

∞ Early Utterances on human Intelligence ∞

1. “*wa qālū law kunnā nasma‘u aw na‘qilu mā kunnā fi aṣḥābi l-sa‘īri / And they will say, ‘Had we but heeded [divine revelation] or understood, we would not now be among the inmates of the Blazing Fire!’*” / QUR’ĀN *al-Mulk* 67:10 — depicting the lament and regret of disbelievers in Hell.
2. *mā ‘ubida llāhu bi-shayth afdala min al-‘aql / GOD is not worshipped with anything more surpassing than the intelligence-understanding.* Assigned to either » LUQMĀN, or to the 1st century H Yamani scholar & collector of ancient wisdom » Wahb b. Munabbih; this widespread wisdom motto originally prefaced a decad listing virtuous character traits of the Sage/ ‘*āqil* or faithful-one / *mu’min*.
3. The Kufan *mawlā* Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (executed 95/ 714; a pupil of Ibn ‘Abbās), recounting an earlier notion:
It has reached me that al-‘aql was divided into a thousand parts. Muḥammad Ṣ was granted nine hundred ninety-nine parts, and his community was given only one part. Likewise the prophets before him, save that which God excelled Muḥammad Ṣ with — for God elected the prophets on account of their ‘aql.
(Ibn Wathīmah al-Fārisī, *Bad’ al-Khalq wa Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, ed. R. G. Khoury, 128.)



“When God Created the **Intelligence...**” ⇔ “The **First** that God Created— the **Intellect**”

Archaic form of controversial *ḥadīth* narrative: *When / lammā khalaqa llāhu l-‘aqla qāla la-hu Aqbil...*

/Later revised version: *The First thing / awwalu mā khalaqa llāhu l-‘aqla, thummā qāla la-hu Aqbil...*

4. ‘Abdallāh b. Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d.290/ 903), in *zawā‘id*/addenda to his father’s *Kitāb al-Zuhd* II 300:
Isnād thru: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.110/ 729; the great Sunnī forebear of Ṣūfīs) [= ‘raised’ to the Prophet without intermediate link of Companion; later transmissions insert Companion-links for added authority] :

When GOD created the [divinely provisioned innate trait of] intelligence, HE said to him, ‘Face forward!’ so he drew near. Then HE said to him, ‘Face back!’ so he withdrew. (So GOD swore: ‘By MY Power and MY Glory!) I did not create a creature dearer to ME than thee! By means of thee I receive, and by means of thee I bestow.’

5. al-Barqī (d.274/887), *al-Maḥāsin*, ed. al-Ḥusaynī; & al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, ed. al-Ghaffārī I 10 §1:
Isnād thru: Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. ca. 117/ 735 or 114; the fifth Shī‘ah imām) :

When GOD created the intelligence, HE interrogated him [istantaqahu /examined or tested him]. Then HE said to him, ‘Come forward!’ so he drew near. Then HE said to him, ‘Go back!’ so he withdrew. Then HE said to him, ‘By MY Power and MY Glory! I did not create a creature dearer to ME than thee! I do not make you perfect (wa lā akmuluka) save in one whom I love (illā fi-man aḥabba). Truly, thee alone I command and thee alone I forbid. Thee alone I reward and thee alone I punish.’

6. The following expansion of the preceding narratives was taught by the 2nd/8th century imāms Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d.148/765) & his son Mūsā al-Kāzīm. It functions as a cosmic setting for a listing of seventy-five pairs of virtues & vices in a psychomachia of purgative mysticism and psychological dualism ('*aql*·light vs. *jahl*·darkness). / Among its recent commentators over many centuries was Āyatullāh Khomeini.

*...inna llāha khalaqa l-'Aqla wa huwa **awwalu khalq**ⁱⁿ khalaqahu min al-rūḥāniyyīn 'an yamīni l-'arshi min nūrihi ... thummā khalaqa l-Jahla min al-baḥri l-'ujāj zulmāniyy^{am} ...*

*GOD created al-'aql [intelligence·wisdom] and it is the **first** creature HE created among the 'spiritual·immaterial·beings' [i.e. bodiless hosts, Archangels] on the right side of the **Throne** from HIS **Light**. Then HE said to him, 'Face forward!' . . . 'Face back!' . . . 'I created thee as a great being and I have ennobled thee above all MY creatures!' Then HE created al-**jahl** [ignorance·folly] from the briny sea full of darkness. Then HE said to him, 'Face back!' and he withdrew. Then HE said to him 'Face forward!' – but he did **not** draw near. So HE said to him, 'Hast thou become prideful?!' and HE cursed him. Then He equipped al-'aql with seventy-five powers. . .*

7. The Basran Mu'āwiyah b. Qurrah al-Muzanī (d.113/731; known for upholding *qadar* doctrine):
 "People perform good (deeds), however they receive their recompense on Resurrection Day in proportion to (the measure of) their intelligence /...*yu'tawna ujūrahum yawma l-qiyāmati 'alā qadri 'uqūlihim.*"
8. In a narrative included in the 2nd/8th cent. H Baṣran-Baghdadi proto-Ṣūfī Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbar's *Kitāb al-'Aql*, the Companion 'Abdallāh Ibn Salām [d. 43/663, a convert from Judaism] questions the Prophet Muḥammad about the Throne /*al-'arsh* as the greatest of all God's creations. The Prophet informs Ibn Salām that the angels once asked God about 'the greatest creation', even greater than the Throne—namely *al-'aql*—beyond the comprehension even of angels. God then informed the angels:¹
... 'Knowledge of it cannot be fully comprehended! Do you have knowledge of the number of grains of sand?! ... Truly I created al-'aql as diverse sorts like the number of grains of sand. Of that I give some people a single grain, and to some two or three grains, and to some I give an entire sack; and I give to some of them one camel's load, to some two loads, and to some even more.'
 [when Ibn Salām asks the Prophet who receives such compounded measures, the Prophet replies:]
 "Those who **labor** in accordance with obedience to God, (are given measures of '*aql*') in proportion to their **deeds** and their **diligence** and their **certitude** ('*alā qadri a'mālihim wa jiddihim wa yaqīnihim*), and in proportion to the **Light** God placed in their hearts. Their custodian (*qayyim*) in all of that is *al-'aql* which God provided them. Thus in proportion to that [finite measure of intelligence endowed them by God] the worker among them **labors** and **rises in degrees** (*yartafi'u fī l-darajāt*)."

¹ al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir al-Uṣūl fī Ma'rifat Ahādīth al-Rasūl*, ed. A. 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Sā'ih & al-Sayyid al-Jumaylī (Cairo, Dār al-Dayyān li-l-Turāth, 1408/1988) II §206, on p.148–149 = an extract preserving certain original details; fuller text in Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Maṭālib al-'Āliyah* III 19–20 §2764, & in Ibn 'Arrāq al-Kinānī, *Tanzīh al-Sharī'ah al-Marfū'ah* I 219–20; also extracted by al-Ghazālī in *Iḥyā'* I.1/ v. I p.123–124.

9. al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. ca.430–450 H ?), the 11th century philologist, Qur’ān savant and moral philosopher who was a formative influence on the important thinker Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d.505/1111), treats ‘*aql* / ‘reason·intellect’ at length in his classic ethical manual *Expedient-Means to the Eminent Character-Traits of the Divine Law / al-Dharī‘ah ilā Makārim al-Sharī‘ah* [ed. Abū Zayd al-‘Ajāmī (Cairo 1985), *faṣl* 2, 167ff.]. Rāghib introduces this section treating *faḍīlat al-‘aql / the surpassing virtue of intelligence* by invoking the famous yet controversial *ḥadīth* assigned to the Prophet Muḥammad portraying God's creation of the human intellectual faculty :

“*al-‘Aql* is the first ‘immaterial·substance’ / *awwalu jawharⁱⁿ* brought into existence by God the Exalted, and the most sublime / *ashraf* (creation), according to the indication of what is reported that the Prophet *Ṣ* said:

The first thing GOD created is al-‘aql; then HE said to him ‘Face Forward!’ so he drew near; next HE said to him: ‘Turn Back!’ so he withdrew. Then GOD said: ‘By MY Power and MY Glory! I did not create any creature more esteemed by ME than thee. By means of thee do I receive, and by means of thee do I bestow; by means of thee do I reward, and by means of thee do I punish.’

Now, if ‘*aql* was a ‘non-essential accident’ / ‘*araḍ* [i.e. an existential quality subsisting in matter] according to what a certain group imagines [= Theologians], then it’s being the first of created beings / *awwalu makhlūqⁱⁿ* would not be true, for the reason that the existence of a thing pertaining to the non-essential accidents is inconceivable prior to the existence of an ‘underlying substance’ to carry it. [i.e. reason·intellect must be immaterial substance]

The Prophet *Ṣ* (also) said: “*There is no faith·practice for one lacking ‘aql* [‘innate moral·intelligence’] / *lā dīna li-man lā ‘aqla la-hu*”; and “*Do not marvel at a man's islām until you know the resolution of his ‘aql.*” [both *ḥadīths* are from Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbar’s *Book*] In accordance with this aspect pointed to by the Prophet, the Sages / *ḥukamā’* have said:

“One in whom their ‘*aql* does not predominate over their goodly traits, then this [i.e. the abdication of the commanding role of ‘moral·reason’] becomes their destruction by the predominance of evil traits over them.”

By means of *al-‘aql* the human becomes the Deputy of God / *khalīfat Allāh*; and if ‘*aql* was imagined to be elevated [beyond the reach of humans], then the surpassing-virtues / *al-faḍā’il* would disappear from the world, let alone from the human. By means of that which God the Exalted has implanted within the human, is one rightly-guided to whom God the Exalted grants success in purifying his soul / *tazkiyat nafsihi*, mentioned in the Exalted’s utterance: ‘*He, indeed, prospers who purifies it, and he is ruined who corrupts it* [Q *al-Shams* 91:9–10];’ and by means of (‘*aql*) does one attain the harvest of the Hereafter mentioned in the Exalted’s utterance: “*Whoso desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We give him increase in his harvest . . .* [Q *al-Shūrā* 42:20].” The fruit of the harvest of the Hereafter is detailed in seven things: subsistence without non-being, potency without incapacity,

knowledge without ignorance, wealth without poverty, security without fear, ease without labor, and glory without ignominy.

It is *al-'aql* which is pointed to in the Exalted's utterance: "*God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. His light is like unto a lustrous niche, wherein is a lamp. The lamp is inside a glass-globe. . . . [al-Nūr 24:35], till the end of the verse. Thus, the meaning of 'the Light of the heavens and the earth' is 'the illuminator /munawwir of the heavens and the earth'; and the Light is al-'aql, . . .*

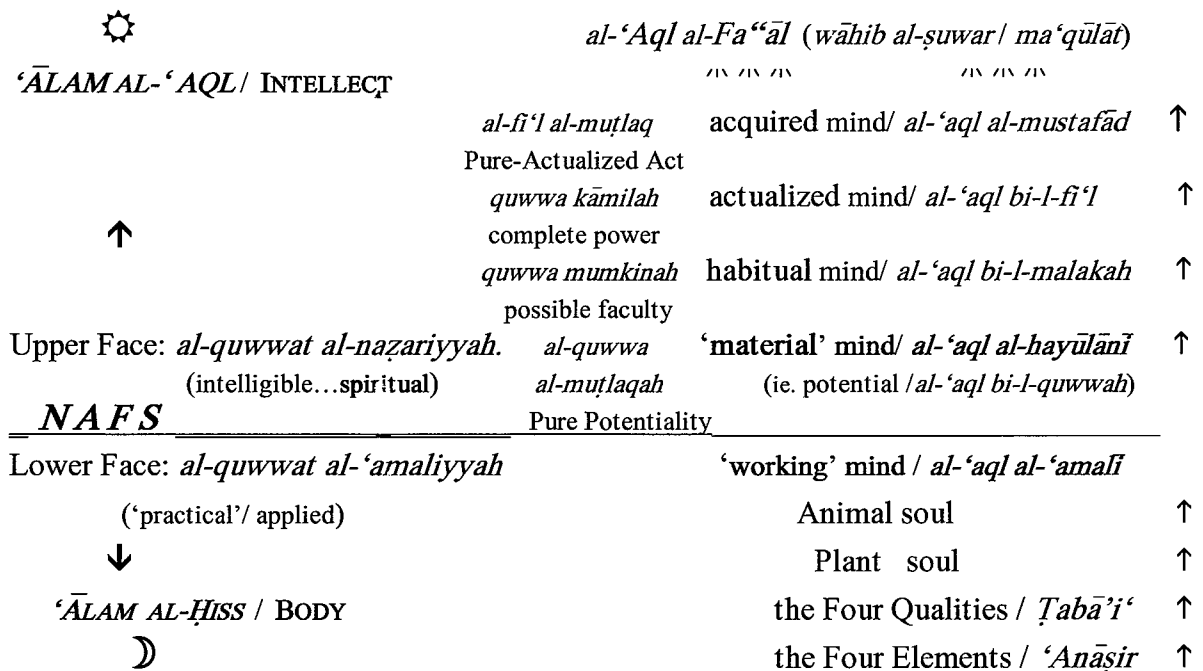
... [p.207] GOD, Mighty and Majestic, has two messengers /*rasūlāni* to HIS creatures: the first of them pertains to the interior /*min al-bāṭin* and it is *al-'aql*; the second pertains to the exterior /*min al-zāhir* and it is the Messenger [Prophet]. There is no possible means for anyone to benefit from the external Messenger without previously availing themselves of the internal. For the internal (messenger) apprehends/*ya'rifu* the veracity of the external (Messenger's) claim, and if not for (*'aql*) then the 'decisive argument' /*al-ḥujjah* by means of (the Prophet's) words would have no compelling force. For this reason, GOD hands the one who is skeptical concerning HIS Oneness and the veracity of HIS prophets' prophecy, over to *al-'aql*; thus HE bids him seek asylum in (*'aql*) regarding the cognition of their veracity. Thus *'aql* is a commander and religion is a reinforcement /*fa-l-'aql qā'id^{um} wa l-dīn madad^{um}*; if *'aql* did not exist then religion would not continue to be maintained, while if religion did not exist then *'aql* would become bewildered. The combination of the two is, as God the Exalted says, '*Light upon Light* [Q *al-Nūr* 24:35].'

Rāghib goes on to discuss the differences between inborn or innate intelligence (*gharīzī*) vs. acquired or learnt intelligence (*mustafād, muktasab*), employing the imagery of innate *'aql* as eyesight & acquired *'aql* as light, for the operation of insight. The imagery of light found in the famous 'Light verse' is aligned with guidance, and elsewhere Rāghib emphasizes that the dual guidance of *'aql* with the Qur'ān is *Light upon Light*, in that the Qur'ān is the oil feeding the lamp of *'aql*. He further comments on this verse (*Dharī'ah* 70) :

"...the Lamp is a parable for *al-'aql*, the Niche is a parable for the bosom of the faithful one, the Glass for his heart . . . , and the Oil is a parable for the Qur'ān; God clarifies that the Qur'ān supplies *al-'aql* as oil feeds the lamp, being all but sufficient on account of its self-evident clarity even if *al-'aql* does not assist it; then HE said '*Light upon Light*', namely the Light of the Qur'ān and the Light of *al-'aql*."

Rāghib emphasizes the cognitive function of intelligence in conjunction with praxis (p.176 "*al-īmān zubdatu l-'aqli wa l-'amali* /faith is the quintessence of intelligence and deeds"); the nexus of the understanding and the heart/*qalb*; and treats at length the relation of *'aql* with *'ilm* /knowledge (pp.169–180, 229–251). Rāghib's treatment of *'aql* was the model for Ghazālī's influential discussion in his *Iḥyā'* '*Ulūm al-Dīn /Revivification of Religious Sciences* (Cairo, 1982, I *kitab al-'Ilm, fī l-'aql* p.83ff.), an authoritative base text for normative Islamic thought. / Rāghib's passage indeed highlights the theological center-of-gravity for the Islamic religious *'aql* notion, at the same time that it displays the distinct impact of philosophical ideas, notably his definition of *'aql* as an immaterial-substance/*jawhar*, and his denial of its being an existential quality or 'accident' / *'arad*.

Hierarchy of Psychic Faculties, with Two Faces of Soul



What determines the ascending hierarchy of psychological faculties (from pure potentiality thru to pure actuality) is the nature of their relationship to intelligible immaterial realities. The two hierarchies of the Two Faces of Soul complement one another; Soul is one in essence ! These hierarchies form one long uninterrupted chain of psychic faculties that join the most elementary level (minerals, and plant soul) to the acquired intellect, whereby the human realizes his finality or union with the intelligible realities.

& please observe :

- ⇒ The ‘independently existing immaterial substance’ (*jawhar mujarrad*) when it is attached to the body as supervisor & director is called *nafs*; otherwise it is called ‘*aql*’ when it has no link (*ta‘alluq*) with matter and the sensory realm.
- ⇒ In one respect, the Active Intellect is other than the rational soul; yet in another respect the fully actualized human intellect (*al-‘aql al-mustafād*) is none other than *al-‘aql al-fa‘‘āl*.
- ⇒ While the intellect is one of the faculties of the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*), the intellectual faculty itself (*al-quwwat al-‘āqilah*) should be clearly differentiated from the rational soul, since the real agent is the soul itself, while the intellect is only the instrument (*ālāh*) for the soul; see eg. al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī’s *Ta‘rīfāt*.



(6)

“Fakhr al-Muhajjirīn”

Mawlā Muḥammad

(d. 1071 or 1086 ad) = pupil of M. Taqī al-Majlisī

11. Ṣāliḥ al-Mazandarānī, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, vol. I *kitāb al-‘aql wa l-jahl* p.67–77: *ḥadīth* §1 – on al-Bāqir.
ed. ‘A. A. al-Ghaffārī (Tehrum; al-Muktabat al-Islāmiyyah, 1384)

68: Abū Ja‘far said: “*lammā khalāqa llāhu l-‘aqla* / *When God created the Intelligence*” — namely, the Rational Soul, it being the ‘substance’ free of matter in itself apart from its action in bodies through regulating and directing (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqah wa hiya l-jawharu l-mujarradu ‘an al-māddati fī dhātīhi dūna fī ‘lihi fī l-abdān bi-l-taṣarrufi wa l-tadbīr*). This *jawhar* / ‘immaterial substance’ is called ‘*nafs*’ with respect to its attachment to the body; and ‘*‘aql*’ with respect to its freedom (from matter) and its link-connection to the World of the Holy (*nisbatīhi ilā ‘ālamī l-quḍs*), since in this latter aspect it intelligizes it’s [own] self (*ya‘qilu nafsaḥu*)—that is to say, it withholds and forbids (the self) from that which the former (bodily) aspect necessitates (claims·exacts / *yaqtaḍīhi*) of evils and malicious deeds that prohibit the return to this World.

The Rational Soul has surpassing levels / *marātib mutafāwīṭah* and differing states of strength and weakness, there being six:

First – the state of pure preparedness/propensity for perfections [= *al-‘aql al-hayūlānī*];

Second – the state in which ‘First Principles’/Primaries are witnessed [= *al-‘aql bi-l-malakāhī*];

Third – the state in which the ‘Theoreticals’ / *al-naẓariyyāt* are witnessed from the mirror of the ‘First Principles’ [= *al-‘aql bi-l-fī‘lī*];

Fourth – the state in which those ‘Theoreticals’ are witnessed after their cessation from (reflection in) this mirror and their storage without renewed acquisition [= *al-‘aql al-mustafād*], and this state is the state of ‘Knowledge of Certainty’ (‘*ilm al-yaqīn*’), being the state in which the Knowledge-Forms and the Sought-after certitudes (*al-ṣuwar al-‘ilmiyyah wa l-maṭālib al-yaqīniyyah*) are witnessed in it’s self [*fī dhātīhi*, i.e. in this level of soul];

Fifth – the state of the ‘Eye of Certainty’ (‘*ayn al-yaqīn*’), being the state in which those Knowledge-Forms and Sought-for certitudes are witnessed in the self/being of the Emanator / *fī dhāti l-mufīd* [*al-mufīd* = *al-‘aql al-fa‘āl*];

Sixth – the state of the ‘Reality of Certainty’ (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*), being the state in which (the human ‘*aql*’) contacts·connects with the Emanator by an ideal connection [*ittiṣālan ma‘nawiyyan*; i.e. an immaterial link] and meets the Emanator in a spiritual encounter, and this is the greatest state of the human faculties.

And these states belonging to the Soul/*nafs* have also been called Mind/‘*aql*. From here there appears the aspect of the dissimilarity of intellects (*tafāwut al-‘uqūl*) within humanity, and the aspect of their reception of completion and diminution. The term *al-‘aql* has been applied to the ‘substance’ separate from matter in its self-essence and its action. It is said that *al-‘aql* is the first creation from among the ‘Spirituals’ (*awwalu khalqin min al-rūḥāniyyīn*) . . .



12. The Safavid Twelver authority Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d.1110/1698) comments on imām Bāqir’s narrative (above §5) regarding: “what is meant by the ‘interrogation’ (of the intelligence) is its being made receptive to perceiving knowledge by means of (such interrogation); and that the command to ‘face forward’ and ‘turn back’ is an ‘ontological command’/*amran takwīnīyan* to make (the intelligence) capable of being a means for attaining both this world and the Hereafter and of felicity and misery, and the instrument for utilization in knowing the realities of affairs as well as for pondering over the intricacies of stratagems” [see Majlisī, *Mir‘āt al-‘Uqūl* v.I *kitāb al-‘aql wa l-jahl* p.25–31]. / This distinction was first propounded by the great Safavid era Sage Mīr Dāmād (d.1041/1631) in his *al-Ta‘līq ‘alā Kitāb al-Kāfī* (ed. Mahdī Rajā‘ī, p.19), commenting on the divine command *aqbil!* in al-Bāqir’s narrative in a penetrating nuanced manner :

“This command is one of ‘originative formation’/*al-takwīnī al-ijādī*, not one of ‘legislative commissioning·obligating’/*al-taklīfī at-tashrī‘ī*, and the *iqbāl* and *idbār* is the augmentation or diminution in every step in the degrees of the rational faculty (*al-quwwah al-‘āqilah* [perhaps? ‘the apprehending·perceiving faculty’]) and in the degrees of the practical faculty—in proportion to the knowledges and the character-traits both quantitatively and qualitatively—in accordance with each (specific individual) pertaining to the primary inborn preparedness·capacity /*al-isti‘dād al-awwal al-jibillī* in the first *fiṭrah*; since it is by means of actions and inactivity [i.e. suspension of works] in the second *fiṭrah* that what is in the first *fiṭrah* becomes augmented or becomes deficient... This intensification and lessening /*al-izdiyād wa l-intiqāṣ* pertains to the intrinsic properties of the ‘substance’ of the human intellect /*min khawāṣṣi jawhari l-‘aqli l-insānī*. Thus, for that reason it became the most beloved creature of GOD Exalted, and by that it merits the legislative obligating of bidding and forbidding from the HONORABLE PERSON, may HE be Praised... .”

On Mīr Dāmād’s views on first creation, see further Āyatullāh Rūḥallāh Khumaynī, *Junūd al-‘Aql wa l-Jahl* [his commentary on al-Ṣādiq’s *ḥadīth* of the seventy-five powers of ‘*aql & jahl*, published posthumously], Arabic trans. by Aḥmad al-Fihri (n.p., Intishārat Dhawī l-Qurbā, 1380 *shamsī* /1422/ 2001) on p.31; and idem, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah ilā l-Khilāfah wa l-Wilāyah*, Arabic text edited with Persian trans. by Aḥmad al-Fihri (Tehran, Intishārat Payām Āzādī, 1360 *shamsī* /Dec.1981) p.141–182 on ‘the First Issuant’ *al-ṣādir al-awwal* – see esp. 157–164 for Khomeini’s rather brilliant insights into al-Bāqir’s ‘*aql* creation narrative, coupled with a critique of Mīr Dāmād’s explanations.

