

the realm of
existence who bow down and prostrate. In the exposition of its truth, we desire
to unfold the
details of the balances of discernment [mawázíni'l-'idrák] that the people
possess, and to explain
and refute them, so that it will be evident and clearly proven that the divine
balance is the inmost
heart, the fountain-head of guidance [ar-rashád].

Therefore, know that all the peoples and kindreds possess four balances with
which they weigh
the realities [al-Haqá'q], the significances [al-ma`ání], and the divine
questions [al-masá'il]. All
of them are imperfect, unable to quench the burning thirst or heal the sick. We
shall therefore
make mention of each one and demonstrate its limitation and inaccuracy.

The first balance is the balance of the senses [mízánu'l-Hiss], which is the
method of most of the
European philosophers in this age. They say that it is a perfect and complete
balance, and that
whatever is decided by it, no doubt or misgiving is attached thereto. The
truth, however, is that
the proofs limiting this balance are as clear as the Sun at midday. Verily, if
thou dost look at the
mirage, thou wilt see refreshing and drinkable water. Further, if thou dost
gaze upon mirrors,
thou wilt see forms within it and wilt be certain that it is unquestionably
real. In reality,
however, the forms are reflections in the glass and are nonexistent. Moreover,
if thou dost look
at a whirling point in the darkness, thou wilt think that it is a circle or an
extended line. The
reality is that it is nonexistent, but only appears so to the vision.
Furthermore, if thou dost look
at the firmament and its sparkling stars, thou wilt see them as tiny bodies. In
reality, however,
each one of them is a thousand times larger than the earth. If thou dost gaze
at a shadow it
appears still, but is really in motion; spokes appear unbroken but are
actually disconnected; and
the earth appears flat but is actually a sphere. Therefore, if it be
established that the senses, of
which the power of vision is, in itself, the most mighty sensory power, are a
limited balance and
an imperfect proof, then how can it be relied upon in ascertaining [`irfán]
the divine truths, the
heavenly signs, and the contingent phenomena?

As for the second balance, which the Illuminati and the peripatetics rely upon, it is the balance of reason [al-mízánu'l-`aqlí]. In like manner, the other schools of the first philosophers in the ancient and middle centuries depended upon it. They said that that which is judged by reason is firmly established, clear and indubitable, and that there is no doubt or defect either in its foundations or its outcomes. All of these schools, by virtue of their reliance upon the balance of reason, have differed on all questions [al-masá'il] and their opinions are divided on all truths [al-Haqá'iq]. If the balance of reason is a just, accurate, and firm balance, then they should not differ in truths and questions, and the opinions of the former and latter generations should not diverge. Because of their conflict and their differences, therefore, it is established that the balance of reason is imperfect. Verily, if we were to conceive of a perfect balance and if thou wert to assess the weight of a hundred thousand souls with it, there would be no difference among them. Their lack of consensus, however, is sufficient and irrefutable proof of the deficiency of the balance of reason.

The third balance is the balance of tradition [al-mízánu'n-naqlí]. This, too, is defective, and the people cannot rely upon it since tradition is understood through reason and weighed in its

This could also be rendered as "rays of light." balance. If the foundation of reason is deficient, how is it possible that the understanding of the tradition will be consistent with reality or lead to certitude? Verily, this matter is clear and manifest.

As for the fourth balance, it is the balance of inspiration [mízánu'l-'ilhám]. Verily, inspiration consisteth of inclinations of the heart [khuTúrátin qalbiyyatin]. And the whisperings of Satan are also inclinations which arrive successively upon the heart by the agency of the soul. If there occureth to the heart a certain idea or question, how is it to be known whether it is an inspiration of the All-Merciful or a whispering of Satan?

Therefore, it is evident that all of balances current among the people are

defective and their
conclusions are unreliable. Nay, they are confused dreams, doubts, and idle
fancies that neither
allay the sore athirst nor satisfy the seeker of knowledge [ʿirfán].

As for the true, divine balance which never strayeth, and which ever
apprehendeth the universal
realities [al-Haqáʿiq al-kulliyyah] and the sublime inner meanings
[al-maʿání al-`aTHímah], it is
the balance of the inmost heart [mízánu'l-fu'ád], of which God hath made
mention in the blessed
verse. It is an effulgence of the brilliant lights of the Divine Outpouring
[tajaliyyat suTu` anwár
al-fayD al-iláhí], the secret of the All-Merciful [as-sirr ar-raHmání], the
manifestation of
consciousness [aTH-Thuhúr al-wijdání], and the lordly sign [ar-ramz
ar-rabání]. Verily it is an
ancient outpouring [fayD qadím], a manifest light and a mighty bounty. Should
God favor with
this gift one of His chosen ones [aSfiyá'íhi], showering it upon one of His
loved ones possessing
certitude, verily he will draw nigh unto that station of which 'Ali (upon him
be peace) hath
spoken, "If the veil be lifted, I would not increase in certitude!" Speculation
and argumentation
are the utmost degree of weakness and understanding, for the result is
dependent upon the
exigencies of the lesser and greater propositions, so that, however thou
orderest these terms, an
outcome is obtained which cannot be implicitly relied upon: hence the differing
opinions of the
philosophers. Therefore, O thou who hast turned towards God, purify thine
inmost heart from all
impediments to righteousness [as-sadád] in the reality of true guidance
[ar-rashád], and weigh all
divine questions with this just, accurate, and glorious balance which God hath
elucidated in the
unerring Qur'an and the Great Announcement, that thou mayest drink from the
fount of certitude
[ʿayn al-yaqín],² savor the truth of certitude [Haqq al-yaqín], be guided
unto the Straight Path,
and walk in the way of righteousness. Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds!

A play on the “eye of certitude” (ʿayn al-yaqín) and “truth of
certitude” (haqq al-yaqín) of the Qur'an (see for
example Suratu'l-Takkathur) which unfortunately must be lost in the
translation.

