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How to End Things in Arabic Literature

Edited by
Lale Behzadi and Bilal Orfali



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Textual Endings as Persuasive Educational Beginnings: An Inquiry into the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*

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*Dedicated to Professor Maher Jarrar,
on the occasion of his 67th birthday
(March 22, 2023)*



Abstract

The Brethren of Purity, a circle of high-ranking 9th and 10th-century scholars from the Iraqi port city of Basra, is renowned for having produced an immense literary corpus of encyclopedic erudition: the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*. The wide range of religious and non-religious subjects of these *Epistles*, the questions as to the identity of their authors and intended addressees, as well as the specifics of the language and literary devices characterizing these treatises, have fascinated readers and researchers from medieval times to the present. Surprisingly, however, the *Epistles* have not yet been adequately studied from the perspective of their role in Islamic educational thought.

This article takes a step in that direction by looking into the pedagogical dimension of remarks the Brethren offer to conclude some of their treatises. It focuses primarily on the endings of their perhaps most programmatic texts, i.e., Epistle 7 (“On the Scientific Arts”), Epistle 8 (“On the Practical Crafts”) and Epistle 22 (“Animals versus Man”). The endings of a few individual chapters in these three works are also examined. Guiding this approach are questions such as: What differentiates each ending from the body of its respective text? What

functions do they have beyond merely summarizing content? And are there indications that preceding literary and scientific traditions, Islamic or non-Islamic, may have influenced the form, language and style of these finales? Thus we hope to advance some insights into the *Epistles'* role in the general development of classical Arabic writing, and their educational significance more specifically.

Keywords

Educational thought in Islam – Muslim adaptation of the Greek intellectual heritage – classical Arabic literature – Arabic-Islamic philosophy – humanism in Islam.



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الخواتيم النصيَّة بصفتها بدايات تعليميَّة بحث في رسائل إخوان الصفاء

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المستخلص

اشتهر إخوان الصفاء، وهم مجموعة من أعظم مفكرَي مدينة البصرة العراقيَّة الساحليَّة في القرنين التاسع والعاشر الميلادي، بمجموعة أدبيَّة ضخمة من المعارف الموسوعيَّة سُمِّيت برسائل إخوان الصفاء. وقد أذهلت المسائل الدينيَّة وغير الدينيَّة الواسعة النطاق التي طرحتها هذه الرسائل كالمسائل المتعلِّقة بهويَّة كُتَّابها ومخاطبيها، علاوة على الخصائص اللغويَّة والوسائل الأدبيَّة المستخدمة فيها - القراءَ والباحثين منذ العصور الوسطى حتَّى اليوم. إلا أنَّه من الغرابة بمكان أنَّ هذه الرسائل لم تحظْ بالدراسات الكافية من حيث دورها في الفكر الإسلاميَّ التعليمي. تتخذ هذه المقالة خطوة في هذا الاتجاه بالنظر إلى البعد التعليمي للملاحظات التي دونها الإخوان في ختام بعض رسائلهم، وتركز بشكل رئيس على خواتيم كلِّ من الرسالة السابعة بعنوان ("في الصنائع العلميَّة والغرض منها")، والثامنة بعنوان ("في الصنائع العمليَّة والغرض منها")، والثانية والعشرين بعنوان ("في أصناف الحيوانات وعجائب هياكلها وغرائب أحوالها") التي ربَّما تُعدُّ أكثر نصوصهم تصويريَّة. وتدرس هذه المقالة أيضًا خواتيم بعض الفصول المفردة في هذه الأعمال الثلاثة. ويُفضي هذا النهج إلى التساؤلات التالية: ما الذي يميِّز كلَّ خاتمة عن متن النصِّ التي تنتمي إليه؟ ما هو الدور الذي تؤدِّيه بعيدًا عن تلخيص محتوى النصِّ؟ وهل من مؤشِّرات تدلُّ على تأثير التقاليد الأدبيَّة والعلميَّة، الإسلاميَّة وغير الإسلاميَّة، السابقة على شكل هذه الخواتيم ولغتها وأسلوب صياغتها؟ نأمل أن نتمكَّن من تعزيز بعض الأفكار المتعلِّقة بدور الرسائل في نموِّ الأدب العربي الكلاسيكي بشكل عام، وقيمتها التعليميَّة بشكل خاص.

الكلمات المفتاحيَّة

الفكر التعليمي في الإسلام - التلقِّي الإسلامي للتراث الفكري اليوناني - الأدب العربي الكلاسيكي - الفلسفة العربيَّة الإسلاميَّة - الفلسفة الإنسانيَّة في الإسلام

Show this epistle to your brethren and friends, and make them desirous of knowledge. These words are part of a short passage concluding Epistle 7, “On the Scientific Arts,” of the *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-ṣafā’ wa-khullān al-wafā’* (“The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity and the Friends of Loyalty”).¹ This immense literary corpus of encyclopedic erudition, with its 51 or 52 separate *rasā’il* or epistles (depending on how they are counted), was produced by a circle of high-ranking 2nd and 3rd/9th and 10th-century scholars from the Iraqi port city of Basra. Arranged and put in written form probably between the years 350–370 AH/961–80 CE or ca. 360–69 AH/970–80 CE,² these epistles provide a *summa* of all the knowledge available to their authors in their time. The question as to the identity of the authors and the addressees of *The Epistles*, along with the issues concerning the contents, language, and literary devices of these texts, have fascinated readers and researchers since *The Epistles* first saw the light of day, and a considerable number of studies has been produced so far, both Western and Eastern. Today, Western scholarship more widely holds the view that the Brethren of Purity were connected to the Shī’ī traditions, perhaps those of the Ismailis more specifically, without necessarily being Shī’īs or Ismailis themselves. Perhaps more importantly, the Epistles display their authors’ intimate knowledge and appreciation of both Sunni and Shī’ī beliefs. At the same time, this corpus attests not only the Brethren of Purity’s devout adherence to the Qur’ān and the Muslim religious traditions but also their attentiveness to the Torah of Judaism and the Gospels of Christianity, as noted by Nader El-Bizri, chief editor of a multi-authored bilingual project collating new critical editions of the Arabic texts and English translations of *The Epistles*. Indeed, *The Epistles* are distinguished by “a perceptible receptivity to otherness.” They seem “to embody a form of diversity in Islam that can accommodate miscellaneous ancient and monotheistic traditions,” as they incorporate ideas from the Babylonian, Indian, and Persian intellectual

1 “واعرض هذه الرسالة على إخوانك وأصدقائك، ورغبهم في العلم”

Cf. Godefroid de Callatāy, *On Composition and the Arts: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 6–8. Foreword by Nader El-Bizri*, ed. and trans. Nader El-Bizri and Godefroid de Callatāy, Oxford: Oxford University Press in Association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2018, 95 (Arabic ed.), 119 (English trans.). Where not specified otherwise, all references refer to the English translations of the multivolume Arabic-English edition of the *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-ṣafā’* published by the Ismaili Institute in London. The Arabic editions Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1376/1957, and al-Zirikli, [London:] Hindawī, 2018, were also consulted.

2 This view, the most widely held today, concerning *The Epistles’* time of origin, is mainly based on Dieterici, *Die Philosophie der Araber im X. Jahrhundert n. Chr.: Einleitung und Makrokosmos*, 142–44; quoted in Marquet, “Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’,” 1072–3. For the different opinions among Western scholars concerning the naming, dating, and arrangements of the corpus, see Baffioni, “Ikhwān al-Safā’;” El-Bizri, “Prologue,” 3, 24–25; De Callatāy, “Brethren of Purity.”

traditions alongside the Greek heritage—which, in many ways, is central to *The Epistles*—as well as indigenous Islamic philosophical and scientific thought.³

Taking the recently much-increased interest in *The Epistles* and their multifaceted philosophical, religious, and literary dimensions into account, it is all the more surprising that their educational scope has remained largely unexplored so far.⁴ This article will address some specific aspects of *The Epistles'* educational dimension, as its first part explores the pedagogical perspective distinguishing the conclusions with which the Brethren of Purity chose to end three of their particularly captivating epistles:

- the initially quoted Epistle 7 (“On the Scientific Arts”), one of their most programmatic treatises;
- Epistle 8 (“On the Practical Crafts”), a unique text which, besides offering insights into the material and social history of Islam, conceptionally deals with a broad spectrum of technical arts (Greek: *tékhnē*; Latin: *ars*); and finally,
- Epistle 22 (“Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn”), the longest, perhaps most widely read and oft-translated treatise composed as an animal fable.

The second part makes the transition to a question unexplored in modern scholarship thus far. Here we inquire whether the Brethren of Purity were aware of the effective communication strategies that Aristotle advanced in his *Rhetoric*—known as the art of persuasion—before concluding our findings with a brief look at three *Epistles* endings from a literary theory perspective.

1 Direction and reassurance for scientific learning

Epistle 7, *Fī l-ṣanāʿi al-ʿilmiyya wa-l-gharaḍ minhā* (“On the Scientific Arts and Their Aim”), provides a scientific classification system and outline of the hierarchical nature of knowledge.⁵ The theoretical arts, it is said, focus on the

3 El-Bizri, “Prologue,” 10.

4 We must note this here despite the inclusion of a parallel Arabic-English version of the Brethren of Purity’s Epistle 7 in Cook’s anthology, *Classical Foundations of Islamic Educational Thought: A Compendium of Parallel English-Arabic Texts*, 20–37. A chapter exploring “Encyclopaedic Learnedness and Human Wisdom in the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*,” however, is part of the handbook on formative Islamicate pedagogy that the author of the present study is currently preparing for publication. For the specific role that wisdom plays in the Brethren of Purity’s concept of learning, see this author’s “Der Mensch sei weise.”

5 Cook, *Classical Foundations of Islamic Educational Thought: A Compendium of Parallel English-Arabic Texts*, xxxvii.

reformation, refinement, and completion of the natural dispositions of human beings so that humans may secure their continued existence in the hereafter as the ultimate objective of life in this world.⁶ To the Brethren of Purity, two significant issues are pertinent here: one relates to the incidental conditions and necessities humans have in this world and the improvement of their bodies. The other concerns the human pursuit of increasing knowledge, a search destined to improve matters relating to the soul. It is emphasized that every effort to learn helps save the soul from “the darkness of ignorance” (*ẓulumāt al-jahāla*), causes knowledge concealed in the soul as ‘potential knowledge’ to unfold so that it becomes ‘actual knowledge,’ and makes knowledge accessible and useable for the human being. The individual achieves a “deep understanding in matters of religion” (*al-tafaqquh fi l-dīn*)⁷ and strives in this world to reach the path to the hereafter. This helps ensure that after death the person succeeds in ascending to the world of the spheres and eventually reaches paradise.⁸ On the one hand, the Brethren of Purity directly link deliberations on the soul, its nature and development, with questions pertinent to learning, as “science is food for the soul;”⁹ on the other, they connect it with the belief in a hereafter. In the PROLOGUE to Epistle 7, the main objectives of the treatise are stated in summary fashion. The Brethren of Purity declare their intent to report on the scientific arts and explain their influences on learners’ souls, and to elaborate on the quiddity and genera of theoretical knowledge. They also define the way by which knowledge is drawn out from the soul from potentiality to actuality, while the result of this procedure “is the ultimate objective in teaching (*fi l-ta’ālīm*).”¹⁰

The EPILOGUE of the *risāla* then details several other points. First, it identifies the outline of the theoretical sciences given in Epistle 7 as a guide to navigating the entire encyclopedia; and second, it determines several long-

term goals that the Brethren of Purity expect to achieve. In the Brethren’s own words, these objectives read:

وقد عملنا في كلِّ فصلٍ من هذه العلوم التي تقدّم ذكرها رسالةً وذكرنا فيها طرفاً من ذلك المعاني لتكون تنبيهاً للغافلين وإرشاداً للمريدين وترغيباً للطالبين ومسلماً للمتعلّمين، فكن به، يا أخي، سعيداً.

6 *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-ṣafā’*, vii, 96. See also De Callatāy, “Introduction to Epistle 7.”

7 For the related expression *al-fiqh fi l-dīn* (“profound knowledge of religion”), see 5.2 in this chapter.

8 *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-ṣafā’*, vii, 100–1.

9 De Callatāy, “Introduction to Epistle 7,” 75.

10 *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-ṣafā’*, vii, 95.

We have produced an epistle of each branch of the above-mentioned sciences; and we mentioned in them some of those meanings to awaken the negligent and guide the beginners, excite the interests of the students, and serve as a path for those who would learn. So, my brother, be happy with it.¹¹

As the epilogue continues, direction and reassurance are provided to the readers for their path of learning. The stated hope is that the treatise would make students “desirous of knowledge, urge them to renounce this world, and show them the way to the last abode.”¹² Furthermore, the Brethren of Purity underscore their expectation that the reader undertakes his educational journey with confidence and joy. Encouragement to apprentices is expressed, with learning presented as the way to draw nearer to God, please Him, and get closer to the bliss that the last abode promises. While addressing the noble character of learning, the Brethren of Purity also emphasize that attaining satisfaction, happiness, and salvation through learning is the same method (*ṭarīqa*) that was already “taken by the prophets ... and the best and most virtuous of savants and sages have followed them.”¹³ Thus, the reader is called upon to do their utmost to achieve this kind of joy and contentment. They should put the information given in this epistle into practice and show it to their brethren and friends.

The EPILOGUE ends with the Brethren of Purity’s appeal to God that He may bestow guidance and blessings upon “you, my brother ... and all of our brethren, in whichever countries they are.”¹⁴ In other words, the text ends by establishing a link between the reader and the authors. At the same time, this fraternal group of scholars is presented as a virtual global community of like-minded men with profound insight into the world’s material and spiritual affairs.

2 Necessity and usefulness of practical education

Epistle 8, *Fī l-ṣanā’i’ al-‘amaliyya wa-l-gharaḍ minhā* (“On the Practical Arts and Their Aim”), is directly linked to Epistle 7. Not only do the titles of the two texts match; their structure and literary strategies in presenting the information also resemble each other, making these two epistles like two sides of the same coin.

11 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-ṣafā’ wa-khullān al-wafā’*, 95; idem., *On Composition and the Arts: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles*, 119.

12 *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-ṣafā’*, vii, 119.

13 Ibid., vii, 120.

14 Ibid., vii, 120.

For the Brethren of Purity, the practical crafts include handcrafts and the fine arts, while the latter involve “aesthetic and ornamental accessories.”¹⁵ Generally, the practical crafts follow the theoretical sciences in rank. This positioning, it is said, takes into account the nature of bodily corporeal substances and subject matters on which the respective crafts focus and how these substances are perceived through the intellect or the senses. In the introductory remark to Epistle 8, the Brethren of Purity acknowledge that this special relationship between corporeal substances, intellectual or sensual perception, and the practical crafts is the reason they consider these crafts in terms of their materials, quiddities, and quantities. In addition, their deliberations take into account “the manner in which their makers (*ṣunnāʿ*) let them appear through objectively posited materials.”¹⁶ Much like in Epistle 7, the authors again lay out their twofold objective: first, to show that the practical crafts are “the clearest of evidence” (*awḍaḥ al-dalāʿil*) to affirm the existence of active spiritual essences; and second, to provide the reader with general knowledge (*maʿrifa*) about their substances, modes of motions, potencies, and the curiosities of practical crafts.¹⁷

The main text of the epistle then details several points. Unlike the theoretical arts, the practical arts or crafts need (a) tools and instruments and (b) bodily motions to perform them.¹⁸ But similar to the theoretical arts, (c) humans assume the industries and vocations of the practical crafts through exercising their intellect, discernment, deliberation, and ideation.¹⁹ All these crafts and professions are (d) naturally honorable, irrespective of the occupation or whether they relate to the blacksmith or shopkeeper, the dung-scooper or perfume maker, the musician or image-shaper.²⁰ Lastly, and importantly, (e) the practical crafts are learned through observation and imitation,²¹ which distinguishes them from the scientific arts.

In the CLOSING PASSAGE of Epistle 8,²² the reader is called upon to contemplate and learn from the deliberations developed in this treatise. Once again, the reader is asked to understand that learning the practical crafts is perceiving corporeal substances through either the intellect or the senses. This kind of action helps awaken the soul from “snoozing in mindlessness and slumbering in ignorance.” Furthermore, this kind of learning is said to be beneficial to

15 Ibid., viii, 149.

16 Ibid., viii, Arabic 100–1/tr. 139.

17 Ibid., viii, Arabic 100–1/tr. 139–40.

18 Ibid., viii, 143, 144.

19 Ibid., viii, 152.

20 Ibid., viii, 155.

21 Ibid., viii, 158.

22 Ibid., viii, 164–65.

humans, as it animates a person through “the spirit of intellectual knowledge.” Eventually, it enables him to live in a state of happiness, goodness, and personal fulfillment.²³ But intellectual initiation and an impulse to learn are also needed for practical crafts. Indeed, this is the way leading to the finest industry that humankind can reach: the divine *nomos* (*al-nāmūs al-ilāhī*, the topic of Epistle 47). Epistle 8 ends with the Brethren of Purity’s appeal:

فاجتهد يا أخي في معرفة أسراره، لعلَّ نفسك تنتبه من نوم الغفلة ورقدة الجهالة
وتحيا بروح المعارف العقلية، فتعيش عيشَ العلماء العملاء السعداء الربانيين
وتتال نعيمَ عالم الروحانيين في جوار الملائكة المقرَّبين مُخلِّدًا أبد الأبدین.
فإن لم يستوِ لك ذلك فكن خادمًا في الناموس بحفظ أحكامه والقيام بحدوده،
فلعلَّك تنجو بشفاعة أهله من بحر الهَيُولَى وأسر الطبيعة وهابوة عالم الجسام،
ذوي الكون والفساد ذوي الآلام، وفقك الله وإيانا، أيها الأخ، للرَّشاد وجميع
إخواننا حيث كانوا في البلاد، إنَّه كريمٌ جواد، ...

So toil hard, my brother, in disclosing its arcana, for your soul may as such be awakened from snoozing in mindlessness and slumbering in ignorance. May you thus be enlivened through the spirit of intellectual knowledge, and live the life of the happy godly people of knowledge, wherein the delights of the world of spiritualists will be bestowed upon you, neighboring angels who are close to God, eternally, forever and ever.

Should this not be attainable by you, then be a servant of the *nomos* by sheltering its rulings and enacting its edicts, so that you may be saved by the intercession of its adherents from the ocean of matter (*al-hayūlā*; Greek: *hylē*), and that you may escape from incarceration in nature, and from the abyss of the world of the bodies of generation and corruption, as those who experienced sufferings. May God guide you and us, O brother, to an attainment of righteousness, and all our brethren wherever they are across the land, for He is Bountiful and Munificent.²⁴

In their CLOSING PASSAGE of this epistle, the Brethren of Purity use the term *al-ṣanāʿi al-bashariyya* (“the human crafts”) in the place of “the practical crafts.” This terminological choice stresses the necessity and usefulness of

23 Ibid., viii, 164–65.

24 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ wa-khullān al-wafāʾ*, 142; idem, *On Composition and the Arts: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles*, 164–65 (slightly adjusted).

the practical crafts for everyday life in the human world—a distinct view well known from the great philosophers of Antiquity. Yet the Brethren of Purity also aver that no human being—whether prophet or philosopher, or any ordinary person—can acquire and sustain any of the arts and sciences “except by what is willed by the One whose Throne is vaster than the Heavens and the Earth.”²⁵ This assessment expressly includes all those individuals who allege to have derived their knowledge and skills through “the potency of their intellects and the fineness of their thought and deliberation,” a claim that would make them look as if they were “being taught by nature.” However, our authors also state that those who pretend such views do overlook that nature too is aided by the Universal Soul, which, in turn, is administered by the Universal Intellect, the first amongst the existents from God, “the Maker of all the reasons and the Upholder of the fine mind of those possessing refined minds.”²⁶

With this cosmological perspective on learning, the Brethren of Purity reconnect the end of Epistle 8 to its beginning, where they had recollected their considerations on ‘the corporeal substances’ (treated in the epistles on the natural sciences) and ‘the spiritual substances’ (treated in the epistles on logic).

On the one hand, the Brethren of Purity thus reveal their intimate familiarity with several fundamental concepts of Greek philosophy. These include, first, Aristotle’s (384–22 BCE) idea that ‘substance’ (Greek: *ousía*) plays an essential role in the process of human sensory and intellectual data collection, knowledge acquisition, and learning;²⁷ and, second, Aristotle’s concept of a “maker intellect” (“the Maker of all the reasons,” in the Brethren’s words), which enables thinking by making things intelligible, much like the light that permits seeing by making things visible.²⁸ A third concept, however, is a line of thought that leads from the Brethren of Purity to Plotinus (d. 270 CE), who proposed that human beings gain knowledge through their relation to a divine intellect.²⁹ These concepts were well known to classical Muslim thinkers through Arabic translations of the respective Greek works, including, in

25 *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-ṣafā’*, viii, 164.

26 *Ibid.*, viii, 164.

27 Novak, “A Key to Aristotle’s ‘Substance,’” 6, explains the issue as follows: “The empiricism of Aristotle is *not* founded on the basis of Humean ideas, but on the basis of data plus insight plus affirmation; so that while for Aristotle all knowing *begins* in the senses he does not *reduce* knowledge to sense-experience. Thus his empiricism tries to tackle both material and immaterial things, making them *both* subject to data, inquiry, affirmation. Again, although Aristotle sees that it is pedagogically easier to begin discussing substance by discussing sensible substances, he obviously thinks sensible substances are inferior to immaterial substances in knowability.” See also Gill, *Aristotle on Substance: The Paradox of Unity*, 145–70 (chapter “The Unity of Composite Substances”).

28 Adamson, *Philosophy of the Islamic World*, 188.

29 *Ibid.*, 188.

particular, the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*, an Arabic translation of selected passages from the *Enneads* by Plotinus that was attributed to Aristotle,³⁰ which have come to be seen by modern scholarship as the probably “most important pseudo-Aristotelian text of the entire Arabic-Islamic philosophy.”³¹

On the other hand, however, the Brethren of Purity express here ideas fundamental to (later) Ismaili thought according to which the “Universal Intellect and Universal Soul are the main causes of illumination and understanding for the human soul and intellect,” whereas the human soul and intellect are “‘traces’ of the *Anima Mundi* and the divine Mind,” as was observed in a study of the system of thought of the prominent Ismaili philosopher, poet, and writer, Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. between 465/1072 and 471/1078).³²

The Brethren of Purity are fully aware that not every human being can successfully tread this highly demanding path of awakening the soul to learning, leading them to the lofty heights of eternal bliss. Therefore, they also point to an alternative: Those for whom these high aspirations are beyond reach are advised to adhere to—and guard—the divine law, revealed through the prophets, with its religious, political, legal, and ethical standards, as the classical Muslim philosophers broadly understood the term *nomos* and its Arabic equivalent, *nāmūs*.³³

3 Enlightening both heart and mind

Our third text, Epistle 22, stands out for its considerable length (with 280 pages in print), its literary genre (it is a fable in prose), and its formal structure and plot (it presents disputes between various protagonists). Epistle 22 is known in the West by an adapted rendering of the title as *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn*. This is notable since the clear main objective of the epistle—edification through classification—is much more explicit in the lengthier Arabic original of the title: *Fī aṣnāf al-ḥayawānāt wa-‘ajā’ib hayākilihā wa-gharā’ib aḥwālihā* (“On the Categories of Living Beings, the Wonders of Their Edifices, and the Peculiarities of their Conditions”).

30 Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the “Theology of Aristotle,”* 1, 5–6. For an Arabic edition, see Badawī, *al-Aflāṭūniyya al-muḥdatha ‘inda l-‘Arab*; an Arabic edition and German translation were published by Friedrich Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles: Aus arabischen Handschriften zum ersten Mal herausgegeben*; and an English translation was prepared by Geoffrey Lewis, *A Re-Examination of the So-Called ‘Theology of Aristotle.’*

31 D’Ancona, “‘Aristū ‘inda l-‘Arab,’ and Beyond,” 20.

32 Lewisohn, “Hierocosmic Intellect and Universal Soul in a *qaṣīda* by Nāṣir-i Khusraw,” 201.

33 Plessner and Viré, “Nāmūs,” 953–54.

This text tells the story of a group of humans who are shipwrecked on an island, where they set out to subdue the animals that live there to their service. The animals resist and eventually bring their case to the wise King of the Jinn who governs the island. In court, the animals argue that all creatures have a place in God's plan and aim to disprove the claim that humans' "innate superiority makes humans the owners of nature and gives them a perfect right to treat all creatures as they please."³⁴ The humans counter these points by highlighting their human merits and distinctions, including their diverse cultures, religions, lands, nations, and societal systems.

In the epic PROLOGUE of the *risāla* (no fewer than 36 pages in print), the Brethren of Purity begin by stating that the "pure-hearted" and "clear-headed, whose minds can weigh evidence," will find in this epistle that "the whole order of being ... springs from a single Cause and Source" and that the human form is to the forms of the other animals as the head is to the body: "man's soul is the leader, as it were, and theirs the led." It is furthermore emphasized that this epistle considers "the merits and distinctions of the animals, their admirable traits, pleasing natures, and wholesome qualities, and touches on overreaching oppression, and injustice against the creatures that serve him." Finally, the reader learns that these contrasting themes are put "into the mouths of animals, to make the case clearer and more compelling—more striking in the telling, wittier, more useful to the listener, and more poignant and thought-provoking in its moral."³⁵

In the CLOSING PART of the narrative, then, these ideas are taken up again in a dramatic fashion. The last chapter depicts a scene where all the protagonists and antagonists come together in a final showdown. But neither side, animals nor humans, can bring forward any additional arguments to balance out the asymmetry between them. At this point, the animals and the jinn come forward to acknowledge the value of prophethood, resurrection, and faith in life in the hereafter and, thus, concepts distinct to humans alone. The narrative ends with the entire court—animals, humans, and jinn—falling silent.

A brief final word is only granted to "a learned, accomplished, worthy, keen, pious, and insightful man," Muhammad, who praises the prophets and their devisees, the imams, sages, poets and models of goodness and virtue, the saints and their seconds, the ascetics, the pure and righteous figures, and the persons of piety, insight, understanding, awareness, and vision.³⁶

This closing of the story may leave some readers somewhat unsettled. At best, it makes them ponder their own life and existence. But this slightly abrupt

34 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn*, introduction, 2.

35 *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, xxii, 63–65.

36 *Ibid.*, xxii, 312–15.

end of the story is not the end of the epistle. Instead, it is followed by a short epilogue (less than a page) that puts readers at ease again.

وَفَقِّكُمْ اللهُ تَعَالَى أَيْهَا الْإِخْوَانُ لِقِرَاءَتِهَا وَاسْتِمَاعِهَا وَفَهْمِ مَعَانِيهَا، وَفَتْحِ قُلُوبِكُمْ
وَشَرَحِ صُدُورِكُمْ وَنَوِّرْ أَبْصَارَكُمْ بِمَعْرِفَةِ أَسْرَارِهَا، وَيَسِّرْ لَكُمْ الْعَمَلَ بِهَا، كَمَا فَعَلَ
بِأَوْلِيَائِهِ وَأَصْفِيَائِهِ وَأَهْلِ طَاعَتِهِ، إِنَّهُ عَلَى مَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ

God grant you success, dear brothers, in reading and grasping it [i.e., this epistle] fully. May He open your hearts, lay wide your breasts, and enlighten your eyes with the inner meaning of these words, and smooth the way for you to put these thoughts into practice, as He has done with His pure, holy, and devoted saints. For He has the power to effect what He will.³⁷

Interestingly, in these final remarks, the authors of *The Epistles* choose a literary strategy that includes as much an intellectual as an emotional approach in addressing the audience. While the readers are asked, once again, to comprehend this text fully, they are also encouraged to “lay wide their breasts” and let God enlighten their eyes with the inner meaning of the epistle. This will, the readers are assured, pave the way for them to deepen their understanding and implement this text’s lessons in their own lives. Moreover, it is suggested that the text’s morals will have a direct, positive effect on their existence. To underline this idea from the religious perspective, in a final note, the epistle explicitly reassures the readers that this was precisely the path God had already granted to his prophets and saints.

4 Persuasion as a means of instruction

All three concluding statements effectively serve the Brethren of Purity’s foremost objective: persuading the reader to adopt the arguments and teachings advanced in the epistles’ main texts.

As is well known, the concept of persuasion (i.e., ‘the potentially persuasive arguments;’ Greek: *pisteis*) was prominently formulated by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*, where he stated:³⁸

37 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-ṣafā’ wa-khullān al-wafā’*, 279; idem, *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 22*, 315.

38 Corbett, “Introduction,” in Aristotle, *The Rhetoric and the Poetics of Aristotle*, xv–xvi, esp. xv–xvi.

Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated. ... Further, we must be able to employ persuasion, just as strict reasoning can be employed ... in order that we may see clearly what the facts are, and that, if another man argues unfairly, we on our part may be able to confute him. No other of the arts draws opposite conclusions: dialectic and rhetoric alone do this. [...]

There are, then, these three means of effecting persuasion. The man who is to be in command of them must, it is clear, be able [1] to reason logically, [2] to understand human character and goodness in their various forms, and [3] to understand the emotions—that is, to name them and describe them, to know their causes and the way in which they are excited. It thus appears that rhetoric is an offshoot of dialectic and also of ethical studies.³⁹

Taken together, Aristotle's multidimensional appeal constitutes what later rhetoricians called the 'rhetorical triangle' with its three means (or pillars) of persuasion: *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. **Logos** (or the appeal to logic) denotes the effort to *convince* the audience using *logic* and *reason*, often employing scientific evidence or other kinds of solid data presented in the style of professional discourse, i.e., in what is sometimes termed 'substantive prose.' **Ethos** (or the appeal to ethics) refers to the attempt to prove one's *credibility* and *authority* on a particular subject by using *ethical diction*, every so often attempting to define or communicate moral truth. Finally, **pathos** (or the appeal to emotions) points to the effort to persuade the audience by appealing to their *emotions*, triggering empathy and compassion, and thus establishing a *personal connection* between addressor and addressee, writer and reader.⁴⁰

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was known in Arabic by the title *Riṭūrīqā* or *al-Khaṭāba* ("Oratory"). It was available to Muslim scholars probably as early as the 2nd/8th century in the most ancient traceable Arabic translation commissioned by the third Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158–169/775–785).⁴¹ Other scholars suggest that an anonymous translation was prepared in the early years of the 3rd/9th century.⁴² In his *Fihrist* or "Index" of Arabic books, the bibliographer and scholar Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995) noted that the *Rhetoric* was translated into Arabic by the Christian Arab scholar Iṣḥāq b. Ḥunayn al-'Ibādī (d. 298/910), a

39 Aristotle, "Rhetoric," 22, 25.

40 Corbett, "Introduction," xvi–xvii; Kinneavy, "Communication Triangle," 121.

41 D'Ancona, "Aristū 'inda l-'Arab' and Beyond," 13.

42 Cf. the detailed study by Vagelpohl, "The *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* in the Islamic World," 77–85 (on the 'reception history' of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*) and 85–91 (on their 'reception framework'), esp. 78.

leading translator of ancient Greek texts, and that the philosopher and logician Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950),⁴³ a contemporary of the Brethren of Purity, wrote a commentary on it.

The translation of *Rhetoric* was part of the concerted efforts made by Christian and Muslim scholars to render Aristotle's *Organon* ("Instrument"), the standard collection of Aristotle's six works on logic, from Greek and Syrian versions into Arabic.⁴⁴ Together with Aristotle's *Topics*, his *Rhetoric* became "part of the theoretical underpinning of philosophical education" in Islam, as these texts "provided methodologies of presenting or arguing for philosophical concepts."⁴⁵

An early extant, anonymous Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* uses the term *taṣdīq* ("deeming credible, acceptable, or to be true;" "assent," "confirmation") in place of the Greek word for 'persuasion.'⁴⁶ Other Arabic terms for persuasion are derived from the root *q-n-ʿ*. In the Qur'ānic usage, this root essentially means "to be content," "to be convinced," and "to persuade."⁴⁷ Arabic lexicographers, including Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311) in his famous lexicon *Lisān al-Arab* ("The Tongue of the Arabs"), confirm this semantic field of this root.⁴⁸ The philosopher and logician al-Fārābī is more specific, stating that "persuasion" (*al-qanāʿa*, *al-iqnāʿ*) and "producing imaginative impressions"

43 [Ibn] al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, 2:601–2, 629. A concise overview of the Arabic translations and transmission history of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in Arabic is given by Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus: The Oriental Translations and Commentaries on the Aristotelian Corpus*, 26–28.

44 Although the *Rhetoric* was initially not part of the *Organon*, for al-Fārābī, following a late Greek taxonomy, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* were included in it. The *Organon* was then comprised of the *Categories* (*K. al-Maqūlāt*), *Peri Hermeneias* (or: *De Interpretatione*, *K. al-ʿIbāra*), *Prior Analytics* (*K. al-Qiyās*), *Posterior Analytics* (*K. al-Burhān*; "Demonstration"), *Topics* (*K. al-Mawāḍiʿ al-Jadaliyya*; "Dialectics"), *Sophistical Refutations* (meaning *al-Ḥikma al-munawwaha*), as well as *Rhetoric* (*K. al-Khaṭāba*) and *Poetics* (*K. al-Shiʿr*); cf. Lahoud, *Political Thought in Islam: A Study in Intellectual Boundaries*, 97–98. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*, xxii, states that al-Fārābī's philosophical curriculum reflects the Alexandrian scheme at the last stage of its development. See also Hodges and Druart, "Al-Farabi's Philosophy of Logic and Language;" and Walzer, "Zur Traditionsgeschichte der aristotelischen Poetica," 5–14.

45 Vagelpohl, "The *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* in the Islamic World," 77.

46 Aristūṭālīs, *Al-Khaṭāba: al-Tarjama al-ʿarabiyya al-qadīma*, 4; idem, *al-Khaṭāba li-Aristū*, 24. For a study of this text, see Margoliouth, "On the Arabic Version of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*," 376–87; and for an English translation of al-Fārābī's commentary on the *Rhetoric*, see Ezzaher, *Three Arabic Treatises on Aristotle's Rhetoric: The Commentaries of al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes*, 16–49.

47 Badawi and Abdel Haleem, *Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, "q-n-ʿ." According to Lane, *Lexicon*, 8:2993, *maqnaʿ* also means something in which there is 'contentment or sufficiency in respect to a juridical decision, or evidence.'

48 Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-Arab*, 5:3753 (q-n-ʿ).

(*takhyīl*) are the cognitive aims of rhetoric and poetics, respectively. He determines furthermore that “rhetoric is the excellence to persuade the general public in things that they practice in accordance with the knowledge that they have.”⁴⁹ For him:

Persuasion, in the art of rhetoric, is similar to teaching in the demonstrative art. It is akin to the knowledge that a learner acquires through learning. The attention a listener pays to a speaker, his willingness to persevere and his reflection on what is said, all these are similar to learning. The meaning of the word *al-qanā'a* has been transposed, to render this meaning [of persuasion], from ‘being content with something’ that is like a portion of it, even if it is possible to obtain more of it.⁵⁰

Given this contextual information on the early Muslims’ knowledge of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and their reception of his concept of ‘persuasion,’ the question arises of whether or not the Brethren of Purity were aware or made use of Aristotle’s art of persuasion when drafting *The Epistles* and, as far as our present case study is concerned, the endings of the three texts we are dealing with.

As one may expect, the answer to this query is composite. On the one hand, it is safe to say that Aristotle’s legacy, in general, was of paramount importance to the Brethren of Purity, as Godefroid de Callatāy put it.⁵¹ Still, there is no explicit reference to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* in the collection of *The Epistles*. On the other hand, there is no reason to dismiss the assumption that the Brethren of Purity tacitly applied Aristotle’s theory of persuasion with its three components—logos, ethos, and pathos—in the epilogues examined here. Inquiry into this issue is a concern of the final part of this paper.

5 Analysis and conclusion

5.1 *Instruction through logical argumentation and the appeal to emotions*

First and foremost, we must emphasize that the closing passages of these three epistles display a focused, yet artful crafting. Aware of the fact that final

49 Lahoud, *Political Thought in Islam: A Study in Intellectual Boundaries*, 98, quoting al-Fārābī’s *K. al-Ḥurūf* (“The Book of Letters”).

50 Ezzaher, *Three Arabic Treatises on Aristotle’s Rhetoric: The Commentaries of al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes*, 16–17.

51 De Callatāy, “The Classification of Knowledge in the *Rasā’ul*,” 58–82, esp. 70.

remarks are often the words a reader remembers best,⁵² the Brethren of Purity effectively use the conclusions to:

- Reiterate the rationale animating their writing of the epistles;
- Condense and reemphasize the main arguments presented in the body of the texts they conclude, and make their points more emphatically;
- Encourage the reader to contemplate the instructions given and their potential benefits in terms of learning for life in this world and the next; and
- Reinforce the idea that the proposed course of learning is consistent with the path that God had granted to the prophets, the saints, and the sages.

These insights relate to textual features that the endings of all three epistles, irrespective of their thematic contents, have in common. At the same time, the Brethren of Purity's intertwining of logical argumentation, sensible rhetoric, and an appeal to the reader's emotions is striking, as it gives their reasoned discourse yet another fresh impulse, reinforcing the attempts to win the reader over to the outlined teachings.⁵³

To illustrate this literary strategy further: At the end of Epistle 7, "On the Theoretical Sciences," the Brethren of Purity state that this particular epistle was conceived as a blueprint for the entire compendium of epistles. Such a central piece of information can certainly be expected to accelerate the intellectual learning activities which our authors wish their readers would engage in. Remarkably, however, this strategic piece of information is complemented by stirring the readers' enthusiasm to learn. As we have seen, the endings accentuate personal fulfillment and the spiritual rewards that the readers are promised to gain through learning. This blending of rational and emotional dimensions eventually has the effect of encouraging the readers

52 Wenzel, "Endings in Literature: A Survey," 20.

53 For the 'reasoned discourse' in Aristotelian studies, see Johnstone, "An Aristotelian Trilogy: Ethics, Rhetoric, Politics, and the Search for Moral Truth," 12; Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern. Vol. 1. The Ancien Régime in Classical Greece*, 21; Delia, "The Logic Fallacy, Cognitive Theory, and the Enthymeme: A Search for the Foundations of Reasoned Discourse," 144, defines it as follows: "Reasoned discourse ... becomes a discourse that makes application of inductive and deductive reasoning and evidence within the context of the listener's field of predispositions. The criterion for selection of premises, examples, analogies, authorities, and statistics is ultimately 'Will the listener accept it?' The persuader's only real guide in evaluating the reasonableness of his arguments is the degree to which the components of proof are congruent with the listener's total predispositional field."

Drawing conclusions successfully, according to the Brethren of Purity

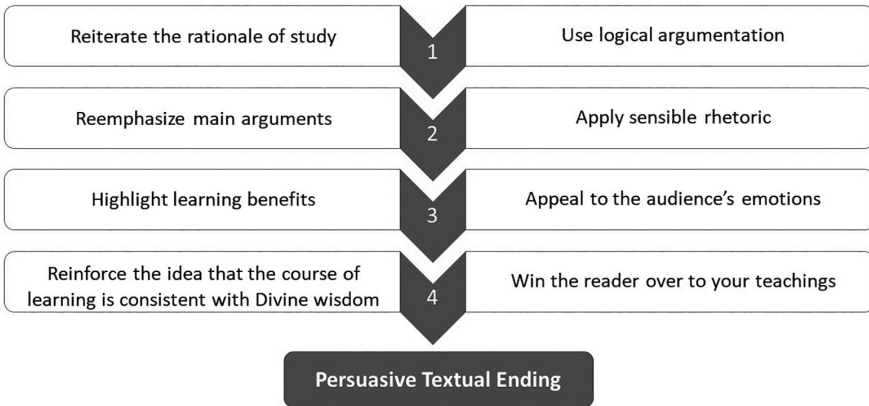


FIGURE 1 The Brethren of Purity's instruction through persuasive logical argumentation.

to engage in more extensive and effective studies. Also, it takes up again and then concludes certain lines of thought established in the body of the epistle. Earlier in the epistle, the Brethren of Purity had already addressed the challenges young students may face when studying ancient texts on logic and demonstration. But instead of underscoring the lack of knowledge novices in these study fields may naturally struggle with, our authors eased the anxiety and fear of beginners by pointing to possible translation mistakes made by uninformed or inexperienced translators. At the same time, those willing to learn were encouraged to first focus on the objectives of each science and understand them fully before engaging in studying its particulars.⁵⁴

This technique of calling upon the readers to deeply engage with and grasp the knowledge that an epistle conveys is likewise evident at the end of Epistle 8, “On the Practical Crafts.” Here the readers are requested to work hard to unlock the secrets of the *nomos*, let their souls awaken to new experiences in life, and move from ignorance to learnedness.⁵⁵

In Epistle 22, “Animals versus Man,” the spectacular ending of the fable adds a unique emotional dimension to the logical arguments presented. Its short epilogue not only evidences the Brethren of Purity’s passion in rationally winning the readers over to the cause of the animals against their human oppressors, the main topic of the epistle; it also calls upon the readers to open their hearts and let God enlighten their eyes to comprehend the inner meaning of this story.⁵⁶

54 *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*, vii, 111–12.

55 *Ibid.*, viii, 164–65.

56 *Ibid.*, xxii, 315.

5.2 *Teaching through ethical diction*

Our second observation concerns the moral language distinguishing the epistles' textual endings. In the epilogue of Epistle 7, we read that the authors wish to trigger an "awaking for the negligent" in learning, offer "guidance to the apprentices," "excite the interest in the students" in studying and provide "a pathway for the learners," leading eventually to happiness.⁵⁷ In Epistle 8, teachers and mentors are called "guides" of the apprentices, and their instruction "guidance."⁵⁸ Likewise remarkable is the subtleness in the Brethren of Purity's critique of those who hold opinions fundamentally different from their own. Here, careful wording determines the Brethren of Purity's assessment of the illusion which those intellectuals and crafters follow in believing to have "derived their sciences and crafts through the potency of their intellect and the fineness of their thoughts and deliberations," not understanding thereby that knowledge acquired from nature ultimately also comes from God.⁵⁹ Epistle 8 displays the prominence assigned by the Brethren of Purity to the divine nomos with eternal laws and conventions governing human conduct.⁶⁰ And in Epistle 22, the moral way of expression highlights how the two competing species—animals and humans—use a decent and reverential language at court even when they disagree. In the closing of this latter text, the animals courteously acknowledge that the humans spoke well, and spoke the truth, and that they have features in which they can take pride. The animals even express a desire to learn more from the humans about the distinctions and godly doings of virtuous humans, "about their lives and characters, their manners and thoughts, and the branches of knowledge" in which they are well versed.⁶¹ This, the animals hope, would advance their own enlightenment and education. This connecting of the animals with the humans in an exchange leading to enlightenment mirrors that in the passage in which, in this ending, a link is established between the "pure, holy, and devoted saints" and those readers who are willing to follow the path laid out by the Brethren of Purity.⁶²

57 *Tanbīh li-l-ghāfilīn wa-irshād li-l-murīdīn wa-targhīb li-l-ṭālibīn wa-maslak li-l-muta'allimīn*; cf. Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-ṣafā' wa-khullān al-wafā'*, 95; idem, *On Composition and the Arts: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 6–8*, 119.

58 *Al-ustādḥūn li-l-muta'allimīn hum al-adillā' wa-ta'līmuhum al-dalāla*; cf. Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-ṣafā' wa-khullān al-wafā'*, 140; idem, *On Composition and the Arts: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 6–8*, 63.

59 *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-ṣafā'*, viii, 164.

60 *Ibid.*, viii, 163–64.

61 *Fī sirāṭihim wa-akhlāqihim wa-ādābihim wa-ārā'ihim wa-'ulūmihim*; cf. Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-ṣafā' wa-khullān al-wafā'*, 275–76; idem, *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 22*, 313.

62 *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-ṣafā'*, xxii, 311–16.

This moral language is clearly intended to help the authors convince their audience to have confidence in the credibility and integrity of their arguments and teachings—a significant point, especially regarding a group of scholars who called themselves Brethren of Purity and Friends of Loyalty. Perhaps more so than the word ‘brethren’ in this self-designation (which some Western scholars, such as Samuel Stern and others, have taken as solid evidence for viewing the Brethren of Purity in close connection with the Ismaili movement),⁶³ the term ‘purity’ or ‘sincerity’ is decisive here. Indeed, the latter designation highlights the idea of ‘the pure soul’ and the philosophical, mystical ‘search for the truth,’ two fundamental concepts evident throughout *The Epistles*.

But there is also a psychological aspect to be considered. As Aristotle put it in his *Rhetoric*, “[w]e believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided.”⁶⁴ In other words, the moral grounding of Brethren of Purity’s communication purposefully and positively impacts how their audience perceives the motivation driving the composition of *The Epistles* and how the reader perceives their authors’ trustworthiness and credibility; one might say: their ethos. In other words, this ethical diction essentially corroborates the validity of the arguments made in the body of the text and renders the respective teachings acceptable to the reader.

5.3 *Edification through persuasive writing*

The Brethren of Purity’s effort to convince the reader—by appealing to his mind and heart and using a specifically ethical language—is a striking feature of all three epilogues. This effort appears to make it at least conceivable that our 4th/10th-century scholars had knowledge of the Aristotelian means of persuasion and made use of them in crafting the respective conclusions.⁶⁵ Indications in support of this postulate include that the Brethren of Purity:

- a. had a criterion or goal in mind when addressing the reader in the conclusions: attempting to reach the reader’s mind through discursive argument and to prompt their souls to activate knowledge and learn;
- b. affected their readers through a particular language and style: by combining an ethical diction with intellectual and emotional approaches to the reader;

63 Stern, “New Information About the Authors of the ‘Epistles of the Sincere Brethren,’” 421.

64 Aristotle, “Rhetoric,” 25.

65 For al-Fārābī’s understanding of persuasion in the context of his definition of rhetoric as a syllogistic art, cf. Ezzaher, “Alfarabi’s Book of Rhetoric: An Arabic-English Translation of Alfarabi’s Commentary on Aristotle’s Rhetoric,” 358.

- c. strived to be successful in achieving their objectives while granting their audience the freedom to choose whether and how to respond to the presented arguments; and
- d. addressed the readers through arguments and inspiration rather than directly influencing their conduct and attempting to 'produce opinions.'

With these criteria, the Brethren of Purity seem to have applied paradigms similar to those which the US-American communication and argumentation theorist Daniel J. O'Keefe defined as key to the concept of persuasion.⁶⁶ At the same time, we should not forget that "persuasion in its proper sense constitutes a distinct mode of cognitive acceptance for the Islamic tradition," as the Canadian Islamicist and historian of philosophy, Deborah Black, observed in her study of al-Fārābī's rhetorical argumentation.⁶⁷

5.4 *Persuasive conclusions theorized*

Our last point is closely related to the former as it touches, although only briefly, on the question of what place these endings occupy in what literary theory calls 'categories of closure' and phenomena of 'cognitive perspective' indicating that the text is approaching its end. The relevant theoretical studies distinguish between:

I. Three main categories of closure:

1. Relationship endings, concluding the text by determining the fate of the main character; linking this end with an insight; solving the main problem;
2. Relationship endings distinguished by parallels with the openings; a surprise ending; the refocalization of the central problem; etc.; and
3. Ending the text with an allusion to its title; a phrase of closure with negation, a question, a switch to direct speech, a quotation, or a figure of speech in the final passage; etc.

II. The cognitive perspective:

1. The mental disposition of structuring time in terms of goals, breaks, and periods;
2. A final confirmation or sudden change of the frame of (recipient) expectations; or
3. Formal signals of structural completeness;

66 O'Keefe, *Persuasion: Theory and Research*, 3–5.

67 Black, *Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, 129–30.

to reiterate in these two lists only a few key criteria advanced by the modern literary studies of ends and endings.⁶⁸

Applying these criteria to our texts, their most striking features are the reconnection of the epistle's endings to their respective openings (in Epistles 7 and 8), a surprise ending (in Epistle 22), and refocalization of the central problem (in all three epistles). In other words, all three endings would belong to category I.2, the 'relationship endings.'

Furthermore, Epistles 7 and 8 also display formal signals of 'structural completeness' (category II.3) as the Brethren of Purity emphasize in the conclusions that they "produced an epistle of each branch of the above-mentioned sciences," asking the reader, in direct speech, to show this epistle to their brethren and friends⁶⁹ "wherever they are across the land." These pieces of information are mentioned after the authors admitted having "finished" their respective considerations.⁷⁰

The assessment for Epistle 22 is different. Here, the somewhat unprepared turn in the narrative (the animals' and the jinn's sudden acknowledgment of the value of prophethood, and the entire court falling silent) is followed only by Muhammad's confirmation and praise of the prophets, sages, and other "models of goodness and virtue."⁷¹ These elements place this epistle end in category II.2 in light of its cognitive perspective.

*

In summary, we may confidently record that each of the studied endings displays a sophisticated literary design signaling closure, i.e., a sense of resolution of the thematic questions raised in the respective epistle, and that the text now comes to an end. Furthermore, all three closings have essential features in common: The Brethren of Purity effectively re-emphasize and promote their teachings through logical reasoning, ethical diction, and the awakening of emotions in their readership. This communication strategy helps them considerably in convincing the reader of their arguments, proving their credibility as writers, and establishing a personal connection with the audience to increase their interest and passion for the subject matters discussed.

In addition, these text endings display their authors' profound understanding of the human character and of how to transcribe their views of what is good and what is good to know, along with what actions ought to be performed

68 For a detailed overview of the categories, see Wenzel, "Endings in Literature: A Survey," 22–28.

69 *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-ṣafā'*, vii, 119.

70 *Ibid.*, viii, 164–65.

71 *Ibid.*, xxii, 312–15.

to attain goodness and become learned. In other words, Aristotle's primary principles of persuasion—appealing to the mind, the heart, and the character distinguishing a person—as outlined in his *Rhetoric* are used in *The Epistles* highly effectively as means of instruction and enlightenment.

The limited textual evidence we have examined here, however, would render premature any broader conclusions as to whether or not the Brethren of Purity made deliberate use of Aristotle's rhetorical triangle. To find more solid ground in this respect, more extensive linguistic, literary and philosophical research would be needed. Remarkably enough, encouragement for this kind of investigation—and support for our current, preliminary findings—is provided by the Brethren of Purity themselves. This evidence is part of the acknowledgment with which the Brethren of Purity end their entire encyclopedia, not only expressing their familiarity with—and the special value they assign to—the idea of persuading and convincing their readers but also explicitly confirming that they have implemented this communication strategy consistently throughout their encyclopedia, with the aim of facilitating their readers' knowledge acquisition and learning. This paper concludes with these final words of the Brethren of Purity:

والآن قد مضى من الكلام في هذه الرسالة أيها الأخ البار الرحيم، أيدك الله وإيانا بروح منه، ما نظن أن لك فيه مقنعاً وكفايةً من جهة السمع والخبر، ولا سيما إذا كنت تأملت ما قد تقدم لنا من الكلام في خمسين رسالة عملناها قبل هذه؛ فهي مقدمات لها ومُعينة في إحاطة علمك.
لهذا نريد الآن أن نقطع الكلام ها هنا لبلوغنا غرضنا لتمام هذه الرسالة الأخيرة، التي هي آخر الرسائل التي ضمنا لك علمها ووفينا بتمامها.⁷²

O righteous and merciful brother, may God help you and us with a spirit emanating from Him; this [last and final] epistle has come to its end. By now, we think that we have mentioned to you what we believe is persuasive [and convincing (*maqna'*),] and sufficient (*kifāya*) to you in terms of [learning by] listening and being informed — especially when you are reflecting on the exposition in the fifty epistles we prepared before this one. So, these preceding epistles are introductions to this epistle and aid in fully comprehending your knowledge. For this reason, we now want to stop our exposition right here since we have reached our objective with the completion of

72 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-ṣafā' wa-khullān al-wafā'*, iv, 312 (ed. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir); 342 (ed. Ziriklī).

this last and final one of the epistles, whose [wealth of] knowledge we guaranteed you, and which we have entirely perfected.⁷³

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73 My translation.

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