

Studia graeco-arabica

6

2016

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Web site: <http://learningroads.cfs.unipi.it>

Service Provider: Università di Pisa, ICT - Servizi di Rete Ateneo

ISSN 2239-012X (Online)

Registration at the law court of Pisa, 18/12, November 23, 2012.

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Cover

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

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Sa'īd ibn Dādhurmuz's Epistle on Soul and Spirit

Veysel Kaya

Abstract

This article briefly addresses the content of Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz's *Risāla fī l-Nafs wa-l-rūh*, an epistle which was written as a complementary section to the author's *Risāla fī Fadl al-ābira 'alā l-dunyā* (*Epistle on the Superiority of the Hereafter over This World*). In these epistles, the author aims to posit the superiority and substantiality of the Hereafter as opposed to the inferiority and imperfection of the worldly life. The author regards an investigation about the essence of soul/spirit (*nafs/rūh*) as a necessary task, because one cannot truly understand the issue of the Hereafter without knowing what the human soul is. Typically, Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz attempts here an amalgamation of philosophical and religious discourses while quoting from several philosophical works available to him. Hence, after close examination, the Arabic Aristotle, Arabic Plato, al-Kindī, Miskawayh and especially the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* appear to be among his sources. Besides, a part of the *Epistle on Soul and spirit* which addresses certain sayings of the past prophets before Muḥammad about spirit attracts special attention.

Aim

The idea that philosophy has its roots in the teachings of the prophets, which is aptly called by Henry Corbin "philosophie prophétique" (*al-ḥikma al-nabawiyya*), was familiar to the Muslim community since the time Greek philosophy was transferred into the Muslim lands. Philosophers such as al-Kindī and Abū Zayd al-Balḥī were seen as proponents of this amalgamation of *ḥikma* and *ṣarī'a*. This attitude, of course, found its avid proponents in the fourth century H., in the hands of the Brethren of Purity. In a famous passage quoted by his disciple Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, Abū Sulaymān al-Siġistānī finds the effort of combination to be vain, particularly addressing to the Brethren.¹ However, contrary to the expectations of al-Siġistānī, the subsequent (5th/11th) century was to witness several figures who attempted to combine the fields that had been positioned against each other in the earlier centuries of Islam. In jurisprudence, al-Māwardī is mentioned for his integrating the philosophical elements into his juridical writings.² In theology, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī received criticisms from his fellow adherents of the Mu'tazilite school for his philosophical approach to the Kalām.³ Among such names, al-Ġazālī is obviously the towering figure, who has frequently been mentioned for his applying the logical structures into the field of jurisprudence and theology, and who was deeply inspired by the philosophy of Avicenna, although he had declared the latter an

¹ Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtā' wa-l-mu'ānasa*, ed. H.Ḥ. al-Ṭu'aymī, al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, Beirut, pp. 162-76.

² J. van Ess, "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology", in G.E. Grunebaum (ed.), *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, Otto Harrasowitz, Wiesbaden 1970, p. 21.

³ W. Madelung, "Abū'l-Husayn al-Baṣrī's Proof for the Existence of God", in J. Montgomery (ed.), *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy from the Many to the One. Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank*, Peeters, Leuven 2006 (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 152), pp. 273-80.

unbeliever in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers*. In this century, such an eclectic attempt arose from a mysterious Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, a name which is completely unknown. His project was to merge rational disciplines into a single unity, those including the philosophical tradition of al-Kindī and the Mu'tazilite theology.⁴ During my ongoing studies on the writings of Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, I have recently discovered that he was significantly influenced by the *Epistles of the Sincere Brethren* (Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'), so much so that the spirit of his writings can essentially be labeled as "Iḥwānian". Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz's project was to enhance and update the syncretic philosophy of the Brethren of Purity. It must be kept in mind that Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz did this in a century in which both *i'tizāl* and *falsafa* were received with categorical denial in the eyes of religious authorities.⁵

The subject of this short paper is the *Risāla fī l-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ* (ff. 37v - 52r), one of the two extant works by Sa'īd. Early in this epistle, the author announces his intention to discuss the issue of soul at length in this separate *risāla*. As it will appear under the heading "Structure" below, the epistle actually exhibits a mosaic which touches upon several aspects of the issue of soul, rather than a systematical examination of the subject matter. However, the epistle does not lack philosophical depth, for it carefully emphasises the key notions to establish the rationale for the entire body of Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz's writings, that is, soul and its achievements must absolutely be kept apart from body, hence its salvation ought to be searched for in spiritual virtues.⁶

Structure

The introductory passage of the epistle emphasises the fundamental notion of Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz's overall project: there is no way to achieve knowledge of the hereafter other than knowing first the true nature (*ḥaqīqa*) of the soul, thus reaching the conclusion that soul survives its separation from body.⁷ This primordial notion is supported by two main realms of authority. Firstly, in terms of the realm of rational argumentation, the sages (*ḥukamā*) have demonstrated that the hereafter is a second resurrection for human beings after their death, and this means that their soul will endure after its separation from body. Secondly, as for the realm of religious proofs, the notion is firmly established by the statements of religious authorities. The Quranic verse, "O you the soul satisfied! Come back to your Lord well-pleased and well-pleasing" (89: 27-28) is a clear evidence to the human soul's coming back to where it belongs, that is, the vicinity of God. Moreover, the saying of the Prophet "the soul of the believer shines to the dwellers of the heavens, as the stars shine to the dwellers of the earth" stresses this belonging. After giving these proofs from the Quran and the *ḥadīth*, Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz appeals to another authority, this time more indicative of the background of his writings: the fourth caliph 'Alī. Simply introduced by a salutation word "peace be upon him" and without mentioning the name of the caliph, the author briefly quotes from his famous saying: "all people are asleep; when they die, they wake up".⁸

⁴ V. Kaya, "Kalām and Falsafa Integrated for Divine Unity: Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz's (5th/11th century) *Risāla fī l-Tawḥīd*", *Studia graeco arabica* 4 (2014), pp. 65-123. In the present article I will refer to the manuscript which is described therein.

⁵ The strong reaction of the 'Abbāsīd regime against the Mu'tazilite theologians is described by G. Makdisi, *Ibn 'Aqil. Religion and Culture in Classical Islam*, Edinburgh U.P., Edinburgh 1997.

⁶ The Arabic text of this epistle, with two other epistles of Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, will hopefully be available in my future monograph, which will be published by Klasik Yayınları, İstanbul 2017.

⁷ This is clearly stated in the *Rasā'il Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'*, 5 vols, ed. Ā. Tāmīr, Éditions Oueidat, Beirut-Paris 1995, III, p. 237.

⁸ Elsewhere, the author similarly quotes a poem, which is attributed to 'Alī, without mentioning the caliph's name (*qāla ba'd ḥukamā al-'arab*). The fact that 'Alī's name is intentionally disregarded is meaningful, if we are to place the

This brief introduction is followed with a long quotation from the Arabic version of the Buddhist tale *Barlaam and Josaphat*, which is known in early Islamic literature as *Bilawhar and Būdāsif*.⁹ Our author quotes a part of the tale in several pages to strengthen his position that the life in the Hereafter is of the utmost superiority when compared to the worldly life, since the latter brings only obstacles for human beings' salvation. As an example, in the author's words "[one must] find the purity of the world as turbid, its joy as distress, its rich as poverty, its power as weakness, its glory as shame, its benefit as grief and sorrow, its happiness as delusion. No one comes into any bit of richness without facing afterwards several kinds of poverty; and no one fulfils any wish without falling into other wishes" (f. 38r). As is typical of the writing style of Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, the whole quotation is masterfully adapted to the flow of the text, without mentioning neither the names of the main characters, i.e., Bilawhar and Būdāsif, nor the actual source the author depends on in his narrative. We know that the tale was widespread from the 8th century onwards up to the 11th century, notably in Ismaili circles. Besides, it is intriguing that the very part which is quoted in Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz's epistle can be partially found in al-Ġazālī's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*.¹⁰ All in all, this narration is used and contextualised by the author in terms of religious argumentations for the superiority and permanence of soul, hence implicitly regarding Bilawhar as a link of the prophetic chain that formed the entire body of religious truth. No doubt, this is in complete accordance with the Brethren's reference to Bilawhar himself, that is, with their representation of the latter as a prophet.¹¹

In parallel with the same context, Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz's epistle *On Soul and spirit* continues to provide prophetic material in order to shed more light on the nature of spirit, a topic which is frequently addressed by the author as one of the most difficult issues to be dealt with. Our author's determination to clarify the matter in this way makes us come across a very rare collection of the prophetic sayings in this genre, all of which are dedicated to the description of the nature of spirit. These prophets belong, all of them, to the Abrahamic-Islamic tradition; their list includes Abraham, Hūd, Ismael, and David, and their sayings are specifically dedicated to defining different aspects of the human spirit (*rūḥ*):¹²

writings of Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz in an Ismaili/Shiite environment. In the meantime, the centrality of the knowledge of soul is similarly emphasized in the sayings attributed to 'Alī. For an overview of these sayings, see I. Panjwani, "The Soul", in I. Kalin (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Science, and Technology in Islam*, 2 vols, Oxford U.P., Oxford 2014, II, pp. 267-73. In fact, the caliph 'Alī was regarded as the source of *ḥikma*, hence called *ḥakīm* in the philosophical circles of the 10th/11th century. For an exemplary observation by Avicenna regarding the famous saying *man 'arafa nafṣahū fa-qad 'arafa rabbahū*, see Āyatullah Ḥasan Ḥasanzādah al-Āmulī, *Šarḥ al-'uyūn fī šarḥ al-'uyūn*, Markaz-i Intiṣārāt-i Daftar-i Tabliġāt-i Islāmī, Qum 1421, pp. 57-9.

⁹ For general information on *Bilawhar* see D.M. Lang, "Bilawhar wa-Yūdāsaf", *EP*, Brill, Leiden 1986, I, pp. 1215-7; J.P. Asmussen, "Barlaam and Iosaph", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/barlaam-and-iosaph-persian-belawhar-o-budasaf-a-greek-christian-or-christianized-novel-of-buddhist-origins-which-througho> (accessed online at 2 October 2016). The Arabic text can be found in D. Gimaret, *Le Livre de Bilawhar et Būdāsif selon la version arabe ismaélienne*, Dar al-Machreq, Beirut 1986, the corresponding part at pp.12-17. For the usage of the story of Barlaam and Josaphat by the Iḥwān al-Šafā', see S.M. Stern, "The Authorship of the *Epistles* of the *Ikhwan al-Safā'*", *Islamic Culture* 20 (1946), pp. 367-72.

¹⁰ al-Ġazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, eds. A. Qāsim - M. al-Ṭayyib al-Nazlī, Maṭba'atu Muḥammad Šāhin, Cairo 1279, III, p. 251.

¹¹ I. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity*, George Allen & Urwin Ltd., London 1982, p. 90; G. de Callatāy, *Ikhwan al-Safā'. A Brotherhood of Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam*, One-world, Oxford 2005 (Makers of the Muslim World), pp. 78-9.

¹² Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, *Risāla fī l-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, f. 41 v.

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| Prophet Abraham: | “Reflect upon the spirit, which was made by God a sign in the offspring of Adam. Don’t you see that man is still hearing, seeing, knowing, and speaking (<i>nātiq</i>) as long as the spirit stays in him? If man loses his spirit, he becomes dumb, blind, and deaf. Don’t you know that the share of spirit is knowledge, remembrance of God the Most High, His obedience, and His knowledge, just as the share of body is eating and drinking? If body continues to eat and drink, it grows and has the strength for its action. Similarly, if the spirit receives its nourishment, which is knowledge and wisdom, it perceives its substance at once, knows its own self, and has the strength for the knowledge of its Creator. Then, God gives him the water of eternal life to drink”. |
| Prophet Hūd: | “Verily, God created the spirits of the knowers (<i>‘arīfīn</i>) from His light, and the spirits draw their possessors to their mines. Whoever is bestowed with one of the lights of God and one of the spirits of God, obtains a great outcome”. |
| Prophet Ismael: | “Know that God is with you in every place because he has put in you some of His spirit which does not perish, and of His light which does not die out. Don’t be afraid of death, if you know the unity of God! This is because the spirit which is truly supported by the knowledge of God, and knowledge of His unity, does not die”. |
| Prophet David: | “The spirit of lust is for animals and unbelievers (<i>kuffār</i>); the spirit of anger is for predatory animals and wicked people; and the spirit of knowledge is for pure and pious believers”. |

Thus, after strengthening his position on a religious basis, the author is now ready to put forward some rational argumentations in order to establish the spirit’s distinctive nature, that is, its being free from any material qualities. The definition presented by the author is evidently taken from the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*, a collection of texts which seems to have heavy influence on the writings of Sa’id b. Dādhurmuz. Thus, the spirit is defined as “a spiritual substance, living by virtue of itself (*bi-l-dāt*), knowing in potency, active with divine guidance”, not a body, accident or bodily mixture (*mizāğ*), as was claimed by naturalist philosophers and other heterodox groups (*ahl al-bi’da*).¹³ Furthermore, the spirit’s distinctive nature is evinced in its capability of receiving countless immaterial qualities. To put it more simply, while the bodily substance has a limited capacity to receive bodily substances, such as heat, cold, shape and form, the spiritual substance is ready to receive numerous kinds of spiritual accidents, such as knowledge, wisdom, virtue, and justice. In the author’s words, “when the bodily substance receives a form, it cannot receive another form from the same genus unless it leaves the first form. For instance, if a board’s surface takes a form of writing, it will not possibly take another writing unless the first form is removed. But when it comes to the spiritual substance, it is simple; it does not include any combination; it does not have any measure; and its power for receiving knowledge and virtue is not limited. Rather, it receives numerous forms without losing any one of them. On the contrary, the more the forms of knowledge in it multiply,

¹³ Sa’id b. Dādhurmuz, *Risāla fī l-Nafs wa-l-rūh*, f. 41 r. For the same definition, see *Rasā’il Iḥwān al-Ṣafā’*, V, 145 (using *nafs* instead of *rūh*). Here, the Brethren further explain that, by this definition, any claim that soul is dead, ignorant and passive will be left out. In the philosophy of the Brethren of Purity, all the existent beings (*mawğūdāt*) fall into two categories: material (*ğismānī*) and spiritual (*rūhānī*). The material beings are perceived by the senses, while the spiritual beings are perceived by thinking. The spiritual beings are also divided into three: (1) The primal *hyle* is a simple substance which is passive (*munfā’il*), (2) the soul is a simple substance, but it is active (*fa’āl*) and knowing, and (3) the intellect is passive with respect to God, but it is also the agent and cause of the things. God cannot be categorised, neither as material nor spiritual. See *Rasā’il Iḥwān al-Ṣafā’*, V, pp. 207-8. Al-‘Āmirī similarly states that the rational soul is “knowing” (*‘allāma*) and “active” (*fa’āla*) at the same time: *Kitāb al-Amad ‘alā l-Abad*, in E.K. Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and Its Fate: al-‘Āmirī’s Kitāb al-Amad ‘alā l-Abad*, American Oriental Society, New Haven (CT) 1988, p. 90.

the more its power to receive other forms increases in limitless number".¹⁴ We are familiar with this line of reasoning in other Arabic texts which were produced in the same milieu.¹⁵

Making the most of the diversity of the philosophical culture in his age, Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz does not miss any opportunity to bring forward his major source of inspiration, the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*. In such a case, he quotes from the epistle *Fī l-'Aql wa l-ma'qūl*, where the Brethren discuss the cogitative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mufakkira*) and its functions. Therein, the Brethren distinguish the cogitative faculty from the rational/speech faculty (*al-quwwa al-nātiqa*), comparing the relation between them to the relation between the king and his translator. Just as the king consults his translator and depends on him to answer the questions of other people, the cogitative faculty gets help from the rational/speech faculty to construct discourse and speech.¹⁶ The rational faculty gives to the words their meanings, which are present as forms in the cogitative faculty. Then, these words are delivered to the expressive faculty (*al-quwwa al-mu'abbira*) in order to construct different kinds of speech forms in different languages. Afterwards, in an intriguing passage, the Brethren attribute many actions to the cogitative faculty, including discernment (*rawiyya*), perception (*taṣawwūr*), syllogism (*qiyās*), physiognomy (*firāsa*), interpretation of dreams, and revelation and inspiration (*wahy wa-ilhām*). Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz incorporates this passage into his writing, although he connects these actions to the cogitative spirit (*al-rūḥ al-'ilmī*), applying his own vocabulary.

| Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, <i>Risāla fī l-Nafs wa l-rūḥ</i> , f. 43 r | <i>Rasā'il Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'</i> , III, p. 202 |
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| <p>وللروح قوى كثيرة وله بها أفعال عجيبة وأمور عظيمة وقد يفعل الإنسان بهذا الروح العلمي أفعالا كريمة لأنه بالتفكير يستخرج غوامض العلوم وبالروية يدبر أمر الملك والسياسة وبالأعتبار يعرف الأمور الماضية مع الزمان وبالتصوير يدرك حقائق الأشياء ويعرف المبادئ والجواهر البسيطة وبالتركيب والتدبير يستخرج الصناعات وبالجمع يعرف الأجناس والأنواع وبالقياس والفراسة يدرك الأمور الغامضة ويعرف ما في الطباع وبالزجر والقال ينظر في الحوادث وبالمنامات وتأويلها يعرف كثيرا من البشارات والإنذارات ويقبول الوحي والإلهام يقوى على وضع السنن وإقامة الشرائع العائدة لمصالح الدين والدنيا.</p> | <p>أن القوة المفكرة لها أفعال كثيرة تستغرق فيها أفعال سائر القوى (...) فاما بالفكر فاستخراج الغوامض من العلوم وبالروية تدبير الملك وسياسة الأمور وبالتصوير يدرك حقائق الأشياء وبالأعتبار معرفة الأمور الماضية من الزمان وبالتركيب استخراج الصناعات أجمع وبالتحليل معرفة الجواهر البسيطة والمبادئ وبالجمع معرفة الأنواع والأجناس وبالقياس درك الأمور الغائبة بالزمان والمكان وبالفراسة معرفة ما في الطباع من الأمور الخفية وبالزجر معرفة حوادث الأيام وبالتهكن معرفة الكائنات بالموجبات الفلكية وبالمنامات معرفة الإنذارات والبشارات ويقبول الخواطر والإلهام والوحي معرفة وضع النواميس وتدوين الكتب الإلهية وتأويلاتها المكنونة التي لا يمسه إلا المطهرون من أدناس الطبيعة الذين هم أهل البيت الروحانيون.</p> |

Plato's tripartite division of the human soul, i.e., the rational, concupiscent and irascible faculties, was a commonplace among the Arab philosophers, starting from early figures such as al-Kindī and Abū Bakr al-Rāzī.¹⁷ The Brethren of Purity have recourse to this division in numerous places of

¹⁴ Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, *Risāla fī l-Nafs wa l-rūḥ*, f. 42 r.

¹⁵ 'A. Badawī, "Introduction", *Muntabkab Siwan al-Hikmah et trois traités*, Dar Byblion, Paris 2004, pp. 27-28. For another parallelism between al-Sigistānī and Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, see Kaya, "Kalām and Falsafā" (quoted above, n. 4), p. 77.

¹⁶ The analogy of "translator" is occasionally repeated in *Rasā'il Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'*, III, pp. 199-201.

¹⁷ Al-Kindī sees the soul (*nafs*) as a divine and spiritual substance, and the concupiscent and irascible faculties as those powers (*quwwa*) which distract the soul from its noble character. See al-Kindī, *Fī l-Qawl fī l-Nafs*, in *Rasā'il al-Kindī al-falsafiyā*, ed. M.'A. Abū Rīda, Dār al-Fikr al-'arabī, I-II, Cairo 1950-53, I, p. 273. According to Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, Plato,

their epistles. In a typical passage, the embodied-particular soul (*al-nafs al-ğuz'iyya al-muğassada*) was parted into three types: the vegetative concupiscent soul, whose desire is for eating, drinking, and sex, the animal irascible soul, whose desire is for dominance and leadership, and the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nātiqa*), whose desire is for the attainment of sciences and virtues.¹⁸ The Iḥwānian sketch appears to be strikingly similar to Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz's treatment of the human spirit in his epistle. Hence, it is not surprising to see that the tripartite division is applied throughout his epistles.¹⁹ However, contrary to his predecessors, our author prefers to go with his own vocabulary choice, that is, the cogitative spirit (*al-rūḥ al-ilmī*) the concupiscent spirit (*al-rūḥ al-šahawī*), and the irascible spirit (*al-rūḥ al-ğadabī*). This preference can be best explained by his effort to see the religious and philosophical discourse at the same level. In fact, Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz explicitly points to the fact that the saying of the Prophet David about the *rūḥ*, which has been quoted above, portrays the very same idea of the philosophers about the tripartite definition of soul.²⁰

The Platonic themes in the epistle strengthens with a subsequent section which exhibits another well-known element of Plato's philosophy: the four cardinal virtues of prudence (*'iffa*), courage (*šağā'a/nağda*), wisdom (*ḥikma*) and justice (*'adāla*).²¹ When the spirit is purified, refined, and perfected by knowledge, and by acquiring these four virtues, it reaches the real pleasure (*al-ladḍa al-ḥaqīqīyya*), which is far greater than every mundane pleasure.²² The well-being of human beings both in this world and in the hereafter is achieved only through these virtues.²³ However, one might need to be aided by his bodily features to complete the acquisition of these virtues, since the only qualities whose attainment is accomplished by the pure powers of the spirit is theoretical wisdom and gnosis (*ma'rifa*).²⁴

The human spirit's necessary engagement with its body results in worldly ties that distract human beings from their path towards salvation. In fact, men's love of the world is firmly grounded in their natural disposition from their birth. For human beings were created out from earth; and, in this sense, it is their "mother". Human beings are the children of the earth, and one should not be blamed for loving his mother. It follows that their inclination towards the Hereafter, and their preference for it instead of this world are only accomplished with an additional effort, which comes after their natural disposition.²⁵ The spirits that fall short of the path of perfection are stuck in the false pleasures of the worldly life: a serious obstacle for one who attempts to reach the real happiness (*al-*

"the Sheikh of Falāsifa" maintained that there are three souls (*anfus*) in man: *al-nafs al-nātiqa* which is divine, *al-nafs al-ğadabiyya* which is animal, and *al-nafs al-šahawāniyya* which is vegetative. See Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī, *Rasā'il falsafīyya*, ed. P. Kraus, Dār al-Āfāq al-Ğadīda, Beirut 1982, p. 27. For its usage in Rāğib al-Isfahānī, see A. Key, *A Linguistic Frame of Mind: al-Rāğib al-Isfahānī and What It Meant To Be Ambiguous*, PhD Dissertation, Harvard University 2012, p. 94.

¹⁸ *Rasā'il Iḥwān al-Şafā'*, V, p. 348. For other places, see for example, II, p. 266; p. 298; III, pp. 56-7.

¹⁹ Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, *Risāla fi Faḍl al-āḥira' alā l-dunyā*, f. 27 r; 27 v; *Risāla fi l-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, f. 41 v; 44 r; 49 r. Miskawayh, another source for Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, also uses the division in his *Refinement of the Character*: Ibn Miskawayh, *Tabḍīb al-aḥlāq*, ed. Q. Zurayk, Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyya, Beirut 1966, repr. Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyya, Beirut 1985, p. 13 ff. (quoted from the reprint).

²⁰ Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, *Risāla fi l-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, f. 49 r: *al-rūḥ al-ilmī wa-l-rūḥ al-šahawī wa-l-rūḥ al-ğadabī wa-biya allatī waşafahā Dāwūd 'alayhi l-salām*.

²¹ The four virtues are strongly emphasized in Miskawayh, *Tabḍīb al-aḥlāq*, p. 15 ff. Zurayk.

²² Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, *Risāla fi l-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, f. 44 r.

²³ Id., *Risāla fi l-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, f. 49 r.

²⁴ Id., *Risāla fi l-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, f. 45 v.

²⁵ Id., *Risāla fi Faḍl al-āḥira' alā l-dunyā*, f. 6 v.

sa'āda al-ḥaqīqīyya). Accordingly, the author concludes the epistle with a section on bodily pleasures (*al-laddāt al-ḡismāniyya*). It initially appears that the dichotomy between pleasure and pain (*alam*) is taken as a precept. Hence, pleasure is defined as the relief from pain, a notion that was stated by several authors before.²⁶ In this respect, the true pleasures reached only by are the rational abilities of the soul, that is, understanding, gnosis, the vision of God, and the perception of good. All these virtues cannot be attained through bodily/material attachments.²⁷

As a Conclusion

Does the text of Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz's *Epistle on Soul and Spirit* clearly differentiate between the terms spirit (*rūḥ*) and soul (*nafs*)? In comparison with the philosophical writings that deal with the difference between these terms,²⁸ our text does not seem to apply a strict criterion to separate from one another. On the contrary, we come across passages where both terms are used interchangeably. Hence, just before the author engages in narrating the saying of the past prophets, Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz contends,

وقد قلنا غير مرة إن جميع ما يناله النفس من الخيرات إنما يناله عند معرفة الله تعالى، ولا وصول إلى هذه المعرفة العالية إلا بعد معرفة الروح وبقائه بعد مفارقة البدن. فمن الواجب إذن على الإنسان أن يصرف همه ووكده إلى طلب معرفة النفس، فإنها هي السبيل إلى معرفة أمر الآخرة.²⁹

This passage adequately shows that our author has the same meaning in mind when he speaks of “knowledge of the spirit” and “knowledge of the soul”, since either is taken as the preliminary requirement for anyone's path to knowledge of God, the highest and noblest science for mankind. Be that as it may, Sa'īd's insistent attitude to use the term “spirit” rather than “soul” as he refers to the three faculties of the spirit (rational, concupiscent and irascible) deserves careful attention. This choice makes him closer to those authors who hold that spirit (*rūḥ*) is specific to individual souls, hence, personal and material. In this sense, the human spirit is also responsible for the rational faculties such as thinking (*fīkr*), distinguishing (*tamyīz*), and discerning (*rawiyya*).³⁰ Moreover, the prophets Abraham, Hūd, Ismael and David had specifically mentioned this *rūḥ* when they described the human spirit and its relation to God. Our author is very much aware that, clinging to the word *rūḥ*, he holds his philosophy as close as possible to the prophetic wisdom, the origin of human awareness of metaphysical realities.³¹

²⁶ *Rasā'il Ihwān al-Ṣafā'*, III, pp. 49-50; 256; Miskawayh, *Tahdīb al-ahlāq*, p. 37 Zurayk.

²⁷ Gerhard Endress addresses this notion in terms of “Platonic *Geistmetaphysik*” and sees it as a “clear continuity with the tradition of al-Kindī”: see G. Endress, “Platonic Ethics and the Aristotelian Encyclopaedia”, in E. Coda - C. Martini Bonadeo (eds.), *De l'Antiquité tardive au Moyen Âge*, Vrin, Paris 2014 (Études musulmanes, 44), pp. 465-90, in part. pp. 471-3.

²⁸ Qustā b. Lūqā (d. before 311/923) posits *rūḥ* as a thin matter which permeates throughout the body, and *nafs* as an immaterial substance which is the cause of movement in body. It is the *rūḥ* that is responsible for the rational faculties such as *fīkr*, *rawiyya*, and *tamyīz*. The *rūḥ* is the proximate cause of the human life, while *nafs* is the remote cause of it. See Qustā b. Lūqā, *Kitāb al-farq bayna l-rūḥ wa-l-nafs wa quwā al-nafs wa-māhiyyat al-nafs*, in H. Ziya Ülken, *Rasā'il Ibn Sinā*, Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, Istanbul 1953, pp. 83-94. See also Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher*, p. 267.

²⁹ Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, *Risāla fī l-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, f. 41 r.

³⁰ Cf. Qustā b. Lūqā, mentioned above.

³¹ Very close to the Ismaili interpretation, Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz elsewhere writes: “the prophets are the teachers of people; the angels are the teachers of the prophets; the sacred spirits and active intellects are the teachers of the angels; and the Creator the Exalted is the teacher of all. Accordingly, God said: “He taught by the pen, and taught man that which he did not know” (96:4-5)”: Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, *Risāla fī Faḍl al-āḥira 'alā l-dunyā*, ff. 19v - 20r.

