free from them all: And how was it possible for him to be otherwise, since the Notion of Imperfection is nothing but mere Privation, or what depends upon it? And how can he any way partake of Privation, who is every Essence, and cannot but exist; who gives Being to every thing that exists, and besides whom there is no Existence? But He is the Being, He is the Absolute-ness, He the Beauty, He the Glory, He the Power, He the Knowledge, † He is He, and besides Him all things are subject to perishing.

§ 61. Thus far his Knowledge had brought him towards the end of the fifth Septenary from his Birth, viz. when he was 35 Years old. And the Consideration of this Supream Agent was then so rooted in his Heart, that it diverted him from thinking upon any thing else: and he so far forgot the Consideration of the Creatures, and the Enquiring into their Natures, that as soon as e'er he cast his Eyes upon any thing of what kind soever, he immediately perceived in it the Foot-prints of this Agent; and in an infant his Thoughts were taken off from the Creature, and and transferr'd to the Creator. So that he was inflam'd with the desire of him, and his Heart was altogether withdrawn from thinking upon this inferior World, which contains the Objects of Sense, and wholly taken up with the Contemplation of the upper, Intellectual World.

§ 62. Having now attain'd to the Knowledge of this Supream Being, of Permanent Existence, which has no Cause of his own Existence, but is the Cause why all things else exist: he was defirous to know by what Means he had attain'd this Knowledge, and by which of his Faculties he had apprehended this Being. And first he examin'd all his Senses, viz. his Hearing, Sight, Smelling, Tafting and Feeling, and perceived that all these apprehended nothing but Body, or what was in Body. For the Hearing apprehended nothing but Sounds, and thee came from the Undulation of the Air, when Bodies are struck one against another. The Sight, apprehends Colours. The Smelling, Odours. The Taste, Savours. And the Touch, the Temperatures and Dispositions of Bodies, such as Hardness, Softness, Roughness and Smoothness. Nor does the Imagination apprehend any thing, but as it has Length, Breadth and Thicknes. Now all these things which are thus apprehended, are the Adjuncts of Bodies; nor can these Senses apprehend any thing else, because they are Faculties diffus'd through Bodies, and divided according to the division of Bodies, and for that

† Alcoran, Chap. A1kca.
that reason cannot apprehend any thing else but divisible Body. For since this Faculty is diffuse’d through the visible Body, ’tis impossible, but that when it apprehends any thing whatsoever, that thing so apprehended, must be divided as the Faculty is divided. For which Reason, no Faculty which is seated in Body, can apprehend any thing but what is Body, or in it. Now we have already demonstrated, that this necessarily Existent Being is free in every respect from all Properties of Body, and consequently not to be apprehended, but by something which is neither Body, nor any Faculty inherent in Body, nor has any manner of dependance upon it, nor is either within it, or without it, nor joint to it, nor separated from it. From whence it appear’d to him, that he had apprehended this Being, by that which was his Essence, and gain’d a certain Knowledge of him. And from hence he concluded, that this Essence was Incorporeal, and free from all the Properties of Body. And that all his External Part which he saw, was not in reality his Essence; by that his true Essence was THAT, by which he apprehended that Absolute Being of necessary Existence.

§ 63. Having thus learn’d, that this Essence was not that Corporeal Mass which he perceiv’d with his Senses, and was cloth’d with his Skin, he began to enter

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entertain mean Thoughts of his Body, and set himself to contemplate that Noble Being, by which he had receiv’d the Knowledge of that Superexcellent, and Nece

§ 64. Having thus seiz’d himself in this Belief, that his Real Essence could not be dissolvd, he had a mind to know what Condition it should be in, when he had laid aside the Body, and was separat’d from it, to which he persuad’d himself would not be, till the Body ceas’d to continue a fit Instrument for its use. Therefore he consider’d all his Apprehensive Faculties, and perceiv’d that every one of them did
did sometimes apprehend Potentially, and sometimes Actually; as the Eye when it is shurt, or turn'd away from the Object, sees Potentially. (For the meaning of apprehending Potentially is, when it does not apprehend now, yet can do it for the time to come.) And when the Eye is open, and turn'd toward the Object, it sees Actually (for that is call'd Actual, which is present,) and so every one of these Faculties is sometimes in Power, and sometimes in Act. And if any of them did never actually apprehend its Proper Object, so long as it remains in Power, it has no desire to any Particular Object; because it knows nothing of any, (as a Man that is born blind.) But if it did ever actually Apprehend, and then be reduc'd to the Power only: so long as it remains in that condition, it will desire to apprehend in Act; because it has been acquainted with the Object, and is intent upon it, and lingers after it; as a Man who could once see, and after is blind, continually desires Visible Objects: And according as the Object which he has seen, is more perfect, and glorious, and beautiful, his Desire towards it is proportionably increas'd, and his Grief for the Loss of it so much the greater. Hence it is that the Grief of him who is depriv'd of that Sight he once had, is greater than his who is depriv'd of Smelling; because the Ob-
necessarily self-existent Essence, nor ever was join’d to him, nor ever heard any thing of him; and so would, at the separating with the Body, never to be join’d to him, nor to be concern’d at the want of him. Because all the Corporeal Faculties cease when the Body dies, nor do they any longer desire or linger after their proper Objects; nor are in any trouble or pain for their absence; (which is the Condition of all Brutes, of what shape ever they are.) Or else, secondly, such an one, who while he continu’d in the Body, did converse with this Being, and had a sense of his Perfection, Greatness, Dominion, and Power; but afterwards declin’d from him, and follow’d his vicious Inclinations, till at length Death overtook him whilst in this State; he shall be depriv’d of that Vision, and yet be afflicted with the Desire of Enjoying it, and to remain in lasting Punishment and inexorable Torture; whether he be to be delivered from his Misery after a long time, and enjoy that Vision which he so earnestly desires; or everlasting to abide in the same Torments, according as he was fitted and dispos’d for either of these two, during his continuance in the Body. Or lastly, were such an one, who convers’d with this necessarily self-existent Being, and apply’d himself to it, with the utmost of his Ability, and has all his Thoughts continually intent upon his Glory, Beauty, and Splendor, and never turns from him, for

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forsakes him, till Death seizes him in the Act of Contemplation and Intuition: Such a Man as this shall, when separated from Body, remain in everlasting Pleasure and Delight, and Joy and Gladness, by reason of the uninterrupted Vision of that self-existent Being, and its entire freedom from all Impurity and Mixture; and because all those Sensible Things shall be remov’d from him, which are the proper Objects of the Corporeal Faculties, and which, in regard of his present State, are no better than Torments, Evils and Hindrances.

§. 66. Being thus satisfied, that the Perfection and Happiness of his own Being consist in the actually beholding that necessarily self-existent Being perpetually, so as not to be diverted from it to much as the twinkling of an Eye, that Death might find him actually employ’d in that Vision, and to his Pleasure might be continu’d, without being interrupted by any Pain; (which Ab-Jenaid a Doctor, and Imam, of the Sect of the Sufians, alluded to; when at the point of Death, he said to his Friends about him, This is the Time when Men ought to Glorify GOD, and be instant in their Prayers,) he began to consider with himself, by what means this Vision might actually be continu’d, without Interruption. So he was very intent for a time upon that Being; but he could not stay there long, before...
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some sensible Object or other would present it self, either the Voice of some wild Beast would reach his Ears, or some Phantasy affected his Imagination; or he was touched with some Pain in some Part or other; or he was hungry, or dry, or too cold, or too hot, or was forc'd to rise to ease Nature. So that his Contemplation was interrupted, and he remov'd from that State of Mind; and then he could not, without a great deal of difficulty, recover himself to that State he was in before; and he was afraid that Death should overtake him at such a Time as his Thoughts were diverted from the Vision, and so should fall into everlasting Misery, and the Pain of Separation.

§. 67. This put him into a great deal of Anxiety, and when he could find no Remedy, he began to consider all the several Sorts of Animals, and observe their Actions, and what they were employ'd about; in hopes of finding some of them that might possibly have a Notion of this Being, and endeavour after it; that so he might learn of them which way to be sav'd. But he was altogether disappointed in his Search; for he found that they were all wholly taken up in getting their Provision, and satisfying their Desires of Eating, and Drinking, and Copulation, and chiefly the shady places in hot Weather, and the sunny ones in cold: And that all their life-time, both day and night, till they died, was spent after this manner, without any variation, or minding anything els at any time. From whence it appear'd to him, that they knew nothing of this Being; nor had any desire towards it, nor became acquainted with it by any Means whatsoever; and that they all went into a State of Privation, or something very near a-kin to it. Having pass'd this Judgment upon the Animals, he knew that it was much more reasonable to conclude so of Vegetables, which had but few of those Apprehensions which the Animals had; and if that whole Apprehension was more perfect did not attain to this Knowledge, much less could it be expected from that whose Apprehension was less perfect; especially when he saw that all the Actions of Plants reach'd no farther than Nutrition and Generation.

§. 68. He next consider'd the Stars and Spheres, and saw, that they had all regular Motions, and went round in a due Order; and that they were pellucid and shining, and remote from any approach to Change or Dissolution: which made him have a strong suspicion, that they had Essences distinct from their Bodies, which were acquainted with this necessary self-existent Essence. And that these understanding Essences, were like
like his understanding. And why
might it not be suppos'd that they might
have incorporeal Essences, when he him-
selt had, notwithstanding his Weakness
and extrem want of sensible Things?
That he consisted of a corruptible Body,
and yet nevertheless, all these Defects did
not hinder him from having an incorpo-
real incorruptible Essence: From whence
he concluded, that the Celestial Bodies
were much more likely to have it; and
he perceived that they had a Knowledge of
the necessarily self-existing Being, and did ac-
ually behold it at all times; because they
were not at all incumbered with those Hinder-
ances, arising from the Interventions of
sensible Things, which obbar'd him from
enjoying the Vision, without Interruption;

§ 69. Then he began to consider with
himself, what should be the reason why
he alone, above all the rest of living Cre-
tures, should be endu'd with such an Es-
rence, as made him like the Heavenly
Bodies. Now he understood, before the
Nature of the Elements, and how one of
them us'd to bechang'd into another, and
that there was nothing upon the Face of
the Earth, which always remain'd in the
same Form, but that Generation and Cor-
ruption follow'd one another perpetually
in a mutual Succession; and that the great-
est part of these Bodies were mix'd and
compound'd of contrary Things, and were
for that reason, the more dispos'd to Dis-
solution: And that there could not be found
among them all, any thing pure and free
from Mixture, but that such Bodies as
came nearest to it, and had least mixture,
as Gold and Jacinth are of longest Dura-
tion, and let's subject to Dissolution; and
that the Heavenly Bodies were most sim-
ple and pure, and for that reason more
free from Dissolution, and not subject to
a Succession of Forms. And here it ap-
pear'd to him, that the real Essence of
those Bodies, which are in this Sublunary
World, consist'd in some, of one simple
Notion added to Corporeity, as the four
Elements; in others of more, as Animals
and Plants. And that those Essence consisted of the fewest Forms, had
fewest Actions, and were farther distant
from Life. And that if there were any
body to be found, that was destitute of all
Form, it was impossible that it should
live, but was next to nothing at all; also
that those things which were endu'd with
most Forms, had the most Operations,
and had more ready and easie entrance to
the State of Life. And if this Form were
so dispos'd, that there were no way of se-
paring it from the Matter to which it
properly belong'd, then the Life of it,
would be manifest, permanent and vigorous to the utmost degree. But on the contrary, whatsoever Body was altogether destitute of a Form, was but Matter with our Life, and near akin to nothing. And that the four Elements subsisted with one single Form only, and are of the first Rank of Beings in the sublunary World, out of which, other things endued with more Forms are compounded: And that the Life of these Elements is very weak, both because they have no variety of Motion, but always tend the same way; and because every one of them has an Adversary, which manifestly opposes the Tendency of its Nature, and endeavours to deprive it of its Form; and therefore its Essence is of short Continuance, and its Life weak: But that Plants had a stronger Life, and Animals a Life more manifest than the Plants. The reason of which is, because that whenever it happen’d, that in any of these compound Bodies, the Nature of one Element prevail’d, that predominant Element would overcome the Nature of the rest, and destroy their Power, so that the compounded Body would be of the same Nature with that prevailing Element, and consequently partake but of a small Portion of Life, because the Element it self does so.

§ 70. On

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