



DĀNEŠ-NĀMA YE 'ALĀ'Ī

DĀNEŠ-NĀMA-YE 'ALĀ'Ī, Persian philosophical treatise written by **Avicenna** (370-428/980-1037). No title is mentioned in the book, but 'Abd-al-Wāḥed Jūzjānī, a student of Avicenna's who edited and amended the text, gave it the title *Dāneš-nāma*. The work has also been called *Dāneš-nāma-ye 'alā'īya*, *Ḥekmat-e 'alā'ī* or *'alā'īya*, *al-Ketāb al-'alā'ī*, *Oṣūl wa nokat-e 'olūm-e kamsa-ye ḥekamīya*, and *Dāneš-māya* (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, pp. 448-53; Qazvīnī, p. 83; Avicenna, 1974a, pp. i-iii; Rieu, *Persian Manuscripts*, pp. 433-34; Gohlman, pp. 68-69; Gutas, p. 114).

The *Dāneš-nāma*, a full exposition of Avicenna's Peripatetic philosophy, represents the first attempt to render an already advanced Arabic philosophical discourse in Persian. It is thus one of the earliest comprehensive records of technical Persian vocabulary in logic, physics, and metaphysics. Although it played a role in developing Persian as a language of learning (Mo'īn, 1988, pp. 533-35), it did not become popular owing to "great difficulties of language" (Nasr, *Camb. Hist. Iran*, p. 434; cf. Fakhry, p. 130). Šāhmardān b. Abi'l-Ḳayr Rāzī reported that the Kakuyid ruler 'Alā'-al-Dawla (398-433/1008-41), whom Avicenna served as vizier, had told him that "if the sciences of the ancients (*'olūm-e awā'el*) were in Persian I could have known them"; when, however, Avicenna submitted the *Dāneš-nāma* to him, "he could not understand a word of it" (Avicenna, 1974a, p. v).

The *Dāneš-nāma* was composed at some time between 412/1021, when Avicenna went to Isfahan, and his death in 428/1037 while still in the service of 'Alā'-al-Dawla (Avicenna, 1974a, p. iv). Syyed Hossein Nasr (*Camb. Hist.*



Iran, IV, p. 434) suggests that it is an abridged Persian translation of Avicenna's Arabic *Najāt*, but most bibliographers believe that the *Najāt* was written after the *Dāneš-nāma* (Goldman, pp. 153-154; Mahdawī; Anawati). Dimitri Gutas has noted the resemblance between the two works and has dated the *Dāneš-nāma* to 418/1027. Nasr has also suggested (1964, p. 148) that Abū Ḥamīd Ġazālī's *Maqāṣed al-falāsefa* is "an almost word-for-word translation" of the *Dāneš-nāma*.

Originally, the *Dāneš-nāma* was intended to encompass logic, physics, astronomy, music, and metaphysics. Avicenna declared in his introduction (1974b, pp. 2-4) that, contrary to the traditional arrangement, he would start with the section on logic and proceed to those on metaphysics and then the "lesser sciences" (*'elmhā-ye zīrīn*). The last section, on mathematics, was lost, however, and Jūzjānī replaced it with translations from Avicenna's Arabic writings.

The section on logic covers the essential issues discussed in Avicenna's major philosophical work in Arabic, *Ketāb al-šefā'*. The text begins with definition of the purpose (*ḡaraḏ*) and usefulness (*fā'eda*) of logic and such preliminary concepts (*lafz*) as universal and particular, essential and accidental, and genus and species (1974b, pp. 1-25). Avicenna's formulation of syllogism was based on his epistemology, in which he defined two kinds of knowing (*dānestan*): "understanding" or "conception" (*andar-rasīdan, taṣawwor*) and "persuasion" or "assent" (*geravīdan, taṣdīq*; 1974b, p. 5). In order to achieve "persuasion," it is necessary to provide "proof" (*ḥojjat*), which can be of three kinds, syllogism (*qīās*), induction (*esteqrā'*), and analogy (*meṭāl*); the most convincing of them is syllogism (1974b, p. 59), and most of Avicenna's section on logic is devoted to it. He listed thirteen kinds of premise (*moqaddamāt-e pīšīn*) on which a syllogism can be based. Although he was critical of dialecticians (*jadaliān*; 1974b, pp. 95-106), he acknowledged that dialectic can be used to defeat false philosophers (*fozūliyān*), to convince people of a truth or the prudence of a measure (*maṣlaḥat*), to prove first principles to beginners studying subordinate sciences (*'elmhā-ye joz'ī*), and to demonstrate the unreliability of dialectical reasoning itself by proving both a proposition and its opposite, whereas only one can be proved by means of syllogism (1974b, pp. 129-31).

In his introduction to the section on metaphysics (*'elm-e elāhī* or *'elm-e robūbiyat*) Avicenna asserted the primacy of the subject, "the branch of knowledge that examines the Unity [of God] . . . The origin of all knowledge is rooted in this knowledge. It is [ordinarily] the last [subject] to be studied,



although in truth it is the first” (1974a, p. 8). He began by dividing the subject of knowledge into knowledge dependent on human beings, for example, knowledge of their own actions, and independent knowledge, as of earth, sky, and animals (1974a, p. 1). Following the standard Aristotelian division, he called the first kind of knowledge “practical” (*‘amalī*) and the second “theoretical” (*naẓarī*). He further divided practical knowledge into three branches: knowledge of the general regulation of society (*tadbīr-e ‘ām*), that is, jurisprudence and politics; knowledge of the regulation of a household; and knowledge of the self or soul. He also divided theoretical knowledge into three branches: “higher” knowledge (*‘elm-e barīn*, *‘elm-e pīšīn*), that is, metaphysics; “intermediate” knowledge (*‘elm-e mīāngīn*, *‘elm-e farhang o rīāzat*, *‘elm-e ta’līmī*), mathematics; and “lesser” knowledge (*‘elm-e zīrīn*, *‘elm-e ṭabī’ī*), physics (1974a, p. 3). He described the subject of metaphysics as “not any particular thing but rather absolute existence insofar as it is absolute. The predicates investigated in this science are the states belonging to existence as such” (1974a, p. 6). On the basis of these preliminary observations Avicenna defined “existence” (*ḥastī*) and “substance” (*jawhar*; 1974a, pp. 8-11). Existence encompasses the famous ten Aristotelian categories, which are like ten genera of things (1974a, p. 36). All existents are either “necessary” (*wājeb*), “contingent” (*momken*), or “impossible” (*momtane’*; 1974a, pp. 65-66).

A considerable portion of the section on metaphysics is devoted to a discussion of the “necessary existent” (*wājeb al-wojūd*), which, according to Avicenna, precedes the eternal (*qadīm*), while everything else is created in time (*moḥdat*; Avicenna, 1974a, pp. 82-83). It cannot be multiple, have many attributes, or have an equal (1974a, pp. 74-75), nor does it change; under all circumstances it is necessary. The quiddity (*māhīya*) and being (*ennīyat*) of the “necessary existent” are identical. It is neither substance nor accident (*‘arāḏ*), and everything else originates from it. Avicenna argued that it can know the many without multiplicity and can know changing things without changing. Supreme bliss is unification (*payvand*) with the “necessary existent.” Avicenna concluded with a discussion of created things, which are composite beings and thus inherently subject to generation and corruption.

The conclusion of the section on metaphysics (Avicenna, 1974a, pp. 157-65) is linked to the introduction to the section on physics (*ṭabī’īyāt*) by a discussion of existence, its essence, and its attributes (1974c, pp. 1-25). Avicenna argued that movement is the force that brings things from potentiality to actuality (1974c, p. 2) and explained how the four elements “are transformed, one into the



other” (1974c, p. 50) and are compounded (*āmīzeš-e naḳostīn*) from minerals, plants, and animals (1974c, pp. 78-86). Miracles and prophecy are explained by the fact that the material world is obedient to both soul and intellect. Indeed, the soul can by itself cause change in matter; in particular exceptional individuals can cause substantial changes in matter, especially in its cold, warmth, or movement, through mental images, “thus explaining all miracles” (1974c, p. 141). The knowledge of the unlettered Prophet Moḥammad reflected the “the sacred soul” (*nafs-e qodsī*). In fact, the active imagination of all the prophets carried them into the world of the unseen and prepared them to receive revelation, “a connection between angels and the human soul (*jān-e mardom*) . . . This is the highest state of man, closely connected to the angelic state. Such a person would be the vicegerent of God on earth” (1974c, pp. 145-46).

See also [avicenna xi](#).

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