

[Third] Discussion

*On showing their obfuscation in saying that
God is the world's enactor and maker,
that the world is His handiwork and act; showing
that with them this is metaphor, not reality*

(1) The philosophers, with the exception of the materialists, have agreed that the world has a maker, that God is the maker and enactor of the world, that the world is His act and handiwork. This, however, is obfuscation in terms of their principle. Indeed, it is inconceivable, in
5 accordance with their principle, for the world to be the work of God, in three respects: with respect to the agent, with respect to the act, and with respect to a relationship common to act and agent.

(2) Regarding [the aspect pertaining to] the agent, it is incumbent that He should be a willer, a chooser, and a knower of what He wills, so
10 as to be the agent of what He wills. But, according to [the philosophers], God, exalted be He, is not one who wills, but has no attribute at all. Whatever proceeds from Him proceeds by compulsory necessity. [As for] the second [aspect, which pertains to the act], the world [for the philosophers] is eternal, whereas the act is the temporally originated. [Regarding] the
15 third [aspect], God for them is one in every respect; and from the One, according to them, nothing but that which is one in all respects proceeds. But the world is composed of various [things]; how does it then proceed from Him?

(3) Let us, then, ascertain each one of these three aspects, together
20 with [showing] their insanity in defending it.

Regarding the first [aspect]

(4) We say: "Agent" is an expression [referring] to one from whom the act proceeds, together with the will to act by way of choice and the knowledge of what is willed." But, according to you [philosophers], the world [proceeds] from God [exalted be He] as the effect from the cause, as a necessary consequence, inconceivable for God to prevent, in the way the shadow is the necessary consequence of the individual and light [the necessary consequence] of the sun. And this does not pertain to action in anything. Indeed, whoever says that the lamp enacts the light and the individual enacts the shadow has ventured excessively into metaphor and stretched it beyond [its] bound, being satisfied with the occurrence of one common description between the expression borrowed for one thing and that from which it is borrowed, [as in this instance, where] the agent is cause in a general sense, whereas the lamp is the cause of illumination and the sun the cause of light. The agent, however, is not called an agent and a maker by simply being a cause, but by being a cause in a special respect—namely, by way of will and choice—so that if one were to say, "The wall is not an agent; the stone is not an agent; the inanimate is not an agent, action being confined to animals," this would not be denied and the statement would not be false. But [according to the philosophers] the stone has an action—namely, falling due to heaviness and an inclination toward [the earth's] center—just as fire has an action, which is heating, and the wall has an action—namely, the inclination toward the center and the occurrence of the shadow—for all [these latter things] proceed from [the wall]. But this is impossible.

(5) [The philosophers, however, may] say:

(6) [In the case of] every existent whose existence is not in itself necessary, but which exists through another, we call that thing an enacted thing and its cause an agent. We do not care whether the cause acts by nature or voluntarily, just as you do not care whether it acts by an instrument or without an instrument. Rather, [for you] action is a genus that divides into that which occurs through an instrument and that which occurs without an instrument. Similarly, it is a genus and divides into that which occurs naturally and that which occurs by choice. Proof of this is

that, if we say, "He acted by nature," our saying "by nature" would not be contrary to our saying "he acted," neither repelling nor contradicting it. Rather, it would be a clarification of the kind of action, just as, when we say, "He acted directly, without an instrument," this would not be a contradiction, but an indication of [the] kind [of action] and a clarification. If we say, "He acted by choice," this would not be repetition as [when we repeat ourselves] in our statement, "animal, human," but an explication of the kind of action, as [in] our statement, "He acted [using] an instrument." Had our statement, "He acted," entailed will, will being essential to the action inasmuch as it is action, then our statement, "He acted by nature," would be [as] contradictory as our statement, "He acted and he has not acted."

(7) We say:

(8) This naming is false. It is not permissible to call any cause, in whatever aspect, an agent, nor any effect an enacted thing. Had this been the case, it would not then be correct to say that the inanimate has no action, action belonging only to animals, when these are among the well-known, true universals. If the inanimate is called an agent, then this is as metaphor, just as it is called a seeker and willer by way of figurative speech. For it is said that the stone falls because it wills [to move to] the center and seeks it, when seeking and willing in reality are only conceivable in conjunction with the knowledge of what is willed and sought after and are [thus] conceivable only of animals.

(9) As for your statement that our saying, "He acts," is a general statement and divides into what is by nature and what is by will, this is not admitted. It is akin to someone saying that our statement, "He willed," is a general expression and divides [in its reference] into one who wills and knows what he wills and one who wills and does not know what he wills. And this is false, since will necessarily entails knowledge. Similarly, action necessarily entails will. Regarding your statement that [the second part of] our saying, "He acted by nature," does not contradict the first, this is not the case. For it contradicts it in terms of what is real. But the contradiction does not impress itself immediately on the understanding, and [our] nature's repulsion to it does not become intense because it remains a metaphor. For, since it is in some respect a cause, the agent also being a cause, ["the action by nature"] is called an action metaphorically. If one

says, "He acted by choice," this is ascertainable as repetition, as when one says, "He willed, knowing what he willed." But, since it is conceivable to say "he acted" when this is metaphor and "he acted" when this is real, the soul is not repelled by the statement, "He acted by choice," the meaning being that he performed a real action not [in the] metaphorical [sense], as when one says [in the real sense], "He spoke with his tongue," or, "He saw with his eye." For, since it is [linguistically] permissible to use [the expression] "seeing with the heart" metaphorically and "speaking" with reference to one's moving the head and the hand, such that one would say, "He spoke with his head," meaning [that he said], "Yes," it is not deemed repugnant to say, "He spoke with his tongue" and "saw with his eye," where the intention is to remove the possibility of [taking these expressions as] metaphor. This, then, is where the foot will slip. Let one then be alerted to [the place] where these naïve people are deceived.

(10) [The philosophers may] say:

(11) Naming the agent "agent" is known from linguistic usage. Otherwise, it is evident to the mind that what is a cause for a thing divides into that which is voluntary and that which is not. The dispute, hence, pertains to whether or not the term "action" is truly applicable to both divisions. There is no way to deny [its applicability to both], since the Arabs say, "Fire burns," "The sword cuts," "Snow cools," "Scammony moves the bowels," "Bread satiates," and "Water quenches." Our saying, "He strikes," means, "He enacts the striking"; our saying, "It burns," means, "It enacts the burning"; and our saying, "It cuts," means, "It enacts the cutting." If you say, "All of this is metaphor," you would be arbitrary about it, without support.

(12) [To this we] answer:

(13) All this is by way of metaphor. Real action is that which comes about only through will. Proof of this is that, if we suppose that a temporal event depends for its occurrence on two things, one voluntary and the other not, reason relates the act to the voluntary. [It is] the same with language. For, if someone throws another into the fire and [the latter] dies, it is said that [the former], not the fire, is the killer, so that if it is said, "None

other than So-and-so killed him," the speaker of this would have said the truth. For if the term "agent" is [applicable to both] willer and nonwiller in the same way, not by way of one of them being the basis [and] the other derived as a metaphor from it, why is it, then, that, on the basis of

5 language, custom, and reason, killing is related to the willer, even though fire is the proximate cause of the killing? [Here the opponent is speaking] as though the one who throws [the victim] would have only undertaken bringing [the victim] and the fire together. But, since the joining [of victim and fire] came about through will, whereas the efficacy of fire

10 is without will, [the willer] is called the killer and the fire is not called a killer except through some kind of metaphor. This shows that the agent is the one from whom the act proceeds through his will. Hence, if God, according to [the philosophers], has neither will nor choice, He would be neither an agent nor a maker except in a metaphorical [sense].

15 (14) [The philosophers may] say:

(15) We mean by God's being an agent that He is the cause of every other existent; and that the world's subsistence is through Him; and that, had it not been for the existence of the Creator, the existence of the world would be inconceivable. And, should the nonexistence of God be

20 supposed, then [in terms of such a supposition] the world would cease to exist—just as, if the nonexistence of the sun is supposed, light [in terms of such a supposition] would cease to exist. This is what we mean by His being an agent. If the opponent refuses to call this meaning "action," there is no need to squabble about names, once the meaning is clear.

25 (16) We say:

(17) Our [whole] purpose is to show that this meaning is not [properly] termed "action" and "handiwork." Rather, that which is meant by "action" and "handiwork" is that which truly proceeds from the will. You [philosophers] have denied the true meaning of "action" and have uttered its

30 expression to endear yourselves to Muslims. Religion is not fulfilled by uttering expressions devoid of [their real] meaning. Declare openly, then, that God has no action, so that it becomes clear that your belief is contrary to the religion of Muslims. Do not confuse matters by [stating] that God is the maker of the world and that the world is His doing. For this is

an expression which you have uttered, but [you have] denied its reality. The purpose of this discussion is only to clear this deceptive beclouding.

The second aspect

(18) [This is] concerned with refuting [the idea] that the world, according to their principle, is the act of God. [The refutation] pertains to a condition regarding the act—namely, that the act means temporal creation, whereas the world, according to them, is pre-eternal and not temporally created. The meaning of “action” is the bringing forth of the thing from nonexistence to existence by creating it. But this is inconceivable of the pre-eternal, since what [already] exists cannot be brought into existence. Hence, the condition of the act [to be something enacted] is for it to be temporally created. But the world, according to [the philosophers], is pre-eternal. How could it, then, be the act of God?

(19) [The philosophers] may say:¹

(20) The meaning of “the created” is “an existent after nonexistence.” Let us, then, investigate the case when the agent creates: is that which proceeds from Him, that relates to Him, pure existence, pure nonexistence, or both? It is false to say that what relates to Him is the prior nonexistence, since the agent has no influence on nonexistence. And it is false to say that both [relate to Him], since it has become clear that nonexistence basically does not relate to Him and that nonexistence, in being nonexistence, does not require an agent at all. It remains, then, that it relates to Him inasmuch as it exists and that what proceeds from Him is pure existence and that there is no relation to Him except existence. If existence is supposed to be permanent, the relation would be supposed permanent. And if the relation is permanent, then the one to whom it relates would be the more efficacious and more permanent in influence because nonexistence did not attach to the agent in any state. It [then] remains to say that [the world] relates to [the agent] inasmuch as it is created. There is no meaning for its being created except that it exists after nonexistence but that nonexistence is not related to it. If, then, the

precedence of nonexistence is made a description of existence and it is said that what relates [to the agent] is a special [kind of] existence, not all existence—namely, existence preceded by nonexistence—it would be said:

(21) Its being preceded by nonexistence is not an act of an agent and
 5 the work of a maker. For the proceeding of this existence from its agent is only conceivable with nonexistence preceding it. But the precedence of nonexistence is not the enactment of the agent—thus, its being preceded by nonexistence is not through the act of the agent. It thus has no connection with it. Hence, having [the previous nonexistence] as a condition for [the act] to be an act is to set as a condition that over which
 10 the agent in no circumstance has any influence. As for your statement that the existent cannot be brought into existence, if you mean by this that an existence does not commence for it after nonexistence, this would be correct. If [on the other hand] you mean by this that in the state of its being existent it would not be [something] brought into existence, we have shown that it is [something] brought into existence in the state of its being existent, not in the state of its being nonexistent. For a thing is only brought into existence if the agent brings about existence; and the agent is not an enactor of existence in a state of [a thing's]
 15 nonexistence, but in the state of a thing's [being in] existence [due to it]. Bringing into existence is concomitant with the agent's being that which brings about existence and the thing enacted being that which is brought into existence. [This is] because it is an expression of the relation of the thing that brings about existence to the thing whose existence is brought about. All [this obtains] with existence, not before it. Hence, there is no bringing about of existence except for an existent, if by "bringing into existence" is meant the relation through which the agent is that which brings about existence and the thing enacted that which is brought into existence.

30 (22) [The philosophers] say [further]:

(23) For this reason we have ruled that the world is the act of God from eternity and everlastingly and that there is no time wherein He is not the Enactor of it. For what is connected with the agent is existence. Hence, if the connection continues, existence continues; and if it is
 35 severed, [existence] is severed. It is not what you [theologians] imagine—namely, that, if one supposes the Creator's existence to cease, the world would [still] endure, since you have thought Him to be akin to the builder [in relation to] the building. For [the builder] would cease to exist, whereas the building would remain. The continued endurance of the building is

not due to the builder, but to the dryness that holds its structure together, since, if it did not have the sustaining power—like water, for example, does not—the endurance of the original shape brought about by the act of the agent would be inconceivable.²

5 (24) [To this we] answer:

(25) The act attaches to the agent in terms of its temporal origination, not in terms of its previous nonexistence, nor in terms of its being an existent only. For, according to us, it does not attach to it in the subsequent state after origination when it [already] exists, but attaches to
10 it at the moment of its temporal origination, inasmuch as [this] is temporal origination and an exodus from nonexistence to existence. If the meaning of temporal existence is denied it, then neither its being an act nor its being attached to an agent would be intelligible. Your statement that its being temporally originated reduces to its being preceded by
15 nonexistence and [that] its being preceded by nonexistence is not the act of the agent and the deed of the maker [expresses what, in fact,] is the case. But its being preceded by nonexistence is a condition for existence to be the act of the agent. Thus, existence which is not preceded by nonexistence, but is perpetual, is not fit to be the act of the agent. Not
20 everything that is made a condition for the act to be an act should [come about] through the act of the agent. Thus, the agent's essence, his power, his will, and his knowledge are a condition for his being [an agent]. But this is not the effect of the agent. But one cannot comprehend an act unless [it proceeds] from an existent. Hence, the agent's existence, his
25 will, his power, and his knowledge [constitute] a condition for his being an agent, although these are not the effects of the agent.

(26) [To this the philosophers may] say:

(27) If you have acknowledged the possibility of the act's coexistence with the agent [rather than] its being posterior to him, then it follows
30 necessarily from this that the act would be temporally originated if the agent is temporally originated, and [the act would be] pre-eternal if [the agent] is pre-eternal. If you make it a condition that the act should be temporally posterior to the agent, this would be impossible, since, if someone moves his hand in a glass of water, the water moves with the
35 movement of the hand, neither before nor after it. For if it moved after it,

then, before [the water] gives way, the hand would be with the water in one and the same space; and if it moved before it, then the water would be separated from the hand—this with its being [simultaneous] with it [as] its effect and an act proceeding from its direction. If, then, we suppose
 5 the hand to be pre-eternal in the water, [ever] moving, then the movement of the water would also be perpetual, being, despite its perpetuity, an effect and an enacted thing. This [latter] is not prevented by supposing perpetuity. The case is similar with the relation of the world to God.

(28) [To this] we say:

10 (29) We do not deem it impossible that the act [should coexist] with the agent, [provided that] the act is created, as with the movement of the water. For it is created out of nonexistence. It is, hence, possible [for something] to be an act, regardless of whether it is posterior to the essence of the agent or concomitant with it. We only deem impossible the eternal
 15 act. For naming that which is not created out of nothing an “act” is pure metaphor, having no reality. As regards the effect with the cause, it is possible for both to be created or to be eternal, as [when] it is said that eternal knowledge is a cause for the Eternal to be a knower. This is not what is being discussed. The discussion is only concerned with what is
 20 termed an “act.” The effect of the cause is not called an act of the cause except metaphorically. Rather, what is called an act has as a condition its being created out of nothing. If someone allows himself to call the Eternal, the Permanently Existent, an³ act of another, he would be indulging in metaphor. Your statement, “If we suppose the movement of the finger
 25 and the finger to be eternal, this would not remove the movement of the water from being an act,” is obfuscation. This is because the finger has no act; rather, the agent is only the one who has the finger, and he is the one who wills [the act]. If we suppose him to be eternal, the movement of the finger would [still] be an act of his, inasmuch as each part of the move-
 30 ment is a temporal creation out of nothing. Considered in this way, it would be an act. As for the movement of the water, we might not say that it is a result of his action, but of the action of God. But in whatever way we take [the water’s movement in the supposition to be caused], it is an act inasmuch as it is created, except that it is eternally being created—
 35 it being an act inasmuch as it is created.

(30) [The philosophers] may say:

(31) You have, hence, acknowledged that the relation of the act to the agent, inasmuch as it exists, is akin to the relation of the effect to the cause, and then admitted that the permanence of the relation between cause [and effect] is conceivable. We do not mean by the world's being an
 5 "act" anything other than its being an effect whose relation to God, exalted be He, is permanent. If you do not call this an "act," there is no need for conflict over naming once the meanings are clear.

(32) We say:

(33) Our sole purpose in this question is to show that you have used
 10 these terms as an affectation, without [the proper] ascertaining of their real meaning; that God, according to you, is not an agent in the real sense nor the world His act in a real sense; and that the application of such a term on your part is metaphorical, having no basis in reality. And this has become manifest.

The third aspect

15 (34) [This is concerned with showing] the impossibility of the world's being an act of God according to their principle, due to a condition common to agent and act—namely, in that they said, "From the one only one thing proceeds." But the First Principle [they hold] is one in every respect. The world, however, is composed of varied things. Hence,
 20 as necessarily demanded by their own principle, it is inconceivable for it to be an act of God.

(35) [The philosophers] may say:

(36) The world as a whole does not proceed from God without an intermediary. Rather, what proceeds from Him is one existent which is
 25 the first of the created things. It is a pure intellect—that is, it is a substance that is self-subsisting; that has no position in space; that knows itself and knows its principle; and, in the language of the revealed law, is referred to as an "angel." A third existent proceeds from it and from the third a fourth, the existents becoming multiple through mediation.
 30 For the variance in the act and its multiplicity are due either: [(a)] to the differences in the acting powers—just as we enact with the appetitive

power that which is different from what we enact with irascible power; [(b)] to the different materials—just as the sun whitens the washed garments, darkens the face of man, melts some substances, and solidifies some; [(c)] to differences in the instruments [used]—as with the one
 5 carpenter who saws with the saw, chisels with the adz, and bores holes with the drill; or [(d)] the multiplicity in the act comes about through mediation where one act is performed, then that act enacts another, the act thereby becoming multiple.

(37) All these divisions are impossible with respect to the First Principle, since there is neither difference, nor duality, nor multiplicity in His
 10 essence, as will be shown in the proofs of divine unity. Moreover, there is no difference in materials. For the discussion would [then] pertain to the first effect and that which is first matter, for example.⁴ And, moreover, there is no difference in instrument, since there is no existent having the same
 15 rank as God. The discussion would then pertain [only] to the origination of the first instrument. Thus, there only remains for the multiplicity in the world to proceed from God by way of mediation, as mentioned earlier.

(38) We say:

(39) It follows necessarily from this that there will be no one thing in
 20 the world that is composed of individuals. Rather, all the existents would be ones, each one the effect of another one above it and the cause of another below it, until an effect without an effect is reached, just as [this chain] terminates in the direction of ascent with a cause that has no cause. But this is not the case. For body, according to them, is composed
 25 of form and matter, becoming by their combination one thing. [Again,] man is composed of body and soul, the existence of neither being from the other, the existence of both being through another cause. The heavenly sphere, according to them, is likewise. For it is a body with a soul where neither is the soul caused by the body nor the body by the soul,
 30 both proceeding from a cause other than both. How, then, did these composites come into existence? [Did they come about] from one [simple] cause—in which case their statement that from the one only one proceeds becomes false—or from a composite cause? [If the latter,] then the

question becomes directed to the composition of the cause [and is pursued] until one arrives at [the conclusion that] a composite necessarily meets a simple. For the principle is simple, whereas in [all] other [things] there is composition. This is inconceivable unless [the simple and the complex] meet; and, inasmuch as a meeting takes place, [the philosophers']
 5 statement that from the one only one proceeds becomes false.

(40) [The philosophers may] say:

(41) Once our doctrine is [properly] known, the difficulty is resolved. Existents divide into those that are in receptacles, such as accidents and
 10 forms, and those that are not in receptacles. These [latter] divide into those, like bodies, that are receptacles for others and those that are not receptacles, such as the existents that are self-subsisting substances. These [in turn] divide into those that exert influence on bodies—and these we call souls—and those that do not exert influence on bodies, but
 15 only on souls, which we call pure intellects. As for the existents, such as accidents, that indwell in receptacles, these are temporal and have temporal causes that terminate in a principle that is in one respect temporal and in one respect permanent—namely, the circular [celestial] motion, which, however, is not the object of the discussion. The discussion is only
 20 concerned with the principles that are self-subsistent that do not [inhere] in receptacles. These are three: [(1)] bodies, which are the lowliest; [(2)] pure intellects that do not relate to bodies, either through the relation of action or by being impressed [in them], these being the noblest; [(3)] souls, which hold the middle ground. For these [souls] attach to
 25 bodies in some manner of attachment—namely, the exertion of influence and action on them. They are, hence, medial in the rank of value. For they are influenced by the intellects and exert influence on bodies.

(42) Moreover, the bodies are ten: nine heavens and a tenth which
 30 [consists of] the matter which is the filling of the concavity of the sphere of the moon. The nine heavens are animals that have bodies and souls and have an order in existence, which we will [now] mention.

(43) From the existence of the First Principle the first intellect emanated, it being a self-subsisting existent, neither body nor imprinted in body, that knows itself and knows its principle. (We have named it "the first intellect," but there is no need for dispute about names—
 5 whether it is called "angel," "intellect," or whatever one wishes). From its existence three things are rendered necessary: an intellect; the soul of the most distant [that is, the outermost] sphere, which is the ninth heaven; and the body of the most distant sphere. Then, from the second intellect, there necessarily [comes into existence] a third intellect: the
 10 soul of the sphere of the [fixed] stars, and its body. Then, from the third intellect there necessarily [proceeds] a fourth intellect: the soul of Saturn and its body. From the fourth intellect there necessarily [comes into existence] a fifth intellect: the soul of the sphere of Jupiter and its body. [The process continues] in this manner until it reaches the intellect
 15 from which proceeds [the existence] of the [last] intellect: the soul of the sphere of the moon and its body. The last intellect is the one termed "the active intellect." That which fills the sphere of the moon—namely, matter subject to generation and corruption—[proceeds] necessarily
 20 from the active intellect and the natures of the spheres. The matters intermix due to the motion of the stars in various combinations from which the minerals, plants, and animals come about. It does not follow necessarily that from each intellect another intellect would ensue without end. For these intellects are of different species,⁵ so that what holds
 for one does not necessarily hold for the other.

(44) From [all] this, it comes out that the intellects, after the First Principle, are ten in number, and the spheres nine. The sum of these
 25 noble principles, after the First [Principle], is nineteen. From this it [also] comes out that under each of the first intellects there are three things: an intellect, the soul of a sphere, and its body. Hence, there must necessarily be a trinity in the principle [of each of these intellects]. No multi-
 30 plicity is conceivable in the first effect except in one respect—namely, in that it intellectually apprehends its principle and intellectually apprehends itself. [Now,] with respect to itself, it is [only] possible of existence because the necessity of its existence is through another, not itself. These,
 35 then, are three different meanings, and the noblest of the three effects

ought to be related to the noblest of these meanings. Thus, an intellect proceeds from it inasmuch as it intellectually apprehends its principle. The soul of the sphere proceeds from it inasmuch as it intellectually apprehends itself, whereas the body of the sphere proceeds from it inasmuch as it in itself is [only] possible of existence.

(45) It remains [for the opponent] to say, "Whence did this trinity in the first effect come about when its principle is one?" We say:

(46) Nothing proceeded from the First Principle except one [thing]: namely, the essence of this intellect by which it apprehends itself intellectually. It has as a necessary consequence—not, however, from the direction of the Principle—that it apprehends the Principle intellectually.⁶ In itself it is possible of existence; but it does not derive [this] possibility from the First Principle, but [has it] due to itself. We do not deem it improbable that, from the one, one comes into existence, where the [latter] effect would have as a necessary concomitant—[but] not from the direction of the First Principle—necessary matters, relative or non-relative, because of which multiplicity comes about, [this effect] becoming thereby the principle for the existence of plurality. In this manner, then, it becomes possible for the composite to meet the simple, since such a meeting is inevitable; and it can only happen in this way. This, then, is the way the [matter] must be adjudged. This, then, is the discourse explaining their doctrine.

(47) [To this] we say:

(48) What you have mentioned are arbitrary assertions which, when truly ascertained, constitute [nothing but] darkness atop darkness. If a human were to relate this as something seen in sleep, one would infer from it the illness of his temperament; or, if its kind were brought about in legal matters, where the most one can hope for is conjecture, it would be said that these are trifles that bestow no likely suppositions. The [possible] openings in objecting to such [statements] are limitless. We will, however, bring forth aspects that are limited in number.

(49) The first is to say: "You have claimed that one of the meanings of plurality in the first effect is that it is possible of existence." [To this we] say: "Is its being possible of existence identical with its existence or other than it? If identical, then no plurality would arise from it; and, if other than it, then why would you not say that there is plurality in the First Principle because He exists and, in addition to this, He is necessary of existence?" For the necessity of existence is other than existence itself. Let one then

allow the proceeding of various things from Him due to this plurality. If it is said, "There is no meaning to the necessary of existence except existence," then [we would say that] there is no meaning to the possibility of existence except existence. If you then say, "It is possible to know its being an existent without knowing its being possible; hence, [being possible] is other than it," [we would say that,] similarly with the Necessary Existent, it is possible to know His existence without knowing its necessity except after another proof; hence, let [the necessity] be other than Him.

(50) In sum, existence is a general thing that divides into the necessary and the contingent. If, then, the differentia in one of the two divisions is additional to the general [meaning], the same applies to the second differentia. There is no difference [between the two].

(51) If it is then said, "The possibility of existence belongs to it from itself, whereas its existence derives from another; then how would that which belongs to it from itself and that which it has from another be the same?" we say:

(52) How can the necessity of existence be identical with existence, when the necessity of existence can be denied and existence affirmed?⁷ The true one⁸ in every respect is the one not subject to [simultaneous] affirmation and negation, since it cannot be said of it that it exists and does not exist and that it is necessary of existence and not necessary of existence. But it is possible to say that [something] exists but is not necessary of existence, just as it can be said that it exists and is not possible of existence. It is through this that unity is known. Hence, it would be incorrect to suppose this [identity of the necessity of existence and existence] in the case of the First, if what they say—namely, that the possibility of existence is other than existence that is possible—is true.

(53) The second objection is to say: "Is [the first intellect's] intellectual apprehension of its Principle identical with its existence and identical with its apprehension of itself, or is it another?" If identical, then there is no plurality in its essence—only in the verbal expression about its essence. If another, then this plurality exists in the First. For He intellectually apprehends His essence and intellectually apprehends [what is] other. If they claim [(a)] that His intellectual apprehension of Himself is His very self, [(b)] that He only apprehends Himself if He apprehends that He is a principle for another, [and (c)] that [this is] because the act of intellectual apprehension⁹ coincides with the apprehended intelligible, whereby [His apprehending another] reverts to [being] His [very] essence, we say:

(54) The [first] effect's intellectual apprehension of itself is identical with itself. For it is intellect in its substance, and thus it intellectually apprehends itself. Intellect, that which intellectually apprehends, and that of it which is intellectually apprehended are also one. Moreover, if
 5 its intellectual apprehension of itself is identical with itself, then let it apprehend itself as an effect of a cause. For this is the case. Intellect and intelligible coincide, all thus reverting to the essence [of the first effect]. Hence, there is no multiplicity. If this were to constitute plurality, then it would exist in the First. Let, then, the varied things proceed from Him.
 10 And let us then forsake the claim of His unity in every respect, if unity ceases with this kind of plurality.

(55) If it is then said, "The First does not apprehend intellectually [that which is] other than Himself. His intellectual apprehension of Himself is identical with Himself, intellect, intellectual apprehension,
 15 and what is apprehended being one [and the same]; and [thus] He does not intellectually apprehend another," we answer in two ways:

(56) One is that because of the repugnancy of this doctrine Avicenna and the rest of the exacting [philosophers] abandoned it. They claimed that the First knows Himself as the source for what emanates from Him and intellectually apprehends all the existents in their [various] kinds by
 20 a universal, not particular, intellectual apprehension, since they deemed it reprehensible for one to say that from the First Principle only an intellect proceeds and then that He does not intellectually apprehend what proceeds from Him. And His effect [those who hold that the First knows only Himself then maintain]¹⁰ is an intellect from which another intellect,
 25 the soul of a sphere, and a body of a sphere emanate. [This other intellect] apprehends itself, its three effects, its [own] cause, and its principle.

(57) The effect [it should be pointed out] would thus be nobler than the cause, inasmuch as from the cause only one [existent] emanated,
 30 whereas from this one three emanated. Moreover, the First apprehends intellectually only Himself, whereas this [effect] apprehends itself, the Principle itself, and the effects themselves. Whoever is content [with holding] that what he says about God reduces to this level would have rendered Him lower than every existent that apprehends itself and Him.
 35 For that which apprehends Him and apprehends itself is nobler than He, since He apprehends only Himself.

(58) Hence, their endeavor to go deep into magnifying [God] has ended up in their negating everything that is understood by greatness. They have rendered His state approximating that of the dead person who

has no information of what takes place in the world, differing from the dead, however, only in His self-awareness. This is what God does with those who are deviators from His path and destroyers of the way of guidance; who deny His saying, “I did not make them witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor the creation of themselves” [Qur’ān 18:51]; who think of God in evil terms; who believe that the depth of the “lordly” things is grasped by the human faculties; who are full of conceit about their minds, claiming that they have in them a [better] alternative to the tradition of imitating the apostles and following them. No wonder, then, that they are forced to acknowledge that the substance of their intellectual apprehensions reduces to that which would be astonishing [even] if it were uttered in a slumber.

(59) The second answer is that whoever upholds that the First intellectually apprehends only Himself [has done so] to avoid plurality as a necessary consequence. For, if he were to uphold [the doctrine that He knows other than Himself], then it would follow necessarily that one must say that His apprehending another is other than His apprehending Himself. But this is [also] necessary with the first effect, and, hence, it ought to apprehend [nothing] but itself. For, if it apprehends the First or another, then this act of intellectual apprehension would be other than itself; and it would require a cause other than the cause of itself when there is no cause other than the cause of itself—namely, the First Principle. Hence, it ought to know only itself, and the plurality that ensues in [the] way [the philosophers hold] ceases.

(60) If it is said, “When it came into existence and apprehended itself, it became necessary for it to apprehend the Principle,” we say:

(61) Did this become necessary for it by a cause or without a cause? If by a cause, there is no cause except the First Principle. He is one, and it is inconceivable that anything but one should proceed from Him. And this [one thing] has [already] proceeded—namely, the effect. How, then, did the second [thing, the necessity of the first effect to apprehend Him,] proceed from Him? If [on the other hand] it became necessary without a cause, let, then, the existence of the First [Principle] be followed necessarily by numerous existents without a cause, and let plurality be their resultant consequence. If this is incomprehensible—inasmuch as necessary existence cannot be but one, that which is more than one being [only] possible, the possible requiring a cause—then this thing which is necessary in terms of the [first] effect [—namely, that it must apprehend the First Principle—would have to be either necessary in itself or possible]. But if [it is] necessary in itself, then [the philosophers’] statement that the Necessary Existent is one becomes false. If possible, then it must require a cause. But it has no

cause. Its existence is, hence, incomprehensible. Nor is [this necessity of apprehending the First] a necessity [required] by the first effect by reason of its being possible of existence. For the possibility of existence is necessary in every effect. As for an effect's having knowledge of its cause, 5 this is not necessary for its existence, just as the cause's being cognizant of its effect is not necessary for its existence. Rather, the concomitance [of a cause] and the knowledge of [its] effect is more evident than the concomitance [of an effect] and the knowledge of [its] cause. It becomes clear, then, that the plurality resulting from [the first effect's] knowledge 10 of its principle is impossible. For there is no initiating principle for this [knowledge], and it is not a necessary consequence of the existence of the effect itself. This also is inescapable.

(62) The third objection is [to ask]: "Is the first effect's intellectual apprehension of its own essence identical with its essence or other than 15 it?" If it is identical, this would be impossible, because knowledge is other than the object known. If it is other, then let this be the same with the First Principle: plurality would then necessarily ensue from Him. Moreover, there would necessarily proceed from [the first effect] a quadruplication and not, as they claim, a trinity [of existents]. For this would consist of 20 [the first effect] itself, its apprehension of itself, its apprehension of its Principle, and its being in itself possible of existence. One could also add that it is necessary of existence through another, wherewith a quintuplicating would appear. By this one gets to know the deep delving of these [philosophers] into lunacy.

25 (63) The fourth objection is for us to say: "Trinity in the first effect does not suffice." For the body of the first heaven, according to them, proceeds necessarily from one idea in the essence of [its] principle. [But] in it there is composition in three respects.

30 (64) One of them is that it is composed of form and matter—this, according to them, being applicable to every body. It is incumbent, then, that each of the two should have a [different] principle, since form differs from matter. Neither one of them, according to their doctrine, is an independent cause of the other, whereby one of them would come about through the mediation of the other without another additional cause.

35 (65) The second is that the outermost body is of a specific extent in size. Its having this specific quantity from among the rest of quantities is something additional to the existence of itself, since it can be smaller

or larger than it is. It must have, then, something that specifies that quantity—[something] which is additional to the simple idea that necessitates its existence and which is unlike the existence of the intellect. For [the latter] is pure existence, unspecified with a quantity contrary to all
 5 other quantities, so that one can say that [the intellect] needs only a simple cause. If it is said, “The reason for this is that, if it were larger than it is, it would not be needed for realizing the universal order; and, if smaller, it would not be suitable for the intended order,” we say:

(66) Is the assigning of the mode of the order sufficient for the existence of that through which the order comes to be, or does it need a cause that brings about [the latter’s] existence? If sufficient, then you would not need to posit causes. Rule, then, that the existence of order in these existents decreed these existents without an additional cause. If not sufficient, but requiring a cause, then this also would not be sufficient to specify
 10 quantities, but would also require a cause for composition.

(67) The third is that the outermost heaven divides along two points, these being the two poles. These two are of fixed positions, never departing from their positions, while the parts of the zone differ in position. For then it follows either [(a)] that all parts of the outermost heaven are similar, [and hence it can be asked,] “Why was the assigning of two points
 20 from among the rest of the points to be the two poles rendered necessary?” or [(b)] their parts are different. In some, then, there would be special characteristics not [found] in others. What, then, is the principle of these differences, when the outermost body proceeded only from one simple idea, and when the simple necessitates only what is simple in shape (namely, the spherical) and what is similar in idea (namely, one devoid of differentiated characteristics)? From this, also, there is no escape [for them].

(68) It may be said: “Perhaps there are in the principle [of these differences] kinds of multiplicity that are necessary, [but] not from the direction of the [First] Principle, of which only three or four have become apparent to us and of the rest [of which] we have no knowledge.
 30 Our not coming across [the rest] in the concrete does not make us doubt that the principle of multiplicity is multiple and that from the one the many do not proceed.” [To this] we say:

(69) If you allow this, then say that all the existents, with all their great number—and they are in the thousands—have proceeded from the first effect, and there is no need to restrict [what proceeds from it] to the body of the outermost heaven and its soul. Rather, it is possible that
 5 all celestial and human souls, all terrestrial and celestial bodies, have proceeded from it with many kinds of multiplicity necessary in them [that] they have not known. Hence, there would be no need for the first effect. Furthermore, from this there follows the absence of [any] need for the First Cause. For, if the generation of plurality that is said to be necessary without a cause, even though not necessary for the existence of
 10 the first effect, is permitted, it becomes allowed to suppose this with the First Cause and [to suppose] that their existence would be without a cause. It would then be said that these are necessary, but their number is not known. Whenever their existence without a cause with the First
 15 [Cause] is imagined, this [existence] without a cause is imagined with the second [cause]. Indeed, there is no meaning to our saying “[their being] with the First [Cause]” and “[with] the second,” since there is no difference between them in either time or space. For that which does not differ from the two in space and time and can exist without a cause will
 20 not have one of the two [rather than the other] specifically related to it.

(70) If it is said, “Things have become numerous so as to exceed a thousand, and it is unlikely that multiplicity in the first effect should reach this extent, and for this reason we have increased the [number of] intermediaries,” we say:

25 (71) Someone’s saying, “This is unlikely,” is sheer supposition in terms of which no judgment is made in rational [arguments], unless he says, “It would be impossible,” in which case we would then say:

(72) Why would it be impossible? What prevents it, and what [operative] deciding criterion is there, once we go beyond the one and believe
 30 that it is possible [that there may] follow necessarily from the first effect—not by way of the [First] Cause—one, two, or three concomitants? What would render four, five, and so on up to a thousand impossible? Otherwise, [when] anyone arbitrarily decides on one quantity rather than another, then, after going beyond the one, there is nothing to prevent
 35 [greater numbers]. This [answer] is also conclusive.

(73) We further say: "This is false with respect to the second effect. For from it proceeded the sphere of the fixed stars, which includes over twelve hundred stars. These vary in size, shape, position, color, influence—in being bad omens and in being omens of bliss. Some have the figure of the ram, [some] of the bull, [some] of the lion, [some] the figure of a human. Their influence in one place in the lower world differs in terms of cooling [or] heating [or] bringing about good and bad luck. Moreover, their sizes differ in themselves. Thus, with all these differences, it cannot be said that the whole constitutes one species. If this were possible, it would be possible to say that all the bodies of the world are one in corporeality, and, hence, it would be sufficient for them to have one cause. If, then, the differences in the qualities [of the bodies of the world], their substances, and [their] natures indicate their differences, then likewise the fixed stars are necessarily different, each requiring a cause for its form; a cause for its matter; a cause for its having a particular nature that either heats [or] cools, brings about a good omen or a bad omen; [a cause] for its belonging specifically to its place; and [a cause] for [the resemblance of] their groups to specific figures of different beasts. And, if the intellectual apprehension of this multiplicity is conceivable in the second effect, it is conceivable in the first effect, wherewith there comes about the dispensing [with the second effect]."

(74) The fifth objection is that we say:

(75) We will concede these insipid postulates and false arbitrary [assertions]. But how is it that you are not embarrassed by your statement that the first effect, being possible of existence, required the existence from it of the outermost sphere, [that] its intellectual apprehension of itself required the existence from it of the soul of the sphere, and [that] its apprehension of the First requires the existence from it of an intellect? What is the difference between this and someone who—knowing the existence of a man who is absent, [knowing] that [such a man] is possible of existence, [knowing] that he apprehends himself and his Maker—then [goes on to] say: "The existence of a celestial sphere follows necessarily from [this man's] being possible of existence"? To this it would then be said: "What relationship is there between his being possible of existence and the existence from him of a celestial sphere?" Similarly, from his intellectual apprehension of himself and of his Maker, two things would have to follow necessarily. This, when spoken of in

terms of a human, evokes [nothing but] laughter, and it would [evoke] the same [when said of any] other existent. For the possibility of existence is a proposition that does not differ with the difference of that which is possible, be this a human, an angel, or a celestial sphere. I do not know how [even] a madman would in himself be satisfied by the likes of such postulates, to say nothing of [those] rational people who split hairs in what they claim in matters intellectual.

(76) It may be said:

(77) If you have refuted their doctrine, what do you yourselves say?

Do you claim that, from the thing that is one in every respect, two different things proceed, thereby affronting what is intelligible; would you say that the First Principle possesses multiplicity, thereby abandoning divine unity; would you say that there is no plurality in the world, denying thereby [the evidence of] the senses; or, would you say that [plurality] is necessitated through intermediaries, being compelled thereby to acknowledge what [the philosophers] say?

(78) We say:

(79) We have not plunged into this book in the manner of one who is introducing [doctrine], our purpose being to disrupt their claims—and this has been effected. Nonetheless, we say: “Whoever claims that whatever leads to the proceeding of two things from one is an affront to reason, or that describing the First Principle as having eternal, everlasting attributes contradicts [the doctrine of] divine unity, [should note] that these two claims are false and [that the philosophers] have no demonstration to prove them.” For the impossibility of the proceeding of two things from one is not known in the way the impossibility of an individual’s being in two places is known. In brief, this is known neither through [rational] necessity nor through theoretical reflection. What is there to prevent one from saying that the First Principle is knowing, powerful, willing; that He enacts as He wishes, governs what He wills, creates things that are varied and things that are homogeneous as He wills and in the way He wills? The impossibility of this is known neither through rational necessity nor through theoretical reflection. [That this is the case] has been conveyed by the prophets, [and the veracity of their prophethood has been] supported by miracles. Hence, it must be accepted. Investigating the manner of the act’s proceeding from God through will is presumption and a coveting of what is unattainable. The end product of the reflection of those who have coveted seeking [this]

relationship and knowing it reduces to [the notion] that the first effect, inasmuch as it is possible of existence, [results in the] procession from it of a celestial sphere; and, inasmuch as it intellectually apprehends itself, the soul of the sphere proceeds from it. This is stupidity, not the showing
5 of a relationship.

(80) Let, then, the principles of these things be accepted from the prophets, and let [the philosophers] believe in them, since reason does not render [these principles] impossible. Let investigating quality, quantity, and quiddity be abandoned. For this is not something which the human
10 faculties can encompass. And, for this reason, the one who conveyed the religious law has said: "Think on the creation of God and do not think on the essence of God."