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*The Concept of Esthetics and Beauty in Islam as one
of the components of Islamic art*

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Abstract

The concept of beauty (*jamaal*) is considered the intellectual foundation upon which many artistic achievements are built. This study aims to address the concept of beauty in Islam through three sources: the Noble Quran, the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, and the opinions of early Muslim thinkers. A systematic literature review was conducted to collect data, and an analysis was performed to examine the topic of this study. Among the most important results is that the concept of beauty in Islam is divided into two parts: moral beauty and formal beauty. In Islamic vision, the former is more important than the latter. A consensus has also been reached among the Quran, the Prophet's teachings, and the opinions of Muslim thinkers regarding this interpretation.

Keywords: Beauty, Jamaal, Esthetic, Islamic Art, Quran

مفهوم الجماليات والجمال في الإسلام كأحد مكونات الفن الإسلامي

المخلص

يعتبر مفهوم الجمال أحد أهم الأسس الفكرية التي تقوم عليها العديد من الإنجازات الفنية بما فيها الفن الإسلامي. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تناول مفهوم الجمال في الإسلام من خلال ثلاثة مصادر: القرآن الكريم، وتعاليم النبي محمد عليه الصلاة والسلام، وآراء المفكرين المسلمين الأوائل. وقد تم استخدام منهجية المراجعات الأدبية المنظومية وذلك لجمع البيانات وتحليلها في هذه الدراسة. ومن أهم النتائج التي خرجت بها هذه الدراسة أن مفهوم الجمال في الإسلام ينقسم إلى قسمين: الجمال الأخلاقي والجمال الشكلي. والجمال الأخلاقي مقدم دائما على الجمال الشكلي من وجهة النظر الإسلامية. كما تم التوصل في هذه الدراسة إلى أن هناك اتفاق بين القرآن وتعاليم الرسول عليه السلام وآراء المفكرين المسلمين حول هذه الرؤية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجمال، الجماليات، الفن الإسلامي، القرآن.

The Islamic understanding of certain concepts such as beauty may differ from the mainstream ones found in other civilizations due to differences in thought and belief. Some of these concepts have contributed to the formation of Islamic identity and, unconsciously, to the perception and behavior of Muslims (Che Man et al, 2016). The researcher believes that beauty took shape alongside the Islamic aesthetic view since Islamic civilization began to develop and follow the path of prosperity. The importance of talking about beauty (*jamaal* as a noun and *jameel* as an adjective in Arabic) is a key pillar of Islamic art. It is hoped that a clear conception of beauty according to the Islamic vision will produce positive results that can contribute to a deeper understanding of Islamic art.

An inherent correlation exists between beauty as an idea and a vision, and the artistic or aesthetic achievement represented in all the results deriving from that understanding of beauty, which in turn reflects deep implications formed by a group of factors and influences (Hirsch, 2020). Therefore, this study explores the origins of the meaning of “beauty” (*jamaal*) and its connotations and the fields that are expected to be included or used within the Islamic concept.

To gain a better understanding of the Islamic vision of beauty and to answer the questions of this study, data will be collected in a systematic literature review approach. The word *jamaal* (“beauty”) and its synonyms will be tracked in Islamic sources, and their meanings analyzed. The analytical method will be employed through a discussion and analysis of three main axes, which the researcher believes to be the main components in the formation of the concept of beauty in Islamic culture:

- 1) The first pivot: discusses the treatment of the Holy Quran for beauty.
- 2) The second axis: examines the handling of the Sunnah of the Prophet (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) of beauty.
- 3) The third axis: examines the opinions of the early Muslims thinkers and scholars regarding beauty.

Beauty in the Holy Quran

The Holy Quran not only represents Muslims in religious life but is extended as a secular constitution that regulates the daily relationships of Muslims with those around them, shaping their worldview (Valerie, 2020). The Holy Quran is unique in its form and content as its syntactic structure differed from all linguistic styles from the era of the Prophet Muhammad. Arabs were amazed by this new, unfamiliar style. Al-Waleed bin Al-Mugheerah, one of the fiercest opponents of Prophet Muhammad, says about the Holy Quran, I just heard the words of the Quran that Muhammad says, and they are certainly not human nor genie words, they are resonant, fresh, and relaxed, like a tree full of accessible fruit, they are of the highest quality, and they are taking on perfection.

He also mentions that the Quran “has sweetness, and it is superior, and it is superior and not superior to it, and its origin is deep and its branch is fruitful” (Ibn.Katheer, 1985, P409). As the Quran is the first component of Islamic thought and Islamic achievements, this study will deal with the word “beauty” and its synonyms mentioned in the Quran as well as the concept that they convey.

The word of beauty *jamaal* in the Quran

The word “beauty” (*jamaal*) is mentioned eight times in the Holy Quran. In each instance, the researcher offers an interpretation of its context and meaning.

The word *jamaal* is used as an adjective in Surat Yusuf: “And they brought upon his shirt false blood. [Jacob] said, Rather, your souls have enticed you to something, so [*jameel*] patience is most fitting. And Allah is the one sought for help against that which you describe” (The Noble Quran, Surah Yusuf. 18). Elsewhere in the same Surah, [Jacob] said, “Rather, your souls have enticed you to something, so [*jameel*] patience is most fitting. Perhaps Allah will bring them to me all together. Indeed it is He who is the Knowing, the Wise” (The Noble Quran, Surah Yusuf. 83). In Surat al-Maarij: “So be patient with gracious [*jameel*] patience” (The Noble Quran, Surah Al Maarij. 5). In Surat Al-Muzzammil, Allah says, “And be patient over what they say and avoid them with gracious [*jameel*] avoidance” (The Noble Quran, Surah, Al-Muzzammil. 10). In Surat Al-Hijr: “And We have not created the heavens and earth and that between them except in truth. And indeed, the

Hour is coming; so forgive with gracious [*jameel*] forgiveness” (The Noble Quran, Surah Al Hijir. 85)

In Surat al-Ahzab: “O Prophet, say to your wives, If you should desire the worldly life and its adornment, then come, I will provide for you and give you a gracious [*jameel*] release” (The Noble Quran, Surah Al Ahzab. 28). In the same surah: “O You who have believed, when you marry believing women and then divorce them before you have touched them, then there is not for you any waiting period to count concerning them. So provide for them and give them a gracious [*jameel*] release” (The Noble Quran, Surah Al Ahzab. 49).

As for Surat Al-Nahl: “And the grazing livestock He has created for you; in them is warmth and numerous benefits, and from them you eat. And for you in them is the enjoyment of beauty [*jamaal*] when you bring them in for the evening and when you send them out to pasture” (The Noble Quran, Surah AnNahl. 5).

An analysis of the use of “beauty” in the first two verses suggests that it is directly associated with patience as beauty is an attribute of it in both verses. Ibn Katheer (1985, P472) provides an interpretation of the meaning of beautiful patience: “That is, there is no fear in it.” Prophet Muhammad was asked about the beautiful *jameel* patience and said that patience has no complaint.

As for the tenth verse of Surat Al-Muzzammil (“Avoid them with gracious [*jameel*] avoidance”), Allah gives a directive to His Messenger Muhammad to avoid those who accuse him of lying. The interpretation of this is as follows: “Allah commands His Messenger Muhammad to be patient with what his opponents say of lying and forsake them beautiful desertion which is not blamed” (Ibn.Katheer, 1985, P458). This is echoed by the eighty-fifth verse of Surat Al-Hijr, where Allah commands to “[f]orgive with gracious [*jameel*] forgiveness.” Qurtbi (2006, P53) said, about the interpretation of this verse, “O Muhammad, forgive them well.”

The twenty-eighth and forty-ninth verses of Surat al-Ahzab offer a warning to the Messenger and the believers that divorce was intended and determined in accordance with divine education, and that a man must take an ethical approach by which he avoids harming the divorced woman physically, psychologically, or financially. For this reason, Allah

used the term “release,” which denotes calmness and gentleness. God Almighty says, “So do you enjoy and comfort you a beautiful release (I will give you a gracious [*jameel*] release),” and in another verse, Give them a gracious [*jameel*] release). Ibn Katheer (1985, P481) explains this statement: “I enjoy you and release you beautifully, that is, I give you your rights and release you.”

The sixth verse of Surat Al-Nahl references the beauty of livestock going out to pasture in the morning and coming home in the evening. The beauty of the cattle is understood and felt by its owners because they rely on it for sustenance. As mentioned in the Quran: “And the grazing livestock He has created for you; in them is warmth and numerous benefits, and from them you eat. And for you in them is the enjoyment of beauty [*jamaal*] when you bring them in for the evening and when you send them out to pasture” (The Noble Quran, Surah AnNahl. 5).

The beauty of the cattle, in this sense, derives from the fact that it provides in many ways for those who care for it. Regarding the word “beauty” and its derivatives mentioned in the previous verses, we find that it takes two meanings. The first revolves around the moral meaning of beauty, such as beautiful patience, beautiful forgiveness, beautiful abandonment, and beautiful release, which appear frequently in the Holy Quran. The second meaning of the word refers to the sensory meaning of beauty, which is the apparent formal beauty confirmed by the Quran through the splendor of the cattle and the beauty of its appearance.

***Jamaal* “beauty” Synonyms in the Holy Quran**

Synonyms of beauty mentioned in the Quran include words such as “adornment” (*zienna*) and “charms” (*hasan* and *husn* as a noun and *ahssan* as an adjective)—the meanings of which vary according to their surrounding context. They are used to provide advice and guidance as well as when referring to seduction, as God Almighty says in The Noble Quran, Surah AnNaml. 24: “Satan has made their deeds pleasing to them and averted them from [His] way, so they are not guided” and in Surah Fussilat. 25: “And We appointed for them companions who made attractive [*zienna*] to them what was before them and what was behind them.”

Zienna was also mentioned in the sense of adding an additional good to things that can be added by its creator or manufacturer such as clothing, jewelry, and others. Allah says, “And tell the believing women to reduce some of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment [*zienna*] except that which [necessarily] appears.” (The Noble Quran, Surah AnNur. 31). This is the case of “artistic” ornamental decorations, which are represented by Allah saying, “And We have certainly beautified [*zienna*] the nearest heaven with stars” (The Noble Quran, Surah Al Mulk. 5) and “Have they not looked at the heaven above them - how We structured it and adorned [*zienna*] it and [how] it has no rifts” (The Noble Quran, Surah Qaf. 6).

The adornment in the Holy Quran was mentioned in several places, but it dominated it in the context of the advice, or by referring to reflection and contemplation in the creation of God; the adornment was, in fact, associated in different places with nature, and many verses were mentioned indicating the beauty of nature by describing it as an adornment of the heavens and the earth. In addition, the word “charms” (*husn*) and its derivatives are mentioned about 165 times throughout, their meanings manifesting in multiple forms that transcend formal appearance to include aspects of ethics, preaching, and the characteristics of God. With this regard, Allah says, “So blessed is Allah, the best [*Ahssan*] of creators” (The Noble Quran, Surah Al Muminun. 14).

The word *Ahssan* here refers to God Almighty’s ability to create and describes God as the best of the Creators. The word *hassan* is also frequently used to indicate positive words and deeds. Allah says, “Allah has sent down the best [*ahssan*] statement: a consistent Book wherein is reiteration. The skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; Then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance of Allah. That is the guidance of Allah” (The Noble Quran, Surah AzZumar. 23).

Further, Allah adds: “Who listen to speech and follow the best [*ahssan*] of it. Those are the ones Allah has guided, and those are people of understanding” (The Noble Quran, Surah AzZumar. 18). In Surah Al Ahqaf. 16, he also mentions that “Those are the ones from whom We will accept the best [*ahssan*] of what they did and overlook their misdeeds, their being among the companions of Paradise. That is the promise of truth which they had been promised”.

Some verses also follow similar patterns, linking *Hassan* with some positive sayings, deeds, and ethics. Others link it with the appearance and body of men. The Almighty said, “We have certainly created man in the best [*ahssan*] of stature” (The Noble Quran, Surah AtTin. 4) and “It is Allah who made for you the earth a place of settlement and the sky a ceiling and formed you and perfected [*ahssan*] your forms” (The Noble Quran, Surah Ghafir. 64). Finally, in Surah Al Ahzab. 52, he adds: “Not lawful to you, [O Muhammad], are [any additional] women after [this], nor [is it] for you to exchange them for [other] wives, even if their beauty [*husn*] were to please you.”

The charms or *husn* in the previous verses are a direct indication of human beauty represented by the human body, which encompasses its structure, unity, and harmony. Despite the tremendous multiplicity and apparent syntactic similarity to the images created by God, each has something that distinguishes itself from the others through the details that carry the finite creativity of the Creator Almighty. Moreover, the word *hassan* carries a new dimension in another context: “And when Our verses are recited to them as clear evidences, those who disbelieve say to those who believe,” Which of our two parties is best [*ahssan*] in position and best [*ahssan*] in association? And how many a generation have We destroyed before them who were better [*ahssan*] in possessions and outward [*ahssan*] appearance?” (The Noble Quran, Surah Maryam. 74–75).

The meaning of the above passage is that Allah created people who had better houses and the highest edifice and the best furniture and vision, and they had better money, luggage, scenery, and forms before those non-believers (Ibn.Katheer, 1985, P135). In these two verses, *hassan* refers to the form, especially the “artistic” product that is the human being. This is confirmed by the second verse through furniture and appearance, that is, the forms or appearances represented in the clothing or buildings used. It is striking that this is the only time that the term *hassan* has been used to denote “artistic” human production, which confirms the Quran’s endorsement of artistic beauty.

From the beginning, the researcher, following the word “beauty” and its synonyms in the Quran, has been able to conclude that beauty was used in its explicit sense, and that other synonyms were used for the approximate indication of the same “esthetic” meaning, which is of

adornment and goodness. The word “beauty” appears in two aspects: moral or moral beauty, and outward or formal beauty. However, the Quran focuses more on morality in the esthetic dimension.

Allah linked the Prophet Muhammad with the esthetic moral character in four of seven places on several occasions. He also linked the esthetic moral characteristic of “beautiful patience” with the Prophet Jacob. The ethical esthetic quality of the matter is also present in other places from the same surah, in which God addresses the Prophet Muhammad. The intention is to emphasize the moral aspect of beauty according to the Quranic text to the messengers, prophets, and believers, which confers it great importance. Regarding the formal aspect of beauty, it is mentioned once in the Holy Quran.

The Quran uses synonyms for beauty, including the word *zeina*. It is possible to summarize the contexts in which the word “adornment” occurs and takes a moral dimension, denoting a sense of seduction by “and the devil decorated them with their deeds”. It seems that the adornment, in this sense, takes the same role as the term beauty conceived with its moral meaning; the evidence is that most words of adornment and their derivatives mentioned in the Quran revolve around this mentioned meaning, which indicates that the moral concept of both words stands out at the expense of the meaning of formality in the Holy Quran. The word “ornamental” elicits a more prominent presence than “beauty” in expressing the formal description of plants, stars, and planets in one context. In another context, it indicates the “artistic” shape produced by man (such as jewelry and clothing), although it is used in the context of preaching either by contextualizing decorations in the appropriate place and time, or by warning not to be drawn to decorations that may have negative effects, such as arrogance and vanity.

The term *hassan* and its derivatives are presented in a more comprehensive, pluralistic, and more profound way. The researcher posits that two are the main contexts in which the term *hassan* is applied: when describing the external or natural form or when denoting morality. It also indicates the “artistic” product in one verse that applies this context, as previously mentioned about architecture, housing, and the manufacturing of furniture; nevertheless, the majority of verses mentioning *hassan* were concentrated on the moral sphere. In these instances, *hassan* refers to words, deeds, and morals. This second

interpretation of the word has the most prominent presence in the text; by this aspect, we can argue that the Quran mentions the words “beauty” and “adornment” in different places according to the expressive context, and that these terms were used to denote morphological or moral concepts that focused on the field of virtue in one way or another.

Beauty in the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad

The Sunnah of the Prophet comes second in terms of importance in the organizational priorities of Islamic legislation because it is considered the source of legislation and the second inspiration for Islamic civilization after the Quran. Demerdash (2020) posits that Islamic intellectual and performance products derive from one of the Sunnah of the Prophet’s main pillars, which is the basis on which much of Islamic civilization has been built.

The Sunnah of the Prophet played an effective role in complementing the role of the Quran at all levels. Indeed, in many places and areas, the Sunnah of the Prophet connected Muslims to the Quran by helping them understand its teachings (Schum, 2017). Beauty is one of many topics addressed in the Prophet’s purified Sunnah, and it had attitudes consistent with those mentioned in the Holy Quran in one way or another. A man said that one likes to be well dressed and a good sole. With this regard, the Prophet said, “Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Arrogance is repelling the truth and oppression of people” (Muslim, 1973, P93).

In another hadith about the desirability of the person being sent in a good shape, the Prophet said, “If you send a Messenger, send it in a well-known, well-known name” (Tabarani, 1979, P144). In these hadiths, the Prophet recognizes an inherent principle that the normal soul enjoys—the love of beauty and beauty itself. However, the Prophet was not only satisfied with confirming that instinct, but he affirmed that God himself is beautiful, and that he also loves beauty. Certainly, nothing is more noble than Prophet Muhammad linking beauty with God and emphasizing that it is one of the attributes of God that he loves: Allah is the Light [Nur] of the heavens and the earth” (The Noble Quran, Surah An Nur. 35). It is the same quality that emphasizes the absolute beauty of God.

In the first two hadiths, the Prophet echoes teachings about beauty from the Quran, which denounces the kind of beauty that calls for arrogance and superiority over people. This type of beauty abhors Islam; indeed, the Prophet affirms that whoever holds this negative beauty in his heart is forbidden from entering Paradise. The Quran also acknowledges the beauty that represents a benign characteristic that God loves and by which He is characterized; this type is reflected in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, in which he urges to send a well-known messenger with a good name. Perhaps in this noble hadith on the Messenger, inclusiveness crossed the boundaries of form to expand and comprise the name, which is consistent with the first hadith: as emphasized by the faithful Prophet, “God is beautiful and loves beauty.” Beauty is then not limited to the formal or visual representation, but it has one in which all the elements and dimensions are represented. Upon reading the hadith on the messenger with a good face and name, we assume that the messenger be well-mannered and well-spoken; therefore, the messenger must be positive in all aspects or most at the very least, so that the message can be received as required.

On the other hand, a group of hadiths about the Prophet offers a deeper understanding of the concept of beauty which extends beyond the aspects of formal phenomena to enter the depth of Islamic thought. The Prophet calls it “[t]he scourge of shameless beauty” (Alhathami, 1987, P283) and says, Whoever abandons the wearing of a garment of beauty, and he is able to humble himself, may God protect him with a dignity suit. There is also a hadith on Muhammad the Messenger of God, that a man came to him and said, O Messenger of God, I love beauty and I love to praise. Then the Messenger said to him: “What prevents you from loving to live benign and die happy, but you have been resurrected in good manners (Abo Daoud, 1969, P348). When examining these hadiths, we find that they have taken on an aesthetic dimension that transcends formal phenomena in terms of meaning and pronunciation and thus registers a clear consensus that falls within the intellectual pattern in Islamic culture, based on directness in presentation and clarity. It is possible to interpret the hadith of the Prophet, “the scourge of camel and camouflage,” in the way that camels are incompatible with esthetic presence according to the clear logic mentioned in it.

In the second hadith, which mentions that whoever wears the garment of beauty while capable of humility may be overwhelmed with dignity by God, we find that beauty is deeper than its apparent significance as it acquires, in part, an abstract moral meaning that follows the same pattern recorded in most of the noble Quranic verses addressed in a previous position. In the hadith, beauty takes two dimensions: one is formal and the other moral. It comes in an implicit way, namely through humility, and humility takes precedence. Therefore, although both “formal” and “moral” beauties are present, the Islamic preference is always to present the latter over the former. This is confirmed by this honorable hadith, which upholds the beauty of humility against that of clothing.

In the third hadith, a man mentions to the Prophet that he loves beauty and to praise. The Prophet says to him, “And what prevents you to love to live benign and die happy. Rather, I have sent out the full merits of morals.” The exchange shows a clear escalation of the ethical aspects; the preference, however, is for moral values over formal appearances. The man in this hadith, for example, mentions that he loves beauty as a model of formal appearance, though he also likes to be acknowledged as a model of moral value. He thus values both the formal and moral in one frame within a unified vision, which makes the Prophet Muhammad choose the moral value and virtue, highlighting it over the formal value, also linking his message to the achievement of those moral values based on the merits of ethics.

Based on the above analysis of the sample hadiths, it is clear that beauty in itself is praiseworthy and desirable. Indeed, it is an attribute that God characterizes and loves and is emphasized by the Prophet. However, once beauty intersects with any matter with a positive moral interest or sensuality, it delays the progress of such positive things in return. If beauty, understood according to the hadiths, is compared with any moral matter, then ethical matters are ahead of beauty, and these opinions are consistent with the opinions expressed in the Holy Quran, where a clear harmony can be observed between it and the Prophet’s Sunnah of beauty.

Beauty Among Early Muslim Thinkers

Beauty exists, but we sometimes need someone to guide us and explain it to us (Carey & Voaliti, 2016). Before giving an interpretation of beauty, the researcher deems it important to state that beauty has not been addressed as a separate topic, and the scholars, thinkers, and philosophers who will be covered by this research have not analyzed it in separate books; rather, they talked about beauty as an occasional topic within similar arguments that are related to beauty and that may be far from it, unless Ibn Taymiyyah is possible. Despite this, the researcher believes that collecting and analyzing these opinions about beauty may provide insight into the basis of the Islamic vision of beauty represented in the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad as represented in Islamic art. The following are the most important thinkers who have contributed to the study of beauty.

Abu Hayyan Altawhidi (922–1023)

Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Abbas, born in 922, grew up in Baghdad, and died in Shiraz in 1023. Two of his most important books are *Pleasure and Sociability* and *Adaptations* (Althahabi, 1993). Abu Hayyan is known for the unification of beauty as “perfection in organs and proportionality between parts acceptable to the soul” (Altawhidi, 1975, P146).

It can be said that Abu Hayyan was one of the first Muslim scholars to develop a definition of beauty, even though he only occasionally addressed this discourse. Upon examining the monotheistic definition of beauty, we find that it largely corresponds to the features of its definition in modern thought, although Abu Hayyan’s text is from the tenth century. It can also be noted that he focuses on the formal side of beauty.

Although the definition included the word “perfection” and is permanently subject to the relativity that accompanies it, this definition may be classified among the first serious and comprehensive scientific ones of formal beauty in Islamic culture, as it contains an influencer bearing the characteristics of proportionality. It also considers the effect of beauty on its beholder. Abu Hayyan believes beauty to be of two types: “An objective, ideal beauty that the enlightened mind attains, not the misguided minor senses, and for this it is absolute, unchanging, nor

relative, absolute beauty. A physical beauty reached by the senses, and for this it is a variable, conditional variable subject to the social variable and follow the local customs and traditions and human natures” (Calahgee 1991, P18).

In these divisions, Abu Hayyan expresses his ideas about the “idealistic” beauty of the Creator and the “materialistic” beauty of the creature in some detail, using philosophical language that contains references to Sufi thought here represented by “absolute beauty.” It is understood that ideal beauty can only be perceived by the enlightened mind, while material beauty can be perceived with the senses. Ideal beauty is also constant and therefore not subject to change; Abu Hayyan described it as an “absolute beauty.” As for physical beauty, as stated in its description, it is affected by its surroundings and subject to multiple variables.

Based on Abu Hayyan’s understanding of beauty and its subjugations, it is clear that he first attempted to define beauty in a specific framework that can be reduced to its formal aspect, without considering that beauty may take a different meaning. He also intended to identify two types of beauty whose formulation are not devoid of philosophical expressions and do not depart from the framework of the beauty of the Creator and the beauty of creatures approved by the Islamic religion. Evidence of such beauty is mentioned in both the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad.

Ibn Hazm Al-Andalusi (994–1063)

Ali bin Ahmed bin Saeed bin Hazm Al-Andalusi was born in 994 and grew up in Cordoba. He was a jurist, thinker, and poet who wrote many books—the most famous of which are *Fiqh*, and *The Ring of the Dove*—and died in 1063 (Corbin, 2014).

Ibn Hazm defines beauty as follows: “Sweetness is the card of virtues, kindness of movements, lightness of signs, acceptance of the soul for the purposes of images” (Saed, 1990, P93). He confines his understanding of beauty to the human form as he describes beauty as having three attributes: tenderness, kindness, and lightness. Each of these attributes must be present in order to reach a degree of sweetness, tenderness, and kindness, which, according to Ibn Hazm, cannot be

achieved until the soul accepts the image of beauty that contains all these characteristics.

When Ibn Hazm addresses beauty, he combines two aspects into its esthetic characteristic—a formal one related to its apparent form and a behavioral one represented by body movement and gestures. In doing so, he is limited to only defining beauty as related to the human image and to the behavior that characterizes this perception.

In addition, Ibn Hazm attempts to address beauty from an emotional standpoint by speaking about the role of beauty in achieving love. He says, “A good soul is passionate about everything good, and tends to elaborate imagery, because if she sees some of them clinging to it, if she distinguishes behind some of her forms, she communicates and validates true love” (Ibn Hazm, 1997. P22).

Ibn Hazm believes that, when the self is good or beautiful, it tends to everything that is also good and beautiful—especially human features, which he also calls “pictures.” He understands that beauty takes on two dimensions: an apparent dimension and a deep dimension. Whenever the soul is met with apparent beauty, it is limited to admiration; however, when the soul is met with deep beauty, the connection generates a sense of love. The researcher believes that a correlation exists between the opinion of Ibn Hazm and the hadith of the Messenger: “Spirits are enlisted soldiers.” He applies the meaning of that hadith to his own understanding of beauty and employs the meaning emotionally in a way that is compatible with the content of that text.

Abu Hamid Alghazali (1058–1112)

Muhammad ibn Muhammad Alghazali was born in Tous in 1058, where he experienced the first sciences in a mystical world. Moving between regions and having taught in Baghdad, he underwent many transitional periods, converting to Sufism at the end of his life and writing a book on the religious sciences during his retirement and on Sufism (Alasam, 1981). He died in Nishapur in 1112.

Abu Hamid Alghazali is one of many Muslim scholars addressing beauty in their work. However, he is not considered a specialist in beauty alone; rather, most of his discussions about beauty exist within other topics of his famous book, *Revival of the Sciences of Religion*, which he

wrote late in his life. Alghazali believes beauty to be divided into two parts, “[t]he beauty of the image perceived by the eye, and the beauty of the inner image perceived by the heart and the light of insight” (Alghazali, 1972, P306).

Alghazali’s view of the types of beauty has a philosophical dimension on which he depends. Alghazali divides beauty into apparent and internal, taking into consideration a sensible dimension once and a moral dimension again. Upon scrutinizing the division that Alghazali provides, one can conclude that he does not attempt to reach neither the apparent or internal divisions of moral content, and that beauty even carries a moral dimension that reflects his own philosophy. However, he corrects this later on, indicating another division consistent with the most prominent classifications referred to above through the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad: “If beauty is in proportion to creation, and saturation of color, then he is aware of the sense of sight, and beauty is of majesty, greatness, high rank, good qualities, morals, and the will of good things for all creation, and always giving them to them, then he is aware of the sense of the heart” (Alghazali, 1972, P267).

Here, Alghazali understands beauty as being greatly inclusive and able to transcend the perceived human form. What can be deduced from his view is that beauty that leads to meaning is more welcome than what a first reading of the text may portray. Only what exists in the physical form can be perceived by sight. As for the second section, Alghazali leads beauty toward the moral sphere represented by majesty, grandeur, and high rank.

The last part of the text suggests that Alghazali aims for the human being to achieve these qualities and that he elevates them toward a higher realm; according to Alghazali’s vision, then, beauty falls outside the scope of visual perception and is found in the heart. What explains such vision and the vocabulary used by Alghazali is the Sufi tendency that he was associated with near the end of his life—not in the field of his view of beauty but in the entirety of the looks he presented according to his own perspective. Such Sufi tendencies were not reprehensible or surprising, as could be imagined; rather, they were widespread in those periods, which allowed them to appear clearly in the literature that Ghazali produced during his period of isolation. Most of the themes he addressed through the mystical character were imparted in an attempt to

overcome reality and transcendence. This is reflected in his vision of beauty: “Know that what is trapped in the strait of fantasies and perceptions may think that there is no sense of good and beauty except for the fit of form, form and good color, and this is an apparent mistake, for good is not limited to the perceptions of sight and the fit of creation” (Saed, 1990, P109).

Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328)

Ahmed bin Abdul Halim Al-Harrani was born in 1263. He grew up in Beit Alam and is regarded as a prominent Muslim scholar and thinker for his jurisprudence and the religion of Hanbali. He remarkably countered dissenting groups, and his views are still prominent legal and psychological arguments. He died in 1328 in Al-Qalaa Prison in Damascus (Ajam, 1993).

Ibn Taymiyyah has a special vision of beauty: “For something beautiful requires God’s love for him, and He, Glory be to Him, is the best of all things He created Until He says, He is glorified, He loves beauty. The beauty of morality is of knowledge, faith and piety, greater than the beauty of form. It is the apparent image, as well as the beautiful from the dress, for the dress of piety is greater and more complete, and he loves the beauty of the clothing of piety, greater than he loves the beauty of clothing and adornment, and he loves the beauty that is for ethics greater than he loves the beauty of form” (Alhazmi, 1993, P101).

Ibn Taymiyyah begins with a general definition of beauty derived from the hadith of the Messenger, by which “God is beautiful and loves beauty.” He then elaborates on this understanding of beauty by dividing it into beauty of ethics and beauty of formality. He posits that the beauty of ethics consists of knowledge, faith and piety, and the order of its components is not arranged by coincidence or randomly; on the contrary, the sequence carries a certain intellectual message, namely that science is the true key to faith, and faith in turn becomes a real gateway to piety and good deeds. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, those who possess these three elements reach the highest level of beauty. As for physical beauty, it is related to the apparent image—or the appearance of the person and what surrounds them—and especially what a person can benefit from and harness, such as clothing and housing. Ibn Taymiyyah believes that God’s love for the beauty of piety is greater than that for the beauty of

adornment: “He loves the beauty that is greater than morals than he loves the beauty of the form” (Ajam, 1993, P 35). This is reiterated by the author with the hadith of the Messenger: “God does not look at your images or your bodies, but on your hearts and deeds” (Alhazmi, 1993, P126).

Ibn Taymiyyah then devotes ample discussion to formal beauty, as if limiting suspicion and controversy around this type of beauty and creating an impression that permanently indicates the first type of moral beauty as the one that is unequivocal and suspicious. After explaining the types of beauty, Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized that moral beauty, which God loves, helps to understand the other type in the syntax: “If beauty is included because there is nothing that is dearer to it, or because there is something that is most hated for it, then it is necessary to miss some beauty Beloved, so if in the beauty of the garments you grow and pride, shame and honor, then God does not love every proud idiot” (Ajami, 1993, P102).

Ibn Taymiyyah decides that any conflict between formal beauty and what contradicts the beauty of morality would misinterpret the true meaning of beauty. Formal beauty is likable in its origin, but any negative influence that accompanies it eliminates such beauty that is originally loved. For example, Ibn Taymiyyah states that the beauty of clothes may be accompanied by arrogance, pride, shame, or extravagance, and those negative values miss what is inherently praiseworthy and even loved by God.

Ibn Taymiyyah further decides to deny beauty if it is implied by the absence of moral. Despite the relative ambiguity of this sentence, the context of the hadith, its connotations, and subsequent evidence indicate that, when beauty is a reason for leaving what is more important, such as virtues, values, and morals, then it loses its status.

Ibn Taymiyyah believes that beauty should not be associated with immorality, lying, injustice, or otherwise, as mentioned by Allah: “Say, My Lord has only forbidden immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed - and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with Allah that for which he has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allah that which you do not know” (The Noble Quran, Surah Al Araf. 33).

This situation misses the beauty that is much dearer to God and requires the prohibition of these many bad deeds. It misses the best beauty, which is embodied by perfection, good morals, and good deeds (Alhazmi, 1993). Ibn Taymiyyah moves from merely “missing” beauty to what may result from that beauty that God forbids and hates. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah divides beauty into beauty of morals and beauty of form and considers that its best version is the combination of beauty of ethics and beauty of form.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292–1350)

Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr Al-Dimashqi was born in Beit Alam and Fadl in 1292. He was a student of Ibn Taymiyyah and was greatly influenced by him for 16 years. His jurist was a scholar who wrote more than sixty books in several sciences. He died in 1350 in Damascus (Ajam, 1993).

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya supports the same principles of beauty that Ibn Taymiyyah identified. It is not surprising that he self-identifies as one of his pupils who had been looking to seek out his knowledge. It is very evident in his work that Ibn Qayyim was influenced by his teacher, Ibn Taymiyyah, through his views on beauty.

Ibn Qayyim divides beauty (*jamaal*) into two parts, apparent and inner, saying, “I know that beauty is divided into two parts, visible and hidden, for the inner beauty is loved for its own sake, and it is the beauty of knowledge, reason, quality, chastity and courage, and this inner beauty is the subject of God’s view of His servant and the place of His love” (Alhazmi, 1993, P155).

Ibn Qayyim begins his interpretation with the understanding that beauty is related to science, reason, and ethics, which is the type that God loves and urges (Ajam, 1993, P49). He indicates that inner beauty is true beauty. It can also be noted that Ibn Qayyim here has used the term “decorate,” which is the same word that the Quran used to add an attribute that is not from the origin of things. Ibn Qayyim mentions that word for the same purpose, with the difference of the apparent: “The inner beauty decorates the apparent image, even if it is not beautiful” (Alhazmi, 1993, P155).

Beauty, in the eyes of Ibn Qayyim, is a relative quality that takes its true dimensions, increasing and decreasing through the values and morals that he called “inner beauty.” He also dealt with the second section, that of “apparent beauty” in much detail, indicating that “[it] is an adornment that God has singled out for some of the images of some of the good deeds” (Ajam, 1993, P155). Ibn Qayyim emphasizes that apparent beauty includes the image as it includes the sound; when comparing apparent beauty and inner beauty, Ibn Qayyim sees the absolute preference for the latter, even though he stresses that the former is a blessing that increases inner beauty. God Almighty is above the people: “The apparent beauty is a blessing from the God Allah also on the human being. If he thanks God’s piety, he will be more beautiful for his beauty” (Alhazmi, 1993, P156).

By comparing the opinions of the thinkers discussed in this study, it can be said that they divide beauty into two parts: formal beauty and moral beauty. Evidence supports the opinions of these thinkers; nevertheless, it remains that these divisions are originally compatible with the comprehensive vision of the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad about beauty. Two are the basic paths followed by beauty, according to the opinions of Muslim scholars and thinkers: beauty, following Abu Hayyan’s vision, is divided into moral beauty, represented by the beauty of the Creator, and formal beauty, represented by that of the creature.

While Ibn Hazm believes that beauty is of two types, namely formal beauty related to phenomena, and moral beauty related to behavior, Abu Hamid Alghazali also divides beauty into two: the first is confined to the apparent form, while the second deals with moral matters, which he defines as majesty, greatness, and high rank. As for Ibn Taymiyyah, beauty is viewed as a beauty of morality linked to science, faith, and piety, and that of a form linked to the outward image. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya follows a similar path in this regard, though he attributes the name of “inner beauty” to beauty associated with science, reason, and ethics and the name of “apparent beauty” to that associated with the image. By tracing the concept of beauty in both the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet, we can conclude that it represents the philosophical basis for the understanding of beauty

reflected in the works of the first scholars and thinkers of Islam, and that it is at the forefront of Islamic art.

Conclusion

Beauty, according to the Islamic view, can be divided into moral and formal beauty. Such conclusion was reached following an analysis of the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad as well as through the work of early Muslim thinkers. By tracing the concept of beauty in both the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet, it can be said that the concept of beauty represented the philosophical basis of its meaning, which was reflected in the visions of early Islam scholars and thinkers.

The consensus on the perception of beauty in both the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet and the vision of Muslim thinkers should be emphasized because the primary and primary source of Islamic thought, Islamic philosophy, and Islamic vision is the Noble Quran: it is the first and clear indicator of Islamic civilization in most of its achievements.

The concept and philosophy of Islamic beauty was formed through the comprehensive vision of beauty in Islamic sources, especially the Holy Quran; this in turn created a deep concept that was reflected in the Islamic achievements linked to the philosophy of beauty, among which the foremost is Islamic art. This area of study should be investigated further to better understand the extent to which the concept of beauty influences Islamic achievements, particularly visual arts.

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