



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

*“THE DISCUSSION OF THE SOUL IS DIFFICULT” – THE  
SOUL AS AN INCORPOREAL AND SIMPLE SUBSTANCE  
IN THE THIRTEENTH NIGHT FROM ABŪ ḤAYYĀN AṬ-  
ṬAWHĪDĪ’S KITĀB AL-IMTĀ‘ WA-L-MU’ĀNĀSA*

by  
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A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
to the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies  
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
at the American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon  
September, 2020

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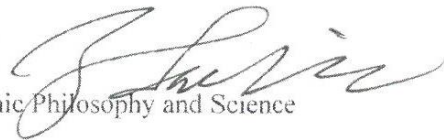
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Dr. Emma Gannagé, who not only helped me find the topic for my thesis, but also for directing to me towards a better and more thorough understanding of the text. Without her help I would not have been able to form a linear line of argument!

# ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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for Master of Arts  
Major: Islamic Studies

Title: “*The Discussion of the Soul Is Difficult*” – The Soul as an Incorporeal and Simple Substance in the thirteenth Night from Abū Ḥayyān Aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī’s *Kitāb al-Imtā’ wa-l-Mu’ānasa*

In the thirteenth night from Abū Ḥayyān aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī’s *Kitāb al-Imtā’ wa-l-Mu’ānasa* a *majlis* is portrayed during which a theory about the nature of the soul is discussed. Aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī cites several unnamed philosophers to argue for an independent, immortal and immaterial soul. These arguments are based on a mixture of Platonic and Aristotelian ideas. Mostly, the anonymous philosophers rely on Aristotle’s *Categories* and *Metaphysics* to set the logical basis for applying the category “substance” to the soul, while Plato’s dialogues *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* are referred to when arguments about the immortality and independence of the soul were at stake. The overall argument and general idea of the soul as an independent and immaterial substance is most likely influenced by al-Kindī, especially his work *That There Are Incorporeal Substances*.

This harmonization of Platonic and Aristotelian thought is summarized by as-Sijistānī in the last part of the *majlis*. This summary draws heavily and partly verbatim from Miskawayh’s *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*. After the ontology of the soul is established as-Sijistānī turns to the ethical implications of such an ontology. Showing some resemblance to the different constitutions of cities from al-Fārābī’s *The Political Regime*, as-Sijistānī categorizes people according to their ability to use their intellects and their respective ways of life. Only the pursuit of true knowledge and the negligence of bodily passions and desires leads to the purification of the soul and to a connecting to the divine. Only then true immortality of the soul and consciousness in the afterlife is reached.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. The Leading Questions

Abū Ḥayyān aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī is known for his literary outputs and recordings of philosophical discussions. His *Kitāb al-Imtā' wa l-Mu'ānasa* is a work that supposedly documents different discussion groups (*majlis*, pl. *majālis*) of 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century Baghdad. In the thirteenth night from this *Kitāb al-Imtā' wa l-Mu'ānasa*, aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī describes a *majlis* conducted by Abū Sulaymān as-Sijistānī, during which the nature of the soul is discussed. This *majlis* can be divided into two main parts. In the first part the ontology of the soul is explored, while the second part consists of an ethical outlook, based on the findings of the previously discussed ontological characteristics of the soul. The first part can be further divided into three sub-sections. In the first two sub-sections, two groups of unnamed philosophers are quoted by aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī, while the third sub-section is a dictation by as-Sijistānī. All three sections focus on the soul being a substance, that is fundamentally different from and independent of a material body. The first section focuses on the soul as an independent, immortal, and immaterial substance. The second section tries to establish the soul as a subsistent and essential substance of the body, by arguing that the soul is the internal mover of the body. Relying on the ontological findings of the first two sections, as-Sijistānī explores, in the third section, in how far the soul's ability to receive multiple forms is different from a material body's ability to receive a form. All three ontological analyses seem to be based on a strict soul-body dualism. Especially the ideas of the soul as an immortal and independent substance seem to be grounded on Plato's concept of the soul developed in his dialogues *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*.

Yet, throughout the *majlis*, the soul is described with certain characteristics, that seem to stem from Aristotle's general understanding of the category "substance", and his specific understanding of the soul as the essential form of the material body. This latter understanding of the soul is usually the foundation for a hylomorphic understanding of the soul-body relationship, which is opposed to a Platonic soul-body dualism. Therefore, each of the three arguments given in the first part of the *majlis* will be analyzed back to back, in order to explicate to which extent they rely on Plato's or Aristotle's ideas, or rather on a mixture of both. This analysis then may lead to an understanding of whether the given theory of the soul is either formed around a dualistic or hylomorphic ontology.

In addition to the Greek influences on the theories discussed in the *majlis*, it seems that Arabic-writing philosophers' concepts on the soul were referred to in each argument as well. Especially Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī's theory of the soul, which is based on the soul being an immortal, independent and incorporeal substance, seems to be prominent in the thirteenth night.<sup>1</sup> As as-Sijistānī was strongly influenced by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī in general, a look into his concept of the soul may shed further light on the arguments in the *majlis*. Especially as-Sijistānī's ethical outlook and the categorization of people according to their intellect evoke connotations of al-Fārābī's classification of people's ability to use their rational faculty of the soul. Yet, the most obvious influence on the given theory of the soul, especially on as-Sijistānī's part, is aṭ-Ṭawhīdī's and as-Sijistānī's contemporary Abū 'Alī Miskawayh. Miskawayh's theory of the soul is quite similar to, and partly even the same as the one developed in the thirteenth night.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Peter Adamson, *al-Kindī*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 111 – 112.

2 Joel Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 139 – 140, 215 & Elvira Wakelnig, "Die Philosophen in der Tradition al-Kindī's," in *Islamische Philosophie im Mittelalter – Ein Handbuch*, ed. H. Eichner, M. Perkams and C. Schäfer (Darmstadt: WBG, 2013), 233 – 236.

As the thirteenth night is not a chapter that reproduces aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī's own ideas, but rather preserves ideas from as-Sijistānī and his circle,<sup>3</sup> the insight gained will rather be into the minds of as-Sijistānī and his circle, which included aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī at least as a recorder. Thus, before the philosophical analysis begins, we will start with a short survey of aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī's, as well as as-Sijistānī's educational and philosophical background. This will introduce the reader to a highly creative time during which ideas from different philosophical traditions were brought together and original lines of thought were established in order to overcome the discord prevailing over theological and juridical disputes, establishing a high point in what is called "The Golden Age".<sup>4</sup> Additionally, in this part of the thesis, aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī and as-Sijistānī will be located in the sphere of al-Fārābī's, al-Kindī's and Miskawayh's influence.

## **B. The Life of Abū Ḥayyān aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī**

During the 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate was in a period of political and economic distress, while at the same time the scientific, philosophical and cultural development and productivity blossomed. In 945 C.E. the Buyid Emirs took over the political control of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate. Their rule encouraged an intellectual life that marks a high point in the cultural history of the world.<sup>5</sup> The courts of the Buyids significantly supported circles of scientists, philosophers and intellectuals coming from different regions of the empire, especially to Baghdad, the capital of the 'Abbāsīd caliph. Thus, Baghdad grew from a mere political center to a center of knowledge

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3 Joel Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 140; 209; 219.

4 G. Endreß, "Die Integration philosophischer Traditionen in der islamischen Gesellschaft des 10./11. Jahrhunderts: aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī und as-Sijistānī," *Philosophie in der Islamischen Welt*, 8. - 10. Jahrhundert, ed. U. Rudolph, Basel: Schwabe 2012, 193.

5 Joel Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam – The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age*, Leiden: Brill, 1992, 5.

production and exchange.<sup>6</sup> The philosophically educated people gathering in Baghdad came from different regions and religious confessions, and also from different strands of thought. This led to a mixture of different ideas, especially to an attempted harmonization of Aristotelian and Platonic thought.<sup>7</sup>

Into this intellectual milieu Abū Ḥayyān aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī (d. 1023) was thrown. Known as “*the philosopher of litterateurs and the litterateur of philosophers*” he participated and recorded sessions of philosophic and literary circles (*majālis*) and reproduced philosophical discussion in a new, literary garment.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī is usually not classified as a philosopher in a strict sense, as for the most part, he reproduced and preserved philosophical ideas and arguments of others, especially of Abū Sulaymān as-Sijistānī (d. 985), and partly of Abū ‘Alī Miskawayh (d. 1030) and Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Yusūf al-‘Āmirī (d. 992).<sup>9</sup> These three thinkers embody the melting pot of philosophical ideas. Aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī, as-Sijistānī and Miskawayh were students of the Aristotelian thinker Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī (d. 974), who was taught by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950). Ibn ‘Adī was mostly concerned with the relationship between philosophy and religious doctrine. On the other hand there was al-‘Āmirī, who is a second generation student of Abū Ya‘qūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī (d. 873).<sup>10</sup> He understood himself as a representative of al-Kindī’s philosophy, who is considered the first Arabic-speaking philosopher relying on the Greek philosophical sources. Al-Kindī was mainly influenced by Plato and Aristotle, coated with Neoplatonic commentaries and

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6 Elvira Wakelnig, “Die Philosophen in der Tradition al-Kindī’s: Al-‘Āmirī, al-Isfazarī, Miskawayh, as-Sijistānī und aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī,” in *Islamische Philosophie im Mittelalter – Ein Handbuch*, ed. by M. Perkams, C. Schäfer and H. Eichner, Darmstadt: WBG, 2013, 233.

7 Kraemer, *Humanism*, 13 & Wakelnig, “Die Philosophen in der Tradition al-Kindī’s,” 233.

8 Gerhard Endreß, “Die Integration philosophischer Traditionen in der islamischen Gesellschaft des 4./10. Jahrhunderts: aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī und as-Sijistānī,” in *Philosophie in der Islamischen Welt*, 8. 10. *Jahrhundert*, Vol. I, edited by U. Rudolph, Basel: Schwabe, 2012, 190.

9 Wakelnig, “Die Philosophen in der Tradition al-Kindī’s,” 235.

10 Wakelnig, “Die Philosophen in der Tradition al-Kindī’s,” 233.

interpretations. Al-Kindī's concept of the soul was heavily influenced by Aristotle's *Categories* and Plato's *Phaedo*.<sup>11</sup>

Although these different philosophers can be traced back to particular teachers and their systems of thought, it wouldn't do justice to the thinkers of 10<sup>th</sup> century Baghdad to simply and solely reduce them to strictly defined schools of thought. The intellectual circles and thinkers aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī was involved with were not necessarily bound to a specific philosophical system or school.<sup>12</sup> As it will be shown in this thesis, it won't come as a surprise that Yaḥyā b. 'Adī's students were not absolutely bound to al-Fārābī's philosophy, but were also heavily relying on concepts developed by al-Kindī, especially with regards to the ontology of the soul.

### **C. The thirteenth Night in the *Kitāb al-Imtā' wa l-Mu'ānasa***

Aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī's works, especially the *Kitāb al-Imtā' wa l-Mu'ānasa*, record and portray the intellectual exchange and productivity of 10<sup>th</sup> century Baghdad vividly.<sup>13</sup> Especially the circle around as-Sijjistānī, the thoughts of his teacher Ibn 'Adī and of the philosophers Abū 'Alī Miskawayh and al-'Āmirī are portrayed by aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī.<sup>14</sup> As an *adīb*, aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī used a style of prose (*adab*), usually only known in connection to religious-political and historical questions, to portray and process intellectual disputes among his contemporaries. The *Kitāb al-Imtā' wa l-Mu'ānasa*, which was probably written between 983 and 985 CE, is an example of this innovative style.<sup>15</sup> During the time of writing the *al-Imtā'*, aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī supposedly attended the *majlis* of the Buyid

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11 Wakelnig, *Feder, Tafel, Mensch – Al-'Āmirīs Kitāb al-Fuṣūl fī l-Ma'ālim al-ilāhīya und die arabische Proklos-Rezeption im 10. Jh.*, Leiden: Brill, 2006, 43 – 44, 47.

12 Kraemer, *Humanism*, 103.

13 Endreß. "Die Integration philosophischer Traditionen," 188.

14 Wakelnig, "Die Philosophen in der Tradition al-Kindī's," 235.

15 Endreß, "Die Integration philosophischer Traditionen," 197.

vizier Ibn Sa‘dān and joined the philosophers’ circle of the book market (*sūq al-warrāqīn*).<sup>16</sup> The latter consisted mainly of students of Ibn ‘Adī with as-Sijistānī being their most prominent figure.<sup>17</sup> This circle around as-Sijistānī stood in an Aristotelian tradition enriched with Platonic ethics and Neoplatonic cosmology, aiming at a reconciliation between Islamic religious doctrine and Greek philosophy.<sup>18</sup> Aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī even compared the circle around as-Sijistānī to the Platonic Academy of Florence, underpinning the line of tradition influencing the philosophers attending these circles.<sup>19</sup> The *Kitāb al-Imtā‘ wa l-Mu‘ānasa* consists of 55 nightly conversations, which portray the sessions of as-Sijistānī’s and Ibn Sa‘dān’s circles.<sup>20</sup> The chosen setting of nightly conversations suggests a resemblance to *1001 Nights*, especially as the purpose of the work is to provide pleasure for the mind and intellectual amusement.<sup>21</sup> While *1001 Nights* is clearly a work of fiction, the *al-Imtā‘* most likely is not.<sup>22</sup> The depicted nightly conversations are set with Ibn Sa‘dān as aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī’s interlocutor, while aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī briefs the vizier on the intellectual life of Baghdad. The topics range from literary and scientific topics to philosophical conversations. Most often these conversations with the vizier are artfully enriched with aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī’s literary style and sometimes may even have been fabricated.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, it is also questionable whether aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī wrote the *al-Imtā‘* for the eyes of the vizier or whether the vizier even knew about the work.<sup>24</sup> It is

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16 Endreß, “Die Integration philosophischer Traditionen,” 193.

17 Kraemer, *Humanism*, 8.

18 Endreß, “Die Integration philosophischer Traditionen,” 193.

19 Kraemer, *Humanism*, 8.

20 Kraemer, *Humanism*, 55 & Wakelnig, “Die Philosophen in der Tradition al-Kindī’s,” 235.

21 Marc Bergé, “Genèse et Fortune du Kitāb al-Imtā‘ wa-l-Mu‘ānasa: d’Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (m. en 414/1023)”, *Bulletin d’études orientales* 25 (1972), 97 – 98.

22 Ibid. 99.

23 Muhsin Akbaş, “aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī, Abu Hayyan,” in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, Vol. II, ed. by O. Leaman, New York: Thoemmes, 2006, 304 – 305.

24 Kraemer, *Humanism*, 216 – 217.

more likely that aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī wrote the *al-Imtāʿ* for his friend Abū al-Wafā al-Būzjānī,<sup>25</sup> who established the connection between Ibn Saʿdān and aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the conversation with Ibn Saʿdān may have served only as a literary setting and was intended only for Abū al-Wafā as a sign of gratitude.<sup>27</sup>

Although the thoughts accredited to certain thinkers in the *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa l-Muʿānasa* are often literary embellishments conducted by aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī, it doesn't necessarily entail that he distorted the key concepts of the philosophical arguments and beliefs attributed to the thinkers at stake. Yet, the language, the philosophical arguments, and the examples attributed to the philosophers, may have been edited by aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī in order to create a literary coherent work.<sup>28</sup> Especially in the thirteenth night, we find passages on the nature of the soul that are accredited to as-Sijistānī, while being partly verbatim paraphrases of Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*.<sup>29</sup>

Concerning the thirteenth night in general, it can be divided into two main parts. In the first part, two unnamed groups of philosophers describe several ontological characteristics of the soul to the participants in the *majlis*. Taking into consideration the introductory remarks given by aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī, it seems that these groups don't represent participants in the *majlis* rather - aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī himself quotes unnamed philosophical sources, that he memorized with regards to their beliefs on the nature of the soul: "*I am coming up with what I have memorized of this discourse [on the soul] and will give an account of it.*"<sup>30</sup> Another reason to read the first part of the text as a recitation by aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī is the lack of any names attributed to the different arguments. The arguments

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25 Bergé, "Genèse et Fortune du Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa l-Muʿānasa," 97 – 98.

26 Kraemer, *Humanism*, 200, 209.

27 Kraemer, *Humanism*, 216 – 218.

28 Endreß, "Die Integration philosophischer Traditionen," 198 – 199.

29 Endreß. "Die Integration philosophischer Traditionen," 198.

30 Annotated Translation, 56.

are either introduced by “[s]ome philosopher said [...]”<sup>31</sup>, “he said [...]”<sup>32</sup>, or “another [philosopher] said [...]”<sup>33</sup>. Throughout the whole text only two other persons are mentioned: Abū Sulaymān as-Sijistānī by name and a vizier, most likely Ibn Sa‘dān. No names of other attendees are given. It seems unlikely that they would remain unnamed if they contributed to the discussion.

The second part takes up more than half of the chapter. It is explicitly attributed to as-Sijistānī by al-Tawhīdī: “*Abū Sulaymān dictated to us a discourse on discussing the soul and such is its topic. There is no excuse to abstain from mentioning it in order to add it to the others.*”<sup>34</sup> The characteristics of the soul’s nature given in the first part of the *majlis* are summarized by as-Sijistānī at the beginning of his discussion. Taking into consideration that what follows is partially identical to different passages from Miskawayh’s writings on the soul, it could be possible that as-Sijistānī is not even laying claim on the following concept of the soul, but is rather paraphrasing Miskawayh to the best of his knowledge, without mentioning him by name. Especially, since the first section of this second part of the *majlis* is simply a reiteration of the points mentioned in the first part of the chapter, as-Sijistānī may have considered it sufficient to refer to Miskawayh’s theory of the soul, since Miskawayh seems to base his theory on similar ontological findings made throughout the *majlis*. Thus, his ontology works adequately as a summary and partly even as a substantiation of arguments from the first part of the *majlis* that lacked philosophical details. Especially one of the main claims from the first part, the soul’s susceptibility to contraries, is explicated by as-Sijistānī by giving a lengthy example of how the reception of forms affects a material body in

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31 Annotated Translation, 56.

32 Annotated Translation, 57 – 60.

33 Annotated Translation, 57.

34 Annotated Translation, 59 – 60.



contrast to an immaterial soul. This example is taken partly verbatim from Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb*. Besides this example and the summary of the most important ontological characteristics of the soul from the first part of the *majlis*, as-Sijistānī doesn't add anything substantial to the soul's ontology, but rather proceeds to examine the ethical implications of the nature of the soul, including a categorization of possible manifestations of the soul in human beings.

This twofold structure of the *majlis* may resemble the Platonic dialogue form, as first a philosophically less educated participant gives his opinion on a topic, only to receive a coherent and complete theory in form of a dictation by his teacher, in this case as-Sijistānī. As the *Imtā'* is in general a work that tries to connect to the Arabic oral tradition, the resemblance to a Platonic dialogue could also be simply due to the dialogue style used by aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī as a literary embellishment. That aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī believed in general, that orally transmitted knowledge is superior to written information exchange is claimed explicitly by aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī in the thirteenth night:

*"[...] because delving into the matter with the pen is different from the tongue, because the pen has a longer bridle than the tongue, and, the expression of the tongue is clearer than the expression of the pen. Given that the whole purpose is the information, it does not increase with the length [of the discourse]."*<sup>35</sup>

Whether aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī suggests the superiority of the dialogue form based on the Arabic or Greek/Platonic tradition, remains uncertain, although it is quite likely that both traditions influenced aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī's literary and philosophic style. Yet, it can be certainly said that the content is based on Greek thought, processed through Arabic-writing philosophers.

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35 Annotated Translation, 60.

## CHAPTER II

### THE INDEPENDENT, IMMORTAL, AND INCORPOREAL SOUL

#### A. The Independent Soul

The first philosophical argument quoted by aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī, attempts to establish the independence, immateriality and immortality of the soul. These three main characteristics of the soul are the basis of the first anonymous philosophers' conclusion that the soul is a substance, that is ontologically different and independent from the body. After aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī begins the *majlis* by acknowledging the hardship of discussing the soul's nature, he begins by quoting “[s]ome philosophers” who said that the soul doesn't require a body: “[The soul] acts by itself, without the need for the body.”<sup>36</sup> This claim is substantiated by the example of the intellect's (*'aql*) ability to conceive an entity without prior sensible perception. While sensible perception is explicitly identified as a capacity of the body, the soul is identified with the intellect, which is able to attain knowledge only through mental contemplation. The soul doesn't take part in sensible perception: “[...] when a human being conceives a thing through the intellect, then he doesn't conceive it with an organ, like when he perceives the colors with the eye and the smell with the nose.”<sup>37</sup> The intellect is the distinctive mark of the soul, that sets it apart from the body. Moreover, this characterization detaches the intellect's act of contemplation from any empirically based knowledge, limiting it implicitly to obtaining knowledge of intelligible forms. This ability of the soul's intellect to intellectual conception allows the soul to act wholly by itself,

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36 Annotated Translation, 57.

37 Annotated Translation, 57.

without requiring any material reference point, and thus, making it independent of the body.

Yet, through this limitation of the soul's action to the intellect, other possible mental capacities, such as sensible perception or emotional affections, which require a certain dependence on the body, are not considered to be a part of the soul. By identifying the soul only with the intellect, while other mental capacities are associated with the body, the speaker implicitly describes a unitary concept of the soul, which can exist independently of a material body.

This limitation of the soul to the capacity of the intellect already shows some implicit similarities to Plato's concept of the soul as treated in his dialogue *Phaedo*.<sup>38</sup> In this dialogue Socrates argues for the immortality of the soul, right before he faces his own execution. As he lays out his argument for the immortality of soul, Socrates asserts the independence and the possible detachment of the soul from the body.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the concept of the soul given in the *Phaedo* is also built on a unitary concept, with the intellect being the soul's essential capacity. Other mental states are not considered to be part of the soul:<sup>40</sup> “*It [the body] fills us with wants, desires, fears, all sorts of illusions and much nonsense, so that, as it is said, in truth and in fact no thought of any kind ever comes to us from the body.*”<sup>41</sup> For Socrates this strong distinction between actions of the soul and actions of the body is necessary to maintain the absolute independence of the soul from the body. If the soul needed the body in any way for its activities, it could not be truly

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38 Although no Arabic translations of complete Platonic dialogues is firmly attested today. Yet, it is most likely that at least paraphrases or abridged versions Plato's dialogues were known among the Arabic-speaking philosophers, especially the *Phaedo*. Cf. Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, 25 & Paul E. Walker, “Platonism in Islamic Philosophy,” *Studia Islamica* 79, 5 – 6.

39 George, Boys-Stones, “Phaedo of Elis and Plato on the Soul,” *Phronesis* 49, No. 1 (2004), 1, 4.

40 Ibid. 4 – 5.

41 Plato, “Phaedo,” trans. G.M.A Grube, in *Plato – Complete Works*, ed. by J. M. Cooper, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1997, 66c1 – 4.

independent, which may then weaken the argument for the soul's immortality. Another reason to strictly distinguish between the soul's and the body's actions stem from the "Principle of Opposition": if the soul were responsible for having desires (e.g. to drink), but could at the same time oppose these desires (by not wanting to drink), then this leads to a violation of that "Principle", because an entity cannot hold contrary desires at the same time. In this case, if the desire to drink was part of the soul, how can the soul oppose it, since an entity cannot oppose that which composes itself. As an independent entity, the soul must be able to oppose everything bodily during their association, while also not opposing itself.<sup>42</sup> This "Principle of Opposition" is also implied in the *majlis* by limiting the soul's capacity to the intellect, in order to maintain the whole soul's independence from any matter without the possibility to violate this "Principle of Opposition".

The soul's independence of matter is underlined as the speaker stresses that the soul, upon intellectual contemplation, is in no way whatsoever affected on a material level, nor does it receive essential change: "*The part of the body, in which the soul is, neither warms up nor cools down, nor does it change from one condition to another upon conceiving a thing through the intellect.*"<sup>43</sup> In the last section of the argument this idea is further underpinned, as the speaker sums up this description of the soul as: "*Hence, he who believes that the soul doesn't act through the body, [does so] because such matters are neither a body nor are they corporeal accidents.*"<sup>44</sup> They are only intelligible forms. The intellect's knowledge of intelligible forms is further substantiated by the quoted

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42 Although the "Principle of Opposition" is made explicitly in Plato's *Republic* and serves to substantiate the tripartite nature of the soul, in the *Phaedo* a similar point is made, resulting in attributing other possible mental capacities to the body. Cf. Plato, "Phaedo", 93a8 – 9; 94 c3 – 7 & Hendrik Lorenz, "Plato on the Soul," in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, ed. by G. Fine, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 251.

43 Annotated Translation, 56.

44 Annotated Translation, 56.

philosophers' example of knowledge of universals, such as "oneness", "time", and "consciousness". These are clear examples of knowledge that is not based on any empirical data: "And no one says: 'The soul knows these things through one of the senses.'"45

The attempt to establish a strict ontological dualism between soul and body, based on a clear epistemological distinction between knowledge derived from sensation and intellection, is quite prominent in al-Kindī's *On First Philosophy*, too. Like the quoted philosophers, al-Kindī acknowledges sensual perception as a gateway to some kind of empirical knowledge. Yet, sensation is limited to the reception of sensible forms, which are only particulars, while intellection may grasp universal, intelligible forms: "*Particular individuals are material and fall under the senses. On the other hand, genera and species do not fall under the sense, and are not perceived through sense-perception, but rather under one of the powers [...] called 'human intellect'.*"46 Al-Kindī concludes, that sensation doesn't even lead to any kind of proper knowledge, as sensitive objects, being particulars, are potentially infinite and in constant change, and thus can't lead to true knowledge, about intelligible and eternal forms.<sup>47</sup> Like the quoted philosophers in the *majlis*, al-Kindī reduces the soul to intellection, as only intellection may lead to true knowledge about intelligible forms.<sup>48</sup> This epistemological distinction does not only solidify the soul-body dualism, but it is also used as a foundation to argue for the soul's divine nature, that will lead both of them to conclude that the soul must be an immortal substance.

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45 Annotated Translation, 56.

46 Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, 128.

47 Ibid. 128.

48 Ibid. 132 – 135.

## B. The Immortal Soul

As the independence of the soul from the material body is established, the quoted philosophers set the ontological basis for the soul's immortality. This underlying premise of the soul having to be absolutely detached from the body, is also given in Plato's *Phaedo*: If the soul or its activities were dependent on the body, then with the body's death, the soul would also perish.<sup>49</sup> Yet, before the ontological argument for the soul's immortality unfolds, the quoted philosophers give an anthropological observation, in order to account for the common belief in the soul's immortality: “[*People*] give charity on behalf of their deceased.”<sup>50</sup> If it weren't for the immortality of the soul “[...] they would have neither asked for pardon for their deceased, nor would they have given charity on behalf of their deceased and visited their graves.”<sup>51</sup> Here, the quoted philosophers don't establish an argument why the soul has to be immortal. They only point to the reason of why they think that people are agreeing on the belief of the soul's immortality. The virtuous deeds of alms giving and quest for forgiveness are thought to be only based on the idea of an afterlife of the soul. If it weren't for the belief in such an afterlife, it is implicitly assumed, people wouldn't behave as altruistically and virtuously, since they wouldn't be concerned with a possible eternal afterlife, which is based on their actions performed during their lifetime.

This anthropological observation may seem to disrupt the ontological argument for the soul's immortality, yet it serves as an introduction, by establishing a common ground for the belief in the immortality of the soul. Moreover, this belief in an afterlife already shifts the focus from the soul's connection to the physical world towards the

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49 Plato, “Phaedo,” 80d5 – e1 & Lorenz, “Plato on the Soul,” 253.

50 Annotated Translation, 57.

51 Annotated Translation, 57.

divine and intelligible realm. Thus, the ontological argument for the soul's immortality being based on the soul's similarity to the divine, connects well to the anthropological observation of a common belief in an afterlife: "*The soul doesn't die, because it is more similar to divine matter than to the body, since it governs the body and leads it.*"<sup>52</sup> The divine is believed to be the absolute arranger of everything - a belief directly substantiated by the invocation to God as the manager and guide of all things. Although the quoted philosophers don't explicitly base their argument for the soul's divine-like nature on its ability to attain intelligible forms through contemplation, thus diverting from al-Kindī's argument for the divine nature of the soul, the bottom line for both thinkers is the same: the soul's similarity to the divine makes it fundamentally different from the material nature of the body.<sup>53</sup> This strict ontological distinction is further substantiated by the quoted philosophers, since the soul's similarity to the divine exceeds the mere ability to manage and guide the body. The soul is the actualization of the body's potentiality to be alive: "*The body is a thing more similar to a mortal thing than to the soul, since the body indeed lives only through the soul.*"<sup>54</sup> The soul, as a life-giving principle, must essentially have life and thus, cannot be susceptible to death. It must be immortal.

This last argument bears strong similarities with an argument for the soul's immortality found in Plato's *Phaedo*. Socrates argues that the soul is what makes the body alive:

*"Answer me then, he (Socrates) said, what is it that, present in the body, makes it living? - A soul. - And is that always so? - Of course."*<sup>55</sup> Being by essence a principle of

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52 Annotated Translation, 57.

53 Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, 131 – 133.

54 Annotated Translation, 57.

55 Plato, "Phaedo," 105c8 – 9.

life, the soul itself cannot be prone to death, as it is impossible for something to contain that, which is opposed to its essence.<sup>56</sup>

### C. The Soul as an Incorporeal Substance

Thus far, the focus of the first argument from the *majlis* lay on establishing a strict ontological distinction between the soul and the body by referring to the soul's immortality and ability to know about intelligible forms. To further substantiate the soul's independence and its ability to attain knowledge about intelligible forms, the quoted philosophers explore the soul as an incorporeal substance, which can bear different and opposing accidents, as “[t]he soul is susceptible to contraries [...]”<sup>57</sup> Additionally, the quoted philosophers give two further conditions for the soul being a substance: the soul's immateriality and the causal relationship between the soul and the body. As the soul fulfills all three conditions, the quoted philosophers conclude that the soul is necessarily a substance.

Starting with the first point, that the soul is susceptible to contraries, different implications need to be illuminated to understand the underlying meaning of the term “substance”. First, what do the quoted philosophers mean, when they say: “*The soul is susceptible to contraries [...]*”? It seems likely that they first and foremost posit the susceptibility to contraries as the soul's ability to bear different accidental attributes. The idea of an entity's susceptibility to contraries reminds us of one of Aristotle's ontological characteristics of an individual subject, i.e. primary substance, as described in the *Categories*, that a primary substance is generally susceptible to contraries:

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 105d1 – e5.

<sup>57</sup> Annotated Translation, 57.



*“It seems most distinctive of substance that what is numerically one and the same is able to receive contraries. In no other case could one bring forward anything, numerically one, which is able to receive contraries. [...] For example, an individual man – one and the same – becomes pale at one time and dark at another, and hot and cold, and bad and good.”*<sup>58</sup>

It is worth noting that Aristotle, similarly to Plato’s “Principle of Opposition”, suggests in his *Topics* that albeit being susceptible to contraries, a subject may hold opposing attributes only at different times.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the soul cannot be educated and ignorant at the same time. Additionally, Aristotle identifies in his *Categories* a (primary) substance with an individual subject, and only an individual subject can receive contraries.<sup>60</sup> Does the characterization of the soul as being susceptible to contraries in the *majlis* entail then, that the soul is an individual subject in an Aristotelian sense? Most likely not. Although the soul is considered to be able to bear opposing attributes, thus satisfying the Aristotelian criterion for an individual subject, the focus lays on the soul as a distinctive entity, and not on the body-soul compound, which would constitute an individual subject in the Aristotelian sense. The soul’s susceptibility to contraries rather points to the soul being able to hold different, intelligible forms as attributes, without being changed in its essence. This understanding of susceptibility to contraries would also account for the soul’s ability to gain knowledge about intelligible forms. Similarly to al-Kindī’s epistemological theory, the soul receives different, intelligible forms upon intellection.<sup>61</sup> If the soul weren’t susceptible to contrary forms, it would always become something different as soon as it

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58 Aristotle, “Categories,” trans. J. L. Ackrill, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. I, ed. by J. Barnes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, 4a10 – 21.

59 Aristotle, “Topics,” trans. W. A. Pickard-Cambridge, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. I, ed. by J. Barnes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, 112a27 – 113b15.

60 Aristotle, “Categories,” 4a10 – 21.

61 Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, 122.

receives intelligible form through contemplation.<sup>62</sup> Thus, not only can the soul be attributed with different predicates, but also it needs to be able to receive contrary forms, in order to receive intelligible forms in the course of intellection. After all, this is the foundation for the soul being a substance, that is independent of matter.

Taking into consideration the following two arguments for the soul's ontological status as substance, it becomes clear, that the focal point of the first argument is to establish the existence of the soul as an immaterial and wholly independent substance, which is the essence of the alive body.

First, there is the argument for soul's immateriality. More specifically, the soul is opposed to being *hyle* or prime matter. The argument for the soul's immateriality is rather simple: if the soul were matter, it would be extended in space, making it perceptible to the senses. As it is only intelligible and not perceptible, the soul can't be material. This already opposes the reading of "substance" as an individual subject, since an individual subject is considered by Aristotle to be something perceptible.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, the argument for the soul's incorporeality gives the reader another reason to understand "substance" as meaning essence, and not individual subject. The first reason given for the incorporeality of the soul is rather obvious, as it is the same argument made for the immateriality of the soul: the soul must be incorporeal as it is not extended in space. Yet, the other reason given for the soul's incorporeality, which focuses on the soul-body relationship, explicates the soul's status as the essential substance of the body: "*The soul is not a body, because the soul pervades all parts of the ensouled body, while the body does not pervade all the parts of the soul.*"<sup>64</sup> The

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62 Ibid. 122.

63 Cf. previous quote, Aristotle, "Categories," 4a10 – 21.

64 Annotated Translation, 57.

body is brought into existence by something other than itself, i.e. the soul. This causal relationship between soul and enlivened body is not reciprocal, as the enlivened body is dependent on the soul for its existence, while the soul is not dependent on the body for its existence. Thus, the body cannot exist independently. The soul on the other hand is able to exist independently. Since the soul induces life to the body, it must be able to pervade the whole body, as the soul is the cause for the body being alive. Thus, the soul is essential to the enlivened body's existence.

All in all, as the soul is considered to be able to receive contraries, to be immaterial and nonetheless is able to pervade the whole body, it is concluded that the soul is necessarily a substance. As the essential substance of the body, the soul is then able to receive contraries, as it is not affected in its essence by the reception of accidental attributes. While the enlivened body changes upon reception of the attributes "tanned" or "pale", its essence, i.e. life that is induced by the soul, is not changed.

Despite having ruled out the possible understanding of the soul as being an individual subject, the question remains whether the soul is considered the essential form of the body, and as such follows an Aristotelian definition of the body-soul relationship. Most likely not. Although the Aristotelian criterion for being a substance is used, the ontological characteristics seem to oppose Aristotle's theory of the soul. This becomes clear when looking at Aristotle's understanding of the soul being the substantial form of the body. As Aristotle progresses in his philosophy and understands individual subjects to be compounds of matter and form, he begins to question what makes an individual subject what it actually is. At this point, Aristotle introduces the idea of "*substance of a substance*" in his *Metaphysics*, which he identifies as the form

of a primary substance.<sup>65</sup> This kind of substance is identified as an individual subject's form.<sup>66</sup> This form is not to be understood as the Platonic intelligible, immaterial and universal Form. For Aristotle the form of a subject is what shapes and individualizes this subject, making the subject what it is in its essence. In the case of a human being, Aristotle identifies the form with the soul.<sup>67</sup> Yet, the soul as the form of the body can only exist in connection with the body. This understanding of the body-soul compound is known as hylomorphic.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the description of the soul as substance may lead the reader to believe that an Aristotelian concept of the soul as the form of an individual subject is posited, especially since the soul as a substance is opposed to matter or *hyle*. *Hyle* is a term used by Aristotle to describe the potential existence of matter, which becomes actualized through a form. Through both a unified entity emerges:

*“But as has been said, the proximate matter and the form are one and the same thing, the one potentially, the other actually. Therefore to ask the cause of their being one is like asking the cause of unity in general; for each thing is a unity, and the potential and the actual are somehow one.”*<sup>69</sup>

Nevertheless, the description of the soul as not being *hyle* is only made to stress the immateriality of the soul, not necessarily its association to *hyle* as being its actualization. Moreover, the ontological independence of the soul, which is stressed by its pervasion of the whole body, implies the strict ontological dualism between soul and body. Although the term “*hyle*” is connoted with an Aristotelian hylomorphic concept of the soul, in this case it is implicitly rejected in favor of a dualistic concept, with the

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65 Rapp, *Aristoteles*, 158 – 160 & Fine, “Plato and Aristotle on Form and Substance,” 24 – 25 & Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1032b1.

66 Norman Dahl, *Substance in Aristotle's Metaphysics Zeta*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, 325.

67 Rapp, *Aristoteles*, 156 – 157.

68 Fine, “Plato and Aristotle on Form and Substance,” 23.

69 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1045b18 – 21.

soul being the essential, yet independent substance of the body. The soul is clearly not understood as a bodily and functional structure, as Aristotle describes it in his *De Anima*: “Yet to say that it is the soul which is angry is as if we were to say that it is the soul that weaves or builds houses. It is doubtless better to avoid saying that the soul pities or learns or thinks, and rather to say it is the man who does this with his soul.”<sup>70</sup>

This kind of hylomorphic compound is rejected in favor of a Platonic concept of the divine and immortal soul, that may be the bearer of certain intelligible and accidental qualities and is the leader of the body.

To further substantiate and explicate the soul’s ontological status as an independent and immaterial substance, aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī brings up an argument based on the soul being the internal mover of the living body, by quoting a different anonymous philosopher, who tries to bring Plato and Aristotle together, in order to account for the soul as an independently existing substance.

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<sup>70</sup> Hubertus Busche, *Die Seele als System – Aristoteles’ Wissenschaft von der Psyche*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2001, 5 – 6 & Aristotle, “On the Soul,” trans. J. A. Smith, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. I, ed. by J. Barnes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, 408b1 12 – 14.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SOUL AS A SUBSISTENT SUBSTANCE

#### A. The Soul as the Internal Mover of the Body

Before the second anonymous philosopher can assess the soul's status as substance that imparts motion, he needs to define what he understands as motion in general and the soul's motion in particular. Motion is divided into two main categories. The first kind of motion is called "*internal*" and the second kind "*external*". Both categories are subdivided further into two sub-parts. The reference to external motion, which is sub-divided into a pushing and pulling motion, is only made to stress the importance of internal motion as the fundamental source of all motion, as "*[i]t is obvious, that our body is neither projected nor pulled, and since every projectile or pulled [thing] which is set in motion from outside is undoubtedly moved [also] internally. Therefore, the body is necessarily moved through internal motion.*"<sup>71</sup> In other words, internal motion causes external motion. Thus, if the concept of internal motion is understood, it will be possible to understand what induces motion to the body.

Concerning internal motion, the anonymous philosopher differentiates between natural motion and the motion of the soul: "*One of the two [main divisions] is internal and it is twofold: one division is like nature [...]. The other division is like the motion of the soul [...].*"<sup>72</sup> Natural motion is said to be continuous, as it "*[...] is never at rest, like the motion of fire as long as it remains fire,*"<sup>73</sup> while the motion of the soul is characterized by potentially either being in motion or at rest: "*The other division is like*

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71 Annotated Translation, 58.

72 Annotated Translation, 57.

73 Annotated Translation, 57.

*the motion of the soul, sometimes it is awoken and sometimes it is at rest [...].*<sup>74</sup> This distinction between two kinds of internal motion seems to be derived from Aristotle's distinction between entities, that exist by nature, as they contain the principle of motion, i.e. the ability for change and preservation, in themselves, and entities that don't have the impetus for change or preservation in themselves:

*“Of things that exist, some exist by nature, some from other causes. By nature the animals and their parts exist, and the plants and the simple bodies (earth, fire, air, water) – for we say that these and the like exist by nature. All the things mentioned plainly differ from things which are not constituted by nature. For each of them has within itself a principle of motion and stationariness.”*<sup>75</sup>

This distinction also illuminates the given example of the burning fire. A burning fire is in so far naturally in motion, as within it the ability to change or to be preserved is already contained. As the body's motion is not contained in the body's being, it cannot be defined as natural motion. Thus, the anonymous philosopher introduces the motion of the soul that induces motion to the body: *“The motion of everything, whose motion ceases and is not everlasting, is not natural motion, which doesn't cease. Rather, it is a psychological motion produced by a soul that moves [the body] and ceases it.”*<sup>76</sup> Since the cause of the body's motion is the soul, the body eventually ceases to exist, upon the separation of the soul from the body. Similarly, Aristotle defines the soul in his *De Anima* as the actualization of the body and the body's source of motion, making it the essential cause for the existence of the living body:<sup>77</sup>

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74 Annotated Translation, 57 – 58.

75 Rapp, *Aristoteles*, 123 & Aristotle, *Physiscs* 192b9 – 15.

76 Annotated Translation, 58.

77 Rapp, *Aristoteles*, 125 – 126 & 129.

*“The soul is the cause or source of the living body. [...] It is the source of movement, it is the end, it is the essence of the whole living body. That it is the last, is clear; for in everything the essence is identical with the cause of its being, and here, in the case of living things, their being is to live, and of their being and their living the soul in them is the cause or source. Further, the actuality of whatever is potential is identical with its account.”<sup>78</sup>*

This constitutes the main ontological difference to natural motion. The fire has the impetus for change within itself, while the body needs to receive this impetus for change from the soul. Yet, through this distinction between matter’s potentiality and form’s capability to actualize that potentiality, aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī implies a hylomorphic concept of the soul-body relationship, as he relies on Aristotle’s argument for that distinction between potentiality and actuality, which lays the foundation of an individual subject’s existence as a matter-form compound.<sup>79</sup>

After having established a strict soul-body dualism in the course of the first argument, it seems rather unlikely that aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī tosses the soul-body dualism overboard in favor of a hylomorphic theory. Thus, aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī needs to supplement the previous argument for the soul’s independent existence.

## **B. The Soul as an Independent Mover**

In order to make a strong argument that proves the soul’s independent existence, aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī continues to quote the same anonymous philosopher to show why the soul remains existent, even when it is not fulfilling its function of actualizing potential matter. Thus, the anonymous speaker leaves behind Aristotle’s distinction between natural motion and the soul’s motion and turns again to Plato. The soul, as a source of life and motion for the body, must contain life and motion essentially, and thus, must be

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<sup>78</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, 415b9 – 14.

<sup>79</sup> Rapp, *Aristoteles*, 126 – 127.



subsistent: “*If the soul is what gives life to a human being and moves him, and if every mover, which moves something other than itself, is a subsistent living being, then the soul is a subsistent living being.*”<sup>80</sup> As was already shown in the previous chapter, something that has and gives life cannot be prone to death. Yet, another similarity to Plato’s *Phaedo* is evoked, especially since death is explicitly defined as the cessation of the body’s motion upon the soul’s separation from the body. In the *Phaedo* Socrates asks Simmias whether death is anything else than the soul leaving the body:

*“Is it [death] anything else than the separation of the soul from the body? Do we believe that death is this, namely, that the body comes to be separated by itself apart from the soul, and the soul comes to be separated by itself apart from the body? Is death anything else than that? - No, that is what it is, he [Simmias] said.”*<sup>81</sup>

Yet, Plato himself also refers to the soul’s motion as the reason for its immortality in his dialogue *Phaedrus*: “*Every soul is immortal. That is because whatever is always in motion is immortal, while what moves, and is moved by, something else stops living when it stops moving.*”<sup>82</sup> This seems quite coherent with the description of the soul’s and the body’s motion in the *majlis*. As the soul stops moving the body upon its separation from the body, the body stops moving and living. Thus, instead of supplementing the argument for the soul being the actuality of the body, the quoted philosopher turns the argument around and uses the soul’s principle of actualization to argue for it being a source of motion and thus having life essentially. It is argued in the *Phaedrus*, that as a source of motion, the soul is not only self-moved, but must be

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80 Annotated Translation, 59.

81 Plato, “*Phaedo*,” 64c2 – 10.

82 Plato, “*Phaedrus*,” trans. A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff, in *Plato – Complete Works*, ed. by J. Cooper, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1997, 245c6 – 8.

endless and immortal, too: “*And since it cannot have a beginning, then necessarily it cannot be destroyed. That is because if a source were destroyed it could never get started again from anything else and nothing else could get started from it.*”<sup>83</sup> This consideration of the soul as being self-moved is also stressed by Miskawayh as a reason for the soul’s immortality as it cannot be corrupted: “[*T*]he soul is self-moved. Everything with motion from itself is incorruptible. Therefore the soul is incorruptible.”<sup>84</sup> Although the self-motion of the soul is not explicitly mentioned in the *majlis*, it is clearly implied and a necessary condition for the soul having life essentially. Only as the soul is considered to be the initiator of the body’s motion, the self-motion of the soul has to be presumed in order to avoid the regress of the soul needing another source of motion. If the soul weren’t self-moved, it couldn’t have life essentially, as it would depend on something different as a source of motion and to maintain its own motion. This consideration of the soul as a self-moved entity takes the theory of the soul in the *majlis* back into a Platonic realm, as the implication of the self-motion of the soul is explicitly rejected by Aristotle:

*“[F]or, doubtless, not only is it false that the essence of soul is correctly described by those who say that it is what moves (or is capable of moving) itself, but it is an impossibility that movement should even be an attribute of it. We have already pointed out that there is no necessity that what originates movement should itself be moved.”*<sup>85</sup>

Once again, aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī brings together Plato and Aristotle, to argue for the soul as the actualization of the body, while trying to maintain its independence and therefore, its potential immortality, although the two philosophers who developed each of these

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83 Plato, “Phaedrus,” 245d4 – d7.

84 Wakelnig, *A Philosophy Reader*, 169.

85 Aristotle, *De Anima*, 405b33 – 406a4.

respective concepts, stood in opposition to each other. Nevertheless, as at-Ṭawhīdī substantiated the immortality of the soul by recourse to it being the internal mover of the body, he paved the way to further investigate the soul's status as an independently existing substance.

### **C. The Soul as a Subsistent Substance**

After the soul's subsistence was proven by pointing to it having life essentially, the quoted philosopher can continue to argue for the soul's status as an actual existing substance. He begins simply by pointing to the soul's susceptibility to contraries, again. Though this time, more details are given on the meaning of "susceptibility to contraries". First, the quoted philosopher generally defines "substance" as being "[...] *able to receive contraries without being changed.*"<sup>86</sup> He asserts this to be true for the soul. This assertion is exemplified by pointing to the soul's ability to bear different attributes, such as knowledge and ignorance, devotion and immorality, courage and cowardice, etc. These contraries can be attributed to the soul "*without however its essence changing.*"<sup>87</sup> Thus, according to the given definition of substance, the speaker concludes, that the soul must be a substance and cannot be an accident, because it can potentially bear contrary attributes. Thus far, the first and the second investigation of the soul as being able to receive contraries are quite similar. Therefore, the strong similarity of this description of the soul as a substance to Aristotle's primary substance from the *Categories* is no surprise. Yet, this time, the soul's susceptibility to contraries is

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86 Annotated Translation, 59.

87 Annotated Translation, 59.

further specified. The soul remains unaffected in its essence upon the reception of opposing attributes:

*“The soul is a substance and not an accident. The definition of a substance is that it is able to receive contraries without being changed. This is necessary for the soul, because the soul bears knowledge and ignorance, devotion and immorality, courage and cowardice, sexual abstinence and its contrary.”<sup>88</sup>*

This stresses an even stronger connection to Aristotle’s primary substance, although the quoted philosophers in the *majlis* only use intelligible attributes to exemplify the soul’s susceptibility to contraries, while the primary substance in Aristotle’s *Categories* is characterized by carrying sensible attributes, too:

*“For in the case of substances it is by themselves changing that they are able to receive contraries. For what has become cold instead of hot, or dark instead of pale, or good instead of bad, has changed (has altered); similarly in other cases too it is by itself undergoing change that each thing is able to receive contraries. [...] [I]t is because the actual thing changes that the contrary comes to belong to them.”<sup>89</sup>*

In the first argument about the soul’s susceptibility to contraries, it was possible to dismiss the idea of the soul being considered a primary substance, yet this second argument seems to try to establish the soul as an individual, immaterial existing entity, that bears intelligible attributes. Otherwise the continuous evocation of similarities with Aristotle’s primary substance seems to cause unnecessary confusion about the soul’s ontological status as either fulfilling an ontological function explaining the emergence of individual subjects or as an entity that resembles Plato’s idea of an intelligible, yet independently existing entity.

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88 Annotated Translation, 59.

89 Aristotle, “Categories,” 4a30 – 37.

The following argument tries to clarify the soul's ontological status as substance:

*“It became clear that the soul imparts life and motion to the body, which is the substance and [since] any life-giver and mover of a substance is a substance, then the soul is substance.”*<sup>90</sup> Interesting is the description of the body as “a substance”<sup>91</sup> Do body and soul now share the same ontological status as both are being called “substance”? By recalling the distinction between the soul being the internal mover of the body, and the body as being moved, it becomes obvious, that soul and body cannot share the same ontological status as being substances. As the body and the soul are set only into relation via the recurrence to the soul being the principle of life and motion of the body, soul and body have to be understood as different kinds of substances, since something that moves and brings life to an otherwise dead entity, seems to have different ontological qualities than the entity that is moved and brought to life. By inducing life to a material body, the soul sets a human being's life into motion. Why does the quoted philosopher implicitly describe the soul as a substance of the substance then? Turning to al-Kindī's line of argument for the establishment of the soul as a substance, this question may be answered. Al-Kindī, following roughly the Aristotelian line of argument from *Categories I*, declares that the thing, which forms and defines an entity, must occupy the same ontological state, as the form-receiving entity: *“So one thing that describes another by giving it its name and its definition is of the nature of what it describes. If what it describes is a substance, then it is substance.”*<sup>92</sup> Since al-

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90 Annotated Translation, 59.

91 Annotated Translation, 59.

92 Adamson and Pormann, *The Philosophical Works*, 109 & Gerhard Endreß, “al-Kindī über die Wiedererinnerung der Seele: Arabischer Platonismus und die Legitimation der Wissenschaften im Islam,” *Oriens* 34 (1994), 186.

Kindī regards the living thing as a substance, the soul must be a substance as well, as the soul is considered to be the form of the living body by al-Kindī:

*“That through which a thing is what it is, is the form of the thing, be it sensible or intellectual. [...] The soul (an-nafs), then, is the intellectual form of the living things, and is its species. So the living thing is a substance, and the species of the substance is a substance. Therefore the soul is a substance [...].”<sup>93</sup>*

Similarly to al-Kindī, the second speaker concludes that the form of a substance, must be substance itself, by asserting that the soul, as the life-giving mover of the substance “body”,<sup>94</sup> must be a substance, as well. Nevertheless, since the soul is an immortal entity, which imparts motion and life to the body, that is close to the divine, it must be considered to occupy a different ontological status than the body.

That body and soul both occupy different ontological categories is reinforced by the quoted philosopher, yet it becomes obvious why both soul and body are called a substance. The reason is to give an ontological explanation for the soul’s actual, independent existence. If the body, as a substance, is considered to exist, then the entity which moves this substance, must exist as well:

*“There is no way that that which is moved and brought to life be a substance, while the life-giver and mover is not a substance. Since the soul imparts motion and life to the body and it is not possible that the life-giver and mover of the extant [thing] be non-existent, then it is not possible that the soul be non-existent.”<sup>95</sup>*

Therefore, it seems likely that the whole argument for the soul being the mover of the body, is made primarily to deduce that the soul must be an existing and subsistent

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93 Adamson and Pormann, *The Philosophical Works*, 109.

94 Although the speaker in the *majlis* doesn’t explicitly identify the body as being alive, it is reasonable to read it as being implied, as the soul is considered to bring life to it and only as the life-giver relates to the body as being substance of the substance.

95 Annotated Translation, 59.

substance, and not merely a function: “*If the soul subsists by itself, through which the life of the body subsists, and what subsists by itself is a substance, therefore, the soul is a substance.*”<sup>96</sup> Aristotle’s *Categories* provides the logical argument, while Aristotle’s ontological understanding of the soul as the form in a hylomorphic compound is rejected in favor of a rather Platonic theory of an independent and immortal soul.

All in all, the arguments of the first two anonymous philosophers use Aristotle’s logic only to argue for a strict dualism between soul and body. While Aristotle argues for the soul being a substance only “[...] *in the sense of the form of a natural body having life potentially within it [...]*”<sup>97</sup> and as such “[...] *the soul is inseparable from its body [...]*,”<sup>98</sup> at-Ṭawḥīdī tries to establish the soul as an independent, individual and immortal substance. By referring to Aristotle’s concept of substances to argue for this kind of theory of the soul, at-Ṭawḥīdī also departs partly from Plato, as for Plato substances are considered to be universals, that cannot bear attributes.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, at-Ṭawḥīdī establishes a new kind of theory of the soul, which attempts to make use of Aristotle’s category of primary substance, in order to account for a concept of an individual soul, characterized by Plato’s idea of immortality and independence. For this ontological undertaking, at-Ṭawḥīdī relies partly on al-Kindī, who already tried to establish the soul as an independently existing substance in his *That There Are Incorporeal Substances*.

In this work al-Kindī argues for the independence of the soul as a substance, also by recurring to Aristotle’s *Categories*.<sup>100</sup> Following the Aristotelian rationale, the soul,

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96 Annotated Translation, 59.

97 Aristotle, “On the Soul,” 412a20 – 23 & Rapp, *Aristoteles*, 165, 170 – 171.

98 Aristotle, “On the Soul,” 413a4 & Topitsch, “Die platonisch-aristotelischen Seelenlehren,” 22 – 24 & Busche, *Die Seele als System*, 27 – 28.

99 Fine, “Plato and Aristotle on Form and Substance,” 23.

<sup>100</sup> Adamson and Pormann, *The Philosophical Works*, 107.

as the essence of the body, must occupy the same ontological state as the body. The immateriality of the substance soul is shown by al-Kindī by identifying form and species.<sup>101</sup> Thus, the soul as the form of the living body, is also its species. Since al-Kindī suggests that all species are incorporeal, the soul must be incorporeal, too.<sup>102</sup> The identification of form with species most likely stems from misreading the Greek word “*eîdos*”, which is used for both, species and form.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, al-Kindī is able to conclude that the soul is an incorporeal substance.

In the second part of the *majlis* as-Sijistānī picks up aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī’s theory of the soul and attempts to further distinguish between the body and the soul, in order to account for the soul’s ability to gain knowledge, via the reception of different forms. This will allow as-Sijistānī to inquire into the ethical implications arising from the soul being the gateway to knowledge and thus, being superior to the body.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 107.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 107.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 107.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE SOUL'S RECEPTION OF FORMS

As as-Sijistānī begins the dictation of his theory of the soul, he first summarizes the most important points about the soul's ontology previously made: the soul's immateriality, its independence of the body, that it is not an accident, but a substance, and its intelligibility:

*“It is necessary, that we know with full awareness that within us is a thing, which is not a three dimensional body extended in length, width, and depth, and is neither part of the body, nor an accident, nor does it require bodily power, but it is a simple substance, not perceived through the senses.”<sup>104</sup>*

As-Sijistānī describes the soul almost only negatively: it is not material, and not part or dependent of the body, it is not an accident, and not sensible. The only positive description as-Sijistānī gives, is that the soul is a simple substance. The simplicity of the soul serves as a reiteration that the soul is a unity, and not tripartite or divided into different faculties. Despite this addition, as-Sijistānī seems to follow the concept of the soul, as it was constructed by aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī in the previous part. Despite following the previously established ontological characteristic of the soul, this part of the *majlis* clearly stands out. While the previously carved out similarities to other philosophical sources was mostly based on the line of arguments and their implications, as-Sijistānī's treatment of the soul is partly drawn verbatim from Miskawayh's own ontological theory about the soul. In the *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* Miskawayh narrows down his concept of the soul as follows: “*Within us is a thing which is not a body, nor part of a body, nor*

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104 Annotated Translation, 60.

*an accident and does not need bodily power for it to exist, but is rather a simple substance, which is not perceived by any of the sense organs.*"<sup>105</sup> This passage is probably derived from Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De Anima* paraphrase.<sup>106</sup> Whether both used the *De Anima* paraphrase as their primary source or whether one quoted it from the respective other's works cannot be answered. The wording of both versions is clearly not identical. As-Sijistānī even adds the explication that the soul is not a three dimensional body, as it is not extended in length, width and depth, while Miskawayh simply addresses the issue of the difference between an incorporeal soul and the body based on physical dimensions in an additional paragraph, by also referring to the body's extension in length, width and depth: "*Furthermore, the length, breadth, and depth by which a body becomes what it is occur in the soul and in its imaginative faculty, without the soul becoming thereby long, broad, or deep.*"<sup>107</sup> This could underpin an understanding of as-Sijistānī's part being an abbreviated version of Miskawayh's theory, as he extracts only the focal points of Miskawayh's theory. Yet, as will be shown, the similarities between as-Sijistānī's dictation and Miskawayh's theory of the soul, will be even more obvious.

With this ontological foundation of the soul set, as-Sijistānī begins to investigate how far the soul and body are associated and interact with each other. Both are clearly distinguished from each other, but the possibility of an independent existence is claimed for the soul only: "[...] *When we found in us a thing which is incorporeal and contrary*

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105 Fakhry, "The Platonism of Miskawayh," 41 – 42 & Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, trans. C. Zurayk, American University Beirut: Beirut, 1968, 3.

106 Elvira Wakelnig, *A Philosophy Reader from the Circle of Miskawayh: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 394; cf. Rüdiger Arnzen (ed.), *Aristotele's De Anima – Eine verlorenerene Spätantike Paraphrase in Arabischer und Persischer Übersetzung*, trans. R. Arnzen, Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill, 1998, 180 – 181.

107 Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 7.

to the parts of the body through its definition and specific property [...].”<sup>108</sup> Miskawayh defines the soul the same way, although the arrangement is slightly different, again: “Having found within man something which, by its definition and properties, is opposite to bodies and parts of bodies [...].”<sup>109</sup> Both, as-Sijistānī and Miskawayh, base further investigation of the body-soul relationship on this definition and set out to look at the extent and limit of their association concerning their respective capacities. The only powers of the soul that are different from the body’s, are the ones, which don’t necessitate anything bodily to work: “[The soul] has conditions that are different from the conditions of the body so that these conditions don’t participate in any of the conditions [of the body].”<sup>110</sup> For example, contemplation can be independent of the body, but empirical based knowledge would have to rely to a certain extent on the body. Doesn’t this limited interdependence between soul and body acknowledge other parts of the soul that are dependent on the body? Is the strictly unitary concept of the soul abandoned? Taking into consideration Miskawayh’s theory of the soul, may help to understand whether as-Sijistānī attempts to introduce a certain co-dependence between soul and body. Although Miskawayh follows al-Kindī’s division of the soul into a rational, irascible and appetitive part, he seems to be aware of the ontological problems arising from an independent soul on the one hand, and the soul’s powers being associated with bodily organs on the other hand. Yet, he tries to avoid addressing the problem: “Sometimes [three faculties] are considered as three souls, and sometimes as three faculties of the same soul. This is not the place to discuss the subject.”<sup>111</sup> Only in

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108 Annotated Translation, 60.

109 Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 5.

110 Annotated Translation, 60.

111 Adamson, “Miskawayh’s Psychology,” 42 & Tahdhīb 52.

his *Fawz al-aṣghar* Miskawayh goes into further detail, attempting to overcome that ontological problem:

*“[I]t is clear too that the soul has proper activities through which it is separate from the body. What has an activity proper to it and separate from the body is also separate from the body, for it has no need for the body to [perform] it. We have proven this from the fact that [the soul] is not strengthened by the power of the body, nor weakened by its weakness [...].”<sup>112</sup>*

Since the soul performs certain psychological activities without the body, it can be entirely independent of the body.<sup>113</sup> Now going back to the *majlis*, as-Sijistānī’s rather vague statement that “[the soul] has conditions that are different from the conditions of the body so that these conditions don’t participate in any of the conditions [of the body],”<sup>114</sup> could mean that as-Sijistānī refers to Miskawayh’s solution for bringing together the concept of an independent soul, that doesn’t lose its independence upon associating with a material body. This temporary co-dependence between soul and body is not something completely new. Already in Plato’s *Phaedo*, Socrates implies a certain degree of connection and dependence of the soul to the body, as the soul is necessarily exposed to the body’s affection upon its connection to the body.<sup>115</sup> Additionally, it seems likely that as-Sijistānī dismisses this strict negation of interaction between the soul and the body, posited by the first anonymous philosophers, in order to account for all psychological activities, including sensual perception, that couldn’t be fully conducted just by a material entity like the body. Thus, it can be assumed that at least as-Sijistānī follows Miskawayh’s idea of the soul having different modes of action that

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112 Adamson, “Miskawayh’s Psychology,” 43 & Fawz II, 5 78.12 – 79.13.

113 Adamson, “Miskawayh’s Psychology,” 43 & Fawz II, 5 80.4.

114 Annotated Translation, 60.

115 David Bostock, “The Soul and Immortality in the *Phaedo*,” in *Plato: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul*, Vol. II, ed. by G. Fine, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 408 – 409.

arise from its relationship to and association with the body. This restricted soul-body association doesn't harm the simplicity of the soul, as the soul doesn't consist of three faculties or parts, but rather has different modes of operation, depending on the activity of the soul.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, the intellect, remains wholly independent and can operate without the body, while the other modes of the soul simply don't occur anymore upon the soul's separation from the body.<sup>117</sup>

As as-Sijistānī continues, he shortly sums up, that “[w]e stated that a thing exists that is neither a body, nor part of the body, nor is it an accident. Therefore, it neither receives change, nor alteration.”<sup>118</sup> This claim, that the soul does not receive change, was a crucial point in the first part of the *majlis* to argue for the soul being a substance. As-Sijistānī builds up on this key point and elucidates further: “[T]his thing [the soul] [is] able to obtain knowledge about all things equally and neither lassitude, nor restlessness get hold of it.”<sup>119</sup> This assertion doesn't simply point to the soul's susceptibility to contraries though, but rather lays the ontological foundation for the soul being able to attain knowledge about intelligible forms. As-Sijistānī illustrates this capacity of the soul to attain different intelligible forms, in contrast to the material body's reaction to the reception of forms:

*“Every body which has a form does not receive another form of the genus of its first form at all, but only after its separation from the first form, for example: If the body admits a form or a figure like the triangle, it admits another figure like a square or circle only after the separation of the first figure. Likewise, it will be in the same state when admitting a pattern or an image. If something from the previous form remains in it, that doesn't receive the other form in the correct order, but the two forms are engraved in it and none of the two is completed - and this is equable to wax, silver and the like when it receives the form of a figure in the seal. We find that the soul receives all forms in the state of completeness and*

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116 Adamson, “Miskawayh's Psychology,” 43 – 44.

117 Ibid. 43 – 44.

118 Annotated Translation, 60.

119 Annotated Translation, 60.

*proper arrangement without imperfection and deficit. This specific property [of the soul] is contrary to the specific property of the body, and because of this man's insight increases as long as he examines theoretically, searches and unveils or comprehends and dreams.”<sup>120</sup>*

This example can be found nearly verbatim in Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb*, too:

*“Each body which has a certain form does not assume another form of the same type until it has abandoned the first one completely. For instance: When a body takes on a certain form or shape such as, for example, that of the triangle, it does not assume another shape such as that of the square, or the circle, or anything else until it has lost the first one. [...] Should any impression of the first form remain, the body would not take on the next one entirely, but both forms would become mixed in it and neither would be its own purely and fully. For example: After wax has assumed the form of an engraving on a ring, it does not receive the form of any other engraving until the impression of the first one has disappeared. The same is true when silver is given the form of a ring This is a persistent characteristic of all body.”<sup>121</sup>*

As-Sijistānī and Miskawayh clearly differentiate between the body's and the soul's ability to receive forms. It seems that both philosophers implicitly introduce two different kinds of forms. Looking at their examination of how the body is affected by the reception of different forms, they probably refer to sensible forms or shapes. Thus, they use both form (*ṣūra*) and shape (*shakl*) to describe the body's actual form. The body can only be shaped or formed in one certain way at a time. For example, if the body is formed like a triangle, it can become a square only if it loses its triangular shape beforehand. Thus, the body can only bear one (sensible) form at a time. Two things can be deducted thus far from as-Sijistānī's and Miskawayh's example. First, a material body exists potentially if it hasn't received a form yet. This is in line with the findings made previously on how the motion of the soul actualizes the potential existence of a body. Second, the form of the body makes the body essentially what it is. Additionally,

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120 Annotated Translation, 60 – 61.

121 Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 6. & cf. Wakelnig, *A Philosophy Reader*, 161.

an interesting claim is made about the body bearing something of its former form after having received another complete form. If a triangular body becomes a square body, then the triangular form isn't completely lost, but something of it remains within the body. This could underpin the interpretation of a form being the actualization of the potentiality of matter. In other words, the once triangular body carries even in its new form of a square the leftovers of the triangle. It could be potentially a triangle again. Wax or silver, used to exemplify the reception of forms in the bodies, can potentially carry different forms or shapes, simply not at the same time. Moreover, if they change from one form to another, they become a new entity. After having established the body's receptivity of forms, as-Sijistānī and Miskawayh investigate the soul's behavior towards the reception of forms. Here the soul's ability to receive different forms is expressed, resulting in the attainment of knowledge.

The soul, as it is an immaterial and intelligible entity, may receive all kinds of form, without being corrupted or changed in its essence. This explains how the soul can gain knowledge over time without however, being changed in its own essence. Thus, an ignorant soul may gain knowledge through education, but remains the same in its essence. This sets the soul apart from the body, which is subject to change upon the reception of a new (sensible) form. That as-Sijistānī and Miskawayh have not only intelligible, but also sensible forms, in mind, which can be apprehended by the soul, is implied by as-Sijistānī saying that: "*We find that the soul receives all forms in the state of completeness and proper arrangement without imperfection and deficit.*"<sup>122</sup>

Miskawayh is more explicit: "*[W]e find that our souls receive completely and entirely the forms of all things, in all their diversity, whether they be sensible or intelligible,*

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122 Annotated Translation, 61.

*without any separation from earlier forms, or any alternation, or the loss of any impression.*"<sup>123</sup> Only through the intellectual activities of theoretical examination and research, conducted by the intellect, the soul is able to receive all forms in a complete manner, without being corrupted by them. Therefore, both Miskawayh and as-Sijistānī already imply an ethical consequence of their ontology: the importance of education and the pursuit of attaining knowledge.<sup>124</sup>

Moreover, as-Sijistānī and Miskawayh both come to the conclusion that the soul cannot be an accident, as it receives and bears forms: "*That [the soul] is not an accident is evident from the fact that an accident cannot support another accident as attribute, since it is itself always attributed, i.e., existing in something else, and it is not self-subsistent.*"<sup>125</sup> Despite as-Sijistānī's clarification "[...] *that the soul is not an accident, because the accident only exists in something other than itself,*"<sup>126</sup> being the same as Miskawayh's, as-Sijistānī further substantiates the ontological difference between body and soul, based on the argument of the second anonymous philosopher, about the soul being the internal mover of the body: "[...] *then indeed [...] the difference between the soul being the mover of the body and the body being moved through the soul is obvious.*"<sup>127</sup> This addition shows, that despite the partly verbatim similarities between Miskawayh and as-Sijistānī, as-Sijistānī still remains in the line of argument and logic of the *majlis* and does not draw blindly from Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb*.

After having established those ontological pillars for the soul as an independently existing substance, as-Sijistānī tries to reject other concepts of the soul, that he believes

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123 Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 6.

124 Cf. Annotated Translation, 61 & Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 6.

125 Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 6 – 7.

126 Annotated Translation, 61.

127 Annotated Translation, 61.



to be false. He begins with the belief in the mortality of the soul: “[I]f the link or connection, which exists between the soul and the body, became loose, both, [soul and body], would completely cease to exist.”<sup>128</sup> He probably refers to a hylomorphic understanding of the soul-body relationship. This understanding claims that form and matter cannot exist independently, but only in connection with each other. Thus, upon the death of the body, the soul as the form of the body must also perish. As-Sijistānī tries to reject the hylomorphic conception with the following argument, which is based on the observation that soul and body both occupy different ontological states: “[...] both, [the soul and the body,] were not in the state of connection in the manner of one shape and one form, meaning both of them are different with respect to their association and both are associated because of their difference.”<sup>129</sup> With this assertion, as-Sijistānī clearly opposes a hylomorphic concept, that regards soul and body forming a functional composition. Yet, the concept developed throughout the *majlis* suggests that two ontological different entities are associated with each other as opposing entities. Yet, this association is not a necessary condition for their respective existence. Although the life of a material body emerges from the association of soul and body, the material body and the immaterial soul still occupy different ontological spaces. They only come together in a temporary relationship. After the soul leaves the body, the soul continues to exist, as it has life essentially, and the material body decays into something different.

Yet, although arguing explicitly against Aristotle’s hylomorphic understanding of the soul-body relationship, as-Sijistānī identifies semen, just like Aristotle,<sup>130</sup> as the transmitter of form to the material body. Yet, in this context of an independent and

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128 Annotated Translation, 61.

129 Annotated Translation, 61.

130 Aristotle, *The Generation of Animals*, 2.1, 735a4-22.

immortal soul, the identification of semen with being the vehicle for the soul seems counterintuitive, as it doesn't account for how the immaterial soul is connected to the material body. This question is unfortunately not discussed in the *majlis* at all. While avoiding the problem of interaction between material and immaterial entities, as-Sijistānī shifts the focus from the purely ontological investigation of the soul, towards its actual manifestation in the physical world along with the ethical implications.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SOUL'S MANIFESTATIONS AND ITS ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

This shift is completed as as-Sijistānī defines the human being as necessarily consisting of both, soul and body. A body alone, or a soul alone doesn't make a human being. Only through the connection of a soul and a body a human being comes into existence. Thus, with regards to forming a human life, both the material body and the soul are necessary. Nevertheless, as-Sijistānī asserts that the soul has a more important proportion in that combination that makes a human being and as such is important for the development of ethics, as the soul is the ruler of the body and the gateway to the attainment of universal knowledge:

*“This greatest [share of the soul in man] exists primarily due to the soul's nobility with regards to it being a substance, and secondly it exists with respect to the holder of the soul, who is human, by what he acquires of sound knowledge and what he attaches to himself of necessary and good deeds. Sound knowledge is knowledge of the one true God with absolute certainty.”*<sup>131</sup>

The ability to attain this kind of knowledge, based on the soul's ability to receive different and complete forms, designates soul as clearly superior to the body. Additionally, the soul is also superior to the body, as it enables the human being to perform “*necessary and good deeds*,” that consist of “*being pious and content [in the face of God]*.”<sup>132</sup> As-Sijistānī sees the whole purpose of knowledge only as a means to connect with God. In order to reach this goal, piety is needed. This kind of piety

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131 Annotated Translation, 62.

132 Annotated Translation, 62.

consists of neglecting the bodily desires and purifying the soul by focusing its energy on contemplating intelligible forms:

*“The purpose of knowledge is the connection with that which is good, and the purpose of necessary deeds is the attainment of bliss and eternal life in the proximity to of God. This [constitutes] the straight path upon which anyone is called who goes back to intelligence and resorts to lawfulness, from retreating to prudence and to accommodate a good way of life.”<sup>133</sup>*

Based on these explicated ethical consequences, that only a pious life leads to the attainment of true knowledge about God, which will grant eternal life, as-Sijistānī categorizes different types of people according to their way of life, ranging from the one kind that does not use the soul’s ability to attain knowledge at all, to that kind which devotes their lives to overcome the material world through attaining knowledge about the intelligible. This categorization is not to be read as a simple, sociological observation though, but it also carries with it ethical implications on the best usage of the intellect, while rejecting certain ways of life as not putting the intellect into adequate use. It becomes clear from the following description of the different kinds of use of the intellect that most people don’t use their intellect in such a way to gain knowledge about God. As-Sijistānī distinguishes between four different kinds of people according to their intellect, with a fifth category of people who are said to have no intellect.

The first category could be categorized as (modern) hedonistic people. These people only focus on their immediate desires. They focus the powers of their soul simply on satisfying basic desires:

*“So, there is one kind of people whose intellects are submerged under their desires. They only perceive through them their urgent pleasures. Therefore, they work hard*

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133 Annotated Translation, 62.

*for the sake of the pursuit and attainment of such pleasures and they make use of every faculty and power for triumph.*<sup>134</sup>

According to the already posited content of a virtuous life, these people clearly fail to live piously. The second category of people can be called the ignorant people. As-Sijistānī suggests that, despite them having an intellect that would be able to attain adequate knowledge, they lack the ability to use it adequately. This is due to them not training and bettering their innate qualities. They cannot attain true knowledge and lead a virtuous life as they simply try to attain whatever they desire:

*“And another sort of people are those whose intellects are alert, but they are blended with the lethargy of ignorance. Thus they instigate for the good and its acquisition and they very often commit mistakes, because they were not perfected in their innate character and this is an attribute that we find in ignorant and impudent scholars, just like the first attribute or characteristic, is found in those who seek this world, [using] every trick and stratagem.”*<sup>135</sup>

There are two kinds of these ignorant people. There are the people who are simply pursuing worldly desires. Then there are the scholars, who wrongly convince other people that the bad is actually the true good. They lead other people in the pursuit of their vulgar desires. For both groups the beginning of their ignorance and wrongness lies in their innate character, but also the lack of proper education. The third category of people are the intellectually gifted people. Nevertheless, despite their innately gifted intellect, as-Sijistānī doesn't categorize them as virtuous:

*“And yet another sort of people are those whose intellects are sharp-witted, but they are ignorant of the afterlife. They persist in the acquisition of good fortunes through science, knowledge, refined admonitions and divine prestige. This is an innate quality existing in the scholars who did not take delight in science and they don't hold the absolute truth, and they were unable to cope with the condition of*

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134 Annotated Translation, 62 – 63.

135 Annotated Translation, 63.

*the sons of the world, who draw in the pursuit of this world the sharp swords and they extend their strong forearms towards its attainment. Thus, by deception and subterfuge they strive towards the pursuit of pleasure and the pursuit of comfort.*<sup>136</sup>

Although they have the innate qualification of being able to attain knowledge about the intelligible forms and the life-hereafter, they remain ignorant, as they focus on their intellect's attention to the empirical world. They commit to science and knowledge acquisition, but only to gain pleasure. Thus, they fail to reach the ultimate truth, as it can only be acquired if the pursuit of pleasure and desire is wholly overcome and not considered ends in themselves anymore. Their intellectual efforts are limited to receiving pleasure from exercising research. Only the last category of people is considered to be virtuous:

*“And a sort of those whose intellects are shining by what returns to them from God, may he be exalted, by mysterious benevolence, sublime selection and pure choice. Thus, they reflect on this world and they wake up in the next. You see them as present, while they are absent, and as followers, yet they are different.”*<sup>137</sup>

As-Sijistānī makes clear that the virtuous people, besides having knowledge about the material world, also hold knowledge about God and the afterlife. He also seems to suggest that having this kind of intellect is granted by God. This connection remains mysterious though. Moreover, although they seem to follow a certain teaching as “followers”, evoking resemblance to the people characterized as “*chattel*”, yet they are different from them. This may suggest that they actually gained knowledge through own contemplation and not by blindly following a teacher or a particular faith. This category of people is the highest and most noble category. They are the only ones who are able to

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136 Annotated Translation, 63.

137 Annotated Translation, 63.

leave behind their bodily existence, which comes with desires and affections, and reach the afterlife, through their purified soul. This substantiates the aforementioned interpretation of the soul needing to be purified in order to be independent of the body and to become truly immortal, because the soul may be affected and corrupted by the body. This entails, that the soul may lose its independence upon connection to the body, especially if a vile way of life is followed. This doesn't inflict the simplicity of the soul in general, but through the soul-body association, a certain degree of intermixing between the two takes place. Only if the simple soul is purified from all material affections, it may rise towards the intelligible forms and leave the material world behind. All the other categories are too strongly connected to their material body, as they are led by desires. If their soul is also thought to be independent of the body, their soul and its intellect wouldn't be submerged with desires and the soul wouldn't need purification. Thus, it seems reasonable to understand this suggested simple concept of the soul similarly to Plato's *Phaedo* as possibly being interconnected with the body, resulting in the soul partaking in bodily activities, corrupting it by the material world. This entails the soul losing its absolute simplicity and full independence of the body.<sup>138</sup> Only the purified soul remains wholly independent and therefore immortal. Only if the soul is purified through true knowledge, one can enjoy the afterlife consciously.

Despite as-Sijistānī's seemingly clear categorization of people, he seems to suggest that nonetheless, each human being has something which is distinct from others. Thus, even within one category differences between people's abilities exist, for better or for worse:

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138 Bostock, "Soul and Immortality," 408 – 409.

*“This is like you say: ‘The kings are ruler, and each one of them has a peculiarity.’ And like they say: ‘These are poets, and each one of them has a [peculiar] meter.’ ‘These are rhetoricians, and each one of them has a stylistic [peculiarity].’ And like you say: ‘scholars, each one of them has a doctrine.’”<sup>139</sup>*

Nevertheless, as aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī praises as-Sijistānī to be part of the fourth category, as he trained his innate character to attain knowledge about God, his chosen path of philosophy (*ḥikma*) is identified with delight, i.e. the good. Moreover, aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī points to the source of as-Sijistānī’s knowledge: “[...] *the flow of knowledge towards him[...]*.”<sup>140</sup> Thus, as-Sijistānī is not gaining knowledge from simple empirical inquiry, but by receiving a “*flow of knowledge*” about the intelligible forms from God.

After these four kinds of intellects have been discussed, as-Sijistānī describes a fifth kind of people. This kind consists of people who don’t possess an intellect and thus, are the most inferior kind of people: “*They are the common folk about whom if you said: ‘They don’t have intellects,’ you would be truthful.*”<sup>141</sup>. Thus, they don’t fall under the same categories as people who (mis-)use their intellects. Yet, they contribute to society in the most basic manner, and thus, are not to be neglected: “*Don’t insult the common folk, they save the ones who are in need of saving, they extinguish the fires, they make the paths of life more comfortable and they are witnesses to the market.*”<sup>142</sup> They are not concerned with intellectuals endeavors, which is due to their innate dispositions. Their qualities are after all beneficial for the society they live in.

*“However, they exist in number, with regards to ethnic background, natural character disposition and human nature. And concerning their existence in this region a tribal structure exists due to [those characteristics], and it is beneficial to the inhabitants [of the region].”<sup>143</sup>*

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139 Annotated Translation, 64.

140 Annotated Translation, 64.

141 Annotated Translation, 64.

142 Annotated Translation, 64.

143 Annotated Translation, 64.



After a first reading of this passage, similarities to Plato's description of different constitutions of cities, along with the characteristics of the ruling class' soul, come to mind. Especially the reference to everyone's place in society, either as a leader, rhetorician, poets or scholars implied a social relevance of the soul's manifestation and formation. Since as-Sijistānī remains rather vague on the different kinds of intellects and doesn't elaborate further on their position in society, it is hard to make out a definite Platonic influence on this passage. Yet, the four (or five, depending if the "common folk" are considered as well) different sorts of intellects would stand in line with the five different categories of constitutions from al-Fārābī's *The Political Regime*, that relies on Plato's *Republic* as source. That as-Sijistānī was influenced by al-Fārābī is quite likely, as as-Sijistānī was a student of Yaḥyā b. 'Adī, whose teacher was al-Fārābī.

Al-Fārābī describes four general categories of cities: the virtuous, the ignorant, the immoral and the errant cities. All four cities have constitutions that are defined either by the interests of a ruler, a ruling class or the majority of the citizens. The inhabitants of the virtuous city strive towards the attainment of true happiness,<sup>144</sup> which corresponds to the last named category of people by as-Sijistānī. The first kind of people mentioned by as-Sijistānī resembles al-Fārābī's idea of ignorant cities. As people follow their desires instead of working towards a virtuous life, they seek different kinds of goals, dictated by their desires. Al-Fārābī differentiates between six different types of ignorant cities, with the common ground between them being the pursuit of urgent pleasures with all their faculties instead of using them to attain happiness.<sup>145</sup> Then there are the

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144 Al-Fārābī, *The Political Regime*, trans. M. Mahdi, in *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011, 43 – 44.

145 Al-Fārābī, *The Political Regime*, 46 – 53.

immoral cities, which are formed by people who had a concept of happiness, yet laziness took hold of them, leading them to dismiss any virtuous actions and they began seeking pleasure instead of true happiness.<sup>146</sup> These characteristics show a certain similarity to as-Sijistānī's third kind of people, whose intellects would enable them to attain true knowledge, yet they use their innate qualities to seek pleasure. The second category of people mentioned by as-Sijistānī are simply following a false concept of happiness and knowledge. Al-Fārābī gives a similar description of people in his category of the errant cities.<sup>147</sup> The inhabitants of the errant cities are simply deceived by a false concept of truth and knowledge.<sup>148</sup> Concerning the people as-Sijistānī calls "*common folk*", they could be read as a counterpart to al-Fārābī's category of "*weeds*". Although al-Fārābī considers the "*weeds*" as beasts that are harmful to a (virtuous) society, he also considers some of them as potentially useful to society: "*Now any one of [the beasts] who is domestic and useful in some way to the cities is to be spared, enslaved, and used as beasts are used.*"<sup>149</sup> Although al-Fārābī and as-Sijistānī seem to differ on how to regard these "beasts", as as-Sijistānī demands a certain degree of respect towards the "*common folk*", both seem to coincide with regarding them as unable to reach any level of truth, allowing them to be useful to a society's basic needs.

Nevertheless, these similarities between as-Sijistānī's proposed categories of intellect and al-Fārābī's categories of cities remain rather vague and indefinite. Yet, a more profound similarity between al-Fārābī and as-Sijistānī can be carved out when looking at their ideas of the perfect man. The perfect man is, according as-Sijistānī, the one, who submits to philosophy and the attainment of knowledge about the

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146 Ibid. 53.

147 Ibid. 53.

148 Ibid. 53.

149 Ibid. 46.

intelligible forms. Likewise, al-Fārābī defines the highest goal as the attainment of true knowledge about the divine.<sup>150</sup>

*“He should continue this investigation until he finally reaches a being that cannot possess any of these principles at all (either what it is or from what it is or for what it is) but is itself the first principle of all the aforementioned beings: it is itself that by which, from which, and for which they are, in the most perfect modes in which a thing can be a principle for the being, modes free from all defects. [...] He will thus come to know the ultimate cause of the beings. This is the divine inquiry into them. For the first principle is the divinity, and the principles that come after it [...] are the divine principles.”*<sup>151</sup>

This can be achieved through connecting to the divine.<sup>152</sup> Only a true philosopher, who overcame the desires of the soul’s lower faculties is able to reach this divine connection.<sup>153</sup> This comes close to the fourth category of people described by as-Sijistānī: they are able to connect to the divine, so knowledge emanates back towards the person. It seems that as-Sijistānī and al-Fārābī agree on how knowledge about the divine is attained. Moreover, as-Sijistānī seems to even agree with al-Fārābī, that only these true philosophers are consciously awake in the hereafter: *“Thus, they reflect on this world and they are awake in the next.”*<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, as-Sijistānī does not clearly deny the immortality of non-philosophers’ souls, while al-Fārābī explicitly rejects the immortality of ignorant souls:<sup>155</sup> *“Thus the souls of these [ignorant] people remain material and do not come to a perfection such that they are separate from matter; so when their matter is nullified, they also are nullified.”*<sup>156</sup>

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150 Rudolph, “Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī,” 437.

151 Al-Fārābī, *The Attainment of Happiness*, trans. M. Mahdi, in *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011, 58.

152 Reisman, “Al-Fārābī and the Philosophical Curriculum,” 58.

153 Rudolph, “Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī,” 437.

154 Annotated Translation, 63.

155 Rudolph, “Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī,” 440 – 441.

156 Al-Fārābī, *The Political Regime*, trans. M. Mahdi, in *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011, 44.

Another similarity between al-Fārābī's and as-Sijistānī's categorization of human beings lays in their respective consideration of innate dispositions as a possible obstacle for people to perfect their intellect and to acquire knowledge about the divine. Both philosophers acknowledge different kinds of people who are either prone to follow their desires or simply lack the intellectual capacities to grasp knowledge about the divine. For example, both philosophers acknowledge that there are people who cannot reflect on their desires, making it impossible for them to overcome them. Yet others, may be fully aware of science and knowledge production, but their goal is not to follow the intellectual pathway to eventually know about the divine, but only for retrieving instant pleasures. Both groups require guidance to acquire some level of truth. Thus, as-Sijistānī, like al-Fārābī, acknowledges different levels of awareness about the final truth and different levels of ability to actually reach perfection of the soul:<sup>157</sup> *“Not every human being is created so as to be disposed to receive the first intelligibles, because individual human beings are by nature generated with varied faculties and divergent preparations.”*<sup>158</sup>

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157 Rudolph, “Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī,” 437, 440 – 441.

158 Al-Fārābī, *The Political Regime*, 40.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In the first part of this thesis I tried to extract the theory of the soul included in the thirteenth night. The first section of the text was identified as an attempt by aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī to set the ontological basis for the establishment of the soul as an immortal substance. The focal point of this argument was the soul's independence and immateriality. Yet, to further underpin the substantiality of the soul aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī turned to investigate the soul as a mover and life-giver of the body. He showed that as a life-giving force, the soul must not only be the essence of the living body, but also subsistent, as it possesses life essentially. It was shown that the first two arguments not only relied on Plato's *Phaedo*, but also Aristotle's *Physics* and *Categories*. In general, throughout the first two arguments, all the arguments evolving around the soul's status as substance, were based on Aristotle's own concept of primary substances. Nevertheless, the first two lines of arguments brought together Plato and Aristotle, in order to create a coherent theory of the soul as an independent, immortal and subsistent substance. Although Aristotle's and Plato's theories of the soul clearly oppose each other, aṭ-Ṭawḥīdī harmonized both, by omitting certain ontological implications, such as Aristotle's hylomorphism, in order to maintain the basic Platonic characteristics of independence and immortality. This attempt to harmonize both theories shows clear similarities to al-Kindī's psychology, which is highly Platonized, while also relying on Aristotle's idea of primary substances, most prominently in his *That There Are Incorporeal Substances*.

It was shown that the theory of the soul as a subsistent substance is reiterated and further substantiated by as-Sijistānī's dictation. This dictation, especially the beginning, bears strong resemblance to Miskawayh to the extent of partly verbatim paraphrases of Miskawayh's psychology. These paraphrases, that were traced back to Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* and the *Fawz al-aṣghar*, were interpreted as as-Sijistānī reciting Miskawayh, in order to summarize all the aforementioned ontological characteristics into a consistent whole. As Miskawayh himself is following a Kindīan paradigm throughout his psychology, the recitation of Miskawayh to summarize the first part of the *majlis* doesn't come as a surprise. Miskawayh also tried to establish the soul as a simple substance, by identifying other psychological capacities, like sensual perception, as modes of the soul, occurring only during its connection to the body. This attempt to maintain a simplicity of the soul, while also providing an ontological basis for other mental capacities, was also implicitly referred to by as-Sijistānī.

Concerning the last part of the *majlis*, it was shown that as-Sijistānī turned from drawing closely from Miskawayh's theory towards exploring the ethical implications of the developed concept of the soul. Surprisingly, this ethical outlook was most likely influenced by al-Fārābī. The categorization along five possible manifestation of the intellect and the suggested importance of educating a person's innate qualities and psychological characteristics evoked a remembrance of al-Fārābī's *The Political Regime*. This came surprising, as al-Fārābī remained quite committed to an Aristotelian psychology, as he proposed a hylomorphic ontology of the soul and explicitly argued for a soul consisting of different powers/faculties, dismissing the simplicity of the soul. All in all, the concept of the soul found in the *majlis* is clearly Platonic with an Aristotelian coating. Al-Kindī and Miskawayh were probably the main direct influences

on the *majlis*, as they already tried to develop a similar theory of the soul. The concept is more or less consistent throughout the whole *majlis* and even in itself, with the exception of the confusion arising from the usage of the focal category “substance”. Thus, this theory of the soul established in the *thirteenth Night* can be read as an exemplary attempt to harmonize Plato’s and Aristotle’s philosophies in 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century Baghdad.

## APPENDIX

(p. 198)<sup>159</sup> As I was present another night he said: “Go on!” I said: “The discourse on the soul is difficult [,]. Those examining the soul’s secret, its conspicuity, its effect and its being affected are at opposite extremes, but there is room for further examination about [such issues], because illusion has power over them. Everyone gave [their opinion] according to their capacity and observation. I am coming up with what I have memorized of this discourse and will give an account of it. After that, opinion should be left to the guiding intellect and the opinion afterwards is based on the sincere mind and clear evidence.

Some philosophers said: “When we examine the matter of the soul, we notice that it acts by itself, without the need for the body, because when a human being conceives a thing through the intellect, then he doesn’t conceive it with an organ, like when he perceives the colors with the eye and the smell with the nose. The part of the body, in which the soul is, neither warms up nor cools down, nor does it change from one condition to another upon conceiving a thing through the intellect. Hence, he who believes that the soul doesn’t act through the body, [does so] because such matters are neither a body nor are they corporeal accidents.

Also, the soul recognizes the present in terms of time, the oneness and the consciousness. And no one says: “The soul knows these things through one of the senses.” Therefore, the action of the soul is (p. 199) separated from the body. The composition of the demonstration is as follows: “The soul has actions that are proper to

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159 The numbers in brackets indicate the page number of the Arabic text from at-Ṭawḥīdī, Abū Ḥayyān. *Al-Imtā’ wa-l-Mu’ānasa*. Edited by Ahmad Amin and Ahmad az-Zayn. 3 Volumes. Cairo: Dar Maktaba al-Hayyat, 1939–1953.



it, independently of the body, like conceiving by the intellect; and everything that has actions proper to it to the exclusion of the body, does not decay with the decaying of the body upon separation.

He also said: We found people agreeing that the soul doesn't die, since they give charity on behalf of their deceased. If they hadn't conceived the immortality of the soul, but only that the soul is transposed from one state to another, either towards good or towards bad, they would have neither asked for pardon for their deceased, nor would they have given charity on behalf of their deceased and visited their graves.

And he continued: The soul doesn't die, because it is more similar to divine matter than to the body, since it governs the body and leads it.

God, the Almighty and the Exalted, governs all things and guides/leads them. The body is a thing more similar to a mortal thing than to the soul, since the body indeed lives only through the soul.

Furthermore, he said: The soul is susceptible to contraries, thus it is a substance. Therefore, the lesson learned is that the soul is a substance.

And he continued: The soul is not matter. If it were matter, then it would be susceptible to extension. Thus, the soul is not matter.

Further he said: The soul is not a body, because the soul pervades all parts of the ensouled body, while the body does not pervade all the parts of the soul (cf. FN 1). The soul is not matter, because if the soul were matter then it would be susceptible to extension and magnitude. The lesson of this is, that the soul is necessarily a substance.

(p. 200) Another [philosopher] said: The motion of every mobile is divided into two: One of the two [divisions] is internal and it is twofold: one division is like nature, which is never at rest, like the motion of fire as long as it remains fire. The other division is

like the motion of the soul, sometimes it is awoken and sometimes it is at rest, comparable to the motion of the human body, which ceases when its soul departs and becomes a corpse.

And the other division is external [motion]. This division is twofold as well: one is being projected like the arrow is projected and shot from the bow. The other motion is being pulled like the cart and the corpse are pulled.

Further he said: Thus, we say: “It is obvious, that our body is neither projected nor pulled, and since every projectile or pulled [thing] which is set in motion from outside is undoubtedly moved [also] internally. Therefore, the body is necessarily moved through internal motion.

He said: If our body is set in motion internally, [it has to be considered] that everything moving from internal motion is either moving by a natural motion, which doesn’t cease, or a psychological motion, that stops.

It is obvious, that the motion of the human body is not an everlasting, ceaseless [movement], rather it is susceptible to/may ceasing/cease and is not everlasting.<sup>160</sup> The motion of everything, whose motion ceases and is not everlasting, is not natural motion, which doesn’t cease. Rather, it is a psychological motion produced by a soul that moves [the body] and ceases it<sup>161</sup>.

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160 The editor added “*lā*”, despite not being in the sources, as he noted. If it is left out, the paragraph could be interpreted as something motionless continuing to exist, but simply as dead matter. The human body wouldn’t be ontologically different from a stone or any conglomerate of matter. If “*lā*” would be taken into account, it could be interpreted along the lines that something that became motionless, simply doesn’t continue in its existence, thus stops being. Both interpretations don’t necessarily rule each other out, but as an addition by the speaker to the observation that the body will eventually become motionless, the clarification of the continuing existence of the body’s dead matter makes more sense, because if the soul as the moving principle leaves the body, why should the body perish? Something that became motionless, as long as it is not in motion by its own essence, will continue to exist as simply matter. Cf. Interpretation in thesis.

161 Most likely it is an error committed by a scribe, as it would only make sense to talk about the soul’s ability to cease a body’s motion and not to make it sense. It should have been “*tusakkinuhu*”.

And he said: If the soul is what gives life to a human being and moves him, and if every mover, which moves something other than itself, is a subsistent living being, then the soul is a subsistent living being.

He added: “The soul is a substance and not an accident. The definition of a substance is that it is able to receive contraries without being changed. This is necessary for the soul, because the soul bears knowledge and ignorance, devotion and immorality, (p. 201) courage and cowardice, sexual abstinence and its contrary. These things are contraries, without however its essence changing. Since the soul is susceptible to receive the definition of substance and since everything that is susceptible to receive the definition of a substance is indeed a substance, then the soul is a substance.

He said: It became clear that the soul imparts life and motion to the body, which is the substance and [since] any life-giver and mover of a substance is a substance, then the soul is substance.

And he said: “There is no way that that which is moved and brought to life be a substance, while the life-giver and mover is not a substance. Since the soul imparts motion and life to the body and it is not possible that the life-giver and mover of the extant [thing] be non-existent, then it is not possible that the soul be non-existent.

And he said: “If the power and the life of the body are through the soul, it is disproved that the soul’s subsistence is through the body, but rather through itself, on which the life of the body subsists.

He continued: If the soul subsists by itself, through which the life of the body subsists, and what subsists by itself is a substance, therefore, the soul is a substance.

Abū Sulaymān dictated to us a discourse on discussing the soul and such is its topic. There is no excuse to abstain from mentioning it in order to add it to the others.

Even though all this did not proceed the way it did in presence of the vizier – May God preserve him and extend his life – because delving into the matter with the pen is different from the tongue, because the pen has a longer bridle than the tongue, and, the expression of the tongue is clearer than the expression of the pen. Given that the whole purpose is the information, it does not increase with the length [of the discourse].

He said: “It is necessary, that we know with full awareness that within us is a thing, which is not a three dimensional body extended in length, width, and depth, nor part of a body, nor an accident, nor does it require bodily power, but it is a simple substance, not perceived through the senses. When we found in us a thing which is incorporeal and contrary to the parts of the body through its definition and specific property, and we realized that it has conditions that are different from the conditions of the body so that these conditions don’t participate in any of the conditions [of the body], and similarly we found this thing to be different from accidents, and we realized this difference from the bodies and accidents is due only to bodies being bodies and accidents being accidents, we thus stated that there is a thing which is neither a body, nor part of the body, nor is it an accident. Therefore, it neither receives change, nor alteration. Moreover, we found this thing to be able to obtain knowledge about all things equally and neither lassitude, nor restlessness get hold of it. This is made clear by [the following example]: Every body which has a form does not receive another form of the genus of its first form at all, but only after its separation from the first form, for example: If the body admits a form or a figure like the triangle, it admits another figure like a square or circle only after the separation of the first figure. Likewise, it will be in the same state when admitting a pattern or an image. If something from the previous form remains in it, that doesn’t receive the other form in the correct order, but the two

forms are engraved in it and none of the two is completed - and this is equable to wax, silver and the like when it receives the form of a figure in the seal. We find that the soul receives all forms in the state of completeness and proper arrangement without imperfection and deficit. This specific property [of the soul] is contrary to the specific property of the body, and because of this man's insight increases as long as he examines theoretically, searches and unveils or comprehends and dreams.

(p. 203) It is also clarified that the soul is not an accident, because the accident only exists in something other than itself. Thus, an accident is an attribute, neither a holder of an attribute, nor is it subsistent. This substance, which is depicted through these qualities, is the holder of the soul's goods that it carries and it is neither similar to the body, nor to the accident.

And he was also saying: If the observation is true, and if the observer is free from affection, and if his search for the truth through dominant passion is sound, then indeed to him the difference between the soul being the mover of the body and the body being moved through the soul is obvious.

He said: When uncertainty befell the people's limited examination, and neither did they have an insight [into], nor an observation [of the topic], thus they believed that if the link or connection, which exists between the soul and the body, became loose, both, [soul and body], would completely cease to exist.

This is a believe consisting of recklessness, because both, [the soul and the body,] were not in the state of connection in the manner of one shape and one form, meaning both of them are different with respect to their association and both are associated because of their difference.

Truly you see, that the body's existence, arrangement and perfection is through the soul? This is apparent.

It is not [only] the power of the soul in its relation with the body, because the soul is connected to the body from the beginning with the conceiving of the sperm. Then, the soul hasn't ceased to grow, nourish, animate and order the body until the arrival of the body to what you see now. And the human being exists through the soul, inasmuch as the soul alone makes not a human, and the body alone isn't a human, however the human being is a human being through both of them. Hence, the human being's proportion consists more of the soul than of the body.

This greatest [share of the soul in man] exists primarily due to the soul's nobility with regards to it being a substance, and secondly it exists with respect to the holder of the soul, who is human, by what he acquires of sound knowledge (p. 204) and what he attaches to himself of necessary and good deeds. Sound knowledge is knowledge of the one true God with absolute certainty and necessary, good deeds [consist of] being pious and content [in the face of God].

The purpose of knowledge is the connection with that which is good, and the purpose of necessary deeds is the attainment of bliss and eternal life in the proximity of God. This [constitutes] the straight path upon which anyone is called who goes back to intelligence and resorts to a good way of life.

Concerning who is, according to all this, blind, and of what he has to be unaware, then he is part of a herd of cattle, despite Him being inconstant in the kinds of blessings.

And he continued saying more: "Human beings are specimen with regard to their intellects: So, there is one kind of people whose intellects are submerged under

their desires. They only perceive through them their urgent pleasures. Therefore, they work hard for the sake of the pursuit and attainment of such pleasures and they make use of every faculty and power for triumph.

And another sort of people are those whose intellects are alert, but they are blended with the lethargy of ignorance. Thus, they instigate for the good and its acquisition and they very often commit mistakes, because they were not perfected in their innate character and this is an attribute that we find in ignorant and impudent scholars, just like the first attribute or characteristic, is found in those who seek this world, [using] every trick and stratagem.

And yet another sort of people are those whose intellects are sharp-witted, but they are ignorant of the afterlife. They persist in the acquisition of good fortunes through science, knowledge, refined admonitions and divine prestige. This is an innate quality existing in the scholars who did not take delight in science and they don't hold the absolute truth, and they were unable to cope with the condition of the sons of the world, who draw in the pursuit of this world the sharp swords and they extend their strong forearms towards its attainment. Thus, by deception and subterfuge they strive towards the pursuit of pleasure and the pursuit of comfort.

And a sort of those, whose intellects are shining by what returns to them from God, may he be exalted, by mysterious benevolence, sublime selection and pure choice. Thus, they reflect on this world and they wake up in the next. You see them as present, while they are absent and as followers, yet they are different

Each sort of these ranks are different, yet the description comprehensively gathered/summarized them through enunciation.

This is like you say: “The kings are ruler, and each one of them has a peculiarity.” And like they say: “These are poets, and each one of them has a [peculiar] meter.” “These are rhetoricians, and each one of them has a stylistic [peculiarity].” And like you say: “Scholars, each one of them has a doctrine.”

In accordance with this, Abū Sulaymān, may God preserve him, thus took on this more delightful path, his breast burning with philosophy, and the flow of knowledge towards him and the soundness of his natural character through creation.

And he said: “After this session we left out a sort of intellect, that we didn’t describe by recollection and we didn’t turn our attention to it with exhaustive treatment. They are the common folk about whom if you said: ‘They don’t have intellects,’ you would be truthful. Yet, if I said: “They have similar things to intellects.” I would be truthful. However, they exist in number, with regards to ethnic background, natural character disposition and human nature. And concerning their existence in this region a tribal structure exists due to [those characteristics], and it is beneficial to the inhabitants [of the region]. Therefore, a few sages said: “Don’t insult the common folk, they save the ones who are in need of saving, they extinguish the fires, they make the paths of life more comfortable and they are witnesses to the market.”

In the end, he was content – may God be content with him and grant him a long life – so he said: (p. 206) In the conversation about the soul happened more of what was in the soul and in it is a statement towards a period of time. And I think the night stretched its heavy matter and it weighs heavily; I turned away.



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