

Reason and Rationality in the Epistles of Ikhwān al-Şafā'

İhvân-ı Safâ Risalelerinde Akıl ve Aklîlik

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Abstract

Ikhwān al-ṣafā' are one of the most significant groups of authors of Islamic thought. Their teachings became influential where philosophy and Sufism and reason and intuition came together. *Ikhwān al-ṣafā'* adopted Neoplatonic philosophy to Islamic thought and affected the course of events and developments of Islamic philosophy and Sufism. Nevertheless, some researchers claim to have *Ikhwān al-ṣafā'* evaluated issues superficially and not had original ideas and approaches. However, the fact that *Ikhwān al-ṣafā'* throughout their thoughts constituted a consistent relationship between cosmology and epistemology is a valuable success. This article aims to examine how *Ikhwān al-ṣafā'* approached their concept of reason (al-'aql). It is possible to evaluate the concept, reason, in the contexts of cosmology, morality, and epistemology. *Ikhwān al-ṣafā'* also used this concept carefully and consistently by taking those contexts into consideration. Reason, which refers to an important communication channel between God and human beings, is the most human side of the soul. At the end of this research, we reached the conclusion that *Ikhwān al-ṣafā'* accept even the intuition and revelation as rational activities.

Keywords: Islamic Philosophy, *Ikhwān al-ṣafā'*, Reason, Cosmology, Morality, Epistemology.

Öz

İhvân-ı Safâ İslam düşünce tarihinin en önemli figürlerinden biridir. Felsefe ve tasavvufun, akıl ile sezginin buluştuğu noktada İhvân-ı Safâ'nın düşünceleri etkili olmuştur. Yeni Eflâtuncu felsefeyi İslam düşüncesine uyarlamış ve kendinden sonraki felsefi ve tasavvufî düşünceleri derinden etkilemiştir. İhvân-ı Safâ her ne kadar meseleleri yüzeysel ele alan ve özgün olmayan kişiler olarak değerlendirilse de tüm düşünce sisteminin tutarlı bir kozmoloji ve epistemoloji ilişkisine dayanması başlı başına bir başarıdır. Bu makalenin amacı İhvân-ı Safâ'nın akıl kavramına nasıl yaklaştığını ele almaktır. Bir kavram olarak akıl, kozmoloji, ahlak ve epistemoloji bağlamlarında ele alınabilir. İhvân-ı Safâ da akıl kavramını bu bağlamları göz önüne alarak dikkatli bir şekilde kullanmıştır. İnsan ile Tanrı arasındaki en önemli iletişim ağını ifade eden akıl, ruhun en insani yönüdür. En önemli bulgumuz ise İhvân-ı Safâ düşüncesinde sezginin dahi akli olarak değerlendirilmesidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam Felsefesi, *İhvân-ı Safâ*, Akıl, Kozmoloji, Ahlak, Epistemoloji.

INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to determine the scope of Islamic thought as it has been shaped by tremendous contributions of various nations, religions, and cultures. Islamic thought, which mainly consists of theology, philosophy, and mysticism, has been reflecting the Muslim interpretations regarding metaphysical questions—among others. These interpretations were based on the Qur'ān and Sunna of the prophet Muhammad as well as Jewish and Christian thought, philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, Neoplatonism, Eastern mysticisms, ancient Arabic and Persian cultures and faiths. *Ikhwān al-ṣafā'* (literally, the Brethren of Purity) come out as a striking and mysterious group in the history of Islamic thought since the group frankly declared that most religions and philosophies, including those that appeared to be non-Islamic, are true ways by which people may reach the reality.¹

¹ Concerning their mysterious characteristic, it is possible to present many examples from their epistles. According to the group, there is an interaction style that only the group members can understand and also there is a book owned only by the members. Furthermore, they use numerals and Arabic letters in a strange format that makes it difficult to grasp the intended meaning. See *Ikhwan al-safa', ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, ed. Arif Tamir (Beirut: Uwaydat, 1995), 132.

Ikhwān al-ṣafā' were a group of thinkers who lived in the 10th century in Basra mainly and in some other cities of the Abbasid Empire. This century was the golden age of Islamic thought and science, and welcomed many different ideas from Indians, Persians, and especially Pythagorean-Hermetic aspects of Greeks.² Therefore, the teachings of Ikhwān al-ṣafā' reflect a synthesis of various teachings of that time. Due to the nature of the group, which combines different cultures, ideas, and religious and philosophical teachings, speculations concerning the group have always been propounded. However, researchers have not proven yet any claims about the leader, members, and activities of Ikhwān al-ṣafā'.³

As for the epistles called *Rasāilu Ikhwān al-ṣafā' wa al-hullān al-wafā'*, and *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, which is a kind of summary of the epistles, they are the sole sources of knowledge about the teachings of Ikhwān al-ṣafā'. The epistles comprise of many interesting and mysterious subjects such as some specific features of numerals, spectacular role of mathematics to acquire the truth, and the relationship between planets (the super-lunar world) and the existents on the earth (the sublunary world), the formations of the mines, plants, animals, and human beings with physical body and soul. Furthermore, religions, cultures, politics, psychology, the relationship between planets and human characteristics, the ways of happiness

² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (Chicago: ABC International Group, 2001), 153; Şahin Filiz, *İlk İslam Hürmanistleri: İhvan-ı Safa Topluluğu ve İnsan Felsefesi* (Konya: 11 Eylül Yayınları, 2002), 58. Hamdi Onay, *İhvan-ı Safa'da Varlık Düşüncesi* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1999), 35-57.

³ Among those claims, we may prove that the members of the groups, even if not all of them, were most probably from Shia because some expressions remind us of the teachings of Shia, especially the teachings of Ismailis. See Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 3. Ed (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 168; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 148; Michael Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-'Arabi and the Isma'ili Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 45-52; Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. Liadain Sherard (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 133-136; Mustafa Öztürk, "İhvan-ı Safa'nın Felsefi Düşünce Sisteminde Kur'an ve Yorum", *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 14-15 (2003): 283-309. In addition to assertions about masonic relations of Ikhwan al-safa', claiming that there may be Christians among the writers of the rasail because of interesting expressions such as when Jesus talks about God, uses the word Father for Him, is possible. As is known, Islam does not welcome this kind of use. Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasailu Ikhwan al-safa' wa khullān al-wafā'*, 4 vols. (Qum: Maktab al-'lam al-İslami, 1985), 4: 31; Ian Richard Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwan al-safa')* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 53-71. Moreover, a reason of our inadequate information of Ikhwan al-safa' is their mysterious structure. The group preferred to be hidden because of Hussein, who is the son of 'Ali, and his friends were martyred in Karbala. Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasail*, 4: 269. Furthermore, one of the most interesting claims about Ikhwan al-safa' is their masonic relations. Some researchers, because of the mysterious structure of the group, have asserted the group is a branch of Masonic order. An important reason for such a claim is Jamal al-Din Afghani's statement. When Afghani applied to join the Masonic Lodge in Egypt in 1875, he addressed the masons as "Ikhwan al-safa' ". Especially based on this mention, the claims regarding the relation between Ikhwan al-safa' and masons have been amplified. Moreover, some thinkers like Emile Dantinne (d. 1969) claimed to have existed an organic relation between the group and Rose-Croix that is an esoteric and philosophical masonic organization founded in France in 1801. See Necip Dalkılıç, *İslam Felsefesinde Akılcı Bir Ekol: İhvan-ı Safa (Can Kardeşliği)* (Ankara: Hür ve Kabul Edilmiş Masonlar Büyük Locası Derneği İktisadi İşletmesi, 2015), 56-57; Elie Kedourie, *Afghani and Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*, 2. Ed (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 21; Sami Zubaida, *Beyond Islam: A New Understanding of the Middle East* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 139.

and salvation in the afterlife, and epistemological issues are among the topics of the epistles. All these vast contents of the epistles urged researchers to study the teachings of Ikhwān al-ṣafā' from various angles.⁴

This article examines the concepts of reason and rationality in the thought of Ikhwān al-ṣafā', relying upon the aforementioned epistles. The concept of reason ('*aql*') has three different aspects in the teachings of Ikhwān al-ṣafā', which constitute different contexts.⁵ First is the context of cosmology in which the First Reason (*al-'aql al-awwal*, *al-'aql al-kullī* or *al-'aql al-fa' 'āl*) plays an enormous role in the formation of everything other than God. The second is the context of morality in which the reason that is human reason (*al-'aql*), actuates human beings always toward the right ideas, deeds, and religious beliefs. The last one is the context of epistemology in which the questions of how human beings acquire knowledge, what knowledge is, and what the epistemological value of rational and mystical (intuitional /*kashf* and *ilhām*) knowledge will be evaluated. This is the most important part of the article because human reason and rationality are more related to epistemology rather than cosmology or morality.⁶ In this part of the article, I will endeavor to find answers for what Ikhwān al-ṣafā' understand from rationality regarding human knowledge, by analyzing their statements throughout the epistles.

⁴ For example, Ian Richard Netton focuses on Ikhwan al-safa' with their relation to Greek thought, Judaism and Christianity, and 'Ismaili thought. Bayram Ali Çetinkaya, *İhvan-ı Safa'nın Dini ve İdeolojik Söylemi* (Istanbul: Elis Yayınları, 2003). In this work, the author evaluates the sources of Ikhwan al-safa', the relation between religion and politics, and conceptions of a prophet and a human being. Şahin Filiz who is the author of *İlk İslam Hümanistleri*, evaluates the teaching of Ikhwan al-safa' regarding the relationship between human beings and the universe. Another work on the group is *İhvan-ı Safa'da Varlık Düşüncesi* written by Hamdi Onay who focuses on the concept of existence as a metaphysical problem in the teaching of Ikhwan al-safa'. I also would like to mention the work, *İhvan-ı Safâ Risâleleri* (5 vols.). It is the Turkish translation of the epistles including the translation of *ar-Risâla al-jâmi'a*. This translation is one of the most important attempts to introduce Ikhwan al-safa' to Turkish readers. See İhvanu's-Safâ, *İhvan-ı Safâ Risâleleri*, trc. Kollektif (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2017).

⁵ Some explanations about the concepts of reason and intellect are necessary because their using interchangeably is possible and may cause some confusions. According to a general assumption, the term reason, as a human-centered concept, had been preferred by many scientists of the 18th century to deny all supra-sensible realities for rationalism. On the other hand, the term intellect may point out the metaphysical realities. However, on the Islamic studies regarding the theory of emanation, scholars may use these terms interchangeably. For example, Majid Fakhry prefers mostly "reason" to mention both *al-'aql al-awwal* and human reason. However, Seyyed Hossein Nasr prefers the term intellect and reason for these things. Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, 93-103; Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy*, 23-33; Rene Guenon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, trans. Lord Northbourne (New York: Sophia Perennis, 2001), 89-95.

⁶ Even though we take the reason into consideration with three angles in this paper, for Ikhwan al-safa' the reason has two meanings: cosmological and epistemological. The first meaning is what philosophers use to identify the first originated or emanated being (*al-'aql al-awwal*, *al-'aql al-kullī*, *al-'aql al-fa' 'āl*). The second one is what humans understand as an essential power of the human soul enabling contemplation, speaking, and distinguishing. However, the context of morality as the intermediate area between human reason and soul is worthy of examination. Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasâil*, 3: 232; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risâla al-jâmi'a*, 204.

The aim of this paper is to make clear how Ikhwān al-ṣafā' understand the concepts of reason and rationality, and accepts all knowledge including intuitional and revelational knowledge as rational knowledge.

1- AL-‘AQL IN THE CONTEXT OF COSMOLOGY

Ikhwān al-ṣafā', who were influenced by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Neoplatonism, were the loyal followers of Pythagoras. In his teaching, everything was based on the number one. Ikhwān al-ṣafā' embraced this idea when forming their cosmology. Numbers were regarded as the keys to comprehend the unity of God, the mysteries of the universe, and to grasp the essence of knowledge.⁷

In the teaching of Ikhwān al-ṣafā', just as all numbers are an extension of the number one, all the universe was based on the unity of God, who is the One. Following the path of Pythagoras, Ikhwān al-ṣafā' assert that the numerals do not have an existence ontologically without referring to the One. In the same way, the universe together with all components does not have an existence without referring to God.⁸

The understanding of Ikhwān al-ṣafā' regarding the universe is complex to some extent. The group has countless statements regarding the formation and coming into existence of the universe in various contexts. Some argued for the creation from nothing (*ex nihilo*) while others supported the theory of emanation, which Plotinus had put forward. According to the theory of emanation, the "One" is at the top of all existence. In accordance with the theory, from the one can be emerged one [thing] only.⁹ In the same way, from the "One", the First Reason (*al-‘aql al-awwal*) emanates timelessly.¹⁰ This is the beginning of the physical and non-physical or metaphysical existents.¹¹ From the First Reason the Soul (*al-naḥs al-kullī*), from the Soul the Matter (*al-jism al-kullī* or *al-hayūlā al-ūlā*) emanates respectively and timelessly. The Matter by accepting length, width, and depth

⁷ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 347.

⁸ Especially for the number "one", Ikhwan al-safa' say that God created and organized everything as that all numerals are originated from the number "one". Therefore, multiplicity is His proof, and the classification and composition of numerals should be regarded as perfection of His wisdom on creation. In addition, the group underlines that the knowledge of numbers is a language expressing the unity and incomparability of God. Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 201; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 8, 13.

⁹ <https://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=plotinus>. Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 273.

¹⁰ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 238.

¹¹ As a note, the Active Reason (*al-‘aql al-fa'‘āl*) is different in Ikhwan al-safa' in contrast to that of al-Fārābī. According to al-Fārābī, the Active Reason is the tenth celestial reason that is together with the moon. For Ikhwan al-safa', the Active Reason is the *First Reason* that comes after God on the hierarchical scheme. Apart from the question of whether the Active Reason is the first or the tenth reason, the concept of the First Reason has some problems because the question of who is the First Reason is not clear. Is the First Reason God or the Reason emanated first from God? If we follow al-Fārābī, God himself is the reason (*al-‘aql*). In this case, the Reason emanates first from God and becomes the second reason. See Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy*, 192.

causes another matter to come into existence, which is spherical (*al-hayūlā al-thānī*).¹²

In this theory, the origination of the universe is dependent on God who is the first cause of everything. The universe consists of two connected parts: the super-lunar world and the sublunary world. Ikhwān al-ṣafā' also, like al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, followed the geocentric model of the cosmology of Ptolemy (*Baṭlāmyūs*). According to this model, the Earth was at the center of the universe, around which were seven planets (the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn), fixed stars and surrounding Heaven (*al-falak al-muḥīṭ*).

All these planets affect the beings of the Earth. In the epistles, the group mentions briefly how each of these planets affects the Earth. For example, the Sun is influential in the continuation and perfection of the universe, Saturn in the uniting of the form and matter, Mars in desiring perfection, Jupiter in balancing opposites, Venus in all types of love, Mercury in all types of knowledge, and the Moon in interaction between the super-lunar world and the sublunary world, which are the area of generation and corruption.¹³ God created the planets as the angels and the sovereigns of the heavens to construct the universe and to manage all created beings.¹⁴

The First Reason, because of its nearness to God, is the noblest, perfect, competent, and spiritual substance. It is the first being created by God without an intermediary, but with His Light (*nūr*).¹⁵ The First Reason contains all forms of beings given by God. The First Reason transmits the forms to the Universal Soul

¹² Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 187. Ikhwan al-safa' are successful in the integration of the theory of creation (*ex nihilo*) and the theory of emanation. Although their explanations reflect mostly the doctrine of Neoplatonism, they created the universe from nothing and refer to the terms *ibdā'*, *ikhṭirā'*, and *ijād*. Furthermore, I should underline bluntly the fact that God created the First Reason as well. However, the emanation begins with the First Reason and continues with the Universal Soul and the First Matter. Hence, - even if a few exceptions- it is not a mistake to say that according to Ikhwan al-safa', the act of creation is related to the generation of the First Reason while the emanation process is related to the generation of the universe. Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 28; 1: 278. Also, Majid Fakhry expresses that Miskawayh (d. 1030) as well defends that God created everything from nothing and that the First Reason is the first being that emanated from God. As is seen, Ikhwan al-safa' and Ibn Miskawayh share a similar approach by putting together the theories of creation and emanation. Fakhry, along with al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, defends the impossibility of a compromise between those theories. On the other hand, according to Onay, the attempt of Ikhwan al-safa' to reconcile religion and philosophy has caused an idea suggesting to explain creation with the term of emanation. Onay, *Varlık Düşüncesi*, 70. See Godefroid De Callatay, *Ikhwan al-Safa': A Brotherhood of Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 17-22; Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy*, 192.

¹³ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 2: 146.

¹⁴ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 145; 1: 179; 1: 186.

¹⁵ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 35; 1: 54; 2: 269; 3: 144. According to Ikhwan al-safa', a phrase *mathalu nūrihi* (His Light) in the Qur'anic verse indicates the First Reason. Thus, the group claims that the First Reason is created by His Light. "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things." (The Qur'an, 24/35). Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 270. See Enver Uysal, *Ihvan-ı Safa Felsefesinde Tanrı ve Âlem* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1998), 144-151.

(*al-nafs al-kullī*). Even if God has, according to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', created the Universal Soul after (not in terms of time, but ontology) the First Reason and by means of the First Reason, this step is an emanation process.¹⁶ The First Reason is the first created thing as well as a complete, eternal, and competent being. The existence of the First Reason stems from the existence of God. The eternity of the First Reason stems from God's help with His existence (*wujūd*) and light (*nūr*). The completeness of the First Reason stems from its acceptance of these graces and forms, and the competence of the First Reason stems from its ability to make flowed these graces and forms to the Universal Soul.¹⁷ Moreover, the First Reason is the first divine act of the essence of God (*zāt al-ilāhī*) through His word 'Be!' (*kun*) and power (*qudra*).¹⁸

According to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', the First Reason as a veil between God and creatures is the unchangeable and eternal face of God. The First Reason is far away from all deficiencies, physical effects, and puts every being beneath itself in order. For Ikhwān al-ṣafā', this is the meaning of the first created (*al-sābiq al-bādī*).¹⁹

The Universal Soul as another component of the cosmological hierarchy of Ikhwān al-ṣafā' plays a significant role in their morality and epistemology. Therefore, making a brief explanation about the relation between the First Reason and the Universal Soul is necessary. Ikhwān al-ṣafā' follow a similar way with Plato and affirm the existence of a soul as the soul of the Universe.²⁰ According to the group, the position of the moonlight relative to the Sun is exactly the same as the position of the Soul relative to the Reason. The position of the sunshine relative to the Sun is the same as the position of the Reason relative to God. In other words, just as the moonlight is not self-existent the soul as well does not exist without the Reason and God.²¹

When we take the hierarchal structure of cosmology into consideration, we can see that the Soul is above the Matter (*al-jism al-kullī*), nature, and all physical beings. According to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', the Soul cannot dominate the Reason that is above the Soul, but heads toward the Matter that is below it.²² The Soul is a kind of place where the First Reason is active by transmitting to it the forms and graces that are bestowed by God. Because of this activity, the Soul obtains its completeness and competence and carries the traces of the divine wisdom.²³ The Soul, whose rank is

¹⁶ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 197.

¹⁷ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 184–187; 3: 352; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 156, 299, 337.

¹⁸ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 4: 212.

¹⁹ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 41; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 132.

²⁰ Daniel A. Dombrowski, *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), 15; Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 398.

²¹ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 2: 462; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 145.

²² Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 36.

²³ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 4: 239; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a* 13.

lower than the Reason, takes the divine wisdom, forms, and graces from the Reason just as a pupil takes his knowledge from his master. In this interaction, the knowledge of the master does not decrease at all. On the contrary, we understand the master's superiority and the pupil's dependence on the master. Therefore, Ikhwān al-ṣafā' identify the Universal Soul to be the Passive Reason (*al-'aql al-munfa'il*) while identifying the First Reason to be the Active Reason (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*).²⁴

By these explanations, the authority and significance of the First Reason after God have become clear. As the first divine act, the First Reason dominates all beings. It is the manager and cause of all physical and metaphysical beings apart from God. Just as the First Reason is supposed to be the manager of all beings, human reason, as a representative or reflection of the First Reason, should be considered to be the manager of the human soul and acts.²⁵

2- AL-'AQL IN THE CONTEXT OF MORALITY

The concept of morality is examined in Islamic thought in conjunction with the human soul (*rūh-nafs*) because all virtues, good deeds, and immoralities take place within the soul. Ikhwān al-ṣafā' affirm three types/degrees of the soul in the sublunary world: The vegetative soul (*al-nafs al-nabāṭi*), the animal soul (*al-nafs al-ḥayawānī*), and the reasoning soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqā*). The place of the first one, the vegetative soul, is a liver. The animal soul together with its virtues and immoralities stays in a heart. The place of the reasoning soul together with its rational powers, virtues, and vileness is a brain. According to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', these three types of the soul are interconnected to the same essence. It is like three rivers flowing in different areas but coming from the same spring. Also, it is like someone who gains a name according to what he does. Namely, when he writes, he is called a writer (*kātib*); when he reads, he is called a reader (*qārī*); and when he teaches, he is called a teacher (*mu'allim*). The person is the same, but his name or attribute depends on his acts.²⁶

When the soul runs after food and sexual intercourse, it is called the vegetative soul whose nature has lust. If the soul runs after tyranny, heroism, and presidency (*riyāsa*), it is called the animal soul whose nature has anger. As for the reasoning soul, it is the soul who runs after always knowledge (*'ilm*), gnosis (*mā'rifa*), realities (*ḥaqā'iq*), and virtues (*faḍā'il*).²⁷

²⁴ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 197.

²⁵ Hamza Jabir Al-asadi, "Maḥūm al-'aql fi falsafa Ikhwān al-ṣafā'", *Journal of Kufa Studies Center* 1/3 (2004): 71-79.

²⁶ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 2: 386; Şahin Filiz, "İhvan-ı Safa (X. yy)'ya Göre İnsanın Biyolojik ve Psikolojik Yapısı", *Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 11 (2001): 115.

²⁷ Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 232.

Human beings have individual souls supported by the First Reason to raise them to the degree of angels. According to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', the last stage of animals is contiguous to the first stage of humans, and the last stage of humans is contiguous to the first stage of angels. The soul of humans encompasses good traits as reasoning and discernment (*tamyīz*), and bad traits as having an unbounded lust and anger.²⁸ In this regard, Ikhwān al-ṣafā' successfully set a connection between the cosmological structure and human souls. Just as the First Reason stands at a higher position than the Universal Soul in the cosmological hierarchy, human reason stands at a higher position than the human soul and has been worthy of being obeyed. Since the First Reason is superior to the Universal Soul in terms of competence and possessing divine forms, the Universal Soul must head towards the First Reason. Otherwise, the Universal Soul will turn towards the Nature that consists of limitations, corruptions, and infelicity because Nature is subject to the generation process and the corruption process.²⁹ In the same way, human reason (*al-aql*) is a superior power in the human soul to the other two powers: the vegetative (*nabātī*) and animal (*ḥayawānī*) souls. Therefore, if the soul heads toward human reason, it will attain to joy, health, and enlightenment.

As a result of heading toward to human reason, the soul will be saved from the heaviness of the physical world, purified, and luminous. This is a necessary step for the soul to be mature and then attain the reality that is the knowledge of God because according to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', whoever knows his soul (*nafs*), realizes his Lord (*Rabb*).³⁰ The individual souls should be developed on knowledge with the help of human reason, faculty of discernment, and contemplation so that they can ascend to the Supreme Assembly (*al-mala' al-a'lā*). An individual soul who ascended to this stage with the help of human reason does good deeds, protects himself from sins, and reaches to his Lord.³¹

Ikhwān al-ṣafā' consider purification of the soul to be an act making the soul closer to human reason, and frequently emphasize the relationship among human reason, morality, and religion. People whose mentor is human reason, have many praiseworthy traits such as righteousness, peacefulness, kindness, humbleness, and piousness.³² Those who purify their souls, deserve being called reasonable because, within the human soul, only human reason encourages the individual to walk in the right way. Thus, according to the group, precious affairs must be correlated with human reason.³³

²⁸ Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 85.

²⁹ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 4: 233; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 25.

³⁰ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 76.

³¹ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 6; 3: 159-160. See Yasien Mohamed, "The Cosmology of Ikhwan al-safa', Miskawayh and al-Isfahāni", *Islamic Studies* 39/4 (2000): 657-679.

³² Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 2: 227; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 25.

³³ Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 29.

Moreover, reason and religion, which recommends a moral life to its believers, are relevant to each other. According to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', people, who follow their reason are at the same time pious because human reason is the first property of pious people and both the religion and human reason request people following moral principles. Whenever the soul of an individual who follows his/her reason, contemplates on the worthlessness of the material world and be purified from its stains, he/she may be together with angels in the Heaven.³⁴ A reasonable person lives in this world as an ascetic who does not aspire the worldly pleasures, not investigate sins of people, not exceed the lines of his/her religion but always prefers righteous behaviors.³⁵ Finally, Ikhwān al-ṣafā' propound that some moral compulsions are present in humans as a natural instinct. The other acts of people are dependent on choice, contemplation, and [divine] laws (*al-nāmūs al-siyāsī*). Nature is a preliminary to (*muqaddima*) and servant of the soul; the soul is a preliminary to and servant (*khādima*) of human reason, and human reason is a preliminary and servant of religion (*nāmūs*). When nature installs a habit in humans, the soul explains and reveals the habit. As for human reason, it conceives and improves the habit by contemplation, and the religion (*al-nāmūs*) manages and reinforces the habit with religious commands and prohibitions.³⁶

As understood from the epistles, Ikhwān al-ṣafā' affirm that the authority of the reason is based on the morality of humans as well. Having explained the similarities between a city and a human being in detail, Ikhwān al-ṣafā' claim that human reason to had been the manager of the body and soul of humans. The group begins the explanations of origination of human beings with the four temperaments (hot, cold, dry, and wet) and the four elements (fire, water, air, and earth). Then the group compares every organs or parts of the human body with a mission or part of a city.³⁷ The group emphasizes the leadership of human reason by recognizing its true guidance and authority by stating "...to our assembly, we have accepted human reason as the leader and the judge, submitted faithfully to provisions of the reason because God has made human reason the leader for the virtuous people. Whoever abandons submission and obedience to the reason, will be taken out our companionship and solidarity."³⁸

In a story about a Muslim-Indian king and his son, Ikhwān al-ṣafā' mention that there are ten pieces of advice that the king gave to his son. One of this piece of advice is to give up intoxicating beverages that are the enemy of the reason. The reason, on the other hand, is an immanent vicegerent of God (*khalīfa*). Whenever the reason disappears, religion, knowledge, courage, modesty (*ḥayā*), and

³⁴ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 138; 1: 356; 4: 137.

³⁵ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 65; 3: 79; 3: 287; 3: 429; 3: 501; 4: 81; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 108.

³⁶ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 318–319.

³⁷ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 2: 382.

³⁸ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 4: 127; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 64.

inspection of the self (*murāqaba*) will disappear.³⁹ Therefore, in the epistles, many passages highlight the superiority of the reason. According to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', human reason is bestowed by God to human beings only as a gift, pride, guidance for the reality, and beneficence.⁴⁰

Eventually, Ikhwān al-ṣafā' summarize the connection between the soul and the reason. If the soul is blind of the lights (*anwār*), emanations (*fayaḍān*), and goodness of the reason, defects and deficiencies occur in the soul so that the soul begins to mistake and to commit sins.⁴¹ These statements display the significance of human reason on the soul to establish a moral life. Besides, these statements clarify what Ikhwān al-ṣafā' understood from rationality as well. Rationality, at least in the context of morality, is equal to being moral.

3- AL- 'AQL IN THE CONTEXT OF EPISTEMOLOGY

This section of the article focuses on the cognitive function of human reason. This function certainly is connected to the celestial reason, the First Reason (*al- 'aql al-awwal* or *al- 'aql al-fa' 'āl*). However, this function could be active with the help of things found in the terrestrial area. In this section, I will examine the concept of reason itself first, and then, the concept of knowledge (*'ilm*) as an act of the Reason and human reason.

Human reason is one of the powers of the human soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqā*) as well as a part of the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kullī*). Human reason together with its supplements is a blessing and bestowal of God to the soul.⁴² Also, human reason is the power of discernment (*tamyīz*) found in each individual of humans specifically.⁴³ In other words, the human soul is a potential knower (*allāma bi'l-quwwa*). However, it needs something else, that is human reason, to turn into an actual knower (*allāma bi'l-fi'l*).⁴⁴

Furthermore, Ikhwān al-ṣafā' make an analogy between the First Reason and human reason. The former as the closest being to God is a kind of veil or door between creatures and God Himself. Through the agency of the First Reason, humans can conceive the unity and oneness of God, and it is the manager of the supreme world (*al- 'ālam al-a' lā*). As for human reason, as the model of the First Reason, it is the manager (*mudabbir*) and judge (*qāḍī*) in the material and inferior world (*al- 'ālam al-sufli*). Thus, through the agency of human reason, human beings can unite (*al-ittisāl*) with the First Reason, and then attain the knowledge of God.⁴⁵

³⁹ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 174.

⁴⁰ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 2: 227; 2: 263; 3: 505; 4: 124; 4: 165; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 11-12, 256.

⁴¹ Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 255.

⁴² Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 316; 3: 232; 3: 241.

⁴³ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 386.

⁴⁴ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 437.

⁴⁵ Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 195, 313.

According to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', human reason is divided into two: Instinctive reason (*al- 'aql al-ḡarīzī*) and acquired reason (*al- 'aql al-muktasab*). The instinctive reason emerges in humans after contemplating on the sensate things (*maḥsūsāt*). The acquired reason is that who contemplates further on the sensate things and purifies the soul becomes more competent at rationality.⁴⁶ The things that are known by human reason consist of the images of the sensate particulars and genus (*jins*) and species (*naw'*) found in the soul. Human reason, as a power of the soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭīqa*), produces knowledge that he/she needs to maintain daily life, by distinguishing genus, species, differentia (*faṣl*), and essence (*dhāt*).⁴⁷ In fact, this is an elementary level of human reason, the instinctive reason.

Every human being has the instinctive reason and without an intermediary possesses it in him/herself.⁴⁸ However, this reason may go astray because of its complex and imperfect structure. Therefore, the control of the human soul should be handed over to the acquired reason. It is more perfected and competent than the instinctive reason. According to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', if the acquired reason does not control the human soul and not accompany it, an irregularity would appear on the acts of humans.⁴⁹

The purpose of the reason is not only to regulate the acts of humans but also to attain reality. The ancient philosophers through their reason, according to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', focused, with the help of their inexhaustible contemplation of, on the immanent meaning of the things of what they saw by their eyes.⁵⁰ As understood from this phrase, for Ikhwān al-ṣafā', human reason is a kind of bridge between concrete and abstract dimensions of the existents. This is to pass from the physical area to the metaphysical one. Moreover, the purpose of God to create the reason is to have humans headed in the right direction. In this regard, the reason plays a vital role because even though a human being can express the opposite of what he/she knows, but cannot know the opposite of what he/she realizes by the reason. In other words, the reason would dictate the truth to humans.⁵¹ The absolute truth is certainly the knowledge of God in this teaching. The reason awakens the soul from negligence and ignorance to make it comprehend God who is beyond the material world and has wisdom and power.⁵²

⁴⁶ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 466. Regarding the sources of knowledge, many thinkers throughout the history of thought have come up with various suggestions. For example, for sensualists, the source is sense organs; for empiricists, the source is experience; and for relativists, the source is human being itself. For this discussion in the thought of Ikhwan al-safa', see İsmail Yakıt, *İhvan-ı Safa Felsefesinde Bilgi Problemi*, 2. Ed. (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1992), 10; Uysal, *Tanrı ve Âlem*, 53.

⁴⁷ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 425; 2: 62.

⁴⁸ Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 15.

⁴⁹ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 2: 114; 2: 389.

⁵⁰ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 404.

⁵¹ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 79; 1: 102–103; 1: 32; 1: 426.

⁵² Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 2: 73; 2: 113; 2: 142.

In this regard, the question of what is knowledge (*'ilm*) is the essential point because knowledge is the main element of the reason.⁵³ Knowledge as a light walking in front of a servant (*'abd*) brings him/her closer to the Lord (*rabb*). It brings him/her closer to the Lord because knowledge is to conceive something with its real essence (*māhiyya*). As long as the knowledge of human beings increases about the things that they are the arts of God, comprehension of the highness of God matures as well.⁵⁴ Knowledge is the nutrient of the human soul. Furthermore, Ikhwān al-ṣafā' define knowledge to be nothing but the forms of known things that reside in the soul.⁵⁵

Having stated briefly the question of what knowledge is, we may touch on the concepts of sense, reason, and proof that are the steps of acquiring knowledge in Ikhwān al-ṣafā'. According to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', sense (*ḥiss*), reason (*'aql*), and proof (*burhān*) are three ways of knowledge. By the concept of sense, five senses that are shared with animals as well, are indicated. By the concept of reason, the power of discernment (*tamyīz*) that separates humans from animals, is meant. By the concept of proof, the group points out a higher degree of human knowledge. To this degree, some scholars only may reach after contemplation of geometrical and logical principles.⁵⁶

All accidents are either physical (*jismānī*) or non-physical (*rūḥānī*). While the former is perceived by the senses, the latter is comprehended by human reason. Nevertheless, the knowledge of humans may occur by the cooperation of the sense organs with human reason. Therefore, the cooperation of the senses, the power of imagination (*mutakhayyila*), the power of thinking (*mufakkira*), and the function of memory (*ḥāfiẓa*) comes to prominence.⁵⁷ The sensory organs perceive the images of things first. The power of imagination transfers these images to the power of thinking, whereby human reason contemplates of the images particularly in order to constitute specific knowledge and to distinguish between what is truth

⁵³ The purpose of this section is to focus on epistemological ways rather than the classification of knowledge (*'ilm*). For a classification of knowledge in the epistles of Ikhwan al-safa', see Godefroid De Callatay, "The Classification of Knowledge in the Rasā'il", *The Ikhwān al-Safā' and their Rasā'il: An Introduction*, ed. Nader El-Bizri (Oxford: Oxford University Press - The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2008), 58-82; Mahmut Meçin, "İhvân-ı Safâ'da Bilgi, Bilim ve İlimlerin Sınıflandırılması", *Dicle Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 16/1 (2014): 427-458.

⁵⁴ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasā'il*, 1: 346; 1: 399; 4: 217; 3: 293.

⁵⁵ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasā'il*, 1: 261; 1: 413; 1: 277; 4: 65; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 287.

⁵⁶ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasā'il*, 1: 277; 3: 232; 2: 396; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 204.

⁵⁷ Even though Ikhwan al-safa' use these terms frequently, it is difficult to state a firm consistency. In some passages, the five sense organs are indicated to be five sensory powers of the human soul. In other passages, it is said that the human soul has seven spiritual powers: the five senses, speaking (*nuṭq*), and thinking. Furthermore, the concepts of imagination (*mutakhayyila*), discerning rational power (*al-quwwa al-mufakkira al-mumayyiza*), memory, speaking (*nāfiqa*), and power whereby humans perform arts, are counted as the five powers of the human soul. Eventually, Ikhwan al-safa' with respect to the classification of powers of the human soul does not pursue a clear way. See Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasā'il*, 2: 401; 2: 414; 2: 468; 4: 232; Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 152, 147, 193.

and what is false. Then, this knowledge that is generated by the power of thinking is sent to the memory to use when needed.⁵⁸ The position of the power of thinking among the senses and the power of imagination is similar to the position of a judge among claimants and defendants. Just as the judge can arrive at a decision by means of proofs, the power of thinking, as a component of human reason, arrives at a decision by means of proofs as well.⁵⁹ The proof (*burhān*) that emerges after the senses and human reason, and that based on a priori premises of reason (*bidāya al-‘uqūl*), is a measure of true and false knowledge regarding not only religious but also mundane matters.⁶⁰

In this respect, the significance of the power of thinking (*al-quwwa al-mufakkira*) comes to prominence because of its relation to proofs. This power has some specific characteristics and acts related to two different types of existents: abstract beings and concrete beings. Some of these characteristics related to the concrete beings are matters relevant to the arts in general. As for the characteristics and acts that are relevant to the abstract beings and concepts, those are thinking (*fikr*), reasoning (*rawiyya*), discernment (*tamyīz*), imagination (*taṣawwur*), consideration (*i‘tibār*), composition (*tarkīb*), analyzing (*taḥlīl*), collecting (*jam*), and demonstrative reasoning (*al-qiyās al-burhānī*) are some of these characteristics and acts of the power of thinking. In addition, the power of thinking has the acts of sagacity (*firāsa*), prophesy (*takahhīn*), intuition (*khawātir*), inspiration (*ilhām*), revelation (*waḥy*), dream (*ru‘ya*), and its interpretation (*ta‘wīl*).⁶¹

Of these concepts, especially intuition, inspiration, and revelation are significant epistemologically. Those types of knowledge are said to have been bestowed by God so that human beings may find a mysterious and transcendent knowledge in their soul.⁶² Ikhwān al-ṣafā’ propound that inspiration and revelation come to human beings according to the capacity of their souls. Furthermore, according to Ikhwān al-ṣafā’, with respect to an acquisition of knowledge about the future, reasoning (*istidlāl*) plays a significant role, and it has several varieties. For example, astrology, prophesy, contemplation, and consideration, as well as intuition, revelation, and inspiration, may be counted as some of those types. The last concepts, intuition, revelation, and inspiration, are the supreme ones and they are not acquired

⁵⁸ Ikhwan al-safa’, *Rasāil*, 1: 451; 2: 457; 3: 237; 2: 389; 3: 243; 3: 404; 3: 408; 3: 424; 2: 414; 2: 471. In *ar-risāla al-jāmi‘a* Ikhwan al-safa’ mention one more step that comes after the memory. This step is called the rational thinking power (*al-quwwa al-nāṭiqā al-‘āqila*) that is the essence of humans, thinks of everything, abstracts all meanings from the physical beings, and conceptualizes these meanings. This part of the text most probably indicates the acquired reason (*muktasab*) and by the power of thinking (*mufakkira*) the instinctive reason (*ḡarīzī*) is pointed out. If we follow the path of Ikhwan al-safa’, it is seen that there is no another way of rational knowledge in humans. See Ikhwan al-safa’, *ar-Risāla al-jāmi‘a*, 127; Ikhwan al-safa’, *Rasāil*, 1: 30.

⁵⁹ Ikhwan al-safa’, *Rasāil*, 3: 423.

⁶⁰ Ikhwan al-safa’, *Rasāil*, 1: 268; 1: 425; 1: 432; 1: 444; 3: 89; 3: 438; Ikhwan al-safa’, *ar-Risāla al-jāmi‘a*, 70.

⁶¹ Ikhwan al-safa’, *Rasāil*, 3: 421; 3: 245; Ikhwan al-safa’, *ar-Risāla al-jāmi‘a*, 211.

⁶² Ikhwan al-safa’, *Rasāil*, 1: 145; 3: 340.

(*muktasab*) but given as the blessing of God for the servants whom God chooses and exalts.⁶³ According to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', intuitional, inspirational, and revelational knowledge are rational knowledge and taken from angels. Thus, it is possible to see a sentence as "the reason (*'aql*), which is named as revelation and inspiration..." when the group defines the philosophical logic.⁶⁴

With respect to the relation between human reason and revelational knowledge, Ikhwān al-ṣafā' claim that the prophets have had a revelation by means of the power of thinking so that among human beings the prophets are at the highest degree regarding the rational knowledge (*al-'ulūm al-'aqliyya*). In addition, knowledge, acts, and miracles that are peculiar to the prophets, are the divine knowledge and instruction (*ta'līm*) conveyed to the prophets by angels as revelation and inspiration. It is not worldly knowledge and instruction but a rational overflowing (*fayḍ al-'aqlī*).⁶⁵

Eventually, the most important point of this section is that according to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', all types of knowledge, including even revelation, inspiration, and intuition, are rational (*'aqlī*) because of the connection between human reason and the First Reason.⁶⁶ In this respect, Ikhwān al-ṣafā' state that the [First] Reason is the first of all creatures, and God created the instinctive reason from it and created the acquired reason from the instinctive reason. This kind of statements shows the connection of all knowledge with the Reason.⁶⁷

CONCLUSION

Ikhwān al-ṣafā', as one of the most controversial figures of Islamic thought, influenced Islamic philosophy and the philosophical Sufism significantly. The teachings of the group were famous for its philosophical and mystical dimensions, and consisted of elements from the ancient Greek philosophy, Persian and Indian thoughts, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

In this article, I focused on the concept of the reason (*al-'aql*) in the thought of Ikhwān al-ṣafā' from three angles: cosmological, moral, and epistemological. Just as

⁶³ Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 178; Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 154; 3: 303.

⁶⁴ Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 33; Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 1: 392.

⁶⁵ Ikhwan al-safa', *Rasāil*, 3: 13; 4: 412; 4: 330. In this respect, Hasan Aydın evaluates this approach of Ikhwan al-safa'. According to Aydın, Ikhwan al-safa' purpose that the revelational and inspirational knowledge are rational means that their authenticity is known and approved by human reason. This can be one of the possible meanings of what Ikhwan al-safa' said. However, I think that the consideration of Ikhwan al-safa' about the rationality of the revelation and inspiration is more comprehensive and connected with the cosmological reason, the First Reason. See Hasan Aydın, "Kozmolojik Temelleri Işığında İhvān Es-Safā'da Astroloji ve Astrolojinin Meşruluğu Sorunu", *Kelam Araştırmaları* 9/1 (2011): 192.

⁶⁶ Even though a difference between the heart and human reason may be in question, according to Ikhwan al-safa', this difference is in expression (*laḫẓan*). Hence, it may be truer to identify knowledge such as revelation and inspiration to be a rational intuition rather than a mystical one. For this kind of matter, see Bayram Ali Çetinkaya, "İhvān-ı Safā Düşüncesinde Temel Tasavvufi Kavramlar ve Meseleler", *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 9/2 (2005): 218-221.

⁶⁷ Ikhwan al-safa', *ar-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, 189.

a triangle can be completed with three different angles, a comprehensive understanding of the concept of the reason can be achieved with these different angles.

At the first section of the article, I examined the concept of reason in the cosmological context because everything, including physical and metaphysical existents apart from God's essence, is connected to the First Reason. The theory of emanation underlies this kind of teaching. In the hierarchical structure of the cosmology, after the First Reason, comes the Universal Soul that transmits all forms of existents including that of sensate (*maḥsūsāt*) and known (*ma'qūlāt*) beings to the Matter (*al-hayūlā*). Consequently, everything has a link to the Reason in terms of ontology, cosmology, and epistemology.

At the second section, I examined the concept of reason in the context of morality in conjunction with the First Reason and human reason. In this section, the degrees and acts of the human soul, its relation with the First Reason and the Universal Soul, and the position and mission of human reason on the human soul where morality and virtues can be in question. The human soul is one existent, not more than one, but it is called with different names as vegetative, animal, and reasoning soul, depending on its acts. According to Ikhwān al-ṣafā', human reason is the manager of the human soul and directs it to the Lord. In this process, one of the most significant steps is to purify the soul.

As for the last section, the concept of human reason in the context of epistemology was examined to understand how it attains knowledge and what the rationality means in the teaching of Ikhwān al-ṣafā'. Just as the human soul has different names according to its acts, rational knowledge also has different names such as sense, illusion, dream, thought, demonstration, intuition, inspiration, and revelation. The most impressive point of the approach of Ikhwān al-ṣafā' is that all knowledge, including revelational and inspirational one, is rational knowledge. Even if Ikhwān al-ṣafā' sometimes use the heart as a place of knowledge, use the heart synonymously with human reason. Hence, it is possible to say that the group does not consider the heart as an alternative epistemological means.

To sum up, it is possible to say that Ikhwān al-ṣafā' were a group of rational authors in the history of Islamic thought. Even their mystical discourses are meaningful within the context of rationality. Without referring to human reason and the First Reason, no knowledge is considered possible to humans. Their rationality is an approach that encompasses all types of knowledge even intuitional, inspirational, and revelational knowledge.

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