Tuba Işık

Cultivating Character

Virtue Ethics and the Islamic Educational Tradition

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© Coverpicture: Iyad Shraim („Islam is beautiful character")

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Introduction

We live in a time and in a world that demands a great deal from people due to their complexity. A multi-religious and multi-cultural society presents everyone with different challenges in terms of their ability to understand and act. Other ways of life and culturally foreign traditions relativise certainties, trigger feelings of alienation and call one's own identity into question. Although these phenomena are well known, in highly complex, pluralistic societies, they take on the form of a "new complexity" (Habermas). Modern society has lost the guiding role models from earlier eras and is—like the subjects within it—left to its own devices.

The ways in which people live together are also undergoing profound social and cultural change in Germany.[1] This change plays a major role in the growth, development, and education of children and young people. They are faced with the problem of becoming capable of judgement and action in increasingly complicated circumstances and having to find their bearings. In the face of new, unknown situations, children and young people are challenged in their personal abilities, characteristics, and attitudes, i.e., in all aspects that guide their actions, their character, or personality.[2] Against this background, it is all the more relevant to think about educational goals. By updating virtue ethics for educational practices, I would like to propose a counterbalance to an increasing loss of meaning and lack of orientation, both of which affect young people in two ways: the experience and affects of living in a fragmented society and on their path to adulthood and identity formation. The cultivation of the self from the perspective of virtue ethics can be described as the never-ending process of self-discovery, which is orientated

1 Cf. Ingrid Gogolin and Marianne Krüger-Potratz, *Einführung in die interkulturelle Pädagogik*, 3rd edition (Leverkusen, 2020), 15.

2 The concept of character will be explicated later and related to the concept of the self. At this point, it can at least be said that the terms *personality* and *character* are used synonymously.

around the three questions: *Who am I?*, *Who should I be?*, and *Who do I want to be?* The educational task could then be to encourage young people to find a balance between these basic questions. In the question, *Who should I be?*, lies the social reference of the self; in the question, *Who do I want to be?*, lies the reference to the private part of the self, which is only accessible to the individual, i.e., their self-realisation. In this holistic view, the young person is not left to their own devices; guided by pedagogy and virtue ethics, they can develop a stable, mature, and autonomous character, which virtue ethics summarises under the concept of the good life.

Although there are virtues that claim universal validity, they differ in their cultural and situational interpretation and form. The ethical virtue work on the self is therefore always linked to cultural and life-world knowledge as well as interpersonal actions, whether at school, on the bus, or when shopping. Thus, working on oneself always means confronting one's self and engaging with others and their values, norms, feelings, etc. Against this backdrop, cultivating the self as an educational goal aims to educate young people to become mature individuals capable of judgement and self-determination.

Wilhelm von Humboldt's theory of education provides a guiding template for the concept of cultivating the self. For Humboldt, the highest ideal is "to educate oneself within oneself"; it is "that in which everyone develops only out of himself and for his own sake."[3] He understands education as self-cultivation and as an ongoing process. Humboldt's concept of education, which is concretised in the first chapter, is aimed at personal human development, which forms a lifelong learning and educational process of reciprocal engagement with one's own talents and potentials as well as with the world. Humboldt's concept of education is of key importance for the current conception of education. In concrete terms, self-cultivation is associated with the following central questions: *how do I want to be?* and *how do I want to live with others?* The present work deals with these questions from an ethical virtue perspective, which can stimulate current educational thinking, especially Islamic religious education. The research focus of this book is therefore on the moral constitution of human beings and their ability to develop and be educated. The formation of a stable and mature character and the

3 Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Gesammelte Werke*, (Berlin, 1841) vol. I, 56, 109.

ability to relate to others are, therefore, simultaneous and equally important educational goals.

The work begins in the *first chapter* with an overview of the topicality of virtue ethics discourses, focusing on the key concepts of personal development, competence, value, and recognition on the one hand, and the concept of "work on the self" on the other. The main focus of this book is virtue as a dimension of education, as the analytical debates on virtue and virtue ethics are only of limited use for real life.

The cultivation of the self is a process that starts very early in terms of developmental psychology, and the arguments presented here contain the normative implication that it should also be given space in the school context, which is already happening to some extent. At the very least, school mandates of most federal states in Germany require this self-cultivation, as will be explained in the first chapter. There are important pedagogical concepts and approaches that ask how children and young people can be equipped to rethink familiar views and perspectives and develop important competencies.[4] From these, I will select some widely received concepts and use them as examples to discuss the ethical-pedagogical development of the self, and the meaning of virtue as a character disposition and its suitability as an educational process taught in schools. This investigation shows that hardly any pedagogical approach looks at the ethical formation of children and young people from a theoretical virtue perspective. Understanding virtue ethics as a question about the conditions, possibilities, and goals of character formation first of all requires leaving behind pedagogical baggage associated with the National Socialist era, and redefining the discourses in the face of a rapidly changing and digitising world. In the present work, this includes a recourse to examples from Islamic educational thinking and the philosophical virtue thinking of Muslim philosophers, with the aim of rethinking and redefining the concept of virtue.

The guiding thematic horizon, "cultivation of the self," also forms the focus of the *second chapter.* In the second chapter, we devote ourselves entirely to the concept of virtue, which refers to a successful approach to practical life issues. The starting point is Aristotle's

4 Cf. Ludwig Duncker, *Wege zur ästhetischen Bildung. Anthropologische Grundlegungen und schulpädagogische Orientierungen* (Munich, 2018), 144.

theory of virtue in *Nicomachean Ethics*, which deals extensively with the cultivation of character through virtues. But how can we understand virtue today? As antiquated as the concept of virtue may seem, it is enjoying a modest revival and has now regained importance in modern ethical discussions, including secular educational and religious pedagogical discourses.[5] Based on this consideration, virtue should be defined as an ethical source for a good life for the individual as well as for the community. Orientation towards the concept of virtue can help to cultivate practical and action-guiding habits that provide people a sense of direction and make life easier. Virtue basically describes what is inherent in people as a possibility, but needs formation and practice in order for it to unfold. I do not want this book to be understood as a revival of an outdated and repressive understanding of virtue that is associated with obsolete mandatory duties (*Pflichtkataloge*) or "training terror" (*Dressurterror*).[6] With this in mind, it is important to discuss the topicality and necessity of contemporary virtue ethics formation and to introduce it into educational theory discourse. Therefore, a solid and systematic foundation of the current concept of virtue is to be developed at the end of the second chapter with recourse to virtue ethics discourse.

Following this overview of the moral theoretical, pedagogical, and cultural aspects of a reconsideration of the concept of virtue, the extensive *third chapter* examines traditions of Islamic intellectual and educational history for their affinity to or location in the field of virtue ethics.

Personal development has always been part of Islamic educational, philosophical, and mystical thought. Although, of course, not

5 Cf. Dagmar Borchers, *Die neue Tugendethik - Schritt zurück im Zorn. Eine Kontroverse in der Analytischen Philosophie* (Paderborn, 2001), 12; see also Hans-Ullrich Dallmann, "Eine tugendethische Annäherung an Begriff und Pädagogik der Kompetenzen," *Ethik und gesellschaft: Bildung, Gerechtigkeit und Kompetenz* 1 (2009): 1–50. See also Tuba Isik, "Kultivierung des Charakters als Selbstverständnis des Islamischen Religionsunterrichts," in *Islamunterricht im Diskurs. Religionspädagogische und fachdidaktische Ansätze*, eds. Tarek Badawia and Said Topalovic (Göttingen, 2022).

6 Cf. Walter Eykmann and Sabine Seichter (eds.), *Pädagogische Tugenden* (Würzburg, 2007), 7ff. On the term "training terror" (*Dressurterror*), see Timo Hoyer, *Tugend und Erziehung. Die Grundlegung der Moralpädagogik in der Antike* (Bad Heilbrunn, 2005).

named as such, the idea of self-cultivation of the human being with the intention of coming closer to God is evident in the various strands of tradition. Islamic conceptions of self-cultivation harbour two crucial terms that will be explored in more detail below: *akhlāq* (character traits) and *nafs* (soul, self). At this point, however, I would like to define the term *self*, as there are also different meanings and uses of this term in the Islamic tradition.[7] I define the term *self* as the totality of processed knowledge about oneself. A self-image implies all perceived attributes and views of a person that are explicitly and implicitly constructed by that person, such as character traits and ideas about their own emotional experience. I add the term *character* as well as the modern term *personality* to these self-related constructs.

Not only the *concept of akhlāq*, but also the *concept of adab* (manners, etiquette) plays a key role in this book context, which is why the chapter begins with a basic definition of the concept of *adab* and then moves on to the literary genre of *makārim al-akhlāq (noblest character traits)* using the example from the educated man of letters and scholar *Abī 'l-Dunyā* (823–894).[8] The interesting thing about Abī 'l-Dunyā is that, without using the concept of virtue, he sets out in prose his ideas of desirable character traits such as reliability,

7 For more on this, see Renate Daniel, *Das Selbst. Grundlagen und Implikationen eines zentralen Konzepts der Analytischen Psychologie* (Stuttgart, 2018). See also Ann-Kathrin Banser and Philipp Bode, *Selbstwerden: über das Selbst als Aufgabe und die Möglichkeiten seiner Realisierung bei Søren Kierkegaard* (Würzburg, 2018); Tuba Isik, "Das Selbstwertgefühl türkischer Migrantenkinder in Deutschland. Ein empirischer Vergleich von türkischstämmigen Grundschulkindern in Deutschland und türkischen Grundschulkindern in der Türkei," (Göttingen, 2006), 21 (online resource in the Lower Saxony State and University Library: https://d-nb.info/1044178914/34).

8 The term *makārim al-akhlāq* (noblest character traits) refers in the Islamic tradition to the highest moral virtues that are meant to shape a person's ethical conduct. It goes back to prophetic traditions in which the Qur'ān describes the Prophet Muḥammad's mission as the completion of "beautiful character traits" (*ḥusn al-akhlāq*). In the literature, one finds various translations: *makārim* is sometimes rendered as "the noblest," "the highest," or "the most excellent," while *akhlāq* is translated as "character traits," "virtues," "manners," or "morality." Thus, the range of interpretations extends from "noblest virtues" to "excellent manners" and "perfect morality." This semantic breadth highlights that the expression refers not only to ethical norms but also to a comprehensive moral excellence and perfection of character.

generosity, neighbourliness, and friendship on the basis of prophetic and post-prophetic traditions.

Following this, carefully selected individual Muslim philosophers who have embraced Aristotelian virtue ethics are analysed to determine what insights they may presently provide for reflecting on virtue. Like many other religious traditions, Islamic philosophy harbours its own ideas about how personal qualities and basic dispositions can be cultivated. Muslim philosophers discussed this cultivation in a separate genre that gradually emerged, the *tahdhīb al-akhlāq (refinement of character traits)*.[9] I would like to take up this discourse, which places the condition of the character of human beings at the centre of philosophical observation. *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* developed its own epistemology for this and developed into a discipline called *ʿilm al-akhlāq* (knowledge of character traits). It would be an overly ambitious goal and intention to present a comprehensive historical and geographical overview of the individual dialectical pollinations of virtue ethics thinking. My aim is therefore to comprehensibly trace the basic features using a few Muslim philosophers as examples, in order to show which understanding of virtue prevailed and which catalogues of virtues emerged. The link between ethics and aesthetics also provides insights, as aesthetics was one of the central learning areas of religiously based self-cultivation processes, which included literature, art, and music education in particular.[10] We will come across these ideas when clarifying the concept of *adab* and among Muslim mystics. The Muslim mystics primarily referred to this process of cultivating the self as *tazkiyya an-nafs*. Insights from Islamic mysticism *(taṣawwuf*) or Sufism should then show that not only philosophically guided mental (and sometimes practical) exercises but also concrete practical exercises make an important contribution to the investigation here.

Against this background, I would like to draw attention to the emancipatory and creative potential of the Islamic tradition of

9 In Islamic scholarship, the expression *tahdhīb al-akhlāq* ("refinement of character traits" or "disciplining of morals") denotes the conscious cultivation and purification of human character. Unlike *makārim al-akhlāq*, which refers to the noblest virtues, *tahdhīb* emphasises the process of moral education and training towards virtue.

10 See Nurcan Özbal and İsmail Aydoğan, "Eğitimde Estetiğin gerekliliği ve oluşumu üzerine bir inceleme," *DergiPark Akademik* 7.2 (2017): 249–260, 253.

thought, above all to reveal its inherent potential to serve the common good and emphasise it as a source of inspiration for contemporary educational theory.

The concluding chapter formulates a synthesis of the observations made, in which the impressions gained in the course of reflecting on philosophical and pedagogical discourses on the one hand, and Islamic philosophical and mystical discourses on the other hand, are brought together and placed within the horizon of far-reaching moral concepts. These concepts can be understood as central virtues; the concept of justice, which refers back to the origins of virtue ethics, is centrally placed alongside the concepts of sincerity, compassion, and friendship. The book concludes with some pedagogical insights for Islamic religious education.

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Chapter I: Educational Theory Approaches in Revision

1. In Search of the Cultivation of the Self

Societies are dynamic. Due to global and domestic political and socioeconomic factors, their composition is not static. The increasing plurality around the globe also creates an increase in options for action and sometimes leads to tensions within society. An unavoidable pluralism of values also has consequences, such as a lack of orientation and uncertainty in the face of diverse and seemingly ambiguous options for action. In Germany, these options have their limits in the *Grundgesetz* (The Basic Law; the German constitution), in a consensus of values and norms that underlie the pluralism of values in a standardising way. The continuous influx of people into Germany since the end of the 1960s, which has been further intensified by refugee movements since 2015 and the war in Ukraine, has put the once valid narrative of an inclusive understanding of "we" and the self-image of a civil society to the test.[11] The diversity of behavioural patterns and the increase in different values, which bring with them individual lifestyles and worldviews, lead to con-

11 Statistisches Bundesamt [Federal Statistical Office], "In Deutschland arbeiten 7,4 Millionen geringfügig entlohnte Beschäftigte," *Destatis*, March 15, 2016, https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2016/03/PD16_105_12421.html, accessed 11 October 2018. See also the Social Democartic Party of Germany (SPD)'s 2013/2017 election campaign slogan, "We decide." In this context, social scientist Naika Foroutan criticises the fact that there was no *education on plurality* during the pluralisation of German society; Naika Foroutan, *Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft. Ein Versprechen der pluralen Demokratie* (Bielefeld, 2019), 127. However, reference can also be made to efforts towards intercultural education and pedagogy, as in Georg Auernheimer, *Einführung in die interkulturelle Erziehung* (Darmstadt, 1990), later revised under the title *Interkulturelle Pädagogik* (Darmstadt, 2015). See also Gogolin and Krüger-Potratz, *Einführung in die interkulturelle Pädagogik*.

flicts and uncertainties that affect all groups in society.[12] However, a pluralism of values, which is enshrined in the *Grundgesetz*, is an essential feature of our political system.[13] Within this pluralism of values, subjective worldviews can give preference to values that provide orientation but cannot be assumed to be binding for everyone in the public sphere. Nevertheless, there is, of course, a need for a minimum understanding of the rules of social interaction.[14] From a pedagogical point of view, it seems essential that the corresponding communicative competences that are expected in adolescence are initiated in elementary education.

Added to this is the great challenge and developmental task of practising emotional and cognitive skills, such as adopting a social perspective towards the elderly, socioeconomically disadvantaged people, and fellow human beings as a whole, which is a lifelong learning process.[15] As an expression of uncertainty, which coincides with a declining significance of traditions in life, people's sense of self and their and worldviews are becoming noticeably more fragmented.[16] There are a growing number of options for attitudes and behaviour. Added to this are the mechanisation and digitalisation of society, which appear to be progressively alienating people from

12 Cf. Manon Westphal, "Kritik- und Konfliktkompetenz. Eine demokratietheoretische Perspektive auf das Kontroversitätsgebot," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (*APuZ*) 13/14 (2018): 12.

13 Cf. Sabine Dengel and Linda Kelch, "'Es ist kompliziert. Dazu guter Pop.' Ambiguität, politische Bildung und Kultur," in *Mehrdeutigkeit gestalten. Ambiguität und die Bildung demokratischer Haltungen in Kunst und Pädagogik*, eds. Ansgar Schnurr et al. (Bielefeldt, 2021), 65.

14 The fact that even such a minimal consensus requires an intensive and continuous social endeavour is often insufficiently reflected upon. Mark Terkessidis emphasises that differences in values can lead to social and political conflicts, especially if they "can no longer be negotiated at the level of the democratic constitutional state." Mark Terkessidis, "Harte Verhandlungen: über die Wertpluralität in einer Gesellschaft der Vielfalt," in *Werte – und was sie uns wert sind. Eine interdisziplinäre Anthologie*, eds. Randolf Rodenstock and Nese Sevsay-Tegethoff (Munich, 2018), 117.

15 Cf. Bardo Herzig, *Förderung ethischer Urteils- und Orientierungsfähigkeit. Grundlagen und schulische Anwendung* (Münster/New York, 1998), 129; see also Robert L. Selman, *Die Entwicklung des sozialen Verstehens. Entwicklungspsychologische und klinische Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt, 1984), 47ff.

16 Jörg Zirfas and Benjamin Jörissen, *Phänomenologien der Identität. Human-, sozial- und kulturwissenschaftliche Analysen* (Wiesbaden, 2007), 127.

one another and increasing anonymity within an individual's environment despite interdependence.[17]

Individuation processes and individualisation discourses are on the rise and require people to find orientation and meaning for their own lives, for which the body is a visualisation medium and resource that lends itself extraordinarily well.[18] Over the last few decades, the body has been revalued, and it has become a project of intensive design, which extends to self-practices of physical perfection, self-staging, and presentation in public.[19] The mediatisation of lifeworlds has led to, among other things, a visualisation of one's own person via the body, which has become the subject of negotiations of gender, for example.[20] "How 'one' lives, what 'one' does, how 'one' looks and whether 'one' is in shape becomes an essential part of this larger commodification process."[21] The preoccupation with the body is now recognisable not only as an integral part of a political analysis of modern societies but also of social and educational theories.[22]

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17 Cf. Peter V. Zima, *Entfremdung. Pathologien der postmodernen Gesellschaft* (Paderborn, 2017), 8, 94. Anonymity and individualisation have taken on a different character, especially after the coronavirus pandemic.

18 Tanja Thomas and Tanja Maier, "Körper," in *Handbuch Cultural Studies und Medienanalyse*, eds. Andreas Hepp et al. (Wiesbaden, 2015), 286.

19 Self practices enable the individual, "by his own efforts or with the help of others, to perform a series of operations on his body or soul, his thinking, his behaviour and his mode of existence, with the aim of changing himself in such a way that he attains a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality." Michel Foucault, "Technologien des Selbst," in *Technologien des Selbst*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Frankfurt 1993), 26 ff. Cf. Robert Gugutzer, *Soziologie des Körpers* (Bielefeld, 2004), 40.

20 Cf. Elke Grittmann et al., "Körperbilder – Körperpraktiken. Visualisierung und Vergeschlechtlichung von Körpern in Medienkulturen," in *Körperbilder – Körperpraktiken. Visualisierung und Vergeschlechtlichung von Körpern in Medienkulturen*, eds. Elke Grittmann et al., (Cologne, 2018), 10.

21 Christian Schwarenegger, Jakob Hörtnagel, and Lena Erber, "Straffer Körper, gutes Leben? Fitnessinhalte auf Instagram zwischen Ideal und Selbst und deren Aneignung durch junge Frauen," in *Körperbilder – Körperpraktiken*, eds. Grittmann et al., 76.

22 Cf. Maren Möhring, "Die Regierung der Körper. 'Gouvernementalität' und 'Techniken des Selbst,'" *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 2, 3 (2006): 285; cf. Eva Kimminich et al., forward to *Express Yourself! Europas kulturelle Kreativität zwischen Markt und Underground* (Bielefeld, 2007), 8. See also Grittmann et al., *Körperbilder – Körperpraktiken*.

People can follow particular and selective—if possible, expedient — motives when weighing to whom they should behave in a just or caring manner.[23] Particularly in times of economic uncertainty, tensions between social classes, and political upheavals, there is an increase in discriminatory behaviour towards people with a migrant background.[24] For some years now, it has not only been Muslims who have increasingly been the focus of discrimination, but also Black people, Jewish people, and refugees.[25] These circumstances call for a serious discourse on concepts of educational theory that relate to the everyday lives of people who want to shape their lives meaningfully in this "new" world and must do so to maintain a positive self-image. As humankind, responsibility and solidarity are not easy to organise, realize, and ensure in society; it is not only every individual who is called upon to act, but also social groups, such as religious communities.[26]

A certain decline in values is often cited as the cause of the decreasing quality of interpersonal interactions.[27] In the literature, value pluralism in connection with ethnic origin and religious affiliation is often blamed for people's feelings of insecurity.[28] However, it was not only in connection with immigration that values such as discipline, loyalty, order, family, abortion, and a sense of duty were

23 See Philipp Mayring, "Individuelle und situative Bedingungsfaktoren für Wohlbefinden – Ergebnisse psychologischer Glücksforschung," in *Orte des guten Lebens. Entwürfe humaner Lebensräume*, ed. Hans-Peter Ecker (Würzburg 2007), 58 ff.

24 Cf. Barbara Sutter, *Der Wille zur Gesellschaft. Bürgerschaftliches Engagement und die Transformation des Sozialen* (Cologne, 2018), 18ff., 131ff.

25 See Peter Antes and Rauf Ceylan (eds.), *Muslime in Deutschland. Historische Bestandsaufnahme, aktuelle Entwicklungen und zukünftige Forschungsfragen* (Wiesbaden, 2017), 7–76. For the context of the USA, see Martha Nussbaum, *Die neue religiöse Intoleranz. Ein Ausweg aus der Politik der Angst* (Darmstadt, 2014), 52.

26 When people experience the limits of structural coping with situations and emergencies, they must take individual and collective responsibility. However, this cannot arise from external coercion but only from human freedom.

27 See Christian Duncker, *Verlust der Werte? Wertewandel zwischen Meinungen und Tatsachen* (Wiesbaden, 2000).

28 Cf. Anna Orkiszewska, *Der Einfluss von Wertewandel auf die intimen Lebensformen in der postmodernen Gesellschaft* (Hamburg, 2010), 11.

passionately debated as early as 1968.[29] With German reunification, these debates about changing values intensified.[30]

> Consequently, the call for values today is always a reaction of uncertainty and questioning of what our values are, where and how they collide with the values of "others," which values we must insist on in order not to lose ourselves, and which values of others are actually non-values.[31]

Based on the Sinus-Milieus research from 2007, Mark Terkessidis concludes that ethnicity and religion are less relevant as value-forming factors than is assumed, which is why the assumption that migration growth jeopardises consensual values is false and, therefore, offers no basis for discourse on value change in connection with immigration.[32] The pluralism of values is expressed in individual lifestyles and moral concepts.[33]

In the context of a good communal life, I believe it should first be noted that the *Grundgesetz* does justice to a plurality of values as long as citizens' subjective values do not come up against the limits of the liberal democratic constitutional state.[34] Many questions then arise: Are values in the sense of desirable basic attitudes sufficient to find one's way in an increasingly complicated world? Would a close alignment of values improve interpersonal interactions? Can social consensus on values be the prerequisite for a good life? In the current educational discourse, there is hardly any talk of ethical competence, but there is increasing talk of values education.[35] These

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29 Cf. Terkessidis, "Harte Verhandlungen," 110; cf. Joachim Schmidt-Tiedemann, "Wertekompetenz als Ziel der Ingenieurausbildung," in *Technik im Wertekonflikt*, ed. Heinz Duddeck (Wiesbaden, 2001), 238.

30 Cf. Heiner Meulemann, "Kulturumbruch und Wiedervereinigung. Wertewandel in Deutschland in den letzten 60 Jahren," in *Gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen im Spiegel der empirischen Sozialforschung*, eds. Frank Faulbaum and Christof Wolf (Wiesbaden, 2010), 60 ff.

31 Regina Ammicht Quinn, "'Gut' sein: Theorie und Praxis von Wertediskursen," in *Werte schulischer Begabtenförderung. Begabungsbegriff und Werteorientierung*, eds. Armin Hackl, Olaf Steenbuck, and Gabriele Weigand (Frankfurt, 2011), 12.

32 Terkessidis, "Harte Verhandlungen," 117.

33 Terkessidis, "Harte Verhandlungen," 116.

34 Terkessidis, "Harte Verhandlungen," 122.

35 On educational discourses, see Rolf Wernstedt and Marei John-Ohnesorg, *Der Bildungsbegriff im Wandel. Verführung zum Lernen statt Zwang zum Büffeln, FES-Dokumentation einer Konferenz des Netzwerks Bildung vom 5.–6. Juli 2007* (Berlin, 2008), 9. Value education and ethical education have similar concerns

questions touch on both the debate about a dominant culture and the field of education. They will be discussed in more detail later against the background of the research questions.

In educational theories, it has often been debated whether the fundamental goal of formation is a successful life for people or whether it is rather about socialising people efficiently, i.e., making them socially acceptable, so that they can cope with the demands of a changing world and society.[36] Unclear social situations, coexistence, and encounters between cultures and religions, new technologies, digitalisation, and new political challenges demand moral judgements and decisions in daily social interaction. A broad-based school education that is not reduced to factual knowledge is therefore of central importance in preparing children and young people for their future (professional) lives.[37] It is increasingly important to acquire higher-level skills, abilities, and competencies for understanding the world and coping with life, especially in a time when knowledge is more freely available than ever before.[38] "We therefore

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and initiate a related practice, but they are nevertheless not congruent. Cf. Quinn, "'Gut' sein," 15.

Rudolf Englert calls for a distinction to be made between different components of ethical learning, which is why he argues in favour of a differentiated concept of competence in the context of ethical learning. He distinguishes between an aretaic component, which involves the development of dispositions to act in the sense of virtues, an evaluative component, which involves the assessment of material and immaterial goods, and finally a normative component, which involves the justification of ethical judgements. Rudolf Englert, "Religion, Werte, Bildung ..., bla, bla, bla. Die Integrationsdebatte als Tauglichkeitstest für 'Schwatzbegriffe,'" in *Welche Werte braucht die Welt? Wertebildung in christlicher und muslimischer Perspektive*, eds. Mirjam Schambeck and Sabine Pemsel-Maier (Freiburg, 2017), 80–83.

36 Cf. Elisabeth Zwick, "Bildung und Ethik. Präliminarien zu einer grundlegenden Thematik aus historisch-systematischer Sicht," in *Bildung und Ethik. Beiträge und Perspektiven jenseits disziplinärer Grenzen*, ed. Markus Fath (Berlin, 2013), 15.

37 In this context, a comprehensive critique of educational content by David Richard Precht is recommended: *Anna, die Schule und der liebe Gott: Der Verrat des Bildungssystems an unseren Kindern* (Munich, 2013).

38 Cf. interview with Dieter Frey and Martin Fladerer, "Werteerziehung und Persönlichkeitsentwicklung gehören neben der Wissensvermittlung auch auf den Lehrplan", in *Werte – und was sie uns wert sind*, eds. Rodenstock and Sevsay-Tegethoff, 166.

need a good balance between knowledge transfer and personal development in our school system."[39]

For many years, the "tolerance of ambiguity" has become one of the central educational concerns in our ambiguous world, not only politically but also in general.[40] Inconsistencies, uncertainties and ambiguities are becoming more visible and challenge people's ability to deal with ambiguity, ideally without devaluing ambiguity.[41] In social encounters, people develop behavioural patterns, habitualised perceptual and decision-making dispositions, and basic temperaments that guide and structure their future actions.[42] With regard to Islam, it was the Islamic scholar Thomas Bauer in particular who, in his theory of cultural ambiguity, recalled the rich culture of the Islamic tradition in the face of the increasing reduction of multiple references and ambiguities. Bauer defines the concept of ambiguity as follows:

> A phenomenon of cultural ambiguity exists when, over a longer period of time, two opposing or at least two competing, clearly divergent meanings are simultaneously assigned to a term, a behaviour or an object, when a social group simultaneously draws norms and meanings for individual areas of life from opposing or strongly divergent discourses, or when different interpretations of a phenomenon are simultaneously accepted within a group, whereby none of these interpretations can claim exclusive validity.[43]

Bauer understands tolerance of ambiguity as an open-mindedness towards constant cultural diversity. I believe that remembering this cultural ambiguity is currently a crucial source and resource for offering a broad spectrum of creativity in thought and action. For,

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39 Cf. Frey and Fladerer, "Werteerziehung und Persönlichkeitsentwicklung", 167.

40 Thomas Bauer, *Die Vereindeutigung der Welt. Über den Verlust an Mehrdeutigkeit und Vielfalt* (Stuttgart, 2018), 12. Cf. Dengel and Kelch, "'Es ist kompliziert. Dazu guter Pop,'" 55.

41 Cf. Naika Foroutan, "Die postmigrantische Perspektive: Aushandlungsprozesse in pluralen Gesellschaften", in *Postmigrantische Visionen*, eds. Marc Hill and Erol Yildiz (Bielefeldt, 2018), 20.

42 Cf. Kathrin Audehm, "Habitus," in *Handbuch Schweigendes Wissen. Erziehung, Bildung, Sozialisation und Lernen*, eds. Christoph Wulf et al. (Weinheim, 2017), 168.

43 Thomas Bauer, *Kultur der Ambiguität. Eine andere Geschichte des Islam* (Berlin, 2011), 27.

as Bauer rightly states, ambiguity in the Islamic world has gradually disappeared as the price of rapprochement with the West in the nineteenth century. It was precisely this "ambiguity that also led to fanaticism, in that the ideas generated by political or religious Muslim innovators were instrumentalised and declared to be the only valid truth."[44] Not only in Europe but worldwide, Muslims oscillate between this old pole of tolerance of ambiguity and the new pole of ultra-orthodox unambiguity.[45] Increased experiences of marginalisation generally encourage people of faith to retreat to a conservative understanding and interpretation of religion.[46] The knowledge and awareness of diverse interpretations, the plurality of discourses and forms of practice can be used today as a functional argument against one-sided interpretative sovereignty, precisely because this tolerant attitude towards ambiguity is a genuinely Islamic trait.[47] This makes it all the more urgent for me to make this ambiguous culture of thought and life fruitful for contemporary discourses. Not only religious narrative traditions but also philosophical considerations and mystical forms of practice in the Islamic tradition offer good orientations for getting to know the conditions and dimensions of learning the ability to make judgements. In a reality whose degree of complexity is constantly growing, the question of what children and young people have at their disposal to be able to react ethically to the challenges of the future, and whether and how they can acquire

44 Yasemin Gökpınar, "Wein, Weib und Gesang – Ein etwas anderes Bild des Islams," *JUSUR, Zeitschrift für Orientalistik, Islamwissenschaft und Arabistik* 3 (2020): 26.

45 On the problematisation of the loss of ambiguity for Islamic religious education, see Tuba Isik and Naciye Kamcili-Yildiz, "'Ist Schweinegelatine halal oder haram?' – Islamische Religionslehrkräfte zwischen Vereindeutigung und Ambiguitätstoleranz," in *"Hauptsache, du hast eine Meinung und einen eigenen Glauben": Positionalität (nicht nur) in der Kinder- und Jugendtheologie.* Jahrbuch für Kinder- und Jugendtheologie, vol. 5 eds. Mirjam Zimmermann, et al. (Stuttgart, 2022), 109–118.

46 Cf. Heinz Ulrich Brinkmann, "Erfolge und Probleme der Integration. Soziodemografische Hintergründe und Lebenslagen der Migrationsbevölkerung," in *Dabeisein und Dazugehören. Integration in Deutschland*, eds. Heinz Ulrich Brinkmann and Haci Halil Uslucan (Wiesbaden, 2013), 121ff.

47 Cf. Gökpınar, "Wein, Weib und Gesang," 26.

this in the school context, becomes all the more important.[48] Not only are lifeworlds and realities becoming more complex, but so also are the ethical issues with which Muslim children and young people, as well as Muslim adults, are currently confronted. Above all, this requires the ability to reason and understand why a behaviour or an ethically justified rule should be valid. This can be based on one's own religious tradition, but when communicating with other perspectives, one must endeavour to express oneself in a way that is understandable to others and capable of reaching a consensus. This addresses people in their moral constitution, their self and their faith. The Islamic tradition can provide genuine orientation and impetus for this context of questions, as it offers a range of different forms of practice and orientation for working on character with a view to one's own lifestyle. *How do I want to live? How do I want to be? How can I be a good person? What does a prosperous, peaceful life entail?* In the face of decision-making situations, which character traits and attitudes can help us perceive otherness as a manifestation of the diverse possibilities of being human, to tolerate pluralistic life plans, not to negate difference and plurality, and not to allow them to become an exclusionary standard of judgement for encounters?

In earlier Islamic environments, the cultivation of ambiguity competency generally took place in a culturally and religiously comparatively homogeneous society. However, the Islamic tradition has a great deal to offer here. Although the current forms of plurality are many times more complex, the Islamic tradition nevertheless offers insights and examples that can be groundbreaking not only for Muslims in Germany today (and certainly beyond) but for everyone.

In order to practise community-building qualities, I believe it is first necessary to cultivate the personal qualities of the individual. The decisive focus in this book is therefore on the moral constitution of the individual. Under the conditions of increasingly perceptible

48 Cf. Hans Julius Schneider, "Einleitung: Ethisches Argumentieren," in *Ethik. Ein Grundkurs*, eds. Hastedt von Heiner and Ekkehard Martens (Reinbek, 1994), 33ff. Ingrid Schoberth, "In zweifelhaften Fällen entscheide man sich für das Richtige," in *Urteilen lernen – Grundlegung und Kontexte ethischer Urteilsbildung*, ed. Ingrid Schoberth (Göttingen, 2012), 11. With regard to Islamic religious education, this is an important interface between religious education and ethics that needs to be considered and addressed in an exchange between theological ethics, practical theology, and religious education.

difference, but also an increasingly complex world, the cultivation of basic moral attitudes seems to me to be more relevant than ever. In the following, I will take a closer look at some approaches that focus on the development of disposition and personal qualities and analyse their effectiveness.

2. Work on the Self with Ethical Virtues: A Component of the Educational Mission of Schools

In his book *Philosophie einer humanen Bildung*, the philosopher Julian Nida-Rümelin posed the question of what *formation* is and what role personality plays in it, among other things, in the context of the need to reestablish the connection between philosophy and educational practice.[49] He criticises the modern trend of reform efforts, which have neither an anthropological nor a philosophical foundation and therefore "do not reveal any idea of a humane development of personality."[50] He points out that formation is inconceivable without the concept of personality.[51] Following Nida-Rümelin, the questions *Who are we?* and *What makes us human?* emphasise the importance and continuous development of practical educational content and its didactics in the school context, which can contribute to a culture of self-reflection. "The regular, self-evident change of perspective can continuously reflect one's own approach and educational content in everyday life."[52] At this point, it is worth briefly recalling this objective, which harks back to Humboldt, as well as the justified criticism of an education geared towards performance standards, in order to emphasise the implicit significance of the virtue ethics discourse for educational theory.

A document from the Ministry of Schools and Further Education of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia states the following with reference to the educational mission:

49 Julian Nida-Rümelin, *Philosophie einer humanen Bildung* (Hamburg, 2013), 8.
50 Nida-Rümelin, *Philosophie einer humanen Bildung*, 12.
51 Nida-Rümelin, *Philosophie einer humanen Bildung*, 21ff.
52 Michael Kroll, *Achtsam Lernen – Psychische Gesundheit systemisch bilden* (Berlin, 2018), 112.

> The societal demands on school education and teaching range from expectations regarding students' subject-related competencies, which schools play a major role in developing, to long-term effects in the area of personality development, to which schools and teaching, as well as other areas of children's and young people's lives and experiences outside of school influence, make a decisive contribution.[53]

The Ministry substantiates the fulfilment of its educational mandate by ensuring that learning processes are systematically geared towards comprehensive personal development.[54] This is made clear in detail in the North Rhine-Westphalia School Act, §2, Paragraph 2. It states:

> Reverence for God, respect for human dignity, and a willingness to act socially are the primary goals of education. Young people should be educated in the spirit of humanity, democracy, and freedom, in tolerance and respect for the convictions of others, in responsibility for animals and the preservation of natural resources, in love for people and homeland, for the international community, and a spirit of peace.

The education and school mandate of Bavaria is very similar. Article 1 states:

> (1) Schools shall fulfil the educational mission enshrined in the Constitution. (2) They shall impart knowledge and skills, and educate mind and body, heart and character. (3) The primary educational goals are reverence for God, respect for religious conviction, for human dignity and for the equal rights of men and women, self-control, a sense of responsibility and a willingness to take responsibility, a willingness to help, an open-mindedness for all that is true, good, and beautiful and a sense of responsibility for nature and the environment. (4) Students are to be educated in the spirit of democracy, in love for their Bavarian homeland and the German people, and in the spirit of international reconciliation.

The idea of personal development is similarly echoed in §2 of the Lower Saxony education and school mandate:

> (1) Following preschool education, the school shall further develop the personalities of its students on the basis of Christianity, European

53 "Referenzrahmen Schulqualität NRW: Schule in NRW Nr. 9051," Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (2015), 11; www.schulentwicklung.nrw.de/referenzrahmen.

54 "Referenzrahmen Schulqualität NRW: Schule in NRW Nr. 9051," 19.

humanism, and the ideas of the liberal, democratic, and social freedom movements. (2) Education and teaching must comply with the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Constitution of Lower Saxony; schools must convey the values on which these constitutions are based. (3) Students should become capable of making fundamental rights effective for themselves and everyone else, of understanding the resulting civic responsibility and of contributing to the democratic shaping of society, of acting in accordance with ethical principles and of recognising and respecting religious and cultural values.

The school and educational mandates of other federal states demonstrate a similar thrust, labelling the training and development of fundamental characteristics for personality development as the linchpin of formation and education.[55] All in all, in the context of the research presented here, it should be noted that, in their education and school mandates, the federal states are committed to personality development, character development, and/or the ability to act socially. This is not really surprising, as the German concept of formation is based on the Humboldtian tradition of self-activity and reciprocity with the world.[56] Formation should act as a stimulus for all human powers, so that the individual enters into a reciprocal relationship with the world as a whole and develops human powers as far as possible.[57] Consequently, education means reflectively engaging with the world, with its demands, constraints, and impositions, primarily scrutinising it and adopting a reflective, critical attitude. Only then can people achieve maturity and freedom, which is an important goal of formation. It also means taking social circumstances seriously and being concerned by unjust structures, grievances, and tensions, which (ideally) motivate people to be creatively committed to just causes, and to improve social conditions.[58] Accordingly, *self-*

55 Cf., e.g., SchulG Rheinland-Pfalz (§1), SächsSchulG for the Free State of Saxony (§1), educational mandate of Hamburg schools in HmbSG (1), SchulG Berlin (§3) educational objective.

56 Cf. Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Schriften zur Anthropologie und Geschichte: Theorie der Bildung des Menschen*, eds. Andreas Flitner and Klaus Giel, vol. 1 (Stuttgart/Darmstadt, 1980), 238.

57 Cf. Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Rechenschaftsbericht an den König*, eds. Andreas Flitner and Klaus Giel, vol. IV (Stuttgart/Darmstadt, 1980), 218.

58 At this point, it is worth remembering that the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) studies primarily show a connection between education, science, and justice on a quantitative and political level. Poor education has

awareness in and *with* society promotes and manifests itself in the processes of personality development, which is continuously dynamic. This means that personality is changeable. If the human being can therefore be understood as a "procedural form," formation or education means not only engaging with the world but also *becoming* and *shaping oneself*. [59] On the one hand, this process of confrontation gives the individual access to themselves and, on the other hand, it creates the awareness of being able to mould and shape oneself.

In this context, the term *character* refers to the way a person's personality is characterised by stable, acquired, and changeable traits that can be recognised or read in a person's active *being* and actions. Every person is unique; even if different people have the same characteristics, they can exhibit individual differences in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour.[60] A person's character, therefore, also implies a quality that can be perceived by the senses. The individual manifestations of these traits, habits, and inclinations or their manifestations in experiences and behaviours, distinguish people; thus, they define the person-specific character. The development of personality appears to be equivalent to the development of a moral self-disclosure. This moral character is like a stamp on a person that defines their particular nature and can be used to determine whether a person has a "good" or "bad" character. Against this background, it becomes clear that the meanings of personality and character overlap.

In my understanding, the concept of the self-forms a reflexive understanding of character or personality on the one hand. On the other hand, it denotes the correspondence between mental life and character and refers to the essence of personal being. As previously explained, ethical action is not only of a reflexive nature but is also always worldview-based and internalised through socialisation. In

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a negative impact on society and its prosperity. Cf. Rainhard Z. Bengez, "Bildung und Wissenschaft," in *Bildung und Ethik*, ed. Fath (Berlin, 2013), 66.

59 For the expression "procedural form" (*prozedurales Formgebilde*), see Monika Witsch, "Das Subjekt als Korrelation von Individuation und Vergesellschaftung oder warum man auch bildungstheoretisch nicht auf einem Bein stehen kann," (peDocs, 2011; DOI: 10.25656/01:3331), 7.

60 See Jule Specht and Denis Gerstorf, "Persönlichkeitsentwicklung und Coaching," in *Handbuch Schlüsselkonzepte im Coaching*, eds. Siegfried Greif et al. (Wiesbaden, 2018), 442.

many cases, the reflexive moment only becomes explicitly effective after the action. The interweaving of ideological convictions, prerequisites related to socialisation (and development), and the ability to reflect ultimately represents the great challenge of ethical learning.

Understanding and reflecting on one's own self and the individual reasons for one's actions have been considered not only in philosophy but also in Islamic theological contexts. Kant famously asked the very specific question, "What should I do?," and explained how this question is closely linked to the question of what a person is. Ethical questions always require anthropological reflection. The individual, anthropological idea of one's own destiny is, in turn, essentially characterised by worldview and ideological convictions. The Qur'ān offers some answers to these questions, which can be stimulating for educational thinking about personal development and ethical learning. This will be explored in chapter three.

If self-determination philosophically and theologically requires an awareness of who someone is, part of this question is also achieved in the anticipation of the external perception of others in order to prevent any self-deception or distorted self-perception as far as possible. The first step, however, is to take stock of one's own self. Self-acceptance, i.e., accepting the status quo of oneself, is crucial for the next step of reflecting on this self and working on it.

However, it is important to reflect on habits, behavioural patterns, inclinations, abilities, weaknesses, and personal characteristics. Self-reflection is the constitutive basis for a person's development as well as for intersubjectivity, i.e., the prerequisite and possibility of a cognitive and emotional change of perspective; because without understanding oneself, it will hardly be possible to empathise with others. Only self-knowledge can enable the ability to relate.[61] Being able to make judgements about oneself demonstrates a reflective relationship to the self and the world. In concrete dealings with others, oneself, and the world around us, self- and world-skills are acquired

61 In the context of children of primary school age and in inclusive learning settings, it is imperative to consider individual differences. Even young people with cognitive support needs are capable of human relationships; however, their ability to reflect on their relationship with themselves may be contingent on their support needs or cognitive impairment.

in connection with one's own person.[62] My intensive recourse to Humboldt is due to the conviction that Humboldt's understanding of education comes closest to humanistic personal development.[63] This educational theory should be further developed and expanded in view of a changed (and changing) pluralistic society.[64] Based on school and educational mandates, the broad consensus on personality development was apparent. Pedagogical endeavours to achieve personality development have already been addressed. However, attention should be focused on the fact that this needs to be discussed in pluralistic societies, because what constitutes *personality* in a positive sense will have different emphases depending on whether one is religious or non-religious.

Education describes the ability to become aware of oneself and to recognise oneself. I understand this to mean self-revision, introspection, contemplation, and spiritual examination of the self, as well as reflective, active, ethical action in the respective lifeworld. With Wittgenstein, it could be said that *working on one's self*, on one's own understanding and perception of things, is an essential part of educational work.[65] Following Humboldt, it can therefore be said that working on one's character is part of the educational ideal and the educational understanding of the self-thinking person, who not only strives to educate themselves cognitively but also keeps his or her (moral) character in mind. What is meant by this is a shaping of the interiority, which finds its expression in the outer, i.e., in actions. This is based on the idea that a revision and refinement of character has a positive influence on the creative forces that emerge in social interaction. Similarly, Nida-Rümelin understands education as a process of human development.

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62 Cf. Frauke Kurbacher, *Zwischen Personen. Eine Philosophie der Haltung* (Würzburg, 2017), *passim*.

63 Cf. Stefan Pohlmann, Gabriele Vierzigmann, and Sven Winterhalder, "Einführung," in *Weiter denken durch wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung*, eds. Stefan Pohlmann, Gabriele Vierzigmann, and Thomas Doyé (Wiesbaden, 2017), 34.

64 Cf. Julian Nida-Rümelin and Klaus Zierer, *Bildung in Deutschland vor neuen Herausforderungen* (Baltmannsweiler, 2017), *passim*.

65 "Working on philosophy—as is often the case in architecture—is actually more about working on oneself. On one's own perception. On how you see things. (And what one demands of them.)," Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Vermischte Bemerkungen. Eine Auswahl aus dem Nachlass*, eds. Alois Pichler and Georg Henrik von Wright (Frankfurt, 1994), 52.

> According to humanistic understanding, the respective educational idea represents the normative content of our self-understanding as human beings. Since people must always be seen as an end in themselves and must never be used (instrumentalised) exclusively for other (external) purposes, the normative core of a humanistic anthropology is thus transferred to the humanistic concept of education. If education is nothing other than the guided and, as far as possible, self-determined development of the human being, the development of human personality traits (virtues), and the practice of a genuinely human way of life, then education in this sense is an end in itself. It is the coupling of anthropology and educational theory in humanistic thinking that excludes instrumentalist views.[66]

Accordingly, a *culture of togetherness*, *respect*, and *esteem* requires the development of people's inherent personal qualities in order to be able to engage in improving interactions. With this claim, we are moving into the scientific field of education and the creation of a specific understanding of education. According to Horkheimer, education must not be limited to the individual development of the personality but must also relate to social cohesion.[67] What is needed is a level of education that takes the plural context seriously, affirms the mutual recognition of otherness and sets this as an educational goal.[68] After all, the development that education has to do with is the development of a dignified existence and respect for others despite differing views. Consequently, educational processes should address and thematise social reality and provoke sociocritical thought in order to challenge the status quo for the better. However, schools also need to be redefined in terms of educational theory and social policy in order to counteract social polarisation tendencies, promote democratic awareness and social-ethical skills, and declare respectful interaction to be constitutive for social cohesion.[69]

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66 Cf. Nida-Rümelin, *Philosophie einer humanen Bildung*, 52.

67 See Max Horkheimer, "Begriff der Bildung," in Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8 (Frankfurt, 1985), 409–419.

68 See Peter Graf, "Religiöse Bildung als individuelle Entfaltung der Person," in *Religiöse Bildung im Dialog zwischen Christen und Muslimen* eds. Peter Graf and Bülent Uçar (Stuttgart, 2011), 64.

69 The idea of a democratic civil society invites people to identify with the democratic principles of the community and to get involved in its interests. The idea of civil society places the individual at the centre of all social action as its origin, actor and goal. As social beings, they should not only enjoy their freedom as

A visionary and forward-looking educational theory that aims to prepare children and young people for a constantly changing and culturally diverse world should focus on character. In understanding one's own life as a process of personal improvement, one must ask about the conditions for the cultivation of morally desirable dispositions that are compatible with one's own ideological foundations, e.g., the beliefs, rules, and rites of a particular religion on the one hand, with the socially relevant foundations of a pluralistic society on the other hand, thus serving one's own identity formation and a prosperous coexistence in the sense of a good life for all. Accordingly, emphasising the ethical virtue orientation of education within the framework of school education (in accordance with educational and school mandates) is the central idea of my research. However, this would be misunderstood if it were a matter of declaring that virtues as character traits should be learning objectives. A pedagogy that deliberately tries to change a person's character would violate the autonomy of the individual.[70] Furthermore, it is not a virtue ethics approach if it were to provide fixed information about ethically correct behaviour, i.e., if the context-dependent realisation of a virtue, which must be justified anew in each case, were to be defined normatively. Rather, it is about the quality of character and the question of how a person should be in order to live a good life and which virtues are necessary or helpful for a good life for everyone in a pluralistic society.

In encounters with other people and in new situations, people are always challenged in their self-relationship and their relationship to the world around them. As a further consequence, character also

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private individuals but also understand it as a responsibility to participate in public affairs. It presupposes an active relationship between the individual and the society in which he lives and which he understands as his own. In order for every citizen to be able to internalise this idea, appropriate political structures and institutions are needed that do justice to diversity in society and do not exclude or humiliate anyone, *per se*. Diversity refers not only to "migration background," but also to gender, sexual orientation, class, age, or disability. Such a society will characterise and determine the spirit of society and cooperation. For more, see Avishai Margalit, *Decent Society* (Harvard, 1997). See also the current school laws of the federal states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony, and Bavaria, among others.

70 Carsten Roeger, *Philosophieunterricht zwischen Kompetenzorientierung und philosophischer Bildung* (Berlin/Toronto, 2016), 157.

reveals the attitudes that co-determine behaviour. The self and the cultivation of its character traits thus form the centrepiece of the understanding of education advocated here. Only through the help of the educational processes can an awareness be created of what is and what should be. Accordingly, we must ask about desirable personal characteristics. As can be seen from the above, the concept of virtue offers potential for this. Based on Aristotle and taking into account other virtue ethicists, it is important to define this concept and to formulate a definition that can be operationalised for the educational discourse.

3. Consideration of Existing Concepts for Personality Development

When it comes to the conditions that make it possible to live well together, to co-exist in a way that creates a desirable shared quality of life, then we need children and young people who are willing to work not only for their own good but also for the good of others. Basically, what is needed is a twofold understanding of freedom that sees the realisation of one's own freedom, i.e., one's own well-being, precisely in the recognition of others' freedom. Children and young people need to develop independent judgement to the extent that they are able to free themselves from the influence of external judgements and, at the same time, develop the ability to engage with with those judgements in a reasoned manner. However, the adoption of certain basic personal attitudes plays a constitutive role in this, and the *locus classicus* for a discussion of basic attitudes can be found in philosophical discourses, more specifically in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*—as will be explained later. The concept of virtue refers to the question of which personal attitudes a person acts from. There are various existing approaches that reflect on the moral constitution of human beings and their conditions. At this point, it is important to examine the most widely received approaches.

3.1 Approaches to Values Education

The aforementioned processes of secularisation and change that our society has undergone in the last century go hand in hand with the question of how children can be supported as they grow into society. On a political, social, and theoretical level, discussions are constantly taking place about which fundamental values are important for the direction and organisation of personal life and living together.[71] In academic literature, many models and approaches have been developed to date with regard to values education and the teaching of values in the school context, which explicitly emphasise the value-forming relevance of school lessons. This applies both to the subject of religious education and to other subjects such as philosophy, ethics, Lebensgestaltung-Ethik-Religionskunde (Life Design-Ethics-Teaching about Religions), and the like. Even though these models are fundamentally concerned with reflection, cognition, and the ability to criticise values, they differ considerably from one another. While models of values education include the promotion of decision-making skills, the clarification of values, and the ability to make moral judgements, the teaching of values is concerned with the concrete communication and concrete practice of values.[72] The decisive moment at this point is not to functionalise and sublimate the focus on socially desirable values through values education, but to ask the concrete question of which values are part of our self-image as people who want to treat each other humanely, socially, and peacefully.[73] It is a different discussion as to which approaches these named values should be applied in the school context. In principle, it is necessary to discuss what corresponds to the objective: ethical and/or moral formation, ethical education, value education, or value formation? It is clear at this point that it must first be clarified what is meant by a value and what is meant by a virtue, and how they are defined in this book.

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71 Cf. Dagmar Fenner, *Das gute Leben* (Berlin/New York, 2007), 153.

72 For the school context, a combination of the various approaches discussed currently appears to be the most promising method of moral education. Cf. Lutz Mauermann, "Pädagogische Explikation," in *Handbuch der Erziehungswissenschaft* vol. I, eds. Lutz Koch et al. (Leiden, 2019), 661.

73 See Elisabeth Naurath, "Bildung, Werte-," *WiReLex*, http://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/100191/ (Feburary 2016).

Under the conditions of an increasingly plural society, values are increasingly being questioned and affirmed in terms of their social relevance and significance for coexistence (and integration).[74] The debate is still current, even a good thirty-five years after Brezinka's remarks.[75] In view of the amount of literature on value theory and the public debates on *Leitkultur* (dominant culture) in connection with values, in which the term seems to have become a political buzzword, it is clear how much ambiguity there actually is in this field.[76] At the political level in particular, there is a consensus on the need for an education in values, as it is hoped that this will create a sense of community. According to Böckenförde's dictum, a democratic society depends on value orientations that are constitutive for the success of a social structure, because the state is increasingly losing its ethical "formative power," and the state itself cannot evoke any binding forces with values.[77] Against this background, the question has been posed to religious communities as to how and what they can contribute to the common good and public spirit.[78] This question will be taken up again in the next chapter, when the potential of Islam to promote the common good and peace will be analysed using the example of Islamic philosophical ethical thinking.

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74 See, for example, Zentrum für Globale Fragen an der Hochschule für Philosophie, *Gelingende Wertebildung im Kontext von Migration. Eine Handreichung für die Bildungspraxis* (Munich, 2017).

75 Cf. Mirjam Schambeck, "Was religiöse Wertebildung zur Integration beitragen kann. Überlegungen aus der Religionspädagogik," in *Welche Werte braucht die Welt?*, eds. Schambeck and Pemsel-Maier, 118–138.

76 See Stephan Ernst, "Pluralität und Verbindlichkeit sittlicher Werte," *Stimmen der Zeit*, 235 (2017): 518–530; cf. Wolfgang Brezinka, *Erziehung in einer wertunsicheren Gesellschaft. Beiträge zur Praktischen Pädagogik* (Munich, 1993), 112.

77 The dictum is: "The liberal, secularized state lives by prerequisites which it cannot guarantee itself," Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, "Die Entstehung des Staates als Vorgang der Säkularisation," in *Recht, Staat, Freiheit: Studien zur Rechtsphilosophie, Staatstheorie und Verfassungsgeschichte* (Frankfurt, 1992), 92 (112). Cf. Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, "Fundamente der Freiheit," in *Was hält die moderne Gesellschaft zusammen?*, ed. Erwin Teufel (Frankfurt, 1996), 91; Jochen Schmidt, "Was erwartet der Staat von der Religion? Ein Versuch über Tugend und Religion," in *Staat und Religion. Aspekte einer sensiblen Verhältnisbestimmung*, eds. Rüdiger Althaus and Jochen Schmidt (Freiburg, 2019), 8.

78 Cf. Hans Michael Heinig, *Die Verfassung der Religion. Beiträge zum Religionsverfassungsrecht* (Tübingen, 2014), 10.

The constitutional state creates laws for the peaceful and non-violent coexistence of the members of society, but it cannot create the sociomoral conditions for the members of society to live together cooperatively.[79] Habermas's interpretation of Böckenförde's dictum is that people depend on cooperation with one another, that this requires mutual stability of the citizens' joint expectations of responsibility and that therefore liberal societies are dependent on virtuous citizens.[80]

> That is why political virtues, even if they are only "raised" in small coins, are essential for the survival of a democracy. They are a matter of socialisation and acclimatisation to the practices and ways of thinking of a liberal political culture. Citizenship is, to a certain extent, embedded in a civil society that thrives on spontaneous, if you will, "pre-political" sources.[81]

Habermas thus associates the coexistence of free individuals in a democratic community with virtue, because virtues can establish stability.

> This moves the connection between freedom and virtue from everyday practice into the sphere of political philosophy, fundamentally re-dimensioning the significance of individual attitudes and behaviour and reformulating it with a view to civic ethics.[82]

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79 Cf. Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, "Entstehung und Wandel des Rechtsbegriffs," in *Staat, Gesellschaft, Freiheit. Studien zur Staatstheorie und zum Verfassungsrecht* (Frankfurt, 1976), 65–92; cf. Michael Sandel, "Die Grenzen der Gerechtigkeit und das Gut der Gemeinschaft," in *Konstruktionen praktischer Vernunft. Philosophie im Gespräch*, ed. Herlinde Pauer-Studer (Frankfurt, 2000), 252.

80 Cf. Simone Kauffeld, *Kompetenzen messen, bewerten, entwickeln. Ein prozessanalytischer Ansatz für Gruppen* (Stuttgart, 2006), 16.

81 Jürgen Habermas, "Vorpolitische Grundlagen des demokratischen Rechts?," in *Dialektik der Säkularisierung. Über Vernunft und Religion*, eds. Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger et al. (Freiburg/Vienna, 2011), 23. Political virtues include, for example, obedience to the law on a voluntary basis, willingness to cooperate, fairness, and tolerance. Democratic virtues include participation, responsibility, and argumentation. See Rudolf Speth and Ansgar Klein, "Demokratische Grundwerte in der pluralisierten Gesellschaft," in *Werte in der politischen Bildung, Didaktische Reihe der Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg*, eds. Gotthard Breit and Siegfried Schiele (Schwalbach, 2000), 35–55; Ansgar Klein, *Der Diskurs der Zivilgesellschaft. Politische Kontexte und demokratietheoretische Folgerungen* (Wiesbaden, 2001), 386.

82 Sutter, *Der Wille zur Gesellschaft*, 145.

Virtuous civic behaviour means, among other things, strengthening the desirable attitudes of subjects that are conducive to the common good.[83] According to Böckenförde, it is precisely because people can be so ambivalent in their behaviour that we need "points of support" for successful coexistence.[84] In line with the theorem, (civic) virtues can be understood as an ethical bonus that members of society can strive for if they want to contribute to a successful and happy lifestyle and achieve it themselves. However, a certain caution is warrented when it comes to expectations of political virtues. This is because they can be exploited by destructive ideologies, as evidenced by historical and political experiences.[85] Furthermore, they must not be enforced, as they would otherwise lead to the destruction of the freedom of members of society.[86] However, this present work is by no means concerned with political virtues but exclusively with virtues in the sense of personal qualities that dispose people to react to things in an excellent or at least sufficient manner—a paraphrase of Christine Swanton's concept of virtue.[87]

Two things can be inferred from the preceding remarks: firstly, that (democratic) societies need virtuous and value-oriented citizens, and secondly, that both values and virtues play an important role in the situational identification of solutions to problems. This requires a definition of values that is conducive to the reception of virtue. According to Hans Joas, values are strongly emotionally supported ideas about what is desirable, and they have the function of making action attractive.[88] An attachment to values does not take place intentionally, but the attachment is *perceived* as binding. Desired actions are evaluated by referring to a value to which a person

83 Cf. Schmidt, "Was erwartet der Staat von der Religion?," 7.

84 Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, *Kirche und christlicher Glaube in den Herausforderungen der Zeit. Beiträge zur politisch-theologischen Verfassungsgeschichte 1957–2002* (Münster, 2007), 590ff.

85 See Ernst Piper, "Preußische Tugenden im Zeitalter der totalitären Herausforderung," *ZRGG* 53 (2001): 35–45.

86 See Herfried Münkler and Anna Loll, "Das Dilemma von Tugend und Freiheit. Die Notwendigkeit von Eigenverantwortung in einer funktionierenden Bürgergesellschaft," Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung: Arbeitskreis Bürgergesellschaft und Aktivierender Staat, Bürgergesellschaft 17 (Bonn, 2005), 3.

87 Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (New York, 2003), 19ff.; Schmidt, "Was erwartet der Staat von der Religion?," 8.

88 Hans Joas, *Die Entstehung der Werte* (Frankfurt, 2006), 3, 5.

feels attached. For Joas, values represent the good, i.e., values are orienting ideas about what one considers fundamentally desirable and valuable.[89] Joas thus comes to the conclusion that values and value commitments arise "in the experience of self-education and self-transcendence."[90] Thus values arise through self-awareness in the context of socialisation through family, community, and society, as people develop through feeling, reflection, and action. Values are ideas about which desire is perceived as personally coherent; it is a kind of reflexive weighing of what is desirable and good.[91] However, considerations about a successful life not only call for the introduction of binding values in the sense of virtues, as otherwise no new value orientations could emerge, but virtues appear to be important as a complementary, independent variant of values.[92] If values are subjective, desire-based judgements, it should be noted that desirability is not a sufficient criterion for determining valuable characteristics.[93] The pursuit of virtues in the sense of *aretē* (Greek: goodness), which brings a person into a good moral condition, can support reflective deliberation. Virtue ethics aims to form and cultivate desirable character traits. For the time being, virtues in the sense of desirable qualities can be understood as those personal characteristics that make people capable of reacting to events and situations in the best possible way.[94] The emphasis on situational awareness and assessment of circumstances, which are required for virtuous action, can be an enriching contribution of virtues to value formation. Since values are more fundamental than virtues, virtues can reveal a scope of action that is more concrete than the overarching value, but which is also more open than a social norm. Virtue ethics can therefore be helpful both to the individual in a pluralistic society and to the community, because it is easier to agree

89 Joas, *Die Entstehung der Werte*, 252ff.; Cf. *Gelingende Wertebildung im Kontext von Migration*, 10.

90 Joas, *Die Entstehung der Werte*, 10.

91 Cf. Nadja Schwendemann, *Werthaltungen von Lehrkräften in der Erwachsenenbildung: Eine rekonstruktive Studie* (Wiesbaden, 2018), 45ff.

92 Cf. Karl-Heinz Hillmann, *Wertwandel* (Würzburg, 2008), 407ff.

93 Cf. Martin Hähnel, *Das Ethos der Ethik. Zur Anthropologie der Tugend* (Wiesbaden, 2015), 110.

94 Cf. Schmidt, "Was erwartet der Staat von der Religion?," 145.

on possible courses of action, even if the worldview or ideology is very different.

Over the course of their life, a person can achieve a fixed disposition or basic disposition by making revised value-based decisions. To do this, they must have established, tested, reproduced, and consolidated these value convictions in different situations so that they become ingrained with recourse to these practical experiences, i.e., they characterise people to such an extent that they become character traits and thus develop into dispositions.[95] According to my working definition, these dispositional attitudes are virtues. This is, therefore, an important interface between values and virtues. *Virtuous values* can therefore be understood as aiming at a complex and practical capacity for judgement that enables people to suitably assess a situation, recognise facts, judge an individual case correctly, and make (morally) appropriate decisions.

The reflexive acceptance of and sensitisation to values is consequently important in the school context. Most approaches to values education aim to raise awareness of one's own values, which encourages self-reflection and helps develop judgement and decision-making skills through the argumentation of one's own values.[96]

The educationalist Wolfgang Brezinka considers the idea of teaching *values* alone to be too "timid," as it does not lead to stable value convictions.[97] In addition, *teaching* values in a pluralistic society and in moral philosophy seems very problematic and is viewed critically. Like Brezinka, other educationalists seem to share the position that education in virtues is a particularly promising form of values education. Hackl, for example, claims that values education at school "tends to focus more on virtues derived from values (e.g. fairness in grading or non-violence in the school environment) and, above all, on the practice of verifiable secondary virtues (punctuality, order, perseverance, etc.)."[98]

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95 See Georg Lohmann, "Werte, Tugenden und Urteilsbildung. Gegenstände und Ziele von Ethikunterricht und Politikunterricht," in *Werte in der politischen Bildung*, eds. Breit and Schiele, 208.

96 Cf. Roland W. Henke, "Die Demokratie und der Streit um Werte," Wertediskurse im Unterricht, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 4.

97 Cf. Brezinka, *Erziehung in einer wertunsicheren Gesellschaft*, 132.

98 Armin Hackl, "Konzepte schulischer Werteerziehung," in *Werte schulischer Begabtenförderung*, eds. Hackl, Steenbuck, and Weigand (eds.), 19. At this point,

Under the conditions of diversity, a pedagogical interplay between the discourses on values and virtues appears to be promising. Accordingly, approaches to values education could be further developed in the direction of virtues and virtuous values. Moral education models from the field of ethical formation can open up new perspectives for this. With this first heuristic conclusion, it seems appropriate to talk about the usefulness of ethical formation.

3.2 Ethical Formation

In the literature and in practice, concepts of ethical formation and upbringing can be found in various subjects such as philosophy or religious education, which will not all be problematised here, but, by concentrating on the analysis, merely made fruitful for the context concerned.[99] What these conceptions all have in common is that they are based on the possibility and necessity of ethical formation for young people.[100] In view of a pluralistic society, which is inherently dynamic, ethical approaches are constantly faced with new challenges. Considering modern, pluralistic societies, *ethical formation*—which aims to enable the independent establishment of values, norms, rules, and/or virtues—is a realistic objective that could be achieved in various school subjects. The concept of *ethical education* seems less useful for the present research horizon, which envisages the practising of (ethical) rules and norms. Such a concept of Islamic philosophical provenance, which would carry in a normativity with it in a theological context, would no longer be translatable for non-Muslims and would, therefore, no longer be accessible for others. For this reason, approaches that aim to develop basic moral attitudes

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however, I am hardly concerned with extolling secondary virtues that need to be revitalised in the context of values education.

99 For approaches such as prosociality, compassion, or model learning, see Matthias Bahr, *Erziehung zur Prosozialität bei Acht- bis Zehnjährigen am Lernort Religionsunterricht* (St. Ottilien, 1992); Lothar Kuld and Stefan Gönnheimer, *Compassion – Sozialverpflichtetes Lernen und Handeln* (Stuttgart, 2000); Hans Mendl, *Modelle – Vorbilder – Leitfiguren. Lernen an außergewöhnlichen Biografien* (Stuttgart, 2015).

100 Cf. Reinhold Mokrosch, "Art. Ethische Bildung und Erziehung," *Wissenschaftlich Religionspädagogisches Lexikon im Internet* (2016): 11, www.wirelex.de.

come closest to the concern here. My aim is not to discuss what is ethically right or wrong from an Islamic philosophical perspective but rather to argue what contributions this religious tradition provides young people in their context and decision-making situations, so that they can develop and justify what is ethically desirable and act accordingly. After all, it is hardly possible to practise desirable virtues such as prudence or courage in school lessons. By contrast, dispositions can be aquired within a school context through practical projects that require theoretical reflection on values and virtues such as courage, justice, and respect. The *values clarification* model, which involves explaining values, norms, and in come cases, virtues, is also inadequate compared to a substantive discussion.[101] The model presupposes a consensus among all participants reguarding the virtues and values that are considered desireable. A pertinent criticism of this clarification model was that it examined values and/or virutures in a highly subjective and culturally context-free manner.[102]

In addition, volitional and emotional skills are part of the substantive examination of values and virtues when it comes to overcoming, for example, reluctance or obstacles to action.[103] According to Kant, the acquisition of virtues also touches and affects the heart, which is honed to become a morally good person.[104] An overall concept that combines the reflection of values and the deliberation of virtues and virtuous behaviour, and that makes personal development processes the starting point for ethical learning, comes closest to the aim of this book.

101 See Louis E. Raths, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney B. Simon, *Werte und Ziele. Methoden zur Sinnfindung im Unterricht* (Munich, 1976).

102 Cf. Mokrosch, "Art. Ethische Bildung und Erziehung," 5.

103 Cf. Rudolf Englert, "Die verschiedenen Komponenten ethischen Lernens und ihr Zusammenspiel," in *Ethisches Lernen*, Jahrbuch der Religionspädagogik vol. 31, eds. Englert et al. (2015), 111.

104 Immanuel Kant, *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (RGV), in *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (AA), vol. VI, ed. Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1907), 47.

3.3 Recognition Pedagogy

For the social philosopher Axel Honneth, recognition is one of the fundamental elements of a society and is a constitutive prerequisite for the sociality of different social groups. Even though Honneth's theory of recognition can be found, for example, in political philosophy, there has been an increasing interest in the topic of recognition within educational theory discourse since the mid-1990s.[105] In particular, Annedore Prengel initiated a new discussion in German-speaking countries with her concept of an explicitly pedagogical theory of recognition—*the pedagogy of diversity*.[106] Krassimir Stojanov's sociophilosophical approach, which Honneth's approach develops further in terms of educational theory, is of interest for the context here, because it takes a closer look at the social framework conditions for educational processes.[107] According to Stojanov's thesis, educational equity presupposes forms of recognition such as empathy, respect, and social appreciation, which he defines as normative sources for successful coexistence in a society.[108] Stojanov believes that the processes of self-awareness and self-development are hindered by lived experiences of disrespect.[109] Precisely this realisation—that only experiences of recognition enable individuals to develop self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-respect—is a remarkable insight for educational discourse.[110]

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105 Cf. Christiane Micus-Loos, "Anerkennung des Anderen als Herausforderung in Bildungsprozessen," *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 58, 3 (2012): 310.

106 For an overview, see Cathrin Reisenauer and Nadine Ulseß-Schurda, *Anerkennung in der Schule. Über Anlässe, Abläufe und Wirkweisen von Adressierungen* (Bern, 2018).

107 See Annedore Prengel, *Pädagogik der Vielfalt. Verschiedenheit und Gleichberechtigung in Interkultureller, Feministischer und Integrativer Pädagogik* (Wiesbaden, 2019); Krassimir Stojanov, *Bildung und Anerkennung. Soziale Voraussetzungen von Selbst-Entwicklung und Welt-Erschließung* (Wiesbaden, 2006); and Krassimir Stojanov, "Bildungsgerechtigkeit im Spannungsfeld zwischen Verteilungs-, Teilhabe- und Anerkennungsgerechtigkeit," in *Gerechtigkeit und Bildung*, eds. Michael Wimmer, Roland Reichenbach, and Ludwig A. Pongratz (Paderborn, 2007), 29–48.

108 See Stojanov, *Bildung und Anerkennung*.

109 Cf. Stojanov, *Bildung und Anerkennung*, 107.

110 Cf. Paul Mecheril et al., *Migrationspädagogik* (Weinheim, 2010); Nicole Balzer and Norbert Ricken, "Anerkennung als pädagogisches Problem. Markierungen

In a pedagogical reading of Honneth's theory of recognition, the question therefore arises as to whether it is sufficient for people to cultivate certain forms of recognition as basic attitudes in order to not avoid other people, and to meet them on equal terms and deal with ethical challenges. Following Hegel, Honneth distinguishes between three forms of recognition: appreciation or love (emotional respect), respect (legal respect), and solidarity or egalitarian difference (social respect). According to Honneth, functions of recognition and refusal of recognition or experiences of disregard result from a communicative-discursive practice.

> At this first level of reciprocal recognition, the individual should learn to experience themselves as an individual, endowed with basic needs but is also dependent on others and their care, in an environment characterised by care, affection, and emotional bonds in order to be able to establish an intact relationship with themselves.[111]

Honneth explains that the enabling conditions of ego identity are based on a dynamic that arises from both (discursive) experiences of disregard and recognition that we have as intersubjective beings. For Honneth, this dynamic is the basis for being able to understand what (mutual or discursive) love, respect, and solidarity mean or to develop a healthy self-respect, i.e., one that neither loses itself in egomania nor self-abandonment.

As Honneth, alongside Charles Taylor and others, aptly put it, people are drastically affected emotionally when they lose the respect of others.[112] Everyone needs recognition, and denied recognition is hurtful.[113] Recognition is described as a basic anthropological

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im erziehungswissenschaftlichen Diskurs," in *Anerkennung*, eds. Alfred Schäfer and Christiane Thompson (Paderborn, 2010), 35–87.

111 Axel Honneth, "Verwilderungen. Kampf um Anerkennung im frühen 21. Jahrhundert," *APuZ* 1–2 (2011): 38.

112 Honneth, "Verwilderungen," 37; See also Jürgen Straub, *Verstehen, Kritik, Anerkennung. Das Eigene und das Fremde in der Erkenntnisbildung interpretativer Wissenschaften* (Göttingen, 1999) and Tzvetan Todorov, *Abenteuer des Zusammenlebens. Versuch einer allgemeinen Anthropologie* (Berlin, 1996).

113 It can be emotionally painful for someone to have to *pretend to be* someone else in order to receive someone else's recognition and to be able to have a conversation with them at all.

need.[114] "Non-recognition or misrecognition can cause suffering, can be a form of oppression, can trap the other person in a false, deformed existence."[115] Recognition in interpersonal relationships is therefore an important building block for identity formation.[116]

I agree with Honneth that intersubjective processes are required in order to form an intact identity as a subject. That there should be symmetry among the discourse partners in negotiation processes is an ideal. According to Honneth, there is a *struggle for recognition*. But a fair fight is ideally based on symmetrical preconditions. However, some struggles begin asymmetrically in favour of the majority society, which creates unequal ground for new efforts for recognition. There are many examples of this in Germany. For example, Muslims have had to fight for their religious equality in various legal matters—which Honneth describes as legal recognition and which must be distinguished from emotional recognition. However, a structural refusal of recognition can also lead to emotional injury. The structural refusal of recognition or, in other cases, hard-fought recognition or long-term efforts for recognition have led and continue to lead directly to labelling, stigmatisation, and humiliation of the petitioners in the public sphere, as Avishai Margalit also describes such a phenomenon.[117] These experiences of denial of recognition have all too often reinforced negative attitudes, emotions, and behaviour in the majority society. This was made particularly clear by the Bertelsmann Foundation's *Religion Monitor*.[118] The study *Muslime in Europa: Integriert aber nicht akzeptiert?* (*Muslims in*

114 Cf. Charles Taylor, *Multikulturalismus und die Politik der Anerkennung* (Frankfurt, 1993), 15; Axel Honneth, "Anerkennung und moralische Verpflichtung," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 51.4 (1997): 25–41; Todorov, *Abenteuer des Zusammenlebens*, passim.

115 Taylor, *Multikulturalismus und die Politik der Anerkennung*, 13ff.

116 Cf. Stefan Altmeyer and Monika Tautz, "Der Religionsunterricht als Ort Komparativer Theologie? Auf dem Weg zu einer fundamentalen und konkreten Didaktik des interreligiösen Lernens," in *Komparative Theologie. Herausforderung für die Religionspädagogik. Perspektiven zukunftsfähigen interreligiösen Lernens*, eds. Klaus von Stosch, Rita Burrichter, and Georg Langenhorst (Paderborn/Leiden, 2015), 117ff.

117 Cf. Margalit, *Decent Society*, 9–28.

118 See the Bertelsmann Foundation/Bertelsmann-Stiftung's *Religion Monitor* studies "Zusammenleben in kultureller Vielfalt" (2018) and "Sonderauswertung Islam" (2017).

Europe: Integrated but not Accepted?) states that, in addition to the hurdles and resistance that Muslims have had to overcome as part of their integration efforts, there is also a lack of recognition of their religiosity.[119] Furthermore, the majority society is called upon to "take its self-formulated claims to plurality seriously and… not measure its willingness to recognise them by how foreign or familiar a religious practice is to it."[120] With Habermas and Honneth, we must therefore continue to constantly ask how the conditions for the possibility of symmetrical respect can be ensured—respect that the individual shows for the integrity of all other persons.[121] For pedagogical theories of recognition, recognition is a key category in the relationship between the individual and society.[122]

In a pedagogical concept of recognition, Prengel draws Honneth's segments of love, legal equality, and social esteem, which appear to be relevant for interactions in the school context. According to Prengel, these three attitudes help to perceive differences while simultaneously ensuring that differences are not overemphasised, otherness is not controlled, and stereotypical treatment of national or religious origins are avoided.[123] Teachers who consciously implement these basic traits are certainly also good role models for their pupils; this can promote skills and aptitudes in students.

How can such a pedagogical reflection of the socioethical approach be implemented at the ethical interaction level of pupils?

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119 Cf. "Studie Ergebnisse und Länderprofile: Muslime in Europa – Integriert, aber nicht akzeptiert?," *Religion Monitor* (Bertelsmann Foundation/Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2017), 58.

120 "Studie Ergebnisse und Länderprofile," 58.

121 Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Vom pragmatischen, ethischen und moralischen Gebrauch der praktischen Vernunft," in *Erläuterungen zur Diskursethik* (Frankfurt, 1991), 106.

122 Cf. Werner Nothurft, "Anerkennung," in *Handbuch interkulturelle Kommunikation und Kompetenz. Grundbegriffe – Theorien – Anwendungsfelder*, eds. Jürgen Straub, Arne Weidemann, and Dors Weidemann (Stuttgart, 2007), 110.

123 See Käte Meyer-Drawe, "Die Beziehung zum Anderen beim Kind. Merleau Pontys Konzeption kindlicher Sozialität," *Bildung und Erziehung* 37, 2 (1984):164, 167; and Yasemin Karakaşoğlu, Mona Massumi, and Sabine Jacobsen, "Interkulturelle Öffnung im Spiegel von Schulkultur. Überlegungen aus einem Theorie-Praxis-Dialog," in *Diversity in der LehrerInnenbildung. Internationale Dimensionen der Vielfalt in Forschung und Praxis*, eds. Sebastian Barsch, Nina Glutsch, and Mona Massumi (Münster/New York, 2017), 217–238.

If social plurality is reflected in the classroom, then students need reinforcement in those competencies that protect them from the opposites of recognition, namely discrimination, bullying, contempt, and rejection.

3.4 Intercultural Pedagogy

According to Maria Castro Varela and Birgit Jagusch, the consideration of intercultural aspects in pedagogy is primarily understood as a further development or reaction to approaches of foreigners, and later, multicultural pedagogy, which were fundamentally based on deficit-oriented and assimilationist approaches.[124] There are many different approaches to intercultural education which cannot be covered fully here.[125] However, one thing that these approaches have in common is that they are based on a "reflexive understanding of culture and its functions in the educational context and in other social contexts."[126] Intercultural pedagogy, therefore, aims to recognise the diversity of cultural identities, whereby differences are seen as social constructions (including those that have become historical) and social conditions are reflected upon—in particular mechanisms of disadvantage or favouritism, based on ethnic-cultural characteristics.[127] As Kiesel and Volz explain in their essay, intercultural (social) work relates to problems of the prerequisites for a good lifestyle and can therefore be understood as a hermeneutics of lifestyle.[128] Intercultural pedagogy should be recognised, in particular, for the

124 Maria do Mar Castro Varela and Birgit Jagusch, "Geschlechtergerechtigkeit in der interkulturellen Jugendarbeit," in *"Rassismus – eine Jugendsünde?" Aktuelle antirassistische und interkulturelle Perspektiven der Jugendarbeit. Tagungsdokumentation*, Informations- und Dokumentationszentrum für Antirassismusarbeit (Düsseldorf, 2006), 45–55.

125 For an introduction, see Gogolin and Krüger-Potratz, *Einführung in die interkulturelle Pädagogik* (Leverkusen, 2020).

126 Gogolin and Krüger-Potratz, *Einführung in die interkulturelle Pädagogik*, 134.

127 Cf. Ingrid Gogolin, Ursula Neumann, and Hans-Joachim Roth, "Förderung von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit Migrationshintergrund," Gutachten für die Bund-Länder-Kommission Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung (Bonn, 2003).

128 Doron Kiesel and Fritz Rüdiger Volz, "'Anerkennung und Intervention.' Moral und Ethik als komplementäre Dimensionen interkultureller Kompetenz," in

fact that practitioners reflect on their own biases and prejudices in encounters with others, and where sociocultural orientation patterns and self-conceptions clash, they proceed with caution in ethical judgements, i.e., intercultural pedagogy enables self-reflection, coping patterns, and self-transformation.[129] However, it fails to specify how these skills are to be acquired and only focuses on the intercultural context.

Intercultural competence is one of the key qualifications that have become increasingly important not only in professional fields but also in private and family life.[130] Intercultural competence has been regarded as a central dimension of general education at least since the 1996 resolution of the German Conference of Education Ministers on "Intercultural Formation and Education," and is now a component of most curricula, learning and education plans at the primary level and, accordingly, at secondary level I. However, there is as yet no empirical support for the programme of intercultural formation and education.[131] Personal intercultural competency refers to knowledge-based abilities and skills in the sense of an individual disposition, which is brought to bear in a way that is mediated by the actor's interpretation of the context and situation.[132]

The specific situation of people with a migrant background may be of intersubjective importance and call for an appropriate approach, but it is questionable whether this is sufficient in a society that is now highly culturally and religiously pluralistic and has different cultural self-images.[133] It is also difficult to impart basic knowledge about a particular culture and religion in a value-free manner. Religious forms of culture must also be taken into account.

Interkulturelle Kompetenz und pädagogische Professionalität, ed. Georg Auernheimer (Wiesbaden, 2013), 77.

129 Cf. Kiesel and Volz, "Anerkennung und Intervention," 76ff.

130 Cf. Jürgen Straub, "Kompetenz," in *Handbuch interkulturelle Kommunikation und Kompetenz*, 35.

131 Cf. Isabell Diehm, Melanie Kuhn, and Claudia Machold, "Der Umgang mit ethnischer Heterogenität im Anfangsunterricht. Prämissen und Implikationen Interkultureller Pädagogik und ihr anhaltendes Empiriedefizit," in *Sachunterricht im Anfangsunterricht. Lernen im Anschluss nach dem Kindergarten*, ed. Eva Gläser (Baltmannsweiler, 2007), 177–191.

132 Cf. Straub, "Kompetenz," 39.

133 See Naika Foroutan, "Muslimbilder in Deutschland. Wahrnehmungen und Ausgrenzungen in der Integrationsdebatte," FES Dokumentation (Bonn, 2012).

Intercultural education should therefore not be blind to religion. The diversity of religions and denominations, each of which is practised in its own way in everyday life, makes things even more difficult. Knowledge about the effectiveness and influence of culture hardly supports the process of human sociability.[134] Knowing something does not mean knowing or even mastering its performance. Reflecting on cultural contexts does not initiate a lasting ability to react sensitively in new culturally specific situations, nor does it necessarily bring about positive attitudes towards plurality. Repeated practice, i.e., confrontation with unfamiliar behaviour, is required in order to learn and gain a certain degree of confidence. However, this must be preceded by an open attitude and willingness that makes it possible to engage with a new environment and other people. This learning process is fraught with difficulties. Culture is known to be dynamic and therefore changeable.[135] For this reason, intercultural education in general, but also intercultural competence in particular, can neither capture nor do justice to the individually divergent multiple cultural references of people. In any case, intercultural education was criticised in the 1990s for concentrating on particular social groups and focusing solely on them.[136] Under the current conditions of increased cultural diversity, criticism regarding the favouring or disadvantaging of certain groups in the school curriculum is likely to intensify. In addition, an explicit focus on "other" cultures creates the danger of perpetuating or (re)constructing the perception of migrant people as "foreigners", thus continuing *othering*, and thereby shaping the way we live together.[137] Added to this is the mostly negative media discourse about migrant groups in society, which exerts a considerable influence on our attitudes. The habitual way of dealing with people of other faiths and cultural backgrounds, possibly

134 Cf. Stojanov, *Bildung und Anerkennung*, 9.

135 Cf. Jürgen Straub, "Kulturwissenschaftliche Psychologie," in *Paradigmen und Disziplinen. Reihe Handbuch der Kulturwissenschaften*, vol. 2, eds. Friedrich Jäger and Jürgen Straub (Stuttgart/Weimar, 2004), 581–591.

136 Cf. Paul Mecheril, *Einführung in die Migrationspädagogik* (Weinheim/Basel, 2004), *passim*.

137 The term *othering* was coined by the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and refers to the production of an "other" through imperial discourse. See, for example, Iman Attia and Mariam Popal (eds.), *BeDeutungen dekolonisieren: Spuren von (antimuslimischem) Rassismus* (Münster, 2018), 19.

characterised by indifference, can suddenly change depending on the prevailing media mood; rifts can be torn open and differences (re)defined, scandalised, and ethnically and/or religiously charged. Even in established neighbourhoods, this leads to problems where there were none before.[138] "A racist division of social space is obviously very easy to stage."[139]

The aim of intercultural education was to uncover structures of social disadvantage and ways to realise equal opportunities regardless of ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender affiliation.[140] Against this background, it offers solutions, albeit only a few, as to how children can learn to deal with migration-related plurality depending on the context.[141] Practising how to deal with cultural differences is likely to prove very difficult in the everyday school environment.[142] There is always the danger of ascribing cultural otherness, with recourse to previous experiences, making attributions and stereotypes that hardly correspond to the self-image of another person. In this way, acquired specific techniques of interaction or forms of behaviour in dealing with particular cultural ways of life can generalise and codify social categorisations, if not even essentialise specially created markings, and stage them as components of human nature.[143]

This means that intercultural pedagogy and the intercultural competence acquired and deepened with its help should enable constructive communication and avoid ethnically-oriented communica-

138 See Wolf-Dieterich Bukow, "Wie viel Fremdheit verträgt das Land? Vom selbstverständlichen Umgang mit einer längst alltäglichen Fremdheit," in *Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Pädagogik. Aktuelle Entwicklungen in Theorie, Empirie und Praxis*, eds. Yasemin Karakaşoğlu and Julian Lüddecke (Münster, 2004), 186.

139 Bukow, "Wie viel Fremdheit verträgt das Land?,"186.

140 Cf. Sven Ernstson and Christine Meyer (eds.), *Praxis geschlechtersensibler und interkultureller Bildung* (Wiesbaden, 2013), 12.

141 Cf. Diehm, Kuhn, and Machold, "Der Umgang mit ethnischer Heterogenität im Anfangsunterricht," 183.

142 Cf. Monika Tautz, *Interreligiöses Lernen im Religionsunterricht. Menschen und Ethos im Islam und Christentum* (Stuttgart, 2007), 70.

143 Cf. Aurora Rodonò, "Ambiguitätsdingsbums. Or: Oder: Unordnung aushalten, Rassismus bekämpfen im (ethnologischen) Museum," in *Mehrdeutigkeit gestalten*, eds. Schnurr et al., 275.

tion.[144] This skill should enable people to react in the best possible way when problems that can be characterised as culture-specific arise. In this sense, competence means a quality, ability, or trait that enables people to cope successfully and efficiently with challenges in complex situations.[145] Understood in this way, competency encompasses much more than the ability to respond appropriately to culturally (and religiously) different people. Following the general concept of competence, the consideration of all factors and aspects of a situation is required, with cultural otherness and strangeness recognised as one of many aspects.[146] This makes virtue ethics didactics compatible with competency discourse.

3.5 *Virtue Competence*? The Consequences of Virtue Ethics: Considerations for the Discourse on Competencies in Educational Theory

In the above discussion, there is evidence of strong convergence between the meaning of the terms *competence* and *virtue*. It can therefore be asked whether the concept of *virtue*, with our working definition on which this book is based, can have an impact on current educational discourses, or whether it can inspire and sharpen the focus on the idea of cultivating the self in the context of personality development. I will not go into all the similarities and differences in detail, but focus on what I consider to be the fundamental difference and convergence of the two concepts relevant to this issue.

The report "Zur Entwicklung nationaler Bildungsstandards" ("On the Development of National Educational Standards"), established

144 Cf. Mohammed Heidari, "Lernen durch Konflikte im Kontext des interkulturellen Zusammenlebens am Beispiel der Migranten und Migrantinnen aus muslimischen Herkunftsländern in Deutschland," in *Lernprozess Christen Muslime. Gesellschaftliche Kontexte – theologische Grundlagen – Begegnungsfelder*, eds. Andreas Renz and Stephan Leimgruber (Münster, 2002), 252.

145 Cf. Hanspeter Maurer and Beat Gurzeler, *Handbuch Kompetenzen. Strategien zur Förderung überfachlicher Kompetenzen* (Bern, 2005), 148.

146 See Franz E. Weinert, "Vergleichende Leistungsmessung in Schulen – eine umstrittene Selbstverständlichkeit," in *Leistungsmessungen in Schulen*, ed. Franz E. Weinert (Weinheim/Basel, 2002), 17–31.

a semantic proximity between *virtue* and *competence*. Although conceptual implications are not examined, the report addresses the specific question of whether certain secondary virtues can be evaluated as objectives of educational work.[147]

Here, our definitions of terms are recalled in order to formulate convergence and difference. Franz Weinert's definition of competence in educational theory is not uncontroversial, but nevertheless enjoys great approval and is often cited as a basis, which is why it is included here.[148] For Weinert,

> Competences are the cognitive abilities and skills that are available to or can be learnt through them in order to solve certain problems, as well as the associated motivational, volitional, and social readiness and abilities to be able to use the solutions to problems successfully and responsibly in variable situations.[149]

According to the above-mentioned characteristics, competences can be understood as permanent and specific dispositions that are acquired in the course of educational and upbringing processes, and enable people to cope with different challenges and life situations.[150] According to this definition, many facets come together to form a competency, such as knowledge, cognitive abilities, understanding, ability, action, experience, and motivation. A certain ability is demonstrated in a successful performance or concretisation, i.e., in the actions of the person; this means that someone is competent *in* something.[151]

This allows competencies to be sorted and categorised according to various facets, such as media, social, judgement, methodological, or personal skills, as well as key competencies. Technical and professional competences relate to the ability to complete tasks using subject-specific knowledge, whereas key competences are essential

147 See Eckhard Klieme et al., "Zur Entwicklung nationaler Bildungsstandards," Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Berlin, 2003), 63ff.

148 Cf. Roeger, *Philosophieunterricht*, 111.

149 Weinert, "Vergleichende Leistungsmessung in Schulen," 27ff.

150 Cf. Eckhard Klieme and Johannes Hartig, "Kompetenzkonzepte in den Sozialwissenschaften und im erziehungswissenschaftlichen Diskurs," in *Kompetenzdiagnostik*. Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft 10 (8), eds. Manfred Prenzel, Ingrid Gogolin, and Hein-Hermann Krüger (Wiesbaden, 2007), 21.

151 See Kauffeld, *Kompetenzen messen, bewerten, entwickeln*.

for the personal and social development of individuals in a modern society and enable flexibility of action.[152]

Human behaviour and human actions fundamentally allow conclusions to be drawn about (moral) attitudes and intentions.[153] A virtuous lifestyle correlates with an intention to act.

> If one acts as a virtuous person would act, but with a different intention, then one would achieve the same immediate goal, but the action would not be virtuous because of the lack of intention. In this case, there would be a different psychological disposition with the same performance.[154]

For virtues, the character, and thus also the intention and motivation of the person acting, is sufficient. That is why the concept of virtue asks

> how a person should be in order to be considered a good person. Virtues are therefore attitudes and behaviours linked to a person's identity that enable them to act appropriately in the respective context.[155]

Character virtues, to which Pauer-Studer alludes, could thus tend to correspond to social and self-competences in the sense of personal qualities in terms of competence theory. There are certain virtues, such as the *dianoethical* virtues described by Aristotle, which are instrumental or artisanal virtues that appear functionally equivalent to social competence but constitute a broader spectrum of action than social skills from an educational theory perspective. The concept of virtue does not refer to individual skills for successfully coping with the world but to an overall view of a good life. According to Swanton's definition, the concepts of competence and virtue have a family resemblance in the Wittgensteinian sense, i.e., they equip

152 Cf. Lothar Böhnisch, "Familie und Bildung," in *Handbuch Bildungsforschung*, ed. Rudolf Tippelt and Bernhard Schmidt (Wiesbaden, 2009), 343. Based on this idea, a competency orientation in educational discourse gives the impression of a renaissance of personality or character development, which has basically been inherent to the educational mission up to now—as will be discussed below. Cf. Roland Reichenbach, *Philosophie der Bildung und Erziehung. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart, 2007), 69.

153 Cf. Herlinde Pauer-Studer, *Einführung in die Ethik* (Vienna, 2010), 102.

154 Roeger, *Philosophieunterricht*, 142.

155 Herlinde Pauer-Studer, "Tugendethik," in *Handbuch Philosophie und Ethik*, vol. II, eds. Julian Nida-Rümelin, Irina Spiegel, and Markus Thiedemann (Paderborn, 2017), 79.

people to react *well* in a context-specific, situation-appropriate, and sensitive manner.[156] On the other hand, competences are not part of an overall conception of the morally good life.[157] The concept of virtue means more than a mastery of skills or craftsmanship, while competence is ultimately a specific skill or *ability*.[158] The concept of virtue brings into play the connotation of the ethically good, which is not included in the concept of competency, i.e., the concept of virtue cannot be replaced by the concept of competency, and they cannot be used synonymously, as this would significantly curtail the concept of virtue. This is why the neologism "virtue competence" seems superfluous. Its use would result in a constitutive loss of content on the part of virtue ethics and in an empirically intangible quantity on the part of competence theory.

3.6 Summary

First of all, it should be noted that dealing with values and values-based education indicates a possible direction for a discussion of virtuous values that can be helpful for a good life for both the individual and the community in pluralistic environments. While virtues essentially answer the question, *Who is good?*, values answer the question, *What is important?*

Pedagogically, advanced recognition concepts focus conceptually on the acquisition of skills that enable mutual recognition, as pedagogical theories of recognition assume that "relationships of recognition are a moral necessity."[159] They emphasise the relevance of forms of recognition such as love, respect, and social appreciation. This provides the first fundamental indications as to which personal characteristics are required for appreciative interaction in a highly differentiated social composition, which enable people as a whole to enter into an (ideally) domination-free dialogue with each other, and to treat each other ethically and with dignity. This concretises

156 Cf. Kauffeld, *Kompetenzen messen, bewerten, entwickeln*, 8ff.
157 Similar criticism is also expressed by Dallmann, "Eine tugendethische Annäherung an Begriff und Pädagogik der Kompetenzen," 31.
158 Cf. Roeger, *Philosophieunterricht*, 144.
159 Reisenauer and Ulseß-Schurda, *Anerkennung in der Schule*, 23.

the search for personal qualities that are considered crucial for an (ethically) prosperous and good life in a pluralistic society.

Intercultural education conceptually focuses on the acquisition of intercultural competence. It considers personal attitudes such as respect and attentiveness to be the basis for peaceful interactions. *Intercultural competence* alone is unlikely to be relevant to the present research question, but it has opened up a fundamental question for the discussion here: How can processes of recognition be favoured in schools? What human resources are necessary for someone to be accepted for who he or she is? This has led to educational theory discussions of competences in comparison to virtues, which consequently means that the concepts of competence and virtue have overlaps. Convictions about what constitutes a good life for the individual and for the community are closely linked to a person's interpretation of the world, their worldview. Religions offer such an overall view of the good life, i.e., a religiously embedded perspective could be compelling for an educational theory—developed decidedly in differentiation from religious perspectives. Against this background, the meaning of the concept of virtue will now be further developed and concretised.

Chapter II: Theories on the Cultivation of the Self

1. A Modern Concept of Virtue: Preliminary Clarification in the Midst of Virtue Ethics Discourses

In ancient moral philosophy, happiness, the art of living, and the question of what comprises the highest good were an essential part of ethical considerations.[160] Thinking about how to lead a good life was an integral part of philosophy. For many philosophers, the answer to the question of how a person should be in order to live happily is clear: be virtuous. Acting out of virtue was considered the highest goal of a good life. This is why thinking about virtue has traditionally been at the centre of philosophical ethics.[161] Since modern times, questions about the "good life" and individual behaviour have experienced a renaissance.[162] Nevertheless, terms such as *virtue* in particular continue to evoke unpleasant associations and connotations, even if these concepts and texts from antiquity first need to be contextualised in their historically-bound semantic world. It is well known that the meaning of old terms changes over time, along with changes in linguistic and cultural contexts. For example, it is a misinterpretation to understand *ars vivendi* (Latin, "art of living") as the enjoyment of life and not as the transformation of character through the development of desirable qualities and the resulting gain of an appropriate disposition in life.[163] Furthermore, the concept of art is known to have been broadly defined in antiquity; for example, medicine was also referred to as *ars* (art) as well as *scientia* (science),

160 Cf. Christoph Horn, *Antike Lebenskunst. Glück und Moral von Sokrates bis zu den Neuplatonikern* (Munich, 1989), 9.

161 See Walter Mesch, "Die aristotelische Tugendethik und ihre Attraktivität aus heutiger Sicht," in *Grundbegriffe des Praktischen*, ed. Thomas Sören Hoffmann (Freiburg, 2016), 229.

162 Cf. Fenner, *Das gute Leben*, 7.

163 Cf. Horn, *Antike Lebenskunst*, 9.

because dealing with medicine was also understood as part of the art of living. It is therefore important to clarify terms such as *ethics*, *morality*, and *virtue*, as much as possible in order to accurately explain those ancient ideas and theories of a successful and appropriate way of life, and to be able to extract aspects from them for a contemporary understanding of education.

Ethics, in the sense of the ancient Greek word *ēthos*, has several meanings. Used in its etymological meaning as a habitat and place of residence, in philosophical contexts, *ēthos* (ἦθος) can also mean custom, usage, habit. *Ēthos* can refer to both behaviour and certain collective practices as well as to a person's individual decisions, which can be traced back to their character, i.e., to their common behaviour and personal qualities, and to goals recognised as good (*agathōn*).[164] Accordingly, ethics refers to a person's character and nature on the one hand and to customs and traditions on the other hand. At present, ethically good actions are understood in this sense as the product of a corresponding character.[165]

Morality, derived from the Latin *mos*, refers to generally recognised norms, rules, commandments, and prohibitions as well as to the values of a community, and consequently has a reactive component that is used to regulate conflicts, differences, or contradictions.[166] Moral actions are therefore not only socially desirable forms of behaviour or the observance of commandments, which people reflexively check for correctness and on which they can take a stand, but they arise from a system of norms with an unconditional claim to validity.[167] In short, morality is a system of norms, whereas ethics is the theory or the reflection of morality.[168]

From antiquity to the early modern period, moral philosophy primarily aimed to guide people towards a good life, and "the

164 Cf. Dietmar Hübner, *Einführung in die philosophische Ethik* (Göttingen, 2018), 11; and Jan Rommerskirchen, *Das Gute und das Gerechte. Einführung in die praktische Philosophie* (Wiesbaden, 2015), 27.

165 Cf. Rommerskirchen, *Das Gute und das Gerechte*, 27.

166 Cf. Myron Hurna, *Was ist, was will, was kann Moral* (Wiesbaden, 2017), *passim*.

167 Cf. Larissa Krainer and Peter Heintel, *Prozessethik. Zur Organisation ethischer Entscheidungsprozesse* (Wiesbaden, 2010), 63, and Hübner, *Einführung in die philosophische Ethik*, 13.

168 Cf. Hübner, *Einführung in die philosophische Ethik*, 19.

acquisition of virtue was regarded almost unchallenged, albeit in quite different ways, as the decisive basis."[169] In contrast to norm ethics, which poses the question of morally right and morally wrong behaviour, virtue ethics asks what a morally good action is based on; the attitude of the person acting, the moral constitution of a person or the good constitution of being a person are at its centre and aim at the development of a moral, solid character.[170] Thus, the ethical consideration of virtue ethics focuses on character traits and attitudes, behavioural dispositions, and a person's way of life.[171] According to virtue ethics, good character is measured by whether a person is considered a good person and does good deeds, and not by whether a person correctly follows set rules and norms.

1.1 Philosophical Revival of Aristotelian Virtue Ethics in the Present Day

Aristotle (384–322 BC) is known to be the virtue theorist who had a decisive influence on Western intellectual and cultural history. He devotes himself to the observation of forms of life and ideas of ultimate happiness, and then poses the question of what is good for mankind.[172] Aristotle poses this question right at the beginning of his most important ethical work, the *Nicomachean Ethics* (henceforth, NE), because it examined ethical considerations on human beings.[173] Rather than starting from commandments and prohibitions for human action, he asks the question of how humans should be, thus shifting the focus to moral excellence. Even though much was thought and written about the good life and its prerequisites in antiquity, virtue ethics seems to have left hardly any notable traces in ethical discourse from the Middle Ages until the second half of

169 Mesch, "Die aristotelische Tugendethik," 229.

170 Cf. Gerhard Marschütz, *Theologisch ethisch nachdenken*, vol. 1 (Würzburg, 2009), 162, and Bruno Keller, "Ethik – eine Annäherung," in *Ethik und Moral in der Sozialen Arbeit: Wirkungsorientiert – kontextbezogen – habitusbildend*, eds. Ueli Merten and Peter Zängl (Opladen/Berlin/Toronto, 2016), 41.

171 Cf. Dagmar Fenner, *Ethik. Wie soll ich handeln?* (Tübingen, 2020), 163.

172 Cf. Volker Steenblock, "Glück, Lust und Seelenruhe," in *Handbuch Philosophie und Ethik*, vol. II, 144.

173 Aristotle, *Nikomachische Ethik*, trans. and ed. Ursula Wolf (Hamburg, 2010).

the 20th century.[174] However, with a certain criticism of the prevailing trend in modern moral philosophy, Aristotle's ethics have been making a comeback for several decades, including in the German academic landscape.[175]

With the publication of the groundbreaking essay, "Modern Moral Philosophy," in 1958, the renowned philosopher Gertrude Elizabeth Anscombe initiated the theoretical discourse on virtue ethics as an alternative to utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, and the theory of the social contract.[176] She introduced her criticism with the thesis "that it is not profitable for us at present to do moral philosophy."[177] She pointed to Aristotelian ethics and its central concept of virtue as a promising alternative. She thus initiated the renaissance of the movement of thought around the discredited concept of virtue and its ethics in moral philosophy, which was further developed by Alasdair MacIntyre around twenty years later.[178] In it, he encouraged the revival of Aristotelian ethics, through which "intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments" is restored.[179] Above all, MacIntyre is responsible for the fact that virtue ethics is more closely associated with communitarian thought, as a result of which, virtue ethics has also become widespread in political discussions.[180] The Indian philosopher and economist Amartya Sen, together with the philosopher Martha Nussbaum, developed

174 Cf. Ben Dupré, "Tugendethik," in *50 Schlüsselideen Philosophie*, ed. Ben Dupré (Heidelberg, 2010), 96.

175 Cf. Fenner, *Das gute Leben*, 7; cf. Christoph Halbig, *Der Begriff der Tugend und die Grenzen der Tugendethik*, Berlin 2013.

176 See Stanford's *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed 30 November 2017, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/anscombe/; Jochen Schmidt, "Critical Virtue Ethics," *Religious Inquiries* 3, 5 (2014), 35.

177 Elizabeth Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* XXXII (1958), 1.

178 Cf. Kurt Bayertz, "Antike und moderne Ethik. Das gute Leben, die Tugend und die Natur des Menschen in der neueren ethischen Diskussion," *ZPhF* 59 (2005): 116.

179 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, 1981), 259. In MacIntyre's recently published work, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity. An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (Cambridge, 2016), a Thomistic Aristotelianism is recognisable. See also Martin Hähnel, "Alasdair MacIntyres Stein-Lektüre," in *Grundbegriffe und -phänomene Edith Steins*, eds. Harald Seubert and Marcus Knaup (Freiburg, 2018), 155.

180 Cf. Verena Weber, *Tugendethik und Kommunitarismus. Individualität – Universalisierung – Moralische Dilemmata* (Würzburg, 2002), 23.

Aristotelian ideas into a *capability approach* based on the theory of justice, which in short represents an explication of quality of life (standard of living) and an analysis of human well-being.[181] Well-being, or a successful practical lifestyle, corresponds to what people are and what they do. Nussbaum develops the *capability approach* with an empirical question about human nature and proposes an "objective list" of fundamental *capabilities*, "which she justifies as the basis of a fulfilled, flourishing life ('human flourishing') in terms of complex human states and behaviour." [182] Nussbaum's aim is to create the skills that enable us to lead a good life.[183] She is less concerned with moral character per se, even though she sees herself as a neo-Aristotelian.[184]

With other philosophers such as Philippa Foot, who, like Anscombe and others, referred to Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) in her descriptions and analyses of the cardinal virtues, the insistence on the indispensability of the concept of virtue led to its rehabilitation in the 1990s, first in Anglo-Saxon and then in German-language moral philosophical discourses, such as those of Michael Stocker, Christoph Halbig, and Christoph Horn.[185] In these new approaches,

181 See Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, *The Quality of Life* (Oxford, 1993).

182 See Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge, 2000). "The 'objective list' of basic human capabilities proposed by Martha Nussbaum includes the development of specific physical constitutions, sensory abilities, thinking skills and basic cultural techniques, the avoidance of unnecessary pain, the guarantee of health, nutrition and protection, the possibility and ability to bond with other people, other species and nature, to enjoyment, to sexual satisfaction, to mobility and finally to practical reason and the development of autonomy and subjectivity," Hans-Uwe Otto and Holger Ziegler, "Der Capabilities-Ansatz als neue Orientierung in der Erziehungswissenschaft," in *Capabilities – Handlungsbefähigung und Verwirklichungschancen in der Erziehungswissenschaft*, eds. Hans-Uwe Otto and Holger Ziegler (Wiesbaden, 2010), 12fn. 4, and 9.

183 Cf. Martha Nussbaum, *Gerechtigkeit oder das gute Leben* (Frankfurt, 1999), 95.

184 See Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*, 76ff.

185 See Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices and other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Los Angeles/Berkeley, 1978) and "Tugenden und Laster," in *Die Wirklichkeit des Guten*, ed. Philippa Foot (Frankfurt, 1997), 116ff. Cf. Roger Crisp and Michael Slote (eds.), *Virtue Ethics* (Oxford, 1997); Michael Stocker, "Die Schizophrenie moderner ethischer Theorien," in *Tugendethik*, eds. Klaus P. Rippe and Peter Schaper (Stuttgart, 1998): 19–41; Halbig, *Der Begriff der Tugend*; Christoph Horn with various essays. Modern virtue ethics, drawing in particular on

it becomes clear that the virtues are by no means moral imperatives that must be followed conscientiously with an unrestricted sense of duty.[186] Whilst some, such as Foot and Hursthouse, follow Aristotle in emphasising the importance of virtues for a good and happy life, others, such as Michael Slote and Julia Annas, place the emphasis on individual aspects, such as character traits, the tolerability of virtues or their appropriation.[187]

A frequent criticism of virtue theory is that it alone cannot establish a complete moral concept. Virtues cannot claim the same self-sufficiency as established consequentialist or deontological moral theories.[188] On the basis of good character alone, a person cannot determine how to act in different situations in life and moral decision-making situations.[189] Yet, moral principles, which are mentioned in deontological approaches, often appear abstract in the face of practical life difficulties and do not extensively reflect the moral characteristics and dispositions of a person.[190] Furthermore, moral reasoning deals exclusively with the question of whether there are justifiable reasons for a certain action, but it asks too little of how motives for actions can be derived from reasons, and why someone should feel connected to these reasons in concrete situations of action. Accordingly, honesty, for example, not only describes the motivation to want to be honest but also contains moral judgements, such as, that it is morally right not to lie, to keep one's promises, not to cheat, etc.[191] However, in Kant's ethics, which is regarded as a prototypical example of principle ethics, the person also plays a role in that a person's *good will* is a prerequisite for acting according to maxims.

Aristotle's concept of *aretē*, attempts to make the character and virtues of people in concrete situations the basis of ethics and also of political philosophy.

186 See Elisabeth Göbel, "Der Mensch – ein Produktionsfaktor der Würde?," *ZfWU* 4 (2) (2003), 175ff.

187 See Michael Slote, *Morals from Motives* (Oxford, 2001); Julia Annas, "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association, 78, 2 (2004), 61–75; see also Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind* (Cambridge, 1996).

188 Cf. Halbig, *Der Begriff der Tugend*, 270.

189 Cf. Weber, *Tugendethik und Kommunitarismus*, 24.

190 Cf. Pauer-Studer, "Tugendethik," 79.

191 Cf. Dieter Birnbacher, *Analytische Einführung in die Ethik* (Berlin/Boston, 2013), 302.

Kant opens his *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*) with the following words:

> It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation, except a *good will*.[192]

So, when we talk about someone being able to rely on a person, this is possible because they have developed certain ways of wanting and acting, on whose consistency and effectiveness someone can count under all circumstances and changing influences.[193] Consistent firmness and consistency of will and action therefore constitute character. Good will is, therefore, the ability to regulate characteristics and dispositions in situations in a way that reason recognises as practically necessary or good. In the second part of *The Metaphysics of Morals* (*Die Metaphysik der Sitten*), Kant also expands on his thoughts on the concept of virtue and understands virtue as "the strength of a man's maxims in fulfilling his duty."[194] The inclinations and dispositions recede into the background, and virtue consists in acting in accordance with one's duty.

However, it seems to me that it makes little sense to draw an absolute distinction between principled ethics and virtue ethics. After all, even people of good character can sometimes act badly. In other words, there is a connection between ethical constitution, or moral character, and actions. The evaluation of character is therefore not only to be directed at dispositions and attitudes but also at actions.[195] Actions and the consequences of actions require precise analysis, provided that character and action are understood as a unit. Principle ethics and virtue ethics can thus be qualified as complementary to each other.

My attempt to understand virtue ethics as a central option, especially for educational matters, is not based on a similar critique of

192 Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (GMS), in *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (AA), vol. IV, ed. Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1903), with reference to the English translation (ET) *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge, 1998), 7.

193 Cf. Theodor Elsenhans, *Charakterbildung* (Leipzig, 1908), 11.

194 Immanuel Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* (MS) in *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (AA), vol. VI, ed. Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1907), 435.

195 Cf. Pauer-Studer, "Tugendethik," 83.

Kantian ethics of duty or universally formulated rules of consequentialist provenance but on the desire to revitalise the human striving for unity and harmony with oneself and one's environment. To this end, a return to the following aspects of ancient Aristotelian ethics in particular (as well as Islamic ethics in the Middle Ages, as we shall see) helps: to place the person with their character traits in the foreground, to emphasise the importance of personal cultivation, and to understand reason as a context-sensitive awareness and a regulatory force.[196] Aristotelian virtue ethics also seems to me to be the appropriate moral theory because it is based on personal potential, and thus places the strengths and weaknesses of a person at the starting point of its consideration. This approach has in mind a person who rethinks and reflects on themselves and their motives for action, and is constantly trying to change their personal moral status quo for the better.

My attempt at revival, as Kleger formulates it with a view to a positive reception of virtues, is not aimed at a moralisation of life but rather at its civilisation of coexistence through the cultivation of personal character traits towards a culture of togetherness.[197] Thus, I understand virtue ethics as an approach to ethics that focuses on the cultivation and training of character, based on the assumption

> that not all moral deficits can be attributed to social conditions and the political and economic framework, but that some moral mistakes are the responsibility of the individual.[198]

1.2 Virtue: An Ambivalent Word in Germany

Talking about character education in Germany today may sound daring, especially to the ears of German educators, given the historical experience of two totalitarian systems, National Socialism and the socialism of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The roots of the concept of virtue, as previously explained, are much deeper than German history, in which King Friedrich Wilhelm I

196 Cf. Bayertz, "Antike und moderne Ethik," 117.
197 Cf. Heinz Kleger, *Tugendethik ohne Tugendterror* (Potsdam, 2015), 92.
198 Pauer-Studer, *Einführung in die Ethik*, 103ff.

(1688–1740) proclaimed Prussian (secondary) virtues such as thrift, prudence, order, diligence, and modesty as his motto.[199]

While *character education* experienced a renaissance in education theory in the United States, England, Canada, and Australia, for various reasons talk of character (education) and virtue (education) almost disappeared from both everyday language and educational jargon from the 1950s onwards.[200] On the one hand, bourgeois virtues were perverted under National Socialism; they became mere catalogues of duties that prevented people's individual development.[201] Hitler's educational objective was to build character by strengthening certain qualities such as willpower and determination.[202] This was to begin in school education. In particular, poems and historical descriptions in ideologically distorted textbooks were intended to inspire boys with warlike and military virtues such as heroism and bravery.[203] School education was characterised as training for the cultivation of strong personalities in terms of character and intellect and as education to become masterful men and warriors.[204] On the

199 See Piper, "Preußische Tugenden im Zeitalter der totalitären Herausforderung." With regard to chastity, see Theodor Brüggemann and Otto Brunken, *Handbuch zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur – von 1570–1750* (Stuttgart, 1991), 1011ff.; see also Esther Suzanne Pabst, *Die Erfindung der weiblichen Tugend. Kulturelle Sinngebung und Selbstreflexion im französischen Briefroman des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 2007). A renaissance can currently be found in the *Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat* in Germany: "The following booklet aims to shed light on the virtue of chastity from an Islamic perspective," Chaudhry Masroor Ahmad, *Keuschheit im Islam* (Frankfurt, 2016), 15.

200 Cf. Agnieszka Bates, *Moral Emotions and Human Interdependence in Character Education. Beyond the One-Dimensional Self* (New York, 2021), 5. In 1958, Otto Friedrich Bollnow published his book, *Die Ehrfurcht. Wesen und Wandel der Tugend* (Frankfurt, 1958). In it, he criticises the moral decline of society and the oblivion of virtues, and attempts a new historical and cultural localisation of various virtues.

201 Cf. Eykmann and Seichter (eds.), *Pädagogische Tugenden*, 7.

202 See Ramona Zürker, *Nationalsozialistische Leibeserziehung. Eine Analyse der Hintergründe und eine didaktische Aufbereitung für den Geschichtsunterricht* (Hamburg, 2015), 17ff.

203 For example, Friedrich Hölderlin, *Der Tod fürs Vaterland: Sämtliche Werke und Briefe in drei Bänden*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt, 1992); see Dietrich Orlow, "Die Adolf-Hitler-Schulen," *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* 13.3 (1965): 280–281.

204 Cf. Heinz Schreckenberg, *Erziehung, Lebenswelt und Kriegseinsatz der deutschen Jugend unter Hitler. Anmerkungen zur Literatur* (Münster/Hamburg/London, 2001), 88.

other hand, there was the danger of politically or ideologically functionalising bourgeois virtues. This was reflected in the school context of the GDR. Patriotic education and homogenisation were seen as the core of a moral education that was to be achieved through specific character development.[205] As a result, the concept of virtue —and virtues in general—were discredited in pedagogical discourse, especially after emancipation and the guiding principles of self-determination and self-realisation meant that any education in virtue was seen as repressive and an expression of "black pedagogy."[206] The so-called anti-pedagogy[207] movement branded any education associated with any notion of virtue as harassment or "training terror" (*Dressurterror*).[208] Since the 1960s, virtue-based approaches have been replaced by approaches based on values education and social skills.[209] Since then, the concept of character has been avoided and replaced by the concept of *personality*, particularly in modern psychology.[210] Those who spoke of morality and virtue during that era quickly found themselves suspected of ideological bias.[211]

While concepts of virtue have changed in the Anglo-American world in the modern era, and character formation, based on Aristotelian virtue ethics and Kantian deontology, enjoys a certain boom in educational discussions, there has not yet been a radical advance

205 Cf. Winfried Marotzki and Walter Bauer, "Zur sittlich-patriotischen Erziehung in der DDR-Pädagogik," in *Pädagogik und Erziehungsalltag in der DDR. Zwischen Systemvorgaben und Pluralität*, eds. Heinz-Hermann Krüger and Winfried Marotzki (Opladen, 1994), 68ff.

206 See Friedrich Koch, *Der Kaspar-Hauser-Effekt: Über den Umgang mit Kindern* (Opladen, 1995).

207 See Hans Berner, *Aktuelle Strömungen in der Pädagogik und ihre Bedeutung für den Erziehungsauftrag der Schule* (Stuttgart/Wien, 1994), 222; see Ekkehard von Braunmühl, *Antipädagogik. Studies on the Abolition of Education* (Leipzig, 2015), 75.

208 Cf. Klaus Horn, *Dressur oder Erziehung. Schlagrituale und ihre gesellschaftliche Funktion* (Frankfurt, 1967), 27.

209 Cf. Emanuela Chiapparini, *Ehrliche Unehrlichkeit. Eine qualitative Untersuchung der Tugend Ehrlichkeit bei Jugendlichen an der Züricher Volkshochschule* (Opladen/Berlin/Toronto, 2012), 15.

210 Cf. Karl König, *Kleine psychoanalytische Charakterkunde* (Göttingen, 2011), 9ff.

211 Cf. Ferdinand Buer and Micha Brumlik, "Bildung und Glück. Versuch einer Theorie der Tugenden," *Organisationsberatung, Supervision, Coaching, Buchbesprechung* 2 (2004): 202.

or a similar positive return to the doctrine of virtue in German moral education discourses.[212] A contrary development can be observed in the discourses of specialised philosophy, action theory, moral psychology, and economics.[213] For Christian theology and religious education, it can at least be noted that after the anthropological turn, there was talk of character education and the passing on of values.[214] This concept of education is based on the assumption that a fulfilled and good life can be guaranteed by instilling virtues.[215] According to Jochen Schmidt, virtue ethics currently has more resonance in Catholic thinking than in Lutheran thinking.[216]

Max Scheler spoke of a serious distortion and over-moulding of the classical concept of virtue since the beginning of the Enlightenment, and a look at today's discourse culture gives the impression

212 Cf. Daniel Lapsley and David S. Yeager, "Moral-character education," in *Handbook of Psychology: Educational Psychology*, eds. Irving B. Weiner, William M. Reynolds, and Gloria E. Miller (Hoboken, 2013), 289–348. Current examples include *The Character Project* at Wake Forest University and *Character.org*, which is launching character education in the United States. See also Hähnel, *Das Ethos der Ethik*, 52; cf. Hoyer, *Tugend und Erziehung*, 22. In the thirteenth century, Christian ethics in the West adopted classical Greek virtue ethics. While later rejected by the Reformation (and the problem of grace), virtue ethics as personal ethics has formed the backbone of Catholic ethics since the ninteenth century. Cf. Ingeborg Gabriel, "Personality/Personality Ethics," in *Handwörterbuch Theologische Anthropologie: Römisch-katholisch/Russisch-orthodox. Eine Gegenüberstellung*, eds. Bertram Stubenrauch and Andrej Lorgus (Stiftung Pro Oriente, Vienna and Stiftung Russische Orthodoxie Moskau, Freiburg, 2016), 62.

213 Cf. Susanne Moser, "Tugend als Wert. Christoph Halbig und Max Scheler im Vergleich," *LABYRINTH* 18.2 (2016): 158.

214 Cf. Gottfried Adam, "Ethisches und soziales Lernen," in *Neues Handbuch religionspädagogischer Grundbegriffe*, eds. Gottfried Bitter et al. (Munich, 2002), 238; see also Hans-Joachim Höhn, *Das Leben in Form bringen. Konturen einer neuen Tugendethik* (Freiburg, 2014); Jennifer Herdt, *Putting on Virtue. The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago, 2008); Christian Feichtinger and Şenol Yagdı, "Tugendethik im christlich-islamischen Religionsunterricht," *Österreichisches Religionspädagogisches Forum* 28.1 (2020): 251–272.

215 Cf. Adam, "Ethisches und soziales Lernen," 238ff.

216 See Jochen Schmidt, "Die höchste Tugend ist: Leiden und Tragen alle Gebrechlichkeit unserer Brüder," *Luther* 86 (2015): 8; cf. Johannes Fischer, Stefan Gruden, and Esther Imhof, *Grundkurs Ethik: Grundbegriffe philosophischer und theologischer Ethik* (Stuttgart, 2008), 376.

that not much has changed.[217] The term *virtue* continues to be used and understood very inconsistently in wide circles and mostly only superficially, so that a deeper understanding of its meaning is impaired.[218] Some strongly associate the word *virtue* with a lack of freedom and with loyalty to a moral set of rules, warning against a "terror of virtue," which is seen as an expression of an attachment to outdated moral concepts.[219] In colloquial language, this term is often used for ironic purposes, e.g., "guardians of virtue."[220] Others regard it as a selfish individual ethic that only serves one's own happiness.[221] Still others praise virtue as an essential happiness factor.[222]

I consider this bias in the German-speaking world to be one-sided and thus call for a reconsideration. A knife is an instrument that can be used for both positive and negative purposes. A person can use it to cut off a slice of bread or injure someone. Consequently, the instrument itself cannot be categorised as good or bad, *per se*. Against this background, the concept of virtue and character may have been perverted in a certain historical epoch and become the victim of an exclusive field of meaning, but this does not mean that the semantic "playground" has to lie fallow; rather, it can be replanted. Above all, however, this misuse naturally reminds us of the need to justify all ethical virtue ideals. To this end, it is first necessary to define what virtue can mean and to what extent this definition is suitable for outlining a workable understanding of virtue that can be operationalised for pedagogical considerations.

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217 Cf. Max Scheler, *Zur Rehabilitierung der Tugend* (Zurich, 1955), 15.

218 Cf. Hähnel, *Das Ethos der Ethik*, 52.

219 See Thilo Sarrazin, *Der neue Tugendterror. Über die Grenzen der Meinungsfreiheit in Deutschland* (Munich, 2014). Cf. William Hoye, *Tugenden. Was sie wert sind – warum wir sie brauchen* (Grünewald, 2010), 9; cf. Anselm Vogt, "Sind Tugenden noch zeitgemäß?," VHS Essen, 21 June 2015.

220 Martin Honecker, "Schwierigkeiten mit dem Begriff Tugend," in *Tugendethik*, ed. Rippe and Schaper, 166.

221 Cf. Matthias Gatzemeier, *Philosophie als Theorie der Rationalität: Analysen und Rekonstruktionen*, vol. 2 (Würzburg, 2007), 206.

222 See Martin Seligmann, *Der Glücksfaktor. Warum Optimisten länger leben* (Bergisch Gladbach, 2005).

2. Virtue Ethics as a Reference Point for a Common Life

Under conditions of religious and cultural diversity, and therefore in more and more complex situations, it is becoming increasingly necessary and important to have qualities that are helpful for appropriate action. Although the constitutional state creates laws and specifies civic duties for the peaceful and non-violent coexistence of members of society, it cannot create the moral conditions required for cooperative coexistence.[223] In this context, approaches that attempt to bring communitarianism and a virtue ethics approach to morality into dialogue and assert the necessity of, for example, civic virtues should be classified.[224] A version of communitarian virtue ethics that sympathises with democratic republicanism is certainly justified in discourses that place high demands on the values of society's members at the centre of their thinking.[225] It is in this context that Alasdair MacIntyre made his appearance with his book *After Virtue*, in which he systematically explained the decline of virtue within a larger critical framework of modern moral understanding.

Even if ethics and politics are not considered to be linked in the same way today as they were for the ancient Greeks, the fundamental question of what constitutes a good and just state order is more topical now than ever.[226] I will not devote myself to these questions, which are discussed in particular in the field of political philosophy. However, I will instead focus my considerations mainly on educational theory: What morally desirable and excellent attitudes should be formed in people for a good life and coexistence in a pluralistic society?[227] What kind of person should someone be in order to create the conditions for peaceful, respectful, and just coexistence? As we are talking about the conditions for peaceful coexistence and moral constitution, we need to ask about character, as previously

223 Cf. Sandel, "Die Grenzen der Gerechtigkeit," 252.

224 Cf. Simone Abendschön, *Die Anfänge demokratischer Bürgerschaft: Sozialisation politischer und demokratischer Werte und Normen im jungen Kindesalter* (Baden-Baden, 2010), 63ff.

225 See Don Eberly and Ryan Streeter, *The Soul of Civil Society: Voluntary Associations and the Public Value of Moral Habits* (Lanham, 2002).

226 Cf. Walter Schweidler, *Der gute Staat. Politische Ethik von Platon bis in die Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden, 2014), 30.

227 This question also implies the answer as to which vices should be avoided at all costs.

noted several times; the concept of character will be defined below, as will individual traits in the sense of character virtues. This focus on the virtues of character (*aretē ethikē*), which can enable a person to react appropriately to social tensions and strive for a good and happy life with others, forms the core of the work.

I am thus continuing MacIntyre's thesis that "the exercise of the virtues is itself a crucial component of the good life for man" in a different direction.[228] At the centre of the efforts of Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, and communitarians as a whole is the exploration of the cultural "conditions of freedom of human subjects" or the prerequisites of a successful personal identity and, thus, also the enabling conditions of a just society.[229] I share their point of view, as well as Aristotle's, that virtues can only be acquired in the context of society and community, as well as in their embedding in culture and ideas about the good and just life. "A certain measure of the moral qualities of societies stands and falls with the attitudes and behaviour of the members of society, not least their affective possibilities."[230] A virtue ethics approach calls for situational and context-related behavioural decisions. In comparison to the deontological and teleological ethical tradition, ethical virtue thinking places the critical weighing up of basic attitudes and a phronetic balancing of the proper centre of virtues at the centre of its thinking, which can give rise to possibilities for action.[231] For me, this leads to the conclusion that virtues cannot be acquired theoretically but rather in the process of intersubjective interactions. Another aspect that may lead me to this position is the mystical idea and metaphor that people are grindstones for each other and can only mature and grow in character *as tools sharpening each other*. I hold to this to counter a possible accusation that I am taking an egotistical approach to ethics. Processes of self-valorisation can hardly take place in a vacu-

228 MacIntyre, *After Virture*, 184.

229 For this phrase, see Axel Honneth, "Posttraditionale Gemeinschaften. Ein konzeptueller Vorschlag," in *Gemeinschaft und Gerechtigkeit*, eds. Micha Brumlik and Hauke Brunkhorst (Frankfurt, 1993), 261. Cf. Hartmut Rosa, *Identität und kulturelle Praxis. Politische Philosophie nach Charles Taylor* (Frankfurt, 1998), *passim*; cf. Hartmut Rosa and Ulf Bohmann, *Die politische Theorie des Kommunitarismus: Charles Taylor* (Opladen, 2016), 66.

230 Pauer-Studer, *Einführung in die Ethik*, 104.

231 Cf. Jean-Pierre Wils, "Tugend und Strukturveränderung," *JCSW* 30 (1989): 37.

um but rather decisively in relationship with others, in view of the interests of others. At this point, it is worth mentioning and rejecting the frequently mentioned formal ethical objection to virtue ethics, namely the *accusation of egoism*, which reads as follows:

> The virtuous agent is thus primarily concerned with her own virtue, and thereby with cultivating and maintaining it. But surely, it is thought, she should have as her primary focus such things as caring for friends, repaying debts because that is just, being a good parent.[232]

With Bernard Williams, however, the objection can be rejected: "The goal is the desirable good or an attitude that corresponds to the pursuit of the desirable good, and not virtue for its own sake."[233] The virtuous person is the one who strives for what deserves to be called good and not for one's own virtue.

Another disparate pretext that distorts the core meaning of virtue ethics is the *action-guiding objection*—the accusation that virtue ethics does not specifically tell the actor how to act, i.e., it does not provide any orientation for action.[234] Virtue ethics can also be defended against this objection. According to David Solomon, no theories of virtue offer algorithms or recipes for solving practical problems, i.e., virtues are not a mastery of the craft.[235] A final prominent criticism is the *right-but-not-virtuous caveat*, which states that an actor is not necessarily virtuous if they perform actions considered morally preferable, because they may not have acquired the corresponding virtue.[236] This criticism can be relativised by the fact that actors who are in the process of learning and acquiring virtues

232 Cf. Christine Swanton, "Cultivating Virtue. Two Problems for Virtue Ethics," in *Cultivating Virtue: Perspectives from Philosophy, Theology, and Psychology*, ed. Nancy E. Snow (Oxford/New York, 2015), 112.

233 As quoted by Jochen Schmidt and Idris Nassery, "Einleitung," in *Moralische Vortrefflichkeit in der pluralen Gesellschaft. Tugendethik aus philosophischer, christlicher und muslimischer Perspektive*, eds. Schmidt and Nassery (Paderborn, 2016), 8.

234 Cf. Julia Annas, "Why Virtue Ethics does not have a Problem with Right Action," in *Oxford Studies Normative Ethics*, ed. Mark Timmons (Oxford, 2014), 13, 33.

235 Cf. David Solomon, "Internal Objection to Virtue Ethics," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 13.1 (1988): 432ff.

236 Cf. Christine Swanton, "Cultivating Virtue," with reference to Robert N. Johnson, "Virtue and Right," *Ethics* 113 (2003): 810–834.

already have a share in virtue.[237] Overall, formal ethical objections to virtue ethics can be rejected.[238] At the same time, a possible *accusation of conservatism* against virtue can also be rejected. This accusation holds that virtues are inherently conservative because they are continuously transported through cultures and societies. However, this does not necessarily mean that a person blindly adopts and imitates virtues into which they grow; rather it means that a person becomes competent, according to Annas, to the extent that they are able to criticise the virtues practised in a certain society.[239]

Aspects or personal forms of expression and self-centred assessments grow through the resolution of and dealing with conflicts, and through the experience of weaknesses, exclusion, or approval. Over time, repetitive patterns of behaviour and their underlying characteristics and basic attitudes shape the personality. The nucleus for improving and cultivating the personality, therefore, lies in inner forces in which the decisive factors for personality, will, and actions are based. Character is not only inferred from actions, but also from the mental processes from which actions arise.

It is therefore necessary to explain what is meant by a "good" character and what content a desired form of character must have in order to be desirable. Consequently, when I talk about the cultivation of character, I mean the formation and training of *secure, firm basic attitudes*, i.e., the formation and practice of lasting, good dispositions that are morally desirable character traits.

With the help of virtue ethics, the course should be set for breaking down forms of destructive behaviour in intersubjective relationships. This disruption also applies to habitus in Bourdieu's sense, i.e., the break down of ossified social structures that have developed over the years as a result of consciously or unconsciously practised cultural chauvinism.[240] These would be those positions and social roles which, according to Bourdieu, are considered appropriate in the social space due to the connection between social practices and

237 Schmidt and Nassery, *Moralische Vortrefflichkeit in der pluralen Gesellschaft*, 8.
238 Cf. Schmidt and Nassery, *Moralische Vortrefflichkeit in der pluralen Gesellschaft*, 8.
239 Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford, 1993), 445ff.
240 Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Entwurf einer Theorie der Praxis auf der ethnologischen Grundlage der kabylischen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt, 1976), 165ff.

lifestyles.[241] Any habitus arising from this should be questioned with regard to its suitability for a good life, for the realisation of the diversity of collective-individual ways of life and for a humane society.[242]

Our positions crystallise our self-relationships and our relationships to the world, or rather, they become performatively apparent through our attitudes. In light of Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue and the ability to relate to others, it is all the more pertinent to ask abou the cultivation of appropriate basic attitudes and visual habits—particularly with regard to perception and personal characteristics—given that determine human relatedness can be determined by habitual activities.[243] A prerequisite for the perception and possible assumption of responsibility is the awareness mentioned at the beginning of these deliberations of being able to understand and *behave* as a human being.[244] Here, we can also find some of the characteristics of an ethics characterised by Emmanuel Lévinas, in which the claim of the *other* represents a variable that is able to critically influence one's own position.[245] According to Lévinas, the questioning of oneself takes place through the presence of another.[246]

Consequently, I understand the cultivation of character as a whole as a complex process of ethical self-development, and this is not only a philosophical question concerning the conduct of life but also a theological question. This also makes it clear that my philosophical

241 Cf. Albert Scherr, "Pierre Bourdieu. La distinction," in *Klassiker der Soziologie. 100 Schlüsselwerke im Portrait*, ed. Samuel Salzborn (Wiesbaden, 2016), 315.

242 "Social disadvantage in the critical developmental phase of childhood and adolescence is deeply imprinted on a person's character. Negative critical life experiences and the lack of opportunities in a stressful environment accentuate and consolidate unfavourable character dispositions that have already developed in the further course of life, instead of challenging new behavioural patterns," Helke Fiebig, "Leistungsmotivation bei sozial benachteiligten Jugendlichen im Verlauf eines Computertrainings" (diploma thesis, 2001), 7.

243 See NE 1103b 7–30; Martin Buber, *Das dialogische Prinzip* (Heidelberg, 1984), 8.

244 See Frauke Kurbacher, "Was ist Haltung?," Lebenswelt und Wissenshcaft XXI. Deutscher Kongress für Philosophie, accessed 28 November 2017, http://www.dgphil2008.de/programm/sektionen/abstract/kurbacher.html.

245 Emmanuel Lévinas, *Jenseits des Seins oder anders als Sein geschieht* (Freiburg/München, 1992), *passim*.

246 Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalität und Unendlichkeit: Versuch über die Exteriorität* (Freiburg, 1987), 51.

and (subsequent) theological reference to virtue ethics indicates, on the one hand, its topicality and relevance to the formation of ethical judgements, whereas, on the other hand, a reciprocal, enriching dialogue on the "cultural rootedness of social moral systems" can be opened up.[247]

3. Educating the Whole Person: Reviving Virtues Based on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics

In the NE, Aristotle places his doctrine of virtue in the context of the search for the comprehensive good (*eudaimonia*). In the first book of the NE, Aristotle explains the main features of his conception of the good life. He defines the orientation of human endeavour towards the highest good (*eudaimonia*) as the ultimate aim, for the sake of which one desires everything else. Aristotle describes the highest good as something perfect, at the top of the human hierarchy of goals. The philosophical word formation *eû-daímōn* expresses that someone has a *good spirit*, which means "that someone leads a well-adjusted, blessed, desirable and praiseworthy life."[248] Therefore, a successful and prosperous life, or a good life, is the ultimate goal of human behaviour. The good life is that which is not sought as a means to something else but as an end in itself. According to Aristotle, one can attain this good through the excellence of their character.

"Virtue, then, is a state involving rational choice, consisting in a mean relative to us and determined by reason--the reason, that is, by reference to which the practically wise person would determine it."[249] In the sixth book of the NE, Aristotle concretises virtue as the rational attitude of choosing, of deciding.[250] By this, he means choosing between two extreme attitudes—between excess and deficiency—and refers to it as the centre or keeping the cen-

247 Schmidt and Nassery, *Moralische Vortrefflichkeit in der pluralen Gesellschaft*, 11.
248 Horn, *Antike Lebenskunst*, 65.
249 NE II.6, 1106b 36–1107a 2; English translations from Roger Crisp, trans. and ed., *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge, 2000).
250 Cf. NE II.6, 1106b 36.

tre (*mesotēs*).[251] This right measure should be cultivated in action and ultimately produces virtue.[252] A position between two extremes should be sought, e.g., generosity as a value between wastefulness and miserliness, or bravery, which lies between foolhardiness and cowardice.

For Aristotle, virtue is an excellent and sustainable attitude (*hexis*) that is determined by reason and that a person can acquire through practice or education. A person is considered virtuous if they behave in an ethically excellent manner in a specific situation, ultimately to realise a value. "Therefore, to act virtuously means to be motivated in a special way for the moral value or the good as such."[253]

According to Aristotle, fixed basic attitudes can be acquired or cultivated in order to lead a good life. This also includes the training of sensual impressions, emotions, and affects, i.e., the cultivation of *sensuality*. As we know, people are not criticised for being angry, as Aristotle exemplifies, but for doing it in a certain way.[254] How can habits be changed? How can people *readjust* their behaviour? How can they obtain and maintain fixed basic attitudes?

Basic attitudes are built on fundamental convictions based on the interplay of body, mind, characteristics, and emotional dispositions. The "human way of life is realised, differentiated and concretised in attitudes."[255] A basic attitude is not the strict adherence to an ethical principle but rather a disposition, a capacity, or a power to act that develops in the course of a person's life. A disposition of character is a good, firm, personal attitude, a constitution from which a person reacts appropriately to people and situations, i.e., a good disposition is a desirable personal attitude of the individual that has become a habit. It could be said that a disposition has become an asset when a person acts well out of this internalised capacity.

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251 Cf. NE II.6, 1106b 16–1107a 8.

252 Cf. NE II.6, 1106b.

253 Stephan Radić, *Die Rehabilitierung der Tugendethik in der zeitgenössischen Philosophie. Eine notwendige Ergänzung gegenwärtiger Theorie in der Ethik* (Berlin, 2011), 61. At this point, the correspondence between values and basic attitudes becomes apparent once again with regard to the virtues.

254 NE II, 1106a.

255 Kurbacher, "Was ist Haltung?" For a theory of attitude that considers the relationship between person and person as interpersonality and interindividuality, see Kurbacher, *Zwischen Personen*.

The habitualisation process from which morally good basic attitudes arise is a decisive aspect of the self-cultivation process. Habitualisation is about the formation of attitudes and, at the same time, the training of the will (or habitus of will) (as well as the powers of the soul), with the aim of perfecting one's own personal dispositions.[256] Thus, habitual internalisation of good personal qualities enables people to react appropriately in complex contexts and to produce good actions most reliably from a firm basic attitude.

In an initial definition, I cited Christine Swanton's concept of virtue, which, following Aristotle, defines virtue as a disposition that enables people to respond in the best possible way to the things they encounter.[257] "A virtue is a good quality of character, more specifically a disposition to respond to, or acknowledge, items within its field or fields in an excellent or good enough way."[258] Being virtuous means thinking, feeling and reacting in a certain way in specific situations, which ultimately leads to a fulfilling and meaningful life.[259] In the following, this definition of virtue will be deepened and concretised.

However, a virtue is not simply a disposition:

> The use of 'disposition' leads to the misunderstanding that virtues are habits. In contrast to habits, however, virtues do not express themselves in fixed behaviour patterns.[260]

In the NE, dispositions are translated as basic attitudes, characteristics, and behaviours.[261] For example, a disposition can initially be a natural disposition or a disposition acquired through practice and habit.[262] According to Aristotle (as well as Kant), a fixed attitude (*hexis*) is not given to humans as a biological disposition; thus, one

256 I will look at the soul and its genuine powers in more detail below.

257 Recall that there are different concepts and ideas of virtue. For Homer, for example, virtue enables individuals to fulfil their social roles, while for Thomas Aquinas it enables people to move towards achieving the specifically human *telos*. See Horst Afflerbach, Ralf Kaemper, and Volker Kessler, *Lust auf gutes Leben: 15 Tugenden neu entdeckt* (Gießen 2014).

258 Swanton, *Virtue Ethics*, 19.

259 Cf. Radić, *Die Rehabilitierung der Tugendethik*, 61.

260 Friedo Ricken, "Kann die Moralphilosophie auf die Frage nach dem 'Ethischen' verzichten?" *ThPh* 59 (1984): 165.

261 NE II, 1108b 11–13.

262 Cf. Josef Schuster, *Moralisches Können* (Würzburg, 1997), 7.

is not determined by one's nature. *Hexis* is a certain basic attitude that can be expressed in both actions and emotions, i.e., attitudes as emotional dispositions are in turn related to dispositions to act.[263] For example, those who have a generous attitude spend money or other assets with joyful light-heartedness, and they give not just the bare minimum but even more.[264]

People certainly also act spontaneously, intuitively, and with recourse to (tried and tested) habits on a daily basis. A one-off, spontaneously performed morally good action out of *habit* is more likely to be characterised as mechanical, as it is blindly based on cultural codes and conventions. Thoughtless habits can mean a refusal to consider on one's actions and a blanking out of consciousness.[265] This is because an activity, i.e., an ordinary action or morally welcome behaviour by chance, is neither a *hexis* in the Aristotelian sense nor can it be characterised as virtue. It also cannot be characterised as virtuous if it is good for the person acting, because they have considered it for themselves.[266] Acting out of unreflected habit is a thoughtless act, instead of a responsible and accountable ethical act. But if a habit has been developed through virtuous behaviour, then the currently unreflected consequences of such a habit can also be considered virtuous. An action is considered virtuous if it is based on a good firm attitude and is carried out on the basis of desirable motives.

> Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just and the temperate person would do. But the just and temperate person is not the one who does them merely, but the one who does them as just and temperate people do. So it is correct to say that it is by doing just actions that one becomes just, and by doing temperate

263 Cf. Eva Weber-Guskar, "Haltung als Selbstverhältnis. Am Beispiel der Würde," in *Was ist Haltung? Begriffsbestimmung, Positionen, Anschlüsse*, eds. Frauke A. Kurbacher and Philipp Wünschner (Würzburg, 2016), 186. Cf. NE II.4, 1105b 3ff.

264 Weber-Guskar, "Haltung als Selbstverhältnis,"186.

265 Cf. Ömer Demir, "Din Eğitiminde Alışkanlık Bilinci," *Sosyal Bilimler EKEV Dergisi* 18, 60 (2014): 77.

266 Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Der Verlust der Tugend. Zur moralischen Krise der Gegenwart*, (Frankfurt/New York, 2006), 202.

> actions temperate; without doing them, no one would have even a chance of becoming good..[267]

Accordingly, both virtues and vices can be acquired through habituation. Ultimately, a vice is also a habit of character that has been acquired over time through corresponding, repetitive behaviour.[268]

Aristotle differentiates the virtues into intellectual virtues (*dianoētikēs*), such as wisdom, prudence, and perceptiveness, and ethical virtues (*ēthikēs*) or virtues of character, such as generosity, prudence, bravery, gentleness, and justice.[269] While virtues of the mind can be the result of teachings, virtues of character do not arise through teaching and instruction. Virtues of character can only be developed and acquired through familiarisation and practice, whereby both categories of virtue are interwoven.[270]

> Through this habituation, the intellectual virtue of practical prudence, with its reflected determination of the proper centre, is transformed into the character virtue of the respective area of life, which from now on carries out the right action in an automated manner.[271]

According to Aristotle, virtues of character can be learned, among other things, from exemplary role models who act virtuously. However, practising virtues by blind imitation would undermine the self-esteem process. In other words, the practise of virtues is not rote copying nor training of subjects. The same could be said for unbridled instincts that ossify over time and become habitual. They then belong to the core of the character, which is difficult to change after a certain point in time, if at all, and hardly through teaching. This would likely only work for those who have learnt to influence themselves and constantly refine their character.[272]

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267 NE II.4, 1105b 0–10.

268 Cf. NE II.6, 1106b–1107a and V.1, 1129b 1ff.

269 Cf. NE II.1, 1103a.

270 Cf. NE II.1, 1103a 15.

271 Hübner, *Einführung in die philosophische Ethik*, 122.

272 See Jule Specht, *Charakterfrage: wer wir sind und wie wir uns verändern* (Hamburg, 2018), on the changeability of personality traits even at an advanced age.

3.1 Character Virtues: Exploring the Best in Character

I understand character as a unique and enduring pattern of behaviour, perception, and emotion of the individual that leads to consistent reactions in different situations. It is, therefore, a complex overall structure of consistent characteristics, traits, attitudes, and behavioural skills over the course of a lifetime that characterises the individual.[273] Following Humboldt, the key question should be asked: *How does a noble personality show itself?*[274] Beauty, in the sense of goodness of human character, is what Aristotle calls *aretē* (Greek ἀρετή).[275] The possession of *aretē* constitutes *eudaimonia* and only comes about when a person uses their rational faculty correctly.[276] The outdated German translations of *Tüchtigkeit* (efficiency) or *Tauglichkeit* (suitability) for *virtue* sound, in my opinion, functionalist, possibly because they are based on the original meaning of the Latin term *virtus*, which denotes an aptitude of character and connotes meanings such as "manliness," "martial prowess," "social merit," and "fame."[277] If we look at a broader range of meanings, we can see that *aretē* is related to *agathē* and denotes a person's goodness.[278] This allows us to distil a basic meaning, that of *excellence*.[279] If virtue as a basic concept expresses the ethical qualities of human beings, it can be heuristically formulated that virtuous behaviour, against the background of the ancient understanding, is to be understood as a manifestation of the beauty of human character or an expression of good character.

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273 Cf. Klaus-Jürgen Tillmann, *Sozialisationstheorien. Eine Einführung in den Zusammenhang von Gesellschaft, Institution und Subjektwerdung* (Hamburg, 2003), 11; see Uwe Henrik Peters, "Charakter," in *Wörterbuch der Psychiatrie und medizinischen Psychologie*, ed. Peters (Munich, 1990), 86.

274 Cf. Humboldt, *Schriften zur Anthropologie und Geschichte*, 238.

275 The meaning of the category of *beauty* will be explained in the next chapter.

276 Cf. Radić, *Die Rehabilitierung der Tugendethik*, 15, 18.

277 Friedrich Kluge, *Kluge: Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*. Edited by Elmar Seebold (Berlin/Boston, 2011), 934.

278 Cf. Radić, *Die Rehabilitierung der Tugendethik*, 15.

279 Cf. Ottfried Höffe, "Art. aretē/Tugend," in *Aristoteles-Lexikon*, eds. Otfried Höffe, Rolf Geiger, and Philipp Brüllmann (Stuttgart 2005), 76.

A Brief Excursus: Aristotle's Concept of the Soul

In Aristotle's conception, the soul (*psychē*), the life principle of all living beings, forms different faculties (*dynameis*). The soul is the active correlate of the passive body and causes it to move.[280]

> We say that the soul is pained and pleased, is confident and further that it is angry and also that it perceives and thinks. But all of thse seem to be motions. On this basis, on might suppose that the soul is in motion.[281]

Aristotle assigns a number of functions to the soul. It is the place of desires and drives, as well as the control centre for growth, nutrition, and reproduction.[282]

In contrast to Plato, who speaks of separate parts or powers of the soul in which the virtues ensure the harmony of those powers, Aristotle has a unifying, tripartite division of faculties.[283] But, with regard to the virtues, two faculties of the soul are decisive: the faculty of aspiration and the faculty of cognition. [284] [285] Since Muslim philosophers and mystics strongly emphasise the aspect of the soul in their ethical virtue considerations, a few aspects of the Aristotelian concept of the soul should be mentioned. A faculty refers to the thinking-reasoning (*dianoētikon*) capacity, i.e., reason itself, which makes cognition and judgement possible, and to the sensual-striving (*aisthētikon*, perceiving) capacity. Instincts, emotions, and desires belong to the rational part of the soul, and personal virtues are attributed to it. The third faculty is not a bearer of virtue. Reason corresponds to the dianoetic virtues; perception corresponds to the character virtues. Since the human soul is not only characterised

280 Cf. Cathrine Newmark, *Passion – Affekt – Gefühl. Philosophische Theorien der Emotionen zwischen Aristoteles und Kant* (Hamburg, 2008), 37. See more on Aristotle's theory of movement in *De anima*.

281 Aristotle, *De anima*, I.4, 408a34–408b4. English translation from Christopher Sheilds, trans., *Aristotle: De Anima* (Oxford, 2016).

282 Cf. Christoph Horn, *Philosophie der Antike. Von den Vorsokratikern bis Augustinus* (Munich, 2013), 60.

283 Cf. Hübner, *Einführung in die philosophische Ethik*, 117. For more details on the soul and its faculties, see *De anima*, "On the Soul" by Aristotle, which is one of the most widely discussed texts in the history of philosophy.

284 Cf. Radić, *Die Rehabilitierung der Tugendethik*, 15.

285 Cf. NE I.13; II.1–6; VI.5.

by reason but also has an emotional realm, the rational part must gain control over the non-rational part of the soul and organise the conflict between the two parts in order to achieve moral excellence. This possibility of perfection and higher development of the soul characterises humans in particular.[286]

Striving for self-improvement also means perfecting the soul's faculties. Self-mastery and self-knowledge thus require a correct self-assessment, and this requires a conscious perception of one's own feelings, driving forces, inclinations, and affects. Self-related assessments grow through the resolution of conflicts and the reflexive handling of them, as well as through the experience of weaknesses, exclusion, and external approval. For example, I categorise stubbornness as a character trait that is inherent in thinking and acting in a stubborn manner, which should be based on a certain disposition that has developed and consolidated over time, but can be changed through reflection and redisposition.[287] In Aristotelian virtue ethics, it is also important to reflect on these personal characteristics and to learn how to deal with them consciously.[288]

According to Aristotle, a character virtue can develop successively with the application of prudence, especially if prudence is morally oriented towards the highest good. Prudence, as an intellectual virtue of the thinking-reasoning faculty of the soul, is the source of all morality.[289] If prudence misses the proper centre, a bad basic attitude can develop through habituation.[290]

A virtue can only become firmly established after a long process of familiarisation. The habituation to acquire an attitude is preceded by practical, performative realisation and practice. Theoretical knowledge of good attitudes or goodness alone is not enough to be considered virtuous, even if it is the first step in this direction. Only when the disposition to act has become an integral part of the character, i.e., has solidified as a character trait, can we speak of virtuous behaviour. Those who live virtuously out of conviction

286 Cf. Hübner, *Einführung in die philosophische Ethik*, 117ff.
287 Cf. Christian Miller and Angela Knobel, "Some Foundational Questions in Philosophy about Character," in *Character: New Directions from Philosophy, Psychology, and Theology*, Miller et al. (Oxford, 2015), 21.
288 Cf. NE II.7, 1108a 30–35.
289 Cf. Hübner, *Einführung in die philosophische Ethik*, 122.
290 Cf. NE II.6, 1106b–1107a 10.

have constantly practised virtues. This practice leads to the development of firm basic attitudes and shapes a person's character; thus, the cultivation of character is therefore understood to mean the acquisition of dispositions for action and acting in accordance with them. Character traits are rooted in the soul and can therefore be changed. "Character means a person as a personal work of art that has a certain aesthetic appearance like a minted (!) coin."[291] Over the course of time, repetitive behavioural patterns and traits become deeply imprinted in one's character. Attitudes thus result from certain character structures, and, conversely, virtues refer to the character traits of an acting person.

3.2 The Deliberation Process as a Condition of Self-knowledge

According to Swanton, virtuous ethical behaviour is behaviour that requires people to assess and evaluate a situation adequately. Moral judgement, therefore, requires deliberative consideration. Habitualising a disposition requires getting used to sizing up and assessing a situation appropriately. Deliberation is based, in Hannah Arendt's words, on the ability to *think*.[292] Thinking is the conscious perception of oneself and the world. Accordingly, thinking in the sense of deliberation is an "inner dialogue."[293] Kant points out a very dicey danger: "Nowhere is it easier to deceive oneself than in that which favours a good opinion of oneself."[294] The existence of a counterpart seems very favourable for this purpose, and offers itself in order that people do not remain too entrenched in the blind spots of self-perception. Overall, it becomes clear once again that the world, society, and others—social interactions—are the right place to learn ethical considerations, whereas ethical principles can be considered secondary. Deliberation is, in my opinion, the decisive basis of moral judgement.

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291 Jochen Schmidt, "Glaube und Charakter," unpublished manuscript (2016).

292 Cf. Hannah Arendt, "Das Denken," in Arendt, *Vom Leben des Geistes* (Munich/Zurich, 1998), 82.

293 I use the term inner dialogue in Arendt's sense; see Arendt, *Vom Leben des Geistes*, 191.

294 Kant, RGV, AA VI:68, Bettina Stangneth (ed.), Hamburg 2003, 88.

The appropriate response to a situation can be considered virtuous if it strikes the right balance between spontaneity and a considered decision, because if the virtue were pure spontaneity, the person's critical behaviour would be absent. Reflexivity is a binding premise of deliberation. Like all virtue ethicists, I understand the middle of two extremes, which constitutes the essence (*ousia*) of a virtue, as the appropriate and right attitude to a situation. In its performance, it aims to achieve the good for humankind as a morally desirable action. Aristotle separates this habitus of decision from desire. Decision-making is an endeavour in which a person has a goal in mind that motivates or moves them to make this or that decision. In addition to the previous definition of virtue, virtue is a disposition to act from the proper centre, as well as it is insight.[295] Desires and passions are to be restrained in accordance with reason. Aristotle calls the right way of dealing with desires *temperance*.

3.3 Prospering for a Successful Life

In her definition of virtue, Swanton borrows from the English virtue ethicist Rosalind Hursthouse and writes, "A virtue is a character trait that a human being needs for *eudaimonia*, to flourish or live well."[296] *Flourish/flourishing* in the sense of thriving, blossoming, or prospering means, on the one hand, the development of personal qualities in order to achieve the highest good, while on the other hand, it illustrates the processual nature of exercising a disposition. A morally well-conducted life, as well as a happy life in the sense of a subjectively well-adjusted life, testifies to the best possible character of a person. If a person is so disposed in their actions and speech to achieve and strive for the good, then they are on the way to fulfilling their *ergon*, understood as the characteristic achievement of a person.[297] This also means that there is a multitude of possible ways of acting if a person wishes to act virtuously. A good person is characterised by the fact that they make the right judgement in appropriate cases, i.e., they have recognised what is truly good in a

295 Cf. NE VI, 1144b 25.
296 Swanton, *Virtue Ethics*, 167.
297 Cf. Höffe, "Art. aretē/Tugend," 77.

specific situation and act accordingly.[298] Aristotle compares this to a healthy person, who is the benchmark for what is healthy,[299] because a healthy body shows what is truly healthy.

> On the one hand, this establishes an objective standard by which we can judge what is truly good; on the other hand, it remains possible for someone to desire something other than what is truly good if their soul is not in the optimal state, i.e., in the state of the good person.[300]

Humans can achieve goodness insofar as they are rational. This ability to reason distinguishes humans from other living beings and also gives them a certain responsibility towards themselves and others. Humans reach perfection, their goodness, when they do justice *to being human*. Human *aretē*, being good, thus consists in one's *ergon*, i.e., in one's rational faculty or rational activity. "Since only that which is rational is pleasant for him, there can never be any motivation for him to seek happiness in a pleasure that is not rational."[301] By finding the centre, people find the way to the best moral and personal outcome. For example, being appropriately outraged, one pursues the just and good for all involved with a harmonious intensity.

Virtue ethics thus attempts to reconcile normative standards with self-interest and to show how people can lead a morally good *and* happy life through virtue. Virtue is not pursued so that people are virtuous but because of the values and goods that are realised in virtue. According to Aristotle, this has the consequence that people live their capacities in the best possible way, and thus ultimately achieve *eudaimonia*.

For Aristotle, the virtuous life also seems to be a blissful life, especially if the person's mental state is in balance.[302] For, according to Aristotle, the truly good is the happiness of humankind. For him, happiness is the highest goal of endeavour, although the definition varies: "They disagree about substantive conceptions of happiness,

298 Cf. NE III, 1113a 29–30.

299 Cf. Béatrice Lienemann, *Aristoteles' Konzeption der Zurechnung* (Berlin, 2018), 321.

300 Lienemann, *Aristoteles' Konzeption der Zurechnung*, 321.

301 Friedo Ricken, *Der Lustbegriff in der Nikomachischen Ethik des Aristoteles* (Göttingen, 1976), 99.

302 Cf. NE X, 1177a; Horn, *Antike Lebenskunst*, 73.

the masses giving an account which differs from that of the philosophers."[303] Even if *happiness* is used as a translation for *eudaimonia*, it may not be understood in our modern sense. The feeling of happiness is very subjective, and people have different ideas of what happiness is.[304]

> That term [*eudaimonia*] is usually translated "happiness," but what it refers to in the hands of these philosophers is not the same as modern conceptions of happiness. For one thing, it makes sense now to say that you are happy one day, unhappy another, but Eudaimonia was a matter of the shape of one's whole life.[305]

Does the ancient term actually mean more than just episodic moments of elation, namely the happiness that arises from moral excellence? Virtuous behaviour or actions thus bring to light the manifestation of happiness.[306]

For my focus, the connection between a virtuous attitude and happiness is irrelevant. Since Aristotle himself problematises how vague the idea of *eudaimonia* is, I would like to stick to the orientation towards the good. A virtue is therefore a solid, good basic attitude that enables a person to act constructively and appropriately in a situation by means of reason and with the right insight, which arises from the interaction of empathy, observation, the ability to assess circumstances and self-reflect, and thus to become and be a good person. Moral judgement is therefore conditioned by or requires the assurance of the good in deliberative consideration.

Aristotle counts not only external goods but also favourable external circumstances among the relevant happiness factors. Although these are not sufficient for happiness, their absence prevents someone from being called happy; they are therefore conducive to happiness. At this point, Aristotle agrees that many people are not happy through their character alone but are in need of other happiness factors to be so.[307]

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303 NE I, 1095a 20–22; Cf. Horn, *Antike Lebenskunst*, 64.

304 See Philipp Brüllmann, *Die Theorie des Guten in Aristoteles'* Nikomachischer Ethik, (Berlin/New York, 2011).

305 Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1994), 34.

306 Cf. Max Klopfer, *Ethik-Klassiker von Platon bis John Stuart Mill: Ein Lehr- und Studienbuch* (Stuttgart, 2008), 143.

307 Cf. NE I, 1096a 5–7.

There are forces in a personality that are part of the deliberation process and that can often disrupt the disposition towards goodness. Inner resistance or motives such as displeasure can hinder and impede the practice of character virtues. "By abstaining from pleasures we become temperate, and having become so we are best able to abstain from them."[308] Aristotle continues, "It is because of pleasure that we do bad actions, and pain that we abstain from noble ones."[309] Consequently, Aristotle agrees with Plato on the point that people should be taught in childhood to feel pleasure and displeasure about what educators want to strengthen or weaken, because that is the right education.[310]

3.4 Emotions as Relevant Dispositions of Moral Excellence

Virtue ethics, which aims to achieve a successful life that can also be regarded as happy, must be asked to what extent feelings are conducive or detrimental to a successful lifestyle. This is because feelings play an important role in the focused consideration of a person's moral constitution and the change in personality. Feelings are part of the *conditio humana* (human condition), as humans are not only cognitive and rational, but also emotional beings. Thinking, feeling, and acting are interwoven and relate to each other. Since Hume, this strong dependency between reason and feelings cannot be denied.[311] Person-centred ethics places the whole person at the centre of its consideration, in which feelings play a decisive role as a motivational force of moral being and action.[312] Emotions, affects, and feelings have been known as mental phenomena and psychological arousal since antiquity, all of which are labelled with the same term: *pathos* (Greek, feeling; Latin, *affectus*).[313] Although Aristotle did not explicitly write about emotions, the question of an Aristotelian theory of

308 NE II.2, 1104a–1104b.
309 NE II.3, 1104b 10.
310 NE II.3 1104b 10–15.
311 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature (1739–40)* (Oxford, 1978), 153.
312 Cf. Fenner, *Ethik. Wie soll ich handeln?*, 232.
313 Cf. Marcel Humar, "Antike Emotionstheorien. Philosophische Erklärungen von Emotionen im Kontext der Eudaimonie," in *Emotion. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, eds. Hermann Kappelhoff et al. (Berlin, 2019), 3. Unlike today's

emotions has a long tradition.[314] According to Michael Krewet, a theory of emotions can certainly be recognised in Aristotle based on various works.[315] In *De anima* and the NE, Aristotle cites emotions as part of the soul's ability to strive.[316] Even though Aristotle does not provide any definitions in the narrower sense, the NE contains the longest descriptive list of the following emotions: desire, fear, anger, courage, envy, joy, love, hate, longing, zeal, and pity.[317]

As Aristotle's ethics are concerned with doing the good, i.e., becoming a morally good person, he also makes it clear that actions are primarily motivated by *affective* or emotional factors.[318] For Aristotle, however, the mere possession of feelings does not make a person morally good as long as these feelings are not linked to actions or considerations.[319] In principle, virtue can consist in feelings, only as the disposition to feel to the right extent following the correct situation-specific deliberation. A person in this described state could theoretically control and regulate their feelings and their representation. Emotional presentation is made by examining its situational appropriateness and can be morally evaluated, as a person has the power to give their feelings voice and manifestation, to control, defuse, or exacerbate them. For example, shyness, jealousy, and bashfulness are dispositions that can take on individual manifestations and characteristics, such as an increase in heartbeat, degree and location of blushing, or tone quality of voice, i.e., physical changes accompany feelings.

When a person is reluctant to speak in front of people or is exposed, their disposition to find something unpleasant comes into play. In this case, shyness has developed into a disposition to

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terminology, antiquity made no distinction was made between affect, feeling, and emotion; I use all three synonymously.

314 Cf. Humar, "Antike Emotionstheorien," 5.

315 See Michael Krewet, *Die Theorie der Gefühle bei Aristoteles* (Heidelberg, 2011).

316 In Book II of *De anima*, he describes the striving faculty that keeps the soul in motion as being divided into three parts: desire, anger, and volition. Aristotle, *De anima*, II.3, 414b 1.

317 Cf. NE II.5, 1105b 21–24.

318 NE II.2, 1103b 27. Cf. Notker Schneider, "Vernunft und Gefühl," *IZPP* 1/2018, especially "Gefühl und Vernunft," 4.

319 Cf. Verena Mayer, *Die Moralität der Gefühle* (Berlin/Boston, 2002), 128; Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Ethics and the Emotions," in *Virtue Ethics: A Critical Reader*, ed. Daniel Statman (Washington, 1997), 99–117.

react shyly in certain situations. But shyness is not a bad thing in principle. Shyness is the fear of being compromised.[320] It is a character disposition, or rather a virtue, only when a person is shy to the degree appropriate to the situation. This means emotions can influence cognitive thought and decision-making processes; above all, "according to Aristotle, emotions are cognitively mediated."[321] This thesis has been taken further in the literature, and many hold the view that, according to Aristotle, feelings not only presuppose judgements, but that beliefs are the conditions for the emergence of feelings.[322]

Emotions can support and guide thinking, especially when it comes to personal and social matters.[323] In the reverse, however, behaviour can also trigger emotions, just as singing or dancing can evoke joy in people, or a certain trigger can provoke past experiences and feelings and put a person in an emotionally unstable situation, such as grief.

Emotions form the basis of interpersonal relationships. Cognitive behavioural therapy, for example, assumes that people do not display emotions because of *something itself*, but rather due to their subjective attitude and interpretation towards the person, thing and/or situation.[324] Let's assume that someone becomes angry: a certain evil must already be perceived in order for anger to be aroused. Anger is only directed towards an object, situation, or person after the fact.[325]

> By living—in an immense variety of reaction modes—the most diverse feelings such as love, hate, shame, guilt, embarrassment, amusement, serenity, melancholy, cheerfulness, pride, etc., we give ourselves and others an understanding of the specific position in which we see our-

320 Cf. Baruch de Spinoza, *Ethik* (Berlin, 2017), 128.

321 Humar, "Antike Emotionstheorien," 5ff.

322 Cf. Martha Nussbaum, "Aristotle on Emotion and Rational Persuasion," in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley, 1996), 309–312.

323 Cf. Antonio Damasio, *Im Anfang war das Gefühl: Der biologische Ursprung menschlicher Kultur* (Munich, 2017), II.8, *passim*.

324 Bärbel Ekert and Christiane Ekert, *Psychologie für Pflegeberufe* (Stuttgart/New York, 2014), 166.

325 Cf. Max Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* Gesammelte Werke, vol. 2 (Bern, 1954), 270.

selves in relation to certain objects and how we evaluate these objects and our relationship to them.[326]

However, feelings, just like actions, can be reflected upon and changed if necessary. First and foremost, this requires the ability to introspect. This is because people have the choice to decide how they want to feel. It is well known that feelings can be influenced and generated by images, ideas, and thoughts.[327] For example, the feeling of anger can be transformed into calmness by mentally perceiving both personal and physical feelings or by reinterpreting the situation (that is, by *reframing*).[328] Aristotelian virtue ethics also implies feelings with a view to a comprehensive deliberation of one's own moral constitution and the respective situation. The perception of one's own constitution also includes emotional self-reflection, i.e., a process of reflection on one's emotional disposition.[329] According to Aristotle, this practical deliberation includes a far-reaching perception, weighing, and correct assessment of the individual aspects.[330]

A virtue is then rather the basic attitude from which a person has moral feelings to an appropriate degree. The appropriate measure or balance of the emotional reaction is determined by the *mesotes doctrine* and is intended to prevent the emergence of excessive feelings that exceed a reasonable level.

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326 Micha Brumlik, "Ethische Gefühle: Liebe, Sorge und Achtung," in *Care – Wer sorgt für wen?*, eds. Vera Moser and Inga Pinhard (Opladen/Farmington Hills, 2010), 36.

327 See Udo Baer and Gabriele Frick-Baer, *Das ABS der Gefühle* (Weinheim, 2008), 105 ff.; Claus Haring, "Hypnose und Autogenes Training," in *Therapie psychischer Erkrankungen*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Möller (New York/Stuttgart, 2006), 24; cf. Aristotle, *De motu animalium*, VII, 701b 19–22.

328 The meaning attributed to an event, a statement, a behaviour, a belief, a trigger, or a stimulus has depends on the context or *frame* in which a person places it. Reframing means constructing a new context and thus giving the matter new meaning. For more information, see Hans J. Markowitsch and Margit M. Schreier (eds.), *Reframing der Bedürfnisse. Psychische Neuroimplantate* (Wiesbaden, 2019).

329 Emotional self-reflection holds a very high status in current competency discourses and dominant understandings of education. See Bernhard Sieland and Tobias Rahm, "Personale Kompetenzen entwickeln," in *Handbuch Schulpsychologie: Psychologie für die Schule*, ed. Thomas Fleischer (Stuttgart, 2007), 207.

330 Cf. Pauer-Studer, *Einführung in die Ethik*, 104.

> … It will be clear also from what follows, if we consider what the nature of virtue is like. In everything continuous and divisible, one can take more, less, or an equal amount, and each either in respect of the thing itself or relative to us; and the equal is a sort of mean between excess and deficiency. … by the mean relative to us I mean that which is neither excessive nor deficient.[331]

Finding *the middle ground in relation to ourselves* requires a special art or virtue, i.e., the performance of virtue requires an artistically practised skill.

> In this way every expert in a science avoids excess and deficiency, and aims for the mean and chooses it -- the mean, that is, not in the thing itself but relative to us. … and if virtue, like nature, is more precise and superior to any skill, it will also be the sort of thing that is able to hit the mean. I am talking here about virtue of character.[332]

Virtue is about expressing emotions and acting on them. Virtue is then the centre between feelings that are too strong and feelings that are too weak. However, it is not only a centre between two extremes on the scale of intensities of the same feeling but also a centre, for example, between too broad or too narrow extensions of a feeling.[333] For example, the virtue of bravery is a certain way of dealing with fear of dangerous situations.[334] For this, people need to develop a certain ability to perceive, which interacts with the wisdom (*phronesis*) to apply moral rules according to the situation or to react or act emotionally to the right extent. Inappropriate emotions can distract a person from acting virtuously. Thus, Aristotle relates the judgement of an emotion and its effect to the acquisition of prudence. Ultimately, learning to see morally is not just about the perception of life circumstances but also the development of multi-perspective perceptual competence.

> For example, fear, confidence, appetite, anger, pity, and in general pleasure and pain can be experienced too much or too little, and in both ways not well. But to have them at the right time, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the mean and best; and this is the business of virtue. Similarly, there is an

331 NE II, 1106a; cf. NE II.5, 1106b 18–23.
332 NE II.6, 1106b.
333 Cf. NE II, 1108b.
334 Cf. Christof Rapp, *Aristoteles zur Einführung* (Hamburg, 2011), 26.

> excess, a deficiency and a mean in actions. Virtue is concerned with feelings and actions, in which excess and deficiency constitute misses of the mark, while the mean is praised and on target, both of which are characteristics of virtue.[335]

Virtue is the ability to act correctly and at the same time to feel correctly towards circumstances, people and things in the world. Aristotle, therefore, does not reject the feeling of emotions but favours an appropriate way of dealing with them. Emotions are known to be very individual because they depend on a person's disposition.[336] A person who has a correct opinion about a situation can feel appropriately ("cultivated feeling").[337] "Only those who are able to adequately control their emotions and develop them in appropriate situations can recognise how to behave correctly in the respective situation."[338] Consequently, emotions play an important role in the cultivation of the self.

3.5 The Cultivation of Character

In correspondence with the concept of disposition, character is characterised by the fact that a person has a basic constitution to choose the appropriate action in a certain way, in a certain situation.[339] Frequent, repeated actions result in an aptitude or qualification, i.e., a character trait, a habitus of emotional characteristics and cognitive potentials develops through familiarisation. If a character trait is oriented towards the morally well-recognised, it is a virtue. According to Erich Fromm, this is possible neither by force nor by chance but only through freedom and free will.[340] Freedom of choice or freedom of decision enables the will to weigh the motives and

335 NE II.6, 1106b.

336 Cf. Christof Rapp, "Aristoteles. Bausteine für eine Theorie der Emotionen," in *Klassische Emotionstheorien. Von Platon bis Wittgenstein*, eds. Ursula Renz and Hilge Landweer (Berlin/New York, 2008), 61.

337 Christoph Demmerlingand Hilge Landweer, *Philosophie der Gefühle. Von Achtung bis Zorn* (Stuttgart, 2007), 176.

338 Cf. Humar, "Antike Emotionstheorien," 7; cf. *inter alia* NE VI.5, 1140b 11–20; NE VI.10, 1142b 33; NE VI.13, 1144a 29–b 1.

339 Cf. Ernst Tugendhat, *Vorlesungen über Ethik* (Frankfurt, 1993), 104ff.

340 Erich Fromm set an important accent in the development of psychology by stating in his research into the human will that what a person considers to be

aspects that affect people. However, this weighing also requires the person to recognise their existence; thus, active perception becomes constitutive. Only then does a person have the ability to say yes or no in their decision. If a person acts virtuously out of free choice, the soul feels pleasure and joy, not in what might come of it, but in the action itself. Then the will to shape oneself becomes a shaping of one's endeavours in accordance with the reason to moderate one's passions. Dealing with the limits and possibilities of the human will is important, as this is an essential prerequisite for moral decisions.

However, human beings can fail again and again (*akrasia*, called *weakness of will* by Aristotle); changing inclinations, instincts, or ingrained habits is a difficult endeavor.[341] It is precisely this human weakness that requires a process of ethical maturation. It implies the aspect that human dispositions, strengths, or potentials may not be sufficiently developed and that further effort is required in order to come close to ethical perfection or refinement. This process of habitualisation challenges the inner world of the human being immensely. Reflecting on oneself, behaving towards oneself, and guiding one's behaviour in accordance with appropriate basic attitudes and orienting oneself towards the highest good is a difficult and demanding process. This involves not only developing consistent, desirable basic attitudes but also training (action) intentions in advance. Intentions and feelings are in a kind of waiting room for decision-making processes. The character with which an intention and a feeling are set in motion is essential, thereby exerting a considerable effect on the form and execution of an action. If the character is negative, the probability that a morally desirable action will follow is very low. It is also known from everyday pedagogical experience that "knowledge of the moral good does not consequently lead to people doing the good—even if it were possible for them to do so."[342] Self-reflection does not necessarily lead directly to improvement, to moral goodness. However, it precedes the first step, whereby the first and most

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a free decision of will can de facto also be an external compulsion. See Erich Fromm, *Die Furcht vor der Freiheit* (Frankfurt, 1972).

341 See Jens Timmermann, "Akrasia/Unbeherrschtheit, Willensschwäche, Handeln wider besseres Wissen," in *Aristoteles-Lexikon*, 21–23.

342 Claudia Gerdentisch, "Zur Aktualität von Herbarts Ästhetik. Ästhetische Erziehung und moralische Urteilskraft," in *Herbarts Ästhetik. Studien zu Herbarts Charakterbildung*, ed. Alexandra Schotte (Jena, 2010), 129.

difficult step is, as it seems to me, to be able to break habits in order to change them (in the longer term). Every virtue can be seen as an expression of its excess and its lack. These two qualities are the shadow of every virtue, and we need to take a close look at these excesses and shortcomings within ourselves. Gaining an overview of our complex inner world is a crucial first step in self-reflection, which can enable us to calculate and assess the context of a situation adequately.

A theological-Islamic perspective on personhood is now following this revival of virtues. Theological perspectives on virtue can make their own contribution to educational and philosophical discussions.[343] It will have to be discussed whether Islamic intellectual history provides further insights or other thought-provoking observations and perspectives for the development of the current concept of virtue. After all, Islam also has potentials and resources that have an effect on the moral and motivational constitution of human beings. This approach should not be understood as a turn towards a religiously based moral theory or, in this context, towards a new concept of virtue ethics. My concern is based on the idea that religious-ethical thinking today, as in the Middle Ages, was amalgamated with Greek thought but continued to be characterised by its own colouring. I would like to trace this colouring in an accentuated way, in order to make it fruitful and capable of speaking to contemporary educational thinking.

343 Cf. Nancy E. Snow, "Introduction," in *Cultivating Virtue*, 2.

Chapter III: The Cultivation of the Self in the Islamic Intellectual History of Educational Understanding in the 9th–12th Centuries

1. Adab and akhlāq: Two Categories of Ethical Educational Endeavours

For current discussions on personality development, this chapter takes a historical-hermeneutical look at the connections between religion and education, particularly between education and character, in Islamic intellectual history. The endeavours of this pedagogical thinking and the research that it has triggered have so far gone more or less unnoticed. The Islamic scholar Sebastian Günther rightly states that—despite present discussion about Islamic religious education and the newly established academic discipline of Islamic religious education—little attention has been paid to Arabic-language literature and the concepts of pedagogy, education, and didactics in the educational thinking of Islamic intellectual history.[344] This is indeed surprising, because Arabic-language literature contains a rich supply of educational thought from as early as the ninth century. For this reason, two central terms of Muslim educational thought, *adab* and *akhlāq*, will be discussed below.

A significant body of educational works is *adab* literature, which is characterised as being aesthetic. It is often categorised as a genre of behavioural literature because it deals with everyday manners, good morals, education, and etiquette.[345] In terms of the history of

344 Cf. Sebastian Günther, "Islamische Bildung im literarischen Gewand: Unterweisung in religiösen und weltlichen Belangen bei Ibn Qutayba und al-Māwardī," in *Bildungskulturen im Islam. Islamische Theologie lehren und lernen*, eds. Abbas Poya, Farid Suleiman, and Benjamin Weineck (Berlin/Boston, 2022), 137.

345 Cf. Bilal Orfali and Ramzi Baalbaki, *The Book of Noble Character: Critical Edition of* Makārim al-akhlāq wa-maḥāsin al-ādāb wa-badā'iʿ al-awṣāf wa-ghāra'ib

ideas, many contexts of meaning come together in *adab*. Above all, historical changes in the meaning of the term make it possible to identify key characteristics of Arab culture from pre-Islamic times to the modern era. The following quote outlines the spectrum quite aptly:

> Right conduct (*adab*) constitutes the sum of prudential knowledge that shields one from all error in speech, acts, and character. It signifies all the Arabic sciences, for they cumulatively promote etiquette. *Adab* is thus a habitus or disposition (*malaka*) that protects one from disgrace. A perfectly urbane and cultivated person (*adīb*) is one who possesses this habitus. Therefore, it is said: "the way to ultimate reality is through [the practice of] right conduct."[346]

The period between the eighth and eleventh centuries is of interest for the present research project. Writings from this period characterised as *adab* works are mostly compilations of poetry and stylistically often elaborate prose texts on specific topics, including the ethical education of man.[347] They show a tendency to integrate elements of knowledge and rules for the realisation of ethical maxims into people's everyday lives, which was typical for this era. For this reason, certain types of texts in *adab* literature can be categorised as genres that deal with the cultivation of character traits. "In their works with instructive content, societies pass on those elements of their knowledge structures and moral systems that they consider to be particularly important, consensual and worth preserving."[348] This particular genre is classified as *makārim al-akhlāq*, and over

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al-tashbīhāt, *Attributed to Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī (d. 429/1039)* (Leiden/Boston, 2015), 1; cf. Isabel Toral-Niehoff, "'Sei seine Dienerin, dann wird er dein Diener sein!' Auf der Suche nach der idealen Ehefrau: Ibn ʿAbdrabbih und sein Buch über die Frauen," in *Didaktisches Erzählen. Formen literarischer Belehrung in Orient und Okzident*, eds. Regula Forster and Romy Günthart (Frankfurt, 2010), 257; cf. Mustafa Çağrıcı, "Ahlak," in *TDV*, vol. 12, 268.

346 Uways Wafā Khānzādah, *Minhāǧ al-yaqīn. Sharḥ adab al-dunyā wa-l-dīn* (Beirut, 1980), 4, quoted in Ebrahim Moosa, "Muslim Ethics?," in *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweicker (Oxford, 2005), 238.

347 Cf. Wiebke Walther, *Kleine Geschichte der arabischen Literatur. Von der vorislamischen Zeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 2004), 106.

348 Bea Lundt, "Review of Didaktisches Erzählen. Formen literarischer Belehrung in Orient und Okzident, eds. Regular Forster and Romy Günthart (2010)," *Fabula* 3/4 (2011): 325–327.

ten works with this title have reached us.[349] *Makārim al-akhlāq* works are anthologies of "good behaviour" and quotations suitable for social and literary discourse. According to Orfali and Baalbaki, *makārim* works contain three thematic foci of *adab*: behaviour, literary culture, and learning.[350] Other components found in *makārim* works are the Prophet Muḥammad and the hadiths, which provided practical recommendations on topics related to everyday life as well as the firmness of faith, pleasant speech, truthfulness, adornment, and much more. These also influenced personal habits such as the cleanliness of the body and clothing, eating, and travelling.[351] ʿAbdallāh Ibn-Muḥammad Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā (823–894) knew how to merge religious *adab* with the characteristics of general *adab*, which found expression in countless works. Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā was not only an ascetic, traditionalist, and jurist but was also well versed in poetry. Between 100 and 300 books are attributed to him, of which around fifty works fall into the category of *adab*. As mentioned above, this particular field of ethically- and religiously-oriented *adab* literature has hardly been studied from an educational theory perspective for the present day. The work of Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā, *Kitāb makārim al-akhlāq* (*The Book of Praiseworthy Character Traits*), the oldest surviving text of this *adab* genre, will be analysed against the background of contemporary educational theory.

What significance does *adab* have if we take the ethical religious texts as a basis for education? Does this type of text, classified as instructive or didactic, contain directives for action and ethical principles aimed at practical implementation, or do these texts rather address virtues, intended to encourage readers to reflect theoretically on values and virtues? Can aspects be discovered that point to ethical virtue teachings, and how should this be interpreted? What is Abī 'l-Dunyā's understanding of virtue, and what role does it play in the formation of character? Against this horizon of questions, the purpose of this literature in its own social, cultural, and literary context will be analysed. Interestingly, various scholars, in particular Peter Brown and Barbara Metcalf, point out the importance of comparing and analysing the term *adab* in the light of the classical

349 Cf. Orfali and Baalbaki, *The Book of Noble Character*, 2ff.
350 Cf. Orfali and Baalbaki, *The Book of Noble Character*, 2.
351 Cf. Azartash Azarnoosh, "Adab," in *EI*^{2}.

studies on *paideia* (education, instruction).[352] *Adab* is interpreted as the Greek equivalent of the term *paideia*, because *adab* in its essence also intends the moulding of character through a variety of intellectual, spiritual, and physical practices, which are illustrated in the early period of ethical and paraenetic *adab* literature.[353] I will not be able to exhaust this area with the examination of a single *makārim al-akhlāq* work, but I will be able to examine that one work as an example within the horizon of my interest.

In addition to the term *adab*, *akhlāq* also deserves attention, not only because their meanings overlap but also because both terms refer in principle to character formation. Moreover, all major hadith collections contain sections on ethics and etiquette, which indicates that the topic was of great importance in the second and third centuries after the Hijrah. However, the most commonly used term for ethics is *akhlāq* rather than *adab*. Since *adab* and *akhlāq* have similar aims, it is important to work out the differences and similarities between the two and the respective special features that appear to be important for Muslim educational thinking. I will trace a line of ethical development in the Islamic moral philosophical tradition that begins with the initial reception of Aristotle's teachings on virtue ethics by Arab scholars. Writings in this direction, which began with Miskawayh (932–1030) in particular, are classified as *tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (refinement of character). In particular, I aim to summarise how Muslim philosophers and later mystics thought about the cultivation of the self and which virtues they considered important for such self-cultivation. Perhaps an Islamic specificity can be crystallised from the ethical virtue approaches of Muslim philosophers, which have so far received little attention in comparison to Aristotelian virtue theory. This geographical, literary, and temporal cross-section is intended to illustrate that pedagogical writings have always been part of Islamic culture and that Muslim scholars of very different stripes have dealt with various facets of education.

352 See in particular the groundbreaking work by Werner Jaeger, *Paideia. Die Formung des griechischen Menschen* (Berlin/New York, 1973).

353 Cf. Katharina Ivanyi, "*Adab*, *akhlāq* and Early Modern Ottoman Paraenesis: Birgivī Meḥmed Efendī's (d. 981/1573) *al-Ṭarīqa al-muḥammadiyya*," in *Adab and Modernity: A "Civilising Process?" (Sixteenth–Twenty-First Century)*, ed. Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen (Leiden/Boston, 2020), 49.

Finally, we will take a glance at mysticism and the mystical concept of *tazkiyya al-nafs* (purification of the self). Since the canonisation of Islamic theology (in the first centuries after the Hijra), inner strengths and human dispositions have been dealt with primarily in the teachings of Sufism.[354] In the ninth century, *adab* had diverse roots in Islamic ethics, which Sufism endows with methods of educating the *nafs* (soul and ethics that can be traced back to the Sunnah of the Prophet and, by name, to Greek ethics (especially Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*). It is reasonable to assume that the mystical ideas of bodily practices, which were focused on the inner character and specifically on the dynamic life of the soul, have interesting aspects to offer to the question posed here.

2. Adab and Its Multiple Meanings

The study of *adab* works is indispensable for the study of classical Arabic literature between the eighth and tenth centuries. The term *adab* itself, or rather its etymology, implies diverse groups of texts from a particular perspective. For philologists of medieval literature, reconstructing the history of the origins and terminology of *adab* is therefore of great interest. Major reconstruction endeavours have attempted to trace the development of the term over the centuries.[355] Indeed, the history of the meaning of the term *adab* is long and extensive. To give a rough overview, the history of its origins is essentially based on the shift in the semantics of the term, which evolved from "tradition," "traditional education," and "education in

354 Cf. Florian Lützen, "Mit dem sehendenden Herzen in den Islamischen Religionsunterricht – Über die inneren Kräfte des Menschen," in *Islamische Bildungsarbeit in der Schule. Theologische und didaktische Überlegungen zum Umgang mit ausgewählten Themen im Islamischen Religionsunterricht*, eds. Fahima Ulfat and Ali Ghandour (Wiesbaden, 2020), 65–66.

355 The first and most comprehensive account of *adab* goes back to the Italian Arabist Carlo Alfonso Nallino; see Carlo Alfonso Nallino, *La letteratura araba* (Rome, 1948). Based on the root *a-d-b*, further meanings are deduced, such as "inviting," "good behaviour," "politeness," "gallantry," "admiring," and "appreciating"; see Muḥammad b. Mukarrim Abū Faḍl Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, vol. 1 (Beirut, 1993), 43.

general" to "educational literature" and finally, in modern Arabic, to "literature" in general.[356]

Although the term is used sparingly in the seventh century, Carlo Nallino concluded that *adab* had the meaning of *sunnah* (in the sense of tradition) at that time, and he sometimes ascribes to it good qualities of the spirit and soul, morality, and behavioural conformity of one's ancestors.[357] It is assumed that *adab* is derived from the plural *ādāb*, which originally formed the plural of *da'b*.[358] Due to the frequent use of the plural form *ādāb*, the singular form *da'b* fell into oblivion, and *adab* as a singular was replaced by *ādāb*.[359] According to Nallino, *adab* not only referred to the knowledge gained from poetry and literature, from wisdom or Arabic genealogies, but it also referred to the sublime and lofty nature.[360]

In the first centuries of Islam, the verb *addaba* or *adaba* also carried the meanings "to educate," "to raise", and, morally, "to mould."[361] This gave the term *adab* a broader meaning.[362] While in the Umayyad era the semantic focus of *adab* was on the sum of knowledge, in the Abbasid era it was on good education, good manners, and the refinement of behavioural habits. Until the eighth century, *adab* predominantly referred to the behavioural tradition of a cultural area composed of Arabic, Persian, Greek, and Indian cultural ideals. In the literary context of Persian culture in particular, *adab* was a synonym for refinement (*ẓarf*, the equivalent of *urban-*

356 Edwald Wagner, "Die literarische Gestaltung von at-Tahtāwīs Bericht über seinen Aufenthalt in Paris (1826–1831)," in *Beschreibung der Welt. Zur Poetik der Reise- und Länderberichte. Vorträge eines interdisziplinären Symposiums 1998*, ed. Xenja von Ertzdorff and coll. Rudolf Schulz (Atlanta, 2000), 433.

357 Cf. Nallino, *La letteratura araba*, 10; see Azarnoosh, "Adab," in *EI*.

358 Cf. Nallino, *La letteratura araba*, esp. 7ff.

359 Cf. Nallino, *La letteratura araba*, 13.

360 Cf. Nallino, *La letteratura araba*, 18.

361 Cf. Seeger A. Bonebakker, "*Adab* and the Concept of *Belles-Lettres*," in *Abbasid Belles Letters*, eds. Julia Ashtiany, T.M. Johnstone, J.D. Jatham, and R.B. Serjeant (Cambridge, 1990), 16–30, 18.

362 Cf. Isabel Toral-Niehoff, "Erzählen im arabischen adab. Zwischen Fiktionalität und Faktualität," in *Geschichte der Fiktionalität. Diachrone Perspektiven auf ein kulturelles Konzept*, ed. Johannes Franzen et al. (Baden-Baden, 2018), 119.

itas), politeness, and sociability as practised by court societies.[363] In an intellectual and technical, almost professional understanding, *adab* soon became the term for general culture. With the emergence of large collections of Arabic prose and poetry, came to designate "(beautiful) literature" in a broader sense from this culture of behaviour. This means that in the course of literary creation, *adab* was used to describe literary works, just as the study of literature itself was considered a sign of refined education.[364] This literature also reflected the respective reception of ethical, political, and social thought from other cultures such as Greek, Indian, and, in particular, ancient Persian.[365] In the current literary controversy as to whether *adab* should be characterised as an independent literary genre, because the term has had different connotations and horizons of meaning over the centuries and through the Arabs' encounters with other cultures and religious traditions, the affirmative view prevails. *Adab* literature bears witness to entertainment, instruction, and intellectual debate on socially relevant topics of its time. *Adab* literature includes a number of comprehensive encyclopaedias that actually represent a hybrid genre of encyclopaedias and *belles-lettres*, as well as many monothematic works, particularly from the aesthetic, instructive, and at the same time creatively entertaining literature, which makes it necessary to clarify the differences between the *adab* genres.[366] The composition and structure of texts are categorised into genres. While *akhbār*, a type of anecdote genre, is often written in a simple, narrative style, topics in encyclopaedias are enriched with narrative elements and poetic examples, and contain a highly individualised system of information units arranged according to the author's own intentions.[367]

363 Cf. Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen and Luca Patrizi, "Ethics and Spirituality in Islam: Sufi adab," in Ethics and Spirituality in Islam, eds. Francesco Chiabotti and Eve Feuillebois-Pierunek (Leiden/Boston, 2016), 3.

364 Renate Würsch, "Rhetorik und Stilistik im arabischen Sprachraum," in *Rhetorik und Stilistik. Ein internationales Handbuch historischer und systematischer Forschung*, vol. 2, eds. Ulla Fix, Andreas Gardt, and Joachim Knape (Berlin, 2009), 2046. Cf. "*Adab* and the Concept of *Belles-Lettres*," 19ff.

365 Cf. Toral-Niehoff, "'Sei seine Dienerin, dann wird er dein Diener sein!,'" 257.

366 Cf. Toral-Niehoff, "'Sei seine Dienerin, dann wird er dein Diener sein!,'" 257.

367 Cf. Walther, *Kleine Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, 107, 109.

The bearer of the *adab* was the *adīb*, a well-educated, polished, polite person who was skilful in a wide variety of life situations and knew how to articulate himself in a cultivated manner.[368] This included proficiency in poetry, rhetoric, Arabic cultural history, grammar, philology, Islamic studies, and other disciplines. In addition to the broad spectrum of meanings of fine manners, (aesthetic) literature, and education, *adab* could also mean the "skill of a particular profession."[369] This pragmatic side of literature sheds light on its societal role; knowledge is not only the subject of philosophical and theological speculation but a product of Muslim society itself.[370] This leads to the consideration that with education and the possession of knowledge as distinguishing features, a new social group, an educated elite, established itself in society.[371] In other words, *being educated* (*mu'addab*) always implied the desire for cultural distinction and social recognition. The *adab* literature provided the *adīb* with the necessary and appropriate knowledge that was expected of him.[372] An *adīb* was therefore not only an educated person with refined manners and a cultivated demeanour but also one with a love of art, science, and poetry; in addition, an *adīb* could be in the service of the ruler.[373] The behaviour of an *adīb* conformed to cultural customs and social norms, followed social conventions, and embodied an urban way of life.[374]

In European culture, the literature of decorum, the genre called *conduct literature*, is comparable to this *adab* text type, although it would only emerge centuries later.[375] It contained instructions on

368 Cf. Nallino, *La letteratura araba*, 12.

369 Cf. Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Structures of Avarice: The* Bukhalā' *in Medieval Arabic Literature* (Leiden, 1987), 7–16.

370 See Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden, 1970).

371 Cf. Toral-Niehoff, "Erzählen im arabischen adab," 119.

372 Cf. Ralf Elger, "Die Reise des Murtadā b. Mustafa b. Hasan al-Kurdī von Damask nach Ägypten im Jahre 1127/1714," in *Beschreibung der Welt*, ed. Ertzdorff, 380.

373 Cf. "Adab," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 11, 2021; https://www.britannica.com/art/adab-literature.

374 Cf. Mayeur-Jaouen and Patrizi, "Ethics and Spirituality in Islam," 3; cf. Mustafa Çağrıcı, *İslam Düşüncesinde Ahlâk* (Istanbul, 2016), 79.

375 For example, Frances Burney, *Evelina* (1778), and Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind Addressed to a Young Lady* (1773). These

correct behaviour in society. Examples include the etiquette book *De civilitate* (1529) by Erasmus of Rotterdam, the *Curieusen Affektenspiegel* (1715) by Johann Gottfried Gregorii, *Über den Umgang mit Menschen* (1788) by Adolph Knigge, and Emma Kallmann's *Der gute Ton* (1891).

2.1 Types of Adab Literature

Arabs were characterised by their tendency to express the experiences of human life through aphorisms, wisdom, poetry, and prose. This is why their literary heritage has been very rich since the beginning of the pre-Islamic era; generations have continued this trend. The transmission of ancestral traditions was deeply rooted and became, if not the most important, at least a central element of culture.[376] The formative epoch between the eighth and tenth centuries had a constitutive influence on the Islamic tradition in its beginnings and all its branches of study. It established the long tradition of a genuine educational and entertaining literature. In this respect, it is worth taking a closer look at those *adab* works that were ascribed a religious, ethical educational character.

> The public discourse of *adab*, grounded in philosophical and moral language and concerns, represents a significant part of the cosmopolitan heritage of ethics in Islam and reflects efforts to reconcile religiously and scripturally derived values with an intellectually and morally based ethical foundation.[377]

The *adab* works include compilations of individual poems, anecdotes, and episodes, but also encyclopaedias and various works, such as philosophical and scientific treatises, as well as the reception of the Qur'ān and prophetic traditions, which can primarily be cate-

writings characterised the English literary landscape of the 18th century. In them, images of femininity were constructed and disseminated.

376 Cf. Gotthard Strohmeier, "Ethical Sentences and Anecdotes of Greek Philosophers in Arabic Tradition," in *Actes du XIV Congrès International d'Arabisant et d'Islamisant* (Paris, 1970), 463–471.

377 Azim Nanji, "Islamic Ethics," in *A Companion to Ethics*, ed. Peter Singer (Oxford/Cambridge, MA, 1993), 106–118, 114.

gorised as didactic and/or ethical literature.[378] It is well known that works were translated into Arabic not only from Greek but also from Middle Persian (Pahlavi) and Sanskrit.[379] In this way, many stories from India and Persia found their way into Arabic literature (and sometimes even into European literature). These included fables and fairy tales (*hikaya*, *qiṣṣa*), wisdom literature (*hikam*) and aphorisms, and especially texts that have a normative-prescriptive character and/or utilise the style of didactic narration. An influential figure in this context is the early prose writer and translator from Middle Persian into Arabic ʿAbdullah ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. ca. 756), who came from a noble Persian family and whose work *Kitāb al-adab al-kabīr* (*The Great Book on Good Behaviour*) introduced the Arabic cultural area to the Persian traditions of thought on *adab* and wisdom.[380] In it, he outlines a model of the best possible self-expression, which seeks to combine the best features of Persian aristocracy and Arab culture, and describes the possibilities and conditions of success and a happy life. He also gives advice on how to build and maintain good relationships with others.[381] He defines the concept of *adab* as an ethnically based self-expression of virtues such as eloquence, politeness, wisdom, and self-control.[382] For him, *adab* stands more for a character that someone develops, and the honour that is bestowed on someone because of their *adab* or character, rather than the position into which someone was born.[383]

Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ wrote a series of essays and epistles and translated writings such as the famous Indian animal fable, *Kalīla wa dimna*, from Middle Persian into Arabic.[384] This "mirror for princes" text

378 Cf. Elger, "Die Reise des Murtadā b. Mustafa b. Hasan al-Kurdī," 380.

379 Cf. Georg Bossong, *Das maurische Spanien: Geschichte und Kultur* (Munich, 2016), 74.

380 The fourth chapter of his work, for example, is mainly about creating friendship and avoiding enmity in a society.

381 Cf. Çağrıcı, *İslam Düşüncesinde Ahlâk*, 80; cf. Rkia Elaroui Cornell, *Rabi'a from Narrative to Myth: The Tropics of Identity of a Muslim Woman Saint* (Amsterdam, 2013), 54.

382 Cf. Michael Cooperson, "Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Arabic Literary Culture 500–925*, vol. 311, ed. Michael Cooperson (Detroit, 2005), 156–158.

383 Cf. Cornell, *Rabi'a from Narrative to Myth*, 54.

384 *Panchatantra* are a collection of fables containing knowledge of state administration. They do not deal with virtues for a good life and statecraft, but

is a good example of a beautiful *adab* literature that has both entertainment value and instructional purpose, and was created in a particular political context. The profession of *kātib* (scribe, secretary), which was associated with social and political advancement, plays an important role here.[385] From 747 to 759, an uprising broke out in eastern Iran against the Umayyad rulers because of their hedonism and discrimination against non-Arabs, with the force of a revolution that encompassed all facets of culture and society.[386] In these times of political upheaval, court secretaries such as the aforementioned Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and later the linguist Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawarī (828–889), translated their Persian "mirrors for princes" tomes (e.g., Pers. *Siyāsatnāma*/*Book of Statecraft*) into Arabic, thereby significantly influencing Arabic theories of governance and military administration.[387] Following Ibn al-Muqaffa's example, *adab kātib* works increased over the next generations: *adab* for princes, mirrors for princes (*ādāb al-mulūk*) and textbooks (*naṣīḥa*), which were distributed by scholars to rulers and formed an integral part of Islamic *adab*: for judges (*adab al-qāḍī*) in the eleventh century, for teachers (*adab al-ʿālim wa-l-mutaʿallim*), and for mystics. Prose that can be characterised as ethical, religious, or mystical literature that deals with specific groups of people is also subsumed under *adab* literature.

> Books about the vices and virtues or faults and merits of people, tribes, professions, even cities or regions, written for entertaining as well as

describe ways for young princes to acquire power and how to maintain it. Cf. Arthur B. Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (Oxford, 1961), 248ff. For more details, see Ludwig Alsdorf (ed.), *Panschatantra. Fünf Bücher altindischer Staatsweisheit und Lebenskunst in Fabeln und Sprüchen* (Munich, 1952).

385 Cf. Würsch, "Rhetorik und Stilistik," 2047.

386 Cf. Tilman Nagel, "Das Kalifat der Abbasiden," in *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, eds. Ulrich Haarmann and Heinz Halm (Munich, 2004), 101.

387 A well-known example from the 18th-century Ottoman Empire is Nābī, who published the most famous work of Turkish mirror-for-princes literature of his time under the category of *naṣīḥatnāme* (art of counselling). Moral, economic, and social grievances can be found in the mirror of his *naṣīḥatnāme*. Nābī criticises the inadequate aspects of Ottoman governance, the distorted social structure, and new forms of human relationships, and attempts to present the image of an "exemplary man" to his young readers. Cf. Iskender Pala, "Nasihatname," in *TDV* vol. 32, 410, and Carlo Scardino, *Edition antiker landwirtschaftlicher Werke in arabischer Sprache*, vol. 1 (Boston/Berlin, 2015), 47.

propagandistic or tendentious purposes, are not uncommon in *adab* literature.[388]

One of the oldest and most exemplary works of the ninth century is *Kitāb al-adab al-kātib* (*Secretary's Guide*) by the above-mentioned theologian and linguist Ibn Qutayba.[389] In his handbook, one of the first topics mirrors the pedagogical aspirations for the education of court officials; he summarises pre-Islamic, Persian, and qur'ānic contributions and hadiths.[390] In this guide, he criticises the court officials' lack of education and educational ambition, and calls on them to cultivate their linguistic expression and good Arabic style. At the same time, he recounts numerous anecdotes about the dismissal of court secretaries with a certain warning function.[391] His conception of *adab* can be understood as a combination of education and morality, which does not mean an classical concept of moral education but rather, as with the previously mentioned *adab* literati, in the sense of moral instruction that claims to teach behaviour, (professional) life guidance, and purpose. As Ibn Qutayba was also trained in religious studies, he departed from the first traces of a pre-philosophical Islamic ethics with this *Guide*, which led to the adaptation of the concept of *adab* by Islam and an Islamic understanding of *adab*.[392] He is of the opinion that the cultivation of the soul (*nafs*) is an important dimension of a holistic educational process, and work on the self must be accompanied by the cultivation and refinement of the tongue, or rather, the culture of language.[393] In connection with the work on the self, Ibn Qutayba names specific character traits, which he thus calls virtues, such as honourableness (*ʿiffa*), gentleness (*ḥilm*), patience (*ṣabr*), seriousness/dignity (*waqār*), and mercy (*raḥma*).[394] In his *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-akhbār* (*The Book of Choice Narratives*), which became an inspiration for subsequent essayists

388 Walther, *Kleine Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, 147.
389 See ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muslim Ibn Qutayba, *Ibn Kutaiba's Adab-al-kātib*, ed. Max Theodor Grübert (Leiden, 1900).
390 Cf. Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān b. Muḥammad, *The Epistle of the Eloquent Clarification Concerning the Refutation of Ibn Qutayba*, ed. Avraham Hakim (Leiden, 2012), 19; Çağrıcı, *İslam Düşüncesinde Ahlâk*, 79.
391 Cf. Walther, *Kleine Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, 147.
392 Cf. Richard Walzer and Hamilton R. Gibb, "Akhlaq," in *EI*^{2}.
393 Cf. Ibn Qutayba, *Adab al-kātib*, ed. Max Grünert (Leiden, 2000), 14, 20.
394 Cf. Çağrıcı, *İslam Düşüncesinde Ahlâk*, 79.

and encyclopaedists, Ibn Qutayba attempts to establish a connection between *adab* and ethics as well.[395]

> In poetic form, he provides manifold insights into the social relationships, ways of thinking, and behaviour of the heterogeneous Muslim courtly urban society of his time, with its educational and communication priorities, its versatility, its contradictions, and its religious and ethical ideals.[396]

An important compositional principle of *adab* literature is variety, diversity of forms and themes, which is intended to prevent the readership from becoming bored.[397] It is fiction intended to impart knowledge of a linguistic and philological nature as well as ethical norms of behaviour in the form of admonitions, proverbs, and maxims.[398] There are, therefore, a large number of topics and text types that contain rules of life and maxims in the conventional sense and attempt to organise common life. These are imperatives that prescribe life according to the conventions of one's own community.[399] *Adab* works include broad-based collections that not only provide a rich overview of Arabic and early Islamic life but also describe customs and traditions, such as the *Kitāb al-aghānī* (Book of Songs) by ʿAlī Ibn al-Ḥusayn Abū ʾl-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (897–967), one of the outstanding literary figures and scholars of medieval Arabic-Islamic culture.[400] His valuable collection of biographies of poets and musicians is the source of most of our knowledge of early Islamic society, its customs and traditions.[401]

With al-Jāḥiẓ (777–869), we have probably the most important prose writer of the eighth/ninth century, whose works illustrate the semantic diversity of *adab*. He was not only a politically interested

395 Cf. Mayeur-Jaouen and Patrizi, "Ethics and Spirituality in Islam," 3ff.
396 Cf. Walther, *Kleine Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, 145.
397 Cf. Elger, "Die Reise des Murtadā b. Mustafa b. Hasan al-Kurdī," 380.
398 Cf. Würsch, "Rhetorik und Stilistik," 2046.
399 Cf. Horn, *Antike Lebenskunst*, 200.
400 See also Yasemin Gökpinar, *Der ṭarab der Sängersklavinnen:* Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār *von Ibn Faḍlallāh al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/1349)*, critical edition with annotated translation, (Baden-Baden, 2021).
401 Sebastian Günther, *Quellenuntersuchungen zu den "Maqātil aṭ-Ṭālibiyyīn" des Abū-ʾl-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī (gest. 356/967). Ein Beitrag zur Problematik der mündlichen und schriftlichen Überlieferung in der mittelalterlichen arabischen Literatur* (Hildesheim, 1991), 10.

theologian; he is often referred to as a polyhistor, as he liked to write about everything that concerns a person.[402] Al-Jāḥiẓ was physiologically limited by his illness (Graves' disease) and was paralysed on his left side eight years before his death. He addressed physical disabilities in anecdotes and many poems, such as in his encyclopaedic (though no keywords can be looked up) multi-volume *Book on Animals* (*Kitāb al-ḥayawān*):

> Beware, then, of judging an animal species badly because of unattractiveness and because of a disharmony of constitution, just because it appears ugly to the eye and is of little advantage and use.[403]

According to Lale Behzadi, this passage not only points to a sensitive approach to "unattractive" creatures but also emphasises, in complete connection to God, that every creature has a purpose and that annoying or "ugly" animals can also be a kind of test of patience for humans.[404] At the same time, he criticises people's judgement because he warns them not to be deceived about the ethical value of a creature by aesthetic impression.[405]

In another work, the satire *On the Miserly* (*Kitāb al-bukhalā*), al-Jāḥiẓ deals anecdotally with generosity, which was already considered an important virtue among the Bedouins in pre-Islamic times, and the vice of miserliness, which he describes as unrestrained egoistic self-indulgence because it eliminates thoughts of others and their needs.[406] As a contrast, he urges moderation and reflection on the

402 Lale Behzadi, "Die Fauna als Gottesbeweis – eine arabische Enzyklopädie aus dem 9. Jahrhundert," in *Animalia in fabula. Interdisziplinäre Gedanken über das Tier in der Sprache, Literatur und Kultur*, eds. Miorita Ulrich and Dina De Rentiis (Bamberg, 2013), 249; see also Charles Pellat, *Arabische Geisteswelt. Ausgewählte und übersetzte Texte von Al-Jahiz (777–869)*, trans. Walter W. Müller (Zurich/Stuttgart, 1967).

403 Abū ʿUthmān ʿAmr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, vol. III (Beirut, 1988), 299; Cf. Pellat, *Arabische Geisteswelt*, 246.

404 Cf. Behzadi, "Die Fauna als Gottesbeweis," 260.

405 The significance of *adab* as character, discipline, disposition, and habitus in a religious context has been examined in (Western) Islamic studies research, in particular by Franz Rosenthal (1970), Ira Lapidus (1984), Claude Gilliot (1999), and Sebastian Günther (2020). Cf. Sebastian Günther, "Islamische Bildung im literarischen Gewand," 147.

406 *Kitāb al-bukhalā* reads like a forerunner of Molière's *The Miser*; Walther, *Kleine Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, 125.

deceitfulness of generosity that has merely strategic intentions.[407] According to al-Jāḥiẓ, the right measure must be observed in the use of language (*lisān*), which must refrain from the pompous, artistic speech and vain rhetoric.[408] For al-Jāḥiẓ, appropriateness and the right measure are both important reference criteria for the related language and for determining the centre of a disposition.

> Shamelessness is the name for a certain measure; what goes beyond that, you can call whatever you like. Likewise, generosity is a measure, but wastefulness is the name for what goes beyond it. Prudence has a measure, and cowardice is the name for what goes beyond it. Economy also has a measure, and avarice is the name for that which goes beyond it. Valour has a measure, and recklessness is the name for what goes beyond that measure.[409]

He also warns that the exaggeration of self-cultivation harbours the danger of noble behaviour turning into domineering behaviour and indicates that affected behaviour can never equal elegant behaviour.[410] He believed that religious knowledge should be linked to moral education (*khulūq*) and the religious tradition of lore (*riwāya*), and that *adab* was a subcategory of this rich tradition of lore, which he understood as entertaining and educational prose.[411] According to Behzadi, he wanted his writings to instruct the readership in every respect and to develop universally valid criteria for this, emphasising once again that everyone was responsible for how they used the means at their disposal.[412]

In the same century, educational thought in Islam found its literary expression and a secure place among the *adab* works. Ibn Saḥnūn (817–870), a Malikite jurist, was one of the first Muslim educators to write manual-like works on teaching for teachers with his

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407 Cf. Walther, *Kleine Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, 125.

408 Cf. Lale Behzadi, *Sprache und Verstehen. al-Ǧaḥiẓ über die Vollkommenheit des Ausdrucks* (Wiesbaden, 2009), 166.

409 ʿAmr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Bayān wa'l-tabyīn*, vol. I, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn (Beirut, 1998), 202ff.

410 Al-Jāḥiẓ sketched a mocking portrait of a secretary in one of his epistles, with which he wanted to draw attention to this potential danger. See Susanne Enderwitz, *Liebe als Beruf: al-ʿAbbās Ibn-al-Aḥnaf und das Ġazal* (Stuttgart, 1995), 60.

411 Cf. Mayeur-Jaouen and Patrizi, "Ethics and Spirituality in Islam," 41.

412 Cf. Behzadi, *Sprache und Verstehen*, 169.

work *Kitāb adāb al-muʿallimīn* (*The Rules of Conduct for Teachers*). The emergence of works dealing with an Islamic theory of education also testifies to the reception of Hellenistic heritage as well as other cultural traditions.[413] Traces of Hellenistic tradition can be found in the writings of Muslim authors who deal with the developmental stages of human character and personality formation in early childhood education from a philosophical and ethical perspective.[414] The pedagogue Burhān al-Dīn al-Zarnūjī (d. ca. 1223), who in his widespread work *Taʿlīm al-mutaʿallim* (*The Instruction of Learners*) gives advice on the study of theology, teaching content, and learning techniques, as well as recommendations for respectful interaction, can be read in a similar vein.

According to Bonebakker, however, *adab* was first associated with social and ethical virtues by the Abbasid poet and anthologist Abū Tammām (ca. 788–845). In Abū Tammām's anthology *al-Ḥamāsah*, a collection of ancient Arabic poetry, he presents ancient Arabic virtues (such as heroism, patience, loyalty) and deals with moral principles and good qualities of the soul (such as friendship, politeness, or leniency towards blame).

This demonstrates the broad spectrum of meanings of *adab*, even if only by using a few well-known names from Islamic intellectual history as examples. These authors drew attention to the relevance of correct behaviour through the reception of ethical ideas and religious beliefs, and occasionally by citing the Qurʾān and the prophetic Sunnah. The following quote summarises the meaning of *adab* in this context very well:

> Right conduct (*adab*) constitutes the sum of prudential knowledge that shields one from all error in speech, acts, and character. It signifies all the Arabic disciplines, for they cumulatively promote etiquette. *Adab* is thus a habitus or disposition (*malaka*) that protects one from disgrace. A perfectly courteous and cultivated person (*adīb*) is one who possesses this habitus. Therefore, it is said: "the way to ultimate reality is through [the practice of] right conduct."[415]

413 Franz Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam* (London, 2003), 79; cf. Günther, "Islamische Bildung im literarischen Gewand," 174.

414 Cf. Sebastian Günther, "Advice for Teachers: The 9th century Muslim scholars ibn Saḥnūn and al-Jāḥiẓ on Pedagogy and Didactics," in *Education and Learning in the Early Islamic World*, ed. Claude Gilliot (London, 2012), 90.

415 Khānzādah, *Minhāǧ al-yaqīn*, 4, quoted by Moosa, "Muslim Ethics?," 238.

Is *adab* really just a collective term for an intellectual attitude, or do these texts attempt to give practical instructions for action with the help of moral, philosophical, and/or theological references?[416] A further question about the function of such texts sometimes justifiably arises: Can these texts actually also be categorised as didactic testimonies of educational thought, which are less intended to convey practical principles of action than to engage people in a thought process?

> To summarise, it should only be pointed out here that it was the ethical-normative aspect of the term *adab* (in the sense of "good behaviour, education, *urbanitas*") that led to the assertion of a general didactic intention of the entire *adab* literature.[417]

Given the diversity of meanings of this multifaceted term and the lack of prior works on Islamic religious education research and analysis, the exemplary work of Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā can only provide a very preliminary insight. The focus here is on the interplay between religion, ethics, and education, and examines their functional relationship to one another. In these *adab* works, there are connections between ethics and narratives of all kinds, i.e., human actions are embedded in narrative forms and modes of representation that lend themselves well to reflection and enquiry. This will be exemplified by the ethical and pedagogical perspectives that can be worked out from a particularly prominent Muslim *adab* work.

2.2 Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā (823–894)

Abū Bakr ʿAbdullah bin Muḥammad bin Ubayd al-Qurashī Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā was born in the great ninth-century Baghdad. He was given the opportunity at a very early age to learn from numerous scholars, such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 855), since his father was a *muhaddith* (someone who deals with the hadith); Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā's

416 Cf. Fedwa Malti-Douglas, "Playing with the Sacred. Religious Intertext in Adab Discourse," in *Humanism, Culture, and Language in the Near East: Studies in Honour of George Krotkoff*, eds. Asma Afsaruddin and A. H. Mathias Zahniser (Indiana, 1997), 52.

417 Toral-Niehoff, "'Sei seine Dienerin, dann wird er dein Diener sein!'" 257ff.

broad knowledge in the field of hadith is not surprising.[418] Unlike others, he did not travel to increase his wealth of knowledge, but learnt from local scholars. Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā was a knowledgeable and experienced prose writer (*adīb*), Hanbali traditionalist, and long-time *mu'addib* (teacher) for the Abbasid court. Although he was also known as an Umayyad sympathiser, he was entrusted with the education of father and son caliphs, *al-Mu'taḍid* (r. 892–902) and *al-Muqtafī* (r. 902–908).[419] He is said to have led a very pious and Spartan life "consecrated to God" (*zuhd*).[420] His ascetic attitude was expressed in his lifestyle in a relaxed restraint from worldly pleasures.[421] At court, he was given the necessary creative freedom to write over a hundred works of edifying literature with an ascetic character and didactic purpose.[422]

Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā, recognised as a protagonist of Islamic ethics and paraenesis in aesthetic literature, created a new prose genre with his *Kitāb makārim al-akhlāq* (*The Book of Praiseworthy Character Traits*), which aims to educate and enhance character.[423] He died in Baghdad in the year 894.

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418 Cf. Ibrahim Hatiboğlu, "Ibn Ebü'd-Dunyâ," in *TDV* vol. 19, 457. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal wrote a *faḍā'il* work entitled *Kitāb al-faḍā'il al-ṣaḥāba*, in which the merits of the Prophet's Companions are presented in their experiences with the Prophet. Cf. Sellheim, "Faḍīla," in *EI*[2].

419 Cf. Leonard Librande, "Ibn Abī al-Dunyā: Certainty and Morality," *Studia Islamica* 100/101 (2005): 7; James A. Bellamy, "Ibn Abī d-Dunyā, The Noble Qualities of Character," in *From the Greeks to the Arabs and Beyond*, vol. 3, ed. Hans Daiber (Wiesbaden, 1973), 414.

420 Cf. Jacqueline Chabbi, "Remarques sur le développement historique de mouvements ascétique et mystiques au Khurasan," *Studia Islamica* 46 (1977): 24. This was likely a reason for writing *Kitāb al-taqwā* about piety or devoutness, and collecting ethical sayings from Christian monks for this purpose. Cf. David Thomas and Barbara Roggema, *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, vol. 1 (600–900), 829–831.

421 Cf. Albert Dietrich, "Zur Überlieferung einiger Schriften des Ibn abī d-Dunyā," *Studia Orientalia* 2–3 (1968): 35.

422 Cf. Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums, Schöngeistige Literatur*, vol. XVI, (Leiden, 1967–2015), 99.

423 For my study I used the version edited, annotated, and introduced by James A. Bellamy, 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Kitāb makārim al-akhlāq* (1973).

2.3 Kitāb Makārim al-Akhlāq

Abī 'l-Dunyā's *Makārim* is the earliest surviving example of this particular thematic complex.[424] The text is written in clear prose.[425] Compilers of these works often dedicated individual chapters in their collections to the topic of *makārim al-akhlāq*, in which they established a connection between ethical values, desirable behaviour, tradition, and/or eloquent speech, and thus gave expression to their ethical imagination. A typical characteristic of this genre is the extensive reception of hadiths.[426] In his book, which provides readers with a wide range of wisdom worth taking to heart, Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā brings together the exemplary behaviour of the Prophet and the *akhbār* (anecdotes, narratives) of the Companions and successor generations, as well as other important figures. According to James Bellamy, Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā also uses a kind of "religious fiction" because, in some cases, he does not mention the name of a protagonist or sage.[427] Unlike Ibn Qutayba or al-Jāḥiẓ, Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā does not draw from either Persian or Greek thought.

The title of his book, *Kitāb makārim al-akhlāq*, is also the programme. Its main feature is to present Islamic ethics in a more popular, human, and accessible form than was the case with specifically legal or theological texts on ethical principles.[428] Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā gives his writing neither a literary nor a philological taste, but an explicitly religious flavour.[429] The titular text type was also used by compilers to explicitly distinguish their collections from solely anecdotal material, and to give the appearance of external order and lend serious weight to the subject, since Arabic prose and poetry, as previously explained, was largely anecdotal, entertaining, and sometimes fictional, from its pre-Islamic origins until the ninth cen-

424 Cf. Orfali and Baalbaki, *The Book of Noble Character*, 1.
425 Cf. Rudolf Sellheim, "Buchbesprechungen," *Der Islam* 53 (1976):129.
426 Cf. Orfali and Baalbaki, *The Book of Noble Character*, 3.
427 James A. Bellamy, "The *Makārim al-Akhlāq* by Ibn Abī"l-Dunyā," *The Muslim World* 53(2) (1963): 109.
428 Bellamy, "The *Makārim al-Akhlāq* by Ibn Abī"l-Dunyā," xiii, 110, 174.
429 Cf. Orfali and Baalbaki, *The Book of Noble Character*, 1, 43.

tury.[430] Bellamy, who is the only person to have published a comprehensive and critical edition of this work to date, translates the title itself as *Book of Noble Qualities* and alternatively suggests *Book of Noble Character*.[431] The Islamic scholar Wiebke Walther translates the title as *Exemplary Qualities*. The conceptual and terminological definition of the attribute *makārim* (pl. of *karīm*) and the term *akhlāq* is quite difficult. My preferred translation, "praiseworthy character traits," takes up the etymological core meaning of *akhlāq* (pl. of *khulūq*), which means *nature* or *character*, and *karīm*, which has the meaning of *being generous, good, noble, and valuable,* as well as *praiseworthy qualities of a person*.[432] It was probably deliberate that Abī 'l-Dunyā did not title his book *adab* like Ibn Qutayba or Ibn Muqaffa', because he likely wanted his work to be understood as a different type of *adab* genre. In this respect, Abī 'l-Dunyā is neither concerned with dry, religious instruction in the guise of the hadith and *akhbār* tradition, nor with conveying general rules of life of a moral nature.[433] Abī 'l-Dunyā makes a rather subjective choice of values and character traits that he considers important, which he illustrates in his book. He derives the ten noble character traits in his work from a *mawqūf hadith* transmitted by Ā'isha (number 36 in the book), although he gives his chapters their own titles.[434]

> The qualities of character are ten: to be honest (*ṣidq al-ḥadīth*), to face difficulties in obedience to Allah (*ṣidq al-ba's fī ṭā'āt allāh*), giving to those who ask (*i'ṭā' al-sā'il*), repaying deeds (*mukāfāt al-ṣanī'*), maintaining relationships (*ṣilat al-raḥim*), remaining faithful to what

430 Cf. Librande, "Ibn Abī al-Dunyā," 8; Bellamy, "The *Makārim al-Akhlāq* by Ibn Abī"l-Dunyā," 107; Gernot Rotter and Abu 'l-Faradsch, *Und der Kalif beschenkte ihn reichlich* (Tübingen/Basel, 1977), 13.

431 Bellamy used two differing editions, which go back to an oder and revised version by Abī 'l-Dunyā himself; Bellamy, "The *Makārim al-Akhlāq* by Ibn Abī"l-Dunyā," 107.

432 Cf. Hans Wehr, *Arabisches Wörterbuch für die Schriftsprache der Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden, 1985), 362; Bekir Topaloğlu, "Kerîm," in *TDV* vol. 25, 287–288.

433 As in other *adab* works, such as the aforementioned *Kitāb al-adab al-kabīr* by Ibn al-Muqaffa' or the 16th-century book *Ādāb an-nikāḥ* (*The Right Behaviour in Marriage*) by Zainaddīn 'Abdallāh 'Arab.

434 Hadith numbering follows the number assigned by Abī 'l-Dunyā, although these are slightly paraphrased translations; *mawqūf hadith* attributed a statement, action, or approval of a Companion of the Prophet Muḥammad, whereby the chain of transmission (*isnād*) does not extend back to the Prophet himself.

has been entrusted or returning the entrusted intact (*ʿadā al-amānah*), responsibility towards the neighbour (*al-tadhammum li-l-jār*) as well as responsibility towards the friend (*al-tadhammum liʾl-ṣāḥib*), hospitality (*qirā al-ḍayf*), and at the top of these is shyness/modesty (*ḥayā*ʾ).[435]

The *Book of Praiseworthy Character Traits* is divided into ten chapters: 1. Various hadiths, 2. Shyness/Modesty and what is known about its excellence, 3. Sincerity/honesty and what is known about its excellence, 4. Steadfastness (literally, facing adversity), 5. Strengthening family ties, 6. What is entrusted, 7. Responsibility to one's friend, 8. Responsibility to one's neighbour, 9. Rewarding good deeds, and 10. Generosity and giving to the one who asks.

The order of presentation in the chapters begins with thematic hadiths—their number varies from chapter to chapter—and occasional words attributed to God (*ḥadīth qudsī*), followed by *akhbār*, narratives or reports from the Prophet's Companions (*ṣaḥāba*) and the successor generations (*tābiʿūn*), and then isolated reports or wisdom from figures in early Islam who are not mentioned by name. There are also a few scattered Qurʾān verses. The author precedes the *akhbār* with a single source reference and dispenses with the complete *isnād* (chain of authorities or traditions). The material is roughly organised chronologically, but this arrangement is not followed with great rigour, which means that some of the neat order is lost.[436]

Abī ʾl-Dunyā is representative of a late stage of early Islamic *adab* works, which are modelled on the classical hadith collections. There is no recognisable difference in structure or style between the hadiths of the Prophet Muḥammad and the *akhbār*, the reports of the Companions and subsequent generations, except for the addition of *isnād* to the hadiths. The only constitutive difference between the hadiths and the *akhbār* is the inclusion of the *isnād* for the hadiths. In each *akhbār*, there is brief information about the narrator. If the *isnād* of a hadith has been given its own place both in the medieval High Arabic literary landscape and in historiography since the eighth century, one realises that its inclusion has a function. The feature *isnād* is not only a constitutive component of a hadith but

435 Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *The Makārim al-Akhlāq*, 41, my translation.

436 For a detailed edition, please refer again to the unique work of James A. Bellamy.

also follows a logic of authentication, whereby the validity of the hadith is made plausible.[437] With formulations such as "so-and-so learnt from so-and-so that so-and-so…," this stylistic custom of Muslim historians introducing reports with chains of transmitters gives the reader the impression that it is an oral transmission of the report, whereby the reader knows that the reports are historically verified as true.[438] This referentiality creates an orientation to reality that introduces the reader to the *matn* (hadith text).

The majority of Abī 'l-Dunyā's *Makārim* consists of a collection of hadiths in which, as the title promises, the Prophet Muḥammad is portrayed in his virtuous behaviour, which is given the necessary theological foundation through the chain of authentication. With regard to the *akhbār* of successive generations, the *isnād* is neither useful nor detrimental, as these are context-independent texts that can have both an educational and universal character.[439] On the one hand, the *isnād* preceding the hadith characterises the factual nature of the narration as a whole, a criterion of plausibility that a historical narrative, a report or a tradition must have if it is to gain validity in the social treatment of the narrated past.[440] On the other hand, it also gives the author a certain degree of weight in his role as a religiously educated figure who demonstrates and proves his religious knowledge and expertise.[441]

437 For more on the function of the *isnād*, see Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammed's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford, 2009), 67–122. In his edition, Bellamy criticises the *isnād* chains in some places and provides additional information about the narrators.

438 Cf. Rotter and Abu 'l-Faradsch, *Und der Kalif beschenkte ihn reichlich*, 13.

439 Cf. Walter Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-Farīd des Andalusians Ibn ʿAbdrabbih (246/840–328/940)* (Berlin, 1983), 44.

440 Cf. Toral-Niehoff, "Erzählen im arabischen adab," 129. According to Toral-Niehoff and others, the spread, function, and use of *isnād* in the context of *adab* collections is largely under-researched.

441 This seems to have played an important role in Abī 'l-Dunyā's time in the eighth and ninth centuries, considering that by the tenth century, many authors no longer adhered to these rules and merely copied from others.

2.4 Narrative Constructions of a Vision of the Virtuous

Abī 'l-Dunyā begins his *kitāb* with a hadith that provides a reference for the structure of the content. According to Bellamy, the reference to Ā'isha"s tradition is of central importance and gives the book its thematic framework and its own flavour. Abī 'l-Dunyā does not comment on the received and quoted material. However, only a few lines later, he mentions his motivation once in reference to Ā'isha"s tradition (number 38 in the book):

> In this book, we will cite all the qualities and the habits (*khasalāt*) of our Prophet, his Companions and the subsequent successor generations (*tābi'ūn*), and the scholars of virtue (*fadhl*) and devotion (*dhikr*). Therefore, the prudent (*baṣara*) should increase his prudence, awaken from his long negligence, which is his fault, and turn to good character (*akhlāq al-karīma*), compete in beautiful deeds, which God has created as an adornment of religion and as an adornment for the friends of God. There is nothing that is good unless it is connected with religion![442]

The target group is broad, but it explicitly addresses all those who want to look at their behaviour and their inner self, i.e., those who are prudent. A prudent person has the ability to abstract current wishes, needs, and emotions and consider everything that could have a future impact. Prudence is linked to the responsibility and self-determination of people to be able to change themselves and their actions by turning to ethically desirable character traits and performing good deeds. The realisation of these is linked to the attitude of prudence, which can be interpreted in the sense of thoughtfulness, judiciousness, and foresight.

Abī 'l-Dunyā mainly quotes hadiths and *akhbār* in individual chapters. This gives each chapter the shape of a brief anthology of shorter and longer narratives about desirable character traits. In this sense, the short hadiths can be understood as prophetic sayings, which on the one hand formulate basic understandings of Islam (such as *modesty is a part of faith*), and on the other hand, communicate wisdom in the form of ethical narratives (such as *the Prophet Muḥammad said to a man who complained about his neighbour: "Do nothing to him and do not suffer him to harm you, for death is a*

442 Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā, *The Makārim al-Akhlāq*, 40, my translation.

sufficient separator"). By omitting the source from the *akhbār*, the content is freed from its historical context and takes on a universal character. In this way, the past is made available, possibly with the aim of representing values that were both relevant and culturally negotiated in this historical cultural context. Readers are invited to relate these historical experiences to their own experiences. The narratives are intended to place the readers in the narrated situation so that they can perceive the narrative with their own inner eye, enabling them to participate in the quality of the experience. Their external perspective enables them to critically scrutinise the point of view described in the narrative to compare it with their own and, if necessary, to integrate it into their own world of values.

The compiler's choice of material and the categorisation of hadiths are by no means arbitrary but represent a form of editing. The individual selection and categorisation of the material is, at the same time, a reflection of the author's own thinking and personality.[443] The selected material and the significance of the selected traditions also bear witness to the author's attribution of value. The specific arrangement and selection are intended to demonstrate different ways of thinking to the readership.[444] By arranging the different types of text with ethical connotations, the author allows moral implications to emerge. The author offers subjective standards of observation and judgement, and at the same time reflects the contemporary moral views of his time and the literature in which he is well-versed. The inclusion of *isnād*, as briefly mentioned, is more significant than attributing the tradition to the Prophet Muḥammad or merely being a prologue. There is a dynamic in the chain of transmission, as the act of transmitting or reproducing is continued. This dynamic itself supports the vitalisation of the *matn*. The "narrative *isnād*" is merely an overture to the hadith, which Tilman Nagel describes as an "epilogue to a small scene."[445] The words, actions, and gestures are brought from the past into the immediate present in the recitation of the hadith (with both components, *matn* and *isnād*). It is therefore not surprising that Abī 'l-Dunyā makes use of this custom. With

443 Cf. May A. Yousef, *Das Buch der schlagfertigen Antworten von Abī 'Awn. Ein Werk der klassisch-arabischen Adab-Literatur* (Berlin, 1988), 44, 47.

444 Gustave E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam* (Chicago, 1969), 255.

445 Cf. Tilman Nagel, "Ḥadīth – oder: Die Vernichtung der Geschichte," *ZDMG* Supplement 10, XXV, Deutscher Orientalistentag, Vorträge (1994): 125ff.

this vividness, he provides insight into human relationships, ways of thinking and behaving, as well as into the facial expressions and feelings that support the prophetic model for exemplary behaviour and bring it to life in their individual experiences.

This narrative, which can be described as a cultural technique, certainly has several functions, including the creation of meaning, but according to Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā's stated intention, he is narrativising and illustrating desirable character traits for interested people. Essentially, Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā draws his vision of a morally desirable and God-pleasing life.[446] On the one hand, religious knowledge is imparted; on the other hand, the readership is introduced to character traits worth emulating, which the Prophet Muḥammad exemplifies, through the literary genre.

A few arbitrarily selected examples are listed here:

No. 72: *Modesty belongs to faith, and faith leads to paradise. Shamelessness/lack of restraint leads to suffering, and suffering leads to hell.*

No. 47 (wisdom saying): *The night and the day work on you* [i.e., make you grow old]*, so work on the night and the day* [i.e., do not waste your time].[447]

No. 203 (*ḥadīth qudsī*): *I am God and I am mercy. I created mercy and separated it from my name. Whoever reaches it, I reach him; whoever isolates himself from it, I isolate myself from him.*

No. 320: *A boy had slaughtered a sheep and was about to skin it. ʿAbdullāh bin ʿAmr said to him, "When you have finished, start the meat distribution with your Jewish neighbour." He repeated this three times, so another man there said, "But you mentioned the Jewish neighbour a lot!" ʿAmr replied: "The Prophet entrusted the neighbour so much to us that we thought he would declare him an heir."*

No. 358: *Give each other gifts.*

446 Cf. Librande, "Ibn Abī al-Dunyā," 17; cf. Bellamy, "The *Makārim al-Akhlāq* by Ibn Abī'l-Dunyā," 109.

447 Due to its uniqueness, the source is translated here as "according to what was narrated by scholars (*ʿalīm*) that some of the sages said."

No. 376: *There was no request that the Prophet Muḥammad did not follow.*

These narratives invite the reader into a certain tension of identification and dissociation from these individual experiences. As a result, they become part of historical memory and, as a positive foil for critical self-reflection, can gain identity- and character-building significance for the reader. Self-reflection, therefore, consists not only of who or what someone is but also always implies the question of who and how someone wants to be. Culture and tradition provide readers with concrete narratives about historical and cultural forms of human practices and traditions.[448] Character virtues are always embedded in narratives, poems, and cultures and are a kind of constant self-presentation.[449] This happens especially in aesthetic forms that are perceived as beautiful or unattractive. With his compilation, the author attempts to show which attitudes, intentions, and character traits—which are based on value orientations—can lead to a beautiful, praiseworthy character. He relates character traits to faith in the sense that people should strive to improve their character, in view of the exemplary nature of the Prophet and his Companions.[450] These stories thus show how *prudence* can be developed.

Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā presents a thematic, well-organised compilation of anthologies that reflect these central character traits, a reality of the good and the bad, right and wrong, in edifying stories, reports, and wisdom adages.[451] In his motivational proclamation, Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā does not use the term "virtue" in the sense of *fadhā'il* (excellence); the term appears explicitly in the quoted hadith about Ā'isha.[452] Hadith scholars (*muḥaddithūn*) at the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries were familiar with the character traits of sincerity, generosity, modesty or simplicity (*ḥayā'*), and the respect-

448 This does not imply an uncritical adoption of these values but rather a critical debate.

449 See early concepts of narrative ethics by its protagonists, such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Martha Nussbaum, and Richard Rorty.

450 Cf. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Makārim al-Akhlāq*, 44.

451 Cf. Sellheim, "Buchbesprechungen," 128ff. The author was particularly familiar with the Mu'tazilite discussions on individual responsibility and moral decisions.

452 Cf. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Makārim al-Akhlāq*, 12.

ful treatment of neighbours, friends, and relatives.[453] It is therefore not surprising that there are parallels between Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā's *Makārim*, and his works, such as the *Kitāb al-wara'* (*The Pious Scruple*), and the hadith compilations of the works of his teacher Aḥmad b. Hanbal.[454]

He succeeds in creating a cathartic moment with the arrangement of stories and themes, so that "the wretched and the false confront us and we experience a purification that enriches our lives."[455] With this in mind, I do not qualify this work as religious instruction, even if it has, in my opinion, often been unfairly categorised as paraenetic. Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā's work has been categorised as paraenetic, mainly because he fits the common cliché of an ascetic who reminds, admonishes, and advises people on what is religiously correct.[456] Walther, who summarises and presents *makārim al-akhlāq* works under "ethical, religious, and mystical literature," is also of the opinion that the characteristic feature of this genre is that it lays down rules for behaviour that conform to Islam, which are presented in both hadiths and qur'ānic verses.[457] Whether the work discussed establishes rules, as Walther formulates them, can be disputed. Rather, the author seems to outline his vision of a desirable life from a religious perspective. Just as Doren Wohlleben profiles Hannah Arendt's ethics "as a movement of thought that can stimu-

453 The term *ḥayā'* also has a wide range of meanings, which makes it very difficult to translate. For example, *ḥayā'* can also mean decency, humility, and timidity. Cf. Bellamy, "Ibn Abī d-Dunyā," 414. The canonical hadith collections explicitly contain sections with titles such as *Kitāb al-adab* (*Book of Behaviour*) or *Kitāb al-birr* (*Book of Beauty*), which deal with ethically correct behaviour and ethically desirable character traits.

454 Both the *Kitāb al-zuhd* (*Book of Renunciation*) and his hadith collection *Musnad*. Cf. Christoph Pitschke, *Skrupulöse Frömmigkeit im frühen Islam. Das "Buch der Gewissensfrömmigkeit" (Kitāb al-wara') von Ahmad b. Hanbal* (Wiesbaden, 2010), 14.

455 Ruth Hagengruber, "Darstellung, Anordnung und implizite Schlussfolgerung. Über das Verhältnis von Dichtung und Moral aus philosophischer Perspektive. Eine platonische Kritik der Postmoderne," in *Narration und Ethik*, ed. Claudia Öhlschläger (Munich, 2009), 77.

456 Cf. Heribert Horst, "Bildung- und Unterhaltungsliteratur," in *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie*, vol. 2, ed. Helmut Gätje (Wiesbaden, 1987), 211; cf. Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1991), 289.

457 Cf. Walther, *Kleine Geschichte*, 193.

late action by taking the freedom to make new beginnings and to make a break that interrupts the chain of moral action," Abī 'l-Dunyā can be understood similarly.[458] With his book, he invites his readers to reflect on their own everyday lives and to decide freely whether they want to interpret their lives in the light of these texts and act accordingly or not. It is in this light that I read, for example, the hadith about giving meat to one's Jewish neighbour. The emphasis on good neighbourliness is very important and has a community-building function.

2.5 The Significance of Ethical, Religious *Adab* Literature for Contemporary Educational Thinking

Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā's work brings together two educational and literary traditions, that of the *'ulamā'* (theological scholars) and that of the *udabā'* (literary scholars), who are complementary protagonists of the same educational tradition.[459] His *adab* work is characterised by the fact that he gives the profile of the *adīb* a stronger religious colouring. In his view, an educated Muslim of the ninth century should also be well versed in religious knowledge, which is consequently expressed in action and speech. Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā neither aims to demonstrate his linguistic skill nor to entertain his readership, which al-Jāḥiẓ, for example, places so much emphasis on in his texts.[460] I see his pedagogical goal as reflecting on his own Arabic-Islamic moral culture through concrete narratives. The first hints of a *narrative ethics* can be found. Edifying narratives function as a medium for an encounter with the ethical. Character traits cannot be acquired through instruction but rather through reflection, deliberation and practice. However, character traits have to be learned from life with people. Therefore, the subject of a narration in the sense of a literary story is not primarily the plot but the person acting, their intentions, emotions, and motives, and

458 Öhlschläger (ed.), *Narration und Ethik*, 17.

459 See Bernd Radtke, "Die Literarisierung der mamlukischen Historiografie. Versuch einer Selbstkritik," in *O Ye Gentlemen: Arabic Studies on Science and Literary Culture*, eds. Arnoud Vrolijk and Jan P. Hogendijk (Leiden, 2007), 265.

460 Cf. Günther, "Islamische Bildung im literarischen Gewand," 157.

the character from which these intentions and motives, which guide their actions in a specific situation, emerge. Hadiths and *akhbār* are written testimonies of a religious tradition that inherently have a dimension of moral interpretation and offer enormous potential for ethical education. The interlocking of the prose genre with ideas of virtue ethics is particularly recognisable in al-Jāḥiž or Abū Manṣūr Thaʿālibī (d. 1039). However, for Abī 'l-Dunyā's *Makārim,* it is not a matter of explicating, reflecting on and justifying religious norms and commandments but of sharpening the reader's sense of structures of action. Rüdiger Bittner and Susanne Kaul argue in a similar vein, arguing that stories "do not have to tell you what you should do in order to help you find out what you should do."[461] In this sense, according to Abī 'l-Dunyā, religious literary narratives have a modelling function.[462] People can use these literary models to test, change, or confirm their own beliefs and attitudes.[463] Readers are addressed in their religious self-understanding. It is recognisable that this *adab* genre has an educational effect on the relationship between culture, religion, and ethics. Abī 'l-Dunyā sees noble character traits and their cultivation as part of an externally prescribed lifestyle. Both social norms of behaviour and named (religious) character traits such as modesty, sincerity, and generosity are closely linked to certain forms of behaviour and interaction with friends, relatives, and neighbours.[464]

The examples given from *adab* literature have made it clear that, through constant efforts to cultivate language, education and personal qualities such as politeness, sincerity, refinement, and elegance, the cultivation of manners not only leads to the formation of a

461 Rüdiger Bittner and Susanne Kaul, *Moralische Erzählungen (Kleine Schriften zur literarischen Ästhetik und Hermeneutik)* (Göttingen, 2014), 72; See also Jannis Giese, "Narrative Ethik. Konturen eines (un-)einheitlichen Konzepts," in *Erzähltes Selbst/The Narrated Self: Narrative Ethik aus theologischer und literarischer Perspektive*, ed. Jochen Schmidt (Leipzig, 2020), 187ff.

462 See Dieter Mieth, "Literaturethik als narrative Ethik," in *Narrative Ethik. Das Gute und das Böse erzählen, Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, Sonderband 17, ed. Karen Joisten (Berlin, 2007), 225.

463 See Walter Lesch, "Art. Hermeneutische Ethik/Narrative Ethik," in *Handbuch Ethik*, eds. Marcus Düwell, Christoph Hübenthal and Micha H. Werner (Stuttgart/Weimar, 2011), 231–242.

464 Cf. Horst, "Bildung- und Unterhaltungsliteratur," 208.

particular mode of social behaviour but also to a moral culture, that could only develop in the environment of an existing religious culture, which appears precisely in these aesthetic forms.[465] Overall, these *adab* genres have contributed to the emergence of their own moral culture and thus developed their own form of cultivation. This culture is a moment of education and has sometimes been linked to religious content, i.e., through stories, the reader is embedded in a certain moral culture, which is intended to have an effect on the inside from the outside.[466] This is countered by the objection that it is not possible to achieve a healthy/reasonable character (*ṣāliḥ al-akhlāq*) through externalities, be it the accurate observance of religious practice or social behaviour, because people only begin to internalise character traits through deliberation, and then practise and acquire them.[467] With his particular selection of different traditions, however, Abī 'l-Dunyā presents his idea of a synergy between the ethical, the aesthetic, and the religious very clearly. Aesthetics connects with ethics in a sensory way that appeals to the emotional world and helps to internalise values and norms. According to Navid Kermani, religions do not only speak in

> conclusively founded norms, values, principles, and doctrines, but in myths, and thus in images, hardly in abstract concepts, [and they] bind their followers less through the logic of their arguments than the charisma of their bearers, the poetry of their texts, the attraction of their sounds, forms, rituals, even their spaces, colours, smells.[468]

Abī 'l-Dunyā shows how dense the structure of ethics, aesthetics, and pedagogy is. This gives *adab* literature a pedagogical and didactic

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465 See also Bettina Stangneth, *Kultur der Aufrichtigkeit. Zum systematischen Ort von Kants "Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft"* (Würzburg. 2000), esp. 18ff.; Cf. Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge/New York, 1999), 295; Jochen Schmidt, "Religion, Kultur und Moral. Überlegungen im Anschluss an Kant und Wittgenstein," in *Religion und Kultur*, eds. Michael Hofmann, Klaus von Stosch and Sabine Schmitz (Bielefeld, 2016), 168.

466 For similar thoughts in relation to Kant's moral culture, see Schmidt, "Religion, Kultur und Moral," 169ff.

467 Cf. Ahmet Yaman, "Fıkıh–Ahlâk İlişkisi İslâm Amelî Ahlâkının İlke ve Uygulamaları Çerçevesinde. Bir Giriş (Fiqh–Moral Relation: An Introduction within the Concept of the Principles of Practical Islamic Morality and the Applications)," *Usûl İslam Araştırmaları* 9/9 (2008): 101.

468 Navid Kermani, *Gott ist schön. Das ästhetische Erleben des Koran* (Munich, 2007), 9.

significance. Whether this was Abī 'l-Dunyā's intention cannot be explicitly answered, but it is nonetheless very evident that this *adab* genre in particular is an educational tradition and not merely a literary tradition. The text examples of this ethical-religious *adab* type are particularly reminiscent of the aspect of aesthetic-literary forms of visualisation and represent an antithesis to supposedly purely rational forms of visualisation. Polite behaviour, for example, in which an aesthetic moment can be found, is not an end in itself but is based on a deep conviction. It takes the pedagogical features of aesthetics together with their ethical implications. As a result, aesthetic representations also prove to be pedagogical tools that serve to teach and encourage virtues.

Aesthetics appears as a force with which the good can be practised and by which the good and the bad can be recognised externally. In this way, aesthetics can influence and enable a good life, not only one's own life but also the lives of others. The good and successful life is expanded, so to speak, into a "beautiful life," which is not only affirmed subjectively but also collectively, as everyone is involved in a stylised shaping of their existence and draws on the same moral culture to do so. In my opinion, Abī 'l-Dunyā has attempted to depict this moral culture, which he may have idealised, with its fundamental supports in social interaction, in an exemplary manner in his work. In this light, it can be stated that the multi-layered, ethical-religious *adab* genre proposes an aesthetic cultivation of character.

The fact that he gave his book the title *Kitāb makārim al-akhlaq* expresses, in my opinion, the endeavour to indicate that the work deals with the noble qualities. This is a significant point for him, which he makes clear in his work: all actions should be good and beautiful to God if the intention is to draw close to him and to attain his love and goodness. For Abī 'l-Dunyā, this is sufficient motivation. What is ethically praised and desired is also what God praises and desires from people, and it is the prerequisite for a good lifestyle and a good life together in society. For Abī 'l-Dunyā, the focus of this way of life is not a "happy" life or the goal of achieving happiness through it; he noticeably did not take up the Greek or Muslim-received moral philosophical concept of happiness. He was trying to create a new genre. I suspect he was very interested in reminding people of an ethical and God-pleasing life. He knew that few people read hadith collections, but they read entertaining prose.

He was likely uncomfortable with the anecdotal, and his self-image as a scholar certainly contributed to the fact that he compiled a work that came close to his intentions, namely, to remind people of essential hadiths, to admonish readers and call on them to reflect on themselves in light of these hadiths. To this end, he added *akhbār* to the hadiths, as this gave the work a different flavour. Without the *akhbār*, it would be a small compilation of hadiths about an excellent character. The *akhbār* and the title turned his book into educational literature, making it interesting and worth reading for a wider audience. As we know, *tahdhīb al-akhlāq* discourse is a niche discourse in intellectual circles. *Adab* literature, on the other hand, had a diverse and wide readership.

3. Ethical Education in the Ethical Virtue Tradition of Thought

Different schools of moral philosophical thought developed in medieval Islamic scholarship. This new moral philosophical school of thought opened up a further dimension of general educational thinking, which had previously prioritised the acquisition of knowledge. Determining the relationship between education and ethics, which are closely linked in religious educational thinking, had now also become the subject of philosophical thought.[469] Miskawayh's work, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (*The Purification of Character*), gave moral philosophical thought its own direction and is probably the most comprehensive outline of philosophically based ethics in the history of Islamic ideas.[470]

With the active reception of Greek thought by Muslim thinkers, religious thought gradually became multi-perspective. The question, *How should one be?,* was discussed specifically from a moral-philosophical and religious perspective. As will be shown later, Muslim moral philosophers were less concerned with moulding human be-

469 On the link between education and ethics, see Sebastian Günther, "Bildung und Ethik im Islam," in *Islam. Einheit und Vielfalt einer Weltreligion*, ed. Rainer Brunner (Stuttgart, 2016), 210–236.

470 Cf. Ufuk Topkara, *Umrisse einer zeitgemäßen philosophischen Theologie im Islam. Die Verfeinerung des Charakters* (Wiesbaden, 2018), 57.

ings than with enabling them to reflect theoretically on God, on character traits and the potential offered to human beings as humans.[471] This open attitude and the resulting new approach gave rise to a philosophical movement interested in virtue ethics, to philosophical circles and thought-specific characteristics in the Islamic world. Even though many, albeit unsystematic, reflections by individual authors or isolated texts were previously known as concise examples of religious-ethical thinking from Islamic intellectual history, Muslim thinkers and philosophers received this predominant ethical virtue concept and ultimately developed it into a powerful *tahdhīb philosophy*.

The complete history of the development of virtue-ethical thought, including a detailed line of reception, cannot be outlined within this limited framework.[472] The following section, therefore, does not offer a complete overview; rather, the intention is to present scholars and their relevant writings. These texts are classic examples of this thematic context and have contributed to the development of a history of Islamic virtue ethics tradition, and I will use them to sketch the significance of the cultivation of character in Islamic intellectual history. In order to provide a solid foundation, the following questions need to be worked through in depth: What is the aim and purpose of the formation of virtues, and what does this mean for educational thought? Can philosophical Islamic virtue thinking be seen as an important addition or even a part of Islamic educational thinking? What is meant by the concept of virtue? Is it about the cultivation of the self? How is cultivation understood? Is the term *nafs* (self) a synonym for *character*? What is the relationship between the cultivation of personal qualities and God? With a sharpened eye, on the one hand, I aim to identify which virtues were named by Muslim scholars and with what justification and objective. On the other hand, it is important to show to what extent the four

471 It is not incorrect to say that while the concept of education in *adab* works was understood as an introduction to a sociocultural tradition and its ethical ideas, in *akhlāq* discourse, self-cultivation in confrontation with virtues came to the fore, as will be shown later.

472 In my opinion, two works can be cited as a systematic beginning: Topkara, *Umrisse*, and Sebastian Günther and Yassir El Jamouhi, eds., *Islamic Ethics as Educational Discourse: Thought and Impact of the Classical Muslim Thinker Miskawayh (d. 1030)* (Tübingen, 2021).

character virtues of Greek antiquity—wisdom (*sophia*), valour (*andreia*), prudence (*sophrosynē*) and justice (*dikaiosynē*)—found their way into ethical religious thought.

The genuinely Islamic term *ʿilm al-akhlāq* (knowledge of character) seems to correspond to the philosophical term *ethics*. In order to be able to make a reliable statement about this, it is first necessary to define the concept of *akhlāq* before focusing on the ethical virtue *akhlāq* tradition.

3.1 *Akhlāq* as a Connotative Concept of the Islamic Ethnoleader

In its modern meaning, the term *ethics* refers to an academic discipline of philosophy that deals with particular fields of knowledge, such as ethical methods and theories, as well as with corresponding subjects like ethical questions and phenomena.[473] For the ancient Greeks, ethics always had to do with character, custom, individual behaviour, and habit, as already shown.[474] There is no cognate for the collective term *ethics* in the modern sense in Islamic intellectual history. In German- or English-speaking countries, equivalents like *islamische Ethik* or *Islamic* or *Muslim ethics* are often used. The German *islamische Ethik* subsumes a range of ethical theories and approaches that are systematised and organised in very different ways.[475] Islamic ethics is usually used to describe those endeavours that have dealt with concepts and questions about the moral constitution of human beings and their ethical actions throughout Islamic intellectual history up to the present day.[476] These approaches are based on the idea that one must answer to an authority that is greater than one's own self, i.e., the determination of the relationship

473 Cf. Hübner, *Einführung in die philosophische Ethik*, 17ff.

474 Cf. Hübner, *Einführung in die philosophische Ethik*, 11.

475 The fundamental difficulty can be demonstrated, for example, by three contemporary works that establish different criteria for their ethical categorisation and classify personalities and their works differently. These are: George F. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge/New York, 2007); Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden/New York/Cologne, 1994); and Cafer S. Yaran, *İslam Ahlak Felsefesine Giriş* (Istanbul, 2011).

476 Zeki S. Zengin, "Islam, Ahlâk ve Etik," *Yıldırım Beyazıt Üniversitesi Bülten* 4 (2016): 5.

between faith and rational behaviour becomes a field of theological ethics.[477] Theological ethics, which developed from the dialectic with adjacent intellectual history and deepened its reflection on the human being as an ethical, social being, is found in philosophical and mystical *akhlāq* concepts. But how is *akhlāq* to be understood?

Etymologically, the term *akhlāq* is the plural form of the word *khuluq*, and has a range of meanings such as character, natural disposition, quality, moral attitude, traits, disposition, and habit.[478] To summarise, it refers to a person's inner potential or qualities, i.e., characteristics and attitudes that can be both praiseworthy and blameworthy. The verb *khalaqa* (to create, to mould), and the qur'ānic terms *khallāq* (creator) and *khalq* (creation and physical constitution) are derived from the same root *kh-l-q*. Therefore, as a medium, the body is related to the cultivation of character traits; there is an interdependence between the two entities of body and soul, which is particularly developed in the mystical tradition but also becomes an issue in the context of medicine and ethics.[479] From the common prayer of the Prophet Muḥammad, "O God, You have beautified my created form (*khalqī*), beautify my character (*khulūqī*)

477 See Yaran, *İslam Ahlak Felsefesine Giriş* (Istanbul, 2011), 45.

478 Cf. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, vol. 10, 88ff; Wehr, *Wörterbuch*, 360ff; Dwight M. Donaldson, *Studies in Muslim Ethics* (London, 1953), 108.

479 The Greek physician Galen (129–199) is considered the most important physician of antiquity after Hippocrates, and wrote treatises on philosophy and ethics. Like many ancient physicians, Galen was also a philosopher and was concerned not only with physical health but also with mental health, i.e., he was concerned with the health of the soul. Galen wrote several ethical works in this context, of which *Fī'l-Akhlāq* (*On Character Traits*) is the only one to have survived in Arabic translation. In it, Galen describes the connection between physical and mental health. The ethical concept is based on a medical approach. Following Galen's approach, human vices are seen as a disease, while virtues are presented as the "health of the soul." Inspired by Galen and Plato's positions on the state and its virtues, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (854–925) wrote his ethical treatise *Al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī* (*Spiritual Medicine*). He dedicates this work as a supplement to *Kitāb al-Manṣūrī*, a medical work on healing the body, to the ruler Abū Sālih al-Manṣūr. Abu Said Bakhtishu, a physician living in the eleventh century, called his book *Ṭibb al-nafs wa mudawat al-akhlāq* (*The Medicine of the Soul and the Healing of Behaviour*). For more details, see Peter Adamson, "Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 925): The Spiritual Medicine," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, eds. Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford, 2017), 63–82.

as well,"[480] one can determine that the term *akhlāq* refers to the human being with physical and psychological/soul components as a personal work of art.[481] As the etymological field of meaning of *akhlāq* varies, different translations and interpretations are possible and evident. In this book, the basic definition of *akhlāq* is taken as the personal character trait or quality inherent in a person that shapes their entire character.

Akhlāq concepts open up opportunities for training and practising basic personal qualities, i.e., character *refinement*, similar to what Schiller writes in his fourth letter in *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (*On the Aesthetic Education of Man*) with regard to human character.[482] Against this background, the *akhlāq* approach does not focus on the right action—as *adab* largely envisages—but on how and that humans train a disposition to choose the ethically right thing and bring said choice to life in an aesthetically beautiful way. *Akhlāq* concepts are currently seen as a branch of Islamic practical philosophy, which, among other things, poses specific questions about character, the soul, good and ethical behaviour, and the coexistence of people, and seeks to moderate and train the constitution of the soul and thus the *beautification* of existing character traits.[483] According to Ebrahim Moosa, *'ilm al-akhlāq* is the knowledge of

480 Cf. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, Hn. 24392.

481 See Mahmud Erol Kılıç, *Sufi ve Sanat. Makaleler – Konferanslar* 2 (Istanbul, 2015), 4ff.

482 See Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke. Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*, edited based on the original prints by Gerhard Fricke and Herbert G. Göpfert with Herbert Stubenrauch, vols. 1–5 (Munich, 1962), 24.

483 Cf. Walzer and Gibb, "Akhlaq." The concept of beautification needs to be explicated in the context of aesthetics. *Ḥusn* (*beautiful*; Greek, *aisthesis*) can be understood as the perceptible and artistically experienceable, which is linked to all forms of sensory perception; Cf. Heinz von Foerster, "Wahrnehmen wahrnehmen," in *Aisthesis. Wahrnehmung heute oder Perspektiven einer anderen Ästhetik*, eds. Karlheinz Barck et al. (Leipzig, 1990), 434–443. The Prophet Muḥammad presents God as beautiful and states that God loves beauty (*innallaha jamīlun wa-yuḥibbu'l-jamīl*; cf. Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*). The human relationship with God is essentially a beautiful one (cf. Kılıç, *Sufi ve Sanat*, 4ff.). Desirable and aspirational qualities of the human character are associated with this, as part of this core relationship based on beauty, i.e., desirable qualities are always also beautiful at their core.

inner dispositions, which implies the cultivation and refinement of these dispositions.[484]

In my opinion, ethics, understood as the study of the judgement of human actions, cannot be seen as equivalent to the concept of *akhlāq*. In its various approaches, ethics asks for the foundation of the respective judgement criteria and, thus, for their justification. These endeavours can be found in the Islamic tradition in various discourses of different disciplines of knowledge. *Akhlāq* discourses were conducted in many branches of knowledge with different implications. The epistemology of ethics—like Islamic jurisprudence—does not ask which courses of action are morally required or rejected in a specific case; rather, it is concerned with approaches as to how one can arrive at such judgements in the first place and/or which human dispositions are necessary for this. Fundamental questions of ethics can be found in a variety of writings in philosophy, theology, literature, and mysticism. Against this background, the term *ʿilm al-akhlāq* is the equivalent of ethics as a field of study. Hence, those works and treatises that deal with character traits, desirable habits, and dispositions or even human drives and emotions have to be referred to as *ʿilm al-akhlāq*, *knowledge of character*.[485] The moral-philosophical *tahdhīb* literature is one of the strands of this study of character that speaks explicitly about virtues. The Arabic equivalent used for the concept of virtue in this literature is the word *faḍīla* (sg., pl. *faḍāʾil*), which encompasses a wide range of meanings from *to be surplus* to *to be excellent*, *to be good*, *to be more adequate*, *to be superior*, and *to contend for precedenc*e.[486]

To date, there have been few attempts at a systematic overall outline of Islamic ethics, and, given the range of ethical writings, such a purpose appears to be a complicated endeavour.[487] In retrospect, the difficulty of systematising ethical currents, approaches, and dis-

484 Cf. Moosa, "Muslim Ethics?," 237ff.

485 Cf. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, vol. 10, 88ff.; Wehr, *Wörterbuch*, 360ff.

486 Cf. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, 524ff.; cf. Wehr, *Wörterbuch*, 969.

487 Cf. Yasien Mohamed, "The Evolution of Early Islamic Ethics," *American Journal of Islamic Studies* 18(4) (2001): 91. For a German-language introduction to Islamic ethics, see Reza Hajatpour, *Islamische Ethik. Einführung* (Baden-Baden, 2022). Cf. Dimitri Gutas, "Review of *Ethical Theories in Islam* by Majid Fakhry," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117(1) (1997): 175.

courses becomes clear, as neither Islamic studies nor theological research has done sufficient preliminary work.

While the works of *makārim al-akhlāq* (praiseworthy character traits) appeal—roughly speaking—to the acquisition of religious virtues, the *tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (refinement of character) works are more likely to express their own ideas about how the acquisition and formation of virtues affect the life of the soul and what their overriding goal is. This needs to be explained after a historical introduction.

3.2 Phase of the Translation of Ancient Philosophical Writings

In the early Islamic period, the study of ancient philosophy began in the second half of the eighth century, and with it started an intensive translation phase. In addition to philosophical works, scientific and medical works were also translated from ancient Greek, Iranian, and Indian heritage. The beginnings of *falsafa* (philosophy), which followed on from the Greek heritage, began in the ninth century in the House of Wisdom (*dār al-ḥikma*), sometimes also called the "translation school with a library," i.e., the Grand Library of Baghdad—the intellectual centre where Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars worked.[488] It is due to this school of translation that the texts of Greek antiquity have been preserved to this day. There, the Muslim philosopher al-Kindī (c. 800–870), known as *faylasūf al-ʿarab* (the philosopher of the Arabs), was the first to devote himself systematically to the study of the translated philosophical texts.[489] Al-Kindī left his successors a broad compendium with what was likely the most ambitious thesis of his era: that Greek philosophy was capable of illuminating problems of its time, from within

488 For more details, see Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th c.)* (London, 1998).

489 Cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, vol. 2, ed. Gustav Flügel (Leipzig, 1871–1872), 22, 225 and Hamid Reza Yousefi, *Einführung in die islamische Philosophie. Eine Geschichte des Denkens von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Paderborn, 2014), *passim*.

theology, opening up a multi-perspective view.[490] He had access to ancient Greek works that had been translated from Syriac in the eighth century and later directly from Greek into Arabic.[491] These translators promoted the transfer of knowledge through their translation work. Philosophy, medicine, and the hard sciences, which had survived into late Hellenism, were fully absorbed into Arabic centres of learning.[492] A period of cultural prosperity and an affinity for scientific and philosophical scholarship began. The endeavour to amalgamate Greek moral philosophy with ethical religious thought, which began in the ninth century in the context of philosophical thought, might mean that Muslim philosophers wanted to unfold and develop the ethical implications of the Qur'ān and the hadiths into an independent Islamic moral philosophy. The Arab Islamic world gradually developed into a high and written culture. In the tenth century, more cultural and philosophical centres and places of learning, such as the University of Cairo, emerged as a result of the active and intensive reception of philosophical texts. Philosophical circles also formed, such as the secret group of philosophers *ikhwān al-ṣafa' wa khillān al-wafa* (the brothers of integrity and friends of loyalty), which was made up of Persian and Arabic philosophers and whose thinking represented the dominant contemporary philosophy of the time. This phase of translating ancient philosophical literature also saw the first Arabic philosophical writings emerge, which initially recognised the value of Greek philosophy without prejudice, commenting on it intensively and developing it creatively.[493]

One problem area crystallised in the definition of the relationship between philosophy and theology, as the latter claimed absolute truth and was regarded as the only path to knowledge. Even though critical reactions from theologians began to emerge during the translation movement, philosophical teachings begin to consoli-

490 Cf. Peter Adamson, "Al-Kindī und die frühe Rezeption der griechischen Philosophie," in *Islamische Philosophie im Mittelalter. Ein Handbuch*, eds. Heidrun Eichner, Matthias Perkams, and Christian Schäfer (Darmstadt, 2013), 156.

491 Cf. Frederick S. Carney, "Focus on Muslim Ethics: An Introduction," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 11 (2) (1983): 167.

492 Cf. Franz Rosenthal, *Das Fortleben der Antike im Islam* (Zurich, 1965), 25.

493 Cf. Yousefi, *Einführung in die islamische Philosophie*, 36.

date towards the end of the translation period.[494] Although even in the tenth century, it was emphatically doubted that the Greek intellectual heritage and culture could actually contribute anything to religion, and the task of theology lay in refuting this accumulation of heretical and misleading claims, a relationship of mutual recognition prevailed for a long time.[495] Thus, the intellectual historical heritage of Islam is not only an Arab one but one of at least two other sources. Through the territorial expansion of the Islamic world, Arab Muslims conquered the great civilisations of the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Empire.[496] The cultural and theological exchange, encounters, and mutual intellectual fertilisation seem to have been an ideal ground on which a lively intellectual culture could flourish, and Islamic culture began to develop. Apart from the fact that the biographies of ancient scholars were available to Muslims, it was most likely part of scholarly practice to be familiar with prominent works by Christian and Jewish contemporaries, among others, if not to receive them favourably or hold an opinion on them.[497] An Aristotle interpreted primarily in Neoplatonic terms found its way into both the philosophical and theological thinking of Muslims.[498] He was introduced "in the process of the reception of Aristotelian writings, mediated by the Platonism of the Alexandrian commentators on Aristotle and the tradition of the Neoplatonists under Aristotle's name," so that he became the representative of Neoplatonic models

494 Cf. Hans Daiber, *Islamic Thought in the Dialogue of Culture: A Historical and Bibliographical Survey* (Leiden, 2012), 172ff.

495 Cf. Ulrich Rudolph, "Einleitung," in *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt. Vol. 1: 8.–10. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ulrich Rudolph (Basel, 2012), xxxi; Matthias Perkams, "Die Bedeutung des arabisch-islamischen Denkens in der Geschichte der Philosophie," in *Islamische Philosophie im Mittelalter. Ein Handbuch*, eds. Heidrun Eichner, Matthias Perkams, and Christian Schäfer (Darmstadt, 2013), 15.

496 Cf. Carney, "Focus on Muslim Ethics," 167.

497 Cf. Rosenthal, *Das Fortleben der Antike im Islam*, 42; see also Francis E. Peters, "The Greek and Syrian Background," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York, 1996), 40–51.

498 Cf. Cornelia Schöck, "Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit menschlichen Handelns. 'Dynamis' (*qūwa/qudra/istitā'a*) in der islamischen Theologie," *Traditio* 59 (2004): 80.

for al-Fārābī (d. 970).[499] An active history of reception began. In the twelfth century, Muslim and Jewish philosophers such as Ibn Sina (980–1037), Ibn Rushd (1126–1198), and Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) reintroduced Aristotle's writings to the West.[500] Within this intellectual framework, an Arab-Islamic philosophy emerged, and ethics was an important discourse variable both in philosophy and in other branches of study. Greek philosophy was regarded as exemplary by intellectuals in the centres of learning, e.g. in Baghdad. In particular, ethical writings played a decisive role in the emergence of Islamic *akhlāq* philosophy, although, as already noted, they differed fundamentally from the *adab* works.

With the writings of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and Galen, the virtue ethics approach was the dominant moral philosophy in antiquity and late antiquity.[501] At the centre of this Greek moral philosophy were concepts of happiness and virtue, which are mainly found in Plato's works *Politeia* and *Nomoi*, in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and in Galen's work *Fī'l-akhlāq* (*On Character Traits*), which has been preserved in Arabic.[502]

In the current discussion on ethical and moral education concepts, Aristotle and Kant, in particular, have played an important role as reference authors since modern times. In addition to the fact that Aristotle's writings were an important main source for philosophical ethics, the NE was the most important and influential work for Islamic *akhlāq* philosophy.[503] A very strong reception and

499 Cleophea Ferrari, "Al-Fārābī und der arabische Aristotelismus," in *Islamische Philosophie im Mittelalter*, eds. Eichner, Perkams, and Schäfer, 222.

500 Cf. Alain de Libera, *Die mittelalterliche Philosophie* (Munich, 2005), 23; see the works of Aristotle in Hermannus Allemannus.

501 Cf. Hüseyin Karaman, "Islam Ahlak Filozofları," in *İslam Ahlak Esasları ve Felsefesi*, ed. Müfit Selim Saruhan (Ankara, 2014), 171; cf. Hübner, *Einführung in die philosophische Ethik*, 99.

502 Cf. Christoph Horn, "Moralphilosophie," in *Platon-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, eds. Christoph Horn, Jörn Müller, and Joachim Söder (Stuttgart, 2017), 161. *Parmenides* and the *Letters* of Plato have also been translated in the reference work of the well-known bibliographer and bookseller Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca. 995); Cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 251ff.

503 Cf. Hans Daiber, *From the Greeks to the Arabs and Beyond*, vol. I (Leiden/Boston, 2021), 117. A brief note on the history of reception should be made at this point: Miskawayh is the first and most important recipient of Aristotle's ideas on virtue ethics. All others in whose works Aristotelian virtue teachings can

influence of the NE are documented in various literary genres and disciplines of knowledge—systematic, philosophical, and, last but not least, mystical. The first traces of an Arabic version of the NE can be found in al-Kindī and the bibliographer and scholar Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca. 995).[504] Al-Nadīm mentions the NE as the book of ethics, which he lists or categorises as *Kitāb al-akhlāq* (*Book of Character Traits*) in his list of books among the Aristotelian writings.[505] Al-Fārābī (870–950) also wrote a commentary on the introduction of the NE.[506] Other philosophers, such as al-ʿĀmirī (d. 991), who placed himself in the philosophical tradition of al-Kindī and was a friend of Miskawayh (932–1030), as well as Ibn Bajja (1095–1138) and Ibn Rushd (1126–1198), also reflect the influence of the NE.[507] We can presume an Arabic translation of the NE, adapted with the nuances of Arabic cultural, i.e., with deviations from the original in terms of content and language, was known and studied in the ninth century.[508] A first translation with the commentary by Porphyrios (233–ca. 303) is attributed to the eminent Christian translator Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn (d. 873).[509] He had rendered outstanding services by translating a wide variety of works, including the writings of the Greek physician Galen (ca. 129–200).

Notably, with regard to the Arabic translation of the NE, it was considered lost until a few years ago, when two manuscripts were discovered in the rich manuscript library, Maktabat al-Qarawīyīn, in

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be found probably received less or hardly any Aristotle himself, but rather an Aristotle understood in Miskawayhian terms.

504 Cf. Manfred Ullmann, *Die Nikomachische Ethik des Aristoteles in arabischer Übersetzung, Teil 1, Wortschatz* (Wiesbaden, 2011), 13. Aristotle's pupil Theophratus (371–287 BC) was known in the Islamic world to have interpreted the NE, chapter by chapter, under various titles such as *Kitab al-nafs* or *Kitāb al-adab*; cf. Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Uyanış Devirlerinde Tercümenin Rolü* (Istanbul, 2011), 140.

505 Other translations were, for example, *Nīqūmākhiyā* or *Kitāb Nīqūmākhiyā*. Cf. Ernst A. Schmidt and Manfred Ullmann, *Aristotle in Fez. Zum Wert der arabischen Überlieferung der Nikomachischen Ethik für die Kritik des griechischen Textes* (Heidelberg, 2011), 7.

506 Cf. Walzer and Gibb, "Akhlaq."

507 Cf. Schmidt and Ullmann, *Aristotle in Fez*, 8.

508 Cf. Anna Akasoy, "The Arabic and Islamic reception of the Nicomachean Ethics," in *The Reception of Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Jon Miller (Cambridge, 2012), 92.

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Fez. Thus, the reception of the NE by Muslim philosophers could have originated from the Greek or from various Arabic translations.

3.3 Virtue Ethics Tradition

In the history of Arabic religious thought, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq (hereafter,* TA) is primarily regarded as the most important source of ethical research. The main content of these works focuses on character traits, their location in the soul and considerations for their refinement. The root for the word *tahdhīb*, *h-dh-b,* means "to prune," "to smooth," "to purify," "to cleanse", or "to correct" and indicates the processual nature and the potential for change in character traits.[510] The term *tahdhīb* therefore means cleansing, improving, correcting, revising, reworking, refining, good education, teaching, well-behaved, polite manner.[511] From an educational theory perspective, processuality means that virtues can only be acquired in a gradual process through actions.[512] It involves the whole person, both physically and mentally. Modern research into personality development, which is primarily interested in the stability or changeability of people's individual characteristics, emphasises today that people have the potential to change their personality traits.[513] However, this change in the self can only be activated through action.

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510 Cf. Ahmet Özel, "Tehzib," in *TDV*, vol. 40, 325; Wehr, *Wörterbuch*, 1345.

511 Cf. Wehr, *Wörterbuch*, 1345. It is highly likely that the Arabic term for purification can be traced back to the Greek term *katharsis* (καθαρότης, καθαρισμός, κάθαρσις), which refers to a symbolic cleansing process of the body as well as the soul (or even of objects). Cf. Martin Arndt et al., "Art. Reinheit/Reinigung," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie Online*, eds. Joachim Ritter et al.

512 Above all, mystical practices show the correlation between the body and the soul, according to which the purification of the self is achieved through physical cleansing activities. The first task of a dervish, as well as a novice, was likely sweeping the order's garden or temple steps, or mopping the floor. Similarly, the same view applies to the purification rites required to participate in the religious rite. The intention is not so much hygienic purity as an educational goal that regards purity as both personal hygiene and the first step towards moral purity.

513 See more details in Jule Specht (ed.), *Personality Development Across the Lifespan* (London, 2017).

The specific feature of the ethical virtue tradition is the establishment of a relationship between the cultivation of a character trait and the purification of the soul. The Aristotelian term of virtue (*aretē*) is rendered as *faḍīla* in the classical Arabic texts, a term that does not appear in the Qur'ān or in the hadith collections.[514]

For the sake of completeness, the Christian philosopher, theologian, and translator Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī (893–974), who was one of the great Christian scholars of Aristotle of his time, should not go unmentioned in this context.[515] He wrote his work entitled *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (*Purification of Character*) before Miskawayh. Even though there have been no studies on the relationship between the two works of the same name, both deal with the same topic in principle.[516] Gerhard Endress characterises Ibn ʿAdī as a teacher of the theoretical way of life and philosophical knowledge of truth and God, someone who, with his writing, wanted to open up the way for everyone to find the universally valid path to perfection by means of reason.[517] His work shows that the fundamental idea of *purification of the soul* is the conviction that every human being has a rational soul that needs to be purified, i.e., cleansed of all ballast that disturbs the soul's life and causes imbalance.[518] According to Ibn ʿAdī, the realisation of a virtue leads a person to bliss.[519] Ibn ʿAdī had established a new direction, so to speak, which many Muslim philosophers followed, as will be shown in the further course of this book.

In the preceding considerations, the selection of Muslim thinkers was made according to the criterion of presenting concepts from scholars who, although they cannot be characterised exclusively as *akhlāq* philosophers, have largely understood the Aristotelian perspective on the doctrine of virtue or were at least inspired by it and,

514 Cf. Mustafa Çağrıcı, "Fazilet," in *TDV*, vol. 12, 269.
515 Cf. Felix Körner, *Kirche im Angesicht des Islam: Theologie des interreligiösen Zeugnisses* (Stuttgart, 2008), 247.
516 Cf. Topkara, *Umrisse*, 72.
517 Gerhard Endress, "Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī," in *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*, ed. Rudolph, 301–325.
518 Cf. Topkara, *Umrisse*, 75.
519 Cf. Sidney Griffith, *Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī: The Reformation of Morals* (Utah, 2002), 131.

with their relevant writings on ethics, can be partially assigned to the classical TA literature.

3.3.1 Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī (c. 872–950)

Fārābī was a music theorist, physician, and philosopher. As a very political person, he advocated the Aristotelian view that every person is a *zoon politikon*, i.e., everyone is a political and social being who should participate in society. Fārābī was thus also confronted with the challenge of relating the reception and new knowledge generated by the translation movement to the body of knowledge that was considered binding in Islamic society.[520] This endeavour gave rise to his work *Ihsā' al-'ulūm* (*Enumeration of the Sciences*).

In his last and most important work, *Mabādi' ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* (*Principles of the Views of the Inhabitants of the Excellent City*), he addresses the connection between metaphysics and political philosophy; at the same time, this work contains a treatise on an ideal form of urban administration and the possibility of happy coexistence in a society.[521]

> Al-Fārābī was an Aristotelian through and through, who wrote numerous commentaries and translations based on the *Corpus Aristotelicum* and presented himself as the rediscoverer of the Aristotelian legacy, which had largely been lost by his time.[522]

He writes an extensive commentary on some sections of the NE and adopts the Aristotelian division of the virtues into virtues of intellect and virtues of character.[523] In his last work, he discusses the intellectual virtues from a sociopolitical perspective, but they are interdependent with the character virtues of the citizens of a city. He categorises bravery, generosity, moderation, and justice as virtues of character. He modelled his understanding of virtue on Aristotle's:

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520 Cf. Ferrari, "Al-Fārābī und der arabische Aristotelismus," 220.

521 See Ulrich Rudolph (ed.), *Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī: Die Prinzipien der Ansichten der Bewohner der vortrefflichen Stadt* (Berlin/Boston, 2022). Ibn Bājja (1085–1138) and Ibn Ṭufayl (1110–1185) would later also pose the question of the possibility of leading a good life in a bad society. Cf. Perkams, "Die Bedeutung des arabisch-islamischen Denkens in der Geschichte der Philosophie," 22.

522 Adamson, "Abū Bakr al-Rāzī," 199.

523 Cf. NE 1103a 10.

it is formed through repeated practice or habituation to a virtuous action. He assumes that the virtuous citizen is able to harmonise the good of the individual with the good of the community and humanity, and that the virtuous ruler is at the top of the list. In this context, following the example of Plato's *Politeia*, he poses the question about the conditions of a perfect government or the ideal of a just ruler. It is up to the ruler and his politics to create structures that guide his citizens towards a virtuous and just life, through which human perfection can be achieved.[524] For spiritual perfection is the ultimate goal of human life. Thus, Fārābī does not create a systematic work on the virtues but rather consciously combines "a Neoplatonic interpretation of the world with the formulation of a political theory" and includes a didactic-ethical claim with political intent.[525] In his treatise *Taḥṣīl al-saʿāda* (*On the Attainment of Bliss*), in the introduction to which he writes an honourable commentary on Plato's philosophy and the NE, he states that citizens of cities and countries could attain bliss in this world and the hereafter through the acquisition of theoretical virtues (*nazarī faḍila*).[526] Fārābī goes on to explain that man can reach the highest level of happiness by realising the truth and freeing himself from earthly ballast and physical urges.[527] This level is the highest good, the good life, which is worth striving for on its own sake. Ibn Rushd and Ibn Bājja (Latinised, Avempace) adopted this position. The concept of happiness (as a translation of *eudaimonia*) was introduced by al-Fārābī and Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥmirī ibn Yūsuf al-ʿĀmirī with the Arabic *saʿāda* and has been widely adopted in the history of Islamic ideas to this day.[528] *Saʿāda*, as a central concept of Islamic philosophy, linked happiness in this world with happiness in the hereafter. The goal of virtue should not be transient pleasure or enjoyment, which provides subjective moments of happiness, but bliss requires realisation

524 Cf. Charles E. Butterworth, "Ethics in Medieval Islamic Philosophy," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 11, 2 (1983): 229.

525 Geert Hendrich, *Arabische-Islamische Philosophie. Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Frankfurt, 2011), 63.

526 Al-Fārābī, *The Attainment of Happiness: Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, transl. Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca/New York, 2001), 13.

527 Cf. Ferrari, "Al-Fārābī und der arabische Aristotelismus," 228.

528 Cf. Ibrahim Maraş, "Mutluluk," in *İslam Ahlak Esasları ve Felsefesi*, ed. Müfit Selim Saruhan (Ankara, 2014), 245.

for its own sake. Fārābī's understanding of happiness (*saʿāda*) also found a broad reception among Muslim philosophers, as we will read later.[529]

He recognises ethical learning in the ability of the individual to train and direct their inclinations and attitudes towards the good. This process is possible in principle through the purification, cleansing, and improvement of the soul. The goal of philosophy, as described by al-Fārābī, is the perfection of the intellect, which ultimately represents bliss par excellence.[530]

3.3.2 Abū ʿAlī Miskawayh (932–1030)

Probably the most influential philosopher and historian who has had the most lasting impact on philosophical ethics is Miskawayh with his work *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq wa-tathīr al-aʿrāq* (*The Purification of Character and the Purification of Dispositions*), which he wrote between 982 and 985.[531] He is the first Muslim moral philosopher to elaborate a clear and, in many respects, thorough analytical system of moral ethics in Islam. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that most later works dealing with ethics used the TA as an authoritative source, and some of them are even based on it.[532] Right up to the present day, a great deal has been written about Miskawayh and his work, which is extremely important for the history of philosophy in

529 Cf. Maraş, "Mutluluk," 247.

530 Cf. Al-Fārābī, *Risālā fī al-ʿaql*, vol. 2, ed. Maurice Bouygues (Beirut, 1983), 31; cf. *Aristoteles, Über die Seele: De anima*, ed. and transl. Klaus Corcilius, Hamburg 2018, Book III (151–120).

531 Cf. Mohammed Arkoun, *L'Humanisme arabe au IVe/Xe siècle, Miskawayh, philosophe et historien* (Paris, 1982), 115ff. In my references to Miskawayh's TA, I follow the translation by Constantine K. Zurayk, *Miskawayh: The Refinement of Character* (*Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*) (Chicago, 2002), hereafter: Miskawayh, *Refinement*. Miskawayh wrote in both Persian and Arabic, not only about history and philosophy but also about theology and medicine. In his TA, for example, reminiscences of Galenic ethics can be found. Cf. Peter Adamson, "Ethik als Medizin in der arabischen Tradition," in *Moralische Vortrefflichkeit in der pluralen Gesellschaft*, eds. Jochen Schmidt and Idris Nassery (2016), 73.

532 See Günther and El Jamouhi, eds., *Islamic Ethics as Educational Discourse*.

the *akhlāq* tradition; hence, my remarks on the TA will concentrate on his interpretation of virtue in line with the research interest.[533]

As other Islamic philosophers, Miskawayh was in the service of various rulers, and he moved in intellectual circles in Iraq and Iran. Philosophically, he belongs to the Fārābī school and was a friend of contemporaries such as the Sufi philosopher Al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1010/1023), Ibn Sīnā, and the aforementioned translator and commentator Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī (893–974).[534] Cleophea Ferrari writes that it is not surprising to recognise the influence of Ibn ʿAdī in Miskawayh's works, Al-ʿĀmirī and Al-Sijistānī, as they and others moved in the same courts and intellectual circles and possibly knew each other personally.[535] From this, it can be concluded that their works were probably predominantly read by people who moved in those intellectual circles or belonged to the ruling dynasty. This cultural and intellectual richness of the world of thought of Muslim philosophers was reflected in their writings and presumably in their life together. This can only have been possible in an atmosphere of respectful coexistence and mutual appreciation.

Miskawayh unites Persian and Arabic cultures in his writing. In addition to the TA, his wisdom treatise *Al-Ḥikma al-khālida* (*The Enduring Wisdom*), known in Persian translation as *Jāvīdān Kharad*, covers passages from Greek philosophy and Persian political heritage, and emphasises the similarity between this literature and the verses of the Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition.[536] The work consists of moral sayings, aphorisms, proverbs, gnomic wisdom, and ethical maxims of the Persians, Hindus, Arabs, Greeks (such as Hermes, Diogenes, Ptolemy, Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras), and

533 In his dissertation, Ufuk Topkara traced the individual lines of reception of *tahdhīb al-akhlāq*; see Topkara, *Umrisse*.

534 For more details, see Richard Netton, *Al-Fārābī and His School* (London/New York, 1992).

535 Cf. Ferrari, "Al-Fārābī und der arabische Aristotelismus," 239.

536 The treatise is also known under the Arabic title, *Kitāb ādāb al-ʿarab wa-l-furs* (*Book of the Behaviour of the Arabs and the Persians*). See Miskawayh, *Ḥikam al-Furs*, transl. Alma Giese, "Perennial Philosophy," in *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, vol. I, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi (London/New York, 2008), 326–336 for *Jāvīdān Khirad*. Cf. Walter Bruno Henning, "Eine arabische Version mittelpersischer Weisheitsschriften," *ZDMG* 106 (1956): 73–77.

Muslims (such as Ibn Muqaffaʿ and al-Fārābī). It concludes with hadiths of the Prophet Muḥammad and statements by his son-in-law and cousin ʿAli Abū Ṭālib.[537] Miskawayh thus not only brings together wisdom literature from different cultures, but he is also able to assimilate it convincingly into the Islamic way of thinking. In conclusion, he attempts to emphasise the commonality of an ethical and peaceful life inherent in all religions. Miskawayh's approach reveals his awareness of the existing cultural, religious, and ideological wealth of his time and of Baghdad, which he endeavours to make fruitful for social coexistence in an appreciative manner. Yet his philosophy is not limited to aphorisms, easily memorised maxims, ethical principles, and rules of life. Quite the opposite: he searches for the conditions and foundations of a happy and virtuous life. With the TA, Miskawayh offers a holistic Muslim perspective in which the well-being of the individual—regardless of religious and cultural differences—determines that of the community and vice versa.

In a time and region in which Sharia was dominant, it seems all the more astonishing that Miskawayh, inspired by Greek philosophy, attempted to rationalise ethics as far as possible. Unlike Aristotle, who claimed that humans have the ability to act morally due to their rational capacities, Miskawayh emphasises the relevance of the existence and unity of God in this context. This may have been a major reason for al-Ghazālī (1058–1111)—who, on the basis of the same approach, declared philosophers such as Fārābī and Ibn Sina to be unbelievers—not to criticise Miskawayh.[538] One possible reason, given by Elizabeth Bucar, is that Miskawayh did not directly adapt Greek ideas but integrated them into his theologically based worldview. In particular, it was the anthropological question of human destiny to which Miskawayh knew how to give a theological answer: not only to recognise the pursuit of good character as the right thing to do, but also to understand oneself as a *kalifa* (caliph) in a relationship

537 Cf. Ahmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Miskawayh, *Al-Hikmah al-khalidah: Javidan khirad*, ed. Abd al-Rahman Badawi (Cairo, 1952), 179; cf. Roxanne D. Marcotte, "Ibn Miskawahy's *Al-Saʿādāt* (The Order of Happiness)," in *Monotheism and Ethics: Historical and Contemporary Intersections among Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, vol. II, ed. Y. Tzvi Langermann (Leiden/Boston, 2012), 144.

538 Cf. Abu Hamid Muhmmad al-Ghazālī, *Der Erretter aus dem Irrtum. al-Munqid min ad-dalāl*, transl. ʿAbd-Elsamad ʿAbd-Elhamid Elschazlī (Hamburg, 1988), 18, hereafter: Ghazālī, *Der Erretter*.

with God on earth. Miskawayh's TA was later greatly appreciated by Ghazālī, who drew inspiration from it, for example, with regard to justice in his *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (*Revival of the Religious Sciences*) and in his *Mīzān al-ʿamal* (*Criteria of Action*).[539]

Since Miskawayh basically follows the structural model of the NE in the TA, he mainly focuses on personal ethics and the domestic life of the individual and not on the relationship between ethics and the rules and laws of politics. However, he also takes the Aristotelian view that a virtuous life can only succeed if it is integrated into a *polis* (political community) with its laws and rules.[540] Regardless of the political framework, the most decisive aspect of virtue ethics is the direct reference to the practice of life, i.e., the cultivation of virtues can only take place in social interactions. Even if, at first glance, cultivation appears focused on the self and one's own happiness, for Miskawayh, virtue is oriented towards a *you*, without whom there can be no courageous, just, and lenient action. According to Miskawayh, a person cannot *become* without a *you*.[541] Humans need friends because humans are "civic beings by nature."[542] Aristotle also understood rule (*archē*) to mean order and control, for which good laws are a prerequisite.[543] Following on from this, Miskawayh argues that, for a successful life, political structures and laws should favour this endeavour, and the ruler himself should also be virtuous.

According to Miskawayh, who adopts al-Farābī's concept of happiness, happiness arises when man strives for that good and that happiness which is eternal. With this objective, i.e., taking into account the good of all, *saʿāda* arises.[544] Muslim philosophers seem to transcend the good to God, as will be shown in Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (1201–1274). God is the good that humans strive for by virtuously finding the centre between two extremes and trying to keep one's

539 Cf. Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 106; Walzer and Gibb, "Akhlaq;" Mehmed Aydın, "Ahlak," in *TDV*, vol. II, 11.

540 Cf. NE 1179b; Nikolaus Knoepffler, *Angewandte Ethik* (Paderborn, 2018), 32ff.

541 Cf. Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 123.

542 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 25.

543 Cf. Otfried Höffe, "Aristoteles' Politik: Vorgriff auf eine liberale Demokratie," in *Aristoteles. Politik*, ed. Otfried Höffe (Berlin, 2011), III 16, 1287a.

544 Cf. Ibn Miskevey, *Ahlaki Olgunlaştırma*, transl. A. Şener, İ. Kayaoğlu, and C. Tunç (Ankara, 1983), 45ff., 80–88.

mental faculties in balance.[545] With this concept of happiness, Muslim philosophers offered an alternative to the view that man needs rigorous and serious endeavour and reflection in order to reach God's presence.[546] El-Fadl agrees with the Muslim philosophers and argues that the assessment of the importance of happiness is consistent with numerous historical narratives that portray the Prophet Muḥammad not only as a cheerful, serene, and calm person but also as someone who loved and celebrated happiness.[547] The broad reception of the category of happiness in philosophy and in the history of ideas is likely due to the fact that the Qur'ān reinforces this attitude by emphasising the importance of happiness for faith in God in many places.[548] In terms of content, this approach defines happiness or a successful life as the most desirable good, i.e., the ultimate goal of endeavour. In this context, obedience means striving for the goodness of God, endeavouring to achieve it, liberating one's soul for it, and thus moving from a state of godlessness to a state of godlikeness.[549] For Miskawayh, this is only possible through and with love for God.[550]

In the TA, which is divided into six chapters, Miskawayh draws on concepts from Aristotelian ethics and other texts that are harmonised with Platonic premises.[551] Thus, Miskawayh begins with a preface or introduction in which he proclaims his devotion to God and characterises his project as an effort on this path to him. This gives the writing its own framing: the ethical virtue writing is now characterised as a process of perfecting the soul for God, who alone is perfect. His book aims to provide practical guidance for his theory of good character.[552] He asks how such a character can be developed

545 Cf. Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 112; cf. Marcotte, "Ibn Miskawayh's," 159; cf. Nasīreddin Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq al-naṣīrī*, transl. A. Gafarov and Z. Şükürov (Istanbul, 2007), 60–69.

546 Cf. Khaled Abou El-Fadl, "When Happiness Fails: An Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Law and Religion* 29, I (2014): 122.

547 Cf. El-Fadl, "When Happiness Fails," 122ff.

548 See Q 11:108; Q 13:28–29; Q 16:97; Q 41:34–35; Q 52:19–21.

549 El-Fadl, "When Happiness Fails," 123.

550 Cf. Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 148ff.

551 Cf. Gerhard Endress, "Antike Ethik-Traditionen für die islamische Gesellschaft: Abū 'Alī Miskawaih," in *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*, ed. Rudolph, 232.

552 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 1.

that produces good actions with ease.[553] The path to this leads via self-knowledge or via understanding and recognising the soul (*nafs*), i.e., it involves keeping the soul pure so that it can develop, and for this purpose, everything bad and evil that is an obstacle to this growth should be warded off and weaned away.[554] At this point, he recalls Surah 91, verses 7–8:

> Consider the human soul (*nafs*) and how it is moulded in accordance with what it should be, and how it is filled with moral weaknesses as well as awareness of God.[555]

According to Miskawayh, the soul is not corporeal in its constitution, as he states in the first treatise. Turning away from bodily inclinations, desires, and actions constitutes its virtue. This process of turning away, of self-turning, lies in the purification of the soul from vices or negative virtues (*razā'il*), an objective that Miskawayh takes up with al-Kindī, and which is also deeply rooted in Plato and Aristotle in the Delphic oracle's call for self-knowledge.[556][557] [558] The soul is therefore an immortal and independent entity that is fundamental to moral life.[559]

Following Plato, Miskawayh divides the soul into three faculties or powers (Arabic, *quwwā*; Greek, *dynamis*): the rational power of the soul or the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nātiqa*), the courageous soul (*al-nafs al-ghaḍabiyya*, also *al-sabu'iyya*) and the desiring, instinctive soul (*al-nafs al-shahawiyya*, also *al-bahīmiyya*).[560] Each soul

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553 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 1.

554 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 10.

555 *Nafs* here means the self as a unity of physical body and soul. Cf. Muhammad Asad, *Die Botschaft des Koran* (Ostfildern, 2013), 1165.

556 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 10.

557 Cf. Ulrich Rudolph, *Islamische Philosophie. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 2013), 38.

558 Cf. Carl-Friedrich Geyer, *Philosophie der Antike. Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt, 1996), 37.

559 Cf. Oliver Leaman, "Miskaway," in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Oliver Leaman (London/New York, 2015), 324.

560 In the late antique worldview, each part of reality, earthly or transcendent, dead matter or living being, is attributed a specific degree of dynamis. Cf. Martin P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, vol. II, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 5,2/1 u. 5,2/2 (Munich, 1988), 704. Against this background, alongside other possible translations such as *ability* or *capacity*, that of *power*

force corresponds to a virtue, which manifests itself in the case of insight and moderate effort, and ultimately gives rise to the highest cardinal virtue, namely justice. The interaction of the four cardinal virtues of wisdom (*ḥikma*), courage (*shajāʿa*), temperance (*ʿiffa*) and justice (*ʿadāla*) is defined by Miskawayh according to Aristotelian guidelines and sees virtue as the centre (*iʿtidāl*) or measure (*nisbah*) between two extremes.[561] He agrees with the unanimous opinion of other Muslim philosophers regarding vice. Wisdom (the virtue of the rational soul) is contrasted with ignorance, abstinence or prudishness with licentiousness, bravery with cowardice, and justice with injustice. He assigns further secondary virtues to each of the four virtues.[562] A virtue cannot arise from excess or deficiency. Virtue increases when the ability to reflect on one's own life and act rationally is developed and improved. The understanding of virtue as the centre helps here, because if a person manages to maintain balance, this results in justice, though this can only be practised in interpersonal relationships.[563] This means that justice is always oriented towards the external. It is therefore not only attributable to a character disposition but also to a determination of the relationship between the various forces of the human soul (Arabic, *qābiliyya*; Greek, *hexeis*).[564] Righteous action results in a healthy soul in the same way that suitable sports exercises and appropriate medicine can produce physical health.[565] One recognises traces of Aristotle's classical doctrine of *dynamis* (potentiality), which points to the dynamic character of the life of the soul. The soul is a primal element that sets not only humans but all living beings and plants in motion, a striving movement that gives humans the possibility of becoming.

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seems to me to be the most plausible. Cf. Endress, "Antike Ethik-Traditionen für die islamische Gesellschaft," 221.

561 Cf. Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 22; Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 113.

562 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 20, 170ff. Tusī, in particular, as well as the Ottoman *akhlāq* philosopher Kınalızâde (1511–1571) and the Ottoman Sufi Muhyî-i Gülşenî (1528–1604), adopted Miskawayh's primary virtues and secondary virtues to a large extent, with minimal modifications. Cf. Ramazan Turan, "Ibn Miskeveyh'de Erdem Kavramı ve Temel Erdermler," *Namık Kemal Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1, 2 (2015): 7–35.

563 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 17.

564 Cf. Plato, *Phaedo. Politeia*, transl. by Friedrich Schleiermacher, ed. by Ernesto Gtrassi and Walter F. Otto (Hamburg, 1958), 443c–444a.

565 Cf. Horn, *Antike Lebenskunst*, 72.

A person is in a dialectical process of becoming, i.e., he or she is on the way but has not yet arrived. The process of refining character is successful when the rational soul triumphs over the other faculties of the soul, which at the same time brings the virtues into balance.

Miskawayh titles his second treatise "Character and its Refinement," and begins with a definition of *khuluq* based on Galen's work *De moribus*. He discusses, like Aristotle in the second book of the NE, that desired character attitudes—dispositions—can be acquired through practice. For Miskawayh, this means that character is not a natural disposition but an imprint gained over time that leads to balance (*iʿtidāl al-mizāj*) of the soul's faculties.[566] He holds that by virtue of God's goodness, it is possible to develop a corresponding disposition in the character through continuous and gradual practice of certain qualities. The repetition of morally good actions leads to the formation of habits.[567] According to Miskawayh, character is thus the practical place of learning, which requires an arena, namely the interpersonal sphere, in order to be able to act virtuously.[568] A distinction must be made between children and adults when it comes to the form and nature of practising these character dispositions. At this point, Miskawayh speaks of the art of refining character (*sināʾat al-akhlāq*). This art includes, for example, the memorisation of poems, which he considers to be an important cognitive aid to the deliberation process (*tashāwur*).[569]

Following the definition established by al-Kindī, Miskawayh also speaks of *faḍīla*.[570] With regard to the original meaning of *aretē*, *being good*, Aristotle poses the fundamental question of what constitutes the specific goodness in man. For Miskawayh, virtue is the best possible fulfilment of human purpose; it arises from insight,

566 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 29, 31, 32.
567 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 29.
568 Miskawayh also emphasises that religious obligations can have a virtue ethical-cultivating dimension, such as ritual prayer in the community. Cf. Oliver Leaman, *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2004), 154.
569 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 52.
570 Cf. Gerhard Endress and Peter Adamson, "Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī," in *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*, ed. Rudolph, 128ff.

deliberation, and reflection, but it must be demonstrated in deeds and actions.[571]

Before Miskawayh wrote about the highest good and happiness at the end of his second and most of his third treatise, he outlined the path to perfection of the soul about twelve years before the TA, in his work called *Tartīb al-saʿādāt* (*The Arrangement of Happiness*).[572] In it, he discusses the nature of humans and happiness and, following the Aristotelian model, elevates wisdom to the virtue with the help of which the highest bliss can be achieved.[573] The highest faculty of the mind that can be exercised at any time is constant contemplation about the world and life. Miskawayh thus lays the foundation for the TA, in which he points out the conditions of human bliss. The highest happiness is realised in the highest degree of knowledge, i.e., actions are to be regarded as divine at the highest level of perfection.[574] At this level, the essence of action is identical with the intellect, and one does not act in order to gain God's favour or because they feel happiness; rather, they are virtuous for the sake of virtue itself.[575] In many passages in the TA, Miskawayh emphasises that one is not able to realise virtuous activities of the soul's faculty on their own without the merciful support of God. Practising a character trait alone is not enough to develop a disposition, but only with the help of divine grace is it possible to attain sufficient virtue.[576] Spiritual contemplation needs God for perfection.[577] For true bliss, faith in God and faith in God's grace as a sustaining force are indispensable.[578] Like Aristotle in NE, Miskawayh does not start

571 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 13.

572 For more details, see Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Miskawayh, *Tartīb al-saʿādāt wa-manāzil al-ʿulūm*, ed. ʿAlī at-Ṭūbjī (Cairo, 1928).

573 Cf. NE 1179b; Elvira Wakelnig, "Die Philosophen in der Tradition al-Kindīs. Al-ʿĀmirī, al-Isfizārī, Miskawayh, as-Sijistanī und at-Tawhīdī," in *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*, ed. Rudolph, 238.

574 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 78.

575 Cf. Miskeveyh, *Tertîbü's-saâdet ve menazilü'l-ulûm*, ed. Ebû'l Kasım İmami (Tehran, 2000), 106; cf. Endress, "Antike Ethik-Traditionen für die islamische Gesellschaft," 223.

576 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 62.

577 Leaman, "Miskaway," 325.

578 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 77, 79; Peter Adamson, "Miskawayh's Psychology," in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception*, ed. Peter Adamson (London, 2007), 50.

from commandments and ethical duties but recognises the pursuit of happiness and the good as the implicit guiding goal of human action. He describes the achieved state as *saʿāda*.[579]

In the fourth treatise, Miskawayh emphasises that a virtuous act must be consistent with the inner attitude in order to be characterised as a virtuous action. In doing so, Miskawayh once again focuses on people: on their motives, attitudes, feelings, and disposition, because, according to his virtue ethics, it is also about human character and about becoming a good person. After all, a good person is ultimately a happy person. The blissful life is therefore a virtuous life.[580] Further on in this section, he discusses the virtue of justice (*ʿadl*) in reference to Aristotle, but also with Qur'ān passages, and elevates justice to the epitome of all virtues.[581] In the TA and in his epistle *Risāla fī māhiyyat al-ʿadl* (*Writing on the Essence of Justice*), Miskawayh defines voluntary justice as the purpose of ethics.[582]

Miskawayh links love and friendship and dedicates a separate essay to this topic. In it, he emphasises that love is of particular importance to him. No human being can live without love. True love and friendship are not based on purpose, advantage, lust, and utility, but they are rooted in the common intention to strive for goodness and virtue. To this end, it is natural for lovers/friends to exhort each other to do good, i.e., moderation and self-restraint are associated with friendship and community.[583]

Miskawayh concludes his writing with remarks on the health of the soul.[584] He repeatedly references Galen and talks about spiritual

579 Miskawayh, *Refinement*, 69.

580 Cf. NE 1177a.

581 Q 16:90; Q 2:177. Cf. Turan, "Ibn Miskeveyh'de Erdem Kavramı," 30; Endress, "Antike Ethik-Traditionen für die islamische Gesellschaft," 223.

582 Cf. Endress, "Antike Ethik-Traditionen für die islamische Gesellschaft," 224.

583 In the classical conception, another dimension of love plays a decisive role, namely the suffering of love. It could, for example, train people in abstinence. Cf. Thomas Bauer, *Liebe und Liebesdichtung in der arabischen Welt des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 1998), 73ff.

584 At this point, Miskawayh quotes extensively from al-Kindī, who is considered the first and most important Muslim philosopher in the Arabic language, from the *Risāla fī l-ḥīla li-daf' al-aḥzān* (*Epistle on the Artifice of Defence against Affliction*), which reveals in particular the Stoic and Platonic influences in his thought. Cf. Roy Jackson, *What is Islamic Philosophy?* (New York, 2014), 36; Çağrıcı, *İslam Düşüncesinde Ahlâk*, 124; Sebastian Günther and Yassir El

medicine, soul hygiene, and self-examination. The cultivation of moral health is comparable to the cultivation of physical health; it requires measures to maintain our moral balance.[585] He does not see death as a deterrent to bad deeds but characterises it as the redemption of the soul from the body.

3.3.3 Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1108)

Very little is known about the Isfahan philosopher, writer and *adīb*, but the influence of his works on many personalities and their reception by other personalities is known. Two ethical works are known: *Kitāb al-dharīʿah ilā makārim al-shārīʿah* (*The Book of the Means of the Noble Qualities of Religious Law*) and *Kitāb tafṣīl al-nashʾatayn wa tahṣīl al-saʿādatayn* (*Book on the Elucidation of the Two Generations and the Attainment of the Two Felicities*).[586] Notably, due to the textual similarities between his best-known ethical work *Kitāb al-dharīʿa* and Ghazālīs *Mīzān al-ʿamal* (as well as parts of *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*), the question of the reciprocal influence of both writings has been raised and researched.[587] Wilfred Madelung explains that Ghazālī, without naming Iṣfahānī as his source, often quotes him with a few changes and sometimes literally.[588] According to Madelung, it is estimated that half of Ghazālī's *Mīzān* is borrowed from Iṣfahānī's work. It is reasonable to assume that Ghazālī was enthusiastic about this writing, as Iṣfahānī succeeded in combining the religion of revelation with Greek philosophy in a unique way. "In his attempt to Islamise Greek ethics, he has reinterpreted Islamic ideals in terms of their ethical philosophy."[589] His philosophy is said

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Jamouhi, "Einführung. Der Moralphilosoph und Historiker Miskawaih: Traditionsbindung und Neubestimmung im Bildungsdiskurs des Islams," in *Islamic Ethics as Educational Discourse*, 32.

585 Cf. Leaman, "Miskaway," 325.

586 Cf. Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* (Leiden, 1937), 505ff.

587 Wilfred Madelung, "Ar-Rāgib al-Iṣfahānī und die Ethik al-Ghazālīs," in *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam*, ed. Wilfred Madelung (London, 1985), 152.

588 Cf. Madelung, "Ar-Rāgib al-Iṣfahānī und die Ethik al-Ghazālīs," 153.

589 Yasien Mohamed, "The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Rāghib Al-Iṣfahānī," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, January (1995): 54.

to have been more "Islamised" than Miskawayh's, as he quoted the Qur'ān more intensively and incorporated hadiths.[590] Hans Daiber characterises Iṣfahānī's work as "an independent continuation of the ideas of Greek ethics in an Islamic guise," and argues that its approach is basically similar to Miskawayh's TA, although no textual overlaps or parallels can be identified. Although Miskawayh's ideas have been adapted, they have clearly been taken further.[591] He uses his own terms and concepts in many places.[592]

In his ethics, Iṣfahānī defines the virtues according to a Miskawayhian reception of Aristotle as the centre between two extremes and follows the Platonic tripartite division of the soul.[593] He also understands the four cardinal virtues (*makārim*) as wisdom, justice, bravery, and abstinence.[594]

> Its beginning is the purification of the soul through learning, the practice of austerity, self-control, and justice, and its end is the acquisition of wisdom, generosity, gentleness, and charity. Through learning one attains wisdom, through the practice of austerity one attains generosity, through the practice of self-control one attains valour and gentleness, and through the practice of righteousness all actions are rectified.[595]

Iṣfahānī succeeds convincingly in translating the philosophical world of thought into a religious language: "'The perfection of reason,' he says, 'is (religious) knowledge (*'ilm*). The perfection of abstinence is the fear of God (*wara'*). The perfection of valour is the struggle of faith (*mujāhada*). The perfection of justice is honesty (*insāf*)."'[596] Similar to Aristotle, he also lists external goods such

590 Madelung, "Ar-Rāgib al-Iṣfahānī und die Ethik al-Ghazālīs,"162; Cf. Everett K. Rowson, "Ar-Rāgib al-Iṣfahānī," in EI.[2.]

591 Cf. Hans Daiber, "Griechische Ethik in islamischem Gewande. Das Beispiel von Rāgib al-Isfahānī (11. Jh.)," in *Historia Philosophiae Medii Aevi. Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, Festschrift für Kurt Flasch zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, vol. 1, eds. Burkhard Mojsisch and Olaf Pluta (Amsterdam, 1992), 182.

592 Cf. Mohamed, "The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Rāghib Al-Iṣfahānī," 51–75.

593 Cf. Yasien Mohamed, *The Path to Virtue: The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Raghib Al-Esfahani, An Annotated Translation with Critical Introduction of* Kitab Al-Dhari'ah ila Makarim Al-Shariah (Kuala Lumpur, 2006), 464ff.

594 Madelung, "Ar-Rāgib al-Iṣfahānī und die Ethik al-Ghazālīs," 161.

595 Madelung, "Ar-Rāgib al-Iṣfahānī und die Ethik al-Ghazālīs," 161.

596 Madelung, "Ar-Rāgib al-Iṣfahānī und die Ethik al-Ghazālīs," 162ff.

as wealth, honour, family, and noble origins as excellence (*faḍā'il*), which for the acquisition and practice of virtue are just as important as the spiritual virtues, i.e., cardinal virtues, and the physical virtues, such as health, strength, beauty, and longevity.[597]

He associates the purity of the soul with the qur'ānic concept of the caliph, i.e., for Iṣfahānī, only a person with a pure, purified soul (*ṭahārāt al-nafs*) is capable of representing God, just as the religious duties are only valid with a pure body.[598] For it is only through the purification of the soul that a *kalifa* can emulate God in his guiding function (*al-siyāsa*) and strive for the realisation of the noble acts of law, which is in line with the idea that humanity is a microcosm of the great cosmos.[599] Daiber summarises the objective of Isfahānī's ethics with Isfahānī as follows: "It aims to lead to bliss (*sa'āda*) in this world and, above all, in the hereafter."[600]

With regard to Iṣfahānī as well as Fārābī, Daiber states that both are based on a universalistic concept of religion, according to which religions do not differ from each other in their inner (*bātin*) meaning (*ma'ānī*) but in their outer (*zāhirī*) form, and consequently religious truth is not reserved for a single religious community.[601] Crucial to the acquisition of virtues and the attainment of bliss in the hereafter is the idea that this is only possible with God's permission (*tawfīq*). Ifahānī's work inspired not only al-Ghazālī but also many Muslim ethicists such al-Ṭūsī and Jalaladdīn al-Dawwānī (1502), who were intensive recipients of his work.[602]

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597 Madelung, "Ar-Rāgib al-Iṣfahānī und die Ethik al-Ghazālīs," 163.

598 Cf. Daiber, "Griechische Ethik in islamischem Gewande," 184.

599 The metaphor of man as a microcosm is borrowed from the Ikhwan al-Ṣafā' group of philosophers. For more information, see Detlef Quintern and Kamal Ramahi, *Qarmaṭen und Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā'. Gerechtigkeitsbewegungen unter den Abbasiden und die universalistische Geschichtstheorie* (Hamburg, 2006), 161.

600 Daiber, "Griechische Ethik in islamischem Gewande," 184ff. Not unlike the philosophical circles of Baghdad and Isfahan, in Andalusia in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Ibn Rushd's reactions to Ibn Sina and Ghazālī led to an intensive discussion of philosophical models of happiness based on the Aristotelian model and the question of the good life. Cf. Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Arabic Philosophy and Averroism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, 2007), 113.

601 Cf. Daiber, "Griechische Ethik in islamischem Gewande," 189ff.

602 Cf. Mohamed, "The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Rāghib Al-Iṣfahānī," 55.

3.3.4 Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (c. 1055–1111)

Al-Ghazālī is a multifaceted personality and one of the most important scholars in the history of Islamic thought, culture, and theology. He is important for the present context of the cultivation of the self because he interwove theological, philosophical, and mystical approaches in his later thought. Thus, Ghazālī is an interesting dialogue partner in principle and in the context of this work, which is why he is given a little more space here.

Ghazālī grew up to become a scholar at a time when the basic orientation of religious policy no longer favoured the support of pro-rationalist and pro-Shiite thinking but instead took a pro-Sunni and restrictive direction.[603] Seljuk religious policy established so-called *niẓāmīya madāris* (theological and jurisprudential seminaries), as a result of which Ash'arite theology became widespread in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Ghazālī also taught at the influential Niẓāmīya *madrasa*. After many years of teaching, he devoted himself increasingly to mysticism, which marked the beginning of a period of intensive engagement with various intellectual and cultural traditions. Ebrahim Moosa characterises this phase of Ghazālī's thinking as spiritual creativity, as in-betweenness, in which he attempted to bring different disciplines into a dialogue.[604]

> Two personal crises, probably triggered by fundamental questions of epistemology and his doubts about the reliability of rational endeavours, led al-Ghazālī in 1095 to give up his university position and leave his family and property behind in order to go on a journey to inner knowledge via the practised systematic path of Islamic mysticism.[605]

603 Cf. Frederek Musall, "Vom 'Schlüssel der Wissenschaften' zum 'Schlüssel des Gesetzes'. Wissenskultur und Wissenstransfer im europäischen Mittelalter am Beispiel Moshe ben Maimons," in *Mittelalter im Labor. Die Mediävistik testet Wege zu einer transkulturellen Europawissenschaft*, ed. Michael Borgolte et al. (Berlin, 2008), 215ff.

604 Cf. Ebrahim Moosa, *Ghazālī and the Poetics of Imagination* (North Carolina, 2005), 28.

605 Muna Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis von Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit. Versuch einer islamisch begründeten Positionsbestimmung* (Münster, 2016), 123.

This journey took him from Syria via Jerusalem to Egypt, on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, and then back to Tus, where he taught for a while and then died in 1111.[606]

In the literature, Ghazālī is portrayed as a critic of philosophy, but this does not do justice to the fact that he both criticises and appreciates the *falsafa* in a differentiated manner. He does not use the term *falsafa* to refer to philosophy as a whole but rather to identify an intellectual movement, namely that of Ibn Sīnā, his students and followers.[607] He particularly criticises this Islamic philosophical tradition of thought (*tā'ifa*) and a certain claim to knowledge in philosophy.[608] He criticises this group for not complying with the religious laws of Islam and the performative claim of orthopraxy. He also criticises those Muslim thinkers who elevated philosophy to the sole art of living for themselves. He rejects this form of *falsafa* as an alternative religion to Islam (*ghayr dīn al-islam*).[609] Ghazālī himself is criticised for not having developed a coherent concept. On the other hand, it must be noted that he aimed to do justice to the horizons of understanding of different readerships and to introduce a new methodological approach.[610]

Ghazālī laid down his own philosophical and theological foundations, which hardly changed until the end of his life, in his work *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*). Frank Griffel describes Ghazālī's magnum opus, *The Revival/Renewal of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥya' 'ulūm al-dīn*), the fundamental and most cited religious work by Ghazālī, as a novel "advocacy of Aristotelian virtue ethics" and characterises it as a "handbook on everyday ethics."[611] A distinction with Griffel's statement must be made in that Ghazālī's specificity does not lie in pushing an Aristotelian understanding of

606 He describes his personal development and scientific thought in his autobiography-like work *al-Munqid min al-ḍalāl* (*The Saviour from Error*), written between 1106 and 1109. Cf. Ghazālī, *Der Erretter*, 45–48.

607 Cf. Frank Griffel, "Al-Gazālī als Kritiker," in *Islamische Philosophie im Mittelalter*, eds. Eichner, Perkams, and Schäfer, 289.

608 Cf. Griffel, "Al-Gazālī als Kritiker," 289.

609 Cf. Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*/Tahāfut al-falāsifa*: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, ed. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, 2000), 2, 4.

610 Cf. Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 122.

611 Griffel, "Al-Gazālī als Kritiker," 293.

virtue ethics as a novelty. Rather, what is actually new about his reasoning is that he sees the remembrance of God as a way of refining good character (*ḥusn al-khulūq*) and expands the virtue ethics approach in this respect. Moreover, according to Ghazālī, cultivating a good character is not possible solely through human endeavour but is a development of the human faculty in response to God's empowerment or mercy (*raḥma*).[612] This means that Ghazālī combines a tradition of virtue ethics developed from ancient philosophical material with the traditional *akhlāq* tradition based on the Qur'ān and Sunnah to create an action-oriented theology, which he reformulates against a spiritual horizon of experience under mystical auspices. His masterpiece is a fusion of faith and knowledge, ritual practice, ethics, and mystical experience. He thus unites three strands of knowledge into a synergetic whole: theology, philosophy, and mysticism. The theologian Darius Asghar-Zadeh summarises this aptly:

> Al-Gazālī's perfectionist thinking also has an ethical consequence in terms of action and virtue, which lies in the demand for a healthy synthesis of intellectual-spiritual formation and existential-practical self-optimisation.[613]

He was obviously familiar with the TA works, as in his *Revival*, he not only included mystics such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (642–728), al-Muhāsibī (ca. 781–857) and Al-Makkī (d. 996), but also philosophers such as Miskawayh, Iṣfahānī, and Ibn Sīna, and thus placed himself in the virtue-oriented *akhlāq* tradition.[614]

The *Revival* emerged from the experiences of his spiritual phase of life and his God-centred pursuit of knowledge. It was written in 1095 and, together with the short manual *Mizān al-ʿamal* (*The Scales of Action*), represents Ghazālī's most important work on *akhlāq*, be-

612 Cf. Ghazālī, *Der Erretter*, 45; Q 13:28.

613 Darius Asghar-Zadeh, "Arabisch-islamische Philosophie: Ibn Sīnā, al-Gazālī und Ibn Rushd," in *Kleine Philosophiegeschichte. Eine Einführung für das Theologiestudium*, eds. Aaron Langenfeld and Martin Breul (Paderborn, 2017), 63.

614 Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was also well-versed in theology and moral theology. Due to his passion for mysticism, he is mainly characterised as a mystic; see Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 152. Cf. Griffel, "Al-Gazālī als Kritiker," 121; see Timothy J. Winter, Ihyā ʿulūm al-dīn. *On Disciplining the Soul and On Breaking the Two Desires*: Kitāb Riyāḍat al-nafs *and* Kitāb Kasr al-shahawatayn, *Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, transl. T. J. Winter (Cambridge, 1997).

cause he approached the topic not with his philosophical self-understanding but with his theological profile, drawing extensively from his mystical world of experience and his knowledge of law.[615] The most important reference work for Ghazālī was the aforementioned treatise *Dharīʿah ilā makārim al-sharīʿah* by Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī. Both works have been the subject of thorough preliminary research, which is why they will only be presented briefly here.[616]

The *Revival* consists of four chapters, each comprising ten sections or books, i.e., a total of 40 books, which Annemarie Schimmel does not regard as a coincidence but as intended, as it is the number of days that a mystic lives in seclusion at the beginning of his path.[617]

In the first chapter, Ghazālī formulates the necessary knowledge of religious practice (*ʿibādāt*) as if in a legal compendium and emphasises that its fulfilment, together with social duties (*ʿadāt*), can lead to a good character. For the most part, these externally perceptible deeds are an expression of an internalisation of the bond with God.[618] But unlike in *fiqh* works, he discusses the *akhlāq* dimension of actions and their influence on the development of morally good character traits. The second chapter and other passages are similar to the *adab* works, which provide concrete instructions (such as table manners, duties of the learner and the teacher, proper handling of money) for various areas of life. The third and fourth chapters deal with ways of cultivating virtues and avoiding vices that prevent believers from reaching a higher level in their character development. The third part speaks in concrete terms about those things that lead to destruction, while the final fourth chapter unfolds those things that lead to salvation. Each commandment or topic is introduced and elaborated through qurʾānic verses, reports from the prophetic

615 Cf. Rajendra Prasad, *A Historical-Developmental Study of Classical Indian Philosophy of Morals* (New Delhi, 2009), 524.

616 Cf. Ulrich Rudolph, "Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī," in *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie: Philosophie in der islamischen Welt, Vol. 2: 11. und 12. Jahrhundert. Zentrale und östliche Gebiete*, eds. Ulrich Rudolph, Renate Würsch, and Amos Bertolacci (Basel, 2021), 277.

617 Cf. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam: Die Geschichte des Sufismus* (Munich, 1995), 143.

618 Cf. Marianne Farina, "Theological Ethics of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī," in *900 Jahre al-Gazālī im Spiegel der islamischen Wissenschaften*, eds. Bülent Uçar and Frank Griffel (Göttingen, 2015), 161.

tradition and other narrations, such as those of the Sufis and other believers.[619]

In the twenty-second book of the fourth chapter, *Riyaḍāt al-nafs wa tahdhīb al-akhlāq wa mu'ālajātī amrāḍ al-qalbī* (*The Education of the Soul, the Refinement of Character, and the Healing of the Disease of the Heart*), Ghazālī unfolds his *akhlāq* philosophy, which he sets out under eleven headings.[620] These are as follows:[621]

1. The Excellence of Good Character and the Rebuke of Bad Character
2. The Essence (*ḥaqīqa*) of Good and Bad Character
3. The Transformation of Character Through Education (*tarbiya*)
4. How can Good Character be Achieved?
5. The Path to Purification
6. Signs of Diseases of the Heart and Signs of Recovery
7. The Way to Recognise Weaknesses
8. Evidence and Testimonies on the Topic
9. Characteristics of Good Character
10. On Raising Children
11. Prerequisites for Striving for the Hereafter and Progressing on the Path of Practice

In this book, Ghazālī essentially deals with the virtues and the conditions under which good character can be formed and considers how the soul can reach perfection. He sometimes argues mystically, directly citing Qur'ān verses, hadiths, and Sufi aphorisms, giving the spiritual dimension a dominant role in Ghazālīsh-ethical thinking.[622] Sometimes he argues philosophically, for example, when he states quite understandably in part two that character is a disposition

619 Cf. Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen*, 143.

620 Imam-i Ghazālī, *Ihya-i Ulum-id-din*, Turkish transl. Ali Arslan, vol. 6 (Istanbul, 1972), 8; hereafter: Arslan, *Ihya*. *Riyāḍat* means, as previously explained, to train and educate the soul forces with mystical-spiritual exercises.

621 Cf. Rudolph, "Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī," 275.

622 According to Ghazālī, it is the mystics who make the soul, heart, and character the starting point of their exercises. They practised their exercises systematically and under guidance in order to purify the soul, improve the ethical disposition and prepare the heart for the invocation of the exalted God, since the mystical path is not comprehensible through theoretical knowledge but in its practical effectiveness. Cf. Ghazālī, *Der Erretter*, 40, 46.

of the soul that tends towards the good or the bad, and that virtue is to be understood as the measure of habits.

In the classical view, exercise, education, and training were understood in the sense of regular and deliberate practice with a specific end goal, namely, to achieve the love of God in this world and the hereafter.[623] In this conception, God represented a lover whose love the believer feared losing in the face of a committed sin or the insistence on a bad character trait. It is not so much the fear of God's eschatological punishment but the fear of losing God's closeness and love— Ghazālī writes about this in part ten.

In parts two and ten of the *Iḥyāʾ*, he distinguishes between the outer constitution (physis) (*khalq*) and the inner (moral) disposition (*khulq*), to which he ascribes a potential for change. Like Miskawayh, Ghazālī uses the term *faḍīla* for virtue and understands it entirely in its etymological meaning of increase and growth, namely of faith and good character traits. It is the measure (*iʿtidāl*) between two extremes. He also mentions four cardinal virtues, which he calls *ummahāt al-akhlāq* (mothers of character): wisdom (*ḥikma*), valour (*shajāʿa*), temperance (*ʿiffa*), and justice (*ʿadl*). Further secondary virtues (*furūʿ*) can be derived from the balance of these four principles (*uṣūl*).[624] Only those who develop a good character based on the example of the Prophet, who is the ideal embodiment of the virtues, have the possibility of the highest happiness. Anger (*ghaḍab*), lust (*shahwa*), and vices that could interfere with the development of good character should not be completely weaned away, but the right measure of control should be taught. Ghazālī sees religious rites and duties as part of practical exercise; they contribute to the development of virtues, provided the person is oriented towards God.[625]

Ghazālī emphasises the consideration and awareness of intentionality. This is an invitation to people to reflect inwardly on their standards of action, motives, desires, and inclinations before carrying out the action and to visualise the presence of God throughout. It is, so to speak, an invitation to deliberation, which is inevitably required for an adequate decision to act.

623 Cf. Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen*, 42–46.
624 Cf. Rudolph, "Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī," 275.
625 Cf. Rudolph, "Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī," 275.

In *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, his treatise on ethics, he combines explicit philosophical considerations with the concerns of Sufism.[626] In the introduction, Ghazālī makes it clear that right action is connected to true knowledge (*ʿilm*) and bliss (*saʿāda*). For him, the urge to acquire knowledge is part of human nature.[627] Since one's striving for knowledge is essentially orientated towards perfection and God is the perfect being, the perfection of knowledge therefore lies in the knowledge of God.[628] For Ghazālī, knowledge of God is the highest happiness. He interprets this state of knowledge as a gift from God, which man cannot obtain through the fulfilment of certain religious duties but which is an expression of divine mercy.[629]

In addition to intellectual endeavours to acquire knowledge, mystically based knowledge of the heart plays a decisive role, which Ghazālī considers to be a further source of knowledge after reason. For Ghazālī, the heart is the seat of reason with a coordinating function.[630] It is also a constitutive faculty of holding the truth (*tasdīq*) of faith (*imān*). This means that people need the expertise and competence of their hearts in order to find their way to the divine home and thus (back to) bliss.[631] The decisive factor on this path, however, is love for God.

> Rather, love of God is the expression of knowledge of God, and while mystical inspiration (*ilhām*) plays a role in attaining the highest degree of knowledge of God, as we have seen, al-Ghazālī advises the most qualified aspirants, the ones most likely to attain their goal, to pursue mystical insight only after careful preparation through rational investigation.[632]

Ghazālī also divides the soul into three powers (*quwwa*): the desiring soul power, the wrathful soul power, and the rational soul. He

626 Cf. Rudolph, "Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī," 277.
627 Cf. Binyamin Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to know God," *Studia Islamica* 77 (1993):149.
628 Cf. Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 126.
629 Cf. Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 127.
630 Ghazālī does not make a clear distinction between the terms, and seems to use soul (*nafs*), heart (*qalb*), and reason (*ʿaql*) interchangeably. Cf. Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 133.
631 Cf. Arslan, *Ihya*, vol. 6, 8.
632 Kenneth Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Sciences* (Oxford, 2014), 92.

admits that, although this is an adoption of Ibn Sīna (a Platonic and Aristotelian one), it does not make him a Neoplatonic mystic.[633] In the *Mizān*, Ghazālī also takes up the four cardinal virtues and differentiates between them as dianoetic and ethical virtues.[634] At the same time, he emphasises the changeability of human ethical dispositions (*khulq*). The path to the perfection of the soul leads through good actions that require continuous effort and, as it were, divine goodness (*jūd*).

The task of man with regard to his soul is therefore to bring his powers into the right condition (*mizān*).[635] Thus, Ghazālī did not consider mysticism to be a way of thinking that demands renunciation in the Christian ascetic sense, i.e., with the aim of fighting down instinctive and covetous inclinations.[636] Rather, for him, it is an all-encompassing place of learning, as effort is required for the perfection of the soul. He is also convinced that knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence helps a person to strive for a special balance of virtue and thus to perfect the soul. The harmony of the soul can be disturbed by other people and therefore requires training (*riyaḍāt*) and practice (*tarbiya*) in order to keep the character traits in balance.[637]

Ghazālī presents the Prophet Muḥammad as the person who achieved perfection in his endeavours in order to inspire believers to strive for virtue themselves. For Ghazālī, a person can only be virtuous in their deeds, whereas theoretical knowledge of virtues and their training alone do not make someone virtuous. The decisive point for him—and for most mystically influenced authors—was not to turn one's back on the worldly, but rather not to give the profane any significant importance in one's own heart, i.e., not to become dependent on material things.[638]

633 Cf. Griffel, "Al-Gazālī als Kritiker," 293.
634 Cf. Rudolph, "Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī," 277.
635 Cf. Abū-Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn-Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *The Mizān al-ʿamal* (Darmstadt, 2006), 124.
636 Cf. Horn, *Antike Lebenskunst*, 32.
637 Cf. Arslan, *Ihya*, vol. 3, 78.
638 Cf. Al-Ghazālī, *Der Erretter*, 42.

For Ghazālī, the pursuit of happiness is aimed at communion with God.[639] Seeking fulfilment in the wrong places (even in places that rational observation would identify as wrong) could entangle people in contexts and structures that are morally questionable and blind them to such an extent that they can no longer recognise this.[640] It is therefore evident that revelation plays a pivotal role as a criterion. Accordingly, Ghazālī's ethics appear to be a moral code based on faith that can be justified by reason and is founded on virtue. For Ghazālī, ethical education takes place within a framework of faith, reason, and the pursuit of knowledge of God and the love of the Creator for his creation. Against this background, I can cautiously summarise that Ghazālī succeeds in successfully integrating the mystical into rational thinking.

Reason, which is at the heart of the human being, connects man with God. On the path to unfolding his innermost being, he moves towards the experience of unity. According to Ilona Kock, human beings perfect themselves by fulfilling their task of self-development and rational development.[641] In this vision of their being, i.e., in their deep knowledge of God, they realise a basis for a way of life oriented towards love, justice, and responsibility. The innermost core of human beings consists of a correspondence with the divine, which, according to Ghazālī, can be achieved through the following efforts: the refinement of character, the dedicated endeavour for an ethical way of life, and religious/spiritual contemplation. If this is taken to its logical conclusion, every "person who deliberately behaves unethically (thus) denies God" forfeits their responsiveness to God's mercy.[642]

Human reason is referenced to the eternally transcendent and enlightened primordial reason of God. Although the will is the faculty that puts into practice what is recognised as reasonable, it can only

639 See also: "flourishing according to God's plan for human beings to experience infinite happiness with God"; Farina, "Theological Ethics of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī," 180.

640 This experience emerges from his reflections on his status as a young scholar at a *niẓāmīya madrāsa*, his relationship with the Seljuk state, and his compulsion to resume teaching.

641 Ilona Kock, *Ontologische Begründungen von Ethik durch Einheitserfahrung im Denken Plotins und Ghazalis* (Nordhausen, 2011), 9, 162ff.

642 Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 78.

do so on the basis of reason. Reason is like a regulator, so to speak, but it can also err and requires a criterion. This is revelation, which can correct human reason if necessary. This means that human reason, which is the place and medium of knowledge, remains for Ghazālī dependent on the enlightened reason of God, which cannot err. For him, the synergy of knowledge of the heart and reason culminates in the mystical experience of tasting (*dhawq*).[643] He thus understands the path of intellectual endeavour and that of tasting as equivalent paths to the knowledge of God.[644] According to Ghazālī, reflection on human nature in the light of Islamic teachings enables the believer to live well (in the sense of *eudaimonia*), which goes hand in hand with acquiring the ability to reflect on the One who brought them into existence. The remembrance of God is therefore a central aspect of Ghazālī's moral concept.

> Those who possess beautiful character are firm in a certitude (*yaqīn*) concerning God's active presence, and this gives birth to contentment (*riḍā*): a peace in the heart resulting from being attentive to God's will.[645]

Ghazālī's ethics appears to be a theological virtue ethics and, as Marianne Farina aptly states in an essay written from a comparative perspective on Ghazālī's and Thomas Aquinas' theological virtues, differs from a deontological approach.[646] Ghazālī superstructures his virtue ethics with mystical ethics culminating in the love of God. The call to ethical action comes from God, whereby man is placed under the obligation to act responsibly. In Ghazālī's thinking, action is a necessary condition for the acquisition of theoretical knowledge. "From this it can be concluded in al-Ghazālī's sense that a person's happiness is conditioned by an ethic that (also) strives to fulfil the rights of others."[647]

643 Cf. Asghar-Zadeh, "Arabisch-islamische Philosophie," 62ff.
644 Cf. Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 133.
645 Farina, "Theological Ethics of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, 178.
646 Cf. Farina, "Theological Ethics of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī," 155.
647 Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 136.

3.3.5 Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (1201–1274)

Although Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī is primarily known as a philosopher, he also made outstanding contributions in the fields of *kalām*, mathematics, astronomy, and Sufism, and he is one of the figures who had a lasting influence on the moral philosophical thinking of others in the field of philosophical ethics. His theological and metaphysical views are reflected in his Persian work, *al-Fuṣūl*, and his *Kitāb al-tajrīd* (*The Book of Catharsis*), which has become one of the most important sources for the study of Shiite theology and, as a result, is one of his most cited works.[648]

Ṭūsī also wrote texts on Sufism, including his admiration for the mystic Ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (857–922), and was in correspondence with the great Sufi master Jallāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207–1273) and Sadraddīn Qunawī (1207–1274).[649] His book *Aḵlāq-e nāṣerī*, written in Persian (Arabic, *Akhlāq al-naṣīrī*; *The Nasirin Akhlāq*), was influenced by these relationships. As we know, Ṭūsī was a Shiite figure, which is why he further developed his ideas in the light of Shiite influences.[650] Therefore, Ṭūsī's work seems to me to be the result of a successful philosophical synergy between languages and denominations. When Ṭūsī was asked to translate Miskawayh's TA from Arabic into Persian in turbulent political times, he was so enthusiastic about this work—as he explains in his foreword—that he feared his translation would not do justice to the author and book. As a result, he decided to write his own book in Persian, closely based on the TA but not as a duplicate, which would later be the source for further *akhlāq* works.[651] His book, completed in 1235, is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the refinement of *akhlāq*, the second to household management, and the third to the philosophy of the state. Thus, in comparison to the TA, Ṭūsī supplements his work with two areas of philosophy

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648 Cf. Mehdi Aminarazavi, "Nasir al-Din Tusi," in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, 483.

649 Cf. Aminarazavi, "Nasir al-Din Tusi," 483. On the correspondence, see Gudrun Schubert, "Annäherungen. Der mystisch-philosophische Briefwechsel zwischen Ṣadr ud-Dīn Qonawī und Nāṣir ud-Dīn Ṭūsī," *Bibliotheca Islamica* vol. 43 (Stuttgart 2011).

650 Cf. Nanji, "Islamic Ethics," 115.

651 Cf. Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq al-naṣīrī*, 12ff.

that seem essential to him, showing his Avicennian character. With regard to political philosophy, he is largely oriented towards Fārābī's ideas, revealing that his ethics are based on the principle of social coexistence, which is supported by people's love for one another as a sign of their striving for harmony.[652]

For Ṭūsī, *akhlāq* is a disposition (*malaka*) and the totality of all habits, from which a person is also able to act correctly spontaneously.[653] Like Aristotle and other moral philosophers, Ṭūsī believes that every disposition and bad habit can be changed through practice. Thus, character refinement and habits aim to develop virtues. Following the example of Galen and Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, Ṭūsī establishes a connection between medicine and the refinement of character traits: he believes that medical methods are helpful in the training and preservation of virtues and the treatment of vices.[654] He therefore describes illness as a failure of virtue.[655]

His approach is based on a three-part model of the soul: reason, aspiration, and desire. To these he adds corresponding virtues, which are identical to those of Miskawayh.[656] Ṭūsī also defines virtue as the centre (*iʿtidāl*) of two extremes (*ifrād wa-tafrīd*), which can vary in their form of expression according to time, place, and person.[657] The vices (*radhīlāt*) are the respective extreme qualities that deviate from the centre.[658] Accordingly, wisdom is the centre between foolishness and cunning, bravery between aggression and cowardice, prudence between licentiousness (of lust) and dullness, and justice is the centre between tyranny and the acceptance of tyranny.[659] He assigns further secondary virtues to each of the four virtues, whereby he adopts, with slight modifications, essential structures from Miskawayh.[660] Even though Ṭūsī prioritises justice,

652 Cf. Mohamed Turki, *Einführung in die arabisch-islamische Philosophie* (Munich, 2015), 174.
653 Cf. Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq al-naṣīrī*, 81ff.
654 Cf. Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq al-naṣīrī*, 133ff.
655 Cf. Karaman, "Islam Ahlak Filozofları," 185.
656 Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq al-naṣīrī*, 20–80.
657 Cf. Anar Gafarov, "Nasirüddin Tûsî," in *TDV*, 443.
658 Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq al-naṣīrī*, 66–67, 108–109, 117–119.
659 Following Aristotle, Ṭūsī also counts friendship as a virtue; Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq al-naṣīrī*, 314ff.
660 Cf. Turan, "Ibn Miskeveyh'de Erdem Kavramı," *passim*.

which results from the realisation of the other virtues, over all other virtues because it is the central virtue for political coexistence, justice nevertheless means maintaining the right centre ground. The realisation of justice makes it possible to come closer to bliss, because only careful consideration leads to just action. Accordingly, one is virtuous when the powers of the soul are oriented towards justice, and this is only possible in a direct connection with society. In the fulfilment of justice, Ṭūsī sees the reflection of God's unity in the world, which can be traced via the connecting line that unites justice with equality, equality with unity, and unity with God, for it is a natural consequence of God's sovereignty to be just to oneself and to others.[661] Ṭūsī understood the goal of human creation to be the awareness of the absolute good or union with God, and the striving to become a good person and thereby to become a follower of God (*khalīfa*).[662] This is possible on the path of insight and reflection, as well as with the purification of bad character traits. In the third part of his writing, he describes humans as social beings, and the necessary consequence of this is community. The motive behind this principle of social relations is love.[663] Communal coexistence is therefore based on love, which is expressed in people's endeavours to live together successfully. It is not surprising that Ṭūsī values the position of love more highly than Aristotle when one remembers that he is at home in the Sufi tradition, in which God *embodies* love itself.[664]

Like Miskawayh, Ṭūsī attaches importance to religious beliefs and religious practice for character traits. He considers the religious law as a remedy or corrective in the face of negative desires of the self, for the divine law prescribes only good and forbids immorality and evil.[665] This is why one sometimes comes across qurʾānic quotations and theological positions in his work. He adds submission, trust, and the need for orthopraxy to the ethical virtues.

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661 Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq al-naṣīrī*, 108ff., 131ff., 145ff.

662 Cf. Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen, "Intention, Faith, and Virtue in the Shi'i Moral Philosophy," in *Moralische Vortrefflichkeit*, eds. Schmidt and Nassery, 117.

663 Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq al-naṣīrī*, 247ff.

664 It is reasonable to assume that Rūmī's influence is noticeable.

665 Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq al-naṣīrī*, 105ff., 135ff., 278ff.

At the request of the political thinker Shamsaddīn al-Juwaynī (d. 1284), Ṭūsī wrote the work *Awsāf al-ashrāf* (*The Attributes of the Noble*) following his *Akhlāq-e naṣerī*, in which he outlines a path for the purification of the soul from a Sufi perspective.

3.4 Brief Summary

Other Muslim philosophers of virtue could be listed, but those presented so far provide sufficient insight into the topic. The authors presented here and their relevant works from the ninth to twelfth centuries illustrate the extensive treatment of virtue ethics in Islamic philosophical thought. At the conceptual level, differences can be identified in the philosophical concept of virtue ethics.[666] In the works presented, as well as in many others, we discovered that they amalgamate the Aristotelian understanding of virtue as the centre of two false extremes in the attitudes or vices with the Platonic doctrine of the soul, which reveals in an exemplary manner how differently Muslim philosophers defined the relationship between body and soul, soul and character, but above all how differently they understood the concept of the soul. The three parts of the soul are assigned virtues and vices that are not directly modelled on an ancient example.[667] However, they all agree that virtue is a relatively stable psychological disposition (*hexis/malaka*) or character trait (*ēthos/khulq*), which can only develop after countless exercises.[668] The practising of dispositions takes place in a practical way in dealing with others and has a reflective effect in the cultivation of one's own person. Emphasis is placed on altruistic responsibility for others and the overcoming of egocentric motivations. Although the philosophers basically adhered to Aristotle's four cardinal virtues, a progressive diversification into secondary or sub-virtues or qualities

666 Cf. Cleophea Ferrari, "Antike Tugendethik in der mittelalterlichen Philosophie der islamischen Welt," in *Tugend*, eds. Cleophea Ferrari and Dagmar Kiesel (Frankfurt, 2016), 109ff.

667 Cf. Ferrari, "Antike Tugendethik," 117.

668 See *hexis* in NE 1105b25–1106a13. In the Arabic translation of the NE, *hexes* is usually rendered as *ḥāl*, a state, and as *hay'a*, a disposition of the soul. *Malaka*, a disposition, is used less frequently in Arabic translation but consistently by al-Fārābī, while Miskawayh, Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, and Gazali use *hay'a*.

can be observed in the course of their reception (also among the mystics).[669] For example, ideal human behavior is differentiated into gentleness, respectfulness, modesty, and kindness.

Islamic philosophical thinking shows very clearly that Islamic ethical virtue work on the self cannot be limited to the concept of a way of life as an art of living. Rather, it is characterised as a socially engaged and physically involved practice of self-cultivation, i.e., work on the self is only possible in interaction with a counterpart. Gaining painful experiences such as rejection, discrimination, or degradation is also part of this path of cultivation. These experiences also shape one's own being. In short, for Muslim philosophers of virtue, the basic trait of all concepts of virtue is self-cultivation and human socialisation. The cultivation of the self through virtue ethics is a means of socialisation.

From the philosophical thinkers, it becomes clear that working on the self requires human activity, but from a theological perspective, it also includes divine grace and mercy, which enable people to do good in their endeavours. The conviction and belief in one's dependence on God invites us to a certain anthropological serenity, meaning the ambivalent nature of human beings, which harbours a tendency towards both the good and the bad.[670] Humans have the potential to change or are in need of change. This anthropological perspective calls for the repeated practice of virtue in the conviction that God gives people this ability. Composure refers to the aspect that, on the one hand, people do not need to hurry in their actions, because changing habits requires consistency and permanence. On the other hand, people should not despair if their active endeavours do not immediately result in a personal response. With their catalogues of virtues, Muslim thinkers show people how they could be if they set out on a quest to recognise their true nature.

Another fundamental feature of the virtue ethics thinking of Muslim philosophers is the conviction that vices cannot be completely weaned or "killed," on the one hand, but that the practice of good character traits should, at the same time, provide the right measure for mastering blameworthy qualities, on the other hand. Religious rites and duties, as part of practical exercises, concern both the exter-

669 Cf. Yaran, *İslam Ahlak Felsefesine Giriş*, 42.

670 In the Qur'ān, man is described as weak and prone to evil; see Q 4:28; 12:53.

nal and internal aspects of man. The religious (qurʾānic) incentive to donate or be generous, for example, is, from this perspective, an exercise for people to train their disposition to give. At this point, the practical nature of virtue cultivation becomes clear once again. The cultivation of virtue receives its socialised form through a rite and expresses itself in humanity.

Miskawayh describes cultivation as the art of refining character (*sināʾat al-akhlāq*), which we encounter in the chapter on mysticism as the *embellishment* of character; each stage of human development has its own recommended form of practice for this art. Miskawayh mentions the memorisation of poems as a basic medium for refining or embellishing character, but this can be supplemented by other aids, such as music, literature or artistic activities, as well as by virtuous friends.

While in antiquity emotions were held in low esteem philosophically, they were positively valued in Arab-Islamic reception. Every human being has the ability to become angry, for example. However, this natural disposition does not yet determine how strongly, how often, or about what someone gets angry. For example, anger that strives for a lofty religious goal and does not arise from self-centred motives is desirable as long as it is shown to inhibit or stop an injustice. In other words, a feeling is included in becoming, in relationship to the world and to other people. A feeling is also a signpost (and in the case of anger or rage, even a warning signal) that says something about the person's current state of mind and thus invites the person to mindful self-perception. This means that feelings that are localised in the soul are also part of the active cultivation process. At the same time, it is an important anthropological statement that people are not at the mercy of their feelings or should fight them; rather, they can and should cultivate them. For Muslim philosophers of virtue, feelings are a natural part of self-perception, if not the indicators for understanding and even recognising one's own behaviour and drives.

4 Ethical Thinking in Islamic Mysticism: A Brief Outline

> The science of Sufism (*'ilm al-taṣawwuf*) also developed in parallel to the other fields of knowledge and combined the structural reflection of Islam with its inherent spirituality. This combination of theology and spirituality was repeatedly put under pressure throughout history and was repeatedly defended.[671]

Sufism has cultivated diverse ethical ideas and played an integral role in the moral characterisation of Muslim societies.[672] Not only through its rich literature but also through its practical dimension, Islamic mysticism offers different approaches to the cultivation of the self, which ultimately aims at becoming one (*fanā'*) with God. In this context, the mystical concepts that deal with the personal cultivation of basic ethical attitudes and their connection with practical forms or rites are of interest. In mysticism, however, the term *nafs* was given a different characterisation than in philosophy, which cannot be understood as something constant but rather as a polysemantic term whose usage shows its own development. The focus of cultivation was placed on the life of the soul. Simply put, the term *nafs* primarily denoted a negative, worldly, impetuous entity that must be constantly admonished and monitored.[673] In mysticism, life is understood as an endless struggle aimed at overcoming, defeating, and detaching oneself from the *nafs*, which is understood as the ego, soul, or passionate self, in order to come ever closer to the divine and ultimately strive for realisation or union with God.[674] According to the Sufi concept, one can only find God when one proves oneself as a human being in victory over the self.

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671 Jan Felix Engelhardt, *Islamische Theologie im deutschen Wissenschaftssystem. Ausdifferenzierung und Selbstkonzeption einer neuen Wissenscha*ftsdisziplin (Wiesbaden, 2017), 74.

672 Cf. Paul L. Heck, "Mysticism as Morality. The Case of Sufism," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 34.2 (2006): 253.

673 Cf. Sara Sviri, "The Self and Its Transformation in Ṣūfīsm: With Special Reference to Early Literature," in *Self and Self-Transformation in the History of Religions*, eds. David Schulman and Guy Stroumsa (Oxford, 2002), 195–215, 13.

674 Cf. Maria Massi Dakake, "Walking upon the Path of Godlike Men? Women and the Feminine in the Islamic Mystical Tradition," in *Sufism: Love and Wisdom*, eds. Jean-Louis Michon and Roger Gaetani (Indiana, 2006), 133.

As mentioned, the path of the mystics is referred to as *ʿilm al-sulūk* (knowledge of the wanderer). In this conception, the mystical ethical teaching contains practical instructions on wandering (*sayr*) and the spiritual path (*sulūk*), which concern both the inner world of the mystic and outer behaviour.[675] Such treatises also deal with *adab* in the sense of fine manners, which concern the interaction between the master and his disciple and can be described as the central educational focus in mystical practice for the respective path.[676] However, even a cat knows where and when to stand and wait in front of the butcher's shop. Correct behaviour is important, but the mystics want to kindle another fire in people. Their goal is *maʿrifa* (realisation), which is regarded as the ultimate goal of religious conduct.[677] Therefore, in this context, only those practices for disciplining the soul, cultivating the self, and beautifying the character are of interest. Nasr describes the connection between virtues and Sufism as follows:

> If the discussion of spiritual states in Sufism is inseparable from that of the virtues (*mahāsin* or *faḍāʾil*), it is precisely because in Sufism a virtue is seen not as an act or external attribute but as a manner of being.[678]

In Sufism, a virtue is not understood as a random character trait but "as a manner of being"—an attitude toward life. Nasr describes a virtue, such as patience (*ṣabr*) or trust in God (*tawakkul*), as a station (*maqām*) that is achieved when the soul does not possess this virtue by chance but when the soul's being is transformed accordingly.[679] A virtue in the mystical perspective is therefore a *way of being* that corresponds to the spiritual state. Thus, according to Nasr, the mystical doctrine as a whole is to be understood not as trying to

675 See Seyyed Hossain Nasr, "Persian Sufi Literature: Its Spiritual and Cultural Significance," in *The Heritage of Sufism: The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, vol. II, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford, 1999), 5.

676 Cf. Erik S. Ohlander, "Adab in Ṣūfism," *EI*^{3}, 41ff.

677 The mystics contrast the concept of *ʿilm*, which predominates in scholastic theology, with the counter-concept of *maʿrifa*. Cf. Amir Dziri, "Über die Klassifikation von Wissenschaften in der islamischen Ideengeschichte," in *Bildungskulturen im Islam*, eds. Abbas Poya, Farid Suleiman, and Benjamin Weineck (Berlin/Boston, 2022), 31.

678 Seyyed Hossain Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (New York, 1972), 70.

679 Cf. Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, 70.

teach the possession of various virtues and the attainment of states but as trying to reach God through the acquisition of these virtues.

The initial roots of Sufism can be found in the widespread ascetic tendencies of small groups that emerged in Basra and other Islamic regions in the first century (i.e., seventh century).[680] Under the critical attitude of Umayyad politics towards the ascetic way of life, many, like Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (642–728), lived and preached abstinence and contemplation as a virtue.[681] They regarded the rejection of worldly attachments of any kind as the essence of faith.[682] The oldest mystics include, for example, Al-Ḥārith al-Muhāsibī (c. 781–857), who preached renunciation, self-control, and devotion to God on the basis of orthodoxy.[683] This spiritual movement, which focused on the pre-temporal covenant with God and its hope of perfection in this world, was not only shaped by foreign influences such as Aristotelian, Platonic, and Neoplatonic; Gnostic, Buddhist, and Persian sources, but it was also primarily based on qur'ānic motifs.[684] Due to these different influences and the geographical expansion of Muslims, Sufism can look back on several ethical traditions.[685] Against the background of a wide range of sources, it seems almost impossible to trace the lines of appropriation of the ancient heritage of virtue ethics within Islamic mysticism.[686] Thus, the aim of this section is more modest: it searches for evidence of virtue ethics thinking and related forms of practice, as Sufism is known to have always had a practical dimension.

Collections of texts are known from the early period (ca. seventh–eleventh centuries) in which aphorism-like definitions are

680 Cf. Annemarie Schimmel, *Sufismus. Eine Einführung in die islamische Mystik* (München, 2008), 15; Reynold A. Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1906): 304.

681 Cf. Reza Hajatpour, *Vom Gottesentwurf zum Selbstentwurf. Die Idee der Perfektibilität in der islamischen Existenzphilosophie* (Freiburg/Munich, 2013), 45; Michael Schwarz, "The Letter of Al-Ḥaṣan al-Baṣrī," *Oriens* 20 (1967): 15ff.

682 Cf. Schimmel, *Sufismus*, 15ff.

683 Cf. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, 133.

684 Cf. Nicholson, "A Historical Inquiry," 320, 328ff.

685 Cf. Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism. A Short History* (Leiden/Köln/Boston, 2010), 13ff.

686 Cf. Heidrun Eichner, "Philosophie," in *Islam. Einheit und Vielfalt einer Weltreligion*, ed. Rainer Brunner (Stuttgart, 2016), 201.

listed that answer questions such as *Who is a Sufi?* and *What is* tasawwuf *or Sufism?*[687] According to Sayyed Hussain Nasr, the Sufis dominated the field of ethical thought with their writings in the early phase of Islam, including, for example, Abū Tālib al-Makkī (d. 990) with his work *Qūt al-qulūb* (*Food for Hearts*) and, decades later, the famous work *Risāla al-qushayriyya* by Abū'l Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1072).[688] According to Nasr, all central works on ethics, which he equates with the term *akhlāq*, of both Sunnis and Shiites up to the thirteenth century were inspired by Islamic mysticism.[689]

The answers vary when it comes to defining the term *tasawwuf* and give a first impression of its core idea. Sarī al-Sakatī (772–867) is said to have answered the question about the meaning of *tasawwuf* with a play on words: *tasawwuf* is a noble (*karīm*) disposition that God or the favoured one (*al-karīm*) produces in the favoured person (*kirām*).[690] There were two mystical schools in Baghdad at this time: Al-Sakatī represented a gnostic Sufism despite its connection to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, whereas the mystical school of Al-Mukhāsibī exclusively represented a traditional Sufism that found its starting point in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.[691] Mystical greats such as Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (827–ca. 909), Sarī al-Sakatī or Ibn Mujīb are said to have interpreted *tasawwuf* as *khulūq*—moral character or noble disposition.[692] These definitions of *akhlāq* can also be found in al-Sulamī's *Tabaqāt*, where he quotes Abū'l-Husayn al-Nūrī (840–908), who went to school with Junayd at Sakatī and belonged to Sakatī's school of mysticism.[693] Sufism, he said, consisted neither of (literal) signs (*rusūm*) nor of knowledge (*'ilm*) but was *akhlāq*, which

687 Cf. Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 5ff.; Tamar Frank, "*Taṣawwuf* is …": On a Type of Mystical Aphorism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104.1 (1984): 73ff.; Richard Gramlich, "Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī," *Oriens* 33 (1992): 25.

688 Cf. Syyed Hussain Nasr, "The Rise and Development of Persian Sufism," in *Classical Persian Sufism: From its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London, 1993), 5.

689 Cf. Nasr, "The Rise and Development of Persian Sufism," 5.

690 Cf. Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*, vol. I (Cairo, 1932), 23.

691 Cf. Maha Al-Kaisy, "Abu al-Qasim al-Junayd," in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, 264.

692 Cf. Frank, "*Taṣawwuf* is …", 77.

693 Cf. Al-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt al-sufiyya*, transl. Johannes Pedersen (Leiden, 1960, 155).

was the pursuit of good qualities.[694] He was probably referring to the Sufi proverb, "Qualify yourself with the divine qualities or attributes of God (*tahkallaqū bi-akhlāq Allah*)."[695] It is said that al-Nūrī's way of expression was *latīf ẓarīf*, fine and elegant as well as poetic, and al-Sulamī claimed that there was no better representative of the Sufi way nor anyone with nobler expressions than him.[696]

Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1038) discusses the lives of well-known mystics and ascetics in his work *Ḥilyat*, which is considered a source of both hadith and *tasawwuf*.[697] It states, for example, that Sufism expresses the seriousness of walking (*sulūk*) to the King of Kings.[698] So he writes:

> Beware of Iblis by resisting your lustful desires. Adorn yourself for God through sincerity and honesty. Open yourself to forgiveness by being ashamed before God and having God before your eyes. Gain an increase in gifts through gratitude. Seek the permanence of grace through the fear of its cessation. There is no act like seeking salvation. There is no salvation like the salvation of the heart. There is no insight like the resistance to desire. There is no poverty like the poverty of the heart. There is no richness like the richness of the soul. There is no strength like the defence against anger. There is no light like the light of certainty. There is no certainty like the contempt of this world. There is no knowledge like self-knowledge. There is no grace like preservation from sin. There is no preservation like the assistance of God's help. There is no renunciation such as the foreshortening of hope. There is no covetousness like competing on spiritual levels. There is no righteousness such as the procuring of justice. There is no violation of rights like oppression. There is no obedience like the fulfilment of duties. There is no righteousness like shunning what is forbidden. There is no absence like the absence of understanding. There is no lack of understanding like the lack of certainty. There is no virtue like struggle. There is no struggle like the struggle against the self. There is no dishonour like

694 Cf. Richard Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder des Sufitums*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1995), 394ff.

695 Annemarie Schimmel, "Abū al-Husayn al-Nūrī, Qibla of the Lights," in *The Heritage of Sufism*, Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford/Boston, 1999), 60.

696 Cf. Schimmel, "Nurī," 63; Al-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt as-sufiyya*, 156.

697 See Yusuf Z. Keskin, "Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī," in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, 248.

698 Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, vol. I, 31.

> greed. There is no retribution like forgiveness. There is no reward like paradise.[699]

Abū Nuʿaym qualifies the path of the great Sufis (*ʿabdāl*) to the effect that on their path (*tarīq*), they not only fasted and prayed but also found God through generosity, boldness of heart, and self-reproach.[700]

Another well-known and versatile scholar from the eleventh century is ʿAbdullah Ansārī al-Harawī (1006–1089), who went blind at the age of 74 and dictated his writings on the Qurʾān and Sufism to his students.[701] Al-Harawī favoured a Sufism that in its essence did not contradict the Qurʾān and the Sunnah.[702] In his late work *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn* (*Stages of the Wanderers*), he wrote a spiritual guide that impressed with its originality, systematic approach, and conciseness, and describes the individual stages of a Sufi's journey.[703] In his work, he lists the bad qualities of pagan Arabs, such as "severity, arrogance, licentiousness, oppression, insolence, arrogance," and contrasts them with the character traits of the Prophet, such as "patience, affirmation (of what comes from God), gratitude (because of one's own shortcomings in the face of God), honesty, preferring the benevolence of others to oneself (*ithhār*), having good habits (dispositions), modesty, generosity, smiling, and kind speech."[704] Moral excellence is characterised above all by a community-oriented approach to life. Even if the catalogues of virtues vary from era to era, both in terms of scope and specificity, their overlaps bear witness to their recognition at all times, as we have seen so far.

Looking at the early Sufis, it can be observed that on their mystical path, they essentially endeavoured to promote an attitude of community and service to humanity and, to this end, encouraged

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699 Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. IX, 270, quoted in Gramlich, "Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī," 82.

700 Cf. Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, IX, 270.

701 Cf. Oliver Leaman, "'Abdullah Ansari al-Harawi," in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, 140.

702 Cf. Oliver Leaman, "'Abdullah Ansari al-Harawi," 140.

703 Serge de Beaurecueil, "Al-Anṣārī al-Harawī," *EI*^{2}. The number of commentators on this work alone occupies an outstanding position in the history of Sufism. Cf. Abdürrezzâk Tek, *Tasavvufî Mertebeler: Hâce Abdullah el-Ensârî el-Herevî Örneği* (Bursa, 2008), *passim*.

704 Abū Ismail al-Harawī, *Manāzil al-Sāʾirīn* (Beirut, n.d.), 49.

the development of positive character traits and values among their disciples, trying to exemplify this ideal with their own lives.[705] In his *Mathnawi*, Rūmī shares a similar attitude:

> The service of man (*khidma*) is prayer (*'ibada*). The worship of God is not done with rosary beads (*tasbiḥ*), pious robes, or prayer rugs.[706]

At this point, Rūmī emphasises that supposed external distinguishing features, such as rosary beads and a certain way of dressing, are not yet an indication of a pious person and that worshipping God has more forms of expression than the orthodox teachings prescribe. For him, helping and serving other people is a practical way of moulding his soul and combating bad qualities such as arrogance.[707]

Many historians separate Islamic mysticism up to the great master Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) from Islamic philosophy in the ninth and tenth centuries.[708] From the end of the eleventh century, mystics were no longer exclusively concerned with the practical conduct of life in philosophical or Sufi plausibility, but rather with the conditions of knowledge.[709] The *tasawwuf* tradition thus increasingly developed into a practical realisation of the *tahdhīb* idea. *Tahdhīb*, which is known to us from philosophical discourse as purification, differs fundamentally here in its spiritual and ethical-practical dimension.[710]

The writings that preceded institutionalised Sufism as pioneering works and dealt with piety were called *kutub al-zuhd* (books of

705 Cf. Javad Nurbaksh, "The Key Features of Sufism in the Early Islamic Period," in *The Heritage of Sufism in the Early Islamic Period*, vol. I, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford/Boston, 1999), xxiv.

706 Jalaluddin Rumi, *The* Mathnawi *of Jalalu'ddin Rumi*, ed. and transl. Reynold A. Nicholson (London, 1925), V I:845.

707 "He is arrogant who overestimates himself and underestimates others; and the cynic does this just as much as the hypocrite, clumsily or subtly, as the case may be," Frithjof Schuon, *Esoterik als Grundsatz und als Weg* (Paris, 1997), section 11.

708 Cf. Rudolph, "Einleitung," xxix; see also Ali Ghandour, *Die theologische Erkenntnislehre Ibn al-ʿArabis* (Hamburg, 2018).

709 Cf. Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen*, 144.

710 Cf. Yaran, *İslam Ahlak Felsefesine Giriş*, 29; Paul L. Heck, "Friendship in the Service of Governance: *Makārim al-Akhlāq* in Abbaside Political Culture," in *The Heritage of Arabo-Islamic Learning*, eds. Maurice A. Pomerantz and Aram A. Shahin (Leiden, 2015), 74ff.

renunciation/asceticism).[711] Translating the term *zuhd* as asceticism, as is often the case, leads to a common misunderstanding: *zuhd* is associated with the asceticism of Christian practice and understood along these lines.[712] However, *zuhd* as a term and as a concept should be considered according to the parameters of Islamic tradition. Leah Kinberg argues in favour of defining *zuhd* on the basis of the Qur'ān, namely as restraint and moderation towards the world and as attainable for any Muslim who wishes to be morally good.[713] While *zuhd* was understood by some as a radical distancing from worldly goods, others made it clear that goods were not completely meaningless in practice. The aim was to train a sensible attitude towards them and a sensible way of dealing with worldly goods in such a way that neither their possession nor their loss makes people happy or unhappy. For both the surrender of their possession and their loss to the divine will constituted the essence of this mystical virtue. It was in this practical and consciousness-training sense that *zuhd* was predominantly understood. According to Al-Nasafī (d. 1287), *zuhd* specifically expresses renunciation, but not in the sense of poverty (*faqīr*).[714] It is the limitation to the essentials in life, the intention to cultivate consciousness and a way of life, indirectly and directly, in order to be able to renounce. Accordingly, *zuhd* has a double meaning: on the one hand, it is the ability to renounce worldly possessions without attachment; on the other hand, it is the deepening of faith in order to keep away from anything that could distance a person from God.[715]

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711 For more details, see Hacı Bayram Başer, "Tasavvufu Önceleyen Dönemde Ahlâk Literatürü: Kitâbü'z-zühd'ler," in *İslâm Ahlâk Literatürü: Ekoller ve Problemler*, eds. Ömer Türker and Kübra Bilgin (Ankara, 2015), 139–162.

712 Cf. Tor Andrae, "Zuhd und Mönchtum. Zur Frage von den Beziehungen zwischen Christentum und Islam," *Le Monde Oriental* 25 (1931): 327; Ute Pietruschka, "Apophthegmata Patrum im muslimischen Gewand. Das Beispiel Mālik ibn Dīnār," in *Begegnungen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Beiträge dialogischer Existenz*, eds. Claudia Rammelt, Cornelia Schlarb, and Egbert Schlarb (Berlin, 2015), 160.

713 Cf. Leah Kinberg, "What is Meant by *Zuhd*?" *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985): 27ff.

714 Cf. 'Azīz al-Nasafī, *Kitāb al-insān al-kāmil*, ed. Marijan Molé (Tehran, 2000), 330.

715 Cf. Reza Hajatpour, "Die Kontroverse zwischen islamischer Mystik und Theologie bezüglich der Glaubensinhalte," in *Dem Einen entgegen. Christliche und*

Kitāb al-zuhd wa raqā'iq (*Book on Asceticism and the Subtleties of the Heart*) by ʿAbdullah bin Mubārak Marwāzī (736–797), who was a poet, a militant, and, in his piety (*zuhd*), was regarded by many as a paragon in the context of hadith studies, is one of the first examples of practical edification literature on the "refinement of the soul," which laid the foundation for the *zuhd* literary genre of the coming centuries.[716] It has taken on the status of a reference work in which Marwāzī describes *zuhd* as an ethical practice based on qur'ānic foundations.[717] "It contains hundreds of pious aphorisms, moral, and ethical precepts which became the building blocks of later Sufi tradition."[718]

The perfection of character culminates in the exemplary character of the Prophet Muḥammad. He is regarded as a morally perfect person (*akhlāq al-nubuwwa*) in piety, stands as a role model for ethical behaviour, and plays an essential role on the path to the knowledge of God.[719] Surah 3, verse 31 in particular, is cited for this, in which God asks the Prophet to tell his listeners that they should orient themselves towards him or follow him, because then God will also love them.[720] Accordingly, the Prophet Muḥammad has a constitutive significance in Sufism, not only in the sense that the prophetic tradition and way of life have a regulative character for the Sufi disciple's (and most Muslims') way of life, but also in the sense that Muḥammad is not only God's representative on earth but can be characterised as His mandatary. In this function, Muḥammad's

islamische Mystik in historischer Perspektive, eds. Erdal Toprakyaran, Hansjörg Schmid, and Christian Ströbele (Berlin, 2018), 41; Schimmel, *Sufismus*, 19.

716 Cf. Feryal Salem, *The Emergence of Early Sufi Piety and Sunnī Scholasticism. ʿAbdullāh b. al-Mubārak and the Formation of Sunnī Identity in the Second Islamic Century* (Leiden, 2016), 1, 37; Ahmad Mahdavi Damghani, "Persian Contributions to Sufi Literature in Arabic," in *Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi (700–1300)*, vol. I, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford, 1999), 35.

717 Cf. Damghani, "Persian Contributions to Sufi Literature in Arabic," 37.

718 Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 21.

719 Cf. Tuba Isik, *Die Bedeutung des Gesandten Muḥammad für den Islamischen Religionsunterricht. Systematische und historische Reflexionen in religionspädagogischer Absicht* (Paderborn, 2015), 203–215.

720 Q 3:31: "Say, 'If you love God, follow me. Then God will love you and forgive your sins, for God is forgiving and merciful.'".

speech and actions are identical to the will of God.[721] Against this background, the broad literature that praises the Prophet in his humanity and emphasises his character traits is unsurprising.[722] The path (*ṭarīq*) to this goal is based on the Qurʾān and the Sunnah (summarised in their entirety as *sharīʾah*) via the purification of the heart and the refinement of the *nafs*, the soul or psyche, as the seat of the will and power of a person.[723] A certain way of life was required to follow this path, the theoretical and didactic basis of which was developed by each mystical order and could therefore be subjectively different with each master on the basis of the respective relationship.[724] This path was given the name *tazkiyya al-nafs* in Islamic mysticism, and it took its own place in *akhlāq* philosophy.

4.1 Tazkiyya al-nafs: Physical Practices as Ethical Virtue Practice

The practices in Sufism focus on one essential point, namely, to become aware of God in every moment and to seek to recognise the beauty of God everywhere.[725] It is therefore about opening people's eyes to this reality. The idea of purification of the self (*tazkiyya al-*

721 This idea comes from a personal conversation with the Sufi master of the Rifaī Kadirī movement in Istanbul, Kahraman Özkök. For Özkök, the Prophet Muḥammad embodied and expressed the divine that God has breathed into every human being in the best possible way; Istanbul, 2017.

722 Isik, *Die Bedeutung des Gesandten Muḥammad*, 100–106. In the German-speaking world, Annemarie Schimmel attempted to capture this tradition in her book, *Und Muhammad ist Sein Prophet. Die Verehrung des Propheten in der islamischen Frömmigkeit* (*And Muhammad is His Prophet: The Worship of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*) (München, 1995).

723 *Nafs* was used very differently from scripture to scripture, epoch to epoch, and it is often translated with corresponding variability, so that it is hardly possible to speak of a universally valid meaning. Cf. Muna Tatari, "Mystik im Islam und die Frage des Friedens," Internationale Erich-Fromm-Gesellschaft, online 2007, 2.

724 Every master has his own way of accompanying the path, and this includes external forms of behaviours and activities, as in the case of the well-known Turkish Sufi Yunus Emre (ca. 1240–ca. 1321), whose master commissioned him to collect and carry firewood for the order. This collection of wood is his external task and at the same time symbolises the process of becoming. See Annemarie Schimmel, "Yunus Emre," *Numen* 8.1 (1961): 12–33.

725 Cf. William C. Chittick, *Sufism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford, 2000), 49.

nafs) plays an essential role on this path. Although the term, which is derived from a Qur'ān passage, also opens up the perspective of an eschatological hope of fulfilment, the focus is on the purification of the soul.[726]

Tazkiyya al-nafs is often described as "purification of the soul," although *tazkiyya* also has the meanings of refinement and enlargement.[727] Thus, *tazkiyya al-nafs* means, on the one hand, the purification of the soul from things that lead people to excessive attachment to the world, and, on the other hand, it means the refinement of the soul so that it can develop into something more beautiful, i.e., grow and prosper.[728] The refinement of the *nafs*, defined as the essence of personal being, therefore means sublimating, refining, or beautifying the soul and character. This concept of cultivation from the eighth/ninth century overlaps with the contemporary concept of education. From the modern era onwards, cultivation in Europe is understood to mean "the cultivation or refinement not only of individual talents and abilities but of the whole person, the whole personality."[729]

The terms *tazkiyya* (purification, cultivation) and *riyāḍa* (moderation) imply decisive methods of bringing the soul and its (lustful) movements into a harmonious balance so that man is able to intuitively recognise God or "taste" (*maʿrifa*) God. *Riyāḍa* (moderation), according to Süleyman Uludağ, also has the meanings "to domesticate a wild animal" and "to ride a wild horse," and, in the context of mysticism, it means cleansing the soul of desires in order to educate it in this way and keep it away from extremes.[730] The practice of distancing oneself from extreme emotionality and corresponding actions strengthens the willpower, which then has an effect on the mastery of dispositions and promotes the maturation of the soul. In this context, the individual (inner) court (*muḥāsaba*), before which a person must confess his or her guilt and which can be equated

726 Cf. Q 91:7–10: "By the soul and the One Who moulded it and inspired it with corruption and the fear of God. Successful is he who perfects it, and unsuccessful is he who buries it."

727 Cf. Chittick, *Sufism*, 50.

728 Cf. Chittick, *Sufism*, 50.

729 Maria Nühlen, *Kultur – also sind wir: Eine Einführung in die Kulturphilosophie* (Münster, 2016), 72.

730 Cf. Süleyman Uludağ, "Riyazet," in *TDV*, vol. 31, 440–441.

with a deliberative process, plays a decisive role.[731] *Muḥāsaba* is an intense moment of self-examination, through which a person can open up the path to self-reflection and self-forgiveness.[732] The mystic ʿAzīz al-Nasafī, for example, wrote exemplarily about mystical didactics in the thirteenth century:

> (14) Know that the call of the prophets and the education of the friends of God was so that people would follow good words, good actions, and good character and that their outward appearance would become sincere. For if the outside does not become sincere, the inside cannot become sincere. Because the outside is like a mould and the inside is like something that is poured into a mould, even straight. If the mould is crooked, what you pour into it will also be crooked. (15) O dervish! There is no doubt that the external affects the internal and the internal affects the external. When the external becomes sincere through asceticism and long endeavours in the company of the wise, the internal also becomes sincere. When the outer and the inner become sincere, then the inner becomes pure in both worlds. On one side is the world of the visible, and on the other side is the world of the hidden. That is, on one side is the body, which is the world of the visible and sensitive, and on the other side is the world of angels and pure faces, which is the world of the hidden and intelligibles [*maqulat*]. The side on which the world of the hidden is located is always pure and clear. On the side of the inner, there is never torment, darkness and turbidity. On the side of the body, as long as it is dependent on pleasures and desires and is a

731 Q 2:284; 7:6; 21:1, 47; 75:36; 55:31; 91:7–9.

732 To give an example: al-Muhasibī (d. 857), who thematises the accountability of the soul in the context of morality, attributes accountability to knowledge (*maʿrifa*), fear (*hawf*), and hope (*raǧāʾ*). According to him, knowledge has four dimensions: knowledge of God, knowledge of the devil, knowledge of the instinctive soul (*nafs al-ammara*), and knowledge of deeds done for God. For al-Muhasibī, knowledge represents an experience that aims at sincerity in contrast to the life of the Sufis, which is based on imitation and characterised by a lack of awareness. With regard to the accountability of the soul, al-Muḥāsibī considers the following to be necessary elements, always on condition that they are accompanied by appropriate knowledge: right intention (*niyya*), willpower (*irāda*), renunciation of lasciviousness, repentance (*tawba*), seclusion (*khalwa*), moderation (*riyāḍa*), remembrance of God (*dhikr*), reflection (*tafakkur*), piety (*taqwa*), self-control (*murāqaba*), and restraint (*waraʿ*); cf. Ishak Tekin, "Der Ansatz des *Taḥḍīb al-akhlāq* in der islamischen Moralerziehung," in *Islamische Religionspädagogik: Leitfragen aus Theorie, Empirie und Praxis*, eds. Yaşar Sarıkaya and Adem Aygün (Münster, 2016), 104.

> slave to greed and anger, there is cloudiness and darkness, and so the inside falls into cloudiness and darkness.[733]

At this point, it becomes very clear that external forms can have an effect on the inside of a person and that the inside can show itself in the outside, guided by the idea that the human being is a divine synthesis of the arts in which content and form build a reciprocal unity. Mental growth is therefore directly related to physical exercises and postures. Exercises for the soul, such as renunciation, can put lust and urges in their proper place.[734] This also includes external exercises to cultivate and control certain attitudes and characteristics.[735] Fasting, for example, is an exercise not only to overcome physicality but also to learn to tame desires and passions. Similarly, thirst and hunger are also ways of fostering compassion for starving people. Fasting is, therefore, also an empathy-promoting exercise that should awaken in people the divine desire to become creative by seeking solutions to unjust structures that cause hunger. Other important practical exercises include waking through the night, for example, in prayer or the remembrance of God (*dhikr*), in silence, or sitting and observing the soul (*nafs*), which is intended to condition the mystic's concentration on the contemplation of God and, at the same time, free the soul for the acquisition of virtues.[736] Wakefulness, for example, is emphasised as a special virtue that, in connection with sitting, seems to reach its peak with the Sufi al-Ḥallāj.[737] *Dhikr* implies a far greater dimension of experience than the literal sense of a repetitive

733 Al-Nasafī, *Kitāb al-insān al-kāmil*, 140; Reza Hajatpour, *Sufismus und Theologie. Grenze und Grenzüberschreitung in der islamischen Glaubensdeutung* (Freiburg/Munich, 2017), 90.

734 Another exercise, particularly in the context of Sufi traditions and some Muslim philosophers, is thinking about death: regularly visualising the finiteness of life offers the opportunity to adopt an attitude in which the annoyances of everyday life can quickly lose their significance.

735 Cf. Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen*, 168.

736 Q 7:180. Cf. Schimmel, *Sufismus*, 18ff.; Serafim Seppäla, *In Speechless Ecstacy. Expression and Interpretation of Mystical Experience in Classical Syriac and Sufi Literature* (Helsinki, 2003), 61ff.

737 Cf. Bettina Krönung, *Gottes Werk und Teufels Wirken. Traum, Visionen, Imagination in der frühbyzantinischen monastischen Literatur* (Berlin/Boston, 2014), 63; Annemarie Schimmel, *"O Leute, rettet mich vor Gott." Texte islamischer Mystik* (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna, 1995), 57ff.

activity suggests, which is supposed to evoke the presence of God in a body-soul vibration.[738]

> Full remembrance means actualising all the perfections latent in the original human disposition (*fiṭra*) by virtue of its being a divine image.[739]

Dhikr implicitly represents a form and experience of visualisation, which is to be brought about by the names of God invoked by humans. These are the names that God has breathed into man.[740] A person, as a divine synthesis of the arts, should learn through this exercise how to see God in herself or himself and in things.[741] At the same time, it is about becoming less me, i.e., renouncing personal attributions and attachments such as "I am clever," or "I am a doctor," or "I am a righteous person." This can create more space for God to work.

Farīduddīn ʿAttār (d. 1221) writes that the cultivation of the soul and its liberation from passions require the integration of virtues in order to be able to pass through the spiritual stages.[742] ʿAttār quotes Shāh Shujāʿ al-Kirmanī (d. ca. 890), to whom the following saying goes back: "The virtuous are virtuous as long as they do not see their virtue […], the saints are holy as long as they do not see their holiness."[743] Another tradition about the Prophet's companion Abū al-Dardāʾ (d. 700) should also be mentioned:

> Abū al-Dardāʾ arose at night, performed the ritual prayer, began to weep, and said to God: "You have made my nature good, make my moral qualities good too—until the morning." Umm al-Dardāʾ reports:

738 Cf. Annemarie Schimmel, *Die Zeichen Gottes. Die religiöse Welt des Islam* (Munich, 2002), 150.

739 Chittick, *Sufism*, 69.

740 "I have fully formed man and breathed into him of my Spirit (*rūh*)" (Q 15:29). In connection with the 99 names of God, Q 2:31: "And He [God] taught Adam the names of all things," as well as Q 59:24, "He is God, the Creator, the Maker, who moulds all forms and appearances! His (alone) are the beautiful names (attributes of perfection). All that is in the heavens and on earth praise His boundless glory: for He alone is almighty, truly wise."

741 Cf. Kılıç, *Sufi ve Sanat*, 5; Chittick, *Sufism*, 49.

742 Cf. Farīd al-Dīn ʿAttar, *Tadkhirat al-awliyāʾ*, Part II, ed. Reynold Nicholson (Leiden, 1944), 54ff.

743 Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, *Frühislamische Mystiker. Fariduddin Attars Überlieferungen und Äußerungen*, transl. and comment. Gisela Wendt (Amsterdam, 1984), 65.

> I asked him, "Abū al-Dardā', was your supplication this night only for beautiful moral qualities?" He replied: "Umm al-Dardā', the Muslim can attain such a beautiful character that it will make him enter paradise, and he can make his character so bad that it will bring him to hellfire."[744]

These endeavours reached a temporary climax in the work of Ghazālī. He became the cornerstone of the Islamic scientific tradition. He brings the ethical ideas of his philosophical predecessors, the aforementioned *'ilm al-akhlāq*, into connection with theology and mysticism. Ghazālī introduces mystical elements and a holistic view of the world into theology, which are still a constitutive part of the majority of practised Islam today. The decisive element that he incorporates into theological thinking is that of love (*maḥabba*).[745] Ghazālī was of the opinion that love is impossible without knowledge, because one can only love what one knows.[746] However, the symbolism of love first goes back to the humble verses of the early mystic Rābi'a (d. 801).[747] According to the mystical concept, the spiritual path begins with learning to love God, which also means that people try to find the divine, the special within themselves, and bring it to prosperity. The joy or happiness (*sa'āda*) that arises through this love is very similar to the philosophical descriptions of the state that arises after improving one's own character.

The body is explicitly placed in relation to concepts of consciousness theory, such as reflection and cognition, but also with cultural anthropological categories, like movement and rhythm. Reflection on the self takes place with explicit reference to one's own body, i.e., self-reflection and self-perception are only possible on the basis of physical self-awareness. The body is not only a medium for practising virtue but also the medium through which a habit can be formed or dispositions can be acquired. Physically performed practices, such as sweeping the inner courtyard of a convent, not only unfold a theoretical action or social effectiveness but also a self-centred action that affects the inner self. The physical cleansing activity should lead to inner purity. Purity is directly related to the purity of character

744 Bernd Radtke, *Materialien zur alten islamischen Frömmigkeit* (Leiden/Boston, 2009), 14.
745 Cf. Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 225.
746 Cf. Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen*, 191.
747 Cf. Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry," 323.

and other qualities such as sincerity and/or honesty. The mystical dimension relates in particular to liberation from self-centredness and greed. In Ghazālī's terms, only those with a pure heart can see God, or only in their hearts can God become perceptible.

4.2 A Brief Outlook

Sufism is an institution in the broadest sense that offers people a practical contemplative path to becoming human. I deny that classical Sufism still exists as an educational institution in the modern age, but this issue is another matter. At present, regrettably, more and more people who turn to Sufi teachings understand them as an adaptation of New Age Sufism or, more specifically, as a personal path of development with contemplative spiritual methods that can be adopted independently of the system as a whole, thus degenerating into exercises in self-optimisation.[748] What both currents have in common is that their sympathisers detach their Sufi connection from the basic tenets of theology and practice, i.e., from a qur'ānic framework. For this reason, many present-day movements seem to me to be paths to *self-mania* rather than actual places of learning consistent basic attitudes and a certain way of life, which consequently should affect the environment.[749]

To summarise, from a mystical perspective, virtues are first and foremost character traits that can be trained with the support of God. Virtues mean desirable qualities or the disposition to behave virtuously and to feel and express emotions to the right degree. Becoming virtuous requires support from and interaction with others—not only with a spiritual guide but also with friends. Only in a community do opportunities for virtuous behaviour arise.

748 For a similar critique, see Annemarie Schimmel, "Sufismus und Volksfrömmigkeit," in *Der Islam III. Volksfrömmigkeit, islamische Kultur, zeitgenössische Strömungen*, ed. Peter Antes et al. (Stuttgart, 1990), 157ff.: "In recent years, however, Sufism has also become a collective term for movements that no longer have anything to do with its Islamic foundations, and you can meet 'Sufis' in Europe and North America whose knowledge of the Koran or of the life and teachings of the Prophet is zero." See also Mark Sedgwick, *Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age* (Oxford, 2016).

749 Self-mania, or a delusion of self-optimisation, is a reference to the stylisation of the body in the sense of body mania.

In the mystical imagination, those who can integrate virtues into their character through personal effort, familiarisation, and habituation form a good character. At the same time, they have purified and cultivated their soul. In the process of spiritual refinement of personal characteristics, a person completes their humanity. The spiritual path serves to perfect the moral character and only authorises people to understand and place themselves as followers of God.[750]

The cultivation of the self in a mystical perspective stems from a holistic view of the human being, which includes the body, soul, and spirit, focusing on the person and the cultivation of their personal abilities.

5. Summarising Reflections on the Cultivation of the Self

Against the background of what has been worked out, it must be summarised which (if any) contributions the concept of virtue and the ideas of self-cultivation can make to the current concept of education and personality development.

Firstly, I would like to comment on the discourse on ethics within Islam. Thinking about a virtue-oriented life and the cultivation of the self in the context of an exclusively philosophical discourse formed a radical alternative to the systematic and normative legal discourses on ethics in Islamic theology. I understand the fact that only a few hadith and Qur'ān references appear in the philosophical *akhlāq* works as a pretext with which the authors wanted to signal to their patron and readers a certain degree of awareness of and attachment to tradition. Above all, this discourse was innovative in that the life of this world is not superimposed with an eschatological hope of fulfilment; rather, the focus is directed towards this world, and the idea of the good is set as the goal. This paradigm shift represented a novelty for a discourse on humans, their actions, and the consequences of those actions, which previously had been conducted within the framework of religious law. The ethical discourse of the aforementioned philosophers was anthropocentric. The mystics transformed the idea of the good into the beautiful, but also into

750 Özkök, personal conversation; see Hajatpour, *Vom Gottesentwurf zum Selbstentwurf*, 287.

love. The experience of bliss formed the climax of the state of the soul, which coincided with the realisation of God. This no longer placed God alone at the centre of life in this world, but also the relationship between God and humans as a whole. At this point, the tradition of the well-known and aforementioned mystic Rābi'a of Basra should be mentioned, which deserves to be better known:

> Rabi'a was seen walking through the streets of Basra. A torch in one hand, a bucket of water in the other; when asked about the purpose of her actions, she replied: "I will pour water into hell and set fire to paradise so that these two veils will disappear and no one will worship God out of fear of hell or hope of paradise, but only for the sake of His eternal beauty."[751]

For Rabi'a, Abī 'l-Dunyā, Miskawayh, Ghazālī, Ibn 'Arabī, Rumī, and numerous other scholars, the core motivation for ethical behaviour is love. For the mystics, the Prophet Muḥammad was the best example, the best possible devotion to God, indeed the highest possible and most beautiful embodiment of this love. It is said in a hadith that Muḥammad was sent to perfect the beautiful character.[752] The cultivation of character—the development of morally desirable character traits—was part of this process of perfection, the aim of which was not moral perfection. Rather, the decisive factor was to have embarked on this path, to follow the prophetic steps, and to dedicate oneself to working on oneself along the way, which was regarded as a great *jihad*. A permanent anthropological incompetence or human fallibility, even *imperfectability*, was regarded as God-given and therefore to be accepted as a matter of course.[753] By cultivating the self out of love for God, one endeavoured to change oneself to the best possible person, not to become God-like but to become permeable for God and to tame his or her destructive powers for this purpose.[754]

The philosophical idea of virtue focuses primarily on the human in the relationship between God and humanity. The mystics did this on the basis of the Qur'ān by attributing something divine to

751 Cf. Schimmel, *Sufismus*, 16.
752 Cf. Bukhārī, *Musnad*, no. 8939.
753 On the concept and notion of perfectibility, see Hajatpour, *Vom Gottesentwurf zum Selbstentwurf*.
754 Cf. Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 14ff.

man because the spirit of God was breathed into him along with his beautiful names. The philosophers did this with the help of the *ergon* argument, which asks about the efficacy or activity corresponding to man. In their reasoning, the argument that humans have a specific efficacy, a meaning—even a purpose—gained priority. Effectiveness was considered *to be becoming* and *being* human. Humans should not become human because of God, out of love for him or out of fear of hell, but because of their specific personal nature: *becoming human qua being human*. To paraphrase Nietzsche, it is about the affirmation of life or a confession of this world by man.[755] For Muslim philosophers, however, this reality is not conceived as godless. This point is an honourable achievement of the Muslim philosophers insofar as they did not invite people to break with God but rather called on believers to look at *themselves* and their moral selves. This opened up a perspective for rethinking Islamic anthropology. Even if the role model of the Prophet was not directly relativised, the philosophers were aware that an authoritative personality alone would not be sufficient for this process of self-development. It was evident to them that ethical virtues develop through habituation and that this could not be achieved through instruction and adherence to norms alone. A wide variety of role models who lived virtuously and could encourage a process of reflection on good personal qualities were beneficial. For this reason, non-prophetic narratives were given ample space for reflection in both philosophical treatises and *adab* works. The *adab* works supported this new development with their own literary diversity, as they conveyed religious education narratively, mostly in anecdotal stories, (post-)prophetic narratives or fables, which opened up great ethical and interpretative possibilities for the individual. While the ethical, religious *adab* educational literature was *value-guiding*, the philosophical *akhlāq* literature or *tahdhīb* literature differed in that it combined rational questions of ethically correct behaviour with the cultivation of personal qualities and the creation of harmony of the soul.

One innovation of the ethical virtue *akhlāq* discourse was that people were encouraged to think and reflect—in the spirit of the Qurʾān. It was and is easier to follow ethical principles and norms

755 Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke*: *Critical Study Edition in 15 volumes*, vol. 6, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin/New York, 1999), 355.

without thinking than to confront the question of how someone should be in order to be considered a good person. This is explicitly expressed by a prophetic tradition often quoted as a hadith: "An hour of deep reflection/contemplation is always better than spending a year in (ritual) prayer." In connection with the *ergon* argument, there was now a stronger emphasis on reason, according to which people should orient their aspirations and actions.[756] Contemplation, or introspection, forms an interface with Sufism, as the mystics were masters of it. However, the mystics also offered ways, methods, and exercises that were oriented towards a transcendental level and ultimately had the goal of realising God, on the one hand, and should serve for training and implementing desirable virtues practically and physically, on the other. They had this in common with the philosophers: the path of spiritual exercise and soul care.

Another interesting aspect that has unfortunately been somewhat neglected in this work is the mystical educational institutions of Sufism, which were dedicated to the common cultivation of human beings through art, music, and poetry. In terms of Sufism's doctrinal orientation, it can be summarised that the Sufi orders, in their social institutions, were both *adab* and *akhlāq* schools.[757] In both categories, physical activity of any kind, i.e., working on and with the body, takes on an ethical significance and becomes important as an essential means of cultivating the self.[758] Unreflected, routine actions are to be broken up with the help of body-centred practices. In this sense, (ethical) habitualisation and ritualisation have the function of a basic technique. Inner attitudes should be developed and consolidated through external exercises in various forms. True self-development consisted not only in meditative introspection but also in the unity of experiencing reality and introspection, in the acquisition of the skills and awareness that enable people to mould their character with its virtues and extra-moral qualities in the confrontation with

756 Without going into the long scholastic dispute, it should be noted that the determination of the relationship between revelation and reason is still an important point of discussion in *kalām* studies today.

757 Cf. Heck, "Mysticism as Morality," 245.

758 In addition to mindfulness exercises, for example, the same importance is attached to cooking, washing, cleaning, etc., in religious houses and social institutions.

the manifestations of reality. The aim was to understand the world in its complexity and diversity as a sphere of challenges.

In the realisation of ethical and cultural patterns, which have a certain priority over theoretical knowledge, it becomes clear that it is not only about the spiritual cultivation of the human being but also about the cultivation of physicality and sensorality as part of a comprehensive approach. Even if philosophical *tahdhīb* works were predominantly read by intellectual circles, the mystical school does not aim to establish an educational elite but rather an integrative social practice. With Abī 'l-Dunyā, the listed philosophers, mystical concepts, and dialogical character of religion stood out, whereby ethical education is considered less as an individual competence development in the direction of self-optimisation but rather as a community-related thinking and action in the foreground. In the process of developing one's own potential, the individual has a direct and creative influence on the concrete reality of life. The cultivation of the self should lead to the cultivation of the world, as development takes place in the reality of each individual's life.

It is in this context that the motif of aesthetics also emerged as a constructive impression.[759] In connection with the *akhlāq* concepts and the designation of the literary genre "refinement of character" (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*), not only does the pursuit of virtue come into view, but an experience of beauty is also attributed to being virtuous. Virtue and character appear as concepts with aesthetic implications that have a perceptible sensory effect, as they are always interwoven with a corresponding style and way of life. Thus, behaviours are not externalities but perceptible manifestations of personal qualities. The realisation of their good quality is brought about by sensory experience, i.e., they are of an aesthetic rather than a discursive nature.[760] From aesthetic experience, the next step to the morally good seems simple, whereby a parallel to Schiller cannot be overlooked at this point. The work in which his aesthetic considerations flow into the realm of ethics is the philosophical treatise *Über Anmut und Würde* (*On Grace and Dignity*). In it, Schiller defines grace as "the beauty of the [human] form moved by freedom" and dignity

759 See also Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Beauty and Aesthetics," in *Medieval Islamic Civilisation: An Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, ed. Josef W. Meri (London, 2006), 103.

760 Cf. Kermani, *Gott ist schön*, 9.

as the "expression of a sublime attitude."[761] A central reason for the creation of his work lies in his examination of Kant's aesthetics and ethics. In it, he attempts to abolish Kant's strict concept of duty and the associated rigorous separation between sensorality and morality through the concept of the beautiful soul, in which duty and inclination, reason and the senses are harmonised with one another. Against this background, the instructions of *adab* literature and the mystical exercises can be understood to mean that external aesthetic forms are not observed with the intention of not offending God but rather to achieve the love of God and to "taste" him: one "loves only for the sake of God and in God, not in order to enjoy instruction and education from the beloved or to achieve anything else through him."[762] This makes the permeability of the supposedly authoritarian instructions (such as the qur'ānic injunction to *be sincere*)[763] evident for the process of character formation. God can be experienced by the senses.[764] The recognition of God is conveyed in expressions of beauty of character, sometimes also as a gallant demeanour, in politeness and friendliness, or in an elegant style of speech.

The Islamic *akhlāq* tradition as a whole sometimes offers an aesthetic cultivation of virtue and character. Betterment or refinement of character or character traits can therefore be read as an integral part of a beautiful and good life. This refers not only to sensory perception, observation, or experience of objects but also to the phenomenon of doing.[765] The aesthetic dimension calls on us to

761 Friedrich Schiller, *Über Anmut und Würde*, ed. Klaus L. Berghahn (Stuttgart, 1997), 104, 113.

762 Al-Ghazālī, *Das Elixier der Glückseligkeit*, transl. Hellmut Ritter (Wiesbaden, 2016), 90.

763 Q 11:112: "Be sincere, as you have been commanded, and with you all who have repented. And do not be rebellious! Behold, he sees what you do."

764 Cf. Milad Karimi, "Die Bedeutung der Koranrezitation. Zur inneren Verwobenheit von Ästhetik und Offenbarung im Islam," *ThPQ* 164 (2016): 265ff.

765 One example among many is the concept of the alms stone (*sadaka taşı*) from the Ottoman culture. These pillars, which had a hole on the exterior, were mainly located near large mosques or well-known religious houses. Generous people placed money in the hollow or placed provisions and clothing next to the pillar. Those in need took as much as they needed. The idea behind this alms stone was that the generous person did not see or get to know the needy person they were helping with their donation. On the one hand, this was intended to prevent the generous person from falling into the trap of being

break through current ways of thinking, seeing, and acting, which have led to a blunting of perception and creativity, to retrain our perception and to uncover the potential for change. With regard to the connection between aesthetics and revelation, Milad Karimi draws attention, for example, to the opening of the human being to the transcendent, i.e., the aesthetics of Qur'ān recitation is conveyed through an experience of beauty.[766]

The establishment of a just, friendly, respectful, honest (many more primary and secondary virtues could be mentioned) relationship with the environment is the structure-building element of a modern educational concept if education wants to be oriented towards virtue ethics. Those who develop virtues in the here and now turn their lives and the lives of others into places of good and happy coexistence, because virtues of character can only be developed, practised, and trained in social interaction, not in isolation.

generous not because it was an end in itself but because they would receive thanks and praise from the recipient. It also prevented the needy from being embarrassed. See Aşk İle Hakk'a Yürüyenler, "Vakıf Medeniyetimiz," *Keşkül Dergisi* 38 (2016): 124ff.

766 Cf. Karimi, "Die Bedeutung der Koranrezitation," 269.

Chapter IV: Contribution of Ethical Virtue Conceptions to the Modern Understanding of Education

1. Society, Virtue, and Competence

In the introduction to this book, I pointed out that it is an urgent task of schools to promote and strengthen the development of the entire personality of children and young people, especially on an emotional and social level, so that they are empowered to shape their own lives with their fellow human beings actively. As we have seen, this development process primarily involves young people learning to perceive themselves and practise this self-awareness, as well as acquiring values, virtues, and skills for successful relationships. As has been shown, competencies are not identical to virtues, but in their objectives and orientation, both can enable people to act in a self-determined and socially responsible manner. If competencies are designed to enable people to overcome challenges, and virtues are designed to activate untapped anthropological potential, then it is worth exploring the question of what contribution they can make to the acquisition of *ethical competence* at school as a place of learning.[767]

The preceding reflections on virtue ethics and the inner life of the soul have sharpened our awareness of the inner negotiation processes and their conditions for virtuous behaviour, combined with the overarching question of how people can develop their humanity to the best possible extent. The pivotal point in maturing and growing, therefore, lies at the core of the self. As Aristotle and others have made clear, dealing with the self primarily trains the ability to deal with one's own feelings, to cultivate positive emotions and character

767 At this point, many more competencies could be listed, above all, those of judgement and changing perspectives.

dispositions and to learn to *observe* them. An in-depth study of the virtues has once again made it clear that this endeavour begins with working on one's own self and that the cultivation of personal qualities is linked to the purification of the soul, which leads people to self-realisation. The Muslim philosophers and mystics, who brought Greek thought into their own reflection on faith, understand faith as a constitutive element of a happy and successful way of life.[768] The recourse to Muslim *udabā* (literary scholars), philosophers, and mystics has broadened the view of the human being and their need for development and relationships, and has placed the human self at the centre.

For children and young people, as well as for adults, the process of working on the self requires people to examine themselves actively and consciously. By working on and cultivating the self, not only children and young people but also adults learn to recognise their own strengths and weaknesses, which exist in every human nature, and how to counteract them.

The importance of starting this process with children needs no further explanation. The language of virtue can be used at an early age to enable children to experience themselves as agents, gain a sense of themselves with feedback, and subsequently make them aware that they have all the necessary dispositions and strengths within them to work on themselves. Only on this basis and with the awareness of who one is can virtuous action be learned. Above all, the premise of self-knowledge, which Muslim philosophers and mystics so strongly emphasised, is based on the realisation that one should not make others responsible for one's own worries and state of mind but should instead become aware of one's own attitudes, emotions, value preferences, and habits and work on them.

The individual's path to a successful and happy life—and this means life with community—leads through self-knowledge. Self-awareness begins in childhood. Even in the school context, children can be supported in getting to know themselves, learning to recog-

768 "Again and again, he [Miskawayh] replaces Aristotle's non-religious terms with theological terms and invokes qur'ānic narratives. Religion appears to him as a catalyst of philosophical insights, but time and again it also becomes productive in order to enrich and challenge these insights"; Topkara, *Umrisse*, v.

nise and understand their feelings, and placing value on themselves and their attitudes. If the competence of self-reflection can be built up gradually with age, this enables future adults to critically assess, evaluate, and categorise their thoughts and actions. Self-reflection is, therefore, an important first step or prerequisite for self-knowledge and working on the self. As already explained, becoming aware of or realising all facets that construct the self plays a major role in these processes. Thus, self-knowledge includes correct self-assessment, the ability to perceive one's own self and to formulate one's own mistakes and shortcomings as well as wishes for the community in such a way that others can relate to them. In this way, people are relieved and freed from the burden of having to fight the never-ending battle for self-improvement alone. By admitting their own fallibility, people—from an Islamic perspective—confess their anthropological weakness, which is divinely intended. The confession of one's mistakes and sins (or the moment of ethical reflection) is preparation for liberation from spiritual incongruity in order to restore spiritual (and possibly physical) health and personal coherence. If people accept their own anthropologically ambivalent constitution, they will become aware of their essential incompetence for self-perfection. While adults rely on friends, relatives, or professionals to work on themselves, the school context can directly and indirectly play a decisive role in the development of children and young people's personalities, provided that decisive processes are initiated and given space: perceiving inner processes and the impact of behaviour on others (self-perception) and evaluating oneself (self-esteem). This also makes the budding adult realise that each person is in control of their own development and cannot blame others for personality flaws and undesirable characteristics. For young people and adults alike, in a society in which people are encouraged to improve themselves by looking at others, when it is assumed that fellow human beings are striving for virtues, it can have a stabilising effect on their own aspirations. The striving for self-improvement, which is regarded in the *tahdhīb* literature as an anthropological determination of humans, is to be understood as a reminder to cultivate the competence for explicit self-criticism despite the incompetence for

self-perfection.[769] On this basis, I also understand (religious) education as educational work on people.[770] However, growing morally is a difficult matter, and it is not only an important phase in (early) childhood but also a component of lifelong learning.

Following Kant, Jochen Schmidt states: "The difficulty of working on one's own moral character lies in the fact that a person's own heart is not transparent."[771] Working on the self is made more difficult by the opacity of the heart, which can only be changed by purifying the soul and heart. Working on the soul, the heart, and consequently the character, harbours self-deception as a great, yet hidden difficulty. "In the blind spot of self-reflection" lurk weaknesses, inclinations, a tendency towards evil and vices that people overlook either unintentionally or intentionally.[772] The greatest burden, however, lies in moral (often concealed) arrogance—in Kant's words, in the "pride of virtue."[773] Even reason can sometimes be of little help in this frenzy of virtue, insofar as it finds (or invents) seemingly reasonable reasons to justify its own patronising attitude. This is another argument in favour of beginning the work of cultivating the self with self-knowledge. Both philosophers and mystics formulate that *only* after self-knowledge can knowledge of God follow. Self-knowledge in a religious perspective sometimes means the subjective recognition of human conditionality and divine unconditionality as well as the realisation of one's particularity as a human being.[774] The realisation

769 The acknowledgement of sin is therefore both a glorification of divine unconditionality and a recognition of our own human conditionality.

770 The results of what has been presented so far can also be situated in religiously contoured educational contexts.

771 Jochen Schmidt, "Selbstbekenntniskompetenz als interreligiöse Schlüsselkompetenz," https://www.academia.edu/30558032/Selbstbekenntniskompetenz_als_interreligi%C3%B6se_Schl%C3%BCsselkompetenz, last accessed 31 January 2019, 4.

772 On the concept of "blind spot of self-reflection," see Schmidt, "Selbstbekenntniskompetenz," 4.

773 According to the Qur'ān, arrogance is one of the most serious sins (cf. Q 4:173; 7:166; 16:29). For example, Iblis was banished from paradise because of his arrogance (Q 38:71–77). For the term *arrogantia moralis* in Kant, MS, AA VI:435: "The persuasion of a greatness of its value, but only for lack of comparison with the law, can be called pride of virtue (arrogantia moralis)." An accusation of egoism would then be justified against the pride of virtue.

774 Based on the Adam narrative (Q 2:30–38) and other passages in the Qur'ān, the image of man is concretised with the description that God breathed his

of one's own creatureliness is the basis for becoming aware of the Creator and thus of the creative aspect of the self. "The human being is a synthesis of infinity and finiteness."[775] Creatureliness implies, on the one hand, the certainty of the moral disposition to be a valuable creature and, on the other hand, the call, in Kant's words, not to *be stingy towards oneself* in one's duty of self-respect.[776] If one knows that every other human being is wanted by God, he or she also knows that the other is equally valuable. The reconnection to the divine origin enables people to reflect on their responsibility for themselves and others. Kant expresses this core statement as follows: "Religion is for me a matter of conscience, the holiness of the promise and truthfulness of what man must confess to himself. Confess to yourself."[777] In a globalised world, actions not only have an indirect impact on others, but they also increasingly have a direct impact. Careful consideration for others can only be maintained if (co-)humanity and compassion are cultivated.[778] Educational work, therefore, also begins with work on the self.

Following Kant, for whom work on the self is work towards a culture, Bettina Stangneth calls this a *culture of sincerity*. I also

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breath into man when he was created and also provided His 99 beautiful names. "In Islamic theology, the qur'ānic descriptions have led to the conclusion that man is in a certain way able to use his abilities to shape contexts of life on earth and to act creatively and thus, as a servant of God, to be able to act in his name," Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannung*sverhältnis, 61. "On the one hand, the Islamic correspondence of names between God and man prepares the ground for implementing a partnership aspect in the God-human relationship, and the idea of serving God is thus enriched by the idea of human creativity and relative autonomy, which is associated with freedom and responsibility. On the other hand, this would then be accompanied by the idea that the human dignity thus guaranteed harbours an imperative to make it tangible for every human being in lifeworld relationships"; Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 225.

775 Søren Kierkegaard, *Die Krankheit zum Tode* (Stuttgart, 1997), 13.

776 Cf. Kant, MS, AA VI:432.

777 Immanuel Kant, *Opus postum. Handschriftlicher Nachlass. Erste Hälfte* (Berlin, 1936); MS, AA XXI, 81; see also MS, AA VI:441.

778 Compassion for others can be developed on the assumption that compassion always implies identification and relatedness. By relatedness, I mean that people are not separated from each other, because all souls are from one divine original soul (cf. Q 15:29). By compassion, I mean the ability to feel the other as oneself. See also the essay "Martin Buber und die Mystik," *Martin Buber*, eds. Paul A. Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (Stuttgart, 1963), 40ff.

mentioned Avishai Margalit, who favours calling this a *decent society*. Against the background of the results so far, it seems to me that the cultivation of certain characteristics, attitudes, and emotions for social interaction, which, as this book has attempted to show, can also be religiously orientated in their justification, is constitutive for a society conceived in this way. This makes it necessary to promote connectedness and interdependence between people, so that the potential inherent in people can unfold in order to transform and be transformed for the good. Because a successful life shows itself in practice.

2. Four Possible Virtues

The observations and remarks made in the course of reflecting on philosophical and pedagogical discourses on the one hand, and Islamic theological discourses on the other hand, can now be placed within the horizon of far-reaching moral concepts and central virtues. The decisive selection criterion is the aspect of their impact on the process of becoming human. Given the many virtues mentioned, especially those that imply a socially beneficial dimension, I would like to explain the four meta-virtues of justice, honesty, compassion, and friendship, which are particularly important for the development of children and young people, above all for cooperation in the school context and beyond. Under the premise of strengthening personal development, I would like to briefly define the content of the virtues in order to conclude with a holistic summary. I will start with the queen of virtues: justice.

2.1 Justice

When discussing the concept of justice, it hardly seems possible to exclude references to the polis, as it was always associated with the idea of a just community—in antiquity, in medieval Islamic, and modern approaches—and was thus considered in conjunction with a political order. Onora O'Neill rightly asks how and by what means justice can be better institutionalised: through a culture of trust or

through formalised structures of accountability?[779] The question of whether citizens in an unjust state are capable of acquiring and cultivating justice has never lost its topicality—even in the history of Islamic education.[780] However, I will exclude the political frame of reference in the following and relate justice to the intersubjective context, not as a social structural norm but as a basic personal attitude.

Justice as a virtue of character is a basic attitude that one would wish every person to have. Justice is the disposition to do what is just, to judge justly and to act justly.[781] The opposite disposition is unjust attitudes, such as the pursuit of one's own advantage, partiality, egoism, all those attitudes that are concerned with one's own advantage and orient life according to selfish motives.[782] However, it is not only the focus on one's own advantage but also the concentration and prioritisation of one's own wishes and needs. A kind of self-love would then determine the form of action. Acting justly implies the starting point or attitude of giving everyone their due. Accordingly, justice is a middle habitus that avoids too much and too little, because it is also the centre between "doing wrong and suffering injustice." Justice is thus manifested in intersubjective actions.

In order to reveal the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the term, Aristotle established criteria for (un)just action. He distinguishes between general and particular justice. General justice refers to virtuous behaviour in relation to other people. Particular justice refers to an area of general justice, namely the distribution of material and immaterial goods. Thus, justice as a character disposition—like other virtues—requires actions appropriate to the situation, which presuppose certain perceptual evidence. For it is not only the accumulation of power and goods that must be confronted with the

779 Cf. Onora O'Neill, "Gerechtigkeit, Vertrauen und Verantwortlichkeit," in *Gerechtigkeit. Auf der Suche nach einem Gleichgewicht*, eds. Neumaier Otto, Clemens Sedmak, and Michael Zichy (Frankfurt, 2005), 33.

780 Cf. NE 1179b, 31 ff.; John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, 2005); Manuel Knoll, *Aristokratische oder demokratische Gerechtigkeit? Die politische Philosophie des Aristoteles und Martha Nussbaums egalitaristische Rezeption* (Paderborn, 2009).

781 Cf. NE 1128b 5–10.

782 Cf. NE 1128b 5–10.

question of how just this action is when people suffer hunger on the other side, but also the patronising of people by authoritatively dictating how they should live their lives is an unjust action. Because if I have the right to live the way I want, I must also grant others this right.[783]

The disposition to act justly, therefore, means the ability to do justice to the individual person in their particular situation.[784] The perspective of liberation theology adds that this claim relates in particular to those who are not in a position to stand up for their own rights. For the Muslim liberation theologian Farid Esack, justice is a basic prerequisite for life in general.[785] He considers passive neutrality, in the sense of a wait-and-see attitude in a situation that requires action, to be a sin. According to Esack, failure to act justly contradicts the divine goal of a just world. As a *kalifa* and in his responsibility as a *kalifa*, one should work towards this goal as much as possible.[786] In my opinion, justice therefore has the character of a social virtue. This form of justice, in particular, can promote care and compassion, which can lead to the development of solidarity or even friendships.[787] The concept of justice from an Islamic perspective reveals that the focus is on the just actor and his or her just motives and intentions, as well as the just action. The community forms the core of just action and has the common good as its main point of reference.

In terms of the justice relationship, my focus is therefore on the relationship with the other. I understand justice as a (shared) responsibility that requires me to uphold the other person's claim or, to put it another way, to protect the realisation of the other person's justice and to orient my actions accordingly.[788] To give an example:

783 Cf. NE 1129a.

784 See also Q 55:5–9; Q 4:135.

785 Cf. Farid Esack, *Qur'ān, Liberation and Pluralism. An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression* (Oxford, 1997), 98.

786 Cf. Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 212.

787 Cf. Onora O'Neill, *Tugend und Gerechtigkeit. Eine konstruktive Darstellung des praktischen Denkens*, trans. Joachim Schulte (Berlin, 1996), 258ff.

788 This idea is based on religious socialisation, in which the right of the neighbour, i.e., the other person, has an essential meaning and role. An example of this is the prophetic recommendation in which the Prophet Muhammad points out that the neighbour has a right to the food, even if he only catches the

Protecting the lives of fellow motorists should be the priority of the driver. The supposed freedom not to wear a seatbelt, which is based on a driver's conviction that he is an attentive and experienced driver, would be assigned to the issue of justice, i.e., justice is related to others and thus always has a "social reference."[789] In order to replace an egocentric view that grants others the same rights that one claims for oneself, many different aspects are required. Including everyone in the concept of justice requires a sense of community, on the one hand, and the ability to argue on the other, but above all, it requires time to overcome egocentric claims to ownership. Concepts of justice can only manifest themselves in action when children also develop an idea of justice within themselves.

2.2 Sincerity

In his fourth book of the NE, Aristotle lists individual social virtues, including truthfulness or sincerity.[790] Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā and other *udabā* clearly emphasised sincerity as an essential link between language (*lisān*) and its cultivation. It was correlated with the sincerity of the heart (*ṣidq al-qalb*), which can emerge when there is a coherence of thought, feeling, and action. The heart, which mystics also consider the place of the soul, can only reflect the truth. The sincerity of the heart is to do what is good, because a sincere heart always excludes self-interest and selfishness.

Truthfulness refers to sincerity in word and deed, whereby sincerity in turn has the truth as its point of reference. It represents the middle ground between deceitful boasting or bragging and feigned modesty or irony.[791] A person's truthfulness is their disposition to be sincere and honest. The boaster, on the other hand, exalts his

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smell of this food because the windows are open. This hadith is probably the origin of the Turkish proverb: *One eats, the other watches; for this reason, the world comes to an end.* It might not occur to a non-Muslim European to share his pretzel with others in a group because he prioritises other aspects in his deliberation and has a different idea of justice and (legal) entitlement.

789 For the term "social reference," see Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, *Geschichte der Rechts- und Staatsphilosophie* (Stuttgart, 2006), 254.

790 Both translations can be found, so I use them synonymously.

791 Cf. NE 1127a 12–15; NE 1108a 20–24.

self and makes himself bigger than he is. Self-enhancement is also a disguised form of arrogance. Irony is a state of mind that can be used in opposition to something true or real. In the Socratic sense, it may be a good tool, but without sensitivity in delicate situations, irony can have a destructive effect. If irony is to be understood more in the sense of feigned modesty, we are dealing with a person who likes to hide their light under a bushel. On the contrary, sincere, honest people are usually stable, self-confident, and thus, not dependent on attention. Confident people are honest with themselves and their environment and can deal well with rejection or criticism. Being honest with oneself means being true to oneself, being able not to orient one's own behaviour primarily towards pleasing others. In order to please others, a person will act and behave as others expect them to, and this leads to a loss of a sincere attitude towards themselves, which can also be recognised in their posture.[792]

Sincerity can be paired with many other primary virtues, such as justice, and secondary virtues such as reliability, authenticity, compassion, gentleness, and integrity. The antonym of sincerity is hypocrisy. Someone is hypocritical when they feign emotions or say something that simulates emotions. Someone is a hypocrite if

792 A story by the famous humourist Nasreddin Hodja is an example of sincerity and authenticity. The story is entitled *"Eat, my fur, eat!"* One day, "Hodja" is "invited to a banquet. He is wearing his everyday clothes and is not greeted or noticed by anyone. This affects him. He hurries home, throws on his magnificent fur coat, and returns to the party. He is received with honour at the entrance and led to a platform where he is given the best seat. When the soup is served, Hodja dips the lapel of his coat into the bowl and says: 'Please, help yourself. Eat, my fur, eat, my fur!' He explains to the astonished guests watching him: 'The honour goes to the fur, then it should have the food too!'" In Hodja's case, he needs to dress appropriately to gain the honour, respect, and attention of his hosts. What is more interesting is what Hodja wants to convey a lesson to his fellow human beings and consequently to the reader, with his behaviour, namely to make them aware of their falseness and insincerity. Hodja as a person deserves no respect; the person with his personality becomes superfluous. Instead, the status expressed through clothing becomes the object of esteem and respect. Nasreddin Hodja respects himself as a unique individual, which the hosts clearly do not. In order to maintain his self-respect and mirror the ethically wrong behaviour of his hosts, he dips the lapel of his coat in the soup and, with this act, wants to make his fellow human beings aware of their carelessness in all its consequences. If the fur coat is respected, it is also entitled to consume the soup.

they present an image of themselves that does not correspond to their true self. If there is no consistency and congruence between one's own code of values and the outward expression in words and actions, that thing becomes false and untrue. Moreover, hypocrisy creates a positive appearance that deceives others about one's personality. An attempt to deceive with regard to appearance and reality, which many people are tempted to do on social media, undermines the establishment of a basis of trust. Sincerity is a good example of the fact that, without the *dianoetic* virtue of prudence, people can fundamentally fail to be virtuous. It requires mental agility, in which one is prepared to leave behind the tried and tested if necessary. It requires fantasy and imagination in order to discover alternative paths beyond the well-trodden. Prudence is in the role of an agent who coordinates the inner goal-setting of other virtues, since it refers to the ability of phronesis to apply moral rules according to the situation and therefore plays an essential role in the interplay with character virtues.[793]

> Such choices require judgement, and the exercise of virtue therefore requires the ability to judge and do the right thing in the right place at the right time in the right way.[794]

The truly virtuous person acts on the basis of a true and rational judgement as a consequence of conscious perception and a deliberative thought process with the help of prudence, as it represents the gateway to new possibilities. Sincerity as a disposition also includes being able to discern in a situation whether it might not be wiser to keep one's mouth shut than to be honest if it would cause harm. I am thinking here of the classic example of the white lie.[795] In the face of reality, wisdom helps us to look for a realistic and ethically acceptable path. At the same time, being honest does not necessarily mean throwing the naked truth in the face of someone who has not asked for it or who may not be able to bear it in this form. In the first place, that would be a rude but not sincere behaviour.

In addition to hypocrisy, other opposites would be falsehood, dishonesty, corruptibility, and deception. All these vices manifest reprehensible qualities that make moral behaviour impossible. Agreeing

793 Schmidt, "Glaube und Charakter." Cf. Hähnel, *Das Ethos der Ethik*, 71.
794 MacIntyre, *Der Verlust der Tugend*, 202.
795 See Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*.

with Bettina Stangneth, the attempt to overcome evil would basically require overcoming moral depravity.

> For if radical evil is insincerity itself, then sincerity is not just one virtue among others, but the overcoming of the fundamental corruption of morality, i.e., the condition of the possibility of utilising moral consciousness at all, and that means: sincerity is the subjective precondition of the possibility of morality at all.[796]

Sincerity, therefore, appears to be a constitutive minimum requirement for the possibility of moral development.

Furthermore, sincerity also correlates with respect, a quality that could almost be described as a mega-virtue. I relate the primary virtue of sincerity, as a disposition of order, to respect and would like to subsume respect under secondary virtues, as it does not necessarily have to be oriented towards an ethically good goal by itself; I will discuss this further below.

Excursus: Respect as an Important Secondary Virtue

Showing respect is a form of recognition and goes hand in hand with sincerity. If someone shows respect to their superior just because they are afraid of losing their job, this is not sincere. If a person is friendly to other people, this does not mean that they respect others or that they are humble. It can also mean that they follow social norms, i.e., what is called etiquette in general dealings with people, and that their inner attitude is actually contrary to this, i.e., that their thoughts, feelings, and actions show cognitive dissonance. This would not be respect in the sense of a virtue but merely tolerance, which simply endures, bears, or even just accepts otherness.

> Morality also differs from etiquette, which concerns form and style rather than the essence of social existence. Etiquette determines what is polite behaviour rather than what is *right* behaviour in a deeper sense.[797]

796 Stangneth, *Kultur der Aufrichtigkeit*, 209.
797 Louis P. Pojman, *Discovering What is Right and Wrong* (Belmont, 2005), 5.

Polite manners or *adab* are fundamental for social interaction, but the decisive factor is whether they are also able to shape a person's character, which I will reflect on at the end.[798]

Respect as *aretē* is the middle disposition between vices such as boorishness, contempt, and restriction of religious and cultural self-rights, humiliation, degradation, arrogance, and rejection, on the one hand, and indifference to otherness, servility, paralysis of action, and falsehood, on the other hand.[799] This kind of vice ignores the other in their outwardly displayed individuality and self-expression. An exaggerated way of showing respect is that which turns into servility, skilful flattery, and intimate submissiveness. Given the concept of servanthood, Kant's plea for the dignity of human beings comes into the picture. In this plea, which he entitles "Von der Kriecherei" (*Of Grovelling*), he describes his concept of dignity, which, for Kant, forbids any form of self-abasement.[800] In it, he describes certain forms of "stooping and grovelling," in which someone "turns themselves into a worm," as unworthy.[801] For Kant, untruthfulness towards oneself represents the greatest violation of the duty to uphold self-respect, regardless of whether, according to the classic topos of the Stoa, one is used as a slave or worshipped as an emperor.[802] For Kant, sycophancy, which also includes servility, flattery or humiliation, is a vice. Furthermore, artificial, insincere affection, as well as inauthentic behaviour and feelings, destroy the basis of trust and thwart communality. A patronising attitude demonstrates contempt and the conviction of the inferiority or unworthiness of my counterpart. This prevents any possibility of initiating friendship

798 Cf. Avishai Margalit, *Politik der Würde. Über Achtung und Verachtung* (Frankfurt, 1994), *passim*.

799 Cf. Karl-Otto Apel, "Anderssein, ein Menschenrecht?," in *Anderssein, ein Menschenrecht. Über die Vereinbarkeit universaler Normen mit kultureller und ethnischer Vielfalt*, eds/ Hilmar Hoffmann and Dieter Kramer (Weinheim, 1995), 1065.

800 Cf. Andreas Brenner, *Bioethik und Biophänomen. Den Leib zur Sprache bringen* (Würzburg, 2006), 236.

801 Cf. Kant, MS AA, 92ff.

802 Kant expresses it as follows: "For his end, which is a duty in itself, he [the rational man] should not beg by grovelling, not *servilely* (*animo servili*), as if seeking favour, nor deny his dignity, but always with the consciousness of the sublimity of his moral disposition (which is already contained in the concept of virtue); and this self-esteem is man's duty towards himself." MS AA VI, 434.

and trust and taking the other person seriously as a thinking and sovereign being.

In his book *Die Wiederentdeckung des Respekts. Wie interkulturelle Begegnungen gelingen* (*Rediscovering Respect: How Intercultural Encounters Succeed*), Josef Schönberger introduces respect as an essential category in cultural exchange and distinguishes between behavioural and attitudinal components.[803] For Schönberger, it is important to respect people as fellow human beings in their humanity—with the exception of their behaviour.[804] Respect should not be understood as something that has to be negotiated between people in everyday life. I therefore see showing respect to others neither as a duty nor as guilt. It should stem from a deep conviction, an inner realisation.

In the eighteenth century, Kant first addressed the view that respect is the anthropological basis of morality. A comprehensive definition of respectability and human dignity itself can be found in Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals). For Kant, the basic principle of human dignity is "that all persons have a dignity that must be respected under all circumstances and at all times."[805] According to Kant, human dignity is an essential object of respect. Dignity demands a categorical respect for others as the framework for all intersubjectivity, in the recognition of their right to exist and in the recognition of the fundamental equality of all people. It is, in principle, unlosable; it cannot be conferred from outside, and it is intrinsic to every human being without exception. According to Kant, a human being is an end in itself; thus, human dignity is always violated when a person instrumentalises another person as a means and uses them for their own ends.[806] Any treatment of human beings that reifies

803 See Josef Schönberger, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Respekts. Wie interkulturelle Begegnungen gelingen* (Munich,) 2010.

804 Cf. Schönberger, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Respekts*, 14.

805 Lisa Linder, "Respekt," in *Psychologie der Werte. Von Achtsamkeit bis Zivilcourage – Basiswissen aus Psychologie und Philosophie*, ed. Dieter Frey (Berlin/Heidelberg, 2016), 169.

806 "The practical imperative will therefore be the following: Act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, at all times simultaneously as an end, never merely as a means." Kant, GMS, AA IV:429; ET, 38.

and fundamentally undermines their subjectivity, including their integrity, violates their dignity.

> The understanding of human dignity is rooted in a moral feeling. This feeling is moral because it provides standards of judgement for actions and omissions, but it is a feeling because it is not a calculative standard but a comprehensive, spontaneously acting, world-exploring attitude.[807]

Respect in the sense of a character disposition also entails recognising the identity of others. Recognition is an essential component of respect. In contrast to tolerance, positive recognition of the other is shown not by simply accepting or mocking the identity, the particularity, the *otherness* of the other person as it is presented, but by recognising it as otherness.[808] The opposite is hurtful and the beginning of all inhumanity.[809] "Disregard and degradation are serious offences because people can suffer damage to their self-esteem by suffering disregard."[810] American President Donald Trump displayed this kind of behaviour when, during an election campaign event, he mocked journalist Serge Kovaleski, who lives with arthrogryposis, a congenital joint stiffness, and made fun of his illness on camera in an attempt to humiliate him. Based on Kant's self-purpose formula, Kovaleski's human dignity was immensely violated by Trump's attempt to discredit and ridicule him in this way.[811] This example combines various attitudes. I would just like to suggest that there are different approaches to the concept of dignity, which cannot be explored in depth here.[812] In some situations, the prohibition

807 Brumlik, "Ethische Gefühle," 44.

808 When it comes to social cohesion and living together in an immigration society, tolerance is the wrong term and the wrong expectation. Tolerance perpetuates inequality and hierarchy within a society. Today, the structural principles of tolerance can neither be secured intergenerationally nor helped to achieve authentic recognition.

809 Cf. Margalit, *Politik der Würde*, 7.

810 Jochen Schmidt, *Wahrgenommene Individualität. Eine Theologie der Lebensführung* (Göttingen, 2014), 40ff.

811 The second part of the categorical imperative reads as follows: "Act in such a way that you use humanity, both in your own person and in the person of everyone else, at all times simultaneously as an end, never merely as a means"; Kant, GMS, AA IV:429.

812 For a comprehensive treatise on the topic of dignity, see Eva Weber-Guskar, *Würde als Haltung. Eine philosophische Untersuchung zum Begriff der Menschenwürde* (Berlin, 2017).

of instrumentalisation may represent a helpful normative orientation for the application of human dignity as a norm. However, understanding dignity not only as an intrinsic quality but also as a contingent attitude, in the sense of a comprehensive shaping of dispositions and thus as a supreme good, seems to me to be more appropriate.[813] Trump's behaviour or appearance was undignified, i.e., he has lost his dignity in the sense of an attitude. As I have previously summarised, an attitude is the authentic, performative expression of inner motivations. Dignity as an attitude reflects a correspondence between "inside and outside and a self-relationship that makes a person appear dignified."[814]

> If I discriminate against the poor or rich, black, or indigenous child, if I discriminate against the woman, the farmer, or the labourer, I cannot listen to them, and if I do not listen to them, I cannot talk to them on an equal level but only in a patronising manner. Above all, I prevent myself from understanding them. If I feel superior to those who differ from me, whoever they may be, I refuse to listen to them.[815]

The Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire states that sincere respect requires humility. This is because modesty expresses the inner (mental) attitude "that no one is superior to another," which means a de-hierarchisation.[816] Modesty expresses a person's relationship to themselves as well as to other people. It is the opposite of self-love, pride, arrogance, and arrogance. A racist person, for example, has the inner attitude of arrogance, as they classify people by placing negative characteristics attributed to others above the self-attributed characteristics of others.[817] A racist positions himself higher than others; he acts arrogantly. A similar form of discrimination, in which the same negative personal characteristics come into play, can also take place with regard to migrants. The *othering* begins with defamatory stereotyping and the associated attributions about the other.

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813 Cf. Eva Weber-Guskar, "Menschenwürde: Kontingente Haltung statt absoluter Wert," in *Menschenwürde: eine philosophische Debatte über Dimensionen ihrer Kontingenz*, eds. Mario Brandhorst and Eva Weber-Guskar (Berlin, 2017), 214.

814 Cf. Weber-Guskar, "Menschenwürde," 216.

815 Paulo Freire, *Pädagogik der Autonomie. Notwendiges Wissen für die Bildungspraxis* (Münster, 2008), 110.

816 Freire, *Pädagogik der Autonomie*, 111.

817 Cf. Birgit Rommelspacher, *Anerkennung und Ausgrenzung: Deutschland als multikulturelle Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt, 2002), 132ff.

The friendship that I favour for a culture of togetherness is based on equality and does not recognise superiority.[818]

I would like to define respect, which is here presented as a secondary virtue, as a basic ethical attitude that does not undermine plurality, takes differences seriously and is able to value every person as a whole from an ethical point of view. It is about respect as a condition for dignified coexistence and about the learning process of treating people as human beings. This opens up and enables openness in the first place, for the perception of the personality of the other person. It is not possible to say what this appreciation looks like in concrete terms from a virtue ethics perspective, but this is not necessary. After all, every situation requires a corresponding type of attention in order to assess it appropriately and act correctly. Basic gestures of respect can be a good exercise in acquiring a fundamentally respectful disposition. If, as previously described, habits arise from repetition, the repeated endeavour to be polite—which can take different forms—should lead to the virtues of human kindness and respect. This includes, for example, friendly glances and looks, when appropriate, as a sign of careful attention to the other person. Children and young people can get used to having respect for others if, among other things, they take care of others.

> It is wrong, all too wrong, to humiliate others who are on the margins of society. But to be treated as human beings, they do not have to be considered precious, pure, or soulful. Respect for people is about nothing else: it does not depend on people being something particularly noble.[819]

Contempt, on the other hand, reflects a lack of self-esteem. "Recognising the integrity of others is linked to the experience of one's own integrity and recognition, which is articulated in self-awareness, self-respect and self-esteem."[820] If someone has no self-respect and has not experienced this themselves, they cannot show this attitude to anyone else. This makes it almost impossible to develop the ability to empathise.

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818 Cf. NE 1158b.

819 Avishai Margalit, "Menschenwürde zwischen Kitsch und Vergötterung," in *Gerechtigkeit*, eds. Neumaier, Sedmak, and Zichy, 19.

820 Brumlik, "Ethische Gefühle," 44.

> Anyone who looks at their own attempts and aberrations with all honesty and attention, who learns to see and respect themselves in all their ambivalence, also develops their ability to recognise and respect other people in their individual characteristics.[821]

Sincerity can therefore create social bonds and friendship, and allow social relationships to grow and expand. Sincerity thus acquires a constitutive value in interpersonal relationships.

2.3 Compassion

The possibility of compassion (*ta'āruf*), which is also conditioned by successful mindfulness, is an important component of a successful lifestyle from a religious perspective. It is striking that emotions are hardly ever explicitly mentioned among Muslim thinkers as something that should be cultivated; instead, they always resonate through the thematisation of character traits and are an implicit component of all virtues. Compassion is a natural part of the theological virtue of mercy or the virtue of neighbourliness and friendship, as well as justice and moderation. A synonymous term that best expresses the scope and referentiality of compassion is humanity. Humanity can be measured by compassion. These considerations lead to the reference criterion that every virtue should be measured by "humanity as a guiding principle." Even in the Qur'ān there is a strong emphasis on the fraternal bond between all Muslims, which should be strengthened, but all people as humanity are addressed to bring about peace and justice in the world.[822] People are related to each other, and the common good is their point of reference. Dealing with the concerns of one's fellow human beings and empathising with them (*ta'āruf*) can enable the development of trust, respect and, as a result, compassion.[823]

The same can be said for the religious practices of charitable behaviour called for in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In charity, compassion expresses a willingness to help. In Islamic countries, being charita-

821 Schmidt, *Wahrgenommene Individualität*, 36.
822 Q 49:9–13.
823 Cf. El-Fadl, "When Happiness Fails," 117.

ble is a central structural element of the sociality of a society.[824] At the same time, it is paired with emotions such as compassion, love, kindness, and humility—emotions that have their natural place, particularly in the traditions of the prophetic and post-prophetic cultures and in the narratives of these cultures. Through these, children and young adolescents can learn about experiences and positions on what is ethically good and what makes them happy. This can give them an idea of what love, friendship, and compassion mean and how they manifest themselves.

In my opinion, developing compassion is a central emotion for successful interpersonal relationships. In the words of Martha Nussbaum, compassion is the basic prerequisite for living together with others and a decisive basis for moral behaviour.[825] Dealing with each other in a compassionate, friendly, and loving way requires the conviction that another person has the same right to exist as we do, and it presupposes cooperating with others and showing consideration for others.[826] The opposite would be a person's selfish focus on their own personal interests and feelings. According to Nussbaum, being able to live with others requires an assessment of the situation of others in order to get to know their needs in relation to a good life, especially because the well-being of others is an important part of living together.[827] Anita Allen formulates it similarly in her book on the importance of ethics by speaking of "a lifelong quest to respond to others with a willingness to forego brazen self-interest."[828] In order to achieve this, a special form of sympathy is required, namely compassion.

Accepting others in their otherness and being able to see the world through the eyes of others requires, among other things, com-

824 Cf. Mahmud el-Wereny, "Wohltätigkeit im Islam. Theologisch-rechtliche Grundlagen und interreligiöse Perspektiven," in *Islam-Erkundungen Einheit und Vielfalt muslimischen Selbstverständnisses zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, eds. Hans-Georg Babke and Heiko Lamprecht (Berlin, 2017), 99.

825 Cf. Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2008), 4 ff.

826 For more information, see Giacomo Rizzolatti, *Empathie und Spiegelneurone. Die biologische Basis des Mitgefühls* (Frankfurt, 2008).

827 For more details, see Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*.

828 Anita L. Allen, *The New Ethics: A Guided Tour of the Twenty-First Century Moral Landscape* (New York, 2004), 7.

passion. Respect alone as a basic personal attitude is not always sufficient for this, as respect can be expressed honestly but also in a distanced manner. If respect is accompanied and linked with positive images of justice and emotions of kindness or gratitude, a different atmosphere can arise in our dealings with one another.[829] In my opinion, cultivating a mindful approach within us requires the constructive emotional disposition of compassion. In order to be cultivated as a disposition, the experience of the community of sharing burdens is helpful. However, empathising with the needs, feelings and interests of others does not yet form a moral personality. Since compassion is a secondary virtue, it needs to be combined with at least one other virtue, such as prudence. It helps to decide to what extent someone should be compassionate and in what form this compassion may be expressed. This also applies because it is fundamentally possible to feel compassion in the wrong way, towards the wrong people or in a way that offends the recipient.

Compassion must be distinguished from empathy, both emotional empathy and cognitive empathy. While the concept of cognitive empathy refers to understanding the emotions, thoughts, and feelings of the other person through conscious, cognitive processes, but no sharing of feelings, the concept of emotional empathy claims to be able to *empathise* with the other person, to be able to share the feelings of the other person in order to be able to give an emotional response to the other person.

This cannot always work.[830] I also share Paul Bloom's criticism that empathy narrows our moral view to certain people in the present and within our range of vision. Our moral decisions and actions are largely shaped by empathy. Bloom argues that empathy is essentially and inevitably partial or biased.[831]

Compassion emphasises the (empathetic) sharing of pain, suffering, sadness or joy, and this is only possible if we are actually able

829 With regard to gratitude, it should be noted that it is one of the demonstrably healthiest attitudes in life, as the experience of reciprocity goes hand in hand with the feeling of happiness from an Islamic theological perspective as well. Cf. Demmerling and Landweer, *Philosophie der Gefühle*, 124ff.

830 I am thinking of pregnant women. A woman who has never been pregnant cannot feel the feelings of being pregnant like an expectant mother. At best, someone can empathise with joy, pain, or grief.

831 Cf. Paul Bloom, *Against Empathy* (London, 2017), 9.

to *empathise*, i.e., the empathic reaction of sharing the feelings of our counterpart can be transformed into compassion or expressed in empathy-related exhaustion.[832] Compassion appears to be, among other things, the disposition to feel sympathetic concern for a (for example) sad person and at the same time to have the intention to alleviate suffering in some way, while empathic people are only able to see things through the eyes of their counterpart and put themselves in the position of other people.[833] This process can take place neutrally, even if one intuitively associates empathy with something positive.

But can we really see through the eyes of another person? The ability to feel empathy is strongly linked to our personality and our ability to deal with emotions and situations. The ability to deal with our own emotions enables us to experience positive social interactions, and it is crucial for building stable relationships with other people. There is also the ability to perceive, which develops over the course of a person's life through their own experiences. Against this background, it can be easier for some people to empathise with the other person's world of ideas, thoughts and feelings and to (fully) share their perspective, while it is more difficult for others because they lack personal experience.[834] Once a shared world of thoughts and feelings has been established (perhaps despite different perceptions of reality), the ego merges with the you, i.e., the ego becomes alienated from itself and becomes the you through empathy. The I changes because it is placed in the world of thought and feeling of the other and shares their mood. Nevertheless, a gradualness of this merging of perspectives must be recognised, in which the merging of I and You in the narrow sense can usually take place in intimate friendships or romantic relationships. Even if you can empathise and sympathise only with people you like, this ability is part of a

832 See Tania Singer and Matthias Bolz, "Mitgefühl," in *Alltag und Forschung*, Max Planck Society, 2013.

833 According to neuroscience studies, this attitude is also said to initiate the self-healing processes. For more information, see Kristin Neff, *Self-Compassion* (New York, 2011).

834 Cf. Thomas Fischl, *Mitgefühl – Mitleid – Barmherzigkeit: Ansätze von Empathie im 12. Jh.* (Mainz, 2017), 14.

process.[835] If you have developed the habit of empathy as a child through socialisation, it is fundamentally possible to empathise and understand the emotional lives of others.

Compassion also appears to be the disposition to act in a prosocial, i.e., people-centred, and genuinely interested way. It shows a motivation to alleviate the pain and suffering of others or to share their joy. Empathisers are solution-oriented; they create and anticipate solutions and do not make them dependent on sympathy for the person in question. To do this, empathisers must be fully present. However, if a person reacts with empathy-related exhaustion, i.e., an ego-centred attitude, this means that they are so overwhelmed by their own sadness that they avoid the situation as much as possible and leave the other person in pain alone.

Mindfulness also plays an important role in the context of compassion. Mindfulness is the "practised feeling of respect;" it requires "the inner attitude of perceived respect" for the other person and can be "understood as an element of interpersonal behaviour."[836] Mindfulness and respect are, therefore, also prosocial emotions. Compassion is a mindful awareness of the other person. If a person feels *respected* and *taken care of*, they feel noticed and accepted as a human being, because those who take care of their surroundings themselves also want to be taken care of in their being. The moment of attention, the moment of relating to the other person—even if this initially begins with a fleeting eye contact—is like an uncelebrated ceremony of being discovered, recognised, and affirmed; the active moment, however, which is free of discovery and recognition, should also be considered. At the same time, it is the affirmation of freedom and dignity, because if being this way is not respected, the ego cannot be truly free.[837]

In this context, one discourse from learning and educational research is worth mentioning as an example: mindfulness education

835 Cf. Hans Walter Gruhle, *Verstehen und Einfühlen: Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin/Göttingen/Heidelberg, 1953), 283.

836 Jochen Schmidt, "Achtsamkeit. Versuch zur Ethischen Theologie," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 54.1 (2012): 24ff.

837 Cf. Robert Spaemann, "Über den Begriff der Menschenwürde," in *Menschenrechte und Menschenwürde. Historische Voraussetzungen, säkulare Gestalt, christliches Verständnis*, eds. Ernst Wolfgang Böckenförde and Robert Spaemann (Stuttgart, 1987), 299.

in schools.[838] In relation to schools, mindfulness is associated with the development of socioemotional skills, stress reduction, promoting the health and resilience of teachers and pupils, and increasing concentration and well-being.[839] Vera Kaltwasser's concept is about training the ability to self-regulate and control impulses, which is based on self-awareness developed over time. Exercise practices, such as formal exercise practice and mindfulness exercises, which can be easily incorporated into lessons, are intended to develop the ability to be present and to recognise one's own ingrained patterns.[840] This approach is aimed in particular at self-cultivation.

Johann Baptist Metz coined the term "mysticism of God's open eyes," which I find relevant not only from a liberation theology perspective but also with regard to the development of social-emotional competence.[841] Empathy requires mindfulness, i.e., an attentive look at oneself and others. However, if the perception of the other person, i.e., respect, has become impossible, this points to the fact that someone is missing themselves, from which they must first be redeemed so that "admitted failures, disregard and shame no longer stand in the way of the view, so that the view can become free again."[842]

Miskawayh emphasised the cultivating dimension of religious practice, which the mystics bring into a high form. Against this backdrop, for example, passing on one's duty (*zakāt*) can be seen as a possible cultivation exercise for both the dispositions of justice and generosity as well as the emotional disposition of compassion.[843] Compassion can therefore activate positive and good feelings for others and for oneself. Compassion can be visualised with the help of narratives. At this point, it makes sense to cite a narrative from

838 See Vera Kaltwasser, *Achtsamkeit in der Schule. Stille-Inseln im Unterricht. Entspannung und Konzentration* (Weinheim, 2008).

839 Cf. Ute Koglin and Franz Petermann, "Kindergarten- und Grundschulalter: Entwicklungsrisiken und Entwicklungsabweichungen," in *Lehrbuch der Klinischen Kinderpsychologie*, ed. Franz Petermann (Göttingen, 2013), 101–118.

840 See Vera Kaltwasser, *Persönlichkeit und Präsenz. Achtsamkeit im Lehrerberuf* (Weinheim 2018), 10ff.; cf. Irina Spiel, "Empathie- und Compassion-Training," in *Handbuch Philosophie und Ethik*, vol. I, eds. Julian Nida-Rümelin, Irina Spiegel and Markus Thiedemann (Paderborn 2017), 246.

841 Johann Baptist Metz, *Mystik der offenen Augen. Wenn Spiritualität aufbricht*, ed. Johann Reikerstorfer (Freiburg, 2013).

842 Schmidt, *Wahrgenommene Individualität*, 97.

843 For more on this, see Isik, *Die Bedeutung des Gesandten Muḥammad*, 251ff.

the Islamic tradition that is well-suited as an example for thinking about dispositions to act and emotions. As already noted, it is part of the traditional form of learning in Islam to cultivate personal and emotional attitudes through discussion (deliberation) on the basis of religious narratives:

> While travelling, a man passed a date garden where a black slave woman was working. After her work, she was given three loaves of bread. The man observed that a dog approached the slave while she was working. The slave gave the dog a loaf of bread to eat. Then she gave him the second loaf, which the dog ate with relish. Finally, she gave him the last piece. The man then approached the slave girl and asked her: "What is your daily wage?" The slave girl replied: "As you saw, three loaves of bread." "Then why did you give all three to the dog to eat?" She said, "No dog has ever passed by here. This dog must have come from far away. I could not bear to see him so hungry." The man then asked: "Fine, but what are you going to eat today?" "I'll be patient, because I've given up my right to three loaves of bread today to this creature." The man thought to himself, "Behold, and I thought I was being very generous. Truly, this slave girl is more generous than I am!" The man then bought the slave girl and the date garden. He set the slave girl free and gave her the garden.[844]

Many personal qualities and attitudes can be seen in the behaviour of the slave woman, which on the one hand illustrate what is decisively Islamic and on the other hand offer the opportunity to discuss the differences between Islam's understanding of virtue with its Aristotelian influences and Aristotle's understanding of virtue itself and to bring them into a dialogue. These personal qualities include magnanimity, generosity, mercy, patience, sincerity, and altruism. However, the central emotion controlling these qualities is compassion.

The story is based on two different ideas of generosity. The man's behaviour of buying the garden and ransoming the slave girl in order to give her the garden as a gift is quite virtuous. The man draws his generosity from his obviously large fortune, while the slave girl gives from nothing. Giving out of little is based on a deep trust in the world or God, on the one hand, but on the other hand,

844 Cf. Ghazālī, *Kimyâ-yı Saâdet* (Istanbul, 1977), 467. It is disputed who this traveller is supposed to have been, ʻAbdullah bin Jaʻfār or Imām Zayn al-ʻĀbidīn.

it demonstrates a high degree of deliberation and judgement stemming from mindfulness and compassion. Her behaviour is therefore neither pretended nor calculated. The man is overwhelmed by her behaviour and her sincere attitude and is so impressed that he sets her free. How would Aristotle have assessed the slave's behaviour and her attitude? According to his doctrine of *mesotes*, the slave might have missed the appropriate centre and displayed an extreme attitude, as she could have just given away a loaf of bread; then both the dog and she would have been satisfied. Moreover, Aristotle would probably have regarded her attitude and actions as the result of an improper weighing of the surrounding variables and as an *excess.* The slave is putting her life in danger by giving too much. According to Aristotle, this deliberation also lacks the rational virtue of prudence as a reference criterion. Prudence assumes the role of an observer who coordinates the inner purpose of other virtues, as it refers to the ability of phronesis to apply moral rules according to the situation, and plays an essential role in the interplay with the character virtues.[845] "Such choices require judgement, and the exercise of the virtues therefore requires the ability to judge and to do the right thing in the right place at the right time in the right way."[846] Arendt also shaped the Aristotelian doctrine of phronesis into a theory of judgement. According to her, the slave may have displayed poor judgement. The truly virtuous person acts on the basis of rational judgement as a consequence of conscious perception and consideration. When asked about the slave's motivation, her answer is compassion (in this case, pity) and trust in God. This compassion manifests itself, i.e., this emotional disposition manifests itself in a very specific way. Emotions can have an "atmospheric" effect.[847] The slave gives kindly, lovingly, and caringly. She is morally judged and her example leaves an impression.

This attitude can be described as a theological virtue known as *īthār*. *Ithār* is a potentised form of perspective-taking. It is the highest possible form of dissolving the difference between I and You.

845 Cf. Schmidt, "Glaube und Charakter;" Hähnel, *Das Ethos der Ethik*, 71.

846 MacIntyre, *Der Verlust der Tugend*, 202.

847 On the term "atmospheric," see: Johannes Fischer, "Emotionen und die religiöse Dimension der Moral," in *Theologie der Gefühle*, eds. Roderich Barth and Christopher Zarnow (Berlin/Boston, 2015), 195.

The 'I' connected to the 'You' experiences such a unity that the good of the other is simultaneously recognised as one's own. This means that the other is no longer *the other*, whose good is put first, but the other is him-/herself, i.e., the difference is cancelled out so that the I dissolves into the You.[848] The early Sufi al-Nurī in particular was highly praised in biographies for this attitude.[849] In addition to compassion, it requires the interplay of other virtues that I would classify more as *theological* virtues: love and trust. With regard to these two virtues, *īthār* therefore cannot be translated as altruism. While altruism tries to achieve a goal, love has found its goal.

In the *akhlāq* works, *īthār* is found exclusively as a secondary virtue. It is presented as a comprehensive realisation of dispositions such as compassion, love, generosity, and trust. Giving from nothing is an expression of this attitude of prioritising the needs of others, because its motivation is based on love for God. It is part of this learning process that children learn that the world does not revolve around themselves and that their own interests, wishes and activities should/must/can be put aside. How can the feelings of others be (better) understood? How can someone empathise with others? The school context offers many opportunities to practise compassionate behaviour and adopt the perspectives of others.

2.4 Friendship

I will analyse friendship (Greek, *philia*; Arabic, *sadāqa*) exclusively in terms of its importance for a good and successful life and exclude forms of friendship and their gender-specific possibilities. For my context, I will discuss which aspects a friendship needs for a successful life together. In the Arabic translation of the NE, the terms *maḥabba* and *sadāqa* are used interchangeably and synonymously. With this alternating use, the dimension of love (*maḥabba*), which is established in the NE, comes to the fore at certain points.[850] The intrinsic motif of friendship is love.

848 Cf. Q 59:9.

849 Cf. Schimmel, "al-Nūrī," 60; for the biographies of the works already mentioned, see al-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt al-sufiyya*, and Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyāt al-awliyāʾ*.

850 Cf. Topkara, *Umrisse*, 164; Ullmann, *Die Nikomachische Ethik*, 97.

According to Aristotle, who addresses friendship as a primary virtue in his eighth book of the NE, friendship is the most necessary thing in life because nobody would want to live without friends, even if they had all the goods.[851] The plausibility of this assertion does not seem to require any philosophical argumentation, as it probably makes everyone happy to have a friend and not to be alone in the world.[852] Friendship is not only a virtue but also a special good and an end in itself.[853] According to Aristotle, people do not behave amicably towards each other because they expect to gain an advantage or benefit from it—provided their frame of reference is respect and love.[854] The concept of friendship can be interpreted as an axiom of a happy life. It becomes a necessary condition of itself. Friendship as a virtue is the disposition to be able to make and maintain friendships.

Along with Aristotle, Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā, Miskawayh, and Ghazālī also emphasise the social function of friendship, insofar as friendship means sociability and affability.[855] Especially in the work of Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā, the vehemence of friendship and neighbourliness became very clear not only through the prophetic statements but also through the many narratives of subsequent generations. In them, the friend is placed directly at the centre of the interaction and is prioritised. Even if friendship, when explicitly mentioned, differs from neighbourliness in that it is friendship among equals in the narrower sense, neighbourliness can refer to many personal affiliations, relationships, and institutional forms.[856]

The virtues of friendship and love appear together as the basis of all virtues and boil down to love of humanity. Without this

851 Cf. NE 1154b.

852 For reasons of better readability, the masculine form is used in the rest of the text.

853 "For it [friendship] is a certain virtue (*aretē*) or associated with virtue; moreover, it is extremely necessary for life." NE 1154b.

854 Cf. NE 1155a 3ff.

855 Cf. Lenn E. Goodman, "Friendship in Aristotle, Miskawayh and al-Ghazālī," in *Friendship East and West: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Oliver Leaman (Richmond, 1996), 176, 181.

856 Cf. Nathalie von Siemens, *Aristoteles über Freundschaft. Untersuchungen zur Nikomachischen Ethik VIII und IX* (Freiburg, 2007), 38ff.; Otfried Höffe, "Art. philia/Freundschaft, Liebe," in *Aristoteles-Lexikon*, 446.

fundamental love of humanity, social coexistence is impossible. In this sense, the cultivation of friendly attitudes makes a decisive contribution to cohesion in a society. For the philosophers, sociability is an indication of good character.[857] Reciprocal cooperation between people in the social sphere is a good field in which friendship can develop and flourish.[858]

Friendship as a way of connecting people humanely and at the same time in freedom is probably the most beautiful possible expression of ethical maturity. Freedom is paired with responsibility. The most enduring friendship exists between virtuous people or where friends are similar in their virtuousness. Friendship not only with others but also with oneself becomes a benevolent attitude towards one's fellow human beings and oneself. In order to be truly benevolent, a clear decision is required. The virtuous person shows benevolence towards his friend in that he identifies with his friend and is happy when the friend is happy and sad when the friend is sad.[859] A true friend is perceived as a »second self« that you respect and protect like yourself.[860] "The fact that the other person is important to me includes the dimension of praise and rebuke."[861] Friendship, therefore, implies openness to friendly criticism. Friendship as a relationship of recognition means honouring and respecting the other person in their particularity, in their special otherness.

The premises for reciprocal recognition in order for friendship to develop at all lie in the assumption that the other person can be understood in principle and in the willingness to realise this by getting to know and listening to them. An important aspect that Freire would like to emphasise is listening, because friendship is based on listening. The rejection of others is often based on problems of understanding, which stem from not really listening to each other, remaining in one's own attitude, and holding on to the conviction that one cannot understand the other anyway. In the encounter,

857 Cf. Ulrich Nortmann, "Art. energeia / Tätigkeit, Wirklichkeit," in *Aristoteles-Lexikon*, 180–182.

858 Cf. Otfried Höffe, "eleutheria / Freiheit," in *Aristoteles-Lexikon*, 170.

859 Elizabeth M. Bucar, "Islamic Virtue Ethics," in Nancy E. Snow, *Oxford Handbook of Virtue* (Oxford, 2018), 221.

860 Cf. NE 1166a, 32.

861 Hähnel, *Das Ethos der Ethik*, 264.

people are called upon to respond to the other person and listen to them.

When it comes to the question of what kind of friendship is desirable, intention plays a decisive role. Friendship for the sake of the friend is crucial.[862] In this type of friendship, friends want what is good for each other equally. Such friendships are rare because it takes a long time of familiarisation until you have proven to be reliable, pleasant, and lovable to each other. This is because friendship is a complex social form of relationship that requires many prerequisites. As far as the public sphere is concerned, it should not be overlooked that friendship in the sense described here remains an event that, for all its structural integration, cannot be planned or made available; friendships either develop or they do not. It is impossible that all members of a society are friends with each other. Individual friendships that transcend milieus, social differences and communities must ultimately act as exemplary bridgeheads and facilitate encounters. In my opinion, however, friendship cannot serve as a model for negotiating all social conflicts, but it can at least motivate an ideal.

In conclusion, it should be noted that it is not only demographic change, developments in the labour market and increasingly loose family relationships but also new formats of friendships such as those in social media that make it necessary to deal with this form of relationship.[863]

3. Reflections on the Educational Discourse within the Horizon of Virtue Ethics

In this concluding section, I aim to establish what the reflective dimension of virtue can bring to the current educational discourse and how it can contribute to an expansion of the understanding of education. Nothing conclusive can be said here, but a basic direction can be indicated.

862 For Aristotle, the friendship of mutual goodwill is the most perfect of friendships.

863 For a sociological view of the phenomenon of friendship, see Janosch Schobin et al., *Freundschaft heute. Eine Einführung in die Freundschaftssoziologie* (Bielefeld, 2016).

In terms of virtue theory, the pursuit of a successful life is linked to a person's ability to become a morally better person, i.e., to develop and practise virtues. If education refers to the human being holistically, the ethical dimension of education, which, in my opinion, is neglected, should be given the same importance as its cognitive dimension.[864] I see the basic element of this dimension in the acquisition of desirable personal qualities and attitudes that equip people to react in the best possible way. I have discussed the virtues that form the coordinating framework for the ethical dimension of education and guide people in their critical self-awareness as justice, honesty, friendship, and compassion—although other secondary virtues could certainly be mentioned under the premise of developing a moral culture of humanity.

In an educational context, the challenge for schools is to fulfil the mission of personality development by offering opportunities and assistance to develop desirable personal characteristics. The socialisation environment of the school is a good breeding ground for the development of ethically desirable character traits and therefore also the pattern of experience, which, according to Joas, is an important aspect, particularly with regard to values education.

Following Aristotle, virtues of character can best arise from familiarisation with a corresponding practice and lead to the development of subjects of integrity.[865] One impulse from the mystical tradition for the virtue theory discussion was the focus on the relationship between body and soul and, in this interdependence, specifically on body perception. It turned out that habitualisations in and on the body have an effect on the self. If they are not restricted to their practical significance, outer, especially aesthetic exercises have a formative power for the inner world due to the way they are experienced. Aesthetic exercises and the sensory experience of the aesthetic itself can therefore help to cultivate a morally competent perception of one's own self.

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864 Cf. Julian Nida-Rümelin, "Die physische Dimension der Bildung," in *Bildung im Sport. Beiträge zu einer zeitgemäßen Bildungsdebatte*, eds. Michael Krüger and Nils Neuber (Wiesbaden, 2011), 23.

865 Cf. Nida-Rümelin, *Philosophie einer humanen Bildung*, 171ff.; NE 1103a, 21–22, 23–25.

> Aesthetic education is thus based on the practice of perception and the possibilities contained therein, a practice that is just as inherent in the character of pleasure as it is in the criticism of perception.[866]

Two important insights for the understanding of education are derived from this: firstly, the indispensability of aesthetic-cultural educational processes for school education within the framework of an educational theory. The fundamental contribution from the religious field was religious practice, body practices and areas of music and art, which emphasise both the sensory and ritual and thus the physical dimension of religion and religious education and understand sensory perception as an enabling potential.[867] In principle, it can be stated that objects of aesthetic-cultural education can initiate processes of (self-)education. In view of the fact that in the virtue ethics discourse, the acquisition of virtues was mainly stimulated by aesthetic means, the composite term *virtue aesthetics* can probably do justice to this phenomenon. This concept of virtue aesthetics means a combination of two ideas: the *aesthetic ethics of virtue* and the *aesthetics of virtue*. The latter states that aesthetics forms the frame of reference in the expression of a virtue. This can be exemplified as follows using the example of friendship. If a friend wants to draw her friend's attention to something that undeniably harms her, she has many communicative options at her disposal. An aesthetic of virtue would be recognisable in a form that possesses grace, i.e., is beautiful in its execution and neither offends nor shames the other person. An aesthetic ethics of virtue implies all those media, such as literature, in which virtues are conveyed through narratives or prose, as was made clear by the example of Abī 'l-Dunyā and many other *adab* works. In this, aesthetics can express a force in which the good is practised

866 Hartmut von Hentig, "Allgemeine Lernziele der Gesamtschule," in *Deutscher Bildungsrat Gutachten und Studien der Bildungskommission*, vol. 12 (Stuttgart, 1969), 29. For more details, see Stefan Altmeyer, *Von der Wahrnehmung zum Ausdruck. Zur ästhetischen Dimension von Glauben und Lernen* (Stuttgart, 2006).

867 Making music and learning to sing can not only promote the spiritual, cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development of children and young people but also edify and cultivate them, and support the further development of their sensory abilities. Cf. Caroline Hopf, "'Das Beste in der Musik steht nicht in den Noten' – Musikalische Bildung als Herausforderung im Medienzeitalter," in *Der Alltag der Kultivierung. Studien zu Schule, Kunst und Bildung*, eds. Leopold Klepacki, Andreas Schröer, and Jörg Zirfas (Münster, 2009), 208.

and through which the good becomes externally recognisable in its aesthetic form. In other words, aesthetic virtue ethics emphasises the significance of external, aesthetic behaviour for the inner life and vice versa. The inner, beautiful, and good attitude affects the outward behaviour of the virtuous.

Accordingly, a virtuous aesthetic educational practice emphasises the perceptual and creative dimensions of educational processes. Literature, music, and the visual arts in particular can open up aesthetic spaces of experience in which children and young people can interact and generate worlds of meaning, interpretation, and feeling. In this sense, not only aesthetic-cultural but also religious education offers important potential for personality development. Engaging with the arts in the broadest sense can cultivate people. Learning to play an instrument, for example, not only trains cognitive and physical skills but also sensory and personal skills, as movement and coordination, feeling and touch, and hearing and seeing are very closely linked when making music. Mastering an instrument gradually leads to a delicate physical control, which can only be achieved through the reflective interplay of the senses. Consistently practising an instrument also trains the ability to be patient and teaches someone to persevere with something. This behaviour teaches you not to lose motivation and give up too quickly. In this learning process, people also get to know themselves better; inner resistances emerge or motives of reluctance become apparent. Constant practice can help to dissolve reluctance and inner resistance. This requires long practice and perseverance, which, over time, imparts a sense of equilibrium and balance. As a result, the musician acquires a certain degree of harmony, unison, and peace of mind. Many other qualities could be listed, such as attentiveness, level-headedness, or tact, which can be trained by learning to play.

By engaging with the world through aesthetics, children and young people learn new perspectives on the world and get to know themselves and their capabilities better. In this way, they can further develop and strengthen their perceptual and behavioural skills.

The second impulse follows on from the first and refers to a greater involvement of the body and movement in educational processes or activity-oriented teaching settings in which the mind and

body work together with the involvement of the senses.[868] Above all, emotional perceptions and changes can be trained through exercises so that unpleasant life circumstances and situations can be accepted more easily.[869] For example, the non-judgemental perception and description of events is a very important first skill of this kind. In the face of audiovisual overload, relaxation or mindfulness exercises can also enable children and young people to become aware of themselves and others, their feelings, and the variety of options for being and acting.[870]

After all, it should have become clear that value concepts or virtues such as justice, honesty or respect do not have anything authoritarian about them as long as they are not understood as instructions for action.[871] In connection with the discourse on competence, it has become recognisable that competence is a "shrunken form" of virtue and does not actually capture the most important dimension of the concept of virtue, namely the moral constitution of the person.[872] Morally desirable attitudes, convictions, and characteristics that result in right behaviour can be derived from the insight into what constitutes a good character.[873] This aspect should have

868 For a holistic education that takes into account cognitive-intellectual as well as physical and affective-emotional aspects, it is important that the different subject areas are in a balanced relationship with one another. Different approaches mark the educational theory discourse that emphasises the dimension of both subjective and objective body in education. See Tobias Haas, *Leib-körperliche Dimensionen von Bildung. Sichtweisen auf verborgene Aspekte im schulischen Kontext* (Berlin, 2018); cf. Nida-Rümelin, *Philosophie einer humanen Bildung*.

869 As explained in chapter two, feelings are important motivators and driving forces for our thoughts and actions. Until they reach school age, children are in the emotional development phase and need support in dealing with feelings and regulating them independently as well as recognising and understanding the emotional expressions of others.

870 However, these exercises or physical practices require constant training and repetition in order to develop their effect and mature into a habit. At first glance, it may seem very complicated to implement them in a school context, but there are ideal opportunities in creative arts, religion, ethics, and philosophy lessons, etc.

871 Cf. Reinhold Mokrosch, *Werte-Erziehung und Schule: Ein Handbuch für Unterrichtende* (Göttingen, 2009), 122.

872 On the term "shrunken form," see Nida-Rümelin, *Philosophie einer humanen Bildung*, 163.

873 Cf. Julian Nida-Rümelin, *Verantwortung* (Stuttgart, 2011), 171.

a greater impact on the ethical dimension of education or should reshape it constitutively.

To dismiss suggestions of the religious embedding of moral personhood in narratives as a kind of moral sermon in pedagogical guise would completely misjudge the potential of these narratives and the approach of narrative ethics. On the contrary, it is neither an appeal to values nor a direct communication of values, nor the communication of a certain moral concept, nor primarily the communication of knowledge, but rather narratives that instigate an attitude and in which value judgements in their concrete lifeworld contexts become the occasion for one's own rational reflection. Whether these learning settings should necessarily take place in ethics, philosophy, art, music or religion lessons is a question I would like to leave open, i.e., I do not want to assign these learning processes to any particular subject.[874] The entire school context, with its typical, conflict-ridden school day, is also very well suited to initiating reflection on one's own attitudes and personal characteristics—provided that trained teachers can initiate these.

The thematisation and treatment of the self in the virtue ethics discourses of Islamic traditions has made the responsibility for people and the environment recognisable as moral concepts of an *ethics of responsibility*. Without getting lost in the explications of the multi-layered concepts of responsibility, I want responsibility to be understood in the sense of the right organisation of life. Responsibility is the emphasis on the virtue *of humanity*. Responsibility is thus, in the broadest sense, the care and compassion that come to bear in a community of solidarity. Although the concept of responsibility correlates with a good way of life, it is somewhat more radical in that it prioritises others, their way of life and their well-being over oneself. The virtuous person does this for the sake of realising their humanity, because they understand responsibility as part of their aretē. In potential conflict situations, people will proceed in a solution-oriented manner, because they will orient themselves towards the good and try to find the best possible solution that makes both themselves and their counterpart happy, i.e., the responsibility factor

874 There are many accessible school projects that work with virtue (e.g. "virtue cards") that incorporate the entire school day and the school community as a whole, because the thematisation of virtues in their specific contexts is omnipresent. See www.tugendprojekt.de.

therefore trains judgement. The judge of individual responsibility is one's own conscience, which for many religious people leads to the idea of a divine authority. For the culture of togetherness, the gradualness of the ethical virtue impulses must be emphasised overall—insights that can have an impact on society from the individual and their environment.

The religiously appealing impulse to recognise oneself in order to be able to recognise God should positively counteract the difficulty in Humboldt's understanding of education that the drive must come from the individual himself: religion can be a motivating force that pulls people out of their comfort zone.[875] The Islamic faith can awaken the desire and stimulate people to realise more freedom by developing their own strengths. With this freedom, the conscious perception and consideration of circumstances, but above all of others, remains essential as the primary point of orientation in the process of weighing up "how one wants to be." One's own freedom finds its limits in the life interests of the other, whereby sincerity, friendship and respect can serve as coordinates for this. A religiously motivated ethic, which sees itself as a virtue-aesthetic way of life, invites us to do this.

4. Insights for a Contemporary Islamic Religious Education in Germany

Virtue ethics thinking in Islamic intellectual history since the ninth century offers fundamental points of reference for the conceptualisation of a contemporary Islamic religious education for the school context. Within this limited framework, I will concentrate on two insights that are closely linked. The first is a *theological-anthropological claim*, and the second pertains to *ethical dimensioning of religious education content*.

The preoccupation with the life of the soul and the concepts of its cultivation has, among other things, brought to light the ambivalent constitution of the human being. The *theological-anthropological claim* refers to this aspect as well as to the role of the caliph (*kalifa*),

875 In this sense, the topic of virtues lends itself very well to Islamic religious education.

which has already been alluded to in this work. The human being, who, due to his natural disposition, can be inclined towards both good and bad or carries a potential for error, is in need of moral education. Against this backdrop, religious education is faced with the task of setting the content of religious education in such a way that people are able to take on the role of the caliph. The position of divine successor demands a certain qualification from man, which only then enables him to take on this weighty responsibility of the so-called representation of God on earth. Following God means wanting to realise God's vision of a good and just world. To qualify for this is a process of self-knowledge. This not only means getting to know one's nature as a conditioned creature and one's own character traits but also seeking and finding ways to develop one's own talents as much as possible in a reciprocal dialogue with the world. Working towards the best form of one's being means embarking on a process of character development. This includes not only ethical virtue learning but also all the formats of working on the self that have already been brought together, in short: all cultural forms and practices of staging the self (such as in prose or narratives) play a prominent role in the everyday organisation and conduct of life. They serve to develop and present one's own potential. At the same time, they demonstrate the intensity with which the outsider or reader is challenged to work on themselves and their appearance. Religiously initiated learning processes can support children and young people in developing self-awareness, perception, judgement, and action skills. Qualification for the role of caliph is based on the ability to reasonably plausible ethical actions. Ethical thinking and behaviour thus become a basic element of the individual's shaping of the self and the world.

This leads me to the second impulse of the *ethical dimension of religious educational content*. The study of *adab* literature in particular has made it very clear that ethical and cultural-aesthetic education was a natural part of Islamic educational thinking. For the definition of religious educational content for today, this aspect means broadening the perspective of observation and judgement of ritual-normative educational content in order to be able to perceive both ethical and aesthetic dimensions in it. This requires the development of self-reflective sensory perception skills, i.e., it calls for an engagement with the subject matter that goes beyond the mere acquisition of

knowledge. The obligatory duty (*zakāt*) is a very good example to illustrate this. The qur'ānic commandment *zakāt* is, in a nutshell, a one-off annual compulsory monetary contribution from the wealthy to the needy; in other words, it is a social right of the needy. It is a practical act that includes a far-reaching ethical radius.[876] On the one hand, it is intended to strengthen the awareness that people give something that does not belong to them but has been given to them by God, thus actually becoming only a medium of divine giving. At the same time, the act of giving places the remaining property under the blessing of God—which is implied by the meaning of the word *zakāt*. This expression of a religious duty complements the basic form of the Islamic faith, which places solidarity with the needy and those marginalised by poverty and on the fringes of society at the centre of the faith. On the other hand, the ethical dimension of *zakāt* extends from the idea of social justice to an exercise in virtue ethics, which creates a motivation not to lose responsibility for third parties and thus to develop the disposition to become solidary and generous through repeated giving. However, the one-off duty to "give away" a part of one's wealth does not make a person generous. The idea can be seen in the fact that this one-off compulsory giving opens the door for people to initially develop an awareness of voluntary giving in order to gradually form the habit of giving in solidarity. At the same time, this outward act makes it possible to experience humanity and strengthen human sympathy. In this way, a ritual or a pillar of faith becomes the starting point for a fundamentally socioethical question in religious education at primary school: What would make our society fairer, more humane, more social, even *more beautiful*?

Through the ethical dimensions, the aesthetics of virtue find their way into Islamic religious education. In this way, children and young people can be given a new aesthetic approach to religion, especially to normative rituals. Under the auspices of aesthetic-ethical-religious learning, which combines physicality and sensorality, the aim is to promote a learning culture that trains the ability to perceive the diversity of reality and promotes religious design and judgement skills.

876 Isik, *Die Bedeutung des Gesandten Muḥammad*, 251.

Abbreviations

EI^2	Encyclopedia of Islam (Leiden/Boston, 2010).
Hn.	Hadith number
JCSW	Jahrbuch für christliche Sozialwissenschaften
TDV	Türk Diyanet Ansiklopedisi (Ankara, 2014).
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Morgenländischen Gesellschaft
ZPhF	Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung
ZfWU	Zeitschrift für Wirtschafts– und Unternehmensethik

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On the Transliteration of Arabic Terms

This work uses the International Journal of Middle East Studies transliteration system for Arabic terms, except common words found in Merriam–Webster's.

All Arabic book titles follow English-language capitalization rules. In sentences, the first Arabic word is written with capital letters, as are all proper nouns. In all other cases, transliteration uses lowercase letters.