Introduction

The fourth section of *Kitāb Bātanjal* is described as treating the subjects of liberation and unification.¹ Such a brief summary, however, merely hints at the intellectual and philosophical challenge facing the reader when presented with the intricacy of composition, translation and allusion that permeates this final section. The level of subtle sophistication in this section accompanied by multiple layers of possible readings, tentative influences, and al-Bīrūnī’s use of sources, renders definitive explanation of the Arabic text’s multivalent permutations almost impossible. The fourth section of *Kitāb Bātanjal* evinces a perceptible development from the psychological to the intellectual: from a discussion of *al-nafs* in the preceding sections to a treatment of the role of *al-ʿaql* in the individual’s existential endeavour towards liberation. This is achieved through a process of unification of the intellect and intellected with and within the prioritised role of the intellector. Accounting for the reasoning behind such a development and the Arabic text’s capacity for multiple interpretations raises the challenge of a response that avoids the temptation for premature and unsubstantiated closure to a wide interpretative range realized in *Kitāb Bātanjal*’s final section.

A two-tier comparative approach will, therefore, be taken in this analysis. The first part of this chapter will begin by comparing the fourth section of *Kitāb Bātanjal* with the *Yoga-Sūtra* of Patañjali. The aim is to highlight the background and significance of the Arabic text’s elaboration and development of certain subjects; in particular, the subtle shift of emphasis from a psychological to an intellectual discussion. The second, concluding, part of this chapter will compare Section IV of *Kitāb Bātanjal* with Ibn Sīnā’s treatment of the intellect in *Aḥwāl al-Nafs* and in his *De Anima*. The discussion will centre on the role of the intellect in its relationship with the soul as illustrated

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¹ *al-qīṭatu ʾl-rābiʿatu fī ʾl-khalāṣi waʾl-ittiḥādi* (*Kitāb Bātanjal*, p. 199, l. 1), “The fourth section on the subject of liberation and unification”. For the use in *Kitāb Bātanjal* of the Arabic term *al-ittiḥād*, “unification”, to denote yoga, see Chapter Four and Glossary of Terms.
by Ibn Sīnā and will reflect on significant and parallel issues salient in the concluding section of Kitāb Bātanjal.

Before commencing such a two part analysis of Section IV, it is recommended that the reader refer to the full translation of this final section and the epilogue in the Appendix. No complete English translation of this section including its epilogue exists. The usefulness of this exercise is to begin to understand the way in which the Arabic text is a multi-layered translation and interpretation of the Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali, the commentary on it by Vyāsa, and the comprehension of both by al-Bīrūnī. Kitāb Bātanjal materializes through the medium of the particular Sanskrit text that al-Bīrūnī relied on (also a multivalent work combining text with commentary), and based on the nature of the human and textual exegesis that was at his disposal. The difficulty of such a contextualisation lies in the lack of information concerning the multiplicity of these layers. Given these difficulties, this translation will only be tentatively compared with current versions of the Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali and the commentary on it by Vyāsa, in English, where significant parallels may be drawn with Kitāb Bātanjal and where some degree of illumination of it may be achieved. Finally, those parallel passages to be found in the Hind will be noted in order to further clarify Section IV wherever the Hind passage is more expansive. The parallel passages will also be used to gauge the extent to which the first ten chapters of the Hind are interpenetrated with whole citations from Kitāb Bātanjal and, more importantly, to assess the epistemological continuity that this interpenetration seems to suggest.

Section IV and the Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali: Liberation, the Soul and the Intellect

The content of Kitāb Bātanjal in this section is as interpretative of the Sanskrit original as the previous sections since it describes in sophisticated, elusive, and, at times, impenetrable terms, the psychological concepts encountered. This last section seems not only to reflect the content and format of its equivalent in the Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali entitled “On Isolation”\(^2\) but also recapitulates the structural and contextual fundamentals articulated in the earlier

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\(^2\) The term kaivalya can be translated as “aloneness”, “perfect isolation”, “detachment of the soul from matter”, “final emancipation”, or “beatitude”, (Mukerji, P.N., 1963: 467). Hence it is possible that the use of the Arabic term al-khalāṣ, “liberation”, in the reference title to this fourth section may denote kaivalya given kaivalya’s range of meanings.