By reading this book I form two sorts of impressions. In the first place, we have an enormous heritage of Islamic works which the researchers should have constantly studied and taken care of. Secondly, the Muslim scholars are making stray efforts for introducing this heritage to the foreign readers as well as for rendering it in other languages.

However, I am aware of the difficulties that possibly stand in the way of editing such works. The task of rendering a text from one language to another requires not merely the translator’s deep knowledge of the two languages, but other factors as well, such as, his grasp of the material he translates, keen insight into the subject and distinctive apprehension of etymological and allegorical expressions of both the languages. The examples of the errors that the translators commit are many and innumerable and, probably some of these errors creep unintentionally while some others occur due to unscholarly motives.

But this monumental work which Dr. Muhammad Şaghir Hasan Maşumi has translated appears as a clear example of the rare Divine help in this effort, and presents to us a unique model of genuine research, faithful rendering, sound intention and astonishing terseness in conveying the philosophical and religious ideas.

Imám Rāzī, the author of the work, is one of the pioneers of Islamic scholarship. He was born at al-Rayy in A.H. 543 and died in A.H. 606. Being an encyclopaedic thinker, his scholarship was not confined to studying and teaching the religious affairs alone but also extended to Philosophy, History, Mathematics, Astronomy, Medical Science, Jurisprudence, and Quranic Exegesis. He was well versed in both the languages, Arabic and Persian, and wrote in both of them. He studied the works of Mulla al-Razi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina Imam Ghazzali.

In his own life time, Imám Rāzī secured such a rare appreciation as was done by a very few in the history of Islamic thought. He had a number of helpers and devotees from different strata such as the kings, the high officials, the judges, the Sufis. His works were very much appreciated in his time for their eloquence, strong arguments, clear and easy techniques so much so that they were widely quoted by learned scholars in the then renowned centres of Islamic learning—from Khwarazm, Khurasan, al-Kayy upto Damascus.

This position which Rāzī enjoyed called forth the envy of the envious and the revenge of the avengers, particularly of the followers of the Bāṭini sects whose beliefs he used to criticize and whose views he declared as absurd. He was often persecuted by some adversaries of these groups so much so, that he had to leave Marw and migrate to Khurasan to save his life. It is said that he died due to poison given to him secretly by
some of these people. Rāzī has a number of voluminous works to his credit. These works are enumerated by Ibn Abī Uṣāibi'ah as 86. The editor of Kitāb I'tāqādat Firaqī al-Muslimin has mentioned about 93 works of Rāzī, including his small treatises.

The works of Imām Rāzī were not confined to one subject alone, but he wrote on Philosophy, Theology, Logic, Law and Principles of Law. He thus made these sciences very easy for general understanding and brought them within the access of the common reader. This is due to his easy and rational approach which indicates his comprehensive grasp of the subjects he dealt with and his ability to explain them logically and clearly.

Imām Rāzī wrote a book on the commentary of the Qur'ān entitled as al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr in which he incorporated along with the commentary of the Qur'ān the bulk of sciences and other branches of studies he had mastered so much so that Qādī al-Qudāt Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Subkī declared "Lo! it surely contains every thing along with the commentary of the Qur'ān". The study of the works of Imām Rāzī reveals to us that the ethical and pragmatic sciences occupied his mind particularly, and for this reason, we find him concentrating on this branch of studies in his work. In this context he writes in his Tafsīr al-Kabīr:-

"I say, sciences are either speculative or practical. The most noble and perfect of the speculative sciences is the knowledge of the Essence, Attributes, Actions, Decrees and Names of Allāh. But you do not consider these sciences as more perfect and nobler than what you find in this Book (The Qur'ān)? As for the practical sciences, what is desired is either the actions performed by the organs or the actions that concern the hearts—which are, in other words, called the purification of manners and refinement of the soul. Now, you do not find these two sciences as compared to that which you apprehend in this Book (the Qur'an) on the same footing. Again, there has been the set tradition of Allāh, the Exalted, that He favours with honour and position in this world and blessings in the world hereafter those who investigate into the meanings of the Qur'ān and hold fast to it".

The work in hand, i.e. Kitaab al-Nafs wa 'l-Rūḥ wa Sharhu Quwāhumā, which Dr. Ma'sûmi has rendered into English language is based on a unique manuscript preserved in the library of the Oxford University. He edited it and published it in its original language earlier.

The historians disagree concerning the name of the book; It has been mentioned in the book, Kashf al-Ẓunūn 'an Asāmi al-Kutub wa 'l-Funūn of Muṣṭafā b. 'Abd Allāh al-Kātib al-Chalabī, the celebrated Ḥājjī Khalīfah, that "Imām Fākhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Umar al-Rāzī wrote a book on the Soul and Spirit". But we find other biographers of Imām Rāzī attributing the two names to two independent works,— Kitaab al-Akhlaq, and Kitaab al-Nafs.

Perhaps the opening section of the text at our hands, which begins with the expression: "Hāḍhā Kitaab fī . . . Akhlaq" leads us to believe that this kitāb is the same Kitaab al-Akhlaq mentioned by the historians. Besides, the contents of the part one permit us to ascribe the same title to the work as mentioned by Ḥājjī Khalīfah.

The book is divided into two parts; The first part consists of the general principles of Ethics. It deals with the soul, Spirit, the creation and faculties of both discussing the
arguments for and against them. The Second part deals with human passions such as love for wealth, greed, hypocrisy, and then, it explains their evils and points out the ways to get rid of them.

In spite of the fact that Imâm Râzi imitated the Greek scholarship, and the works of Greek philosophers, the trends of Islamic ideology dominated constantly on his exposition of ethical principles he mentioned and for this reason, we find him referring to the Qurânic verses, the Prophetic traditions upon which he relies for explaining ethical problems and their solution. Again, the book will remain indebted, as Dr. Ma'şûmi holds, to Muslim authors who preceded Imâm Râzi and dealt on the subject such as Imâm Râghib al-Ijâfâhâni, Abu'l Barakât al-Baghdâdi, and Imâm al-Qhazzâli, specially for his work Thâyà 'ulûm al-Dîn.

All the chapters of the book are followed by notes indicating extensive scholarship and wide and deep study. Professor Ma'şûmi has referred to more than sixty works. He has compared the similar ideas and measured word by word so much so that these notes became part and parcel of the book without which the study of the book would not be accomplished.

Dr. Ma'şûmi is very cautious in selecting the words and is aware of their significance; so he uses not merely the corresponding expression for every word but studies the context and then chooses the nearest possible expression. He even examines them and does not feel satisfied except after careful scrutiny; and then he incorporates them in the notes mentioning relevant quotations from the works of Imâm Râzi and other authors.

This translation is surely a great brilliant work of Dr. Ma'şûmi which may be added to his other good products in the field of Islamic scholarship. How good it will be if the same effort would have been made for other branches of Islamic thought pursuing the same methods as he has used in this work such as the qualities of rare accuracy in rendering, careful understanding of the texts, sound approach for its aims and objects which may enable the foreign reader to become acquainted with these treasures and to place them in the right place in the history of human thought in general!

(Translated by) A.M.M. Sharfuddin.