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

Antonella Ghersetti

University of Venice

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, as one can see from the famous episode of the sons of Nizār b. Ma‘add. Firāsa (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 Ḥāġġī Ḥalīfa (Kasf IV, 388) and, with Eleos, by Ya‘qūb b. Ishaq al-Kindi. al-Ǧahiz repeatedly mentions Polemon in his Hayawan (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 and Physiognōmonika.

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. Firāsa was used, in the scientific sense,
to define the physiognomical among the natural sciences and in the mystical sense
to indicate the capacity inspired by divine grace to read into the hearts of men.8

The science of physiognomy was of interest and was a subject of study for Arab
writers of various disciplines. For the theologian Fārāb ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, who died in
1209, it was subject of a systematic treatise, Fīrāsā. One work on this argument9
has been attributed to the legalist al-Šāfī’ī, who died in 920, 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-Ǧāḥiz, 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 physio-
gnomy. The famous Andalusian mystic, Ibn ‘ArabI, who died in 1240, and who is
considered one of the greatest in this field10, gives us a systematic treatment of it in
a part of his Tadbīrāt and of his Futuḥāt (II, 235-241), and Muhammad b. Zakariyyā
ar-Rāzī, who died in 925, dedicates the second book of his treatise on medicine,
Tībb, 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-Nuway-
ri’s Nihāya (III, 149 ff. & 353-357) or in the Mustatruf by al-Ibāshī (II, 191-192), as well as in story collections like the Aḏkīyā and the Hamqā by Ibn al-Ǧawzi11. Even in
theses for scribes (kuttāb) one finds some notion of physiognomy in the descrip-
tion of the ideal scribe: excellent examples are the prescriptions of aṣ-Šābānī (Risāla
9), later to be taken up by al-Qalqālī (Subh 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 (dakāʾ, fitna, fahm, aqīl). This is a question
that nearly always finds its canonical place among the subjects treated in the adab
works, also for its doctrinal importance in that it is strictly connected with intelli-
gence as a gift of God and a guide to the straight and narrow way12.

We consider it interesting to give the following brief review of the physical in-
dices 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-raṣūf al-ḥāfīm) that we find repeated
with slight differences in ar-Rāzī, in the Arab Pseudo-Polemon, and the afore-
mentioned Qabs, more or less faithfully reflects the Aristotelian concept of the
proper mean, the Greek mesotēs, as an expression of ethical virtue. The physical char-
acteristics 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 be-
tween the two extremes. This surely Aristotelian concept probably comes through
the Physiognomika, 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 tem-
perament, 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 soft14. 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 pro-
portioned 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
straight15."

8 The mystical interpretation is based on the famous ḥadīj: "ittauq min fīrāsā al-mu'min" (at-
Tirmūgli, Ğamī' V, 298).
9 But compare Mourad 1939:57-61.
10 See Rescher 1914:53. To Ibn ‘ArabI is also attributed the Qabs, in all probability apocryphal. The
texts contains a chapter on physiognomy, see Ghersetti 1994.
11 According to az-Ziriklī (1980: III, 316) Luqāṭ al-mansūf: fi t-tīb by the same author (GAL S I, 920)
is devoted to tīm al-fīrāsā.
12 The treatise has been erroneously attributed to Ibn al-Mudābbīr. See also Ghersetti 1992a.
13 All the following works include almost one chapter about intellect and intelligence (but also one
about silliness): an-Nuwayrī, Nihāya III, 230 ff.; ar-Rāzī al-Īfāshānī, Muhādatār 4 ff.; Ibn ‘Abdulbarr,
I, 393-396.
14 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 Fārāb ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, Fīrāsā 64. Up to
this point see the descriptions of the intelligent man in ar-Rāzī, Tīhb 174 and Pseudo-Polemon, Phys. 160.
Compare also Pseudo-Aristotle, Physiognomika 98.
15 For this description, attributed to the "good-natured man" see ar-Rāzī, Tīhb 175. Compare Pseudo-
Aristotle Physiognomika 100, with slight omissions.
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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 soft14. 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 straight15."
In Sīrris (123) and in Ibn ‘Arabī’s two treatises, there is a very similar description attributed to the man of good intelligence and good nature16 and this is developed to the point of including characteristics that are pertaining to the ḥakīm 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 taüs tou σώματος krassein aι tēs ψυχῆς δυναμεις epoptai translated into Arabic17 by the nephew of Hunayn, Hubayy b. al-Hasan ad-Dimaṣqī 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-mizāg al-mu’tadīl) points out how eucrasia, which lies in the just mean between the two poles, assures optimal functioning in the psychological faculties (Fīrasa 37-38), and Ibn al-Gawzī considers it axiomatic that there is a correspondence between a balanced temperament and a good intelligence18. Even from a preliminary linguistic analysis, what emerges is a semantic isotopy in both measure and equilibrium in both lexical and syntactical choice. Attestation 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 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 face19. These, in fact, are also connected with a warm temperament, one of 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)20. Finally, physiognomy does not neglect the correlation between the physical and the intellective which is connected to differences of sex and race. Men, it would appear, have a more perfect intelligence than women21 and the intelligence quotient would appear to vary according to race. The Egyptians, it seems, are not particularly perspicacious whereas the Macedonians are22. The geographical area in which one is born23 appears also to have its influence on human psychological and intellective capacity. This latter theory finds its origin in the works of Hippocrates in particular as the auctoris quotes by al-Masʿūdi (Munāfī I, 528-530) evaluating the correlation between environment and temperament24.

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 intellect25. 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 word26. 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 environment27.

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,25

16 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 Tadhribāt 163).
18 “The sages say: a well-proportioned constitution and the corresponding body indicate the faculty of intellect and a good intelligence” (Ibn al-Gawzī, Adkijā’ī 18).
19 See the following sources (quoted, for brevity, in one and the same list even if not every source presents the complete catalogue): Sīrīs 120, 121, 122; Ibn ‘Arabī, Futūḥāt II, 238, 239; Idem., Tadhribāt 164-166; Qubs II, 22 r.; Ibn al-Gawzī, Adkijā’ī 18; Pseudo-Polémon, Phys. 155, 156; ar-Rāzī, Tibh 169, Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, Fīrasa 31-32, 34-36, 72.
20 Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, Fīrasa 72, 74; Qubs fol. 22 r.; ar-Rāzī, Tibh 169, 171, 172; Pseudo-Polémon, Phys. 155, 156, 157.
21 Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, Fīrasa 25; according to al-Ǧāhīz (Bayân, I, 139; Fahr I, 196-197) women are silly by nature.
22 Poleémon, Fīrasa 237-239. See also al-Ǧāhīz, Huwarān V, 35.
23 According to Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (Fīrasa 58) the dwellers of the eastern areas have a better physical constitution and mental faculties than those of the western areas have (!).
24 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 taüs tou σώματος, quotes many passages from the book of Hippocrates.
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\(^{25}\) Ibn ‘Arabi, Futuhat III, Iđīm, Tadhīb 166, 167; compare Sirī II, 121.

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\(^{27}\) See Gheretti 1992b:71-73.
such as the adab encyclopaedias, where one usually finds, alongside the signs and attributes of intelligence, those of stupidity. Here the concept of stupidity, such as humaq, gabi 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. 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-Gawzi (Hamga 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.

"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. If the neck is short, this is a sign of a weak and scarce brain. 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, short fingers, a round face, tall stature, a small head, and forehead, face, neck, and feet, fleshy, or a face like a semi-circle. In the same way, if the head and forehead are round, but the face large and with a look of stupidity and shiftiness in his eyes, he belongs to those furthest from the good. If the eyes protrude the person is insolent and talks too much and if they look you up and down, then he is cunning and thieving. If the eyes are large and tremulous, then he is lazy, vain and a lover of women. Blue eyes with an admixture of saffron yellow are signs of ignoble customs. Cow-eyes are signs of stupidity. Whoever has bulging eyes with falling eyelids is stupid. 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-Din ar-Razi, Firasat 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. Whoever has a long neck creates noise and confusion, is stupid and is a coward. Whoever has a large and full neck is slow on the uptake (ibid). Whoever has fleshy lips is stupid and dense. Whoever has a decidedly round face suffers from pride. Whoever has large ears, likewise, and he is long-lived. A lovely voice is a sign of stupidity and

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


30 For the relation between form and size of the head (seat of the brain that controls the intellectual functions) see also Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, Firasat 39-40. See also Ibn 'Arabi, Tadbirtat 167; Idem, Futasbat 239.

31 But compare Sirr 121; Ibn 'Arabi, Tadbirtat 167; Idem, Futasbat 239 and ar-Razi, Tibb 170.

32 Batal must probably be read gabha, as in the corresponding passage of Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi (Firasat 38).

33 Compare Sirr 122; Ibn 'Arabi, Tadbirtat 167; Idem, Futasbat 239.

34 Sirr 122; compare Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, Firasat 74; Pseudo-Polemon, Phys. 157; ar-Razi, Tibb 172; Qubs fol. 22 v.

35 ar-Razi, Tibb 168; Pseudo-Polemon, Phys. 153; Qubs fol. 21 v.

36 Compare Sirr 120, 122; Ibn 'Arabi, Tadbirtat 166, 168; Idem, Futasbat 239; Qubs fol. 22 v.; Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, Firasat 68, 74; Pseudo-Polemon, Phys. 153; ar-Razi, Tibb 168, 172.

37 The passage between brackets is the same as Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, Firasat 38. There is a great similarity also with the description of the "man of thick nature" in ar-Razi, Tibb 176.

38 Compare Aristotele, Sirr 119; Ibn 'Arabi, Tadbirtat, p. 165 and idem, Futasbat 238; Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, Firasat 62.

39 Sirr 119; compare Ibn 'Arabi, Futasbat 238; Idem, Tadbirtat 165.

40 The size of the eye means abundance of the humid substance of brain, which is a cause of silliness (Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, Firasat 62).

41 Compare Qubs fol. 21 v.; Pseudo-Polemon, Phys. 152 and ar-Razi, Tibb, 164-165; Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, Firasat 65.

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such as the *adab* encyclopaedias, where one usually finds, alongside the signs and attributes of intelligence, those of stupidity. Here the concept of stupidity, such as *humq, gahl* 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. 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-Gawzi (*Hamga* 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. If the neck is short, this is a sign of a weak and scarce brain. Whoever has a disproportionately physical build is one of little value, both in his intentions and his intellect, just as whoever has a large paunch, short fingers, a round face, tall stature, a small head, and forehead, face, neck, and feet, fleshy, or a face like a semi-circle. In the same way, if the head and forehead are round, but the face large and with a look of stupidity and shiftiness in his eyes, he belongs to those furthest from the good. If the eyes protrude the person is insolent and talks too much and if they look you up and down, then he is cunning and thieving. If the eyes are large and tremulous, then he is lazy, vain and a lover of women. Blue eyes with an admixture of saffron yellow are signs of ignoble customs. Cow-eyes are signs of stupidity. Whoever has bulging eyes with falling eyelids is stupid. Whoever has eyelids that are not of one piece or that are variously coloured, but not for reasons of illness, is sly and stupid. Whoever has a long neck creates noise and confusion, is stupid and is a coward. Whoever has a large and full neck is slow on the uptake. Whoever has fleshy lips is stupid and dense. Whoever has a decidedly round face suffers from pride. Whoever has large and even ears, likewise, and he is long-lived. A lovely voice is a sign of stupidity and..."

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


30 For the relation between form and size of the head (seat of the brain that controls the intellectual functions) see also Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, *Firasa* 39-40. See also Ibn ‘Arabi, *Tadhkira* 167; Idem, *Futuhat* 239.


32 Batal must probably be read *jabba*, as in the corresponding passage of Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi (*Firasa* 38).

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36 *Lihiya* must probably be read *jabha*, as in the corresponding passage of Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi (*Firasa* 38).

37 The passage between brackets is the same as Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, *Firasa* 38. There is a great similarity also with the description of the "man of thick nature" in ar-Razi, *Tibb* 176.


40 The size of the eye means abundance of the humid substance of brain, which is a cause of silliness (Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, *Firasa* 62).


scarce intelligence. Abundant and solid flesh are signs of sensations and density of intelligence. 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-Ahnaf 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. AbdSams.'

This description covers all the characteristics that ar-Razi, in his Kitāb al-fīrāṣa, ascribes to the dyscrasic temperament and which, as we have pointed out earlier, denote a very small or fleshiness in the face, eyes or feet. Other characteristics are strictly short fingers, a round face, shortness of stature, a head that is either very large or lack of equilibrium and also excess in one sense or the other, be it a large stomach, absence of intelligence. One example: if the forehead is low, it corresponds to a smaller brain, which can only implicate scarce intellective faculties. 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, 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. Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, although he considers 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, just as is inappropriate intervention in a discourse, or loquacity or too hurried answers. 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 fīrāṣa 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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52 Concerning the long beard as a sign of silliness see the sources quoted in Ghersetti 1993:90.

54 Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, Fīrāṣa 60; ar-Rāzī, Tibb 168; Qāhū fol. 21 v.; but compare an-Nuwayri, Nihayāt III, 149, 356.

55 Ibn 'Arabi, Tadhīrāt 165 and Futūḥat 238; Fahr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, Fīrāṣa 66; Pseudo-Polemon, Phys. 152; ar-Rāzī, Tibb 164, 165; Qāhū fol. 21 v.

56 Polemon, Fīrāṣa; the second chapter is devoted to animal psychology.
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This description covers all the characteristics that ar-Razi, 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. 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 intellective faculties. 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, a nose that is large and reminiscent of the bovine species, for example. The theory according to which the similarity of somatic features between man and the animals implicates a similarity in the character traits, finds a systematic exposition in the treatise of Polemon of Laodiceia.

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51 Qahf fol. 22 r.; Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, Firāsa 72; ar-Razi, Tibb 169.

52 Concerning the long beard as a sign of silliness see the sources quoted in Gheretti 1993:90.

53 Even in handbooks for kun`tub 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 (al-Šaybanī, Risāla 9, quoted by al-Qalqasandi, Subh I, 67).

54 Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, Firāsa 60; ar-Razi, Tibb 168; Qahf fol. 21 v.; but compare an-Nuwayri, Nihayat III, 149, 356.

55 Ibn 'Arabi, Tadbirat 165 and Futuhat 238; Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi, Firāsa 66; Pseudo-Polemon, Phys. 152; ar-Razi, Tibb 164, 165; Qahf fol. 21 v.

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58 These two are among the most widespread definitions of 'silliness' which can be found in adab works. See Gheretti 1993:88-89.