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Soul Alchemy and Intellectual Transmutation: An Analysis of Hylomorphism in *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Volume II, First Epistle

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Abstract

This study explores the radical expansion of the concept of hylomorphism (matter and form) in the philosophical thought of Ikhwan al-Shafa beyond the conventional boundaries of material physics. Through a philosophical-hermeneutical analysis of *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Volume II, First Epistle, the study demonstrates that the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' employ the principles of *Hayūlā* (matter) and *Ṣūrah* (form) as a theosophical methodology for explaining the substantial transformation of the human being. By positioning the soul as a potential matter (*hayūlā*) and knowledge as an actualizing form (*ṣūrah*), the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' formulate a distinctive conception of "soul alchemy." The findings reveal that the acquisition of knowledge is not merely a cognitive activity but rather a process of "intellectual transmutation" that ontologically transforms the quality of the soul from a lower state, bound to material existence, into a noble spiritual substance. This transformation is understood as a gradual actualization of the soul's latent capacities through the reception of intelligible forms. The study further argues that such a framework provides a novel perspective within Islamic theosophy concerning the relationship between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge as an inseparable hylomorphic unity in the spiritual ascent toward the Universal Soul. Consequently, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' offer a comprehensive metaphysical model in which epistemology, ontology, and spiritual development converge within a single process of existential perfection.

Keywords: *Hayūlā*, *Ṣūrah*; Hylomorphism; Ikhwan al-Shafa; Intellectual Transmutation; Soul Alchemy

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INTRODUCTION

The study of the thought of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* occupies a significant position within the discourse of Islamic theosophy, as it represents one of the most ambitious intellectual projects aimed at harmonizing human reason with divine revelation. This orientation is evident both in their monumental work, *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* wa Khullān al-Wafā', and in numerous scholarly studies that have examined their intellectual legacy (Humaidi, 2018; Sahib et al., 2025). The significance of this intellectual fraternity lies in its ability to conceive science not as a secular and autonomous enterprise, but rather as an epistemological ladder leading toward the knowledge of God (maʿrifat Allāh). Amid the increasing fragmentation of modern knowledge, the integrative vision of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* offers a model of "sacred science" in which every observation of natural phenomena serves as a process of spiritual purification and preparation for post-worldly existence.

Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ occupy a uniquely enigmatic position in the history of Islamic theosophy. This tenth-century intellectual fraternity, centered in Basra, developed a grand synthesis that integrated Aristotelian logic, Neoplatonic cosmology, and Hermetic spiritual traditions (S. H. [cite: 1 Nasr 28, 40, 42], 1993; Netton, 1991). Through their magnum opus, the *Rasāʾil*, they constructed a comprehensive body of knowledge oriented toward a soteriological goal: the salvation of the soul through the perfection of the intellect. The scope of their epistles extends far beyond a mere description of the physical universe. Rather, they seek to guide the human soul in its spiritual ascent from the lower realm of matter toward the exalted realm of spirit (Corbin, 1993). Such an approach presupposes that the cosmos itself constitutes a vast book whose signs must be interpreted theosophically so that the soul may free itself from the chains of material attachment.

Although the soteriological vision of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* has long been recognized as a project of spiritual purification and salvation through the integration of knowledge, ethics, and spirituality (Halilovic, 2016; Saleh, 1998), an epistemological problem emerges when the doctrine of hylomorphism the relationship between *hayūlā* (matter) and *ṣūrah* (form) is interpreted solely within the framework of Peripatetic physics. A reductionist tendency persists in many studies that separate the epistles concerning natural philosophy from the broader theosophical and alchemical aims of the fraternity. Yet the deployment of the concepts of matter and form in these epistles suggests the existence of a process of "intellectual transmutation" that transcends the domain of physical objects. The central question, therefore, concerns how a theory that ostensibly deals with material elements can function simultaneously as a methodology for the transformation of the soul. The failure to integrate physical hylomorphism into the metaphysical context of the soul risks obscuring the essential notion of "soul alchemy" that lies at the heart of their theosophical project (Darraz, 2014; Wan Abdullah, 1995).

Both classical and contemporary scholarship have offered critical examinations of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*'s thought. Seyyed Hossein Nasr has highlighted their cosmology as a form of sacred science that establishes a hierarchical correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm, ultimately oriented toward human spiritual perfection (S. H. Nasr, 1993, 2010). Ian Richard Netton has explored the influence of Neoplatonism on their emanationist system, particularly their conception of the flow of existence from God through the Universal Intellect and Universal Soul to the material world (Netton, 1991). Henry Corbin, meanwhile, has identified elements of Islamic esotericism, imamology, and Hermetic traditions that shape the symbolic structure and spiritual hermeneutics of the *Rasāʾil* (Corbin, 1993). Traditionally, the theory of hylomorphism the relationship between *hayūlā* and *ṣūrah* has been understood primarily as a physical and cosmological framework for explaining change within the natural world, in accordance with the Peripatetic tradition. Such interpretations are reflected in studies emphasizing the cosmological and philosophical dimensions of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, particularly their adaptation of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic legacies (Baffioni, 2012; de Callataÿ, 2005; Fakhry, 2004). Nevertheless, several contemporary scholars argue that the concepts of matter and form in the *Rasāʾil* extend beyond natural philosophy and function as symbols of the soul's perfection and humanity's ontological ascent toward the intelligible realm. From this perspective, the hylomorphism of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* must be interpreted within a theosophical framework that integrally connects cosmology, epistemology, and soteriology (Baffioni, 2025; El-Bizri, 2013; Halilovic, 2016).

Despite the substantial body of research devoted to the cosmology and epistemology of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, a significant analytical gap remains concerning the direct relationship between the hylomorphic structure of matter and form (*hayūlā–ṣūrah*) and the theosophical structure of soul and knowledge. Previous studies have primarily focused on emanationist cosmology, universal metaphysics, the macrocosm–microcosm relationship, and hierarchical structures of being within the *Rasāʾil*, while paying

comparatively little attention to hylomorphism as a mechanism of spiritual transformation (Baffioni, 2012; Darraz, 2014; Saleh, 1998). Rarely has hylomorphism been examined not merely as a theory of physical reality but as a methodology of spiritual transmutation. Even studies discussing causality, matter, form, and ontological structures within *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā"*s philosophy generally situate these concepts within the domains of cosmology and natural metaphysics rather than viewing them as processes of soul perfection through the acquisition of knowledge and spiritual purification (Darraz, 2014; Wan Abdullah, 1995). Yet numerous indications throughout the *Rasā'il* suggest that the material order is consistently presented as a reflection of a higher spiritual order, thereby allowing matter and form to be interpreted symbolically as stages in the soul's journey from potentiality to intellectual actuality and nearness to God. Such an interpretation is implicitly reflected in discussions concerning the hierarchy of knowledge leading to divine vision, the correspondence between material and spiritual structures, and the integration of knowledge, ethics, and salvation developed by *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (Baffioni, 1998; Halilovic, 2016). Consequently, there is a pressing need to reexamine the First Epistle of Volume Two as a text of "soul alchemy," wherein the concepts of matter and form serve not only to explain physical change but also to illuminate the esoteric process through which the human being progresses from potentiality toward intellectual perfection and divine gnosis.

The principal problem addressed in this study concerns the tendency to separate natural science (physics) from the science of the soul (spiritual psychology) in interpretations of the *Rasā'il*. In the Epistle on Matter and Form, however, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* undertake a radical expansion of the concept of hylomorphism. If physical hylomorphism explains how iron becomes a sword, then within their theosophical framework the same principle explains a non-physical phenomenon: how a soul submerged in the "ocean of matter" undergoes substantial transformation upon receiving the "form" of knowledge and gnosis.

Building on the mapping of previous scholarship outlined above, the novelty of this study lies first in the relocation of hylomorphism from the domain of natural philosophy into the domain of the science of the soul. The First Epistle of Volume Two is read here not as a technical exposition on physical bodies but as an operative text of soul alchemy, since the studies of Nasr (Nasr, 1993, 2010), Netton (Netton, 1991), Corbin (Corbin, 1993), and Baffioni (Baffioni, 2012, 2025), while establishing the cosmological, Neoplatonic, and esoteric horizons of the *Rasā'il*, still position the epistle on matter and form as a preliminary discussion belonging to physics rather than as a working methodology for the transformation of the soul. Following the internal logic of the epistle itself, this study shows that the ladder ascending from artificial matter (*al-hayūlā al-ṣināʿiyyah*) toward First Matter (*al-hayūlā al-Ūlā*) does not terminate at the boundary of the corporeal world, but continues, without any break in principle, into the soul that receives the forms of knowledge. From that reading follows the second point of novelty, namely the formulation of "intellectual transmutation" as an analytical concept and not as an illustrative figure of speech, since alchemical vocabulary in the *Rasā'il* designates a real ontological mechanism in which knowledge operates as *ṣūrah* that alters the substantial quality of the soul in the same manner that form alters the substantial quality of matter. Knowledge is therefore assessed not only by the truth of its propositional content, but also by the degree of transformation it produces in the knowing subject, and it is precisely this criterion that has no genuine equivalent in the modern epistemological vocabulary commonly applied to the *Rasā'il*.

The remaining novelty of this study concerns its epistemological implication together with the methodological choice that sustains it. Most studies of the epistemology of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* continue to describe the act of knowing along the familiar line of a subject apprehending an object that stands outside it, whereas reading the epistle

hylomorphically dissolves that separation, because the soul as *hayūlā* and knowledge as *ṣūrah* do not constitute two entities brought into contact but rather one composite being, so that a change in what is known is at the same time a change in the one who knows. It is important to underline that this claim is advanced not as a mystical assertion concerning union with the divine, but as a structural consequence of the theory of matter and form that the fraternity themselves employ, and it is this structural character that renders it accountable philosophically and not merely devotionally. A claim of such a kind demands a method appropriate to it, and for that reason this study does not present a thematic survey across the fifty-two epistles, as has been the tendency of much existing scholarship, but confines its analysis to a single epistle and reads it philosophically and hermeneutically from beginning to end, so that the movement of the argument from artificial matter to First Matter, and thereafter to the soul, may be traced within the text itself and not reconstructed from secondary syntheses, a mode of close textual work that remains rare in Indonesian scholarship on the *Rasā'il*. What this study seeks to yield is a model of soul alchemy in which epistemology functions not as the antechamber of spiritual ascent but as its very engine, and such a model, the authors suggest, may be borrowed to reread the problem of the fragmentation of knowledge with which this introduction began, namely the condition in which the pursuit of knowledge is no longer accompanied by any transformation in the one who pursues it.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design based on library research, focusing on the conceptual analysis of philosophical and theosophical texts within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Library research was selected because the object of investigation consists of ideas, concepts, and structures of thought embedded in written works, making textual interpretation the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Bakker & Zubair, 1990; Zed, 2014). The primary source of this study is *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* wa Khullān al-Wafā', particularly Volume II, First Epistle, which discusses matter (*hayūlā*), form (*ṣūrah*), motion, time, and space. Secondary sources include a wide range of scholarly works addressing the philosophy, cosmology, metaphysics, and theosophy of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, including studies by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1993), Ian Richard Netton (1991), Carmela Baffioni (2012), Godefroid de Callataÿ (2005), as well as relevant journal articles concerning hylomorphism and spiritual transformation within the tradition of Islamic philosophy.

The primary analytical framework employed in this research is philosophical hermeneutics, which seeks to uncover the deeper meanings underlying the linguistic structures and symbolic expressions utilized by *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. Hermeneutics enables texts to be interpreted not merely at the literal level but also at conceptual, metaphysical, and esoteric levels by taking into account the philosophical, religious, and intellectual contexts that shaped their production (Gadamer, 2006). This approach is particularly relevant because concepts such as *hayūlā*, *ṣūrah*, motion, and change in the *Rasā'il* frequently function as symbols of metaphysical and spiritual realities rather than as references solely to physical phenomena. Accordingly, this study reinterprets the hylomorphic theory of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* within a theosophical framework that connects the structure of the cosmos with the process of human spiritual perfection.

In addition to philosophical hermeneutics, this study employs a transmutational analogy approach as an analytical instrument for tracing the relationship between material transformation in the physical world and the transformation of the soul within the spiritual realm. This approach is grounded in the principle of correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm, a fundamental feature of the cosmological system developed by *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (S. H. Nasr, 1993; Netton, 1991). Through this perspective,

matter is understood as potentiality that receives form, while the soul is conceived as a substance that receives knowledge as the form of its perfection. Consequently, the hylomorphic structure applied to natural objects is analyzed as a philosophical model that explains the process of intellectual actualization and the spiritual ascent of human beings toward existential perfection.

Data analysis was conducted through a sequence of critical reading, conceptual categorization, philosophical interpretation, and theoretical synthesis. The initial stage focused on identifying key concepts related to *hayūlā* and *ṣūrah* within the primary text, followed by the reconstruction of the ontological hierarchy that explains the layered relationship among matter, form, soul, and intellect. Subsequently, the various statements of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* concerning the soul, knowledge, and human perfection were examined in order to identify analogical patterns linking material transformation with spiritual transformation. The findings derived from these analytical stages were then synthesized to formulate the concept of "intellectual transmutation," understood as the process through which the soul moves from a state of potentiality toward a higher actuality of knowledge and intellectual perfection. Through this methodological procedure, the study seeks to demonstrate that the theory of hylomorphism in the *Rasā'il* functions not merely as a cosmological explanation of the physical universe but also as a theosophical framework for understanding the purification of the soul and the attainment of divine gnosis (*maʿrifah ilāhiyyah*).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Result

Hylomorphism: Definition and Ontological Framework

The concept of hylomorphism derives from two Greek terms: *hylē* (ὕλη), meaning matter, and *morphē* (μορφή), meaning form. In Aristotelian philosophy, every physical entity is constituted by two inseparable ontological principles: matter as the potential substratum and form as the principle of actualization that confers a specific identity upon a thing. Consequently, no entity can exist solely as pure matter or pure form; rather, every concrete being exists as a synthesis of both. Matter provides the possibility or potentiality of existence, whereas form realizes that potentiality and brings it into actuality (Adamson, 2005; Marmura, 1984).

For Aristotle, the processes of change and transformation occurring throughout the natural world can be explained through the dynamic relationship between matter and form. When an object undergoes transformation, its underlying matter remains, while its form changes. A piece of wood fashioned into a table, for example, retains its material substance as wood while acquiring a new form that grants it a distinct identity and function. Form, therefore, serves as the organizing principle that imparts order, purpose, and intelligibility to matter, which in itself remains passive and indeterminate (Shields, 2014).

Within this framework, Aristotle distinguishes between two levels of matter. The first is materia prima (*hylē prōtē*), or Prime Matter, which exists as pure potentiality devoid of any determinate characteristics. Such matter cannot be encountered empirically because it never exists independently of form. The second is materia secunda (*hylē* deutera), or Secondary Matter, which has already received a particular form and subsequently serves as the substrate for further forms. Wood, for instance, functions as secondary matter for a table; while it already possesses a determinate form as a natural substance, it remains capable of receiving additional forms, becoming a table, chair, cabinet, or other manufactured object (Lagerlund, 2011).

This distinction became particularly significant in the development of Islamic philosophical ontology. Thinkers such as *al-Fārābī*, *Ibn Sīnā*, and the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*

accepted the fundamental structure of Aristotelian hylomorphism while integrating it with Neoplatonic cosmology and Islamic doctrines of creation. As a result, matter was no longer understood merely as a physical principle but also as a stage within the process of cosmic emanation linking the material world to higher spiritual realities. Within this expanded metaphysical framework, hylomorphism evolved beyond a theory of natural substances and became an essential explanatory model for understanding the hierarchical structure of existence, the gradation of being, and the relationship between the corporeal and the spiritual realms (Adamson, 2016; Wisnovsky, 2003).

The Hylomorphism of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*: From Ontology to Cosmic Alchemy

Although *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* adopted the fundamental framework of Aristotelian hylomorphism, they did not remain confined to the simple dichotomy of matter and form. In the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, matter is situated within a hierarchical cosmological structure that dynamically moves toward perfection. Matter is understood as the receptacle of forms emanating from the Divine through the Universal Intellect (*al-ʿAql al-Kullī*) and the Universal Soul (al-Nafs al-Kulliyyah). Consequently, the relationship between matter and form serves not only to explain physical change but also to illuminate the existential perfection of all beings (Baffioni, 2012; Netton, 1991).

From this perspective, the hylomorphism of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* possesses a dimension that may appropriately be described as a form of "cosmic alchemy." Whereas traditional alchemy sought to transform base metals into noble ones, the cosmology of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* portrays matter as undergoing successive transformations toward increasingly perfect forms. This process reflects both an ontological journey from potentiality to actuality and a spiritual ascent from the material world toward intellectual and divine realities. Accordingly, the concept of matter in *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* is not merely a metaphysical theory but also a model for understanding the evolution of the cosmos and the perfection of the human soul (El-Bizri, 2013).

***Hayūlā al-Ṣināʿah* (Artificial Matter)**

The first level identified by *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* is *Hayūlā* al-Ṣināʿah (artificial or industrial matter). At this stage, matter is understood as the raw material employed by artisans in the production of various objects. Wood for the carpenter, clay for the potter, and iron for the blacksmith constitute concrete examples of this category. Matter occupies a passive position, while the artisan functions as the agent who imparts form and purpose to it.

This conception clearly reflects the influence of Aristotelian hylomorphism. Just as Aristotle maintained that form actualizes the potentiality inherent within matter, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* argue that the value of an object does not reside merely in its material composition but in the form it receives. A piece of iron that remains unshaped possesses only potential value; once fashioned into a sword, an agricultural tool, or an ornament, it acquires a distinct identity and function. Form, therefore, determines both the actuality and the telos of a given object (Adamson, 2005; Marmura, 1984).

Nevertheless, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* expand this framework beyond Aristotle's original formulation. For them, the activity of the artisan constitutes a microcosmic reflection of the creative processes operating throughout the universe. Just as the artisan imposes form upon matter, the Universal Soul imparts forms to cosmic matter through the command of God. This analogy demonstrates that human production mirrors the ontological mechanisms governing the cosmos itself. Consequently, craftsmanship is not regarded merely as an economic activity but as a manifestation of humanity's intellectual capacity as a being created according to a rational cosmic order (Baffioni, 2012).

From the perspective of the present study, *Hayūlā* al-Ṣināʿah may be interpreted as the initial stage of intellectual transmutation. Unformed matter symbolizes the human soul in its state of potentiality. Just as wood attains perfection through the form bestowed by the artisan, the human soul achieves perfection through education, knowledge, and spiritual discipline. Thus, the concept of artificial matter explains not only the transformation of physical objects but also serves as a metaphor for the intellectual refinement of human beings. The higher the form of knowledge received by the soul, the higher its existential rank within the hierarchy of the cosmos (El-Bizri, 2013; Netton, 1991).

Through this explanation, *Hayūlā* al-Ṣināʿah emerges as the foundation of the entire hierarchy of matter presented in the *Rasāʾil*. This first level establishes the fundamental principle that all perfection is attained through the reception of form. It is this principle that underlies the subsequent levels of matter, which progress from the artificial realm to natural reality, universal matter, and ultimately to the source of all forms God as the First Cause of existence.

***Hayūlā al-Ṭabīʿah* (Natural Matter)**

One level above artificial matter stands *Hayūlā al-Ṭabīʿah*, or natural matter. At this stage, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* identify the four elemental constituents of nature (al-arkān al-arbaʿah): fire, air, water, and earth. These four elements constitute the foundation of all entities inhabiting the sublunary world, namely the realm situated beneath the orbit of the moon. Minerals, plants, animals, and the human body are all composed of varying combinations and proportions of these elemental constituents. This doctrine demonstrates the continuity between the cosmology of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* and the Greek philosophical tradition, particularly the teachings of Aristotle and Empedocles. However, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* develop this theory further by emphasizing the dynamic nature of matter. For them, the elements are not static substances but are continuously engaged in processes of transformation. Fire may become air, air may become water, water may become earth, and vice versa. Such transformations occur because each element possesses interrelated qualities such as heat, coldness, dryness, and moisture (Netton, 1991).

This conception became an important foundation for the understanding of alchemy within the Islamic intellectual tradition. If matter possesses the capacity to receive new forms through alterations in the composition of its elements, then the transformation of one substance into another is philosophically conceivable. Alchemy, therefore, is not merely an attempt to transform ordinary metals into gold but a reflection of the cosmic principle that all material reality exists in a state of becoming rather than completed being. Matter is perpetually moving toward more perfect forms through gradual processes of perfection (El-Bizri, 2013; Kraus, 1942). Viewed through the lens of intellectual transmutation, *Hayūlā al-Ṭabīʿah* symbolizes the human soul beginning its movement from passivity toward actualization. Whereas *Hayūlā* al-Ṣināʿah depicts the reception of form from an external source, *Hayūlā al-Ṭabīʿah* illustrates the internal capacity for growth and transformation. The soul that acquires knowledge does not merely receive information passively but transforms itself through learning, reflection, and spiritual experience. Consequently, the dynamics of the four natural elements may be understood as a metaphor for the psychological and intellectual development of the human being on the path toward perfection.

Furthermore, the theory of elemental transformation advanced by *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* indicates that material reality is not a closed system. Nature is portrayed as an open and dynamic order continually evolving toward increasingly complex forms. This perspective reveals an evolutionary tendency within the cosmology of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, albeit one situated within a metaphysical framework of emanation. Thus, *Hayūlā al-Ṭabīʿah*

represents not merely a category of natural matter but a universal principle of transformation linking the physical world with the development of the human soul (Baffioni, 2012).

Hayūlā al-Kull (Universal Matter)

The next level is *Hayūlā* al-Kull, or Universal Matter, which *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* describe as al-jism al-muṭlaq (the Absolute Body). Whereas the four elements constitute the building blocks of the sublunary world, Universal Matter serves as the cosmic substratum underlying all physical entities throughout the universe, whether terrestrial or celestial. Within the cosmological framework of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, the universe is fundamentally a single material unity. The distinction between celestial and terrestrial entities does not arise from differences in their matter but from differences in the forms they receive. Celestial bodies appear more perfect because they receive purer forms and stand closer to the source of divine emanation. Terrestrial entities, by contrast, receive lower forms and are therefore more susceptible to change, corruption, and mortality (Netton, 1991). This perspective illustrates the effort of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* to reconcile Aristotelian philosophy with Neoplatonic cosmology. While classical Aristotelianism maintains a significant ontological distinction between the celestial and terrestrial realms, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* affirm the unity of cosmic matter connecting all levels of existence. The cosmos is therefore envisioned as a vast organism whose parts are harmoniously interconnected under the governance of the Universal Soul (al-Nafs al-Kulliyyah) (De Callataÿ, 2024).

From the standpoint of soul alchemy, *Hayūlā* al-Kull represents the awareness that the human being is an integral component of the cosmic structure. The human soul is not an isolated entity but part of a universal network of existence. Consequently, intellectual transformation is itself a participation in the cosmic movement toward perfection. When an individual enhances intellectual and spiritual capacities, he or she aligns more fully with the universal order emanating from the Universal Intellect. This interpretation demonstrates that the thought of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* transcends the concerns of material ontology alone. The concept of *Hayūlā* al-Kull contains an epistemological message: genuine knowledge can only be attained when human beings recognize their interconnectedness with the totality of the cosmos. In this context, the human intellect functions as a bridge linking the material realm with higher metaphysical realities (Goodman, 1992).

Hayūlā al-Ūlā (Prime Matter)

At the highest level stands *Hayūlā al-Ūlā*, or Prime Matter. Unlike the preceding levels, which remain connected to physical reality, Prime Matter constitutes a purely metaphysical principle inaccessible to sensory perception. It possesses neither form, color, magnitude, nor any other physical characteristic. Its existence can be apprehended only by the intellect as pure potentiality underlying all existence. *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* define Prime Matter as al-huwiyyah al-maḥḍah (pure identity), the universal possibility from which all forms of existence emerge. At this stage, matter possesses neither dimension nor quality; it is simply the capacity to receive form. Consequently, Prime Matter occupies a liminal position between relative non-existence and actual existence (Baffioni, 2012).

To explain the emergence of reality from Prime Matter, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* employ a distinctive mathematical analogy. They liken identity to the number one, quantity to the number two, and quality to the number three. Just as three cannot exist without two, and two cannot exist without one, all physical existence depends upon a prior principle of identity. This analogy reflects their conviction that reality possesses a rational and mathematical structure that can be comprehended through intellectual activity (de

Callataÿ, 2005). From the perspective of soul alchemy, *Hayūlā al-Ūlā* carries profound significance. Whereas the preceding levels depict the progressive transformation of matter toward increasingly perfect forms, Prime Matter represents the source from which all such possibilities arise. The human soul possesses an intellectual potential grounded in this universal principle. Education, intellectual discipline, and spiritual purification function to actualize this latent potential until the soul attains perfection in knowledge. Accordingly, *Hayūlā al-Ūlā* is not merely an ontological concept but also an anthropological and epistemological one. It explains why human beings possess the capacity to know truth: within them resides a trace of the universal principle that serves as the source of all forms of knowledge. The closer the soul approaches this source, the more perfect become its intellectual and spiritual capacities (Adamson, 2016; Goodman, 1992).

The Mechanism of Form as the Principle of Perfection

The relationship between matter (*hayūlā*) and form (*ṣūrah*) in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* extends far beyond an explanation of the ontological structure of physical objects. More fundamentally, it provides a framework for understanding the mechanisms of change and perfection that operate throughout all levels of existence. According to *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, no form within the material world is absolutely final. Every form attained at a particular level of existence may subsequently function as matter for a higher form. Reality is therefore understood as a continuous process of transformation, advancing progressively toward increasingly elevated degrees of perfection (Netton, 1991).

This principle is clearly illustrated through the biological examples presented by *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. A grain of wheat, initially existing as a natural substance, undergoes transformation into flour. At this stage, flour constitutes a new form (*ṣūrah*) that perfects the existence of the wheat grain. Yet the status of flour is not final. Flour subsequently becomes the matter of dough, and dough in turn becomes the matter of bread. Each stage demonstrates that an entity acquires a particular perfection through the reception of a new form, while that very perfection simultaneously creates the possibility for further transformation. The process is therefore characterized by an ongoing succession of actualizations in which every achieved state serves as the foundation for a higher level of realization (*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Vol. II)

This pattern carries profound philosophical implications. Perfection is not conceived as a static condition but as a dynamic process moving continuously from potentiality toward higher degrees of actuality. In Aristotelian terminology, every actualized form retains within itself the potential to receive a more perfect form. Consequently, the entire cosmos participates in what may be described as a process of continuous ontological becoming, namely, the gradual enhancement of existential quality through the reception of increasingly refined forms (Adamson, 2016).

Furthermore, this mechanism demonstrates that form is not merely a physical structure attached to matter. Rather, form functions as the principle of perfection that confers identity, purpose, intelligibility, and function upon a material substrate. Without form, matter remains pure potentiality lacking determinate actuality. Accordingly, the higher the form received by a given entity, the higher its position within the hierarchy of existence. In the cosmological vision of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, this principle operates universally across all levels of being, from minerals, plants, and animals to human beings and the spiritual entities that transcend the material realm (Goodman, 1992).

Within this framework, form performs a role analogous to that of a catalyst in the alchemical process. Just as alchemy seeks to transform ordinary metals into noble ones through successive stages of purification, form elevates matter from lower levels of existence to higher degrees of perfection. The transformation envisioned by *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* is therefore not merely physical but fundamentally metaphysical. What undergoes

change is not simply the composition of matter but the very quality of being itself. Each newly acquired form signifies an increase in existential perfection and a movement toward greater participation in higher realities. In this sense, form serves as the primary vehicle through which the cosmos, and ultimately the human soul, advances toward intellectual, spiritual, and ontological fulfillment (El-Bizri, 2013).

2. Discussion

Relevance to the Perspective of Modern Science

Although formulated in the tenth century CE, the hierarchical theory of matter developed by *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* exhibits several conceptual parallels with certain developments in modern scientific thought. Such similarities should not be interpreted as evidence that *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* anticipated contemporary scientific theories in any direct sense. Rather, they reveal noteworthy philosophical intuitions concerning the structure and dynamics of reality that continue to resonate with modern intellectual inquiries. At the level of *Hayūlā al-Ṭabīʿah* (Natural Matter), for example, the notion of transformation among the elemental constituents of nature bears a conceptual resemblance to the modern scientific understanding of material change. Whereas alchemists interpreted transformation in terms of alterations in the qualities of elemental substances, modern chemistry explains such changes through the interactions of atoms, molecules, and chemical reactions. Although the theoretical frameworks differ significantly, both perspectives are grounded in the assumption that matter is not static but is capable of undergoing transformation into new configurations and forms (Newman, 2006).

Similarly, the concept of *Hayūlā* al-Kull (Universal Matter), which portrays the universe as a unified material reality, resonates with the modern cosmological principle that the same physical laws govern all regions of the cosmos. From subatomic particles to galaxies, the observable universe is structured by fundamental constituents and universal laws that operate consistently across space and time. In this respect, the cosmic unity envisioned by *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* may be viewed as an early philosophical expression of the search for universal principles that likewise characterizes modern scientific inquiry (Kragh, 2007). The concept of *Hayūlā al-Ūlā* (Prime Matter) also bears an intriguing philosophical resemblance to contemporary discussions concerning quantum fields and the foundational conditions of reality in theoretical physics. Although the two concepts differ substantially in methodology, epistemological assumptions, and conceptual content, both Prime Matter and quantum fields are understood as underlying realities that cannot be directly observed yet serve as the basis from which observable phenomena emerge. This resemblance should be understood as analogical rather than literal; nevertheless, it highlights the enduring significance of questions concerning the ultimate origin and ground of existence within both philosophy and science (Tegmark, 2014).

Consequently, the hierarchy of matter proposed by *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* may be interpreted not merely as a medieval metaphysical doctrine but also as a sophisticated philosophical attempt to understand the relationships among potentiality, form, transformation, and the unity of reality. While modern science investigates these issues through empirical and mathematical methods, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* approached them through metaphysical reflection and theosophical reasoning. Despite these methodological differences, both endeavors share a common aspiration: to uncover the underlying principles governing existence and change. Within the context of the present study, this hierarchical conception of matter provides the conceptual foundation for the notion of "soul alchemy," understood as the process of intellectual transmutation through which the human being progresses from a state of potentiality toward increasingly perfect forms of knowledge and self-realization. The movement from matter to form within the cosmic order thus becomes a symbolic model for the movement of the soul from ignorance to

knowledge, from imperfection to perfection, and ultimately from material attachment toward participation in higher spiritual realities.

From Material Alchemy to Soul Alchemy

The greatest significance of this theory lies in its application to the human soul. If all entities within the cosmos move toward increasingly perfect forms, then the human soul is likewise subject to the same ontological principle. At the beginning of its existence, the soul exists in a state of potentiality. It possesses the capacity to know, yet this capacity has not been fully actualized. Knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual experience function as forms that progressively perfect the substance of the soul (de Callataÿ, 2005). In the *Rasā'il*, education and the pursuit of knowledge are portrayed as instruments of existential transformation. When an individual studies mathematics, natural sciences, logic, and metaphysics, he or she is, in effect, receiving new intellectual forms. These forms do not merely add information to the mind; they transform the ontological quality of the soul itself. In other words, to know something is simultaneously to become something new at the level of intellectual existence. Knowledge is therefore not an external possession but an intrinsic transformation of the knower's being (Netton, 1991).

This perspective is deeply rooted in the tradition of Islamic Neoplatonism. Knowledge is not understood as a passive representation of external objects but as a process of unification between the knowing subject and the form of the known object. The higher the object of knowledge comprehended by an individual, the more elevated the form that becomes present within the soul. Consequently, the pursuit of knowledge is not merely an epistemological activity but an ontological journey toward existential perfection (Adamson, 2005). From the perspective of the present study, this process may appropriately be described as intellectual transmutation. Whereas material alchemy seeks to transform ordinary metals into gold, intellectual alchemy aims to transform a soul still bound to the material world into one capable of receiving the illumination of the Universal Intellect. This transformation occurs gradually through the reception of increasingly abstract, universal, and refined forms of knowledge.

The initial stage of transmutation begins with sensory knowledge, acquired through perception and experience. The soul subsequently advances toward rational knowledge through reflection, analysis, and intellectual inquiry. The culmination of this process is the attainment of intellectual and spiritual knowledge, enabling the soul to comprehend universal realities and recognize its own metaphysical origin. At this highest stage, the soul is no longer merely a recipient of forms but becomes a mirror reflecting the radiance of the Universal Intellect (*al-ʿAql al-Kullī*), the ultimate source of all knowledge (Adamson, 2016; Goodman, 1992). Within this framework, the acquisition of knowledge represents a process of ontological actualization. The soul moves from a condition of latent intellectual potential toward progressively higher degrees of actuality. Every new form of knowledge received by the soul expands its existential horizon and increases its participation in higher levels of reality. Thus, learning is simultaneously an act of self-transformation, and intellectual development becomes inseparable from spiritual refinement. The perfection of the intellect is therefore identical with the perfection of the soul itself.

Accordingly, the mechanism governing the relationship between matter and form in the thought of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* should not be understood merely as a theory concerning the ontology of physical objects. Rather, it constitutes a comprehensive cosmological model explaining how all levels of reality advance toward perfection. At the material level, this process appears as the transformation of natural forms; at the human level, it manifests as education, the pursuit of knowledge, the purification of the soul, and the cultivation of intellectual excellence. It is precisely at this point that the hylomorphism of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* is transformed into a theory of soul alchemy: an existential journey of

transmutation from potentiality to actuality, from ignorance to knowledge, and from attachment to the material world toward participation in higher intellectual and spiritual realities.

Viewed from this perspective, the *Rasā'il* present a vision of human development in which epistemology, ontology, and spirituality converge within a single process of perfection. The soul is the matter, knowledge is the form, and intellectual cultivation is the alchemical operation through which human beings gradually ascend the hierarchy of existence. The ultimate goal of this ascent is not merely intellectual mastery but the realization of *ma'rifah* the direct knowledge of divine reality and the reunification of the individual soul with the universal order from which it originates. In this sense, the hylomorphic doctrine of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* serves as both a metaphysical theory of reality and a spiritual roadmap guiding humanity toward existential fulfillment and divine proximity.

Soul Alchemy: Transmutation from Matter to Gnosis

If the previous discussions demonstrated how *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* applied the principles of hylomorphism to the structure of the cosmos and physical entities, this stage reveals the application of the same principles to human reality. It is precisely here that hylomorphism undergoes a significant transformation from a theory of ontology into a theory of spiritual education and soul perfection. For *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, human beings are not merely biological organisms composed of material elements; rather, they are entities endowed with the capacity for ontological transformation through intellectual and spiritual development. Consequently, the pursuit of knowledge is not understood merely as a cognitive activity but as a process of soul alchemy (al-kīmiyā' al-rūḥāniyyah) through which human beings are transformed from a state of potentiality into a condition of existential perfection (Baffioni, 2012; Netton, 1991).

The Soul as Dynamic Matter (*Hayūlā*)

In the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, the human soul is regarded as a substance sharing the same essential origin in all individuals. Human differences do not arise from the essence of the soul itself but from the quality of the forms that the soul has acquired throughout life. The assertion of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* that human beings differ in knowledge, moral character, worldview, and conduct indicates that the soul is fundamentally dynamic and open to transformation (Netton, 1991). This conception carries important philosophical implications. If the soul exists in a state of potentiality, it may be understood as *hayūlā* (matter) in a metaphysical sense. Just as physical matter requires form in order to attain actuality, the soul likewise requires intellectual and spiritual forms in order to achieve existential perfection. A soul that has not yet acquired knowledge remains in a latent condition, comparable to unrefined metal awaiting the smith's craft or a seed that has not yet developed into a mature tree. Such a conception reflects the profound anthropological optimism of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. They reject deterministic views that regard human nobility or perfection as predetermined at birth. Human excellence is not an innate status but the result of a transformative process unfolding throughout life. Education and the pursuit of knowledge therefore possess immense ontological significance because they directly determine the quality of human existence itself (Goodman, 1992). From the perspective of the present study, the soul may be understood as a form of "spiritual matter" that continuously exists in a process of becoming. The latent capacities contained within it await actualization through the reception of increasingly elevated forms of knowledge. Consequently, the entire intellectual project of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* rests upon the assumption that the human being is a transmutable entity whose existential condition can be fundamentally transformed through intellectual and spiritual cultivation.

Knowledge as Spiritual Form (*Ṣūrah*)

Having established the soul as potential matter, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* proceed to explain the role of knowledge as the form (*ṣūrah*) that perfects the soul. Within their epistemological framework, knowledge is not merely information stored in memory but a spiritual form inscribed upon the substance of the soul. When an individual comes to know something, the form of the known object is transferred and becomes present immaterially within the soul of the knower (Adamson, 2016). This conception is deeply rooted in both Aristotelian and Neoplatonic traditions. Aristotle argued that knowledge occurs when the intellect receives the form of an object without receiving its matter. *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* adopt this principle and expand it into a comprehensive theory of spiritual perfection. The more forms of knowledge received by the soul, the more perfected its existence becomes (Wisnovsky, 2003). Within the framework of soul alchemy, knowledge functions analogously to the philosopher's stone of classical alchemical traditions. Just as the philosopher's stone was believed to transform base metals into gold, knowledge transforms the soul from a lower state of existence into a nobler and more refined condition. This transformation is not merely metaphorical but ontological in nature. A soul that acquires knowledge of mathematics, logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics experiences an elevation in its mode of existence because these universal forms become integrated into its very substance (de Callataÿ, 2005).

The analogy of the astrolabe employed by *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* further clarifies this idea. Copper, as an ordinary material, acquires far greater value when fashioned into an astronomical instrument capable of revealing the order of the heavens. Likewise, the worth of the human soul is not determined by its common origin which, like all souls, ultimately derives from God but by the forms of knowledge and virtue that it successfully actualizes within itself. For this reason, knowledge in the thought of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* cannot be separated from moral formation. Genuine knowledge must produce a transformation of character and a reorientation of life. The greater an individual's knowledge, the greater his or her capacity to govern passions, comprehend the order of the cosmos, and draw nearer to the source of truth. It is precisely here that the intimate relationship between epistemology and ethics becomes evident within the intellectual system of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* (Baffioni, 2012).

Furthermore, knowledge serves as the medium through which the soul ascends the hierarchy of existence. Every level of understanding corresponds to a higher degree of participation in reality. Sensory knowledge grants access to the material world, rational knowledge reveals the principles governing natural phenomena, and metaphysical knowledge opens the soul to universal and transcendent realities. As the soul receives these increasingly comprehensive forms, it undergoes a gradual process of refinement that transforms its mode of being. Knowledge is therefore not simply something the soul possesses; it is what the soul progressively becomes. From this perspective, the relationship between the soul and knowledge mirrors the hylomorphic relationship between matter and form. The soul functions as receptive matter, while knowledge serves as the actualizing form that perfects and elevates it. The acquisition of knowledge thus constitutes an ontological event, bringing about a genuine transformation in the soul's existential condition. Through this process, the human being advances from ignorance to wisdom, from fragmentation to integration, and from attachment to material realities toward the contemplation of universal truths and ultimately divine gnosis (*maʿrifah*).

Intellectual Transmutation and Union with the Universal Soul

The culmination of the entire process of soul alchemy is the attainment of a harmonious relationship between the human soul and the Universal Soul (al-Nafs al-Kulliyyah). Within the cosmological framework of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, the Universal Soul is a

cosmic entity situated below the Universal Intellect (*al-ʿAql al-Kullī*) and serves as the intermediary through which divine emanation flows into the universe. It functions as the source of life, motion, order, and consciousness that animates the entirety of the cosmos (de Callataÿ, 2005; Netton, 1991). This concept is rooted in the Neoplatonic tradition, particularly the doctrine of the World Soul developed by Plotinus. However, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* Islamized this concept by incorporating it into an emanationist structure originating from God as the First Cause (al-Sabab al-Awwal). The Universal Soul thus occupies an intermediate position between the realm of pure intellect and the material world characterized by change and multiplicity.

According to *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, the principal obstacle preventing human beings from attaining this elevated state is their attachment to the material world. They describe this condition as the "dark ocean of matter" (baḥr al-*hayūlā* al-muẓlim), a state in which the soul becomes submerged in passions, worldly ambitions, and sensory pleasures, causing it to forget its spiritual origin. As long as the soul remains bound to material attachments, it is incapable of receiving the intellectual illumination emanating from the Universal Soul (Netton, 1991).

For this reason, the process of intellectual transmutation must proceed through several successive stages.

a. The Stage of Purification (*Taṭhīr al-Nafs*)

The first stage consists of purifying the soul from the domination of material desires. During this phase, individuals cultivate self-discipline, refine their moral character, and gradually reduce their attachment to worldly concerns. Purification functions as a process of removing the "rust" that obscures the mirror of the soul, thereby enabling it to reflect higher forms of knowledge and spiritual illumination (Goodman, 1992). This stage is fundamentally ethical in nature. Intellectual development cannot occur independently of moral refinement because the soul's receptivity to higher truths depends upon its degree of purity. The purification of desires therefore constitutes the necessary foundation for all subsequent stages of spiritual and intellectual ascent.

b. The Stage of Formation (*Takwīn al-Ṣuwar al-ʿilmiyyah*)

Once the soul has undergone purification, the next stage involves filling it with the forms of knowledge. *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* regard mathematics, logic, natural science, and metaphysics as successive stages within a comprehensive program of spiritual education. Each discipline introduces new intellectual forms that expand the soul's capacity to comprehend reality and ascend the hierarchy of existence (Baffioni, 2012). At this stage, knowledge functions not merely as a means of understanding the external world but as a process of existential formation. The soul gradually evolves from being a passive recipient of sensory impressions into an active intellect capable of grasping universal principles. Every acquired form of knowledge contributes to the transformation of the soul's ontological condition, refining its intellectual and spiritual capacities. The educational curriculum proposed by *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* therefore possesses a profoundly theosophical character. Scientific and philosophical disciplines are not pursued for purely practical purposes; rather, they constitute stages in the soul's preparation for participation in higher realities.

c. The Stage of Actualization (*Taḥqīq al-Kamāl*)

The final stage is the actualization of the soul's perfection. Having received and assimilated a multitude of intellectual forms, the soul becomes increasingly simple (basīṭ), luminous, and analogous to the celestial substances that are free from material corruption and decay. In this state, the soul becomes capable of

receiving direct effusion (fayḍ) of knowledge from the Universal Soul and the Universal Intellect (Adamson, 2016). It is at this point that the human being attains the highest goal of philosophy according to *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*. Echoing the classical philosophical tradition, they define philosophy as "the endeavor to become like God to the extent of human capacity" (al-tashabbuh bi Allāh bi qadr al-ṭāqah al-insāniyyah). Such resemblance does not imply participation in the divine essence itself but rather participation in divine attributes of perfection, including knowledge, wisdom, order, harmony, and goodness.

The perfected soul thus transcends the limitations imposed by material existence and becomes increasingly aligned with the universal order emanating from the Divine. Through intellectual and spiritual refinement, the individual soul recognizes its connection to the larger cosmic hierarchy and participates consciously in the realities that sustain the universe. Accordingly, intellectual transmutation in the thought of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* should be understood as a genuine ontological process that transforms the soul from a predominantly material condition into an increasingly spiritual mode of existence. A soul that initially possesses only the potential for knowledge gradually develops into an intellectual substance capable of participating in universal realities. This transformation constitutes the deepest meaning of soul alchemy: the elevation of the human being from an existence bound by space, time, and material limitations toward a mode of consciousness that reflects the eternal, luminous, and knowledge-filled qualities of the cosmic order (Adamson, 2016; Baffioni, 1998; Netton, 1991).

From this perspective, the ultimate purpose of human life is neither the accumulation of information nor the attainment of worldly success. Rather, it is the gradual realization of the soul's latent potential through the acquisition of intellectual and spiritual forms that culminate in divine gnosis (*maʿrifah*). The journey from matter to form, from potentiality to actuality, and from ignorance to wisdom thus becomes a journey from the fragmented self toward union with the universal order of being. In this sense, the doctrine of hylomorphism in the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* emerges not merely as a cosmological theory but as a comprehensive philosophy of spiritual transformation whose ultimate horizon is the soul's return to its metaphysical source.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, Volume II, Epistle One, it can be concluded that the doctrine of hylomorphism occupies a central position not only within the cosmological system of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* but also within their esoteric theosophy. Matter (*hayūlā*) and form (*ṣūrah*) are not merely Aristotelian categories employed to explain the constitution of physical objects; rather, they function as fundamental analytical instruments for understanding the nature and development of the human soul. Through the reinterpretation of hylomorphic principles within a spiritual framework, *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* transform a theory of physical reality into a comprehensive model of human perfection and existential ascent.

This study demonstrates the presence of a concept that may appropriately be termed "Soul Alchemy" within the text. Whereas physical alchemy seeks the transmutation of base metals into gold, the theosophy of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* envisions a comparable process occurring at the intellectual and spiritual levels. The human soul is understood as a single and fundamentally identical substance, yet the quality of its existence is determined by the forms it receives in the shape of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and gnosis (*maʿrifah*). The more universal, refined, and purified the forms assimilated by the soul, the more luminous, transparent, and noble its substance becomes, ultimately enabling it to participate in the

illumination of the Universal Soul. In this sense, intellectual and spiritual development constitutes an ontological transformation rather than a merely cognitive accumulation of information.

The principal contribution of this research is the introduction of the concept of "Intellectual Transmutation" as a theoretical framework for explaining the acquisition of knowledge in the thought of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. From this perspective, to know is fundamentally to become. The transition from ignorance to knowledge represents a substantial movement from potentiality to actuality, transforming the very mode of existence of the knower. The theosophical implications of this finding affirm that philosophy and science, in the worldview of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, function as liberating agents that free the soul from the constraints of the "dark ocean of matter" and guide it toward eternal salvation and proximity to divine reality. Knowledge thus serves simultaneously as an epistemological, ethical, and ontological pathway leading the soul toward perfection.

The limitation of the present study lies in its textual focus on the First Epistle of Volume II. Consequently, future research is encouraged to explore the psychological epistles contained in Volume III in order to examine more comprehensively the relationship between practical ethics, spiritual discipline, and the hylomorphic structure of the soul. Such investigations may further illuminate the ways in which *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* integrated cosmology, epistemology, ethics, and soteriology into a unified vision of human transformation and spiritual fulfillment.

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