

## ONE ETHIC FOR THREE FAITHS

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There are two major paths for the investigation of the connections between monotheism and ethics. One is the philosophical or theological path; its goal is to establish, or refute, the existence of a set of ethical principles that bind together monotheists by virtue of their membership in one very large and highly diverse community. The other path is the historical one; its goal is to investigate to what extent, in actual practice over the centuries, monotheists have chosen to embrace the same ethic, and to flesh out the contours, details, and pedigree of that ethic. Being an historian, I will take the second path. I will exhibit before the reader a short essay on morals that was certainly written originally in Greek, and very likely by a pagan (which does not rule out, of course, the possibility of a pagan monotheist). Neither the presumed Greek original, nor the (equally presumed) Syriac version from which the later translations were made, are available today. In its Arabic and Hebrew versions, however, the essay found adherents among Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

The late Shlomo Pines describes the treatise in this way:

The ethics that the treatise preaches is at root practical and empirical, without any mention of a higher purpose for man. The lectures on ethics contain no idea that is characteristic of any particular school of philosophy, be it peripatetic or any other. The demand that is heard in this text, that the person ought to edify his soul, is found in different forms in writings of popular ethics.<sup>1</sup>

As far as it goes, this description is correct, certainly for the Arabic version. However, at least one Muslim enthusiast and one of the Hebrew translators (or the editor of the Arabic version that the translator saw) have spiritualized what was, as far as we can tell, originally a non-sectarian

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<sup>1</sup> S. Pines, "Towards the history of a pseudo-Aristotelian text," in *Studies in the History of Jewish Philosophy: The Transmission of Texts and Ideas* (Jerusalem, 1977) (my translation from the Hebrew), p. 176; bibliographic information concerning the text and its various versions in Hebrew and Arabic will be provided shortly, and our English translation of the full text is displayed below, pp. 206–211.

and essentially non-religious, practical guide for the professional who was at the same time conscientious and very much career-oriented.

The essay devotes a great deal of attention to social behavior—how to attend to rivals, friends, those who feign friendship, and so on. The meaning of some terms used to describe social behavior are not entirely clear to me; I have had to rely upon dictionary meanings, though their full and precise import can be appreciated only by someone who has grown up in or otherwise become assimilated in the society for whose members the author prepared the treatise.<sup>2</sup> My task is not made easier by the fact that I am dealing with translations; the Arabic rendition from the Greek, as well as the Hebrew from the Arabic, involves successive crossings of major cultural divides, with a consequent transformation of thinking about social bonds and intrigues, expectations and strategies for survival and advancement.

Religion requires a social ethic. Even highly “spiritual” people spend much or most of their time in social settings; their normal intercourse is with other people, even if they aim for intensifying and maximizing communion with the divine. Indeed, much of the worries of “spiritual” people concern the barriers and nuisances that the demands of society erect between them and their path to fulfillment. Hence there is a need to embed a very practical social ethic within the life plan of the pietist, something that will guide him through the treacherous maze of societal demands.<sup>3</sup> All the more so for the courtier class that constitutes the target audience of this, a fact that is clearly evident, e.g., from the advice given to flatter rulers.

Despite its religiously sterile character, the pseudo-Aristotelian essay was prominently embedded in a deeply religious program for life by some of its medieval readers. I cannot produce any evidence as far as the Christian readership goes. The translator, the man who first saw fit to make

<sup>2</sup> My late mentor, Rabbi Yosef Qafih, was well aware of these difficulties, and went to the trouble to spell out the meaning of the moral qualities mentioned by Maimonides in his disquisition on the mean or “golden path” between extremities. See the beginning of the fourth of Maimonides’ “Eight Chapters,” Y. Qafih (trans.) *Mishnah ‘im Peirush Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1965), 251–252 [Hebrew]. His explanations are far more useful for the understanding of Maimonides than attempts to trace the Hellenistic pedigree of the terms involved.

<sup>3</sup> I use the masculine in keeping with the essay, which is written by and for males; this device conveniently allows me use the feminine form for “soul”, which relieves my essay of some ambiguity. Needless to say, my remarks hold equally true for “spiritual” women looking to navigate their way, on their course to the other shore, through the shoals of social demands and expectations.

this essay available in Arabic, was the Christian Ibn Zur'a. As far as we know, Ibn Zur'a translated from Syriac, not directly from Greek.<sup>4</sup> Pines noticed that he is also credited with the translation of an "unknown" (*majhūla*, meaning here, of unknown authorship) essay on ethics (*Risāla fī al-Akhlāq*), and this may possibly refer to our text. However, that most likely refers to the so-called Alexandrian summary of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which was rendered into Arabic by Ibn Zur'a. The painstaking studies of D.M. Dunlop clarified that point, but only as a by-product of research into the Arabic versions of Aristotle's *Ethics*; we are still in want of a study concentrating on Ibn Zur'a's work in the field.<sup>5</sup>

Ibn Zur'a's translation is found in a codex at Paris (BNF arabe 132), from which it was published nearly a century ago by Louis Cheikho.<sup>6</sup> Another copy, which diverges significantly only at the very end, is found in the anthology of Mubashshir bin Fātik; his precise dates are not known, but his long life spanned most of the eleventh century and reached into the twelfth.<sup>7</sup> 'Ali Ibn Riḍwān, who, for reasons that shall soon become clear, will occupy most our attention, copied the entire essay into his autobiography, *sīra* in Arabic, for which the essay served as a centerpiece.<sup>8</sup> Both Ibn Riḍwān and Mubashshir lived in Egypt. Only small portions of the autobiography are preserved in Arabic, but the entire text, including the essay on ethics, is preserved in the Hebrew translation of Judah Ḥarīzī.<sup>9</sup> The Muslim Ibn Riḍwān tells us in great detail how he applied the ethics

<sup>4</sup> Pines, p. 175, n. 10; Anna Akasoy and Alexander Fidora, *The Arabic Version of the Nicomachean Ethics*, with an introduction and annotated translation by Douglas M. Dunlop (Leiden and Boston, 2005) p. 71. This is actually a posthumous publication of Dunlop's edition, translation, and study of the *Ethics*, edited and updated by Akasoy and Fidora.

<sup>5</sup> I have not been able to locate a copy of the book by Cyrille [Kirrilus] Haddad, *Isa Ibn Zur'a: philosophe arabe et apologiste chrétien* (Beirut, 1971).

<sup>6</sup> L. Malouf, C. Edde, and L. Cheikho, *Traité inédits d'anciens philosophes, musulmans et chrétiens [...] publiés dans la revue al Machriq* (Beirut, 1911; 3rd printing, Cairo, 1985), pp. 50–52.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik, *Mukhtār al-Ḥikam*, ed. A. Badawi (2nd printing, Beirut, 1980), 219–221. For a thorough study, see Franz Rosenthal, "Al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik: Prolegomena to an Abortive Edition," *Oriens* 13–14 (1961), 132–158.

<sup>8</sup> This important observation was first made by the incomparable Moritz Steinschneider, who devoted a very small entry (no. 203, p. 354) to the autobiography, and then a longer one to the essay on ethics (no. 204, pp. 354–356). Unfortunately, Jennifer Seymore, in her otherwise excellent dissertation on Ibn Riḍwān (see note 16), did not think of consulting Steinschneider. Had she done so, she would have gleaned some important information on Ibn Riḍwān's autobiography, and also avoided misidentifying the pseudo-Aristotelian essay (see p. 24, n. 62, where she mistakenly takes it to be pseudo-Aristotle's *Economics*.)

<sup>9</sup> The most accessible version is that published by Isaac ben Jacob Benjacob in the *Debarim 'Attiqim* (Leipzig, 1844), pp. 12–18, on the basis of two manuscript copies found at Leipzig; my own translation is based upon Benjacob's text.

of the tract, especially in the intense spiritualization of the later period of his life. At this time, having retired from his medical practice, he regularly re-read the essay, as part of a lifestyle that included also composing and reciting prayers and the customary reading of the Qur'an.

Mubashshir was a link of sorts between Ibn Zur'a and Ibn Ridwān. His teacher in philosophy, Ibn al-Āmidī, was in contact with Ibn Zur'a; Ibn al-Āmidī showed Mubashshir some verses in praise of scholarship that deeply influenced him. Ibn Riḍwān was Mubashshir's teacher in medicine. These facts were elucidated by Franz Rosenthal in his study of Mubashshir.<sup>10</sup> One must add, however, that there was an intense rivalry between Ibn Riḍwān and the scholars of Baghdad, among whom Ibn Zur'a is to be counted.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Ibn Riḍwān wrote a tract against Ibn Zur'a; it is not extant, but from the title, it is likely to have had religious overtones.<sup>12</sup>

There is also a second Hebrew translation by Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera, which is incorporated in two short books by that author.<sup>13</sup> It is most likely that he encountered the essay by way of Mubashshir's compilation, which reached the west: there exists at least one copy in a Maghrebi hand, and a Spanish translation (under the title *Bocados d'oro*) was made before 1257. In fact, Mubashshir's compilation was translated into many vernaculars and circulated widely.<sup>14</sup>

In the two Hebrew translations we encounter two very different, indeed opposing trends. Judah Ḥarīzī translated the essay along with Ibn Riḍwān's autobiography, within which it is embedded; moreover, his

<sup>10</sup> Rosenthal, 137.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Schacht and Max Meyerhof, *The Medico-Philosophical Controversy between Ibn Butlan of Baghdad and Ibn Ridwan of Cairo* (Cairo, 1937).

<sup>12</sup> The tract is called *Maqāla fi al-radd 'alā Afrā'im wa-ibn Zur'a fi ikhtilāf al-mīlāl*, "Treatise refuting Efraim and Ibn Zur'a on the issue of the difference between religious communities." Seymore, p. 23, apparently identifies Afrāim as Efraim bin Zaffan, Ibn Riḍwān's Jewish pupil. If this is correct, the treatise is written by a Muslim and takes issue with both a Jew and a Christian. However, the intention may be Saint Ephrem, one of the most authoritative voices of Christianity in the Syriac language, in which case the treatise refutes Christians only.

<sup>13</sup> Steinschneider, *Hebraeischen Uebersetzungen*, 356, noticed that the essay included by Falaquera was the same as that found in Harizi's translation of Ibn Ridwan's autobiography. However, I think that Falaquera did not follow Harizi, but rather translated a (somewhat different version of) the Arabic himself. I consulted *Reishit Hokhma*, ed. M. David, Berlin, pp. 17–19; *ha-Mevaqqesh*, The Hague 5538, pp. 48–50; on Falaquera and his writings, see Rafael Jospe, *Torah and Sophia: The Life and Thought of Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera* (Cincinnati, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> Rosenthal has an extensive discussion of these translations; the Maghrebi copy of the Arabic original is MS Escorial, Derenbourg 727, described by Rosenthal, pp. 142–143.

version of the essay displays some variants that add a religious coloring not found in the original (at least, not in the extant Arabic versions). Falquera, for his part, exploits the highly practical, this-worldly character of the essay in order to bolster his point about the rankings of the sciences: on the path to fulfillment, ethics stands far below metaphysics. We shall elaborate upon the Hebrew translations at the end of this paper.

*The Autobiography of Ibn Riḍwān*

Alī ibn Riḍwān (988–ca. 1061) was a prolific and highly opinionated scientist-scholar who worked in Fatimid Egypt. He is best known for his writings on medicine and astrology but, in fact, there were few fields of knowledge where he did not display his scholarship and give vent to his opinions. A small portion of his extant writings (only about a quarter of the hundred-odd writings listed by the bibliographer and medical historian Ibn Abī Uṣaybīʿa survive) has been the subject of editions, translations, and studies. The first major advance in scholarship was the publication, accompanied by a penetrating study, of documents relating to Ibn Riḍwān’s “medico-philosophical” controversy with Ibn Buṭlān of Baghdad.<sup>15</sup> A few more studies appeared in the second half of the twentieth century. More recently, Jennifer Anne Seymore completed a dissertation on Ibn Riḍwān under the direction of George Saliba at Columbia.<sup>16</sup> Seymore has provided a useful synthesis of scholarship to date, and she has made a very serious attempt at placing Ibn Riḍwān in historical context. In addition, she has made a close study of a small section of Ibn Riḍwān’s massive commentary to Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos*. Ibn Riḍwān’s *sīrā* is not extant in the original Arabic, save a few brief citations brought by Ibn Abī Uṣaybīʿa.<sup>17</sup> The Hebrew version, by contrast, had a major impact on its Jewish readership; no less than thirty-five manuscripts have been identified, and it was printed as early as 1559, in Riva di Trento.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Schacht and Max Meyerhof, *The Medico-Philosophical Controversy between Ibn Butlan of Baghdad and Ibn Ridwan of Cairo* (Cairo, 1937).

<sup>16</sup> “The Life of Ibn Ridwan and his commentary of Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos*,” 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Seymore was unaware of the Hebrew version of the *sīrā* and did not include in her dissertation the important information contained therein.

<sup>18</sup> I have consulted the online catalogue of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, Jewish National Library, Jerusalem; I personally catalogued some of these items during my years at the Institute. A fairly good listing is provided as always by Steinschneider, p. 354. For the purposes of this study I have chosen two manuscripts, Oxford,

With these preliminaries in mind, let us return to the *sīrā*. As noted above, the full autobiography is extant only in Hebrew. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a offers some liberal extracts, and the title appears in the list of Ibn Riḍwān’s works as *maqāla fī sīratihī*.<sup>19</sup> *Sīra* means both biography, or, as in this case, autobiography, but it is also means way of life, or conduct. In some cases, including the present one, it combines both: the biography is meant to instruct and illustrate how one ought to conduct oneself. The centerpiece is the essay attributed to Aristotle, accompanied by a brief introduction and several short appendices, all given in the name of ‘Alī. Steinschneider surmised that “‘Alī” is none other than ‘Alī Ibn Riḍwān, and he is undoubtedly correct. The citations displayed by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a (and translated by Schacht and Meyerhof, later cited by Seymore) match the Hebrew very closely. There can be no doubt that the Hebrew text is Ibn Riḍwān’s *sīrā*;<sup>20</sup> there are, however, some interesting differences between the citation in Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a and Ḥarīzī’s piece.

Ibn Riḍwān is very forthcoming concerning his life, his habits, and the lifestyle he chose, especially upon his retirement from his medical practice. Most importantly for our purposes here, he is quite explicit about the central role the pseudo-Aristotelian essay played in guiding his life. As he describes it, his lifestyle was a model of ethical conduct. Here is a sample of his self-evaluation:

In my professional work, I endeavor to be humble, sociable, helpful to the dejected, to discover the distress of the unfortunate, and to help the indigent . . . I endeavor to speak always decently and take care not to swear and not to blame the opinions [of others]. I avoid conceitedness and overweening, avoid eager desires and covetousness; if an adversity befalls me, I rely upon Allah the Most High and meet it reasonably, with neither faintheartedness nor weakness.

However, Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a (who clearly had other sources at his disposal) viewed Ibn Riḍwān as an argumentative individual, who could be insolent

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Neubauer 2525/3, and Moscow 278, which, upon preliminary inspection, seem to be among the better copies. A few important variants to Benjacob’s edition will be noted in the course of this study.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a, *‘Uyūn al-Anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā’*, ed. August Mueller, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1882), I, 100.

<sup>20</sup> Steinschneider, 354, mentions a “Genoa fragment” of the autobiography, seen by some early Orientalists, that may be an extract from Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a. I have not pursued that lead.

and even abusive in his disagreements. Seymore has characterized him as a “jealous social climber.”<sup>21</sup>

The present essay is not a biographical study of Ibn Riḍwān, and in any case I can do no more than guess at the true story. While there seems to be little doubt that Ibn Riḍwān in the early and central stages of his career was highly competitive and possessed the necessary adroitness to survive and advance at court, he may well have mellowed after his retirement. I see no reason to doubt that Ibn Riḍwān the retired physician conducted his life as he described. Ibn Riḍwān wrote the *sīrā* towards the end of his life; and the calm, retired physician may well have projected upon his younger years a poise and equanimity that were lacking at the time.

A few other details of his life are relevant to our study. Seymore has emphasized Ibn Riḍwān’s strong identification with the great intellects of Hellenic culture; this may help explain why his piety, with all its distinctly Muslim elements (reading the Qur’an, prayer) was grounded in a treatise ascribed to Aristotle. In the *sīrā* cited by Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a, Ibn Riḍwān notes that

The ancients and the *‘arifūn* have written many books on this [praising God and contemplating His works]. I saw it fit to to summarize, as I would word them, five of the books on proper conduct (*adab*) and ten of the books of revelation (*shar‘*).<sup>22</sup>

Although he is familiar with the literature of the *‘arifūn*, a moniker that generally refers to Sufi theosophists or gnostics (for lack of better English terms), Ibn Riḍwān evinces no keen interest in theosophy, and perhaps that is the reason that he did not choose the Sufi path. Nonetheless, his way of life, I expect, would have found approval in Sufi circles.

After a very brief preface announcing that Ḥarīzī translated the text for one Ezra ben Yehudah of Beaucaire, there are two short sections, each beginning “*amar ‘Alī*” (“Said Ali”), followed in Ḥarīzī by the essay attributed to Aristotle, followed by three additional sections each of which also begins *amar ‘Alī*.<sup>23</sup> Thus we have five separate pieces by Ibn Riḍwān which surround pseudo-Aristotle. We have already observed that some of them match

<sup>21</sup> Seymore, 38.

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a.

<sup>23</sup> We know next to nothing about this patron, whom Harizi met in the course of his travels; see now Joseph Yahalom and Joshua Blau, *The Wanderings of Judah Alharizi* (Jerusalem, 2002), the long footnote at the bottom of page 52.

Ibn Riḍwān's *sīra* or autobiography that is cited by Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a. Ibn Riḍwān deals with a number of issues in these paragraphs, which connect—certainly *he* thought so—to the essay on ethics; in particular, he has a lot to say about eudaemonia, the division of the arts and the sciences, and the choice of a profession. Out of considerations of space, we will not translate the entire *sīra*; instead we summarize, and occasionally quote verbatim, from those portions that touch upon our concern, that is, the “spiritualization” of the pseudo-Aristotelian ethic. Ibn Riḍwān emerges from these short pieces as an advocate, and a practitioner, of the philosophical way of life—pietistic, demanding, not painfully ascetic but certainly not this-worldly either.

Let us now look a bit more closely at each of the five sections contributed by Ibn Riḍwān which, for convenience's sake, I will call A, B, C, D, and E.

A. Ibn Riḍwān discusses the different types of *ḥaṣḥa* (Arabic *sa'āda*, Greek *eudaimonea*), “felicity”. He concludes that true, complete felicity consists in the following:

The person should be perfect in that thing for the sake of which he was created, which is to do the good and to know the truth. Knowing the truth consists in having [one's] thought come out correctly, in accordance with the matter sought, neither more nor less. Doing the good consists in having all of a person's actions, and reactions, be in accordance with the instruction of the powers of the human intellect.

Logic is the tool by which we distinguish the true from the false.

I cannot identify the source of this definition, if a source is to be sought after.<sup>24</sup> More to the point of this paper is the observation that there is nothing otherworldly or “religious” in this definition; as such it is in keeping with the tone of the essay. There follows, briefly here immediately

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Riḍwān wrote a short treatise on felicity and it has been published by A. Dietrich, *Über dem Weg zur Glückseligkeit* (1982); the title is misleading, since the treatise is concerned mostly with Hippocrates and the role of the physician. The last chapter contains a definition of felicity attributed to Aristotle and very different from that given in our text. (I thank Gerrit Bos for sending a brief report on this very hard-to-find book.) Richard Walzer discusses several definitions of felicity and their classical pedigree in his “Aspects of Miskawaih's *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*”; see esp. pp. 609–610, on the rejection of exclusively other-worldly definitions among some Arabic writing ethicists. D.M. Dunlop (“The Arabic Tradition of the *Summa Alexandrinorum*,” *Archives d'Histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 49 (1983), 253–263, at p. 256) calls attention to variant readings in Mubashshir's compendium, where one manuscript displays “divine happiness” where the others have “true happiness”.



after the definition of eudaemonia and again but at greater length after the pseudo-Aristotelian essay, a discussion of the different arts and sciences. Ibn Riḍwān is very concerned with the choice of a profession; he is much more interested in practical arts—hunting, soldiering, commerce, medicine—than he is in the sciences.

B. The second section comprises a brief introduction to the pseudo-Aristotelian essay. Particularly noteworthy is the final sentence: Ibn Riḍwān achieved his religious goals by living by the essay, whose this-worldly orientation was certainly transparent to him. Conducting one's mundane affairs properly is thus a requisite for successful worship.

Said 'Ali: The great scholar Aristotle wrote an essay in a rhetorical style. He included in it some points which, he said, a person ought to adhere to in all dealings concerned with authentic felicity (*ḥaṣḥa yesodit*), which is called philosophy, or that which is accidental and is called good fortune; by their means, he will attain his ultimate wish.<sup>25</sup> I advise everyone who reads this essay to follow my rule<sup>26</sup> to read it once each week, and to take to heart all of its ideas. I conducted all of my affairs according to it, and I achieved thereby my wish to serve God and to fulfill His will.

Here follows the essay itself:<sup>27</sup>

*Pseudo-Aristotle, "Regimen"*

The following abbreviations are employed:

C: Arabic text published by Louis Cheikho

M: Arabic text included in anthology of Mubashshir ibn Fātik

F: Hebrew version of Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera

a significant difference between the versions is underlined

{*explanatory comments by me, ytl*}

<sup>25</sup> MS Moscow 278, f. 35b, exhibits instead: "He included in it some points, which, if the person will conduct himself according to them in all of his dealings that concern permanent felicity, which is called philosophy, or transitory [felicity], which is called good fortune, he will attain the ultimate goal of his wish."

<sup>26</sup> Once again the Moscow manuscript exhibits an interesting variant: "to do as I did, for I made it a personal rule, and took an oath."

<sup>27</sup> Moscow MS adds: "This is the beginning of the essay that the philosopher Aristotle wrote."

*“Original” Version (Arabic, Falaquera)*

Said Aristotle, The intelligent person must look into the good and bad traits that people possess, as well as the benefits and damages that accrue from them. He ought to choose for himself the helpful ones from among those that proved helpful to them [i.e., the others whom he observes], and eliminate [C: guard against] the harmful ones, from among those that proved harmful to them. Then he will put each one in its place, establishing differentia between the groups so as to separate them from each other. {*For the different classes of traits, M uses wazāʾif, C ṭabaqāt—the two terms are fairly synonymous in this context.*}

After this, he will prepare for himself [or: for his soul] the instruments of discipline {*tādīb, literally “to acquire adab”, adab meaning “good manners”, “proper conduct”*}, so as to vivify those things that he knows by practicing them, and to supply that which he does not know by learning them.

The discipline by means of which he restrains himself will not be at any single or fixed time, because at every moment, on every day throughout eternity, in every activity that the soul engages in, there are types of earnestness and mirth, joy and sadness, rest and exertion—situations in which it is appropriate for a person to discipline his soul and to rectify her {*Harizi, but not F, has smoothed over hellenisms(?) that are found in the Arabic: present*

*Harīzī Version*

Said Aristotle, after offering thanks to the Creator: Every intelligent person must contemplate the good and bad traits that people possess. He should contemplate, and pay attention to, the benefits and damages that accrue from them and from their consequences [literally: from doing them]. He ought to choose for himself the helpful ones by observing which traits are helpful to them [i.e., the others whom he observes], and to distance himself from harmful ones, by looking into which ones are harmful to them. Then he will sort things out, putting each individual item and each species in its place. He will insert differentia that distinguish between each and every class.

After this, he will prepare for himself [or: for his soul] the instruments of discipline {*Hebrew musar means “discipline”, even (in verbal form, li-yasser), “castigation”, but by extension is also the generic term for “ethic” or “morals”. I have tried to choose the best alternative for each context*} in order to keep it disciplined all of the time, and in order to supply what he knows to be missing. What needs to be done, [will be achieved] by means of action; what needs to be learned, [will be achieved by] study. The discipline by means of which he restrains himself will not be at any fixed or random times, because at every moment, on every day throughout eternity, in every activity that the soul engages in, be it an activity of truth or mirth, anxiety or joy, rest or exertion, there are situations in which it is appropriate for a person to restrain [scourge] his soul, to correct all that she has done wrong, and to rectify her circumstances.

*“Original” Version (continued)*

(wājīd rather than mawjūd); at every level of eternity (dahṛ) upon which he rides (rākīb), H: yom mi-yemot ha-‘olam; instead of “activity that the soul engages in” Arabic has “psychic state in the direction of which he is moving”).

Thus none of the people belonging to any level that he shares with them, be it high or low, should have any edge over him. {I.e., no one at his level should possess any more of a given virtue than he; introduces here a competitive motivation for achieving virtue.} A person will not strive to have an edge over the people belonging to a certain station without this edge leading him to find them distasteful, so that he will move upwards in station until he joins the level that is above his own. Indeed, striving for ease by means of ease chases away ease and brings about hardship. For man’s self-discipline calls him to transport himself to those of higher standing if he has high standing, or to the baser ones, if he has base traits. {A person naturally strives to surpass the people of his station, but this can work both ways. Good people will be driven to join the next higher station, but bad people will be motivated to join the station below.} Forgetting study and discipline is damaging, and the damage is destroying and impoverishing hardship that leads to abject poverty [M: hardship for the poor breadwinner (?); F: he who is damaged toils, becomes destitute and poor.]

The training program (*mīnhāj al-tāḍīb*) consists in awakening the soul to good manners (*adab*). Do not let her [the soul’s] insubordination keep you from persisting in awakening her. Your harassment, together with her

*Ḥarīzī Version (continued)*

Thus none of the people belonging to any level, be it higher or lower, should have any more than he in whatever it is that he shares with them. {I.e., no one at his level should possess any more of a given virtue than he; introduces here a competitive motivation for achieving virtue.} For anyone who has an edge over the people belonging to a given [moral] level [of society] will find that this edge perforce drives him to become like the people in next level above. Indeed, striving for ease by means of ease chases away ease and brings about hardship.

Forgetting study and discipline is damaging, and damage is the hardship that leads to abject poverty.

For this reason one must constantly castigate one’s soul and admonish her. Do not let the difficulty, cruelty and rebelliousness of the soul keep you from persisting in discipline and edification. One compels her so, and gives her no rest with one’s lecturing; she, on the other hand, greatly desires tranquility and seeks it. She will therefore seek some rest from his discipline if only by some minimal exertion, and thus she

*"Original" Version (continued)*

love of tranquility, will carry her seek to some relief by [at least] some partial obedience, and thus she will acquire some discipline. Nor will she tarry long in her deficiency, so that if it is much, it will become little. [C unclear, as C notes; F follows Ḥarīzī here.] When the soul begins to respond, if only partially, her first task should be fulfill her obligation to the code {*Arabic al-dīn, Hebrew tora; likely to have been in the original nomos, a code, not necessarily religious*}, and to inform the soul of her portion {*not quite clear; contrast Ḥarīzī*}. Afterwards, attend to friends, giving life to friendship, for whoever deserts [others] will himself be deserted. Next, increase the advantages of [having] loyal friends [literally: brothers], for being many they will steady you if you stumble, and they will spread your praise.

Train her to be patient with [F follows Ḥarīzī] those who smile at you, pretending to be friends. Forbear, either in the hope of transforming their enmity into friendship, or else to guard yourself against their slander, which may reach the fatuous ear of a ruler. Then give a portion of your care and attention to friends of friends, because friends of friends are also friends; they have the status of giving notice of your faithfulness. [F adds this explanation: that is to say, when you are loyal to friends of friends, it testifies that your love of your friends is flawless. F also differs in the rest of the paragraph, see next reference to F.]

*Ḥarīzī Version (continued)*

will acquire a modicum of discipline. The intelligent person should not waive this trifle, even though his soul will still lack the greater part [of a full discipline]: this is the secret of acquiring by habit.

When the soul awakens to your discipline and begins to perform a bit as you would wish, her first task should be fulfill her obligation to the code {*Arabic al-dīn, Hebrew tora; likely to have been in the original nomos, a code, not necessarily religious*}, and to inform her of the pleasant portion and reward that she will receive on account of her good actions. But admonish her that her worship and fear should not be done hypocritically; she should not act out of modesty, beneath which looms pride, nor out of feigned piety and hidden cruelty. If that is the case, her exertion will be in vain. {*N.B. This explicit statement of religious duty and (presumably) other-worldly reward is the most blatant intervention, or modification, transforming this essay into a religious ethic.*}

Afterwards, discipline her to attend to friends, so as to maintain their fraternity and bond. They are your support; and whoever deserts [others] will himself be deserted. He should discipline [train] her to acquire many loyal friends, for being many they will aid you against your rivals and earn for you a good name among your contemporaries.

Train her to do what is necessary for those who smile at you, though their hearts scheme against you, those who pretend to be friends though they are really enemies. Therefore, generously offer them some friendship, either in the hope to transform their enmity into friendship, or else to guard yourself

*“Original” Version (continued)*

Now the greatest test by which friends are tested among people are: at death, preserving it [friendship] with their offspring; at illness, preserving it during a period of weakness; when in need, preserving it despite poverty. Balance what you give and what you receive; but the better part of giving is by foregoing recompense and acquiring [instead] virtue. Be piqued with yourself if you are lax in attending to their needs. [F: Also, do what is required in the trials to which one is put among people—whether it be at a time of bereavement, when you maintain it at a time of weakness {sic, choppy sentence}, or in a time of need, when you maintain it at a time of poverty. Then take stock of what you have drunk and what you have eaten. Observe if you have [taken in] an excess, remove what is missing (!), and keep the excess. Be piqued with yourself if you have come short.]

Serve kings with praise and obeisance, for their self-concern is with laudation and submission. Attend to your counselors in private, for you derive benefit when secluded with them. Attend to the righteous (*ṣulahā'*) sincerely [F like Ḥarīzī: and honestly], so as to learn from them what they have learned concerning the good. Give your equals their reward [F: Attend to friends who are always in your company]; they will put to rest [accusations?] of parsimony and will offer you fraternity. Attend to patrons, searching [to find] their true intent [F like Ḥarīzī]. Attend to the poor in your family compassionately, and to the successful among them by

*Ḥarīzī Version (continued)*

against their slander, which may reach gullible ears. Train her as well to pay attention to the friends of your friends, because that is the virtue that testifies to true friendship.

Also train her to do what is necessary for friends who are in trouble or undergo hardship; if they die, keep your faith with their offspring; if they take sick, visit them; if they are become impoverished, help them as best you can. Have a generous soul, so as not to be proud of the kindness you did for them. Be piqued with yourself if you are lax in attending to their needs.

Attend to kings, giving them praise {*Here I correct the printed Ḥarīzī on the basis of other MSS*} obey their commands, and pray for their welfare, for all that they desire is to protect their people, just as a shepherd watches over his flock. Attend to your trusted companions, exchanging secrets in a hidden place; for you belong with them, and derive benefit from them, at the time that you are cloistered with them. Attend to the pious {*ḥasidim, often though not always “pious” in the religious sense*} sincerely and honestly, so as to learn from them what they have learned concerning the good virtues. Attend all of your friends honorably; they will relieve you

*“Original” Version (continued)*

giving them instruction in just acts. Your compassion for the poor will bring you honor, and your instruction of the successful will bring you benefit from them. [Sentence in M corrupt]

Attend to your livelihood correctly, without giving people any less than their due. Attend to your enemies and cause them damage. Attend to those who conspire against you by confuting their plans; to those who disengage by forgiving them; to those who confess, with mercy and compassion; to those who are jealous, impolitely; to the wicked, with intrigue [C: by cajoling; F: by inquiring into their secrets]; to the foolish, gently [C: with knowledge]; to the hotheaded, with composure; to those who curse, with scorn; to rivals, with a grimace [F: by ignoring them]; to slanderers, by bewareing of them.

Be cautious in doubtful matters, and [look toward] the unknown with anticipation. Be determined in issues that are clear, and investigate [mere] appearances.

Be firm in the face of calamities, patient in the event of outbursts, forbearing when angry, and dignified when meeting idiocies. [F: Activate expedition in the face of troubles, patience in the event of distress, forbearance when irritated, restraint when angry, and composure in the face of the unknown.]

Attend to your neighbors with help, your spouse with charity [C: intimacy; F follows Ḥarīzī], {*\*here begins different*

*Ḥarīzī Version (continued)*

of troubles and parsimony [scil. others being parsimonious towards you?], and they will show you the path towards fraternity. Attend to dignitaries humbly. Attend to the poor in your family compassionately, and to the successful among them by giving them instruction in just acts. Your compassion for the poor will bring you honor, and your instruction of the successful will bring you benefit from them.

Attend to your livelihood with honest dealings, avoiding deceit and oaths. Attend to your enemies, without, however, taking revenge, though guarding yourself against them. Attend to those who conspire against you by confuting their plans; to those who disengage by forgiving them; to fools, by overlooking their misdeeds; to the silly, with composure; to those who curse, with scorn; to those who are jealous, by increasing their jealousy; to slanderers, by bewareing of them.

Keep your distance from any doubtful matter, but do not delay doing anything that is clear and tried. Attend to doubtful matters by investigating them thoroughly.

Be very careful in dangerous situations. Bear travails that may come by with a pleasant composure [trans.?]. Restrain yourself when angry, and hold back when you are enraged.

Attend to your neighbors with help, the stranger with loving kindness, the loyal friend by obeying his command, and the visitor with greetings. Attend to kings by guarding their secrets and praising their actions.

*“Original” Version (continued)**Ḥarīzī Version (continued)*

*ending found in C, see below*} the loyal friend by obeying his command, and the visitor with a gift [H: greetings]. Attend to kings by guarding their secrets and advising action and zealous work [H for last two: praising their actions].

Take stock in your heart of the good and bad from among your friends, and decide to which group you incline. If you lean toward the good group, then you will increase the jealousy and enmity that the bad hold towards you. But if you lean towards the bad group, you will receive more scorn and contempt in the eyes of the good. Therefore, you ought to stay close to both of them, and you will receive the love of both.

[\*ending in C: thus we give to each one of the rest according to its special properties, not its essence. We have completed what we have set out to do, and it is clear from what we have written, with the help of God and His good guidance; to Him [our] thanks always, forever and ever.]

Take stock in your heart of the good and bad from among your friends, and decide to which group you incline. If you lean toward the good group, then you will increase the jealousy and enmity that the bad hold towards you. But if you lean towards the bad group, you will receive more scorn and contempt in the eyes of the good. Therefore, you ought to stay close to both of them. You will receive the love of both, and peace as well.

Finally, there is this closing passage, found in all versions save that of Falaguera: This is the covenant that Aristotle bestowed upon the wise at heart. He included in it things that a person should do in all of his affairs. He should conduct all of his business on their basis, neither adding to them nor subtracting from them. He will then attain his desired goal.

The next three sections come after the essay ascribed to Aristotle:

C. In this section Ibn Riḍwān once again takes up the division of the sciences, or rather of the arts and professions. There are two major divisions: occupations of the mind, such as philosophy and logic and their subdivisions; and practical occupations. Ibn Riḍwān is concerned here only with the second group, which bifurcates again, into “natural” and commercial arts. Each of these branches off again and again, and we need not repeat all of the subdivisions. I think it interesting that Ibn Riḍwān classifies hunters together with military commanders, since both have as their goal the subjugation of their prey. Medicine is grouped together with agriculture; Ibn Riḍwān does not say why. Both medicine and the military are ranked highest in their groups.

How does one choose a profession? Once again, Ibn Riḍwān lists two options. One either casts one’s own horoscope—we know that he did this for himself—in order to learn what the stars have fated, or one tries one’s hand at the different arts and learns from experience which art suits one best.

One must study with a skilled practitioner of the chosen art. It is not clear whether this is true, whichever of the two methods of selection have been employed; it would seem to apply to both. Ibn Riḍwān concludes with a political statement:

Therefore, one must honor and defer to the person who is skilled and expert in his art and craft, over the person who is not, even if he [the unskilled] is of honorable lineage. For in this way the arts will multiply, blessings will increase, and the affairs of the community will flourish.

D. The first thing that one must learn is proper conduct, and once again the rules fall into two classes. Some are “written in revealed books (*sefer torōt*) of each nation.” While this phrase could refer to prophetic revelations exclusively, I tend to think that it has here a wider meaning, to include the regimens of the (pagan) philosophers. (Those could well be inspired, according to some theories of prophecy then current.) In any event, no exclusive claim is made here for the truth of the Islamic



scripture. Other modes of conduct are arrived at by means of reason. The overarching rule is that one should be honest and upright in all one's dealing with one's fellow humans. These passages have a direct bearing on ethics and we will cite from them, offering as well a few comments.

Said 'Alī: The intelligent person should learn first of all his profession and the useful activities, and these are divided into two parts: one part is to be learned from the codes (*torōt*), the other part is learned by reason and intellect. The part that appertains to codes is written in the books of each and every nation. Those [items] that come by way of intellect are morals and wisdom, virtues, proper conduct, winning people's love, and having all of one's business done honestly. In general, a person ought to be intelligent and honest in all of his affairs and actions. *{Comment: Some rules are recorded in tradition and vary from people to people—but 'Alī gives no hint that one written code may be better than any other. This seems to be purely a matter of tradition and of secondary importance. Morals, wisdom, and proper conduct, are universal, arrived at and decided upon by reason, and are primary.}*

The writers of proverbs and witticisms have composed some fine sayings and sharp proverbs. Pythagoras, for example, said in his proverbs: *{Comment: It is striking that Ibn Riḍwān has chosen to cite here ten proverbs, all of them attributed to Pythagoras. I have made no attempt to trace the lineage of these sayings. The key point, as it seems to me, is that Pythagoras was the paragon of the pious individual, un beholden to any given faith, and so it was his words that Ibn Riḍwān chose to cite—even if the central essay in the sīra is ascribed to Aristotle.}*

- Look into [the matter] before acting, so that you are not disgraced when acting.
- Things that you ought not to do, you ought not to consider doing.
- The best witnesses to your faith [or: faithfulness] are what your soul encompasses in the act of intellect and wisdom.
- Possessions are the source of sorrow. So, if you wish not to have any worries, don't acquire anything whose loss will cause you worry.
- Don't let yourself be more agile at acquiring wealth, than you are at safeguarding what you already have.
- While you are still alive, seek wisdom, wealth, and skill; for scholars will honor you on account of your wisdom, common folk on account of your wealth, and everyone on account of your skill.
- There are three 'times': past time, which you cannot bring back; future time, which you do not know if you will reach; and static time, which will be lost immediately if you do not utilize it for the good, and when you shall want to do it, you will be unable.
- Maintain the good state of your body by avoiding sloth in your activities, and by staying away from copious eating and drinking.
- Whoever recognizes the good but doesn't do it isn't worth a thing.

E. This section, which contains Ibn Riḍwān's autobiography, is by far the longest of the five.<sup>28</sup> "Each person must study art that suits him and which he loves, as we have already mentioned," he tells us. "All of my desire and love was . . . for God, and to unify him. My intention in its entirety was to be counted among those who fulfill His will . . ." In line with these life-goals, he chose the medical profession. Medicine is "neighbor" to philosophy in bringing one close to God, because both lead one to do what is good, proper, and charitable. If I understand correctly, then, it is not the intellectual side of medicine—learning about the wonders of the human body—but rather the practical side, helping and curing, that makes it into philosophy's "neighbor."

Ibn Riḍwān also wanted to bring life to his own soul—this phrase can mean both to find a means of economic support as well as a source of intellectual satisfaction.<sup>29</sup> He began his studies at the age of fifteen, an orphan without any backing. He found the going difficult but rejoiced in whatever he managed to learn. He studied industriously and, at the age of thirty-two, finally achieved acclaim. He was now able to purchase books and thus further his studies; and so he carried on until he reached the age of sixty. Wisdom teaches that that age marks the end of worldly affairs; whoever reaches it ought to leave behind the vanities of this world and apply himself to the next.

Having reached the age of sixty, then, Ibn Riḍwān dedicated himself to treating the poor for free; as for the rich, he accepted whatever payment they wished to give him. After morning prayers, he would spend the first third of the day in his medical practice, mainly in order to keep to the habit of working. The rest of the day would be devoted to worship, as well as to attending to the needs of his body and soul. He describes at length his efforts to avoid petty disputes and worldly worries, to avoid loans, debt, and oaths, and, in general, to be satisfied with his lot, whatever it may be.

Some other habits are unusual. When confronted with a patient whose ailment was not clear, Ibn Riḍwān would give him a placebo, "a drug that will cause no harm, and perhaps do some good," until he was able to diagnose the illness and treat it properly. When a potential student asked to

<sup>28</sup> Much of this is culled from other sources, including the fragments of the *sīra* quoted by Ibn Abi Usaybia, by Seymore, pp. 8–22, who adds much valuable information from other sources as well.

<sup>29</sup> The phrase "to bring life to" is found in the pseudo-Aristotelian essay several times.

study with him, Ibn Riḍwān would examine his physiognomy, the face and eyes, and either accept him or send him on his way.

He read a portion of the Qur'an each day, and he also composed liturgies; he was punctilious about prayer. He would read Aristotle's essay once each week, and take account of the day's activities each night; and either rejoice or scold himself, depending on his conduct. Thus pseudo-Aristotle's essay was the pivot of this spiritual regimen, which included—as recommended in the Pythagorean *Golden Verses*—a nightly accounting, with self-inflicted reward and punishment.<sup>30</sup>

Here follow the most relevant passages (from the very end of the *sīra*) for the purposes of this essay, i.e., those describing the spiritual aspects of Ibn Ridwan's regimen. Recall that we are dependent here upon Ḥarīzī's Hebrew version:

I maintained silence, not speaking before thinking about what I would say. I would not profane my speech by pointing out another person's defects, by taking part in arguments and disputes, or by taking an oath in God's name—whether in truth or in vain. I would not dominate other people, and I freed myself of worry over money or exertion. If something bad would befall me, I would beseech my Creator that it be a ransom for my sin, something that may serve to quench His anger. I accepted evil as the intellect demands, without fear or trembling; I was neither shocked nor dazed by God's disciplinary measures (*musar*)...

I made it my habit to spend one day each week attending to my patients, and the rest of the week to reflect upon earth, heaven, and all that they contain. I gave song and praise to my Creator...

I made it my custom to read the law code of my God (*sefer torat elohay*), reading from it a portion every day, until I finished the book, and which I time I would go back and start again from the beginning. I would compose supplications and requests with which to beseech my Creator, and I would never neglect my prayers. I was punctilious in observing both the 'received' and the 'rational' commandments of our law. I would read Aristotle's essay every week...

Unfortunately I can say nothing about how the ethic may have been applied in a Christian context; all I know is that it was a Christian who selected this essay for translation into Arabic. However, it is pertinent to observe that Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, who knew Ibn Zur'a personally, has this to say about his lifestyle:

<sup>30</sup> See lines 40–44 of the poem in Johann C. Thom, *The Pythagorean Golden Verses: Translation and Commentary* (Leiden, 1995), p. 153; Seneca reports that a certain Sextius put this into practice (*ibid.*, 39).

He is very reliable in all the great matters of philosophy [...] and were it not for his attention being distracted by mercantile affairs, his love of gain, eagerness for amassing and stress on withholding, his genius would answer him and his cloud would rain upon him [...] It is love of the present world that makes us blind and deaf!<sup>31</sup>

As we have seen, the pseudo-Aristotelian was tailor-made for competitive, this-worldly individuals, who nonetheless had a taste for philosophy; so, on the personal level at least, would have been appropriate for Ibn Zur'a.

The Hebrew translations were, of course, directed at a Jewish audience, and here we can detect two different, even opposing trends. The first and most important observation to be made is this, that Ḥarīzī chose to translate the entire *sīra*, despite its highly personal aspects and the obvious Muslim connection. This surely indicates that he wished to present to his patron, and readership, a religious or spiritual ethic. The *sīra* makes it clear that the essay is meant to serve the individual seeking spiritual fulfillment within a program that includes prayer and study. Having said this, there is no reason to suppose that Ḥarīzī knew much if anything about “Alī”; he may have taken him to be a fictional narrator—just as some readers of Maimonides’ *Guide* took “Yosef ben Yehudah” to be a literary device and convenient fiction.<sup>32</sup> Whether or not Ḥarīzī knew anything about the historical “Alī”, his readers surely did not; so “Alī” was for all practical purposes a literary device, a fictional narrator.

Be that as it may, Ḥarīzī made no effort to suppress the Muslim identity of “Alī the Ishamelite,” the narrator of the essay, and the person whose recommendation of “Aristotle’s” essay would convince Jewish readers to study it and adopt its teachings. His translation is introduced as follows:

The essay (*iggeret*, literally epistle) of ‘Alī the Ishmaelite which the scholar, Rabbi Yehudah, son Rabbi Shlomo Ḥarīzī, of blessed memory, translated. It is the universal ethics written by the great philosopher Aristotle. One of the Ishmaelite scholars by the name of ‘Alī translated it from [the Greek] language to the Arabic language, and included it with an essay on his own ethic.

<sup>31</sup> Citation and translation in Akasoy and Fidora, p. 70, from *al-Imtā wa-l-mu’anasa*, eds. A. Amin and A. al-Zain, vol. 1, p. 33.

<sup>32</sup> Y. Tzvi Langermann, “Sharḥ al-Dalāla, A Commentary to Maimonides’ *Guide* from Fourteenth Century Yemen,” in Carlos Fraenkel (ed.), *Traditions of Maimonidean Judaism* (Leiden-Boston, 2009), pp. 157–159.

Apparently Ḥarīzī was led to believe that “‘Alī” himself had translated the essay from the Greek; this caused no little consternation to the great Moritz Steinschneider, who knew that ‘Alī referred to Ibn Riḍwān but also knew that the latter was not a translator. The manuscripts exhibit two different titles: *Iggeret ha-Musar ha-Kelali*, “An Essay on Universal Ethics”; this is the title that Ḥarīzī gives in the preface, as we have just seen, and it clearly refers to the (pseudo-Aristotelian) essay. However, some copies display the title *Minhag Ḥasidim*, “The Way of Life of the Pious,” in the explicit. Steinschneider had doubts about this second caption; it is, however, a very fitting title for the *sīra* in its entirety, not just the pseudo-Aristotelian essay.<sup>33</sup>

Ḥarīzī does not employ words with highly specific Muslim reference, e.g., “Qur’an,” but rather speaks of holy writ, prayer, and so forth—items that would be swiftly and smoothly interpreted by the Jewish reader in terms of his own religion. On the other hand, some of the practices, for example, that of reading a fixed portion of holy writ each day, and starting over again when finished, conform to Muslim, rather than Jewish practice. Ḥarīzī’s version displays a few striking variants from the extant Arabic texts; these serve to give the essay itself more of a religious character. I have no way of knowing whether these phrases faithfully reflect the Arabic text that Ḥarīzī saw, or whether Ḥarīzī (as seems unlikely to me) added them on his own. For example, at the very beginning, Ḥarīzī’s version adds the phrase (italicized here): “Said Aristotle, *after offering thanks to the Creator.*” This may seem trivial, but, in fact, mentionings of the divine, even in the most abbreviated form (e.g., “Exalted God”), are extremely rare in Arabic texts belonging to the Aristotelian ethical tradition.<sup>34</sup> Most significant is the addition of an other-worldly reward, made at the mention of a “code” and with the implication that this reward is somehow connected to sincere worship:

When the soul awakens to your discipline and begins to perform a bit as you would wish, her first task should be fulfill her obligation to the code, *and to inform her of the pleasant portion and reward that she will receive on account of her good actions. But admonish her that her worship and fear should not be done hypocritically.*

<sup>33</sup> Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebraeischen Uebersetzungen des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1893), 354–356; Pines later identified Ibn Zur’a as the translator.

<sup>34</sup> Akasoy & Fidora, 67.

Finally, the fact that “‘Alī the Ishmaelite” and his exemplary life (*minhag ḥasidim* in Hebrew), which took its key from pseudo-Aristotle, struck such a resonant chord among Hebrew readers, shows, I think, that for all his many personal idiosyncrasies, ‘Alī ibn Riḏwān’s personal path to spirituality and to the right sort of life was something that many people—perhaps not droves, but certainly not just a handful—could identify with. This essay did provide an ethic for people of different faiths, guidance for up-and-coming professionals working in a competitive environment and seeking tranquility and spiritual fulfillment after they had scored their career success.

Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera (ca. 1225–1291) translated the pseudo-Aristotelian essay, without the materials from ‘Alī bin Riḏwān. I have already suggested that Falaquera came across the text in one of the doxographies that he mined for his own Hebrew compilations, most likely a version of Mubashshir’s book. The non-spiritual tone of this particular essay certainly suited well Falaquera’s purpose, which was to illustrate the relatively low place of ethics among the sciences. Falaquera’s “seeker” after felicity finds that ethics deals only with conventional truths, not intellectual ones. Ethics is concerned with the body and with society, facets of human life that are shared with animals; but true felicity must lie with the intellect, something accessible to man alone, and not dependent upon social conventions. The pseudo-Aristotelian essay is an excellent fit for an argument of this sort. Falaquera seems to have seen in the essay a conveniently concise statement of an ethic that was widely accepted.<sup>35</sup>

There are of course of other examples of Greek ethic texts that were read and for all we know put into practice by adherents of the Abrahamic faiths. Most important of these would be Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Golden Verses*. Their absorption into the religious ethic of the monotheistic faiths certainly warrants studies of their own.

<sup>35</sup> In a very long note, which takes up most of page 176 of his study (see above, n. 8-8), Pines discusses Falaquera’s views on the place of ethics in the curriculum, contrasting them with the opinion of Maimonides. See also R. Jospe, *Torah and Sophia*, pp. 120–121.