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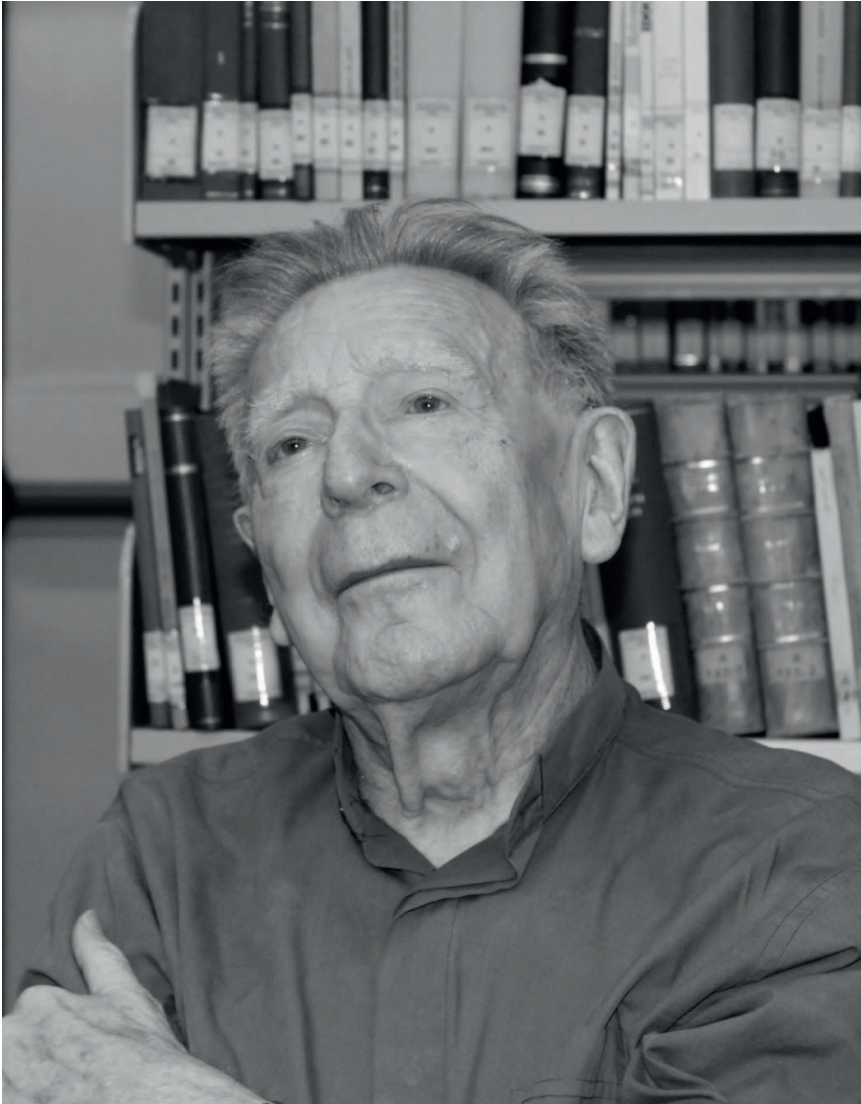


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Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v  
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Maurice Borrmans MAfr. (1925-2017)

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# *Ethics as Likeness to God in Miskawayh*

## *An Overlooked Tradition*

Hans Daiber

### *Abstract*

We have a fairly good knowledge of Miskawayh's ethics and his sources. Still puzzling is his combination of Platonic, Aristotelian and Neoplatonic concepts. In single cases Miskawayh's use of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* betrays Neoplatonizing interpretations, perhaps due to Hellenistic commentaries. Why and how these interpretations are introduced in Miskawayh's ethics, is still unclear. The paper will focus on an overlooked tradition about the soul, which evolved to be the common basis for ethics from al-Kindī to Miskawayh. This tradition can be traced back to critical discussions about the soul by Alexandrian philosophers since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Porphyry's pupil Iamblichus (d. 330 AD) seems to have played a remarkable role, also in the ethics of Miskawayh, as a comparison with Iamblichus' commentary on the Pseudo-Pythagorean *Golden Verses* shows. This commentary is lost in the Greek original, but is available in an Arabic translation from the early 9<sup>th</sup> century.

We have a fairly clear idea of the diversity of Miskawayh's (ca. 320/932 - 421/1030) sources in his *Tabdīb al-ahlāq*,<sup>1</sup> his main work on ethics.<sup>2</sup> At first sight and as shown recently by scholars, Miskawayh's concept is based mainly on a combination of Aristotelian and Platonic traditions. In addition, Neoplatonic commentaries are integrated, as well as central concepts of Fārābī's *Perfect State*, including Fārābī's epistemological idea of divine revelation to the prophet-ruler.<sup>3</sup>

What is Miskawayh's motif to combine divergent sources and traditions in his *Tabdīb al-ahlāq*? The answer requires a comparison with Fārābī's *Perfect State*. Contrary to Miskawayh, Fārābī did not concentrate on ethics. His *Perfect State* is more interested in citizenship and rulership and their epistemological background.

Miskawayh's ethics appears to be a supplement to Fārābī's political philosophy and concentrates on the ethics of the individual. He quotes Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and adds comments taken from Greek-Hellenistic texts, partly ascribed to Porphyry ("and others").<sup>4</sup> Most important is a passage in *Treatise III* of Miskawayh's *Tabdīb*, rendering Miskawayh's opinion on the "spiritual virtue" leading to perfect happiness. It is followed by an excerpt on the "Virtues of the Soul" attributed to "the philosopher".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ed. C.K. Zurayk, al-Ġāmi'a al-Amīrikiyya, Beirut 1966. Translated by C.K. Zurayk, *The Refinement of Character (Tabdhib al-Akhlāq)*, Kazi Publications, Chicago 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. G. Endress, "Ancient Ethical Traditions for Islamic Society: Abū 'Alī Miskawayh", in U. Rudolph - R. Hansberger - P. Adamson (eds.), *Philosophy in the Islamic World 1: 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, English translation by R. Hansberger, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2017 (Handbook of Oriental Studies I, vol. 115.1), pp. 304-44.

<sup>3</sup> See below, n. 49 and 50.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Endress, "Ancient Ethical Traditions" (above, n. 2), pp. 324f.

<sup>5</sup> On this see below, n. 18.

Both sections are preceded by a doxographical report<sup>6</sup> about two groups of philosophers:

a) Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato<sup>7</sup> “and the like”, who considered the virtues and happiness as belonging to the soul alone.

b) The Stoics “and a group of the Naturalists”, according to whom happiness of the soul alone is incomplete. Miskawayh took his doxographical information from a small text on the virtues of the soul, the *Maqāla fi iḥbāt fadā'il al-nafs*, attributed to Plato. It criticizes those who prefer asceticism to wealth.<sup>8</sup>

Miskawayh himself is convinced, that happiness only belongs to the soul. According to him, “bodily things” (*al-ašyā' al-ḡusmāniyya*) have a double function: who is still in the lower rank of the “bodily things” is “looking at” (*yutālī*) the noble things, by “seeking for” (*bāḥitan*) them, “desiring” (*muštāqan*) them, “being driven to them” (*mutaḥarrikan naḥwahā*) and “pleased with” (*muḡtabiḥan*) them.<sup>9</sup> And who is in the rank of the “spiritual things” (*al-ašyā' al-rūḥāniyya*)<sup>10</sup> remains simultaneously “looking at” the “lower things” (*al-ašyā' al-dāniyya*), “by learning from them” (*mu'tabiran biḥā*), by reflecting on the signs of divine power and the evidences of perfect wisdom, by following the example of (these signs and evidences) (*muqtadiyan biḥā*), by regulating (*nāziman*) them, by pouring out (*mufidan*) goods (*ḥayrāt*) on them and by leading them gradually to what is the best in accordance with their readiness (*qubūl*) and capacity (*istiṭā'a*).<sup>11</sup>

This statement is of crucial importance for a correct understanding of Miskawayh's ethics. The starting point is the imperfection of man: “He has an abundant share of wisdom, and, by virtue of his spirituality, he stays among the higher beings (*al-mala' al-a'lā*) from whom he gets the subtleties of wisdom and is illuminated (*yastanīru*) by the divine light (*al-nūr al-ilāhī*). And he seeks to add to his virtues in the measure of the attention (*ināya*) he gives to them and of the lack of hindrances from them”.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Miskawayh, *Tabḏīb*, p. 80.1-7 and 13-17 Zurayk/translation pp. 72f. The passage reappears in an anonymous collection of philosophical excerpts from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, ms. Oxford, *Marsh* 539, see E. Wakelnig, *A Philosophy Reader from the Circle of Miskawayh*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2014, p. 466 (Wakelnig does not mention Miskawayh's source, which we discuss below, n. 8).

<sup>7</sup> On Socrates and Plato cf. also Miskawayh, *Maqāla fi l-nafs wa-l-'aql*, translation by P. Adamson and P.E. Pormann, “More than Heat and Light: Miskawayh's Epistle on Soul and Intellect”, *The Muslim World*, 102 (2012), pp. 478-524, pp. 523f. On a further report about Socrates' doctrines of the soul, with a Neoplatonizing tint, cf. I. Alon, *Socrates in Mediaeval Arabic Literature*, Brill - The Magnes Press - The Hebrew University, Leiden-Jerusalem 1991 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, 10), p. 163. On Socrates' numerous sayings in Arabic about virtues cf. *ibid.*, pp. 128-43 and about friendship pp. 153-6.

<sup>8</sup> H. Daiber, “Ein bisher unbekannter pseudoplatonischer Text über die Tugenden der Seele in arabischer Überlieferung”, *Der Islam* 47 (1971), pp. 25-42, § 5. Fragments of a Syriac version are preserved by the Jacobite author Iwannīs of Dārā (9<sup>th</sup> c.): see M. Zonta, “Iwannīs of Dārā on Soul's Virtues. About a Late-Antiquity Greek Philosophical Work among Syrians and Arabs”, *Studia graeco-arabica* 5 (2015), pp. 129-43. On the allusions of the *Maqāla fi iḥbāt fadā'il al-nafs* to the *Divisiones Aristoteleae* and on fragments of their Syriac transmission cf. now T. Dorandi - I. Marjani, “La tradizione siriana e araba delle cosiddette *Divisiones Aristoteleae*. Analisi e commento della versione siriana (ed. Brock) e delle due traduzioni arabe (ed. Kellermann-Rost)”, *Studia graeco-arabica* 7 (2017), pp. 1-55, esp. pp. 18f.

<sup>9</sup> Miskawayh, *Tabḏīb*, p. 83.21f. Zurayk/transl. pp. 75f. – Here and elsewhere we do not always follow the translation of Zurayk.

<sup>10</sup> On *rūḥāni* “spiritual” in the sense of “immaterial” and its echo in Ibn Bāḡḡa cf. D. Wirmer, *Vom Denken der Natur zur Natur des Denkens*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2015 (*Scientia graeco-arabica*, 13), pp. 504-32.

<sup>11</sup> Miskawayh, *Tabḏīb*, p. 84.1-5 Zurayk/translation p. 76.

<sup>12</sup> Miskawayh, *Tabḏīb*, p. 85.3-6 Zurayk/translation pp. 76f.



The “emanation (*ḥayd*) of the light of the First One (*al-awwal*)” makes man free from pains and sorrows, of which someone in the first rank is not free.<sup>13</sup> Who belongs to the higher rank and has attained “the final and extreme happiness” (*āḥir al-sā’ādāt wa-aqṣāhā*) is only in need of the necessary things of his body “to which he is attached and from which he cannot be set free until his Creator so wills”.<sup>14</sup>

Here, the text adds a most important statement, which is equally crucial for a better understanding of Miskawayh’s ethics: “(The person in the higher rank) longs to associate with his kindred and to meet the good spirits (*al-arwāḥ al-ṭayyiba*) and the angels who are approximate to him (*al-malā’ika al-muqarrabūn*)”.<sup>15</sup>

Man’s “association with his kindred” (*ṣuḥbat aškālihi*) includes, as Miskawayh says elsewhere,<sup>16</sup> the task to teach those “who are akin or near to him and wish to learn from him (*aḥabba l-iqtibās minhū*)”. This is an allusion to the Farabian-Aristotelian concept of man as political animal, ζῷον πολιτικόν, who requires his fellow human beings – also in the process of getting knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

Miskawayh’s explanations receive a philosophical fundament in the following chapter, which is said to be an excerpt from a work entitled *The Virtues of the Soul*, attributed to “the philosopher”<sup>18</sup> and translated by Abū ‘Uṭmān al-Dimašqī. This work cannot be identified.

According to this treatise, the lower rank of virtues is related to body and soul. Man’s conduct cannot be more than “moderation” (*i’tidāl*)<sup>19</sup> to an extent “rather nearer to what ought to be than to what ought not to be” (*ilā mā yanbaḡi aqrabu minhū ilā mā lā yanbaḡi*).<sup>20</sup> In the second rank “man directs his will (*irāda*) and efforts (*muḥāwalāt*) to the best improvement (*ṣalāḥ*) of his soul and body”, with decreasing affection by worldly things and only insofar they are necessary.<sup>21</sup> There

<sup>13</sup> Miskawayh, *Tahdīb*, p. 85.6-9 Zurayk/translation p. 77.

<sup>14</sup> Miskawayh, *Tahdīb*, p. 85.12-18 Zurayk/translation p. 77.

<sup>15</sup> Miskawayh, *Tahdīb*, p. 85.18-20 Zurayk/translation p. 77.

<sup>16</sup> Miskawayh, *Tahdīb*, p. 85.11f. Zurayk/translation p. 77.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. also Miskawayh, *al-Fawz al-aṣḡar*, ed. Š. ‘Uḡayma, al-Dār al-‘arabiyya li-l-kitāb, Tunis 1987, pp. 91.7-92.5 (French translation by R. Arnaldez, *Le Petit Livre du Salut*, ch. 8, is preceding the Arabic text), English translation by J. Windrow Sweetman, *Islamic and Christian Theology*, I/1, Lutterworth Press, London-Redhill 1945, p. 142. Cf. Endress in *Philosophy in the Islamic World I* (above, n. 2), p. 314.

<sup>18</sup> C.K. Zurayk in his edition and translation identified the “philosopher” (*al-ḥakīm*) with Aristotle and GEndress in *Philosophy in the Islamic World I* (above, n. 2), p. 337 speaks of Aristotle as “author of a Pseudo-Platonic-Peripatetic treatise on the ‘virtues of the soul’”. In the anonymous collection of philosophical excerpts from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, ms. Oxford, *Marsh* 539, the first sentence of the *Fadā’il al-nafs* appears, followed by a sentence from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, attributed to Plato: see Wakelnig, *A Philosophy Reader from the Circle of Miskawayh* (above, n. 6), p. 32. Closer to the truth is Shlomo Pines’ classification of the text as a Neoplatonic treatise: see S. Pines, “Un texte inconnu d’Aristote en version arabe”, in Id., *Studies in Arabic Versions of Greek Texts and in Medieval Science*, The Magness Press - Brill, Jerusalem-Leiden 1986 (= *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines II*), pp. 157-95 and *Addenda et corrigenda*, pp. 196-200, esp. 172-5 and 184-6 (referring to Porphyry, Plotinus, Iamblichus); pp. 178f. and 196-200 (Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Providence*). I assume that the text on *The Virtues of the Soul* is part of the Neoplatonizing commentary on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, which has been tentatively ascribed by R. Walzer to Porphyry. See R. Walzer, “Porphyry and the Arabic Tradition”, in *Porphyry*, Fondation Hardt, Vandœuvres-Genève 1965 (Entretiens sur l’Antiquité Classique 12), pp. 275-99, esp. pp. 294-6. *The Virtues of the Soul* might have been written by Porphyry himself, as it shares with Porphyry the concept of philosophy as a way to God, contrary to the revelationist concept of Porphyry’s student Iamblichus (see below, n. 77). In favour of this identification is the fact that the translator mentioned by Miskawayh, Abū ‘Uṭmān al-Dimašqī, also translated Porphyry’s *Isagoge* (see Walzer, “Porphyry”, p. 278).

<sup>19</sup> Miskawayh, *Tahdīb*, p. 86.13, Zurayk/translation p. 78.

<sup>20</sup> Miskawayh, *Tahdīb*, p. 86.15f., Zurayk/translation p. 78.

<sup>21</sup> Miskawayh, *Tahdīb*, p. 86.19f., Zurayk/translation p. 78.

are many grades of virtues, as people differ 1) in their nature (*tabā'i*), 2) habits (*'ādāt*), 3) degrees of science (*'ilm*), knowledge (*ma'rifa*) and understanding (*fabm*), 4) in their ambitions (*humam*) and 5) in their desires (*šawq*) and efforts (*mu'ānāt*), finally possibly also in their fortunes (*ḡudūd*).<sup>22</sup>

The highest degree is “the purely divine virtue” (*al-faḍīla al-ilāhiyya al-mahḍa*), a rank “which is not accompanied by any longing” for future or past, remote or near things, by fear or desire. The “uppermost ranks of virtues” are determined by the “intellectual part” (*al-ḡuz' al-'aqlī*) of man and enable man “to follow the example of the First Cause and to imitate Him and His activities” (*tašabbuhuhū bi-l-'illa al-ūlā wa-qtidā'uhū bihā wa-bi-af'ālihā*).<sup>23</sup>

Herewith man's activities become “divine” (*ilāhiyya*) and “absolute good” (*al-ḥayr al-mahḍ*) and as such “proceed from his inner and true self (*lubābuhū wa-dātuhū l-ḥaḡiqiyya*), which is his divine reason (*'aqluhū l-ilāhī*) and his real essence (*dātuhū bi-l-ḥaḡiqa*)”.<sup>24</sup>

In the final passage the author of the treatise on *The Virtues of the Soul* explains his concept of the resemblance of man's actions to the actions of the “First Principle” (*al-mabda' al-awwal*), the Creator in the final stage: Man's and God's actions are performed only “for this activity itself” (*lā yaf'alu mā yaf'aluhū min aḡli šay'in ḡayri fi'lihi nafsihi*) and for “the divine intellect itself” (*wa-dātuhū nafsubā hiya l-'aql al-ilāhī nafsubū*). Herewith, man's activity becomes the “absolute good and absolute wisdom” (*ḥayr mahḍ wa-ḥikma mahḍa*). Accordingly, God's activity is only “for the sake of His own Self” (*min aḡli dātihī*) and God's care of other things happens only as “a secondary purpose” (*al-qaṣd al-tānī*).<sup>25</sup>

Equally, man's actions for others are for “a secondary purpose”. The primary purpose is his own self (*min aḡli dātihī*) and the activity itself (*min aḡli l-fi'li nafsihi*), i.e. “the virtue and the good themselves (*li-nafsi l-faḍīlat wa-li-nafsi l-ḥayr*)”. Activity as virtue is not for the sake of benefit, of preventing harm, of seeking authority or honour. The author of *The Virtues of the Soul* concludes: “This is the object of philosophy and the culmination of happiness” (*fa-hādā huwa ḡaraḍ al-falsafa wa-muntahā al-sā'āda*).<sup>26</sup>

It is “divine knowledge” (*ma'rifa ilāhiyya*) and “divine desire” (*šawq ilāhī*), which reach man, when he is free and purified (*šafā, naqiya*) from the “physical” (*al-amr al-ṭabī'i*) and when in himself, in “his very essence” (*nafs dātihī*) – that is his “reason” (*al-'aql*) – “the divine things” (*al-umūr al-ilāhiyya*) take place in a manner “which is nobler, finer, more pronounced, more manifest to (reason) and more evident than (that of) the first propositions (*al-qaḍāyā al-uwal*) which are called the primary intellectual sciences (*al-'ulūm al-awā'il al-'aqliyya*)”.<sup>27</sup>

The passages quoted from *The Virtues of the Soul* do not speak of divine revelations to man and herewith differ from Iamblichus. They look like echoes and slight specifications of Plotinus' discussions about virtue (*Ennead* I 2), happiness (*Ennead* I 5 and 7) and the soul (*Ennead* IV 8).

<sup>22</sup> Miskawayh, *Tabḍīb*, p. 87.4-7 Zurayk/translation p. 78.

<sup>23</sup> Miskawayh, *Tabḍīb*, pp. 87.8-88.3 Zurayk/translation pp. 78f.

<sup>24</sup> Miskawayh, *Tabḍīb*, p. 88.4-17 Zurayk/trans. p. 79. – A fragment (p. 88.7-8 Zurayk/trans. p. 79) appears as a saying, attributed to Plato, in an anonymous collection of philosophical excerpts from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, ed. and transl. Wakelnig, *A Philosophy Reader* (above, n. 6), pp. 298-9, (nr. 200). Cf. the commentary of Wakelnig, *ibid.*, p. 461 and p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> Miskawayh, *Tabḍīb*, pp. 88.18-89 Zurayk, ult./translation pp. 79f. On the passage cf. Pines, “Un texte inconnu” (above, n. 18), pp. 170f. and 199 and A. Neuwirth, *'Abd al-Latīf al-Baḡdādī's Bearbeitung von Buch Lambda der aristotelischen Metaphysik*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1976, pp. 188-90.

<sup>26</sup> Miskawayh, *Tabḍīb*, p. 90.1-10 Zurayk/translation p. 80.

<sup>27</sup> Miskawayh, *Tabḍīb*, p. 90.14-21 Zurayk/translation pp. 80f. (end of the excerpt).

According to Plotinus, who follows here Plato,<sup>28</sup> likeness to God is attained by being just and living in wisdom (*Ennead* I 2[19], 1). Man's soul, with its civic virtues, attains likeness to God,<sup>29</sup> through increasing purification from the passions of the body (*Ennead* I 2[19], 2) and devotion to the absolute Good, the intellectual principle, its knowledge and its wisdom (*Ennead* I 2[19], 4, 6 and 7). The virtue in the Supreme is its act and its essence, the virtue in man is a civic virtue and if man abandons his human life, he will get the life of the Gods (*Ennead* I 2[19], 6). Man's soul, the individual soul, has appetite for the divine intellect, his source to which he is ascending (*Ennead* IV 8[6], 4, 5; VI 9[9], 11). It is neither a *pneuma* nor a body (*Ennead* IV 7[2], 4).

The mentioned ambivalence of Plotinus with regard to the soul results from Plotinus' criticism of the Stoic concept of *pneuma*, of *κρᾶσις δι' ὄλων*, which became known to the Arabs since the 9<sup>th</sup> century through the adaptation of the *Enneads* in the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Theology*.<sup>30</sup> It paved the way to the classification of the soul as something spiritual, as we find in Miskawayh. It is not detectable in the treatise *The Virtues of the Soul*, as quoted by Miskawayh: the quotation only speaks of "two beastly souls" which are the source of "imagination" (*taḥayyul*) and of the "sensible soul" (*nafsubhū al-ḥissiyya*) of man. Their "vicissitudes" (*dawā'ī*) will disappear, when man's activities – his "real essence" – become "divine" and his "divine reason".<sup>31</sup>

This is a transformation of the Platonic doctrine of the soul and its three parts *ἐπιθυμητικόν*, *θυμοειδές* and *λογιστικόν*<sup>32</sup> into the Neoplatonic concept of the soul returning to its divine origin. However, the consequent classification of the soul as something spiritual does not exist – at least in Miskawayh's excerpt from the treatise *The Virtues of the Soul*.<sup>33</sup>

A forerunner of such a classification of the soul as something spiritual, appears to be Plotinus' student Porphyry, who has introduced the doctrine of the *pneuma* in Neoplatonism.<sup>34</sup> In his treatise *De Regressu animae* he expresses his conviction that only the "spiritual soul" (*anima*

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus* 176 B, quoted by L.V. Berman, "The Political Interpretation of the Maxim: The Purpose of Philosophy is the Imitation of God", *Studia Islamica* 15 (1961), pp. 53-61, esp. pp. 53f.

<sup>29</sup> On the history of this concept in Greek philosophy s. D. Roloff, art. "Angleichung an Gott", in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (henceforth: *HWPb*) I (1971), cols. 307-310.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. C. D'Ancona, "Hellenistic Philosophy in Baghdad. Plotinus' anti-Stoic Argumentations and their Arabic Survival", *Studia graeco-arabica* 5 (2015), pp. 165-204, esp. pp. 185-204. The relevant passages in Plotinus' *Enneads*, esp. IV 7 [2], § 8<sup>2</sup> and in the ps.-Aristotelian *Theology* (esp. Ch. III), are available now in a critical edition, translation and extensive commentary by C. D'Ancona, *Plotino. L'immortalità dell'anima IV 7 [2]. Plotiniana Arabica (pseudo-Teologia di Aristotele, capitoli I, III, IX)*. Introduzione, testo greco, traduzione e commento, testo arabo, traduzione e commento, Pisa U.P., Pisa 2017 (Greco, Arabo, Latino. Le vie del sapere. Testi, 5), pp. 236ff. (commentary pp. 286ff.) and (*Theology*) pp. 416ff. (commentary pp. 502ff.).

<sup>31</sup> Miskawayh, *Tahdīb*, p. 88.9-15 Zurayk/ translation p. 79.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. the references in H. Daiber, "Ein bisher unbekannter pseudoplatonischer Text über die Tugenden der Seele in arabischer Überlieferung" (above, n. 8), esp. pp. 34f. – *θυμοειδές*, and *ἐπιθυμητικόν*, in addition the "sensible soul", are considered to be a source for "imagination". This is a Neoplatonizing modification of the Aristotelian discussion about imagination and sensation in *De Anima* III 3.

<sup>33</sup> Nor is this classification mentioned in Miskawayh's *Tahdīb*, pp. 15.9-16.5 Zurayk/translation pp. 14f., where the tripartition of the soul is explained: On this cf. also P. Adamson, "Miskawayh's Psychology", in P. Adamson, *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception*, Warburg Institute, London 2007 (Warburg Institute Colloquia), pp. 39-54, esp. p. 42 and Id., "Miskawayh on Pleasure", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 25 (2015), pp. 199-223, esp. pp. 207-10.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. G. Verbeke, *L'évolution de la doctrine du Pneuma du stoïcisme à St. Augustin*, Desclée De Brouwer - Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, Paris - Louvain 1945, pp. 363-74; S. Toulouse, *Les théories du véhicule de l'âme. Genèse et évolution d'une doctrine de la médiation entre l'âme et le corps dans le néoplatonisme*, Thesis EPHE, I, Paris 2001, pp. 268-74; M. Chase, "Omne corpus fugiendum? Augustine and Porphyry on the Body and the *post-mortem* Destiny of the Soul", *Chora. Revue d'Études Anciennes et Médiévales* 2 (2004), pp. 37-58 and the references given in these publications.

*spiritalis*) can be purified and he introduced for the first time the concept of theurgy as a tool for the purification of this soul by using rituals.<sup>35</sup> Porphyry has not yet fully developed this concept. This remained reserved to his student Iamblichus, who in his work *De Mysteriis* considered theurgy as a tool for the purification of the lower soul, of its leading up to the intelligible and to the divine powers.<sup>36</sup> Here, he presupposes an “affinity” (ἐπιτηδειότης) between the beings and their divine cause.<sup>37</sup>

This affinity between man and God is the prerequisite for the establishment of a relationship with the gods by exercising virtues, which Iamblichus called ‘theurgic virtues’.<sup>38</sup> Ammonius and the Alexandrians instead speak of ὁμοίωσις θεῶ, “likeness to God”, and differ herewith from Plotinus, who considered the human virtues solely as a way to the perfection of man’s ethical-political life, but they do not make man godlike. Ammonius described philosophy as ‘likeness to God, as far as it is possible for man’.<sup>39</sup> He explains this with the additional remark – perhaps with respect to the Christian theologians in the 6<sup>th</sup> century – , that neither the philosopher’s knowledge nor his care for the lower are comparable with God’s knowledge and providence.<sup>40</sup>

The sketched positions and the culmination among Alexandrian philosophers of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century AD turn out to be the starting point for the development of ethics in Islamic philosophy. Kindī (between 247/861 and 259/873) followed the Neoplatonic tradition of Plotinus – and also of Iamblichus<sup>41</sup> – in his treatise *On the Method of How to Dispel Sorrow*.<sup>42</sup> This is excerpted by Miskawayh<sup>43</sup> and recommends man to dedicate himself to the intelligible world, to the absolute good and to turn away from the transitory world. Thus he can release the rational soul from the worldly pleasures. A philosophical foundation – possibly following the Neoplatonic tradition of the *Vita Pythagorica* as shaped by Porphyry and his student Iamblichus<sup>44</sup> – has been developed by Kindī in his *Discourse on the Soul*. It explains, that the soul consists of three parts – as we found them in Miskawayh’s excerpt from the treatise on *The Virtues of the Soul*. It is eager to release itself from the body through ethical virtues and to return to its divine origin,

<sup>35</sup> J. Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre, le philosophe néo-platonicien avec les fragments des traités ‘Peri agalmáton’ et ‘De Regressu animae’*, E. van Goethem - Teubner, Gand-Leipzig 1913, p. 35\*, 15ff., quoted in T. Stäcker, art. “Theurgie”, in *HWPPh* 10 (1998), cols. 1180-1183, esp. col. 1180 below.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Stäcker, art. “Theurgie” (above, n. 35), col. 1181 (n. 11 and 12). G. Verbeke, art. “Geist II: *Pneuma*”, in *HWPPh* 3 (1974), cols. 157-162, esp. col. 161. J.F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, Scholars Press, Chico, CA 1985, p. 4. B. Nasemann, *Theurgie und Philosophie in Iamblichs De Mysteriis*, Teubner, Stuttgart 1991 (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, 11), 198ff. S. Toulouse, “Les théories du véhicule de l’âme” (above, n. 34), pp. 277-94.

<sup>37</sup> Stäcker, art. “Theurgie” (above, n. 35), col. 1181, nn. 18 and 19.

<sup>38</sup> Stäcker, art. “Theurgie”, col. 1181, n. 23.

<sup>39</sup> Amm., *In Isag.*, p. 3.8-9 Busse. On this definition cf. L.V. Berman, “The Political Interpretation” (above, n. 28). H. Daiber, “Qostā Ibn Lūqā (9. JH.) über die Einteilung der Wissenschaften”, *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 6 (1990), pp. 93-129, esp. pp. 118f., the references given there and S. Diwald, *Arabische Philosophie und Wissenschaft in der Enzyklopädie. Kitāb Iḥwān aṣ-Ṣafā’ (III). Die Lehre von Seele und Intellekt*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1975, pp. 510f.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. R. Thiel, “Die Transformation der Theurgie im christlichen Alexandria des 6. Jahrhunderts nach Christus”, in H. Seng - L.G. Soares Santoprete - C.O. Tommasi (eds.), *Formen und Nebenformen des Platonismus in der Spätantike*, Universitätsverlag Winter, Heidelberg 2016, pp. 403-17, esp. pp. 408-15.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. H. Daiber, *Neuplatonische Pythagorica in arabischem Gewande. Der Kommentar des Iamblichus zu den Carmina aurea*, North-Holland, Amsterdam [etc.] 1995 (KNAW. Verhandelingen, Afdeling Letterkunde, N.R., d. 161), pp. 28f.

<sup>42</sup> *Risāla fī l-Ḥīla li-daf’ al-abzān*. Cf. P. Adamson - G. Endress, “Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī”, in Rudolph-Hansberger-Adamson (eds.), *Philosophy in the Islamic World I* (above, n. 2), pp. 143-220, esp. pp. 160f. and 193f.

<sup>43</sup> Miskawayh, *Tabḍīb*, pp. 219-221 Zurayk/translation pp. 194-196.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Daiber, *Neuplatonische Pythagorica* (above, n. 41), pp. 32f.

the realm of the intelligible world.<sup>45</sup> Kindī does not offer a fully developed ethical doctrine, which is more than the “ascetic and intellectualist ethics”, that appears in Kindī’s *Treatise on the Sayings of Socrates*.<sup>46</sup>

This remains reserved for two later philosophers, for Fārābī (d. 339/950 or 951) and for Miskawayh. Both philosophers have continued the Neoplatonic tradition, and insofar they share the common concept of happiness, which can be reached by the release of man’s soul from matter, by man’s virtuous acting and by his increasing knowledge.<sup>47</sup> According to Miskawayh, this knowledge is most perfect in the “perfect man” (*insān kāmil*), who is either a “perfect philosopher” (*ḥakīm tāmm*) because of his “inspirations” (*al-ilhāmāt*) in the philosophical attempts made by him and through heavenly support in his “intellectual conceptions” (*al-taṣawwurāt al-‘aqliyya*), or he is a prophet supported (by God), who obtained divine “revelation” (*al-wahy*) in varying grades, which exist in comparison with God. He will then become an intermediary between “the higher world” (*al-malā’ al-‘alā*) and “the lower world” (*al-malā’ al-asfal*).<sup>48</sup> This formulation is a clear echo of a specification introduced by Fārābī, who had added the concept of prophecy as prerequisite of the philosopher.<sup>49</sup> According to Fārābī, the ruler in the perfect state is a philosopher and a prophet, who – inspired by God and by assimilation to God, by emulating God’s rule – reigns on the city.<sup>50</sup> In addition, Miskawayh and Fārābī mirror an accentuation in Iamblichus, who combined philosophy with theurgic revelation and herewith had modified his teacher Porphyry.<sup>51</sup>

The Neoplatonic tradition, common in Fārābī and Miskawayh, appears to be mixed in Fārābī mainly with Platonic and Aristotelian ideas.<sup>52</sup> Fārābī is concentrating on epistemology and the concept of knowledge, of learning and acquiring knowledge.<sup>53</sup> We have only a small treatise on virtues attributed to Fārābī and based on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, with some Platonic elements.<sup>54</sup> Miskawayh, however, is in fact more focussed on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, which he represents combined with Hellenistic, Neoplatonic interpretations.<sup>55</sup>

These Neoplatonic interpretations gave Miskawayh’s ethics a specific shape. His *Tahdīb al-ahlāq* is not a book on political thought, containing rules for rulers and the ruled, like Fārābī’s

<sup>45</sup> *al-Qawl fī l-Nafs al-muḥtaṣar min Kitāb Aristū wa-Falāṭun wa-sā’ir al-falāsifa*. Cf. Adamson-Endress, “Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī” (above, n. 42), pp. 147, 166 and 194.

<sup>46</sup> *Risāla fī Alfāz Suqrāt*. Cf. Adamson-Endress, “Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī” (above, n. 42), pp. 164 and 194 below.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. H. Daiber, “Al-Farabi on the Role of Philosophy in Society”, *Philosophia Islamica* 1 (2010), pp. 71-7, esp. pp. 73f. and 77.

<sup>48</sup> Miskawayh, *Tahdīb*, p. 70.15-20 Zurayk/ translation p. 62.

<sup>49</sup> For more details on parallels between Fārābī and Miskawayh see R.D. Marcotte, “The Role of Imagination (*mutakhayyilab*) in Ibn Miskawayh’s Theory of Prophecies (*nubūwāt*)”, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 73 (1999), pp. 37-72, esp. pp. 56-72.

<sup>50</sup> H. Daiber, *The Ruler as Philosopher. A New Interpretation of Fārābī’s View*, North-Holland Pub. Co., Amsterdam-Oxford–New York 1986 (Mededelingen der KNAW, afd. Letterkunde. Nieuwe reeks, d. 49 - no. 4), p. 17 (nn. 79 and 80).

<sup>51</sup> See below, n. 77.

<sup>52</sup> On Fārābī cf. H. Daiber, “Al-Fārābīs Aristoteles. Grundlagen seiner Erkenntnislehre”, in A. Vrolijk - J. Hogendijk (eds.), *O ye Gentlemen: Arabic Studies on Science and Literary Culture in Honour of Remke Kruk*, Brill, Leiden [etc.] 2007 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, 74), pp. 99-112.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Daiber, *Ruler* (above, n. 50).

<sup>54</sup> This is the *Ġawāmi’ al-siyar al-marḍiyya fī qtinā’ al-fadā’il al-insiyya*, ed. and trans. by H. Daiber, “Prophetic und Ethik bei Fārābī (gest. 339/950)”, in Ch. Wenin (ed.), *L’homme et son univers au Moyen Âge*, vol. II, Éditions de l’Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, Louvain-La-Neuve 1986 (Philosophes médiévaux, XXVII), pp. 729-53, esp. pp. 741-53.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Endress, “Ancient Ethical Traditions for Islamic Society” (above, n. 2), pp. 322-6, and 337-44.

*Mabādi ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-fāḍila*. On the contrary, it is a book on virtues of the individual, who – as formulated by Miskawayh in a passage attributed to Aristotle – is provided with “wisdom” (*al-ḥikma*) and “intellect” (*al-ʿaql*) and should “aim with all his capacities (*bi-ḡamīʿ quwāhu*) to live a divine life (*ḥayāt ilāhiyya*)”.<sup>56</sup> This aim requires, as Miskawayh says in the footsteps of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*,<sup>57</sup> a “moderate amount of external goods” (*al-qaṣd min al-ḥayrāt al-ḥārī ḡiyya*).<sup>58</sup>

Miskawayh’s book *Ṭabḍīb al-ablāq* is not primarily addressed to the citizen, to rulers and the ruled. It is a guidebook on ethics for the individual, for training his character and teaching him the right behaviour towards his fellow human beings. Love, friendship<sup>59</sup> and justice<sup>60</sup> are for the benefit of the individual and are only means for attaining happiness and knowledge. Human virtues, however, are imperfect: Who has knowledge of real happiness and the real good, can endeavor (*ḡabd*) to gain God’s favor (*yataqarrabu ilayhi*) and can try to obtain (*yatlub*) God’s pleasure (*marḍāt*) as far as he is able (*bi-qadr tāqatihī*), so that “he resembles (*yataqayyalu*)”<sup>61</sup> (God’s) acts to the extent of his capacity (*istiṭāʿa*).<sup>62</sup>

Miskawayh has modified Aristotle’s allusions to the “most divine element” in man,<sup>63</sup> who must “strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing” in him,<sup>64</sup> with a Neoplatonic tint. He says: “The love of wisdom, the devotion to the intellectual conception (*al-taṣawwur al-ʿaqlī*), and the use of divine notions (*al-ārāʿ al-ilāhiyya*) are characteristic of the divine part in man”.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, he who has acquired virtues, has concern for divine virtues, and herewith he can “join the good spirits (*al-arwāḥ al-tayyiba*) and mingle (*iḥtalaṭa*) with the angels which are close (to God) (*al-malāʾika al-muqarrabūn*)”.<sup>66</sup> Here, Miskawayh adds, in a statement attributed to Aristotle, some information about the hierarchy existing between God, angels and those, “who seek to be like God” (*al-mutaʿallihīn*).<sup>67</sup>

This hierarchy reappears in a similar way and partly with identical terminology in a commentary on the Pseudo-Pythagorean *Golden Verses*, written by the Neoplatonist Iamblichus, which we have already mentioned earlier. Iamblichus distinguishes between God, “the angels who are close (to the Gods)” (*al-malāʾika al-muqarrabūn*)<sup>68</sup> and the “godlike” (*al-ilāhiyūn*), who are “souls,

<sup>56</sup> Miskawayh, *Ṭabḍīb*, p. 171.13-15 Zurayk/translation p. 152. On the term “divine life” cf. Arist., *Eth. Nic.* X7, 1177 b 30f., Arabic translation ed. A.A. Akasoy - A. Fidora, *The Arabic Version of the Nicomachean Ethics*, with an Introduction and Annotated Translation by D.M. Dunlop, Brill, Leiden–Boston 2005 (Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus, 17), p. 561.12 (trans. Dunlop, p. 560).

<sup>57</sup> Arist., *Eth. Nic.* I 8, 1099 a 31 - b 7; Arabic translation p. 143.7-16 Akasoy-Fidora (trans. Dunlop, p. 142).

<sup>58</sup> Miskawayh, *Ṭabḍīb*, Zurayk p. 172.1f./translation p. 153.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Miskawayh, *Ṭabḍīb*, 5<sup>th</sup> discourse.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Miskawayh, *Ṭabḍīb*, 4<sup>th</sup> discourse.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, I/1-8, London and Edinburgh 1863-1893 (reprint Beirut 1968), s.v. “qyd”. C.K. Zurayk translates “imitates”.

<sup>62</sup> Miskawayh, *Ṭabḍīb*, Zurayk p. 170, 4-7/translation p. 151.

<sup>63</sup> Arist., *Eth. Nic.* X7, 1177 a 16f., trans. J. Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. The Revised Oxford Translation, II, Princeton U.P., Princeton 1984, p. 1860; Arabic translation p. 557.11 Akasoy-Fidora (trans. Dunlop p. 556).

<sup>64</sup> Arist., *Eth. Nic.* X7, 1177 b 34, translation Barnes, vol. II, p. 1861; Arabic translation pp. 561.14-563.1 Akasoy-Fidora (trans. Dunlop p. 560, and 562).

<sup>65</sup> Miskawayh, *Ṭabḍīb*, Zurayk p. 168.18f./translation p. 150.

<sup>66</sup> Miskawayh, *Ṭabḍīb*, Zurayk p. 169.8f./translation p. 151.

<sup>67</sup> Miskawayh, *Ṭabḍīb*, Zurayk p. 169.13/translation p. 151. R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, Bruno Cassirer, Oxford 1962, p. 228 translated *al-mutaʿallihīn* with “the divine men”, giving the Greek equivalents θεῶι ἄνδρες and ἐκθεούμενοι.

<sup>68</sup> The term “close (to God)” (*al-muqarrabūn*) corresponds to Greek συνεχής in Iamblichus’ *De Mysteriis* I 6,20-2-8 on which cf. Nasemann, *Theurgie und Philosophie* (above, n. 36), pp. 137f. It describes the closeness of the δαίμονες to God.

which assumed a human shape (*ta'annasat*), abandoned worldly pleasures and are looking for their "good" (*maṣāliḥ*).<sup>69</sup> Iamblichus recommends a moderate acquisition of possessions, insofar as it is necessary and useful for man,<sup>70</sup> who is "on the path of virtue" (*sabīl al-faḍīla*) by "reflecting" (*bi-ṣuḡl al-fikr*) on the paths leading to virtues, away from the "body" (*al-badan*). Everyone is obliged to tackle difficult situations and to endure trials as possibilities to learn, to find the right way and to avoid sensual "delights" (*ladḍāt*), in accordance with his capacity.<sup>71</sup> Perfect human virtues of man, whose soul participates in the divine being,<sup>72</sup> pave the way to the divine virtue.<sup>73</sup> The reasonable part of the soul urges the disobedient part to keep to the virtues and to become habituated to them. This is a process of "learning" (*dars*) leading to "education" (*taharruḡ*), "experience" (*tadarrub*, *hibra*) and "patience" (*ṣabr*), also in dealing with others.<sup>74</sup> Iamblichus understood philosophy as "conformity with the divine" (ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεῖον ὁμολογία) and "knowledge of the gods" as perfect virtue, wisdom and happiness, making man "similar to gods".<sup>75</sup>

Iamblichus' concept of a similarity between man and God and of the existence of the divine soul in man is ultimately Platonic. It formulates the preconditions for man's increasing knowledge of the divine and is a Platonic modification of the ancient Greek principle τὸ ὁμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ φίλον, like attracts like.<sup>76</sup> This concept led Iamblichus – in contrast to his former teacher Porphyry and to his concept of philosophical contemplation as the only path to the gods – to the assumption of theurgic virtues as a way to receive theurgic revelations.<sup>77</sup> The Alexandrians and Ammonius instead spoke of assimilation to God through virtues leading to the knowledge of God. Herewith, they deviate from Plotinus and follow the Neoplatonic tradition of Iamblichus. We found an echo in Kindī and above all in the ethics of Miskawayh. With some probability, Miskawayh knew the *Golden Verses* and the commentary by Iamblichus. This can explain that an anonymous Arabic philosophy reader from the circle of Miskawayh, compiled in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, contains excerpts from the *Golden Verses* (excluding Iamblichus' commentary).<sup>78</sup>

It is interesting that the mentioned philosophical reader contains an extensive quotation from the encyclopaedia of the so-called "Sincere Brethren" (*Rasā'il Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'*). This encyclopaedia, written during the lifetime of Miskawayh, deserves our interest, as it shares with Miskawayh the Neoplatonic post-Plotinian and Iamblichian doctrine of the ascent and return of the soul to its

<sup>69</sup> Iamblichus, *Šarḥ maḡmū' min Kitāb Iyāmbliḥus li-waṣāyā Fūtāḡūras al-Faylasūf*, ed. and trans. Daiber, *Neuplatonische Pythagorica* (above, n. 41), pp. 40-41.5-11. Cf. Daiber, *Introduction*, pp. 18f.

<sup>70</sup> Ed./trans. Daiber, *Neuplatonische Pythagorica*, pp. 54-55.2-6. Cf. Daiber, *Introduction*, pp. 26-8.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. ed./trans. Daiber, *Neuplatonische Pythagorica*, pp. 58-59.13-22.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Daiber, *Neuplatonische Pythagorica*, pp. 20f.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. ed./trans. Daiber, *Neuplatonische Pythagorica*, pp. 88-89.21-ult. Cf. Daiber, *Introduction*, pp. 20, 26 and 29f.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. ed./trans. Daiber, *Neuplatonische Pythagorica* (above, n. 41), pp. 62-63.6-10 and 86/87.14-18. Cf. Daiber, *Introduction* pp. 22-5. Echoes of Iamblichus' remarks about the acquisition of experience in dealing with others and the critical reflection about others and oneself (cf. also ed./trans. Daiber pp. 80-81.10/82-83.23) appear in Miskawayh's *Tahdīb*, pp. 190.4-191.4 Zurayk / translation pp. 169f., in a quotation attributed to Kindī.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Daiber, *Neuplatonische Pythagorica*, pp. 30f.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. C.W. Müller, *Gleiches zu Gleichem. Ein Prinzip frühgriechischen Denkens*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1965 (Klassisch-Philologische Studien 31), pp. 177-93.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. G. Shaw, "The Soul's Innate Gnosis of the Gods. Revelation in Iamblichean Theurgy", in P. Townsend - M. Vidas (eds.), *Revelation Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2011, pp. 117-29, esp. pp. 122-9.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Wakelnig, *A Philosophy Reader* (above, n. 6), pp. 37-9.

divine origin through increasing knowledge, purification of the soul and improvement of the character. This requires friendship for mutual assistance.<sup>79</sup> The parallels and differences between Miskawayh and the *Rasā'il Iḥwān aṣ-Ṣafā'* deserve further investigation.

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. *Rasā'il Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'*, Part IV, *Epistle 43 (The Ascent to God)* and *45 (Friendship and Mutual Assistance)* in the English translation by E. van Reijn, *The Epistles of the Sincere Brethren (Rasā'il Iḥwān al-Ṣafā')*. An annotated translation of *Epistles 43 to 47*, Minerva Press, London 1995, pp. 11-17 and 35-49. Cf. also Part III (*On Soul and Intellect = Epistles 32-41*) in the German translation by S. Diwald, *Arabische Philosophie* (above, n. 39). *Epistles 32-36* are newly edited and translated into English by P.E. Walker - I.K. Poonawala - D. Simonowitz - G. de Callataÿ, *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. Sciences of the Soul and Intellect. I: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 32-36*, Foreword by N. El-Bizri, Oxford U.P. - The Institute of Ismaili Studies, Oxford 2015.