

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF IKHWAN AL-SAFA AND CONTRIBUTION OF ASIAN CULTURES TO THE IDEA OF PLURALISM

BAYRAM ALİ ÇETİNKAYA*

ABSTRACT

Ikhwan al-Safa (read as *ikhw'anus-safâ*) is a community which aims to reconstruct Muslim Community intellectually through philosophical and scientific studies and moral and religious enthusiasm amid religious, philosophical, and political contentions in the decline period of Abbasid State. *Rasa'il-e* Ikhwan as-Safa convey the philosophical life of 10th century as if they reflect political atmosphere of the era. Islamic reason in this era was aware of Ancient Greek philosophy, Hindu wisdom, and Persian and Arabic literature. Thus, *Rasa'il* gathered all these ideas and cultures in a melting pot. Ikhwan al-Safa, the members of a religious-political movement, helped *Rasa'il* to spread by consciously hiding their identity. Thus, *Rasa'il* have become works everyone from all sections of the society could reach. At the same time, *Rasa'il* are the first attempt to educate society through philosophical and scientific ways. The effects of *Rasa'il* are beyond their time and place. *Rasa'il*, an encyclopedia of religious and positive sciences, have the legacy on Islamic intellectual life from Iran to Spain. Ikhwan as-Safa referred to prophets, to ancient Greek Philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and even to Hindu wise men. Thus, it is unfair to engage Ikhwan as-Safa with a certain sect. In fact, Ikhwan is over sects and factions. Ikhwan as-Safa has become a school which has consisted of Greek philosophy, Persian, Hindu, Messiah and other ideas. Ikhwan as-Safa displays an example of very inclusive eclecticism in philosophy while it is inclined to Mu'tazile and Shia in terms of religion. It talks about Christianity, Sabian and other religions and ideas as if it talks about Islam. Ikhwan as-Safa as a school means rationalism from many perspectives, moral and mental idealism, and spiritualism as a return of spirits to Allah, logical mysticism, monism, syncretism, and pluralism. Ikhwan al-Safa has become a successful model for latter Muslim and Asian societies with its organizational structure which employs these theoretical backgrounds. They have passed the borders of tenth century with their religious-ideological project in the area of religion, philosophy and culture. They have provided the prescription of a new millennium by struggling against religious, ethnic, sectarian and cultural discriminations.

Keywords: Culture, Religion, Pluralism, Philosophy, Ikhwan al-Safa

* Istanbul University, Istanbul, Turkey bacetinkaya@hotmail.com

I. INTRODUCTION

There is a general consensus on the idea that the movement of Ikhwan al-Safa, introduced in Basra which is declared as the centre of free rational thought and Mu'tazilite movement in addition to its being centre of Muslim idea.¹ It is not a coincidence that the community has been primarily emerged in Basra in South Iraq and tractates are composed of mathematical, political and religious doctrines because Basra in 10th century² as a cosmopolitan city was open to outer effects and it always communicated with external world. Although Ikhwan maintained its activities secretly, it is possible to claim that Basra was a freedom centre, which gives the right of self-expression for every thought, ideology and school.³

The tractates proposed by Ikhwan al-Safa represents the philosophical life of 10th century- even if is not too comprehensive- as it represents political life. Besides, the reflection of philosophical atmosphere of that period is seen obviously in tractates. Islamic mentality of this century was aware of Ancient Greek, Indian wisdom, Arabic and Persian literature and other monotheistic and non-monotheistic religions and cultures. The tractates combined these ideas and cultures.⁴

II. IKHWAN AL-SAFA AS A PHILOSOPHICAL COMMUNITY

Publishing and research concerning Ikhwan al-Safa have been emerged since the end of 19th century. Some of the tractates were translated into Latin in medieval Christian world.⁵ There are two authorities who provide us some reliable knowledge on Ikhwan al-Safa: the philosopher of 4th and 5th century Abu Sulayman al-Mantiqi and his student Abu Hayyan al-

Tawhidi.⁶ Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi states the following anecdote that has been expressed for centuries about Ikhwan al-Safa in *Muqabasat* and *al-Imta wa al-Muanatha*:

He does not belong to any sect or group; he did not need such a belonging because of the difference of the thing that is seen as simply commented and superficially explained. He had lived in Basra for a long time. He met there with various scientists and profession experts. Among these people, it could be mentioned about Abû Suleyman Muhammad b. Ma'sher al-Bustî, Abu'l-Hasan Ali b. Harun al-Zanjânî, Abû Ahmed el-Mihrijânî, el-Avfî and such. He spent time with them. He had a group of ten friends. Their friendship was close. They met together very frequently. Eventually, they had a common idea and they formed a sect. They supposed that they are becoming close on another in the way to reach the sake of Allah. They expressed this: "The Shari'a became dirty by being painted with ignorance and composed with aberrations. The only way that will clean Shari'a is philosophy because philosophy includes *itikadi hikmet and itikadi maslahat*". They also supposed that maturity is formed via the regulation of Greek philosophy and arrangement of Arabic Shari'a. They wrote 50 tractates, which contain all branches of philosophy. They separated these tractates, which include all scientific and practical parts of philosophy, with respect to sciences and put an index for them. Then, they called them "Ikhwan al-Safa and Hullani'l Wafa". They did not express their (writers') name. They named these tractates with religious words, idioms about Shari'a and letters that will reach them the way they select.⁷

The identity and works of this community is important in other way because it is thought that the group of Ikhwan al-Safa⁸ originated from Basra emerged between the years of 946 and 1055.⁹ The members of this community spread to various cities. According to the explanations of Kitri, their activity centre was Basra. The community had branches in Egypt and Bagdad.¹⁰

1 Hamdi Ragıb Atademir. "Tahlil ve Tetkikler Adel Awa: İhvan al-Safâ'nın Tenkid Kafası", *A.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2: 1, Ankara 1953, 98; Ömer Ferruh, *Ikhwân al-Safâ*, 3rd edition (Beirut: N.p., 1981), 18; Nâdiye Jamâluddîn, *Falsafat al-Tarbiyya 'inda Ikhwân al-Safâ* (Kahire: N.p., 1983), 87-88.

2 R. Hartman, "Basra", *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (MEB) (Istanbul: 1986), II, 320-327.

3 Ârif Tâmir. *Haqîqat Ikhwân al-Safâ wa Hullan al-Wafâ*, 3rd edition, Beirut 1982, 72-73.

4 Taha Hüseyin, "Muqaddima", *Rasâil Ikhwân al-Safâ wa Hillân al-Wafa*, ed. Khayruddin al-Zirikli (Egypt: 1928), I, 10; Armand Abel, "Basra'da İhvân-el-Safâ Muamması ve Bunun X. Yüzyılda Halifeler Devletinin Sosyal Tarihi Bakımından Manası", translator: Nusret Hızır, *Bellekten*, XXIX (1965), 613.

5 Nihat Keklik. *Türk-İslam Felsefesi Açısından Felsefenin İlkeleri*, 2. baskı (Ankara: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1996), 99.

6 M. S. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismâ'ilism*, Leiden 1983, 155; M. Stern, "The Authorship of the Epistles of the Ikhwân-as-Safâ", *Islamic Culture*, 20 (1946), 368-369, 372.

7 Abu Hayyân al-Tawhidî, *al-Muqabasât*, Egypt 1929/1347, 45 (1st footnote), 46; al-Tawhidî, *al-Imta wa'l-Muanatha*, ed. Ahmet al-Tuwaylî, Tunisisa 1982, 171-173; al-Qiftî, *Akhbâr al-'Ulamâ bi Akhbâr al-Hukamâ*, 59.

8 Al-Tawhidî, *al-Muqabasât*, 45 (1st footnote), 46; see also *al-Imta*, 171-173; al-Qiftî, *Akhbâr al-'Ulamâ bi Akhbâr al-Hukamâ*, 59.

9 Ian Richard Netton. *Muslim Neoplatonists* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 78.

10 Al-Qiftî, *Ahbârul-Ulemâ bi Ahbârul-Hukemâ*, 59.

It was claimed such theses that tractates addresses to many people in various social statues, in various ages and having various jobs, their language includes the words originated from Greek and other languages in addition to philosophical and scientific expressions and they have one or more writers.¹¹ Ikhwan al-Safa was a secret philosophical community emerging in the last period of Abbasid Government when religious, philosophical and political rivalry was widespread, and it aimed to reform intellectual side of Islamic society by putting forward unity and solidarity, fraternity, assistance and cohesiveness.¹² However, it is interesting that this community was working like association of philosophy that tries to transfer its philosophical, scientific and cultural studies to the people in this age by saving its existence during one age in Hijri 4th century in Islamic geography. The works and struggles of this group are remarkable in terms of the idea that they indicate the progress of Islamic world in an intellectual area in that period. The doctrines of this community were summarized in the study of *Rasail Ikhwan al-Safa*, which is anonymous. This study involves fifty-one tractates and it reflects all of their ideas and the application of them to the religious doctrines.¹³

There were people from various groups among the members of this community.¹⁴ Some part of the members were the children of Amir, Queen, gentry or administrators, some parts were children of artisan, tradesman or traders and some other parts were the children of writer, reverend and scholars.¹⁵

There is merely one important work transferred to us from this group, which lives in some of Muslim Indian areas like an alive literature.¹⁶ This work is “tractates” and at least one

11 Abel, “Basra’da İhvân-el-Safâ Muamması ve Bunun X. Yüzyılda Halifeler Devletinin Sosyal Tarihi Bakımından Manası”, 99; Muhammed Ferid Hijâb, *al-Falsafat al-Siyasiyya inda İkhwân al-Safâ*, Egypt, 1982, 65.

12 R, II, 140; Enver Uysal, *İhvân-ı Safâ Felsefesinde Tanrı ve Alem*, Istanbul 1998, 24; Uysal, “İhvân-ı Safâ” mad., *T. D. V. İ. A.*, Istanbul 200, XXII, 1-2; Necip Taylan, *Anahatlarıyla İslâm Felsefesi Kaynakları Temsilcileri-Tesirleri*, Istanbul 1981, 148; Ömer Faruh, *Târîkh al-Fikr al-Arabî ilâ Ayyâm Ibn Khaldûn*, IV. edition, Beirut: 1983, 379; Hannâ al-Fâkhûrî - Khalîl al-Jarr, *Târîkh al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, 3rd edition, Beirut 1993, I, 224, 228; Antoine Kerem – Kemâl al-Yâzîjî, *A'lâm al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, 4th edition, Beirut 1990, 400-403, 419.

13 Ignaz Goldziher, *Klasik Arap Literatürü*, trans. Azmi Yüksel, Rahmi Er (Ankara: İmaj Yayınları, 1993), 108; Tawhidî, *elMukabesât*, 46; Ömer Ferruh, op. cit., 19, 27.

14 Yuhanna Kumayr. *İkhwân al-Safâ*, 2nd edition (Beirut: 1986), 5.

15 R, IV, 165-166, 188-189; Koç, *İhvân-ı Safâ'nın Eğitim Felsefesi*, 29-30; Tâmir, *Haqîqat İkhwân al-Safâ wa Hullan al-Wafâ*, 84; İsmail Râci Farûkî – Lâmia Farûkî, *İslâm Kültür Atlası*, trans. M. O. Kibaroglu, Z. Kibaroglu, 3rd edition, Istanbul 1999, 334; Çubukçu, *İslâm Düşünürleri*, 33-34; İbrahim Agah, Çubukçu, “İhvân as-Safâ ve Ahlâk Görüşleri”, *AÜİFD*, 12 (1964), 44; Ferruh, *İkhwân al-Safâ*, 29-30; Kumayr, *İkhwân al-Safâ*, 10.

16 Abel, “Basra’da İhvân-el-Safâ Muamması ve Bunun X. Yüzyılda Halifeler Devletinin Sosyal Tarihi Bakımından Manası”, 605.

copy of it exists in the important centers of Islamic world and in most of their libraries. The members of the community of Ikhwan al-Safa experienced the behavior, sect, belief, morality and custom of the people they can have close friendship with and they considered these people’s circumstance.¹⁷ People could attend this community, which maintained its activities secretly, via personal and faith-based contact.¹⁸ They advise their propagators to act among young people because old people were not suitable for movement. Members of the community were categorized in four degrees, which were selected according to their ages.¹⁹

Their community is depicted as communal or fraternal. It was insistently explained to the people accepted for the membership of this community to help and support each other against the relationships with worthless people until they reach their target. The members of this community were selected among young people who are lively, willing and tend to change the minds rather than old people who are against of reform and all types of change.²⁰

III. THEIR SOURCES

It should not be thought that the sources of Ikhwan are historical inscriptions. They mentioned about the universality of their sources, which contain divine inspiration and Nature:

We provided our information from four books. First one is composed of mathematical and natural sciences produced by philosophers and sages. Second one is composed of Torah, Bible, Quran and other pages sent to prophets via seraphs. Third one is books concerning nature in which there is movement of stars, the episodes of zodiac, ideas of the shapes of celestial spheres, plant and animal kingdoms, and the production of various human industries in Platonic point of view. Forth one is comprised of holy

17 İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, *İhvân-ı Safâ Felsefesi ve İslam’da Tekâmül Nazariyesi*, ed. C. İzmirli, Istanbul 1949, 7; İzmirli, “İhvân-ı Safâ Felsefesi”, *Sebilürreşad*, volume: 29, Istanbul 1949, 54.

18 R, IV, 51-52.

19 Ömer Ferruh, “İhvân-ı Safâ”, *İslâm Düşüncesi Tarihi*, trans. İ. Kutluer, ed. M. M. Şerif, Istanbul, 1990, I, 328; İzmirli, “İslâm’da Felsefe Cereyanları (3)”, *Darul-Fünun İlahiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası* (February), 14 (1930), 8-39; M. S. Stern, “New Information About The Authors of The *Epistles of The Sincere Brethren*”, *Islamic Studies*, c. 3, Karachi 1964, 421.

20 R, IV, 52.

books that are just sent to pure people. Merely angels are closed to these spirits that are pure, privileged and noble.²¹

Main doctrines in tractates about Judaism are indicated as the Jewish stories and traditions transferred by Ikhwan.²² Ikhwan advised to his members to read Bible.²³ He most probably utilized from the copies of Ahd-I cedid.²⁴ The main attitude of Ikhwan towards Islam is shaped on the frame of being tolerable. The origins of this toleration are represented in verses transported from Quran.²⁵ Tractates include not only the effects of Greek, Jewish, and Quran, but also the effects of Buddhist, Persia, Zoroaster and Maniheist ideas.²⁶

It can be inferred that while tractates had been forming, Ikhwan applied to various sources and utilized from them. The most dominant point among these sources is the idea and philosophy of Greek. Ikhwan was relied on Ptolemaeus²⁷ in astronomy, Euclid²⁸, in geometry, Hermes²⁹ in magic and astrology, Aristotle³⁰ in logic and physics, Pythagoreans³¹ in arithmetic and music, Plato and new Platonic ideas in metaphysics. The effects of Plato and Porphyry³² from Neo-Platonic is felt strongly. In tractates, there are Babel and Indian elements in astrology area, but at the same time there are stories from Buddhism and Persian and transferences from Torah and Bible. Despite these different sources, the writers of tractates were very successful in synthesizing them.³³

21 Seyyid Hüseyin Nasr, *İslâm Kozmoloji Öğretilerine Giriş*, trans. N. Şişman, İstanbul, 1985, 49-50; R, IV, 20.

22 Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, 72.

23 R, IV, 245.

24 Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, 54, 79; A. L. Tibawi, "Further Studies on Ikhwan as-Safa", *The Islamic Quarterly*, II (1995), 66.

25 Netton, op. cit., 79; R, IV, 121.

26 Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, 89, 94; besides see. Marqet, "Ikhwan al-Safa", *E.I.*, London, 1979, III, 1076; Sheikh, *Islamic Philosophy*, London, 1982, 35.

27 R, I, 49, 138; III, 326; IV, 285, 361, 382.

28 R, I, 106, 49, 440; III, 89, 207.

29 R, I, 138.

30 R, I, 138.

31 R, I, 35-36, 48-49, 208.

32 R, I, 266-269.

33 R, I, 266-269.

IV. THEIR PURPOSES

There are different claims about the aims and targets of Ikhwan al-Safa. According to some researchers, their purpose and target is on one hand to help religion, to advise their coreligionists and to get closer to Allah by understanding all sciences deeply, on the other hand to explore the realities in philosophical and religious disciplines.³⁴

Taha Husayn and other historians thought as him claimed that the purpose of Ikhwan is to change existing political mechanism by developing a new philosophical system.³⁵ According to another researcher, their aim was to spread their views all over the Muslim world³⁶ and to combine all religions as one religion by philosophy of religion. Due to this idea, while they were writing tractates, they used the ideas of all of existing religions in their age. Thence, Ikhwan whose ideas are mostly relied on Islamic point of view, tried to compromise philosophy and religion. However, according to our point of view, because of the reasons emerging from their secret organization, they sometimes commented against Sunni Islamic doctrines. They were followed by law enforcement and this caused them to work secretly.³⁷

Some other researchers who explain the aims of Ikhwan in a different way claimed that their purpose is to construct philosophical religion and spread their ideas to all over Muslim world,³⁸ then, to merge all regions into a single religion. Due to this reason, while writing tractates, they used all religions.³⁹

An ultimate goal of this philosophy group can be suggested as *being liberal and finding a teacher who searches for reality and who does not have just one idea dogmatically in religious topics*.⁴⁰ Ikhwan comfortably mentioned about Christianity and Mandaeans as they talked

34 R, III, 29; İzmirlı, *İhvân-ı Safâ Felsefesi ve İslâm'da Tekâmül Nazariyesi*, 6; Mustafa Çağrı, *İslâm Düşüncesinde Ahlâk* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1989), 54.

35 Taha Hüseyin, "Mukaddime", *Rasâil İkhvânî's-Safâ ve Hillân al-Wafâ*, ed. Khayruddin al-Zirikli, Egypt 1347/1928, I, 7-8; Nasr, *İslâm Kozmoloji Öğretilerine Giriş*, 44; al-Fâhûrî -al-Jarr, *Târîhu'l-Felsefeti'l-Arabiyye*, I, 225, 230; al-Jundi, "Abû'l-Alâ al-Maarri wa Ikhwân al-Safâ", *Majallât al-Majma al-İlmi al-Arabî*, Süleyman Uludag, *İslâm Düşüncesinin Yapısı*, 4th edition, İstanbul 1999, 219.

36 İ. Agah Çubukçu, *İslâm Düşünürleri*, 2nd edition, Ankara 1983, 32.

37 Çubukçu, *ibid*, 35; also see. Tevhidi, *al-İmtâ*, op. cit., 174. Ahmet Zeki Paşa, "Fasl fi Rasâil İkhwân al-Safâ", *Rasâil İkhwân al-Safâ wa Hillân al-Wafâ*, I, 24; Farruh, *Tarikh al-Fikri'l-Arabî*, op. cit., 380; al-Fâkhûrî - al-Jarr, *Târîkh al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, I, 228; Kerem - al-Yâzîjî, *A'lâm*, op. cit., 412.

38 Çubukçu, *İslâm Düşünürleri*, 32.

39 Çubukçu, *ibid*, 35; Kumayr, op. cit., 10.

40 R, IV, 51; Husayn al-Hamdânî, "Rasâil İkhwân as-Safâ in the Literature of the Ismâ'îlî Taiyibi Da'wat", *Der Islam*, XXV, Berlin 1939, 291; Sarıkavak, *Düşünce Tarihinde Urfa ve Harran*, 126; Kerem -al-Yâzîjî, *A'lâm*, op. cit., 401.

about Islam.⁴¹ Their real goal was to develop a spiritual doctrine which does not harm anyone, suits for everyone and takes other religions that are placed in history by the help of Islam and Greek philosophy place.⁴² Saying that Ikhwan al-Safa was connected to one sect would be injustice for them. They were not in favor of the sects their members are included in. All views see and reflect this community as a part from their view.

V. THEIR SCIENTIFIC METHODS

It is seen that Ikhwan had a liberalistic attitude towards other religions. According to their view, differences in religions depend on incidental factors such as race, time and accommodation. Nevertheless, they considered that these factors do not influence universality and unity of reality.⁴³ The school of Ikhwan al-Safa as an uncommon religious satisfaction attempt in Sunni customs⁴⁴ did not adhere to neither one religion nor one philosophical attitude; conversely they used all of the ideas that could be useful regardless of religious, doctrinal, philosophical and sectarian differences.⁴⁵

Awa thinks that the thought of Ikhwan is between syncretism and eclectics.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, some researchers support the view that Ikhwan is not syncretic but it is eclectic because syncretism is to combine different doctrines with non-critical manners. Due to this feature of syncretism, it is supposed as the contrast of eclecticism. Therefore, eclecticism, as an opposite of syncretism, is accepted as the prevention of all kinds of harmonization inclination that is against of natural.⁴⁷ In the thought of Ikhwan, it is seen that there are signs of the preparation of point of view that is available to educate people with true and deep beliefs, of the moral discipline as in new Pythagoreanism and of critical and lightener philosophy.⁴⁸ Therefore, it should be accepted that Ikhwan al-Safa is a system that follows chooser (eclectic) method.⁴⁹

41 Al-Fâkhûrî - al-Jarr, *Târîkh al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, I, 236, 240-241.b.

42 Ferruh, "İhvân-ı Safâ", *İslam Düşüncesi Tarihi*, I, 329; see. R, II, 367.

43 Poonawala, "İkhwân al Safâ", 93.

44 Arthur Jeffery. "Eclecticism in Islam", *The Moslem World*, XII (1922), 238.

45 Ömer Ferruh. *Târîkh al-Fikr al-Arabî ilâ Ayyâm Ibn Khaldûn*, 4th edition (Beirut: 1983), 380.

46 Ahmet Koç. *İhvân-ı Safâ'nın Eğitim Felsefesi* (Istanbul: Marmara Ün. İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1999), 48.

47 Şahin Filiz. *İlk İslâm Hümanistleri -İhvân-ı Safâ Topuluğu ve İnsan Felsefesi* (Konya: 11 Eylül Yayınları, 2002), 53.

48 Abel, ibid, 611.

49 İsmail Yakıt. *İhvân-ı Safâ Felsefesinde Bilgi Problemi* (Istanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1985), 20.

Ikhwan opened their doors for the owners of science and knowledge without the importance of their religion, language and race and without any disturbance because of their religion, language and race.

VI. THEIR INTELLECTUAL EFFECTS

Ikhwan al-Safa's effect on the wide geographical area and their acceptance by huge groups are the proofs of the idea that they obtained very strong idea structure.⁵⁰ In addition to tractates' being effective on divisions such as Bâtıniyye, İsmailiyye, Haşşaşın, Dürzî, it is seen that it was read by Ibn Sina (980-1037), Ghazali and Ibn Heysem (965-1040, it influenced Ibn Arabi and Ibn Haldun (1332-1406) and it was adopted mostly by Ismailis.⁵¹

This community did reforms in history of philosophy; it caused religious philosophy to develop and to enlarge philosophical life in Endulus.⁵² Ikhwan al-Safa community that had a big role on the development of Islamic thought is always a topic for wonder because of the eclectic side of their views and mystery of their identity. Ikhwan was popular in Middle East as Hegel, Kant and Voltaire in West. Their defining themselves as "sleepers in the cage of our father Adam"⁵³ is indicated that they inspired from *Ashab al-Kahf* (People of the Cave) in Qur'an.⁵⁴ Tractates had huge impressions on intellectuals and especially semi intellectuals and after that divisions such as Bâtıniyye, Haşşaşıyye, İsmâiliyye, Dürzî...imposed Ikhwan's ideas. The philosophy of Aristotle was solely for the higher class but the philosophy of Ikhwan al-Safa was turned into the philosophy of society.⁵⁵

50 Atademir, "Tahlil ve Tetkikler Adel Awa: "İhvân al-Safâ'nın Tenkid Kafası", 97.

51 Koç, *İhvân-ı Safâ'nın Eğitim Felsefesi*, 219; Stern, *Studies in Early Ismâ'ilism*, Leiden 1983, 173; Nasr, *İslâm Kozmoloji Öğretilerine Giriş*, 47; Poonawala, "İkhwân al Safâ", 93; Yves Marquet, "İkhwân al-Safâ", *DSB*, New York 1981, XV, 249; Sheikh, *Islamic Philosophy*, 35.

52 İzmirli, *İhvân-ı Safâ Felsefesi ve İslâm'da Tekâmül Nazariyesi*, 9.

53 R, IV, 18. These expressions are designated in the inner cover of the book of Ian Richard Netton that is the most important study done in West concerning Ikhwan See. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, London 1982.

54 Şahin Filiz, "İhvân-ı Safâ Felsefesinde İnsan", *Makâlât*, Konya 1999, 25.

55 Cavit Sunar, *İbn Miskeveyh ve Yunan'da ve İslâm'da Ahlâk Görüşleri*, Ankara 1980, 18.

VII. TRACTATES

It is undeniable fact that tractates as systematic philosophical trials have a pure poetical and eclectic feature.⁵⁶ Abel explains that he obtained mere big work, which is living as an alive literature in some of the Muslim Indian areas, firstly in Calcutta.⁵⁷ It is mentioned about Hermes, Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato frequently but Aristotle is taken into account as more notable. Aristotle is represented as “logician” and besides as the writer of Plotinus’s *Theology* and *Kitabû’l-Tuffah*.⁵⁸

In general, also in this encyclopedia, there is an established eclectic agnosticism⁵⁹ towards natural science and there are political aims beyond this.⁶⁰ Tractates of Ikhwan al-Safa reflects the philosophical life of 10th century as it reflects the political life of that century. At the same time, the effects of philosophical atmosphere in this period are seen obviously in tractates. Islamic mentality of this century was aware of Ancient Greek, Indian wisdom, Arabic and Persian literature and other monotheistic and nonmonotheistic religions and cultures. The Tractates combined these ideas and cultures.⁶¹

Tractates that was formed the first known encyclopedia can be accepted as the summary of the sciences of their times.⁶² Besides, tractates performed the unique feature and affected elite Muslims deeply. It designates their popularity and their effect that there are many copies of their manuscripts.⁶³ Ikhwan as the members of religious-political movement spread tractates to a wide area by hiding their identities and they provided tractates to become works used by people from all parts of society.⁶⁴ On the other hand,

56 Fahri, *İslâm Felsefesi, Kelâmı ve Tasavvufuna Giriş*, 82.

57 Abel, “Basra’da İhvân-el-Safâ Muamması ve Bunun X. Yüzyılda Halifeler Devletinin Sosyal Tarihi Bakımından Manası”, 605.

58 R, IV, 271.

59 R, I, 138, 226; II, 42; IV, 287.

60 T. J. De Boer, *İslâm’da Felsefe Tarihi*, trans. Y. Kutluay, Ankara 1960, 60; Geo Widengren, “The Gnostic Technical Language in *The Rasâ’il Ikhwân Al-Safâ*”, *Actas*, Leiden, 1971, 182-183.

61 R, II, 42; Taha Hüseyin, “Mukaddime”, *Rasâ’il Ikhwân al-Safâ wa Hillân al-Wafa*, I, 10; Abel, “Basra’da İhvân-el-Safâ Muamması ve Bunun X. Yüzyılda Halifeler Devletinin Sosyal Tarihi Bakımından Manası”, 613.

62 Hamid İnyet, *Çağdaş İslâmi Siyasî Düşünce*, trans. Y. Ziya, 3rd edition (Istanbul: 1995), 27; M. Saaed Sheikh, *Islamic Philosophy, A Dictionary of Muslim Philosophy* (Lahore: 1981), 33; Hüseyin Merruh, *al-Nezeât al-Mâddiyye fi’l-felsefeti’l-Arabiyyeti’l-İslâmiyye*, 8th. Edition (Beirut: 1985), II, 434.

63 Poonawala, “Ikhwân al Safâ”, 95; Sheikh, *Islamic Philosophy*, 34.

64 Poonawala, *ibid*, 92; Ahmet Zeki Paşa, “Fasl fi Rasâ’il Ikhwân al-Safâ”, *Rasâ’il Ikhwân al-Safâ wa Hillân al-Wafa*, I, 18; Ferruh, *op. cit.*, 378; MArruh, *Al-Naza’ât al-Mâddiyya fi’l-falsafat al-Arabiyyat al-İslâmiyya*, II, 365; al-Fâhûrî - al-Jarr, *Târîkh al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, I, 225.

this encyclopedia of religious and positive sciences had a deep effect on Islamic idea life from Persia to Spain.⁶⁵

Ikhwan had a rational point of view because mind has a huge place in their philosophy. However, as a result of this, their trial of reconciling science and religion did not take a positive reaction from Islamic countries. Other idea schools, which see religion and faith above mind, had an opponent attitude towards Ikhwan. It was claimed that mind does not have a real measurement and because it is depended upon senses that mislead people, it is always skeptical. Nevertheless, these ideas did not prevent the spread of Ikhwan idea to the various parts of society. The idea of Ikhwan, which is known by many rational philosopher and thinker in latter centuries, was accepted as the fundamental method of rational point of view.⁶⁶

VIII. RELIGION IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION

According to Ikhwan al-Safa, from Adam to Muhammad, the main reason of Allah’s sending many prophets and religions to humanity is to provide both social and psychological evolution of humanity. For Ikhwan al-Safa, Allah designated the basic elements like faith to Allah and Judgment Day as unchanging principles.⁶⁷ All coming new religions change the system, which is related to social life and ideas of the previous period, partly or completely.⁶⁸ Since Ikhwan al-Safa relates social evolution with religious renewals, this question comes to mind that if as they accepted, the last and the most perfect religion is Islam, isn’t it necessary to come new prophet and new religion after the period of social evolution? Ikhwan al-Safa answers these questions as: the social evolution of humanity will continue, at the same time, after Islam, neither new religion nor new prophet will come. Due to the fact that Islam is the most perfect and last religion, it has a capability to satisfy social evolutions in future and the role of prophet will be maintained by imams, curators, scholars and judges as inheritors of Muhammad.⁶⁹

65 Bernard Lewis, *Haşîşiler Ortaçağ İslâm Dünyasında Terörizm ve Siyaset*, trans. A. Aktan (Istanbul: 1995).

66 “el-İhvan-üs-Safâ”, *Encyclopedia of Meydan Larousse*, IV, 191-192.

67 R, IV, 180; Mehmet Bayrakdar, *İslâm’da Evrimci Yaratılış Teorisi*, 2nd edition, Ankara 2001, 70.

68 R, II, 239; III, 487-488; Bayrakdar, *a. g. e.*, 70.

69 R, III, 347; IV, 16, 124-126, 148; Bayrakdar, *a. g. e.*, 70-71; al-Fâkhûrî-al-Jarr, *Târîkh al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, I, 242-244; Ferruh, *Ikhwân al-Safâ*, 119.

IX. THE POSSIBILITY OF RELIGIOUS MORALITY AND THE PROBLEM OF THE ORIGIN OF MORALITY

Ikhwan give a big importance to the notion of morality. They feel themselves as compulsory to mention about morality in all topics.⁷⁰ Ikhwan al-Safa gathered the characteristic features of many nations and put forward the ideal model of person: “a perfect person in respect to ideal and morality should be Persian in responsibility, should be Arabian in faith, should be Iraqi in politeness, should be Jew in guile, should be Christian in behavior, should be Syrian in worship, should be Greek in science, should be Indian in explaining secrets and in the end should be like a Sufi in all spiritual life.”⁷¹

According to Ikhwan, reality is in all religions but people put suspicion in it. The thing should be done is not criticizing the ways of people and telling the shames of people but revising the defects by self-criticizing.⁷² Ikhwan al-Safa combine the elements of the Mu'tazilites and the Shi'ities, rules of Torah, Bible, Mazdaism with Greek philosophy.⁷³ Their combining these elements from different origins indicates their intention to universal sect. It means that they look all religious and humanistic views with solely one measurement and want to collect all humans in a common belief. Tevhidi reaches this result from their views in tractates: Ikhwan al-Safa accepted all religions as equal. They accepted Noah, Ibrahim, Socrates, Plato, Zoroaster, Mohammed, Ali, Jesus and his apostles as their prophets, considered Alawites as casualties of the faith to mind, and because of this accepted them.⁷⁴

Ikhwan was subject to internal principles in all inner and outer things. They combine science with religion and philosophy with the Shari'a.⁷⁵ They became a school whose sayings

are composed of the combination of Greek philosophy, Indian and Christian ideas and other ideas.⁷⁶ Even if Ikhwan al-Safa did not completely reconcile religion and philosophy, they supplied an important progress in this topic. They had Mu'tezili and Shi'ite drift in religion and display an eclecticism sample in philosophy.⁷⁶

They wanted to use religion as *taqiyya* by going out of its aim. The reason of their preferring of Islam and seeing its value above other religions is not derived from their being “Muslim” in all things. The main reason is that Islam came with Shari'a in order to complete the missing of Judaism, Christianity and Magianism.⁷⁷ As a result, Ikhwan al-Safa adhered to principles and essences of Islam, needed to support with Quran and Hadiths. They accepted Islam as a final religion and our prophet as a final prophet.

X. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF IKHWAN AL-SAFA

The ensemble of Ikhwan al-Safa is a religious, philosophical and political community and their relatives were in the position of the members of this religious-political movement.⁷⁸ Ikhwan had a liberal and indulgent attitude towards other religions. They based religious differences on incidental factors like race, settlement and time. Nonetheless, they thought that these religious differences do not influence universality and unity of reality.⁷⁹ In Ikhwan al-Safa, there are the majority of age's tendencies in the area of political wishes like in the area of philosophical ideas.⁸⁰

These intellectuals from Basra were well-educated people developing a syncretistic philosophy that is suitable for a social class in which people who have effective experiences concerning human world and who come from various kinds of origins live together. Additionally, firstly in 10th century princes could live merely by mugging of rich merchants. Hence, one of the symptoms of pluralism was hate for despotic and cruel government. Then

70 Kerem – al-Yâzîjî, *A'lam al-Falsafat*, op. cit., 417.

71 De Boer, *İslâm'da Felsefe Tarihi*, 67-68; R, II, 376; Sheikh, *Islamic Philosophy*, 40; Jeffery, “Eclectism in Islam”, 239; Ferruh, *Tarîkh al-Fikri'l-Arabî*, op. cit., 398; al-Fâkhûrî-al-Jarr, *Târîkh al-Falsafat*, op. cit., I, 233.

72 R, III, 501; Koç, *İhvân-ı Safâ'nın Egitim Felsefesi*, 27; Tibawi, “Further Studies on Ikhwan as-Safâ”, 66.

73 See R, III, 218.

74 Muhammad al-Behiy, *İslâm Düşüncesinin İlahî Yönü*, trans. S. Hizmetli, Ankara 1992, 453. (39th footnote); Kerem – al-Yâzîjî, *A'lam al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, 414; Ferruh, *Ikhwân al-Safâ*, 117; Lootfy Levonian, “The Ikhwân al-Safâ and Christ”, *The Moslem World*, Harford 1945 in *Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Fuad Sezgin, Frankfurt 1999, XXI, 27; al-Hamdani, *Bahtun Tarikhiyyun fi Rasâil Ikhwân al-Safâ wa Aqâid Ismailiyya fiha*, 28; Abdülemir Şemseddin, *al-Falsafat al-Tarbawiyye 'inda Ikhwân al-Safâ min Hilâl Dirâsatihim*, Beirut 1988, 32.

75 Sheikh, *Islamic Philosophy*, 33.

76 Muhammed al-Behiy, *İslâm Düşüncesinin İlahî Yönü*, op. cit., 453. (39th footnote); Kerem – al-Yâzîjî, *A'lam al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, 414; Ferruh, *Ikhwân al-Safâ*, 117; Lootfy Levonian, “The Ikhwân al-Safâ and Christ”, *The Moslem World*, 1945 in *Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Fuad Sezgin, Frankfurt 1999, XXI, 27; el-Hamdani, “Bahtun Tarikhiyyun fi Rasâil Ikhwân al-Safâ wa Aqâid Isma'iliyya fiha”, 28; Abdülemir Shamsuddin, *al-Falsafat al-Tarbawiyya inde Ikhwân al-Safâ min Khilâl Dirâsatihim*, Beirut 1988, 32.

77 Farrukh, *İkhvân-ı Safâ*, 21-22.

78 Ülken, *İslâm Düşüncesi*, 170; al-Fâkhûrî - al-Jarr, *Târîkh al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, I, 228.

79 Poonawala, a. g. m., 93; Marquet, “Ikhwân al-Safâ”, *DSB*, XV, 250; al-Fâkhûrî - al-Jarr, op. cit., I, 234.

80 Abel, *ibid*, 606.

there was a step towards a doctrine that considers decline of empires after their rising as compulsory. This step was by faith and sincerity.⁸¹

XI. THE PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL STRATEGY OF COMMUNITY

Secrecy is the primary essence for Ikhwan. Both in their main centers and in their branch offices, it should be necessary that place must be secret and the entry of foreigners must be impossible. Ikhwan made a lot of recommendation to his members about this issue:

In definite times, our members should come together in a special parliament, it should not be let for the attendance of others (people who are out of Ikhwan), sciences of Ikhwan should be discussed and secrets should be talked in this place.⁸²

Besides, they object to elitist education in their life and thoughts. They believe in using all religions and all philosophical, intellectual movements.⁸³ Ikhwan al-Safa wanted to construct a religious system relying on Quran and the ideas of philosophers. Accusations about the contradictions in their system are probably because of their eclectic ideal structure. Their interpretation of religious laws is most probably changeable due to secrecy of their activities.

The member of Ikhwan saves love of his brothers in community and tries to maintain their well relationships. He prefers his brothers in community to his most close friends, as well. Therefore, spiritual dependence connection is regarded in community. Spiritual connection is the one that gives a feel of one conscious, one idea and *even one spirit in different bodies*.⁸⁴

Each member of Ikhwan al-Safa does not believe that he can rise in faith if he does not

help his brother and does not want everything he wants for himself also for his friend.⁸⁵ The school and life of Ikhwan means indicating mercy and benignity for all things⁸⁶; hence, rich but ignorant brother helps poor but scholar brother.⁸⁷

My brother, - Allah will help you and us by his own spirit- know that we are the group of friends, valuable and pure brothers. We slept in the cage of our father Adam during the time that gives us back the events of time and its disasters. After this spread among various nations, it continued until the time we saw the rise of our town on heaven by the meeting of universal religion's owner with his hometown⁸⁸... My brother, do you want to escape together with us by embarking Noah's ark? Before sky will cover with fume, you will get rid of the flood of fire; then do like this and escape. Be sure about waves and material see, do not be from getting drowned people.⁸⁹

It is enough to know that the sect of Ikhwan al-Safa is composed of Mu'tezili and Shi'ite sects, Christianity, the ideas of Torah, Greek philosophy and philosophy of nature.⁹⁰ The group of Ikhwan was aware of the fact that they live in a chaos. They explain this situation to their members like following: "*Know that doctrines and religious beliefs of people are different from each other's like difference of their bodies*".⁹¹

Ikhwan al-Safa himself believed in searching for peaceful moral principles on the ground of government order by saying that "loyalty is essence for fraternity, fraternity is essence for conversation,, conversation is essence for rehabilitation of social order, rehabilitation of social order is essence for restoration of cities and restoration of cities is essence for the permanence of the world and the continuity of generation."⁹²

In that case, in the political project of Ikhwan, it is undeniable in society that there is an authority for people that will apply the order given by religion and the rules among people. Ikhwan al-Safa who consider this as the reason of emergence of government⁹³ believed in the

85 R, IV, 55, 126-127, 134.

86 See. R, IV, 44.

87 R, IV, 54-55, 167; Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, 103.

88 R, IV, 18; and see. R, I, 324.

89 R, IV, 18; II, 183; *al-Risâlat al-Jâmi'a*, 288.

90 Al-Behiy, *ibid*, 453 (39th footnote); Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, 95.

91 Netton, *op. cit.*, 95; R, III, 401. 92 R, II, 328.

92 Çagrıcı, *İslâm Düşüncesinde Ahlâk*, 53.

93 Ferruh, *Tarikh al-Fikr al-Arabî ilâ Ayyâm Ibn Khaldûn*, 394.

81 Abel, *ibid*, 608-609.

82 R, IV, 41.

83 Al-Fâhûrî - al-Jarr, *ibid*, 234.

84 R, IV, 48, 170; Kerem -al-Yâzîjî, *A'lâm al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, 407-408; Jamâluddîn, *Falsafat al-Tarbiyya inde Ikhwân al-Safâ*, 172.

need of searching for peaceful moral principles on the ground of government order by saying that “fellowship is ground for fraternity, fraternity is ground for love, and love is ground for the rehabilitation of social order”.⁹⁴

XII. SPIRITUAL GOVERNMENT

Ikhwan al-Safa invite people to live in a spiritual government in which science and goods are common.⁹⁵ Their spiritual government is the one that does not have geographical borders and does not refer to a definite region but that is painted by a philosophical spiritual color.⁹⁶

According to Ikhwan, people are composed of various social classes because of the fact that some of them are upper than each other's since birth. Some of the people are children of sovereigns, some of them are children of merchants and some are children of poor people. For Ikhwan, this differentiation in society is the result of a wisdom. Since human is not able to do all jobs of society, difference in social classes makes easy for each class to do a definite job properly. In the notion of the society's salvation, all social classes help each other.⁹⁷

In one section of tractates, the group of Ikhwan while mentioning about spiritual holy cities, tried to defend that they actually descended from the *Hanif* tradition developing after the coming of the final prophet and philosophical *perennis*:

My brothers! Know that we are the community of Ikhwan al-Safa, we are generous, pure and sincere people. We slept in the cage of our father Adam during the time that gives us back the events of time and its disasters. . After this spread among various nations, it continued until the time we saw the rise of our town on heaven by the meeting of universal religion's owner with his hometown...⁹⁸

According to Ikhwan, the happiest people are the ones who comprehend the realities of property, who believe in doomsday, who know the laws of religion, who realize the works of

hereafter, who are informed of the states of the other world, who have an intellectual, wise and perfect teacher.⁹⁹

The expressions of Ikhwan on this issue are very plain: “know that the way is long, devils wait like bandits in the place of observation. Therefore, think and draw a lesson. The life you will live alone can even be a troublesome life. You can have a comfortable life merely by depending on Shari'a and people's helping each other. Hence, you should think and learn that you need for the help of your loyal brothers whose intercessions assist you to escape from hell and you need their cooperation that supply you entering paradise beyond all questions and raising the top of heaven.¹⁰⁰

As a result, according to Ikhwan, the highest happiness is the happiness of eternity.¹⁰¹

XIII. THE UNITY OF RELIGIONS AND SECTS

Ikhwan designate a definite attitude towards all religions, sects and divisions.¹⁰² Ikhwan had a liberalistic attitude towards other religions. According to their view, differences in religions depend on incidental factors such as race, time and accommodation. Nevertheless, they considered that these factors do not influence universality and unity of reality.¹⁰³

Even if Ikhwan commemorated the names of the religions of dualists, Christianity, Jewishness, naturists, materialists, Mazdean, Sabi, polytheists, Hinduism and the names of the sects depended on them Samirî, Gıyabî, Câlutî, Nasturî, Yakubî, Malkanî, Manî, Hürremî, Mazdekî, Disânî, Behramî, Şemsî, Hâricî, Râfizî, Nâsibî, Kaderîye, Cehmîye, Mu'tezilî, Sünnî ve Cebriye' and even if Ikhwan sometimes quoted from their expressions, they definitely declared that they are not members of these movements and religions.¹⁰⁴ In addition, they define themselves like following: “... We are far from all of them. Our sect is one, our belief is

99 R, IV, 49-50.

100 R, II, 139-140; see, R, III, 308, 375.

101 R, III, 516; Jamâluddîn, *Falsafat al-Tarbiyya 'inda Ikhwân al-Safâ*, 134, 147.

102 R, III, 516; Jamâluddîn, *Falsafat al-Tarbiyya 'inda Ikhwân al-Safâ*, 134, 147.

103 Poonawala, “Ikhwân al Safâ”, 93; Ferruh, *Ikhwân al-Safâ*, 124-125.

104 R, I, 217; II, 367; III, 371-372.

94 Şahin, “İlk İslâm Hümanistleri –İhvân-ı Safâ Topluluğu ve İnsan Felsefesi”, 70.

95 R, IV, 18, 171-172; Ferruh, *Tarîkh al-Fikr al-Arabî ilâ Ayyâm Ibn Khaldûn*, 380.

96 *Al-Risâlat al-Jâmia*, 294-295; Ferruh, op. cit., 31; Jamâluddîn, *Falsafat al-Tarbiyya 'inda Ikhwân al-Safâ*, 232.

97 Ferruh, *Tarîkh al-Fikr al-Arabî ilâ Ayyâm Ibn Khaldûn*, 394.

98 R, IV, 18; Nasr, *İslâm Kozmoloji Öğretilerine Giriş*, 43-44.

one, all of us are Muslims, we are not polytheist, hypocrite, sinner, murtap, sceptic, hesitant and perverter. We know our Allah, our giver of livelihood, our creator, the one who provides us to live and die".¹⁰⁵

According to a rumor, in 390th year of hijra, in Bagdad, a visitor from Spain can see "the existence of some meetings in which from all sects, Muslim, Orthodox, Mu'tezile, Persian, or all kind of heathens, Jewish and Christian discuss among themselves liberally. It could be said that this is not anything different from the meetings of Ikhwan which are like "religion's parliament."¹⁰⁶

Ikhwan preferring the ideas suitable for their rational thoughts from all religions and sects¹⁰⁷ reject constraints and prohibitions of ideas which are believed by mind owners.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, they separate their ideal systems to parts by taking Islam religion as a centre: non-Islamic systems, Islamic sects. They accept schools supporting broken beliefs as non-Islamic ideas.¹⁰⁹

Ikhwan al-Safa combine the elements of Mu'tezile and Shi'a sects, rules of Torah, Bible, Mazdaism with Greek philosophy. Their combining these elements from different origins indicates their intention to universal sect. It means that they look all religious and humanistic views with solely one measurement and want to collect all humans in a common belief. Tawhidi reaches this result from their views in tractates: Ikhwan al-Safa accepted all religions as equal. They accepted Noah, Ibrahim, Socrates, Plato, Zoroaster, Mohammed, Ali, Jesus and his apostles as their prophets, considered Alawites as casualties of the faith to mind, and because of this accepted them.¹¹⁰

Ikhwan al-Safa that follow an eclectic method while realizing their aims use all kind of religious, philosophical and scientific knowledge when it is necessary. The attitude and dialogue of Ikhwan towards religious groups have a special value for an idea historian. These encyclopedists thought that religious differences are arrived from incidental factors as race, time and accommodation and even individual character factors.¹¹¹ However, willingly or

105 R, II, 367.

106 Atademir, "Tahlil ve Tetkikler"; Adel Awa: "İhvan al-Safâ'nın Tenkid Kafası", 98.

107 Emin, Zuhru'l-İslâm, I, 151; Jamâluddîn, op. cit., 115.

108 Ferruh, *Ikhvân al-Safâ*, 124.

109 R, II, 367; Ferruh, ibid, 124-127; Davidson, "The Brothers of Sincerity", 442.

110 R, I, 363; IV, 34-35, 167; al-Bahiy, İslâm Düşüncesinin İlahî Yönü, 453 (39th footnote); Emin, *Zuhru'l-İslâm*, I, 155; Ferruh, op. cit., 117; Kerem – al-Yâzîjî, *A'lam al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, 420-421; Şemseddin, *al-Felsefet al-Tarbawiyya inde Ikhvân al-Safâ min Hilâl Dirâsatihim*, 70; Jamâluddîn, *Falsafat al-Tarbiyya inde Ikhvân al-Safâ*, 20, 105.

111 See. R, IV, 28, 53, 73, 74, 117; III, 72.

unwillingly they did not interfere with the universality and unity of reality that is not destroyed by these kinds of features and differences.¹¹²

The members of Ikhwan al-Safa do not denigrate anybody and do not impose any prejudgment for any religion by relying on their doctrines combining all religions and sciences. They were talking with universal intelligence language by going up to a higher ideal level from narrow religious and sectarian point of view. Although their tractates imply that they tend to Shi'ism, they were liberal in their views. Besides, nevertheless, they were not satisfied with any religion or sect in their time, they suggest their followers to choose a religion because according to them, even the worst religion is better than atheism. They did not have any suspicion concerning the idea that Islam is the best among the existent religious and Muhammad is the last and the most perfect of prophets.¹¹³

According to Ikhwan, controversies between religions and sects, between prophets and philosophers are emerged because of the mentalities of societies about time and accommodation.¹¹⁴ Although Ikhwan, who were mentioning about the benefits of the variety of sects and ideas in the controversy of scholars¹¹⁵ and were working for combining all religions and sciences,¹¹⁶ tend to Mu'tezile and Shi'ism in religion, they have an eclectic structure in philosophy.¹¹⁷

It is understood that while they were fulfilling the attempt of religious satisfaction, which is not usual in Sunni tradition,¹¹⁸ they also rejected elitist inclination in their life and ideas. In this context, they believe in utilizing from all religions, philosophical and ideal movements.¹¹⁹ Ikhwan, who see adaptation as a key concept in their methodology, adapted ideas from other religions and philosophical doctrines for their aims. The contradictions in tractates indicate that central features of Medieval Middle East ideas and all other foreign effects and notions creating the pattern of tractates do not integrate successfully.¹²⁰ Ikhwan, who did not content

112 110 See. R, I, 49, 268-269, 440; III, 89, 94, 332, 424, 512; IV, 19, 25, 34-36, 42, 58, 117 167, 175; *al-Risâlat al-Jâmia*, 135, 132; Uysal, *İhvân-ı Safâ Felsefesinde Tanrı ve Alem*, 25; Uysal "İhvân-ı Safâ" in the *DIA*, 2; Koç, *İhvân-ı Safâ'nın Egitim Felsefesi*, 46; İzmirli, "İslâm'da Felsefe Cereyanları (3)", 3; Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, 46-48; Ferruh, *Tarikh al-Fikri'l-Arabi*, op. cit., IV, 390-391; Fuad, "Takdim ve Dirâsah", 16-17.

113 R, IV, 167; C. A. Kadir, "İhvân-ı Safâ", *İslâm'da Bilgi ve Felsefe*, ed. M. Armagan (İstanbul: 1997), 111-112; Kazım Sarıkavak, *Düşünce Tarihinde Urfa ve Harran*, Ankara 1997, 129-130.

114 Al-Fâkhûrî – al-Jarr, op. cit., 246.

115 R, III, 490.

116 Yakıt - Durak, *İslâm'da Bilim Tarihi*, 153; Hicâb, *al-Falsafat al-Siyasiyya 'inda Ikhvân al-Safâ*, 219.

117 Sheikh, *Islamic Philosophy*, 33.

118 Jeffery, "Eclecticism in Islam", 238.

119 Al-Fâkhûrî – al-Jarr, op. cit., I, 234.

120 Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, 106-107; Ferruh, *Ikhvân al-Safâ*, 43.

with the existing religions, suggest everyone to choose one of them. According to their point of view, a defective religion is better than atheism because in a religion there is a notion of reality. Everybody should be free in choosing the religion he wants. Nonetheless, he should avoid from contradictory ideas and defective beliefs. Scholar person cannot believe in two opposite religions.¹²¹ According to Ikhwan al-Safa, who have a liberal attitude towards the freedom of faith and speech, there should not be enforcement in religion. They supported the idea that constraint is the job of laws by the guide of the principle “there is no enforcement in religion”.

The verification of religion by heart is because of this. Adversely, the laws of religion are social arrangements that should be obligatorily obeyed in order to maintain security and prosperity of society.¹²² When the above sayings are taken into an account, it can be said that according to Ikhwan, if religion is a sincere problem and the rest of it depends on people’s conceiving themselves, it is not the issue to mention about enforcement in religion.¹²³

Ikhwan had a liberalistic attitude towards other religions. According to their view, differences in religions depend on incidental factors such as race, time and accommodation. Nevertheless, they considered that these factors do not influence universality and unity of reality.¹²⁴ Ikhwan as talking about Islam, mentioned about Christianity and other religions’ ideas, as well.¹²⁵ Therefore, the idea of Ikhwan could be seen as connected to world’s belief environment rather the school of religious beliefs that has one idea in the centre of Islam and the series of lines spreading light towards outside. Ikhwan have just one focus they infer from revelation and support with a various beliefs they have a relationship. Nevertheless, this focus is the universal concept of purity not of Islam.¹²⁶

121 Ferruh, op. cit., İslam Düşüncesi Tarihi, I, 346.

122 R, IV, 460; Ferruh, op. cit., I, 346-347; Ferruh, *Tarikh al-Fikr al-Arabi ilâ Ayyâm Ibn Khaldun*, 392.

123 R, IV, 460; Kadir, “İhvân-ı Safâ”, 112; see, Ian Richard Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, 49; Ferruh, *Tarikhü’l-Fikri’l-Arabi ilâ Eyyâm-i İbn-i Haldûn*, 390; Ferruh, *İhvânü’s- Safâ*, 187-196.

124 Poonawala, “Ikhwân al Safâ”, 93; Marquet, “Ikhwân al-Safâ”, *DSB*, XV, 250; al-Fâkhûrî – al-Jarr, *Târîhu’lFelsefeti’l-Arabiyye*, 3rd edition, Beirut 1993, I, 234.

125 Al-Fâkhûrî – al-Jarr, *Târîkh al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, I, 236.

126 Ibid.

XIV. SOCIAL OPINION

According to Ikhwan, a person cannot live alone. The life he will live alone can even be a troublesome life because he needs various arts in order to go on a good life. It is impossible to reach this alone because life is short but arts are various. Therefore, they make obligatory for many people to deal with an art, for some people to deal with trade, for some of them to deal with construction of cities, with politics, with science and teaching and for some of them to deal with fulfilling society’s needs. The job sharing between father, mother and children in a home is the same, as well. This job sharing among all people is to encourage people to work and to produce arts. By this way, each person can remunerate.¹²⁷

Their community is described as communal or fraternal. It is explained to people accepted for the membership of this group that they should help and support each other until they reach their objectives. The members of this community were selected among young people who are lively, willing and tend to change the minds rather than old people who are against of reform and all types of change.¹²⁸

According to Ikhwan, people are composed of various social classes because of the fact that some of them are upper than each other since birth. Some of the people are children of sovereigns, some of them are children of merchants and some are children of poor people. For Ikhwan, this differentiation in society is the result of wisdom. Since human is not able to do all jobs of society, difference in social classes makes easy for each class to do a definite job properly. In the notion of the society’s salvation, all social classes help each other.¹²⁹

CONCLUSION

In Ikhwan al-Safa community emerging in the last period of Abbasid Government when religious, philosophical and political rivalry was widespread, there is a scene that it aimed to reform intellectual side of Islamic society by putting forward unity and solidarity, fraternity, assistance and cohesiveness. Tractates produced by Ikhwan al-Safa transfer the philosophical

127 R, I, 99-100; II, 140-141; III, 308, 375; Şahin Filiz, “İhvân-ı Safâ Felsefesinde İnsan Sorunu”, *Makâlât*, Konya 1999, 57; Merruh, *al-Nazaâtu’l-Mâddiyye fi’l-Falsafati’l-Arabiyyat al-İslâmiyya*, II, 378; al-Fâkhûrî – al-Jarr, *Târîkh al-Falsafat al-Arabiyya*, I, 279; Ferruh, *İhvânü’s- Safâ*, 134; Jamâluddîn, op. cit., 233-234.

128 R, IV, 52.

129 Ferruh, *Tarikh al-Fikr al-Arabi ilâ Ayyâm Ibn Khaldun*, 394.

life although it is not very comprehensive as they reflect the general political atmosphere of 10th century. The reflection of philosophical atmosphere of that period is seen obviously in tractates. Islamic mentality of this century was aware of Ancient Greek, Indian wisdom, Arabic and Persian literature and other monotheistic and non-monotheistic religions and cultures. The Tractates combined these ideas and cultures.

The effect of Ikhwan al-Safa went beyond the time and place in which they produced their works. Their doctrines became a guide directing cosmological sciences during the history of Islam by being kneaded in the general perspective and spirit of Islam. Thus, this encyclopedia of religious and positive sciences had a deep effect on the Islamic idea life from Persia to Spain.

When tractates are evaluated from a scientific perspective, they present the picture of mental life especially ideal side of 10th century. They are the first book gathering all subdisciplines. At the same time, tractates are the first attempt made for education by scientific and philosophical methods. Ikhwan designates that their aim is to struggle with bigotry, to clean religious idea, which is polluted by superstitions and wrong information, with philosophy, to make philosophy dominant over their sciences, and to create an intellectuals class and morality that will reform community. In addition to this, it is possible to claim that their aim is to construct a religion with philosophical ground and spread it to all parts of Islamic society; then, to integrate all religions under one religion via philosophy of religion. Thus, they utilized from the views of all religions while writing tractates.

While evaluating the community of Ikhwan al-Safa, it is a big injustice for them to accept as they engage in a definite sect. Their place is not a sect the researchers who study for them are connected to, as well. All political or religious groups, sects and schools claim that Ikhwan al-Safa are from their groups and so Ikhwan al-Safa are the supporters and propagandists of their ways. Therefore, all wings see and show that Ikhwan al-Safa are their parts. In real, Ikhwan is the delegate of an organization over and above all sects. While they are saying that knowledge starts with senses, they close to the ideas of naturists but while designating that senses are deceptive, they direct to skepticism. While saying that, reality can be obtained solely by cleaning spirit, they think like mystics. However, they see mysticism not as a system but as a mental vehicle for reaching supreme knowledge.

Even though it is seen in Ikhwan's program that there is domination of philosophy of religion, they tried to reconcile intelligence and transferred sayings, wisdom and inspiration, and, philosophy and religion in a spiritual atmosphere. In this frame, Ikhwan was subject to internal principles in all inner and outer things. . They combine science with religion and

philosophy with the Shari'a. They became a school whose sayings are composed of the mix of Greek philosophy, Indian and Christian ideas and other ideas. Although they had Mu'tezili and Shi'ite drift in religion, they displayed an eclecticism sample in philosophy. Ikhwan as talking about Islam, mentioned about Christianity and other religions' ideas, as well. Therefore, the idea of Ikhwan could be seen as connected to world's belief environment rather the school of religious beliefs that has one idea in the centre of Islam and the series of lines spreading light towards outside. Ikhwan have just one focus they infer from revelation and support with a various beliefs they have a relationship. Nevertheless, this focus is the universal concept of purity not of Islam.

Finally, we can say that Ikhwan achieved a model for governments and societies after them in Asia by its organization structure it transfers theoretical area to practical. Nevertheless, unfortunately, Islamic geography has still troubles in the area of democratic attempts that are pluralist, liberal, law and justice grounded and highlighting individuals/people. Besides, insistent high-pitched voicing of demands of societies for freedom and justice in Asia and other regions shows the signs of "world" described by Ikhwan al-Safa and shows that new doors will open for shaping the order/system.