

THE METAPHYSICS OF THE IKHWĀN AL-ŞAFĀ' : A PRELIMINARY SURVEY ON THEIR CONCEPT OF GOD

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Abstrak

Tulisan ini mencoba menyoroiti formulasi Ikhwān al-Şafa' tentang Tuhan sebagai suatu aspek penting dalam konsep metafisika mereka. Diskusi ini menjadi menarik karena di satu pihak, sebagai sekelompok filosof Muslim, mereka tidak dapat melepaskan diri dari prinsip-prinsip ajaran Islam; tetapi di pihak lain, wacana kefilsafatan mereka banyak dipengaruhi oleh Neoplatonisme yang memang menjadi tema utama pada masa hidup mereka. Lalu, bagaimana doktrin mereka tentang Tuhan?

Dimulai dengan penjelasan secara umum tentang Ikhwān dan *Rasā'il* mereka, artikel ini mencoba menguak tentang siapa sebenarnya Ikhwān dan siapa pengarang *Rasā'il* yang sebenarnya, yang masih terus diperdebatkan hingga saat ini. Tentu saja bahasan ini tidak lepas dari pembicaraan tentang warisan Yunani yang sangat mewarnai pemikiran Ikhwān.

Konsep tentang Tuhan dalam pemikiran kefilsafatan Ikhwān di satu pihak terpengaruh oleh konsep emanasi yang dicetuskan oleh kaum Neoplatonis. Tetapi, di lain pihak, terdapat perbedaan antara penjelasan emanasi Ikhwān dengan Plotinus. Dalam hal ini, Ikhwān lebih dipengaruhi oleh Pythagoras. Secara singkat, Ikhwān mendasarkan doktrinnya tentang Tuhan pada ajaran Islam, tetapi mencoba memformulasikan pemahaman keislamaan mereka sendiri tentang Tuhan berdasarkan prinsip-prinsip kefilsafatan. Ikhwān menerapkan doktrin tentang emanasi dan hirarki sebagai solusi yang tepat untuk menjelaskan kesatuan Tuhan, karena mereka yakin bahwa *Şhari'ah* telah dinodai oleh kesalahan-kesalahan, dan tak ada jalan lain untuk memperbaikinya kecuali lewat Filsafat.

Kritik tajam yang dapat diajukan kepada Ikhwān adalah ketidakkonsistenan ide-ide mereka. Berlawanan dengan Neoplatonisme, yang berpendapat bahwa penciptaan adalah suatu keharusan, Ikhwān berpendapat bahwa penciptaan alam merupakan hasil perbuatan Tuhan atas kehendak Suci-Nya. Kemudian Tuhan, dalam kaitannya dengan alam semesta, disebut dengan *al-Mubdi'*, *al-Mukhtari'*, *al-Muhdits*, *al-Khāliq* dan

al-Muṣawwir, yang secara umum berarti Sang Pencipta. Pendapat ini tentu saja tidak memiliki sifat.

Tulisan ini banyak mendasarkan pada karya Ian R. Netton yang berjudul *Muslim Neoplatonism: An Introduction to the Thought of Brethren of Purity* (1982) dan karya Nasr *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (1978). Karya Ikhwān sendiri baik *Rasā'il* maupun *al-Jāmi'ah* juga digunakan sebagai *cross-reference*.

ملخص

تناقش هذه المقالة صيغة إخوان الصفاء عن صفات الله في كونها عنصرا هاما في فكرتهم الميتافيزيقية . تكون هذه المناقشة مهمة وجذابة لأنها تبحث عن إخوان الصفاء كجماعة الفلاسفة المسلمين الذين لا يمكن إزالة أسس تعاليم الإسلام في جهة وفي جهة أخرى إن آراءهم الفلسفية متأثرة بأفلاطونية الجديدة لسيداتها في العالم الفكري الذي عاشو فيه . فالسؤال . ما عقيدتهم بالله؟

تبدأ هذه المقالة ببيان إخوان الصفاء ورسائلهم بيانا أجماليا . فتبين من إخوان الصفاء ومن كاتب الرسائل الحقيقي الذي لا يزال مبهما حتى اليوم . زيادة على ذلك تناقش هذه الرسالة عن الوراثة اليونانية التي لونت آراء الإخوان .

هناك وجهان في أفكارهم الفلسفية . في وجه كانت آراءهم عن الله متأثرة بمفهوم الفيض الذي أخرجته الأفلاطونية الجديدة . ولكنهم في وجه آخر خالفوا بلوطينوس في هذا المفهوم كانوا متأثرين ببيتاغورس .

تلخيصا لها يقوم الإخوان بأرائهم الإلهية على أساس تعاليم الإسلام رغم تصيغها على أساس المبادئ الفلسفية . يقوم الإخوان بتطبيق الفيض والسلسلة كجواب قاطع لتصوير وحدة الله ، لأنهم يعتقد بأن الشريعة ملوثة بالأخطاء فلا سبيل إلى إصلاحها إلا بوسيلة الفلسفة .

النقد الصارم الذي يوجه إلى الإخوان هو عدم مئانة آرائهم . مخالفتهم بالأفلاطونية الجديدة القائلة بأن خلق العالم لازم بينما الإخوان يذهبون إلى أن خلق العالم نتيجة من أفعال الله القائمة على إرادته الطاهرة . فالله في اتصاله بالعالم هو

المبدع والمخترع والمحدث والخالق والمصور . هذا الرأي يخالف آراء الإخوان
القائلة بأن ليس لله صفة .

هذه المقالة قائمة على الكتب منها ما كتبه ايان .ر. نتون : أفلاطونية الجديدة
المسلمة : مقدمة إلى آراء إخوان الصفاء (١٩٨٢) وكتاب سيد حسين نصر : مقدمة
إلى تعاليم عالمية إسلامية (١٩٧٨) ثم كتاب الإخوان : الرسائل والجامعة كمقارن
له .

This paper will attempt to describe how the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' formulated their idea of God as an important aspect of their metaphysical concepts. Basically, as a group of philosophers belonging to the Muslim *ummah*, they retained the principal doctrines of Islamic belief, especially in term of the concept of the unity of God. Although their philosophical thoughts were greatly influenced by Neoplatonism, and they were accused of being "Muslim Neoplatonists", their philosophical examination of the existence of God is clearly distinct from that of the Neoplatonists. This paper will therefore be devoted to a discussion of the ways in which the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' used the Neoplatonic approach (particularly concerning the concepts of "hierarchy" and "emanation") as a basis for their elaboration of God's unity. It will also include a discussion of the aspects in which their concept is different from or similar to that of Neoplatonists.

In discussing this issue I will rely heavily on Netton's work, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity* (1982), for its comprehensive and clear examination of the thought of the Ikhwān. Not many books provide as much complete and comprehensive information on the Ikhwān as Netton's work. Nasr's work, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (1978), is another useful resource for discussing this issue, especially concerning his examination of the principles of the cosmos and hierarchy of the universe according to the Ikhwān (Chapter Two of the First Part of the book). However, I will also try to refer directly to the Ikhwān's treatises, mainly their *Rasā'il* and *al-Jāmi'ah*. Since many of the important issues relating to their discussion on metaphysics have been quoted by both Netton and Nasr, it is inevitable that I have to make a cross-reference and compare what they write in their books with the original works by the Ikhwān. Other books and articles are also consulted to expand more elaboration on the issue.

I. Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and their *Rasā'il*

Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' was a remarkable philosophico-religious society founded in the tenth century which was both sympathetic to Shi'ite ideas and disaffected from the established political order. Like many Shi'ite theological groups, it adopted Mu'tazilite views on free will and sought to moderate the claims of orthodox theologians who advocated extreme theories of predestinarianism, which left no room for human initiative.¹ The members of this group wrote many treatises concerning their doctrines and philosophical thought which were later collected as an encyclopedic work, known as *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa Khullān al-Wafā'*. Yves Marquet suggests that the name *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* was used to conceal the individual authors of the *Rasā'il*, as the extended the term *ikhwānunā*, "our brothers", and *awliyā' Allāh*, "the friends of Allah", in addressing their fellows to cover all initiates or adepts of their doctrines.² In addition, the name was chosen, according to Tibawi, "as a protest against the treachery and lack of social cohesion of their time and as an imitation of the Sufi tendency to associate their name with *ṣafā'* (purity), an imitation which is supported by the Ikhwān's description of themselves in the *Rasā'il* as Sufis".³ The generally acceptable translation of the name is "the Brethren of Purity" or "the Sincere Brethren (and Loyal Friends)", that is to say "those who are united, in the spiritual city, by the purity of their souls ... and the loyalty that flows from this, loyalty to one another, in fact to all men, and perhaps above all to the true *imām*".⁴

However, the Ikhwān themselves provided one significant clue to the real meaning of their name as mentioned in *al-Risālat al-Jāmi'ah*. They insisted that the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' should be distinguished from the *Ikhwān al-Kadar wa-al-Shaqā'*, or the "brethren of turbidity and misfortune", the friends of Iblis. As *al-ṣafā'* is the opposite of *al-kadar* -turbidity- it should not be translated as "sincerity"; it is, therefore, more accurate to translate *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* as the "Brethren of Purity" rather than the "Brethren of Sincerity". There are still more clues found in the *Rasā'il* such as its emphasis on the necessity of purity and purification before entering Paradise. Broadly speaking, they claimed to be men of pure minds as well as specialists on the subject of mental and spiritual purity.⁵

Their writings are frequently complicated and repetitive. The subject matter they dealt with, which is "very much like the material that emerges from the deliberations of a learned society",⁶ is vast, ranging from mathematics, music and logic, through mineralogy, botany and embryology, to philosophical and theological topics. However, the *Rasā'il*

remains one of the great works of Arabic literature. Scholars agree that their epistles were written by a group of philosophers, traditionally believed to have lived in the Lower Mesopotamian river part of Basra during the tenth or eleventh century AD.⁷

These treatises, comprising a total of fifty-two *Rasā'il*, are divided into four main sections, consisting of fourteen *Rasā'il* on mathematical sciences, seventeen on natural sciences, ten on psychological and rational sciences, and eleven on theological sciences. In addition to this group of fifty-two is a further *Risālah* which seems to have been intended as a conclusion, entitled *al-Risālat al-Jāmi'ah* or the Summary. This "Summary" was intended to clarify the truths which were alluded to in the other fifty-two *Rasā'il*. According to Netton, however, the *Jāmi'ah* does not really fulfil this promise, since the work is neither exhaustive nor comprehensive. Overladen with Quranic quotations, it repeats itself frequently.⁸

With regard to the authorship of the *Rasā'il*, it has been suggested that the *Rasā'il* were the product of meetings (*majālis*) convened by the Brethren for purpose of philosophical discussion. The Brethren held special meetings at set times, in which only admitted members were allowed to participate, "where their secrets and esoteric knowledge can be discussed in peace." Nevertheless, it is possible to assume that the *Rasā'il* were written by some individual authors, as there are occasional lapses from the usual plural mode of address into the first person singular. This single author could be anyone of these scholars: Maslamah al-Majritī (d. 1008), 'Alī (d. 661), Ja'far al-Ṣiddīq (c.700-765), and Jābir b. Hayyan (c. 721-c. 815). Other possible writers of the *Rasā'il* include Abu Sulayman Muhammad b. Ma'shar al-Busti, the *Qāḍī* Abū al-Hasan 'Alī b. Hārūn al-Zanjānī, Abū Ahmad al-Nahrajūrī, and Abū al-Hasan al-Awfi.⁹

The scholars also differ in their views on the intellectual origins of the Ikhwān. Ibn al-Qiftī, for instance, considered that the Ikhwān to be followers of the rationalist Mu'tazilite school. On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyah reportedly linked the Ikhwān to the Nusayris, as far removed from rationalists as any Islamic sect. It is not surprising that some modern scholars also claim that Ikhwān were Ismā'īlīs. This claim is based primarily on the great respect the Ismā'īlīs paid to the *Rasā'il*, and their extensive use of them, especially in the Yemen. More notably, "the work is accepted by the Ismā'īlī as belonging to their religion, and is still regarded as esoteric." The idea that the Ikhwān were Ismā'īlī in nature is also supported by A. Tamir in his very detailed and convincing account

of Ismā'īlī philosophy.¹⁰ Other scholars, however, reject this idea. H.F. al-Hamdani, a well-known modern Ismā'īlī scholar, while admitting the importance of the *Rasā'il* in the Ismā'īlī mission in Yemen, disagrees with the idea that the Ikhwān were Ismā'īlīs, and attributes the treatises to the 'Alids. Another scholar, A.L. Tibawi, considers that the Ikhwān opposed the hereditary imamate and concealed *imām*, claiming that the connection between the *Rasā'il* and the Ismā'īlīs is of later origin. He went even further, stating that the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' may be taken as symbolizing the Shī'ah attempt at synthesis, similar to the synthesization developed in al-Ghazālī's works for the Sunni's part.¹¹

Concerning the nature of the Ikhwān, Nasr suggests that the Ikhwān left some clues in their *Rasā'il* that can help to clarify their position. They write, for instance, "the reason why the Brethren of Purity assemble is that each of them sees and knows that he cannot attain what he wishes concerning his well-being in this world and the attainment of success and salvation in the next world except through the cooperation of each one them with his companion." Based on this idea, the aim of the Ikhwān is neither to merely collect facts nor simply create some sort of eclecticism as which some authors accuses them of, but rather, according to their own definition, their purpose seems to be educational in the sense of the word: "to bring to fruition and perfection the latent faculties of man so that he may gain salvation and spiritual freedom. "The Ikhwān emphasized that the world is a prison for the human soul, and reminded the Brethren to free themselves from this earthly prison through knowledge. All the sciences are discussed, not for the purpose of "a purely theoretical or intellectual interpretation or for their practical application, but to help unite the knots in the soul of the reader by making him aware, on the one hand, of the great harmony and beauty of the universe and, on the other, of the necessity for man to go beyond material existence."¹² All these admonitions aim to achieve an ideal type of human feature, by borrowing from the characteristics of various nations. T.J. de Boer, restating this ideal type, explains :

This ideal, and morally perfect man, should be of East-Persian derivation, Arabic in faith, of Irak, i.e. Babylonian in education, a Hebrew in astuteness, a disciple of Christ in conduct, as pious as a Syrian monk, a Greek in the individual sciences, an Indian in the interpretation of all mysteries, but lastly and especially a Sufi in his whole spiritual life.¹³

It is also noteworthy that the aim of the Ikhwān was to combine religion and philosophy. They intended to cleanse the *sharī'ah* of all impurities by combining it with philosophy, and to reveal the essential truths of philosophy by going to its very source. They often speak of the virtues of philosophy as a way of finding the truth and their desire to combine it with the divine law of the prophets. However, they did not mean by philosophy as the rationalistic, syllogistic meaning given to it by the Aristotelians, rather they identify philosophy with *ḥikmah*.¹⁴ More clearly, philosophy for the Ikhwān is "the similitude as much as possible of man with God." It is the means which draws the elite of men or the angels on earth near to the Creator the Most High.¹⁵

With regard to the true identity of the Ikhwān, in fact, scholars still hold many contradictory opinions. According to Nasr, it can be asserted that the Ikhwān must be excluded from the school of the Mu'tazilites as well as from the followers of Aristotle. That is because the Ikhwan were more inclined to cosmological and symbolic rather than rationalistic tendencies. On the other hand, they can be connected with Pythagorean-Hermetic doctrines, popularized in the Muslim world through the writings of Jābir b. Hayyan. Moreover, the Ikhwān can be loosely connected with Ismā'īlism on the grounds that the *Rasā'il* were used extensively by the Ismā'īlīs during later centuries; and that certain basic ideas such as *ta'wīl* were widely known in both groups, especially concerning the so-called "Ismā'īlī gnosis". However, it is still more significant to describe the Ikhwān as a Shī'ite group, especially in respect to their cosmological doctrines. Their exposition of the cosmological sciences, with a tendency towards Sufism, became greatly influential in many Muslim communities during later centuries. Their conception of nature has been similarly influential on both Shī'i and Ismā'īlī thought. Their cosmological doctrines and the similarities between the *Rasā'il* and *tasawuf* influenced both al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-'Arabī to draw many formulations.¹⁶

This *Rasā'il* soon gained wide popularity and great importance due to its attempt to develop a synthesis of thought on the part of the Shī'ah during the fourth century of Hijrah. It was widely read by most learned scholars of later periods, including Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī; and later on it was translated into Persian, Turkish, and Hindustani. Nasr considered the *Rasā'il* among the most popular Islamic works on learning, since its extant manuscripts are now present in various libraries in the Muslim world.¹⁷

The *Rasā'il*, as an encyclopedic work, seems to have been formulated in the broadest sense, including all different currents of thought prevailing at the time of its composition. It also signifies the Ikhwān's inclination to be tolerant towards many different ideas, not only those belonging to "the people of the book" (*ahl al-kitāb*), but others going far beyond the limited standards of early Islam. They tended to be accepting of other branches of knowledge and schools of thought (*madhahib*), refusing to dissociate themselves from any book written by philosophers and wise men. This does not mean that they did not want to rely on the orthodox teachings of the prophets and the inspiration received by them through the angels. Their ideas and particular school of thought, however, embrace all schools and unite all branches of knowledge. They emphasized that these different schools of thought and different religions could serve as beneficial treatment for sick souls and as means of salvation from the "sea of matter and bondage of nature". This measure obliged the Ikhwān to cultivate a comprehensive mastery of all branches of knowledge in both external and internal aspects.¹⁸

II. The Greek Legacy

It is plausible to assume that the Ikhwān were very much influenced by the philosophical heritage of the Greeks, as a result of their increasing contact with the Hellenistic world. Among the Greek philosophers or the schools of philosophy having the strongest influence on the Ikhwān was Pythagoras, Aristotle and Neoplatonism. Netton maintains that the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' were permeated throughout with the spirit of Pythagoras and the Pythagorean. The Pythagorean influence on the Ikhwān is most obvious in their devotion to the study of mathematics, which led them to believe that mathematical principles were the basis of everything. Number, as Pythagoreans held, constituted the first of these principles, and many resemblances were detected between numbers and material and spiritual phenomena; the whole universe was modelled on numbers. The Ikhwān urged their fellows to acquire a good knowledge of the science of mathematics before proceeding to a study of other advanced sciences such as logic, physics and divinity.¹⁹ The Ikhwān emphasized further that the man who acquires a knowledge of number with its laws, nature, kinds and properties will be familiar with the number of kinds of created things.

This emphasis on the importance of a knowledge of number held by the Ikhwān was primarily devoted to a study of God's unity

Through a knowledge of number, the Ikhwān try to explain how the universe was originated by God. God, they claimed, existed before the Universal Intellect in the same way that number one must exist before the number two. This explains how creatures grow and reach perfection through emanation. More clearly, the issue has been paraphrased by Nettleton as follows:

Creatures grow and reach perfection from the emanation of the Creator and His generosity in the same manner that a number increases by the repetition of one. Just as two is the first number to be produced from the repetition of one, so the Universal Intellect is the first created being to emanate from the Being of the Creator. The parallelism is continued, with the number three being compared to the Universal Soul and the number four being compared to Matter, until the thousands are reached, which are compared to the animals. The whole complex symbol is reduced to unity again in the phrase "The mixture [of all] is like the one", which perhaps reflects the belief that all things are one in matter but many in form.²⁰

Nasr pays special attention to this issue. He explains that the Ikhwān considered that the science of number (*'ilm al-'adad*) would lead the way leading to the group of Unity, a science which stands above Nature and is the principle of beings and the root of the other sciences. More deliberately, the first effusion (*fayḍ*) of the Intellect is imprinted upon the Soul and the "tongue which speaks of Unity and transcendence." Metaphysically speaking, as Nasr further reveals, the relation of God to the world is comparable to that of One to other numbers. Another explanatory note given by Nasr states that the creatures proceed from God and return to Him, just like the generation and reduction of number in respect to unity. Following Pythagorean tradition, number becomes not only the instrument of division but also that of unification and integration, due to its symbolic aspects. Nasr also quotes from the esoteric *al-Risālat al-Jāmi'ah* that Being (*al-Wujūd*) corresponds to one, and the Infinite, or the Divine Essence, to zero.²¹

Besides the emphasis on the meaning of number, the Ikhwān also endorse the concept of purification formulated by Pythagorean doctrine. The *Rasā'il* includes a number of quotations from the Pythagorean legacy asserting the necessity of the purity of soul. More obviously, it was mentioned in the *Rasā'il* that purity of the soul was one of the necessary attributes for admission to Paradise, besides maintaining a righteous manner (*istiḳāmāt al-ṭarīqah*).²² But, unlike the Pythagorean who regarded

purity as an element in their soul's long journey of successive incarnations towards ultimate bliss and immortality, the Ikhwān concluded that achieving purity of the soul in this life is an infallible passport to Paradise.²³

Another influential figure in shaping the philosophical concepts of the Ikhwān was Aristotle. The Ikhwān particularly adopted the idea of First Philosophy, employing a number of basic Aristotelian terms and concept, such as substance and accident, matter and form, potentiality and actuality, and the four causes (material, formal, efficient, final - '*illah hāyūlāniyah, ṣūriyah, fā'iliyah, tamāmiyah*). For the Ikhwān, substance and accidents were fundamental concepts of their metaphysics, although they also added some new elements, as they developed them along Neoplatonic rather than traditional Aristotelian lines. The Ikhwān insisted that all things are of two types: substances and accidents (*jawāhir wa a'rad*); and that all substances are of one kind and self-existent (*qā'imah bi-anfusihā*) while accidents are present in substances as attributes (*ṣifāt*) of them. However, they did not describe God as either accident or substance, since He is the Originator and the Creator of all things.²⁴

What brings the philosophy of the Ikhwān closer to that of Aristotle, claims Netton, is their definition or description of a substance as something "self-existent and receptive of attributes (*ṣifāt*)"²⁵ However, the Ikhwān brought this Aristotelian term of substance and accident into Neoplatonic hierarchy, in which they considered substance in terms of matter and form.²⁶ The Ikhwān continued to retain some Aristotelian characteristics for these terms, however. The description given by the Ikhwān for the meaning of matter and form is not too far apart from Aristotle's definition. According to Aristotle, matter is that "which in itself is neither a particular thing nor a quantity, nor designated by any of the categories which define being." While for the Ikhwān, matter (*hāyūlā*) is "every substance receptive of form (*ṣūrah*); form is every shape and trace which the substance accepts."²⁷ This also signifies that neither the Ikhwān nor Aristotle distinguished clearly between matter and substance. Aristotle explains: "That matter is also substance is evident."²⁸

In addition to Pythagoras and Aristotle, Neoplatonism also influenced the Ikhwān greatly. The Ikhwān adopted two important concepts from the Neoplatonists, i.e. emanation and hierarchy. In Neoplatonism, the concept of hierarchy comprised three principles: The One or the Good, Intelligence or Intellect, and Soul. These three principles or hypostases are above Matter. According to Plotinus, the father of Neoplato-

nism, the One or the Good is beyond being while the second hierarchy or Intellect is said to be both Being and the Intellectual Principle. They are followed immediately by the Soul.²⁹

The second and the third hypostases, as well as all things, originated from the One through the image of generation or emanation. This concept of hierarchy is adopted by the Ikhwān, who divide it into four ranks of hierarchy: the Creator (*al-Bārī*), the Universal Active Intellect (*al-'Aql al-Kulliy al-Fa''ah*), the Universal Soul (*al-Kulliyah*), and the Prime Matter (*al-Hāyūlā al-Ūlā*).³⁰ The Ikhwān mention this issue in several places in their *Rasā'il*. The main idea insists that this hierarchical scheme resembles the generation of numbers from the number one:

Know, O brother, that the first thing which the Creator originated and invented from the light of His unity was a simple essence called the Active Intellect, just as He produced two from one by repetition. Then He created the Universal Celestial Soul from the light of the Intellect, just as He created three by addition of one to two. Then He created Prime Matter from the movement of the Soul just as He created four by adding one to three.³¹

This quotation shows clearly that the Ikhwān considered Matter a full member of emanationist hierarchy. Unlike Plotinus, who considered Matter a principle of evil and source of any weakness in the soul - therefore he did not include it in his emanationist hierarchy - the Ikhwān regarded it as a positive spiritual principle.

III. The Concept of God in the Ikhwān's Philosophical Thought

The concepts of hierarchy and emanation drafted by the Neoplatonists as a means to elaborate how beings originated from God, the One, and to describe the relationship between the various members of the hierarchy greatly influenced the Ikhwān. Using the term *ḥayḍ* for emanation, which literally means "pouring forth" or "flood", the Ikhwān tried to relate how the generosity and virtues which were in God emanated (*afāḍa*) from Him "by necessity of wisdom" (*bī-wājib al-ḥikmah*), in the same way that light and brightness emanate from the sun. The product of this unbroken emanation is called the Active Intellect (*al-'Aql al-Kulliy al-Fa''ah*), from which, in turn, emanates the Passive Intellect (*al-'Aql al-Munfa'il*) or Universal Soul, and finally, Prime Matter emanates from the latter.

On the other hand, the Ikhwān's exposition of emanation is not exactly the same as that forwarded by Plotinus. As shown by the above

explanation, the Ikhwān's discussion on emanation is believed to have been strongly influenced by Pythagorean thoughts. According to their conception, the emanation of all things from God was compared to the emanation of all numbers from the number one. More significantly, emanation and creation did not occur involuntarily as Plotinus thought. According to Plotinus, the One neither willed nor planned the emanations which proceeded from It: "the universe came into being not as the result of some carefully reasoned plan, but out of necessity." The Ikhwān, in contrast, insisted that the process of emanation and creation were the result of the Creator's choice and deliberate action. The phrase "by the necessary wisdom" signifies something which God has complete control over. In other words, the universe did not come into being purely as a result of a natural dispensation or order over which God exercised no choice whatsoever, but was rather due to the will and choice of God the Creator. Accordingly, the Ikhwān did not accept resemblance of the sun's light in the atmosphere in describing their concept of emanation.³²

Unlike Plotinus, who made only a simple triad structure of emanation, the Ikhwān reveal that the creation of the world by God or the manifestation of existence by Being is divided into nine "states of being." This division is of course more elaborate than the structure of emanation forwarded by Plotinus. Based on their great concern with the science of number (*'ilm al-'adad*), the Ikhwān insist that nine, due to its nature at the end of the decimal cycle, closes that cycle, and symbolically brings the series of numbers to an end. Accordingly, the creation of the universe, beginning with the existence of the Creator, descending through the multiple states of being, and ending with the terrestrial creatures whose final link is man, is drafted by the Ikhwān in the ensuing order: 1. Creator (*al-Bārī*), who is one, simple, eternal and permanent; 2. Intellect (*al-'Aql*), which is of two kinds: innate and acquired; 3. Soul (*al-Nafs*), which has three species: vegetative, animal and rational; 4. Matter (*al-Hāyūfā*), which is of four kinds: matter of artifacts, physical matter, universal matter, and original matter; 5. Nature (*al-Ṭābi'ah*), which is of five kinds: celestial nature and the four elemental natures; 6. Body (*al-Jism*), which has six directions: above, below, front, back, left, and right; 7. The Sphere (*al-Falak*), which has its seven planets; 8. The Elements (*al-Arkān*), which have eight qualities, as the result of the combination of the four original elements: Earth - cold and dry; Water - cold and wet; Air - warm and wet; and Fire - warm and dry; 9. Beings inhabiting in this world (*al-*

Muwalladat), which are the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms, with three parts in each.³³

With regard to the production of the "great chain of Being", the Ikhwān explain:

The first thing which the Creator produced and called into existence is a simple, spiritual, extremely perfect and excellent substance in which the form of all things is contained. This substance is called the Universal Soul (*al-Nafs al-Kulliyah*). From the Universal Soul proceeds another substance which is below the Soul and which is called Original Matter. The latter is transformed into the Absolute Body, that is, into Secondary Matter which has length, width and depth.³⁴

This explanation reveals how God, the Creator, brought all beings into existence through the process of emanation. Yet, the Ikhwān maintain that there is a great distinction between God and the universe He produced. The universe, as the Ikhwān define it, is "all the spiritual and material beings who populate the immensity of the skies, who constitute the reign of multiplicity which extends to the spheres, the stars, the elements, their products and to man."³⁵ After all, the Ikhwān insist that God is above Being and is fundamentally distinct from the universe. This universe, however, is always dependent on and related to God by its existence (*wujūd*), its persistence in being (*baqā'*), its completeness (*tamām*), and its perfection (*kamāl*). The Ikhwān insisted on this in their *al-Risālah al-Jāmi'ah*, explaining that all beings in the universe are encompassed within the order of God, nothing can exist or happen beyond His will. The first and the highest existent being, according to them, is the Universal Intellect. Its existence is the closest to God and becomes His great veil and the great gate to His unity.³⁶ This Universal Intellect, in turn, inherits the four virtues from God and transmit them to the Universal Soul, which remains passive and feminine in respect to the Intellect.³⁷

In addition to the above exposition, in their attempt to describe the relationship between God and the universe, the Ikhwān also make use of the symbolism of love (*'ishq*) in terms similar to those used by the Sufis. Basically, in Sufi terms, the relationship between God and the universe can be called a relationship of attraction, through which the whole world seeks the Creator and loves Him. For the Sufi, who treads a path followed by the Ikhwān, the Creator is really the only Beloved (*al-Ma'shūq*) and the only object of desire (*al-Murād*). This is particularly to emphasize their understanding of the Qur'ānic enactment that every be-

ing exists only to praise and glorify God.³⁸ They interpret the meaning of *tasbīḥ* (to praise or to glorify) as a hastening to fulfil His ordained will and become closer to Him.³⁹ Moreover, they claim that the power which propelled the universe into existence was the power of yearning (*al-shawq*), appropriate as "God is the first Beloved of the Universe". Every being in the universe proceeds from Him and aspires to return to Him. This aspiration is the law of the Universe or *namūs*, and the Prophet is therefore called *Ṣāhib al-Namūs*, the possessor of the Law.⁴⁰ The Ikhwān also emphasize that it was through *shawq* for Allah that the Universal Soul brought the outermost sphere of the Universe, called *al-Muḥīt*, into being. *Al-Muḥīt*, in turn, rotated to form the sphere below it, and this process continued all the way down until the sphere of the moon.⁴¹

In regard to the nature of the Universe, the Ikhwān claim it is not eternal (*qadīm*) but created or *muhdath*. It came into being after it had been non-existent (*kā'in ba'da an lam yakun*), and it came into being as it was created by God. These ideas are contrary to those adopted by the followers of Hellenistic philosophy and cosmology who believed in the eternity of the world. God has created the first four universal beings in the series of emanation (*fayḍ*) instantaneously. The other existent beings, however, were brought into existence directly by the Universal Soul, which act with the permission of God the Most High. The Ikhwān maintained that God's relationship to the world is different from that of, for instance, a mason to a house or a writer to a book. This idea was clearly manifested by the Ikhwān in their *Rasā'il* as follows:

The world in relation to Allah is like the word in relation to him who speaks it, like light, or heat or numbers to the lantern, sun, hearth or the number One. The word, light, heat and number exist by their respective sources, but without the sources could neither exist nor persist in being. The existence of the world is thus determined by that of Allah.⁴²

The above discussion brings up another distinction between the Ikhwān's theory of emanation from that of Plotinus. Plotinus claimed that emanation and creation were involuntary, which The One neither willed nor planned the emanations which proceeded from It. He argued that the universe came into being out of necessity, not as the result of exercising The One's choice or plan. This idea brings us the further consideration that The One or The Good of Plotinus is absolutely different from the Muslim *Allāh*, or even from the divine names ascribed by other religions. More obviously, Plotinus claims, The One Itself is not the Creator, and

cannot be called First Cause. The One in Plotinian concept is "lonely majesty", and it is impossible that it holds any "prediction of action".⁴³ This idea is rejected by the Ikhwan who hold that God is the Originator and the Creator of all beings. In terms of this ascription the Ikhwān called God *al-Mubdi'*, *al-Mukhtari'*, *al-Muḥdith*, *al-Khāliq* and *al-Muṣawwir*, all of which mean Creator and Originator.⁴⁴

On the other hand, both Plotinus and the Ikhwān agreed that the Intellect and the Soul played an intermediary role in the creation of the material world. The Ikhwān admitted in the *Rasā'il*, that the Soul was created through the medium of the Intellect,⁴⁵ then God created other living beings from Matter and arranged them by means of the Intellect and the Soul.⁴⁶ This intermediary role seems to mean that God did not act directly in creating the lower rank of the existent beings (the rest of the living beings), but rather with the assistance of other angelic agents, such as Nature (*al-Ṭābi'ah*).⁴⁷

The Ikhwān also held the idea that God did not move the world directly, rather it was moved by the power of the Universal Celestial Soul to whom God had entrusted "the relation of the spheres and the movement of the stars and what is under the sphere of the moon."⁴⁸ This concept is similar to that adopted by Plotinus, which stated that "the Universal Soul... operated directly on the material world with what it received from the Intellect. God's gifts, for example, were poured firstly onto the Intellect and then received by the Universal Soul which poured them forth, in turn, onto Matter."⁴⁹

Another interesting aspect of the Ikhwān's discussion of their metaphysical concepts involves the problem of the attributes of God. Like Plotinus, the Ikhwān describe God as an almost unknowable subject. This supports their idea that God is incompatible with any being whatsoever, which is clearly formulated in their concept of *tanzīh*. Due to the extreme degree to which they developed this idea, they came to the conclusion that no attribute can be ascribed to God. Any attribute predicated to Him might seem to detract His divinity and make Him appear in same way human.⁵⁰ On the other hand, this is also intended to uphold their intention of proclaiming the unity of God (*al-tawḥīd*) as the fundamental doctrine adopted by their fellows -- as always stressed throughout the *Rasā'il* -- which, consequently, necessitates their belief that God should be freed from any anthropomorphic element.⁵¹ In this respect, then, they can be compared to the Mu'tazilite school of Islamic theology.

The Mu'tazilite school of theology is well-known for the rationalistic tendencies, on which they established their main doctrines. The Mu'tazilites held five principal doctrines which had to be completely implemented in their daily lives. The first and most fundamental of those five principal doctrines was *al-tawḥīd* or belief in the unity of God. In their endeavor to establish this principle they insist that there no attribute should be ascribed to God. From their point of view, if God had attributes, the attributes must be as eternal as His essence, and if the attributes are eternal, then there would be a multiplicity of eternal beings, a belief that is nothing less than polytheism. Therefore they do not regard knowledge, power, life etc. as attributes of God. They continue to admit that God has knowledge, power, life and other qualities; yet they simply deny that these qualities are attributes in their real meaning.⁵²

God's having knowledge or knowing (*'alim*), according to Abū al-Hudhayl al-'Allāf, one of the most prominent figures among the Mu'tazilites, means that God knows through knowledge, which is He Himself.⁵³ The Mu'tazilites insist that God knows by His own essence (*'ālim bi-dhātih*), not because of a supplementary knowledge added to His essence (*lā bi-'ilm zā'id 'alā dhātih*). The same notion goes for His other qualities, like living (*ḥayāt*), being powerful (*qudrah*), and having a will (*irādah*), and so on.⁵⁴ Moreover, they also emphasize that God is knowing, powerful and alive because of His own essence, not because knowledge, power, or like are eternal attributes with an independent meaning; because, as they argue, if those attributes share eternity with Him, it implies that they also share in God's divinity. Another Mu'tazilite scholar, al-Khayyāt, tried to clarify this issue by stating that God knows by His essence and not by an additional knowledge supplemented to His essence. If this were true, argues al-Khayyāt, knowledge can be either eternal or created (*muh-dath*). However, this knowledge cannot be eternal, as that would imply that there are two eternal beings, which is impossible. On the other hand, it can be neither non-eternal or created (*muhdath*), because, if that were true, it would further imply that God creates something new on His own essence or in another place. If He creates it on His own essence, He would consequently become a place or substratum (*mahall*) for accidents (*ḥawādīth*), which would imply that He Himself is created, which is of course inconceivable too.⁵⁵ The Mu'tazilites intended to emphasize the meaning of *tawḥīd* as the negation of the eternal attributes of God and the defense of His absolute unity.⁵⁶

When the Ikhwān adopted the general view of Mu'tazilite theological thought, they also advocated the idea of negating the attributes of God as a basis for their understanding of God's absolute unity. However, this does not mean that the Ikhwān were able to solve all difficulties in their exposition of the concept of God. In short, like the Mu'tazilites, the Ikhwān denied the ascription of attributes to God. But, if God has no attributes, and if He cannot be qualified, He cannot be said to have divine will, and all notion of divine will becomes superfluous.⁵⁷ Here we find a contradiction in the Ikhwān's theological concept. Previously we noted that, in contrast to Plotinus, the Ikhwān insisted that God manifested His will in creation and emanation. Now in order to safeguard the concept of *tanzīh*, this divine will is denied. The divine will is of course one of God's attributes, through which He exercises His power, as manifested in creation and emanation.

Realizing this difficulty, the Ikhwān tried to modify their position by adopting the metaphorical expression (*'alā sabīl al-majāz*) in their treatment of divine will. Netton is right, therefore, when he says that actually the Ikhwān admitted anthropomorphic ascription to the deity, such as sitting on a throne in heaven. But this ascription is designated for the belief of unscholarly people (the common people, *al-'ammah*), since it may help them to believe in the very existence of God.⁵⁸ However, it also indicates that, to some extent, the Ikhwān did not follow Neoplatonist thought consistently, as it is doubtful whether or not they really considered that God was within or beyond being. In addition, the Ikhwān sometimes tried to give a clear description of God like that offered by traditional Islam, acting for and guiding all mankind directly. They continued to emphasize that God will reward the good and punish the wicked. In other words, they put aside the role of the Intellect or Universal Soul as Judge - as in the Neoplatonic concept - since judgment is the work for God alone. The *Rasā'il* reveals that clearly:

The souls of the believers among the saints of God and His good servants will be raised after death to the Kingdom of Heaven and the expanse of the spheres As for the souls of infidels and the profligate and the evil, they will remain, in their blindness and ignorance, tormented, in vain, grieving and sad, fearful and apprehensive, until Judgment Day.⁵⁹

In addition to the above explanation, the Ikhwān emphasize the necessity of God's direct guidance to achieve salvation. Their *Rasā'il* frequently mentions the prayers which ended many of their discussions, that

God may "grant you and us and all our brothers success in doing the right thing, and guide you and us and all our brothers along the path of righteousness." This is quite different from the way Neoplatonists perceived The One or The Good, which they did not consider a source of guidance. Furthermore, the Ikhwān also maintain that, in accordance to their prayer, they should implement the notion of seeking guidance in their daily lives among the members of their society: "each man must work out his salvation within the framework of the society in which he lives." Realizing that he cannot achieve this by his own effort, he must pursue it through the guidance and help (*ma'ūnah*) of those who are better instructed and more qualified than he, for example the Ikhwān, who regard themselves, metaphorically, as one soul in several bodies.⁶⁰

The above phrase seems to have its own significance for the Ikhwan, since they considered that each man's soul is, in fact, part of a great kingdom of souls which draw their power from the same Universal Soul. Based on this perspective, the Ikhwān identify a similar source of power on the social level. They emphasize that salvation "may be better achieved through membership of a society in which the concept of mutual help or cooperation (*ta'āwun*) is the principal driving force than in the solitary cave of the anchorite who has shunned all contact with men."⁶¹

Concluding Remarks

The Ikhwān tried to formulate their own Islamic understanding of God based on the philosophical principles which were penetrating the Islamic world during their age, especially Neoplatonist influences. They benefited from the use of emanation and hierarchy as suitable solutions to explain God's unity in the face of philosophical doctrines. That is because they believed that the *sharī'ah* had been stained or spoiled (*tadannasat*) by ignorances and errors, and there was no way to restore it except through philosophy.⁶²

Actually the Ikhwān did not see the necessity of affirming the existence of God; they considered that God's existence was clearly understood, in the same way that a human being perceives the existence of the sun. They maintain, however, that the Qur'ān orders mankind to think about the creation of the heaven and the earth and those in the spheres and even in their own selves, as the way to obtain clear and conceivable signs (*āyāt*), indicating the existence of God the Creator and the Originator of all beings.⁶³

If the existence of God can be reliably proven through a consideration of natural phenomena, belief in the unity of God requires another deliberate scrutiny. The Ikhwān attempted to formulate this issue on the basis of their philosophical thinking by relying on the concepts of hierarchy and emanation adapted from Neoplatonic ideas. The Ikhwān affirm that the whole universe was created by and originated from God through emanation. Through this emanation, God, the Creator, invented the first being in the form of a simple essence called the Active Intellect from "the light of His Unity". The way that God invented this essence resembles the way He produced two from one by repetition. In turn, the third being, called the Universal Celestial Soul, was created from the light of Intellect, just as He created three by the addition of one to two. The same way was repeated in the creation of the next being, the Prime Matter, from the movement of the Soul. The remaining existent beings were not created directly by God, but rather through the role of the Universal Celestial Soul, to whom God had entrusted the operation of the material world with what it received from the Intellect.

By adopting this theory of emanation, the Ikhwān tried to defend their doctrine of the unity of God. They emphasized that there should be no eternal being other than God. God alone is eternal, an idea which means that there cannot be any attribute to be ascribed to His majesty. He must be freed from ascribing attributes, since otherwise the attributes will be eternal as well. This will further imply that there is more than one eternal being, which negates the idea of *tawḥīd*. The use of the theory of emanation also helps the Ikhwān to explain the problem of the origination of the universe, concerning the question of the original substance out of which the universe was created. In the theory of emanation, such a question can be suspended, since the first being created by God was the Active Intellect which *emanated* from the light of God's Unity. However, it is not yet clear whether or not the Ikhwān advocated the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*. But one thing is known: for the sake of the defense of God's unity, they did not accept any other being as sharing the eternity of God, not even His own attribute.

Nevertheless, the Ikhwān were not consistent in these ideas. Their exposition on the way this emanation proceeded from God shows a different point of view. In contrast to Neoplatonism, which holds that creation is involuntary, the Ikhwān maintain that the creation of the universe was the result of God's exercise of His divine will. God, in His relation to the universe is then called *al-Mubdi'*, *al-Mukhtar'*, *al-Muḥdith*,

al-Khāliq and *al-Muṣawwir*, names derived the Qur'ān which mean the Creator or the Originator. Having such ideas in mind, it seem plausible to say that the negation of God's attributes adopted by the Ikhwān contradicts this idea. However, the Ikhwān get around this by suggesting that this idea is specified for the common or unscholarly people, to make them believe in the very existence of God. For this purpose too, the Ikhwān then describe their concept of God in the same clear terms as traditional Islam, acting and guiding all mankind directly to the righteous way of behaving. "Our Lord is He who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature, and further, gave (it) guidance" (Q.S. XX:50).

Notes

¹Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 202.

²Yves Marquet, "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā". *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Vol. III, p. 1071.

³A.L. Tibawi, "Ikhwan Aṣ-Ṣafā' and their *Rasā'il*: A Critical Review of Century and a Half of Research," *Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. II, No. 1 (1955), p. 37.

⁴Yves Marquet, "Ikhwan al-Ṣafā'", p. 1071.

⁵Ian Richard Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā')* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 6.

⁶A.L. Tibawi, "Ikhwān Aṣ-Ṣafā'", p. 37.

⁷Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 1. J. Comair, in his work *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā': Dirāsah-Muktarat* (Beirut: al-Matba'at al-Kathulikiyah, 1954) mentions that the Ikhwān society emerged during the third period of the 'Abbasid reign (334-447/946-1055). The period was marked with the 'Abbasid political disintegration and the decline of the Caliphs' authority under the Buyid's domination. See, pp. 3-4.

⁸Netton, *ibid.*, p. 3. See also J. Comair, *ibid.*, pp. 19-23.

⁹Y. Marquet, "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'", p. 1071; For further discussion on the authorship of the *Rasā'il* see, among other works, M. Stern, "The Authorship of the Epistles of the Ikhwān Aṣ-Ṣafā'" in *Islamic Culture*, No. 2 (1946), pp. 367-732; A.L. Tibawi, "Ikhwān Aṣ-Ṣafā' and their *Rasā'il*: A Critical Review of a Century and a Half of Research" in *Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. II, No. 1 (1955), pp. 28-46. See also Abbas Hamdani, "An Early Fatimid Source on the Time and Authorship of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*" in *Arabica*, Vol. XXVI, No. 1 (1979), pp. 62-75.

¹⁰Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 27.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 28. Netton, in his work cited above, has an extensive discussion on this issue which brings him to a conclusion that the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' were not Ismā'īlīs. The Ismā'īlī elements found in the *Rasā'il* are reducible to the level of

influences, and should not be regarded as indigenous factors in the doctrines of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'. See, Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, pp. 95-104.

¹²Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, p. 30.

¹³T.J. de Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam* (New York: Dover Publications, 1967), p.95.

¹⁴*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa Khullān al-Wafā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1957), Vol. III, p. 345.

¹⁵Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, p. 33.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 7; based on some quotations from the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. See also Jabūr 'Abd al-Nūr, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (Egypt: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1954), p. 15.

¹⁹Netton, *ibid.*, p. 10, based on several quotations from the *Rasā'il*.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 19.

²¹Nasr, *Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, pp. 46 and 50.

²²*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol. IV, p. 6.

²³Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 14.

²⁴*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol. I, p. 401.

²⁵*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 385. (*al-Jawhar huwa qā'im binafsihi, al-qabil li-ṣifat*).

²⁶Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 22.

²⁷*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol. II, p. 6.

²⁸Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 22, citing from *Metaphysics*, book 8, 1042a.

²⁹Netton, *ibid.*, p. 34.

³⁰*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol. I, p. 53.

³¹Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 34, citing from *Rasā'il*, Vol. I, p. 54.

³²Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 35; *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol III, p. 338.

³³Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, pp 51-52, citing from *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol. III, p. 185, 203-208.

³⁴Nasr, *ibid.*, citing from Dieterici, *Die Lehre von der Weltseele*, p. 15.

³⁵Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, p. 53, citing from *Rasā'il*, Vol. I, p. 99.

³⁶*Al-Risālat al-Jāmi'ah*, Vol. II, p. 33.

³⁷Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, p. 53; *Rasā'il*, Vol. III, p. 188.

³⁸Based on the *Qur'ānic* verse, XVII: 44.

³⁹*Al-Risālat al-Jāmi'ah*, Vol. II p. 159.

⁴⁰Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, p. 54; *Rasā'il* Vol. III, p. 275.

⁴¹Nasr, *ibid.*, citing from *al-Risālat al-Jāmi'ah*, Vol. I, pp. 276-278.

- ⁴² *Ibid.*, p 54-55, citing from *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol. III, p. 319.
- ⁴³ Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 38.
- ⁴⁴ *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol. II, p. 76.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 184.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 54.
- ⁴⁷ Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 38, citing from *Rasā'il*, Vol. II, p. 128. Unfortunately, there is no further explanation concerning this *al-Ṭābi'ah* as an angelic agent.
- ⁴⁸ *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol. III, p. 328.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 285, as cited by Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 39.
- ⁵⁰ *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol. III, pp. 403; 515; Vol. IV, pp. 206-208.
- ⁵¹ Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 42.
- ⁵² Harun Nasution, "The Place of Reason in Abduh's Theology: Its Impact on his Theological System and Views." (Ph.D. Dissertation, McGill University, 1968), p. 220.
- ⁵³ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *Maqālat al-Islāmiyyin wa-Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn*, ed. by Hellmut Ritter (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1963), p. 484.
- ⁵⁴ Zuhdi Hasan Jar Allah, *al-Mu'tazilah* (Beirut: al-Ahliyah, 1974), p. 63.
- ⁵⁵ Abū al-Ḥusayn b. Uthmān al-Khayyāt, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār wa-l-Radd 'alā Ibn al-Rawandī al-Mulhid*, ed. by H.S. Nyberg (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 1925), p. 111.
- ⁵⁶ Zuhdi Hasan Jar Allah, *al-Mu'tazilah*, p. 5.
- ⁵⁷ Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 39, citing from *Rasā'il*, Vol. III, p. 338.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- ⁵⁹ *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol. III, p. 290, as quoted in Netton, *ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol. IV, p. 48, as quoted in Netton, *ibid.*, p. 42.
- ⁶¹ Netton, *ibid.*
- ⁶² Abū Hayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-Imtā' wa-al-Mu'ānathah* (Beirut: al-Maktabat al-'Aṣriyah, 1965), Part II, p. 5.
- ⁶³ Jabur 'Abd al-Nūr, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, p. 34.

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