

ABAY KUNANBAYEV'S CONCEPTION OF THE HUMAN BEING IN LIGHT OF THE SEVENTH WORD: SOUL, BODY, NAFS, FAITH AND THE DESIRE FOR KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between bodily desire (ten kumarı) and spiritual desire (can kumarı), as set out by Abay Kunanbayev in the Seventh Word of his Book of Words (Kara Sözlər), from the perspective of theological anthropology. The central question of the article is how Abay grounds the human being not merely as a biological and social entity, but as a subject who is oriented toward knowledge, bears moral responsibility and attains perfection through faith. The research employs qualitative content analysis and comparative textual reading; the Seventh Word in particular, together with the Twelfth, Thirteenth, Seventeenth, Nineteenth, Twenty-Eighth and Thirty-Eighth Words, is evaluated alongside Abay's poetry, Qur'anic verses and hadith. The relationship between bodily and spiritual desire is further explained with reference to the stages of the nafs—al-nafs al-ammāra, al-nafs al-lawwāma and al-nafs al-muṭma'inna—and a comparison is drawn with the conceptions of soul, body and nafs in Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī and Rūmī. The theological framework of the study is constructed with due regard to the Hanafi-Maturidi heritage of the Kazakh Muslim milieu in which Abay lived, while particular care is taken to note that there is no direct historical evidence that Abay was a systematic representative of any specific school of kalām or Sufism. The article argues that Abay's originality lies in his treatment of the human being's innate desire to know within the integrity of faith, reason, heart and ethics; in his subordination of bodily desire to a spiritual end rather than its negation; and in his construal of "becoming human" as a continuous process of moral and cognitive perfection.

Keywords: *Abay Kunanbayev, Seventh Word, Book of Words, soul–body relationship, nafs, Maturidism, faith, desire for knowledge, theological anthropology.*

INTRODUCTION

Abay Kunanbayev (1845–1904) is one of the founding figures in the formation of modern Kazakh thought, a thinker who treated literature, ethics, education and religion without separating them from one another. His poems and his *Book of Words* diagnose the pains of transformation experienced by nineteenth-century Kazakh

society while also seeking an answer to the question of how the human being is to mature. The literature on Abay in Türkiye has produced a substantial body of work on his literary personality, his views on education, his social criticism and the thematic structure of the *Book of Words*. Ekrem Ayan's monograph, which examines the *Book of Words* along the axes of religion and ethics, education, science, the meaning of life and social issues, is one of the principal reference works of this corpus. Adilov's presentation of the *Kitāb-i 'Aqliyya*, Kalkan's encyclopaedia entry, Karabey's biographical study, Kibar's assessment, the research of Kurmanbaiuly and Adilov, and the pedagogical study of Öztürk and Sembi likewise render different dimensions of Abay visible within the Turkish-language literature.¹

Nevertheless, a systematic treatment of the Seventh Word from the standpoint of theological anthropology—particularly around the soul–body–*nafs* relationship, the desire to know and the concept of faith—remains an area open to further development. The present study seeks to fill this gap by reading Abay's distinction between “bodily desire” (*ten kumari*) and “spiritual desire” (*can kumari*) together with the Qur'anic language of the *nafs*, the conception of the human being in Islamic *kalām*, and the soul–body debates of classical Islamic thought. The aim here is not to force Abay into a scheme constructed after the fact, but to show at which points his concepts intersect with the Islamic intellectual tradition and at which points they generate a distinctive ethical language of their own.

The primary source of the study is Abay's *Book of Words*. While the Seventh Word is kept at the centre, the Twelfth, Thirteenth and Twenty-Eighth Words are used comparatively for faith and worship; the Seventeenth Word for the balance of reason, heart and will; the Nineteenth Word for learning and experience; and the Thirty-Eighth Word for the relationship among God, the human being, love and gnosis (*ma'rifa*). In this way the Seventh Word is read without being severed from the integrity of Abay's thought.²

1. Method, Scope and Place in the Literature

1.1. Method and principal sources

The research combines qualitative content analysis with comparative textual reading. In the first stage, the recurring themes of the Seventh Word—body, soul/spirit, desire, knowing, seeing, learning, faith, heart and the human–animal comparison—were identified. In the second stage, these themes were compared with

¹Ekrem Ayan, *Bir Devrin Aynası: Abay Kunanbay ve Kara Sözler* (Ankara: Hoca Ahmet Yesevi Uluslararası Türk-Kazak Üniversitesi, 2017). The work examines the *Book of Words* through themes such as religion and ethics, education, science, love and the meaning of life.

²Abay's *Book of Words* is the principal primary source of this study. The Seventh Word has been read together with the other Words within the integrity of his thought.

parallel expressions in other sections of the *Book of Words*. In the third stage, connections were established with the Qur'anic concepts of *nafs*, spirit (*rūḥ*), heart (*qalb*), reason (*‘aql*), responsibility and purification (*tazkiya*); in the final stage, a comparative framework was constructed with the conceptions of the human being found in Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī and Rūmī.

In the use of primary sources, the *Book of Words* itself occupies the centre. This choice is significant, because interpretations of Abay must rest directly on the conceptual fabric of his own text. The study also draws on Abay's poetry as an auxiliary primary source in order to show the poetic counterparts of the ideas expressed in the *Book of Words*. This makes it possible to trace the continuity of concepts such as “guesthouse”, “I / what is mine”, “knowledge” (*ilim*), “heart”, “faith” and “becoming human” across different genres.

1.2. Engagement with the Turkish-language literature and the contribution of the study

A considerable part of the Turkish-language scholarship on Abay's *Book of Words* is situated along the axes of literature, education and cultural history. Ayan, evaluating the *Book of Words* as the mirror of an era, sets out Abay's themes of religion and ethics, education, science, love and social criticism in an integrated manner. This approach is important in showing that the Seventh Word is bound not only to individual psychology but to Abay's broader vision of reform. Abdulvahap Kara's writings on Abay, for their part, dwell particularly on Abay's place in Kazakh culture, the education of children and the accurate transmission of the *Book of Words*; they foreground the link between the desire to know and learn and the ideal of “becoming a true human being”.³

When the studies of Adilov, Ayan, Kalkan, Karabey, Kibar, Kurmanbaiuly–Adilov and Öztürk–Sembi are considered together, three tendencies stand out in Abay scholarship: biographical-cultural contextualisation, pedagogical-ethical reading, and comparison centred on language and literature. The present article extends this body of work in the direction of theological anthropology. Its principal contribution is to read “spiritual desire” not merely as curiosity or a wish for education but as the human being's innate aptitude for knowing the truth, and “bodily desire” not merely as base appetite but as the domain of biological needs that must be regulated.

In the course of peer review it was suggested that Mehmet Sait Toprak's studies on Abay also be addressed. However, since no verifiable publication by Toprak

³In Abdulvahap Kara's writings on Abay, the education of children, the love of learning and the accurate transmission of the *Book of Words* are particularly prominent. See also Abdulvahap Kara, “Kazak Edebiyatının Zirvesi Abay Kunanbayoğlu”, *Arman Dergisi* (December 2004), 22–24.

focused directly on Abay Kunanbayev or the Seventh Word could be identified among the accessible academic records, no reference has been made to a work whose bibliographic details remain unverified. It would be more sound, from a scholarly standpoint, to add such a work to the literature review separately once its bibliographic details have been obtained.⁴

2. Abay's Theological Framework: The Hanafi-Maturidi Milieu, Sufism and a Cautious Positioning

It is methodologically problematic to explain Abay's religious thought solely by means of a particular school (*madhhab*) or Sufi-order (*ṭarīqa*) label. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Sunni Islam of the Kazakh steppe in which he was raised historically bore the imprint of Hanafi jurisprudence and Maturidi creed. For this reason, the relationship Abay establishes among faith, reason, gnosis and ethics can be read comparatively with Hanafi-Maturidi thought; this resemblance, however, should not be converted directly into the conclusion that "Abay is a systematic Maturidi theologian."

In the Maturidi tradition, reason is a central faculty enabling the human being to reflect on the existence and unity of God and to grasp moral responsibility. That Abay, especially in the Thirteenth and Thirty-Eighth Words, does not leave faith at the level of mere verbal assent but connects it with knowledge, contemplation, love and action shows a meaningful affinity with this epistemic-ethical line. That in the Seventh Word the child's natural inclination—"let me know, let me see, let me learn"—is counted as the beginning of human perfection is likewise consonant with a milieu that elevates the religious value of reason and knowledge.

From the standpoint of the Sufi tradition, Abay's emphases on the heart, love, the disciplining of the *nafs*, gnosis and inner purification are striking. The placing of love and gnosis at the centre of religious life, particularly in the Thirty-Eighth Word, intersects with the ethical language of classical Sufism. Even so, it would be incorrect to pronounce a definitive judgement without relying on explicit documentation proving Abay's direct affiliation with the Naqshbandiyya or a specific shaykh–*silsila* relationship. In this study the expression "Sufi affinity" is used to denote conceptual and ethical resemblance rather than institutional belonging.

3. The Dialectic of Soul and Body in the Seventh Word

Abay opens the Seventh Word by stating that the human being carries two distinct inclinations from birth. The first inclination is directed toward bodily needs such as eating, drinking and sleeping; the second toward seeing, hearing, asking and

⁴The name of Mehmet Sait Toprak was mentioned in the reviewer's note. However, since no verifiable bibliographic record of a publication directly concerned with Abay or the Seventh Word could be identified among the accessible academic records, no reference has been made without bibliographic verification.

learning. His naming of these two domains “bodily desire” (*ten kumari*) and “spiritual desire” (*can kumari*) shows that he conceives of the human being from the outset as a conflicted yet integral being. The word *kumar* here should be understood not merely in the sense of addiction to pleasure, but in the sense of strong desire, longing and orientation.

“When a child is born of its mother, it comes into the world with two kinds of nature... One is the inclination that tends toward ‘let me drink, let me eat, let me sleep’... The other is the desire to ‘know’... It asks, ‘What is this?’, ‘Why is that so?’... All of these are the desire of the soul; the wish to know, to see and to learn.”

Abay does not regard the body as evil or superfluous. On the contrary, the nourishment and protection of the body are obligatory, because the body is “a guesthouse for the soul.” This metaphor carries two implications simultaneously. The first is the legitimacy of the human being’s bodily needs: the guesthouse must remain standing. The second is that the body is not the ultimate end: the guesthouse is not the guest. Abay thus keeps his distance from a rigid hostility toward the body and establishes a hierarchical integrity: the body is protected, but it is subordinated to a spiritual end.

This approach acquires a more explicit metaphysical language in the distinction between “I” and “what is mine” in Abay’s poetry. Reason and soul are depicted as “I”, the body as “what is mine.” The presentation of justice, ethics and love—in contrast to the mortality of the body—as values that extend beyond death completes the guesthouse metaphor of the Seventh Word with an ethical conclusion. The human being realises itself not by denying the body, but by knowing the limits of the body and by giving precedence to enduring values.

4. The Concept of Nafs in the Qur’an and Abay’s Body/Soul Distinction

4.1. Nafs: not merely base desire, but the human self

In the Qur’an the concept of *nafs* is not univocal. In some places *nafs* denotes the human being’s own self or person, in others the centre of moral inclinations, and in others still the integrity of the human being in the context of death and responsibility. The verses “Every soul (*nafs*) shall taste death” (Āl ‘Imrān 3:185), “God takes the souls at the time of their death” (al-Zumar 39:42) and “By the soul and Him who fashioned it...” (al-Shams 91:7–10) exemplify this multi-layered usage. For this reason, when relating Abay’s distinction between soul/spirit and body to the Qur’anic concept of *nafs*, the *nafs* must not be narrowed down to a mere “sum of evil desires.”

4.2. *Al-nafs al-ammāra and bodily desire*

Al-nafs al-ammāra is associated in the Qur'an with the expression "the soul that commands evil" (Yūsuf 12:53). In the Sufi and ethical literature this stage describes the predominance of the human being's uncontrolled inclinations toward pleasure, anger, selfishness and self-interest. Abay's bodily desire, however, is not directly identical with *al-nafs al-ammāra*, because needs such as eating, drinking and sleeping are indispensable parts of human life. Yet when bodily desire becomes immoderate and suppresses spiritual desire—that is, when the human being reduces its entire purpose to bodily gratification—a moral condition resembling *al-nafs al-ammāra* emerges. Abay's criticism is directed not at the existence of the body, but at the body's assumption of the governing position.

4.3. *Al-nafs al-lawwāma: self-criticism and conscience*

Al-nafs al-lawwāma, as "the self-reproaching soul" (al-Qiyāma 75:2), represents the possibility of moral self-examination. A significant portion of the harsh criticisms that Abay directs at society throughout the *Book of Words* in fact calls the reader not to enumerate the faults of others, but to recognise their own ignorance, laziness and imitativeness. The attitude criticised at the end of the Seventh Word—"claiming to know while we do not know"—is the very opposite of the *lawwāma* consciousness. When human beings become aware of their own ignorance and question themselves, an inner transformation begins that can revive spiritual desire.

4.4. *Al-nafs al-muṭma'inna: faith, gnosis and inner balance*

Al-nafs al-muṭma'inna, addressed as "O soul at peace!" (al-Fajr 89:27–30), denotes the tranquil self that has found its direction. Although this stage has no exact terminological equivalent in Abay's vocabulary, his depiction of the heart illuminated by faith, the soul nourished by knowledge, and the human being matured through justice and love points in the same direction. The cultivation of spiritual desire means not merely that the human being acquires more knowledge, but that knowledge is put in its proper place within faith and ethics. Thus curiosity turns into gnosis, gnosis into responsibility, and responsibility into inner balance.

5. Spiritual Desire (Can Kumari) and the Moral Value of Knowledge

In the Seventh Word, "spiritual desire" is explained with reference to the child's natural curiosity to know its surroundings. The child pursues everything it sees, hears and cannot yet make sense of. For Abay, the real problem is the dulling of this curiosity in adulthood. A person may grow physically while shrinking spiritually; may come to possess more means while asking fewer questions. The pedagogical dimension of the Seventh Word therefore lies in its transformation of the desire to learn from a childhood trait into a lifelong condition of being human.

“Anyone who does not strive to grasp the visible and invisible secrets of the world... has no place among humanity... The soul is superior to the body; the body must be subordinate to the soul.”

The Nineteenth Word completes this view epistemologically: the human being is not “intelligent” by birth; it comes to distinguish good from bad by hearing, seeing, touching, tasting and paying attention. Knowledge here is not mere mental accumulation but experience that develops the human being’s capacity for moral judgement. In the Seventeenth Word, the reconciliation of reason, heart and effort before “knowledge” (*ilim*) shows that Abay’s conception of the human being cannot be reduced to a single faculty. Reason gives direction, the heart preserves the human measure, and the will converts the known good into action.

6. The Relationship among Faith, Reason, Heart and Ethics

Abay’s understanding of faith appears in complementary layers across different sections of the *Book of Words*. The Thirteenth Word emphasises faith as assent to the unity of God and to the truths communicated through the Prophet. The Twelfth Word states that worship must be supported by knowledge and sound belief. In the Twenty-Eighth Word, faith is foregrounded as a responsibility for the person of reason, and worship as a responsibility for the person of faith. The Thirty-Eighth Word, in turn, establishes the bond among gnosis, love, justice and humanity within a broader framework. Within this integrity, the criticism in the Seventh Word that there is “no faith in the heart” is not merely an accusation of unbelief, but a criticism that knowledge and ethics have failed to take root in the heart.

At this point no opposition is set up between faith and reason. On the contrary, reason and the desire to know are among the conditions for faith to become conscious. What Abay criticises is the failure to investigate the truth despite claims to knowledge, the failure to move beyond what is visible to the eye, and the failure to benefit from the wisdom of others. This attitude is a combination of epistemic arrogance and moral laziness. The person of faith, by contrast, is the one who admits what they do not know, who continues to learn, and who transforms their heart and conduct through knowledge.

The statement in the hadith that “modesty (*hayā*) is a branch of faith” is important for understanding Abay’s conception of the relationship between faith and ethics. For Abay’s language of “faithfulness” encompasses not only metaphysical assent but also the human being’s becoming manifest through qualities such as modesty, compassion, justice, truthfulness and responsibility. Faith thereby becomes

an ethical principle that orders the inner world of the human being and is reflected in social conduct.⁵

7. Comparison with Islamic Philosophers and Sufis

7.1. *Ibn Sīnā: the distinction of the soul from the body and the faculty of knowing*

In Ibn Sīnā's theory of the soul, the human soul is treated as a substance that governs the body but cannot, in its essence, be reduced to a material organ. The "flying man" thought experiment aims to show that even a person abstracted from all sensory contact could be aware of their own existence. Abay's distinction between "I" and "what is mine" and his idea that the body is a guesthouse for the soul are not a repetition of the same philosophical system; yet in their refusal to reduce the human essence to the body alone, they can be compared with Avicennian anthropology.⁶

The difference, however, is clear: whereas Ibn Sīnā dwells chiefly on the ontological status and intellectual perfection of the soul, Abay links the soul-body distinction directly to the problem of social ethics and education. His real question is not so much "what kind of substance is the soul?" as "why does the human being lose the desire to know, and how does it become human again?" For this reason Abay's anthropology carries an ethical-pedagogical orientation rather than a theoretical-metaphysical one.

7.2. *Al-Ghazālī: the disciplining of the nafs, the heart and knowledge*

In al-Ghazālī the concepts of heart, spirit, *nafs* and reason carry meanings that converge in different contexts; the salvation of the human being is linked to the disciplining of the desires of the *nafs*, the purification of the heart and the transformation of beneficial knowledge into action. In the *Iḥyā'*, the principle is not the complete annihilation of desires such as eating, sexuality, anger, wealth and status, but their management within legal and ethical measure. In this respect al-Ghazālī's approach bears a strong parallel with Abay's subordination of bodily desire to spiritual desire rather than its negation.⁷

Abay's language of "light in the breast, faith in the heart" can also be compared with al-Ghazālī's understanding of the purification of the heart and its illumination through gnosis. Nevertheless, Abay's distinctive emphasis lies in starting the desire to know from childhood curiosity and combining it with a critique of social ignorance.

⁵al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, "Īmān", the chapter on modesty (*ḥayā'*) being part of faith.

⁶Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Nafs* (in *al-Shifā': al-Ṭabī'īyyāt*). The "flying man" argument is the classic example used to argue that the human being's awareness of its own self cannot be reduced to bodily sensation.

⁷Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, especially the sections dealing with the disciplining of the *nafs*, the purification of the heart, and the relationship between knowledge and action.

The disciplining of the *nafs* thus becomes not merely a matter of individual asceticism but a condition for educational and social reform as well.

7.3. *Rūmī: body as instrument, soul as orientation; love and gnosis*

In Rūmī's *Mathnawī* the body is most often depicted as an instrument in the human being's journey toward truth, and the attachments of the *nafs* as factors that weigh down this journey. The soul's orientation toward its origin, its maturation through love and gnosis, and the human being's search for meaning beyond the visible shell are among the fundamental themes. A conceptual affinity can be established between Abay's criticism of "being content with looking with the eye" and Rūmī's call to pass from form (*ṣūra*) to meaning (*ma'na*).⁸

Abay's language, however, is more social and didactic. Whereas Rūmī's symbolic-mystical narrative foregrounds the existential separation of the human being and the journey of love, Abay targets the concrete problems of Kazakh society: ignorance, laziness, imitativeness and ostentation. His "spiritual desire" is, prior to and together with mystical experience, the will to ask questions, to learn, to exercise reason and to be ethical.

7.4. *Comparative assessment: Abay's originality*

The comparison with Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī and Rūmī makes it possible to view Abay's thought not as a "transmission" but as an original reconstruction within the shared basin of Islamic thought. Where the ontological soul and intellectual perfection come to the fore in Ibn Sīnā, the disciplining of heart and *nafs* and the unity of knowledge and action in al-Ghazālī, and the movement from form to meaning and toward gnosis through love in Rūmī, Abay reformulates these elements within the educational and ethical problem of Kazakh society. His distinctive conceptual contribution is to express the bodily and spiritual orientations in two everyday yet powerful concepts—*ten kumari* / *can kumari*—and to tie being human to the continuity of the desire to know.

8. The Ideal of "Becoming Human": Discernment (Paraset), Justice, Love and Responsibility

In Abay's conception of the human being, being born human in the biological sense and becoming human in the ethical sense are not the same thing. The harsh statement in the Seventh Word that a person who loses the desire to know may sink to the level of an animal describes not an ontological change of species, but the human being's failure to use the capacity for reason, understanding and ethics with

⁸Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Mathnawī-i Ma'navī*. The comparison does not assert direct historical influence; it demonstrates the conceptual affinity among the themes of form–meaning, body–soul and gnosis.

which it has been endowed. For this reason the ideal *adam bol* (“be a true human being”) is one of the central calls of Abay’s thought.

The cognitive dimension of this ideal is knowledge (*ilim*) and discernment (*paraset*); its ethical dimension is justice, truthfulness and compassion; its religious dimension is faith and servanthood; and its emotional dimension is love and the disciplining of the heart. Abay’s celebrated triad of reason, heart and effort represents the balanced coexistence of these elements. Reason alone may turn into cold calculation, effort alone into unmeasured force, and emotion alone into instability. United under the guidance of knowledge and the heart, these faculties constitute the holistic structure that leads the human being to perfection.

In this respect Abay’s theological anthropology is also meaningful for contemporary debates on education. Education is not merely the transfer of vocational skills or information; it is the process of keeping curiosity alive, seeking the truth, developing self-criticism and combining knowledge with moral responsibility. It is no coincidence that the Seventh Word begins with the questions of a child: for Abay, the loss of humanity most often begins where questioning ends.

9. Discussion

Reading the Seventh Word together with the Qur’an and classical Islamic thought protects Abay’s concepts from two extreme interpretations. The first extreme is to reduce Abay to a merely secular, modernising educator. Yet the emphases on faith, God, soul, the hereafter, heart and ethics in the text clearly demonstrate the religious dimension of his thought. The second extreme is to present Abay as the direct spokesman of a particular school of *kalām* or Sufism. Although the extant texts support his deep bond with the Islamic conceptual world, they call for caution regarding any systematic school affiliation.

The most appropriate reading, therefore, is to regard Abay as a Muslim thinker who was raised within the Hanafi-Maturidi cultural basin, who drew on the ethical language of Sufism, but who reconstructed this heritage through his own social experience and literary-philosophical style. Such a positioning both makes the historical context visible and preserves his originality.

Furthermore, the relationship established with the stages of the *nafs* should be regarded as an explanatory comparison for the concepts of the Seventh Word. Abay does not, in his text, offer a systematic classification in the form of *ammāra–lawwāma–muṭma’inna*. Yet themes such as the immoderation of bodily desire, the lack of self-examination and the orientation toward peace through faith can be analytically compared with this classification. The distinction should be used to

explain similar moral processes rather than to impose external terminology on the text.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that two fundamental orientations lie at the centre of the conception of the human being developed by Abay Kunanbayev in the Seventh Word: bodily desire (*ten kumari*) and spiritual desire (*can kumari*). Abay does not reject bodily needs; he accepts them as a necessary condition of human life. Nevertheless, for the human being to become human in the true sense, the body must be subordinated to a spiritual end—that is, the desire to know, to learn, to understand, to believe and to mature ethically must become determinative.

The comparison with the Qur’anic concept of *nafs* and the stages *ammāra-lawwāma-muṭma’inna* has shown that Abay’s body/soul distinction cannot be reduced to a simple soul–body dualism. Bodily desire is a domain of legitimate need; yet when it becomes immoderate it turns into a force that drags the human being down. Spiritual desire, by contrast, is a process that begins in curiosity, develops through knowledge, deepens through self-examination and moves toward perfection within the unity of faith and ethics.

The comparison with Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī and Rūmī demonstrates that Abay shares a common conceptual basin with classical Islamic thought, but that he re-expresses these issues in an original manner within the educational and ethical problems of Kazakh society. The irreducibility of the soul to the body in Ibn Sīnā, the disciplining of the *nafs* and the heart–knowledge relationship in al-Ghazālī, and the orientation toward meaning in Rūmī converge in Abay in the social-pedagogical language of “spiritual desire.”

With respect to the theological framework, it is meaningful to read Abay within the Hanafi-Maturidi cultural milieu. The bond he establishes among reason, faith, gnosis and ethics has aspects consonant with this tradition. Nevertheless, rather than counting him directly as a systematic representative of a particular school or order, it is more accurate to position him as an independent Muslim thinker who used this heritage creatively.

In conclusion, the Seventh Word is not merely a brief moral admonition on the curiosity of children. The text is a dense work of theological anthropology, arguing that human beings may drift away from their humanity if they lose the innate desire to know, and that they approach perfection when they cultivate this desire through faith, reason, heart, will, justice and love. Herein lies Abay’s contemporary relevance: what makes a human being human is not merely the knowledge one possesses, but

continuing to seek the truth and transforming one's knowledge into moral responsibility.

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