

Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār

In the absence of reliable biographical data concerning this important Mu‘tazilite figure, what is said about his life should be viewed with caution. His full name appears to have been Abu’l-Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad Hamadānī also known by the honorific title ‘al-Qāḍī’ (the Judge) or ‘Qāḍī al-Quḍāt’ (The Judge of Judges) and sometimes simply called ‘al-Hamadānī’. There is no information regarding the exact date of his birth but given the possible date of his death as 414–416/1023–1025 and the fact that he lived to be ninety, it is safe to assume that he must have been born around 310/932 in Asadābād near the modern city of Hamadān in Iran.

Having received his early education in Hamadān and Iṣfahān, he first became an Ash‘arite but later in life at Baṣra, while studying with Abū Ishāq, he came under the influence of the Mu‘tazilites. His further studies in Baghdad with Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Baṣrī made his Mu‘tazilite convictions even deeper. Sometime after 360/982, at the invitation of the wazīr Ṣāḥib ibn ‘Abbād, al-Jabbār went to Rayy where he assumed the position of chief judge.

In addition to Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Baṣrī, ‘Abd al-Jabbār studied with two other teachers, Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad ibn al-Jubbā‘ī and Abū Hāshim ‘Abd al-Salām ibn al-Jubbā‘ī whom ‘Abd al-Jabbār tells us were his real teachers. As to the students of ‘Abd al-Jabbār, detailed biographies of thirty-six of them are known. Among the more notable of them one can mention Abū Rashīd Sa‘īd al-Nayshābūrī, a central figure in the school of Baghdad, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Mattawayh and finally Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, a Jewish theologian belonging to the school of Karaism which had borrowed much from Islamic sources.

‘Abd al-Jabbār also had his opponents who were primarily among the Ash‘arites. Ibn Kullāb who was the central figure of the School of Kullābiyyah and Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam, from an extensive list about whom ‘Abd al-Jabbār writes, were also his opponents.

From a doctrinal point of view, ‘Abd al-Jabbār was first and foremost a Mu‘tazilite who undertook a major and comprehensive attempt to reconcile reason

and revelation. He himself considered his major contribution to be the methodical and systematic treatment of theological issues. His work is in fact a synthesis of Mu'tazilite theology. It is the absence of such a methodology that 'Abd al-Jabbār considers to be the cause of errors in theological discussions.

On the question of God, 'Abd al-Jabbār argues that human intuition bears witness to His existence without any need for assistance, be it intellectual or revelatory in nature, although he of course accepts the truth of revelation. 'Abd al-Jabbār comments critically on a wide range of Aristotelian themes such as logic, epistemology, ontology, cosmology, metaphysics and theodicy. On a number of issues, such as the body-soul distinction, 'Abd al-Jabbār rejects the Aristotelian view and instead argues for a more unified perspective.

'Abd al-Jabbār has a special place in the history of Islamic theology for it is through his magnum opus, *al-Mughnī* (The Book That Makes Others Superfluous), that our knowledge of the Mu'tazilites has increased substantially. *Al-Mughnī*, which etymologically means 'that which contains what is essential and makes other things superfluous', was found in Yemen in the early 1950s. The discovery of this encyclopedic work transformed the knowledge that contemporary scholars have of the whole school of Mu'tazilite theology.

We have included in this chapter several sections of this book that are mainly concerned with the question of the possibility of having a beatific vision of God. In the first the claim that we can see God now is refuted, and in the second the claim that there is a sixth sense by which we see the eternal is refuted. Continuing with the same theme, 'Abd al-Jabbār goes on to argue that the reason we do not see God is not because of the weakness of our vision or the scarcity of the eye's rays. The final section is titled 'A refutation of the claim that there is a sixth sense by which we see the Eternal, May He Be Exalted, or other things, although it is among those things that it is impossible to see by this sense'.

M. Aminrazavi

THE BOOK THAT MAKES OTHERS SUPERFLUOUS

al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawhīd wa'l-'adl

Translated for this volume by Daniel C. Peterson based on Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār's *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawhīd wa'l-'adl* (Cairo, 1950), section 4, pp. 99–112 and 113–114.

A Refutation of the Claim That We See God Now

What indicates that we do not see Him now is the fact that, if we saw Him, we would necessarily know Him, for it is by the logic of that which we see, when the obscurity that veils it is removed, that we know it as it is. For that reason we know all of the visible things in their variety when we see them as colours and as substances. It is the same with all of the perceptibles. Still, none of us [fully] knows what he sees, owing to the ambiguities or similarities that occur. But we know that rational obscurities or ambiguities, on account of which we fail to know what we see, do not occur in Him, may He be exalted, because they occur only in what is obscured by something else; by reason of its connection with it by way of incarnation, or by way of proximity, or by its being similar or equivalent to something else, or by imagining that some of these things apply to Him.

But the impossibility of all of that with regard to God, may He be praised, is well known, for, if He were visible to us, we would inevitably know Him. Therefore, if that claim is invalid on account of what we find in ourselves, namely, that we lack necessary knowledge of Him and in view of the fact that our deductive reasoning about Him is valid, and the negation of knowledge about Him comes with the entry of obscurities, and in view of the fact that it is known that, among those who are legally accountable, there are those who deny His existence, as well as those who believe Him to be what He is not, it is known that He is not visible to us now.

No one should say, 'Have you considered that there might be, among all those who are legally accountable, someone who sees Him—as certain of them claim—even if you people do not see Him?' Let it be said to him, if one of those who are legally accountable saw Him, all would see Him. And if that is true of all of them, it is wrong to suppose that one of them might be privileged to see Him while another is not, and it is not valid to suppose that someone not legally responsible would be favoured with that privilege in preference to those who are legally accountable for that is simply not true of visible things as we have made clear previously.

In addition, nobody claims that he sees God, may He be praised, except those who believe Him to be a body of a particular shape, or who believe that He incarnates Himself in bodies. And we have shown the corruption of such views. And discussion on the vision of God logically follows after discussion of corporeality.

And if it is said, 'Why do you not say that He, may He be exalted, does not create in us knowledge of Him even if we see Him in reality? For, if He created that in us, we would be free of the obligation that is not valid except with the acquisition of knowledge about Him.' Let it be said to that person, it is by the logic of that which we see, when our seeing is coupled with perfection of intellect, that we inevitably know it. Indeed, the loss of knowledge necessarily implies the cessation of intellect. For it is not true, when the intellect is sound, that one can see blackness and not know it, while at the same time both see and know whiteness.

And this should imply, even if we say that knowledge of perceptible things is an act of God, that it is never true when sound mind is present that He fails to produce such knowledge in us. If we allowed that, it would lead to gross ignorance and to our mistrusting objects of perception. We could not be certain of their actual condition. Thus, we have critiqued that assertion, and the invalidity of the question is established.

Moreover, it should have been possible for those who are not legally accountable to know their Lord by seeing Him. For there is no obstacle blocking that—if that which prevents one from knowing Him is, as they have asserted, our being legally accountable—as it follows, according to this saying (i.e., that holding someone accountable is not true, unless people do not know what they see), that God does not commission anyone, because it leads to the conclusion that the ascription of responsibility is conditioned upon something that, if it happened, would necessarily imply the cessation of intellect. And this would rightly establish as repulsive the notion of moral accountability.

Furthermore, we should have known Him, for that would not rule out the validity of requiring accountability if He were visible, because it would necessitate that He be among the perceptibles. But, rather, this statement is true for us in view of the fact that it is established that attainment to knowledge of Him by acquisition is benevolence to us in all that we are intent upon. And if He were visible and perceptible, that would not be true.

On the other hand, there is no difference between the assertion of someone who says, 'Truly, we see Him, may He be exalted, even if we do not know Him,' and the assertion of someone else who says, 'Truly, we hear Him, and we perceive Him by the organs of taste and smell, even if we do not know Him.' And the corruption of that demands the invalidity of this proposition.

In addition, it would oblige us to grant that we see nonexistent things, even if we do not know them, and that we see everything that, in fact, we do not see (e.g. tastes and smells and belief and consciences), even if we do not know them. And we would not guarantee that we can see everything that we perceive by all the senses. Rather, we perceive all the perceptibles by the cause of life, just as we perceive it by the senses, even if we do not know it. And one who says this has forged upon

himself a chain of ignorance that he cannot handle with talk of accountability and the principles of argumentation.

Thus, it has been confirmed by this statement that we do not now see the Eternal One, may He be exalted.

A Refutation of the Claim That there is a Sixth Sense by Which We See the Eternal, May He Be Exalted, or Other Things, Although it is among Those Things that it is Impossible to See by This Sense

Know that someone who disagrees with that inevitably falls into one or the other of two categories. Either he says that these visible things are seen by it in the same way that things are seen with the eye (although it is distinguished by the fact that the Eternal, may He be exalted, is seen by it), or he says that it is distinguished by the fact that the perceptibles are perceived by it in a way different from the vision of the eye and the perception that occurs by means of all the other senses. And that the Eternal, may He be praised, is perceived by it, or belief and the will.

Perhaps he opts for the first category. What points to its falsity is the fact that we know that this sense, by which God is allegedly seen, differs in its constitution and its range and its restriction and its colour and so on, through all of the qualities by which it is distinguished. Yet we know, even if it varies, that it shares in the fact that it is not true that we see by one of them anything but what we see by all of them. And it is known that the contradiction of that sense to this rational sense is no greater than the contradiction of some of them to others, for it cannot be said that it is contradictory to this sense by nature, since their essences are similar. We have made clear that a difference of attributes has no impact in this matter. And if, despite their variation, they share in the fact that we see nothing by one of them that we do not see by all of them, it is necessarily untrue that we see the Eternal, may He be exalted, by that sense, just as it is impossible that we see Him by these rational senses. If we allowed the contrary of that, we could not believe in His being able, may He be exalted, to create a faculty in certain bodies by which he makes bodies and colours, although that is impossible by this faculty. Since that is refuted on the basis of the knowledge that the faculties do not differ even if their objects differ, the contradiction of those faculties to it is like the contrary of some of them to others. And since that is true of the faculties, a similar judgment is entailed with regard to the senses, for the division of the attributes of the senses is like the difference of the natures of the faculties. If it is necessary, on the basis of knowledge that a difference of the natures of the faculties does not affect the objects of those faculties, there follows the refutation of the claim of a faculty connected with none of these categories. And if division in the attributes of the sense of the eye does not affect what we see by it, then it is not true that we see by the sixth sense something that is impossible to see by it.

Our Shaykh, Abū Hāshim, may God have mercy upon him, said: If God sees His own nature—and it is not true, despite the difference between His nature and our natures and the natures of the senses that He see what is impossible for us to see—since difference in nature is more decisive than a division of attributes, if they do not have an impact in this issue surely a difference of attributes will not. One who advances this proposition is obliged to allow the perception of the Eternal, may He be exalted, from every aspect by which the perceptibles are perceived. And he declares Him to be perceptible in all these aspects by the sense that he mentions, and by many senses. And he necessarily affirms the possibility of seeing the nonexistent by means of that sense, as well as the possibility that a thing can be seen by this sense as what it is not. And the allowance that He may be seen by that sense necessitates what cannot truly be seen according to sight. And he necessarily affirms ignorance almost beyond reckoning, in the manner of the Kullābiyyah in their affirmation of an ancient word contrary to this word. Thus, the affirmation of it is necessarily false.

As for a discussion of those who affirm a sixth sense in a different way, and claim that the Eternal, may He be exalted, is perceived by it in a different way than that by which these senses perceive the perceptible, our Shaykh, Abū Hāshim, may God have mercy upon him, points to the falsity of this proposition, saying that it would be necessary that one of us finds damage by the loss of this sense, just as he finds harm and loss in the loss of the sense of the eye. And in our knowledge that we do not find a loss in that is an indication of the falsity of what they connect with it.

And he made clear, may God have mercy upon him, that the deficiency that the blind man recognizes does not depend upon his knowledge that there is a sense by which one sees, because the blind man who cannot see at all and does not know the manner of the operation of this sense, when it is granted to him and it is permitted that he see by it and know, by it, some of the objects of knowledge, recognizes the deficiency in himself. So, likewise, it is necessary that we find the deficiency in ourselves implied by our lack of the sixth sense, if we allow its being among the faculties as they think.

And he made clear that a human being recognizes a defect in himself by the lack of organs, because he needs them if they existed, for if he had organs for speech or for strength, his condition would be such that he would attain benefits by their means and would repel harm quite differently from what the situation is at present. Thus it is inevitable that he should recognize a deficiency in himself, as we have said. Likewise, if there were among the faculties another sense by which some of the perceptibles were perceived, along with the knowledge of their manner of being, that would necessitate his recognition of a defect when it was lost. And it is not necessary that one of us recognize a defect if he did not attain to an object of desire on account of more than what he desired, for he recognizes the defect, rather, in what necessitates its loss, the deficiency of his state with regard to that

by which he profits or with which he repels injuries. As for what he does not covet at all, that is not necessary with regard to it. And for this reason the believer in paradise is not in a state of deficiency owing to the insufficiency of his desire when contrasted with the desire of the prophets. If he were, if the object of his desire fell short of the extent of need, he would unavoidably recognize a deficiency. And for this reason one does not recognize a defect on account of the smallness of his body as compared with the body of an elephant, since he has no need of a large body to procure benefits and to repel harm. And we know that, if there were a faculty of a sixth sense, by which we would perceive what it is impossible that we perceive by these senses, there would be in us a stronger need by which we would attain to knowledge of the perceptibles, and if it were like that, it would necessitate that the rational man would recognize a deficiency in himself, just as we have said. In the absence of that is an indication of the corruption of this proposition.

Our assertion that it is necessary that he perceive a lack in his soul does not mean merely knowing of the loss of the sense. Rather, it refers to the defective condition that comes upon him, owing to the loss of that which, if it is present, permits him to attain to benefits and harms according to what the loss of one of these rational senses does to his condition. And it is not for anyone to say, 'You lament the deficiency which, when it occurs, does not affect anything except the loss of the sense.' What points to the nullity of this saying is that one of the things that accompany perfection of intellect is knowledge of the perceptibles. We have indicated that in what has gone before, and we have made clear that the soundness of reasoning requires prior knowledge of visible things and many of their conditions, and that whoever is not a knower of that is incapable of reasoning upon the unity of God, may He be exalted, and upon His justice.

When that has been established, if there were among the faculties a sixth sense by which can truly be perceived that which cannot be perceived by these senses, it would be necessary that God create it (may He be praised) in order that He might know those perceptibles by it, just as the like would be necessary for these senses. And it would be necessary even if He did not create in some of the intellects that which He created in others, in order to know by it the perceptibles, and to know from its loss these perceptibles by report—just as, in short, the blind man knows colours by report.

It has been established that everything, knowledge of which is attained by perception, of which perception is the way to knowledge, is unknowable by rational proofs—just as the knowledge of that which is attained by argument is unknowable by perception. Likewise, it has been established that the knowledge of that which is attained by rational proof does not admit of being known except by that means. What can be known by report are some things that can be known by perception or rational argument. A knowledge of them and of their manner is preceded, thus, by perception and rational argument.

If that is true, if there were a sixth sense by which some of the rational accidents were perceived, or even the Eternal, may He be exalted, it would necessitate that there not be in the intellect an indication of the corruption of knowledge of that. And establishing the rational proofs for that and for its conditions is a proof of the corruption of this proposition. And for that reason we said that whatever there is that is established by perception, is not established on a condition of its own, not grasped or necessitated by perception. Perception does not grasp it nor necessitate it. And for that reason we accuse whoever approves the being of the perceptibles as possessing other attributes of their own, of ignorance, just as we accuse of ignorance whoever confirms what he knows by rational demonstration on the basis of that to which arguments cannot penetrate. So the judgment is necessary that the proposition of a sixth sense is invalid, owing to what it implies of ignorance.

On the other hand, the intellect does not point to the establishment of the senses. Rather, it is known by practical experience, just as the intellect does not establish the existence of tools for action, but, rather, they are known by practical experience. And if that is true, how can anybody say of the sixth sense that it is among the faculties, until he has judged that of it, and until he can prove that the Eternal, may He be exalted, is perceived by it in the life to come, according to what He really is?

If he says, 'I affirm that because I know that He, may He be exalted, has a quiddity which rational argument does not indicate, there is no escape from the truth of knowledge of His having a quiddity. Thus, it is necessary that the way to knowledge of this quiddity is perception by a sixth sense, because I know that He cannot be perceived by these ordinary senses.' Let it be said to him, first, 'We have made clear the falsity of the proposition of quiddity, and we indicated its corruption. So how can it seem true to you to make it a principle for this corrupt school? Furthermore, you have not come to the assertion of a sixth sense for this cause without asserting that He, great and glorious, is able to set up an indication that He does not know now. He knows it, rather, by what He has in terms of quiddity. For the assertion of a proof that differs from what is known is not far from the assertion of a sense differing from the rational senses.'

And if he says, 'Even if the argument does not necessitate the judgment that there is among the faculties a sixth sense, it is necessary that we allow that and that we stop at that point. And when we allow it, the judgment is not valid that He, may He be exalted, is not perceived.' Let it be said to him, 'If you were in doubt about that, because of the lack of proof, why you did assert a sixth sense without going on to assert a seventh and an eighth and a ninth and a tenth and so on *ad infinitum*? And how can it be true that you decide that He is seen by a sixth sense, while your position in asserting it is the position of one who doubts it? And, furthermore, you did not come to affirm a sixth sense by which He is seen or perceived by way of smell or taste or hearing without first confirming His perception by it in a different way from these ordinary ways, for the specialization of some of that without

the other is rather true by proof. So, as for being in doubt, it is necessary that the permission of all be on the same level. And this is as we said to whoever establishes an Eternal with God.

Secondly, you do not assert a second Eternal, which the intellect does not require, by a first without the establishment of a third and a fourth, and so on *ad infinitum*. Therefore, your position in what you assert on this subject is the position of a doubter. Thus, it is clear that the judgment that there is a sixth sense among the faculties according to this proposition is not true.⁷

On the other hand, one who confirms this sense cannot escape saying that either (a) perception of the perceptibles by all of the senses is of one type or (b) perception by them varies. If he says that all of them are of one type, although the senses that represent the path to them differ short of perception, it is necessary that his assertion of the sixth sense is vain, for what is perceived by it is perceived in the same way that it is perceived by these ordinary senses, and it is necessary that these senses in all their variety function as one sense. And that necessarily implies satisfaction with one of them from among the totality. And the corruption of that is evident.

And if he makes them different, why does he proceed to confirm the sixth sense, by which things are perceived in a different way than by these senses, as more worthy than that he be perceived by it in the fashion in which some of them are perceived? There is no difference between his designating them by a perception different from these perceptions, or designating them by a perceptible of which it is not true that it is perceptible by these senses. And this necessitates, with regard to him, the allowance of the Eternal Being, may He be exalted, perceptible by this sense in the way that He is perceived by the sense of smell or taste or hearing, and that is something that those who assert the sixth sense do not commit.

On the other hand, it is necessary that the perceptible is perceived by that sense in a special fashion. And if the Eternal is perceived by way of vision, it is necessary that the condition for the validity of His perception by its means be like that which we have mentioned with regard to the perception of visible things. And that necessitates His being among those things, which are subject to comparison or something analogous to comparison. And we will explain the corruption of this proposition in what follows. If He were perceived by its means but in a different fashion, this is a confirmation of what cannot be understood. This school is not a school of those who permit the vision of God, may He be praised, because the person who asserts it says that the Eternal, may He be exalted, is perceived by a sixth sense but is not seen by it [is nonetheless a school that affirms something analogous to sight]. So we mentioned it and treated the proof for it exhaustively because of its connection with vision and perception.

A Refutation of the Claim That the Reason We Do Not See God is the Weakness of Our Vision or the Paucity of its Rays

Know that the perfection of the organ of sight implies the separation of a quantity of rays from it in a special way, so that we can see visible things by it. We have already alluded to this. And if that is true, the proposition advanced that sight is too weak to see something must take one of the two following forms: either the paucity of visual rays is intended by it and by the incapacity of the observer from whom the rays issue, or a weakness is intended that goes back to him and not to the paucity of his visual rays. And this weakness must necessarily be rational. Either it is intended that this state obtains because of an attribute which, when present, causes the diminution of its rays, or it is intended that it is by an attribute which makes it impossible for the eye to turn to all visible things, for there is, in them, that which requires, because of its distance, that a separate operation work upon them so that it can see that visible thing by it, just as it requires a separate operation when jumping is desired, or victory. And when, by weakness of sight, some of what we have mentioned is not intended, he who asserted it is wrong with regard to an unintelligible aspect.

We have learned that what we have mentioned earlier does not have an effect upon the vision of visible things, except if they have a specific attribute on account of which, if they lack it, their seeing is not impossible. Do you not realize that the seeing of distant things is impossible because it would require a quantity of rays exceeding the quantity by which a near thing is seen, as well as that they not scatter, and that it does not occur in such a manner that would perfect the organ? And for that reason the situation of those who observe a distant object differs. Some of them see it more quickly than their vision of other objects. Some of them need to use an instrument to observe it, and they have difficulties in it that others do not experience. And for that reason, those who have weak sight do not see distant objects, but when they draw near to them, they see them. And they do not see delicate or fine things—but when those things become denser, they see them. And for that reason, by the strength of their visual rays, they change the situation of the visible thing, as it were, in this regard.

Anybody who asserts the weakness of visual rays or the weakness of sight as an obstacle to the vision of the Eternal, may He be exalted, but not in this rational way, is in the same condition as the person who asserts an unknown obstacle, for the affirmation of the obstacle as an obstacle of a non-rational type is equivalent to the affirmation of an unknown obstacle. And when that has been established, if it were weakness of vision or paucity of rays that had an effect upon our vision of God, may He be exalted, it would be necessary that it be there in the judgment of distant objects and delicate ones and fine ones for the effect of that thing upon it to be true. And it is true that this obstacle vanishes by strength of vision or abundance of visual rays, as we say with regard to delicate bodies, so that we see

them. And the proposition on this subject necessitates the assertion that He, may He be exalted, is a body or a contingent thing. But we have already demonstrated the corruption of that opinion. And in this way we have allowed a differentiation in the condition of those who see delicate things. Thus, it is allowed that an angel can see other angels, and also that the prophets can see them, even if we ourselves cannot see them now. And the situation of those who look at distant things differs likewise, and it is not true that their situation differs with regard to the vision of massive and near bodies when weakness of visual rays and weakness of vision do not affect them. Thus, it is established that weakness of visual rays and of vision is not an obstacle to the vision of God, may He be exalted.

If it is said, 'How can it be true that weakness of visual rays has an effect upon the seeing of one thing, but not upon the seeing of another? And why don't you say that it is impossible for it to have an effect? Or that if it affects the seeing of one thing, it will influence the seeing of another? Just as the corruption of the sense, if it influences the soundness of the vision of some visible things, affects also the soundness of the seeing of other things, this necessitates the assertion that what the person weak in sight, or the person afflicted by a paucity of visual rays does not see, he fails to see owing to some factor other than what you have mentioned. And this necessitates the soundness of the proposition that the observer sees a thing because of something else, in the absence of which he does not see it, and that the situation rather differs in the observer because of this.'

Let it be said to him: Indeed, the sense of sight is an instrument in the perception of visible things. And the instrument is not prohibited from being an instrument in a thing if it has a certain attribute, and it is not an instrument in another thing unless it has another attribute. For a difference in the attributes of that in which it is an instrument is like a difference in that for which it is an instrument. And if it does not rule out a difference of instruments according to a difference of perceptibles, so likewise it does not forbid that the situation of the sense of sight differs commensurate with the difference of what is seen by its means. So the attribute that is appropriate for the seeing of something near at hand is not the attribute that it is necessary to have for the seeing of something far away; similarly, the instrument with which some writings are written is necessarily different from that by which other writings are done, and the instrument by which distant things are moved is different from that by which things near at hand are moved. And if that is true, it necessarily follows that we observe the difference of their state, just as the observation of the difference of the situation of that for which it is an instrument is also necessary. And for that reason, it is true that there is an instrument, with the paucity of visual rays, in the vision of near things, and with the abundance of visual rays in the vision of things distant, just as it is true that a strong rope is an instrument in pulling a heavy object, and a weak rope is an instrument for pulling an object that is lighter.

When someone says that sight, since it is distinguished by a measure of rays, is an instrument in seeing the Eternal, this is not true, for we have made it clear that it is rather an instrument, with strength of visual rays in a thing of which it truly can be an instrument for seeing, with the weakness of rays when its situation is altered from nearness to farness, and from lightness to massiveness. As we say about power, a specified power can move a small body, but if that small object becomes great or increases in mass, it cannot be carried by that power. But when the power increases, its carrying becomes plausible. So an increase in power affects the carrying of something whose carrying is possible, as does a decrease in power, if its situation changes from heaviness to lightness. And just as the assertion of a forbidding of the heavy is not true except in this fashion, so, likewise, is your assertion that the paucity of visual rays is an obstacle to the seeing of visible things not true, except according to this definition. And if there is no truth in what we have mentioned, it necessarily follows that it is allowed in all of the contingent things that they be visible, even if we do not see them owing to the weakness of the visual rays or of the sight.

And as for him who allows that it be said that all of what is perceived by the senses is perceived by the faculty of sight, in the same way that we perceive the visible things by it, but that we do not perceive by it at the present time because of the weakness of sight and the weakness of our visual rays; it would be true to say that the visible thing is true when it is seen according to every attribute that it has. But we do not see all of them now because of the weakness of the visual rays and of our sight, and it is true that it is said that the screen and the veil prevent, now, the seeing of some of the visible things owing to the weakness of the rays and sight. If they were strong, we would see the veiled to the same degree that we now see that from which no veil separates us. And every ignorance that is entailed upon us by those who assert the seeing of God and permit the presence of higher bodies with us even if we do not see them, accompanies this proposition. There is no way to restore it, and it obligates the vision of that which does not exist, and it necessitates the nullification of the contrariety of contraries, and the assertion worthy of actions which they are not worthy of, or the nullification of the caused from causes and the assertion of everything that leads to confusion of the necessary with the usual. And if that is false, the judgment necessarily follows that weakness of sight and of visual rays does not affect anything, except in the seeing of what we have already mentioned. And that forbids the attachment to Him of the notion that He, may He be exalted, is invisible because of it.

**That It is Not True That the Obstacle That Prevents Us from Seeing God is
That the Visual Rays Do Not Connect with Him or with His Location**

Someone may raise an objection as follows: Why don't you allow that an observer may not see the Eternal, may He be praised, not because He is by nature invisible, but because He is seen by means of an organ, and it is of the perfection of that organ that rays go out from it and find connection with the object of vision or with its place? But it is impossible that visual rays connect with the Eternal, great and glorious, or with His place. He is exalted above that because of the impossibility of His being either a body or a contingent thing. Thus, it is necessary, for this cause, that we do not see Him. But that does not deny His being visible to Himself, or by a sixth sense which functions without visual rays.

That objection may be replied to as follows: We have already made clear in what has gone before that the reason for our seeing visible things by the sense of sight is not what you have mentioned with regards to a connection of the visual rays with them or their place. Rather, we see by means of the sense of sight when the visual rays, which are the perfection of the organ, reach a situation where there is no veil between the observer and the object of vision, or a place where it is not admissible that there be a veil. And when the visual rays go beyond this situation with the object of vision, it is necessarily seen. But when its situation with the object of vision is as we have mentioned, it is not true that it is seen.

We know that, were the Most High an object of vision as they claim, it could not be truthfully said that between Him and us is a veil or a place in which a veil would be appropriate. And if that were not true, it would be necessary, were He visible, that we see Him now. So, since we do not see Him, the judgment is necessary that He is not an object of vision.

We have already indicated with regard to the perfection of the organ of sight that the situation of the visual rays is just as we have said, and that its connection is not observed—neither with the object of vision nor with its place, and even when the object of vision is such that connection is possible in regard to it, the situation that we have mentioned does not arise except by connection. And when a situation is in the place, the judgment nevertheless does not arise which we have mentioned, except by connection with its location, not that that is a condition, just as the capable person acts by reason of his capacity. And if he is not capable except by a capacity that he requires for his action, not because the action lies in it, but because his being capable is not true except with it, so likewise, the arrival of the rays by the attribute that we have mentioned is not true when the object of vision is a body or an accident except when it arrives by that attribute, not because it is the condition for its vision.

We have made clear that the judgment of the remainder of the senses does not differ, in that the condition of what is perceived by them works in the same way.

And we have made clear what our Shaykh, Abū Hāshim, may God have mercy upon him, said about blackness, if it is not found in a place, it is true that we see it in this way, such that it is said that it does not obtain except in such a manner that, if it reaches a condition in a place, it is in one aspect rather than another, so that it is true that it attains to the rays with it. It is found not in the place of judgment, which it reaches to when it is in a place. And we have made clear that this aspect rather is true in it, owing to its newness from the perspective of its creator. Thus there is no difference between His creating it in a place, first in a place in which its createdness does not differ. And we have made clear that it is among those things that are not true that He created it in opposition like the essences, such that its condition changes in the manner of its coming to be by the act of its creator. So it is necessary that He creates in the place and not in the place simultaneously, inasmuch as if the place were obtained by which it is distinguished, it would be in its domain. And we have made clear that its being in multiple domains is impossible, but rather its place becomes independent in opposition, so that it is seen as if it were transported by the transportation of its place. And if not, its condition does not change.

If that is true, it is not possible that it be said that we do not see the Eternal, exalted be He, because it is not true that the visual rays which are the perfection of the organ attain the judgment by which He would be perceived. And if that has been refuted, what we have said about our not seeing Him because He is by nature invisible is established, and that it is necessarily impossible that He see Himself, just as it is impossible that we see Him.