Barahima*),¹⁸ deny that *mutawatir* narrative produces knowledge. This argument is inapplicable as an objection, for it is to be admitted that various kinds of necessary knowledge sometimes differ from one another by difference in usage, custom, and practice, and in the occurring to one's mind and conceiving the terms of judgments (*atraf alahkam*). And there may be a contradiction about *mutawatir* narrative because of pride and obstinacy just as the Sophists exhibit in contradicting all types of necessary knowledge.

(والثاني) خبرُ الرسولِ المؤيّدِ

The second kind is the narrative of the Messenger (*al-rastil*) aided/that is to say, whose message is established

بالمعجزة

by an evidentiary miracle (*al-mu'jiza*)/ A Messenger is a man sent by Allah to creatures in order to convey His judgments; and the bringing of a book may be stipulated of him, in contrast to a prophet (*al-nabi*), for "prophet" [32] is a more general term.¹⁹ An evidentiary miracle²⁰ is something that annuls the customary way of things (*kehariq lil-ada*), the purpose of which is to demonstrate the truthfulness of the one making the claim to be the Messenger of Allah.

وهو

and it/that is, the narrative of the Messenger

يُوجِبُ العلم الاستدلالي

brings about deductive (*istidlali*) knowledge/that is, that which is arrived at by deduction (*al-istidlal*), which is by consideration of proof (*dalil*). Deduction is (1) that thing by the sound consideration of which one is enabled to attain the knowledge of any subject that has been transmitted by narrative. (2) It has also been said to be a [minor] proposition, composed of judgments, which necessarily demands a [major] proposition.

[33] So according to the first definition the proof of the existence of the Maker is the world, and according to the second definition it is our saying that the world is originated and that everything originated has a maker. But their statement that proof is that thing from the knowledge of which the knowledge of something else follows is more

suitable to the second definition. But as for its bringing about knowledge, that is because it is absolutely certain that he through whom Allah performs an evidentiary miracle for the purpose of asserting his claim to the office of Messenger is truthful in the judgments which he brings. If he is truthful, then the knowledge concerning the contents of his message absolutely follows.

And as for its being deductive, that is because it depends upon deduction [34] and because it brings to the mind the fact that it is the narrative of the one whose office of Messenger is established by evidentiary miracles. Every narrative of this kind is truthful and its contents are according to fact.

والعلم الثابت به

and the knowledge established by it/that is, by the narrative of the Messenger

يُضاهي

resembles/that is, is like

العلم الثابت بالضرورة

the knowledge established by necessity/[this means] like the things perceived by the senses, those immediately perceived, and the *mutawatir* narratives.

في التيقن

in certainty/that is, in the impossibility of predicating the contradictory

and in fixity/that is, in the impossibility of predicating the discontinuance of this knowledge by that which is ambiguous (*tashkik al-mushakkik*).²¹ And it is a kind of knowledge that means the absolute established conviction (*i'tiqad*) which agrees with the fact, else otherwise this knowledge would be a matter of ignorance, or of opinion, or of following tradition (*taqlid*).²²

If it is objected that this explanation is applicable to the *mutawatir* only, and therefore goes back to the first section [of true narrative], we reply that the statement is about that narrative which is known to be [35] of the Messenger because it has been heard from his mouth or because that or something else possible has been transmitted of him by *tawatur*. The individual narrative is not useful for knowledge because there may be some doubt of its being the narrative of the Messenger.

An objection may also be made that since the statement is *mutawatir* or heard from the lips of the Messenger of Allah, the knowledge which results is then necessary and consequently not deductive, just as in the case of the rest of knowledge obtained by *tawatur* and sense perception. To this we reply (1) that the necessary knowledge, in the case of the *mutawatir* narrative which is from the Messenger, is the knowledge that the narrative is the narrative of the Messenger of Allah—may blessing and peace be upon him—because this means "that by which the giving of the narrative has become *mutawatir*" (2) In regard to that which is heard from the mouth of the Messenger—may Allah bless him and give him peace—the necessary knowledge [in this case] is the perception of the verbal expressions and that they are the speech of the Messenger. (3) But the deductive knowledge [in this case] is the knowledge as to its content and the establishing of that which it proved. For example, the statement of the Messenger, "It is incumbent on the claimant to produce proof, and the defendant must take an oath,"²³ is known by *tawatur* to be the statement of the Messenger. This knowledge is necessary. Further it is known from this

statement [of the Messenger] that proof devolves on the claimant. [The knowledge of] this [fact] is deductive.

Further objection may be raised that truthful narrative which gives useful knowledge is not confined to these two kinds, but may be narrative coming from Allah or from the Angel or the People of Agreement (*al-ijma*) or narrative coupled with that which removes the possibility of falsehood, like the news of the arrival of Zayd as indicated by his people rushing to his house. To this we answer that what is meant by narrative is a narrative which **is a** means of knowledge to all creatures by merely being a kind of narrative without regard at all to the contexts [36] which give certainty by the evidence of Reason.

So the narrative coming from Allah or from the Angel is able to impart knowledge in relation to all creation only when it comes to them by way of the Messenger. The same judgment applies to the narrative of the Messenger and to that of the People of Agreement in the case of a *mutawatir* judgment. Answer may be made that it has no meaning by itself alone but rather by consideration of the proofs which indicate that Agreement is an argument. We then say that likewise the narrative of the Messenger is of the same class and for that reason was classified as deductive.

وَأَمَّا الْعَقْلُ

Then as for Reason (*al-aql*) ²⁴ /which is a faculty of the soul (*al-nafs*),²⁵ by which it is prepared for the reception of things to be known and perceived. That is the meaning of their saying, "It is an innate property (*gharizā*) which, whenever the instruments of perception are sound, is followed by the necessary types of knowledge." [37] Some people define it as the substance (*al-jawhar*) by which the things not perceived by the senses are perceived through means, and by which sense perceptions are perceived through observation.

فهو سببٌ للعلم أيضًا

it is a cause of knowledge also/He made this clear because there is a disagreement about it among the heretics (*al-Malahida*) and the Sumaniya in regard to all types of speculation, and among some Philosophers in regard to metaphysical speculations, on the basis of numerous differences and the contradiction of opinions. The reply that this is due to the unsoundness of speculation does not preclude the fact that sound speculation on the part of Reason is useful for giving knowledge, although the very thing you mentioned is a deduction by the speculation of Reason. Thus it establishes that which you have denied, so it is contradictory to itself. And if they assert that this means the opposing of the unsound with the unsound, we answer that either it means something [38] and therefore is not unsound, or it does not mean anything at all and therefore there is no opposing [of the unsound with the unsound].

Some may say, "Let us grant that speculation is useful for giving knowledge. Well then, if this knowledge is necessary there is no contradiction about it, for it is just as though we said, 'One is half of two'; and if it is speculative, then it is necessary to establish speculation by speculation and that is circular proof (*al-dawr*)." To this we reply that sometimes there may be a contradiction about necessary knowledge because of obstinacy or the limitation of perception. The people who use Reason are agreed that the reasoning faculties of men are distinctly different according to the nature created (*al-fitra*) in them. [This position is reached] by deduction from precedents (*al-atbar*) and by the testimony of narratives (*al-akbbar*) [from the Prophet].²⁶ The speculative type (*al-nazari*) of knowledge itself may be established by a special speculation which is not expressed in terms of a [general] speculation. An example of this is our saying, "The world is changing, and everything changing is originated." Of necessity that is useful for giving the knowledge that the world was originated. [39] This [necessity] does not rest upon the special character of the

speculation, but because it is sound and accompanied by [that which meets] its conditions. So every sound speculation accompanied by that which meets its conditions has a meaning, and in verifying the answer to this objection there is more detail than is fitting to this book.

وما ثبت منه

and whatever of it is established/that is, of knowledge established by Reason

بالبدية

by **immediate perception**(*al-badiba*)/that is, at the first glance without the necessity of thought

فهو ضروري كالعلم بأن كل الشيء أعظم من جزئه

is necessary, just as the knowledge that the whole of a thing is greater than the part of it/For after conceiving the meaning of "all" and "part" and "greater" it is seen that this [proposition] does not rest on anything; and whoever hesitates about it—so that he asserts that a part of a man, like the hand for example, may sometimes be greater than [40] the whole—does not conceive the meaning of "whole" and "part."

وما ثبت منه بالاستدلال

and whatever is established by deduction (*al-istidlal*)/that is, by consideration of proof, whether by deduction from cause to effect, as whenever one sees fire and so knows that it has smoke; or from effect to cause, as whenever one sees smoke and so knows that fire is there. The first process may be specified as "assigning the cause" and the second as "deduction."

is acquired (*iktisabi*) / that is to say, obtained by acquisition (*al-kaṣb*). This is [done by] immediate causality (*mubasharat al-asbab*) through choice, as in the application of Reason and in speculation on the matters which pertain to deduction, and by inclining the ear, turning about the pupil of the eye, and so forth, in matters which pertain to the senses. So we see that "acquired" is a more general term than "deductive" because deductive knowledge is that which is obtained by consideration of the proof. Everything deductive then is acquired, but not everything acquired is deductive, as for example the use of the faculty of sight which results from purpose and choice.

As for necessary knowledge: it is sometimes contrasted with acquired knowledge and it is then explained as that the obtaining of which is not within the power (*maqdur*) of [choice apportioned by Allah to] the creature; and sometimes necessary knowledge is contrasted with deductive knowledge and explained as that which results without thought or speculation regarding proof. And so some termed the knowledge resulting from the use of the senses "acquired," that is, resulting from immediate causality through choice; and others termed it "necessary," that is, resulting without the use of deduction.

[41] There does not seem to be a contradiction in the statement of the author of *al-Bidaya* ²⁷ when he says that originated (*al-hadiith*) knowledge is of two kinds: (1) necessary, which Allah originated in the soul of the creature without his acquisition and choice, like the knowledge of his existence and the change of his states (*ahwal*); and (2) acquired, which Allah originates in the creature by means of his acquisition, and this is by immediate causality in respect to knowledge, its causes being three: sound senses, truthful narrative, and the speculation of Reason. Then he went on to say that from the speculation of Reason there result two kinds of knowledge: (1) necessary, which comes at the very beginning of speculation without any cogitation (*tafakkur*), such as the

knowledge that the whole is greater than the part; and (2) deductive, in which a kind of cogitation is necessary, as the knowledge of the presence of fire on seeing the smoke.

والإلهام

And Illumination (*al-ilham*)/It is that which is explained as the casting of an idea into the intellect (*al-qalb*) by means of overflowing (*al-fayd*).

ليس من أسباب المعرفة بصحة الشيء عند أهل الحق

is not one of the causes of the cognition (*al-ma'rifa*) **of the soundness of a thing with the People of Reality**/This statement was made to answer the objection to confining the causes of knowledge to the above-mentioned three things only. It would have been better if al-Nasafi had said, "One of the causes of the knowledge (*al-'ilm*) of a thing," unless it was that he tried to call attention to the fact that for us knowledge and cognition are the same, not, as some do, making a technical distinction between them by confining knowledge to compounds (*al-murakkabat*) or to universals (*al-kulliyat*), and cognition to simple things (*al-basa'it*) or to particulars (*al-juz'iyat*); otherwise there was no use of his particularizing the statement by saying "the soundness of a thing" [instead of "a thing"].

Then it is clear that he meant that Illumination is not a cause by which knowledge results to creatures in general nor by which it is right for one to force knowledge on another; otherwise there is no doubt that knowledge does result from Illumination. There have been reported statements regarding Illumination in the tradition of the Prophet (S) such as, "My Lord illumined me." ²⁸ And this has been said of many of the Fathers (*al-salaf*) also.

As for the narrative of a single unprejudiced person and the following of the tradition (*taqlid*) of one who attempts a legal opinion (*al-mujtahid*), they are sometimes useful for

opinion and sometimes for strong conviction which is enduring. It appears that al-Nasafi meant by knowledge (*al-'ilm*) that which does not include these two things mentioned; otherwise there is no reason for confining the causes of knowledge to the three [causes mentioned].

Chapter 3

THE WORLD

والعالم بجميع أجزائه مُحَدَّثٌ، إذ هو أعيانٌ وأعراضٌ. فالأعيانُ ما له قيامٌ بذاته، وهو إما مركَّبٌ وهو الجسمُ، أو غيرُ مركَّبٍ كالجواهر وهو الجزءُ الذي لا يتجزأ. والعرضُ ما لا يقومُ بذاته ويَحْدُثُ في الأجسامِ والجواهر كالألوان، والأكوان، والطُّعوم، والروائح.

Further, the world in the totality of its parts is a thing originated, since it consists of substances and accidents. A substance is that which has self-subsistence, and it is either a thing compounded, that is, a body; or not compounded, like the atom, which is the part that is not further divided. And the accident is something that does not subsist in itself but is originated in bodies and atoms, such as colors, states of coming into being, tastes, and odors.

والعالمُ

Further, the world (*al-alam*)/that is, everything except Allah—of the existent things (*al-manjudat*) by which the Maker is known, is called the world of bodies (*al-ajsam*), the world of accidents (*al-a`rad*), the plant world (*al-nabat*), the animal world (*al-hayawan*), and so on. The attributes of Allah are excluded [from the things making up the world] because they are not other than His essence, just as they are not the essence itself.

بجميع أجزائه

in the totality of its parts/that is, of the heavens and what is in them and the earth and what is on it

مَحْدُوثٌ

is a thing originated (*muhdath*)¹/This means it is something brought from non-existence into existence, meaning that it was once non-existent (*ma'dum*) and then it existed. This is in opposition to the Philosophers, insofar as they held to the position of the eternity (*qidam*) of the heavens² including their respective matters (*mawadd*), forms (*sumar*), and shapes (*ashkal*), and the eternity of the sub-lunar elements (*al-'anasir*) including their respective matters and forms, but these forms are only specific forms, inasmuch as the elements were never without form. Strictly speaking, the Philosophers used the term "being originated" with reference to that which is not Allah, but they used it in the sense of being dependent on something else, not in the sense of being preceded by non-existence.

Then al-Nasafi pointed out the proof for the origin (*huduth*) of the world by his statement:

إِذْ هُوَ

sinceit/that is, the world

إِذْ هُوَ أَعْيَانٌ وَأَعْرَاضٌ

consists of substances (*a'yan*)³ **and accidents** (*a'rad*)/because whatever of it is self-subsistent (*qa'im bi dhatibi*) is a substance, and whatever is not is an accident. Both of them are originated, as we shall show. And the author—Allah have mercy on him—did not deal with this, because the discussion of it would be very long and inappropriate to this brief treatise of his, seeing that it is confined to problems without their proofs.

فَالْأَعْيَانُ مَا لَهُ

A substance is that which has/that is, any possible thing

قيام بذاته

self-subsistence (*qiyam bi dhatihi*)/ By context this is inferred from their being a part of the world. The meaning of self-subsistence with the Mutakallims is that substance is bounded by itself (*yatabayyaḥ bi nafsibi*); its being bounded does not follow from the fact that some other thing is bounded, in contrast to the accident, in which case its being bounded follows from the fact that the atom (*al-jawhar*) is bounded, for the atom is the subject (*al-mawduʿ*) or the locus (*al-mahall*) which gives subsistence to the accident.

The meaning of the existence of the accident in the subject is that its very existence is its existence in the subject, and for that reason it cannot be transferred from the subject. This is in contrast to the existence of a body within a boundary (*al-hayyiz*), for its very existence and its existence in a boundary are two different things. For that reason a body may be transferred from a boundary. According to the Philosophers the meaning of the subsistence of a thing in its essence is its being independent of the locus in which it subsists, and the meaning of its subsistence in something else is its being specified by it, so that the first becomes something descriptive (*naʿi*) and the second something described (*manʿut*), whether having boundaries, as in the case of the blackness of a body, or not [having boundaries], as in the case of the attributes (*sifat*) of Allah and the absolutes.⁴

وهو

and it is/whatever of the world is self-subsistent

إما مركب

either a thing compounded (*murakab*)/of two or more parts, according to us.

وهو الجسم

that is, a body (*jism*)⁵/Some say that there must be three parts so that the three dimensions, length, breadth, and depth may be realized; and others say eight parts, in order that the intersecting of the dimensions at vertical angles may be realized. This is not a dispute over verbal expressions to be used, referring to some technicality [in the matter] that can be settled by saying that each may explain the term technically as he wishes. It is a dispute as to whether or not the conventional idea thus given to body is sufficient if it is compounded of two parts only. The Primitive Theologians (*al-awwalun*) argued that if one of two bodies exceeds the other by one part, then it is bulkier [*ajsam*, that is, more of body] than the other. And if the mere compounding [of parts] were not sufficient to constitute corporeality, then the body would not increase in corporeality by the mere addition of a part. This is a matter for consideration, for the form *aj'al* from the noun *al-jasama* [that is, *ajsam* as used above] has the meaning of bulk and greatness of amount. It is said that a thing becomes bulky (*jasuma*), that is, it becomes great, so it is said to be bulky (*jasim*) and corpulent (*jusam*). We speak here of body as a name (*ism*) not as an attribute (*sifa*).

أو غير مركب كالجوهر

or not compounded, like the atom (*jawbar*)/that is, the substance which is not divisible, neither actually, nor in fancy, nor by supposition (*fard*)⁶

وهو الجزء الذي لا يتجزأ

which is the part that is not further divided/Hedid not say, "it is the atom," but "like the atom," guarding against introducing a restriction; for that which is not compounded is not confined according to Reason to the atom, meaning "the indivisible part" (*al-juz' alladhi la yatjazza'*) since it

would have been necessary to abolish primary matter (*hayuli*),⁷ form (*sura*), Intelligences (*ʿuqul*), and the absolute souls (*al-nufus al-mujarrada*)⁸ in order to complete the restriction of the indivisibles to the atom.

According to the Philosophers there is no such thing as the pure atom (*al-jawharal-fard*), that is, the indivisible atom. As for the compounding together of the body, they say that it is composed of primary matter (*al-hayuli*) and form (*al-sura*) only.

The best proof for establishing the [indivisible] part is that were a real sphere to be placed on a real plane it would make a contact at one indivisible point only, since if it should make a contact with it at two points, there would actually be on the sphere a line, so it would not be a real sphere on a real plane.

The most noted proof [of the pure atom] according to the Early Theologians has two aspects. The first is that if every substance were infinitely divisible the mustard seed would not be smaller than the mountain, since each is made up of infinite parts. But hugeness and smallness consist only in the multiplicity and paucity of parts, but that fact is only conceivable in the finite. The second proof is that the combination (*al-ijtimaʿ*) of the parts of the body into a whole is not due to its own essence, for were that the case the body would not be capable of being separated into parts (*al-iftiraq*). It is because of this that Allah has the power to create in that body the possibility of being separated into parts which cannot be further divided. Now with reference to this ultimate part, the indivisibility of which is under discussion, if it is possible for it to be further separated into parts it follows that the power of Allah would have to bring it about in order to eliminate the assumption that Allah is powerless, but if it is impossible [for it to be further separated] then the contention as to the existence of an absolute atom is established.

All [of these three proofs] are weak. The first is weak because it only points to the existence of the geometrical

point, and that does not necessitate the existence of the indivisible part, for the fact that a geometrical point is said to have position (*al-hulul fi mahall*) does not mean that it occupies place (*bulul al-sarayan*)⁹ and consequently it does not mean that the indivisibility of the place follows from the indivisibility of the geometrical point.

The second and third are weak because the Philosophers do not say that the body is actually composed of parts that are infinite; but they say that the body admits of an infinite number of divisions and that there is no combination (*ijtima*) of the parts in it at all. Greatness and smallness are only according to the quantity which subsists in a body. And it is possible for the parts to be separated (*iftiraq*) to infinity, so the pure atom is not to be postulated¹⁰ The proofs for denying this are also somewhat weak. For this reason al-Imam al-Razi inclined to noncommittal on the subject.

If the question is raised whether there is any benefit resulting from this position which is different [from that of the Philosophers], we reply that there is. In establishing the pure atom we escape many of the obscurities of the Philosophers, such as the positing of primary matter (*hayuli*) and form (*sura*) which leads to the eternity of the world, the denial of the resurrection of the body, and many of the fundamental laws of measurement (*al-bandasa*), upon which obscurities rests the continual motion of the heavenly spheres; and also the denial of the rending (*al-kharq*) of them and their being coalesced together again (*al-ilti'am*).

وَالْعَرَضُ مَا لَا يَقُومُ بِذَاتِهِ

And the accident is something that does not subsist in itself/but it subsists in something else by being incident (*tabi'*) to it in having its boundaries (*tabayyuz*), or by being specialized by it, just as something descriptive is specialized by the thing described, as has already been said. This does not mean that it cannot be thought of apart from the locus as has been fancied by some, for that only applies to some