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-

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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'ṣ 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. *Ḥuṣn* (*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, *Yahyā 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

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 (*saʿāda*) 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, "ʿAbdullah Ansari al-Harawi," in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, 140.

702 Cf. Oliver Leaman, "ʿAbdullah 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 *Tahḏīb 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.