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Part 4. The "Philosophers"

Chapter XLV

JALĀL AL-DĪN DAWWĀNI

A

LIFE AND WORKS

Muḥammad bin As'ad Jalāl al-Dīn was born in 830/1427 at Dawwān in the district of Kāzarūn, of which his father was the Qāḍi. Having received early education from his father and then from Mahjwi al-Ari and Ḥasan bin Baqqāl, he studied theology under Muḥyi al-Dīn Anṣāri and Hammām al-Dīn at Shīrāz, where he ultimately became professor at the *Madrasat al-Aitām*. In a short time he became famous for his knowledge and learning, attracting students from far and wide. It was in recognition of his literary and academic fame that he got admission into the Court of Ḥasan Beg Khān Bahādur (Uzūn Ḥasan), the then Turkish ruler of Mesopotamia and Persia. He ultimately rose to the eminent position of the Qāḍi of the Court, which position he retained under Sulṭān Ya'qūb as well. He died in 907/1501 or 908/1502, and was buried in his native village Dawwān.[1]

Ṭūsi revived the tradition of philosophical disciplines during the Mongol period; Dawwāni did the same during the Ottoman period. Whereas the former gave a fresh impetus to the study of ibn Sīna by writing commentaries on some of his works and by defending him against his detractors, the latter reorientated the study of Shihāb al-Dīn Maqtūl by writing a commentary on his *Hayākil-i Nūr* and elaborating his illuminative philosophy *(ḥikmat-i ishrāq)* in his own works. Both are revivalists, but they differ in their approach to the truth. The one is a true Avicennian, the other a faithful Suhrawardian. Brockelmann has enumerated seventy of his extant works,[2] of which the important ones are listed below: —

[1] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. I, p. 933.
[2] *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur, Suppl.*, Vol. II, 1937, pp. 306–09.

1. *Sharḥ 'Aqā'id-i 'Aḍudiyyah*, Istanbul, 1817.
2. *Sharḥ Tahdhīb al-Manṭiq wa al-Kalām*, Lucknow, 1264/1847.
3. *Al-Zaura*, Cairo, 1326/1908.
4. *Risālah fi Ithbāt al-Wājib al-Qadīmah w-al-Jadīdah.*
5. *Risālah fi Taḥqīq Nafs al-Amr.*
6. *Risālah fi Ithbāt al-Jauhar al-Mufāriq.*
7. *Risālah fi 'Adālah.*
8. *Risālah fi al-Ḥikmah.*
9. *Sharḥ al-Hayākil.*
10. *Anmudhaj al-'Ulūm.*
11. *Al-Masā'il al-'Aṣr fi al-Kalām.*
12. *Akhlāq-i Jalāli*, translated into English under the title of *The Practical Philosophy of the Mohammadan People* by W. F. Thompson, London, 1839.

B

ETHICS

Dawwāni was commissioned by Sulṭān Ḥasan Beg to revise the ethical treatise of Ṭūsi with the express aim of "correcting and completing" it from the illuminative *(ishrāqi)* point of view. The structure of *Akhlāq-i Jalāli* is basically the same as that of *Akhlāq-i Nāṣiri*, but in the execution of the work Dawwāni has artistically ornamented it with the Qur'ānic verses, precepts of the Prophet and his Companions, and the moving utterances of the mystics. He not only abbreviated and simplified Ṭūsī's treatise but also amplified and elaborated it at places in the light of the philosophy of illumination; besides he added much by way of literary adornment.

Following ibn Miskawaih, Ṭūsi regards ultimate happiness *(sa'ādat-i quswa)* as the *summum bonum* of life. His concept of ultimate happiness, because of its reference to the heavenly *(qudsi)* element, is intrinsically different from the Aristotelian concept of happiness. Dawwāni goes a step further and identifies the moral with the religious ideal. It is with reference to God-intended vicegerency that the Qur'ān distinguishes right from wrong, evaluates knowledge and appreciates power; therefore, vicegerency of God *(khilāfat-i ilāhi)* and not ultimate happiness should be the inspiring ideal of the "noblest of the creation." His moral theory, in other words, is based on the place or position of man in the universe as determined by God and not by man himself, which is that of the vicegerency of God.

What entitles man to this high office of responsibility? Dawwāni finds the answer in a saying of the Caliph 'Ali. Man, according to this saying, occupies a middle position between the angels and the brutes. The former have intellect without desire and ire. They have no temptations, nor freedom of choice; being perfect by nature, they are above morality. The latter, on the other hand, have desire and ire without intellect, and, thus, being incapable of controlling their irrational impulses, are below morality. Man has both. He

can, however, rise above the angels by subordinating desire and ire to intellect, and can also sink below the brutes if desire and ire enslave his intellect. The brutes can be excused for want of intellect, but not man. The excellence of man's perfection is enhanced by his natural temptation and deliberate resistance to evil; the angels have been spared the painful processes of conflict, deliberation, and choice. Thus, man alone is a free, responsible and, therefore, moral being, and his right to the vicegerency of God is established on this very ground.[3]

How is this vicegerency to be accomplished by man? Quoting the Qur'ānic verse, "Whosoever gains wisdom, verily he gains great good," Dawwāni holds that mature wisdom *(ḥikmat-i bāligḥah)* is the royal road to this exalted position. But mature wisdom, being a happy blend of theory and practice, is essentially different from the Socratic dictum: Knowledge is virtue. The Greeks were interested in ascertaining the speculative principles of morals; the practical aspect of ethics was quite alien to their temperament.

Mature wisdom can be acquired through intellectual insight as well as through mystic intuition. Both the philosopher and the mystic reach the same goal through different ways. What the former "knows," the latter "sees," there being complete harmony between the findings of the two.

Influenced by the Qur'ānic doctrine of moderation[4] no less than the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, Dawwāni holds that the mean constitutes the good in all matters. But it is determined not by "reason" and "prudence," as held by Aristotle, but by the divine Law. Reason can at best determine the form of morality, the content whereof must come from the divine Code. Since the path of moderation is difficult to tread, Dawwāni has identified it with the bridge over hell *(pul ṣirāṭ)*—a bridge which is narrower than a hair and sharper than a sword.

Moral struggle presupposes that all dispositions *(khulq)*, whether innate or acquired, are capable of modification and change. Constant instruction and discipline and punishment, as evidenced by experience, can change the wicked into the virtuous. By these means the evil is greatly reduced, if not completely eradicated. And since a person does not know beforehand that a particular evil disposition would resist all attempts to modify and change it, it is in consonance with the dictates of both reason and religion that he should exert his utmost for its modification.

To Plato virtue was the moderation of human nature as a whole. Aristotle assigned to each virtue the place moderation would give it. But he could go no further than this. The Greeks "systematized, generalized, and theorized," but the accumulation of positive knowledge based on patient, detailed, and prolonged observation was altogether "alien to their temperament." This weakness of the Greek genius was removed by a rather practical and penetrating

[3] *Akhlāq-i Jalāli*, p. 24.
[4] Qur'ān, ii, 190; v, 2.

mind of the Muslims,[5] who classified ethics as a "part of practical philosophy." With ibn Miskawaih, the first Muslim moralist, the emphasis shifted from broad generalizations to individual differentiation and specification of virtues. He not only determined seven, eleven, twelve and nineteen species[6] of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice respectively—the four cardinal virtues of Plato—but also developed an attractive theory of the causes and cures of mental diseases, a process which culminated in al-Ghazāli with a shift from an intellectual to a mystic outlook.[7]

Ibn Miskawaih had worked out the details of Plato's theory of virtue, but with Ṭūsi the problem was that of improving and completing the Aristotelian theory of vice. He emphasized for the first time that deviation from the equipoise is not only quantitative but also qualitative, and, thus, added perversion *(radā'at)* as the third generic cause of vice[8] to the Aristotelian excess and deficiency of a State. Ṭūsi also set the seal of completion on practical philosophy by including domestics and politics in his ethical treatise in order to meet the deficiencies of the ethical work of ibn Sīna *(Kitāb al-Ṭahārat)* and of that of Fārābi. Lastly, Ṭūsi revolted against the ascetic ethics of al-Ghazāli. Asceticism, for him, is the negation of moral life, for man is by nature a social being as is indicated by the word for man in Arabic, *insān* (associating), and body is not an obstacle but an instrument of the soul for attaining the perfection it is capable of.[9] Nevertheless, he recognizes asceticism as a necessary stage in the development of mystic consciousness, of which he has had no personal experience. Inspired by the illuminative philosophy of Shihāb al-Dīn Maqtūl, Dawwāni finds complete harmony between philosophy and mysticism. What the mystic "sees," the philosopher "knows," and what the latter "knows," the former "sees." He, therefore, gave a Qur'ānic bias to the ethics of Ṭūsi.

C

POLITICS

Following Ṭūsi, Dawwāni too has used *Siyāsat-i Mudun* more in the sense of the science of civics than in the modern sense of politics. The origin, function, and classes of society and the need of a government headed by a just king are the same for Dawwāni as for Ṭūsi. Monarchy is held to be the ideal form of government, in which king is the second arbitrator of justice, the first being the divine Law. After reproducing the general principles of distributive and corrective justice from *Akhlāq-i Nāṣiri*, Dawwāni adds ten moral principles of his own, which ought to be observed by a king in order to ensure efficient administration of justice.

[5] Briffault, *The Making of Humanity*, p. 192.
[6] *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, pp. 15–20.
[7] *Mīzān al-'Amal*, pp. 83–91.
[8] *Akhlāq-i Nāṣiri*, p. 114.
[9] Ivanow, *Taṣawwurāt*, p. 92.

In the first place, the king should invariably consider himself to be the aggrieved party while deciding a case, so that he may not wish for the aggrieved what is abhorrent to himself. Secondly, he should see that the cases are disposed of quickly, for justice delayed is justice denied. Thirdly, he should not indulge in sensual and physical pleasures which ultimately bring about the ruin of a State in their wake. Fourthly, royal decisions should be based on clemency and condescension rather than on rashness and wrath. Fifthly, in pleasing people he should seek the pleasure of God. Sixthly, he should not seek the pleasure of the people by displeasing God. Seventhly, he should render justice if decision is left to his discretion, but forgiveness is better than justice if mercy is begged of him. Eighthly, he should associate with the righteous and lend ears to their counsels. Ninthly, he should keep everyone to his rightful place and should not entrust high office to the low-born people. Lastly, he should not be content with personal abstention from injustice, but should so conduct the affairs of the State that none under his authority is guilty of this offence.

D

METAPHYSICS

Like Ṭūsi and others, Dawwāni's cosmology consists of the gradual emanation of ten intellects, nine spheres, four elements, and three kingdoms of nature. The active intellect, the intellect of the sphere of the moon, bridges the gap between the heaven and the earth.

Quoting the Prophet's saying that intellect is the noblest of all the created things, Dawwāni identifies the first intellect *('aql-i awwal)* with the original essence of Muḥammad. It conceives the idea of all things past, present, and future, just as a seed potentially contains roots, branches, leaves, and fruit. The spheres which are stationary in nature, but changeable in qualities, control the destiny of the material world. Fresh situations come into being through the revolutions of the spheres, and every moment the active intellect causes a new form into existence to reflect itself in the mirror of elemental matter. Passing through the mineral, vegetative, and animal states, the first intellect finally appears in the form of acquired intellect *('aql-i mustafād)* in man, and, thus, the highest point having coalesced with the lowest, the circle of being is completed by the two arcs of ascent and descent.

The first intellect is like the seed which, having sprouted into twigs, branches, and fruit, reverts to its original form of unity possessing collective potentiality. This circular process takes the form of motion *(ḥarkat-i waḍa'i)*, in growing bodies of increasing or decreasing their magnitude, and in the rational soul that of the movement of thought. All these motions are, in fact, shadows of the divine motion proceeding from God's love for self-expression, which in mystic terminology is called the flashing of Self upon Self.[10]

[10] *Akhlāq-i Jalāli*, pp. 258–59.

Dawwānī's metaphysical treatise, *al-Zaura* is a critical evaluation of *Kalām* and of the teachings of the spiritual leaders, the philosophers, and the mystics, from the illuminative *(ishrāqi)* point of view. He fully appreciates the utility and importance of the first three disciplines but takes a serious notice of the inconsistency with Islam of some of the issues raised by them. He believes that philosophy and mysticism both ultimately lead to the same goal, yet he cannot shut his eyes to the eminence and superiority of the latter over the former. Mysticism, in his view, is free from doubt and uncertainty because it is due to divine grace and is, therefore, nearer to prophethood.[11]

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[11] *Al-Zaura*, p. 116.

Chapter XLVI

IBN KHALDŪN

A

Ibn Khaldūn wrote no major work in fields accepted in the Muslim philosophic tradition, or which he himself considered to be the proper fields of philosophic investigation—logic, mathematics, physics, and metaphysics—politics, ethics, and economics.[1] Consequently, he was not regarded by his contemporaries, or by subsequent Muslim students of philosophy, as a philosopher *(failasūf)* in the sense in which al-Fārābi, ibn Sīna, and ibn Rushd were identified as such. Nevertheless, both his contemporaries and later Muslim students of history and society were aware that ibn Khaldūn had made the most significant contribution to these specialized fields through his

[1] The summaries of "many" of the works of ibn Rushd, which he wrote as a young man (reported by ibn al-Khaṭīb, cf. al-Maqqari, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyi al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd [10 vols., Cairo, al-Maktabat al-Tijārīyyah, 1367/1947, Vol. VIII, p. 286]), may prove of value in corroborating the philosophic notions found in the "History." Ibn Khaldūn himself did not evidently consider them of permanent value; they have not as yet been recovered, and it is not known whether they have survived at all.