

## **Avicenna on the Angelological Relevance of Mystical Experience**

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Avicenna is a renowned peripatetic philosopher whose rationality continuously draws the attention of many scholars. In many of his works, he resorts to the hierarchy of intellects (angels) to explain the process of the emanation of the multiplicity from the One, as well as the emergence of beings. As these intellects are among the ontological causes of the human soul in the arc of descent, they also guide human individuals through the arc of ascent. Angels are of two types according to Avicenna: (1) the intellects who reveal themselves to human beings via mystical experience and endow them with all the necessary means of intellectual and spiritual transcendence and (2) the celestial or heavenly souls who serve them as an examples of vision and intuition. The manifestation of intellects plays a key role in the explanation of mystical experience, because they account for the rationality of mystical experience, on the one hand, and provide a typology of mystical experiences, on the other hand, based on human existential status. Moreover, one can recognize and tackle the existing obstacles before pure vision and intuition via a study of Avicenna's ideas.

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## **Introduction**

We seek to assay the place and function of intellects, as well as the role of the Active Intellect in mystical experiences according to the ideas of Avicenna, the Iranian Muslim theosopher and philosopher.

This essay is an effort to show that according to our Islamic intellectual tradition, mystical experience is not in contradiction with logic or discursive reason; rather, it happens in a rational domain. Of course, by rational in this context we do not refer to the rationality that is grounded in deduction, as Avicenna believes that mystical experience is not among the rational affairs that are attained through deduction (Badawi 1978, 44). Rather, it is an intellectual intuition beyond every perception, because perception is different from vision, and the vision of Truth is preceded by perception.

Resorting to the arch and celestial angels, Avicenna explains not only the subjective but also the objective efficient cause of these experiences. Having demonstrated the necessity of the existence of angels as Divine mediums and the reality of the super-sensible world, he argues that one can provide not only a historical and cultural but also a Divine explanation of mystical experience. One can simultaneously assay the impact of personal beliefs, emotions, and qualities on the emergence and variation of this kind of experience.

## **The Necessity of the Existence of Angels**

We begin our discussion here with an outline of the ontology of angels and a discussion of the similarities between them and human beings, which leads to the emergence of mystical experience.

Among the difficulties that continuously haunt those philosophers who believe in a unique origin of the world is the explanation of the multiplicity in the world. The Necessary Being is unique from all respects, because He is absolutely indivisible and simple, and nothing would emerge from the One but one (Avicenna 1362a Sh, 402). Moreover, every corporeal entity is of a hylomorphic nature in the sense

that it consists of a form and a matter. In other words, a corporeal body requires to be originated by a compound entity of at least two separate aspects that will be essentially different from the Absolutely Simple Necessary Being. Therefore, the first effect effused from the Necessary is an intellectual entity not a corporeal one (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2:154) called the First Intellect.

Because of its necessary and contingent aspects and its thinking of itself and the Necessary, the First Intellect becomes the origin of the Second Intellect and of the soul and body of the First Heaven. By the same token, the Second Intellect becomes the origin of another intellect and heaven, and this origination continues down to the Tenth Intellect and Ninth Heaven, whose existential weakness does not allow it to be the origin of another intellect or heaven. Thus, the Tenth Intellect endows the matter and form of worldly corporeal entities and produces their souls, and this is why it is called the Endower of Forms. Moreover, the human rational soul is also directly effused from the Tenth Intellect (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2:279-81).

Here we have a series of heavenly intellects and souls, the first group of whom represents the *spiritual angels*, or in religious parlance, the *arch angels*, while the second group stands for the *celestial angels*.

On the ontology of heavens, one should say that in ancient astronomy, the number of stars was counted and their movements recorded, and whereas ancient astronomers did not believe in natural and compulsive movements, they considered the motions of celestial bodies as volitional and envisaged an agent who led them to their ends. However, pure intellects cannot be the origin of movements of celestial bodies as they are unchangeable and cannot imagine the particular entities; and since they are simple, they cannot be the mediating agents of corporeal celestial bodies (Avicenna 1362a Sh, 383).

Therefore, Avicenna believes in a set of souls who are the proximate motivators of heavens and mediate between bodies and intellects. All ten intellects and nine heavens are among the angels whose existence is necessary in Avicenna's cosmology. Avicenna not only proves the existential necessity of these angels in the arc of descent based on his ontology but also demonstrates their necessity in the arc of ascent, relying on the mystical principles of his philosophy of illumination.

### **The Significance of the Role of Angels in Mystical Experience**

Intellects—including the Tenth Intellect, whom Avicenna calls the Arch Angel (Avicenna 1400 AH, 336)—are manifestations of divine Names. God's transcendent Nature is not an object of human knowledge, but it reveals itself through divine Effusion that emerges in the form of intellects, who uncover the Lord's Names and Attributes. He resides in his supersensible abode, which is beyond human reach and is only available via the intellects that have emerged from Him; they are mediators of His Effusion and can be known and experienced by human beings and used as mediums for ecstatic interaction with the Lord.

Furthermore, what makes the role of angels more fundamental in mystical experience is their, particularly the Active Intellect's, essential similarities with the human rational soul, on whom relies the very possibility of such intuition and experience as a whole. Man is the most honored creature in this worldly sphere and is more like angels (Avicenna 1362b Sh, 277). He owes his human form to his archetype, viz. the Active Intellect, and is able to communicate with his Creator. In the hierarchy of beings and the arc of descent, man immediately emerges from the Active Intellect; and in his arc of epistemic and spiritual ascent, it is this very Active Intellect who prevents him from egotism and error. In fact, the human form is emanated from the Active Intellect and the latter sustains him and is indeed his father. Thus, the Active Intellect is the most important company of man in his epistemic and spiritual transcendence.

In mystical experience, it is the rational soul's encounter with the angel that connects it to divine Grace and informs it of the mysteries of heaven and finally provides it with an interpretation of its existence. If the soul continuously pursues the Truth and avoids whatever is in contradiction with its essence, it will be homomorphous with the angels and be competent to communicate with them (Avicenna 1400 AH: 155).

However, besides the Active Intellect—one of the arch angels, the communion with whom makes the mystical experience possible for man—the celestial angels also play a role in this experience. The homogeneity and similarity that one finds between the body and soul of heavens and humans are of paramount importance in the discussion of mystical experience.

And what is revealed in the light of a kind of contemplation for the true pursuers of transcendent theosophy is the fact that there are some souls in a level after the incorporeal intellects, who have these intellects as their principles and are not printed on their bodies; rather, they use these bodies as a vehicle that brings them to their perfection. (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 3:432)

Avicenna's reference to *transcendent theosophy* in this context reflects his disagreement with peripatetic philosophers on the origin of the movements of heavens. Peripatetic philosophers believed that the form printed on the body of heaven, and not an incorporeal soul, is the corporeal origin of its movements. But Avicenna, in the wake of discursive and sapiential transcendent theosophy, believes that the mover of heaven is an incorporeal soul, who uses the body as a medium to reach its intended perfection.

As we mentioned before, from every one of the intellects, except the Tenth Intellect (Active Intellect), a celestial soul and body is effused. Avicenna maintains that every celestial soul moves the celestial body that is under its control to the delight of the intellect from whom it has been emanated. The main end of souls or celestial angels from moving the bodies is assimilating to the intellects or arch angels and acquiring

their paradigmatic perfections (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 183-85; 1351 Sh, 60).

In their assimilation to intellects and intellectual perfections and effusions, celestial angels are very similar to human souls; and, as it will be shown, they are the guiding light of human souls in mystical experience.

Our previous discussions showed the significance of intellects and their role in mystical experience. However, before turning to the study of the role of intellects in mystical experience, we need to assay human intellectual domain and the levels of intellect, as well as the quality of the relation between this domain and angels, who provide the grounds for intellectual intuition and mystical experience.

### **The Hierarchy of Intellects**

Our preceding speculations on intellects in general and the Active Intellect in particular are in fact concerning entities which are existentially independent of man and subsist on their own, and this is why they are called separate intellects. But the intellect that is an existential feature of human beings and one of their cognitive faculties is in charge of understanding the universals.

The human soul has two faculties: (1) practical reason, whose main concern is moral and artificial affairs and distinguishes between the good and bad and between the beautiful and the ugly, and (2) theoretical reason, which is in charge of epistemic matters and the incorporeal forms are printed on it. Mystical experience occurs in a particular level of theoretical reason. To explain the occurrence of this experience, one needs to provide an outline of Avicenna's ideas on the typology of human intellect/reason. The quadruple levels of human reason are as follows:

1. *Material or potential intellect*, which exists in every human individual and contains only the potentiality of knowing various

forms of things and beings. It does not have any intelligible form and is mere potentiality.

2. *Habitual intellect* refers to a level of human intellectual development in which self-evident and primary truths are realized by the intellect. By primary truths is meant those realities whose truth is verified by themselves without any independent investigation, such as the fact that the whole is bigger than its parts.
3. *Actualized intellect* refers to the human intellectual capability for understanding the secondary intelligible facts based on the self-evident truths. Of course, intelligibles are not of actual and persistent presence in this level; rather, they turn actual upon human intellection.
4. *Acquired intellect* contains all intelligibles and acquired facts as well as self-evident truths in a constantly actual form, thanks to its connection with the Active Intellect (Avicenna 1379 Sh, 334-36; Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2:411-14; Avicenna 1383a Sh, 24-27).

The human rational soul gradually becomes actualized in the process of knowing, and, after reaching the level of the acquired intellect, it is able to perceive the intelligibles in a distinct and clear form without any new effort. It is indeed the Active Intellect or Arch Angel who leads the human soul through these quadruple intellectual levels as the superhuman treasure of intelligibles (Avicenna 1400 AH, 57).

The Active Intellect, according to Avicenna, has a higher existential status than human beings and is a supersensible and unempirical source for acquiring knowledge and intuiting the intelligibles. Intelligible forms are endowed upon human beings via the Active Intellect, and it is through it that potential intelligibles become actualized:

Since intelligibles in the human soul are potential, we need something intellectual to bring them to actuality. And there is no

doubt that this intellectual entity has to be one of the intellects we talked about before, particularly the one that is nearer to this world, called the Active Intellect, who acts in our intellects so that they may come to actuality. (Avicenna 1383b Sh, 123)

This angel has an emanative relation with the human soul. We will soon discuss this relation in more details, but before that, we have to describe the role of the faculty of intuition in the course of human intellection.

Avicenna distinguishes between two movements in the process of human intellectual efforts to attain knowledge: “Sometimes one needs to make a set of intellectual efforts so as to be informed of the middle term by divine grace, while some other times one intuits the middle term by divine grace without taking other terms into consideration” (Avicenna 1371 Sh, 200). Then, there is a difference between intellection and intuition: intellection may miss its intended goal, while intuition is always on target. Moreover, human intellectual power may err in the synthesis of the premises; however, in intuition, which is a divine bounty, man is immune to all errors. In fact, intellection is weak, and when it becomes strong, it turns into intuition. This intuition receives divine affirmation when it gets enlightened enough to be divine.

The intensity of the faculty of intuition differs from one individual to another; and it is of a hierarchical nature, in the sense that whoever is of a stronger intuition, they are more competent to get connected to the Active Intellect. Some people are unable even to deal with the simplest questions, while others find the answers of all questions via intuition without any intellectual effort.

The uppermost level of intuition belongs to prophets, and it is called divine power; there are few humans who acquire knowledge without any intellectual efforts thanks to their divine power (Avicenna 1371 Sh, 107). A prophet is a man who is connected with the Active Intellect and



is endowed with a divine intellect that receives every piece of knowledge directly from the Active Intellect without any intellectual efforts. The prophetic soul is of an existential status that allows him to get connected to the other world. This is itself a miracle that is hard for ordinary people to understand. This connection opens up many intricacies for the prophetic soul.

### **The Role of Angels in Intellectual Vision**

The intellectual level that is at stake here is that of intuition, which requires angelic grace. Vision is essentially similar to intuition, and one may say that it is a type of the latter, because it is cordial knowledge and does not require thinking. As we mentioned before, Avicenna believes that intuition is beyond perception, and one can reach intelligible forms with utmost certainty through connecting oneself to the sphere of universals and incorporeal intellects or angels. The human soul is the medium of this connection to the incorporeal and transcendent spheres of infinite light and grace (Avicenna 1360 Sh, 139). This connection is of a divine, intuitive, and spontaneous nature.

In his *Remarks and Admonitions*, Avicenna describes the mystic as "a person who is wholeheartedly devoted to the divine Presence and is continuously exposed to the heavenly illuminations of the divine Light" (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 3:400) and receives the eternal forms via the Active Intellect.

Thus, even in his description of mystics, Avicenna prefers to insist on intuition as an intellectual quality of human existence instead of heart or emotions. According to Avicenna, intellectual vision or intuition is a way that leads us to the knowledge of intelligible forms via the light of the Active Intellect.

The remarkable point in this regard is Avicenna's illuminative perspective that is reflected particularly in his visionary recitals. In some of his works, he speaks of the Active Intellect in a way as if it is a person who endows the forms upon man. He states, "The Active

Intellect is a glowing fire that enlightens the human rational faculty, and one clearly sees that he orally addresses him" (Avicenna 1362b Sh, 277).

In fact, man experiences a sense of individuality in such mystical vision of the Active Intellect that he finds the angel the object of his intuition. On the one hand, he is a manifestation of the transcendent and unknown nature of the Divine and familiar with the mysteries of the Unknown Sphere, and, on the other hand, he is somehow the father of the human soul and form and connects him with the Lord. It is just this arch angel who can realize man's dream of becoming an angel.

In the same way that illuminations and revelations are endowed upon man by the Active Intellect, heavenly illuminations are also inspired to celestial souls by the intellects that are their existential origins. This is why celestial souls long for intellects and seek to make themselves similar to them. Arch angels are regarded as the final causes of celestial movements, and in fact their eternal and continuous effusions instigate their fondness for assimilating to the arch angels into angelic entities.

In the coming section, we will explain how the similarity between the human soul's relation with the Active Intellect and the celestial souls' relation with intellects can lead to human transcendence.

### **The Soul's Transcendence**

The significant point of mystical experience is that it leads to the human soul's transformation and transcendence. If we take Avicenna's views on the value and status of human intellectual power into consideration, we can make sense of the transcendence and transformation that he expects of mystical experience and intellectual vision.

Avicenna praises God as the Endower of intellect to man (Avicenna 1362b Sh, 277) and glorifies the intellectual side of existence. He believes that "the human soul in fact has its particular perfection in

becoming an intellectual world that contains all the intelligible forms of beings, and its comprehension of these beings from transcendent intellects to incorporeal angels is seamless and perfect" (Avicenna 1362a Sh, 425).

Thus, the soul's perfection, transcendence, and bliss are all contingent upon the degree of the actuality of human intellect and practice based on the exemplary pattern of the intellectual sphere of angels. This is why he says, "Knowledge elevates the one who is not elevated" (Ra'ufi Mehr 1385 Sh). According to Avicenna, it is the intellectual side of human existence that is capable of being connected with the world of the unknown, intuition, and revelation, not its emotional side that is mostly represented by the human heart. Intellect or reason is a level of the soul that is capable of being in touch with supreme substances and intellects, through whom it reaches the true pleasure, perfection, and light (Badawi 1978, 41).

The ultimate goal of the soul is complete realization, meeting with the inner soul, returning to the Higher Spiritual Realm, and knowing God. This goal is not achieved but through angelic education that activates theoretical reason or intellect. Angelic education is fulfilled via human encounter with the Active Intellect, in whose company one becomes united with the Truth (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 3:420).

Here, the Active Intellect plays an educational role besides his epistemic function, without withholding any assistance in this path: "I asked him to teach me how to go on the journey that he is used to go ... the Master [i.e., the Active Intellect] said, ... "Whenever you are mirthful enough to go on this journey, call me; I will join you mirthfully" (Avicenna 1400 AH, 134). Thus, anyone who keeps his company benefits from the intellects in general, and becomes united with the Active Intellect or the Supreme Intellect in particular. Intellect is essentially fond of the Truth and has the latter and knowledge as its goal. In fact, intellect is a faculty that is connected with the higher

realms and is continuously exposed to divine illuminations, which enable it to perceive the universals.

However, the remarkable point in this regard is that after meeting the angel, man has to continue his path. Avicenna invites the wayfarer to accompany the Active Intellect and benefit from his angelic education: “You have to know that if I am addressing you or trying to awake you, I do all of this so as to make myself nearer to the king; otherwise, I have other issues to deal with. If you want to join me, follow my steps” (Avicenna 1400 AH, 141).

The human soul is of a luminous and intellectual origin although it is entrapped in the body. The soul continuously struggles to return to the unknown abode of light and the inner soul that lies somewhere beyond this world. It is this inner soul that is nostalgically recollected by Avicenna in his couplet *al-Ayniyyah*, which has documented the philosopher's scorching enthusiasm for the spiritual sphere of intellects. The main issue is the quality of this return. The soul's movement toward the sphere of intellect is not possible but with the aid and guidance of angels, who are its guides in this course and are in charge of human intellectual guidance. The soul is enthusiastically attracted to the intellect from whom she has been effused, and this enthusiasm and attraction reawakens her into the primordial domain of inwardness.

Furthermore, the soul's assimilation to the Active Intellect reveals the significance of heavenly souls or celestial angels. As these souls are entrapped in the corporeality of their heavens and continuously motivate the heavens to emulate the intellects so as to find a way out of the darkness of corporeality, the human soul can take these heavenly souls as its example and devote itself to the emulation of the Active Intellect. According to Avicenna, in the same way that the human soul is illuminated in the course of the supplication of the Active Intellect (Living Son of the Awake), the heaven's movement instigated by its innermost enthusiasm for intellect is a kind of heavenly devotion:

“Celestial movement does not essentially refer to a physical movement; rather, it seems to be a kind of angelic or celestial devotion” (Avicenna 1362a Sh, 391).

This devotedness leads to heavenly souls' transcendence and perfection. The human soul has to follow the steps of celestial souls in this path so as to reach the pure and true good. Beholding the celestial angels, man can realize his primordial potentiality for angelhood and embark upon the infinite path of perfection and righteousness that leads to the vision of the Lord, who has the intellects as His deputies.

### **The Role of the Imaginal Faculty in Mystical Vision**

The imaginal faculty, which is included by Avicenna among human inner faculties, can synthesize imagined forms and create new notions. In most cases, the imagined forms that have their origin in sensory perception pave the ground for acquiring intellectual forms by the assistance of the Active Intellect. Avicenna writes: “Intelligible forms are preceded by sensory and imaginary forms. However, there are also intelligible entities that are not preceded by any sensory or imaginary forms, such as the Lord God, to whom belong all praise, and the Active Intellect” (Avicenna 1362b Sh, 53). Or in his *Annotations*, he writes: “Whatever becomes an object of the soul's intellection is already in imagination” (Avicenna 1351 Sh, 101).

As we mentioned before, intelligibles could be immediately transferred to the soul via the Active Intellect, and this process is called *intellectual vision*. However, the remarkable point in this regard is the quality of the comprehension of these forms. Avicenna writes: “When our souls become connected with the Active Intellect, some intellectual forms are endowed upon them according to their inner potentiality and aptitude” (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2: 423).

The Active Intellect's relation with the human soul is an illumination-and-effusion-based relation, and this effusion has its particular criteria, according to which the intellectual forms are

endowed upon souls based on their potentialities. One's illusions and imaginations are among those potentialities that qualify him for receiving the incorporeal intellectual forms from the Active Intellect (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2:426).

In fact, the individual apprehension of the angel Active Intellect and understanding the intelligibles effused from him are not possible but by the assistance of the imaginal faculty. Since the angel is incorporeal and formless, he is depicted as the Living Son of the Awake or the Deputy of the King in Avicenna's mystical recitals. In Corbin's words, "[t]he lovers could believe in the cult for the same intelligence-sophia and at the same time perceiving his figure-archetype under the traits of one figure which was every time different" (Corbin 2005, 312).

The imaginal faculty manipulates the intelligibles and creates imaginary forms for them, and this is one of its main functions. This interference is of paramount significance in mystical experience. One of the major signs of the intelligible is its universality and formlessness that can reveal itself to human soul via an imaginary form. What is inspired or revealed to man by intellects is embodied in personal imaginations and illusions. Avicenna writes:

A soul is prepared for the reception of intellectual forms effused by the Active Intellect when its intellectual faculties are conscious of the whole content of imagination. This consciousness makes the soul's ideas and feelings that decide the quality of effusion" (Avicenna 1371 Sh, 369).

Then, the total body of our ideas and feelings is of crucial influence in the preparation of the soul for the reception of the Active Intellect's effusion. Intellectual vision is impossible without imagination, according to Avicenna, and the more powerful one's soul is the more accurate and certain are the intelligibles he perceives. However, Avicenna believes that every individual's imagination, which is normally affected by numerous worldly objective and subjective

factors, such as ideas, judgments, hopes, and even spatial, temporal and physical conditions, depicts the intelligibles and truths effused from the divine realm in his own personal way. Thus, these experiences, despite having a unique cause, are of a remarkable variety.

Moreover, since imagination can easily change a form into its opposite, it could be a source of error in intuition. Avicenna writes, "False forms have their origin in the necessity of imagination, and after one's death and the disappearance of the Imaginal faculty, only true forms are effused from the soul" (Avicenna 1362b Sh, 56).

It is noteworthy that Avicenna believes that celestial souls or angels also have imaginations and illusions: "These affections are in the form of imaginations and not purely intellectual, although they have a partial relation with the intellects proportionate to the physical powers that secure them as imaginations" (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 3:193).

Basically, wherever an incorporeal soul is at stake, regardless of whether it is human or celestial, there is also an arena for imagination. Of course, there is a difference between celestial and human souls in this regard. The imaginations of celestial souls are always true: "And all these imaginations and semi-imaginings of the celestial soul are true, like what we do based on our practical reason" (Avicenna 1362b Sh, 378).

### **Emanation and Its Obstacles**

One of the issues regarding the role of the Active Intellect in mystical experience is that of emanation:

The rational soul is an entity that requires bodily means to reach perfection; and through the application of its bodily means, it also receives effusions from the higher principles that assist it in the path of perfection. (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2:283)

It is the Active Intellect that illuminates souls with intelligible forms and assists them. The human soul is a mirror that reflects divine forms

when it turns to the sphere of divinity; and when it changes its direction, these forms disappear (Avicenna 1384 Sh, 2:368).

Thus, if man is not exposed to divine radiations of the Active Intellect, he will miss intelligible forms. Although potential intellect is continuously exposed to these divine effusions, this is just a passive encounter. Of course, this passive encounter does not close the door of emanation. The Active Intellect is not something that appears and disappears; rather, it is always present. It is us who make it disappear when we lose our sight of it and make it appear when we turn to it (Badawi 1978, 95).

Therefore, the soul does not abstract anything; rather, it receives the angelic effusion of the Active Intellect. The obstacles to divine emanation exist in the object, not in the subject:

We say that the human soul is susceptible to receiving knowledge from intellectual substances and celestial souls, and it is not as such the source of obscurity, but this obscurity has its origin in the object; and by the disappearance of this factor, the soul receives divine effusions of knowledge. (Avicenna 1383a Sh, 68)

Therefore, the major obstacle to intellectual vision is inside human beings and can be traced back to human illusions and carnal desires. This is why Avicenna insists on self-refinement as a condition of perfect understanding: "To understand higher spiritual pleasure, one needs to purify his soul of anger, carnality, and mean properties" (Avicenna 1362a Sh, 426).

In his discussion on the difference between thinking and intuition, Avicenna suggests that intuition requires inner purity, which prepares one to get connected with the Active Intellect as the eternal source of secure knowledge; while thinking has its origin in the soul's impurity, which deprives man from divine Presence (Avicenna 1371 Sh, 107).

In his *Living the Son of the Awake*, Avicenna speaks of bad companions of the soul, whose company separates it from the angel of



intellect; and whenever the soul leaves their company, it is addressed by the angel. Likewise, in the allegory of *Salaman va Absaal*, Salaman's wife is an example of the negligence of the mystic who has become a captive of anger and carnal desires.

As we know, an action that is done based on lust and anger stands in contrast with an action carried out based on practical reason. If we pursue our ideas and actions in the light of practical reason, we will never lose our touch with angels and intellects and their heavenly bounties. However, since human actions are not always grounded in reason, sometimes his thoughts and imaginations fail to be true. This is not the case with the celestial or heavenly soul, Avicenna argues, because it is not affected by anger or lust, and this is why it continuously instigates the movement of celestial bodies and keeps the company of divine intellects.

Thus, if the human soul takes the celestial soul as his example and fixes his eyes on the intellect from whom he has been effused, he will break the bondage of anger and lust once and for all and will have his angelhood and intellectuality flourished.

In all of his works, Avicenna highlights the possibility of intellectual initiation and insists on the necessity of purifying oneself from the taints of lust and anger as the obstacles to spirituality. This kind of initiation is beyond mere rational reasoning and leads to intellectual vision, because reasoning and proof alone do not open the ways of heaven and the Orient. When one overcomes sensory obstacles, he finds the opportunity to connect himself to the realm of divinity, “returns to the sphere of purity, and finally becomes a close companion of the Active Intellect; a title that could be attributed only to the chosen prophets of God” (Avicenna 1383c Sh, 29).

## **Conclusion**

The conclusions of this research are as follows:

- The necessity of the existence of intellects in Avicenna's ontology is a basis for explaining the object of mystical experience, and the cause of these experiences is not reduced to human subjective modes that do not have any concrete references.
- One of the difficulties of the description and explanation of mystical experiences, particularly in monotheistic religions, is the quality of knowing the unknowable and transcendent nature of God. According to Avicenna, intellects (arch angels), as manifestation of divine Names and Attributes, make such experiences possible, and celestial souls (celestial angels) are patterns of these experiences.
- Mystical experience, in the sense that was meant in this research, does not occur as an emotional or sensational phenomenon; rather, it is a kind of inspiration and vision.
- Mystical experience, in Avicenna's viewpoint, is not only in harmony with reason and logic but is itself a kind of intellectual intuition.
- Avicenna offers an alternative understanding of reason, according to which reason is in harmony with intuition and vision in its realized state. This makes the discussion of cordial intuition pointless here.
- The intellect that leads man to intuition is not the autonomous and limited reason that is blind to prophecy and revelation and only relies on proofs and reasoning, because logical reasoning is a human activity and does not lead to the realm of spirituality; rather, it is a divine intellect whose perfection lies in its connection with the Active Intellect and supersensible sphere.

- Since this kind of experience is realized with the assistance of an arch angel, who is the manifestation of divine Names, and also a pattern of celestial angels, it contains a sign of the sphere of divinity and leads to the mystic's existential elevation.
- Regarding the reason behind the differences between mystical experiences, Avicenna refers to the souls' aptitude for receiving divine emanations and also the interference of the imaginal faculty in the comprehension of experiences. Although he believes that our imaginations, illusions, and mental notions do not play a causal role in the formation of intuitions and that the efficient cause of the latter is the Active Intellect, he maintains that intuitions are affected by one's culture and personal conditions.
- The main obstacles to intuitions and mystical experiences are carnal desires and neglecting the intellectual side of existence. This is to say that if man breaks the bondage of anger and lust, like celestial souls, he can be eternally in touch with the intellects and heavenly entities.

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