

other parts of Central Asia. His brilliant chapter "The Spread of Maturidism," in his *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985) provides an important background to all research on the intellectual history of Transoxanian Hanafism.

69 'Alā' al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Samarqandī was a prominent representative of the Samarqandī school in theology as well as in law. He was a student of Abū l-Ḥasan Al-Bazdawī (d. 1089 in Samarqand) and of the famous theologian and jurist Abū l-Mu'in al-Nasafī (d. 1114). His *sharḥ* is an influential commentary on Māturīdī's *Ta'wilāt*. 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Samarqandī migrated from Samarqand to Syria, where he died in 1144.

70 Kāsānī, *Badā'ir al-ṣanā'ir*, vol. 2, pp. 88-9.

71 Ibid., p. 88.

72 Ibid., line 29.

## Humanism in Ismā'īlī Thought: The Case of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (The Epistles of the Sincere Brethren and Faithful Friends)

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Cultural historians are divided as to whether the term "humanism," a product of the Graeco-Roman *humanitas* ideal, can be applied to the world of medieval Islam. In his chapter entitled "*al-Naz'a al-insāniyya fi'l-fikr al-'arabī*" (The Humanist Trend in Arab Thought), 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, reflecting on humanism in Arab thought, states that Greek culture was not unique in creating a humanist ideal. Every high culture, he asserts, produces this phenomenon in its own way.<sup>1</sup> A number of other scholars, such as Louis Gardet,<sup>2</sup> and Mohammed Arkoun<sup>3</sup> have discussed and elaborated on humanism as a feature of Arab-Islamic civilization. In *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West*, George Makdisi has covered all aspects of Islamic learning and rendered the Arabic term *adab* as humanism. He states:

In classical Islam, each of the two movements [i.e. humanism and scholasticism] has its *raison d'être*, distinct from the other; yet both sprang from concern for a common source: the Sacred Scripture. The history of their developments is one of interaction in which there was conflict, but never a clean break. The day of humanism dawned some time before Islam's first century came to an end. The movement arose because of deep concern for the purity of the classical Arabic of the Koran as the living language, as well as the liturgical language, of Islam. Scholasticism owed

its rise to the struggle between opposing religious forces, the conflict coming to a head in the third/ninth century inquisition (*mihna*), over a century after the dawn of humanism.<sup>4</sup>

The issue of humanism in Islam is further pursued by Joel Kraemer. In an excellent article, "Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: A Preliminary Study," he has addressed the theoretical issues raised by cultural historians. Subsequently in his book *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age*, Kraemer has revisited the debate and reiterated that both terms, "Renaissance" and "Humanism," belong to Islam as a complex civilization.<sup>5</sup>

It should be further noted that cultural historians and Islamicists are also at odds over another question that is closely intertwined with the first. It regards whether Islamic civilization belonged to the *Kulturkreis* (cultural sphere) of Western Europe—sharing a common heritage of classical antiquity—or if it belonged to another cultural orbit.<sup>6</sup> Those who support the former thesis maintain that Islamic civilization was part of the cultural sphere of the Mediterranean, which in turn was the underpinning of the Graeco-Roman civilization.<sup>7</sup> In the preface to *The Jewish Discovery of Islam*, Martin Kramer stresses this very point and states:

The thread that runs through the contribution of Jewish scholars of Islam is the denial of a dichotomy between East and West. The Jewish discovery of Islam was not distinct from Europe's; it was an inseparable part of it. But it was overwhelming based against "Orientalism" as an ideology of difference and supremacy.<sup>8</sup>

In his article "Narrative and Community in Islamic Late Antiquity," Thomas Sizgorich has indicated that there are many strands of cultural affinities between the early Islamic community and the other communities of Late Antiquity.<sup>9</sup> While discussing Henri Pirennes's *Mohammed and Charlemagne* and Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Peter Brown states:

Historians of late antiquity could now agree that, from A. D. 200 to at least 700, the Mediterranean itself, a clearly defined landscape, encrusted with millennia of experience of human habitation and sharply distinguished from its northern and southern neighbors by a unique ecology and lifestyle, provided a center to western Europe which was notably more palpable than was the somewhat disembodied notion of a spiritual unity realized by the Catholic church.<sup>10</sup>

In his *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam*, George Makdisi has clearly demonstrated that not only did a common spirit encapsulate the entire Mediterranean world during the Middle Ages but scholasticism and humanism, two major intellectual movements in medieval intellectual history, also carry the signatures of classical Islam which is clearly legible in their essential constituent elements.<sup>11</sup> It should be noted here that in his article "Dominant Ideas in the Formation of Islamic Culture" Giorgio Levi Della Vida also has maintained that Islamic civilization was an outgrowth of Hellenism, just as Islam itself was an offshoot of the Judaeo-Christian religion.<sup>12</sup> These thorough accounts, I believe, absolve me from any additional obligation to address theoretical issues.

Both Mohammed Arkoun and Joel Kraemer have devoted substantial parts of their studies concerning Islamic humanism to the writings of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023), an erudite litterateur who had considerable influence in literary and philosophical circles in the latter part of the tenth century. It is a strange coincidence that this study deals with the celebrated encyclopedia, *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-ṣafā' wa-khullān al-wafā'*, whose authors were accused by Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī of harboring heretical beliefs. This is not the time or the place to discuss extensively the latter's story about the authorship of the *Rasā'il* since I have dealt with it in greater detail in a separate, but yet unpublished study.<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that there is a long established tradition among the Musta'li-Ṭayyibīs of Yemen going back to the *dā'i* Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī (d. 557/1162) which claims that the *Rasā'il* were composed by the second hidden imām

Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl. This in turn implies that the dating of the *Rasā'il* goes back to the middle or the second half of the third/ninth century. Abbas Hamdani has defended this position by arguing that the *Rasā'il* were composed prior to the establishment of the Fāṭimid dynasty in North Africa. The Ismā'īli character of the *Rasā'il*, in its broader sense, is no longer in dispute. What is still disputed is the precise identity of its authors within the Ismā'īli community. Although the exact identity of the authors is beyond recovery this issue is closely tied to the dating of the *Rasā'il*.

Coming back to our subject of inquiry, I would like to state that, besides the question of their authorship, modern scholarship concerning the *Rasā'il* has been preoccupied with analyzing the contents of various epistles and indicating their *ur* (original) sources, such as the legacy of Greece, that is, Pythagoreanism, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Neoplatonism, as well as the Judeo-Christian, Persian, Indian, Buddhist and Zoroastrian legends. Other authors have focused on the different aspects of the Ikhwān's thought: for example, cosmological doctrines, the theory of the imamate, ethics, educational terms and political thought.

As far as I am able to ascertain, the theme of humanism in the *Rasā'il* has not been previously explored. The following pages are, therefore, a modest effort to present some of the most prominent universal human characteristics espoused by the Ikhwān. Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* defines humanism as a doctrine, a set of attitudes, or a way of life centered upon human interests or values. It adds that humanism is a philosophy that asserts the essential dignity and worth of humankind and its capacity to achieve self-realization through the use of reason.<sup>14</sup> When humanism ceases to be the principal concern of a society, it is argued, barbarism ensues. Hence, humanism has become a component of several specific philosophical systems, and has also been incorporated into some religious schools of thought. It entails a commitment to the search for truth and morality through human means in support of human interests. Humanists endorse a universal morality based on the commonality of human nature,

believing that solutions to human social and cultural problems cannot be parochial. In addition to the above aspects the other primary features of humanism described in various dictionaries and encyclopedias are: (i) that it is committed to the pursuit of knowledge, the adoption of both religious and non-religious sciences as an educational and cultural ideal in the formation of the human mind and character; (ii) it is also committed to cosmopolitan values of tolerance and understanding between different races and religions based on a conception of common kinship and the unity of mankind.<sup>15</sup>

Keeping in mind the aforementioned definition, I have collected and organized the Ikhwān's views, which are scattered throughout the 51 epistles in four volumes plus two summary volumes (*al-Risāla al-jāmi'a*), under the following headings:<sup>16</sup>

1. Mankind's origin, his place in the universe and his destiny.
2. Rationalism and its limits.
3. Religious tolerance and the spirit of inclusiveness.
4. The Ikhwān's goal of providing a well-rounded education.
5. The Ikhwān's bold intellectual attempt to debate not only the inherent tension generated by the anthropocentric view projected in heading number one (mankind's origin) and the ethical issues it raises, but also to offer a provisional resolution to this dilemma. I think that the latter theme is unique to the history of religious thought in general and Islamic thought in particular.

#### **Mankind's origin, his place in the universe and his destiny**

Perhaps a good starting point when considering the rich, varied and complex thought of the Ikhwān is to pose the question: what did the Ikhwān themselves think they were trying to accomplish? Or, what was their objective that they diligently pursued throughout their epistles? It is my belief that if this question

had been posed to the Ikhwān, their reply would have been similar to Plotinus, who, when asked the same question on his deathbed, is reported to have said: "I am trying to bring back the divine in us ..."<sup>17</sup> A. H. Armstrong, author of *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus*,<sup>18</sup> states that this ambiguous statement can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Therefore, he attempts to clarify the statement of Plotinus by saying:

But if we come to understand as precisely as possible what Plotinus meant by it, we shall be well on the way to understanding his philosophy as a whole. Man for Plotinus is in some sense divine, and the object of the philosophic life is to understand this divinity and restore its proper relationship (never, as we shall see, completely lost) with the divine All and, in that All, to come to union with its transcendent source, the One or Good.<sup>19</sup>

With some modifications, what Armstrong said of Plotinus is applicable to the Ikhwān. The human soul, according to them, is part of the Universal Soul and belongs to the realm of the spiritual world that transcends the physical world of generation and corruption. It is therefore divine. The philosophical structure and the cosmology of the *Rasā'il*, with some adaptations, are derived from Neoplatonism and Neopythagoreanism.<sup>20</sup> One might also ask the question: why were the Ikhwān specifically attracted to Neoplatonism? In reply we can say that the Ikhwān were not the only ones fascinated by Neoplatonism. Other groups in Islam as well as in Judaism and Christianity were equally fascinated for many different reasons. First, within the Greek tradition Neoplatonism had become an integral component. And when the Greek tradition was translated into Arabic and transmitted to the Muslims, the latter inherited that legacy.<sup>21</sup> Second, it was significant to all the revealed religions since it tried to accommodate God, described as the first principle of reality, or the One who is beyond Intellect (or reason) and being.<sup>22</sup> Third, Neoplatonism offered support to the notion in revealed religions that God, the divinity, is active, not just an intellectual concept intellectualizing about itself.<sup>23</sup>

In order to understand the origin of humans, their lofty position in the universe and the destiny awaiting their soul's return to the spiritual realm from whence it began, it is appropriate to outline briefly the Ikhwān's cosmology.<sup>24</sup> According to the Ikhwān, God transcends all thought and all being. He is the One, the originator and the cause of all being. He is unique in every respect and nothing can be predicated about him. The universe, which is quite distinct from Him, is related to God through its existence (*wujūd*), permanence (*baqā'*), wholeness (*tamām*) and perfection (*kamāl*). The universe is derived by emanation (*fayḍ*), whereas creation is understood as a form of adaptation to theological language.

According to the philosophical system of the Ikhwān, the superstructure of the hierarchy of beings originates with the Intellect emanating from God. The Intellect, at times referred to as the Universal Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-kullī al-fa'cāl*) or the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'cāl*), is described as the first existent being that emanates from God's munificence (*jud*). It is a simple spiritual substance with the qualities of permanence, wholeness and perfection. The Intellect contains the forms of all things and is in fact the cause of all causes. Second in the hierarchy is the Soul, at times called the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kullīya*), which emerges from the Intellect. It is a simple spiritual substance with the qualities of permanence and wholeness but lacking in the quality of perfection. Third in the hierarchy is Prime Matter (*al-hayūlā al-ūlā*), which gushes out from the Soul. It is a simple spiritual substance that has permanence but lacks both wholeness and perfection. It is also susceptible to form.

The cause of the Intellect's existence is God's munificence, which springs out from Him. The Intellect instantaneously (*daf'at<sup>an</sup> wāhidat<sup>an</sup>*) accepts God's munificence and virtues (i.e. permanence, wholeness and perfection), without motion, time or exertion, on account of its proximity to God. Because of its perfection, its munificence and virtues overflow into the Soul. But the latter's existence is through the intermediary of the Intellect, hence the Soul is deficient in receiving virtues, and its rank is

below that of the Intellect. To procure goodness and virtue, the Soul sometimes turns to the Intellect and at other times to Matter. Consequently, when it turns to the Intellect for goodness, it is distracted from doing good to Matter, and vice versa.

Being imperfect, the Soul becomes attached to Matter, which lacks not only virtues but also the desire to receive them. The Soul, therefore, must turn to Matter, take special care in its advancement by acting on Matter and by making manifest the virtues inherent in it. Hence, the Soul is afflicted with exertion, hardship and misery in reforming and perfecting the Matter. When the Matter accepts the virtues, it attains wholeness, and simultaneously the Soul achieves its own perfection. When the Soul turns to the Intellect, it becomes attached to it and united with it, thus attaining tranquility.

The process of emanation terminates with Prime Matter. As the Soul acts on Prime Matter, it receives its first form that includes three dimensions (length, breadth and depth), thereby becoming the Absolute Body (*al-jism al-muṭlaq*) or Universal Matter (*hayūlā 'l-kull*). Thereupon begins the realm of the composite (*'ālam al-murakkabāt*). Next, the Absolute Body takes its first form, which is circular because this is the best form. Thus, the spheres and the stars are formed from the Absolute Body. Subsequently the nine spheres emerge, beginning with the outermost sphere (*al-falak al-muḥīf*), which encompasses all spheres. Next to it is the sphere of fixed stars (*falak al-kawākib al-thābita*), followed by the spheres of Saturn (*falak zuḥal*), Jupiter (*falak al-mushtarī*), Mars (*falak al-mirrikh*), the Sun (*falak al-shams*), Venus (*falak al-zuhara*), Mercury (*falak 'uṭāriḍ*) and the Moon (*falak al-qamar*). The higher the position of the sphere, the purer and finer is their matter. The spiritual force that directs and manages each sphere is identified as the particular soul of that sphere.

Below the lunar world comes the physical matter (*hayūlā al-ṭabi'ā*) of the four elements: fire (*nār*), air (*hawā'*), water (*mā'*) and earth (*arḍ*). The Earth, being farthest from the One, is the coarsest and darkest kind of physical matter. The active force of the Soul operates through these four elements by means of heat,

cold, dryness and wetness and is known as "the nature of generation and corruption (*'ālam al-kawn wa'l-fasād*)."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, it produces the generated beings that form the three kingdoms: minerals, plants and animals. The active force operating on each of these generated beings is called the particular soul. Thus, the process wherein the soul mixes with these elements in varying degrees produces the generated beings including the human being, which is the culmination of the process. The human being is, therefore, not only situated at the peak of a hierarchy with inanimate things at the base but is also the noblest of all creations, and the rest of the three kingdoms (i.e. the animal, vegetative and mineral) are subservient to him.

Humans, by virtue of their position in the universe, are the central link in a long chain of beings; below them is the animal kingdom and above them is the world of angels. They are connected to both. In the Perfect Human Being, one who has realized his divine origin, the process of generation in descending order from the Absolute Body to the sublunar world comes to an end, and the reverse journey in ascending order back to the Universal Soul and the Intellect, starts. The human being, therefore, fulfills the purpose of creation.

In order to further their philosophical claim that a human being is the noblest of all creation the Ikhwān cite the Qur'an where it states: "We indeed created the human beings in the fairest stature."<sup>25</sup> Quoting from the scrolls of Hermes (*ṣuḥuf Hirmis*, i.e. the prophet Idrīs) and the books of the Israelite prophets (*kutub anbiyā' banī Isrā'īl*), the Ikhwān state that when God decided to put His vicegerent on Earth He formed the first human being out of dust in a form unrivaled to other animals and breathed into him His spirit.<sup>26</sup> As a result, the earthly body of every human is infused with a spiritual soul that provides it with the ability to acquire a noble character and be trained in all the sciences and politics. The purpose of all this, the Ikhwān state, is to enable and prepare him to resemble God, his Creator, because he is His vicegerent on Earth. If a human manages himself well and wisely, his soul will become an angel from among the angels

that surround Him. In order to support their assertion the Ikhwān quote a passage from a book by the Israelite prophets.<sup>27</sup> At several places in the epistles, the Ikhwān assert that the substance of the human soul is celestial and that after the death of the body it will return to its celestial abode.<sup>28</sup>

At another location in the 34th epistle "On the saying of the sages that the human being is a microcosm," the Ikhwān state that among the partial souls it is the human soul that resembles the Universal Soul.<sup>29</sup> The human soul is further described as a spiritual, celestial substance that is luminous and lives by itself. It has the potential to be the most erudite and full of life. Moreover, it is active in bodies, using them and perfecting them for a time, until it eventually leaves them.<sup>30</sup> The soul's death, on the other hand, is described as ignorance of its own substance (*bi-jawharihā*) and its lack of knowledge about itself (*ma'rifat dhātihā*).<sup>31</sup> Toward the end of the 46th epistle, entitled "On the essence of faith and the characteristics of the faithful," the Ikhwān state:

Make every endeavor, O brother, to seek knowledge and [various] sciences and tread the path of the best and the divines who submitted themselves to the will of God. Perhaps your soul might be awakened from the slumber of heedlessness ... might open the discerning eye and understand the secrets [hidden in] the books of the prophets and allusions [contained] in the divine laws. It would be precisely at that moment that the soul would be ready to receive revelation from the angels.

Know, O brother, that your soul is potentially an angel, and can become one in actuality if you follow the path of the prophets and those who were responsible for the promulgation of the divine laws, and act in accordance with their counsels mentioned in their books, which are obligatory in the usages of their laws. Indeed, your soul is also potentially a devil and will one day actually become a devil if you follow the path of the wicked and the infidels.<sup>32</sup>

### Rationalism

The relationship between reason and revelation is one of the most profound topics in the history of human thought. It has been debated for over two millennia and has not lost any of its fascination or freshness. Since monotheistic religions are based on revealed scriptures their relation with reason has been altogether an uneasy one. In religion, reason is more often regarded as a prison or a restriction to be escaped from and not as a key to understanding the world. This demonstrates the limited role assigned to reason in religious thought.<sup>33</sup> The rational tradition in Islam can be viewed and studied in various ways. Broadly speaking, as Muhsin Mahdi states, it not only includes the scientists and philosophers but also many of the theological schools and mystics.<sup>34</sup> The reason is that whenever they tried to express themselves, or in the case of the mystics who tried to communicate their experience, they were required to use reason. In his attempt to delimit the scope of this tradition, Mahdi continues:

The most interesting part of the rational tradition for us is where it comes directly in contact with, and tries to understand, the whole question of religion, the origins and structure of the religious community ... This normally takes the form of political philosophy, but that is only one part, perhaps the most interesting part, of the way in which the rational tradition tries to understand and deal with the phenomenon of religion and the religious community.<sup>35</sup>

Having identified the core of the problem, Mahdi adds that the origin of Islamic religious thought or *kalām* (scholastic theology), is this very question—who has the right to rule the Muslim community?<sup>36</sup> Is the ruler designated by the Prophet since he himself was chosen by God? Or, is he to be elected by the community? It is obvious that the issue of the succession to the Prophet created other controversies regarding God's justice, the qualifications of the leader and a Muslim's duties. Concerning the main tradition of Islamic philosophy (i.e. the philosophy of al-

Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā<sup>37</sup> [Avicenna] and Ibn Rushd [Averroes]), Mahdi asserts that it never thought that a society can be based entirely on reason, or that the prophecy or the divine law (in all three revealed religious communities) can be explained purely on the basis of reason. The only way society can be held together, and the only way people can be encouraged to pursue virtues, is through a divine law. Therefore the dominant trend that emerged in Islamic philosophy was to mitigate the conflict between reason and revelation.<sup>37</sup> The Ikhwān's rationalism, if one accepts the pre-al-Fārābī dating of the *Rasā'il* rather than the post-al-Fārābī dating that is generally recognized,<sup>38</sup> predates the main tradition of Islamic philosophy as outlined by Muhsin Mahdi. In their synthesis of reason and revelation, the Ismā'īlīs and the Ikhwān had gone far beyond Mu'tazili rationalism to encompass the whole spectrum of scientific thought. The Ikhwān had integrated the Greek sciences and their formal reasoning into one universal valid truth that was equivalent to religious reality. In the following pages an examination will be undertaken to determine what the Ikhwān had to say about rationalism, its limits and how they harmonized it with faith and revelation, which will be followed by a scrutinization of their political theory.

The story of the debate between reason and revelation began with Plato, a pre-eminent political philosopher.<sup>39</sup> In *The Republic*, which he wrote in the prime of his life, Plato discovered that with intelligent leadership and the educational advantages of a healthy political life there is little need for positive law. But in *Laws*, written at the end of his life, he became concerned with the alternative to intelligent leadership—the need for a few necessary laws clearly stated and firmly enforced.<sup>40</sup> He, therefore, found it necessary to assume the existence of a divine lawgiver, in order to furnish with authority the ordinances by which he hoped to establish his ideal state.<sup>41</sup> "No one," he states, "who in obedience to the laws believed that there were gods, ever intentionally did any unholy act, or uttered any unlawful word." Very poignantly he also added, "Who can be calm when he is called upon to prove the existence of God?" For "men say that we ought not to inquire

into the supreme God and the nature of the universe, nor busy ourselves in searching out the causes of things, and that such inquiries are impious; whereas the very opposite is the truth."<sup>42</sup> Plato's statement goes to the very heart of the controversy between faith and intellect.<sup>43</sup> Hence, in *Timaeus* he elaborated his celebrated theory of God and creation.<sup>44</sup>

The classical rationalists, such as Plato and Aristotle, believed everything was accessible to reason, except the "first principle" (i.e. the Good, the One, the transcendental, God), which was located "beyond reason." Having adapted Neoplatonist cosmology, the Ikhwān's position is very similar to Plato's. For them, it is not only the "first principle" but also the manner of creation of the universe, and the cause of its existence, which are beyond the scope of human reason. This is explained in the 28th epistle, entitled "The limits of man's cognitive ability."<sup>45</sup> The epistle begins with the creation of Adam whose upright body was created by God out of dust, after which God breathed into him His spirit, and taught him names. Thereafter, God commanded the angels to bow down before Adam not because of his earthly body, but because of the noble spirit that was breathed into him. Knowledge is, therefore, the sustenance of the soul and its very life—as food, drink and other attainable things are nourishment for the body.<sup>46</sup> According to the Ikhwān, knowledge about things could be obtained through three channels: (i) that which is natural and instinctive, such as that which can be arrived at by means of sense perception or that which is based on the rational faculty; (ii) that which could be learned and acquired, such as mathematics and rules of conduct; or (iii) that which is brought by divine law (*nāmūs*) by virtue of revelation. The Ikhwān reiterate that man's cognitive ability is limited, especially in acquiring knowledge of the realities of things.<sup>47</sup>

In the same epistle, the Ikhwān criticize legal scholars (*al-'ulamā' al-shar'iyyīn*) who reject science that deals with the composition of spheres and the influence of the stars (*aḥkām al-nujūm*) on sublunar living beings. Their rejection, the Ikhwān state, could be due to several reasons. First is their inability to understand such a discipline, or their lack of desire even to

examine it. Second is their preoccupation with the *shari'a*, or their contempt for this science. At the same time the Ikhwān also censure those who have begun deliberation over philosophical sciences or those who have reached an intermediate stage in their study of philosophy but have a disdain for divine law, the rules of *shari'a*, and ridicule the people who are engaged in its inquiry. The Ikhwān once again affirm that their creed is the consideration of all bodies of knowledge, both the philosophical as well as the prophetic sciences, and unveiling the realities of all existing things. Since this knowledge is a vast ocean they were called upon to compile 51 epistles.<sup>48</sup>

At the end of the third epistle entitled "On astronomy", the Ikhwān state that the jurists, traditionalists and people of piety forbid the study of astronomy because they believe that the latter is a part of the philosophical sciences. In clarifying their own position the Ikhwān spell out that they themselves do not approve of the study of philosophical sciences for those who did not first study the essentials of religious sciences and the ordinances of the *shari'a* that are obligatory on every Muslim and whose ignorance is not to be excused. However, for those who have completed their studies of the *shari'a* and the ordinances of religion, and have fulfilled the requirements of the divine law, the Ikhwān assert that their indulgence in philosophy will not harm them. On the contrary, it will strengthen their religious belief and add certitude to their conviction.<sup>49</sup>

They further state that both the philosophical sciences and the prophetic *shari'a* are divine and are in conformity with their intended aim. Their goal is one, however their approaches may vary.<sup>50</sup> The ultimate aim of philosophy is, as it is said by Plotinus, to resemble God according to man's ability and this goal is achieved through four channels: (i) acquiring knowledge of the realities of existing things; (ii) asserting belief in sound opinions; (iii) electing to be molded with noble character and praiseworthy disposition; and iv) having blameless conduct and good deeds. The real objective behind those traits is the refinement of the soul and its advancement from the state of imperfection to that of

wholeness (*tamām*), thereby moving from the state of potentiality to that of actuality in order that the soul can attain permanence and eternity in bliss with its fellow souls and with the angels. Similarly, the purpose of prophecy and divine law is the refinement of the human soul and its salvation from Hell (which is described as the sublunar world of generation and corruption) and to lead it to Paradise.<sup>51</sup>

The Ikhwān did not compose a separate epistle dealing with political theory, but the material related to it is scattered throughout the *Rasā'il*. In his article "An Outline of the Political Philosophy of the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'," Hamid Enayat has delineated the Ikhwān's political philosophy.<sup>52</sup> He presents his discussion and analysis of the material under three major headings: (i) philosophical postulates; (ii) a critique of social conditions; and (iii) the ideal state. Although it is a well-researched article, the last part on the ideal state is misleading and based on a misreading of the *Rasā'il*. Unfortunately, there is no sustained discussion by the Ikhwān on the ideal state, nor on the ignorant or the deviant one as is found in al-Fārābī's *Mabādī' āra' ahl al-madina al-fāḍila*. Enayat's subsequent statement that there are striking similarities between the Ikhwān's schemes of the ideal state and those of al-Fārābī is, therefore, incorrect. One must remember that Enayat's article having being written from the perspective of a political scientist does not cover the Ikhwān's theory of prophecy, which is central to my discussion. I will, therefore, only point out some of his findings and then devote the rest of this section to expounding the Ikhwān's theory of prophecy. It should be remembered that prophecy is an important subject not only for Muslims but also for Jews and Christians. During the early centuries of Islamic history it became a hotly contested issue and several books were composed in defense of prophecy. It also reminds us of the great debate that took place at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century between the two Rāzīs: the physician-philosopher Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī, who denied prophecy, and his



compatriot the Ismā'īlī thinker Abū Ḥātim Aḥmad al-Rāzī, who defended it.<sup>53</sup>

Under philosophical postulates Enayat argues that the Ikhwān's political views stem directly from their basic philosophy, which is their belief in motion and change as an inexorable process, and a factor of progress both in natural phenomena and in social and political institutions.<sup>54</sup> It is worth noting that the concept of revolutionary change in the *Rasā'il* is accorded a respectability rarely found in Muslim historical and juridical sources.<sup>55</sup> Since human beings possess both knowledge and will, they are presumed to be able to determine their way of life, and devise the social and political institutions regulating their relationship with fellow human beings, otherwise, the Ikhwān maintain that there can be no moral basis for the state.<sup>56</sup> It is interesting to note that the term *siyāsa*, which has several different meanings in Arabic,<sup>57</sup> has three different interpretations in the *Rasā'il*: (i) the individualistic pursuit of happiness; (ii) statecraft or governing of the people that concerns the social dimension of human life; and (iii) the knowledge of the arts and methods for simultaneously attaining both the spiritual and mundane happiness for the individual and the community. All three nuances are subsumed under the following five categories of *siyāsa*.<sup>58</sup>

The first category is *al-siyāsa al-nabawiyya* (prophetic manner of governing).<sup>59</sup> It entails the laying down of the divine laws for curing the ailing souls. This, the highest form of *siyāsa*, is accomplished only by the prophets. This is followed by *al-siyāsa al-mulūkiyya* (regal manner of governing), which requires knowledge of the ways to preserve the laws of the prophets and the revival of their traditions. This is the task of the prophets' successors, the rightly guided Imāms. *Al-siyāsa al-ʿāmmiyya* (statecraft in general), the third type, pertains to the art of governing various groups, such as the *umarā'*, which entails managing the affairs of some cities and provinces. It requires knowledge of the classes of the people, their conditions, crafts, morals and maintaining cohesion amongst the masses. The next level is *al-siyāsa al-khāṣṣiyya* (individual management), which

consists of knowledge that every individual ought to have regarding his household management and his means of livelihood. Furthermore, he should review his mundane and spiritual welfare. The last category is *al-siyāsa al-dhātiyya* (personal conduct). This *siyāsa* identifies as knowledge that allows every individual to reflect on himself, his character and his own affairs. It should be noted that the classification of five categories of *siyāsa* in the *Rasā'il* is a novel interpretation amongst other Muslim thinkers.

Enayat has compiled a fairly detailed account of the Ikhwān's criticism of the socio-political conditions that prevailed in Muslim society at that time, hence it will not preoccupy us here.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, I would like to address briefly the 22nd epistle entitled "On the generation of animals and their species," which includes the famous debate between animals and humans. It is a rich and valuable document wherein the most severe criticism is leveled against the wealthy, those who go on amassing fortunes without caring for the needy, the privileged and the ruling classes. The focus of the criticism is rendered more explicit in the compendium (*al-Risāla al-jāmi'a*), where it is stated that the animals in the story symbolize the masses who blindly follow their rulers, while the humans stand for those who uphold the principle of *qiyās* (reasoning by analogy). And those who advocate the latter principle, according to the Ikhwān, represent the disciples of Satan, the adversaries of the prophets and the enemies of the Imāms.<sup>61</sup>

The utopian state envisioned by the Ikhwān and portrayed as "the Excellent Spiritual State" (*madīna faḍīla ruḥāniyya*) is a state that will be realized after the appearance of the seventh *naṭīq*, a cosmic rank described as *ṣāḥib al-nāmūs al-akbar*, and *qa'im al-qiyāma* (the one who will raise the Resurrection).<sup>62</sup>

Let us now examine the Ikhwān's theory of prophecy as outlined in the 47th epistle entitled "On the essence of divine law, the conditions of prophecy, the quantity of their characteristics and the creed of godly people."<sup>63</sup> The epistle commences with:

Know, Oh brother, may God assist you and us with a spirit of His, that the animals are the embellishment of the earth as the stars are the embellishment of the heavens ... Indeed, the human is the most perfect animal with respect to form and is the noblest with regards to composition. The best of the humans are those who are rational, and the best of the rational are the 'ulamā'. The highest of the 'ulamā' in rank are the prophets, peace be upon them! They are followed in rank by *al-falāsifa al-ḥukamā'*. Both the groups [i.e. the prophets and *al-falāsifa al-ḥukamā'*] concur that everything, in fact, is caused (or the effect of a cause, 'illa) and the Creator, most high and sublime, is the Cause, the Originator, and the One who imparts wholeness and perfection [to the created beings].<sup>64</sup>

The Ikhwān further state that the position of *nubuwa* (or *nubu'a*, prophethood, prophecy), which follows the rank of the angels, is the highest status that a human can aspire to attain and it is fulfilled if a person acquires all 46 human virtues. The first and foremost is true vision (*al-ru'yā al-ṣādiqa*).<sup>65</sup> It is part of the prophecy as the tradition states: "A true vision is one 46th of prophecy."<sup>66</sup> Once all those qualities are combined in one person during an appropriate constellation of the stars at a given period of time, that person becomes the *mab'ūth* (the prophet), *ṣāhib al-zamān* (master of the age) and *imām* (leader) of the people for the rest of his life. Upon his death, after promulgating the message revealed to him, putting down the revelation in writing, alluding to its *ta'wīl* (hermeneutics), setting up the *sunna* (legally binding precedents) and uniting his community, those traits are his legacy and are a permanent fixture of his community.<sup>67</sup>

The Ikhwān continue by stating that if all those qualities [implying all 46 virtues] or most of them are combined in one person, that person is most suitable to be the Prophet's successor. If by chance those qualities are not found in one person but are scattered throughout a group, their rule will prevail and they will be rewarded in the hereafter if that group constitutes one opinion, their hearts are reconciled with love for each other, they support one another to defend the faith, implement the *sharī'a*, adhere to

the *sunna*, and place the community on the path of religion. On the contrary, if the community becomes divided after the death of the Prophet and diverges from the Prophet's path, the cohesiveness of the community will be shattered and the state established by the Prophet will disintegrate and their fate in the hereafter will also be ruined.<sup>68</sup> Given the situation that prevailed in the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet, the Ikhwān state that the leadership (*riyāsa*) of the community has two dimensions: physical and spiritual. The former resembles the leadership of kings and tyrants who rule over the people unjustly and for worldly pleasures, whereas the latter signifies the leadership of the lawgiver prophets who administer over the souls through justice and *iḥsān* (beneficence) for attaining happiness in the hereafter.<sup>69</sup>

The Ikhwān reiterate that the status of the prophet who brings the divine law has reached the highest and the noblest position a human can hope to attain.<sup>70</sup> They further add that the formulation of the divine law, which is a spiritual disposition that emerges from a partial soul united with a human body, occurs with *al-quwwa al-ʿaqliyya* (rational faculty, or intellectual power) that emanates from the Universal Soul and reaches the particular soul [i.e. the prophet] with God's permission at a particular period of time.<sup>71</sup>

It is at this point that the Ikhwān mention that the lawgiver prophet should have the following 12 innate qualities: (i) perfect limbs that will enable him to be readily fit for the appropriate actions; when he performs an action, he accomplishes it with ease; (ii) astute perception of everything said to him, especially the ability to determine what the speaker intends and what the matter itself demands; (iii) exceptional at retaining whatever he comes to know through [sight] and sound. Essentially, he should not forget anything; (iv) an inherent high level of intelligence, so that when he sees the slightest indication of a thing, he can grasp it in the intended manner; (v) the most refined ability of articulation, his tongue enabling him always to concisely express what is in the recesses of his mind; (vi) a devotion to the acquisition of knowledge, namely the ability to easily master material; (vii) a

fondness for the truth, which includes good conduct toward truthful people and the ability to draw them close to him; (viii) without an appetite for food, drink and sexual intercourse, averse to frivolity, and a dislike for the pleasures which these pursuits provide; (ix) proud of spirit, high-minded and devotion to honor, his soul being by its nature above everything ugly and non-virtuous, and his high-aspiring spirit rising to the most lofty things; (x) dirhams and dīnārs and other worldly pursuits are of little value to him and he should be abstemious to them; (xi) a predisposition to justice and just people and an abhorrence for oppression by providing justice to those who are wronged and showing pity to those who are oppressed; lending support to what is beautiful, good and just; and not reluctant to concede or demonstrate obdurateness; if he is asked to perform injustice and/or evil he does not respond; (xii) strong in setting his mind firmly upon the things, which, in his view, ought to be done; he should carry it out daringly and bravely without fear and timidity.<sup>72</sup>

It is interesting to note that these 12 physical, intellectual and moral qualities, identified by the Ikhwān, are not only listed in the same order by al-Fārābī in his *Mabādī' ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* (the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City), but the actual wording of those qualities is almost the same.<sup>73</sup> In the opinion of the present writer, the possibility that either of the two, that is, the Ikhwān and al-Fārābī, might have copied from the other, seems remote given their different orientation. It is more likely that both drew from a common source, namely Plato's *Republic*, translated by Ḥunayn b. Ishāq. Unfortunately, the Arabic translation did not survive to provide us with conclusive evidence.

In his *al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, Walzer acknowledges that the quest for the identity of the Greek sources (in addition to Plato) used by al-Fārābī in the *Mabādī' ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* and similar writings does not yield absolutely certain results. Yet he maintains that al-Fārābī's thought may be ultimately derived from a Greek tradition originating in the sixth-century Alexandrian tradition of Ammonius' school. In his review article of Walzer's aforementioned book, Muhsin Mahdi,

"al-Fārābī's Imperfect State," states that Walzer's sixth-century Greek source-hunting game has failed to yield any fruit. Hence, any assumption of a common source must be abandoned. Mahdi has exposed other weaknesses in Walzer's translation, commentary and his thesis that al-Fārābī was promoting Imāmī Shī'ism.<sup>74</sup>

However, it is to be noted that the utopia imagined by Plato in *The Republic* is not ruled by laws under which injustice inevitably occurs, but by men and women who have been carefully selected in youth and become wise and good by a long training. The world will never be justly ruled until rulers are philosophers, that is, until they are themselves ruled by the idea of the good, which is divine perfection and brings about justice, which is human perfection.<sup>75</sup> It is worth noting that some of those qualities are also mentioned for the holder of the office of the caliphate/imamate.<sup>76</sup>

Let me briefly mention that al-Fārābī describes the ruler of the perfect state as a person who embodies the perfect rank of humanity and has reached the highest degree of felicity. He then adds that this ideal state cannot be reached unless one has all the aforementioned 12 qualities, with which one is endowed from birth. This person is the one who has attained perfection and has actually become intellect and thought (*ṣāra 'aql<sup>an</sup> wa-ma'qu<sup>l</sup> bi'l-fi'l*). This occurs when his Passive Intellect (*al-'aql al-munfa'il*) has become actualized and has risen to the stage of the Acquired Intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafād*). When all this is taken as one and the same thing, then this person is the one whom the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fā'āl*) descends upon. Al-Fārābī continues by identifying when this occurs in both parts of his rational faculty (i.e. the theoretical and the practical rational faculties), and also in his *al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila* (imaginative faculty or *phantasia*) he is then the person who receives Divine Revelation, and God grants him revelation through the mediation of the Active Intellect, so that the emanation from God to the Active Intellect is passed on to his Passive Intellect through the mediation of the Acquired Intellect, and then to the faculty of imagination.<sup>77</sup> Thus, through the emanation of the Active Intellect to his Passive Intellect, he is a wise person and a philosopher who

employs an intellect of divine quality, and through the emanation from the Active Intellect to his faculty of imagination he becomes a visionary prophet, who warns the people of things to come. It should be noted that al-Fārābī assigns a lower grade to the faculty of imagination than to the rational faculty. In al-Fārābī's view therefore, visionary prophecy is inferior to philosophy.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, the Angel of Revelation and the Active Intellect are to be considered as one and the same thing.

Another important difference between al-Fārābī and the Ikhwān is their treatment of the Active Intellect. Plotinus does not use this term, but it seems to have been applied to the Universal Intellect in later times and Alexander of Aphrodisias identifies the Active Intellect with the Aristotelian First Cause. In the *Rasā'il* the Intellect or the Universal Intellect is called the Active Intellect that emanates directly from God, while in the complex system of al-Fārābī the Active Intellect governs the sublunar world and occupies the last and lowest of a series of ten Intelligences emanating from the One (i.e. God). Both al-Kindī and Ibn Sīnā<sup>3</sup>, on the other hand, placed the visionary prophecy much closer to the religious view. Al-Kindī did not believe that visionary prophecy resided in the inferior part of the soul, particularly the faculty of imagination. For him, the prophet is self-taught, that is, he has no human teacher, and is in no need of philosophical training. His soul is purified and divinely inspired.<sup>79</sup> For Ibn Sīnā<sup>3</sup> the prophet is an extraordinary human being who is unsurpassed by the philosophers. Through immediate intuition, he is aware of the truth, which reason is unable to attain. The philosopher can do nothing but confirm in his own way the insight of the prophet.<sup>80</sup> The Ikhwān's views are very similar to those held by al-Kindī and Ibn Sīnā<sup>3</sup>. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā<sup>3</sup> al-Rāzī, in contradistinction to the above positions, took up Ibn al-Rāwandī's hostile attitude to prophecy. In his view Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad were impostors.<sup>81</sup>

In another revealing passage, following the enumeration of 12 innate qualities, the Ikhwān draw a clear distinction between a prophet who brings the divine law and a philosopher. They state

that the former does not attribute whatever he says, does, commands or forbids in the laying down of *sharī'a* to his own *ra'y*, *ijtihād* and *quwwa*. Rather, he ascribes it to an intermediary, an angel that is between him and his Lord who brings him revelation at undetermined times.<sup>82</sup> As for the philosopher, whenever he deduces a [new] discipline of knowledge, writes a book, derives an art or designs a policy, he ascribes it to his own power (*quwwati anfusihim*), his own *ijtihād* and his own good judgment (*jawdati ra'yihim*).<sup>83</sup>

In the 50th epistle entitled "On the types of political constitutions (*fi anwā' al-siyāsāt*)", the Ikhwān state that worship embodies two notions. The first, called *al-'ibāda al-shar'iyya al-namusiyya* (religious/ritual worship), is adhering to the lawgiver prophet's commands and to comply with the acts of devotion and religious observances he has instituted, namely the ritual purity, ritual prayers, fasting, alms tax and pilgrimage. The second type of worship, called *al-'ibāda al-falsafiyya al-ilāhiyya* (philosophical/divine worship), is the profession of the belief in the unity of God.<sup>84</sup> In the introduction of *al-Risāla al-jāmi'a* the Ikhwān affirm that the profession of *tawḥīd*, the foremost and the noblest of *ma'ārif* (cognition), consists in acquiring the total knowledge of the realities of things, especially their causes and effects, the essential nature from which they were created, and the purpose of their creation. The path to this knowledge is through philosophy, defined as *al-tashabbuh bi'l-ilāh bi-ḥasab al-tāqa al-insāniyya* (to resemble God according to human ability).<sup>85</sup> The second type of worship implies mortification of the flesh and abstaining the lower soul from carnal pleasures, hence it is very difficult for anyone to combine both types of worship. The Ikhwān assert that they are entitled to claim this unique honor since they combine both *al-'ibāda al-shar'iyya* and *al-'ibāda al-falsafiyya al-ilāhiyya*.<sup>86</sup>

The acceptance of reason as an ally of faith can be traced back to the very foundation of Islam, that is to say, the Qur'ān. Phrases such as *ūlu al-albāb* (people of understanding, or those with insight),<sup>87</sup> *la'allakum tatafakkarūn* (so that you may reflect),<sup>88</sup> *a-fa-lā tatafakkarūn* (why will you not reflect?),<sup>89</sup> *li-qawm*<sup>90</sup>

*yatafakkarūn* (for people who reflect),<sup>90</sup> *a-fa-lā ta'qilūn* (have you no understanding?),<sup>91</sup> *la'allkum ta'qilūn* (perhaps you will understand),<sup>92</sup> *li-qawm<sup>in</sup> ya'qilūn* (for people who reason),<sup>93</sup> *la'allahum yataadhakkarūn* (so that they may reflect),<sup>94</sup> are repeated countless times in the Qur'ān. The Ikhwān's endeavour to place reason on a high pedestal, therefore, is not unsubstantiated.<sup>95</sup>

In his article "Reason," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Henry Leroy Finch observes that the prestige of reason has declined noticeably in regards to society, due partly to the changing conception of the nature of science as well as to an increasing awareness of the conventionality of what passed for reason. He adds that under the present conditions reason is more likely to be regarded as an instrument or a tool rather than as the supreme defining characteristic of human beings. According to Finch, the effect of this situation upon religion, and spiritual practices and development, remains to be seen.<sup>96</sup>

### Religious tolerance and the spirit of inclusiveness

The Ikhwān promoted religious tolerance and the spirit of inclusiveness by affirming the unity and common destiny of mankind. According to Qur'ānic teaching, the Ikhwān maintain that divine guidance is universal and God regards all human beings as equal. Every prophet's message, although addressed to a specific group of people, carries universal import and must be believed by all humanity.<sup>97</sup> Addressing Muḥammad, God states in the Qur'ān: "[O Prophet], summon [all mankind], and pursue the right course, as thou hast been bidden [by God]; and do not follow their likes and dislikes, but say: 'I believe in whatever revelation God has bestowed from on high.'<sup>98</sup> This is because God is one, the source of revelation is one, and mankind is one. Prophethood is indivisible, and the Qur'ān requires equal recognition of all prophets.<sup>99</sup> The Qur'ān also states that although religion is essentially the same, God himself has given different institutions and approaches to different communities so that He might test them.<sup>100</sup> At two places, in *Sūrat al-Baqara* and *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, it

states: "Verily, those who have attained to faith [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians, and the Sabians—all who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds—shall have their reward with their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve."<sup>101</sup> Religious tolerance and the spirit of inclusiveness epitomized by the *Rasā'il* are, therefore, in keeping with the spirit of the Qur'ān.

At the beginning of the 45th epistle entitled "On the modalities of social intercourse among the Sincere Brethren," the Ikhwān insist that their fellow brethren, in whatever region they reside, should organize private gatherings at fixed times in order to discuss their sciences and secrets among themselves. Their discussion should be focused on the science of psychology (*'ilm al-nafs*), intellect and the intelligible (*al-'aql wa'l-ma'qūl*), the secrets of the Revealed Books and mathematical sciences. However, their ultimate aim should be the divine sciences. Then, counseling them, they state:

Our brethren, may God the High assist them, in general, ought to show no enmity toward any science, nor shun any book, nor cling fanatically to any single creed. For our own creed encompasses all other creeds, and comprehends all sciences. This creed is the consideration of everything in existence, both sensible and intelligible, from beginning to end, whether covert or hidden, manifest or concealed, with a view [to discovering] the source of reality in so far as each and every one of them are derived from a single principle, single cause, a single world, and a single soul ...

... Our sciences (*'ulūm*) are derived from four sources (*kutub*, literally, "books"): First, the books compiled by the sages and the philosophers, such as mathematics and physics; Second, the revealed books brought by the prophets, may God's blessings be on them, such as the Torah, the Gospel, the *Furqān* [i.e. the Qur'ān], and the scrolls of the prophets ... and the veiled secrets they contain; Third, *al-kutub al-ṭab'īyya* (books on natural sciences), that is, the forms of the existing things, such as the composition of the spheres, signs of the zodiac, movements of the stars and the extent of their

masses, the vicissitudes of time, transformation of the elements, and the created things from minerals to plants to animals ...; Fourth, the divine books [written] by the hands of noble and virtuous scribes<sup>102</sup> which cannot be touched by any but the pure angels. These books contain the essences of the souls, their genera, species, and parts, their management of the bodies and setting them in motion ...<sup>103</sup>

The Ikhwān not only show respect for Judaism and Christianity, the two older Abrahamic faiths, but they also frequently quote from the Torah (*tawrā*), the Gospel (*al-injīl*), Psalms (*al-zabūr*) and other books of the Jewish prophets (*kutub al-anbiyā'*, *ṣuḥuf al-anbiyā'*) along with the Qur'ān.<sup>104</sup> This demonstrates their acceptance of the Torah and the Gospel as primary sources and of equal importance to the Qur'ān. It is quite common for the Ikhwān to seek the support of those three scriptures for some of their views that they expound upon in the *Rasā'il*. In addition to those sacred writings, the Ikhwān freely draw upon other sources as well, particularly Greek, Persian and Indian literature. Let me take a moment to cite some specific examples from the Bible.

First, in the 22nd epistle entitled "Explication of the generation of animals and their species," during the debate between animals and humans all three scriptures are referred to by the humans to support their contention that the animal world was created for their benefit and for their service.<sup>105</sup> Second, in the same epistle, in the section dealing with how *jinn* dutifully obey their leaders and kings, the Ikhwān state that recitation of a verse from either the Qur'ān, the Torah or the Gospel has the same power to protect the unfortunate traveler from the malevolence of evil *jinn* and from going mad in the wilderness.<sup>106</sup> Third, in the epistle "On astronomy" the Ikhwān state that although one cannot avoid what has been decreed by God, one may, if one has foreknowledge of some impending disaster, take appropriate prophylactic measures, such as prayer, the invocation of God, repentance and remorse, fasting or offering a sacrifice. Then they must cite the last testaments of Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad to their respective communities to support their supplication.<sup>107</sup>

Besides citing the Torah, the *Rasā'il* culls from other Jewish texts, such as the Midrash, Talmud, Haggadah, and notably from the *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* (Stories of the Prophets) since copies of the latter circulated in Arabic. I. R. Netton correctly observes in his book *Muslim Neoplatonists* that the Ikhwān's knowledge of Christianity was advanced compared to that of the Old Testament; however, one must remember that the story of Christ as well as Christian piety and asceticism were more appealing to the Ikhwān and directly connected to their teachings. Netton further adds that from the data provided in the *Rasā'il* one can construct an accurate and chronological picture of the life of Christ. It should be noted that the *Rasā'il* also demonstrate that the Ikhwān were well acquainted with a number of Christian doctrines and with the dissensions that gave rise to these doctrines. The life of Christ according to the *Rasā'il* corresponds to that delineated by the four evangelists in their respective Gospels.<sup>108</sup>

It is worth pointing out that the Ikhwān's knowledge of Christianity at times reveals a Nestorian perception of the nature of Christ. They were to some extent aware of the Christological controversies between the Nestorians and the Monophysites.<sup>109</sup> Their basic attitude toward Christianity extends beyond tolerance as they advise their brethren to read the Gospel.<sup>110</sup> Sayings attributed to Christ are scattered throughout the *Rasā'il*. Some parallels to those maxims are to be found in the Christian scripture, the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet. Stanley Lane-Poole, who read the summary translations of the *Rasā'il* into German rendered by Friedrich Dieterici, was so impressed by the Ikhwān's philosophy and their sympathetic treatment of Christianity that he concluded his essay "The Brotherhood of Purity" by pronouncing:

In their ideal of the higher life, indeed, the Brotherhood of Purity belongs to Christianity rather than to Islām: but, in truth, their noble doctrine appeals to what is best in all philosophies and religions.<sup>111</sup>

Let me cite some additional examples from Jewish sources. The story of how Esau, the son of Isaac, fought with Nimrod's son and

obtained the magic hunting-coat of Adam, which the son of Nimrod wore, is recounted in the last epistle on magic. This coat was covered with pictures of all kinds of wildlife. When Adam wanted to hunt an animal he would place his hand on the picture of the animal that he desired and that animal would halt and become bewildered until Adam seized the animal. Genesis 10:9 states that Nimrod was a mighty hunter, but adds very little. The Ikhwān's source appears to be the Midrash, since it gives more detail.<sup>112</sup>

In the "debate between the animals and the humans," the story of when Abraham was thrown into the fire by Nimrod is alluded to by the crocodile. The latter then recounts how the frog carried water in its mouth and poured it onto the fire to put out the flames.<sup>113</sup> In another version of the same story the Ikhwān relate a tradition of the Prophet where he is stated to have said that there were 40 righteous persons in his community who follow the religion of Abraham (*millat Ibrāhīm*). Hence, the Prophet was asked about the religion of Abraham and he responded that Abraham was upright (*kāna ḥanīf<sup>an</sup> muslim<sup>an</sup>*) and devoted to God. While he was about to be thrown into the fire the angels in Heaven were filled with pity for him. Therefore, God revealed to Gabriel to go down and assist Abraham if he sought the angel's help. Consequently, the archangel came down while Abraham was in the catapult (*manjanīq*) ready to be tossed into the flames. He asked Abraham if he was in need of anything. The Patriarch, because of his trust in the Lord that he would fulfill his promise and rescue him, replied that he did not need the archangel's help. It was at this moment that God was moved and said in the Qur'ān: "O Fire! Be thou cool, and [a source of] inner peace for Abraham."<sup>114</sup> There seems to be an obvious parallel between this account in the *Rasā'il* and the one in the Babylonian Talmud.<sup>115</sup>

Furthermore, in the last epistle, entitled "On the essence of magic, charms and the evil eye," the Ikhwān narrate a story about Jacob and how he tricked Laban into giving him a large herd of a particular livestock and then caused this herd to conceive a lot of offspring. The account in the *Rasā'il* is very similar to that related in Genesis.<sup>116</sup>

In the 44th epistle, "On the creed of the Sincere Brethren," while discussing the immortality of the soul after leaving the body, the Ikhwān recount the story of Christ's passion, death and resurrection.<sup>117</sup> This long passage from the *Rasā'il* is translated into English by Lootfy Levonian, who comments:

We have a summary description of the life of Jesus and his preaching, admitting the fact of Jesus's crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. Here is a Moslem association of the tenth century AD whose teaching about Jesus agrees with that of Christianity on those very points, which are denied by Orthodox Islam.<sup>118</sup>

In the same epistle the Ikhwān draw a parallel between the beginning of the Prophet's mission and that of Moses and Jesus. The Prophet began his mission by first inviting his wife Khadija, his cousin 'Alī and his friend Abū Bakr and then Malīk, Abū Dharr, Ṣuhayb, Bilāl, Salmān and others.<sup>119</sup> This is similar to the way Moses began his mission by first inviting his brother Aaron, then the Israelite scholars (*'ulamā'*) from the family of Jacob before proclaiming his mission publicly and inviting the Pharaoh. Jesus began his mission in Jerusalem in the same manner. Netton is correct in stating that this refers to Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem at the beginning of his mission.<sup>120</sup> It alludes to the discovery of the 12-year-old Jesus by his parents after spending three days talking to the scholars in the Temple.<sup>121</sup>

In the *Rasā'il* Jesus travels far and wide in Palestine for two and a half years attempting to rescue the people of Israel from "the death of sin," and working miracles.<sup>122</sup> This representation of Jesus closely corresponds with the Ikhwān's view that the prophets are the doctors of human souls.<sup>123</sup> The most striking story of Christ's teachings as noted by the Ikhwān is when Jesus encountered a group of bleachers (*qaṣṣarin*). Jesus asks them whether they would permit the clothes, which they had just washed and bleached, to be worn by their owners if their bodies were contaminated with blood, urine and excrement. They replied that they would not and that whoever would do so was a fool.

Jesus rebutted by saying that they had done just that. The bleachers did not comprehend what Jesus was hinting at and retorted: How? Jesus responded that the owners of the clothes have cleansed their bodies and that the bleachers dressed them in the clothes that they had whitened, but their souls are still polluted with decay, filled with ignorance, blindness, poor character, hatred, deceit and fraud. He urges them to seek the Kingdom of Heaven. Consequently, all of them were guided to the right path and followed Christ.<sup>124</sup> This story is not reported in the canonical Gospels, but it appears in the apocryphal Gospel of Philip.<sup>125</sup>

In order to support their contention that the human soul is eternal and that it will return to the Garden of Bliss following the death of the body, the Ikhwān acknowledge the pronouncements made by a group of illustrious human figures: Abraham,<sup>126</sup> Joseph,<sup>127</sup> Pythagoras,<sup>128</sup> Socrates,<sup>129</sup> Plato,<sup>130</sup> Aristotle,<sup>131</sup> Bilawhar (the holy hermit of Sarandīb [Ceylon] and Buddha's teacher),<sup>132</sup> Christ,<sup>133</sup> the Prophet Muḥammad<sup>134</sup> and the martyrs of Karbalā'.<sup>135</sup> It is worth pointing out here that besides the story of Christ's passion, the Ikhwān greatly admired Socrates' courageous attitude in the face of certain death, as portrayed by Plato in *Phadeo*. At one place the Ikhwān state that sacrifices are of two kinds: *shar'ī* (lawful) and *falsafī* (philosophical). The former is what the faithful is commanded to offer, such as the animal sacrifice following the completion of the pilgrimage to Mecca. The latter is to sacrifice one's own body and accept death without fear in order to draw close to God, as done by Socrates.<sup>136</sup>

The spokesmen of the humans are specified in the "debate between the animals and the humans" as representing the major religious traditions and geographical regions, such as a descendant of the Prophet's uncle 'Abbās;<sup>137</sup> a Persian;<sup>138</sup> an Indian from the island of Ceylon;<sup>139</sup> a man from Syria, a Hebrew ('*ibrī*) from the House of the Israelites;<sup>140</sup> a Syrian from the partisans of Christ;<sup>141</sup> a man from Tihāma from the tribe of Quraysh;<sup>142</sup> a Byzantine from Greece;<sup>143</sup> and a man from Khurāsān.<sup>144</sup> Toward the end of the debate when the spokesman of the animals and the *jinni* sages asked the gathering of the humans to expound on the

characteristics of the noblest of them, such as the prophets, the Friends of God (*awliyā' Allāh*), and the philosophers who resemble angels, all the humans fell silent for a time, thinking over what they had been asked. For a moment no one had an answer. Finally, an insightful man arose. The Ikhwān describe him in the spirit of the oneness of mankind, stating that he was Persian by birth and upbringing, Arabian by faith, professing the true monotheistic religion, Iraqi (cosmopolitan) in culture, Hebrew in lore, Christian in manner, Syrian in piety, Greek in sciences, Indian in contemplation, Ṣūfī in conduct, angelic in character, divine in thought, and firmly grounded in knowledge.<sup>145</sup>

#### Use of Persian and Indian literature

Various elements of Indian and Persian culture and literature are scattered throughout the *Rasā'il*. The reader cannot fail to notice that the Ikhwān were relentlessly looking for novel parallels with which to illustrate, substantiate and propagate their views. Persian names, terms and citations from Persian poetry are frequently encountered.<sup>146</sup> The Book of Zoroaster,<sup>147</sup> and the testament of King Ardashīr I are two such sources.<sup>148</sup> Anecdotes from collections called "King Stories" and "Animal Stories" have Persian and Indian origins and are often used. Most of those stories belong to a distinct genre, as they have several common stylistic features. For example, they describe the power of the king who is also a good and wise ruler.<sup>149</sup> Some stories are derived from the legend of *Bilawhar wa-Būdḥāsaf* (or *Yūdāsaf*), known in the medieval West as *Barlaam and Josaphant*.<sup>150</sup> Some stories in the *Rasā'il* are told within other stories, a technique derived from Indian literature.<sup>151</sup> A few stories are even a mixture of Platonic philosophy and Buddhist legends,<sup>152</sup> while others illustrate the immortality of the human soul. Others are didactic, the Aesopic moral stories, such as that of the foxes, the wolf and the lion<sup>153</sup> and another about some crows and a falcon.<sup>154</sup>

In the former, a group of foxes go out in search of food and find a dead camel. While deciding whether to divide it amongst



themselves, a wolf passes by. The wolf's father had been a benevolent king of the animals; hence the foxes are persuaded to share the camel with him. The wolf complies with the request, but later becomes greedy and warns the foxes not to return for more. Consequently, the hungry foxes appeal to the lion and recount the series of events. The lion seizes the wolf, kills him and returns the carcass of the camel to the foxes. The moral of the story according to the Ikhwān is that one calamity is overcome by another.<sup>155</sup>

The latter story concerns a group of crows. Following the death of their just and compassionate king, they became divided among themselves and decided not to empower any member of the royal family who might think that he had inherited the power from his father and would subsequently mistreat them. The crows gather to consult and debate the issue using their *ra'y* and *ijtihād* and decide to invite an old and undernourished falcon who feigns modesty and piety to be their king. Soon, the falcon regains his strength and begins to oppress and kill the crows. Before his death the falcon appoints an even more brutal successor from his own kind. The crows repent for their initial decision, but it is too late. The story is an analogy to what happened in the Muslim community following the Prophet's demise.<sup>156</sup>

### Organization of knowledge

Reliable information with a detailed account of Muslim education during the first century of Islamic history is extremely difficult to obtain. In *The Rise of Humanism*, George Makdisi has collected all the available information from various sources and has concluded that the *maktab* existed as early as the first Islamic century.<sup>157</sup> The *maktab*, later called *kuttāb*, is typically described as an elementary school where reading, writing and basic religious education was imparted.<sup>158</sup> A close association between *al-ʿulūm al-ʿarabiyya* (the literary arts) and *ʿulūm al-sharīʿa* (the religious sciences) in the curriculum of the *maktab* was well established from the very beginning.<sup>159</sup> This is acknowledged by statements ascribed to ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās (d. 68/687–88), a great scholar from the first

generation of Muslims and the father of Qurʾānic exegesis,<sup>160</sup> and by statements attributed to Abū'l-Aswad al-Duʿālī (d. 69/688), an early grammarian.<sup>161</sup> The relationship between the two fields of study was reaffirmed by the need in the religious sciences for a thorough knowledge of classical Arabic. Nevertheless, the literary arts were subordinate to the religious sciences. Thaʿlab (d. 291/904), the famous grammarian and philologist of the Kufan school,<sup>162</sup> was well aware of the fact that his expertise dealt with a human science and not with the religious sciences of the divine Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*. It is reported that he complained about his distress to al-Mujāhid (d. 324/916), the famous scholar of the Qurʾān, of having spent his entire life in a field of knowledge that had no future in the hereafter. He claims to have said:

The scholars of the Qurʾān have occupied themselves with the study of the Qurʾān and succeeded. The scholars of law (*fiqh*) have done the same with law and succeeded. And the scholars of *ḥadīth* have succeeded by studying *ḥadīth*. But, as for me, I have occupied myself with 'Zayd and 'Amr!' I wish I knew what is to become of me in the Hereafter!<sup>163</sup>

Al-Mujāhid is then reported to have had a dream in which the Prophet appeared to him and instructed him to tell Thaʿlab that he approved of the study of the science of grammar as a necessary tool before undertaking the study of Islamic sciences. The story exemplifies two ideas: first, thorough knowledge of grammar is required for the proper understanding of the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*; second, the term "grammar" in this context is used to encompass the entire field of literary arts.

The introduction of Greek scientific and philosophical works into Islam had a profound impact on the development of Islamic thought and education. Islam, like Christianity before it, faced the problem of how to assimilate the "pagan" knowledge of the Greeks to a completely different conception of the universe that was created by God, who had also provided mankind with guidance through the agency of prophecy. Muslims separated the Islamic sciences from those it referred to as the "foreign sciences."

often called *'ilm al-awā'il* (the science of the Ancients) or *'ulūm al-ʿajam min al-Yūnāniyyīn wa-ghayrihim min al-umam* (the sciences of non-Arabs, the Greeks and other nations).<sup>164</sup> The development of Islamic thought reflects the attempts by the Muslims to reconcile the foreign sciences with the Islamic sciences, both within and without institutionalized centers of learning.

By the middle of the third/ninth century as delineated by Makdisi in his novel studies, namely *The Rise of Colleges* and *The Rise of Humanism*, either a sharp distinction between the two sets of sciences—the religious and non-religious—or a tripartite division into the literary arts, religious sciences and foreign sciences, had already developed.<sup>165</sup> In order to support this contention, Makdisi states that the tripartite division is discernible in the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm (compiled in 377/987–8),<sup>166</sup> al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ārizmī's (d. ca. 387/997) *Mafātīḥ al-ʿulūm*,<sup>167</sup> and Ibn Buṭlān (d. 460/1068) reminiscent of his contemporaries.<sup>168</sup> All three sources identified by Makdisi do not predate the *Rasā'il*. Both Ibn al-Nadīm and al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ārizmī composed their works during the second half of the fourth/tenth century, while Ibn Buṭlān lived almost a century later. I would like to point out that the Ikhwān were at the forefront among Muslim thinkers who successfully integrated the tripartite division of knowledge into one organic whole.

It should be recognized that knowledge for the Ikhwān was of utmost importance, as demonstrated in their Neoplatonic system. The ultimate aim of learning or acquiring knowledge, as reiterated innumerable times throughout the *Rasā'il*, is "the refinement of the soul and improvement of character" in order to attain the greatest happiness, the highest sublimity, eternal life and the final perfection.<sup>169</sup> At times the importance of knowledge is depicted by sayings ascribed to the Prophet. One tradition states: "One who knows himself (i.e. about his own soul) knows his Lord."<sup>170</sup> In another tradition, the Prophet, while addressing Muslims, states: "The most knowledgeable of you about himself (i.e. his own soul) is most knowledgeable about his Lord."<sup>171</sup> In keeping with the

noble aim of acquiring knowledge, they regard the ignorant man's existence as even being below that of an animal.<sup>172</sup> In another passage the Ikhwān state that good conduct is like a ladder for the ascension to the heavens while knowledge is akin to the light that illuminates the path.<sup>173</sup>

Their adoption of *al-ʿulūm al-ʿarabiyya*, *al-ʿulūm al-sharʿiyya* and *al-ʿulūm al-falsafiyya* was aimed at achieving an educational and cultural ideal in the formation of the human mind and character. They advocated comprehensive humanist education at three levels: Primary, Intermediate and Advanced. The purpose of primary education was to provide a basis in the fundamentals of reading, writing, grammar, poetry, history and other essential arts with an aim to achieve mastery of the Arabic language. The aim of the intermediate level was to impart the proper religious instruction of various disciplines, such as Qur'anic exegesis, hermeneutics and *sharī'a*. The highest stage was reserved for philosophical sciences designated by the 51 epistles, which are arranged in four progressive categories: the mathematical-philosophical sciences (*al-riyādiyya al-falsafiyya*) constituting 13 epistles; the physical and natural sciences (*al-ṭabī'iyya wa'l-jismāniyya*) containing 17 epistles; the spiritual-intellectual sciences (*al-nafsāniyya al-ʿaqliyya*) pertaining to ten epistles; and the juridical-divine sciences (*al-namusiyya al-ilāhiyya*) consisting of 11 epistles.

In the very first epistle, entitled "On number," they state that the objective of the philosophers regarding the study of the mathematical sciences is to prepare the student for the next stage, which is the study of the physical sciences that would, in turn, lead him to *al-ʿulūm al-ilāhiyya* (theological/divine sciences), which is the ultimate goal. The first phase of *al-ʿulūm al-ilāhiyya* is knowledge of the soul's existence and its substance, followed by the search for its origin prior to its relationship with the body, followed by the search for its return and the final state of its existence in the world of spirits after it leaves the body.<sup>174</sup>

In the seventh epistle, entitled "On the theoretical arts," (*al-ṣanā'i' al-ʿilmiyya*), the Ikhwān state that the sciences (*al-ʿulūm*)

which people pursue are of three kinds: i) practical sciences/arts (*al-riyādiyya*); juridical-religious sciences (*al-shar'iyya al-waḍ'iyya*); and the authentic (or the essential) philosophical sciences (*al-falsafiyya al-ḥaqīqiyya*).<sup>175</sup>

Practical sciences are directed toward refinement and culture, and most of them are devised for seeking an improved livelihood and a betterment of worldly affairs. They consist of nine categories: (i) reading and writing (*al-kitāba wa'l-qirā'a*); (ii) the science of language, namely syntax and grammar (*'ilm al-luḡha wa'l-naḥw*); (iii) accounting and business transactions (*'ilm al-ḥisāb wa'l-mu'āmalāt*); (iv) poetry and prosody (*'ilm al-shi'r wa'l-'arūḍ*); (v) the science to foretell future events by omens derived from the actions of birds (*'ilm al-zajr wa'l-fa'l*);<sup>176</sup> (vi) magic, charms, alchemy and mechanics (*'ilm al-siḥr wa'l-'azā'im, al-kīmiyā' wa'l-ḥiyāl*); (vii) arts and crafts (*al-ḥiraf wa'l-ṣanā'ī'*); (viii) buying and selling of goods (trade), agriculture and husbandry (*'ilm al-bay' wa'l-shirā', al-tijārāt wa'l-ḥarth wa'l-nasl*); (ix) biographies and history (*'ilm al-siyar wa'l-akḥbār*).<sup>177</sup>

Religious sciences, the Ikhwān continue, are intended for the treatment of souls and for seeking the hereafter. They constitute six types: (i) the science of revelation (*'ilm al-tanzīl*); (ii) the science of interpretation (or hermeneutics, *'ilm al-ta'wīl*);<sup>178</sup> (iii) the science of transmission and history (*'ilm al-riwāyāt wa'l-akḥbār*);<sup>179</sup> (iv) the science of jurisprudence, customary practices and legal consequences of the facts of a case (*'ilm al-fiqh wa'l-sunan wa'l-aḥkām*); (v) the science of remembrance, exhortation and asceticism (*'ilm al-tidhkār wa'l-mawā'iz wa'l-zuhd wa'l-taṣawwuf*); (vi) the science of interpretation of dreams (*'ilm ta'wīl al-manāmāt*).

The philosophical sciences are divided into four categories: (i) the mathematical sciences (*al-riyādiyyāt*);<sup>180</sup> (ii) the logical sciences (*al-manṭiqiyyāt*); (iii) the physical or natural sciences (*al-ṭabī'iyyāt*); and (iv) the theological or divine sciences (*al-ilāhiyyāt*).<sup>181</sup> Mathematical sciences are subdivided into four parts: (i) arithmetic, (ii) geometry, (iii) astronomy and (iv) music.<sup>182</sup> Logical sciences consist of five kinds: (i) the *Isagoge*,<sup>183</sup>

(ii) Categories, (iii) Peri Hermeneias, (iv) Prior Analytics and (v) Posterior Analytics. In addition to these five treatises on logic that circulated among the Arabs, the Ikhwān add another three: Sophistical Refutations, Rhetoric and Poetics.<sup>184</sup>

Physical sciences, in turn, are divided into seven categories: (i) the principles that govern the bodies (*'ilm mabādi' al-jismaniyya*), that is, the knowledge of matter, form, time, space and motion; (ii) the science of the heavens and the universe (*'ilm al-samā' wa'l-'ālam, De Caelo/On the Heavens*), specifically knowledge of the substances of spheres and stars, the catalyst for their motions, the reason for the stationary character of the earth and so on; (iii) the science of generation and corruption (*'ilm al-kawn wa'l-fasad, De Generatione et Corruptione*), particularly the knowledge of the essential substances of the four elements, their transformation into each other because of the influence of higher forces, and the coming into existence of minerals, plants and animals; (iv) meteorology (*'ilm ḥawādith al-jaww*), the knowledge of the changes in weather in correlation to the positions of the stars; (v) mineralogy (*'ilm al-ma'ādin*); (vi) botany (*'ilm al-nabāt*) and (vii) zoology (*'ilm al-ḥayawān*).<sup>185</sup> The Ikhwān further add that medical and veterinary sciences (*'ilm al-ṭibb wa'l-baytara*), agriculture (*al-ḥarth*), husbandry (*al-nasl*) and all other crafts are subsumed within the natural sciences.<sup>186</sup>

*Al-'ulūm al-ilāhiyya* (the theological/divine sciences)<sup>187</sup> comprise five types: (i) knowledge of God, the attributes of His oneness, how He is the source of creation, how He causes generosity to overflow and how He grants existence;<sup>188</sup> (ii) knowledge of the spiritual world, which is the understanding of simple intellectual substances when they are in abstract forms and free from matter;<sup>189</sup> (iii) psychological sciences which encompasses the knowledge of the souls that pervade the heavenly bodies and nature to the center of the earth and how they move spheres and inhabit plants and animals, and also the manner of their resurrection after death;<sup>190</sup> (iv) politics which pertains to the prophetic manner of governing, a regal manner of governing, statecraft in general, individual management and personal

conduct<sup>191</sup> and (v) knowledge of the hereafter, which encompasses the ability to perceive the nature of resurrection and the manner in which the souls will rise from the bodies.<sup>192</sup>

It is worth noting that in their classification of the sciences and in an analysis of their philosophy of education, the Ikhwān pay special attention to trades, arts and crafts, commerce, agriculture and music, which is categorized under mathematics. The science of interpretation/hermeneutics also occupies a prominent place in their ideology. Furthermore, the Ikhwan state that instructing students in the arts and crafts should not be considered less important than instructing them in philosophy. The teacher of a craft is also called *ustādh* (master), the same term used for the teacher of abstract and advanced subjects. The Ikhwān mention that learning a craft is as meritorious as the pursuit of philosophy or any other science. They further add that the higher level of skill a craftsman acquires, the closer he comes to God, and the more refined he becomes in his craft, the more he resembles the Great Craftsman.<sup>193</sup> To further emphasize this point a tradition stating that God loves the craftsman who perfects his craft is ascribed to the Prophet.<sup>194</sup> It is for this very reason that philosophy is perceived as humanity's ability to imitate God.<sup>195</sup> The Ikhwān explain in further detail that "resemblance" (*al-tashabbuh*) pertains to a resemblance to God in knowledge, crafts and the imparting of goodness. For God is the most knowledgeable of all the *'ulamā'*, the wisest of all the *ḥukama'*, and the most skilled of all the craftsmen. The individual who becomes increasingly more adept in these characteristics will simultaneously move closer to Him.<sup>196</sup> In their organization of the citizens of their utopian state, the first rank is assigned to the artisans who have reached the age of maturity.<sup>197</sup>

Leaving aside certain similarities between the Ikhwān's classification of the sciences and that of al-Fārābī, there are some sharp differences among them. A detailed examination is beyond the scope of this study, however, the following observations should suffice. Al-Fārābī divides the known sciences of his day into eight categories, and addresses them in five chapters: (i)

the science of language (*'ilm al-lisān wa-ajzā'ih*); (ii) logic (*'ilm al-mantiq wa-ajzā'ih*); (iii) propaedeutics (*'ulūm al-ta'alīm*),<sup>198</sup> introduction to certain sciences like arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music, etc.; (iv) physical sciences and divine sciences (*al-'ilm al-ṭabī'i wa-ajzā'ih wa-fi'l-'ilm al-ilāhī wa-ajzā'ih*) and (v) political science with short accounts of Islamic jurisprudence and theology (*al-'ilm al-madani wa-ajzā'ih wa-fi 'ilm al-fiqh wa-'ilm al-kalām*).<sup>199</sup> Hence, it appears that physics and metaphysics occupy a central place in al-Fārābī's review of the sciences. With the discussion of metaphysics, the syllabus of the Hellenic sciences is complete except for politics, which the Ikhwān, al-Fārābī and the older peripatetic tradition categorize as ethics and political science. It deals with virtues and their relation to happiness, however, it also includes the political regimes most suited for the preservation of those virtues. It should be noted that logic occupies a much more important place immediately following that of the science of language in the system of al-Fārābī than it does in that of the Ikhwān.<sup>200</sup> It should be further noted that religious sciences, except jurisprudence, are totally absent from al-Fārābī's organization. Jurisprudence is very briefly described as the art of determining the correct religious beliefs and practices in regards to issues that the lawgiver did not address. It entails drawing an analogy between the unequivocal verses of scripture and the specific issue. Also contrary to the Ikhwān, al-Fārābī closes his discussion of political science with *'ilm al-kalām*, while this topic is completely absent from the *Rasā'il*.<sup>201</sup>

Let me digress for a moment to point out what al-Fārābī has to say about the last category. He states that the distinction between a *faqih* (jurist) and a *mutakallim* (theologian) is that the former ascertains the necessary conclusions from the lawgiver's text, while the latter defends the very premises established by the text of the scripture that are used by the *faqih* as the *uṣūl* (fundamentals). As chance would have it a person could combine both functions. In the remaining part of this section al-Fārābī presents views advocated by the theologians (*mutakallimun*).<sup>202</sup> It is correct that those views do not represent al-Fārābī's own views.

Nevertheless, one is surprised that his classification of knowledge ends on such a note.<sup>203</sup> The Ikhwān's classification of the sciences and their syllabus of education for citizens of their ideal state, on the other hand, are not only well-thought-out but also represent humanistic scholarship.

In his book *Islamic Education*, 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Ṭībawī remarks that Muslim philosophers paid very little attention to the philosophy of education. However, he believes that the Ikhwān's treatment of the subject is more sustained.<sup>204</sup> They state that the first four years of human life are for "the completion of nurture and gathering of strength," during which the infant, under the guidance of the parents, learns mainly through the senses and instinct. This initial stage is referred to as the *sinī al-tarbiya* (the years of upbringing). Conventional education, according to the Ikhwān, begins after the age of four. From that age until the age of puberty, the child acquires basic skills from a *mu'allim* (teacher, instructor) in the *maktab*.<sup>205</sup> Rational faculty emerges at the age of 15, and that is exactly the point at which the Ikhwān propose to take over the student's education. The Ikhwān's efforts for education, thenceforth, are mainly directed at the youth. They advise their brethren not to bother about the old and senile who have already acquired false beliefs, bad habits and repulsive morals. Youth, on the other hand, have healthy hearts, inquisitive minds, and discerning intellects. They follow the laws of the prophets and search for the secrets of the revealed books; not stubbornly clinging to one creed.<sup>206</sup> In order to illustrate their contention they argue that all the prophets were commissioned by God in their youth and that the elders of the community were the first to reject their message.<sup>207</sup> It is the youth who constitute a part of the first rank in the Ikhwān's hierarchy of citizenship in their utopian state.<sup>208</sup>

The relation between the teacher and his student is described as a spiritual one. In the 45th epistle, entitled "On the social intercourse with the Sincere Brethren," they state:

Know that [your] teacher (*ustādh*) is the begetter (*ab*) of your soul, and the cause of its evolution, and the essence of

its life, in the same way as your father is the begetter of your body, and the cause of its existence. Your father gives you your physical form, while your teacher gives you your spiritual form. This is because your teacher nourishes your soul with knowledge and instructs it with wisdom, and guides it to everlasting bliss, while your father brings you up to make a living in this transient world. Hence, O brother, invoke your Lord to grant you a teacher who is rightly guided and wise.<sup>209</sup>

Let me conclude this section with a tradition of the Prophet that is cited by the Ikhwān in the ninth epistle entitled "On the morals," where they extensively dealt with the virtues of seeking knowledge.<sup>210</sup> It states:

Seek knowledge because seeking knowledge is indeed a sign of those who stand in awe of their Lord. The pursuit of knowledge is worship, meditation over it is glorification of God, search for it is *jihād*, and instructing those who do not know is equivalent to *ṣadaqa* (charitable gift).<sup>211</sup>

### The allegorical debate between the animals and the humans before the King of the Jinn

The publication of a partial Urdu translation of this fable by Mawlawī Ikrām 'Alī in 1810 in Calcutta,<sup>212</sup> and the subsequent publication of the same fragment in its original Arabic two years later, also in Calcutta by Shaykh Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Yamanī,<sup>213</sup> marks the beginning of modern scholarship on the *Rasā'il*. Aloys Sprenger appropriately remarked that the publication of this story, particularly because of the novelty of its ideas and the peculiarity of its style, created a considerable sensation.<sup>214</sup> Since then the *Rasā'il* have attracted the curiosity of scholars, in the East and the West, and this attention has continued unabated to the present day. A critical review of the almost two centuries of modern scholarship on the *Rasā'il* is in itself a fascinating study, which I have addressed elsewhere.<sup>215</sup> However, I would like to point out that Patricia Crone, a controversial scholar and editor of a new series entitled "Makers of the Muslim World," correctly

recognizes the importance of the *Rasā'il* and their place in the history of Arabic science, philosophy and literature by allocating a volume to this encyclopedia.<sup>216</sup>

The fable has been translated into major Western languages. It addresses several motifs, namely, the political, religious and philosophical implications of life in Muslim society at that time. Also, Theodora Abel has analyzed psychological themes in the story,<sup>217</sup> while in the introduction to his English translation, Lenn Goodman has dealt with the ecological aspects.<sup>218</sup> Before analyzing it from a different angle, namely a humanistic perspective, it is necessary to review the setting of the debate and main arguments presented by both sides: the plaintiffs, that is, the animals, and the defendants, that is, the humans.

The story begins as follows. About 70 men of commerce, crafts, wealth and learning from diverse lands were shipwrecked, and cast on the shore of an island. Having found the place rich in fruit trees, fresh water, wholesome air, fine soil, vegetables, herbs and plants, and all sorts of animals—cattle, birds, and beasts of prey—living in peace and harmony with one another, they decided to settle there.<sup>219</sup> Soon they forced the cattle and some animals into their service, by riding them and burdening them with heavy loads as they used to do in their former lands. Some animals refused and fled to the forests and hills. The humans pursued and hunted them down, firmly convinced that the animals were like runaway slaves. When the animals learned that this was what the humans believed, they got together and decided to file a grievance against this harsh treatment, oppression and encroachment of their habitat in the court of the just and wise King of the *Jinn*. The King promptly gathered his *Jinnī* advisors who included the judges, jurists, philosophers, knowledgeable and experienced persons and summoned the humans to his court and asked them to substantiate their alleged claim against the animals.

The human spokesperson, a descendant of [the Prophet's uncle] 'Abbās, replied that he had religious and rational proof to corroborate his claim. He then presented several verses from the Qur'an. One of them I will recite here:

And He creates cattle: you derive warmth from them, and [various other] uses; and from them you obtain food; and you find beauty in them when you drive them home in the evenings and when you take them out to pasture in the mornings. And they carry your loads to [many] a place which [otherwise] you would be unable to reach without great hardship to yourselves... And [it is He who creates] horses and mules and asses for you to ride, as well as for [their] beauty.<sup>220</sup>

According to the humans, these verses indisputably demonstrated that the animals were created for the humans and for their sake and that the animals were their slaves and they were their masters. In his argument he also added that there were additional verses in the Qur'an, the Torah and Gospels to further substantiate the position he was propounding.

The spokesman of the animals, a mule, refuted the human's assertion by stating that there was nothing in those verses that supported their claim. Those verses, the mule asserted, merely indicate that God granted kindness and blessings to mankind. Citing a verse from the Qur'an, which states: "And has made the sun and the moon, both of them constant upon their courses, subservient [to His laws, so that they be of use] to you."<sup>221</sup> The mule exclaimed rhetorically: "Do the Children of Adam think that they too [i.e. the sun and the moon] are their slaves and chattels and that they are their masters?" The mule continued by addressing the *Jinnī* King:

"Your majesty, God created all His creatures in heaven and earth so that some will serve others, either to promote some good or to forbid some evil. God's subordination of animals to the Children of Adam is solely meant to assist them, not as they dupe themselves into believing and falsely claiming that they are our masters and we are their slaves."

The spokesperson of the humans simply reiterated his position. Hence, the King intervened and addressing the humans he said: "Only claims which are grounded in definite proof are acceptable

before this court. What proof, O human beings, have you of your claims?" The spokesperson for the humans replied:

"We have rational proofs and philosophical arguments. Our beautiful form, the erect construction of our bodies, our keen senses, the subtlety of our discrimination, our keen insight and superior intellect, all demonstrate that we are the masters and they are the slaves."<sup>222</sup>

The animal spokesperson snapped back:

"God wisely ordained that human form is better for humans and ours is for us. Since God created Adam and his children naked ... and gave them fruit from trees as their food and leaves of trees for their clothing ... He made humans stand erect so it would be easy for them to reach the fruit and leaves. By the same token, since God gave us the grass on the ground for our food, He made us face downward so it would be easy for us to reach it. This, not what the Children of Adam allege, is the reason God made them erect and us bent downward."<sup>223</sup>

The King intervened and asked: "What about when God said: 'Verily, We create man in the best conformation.'<sup>224</sup>

The spokesperson of the animals replied: "The heavenly books have interpretations (*ta'wilāt wa-tafsirāt*) which go beyond the literal meaning and those 'who are deeply rooted in knowledge' (*al-rāsikhūna fi'l-'ilm*)<sup>225</sup> know the true meaning, so let His Majesty, the King, ask *ahl al-dhikr*."<sup>226</sup> So the King asked the learned sage of the *Jinn* and He replied:

"The day God created Adam, the stars were at their zeniths, the signs of the zodiac were solid and square, the season was favorable ... hence, matter was given the finest form." The wise *jinni* added: "God's words have another meaning also. They mean, He made humans neither tall and thin nor short and square, but between the two extremes." The spokesperson of the animals immediately added: "God did the same for us. He did not make us tall and thin, nor short and squat, but in a proper proportion ... Their claim of acute perception and the powers of discernment are not unique,

for there are animals with superior senses and more precise sensitivity. The camel, for example, despite his long legs and neck and the elevation of his head in the air, finds his footing along the most arduous and treacherous pathways in the dark of night, something a human could never do without a torch, or a candle ... As for their claim of superiority in regards to intellect—we do not find the slightest trace of it. If they had such sophisticated minds they would not have ridiculed us and boasted about themselves of things which are neither of their own doing nor acquired through their own efforts, but are among the manifold gifts of God, to be recognized and given thanks for as acts of grace. The truly intelligent take pride only in things which are of their own doing ... As far as we can see the humans have no superiority to boast about, but only unfounded claims, unwarranted allegations, and groundless contentions."<sup>227</sup>

I think I have given you some sense of the original text, which is not only amusing but also enlightening. Time and space do not permit me to give more details, only a summary. Justifications for the humans' claims are attempted in all manners by various other representatives of mankind, such as a Jew, a Christian, a Zoroastrian from Persia, an Indian, and a Greek, but all those contentions are ultimately refuted by the animals at every moment. As pointed out above by the animal representative, humans' boasted powers of sensibility and discernment are exceeded in one species of the animals or another, except for one highly ambiguous gift, namely reason. The *Ikhwān* quite satirically argue that even this precious gift of reason is used by humans in defiance rather than in compliance with the dictates of reason. In other words, God-given reason affords humans the opportunity for heedlessness.

Herein lies the crux of the problem. According to the Qur'ānic *Weltanschauung*, as well as the intellectual principles upheld by the *Ikhwān* and outlined in the 33rd epistle, entitled "On the intellectual principles of the *Ikhwān*," the Universe was created by God with design, wisdom and order wherein everything is

connected by bonds of continuity. Order is explained by the fact that every created thing is endowed with a definite and defined nature. This nature not only allows everything to function in harmony but also defines their limits. The idea of placing restriction on everything is one of the most irrefutable points in both the cosmology and theology of the Qurʾān. Whereas the rest of nature automatically obeys God, human beings alone possess the choice to obey or to disobey. Moreover, human beings are viewed in the Qurʾān as rebellious and full of pride, attributing to themselves the characteristics of self-sufficiency.<sup>228</sup> The humans, in the dispute between themselves and the animals, set themselves apart, above and against the rest of nature. Obviously the humans are then the oppressors and the usurpers. This is the real source of the tension in the anthropocentric view projected by the Ikhwān, which motivated them to compose this fable. In other words, how can human abuse of animals and the destruction of the natural environments be morally justified? I think that the fable and its allegorical form gave the Ikhwān a degree of latitude to critique not only the socio-political conditions that prevailed in Muslim society at that time but also to comment on religion as practiced by the Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Indians, and Greeks. The role of a religious critic is assigned in the fable to *Ṣāhib al-ʿazīma* (literally, a person with determination), a high court dignitary and advisor to the King of the *Jinn*. Like a chief prosecutor, he always points out the shortcomings of the various human spokespersons and reprimands them.<sup>229</sup> The Ikhwān's commitment to the imperatives of sensibilities and moral justice calls upon them to regard the matter of humans' justification of their claim, both on religious and rational grounds, to be problematic. The parable, therefore, cannot be dismissed or treated simply as a futile intellectual exercise.

Before the Ikhwān provide us with a provisional resolution of the dilemma let me summarize the last session of the court, because it offers valuable clues to a solution. An orator from the *Hijāz* pleaded the last argument by saying:

"The promises of our Lord to us [i.e. the humans] that we will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment, admitted into Paradise ... [with its vivid description], are stated in some seven hundred odd verses of the Qurʾān, and are specifically related to us and not animals. This clearly indicates that we are the masters and the animals are our slaves."<sup>230</sup>

At that point the nightingale stood up and rejoined:

"Yes, it is true, O human, but also state the balance of the promise. O humans, you are also promised the torment of the grave, the interrogation by *Munkar* and *Nakir*, the terrors of the Reckoning Day, the rigorous accounting, the threat of entry into the scorching flames of Gehenna ... the drinking of foul water, and the eating from the Tree of *Zaqqūm*, hot as molten lava. Every promise of the Qurʾān is followed by a threat. All this is for you, O humans, while we are excluded from it. Just as we are promised no reward, we face no threat of punishment. We are content with our Lord's judgment in our case, neither for us nor against us ... The evidence between us and you, O human, is, therefore, balanced, our fates are equal. So what is the matter with you, O human, and all this boasting?"<sup>231</sup>

The *Hijāzī* demanded:

"How are we equal, when in either case [i.e. punishment or reward] we survive forever and ever? If we obey, we are with the prophets, Friends of God (*awliyāʾ Allāh*), the Imāms and the *Awṣiyāʾ*, Sages, the virtuous and the righteous ... who resemble the angels ... And even if we are condemned to punishment, still we will be rescued by the intercession of our Prophet."<sup>232</sup>

At that time the leaders of the animals and the *Jinnī* Sages all proclaimed:

"Now, at last, [O humans,] you have spoken the truth. Indeed, the examples you have given are something to boast about and something to strive for ... But, tell us, O community of humans, about the characteristics of those virtuous people and their way of life, if you are truthful, and state those things if you have knowledge thereof."<sup>233</sup>



Just then the entire gathering of humans fell silent, reflecting over what they had been asked. No one had an answer. Finally, a learned, experienced man of intelligence, culture, refinement, and insight, who was Persian by birth and upbringing, Muslim by faith,<sup>234</sup> Ḥanafī in ideology, Iraqi in culture, Hebrew (*'ibri*) in lore, Christian in manner, Damascene in piety, Greek in sciences, Indian in insight, Ṣūfī in conduct, angelic in character, and divine in thought—said:

“O just King of the *Jinn* and the community that has gathered together, know that those who are the Friends of God, the choicest of His creation and the best of His servants, have praiseworthy characters, pious acts, diverse learning, noble attributes, knowledge pertaining to God, angelic traits, holy and just conduct, and wondrous ways, which our tongues are weary to describe and no account can do justice to enumerate their ways of life and the virtues of their character.”

Then addressing the just King of the *Jinn*, the spokesperson continued: “What does your Majesty command with respect to these human strangers and animals?”<sup>235</sup>

So, the King of the *Jinn* delivered his judgment that the animals must be subject to the commands and prohibitions of the humans and serve them until the beginning of the new epoch.<sup>236</sup> It is worthy to note that in the ‘Āṭif Effendi, the oldest extant manuscript transcribed in 578/1182 and two other old manuscripts, Esad Effendi (numbers 3637 and 3638) the dispute ends without the judgment.

I would like to conclude that in the Neoplatonic cosmology of the *Ikhwān*, humans are at the top of the sublunary scheme and even better than some of the angels. According to the revealed scriptures, humans are the culmination of creation and God’s vicegerents on earth. Despite this lofty station their privilege is not absolute. Because humans are endowed with reason and responsibility, they are subject to the special graces of intercession and redemption. The *Ikhwān* assert that all human dynasties and empires rise and fall in accordance with God’s decrees and that

the concepts of *adwār* and *akwār*, that is, the conception of history as one of a series of cycles of prophecy, each cycle followed by a gradual decay leading to a new cycle, are applicable to the entire world.<sup>237</sup> Humanity’s hegemony on earth is, therefore, of limited duration. There are other spheres of life over which mankind has no control. The verdict announced in the *Jinnī* court is merely provisional until the current cycle of history ends.

### Conclusion

Intellectual movements become more comprehensible when they are studied in close reference to the socio-political forces that produce them. My reading of the *Rasā’il* and some of the major themes that I have analyzed in the foregoing pages clearly indicate that they were a product of a secretive religio-political movement and an intellectual organization of the late third/the beginning of the tenth century, whose goal was to supplant the Sunnī ‘Abbāsīd caliphate with a Shī‘ī imāmate. The brotherhood of Sincere Brethren and Faithful Friends (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ wa-Khullān al-Wafā’*) was a pseudonym assumed by the authors of this celebrated encyclopedia to conceal their true identity. They describe themselves as seekers of truth whose aim was to reform Muslim society from within. They entered into the ongoing debate, between the proponents of the imported Greek sciences and philosophy and the adherents of Islamic revelation, in which each side claimed to possess the truth. The authors of the *Rasā’il* combined the main tenets of the Shī‘ī faith, the need for and existence of a divinely sanctioned supreme authority, the Imām, with the validity of reason as a source of knowledge. Thus, they synthesized reason with revelation basing it on Neoplatonic cosmology and Shī‘ī doctrine and offered a new world order under the aegis of the Imām, who resembles Plato’s philosopher-king. They also formulated a model of an inclusive Islam with values of tolerance and understanding between different religions and cultures. Their so-called “liberal” interpretation of Islam was still rooted in the spirit of the Qur’ān, especially the themes

present in the verses 62 of *sūrat al-Baqara* and 69 of *sūrat al-Mā'ida*<sup>238</sup> and the verses 136 and 285 of *sūrat al-Baqara* and 84 of *sūrat Āl 'Imrān*.<sup>239</sup>

The question as to how the *Rasā'il* were received by their readers and their impact on subsequent thinkers is yet to be extensively explored. However, here is a brief glimpse. Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī (d. ca. 390/1000–01), nicknamed *al-Manṭiqī* (the Logician, for having written numerous commentaries on Aristotelian logic), states in *Šiwān al-ḥikma*, composed between 339/950–1 and 349/960–1, that the *Rasā'il* were current among people and were widely read.<sup>240</sup> He also quotes approvingly from them. Another reference, from the same time period, comes from Islamic Spain, which not only further demonstrates the *Rasā'il*'s popularity but also the swift movement of the books throughout the Muslim world. The author was Abu 'l-Qāsim Maslama b. al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Qurṭubī, born in Cordoba in 293/906 and died there in 353/964. In her article entitled "Plants, Mary the Copt, Abraham, Donkeys and Knowledge: Again on Bāṭinism during the Umayyad Caliphate in al-Andalus," Maribel Fierro states:

The *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* (=Picatrix), an astrological and magical work, and the *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*, an alchemical work, have been attributed to the mathematician Maslama al-Majrīṭī (d. ca. 398/1007), although the most frequent dates appearing in the mss of such works are the years 339–342/950–953 in the case of the *Rutba*, and 343–348/954–959 in the case of the *Ghāya*, which excludes authorship on the part of Maslama al-Majrīṭī ... Finally, in *Rutba* mention is made of some *Epistles* that are understood as referring to the *Epistles of the Pure Brethren (Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Šafā')*. Taking all this into consideration, I agree with Holmyard that the internal evidence of both the *Ghāya* and the *Rutba* indicates that they were written between 339/950 and 348/959. Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964) is the best candidate as their author.<sup>241</sup>

Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī also refers to the *Rasā'il* in his *Kitāb al-imtā' wa'l-mu'ānasa* and names four contemporary thinkers from

Bašra as the authors.<sup>242</sup> Abbas Hamdani has analyzed al-Tawḥīdī's story and demonstrated that the latter's concern was not to establish the authorship of the *Rasā'il*, but to malign Zayd b. Rifā'a, a man of letters and a close associate of the vizier, Ibn Sa'dān, in the latter's eyes. Al-Tawḥīdī thought that he could prove Zayd's unorthodox views by confirming that the latter was associated with the authors of the *Rasā'il* while he resided in Bašra. I have further elaborated on this issue elsewhere with a full English translation of the relevant passages from *Kitāb al-imtā' wa'l-mu'ānasa* and additional material.<sup>243</sup> The *Rasā'il* were read by Ibn Sīnā' (d. 428/1037) when he was young.<sup>244</sup> Unfortunately, all subsequent references to the *Rasā'il* in the works of al-Bayḥaqī (d. 565/1169–70),<sup>245</sup> Ibn al-Qifṭī (d. 646/1248),<sup>246</sup> Ibn al-'Ibrī (d. 685/1286), al-Shahrazūri (d. ca. 687/1288),<sup>247</sup> al-Šafadī (d. 764/1363)<sup>248</sup> and Ḥājji Khalīfa, also known as Kātib Čelebi (d. 1067/1657)<sup>249</sup> are nothing but variations on the story propounded by al-Tawḥīdī. The reception of the *Rasā'il* within the various circles of Ismā'īli *da'wa* is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Manuscript copies of the *Rasā'il* seem to be widely scattered. Leaving aside the copies in the private collections of the Bohra families in the Indian sub-continent, there are at least 14 complete copies of all four volumes in the libraries of Istanbul, Paris, London, and the Bodleian alone.<sup>250</sup> The oldest extant copy in the 'Āṭif Effendi library in Istanbul was transcribed in 578/1182.<sup>251</sup> This in itself testifies that the *Rasā'il* circulated widely in certain circles.

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, at the end of the fifth/eleventh century, understood very well that the threat of the Ismā'īlis and the *Rasā'il* was not merely political but also intellectual. He perceived that it was not simply Mu'tazilite rationalism, for in their synthesis the Ismā'īlis had gone far beyond to encompass the entire spectrum of scientific thought. They had integrated the Greek sciences and philosophy and their formal reasoning into one universal valid truth, synonymous with religious reality. Therefore, in addition to his *Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭiniyya*,<sup>252</sup> which is exclusively devoted to refuting the newly formulated doctrine of

ta'lim, that one must accept the absolute authority of the infallible Imām in religious faith, he refuted the Ismā'īlis in several other books. In some of those polemical works he loses his customary academic serenity and becomes almost shrill in his denunciation. Referring to the *Rasā'il* in his *Munqidh min al-dalāl* (The Savior from Error), which has been called al-Ghazālī's "Apologia pro doctrina sua," he states that the book of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* is really the refuse of philosophy (*hashw al-falsafa*) because their philosophy is based on the feeble philosophy of Pythagoras whose philosophy is the weakest of all philosophical doctrines since it had already been refuted by Aristotle.<sup>253</sup>

Finally, the attempts to reconcile reason and revelation in Islam did not succeed as demonstrated by the failure of the Mu'tazila, whatever their excesses might have been. Similarly the efforts of al-Fārābī at the popular level to make philosophy a part of Islamic education also failed. In the case of the *Rasā'il*, their Shī'i-Ismā'īli connection could not remain hidden. Moreover, since the Ismā'īlis were depicted as the *zanādiqa* (the godless) *par excellence*, their efforts were doomed to failure.

### Notes

- \* I would like to express my thanks to Eric Bordenkircher, a Ph.D. candidate in Islamic Studies, for carefully reading the final draft of this chapter. His comments and suggestions have helped to improve the text and articulate my thoughts on several issues.
- 1 'Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, "al-Naz'a al-insāniyya fi'l-fikr al-'arabī," in his *al-Insāniyya wa'l-wujūdiyya fi'l-fikr al-'arabī* (Cairo: Maktab al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1947), pp. 1-64; idem, "L'Humanisme dans la pensée Arabe," *Studia Islamica* 6 (1956), pp. 67-100. It should be noted that in his *Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry* (London, 1885), Charles Lyall referred to the early Islamic philologists as "the great Humanists." In his *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge: University Press, 1953; reprint of 1907), p. 32, R. A. Nicholson applauds Lyall's efforts.
  - 2 L. Gardet, *La Cité Musulmane: Vie Sociale et Politique*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1969), pp. 273-322.

- 3 M. Arkoun, "L'Humanisme arabe au IV<sup>e</sup>/X<sup>e</sup> siècle, d'après le *Kitāb al-Hawāmīl wal-Ṣawāmīl*," *Studia Islamica* 14 (1961), pp. 73-108; 15 (1961), pp. 63-87; idem, *Contribution à l'étude de l'humanisme arabe au IV<sup>e</sup>/X<sup>e</sup> siècle: Miskawayh (320/325-421)=(932/936-1030), Philosophe et Historien* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1970).
- 4 George Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West, with Special Reference to Scholasticism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), p. xix.
- 5 J. Kraemer, "Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: A Preliminary Study," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104 (1984), pp. 135-64; republished as supplement to his *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age*, 2nd revised ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992); see also Lenn Goodman, *Islamic Humanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- 6 Kraemer, "Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam," p. 140.
- 7 Franz Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam*, trans. from German by Emile and Jenny Marmorstein (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 1-5.
- 8 Martin Kramer, ed., *The Jewish Discovery of Islam: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lewis* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1999), p. viii.
- 9 Thomas Sizgorich, "Narrative and Community in Islamic Late Antiquity," *Past and Present*, no. 185 (2004), pp. 9-42.
- 10 Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A. D. 200-1000*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p. 11.
- 11 Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam*, p. 348.
- 12 G. Levi Della Vida, "Dominant Ideas in the Formation of Islamic Culture," in *The Crozer Quarterly*, 21 (1944), pp. 207-16.
- 13 Ismail K. Poonawala, "Modern Scholarship in Polemical Garb: Two Centuries of Research on the *Rasā'il ikhwān al-ṣafā'*," unpublished study.
- 14 *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1961), p. 1100. See also *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language: The Unabridged Edition* (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 691; *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1973), s.v. Humanistic Scholarship, History of (or vol. 8, pp. 1170-83); *The Encyclopedia*

- of Religion, ed. M. Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), s.v. Humanism (or vol. 6, pp. 511–15).
- 15 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. Humanistic Scholarship, History of; *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, s.v. Humanism.
- 16 All the published editions of the *Rasā'il* (Bombay, Cairo and Beirut) list a total of 52 epistles, while all of the 13 internal references in the text of the *Rasā'il* state that the total number of epistles is 51. So, what is the source of this discrepancy? The *fihrist al-rasā'il* in the 'Āṭif manuscript ('Āṭif library, Istanbul, Turkey), the oldest extant complete copy transcribed in 578/1182, lists 51 epistles, which confirms the internal evidence. The discrepancy seems to have stemmed from counting two epistles in the first volume (on the mathematical sciences) as two separate epistles or one epistle. In published editions the 12th and 13th epistles are regarded as two separate epistles, while both are counted as one in the 'Āṭif manuscript.
- 17 P. Henry, "La Dernière Parole de Plotin," *Studi classici e orientali* 2 (Pisa, 1953), pp. 113–20 as cited by Armstrong in A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 215.
- 18 A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus: An Analytical and Historical Study* (Amsterdam: Adolf Hakkert, 1967).
- 19 A. H. Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, p. 222.
- 20 Cristina D'Ancona, "Greek into Arabic: Neoplatonism in Translation," in Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 10–31; it sums up the salient features of late ancient philosophy and the transmission of Neoplatonic philosophy to the Arabic-speaking world. The Pythagorean features, such as metaphysics of number with respect to the One, at the apex of reality, mathematics and astronomico-astrological considerations, and moral religious preoccupation are obvious throughout the *Rasā'il*, especially in the epistles 1, 3, 5, 32, 33 and 52. See also Yves Marquet, *Les Frères de la pureté* (Paris, 2006); and Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 163.
- 21 Muhsin Mahdi, "The Rational Tradition in Islam," in Farhad Daftary, ed., *Intellectual Traditions in Islam* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2000), p. 49.

- 22 A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 195–268.
- 23 Mahdi, "The Rational Tradition in Islam," p. 50. About Aristotle's concept of One, Sir David Ross (*Aristotle*, London: University Paperbacks, 1964), p. 182, states: "The prime mover is not only form and actuality, but life and mind, and the term God, which has not so far appeared, begins to be applied to it."
- 24 The cosmology is described in the 32nd epistle, entitled "On the intellectual principles of the existing beings according to the Pythagoreans," *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa-Khullān al-Wafā'* (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt wa-Dār Ṣādir, 1957), vol. 3, pp. 178–98; hereinafter referred to as *Rasā'il*. This paper was written and completed in March 2007; hence no reference is given to the subsequent Arabic critical edition with English translation published by Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies. For details see Yves Marquet, *La philosophie des Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'*, nouvelle édition augmentée (Paris: S.É.H.A., 1999), pp. 49–218. This is not the place to note Ismā'īlī adjustments to Neoplatonism, however, the reader is referred to Paul Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Ismail Poonawala, ed., *Kitāb al-iftikhār* by Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq al-Sijistānī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2000), English introduction.
- 25 Qur'ān 95:4; A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), vol. 2, p. 343. I have changed Arberry's translation of "man" for the Arabic *insān* to "human beings," consistent with my translation of this term throughout this chapter. In his *The Message of the Qur'ān* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980, p. 961), Muhammad Asad translated *fī aḥsanī taqwīm*<sup>10</sup> as "in the best conformation." In the footnote he explains that everything God creates is formed in accordance with what it is meant to be. For the hierarchy of creation in Islam see Sachiko Murata and William Chittick in *The Vision of Islam* (New York: Paragon House, 1994), pp. 128–31.
- 26 Genesis 1:26, 27; 2:7. *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 380; vol. 3, p. 112; it states: إِنَّ الْبَارِئَ تَعَالَى لَمَّا خَلَقَ الْجَسَدَ [يعني فطر آدم] وَسَوَّاهُ، وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِهِ وَأَحْيَاهُ. In *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, p. 141, it states: نَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِ قَدْسِهِ، وَأَتَمَّهُ بِكَلِمَتِهِ، وَعَلَّمَهُ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ... وَجَعَلَ لَهُ الْعَقْلَ الْعَاقِلَ ... وَأَخْرَجَ سَائِرَ الْمَوْجُودَاتِ مِنَ الْمَعَادِنِ وَالنَّبَاتِ وَالْحَيَوَانَاتِ إِلَيْهِ لِيُدَبِّرَهَا وَيَسُوقَ إِلَيْهِ مَنَافِعَهَا وَيُدْفَعُهَا عَلَى مَا يَكُونُ بِهِ صَلَاحُهَا ... In *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 462, it states:

- لأن الباري تعالى خلق الإنسان في أحسن تقويم، وصوّره أكمل صورة، وجعل صورته مرآة لنفسه ليرى فيها صورة العالم الكبير.
- 27 *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pp. 297–8, 300–2, 306.
- 28 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 226, 337–8.
- 29 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 477.
- 30 It states:  
 أنها [النفس] جوهرة روحانية سماوية بورتانية حية بذاتها، علامة بالقوة، فقالة بالطبع، قابلة للتعاليم، فقالة في الأحسام ... متقمة للأجسام الحيوانية والنباتية إلى وقت معلوم، ثم أنها تاركة هذه الأحسام ومفارقة لها، راجعة إلى عنصرها ومعدنها ومبدئها كما كانت ...  
*Rasā'il*, vol. 1, p. 260; see also *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, p. 294; vol. 2, p. 380; vol. 3, pp. 39–40.
- 31 *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, p. 40. Miskawayh states that life is of two kinds: bodily life (*ḥayāt badaniyya*) and spiritual life (*ḥayāt nafsīyya*). An ignorant person's life is of the former type while the life of a learned one is of the latter type. Al-Tawḥīdī and Miskawayh, *al-Hawāmil wa'l-shawāmil*, eds. Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad Ṣāqir (Cairo: Lajnat al-ta'lif wa'l-tarjama, 1951), pp. 284–5.
- 32 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 122. The Arabic reads:  
 فاجتهد يا أخي في طلب المعارف والعلوم، واسلك مسلك الربانيين والأخبار الذين أسلموا. فعمل نفسك تنته من نوم الغفلة، وتستيقظ من رعدة الجهالة، وتصفو من كدر أوساخ الطبيعة، وتفتح لها عين البصيرة، فظهم أسرار كعب النبوة، وممرورات النواميس الإلهية. فعند ذلك يتوحيها لها فيقول إمام الملايكة. واعلم يا أخي أن نفسك ملك بالقوة، ويمكن أن تصير ملكاً بالفعل إن أنت سلكت مسلك الأنبياء وأصحاب النواميس الإلهية، وعملت بوصاياهم المذكورة في كتبهم، المفروضة في سنن شرائعهم. وأن نفسك أيضاً شيطان بالقوة، يمكن أن تصير يومئذ شيطاناً بالفعل إن أنت سلكت مسلك الأشرار والكفار.
- 33 A. J. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1965), p. 7.
- 34 Muhsin Mahdi, "The Rational Tradition in Islam," p. 43; idem, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 29–46.
- 35 Mahdi, "The Rational Tradition in Islam," p. 44.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 48. Mahdi states that in fact, the question of the leadership of the Islamic community was one of the primary questions, if not the primary question, that led to the rise of Islamic theology. The legal qualifications of rulers continued to be discussed for a long time, but the rulers themselves had long since ceased to act as worthy successors of the Prophet. Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy*, pp. 20–3.
- 37 Mahdi, "The Rational Tradition in Islam," p. 53; idem, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy*, pp. 47–62.
- 38 The *Rasā'il*'s philosophy, according to their own statement, was derived from Neo-Pythagoreanism and Neoplatonism and all

- those sources were translated into Arabic by the translators in the circle of al-Kindī.
- 39 In his *Philosophy of Plato*, al-Fārābī presents Plato who is neither mystical nor metaphysical but who is primarily political. *Timaieus* is not a work on cosmology but a political work meant to instruct the citizens in correct opinions. Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy*, p. 56.
- 40 *Plato: The Collected Dialogues including the Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and H. Cairns with Introduction and Prefatory Notes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. xxiii.
- 41 Arberry, *Revelation and Reason*, p. 8.
- 42 *Plato: The Collected Dialogues, Laws, Book X*. For the analysis of Book X see A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1964), pp. 489–92.
- 43 For the discussion of the issue as to why a prophet is needed for the foundation of the law, see Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958), pp. 53–64.
- 44 It is more than an account of the creation of the universe, it is an explanation. *Plato: The Collected Dialogues, Timaeus*; for its analysis see Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work*, pp. 436–62.
- 45 *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, p. 18; in Arabic it reads:  
 في بيان طاقة الإنسان في المعارف وإلى أي حد هو ويبلغه من العلوم، وإلى أي غاية ينتهي، وإلى أي شرف يرتقى.
- 46 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 18–19.
- 47 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 19.
- 48 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 29.
- 49 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 157; it reads:  
 فأنا من قد تعلم علم الشريعة وعرف أحكام الدين وتحقق أمر التاموس، فإن نظره في علم الفلسفة لا يرضه بل يزيده في علم الدين تحقّقاً، وفي أمر المعاد استبصاراً ... بيقيناً.
- 50 It is interesting to note in this respect Ibn Rushd's treatise *Faṣl al-maḡāl wa-taqrīr mā bayn al-sharī'a wa'l-ḥikma min al-ittiṣāl* (The decisive treatise, determining the connection between the law and wisdom). In the opening statement Ibn Rushd states that his goal is to investigate, from the perspective of *sharī'a*, whether reflection upon philosophy and the science of logic is permitted, prohibited or commanded. His arguments are quite similar to those advocated by the Ikhwān throughout their epistles. Averroës, *Decisive Treatise & Epistle Dedicatory*, trans., with introduction and notes by Charles E. Butterworth (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2001).
- 51 *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, pp. 29–30. The Arabic reads:

- ثم اعلم أن العلوم الحكيمية والشريعة النبوية كلاهما أمران إلهيان يتفقان في الغرض المقصود منهما الذي هو الأصل، ويختلفان في الفروع. وذلك أن الغرض الأقصى من الفلسفة هو ما قبل إنها التشبه بالإله بحسب طاقة البشر كما يتنا رسائلنا أحسن وعمدتها أربع محصل: أولها معرفة حقائق الموجودات ... وهكذا الغرض من النبوة والناموس هو تهذيب النفس الإنسانية وإصلاحها وتخليصها من جهنم، عالم الكون الفساد، وإيصالها إلى الجنة.
- 52 Hamid Enayat, "An Outline of the Political Philosophy of the *Rasā'il* of the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*", in S. H. Nasr, ed., *Ismā'īlī Contributions to Islamic Culture* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977), pp. 25-49.
- 53 See Paul Kraus, "Raziana I: La conduite du philosophe, traité d'éthique d'Abū Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī," *Orientalia* 4 (1935), pp. 300-34; idem, "Raziana II: Extraits du *kitāb a'lām al-nubuwwa* d'Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī," *Orientalia* 5 (1936), pp. 35-6, 358-78; Isma'il Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature* (Malibu, Calif.: Undena Publications, 1977), pp. 36-9.
- 54 See for example *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 186-8, 189. Enayat, "An Outline of the Political Philosophy of the *Rasā'il*," p. 27.
- 55 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 187, 190; Enayat, "An Outline of the Political Philosophy of the *Rasā'il*," p. 28. In his introduction to *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1971, p. xxviii), Richard McKeon states that according to the traditional order of the books—which has not, however, found favor with recent scholars—*Politics* would close with the consideration of the conditions of revolution in Book V (which was previously Book VIII), and such a conclusion would be dialectically appropriate, for revolutions occur when the order of the state no longer fits the conditions of its citizens.
- In his *al-Siyāsa al-shar'iyya* (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1951), written following the Mongol sack of Baghdad, Ibn Taymiyya was the first to have introduced a theory of political rebellion in the medieval Sunni discourse. He states that if a ruler acts against the interests of Islam, not only undermining such a regime is warranted, but its overthrow is also justified. For a systematic examination of the idea and treatment of political resistance and rebellion in Islamic law, see Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion & Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 56 Enayat, "An Outline of the Political Philosophy of the *Rasā'il*," p. 32. The point that social organization and mutual help among members of human organizations are essential for attaining happiness in this world and the next is reiterated several times. For example see, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pp. 99-100.

- 57 Bernard Lewis, "Siyāsa," in A. H. Green, ed., *In Quest of Islamic Humanism: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Memory of Mohamed al-Nowaihi* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1984), pp. 3-14.
- 58 *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pp. 273-4; Enayat, "An Outline of the Political Philosophy of the *Rasā'il*," p. 33. Al-Fārābī's use of the term *siyāsa* carries almost the same meaning. See al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulum*, ed. 'Uthmān Amīn, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjū al-Miṣriyya, 1968), p. 125; English tr. Fauzi Najjar, "Alfarabi: The Enumeration of the Sciences," in Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, eds., *Medieval Political Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 24.
- 59 Enayat has uniformly translated the term *siyāsa* as politics, which is incorrect.
- 60 Enayat, "An Outline of the Political Philosophy of the *Rasā'il*," pp. 34-9.
- 61 *Al-Risāla al-jāmi'a al-mansūba li'l-ḥakīm al-Majrīfī, wa-hiya taj Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa-Khullān al-Wafā'*, ed. Jamīl Ṣalība (Damascus: Maṭbū'at al-Majma' al-'ilmī al-'Arabī, 1949), vol. 1, pp. 439-45.
- 62 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 18, 171. It states:  
 كنا نياتا في كهف أينا آدم مدة من الزمان ... حتى جاءت وقت الميعاد بعد تفوق في البلاد في مملكة صاحب الناموس الأكبر، وشاهدنا مدينتنا الروحانية المرتفعة في الهواء ... وبنينا مدينة فاضلة روحانية، ويكون بناء هذه المدينة في مملكة صاحب الناموس الأكبر الذي يملك النفوس والأجساد ...  
 In Ismā'īlī doctrine he is a lawgiver prophet who brings new *sharī'a*, abrogates the previous *sharī'a* and initiates a new cycle (*dawr*) of hierohistory. Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), *passim*.
- 63 The Arabic reads:  
 في ماهية الناموس الإلهي وشرائط النبوة وكيفية خصائصهم ومذاهب الرتابين والآلهيين.  
 Fazlur Rahman states that the Muslim philosophers' attempt to formulate the theory of revelation, or the theory of prophecy was quite conscious and deliberate. He further adds that every detail of this elaborate theory has its source in Greek ideas, however, the intricate eclectic elaboration is, of course, new. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, p. 64.
- 64 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 124; it reads:  
 اعلم أيها الأخ، أتدرك الله وإيماناً بروح منه، أن الحيوانات زينة الأرض، كما أن الكواكب زينة السماء، وأن أتم الحيوانات هيئة وأكملها صورة وأشرفها تركيباً هو الإنسان، وأفضل الإنسان هم العقلاء، وأخيار العقلاء هم العلماء، وأعلى العلماء درجة وأرفعهم منزلة هم الأنبياء، عليهم السلام، ثم بعدهم في الرتبة

- الفلاسفة الحكماء. والفريقان قد اجتمعا على أنّ الأشياء كلّها معلولة، وأنّ الباري، عزّ وجلّ وتقدّس، هو علّتها ومقتضاها ومبدعها ومقتضاها ومكتلها ...
- 65 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 125; it states:  
 أن النبوة هي أعلى درجة وأرفع رتبة ينتهي إليها حال البشر تماماً يلي رتبة الملائكة. وأن تمامها في مست وأربعين خصلة من فضائل البشرية: الأولى هي الرؤيا الصادقة.
- 66 In his book *al-Fawz al-aṣghar* (ed. Ṣāliḥ 'Aḍīma. [Paris]: al-Dār al-'Arabiyya li'l-kitāb, 1987; French tr. Roger Arnaldez, *Le Petit Livre du Salut* ([Paris]: Maison Arabe du Livre, 1987), Miskawayh has devoted the third issue to the question of prophecy. He discusses various modes of revelation including the faculty of imagination and has assigned a separate section to the previously cited tradition.  
 The tradition transmitted by al-Bukhārī and Muslim states: "A good vision (*al-ru'yā al-ṣāliḥa*) is one forty-sixth of prophecy." Bukhārī transmitted another tradition on the authority of 'Ā'isha, which states that the Prophet's mission began with "true visions," which came to him in his sleep and he said that they were like "the breaking of the light of dawn." Bukhārī, *Matn Bukhārī bi-ḥāshiyat al-Sindī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1978), vol. 4, pp. 207-8; Tabrizī, *Mishkāt al-maṣābiḥ*, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (Damascus: Manshūrāt al-maktab al-Islāmī, 1381/1961), vol. 2, p. 528; English tr. J. Robson, *Mishkāt al-Masabih* (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1975), vol. 2, p. 962; Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His life based on the earliest sources* (London: Islamic Texts Society, 1983), p. 43. "A true vision" also occurs in the stories of some prophets, especially the story of Joseph in the Qur'ān. Unfortunately, the remaining 45 qualities are not listed in the traditions. See also al-Tawḥīdī and Miskawayh, *al-Hawāmīl wa'l-shawāmīl*, pp. 125-6.
- 67 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 125; it states:  
 إذا اجتمعت هذه الخصال في واحد من البشر في دور من أدوار القرات في وقت من الزمان، فإن ذلك الشخص هو المبعوث وصاحب الزمان والإمام للناس ما دام حياً. فإذا بلغ الرسالة ... ودون التنزيل، ولوح التأويل، وأحكم الشريعة ... وأقام السنة، وآلف شمل الأمة، ثم توفّي ... بقيت تلك الخصال في أمته وراثته منه.  
 The passage strikes a chord with Weber's theory of charisma and the crucial issue of succession when the personal basis of charismatic authority is removed by the death of the Prophet. Bryan Turner, *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 79-80, 83-4. Although the Ikhwān state that they have elucidated the remaining 45 qualities in a separate epistle, they are not to be found in the epistles except for 26 qualities enumerated separately in the same epistle.

- 68 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 125. The Arabic reads:  
 وإن اجتمعت تلك الخصال في واحد من أمته، أو مجلّها، فهو الذي يصلح أن يكون خليفته في أمته بعد وفاته. فإن لم يتفق أن يجتمع تلك الخصال في واحد لكن تكون منفردة في جماعتهم، اجتمعت تلك الجماعة على رأي واحد، وأتلفت قلوبهم على عجة بعضهم بعضاً، وتعاضدت على نصرة الدين، وحفظ الشريعة، وإقامة السنة، وحمل الأمة على منهاج الدين، دامت لهم الدولة في دينهم ووجبت الفقى لهم في أحوالهم. وإن تفرقت تلك الأمة بعد وفاة نبيها، واختلفت في منهاج الدين نشئت شمل ألفتهم، وفسد عليهم أمر آخرتهم وزالت عنهم دولتهم.  
 Al-Fārābī states that it is difficult to find all those qualities [the 12 qualities described below] united in one person. He adds, a man endowed with those qualities will be found one at a time only, such a man being very rare. Therefore, if there exists a man who fulfills six or five of the aforementioned qualities, excluding the gift of visionary prophecy, he will be the sovereign. Richard Walzer, ed. and trans., *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's Mabādī' arā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, A revised text with introduction, translation, and commentary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 48-51.
- 69 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 128; it reads:  
 أن الرياضة نوعان: جسماني وروحاني. فالرياضة الجسمانية مثل رياضة الملوك والجبارة الذين ليس لهم سلطان إلا على الأحكام والأجساد بالقهر والغلبة والجور والظلم ... وأما الرياضة الروحانية فتعلم رياضة أصحاب الشرائع الذين يملكون النفوس والأرواح بالعدل والإحسان ...
- 70 *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 128. Norman Brown states: "It is in terms of prophecy, not incarnation, and therefore in terms of theophany or epiphany that Islam envisages the Divine Humanity: 'Islam without in any way overlooking the limited and weak aspect of human nature does not consider man in his aspect as a perverted will but essentially as a theomorphic being who as the vicegerent (*khalifa*) of God on earth is the central theophany (*tajalli*) of God's Names and Qualities'." (*Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 53).
- 71 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 129; it states:  
 الشريعة الإلهية هي جبلّة روحانية تبدو من نفس جزئية في جسد بشري بقوة عقلية تفيض عليها من النفس الكلية بإذن الله تعالى في دور من الأدوار والقدرات ... لتجذب بها النفوس الجزئية وتخلصها من أجساد بشرية ...  
 See also Marquet, *La philosophie des Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'*, pp. 501-8.
- 72 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 129-30. My translation is not literal, but truthful to its meaning.
- 73 Al-Fārābī, *Mabādī' arā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, pp. 246-9.
- 74 M. Mahdi, "Al-Fārābī's Imperfect State," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110 (1990), pp. 691-726.
- 75 *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, including the letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University

- Press, 1971), p. 576. Plato's *Republic* (*Kitāb al-siyāsa*) and *Laws* (*Kitāb al-nawāmīs*) were translated by Ḥunayn b. Iṣḥāq, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. Riḍā Tajaddud (Tehran: Maktabat al-Asadī wa-Maktabat al-Ja'farī, 1971), p. 306; English tr. B. Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), vol. 2, p. 592. For the translation movement of the ninth century see Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsī Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 175-86. A commentary on *The Republic* was used by al-Fārābī and it constitutes the main part of Ibn Rushd's commentary. *ET*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. Aflātūn, by Walzer; idem, "On the Legacy of the Classics in the Islamic World," in *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1963), p. 31. It is obvious that the list of the 12 inborn qualities of the ruler of the perfect state originate with Plato from the opening chapter of the sixth book of his *Republic*.
- In his *Kitāb taḥṣīl al-sa'āda* (Attainment of Happiness) al-Fārābī lists briefly those 12 qualities in a slightly different order and refers to Plato's *Republic*. See *Kitāb taḥṣīl al-sa'āda*, ed. Ja'far Āl Yāsīn (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1981), p. 95; English tr. M. Mahdī, "Alfarabi: The Attainment of Happiness," in *Medieval Political Philosophy*, p. 80. In his *Kitāb al-milla wa-nuṣūṣ ukhrā*, ed. Muḥsin Mahdī (Beirut: Dār al-Machreq, 1968), p. 72, al-Fārābī also refers to Plato's *Republic*. Plato dedicated a significant part of *The Republic* and the *Laws* to the importance of moral training in early childhood, see Walzer, *Al-Fārābī on the Perfect State*, pp. 444-5.
- 76 Al-Kulīnī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfi*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1388), vol. 1, *kitāb al-ḥujja*; al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyya*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1966), p. 6; Abū Ya'la al-Farrā', *al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyya*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamid al-Faqī, 2nd ed (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1966), pp. 20-2.
- 77 Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, pp. 11-14, 30-1, 36. Rahman states that the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*) is the central principle on which the Muslim philosophers base their explanation of the inner, psychological process of revelation. Al-Kindī uses three terms: *al-quwwa al-muṣawwira*, *quwwat al-tawahhum* and *quwwat al-takhayyul* and equates all three with the Greek *al-fantāsiyya*. Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il al-Kindī*, ed. Muḥammad

- 'Abd al-Hādī Abū Rīda (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1950-3), vol. 1, pp. 167, 284, 295.
- 78 Mahdī explains why the faculty of imagination is considered lower than the very act of revelation by al-Fārābī. He (*Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy*, p. 162) states:  
Although Alfarabi is not willing to enter into detail on how revelation or prophecy takes place, he asserts that it is not prophecy (defined as the overflow of the divine mind to the [power of] imagination [without making it quite clear whether the overflow is from the divine mind or from reason or from the illumination itself] but revelation (defined as the overflow of the divine mind to reason) that is the vehicle for the achievement of a human being's highest perfection and for the excellence of the city he founds and rules.
- 79 Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il al-Kindī*, vol. 1, pp. 372-3; it states:  
... العلم الإلهي بلا طلب ولا تكلف ولا بجيلة بشرية ولا زمان، كعلم الرسل، صلوات الله عليهم، الذي خلقها الله، جلّ وتعالى علواً كبيراً، أنه بلا طلب ولا تكلف ولا بحيث ولا بجيلة بالرياضات والمنطق ولا برمان، بل مع إرادته، جلّ وتعالى، بتطهير أنفسهم وإثارتها للحق بتأييده وتسدده وإلهامه ورسالاته. فإن هذا العلم خاصة للرسل، صلوات الله عليهم، دون البشر ...
- 80 Ibn Sīnā', *Avicenna's De Anima* (Arabic Text): *Being the Psychological part of Kitāb al-Shifā'*, ed. Fazlur Rahman (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 173, 249-50, 276-7, 292-3; Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, pp. 14, 20, 31-45.
- 81 *ET*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. al-Rāzī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā', by L. Goodman.
- 82 Gabriel is referred to in the Qur'ān as an agent of revelation, see Qur'ān 2:97; 26:192-5.
- 83 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 136; it states:  
واعلم أن من إحدى الخصال التي يضعها صاحب الشريعة أن لا ينسب إلى ربه واجتهاده وقوته شيئاً مما يقول ويفعل ويأمر وينهى في وضع الشريعة، لكنه ينسبها إلى الوساطة التي بينه وبين ربه من الملائكة التي تروحي إليه في أوقات غير معلومة. وأما الحكماء والفلاسفة إذا استخرجوا علماً من العلوم، وألفوا كتاباً، أو استخرجوا صنعة من الصناعات ... أو دبروا سياسة، نسبوا ذلك إلى قوة أنفسهم واحتياجاتهم وجسدة رأيهم ...
- 84 *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 261-2. In fifth- to sixth-century Athens, the peak of the philosophical curriculum was no longer metaphysics, but theology, i.e. a philosophical discourse about the divine principles, whose sources lie in the revelations of late paganism, in Plato's dialogues, etc. Referring to this phenomenon C. D'Ancona, "Greek into Arabic: Neoplatonism in Translation," p. 16, states that philosophy, insofar as it celebrates the truly divine principles of the visible cosmos, is prayer. See also A. C. Lloyd, "The Later



- Neoplatonists," in A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 272–325.
- 85 This definition of philosophy occurs several times in the *Rasā'il* and *al-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, vol. 1, pp. 92–123. In his epistle entitled "On the first philosophy," al-Kindī defines philosophy as "the knowledge of the realities of things according to human capacity." In another epistle, "On the definition of things," he defines philosophy as "imitation of God's actions according to human capacity," or "philosophy is the man's knowledge of himself." He comments that the latter is extremely noble with profound meaning. The Arabic reads:
- إن أعلى الصناعات الإنسانية منزلة، وأشرفها مرتبة، صناعة الفلسفة التي حدّتها علم الأشياء بحقائقها بقدر طاقة الإنسان... إن الفلسفة هي التشبه بأفعال الله تعالى بقدر طاقة الإنسان... إن الفلسفة علم الأشياء الأبدية الكلية، إتيانها وماتيتها وعللها، بقدر طاقة الإنسان... الفلسفة معرفة الإنسان نفسه.
- The phrase: "The Liber de Causis (Kalām fi maḥḍ al-khayr): A Study of Medieval Neoplatonism," ed. and trans. by Richard Taylor (Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the University of Toronto, 1981), p. 236. See also al-Kindī, *Rasā'il al-Kindī*, vol. 1, pp. 97, 172 and 173.
- 86 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 261–3, 268.
- 87 Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur'ān al-karīm bi-ḥāshiyat al-Muḥaḥaf al-sharīf* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1987), s.v. *al-albāb*.
- 88 Ibid., s.v. *tatafakkarūn, yatafakkarūn*.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 Ibid., s.v. *yatafakkarūn*.
- 91 Ibid., s.v. *ta'qilūn*.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Ibid., s.v. *ya'qilūn*.
- 94 Ibid., s.v. *yatahdhakarūn*.
- 95 Basing his argument on several verses of the Qur'ān, Arberry has argued that a rational discussion of religious truths was opened by the prophets. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason*, pp. 12–15.
- 96 *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), s.v. Reason, by Henry Leroy Finch.
- 97 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 180, it states:
- دين الأنبياء دينٌ واحدٌ ومسلكتهم جميعاً مسلكتٌ واحدةٌ، ومقصدهم مقصدٌ واحدٌ، وغرضٌ واحدٌ وإن اختلفت شرائعهم.
- 98 Qur'ān 42:15; translation is by M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān*, p. 742.

- 99 It states: "We make no distinction between any of them [i.e. we regard them all as true prophets of God]." See Qur'ān 2:136, 285; 3:84; M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān*, p. 28.
- 100 It states: "Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return: and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ." Qur'ān 5:48; M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān*, pp. 153–4.
- 101 Qur'ān 2:62; 5:69.
- 102 Alludes to the Qur'ān 80:15–16. It refers to the "preserved tablet" (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*), kept pure and uncorrupted from the hands of evil spirits, and touched only by the angels. It was the source of all revealed books. Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, n.d.), vol. 30, p. 34; al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-Sayyid Ḥāshim al-Rasūlī al-Maḥallātī (Sharikat al-Ma'ārif al-Islāmiyya, 1379 [1959–60]), vol. 5, p. 438.
- 103 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 41–2, it states:
- ينبغي لإخواننا، أيدهم الله تعالى، أن لا يعادوا علماً من العلوم، أو يهجرُوا كتاباً من الكتب، ولا يتعضبوا على مذهب من المذاهب، لأن رأينا ومذهبنا يستغرق المذاهب كلها ويجمع العلوم جميعها، وذلك أنه هو النظر في جميع الموجودات بأسرها الحسية والعقلية، من أولها إلى آخرها، ظاهرها وباطنها، جليتها وخبئيتها، بعين الحقيقة من حيث هي كلها من مبدأ واحد، وعلّة واحدة، ونفس واحدة... أن علومنا مأخوذة من أربعة كتب: أحدها الكتب المصنفة على السنة الحكماء والفلاسفة من الرياضيات والطبيعات؛ والآخر الكتب المنزلة التي جاءت بها الأنبياء، صلوات الله عليهم، مثل التوراة والإنجيل والفرقان وغيرها من صحف الأنبياء المأخوذة معانيها بالوحي من الملائكة، وما فيها من الأسرار الخفية؛ والثالث الكتب الطبيعية، وهي صور أشكال الموجودات بما هي عليه الآن من تركيب الأفلاك، وأقسام البروج، وحركات الكواكب...؛ والرابع الكتب الإلهية التي لا يمسه إلا المطهرون الملائكة التي هي بأيدي سفرة كرام بررة، وهي جواهر النفوس وأجناسها وأنواعها... .
- 104 See for example *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, p. 145; vol. 4, pp. 167–8, where the aforementioned things are summarized, p. 283; vol. 3, p. 246; vol. 4, p. 42.
- 105 *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, pp. 306–7.
- 106 *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 307.
- 107 *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pp. 156–7.
- 108 I. R. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwan al-Ṣafā')* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 54–5.
- 109 *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, pp. 284, 367; vol. 3, p. 161.
- 110 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 168.

- 111 Stanley Lane-Poole, *Studies in a Mosque* (Beirut: Khayats, 1966), p. 207.
- 112 For references see Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 126, n. 159. The story is cited in the *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 291–2.
- 113 *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 266.
- 114 Qur'an 21:69; M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 495. Asad states in the footnote that the Qur'an does not state that Abraham was actually thrown into the fire and miraculously kept alive in it. Contrarily, the phrase "God saved him from fire" in 29:24 indicates the fact of his not having been thrown into it. Muslim stories embellished by the classical commentators are traced back to Talmudic legends. *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pp. 376–7. For a similar explanation see al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān fi tafsīr al-Qur'an*, vol. 17, pp. 32–3.
- 115 *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*, tr. H. Freedman, ed. I. Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1967); Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 126, n. 168.
- 116 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 292–3; Genesis 30:25–43. In the present edition of the *Rasā'il* it is attributed to the second book of the Torah, which is an error as this story is found in chapter 30 of Genesis, the first book of the Pentateuch and the Old Testament. It should be noted that strictly speaking the term Torah is used for the Pentateuch, however in a wider sense it is applied to the Old Testament.
- 117 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 28–32.
- 118 Lootfy Levonian, "The *Ikhwan al-Ṣafā'* and Christ," *Muslim World* 35 (1945), p. 27. The *Rasā'il*, like the Nestorians, emphasize Christ's humanity (*nāsūt*) rather than his divinity (*lāhūt*). It was Christ's humanity that was crucified and his human body was found missing when the tomb was opened. The *Ikhwan's* statement that Christ was crucified, and was buried and the implication that he rose from the dead is in sharp contrast to the Qur'anic assertion, which states: *However, they did not slay him, and neither did they crucify him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so.* Qur'an 4:157; Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 134. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr and Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1969-), vol. 9, pp. 367–78. The *Ikhwan's* emphasis in the story is on the soul's immortality.
- 119 For the traditional accounts of the earliest converts see W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 86–99.

- 120 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 16.
- 121 Compare Luke 2:41–50; Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 55.
- 122 *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 284; vol. 3, p. 485; vol. 4, p. 30. Miracles, such as speaking in the cradle, healing the blind and the leper, etc. are mentioned also in the Qur'an 5:110–15.
- 123 This view is repeated several times. See for example, *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 141; vol. 3, p. 12; vol. 4, p. 16.
- 124 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 29–30.
- 125 *The Gospel of Philip*, tr. from the Coptic by R. Wilson (London, 1962), p. 39; Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 57.
- 126 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 58, 175. Qur'an 26:81–6 is cited as evidence. It states: "The Sustainer of all the worlds, who has created me and is the One who guides me ... He who will cause me to die and then bring me back to life ... O my Sustainer! Endow with the ability to judge with the righteous ... and place me among those who shall inherit the garden of bliss!" Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, pp. 565–6.
- 127 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 58, 175. Qur'an 12:101 is cited as evidence. It states: "O my Sustainer! Thou hast indeed bestowed upon me something of power, and hast imparted unto me some knowledge of the inner meaning of happenings ... Let me die as one who has surrendered himself unto Thee, and make me one with the righteous!" Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 353.
- 128 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 34–6, 58, 175. Pythagoras' *al-Risāla al-dhahabiyya* (*The Golden Epistle*) containing his counsels for the initiate is referred to. See also Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, pp. 15–16; Marquet, *Les "Frères de la pureté": Pythagoriciens de l'Islam*.
- 129 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 34–5, 58, 73–4, 175, 271 (It refers to Plato's dialogue *Phaedo*, which gives an account of Socrates' last hours and where the talk had turned on the immortality of the soul.)
- 130 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 35. Plato's doctrine of the soul remains one of the perplexing puzzles in his philosophy. He believed in the imperishability of the soul (*psyche*) and discussed the question of the immortality of the human soul in the sense of the survival of human consciousness after death. See *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, pp. xx–xxi.
- 131 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 35, 271. A spurious Aristotelian treatise entitled *Risālat al-tuffāḥa* (*The Book of the Apple*) is referred to. It was also known in the West by its Latin title *Tractatus de pomo et morte incliti principis philosophorum Aristotelis*. See Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 31.

- 132 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 175. The story was translated from Pahlavi into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa'. *ET*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. Bilawhar wa-Yūdāsaf, by D. M. Lang.
- 133 See n. 117 above.
- 134 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 58, 175. The Prophet's saying referred to states: "Verily, tomorrow you will arrive at the Pond (*ḥawḍ*)."<sup>2</sup> For the traditions see A. J. Wensinck, *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), s.v. ḥ-w-ḍ.
- 135 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 33, 75.
- 136 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 270-1.
- 137 *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 206. من أولاد العباس
- 138 *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 278. ايران شهر يعني به العراق (i.e. an Iranian from Iraq). The term *Īrānshahr* is applied to the country of Iran (*keshvar-e Īrān*) during the Sasanid period, which included Iraq. Muḥammad Mu'īn, *Farhang-i Fārisī* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1963-73), s.v. Īrānshahr.
- 139 *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 281. رجل من بلاد الهند من جزيرة سرنديب
- 140 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 282. رجل من أهل الشام، عراقي من آل إسرائيل
- 141 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 284. رجل سرياني من آل المسيح
- 142 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 285. رجل من تهامة، قرشي
- 143 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 286. رجل من أهل الروم، من بلاد يونان
- 144 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 289. رجل من أهل خراسان، من بلاد مرو
- 145 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 376, it reads:  
 قدام عند ذلك العالم الخبير، الفاضل الذكي، المستبصر الفارسي النسيه، العربي الدين، الحنفي المذهب، العراقي الآداب، العراني المخبر، المسيحي المنهج، الشامي النسل، اليوناني العلوم، الهندي البصيرة، الصوفي السيرة، الملكي الأخلاق، الرباني الرأي، الإلهي المعارف.
- 146 See for example *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pp. 139, 209, 235 (Persian verses are cited); vol. 1, p. 292; vol. 2, p. 280; vol. 3, pp. 495, 496 (names of Persian kings are mentioned).
- 147 *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, p. 292; *Kitāb Zardāsht* is referred to.
- 148 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 495, 496; it states:  
 قال ملك الفرس أردشير في وصيته: إن الملك والدين أخوان تومان، لا قوام لأحدهما إلا بالأخر، وذلك أن الدين أسن الملك حارسه، فما لا أسن له مهدوم ... ولا بدّ للدين من حارس.  
 See also Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 129, n. 98.
- 149 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 20-2, 315-27 (*malik al-Furs*, or *malik<sup>un</sup> min mulūk al-Furs*); *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 460-1 (*malik<sup>un</sup> min al-mulūk, ḥakim<sup>un</sup> min al-ḥukamā'*); *ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 82-3 (*min awlād al-mulūk*); *ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 173-6 (*ba'ḍ mulūk al-Hind*); *ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 315-19 (*anna malik<sup>un</sup>*).
- 150 See for example, *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, pp. 82-3; vol. 4, pp. 14-16, 148-57, 162-4. See n. 132 above.
- 151 See for example *ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 152-64.

- 152 For example see *ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 14-15.
- 153 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 170-1; Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, pp. 93-4.
- 154 *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, pp. 167-8; Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, pp. 93-4.
- 155 The Arabic proverb cited is: ما من طائفة إلا وفوقها طائفة (literally, there is no calamity but above it is a greater calamity). See E. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Islamic Text Society, 1984; reprint of 1863-77), s.v. ṭ-m-m.
- 156 It ends with: فقالت الغريان بعضها لبعض: شس ما صنعنا بأنفسنا، وقد أخطأنا. فندموا من حيث لم تتفهم الندامة.
- 157 Makdisi, *Rise of Humanism*, p. 48.
- 158 Ahmad Shalaby, *History of Muslim Education* (Beirut: Dar al-Kashshaf, 1954), pp. 16-23; A. L. Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its traditions and modernization into the Arab national systems* (London: Luzac & Company, 1979; reprint of 1972), pp. 23-6.  
 Based on some historical evidence Makdisi suggests that besides teaching "the literary arts," at times, the *maktab* also provided a higher level of education and even functioned as a "finishing school," whose graduates continued their studies on their own, or took up private apprenticeship with a master. Makdisi, *Rise of Humanism*, pp. 48-9; *idem*, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), p. 19.
- 159 Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ārizmī, *Mafātiḥ al-'ulūm* (Cairo: Idārat al-ṭibā'a al-Muniriyya, 1342/1923-4), p. 4. The term "literary arts" is used by Makdisi. Other Arabic terms used are: *al-adab*, *al-ādāb*, *al-adabiyyāt*, *'ilm al-ādāb*, *al-'ulūm al-adabiyya*, *'ilm al-lisān* or *'ulūm al-lisān*. It included philology, i.e. grammar and lexicography; poetry, with the sciences of metrics and rhyme; rhetoric, as applied to letter-writing and speech-writing; history; and moral philosophy, including proverbs and the science of government. Other Arabic terms for the religious sciences are *al-'ulūm al-shar'iyya* or *al-'ulūm al-naqliyya* (traditional sciences). Makdisi, *Rise of Humanism*, pp. 88-96, 119-52.
- 160 Makdisi, *Rise of Humanism*, pp. 109-10; *ET*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās, by Veccia Vaglieri.
- 161 Makdisi, *Rise of Humanism*, p. 111; *ET*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. Abu'l-Aswad al-Du'ālī, by J. Füch.
- 162 *ET*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. Tha'lab, Abu'l-'Abbās Aḥmad, by Monique Bernards.
- 163 Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabā': Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1993), vol. 2, p. 551; it reads:

وحدث أبو بكر ابن مجاهد. قال: كنت عند أبي العباس ثعلبي، فقال لي: يا أبا بكر اشتغل أصحاب القرآن بالقرآن ففازوا، واشتغل أهل الفقه بالفقه ففازوا، واشتغل أصحاب الحديث بالحديث ففازوا، واشتغل أنا بزيتي وعصري، فليت شعري ما يكون حالي في الآخرة!

See also Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, p. 76; English translation is by Makdisi with slight modification.

- 164 Al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ārizmī, *Mafātih al-‘ulūm*, p. 4; other Arabic terms are *al-‘ulūm al-‘aqliyya* (rational sciences), or *al-‘ulūm al-ghayr al-shar‘iyya*. See also Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*.
- 165 It should be noted that the efforts to classify the sciences in Islam began with al-Kindī. His efforts were based on the Aristotelian division into theoretical, practical and productive as given by Porphyry in the *Isagoge*. S. H. Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 60.
- 166 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. Riḍā Tajaddud (Tehran: Maktabat al-Asadī, 1971), pp. 3–5. Ten chapters are organized as follows: (i) Languages and Writings, (ii) Grammar and Philologists, (iii) History, Biography and Genealogy, (iv) Poetry and Poets, (v) *al-Kalām* and *al-Mutakallimīn*, (scholastic theology and the theologians) (vi) *Fiqh, Fuqahā’* (jurisprudence and the jurists) and *Muḥaddithūn* (transmitters of traditions), (vii) Philosophy and Ancient Sciences, (viii) *asmār, khurāfāt, ‘azā’im, siḥr* (nightly conversation, fairy tales, talismans, casting of spells), (ix) *al-madhāhib wa’l-‘itiqādāt* (the Ḥarrāniyya, Kaldāniyya, Ṣābi‘a), (x) Alchemists.
- 167 His organization of knowledge is divided into two discourses: Islamic sciences (*‘ulūm al-shar‘ī’a*) and what is associated with them of *al-‘ulūm al-‘arabiyya*; and foreign sciences (*‘ulūm al-‘ajam min al-Yūnān wa-ghayrihim min al-umam*). The first discourse consists of six sections: (i) jurisprudence (*fiqh*); (ii) philosophical/scholastic theology (*kalām*), it includes Islamic, Christian and Jewish sects; (iii) Arabic language and grammar (*naḥw*); (iv) the art of writing in various chanceries [*al-kitāba wa-]kuttāb*; (v) poetry and metrics (*al-shi‘r wa’l-‘arūd*); (vi) history (*al-akḥbār*). The second discourse consists of nine sections: (i) philosophy; (ii) logic (*Isagoge* plus eight books of Aristotle); (iii) medicine; (iv) arithmetic; (v) geometry; (vi) astronomy; (vii) music; (viii) *ḥiyal* (devising instruments for pulling heavy weight with little power, etc.) (ix) alchemy. Al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ārizmī, *Mafātih al-‘ulūm*, pp. 4–5.

It was al-Kh<sup>w</sup>ārizmī’s classification of sciences that prevailed during the later centuries of Islamic history. In his *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 166–75, Gutas has clarified the misconception

generated by I. Goldziher that Islamic orthodoxy was opposed to the Greek sciences. However, it is undeniable that a strong antagonism toward foreign sciences was one of the reasons for the gradual decline of science and philosophy from the curriculum of medieval Islamic education. This is amply borne out by Fazlur Rahman’s remark in his *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 33, wherein he states:

But the most fateful distinction that came to be made in the course of time was between the “religious sciences” (*‘ulūm shar‘īya*) or “traditional sciences” (*‘ulūm naqliya*) and the “rational or secular sciences” (*‘ulūm ‘aqliya* or *ghayr shar‘īya*), toward which a gradually stiffening and stifling attitude was adopted. There are several reasons for this perilous development.

- 168 For the physician Ibn Buṭlān see Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a, *‘Uyūn al-anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā’*, ed. Nizār Riḍā (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1965), pp. 325–8; *EL*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. Ibn Buṭlān, by J. Schacht.
- 169 For example the Arabic reads:  
تهذيب النفس وإصلاح الأخلاق، أو تهذيب النفس والترقي من حال النقص إلى التمام، والخروج من حدّ القوة إلى الفعل بالظهور، لتنال بذلك البقاء والدوام والخلود في النعم مع أبناء جنسها مع الملائكة ... في تهذيب النفوس وإصلاح الأخلاق للبلوغ إلى السعادة الكبرى، والجلالة العظمى، والبقاء الدائم، والكمال الأخير.
- 170 it is repeated at several places.
- 171 *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, p. 76; 4, p. 231; *al-Risāla al-jāmi‘a*, 1, pp. 497–8; see also n. 87 above. We could not trace this tradition in the Sunnī *ḥadīth* collections, however it circulated widely in the works of Yamānī Ismā‘īlīs, see Ismail Poonawala, ed., *al-Sulṭān al-Khaṭṭāb: Ḥayātuhu wa-shi‘ruhu*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1999), pp. 437–8.
- 172 *Al-Risāla al-jāmi‘a*, vol. 1, p. 64 (إن الجاهل من عالم الإنسان دون مرتبة الحيوان).
- 173 *Rasā’il*, vol. 4, p. 217; it reads:  
واعلم أن العمل هو سلم المراج، والمعركة هي النور يسمى بين يديك. فبالسلم ترتقي، وبالنور تهدي.
- 174 *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, pp. 75–6.
- 175 *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, p. 266; *al-Risāla al-jāmi‘a*, vol. 1, p. 219. Marquet (*La philosophie des Iḥwān al-Ṣafā’*, pp. 295–6) translates them as: Les Sciences Pratiques, Les Sciences Juridiques and Les Sciences Philosophiques, ou Sciences des Réalités.
- 176 Miskawayh states that *al-taṭayyur* (auguring evil from birds’ movements) is forbidden by the *shar‘ī’a*, but not *al-fa’l*. Al-Tawḥīdī and Miskawayh, *al-Hawāmīl wa’l-shawāmīl*, pp. 200–1.

- There are several *aḥādīth* that approve of *al-faʿl*. Wensinck, *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane*, s.v. f-ʿ-1.
- 177 *Rasāʾil*, vol. 1, pp. 266–7; *al-Risāla al-jāmiʿa*, vol. 1, p. 220.
- 178 The Imāms, the successors of the prophets, are the most qualified in it.
- 179 *Aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* are meant here.
- 180 In al-Kindī's *Rasāʾil al-Kindī*, vol. 1, pp. 364, 369–70, 376, 378, this word is spelled *ʿilm al-riyādāt* and at one place as *al-riyādāt wa'l-taʿālīm*. In arranging the Aristotelian corpus al-Kindī stresses the importance of these sciences for the study of philosophy. He is said to have composed a treatise on *ʿilm al-riyādiyyāt* emphasizing its importance (رسالته في أنه لا تُنال الفلسفة إلا بعلم الرياضيات). Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, p. 316; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ*, p. 289.
- 181 This fourfold division of the philosophical sciences is also given at the beginning of the first epistle, see *Rasāʾil*, vol. 1, p. 49. This division closely resembles that of the Aristotelian corpus given by al-Kindī. Al-Kindī, *Rasāʾil al-Kindī*, vol. 1, pp. 364–5.
- 182 *Rasāʾil*, vol. 1, pp. 267–8; *al-Risāla al-jāmiʿa*, vol. 1, pp. 223–5. The fourfold division of mathematical sciences is derived from the Pythagorean school and was continued in the quadrivium curriculum of the Middle Ages. Miskawayh follows the same division, see al-Tawḥīdī and Miskawayh, *al-Hawāmīl wa'l-shawāmīl*, p. 162. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 11. In al-Kindī, *Rasāʾil al-Kindī*, vol. 1, pp. 369–70, 376–8, the four categories are:  
علم العدد والهندسة والتنجيم (الذي هو علم هيئة الكُلّ وعدد أجسامه الكليّات وحركاتها ... ) والتأليف ... تعلم التأليف فإنه إيجاد نسبة عدد إلى عدد، وقرنه إليه، ومعرفة المؤلف منه والمختلف.
- 183 The *Isagoge* of Porphyry was an introduction to Aristotelian logic. *EP<sup>2</sup>*, s.v. Furfūriyūs (by R. Walzer) and Iṣāghūdjī.
- 184 *Rasāʾil*, vol. 1, pp. 268–9; *al-Risāla al-jāmiʿa*, vol. 1, pp. 225–8. The titles of all treatises are misspelled in the printed editions, hence I have listed the first five as they are arranged in vol. 1 of the *Rasāʾil*, epistles 10 to 14. The five treatises listed in the text are: Poetics, Rhetoric, Topics, Analytics and Sophistical Refutations. Al-Kindī (*Rasāʾil al-Kindī*, vol. 1, pp. 365–8) has listed all eight in the following order: Categories, Peri Hermeneias, Prior Analytics, Posterior Analytics, Topics, Sophistical Refutations, Rhetoric, and Poetics.
- 185 The sevenfold division of the physical sciences is the same as in al-Kindī, *Rasāʾil al-Kindī*, vol. 1, p. 368:

- فأما كمية الطبيعة المرتبة فسيعة كتب: الأول منها كتاب الحبر الطبيعي، الثاني كتاب السماء، الثالث كتاب الكون والفساد، الرابع كتاب أحداث الجو والأرض، الخامس كتاب المعادن، السادس كتاب النبات، والسابع كتاب الحيوان.
- 186 *Rasāʾil*, vol. 1, p. 272; it states:  
وكذلك علم الطبّ والبيطرة، وسياسة الدواب والسباع والطيور، والحراث والتسل، وعلم الصنائع أجمع داخل في الطبيعيات.  
It should be noted that al-Kindī (*Rasāʾil al-Kindī*, vol. 1, pp. 364–5, 368) lists a third category of Aristotle's works described as *النوع الثالث* فيما كان مستغنياً عن الطبيعة، قائماً بذاته غير محتاج إلى الأقسام، فإنه يوجد مع الأقسام مواصلاً لها بأحد أنواع المواصلة (those things that exist by themselves independent of matter). They are:  
كتاب النفس، كتاب الحسّ والحسوس، كتاب النوم واليقظة، وكتاب طول العمر وقصره.
- 187 In Aristotle it is metaphysics (كتاب بما بعد الطبيعيات). Al-Kindī, *Rasāʾil al-Kindī*, vol. 1, pp. 368–9, 372–6. After it al-Kindī lists Aristotle's books on ethics, especially the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is worth noting that following the classification of Aristotle's corpus, which he describes as human sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-insāniyya*) that could be acquired by human endeavor, he adds four pages on the divine science (*al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*). He adds that the latter is higher than the former sciences, and cannot be obtained through mental exercise of mathematical and logical sciences, but it is revealed by God to the prophets. He states:  
العلوم الإنسانية يطلب وتكفّف البشر وحيلهم ... العلم الآسهي بلا طلب ولا تكفّف ولا بحيلة بشرية ولا زمان كعلم الرسل صلوات الله عليهم الذي خصّها الله، جلّ وتعالى علواً كبيراً، أنه بلا طلب ولا تكفّف ولا بحيل ولا بحيلة بالرياضيات والمنطق ولا بزمان، بل مع إرادته، جلّ تعالى، يظهر أنفسهم وإنارتها للحقّ بتأييده وتدبيره وإلهامه ورسالاته. فإن هذا العلم خاصة للرسل، صلوات الله عليهم، دون البشر.
- 188 *Rasāʾil*, vol. 1, p. 272; and خالق هو علة الموجودات، وكيف وصفة وحدانيته، ومُعطي الوجود، والمخلوقات، وفائض الوجود، ومُعطي الوجود.
- 189 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 272; وهو معرفة الجواهر البسيطة العقلية، العلامة العقلية ... وهي الصور المجردة من الطولي، المستعملة للأجسام المتدبّرة بها ...
- 190 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 273; وهي معرفة النفوس والأرواح السارية في الأجسام الفلكية؛ ومعرفة كيفية إدارتها للأفلاك وتخريكها والطبيعة من لدن الفلك المحيط إلى منتهى مركز الأرض، ومعرفة كيفية إدارتها للأفلاك وتخريكها للكواكب ... وكيفية انبعاثها بعد المات.
- 191 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 273; see n. 58 above.
- 192 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 274; وهو معرفة ماهية النشأة الأخرى، وكيفية انبعاث الأرواح من ... وظلمة الأجساد ... وحشرها يوم المعاد ... وحشرها لحساب يوم الدين ...
- 193 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 290; it states:  
واعلم يا أخي بأن الحدائق في كلّ صنعة هو التشبيه بالصانع الحكيم الذي هو الباري جلّ ثناؤه. ويقال إن الله تعالى يُحبّ الصانع الفاعل الحاذق.

- See also A. L. Tibawi, "Further Studies on *Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā*," *Islamic Quarterly* 20-2 (1978), pp. 61-2.
- 194 *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, p. 290; روي عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه قال: إن الله تعالى يحب الصانع المثلن في صنعه
- 195 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 290; ومن أجل هذا قيل في حدّ الفلسفة إنها التبتُّه بالإله بحسب طاقة الإنسان .
- This definition is repeated several times.
- 196 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 290; see also Tibawi, *Islamic Education*, p. 39; idem, "Further Studies on *Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā*," p. 62.
- 197 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 172.
- 198 It means a preliminary course of study that precedes more advanced instruction.
- 199 Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, p. 53; chapter five is translated by Fauzy Najjar, "The Enumeration of the Sciences," in *Medieval Political Philosophy*, pp. 22-30. See also David Reisman, "Al-Fārābī and the philosophical curriculum," in Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 52-71.
- 200 It reminds us of the debate between Abū Bishr Mattā, a prominent logician of his day, and Abū Sa'īd al-Sirāfi, a grammarian, that occurred in Baghdad in 326/937-8 and is recorded by Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī in his *al-Imtā' wa'l-mu'ānasa*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad al-Zayn, 2nd edn. (Cairo: Lajnat al-ta'lif wa'l-tarjuma wa'l-nashr, [1953]), vol. 1, pp. 107-29. For its summary in English, see Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 183-4.
- 201 Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, p. 53; Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 112-16; Nasr, *Science and Civilization*, pp. 60-2 (there are a number of translation errors). The physician Ibn Buṭlān (d. 460/1068) offers three major divisions of the sciences that had developed among the Muslims by the middle of the third/ninth century: the Islamic sciences; the philosophical and natural sciences; and the literary arts. See Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn al-anbā'*, p. 327; Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, p. 75.
- 202 Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, pp. 132-8; see also Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 116.
- 203 To be fair to al-Fārābī it should be stated that in his *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, he does not explain the relationship between political philosophy, on the one hand, and jurisprudence and theology, on the other. However, he clarifies that relationship in his *Kitāb al-milla* (Book of Religion), pp. 69-76. For further details the reader is referred to Muhsin Maḥdī's *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy* where he has analyzed and interpreted al-Fārābī's

- political philosophy. Maḥdī's account of al-Fārābī as the founder of Islamic political philosophy is quite persuasive. He states that in the scheme of al-Fārābī metaphysics does not simply crown the sciences, rather it becomes a preface to political science; and political science studies everything that is necessary for the realization of virtue and happiness and their preservation. It is in this sense that jurisprudence and theology are included in political science that deals with the questions of prophecy, divine law and revelation, for these are seen in terms of realization rather than simply as theoretical matters. Maḥdī, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy*, pp. 4-5, 6, 7, 57.
- 204 A. L. Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems* (London: Luzac & Company, 1979), pp. 29, 37-9; idem, "Philosophy of Muslim Education," in *The Year Book of Education* (London: Published in association with the University of London, Institute of Education and Teachers College, Columbia University by Evans Brothers, 1957), pp. 84, 88; idem, "Muslim Education in the Golden Age of the Caliphate," *Islamic Culture*, xxviii, p. 429.
- 205 The term *maktab* is used in the early centuries of Islamic history while the term *kuttāb* is used during the later period. *Kuttāb* is generally an elementary school for the teaching of reading and writing, penmanship, Arabic grammar and arithmetic. Some authorities distinguish between this type of *kuttāb* and another type in which Qur'ān and elementary religious sciences were taught. For details see Ahmad Shalaby, *History of Muslim Education* (Beirut: Dar al-Kashshaf, 1954), pp. 16-23; in the supplement to the book, the author has given a brief sketch of Ismā'īlī doctrines and the efforts of the Fāṭimid dynasty to propagate them. See also Tibawi, *Islamic Education*, pp. 26, 27; idem, "Some Educational Terms in *Rasā'il Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā*," *Islamic Quarterly* 5 (1959), pp. 55-60; Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, pp. 48-50.
- 206 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 51-2; it states:  
أبها الأخ، أن لا تشغل بإصلاح المشايخ الهرمة الذين اعتقدوا من الصبا آراء فاسدة، وعادات رديئة، وأخلاقاً وحشية. فإنهم يتعبونك ثم لا ينصلحون، إن صلحوا قليلاً قليلاً فلا يفلمحون. ولكن عليك بالشباب السالمى الصدور، الراغبين في الآداب، المبتدئين بالنظر في العلوم، المرادين طريق الحق ... المستعملين شرائع الأنبياء ... التاركين الهوى والجدل، غير متعصبين على المذاهب.
- 207 *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 52; it states:  
واعلم أن الله تعالى ما بعث نبيّاً إلا وهو شاب، ولا أعطى لعبدٍ حكمة إلا وهو شاب ... واعلم أن كل نبي بعثه الله فأول من كذبه مشائخ قومه ...

It is followed by a lengthy discussion about those who are blessed with wealth but not knowledge, and those who are blessed with knowledge but not wealth, and those who are blessed with neither of the two but endowed with good character, pure souls and sound hearts without corrupt beliefs.

208 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, pp. 57, 173–4.

209 *Rasā'il*, vol. 4, p. 50; it reads:

واعلم أنّ المعلم والأستاذ أثبت لنفسك، وسبب لنشوتها، وعلة حياتها، كما أن والدك أثبت لجسدك، وكان سبباً لوجوده. وذلك أنّ والدك أعطاك صورةً جسدانيةً، ومعلمك أعطاك صورةً روحانيةً. وذلك أن المعلم يغيّد نفسك بالعلوم، ويوتيها بالمعارف، ويهديها طريق النعيم واللذة والسرور والأبدية والراحة السرمدية، كما أنّ أباك كان سبباً لكون جسدك في دار الدنيا، ومرتيك ومرشدك إلى طلب العاش فيها التي هي دار الفناء والتغير والسيلان ساعةً بساعة. فسل يا أخي ربك أن يوفقك لك معلماً رشيداً، هادياً سديداً، واشكر الله على نعمائه السابقة.

See also Tibawi, "Some Educational Terms," p. 59; idem, *Islamic Education*, p. 39. A saying ascribed to Pythagoras states: "Fathers are the cause of life, but philosophers are the cause of the good life." D. Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation: A Study of the Graeco-Arabic Gnomologia* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1975), pp. 70, 71.

210 *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pp. 346–55. All the *ḥadīth* collections begin with a chapter on *'ilm* and thousands of traditions are ascribed to the Prophet. Wensinck, *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane*, s.v. 'l-m.

211 *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pp. 346–7. It is a long tradition; the beginning reads: ما روي عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه قال: تعلموا العلم، فإن في تعلمه لله خشية، وطلبه عبادة، ومذاكرته تسبيح، والبحث عنه جهاد، وتعليمه لمن لا يعلمونه صدقة، وبذله لأهله قرينة، لأنه معام الحلال والحرام، ومنار سبيل الجنة، والمونس في الوحدة والوحشة، والصاحب في الغربة، والدليل على السراء والضراء....

212 It is a major part of the 22nd epistle entitled "On the manner of the creation of animals and their species," and is the longest of all the epistles. See *Rasā'il*, vol. 21, pp. 203–377. *Ikhwan al-Safa* ascribed by tradition to Abu Sulaiman [al-Maḥdī] and others, translated from the Arabic into Urdu by Ikrām 'Alī (Calcutta: Munshi Muhammad Taha, 1810).

213 *Tuhfat Ichwan-oos-Suffa*, in the original Arabic (نحفة إخوان الصفا), revised and edited by Schuekh Ahmad-bin Moohummud Schurwan-ool-Yummuneeh [Shaykh Ahmad b. Muḥammad Shurwān al-Yamānī], with a short preface in English by T. T. Thomason (Calcutta: Printed by P. Pereira at the Hindoostanee Press, 1812).

214 A. Sprenger, "Notices of some copies of the Arabic work entitled *Rasāyil Ikhwān al-Ḥafā'*," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 17/i (1848), pp. 501–7; 17/ii (1848), pp. 183–202.

215 See note 13 above.

216 Godefroid de Callatay, *Ikhwan al-Safa': A Brotherhood of Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam* (Oxford: One World, 2005).

217 Theodora Abel, "Psychological Themes in a 10th Century Arabic Satire on Men and Animals," *International Mental Health Research Newsletter* 13 (1971), pp. 2–4, 9–11.

218 Lenn Goodman, *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn: A Tenth-century Ecological Fable of the Pure Brethren of Basra*, translated from the Arabic with introduction and commentary (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1978).

219 *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 205; here the number is given as 70, while on page 298, the number is given as 72.

220 Qur'an 16:5–8; M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 394.

221 For example see Qur'an 14:33; 16:12; M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, pp. 377, 395.

222 *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 209; it states:

فقال الإنسي: إنّ لنا حججاً عقليةً ودلائل فلسفيةً تدلّ على صحة ما قلنا ... حسن صورتنا، وتقوم بنية هيكلنا، وانتصاب قامتنا، وجمود حواشينا، ودقة تمييزنا، وذكاء نفوسنا، ورجحان عقولنا. كلّ هذا يدلّ على أنّنا أربابٌ وهم عبيدٌ لنا.

223 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 210; it states:

واعلم بأن الله، جلّ نأوه، ما خلقهم على تلك الصورة، ولا سواهم على هذه البنية لتكون دلالةً على أنهم أرباب، ولا خلقنا على هذه الصورة وسوانا على هذه البنية لتكون دلالةً على أننا عبيد، ولكن لعلمه وانتضاء حكمته بأن تلك البنية هي أصلح لهم، وهذه أصلح لنا ... وجعل أرزاقهم من ثمر الأشجار ... جعل قاتمهم منتصباً ليسهل عليهم تناول الثمر... وهكذا لما جعل أرزاقنا من حشيش الأرض، جعل بنية أبداننا منحنيةً ليسهل علينا تناول العشب من الأرض ... لا كما توهموا.

224 Qur'an 95: 4. M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 961. Richard Bell, *The Qur'an: Translated, with a Critical Re-Arrangement of the Surahs* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), vol. 2, p. 665, translates *fi aḥsan taqwīm*, as "most beautiful erect." Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Washington, DC: The Islamic Center, reprint of the 3rd ed. [1938]), p. 1759, translates "in the best of moulds."

225 Reference to Qur'an 3:7; M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 67.

226 Reference to Qur'an 16:43. Generally translated as "people of the Remembrance" or "who have that knowledge" Asad translates it "ask the followers of [earlier] revelation," *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 400. He adds that the literal meaning is "reminder," because every divine message is meant to remind one of the truth.

The people to be asked for enlightenment in this respect are apparently the Jews and the Christians.

227 *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, pp. 211-14; it states:

فقال زعيم البهائم: ونحن كذلك، فعل بنا أيضاً، لم يجعلنا طويلاً ولا دقاً ولا قصاراً ولا صغاراً، بل بين ذلك... وأما الذي ذكرته من جودة حواشكم، ودقة تمييزكم، وانحترامكم به علينا، فليس ذلك لكم خاصة دون غيركم من الحيوانات، لأن فيها ما هو أجود حاشة منكم وأدق تمييزاً. فمن ذلك الجمل، فإنه مع طول قواله ورقبته وارتفاع رأسه من الأرض في الهواء، يبصر ويرى موضع قدميه في الطرقات الوعرة والمسالك الصعبة في ظلم الليل ما لا يرى ولا يبصر أحدكم إلا بسراج... وأما الذي ذكرته من رجحان العقول، فلستأ نرى له اثرأ أو علامة، لأنه لو كان لكم عقولٌ راجحة لما انحترمت علينا بشيء ليس هو من أفعالكم، ولا اكتساب منكم، بل هي مواهب من الله... لتعرفوا مواقع النعم، وتشكروا له... وإنما العقلاء يفتخرون بأشياء هي أفعالهم من الصالح المحكمة... ولستأ تراكم تفتخرون بشيء منها غير دعوى بلا حجة، وخصومة بلا بينة.

228 Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), pp. 17-36.

229 Netton (*Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 72) read this criticism of some religious groups, especially Christianity, between the lines and out of context.

230 *Rasā'il*, vol. 2, p. 374; it states:

فقال عند ذلك الخطيب الحجازي المكِّي المدني... قال: مواعيد ربنا لنا بالبعث والنشور، والخروج من القبور، وحساب يوم الدين... ودخول الجنان من بين سائر الحيوانات، وهي حجة الفردوس وحجة العيب... المذكور في القرآن في نحو من سبعمائة آية. كل ذلك بمعزل عن هذه الحيوانات. فهذا دليل على آتأ أربابٌ وهي عبيد لنا.

231 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 374-5; it states:

فقال عند ذلك زعيم الطيور، وهو الفزاردستان، فقال: نعم لعبري، إن الأمر كما قلت أيها الإنسي، ولكن اذكر أيضاً ما أُعدتم به، من عذاب القبر، وسؤال منكر ونكير، وأحوال يوم القيامة، وشدة الحساب، والوعيد بدخول النيران... وشرب الصديد، وأكل شجرة الزقوم... وما هو مذكور في القرآن بجنب كل آية من الوعد آية من الوعيد. كل ذلك لكم دوننا، ونحن بمعزل عن جميع ذلك، وكما لم نعهد بالفواب لم نعهد بالعقاب. وقد رضينا بحكم ربنا، لا لنا، ولا علينا... وتساوت الأقدار. فما لكم والافتخار!

232 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 375-6; it states:

فقال الحجازي: وكيف تساوت الأقدار بيننا وبينكم؟ فإنا، على أي حال كانت، باقون أهد الأبدن ودهر الدهرين. إن كنا مطيعين، فمع الأنبياء والأولياء والأنفة والأوصياء والحكماء والأحبار والفضلاء... والذين هم بملاكمة الله الكرام يتشبهون... و لو كنا مردودين إذن تتخلص بشفاعتنا محمد، عليه السلام...

233 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 376; it states:

فقلت حينئذ زعماء الحيوانات وحكماء الجن بأجمعهم: الآن جنتم بالحق، ونطقتم بالصواب، وقلتم الصدق، لأنَّ بأمثال ما ذكرتم يفتخر به المتفتخرون، ومثل أعمالهم فليعمل العاملون... وفي ذلك فليتنافس المتنافسون! ولكن حيزونا، يا معشر الإنس، عن أوصافهم، وبتبوا لنا سيرهم، وعزفونا طريق معارفهم، ومحاسن أخلاقهم، وصالح أعمالهم، إن كنتم صادقين، ثم اذكروها إن كنتم بها عارفين.

234 The word in the text is 'arabiyyan' (Arabian).

235 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 376-7; it states:

فسكنت الجماعة حينئذ يتفكرون، فلم يكن عند أحد منهم جواب... فقام عند ذلك العالم الخبير، الفاضل الذكي، المستبصر الفارسي النسبة، العربي الدين، الخفي المنصب، العراقي الآداب، العبراني اللغوي، المسيحي المنهج، الشامي التسك، اليوناني العلوم، الهندي البصيرة، الصوفي السيرة، الملكي الأخلاق، الرتيقي الرأي، الإلهي المعارف... ثم قال: أيها الملك العادل، وأتم معشر الجماعة المحضرة، اعلما أن هؤلاء الذين هم أولياء الله وصفوته من خلقه وخوته من عباده وربيته أوصافاً حميدة، وأعمالاً زكية، وعلوماً مُثَقَّنَةً، وصفات جميلة، وأعمالاً زكية، ومعارف رتيقية، وأخلاقاً ملكية، وسيرة عادلة قدسية، وأحوالاً عجيبة، قد كَلَّتْ الألسنُ عن ذكرها، وقضرت أوصاف الواصفين عن كنه صفاتها... فكيف يأمر الملك العادل في حق هؤلاء الغرباء وما جوابهم؟

*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 233; it states:

... تصير هذه البهائم في الأسر والعبودية إلى أن ينقضي دور القرآن ويُستأنف نشوء آخر، وبأي الله ما بالفرج والخلاص كما نجي آل إسرائيل من عذاب فرعون... فإن أيام هذه الدنيا دولٌ بين أهلها، تنور بإذن الله تعالى وسابق علمه، ونفاذ مشيئته بموجبات أحكام القرانات والأدوار في كل ألف سنة مرة، أو في كل اثني عشر ألف سنة مرة، أو في كل ستة وثلاثين ألف سنة مرة... أو في كل يوم مقداره خمسون ألف سنة مرة.

236 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 377; it states:

فامر الملك أن تكون الحيوانات بأجمعهم تحت أوامره ونواهيهم، ويكونون مأمورين للإس حتى يُستأنف الدور، ثم بعد ذلك حكم حكماً آخر.

237 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 154, 180-1; vol. 4, pp. 146, 186-7, 190.

238 For the translation see n. 101 above.

239 It states: "Say: 'We believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed to all the [other] prophets by their Sustainer: We make no distinction between any of them. And it is unto Him that we surrender ourselves.'" Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 28.

240 Al-Sijistāni, Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī, *Ṣiḥān al-ḥikma*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān Badawī (Tehran, 1974), pp. 361-2; he ascribes the authorship of the *Rasā'il* to Abū Sulaymān al-Maqdisī. See also S. M. Stern, "New information about the authors of the 'Epistles of the Sincere Brethren,'" *Islamic Studies* 3 (1964), pp. 405-28.

241 Maribel Fierro, "Plants, Mary the Copt, Abraham, Donkeys and Knowledge: Again on Bāṭinism during the Umayyad Caliphate in al-Andalus," in Biesterfeldt, Hinrich and Verena Klemm, eds., *Differenz und Dynamik im Islam: Festschrift für Heinz Halm zum 70. Geburtstag* (Würzburg, Ergon-Verlag, 2012), pp. 125-44. This article amends some previous errors of attribution of both the *Ghāya* and the *Rutba* and corroborates the arguments of Abbas Hamdani for the early dating of the *Rasā'il*. See Susanne Diwald, *Arabische Philosophie und Wissenschaft in der Enzyklopädie Kitāb Iḥwān aṣ-Ṣafā'*, III: *Die Lehre von Seele und Intellekt* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), pp. 15-16; and Abbas Hamdani,



- "Brethren of Purity, A Secret Society for the Establishment of the Fāṭimid Caliphate: New Evidence for the Early Dating of their Encyclopaedia," in Marianne Barrucand, ed., *L'Égypte Fatimide: son art et son histoire* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris, 1999), pp. 73–6.
- 242 Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-imtā' wa'l-mu'ānasa*, vol. 2, pp. 3–6. For the refutation see n. 13 above.
- 243 Poonawala, "Modern scholarship in Polemical Garb"; see n. 13 above.
- 244 Al-Bayhaqī, *Kitāb tatimmat ṣiwān al-ḥikma*, ed. Muhammad Shafi (Lahore: Punjab University Oriental Publications, 1351/1932–3), p. 40. It is well known that Ibn Sinā's father and his brother were Ismā'īlīs and a copy of the *Rasā'il* was in the collection of his father.
- 245 Ibid., p. 21.
- 246 Ibn al-Qifṭī, 'Alī b. Yūsuf, *Ta'rīḥ al-ḥukamā'*, ed. Julius Lippert (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1903), pp. 82–8.
- 247 al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat al-arwāḥ wa-rawḍat al-afrāḥ fī ta'rīḥ al-ḥukamā' wa'l-falāsifa*, ed. al-Sayyid Khurshid Aḥmad (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1976), vol. 2, p. 20.
- 248 See G. Flügel, "Über Inhalt und Verfasser der arabischen Encyclopädie رسائل إخوان الصفا وخلق الوفاء, i.e., die Abhandlungen der aufrichtigen Brüder und treuen Freunde," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 13 (1859), pp. 22–4.
- 249 Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn 'an asāmī al-kutub wa'l-funūn* (Istanbul: Wakālat al-Ma'ārif, 1941–5), vol. 1, p. 902.
- 250 Istanbul six copies ('Āṭif Effendi MS 1681, Esad Effendi MS 3637, Esad Effendi MS 3638, Feyzullah MS 2131, Koprulu MS 870, Koprulu MS 871); Paris three (Bibliothèque Nationale MS 2303, MS 2304, MS 6648); England five (British Museum MS OR 2359, Bodleian MS 189, MS 296, MS Or 255, MS Or 260).
- 251 For its description see Diwald, *Arabische Philosophie und Wissenschaft*, p. 29.
- 252 See n. 13 above.
- 253 Al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, ed. and tr. Farīd Jabr (Beirut: Commission Internationale pour la Traduction des Chefs d'oeuvre, 1959), p. 33 (Arabic pagination); p. 94 (French tr.); English tr. Richard McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and other Relevant Works* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), p. 89.

## Universality in Islamic Historiography

Michael G. Morony

Universality has to do with universal comprehensiveness in range or scope. Universality in historiography would then be a matter of including the history of everything possible across time and space. Ordinarily, this would tend to cross cultural boundaries, and there would seem to be some kind of conceptual kinship between the pre-modern genre of universal history and modern world history projects. In historical thought and presentation universality might be simply encyclopedic, or it might take the form of an all-inclusive chronology from creation to the end of the world. In the latter case it tends to be concerned with cosmology and the geography of the world as well as with calculating the age of the world or universe in years and with how much longer it is expected to last. In practice, however, most universal histories encompassed "the history of the universe from the moment of creation until the lifetime of the author."<sup>1</sup>

The genre of universal history appears to have originated in a Christian combination of biblical with Babylonian and Egyptian antiquities and the integration of different chronological systems in order to work out the chronology of the events of primordial history beginning with Adam. Sometimes this was joined to commentaries on the six days of creation (*Hexaemeron*) and included ideas about the origin of the arts and sciences and of civilization in general.<sup>2</sup> The incipient inclusiveness of this kind of history lay in the use of non-biblical sources by Christians, and the way it transcended cultures, languages and religions. But this was mainly in terms of the heritage of the Hellenistic world; Christian

End note 1114