

**FIRĀSA AND INTELLIGENCE:  
THE SILLY AND THE INTELLIGENT IN ARAB PHYSIOGNOMY**

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Contact with the cultural heritage of the classical world created a great interest in physiognomy in the Arab one and this was a stimulus that fell on fertile ground. In fact disciplines of divination based on induction and the spirit of observation, as *qiyāfa*, were already well known and came from a long tradition<sup>1</sup>, as one can see from the famous episode of the sons of Nizār b. Maʿadd<sup>2</sup>. *Firāsa*<sup>3</sup> (physiognomy), though, was something that the Arab world always saw as a foreign branch of knowledge and it was thus not by chance that the recognised authorities of this science were Greek. Polemon of Laodiceia (Stegemann 1952), who died in 114 A.D., and Aristotle himself, are quoted by Ḥaġġī Ḥalīfa (*Kaṣf* IV, 388) and, with Eleos, by Yaʿqūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī<sup>4</sup>. al-Ġahiz repeatedly mentions Polemon in his *Ḥayawān* (III, 146, 269, 284). What was attributed to Aristotle were two treatises on physiognomy, the contents of which are in large part taken and quoted in the *firāsa* works: *Sirr*<sup>5</sup> and *Physiognōmonika*<sup>6</sup>.

The term *firāsa* itself, used to translate the Greek *physiognōmonika*, brings out the inductive character which it has in common with the typically Arab *qiyāfa* mentioned above and is an interesting clue to how physiognomy was perceived and assimilated into the Arab culture. It, in fact, stands for acute observation, the capacity to grasp the recondite and what is inaccessible to the senses (*idrāk al-bātin*) thanks to attentive consideration of exterior aspect<sup>7</sup>. *Firāsa* was used, in the scientific sense,

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<sup>1</sup> See the definitions given by Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 12-15 (page numbers always refer to the Arabic text) and the essay of Fahd 1966:370-379.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Adkayā* 91-92; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūġ* I, 427-431; al-Masʿūdī (*ibid.*, 473) presents *qiyāfa* as a typically Arab science.

<sup>3</sup> See Fahd 1966:379-389; *idem.*, 1965:937-938; Mourad (1939) traces a concise history of physiognomy in the Arab culture.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Rescher 1914:53.

<sup>5</sup> About this text see the article of Grignaschi (1982), containing a rich bibliography. The "long version" of the *Sirr* has been edited by Badawī 1954 I, 67-171.

<sup>6</sup> For the transmission of the text to the Arab world see Grignaschi 1974.

<sup>7</sup> See the definitions given by Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān* VI, 160 and az-Zabīdī, *Taġ* IV, 207.

to define the physiognomic among the natural sciences and in the mystical sense to indicate the capacity inspired by divine grace to read into the hearts of men<sup>8</sup>.

The science of physiognomy was of interest and was a subject of study for Arab writers of various disciplines. For the theologian Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, who died in 1209, it was the subject of a systematic treatise, *Firāsa*. One work on this argument<sup>9</sup> has been attributed to the legalist aš-Šāfi'ī, who died in 820, and who is considered an authority in his field. And obviously, another attribution of this kind has been erroneously given to such a prolific *polygraphe* as al-Ġāhiz, i.e. 'Irāfa (clearly spurious). Finally, there is an excellent work of synthesis on ideas of physiognomy to be ascribed to Šams ad-Dīn al-Anṣārī, who died in 1327. In the works of philosophy, medicine and religion, there are also passages devoted to the discipline of physiognomy. The famous Andalusian mystic, Ibn 'Arabī, who died in 1240, and who is considered one of the greatest in this field<sup>10</sup>, gives us a systematic treatment of it in a part of his *Tadbīrāt* and of his *Futūḥāt* (II, 235-241), and Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā ar-Rāzī, who died in 925, dedicates the second book of his treatise on medicine, *Tibb*, to physiognomy.

Even in less specialised and more accessible works, one finds physiognomy called in. One finds references to physiognomy in encyclopaedic books such as an-Nuwayrī's *Nihāya* (III, 149 ff. & 353-357) or in the *Mustatraf* by al-Ibšīhī (II, 191-192), as well as in story collections like the *Adkiyā'* and the *Hamqā* by Ibn al-Ġawzī<sup>11</sup>. Even in treatises for scribes (*kuttāb*) one finds some notion of physiognomy in the description of the ideal scribe: excellent examples are the prescriptions of aš-Šaybānī (*Risāla* 9)<sup>12</sup>, later to be taken up by al-Qalqašandī (*Šubḥ* I, 67). This leads us to think that there was some notion of this discipline as a common heritage among the learned.

Often enough, listing of the physiognomical meaning of physical characteristics is linked to the question of intelligence (*dakā'*, *fitna*, *fahm*, 'aql). This is a question that nearly always finds its canonical place among the subjects treated in the *adab*

<sup>8</sup> The mystical interpretation is based on the famous *ḥadīṭ*: "ittaqu min firāsāt al-mu'min" (at-Tirmidī, *Ġāmi'* V, 298).

<sup>9</sup> But compare Mourad 1939:57-61.

<sup>10</sup> See Rescher 1914:53. To Ibn 'Arabī is also attributed the *Qabs*, in all probability apocryphal. The texts contains a chapter on physiognomy, see Ghersetti 1994.

<sup>11</sup> According to az-Ziriklī (1980: III, 316) *Luqat al-manāfi' fi t-tibb* by the same author (*GAL* SI, 920) is devoted to 'ilm al-firāsa.

<sup>12</sup> The treatise has been erroneously attributed to Ibn al-Mudabbir. See also Ghersetti 1992a.

works, also for its doctrinal importance in that it is strictly connected with intelligence as a gift of God and a guide to the strait and narrow way<sup>13</sup>.

We consider it interesting to give the following brief review of the physical indices of intelligence (and of its opposite) as seen by the physiognomical tradition in the Arab world, with an indication of traces in *adab* works of the classical and post-classical periods.

The physical type of the intelligent person (*ar-raḡul al-fahim*) that we find repeated with slight differences in ar-Rāzī, in the Arab Pseudo-Polemon, and the aforementioned *Qabs*, more or less faithfully reflects the Aristotelian concept of the proper mean, the Greek *mesotēs*, as an expression of ethical virtue. The physical characteristics of the man gifted with a good intelligence and a good nature, in fact, refer, also in the stylistic and lexical choices, to the concepts of measure and balance between the two extremes. This surely Aristotelian concept probably comes through the *Physiognōmonika*, the Pseudograph of the Aristotelian school, translated into Arabic by Hunayn b. Ishāq. The quotation that follows, taken from *Qabs* fol. 21 v. is a physiognomical portrait of the intelligent man.

“If the proportioned state of the body corresponds to the same balance of temperament, and the temperament corresponds to the soul, then one can say that the following are the signs of the intelligent man. He should have flesh that is soft, tender and not abundant, he should be neither corpulent nor fragile, his face should not be fleshy and his shoulders should slope properly. He should not have too much flesh along his backbone and his complexion should be between the white and the red, luminous, with a fine skin. He should have neither too much nor too little hair and it should be neither too wiry nor too black. His eyes should be black with shades of blue, and soft<sup>14</sup>. His stature should be between the short and the tall, his hands and feet well-proportioned and neither big nor small, neither fleshy nor too fleshless, his head well proportioned and neither great nor small, his neck not thick and his hair tending towards the red and between curly and straight, his face round and his nose straight<sup>15</sup>.”

<sup>13</sup> All the following works include almost one chapter about intellect and intelligence (but also one about silliness): an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya* III, 230 ff.; ar-Rāḡib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥādarāt* 4 ff.; Ibn ‘Abdalbarr, *Bahāa* I, 532 ff.; al-Ibšīhī, *Mustatraf* I, 33-41; Ibn ‘Abdrabbih, *Iqd* II, 104-116; Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn* I, part 1, 393-396.

<sup>14</sup> The colour of eyes should be black mixed with blue: although all the colours are to be blamed, this mixture seems to be acceptable. This explanation is given by Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 64. Up to this point see the descriptions of the intelligent man in ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 174 and Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 160. Compare also Pseudo-Aristotle, *Physiognōmonika* 98.

<sup>15</sup> For this description, attributed to the “good-natured man” see ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 175. Compare Pseudo-Aristotle *Physiognōmonika* 100, with slight omissions.

In *Sirr* (123) and in Ibn ‘Arabī’s two treatises, there is a very similar description attributed to the man of good intelligence and good nature<sup>16</sup> and this is developed to the point of including characteristics that are pertaining to the *hakīm* in the source from where we quoted the aforementioned passage. The affinities between physical build and moral attributes as a theoretical premise is clearly lifted from Aristotelian sources for the theory of the temperaments, duly elaborated and systematically set out by Galen in his treatise *Oti tais tou sōmatos krasesin ai tēs psychēs dynameis epontai*, translated into Arabic<sup>17</sup> by the nephew of Hunayn, Ḥubayš b. al-Ḥasan ad-Dimašqī at the end of the third/ninth century. A balanced nature and a constitution fitted to it thus become a sign of good intelligence.

Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, describing the balanced temperament (*al-mizāğ al-mu’tadil*) points out how eucrasia, which lies in the just mean between the two poles, assures optimal functioning in the psychological faculties (*Firāsa* 37-38), and Ibn al-Ġawzī considers it axiomatic that there is a correspondence between a balanced temperament and a good intelligence<sup>18</sup>. Even from a preliminary linguistic analysis, what emerges is a semantic isotopy in both measure and equilibrium in both lexical and syntactical choice. Attenuation in the use of litotes, e.g., “he should not have a fleshy face” or “neither fat nor thin” points to the proper mean between the two poles, another example being “between the white and the red” thus giving yet greater emphasis to the Aristotelian concept of virtue as equilibrium and the proper mean, and a large part of the physiognomical descriptions in question come under this heading.

It must also be said that many of the characteristics that are signs of a good intelligence, listed as a catalogue of physical signs, also recall the concept of equilibrium and measure that stand out in the passage we have quoted. For example these point to a good intellect and a good nature: well proportioned eyebrows, an averagely broad and prominent forehead, an averagely large nose, a tone of voice that is neither too high nor too low, and a neck of average proportions. Then there are other physical signs that reveal intelligence: abundance of flesh, little fat at the stomach and a thin face<sup>19</sup>. These, in fact, are also connected with a warm temperament, one of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, obviously considering it from a doctrinal viewpoint, attributes to the Prophet the aspect corresponding to the best constitution and the well-proportioned temperament (*Futūḥāt* II, 238 and *Tadbīrāt* 163).

<sup>17</sup> Under the title *Kitāb fī anna quwā n-nafs tābi’a li-mizāğ al-badan*. Ed. in Badawī 1981:182-186.

<sup>18</sup> “The sages say: a well-proportioned constitution and the corresponding body indicate the faculty of intellect and a good intelligence” (Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Adkiyā’* 18).

<sup>19</sup> See the following sources (quoted, for brevity, in one and the same list even if not every source presents the complete catalogue): *Sirr* 120, 121, 122; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt* II, 238, 239; *Idem.*, *Tadbīrāt* 164-166; *Qabs* fol. 22 r.; Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Adkiyā’* 18; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 155, 156; ar-Rāzī, *Ṭibb* 169; Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 31-32, 34-36, 72.

whose characteristics is brilliant intellectual capacities, with its variants in warm and dry and warm and moist. There are, however, three characteristics that recur constantly even outside this particular scheme: broad shoulders, tender flesh and soft and thin hands (sign of rapidity of intelligence)<sup>20</sup>. Finally, physiognomy does not neglect the correlation between the physical and the intellectual which is connected to differences of sex and race. Men, it would appear, have a more perfect intelligence than women<sup>21</sup> and the intelligence quotient would appear to vary according to race. The Egyptians, it seems, are not particularly perspicacious whereas the Macedonians are<sup>22</sup>. The geographical area in which one is born<sup>23</sup> appears also to have its influence on human psychological and intellectual capacity. This latter theory finds its origin in the works of Hippocrates in particular as the *auctoritas* quoted by al-Mas'ūdī (*Murūğ* I, 528-530) evaluating the correlation between environment and temperament<sup>24</sup>.

Then, there are signs of intelligence that have nothing to do with the physical sphere, but rather with the behavioral one. These too hark back to the concept of measure: a proper speed of speech, sobriety in the way of being seated and in conversation and gesture, are signs of a good intellect<sup>25</sup>. In the anecdotic and aphoristic literature the action and speech of the intelligent man are also connected to the concept of moderation: whoever it is that has a good intellect knows how to hold his tongue, to know his station in society, to recognise his own mistakes and to be prudent in both act and word<sup>26</sup>. He is in charge of his own passions and above all has a way of behaviour that is measured and consonant with both situation and environment<sup>27</sup>.

In the quantitative sense, indices of stupidity are far more numerous than those for intelligence, both in the physiognomical works and those which take them up,

<sup>20</sup> Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 72, 74; *Qabs* fol. 22 r.; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 169, 171, 172; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 155, 156, 157.

<sup>21</sup> Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 25; according to al-Ġāhiz (*Bayān*, I, 139; *Fahr* I, 196-197) women are silly by nature.

<sup>22</sup> Polemon, *Firāsa* 237-239. See also al-Ġāhiz, *Hayawān* V, 35.

<sup>23</sup> According to Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (*Firāsa* 58) the dwellers of the eastern areas have a better physical constitution and mental faculties than those of the western areas have (!).

<sup>24</sup> Hippocrates in his treatise *Peri aerōn* theorizes the influence of environment on the nature of the human being. The hippocratical theory is referred to by Galen who, in his *Oti tais tou sōmatos*, quotes many passages from the book of Hippocrates.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt* 239; *Idem*, *Tadbīrāt* 166, 167; compare *Sirr* 121.

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn* I, part 1, 393 (compare Ibn 'Abdrabbih, *Iqd* II, 104, Ibn 'Abdalbarr, *Bahā* I, 532).

<sup>27</sup> See Gherseti 1992b:71-73.

such as the *adab* encyclopaedias, where one usually finds, alongside the signs and attributes of intelligence, those of stupidity<sup>28</sup>. Here the concept of stupidity, such as *ḥumq*, *ḡabl* and *qillat al-fitna*, to be found in the literature, mirrors those of intelligence in sense of measure and expediency and substantially deals with congruity between *modus operandi* and situation or context. This, in fact, in the classical dictionaries, is presented as stagnation of the intellect and is better defined as dissonance, often for lack of measure, between an evaluation of reality and reality itself, or between conduct and the exigencies of the situation<sup>29</sup>. The concept of excess, be it towards the positive or the negative, and of disharmony has brought much to the physical and behavioral indices of stolidity mentioned in the works on physiognomy. Many of them, in fact, are to be found as signs of the dyscrasic temperament, that is the one which lacks harmonic proportion in its parts.

The following passage, taken from Ibn al-Ġawzī (*Hamqā* 19-20), gives us the complete catalogue of the signs of stupidity, bringing together descriptions to be found in various sources. We shall point out those passages that recur in the sources of physiognomy we have consulted.

“The sages say this: that if the head is small and is not well-formed, this is a sign of bad conformation of the brain. Galen says that smallness of head never fails to be a sign of bad conformation of the brain<sup>30</sup>. If the neck is short, this is a sign of a weak and scarce brain<sup>31</sup>. Whoever has a disproportionate physical build is one of little value, both in his intentions and his intellect, (just as whoever has a large paunch<sup>32</sup>, short fingers<sup>33</sup>, a round face<sup>34</sup>, tall stature, a small head, and forehead, face, neck, and feet, fleshy<sup>35</sup>, or a face like a semi-

<sup>28</sup> In literary works this is perhaps due to the comical value of the anecdotes illustrating sayings and actions of silly people.

<sup>29</sup> See Ghersetti 1993: esp. 92-94.

<sup>30</sup> For the relation between form and size of the head (seat of the brain that controls the intellectual functions) see also Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 39-40. See Ibn ‘Arabī, *Tadbīrāt* 167; *Idem*, *Futūḥāt* 239.

<sup>31</sup> But compare *Sirr* 121; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Tadbīrāt* 167; *Idem*, *Futūḥāt* 239 and ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 170.

<sup>32</sup> *Batal* must probably be read *batn*, as in the corresponding passage of Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (*Firāsa* 38). See also *Sirr* 122; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Tadbīrāt* 167; *Idem*, *Futūḥāt* 239.

<sup>33</sup> *Sirr* 122; compare Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 74; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 157; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 172; *Qabs* fol. 22 r.

<sup>34</sup> ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 168; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 153; *Qabs* fol. 21 v.

<sup>35</sup> Compare *Sirr* 120, 122; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Tadbīrāt* 166, 168; *Idem*, *Futūḥāt* 239; *Qabs* fol. 22 r.; Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 68, 74; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 153; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 168, 172.

circle. In the same way, if the head and forehead are round<sup>36</sup>, but the face large and with a look of stupidity and shiftiness in his eyes, he belongs to those furthest from the good<sup>37</sup>. If the eyes protrude the person is insolent and talks too much<sup>38</sup> and if they look you up and down, then he is cunning and thieving<sup>39</sup>. If the eyes are large<sup>40</sup> and tremulous, then he is lazy, vain and a lover of women<sup>41</sup>. Blue eyes with an admixture of saffron yellow are signs of ignoble customs<sup>42</sup>. Cow-eyes<sup>43</sup> are signs of stupidity. Whoever has bulging eyes with falling eyelids is stupid<sup>44</sup>. Whoever has eyelids that are not of one piece or that are variously coloured, but not for reasons of illness, is sly and stupid (Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 62). Hair on the shoulders and neck is a sign of stupidity and stubbornness, and if there is hair on the chest and the stomach, it is a sign of little sagacity<sup>45</sup>. Whoever has a long neck creates noise and confusion, is stupid and is a coward<sup>46</sup>. Whoever has a large and full neck is slow on the uptake (*ibid.*). Whoever has fleshy lips is stupid and dense<sup>47</sup>. Whoever has a decidedly round face suffers from pride<sup>48</sup>. Whoever has large ears, likewise, and he is long-lived<sup>49</sup>. A lovely voice is a sign of stupidity and

<sup>36</sup> *Lihiya* must probably be read *ḡabha*, as in the corresponding passage of Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (*Firāsa* 38).

<sup>37</sup> The passage between brackets is the same as Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 38. There is a great similarity also with the description of the "man of thick nature" in ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 176.

<sup>38</sup> Compare Aristotle, *Sirr* 119; Ibn 'Arabī, *Tadbīrāt*, p. 165 and *idem*, *Futūhāt* 238; Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 62.

<sup>39</sup> *Sirr* 119; compare Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūhāt* 238; *Idem*, *Tadbīrāt* 165.

<sup>40</sup> The size of the eye means abundance of the humid substance of brain, which is a cause of silliness (Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 62).

<sup>41</sup> Compare *Qabs* fol. 21 v.; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 152 and ar-Rāzī, *Tibb*, 164-165; Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 65.

<sup>42</sup> Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 63; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 151; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 165; *Qabs* fol. 21 v.

<sup>43</sup> Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 64; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 152; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 165; *Qabs* fol. 21 v.

<sup>44</sup> Compare Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 62; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 152; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 166.

<sup>45</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Tadbīrāt* 164; *Futūhāt* 238; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 150; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 163; *Qabs* fol. 21 v.

<sup>46</sup> *Sirr* 121; Ibn 'Arabī, *Tadbīrāt* 167; *Idem*, *Futūhāt* 239 and ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 170.

<sup>47</sup> *Sirr* 120; Ibn 'Arabī, *Tadbīrāt* 166 and *Futūhāt* 239; Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 67, 68; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 168; compare Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 153.

<sup>48</sup> ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 168; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 153; *Qabs* fol. 21 v.

<sup>49</sup> *Sirr* 121; Ibn 'Arabī *Tadbīrāt* 165 and *Futūhāt* 238; *Qabs* fol. 21 v.; Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 70; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 154; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 169. Compare an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya* III, 149.

scarce intelligence<sup>50</sup>. Abundant and solid flesh are signs of sensations and density of intelligence<sup>51</sup>. Idiocy and stolidity are to be found for the most part among those who are tall of stature. Among the infallible signs there is also length of beard, because who has a long beard does not lack in stupidity. And this is taken back to the Torah: the beard comes out of the brain and if somebody has an excessively long beard, it is a sign of little brain - and who has little brain has little intellect and who has little intellect is stupid. Some sages say that stupidity is what fertilises the beard: who has a long beard is very stupid. One who saw a man with a long beard says, 'By God, if that (the beard) came out of a river, the river would dry up'. al-Aḥnaf b. Qays said, 'If you see a tall man with a long beard, know that he is an imbecile, even if he were Umayya b. 'Abdšams'<sup>52</sup>."

This description covers all the characteristics that ar-Rāzī, in his *Firāsa*, ascribes to the dyscrasic temperament and which, as we have pointed out earlier, denote a lack of equilibrium and also excess in one sense or the other, be it a large stomach, short fingers, a round face, shortness of stature, a head that is either very large or very small, or fleshiness in the face, eyes or feet<sup>53</sup>. Other characteristics are strictly associated with the bad cerebral conformation, the brain being held to be the seat of the intelligence. One example: if the forehead is low, it corresponds to a smaller brain, which can only implicate scarce intellectual faculties<sup>54</sup>. Many and varied are the characteristics to be considered as signs of stupidity, in analogy with the somatic features of certain animals: the fixed look the animals have, eyes similar to a goat's or a crab's, a nose that is large and reminiscent of the bovine species<sup>55</sup>, for example. The theory according to which the similarity of somatic features between man and the animals implicates a similarity in character traits, finds a systematic exposition in the treatise of Polemon of Laodiceia<sup>56</sup>. Faḥr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, although he considers

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<sup>50</sup> *Sirr* 121; compare Ibn 'Arabī, *Tadbīrāt* 166 and *Futūḥāt* 239; *Qabs* fol. 21 v., 22 r.; Faḥr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 71 (at 45-46 a "physiological" explanation of this statement); Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 155; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 169.

<sup>51</sup> *Qabs* fol. 22 r.; Faḥr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 72; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 169.

<sup>52</sup> Concerning the long beard as a sign of silliness see the sources quoted in Ghersetti 1993:90.

<sup>53</sup> Even in handbooks for *kuttāb* these features are quoted; according to their prescriptions scribes mustn't have disproportionate limbs, a very big head or a long beard, since these are signs which cannot be associated with intelligence (aṣ-Ṣaybānī, *Risāla* 9, quoted by al-Qalqaṣandī, *Ṣubḥ* I, 67).

<sup>54</sup> Faḥr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 60; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 168; *Qabs* fol. 21 v.; but compare an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya* III, 149, 356.

<sup>55</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Tadbīrāt* 165 and *Futūḥāt* 238; Faḥr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 66; Pseudo-Polemon, *Phys.* 152; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 164, 165; *Qabs* fol. 21 v.

<sup>56</sup> Polemon, *Firāsa*; the second chapter is devoted to animal psychology.

this criterion among the last of the hierarchy of signs, nonetheless calls it in fairly often where it is useful as a physiognomic explanation.

Alongside the physical signs, what has also to be taken into consideration are the behavioral ones where, likewise, the concepts of lack of measure and disharmony are *Leitmotifs*. Too rapid speech, for example, is a sure indication of stupidity<sup>57</sup>, just as is inappropriate intervention in a discourse, or loquacity or too hurried answers<sup>58</sup>. These are all traits tied to a distorted (excessive or dyscrasic) use of the faculty of speech. Also connected to this same semantic isotopy are the concepts of incongruity and inadequacy in any given context and these constitute the phenomenology of the best-known definition of stupidity such as "putting things in the wrong place". The catalogue of the actions of the silly person is in fact characterized by lack of measure. In what the *firāsa* works and the works of *adab* bring us (these works seem to us to contain a certain conceptual coherence) one can isolate, in the concept of intelligence, as presented in the sources taken into consideration, a dichotomy of structure. In this the positive pole – that of a good intelligence – is represented by all that is inspired by eucrasia and measure both in the sphere of physical constitution and in that of behaviour, while the negative pole – stupidity – is represented by all that is inspired by dyscrasia and excess, in both the physical and the behavioral.

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<sup>57</sup> Aristotle, *Sirr* 121 (compare Ibn ‘Arabī, *Tadbīrāt* 166); Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt* 239; Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *Firāsa* 71; ar-Rāzī, *Tibb* 169; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Qabs* fol. 21 v.-22 r.

<sup>58</sup> These two are among the most widespread definitions of "silliness" which can be found in *adab* works. See Ghersetti 1993:88-89.

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