

A New Source for Al-‘Āmirī Studies: *al-Majālis al-sab’ bayna al-Shaykh wa al-‘Āmirī*

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Abstract: The unique copy of *al-Majālis al-sab’ bayna al-Shaykh wa al-‘Āmirī* (Ragıp Paşa Library 1461, ff. 150^a-162^b) consists of seven sessions including forty-one questions and answers. While the name of al-‘Āmirī (d. 381/992) does not appear in the texts except for the title, we understand from the phrases at the end that the al-Shaykh in the title corresponds to Ibn Sinā (d. 428/1037). In this article, I will broadly describe structural characteristics of *al-Majālis* and examine the historical and geographical possibility of the philosophical debate between al-‘Āmirī and Ibn Sinā outlined in *al-Majālis*. Then, I will compare the philosophical approach in the first three sessions of *al-Majālis*, where the stages of the coming of the universe into being are treated, with al-‘Āmirī’s extant works. I can talk two principal conclusions of the article: (i) It was historically and geographically possible that young Ibn Sinā and his older contemporary al-‘Āmirī could make the debate told in *al-Majālis*. (ii) The examination and comparison for the first three sessions of *al-Majālis* shows that the answers are mostly consistent with the approach of al-‘Āmirī according to his extant works and this leads me to conclude that the one asks questions or comments is Ibn Sinā while the one answers is al-‘Āmirī.

Keywords: al-‘Āmirī, Ibn Sinā, metaphysics, hierarchy of beings, creation, al-Bārī, command, intellect, soul, nature, body.

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The collective manuscript (*majmū'a*) in Ragıp Paşa Library (no. 1461, ff. 150^a-162^b),¹ comprises mostly of philosophical works, includes a remarkable text. While the text's title appears in the collective manuscript's table of contents and at the beginning of the text as *al-Majālis al-sab' bayna al-Shaykh wa al-Āmirī*² (seven sessions between the Shaykh and al-Āmirī), it proceeds in the format of *qāla al-sā'il* (the questioner said) and *qāla al-mujīb* (the answerer said)³ giving no hint concerning the identity of the questioner or the answerer. The text documents seven sessions (*majlis*) totaling a set of 41 questions/comments and answers. Each session respectively has 5, 6, 6, 7, 5, 7, 5 subset of question/comment-answers. Whereas the name *al-Āmirī* does not appear throughout the text, the identity of the person called as *al-Shaykh* becomes clearer in the final sentence of the text:

At this point, the questioner stopped asking and they left as they agreed to arrange an[other] session on reading and interpreting the revealed books. Afterwards, al-Shaykh Abū 'Alī İbn Sinā had to leave suddenly (*wa lammā intahā al-kalām ilā hādhihi al-jumla amsaka al-sā'il 'an al-mas'ala wa tawā'ada li 'aqd majlis yutlā fihī al-kutub al-munazzala wa yuta'awwalu wa iftaraqa wa ittafaqa li al-Shaykh Abū 'Alī İbn Sinā harakat ba'da dhālik*).

Even though this quotation indicates that the Shaykh in the title corresponds to Ibn Sinā, there still no hint whether the *Shaykh* is either the questioner or the answerer. This problem is complicated by the fact that there is no indication to this work either way in any autobiographical, bio-bibliographical material on Ibn Sinā and the fact that *al-Majālis* has only one surviving copy. Two modern bibliographers of Ibn Sinā, Georges C. Anawati and Yaḥyā Maḥdawī, confidently count *al-Majālis* as one of Ibn Sinā's works.⁴ Mahmut Kaya and following him Kasım Turhan state that al-Āmirī is the questioner and Ibn Sinā is the authoritative answerer on the grounds that the text refers to Ibn Sinā as *al-Shaykh*. They argue that the text was probably an apocryphal work written by some scholar who knew both philosophers' systems well.⁵

1 For a general description of this collective manuscript see David C. Reisman, *The Making of Avicennan Tradition: The Transmission, Contents, and Structure of Ibn Sinā's al-Mubāḥaṭāt (The Discussions)* (Leiden & Boston & Köln: Brill, 2002), p. 62.

2 Hereafter I will refer the text as *al-Majālis* and indicate questions and answers with #.

3 Throughout the text, *al-mujīb* is not written only in 2nd and 6th questions and *al-sā'il* in the 27th question. Most probably, the reason of these disappearances is the scribe's unweariness.

4 Georges C. Anawati, *Mu'allafāt Ibn Sinā* (Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif, 1950), no. 20; Yaḥyā Maḥdawī, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-i muṣannafāt-i Ibn Sinā* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tehran, 1333 [1954]), no. 107.

5 Mahmut Kaya, "Āmirī, Ebū'l-Hasan", *Turkish Encyclopedia of Islam (DİA)*, III, p. 69; Kasım Turhan, *Din-Felsefe Uzlaştırıcısı Bir Düşünür: Āmirī ve Felsefesi* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1992), pp. 50-51.

It is worth noting that Ibn Abi Uṣaybi‘a mentions in his ‘*Uyūn al-anbā’*, among the works of Ibn Sinā, a text titled *Ajwiba li su‘ālāt sa‘alahū ‘anhā Abū al-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī wa hiya arba‘a ‘ashrata mas‘alat* (the answers that Abū al-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī asked and it consists of fourteen problems),⁶ which indicates that al-‘Āmirī is the questioner and Ibn Sinā is the answerer. Although we are unable to determine whether *Ajwiba* and *al-Majālis* are identical works, the fact that *al-Majālis* has forty-one and *Ajwiba* has fourteen questions leads us to think either: i) the number “41” was changed to “14” due to a mistake during copying or transmission, or ii) fourteen questions out of forty one might have been in circulation separately and with a different title.

Beyond the question of identity between *Ajwiba* and *al-Majālis*, we need to examine first the possibility of relationship between al-‘Āmirī and Ibn Sinā. Considering Ibn Sinā’s generally accepted date of birth is 370/980, it would be very hard to argue that he was the questioner or answerer before al-‘Āmirī who died 381/992. Franz Rosenthal states that it is impossible to believe that there was an intellectual relationship between Ibn Sinā and al-‘Āmirī as indicated by the title of *Ajwiba* because Ibn Sinā would be eleven years old when al-‘Āmirī died.⁷ Saḥbān Khalifāt, who edited the treatises of al-‘Āmirī, emphasizes the impossibility of this relationship and asserts that *Ajwiba* could be the work titled *Ijābāt Ibn Sinā ‘alā as‘ilāt Abī ‘Alī al-Nisābūrī*, which is also mentioned by Ibn Abi Uṣaybi‘a or that its title could be modified in the manuscripts used for the edition of ‘*Uyūn al-anbā’*.⁸

6 Ibn Abi Uṣaybi‘a, ‘*Uyūn al-anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā’*, ed. August Müller (Königsberg & Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Wahbiyya, 1882-1884), p. 20. There are one long and one short list of works in Ibn Sinā’s autobiography and biography complex. One of the earliest copies of the long list is in a collection in Istanbul University Rare Works Library, no. 4755, which was copied in 588/1192, and the other one is in the entry of Ibn Sinā in Ibn Abi Uṣaybi‘a’s ‘*Uyūn al-anbā’*, which was completed in 667/1268. It is worth emphasizing however that the work titled *Ajwiba* as mentioned in ‘*Uyūn al-anbā’* does not appear in the long list in Istanbul University. For a detailed examination of the long lists of Ibn Sinā’s works, see Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna’s Philosophical Works* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2014), pp. 396-399.

7 Franz Rosenthal, “State and Religion According to Abū l-Ḥasan Al-‘Āmirī”, *Islamic Quarterly*, 3 (1956): 42-43.

8 Saḥbān, Khalifāt. *Rasā’il Abi al-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī wa-shadharātuhū al-falsafiyya* (‘Ammān: al-Jāmi‘a al-Urduniyya, 1988), pp. 208-209. Dimitri Gutas lists the work, whose title cited as *Ijābāt* by Khalifāt, as *Munāzarāt jarat lahū fī al-naḥs ma‘a Abi ‘Alī al-Nisābūrī* and asserts that the identity of Abū ‘Alī al-Nisābūrī mentioned only in the long list of Ibn Sinā’s works is obscure and there is no extant copy of the text. See Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 457. The appearance of al-‘Āmirī as questioner and of Ibn Sinā as answerer in *Ajwiba* can be attributed to the fact that al-‘Āmirī has been a figure neglected by the *ṭabaqāt* literature. It seems that the absence of al-‘Āmirī in any *ṭabaqāt* literature including ‘*Uyūn al-anbā’* has led the scholars, and Ibn Abi Uṣaybi‘a in particular, to disregard the age difference between Ibn Sinā and al-‘Āmirī. Among the modern scholars, only Henry Corbin argues for the possibility of a relationship between al-‘Āmirī and Ibn Sinā. Based on Ibn Abi Uṣaybi‘a’s exposition, he writes that al-‘Āmirī corresponded with Ibn Sinā on philosophy and his letters together with Ibn Sinā’s answers constituted the book titled *Fourteen Questions*. See Henry Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 233

On the other hand, Dimitri Gutas' convincing conclusions challenging the widely accepted date of birth for Ibn Sīnā seems to open new perspectives. Gutas argues that since Abū Bakr al-Baraḳī, for who Ibn Sīnā wrote *al-Ḥāṣil wa al-maḥṣūl* and *al-Birr wa al-ithm* according to his autobiography,⁹ died in 376/986, Ibn Sīnā's date of birth must be dated further back, as early as 353/964. Ibn Sīnā must have been at least twenty-one years old when he wrote the book for al-Baraḳī if we take into account the sequence of events in the autobiography.¹⁰ If we accept Gutas' proposal, then it becomes possible to argue that Ibn Sīnā was twenty-eight years old when al-ʿĀmirī died and therefore could have been one of the interlocutors of *al-Majālis*. This historical possibility can be strengthened by geographical data. We know that al-ʿĀmirī, originally from Nishapur, dedicated his work *al-Taqrīr li awjuh al-taqdīr* to Abū al-Ḥusayn ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Aḥmad. Abū al-Ḥusayn was in fact vizier Abū al-Ḥusayn al-ʿUtbi (vizierate 367/977-372/982) serving the Samanid ruler Nūḥ b. Maṣṣūr (r. 365/976-387/997). This means al-ʿĀmirī may have travelled to Bukhara, the Samanid capital, at least for a limited period within the aforementioned dates. Another piece of evidence for al-ʿĀmirī's presence in Bukhara is recorded at the end of his work *al-Amad ʿalā al-abad* indicated that he finished the book in 375/985-6 in Bukhara.¹¹

On these grounds it is possible that Ibn Sīnā, who was born in the village Afshana near Bukhara in 353/964 and stayed in Bukhara until 389/999 when the Karakhanids overthrew the Samanids, possibly met al-ʿĀmirī during his twenties. According to his autobiography,¹² Ibn Sīnā, who portrayed himself as an "autodidact", entered in the service of the Samanid ruler Nūḥ b. Maṣṣūr after treating him and completed his own education on "all" philosophical sciences by obtaining access to the palace library.¹³ Considering that he had written his works titled *Maqāla fī al-naḥs ʿalā sunnat al-ikhtisār*, *al-Ḥikma al-Arūḍiyya*, *al-Ḥāṣil wa al-maḥṣūl* and *al-Birr wa al-ithm* before he left Bukhara, we can assume that despite his young age,

9 William E. Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1974), p. 38, 40.

10 Dimitri Gutas, "Avicenna's Maḥḥab with an Appendix on the Question of His Date of Birth", *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 5-6 (1987-1988): 334-336.

11 For al-ʿĀmirī's relationship with Bukhara see al-ʿĀmirī, *al-Amad ʿalā al-abad*, ed. E. K. Rowson (Beirut: Dār al-Kindī, 1979), p. 12 (editor's introduction); Khalifāt, *Rasāʾil*, pp. 93-94, 96; Turhan, *ʿĀmirī ve Felsefesi*, pp. 16-18; Everett K. Rowson, "Al-ʿĀmirī", *EI*, XII, pp. 72-73; Elvira Wakelnig, *Feder, Tafel, Mensch: Al-ʿĀmirī's Kitāb al-Fuṣūl fī l-Maʿālim al-ilāhiyya und die arabische Proklos-Rezeption im 10. Jh.* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 29-30; Elvira Wakelnig, "Die Weiterführung der Neuplatonischen Ansätze", *Philosophie in der Islamischen Welt Band 1 8.-10. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ulrich Rudolph (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2012), pp. 174-175.

12 For the structure and philosophical objective of Ibn Sīnā's autobiography see Gutas, *Avicenna*, pp. 220-225.

13 Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina*, pp. 20-38.

Ibn Sinā already had satisfactory knowledge to discuss philosophical issues with someone quite old and experienced like al-‘Āmirī. Besides, Ibn Sinā, while pursuing his philosophical studies at the Samanid palace library, most probably even studied al-‘Āmirī’s works, and some limited clues also point to al-‘Āmirī’s influence on Ibn Sinā’s philosophy.¹⁴ All of this leads us to believe a more profound level of significance for this relationship.

- 14 The philosophical connection between al-‘Āmirī and Ibn Sinā needs further study from various perspectives. In this context, the most important proof showing the intellectual continuity between two philosophers is the traces of necessity and contingency as two basic concepts of Ibn Sinā’s metaphysics in al-‘Āmirī’s thought. For a detailed discussion on this subject see M. Cüneyt Kaya, *Varlık ve İmkân: Aristoteles’ten İbn Sinā’ya İmkânın Tarihi* (İstanbul: Klasik, 2011), pp. 119-127. When the relationship between Ibn Sinā and al-‘Āmirī is considered, Ibn Sinā’s statements in *al-Najāt* insulting al-‘Āmirī is mostly remembered. As Ibn Sinā thinks that objects of desire of celestial bodies are not bodies or the souls of bodies, he argues that some newly emergent so called Muslim philosophers with blurring ideas (*min aḥdās al-mutafalsifa al-İslāmiyya fi tashwīsh al-falsafa*) suppose objects of desire of celestial bodies not as separate intellects but as distinct bodies and proposing for example that a body at a lower level tries to resemble a prior and superior body. Some *al-Najāt* recensions has phrases indicating that the aforementioned “emergent so-called Muslim philosopher” refer to Abū al-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī. See Ibn Sinā, *Al-Najāt fi al-ḥikma al-mantiqiyya wa al-ṭabī‘iyya wa al-ilāhiyya*, ed. Muḥyi al-Dīn Şabrī el-Kurdi (Cairo: Matba‘at al-sa‘āda, 1357/1938), p. 271 (*ka-mā zanannahū Abū al-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī al-qidam min akhbath al-mutafalsifa al-İslāmiyya fi tashwīsh al-falsafa*); *Al-Najāt min al-gharaq fi baḥr al-dalālat*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpajūh (Tehran: Dānishgāh-ı Tehran, 1379), p. 645 (*ka-mā zanannahū [Abū al-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī] al-qidam min aḥdāth al-mutafalsifa al-İslāmiyya fi tashwīsh al-falsafa*); *Al-Najāt fi al-mantiq wa al-ilāhiyyāt*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Umayra (Beirut: Dār al-jil, 1992), v. II, p. 130 (*ka-mā zanannahū Abū al-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī al-fadm [sic.] min akhbath al-mutafalsifa al-İslāmiyya fi tashwīsh al-falsafa*). As we know that Ibn Sinā wrote *al-Najāt* with a departure from his works of *al-Mabda’ wa al-ma‘ād* and *al-Shifā’*, when we compare these phrases with these works, we see that *al-Mabda’ wa al-ma‘ād* does not include such a criticism, *al-Shifā’* mentions a group (*qawm*) with no direct reference to al-‘Āmirī. See Ibn Sinā, *al-Mabda’ wa al-ma‘ād*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh Nūrānī (Tehran: Muassasa-i Muṭala‘āt-ı İslāmi Dānishgāh-ı McGill bā hamkāri-i Dānishgāh-ı Tehran, 1363), p. 66; *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, ed. and trans. Michael, E. Marmura (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), p. 323. On the other hand, it is worth noting that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Isfarāyīnī al-Nisābūrī (ca. VII/XIIth century) in his commentary on *al-Najāt* does not mention the name al-‘Āmirī and only quotes “*ka-mā zanannahū al-mutakaddimūn min aḥdāth al-mutafalsifa al-İslāmiyya...*” See *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Najāt li Ibn Sinā (qism al-ilāhiyyāt)*, ed. Ḥamid Nāji Işfaḥnī, consults with al-Shifā’ and omits the part of “Abū al-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī” from the text and reads the phrase as “*ka-mā zanannahū ba’d al-qawm min aḥdāth...*” See *Kitāb al-Najāt fi al-ḥikma al-mantiqiyya wa al-ṭabī‘iyya wa al-ilāhiyya*, ed. Mājid Fakhri (Beirut: Dār al-āfāq al-jadida, 1985), p. 308. Considering all these notes, we can conclude that the comment of a reader or a copier concerning that the person Ibn Sinā criticized was al-‘Āmirī was taken as part of the text of *al-Najāt* in time and the misreading of word *al-qawm* in the phrase as *al-qidam* also contributed to this misunderstanding. Another aspect of Ibn Sinā and al-‘Āmirī connection was the relationship between Ibn Sinā and Abū al-Qāsim al-Kirmānī. According to Ibn Sinā’s letter to vizier Abū Sa’d, a public debate took place between Ibn Sinā and al-Kirmānī who was known as al-‘Āmirī’s ghuḷām and working as scribe in the Buyid court in Ray. Ibn Sinā’s extreme criticism of al-Kirmānī in his letters to his students can be attributed to this public debate. Besides, al-Kirmānī appears an important figure in *al-Mubāḥathāt* with his questions and objections transmitted through Bahmanyār. In this case, we can argue that Ibn Sinā’s personal and strong intellectual relationship with al-‘Āmirī probably continued through al-Kirmānī. For the identity of al-Kirmānī and his relationship with Ibn Sinā see Reisman, *The Making of Avicennan Tradition*, pp. 166-185. Yahya Michot who edited Ibn Sinā’s letter to Abū Sa’d and translated it into French analyzes in detail the relationship between Ibn Sinā and al-Kirmānī in the introduction. See Yahya Michot, *Ibn Sinā: Lettre au vizir Abū Sa’d* (Beirut: Les Éditions Al-Bouraq, 2000) 1*-128*.

Having established the historical and geographical possibility of a relationship between Ibn Sinā and al-‘Āmirī, the structure of *al-Majālis* will help determine the identities of the questioner and the answerer. *Al-Majālis*, which composes of seven sessions, can be divided into three sections in respect to subjects of each session. The first three sessions (questions 1-17) include discussions on the levels of beings, whereas fourth and fifth sessions (questions 18-29) include discussions on the generation of physical world through the concept of “nature” and sixth and seventh sessions (questions 30-41) discuss the beings with souls in the physical world one by one and examine the functioning of the human intellect and soul-body relationships. Considering the content and style of questions,¹⁵ we observe that the questioner actually tries to facilitate the discussion for the answerer to clarify, exemplify, elaborate, and justify his ideas rather than simply challenge, criticize, or show inconsistencies of the answerer. In addition, we see that the questioner is acquainted with the ideas of the answerer and occasionally contributes considerably to the discussion through his comments (for example in question/answer 24, 28, 29 and 39).¹⁶

Both the content and style of the questions and the debate’s linear progression makes *al-Majālis* seem like a constructed narrative rather than a real debate. Even if it is almost impossible to eliminate this option, the concluding phrases of al-Majālis quoted above seem to indicate the opposite: if *al-Majālis* were a constructed narrative, it would be difficult to justify why it has finished in this way. On the other hand, at the beginning of third session, the questioner requests a new perspective to examine issues discussed in the first two sessions. The response supports the view that *al-Majālis* records a real debate:

Question: With your permission, I [would like to] return to the issues (*al-muṭālabāt*) with a different perspective.

15 Find the complete list of questions in *al-Majālis* in the appendix. I also prepare the text and translation of *al-Majālis* for publication.

16 Dimitri Gutas points out that since the unique copy of *al-Majālis* exists in a collective manuscript in Ragıp Paşa Library, no. 1461, which also includes some material concerning *al-Mubāhathāt*, this collection could be originated from the circles that spread the works of Ibn Sinā and his student Bahmanyār and he finds it confounding that a collection from this circle calls Ibn Sinā in the introduction and conclusion only as *al-Shaykh* instead of his widespread epithet *al-Shaykh al-Ra’is*. See Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 432. Even though Ibn Sinā was being called as *al-Shaykh al-Ra’is* by later generations, Gutas’ reservation seems unjustified because of the fact that Ibn Sinā’s famous student, al-Jūzjāni, in the biography of his teacher, always calls him as *al-Shaykh*. For al-Jūzjāni’s references see Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina*, p. 44, 52, 56, 60, 62, 66ff. On the other hand, regarding the narrative in his autobiography, it should not be surprising to see Ibn Sinā, who had acquired a considerable intellectual progress and attracted attention, to be called as *al-Shaykh*.

Answer: Your idea is very appropriate and your planning (*tadbiruka*) is considerably right. I ask from God firstly a good success, secondly protection from error in religion, thirdly release from danger [in other words] the desert of negligence in knowledge, and fourthly rescue from sparing anything good [from others] and so failure to fulfill its obligation. (#12)

Besides, the phase in the answer of the twenty fourth question saying “Yes, just as you have said. How beautifully you described” (#24), and the sentences in the answer of the last question saying “This issue can only be concluded with a detailed discussion containing words in books revealed to the prophets that explain the conditions in hereafter. It is impossible to discuss everything in this session. But in order to satisfy the main goal, I just say this and postpone its detailed explanation to another session” (#41) weakens the argument for *al-Majālis* as a constructed narrative.

Therefore, we can conclude that *al-Majālis* is a record of a real debate that took place in Bukhara during 372-375/982-986 between al-‘Āmirī and Ibn Sinā who closely knew al-‘Āmirī’s philosophy and recently began to produce new works on philosophy. We understand that Ibn Sinā is the questioner and al-‘Āmirī is the answerer.¹⁷ Although we will discuss the answers in *al-Majālis* below in more detail, for the ascription of answers to al-‘Āmirī, let us suffice now to show the similarity, in terms of wording and meaning, between the answer for the seventh question and the sentences in al-‘Āmirī’s *Inqādh al-bashar min al-jabr wa al-qadar*.

17 Although the phrase at the end of *al-Majālis* explicitly indicates that the *shaykh* in the title refers to “Abū ‘Alī ibn. Sinā,” other alternatives are also possible. In the introduction of his book, *Kitāb al-i‘lām bi-manāqib al-Islām*, Al-‘Āmirī refers to “Abū Naṣr”, to whom he dedicated the work, as *Shaykh al-fāḍil al-ra‘īs*. See al-‘Āmirī, *Kitāb al-i‘lām bi-manāqib al-Islām*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Ḥamid Ghurāb (Cairo: Dār al-kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1967), p. 74. For the identity of Abū Naṣr, the editor of the text, Ghurāb, refers to Samanid vizier Abū Naṣr ibn Abū Zayd where as Rowson and Khalifāt consider that he could be Samanid ruler Nūḥ b. Maṣṣūr’s vizier Abū al-Ḥusayn al-‘Utbi’s uncle historian Abū Naṣr al-‘Utbi or “Governor of Nishapur” Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘il al-Miḡālī. See al-‘Āmirī, *al-Amad ‘alā al-abad*, p. 12 (editor’s introduction); Khalifāt, *Rasā’il*, pp. 91-93. Turhan states that the option of Abū Naṣr ibn Abū Zayd, as Ghurāb suggests, is impossible, because he became vizier after al-‘Āmirī’s death. He also states that there is insufficient evidence to support any of the other two suggestions. See Turhan, *Āmirī ve Felsefesi*, pp. 17-18. As the person called “Abū Naṣr” seems to have strong literary skills and since we do not know much about these two persons’ connection with philosophy, it seems unlikely to decide for sure on that the questioner is either one of them.

al-Majālis, ff. 151^b18-152^a10 (# 7)*al-‘Āmirī, Inqādh*, pp. 257-258 (Khalifāt)¹⁸

<...> وهي اتفاهم بأن الفاعل الواحد لا يختلف أفعاله إلا لإحدى جهات أربع أولها أن يكون ذا قوى مختلفة كالإنسان الواحد الذي يفعل لكل واحدة من قوى الشهوانية والغضبية والنطقية فعلاً يخالف فعله بإحديها الأخرى والثانية أن يكون فاعلاً بآلات مختلفة كالنحار الذي يفعل بكل واحدة من الآلة فعلاً يخالف فعله بصاحبته والثالثة أن يفعل في مواد مختلفة كالنار التي يفعل في الشمع الإذابة وفي البيضة التعقيد وفي الحجر التكليس وفي الطينة التحجير والرابعة أن يفعل على توليد البعض من البعض كالبرد الذي يورث النشرة قبضاً فيتولد من القبض انسداد ويتولد من انسدادها تكابس الأبخرة في البدن ويتولد من انكباسها الحركة المفرطة ويتولد من التحرك فرط السخونة فيصير البرد علة للحرارة التي ضده في الطرف الأقصى منه ولما صح هذا بم عرف أن الباري عز وجل أجل من أن يوصف بالقوى المختلفة أو هو واحد محض وأجل من أن يوصف بالإستعانة بآلات مختلفة أو هو ليس يفعل بالآلات وأجل من أن يوصف بتحصيل فعله في عناصر لم يوجد لها إذ هو ليس بمحتاج إلى العناصر في أفعاله فلم يبق إلا الوجه الرابع وهو أن اختلافها وتكثرها على طريق إيجاد البعض من البعض فأمر الناقد في الأشياء كلها على أنها لو كانت كلها بالنسبة إليه على رتبة واحدة لما نفذ سلطان واحد منها على صاحبه <...>

إن الفاعل الواحد قد يجوز أن تصدر عنه الأفعال المختلفة وذلك يكون على إحدى جهات أربع إحداها على سبيل الإستعانة بقوى في ذاته مختلفة والثانية على سبيل الإستعانة بآلات مختلفة والثالثة على سبيل التأثير في عناصر مختلفة والرابعة على سبيل توليد البعض عن البعض فأما الإستعانة بقوى مختلفة [فـ] كالرجل يفعل بالقوة الشهوانية خاصية الإجتذاب للنافع وبالقوة الغضبية خاصية الدفع للضار والقوة النطقية خاصية التمييز بين ما هو نافع فيحتلب أو ضار فيدفع وأما الإستعانة بالآلات المختلفة فكالنحار الذي يضرب بالفأس فتشقق وبالقدوم وبالمدقة فيرص فتصدر عنه الأفاعيل المتباينة لاستعانتها بآلات مختلفة وأما التأثير في عناصر مختلفة [فـ] كالنار الموقدة التي أثرت في البيض ففعلت فيه العقد وأثرت في الشمعة ففعلت فيها الإذابة وأثرت في الطين فحجرته وأثرت في الحجر فكلسته فصارت محدثة للأفعال المختلفة لاختلاف العناصر وأما على سبيل توليد البعض عن البعض فكالبرد الذي يحدث في البشرية قبضاً فيحدث من انقباضها انسداد المسام ومن انسداد المسام تكابس الأبخرة ومن تكابسها إفراط الحركة ثم يتولد منها الحرارة التي هي مضادة للبرد وفي الطرف الأقصى منه فإذا كان صدور الأفعال المختلفة عن الفاعل الواحد محصوراً في هذه الأنواع الأربعة ثم علم أن الباري جل جلاله ليس ذا قوى مختلفة فيصح به الوجه الأول وليس يفعل بالآلات فيصح بما الوجه الثاني ولم يفعل ابتداء في العناصر المختلفة إذ هو الموجد للعناصر كلها فلم يبق إلا الوجه الرابع وهو أنه عز اسمه بتمام قوته الإلهية أبدع موجوداً كاملاً منساقاً بذاته إلى توليد غيره عنه ثم عن ذلك الغير آخر ثم عن الآخر آخر سواه <...>

Although the resemblance between two texts may lead us to associate *al-Majālis* with al-‘Āmirī, in order to outline the nature of this relationship comprehensively we need to analyze the philosophical doctrines in *al-Majālis* and examine their coherence or incoherence with al-‘Āmirī’s philosophy. As an examination of the whole text of *al-Majālis* may exceed the limits of this article, I will focus on the first three sessions (questions 1-17) where the levels of beings being are discussed and inquire

18 For the edition of *Inqādh* by Kasım Turhan see *Bir Ahlak Problemi Olarak Kelâm ve Felsefe Açısından İnsan Fiilleri* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1996), pp. 12-13.

the coherence between the philosophical approach of the text and that of al-'Āmirī's other works. Meanwhile, I will not reproduce *al-Majālis'* format of question-answer, but instead summarize the ideas outlined in the texts.

The narrative in al-Majālis, which adopts the model of the gradual coming of the world into being, refers to the origin of existence with these names and adjectives: The Creator (*al-Bārī*), The True First (*al-Awwal al-ḥaqq*), The Absolute True First (*al-Awwal al-ḥaqq al-mahḍ*), The True One (*al-Wāḥid al-ḥaqq*), The Absolute Truth (*Ḥaqq mahḍ*), The True Wise (*al-Ḥakīm al-ḥaqq*), The First Wise (*al-Ḥakīm al-awwal*), The Absolute Originator (*al-Mūjid al-mahḍ*), The Being to whom the command and creation belong (*man laḥū al-amr wa al-khalq*), The True Creator (*al-Mubdi' bi al-ḥaqīqa*), The True Sovereign (*al-Mālik al-ḥaqq*), The Absolute Perfect (*al-Tamām al-mahḍ*). As the adjectives "True" and "Absolute" have particular importance in these denominations, "the Creator" and "Absolute Truth" are most frequently used. Since al-Majālis particularly focuses on the manner and process of the coming of the world into being, it does not offer any proof to demonstrate the existence of the Creator, and instead of analyzing His existence in detail, it emphasizes His principal nature as "Absolute Truth" and His action as "*fayḍ*". (#13) In this case, it cannot be thought that the Absolute Truth does seek benefit in realizing His action. He realizes whatever the true wisdom is to do without a demand to obtain benefit. As acquiring a benefit is a demand for perfection, it is impossible to talk about any goal or demand of the Absolute Perfect. *Al-Majālis* explains the state of the Absolute Truth with the example of king. According to this, the characteristic of the king is to bestow benefit to his subjects while the characteristic of the subjects is to receive benefit from the king. Therefore, the king in true sense is the one who bestows benefit but does not obtain benefit from his subjects (#17). The reason for the action of the Absolute Truth at this level is to uncover his generosity. The answer for the question on the reason for the Absolute Originator's creation of the creatures (*khaliqa*) explains this point further:

The emergence (*zuhūr*) of one thing from another takes place either by itself like the sensible things whose essences are apparent to us or through observable effects (*āthār*) like the passive things showing their active elements. It is not possible for the True First to emerge while his essence is observable. Therefore, his existence comes into being through his passive element. So since his emergence depends on the existence of his passive element, He either chooses never to have his essence emerge, his existence not be known and his generosity and wisdom not appear, or vice versa. Choosing His emergence is more valuable than choosing otherwise or [in other words, while choosing the emergence] corresponds to existence; so does choosing the opposite to absence. The True Wise always chooses the superior one between two contingencies and thereby he effuses (*fayḍ*) his generosity, manifests all his powers. It is impossible for him as being the True Wise to choose the inferior one [between the two contingencies]. Consequently, the reason for the creation of the creatures by the Absolute Originator is his choice for the superior one between the [options] of emerging or not emerging of the existence. (#1)

The association of the creation of the Absolute Truth with the emergence of his existence, generosity and wisdom can be interpreted for the eternal existence of the world. *Al-Majālis* tries to solve this problem through the concepts of eternity and active/passive elements. According to this, since the eternal exists forever, it is impossible to argue for its need to have an active cause. Even if the “active” is relative to a “passive”, it precedes the “passive” in respect to its essence and existence, the active and the passive do not belong to the same existential categories. The consequence of this is that the passive is not eternal because of its passivity and the eternal is not passive because of its eternity. Therefore, the world, as a passive of an active cause, is not eternal. (#2)

Before discussing the gradual coming of the world into being from the Absolute Truth or the Creator, it is worth mentioning why *al-Majālis* adopts such a model. The seventh question is exactly related to this:

Why don't you say, like ordinary people, that it is the True First who is the creator (*mubdi'*) of the intellect, soul and all universal and particular things from nothing, that the origination of any of these into existence are not preceded with the origination of another thing, that all of these stand in the same category in respect to the Supreme Eminence, and that he shows his power by effusing his generosity and (...) by creating every contingent things, except the ordinary meanings? (#7)

In the answer, it is stated first that all philosophers (*ḥukamā'*) unanimously agree that all the originated things (*muḥdathāt*) are created by the Creator and those who refuse this fact are erratic (*muḍlil*). According to philosophers, every existing thing originates through the Creator's predestination (*qadar*) and decree (*qaḍā'*) and it is impossible for anything to happen without this. According to philosophers, decree is “the guidance bestowed on the active substances (*al-jawāhir al-fā'ila*) to carry their passive elements into perfection,” and the predestination is “the capacity (*quwwa*) bestowed through the command on the active substances to bring their passive elements into existence.” In this framework, philosophers do not approve considering everything in the same category in respect to their relations with the Creator by disregarding their relations with each other. The emergence of different actions by an efficient can appear for any of four reasons: (i) the efficient's possession of various capacities: like the human being's capacity for desire, anger and intellect and different actions through each one of them. (ii) The efficient's working with various tools: like a carpenter's use of different tools in order to fashion various products. (iii) The efficient's different actions on different matters: like the fire's melting of wax, solidifying of eggs, turning the rock into powder and turning mud into rock. (iv) The efficient's realization of its action indirectly: like the shrinking of skin because of cold, the closing of pores out of shrinking, the squeezing of air in

the body because of the contraction of pores, the appearance of excessive motion due to the squeezing of air, the appearance of excessive heat because of motion and eventually the cold's being a reason for its opposite, i.e. the heat. Since it is not an issue of the Creator to have different capacities, to act through tools or realize his action on the matter directly, the only alternative for the Creator's different actions, in other words, for the variety and plurality of beings is His indirect realization of his actions. (#7)

Now we can look at more closely on how *al-Majālis* explains the levels of beings. Since the world came into being by the appearance of the essence and generosity of the True First through effusion, the first thing that the Creator creates must be an essence that is the most valuable and most complete for its uniqueness and the most perfect for its simplicity. This essence must actively exist and know itself and the essence of its creator. As can be easily inferred, this essence is the intellect standing at the top of uniqueness for its indivisibility and unchanging capacities and at the peak of simplicity for its thinking of everything unchanged. (#3)

The phrases on the intellect's coming into existence from the Creator or the True First indicate to the existence of another category between the two. According to this, the reason for the active existence of the intellect is the capacity (*quwwa*) emanating from the Being to whom the command and creation belong. The actual quality of this capacity named as the command is its absolute potency (*qudra maḥḍa*) and the potency is used here in the meaning of "the reason facilitating one thing to bring another thing into existence." At the same time, the relationship between the command, the knowing (*'allāma*) in its essence, and the Creator can be explained in comparison to the relationship between the perfect administration (*al-tadbīr al-tāmm*) and the perfect ruler (*al-malik al-kāmil*). In this sense, the command is the administration effused from the True Ruler (# 4, 8, 13, 14). While the Creator realizes his action through effusion, the command realizes his action through *ibdā'* and all the active substances including the intellect derive their capacities and powers to act from the command. (#4, 15). Therefore, we can state that as a result of the Creator's effusion to the command, the command brings the substance of intellect into existence through *ibdā'*. The intellect that links its substance with the command knows in this way the existence of the command and so its essence comes into being in this way. In addition, the intellect is also aware of the fact that the command and the commander, i.e. the Creator, are relative concepts, thereby knows both himself with no plurality in its essence and also the principle that created it. (#3, 4)

The position of the intellect, whose actual quality is absolute knowledge in respect the command, resembles to the position of a gentle and obedient person

vis-à-vis the absolute rulership. The intellect, which realizes its actions through *in-shā'*, is the most powerful active substance because it conceptualizes the truths of meanings (*ma'ānī*). The reason for its being in such a position is its proximity to the absolute command. The abovementioned principle, according to which the reason for the Creator's creation of the world is the choice of the contingency of emergence (*zuhūr*) as it is being superior to its opposite, is also valid for the intellect. According to this, the intellect knows the superior one of the two contingencies, i.e. the existence, and desires to be delighted (*ghibṭa*) by the existence of a passive thing on which it can operate to the extent of its capacity. As a result, with the power acquired from the command, the intellect induces other inferior substances to exist in order to have his existence emerge, to hand down generously from his quality and to raise its happiness (*surūr*) by bestowing the effects of its superiority and realizing his action particular to itself. (#5, 8, 14, 15)

Following the intellect, there comes the soul whose actual quality is absolute life (*ḥayāt*) and realizes its actions through *ikhtirā'*. The relationship between the soul and the intellect resembles the relationship between the intelligent student and the experienced teacher. The soul, which stands closer and resembles the most to the intellect in terms of simplicity, is at the peak of potency and simplicity vis-à-vis other substances even though it is composed of two capacities of desire (*shawqiyya*) and supremacy (*ghalabiyya*). As the light of the intellect rises on the soul, the soul comes to know its own essence, the essence of its creator, i.e. intellect, and the Being to whom the command and creation belong. In this framework, the soul obeys the intellect to follow the Truth and help the command during the effusion of the good (*khayr*) and obeys the Creator indirectly with the desire to be closer to Him. If the light of the intellect did not fall on the soul, it would be impossible for the soul to know the intellect not to mention the impossibility of the soul's ability to be separate from the intellect and its continuous seeking to reach the intellect (#5, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15). Besides, if the command did not effuse on the soul through the intellect, it would be impossible to talk about the soul's capacity to operate on inferior beings not to mention its impossibility of its capacity to know the Creator to reach the goal of coming closer to Him:

(...) The command affecting all beings, when all others are equal in respect to Him, is that none among these authorities (*sultān*) can affect others. Since the inferior exists only through obedience, the intellect exists by obeying the command or is voluntarily tied up to the thing the True guides. The soul too exists by obeying the intellect as it gives priority to the rational inclinations. (...) (#7)

The soul, which reaches to create something through the command of the Creator and to know the superior one between two contingencies by means of the

intellect, is not satisfied to know only those superior to itself, but also it creates a passive thing, i.e. the nature, which indicates its individual existence, enables its essential power to appear, and on which the soul has happiness by ruling it. There are two reason for the impossibility of the soul to create more perfect thing than the nature:

(i) The thing that is closer to accept a meaning, which is substantially simpler, essentially purer and remoter to accrue by others and to found composition with something close, deserves more to accept that meaning and is closer to be considered with it (*anna al-shay' al-ṣāliḥa li-qabūl ma'nān min al-mā'ānī ay ma'nān mā kāna absaṭu dhātan wa akhlaṣu jawharan wa ab'adu min al-takathtur bi-ghayrihī wa al-tarkīb bi-mā yaqtarinu bihī kāna ajdar li-qabūl dhālika al-mā'nā wa aqrab 'alā al-taṣawwur bihī*). Therefore, the substance the most suitable to encompass the substance of an existence should undoubtedly be simpler than the encompassed and closer to uniqueness in respect to it.

(ii) Nothing is able to create something similar to itself or something simpler and more perfect than itself (*anna al-shay' lā yaqdiru 'alā ijād mithlihi wa lā 'alā mā huwa absaṭ minhu wa atamm*). It is impossible for anything to render a duplicate of its power or bestow voluntarily something beyond its power. Therefore, the soul, which comes into existence through the rising of the intellect's light on it, cannot transfer this light to the inferior with the same perfection. This is because of two reasons: (a) it is imperative that the passive should have weaker capacities than the active (*anna maf'ūl al-shay' lā maḥālata yajibu an yakūna aḍ'af quwwatan min fā'ilihī*). (b) The one remoter to the uniqueness cannot be closer to simplicity (*anna al-ab'ad min al-waḥdat mumtani'un an yakūna mithla al-aqrab ilayhā fi al-basāṭati*). Therefore, it is impossible for the soul to produce a passive that certainly knows its essence and recognizes its individual existence. (#10)

The relationship between nature having absolute will and the soul resembles the relationship between the right tool and the powerful efficient. Nature's obedient attitude in front of the soul paves the way for miracles (*al-āyāt*), extraordinary events (*al-mu'jizāt*) and spiritual influences (*al-ta'thīrāt al-ruḥāniyya*) (#7). While nature, which exists as a result of the command's effusing force on the soul, derives its capacity to move the matter from the soul's desiring force (*shawqiyya*), the soul, with its force derived from the intellect, can guide the nature without teaching capacities specific to the nature's each particles. At this level, nature has three meanings: (i) to incline on something (*al-mayl ilā al-shay'*), (ii) stimulative force (*quwwa al-taḥrik li al-shay'*), and (iii) guiding force (*quwwa al-hidāya li al-shay'*). However, since inclining on a capacity is impossible without the body, the soul guides the

nature, through the absolute command, to generate body. The soul knows that its action could not perfectly appear unless nature generates the body. Even though the nature was guided to its perfection, it guides the body by subjugating forcefully under its command (*'alā ṭarīq al-taskhīr al-īdṭirārī*), not by way of absolute knowledge. Therefore, as the nature does not have a trait to know the essence of its creator, the soul, and generate another thing, the soul has guided the nature to generate the body, and then brought it closer in order to have it operate on the body. Unless the nature came closer to the body, it would become substantially idle and futile. As the nature's action is inclined to stimulate, it needs an actively existing substance, i.e. body, in order to realize this action. In this respect, the relationship between the nature and the body can be compared with the relationship between the passive matter and complementary form. (#9).

On the context of the soul's guiding of the primary nature (*al-ṭabī'a al-awwal-iyya*) to bring the absolute body into existence, *al-Majālis* also mention the stages of the process in which the body comes into existence. According to this, the beginning of the body, which is in the category of continuous quantity as its position (*lahā waq'*) is the point and we can reduce all dimensions to the point by analyzing it. When the soul originated (*ahdathat*) the first point through its own force on the universal nature (*bi al-ṭabī'at al-kulliyya*) moving with its essence and the command, when the nature begin to move it linearly, the first dimension, "the abstract length" (*al-ṭūl al-mujarrad*) or "the linear line" (*khaṭṭ mustaqīm*) appears. As the nature moves the line linearly, but not in its original dimension, then "the abstract width" (*al-'arḍ al-mujarrad*), which is also called "simple plane" (*baṣiṭ musaṭṭah*), appears. Then, the plane is moved by the nature linearly, but not in its own dimensions, which brings into existence the third dimension, depth (*'umq*). In addition to the three dimensions of the body representing its perfection, *al-Majālis* adds another dimension to length, width and depth. It is named as "shape" (*shakl*), which is the body's active existence as a result of four forces, i.e. the command, the intellect, the soul and the nature. However, it still remains obscure as the text does not discuss what is meant by the fourth dimension, *shakl*, in the context of first three dimensions. While the body is absolutely passive and only acts through either the nature or the soul, the nature has four kinds of actions, which correspond to the categories of movement: (i) the substantial movement of generation and corruption, (ii) the movement of quantitative increase and decrease, (iii) the movement of qualitative transformation, and (iv) the movement of spatial relocation (#11)

At the end of the third session, the text explains the four categories of actions (distinct from the nature's movements), *fayḍ*, *ibdā'*, *inshā'* and *ikhṭirā'*, by giving one

example for each. *Al-Majālis* states that these four “sublime” actions preceding the nature and the four “natural” movements can be called as *ihdāth*, in other words, “origination”, and also emphasizes that it is synonymous with the certain concepts frequently used in religious terminology such as *ihdāth*, *khalq*, *ja'l*, and *fi'l* (#16). Even though, throughout the stages from the Creator to the body, we attribute actions of “creation” to the command, the intellect, the soul and the nature, we cannot argue that these are absolutely active. The active quality attributed to all beings, except for the Creator, does not mean beyond considering the True First free from direct action:

(...) The command cannot be qualified with benefiting or not benefiting. It is actually a divine force through which the defects of existing substances could find ease when it shows the aspects of its actions. It is not absolutely active. Our statement that the essence of the intellect appears from it by way of *ibdā'* does not mean to argue that the intellect is *mubdi'*. On the contrary, we intend to consider the True First free from direct action. The *mubdi'* in its full sense is the sublime Being to whom the command and creation belong. As for the intellect and the soul, the true actions generated by each one give happiness and comfort, but none of them enjoys with their actions or benefit from the thing they create. On the contrary, they become happy and reach comfort through the thing's active existence. Happiness and comfort are not with the scope of enjoyment and benefiting. While the first two happen in the active form, the latter two happen in the passive form. Since the substances of the soul and the intellect are the two non-passive actives and their activeness are not only for their essences but also through the effusing command, they have particularly happiness and comfort, but not benefiting from joy. Since the natural body is passive not active, it has particularly enjoyment not happiness. As for the nature, it is only a force under the command and since it does not do its action with intention and choice, it is qualified with benefiting and suffering. But when the words cannot express [the content] exactly, we sometimes say that the command does so and so and the nature intends such and such. (#17)

Hierarchy of Beings in <i>al-Majālis</i>				
Levels of Existence	Principal Characteristic	Principal Action	Hierarchical relationship	Example for the subordinate coming from the superior
The Creator	Absolute truth	<i>fayḍ</i>	-	Effusion of the sound vision from the bright intellect
The Command	Absolute Power	<i>ibda'</i>	The perfect management of the competent ruler	<i>Ibdā'</i> of the number four from multiplication of two with two
The Intellect	Absolute knowledge	<i>inshā'</i>	The benign person in relation to absolute politics	The drum's <i>inshā'</i> different effects on the soul of each soldier in the campaign
The Soul	Absolute life	<i>ikhtirā'</i>	The intelligent student of the experienced teacher	A person's composition of words and meanings and <i>ikhtirā'</i> of a eulogy
The Nature	Absolute will	Generation and corruption, increase and decrease, transformation, relocation	True tools of the powerful efficient	
The Body	Absolute matter	Absolute passiveness	The passive matter in relation to the complementary form	
		<i>ihdāth = khalq = fi'l = ja'l</i>		

Now we need to compare the philosophical approach of *al-Majālis'* first three sessions outlined above with al-ʿĀmiri's ideas on metaphysics. But we have two outstanding problems. First one is related to the structure of *al-Majālis*. Even if we accept that al-ʿĀmiri is one who answers the questions in *al-Majālis*, which we assumed to be a record of an authentic debate, it would not be reasonable to expect complete consistency between the answers over the course of the debate and al-ʿĀmiri's ideas in his other works. The second problem is that some of al-ʿĀmiri's works from which we can study his ideas on metaphysics are not available today or the extant works have idiosyncratic structures. For example, unfortunately we do not have some of his books such as *al-Ināya wa al-dirāya*, *al-Irshād li-taṣṣīḥ al-i-tiqād*, *al-Fuṣūl al-burhāniyya li al-mabāḥith al-naṣāniyya* ve *Sharḥ kitāb al-naṣ li-Aristaṭālis*, from which we expect

to find important clues for his ideas on metaphysics. The principal source, among al-‘Āmirī’s extant works today, that we can consult for his ideas on metaphysics is *al-Fuṣūl fī al-ma‘ālim al-ilāhiyya*. *Al-Fuṣūl* is the most important work of al-‘Āmirī that deal with the hierarchy of beings and the issues of creation discussed in the first three sessions of *al-Majālis*. It is essentially however a paraphrased version of Proclus’ (d. 485) *Elements of Theology*,¹⁹ thereby the question whether this book attributed to al-‘Āmirī reflects his own ideas completely remains valid.²⁰ In addition to *al-Fuṣūl*, al-‘Āmirī’s *al-Amad ‘alā al-abad*, focusing on soul-body relationship and two other books, *al-Taqrīr li-awjuh al-taqdīr* and *Inqādh al-bashar min al-jabr wa al-qadar* examines the issue of predestination and free will, provides, albeit indirectly, important contributions to al-‘Āmirī’s ideas on metaphysics.

Considering these constraints, when we compare our summary of the first three sessions of *al-Majālis* with al-‘Āmirī’s works, we observe that *al-Majālis* concurs largely with al-‘Āmirī’s terminology on the origin of existence:

Descriptions of the Origin of Existence in <i>al-Majālis</i>	Descriptions on the Origin of Existence in al-‘Āmirī’s other works
The Creator (<i>al-Bārī</i>)	The Creator (<i>al-Bārī</i>) ²¹
The True First (<i>al-Awwal al-ḥaqq</i>) The Absolute True First (<i>al-Awwal al-ḥaqq al-mahd</i>)	The True First (<i>al-Awwal al-ḥaqq</i>) ²²
The True One (<i>al-Wāḥid al-ḥaqq</i>)	The True One (<i>al-Wāḥid al-ḥaqq</i>) ²³



19 For possible sources used by al-‘Āmirī in paraphrasing the work of Proclus, see Elvira Wakelnig, “Al-‘Āmirī’s Paraphrase of the Proclean *Elements of Theology*: A Search for Possible Sources and Parallel Texts”, *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, ed. Cristina D’Ancona (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 457-469. Besides, in her book *Feder, Tafel, Mensch*, Wakelnig examined the Neoplatonist elements in al-‘Āmirī’s philosophy in *al-Fuṣūl*. In this work, Wakelnig translated *al-Fuṣūl* into German, wrote a commentary and examined in detail its connection with Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*. See Wakelnig, *Feder, Tafel, Mensch*, pp. 127-388.

20 Elvira Wakelnig, in an article on al-‘Āmirī’s ideas on metaphysics, compared his theories on the levels of beings and creation in *al-Fuṣūl* with his perspectives in other works and concluded that there is, roughly speaking, a consistency between these works. See Elvira Wakelnig, “The Metaphysics in al-‘Āmirī: The Hierarchy of Being and the Concept of Creation”, *Medioevo*, XXXII (2007): 39-59.

21 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl fī al-ma‘ālim al-ilāhiyya*, in Saḥbān Khalifāt (ed.), *Rasā’il*, p. 364, al-‘Āmirī, *al-Taqrīr li-awjuh al-taqdīr*, in Saḥbān Khalifāt (ed.), *Rasā’il*, p. 305, 306, 314, 336; al-‘Āmirī, *Inqādh al-bashar min al-jabr wa al-qadar*, in Saḥbān Khalifāt (ed.), *Rasā’il*, p. 249, 252, 263, 264, 267, 268, 269; al-‘Āmirī, *al-Amad*, p. 78.

22 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, pp. 365, 371, 378; al-‘Āmirī, *Inqādh*, p. 252.

23 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 366, 368. For the use of this description as *al-Aḥad al-ḥaqq*, see *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 367, 368, 372, 374; al-‘Āmirī, *al-Taqrīr*, p. 319.

24 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 368.

Absolute Truth (<i>Ḥaqq maḥḍ</i>)	Absolute Truth (<i>Ḥaqq maḥḍ</i>) ²⁴
The True Wise (<i>al-Ḥakīm al-ḥaqq</i>)	-
The First Wise (<i>al-Ḥakīm al-awwal</i>)	-
The Absolute Originator (<i>al-Mūjid al-maḥḍ</i>)	The Originator (<i>Mūjid</i>), ²⁵ The Originator of all (<i>al-Mūjid li al-kull</i>) ²⁶
The Being to whom the command and the creation belong (<i>man laḥū al-amr wa al-khalq</i>)	The Being to whom the creation and the command belong (<i>man laḥū al-khalq wa al-amr</i>), ²⁷ The Being to whom the command belongs (<i>man laḥū al-amr</i>) ²⁸
The Truly Creator (<i>al-Mubdi' bi al-ḥaqīqa</i>)	The Perfect Creator (<i>al-Mubdi' al-tāmm</i>), ²⁹ the True Creator (<i>al-Mubdi' al-ḥaqq</i>) ³⁰
The True Sovereign (<i>al-Malik al-ḥaqq</i>)	-
The Absolute Perfect (<i>al-Tamām al-maḥḍ</i>)	Absolute Perfect (<i>Tamām maḥḍ</i>) ³¹

Even though in *al-Majālis* the Absolute Truth realizes his actions without any intention to obtain benefit do not exist identically in al-‘Āmirī’s other works, the use of attributes in His descriptions such as “absolute” (*maḥḍ*) and “true” (*ḥaqq*) suggests that the approach in *al-Majālis* does not contradict to al-‘Āmirī’s philosophical perspective and to a large extent it even agrees with it. Besides, the statements in *al-Majālis* that links coming of the world into being with the emergence of the Absolute Truth’s own existence, generosity and wisdom is comparable to al-‘Āmirī’s statements in *al-Taqrīr*:

We see that the metaphysicians among the philosophers (*inna al-ilāhiyyīn min al-ḥukamā'*) agree on that the primary goal of the divine determination is for three meanings on the creation of the world (*ijād*). These [three meanings] are the following: the effusion of perfect generosity (*ifāda*), exertion of perfect power (*ibrāz*), uncovering of perfect wisdom (*izhār*). The actions particular to this determination are divided into three: creation of the world (*ijād*), having the existence of the world continue (*istibqā'*) and having the world operate (*taṣrif*).³²

Even though al-‘Āmirī does not use in *al-Taqrīr* the themes “choosing the superior one of the two contingencies” and “having One’s own existence known/appear,”

25 Al-‘Āmirī, *Inqādh*, p. 258; al-‘Āmirī, *al-Amad*, p. 87.

26 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 372.

27 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 369, 370; al-‘Āmirī, *al-Taqrīr*, p. 316, 322, 333, 340.

28 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 369.

29 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 366.

30 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 377.

31 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 368. For the use of this description as *Fawq al-tamām* see *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 370.

32 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Taqrīr*, p. 310.

as appear in *al-Majālis*, the emphasis on certain concepts, such as generosity, power, wisdom lead us to associate these statements with the answer given to the first question of *al-Majālis*: “The True Wise always chooses the more superior one of the two contingencies and therefore effuses his generosity completely (*mufiḍan bihī tamām jūdihi*), exhibit all his power (*mubrizan kamāl qudratihi*). While being the True Wise (*wa dhātuhū Ḥakīm ḥaqq*), it is impossible for him to choose the inferior one [from the two contingencies].” It is worth noting that the phrases in this quotation of “the effusion of the generosity completely” and “the exhibition of all the powers” resemble those in *al-Taqrīr*, “the effusion of the perfect generosity” and “the exhibition of the perfect power.” While al-‘Āmirī links the effusion of the generosity, the exhibition of the power and the revelation of the wisdom with three different actions, i.e. the creation of the world, the continuation of its existence and the keeping it operate, respectively, we observe that he does not differentiate these actions in *al-Majālis* but considers them all as the reasons for bringing the world into existence (*ijād*).

Unfortunately, we do not have any source from al-‘Āmirī’s other works to verify the exposition in *al-Majālis* concerning whether the creation of the world as discussed with the Absolute Truth’s generosity, power and wisdom may lead us to conceive it as eternal or not. However, *al-Majālis’* statement on the reasons why the world came into existence continuously and gradually is actually a summarized version of a section from al-‘Āmirī’s *Inqādh*. The passage that I gave at the beginning of this article, where the original texts are compared, constitutes the most important evidence to associate *al-Majālis* with al-‘Āmirī. Al-‘Āmirī argues in the section of *Inqādh* that there are four reasons for the appearance of different actions from one efficient. These are: (i) as the efficient receives help from its different forces, (ii) as the efficient uses different tools (iii) as the efficient operates on different matters (*‘anāṣir*), (iv) as the efficient has one thing generate another thing (*tawlid*). Al-‘Āmirī asserts that the Creator does not have different forces, does not use tools and does not operate on different matters at the beginning, He can only have one thing generate another thing, as in the fourth reason:

The One, whose name is dear, with all his divine power (*quwwatihi*), initiated (*ibdā’*) something that exists perfectly (*kāmīlan*), which creates one thing that creates another thing that creates another thing (...). We call [the Creator] the Almighty as the First Efficient, as some are existentially closer to him than others.³³

Al-‘Āmirī who explains the Creator’s efficiency with the concept of *tawlid*, refers to the concept of *ibdā’* in the quotation above and states that He creates (*ibdā’*)

33 Al-‘Āmirī, *Inqādh*, pp. 257-258.

“something exists perfectly” in order to realize his efficiency and thereby gives some clues about the relationship between the Creator and the world. Through these clues, we arrive at al-‘Āmirī’s statements about the levels of beings in *al-Fuṣūl*. Inspired by the 55th and 88th propositions of *Elements of Theology*, al-‘Āmirī’s *al-Fuṣūl* gives a quintet scheme of existence in the second chapter:

(i) The Creator who essentially exists before and after *dahr*.

(ii) *Qalam* and *amr* that come to exist through *ibdā’*, with (*ma’a*) *dahr* and in a closer position to it (*qarīnuhū*). Al-‘Āmirī states that philosophers define *qalam* (pen) as “universal intellect” and *amr* as “universal forms.”

(iii) ‘*Arsh* and *lawḥ* that come to exist through *khalq*, after *dahr* and before time. According to al-‘Āmirī, philosophers interpret ‘*arsh* as *al-falak al-mustaqīm* and *falak al-aflāk*, and *lawḥ* as the “universal soul.”

(iv) The circulating heavens (*al-aflāk al-dā’ira*) and first celestial bodies (*al-ajrām al-awwaliyya*) that come to exist through *taskhīr*, with the time and in a closer position to it.

(v) Bodies that come to exist through *tawlid* and made of four elements after time.³⁴

It is worth noting that al-‘Āmirī simplifies this schema in the seventh and eleventh chapters of *al-Fuṣūl* and in his *al-Amad* and he counts them as (i) the Creator, (ii) the intellect, (iii) the soul, (iv) the nature and (v) the body. According to this, al-‘Āmirī identifies circulating heavens and first celestial bodies of *al-Fuṣūl* with the nature.³⁵

In *al-Taqrīr* where al-‘Āmirī focuses on the issue of divine determination and free will, we see another classification of beings. In this book organized around the concepts of the necessary and the contingent, al-‘Āmirī asserts that the intellect can decide about one thing in three ways, such as necessary, contingent and impossible, and so he examines the necessary being in two categories: (i) the one whose existence is necessary in itself (*al-wājib wujūduhū bi al-dhāt*). (ii) the one whose existence is necessary in relation to another thing (*al-wājib wujūduhū bi al-iḍāfa*). Al-‘Āmirī accepts the one whose existence is necessary in itself as the Creator and explains the second category of the necessary being with the example of the existence of a center in relation to the circle.³⁶ Al-‘Āmirī classifies the impossible being in two categories

34 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 364.

35 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, pp. 367-368, 370-371; al-‘Āmirī, *al-Amad*, p. 87.

36 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Taqrīr*, p. 305.

of “absolute” in the sense of completely impossible and “conditional” in the sense of being impossible under certain circumstances. He also classifies the contingent being in three categories in reference to the frequency of their coming into existence, such as “natural events whose existence is more frequent than their not being”, “rare events whose existence is less frequent than their not being” and “changing events whose existence is as frequent as their not being.”³⁷ However, while al-'Āmirī identifies the necessary being with the Creator, it is still obscure how he differentiates the one whose existence is necessary in relation to another thing and the contingent being. Al-'Āmirī argues that the renewing/changing events appearing from four elements, as he also calls the “inferior world,” are classified as the necessary being in relation to another thing but they are actually in the category of absolute contingency for their existences.³⁸ Nonetheless, despite this identification, it is still unclear whether the “superior world,” in other words the categories in *al-Fuṣūl* such as *qalam* and *amr* or the universal intellect and the universal forms existing with *dahr* and close to it, and *'arsh* and *lawḥ* or *al-falaq al-mustaqīm* and the universal soul existing after *dahr* but before the time, in short all unchanging beings beyond the time, are to be considered as the necessary being in relation to another thing or as contingent beings.³⁹

While al-'Āmirī refers to four kinds of actions, *ibdā'*, *khalq*, *taskhīr* and *tawlid*, in *al-Fuṣūl*, he explains in the same discussion that *taskhīr* corresponds to *ṭab'* and *tawlid* corresponds to *takwīn*.⁴⁰ We see more detailed explanation of these concepts in al-Taqrīr. Concerning how the divine determination occurs, he indicates three spheres on the divine determination: (i) the bodies themselves (*dhawāt*), (ii) the principles of the bodies (*mabādi'*) (iii) the attachments of the bodies (*lawāḥiq*). According to al-'Āmirī, the bodies are three kinds, those moving towards the center (*ilā al-markaz*), those moving from the center (*min al-markaz*) and those moving on the center (*'alā al-markaz*). The principles of the bodies are matter, form and disposition and the attachments of the bodies are in three kinds, meteorological events (*al-āthār al-'ulwiyya*), events happening in inorganic organisms (*al-ḥawādith al-ma'daniyya*) and events happening in growing beings (*al-kawā'in al-nāmiya*). In this context, the effect of the divine determination on these three spheres happens in the form of *sun'*, *ibdā'* and *taskhīr*, respectively. According to al-'Āmirī *sun'* means that *hayūlā*, whose is made through *ikhtirā'*, obtains a form which is made through *ibdā'* and so

37 Al-'Āmirī, *al-Taqrīr*, p. 308, 332.

38 Al-'Āmirī, *al-Taqrīr*, p. 313.

39 For a detailed discussion on al-'Āmirī's classification of beings in the context of the necessary and contingent and the obscurities in this classification, see Kaya, *Varlık ve İmkân*, pp. 120-127.

40 Al-'Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 364.

the bodies come into existence. While he explains the creation of the principles of the bodies with *ibdā'*, he defines *ibdā'* as the creation with no matter and timelessly (*ikhṭirā*). *Taskhīr* in the context of the attachments of the bodies means to guide towards a goal specific to itself voluntarily (*ṭaw'an*) or forcefully (*qahran*). Al-ʿĀmirī also notes *khalq* which comprises all three concepts of *sun'*, *ibdā'* and *taskhīr*, but he does not define it specifically.⁴¹

The Hierarchy of Beings in *al-Fuṣūl*

Levels of Beings	Manner of existence	Relations with <i>dahr</i> and time	Conceptual explanations in <i>al-Taqrīr</i>
The Creator	Essentially existing	Beyond and before <i>dahr</i>	
<i>Qalam</i> = the Universal Intellect <i>Amr</i> = Universal images	Existing with <i>ibdā'</i>	With <i>dahr</i> and closer to it	<i>Ibdā'</i> : the creation of something matterless and timeless (<i>ikhṭirā'</i>)
' <i>Arsh</i> = <i>al-Falak al-mustaqīm</i> , <i>Falak al-aflāk</i> <i>Lawḥ</i> = Universal Soul	Existing with <i>khalq</i>	After <i>dahr</i> before time	<i>khalq</i> = <i>sun'</i> , <i>ibdā'</i> , <i>taskhīr</i>
Circulating heavens and first celestial bodies	Existing with <i>tashīr</i> (<i>taskhīr</i> = <i>ṭab'</i>)	With time and closer to it	<i>Taskhīr</i> : to guide something towards a goal specific to itself voluntarily (<i>ṭaw'an</i>) or forcefully (<i>qahran</i>)
The beings made from four elements	Existing with <i>tawlid</i> (<i>tawlid</i> = <i>takwīn</i>)	After time	<i>Sun'</i> : The embodiment of a <i>hayūlā</i> created through <i>ikhṭirā'</i> with the form created through <i>ibdā'</i>

When we compare this conceptual analysis on the existence of the bodies and their principles and attachments with the statements in *al-Fuṣūl*, we encounter some unclear points: what does it mean to have *ibdā'* use both for the pen (the universal intellect) and the command (the universal forms) and also for the principles

41 Al-ʿĀmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 309. For a detailed discussion on al-ʿĀmirī's ideas about the levels of beings see Turhan, *Āmirī ve Felsefesi*, pp. 86-107.

of the bodies (matter, form and disposition)? Is the concept of *khalq*, which is referred to indicate a phenomenon comprising *sun’*, *ibdā’* and *taskhīr*, identical with the concept of *khalq* used to describe the creation of ‘*arsh (al-falak al-mustaqīm, falak al-aflāk)* and *lawḥ* (the universal soul)? Are the concepts of *tawlid* and *takwīn* used for the beings made of four elements synonymous to *sun’* ?

Although we need to reexamine and interpret al-‘Āmirī’s descriptions for the levels of beings and their ways of coming into existence, so far we do not have any other ground to compare and contrast the statements in *al-Majālis*. It is important to note that *al-Majālis* does not take into consideration the categories of *dahr* and time, and does not include the classifications concerning the concepts of necessary and contingent beings. Besides, it is impossible to find clues for the representative narrative in *al-Majālis* about the relationship among the levels of beings and for the relatively detailed description provided for nature’s bringing the body into being in any other extant works of al-‘Āmirī.⁴²

Despite these “absences”, the classification of beings in *al-Majālis* has elements that agree with the classifications found in *al-Fuṣūl*. The sorting in *al-Majālis* that seems to resemble structurally to the second classification in *al-Fuṣūl* can agree with the relatively detailed first classification. Although *al-Majālis* notes that the principal action of the Creator standing in the first level of existence is effusion, it is described as *ibdā’* at the end of the third session, quoted above. In addition, the fact that al-‘Āmirī mentions the effusion of the Creator considerably many times in *al-Fuṣūl* also supports the description in *al-Majālis*.⁴³ Besides, these phrases on the Creator being true efficient in *al-Fuṣūl* parallel *al-Majālis*’ perspective:

Therefore it has become obvious that the intellect’s *mubdī’*, the soul’s *khāliq*, the nature’s *musakhkhīr*, the beings’ *muwallid*, the intellect, the soul, the nature, the body, the attribute, the intellectual forms, the natural beings are not the ones perceived through estimative faculty. He is not even matter, form, power (*quwwa*) and end (*nihāya*). On the contrary, the One whose name is dear is much more supreme and almighty than being the one having equals, alike, form and match. He is absolute truth, absolute being, absolute good and absolute perfect.⁴⁴

42 It is important to underline that *al-Majālis*’ argument that the body has a fourth dimension as *shakl* in addition to width, length and depth can be associated with an idea in *al-Fuṣūl*. Al-‘Āmirī in this work states that the action particular to the body has three dimensional (*fi al-aqtār al-thalātha*) orientation and also notes the quality of “preventing other things from intervening to itself.” It seems that we can examine *shakl* in *al-Majālis* in this interpretation. Wakening refers to Stoic origins of *al-Fuṣūl*’s definition of the body. See Wakelnig, “Al-‘Āmirī’s Paraphrase of the Proclean *Elements of Theology*”, p. 458, n. 9.

43 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 365, 368-372.

44 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, p. 368.

The most important point that distinguishes *al-Majālis* from al-‘Āmirī’s classification of being is that the command, which is classified in the same category as command (the universal forms) together with the pen (the universal intellect) in *al-Fuṣūl*, is put in an independent level between the Creator and the intellect in *al-Majālis* as it has the capacity to give existence through *ibdā’*. The statements in *al-Majālis* suggest that the command corresponds to the Creator’s management over all beings rather than to an ontological category. It seems that the command, from which all the efficient substances receive their capacities, stands in its level in the classification in order to reinforce the idea that the Creator has the attribute of “the Being to whom the creation and the command belong” and also the idea that He operates over the world indirectly. In this context, it seems that *al-Majālis*’ idea of the command’s creation of the intellect through *ibdā’* agrees with *al-Fuṣūl*’s exposition for the existence of the second level, in reference to *qalam* (the universal intellect), through *ibdā’*.

While according to *al-Majālis*, the souls follow the intellect in the hierarchy of being, the detailed classification in *al-Fuṣūl* refers to the ‘*arsh* (*al-falak al-mustaqīm*, *falak al-aflāk*) and the *lawḥ* (the universal soul). Other classification in *al-Fuṣūl* and *al-Amad* directly mentions the soul. Despite the parallel approach in the second classification, al-‘Āmirī argues that ‘*arsh* and *lawḥ* exists through *khalq*, *al-Majālis* asserts that the principal action of the intellect is *inshā’* through which the soul exists. Besides, while *al-Fuṣūl* states that the circulating heavens and the first celestial bodies, corresponding to the nature, come to exist through *taskhīr*, *al-Majālis* states that the principal action of the soul is *ikhtirā’*, through which the nature come to exist and uses *taskhīr* to explain the nature’s effect on the body and explains it as a kind of actions of the nature.⁴⁵ Therefore, the concept of *inshā’* treated as the intellect’s action in *al-Majālis* is not used in al-‘Āmirī’s extant works. *Ikhtirā’* is used once to define *ibdā’*, and in another context, it is used to describe how *hayūlā* comes to exist whereas the forms come to exist through *ibdā’*. In addition, al-‘Āmirī refers to the concepts of *tawlid* and *takwīn* in *al-Fuṣūl* in connection with the beings made of four elements and the concept of *sun’* as he refers in *al-Taqrīr* should be considered in this context. Although *al-Majālis* remarks explicitly that the Creator’s actions happen through *tawlid*, it does not assign it to a level of being and unlike *al-Fuṣūl*, it uses it to describe in general how the Creator renders existence indirectly.

45 Compare *al-Majālis*’ description of four kinds of movement in al-‘Āmirī, *al-Taqrīr*, p. 310. Al-‘Āmirī mentions quadruple structure (*fa-hiya dhāt rubā’iyya*) of the nature without any further description. See al-‘Āmirī, *al-Taqrīr*, p. 371. The quadruple structure of the nature is explained in *al-Majālis*. According to this, the nature is preceded by four kinds of actions such as *faḍl*, *ibdā’*, *inshā’* and *ikhtirā’* and these correspond to four kinds of movement.

Another point needs to be mentioned here. al-‘Āmirī’s identification of the concepts of *sun’*, *ibdā’* and *taskhīr* with the concept of *khalq* can be reconciled with *al-Majālis’* identification of the concepts *iḥdāth*, *khalq*, *ja’l* and *fi’l*. As it can be recalled, al-‘Āmirī mentions the concepts of *sun’*, *ibdā’* and *taskhīr* in the context of the bodies themselves, their principles and attachments, respectively, and argues that *khalq* comprises all three. *Al-Majālis*, however, describes the four actions corresponding to four kinds of movement as *iḥdāth* and argues that *iḥdāth* is synonymous with the concepts of *khalq*, *ja’l*, and *fi’l* in the religious terminology. It is worth noting here that the reference to “religious terminology” in *al-Majālis* is consistent with al-‘Āmirī’s tendency to reconcile philosophical theories with religious doctrines⁴⁶ as well as both concepts are mentioned in the context of the body. Besides, while he ascribes the comprehensive meaning to *khalq* in *al-Taqrīr*, he does this to *iḥdāth* in *al-Majālis*. As shown above, while *al-Taqrīr’s* definitions of *khalq*, *sun’*, *ibdā’* and *taskhīr* have some inconsistencies with *al-Fuṣūl’s* use of these concepts in its narrative on the hierarchy of being, *al-Majālis* seems to have more consistent set of propositions.

Besides, al-‘Āmirī’s other works include reflections for these issues discussed in the first three sessions of *al-Majālis*: (i) Nothing falls outside of the Creator’s will and decree.⁴⁷ (ii) The intellect stands at the peak of uniqueness and simplicity, and knows both itself and the Creator. In addition, due to its conceptualization of the realities of meanings, it is the most powerful of the efficient substances.⁴⁸ (iii) The soul whose basic quality is livelihood is the substance closest to the intellect despite its multiplicity. The soul knows both itself and the intellect and the Creator, and at the same time controls the nature under its command as it mediates the nature’s coming into existence.⁴⁹ (iv) There is a hierarchical relationship among the command, the intellect, the soul and the nature, as the inferior obeys the superior.⁵⁰

46 The statement at the end of *al-Majālis* concerning that the questioner and the answerer “left as they agreed to arrange an[other] session on reading and interpreting the revealed books [from God to the prophets]” can be interpreted as a reflection of this perspective of al-‘Āmirī. It is worth mentioning Turhan’s work of *Āmirī ve Felsefesi* examining al-‘Āmirī’s philosophical ideas in the context of “religion-philosophy reconciliation” as an example of different applications of his ideas.

47 Al-‘Āmirī examines the issue of free will in *Inqādh*, where he analyzes the concepts of will and decree and adopts a critical perspective to the mainstream approaches in Islamic thought on free will. Al-‘Āmirī emphasizes that in order to realize his actions the human being needs the Creator, not as “close” but as “first” efficient, and so he tries to find a middle way for human being between the absolute determinism and absolute free will. See al-‘Āmirī, *Inqādh*, pp. 263-265. For a detailed work on al-‘Āmirī’s ideas about human actions, see Turhan, *İnsan Fiilleri*, pp. 106-118

48 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, pp. 365-367, 372.

49 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, pp. 364-365, 371, 373.

50 Al-‘Āmirī, *al-Fuṣūl*, pp. 368-369, 371; al-‘Āmirī, *al-Amad*, p. 87.

Our comparison of *al-Majālis*' first three sessions on the hierarchy of being with al-'Āmirī's extant works provides sufficient evidence to associate the text with him. Some inconsistencies between the text and al-'Āmirī's ideas in his works are relatively unimportant when we consider the inconsistencies already present in al-'Āmirī's works. Besides, some of the subjects in *al-Majālis*, which we cannot find any correspondences in al-'Āmirī's extant works, enable us to examine his philosophical ideas more comprehensively. When we extend our limited examination to the entire text, with the remaining four sessions focusing on relatively untouched subjects of physics and psychology/epistemology by al-'Āmirī, *al-Majālis* stands to be a new source for al-'Āmirī studies.

Appendix: Issues discussed in *al-Majālis*

Session	Question	Question/Subject	Folio
I	1	What is the reason for the Absolute Originator's (<i>al-Mūjid al-mahḍ</i>) creation (<i>ijād</i>) of the creatures?	150 ^a -150 ^b
	2	If He always chooses the superior (<i>al-afḍal</i>) from the two contingencies, why does the world not become eternal?	150 ^b
	3	When did the creation of beings (<i>al-ḥuṣūl</i>) actually start?	150 ^b
	4	Considering that it [i.e. the intellect] knows its essence with no help, this is an assumed issue as it is truly a knowing power and it is not hidden to itself. But while we have certainly comprehended that it is undoubtedly different from this [Creator], how could it knows its creator?	150 ^b -151 ^a
	5	If the substance of the intellect comes to exist (<i>ḥaṣala</i>) so preciously and perfectly and we know that it is imperfect vis-à-vis the Absolute First Truth (<i>al-Awwal al-ḥaqq al-mahḍ</i>) and also that no substance more precious than it can be conceivable, why was the First Wise not satisfied with the intellect concerning the act of creation and did he create also the whole world which is much more imperfect vis-à-vis the substance of the intellect?	151 ^a

II	6	What is it that the intellect brings forth from the action and that its essence (<i>dhāt</i>) appears with it and its being (<i>anniyyatuhū</i>) gains reality?	151 ^a -151 ^b
	7	Why don't you say, like ordinary people, that the True First is the creator (<i>mubdī</i>) of the intellect, soul and all universal and particular things from nothing, that the origination of any of these are not preceded with the origination of another thing, that all of these stand on the same category in respect to the Supreme Eminence, and that he showed his power by effusing his generosity and creating every contingent things, such as vermin's coming from rotting/ molding (<i>ufūna</i>) or accidents that essentially cannot maintain their existences, except the ordinary meanings (<i>al-ma'āni al-khathītha</i>), for which there is no doubt on issue of the prioritization of their creation by other things.	151 ^b -152 ^a
	8	How do you argue that the intellect's power beams light on the soul and the command's power effuses on it?	152 ^a -152 ^b
	9	If the soul reaches the capacity to create something through the Creator's command and can know the superior one (<i>afḍal</i>) between two contingencies through the intellect which is efficient vis-à-vis itself and if the soul cannot appear by itself –if it could, a passive (<i>maf'ūl</i>) other than itself can appear (<i>ṣudūr</i>)– do you [want to] say this: He chooses to create a passive which shows his being (<i>anniyyatīhi</i>), realizes the power of his essence, and on which he feels happiness (<i>mughṭabīṭa</i>) by applying his sovereignty? Or is it satisfied with knowing its superior instead of performing an action inferior to itself?	152 ^b -153 ^a
	10	Why didn't the soul bring into being more intelligible existent than the nature? [Had it done so], this intelligible can maintain its existence by itself (<i>bi-nafsihi</i>), it can bring forth the existence of the soul through its actual being, can know its creator and operate those under its command voluntarily (<i>ṭaw'an</i>) not by subjugation (<i>taskhīr</i>)?	153 ^a
	11	How can we understand the soul's guidance on the primary (<i>awwalīyya</i>) nature in order to create the absolute body?	153 ^a -153 ^b

III	12	With your permission, I [want to] return the issues that we discussed in our first two sessions.	153 ^b
	13	What are the true qualifications of the essences of the Creator Almighty, the command, the intellect, the soul, the nature and the body?	153 ^b -154 ^a
	14	Among these relationships (<i>al-nisab</i>), what is the status of each one of these vis-à-vis their creators?	154 ^a
	15	How can we conceptualize the actions particular to each one of these relationships?	154 ^a
	16	I understand that the nature has four kinds of actions. However, we need to exemplify each one of the four actions different from the nature's actions, i.e. <i>fayḍ</i> , <i>ibdā'</i> , <i>inshā'</i> and <i>ikhtirā'</i> , so that we can understand them better.	154 ^a -154 ^b
	17	Is it possible to say that the Creator Almighty, or the command, the intellect, the soul or the nature obtain a benefit [for themselves] or repel any harm through their actions, or by this way they enjoy or gain happiness?	154 ^b -155 ^a

IV	18	If the goal of the nature's creation of the body is only bringing into existence of the apparent (<i>al-zāhir</i>) passive, why did the nature divided the body into two categories, as one <i>latīf</i> being free from opposites, away from change and transformation, and the other <i>kathīf</i> having the opposite qualities, instead of making the whole body in one unique kind?	155 ^a -155 ^b
	19	Why is it more appropriate for the <i>latīf</i> to have circular movement while for the <i>kathīf</i> to have linear movement? Why does the <i>latīf</i> affects on the <i>kathīf</i> but is the former not affected from the latter? Why does the <i>kathīf</i> not affect the <i>latīf</i> , but is the former affected by the latter? Why is it more appropriate for the body moving linearly to stand at the center whereas the body moving circularly to be on the periphery?	155 ^b
	20	Why has the <i>latīf</i> body transformed instead of being totally particular to one kind of movement?	155 ^b -156 ^a
	21	Why was the body (<i>al-jism al-'unṣuri</i>) made of four elements that receive all kinds of effects divided into four elements instead of staying as one thing?	156 ^a -156 ^b
	22	Why did the Creator Almighty not satisfy with creating all simple beings (at this level the effusion of the absolute generosity became apparent, and the extent of the perfect power became visible) and furthermore did he incline to bring into existence (<i>iḥdāth</i>) the command, particular composites (<i>al-murakkabāt al-juz'iyya</i>) –none of which can maintain its existence and stand alone?	156 ^b
	23	How can we understand the order of return (<i>i'āda</i>)?	156 ^b
	24	As two orders face each other, we said [before] about the order of beginnings that the intellect's action precedes the soul's action and the soul's action essentially precedes the nature's action. [Now] you say for the order of return the opposite, in other words, the nature's action precedes the soul's action and the soul's action precedes the intellect's action. [According to this] the intellect stands both at the end of happenings (<i>al-akwān</i>) on the comprehensive side and at the beginning of the substantial beings (<i>al-jawhariyyāt</i>).	156 ^b -157 ^a

V	25	Where does the nature start in the movements of return?	157 ^a -157 ^b
	26	Where does the nature start and end the completeness of one thing, and what is the goal of the soul for subjugating the [nature] in order to bring (<i>iḥdāth</i>) these movements in natural bodies?	157 ^b
	27	Why has the growing thing had many kinds and why was the nature satisfied with one kind?	157 ^b -158 ^a
	28	How did we say that the creation of growing substances is related to the providence from the nature? Why didn't we say that they came into existence by coincidental meeting and mixture (<i>imtizāj</i>) of four elements? Forasmuch, the parts belonging to earth are located below and as a result veins came into place; the parts belonging to fire are located above and as a result branches came into place. The reason for these is the gravity of earth and the rising of fire.	158 ^a -158 ^b
	29	If the nature became the actor of nourishment, growing and reproducing the body, the internal heat (<i>al-ḥarārat al-gharīziyya</i>) as one of four elements would not have been related to digestion, nourishment, growing and transforming.	158 ^b -159 ^a

VI	30	When does the nature leave the task of growing to the soul or when does the soul take care of [the growing body] and sideline the nature on this issue?	159 ^a
	31	After its receiving livelihood, how does the soul starts operating and how long it keeps working?	159 ^a -159 ^b
	32	Under what conditions does the reality of sensation become complete?	159 ^b
	33	Sensation is related to senses and senses are [connected to] five organs. Each one of these organs has a sensible particular to its perception and none of these are eligible for other's sensible. We do not define the living being as the one "distinguishing the sound and taste or color and smell at the same time" beyond distinguishing black and white or hard and soft. We know that the one distinguishing two things should have one particular thing from each one of the two. Suppose that one sense distinguishes two opposite things that it perceives at the same time. How is it possible to distinguish between the one perceived through others and the one perceived through itself? How could it be possible that the sense perceives the sensible and by this it distinguishes the other?	159 ^b -160 ^a
	34	How does the discretionary movement end?	160 ^a
	35	What are the conditions that inhibit the reality of imagination?	160 ^a -160 ^b
	36	Now if bugs and insects have discretionary movement, and as we said bugs and insects move through the force of desire and one thing desires as long as it imagine another thing; why don't you say that they too have this power? [If this is so] why are not domesticated?	160 ^b

VII	37	When does the practical intellect rectify these substances? How does it start to clean/purify them and how long does it keep doing this?	160 ^b -161 ^a
	38	Is it possible for the body (<i>qālib</i>) to stand alone and be able to maintain this power after it disappears? Or when the body disappears, so does it so?	161 ^a
	39	We do not know any action of this power. But we suppose that it acts differently from the body except for one thing. And this is to know those that exist through encircling (<i>al-iḥāṭa</i>) and certainty (<i>al-yaqīn</i>). The body does not have this quality, on the contrary only powers belonging to the soul have this quality. In addition, we see that this knowledge on the existing beings is divided into two (a) sensual perception, (b) intellectual conceptualization. None of these appropriate for it.	161 ^a -162 ^a
	40	What is it that tells us that the qualities calamities do not harm these substances and that prevents the body from the effects of calamities?	162 ^a -162 ^b
	41	What happens when the body leaves it?	162 ^b

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