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Ḥilm or “Judiciousness”: A Contribution to the Study of Islamic Ethics

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Among the ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God listed in Islamic religious literature, there appears *al-ḥalīm*,¹ deriving directly from the text of the Koran.² As is the case with other Names, the Koran also applies *ḥalīm* to human beings; in particular, the virtue is recognised in Abraham (Cor 9, 114 and 11, 75), in his son (Cor 37, 101), as well as in the prophet Shu‘ayb (Cor 11, 87).³ This essay will examine the ingredients of the virtue called *ḥilm* and define the qualities of the man who possesses it with reference to the canonical sources and other traditionally based works, and aims thereby to offer a contribution to the study of the Islamic ethics of virtue.⁴

- 1 In al-Tirmidhī’s list, deriving from Abū Hurayra, it appears in 33rd place.
- 2 Where it is found from the late Meccan period; cf. 2, 225, 235 & 263; 3, 155; 4, 12; 5, 101; 22, 59; 64, 17; 17, 44; 33, 51; 35, 41. In the various appearances of the term in the Koran, this manifestation of divinity is paired with sufficiency (cf. *ghanī ḥalīm*), knowledge (cf. *ḥalīm ‘alīm*), pardon (cf. the expression *ghafūr ḥalīm*) and gratitude (cf. *ḥalīm shakūr*). On gratitude or *shukr* as a human virtue, by extension from the Divine Name, I take the liberty of directing readers to my own “The Gratitude of man and the Gratitude of God. Notes on *shukr* in traditional Islamic thought”, *Islamochristiana*, 38 (2012), pp. 45-61.
- 3 *Ḥalīm* belongs then with the “equivocal” (*asmā’ mutashābiḥa*) or “shared” (*mushtaraka*) Names on which al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) reflects at length in his *al-Maḥṣad al-Asnā fi Sharḥ Asmā’ Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, Arabic Text, edited with Introduction by Fadlou A. Shehadi, Beirut, Dar el-Machreq, 1971 (for *ḥalīm*, p. 112). On *ḥalīm*, see also Daniel Gimaret, *Les Noms divins en Islam: Exégèse lexicographique et théologique*, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1988, pp. 420-2.
- 4 On *ḥilm* in the Islamic context, see above all: Charles Pellat, “Ḥilm”, *EI2*; *idem*, “Concept of *ḥilm* in Islamic Ethics”, in *Études sur l’histoire socio-culturelle de l’islam (VII^e-XV^e s.)*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1976, pp. 131-43, originally *Bulletin of the Institute of Islamic Studies*, India, Aligarh, 6-7 (1962-3); Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-religious concepts in the Qur’ān*, Montreal, McGill University Press, 1966 (revised edition of *The structure of the ethical terms of the Koran*, Tokyo 1959), pp. 28-31 & 69; Georges Henri Bousquet, “Études islamologiques d’Ignaz Goldziher: Traduction analytique (III)”, *Arabica* 7 (1960), pp. 237-73, particularly pp. 246-9. Some useful material in Frank Griffel, “Moderation”, *EQ*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, v. III, p. 401.

From Puberty's Dreams to Intellectual Maturity

Ibn Manẓūr's (d. 711/1312-3) investigations in his *Lisān al-'Arab* into the lexical root *ḥlm* from which *ḥalīm* derives open with a reference to dreams.⁵ Our author writes that "a dream—*ḥulm* or *ḥulum*, pl. in both cases *aḥlām*—is an oneiric vision (*ru'yā*); in Arabic one says that someone *ḥalama* when he has seen something in his sleep (*manām*)", seeing in one's sleep (*ḥalama*, *iḥtalama*, *inḥalama*) being "the opposite of seeing in reality".⁶ Ibn Manẓūr then cites a well-known prophetic saying which applies the fifth form derived from the verb in question, *taḥallama*, with its sense of "counterfeiting a dream", that is, lying about the content of one's dream.⁷ This is a very grave fault—he explains—and severely punishable in the life to come, because dreams are a part of prophecy and to simulate a dream is equivalent to counterfeiting a message from God;⁸ *taḥallum*, the simulating of dreams, is therefore a lie about God, a much more serious matter than a lie about the world or about oneself. A few lines further on, however, he emphasises for his readers the inexact synonymy of *ḥulm* or *ḥulum* and *ru'yā*: even while a philologist such as al-Jawharī (d. 393/1003) can maintain that *ḥulum* means no more than "that which one sees in dreams", the Prophetic Tradition none the less insists that the term indicates a dream of satanic provenance or at least of largely negative content, while only *ru'yā* indicates a dream of divine inspiration or largely positive content.⁹

These opening remarks point to an ambiguity in the root in question, given that *ḥulm* (or *ḥulum*) seems to refer at the same time to a genuine message from God which must not be misrepresented, and to a bundle of mischief

5 *Lisān al-'Arab*, Beirut, Dār al-ma'ārif, 2010 (6 vols.), v. II, pp. 979-82; cf. al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1790), *Tāj al-'Arūs*, Riad, Dār al-Hidāya, n.d. (40 vols.), v. XXXII, pp. 524-34, which begins and continues along similar lines; in the same vein but more concisely al-Fayrūz'ābādī (d. 817/1415), *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, Cairo, Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 6th ed. 1419/1998, p. 1096. For a rapid overview of the lexicographical work on the root in question, v. Pellat, "Ḥilm".

6 The author cites by way of example two phrases from the pre-Islamic poet Bishr Abī Khāzim: "*ā ḥaqq^{un} mā ra'ayta am iḥtilām?*", "*yurwā am inḥilām?*", p. 979.

7 Cf. *Lisān*, *ibidem*: "*ḥalama idhā ra'ā wa-taḥallama idhā idda'ā l-ru'yā kādhiban*". The saying in question is: *Man taḥallama mā lam yaḥlum kullifa an ya'qida bayna sha'iratayn*, "he who pretends to have dreamed what he has not dreamed will be made to distinguish between two grains of barley", cf. al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-ta'bīr*; *bāb man kadhaba fī ḥulmi-hi*, no. 6635, after Ibn 'Abbās (here and hereafter, for every reference to the Tradition, unless otherwise indicated, see <http://www.islamweb.net/hadith>).

8 Thus also another Prophetic saying, cf. al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-ta'bīr*; *bāb al-ru'yā al-ṣāliḥa juz'^{un} min sitta wa arba'īn juz'^{an} min al-nubuwwa*, no. 6502 (after 'Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit).

9 Cf. *Lisān*, again p. 979.

prompted by Satan. Ibn Manẓūr then adds a further element to the discussion when he informs us that the same verb *ḥalama*, of which *ḥulm* is the action noun, can also refer to a sensual dream;¹⁰ and thus introduces a completely new current emanating from the root, the reference to the sexual sphere. The author proceeds with his explication by seeking, as always, guidance from the canonical literature, the Koran and the Sunna, and cites a Koranic passage that employs the term *ḥulum* in the context of puberty or sexual maturity.¹¹ As far as the Traditional literature is concerned, according to Ibn Manẓūr the reference to sexuality is less explicit. On the one hand he reminds us that Mohammed insisted on the obligation to wash completely on Fridays for every *ḥālim*, meaning all who had reached the age of puberty, that is, "whoever had just arrived at the point of having sensual dreams, or who had already experienced them".¹² On the other hand he mentions the instruction given to one of the Anṣār, Mu'ādh b. Jabal, to the effect that all those who had attained the status of *ḥālim* should pay the individual tax of one *dīnār*, in this case *ḥālim* signifying "whoever has reached a mature faculty of judgement (cf. *ḥukm al-rijāl*), whether or not he has experienced a sensual dream";¹³ and he goes on to state that the traditional narratives speak of a *muḥtalim* as one who has reached "the age of understanding" (cf. *bāligh mudrik*), the stage of adulthood at which one sees the sense of things.¹⁴ These observations take account of the above-mentioned ambiguity which revolves around the complex issue of sexual maturity, at one and the same time the dark corner of physical prohibitions and sinful temptations, and the shining signal of that intellectual maturity appreciated by both God and men.

The final aspect, relating to the cognitive dimension, is shaped by the other main derivative of the root in question, that is *ḥilm* (pl. *aḥlām* and *ḥulūm*), which Ibn Manẓūr defines as a combination of thoughtfulness and intelligence (*anāt* and *ʿaql*), and, by antonym, as "the opposite of foolishness" (*naqīd al-safah*).¹⁵ This is the semantic area particularly covered by the verb *ḥaluma*, of which *ḥilm* is the action noun: the link between dreaming and sexuality

10 "Ḥulm and *iḥtilām* both mean to dream of embracing and everything that entails"; *ibid.*

11 *Lam yablughū l-ḥulum*, "they have not reached puberty", in Cor 24, 58 (cf. 24, 59); *ibid.*

12 On the Friday washing required of every adult (designated *muḥtalim*; see also below in body of text), cf. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-ʿashara al-mubashsharīn bi-l-janna*, no. 11414, after Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī (d. between 63/682 & 74/693).

13 *Iḥtalamā aw lam yaḥtalim*, *Lisān*, p. 980, from the account of the Companion Abū l-Haytham (d. circa 20 AH); cf. *Tāǧ al-ʿArūs*, 524-5 citing a saying of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and explaining *iḥtilām* as the emission of sperm, whether by night or day.

14 *Lisān*, *ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*

posited above with the verb *ḥalama* here seems entirely forgotten, as indeed any connection between the sexual impulse and maturity of judgment (cf. *ḥulm* and *ḥulum*), and we are left with simply the achievement of an intellectual and moral perfection.¹⁶ The virtue described by *ḥilm*, which renders its possessor *ḥalīm* (pl. *ḥulamā'* or *aḥlām*), is therefore, in general terms at least, “judiciousness”,¹⁷ keenness of mind and prudence in action. Ibn Manẓūr implies as much when he writes, with reference to another prophetic saying,¹⁸ that “*ḥilm*, together with thoughtfulness (*anāt*) and strength of purpose (*tathabbut*), is a distinguishing trait of the intelligent (*‘uqalā'*)”.¹⁹

A little further on he examines a Koranic passage concerning the prophet Shu‘ayb (11, 87), where the unbelievers among his people complain about him for all his being *ḥalīm*. He explains that this use of *ḥalīm* is satirical, and has here a mocking or derisive sense and therefore should be understood in the diametrically opposite sense of “a foolish and ignorant man” (*safīh jāhil*).²⁰ Thus Ibn Manẓūr, never reluctant to argue from opposites, reaffirms the area embraced by the virtue called *ḥilm*: it is sagacity in the sense of a capacity for sound judgment (*‘aql*), considered and resolute conduct (*anāt, tathabbut*) and

16 The author points to the synonym *taḥallama*, seen above as “to affect a dream”, but here meaning *takallaḥa al-ḥilm*, “to assume or fill oneself with *ḥilm*”; he indicates also the sixth form *taḥālama*, “give evidence of possessing *ḥilm*”, “to claim *ḥalīm*”; and the second, *ḥallama*, “to render *ḥalīm*”, *ibid.*

17 This seems preferable to the common translation of *ḥilm* as “temperance” (recalling the fourth principal virtue of man according to the western tradition, from Plato through Cicero to St. Ambrose) since “temperance”, although retaining the temporal link (cf. *tempus*) implicit in the connection with puberty, tends to signify no more than self-control, moderation in the satisfaction of one’s desires, to the detriment of the cognitive and cultural dimensions.

18 “Be gentle those of you who are *judicious* and wise (*ūlū l-aḥlām wa-l-nuhā*)”; is a quite well-known saying that already appears in the Ibadi al-Rabī‘ b. Ḥabīb’s (d. 103 AH) *Musnad* after ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, and is quoted by al-Dārimī from Ibn Mas‘ūd, by Ibn Māja from ‘Uqba b. ‘Amr, and by Ibn Ḥanbal from both. Ibn Manẓūr writes: “Meaning those who are possessed of good sense (*lubb*) and intelligence (*‘aql*)”, *ibid.*

19 And he concludes: “One says that a woman *aḥlamat*—employing the fourth form in a causative sense—when she has given birth to sons endowed with such virtues”, *ibid.*; cf. for example al-Fayrūz‘ābādī, *Al-Qāmūs*, p. 1096.

20 And he continues: “To say to another *yā ḥalīm* when one believes him ignorant is a particularly offensive insult among the Arabs; it is as if to say: “You think yourself judicious (*ḥalīm*) but to others you’re an idiot (*safīh*)”, *ibid.*; the author also points to a similar rhetorical pairing, *al-‘azīz al-karīm*, in Cor 44, 49, referring to the damned.

the opposite of stupidity or *safah* (or *safāha*); and he adds that, in contrast to ignorance or *jahl*, it leads on to knowledge and wisdom.²¹

Patience, Unhurriedness, Calm, Forbearance

Having examined the various applications of the root and pointed out the dream and sexual maturity connotations conveyed by the verb *ḥalama* and by the nouns *ḥulm* or *ḥulum*—together with the intellectual, cultural and moral connotations conveyed by the verb *ḥaluma* and by the noun *ḥilm*, “judiciousness”—Ibn Manẓūr turns to the corresponding divine attribute, which is to say the entry *ḥalīm* when this is a *ṣifa* applied to God.²² He writes that this Name is synonymous with *ṣabūr*, the intensive form of *ṣābir* or “patient”, and proceeds to explain that this denotes “One who while not taking lightly (*lā yastakhiffu-hu*) the disobedience of the recalcitrant (*‘iṣyān al-‘uṣāt*), none the less does not allow himself to be unsettled (*lā yastafizzu-hu*) by anger against them,²³ who has established the measure (*miqdār*) of every created thing, which is to find its own end in Him (*muntahⁱⁿ ilay-hi*)”.²⁴

Carrying these characteristics back into the human realm, the possession of *ḥilm* or judiciousness derives from the capacity to correctly weigh up contingencies, in particular negative ones, to be resolute in soul and calm in conduct, in absolute confidence of a positive outcome. These are in effect the same components we find in *ṣabr* (cf. *ṣabūr*, above), the “patience” of the imperturbable, a question we will return to. In the meantime, to reinforce and refine the significance of *ḥalīm*, as an aspect of God and, potentially, of man, it will be useful to cast an eye over the exegetic literature, engaging with those texts dealing with the earliest Koranic appearance of the term, as in such works, in all their variety, the commentary is liable to be fullest.²⁵ The citations in

21 On the range of the content of *ḥilm*, conceived as the opposite of *safah* and of *jahl* and to that extent more adequate than *‘aql* in expressing judiciousness in pre-Islamic morality (but not in Koranic thought, nor in Imamite doctrine where it represents an aspect of intelligence exclusively profane in scope), cf. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *Le guide divin dans le shī‘isme originel*, Paris, Verdier, 2007, especially pp. 16-7.

22 *Lisān*, *ibid.* The *Tāğ al-‘Arūs* on the other hand makes no mention of the Name.

23 This is quite a widely shared explication, also put forward in the *Maqṣad*; al-Ghazālī provides the following citation from Cor 16, 6: “If God were to seize men immediately who have sinned, he would not leave anyone on the earth; instead he grants them respite until the appointed day [...]”.

24 *Lisān*, *ibid.*

25 Here and hereafter, to refer to the Koranic commentaries, see www.altafsir.com.

question come from the “Cow” sura (Cor 2, 225) as referring to God, who is called *ghafūr ḥalīm*, “indulgent wise”, two Names simply juxtaposed, as is almost the rule in the Koran; and, with regard to man, from the “Repentance” sura (Cor 9, 114) as referring to Abraham.

In the commentaries on the expression “indulgent wise” as referring to God in the “Cow” sura, “judiciousness” is explained primarily in terms of deferral, an unhurriedness of gesture that derives from the tranquillity of the soul. The great Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) writes: “God is *al-ḥalīm* because he does not hasten (cf. *muʿājala*) the punishment of the disobedient”. Equally insistent on the benevolent time-scale of divine behaviour are the commentaries of the Andalusian theologian al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272)—“judiciousness belongs to the discourse of deferral (*tawsiʿa*)”—and of the dialectician Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209): when *al-ḥalīm* is used as a divine Name, writes al-Rāzī, “it means that God does not hasten (*lā yaʿjalu*) punishment but on the contrary delays (*yuʾakkhiru*) the chastisement of the unbelievers and the corrupt”.²⁶ The latter author teaches that the true basis of *ḥilm* is the unhurriedness deriving from calm: the distinguished theologian also observes, uniquely among the commentators, that in the Arabic language this also signifies “tranquillity” (*sukūn*); one says in fact “mount the sedan on the most judicious (*aḥlam*) camel”, meaning “the slowest walker”; and concerning dream, “it is called *ḥulm* because it is seen in a state of repose (*sukūn* again)”.

Turning now to the epithet *ḥalīm* as referring to man, and in particular to Abraham, the Koran reports that the patriarch, recognising the faithlessness of his father, abandoned him to ruination, albeit with some reluctance. Abraham is therefore described as *awwāh ḥalīm*, “sighing²⁷ and judicious”, grieving for his father but resolute in purpose, an example of dominance over the emotions.²⁸ It is particularly the emotional, the passionate element, underlying his judiciousness, but restrained and subjected by it, that stands out in al-Rāzī’s

26 Cf. also, for example, al-Bayḍāwī (*lam yaʿjal al-muʾākhadha*, “He does not hasten to seize them”), al-Jalālayn (*ḥalīm bi-taʾkhīr al-ʿuqūba ʿan mustahiqqi-hā*, “[...] because he postpones the punishment of those who merit it”), al-Shawkānī (*lam yaʿjal al-kaffāra*, “He does not hasten the expiation of sins”).

27 This is the sense of *awwāh* according to some commentators, for example al-Rāzī who points immediately to the onomatopoeia of the term (*min qawl al-rajul ʿinda ḥuzni-hi āh*, “it derives from the sound a man makes when he is sad, [that is] ah”), while recording alternative explanations; cf. al-Qurṭubī who includes this idea (*inna-hu l-mutaʿawwih*, from Abū Dharr) among fifteen equally plausible alternatives.

28 One might think too of Cor 37, 102 where Abraham, on receiving the instruction for the sacrifice, is initially troubled by it and consults his son; perhaps, in the context of *ḥilm*, it is no coincidence that this divine order arrives in the course of a dream-vision.

commentary, always more alert to intratextual nuances than his colleagues; this author in fact explains that among the causes, or rather the conditions (*asbāb*) of Abraham's *hilm*, are a refinement and delicacy of the heart (*riqqat al-qalb*) and a natural inclination to sentiment and affection (*'atf*). For his part, Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) restricts the scope of this virtue but emphasises its moral importance; thinking in general of the vicissitudes of Abraham's life and his idolatrous tribe, he sees judiciousness rather as the badge of the man of forbearance, who knows how to tolerate malice and impertinence, thus superimposing *hilm* on the virtue of *ṣabr*, the "patience" of he who insists on repaying evil with good, as the Koran teaches on more than one occasion.²⁹

"Abraham is called *ḥalīm* because he dealt generously with those who did him ill"—writes Ibn Kathīr—"because he interceded with God on their behalf and sought pardon for them". Such an interpretation of the judiciousness of Abraham, as the mirror-image and equivalent of patience or *ṣabr*, is a commonplace³⁰ of the commentaries down to the present day.³¹ Where then is the borderline between *hilm* and *ṣabr*?

The answer must surely lie in the connection between *hilm* and the age of majority or *ḥulm*: a calm, quiet and tolerant judiciousness (*hilm*, exactly) is certainly patience or steadfastness (*ṣabr*) but winnowed of the deficiencies of youth and burnished with maturity of judgment and cultural experience. This clarification is especially evident in the glosses on the *hilm* of Abraham's son as cited in the Confederates sura, where it says: "We gave him the good news of a *ḥalīm* boy" (Cor 37, 101); in this case we see the various authors obliged to fall back on the link with puberty and re-establish the connection between the verbs *ḥalama* and *ḥaluma*. "God announces to Abraham that his son is

29 We read for example in the Explained in Detail sura: "The good and the bad action are not equal; if you respond with the better one your enemy will become a sincere friend to you. Only those who have been patient (*ṣabarū*) reach this level [...] (Cor 41, 34-5)". Cf. Cor 28, 54: "They will receive double their reward because they have been patient, because they repay evil with good [...]."

30 Cf. for example the Shiite al-Ṭabarsī, d. 548/1153 ("*ḥalīm* means very patient—*ṣabūr*—when confronting a wrong, forbearing—*ṣafūḥ*—when confronting guilt"), al-Qurṭubī ("is the man who forgives injuries and bears with patience—*yaṣbiru*—the wrongs done to him"; the latter however, the expert jurist, anticipating exceptions, adds: "is the man who punishes no-one unless in God's name, who supports no-one unless in God's name"), or "the two Jalāl" ("is the man who is patient—*yaṣbiru*—in the face of an offence").

31 Still expressly citing patience or *ṣabr* we find the well-known commentators al-Ālūsī (d. 1270/1853) and Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Sha'rāwī (d. 1418/1998). More obliquely the Yemenite al-Shawkānī (d. 1250/1834): "An aspect of Abraham's *hilm* is that, if one of his people did him a wrong, he would reply: May God lead you to the right (*hadā-ka llāh*)".

ḥalīm”—al-Ṭabarī explains, for example—“and from this we understand that he must grow to maturity; as to his infancy in the cradle, that goes unmentioned”. This idea that God’s promise to Abraham included the survival of the child at least until adulthood, given that the young cannot qualify for the description *ḥilm*, we find too in al-Qurṭubī. The commentary of the Mu‘tazilite al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) also follows the same line, the latter an author ever alert to linguistic and rhetorical considerations, who while highlighting the virtue in question praises particularly the concision of the Koranic idiom. In the briefest of phrases—he points out—“God announces three things to Abraham: that he would have a male child, that the child would reach the age of puberty (*ḥilm*) and that he would be *ḥalīm*; more *ḥalīm* than Abraham even, because when the latter revealed his intention of sacrificing him, the boy replied: If it be God’s will, He will find me patient (*min al-ṣābirīn*, Cor 37, 102), after which he dedicated himself to God (or to *islām*, cf. *thumma staslama*)”. Al-Zamakhsharī then adds: “there is no quality that God—which is to say the Koran—attributes (*na‘ata*) more sparingly to the prophets than judiciousness, so glorious (cf. *‘izza*) is its presence”.³²

The Antidote to Foolishness and Ignorance

We were saying that the borderline between *ḥilm* and *ṣabr* is marked by *ḥilm*’s association with maturity, sexually and intellectually, which restricts the possession and exercise of judiciousness. It now needs to be added that this border is also marked by the presence of an offensive action, not bad luck in general but a particular wrong endured (*al-adhā*), which makes judiciousness the remedy to which the Muslim can have recourse against the assaults of others; thus, if patience is the necessary analgesic, then judiciousness is his powerful antidote.

This aspect is repeatedly illustrated in the little *Book of Judiciousness* or *Kitāb al-Ḥilm*³³ by Ibn Abī l-Dunyā of Bagdad (d. 281/894), more or less a contemporary of the “canonical” authors of the works on the Prophetic Tradition, a man of exemplary rectitude, a tutor of the Abbasid princes and a prolific

32 “And this virtue—he concludes—is even awarded Abraham twice over” (as already noted, in Cor 9, 114 & 11, 75). Confirming the “uniqueness” of wisdom, we may note that *ḥalīm* never appears in the plural in the Koran, unlike, for example, *ṣābir*, “patient”.

33 The title is vocalised *Al-Ḥulum* in Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā’s critical edition, consulted here, in *Majmū‘at rasā’il Ibn Abī l-Dunyā*, Beirut, Mu’assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1413/1993.

author on moral questions. His *Book of Judiciousness* is a series of over a hundred juxtaposed traditional short tales, in prose and verse, without commentary, given the absence of which it is important to consider carefully the sequence of the pieces, as the author's message clearly lies in the arrangement of the material no less than in its selection. And right at the beginning of the work we find a saying of Mohammed which underlines the importance of impediments: "There can be no judicious man without an obstacle (*lā ḥalīma illā dhū 'athra*), there can be no sage man without a trial (*lā ḥakīma illā dhū tajriba*)".³⁴ A few decades later the Khorasanian Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī (d. 354/965) also singles out and comments on this saying in an extensive work entitled *The Garden of the Intelligent, The Path of the Virtuous* (*Rawḍat al-'uqalā' wa-nuzhat al-fuḍalā'*), in his turn placing it at the head of a chapter on judiciousness.³⁵ As Ibn Ḥibbān suggests in fact, the saying means that, just as judiciousness cannot exist unless some obstacle brings it to light by putting it to the test, so there can be no sagacity unless measured against foolishness, because the existence of every perfection depends on the experience of its lack.³⁶

Returning to Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's work: in second place, as a sort of extra prologue, the author refers to another of the Prophet's sayings, which deals instead with the role of personal commitment in the practice of virtue: "One obtains knowledge by learning (*al-'ilm bi-l-ta'allum*) and judiciousness by making oneself judicious (*al-ḥilm bi-l-taḥallum*);³⁷ he who dedicates himself to the good, will find it given to him, and he who is alert to evil will be protected from it".³⁸

34 *Al-Ḥulum*, pp. 14-5 (no. 1), by Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī. Cf. al-Bukhārī, *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, Beirut, Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād al-Bāqī, 3rd ed. 1409/1989, *bāb al-tajārib*, p. 199, no. 565; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan, Kitāb al-birr wa-l-ṣīla*, no. 1953; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad, Musnad al-'ashara al-mubashsharīn bi-al-janna*, no. 11449.

35 Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1397/1977 (no editor's name given); the chapter is titled *Al-Ḥathth 'alā luzūm al-ḥilm 'inda al-adhā'*, pp. 137-42. This is one of the few works surviving from the voluminous output of this author, more methodical than some in the arrangement of his material; cf. Johann W. Fück, "Ibn Ḥibbān", *EI2*.

36 *Rawḍat al-'Uqalā'*, p. 137; the author's argument turns on the linguistic significance of the *lā l-nāfiya li-l-jins* in the saying in question; cf. p. 138.

37 Taking into account the median or reflexive sense of the fifth verbal form.

38 *Al-Ḥulum*, pp. 16-7 (no. 2), after Abū Hurayra (d. 57/676); cf. also p. 43-4 (no. 47). This saying also appears in al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/970), *Al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ, bāb al-alif, bāb man ismu-hu Ibrāhīm*, no. 2738, after the Companion Abū l-Dardā' (d. 32/652); and in al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995), *Al-'Ilal al-wārīda fī al-aḥādīth al-nabawiyya, musnad Mu'adh b. Jabal*, no. 1435, again after Abū l-Dardā'.

After reminding us that judiciousness should be actively sought by man, Ibn Abī l-Dunyā teaches that it is none the less a beautiful gift from the creator; he places in fact in third position, the following prayer of Mohammed's: "O Lord, make me rich in learning (*ilm*), adorn me with judiciousness (*ḥilm*), honour me with fear of Thyself, and make me handsome with good health".³⁹

Having introduced his material according to the logical sequence we have outlined—first the necessary experience of an impediment, then individual commitment (which is *jihād*, naturally), and then faith in grace which makes virtue a reward—the *Book of Wisdom* offers, in fourth place, a further saying of Mohammed's: "The Prophet said to his followers: Aim for the highest level (*rif'a*) before God. And they asked him:—What is that, thou Messenger of God? He answered—Be reunited with those that have become distant from you, give to those who have taken from you what was yours, and be judicious (*taḥlum*) with those who behave ignorantly towards you".⁴⁰ This exchange demonstrates the social implications of judiciousness, and re-emphasises its area of application: *ḥilm* is "responding to evil with good" as Abraham did, and as his son did, a mature, subtle and entirely worldly form of patience or *ṣabr*, with which the good Muslim should combat those who fall short, in accordance with the admonishments insisted on in the Koran.⁴¹ Precisely because it is a generous response to a wicked action by another, judiciousness has a formidable civic function, i.e. that of prophylaxis (*rādī'a*); in this context Ibn Abī l-Dunyā quotes an aphorism of al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad's (d. 175/791), a scholar much admired for his sound judgement and piety, although best known as a philologist:⁴² "If a man does evil and receives good in return, a barrier is formed in his heart which will hold him back (*yarda'u-hu*) from committing a like offence a second time".⁴³

We have seen that in Ibn Manẓūr's work *ḥilm* is "the opposite of foolishness" or *safah*, and that among its attributes is a proper use of the intellect (*ʿaql*); this qualification is amply illustrated by Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, who throughout his anthology emphasises the intellectual and cognitive dimension of the

39 *Ibid.*, p. 19 (no. 3).

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 20-1 (no. 4), again after Abū Hurayra. This saying seems to be not much recorded, but does appear in the compendious *Kāmil fī du'afā' al-rijāl* by Ibn 'Adī al-Jurjānī, d. 365/976), *man ibtadā' asāmī-him wāsil*, no. 8566, after 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar.

41 See above, note 29.

42 See particularly Michael G. Carter, *Another Khalīl: Courtier, Teacher, and Sage*, in Karin C. Ryding (ed.), *Early Medieval Arabic: Studies on Al-Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad*, Georgetown University Press, 1998, pp. 16-42.

43 *Al-Ḥulum*, p. 43 (no. 46).

Islamic moral consciousness. In fifth place in his collection the author teaches that "judiciousness is an aptitude (*khaṣla*) of the intelligence (*ʿaql*)".⁴⁴ He reminds us however that judiciousness is a higher attribute than intelligence because God applies the former epithet to Himself, but not the latter.⁴⁵ Still on the subject of intelligence but arguing *a contrario*, Ibn Abī l-Dunyā will often insist on the opposition, antagonism even, of judiciousness to foolishness. He does so, for example, using two of Mohammed's sayings; the first: "There are three things that if a single one is lacking in a man his deeds will count for nothing, and they are the fear of God that keeps him from disobeying the Lord, judiciousness (*ḥilm*) to keep the foolish at bay, and a good character that enables him to live among his fellow men";⁴⁶ the second: "When God wishes a people well he puts business in the hands of the judicious (*ḥulamāʾ*) and wealth in the hands of the generous, and when he wishes a people ill he puts business in the hands of the foolish (*suhafāʾ*) and wealth in the hands of the miserly".⁴⁷

Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, then, correlates *ḥilm* with intelligence or *ʿaql*, but also, secondarily, with knowledge or *ʿilm*, because, as he says, "nothing marries better

44 *Ibid.*, p. 21 (no. 5). Cf. p. 62 (no. 92): "The ornament of man is Islam, the ornament of Islam is intelligence, the ornament of intelligence is judiciousness, the ornament of judiciousness is restraint, the ornament of restraint is thoughtfulness and reflection, the ornament of thoughtfulness is to be patient (*taṣabbur*) and the ornament of being patient is to pause and consider what constitutes obedience, and what constitutes disobedience". Cf. also Ibn Ḥibbān, *Rawḍat al-Uqalāʾ*, p. 140: "The intelligent man, when he is angered and goes into a rage, should remember how much judiciousness God has shown him even while he insistently continues to transgress (cf. *intihāk*) and to violate what ought to be inviolable (cf. *tuʿaddī-hi ḥurumāti-hi*); then, having done this (*thumma*), he should himself behave with judiciousness [...]".

45 *Ibid.*, p. 29 (no. 15); cf. Ibn Ḥibbān, *Rawḍat al-Uqalāʾ*, p. 138. It is worth noting that *al-ḥalīm* is a Name while the same cannot be said of the derivatives of the root *ʿql*.

46 *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49 (no. 55), after Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/686). The saying is also reported by al-Ṭabarānī, *Makārim al-Akhlāq*, chap. *Faḍl al-rifq wa-l-ḥilm wa-l-anāt*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1421/2000, p. 322, no. 30 (this work, annotated by Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn, appears *in fine*, pp. 309-95, of a homonymous text by Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAtā). And in more or less similar terms, the saying appears in the *Musnad* of Abū Bakr al-Bazzār (d. 292/904-5), *Al-Baḥr al-Zakḥkhār, baqiyya musnad Anas*, no. 1978.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 58 (no. 75). This little-known saying appears in *Al-Āthār li-Abī Yūsuf, bāb al-ṭalāq*, no. 924, after Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm (d. 182/798). Cf. also p. 52 (no. 58): "Do not mix (*lā tujālis*) your judiciousness with the foolish and do not mix your foolishness with the judicious.

(*mā adyaf shay'in*) with another thing than judiciousness with knowledge".⁴⁸ It is an observation that is no more than necessary: *ḥilm* is a virtue to a Muslim—it is not irrelevant that *al-ḥalīm* is a Divine Name—and a Muslim is someone who not only has access to reason, like any other human being, but also, thanks to the Book, to “science” in the particular sense of revealed knowledge.⁴⁹ Ibn Abī l-Dunyā also shows conversely that judiciousness is the correlative of ignorance or *jahl* when, still in an introductory placing, explains that those, whom the Holy Book calls “the servants of the Most Merciful, who walk the earth with humility and, when the ignorant (*al-jāhilūn*) berate them, reply only: Peace be with you” (Cor 25, 63), are precisely “the judicious men” (*al-ḥulamā*).⁵⁰ And he again sets *ḥilm* against ignorance when he reports these words of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib’s: “The first recompense due to the judicious (*ḥalīm*) for his virtue is that all be his supporters against the ignoramus (*jāhil*)”.⁵¹

The argument is even clearer when appeal is made to a great exemplar of judiciousness, the Caliph Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān (d. 64/680),⁵² who, according to historical tradition, used to consult his contemporaries on questions of

48 *Ibid.*, p. 28 (no. 14). In a very similar vein Ibn Ḥibbān, *Rawḍat al-‘Uqalā’*, p. 140, who adds that “nothing is more discordant than the absence of knowledge in an intelligent person (*‘adam al-‘ilm fī l-‘āqil*)”; elsewhere this author records that “a man once wrote to his brother: judiciousness is the clothing of knowledge, do not undress yourself utterly”, *ibid.*, p. 139.

49 On the same theme, Ibn Abī l-Dunyā quotes a saying by Abū l-Dardā’: “The good does not consist in the increase of your wealth or of your offspring, but in the growth of your *ḥilm* and the increase of your *‘ilm* [...]”, *ibid.* p. 53 (no. 60).

50 *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7 (no. 10, cf. no. 11). According to the author, “make yourselves masters” (*kūnū rabbāniyyīn*)” in Cor 3, 79 is also an inducement to judiciousness (cf. p. 26 no. 9). On the counterpointing of *jahl* and *ḥilm* in Cor 25, 63 and also, according to the commentaries of al-Ṭabarī and al-Zamakhsharī, in Cor 28, 55, cf. William E. Shepard, “Ignorance”, *EQ*, vol. II, pp. 487-8.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 27 (no. 12).

52 Ibn Abī l-Dunyā composed an entire *Kitāb Ḥilm Mu‘āwiya* (ed. Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ, Damascus, Dār al-Bashā’ir li-l-nashr wa-l-tawzī’, 1424/2003). The *ḥilm* of the Caliph Mu‘āwiya became proverbial, and, as Pellat records (see *Ḥilm*) reflecting on the expression “*aḥlam min Aḥnaf*”, it is considered second only to that of al-Aḥnaf al-Tamīmī (d. 67/686-7), a typical figure of the pre-Islamic *sayyid*; indeed, “this caliph belonged to a dynasty which had not yet shed all its bedouin character and, on the other hand, an analysis of his *ḥilm* shows that he had made of it a political principle”. Mu‘āwiya’s virtue receives, naturally, an altogether different treatment in the Shiite literature: in the words of the Imām Ja‘far, his is not a case of *ḥilm* but of malicious cunning or *nakrā’*, “a satanic attribute which resembles intelligence or *‘aql*, but is far from being it”, cf. again Amir-Moezzi, *Le guide divin*, p. 25.

morality; and the attention the Umayyad Caliph paid to recent converts, transmitters therefore of Arab values antedating Islam is clearly presented in Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's work, as a demonstration of the perennial and incontrovertible validity of *ḥilm*. Our author records that when Mu'āwiya asked 'Arāba b. Aws, a leading Medinan, known as "The Supernal" (*al-shammākh*) for his exceptional moral qualities, how he had governed his people, the latter's reply was: "I have been judicious (*ḥalīm*) with the ignorant (*jāhil*) among them, I have rewarded the petitioners among them, and I have been prompt in responding to their needs".⁵³

Going back in time to further emphasise the glory of *ḥilm*, Ibn Abī l-Dunyā remembers, from the testament of the legendary Luqmān: "My son, I commend to you all good qualities for if you ground yourself in these you will never fail to excel: spread your judiciousness (*ḥilm*) among both the near and the far, and keep your ignorance (*jahl*) from both the excellent and the blameworthy [...]".⁵⁴

Forgiveness and Silence, Humility and Honour

In Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's anthology, the great majority of selections treat the theme of *ḥilm* as the intelligent and educated man's foil to both foolishness or *safah* and ignorance or *jahl*; and given that both these are interpreted as offensive attitudes towards others, another important component of judiciousness must also be pardon (*ghafr*, *maghfira*) and forgiveness (*'afw*), the latter involving particularly the renunciation of punishment or of claiming right of revenge, although it is within one's power to do so.⁵⁵

53 *Ibid.*, p. 40 (no. 39).

54 "[...] and renew your ties with your kin, and make those your brothers whom you have not spoken ill of, after they have broken off relations with you and you with them", *ibid.*, p. 46 (no. 50). The "testament of Luqmān" which the saying in question paraphrases and synthesizes, appears in Cor 31, 17-9.

55 Ibn Ḥibbān, *Rawḍat al-'Uqalā'*, p. 137, explains that "nothing marries better with another thing than forgiveness (*'afw*) with power (*maqdira*)" and that "the best judiciousness is that which comes from he who has the power to revenge himself (*al-muqtadir 'alā al-intiqām*). This aspect of *ḥilm*, while present in Arab and Muslim literature generally, and homiletic texts particularly, seems to have been ignored by the classical lexicographers who, as Pellat notes (see *Ḥilm*), "make no reference to the pardoning of offences, whilst in the modern period (as probably for many centuries) the word *ḥilm* generally connotes the qualities associated with patience, leniency, understanding".

Our author, citing the Prophet, reminds us that among the recognised merits on the day of resurrection, there is “that you forgive (*tafu*) those who have done you ill (*zalama*) and treat with judiciousness those who have been ignorant (*jahala*) towards you”.⁵⁶ He goes on to quote again from the Prophet and still in eschatological mode, that “when God gathers his creatures together on the day of resurrection a voice will call out:—Where are the virtuous (*ahl al-faḍl*)? And some will rise immediately and make their way towards paradise. The angels will meet them on the way and ask:—We have seen you heading briskly towards paradise; who are you? They will say:—We are the virtuous. The angels will ask:—And what virtue do you possess? They will answer:—When they wronged us we were patient (*ṣabarnā*) with them, when they did ill unto us we pardoned (*ghafarnā*) them, and we were judicious (*ḥalumnā*) when they treated us in an ignorant manner. The angels will exclaim:—Enter then into paradise, beautiful is the reward of those who have acted well!”.⁵⁷ According to one sage—and here is yet another example of the close relationship binding *ḥilm* to forgiveness, and to intelligence, and to patience—“judiciousness is the buttress of intelligence, patience is the quintessence of action, and the best of actions is forgiveness”.⁵⁸

Worth noting in these and other encomia of pardon and forgiveness is the positive contribution of the provocative action, be it foolish or ignorant, to which the Muslim opposes his judiciousness; in fact, without the preceding offence, his *ḥilm* would have no means or motive to manifest itself, and the opportunity for exemplary behaviour would be lost. The previously cited author of *The Garden of the Intelligent*, Ibn Ḥibbān, explains that virtue (*faḍl*) is only to be found in he that does good (*al-muḥsin*) to one that does him ill (*al-muṣīʿ*), in so far as he who does good to one that does him good and no harm, is not demonstrating his judiciousness or even doing good (*iḥsān*).⁵⁹

Without the stimulus of the foolish or ignorant offence, *ḥilm* cannot do credit to its possessor or be of any advantage to him; this is a lesson Ibn Ḥibbān reinforces by means of an exhortation of Wahb b. Munabbih (d. between 110/728 and 114/732): “Son of mine [...] if a fool treats you in a foolish manner, turn it to profit with your judiciousness! If you do not do good to him so that

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4 (no. 7), after Abū Hurayra.

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 49-51 (no. 56). The author also references this saying in his *Madārat al-Nās*, cf. ed. Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf, Beirut, Dār al-Ḥazm, 1418/1998, pp. 29-30, no. 11.

58 *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30 (no. 16), a saying of Aktham b. Ṣayfī of the Tamīm tribe, known as *al-ḥakīm* for his sagacity; according to the sources, Aktham b. Ṣayfī himself converted immediately on meeting the Prophet and encouraged his people to do likewise.

59 *Rawḍat al-'Uqalā'*, p. 139.

he do good to you in his turn, where is your reward and how can you excel over others? If you seek merit (*fadīla*), do good to those that do you ill, and forgive those who wrong you, help those who have done nothing for you and await the prizes God will award you. The perfect good deed (*al-ḥasana al-kāmila*) is one which looks for no return in this world".⁶⁰

On the same theme, Ibn Ḥibbān quotes from Makḥūl al-Hudhalī (d. *circa* 112/730) a saying so elliptical it borders on the incomprehensible: "He has no judiciousness who has not an ignoramus (*lā ḥilma li-man lā jāhila la-hu*)", which he explains as meaning that sometimes the judicious man needs a fool (*safīh*) to get the better of him, as the absence of *ḥilm* can be *ḥilm* in its turn. He then reports a dialogue between two well-known personalities, each by turns proving ignorant and judicious, the celebrated theologian and Sunni jurist Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) and the Shiite Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Nu'mān.⁶¹ "Abū Ḥanīfa asked:—What do you think of temporary marriage (*mut'a*)? The other replied:—It is permissible (*ḥalāl*). To which Abū Ḥanīfa exclaimed:—And would you be happy were your mother to make a temporary marriage? The other was silent, but after a while asked him:—And you, Abū Ḥanīfa, what do you think of wine (*nabīdh*)? It is permissible—he replied. To drink, to buy and to sell?—pursued his interlocutor.⁶² Yes,—he replied.⁶³ The other was silent for a moment and then exclaimed:—And would you be happy if your mother was a barmaid? Abū Ḥanīfa was silent in his turn".⁶⁴

As in the above story, silence (*sukūt* or *ṣamt*) in the face of foolishness, another's or one's own, can be a valid expression of *ḥilm*. Returning to Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, he repeats this several times through the agency of his anthologised material; for example with these verses of the Kufa poet al-Mu'ammil b. Umayl al-Muḥāribī, who lived on the cusp of the Umayyad and the Abbasid dynasties: "When the fool (*safīh*) speaks, reply not/for silence (*sukūt*) is better than a retort [...]".⁶⁵ A little further on he cites the Kufa traditionist al-A'mash

60 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

61 Died around 180 AH; the author refers to him with the insulting epithet "Shayṭān al-Ṭāq".

62 It is worth noting that Abū Ḥanīfa allowed, in the absence of water and in particular when on a journey, ritual washing with the juice of fermented dates, the only form of *nabīdh* permitted for this purpose; cf. A. Pakatchi, S. Umar, "Abū Ḥanīfa", *Encyclopaedia Islamica* (eds. W. Madelung & F. Daftary).

63 The Hanafi school, unlike other Sunni schools and the Shiites, allows the consumption of *nabīdh*, if in moderation; the Hanafi in fact themselves make a distinction between *nabīdh* and *khamr*, the latter absolutely prohibited.

64 *Rawḍat al-'Uqalā'*, again p. 141.

65 *Al-Ḥulum*, p. 34 (no. 24).

(d. 148/765): “Silence is a reply”.⁶⁶ And then again adds a maxim of Wahb b. Munabbih’s: “He who shows indulgence shall be indulged⁶⁷ and he who remains silent (*yaşmutu*) will be safe and sound (*yaslamu*) [...]”.⁶⁸ Another example of reining in the tongue, and a judicious *memento mori*, is the following: “A Muslim insulted a Zoroastrian and behaved like a fool (*safha*) towards him. The Zoroastrian retorted:—The judicious man is he who holds his tongue, and thinks of the worms who will pass through him from one side to the other. And all the bystanders wept”.⁶⁹

Abstention as an ingredient of judiciousness is explored equally in Ibn Ḥibbān’s work. When the author of *The Garden of the Intelligent* lists the constitutive elements of *ḥilm*, for example, he writes that these also include “being silent and letting things go (*şamt wa-ighḍāʾ*)”, and teaches that “if judiciousness could be said to have two fathers, one would be intelligence and the other silence (*şamt*)”.⁷⁰ Amongst similar statements emphasising the inactive or passive character of *ḥilm*, however, Ibn Ḥibbān feels obliged to insert the following dictum of the Caliph al-Maʾmūn (d. 218/833), another leading exemplar: “The ruler should show judiciousness to all, except in these three cases: to those who disparage a king, to those who betray a secret and to those who violate a sacred interdict (*ḥurma*)”.⁷¹ It is an extraordinary inclusion which testifies to the relativity of virtue and is enough on its own to undermine any glib assumptions concerning the blind prescriptivity of Islamic ethics: whether we are dealing with judiciousness or any other virtue, it will not always appear under the same guise but must be identified afresh on every occasion, because the same behaviour may be judged differently according to the individual and the circumstances of his life.

Returning again to Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, we see that it is exactly in the light of such a moral relativity that we should read his observations concerning the term *dhull*, which covers both “humility” in the positive sense, and “humiliation” in the negative. This is illustrated by a Prophetic saying which the author

66 *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6 (no. 28).

67 *Man yarḥamu yurḥamu*; its negative form is cited in a celebrated saying of the Prophet, also recorded by al-Bukhārī, *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, p. 46 (no. 91: *man lā yarḥamu lā yurḥamu*).

68 *Ibid.*, p. 45 (no. 49).

69 *Ibid.*, p. 56-7 (no. 71). Among the many works of this author, one, relatively sizeable, is entirely dedicated to silence: *Al-Şamt wa-ādāb al-lisān*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā, Beirut, Muʾassasat al-Kutub al-thaqāfiyya, 1409/1988.

70 *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40.

71 *Rawḍat al-ʿUqalāʾ*, p. 141.

cites, not in his *The Book of Judiciousness* but elsewhere, in *The book of Modesty and Indolence*, a saying which turns precisely on the ambiguity of the term *dhull*: "Blessed (*ṭūbā*) is he that is modest without want, who is humble (*man dhalla*) without poverty and who dispenses the money he has accumulated without sin, who is kind to the humiliated (*ahl al-dhull*) and the wretched, and who keeps company with the learned and the wise".⁷²

While it is the case that *dhull* appears much more frequently in the Traditional literature in the sense of subjection or dishonour,⁷³ in Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's works, and particularly in *Kitāb al-Ḥilm*, it is used rather in its sense of humility, a noble and courageous giving of oneself, and the mirror of *ḥilm*. For example, Ibn Abī l-Dunyā records an early traditionist esteemed for his staunch morality, 'Īsā b. Ṭalḥa b. 'Ubayd Allāh, replying to the question "what is wisdom?" that it is simply humility;⁷⁴ and has the Caliph Mu'āwiya giving the same response to a similar question.⁷⁵ None the less, our author is at pains to make clear that judiciousness, while humble, quiet and ready to overlook offences, is not to be confused with the abdications of the mean and cowardly, because it is on the contrary an expression of nobility (*sharaf*) and an additional fount of honour (*karam*); he makes the point with a borrowing from Mu'āwiya;⁷⁶ and further reminds us that inscribed on the ring of the valorous Bujayr b. Raysān (d. 64/683) was: "He who is judicious, is noble (*man ḥaluma sharufa*)".⁷⁷ Furthermore, Ibn Abī l-Dunyā firmly places *ḥilm* alongside courage (*shajā'a*):⁷⁸

72 *Kitāb al-Tawādhu' wa-l-khumūl*, ed. Luṭfi Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr, Cairo, Dār al-Itiṣām, 1988, pp. 134-5 (no. 76), after the little known Rakb al-Miṣrī. The saying is also reported by some later authors, e.g. al-Ṭabarānī, both in *Al-Mu'jam al-kabīr, bāb al-rā'*, *bāb man ismu-hu Rabi'*, no. 4478, and, in abbreviated form, in *Makārim al-Akhlaq, faḍl līn al-jānīb*, no. 17.

73 It is sufficient to note that it is often paired with *ṣaghār*, "cowardice" or "servility". For the similar *dhulla*, see the Prophet's invocation in al-Bukhārī, *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, p. 236 (no. 678): "Lord, in You I find refuge from poverty, from want and humiliation (*dhulla*) [...]".

74 *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7 (no. 30).

75 *Ibid.*, p. 37 (no. 31). The author also records the following saying attributed to the Prophet's grandson 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan (d. 50/670): "Seignory (*su'dud*) is patience (*ṣabr*) in the face of humiliation (*dhull*), *ibid.*, p. 60 (no. 81), words that form part of an extended citation, apocalyptic in tone, quoted in a work entitled *Al-Sunan al-Wārīda fī l-Fitan* by 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd al-Dānī (d. 444/1052), in which however the term *dhull* is entirely without any positive shading.

76 *Ibid.*, pp. 37-8 (no. 33).

77 *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60 (no. 79).

78 On the relationship of *ḥilm* to courage cf. A. D. Knysh, "Courage", *EQ*, v. 1, p. 459. According to al-Ghazālī, *ḥilm* is one of the most important subordinate virtues of courage, in so far

“Mu‘āwiyā asked the Tamīmi poet, ‘Amr b. al-Ahtam (d. 75/677):—Who is the most courageous of men? The latter replied:—He who combats (*radda*) his ignorance (*jahl*) with his own judiciousness (*ḥilm*)”.⁷⁹

Before closing, we must mention the *Adab al-Dunyā wa-l-Dīn*⁸⁰ of al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), the great theorist of Muslim institutions and among the first to marry Traditional religious ethics with philosophical enquiry.⁸¹ It is a wide-ranging work, full of acute observations and often very telling⁸² stories,⁸³ which in a chapter on judiciousness⁸⁴ deals among many other issues with the difference between the forgiveness offered by the noble man (*karīm*) and that extracted from the coward (*la‘īm*), the former edifying, the latter unnatural and corrupt. The Arabs say that “What enters a house is what leaves a house”—al-Māwardī reminds us—thus good (*khayr*) will come in only if good has gone forth, while if evil (*sharr*) has come out of the house, evil will enter it.⁸⁵ So too, in a noble soul anger can be noble (*makram*), while the man is a coward who does not become angry when he should, demonstrating a servile

as it is related to anger which is the psychic basis of the irascible capacity; cf. M. H. Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1975, p. 51.

79 The passage continues: “And who is the most noble (*asmā*) of men?—he then asked. It is he who uses his money for the good of his faith—he answered”. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4 (no. 22).

80 Ed. Muṣṭafā l-Shiqqā, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā’ al-‘Ulūm, 3rd ed. 1408/1988, pp. 357-64 (German translation by O. Rescher, *Das Kitāb ‘Adab ed-dunjā wa’ddīn*, Stuttgart, 1932-3).

81 Among these naturally Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) in his *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa-Taṭhīr al-A‘rāq* (ed. Ḥasan Tamīm, Beirut, Dār Matkabāt al-Ḥayāt, n.d., p. 84, English trans. by Constantine K. Zurayk, *The refinement of character*, Beirut, The American University, 1968). On al-Māwardī’s ethical position, updated to bear on those desirous of “passing from the classical to the modern city” cf. Mohammed Arkoun, *L’éthique musulmane d’après Mawardi*, *REI* 31/1 (1963), pp. 1-31.

82 Just a few examples on the subject of judiciousness and its various instances: a man insulted al-Sha‘bī (d. 103/731) who said to him: “If I am as you say, God pardon me, if I am not, He pardon you”, *ibid.*, p. 358. A man swore he would break some object over Mu‘āwiyā’s head; when the Caliph heard of this he said: “Keep to your oath but for pity’s sake let one old man be gentle to another”, *ibid.* On silence: a man said to Ḍirār b. al-Qa‘qā: “If you say one word you will hear ten”; the latter, judiciously, retorted: “If you say ten you will hear none”, *ibid.*, p. 361; after certain wise men: “The anger of the fool is seen in his words, the anger of the intelligent man in his actions”, *ibid.*, pp. 362-3.

83 Some of which we have already encountered in the preceding pages since also related by Ibn Abī l-Dunyā or by Ibn Ḥibbān.

84 Considered together with anger; cf. ch. IV: *Fī l-ḥilm wa-l-ghaḍab*, pp. 357-69.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 364.

spirit (*dhull al-nafs*) and little pride (*ḥamiyya*). As the wise say, there are three kinds of men whose worth we know on three occasions only: the generous man in times of want, the courageous man in time of war, the judicious man in his anger [...].⁸⁶

Conclusions

Our enquiry focused on scriptural sources and a few eloquent works on *adab* demonstrates that the ingredients of the virtue called *ḥilm* are multifarious, with the equivocal root *ḥlm*, which may express sexual and/or intellectual maturity, as our starting point. Given this double matrix, *ḥilm*, generally translatable as "judiciousness", may be understood from one angle as a condition of mind often defined by its opposite: it is associated with intelligence (*ʿaql*) and knowledge (*ʿilm*) in so far as it is contrasted with foolishness (*safah*) and ignorance (*jahl*). Alternatively it may be seen as a way of being and conducting oneself in the world, grounded in a wide range of antonyms of haste (*ʿajala*, *muʿājala*): thus, it is variously thoughtfulness (*anāt*), resolve (*tathabbut*), delay (*taʿkhīr*), deferral (*tawsiʿa*), tranquillity and quietness (*sukūn*) and so on, all the way to, ultimately, abstention; so that *ḥilm* may also be shown by forgoing a verbal response, in which case it is silence, or abstaining from vengeance, when it is pardon or better forgiveness (*ghafr* and *maghfira*, *ʿafw*).

This insistence on definition via opposites, pervasive in the sources, is a reflection of the real basis of *ḥilm*, which is precisely antithesis, the reverse image. Judiciousness may manifest itself in many guises, in the intellect or the heart or in one's behaviour, but it remains essentially that which the Muslim deploys against wrongs done to him. In this, *ḥilm* comes close to patience or *ṣabr*, the Islamic virtue *par excellence*, with two important differences: the first being a temporal limitation, Judiciousness being confined to the age of majority; the second in its range of application, for *ḥilm* is not called on to confront the reverses of fortune—it does not generally respond to God—but the wrongs and injuries (cf. *ẓulm*, *adh^{an}*) originating from men; the writings of the authors we have consulted are unanimous on this. Thus, although it is an Islamic virtue, and could not be otherwise, *al-ḥalīm* being one of the Names of God, judiciousness belongs to the affairs of this world. It is exactly in this worldly

86 *Ibid.*, pp. 363-4.

dimension, as the riposte, both intelligent and educated, and courageous and honourable, of great social and—thinking of Mu‘āwiya—even political relevance, that *ḥilm* harks back to the pre-Islamic era—or to that of it documented by Muslim authors—of whose leaders and wise men it represents the legacy.⁸⁷ In judiciousness therefore we could identify a value taken over by the nascent Islam, without any significant rupture, from a pre-existing world-view.⁸⁸

87 Cf. generally George Hourani, “Ethical Presuppositions of the Qur’ān”, in *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 23-48, particularly p. 24; and Bichr Farès, *L'honneur chez les arabes avant l'Islam: Étude de sociologie*, Paris, Adrien Maisonneuve, 1932, pp. 55-6.

88 Cf., however, the following comment by Pellat, “Ḥilm”: “With Islam [...] ḥilm was to change its character entirely, at least in principle”; and Izutsu’s: “Muhammad’s whole work on its ethical side may very well be represented as a daring attempt to fight to the last extremity with the spirit of *jāhiliyya*, to abolish it completely, and to replace it once for all by the spirit of ḥilm”, *Ethico-religious concepts*, p. 25.