4. As for the Creator, He is truly the First Cause of everything acted upon, both mediately and immediately, because He is an agent, not acted upon in any way. Nevertheless, He is a proximate cause of the first thing acted upon, and a cause, through mediation, of the effects after the first thing acted upon.

5. This latter species of action—I mean the metaphorical, not real, action of the things that are acted upon—is sometimes divided into two divisions, since there is no genuine agent among the things acted upon, but there is genuinely something acted upon whose being acted upon is a cause of another thing's being acted upon. This general term—I mean "action"—applies to one of the two divisions whenever the effect passes away with the passing away of its agent's being acted upon. An example is the walking of someone who is walking; for when he stops walking, the walking passes away by virtue of the passing away of the walker's being acted upon, without leaving any perceptible effect.

6. The second division is [that] the effect on the one being acted upon persists after the one causing the effect by being acted upon ceases to be acted upon,[21] for example, the piece of sculpture, the building, and all such manufactured products; for the piece of sculpture, the building, and all manufactured products are [the craftsman's] effect, I mean that one who is acted upon who was a cause of their being affected. The term "production" properly applies to this species of action. This is sufficient to answer your question. The treatise is complete. Praise God, Lord of the worlds. Blessings be on His messenger, Muḥammad, and all his family.

## V. ON THE MEANS OF DISPELLING SORROWS[a]

1. [31] O, praiseworthy brother, may God preserve you from every depravity, protect you against every harm, and make you successful in the paths that will end at His satisfaction and ample reward. I understood your request for a description of arguments that will combat sorrows; put one in mind of any weaknesses; and provide protection against any pains you have.[b] The likes of your superior soul and balanced temperament has scorned the acquisition of vices and sought to protect [itself] against their harms and the persecution of their rule. I have described for you what I hope will be sufficient for you; may God protect you from all anxieties!

2. The cure will not be found for any pain whose causes are not known. Thus we should make clear what sorrow and its causes are so that its cures will be clear and easily administered. So we say that sorrow is a psychological pain that appears owing to the loss of loved things or the failure to obtain the things one desires. Thus, from what was said, the causes of sorrow also have become clear, since [sorrow] appears owing to the loss of something loved or the failure to obtain something desired.

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21 That is to say, the one producing the effect ceases to act because it itself is no longer being acted upon.

3. Now we should investigate whether anyone can be free of these causes; for it is impossible for anyone to obtain all of [32] his desires and to be safe from losing all the things he loves, because in the world of generation and corruption in which we find ourselves nothing exists permanently and perpetually. The permanent and perpetual necessarily exist only in the world of the intellect, which we can experience. So if we want neither to lose the things we love nor to fail to obtain what we desire, we should look to the world of the intellect and make what we love, own, and desire [come] from it. If we do that, we will be safe from someone forcibly taking our possessions or some power lording them over us; we shall [be safe against] losing what we loved of them since neither does misfortunes reach them nor does death cling to them. Since the objects of the intellect's inquiry attach to one another steadfastly, neither changing nor ceasing, [once] grasped, they do not escape.

4. As for sensible possessions and cherished and desired things, everyone briefly has them, and they are attainable[c] by every hand. It is impossible to preserve them and safeguard against their corruption, disappearance, and change. So <all of that>, after having been a source of comfort by its closeness, becomes a source of loneliness, after trusting that something will be of service, it becomes intractable, and after its embrace, it turns its back, since it is not natural that it be what it is not naturally. If we want to be uniquely ours one of the common states and dispositions that does not uniquely belong to one person to the exclusion of others but is a possession of everyone, and if we want one of the corruptible things to be incorruptible, and if we want only to be embraced by what both embraces and turns its back, and if we want what always passes away to be always permanent, then we have wanted something that is not natural of nature. Whoever wants what is not natural desires what does not exist, and whoever wants what does not exist seeks in vain, and the one who seeks in vain will be unhappy. So whoever desires things that briefly remain and desires that his possessions and cherished objects to be made up of [sensible things] will be unhappy, whereas he who has his desire fulfilled will be happy.

5. Therefore, we should strive to be happy and be on guard against being unhappy. Indeed, our desires and the things we love should be what we can attain. We should neither grieve over things that slip away nor seek unattainable sensible things. Instead, when we experience the things that people enjoy, such as the desirable things of the intellect—I mean in the measure that the soul needs to bring about permanence in its form during the allotted days of its duration [33] and to produce their like, as well as to drive pain from [the soul] and to provide it rest—then we shall have taken hold of [the things we desire] in the most befitting way in the measure of the need. Neither shall we desire them before we have laid eyes and hand on them, nor shall we make ourselves regretful and anxious after they leave us. Indeed, this belongs to the manners of the greatest kings, for they neither set out to meet anyone arriving nor escort anyone departing. Quite the contrary, they enjoy whatever they experience with the calmest action and most obvious indifference. The contrary of that belongs to the manners of the low-born masses and those of ill-natured base ways and stinginess; for they will greet anything that arrives and call out to anything that

departs. It is fitting of those possessed of intellects not to prefer the manners of the low-born masses and their base ways over the manners of the greatest kings.

6. Similarly, we say that when what we want does not exist, then we should want what does exist. We should not prefer perpetual sorrow over perpetual delight. Truly he who is unhappy about the disappearance of transitory things and the lack of the things that do not [in fact] exist, his sorrow will never wane because in every situation in his life he will lose a loved one or what [he] seeks will pass him by. Now sorrow and delight are contraries that do not remain in the soul together. So when one is sad, he is not delighted, and when he is delighted, he is not sad. Thus we should not be sad about what passes us by and the loss of cherished things, and through proper habit, we should make ourselves content in every situation so that we are always delighted.

7. We can see that [the role habit plays in what makes someone happy] clearly existing in the habits [of people], and we can see a clear indication of that from the various states and differences of people with respect to what they want and seek. Thus we see that the aesthete who takes joy in food, wine, women, clothes, and similar sensual delights and by these is blissfully delighted, sees whatever is contrary to those as deprivation and afflictions. We see that the obsessive gambler is blissfully delighted in his [life] despite the looting of his money, the idle lolling away of his days, and the vicissitude of becoming rich and poor through what he has gambled away, but in his opinion whatever is contrary to that and keeps him away from it are afflictions and deprivations. Again, we see that the highwayman is [set] in his evil ways and rough treatment—and because of [his evil ways he suffers] the atrocious and monstrous injuries resulting from flogging, dismemberment of limbs, and many painful wounds, while ceaselessly continuing to wage war until [his evil ways] ultimately result in his due reward: crucifixion. Yet he joyously considers all of these injuries marks of glory and honor, while considering the healthy things that oppose them as deprivation and afflictions. We also find that the transvestite is joyous, gay, and flamboyant with [his] infamous [34] depravities and disgraceful characteristics from which everyone [else] recoils and tries not to think about: the disfigurement of [their] appearance by tweezing [their] beards and affecting the appearance of women. By that [behavior] they see themselves as having surpassed everyone [else], and that [everyone else] has been deprived in what they have failed to obtain of that most generous good fortune. [The transvestite sees himself] as having been made special to the exclusion of [everyone else] by a most special delight and a most splendid delicate life, and he sees whatever is contrary to that as deprivation and afflictions.

8. Therefore, clearly the sensible things that one hates and loves are not something necessary by nature, but rather are [loved and hated] as a result of habits and regular practice. Hence, if the way to produce delight is through what we have experienced, and the consolation for our lost things is clearly facilitated through habit as we have described, then we should apply ourselves to winning over our souls to that and educating [our souls] until that becomes an intrinsic habit for us and an acquired disposition. I mean that in order that life will be pleasant for us during the

days of our appointed time, we [should] mold ourselves to a certain disposition, since that [disposition] does not actually belong to us by nature (I mean at the beginning of our habituation).

9. Sorrow results only from pains of the soul. Now it is necessary for us to dispel our bodily pains by means of bitter medicines, cauterization, amputation, the application of salves and dressing wounds, abstaining from certain foods and similar things that cure bodies, and for that we are willing to pay significant sums of money to whomever cures these ailments. The well-being of the soul and curing it from pains, however, take precedence over the well-being of the body and curing [the body] from its pains, just as the soul takes precedence over the body since the soul rules, whereas the body is ruled and the soul remains while the body expires. Also, the well-being of what remains and the concern for putting it into right order and keeping it well-balanced is more appropriate and takes precedence over maintaining the well-being and balance of what expires [and] inevitably is corruptible by nature.

10. [If all this is the case], then maintaining the soul and curing it from illness is more required of us than maintaining our bodies; for it is not by means of our bodies, but by means of our souls that we are what we are, because corporeality is something common to every body, whereas every living things' [state of] being alive is by means of its soul. Our souls are essential to us, and the welfare of our being is more required of us than the welfare of the things extraneous to us. Now our bodies are instruments for our souls by mean of which [the souls'] actions are made apparent, and so the maintenance of our being is more fitting to us than the maintenance of our instruments. So we should persevere in maintaining our souls through the unpleasantness and difficulty of therapy and enduring the pains involved in it many times [more than] what we endure of that in maintaining our bodies, along with the fact that maintaining our souls is less unpleasant and a much lighter burden than what is associated with that in the maintenance of bodies. [35] [That is] because maintaining our souls is only through our power of resolving to bring about our welfare, not by drinking medicine or the pains of iron and fire or paying [doctors'] fees. Quite the contrary, it is by forcing the soul into praiseworthy habits in the smallest affair in which forcing it is easy for it, and indeed from that one progresses to forcing [the soul] in greater [affairs]. When [the soul] is habituated to that by its being led in continuous degrees to what is greater than the former until the habit sticks with it in the most significant affair just as the habit sticks with it in the most trivial affair, then by means of what we have described, the habit comes easily and, by that, patience in the face of the loss of things and the consolation of things lacking comes easily.

11. One of the simple remedies for that is to reflect on sorrow and divide it into its classes. So we say: What gives rise to sorrow must either be our action or the action of another. If it is our action, then we should not do what makes us sad; for if we do what makes us sad, but refraining from doing it is up to us—since our acting and refraining from [acting] are up to us—then we have done either what we want to do or what we do not want to do. If we did what we wanted to do, but we never want to be sad, then we want what we do not want, and this is characteristic of one who

has lost his mind, and thus we have lost our minds. If what makes us sad is the action of someone else, then dispelling it is either up to us or not. If dispelling it is up to us, we should dispel it and not be sad. If dispelling it is not up to us, then we should not be sad before the cause of sorrow occurs—perhaps the one who can dispel it will do so before it befalls us, and perhaps the one who can bring about sorrow will not bring about sorrow and will not do what we feared. If we are sad before the cause of the sorrow occurs, then we have acquired for ourselves a sorrow that perhaps will not occur, either because the cause of the sorrow refrains from causing the sorrow or because the one who can dispel it from us dispels [it]. In that case, we would have acquired for ourselves a sorrow that someone else had not imparted to us. Now whoever makes his soul sad has harmed it, and whoever harms his soul is stupid, uncouth, and acting in the worst way, since he has brought harm to his soul. [That is] because if he were to do that to someone else, he would be stupid and acting wrongly, but his doing that to his own soul is all the more so. In that case, we should not consent to being the stupidest, the most uncouth, and the most wrong of all. [Even] if sorrow were something necessary, then what happens at the time of its cause's occurrence would be sufficient, which we ought not[d] anticipate before the occurrence [36] of its cause, where acting upon it before the occurrence of its cause is a kind of evil and is contemptible. Moreover, acting upon it at the time of the cause of sorrow requires that it is not to be acted upon before it is resisted, since there is in it one of the harms similar to what we have mentioned previously, [namely, doing a type of violence to one's own soul]. Therefore, resisting it is necessary at the time of its occurrence. Consolation necessarily dispels every cause of sorrow over a given amount of time—if the sad person is not overcome with sorrow or near the source of the sorrow. If[e] overcoming sorrow is a part of nature (since all of what is subject to generation does not last and is not perpetual in the particular instances of things), we should direct our efforts towards the strategy to facilitate the shortening of the time of the sorrow; for if we are remiss in that,[f] then we will be remiss in something else as well, [namely,] dispelling the misfortune that we can dispel from our souls. This is the sign of the unjust, uncouth, miserable, and stupid man, because the unjust man is one who drags out misfortune, and the most miserable man is one who does not try to dispel misfortune from his soul by means of whatever he can. So we should not be content with being miserable when we can be happy.

12. Part of a fine strategy for that is remembering the causes of our sorrow from which we have long since been consoled, and the causes of other peoples' sorrows whose sorrow we have witnessed and whom we have consoled, and comparing our current cause of sorrow with our past causes of sorrow and those we have witnessed and the solace to which they eventually led; for by this we will gain a great power to console like that by which Alexander, son of Philip, the Macedonian king, consoled his mother when his death was approaching. He wrote to her, among other things: "Think, O Mother of Alexander, about the fact that all of what is subject to generation and corruption is fleeting, and that your son is not satisfied with having the character of a petty king! At his death, do not be content with having the character

of the petty mothers of kings: order the construction of a magnificent city when you receive news [of the death] of Alexander! Send orders to the effect that the people in all the countries of Africa, Europe, and Asia will be assembled on a certain day in that city for food, drink, and festivities. Order that it be announced to them that anyone who has been struck by misfortune should not come to you, so that the funeral of Alexander [37] will be delightful, unlike other, sad, funerals." When she had commanded that, not a single person showed up at the time she had decreed. She said: "Why did the people disobey us, in spite of what we offered?" It was said to her: "You commanded that anyone who has been struck by misfortune [should] not come to you, but all the people have been struck by misfortune; so no one obeyed us." She said: "O, Alexander! How much your end resembles your beginning! You had wanted to console me in a perfect way for the misfortune [of your death], since I am neither the first nor the only person to suffer misfortune."

13. We also [have] to remember that everything we have missed or lost has been missed or lost by a great many people, and all of them came to terms with its loss, exhibiting joy and removed from sorrow; for someone whose child has died or doesn't have any children has many people like him in that, for instance, someone who doesn't have a child but is joyful, or someone whose child has died, but he has been consoled and is joyful. A similar thing happens with money, and all the sensible possessions of the world, and all the desires of the human soul. Therefore, sorrow is solely by convention, not by nature, because when we find a man who is stripped of a possession, he is sad, whereas many don't have that possession and are not sad. Therefore, he has devised that sorrow for himself in place of what he was stripped of or lost. So we should not devise for ourselves anything bad (since sorrow is something bad, as we said); for anyone who invents something bad for himself has lost his mind. We should not lose our minds because it is the height of contemptibility, because there is no difference between someone who has lost his mind and the rest of the nonrational animals. In fact, those are superior to him, because each of them has a timed, inherent, ongoing property like the law at its beginning, and [that] leads it in every situation, whereas the person who has lost his mind has neither order nor regularity in his actions; rather, they [are performed] according to the confusion and the imagination of the intellect. We should be ashamed to be in this miserable state, the object of pity by the rational, the object of laughter by the insolent.

14. We should also keep in mind that if we want not to suffer misfortune, what we really want is not to be at all, because misfortunes come about precisely through the corruption of things subject to corruption. If there were no corruption, [38] there would be no generated thing. Therefore, if we want there to be no misfortunes, we have also wanted there to be no generation and corruption in nature. If we want what is natural not to be, we have wanted the impossible. Whoever desires the impossible is deprived of what he wants, and whoever is deprived of what he wants is miserable. We should be ashamed of this characteristic and disdain this rank—I mean stupidity and misery; for one of them (I mean stupidity) produces contemptibility, and the other (I mean misery) produces debasement and maliciousness.

15. We should keep in mind that all the things that hands can reach are common to all people. They are merely near us, [but] we have no more right to possess them than do others. They are the possessions of the one who possesses them [only for] as long as he possesses them. As for the things that we have but are not common to others, others' hands cannot reach them and possess them. [They are] the soul's virtues that our souls possess; these are the ones about which we can be excused for feeling sad if our souls are bereft of them. It is not seemly for us to feel sad over what we have only through the exigencies of change, because anyone who feels sad over the fact that he does not naturally possess what [other] people have is envious. We should not teach our souls envy, since it is the worst evil, because anyone who wants evil for his enemies loves evil [itself], and anyone who wants evil is [himself] evil. More evil than this is anyone who wants evil for his friends. Anyone who wants to prevent his friend from [obtaining] what he wants to possess, possessing it being a good in his [friend's] view, has wanted for his friend a situation that he believes is evil. So he has wanted evil for his friends. Anyone who wants that no one else possesses what they have the right to obtain has wanted neither enemies nor friends to possess it. So, anyone who feels sad at someone else's obtaining it is envious. We should not accept this baseness.

16. We should also keep in mind that the common possessions that we have are a loan from a Lender, who is the Creator of the possessions (great is His praise), [Who] can retrieve His loan whenever He wants and give it to whomever He wants; for, if He had not given it to whomever He wants, it would not have come to us at all. Sometimes, we suppose that when He takes it from us by means of the hands of [our] enemies, He does it to harm us. We should bear in mind [in this instance] that the Lender [39] has the right to take back what He loaned and to do so by the hand of whomever He wants. Consequently, there is neither shame nor disgrace in this for us; rather, the shame and disgrace for us is to feel sad whenever the loans are taken back from us. These are part of the character traits of those who are greedy, stingy, of bad discernment, and of anyone who, once he is loaned something, assumes that he owns it. This is beyond the pale of gratefulness, because the least thing required of gratefulness on the part of the one loaned something is to return the loan whenever the lender wants it back, with a pleasant spirit and a joy to hasten to meet the desire of the lender for [the item] to be returned. Therefore, anyone who is sad at returning what has been loaned to him is ungrateful. We should be ashamed at ourselves for this character trait that departs from justice. We should also be ashamed of giving idiotic, childish excuses for our sadness at repaying the lender, not saying we are sad precisely because the Lender took His loan back by the hands of our enemies; for the messenger of the lender is not required, in taking back the loan, to be the way we desire in terms of his bearing, disposition, love of us, and timeliness. Since that is not required of him, it *is* required of us not to be sad that the messenger's configuration differs from our [expectations]; for this is one of the characteristics of children and anyone who lacks discernment.

17. We should keep in mind that, since the Lender does not take back the most costly of what He has loaned us but rather the meanest of it, then He has done to us

the utmost good. We will be most joyous through the lasting beauty of the noble gift [He has given] us and not be sad at the loss of what He has taken back from us, since, were He to reclaim everything He loaned us, we must not be sad but joyous, since our joy at that is part of gratitude to Him and consonant with His desire, as He has left behind the most superior [loan], I mean what no hand can reach and in which no one can share. [Moreover, we should] consult our souls, and if we want what has been reclaimed to stay with us, we [should] say that the meanest and the least has been taken back, while the superior and the most has remained as long as our souls remain.

18. We should bear in mind that if we must be sad for things that are lost and pass us by, we must be sad always, and [yet] we must *not* be sad at all. This is an egregious contradiction. [That is] because if [40] the cause of sorrow is the loss and passing of possessions that are external to us, and it is hateful that sorrow get to us (where its cause is what we have just mentioned), then if we neither have nor seek a possession external to us, then we shall not suffer the loss or passing [of an external possession]. So we must not have possessions at all lest we be sad. If we must not have possessions, and despite our lacking the possession there is sorrow, then sorrow is forever necessary if we do not have possessions. Therefore, there must always be sorrow, whether we have or do not have possessions. Therefore, if we must be sad always, we must not be sad at all, whether we have or do not have possessions. All of this is an absurd contradiction.

19. Thus, it is not necessary that we be sad, and whatever is not necessary, the rational person should neither think about nor act on, especially if it is harmful or painful. On the contrary, we must reduce possessions, since their absence or loss, being beyond our control, are a cause for sorrows; for [they] come from that alone. It is related about Socrates, the Athenian, that it was asked of him: "Why do you not get sad?" He responded: "Because I do not possess anything for which I would get sad at its loss." It is also reported about Nero, the Roman king, that someone gave him a gift of a wonderfully crafted, precious crystal dome, and it was presented to him while he was receiving a group of people, among whom was a philosopher of his time. His joy at [the gift] was great, and those present described its virtues at length. So he turned to the philosopher and asked: "What do you say about this dome?" He said: "I say that it shows a poverty about you and indicates a great misfortune that you will experience." [Nero] said: "How is that?" He said: "Because if it is lost, it is hopeless for you to own its like [again]. So it reveals your poverty in its like. If any damage happens to it that deprives you of it, a great misfortune will have been foisted upon you . . . ," and he went on in a similar vein. It was reported that what happened was exactly as the philosopher said. According to the report, one Spring day, the king went out to some nearby islands for amusement and ordered that the dome be brought along in what carried it in order that it be set up during his amusement, but then the boat in which it was sank, and [41] it could not be recovered. So a great misfortune, recognized as such by all his courtiers, befell the king, and although he tried to get something similar to it [right] until his death, he did not. Consequently we say:

"Anyone who wants to lessen his misfortunes, let him lessen his external possessions." In fact, it has been reported about the wise Socrates that for days he was taking shelter in a broken jar in the army camp, and he said one day when one of the youths was having a discussion with him: "We should not possess [anything] so as not to get sad." The youth said to him: "[What] if your jar breaks?" Socrates said to him: "The jar may break, but the place will not." The philosopher spoke truthfully, because there is a replacement for everything lost.

20. Consequently we say that the Creator of the universe (great is His praise!) did not create anything that is cut off from nature but rather is provided for; for we see the magnificent whale and the wondrously formed elephant, each of them in need of sustenance, shelter, habitat, and all the requirements necessary for them both, and all the creatures under them are provided for with the measure of their need for subsistence prepared for them. Nothing considered to be missing is missing from their good life. All of them have a pleasant life as long as they touch nothing harmful, with the exception of humans; for, despite being increased by the virtue through which he came to have dominion over all the animals, governing and managing them all, he is stupid about managing his own soul. This is a sign of the absence of intellect. We should be ashamed of anyone lacking an intellect;[g] for, despite being increased by rational discernment, he wants to possess many things for which he has no need in sustaining himself and the improvement of his life, such as the garnishing of foods, pictures of animals and other things, sculpting and ornamenting what he sees, as well as things he hears and smells that distract him from things of genuine benefit to him and distance him from his worldly ease. All of these will gain him [only] hardship in his search for them, pain at his losing them, and distress at their passing him by; for with every desired thing that is lost, there is misfortune, and with everything that passes him by, there is distress and sadness, and with the anticipation of every absent thing, there is sorrow and anxiety, and after every hope, there is fear, because the fearful one is distracted and worried. [42] Consequently we say that anyone who occupies himself with increasing[h] his external possessions will miss out on his eternal life, his temporal life will be dreary, his illnesses will increase, and his pains will not cease.

21. In their passage through this ephemeral world—its fading[i] states, its deceitful images, its ends crying lie to its beginnings (forsaken is the one who trusts it! pitiable is the one who is misled by it!)—people resemble a group traveling by boat to a destination they intend to be their homeland.[22] The captain brought them to a headland to get some provisions. The boat anchored and anyone in the boat needing provisions disembarked. Some, having concluded what they had disembarked for, returned to the boat without dallying for anything. So they got the roomiest berths and the most comfortable seats without any competitors or rivals preventing that.

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22 The parable of the ship, which follows, appears to be taken from the Stoic philosopher Epictetus (c. 55–135), *Enchiridion,* 7.

22. Some, however, stopped to see the meadows blooming with all kinds of flowers; to smell all the different kinds of scents of those flowering meadows and the stands of trim trees bearing wondrous kinds of fruit; to hear the pleasant songs of the hidden birds; to pick out, in the earth of that land, different colored stones and pretty shells with strange shapes and wondrous markings. [They did all of this] without leaving their landing site in which their needs were met. They then returned to their places on the boat, the best, most spacious places with the softest seats having already been taken before [them].

23. Others eagerly devoted themselves to gathering up those shells and stones and nearby fruits and flowers, without leaving the place where they had met their needs. So they returned, burdened by their loads, servants of the stones of the earth, and its shells and flowers that were perishing, changing from what shortly before had deceived them, and the fruits that would soon become spoiled and disgusting to those nearby. They then discovered that others had already taken the roomiest spaces on the boat; and they had to sit in the cramped, rough, and uneven ones. The stones, shells, flowers, and fruit that they had valued earlier became a burden in those cramped, rough, and uneven places, preventing them from the rest that came to the others who had preceded them to the roomiest places and who did not have stones nearby that further cramped their spaces and required them to guard and protect them and ward off damages to them. [43] Most of their relaxation time was broken up into [fretting over] the stones not being there, and worries about it, many fears about it, and the intense devotion of [their] souls to their being nearby. The legacy of the stones bequeathed regret, sorrow, and worries every time they or even one of them was missing.

24. Some [of the passengers] had[j] penetrated far into those fields and stands of trees, forgetting about the boat and the place that they had intended to be their homeland, being preoccupied with collecting those stones, shells, and flowers, distracted by eating that fruit from recollecting their homeland and the grief to which they would come at the boat. In that [foray], they were not free of successive fears, continuous calamities, and the anxiety of harm from a fleeing wild beast, a poisonous snake, a frightening noise, and a hanging branch that would scratch and wound their faces and the rest of their bodies, or a thorn sticking to a foot requiring a long time to heal, or mud holding them back, soiling and destroying their clothes that covered their private parts, or a piercing branch tearing their cloaks, or a hanging vine preventing their progress.[k]

25. When the captain of the boat called to them that he was weighing anchor, some of them returned, burdened with what they had collected, and so suffered the harms we have described. No sooner had they arrived at the boat than they found no place except for cramped, uncomfortable ones that allowed for no rest and led them to contract fatal diseases. For some, the captain's call did not reach them, because they had gone so far into the stands of trees and tramping through the muddy fields. So the boat left, and they were in the place, cut off from their homelands, exposed to its deadly, vicious dangers and horrific injuries. Some became the prey of savage beasts; some became caught up in diversions and distractions. Some became soiled in

the muddy places; still others were bitten by the poisonous snakes. They became deserted, disgusting, and putrid [corpses] with their limbs torn away, and their conditions horrific, as [objects of] pity for whomever did not know them and a lesson to whomever knew them as cut off from their homelands to which they had intended to go.

26. As for those who reached the boat burdened with what they considered valuable of what they had gathered (and which deceived their minds, shackled their freedom, did away with their rest, cramped their berths, and caused them anxiety), [they found that] it did not take long before those flowers wilted and the colors on those stones faded (since the freshening moisture they and their color had was gone). The shells, in their brackish [water] and with their horrible stink, [also] changed and became a burden and a harmful companion for them. There was nothing to do with them besides throw them into [44] the sea. Whatever prevented their hastening [back to the boat], spoiled their lives, made them sad at their places, and robbed their freedom, became a burden and left them empty-handed. No sooner had they reached the place [on board the boat] than their illnesses had multiplied because of [the effects] of the putrid smells on them and the exhaustion of strength through the hardship affecting them from the cramped quarters and the serious attention to [their illnesses and exhaustion], which brought them ruin and harm. Some perished before reaching their berths. Some arrived at theirs weak and ill. As for those who stayed behind and whose preoccupation was to the extent of sightseeing and breathing in the fresh air, they missed only the spacious and comfortable berths. As for those who returned to the boat without being preoccupied by any of what their senses took in except for whatever their eyes saw while they were going to meet their needs, then they got back early to the most spacious and comfortable berths, and would reach their homeland relaxed.

27. This parable is like our passage through this world to the true world and the simile of the conditions of the travelers in this world. How wretched it is for us to be deceived by the pebbles of the earth, the shells of the sea, the flowers of trees, and the chaff of plants, [all] of which is paltry [and yet] a burden to us! To our mind, we have no cure from their horribleness besides burying them in some part of the ground, in the depths of the sea, or in the flames of a fire, while we block our noses to their putrid stench, avert our eyes from them because they are repulsive, and seek distance from them because we are repelled when they are close and our souls are adverse to experiencing them; for these are the causes of our sorrow that occupy this place for us. If we are sad, we should rightly be sad at being cut off from our true place and coming to a wide expanse of sea [from which] the boat cannot deliver us to our true homelands, in which there are no misfortunes because there is no lack nor anxieties in it, because there are no things that pass us by, because there is nothing that is not rightful [for us] in that place. There, one does not want anything that he should not want. As for what should be wanted, there is with the one who wants neither anything that is kept separate nor anything that produces harm. We should be sad precisely at being deprived of not being sad; for this is a property of reason. As for sorrow at being deprived of being sad, this is a property of stupidity.

28. We ought to keep in mind that we should not hate what is not evil. It is precisely what is evil that we should hate. If that is firmly fixed in our memory, its attention to dispelling the sensible causes of sorrow is thereby strengthened. We do not suppose that anything is more evil than death, but death is not evil; the fear of death is only what is evil. Death is no more than the perfection of our nature. If there were no death, there would certainly be no man, because the definition of man is [45] is a living, rational, *mortal* being. The definition is thus based on the nature, I mean the nature of man is that he is a living, rational, *mortal* being. So, if there is no death, there is no man, because if someone did not die, he would not be a man. Therefore, it is not evil to be what we are; what is evil is precisely to be what we are not. Thus, the evil thing would be that there would be no death, because if there were no [death], there would be no man. Therefore, death is not evil. Consequently, if what is thought by all to be the most evil thing is not evil, then anything less evil, such as lost and lacking sensory things, is not evil.

29. Therefore, the cause of the opinion that death is evil—since it has been proved that it is *not* evil—ought to have its origin in ignorance about the state of life and death. For instance, I might say that if food were possessed of an intellect and it was in the liver, and yet it had not experienced anything else, and then it is broken down in order to be transported from [the liver], that would sadden it, even though it is being transported from [the liver] to a physical constitution of a form and reaching something closer to being perfect. So if it goes into the testicles and changes into sperm, where it is [again] broken down in order to be transported to the womb, which is more spacious than the testicles, that would cause it great sorrow. If it were said to it after it had come to the womb that it would be returned to the testicles, that would cause it to be even sadder than it was originally, because of its recollection of the cramped space of the testicles and its distance from the perfection of the human form when its condition in them is compared to its condition in the womb. Also, if it were going to be roused from the womb into the spaciousness and wideness of this world, that would make it very sad. Then, when it had come out to this spaciousness and perfection, and next it was said to it that it would be returned to the womb, when it possessed all the earth and everything in it, it would relinquish it [all] not to return to the womb. Similarly, while it is in this place that is the world, it is very apprehensive about departing from it. So, when it comes to the place of the intellect—[a place that] lacks sensory pains and the sensory possessions that are the sources[l] of all sensory and psychological pains <. . .>[m] of which neither hands nor harm can take hold, and so its possessor is never separated from his possession—if [at that time] it were told "you will be returned to this [earthly] world that you were in," then its anxiety would be many times greater than the anxiety [it felt when] it was said to it, "you will be returned from this worldly expanse to within the womb." [46]

30. It has been explained, therefore, how souls that are weak in their discernment and partial to the senses have misconstrued death and have assumed it is a horrible thing when it is not. Thus, being deprived of all the things, like sensible possessions, on this side of earthly life is not evil; but rather feeling sad about them

is evil, because [then] they are unnecessary pains we foist upon our souls. When we are like that, we have an evil nature and an evil life; for anyone who has consented to that has made evil choices and is devoid of intellect, because the intellect puts things in their rightful places, whereas to be devoid of intellect is to put things elsewhere than in their rightful places and to suppose that they are the direct opposite of what they [really] are.

31. With every thing that passes us by and that we lack, we should keep in mind to be concerned about remembering every possession of the senses or the intellect that we continue to have and counting them off from past ones; for remembering what we continue to have is a solace in the face of misfortunes. Moreover, with every cause of sorrow due to lost or spoiled[n] sensible possessions, we [can] keep in mind that the anticipation of misfortune after [the loss of] our sensible possessions has been eliminated, reducing some of the causes of sorrow; for, if that is fixed in our memory, it transforms the causes of sorrow from [having] the nature of misfortunes to [having] the nature of blessings. Every time a misfortune overcomes us, it will be a blessing for us, because, if such misfortunes reduce our misfortunes, they are blessings. [This is so] because, if the misfortune is a cause of sorrow in our opinion, then everything that reduces the cause of sorrow is a blessing. So, every time we lose a sensible possession, we acquire a misfortune that, for our souls, is a blessing.

32. Therefore, we say that whoever does not [desire to] possess the things that are outside his control *does* control the things that make slaves of kings, I mean the anger and desire that are the sources of vices and pains. The greatest illness, then, is the illness of the soul, more so than [any] illness of the body, as we said before, because anyone who is not influenced deleteriously by anger and desire does not have them as ruler over himself. Whoever is so influenced has them as ruler and king over himself, making him act when they want. So, it is true that anyone who does not possess the things that are outside his control *does* control the things that make slaves of kings. He conquers most of the enemies that are with him in his fortress, [enemies] the sharp deceits of whose weapons cannot be guarded against by the protection of iron; in their dwellings, one is not safe from the most abominable sins and the most monstrous ruin. [47]

33. So, praiseworthy brother, make these counsels fixed models in your soul, by which you will save yourself from the damages of sorrow and reach the most virtuous homeland of the abode of permanence and the dwelling place of the righteous. May God bring your happiness to perfection in your two abodes, give you a surfeit of virtues in both. [May He] make you one of the guided and blessed by reaping the harvest of reason, and keep you far from the contemptible lowliness of ignorance. [The treatise] is sufficient for what you requested, even though the kinds of discourse about [the topic] are many. When the sought-after goal is reached, the end of what was wanted has been obtained, even if the paths to the goal are so many as to be virtually infinite. May God give you such protection in your present life and the hereafter that by it you can reach the most perfect ease and the best life!

# Ar-Rāzī

Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakarīyā ar-Rāzī was born in Rayy near present-day Tehran in Iran around 864, and he died there as well in either 925 or 932. In the Arabic intellectual tradition ar-Rāzī was famous as a doctor—he was called "the unsurpassed physician in Islam"—and infamous as a philosopher, labeled a "freethinker," "schismatic," and even an "infidel." A polymath and voluminous in his writings, ar-Rāzī composed approximately two hundred books covering virtually the whole gamut of scientific and philosophical topics; most of these works dealt with issues in medicine, but still more than a third were dedicated to philosophy. From what is available of his writings it is clear that ar-Rāzī was a nonconformist who refused to accept things solely on the basis of authority, no matter who or what that authority might be. Thus, in medicine he readily challenged such illustrious ancient authorities as Hippocrates and Galen, correcting and emending their claims on the basis of his own observations and medical experience; he developed his own metaphysical system—a medley of Greek and perhaps Sabean influences—at odds with many of the features of Neoplatonized Aristotelianism, which was already gaining prominence among Arabic-speaking philosophers; and most notoriously, he denied the need for revelation and prophecy, arguing that at best they are superfluous, since we have reason, and at worst, morally repugnant, since they lead to schisms and bloodshed.

The influence of ar-Rāzī's thoughts on medicine was not limited to the Islamic world but also extended into Latin Europe, where as early as the twelfth century some of his medical works were being translated. Indeed, ar-Rāzī's works were still being read in Europe as late as the sixteenth century. His philosophical writings, however, did not fare as well. We thus have to glean our understanding of his philosophical thought from short extant works, fragments, and *testimonia*, which most frequently are drawn from hostile sources. The loss of the greater part of his philosophical corpus is no doubt due in large measure to the repugnance later thinkers had for the heterodox aspects of his thought, with its rejection of important features of both Aristotelianism and Islam itself.

## I. *THE PHILOSOPHER'S WAY OF LIFE*[a]

1. [99] Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakarīyā ar-Rāzī (may God augment his soul with refreshment and repose!) said the following.

2. When scholars of reflection, discernment, and intellectual achievement see us mixing with the people and pursuing various ways to earn a living, they chastise and disdain us. They argue that we have abandoned the life of philosophy, not to mention the model of our leader Socrates, about whom it is related that he would not