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Islamic Sensory History



Edited by
Christian Lange and Adam Bursi

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Volume 2: 600–1500

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Musical and Socio-cultural Anecdotes from Kitāb al-Aghānī al-Kabīr (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2019), pp. 73–4, 215, 277–81, 283–4, 287, 291–2, 300, 302–3, 305, 323, 337, 378–9, and (3) Franz Rosenthal, *The Herb: Hashish versus Medieval Muslim Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), pp. 152–3, republished in *Man versus Society in Medieval Islam*, ed. Dimitri Gutas (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014), pp. 287–8.

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Utrecht/Saint Paul,
The editors

Abbreviations

- BSOAS* *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
- EI2* *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: New Edition*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al., 12 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1954–2004
- EI3* *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, and Everett Rowson, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007–, online publication
- EIr* *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater et al., Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1985–, online publication
- EQ* *The Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe et al., 6 vols., Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2001–6
- GAL* Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, first publ. 1898, Leiden: Brill, 1943–9
- GAS* Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967–
- ILS* *Islamic Law and Society*
- ISH* Christian Lange (gen. ed.), *Islamic Sensory History*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2024–
- JAL* *Journal of Arabic Literature*
- JAOS* *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
- JAPA* *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*
- JQS* *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies*
- JRAS* *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
- JSAI* *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
- JSS* *Journal of Sufi Studies*
- Lane Edward Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 vols., 1863, repr. Beirut 1968
- MW* *The Muslim World*
- SEP* *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta et al., Metaphysics Research Lab, Philosophy Department, Stanford University, 1999–, online publication
- SI* *Studia Islamica*
- TG* Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert der Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, 6 vols., Berlin-New York: de Gruyter, 1991–7
- WKAS* Manfred Ullmann, *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970–
- ZDMG* *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
- ZGAIW* *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften*

Note on Dates, Transliteration, and Citation

In the text, dates for the premodern era are given both according to the Islamic *Hijrī* calendar and the Julian/Gregorian calendar. In the bibliographies, books issuing from Iran are occasionally listed according to their year of publication in the Iranian solar calendar, and accordingly marked with “sh” (*shamsī*, “solar”).

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Ḥadīths from the Sunni *ḥadīth* canon are cited following the convention established in Arent Jan Wensinck’s *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane*, 8 vols., 2nd ed. (Leiden-New York: Brill, 1993), that is, by the name of the *kitāb* and number of the *bāb*.

Throughout this book, footnotes only show the short title of books and articles; full information is given in the list of references at the end of the introduction to each chapter.

Notes on Contributors

Eyad Abuali

is a research fellow at Cardiff University. His publications focus on the intellectual and cultural history of medieval Sufism, including “Dreams and Visions as Diagnosis in Medieval Sufism” (2019), “Words Clothed in Light: Dhikr, Colour, and Synaesthesia in Early Kubrawi Sufism” (2019), and “‘I Tasted Sweetness and I Tasted Affliction’: Pleasure, Pain, and Body in Medieval Sufi Food Practices” (2022). His work currently focuses on the body, emotions, and space in medieval Sufism.

Tanvir Akhtar Ahmed

is a postdoctoral research scholar at the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Arizona State University. His academic work has appeared in forums such as *History & Theory*, the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, and *Afghanistan*. He is currently working on a monograph about the cultural landscape of medieval Muslim rebellion.

Hanif Amin Beidokhti

is a postdoctoral fellow at LMU Munich. He is the author of the forthcoming *Avicenna Illuminated: Suhrawardī’s Critique of Aristotelian Categories and Hylomorphism*. His research interests include Avicenna, the Avicennan school, Suhrawardī, historiography of *falsafa*, and classical Persian works of *falsafa* and *kalām*.

Shahzad Bashir

is the Agha Khan Professor of Islamic Humanities and Professor of History and Religious Studies at Brown University. His research has been concerned with temporality, poetry, the study of Sufism and Shiism, messianic movements originating in Islamic contexts, and religious representations of corporeality. Among his many publications is *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (2013). His most recent publication is digital and entitled *A New Vision for Islamic Pasts and Futures* (2022).

Maroussia Bednarkiewicz

is a researcher at the Cluster of Excellence for Machine Learning and the Institute for Oriental Studies at the University of Tübingen. She wrote her PhD dissertation on the early history of the Islamic call to prayer. At the moment, she works on the evolution of *ḥadīth* chains of transmission, aiming to develop algorithms for the study of *ḥadīth* and classical Arabic texts.

David Bennett

is Assistant Professor in the Department of Graduate Studies at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. In addition to co-editing *Philosophical Problems in Sense Perception: Testing the Limits of Aristotelianism* (with Juhana Toivanen, 2020), his work has appeared in several edited volumes, including a chapter on “Sense Perception in the Arabic Tradition” (2022) and another on “Cognisable Content: The Work of the *Maʿnā* in early Muʿtazilite Theory” (2021). He works on early Arabic philosophy and theology, and particularly on epistemology and psychology.

Hinrich Biesterfeldt

is Emeritus Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Ruhr-Universität Bochum. He is a co-author of five lovely grown-up children and author of books and articles on classical Arabic literature and the history of Graeco-Arabic scholarship. Together with Everett K. Rowson (New York University), he is preparing an annotated translation of Abū Zayd al-Balkhī’s monograph on *Welfare of Body and Soul*, complete with a study of Abū Zayd’s life and times and a collection of the extant fragments of, and quotations from, his numerous writings.

Julie Bonnéric

is currently a researcher in Islamicate archaeology at the French Institute of the Near East (Ifpo) and head of the Amman branch (Jordan). She published in particular *La lumière dans les religions du Livre: une approche pluridisciplinaire* (ed. with N. Panayot-Haroun, 2015), *Histoire et anthropologie des odeurs en terre d’Islam à l’époque médiévale* (ed., Special Issue of *Bulletin d’études orientales* 64 [2016]), and *A Global History of Kuwait* (with Ph. Pétriat, 2022). Her current research focuses on two main themes, monasticism in Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula, and the evolution of northern Jordan in the early Islamic period.

Adam Bursi

is the editorial assistant at Fortress Press in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He has published several articles on late antique and early Islamic history and religion, as well as the book *Traces of the Prophets: Relics and Sacred Spaces in Early Islam* (2024). He is currently working on articles related to the perfuming of the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina, and the usage of tombs and relics in rain-making rituals during the early Islamic period.

Fatih Han

is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University. His research focuses on the art and architecture of the Islamic

Middle East, particularly from Anatolia and the Levant. Currently, he is investigating the sensorial qualities of cross-cultural objects from Islamic lands and their function within an architectural context.

Rotraud Hansberger

is Assistant Professor (Akademische Rätin) of Late Antique and Arabic Philosophy at LMU Munich, where she arrived in 2013 following a research fellowship at King's College London. Previous publications on the topic of the senses include "Averroes and the 'Internal Senses'" (2018) and "Mediating the Medium: The Arabic Plotinus on Vision" (2012). Her areas of research are the Graeco-Arabic transmission and medieval Arabic philosophy, with a particular interest in philosophical psychology.

Jan P. Hogendijk

is Emeritus Professor of the History of Mathematics at Utrecht University. He prepared the late A. I. Sabra's translation of Books IV and V of the *Optics* of Ibn al-Haytham for publication at the Warburg Institute (2023). His research interests are the mathematical sciences in ancient Greek and Islamic civilization, and mathematics in the Netherlands between 1500 and 1850.

Domenico Ingenito

is Associate Professor of Iranian Studies and Persian Literature at the University of California, Los Angeles. His most recent books are *Beholding Beauty: Sa'di of Shiraz and the Aesthetics of Desire in Medieval Persian Poetry* (2020), a critical edition and Italian translation of Forugh Farrokhzad's collected poems (*Io parlo dai confini della notte. Forugh Farrokhzad: tutte le poesie*, 2023), and the English translation of a selection of poems by Sa'di Shīrāzī (forthcoming). His current research projects focus on kingship and desire in Ghaznavid praise poetry and the relationship between artistic creativity and the visual arts in the narrative poems (*Khamsa*) of Nizāmī Ganjavī.

Anya King

is Associate Professor of History at the University of Southern Indiana. She is the author of *Scent from the Garden of Paradise: Musk and the Medieval Islamic World* (2017). Her research interests include perfumery, pharmacology, and medieval Islamic relations with Asia.

Hannelies Koloska

is a senior lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the Department of Comparative Religion. Among her publications are *Revelation, Aesthetics and Qur'anic Exegesis: Two Studies of Surah 18 (al-Kahf)* (in German, 2015) and the

first German translation of Ibn al-Jawzī's widely adopted treatise about Muslim women, *Aḥkām al-nisā'*, with annotations (2009). She is currently running an international project on vision and visuality in early Islam, researching aspects of visuality in the Qurʾān and early Islamic exegesis, as well as the interrelation between different media such as texts and images in early Islam.

Christian Lange

is Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Utrecht University. His research is concerned with premodern Islamic law, theology, mysticism, and the history of the religious imagination and of the senses in the Islamic world. Among his publications are *Justice, Punishment, and the Medieval Muslim Imagination* (2008), *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* (2016), and (as editor), *Sensory History of the Islamic World* (Special Issue of *The Senses & Society* [2022]). From 2017 to 2023, he served as the Principal Investigator in the ERC Consolidator Grant project "The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Islamic World". From 2023 to 2028, he is the Principal Investigator in the NWO Vici project "Rosewater, Nightingale, and Gunpowder: A Sensory History of the Islamic World, 1500–1900 (www.sensis.wp/hum.uu.nl)".

Danilo Marino

is an associate researcher at the Institute for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Societies at University of Bern, after a two-year postdoc position at the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies (2018–19). He is a specialist in the literary representation of intoxicants and hashish in particular, to which he has devoted many articles, including "Le plaisir de l'ivresse. Haschish et littérature homoérotique à l'époque mamelouke" (2020), "Contesting Masculinity in Pre-modern Arab Societies: Intoxication, Desire and Antinomian Mysticism" (2021), and "Crossing the Boundaries: Hashish Intoxication in Pre-modern Arabic Literature and Law" (2022). Currently, he is working on the different meanings of the Arabic notion of *murū'a* in premodern Islamic ethics and *adab* writings.

Richard McGregor

is Professor and Chair of the Religious Studies department at Vanderbilt University. He is the author of *Islam and the Devotional Object: Seeing Religion in Egypt and Syria* (2020), *Sanctity and Mysticism in Egypt: The Wafa' Sufi Order and the Legacy of Ibn 'Arabi* (2004), and co-editor and translator of the Brethren of Purity's *Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn* (2009). His current projects include a new translation of the Prophet's biography and a study of the devotional reception of the Prophet's *Virtues* by al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892).

Pernilla Myrne

is Associate Professor in Premodern Arabic Literature at the University of Gothenburg. Among her publications are “Women and Men in al-Suyūṭī’s Guides to Sex and Marriage” (2018) and *Female Sexuality in the Early Medieval Islamic World* (2020). Her current research focuses on premodern Arabic erotic literature, in particular erotic manuals and their manuscript traditions.

Nawal Nasrallah

formerly a professor of English language and literature at the universities of Baghdad and Mosul, is an independent scholar of the culinary history and culture of Arab food. Among her published English translations of medieval cookbooks are *Annals of the Caliphs’ Kitchens* (4th/10th-century Baghdad, published in 2007), *Treasure Trove of Benefits and Variety at the Table* (8th/14th-century Egypt, published in 2018), and *Best of Delectable Foods and Dishes* (7th/13th-century al-Andalus, published in 2021). She is currently writing a book on the history of Arab food and foodways.

Zhinia Noorian

is a postdoctoral researcher in the ERC Advanced Grant project “Beyond Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam” at Utrecht University. She is the author of “Debating Piety: Parvin E’tesami’s Innovation in the Genre of Munazara” (2022), *Parvin E’tesami in the Literary and Religious Context of Twentieth-Century Iran: A Female Poet’s Challenge to Patriarchy* (2023), and “Jamāl al-Dīn Sāvī’s Codification of *Qalandarī* Rites and Rituals” (forthcoming). She is currently working on the gender-related aspects of the Qalandariyya movement in the 7th/13th century.

Austin O’Malley

is the Roshan Institute Assistant Professor of Persian and Iranian Studies at the University of Arizona. He is the author of *The Poetics of Spiritual Instruction: Farid al-Din ‘Attar and Persian Sufi Didacticism* (2023). His current research projects include an examination of authorial anxiety and ambivalence toward poetry in the Persian literary tradition, and a history of forgeries and misattributed texts.

Franz Rosenthal

(†2003) was the Louis M. Rabinowitz Professor of Semitic languages at Yale University from 1956 to 1967 and the Sterling Professor of Arabic at Yale from 1967 to 1985. His publications include *Humor in Early Islam* (1956), *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (1970, repr. 2007), and “Sweeter Than Hope”: *Complaint and Hope in Medieval Islam* (1983).

Everett K. Rowson

is Professor Emeritus at New York University. His early publications were in the fields of classical Islamic philosophy and classical Arabic prose literature, mostly ninth and tenth centuries CE, although he has also investigated Arabic literature of the Mamluk period. He has also published a series of articles on gender and sexuality in the premodern Islamic world, and that research is ongoing. Together with Hinrich Biesterfeldt (Ruhr-Universität Bochum) he is preparing an annotated translation of Abū Zayd al-Balkhī's monograph on *Welfare of Body and Soul*, complete with a study of Abū Zayd's life and times and a collection of the extant fragments of, and quotations from, his numerous writings.

Abdelhamid I. Sabra

(†2013) was Professor of the History of Arabic Science at Harvard University from 1972 to 1996. His publications include the seminal 1987 article, "The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement," as well as a critical edition and English translation of Books I–III of Ibn al-Haytham's *K. al-Manāẓir* (1989).

George Sawa

holds a doctorate in historical Arabic musicology and has over 50 years of experience in Arabic music performance as well as teaching Arabic music history and theory. He is the author of, among others, *Music Performance Practice in the Early 'Abbāsīd Era. 132–320 AH/750–932 AD* (first publ. 1989, repr. 2020), *Musical and Socio-cultural Anecdotes from Kitāb al-Aghānī: Annotated Translations and Commentaries* (2019), and *Ḥāwī l-Funūn wa-Salwat al-Maḥzūn: Encompasser of the Arts and Consoler of the Grief-Stricken by Ibn al-Ṭahḥān* (2021). His latest book, *A Treatise on Qānūn Musical Ornaments*, was published in 2022.

Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab

is Professor of Iranian and Persian Studies at Utrecht University. He has published extensively on Persian poetry, Sufism, and application of religious metaphors and motifs to the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88): *Martyrdom, Mysticism and Dissent: The Poetry of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988)* (2021); "Rūmī's Antinomian Poetic Philosophy" (2018); "'This Being Human Is a Guest House': Reflections on Colman Barks's Translations of Jalal al-Din Rumi's Poetry" (2022). At the moment he is the Principal Investigator of an ERC Advanced Grant entitled "Beyond Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam" (www.beyondsharia.nl), examining Islamic antinomian movements.

Jocelyn Sharlet

is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Middle East/South Asia Studies at the University of California, Davis. She has published *Patronage and Poetry in the Islamic World: Social Mobility and Status in the Medieval Middle East and Central Asia* (2011), “The Thought That Counts in Gift Exchange Poetry by Kushājim, al-Ṣanawbarī, and al-Sarī al-Raffā” (2011), and, as co-editor (with Margaret Larkin), *Tradition and Reception in Arabic Literature: Essays Dedicated to Andras Hamori* (2019). Her current research is on poetry and prosimetrum by Kushājim, al-Ṣanawbarī, al-Sarī al-Raffā, and al-Khālidiyyān.

Geert Jan van Gelder

was Laudian Professor of Arabic, University of Oxford, until his retirement in 2012. He has published widely on classical Arabic literature, including *Beyond the Line: Classical Arabic Literary Critics on the Coherence and Unity of the Poem* (1982), *Sound and Sense in Classical Arabic Poetry* (2012), and *Prominent Murder Victims of the Pre- and Early Islamic Periods, Including the Names of Murdered Poets*, by Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb (d. 245/860), edited and annotated (2021). He is currently preparing an annotated translation of Ibn al-Muʿtazz’s *Ṭabaqāt al-shuʿarāʾ al-muḥdathīn*.

Cornelis van Lit

was a doctoral researcher at Utrecht University and a postdoctoral researcher at Yale University and Utrecht University. His publications include *The World of Image in Islamic Philosophy: Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, Shahrāzūrī, and Beyond* (2017), in which he explores Suhrawardī’s take on imagination, and “The Commentary Tradition on Suhrawardī” (2018). Currently he is exploring theories of imagination in the commentaries on Ibn al-ʿArabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.

James Weaver

is currently *Oberassistent* at the Department of Islamic Studies in the University of Zurich’s Asia-Orient-Institute. He is the author of the forthcoming book, *The Shīʿa in Iraqi Heresiography*, to be published in 2024. He is working on an edition and translation of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāṭ’s *Kitāb al-intiṣār* for the Library of Arabic Literature.

Ines Weinrich

is a researcher at the University of Münster and Principal Investigator in the AHRC-DFG project “Hindu-Muslim-Jewish Origin Legends in Circulation between the Malabar Coast and the Mediterranean, 1400s–1800s.” Among her recent publications are “From the Arab Lands to the Malabar Coast: The Arabic

Mawlid as a Literary Genre and a Traveling Text” (2022), *In Praise of the Prophet: Forms of Piety as Reflected in Arabic Literature* (ed., 2022), and “The Creation of Muḥammad’s Qualities through Contemporary Chant in Syria and Lebanon” (2023). She is interested in the sonic dimensions of Muslim ritual, Arabic poetry and music, and the appropriation of late antique musical philosophy by Muslim authors.

Brannon Wheeler

is Professor of the History of Religion and Islamic Studies at the United States Naval Academy. His most recent book is *Animal Sacrifice and the Origin of Islam* (2022). He is currently researching the conflation of sacred/profane and pure/impure by looking for objects that are supposed to be touched.

Alan Williams

is Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Religion at the University of Manchester. His research and his publications concern the religious history of Iran from its pre-Islamic beginnings to the modern period, resulting in, among other publications, *The Zoroastrian Myth of Migration from Iran and Settlement in the Indian Diaspora: Text, Translation and Analysis of the 16th-Century Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān ‘The Story of Sanjān’* (2009) and *The Zoroastrian Flame: Exploring Religion, History, and Tradition* (ed. with Sarah Steiṣ, 2016). He is currently engaged in a translation of the six volumes of Rūmī’s *Mathnavī*, the first two volumes of which were published in 2020.

Cyrus Ali Zargar

is currently al-Ghazali Distinguished Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Central Florida. His book publications include *Sufi Aesthetics: Beauty, Love, and the Human Form in the Writings of Ibn ‘Arabi and ‘Iraqi* (2011), *The Polished Mirror: Storytelling and the Pursuit of Virtue in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism* (2017), and *Religion of Love: Sufism and Self-transformation in the Poetic Imagination of ‘Aṭṭār* (2024). Zargar’s research interests focus on the metaphysical, aesthetic, and ethical intersections between Sufism and Islamic philosophy.

PART 1

Scriptural Foundations



The Senses in the Qurʾān

Hannelies Koloska

1 Introduction

In the Qurʾān, the domain of sensation is broad. The senses serve as an essential instrument of human experience, as a source of knowledge, and as a prerequisite for, as well as an impediment to, spiritual insight. The senses of hearing and seeing, while prone to causing deception, play a major role as a means of perception and as a vehicle for faith. Smell and taste are paramount tools of discernment of matters in the afterlife. The sense of touch is depicted as the most carnal of the senses: it is viscerally immediate and inherently dangerous and deceptive.

The senses, as part of the Qurʾānic textual world, are described and their use debated and regulated; they are also manifest on the rhetorical level, when the text directly addresses the senses of the audience and asks the listeners to see, to listen, or to taste. Scholars have drawn attention mainly to the sense of hearing as the primary mode of sensory perception in the Qurʾān (Kermani, *God*). Indeed, the text refers to itself as an audible recitation of God’s word. *Qul* (“say!”), God addresses the Prophet time and again, and listening to the Qurʾānic recitation is equivalent to hearing God speaking in human voice (Graham and Kermani, “Recitation”). Hearing the word of God in the Qurʾānic verses (Arab. *āyāt*) constitutes the main source of information about the will of the divine. Thus, hearing seems to precede all other modes of sensory perception.

However, the sense of seeing receives just as much attention in the Qurʾān as the sense of hearing. The audience of the Qurʾān is constantly reminded of the need to use their sight to perceive the visible signs (Arab. *āyāt*) of God’s actions in history, in the cosmos, and in nature (Graham and Kermani, “Discourse”; see below, § 1.2). Despite the Qurʾānic affirmation that no one can see God (Q 6:103), there are plenty of verses that regard the vision of God’s face as the ultimate goal of the faithful (§§ 3.4.1, 3.6.1), although it has always been a matter of discussion whether this is metaphorical speech or whether, when, and where a vision of God is indeed possible.¹ The interpretation of the reports

¹ See *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 3 (§§ 1.19, 1.33), 5 (§ 2.3), 28, 32 (§ 7).

about the visions of the Qur'ānic prophet (Q 53:1–18, 81:22–4) is also disputed by scholars (§ 3.6.3). Is God the object of his visionary experiences, or a celestial being? The Prophet's nightly journey (*al-isrā'*), as related in Q 17:1, includes references to divine signs, which later Muslim commentators (*mufasssirūn*) interpreted as phenomena of the transcendent otherworld. God's audible and visible signs constitute the backbone, or rather the point of departure, for the human sensorial capacity to understand, decipher, and attain divinely sanctioned knowledge. They form the basis for divine-human communication and serve as access points for an ascent toward the Divine. The deliberate obstruction of sensory perception, by contrast, disturbs the relationship between humankind and God; humankind is held responsible for this, even though God himself is described as sealing eyes, ears, and hearts (§ 1.5).

Already the earliest *sūras* attest to the centrality of the creation of the human body and of the ears, eyes, and heart as the organs of perception. The recognition that God is the omniscient provider of sustenance and provision depends on the perceptive capacities of the ears and eyes, and on the heart as the medium for converting perception into understanding and knowledge. Using the senses of hearing and sight, thus, leads to the acknowledgment of God's benevolence and bounty and shapes humankind's ultimate relationship with God (§ 1.2). Later *sūras* reflect an ongoing debate about God's power combined with polemics against those who oppose the Qur'ānic revelation and are ignorant of the origin of their well-being (§ 3.1). Eyes and ears will bear witness about people's shortcomings on Judgment Day; hence the senses are presented as essentially important for human life from creation to afterlife (§ 1.3).

Like eyes and ears, the skin is a sensory organ that will be given the ability to speak and bear witness on the Day of Judgment (§ 6.5). The sense of touch provides direct and unmediated information about the body and the person itself, thereby revealing its immediate interpersonal relations, moral or immoral behavior, and the most intimate points of contact between humans (§ 6.1). More than hearing, sight, and touch, which are primary instruments of gaining knowledge for worldly well-being and serve as instruments of reaching eternal bliss, smell and taste are invoked in the Qur'ān in order to evoke the afterworld (§§ 4.1, 5.4). Paradise is described in multisensory terms, from food and drinks to furnishings, textiles, pleasant fragrances and sounds, and the vision of God. People are warned against the taste of punishment in hell, its heat and its disgusting drink and food.

The Qur'ān's statements about the rightful use of the senses make the human body—which is deeply connected to human eschatological responsibility—a site of controversy. How should the body and the senses be deployed? How to react to stimuli originating from mundane phenomena, but also to those

coming from the transcendent world and from the unseen realms inhabited by angels and jinn? What is going to happen to the body and the senses after death? What gateways to the Divine are accessible by means of the senses? Thus, the deployment, interpretation, ritualization, and regulation of the senses in the Qur'ān allow us to understand the Qur'ānic sensorium.

The Qur'ānic recourse to the senses and sensory experiences evinces its active participation in the "age of sensory piety" of late antiquity, in which particular sensory practices were employed and the importance of sensory perception debated by diverse communities (Frank; Hezser). Religious practices were shaped by the desire to sense the divine presence in places of worship by means of incense, during pilgrimage to holy sites, in human bodies of living saints and sages, or by touching or seeing relics. Objects used during liturgies or the deployment of pictures and images were also an important part of rituals and theological debates (Brown).

Sensory experience and the discussion about its denial are also at the heart of Late Antique ascetic movements. The strict regulation of sensory perception and the specific techniques to bring emotions under control was not a mere rejection of passions or desires but a first step in a process of self-transformative exercises (Gr. *áskēsis*) in order to ascent to intimacy with the Divine. Theologians and ascetics came to acknowledge the deep and problematic connection between the senses and the intellect, and thereby, between sensory perception and self-knowledge. For them, spiritualization of the self was thus a sort of transfiguration of the body through the regulation of its senses (Alciati, 53).

The Qur'ān as a witness of such a late antique sensory piety develops its own distinct view of the senses, their use and control for the purpose of perceiving the divine truth and living in accordance with the divine will. Throughout the Qur'ān a tension is observable between, on the one hand, verses that support a fully embodied or sentient engagement with this world and the next, to the point of enabling a sensory experience of the next world in this life already (e.g., §§ 3.1, 3.3.2, 4.1, 5.4), and, on the other hand, verses that restrain and discipline the senses in this world and the next, to the point of denying the possibility of sensing the beyond while still alive, or the need to sense the beyond as a confirmatory miracle (§ 3.4).

Abstention from worldly pleasure and ascetic practices such as nightly vigils, whether of the Prophet or the first members of the new religious community, are well attested in early Qur'ānic verses (Q 73:1–4, 32:15–17). These verses demonstrate the importance of self-control and endurance. The ethics of self-control as a means to distinguish the Qur'ānic community from others takes even more precise shape in later Medinan verses, which allocate moral

values to proper ways of seeing and hearing, but also to certain food laws. The establishment of Ramadan, the month of fasting, is of particular interest in that regard (Q 2:183–7), as it introduced communal restrictions on sensory experiences and bodily pleasures, one of its aims being to enable a higher form of contemplating the Qur’ānic revelation. It did not, however, impose complete abstinence, instead only demanding limited abstention and thereby reflecting the difference between the community around the Prophet and more radical ascetic movements. The Qur’ānic text acknowledges the fundamental importance of a balance between restriction and enjoyment of sensory experiences that applies to the whole community of believers.

The Qur’ān, hence, adopts the late antique understanding of the senses as essential to human existence and as a primary means of conceiving the permeable and interpenetrating domains of divine and human, this world and the otherworld, the material and the immaterial (Harvey and Mullet, 3). The Qur’ān also reflects the idea that humans are composite beings, comprising body, mind, and soul; an idea that was central to late antique Christian theology (Caseau) and also part of rabbinic discussions (Neis). The Qur’ān’s varied perspectives on sensory experiences reveal the complex understanding of the human self and the function of the senses, showing their role in enabling and restricting interaction with the world, the supernatural, the Divine, and the otherworld. In this regard it is noteworthy that the Qur’ān emphasizes the senses of seeing and hearing, whereas it is largely silent about the use of smell, touch, and taste in religious rituals and practices. Thus, Christian and also pagan multisensory rituals that include the use of incense, the taste of consecrated food, and the touch of objects are hardly mentioned or discussed in the Qur’ān.

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2 Translation

Al-Qur’an al-karīm, Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Amīriyya, 1952² ("Medinan edition/King Fu‘ād edition"). Translations are based on Alan Jones’ translation (2007), with minor amendments.

§ 1. General Notions: Divine, Human, and Animal Senses

The creation of human beings (*al-insān*) as a confirmation of the divine creative power and grace toward humankind is exemplified in the Qur’an by the reference to the creation of hearing, sight, and heart (§ 1.2). Human beings are a counterpart of God, who is also described as hearing and seeing (§ 1.1). However, in contrast to the knowledge of the omniscient God, human knowledge and cognition remain piecemeal. The endowment of cognition through the senses elevates human beings, but it also commits them to special moral standards. The creation of the senses implies great moral responsibility and eschatological accountability regarding their use (§ 1.3). The senses of hearing

and seeing perceive divine communication—they are created to recognize God's will—whereas tongue and lips are created to react to this fact. Humans are privileged by nature to attain knowledge and insight; moreover they have the possibility to reject and to forget their natural given disposition, which inclines toward a denial of human accountability and the denial of divine action and interference in human matters. When they shun their responsibility, they are compared to animals who do not use their sensorium (§ 1.4). Moreover, the freedom to choose is correlated with the blocking of the sensory organs (§ 1.5). People are reminded of their responsibility, warned about negative outcomes, and only then their senses are blocked by divine decree. The undermining of the human senses by God, a theme already salient in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Isaiah 6, 9–10), is imposed upon humans but they are still held accountable for their actions (Räisänen). Persons whose senses are blocked remain in charge of their intellectual capacities and are responsible for any negative action.

§ 1.1 The Divine Sensorium

Q 52:48–9 (God to Noah): So wait patiently for the command of your Lord: you are before Our eyes (*bi-ʿayuninā*); and glorify your Lord by praising Him when you arise, (49) and during the night, and glorify Him at the declining of the stars.

Q 54:11–15: Then We opened the gates of heaven with pouring water, (12) and made the earth to gush with fountains, and the waters came together for a decreed matter. (13) And We carried him [Noah] upon that which is of planks and nails, (14) which sailed before Our eyes—as a recompense for him who was denied. (15) And We left it as a sign. Is there anyone who will be reminded?

Q 11:37 (God to Noah): Make the ship under Our eyes and by Our inspiration. Do not address Me on behalf of those who do wrong. They will surely be drowned.

Q 20:39: “Cast him [Moses] into the casket, and cast him into the river, and let the river cast him up on the shore, and he will be taken up by one who is an enemy to Me and an enemy to him.” But I bestowed love from Me on you, that you will be formed under My eyes (*ʿalā ʿaynī*).

Q 4:58: God commands you to pay back to their owners things entrusted to you; and when you judge between the people, that you judge with justice. Excellent is the admonition which God gives you; God is All-hearing (*samīʿan*), All-seeing (*baṣīʿan*).

Q 2:110: And perform the prayer, and give the alms; whatever good you forward to your souls' account, you will find it with God; assuredly God sees what you do.

§ 1.2 The Creation of the Human Sensorium

Q 90:8–9: Have We not made for him a pair of eyes (*ʿaynayn*)? (9) And a tongue (*lisānan*), and a pair of lips (*shafatayn*)?

Q 16:78: It is God who brought you forth from your mothers' wombs when you knew nothing; and He made you hearing (*al-samʿa*), and sight (*al-abṣāra*), and hearts (*al-afʿidata*) so that you may be thankful.

Q 76:2: We created the human being of a mixed sperm-drop, in order to test him and We made him able to hear and to see.

Q 23:78: It is He who made for you hearing, and sight, and hearts; little thanks you show.

§ 1.3 The Senses as Witnesses on Judgment Day

Q 17:36: Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. The hearing and the sight and the heart—each of those shall be questioned.

Q 41:20: Then, when they come to it, their hearing, their eyes, and their skins bear witness against them about what they have been doing.

§ 1.4 The Animal Sensorium

Q 7:179: And We have indeed urged unto Hell many of the jinn and humankind. They have hearts (*qulūbun*), with which they do not understand; they have eyes (*aʿyunun*), with which they do not perceive; they have ears (*ādhānun*), with which they do not hear. These are like cattle—no, rather they are further astray. These are the heedless.

§ 1.5 The Senses Obstructed

Q 2:7: God sealed (*khatama*) their hearts and their hearing, and on their sight is a covering (*ghishāwa*). They will have a severe chastisement.

Q 6:25: And some of them are listening to you, but We have placed veils (*akinnatan*) over their hearts, so they do not understand it, and heaviness (*waqran*) in their ears. If they saw every sign, they will not believe in it; so when they come to you they argue with you, those who deny say, "This is nothing but the tales of the ancients."

§ 2. Hearing

The Qurʾān's plentiful references to the sense of hearing bear witness to the oral and auditory nature of divine revelation. First and foremost, this is demonstrated by the frequent command "say" (*qul*). In addition, the persuasive power of the recited revelation is mentioned several times, whether it is humans or jinn who are listening (§ 2.1). Verses that address certain rules of behavior while listening to the Qurʾānic revelation are juxtaposed with verses that describe the attitude of the Prophet's opponents when hearing the Qurʾānic

speech. They indicate a vividly contested context of oral performance and attempts to disturb and diminish its effects. People who are listening to the Qur'ānic speech but are not following its commandments are threatened with punishment. Their refusal engenders a kind of self-imposed deafness. The Prophet is frequently consoled that he cannot make deaf people hear (§ 2.2).

The references to earlier prophets and the acts of their people are of particular importance for understanding the conceptual relationship between listening to divine revelation and obeying its commandments. The revelation of the divine commandments to the Israelites at Mount Sinai is the primal scene of a community's self-chosen commitment to hearing and obeying God's word. This scene receives a special twist and critical evaluation in the Qur'ān. The nascent Islamic community inherits the legacy of the Israelites by their own commitment to listening and obeying (§ 2.3).

The danger of deceit through wrongful speech, especially through demons and the Devil (*al-shayṭān*), can only be overcome by turning to God and asking for His protection from their whisperings (§ 2.4). The verses that address this issue remind one of the late antique discourses of deceit leading to impurity (Blidstein).

Besides the audible side of life, the yet inaudible soundscape of the afterlife is brought near in several verses which describe moments on Judgment Day and sounds of Hell and in Paradise (§ 2.5).

§ 2.1 Hearing the Divine: Revelation and Prophetic Speech

Q 5:83: And when they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears because of the truth they have recognized. They say: "Our Lord, we believe, so write us down among the witnesses."

Q 72:1: Say: It has been revealed to me that a group of jinn has listened and said: "We heard an amazing recitation (*qur'ānan*)."

Q 7:204: And when the Recitation (*al-qur'ān*) is recited, listen to it and be silent; so that you may find mercy.

Q 39:18: Those who listen to the word and follow the best of it; those are the ones whom God has guided and those are the ones endowed with understanding.

§ 2.2 Hearing Prophetic Speech: Reaction of the Opponents

Q 17:47: We know how they listen when they listen to you, and when they conspire, when the wrongdoers say: "You are only following a bewitched man!"

Q 41:26: Those who do not believe say: "Do not listen to this recitation (*al-qur'ān*) but talk idly during it, perhaps you will overcome it."

Q 45:8: Who hears the signs of God being recited to him, then persists in arrogance, as if he has not heard them; so give him the tidings of a painful chastisement.

Q 10:42: Among them are some who listen to you. But can you make the deaf hear, although they will not use their senses (*wa-law k̄ānū lā ya'qilūn*)?

§ 2.3 Divine Commandments: Hearing and Obeying

Q 20:13–14 (God to Moses): I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed: (14) “Verily, I am God; there is no god but I. So serve Me, perform the prayer for My remembrance.”

Q 2:93 (the Israelites at Mount Sinai): And when We took the covenant from you and raised the mountain over you: “Hold fast to what We have given you, and hear (*isma'ū*)!” they said: “We hear and we disobey” (*sami'nā wa-ʿaṣaynā*). And their hearts absorbed the calf because of their disbelief. Say: “Evil is what your belief enjoins on you, if you are believers.”

Q 4:46: Some of those who are Jews change words from their places and say: “We hear and we disobey” (*sami'nā wa-ʿaṣaynā*), and “Hear, and not being heard” (*wa-sma' ghayra musma'in*), and “Observe us” (*wa-rā'inā*), twisting with their tongues and traducing religion. If they had said: “We have heard and obey” (*sami'nā wa-aṭa'nā*) and “Hear and look at us” (*wa-sma' wa-nẓurnā*), it would have been better for them, and more upright; but God has cursed them for their disbelief; and so they do not believe except a few.

Q 2:285: The Messenger believes in what was sent down to him from his Lord, as do the believers; each one believes in God and His angels, and in His Scriptures and His Messengers; we make no distinction between any one of His Messengers. They say: “We hear and obey (*sami'nā wa-aṭa'nā*). Our Lord, grant us Your forgiveness; unto You is the homecoming.”

§ 2.4 Hearing the Devil

Q 20:120: Then Satan whispered to him (*fa-waswasa ilayhi l-shayṭān*) and said, “Adam, shall I show you the tree of eternity and a kingdom that will not decay?”

Q 7:200: And if an evil whisper comes to you from Satan (*wa-immā yan-zaghannaka mina l-shayṭāni nazghun*), then seek refuge with God. He is All-hearing, All-knowing.

Q 114:1–6: Say: I take refuge with the Lord of human beings, (2) the King of human beings, (3) the God of human beings, (4) from the evil of the slinking whisperer, (5) who whispers in the breasts of human beings, (6) of jinn and human beings.

§ 2.5 Hearing the Inaudible

§ 2.5.1 Sounds on Judgment Day

Q 50:42: On the day they hear the cry (*al-ṣayḥata*) in truth, that is the day of coming forth.

Q 74:8–9: For when the trumpet (*al-nāqūri*) is sounded, (9) that day will be a harsh day.

Q 36:51: And the trumpet (*al-ṣūri*) shall be blown; then behold, they are sliding down from their tombs to their Lord.

Q 20:108: That day, everyone will follow the caller (*al-dā'iya*), no crookedness therefrom, and the voices will be hushed before the Merciful, you will not hear except a murmur (*hamsan*).

§ 2.5.2 Sounds in Paradise

Q 19:62: There they shall hear no idle talk (*laghwan*), but only “Peace.” There they shall have their provision at dawn and evening.

Q 78:35: Therein they shall hear no idle talk, no cry of lies.

§ 2.5.3 Sounds of Hell

Q 25:12: When it [Hell] sees them from a far place, they shall hear its roaring and sighing.

§ 2.6 Prohibition of Hearing the Heavenly Council

Q 37:6–8: We have adorned the nearest heaven with the adornment of the stars, (7) and [We have placed them] as a protection against every rebellious devil. (8) They cannot listen to the Heavenly Council (*al-mala' al-a'lā*), for they are pelted from every side.²

§ 3. Sight

The sense of sight is important in the Qur'ān because it helps to decipher the signs in the visible world that reveal God's attributes (§ 3.1). The most prominent figure in the Qur'ān who uses his sense of sight to decipher the visible in order to perceive the invisible is Abraham, by looking at the stars, the moon, and the sun (§ 3.2). A number of other people also appear throughout the Qur'ān asking God for visible signs of His power. The human desire to see God's action is accompanied by the wish to see God in this world. This wish is denied. Instead of seeing God, the Israelites are struck by a thunderbolt (§ 3.4.3). Moses, who has an insatiable longing to behold God, sees the burning bush and hears God's voice (§ 3.6.2), and he collapses under the manifestation of God's might (§ 3.4.2). Despite the Qur'ān's affirmation that human sight cannot reach God (§ 3.6.1), some verses relate to the desire for God's face as an ultimate goal of the faithful (§ 3.4.1). The visionary experiences of the righteous in Paradise are

² See also Q 72:8.

a recurrent subject (§ 3.3.2). The audience of the Qurʾān is frequently made “eyewitness” of the proceedings in the afterlife (§ 3.3).

The visions of the Qurʾānic Prophet indicate his distinction from all other prophets and people (§ 3.6.3). They function as legitimation and proof of the rightfulness of the claim of being God’s messenger. Dreams function as revelatory instruments. Dream interpretation is an important subject in the Joseph story and in the story of Abraham’s sacrifice of his son (§ 3.3.3). Besides the overall importance of the eye in regard to knowledge, its power of deception and seduction is also thematized (§ 3.7). A late Medinan verse introduces the regulation of the gazes of men and women (§ 3.7.4).

§ 3.1 Seeing the Divine in the Visible World: Signs in Nature, Cosmos, and from the Past

Q 32:27: Have they not seen that We drive water to barren land and bring forth crops through it, from which both they and their livestock eat? Then do they not see?

Q 17:99: Have they not seen that God, who created the heavens and earth, is powerful to create the like of them? And He has appointed for them a term, about which there is no doubt. But the wrongdoers refuse anything but ingratitude.

Q 6:6: Have they not seen how many generations We have destroyed before them, whom We had established on the earth such as We have not established you? And We sent down the sky in abundance, and made the rivers flow beneath them. Yet We destroyed them for their sins, and created after them other generations.

Q 7:198: If you call them to the guidance they do not hear; and you see them (*wa-tarāhum*) looking at you (*yanẓurūna ilayka*), not perceiving (*lā yubṣirūna*).

Q 6:11: Say: Roam the land, then observe how was the consequence for those who denied the truth.

Q 54:2: Whenever they see a sign, they turn away from it and say: “This is just continuous magic.”

Q 46:21–6: And remember the brother of ʿĀd, when he warned his people beside the sand-dunes, and warners had passed away before him and after him, saying: “Serve only God! I fear for you the chastisement of a dreadful day.” (22) They said, “What, did you come to turn us from our gods? Bring us what you promise us, if you are one of those who speak the truth.” (23) He said, “Knowledge is only with God, and I deliver to you the message with which I was sent; but I see you are an ignorant people.” (24) Then, when they saw it as a sudden cloud coming toward their valleys, they said, “This is a cloud, that shall give us rain!” “No, it is what you wanted to hasten—a wind, wherein is a

painful chastisement, (25) destroying everything by the commandment of its Lord." In the morning there was nothing to be seen but their dwellings. Thus, We recompense the people who are sinners. (26) And We had established them in that wherein We have not established you, and We appointed for them hearing, and sight, and hearts; but neither their hearing, their sight, nor their hearts availed them, since they denied the signs of God. What they used to mock encompassed them.

§ 3.2 Abraham as an Example of Seeing and Understanding

Q 6:74–81: And when Abraham said to his father Azar: "Do you take idols as gods? I see you and your people, in obvious error." (75) So we showed Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those having certitude. (76) When night outspread over him he saw a star and said: "This is my Lord." But when it set he said: "I do not love things that set." (77) When he saw the moon rising, he said: "This is my Lord." But when it set he said: "If my Lord does not guide me I shall surely be of the people who go astray." (78) When he saw the sun rising, he said: "This is my Lord; this is greater!" But when it set he said: "O my people, I disown all that you associate. (79) I have turned my face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth, as a man of pure faith; I am not one of those who associate others with God." (80) His people argued with him. He said: "Do you argue with me about God, when he has guided me? I do not fear what you associate with Him, except my Lord wills something. My Lord embraces all things in His knowledge; will you not remember? (81) How should I fear what you have associated with Him, when you are not fearing to have associated with God that for which He has not sent down on you any authority?" Which of the two parties has better title to security, if you have any knowledge?

§ 3.3 Seeing the Invisible

§ 3.3.1 *Judgment Day*

Q 75:7–10, 22–5: When the sight is dazzled, (8) and the moon is eclipsed, (9) and the sun and moon are brought together, (10) upon that day humans will say, "Where to flee?" [...] (22) Upon that day faces shall be radiant (23) gazing upon their Lord, (24) and upon that day faces shall be scowling, (25) you might think the calamity has been wrecked on them.

Q 2:165: And among the humans are those who take other than God as equals. They love them as God is loved. But those who believe are stronger in love for God. And if only they who have wronged would see when they see the punishment, that all power belongs to God and God is severe in punishment.

§ 3.3.2 Paradise

Q 83:22–4: The pious shall be in bliss, (23) upon couches gazing (*yanzurūna*); (24) you know in their faces the radiance of bliss.

Q 76:11–21: So God has guarded them from the evil of that day, and granted them radiance and joy, (12) and He recompensed them for their patience with a Garden, and silk; (13) therein they shall recline upon couches, therein they shall see neither sun nor cold; (14) near them shall be its shades, and its clusters are lowered, (15) and there shall be passed around them vessels of silver, and goblets of crystal, (16) crystal of silver that they have precisely measured. (17) And therein they shall be given to drink a cup whose mixture is ginger, (18) therein a fountain whose name is called Salsabīl. (19) Immortal youths circle amongst them; when you see them, you consider them scattered pearls, (20) when you see them you see bliss and a great kingdom. (21) Upon them shall be green garments of silk and brocade; they are adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Lord shall give them to drink a pure draught.

§ 3.3.3 Dreams

Q 12:4–5 (Joseph): When Joseph said to his father: “Father, I saw eleven stars, and the sun and the moon; I saw them bowing down before me,” (5) he said, “O my son, do not tell your vision (*ru’yāka*) to your brothers, they might devise some guile against you. Satan is to human beings a manifest enemy.”

Q 37:101–5 (Abraham): Then We gave him the good tidings of a prudent boy; (102) and when he had reached the age of running with him, he said, “My son, I saw in a dream (*fī l-manāmi*) that I shall sacrifice you; so behold what you see?” He said, “My father, do as you are commanded and you shall find me, God willing, one of the steadfast.” (103) When they had surrendered, and he flung him upon his brow, (104) We called unto him, “Abraham, (105) you have confirmed the vision (*al-ru’yā*), this is how We recompense the good-doers.”

§ 3.4 Seeking Vision

§ 3.4.1 The Pious Seek the Face of God

Q 18:28: And keep yourself patient with those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His face (*yurīdūna wajhahū*). And do not let your eyes turn from them, desiring adornments of the worldly life, and do not obey one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his desire and whose affair is ever neglect.

§ 3.4.2 Moses Wants to See God

Q 7:143: And when Moses came at Our appointed time, and his Lord spoke with him, he said, “My Lord! Show me that I may behold You!” Said He, “You shall not see Me, but behold the mountain, and if it remains, in its place, then you

shall see Me.” And when his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, He leveled it to the ground and Moses fell down unconscious. And when he recovered, he said, “Glory be to You! I repent to You, and I am the first of the believers.”

§ 3.4.3 *The Israelites Want to See God*

Q 2:55: And when you said, “O Moses! We will never believe you until we see God manifestly,” so a thunderbolt struck you while you were looking on.

§ 3.4.4 *Abraham Wants to See the Dead Come Back to Life*

Q 2:260: When Abraham said, “Show me, Lord, how You will raise the dead,” He replied, “Don’t you have faith?” He said, “Yes, but just to reassure my heart.” God said, “Take four birds, draw them to you, and cut their bodies to pieces. Scatter them over the mountain tops, then call them back. They will come swiftly to you. Know that God is All-mighty, All-wise.”

§ 3.5 Visual Evidence of God’s Associates

Q 35:40: Say: “Have you seen the associates of yours whom you call upon besides God? Show Me what they have created from the earth. Or have they a share in the heavens? Or have We given them a scripture so that they are on clear evidence from it?” No, the wrongdoers promise each other nothing but delusions (*ghurūran*).

§ 3.6 Visions of the Divine

§ 3.6.1 *God Cannot Be Seen*

Q 6:103: Sight does not reach Him, but He reaches sight.

§ 3.6.2 *Moses Sees the Burning Bush*

Q 20:10–12: When he saw a fire, he said to his family, “You tarry; I perceive a fire; perhaps I can bring you some burning brand therefrom, or find some guidance at the fire.” (11) But when he came to the fire, a voice was heard: “O Moses! (12) I am your Lord! Take off your shoes: you are in the sacred valley Tuwa.”³

§ 3.6.3 *The Prophet’s Visions*

Q 81:22–4: And your companion is not a madman. (23) For verily he saw H/him on the clear horizon (*wa-la-qad ra’āhu bi-l-ufuqi l-mubīn*), (24) and he is not withholding from the Unseen.

Q 53:1–18: By the star when it sets, (2) your companion has neither gone astray, nor has he erred; (3) nor does he speak out of desire. (4) It is simply a revelation that is being revealed, (5) taught to him by one of awesome

3 See also Q 28:29–31.

power, (6) possessed of vigor. He stood upright, (7) on the highest horizon. (8) Then H/he drew near and drew closer, (9) until he was within the length of two bows' away or even nearer, (10) then He inspired His servant with His inspiration. (11) The heart has not lied about what he saw. (12) Will you dispute with him concerning what he saw? (13) Indeed, he saw H/him on another descent, (14) by the Lote-Tree of the boundary, (15) near to which is the garden of refuge, (16) when the Lote-Tree was covered by its covering. (17) The eye did not swerve, nor did it go beyond. (18) Verily he saw some of the greatest signs of his Lord.

Q 17:1: Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Furthest Mosque, the precincts of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs (*āyātīnā*). He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing.

Q 17:60: And when We said to you: "Surely your Lord encompasses the humans"; and We did make the vision (*al-ru'yā*) which We showed you as trial for the humans, and the cursed tree in the Qur'ān as well; and We cause them to fear, but it only adds to their great inordinacy.

§ 3.7 The Power of the Eye

§ 3.7.1 *Delusional Vision*

Q 27:38–44 (visit of the Queen of Saba to Solomon): He said, "O Council, which one of you will bring me her throne, before they come to me in submission?" (39) An 'Ifrit of the jinn said, "I will bring it to you, before you rise from your place; I have strength for it." (40) One with whom was knowledge of the Scripture said, "I will bring it to you before your glance (*tarfuka*) returns to you!" When he saw it placed before him, he said, "This is by the grace of my Lord to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful!" And whoever is grateful, truly, his gratitude is for himself, and whoever is ungrateful—my Lord is All-sufficient, All-generous." (41) He said, "Disguise her throne for her, and we shall behold whether she is guided or if she is of those who are not guided." (42) When she came, it was said, "Is your throne like this?" She said, "As though it was it." "And we were given the knowledge before her, and we were in submission, (43) and that what she was worshipping apart from God barred her, for she was from a people who were ungrateful." (44) It was said to her, "Enter the palace." But when she saw it, she deemed it was spreading water, and she bared her legs. He said, "It is a palace smoothed of crystal." She said, "My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, and I submit with Solomon to God, the Lord of all Beings."

Q 4:157 (crucifixion of Jesus): And for their saying, "We killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the messenger of God," they did not kill him nor crucify him, but it appeared to them (*shubbiha lahum*). Those who disagree concerning that surely are in doubt regarding it; they have no knowledge of it, just following an assumption; and they certainly did not kill him.

Q 7:148 (the calf of the Israelites): And the people of Moses took to them, after him, of their ornaments a calf, a body having a lowing sound. Did they not see it could neither speak to them, nor guide them to a way? Yet they took it to them, and became wrongdoers.

§ 3.7.2 *The Evil Eye*

Q 68:51: And indeed, those who disbelieve would almost make you slip with their glances (*la-yuzliqūnaka bi-abṣārihim*); when they hear the message, and they say, "He is possessed."

§ 3.7.3 *Looking with Desire*

Q 12:22–31 (Joseph's beauty): And when he [Joseph] was fully grown, We gave him judgment and knowledge. This is how We recompense those who do good. (23) And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him, and closed the doors. And she said, "Come, you." He said, "God be my refuge. He is my master who has given me good lodging. Those who do wrong do not prosper." (24) For she desired him; and he would have desired her, had he not seen the proof (*burhāna*) of his Lord. Thus did We protect him from evil and indecency. He is certainly among our sincere servants. (25) They raced to the door; and she tore his shirt from behind. They encountered her master by the door. She said, "What is the recompense of him who does evil against your folk, but that he should be imprisoned, or a painful chastisement?" (26) He said, "It was she who sought to seduce me"; and a witness of her folk bore witness (*wa-shahida shāhidun*), "If his shirt has been torn from before then she has spoken truly, and he is one of the liars; (27) but if it be that his shirt has been torn from behind, then she has lied, and he is one of the truthful." (28) When he saw his shirt was torn from behind he said, "This is of your women's guile; surely your guile is great. (29) Joseph, turn away from this; and you, woman, ask forgiveness of your crime; surely you are one of the sinners." (30) Women in the city said, "The governor's wife has been sought to seduce her slave; he has impasioned her with love; we see her in clear error." (31) When she heard their sly whispers, she sent to them, and made ready for them a feast, then she gave to each one of them a knife. "Get out to them," she said. And when they saw him, they were so amazed that they cut their hands, saying, "God save us! This is no mortal; he is no other but a noble angel."

§ 3.7.4 *Controlling the Gaze*

Q 24:30–1: Say to the believers, that they cast down their gaze (*abṣārihim*) and guard their private parts; that is purer for them. God is aware of the things they work. (31) And say to the believing women, that they cast down their gazes (*abṣārihinna*) and guard their private parts, and reveal not their adornment save such as is outward; and let them cast their veils over their bosoms, and

not reveal their adornment save to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husbands' fathers, or their sons, or their husbands' sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or what their right hands own, or such men as attend them, not having sexual desire, or children who have not yet attained knowledge of women's private parts; nor let them stamp their feet, so that their hidden ornament may be known. And turn all together to God, O you believers; so you may prosper.

§ 4. *Smell*

References to the sense of smell do not occur explicitly in the Qur'ān, but olfaction plays a significant role in the Qur'ānic imagery of Paradise and in a scene in the Joseph story. Smell is evoked in references to *rayḥān*, usually interpreted as “scented, or sweet-smelling herbs” that are part of the imagery of Paradise. The sensory delight of scent and perfume is also apparent in descriptions of heavenly drinks that are sealed with musk or wine mixed with camphor or ginger (§ 4.1). Remarkably, no reference is made to the burning of incense or to the smell of burnt offerings (Stewart). Also missing are references to perfume, which was a much-used trope in pre-Islamic poetry and later became important in Prophetic traditions.

The story of Joseph is of particular interest regarding the sense of smell, as it includes the depiction of the restoration of Jacob's sight after Joseph's shirt is draped over his face. It is either the sense of smell or that of touch that enables him to see again. The story also includes Jacob's claim that he perceived the smell of Joseph from afar (§ 4.2).

§ 4.1 Smells of Paradise

Q 55:10–12: And the earth—He set it down for all beings, (11) therein fruits, and palm-trees with sheaths, (12) and grain in the blade, and fragrant herbs (*al-rayḥān*).

Q 56:88–9: Then, if he will be one of those brought near, (89) there shall be repose and fragrance (*fa-rawḥun wa-rayḥān*), and a Garden of Delight.

Q 83:22–8: Surely the pious shall be in bliss, (23) upon couches gazing; (24) You recognize in their faces the radiancy of bliss (25) as they are given to drink of a wine sealed (26) whose seal is musk (*khitāmuhū miskun*), so after that let the strivers strive (27) and whose mixture is Tasnīm, (28) a fountain at which those brought near drink.

Q 76:17–18: And therein they shall be given to drink a cup whose mixture is ginger (*zanjabīl*), (18) therein a fountain whose name is called Salsabil.

§ 4.2 Smelling and Healing

Q 12:93–6: “Go, take this shirt, and do you cast it on my father's face, and he shall recover his sight; then bring me your family all together.” (94) And when the

caravan departed, their father said, "I do indeed perceive the smell of Joseph (*riḥa Yūsufa*), if only you think me not a dotard." (95) They said, "By God, you persist in your old error." (96) When the bearer of good tidings came, he threw it over his face and he saw again. He said, "Did I not tell you that I knew something from God that you did not know?"

§ 5. Taste

The sense of taste is mainly evoked in passages that describe divine nourishment by means of all kinds of plants, asking humans to be thankful and to ponder God's benevolence (§ 5.1). Later Medinan texts provide some detailed descriptions of licit and forbidden food (§ 5.2). The reference to the demand of the Israelites for different food is part of a polemic against people's failure to believe that God nourishes humankind. Similarly, the demand of Jesus' disciples for a heavenly table decked with food to verify Jesus' message and the belief in God as nourisher underscores the human desire of tasting divine grace (§ 5.3). However, the passage also criticizes the demand for sensory proof. God's overwhelming power to create and sustain becomes obvious in the descriptions of Paradise and its manifold victuals and drinks (§ 5.4.1). In stark contrast is the food that will be offered in Hell (§ 5.4.2). A more metaphorical use of the sense of taste appears in passages that state that death will be tasted by everyone and that predict that sinners will taste punishment (§ 5.5).

§ 5.1 Tastes of the World

Q 6:99: It is He who sends down water from the sky. Therewith We bring forth vegetation of all kinds, then We bring forth from it green leaves from which We produce thick clustered grain; and of the palm-tree, of the sheaths of it, come forth clusters within reach, and gardens of grapes and olives and pomegranates, alike and unlike; behold the fruit of it when it yields the fruit and the ripening of it; most surely there are signs in this for a people who believe.

§ 5.2 Forbidden and Licit Food

Q 6:141–6: It is He who produces gardens trellised, and untrellised, palm-trees, and crops diverse in production, olives, pomegranates, similar or dissimilar to each other. Eat of their fruits when they fructify, and pay the due thereof on the day of its harvest; and be not prodigal; God loves not the prodigal. (142) And of the cattle, for burden and for slaughter, eat of what God has provided you; and follow not the steps of Satan; he is a manifest enemy to you. (143) Eight couples: two of sheep, two of goats. Say, "Is it the two males He has forbidden or the two females? Or what the wombs of the two females contain? Tell me with knowledge, if you speak truly." (144) Of camels two, of oxen two. Say, "Is it the two males He has forbidden or the two females? Or what the wombs of the two females contain? Or were you witnesses when God charged you with

this? Then who does greater evil than those who invent falsehood against God, to lead the people astray without any knowledge? Surely God does not guide the people who do wrong.” (145) Say, “I do not find, in what is revealed to me, anything forbidden to the eater of it (*ṭā’imin yaṭ’amuhū*) except it is carrion (*maytatan*), or blood shed (*daman masfūhan*), or the flesh of a pig (*lahma khinzīrin*)—for that is an abomination—or an ungodly thing that has been hallowed to other than God; but whoever is compelled, neither desiring nor transgressing, surely your Lord is All-forgiving, All-compassionate.” (146) For those who are Jews We have forbidden every beast with claws; and of oxen and sheep We have forbidden them the fat of them, save what their backs carry, or their entrails, or what is mingled with bone; that We recompensed them for their insolence; We speak truly.

Q 22:36: And the beasts of sacrifice (*budna*), We have appointed them for you as among God’s waymarks; therein is good for you. So mention God’s Name over them, standing in ranks then, when their flanks collapse, eat of them and feed the beggar and the suppliant. So We have subjected them to you; maybe you will be thankful.

§ 5.3 Seeking Taste

§ 5.3.1 Demand for Different Food

Q 2:61: And when you said, “Moses, we will not endure one sort of food (*ṭā’imin wāhidin*); pray to your Lord for us, that He may bring forth for us of that the earth produces—green herbs, cucumbers, corn, lentils, onions,” he said, “Would you have in exchange what is meaner for what is better? Get you down to Egypt; you shall have there that you demanded.” And abasement and poverty were pitched upon them, and they were laden with the burden of God’s anger; that, because they had disbelieved the signs of God and slain the prophets unrightfully; that, because they disobeyed, and were transgressors.

§ 5.3.2 Demand for Tasting the Divine

Q 5:112–15: And when the disciples said, “O Jesus son of Mary, is your Lord able to send down on us a table out of the sky?” he said, “Fear you God, if you are believers.” (113) They said, “We desire that we eat of it and our hearts be at rest; and that we may know that you have spoken true to us, and that we may be among its witnesses.” (114) Jesus son of Mary said, “O God, our Lord, send down upon us a Table out of the sky, that shall be for us a feast for the first and the last of us, and a sign from You. And provide for us; You are the best of providers.” (115) God said, “I will send it down on you; whoever of you hereafter disbelieves, I shall chastise him with a chastisement with which I chastise no other being.”

§ 5.4 Tasting the Untastable

§ 5.4.1 *Tastes of Paradise*

Q 56:17–21: Immortal youths going round about them (18) with goblets, and ewers, and a cup from a spring. (19) No headache will they have therefrom, nor will they be intoxicated, (20) and fruits as they shall choose, (21) and flesh of fowls as they desire.

§ 5.4.2 *Tastes of Hell*

Q 38:57: All this; so let them taste it—boiling water and pus.

§ 5.5 Metaphorical Tastes

§ 5.5.1 *Taste of Punishment*

Q 4:56: Those who reject our Signs, We shall soon cast into the Fire: as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the penalty: for God is All-powerful, All-wise.

§ 5.5.2 *Taste of Death*

Q 3:185: Every soul shall taste of death (*kullu nafsin dhā'iqatu l-mawt*); you will surely be paid in full your wages on the Day of Resurrection. Whosoever is removed from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, shall win the triumph. The present life is but the joy of delusion.

§ 6. Touch

In the Qur'ān, touch is associated with seduction, moral temptation, and ritual impurity. It thus is the most dangerous of all senses. In particular, touch is connected to the power of Satan, similar to the sense of hearing (§ 6.2). For reestablishing purity ritual cleaning (*wuḍū'*) is mandatory and it is fundamental to wash body parts such as hands and feet that are involved in immediate bodily contacts (§ 6.1).

Qur'ānic narratives include prohibitions to touch sacred animals, as in the case of the people of Thamūd. Moses declares a man called Sāmīrī to be an untouchable and impure person cast out of his community after seducing his people (§ 6.4).

At the same time, tactile sensations are also considered as proof for Prophetic truth claims. If such a proof is offered but the tactile experience is disregarded by the audience, it is considered as a failure of properly evaluating touch. When the divine revelation is successfully perceived (that is, in most instances, listened to), the skin of the person perceiving it will shiver and soften (§ 6.3). Skins will also give witness on Judgment Day about the life of each person (§ 6.5). The everlasting burning of skins is one of the painful punishments of Hell (§ 6.6).

§ 6.1 Touch and Purity

Q 4:43: O believers, draw not near to prayer when you are drunken until you know what you are saying, or defiled—unless you are traversing a way—until you have washed yourselves; but if you are sick, or on a journey, or if any of you comes from the privy, or you have touched women (*lāmastumu l-nisā'a*), and you can find no water, then have recourse to wholesome dust and wipe your faces and your hands; God is All-pardoning, All-forgiving.

Q 2:236: There is no fault in you, if you divorce women while as yet you have not touched them nor appointed any marriage-portion for them; yet make provision for them, the affluent man according to his means, and according to his means the needy man, honorably—an obligation on the good-doers.

Q 5:6: You who believe, when you rise to pray, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads and your feet up to the ankles. If you are polluted, purify yourselves. If you are sick or on a journey or one of you comes from the closet or if you have had contact with women and you do not find water, have recourse to clean soil and wipe your faces and your hands with it. God does not wish to place any difficulty on you, but He wishes to make you pure and to complete His blessing on you so that you may be grateful.

Q 19:20–1 (Mary and the angelic messenger): Mary said: “How can I have a son when no mortal has touched me?” (21) He said: “So says your Lord: ‘It is easy for Me. [We have done this] so that We may make him a sign for men and a mercy from Us. It is a thing decreed.’”

§ 6.2 Touch of the Devil

Q 7:201–2: The God-fearing, when an affliction of Satan touches them, remember, and then see clearly, (202) and their brothers would lead them into error, then not stop short.

Q 2:275: Those who live on usury will rise only as does the one who is prostrated by the touch of Satan. That is because they say, “Trading is like usury.” God has permitted trading, and forbidden usury. Whosoever receives an admonition from their Lord and desists, he shall have his past [gains], and his affair is committed to God; but those who revert—those are the companions of the Fire, in which they will dwell forever.

§ 6.3 Touch and Divine Signs

Q 6:7: Had We sent down on you a scripture on parchment (*kitāban fī qirṭāsīn*) and so they touched it with their hands, yet [still] the deniers would have said, “This is nothing but obvious sorcery.”

Q 39:23: God has sent down the fairest discourse as a consistent scripture, oft-repeated (*mathāniya*), whereat shiver the skins of those who fear their

Lord; then their skins and their hearts soften to the remembrance of God. That is God's guidance, whereby He guides whomsoever He will; and whomsoever God leads astray, he has no guide.

§ 6.4 Forbidden Touch

Q 7:73 (sacred camel of Thamūd): To the Thamūd people [We sent] Šāliḥ, one of their own brothers: He said: "O my people! Worship God: you don't have any other god but Him. To you came a clear sign from your Lord! This she-camel of God is a sign for you: So leave her to graze in God's earth, and do not touch her with any harm, or ye shall be seized with a grievous punishment."

Q 20:97 (the outcast Sāmirī): He [Moses] said [to Sāmirī]: "Depart! It shall be all the life that you say: 'Do not touch (*lā misāsa*)!' And a threat awaits you which will not fail you. Look at your god, to whom you worshipped so long! We will surely burn it and scatter its ashes into the sea."

Q 56:77–80: It is a noble recitation (*qur'ān*) (78) in a hidden Scripture, (79) which only the purified will touch, (80) a revelation from the Lord of all Beings.

§ 6.5 Skins Bearing Witness on Judgment Day

Q 41:20–2: Till when they are come to it, their hearing, their eyes, and their skins bear witness against them concerning what they have been doing, (21) and they will say to their skins, "Why are you bearing witness against us?" They shall say, "God gave us speech, as He gave everything speech. He created you the first time, and unto Him you shall be returned. (22) Not so did you cover yourselves, that your hearing, your eyes, and your skins should not bear witness against you; but you thought that God would never know much of the things that you were working."

§ 6.6 Skins Burning in the Fire

Q 4:56: Surely those who disbelieve in Our signs—We shall certainly roast them in a Fire; as often as their skins are wholly burned, We shall give them in exchange other skins, that they may taste the chastisement. Surely God is All-mighty, All-wise.

§ 6.7 Touching the Untouchable

Q 76:12–13, 21: He has recompensed them for their patience with a garden and silk; (13) They recline there on couches and see neither sun nor cold. (14) Close over them are its shades, and its fruit-clusters are lowered. (15) Cups of silver are brought round to them in turn, vessels of glass [...] (21) The clothes they

wear will be of green silk and brocade, and they are adorned with bracelets of silver; and their Lord gives them a pure draught to drink.

§ 6.8 Metaphorical Touches

Q 6:17: If God touches you with affliction, none can remove it but He; if He touches you with happiness, He has power over all things.

Q 19:45: "Father, I fear that some chastisement from the All-merciful will touch you, so that you become a friend to Satan."

Ibn Ishāq (d. ca. 151/768) on Vision in the Prophet's Biography

Richard McGregor

1 Introduction

Within the Islamic tradition, the figure of the Prophet Muḥammad looms large, with his biography (*sīra*) constituting a key literary source. Along with the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, the *sīra* and *maghāzī* ("expeditions") literature have been essential references for the Prophet's model (*sunna*). Among the most important author-compilers of the Prophet's *sīra* was Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, whose work has become known to many simply as *The Prophetic Biography* (*al-Sīra al-Nabawīyya*). Originally from Medina, Ibn Ishāq rose in the administrations of both the Umayyads and Abbasids, residing variously in Alexandria, Kufa, Rayy, and finally Baghdad. His grandfather had converted from Judaism, and his family produced several *ḥadīth* experts (Lecker). In Medina, Ibn Ishāq taught in the same learned circles as the founder of the Mālikī school of law, Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795). This relationship turned sour for several reasons, however, and Ibn Ishāq eventually made his way to the court of the caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136/754–158/775) in Baghdad. There, in the early decades of the Abbasid Empire, courtly patronage supported the production of Ibn Ishāq's biography of the Prophet (Anthony, 153–5, 158).

The term "biography" is often used to refer to the narrative literature recounting Muḥammad's life from birth to death: that is, the *sīra*. However, biographical reports can also be found in the *ḥadīth*, making the distinctions between *ḥadīth* and *sīra* unclear at times. The question of the overlap between these literatures hinges on genre formation in the early Islamic period. In the past, some scholars argued that *ḥadīth* literature is essentially *sīra-maghāzī* material taken out of its historical sequence (i.e., the life story of Muḥammad), while others claimed the reverse, that *sīra-maghāzī* literature consists of *ḥadīth* reports arranged chronologically (Görke, "Relationship," 171–3). The case has recently been made that the *sīra-maghāzī* and *ḥadīth* genres stood from the earliest period as distinct genres. Although individual reports (*akhbār*) occasionally moved between genres, the fields remained distinct from each other for reasons relating to both form and content (Görke, "Relationship," 175, 183).

If the boundaries between subgenres were not firm, our understanding of the authorship of the *Sīra* also requires some nuance. The *Sīra* that today we attribute to Ibn Ishāq was in fact the product of many hands, with Andreas Görke mapping at least four generations of scholars involved in the “authorship” of Ibn Ishāq’s *sīra-maghāzī* (Görke, “Authorship,” 86). Individuals in the generation immediately preceding Ibn Ishāq had already begun to collect traditions around the theme of Muḥammad’s life. ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. ca. 93/712), for example, assembled and taught traditions on the Prophet’s life (Görke and Schoeler, 213). While the letters that Ibn al-Zubayr penned to the caliphs about the Prophet may preserve some of the earliest written expressions of Prophetic biography, he seems to have never written a formal work (Anthony, 98, 102–4). Muḥammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhri (d. ca. 124/742) similarly transmitted important content about the life of the Prophet—and was Ibn Ishāq’s teacher in Medina—but never compiled this material into a book (Anthony, 146, 148).

While he drew on these established *sīra-maghāzī* sources, Ibn Ishāq’s contribution was novel and formative to the genre of Prophetic biography. Scholars of his era identified him as the first to compile and write/arrange (*allaḥa*) the *maghāzī* of the Prophet (Lecker). More than a collection of disconnected traditions, Ibn Ishāq’s work presents a narrative arc that advances its plot—the providential mission of Muḥammad—by weaving together historical details within wider cultural, religious, and political contexts (Anthony, 158; Robinson, 65). Ibn Ishāq’s original text is now lost, but was preserved partially in later recensions, the most prominent of which was that of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Hishām (d. ca. 215/830–1). Textual evidence suggests that Ibn Ishāq’s original work likely included significant coverage of both pre-Islamic and post-Muḥammadan history, most of which is absent due to Ibn Hishām’s editing. The *Sīra* as we have it today touches upon pre-Islamic reports only to introduce the narrative of Muḥammad’s life. Ibn Hishām’s editing represented the shifting of pre-Islamic and post-Muḥammadan materials out of the *sīra-maghāzī* genre and into the emerging fields of universal history, tales of the prophets (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’*), and histories of the caliphs (*ta’rīkh al-khulafā’*) (Robinson, 135, 179).

Throughout its narratives, Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra* engages the full range of human senses. Its narrative structure—centered on events, deeds, and statements—offers no systematic or abstract reflection on these bodily capacities and practices. Nevertheless, the *Sīra* evokes sensory practices often in powerful and dramatic ways, engaging the senses at key moments to make its point. The sections translated below are passages that enlist the visual register. While other sensory foci would also yield substantial results, tracing out the visual engagements in the *Sīra* is a rich target of inquiry. Focusing on visual practices in the

passages below illuminates some essential orientations of the Islamic revelation, that is, the visual reconfiguration of the religious sensorium through the contestation of sacred objects and spaces.

These passages are vignettes of images and objects that represent or embody the disruptive dynamic at play within the *Sīra*. They illuminate the *Sīra's* use of images and objects as part of a visual narrative of opposition, which opens space for the emergence of a new religious system. Pre-Islamic Arabia and its religious landscape are being rearranged and transformed, shaken and put into flux. The political, social, and religious models are being challenged. Rather than simply stated as such in the text, this transformation is shown through several illustrations. In other words, a complex visual communication is presented, which captures the disruptions in the landscape. These disruptions, and the sensory impact they convey, articulate the Islamic story of the arrival and triumph of a new revelation. Through these vignettes the eye is led to witness the intervention of Muḥammad's mission into the religious topography. The world thus becomes a stage filled with powerful images, symbols, and performances, all of which the tradition will draw upon in perpetuity. In the examples presented below the *Sīra* preserves a visual record of divine providence as it intervenes into human history: God's hand working in dramatic and sometimes surprising ways, framed and communicated through the human senses.

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2 Translation

Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, *Kitāb Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, 2 vols., Göttingen: Dieterich, 1858–60, vol. 1, pp. 12–15, 17–18, 29, 31–2, 51–6, 71, 93–8, 122–5, 258, 303–4.

[§ 1. *The Campaign against Mecca and Medina*]

[pp. 12–15] [The ruler of Yemen] Tubān As‘ad Abū Karib [r. 378–430 CE] marched from the East. Arriving at Medina, Tubān seized two rabbis from among the Jews, to take back with him to Yemen [...] The story is told that when Tubān Abū Karib departed, he left one of his sons behind [to rule] in Medina. Although none of the population of the city were harmed, Tubān’s son fell to an assassin. Resolving to destroy the city, cut down its date palms, and annihilate its population, the enraged sovereign stormed back to the city. The rabbis were learned men from the Qurayza tribe, and when they heard of the king’s intention to destroy Medina and its people, they said, “O king, abandon this course of action. If you pursue it, you will fail, and we fear you will meet an imminent punishment.” They explained that this is the place to which a prophet from among the Quraysh will emigrate, and which he will make his home and final resting place. The king was astonished by these profound words; he thus not only abandoned his assault on Medina, but embraced the religion of the rabbis [...]

On his way back to Yemen, the king was passing by the city of Mecca [...] at which point he met some men from the Hudhayl clan who offered to lead him to a long-lost treasure of pearls, topaz, rubies, gold, and silver. Having caught the king’s attention, they explained that it was to be found in the Sacred House of Mecca, which its people worshipped and prayed toward. Their aim, however, was to lead the king to disaster. They knew that any king who committed outrage against the temple would meet his end. After agreeing to their proposal, Tubān Abū Karib consulted the two rabbis. They warned the king, “These people only seek your downfall, and the defeat of your armies. This is the only temple in the land that God has taken for Himself. If you follow them in this, you and all those following you will meet your end.” The king then asked them what he should do once at the House. They replied, “Behave as its devotees do. Circumambulate the House, venerate and honor it; shave your head, and humble yourself until you leave its presence.” “What prevents you,” asked the king,

“from performing these rites, yourselves?” They replied, “By God, this is the House of Abraham, our father, yet the impure idols that are displayed around it, and the offensive blood sacrifices of the polytheists, keep us from it.”

At this, the king called the men from the Hudhayl tribe, ordered their hands and feet to be cut off, and resumed the road to Mecca. There he circled the House of God, offered a sacrifice, and shaved his head. He stayed there for six days, making sacrifices on behalf of the people—thanks to which they ate meat and drank honey. In a dream, it came to him that he should dress the House, so he adorned it with a covering of woven palm fronds. A subsequent vision urged him to do more, so he covered it with plain Yemeni cloth. After a third vision, he draped it with a fine striped fabric. Thus it is claimed that King Tubān Abū Karib was the first to hang cloth upon the Ka'ba. Tubān also had a door with a lock be made for the shrine, and directed the shrine's custodians, from the Jurhum tribe, to keep the site clean, and forbid blood, corpses, and clothes stained with menses.

[pp. 17–18] There stood in Yemen a shrine known as Ri'ām. The idolaters venerated it, made sacrifices to it, and received oracles from it. The two rabbis told the king [Tubān] that this idol was in truth occupied by a beguiling devil, and that they could defeat it. At the king's behest, they drew the devil out, which assumed the form of a black dog. They killed the dog, and tore down the temple. Upon the ruined stones, blood from many sacrifices is still visible today.

[§ 2. *Revenge for Desecration of a Church*]

[pp. 29–32] Abraha built a monumental church (*kanīsa*) in Sanaa, the likes of which the world had never seen.¹ In his report to the Negus, he wrote, “I have built for you a church, greater than any other ever built for a king. I will not rest until I have diverted the Ḥajj of the Arabs to it.” When the Arabs heard about this letter, one of the intercalators from the Banū Fuqaym was greatly angered.² [...] In his anger at Abraha's attempt to divert the Arab pilgrims, Abū Thumāma set out for the church, defiled it with his excrement, and returned home.

This stirred Abraha's rage, and upon hearing it had been done by a man from the temple at Mecca [...] he vowed to march to the Ka'ba and destroy

1 Abraha (d. ca. 570 CE) was the viceroy in South Arabia for the king of Aksum, the Negus, but later ruled much of Arabia independently.

2 Intercalation serves to match the lunar calendar to the seasonal solar calendar, by either inserting days or reassigning important dates to points later in the calendar. The Islamic calendar, divided into twelve months, has continued to recognize four months as sacred, during which warfare and feuding is prohibited, thereby assuring trading and regional pilgrimage.

it. [...] He ordered his Abyssinian troops to prepare for battle, and rode out on an elephant. When the Arabs got wind of this force, they were shocked and anxious, but felt that since Abraha intended to destroy God's house, the Ka'ba, then they must oppose him. [...] Abraha marched out, and reaching the town of Ṭā'if, he stopped. [...] A delegation came out to meet him, saying, "O king, we are your loyal and obedient servants! We have no dispute with you. Our temple is that of the goddess al-Lāt—you seek the temple in Mecca. We shall send someone with you to show you the way." With that, he moved on, leaving them in peace. Regarding al-Lāt, it was a temple in Ṭā'if that they used to venerate like the Ka'ba. The man they sent to show Abraha the way was called Abū Righāl. He died along the route near al-Mughammas, and was buried there. As a sign of their animosity toward this traitor, the Arabs throw stones at his grave even today.

[§ 3. *The Origins of Idolatry in Arabia*]

[pp. 51–6] Ibn Hishām reports that the practice of idol worship started from a trip 'Amr b. Luḥayy made, traveling from Mecca to Syria. There, he came across the Amalekites,³ descendants of 'Imlāq in the line of Noah, in the Moabite kingdom to the east of the Dead Sea, worshipping idols. In response to 'Amr's query, they explained that the idols rewarded them with favors such as rain during droughts, or victory in battle. 'Amr then asked for one of these idols that he might take it back to the Arabs, and the Amalekites obliged, entrusting him with the idol named Hubal. Thus, he returned to Mecca, set up Hubal, and called the people to glorify and worship it.

It is said the worship of stones among the descendants of Ishmael began when the residents of Mecca became too numerous and the city began to feel overcrowded. Some began to set out in search of open lands in which to dwell, but none left Mecca without a stone from the Sacred Precinct of the Ka'ba, as a tribute to that home shrine. Wherever they settled, they set up these stones, circumambulating them as had been their practice around the Ka'ba. In this way, they came to worship the stones, finding them reassuring, and even marvelous.

Over time this led them to forget the religion of Abraham and Ishmael, replacing it with another. While in worshipping these idols they fell back into the error of those who had come before them, they nevertheless retained some remnants of their Abrahamic covenant. They continued to honor the House of God and to circumambulate it during the Ḥajj and the lesser pilgrimage of

3 The Amalekites appear in the Hebrew Bible, in Genesis and elsewhere, as nomadic occupants of ancient Israel, and the inveterate enemies of the Israelites. Their descendants will reappear in the *Sīra* as the original custodians of the Ka'ba.

the 'Umra, they continued to stand at Mount 'Arafāt, to halt at the station of Muzdalifa, to make the sacrifices, and declare the One true God during the greater and lesser pilgrimages; all of this despite their having mixed foreign practices into the original monotheistic faith.⁴ And so the people of the Quraysh and the Kināna tribes used to declare, "At Thy service, O God, at Thy service! At Thy service! You have no partner. You are the owner of every associate, and all that belongs to him belongs to You!"⁵ They introduced their idols into the divine presence, proclaimed His unity in their declarations, and then subordinated these idols and their powers to the One God. This is precisely what was being said in the Qur'ān when the Blessed Lord said to Muḥammad, "Most of them do not believe in God, except if they can associate others with Him" (Q 12:106). Which is to say, "They acknowledge My oneness only along with a mistaken association of partners from among My creation."

The people of Noah also had idols to which they were utterly devoted. God Almighty mentioned these to His blessed Messenger through revelation, saying: "They enjoined, 'On no account abandon your gods! Do not leave Wadd or Suwā' or Yaghūth and Ya'ūq and Nasr.' But surely they have misled many in this" (Q 71:23–4). When they abandoned the religion of Ishmael, many among the descendants of Ishmael—as did others—invoked the names of these idols. One of these was Hudhayl b. Muḍar. At Ruhāt, another adopted the idol Suwā'; at Dūmat al-Jandal, it was Kalb b. Wabara of the Quḍā'a tribes who adopted Wadd, [...] An'um of Ṭayyī' and the people of Madhḥij adopted the idol Yaghūth in the Yemeni province of Jurash. Khaywān, a clan of the Hamdān, embraced Ya'ūq in the Yemen. The people of Dhū l-Kulā' adopted the idol Nasr in the land of Ḥimyār [...]

The Quraysh set up the idol Hubal beside a well in the middle of the Ka'ba. They also venerated the idols Isāf and Nā'ila at the nearby well of Zamzam, sacrificing to both of them. Isāf and Nā'ila, the story goes, had originally been a man and a woman from the Jurhum tribe, turned to stone after having sexual relations in the holy Ka'ba [...]

The practice among the early Arabs had been for each household to set up its own idol for worship in the home. When one of their men was about to travel, he would rub himself upon the family idol just before riding off. Upon his return the first thing he would do is rub himself once again upon the idol, even before greeting the members of his family. When God sent the Prophet with the message of divine unity and monotheism, the people of the

4 The essential stages of the Ḥajj and 'Umra predate the advent of Islam.

5 "At Thy service Lord ..." (*labbayka Allāhumma labbayk*) is the devotional declaration made by all Muslim pilgrims as they enter the Sacred Precinct and face the Ka'ba.

Quraysh protested, “Is he gathering all the gods into one God?! What a strange idea!” (Q 38:5).

The Arabs worshipped idols at many temples (*tawāghūt*) throughout their lands, making offerings before them, sacrificing animals, and circling them, much as was the practice before the Ka‘ba. There were guardians and owners of all these sites, and people would make sacrifices at them and circumambulate, but the Ka‘ba was the most prominent shrine because it was the temple and prayer space of the prophet Abraham.

The Quraysh and the Kināna tribes had the idol al-‘Uzzā in Nakhla valley. Her guardians and overseers were from the Shaybān, allies of the Hāshim tribe. The idol al-Lāt belonged to the Thaḳīf, in the area of Ṭā‘if, with her guardians and overseers being drawn from the Mu‘attib family of Thaḳīf. And Manāt was worshipped by the Aws and Khazraj tribes, along with devotees from the city of Yathrib. Dhū l-Khalaṣa belonged to the Daws, Khath‘am, and Bajīla tribes, along with other Arabs in the region of Tabāla [...]

[§ 4. *The Well of Zamzam*]

[p. 71] While asleep at the Ka‘ba, within the *ḥijr* enclosure, it came to ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib [the grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad] that he must dig out the well of Zamzam, which had been filled in and lost since the Jurhum had abandoned Mecca. It lay between the idols Isāf and Nā‘ila, where the Quraysh used to make sacrifices. It was the well of Ishmael, son of Abraham, where God provided him water as a thirsty child. His mother desperately sought water for her child, running first to al-Ṣafā and then to al-Marwa, imploring God’s help.⁶ The Lord sent the angel Gabriel, who with his heel struck the ground, bringing out water for the child. His mother had heard the growls of the wild animals nearby, and fearing for her son, ran back to him, only to find him playing with the water, and drinking of it out of his hand.

[pp. 93–8] ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib gave more details of this story: When ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib had been commanded to dig the Zamzam well, he went to the Quraysh and announced to them his task [...] They asked, “But have you been told where it is?” He replied that he had not. “Then return to your bed, and if you are then told of its location, surely this is a message from God—but if its source is demonic, you’ll get no more details.” When he went back to sleep, he heard the following words: “Dig the well of Zamzam. You will not regret the effort. It is an inheritance from your great ancestor. It will never run dry or disappoint. By it you will provide water to thirsty pilgrims [...]” When ‘Abd

⁶ In Islamic ritual, Ṣafā and Marwa are the hillocks between which pilgrims run seven times, as part of the Ḥajj duties (see Q 2:158). These were likely idols in the pre-Islamic period.

al-Muṭṭalib inquired, he was told the well could be found near the ants' nest where the following day a raven would land and begin to peck the ground.

The next day, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and his only son at the time, al-Ḥārith, found the nest and the raven between the two idols Isāf and Nā'ila, at the spot where the Quraysh would offer sacrifices. He had brought a pickax, and began to break ground. The Quraysh rose to object, saying that this was a sacred place for them. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had his son stand guard, while he returned to his appointed task. When they saw he would not be deterred, they dropped their objections and let him continue. It was not long before 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib uncovered the lip of the well, at which point he cried "God is Great!"—knowing that he had not been led astray. With further digging, the two golden gazelles, which the Jurhum had buried there when they left Mecca, were uncovered. He also found swords and coats of mail from the [region of] Qal'a. The Quraysh objected that they were entitled to a share of this find. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib resisted, but agreed to cast divining arrows. Two yellow arrows were for the Ka'ba, two black ones were for him, and two white ones were for the Quraysh—and the two that emerged first from a quiver would establish ownership of the treasures. These were then presented to the temple priest, who cast arrows inside the Ka'ba, beside the great idol Hubal. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib stood in prayer as the priest drew the arrows: the first to appear were the yellow arrows, which meant both gazelles went to the Ka'ba shrine, followed by the two black ones, allotting the swords and mail to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. The Quraysh received nothing. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had the swords made into a door for the Ka'ba, and coated it with the gold of the gazelles. It is said this was the first time the Ka'ba was ornamented with gold.

[§ 5. *Muḥammad and the Rebuilding of the Ka'ba*]

[p. 122–5] When the Prophet was 35 years of age, the Quraysh decided to rebuild the Ka'ba. They intended to build for it a roof, but were afraid to take down the existing walls because they were made of loose stone, sitting above the height of a person. They wanted to build it up and put a roof on it because thieves had stolen the treasures of the Ka'ba out of the well in the middle of it. These were found with Duwayk, a freedman of the tribe of Mulaḥ b. 'Amr of Khuzā'a. The Quraysh cut off his hand, because, as they claimed, he had received the stolen property.

The ship of a Greek merchant ran aground near Jedda and was wrecked. The Quraysh salvaged the wood for the new roof on the Ka'ba. At that time, a Coptic carpenter happened to be living in Mecca. Circumstances favored their renovation project. A snake used to emerge daily from the well inside the Ka'ba, where the offerings were stored, to sun itself atop one of the walls. People were

terrified by this snake. If anyone approached it, it would recoil and bear its fangs. One day, while it was perched on the Ka'ba wall sunning itself, God sent a bird that seized the snake and flew off with it. The Quraysh then said, "It seems that God approves of our plans! We've found the lumber, enlisted a carpenter, and now God has rid us of that snake." When they resolved to start work on the walls, Abū Wahb b. 'Amr was the first to approach, but when he drew out a stone, it sprang from his hand, and flew back to its place in the wall. He called out, "O Quraysh, enter not this building with illicit goods, prostitutes, money tainted by usury, or having wronged anyone ..."

The Quraysh divided the work up among them. To the tribes of 'Abd Manāf and Zuhra went the wall in which the door was located. The section between the Black Stone and the Yemeni corner went to the Makhzūm and the Quraysh tribes. The rear of the Ka'ba was the responsibility of the descendants of Jumaḥ and Sahm [...] The sons of 'Abd al-Dār, Asad b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, and 'Adiyy b. Ka'b took the side of the *ḥijr* enclosure and the *ḥaṭīm* wall.

The people were afraid to take down the walls of the Ka'ba, but al-Walīd, son of al-Mughīra, said to them, "I'll begin the demolition for you." With a pickax in hand, he approached it, saying, "By God, do not worry [dear Ka'ba]. Our intentions are only good." He then broke into the side between the Black Stone and the Yemeni corner. That evening, the people watched him, saying to each other, "Let us observe him carefully. If he is struck down dead, we won't continue with the destruction, and will restore it to the way it was; but if nothing happens, then God is surely pleased with our actions, and we'll continue with the demolition." The next day, al-Walīd took up his work again, and the people joined him. They took the walls down to the foundation of Abraham, where they reached green stones like camel humps, attached to each other. One of the *ḥadīth* reporters says that one of the Quraysh working on the demolition inserted an iron bar between the stones to pry one out, but when the stone moved, all of Mecca was shaken, so they left the foundation in place.

In the corner, the Quraysh found writing in the Syriac language, which they could not read, until one of the Jews deciphered it: "I am God, the Lord of Mecca. I created it on the day I created the heavens and the earth, and formed the sun and moon. I encircled it with seven devout angels, and it will stand as long as its two mountains stand, being a blessing of milk and water to its people." They also found an inscription at the Station of Abraham (*Maqām Ibrāhīm*), which ran, "Mecca is God's holy house, which is sustained by three avenues (*subul*). May none of its people neglect their duty toward it."

The tribes of the Quraysh collected stones for the structure, and each set out building their own part. They made progress up to the level of the Black Stone, at which point they began to quarrel, since each sought to raise it up

to its place. They withdrew, formed alliances, and prepared themselves for war. The tribe of 'Abd al-Dār produced a bowl filled with blood. They and the 'Adiyy b. Ka'b pledged themselves as steadfast allies to each other, sealing their pact by putting their hands into the bowl together. They thus were known as the "blood-lickers." This situation among the Quraysh went on for four or five nights. They finally gathered for consultation in the Great Mosque, and the most senior among them, Abū Umayya, son of al-Mughīra, said, "O Quraysh, appoint the person who next enters the mosque through this gate as the arbiter among you." They agreed, and the first to walk in was the Messenger of God. When they saw him, they said, "This is Muḥammad, known as the Trustworthy One. We are satisfied." When he approached them, and was told of the matter, he asked for a cloak, which they brought to him. He placed the Stone within it, and instructed each tribe to take a corner of the mantle. Together they raised the Stone, and by his own hand he put it into place. With the Stone secured, building continued above it.

[§ 6. *The Moving Tree and the Wrestler*]

[p. 258] Rukāna, son of 'Abd Yazīd, was the strongest member of the Quraysh. One day, in one of the ravines around Mecca, he met the Messenger of God, who said to him, "O Rukāna, why will you not heed my call and fear God?" He replied, "If I were convinced of the truth of your words, I would follow you." The Messenger said, "If I throw you, will you concede that what I say is true?" When he replied that he would, they faced off, and the Messenger pinned him helplessly on the ground. He said, "Come at me again, Muḥammad!" and [Muḥammad] threw him a second time. "Can you really throw me, Muḥammad? That is amazing!" The Messenger of God then replied, "If you fear God and follow me, I will show you something more wonderful than this." "What is that?" he asked. "I will call that tree, which you see there, and it will come to me." He said, "Call it, then." He did so, and it moved toward them until it stopped in front of the Messenger of God. Then he commanded it to return to its place, which it did. When Rukāna returned to his people, he said, "O tribe of 'Abd Manāf, the best sorcerers in the world are to be found among you, but by God I have never seen anyone more enthralling than him." He then described to them what he had seen of Muḥammad's deeds.

[§ 7. *Islam's Defeat of Polytheism*]

[pp. 303-4] Although Islam was openly practiced in Medina, some persisted in their polytheism. One of these was 'Amr b. al-Jamūḥ, the father of Mu'adh, a witness at al-'Aqaba who had pledged allegiance to the Messenger. 'Amr b. al-Jamūḥ was an honored leader among the Salama tribe, and like many nobles

he venerated an idol in his home. His was made of wood, and known as Manāt. Along with the others at al-‘Aqaba, two youths of the tribe, Mu‘ādh b. Jabal and Mu‘ādh b. ‘Amr b. al-Jamūh, had become Muslims. At night these two would sneak into the house, carry off the idol, and toss it upside down into one of the tribe’s cesspits. When ‘Amr awoke, he would cry, “Woe unto you! Who has trespassed upon our gods this last night?” and would head out in search of it. When he found it, he would wash it, and perfume it, swearing that if he learned who is responsible for doing this, he would put him to shame. The next night as he slept, they did the same thing, and he set out the next day to clean and perfume the idol. This went on until one day he came to the idol and hung a sword around its neck, saying, “By God, I know not who does this to you, but if there is good in you, then defend yourself with this sword.” That night while he slept, they returned and took the sword, leaving in its place the corpse of a dog, tied to its neck. They then threw the whole thing into one of the tribe’s cesspits. When ‘Amr arose the next day, he saw that it was missing once again. He went out and found it in the cesspool, upside down and tied to a dead dog. At the sight of it he knew what had happened. At that point a number of Muslims from among his people spoke with him, and by the mercy of God, he accepted the religion and became a good Muslim.

Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849) on the Senses in the Afterlife

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

The Muslim afterlife is pictured in Islamic traditionist literature as a spectacular continuation and amplification of the material and sensory cultures of the medieval Islamic world.¹ The inhabitants of Paradise and Hell are exposed to what can only be described as sensory overload. The human sensorium is enhanced and rewarded in the case of Paradise, stunned and undone in the case of Hell. In Paradise, rules that restrict the scope of sensation on earth are lifted. In Hell, no moral or legal constraints apply to how much punishment and pain is suffered. While the blessed enjoy a panoply of polymorphous pleasures, the damned are forced to undergo a vast array of tortures. There is more than just carnal pleasure in Paradise (Al-Azmeh, 217), just like there is more to Hell than just punishment by fire (Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 14, 154).

To provide an impression of the imaginary sensescapes of the Muslim hereafter, below I translate a selection of narrations (*ḥadīths*) included in the chapters on Paradise and Hell in the *Thematic Collection* (*K. al-Muṣannaf*) of the Iraqi compiler ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849). Ibn Abī Shayba’s *Thematic Collection* is “the largest extant collection of *ḥadīth* from the early period of Islam” (Lucas). It enjoyed particular success in the Islamic west, where it was reckoned among the “Ten Books” (that is, the ten authoritative collections of *ḥadīths*), and where for a long time it “remained in use as a textbook for the *‘ulamā’*” (Pellat, 692b). The *Thematic Collection* did not make it into the eastern canon of *ḥadīth*, the “Six Books,” but nonetheless Muslim scholars in the east continued to hold Ibn Abī Shayba’s works in high esteem. Many of the afterlife narrations related in Ibn Abī Shayba’s *Thematic Collection* reappear in the late medieval specialized compendia of eschatological *ḥadīths*, such as the *Memoir about the Conditions of the Dead* [*in the Grave*] and the

¹ The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant “The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)” (project no. 724951).

Last Things (*al-Tadhkira fī ahwāl al-mawtā wa-umūr al-ākhirā*) of al-Qurṭubī (d. 621/1273).

Ibn Abī Shayba, who hailed from Kufa, was among the protégés of the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–47/847–61). Al-Mutawakkil famously rescinded the Abbasid caliphate's support for the Mu'tazilites, "rationalist" theologians who were generally critical of the use of *ḥadīths*. Instead, al-Mutawakkil shifted patronage to "traditionist" scholars, such as Ibn Abī Shayba, who were popular with the masses for circulating sundry religious narratives from the early period of Islam. Ibn Abī Shayba was encouraged by al-Mutawakkil to teach anti-Mu'tazilite *ḥadīths* in the mosques of Baghdad, including anthropomorphist narrations about the vision of God (*ru'yat Allāh*) (TG, 3:496).² As demonstrated by the translation below, many of Ibn Abī Shayba's afterlife narrations center on the "sensational" aspects of Paradise and Hell, whether the sensory delights of the blessed or the punishments suffered by the damned.

Ibn Abī Shayba's chapter on Paradise in the *Thematic Collection* features 163 narrations. The chapter on Hell is roughly half as long, counting 82 narrations. In these two chapters, Ibn Abī Shayba traces only about a quarter of his narrations to the Prophet Muḥammad. He attributes the rest to pious figures of nascent Islam, such as Companions (*ṣaḥāba*) of the Prophet, or early Qur'ānic exegetes from the generation of the Followers (*tābi'ūn*). The most frequently cited Companions are 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd (d. ca. 32/652, 23 times), Abū Hurayra (d. ca. 58/678, 18 times), and Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (d. ca. 63/682, 11 times). The most often-mentioned Qur'ānic exegetes are Mujāhid (d. 103/721 or 104/722, 18 times), Ibn 'Abbās (d. ca. 68/687, 11 times), and al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. 102/720 or 105/723, 9 times). For each narration, Ibn Abī Shayba provides the full chain of transmission (*isnād*) from the Prophet, Companion, or exegete, all the way up to his own teachers. For the sake of space, in my translation below I only give the last part of the chain of transmission, usually the name of a Companion or the Prophet himself.

As regards Ibn Abī Shayba's direct sources, he gathers most of his material from three prominent Kufan traditionists: Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/812, quoted 37 times), Abū Mu'āwiya (d. 194/810 or 195/811, quoted 35 times), and, from a generation earlier, al-A'mash (d. 147/764 or 148/765, quoted 45 times). All three were known for their anthropomorphism and for transmitting afterlife narratives full of corporeal and sensory details (TG, 1:237–8, 4:369, *passim*). Indeed, in Ibn Abī Shayba's Kufan milieu, notions of a sense-denying, spiritual eschatology were actively opposed. Al-A'mash and Abū Mu'āwiya were probably

2 On the vision of God, see *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 5 (§ 2.3), 28, 32 (§ 7).

responsible for tampering with a famous, widely circulating saying declaring that God fills Paradise with things “that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has conceived.” This saying, which derives from Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians (2:9–10), entered Muslim *ḥadīth* literature in the formative period of Islam (Lange, “What No Eye Has Seen,” 265). Theologians and philosophers throughout the long history of Islamic eschatology often used it to deny the corporeality of the afterlife. Al-A’mash and/or Abū Mu’āwiya appear to have extended the saying—and thereby changed its meaning—by adding the view (attributed to the Companion Abū Hurayra) that the descriptions of the sensory Paradise in the Islamic scriptures provide exceptions: they *do* let believers conceive of the things that are seen and heard in Paradise (below, § 1.16). This made room for the likes of Ibn Abī Shayba to fill their *ḥadīth* collections with a plethora of narrations about the sensory wonders of the afterlife (Lange, “What No Eye Has Seen,” 276).

In Ibn Abī Shayba’s Paradise narratives, the senses of sight and smell are accentuated, while in the chapter on Hell, taste and touch dominate. Both otherworldly realms, however, provide stimuli for the entire sensorium, not just single senses, and not just the five Aristotelian senses, but those of proprioception (the sense relating to the location and movement of the body) and interoception (the sense relating to the inside of the body) as well.

As regards sight, the dazzling brilliance of the heavenly habitat is stressed, the silver and golden elements of its architecture, the luminosity of the faces and the bodies of the blessed and the houris (§§ 1.1, 1.10, 1.17, 1.20). Next to being luminous, the buildings and women in Paradise are eerily transparent (§§ 1.8, 1.12, 1.28), which allows the male gaze to roam freely, in contrast to legal proscriptions on earth (on this theme, see O’Meara).³ Vision travels effortlessly over large distances (§§ 1.19, 1.25) and is unencumbered by social convention (§§ 1.7, 1.22), at least as regards men (§ 1.27). In a visual climax, God is seen, although it remains unclear whether He is witnessed directly (§ 1.19) or only His “Cloak of Glory” (§ 1.33). In Hell, by contrast, sight is mutilated—the eyes of the damned are flowing with tears and blood (§ 2.8)—or even absent altogether, because of the utter darkness in Hell (§ 2.18), which not even the flames of the eternal fire can illuminate (§ 2.2).

As for hearing, the inhabitants of Paradise are treated to the gentle greetings of the angels (§ 1.20), to the singing of the houris (§ 1.7), and to music (§ 1.23). The trees in Paradise miraculously produce beautiful sounds (§ 1.9). The soundscape of Hell, by contrast, is likened to the roar emitted by a monster

3 On the regulation of the gaze in Islamic law, see *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 42, 44 (§ 2).

(§ 2.1). Frightening sounds heard on earth are interpreted as originating in Hell (§ 2.14).

In an elaboration on a Qur'ānic theme (see Q 56:89),⁴ the flora of Paradise is described as fragrant (§§ 1.13, 1.25), but so are its earth, stones, and rivers (§§ 1.2, 1.32). The mortar of the buildings in Paradise is mixed with musk, and the ground is strewn with saffron and aloeswood (§§ 1.2, 1.3, 1.17). In yet another reversal of the legal norms of Sharia, the perfume of the women in Paradise can be enjoyed freely, in contrast to the rules and prohibitions obtaining on earth (§ 1.11).⁵ Henna receives special praise (§ 1.13). There are no unpleasant bodily odors in Paradise: the blessed do not produce bodily waste, but instead digestion happens by way of a pleasant sweat that smells of musk (§§ 1.15, 1.17, 1.26). The wine in Paradise likewise smells of musk (§ 1.31). Conversely, Hell is filled with extremely malodorous liquids and substances (§§ 2.12, 2.13).

Regarding taste, Paradise offers a variegated selection of delicacies, such as fowl, fruit, fresh water tasting of honey, and wine (§§ 1.4, 1.5, 1.18, 1.29, 1.32). In the Qur'ān, the damned in Hell are told in several passages to “taste the torment of the burning” (§ 2.2, see Q 22:22; Hoffmann), and the eschatological narrations collected by Ibn Abī Shayba elaborate forcefully on the theme. Thus, the damned in Hell are forced to drink poison and boiling liquids (§§ 2.4, 2.7), and they eat thorny shrubs (§ 2.7), neither of which is apt to still their thirst and hunger.

In tactile terms, Paradise is characterized by its mild climate (§ 1.6) and the comfort provided by the shade of beautiful trees (§ 1.4). In their mansions, the inhabitants of Paradise bathe and rest on cushions (§ 1.20). They enjoy an active sexual life (§§ 1.22, 1.26). In Hell, skins are burned by fire (§§ 2.3, 2.5) and shriveled by boiling liquids (§ 2.7). The heat makes brains boil, molar teeth turn into live coals, and eye lashes go up in flames (§ 2.9). The damned also suffer from scabies (§ 2.11), monstrously thick skins, and enormous teeth (§§ 2.15, 2.16). They are beaten mercilessly with iron rods and whips (§§ 2.17, 2.20). In an anthropomorphic narration, Hell complains to God of its condition and is granted “two exhalations,” which result in summer's heat and winter's bitter coldness on earth (§ 2.10).

Additionally, as mentioned above, Paradise and Hell are sensescapes marked by special kinds of proprioception and interoception. While Paradise knows no walls or borders (§§ 1.7, 1.8), Hell is an exceedingly confined space (§ 2.6). Despite their unsatiable ability to ingest large quantities of food and drink, the

4 See *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 1 (§ 4).

5 On the protocol of smell in Islamic law and ethics, see *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 4 (§ 3), 5 (§ 4.3), 6, 40 (§§ 1-3), 45 (§ 4).

inhabitants of Paradise experience no bowel movement. As one narration puts it, their bellies “shrink” (§ 1.15). Bodies in Paradise are immaculate not only from the outside, but also from the inside (§§ 1.17, 1.20, 1.21). By contrast, in Hell there is violent metabolism. The digestive tracts of the damned are torn asunder by the poisonous, boiling liquids they are forced to imbibe (§§ 2.7, 2.9).

Finally, it is worth noting that the picture that emerges from Ibn Abī Shayba’s work is not the only one available in Islamic traditions. Since virtually the beginning of Islamic history, the Muslim Paradise and Hell have provoked accusations of sensualism, many of them in the context of interreligious polemics (Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 17–24). Muslim theologians regularly questioned how to reconcile the sensuality of the traditionist Muslim afterlife with the disembodied spirituality that also characterizes Islamic eschatology. A fourth/tenth-century Mu‘tazilī theologian from Baghdad reportedly wondered what to make of the inhabitants of Paradise, who do nothing except eat, drink, and cohabit: “Does this not make them depressed, are they not bored?” (see Rosenthal, 249). In the post-Avicennian tradition, Muslim eschatologists came to stress the “imaginal” (*khayālī*) aspects of the traditionists’ sensory descriptions of the afterlife, thereby establishing a middle-of-the-road position between corporeal and disembodied understandings (Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 186–96). In recent, Lacan-inspired scholarship, Muslim afterlife narratives have been read as a celebration of desire, taking delight in the “spectacular sumptuousness” of beautiful objects (Al-Azmeh, 226–7).

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TG.

2 Translation

ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad Ibn Abī Shayba, *K. al-Muṣannaḡ*, ed. Saʿd b. Nāṣir al-Shatharī, Riyadh: Dār Kunūz Ishbīliyā, 1436/2015, *K. al-Janna: mā dhukira fī ṣīfat al-janna wa-mā fī-hā mimmā uʿidda li-ahlihā*, vol. 19, pp. 137–82; *K. al-Nār: mā dhukira fī-mā uʿidda li-ahli l-nār wa-shiddatihā*, vol. 19, pp. 182–207.

[§ 1. Paradise]

[§ 1.1]

[p. 137] From Mujāhid: The ground of Paradise is made of leaves and its earth of musk. The roots of its trees are made from gold and silver, its branches from pearls, chrysolite, and ruby, and below this there are the leaves and fruits. People eat [from them] at their leisure, whether they are standing, sitting, or reclining [on couches]. *Their fruit-clusters are lowered* (Q 76:14).

[§ 1.2]

From Ibn ʿUmar: The Messenger of God was asked, "What is Paradise like?" He answered, "Those who enter it live and do not die, they enjoy pleasures and do not suffer, their clothes do not wear out [see Q 86:9], nor does their youthful vigor." He was asked, "What are the buildings in it like?" He said, "The bricks are of silver and gold, the mortar is musk, the floor pebbles are pearls and rubies, the earth is saffron."

[§ 1.3]

[p. 138] From ʿAbdallāh [b. Masʿūd]: The rivers of Paradise spring from underneath a mountain of musk. [...]

[§ 1.4]

[p. 140] Mughīth b. Sumayy explained that Ṭūbā (Q 13:29) is a tree in Paradise whose branches give shade to all the mansions in Paradise. On them there are

all kinds of fruit, and birds as big as two-humped camels nest in them. When a man desires a bird, he calls for it, and then it falls on his plate [ready for consumption]. He eats it, dried strips of meat from one side, roasted meat from the other. Then the bird is restored to its former shape and flies away.

[§ 1.5]

[p. 141] From ‘Amr. b. Qays: If a man from among the people of Paradise desires a fruit, it immediately comes to him, melting in his mouth, even though previously it was [hanging] on a tree.

[§ 1.6]

From ‘Abdallāh [b. Mas‘ūd]: Paradise is temperate, neither cold nor not.

[§ 1.7]

From the Prophet: There is a market in Paradise in which there is no selling or buying except images of men and women. If a man desires an image, he enters into it. In them [the images], the houris are assembled, raising their voices, never before have creatures like them been seen. They sing: “We are the eternal ones, imperishable! We are the happy ones, unperturbed! We are the content ones, never displeased! Blessed are those who belong to us, and we belong to them!”⁶

[§ 1.8]

[p. 142] From the Prophet: There are chambers in Paradise whose outside can be seen from the inside, and vice versa. [...]

[§ 1.9]

[p. 144] Mujāhid was asked: “Is there music (*samā‘*) in Paradise?” He answered: “There is a tree in Paradise that produces music, the like of which has never been heard before.” [...]

[§ 1.10]

[p. 146] From al-Ḍaḥḥāk: If one of the women of Paradise were to bare the palm of her hand, all that is between heaven and earth would be illuminated.

[§ 1.11]

From Mujāhid: The scent of the houris is smelled over a distance [traveled in the course] of 50 years. [...]

6 On this *ḥadīth* and related traditions, see Lange, “The Day of Surplus.”

[§ 1.12]

[p. 147] From ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd: The women of Paradise wear 70 robes of silk. Through all of these [layers], the whiteness and beauty of their thighs can be seen, as well as their shin bones. God says, *They are like rubies and corals* (Q 55:58). Rubies are precious stones. If you pass a thread through such a stone, and if the stone is limpid, you see the thread running through it. [...]

[§ 1.13]

[p. 148] From ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd: Henna is the lord of the aromatic plants in Paradise. [...]

[§ 1.14]

From ‘Abdallāh [b. Mas‘ūd]: While they sit with their wives, the men in Paradise are given [wine] cups. They drink from them, then turn to their wives and say, “You have just become 70 times more beautiful in my eyes!”

[§ 1.15]

[p. 149] The Prophet said, “Men in Paradise will be given the strength of a hundred in regard to eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, and desire.” A Jew interjected, “When people eat and drink, they have to excrete!” The Prophet responded, “Your excretion will be perspiration through the skin. Your bellies will shrink.”⁷

[§ 1.16]

The Prophet said: “God the Exalted said, ‘I have prepared [in Paradise] for My pious servants what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has conceived.’” Abū Hurayra added that the Prophet continued, “Except for that which He has already enabled you to know. If you will, recite: *No soul knows what joyful sight is hidden away for them* (Q 32:17)!”

[§ 1.17]

From the Prophet: The first group to enter Paradise will be like the full moon, [p. 150] those who follow them like the lightest stars in the sky. After that, [they enter] their abodes [in Paradise]. They do not defecate, urinate, expectorate, or spit. They have golden combs, [their] censers [will be filled] with aloeswood, and their sweat will be musk. They all look the same, like Adam, being 60 cubits tall. [...]

⁷ On this *ḥadīth*, see Aguadé, “*Inna llaḏī ya’kulu*”; Lange, “What No Eye Has Seen,” 267–72, 275–6.

[§ 1.18]

From Ka'b: The lowest of the people in Paradise is served food on 70,000 dishes on the Day of Resurrection. On every dish are varieties [of food] unlike the other, but all are perfectly delicious. [...]

[§ 1.19]

[p. 151] From Ibn 'Umar: The lowest of the people in Paradise are those who see their estate [in Paradise] over a distance traveled in 2,000 years. Its most distant part is seen in the same way as its closest part. Those who have the highest rank see God's face twice a day. [...]

[§ 1.20]

[p. 152] From 'Āṣim b. Ḍamra: *The God-fearing will be driven into Paradise in troops* (Q 39:73). When they arrive at one of the gates of Paradise, they will find a tree at this gate, from underneath of which spring two wells of water. As if on command, they will dive into the first, and become purified and refreshed. [p. 153] After this, their skins will never be dry again, nor will their hair look unkempt. It will be as if they have been anointed with ointment. Then they will drink from the other spring, and pain and impurity will be purged from their bellies. Then the angels will meet them and say: *Peace be with you. You are good. Enter it, to remain forever* (Q 39:73, cont.). [...]

He [*sic*] will enter [his house in] Paradise, and there will be cushions arranged in rows, goblets [of wine] put on [the table], and rugs spread out. He will take a seat on a dais, and he will see that the foundations of his dwelling are made of pearl stones, [oscillating] between yellow, red, green, and all kinds of colors. He will look to the roof, and had God not made it possible for him [to look], his gaze would be overwhelmed by the dazzling light. *They will say: Praise belongs to God, who has guided us. Had He not guided us, we would never have been guided aright* (Q 7:43). [...]

[§ 1.21]

[p. 154] From the Prophet: The blessed enter Paradise without body hair and beards, with white skin and curly hair. Their eyes will be adorned with collyrium, and they will be 33 years old. They will look like Adam, 30 cubits tall and 7 cubits wide. [...]

[§ 1.22]

[p. 155] From Ibrāhīm: There will be sex in Paradise, for as long as they [the blessed] wish and without offspring. They will look around and spot [someone], and their desire will be aroused. Then they will look around again, and again their desire will be aroused. [...]

[§ 1.23]

[p. 160] Yaḥyā b. Abī Kathīr explained [the expression], *They shall be made happy* (yuhḥbarūna) *in a garden* (Q 30:15), by saying that [the cognate noun] *al-ḥabr* refers to music (*samāʿ*) in Paradise.

[§ 1.24]

[p. 161] From the Prophet: If one of the women of Paradise were to visit the people on earth, the earth would be filled with the scent of musk. [...]

[§ 1.25]

From Ibn ʿUmar: The lowliest person in Paradise has a thousand castles. The distance between them is that covered in one year [of travel]. However, he sees the [castle that is] closest [to him] as clearly as the [castle that is] farthest [from him]. In each castle are houris, aromatic plants, and boy servants. Everything he calls for is brought to him. [...]

[§ 1.26]

[p. 162] From Ibrāhīm al-Taymī: I heard that the people in Paradise will be given the desire, capacity to eat, and appetite of a hundred [men]. They will be given a pure drink that transpires from their skin like musk. Then their appetite will return. [...]

[§ 1.27]

[p. 166] Muḥāhid said that [the expression] *women of modest gaze* (Q 55:56) means that they only have eyes for their husbands and nobody else. [...]

[§ 1.28]

[p. 167] Muḥāhid said that [the expression] *as if they were rubies and coral* (Q 55:58) means that the marrow of [the heavenly maidens'] shin bones can be seen through their garments in the same way in which a thread can be seen running through a ruby. [...]

[§ 1.29]

[p. 172] Muḥāhid said that [the expression] *a cup from a spring from which they do not suffer headaches nor are they intoxicated* (Q 56:18–19) means that they are served white wine that neither makes their heads hurt nor causes them to vomit. [...]

[§ 1.30]

From Mughīth b. Sumayy: Birds come and settle on trees. Then they are eaten from both sides: one is cooked and one is roasted. [...]

[§ 1.31]

[p. 174] ‘Abdallāh [b. Mas‘ūd] explained that *wine sealed* (Q 83:25) means that [the wine] is mixed (*mamzūj*), and *whose seal is musk* (Q 83:26) [refers to the wine’s] flavor and fragrance. Regarding [the expression] *mixed with Tasnīm* (Q 83:27), [he explained that Tasnīm is] a spring from which those who are brought near (Q 83:28) enjoy an unadulterated drink, while it is mixed [with wine] for the Companions of the Right (Q 90:18).⁸

[§ 1.32]

[p. 167] From the Prophet: Al-Kawthar is a river in Paradise. Its banks are of gold. It flows over rubies and pearls. Its soil is more fragrant than musk, its water tastes sweeter than honey, and its color is whiter than snow. [...]

[§ 1.33]

[p. 180] From the Prophet: [...] Nothing prevents people [in Paradise] from seeing God except the Cloak of Glory (*ridā’ al-kibriyā’*) that covers His face.

[§ 2. Hell]

[§ 2.1]

[p. 182] From Ka‘b: On the Day of Resurrection, Jahannam emits a deep sigh, and all the angels and prophet-messengers fall to their knees and cry: “O Lord! [Save] me, [save] me!” [...]

[§ 2.2]

[p. 183] Salmān [al-Fārisī] said: “Hell is pitch-black. Neither its live coals nor its flames provide it with light.” He then recited: *Whenever, in their anguish, they want to come out of it, they are returned to it, and it is said to them, “Taste the torment of the burning!”* (Q 22:22).

[§ 2.3]

From Ibn Abī l-Hudhayl: The fire scorches them to the point that their flesh falls from their bones. [...]

[§ 2.4]

[p. 184] From Mughīth b. Sumayy: When a man is led into Hell, he is told: “Wait, we will bring you a present!” Then he is given a cup filled with the poison of

8 “Those who are brought near” (*al-muqarrabūn*), the “Companions of the Right” (*aṣḥāb al-maymana*), and the “Companions of the Left” (*aṣḥāb al-shimāl*) are three groups of the resurrected mentioned in the Qur’ān (56:8–11, passim). See Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 43–4.

vipers and scorpions, and as soon as he brings it [the cup] close to his mouth, the flesh falls off his bones.

[§ 2.5]

Abū Zarrīn explained that [the expression] *scorching the flesh* (Q 74:29) means that [the Fire] scorches the skin until it is left looking blacker than the night.

[§ 2.6]

ʿAbdallāh [b. Masʿūd] explained that [the expression] *the hypocrites will be in the lowest reach of Hell* (Q 4:145) refers to shadowy boxes in which they are imprisoned.

[§ 2.7]

[p. 185] From Abū l-Dardāʾ: The inhabitants of Hell are plagued by hunger so much that it diverts their attention from the other punishments therein. They beg for food, but they are only given thorny shrubs (*ḍarīʿ*, Q 88:6), which neither nourishes them nor alleviates their hunger. They beg for food [again] and they are given food that makes them choke; this reminds them that they used to allow people to imbibe wine. They beg for food and are given boiling liquid (*ḥamām*, Q 55:44) served with iron spoons. If they bring it close to their faces, their faces are roasted. If they drink it, it rips their insides asunder. [...]

[§ 2.8]

[p. 186] From Abū Mūsā: The people in Hell cry so much that ships could sail in their tears. Then, after shedding tears, they cry blood in the same way.

[§ 2.9]

[p. 187] From the Prophet: The lightest punishment in Hell is that of the man who is made to wear sandals of fire, which make his brain boil like a kettle. His ears and molar teeth are live coals. His eye lashes are flames of fire. His innards exit through his two feet. The rest of the people in Hell are like small grains cooked in a gushing, boiling ocean. [...]

[§ 2.10]

[p. 188] From the Prophet: Hell once complained to its Lord, saying: "My Lord, one part of me consumes the other part!" So, God granted it two exhalations:⁹ one in summer and one in winter. The extreme cold that you feel [on earth]

⁹ The idea here seems to be that Hell is a breathing monster. See also above, § 2.1.

comes from Hell's reservoir of extreme cold (*zamharīr*), and the extreme heat that you feel [on earth] comes from Hell's hot wind (*samūm*).¹⁰ [...]

[§ 2.11]

[p. 190] From Mujāhid: The damned are struck with scabies. They scratch themselves until their bones appear. They say: "O Lord, how has this come over us?" He says: "Because you have hurt the believers!"

[§ 2.12]

From Ibn 'Abbās: If a drop of Hell's *Zaqqūm* fell on the people of the earth, their sustenance would be destroyed.¹¹

[§ 2.13]

From al-Ḥasan: If a bucket of Hell's putrid liquid (*ṣadīd*, Q 14:16) were poured from the sky and its stench smelled by people, their [enjoyment of the] world would be destroyed. [...]

[§ 2.14]

[p. 191] From Anas b. Mālik: The Messenger of God once heard a thunderous noise. He said: "O Gabriel, what is this?" Gabriel said: "[It is] a stone that was thrown into the Hell funnel 70 years ago and has now reached its bottom." [...]

[§ 2.15]

[p. 193] From 'Abdallāh [b. Mas'ūd]: The molar teeth of the unbeliever in Hell are as [big as] Uḥūd.¹² [...]

[§ 2.16]

'Abdallāh [b. Mas'ūd] once asked Abū Hurayra: "Do you know how thick the skin of unbelievers is [in Hell]?"—"No."—"Forty-two cubits." [...]

10 In addition to scorching heat, there is severe frost (*zamharīr*) in the Qur'anic Hell (Q 76:33), and a hot wind called *samūm* blows in it (Q 56:42). See Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 10, 141 n170 (with references to attestations of this tradition in the canonical collections), 256–7 (on *zamharīr*).

11 *Zaqqūm* is the name of a poisonous plant or tree growing at the bottom of the Qur'anic Hell (Q 37:65). See Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 9, 154.

12 Uḥūd is the name of a famous mountain north of Medina. On toothache in the Muslim Hell, see Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 149, 254.

[§ 2.17]

[p. 195] From Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yazīd: I was told that certain persons with long whips, who show no mercy to people, will be told [on the Day of Judgment]: “Put down your whips, and enter Hell!”¹³ [...]

[§ 2.18]

From Abū Hurayra: The Fire is stoked for a thousand years until it becomes white. Then it is stoked for another thousand years [p. 196] until it becomes red. Then it is stoked for another thousand years until it becomes black like dark night. [...]

[§ 2.19]

[p. 197] Abū Ṣāliḥ explained that [the expression that Hell is] *eager to roast* (Q 70:16) refers to the flesh of the thighs. [...] Muḥāhid said it refers to roasting the body’s extremities.

[§ 2.20]

[p. 202] From Abū l-‘Awwām: [...] Every one of Hell’s angels has a bifurcated iron rod in his hands with which he beats [people] severely. [...]

¹³ This curious narration threatens professional floggers, henchmen of the political powers on earth, with punishment in Hell. See further Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 160.

Ibn Abī l-Dunyā (d. 281/894) on Scrupulous Sensory Piety among Early Muslim Ascetics

Adam Bursi

1 Introduction

Abū Bakr Ibn Abī l-Dunyā was born in 208/823 in Baghdad, where he appears to have spent most of his life until his death there in 281/894. While some of his work suggests pro-Umayyad sympathies—and he is named as a client of the Banū Umayya in biographical texts—Ibn Abī l-Dunyā was employed as a teacher to “more than one of the children of the [Abbasid] caliphs,” including some who would themselves later come to hold the caliphate (al-Khaṭīb, 11:293). One report finds Ibn Abī l-Dunyā regaling the powerful caliphal regent al-Muwaffaq (d. 278/891) with pious narratives of past caliphs and amusing tales of the Arabs, thereby earning him a monthly government stipend that he reportedly received for the rest of his life (Bellamy, 73).

As this anecdote would suggest, Ibn Abī l-Dunyā was a purveyor of traditions on several subjects, but most especially of “edifying literature” (Dietrich). While he was considered a truthful (*ṣadūq*) transmitter of *ḥadīth* by medieval scholars, he is categorized primarily as a “scrupulously pious one (*wariʿ*) and ascetic (*zāhid*), knowledgeable in historical reports and transmissions” in the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca. 320/932) (1:661). The historian al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956) calls him “the author of books on asceticism (*zuhd*) and other subjects” (8:210), and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) likewise characterizes him as “the author of books on asceticism and exhortation (*al-zuhd wa-l-raqāʿiq*)” (11:293; cf. Librande, 11). Among the many works on such themes that Ibn Abī l-Dunyā composed, and which survive today, are *On the Condemnation of the World* (*Kitāb Dhamm al-dunyā*), *On Hunger* (*Kitāb al-Jūʿ*), and *On Fear and Confidence in Practice* (*Kitāb al-Wajal wa-l-tawaththuq bi-l-ʿamal*) (Weipert and Weninger). All of these texts are composed primarily of reports (*akhbār*) of the actions and words of prophets, Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad, as well as figures from the generations of the Successors (*al-tābiʿūn*) (Arberry). Similar to other collections from this period, Ibn Abī l-Dunyā’s texts include Prophetic

ḥadīths, but these are far outnumbered by the reports about Companions and Successors (Lucas).

The text excerpted here, *On Scrupulousness (Kitāb al-Waraʿ)*, fits well into Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's preoccupation with issues of ascetic piety. Early Muslims tied the concept of "scrupulousness" to *zuhd*, commonly translated as "asceticism" or "renunciation" (Melchert, 10). We see this interconnection in Ibn al-Nadīm's characterization of Ibn Abī l-Dunyā as both a *wariʿ* and a *zāhid*, and in the presence of chapters on *waraʿ* in several early collections on *zuhd*, including those by ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/812), and Hannād b. al-Sarī (d. 243/857) (Pitschke). In a survey of the conceptions of *zuhd* found throughout early and medieval Islamic literatures, Leah Kinberg writes that *waraʿ* "is the key-word for understanding the nature of *zuhd*. Leading a scrupulous life promises the achievement of *zuhd*" (43). This "scrupulous life" was characterized by the practice of meticulous bodily and mental discipline to ensure one commits no religiously prohibited (*ḥarām*) actions, leading the sufficiently scrupulous even "to avoid anything remotely dubious in order never to stumble into anything forbidden" (Melchert, 39; Wilk, 69–71). The Kufan *ḥadīth* scholar Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 198/814) summarizes this as the individual "placing a barrier of permitted things (*ḥalāl*) between himself and the forbidden things (*ḥarām*), such as to keep sin (*ithm*) and its like away from him" (al-Marrūdhī, 146; cf. Cooperson, 205).

The senses are sites of anxiety in this discipline, as they are able to draw one's attention to the world and its concerns, distracting from pious thought and action. The fear of losing control of the senses appears, for example, in the statement of the Companion Qays b. Abī Ḥāzim (d. ca. 84–98/703–17): "One does not have control over one's first glance, but whatever prompted the glance does" (Wakīʿ, 795). The *ḥadīth* that opens Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's chapter on "Scrupulousness in Looking" lays out how one should properly comport oneself, and includes a prominent place therein for the senses. The Prophet Muḥammad states that one practicing the "shame appropriate before God" will "protect his head and what it gathers and his belly and what it contains, and recall death and the divine trial." Exegetes interpreted "the head and what it gathers" to reference "the eye, the ear, the tongue, and the rest of the senses" (al-Majlisī, 1:142). Thus, controlling (or "protecting") what the senses perceive is a key part of the pious life, alongside frequent recollection of death and the possibility of punishment in Hell.

Another of Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's texts, *On Fear and Confidence in Practice (Kitāb al-Wajal wa-l-tawaththuq bi-l-ʿamal)*, elaborates an explicitly ascetic understanding of the senses. In a long narrative about a Christian monk named Anthony the Anchorite (Anṭūnus al-Sāʿiḥ), Anthony states that human

misfortune exists in large part due to four openings (*abwāb*) in the body—the eyes, nostrils, mouth, and genitals—through which pleasurable things enter into it (*Kitāb al-Wajal*, 36–7; Rosenthal, 47). Anthony particularly emphasizes the dangers of visibility and sexuality, saying that the eyes and the genitals are connected to the heart, and noting that “the opening of the eye irrigates the heart with desire.” But he likewise calls both the nostrils and mouth a “burden” (*mu’na*), and the senses and genitals collectively are termed “the gateways of sin,” an image that also appears in late antique Christian discussions of the senses (Harvey, 39, 159). Anthony’s solution to this problem is monasticism: he finds that “withdrawal from people” by living alone in a cave is his best respite from the sensory assault of the world.

Such total retreat from society—emblematic of late antique Christian asceticism—was a controversial issue among early Muslims, with considerable evidence of its rejection by many early authorities (Sahner). Yet there is a “positive assessment of Christian asceticism” displayed in Ibn Abī l-Dunyā’s writings, and most especially of monks’ “abandonment of the world and its materialistic trappings” (Bowman, 463). Ibn Abī l-Dunyā was not unique in this regard, and noticeable parallels to Anthony’s monkish comments appear in statements ascribed to many early Muslim renunciants. Combined concerns regarding the genitals and the senses appear when the Companion ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ (d. 65/685) says, “The genitals are a trust [i.e., between God and humanity], hearing is a trust, and sight is a trust” (Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *Wara’*, 121). Echoing Anthony’s worries about the relationship between sight and sexual desire, the Companion Abū Mūsā l-Ash‘arī (d. ca. 42–53/662–73) says, “Every eye is a whore (*fā’ila*), that is, a fornicator (*zāniya*)” (Ibn Abī Shayba, 6:256). Like monks, early Muslim ascetics expressed appreciation for some forms (or periods) of withdrawal, as when the Companion Abū l-Dardā’ (d. ca. 32/652) says: “What a good monastic cell (*ṣawma’*) for a man is his house, which restrains both his sight and his tongue!” (Wakī’, 516). Relatively few fled into the wilderness, and “renunciation remained an affair of the cities” among early Muslims, but many nonetheless saw a clear benefit in restraining the senses through some forms of physical retreat from worldly affairs (Melchert, 53).

Rather than complete retirement from the world, however, the more common approach offered by early Islamic renunciants was “control of the senses” in the spiritually hostile environment of society, a theme found also in other ascetic traditions of the late antique Near East (Hezser, 11; Neis, 138). Like Jewish rabbis, Muslim renunciants “lived within the world and tried to control their interactions with their environment” and “to control its impact on their own minds and bodies” (Hezser, 13, 15). Muslim renunciants enacted this through a bodily habitus that shut off sensory engagement at certain times: looking

down, plugging one's ears, covering one's nose, and so on. A key component of the social environment that the (generally male) renunciants attempted to avoid was women: many of Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's reports about "Scrupulousness in Looking" are preoccupied with shunning the sight of women, and one about "Scrupulousness in Smelling" notes the wish to avoid "the scent of a woman." A haptic dimension appears in a report in which the Companion 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd (d. ca. 32–3/652–4) says, "If I were pressed up against a camel painted with tar, that would be preferable to being pressed up against a woman" (Ibn Abī Shayba, 6:256). But feminine allures were far from the only sensory experiences that Muslim renunciants wished to divert themselves from: reports criticize and bemoan eavesdropping, looking into private homes, listening to musical instruments, gazing at beautiful buildings, smelling fine perfumes, among other concerns. The pious needed to be scrupulous not to find themselves drawn in by the variety of earthly sensibilia.

The reward for this sensorially ascetic life on earth would be, it was hoped, the multisensory delights of Paradise.¹ This trade-off is sometimes made quite explicit. In a variant version of one of the reports found in Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's collection, the Prophet Muḥammad tells 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib: "There is a treasure for you in Paradise [...] So do not follow one glance with another, for the first is allowed to you, but not another" (Ibn Abī Shayba, 6:255). In the section on "Scrupulousness in Hearing," it is reported that those "who kept their souls and their ears untouched by entertainment sessions and Satan's flutes" will find their homes "among gardens of musk" and hear the angels singing God's praises. Jewel-bearing trees and thickets of gold will produce beautiful sounds when a heavenly breeze blows through them: indeed, "every sound they desire will be brought" to the residents of Paradise. Conversely, those who misused their senses will find themselves punished in the afterlife, such as an eavesdropping woman whose brother discovers that she is burning in hellfire in her tomb. As Jesus told his disciples, rather sensorially: "Truly I say to you, the sweetness of this world is the bitterness of the world beyond, and the bitterness of this world is the sweetness of the world beyond" (Khalidi, 89).

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¹ See *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 1 (§§ 2.5.2, 3.3.2, 4.1, 5.4.1, 6.7), 3.

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2 Translation

Abū Bakr ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Abī l-Dunyā, *Kitāb al-Warāʿ*, ed. Bassām ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Jābī, Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2002, pp. 98–106.

[p. 98] [§ 1.] *Scrupulousness in Looking*

[§ 1.1]

‘Abdallāh [b. Mas‘ūd]² reported that the Prophet (God bless him and give him peace) said one day to some of his Companions, “Be ashamed before God, as He is due.” They responded, “O Messenger of God, we are!” He said, “That is not the shame appropriate before God! Rather, one who is ashamed before God protects his head and what it gathers and his belly and what it contains, and recalls death and the divine trial (*al-balā*). Whoever does these things has been ashamed before God in the way He is due.”³

[§ 1.2]

Dāwūd al-Ṭāʿī⁴ said, “They hated excesses of glancing.”

[§ 1.3]

Ḥibbān b. Mūsā said, “I heard ‘Abdallāh [b. al-Mubārak] say, ‘Guarding one’s gaze is more difficult than guarding one’s tongue.’”⁵

2 Companion of the Prophet, settled in Kufa, died ca. 32–3/652–54. See Anthony. Note that I have shortened the *isnāds* for all the traditions throughout my translation, giving only the earliest link(s) rather than the full lists of names that appear in the original Arabic.

3 A version of this *ḥadīth* appears in one of the canonical Sunni collections: al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ, k. ṣīfat al-qiyāma* 24.

4 Kufan ascetic, died ca. 165/781–2. See Berger.

5 Ḥibbān b. Mūsā (d. 233/847–8), a *ḥadīth* scholar from Merv, transmitted from ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), himself a prodigious *ḥadīth* collector also from Merv. Note that a different opinion—that “scrupulousness of the tongue” is the “most difficult”—is ascribed to Ibn al-Mubārak elsewhere in Ibn Abī l-Dunyā’s *Kitāb al-Warāʿ* (108).

[§ 1.4]

‘Amr b. Murra⁶ said, “I do not like having eyesight. When I was young, I used to cast glances.”

[§ 1.5]

[p. 99] Sa‘īd b. Jubayr⁷ said, “The *fitna* of David (peace be upon him) was in his act of looking.”⁸

[§ 1.6]

Ḥammād b. Zayd⁹ said, “I heard my father say, and he transmitted, ‘By God, meeting a lion and being eaten is better for you than a glance. Did not David (peace be upon him) endure what he did because of a glance?’”

[§ 1.7]

Khālid b. Abī ‘Imrān¹⁰ said, “Do not follow one glance with another. Whatever someone casts his glance upon will fester in his heart, like leather rotting in tanning fluid, and it will be of no use to him.”

[§ 1.8]

Wakī‘ [b. al-Jarrāh] said, “We went out on a festival day with Sufyān al-Thawrī,¹¹ who said, “The first thing we will do with our day is cast down our eyes.”

[§ 1.9]

Ḥassān b. Abī Sinān¹² went out to the Feast.¹³ When he returned, someone said to him, “O Abū ‘Abdallāh, we have never seen a festival with so many women!” Ḥassān said, “I encountered no woman until I returned home.”

6 Kufan *ḥadīth* scholar, died ca. 116–18/734–7. See van Ess, 1:204–5.

7 Kufan scholar and ascetic, died 95/714. See Ibn Sa‘d, 8:374–85.

8 The reference here and in the next report is to the biblical story of David and Bathsheba, in which David was enraptured with the beautiful Bathsheba when he looked from his rooftop and saw her bathing (2 Sam 11–12). For Islamic engagements with this story, including Sa‘īd b. Jubayr’s statement, see Maghen; Wilk. In Ibn Abī l-Dunyā’s *Kitāb al-Wajal*, it is said that “David’s sin was a single glance” (Rosenthal, 57).

9 Basran *ḥadīth* scholar, died ca. 179/795. See Ibn Sa‘d, 9:287. He cites his father, Zayd b. Dirham, a Basran *ḥadīth* transmitter.

10 Judge in the North African province of Ifrīqiyya, died ca. 125/742–3. See al-Mālikī, 1:162–6.

11 Kufan *ḥadīth* scholar, died 161/778. See Raddatz.

12 Basran ascetic, active in the middle of the second/eighth century. See Melchert, 116–18.

13 The word here is *al-‘īd*, presumably referring to either *‘īd al-aḍḥā* or *‘īd al-ḥijr*.

[§ 1.10]

Ḥassān b. Abī Sinān went out [p. 100] on the day of the Feast. When he returned, his wife said to him, “How many beautiful women have you gazed at today?!” As she heaped accusations upon him, he said, “Woe onto you, I have gazed at nothing except my big toe from the time when I went out until I returned here to you!”

[§ 1.11]

The Messenger of God (God bless him and give him peace) said to ‘Alī [b. Abī Ṭālib], “Do not follow one glance with another: the first is allowed to you, but not another.”¹⁴

[§ 1.12]

Jarīr [b. ‘Abdallāh al-Bajalī]¹⁵ asked the Messenger of God (God bless him and give him peace) about [the lawfulness of] a sudden glance. He said, “Avert your eyes.”¹⁶

[§ 1.1.13]

[‘Abdallāh] Ibn ‘Umar¹⁷ said, “Among the acts that ruin trust is looking into private rooms and houses.”

[§ 1.14]

Anas [b. Mālīk]¹⁸ said, “If a woman walks by you, shut your eyes until she passes by.”

[§ 1.15]

[p. 101] Abū ‘Isā l-Marwazī reported, “During the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, I heard Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab¹⁹ saying: ‘Do not fill your eyes with the imams of injustice or their helpers except with rejection in your heart, lest your own righteous deeds come to naught.’”²⁰

14 This tradition appears in Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan, k. al-nikāḥ* 44; al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi‘, k. al-adab* 28.

15 Companion of the Prophet, settled in Kufa, died ca. 54/673–4. See Ibn Sa‘īd, 8:145.

16 This tradition appears in Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, k. al-ādāb* 10; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan, k. al-nikāḥ* 44; al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi‘, k. al-adab* 28.

17 Son of caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, died 73/692–3. See Vecchia Vaglieri.

18 Companion of the Prophet, settled in Basra, died 93/712. See Juynboll, “Anas b. Mālīk.”

19 Prominent Medinan jurist, died ca. 96/714–15. See Ibn Sa‘īd, 7:119–43.

20 On the hostility toward political authorities displayed in this and the following reports, see Wilk, 72–3.

[§ 1.16]

As Sufyān al-Thawrī was sitting in Basra, it was said to him: “Here comes Musāwir b. Sawwār,” who was in charge of the police force of [the Abbasid governor] Muḥammad b. Sulaymān.²¹ Sufyān jumped up and ran into his house. He said, “I hate looking at someone who is disobedient to God when I cannot change him.”

[§ 1.17]

Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ²² said, “Do not gaze upon their [i.e., political rulers’] mounts, for gazing at them extinguishes the light of your rejection of them.”

[§ 1.18]

Yaḥyā b. Yamān²³ said, “I was with Sufyān al-Thawrī when he saw a house. I lifted my head to look at it, and Sufyān said, ‘Do not look! It was built only so that people like you would look at it.’”

[§ 1.19]

Ishāq b. Suwayd²⁴ said, “I heard al-‘Alā’ b. Ziyād²⁵ saying: ‘Do not let your gaze follow the beauty of a woman’s rear end! Gazing places desire in the heart.’”

[§ 1.20]

Mu‘tamir [b. Sulaymān]²⁶ said, “I heard Ishāq [b. Suwayd] saying: ‘This applies to the first glance, so how much more so to the next one!’”

[p. 102] [§ 2.] *Scrupulousness in Hearing*

[§ 2.1]

Nāfi²⁷ said, “I was on the road with Ibn ‘Umar when he heard a shepherd’s pipe. He stuck his fingers in his ears, swerved off the road, and said, ‘Nāfi’, do you hear it?’ I said no, and he took his fingers out of his ears. Then he turned off the road [again] and said, ‘Nāfi’, do you hear it?’ I said no, and he [again] took

21 Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abbās, the Abbasid governor of Basra and Kufa for several alternating periods from 142/759–60 until his death in 173/789–90. Musāwir b. Sawwār al-Jarmī is mentioned as his “chief of police” in al-Ṭabarī, 3:377.

22 Proto-Sufi ascetic and *ḥadīth* scholar, originally from Iran, died in 187/803. See Tor.

23 Kufan *ḥadīth* transmitter, died 189/804–5. See Ibn Sa‘d, 8:513.

24 Basran *ḥadīth* transmitter, died 131/748–9. See Ibn Sa‘d, 9:241.

25 Basran ascetic, died 94/712–13. See Ibn Sa‘d, 9:216–17.

26 Basran *ḥadīth* transmitter, died 187/833. See van Ess, 2:418–20.

27 Client of ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar, died ca. 117/735–6. See Ibn Sa‘d, 7:423–4.

his fingers out of his ears. He came back onto the road and said, “This is what I saw the Messenger of God do.”

[§ 2.2]

Muḥammad b. al-Munkadir²⁸ said, “On the Day of Resurrection, a herald will call out: ‘Where are those who kept their souls and their ears untouched by pleasure halls (*majālis al-laḥw*) and Satan’s flutes (*mazāmīr al-shayṭān*)? House them among gardens of musk!’ Then the angels will say, ‘Let them hear my glorification and praise!’”

[§ 2.3]

[p. 103] ‘Abda b. Abī Lubāba²⁹ said, “In Paradise, there is a tree that bears rubies, emeralds, and pearls. God makes a breeze blow and [the tree] shakes, and a sweeter sound was never heard.”

[§ 2.4]

Saʿīd b. Abī Saʿīd al-Ḥārithī³⁰ said, “I was told that in Paradise there are golden thickets bearing pearls. When the people of Paradise wish to hear a pleasant sound, God will send a breeze over those thickets, and every sound they desire will be brought to them.”

[§ 2.5]

Mujāhid [b. Jabr]³¹ said, “I was walking with Ibn ‘Umar when he heard the beat of a drum. He stuck his fingers in his ears and kept walking. When the sound stopped, he lowered his hands. Two or three times he did this and then said, “This is what I saw the Messenger of God do.”

[§ 2.6]

‘Amr b. Dīnār³² said, “There was a man from Medina with a sister who lived on the outskirts of the city. When his sister died, the man came to the market and prepared her [for burial]. A man approached [the brother] in the market

28 Medinan transmitter, associated with ascetic sayings and reports of the afterlife, died ca. 130–1/747–9. Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 423.

29 Kufan scholar, settled in Syria, active in the mid-second/eighth century. See Ibn Ḥibbān, 5:145.

30 An unidentified figure. This report is said to have been transmitted from him by ‘Alī b. ‘Āṣim b. Ṣuḥayb, a prominent *ḥadīth* scholar of Wāsiṭ who died in 201/816. See van Ess, 2:364–5.

31 Meccan scholar, died ca. 104/722–3. See Rippin.

32 Meccan scholar and *muftī* under the Umayyads, died ca. 126/744. See Motzki.

with a bag of money, and [the brother] placed the bag in his [family's] burial chamber (*hujra*). After the man had buried his sister, he returned home and remembered the bag of money. He asked one of his friends for help, and they came to the tomb, disinterred the grave, and found the bag. The man said to his friend, 'Step aside so that I can see what state my sister is in.' He lifted the cover of the grave niche and, behold, the tomb was ablaze with fire! He covered it over again and called his friend, and they flattened the grave. The man came to his mother and said, 'Tell me [p. 104] what was going on with my sister!' His mother responded, 'Why are we speaking of her secrets, when she has died?' He said, 'Tell me!' She said, 'Your sister would lag behind during *ṣalāt* and would pray, I believe, without having performed *wuḍū'*. And while the neighbors slept, she would press her ear to their doors, and then spread tales about them.'

[§ 2.7]

‘Ubaydallāh al-Akhlāqī³³ said, “Whenever a judge would die among the Children of Israel, they would place him in a chamber for 40 years: if any part of him decayed, they knew that he had acted unjustly during his judgeship. Once, one of their judges died, so he was placed in a chamber. When the caretaker of the chamber came in, his broom touched the tip of the judge’s ear, and puss flowed from it. This grieved the Children of Israel. God then revealed to one of their prophets: ‘There is no fault in this servant of Mine. But one day he listened, with one of his ears, to one litigant more than he listened to his opponent. For that reason, I did this to him.’”

[§ 2.8]

The Prophet (God bless him and give him peace) said: “Lead will be poured into the ears [on the Day of Judgment] of whosoever eavesdrops on people who do not want their words to be heard.”³⁴

[p. 105] [§ 3.] *Scrupulousness in Smelling*

[§ 3.1]

As Jesus son of Mary (peace be upon him) was walking with his Companions, they came upon a foul smell. They all placed their hands over their noses, but Jesus did not. Then, when they passed a pleasant smell, they removed their

33 An unidentified figure. The report is said to have been transmitted from him by Muḥammad b. Fuḍāyī, a Kufan scholar with Shi‘i leanings, died ca. 194–5/809–11. See Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 418.

34 A version of this *ḥadīth* appears in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-ta‘bīr* 45.

hands from their noses, while Jesus placed his hand over his nose. They asked him about this, and he said, “A pleasant smell is a blessing (*ni‘ma*), and I fear that I would not show enough gratitude toward it. But a foul smell is a trial, and I love to endure a trial.”³⁵

[§ 3.2]

‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz³⁶ was brought some musk among the spoils of war. He held his nose and they said, “Commander of the Believers, you are holding your nose from this?” He said, “No, enjoy this scent! But I would hate that I experience it without the [other] Muslims.”

[§ 3.3]

Abū Mūsā l-Ash‘arī³⁷ said, “Were my nostrils filled with the scent of a corpse, I would prefer that more than their being filled with the scent of a woman.”

[§ 3.4]

‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb used to bring his wife³⁸ some of the Muslims’ perfume (*ṭīb*), and she would sell it. She weighed it, adding some and taking some away, breaking pieces off with her teeth, and arranging them into portions by weight. Some of it stuck to her finger, [p. 106] so she put her finger in her mouth and then wiped it on her headscarf (*khimār*). When ‘Umar came, he asked, “What is that smell?” She told him what had happened, and he said, “You are scenting yourself with the Muslims’ perfume?!” He snatched her headscarf from her head, grabbed some water, and poured it upon the headscarf. He stuck it in the dirt, sniffed it, poured more water on it, stuck it again in the dirt, until he thought the scent had left it. The perfume vendor came to purchase perfume from ‘Umar’s wife. She weighed it for the vendor, and some of it stuck to her finger: so, she put her finger in her mouth and then put her finger in the dirt. The perfume vendor said, “You did not do this before!” She responded, “Oh, if you only knew what happened before!”

35 Jesus frequently appears as a model in texts on asceticism, including in other collections by Ibn Abī l-Dunyā. See Khalidi, 34.

36 Famously pious Umayyad caliph, ruled 99–101/717–20. See Cobb.

37 Companion of the Prophet, died ca. 42–53/662–73. See Lecker.

38 Related reports in al-Marrūdhī, 45–7, and Ibn Shabba, 703, suggest that this woman is ‘Ātika bt. Zayd b. ‘Amr. See Ibn Sa‘d, 10:252–3.

Ibn Bābawayh (d. 381/991) on the Shi‘i Sensorium

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

Ibn Bābawayh (Bābawayh) (d. 381/991) was a Shi‘i traditionist and jurist whose full name was Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Abī l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Ḥusayn b. Mūsā Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī.¹ He was born sometime after 305/918 into a learned Imami family from Qum. Known as al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, “The Truth-Telling Shaykh,” he traveled widely in the Persian- and Arabic-speaking world, collecting material from both Shi‘i and Sunni sources, before finally settling at Rayy in northern Iran, where he died (for overviews of his life and works, see Ansari, 65–76; Fyzee; McDermott). His fame rests on the large body of *ḥadīth* works that he compiled, which served as the bedrock for later Imami theology and jurisprudence. His most well-known compilation, *Kitāb man lā yaḥduruhu l-faqīh* (*The Book [That Is Necessary] for Those Who Are Not in the Presence of a Jurist*, henceforth: *Jurist*), is counted among the so-called Four Books (*al-kutub al-arba‘a*) of Imami *ḥadīth*.

One of Ibn Bābawayh’s important contributions to Imami doctrine consists in having collected reports that provide arguments for the existence of the Hidden Imam (Halm, 53; Warner, 117–48). The twelfth and last of the Imams, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, was believed to have passed into “occultation” (*ghayba*) in 260/874 (Halm, 41–4; Momen, 45, 161–71). Ibn Bābawayh recorded and continued the esotericism and the “spiritual hermeneutics” (Ansari, 74) of early Shi‘i thought. In a story Ibn Bābawayh relates about the Imami theologian al-Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. 179/795–6), the existence of the Hidden Imam is demonstrated by drawing an analogy between the microcosm of the human sensorium and the macrocosm of human society (see below, § 1.1). Just like the five senses of the body require an inner (*bāṭin*) organ, namely the heart, to process and, if necessary, to correct the information they have gathered, so people need the Hidden Imam to order their affairs and guide them.

The theme of the interior roots of the sensorium is developed in several other reports transmitted by Ibn Bābawayh as well. For example, Ibn Bābawayh

¹ The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant “The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)” (project no. 724951).

relates narratives about the capacity of certain human beings for seeing the Unseen (*al-ghayb*) with the “eyes of the heart” (see below, § 2.2) and for veridical visions in dreams (§ 2.1, cf. § 4.1.3) (see Sirriyeh, 83–102). God, however, can never be seen. Ibn Bābawayh may have been “categorically opposed” to speculative theology (*kalām*) (Ansari and Schmidtke, 201; see also Ansari, 72), but he was in agreement with Shi'ī theologians' rejection of anthropomorphism, or assimilationism (*tashbīh*) (Warner, 94, 98). The reports he presents relating to the vision of God in the afterlife, accordingly, make the point that this vision will be intellectual, not ocular: God does not have a body that can be perceived by the senses (§ 2.3).²

Ibn Bābawayh's students, particularly those in Baghdad, built on his many works to lay the foundations of classical Imami theology and law (Halm, 62). While from the mid-fifth/eleventh century onwards, Ibn Bābawayh's works were less well known, they regained popularity after the emergence of the Shi'ī Safavid Empire in the 10th/16th century, with interest peaking in the 11th/17th century (Newman, 112, 114). For example, chapter 46 of al-Majlisī's (d. 1110/1699) massive compendium of Shi'ī-Imami knowledge, the *Biḥār al-anwār* (*Oceans of Lights*), which deals with “the faculties of the soul and their senses (*mashā'ir*) by way of the external and the internal senses and the rest of the physical faculties,” draws heavily from Ibn Bābawayh (Newman, 119). Today, Ibn Bābawayh's works, inasmuch as they are available (of the ca. 300 works he is credited with, only a few survive), are well known to students of Shi'ism, even if most scholarly efforts have been devoted to the *Jurist*, while Ibn Bābawayh's lesser compilations are studied less frequently (Newman, 109).

In the translation below, I provide a cross-selection of *ḥadīths* on the sensorium culled from five of Ibn Bābawayh's works. A key text, relating to the theme of disciplining the senses, is the *Risālat al-ḥuqūq* (*Treatise of Rights*). Ibn Bābawayh quotes the *Treatise* in no less than three of his extant works (*Amālī*, 451–7; *Faqīh*, 2:392–8; *Khiṣāl*, 2:564–70). He attributes the *Treatise* to the fourth Imam, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. ca. 95/713), who bears the epithet Zayn al-Ābidīn (“Ornament of the Worshippers”). After narrowly surviving the massacre of Karbala in 61/680, Zayn al-Ābidīn was sent back to Medina, where he devoted himself to devotional exercises and kept out of politics (Halm, 26–7). Little else is known about his life (Haider, 14; see Kohlberg for a summary of the available information).

Zayn al-Ābidīn's lasting reputation is one of great piety and simplicity of lifestyle (*zuhd*).³ As the sixth Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765 at Medina) is

2 On the vision of God, see *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 28, 32 (§ 7).

3 On *zuhd* and the senses, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 4.

said to have related, “he used to feed his family [only] oil, vinegar, and dried dates, and he only dressed in coarse fabric of white cotton” (al-Mufīd, 2:142). Among Zayn al-Ābidīn’s other epithets are al-Sajjād (“he who constantly prostrates himself”), al-Zakī (“the pure one”), and Dhū l-Thafināt (“owner of calluses”), the latter referring to the calluses resulting from repeatedly touching the ground in prostration. An impression of Zayn al-Ābidīn’s strict lifestyle is provided by the *Treatise*, which lists some 50 “rights” (*huqūq*, also translatable as “duties,” depending on context). These “rights” are due to God, the human body, ritual acts, leaders, subjects (including wives and slaves), relatives, and others, such as neighbors, debtors, and non-Muslims. Below, I translate the section of the *Treatise* that speaks of the “rights” (or “duties”) of the human body and the sensory organs (§ 3.).

A testament to the *Treatise*’s continued popularity in the Shi‘i world is the extensive commentary written by the Najaf-based scholar Ḥasan al-Qubānī (1328–ca. 1411/1910–ca. 1990).⁴ In his introduction to the *Treatise*, written in 1963, al-Qubānī notes that Zayn al-Ābidīn used to weep a lot for the family members he had lost at Karbala, comparing himself to Jacob weeping over his beloved lost son Joseph. However, despite his deep grief, al-Qubānī explains, Zayn al-Ābidīn was full of compassion and affection for others. The *Treatise*, al-Qubānī affirms, inspires sensitivity in inter-human relations. It “corrects manners” (*muqawwimat al-akhlāq*) and provides “firm foundations” (*usus waṭīda thābita*), beyond utilitarian considerations of ulterior benefits and aims, for the management of relations between husbands and wives, governors and governed, and even countries and nations (al-Qubānī, 5–8).

There are clear elements of sense denial and of disciplining the senses in the narratives that Ibn Bābawayh relates. However, the “Shi‘i sensorium” that emerges from his compilations is multilayered. There are also narratives that affirm or even celebrate the work of the senses, both inner and outer. Thus, while people must studiously avoid looking at another person’s “shame zone” (*‘awra*, see below, §§ 3, 4.1.1), they are encouraged to look at beautiful bodies, including their own, and to praise God for them (§ 4.1.2). Although God remains unseen, He is known and worshipped through the Imams (Ibn Bābawayh, *Tawhīd*, 152), such that contemplating their bodies (a practice known variously as *rābiṭa*, *murābaṭa*, *tawajjuh*, *wijha*, and other terms) is tantamount to seeing God’s face, eyes, hands, and so on (§ 2.4). As Ibn Bābawayh relates, “looking at the face of ‘Alī [b. Abī Ṭālib, the first Imam, d. 40/661] is

4 Several of al-Qubānī’s sons were killed at the hands of the Ba’th regime during the 1970s and 1980s. Al-Qubānī himself perished in one of the prisons of Saddam Hussein. His death date is uncertain. See <https://arabic.al-shia.org/الشهيد-السيد-حسن-القبايني> (accessed July 12, 2022).

an act of worship" (*Amālī*, 444; on the contemplation of 'Alī's face, see Amir-Moezzi, 238). While people must guard against eavesdropping and against listening to "unlawful sounds" (§§ 3, 4.1.3), they are invited to listen closely to the call for prayer and to repeat the call with their own tongues (§ 4.2.1). Earthly soundscapes are filled with hidden meanings: When 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib hears the sound of a *nāqūs*, he realizes it is saying, "There is no god but God," among other pious formulas, although this remains hidden from the Christian who plays it (Ibn Bābawayh, *Amālī*, 295).⁵ The taste of certain fruits on earth is a reminder of the pleasures of Paradise (§ 4.4.1). Worries about the licitness of garlic, onion, and leek are dispelled (§ 4.4.3). Perfume is condoned and even recommended, except in the state of ritual consecration (*iḥrām*) during the pilgrimage (§§ 4.3.1, 4.3.2).

Finally, of particular interest are traditions that reveal differences between the sensory styles of the Shi'a and their enemies, especially their political nemeses, the Umayyads. One tradition cited by Ibn Bābawayh declares that, while the Umayyads begin their meals with vinegar and end it with salt, the Shi'is do the exact opposite (§ 4.4.2). Similar traditions can be found in a third/ninth-century Shi'i guide to eating, in which, for example, the seventh Imam Mūsā l-Kāzīm (d. 183/799) is remembered as saying that the Imams were created from a sweet substance (*ḥalāwa*) and are therefore extremely fond of sweets such as *ḥalwā'* (see Vilozny, 355). Certain greens, such as endives and basil, as Ja'far al-Ṣādiq supposedly judged, are "for us," whereas arugula is "for the Umayyads" (Vilozny, 360). Furthermore, certain *ḥadīths* related by Ibn Bābawayh suggest that memories of the tragic events of early Shi'i history gave rise to a special Shi'i sensory etiquette. Thus, Shi'is are reminded of the need to listen to the pleas of the oppressed (§ 4.2.2). Great emphasis is placed on kissing the faces of the dead when mourning their passing (§ 4.5.5). Tenderness toward orphans is encouraged: caressing an orphan's head will be rewarded by God with a light on the Day of Resurrection, "one for every hair that is touched" (§ 4.5.1).

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⁵ On the *nāqūs*, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 14 (§ 2).

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2 Translation

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- Thawāb* *Thawāb al-a'māl*, Najaf: al-Maṭba'a al-Ḥaydariyya, 1392/1972.

[§ 1. *The Heart Commanding the Senses*]

[§ 1.1 Ḥishām b. al-Ḥakam Challenging 'Amr b. 'Ubayd = *Amālī*, pp. 685–7]

My father told me, from Sa'd b. 'Abdallāh, from [p. 686] Ibrāhīm b. Hāshim, from Ismā'īl b. Marrār, from Yūnus b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, from Yūnus b. Ya'qūb, that a group of companions once was with Abū 'Abdallāh [Ja'far] al-Ṣādiq, among them [...] Hishām b. al-Ḥakam,⁶ who was a young man at the time.

"O Hishām," said Abū 'Abdallāh [...], "will you tell me how you dealt with 'Amr b. 'Ubayd,⁷ and what you asked him?" [...]

Hishām said: "I had heard about what 'Amr b. 'Ubayd was up to and that he taught in the Basra mosque. This bothered me, so I set out to meet him. I arrived in Basra on a Friday, and I went to the mosque. I found myself in a large gathering (*ḥalqa*), and there was 'Amr b. 'Ubayd, covered in black mantle-cloak of wool, wearing another cloak pulled over it. People were putting questions to him. I asked people to let me through and ended up sitting in the front row, on my knees.

I said: 'O learned man (*ayyuhā l-'ālim*)! I am a foreigner, will you allow me to ask you a question?' 'Yes,' he said. I asked him: 'Do you have an eye?' He said: 'Son, what kind of question is this?'—'This is the question I have.'—'Son, ask, even if your question is stupid.'—'Answer me then!'—'Then ask [again]!'

I repeated, 'Do you have an eye?'—'Yes.'—'And what do you see with it?'—'Colors and individuals.'—'Do you have a nose?'—'Yes.'—'What do you do with it?'—'I smell smells with it.'—'Do you have a mouth?'—'Yes.'—'What do you do with it?'—'Through it, I come to know the taste of things.'—'Do you have a tongue?'—'Yes.'—'What do you do with it?'—'I talk with it.'—'Do you have

6 Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. 179/795–6) was "the most prominent representative of Imāmi *kalām* in the time of the Imāms Ḍja'far al-Ṣādiq [d. 148/765] and Mūsā l-Kāzīm [d. 799]." See Madelung. See further *TC*, 1:349–79. In epistemology, Ḥishām followed a "sensualist" theory of perception, based on the notion of contact, or touch (*mumāssa*). See *TC*, 1:365–9, 6:95–6.

7 'Amr b. 'Ubayd was an early Mu'tazilite from Basra (d. ca. 143/760). See *TC*, 2:280–310. For a while it seemed as if he might declare himself for the 'Alid cause (*TC*, 2:289), but eventually he embraced a "quietist" position (*TC*, 2:293), to the disappointment of the Shi'a.

an ear?’—‘Yes.’—‘What do you do with it?’—‘I hear sounds with it.’—‘Do you have a hand?’—‘Yes.’—‘What do you do with it?’—‘I use it to touch [things].’

I said: ‘Do you have a heart?’—‘Yes,’ he said.—‘What do you do with it?’—‘I discern (*umayyizu*) [with it] everything that reaches these organs (*jawāriḥ*).’

I said, ‘Is there not enough in these organs to make the heart unnecessary?’—‘No.’—‘How is this, despite the fact that they [the organs] are sound and healthy?’—‘O son, if these organs have a doubt about anything they have smelled, seen, tasted, heard, or touched, they refer it to the heart. It [the heart] then confirms what is certain and nullifies what is doubtful.’

[p. 687] I said, ‘So God has put the heart in place for the sake of the doubt arising from the sense organs?’—‘Yes,’ he said.—‘So the heart has to be there by necessity, and if it were not there, the organs could not function properly (*lam tastaqim*)?’—‘Yes.’—‘O Abū Marwān,⁸ God did not abandon your sense organs but rather, He gave them an Imam to confirm the truth for them (*yuṣaḥḥiḥu lahā l-ṣaḥīḥ*) and to clarify their doubts. Now, does He abandon all people in their bewilderment, doubts, and divided opinions, without installing an Imam for them to whom they can address their doubts and bewilderment, even though He has installed an Imam for your sense organs, to which you refer your bewilderment and your doubt?’

He fell silent and did not say a word. Finally, he turned to me and said, ‘Are you Hishām?’ ‘No,’ said I. ‘Have you studied with him?’—‘No.’—‘Where are you from?’—‘I am a Kufan.’—‘So you *are* him.’

Then he drew me near to him and made me sit in his study circle (*majlis*), and did not utter a word until I rose [and left].”

Abū ‘Abdallāh [Ja‘far] al-Ṣādiq laughed, and said, “O Hishām, who taught you *that*?”—“O son of the Messenger of God, it just occurred to me.”—“O Hishām, verily, it’s written in the revelation (*ṣuḥuf*) given to Abraham and Moses.”

[§ 1.2 The Senses as Policemen and Informants of the Heart = *Ilal*,
Vol. 1, pp. 109–10]

Muḥammad b. Mūsā l-Barqī told us, from ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Mājilawayḥ, from Aḥmad b. Abī ‘Abdallāh, from his father, [...] from Muḥammad b. Sinān, from Abū ‘Abdallāh [Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq]: “Know [...] that the place of the heart within the body is [like] the place of the Imam among the people, who must obey [him]. Don’t you see that all the body parts are the policemen (*shuraṭ*) of the heart, as well as its informants (*tarājima*)? The ears, eyes, nose, hands, feet, and genitals [all] act on its behalf. For when the heart wants to see, a man opens his eyes. If it wants to hear, he activates (*ḥarraka*) his ears, opens his

8 Abū Marwān is ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd’s *kunya*, or teknonym.

auditory senses (*masāmi'*), and hears. When the heart wants to smell, he sniffs with his nose, and then it [the nose] conveys that smell to the heart. If it wants to express itself he speaks with the tongue. If it wants to touch, the two hands are set in motion, and if it wants to move, the feet walk. [p. 110] And if it [the heart] has an appetite for lust, the penis is stirred. All this happens on behalf of the heart, which makes things move. In the same way, it is obligatory that the commands of the Imam be obeyed."

[§ 2. *Seeing the Unseen*]

[§ 2.1 On Dream Visions = *Amālī*, pp. 208–9]

Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Mūsā Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, from my father, from Sa'd b. 'Abdallāh, from Aḥmad and 'Abdallāh, the sons of Muḥammad b. 'Īsā, from al-Ḥasan b. [p. 209] Maḥbūb, from Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Nawfalī: I asked Abū 'Abdallāh al-Ṣādiq, "When a believer has a dream vision (*ru'yā*), is the vision [really] like he has seen it, or is it possible that he has a vision of something that does not exist?"

He answered, "When a believer sleeps, his spirit (*rūḥ*) extends skywards (*ilā l-samā'*). Everything a believer's spirit sees in the Angelic Realm (*al-malakūt*), the realm of [God's] providence and rule (*mawḍi' al-taqdīr wa-l-tadbīr*), is true. Everything it sees on earth is [nothing but] confused dreams." I asked, "The spirit ascends to the sky?" "Yes," he answered. "So that nothing of it remains in the body?" "No," he said, "if all of it left [the body] so that nothing of it remained, the person would die." I asked: "But how does it exit [the body]?" He answered, "Don't you see the sun in its place in the sky, but its light and rays on earth? Likewise, the spirit has its root in the body, but extends skywards."

[§ 2.2 The Servant (of God) Has Four Eyes = *Khiṣāl*, Vol. 1, p. 240]

My father related from Sa'd b. 'Abdallāh, from al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Iṣbahānī, from Sulaymān b. Dāwūd al-Munqirī, from Sufyān b. 'Uyayna, from al-Zuhri, from 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, in a long narration: "Is it not so, that the servant [of God] has four eyes: one pair with which he sees the things that concern his faith and life on earth (*amr dīnīhi wa-dunyāhu*), and another with which he sees the things that concern his afterlife? If God wants to treat a servant well, He opens the two eyes of his heart, so that he may see with them the Unseen (*al-ghayb*) in the things that concern his afterlife. However, if He wants otherwise, He leaves the heart and what is in it as it is."

[§ 2.3 Denial of the Vision of God = *Amālī*, pp. 494–5]

From 'Alī b. Mūsā l-Riḍā, on "There will be faces on that day that are radiant (*nāḍira*), looking on (*nāzira ilā*) their Lord" (Q 75:22–3): "This means [faces will be] 'illuminated' (*mushriqa*) and 'looking for God's reward.'"

From ‘Alī b. Mūsā l-Riḍā, on [p. 495] “Sight does not reach Him, but He reaches sight” (Q 6:103): “Hearts are unable to fathom Him, so how could the eyes see Him?!”

From Ismā‘īl b. al-Faḍl: “I asked Abū ‘Abdallāh Ja‘far b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq whether God will be seen in the afterlife (*fi l-ma‘ād*). He said: ‘God is far above this! My dear son, the eyes only perceive things that have colors and [other] attributes. God, however, is the creator of colors and attributes!’”

[§ 2.4 The Imams as God’s Sensorium = *Tawḥīd*, pp. 151–2]

From Abū ‘Abdallāh [Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq]: “God the Exalted created us [i.e., the Imams] in a beautiful shape (*khalq*) and form (*ṣūra*). He made us His eye among His worshippers, His speaking tongue among His creatures, His hand extended over His servants in kindness and mercy, His face by means of which one can reach Him, His threshold that leads to Him, His treasure in heaven and on earth [...]”

[§ 3. *The Rights of the Sensory Organs* = *Khiṣāl*, Vol. 2, pp. 565–6]⁹

God has given your tongue a right over you, your hearing a right over you, your sight a right over you, your hand a right over you, your leg a right over you, your stomach a right over you, and your private parts a right over you. These are the seven organs through which acts (*af‘āl*) take place. [...]

[p. 566] The right of the tongue is that you consider it too noble for obscenity, accustom it to good, refrain from any meddling in which there is nothing to be gained, express kindness to people, and speak well concerning them.

The right of hearing is to keep it pure from listening to slander and [all] that which is unlawful to hear.

The right of sight is that you lower it before everything that is unlawful to you and that you take heed whenever you look at anything.

The right of your hand is that you stretch it not toward that which is unlawful to you.

The right of your two legs is that you walk not with them toward that which is unlawful to you. You have no escape from standing upon the narrow bridge (*al-Ṣirāt* [over Hell]), so you should see to it that your legs do not slip and cause you to fall into the Fire.

The right of your stomach is that you make it not into a container for that which is unlawful to you and that you eat no more than your fill.

⁹ The translation of the *Treatise of Rights* (*Risālat al-ḥuqūq*) follows Chittick, 302–4, with minor changes.

The right of your genitals (*farj*) is that you protect them from fornication and guard them against being looked upon.

[§ 4. *Etiquette of the Senses*]

[§ 4.1 Vision]

[§ 4.1.1 *The Reward of Averting the Gaze in the Bathhouse* = Thawāb, p. 19]

From [Ja‘far] al-Ṣādiq: “Those who enter the bathhouse (*ḥammām*), lowering their gaze lest they see the shame zone (*‘awra*) of their brethren: On the Day of Resurrection, God will deliver them from the boiling heat of Hell (*ḥamīm*).”

[§ 4.1.2 *The Reward of Those Who Look in the Mirror* = Thawāb, p. 25]

From Ja‘far b. Muḥammad, from his ancestors, from the Prophet: “God will reward with Paradise those young men who look in the mirror frequently, praising the Lord while doing so.”

[§ 4.1.3 *The Punishment of Those Who Fashion Images, Lie about Dreams, and Eavesdrop* = Thawāb, p. 223]

From Abū ‘Abdallāh [Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq]: “Three groups of people will be punished on the Day of Resurrection. Those who fashion images (*ṣuwar*) of living beings will be punished as long as they fail to breathe [life] into them—which they cannot do. Those who lie about dreams will be punished as long as they fail to tie two banners¹⁰ together between which they will be made to sit—which they cannot do. And those who eavesdrop on people, being disliked by them, will have molten lead poured into their ears.”

[§ 4.2 Hearing]

[§ 4.2.1 *The Reward of Those Who Hear the muezzin and Repeat His Words* = Thawāb, p. 32]

From Abū ‘Abdallāh [Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq]: “Those who hear the *muezzin* say, ‘I testify that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God!’ and who then confirm it, striving to do good, by saying, ‘I, too, testify that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God!’—by virtue of them [these words], they no longer need [any help from] all

¹⁰ Arab. *sha‘īra* betokens a sign, especially in war, and hence a banner; but the word also denotes signs seen in dreams and interpreted, correctly or incorrectly, by dream interpreters.

those who deny and reject, and those who confirm and testify are helped by them. [...]"

[§ 4.2.2 *The Punishment of Those Who Do Not React upon Hearing the Plea of the Family of the Prophet* = Thawāb, pp. 259–60]

From ‘Amr b. Qays al-Mashriqī: “I and my cousin visited al-Ḥusayn [b. ‘Alī] while he was at Qaṣr Banī Muqātil.¹¹ After greeting him, my cousin said: ‘O Abū ‘Abdallāh, is what I see dyestuff, or your true hair?’ He answered: ‘It is dyestuff. Gray hair grows fast on us, the Banū Hāshim ...’ Then he drew close and asked: ‘Have you come to help me?’ I said: ‘I am a very old and pious man, and I have a big family. Before me is a lost man. I don’t know what will happen, but I do not wish to compromise my own safety.’ My cousin said something similar. He said to us: ‘Go away then! Do not listen to my plea! Do not look at my misery! Those who listen to our plea and see our misery but fail to react and help us: [p. 260] It is God’s right to throw them down on their noses in Hell!’”

[§ 4.3 Smelling]

[§ 4.3.1 *Use of Aromata before iḥrām* = Faqīh, Vol. 2, pp. 208, 232]

From Abū ‘Abdallāh [Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq]: “A man may use whatever unguent (*duhn*) he likes before the ritual washing at [the moment of entering] *iḥrām*, unless there is musk, ambergris, saffron, or *wars*¹² in it. Do not fumigate a garment for your *iḥrām*.”

[§ 4.3.2 *Perfume during the Fast* = Thawāb, p. 53]

From [Ja‘far] al-Ṣādiq: “Whoever puts on perfume at the beginning of the day, while fasting, remains focused (*lam yafqud ‘aqlahu*).”

[§ 4.4 Tasting]

[§ 4.4.1 *Five Fruits of Paradise on Earth* = Khiṣāl, Vol. 1, p. 289]

My father told me from Sa‘d b. ‘Abdallāh, from Aḥmad b. Abī ‘Abdallāh al-Barqī, from Aḥmad b. Sulaymān al-Kūfī, from Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā l-Ṭaḥḥān, from someone, from Abū ‘Abdallāh [Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq]: “There are five fruits of Paradise on earth: shiny pomegranates (*al-rummān al-implī*), apples, quinces, grapes, and black dates (*al-ruṭab al-mushān*).”

11 On the way to his martyrdom at Karbala in Iraq, al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī (d. 61/680), the third Imam, briefly stayed at this place. See al-Mufīd, 2:82.

12 A plant used for dying and in perfumes, found especially in Yemen.

[§ 4.4.2 *Start with Salt, Finish with Vinegar* = Faqīh, Vol. 3, p. 233]

From [Ja'far] al-Şādiq: "The Umayyads begin their meals with vinegar and finish with salt. We, however, begin our meals with salt and finish with vinegar." The Commander of the Faithful [‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib] said: "Begin your meals with salt. If people knew what [benefit] there is in salt, they would prefer it to tested medicine."

[§ 4.4.3 *Garlic, Onion, and Leek* = Faqīh, Vol. 3, p. 234]

From Abū Baṣīr: "Abū ‘Abdallāh [Ja'far al-Şādiq] was asked about garlic, onions, and leek. He said: "There is no harm in eating it uncooked or [cooking it] in cooking pots, nor in eating garlic as remedy. However, when this happens, one should not go to the mosque." [...] From Muḥammad b. Muslim: "I asked Abū Ja'far¹³ about garlic, and he said the Prophet had forbidden it because of its smell. Then he said: "Those who eat this vile plant, let them not go near a mosque of ours. But if people eat it and stay away from the mosque, there is no harm."¹⁴

[§ 4.5 Touching]

[§ 4.5.1 *The Reward of Those Who Caress an Orphan's Head* = Thawāb, p. 199]

From ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib: "All believers, male and female, who put a hand on the head of an orphan to comfort them, will be credited by God with a good deed, one for every hair that their hands caress." From Abū ‘Abdallāh [Ja'far al-Şādiq]: "All believers who put a hand on the head of an orphan to show them kindness will be given a light by God on the Day of Resurrection, one for every hair."

[§ 4.5.2 *Hugging Pilgrims* = Faqīh, Vol. 2, p. 204]

From [Ja'far] al-Şādiq: "Hugging a dust-covered pilgrim [returning from the pilgrimage] is like touching the Black Stone."

[§ 4.5.3 *Shaking Hands with Pilgrims* = Thawāb, p. 50]

From Abū ‘Abdallāh [Ja'far al-Şādiq]: "Whoever meets a pilgrim and shakes their hand (*yuṣāḥifuhu*) is like someone who touches the [Black] Stone."¹⁵

13 Abū Ja'far Muḥammad al-Bāqir, the fifth Imam of the Imami line (d. ca. 115/733, at Medina).

14 On garlic and halitosis in Sunni *ḥadīth*, see Juynboll, 155 n1, 213, 501, 620, 663.

15 On handshaking and touching the Black Stone in Sunni traditions, see *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 40 (§ 4), 44 (§ 2).

[§ 4.5.4 *Touching the Dead* = Faqīh, Vol. 1, p. 100]

Those who touch a piece of a body torn apart by a wild beast must perform a ritual washing if there is a bone in it, but if there is no bone in it, touching it does not require them to perform a ritual washing.

Those who touch a dead body must wash their hands, but they do not have to perform a ritual washing. This is necessary only in the case of [touching the corpse of] a human being.

Those who touch a human corpse before it has been washed and while it is still warm, do not have to perform a ritual washing; but if they touch it after it has gone cold, they must perform a ritual washing. Those who touch it after it has been washed do not have to perform a ritual washing.

[§ 4.5.5 *Kissing the Dead* = Faqīh, Vol. 1, p. 112]

From [Ja'far] al-Ṣādiq: "When Ismā'īl¹⁶ died and lay covered, I ordered his face to be uncovered, so that I could kiss his front, his chin, and his neck. Then I ordered him to be covered. Then I said: 'Uncover him!' so that again I could kiss his front, chin, and neck. Then I ordered them again to cover him and wash his corpse. When I reentered [the room], he had been shrouded. I said: 'Uncover his face!' so that again I could kiss his front, chin, and neck. Then I prayed for him and said: 'Now wrap him!'" [...]

From [Ja'far] al-Ṣādiq: "The Messenger of God kissed 'Uthmān b. Maḏ'ūn¹⁷ after he died."

16 Ismā'īl b. Ja'far (d. 138/755) was the eldest son of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.

17 'Uthmān b. Ma'zūn (d. 3/624 or 4/625), one of the earliest Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad, was known for his asceticism.

Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1210) on the Prophet's Sense of Smell

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

The Prophet Muḥammad (d. 12/632) reportedly declared that “perfume and women are made dear to me, but my solace lies in prayer” (al-Nasāʿī, *Sunan*, k. *ʿishrat al-nisāʾ* 10; Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 75b).¹ However, determining the Prophet’s attitude toward perfume is not a straightforward task. On the one hand, he is attributed a love for aromata and an abhorrence of halitosis (Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 155 n1, 213, 501, 620, 663). “The thing that most troubled the Messenger of God was that a bad smell should come from him” (Ibn Ḥajar, 9:379). On the other hand, early Muslim sources relate stories about his ascetic willingness to ignore or even celebrate holy stench. Thus, he is said to have stated that the breath of a fasting person smells better than musk (al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, k. *al-īmān* 8; see Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 117, 336), and a Companion recalled that the Prophet’s entourage smelled of sheep, because his closest followers were dressed in simple garments of wool (Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, k. *al-libās* 5; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 4:407). One should also note that the Qurʾān is remarkably indifferent to olfaction: the most common Arabic root indicating “smell,” *sh-m-m*, does not appear in it at all. Smells are mentioned in the Qurʾān in only two contexts.² There are brief allusions to fragrant substances in Paradise (Q 56:89, 76:5, 83:26), and in the Joseph story, Jacob miraculously catches a whiff of the scent of Joseph’s shirt, even though Joseph is far away, in Egypt (Q 12:94). This “Qurʾānic anosmia” (Lange) contrasts sharply with the richly perfumed culture of the Prophet’s hometown Mecca, where his clan, Quraysh, traded in aromata and where during his youth the holy precinct (*ḥaram*) was the site of many olfactory rituals, including fumigation and the application of fragrant unguents to the Kaʿba walls (Bursi, 206).

1 The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant “The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)” (project no. 724951).

2 See *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 1 (§ 4).

In sum, the Prophet's attitude towards perfume (as well as bad odors) was complex. Possibly, it developed over time. Ignaz Goldziher once suggested that "we have to accept the steadily increasing sensualism of Muḥammad as a fact" (Goldziher, 146–7). Be that as it may, it is striking that the Muslim political and religious leaders of the generation after the Prophet colored their hair and beards (El-Shamsy; Juynboll, "Dying"), dressed themselves fashionably, and perfumed themselves lavishly. In Ibn Sa'd's (d. ca. 230/845) biographical dictionary of famous men and women of the early period, perfume is given "a salient role," even if "the prayer devotees (*Betbrüder*), as sworn enemies of the cosmetic arts, agitated against it" (Goldziher, 147–8).

As the urban, lavishly scented high culture of Islamic civilization gradually took shape, it was opportune to attribute a love of perfume to the Prophet, and to seek support for this in the stories told about him. The fame of the Prophet's saying that perfume was "made dear to me," as G. H. A. Juynboll has observed, is "inversely proportional to its meagre support in *isnād* strands [i.e., chains of transmission]," leading Juynboll to conclude that it is "a relatively late tradition" (Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 75b). If ever there was an ascetic reticence to indulge in too much perfume in early Islam, it soon evaporated. Building on Prophetic precedent and driven on by the rich olfactory traditions of the conquered territories, medieval Islamic perfumery became a prime site for the manifestation of Islamic sensory culture (see Bonnéric; Gyselen; King), a characteristic to which several later chapters in this volume likewise attest.³

Below, a selection of Prophetic *ḥadīths* about perfume and other aromata is translated on the basis of a much-used standard reference work of *ḥadīth*, *The Collection of Basic Sayings of the Messenger* (*Jāmi' al-uṣūl fī aḥādīth al-rasūl*) of Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1210), a versatile scholar and chief clerk working for the local court in Mosul. The *Collection of Basic Sayings* is a *ḥadīth* compendium that draws on the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) and the canonical Sunni collections of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), Muslim (d. 261/875), Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/889), al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), and al-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915), with the notable exclusion of Ibn Māja (d. 273/887). The *Collection of Basic Sayings* does not quote all variants of a *ḥadīth* transmitted by these authorities, but instead only gives one common version, or a small number of different versions, in each case noting in which collections these versions occur (usually, by using the formula *akhrājuhu*, "it was included by"). Further, it does not cite the complete chains of transmission of a tradition; it only provides the name of the person who transmitted the *ḥadīth* from the Prophet Muḥammad. Finally, it offers explanations of difficult terminology. All this made the *Collection of*

3 See *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 8 (§ 2), 16, 17 (§ 3), 19, 20, 25.

Basic Sayings a popular text in madrasa education in the later centuries of Islam (see Aerts; Ahmad).

The *Collection of Basic Sayings* is ordered alphabetically and thematically. Aromata figure prominently in two places: under the letter *ḥā'*, in the chapter on the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*), in a section dealing with the pilgrims' state of consecration (*iḥrām*); and under the letter *zāy*, in the chapter on toilette and adornments (*zīna*), in a section dedicated to perfume and unguents (*al-ṭīb wa-l-duhn*). The first section (§§ 1.1–10) centers on the use of perfume during *iḥrām*, the state of ritual consecration into which pilgrims enter before undertaking the major pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) or the minor pilgrimage (*ʿumra*), after making a statement of intention, performing certain rites, and donning the ritual garment. Traditionally, this happens at one of the pilgrimage boundary posts (*mawāqīt*, sing. *mīqāt*) on the approach to Mecca, such as al-Juḥfa or Dhū l-Ḥulayfa, both mentioned in the traditions quoted by Ibn al-Athīr. The second circumambulation during the pilgrimage, after performing the rites at ʿArafa and Minā (where the Feast of Sacrifice is celebrated), marks the termination of *iḥrām*.⁴

While some of the *ḥadīths* compiled by Ibn al-Athīr leave room for the notion that the Prophet put on perfume not only before but even during *iḥrām*, most jurists of Islam came to settle on the view that the latter was forbidden. The discussion turned on another question: whether the scent of perfume, if it persisted beyond the moment of entering *iḥrām*, invalidated it (see Ibn Ḥajar, 3:399, 585). A more permissive position regarding the wearing of perfume during the pilgrimage is attributed, in the *ḥadīths* presented by Ibn al-Athīr, to the Prophet's wife ʿĀ'isha (d. 58/678 or 59/679) (§§ 1.1, 1.4), while a more prohibitive view is attached to the name of ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar (d. 74/693) (§§ 1.2, 1.3, 1.7–9), the son of the second caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–44). The case of Ibn ʿUmar is noteworthy. On the one hand, Ibn Saʿd's biography of him provides many details about his concern with matters of fashion, including how he oiled and perfumed himself to attend Friday prayer and religious festivities (Ibn Saʿd, 111, ult.–112.3). On the other hand, he seems to have taken, like his father (see §§ 1.5, 1.6), a rather puritanical, anti-sensual stance when it came to the question of perfume during the pilgrimage. Ibn ʿUmar is also attributed a deep dislike of music, especially flute music, and of eating from silverware (Ibn Saʿd, 120.11–15, 126.9–10).

The second section (§§ 2.1–18) provides a range of essentially positive views of perfumes, as well as of fumigation (*istijmār*, *tabakhkhur*). Thus, the Prophet's love for perfume, especially musk and ambergris, finds mention (§§ 2.1, 2.3–5,

4 On legal rules concerning the senses during the pilgrimage, see further *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 40.

2.9, 2.11). Perfume is described as originating in Paradise (§ 2.6), a motif further developed in medieval Islamic exegesis (see, e.g., al-Ṭabarī, 296–7). God, in a pun on the Arabic root *ṭ-y-b*, is said to be “good (*tayyib*), and He loves perfume (*ṭib*)” (§ 2.2). The *ḥadīths* in this section also discuss the notion that there are certain “male” aromata and certain “female” aromata (§§ 2.7, 2.8, 2.12, 2.13): musk and ambergris for men, saffron and the unguent known as *khalūq* for women. Women are to abstain from strongly scented perfumes, especially when going to the mosque for prayer (§§ 2.14–18). Scent, as the traditions in Ibn al-Athīr reveal, was an important marker of difference in the formative period of Islam, instrumental in disambiguating non-Muslim pilgrimage practices from Muslim ones and entrenching social hierarchies between the sexes.

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2 Translation

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[§ 1. On the Use of Perfume during iḥrām = Vol. 3, pp. 31–40]

[§ 1.1]

[p. 31] 'Ā'isha said, "I perfumed [p. 32] the Messenger of God with these two hands of mine when he entered *iḥrām* (*ḥīna aḥrama*) and [also] when he quit *iḥrām* (*ḥīna aḥalla*) before circumambulation [of the Ka'ba]." And she ['Ā'isha] held out her two flat hands.

There is another, similar report, in which [it is stated]: "[I perfumed him] before he quit Minā."

According to another report [she said], "I used to perfume the Prophet [eulogy] before he entered *iḥrām* and [also] on the Day of the Sacrifice before circumambulating the House [of God], with a perfume in which there was musk."

According to another report, she said, "With these two hands, I perfumed the Messenger of God [eulogy] with *dharīra* powder.⁵ [This was] during the [Prophet's] Farewell Pilgrimage, when quitting and entering *iḥrām*."

According to another report, she said, "I used to perfume the Prophet [eulogy] when he entered *iḥrām*, with the best perfume I could find."

5 King, 281: "The classical *dharīra* was made with palmarosa [...] but the formulas are invariably for complex mixtures of dried powdered aromatics. One formula [...] purports to date to Sasanian times and includes aloeswood, musk, and ambergris. Other formulas include many different ingredients and are sometimes based on floral and botanical scents."

According to another report, [‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr] said, “I asked ‘Ā’isha, ‘With what did you perfume the Messenger of God [eulogy] during *iḥrām*?’ She answered, ‘With the best perfume.’”

According to another report, [she said,] “Before he entered *iḥrām*, I used to perfume the Messenger of God [eulogy] with the best [perfume] I could get my hands on. Then he would enter *iḥrām*.”

According to another report, [she said,] “[I perfumed him] with the best [perfume] I could find, so that I saw the perfume glisten in his hair and beard.”

[p. 33] According to another report, she said, “[It was] as if I was looking at the glistening of the perfume in the parting of hair of the Messenger of God [eulogy], while he was in a state of *iḥrām*.”

[§ 1.2]

According to another report, [Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, d. 95/714] said, “Ibn ‘Umar used to oil himself lavishly. I mentioned this to Ibrāhīm [al-Nakha‘ī, d. ca. 96/715],⁶ and he said: ‘How do you reconcile this with what he [Ibn ‘Umar] said [against wearing perfume in *iḥrām*]? [Remember that] al-Aswad related from ‘Ā’isha [that she said] she had seen perfume glistening in the parting of hair of the Messenger of God [eulogy], while he was in a state of *iḥrām*.’” In another report, he added: “This is how he [the Prophet] used perfume during his *iḥrām*.”

[§ 1.3]

According to another report, Muḥammad b. al-Muntashir [d. 101/719–20] said, “I asked ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar [what he thought] about men who put on perfume and then enter the next day in a state of *iḥrām*. He said, ‘I do not like to wake up in the state of *iḥrām* exuding perfume. In fact, I would rather be daubed in tar!’ Then I visited ‘Ā’isha and told her that Ibn ‘Umar had said that he did not like to wake up in the state of *iḥrām* exuding perfume, and that he would rather be daubed in tar. ‘Ā’isha said, ‘I perfumed the Messenger of God [eulogy] on the occasion of entering *iḥrām*. Then he circumambulated [the Ka‘ba] among his wives. Then he woke up in the state of *iḥrām*.’” In another report, he added: “exuding perfume”. [...]

[§ 1.4]

[p. 36] ‘Ā’isha said, “When we traveled with the Messenger of God [eulogy] toward Mecca, we applied sweet-smelling *sukk*⁷ to our foreheads when we

6 A Kufan jurist with a positive view of perfume, al-Nakha‘ī also reportedly condoned the scenting of mosques with incense (*bakhūr*). See Bursi, 205–6.

7 *Sukk* is a compound musk perfume, mentioned in pre-Islamic poetry and said to have been used by the Prophet as well. See King, 152–3, 156.

entered *iḥrām*. We started to sweat, and it flowed over our faces. The Messenger of God [eulogy] saw this and did not object.” Abū Dāwūd included it.

[§ 1.5]

[p. 37] Al-Ṣalt b. Zubayd⁸—may God be pleased with him—related from several members of his family that ‘Umar [b. al-Khaṭṭāb], [having arrived] at al-Shajara,⁹ smelled perfume. He asked, “Whose perfume is this?”—to which [Abū] Kathīr b. al-Ṣalt replied, “It is mine. I put it on my head, with the intention of shaving [my head].” ‘Umar said: “Go to the water-hole and rub your head until you rid yourself of it.” [Abū] Kathīr b. al-Ṣalt did [as he had been told]. [Mālik b. Anas] included it in his *Muwattaʿa*’.

[§ 1.6]

Aslama, the *mawlā* of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, related that [p. 38] ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, [having arrived] at al-Shajara, smelled perfume. He asked, “Whose perfume is this?”—to which Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān¹⁰ [d. 60/680] replied, “It is mine, O Commander of the Faithful.” ‘Umar exclaimed, “Yours! By the life of God!” Mu‘āwiya ventured, “Umm Ḥabība put this perfume on me, O Commander of the Faithful.” ‘Umar said, “I adjure you to go back and wash it off!” [Mālik b. Anas] included it in his *Muwattaʿa*’.

[§ 1.7]

‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar clothed his feverish son in shrouds and then he [the son] died at al-Juḥfa in the state of *iḥrām*. He put a veil on his head and face, saying, “If we were not in the state of *iḥrām*, we would have put perfume on him.” [Mālik b. Anas] included it in his *Muwattaʿa*’. [...]

[§ 1.8]

Nāfi‘, the *mawlā* of Ibn ‘Umar [d. between 117/735 and 120/738], said, “When setting out to travel to Mecca [to perform the Ḥajj], Ibn ‘Umar put on a scentless unguent. Then he went to the mosque of Dhū l-Ḥulayfa, prayed, and sat in the saddle. Then, when his riding-camel stood up with him straight upon its legs, he entered *iḥrām*. He used to say, “This is what I saw the Messenger of God [eulogy] do.” [p. 39] Al-Bukhārī included it.

8 Death date unknown. He was the son of Zubayd b. al-Ṣalt, a Medinan Companion whose nickname was Abū Kathīr (“Father of Plenty”) and who related *ḥadīths* from ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.

9 A place name and a mosque close to the Mecca sanctuary, well beyond the traditional *mawāqīt*.

10 The later caliph, r. 41–60/661–80.

[§ 1.9]

‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar said that the Messenger of God [eulogy] used to put on an unguent that was not *muqattat*: that is, an unguent that was not scented, for *qatt* is [the technique of] making unguents smell good by [boiling them with] herbs. According to another report, included by al-Tirmidhī, he used to put on oil that was not *muqattat*, while he was in a state of *ihrām*. The first [report] is related by Razīn [d. 524/1130],¹¹ but I have not found it in the basic texts (*al-uṣūl*). [...]

[§ 1.10]

‘Abdallāh b. al-‘Abbās [d. ca. 68/687] said, “Pilgrims smell [p. 40] of fragrant herbs, they look in the mirror, and they treat themselves [in case of illness] with what they eat, namely, oil and clarified butter.” Al-Bukhārī included it.

[§ 2. On Perfume and Ointment = Vol. 4, pp. 766–73]

[§ 2.1]

[p. 766] Anas b. Mālīk [d. between 91/709 and 93/711] said, “The Messenger of God [eulogy] said, ‘Perfume and women are made dear to me, but my solace lies in prayer.’” Al-Nasā’ī included it.

[§ 2.2]

Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab [d. 94/715] was heard saying, “God is good and He loves perfume; clean and He loves cleanliness; noble and He loves noble-mindedness; generous and He loves generosity. So keep clean”—and I saw [written somewhere] that he said, “[keep] your courtyards [clean]”—“and do not assimilate yourselves to the Jews!” He [the person who heard this] said, “I related this [p. 767] to Muhājir b. Mismār, and he said, “‘Amir b. Sa‘d related this to me, too, on the authority of his father, from the Prophet, in a similar version, except that he said, “keep your courtyards clean.”” Al-Tirmidhī included it.

[§ 2.3]

Anas b. Mālīk related that when the Messenger of God [eulogy] was offered perfume, he did not reject it. Al-Nasā’ī included it. In the version transmitted by al-Bukhārī and al-Tirmidhī, it is stated that Anas [b. Mālīk] did not reject

11 Razīn b. Mu‘āwiya al-Saraqusṭī is the author of a work entitled *Tajrīd al-ṣiḥāḥ al-sitta*, a compilation of *ḥadīths* culled from the Six Books of Sunni Islam. Razīn omits the long chains of transmitters, a feature of his work that inspired Ibn al-Athīr to do the same in his *Jāmi‘ al-uṣūl*. See Ahmad, 34–5.

perfume [when being offered it], and that Anas claimed that the Messenger of God [eulogy] did not reject perfume, either.

[§ 2.4]

Abū Hurayra [d. ca. 59/681] said, "I heard the Messenger of God [eulogy] say, 'When presented with perfume, do not reject it. For it smells nice and is easy to bear.'" Abū Dāwūd included it. Al-Nasā'ī added: "It [perfume] derives from Paradise." Muslim also included it, replacing "perfume" with "sweet-smelling plants" (*rayḥān*).

[§ 2.5]

[p. 768] 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar related that the Messenger of God [eulogy] said, "Three things must not be rejected: cushions, unguents, and perfume." Al-Tirmidhī included it.

[§ 2.6]

Abū 'Uthmān al-Nahdī [d. ca. 95/713] related that the Messenger of God [eulogy] said, "If one of you is offered sweet-smelling plants, let him not reject it, for they derive from Paradise." Al-Tirmidhī included it.

[§ 2.7]

Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib [d. 81/700] related: "I asked 'Ā'isha whether the Messenger of God [eulogy] used to put on perfume? She answered 'Yes, [he used to put on] male perfumes, that is, musk and ambergris.'" Al-Nasā'ī included it.

[§ 2.8]

Al-Azharī [d. 370/980] explained: "It is related that they [the Arabs] used to detest female perfumes. However, they saw no harm in male perfumes." He further said: "'Female' means the perfume of women, such as *khalūq* and saffron. 'Male' perfumes are those that have no color, such as musk, [p. 769] aloeswood, camphor, and ambergris." [...]

[§ 2.9]

Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī [d. ca. 65/684] related that the Messenger of God [eulogy] was asked [what he thought] about musk. He answered: "It is the best of all your perfumes." Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī included it, but according to the version transmitted by Abū Dāwūd [the Prophet answered]: "Musk is the best perfume." Al-Nasā'ī [included] the same version, but according to another version that he transmitted, he [the Prophet] answered: "Musk is one of the best among your perfumes."

[§ 2.10]

Nāfiʿ, the *mawlā* of Ibn ʿUmar, said, “Ibn ʿUmar used to fumigate with unscented aloeswood and with camphor that he mixed with aloeswood. He used to say, “This is how the Messenger of God [eulogy] fumigated.” Muslim and al-Nasāʿī included it. [...]

[§ 2.11]

[p. 770] Anas b. Mālīk said, “The Messenger of God [eulogy] had a perfume box (*sukka*) from which he used to perfume himself.” Abū Dāwūd included it.

[§ 2.12]

Abū Hurayra related that the Messenger of God [eulogy] said, “Men’s perfume: conspicuous scent, discreet color. Women’s perfume: conspicuous color, discreet scent.” Al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasāʿī included it.

[§ 2.13]

ʿImrān b. Ḥuṣayn [d. 53/673] related: “The Messenger of God [eulogy] said: ‘The best perfume for men is that whose scent is conspicuous, while its color is discreet. The best perfume for women is that whose color is conspicuous, while its scent is discreet.’ And he forbade saddlecloths dyed in red.” Al-Tirmidhī included it.

[§ 2.14]

Abū Mūsā l-Ashʿarī [d. ca. 48/668] related that the Messenger of God [eulogy] said, “Every eye is a fornicator. Now, when a woman puts on perfume and passes [p. 771] by an assembly [of men], she is just like this”—meaning: she is a fornicator. Al-Tirmidhī included it, but according to Abū Dāwūd, he said: “When a woman puts on perfume and passes by people in order that they smell her scent, she is just like this.” [...]

[§ 2.15]

Abū Hurayra related that the Messenger of God [eulogy] said, “Let a woman who has been exposed to incense (*bakhūr*) stay away from praying the evening prayer together with us!” Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nasāʿī included it.

[§ 2.16]

According to a report transmitted by Abū Dāwūd, he [Abū Hurayra] said: “I met a woman who smelled of perfume, trailing a pillar of dust [whipped up by her long garment].” He asked her, “O bondmaid of the Almighty! Are you coming from the mosque?” She said: “Yes.” He asked, “Did you put on perfume

for it?" She said, "Yes." He said, "I heard my dear Abū l-Qāsim¹² say, 'No woman who perfumes herself for the mosque shall be admitted, unless she gets rid of her defilement (*janāba*) by means of a full-body lustration (*ghusl*).'" Al-Nasā'ī also relates that he [the Prophet] said, "If a woman goes to the mosque, let her wash off her perfume [p. 772] just like she performs a full-body lustration to get rid of her defilement." [...]

[§ 2.17]

[As regards the expression] "O bondmaid of the Almighty!": He [Abū Hurayra] linked the bondmaid to the Almighty here, to the exception of the other names of God Exalted, because the woman was full of pride and haughtiness, on account of the perfume she had put on, vainly dragging her garment over the ground. This compelled [Abū Hurayra] to link her name to that of the Almighty, in order to put her in her place and humble her—a very subtle allusion and rather good example of rhetoric.

[§ 2.18]

Zaynab, the wife of Ibn Mas'ūd [d. ca. 32–3/652–4] related that the Messenger of God said, "If one of you is present in the mosque, let her not touch perfume!" According to another version [he said], "If one of you is present at the night prayer, let her not use perfume in the evening!" Muslim and al-Nasā'ī included it. [Mālik b. Anas in his] *al-Muwatta'* included [the report of] Busr b. Sa'īd, with a loosened (*mursal*) chain of transmission,¹³ that the Messenger of God [p. 773] said, "If one of you is present at the night prayer, let her not touch perfume!" Al-Nasā'ī included this version, too, on the authority of Zaynab.

12 "Father of al-Qāsim" is the teknonymic, or *kunya*, of the Prophet.

13 An *isnād* is "loosened" (*mursal*) when a Successor cites the Prophet, omitting the intervening Companion. See Pavlovitch, § 7.1.2.

PART 2

Literary and Aesthetic Perspectives



Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869) on Animal and Human Sensation

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

Al-Jāḥiẓ (ca. 160–255/ca. 776–868) is one of the most inventive and productive writers of the Abbasid High Caliphate, if not of all Arabic literary history.¹ He is not only a famous belletrist but also a noted theologian (*TG*, 4:96–118). His ideas about the senses and the process of sensation have been discussed by several scholars (see, for example, Jarrar and Jaafar; Lange; Patel). Particular attention has been drawn to the important role al-Jāḥiẓ played in a major shift in third/ninth-century Muslim knowledge production from oral/aural to written knowledge, that is, from earwitness to eyewitness and to books. Over the course of the first two centuries of the Abbasid caliphate (r. 132–656/750–1258), Baghdad, the splendid imperial city that was al-Jāḥiẓ’s home in the second half of his life, became remarkably bookish. Building on the work of scholars like Gregor Schoeler and Shawkat Toorawa, James Montgomery has argued that the technological revolution in paper and bookmaking made it “no longer acceptable ... to rely on predominantly oral forms of disseminating knowledge” (Montgomery, 5; see Schoeler, 111–21; Toorawa, 2, 7–15). Al-Jāḥiẓ, a bibliomaniac who once remarked that there was more knowledge in his library than what might ever be learned by listening to teachers, both spear-headed and embodied this shift. Similarly, Houari Touati has proposed that in the time of al-Jāḥiẓ, “sight operated an epistemological revolution in the classical Islamic episteme,” and that al-Jāḥiẓ, “the pop-eyed one” (Arab. *al-jāḥiẓ*), was the champion of *autopsia* (*‘iyān*), “seeing for oneself” (Touati, 105).

However, al-Jāḥiẓ’s sensory thought accomplishes more than just elevating vision over audition. In his magnum opus, the *Book of the Living* (*Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*), he demonstrates a deep interest in the human and the animal sensorium. Many of his observations about the senses are found in the seventh

1 The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant “The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)” (project no. 724951).

volume of the *Book of the Living*, in a long chapter on “the sense perception of the various types of living beings.” In addition, there are many scattered references to the extraordinary sensory abilities of a variety of animals and human beings throughout the rest of the *Book of the Living*, as well as in other writings of al-Jāḥiẓ, such as the *Epistle on Singing-Girls (Risālat al-Qiyān)* (Beeston).

On the one hand, musing about the senses and sense perception, al-Jāḥiẓ cautions his readers against indulging the senses, particularly taste (*dhawq*) and gustation (*taʿm*), a sense he sets apart from the other senses (see below, § 5.1). Too great a taste for food leads to gluttony, which in turn invites concupiscence and sin (§§ 5.2, 5.3). Al-Jāḥiẓ is also clear that reason-based knowledge is superior, both morally and epistemologically, to knowledge obtained by way of the senses (§§ 1.1, 1.2). “The eye can make a mistake and the senses can lie,” he states. “Only the mind (*dhihn*) judges decisively and only the intellect (*ʿaql*) can explain things correctly, for they are the halter of the body and the yardstick of the senses (*ʿiyār al-hawāss*)” (al-Jāḥiẓ, *Tarbīʿ*, 14). As the various excerpts translated below demonstrate, al-Jāḥiẓ routinely contrasts intellectual and spiritual joy (*surūr*) against the base pleasure (*ladhdha*) attained by means of the senses.

On the other hand, al-Jāḥiẓ celebrates the sensory prowess of a range of different animals, as well as select human beings. The sensorium demonstrates God’s wonderful design of nature. Whether the hearing of ticks (§ 3.1), the olfaction of ants (§ 4.1), or the somatosensation of doves (§ 6.1): nothing is too small to escape al-Jāḥiẓ’s attention. He urges his readers not to content themselves with hackneyed phrases, such as calling a person with acute vision “more sharp-sighted than an eagle” and other such commonly used expressions. Instead, he encourages them to pay particular attention to animals “that are lowly in both status and significance, and small in body and worth” (§ 3.1). This characteristic of al-Jāḥiẓ endears him to zoologists, but his point is primarily theological: he is keen to demonstrate God’s encompassing power over creation (Pellat, *Life*, 22). God creates truly sensational animals, big and small. Importantly, He has also the power to intervene in the process of perception. According to al-Jāḥiẓ’s theory of deflection (*ṣarfā*), God can, if He so wills, disrupt the course of human perception and reflection (Montgomery, 327–31). For example, God “deflected” Moses and the Israelites’ sense of orientation (proprioception) and their ability to make up their minds—had He not done so, it would not have taken them 40 years to cross the Sinai desert (Montgomery, 328). He can also miraculously enhance perception, as in the case of the prophet Jacob catching the smell of his son Joseph emanating from a shirt traveling in a caravan from Egypt to Syria (§ 4.3).

Al-Jāḥiẓ is no ascetic or prude. He lampoons misers who accumulate wealth without enjoying the good things in life, calling them “more ill-tempered and more stupid than donkeys” (al-Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, 2:99). Central to al-Jāḥiẓ’s thinking about the senses is the confluence and mutual enforcement of sensory stimuli received by the person experiencing pleasure, a phenomenon he talks about in terms that on occasion approach the notion of synesthesia (§ 7.1).² Sex involves much more than touch: it is the multisensory pleasure par excellence, a pleasure enjoyed only by human beings but not by animals (§ 6.2). However, also other sensory events, such as the performances of singing-girls, achieve their characteristic effect on multisensory grounds (§ 7.2). In sum, al-Jāḥiẓ’s “sensory style” (Lange, 33) is a refined, moderate one. He does not argue that people should overcome the senses and leave the sensible world behind, nor does he advocate unfettered sensualism, or libertinism. Rather, he encourages us to explore the phenomenal complexity of the world and, ideally, to combine sensory impressions into a unified or even synesthetic, emotionally and intellectually enriching experience.

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² On al-Jāḥiẓ’s notion that the senses constitute a single class (*jins*), united by perception in the human soul, see the reports related by al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935–6), in *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 27 (§§ 3.3–6). See also *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 26 (on al-Nazzām; § 2.4).

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2 Translation

- KH al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 7 vols., Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā l-Bābī l-Ḥalawī wa-Awlādihī, 1938–45.
- RQ al-Jāhiz, *Risālat al-Qiyān*, in *Rasāʾil al-Jāhiz*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 4 vols. in 2., Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1964, vol. 2, pp. 143–82.

[§ 1. Epistemological and Moral Aspects]

[§ 1.1 Sensory Pleasure vs. Intellectual Joy = KH, Vol. 1, pp. 204–5]

Know that the well-being (*maṣlaḥa*) of the world, from its beginning to its demise, resides in the mixture of good with evil, harm with remedy, the disagreeable with the enjoyable, lowliness with exultation, abundance with scarcity. [...] Those who do not know what it means to crave something do not understand what relief is, and those who do not know what it means to feel relieved do not understand what peace is. They resemble animals, whether predatory or herbivorous, mired in a state of ignorance and stupidity. In contrast are the angels, who are the purest of creation, and human beings, among whom are the prophets and saints. [...] [p. 205] What, however, is the pleasure of a beast that is fed, or of a predatory animal that draws the blood and eats the flesh [of other animals], compared to the joy of someone who overcomes

enemies, or the joy experienced when, after knocking on the door of knowledge for a long time, it finally opens? [...] [p. 205] What is the pleasure of sense perception—consuming food and drink, listening to beautiful sounds, [seeing] pleasant colors, and touching soft things—compared to the joy of issuing orders and prohibitions and of having one’s decree hold sway, and of [experiencing] the obedience commanded by the signet ring, compelling [others] to accept one’s argument?

[§ 1.2 Superiority of Intelligible over Sensible Knowledge = *KH*,
Vol. 1, pp. 206–7]

I suspect that you are one of those people who think that, in God’s view, the peacock is nobler than the crow, [p. 207] the pheasant more impressive than the kite, the gazelle more lovely than the wolf. God has made these things look different in the eyes of people, distinguishing between them according to the natures (*ṭabā’i*) of [His] servants. He made some [animals] to resemble [people] more [than other animals]. Some [animals] He made human-like, others beast-like, some He made to provide food, others He made predators, in the same way in which He made pearls, stones, dates, and coals. So trust not what the eye shows you, trust what reason shows you! All things are judged in two ways: externally by the senses, and internally by reason. Reason, however, provides true proof.

[§ 2. *Sight*]

[§ 2.1 Animal Vision = *KH*, Vol. 7, p. 16]

As regards perception by vision, people say [that a person] “sees better than a raven,” “sees better than a horse,” “sees better than a hoopoe,” and “sees better than an eagle.” Cats, mice, rats, and predatory animals have night vision that is as good as your vision by daylight.

[§ 2.2 The Bat’s Poor Eyesight = *KH*, Vol. 3, p. 527]

One of [the bat’s] wondrous qualities is that it does not fly in daylight nor in darkness. It is a flying animal with poor eyesight, the pupil of its eye emitting only a small number of rays. Bats do not come out during darkness, because the darkness engulfs the light of their eyes. Likewise, they do not come out during the day, for the bright daylight eclipses their eyes, their pupils being so weak. Glittering things are detrimental to the eyes of those described as having sensitive sight, [p. 528] and the sun shines its rays upon the exit [of the lair] where they reside and from where they go forth, repelling and dispelling the rays of their eyes. Thus, they do not see at night nor during the day. However, since they know this, and since they have to collect provisions and to feed,

they wait for the moment when the darkness is not strong and overpowering, and when the light is not blindingly repellent and obstructive. They intuitively know this is so when the sun disk approaches the horizon, to the end of dusk. For this is [also] the time when the mosquitos and what resembles them become agitated, hovering in the air and swarming about in search of provisions. The mosquitos go out to feed, their food being the blood of animals, and [likewise] the bats go out to feed.

[§ 3. *Hearing*]

[§ 3.1 Aural Prowess of Ticks = *KH*, Vol. 7, p. 15]

As for hearing, let us abandon expressions like “his hearing is better than a horse’s,” “his hearing is more acute than an eagle chick’s,” “his hearing is better than this or that.” Instead, let us consider those [animals] that are lowly in both status and significance, and small in body and worth. The Bedouin (*al-‘arab*) say “more sharp-eared than ticks,” referring to the ticks that live around water holes and wells. When a caravan journeys to a well at night, some men are sent ahead to prepare the buckets and other contraptions for watering the camels. These men spend the night by the well, anticipating the camels’ arrival. They will know, in the middle of the night, that the camels are approaching because the ticks will come out, scurrying around and producing a rustling sound. The ticks will move toward the shepherds, who will repel them, and the crackling of their feet on the ground will be audible. These men [by contrast] will not have heard or perceived anything of them [the approaching camels]. When they have inferred this [i.e., that the camels are approaching] from the ticks, they rise, gird themselves, get dressed, and prepare for work.

[§ 3.2 Polecats Sounding and Stinking Out Lizards = *KH*, Vol. 6, pp. 371–2]

Abū Sulaymān al-Ghanawī remarked: “The polecat is the vilest four-legged creature on earth, and lethal for young lizards.” I asked Zayd b. Kathwa about this, and he said: “By God, also for fully grown lizards! The polecat is an animal that farts a lot. Nothing measures up to the stench of its farts.” I asked: “But how does it catch lizards?” He said: “It approaches the lizard’s burrow, while the lizard is at the burrow’s exit, sniffing around. When the lizard smells its [the polecat’s] stench, it scurries back into its burrow. The polecat now moves along with it above the burrow, listening to the rustling it produces. It may even put one ear against the ground to follow the sound—it has the acutest sense of hearing of all the four-legged animals. When the lizard reaches the end of the burrow, arriving at its farthest point, [p. 372] and when [accordingly] the rustling stops, the polecat turns its rear part toward the burrow and then, from

there, unleashes a fart into it. When the lizard smells this, it falls unconscious. The polecat then digs it up and takes it.”

[§ 4. *Smell*]

[§ 4.1 Animal Olfaction = *KḤ*, Vol. 4, pp. 402–3]

The Bedouin say [that a person has] “a keener sense of smell than an ostrich” and “a better sense of smell than an ant.” A certain *rajaz* poet said: “His smelling is more acute than that of a male ostrich, and he provides better guidance than a camel.” And al-Ḥirmāzī³ said in his *rajaz* poem: “He sniffs around like an ostrich.” [...] Sometimes, when a stallion travels in a retinue, and a mare travels behind it at a distance of two bowshots, the stallion will become aroused underneath its rider, without [the mare] having even neighed. Wolves smell and sniff around over a mile’s distance, and ants smell things that do not [even] have a scent, including things that, were I to put them right in front of your nose, you would not smell at all, even if you sniffed vigorously, for example the leg [p. 403] of a locust, dropped in a place where not a single ant is to be seen: in no time, you will see ants marching toward it in a black, string-like procession.

[§ 4.2 Extraordinary Human Olfaction = *KḤ*, Vol. 4, p. 425]

Ibrāhīm b. al-Sindī⁴ used to tell me stories about his father’s remarkable sense of smell, the like of which is otherwise only attributed to predatory animals, ants, and ostriches. He claimed that one day, his father said: “I smell mouse urine!” Then he sniffed around and let his nose wander about the room, and said: “It’s in that corner!” They inspected the corner and indeed, there was, on the fringe of the rug, a moist spot the size of a small coin (*dirham*) or slightly bigger, and they determined it to be mouse urine.

[§ 4.3 Jacob Smelling Joseph’s Shirt = *KḤ*, Vol. 4, p. 426]

None of what is related about the highly acute olfaction of certain human beings, ostriches, predatory animals, mice, ants, and various insects is of the order of what the glorious Qur’ān talks about when relating what happened

3 Probably Abū ‘Alī Ḥasan b. ‘Alī l-Ḥirmāzī, a poet and philologist who lived in Basra in the early third/ninth century. On him, see Baalbakki, 20; Yāqūt, 931–2 (no. 327).

4 Ibrāhīm b. al-Sindī b. al-Shāhak, a contemporary of al-Jāḥiẓ, was a noted theologian and jurist in Baghdad; al-Jāḥiẓ mentions him in several of his works. See Pellat, “Ibrāhīm b. al-Sindī.” He was also Chief of Intelligence (*ṣāhib al-khabar*) under al-Ma’mūn (r. 198–218/813–33). See Ibn Ṭayfūr, 42–3. His father, al-Sindī b. al-Shāhak, was Chief of Police (*ṣāhib al-shurṭa*) under Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–93/786–809). See al-Ṭabarī, 8:479, 481. I owe these references to Eugénie Rébillard.

with Jacob and Joseph. God Exalted states there: "Their father said, 'Surely I perceive Joseph's scent, unless you think me doting.' They said: 'By God, you are certainly in your ancient error'" (Q 12:94–5). Jacob said this after [the previous verse, in which] Joseph says [to his brothers]: "Go, take this shirt, and do you cast it on my father's face, and he shall recover his sight; then bring me your family altogether" (Q 12:93). This is why He says: "So, when the caravan set forth, their father said, 'Surely I perceive Joseph's scent, unless you think me doting'" (Q 12:94). And then: "But when the bearer of good tidings came to him, and laid it on his face, forthwith he saw once again" (Q 12:96). This was a miracle that came about especially for his [Jacob's] sake, for usually humans do not smell the smell of their offspring when they are far away from their noses. It is beyond the power of stallions to smell the mare over a distance of more than two or three bowshots. So how could someone who is in Syria sense the smell of his son by way of his shirt, at the moment when it is carried out of Egypt? This is why he [Jacob] says: "Did I not tell you I know from God that which you know not?" (Q 12:96).

[§ 5. *Taste*]

[§ 5.1 Taste as a Sense Apart = RQ, Vol. 2, p. 170]

Pleasures all come by means of the senses. Food and drink belong to the domain of taste (*dhawq*), and no other sense has a share in this. If a man were to eat musk, which belongs to the domain of the nose, he would find it disgusting and loathsome, because it was in origin congealed blood. If a man, without feeling any appetite, were to sniff the odors of delicious foodstuffs like fruit and the likes thereof, or were to persist in gazing at such things, it would provide no benefit. Or if someone were to bring all kinds of delicacies or perfumes close to his ear, he would find no pleasure in it.⁵

[§ 5.2 The Evils of Gluttony = KH, Vol. 2, p. 98]

As regards food, drink, sex, and perfume and all the things that belong to the domain of the senses (*min naṣīb al-ḥawāss*), it is well known that the more voracious and desire-driven people are, the more obsessed they are with food (*atamm li-wijdānihi l-ta'm*), thus becoming like starving people when they are fed or thirsty people when they are given drink. Now, if we compare the benefit derived from lasting joy with the pleasure of food, considering all the things that gluttony occasions, such as insomnia, inflammation, physical unease, and burning thirst, it is readily understood that gluttons benefit less: they are

5 The translation, like the translation below at § 7.2, follows that of Beeston, with some adjustments.

reviled for it [their gluttony] and it propels them to commit sins. Besides, when satiation (*ni'ma*) subsides, nobody is more miserable than they. Compare this to the joy of those aware of God's gift in preserving them from its [gluttony's] evil effects and from the corruption of the bodily humors!

[§ 5.3 Gustation and Lust = *κH*, Vol. 7, p. 16]

As for gustation, it is thought that it is related to gluttony and greed, an excess of metabolism, cupidity, and appetite; that the pleasures derived from it correlate with how gluttonous and greedy one is; and that they correspond to visible sexual agitation and outward signs of lust. Just think of a jack when he sees a jenny, or a stallion when he sees a mare, a horse mule when he sees a mare mule, and a billy goat when he sees a she-goat. It is thought that pleasure correlates with desire, and desire with agitation; and the neighing and braying [of the animals] is because lust overcomes them. We find that men, when seized by this, are not like this, except when they are prey to the most intense lust and the most excessive desire.

[§ 6. *Touch*]

[§ 6.1 Doves Kissing = *κH*, Vol. 3, p. 177]

Only doves and human beings kiss. The male dove does not cease to do it until he's become utterly decrepit. It is probably the case that the older and feebler he gets, the more he desires this kind of excitement. The common people claim that, when crows cohabit, they feed each other with their beaks, and that they impregnate each other in the same way and no other; but I have not seen scholars argue this. Hens also kiss each other, and it is said that from this they hatch eggs, but that from these eggs no chicks emerge.

[§ 6.2 Elephant Sex and Human Sex = *κH*, Vol. 7, pp. 237–8]

A young woman asked her mother on her wedding-night: "Mother, if the dick of my husband is like the prick of an elephant, how can I make sure that I will enjoy it?" Her mother replied: "My dear daughter, I asked my mother the same question, and she said she had asked *her* mother the same question, and that her mother had said: 'It's impossible, unless God makes you elephant-like.'" For a year, the daughter was silent. Then she said: "Mother, do you think it's a good idea to ask God to make me elephant-like?" Her mother replied: "My dear daughter, I asked my mother the same question, and she said she had asked *her* mother the same question, and that her mother had said: 'It's impossible, unless God makes all women elephant-like.'" Again, the daughter was silent for a year. Then she said: "Do you think it's a good idea to ask God to make all women elephant-like?" Her mother replied: "My dear daughter, I asked my

mother the same question, and she said she had asked *her* mother the same question, and that her mother had said: ‘It’s impossible, unless God makes all husbands of these women elephant-like, too.’” Again, the daughter was silent for a year. Then she said: [p. 238] “Do you think it’s a good idea to ask God to make all husbands of these women elephant-like?” Her mother replied: “My dear daughter, I asked my mother the same question, and she said she had asked *her* mother the same question, and that her mother had said: ‘My dear daughter, if God turned all people into elephants, then no [woman turned] female elephant, despite her enormous body, would experience the kind of pleasure that you will experience today with your husband. [If you were an elephant] you would be deprived of the pleasure of smelling and kissing, of embracing and rolling about, of perfumes and makeup, of beautiful clothes and toiletry, of teasing and promises of love—all the things you will experience today.’”

[§ 7. *Multisensory Events*]

[§ 7.1 Collaboration of the Senses = *KH*, Vol. 4, pp. 441–2]

The Manicheans claim that the world and what is in it is according to ten types (*ajnās*): five that are good and light, and five that are evil and dark, all of them sensing (*hāss*) and hot (*hārr*).

[They also claim] that human beings are composed of all of these, inasmuch as the good types are preponderant over the evil types, or inasmuch as the evil types are preponderant over the good types. Further, [they claim] that human beings have five senses, and that in each sense there are the five types and their opposites. For example, if a person looks mercifully [at another person], then that look originates from light and goodness; if a person looks in a threatening way, then that look originates from darkness. So it is with each of the senses.

[They also claim] that the acoustic sense is a sense apart, and that the goodness and the light that is in the optical sense does not assist the goodness in the acoustic sense. However, it does not oppose it, either, [p. 442] nor does it undermine or obstruct it. It [the visual sense] does not assist it [the acoustic sense] because of the difference in types. It does not undermine it because it is not its opposite. [...]

In response, it is said to the Manicheans: What do you say about a man who asks another man: “Did you see such-and-such?” If the man answers: “Yes, I saw him!” has not the organ of hearing transmitted [something] to the organ of sight, and has not the organ of sight transmitted [something] to the organ of taste? Why did the tongue say “Yes!” if not because the owner of the tongue heard the sound?

[§ 7.2 Multisensory Pleasure = *RQ*, Vol. 2, pp. 170–1]

When one comes to consider singing-girls, three of the sensory organs are involved, and the heart makes a fourth. The eye enjoys the sight of a beautiful, attractive girl (and indeed, cleverness and beauty [p. 171] are seldom found in a single object of enjoyment and delight); the hearing has an unencumbered share of her, the ear delighting in nothing but her; and the sense of touch experiences carnal desire for her and the longing for sexual intercourse. All the senses are scouts for the heart, and witnesses testifying before it. When the girl raises her voice in song, the gaze is rivetted on her, the hearing is directed attentively to her, and the heart surrenders what it has to her. Hearing and sight race each other to see which of the two can convey what she has bestowed on them to the heart before the other, and they arrive at the heart's core and pour out what they have observed. On feeling joy (*surūr*) [in his heart], [a man's] tactility is aroused, so that he has at one and the same time three concurrent pleasures (*ladhdhāt*), such as he would not find conjoined in anything else, and the like of which the [individual] senses could never give him. In this way, in his consorting with the singing-girl there lies the greatest temptation. It is related in Tradition: "Beware of gazing [at women]! It sows desire in the heart." For the one who gazes, it is temptation enough. How much more tempting will it be if music is added to it and helped along by flirting!

Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq (*fl.* Mid-fourth/Mid-tenth Century) on Multisensory Dining and Wining

Nawal Nasrallah

1 Introduction

The book from which several excerpts are translated below bears the title *Kitāb al-Ṭabīkh wa-īslāḥ al-aghdhīya al-ma’kulāt wa-ṭibat al-aṭ’ima al-maṣnū’āt mim mā ustukhrīja min kutub al-ṭibb wa-alfāz al-ṭuhāt wa-ahl al-lubb* (*A Book on Cookery and Remedying Foods, with the Best of Delectable Dishes, as Obtained from Books on Medicine, and Told by Accomplished Cooks and People of Wisdom*). The name of its author, as mentioned in the Bodleian Library manuscript (MS Huntington 187), is Abū Muhammad al-Muẓaffar b. Naṣr b. Sayyār al-Warrāq (henceforth: al-Warrāq). Aside from the fact that he wrote this cookbook, we know nothing else about him. His nickname, al-Warrāq (Arab. “paper dealer”), however, suggests that he was in the book business. In the medieval Islamic world, people in the book business used to practice their profession in the *sūq al-warrāqīn* (“the market of people dealing with paper”), where writers bought their stationery and where copies of books were commissioned and produced. In addition, new books were researched, compiled, or authored in the *sūq al-warrāqīn*, as the bookshops in such markets also served as research libraries.

Regarding the book’s provenance and date, internal evidence points to Baghdad during the early Abbasid era. It is possible to date the book approximately to the mid-fourth/mid-tenth century, based on the fact that the last allusion that occurs in it is to the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir (d. 320/932). Additionally, one of the poets whom al-Warrāq often mentions in his book and with whom he seems to have had a personal relationship was the master chef and poet Abū l-Faṭḥ Kushājīm (d. ca. 350/961).

From his introduction, we also know why al-Warrāq wrote the book. Addressing his anonymous commissioner, he says: “You asked me to write a book on dishes cooked for kings, caliphs, lords, and dignitaries, and here it is [...] an illustrious and fine collection of whatever benefits the body and fends off any harm that foods might induce” (al-Warrāq, 67). We may speculate that al-Warrāq’s gastronomic and literary interests and easy access to the bookshops in the *sūq al-warrāqīn* must have enabled him to tailor the book to his

commissioner's satisfaction. The resulting cookbook was indeed a remarkable achievement; he must have been handsomely compensated.

Within the course of the book's 132 chapters, al-Warrāq incorporates 615 recipes copied from more than 20 cookbooks, said to have been written by or for caliphs, princes, physicians, dignitaries, professionals, boon companions, and more. Not only does al-Warrāq anthologize the Abbasid cuisine, but by relating myriad anecdotes and allusions, populated by figures from all walks of life, he also provides a panoramic cultural overview. More than a hundred of the figures are mentioned by name, ranging from caliphs to scholars, entertainers, poets, and party crashers. Added to the recipes and anecdotes are the 86 gastronomic poems. Comparable to today's food photography, some of them illustrate the dishes themselves.

As for the recipes, they largely deal with a luxury cuisine that testifies to the sophisticated level Abbasid culinary culture had attained. This high level was made possible by the material prosperity enjoyed at the time, which also gave rise to a social class, the "nouveaux riches," who, like al-Warrāq's commissioner, had the desire and the means to emulate the courtly elite but lacked the knowledge.

Abbasid luxury cuisine, as depicted in al-Warrāq's cookbook, was indeed a typical product of its age, as Baghdad provided the ingredients for the development of an indulgent food culture, which was further encouraged by the almost complete absence of prohibitions in Islam against the enjoyment of God's bounties. In the making of luxuriously prepared dishes great measures were taken to decorate and garnish the dishes, as in the cookies recipe in § 8 below, where colored sugar and nuts were sprinkled like confetti. The savory dishes were often garnished with a sprinkle of finely chopped herbs, and the cold dishes were given a generous drizzle of olive oil and decorated with cucumbers sliced into *dirhams* (silver coins) and ruby-red pomegranate seeds. The *sikbāja* dish, the subject of § 5 below (see also § 1), is the ultimate in this respect.

For the achievement of the optimal in flavor and aroma, cooks spared no expenses in incorporating the best cuts of meat, the freshest of vegetables, and the dearest of spices. However, as al-Warrāq's advice to cooks in the anecdote of the sultan's chef clearly demonstrates (see below, § 1), no matter how expensive and rare the ingredients were, no cooked dish would deliver great flavor if the earthenware pots used were not sufficiently clean. Al-Warrāq proposes an ultimate test of cleanliness: if the cook puts a stone in one nostril and gives the washed pot a sniff with the other, the two should smell alike. We also witness a similar, almost obsessive concern with the cleanliness of meat and how to remove its unpleasant greasy odor, called *zuhūma*.

Al-Warrāq's book is not only about delicious dishes that indulge the eater's senses, but also about those that maintain and restore health. Such dishes are based on the then popular Galenic medico-culinary tradition of the four humors, which dominated the thinking of the medieval world (Nasrallah, *Annals*, 55–64; Waines, 228–40). Spices, for instance, valued for their scents and flavors, were also held to be effective in manipulating the properties of the consumed food so that it would agree with the season of the year, for instance, or with the eaters' humors. In the making of desserts, for example, camphor was used in the summer for its cold properties, but ambergris and musk, which are hot, were considered more suitable for winter.

Moreover, the aromatic substances used in incense (*bakhūr*), such as musk, ambergris, and aloeswood, were valued not merely for their pleasant scents, but also for their therapeutic and cleansing properties: they purged the air, cleared the head, and improved one's mood.¹ In short, anything that smelled nice, tasted delicious, especially sweet foods, and pleased the eyes, was considered beneficial to one's well-being. The medieval physicians collectively called these things *mufarriḥāt* (Arab. "exhilarators"), because they had the capacity to exhilarate the heart and drive off depression (Ibn Qāḍī Ba'labakk, 57–69).

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2 Translation

Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq, *Kitāb al-Ṭabīkh wa-iṣlāḥ al-aghdhīya al-ma'kulāt wa-ṭībat al-aṭ'ima al-maṣnū'āt*, ed. Kaj Öhrnberg and Sahban Mroueh, Helsinki: [Finnish Oriental Society], 1987, English translation by Nawal Nasrallah, *Annals of*

1 On the nexus between smell and health, see also *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 17 (§ 3), 19, 20, 25 (§ 2).

the Caliphs' Kitchens, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007, pp. 79–82, 91–6, 178–9, 228, 249–52, 502.

[p. 79] [§ 1.] *What Causes the Cooked Food to Spoil, Have Unpleasant Greasy Odors, or Vitiate*

Food might spoil, develop greasy odors, or change for many reasons, one of which is failure to smear the pot with clay after using it, and failure to wash it before smearing it with clay. The best thing to do is to wash the used pot and smear it with clay. Then wash it again to get rid of the first coating of clay and smear it again with clay; set the pot aside overnight. In the following day when you need to use it, you will notice that a film of grease (*dasam*) has formed on the clay. It is this remaining grease that causes the cooked food to spoil and develop unpleasant greasy odors (*zuhūma*). The other reason could be careless handling of the meat, such as not washing it thoroughly to get rid of the blood, or not washing it after the butcher's handling of it. It may also be neglecting to discard the nodules (*ghudad*),² blood vessels, the spinal cord, and the *istīdhaj* (epimysium, silver skin), which is the thin membrane that covers the meat like a skin. So, watch for these things and do not be negligent in this regard, God willing.

Other practices that cause the cooked food to develop an unpleasant greasy odor may be washing the meat in water that is already used for washing other ingredients, or washing it in salted or impure water, or in [p. 80] greasy utensils. Cutting onions, leeks, carrots, eggplants, and all other vegetables with the same knife used for cutting the meat would also spoil the cooked dish, so you need to know this. Have a special knife for cutting the meat and another one for cutting the vegetables.

Another practice that may alter the taste of the dish and cause food to spoil is to keep on adding fresh batches of water to the pot while it is cooking. It is much better and more sanitary to add the required amount of water all at one time, especially when using soapstone pots. Washing the meat with hot water will also spoil it because it will give it an unpleasant greasy odor by causing the blood to coagulate and lock in dirt. It is better to use cold water in this case. Additionally, neglecting to taste the salt to check for bitterness before adding it to the cooking pot, or carelessly using unrefined and acrid oil without bothering to taste it before pouring it into the pot, will spoil the taste of the stew. Also, avoid using fermented sauce (*murri*) that is putrid, or vinegar that is

2 Such as glands, lymph nodes, and any stiff growths in the meat, tallow, or between the skin and the meat. They were believed to be harmful to the eater because they were susceptible to infections.

foul-smelling, moldy, or wormy. Excessively salty or moldy juice of sour unripe grapes is not good either. Old spices lose their flavors and pungency. Therefore, they should not be used in cooking because they will spoil the food.

Sometimes, when liquid cooking in a pot reduces by evaporation, particles of chopped onion or any other vegetables might remain sticking to the inner side of the pot. They will eventually burn and may fall back into the pot or mix with the rest of the ingredients if extra liquid is added to the cooking pot. Should this happen, the dish would be spoiled, so one needs to avoid this, God willing. Also, refrain from fueling the fire with damp wood which produces a lot of smoke. If smoke is blown toward the pot, it will mix with the food and spoil its taste. This is why the best food is usually cooked on coal fire.

Another practice to be shunned is melting animal fat in a separate pot then pouring it over the food in the pot, which has already finished cooking and is put away from the heat. This will give the dish an unpleasant greasy odor and alter its flavor. [Professional] cooks in weddings and feasts usually do this, and often spoil the best of dishes this way. Another reason that causes food to spoil is using too much fuel in cooking *aruzziyyāt* (rice porridges), *ʿadasiyyāt* (lentil dishes), and *lūbyāyāt* (cow pea dishes). The food will stick to the bottom of [p. 81] the pot and scorch, which would definitely ruin its taste and aroma. So long as cooks take such precautionary measures, their food will always be perfect and safe from ruin, God willing.

It is told that a group of men used to get together for a game of chess until midday. For the rest of the day they would socialize at the house of whoever was the host at the time. It happened once that one of the sultan's chefs stopped by and was invited to join the group, which he did. From then on, he started coming on the days when he was free of duty. Once, the chess-group host asked him to prepare for them a meal similar to what he usually cooks for the sultan, and his choice fell on *sikbāja* (meat stew soured with vinegar). The sultan's chef asked the host, "Who is your cook?" The host said his servant boy does the cooking, and called for him. The chef asked him, "How do you cook *sikbāja*?" and he described the procedure to him. The chef said, "Go and bring me the pot you use in cooking it." The servant boy did, and the chef asked him to wash it with clay, which he did, repeatedly. Each time he washed the pot, the chef would sniff at it and ask him to wash it one more time. He then told him to wash it with parsley, which he did. The chef sniffed at it again and said, "Yes, it is clean now, go and cook *sikbāja* in it the way you usually do every day." Having said that, the chef resumed his chess game. The servant boy was under the impression that the chef would at some point come [to the kitchen] and add his own spices to the dish, but he never did.

When the table was spread and *sikbāja* was served, they all marveled at its beauty and excellent aroma. It was noticeably different from what they had

been served before, and they were curious to know the reason. The chef said, “Do you think that dishes cooked in the sultan’s kitchen are any different from the familiar ones? The ingredients used there are none other than vinegar, greens, meat, eggplants, gourds, saffron, and the like; meticulous cleanliness of the ingredients and the pots is all that it takes.” Indeed, pots can only be deemed clean when they are carefully washed before and after cooking, as I have explained.

The cook might have to replace his Meccan soapstone pot (*qidr birām Makkīyya*) with a new one quite often. The best ones are wide with low sides, free of any breaks or cracks, and are polished smooth. Therefore, keep in mind that broken pots that have been patched or fixed, or the cracked ones, will never be free of unpleasant greasy odors even though extraordinary care [p. 82] is taken in washing them. The cooked food will acquire such greasy odors so long as the cook uses pots, lids, or stirring and ladling utensils that are not thoroughly washed. The pot is not necessarily rendered clean if, when sniffed, it smells of clay, gypsum, or even some pleasant odors. These smells could be just temporarily covering up some greasy odors (*ghamar*),³ which would spoil the cooking food as soon as the pot boils. Therefore, if you want to make sure that the washed pot is thoroughly clean, put a pebble in one nostril and sniff at the pot with the other. If the pot smells like the pebble, it is clean. However, if the smell is dissimilar, wash the pot again until it passes the test.

Additionally, the cook should remove any nodules found in the meat and beware of being neglectful in this regard.⁴ [Hārūn] al-Rashīd [d. 193/809], and those who followed his practices, used to beat their cooks when they found them negligent of this, but would not do so if they saw a fly in the food. The fly, they would say, might have accidentally fallen into the food after the cook had finished cooking it. [At any rate,] food needs to be protected from flies before and after ladling it. Otherwise, they may fall into it, which would be a repulsive thing to see. Therefore, the pot needs to be kept covered with its own lid after it has finished cooking. Likewise, the serving bowl is to be carried [to the table] covered with a *mikabba* (domed cover).

[p. 91] [§ 2.] *On Seasoning the Pots with Spices and Aromatics*

Mentioned here are the seasonings that add aroma to the cooking pots of grains and stews—be they those served as *tharīda* or otherwise.⁵ Listed also

3 *Ghamar* is the coagulated grease that sticks to the pots after ladling the food, or the hands after eating greasy foods.

4 See footnote 2, above.

5 *Tharīda* is a dish of broken pieces of bread, sopped in the rich broth of meat and vegetable stews.

are the essential spices, herbs, vegetables, aromatics, dairy products, and other similar ingredients which must be added to the cooking food [to enhance its flavor]. I am doing this here for fear the cooks should overlook any of these if they do not have them briefly put together at the beginning of the book and mentioned in a more detailed manner in the rest of the chapters.

Of added aromatics (*al-ʿitr*): musk (*misk*), ambergris (*ʿanbar*), rose water (*māʾ ward*), saffron (*zaʿfarān*), cassia (*dār-šīnī*), galangal (*khūlanjān*), spike-nard (*sunbul*), cloves (*qaranful*), mastic (*maṣṭakā*), nutmeg (*jawz bawwā*), black cardamom (*qāqulla*), mace (*basbāsa*), and green cardamom (*hāl*).

Of dried fruits: almonds, walnuts, pistachios, hazelnuts, pine nuts, coconut, jujube (*ʿunnāb*), raisins, and dates.

Of fresh fruits: sour pomegranates, sweet pomegranates, sour apples, rhubarb (*ribās*), unripe grapes (*hišrim*), black plums (*ijjās aswad*), bananas, Levantine apples, *biṭṭikh* (watermelon and muskmelon), and apricots.

Of sweeteners: sugar [white (*tabaržad*) and light brown (*Sulaymānī*)], bees' honey (*ʿasal naḥl*), dark brown sugar (*sukkar aḥmar*, literally "red sugar"), and syrup (*ʿasal*) made from sugar or any other sweeteners.⁶

Of fermented sauces and condiments (*kawāmīkh*): [p. 92] *bunn* (nondairy fermented condiment), *murri* (liquid fermented sauce), [...] olives, and fermented sauce of olives (*murri l-zaytūn*).

Of grains and legumes (*hubūb*): chickpeas, green and sprouted fava beans, wheat grains, rice, grass pea (*julubbān*), lentils, beans (*lūbiyā*), and mung beans (*māsh*).

Of herbs and vegetables (*buqūl*): onions, garlic, onion juice (*māʾ al-baṣal*), garlic juice (*māʾ al-thūm*), parsley (*karafs*), watercress (*jirjir*), Levantine bulbous leeks (*kurrāth Shāmī*), table leaf leeks (*qirt*), radishes (*fujl*), chard (*silq*), cilantro (*kusfara raṭba*), rue (*sadhāb*), cultivated mint (*naʿnaʿ*), pungent leeks (*kurrāth ḥirriṭf*), gourds (*qarʿ*), orach (*qaṭaf*), asparagus (*hilyawn*), citron leaves (*waraq utrujj*), dill (*shibitt*), purslane (*farfaḥīn*), eggplants, carrots, turnips, cabbages, spinach, elecampane (*rāsan*), [...] thyme (*ṣaʿtar*), and cauliflower florets (*mufarradat al-bayḍ*).

Of seasoning spices (*abāzīr*): peppercorns (*fulful*), coriander seeds (*kusfara yābisa*), cumin (*kammūn*), caraway (*karawiyā*), ginger (*zanjabūl*), long pepper (*dār fulful*), lovage (*kāsham*), resin of asafetida root (*hiltīt*), asafetida leaves (*anjudhān*), salt, olive oil (*zayt*), vinegar, sour juice of unripe grapes (*māʾ hišrim*), and *mahrūt* (root of the asafetida plant).

⁶ These would have been syrups of honey-like consistency. Sometimes, these syrups were called *ʿasal sukkar* (sugar-honey), to differentiate it from *ʿasal naḥl* (bees' honey).

Of dairy products: whey (*maṣl*), dried buttermilk (*rakhbūn*),⁷ milk (*laban ḥalīb*), butter (*zud*), [p. 93] soft yogurt cheese (*qanbarīs*), ricotta cheese (*qarīsha*), and clotted cream (*bīrāf*).

Of wines (*sharāb*): [nonalcoholic] cooked wine (*khamr maṭbūkh*), raisin wine (*zabībī*), mead (*ʿasālī*), sun-fermented wine (*shamsī*), and grape wine (*jumhūrī*).

Of food dyes (*aṣbāgh*) used with desserts: lapis lazuli (*lāzaward*), saffron (*zaʿfarān*), vermilion (*zunjufr*), red lead (*sayraqūn*), ceruse (*isfīdhāj*), and indigo (*nīl*). To obtain green, mix saffron with lapis lazuli. Alternatively, you may use juice of fresh greens, such as that of alfalfa (*fiṣṣa*), chard, and the like. Two different greens may be obtained with them: pistachio green (*fustuqī*) and chard green (*silqī*). To obtain sky blue (*lawn al-samāʿ*), mix ceruse with lapis lazuli, or indigo with ceruse. To obtain [the color] pink (*muwarrad*), mix vermilion with ceruse. To obtain deep red (*aḥmar fāqīʿ*), use juice of amaranth (*bustān abarwīz*) or gum lac (*lukk*). To obtain deep yellow (*fāqīʿ al-ṣufra*), mix saffron with gum lac or juice of amaranth.

[p. 94] [§ 3.] *On Tastes of Food*

The tastes of food are eight: *ḥulw* (sweet), *ḥāmīd* (sour), *mālīḥ* (salty), *dasīm* (agreeably rich and greasy),⁸ *tafīh* (insipid)—also called *bashīʿ* (unpalatable)—*ḥīrrīf* (pungent), *murr* (bitter), and *sanīkh* (rancid). Each of these tastes has its own distinct qualitative powers. The closest taste to man’s nature is the sweet, which is moderately hot by temperament. Foods that are not sweet have less power to nourish the body than the sweet ones.

Sour is cold, low in density (*laṭīf*), and sharp (*ḥadīd*). Greasy has power in it. It is somewhat low in density as it is more akin to the power of the element of air. Salty is hot in properties, and is astringent (*qābīd*) as it is more akin to the power of the element of earth. Insipid, which is unpalatable and cold, is similar in power to that of the essence of the earth. Pungent is hot and low in density. In properties, it is similar to fire in dryness. Bitter is hot, low in density, and sharp. There is also a certain amount of the earth’s astringency in it. Sweet is hot, low in density, and is almost perfectly balanced in qualities. Rancid is more akin to the element of water, which is moist and cold. It is rank and spoiled.

⁷ Similar to today’s *jamīd*, used in making the Jordanian traditional dish *mansaf*.

⁸ This could have been the equivalent of what today is called umami (the fifth sense), the elusive savory rich flavor that is meaty and brothy.

The properties of [tastes] are described in terms of earth, air, water, and fire, because all the trees and foods are composed of these four elements. In some of them, only one element is predominant, whereas others are predominated by three elements combined. Still, others combine all four of them, so know this.

It hence follows that bitter is hot because it is more related to heat, but also to the earth. Sour is related to coldness and low density. The unpalatable taste (*bashi*⁹) is high in density (*ghalīz*) and is coarse (*khashin*) as it is more related to the power of the earth in coldness. Sweet is low in density because it is related to air, which is light. The taste that is neither [p. 95] sweet nor bitter, and is far from being agreeable, is the rancid one.

You need to understand all these facts, which are taken from Galen's *Kitāb al-Aghdhiya al-musta'mala* (*Book of Familiar Foods*).

[p. 96] [§ 4.] *Remedies for Burnt Foods in the Cooking Pots*

If *aruzziyya* (rice porridge) burns, add rue to the pot. It will rid the dish of its burnt taste, God willing. If bean and lentil dishes scorch, burn a piece of wool underneath the pot. Its smoke will drive away the stench. If the cooking pots smell unpleasantly greasy (*zahir*), throw one or two whole walnuts into them, and keep them there for a while. The walnuts will absorb these odors. To prove this, take out the walnut and break it open. [You will find that] its greasy odor is so repugnantly powerful that you cannot tolerate its smell.

[Generally,] you can get rid of the stench of any burnt food by placing the pot on urine (*bawl*). However, a better way for doing it is to change the pot in which the food has burnt. Pour its contents into another one, remove the burnt parts, [and resume the cooking]. This is indeed what is usually done in such cases, and what really works.

[p. 249] [§ 5. *Sikbāja*⁹]

[The story goes that] Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī¹⁰ had a slave girl who was [...] an exceptionally skillful cook and was the most-gifted expert in making *bawārid* (cold dishes) and desserts (*ḥalwā*). She was the best, ever. When al-Amīn heard some of the stories about her, he told Abū Ishāq [Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī] that he craved to eat *sikbāja* of beef prepared by her, and that the pot should [p. 250]

9 *Sikbāja*, a meat stew soured with vinegar, is a celebrated multisensory dish that Bid'a made for the Abbasid caliph al-Amīn (d. 198/813), one of the sons of Hārūn al-Rashīd (d. 193/809).

10 Ibrāhīm (d. 224/839) was the half brother of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd.

also be cooked with lamb, kid's meat, and poultry. His only condition was that she should cook nothing else on that day, and were other kinds of dishes to be presented before or after serving it, he would not touch them. All he desired was to eat that dish and drink after it until intoxicated, before washing his hands.

So Ibrāhīm went home and ordered the slave girl be brought to him. Her name was Bid'a. He said to her, "Bid'a, your master al-Amīn, Commander of the Faithful, desired me to serve him *sikbāja*. He said you cooked it once for [his father] al-Rashīd, and that he had it with him and liked it a lot. It was made with different kinds of meat." She replied, "I hear and obey the commands of the Commander of the Faithful."

Ibrāhīm ordered the kitchen manager to make available whatever Bid'a asked for and needed to make the dish. So the kitchen supplier provided all the ingredients she asked for. When Bid'a woke up in the morning, she started working on the dish. She asked for 1 *mithqāl* (4½ grams) ambergris (*'anbar*) and 2 *mithqāls* Indian aloeswood (*'ūd Hindī*) to infuse with their aromatic smoke the meat and all the ingredients after washing them. She spread them on a basket turned upside down. [...] Then she covered them with a bucket or quilted garment with a wide opening [...] or anything else that traps the smoke in. This should be done before the water and vinegar start boiling in the pot. Besides, the pot itself may be infused with this smoke after washing it thoroughly as I mentioned earlier [see above, § 1], as well as the serving bowl before ladling the food into it. Adding a small amount of musk to the pot after taking it away from the fire and before ladling it [will be good, too].

So, when the table was set and *sikbāja* was brought in, its aromas filled the air and it exhaled the wonderful fragrances of the perfumes and spices that were in it. Al-Amīn looked at it appreciatively; how excellently it was made and garnished with all kinds of decorations, different kinds of large sausages (*maḥāshī* and *mabā'ir*), pinwheel sandwiches (*bazmāward*), thin meat patties (*ṭardīnāt*), meat-stuffed small pastries (*sanbūsqjāt*), and small sausages (*laqāniq*). These were all beautifully interspersed with all kinds of vegetables and herbs, systematically arranged in layers, and festooned around a small bowl of pungent white mustard sauce. It looked like a flower orchard embellished and ornamented with all kinds of adornments; or like an illustrious bride. [...]

Al-Amīn was all admiration for the way it looked, and the aromas that hit his nose. When he tasted it, he found it quite delicious, and started sampling all the varieties that were in it. He then said, "Uncle, this dish contains 30 kinds of food, which makes any other dishes unnecessary. It has more varieties than the one I had with al-Rashīd, Commander of the Faithful, and is even more delicious. I had previously ordered it to be made for me but it did not come out as excellent as this one."

[p. 228] [*§ 6. Verses on Eggplant*¹¹]

Eggplant has a taste like saliva, which a generous lover freely offers.
 A pearl in a black gown, with an emerald set, from which a stem extends.
 In taste 'tis like no other, whether hurriedly cooked or well done.
 Yearning for this little wonder, the witty in hosts hasten to it.
 Only fools have no appetite for it. As for the smart, they just love it.

[p. 178] [*§ 7. A Fish Recipe in Which the Head Is Roasted, the Middle Is Poached, and the Tail Is Fried*]

Scale a big fish and take out its entrails. [...] After you clean it, stuff its mouth, gills, and between the jaws with as much as possible of finely chopped citron leaves, apple peels, salt, thyme, and rue.

Using a wide strip of thick cloth, which has been soaked in oil, wrap the middle part of the fish three times, the width of two fists put together, starting at four fingers' width below the head. Make sure to wrap it three times. Otherwise, the cloth will burn and the whole fish bakes, which will defeat the main design of the recipe. [p. 179] As for the lower third of the fish, wrap it with an overlapping bandage-like strip of linen cloth, which has been drenched in oil. You can secure the wrappings with a thin string made by twisting a thin strip of cloth, and winding it around the middle cloth and the tail cloth.

Lower the fish into a well-heated clay oven (*tannūr*), and when done, take it out and untie both wrappings. You will thus get a fish that is cooked in three different ways: the head is baked, its middle is poached, and its lower part is fried.

For each part prepare a sauce that goes with it, so that nobody will suspect [that the whole fish was actually cooked as one piece], God willing.

[p. 425] [*§ 8. Multicolored Cannoli-Like Pastries*¹²]

Take as much as you like of dough made with pure fine flour and knead it thoroughly with olive oil or sesame oil. Prepare some yard-long reeds, scrape their outer layers, and clean them. Wrap the prepared dough around them and cut them into finger-long pieces. Make decorative impressions on them with pin-cers, and color them red, yellow, green, and blue, using the dyes mentioned

11 These verses (eight in the Arabic) are ascribed to "Abū l-Fath," the poet known as Kushājim. The eggplant was a controversial vegetable at the time. It was the least favorite among physicians, who believed that it generated black bile, cancer, melasma, and more. However, as the verses translated here show, it was not short of admirers.

12 Such pastries were used as decorations for desserts, a pleasure to look at.

at the beginning of the book, where it is explained how to make them [see above, § 2.].

Put the finished reeds in the clay oven (*tannūr*), and when baked, remove the reeds, which will leave you with [pastry] tubes. Fill them with a mixture of pounded walnuts and sugar, and dip both ends of each in thick and sticky sugar syrup. Sprinkle the ends with chips of hard sugar candy (*sukkar Sulaymānī*), which have been colored with the dyes mentioned above. They will look as colorful as an orchard, God willing.

[p. 502] [§ 9. *Verses on Bunk*¹³]

Bunk obliterates greasy smells of food on hands and whatever of sweets and fats.

Whether traveling or at home, neglect not to wash your hands with it when the nimble server passes around with it.

Nothing surpasses *bunk* to wash the hands after having a fragrant scrumptious meal.

Like musk in color, and soft as silk on hands and face.

¹³ *Bunk* was an excellently made handwashing compound, fragrant and soft and smooth in texture. See Nasrallah, “*Bunk*.” The verses in this section are attributed by the author to Abū l-Ḥusayn (i.e., Abū l-Faḥ) al-Kātib, better known as Kushājim.

Al-Sarī al-Raffā’s (d. 362/973) Invitations to Delight

Jocelyn Sharlet

1 Introduction

Al-Sarī al-Raffā’ al-Mawṣilī grew up in Mosul, Iraq, where he worked in the textile trade (hence his name al-Raffā’, lit. “the Mender”) and perhaps as a fisherman (al-Ḥasanī, 24). After studying the Qur’an, grammar, language, literature, and the sayings of the Prophet, he began a career as a poet and writer. His first patron was Nāṣir al-Dawla Ḥasan b. Abī l-Hayjā’ ‘Abdallāh b. Ḥamdān (d. 356/996), a member of the Hamdanid dynasty of Iraq and Syria (al-Ḥasanī, 56). After the Hamdanids had served the Abbasid caliph during a tumultuous time in Baghdad, Abū l-Hayjā’ set up the Hamdanid state, but it truly came to power under his son, Nāṣir al-Dawla, who ruled for many years in Mosul (Shak’a, *Sayf al-Dawla*, 45). Before long, Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Khālidi (d. 380/991) and his brother Abū ‘Uthmān Sa’id al-Khālidi (d. 390/1000), both also poets and writers of prosimetrical works, undermined al-Sarī’s relations with his patrons. The rivalry hinged on accusations of *sariqa* (lit., “theft”): that is, plagiarism or controversial intertextuality—although in many contexts “good” *sariqa*, in which the borrower improved on the earlier text, was admired (‘Abbās, 130). Al-Sarī moved to Aleppo in 338/950, only to find that the Khālidi brothers, who served as librarians to Sayf al-Dawla al-Ḥamdānī (d. 357/967), continued to undermine his relations with patrons (al-Ḥasanī, 26). Sayf al-Dawla, Nāṣir al-Dawla’s younger brother, ruled Aleppo for many years and is well known for his frontier battles with the Byzantines, portrayed in poetry by al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965) and other poets. Al-Sarī sometimes worked as a copyist of poetry to earn money, a relatively new practice at the time (al-Ḥasanī, 136; see Gruendler). He moved back to Iraq in 349/960 and established a patronage relationship with the minister Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-Muhallabī (d. 352/963) and others, including the writer and poet Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣābi’ (d. 384/994).

Like other poets in his time, al-Sarī worked in the shadow of al-Mutanabbī, the leading poet of Sayf al-Dawla al-Ḥamdānī. Al-Sarī played a prominent role not only in compositions on more formal poetic themes—known as “aims” (*aghṛād*, sing. *gharaḍ*) in Arabic criticism—that were often dedicated to a patron, but also in less formal poetic themes that circulated among friends

and peers, such as the invitation poems in this translation. While his more formal poetry often appeared in the longer, polythematic genre known as the *qaṣīda*, the less formal poetry often circulated in the shorter, monothematic genre called *qit'a*. The former included "aims" such as praise, censure, invective, elegy, and request for pardon. Less formal poetry included the "aims" of description of things such as wine, love, friendship, gift exchange, hunting, gardens, and other pleasant locations.

The invitation poems translated here seem to combine the poetic "aims" of the description of objects and places, wine, and friendship, while also alluding to other informal or formal "aims." Al-Sarī and his contemporaries who expanded the use of these informal "aims" seem to have been especially interested in integrating the physical and sensual experiences of pleasure with emotional, social, and ethical dimensions of poetic aims and values such as manners, elegance, and provocative playfulness, as well as wisdom, religion, glorious virtue, and morals (see Sharlet, "Inside and Outside"; "The Thought That Counts"). His informal "aims" revolve around relations among friends or peers, and this feature is especially important in the invitation poems. In particular, the physical and sensual experience of pleasure often derives from low-technology devices shared among friends and peers in a gathering: the space heater (Poem 4, l. 4), the watercooler (Poem 1, l. 10), and the cooling tent (Poem 1, l. 14; Poem 2, l. 4). While several informal poetic "aims" existed before al-Sarī's time, his work in others, such as gift exchange and novel topics of description, served as a new aspect of the Abbasid-era modernist movement in poetry (see Shak'a, *Funūn al-shi'r*).

Along with poets such as Ibn al-Mu'tazz (d. 296/908), al-Ṣanawbarī (d. 334/945), Kushājim (d. 350/961 or 360/971), and al-Babbaghā' (d. 397/1007) in Iraq and Syria, and Ibn Khafāja (d. 529/1134) in Iberia, the work of al-Sarī and his rivals the Khālidi brothers was important for the *qit'a* genre (as well as the epigrammatic genre of *maqṭū'a*) in informal "aims" and in prose or prosimetrical works on topics related to informal poetry. Al-Sarī's anthology published in four volumes, *The Lover, the Beloved, Fragrances, and Drinks (al-Muḥibb wa-l-maḥbūb wa-l-mashmūm wa-l-mashrūb)*, features short selections of poetry by earlier and contemporary poets, mainly on topics related to informal "aims," as well as brief sections of prose description. Similarly, his contemporaries composed prosimetrical books on hunting, drinking, and gift exchange, as well as a commentary and a study of intertextuality. Poetry by many of these poets, including al-Sarī, was featured by anthologists such as al-Tha'ālibī (d. 429/1038) in Iraq and Iran and by al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 488/1095) in Iberia. Thus, their own prosimetrical works and the inclusion of or commentary on their poetry in anthologies provide contexts for their role in the literary tradition.

In the invitation poems translated below—selected not from *The Lover, the Beloved, Fragrances, and Drinks*, but from al-Sarī's *Dīwān*—the theme of the sensorium serves as an occasion for al-Sarī to explore the emotional, social, and ethical dimensions of “aims” in Arabic poetry and the values that they include. For example, in line 12 of Poem 1 (see below, § 1), which I have entitled “We have a gathering,” we encounter the most generous of fine men seeking benefit while he is the one who gives ample gifts. This line alludes to the formal “aim” of panegyric along with the informal “aim” of friendship. In the context of the scene at this monastery on the eastern side of the Tigris River in Mosul, which was frequented by seekers of pleasure like many other monasteries, these allusions offer the value of Christianity as a backdrop, as well as the values of morals, refined manners, and elegance (Yāqūt, 1:146, 2:511). The description of a cooling tent with the image of tears for water in line 16 alludes to both the traditional “aim” of *nasīb*, which may serve as a prelude about lost love and abandoned desert abodes in longer poems, and the modernist and informal “aim” of the garden poem, so that this counterpoint suggests elegance and refinement in literature.

In Poem 2 (§ 2), “It is good to show resolve,” the motifs of resolve to pursue pleasure and to cope with Time in line 1 refer to the values of morals, glorious virtue, and wisdom, which evoke the “aims” of panegyric or wisdom poetry, while the counterpoint of glory and pleasure highlights the value of elegance. The fine men who love poetry and the garden in line 2 of this poem link it to the “aims” of friendship and garden poetry, foregrounding values of elegance and refinement. The cooling tent like a bride's scented gown in line 4 refers to the “aim” of garden poetry while the image of marriage points to values of religion and morals as well as elegance. The horse image at the end of the poem, for the delightful day that is like a blaze of white, offers a faint echo of battle in panegyric as well as the hunt on horseback in the hunting poem because the resolve to pursue leisurely pleasure parodies these more glorious or adventurous endeavors. Telling the guest that he will enjoy benefits if he comes adds a religious angle.

In “Rise so that you may seek your fair share” (Poem 3, § 3), we should note the reference to the “aim” of love poetry in line 7, in the motif of the racecourse of lovers. Line 8 features allusions to panegyric, the wine poem, and the value of wisdom in the motif of enjoying pleasure before catastrophes strike.

Invitation poems typically evoke interesting and amusing counterpoints between serious and playful values. Line 3 of “A day of light rain” (Poem 4, § 4) offers an incongruous image of glorious virtue from battle panegyric for the wine cups. Line 7 features references to the “aims” of description and wine, as well as religion, elegance, and provocative play: the wine cup on the edge

of the space heater seems to be circumambulating the fire, like the motion of Muslim pilgrims around the Ka'ba, but it is as if it were worshipping the fire, as in a Zoroastrian ritual. We should observe that contemporary readers/listeners probably would have enjoyed the incongruence between the cherished value of Islamic religion and the secondary yet significant value of provocative play. The latter value is associated with playful transgression of social and moral norms, in literature and/or behavior, such as drinking alcohol, enjoying entertainment, and sex or desire for sex outside of a marriage contract (see Szombathy).

"Our pleasures" (Poem 5, § 5) juxtaposes the description of a cupbearer, whose fair face and dark hair are like a morning surrounded by night in line 9, and a playful reference to the Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiya (r. 41–60/661–80), who would not have learned restraint had he enjoyed this drinking party. The description of the cupbearer alludes to the "aims" of wine, love (*ghazal*), and provocative play, while the image of morning and night points to the delightful time-out from the vicissitudes of Time, a concept associated with the poetic "aim" and value of wisdom. Meanwhile, Mu'āwiya and his people resisted Islam and later converted to it. The Umayyads were depicted by their critics as being excessively committed to material pleasure, extreme wealth, and their own ethnic, tribal, and sectarian faction, but Mu'āwiya in particular was appreciated for his refined manners and skills as a ruler. Thus, he is a figure who relates to the "aim" of panegyric and the values of religion, glorious virtue, and morals, and this line also points to the wine poem and the values of refinement and elegance.

The bride in "I recall a drinking companion" (Poem 6, § 6) is the wine, which is a theme of most invitation poems, and the playful poem addressed to a guest with a hangover combines allusions to the "aims" of wine, the garden, and friendship. It also evokes values of religion and morals (in the motif of marriage), refinement, elegance, and provocative play. Al-Sarī uses the theme of the sensorium as an opportunity to interrogate the relations among layers of meaning in Arabic literary culture in his time.

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2 Translation

al-Sarī al-Raffā' al-Mawṣilī, *Dīwān al-Sarī al-Raffā'*, ed. Ḥabīb Ḥusayn al-Ḥasanī, 2 vols., [Baghdad:] Manshūrāt Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-A'lām, 1981, vol. 1, pp. 350–1, 365–6, vol. 2, pp. 299, 578–9, 556, 667.

[§ 1. We Have a Gathering = Vol. 2, pp. 578–9, lāmiyya (Poem Rhyming in the Letter lām) in the Meter al-ṭawīl]

And he said, inviting a friend of his and describing the wine jar, herbs, and the snow and the watercooler and the cooling tent:

1. We have a gathering that would be perfect were you not absent
And a collective whose joy would be absolutely complete
2. Fostered in the shelter of the monastery of 'Umr al-Za'farān
That is redolent of northern breezes and with saffron tints
3. Secured in the house of 'Azra is one who stands
Upon one leg that does not sway
4. Concealed in layers of clay in life and propped up
Fastened to the wall like one crucified, and he is killed

5. And one that is green from which there appear huge waves to
the eyes
Over which the west wind and the east wind met
6. Turned white by camphor, not that its fragrance
Is paltry, but that munificence is beautiful
7. And one that is pure white and cleared of impurities
By a north wind that made its surfaces salient so that it is polished
8. Returns to the rose-colored one the coolness of its heart
When it visits it like a friend and companion
9. It is as if our hands plundered pebbles of crystal
That sometimes melt away upon it as it flows
10. And one whose breath is confined, its belly injured
Lightens the burden of the intense summer heat when it is heavy
11. It is as if a northern breeze greeted its pure water
Even though there is no way for the north wind to reach it
12. You see the most generous of fine men demand its benefit
Although he is the one who is free with generous gifts
13. When water has no shade to contain it,
Then its garment is shade that gives it shelter
14. And a cloth of linen moistened by its eastern breeze
Cloaked the walls from every observer
15. A veil of linen whose air became fine
As if, within it, the hottest part of the day were the time of evening
16. It is sprinkled with rose water until you see that it sheds
Tears in what flows down of its humidity
17. So if you do not hasten to catch up with your close friends
You would find their minds in a state of decline

[§ 2. *It Is Good to Show Resolve* = Vol. 2, p. 556, *lāmiyya in the Meter al-ṭawīl*]

And he said, inviting one of his friends:

1. It is good to show resolve by encountering desire when it approaches
And how can you see the justice of Time and turn aside?
2. I have fine men who are lovers of poetry as well as a garden
That is sometimes patterned like a brocade, and a necklace with
gems of alternating colors
3. And a rain cloud formed between the cups
Of perfume except that it does not pour down

4. And a cooling tent was given repeated drafts of rose water as if it were,
Due to its walls, the sandalwood-scented gown of a bride
5. And my day with them is a day that is a blaze of white so if you visit
You will be blessed with benefits that day, and it is one with a
blaze and lower legs of white

[§ 3. *Rise So That You May Seek Your Fair Share* = Vol. 1, pp. 350–1, *bā'iyya in the Meter al-basīṭ*]

And he also said:¹

1. Rise so that you might seek your fair share from the vicissitudes of
Time and turns of fate
And join with your wine cup the full range of pleasant diversions
and delight
2. Do you not see that the armies of the morning have risen
In the east, spreading banners of gold?
3. As the air struts forth in musk-scented veils
In which it is as if the lightning were a heart that is terrified
4. Where the vicissitudes of Time avoid you and depart
And the good fortune of life greets you from nearby
5. So let your hair down and drink wine that is mixed
With the wine of the beloved's kisses
6. For life is in the shade of the days of youthful passion and when
You bid farewell to the pleasant scent of fresh youthfulness, it is
not pleasant
7. I avidly ran the racecourse of lovers
And how can I fall short given that the passing days pursue me?
8. Crown my hand with your wine cup before the catastrophes strike
For the wine cup is the crown of the hand of the one who is rich
in refinement

[§ 4. *A Day of Light Rain* = Vol. 1, pp. 365–6, *bā'iyya in the Meter al-munsariḥ*]

And he said, inviting a friend of his and describing a space heater:

1. A day of light rain with musk-scented veils
On which joy laughs from nearby

¹ “And he also said” introduces this poem in all manuscripts except one. Four manuscripts add “urging playfulness,” and one, “may God forgive him.”

2. And a gathering whose curtains hung down
Before splendid suns with fine deeds
3. And the battle horses of our wine ran at an ambling pace
Or they prepared themselves to do so
4. And our fire burned bright so that the view
Enables you to dispense with every other amazing view
5. When it cast off sparks and the lances of the flames
Pursued its peak
6. You saw a ruby in a setting
From which shavings of gold fly
7. Around which the full wine cup circumambulated
With white bubbles on both sides
8. So come to the gathering in which
The gardens of beauty and refinement smile

[§ 5. *Our Pleasures* = Vol. 2, p. 667, *mīmiyya in the Meter majzū' al-wāfir*]

And he said, inviting two friends of his and teasing them:

1. Our pleasures became a goal that is easy to reach
Yet they were no good due to the distance of you two
2. And the smile of the lightning bolt urged on
The rain cloud's tears so that they poured down
3. And the thunder expressed so much yearning that
I imagined that it was seeking the affection of the downpours
4. And I have a singing-girl who composed the
Disparate aspects of life so that they were set in a composition
5. Like a sun that offered greetings in the darkness
And a branch bearing red fruit
6. And one that is pure so that, when it smiles,
It shows us life that is smiling
7. And basil that excited your admiration
And a drinking companion who makes you joyful
8. And one who is beloved who is distinguished by his beauty
Came forth in late morning carrying the banner
9. It is as if his forehead were a morning
Surrounded by a curling lock of darkness
10. And there is something that I do not mention
Lest I cause you two to flee
11. If one who conceals a secret desire treats
His illness with it, he recovers

12. And had the eyes of Mu'āwiya been lined with it
He would not have become forbearing
13. So make your way here so that you two may encounter
A surging sea of pleasures

[§ 6. *I Recall a Drinking Companion* = Vol. 2, p. 299, *rā'iyya* in the
Meter al-wāfir]

And he said:

1. I recall a drinking companion whom I invited to drink wine
When the light of day had scandalized the darkness
2. And I said: will you not rise for a bride
Who appeared in a robe the color of pomegranate flowers?
3. So he rose and there was weakness in his limbs
And a sign of a hangover in his eyelids
4. And his eyes notify the one who sees him
Of what they stole from the color of wine

Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī (d. 360/971) on the Conditions and Effects of Music

George Sawa

1 Introduction

Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī was born in Isfahan in 284/897 and died in Baghdad in 360/971. He belonged to an offshoot of the Quraysh tribe, the tribe of the Prophet Muḥammad, and was a lineal descendant of Marwān b. Muḥammad b. Marwān, the last Umayyad caliph (r. 127–32/744–50). He spent much of his life in Baghdad where he studied philology, grammar, *ḥadīth* and Qurʾānic sciences, history, genealogy, biographies, and the requisite of boon-companionship such as falconry, farriery, medicine, astrology, preparation of beverages, narration of anecdotes about poets and musicians, and music. His all-round education and encyclopedic knowledge of poetry and music literature made his company much desired at the court.

Al-Iṣbahānī famously compiled the *Book of Songs* (*K. al-Aghānī*), a collection of stories that provides a panoramic view of Arabic poetry and music from pre-Islamic times to the end of the third/ninth century. The value of the *Book of Songs* lies not only in its monumental ethnographic coverage, but also in the fact that it contains and supersedes many sources that are now lost, especially the works of Ishāq al-Mawṣilī (150–235/767–850), a celebrated composer, singer, and lutist from Baghdad who appears numerous times in the *Book of Songs* and was not only a musician but also a theorist and historian of music.

Al-Iṣbahānī's short introduction to the *Book of Songs* is revealing. It tells how and why the book was devised, and at whom it was aimed. Al-Iṣbahānī did not intend it to be a history of all Arabic poetry which had been set to music from the pre-Islamic period down to his own time. Rather, he selected songs around which revolved interesting stories concerning the poet or the singer, often related by themselves, including indications as to the reasons for composition. This, al-Iṣbahānī argued, made the presentation of the songs more attractive, as readers do not only learn the dry facts about these songs, such as the names of poets and singers, their melodic and rhythmic modes, but also gain insight into the contexts in which the songs were composed and performed, the process of transmission, composition, criteria for performance

excellence, musical change and improvisation, and *ṭarab*, including its physical, emotional, imaginal, and therapeutic effects.

In the classical Arabic dictionaries, *ṭarab* is defined as lively emotion, excitement, agitation, or unsteadiness of the heart or the mind, provoked by joy or grief, the onset of joy, departure of grief or sorrow, desire, or yearning or longing of the soul. In the *Book of Songs*, *ṭarab* goes further, leading to behavior that often borders on insanity: shouting and loss of control, hitting heads on walls, tearing garments, stripping naked, slapping one's face until bleeding, burning one's own beard, fainting, piling up on each other, almost breaking one's neck, throwing oneself in a pond, well, or river, almost falling off a camel, collapsing with diabolic possession and madness, and dying. Less dramatic and more relaxing effects of *ṭarab* include entering a generous and happy state, falling in a deep sleep, unaware of one's surroundings, and becoming motionless.

The following anecdotes illustrate *ṭarab* and its physical, emotional, imaginal, and therapeutic effects. Many names of poets and musicians appear in these anecdotes, but to introduce them all is beyond the scope of this chapter. Interested readers can follow up on the *Book of Songs* and the many characters that feature in it in the specialized scholarly literature (see, e.g., Farmer; Kilpatrick). However, to facilitate reading, I note the following important personalities, in addition to the above-mentioned Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī.

Jamīla (*fl.* late first/seventh century) was a famous singer in Medina who taught music and singing to a large number of students. She was the most knowledgeable person in the art of singing and is said to be the origin and root of singing.

Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (125–188/742–804), the father of Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī, was a famous singer and composer in the Baghdad court. He performed for a number of caliphs including al-Mahdī (r. 158–169/775–85) and Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/786–809).

Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī (162–224/779–839), the son of al-Mahdī and brother of Hārūn al-Rashīd, was a gifted composer and singer. He had an amazing range of four octaves. He is blamed for freely altering the older repertoire, much to the chagrin of the serious Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī.

Al-Walīd b. Yazīd (88–126/707–44), the eleventh Umayyad caliph (r. 126/744), was a great patron of poets and musicians. He is said to have been greatly affected by *ṭarab*.

Hārūn al-Rashīd (145–193/763–809), the fifth Abbasid caliph (r. 170–93/786–809), was a famous patron of poets, singers, and scholars.

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2 Translation

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[§ 1. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī on Composing Music]

[p. 73] Muḥammad b. Khalaf b. al-Marzubān told me, Ḥammād b. Ishāq al-Mawṣilī told me,

My father Ishāq al-Mawṣilī told me that he heard the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd asking my grandfather Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī what technique he uses (*ṣana‘a*)¹ [p. 74] if he wants to compose a song. He said: “O Commander of the Faithful, I remove worries (*akhraja al-hamm*) from my mind, and I picture (*maththala*)² *tarab* between my eyes. In this way the paths (*maslak*) of the melodies that

1 Transliterated Arabic verbal forms within parentheses offer the dictionary forms rather than the exact wording in the original.

2 Arab. *maththala* can also mean “to represent pictorially or graphically, portray.” This is a very interesting sentence where Ibrāhīm is in fact “seeing” *tarab*, and as a result, rendering himself in a state of acute emotion of joy or grief.

I desire come to me easily (*sāgha lī*),³ and I go through them (*salaka*)⁴ with the guidance (*dalīl*) of the rhythmic mode. In this way, I hit the mark and succeed in what I desire.” Hārūn [al-Rashīd] said: “You deserve, O Ibrāhīm, to hit the mark and succeed, and your perfect description is in total harmony (*mushākil*) with the perfection of your composition and singing.”

[§ 2. *Al-Waṣīf's Impaired Sense of Rhythm*]

[p. 215] Muḥammad b. Ḥamza b. Nuṣayr al-Waṣīf was a client of al-Manṣūr, his surname is Abū Jaʿfar and his nickname is Pumpkin-Face (*wajh al-qarʿa*). He is among the singers who were skilled (*ḥādhiq*) in vocal composition, and instrumental and vocal performance (*ḍārib, rāwī*). He learned from Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili and his generation (*ṭabaqa*). He was good at performance and had a nice voice (*ṭayyib al-ṣawt*), and no weakness (*illa*), except that if he sang melodies in the *hazaj* rhythmic mode he would get off rhythm (*kharaja*) for unknown reasons; it could be caused by a shortcoming (*āfa*)⁵ affecting his sense (*hiss*) in a particular rhythmic mode (*jins*), such that he could never succeed in performing it.

[§ 3. *Ibn ʿĀisha Singing*]

[p. 277] Ibn ʿĀisha was standing in a festival at a loss. So, one of his friends passing by him said to him: “What are you doing here?” He said, “I know a man, if he were to sing (*takallama*),⁶ he would imprison (*ḥabasa*) people here [p. 278] in such a way that they would not come or go.” The man said, “And who is that man?” He said, “It is me.” Then he burst forth singing:

They passed on the right side, so I said to them, pass on,
going away to the north, so when are we meeting?

People became paralyzed, the camel-borne litter was disturbed (*iḍṭarabat al-maḥāmil*),⁷ the camels stretched their necks (*maddat al-ibilu aʿnāqahā*), and were captivated, and civil strife (*fitna*) almost occurred. [...]

3 In other MSS, it is *saruʿa lī*, which means “come quickly to me.”

4 Arab. *salaka* can also mean “to travel.”

5 Ibn al-Ṭahḥān (fols. 38b–39a) adds important information about the reasons a singer gets off rhythm: weakness of musical nature, striving, speed, slowness, laxity, not learning the durations of the songs properly, lack of attention, mixing durations, fright, being drunk, having imperfect sensory perception, weakness in understanding the song.

6 Lit., “speak.”

7 A similar anecdote uses the word “broke” (*inkasara*) (6:340).

[§ 4. *A Concert for the Caliph al-Amīn*]

My uncle told me, ‘Abdallāh b. Abī Sa’d told me, Hibatallāh b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī told me that my uncle Maṣṣūr b. al-Mahdī told me:

He was at my father’s place⁸ on the day it was his turn (*nawba*)⁹ to perform for the caliph Muḥammad al-Amīn. My father was distracted drinking [p. 279] at his house and did not go. The caliph sent him many messengers, but he delayed going. Maṣṣūr said, on the next day Ibrāhīm said, “You must come to me so that we can both go to the caliph and pacify him, for I do not doubt that he is angry with me.” So, I did and we both went. We asked about him and were told that he was at the zoological garden (*ḥayr al-waḥsh*) intoxicated, and it was his habit to stop drinking if he had a hangover. We entered, and our path took us through a room for the manufacturing of musical instruments (*malāhī*). So, my brother Ibrāhīm said to me: “Go choose a lute to your liking, tune it perfectly so that you will not need to tune it at all before you play.” So, I did and I put it in my sleeve,¹⁰ and we entered while al-Amīn had his back to us. When we saw him from afar, Ibrāhīm said, “Get your lute out!” I did, and he burst out singing:

I drank a cup for pleasure
 And another one to cure me from it¹¹
 So that people know that I am a man
 Who came to chivalry from its very door
 Our witness is the white, red, and yellow roses and the jasmine
 And the singing-girls with their gut strings stretched
 Our lute is always in tune
 So, which of the three would be ridiculed by her.

Al-Amīn sat up (*istawā jālisan*) and reached a high state of *ṭarab* and said, “O uncle, you did well and enlivened me with *ṭarab*.” He asked for a *raṭl*¹² of wine and drank it on an empty stomach and kept on drinking. Al-Maṣṣūr said, Ibrāhīm sang that day at the highest tonal level (*ashadd ṭabaqa*) a lute can reach and I never heard the like of his singing as [I did] on this day. And I saw

8 That is, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī’s place.

9 The *nawba* was a well-established practice to organize the musicians’ performance schedule, namely, musicians were given turns to perform on specific days of the week.

10 The purpose was to hide it from the caliph. Hiding a lute in a sleeve is problematic: this may have been possible if the lute was small, or if the sleeve was large enough to accommodate a regular lute, or it could be that only a portion of the lute was hidden.

11 I.e., the first cup.

12 Lane, s.v., specifies that a *raṭl* was a pint.

an amazing thing that I would not have believed if I had been told about it: when he began to sing the animals (*waḥiṣh*) listened to him, stretched their necks (*maddat a'nāqaha*) toward him, and approached (*danā*) us, almost putting their heads (*waḍa'a ra'sah*) on the bench (*dukkān*)¹³ on which we were; when he stopped, they dispersed [p. 280] (*nafara*)¹⁴ and went as far away (*ba'uda*) from us as possible. Al-Amīn was amazed at this phenomenon and we left with rewards the like of which we had not seen before!

[§ 5. *Mukhāriq Singing for the Caliph al-Wāthiq*]

[p. 281] Hārūn b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt said, my father said, the caliph al-Wāthiq said,

Do you want to see the superiority of Mukhāriq over all of his colleagues? Then look at those *ghulāms* who are standing in the banquet (*simāṭ*).¹⁵ The audience watched them while they were standing up, all of them listened to the singers and stood still and controlled themselves, but when Mukhāriq sang they came out (*kharaja 'an*) of their motionless state (*ṣūra*), their feet (*rijl*), shoulders, and sides (*mankib*) moved and the effect of *tarab* appeared in them, and they crowded (*izdahama*) near the rope behind which they stood.

[§ 6. *Ibn Jāmi' Singing for the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd*]

[p. 283] Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā l-Makkī told a story about Ibn Jāmi' who was known to sing best when he was sad. So, [Hārūn] al-Rashīd resorted to a rather unkind trick; he had a letter [read], mentioning that Ibn Jāmi's mother had died. Upon reading the letter, Ibn Jāmi' burst forth singing with such burning pain (*hurqa*) and sadness (*huzn*) in his heart [...] By God, we could not control ourselves (*mā malaka al-nafs*) and I saw the *ghulāms* beating their heads on the walls and columns!¹⁶

13 In Dozy, 454, *dukkān* is defined as a bench or stone bench, and *dukkān al-qasr* is a long stone bench elevated against the palace wall in the open air. In Lane (3:900), this is the meaning of *dikka*, whereas *dukkān* is a small chamber with an open front, along which a wide bench of stone or brick extends. For other meanings, see both sources at the above-mentioned pages.

14 Arab. *nafara* can also mean "to take fright and flee, retire to a distance, shun, be averse, aloof." See Lane, 8:2823–4.

15 Arab. *simāṭ* can also be a thing upon which the food is served. It is long and prepared for a large company of people. See Lane, 4:1427.

16 In another anecdote, Ja'far b. Yaḥyā b. Khālid almost hits his head on the wall (10:179).

[§ 7. *Siyāṭ Singing for Abū Rayḥāna al-Madanī*]

[p. 283] Al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim al-Kawkabī told me, Abū l-‘Aynā’ said that Ishāq al-Mawṣili said,

I heard that on one cold day, Abū Rayḥāna al-Madanī was sitting and wearing a thin worn shirt. Siyāṭ the singer passed by him, so he leapt up and grabbed the bridle [of his horse] and said, “O master, I invoke you by the full respect of the grave and the one buried in it,¹⁷ sing for me the poem of Ibn Jundub.” So, he sang,

[p. 284] My heart is held hostage (*rahīn*)¹⁸ by your love, my soul
Melts away, and because of you my eyelids are bathed in tears.

Abū Rayḥāna tore (*shaqqa*) his shirt till it came off him, [then he] stayed naked (*‘ārin*) until he fainted (*ghushiya ‘alayhi*). People gathered around him while Siyāṭ stood, bewildered at what Abū Rayḥāna had done. He [Abū Rayḥāna] then regained consciousness and got up and Siyāṭ was compassionate toward him and said to him: “What happened to you, O unfortunate one? What do you want?” He said, “By God, sing to me”:

Say farewell to Umāma, for your departure is fast approaching.
Indeed, farewell to the one you love is rare.¹⁹
She is like a branch whose sides are swaying,
For the wind attracts its body and causes it to sway.
If your concern is coquetry, then
It is fine and beautiful, O Umayma.

He sang it to him and as a result he slapped his face (*laṭama*)²⁰ until he bled from his nose (*kharaja l-dam min al-anf*) and fell, overcome by diabolic possession and madness (*waqa‘a ṣarī‘an*). Siyāṭ left and people carried Abū Rayḥāna into the sun. When he woke up they said to him: “Woe unto you! You tore the only shirt you own!” He said, “Leave me alone, for the good singing from a singer who causes *ṭarab* (*muṭrib*) is warmer (*adfa‘*) to the chilled person (*maqrūr*) than the bath of the caliph al-Mahdī, even if [the water] had been heating for

17 The reference here is likely to the Prophet’s grave.

18 Lit., “held in pledge.”

19 Or: “is (only) a little thing.”

20 A similar anecdote (15:35) adds “call for help” (*wā-ghawthāh*) after “he slapped his face.”

seven days." [...] Siyāṭ sent him a shirt, a long outer garment open in the front and with wide sleeves, pants, and a turban.²¹

[§ 8. *A Concert for the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd*]

[p. 287] Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, Zalzal, and Barṣawmā met with [Hārūn] al-Rashīd; Zalzal played his lute (*ḍaraba*), Barṣawmā played his wind instrument (*zam-ara*), and Ibrāhīm sang:

My heart has relinquished youthful folly and amorousness, and my mind
returned to me.

My vain and futile occupation ceased, and I gave up my ignorance.
I saw the beautiful girls who in the past turned their faces toward
Me, now they have forsaken me and cut off my bond with them.

Hārūn [al-Rashīd] reached such a state of *ṭarab* that he jumped to his feet (*wathaba ʿalā rijlayh*) and exclaimed: "O Adam, if today you were to see who is in my company from among your descendants, you would be happy!" He sat down and said, "God, I ask Your forgiveness." The poem that Ibrāhīm set to music and sang is by Abū l-ʿAtāhiya, and the melody is in the [first] light heavy rhythmic mode and in the melodic mode with the open *mathnā* string as tonic in the course of the ring finger fret.

[§ 9. *Ṭarab Caused by a Songstress*]

[p. 291] Aḥmad b. ʿUbaydallāh b. ʿAmmār, Ismāʿīl b. Yūnus, and others told me, ʿUmar b. Shabba told us that Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī said that Ibn Kunāsa said,

An older man accompanied a group of young people on a boat in the Euphrates and a songstress was present. When they had been gone for a while they said to the older man: "We have among us a slave girl who belongs to one of us and she is a singer, we would like to hear her sing and we were afraid that you might be offended, but if you allow us to hear her, then we will ask her to sing." He said, "I shall climb up to the roof deck and you do as you wish." He did and the slave girl picked up her lute and sang:

21 A similar anecdote (6:153-4) adds the following explanation for his actions after he tore his shirt: "Beautiful poetry sung by a beautiful singer who has a voice causing *ṭarab* (*muṭrib*) is warmer (*adfaʿ*) for a person who is cold (*maqrūr*) than a heated bath (*ḥammān muḥammā*)."

If the light of the morning appears
 And Gemini and Orion disappear,
 I came forth, treading concealed, the way
 The serpent creeps from its hidden place.

The older man reached a state of *ṭarab*, screamed (*ṣāḥa*), then threw (*ramā*) himself into the Euphrates with his clothes on; he went underwater then rose to the surface and said, "I am the serpent! I am the serpent!" They threw themselves in after him and pulled him out with great difficulty. They said to him, "O shaykh, what made you do what you did?" He said, "Get away from me! For by God, I know what you do not know about the meaning of poetry!" And in his story, Ismā'īl b. Yūnus said, "Ibn Kunāsa [p. 292] said to him: What hit you?" He said, "Something crawled (*dabba*) from my foot (*qadam*) up to my head (*ra's*) like the crawling of ants (*naml*), something similar landed in my head and went down, so when both met in my heart (*qalb*) I became unaware of (*mā 'aqala*) my action."

[§ 10. *Aṭarrad Singing for the Caliph al-Walīd b. Yazīd*]

[p. 292] Muḥammad b. Mazyad and Jaḥḥa told me, Ḥammād b. Ishāq al-Mawṣilī told us, I read from my father from Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā that his uncle Ayyūb b. Ismā'īl said,

When al-Walīd b. Yazīd became caliph, he wrote to his agent in Medina [and asked that he] send Aṭarrad to him. Aṭarrad said, "The agent made me read the letter, gave me travel money, and sent me to him. I was let in while he was sitting in his palace at the edge of a pool (*birka*) that was encased with lead and full of wine. It was not large, but enough for a person to swim around in. I had not yet greeted him when he said, 'Are you Aṭarrad?' I said, 'Yes, O Commander of the Faithful.' He said, 'I was desiring your company, O Abū Hārūn. Sing *Ḥayyi l-ḥumūla* for me.' I did, and by God, I had not yet finished it when he tore (*shaqqa*) his embroidered garment (*ḥulla*), the worth of which I do not know, then removed it and was as [naked as the day] his mother gave birth to him and tore it into two pieces. Then he threw (*ramā*) himself into the pool (*birka*) and drank (*nahila*) from it such that the level went down markedly. He was taken out of it as if dead (*mayyit*) from drinking, was put in bed and covered."

[§ 11. *Ibn Abī l-'Alā' Singing for the Caliph al-Mu'taḍid*]

[p. 300] Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Jurjānī Qurayḍ told me that Aḥmad b. Abī l-'Alā' said,

One day I sang a song of Ishāq for al-Mu‘taḍid when he was an emir:

O great tree with spreading branches by the water²² whose sources are
blocked up,
Is there a way to you that is not?

He reached a state of *ṭarab* and asked me to repeat it many times, and then he said, “By God, this song spreads into the soul and mingles with it and affects it and takes it over (*khālaṭa al-rūḥ*) and blends harmoniously with the skin and the blood (*māzaja al-laḥm wa-l-dam*)!”

[§ 12. *Ṭarab Stirring Hidden Desire*]

[p. 300] [The poet Mānī l-Muwaswis listened to a songstress singing his poem and said,] “*Ṭarab* has stirred a hidden desire (*ḥarraka shawqan kāna kāminan*) in me and made [the desire] appear.”

[§ 13. *The Devil Singing for Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī*]

[p. 302] [Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī was visited by the Devil (*Iblīs*) who sang him a song that caused Ibrāhīm to say,]

By God, I thought (*zanna*) the walls and the doors and everything in the house were answering (*jāwaba*) him, and singing with him, because of his beautiful singing, to the point that I imagined (*khāla*), by God, that I was hearing all of my body (*‘uḍw*)²³ and [p. 303] clothes (*thawb*) answering him. I was bewildered (*mabhūt*), unable to talk (*kalām*) or answer (*jawāb*) the Devil or move (*ḥaraka*) because of what spread into my heart and mingled with it and affected it and took it over (*khālaṭa qalbī*).²⁴

[§ 14. *Mukhāriq Singing for the Poet Abū l-‘Atāhiya*]

[p. 305] Aḥmad b. Ja‘far Jaḥḥa told me, the nephew of al-Khārakī and Abū Sa‘īd al-Rāmahurmuzī; and ‘Alī b. Sulaymān al-Akhfash told me, Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Azdī told us, from Aḥmad b. ‘Īsā l-Jalūdī from Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd al-Tirmidhī [...] that they said,

22 This is also a metaphor for a beautiful woman.

23 Arab. *‘aḍā’* (sing. *‘uḍw*) also means “body part, limb, member, head, organ.”

24 An extremely interesting anecdote tells of al-Gharīḍ’s power over the jinn, which led them to ask him not to sing a particular song because it enraptured (*fatana*) them (2:385–6).

Abū l-ʿAtāhiya knocked at the door of Mukhāriq who came out to greet him. Abū l-ʿAtāhiya said, “O beautiful one of this region, O wise man of the land of Babylon, pour (*ṣabba*) into my ear something to gladden (*fariḥa*) my heart and please (*naʿima*) my soul” [...] He sang and Muḥammad b. Saʿīd said, “I almost fell (*saʿā*) on my face because of the *ṭarab*,” and Abū l-ʿAtāhiya cried, then said to him: “O medicine to cure insane people (*dawāʾ al-majānīn*), you have made yourself soft and tender (*raqqaqa*) so that I was almost able to sip you little by little (*ḥasā*). And if singing were food (*ṭaʿām*), your singing would be bread enriched with tasty food and condiments that make that bread easy to swallow (*udm*); and if it were a drink, it would be the sustaining water of life (*māʾ al-ḥayāt*)!”²⁵

[§ 15. *The Persians on Good Singing*]

[p. 323] Ibn Khurdādhbih said,

The Persians used to say [...] “If good singing coincides with a beautiful face, then, that would increase your feeling of *ṭarab*. Do you not see that the singing that emerges from the mouth of a beautiful singing slave girl, [who looks] as if she were molded out of a white pearl or a ruby, and sings for you from a mouth you would love to kiss [...] [is] more likable to you than the mouth of an old man [...] with a beard of twisted-hair, thick cheeks, cracked teeth, a yellow, pale face!”²⁶

[§ 16. *Jamīla Singing for ʿAbdallāh b. Jaʿfar*]

[p. 337] Jamīla and her slave girls and ʿAbdallāh b. Jaʿfar were in a *majlis*. She sat close to him and her slave girls sat in two rows. She sang beautifully and he asked her to repeat it and she did, then she asked for a lute for every singing slave girl and asked them to sit on small seats prepared for them. She sang to their accompaniment on lutes (*ghannat ʿalayhinna*) and then they sang with her (*ghannā ʿalā ghināʾihā*). When they all played and sang together, ʿAbdallāh said, “I did not think the like of this could ever exist! Indeed, it enraptures (*fatana*) the heart, and for this reason many people hate (*kariha*) singing, because they know what is inherent in it, and the power it has on people!”

25 He also said (on the following page), “If you were something to drink, you would be sprinkled on water and drunk.”

26 Ibn Khurdādhbih, 53–4.

[§ 17. *A Sage on the Benefits of Singing*]

[p. 378] [The famous songstress Jamīla thought of giving up her singing career, because she was afraid that a punishment would strike her. At a large gathering in her house, she said to the attendees:] “In my dream I saw something that startled and terrified me and I do not know the reason. I have thus been afraid that my death is near and only my good deeds (*ṣāliḥ ‘amālī*) will be beneficial. I have therefore thought to give up singing, [because I] loathe the fact that God will punish me for it.” Some people said, “may God make you successful and strengthen your determination.” Others said, “But there is no prohibition for you or sin (*ḥarāj*) in singing.” At this point, an old man with knowledge (*‘ilm*), and knowledgeable in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and life experience (*tajriba*) said, “[...] Those who avoid singing, do so not because of a prohibition, but out of asceticism (*zuhd fī l-dunyā*). Singing is one of the greatest pleasures (*ladhdha*) in life; it brings more joy (*asarr*) to the souls (*nafs*) than other things that the soul desires (*shahwa*); it livens (*aḥyā*) [p. 379] the heart (*qalb*); increases the intellect (*‘aql*); it brings happiness to the soul (*nafs*); it widens people’s views and ideas; it facilitates (*tayassara*) the difficult (*‘asīr*); it allows armies to be victorious; it subdues (*dhallala*) the powerful ones (*jabbār*) as they humble (*imtahana*) themselves after listening to it; it cures (*abra’u*) the sick (*marīḍ*) and the ones whose heart, mind (*‘aql*), and eyesight (*baṣar*) have died (*māta*); it increases rich people’s (*ahl al-tharwa*) wealth (*ghinā*) and poor people’s (*ahl al-faqr*) contentment (*qanā’a*) and acceptance (*riḍan*) so that they shun seeking wealth; the one who is devoted to it (*tamassaka*) is knowledgeable and wise, and the one who abandons (*fāraqa*) it is ignorant (*jāhil*), since there is no other art or occupation that can reach a loftier and subtler (*arfa’*) level (*manzila*) or be better (*aḥsan*) than it; so how can one approve (*istaṣwaba*) of relinquishing (*tark*) it and how can one not seek its help (*ista’āna*) when adoring (*‘ibāda*) God, to whom belong might, majesty, glory, and greatness!”

‘Alī b. Naṣr al-Kātib (*fl.* Late Fourth/Tenth Century) on Erotic Sensations

Pernilla Myrne

1 Introduction

The Encyclopedia of Pleasure (*Jawāmi‘ al-ladhdha*) is the oldest extant erotic manual in Arabic, the first work of what was to become a distinct Islamic genre (Rowson). According to the surviving manuscripts, it was written by an author called ‘Alī b. Naṣr al-Kātib. His exact identity is unknown, but he might have been a Buyid-era secretary and author who died in 377/987 (Myrne, *Female*, 6). It became a source of inspiration for later erotic manuals and was quoted by—among others—al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), who composed several works in the genre (Myrne, *Women*). The *Encyclopedia* contains citations from a range of late antique and early Islamic literature written in Greek, Persian, Arabic, and perhaps Sanskrit. The influence of Indian erotology in the *Encyclopedia* is evidenced by extracts from a commentary or paraphrase of the *Kamasutra* (by an unknown author), in addition to extensive quotations from otherwise lost erotic treatises in Arabic and perhaps Persian that relied on Indian sources. The titles of some of these treatises were recorded by Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca. 385/995) in his *Fihrist* (*List of Books*) (Ibn al-Nadīm, 2:345).

The *Encyclopedia* covers several fields of learning: medicine, including pharmacology and anatomy, philosophy, physiognomy, lexicography, and, to a certain degree, Islamic jurisprudence. It is rife with poetry, pre-Islamic and Islamic wisdom, and historical anecdotes, like other Abbasid *adab* compilations, but it also contains longer erotic stories and is particularly rich in *mujūn* (obscene discourse). Much of the content is entertaining; it is sometimes difficult to distinguish humor from serious discourse. The chapters are arranged according to topic, not discipline, and material from diverse sources is assembled within single chapters.

In a chapter on sexual etiquette for women, a section of which is translated below (§ 5), the author cites early Islamic and Abbasid authorities, including legal scholars, with a certain emphasis on how to stimulate the partner’s senses, which corporeal and sensory expressions to avoid (§ 5.3) and which to make use of (§§ 5.2, 5.4, 5.5). Typically, the author refers to Indian and Persian

sexual advice and tradition, and he ends with a remedy against flatulence, pharmacology holding an important place in most erotic manuals.

The overarching theme of the *Encyclopedia* is that sexual connoisseurship and mastering the—often arcane—knowledge conveyed by the book are a mark of distinction. The intended readers were privileged men who had the time and means to engage in refined sensory pleasures, very much like the world of *Kamasutra* (cf. Shusterman, 222). In the introduction, the author addresses his reader as *zarīf*, a polished man of the world. As sex drive is an instinct that all creatures have in common, the *zarīf* should be able to take control of it and refine it in order to distinguish himself from animals and common people (*al-ʿamma*) and at the same time achieve greater pleasure. Common people and animals do not have this capacity and therefore unconsciously follow their instinct.

Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of the *Encyclopedia* is to legitimate erotic activity. One of the first chapters, “on the merits and benefits of sexual intercourse,” summarizes the benefits of sexual intercourse according to authoritative fields of knowledge—medicine, philosophy, and religion. With an intriguing line of reasoning, the author claims that sexual intercourse (*nikāḥ*) constitutes a sixth sense, which is incited by the experience of pleasure from the other senses, arguing that this is a further proof that sex is the best and most complete pleasure (§ 1). The idea that sexual pleasure constitutes a sixth sense (or, here, “property” of the sense organs) did not come out of the blue: it was an idea attributed to the Muʿtazilī philosopher al-Nazzām (*fl.* third/ninth century) (Lange, 30).¹

Love is a core component of refined sex, while at the same time the key to love is a fulfilling sexual life. In an oft-quoted chapter, the author discusses various opinions about the nature of love. Whereas some thinkers claim that sex and love are incompatible and physical intimacy is detrimental to love, the author clearly stands with the people who hold that “skin-to-skin contact” strengthens love (§ 2.1). However, love cannot be built on sensory (*ḥissī*) satisfaction alone; it also has to be intellectual (*fikrī*) (§ 2.2).

In addition to theoretical knowledge, the author provides methods and practical advice for readers to cultivate their sexual life. Full sexual pleasure is achieved by a sensory refinement that involves all senses (§ 4.2), constituting what Richard Shusterman labels “a multisensory sexual aesthetics” (Shusterman, 268). This ideal was probably taken from Indian erotology, but Ibn Naṣr must also have been influenced by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869)—whom he

1 On this sixth sense, see further *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 26 (Introduction, footnote 1), 27 (§ 1.6).

cites a lot—and his notion of synesthesia (Lange).² Although the sex scenes in Ibn Naṣr’s erotic stories and anecdotes tend to be excessive and there are ample obscene motifs, the sexual education aims at mastery of the senses. In this, we also find a parallel in the *Kamasutra*, which grew from a literary tradition that stressed the need for control of the senses (Doniger, 58).

Multisensory stimulation, together with politeness and affection, is key to sexual education. Both men and women are instructed to use perfume in order to stimulate olfaction (§ 3), and there is specific advice directed to women (§ 5). On the whole, however, the book is targeted at men, who were the intended readers of the *Encyclopedia* and the “active partner” (§ 4.2) in sexual liaisons. Men are instructed to look good and attractive in order to please women’s sense of beauty (§ 5.1), and they are given technical advice on how to renew their sexual life and enhance pleasure. Below is a short example on how to arouse women with delayed orgasm (§ 5.2). Orgasm (*inzāl*) is sometimes described as an almost supernatural experience, but the practical advice on how to reach it is methodical corporal stimulation.

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2 Translation

‘Alī b. Naṣr al-Kātib, *Jawāmi‘ al-ladhdha*, ed. ‘Abdallāh ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Sūdānī, Beirut: Dār al-Rāfīdayn, 2019, pp. 29, 107, 108, 232, 255, 256, 265–70.³

[§ 1. *Sexual Intercourse Is the Sixth Sense*]

[p. 29] Humans are naturally disposed toward taking pleasure in what is in harmony with the five sense organs—the ear, the eye, the nose, the mouth, and the hand. The loss of any of the six properties of life (*khilāl al-‘aysh*)—hearing, sight, smell, taste, touch, and sexual intercourse—causes damage, except for sexual intercourse. This is because sex is an addition that God has granted humans for their pleasure and increased enjoyment. The five sense organs enable the property of sexual intercourse; every time their own properties give someone a complete experience and delight him, they invite him to the sixth property, which is sexual intercourse. This property is not a tool for the other properties, nor does it initiate them. It is a means to accomplish total pleasure and utmost happiness. This being the case, reason obliges us to give precedence to this property, to its action over all other actions and its pleasure over all other pleasures. Its merit over all other actions is that it generates offspring, which God uses to populate His world and from which He chooses messengers for His creation. Some of the offspring will keep the memory of Him alive and preserve His honor. They will accomplish His religion and benefit from

3 The translations below are from my own unpublished edition of the book, which is based on the best available manuscripts. As this edition is not yet available, the references are to pages in an unscholarly edition from 2019, which is the best so far.

prayers. As for its merit over all other pleasures, it is because all other pleasures lead to it.

[§ 2. *On Love*]

[§ 2.1 The Effect of Touch on Love]

[p. 107] People who love can be divided into two factions as to their view of skin-to-skin contact⁴ with their beloved. One faction claim that it increases love and affection and calls it the nail of love; with this they mean that it strengthens love and safeguards affection, in the same way as something nailed is safeguarded. The other faction refrains from it; as for them, it destroys affection, extinguishes the fire of yearning, and causes separation. They claim that looking makes love joyful, but it is spoiled by fornication.⁵

[§ 2.2 Sensual and Intellectual Love]

[p. 115] The reason why [love] ends after sexual intercourse is that its foundation is sensual, whereas the reason why it becomes strong and lasting is that its foundation is intellectual. Likewise, a passion that comes from the absence of what is necessary for it [i.e., sexual intercourse⁶] only lasts for a short while and then dies away, while the one that comes later [in a relationship] will remain for a long time.

[§ 3. *Smell*]

[p. 256] Concerning the recommendation to wear perfume, the first thing that lovers should aspire to is to smell pleasantly; that is the most virtuous conduct (*kamāl al-muruwwa*) for both of them and makes everything else excusable. They must be careful with the parts of the body where bad odor occurs, such as bad breath, the armpits, the lower part, and—for some people—other areas. For that reason, a man advised his daughter the night before her wedding, “Be careful with the parts his nose can smell!” Another woman was advised, “Use

4 The word for skin-to-skin contact, *mubāshara*, is often used as a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

5 The two “factions” are exemplified in this chapter by poems and anecdotes. Among the faction that claims that sexual intercourse destroys love, Ibn Naṣr seems to count the author al-Washshā’ (d. 325/937). Many of the poems expressing a negative view toward sex in this chapter are included in al-Washshā’s book on courtly manners, *Kitāb al-Muwashshā*, as is the metaphor “nail of love” (see Myrne, “Pleasing”).

6 Ibn Naṣr refers here to “the faction” in § 2.1 that claims that passion can only thrive as long as the lovers abstain from sexual intercourse, a view that he criticizes.

plenty of water so that your skin smells like rain!" They say that water is the best perfume and kohl⁷ the best cosmetic.

[§ 4. *Sexual Etiquette for Women*]

[§ 4.1 Sight]

[p. 265] Recommended conduct for the bedfellow⁸ is to lower her gaze and not stare at the partner, while continuing to flatter him, talk dirty, and joke. For this reason, someone said:

When we have sex, you give me joy
with lively talk and dead gaze.

This is because gazing makes the object of the gaze feel ashamed,⁹ not the least during sexual intercourse, of which shame is an innate disposition. For this reason, the Persians removed daffodils from their places for intimacy. Moreover, the face of someone having sexual intercourse tends to be very ugly, and it is advisable that his beloved does not see him in this condition as it might cause aversion. It is customary for women to close their eyes when reaching orgasm, which is desirable and something men love, as it is the goal they endeavor to reach.

[§ 4.2 Sound and Multisensory Pleasure]

[p. 265] Speech of the passive partner, on the other hand, causes happiness and complete pleasure. Each one of the active partner's senses is then filled with pleasure, the eye with the pleasure of sight, the mouth with the pleasure of saliva, the nose with the pleasure of perfume. The ear also needs to enjoy the words of the beloved, especially if they are phrases that engage the heart. The thoughts provoked by the words are added to the enjoyment of the senses. When one revels in the beauty of their meaning, pleasure is complete. Pleasure-seekers love it when separate pleasures become united in a single person, so that they can achieve a unified and sublime form (*ṣūra*) by uniting with her. A poet said:

⁷ Kohl (*kuhl*) is an ancient eye cosmetic made by a sulfide mineral and used as an eyeliner.

⁸ The whole section is taken from the chapter in the *Encyclopedia* on the etiquette of being a bedfellow. In this chapter, the "bedfellow" (*al-muftarash*) is the passive partner, while the "partner" (*al-fā'il*) is the active partner. Both are referred to in the masculine gender, and the meaning is in a sense non-binary, as all sexual acts between two partners were thought to have an active and a passive partner. Most of the time, however, it is obvious from the context that the passive partner is the woman in a heterosexual relation.

⁹ On gazing and shame, see also *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 4, 42, and passim.

Four of me found four of you to be sweet,
 I don't know which one of them stirred my member:¹⁰
 Your face in my eyes or saliva in my mouth,
 Your words in my ears or the love in my heart. [...]

[p. 266] A woman, if she is intelligent and experienced, is playful toward the man and cheers him up. She dandles him, sings for him, and suckles him until he falls asleep, happy, satisfied with food and drink. The happiness circulates in his veins in the same way that anxiety does. Truly, kings fall asleep to singing and lute-playing, so that happiness can circulate in their veins and hide in their breasts. It is said that this habit cultivates the body and refreshes the intellect. For that reason, al-Shaybānī said, when he claimed to live like a king:

Listening to a singing-girl who diverts our attention on a cloudy day
 Until we spend the night sleeping like the Persians.

The “Persians” here are the Persian kings. Nevertheless, al-Nu‘mān b. al-Mundhir¹¹ could only fall asleep to music, and he was an Arab king.

[§ 4.3 Avoiding Repulsive Sound and Smell]

[p. 266] The most excellent conduct during sexual intercourse and the most exalted conduct of a bedfellow is that of Ramla bt. al-Zubayr.¹² She was more sophisticated than anyone else in this regard and has no equal. If she became proverbial in this matter, it was certainly merited. When she was asked about the most light-hearted thing she could do in the presence of her husband, she answered, “A free woman does not do such things when she lies besides her husband, it could make the stomach rumble!”

Al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Yūnus al-Kātib said, “One day, in the company of a girl I was in love with, I felt a fart coming on. We were in the house of our friend, whose name was Ahmad b. al-Muthannā, and the privy was next to where I was sitting.” He continued, “As I rose to go to the privy, I knew that if the girl heard

10 The common rhyme word in this oft-quoted poem is *karbī*, “my grief,” which is exchanged with *dhakarī*, “my member,” in all manuscripts available to me, as well as the edition. It is probably an error for *zubbī*, “my penis,” which rhymes with *qalbī* in the last line. I thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

11 Al-Nu‘mān b. al-Mundhir (d. ca. 602 CE) was the last Lakhmid king of Ḥira.

12 Ramla bt. al-Zubayr was the daughter of al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwām, one of the first converts to Islam. She was the sister of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr (d. 72–3/691–2), the anti-caliph in Medina, as well as of Muṣ‘ab b. al-Zubayr (d. 72/691), the second husband of ‘Ā’isha bt. Ṭalḥa. See also below, § 4.4.

the fart, she would find me disgraceful.” He said, “I left my seat and took refuge in God, directing my sincere prayers to Him, and my suffering was removed.”

This and the preceding anecdote demonstrate the repulsiveness of this condition and incite us to avoid similar situations in the company of a bosom friend, and to be on our guard against it when sharing bed. The philosopher Pythagoras stated that if a person wants to remove passion from his heart, he should sleep next to his beloved. When he feels the smell of her breaking wind, it will not be difficult for him to forget her. Be that as it is, there is no rule of sexual etiquette that is more honorable than preventing anything that leads to break-up of friends and estrangement of lovers. [...]

[p. 270] We have mentioned part of the sexual etiquette and summarized the reports that we have been able to collect with words of scholars and anecdotes about cultured people. Now, let us mention a remedy that prevents gases to pass out of the rectum when you sleep. Use when needed: celery seeds, anise seeds, fennel seeds, and dill seeds, each the weight of one dirham, pound and take before going to bed.

[§ 4.4 Lustful Sounds]

[p. 267–9] When ‘Abdallāh b. Ma‘mar had sex with his wife ‘Ā’isha bt. Ṭalḥa b. ‘Ubaydallāh, she grunted, groaned, and sighed.¹³ When she was asked why, she answered, “If a girl does not grunt when she is alone with her husband, he will think that he is mounting a donkey.” Among Indian slave girls there are those who attract the desire of men by their grunting and groaning. Sometimes a slave girl pretends to faint and gives the man the illusion that she is a *rabūkh* [a woman who faints when she reaches climax]. It is related that Ibn Dāḥa married a girl, and this Ibn Dāḥa used to neigh like a horse when he had sex. The girl did not satisfy him with her habit of simulating grunts and groans, until she began to imitate a *rabūkh*, and found favor with him. When an envious man vilified him, Ibn Dāḥa said:

She deceives me and grunts as I move
and imitates the fainting of a prostitute *rabūkh*.

13 ‘Abdallāh b. Ma‘mar might be a transmission error; the name should be ‘Umar b. ‘Ubaydallāh b. Ma‘mar, a Zubayrid and Umayyad army commander (d. 82/701). ‘Ā’isha bt. Ṭalḥa (d. ca. 110/728) was the granddaughter of the caliph Abū Bakr (r. 11–13/632–4). In Abbasid history writing, she was remembered for her patronage of music and poetry, among other things. She was also known for her pride and independence, and for her marriages; her first husband was her maternal cousin, ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr, her second was Muṣ‘ab b. al-Zubayr (see preceding footnote), and her third was ‘Umar b. ‘Ubaydallāh. A slightly more modest variant of this anecdote as well as other anecdotes about her with sexual content circulated in the tenth century (see al-Iṣbahānī, 11:176–93).

A woman heard ‘Ā’isha bt. Ṭalḥa as ‘Umar b. ‘Ubaydallāh had sex with her—he was her husband—and she was grunting and snoring in a way that was never heard of. She talked to her about it, and ‘Ā’isha answered, “An ass does not want to drink if he is not called by a whistling.” It is also related that she said, “If a stallion is not aroused, he will not rise.” Someone asked Ḥubbā l-Madīniyya,¹⁴ “What is desired by a woman in intimate meetings?” She answered, “He wants to hear squeaks from her vagina, groans from her throat, and grunts from her nose.” Al-Naqqāsh related on the authority of Muḥammad b. Sijān that Ibrāhīm b. Ishāq narrated, on the authority of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr, about grunting during sexual intercourse. He said, “If they are alone, they can do what they like.”

It is related that Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab¹⁵ used to grunt when having sexual intercourse. He said, “Concerning grunting, Sa‘īd b. Jubayr used to do it, and someone asked him, ‘Do you grunt when you have sex?’—to which he answered, ‘As for grunting, no, but I can neigh like a horse.’” Mālik b. Anas,¹⁶ may God be pleased with him, used to say, “Grunting is a foolishness that I deem punishable, but it is acceptable in sexual intercourse.” ‘Umar b. Qays al-Makkī related that a woman came to ‘Aṭā’ b. Rayyāḥ and said, “My husband commands me to grunt during sexual intercourse.” He answered, “Obey your husband.” Al-Naqqāsh said, Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā l-Rūyānī related that ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abbās’s wife said to him, “My husband commands me to grunt during sexual intercourse.” He answered, “Obey your husband.” It is also related that someone said, “When I have sex with my woman, my neighbors know.” [...]

It is desirable that the woman make luscious sounds, including much and lengthy grunting, interspersed with breaths and groans. Al-Fārī‘a, the most beautiful woman, said: “Everything has a foundation, and the foundation of sexual intercourse is luscious sounds.” They say that if you take possession of a girl, slave or free, who does not make luscious sounds, you can teach her by spraying cold water on her without her knowing and prick her with a needle or a thorn without her knowing, which will make her grunt and groan. Continue to do this several times until she learns; this will make luscious sounds natural for her.

Ḥubbā l-Madīniyya was told, “There is a new thing that women have started doing.” She asked, “And what is that?” The answer was, “Grunting.” She said, “By God, I grunted when I was with a man, and made 3,000 camels of the

14 See below, footnote 17.

15 Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab (d. 94/715) was an important early legal scholar (*faqīh*) in Medina.

16 Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796) is the eponymous founder of the Mālikī school of law.

alms escape from their enclosure and run away. This happened in the time of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, and the camels were never found again.”¹⁷

[§ 4.5 Touch]

[p. 268] Hrwt¹⁸ (?) the Indian said, “A woman should lick her lips during sexual intercourse, as if she is finishing a meal, and press on when the penis pushes, accommodatingly, until the pushes are simultaneous, but she should not press hard. When the man wants to pull out the penis from her vagina, she should squeeze it tightly so that he cannot remove it quickly.”

[§ 4.6 Multisensory Advice to Women]

[p. 269] Al-Madā’ini¹⁹ was asked, “What makes a woman attractive for a man, so that he desires her more?” He answered, “If the woman is young and desires sexual intercourse, she will attract the man by complying, showing true love and affection, and endeavoring to conform to him. This will make him love her exclusively, more than he loves his father and mother and loved ones. If the woman is middle-aged, she can attract the man by various types of food, pleasing gifts, drinks, grace, clothes, fine behavior, and by approaching him with kindness and nice words.”

The Persian woman said, “A woman who wants to gain the pleasure of sex must be clean and adorned with colorful clothes and jewelry. She must treat men playfully and joke with them, while being submissive when speaking and talking gently, alternating straight looks with covert glances. She should smile toward them and let them see her and talk in their company in a way that diverts and stimulates the heart. Her vulva should always be shaved and clean, her hair curly and wavy, and her clothes dyed. Her body and armpits should be perfumed, her face washed, her hair combed, and eyebrows plucked. She should use litharge²⁰ every day with cold water, it is the most essential beautifier. If she wants to have sex, she should wash her head and perfume it

17 Ḥubbā was a Umayyad woman who became the protagonist of many Abbasid humorous anecdotes (see Myrne, “Ḥubbā”). When this particular anecdote first appeared, in *Mufākkharat al-jawārī wa-l-ghilmān* by al-Jāḥiẓ (2129–30), there were 500 camels. ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān was the third caliph (r. 23–35/644–55).

18 The spelling of this name varies between the different manuscripts: hrwt, bqrṭ, bqrw.

19 The historian al-Madā’ini (d. 215/843) wrote many works on women which are now lost (Myrne, “Ladies”). He is often cited in third/ninth- and fourth/tenth-century *adab* on topics related to women.

20 Litharge is a lead oxide, an ancient ingredient in cosmetics. According to Dioscorides (d. ca. 90 CE), whose *De materia medica* was very influential in its Arabic translation, it could be used for treating scars, wrinkles, and facial blemishes (Dioscorides, 371).

with fragrance oil. She should use tooth rubber and tooth stick, and then chew something sweet-smelling. She should use kohl, as it incites sexual desire.”

Abū ‘Amr b. al-‘Alā’ related that Ḍirār b. ‘Amr²¹ married off his daughter to Sa’d b. Zurāra. When he took her to Sa’d, he advised her, “My daughter, take care of your marriage with two good things.” She asked, “Which are the good things?” He answered, “Talking and lustfulness.”

[§ 5. *Sexual Etiquette for Men*]

[§ 5.1 Multisensory Advice]

[p. 255] The Indian said that a man must make himself look as attractive as possible to the woman and wear perfume. He should not treat her roughly and demand sex at their first meeting. Instead, he should embolden her as much as he can with the help of humor and playfulness in a way that is sensitive to her feelings and makes her happy. He should be cautious not to be intimate with her [...] with disheveled hair and beard. He should comb his beard and perfume his body, head, and beard, and make his body pleasant so that she can do what she wants.

[§ 5.2 Touch]

[p. 232] A woman who has delayed orgasm can be helped in five ways: kissing, touching the vulva, sucking, scratching the vulva, and slapping the thighs and the sides of the vulva. The places to kiss are the cheeks, the lips, the eyes, the forehead, behind the ears, the area under your neck, and the breasts. The places to smell are the tip of the nose, the nostrils, around the eyes, inside the ears, the navel, the vagina, and the sides of the belly. The places to nibble are the palms, the ears and behind the ears, inside the lower lip, the tip of the nose, and the forehead. The places to scratch with the nails are inside the legs and the feet and the thighs. The places to slap are the shoulders, inside and outside of the thighs, the forearms, and the area between the navel and the clitoris.

21 Ḍirār b. ‘Amr (d. 200/815) was an important Mu’tazilī theologian.

Ibn Jubayr (d. 614/1217) on the Illumination of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca

Julie Bonn eric

1 Introduction

Born in Valencia in 540/1145, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Jubayr (henceforth: Ibn Jubayr) was the secretary of the governor of Grenada, Abū Saʿīd ʿUthmān, before he left the city in 578/1183 to make the Ḥajj to Mecca. Over 14 months, he traveled from Andalusia to Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Syria, the Levant, and Sicily. He stayed nine months in Mecca and visited Medina. His memoir of these travels—known as his *Riḥla* (*Travelogue*)—is one of the earliest books in the *riḥla* genre, and it would be much imitated and sometimes plagiarized. The book is not simply a list of toponyms and accounts of cities, but it is enriched by detailed and colorful descriptions, anecdotes, comments, and personal opinions.

Due to his careful depiction of many different places, Ibn Jubayr’s *Riḥla* is a useful source for the study of Islamic material and sensory culture in the sixth/twelfth century. More particularly, the *Riḥla* lends itself to an investigation of the use of light in mosques. Studying light and its perception is often difficult from an historical point of view, due to its intangible nature and the scarcity of relevant textual and archaeological evidence, particularly in regard to the effects produced by light on the senses of believers during ceremonies. Not only is Ibn Jubayr’s testimony produced by a Muslim who visited many sacred buildings throughout the Islamic world, but his descriptions occasionally express his personal perceptions, which is relatively rare in premodern Arabic sources. Ibn Jubayr not only describes the scenography of the light, but also mentions its sensory properties and testifies to its symbolic virtue.

Testimonies such as Ibn Jubayr’s descriptions of different festivals in Mecca give an insight into the use of illumination to ritualize religious activities and to organize sacred places. Ibn Jubayr’s descriptions of his visits to the Sacred Mosque (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām) in Mecca are among the most detailed in the *Riḥla* and offer a wealth of information about the lighting of the buildings there. The Sacred Mosque is one of the three most sacred sanctuaries of Islam: it is a large area, bounded by walls enclosing the Kaʿba, the centre of the world

for Muslims. It is the destination of both the Ḥajj and ‘Umra pilgrimages. On pilgrimage certificates, glazed tiles, and other representations, it was frequently depicted with numerous lighting devices. The testimonies of Ibn Jubayr and other travelers corroborate the importance of lighting in this place, and light’s effect on worshippers there.

During Ibn Jubayr’s visit in the sixth/twelfth century, the inside of the Ka‘ba was illuminated by twelve silver cups (*akwās*) and one gold one. This is considerably more than were there at the time of the pilgrim Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s (d. between 456/1072 and 471/1078) visit a century earlier (Nāṣir-i Khusraw, 203). Such increase in lighting seems to have been a widespread phenomenon at this time, since it also seems to have occurred in some congregational mosques of Syria (Bonnéric, “La lumière,” “Interpretation”). It is interesting to note that Ibn Jubayr’s description does not suggest any supplementary lighting of the Sacred Mosque during prayer times, except in the pavilions¹ of the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and Shāfi‘ī *madhhabs*, where torches (*mashā‘il*), fires (*anwār*), and candles (*sham‘*) were installed. Inside the Sacred Mosque, each school had a reserved space that was arranged as they wished, with each of them in competition with the others to make the most well-lit space. Ibn Jubayr mentions systems of wooden beams and metal hooks to hang lamps, lanterns, and chandeliers, or to support glass lamps and candles. In this passage in the *Rihla*, it is clear that light plays an important role in the design of these spaces.

According to Ibn Jubayr, lighting was increased in the Sacred Mosque at three crucial times: during the month of Sha‘bān for the Night of Forgiveness (*laylat al-barā‘a*); during the month of Ramaḍān, and particularly during the Night of Power (*laylat al-qadr*); and throughout the month of the Ḥajj. The profusion of light created a distinct temporality related to sacred commemoration, by contrast with the usual lighting of the non-festive nights. The use of candles, lamps, and torches to celebrate the Night of Forgiveness seems to have made a particularly strong impression on Ibn Jubayr when he visited the holy place in 579/1183. Another traveler, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 770/1369), also seems to have been struck by the illumination of the holy place, which he visited on four occasions in the first half of the 8th/14th century (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, 1:388). The Sacred Mosque was not the only mosque to be illuminated during the Night of Forgiveness: Ibn Jubayr describes lighting equipment installed in the courtyard of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus for the Night of Forgiveness (Ibn Jubayr, 271), and the geographer Shams al-Dīn al-Dimashqī (d. 727/1327) mentions the use of 12,000 lamps (*qandīl*) in the same mosque (al-Dimashqī, 193).

1 The term *ḥaṭīm* refers to wooden, pavilion-like structures that were erected in the space of the Sacred Mosque.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa mentions a ceremony peculiar to the Night of Forgiveness in the mausoleum of Jablā (present-day Jableh in Syria), in which each visitor carried a candle (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, 1:176). Illumination was thus a way of ritualizing religious ceremonies in many different buildings.

The other occasion that gave rise to exceptional lighting was the month of Ramaḍān, the holiest month of the Islamic calendar. The month of Ramaḍān was a month of major activity and traffic in the mosques, which seem to have been endowed with more lighting than usual. Ibn Jubayr witnessed these festivities in the Sacred Mosque in 580/1184, and he describes the exceptional lighting of the holy place at that time in detail. Ibn Jubayr's account attests to the staging of the sacred by means of different lighting systems, with a quantitative increase in lighting devices, especially candles and torches, throughout the sacred space. Some locations were particularly emphasized by lighting. The well of Zamzam was illuminated by means of an unusual lamp in the shape of an iron bowl (*ṣaḥfa ḥadīd*). The minarets framing the Sacred Mosque also enjoyed special lighting, with two gigantic glass lamps (*qanādīl min zujāj*) suspended on a kind of pulley system (Ibn Jubayr, 145). During Ramaḍān, the legal schools also increased the illumination in their pavilions. During Ibn Jubayr's first pilgrimage, it was the Mālikīs who, thanks to the patronage of Mālikī merchants, illuminated their facilities the most, to the extent that "eyes are dazzled by the light." Exceptionally well-preserved pilgrimage certificates from the beginning of the 7th/13th century show, inside the Sacred Mosque, the pavilions of the legal schools illuminated with globular lamps and candles resting on truncated cone-shaped candleholders.

In addition to this increase of illumination during the whole month, there were other lighting installations for special ceremonies, such as during the whole recitation of the Qur'ān, known as the *khatma*. This was one of the main activities of the month of Ramaḍān, in which people gathered to listen to the recitation of the whole or a part of the Qur'ān. The recitation was performed by the sons of the notables of Mecca in the sixth/twelfth century, and, according to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, in the 8th/14th century as well. Ibn Jubayr testifies to the profusion of lighting devices and the use of innovative ones. Wooden *miḥrābs* were built or rearranged to support it. For the month of Ramaḍān, a special arrangement seems to have been in place, at the time of Ibn Jubayr's journey, to light the dawn meal and to warn the faithful of the beginning of the fast. Two centuries later, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa would also describe the use of two large glass lamps suspended from beams (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, 1:390).

On the 27th of Ramaḍān, the Night of Power gave rise to an exceptional display of lighting devices. The Shāfi'īs, who were designated to recite the Qur'ān, erected a mobile pavilion, which had three layers of candles, lamps,

and chandeliers. The top of the dome that surmounted the Zamzam well, as well as the part of the well facing the Ka'ba, were also lit up. The sanctuary enclosure was illuminated by burning balls of rags.² Ibn Jubayr's description suggests that the use of lighting devices on this particular day had no equivalent in the rest of the month. The conclusion of the description makes clear that, for the author, the profusion of lights contributed to the sumptuousness of the place and significantly enhanced its majesty. An increase of lighting in the month of Ramaḍān, particularly for the Night of Power, is attested at the same period in the Great Mosque of Cordoba (al-Idrīsī, 5:577) and in Palermo (Ibn Jubayr, 333). It is interesting to note that, in the 9th/15th century, the jurist al-Wansharīsī (d. 914/1508) speaks out against the overuse of lighting during the month of Ramaḍān (al-Wansharīsī, 2:461–511). His criticism likely testifies to widespread practices.

The aim of the illumination of ceremonies was to enhance the building in which the ceremony took place. The choice of the lighting devices' location offered the opportunity to shape the space in a different way than was originally planned by the building's architects. Light created an ephemeral architecture in the sacred space of the Sacred Mosque, as well as in other mosques. Ibn Jubayr testifies to this several times by expressing the sensations provoked by the play of light. In Mecca, "the Mālikī part of the mosque excited wonder for its beauty and the eyes are dazzled by the light." During the Night of Power, the illumination (*iqād*) was such that the worshipper describes a "luminous night" where "the rays of the lights blind one's eyes." It is stated that the worshippers "encountered only brightness (*nūr*) that absorbed the sense of sight" (*istimālat al-naẓar*). Beyond these literary sketches, Ibn Jubayr expresses the emotions caused by the light. The lighting devices not only contributed to creating a luminous atmosphere conducive to the festivities, they mobilized the attention of the faithful to emphasize the special significance of this religious festival, by playing on their senses.

If artificial lighting was used to redraw the sacred space and to create an atmosphere favorable to worship, it might be because lighting devices and light possess not only functional virtues, but also symbolic ones. Indeed, light itself is imbued with meaning drawn from its central place in the Qur'ān. The Light Verse (Q 24:35), which compares the light of God to a lamp (*miṣbāḥ*) in a niche (*mishkāṭ*), probably inspired the motif of a hanging lamp that often decorates *miḥrābs*, carpets, cenotaphs, and so on. The Light Verse is very often

2 Ibn Baṭṭūṭa similarly described the lighting system of the pavilion (*ḥaṭīm*) of the Shāfi'īs in 726/1326 (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, 1:392). He also mentioned a three-tiered installation, but his description may have been influenced by that of his predecessor, whom he sometimes plagiarized.

inscribed on glass lamps that also could carry the same meaning. Could the lighting devices hanging in the mosque be a symbol of the “light of God” in the buildings? The first sentence of the Light Verse was debated as to whether God is described there as light itself or as having created light. However, the luminous essence of the Prophet (Flood) was agreed upon: the Qur’ān describes him as a shining luminary (*sirāj munīr*, Q 33:46). The name of Muḥammad is also sometimes inscribed near the lamp in the motifs of hanging lamps. Might the lighting devices be a way to commemorate the Prophet in the religious building and the shrines?

Ibn Jubayr’s words—“the lights gather together (*talāqat*) in this noble sanctuary which is light (*alladhī huwa nūr*)”—suggest that the lighting devices reflect the sacredness of the building, which is light itself. The illumination of festivals was not only intended to mark a sacred temporality and an ephemeral architecture, but also to create the conditions for an elevation of the soul through the worshipper’s senses. If light makes it possible to represent divine presence within the building, it also constitutes, as Ibn Jubayr testifies, a sensory source of inspiration and devotion.

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[§ 1. *The Ka'ba*]

[p. 83] The Ka'ba has five windows of Iraqi glass, richly stained. One of them is in the middle of the ceiling, and at each corner is a window, one of which is not seen because it is beneath the vaulted passage described later. Between the pillars [p. 84], there are 13 silver cups (*akwās min al-fidḍa*), and one made of gold (*min dhahab*).

[§ 2. *The qubba of Zamzam*]

[p. 100] Inside the latticework of the *qubba* of Zamzam is a terrace, in the middle of which stands a kind of minaret ball (*fahl al-ṣawma'a*) on which the Zamzam muezzin makes the call to prayers. From this ball (*al-fahl*) rises a plastered column with an iron vessel (*ṣahfa ḥadīd*) at its top [p. 101] that they use as a torch (*mash'al*) in the holy month of Ramaḍān.⁴ On the side of the *qubba* that faces the Ancient House are chains (*salāsil*) on which hang glass lamps

³ The translation follows that of Broadhurst, with amendments by the author.

⁴ It is not easy to understand this lighting device but it is probably a kind of large vessel in the shape of a cup (*ṣahfa*) on a short stand (*amūd*) placed on the minaret ball (*fahl al-ṣawma'a*), from which a tall flame burned in the air, outside on the cup, which would explain the use of the word *mash'al* that usually refer to a torch, even if no wood is mentioned here.

(*qanādīl mu'allaqa min al-zujāj*) that are lit every night (*tūqadu kulla layla*); and on the side to the right, which faces north, it is the same.

[§ 3. *The Pavilions Outside of Festivals*]

[p. 102] The Shāfi'ī [imam] has an important pavilion (*ḥaṭīm*) opposite the Maqām [Ibrāhīm]. A description of the pavilion: Two wooden boards are joined by rungs like a ladder, and facing them are two more wooden boards in the same style. These woods are set on two plastered feet that do not rise high [p. 103], and another piece of wood is nailed high across them. From this hang iron hooks, from which glass lamps (*qanādīl mu'allaqa min al-zujāj*) are suspended. Sometimes the upper transverse board is equipped with a latticed balustrade along its whole length. The Ḥanafī has, between the two pedestals of stucco that hold the woods, a *miḥrāb* in which he prays. The Ḥanbalī has a pavilion without decoration [...] All these places are included in the circuit of the Ancient House. A short distance from the House are torches that are kindled in iron bowls on wooden poles driven [into the ground] (*mashā'īl tūqadu fī ṣiḥāf ḥadīd fawq khushub markūza*), thus all the noble sanctuary shines with light (*yattaqīdu l-ḥaram al-sharīf kulluhu nūr*). Candles (*al-sham'*) are set in front of the imams in their *miḥrābs*. The Mālikī has fewer candles than the rest and is the poorest, for his rite is uncommon in this region.

[§ 4. *The Night of Forgiveness*]

[p. 141] On the Saturday night, which was truly the middle night of the month [of Sha'bān], and after the evening prayers, we witnessed a vast concourse in the holy Ḥaram. People began in groups to perform *tarāwīḥ*⁵ and to recite the Opening (*fātiḥa*) of the Book ten times for each *rak'a*, until they had done 50 *taslīma* with 100 *rak'a*. Each group had an imam, with mats spread, candles lit, torches kindled, and lamps lighted. The lamp of the sky (*miṣbāḥ al-samā'*), the moonlight, shed its light on the earth and spread its rays. The lights (*al-anwār*) gather together in this noble sanctuary (*al-ḥaram al-sharīf*), which is light itself (*alladhī huwa nūr*). Oh what a spectacle, that the imagination could not conceive or the fancy conjecture!

[§ 5. *The Month of Ramaḍān*]

[p. 143] During this blessed month there was much ceremony in the Sacred Mosque, making necessary the renewal of the mats, and the increasing of the candles and the torches (*mashā'īl*), and other devices (*al-ālāt*) until the Ḥaram

5 The *tarwīḥ* (pl. *tarāwīḥ*) is a prayer recited during Ramaḍān nights and accompanied by the performance of 20 *rak'as*.

blazed with light (*nūr*) and shone with brightness (*diyā'*). The imams formed separate groups in order to perform the *tarāwīḥ*. The Shāfi'īs, who had precedence over the others, had set up an imam on one side of the mosque, and the Ḥanbalīs, the Ḥanafīs, and the Zaydīs had done the same. As for the Mālikīs [p. 144], they had gathered around three reciters who recited in turn. In this year, the attendance of this sect was greater than usual and it possessed more candles, because a party of Mālikī merchants competed in that, bringing to the imam of the Ka'ba a lot of candles. Among the largest, two candles were set up in front of the *miḥrāb*, each weighing a *qinṭār*,⁶ and around them were the poorer candles, big and small. Thus the Mālikī part of the mosque excited wonder for its beauty and the eyes are dazzled by the light. There was hardly a recess or direction in the mosque where there was not a reciter with a group praying behind him. The mosque shook with the voices of reciters from all sides. From all of this, the eyes clearly see and the ears see [*sic*] a performance and a concert that shakes the souls with veneration [literally, fear] and tenderness. [...]

[p. 149] The next night, the 23rd, the reciter was one of the sons of a rich Meccan, a boy who had not reached the age of 15. His father had made creative preparations for this night, having arranged a branched chandelier for candles (*thurayyā maṣnū'a min al-sham' mughaṣṣana*),⁷ set with all manner of fruits, fresh and dry, and furnished with many candles. In the middle of the Ḥarām, toward the gate (*bāb*) of the Banū Shayba, was a sort of quadrilateral *miḥrāb* with a wooden balustrade, standing on four pedestals and having at its summit wooden shafts, from which hung lamps (*qanādīl*), and on which stood lighted lanterns (*maṣābīḥ*) and torches (*mashā'īl*). Round the *miḥrāb* were driven sharp-headed nails on to which were fixed the candles (*al-sham'*) that surrounded all the *miḥrāb*. The branched chandelier (*al-thurayyā al-mughaṣṣana*) bearing the fruits was then lit. In all this the father of the lad had shown assiduous care.

Near to the *miḥrāb* was placed a pulpit adorned with a multicolored cloth. The youthful imam arrived and performed the *tarāwīḥ* and completed his recitation [of the whole Qur'ān], with all who were in the Sacred Mosque, both men and women, assembled around him. In his *miḥrāb*, he could hardly be seen for the many rays of the candles that encompassed him. He then came

6 The *qinṭār* is a weight unit, but its weight fluctuated according to the region and period.

7 The term *thurayyā* is inscribed on two multitiered metal chandeliers that are probably examples of the kind of device Ibn Jubayr is referring to here: one was lighting the Qarawiyyīn mosque (Fez) and dates to 600/1204; the other one the al-Zaytūna mosque (Tunis) and dates to 721/1321. The term *sham'* can refer to the wax of candles, to candles themselves, or to candlesticks.

forth from his *miḥrāb*, strutting proudly in his rich apparel, with the bearing of an imam and the calmness of youth, his eyes shaded with kohl and his hands hennaed up to the wrists. [...]

[p. 150] Before him sat the Qurʾān readers, who began to recite in chorus. When they had finished a tenth part of the Qurʾān, the preacher rose and pronounced an eloquent sermon that moved most spirits, more from its mellifluous delivery than from its piously recollective or emotional qualities. In front of him, on the steps of the pulpit, was a small group of men holding candles in their hands and yelling “O Lord! O Lord!” at each pause in the sermon. [...]

Then came the night of the 25th, and the reciter was a Ḥanafī imam. He had brought a son of his to do it, a boy of about the age of the first preacher we mentioned. The Ḥanafī imam had made great preparations for his son for this night. He brought four candle-bearing chandeliers (*thurayyāt*) of varying types, some being shaped like branching trees (*mushajjara mughaṣṣana*) and garnished with all kinds of fruits, fresh and dry, and some being [p. 151] unbranched (*ghayr mughaṣṣana*). They were arranged in line in front of his pavilion, which was crowned with boards and planks covered with lamps (*suruj*), torches, and candles that illuminated all the pavilion until it shone in the air like a great crown of light (*ka-l-tāj al-ʿaẓīm min al-nūr*). The candles were brought forward in yellow-brass candlesticks (*atwār al-ṣufr*), and then the *miḥrāb* with the wooden balustrades was set in place, its upper part ringed with candles and itself encompassed by candlesticks that threw a halo of light around it. [...] Before him on the steps of the pulpit was a group of [mosque] attendants holding candles in their hands, and one of them held the censer which repeatedly spread the aroma of the aloe.

Then came the night of the 27th, which was a Friday, the month having been deemed to have begun on a Sunday. It was a bright night (*al-layla al-gharrāʾ*), with its auspicious portion of the reading of the whole Qurʾān, its full and mature dignity, and the state that make prayers acceptable to Great and Glorious God. [p. 152] And what can compare to attending the reading of the Qurʾān on the night of the 27th of Ramaḍān behind the venerated Maqām and in front of the sublime House? It is a night which in grace makes all others seem but mediocre, as does the Ḥaram make insignificant all other places.

Thought and preparation are given to this blessed night two or three days before. Beside the pavilion of the Shāfiʿī imam were planted huge wooden poles of considerable height, joined every three by stout beams and forming a continuous row that occupies almost half of the width of the Ḥaram and reaches to the pavilion. Long planks passed between them, extending over the beams and raised to form one story over another until three stories were completed. The upper story was a long wooden platform perforated throughout

with sharp-headed nails, close-set like the back of a hedgehog, on which candles were fixed. The two lower stages were of planks pierced with close-set apertures in which were placed the glasses of lamps (*zujājāt al-maṣābīḥ*) with stems that rose from below them and hung from the sides of these planks and poles. From all the beams hung lamps (*qanādīl*), large and small, interspersed by large brass trays (*al-aṭbāq al-mabsūṭa min al-ṣufr*),⁸ to each of which were fixed three chains which held them in the air. All these discs were pierced with apertures in which were glasses (*zujājāt*) with stems coming from below these brass trays, no stem being bigger than another. In them, the lamps (*al-maṣābīḥ*) were lit so that they seemed like a many-legged table shining forth light.

Connected with the second pavilion, which faces the south corner of the dome of Zamzam, was a wooden construction of the same style which reached to that corner. The firebrand (*al-mashʿal*) which was on top of the ball of the *qubba* was lit, and along the edge of its lattice, on the side facing the venerated House, a row of candles was set. The noble Maqām was encompassed by a *miḥrāb* composed of a carved wooden balustrade, its upper part surrounded by sharp-headed nails which, as before described, [p. 153] were all provided with candles. To the right and the left of the Maqām were ranged large candles in candlesticks proportionate to them in size. These candlesticks were disposed on the stools which the guardians use for their ascent to kindle the lights (*al-īqād*). All the walls of the venerated Ḥijr were covered with candles in brass candlesticks, forming a circle of radiant light (*dāʿirat nūr sāṭiʿ*). The Ḥarām itself was surrounded by torches, and all the illuminations described were set alight. The merlons around the Ḥarām were filled with Meccan boys, each of whom held a rag ball (*kura min al-khiraq*) soaked in oil (*al-mushbaʿa salīṭ*) which they placed burning on the tops of the merlons. Each group of them took one of the four sides, and competed with the one beside it as to who should first light up its side. The beholder conceived that the flame leapt from merlon to merlon, for the persons of the boys were hidden behind the light (*al-ḍawʿ*) that dazzled the eyes. As they did this they cried aloud and in chorus, “O Lord! O Lord!” and the Ḥarām shook with their voices. When the illumination (*īqād*) is total, as described, the rays of the lights blind one’s eyes. They encountered light that absorbed the sense of sight (*istimālat al-naẓar*) and captivated the gaze. Let the imagination play on the grandeur of what can be seen upon that blessed night, which in its nobleness strips off the clothes of darkness and adorns itself in the lamps of the sky (*maṣābīḥ al-samāʿ*).

8 The device described here is the type of the so-called polycandelon chandelier, characterized by a pierced tray supporting the small glass lamps ending with a tubular stem.

[p. 154] Then came the night of the 29th. The reader [of the final part of the whole Qur'ān] is one of the remaining imams who conduct the *tarāwīḥ*, and who undertake the ceremony of the *khutba* that follows the *khatma*. The one appointed was the Mālikī. He came forward with a number of boards and beside his *mihrāb* he planted six in the form of a *mihrāb*'s circle and rising little less than a man's stature from the ground. Over every two of these crossed a wide board; the top was ringed with candles, and the lower part with the remainder of the many candles we mentioned in our first description of the blessed month. The inside of that circle was also fringed with other candles of medium size. It was a simple spectacle, a scene without display, wholesome and quiet, and expectant of full recompense and reward proportionate to the goodly aspect of the *mihrāb*. The candles, instead of being placed in candlesticks, were supported by stones. The result was remarkable for its simplicity, being removed from pride and display and within the bounds of humbleness and modesty.

Abū l-Majd Tabrīzī (d. after 736/1336) on the Debate between the Ear and the Eye

Tanvir Ahmed and Shahzad Bashir

1 Introduction

The following passages are translated from a Persian-language work called *The Debate between the Ear and Eye* (*Munāzara-yi sam^ʿ-u baṣar*), composed in Tabriz in 717/1317 by Abū l-Majd Muḥammad Tabrīzī (d. after 736/1336). Abū l-Majd belonged to a patrician family in Tabriz, members of which participated in its literary and scholarly circles, and studied in his hometown under various teachers, many of whom were active in Sufi circles. These included the historian and litterateur Amīn al-Dīn Ḥājj Bulah (d. 719/1320), the poet Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ʿAtīqī (*fl.* early 8th/14th century), and the poet Saʿd al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shabustarī (d. ca. 720/1321). He also seems to have been familiar with the governing cliques of the Ilkhanid Empire that, in his day, ruled much of the present-day Middle East from the area around Tabriz. All that we know at present about Abū l-Majd stems from a compendium called *The Ark of Tabriz* (*Safīna-yi Tabrīz*), which he put together between 720/1321 and 736/1336. Carried within this *Ark* are over 200 works treating topics in history, lexicography, astronomy, climatology, geography, musicology, medicine, and more (see Seyed-Gohrab and McGlinn). Among these are eleven literary debates (sing. *munāzara*), including that between the Ear and Eye.

By Abū l-Majd's day, such debates had been part of the Persian literary landscape for at least three centuries, with specific generic conceits (see, among others, Abdullaeva; Melvin-Koushki; Seyed-Gohrab). Within those conventions, the author sets into play a dialogue between two titular contestants, for example: Sword and Pen, Wine and Hashish, Muslim and Zoroastrian, Reason and Love, Fire and Water, Poetry and Prose. The contestants are made to deprecate their opponents' qualities and uphold their personal supremacy throughout the text. The debates are generally resolved either through some form of external mediation, through which the contestants are reconciled, or the seeming victory of one party.

Far from acting as strict trappings, the generic conventions of Persian debate literature serve as anchors around which texts flow in strikingly different ways. Though the debates are notionally held between two parties, other characters often play interruptive roles that are critical to the overall narrative. As the debates themselves are highly citational—with disputants bringing in aphorisms, parables, poetry, scripture, and stories of saints' lives—they index the sociocultural contexts of their composition. In a way, they mark the ephemeral combination of whatever happens to be trending in the authorial moment at hand. In the case of the present text, for example, we are brought into contact with Persian poetry (including what might be Tabrīzī's own compositions), stories of the Sufi master Sayf al-Dīn Bākhārī (d. 659/1261), a possible reference to the poet Abū Nuwās (d. ca. 200/815), *ḥadīths* attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad (including ones in which God is made to speak), a list of books considered foundational for the well-read person, and much more. We can similarly trace the differences in authorial style between different composers. The formal elements of the debate thus signify historical disjuncture as much as the continuity of a long-standing literary form; and through that combination, each text becomes laden with a great deal of historiographical information.

The Debate of the Ear and Eye is framed by an autobiographical narrative, in which Abū l-Majd encounters a patron called Sharaf al-Dīn in 717/1317. Sharaf al-Dīn relates that he himself had been in the company of some learned sorts who disagreed as to whether hearing or sight was the superior form of apprehension. As there was no resolution, Sharaf al-Dīn requested that Abū l-Majd write something to clarify the matter. Abū l-Majd then relates a story (*ḥikāyat*) in which his own contemplative faculty (*andīsha*) comes across personifications of the Ear, Eye, and Tongue (below, § 1). The Ear and Eye enter into a back-and-forth for some time, which is itself broken up at one point by stories of the aforementioned Sufi master Sayf al-Dīn Bākhārī. The final segment of the text brings us back to Abū l-Majd as narrator while he addresses the reader. *The Debate of the Ear and Eye* thus shuttles between a wide range of presumed authorial contexts, each nested within the even broader frameworks of the *Ark's* eleven debates, and the *Ark* itself.

The passages below exemplify varying aspects of the debate, which offer a sense for the many maneuvers made possible by this literary form. Section 1 (§ 2) focuses on the Ear and Eye as aspects of a single body. Here, the focus lingers on the effects of love upon the human body, and the moral valences of those effects. Section 2 (§ 3) gives us a fractalization of the human body, with the Ear and Eye taking on different body parts themselves: eyelashes, faces, mouths, and more. These disparate body parts are summarily related to

complete human bodies themselves—specifically, the bodies of famed religious personalities. The pattern then moves on from bodies to various texts and celestial bodies, embedding the Ear and Eye within a (sometimes literal) constellation of tangible phenomena. Section 3 (§ 4) examines the different forms of apprehension made possible by the Ear and Eye, beginning with reference to Islamic prophetology. The argument comes to an end through the mediation of another organ, the Heart, who informs the quarreling Ear and Eye that all body parts have separate and unique functions as appointed by God, and who brings about a reconciliation (§ 5).

In taking on this translation as a co-authored task, we have an opportunity to do something that Abū l-Majd's Persian text does not. In the latter, the voices of the Ear and the Eye do possess certain specificities, but for the most part, they come off as “sounding” similar to a reader. In what follows, one of us has translated all passages in which the Eye speaks, while the other has rendered the voice of the Ear. Our aim in doing so is to generate two distinct voices for the Ear and Eye, and thus add a new flavor to the debate. Part of our methodological commitment here is to foreground the creative possibilities in translation work, and to model interpretive modes and techniques which are only possible through acts of translation.

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2 Translation

Abū l-Majd Muḥammad Tabrīzī, *Munāẓara-yi sam‘-u baṣar*, in *Majmū‘a-yi rasā’il-i fārsī: Daftar-i haftum*, ed. Najīb Māyil Hirawī et al., Mashhad: Bunyād-i Pizhūhishhā-yi Islāmī-yi Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍāvī, 1385sh/[2006–7], pp. 11–14, 17–19, 22, 25–6.

[§ 1. Introduction]

[p. 11] One day, the bird of contemplation took flight in the skies of thought; and I heard someone speaking, so I took heed and listened, attuning the heart to their words. I came to see two persons locked in a heated debate, going back and forth in dispute.

One of them was speaking in eloquent expressions and articulate metaphors, loquacious and caviling, red-faced, slipping into graceful turns of phrase, perpetually cutting off [the other’s] locutions with sweet speech, and picking at the finer points of right and wrong. The other person was a venerable sort of few words, rather silent and restrained, taking the path of [Arabic:] “the one who stays quiet is saved.”¹ [Persian:] They [the other person] preferred listening to what was being said to speaking.

When I considered [them] carefully, I found that they were none other than the Ear and Tongue, going back and forth. However, the Ear was also ragging on the Eye: ignoring what they [the Eye] were saying and saying nothing to them, acting rather snobbishly, and expressing its contempt without speaking. The tongue of that two-faced calumniator was constantly engaged in taunts, reproaches, and insults—slandering the Eye in a manner understood by all.

The Eye got sick of all this and started getting mad at the Ear: “You are one to have lost your head, your habit being always to speak bitterly. They have said, [Arabic:] ‘a blow from the tongue wounds worse than one from the sword.’² [Persian:] I am a knower, a witness to the traces of Lordship. I am an observer of the rising of the light of the lamps of divinity, following from the saying of God the Exalted, [Arabic:] ‘And we adorned the nearer heaven with lamps’ (Q 41:12). [Persian:] All that is to be found upon the spread of the earth cannot be unveiled save through me, the Eye. Subtleties written on the earth’s waystations, and the collectivity of these subtleties, come alive only through indications found in my noble winks. [p. 12] My sight is an alchemy of felicity

1 A saying attributed to the Prophet; see al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi‘*, k. *al-ḡiyāma* 50; Ibn Ḥanbal, 2:159, 177.

2 More commonly “a blow from the tongue wounds worse than the stab of the spearhead,” a saying attributed to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. See, e.g., al-Majlisī, 71:286.

without which people have no provisions for the end times, no path in the lower world, no light to the next life, and no key to paradise. I am a witness whose moon-face has gathered multitudes seeking ultimate pleasure. By what form of servitude [to God] do you seek to stand against me? What makes you capable of talking of me?"

[§ 2. *On the Effects of Love*]

The Ear said: "Hey, Eye! I'm the collector of the foundational principles of hearing, the perfecter of knowing's essence; the one who's the Sufi's ardor while listening to the Mighty Lord's speech is I. I collect and expound the divine book by listening to the reports of the saints. I'm a darling (*qurrat al-'ayn*, lit. 'joy of the eye' [cf. Qur'ān 25:74]) who, from being assayed and measured, is the chosen beloved of creatures. Both the foundational principles and their wider branches address me. Through me, the Guide upon the Right Paths (peace be upon him)³ warned created beings. I am the model of divine secrets, nay, the container of godly affairs! While you, you scandalous and ailing drunkard—this is what they have to say about your nature:

You left, and in hope of dreaming about them, fell asleep.
What can even be said about your scandalous nature?

You are the one who makes people lose their heads from inebriation, and tortures people through ailment, shooting arrows from a hidden bow. You're so evil-natured, it can't even be said [in your presence] that the eyebrow is above you. You're always full of water because of some separation, an insomniac because of some severance.

You call me foul-tongued? Well, if I'm foul-tongued, you're always crying burning tears that glow on the face. Without tears, water would have nothing to do with [the face]; without such a pearl, no gem would ever reach the market. You say to me, 'What power do you have to oppose me?' Hey, you powerless ailing drunk! Compared to you, I've such might as that of the wish-granting Night of Power!"⁴

3 E.g., the Prophet Muḥammad.

4 The "Night of Power" (*shab-i qadr*) is a night celebrated by many Muslim communities for various reasons, including because of the idea that it marks the anniversary of the Qur'ān's initial revelation to the Prophet Muḥammad. It is widely held to fall on one of the odd-numbered nights in the last third of the month of Ramaḍān, e.g., any odd-numbered night that happens to be a Friday in that year, or the night of the 23rd of the month, or the night of the 27th.

The Eye said: "Ear! I am a subtle being, sometimes the lover, other times the beloved. I am a ravisher, plundering a life in every tryst. I am an archer, ensnaring a thousand hearts when I put eyelashes' arrows in my eyebrow's bow. After all, haven't you heard what lovers have said:

Your eye, when it pierces, sees the heart and the soul.
 It drinks no wine save hearts' blood from those stricken.
 [p. 13] From what I can see of his coquettish winks,
 No life gets spared from the cruelty of his arrows.

And this quatrain has come from the sayings of one of the learned:

Without your tresses, dreams ran away from my eyes, ashamed.
 Your eye collapsed my heart's feet, sinking down into mud.
 What, pray, does the eye see in those tresses?
 And what, pray, does the heart perceive in that eye?

I am a worshipper busy worshipping in the cloister of the pupil. I am an ascetic hidden behind the thousandfold cloak of the eyelashes. I am a knower who spreads the prayer carpet on water. I am a preacher busy heralding terror and hope from the pupil's pulpit [...] You said: 'I am a zealous Sufi.' How would you acquire zeal when you are forever afflicted by cold? You said: 'You are debauched.' May you wither for speaking like this to me. You said: 'You are a drunkard.' Yes, I am drunk from *alast!*⁵

There was then no garden, grape, or wine, no worshipper of drink
 When the Friend gave a wine to the lovers of *alast* [...]

You said: 'You are ill-mannered because even someone's eyebrow cannot be said to be above someone's eye.' This is not from [p. 14] bad manners but due to my dignity. Although you have twisted your tongue around this perfect quatrain, you haven't actually heard it:

Their winks let loose arrows toward foe and friend.
 Then they hide the bow—that is not kind!

5 The composite term *alast* (lit. "am I not") refers to a moment in the Qur'anic account of creation that Muslims interpret as a primordial covenant. Once God had made all of Adam's future progeny exist in potentiality, He asked them, "*a-lastu bi-rabbikum* (am I not your Lord)?" (Q 7:172). Their affirmative response to this is seen as a commitment to monotheism that is embedded within all human beings but which many are liable to forget.

I can see the bow, but can't say to them:
It's the eyebrows above their eyes.

You said: 'You are always full of water and sleepless from being in love.' [Arabic:] What you criticize is neither my shortcoming nor my error; from the unseen realm, I know things hidden from you. [Persian:] Insensitive, defiled one, it has become known that you don't know even how to describe faults. This isn't my shortcoming but my craft." [...]

[§ 3. *On Saints and Stars in the Organs*]

[p. 17] The Ear said: "Hey, Eye! I'm the master of discipline. The images of so many of God's friends can be witnessed in my shape. My face is Ḥasan Baṣrī, my mouth (*dahān*) Faṭḥ Mawṣilī. My tongue is Ja'far Ṣādiq, my curling locks Bābā Raṭṭan. My hand is Mālik Dīnār, my eyebrows Dhū l-Nūn Maṣrī. My head is Sarī Saqaṭī, my mouth (*dahan*) Yaḥyā Mu'ādh. My eyelashes are Abū l-Khayr Aqṭa'.⁶ In fact, [p. 18] through the light of friendship with God, I have reached my own rank such that the images of sundry friends of God can be seen on my face. You scandalous thing! How is it that you oppose me, battling in debate, claiming to share in a conversation!"

The Eye said: "Ear, how long will you continue with this boasting and lying! You cannot vanquish me with this unseemly foolishness. Your face is not the form to reflect God's friends. The form that marks the prophets and the rightly guided caliphs is reflected in me alone. My face is Joseph, who drives many thousands mad with love. My mole is Abraham, who when thrown into the face's fire turns it to flowers and fragrant herbs. My speaking lips shine forth like Moses's hand. Like Jesus, my breath brings the dead back to life. My interlocked tresses are like David, the maker of chains. The jewel of my mouth is [the ring of] Solomon. My eyebrows are Jonah jumping out of the mouth of the fish. My eyelashes are Job become thin. My cheek's down is Khiḍr,⁷ touching his lips to the spring of eternal life. My forehead is the Beloved [Muḥammad] arrived at the bows of the eyebrows. My tongue is Abū Bakr the Truthful. The parting in my hair is 'Umar the Separator. My face is [‘Uthmān] the Possessor

6 The figures mentioned here are widely revered Muslim saints from a variety of contexts including North Africa, Iraq, and India. By Tabrīzī's time, such figures had been memorialized in early examples of hagiographical literature, such as the *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya* of Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 937/1021), a work of the same name by 'Abdallāh Anṣārī (d. 481/1089), and the *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'* of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 618/1221).

7 Khiḍr is a saintly figure said to have received the gift of eternal life by drinking from a stream. He is described living in the hidden realm, from which he makes appearances to the spiritual elect to affirm their status and to aid them in their struggles against enemies.

of the Two Lights.⁸ My hand is ‘Alī the Chosen One. The pupils of my eyes are Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. What else do you have, what other lies to spread forth? Shut up as I don’t want to field any more of your pretenses and lies.”

Once again, the Ear started pontificating and making a long, meandering point, saying: “Hey, Eye! I’m the ocean of knowledges upon whom the arks of so many books can be inspected, by dint of the pages of my form. My face is the *Lights*; my handwriting the *Index*; my fastened locks are the *Container*, my tongue the *Memorial*. My mouth is the *Key*, and my teeth the *Thirty Parts* [of the Qur’ān].⁹ You, on the other hand, are an ignoramus who hasn’t got such good luck and doesn’t know to listen. What do you know of what these books are and what they’re good for?”

The Eye began to speak again, piercing the pearls of eloquence: “You calumniating liar and envious falsifier, you are perpetually dried up so how would you be the ocean of knowledges? These are not tomes to be known from your form. Rather, they are varieties of knowledge to be studied from my visible aspect. My face is astronomy, [p. 19] the down on my cheek is geomancy, my tresses are mathematics [...] Braggart, ignorant of any craft, even as I falsify your nonsense with proofs, you remain shameless and go on talking, steeped in insolence!”

Then the Ear started up again, taking up its discourse by saying: “Hey, Eye! It’s been well-established and well-reviewed as an ordering principle, several times over, that the Ear’s occupation is to listen, meaning that it’s not customary [for me] to prate on; but you know that several fixed and roving celestial bodies can be considered upon my face. My cheek is the sun, the curved bows of my eyebrows the crescent moon; my curling Indian locks are Venus, my coquettish shooting glances Mercury; my murdering eyes are Mars, and my truth-speaking tongue is Jupiter; my world-adorning countenance is Saturn, and my shining breast the Pleiades; my head is the Dragon’s Head; my tongue

8 ‘Uthmān is a Companion of the Prophet Muḥammad who was the third successor (*khalīfa*) of the Muslim community according to Sunnis. His sobriquet “possessor of the two lights” derives from his marriages to, first, the Prophet’s daughter Ruqayya, and, upon her death, to her sister Umm Kulthūm.

9 These titles refer to popular textbooks and primers in use during Tabrīzī’s day. The *Lights* here likely refers to the *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta’wīl*, a Qur’ānic commentary by al-Bayḍāwī (d. 719/1319); the *Index* might be the *Ta’līqa ‘alā Kitāb Sibawayhi*, a work on Arabic grammar by Abū ‘Alī l-Fārisī (d. 377/987); the *Container* might be the *Ḥāwī fī l-ṭibb*, a medical compendium by Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 323/935); the *Memorial* likely refers to the *Tadhkirat al-awliyā’*, a hagiographical compendium by Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d. 618/1221); the *Key* might present the *Miftāḥ al-‘ulūm*, a rhetorical textbook by Abū Yūsuf al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229); and the *Thirty Parts* are a common descriptor for the text of the Qur’ān, which is often divided into the eponymous 30 segments.

is Sirius. But your cognitive capacities don't even reach the higher world, since you're down grubbing in the dust; a miserable, unmindful creature who expects only 'more' or 'less' of whatever comes into view, heedless of anything else." [...]

[§ 4. *On Powers of Perception*]

[p. 22] The Ear said: "Hey, Eye! It's recorded in tomes and chronicles—not to mention recalled on the tongues of the world's people, well known among the rabble and the elite alike—that no Prophet was ever deaf, but some were blind. Well, prophets are the guides for all the world's creatures, and they never went about without me; it's obvious that the Exalted Truth never kept me back from them. But since you're such an unmindful thing, the existence of which brings about iniquity, they consequently could go about without you, unseeing."

The Eye said: "You hapless fool, you've gotten things so wrong. Because prophets must listen to revelation to convey it to the world, you are lording on the idea that this requires hearing. But when Jacob was blind and could not foresee anything, he was given back his eyes: 'So he regained his sight' (Q 12:96). Ḥātim-i Aṣamm,¹⁰ that king of the domains of poverty and affirmation of divine unity, perfect and perfecting in secluded devotion and celibacy—may God have vast mercy on him—made himself to appear a little deaf for expediency [to save someone embarrassment]. Even though he had the capacity [to hear], his name will be associated with [deafness] until the world's end. My pride shines forth equally whether I am present or absent. [In comparison,] your absence is a disgrace while your presence is no source of dignification. Among Adam's children, when I am not on the throne of existence, by sitting on the throne of the pupil, I install insight in my stead. This is called heart's sight, acting from my station."

The Ear said: "Hey, Eye! I'm the one who's been favored with greatness. Everywhere that the Glorified and Exalted Truth mentions both of us, I'm always mentioned before you [e.g., Qur'ān 76:2]; the mention of you only comes later. If we go by the precept of [p. 23] [Arabic:] 'precedence is preference,' [Persian:] you're not the favored and ennobled one, and you don't have precedence."

10 Ḥātim-i Aṣamm (d. 237/851–2) was an early Sufi in Khurasan who was a disciple of the famous master Shaiq of Balkh. His designation "Aṣamm" (the Deaf) derives from a story about his extraordinary charity toward others. Once an old woman broke wind in his presence while speaking to him. In order to minimize her embarrassment, he pretended that he could not hear well and asked her to speak louder. From then on, he kept up the pretense of being deaf until the woman's death so as to spare her any discomfort.

The Eye said: “Ear, this too is not a fault of mine but something praiseworthy. But what am I to do when you are such an ignoramus! Among Arabs, it is a known custom, an established habit, that the lower is mentioned first and then they bring up the higher. What do you know of this principle—you base, ignorant plebeian. God, exalted and holy, goes from you, the low one, to me, who is higher.”

The Ear said: “Hey, Eye! You’re a weakling who sometimes cries out from even the slightest touch of pain, and sometimes you’re confounded by ophthalmia. Sometimes you go red and bloody from injury, and sometimes you’re depressed from illness and lamentation.”

The Eye said: “Ear, if I am a weakling that is because I am a noble thing, a subtle organ. If I cry from pain upon touch, I rub medicine on myself. So my pain has a remedy and my sorrow has a cure. However, when you go deaf, there is no remedy for it. If you cannot hear, there is no cure for you.” [...]

[§ 5. *Resolution*]

[p. 25] The Eye and the Ear called a truce and followed the Tongue to the royal court of the Heart. The Tongue began to explain and metaphorize what was necessary to explain in elegant language and eloquent speech, using bejeweled words and rhyming sayings and utterances of scintillating quality.

Facing the Heart, they [the Tongue] said: “O King of Love’s Throne and Guardian of Honesty’s Country! O one who is nourished by God’s hand, as [Arabic:] ‘the believer’s heart is between two of the Merciful’s fingers.’¹¹ [Persian:] O home of the Unfathomable Lord by the example of [Arabic:] ‘neither My earth nor My heavens can encompass Me, but the heart of My believing servant can do so!’¹²

The speaker of joy’s court still falls short in praising you,
And so, they begin summary’s peeling chant.

What has come to pass between the Eye and Ear is that each one claims [Arabic:] ‘I’m better’ and ‘I’m more perfect,’ [Persian:] and we’ve come to this point.”¹³

The Heart sat down among them to resolve the matter. They spoke to all parties involved in inventive expressions, boring into the pearls of meaning.

11 See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-qadr* 17; Ibn Ḥanbal, 2:168, and passim.

12 See al-Ghazālī, 1:102, and passim.

13 The phrase “I’m better” seems to echo a Qur’ānic narrative about the speech of Iblis regarding human beings (*anā khayrun minhu*).

They began by saying, “When the World-Nourisher and Creator of Space and Time (may Their majesty be glorified and Their bounty be spread about) fashioned with power’s hand the clay for the kingdom of being, which is the human body; and set its form for forty days of solitude, in accordance with [Arabic:] ‘I covered Adam’s clay with my hand for forty mornings,’¹⁴ [Persian:] They appointed for body parts tasks in accordance with what would work best for each. The Eye was appointed to see, the Ear was to be busy with hearing, the Hand was kept occupied with the task of grasping, the Leg was set for moving, and the Tongue was prepared for speaking. Thus They appointed and established each member from among the parts of the body in accordance with its optimal usage. And the established appointment of that rule has been in effect right up through our present moment, so that no part of the body tries to do the function of another:

Setting out for a goal which will never be reached?
Not doing it is a thousand times better than doing it.

[p. 26] Now: the Eye cannot hear, the Ear cannot see, the Hand cannot go, the Leg cannot speak, and the Tongue cannot grip. So, gentle progeny and lovely honored children, listen to what I’ve said and get about with your own work.”

Both Eye and Ear accepted the Heart’s advice, such that afterward they never again got into that sort of excessive impertinence. They never troubled each other about seeing and hearing, and began praising one another’s qualities. And as long as it is possible for there to be readers and listeners of these events, let anyone who reviews these events, or who lends a noble ear to hear about them, offer a heartfelt prayer for the benefit of this lean and weak author.

14 See al-Ghazālī, 4:277.

Al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) on the History of the Call to Prayer in Egypt

Maroussia Bednarkiewicz

1 Introduction

During his career, Taqī l-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) held several prestigious positions in Egypt, starting as a secretary in the state chancellery, all the way up to market inspector (*muhtasib*), preacher, imam, and ambassador. He benefited from powerful patronage and spent most of his professional life in tight contact with the ruling authorities and institutions of the time. Yet his true vocation seems to have been elsewhere, since, in his late fifties, he retired entirely from political life and became a full-time historian of Egypt. His rich administrative and religious experience enlightens his most famous collection of historical and geographical accounts about Egypt, known as *Admonitions and Reflections on the Quarters and Monuments* (*al-Mawā'iz wa-l-ʿtibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār*), or *al-Khiṭaṭ* for short. Even in the small section of *al-Khiṭaṭ* dedicated to the *adhān* (the Islamic “call to prayer”), political history predominates. Through the particular lens of the *adhān*, al-Maqrīzī explores how political authorities over time tried to impregnate the acoustic space with their presence.

The “Account of the *adhān* in Egypt and its variations” (*Dhikr al-adhān bi-Miṣr wa-mā kāna fīhi min al-ikhtilāf*) is a section of *al-Khiṭaṭ*’s large chapter about congregational mosques (*jawāmiʿ*, sing. *jāmiʿ*). As its title indicates, the section is concerned with the variations of the *adhān* in al-Maqrīzī’s homeland. The word *ikhtilāf*, translated here as “variations,” can also mean “divergences” or “disagreements,” but al-Maqrīzī only rarely mentions differing viewpoints regarding the *adhān*. He does enumerate varying pieces of information at times, but he seems to seek a harmonized account, rather than the reconstruction of a debate. His focus lies on the diverse formulae that were added over time to the ritual by rulers and by muezzins, who were officially entrusted with reciting the call to prayer. Hence “variations” must be understood here in a broad sense: it encompasses variations in the formulae of the ritual, as well as in the cited sources or opinions.

TABLE 14.1 The core formulae of the *adhān*

allāhu akbar	God is great
ashhadu an lā ilāha illā llāh	I bear witness that there is no god but God
ashhadu anna Muḥammadan	I bear witness that Muḥammad is God's
rasūlu llāh	Messenger
ḥayya 'alā l-ṣalāt	Hasten to the prayer
ḥayya 'alā l-falāḥ	Hasten to the salvation
allāhu akbar	God is great
lā ilāha illā llāh	There is no god but God

The *adhān* is a relatively simple ritual, inviting Muslims to gather for the ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*). It is composed of five core formulae, repeated twice or four times according to different schools of law, and a final formula, recited once to conclude the ritual.

Muezzins often elongate the long vowel “ā” in the last syllable of some words—sometimes at the end of a formula, sometimes in the middle—often making the *adhān* last more than three minutes. Muezzins can freely vary their timbre and rhythm, following what Habib Hassan Touma called the “*maqām* phenomenon,” according to which rhythm is improvised and can become the characteristic of the performer, while the tone is subject to fixed organizational rules. In the case of the *adhān*, it must be noted that the wordings and their pronunciations are also immutable. For the *adhān* is more than just a call to prayer: it contains two of the most important Islamic formulae, *Allāhu akbar* (“God is great”), known as the *takbīr*, and the *shahāda*, in which reciters testify to their belief in God and His Messenger, the Prophet Muḥammad. Anything inserted into or after the standard words of the *adhān* is necessarily associated with these ancient pillars of the Islamic creed and gains, thereby, a special status.

In his account, al-Maqrīzī covers how the *adhān* varied from its introduction in Medina at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad until his own lifetime in Egypt. Behind each variation in the words of the *adhān*, there is assumed to be an agent who introduces this change. Al-Maqrīzī tries to uncover this agent and, thus, the origin of the variation, often tracing it back to Muḥammad's Companions, who are assumed to be the ultimate source of inspiration for many religious practices.

In al-Maqrīzī's examples, it is always a figure of authority who introduces variation into the *adhān*. The changes to the *adhān* are thus intrinsically linked

to power. Al-Maqrīzī's selection of accounts, and his insistence on naming the authorities responsible for these textual variations, eloquently brings political history to the forefront of his inquiry. The *adhān* serves here to underline the strong embedding of political power in religious rituals. In the variations of the *adhān*, we cannot fail to notice the continued use of this powerful acoustic ritual for political affirmation. Like the refrain of a chorus, the daily repetition of the *adhān* is used by authorities to continuously reaffirm their grip over the acoustic space as a metaphor of their conquered or coveted realms. Half concealed behind the detached and erudite style of the objective historian, al-Maqrīzī's long experience in the high political spheres, together with some uncontained resentments, often surface in his detailed accounts.

Yet, authorities seeking to expand their power were not the only threat to the *adhān*'s integrity. The wooden sound of the *semantron* (Arab. *nāqūs*), calling the Christians to their daily orations, often challenged the voice of the muezzins and distracted those who should answer his call. Al-Maqrīzī's brief mention of the conflict between the two calls to prayer in Egypt echoes many similar complaints over the centuries, and suggests that Muslim authorities never fully dared to prevent Christians from playing their instrument, which eventually fell in desuetude in favor of church bells, but is remembered in Muslim accounts as the source of inspiration for the *adhān*.

The acoustic space appears as an amplifier of political and religious communication across time, between new and ancient regimes, or between authorities and their subjects. Al-Maqrīzī could therefore hear in the *adhān* the voice of Bilāl,¹ as well as Moses' silver trumpets; the velleity of corrupt authorities, as well as the names of pious rulers. Sounds are ephemeral and difficult to study for historians. Yet when they carry successful acoustic traditions and rituals, immune to decrepitude and mutations, they grant access not only to means of power, but also to a wealth of information about the past. Al-Maqrīzī has captured these functions of the acoustic space and rendered them in a skillful and condensed description of the first 800 years of the *adhān*'s history in his homeland.

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2 Translation

Taqī l-al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAlī l-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-l-iʿtibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār*, ed. Ayman Fuʿād Sayyid, 5 vols., London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2003, vol. IV/1, pp. 81–90: “Account of the *adhān* in Egypt and its variations”.

[§ 1. *The First Muezzins in Mecca and Medina*]

[p. 81] Know that the first person who performed the *adhān* for the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) was Bilāl b. Rabāḥ, the client of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq² (may God be pleased with them both) in noble Medina and while traveling. The son of Umm Maktūm—whose name was ʿAmr b. Qays b. Shurayḥ, from the Banū ʿĀmir b. Luʿāyy (some said his name was ʿAbdallāh), and his mother was Umm Maktūm, whose name was ʿĀtika bt. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAnkatha from the Banū Makhzūm—may have performed the *adhān* in Medina. [...]

[§ 2. *The Beginnings of the adhān in Egypt*]

At the time of Egypt’s conquest, the *adhān* was [performed] in the congregational mosque known as the Mosque of ʿAmr (*jāmiʿ ʿAmr*).³ There, the prayer of all the people was performed. The custom of the Companions and the

2 Abū Bakr (d. 13/634), also known as al-Ṣiddīq (“the Trustworthy”), a Meccan Companion and the first to succeed the Prophet as caliph.

3 ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ (d. 42/662 or 43/664), the Meccan Companion who led the conquest of Egypt, which he governed from 21/642 to 23/644. He founded the city of Fustat and its mosque, which was named after him.

Followers (may God be pleased with them) was to preserve the congregational prayer, and to reprimand severely those who stayed away from the Friday prayer (*ṣalāt al-jumu'a*).

Abū 'Umar al-Kindī⁴ said in regard to the muezzins in the Great Mosque of 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ in Fustat: The first of those known among the muezzins was Abū Muslim Sālim b. ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd al-Murādī, who was a Companion of the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace). He performed the *adhān* at the time of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb,⁵ then traveled to Egypt with 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ and performed the *adhān* [p. 83] for him until Egypt was conquered. He was put in charge of the *adhān* and 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ gathered for him nine men to perform the *adhān*, and he was their tenth. The *adhān* remained in his family until his line went extinct.

Abū l-Khayr⁶ said: Abū Muslim, the muezzin for 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ, told me that the beginning of the *adhān* was "There is no god but God" (*lā ilāha illa llāh*) and the end was "There is no god but God." Abū Muslim was entrusted with that until he died. It is said that this is how the *adhān* was.

Then Abū Muslim's brother Shuraḥbīl b. ʿĀmir, a Companion of the Prophet, was appointed for them [as muezzin]. During his time, Maslama b. Mukhallad⁷ extended the Great Mosque and added minarets, which had not been there before. Shuraḥbīl was the first to climb the minaret of Egypt for the *adhān*. Maslama b. Mukhallad prayed in seclusion in the minaret of the Great Mosque, where he heard the sounds of the semantrons (*nawāqīs*)⁸ above Fustat. He [Maslama] called Shuraḥbīl b. ʿĀmir and told him what was evil in that. Shuraḥbīl said, "Truly I shall prolong the *adhān* from the middle of the night up to the approach of dawn. Forbid them, O emir, from striking the semantron while I am performing the *adhān*!" So, Maslama forbade them from striking the semantron at the time of the *adhān*. Shuraḥbīl prolonged [the *adhān*] and extended it more frequently at night, until he died in the year 65[/684–5].

4 Abū 'Umar Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Ya'qūb al-Kindī l-Tujībī (d. 350/961), Egyptian historian, whose books on Egypt's governors and judges have served as references until today.

5 Meccan Companion and the second caliph (r. 13–23/634–44).

6 Marthad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Yazanī (d. 90/709), also known as Abū l-Khayr, an Egyptian *ḥadīth* transmitter.

7 Maslama b. Mukhallad b. Šāmīt al-Anṣārī (d. 62/682), Medinan Companion who was governor of Egypt from 47/667 or 50/670 until his death. He rebuilt the Mosque of 'Amr, adding its first minarets. See Behrens-Abouseif, 47.

8 Plural of the Arabic word *nāqūs*, which is also used to describe church bells, but in this case, it refers to a Christian instrument: the semantron, made of a long wooden board held on the shoulder or with ropes, which a monk strikes with one or two mallets to announce the prayers' time. The instrument was used by Christians before the bells and it remains important in some Eastern Christian communities.

It was related on the authority of ‘Uthmān (may God be pleased with him) that he [‘Uthmān] was the first to fund two muezzins.⁹ When the mosques of the *khuṭba* increased, Maslama b. Mukhallad al-Anṣārī ordered, during his rule in Egypt, the construction of minarets in all the mosques, except those of Tujīb and Khawlān.¹⁰ They would perform the *adhān* in the Great Mosque [of ‘Amr] first and, when it was finished, all the muezzins in Fustat would perform the *adhān* at the same time. Their *adhān* had a powerful sound.

[§ 3. *Fatimid Changes to the adhān*]

At first, the *adhān* in Egypt was like the *adhān* of the people of Medina: “God is great, God is great,” and the rest, as it is today. This practice endured in Egypt in the Mosque of ‘Amr in Fustat, the Mosque of al-‘Askar,¹¹ the Mosque of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn,¹² and the rest of the mosques. That was, until the general Jawhar¹³ arrived from the Maghreb with the armies of al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh,¹⁴ and built Cairo. This was on Friday, the eighth of Jumādā I in the year 359 [March 19, 970]. The general Jawhar prayed the Friday prayer in the Great Mosque of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn. ‘Abd al-Samī‘ b. ‘Umar al-‘Abbāsī¹⁵ delivered the sermon there, wearing an embroidered hat and an embroidered shawl. The muezzin performed the *adhān* [adding the sentence]: “Hasten to the best of deeds!” [p. 84]. He was the first to perform the *adhān* with it in Egypt. ‘Abd al-Samī‘ prayed the Friday

9 ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān (d. 35/655), a Meccan Companion and the third caliph (r. 23–35/644–55).

10 Quarters of Fustat, named after the South Arabian tribes of Tujīb and Khawlān, who were instrumental in the conquest of Egypt and retained influence as they settled there.

11 When the Abbasids came to power in 132/750, they established a new administrative center north of Fustat, in which they built a mosque called al-‘Askar, like the city.

12 The Abbasid governor Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn (d. 270/884) took advantage of his influential position and unrest in the empire to gain some independence from the central Abbasid power. He founded the Ṭūlūnid state (ca. 254–92/868–905) and a new city, al-Qaṭā‘ī, northeast of al-‘Askar and Fustat, with the famous mosque bearing his name.

13 Jawhar b. ‘Abdallāh (d. 381/992) was secretary of the Fatimid caliph al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh and general of his army when the Fatimids decided to expand from Tunisia over Egypt. After his victorious conquest in 358/969, he founded the city of Cairo, al-Qāhira (“the victorious”), north of the previous capital.

14 Al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh (r. 341–65/953–75), the fourth caliph of the Fatimid dynasty in Tunisia and the first to settle in the new capital city of Cairo, which he inaugurated in 362/973 after the successful conquest of Egypt by his general Jawhar b. ‘Abdallāh (d. 381/992) in 358/969.

15 A member of the Abbasid family, ‘Abd al-Samī‘ b. ‘Umar al-‘Abbāsī was in charge of the Friday sermon in the Mosque of ‘Amr when al-Mu‘izz’s general, Jawhar, conquered Egypt. He was allowed to keep his position, together with other high-ranked officials, such as the very popular Mālikī judge Abū Ṭāhir al-Dhuhli (d. 366/978). He was succeeded by two of his sons, Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad and Abū Ṭālib ‘Alī.

prayer there and recited *Sūrat al-Jumu'a* (Q 62), and [the verse] "When the hypocrites came to you" (Q 63:1). He stood (*qanata*) during the second *rak'ā* and then descended for the prostration (*sujūd*), for he had forgotten the [prescribed number of] *rukū'*. 'Alī b. al-Walīd, the *qāḍī* of Jawhar's troops, called out to him: "The prayer is invalid! I count four *rukū'* in the midday prayer."

Then the *adhān* was performed with "Hasten to the best of deeds" in the other mosques of al-'Askar, all the way to the Mosque of 'Abdallāh.¹⁶

Jawhar disapproved of 'Abd al-Samī's not reciting "In the name of God, the lord of mercy, the giver of mercy" [the *basmala*] before each *sūra*, and his not reciting it during the sermon. Jawhar prayed another Friday prayer with him, and 'Abd al-Samī did this again. 'Abd al-Samī also would name Jawhar in the first Friday prayer during the sermon, and Jawhar disapproved of and prohibited this.

For the four remaining days of the aforementioned month of Jumādā I, the *adhān* was performed in the old congregational mosque with "Hasten to the best of deeds," and they loudly recited the *basmala* in the prayer in the congregational mosque. This lasted throughout the time of the Fatimid caliphs, except when al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh,¹⁷ in the year 400[/1010], brought together the muezzins of the palace and of the other mosques. The chief judge Mālik b. Sa'īd al-Fāriqī¹⁸ was also present there. Abū 'Alī l-'Abbāsī¹⁹ read an official document that included the order to remove "Hasten to the best of deeds" from the *adhān*, and to say in [the call for] the morning prayer "Prayer is better than sleep!" (*al-ṣalāt khayr min al-nawm*). It was ordered that the muezzins of the palace would say in their words [after the *adhān*] "May peace and God's mercy be upon the Commander of the Believers," and this was obeyed. Then, in the spring of the year 401[/1011], the muezzins went back to saying "Hasten to the best of deeds." In the year 405[/1015], the muezzins of the congregational mosque of Cairo and the muezzins of the palace were prevented from saying the greeting for the Commander of the Believers after the *adhān*. They were commanded instead to say after the *adhān*: "The prayer is God's blessing for you" (*al-ṣalāt raḥīma-ka Allāh*).

16 The Mosque of 'Abdallāh, of which the exact location is unknown, was located between the mosques of Ibn Ṭūlūn and 'Amr.

17 Al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh, sixth Fatimid caliph (r. 386–411/996–1021), whose reign was marked with the executions of many officials, numerous decrees restraining people's freedom drastically, and the destruction of Christian and Jewish houses of worship.

18 Fourth chief *qāḍī* of the caliph al-Ḥākim (r. 398–405/1008–14). He was executed for his relationship with al-Ḥākim's half-sister, Sitt al-Mulk (d. 413/1023).

19 A *khaṭīb*, son of 'Abd al-Samī b. 'Umar al-'Abbāsī.

The origin of this practice was [the following]. Al-Wāqidī²⁰ said: Bilāl (may God be pleased with him) would stand at the door of the Prophet of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) and say, “Peace be upon you, Messenger of God.” Sometimes he would say: “Peace be upon you, may my father and mother stand in for you, Messenger of God! Hasten to the prayer, hasten to the prayer, peace be upon you, Messenger of God!”

Al-Balādhurī²¹ and others said: He [Bilāl] said “Peace be upon you, Messenger of God, and God’s mercy and His blessing! Hasten to the prayer, hasten to salvation—the prayer—Messenger of God!”

[p. 85] When Abū Bakr (may God be pleased with him) was appointed caliph, Sa’d al-Qaraz would stop at his door and say, “Peace be upon you, Successor of the Messenger of God, and God’s mercy and His blessing! Hasten to the prayer, hasten to salvation—the prayer—Successor of the Messenger of God!”

When ‘Umar (may God be pleased with him) became caliph, Sa’d came to his door and said: “Peace be upon you, Successor of the Successor of the Messenger of God, and God’s mercy! Hasten to the prayer, hasten to salvation—the prayer—Successor of the Successor of the Messenger of God!”

‘Umar (may God be pleased with him) said to the people: “You are the believers and I am your Commander.” He was called “Commander of the Believers,” for it was overly long to say “Successor of the Successor of the Messenger of God,” and to call the one after him “Successor of the Successor of the Successor of the Messenger of God.” The muezzin would say, “Peace be upon you, Commander of the Believers, and God’s mercy and His blessing! Hasten to the prayer, hasten to salvation—the prayer—Commander of the Believers!” Then ‘Umar (may God be pleased with him) commanded the muezzin to add, “May God have mercy for you.” It was also said that ‘Uthmān (may God be pleased with him) added that.

The muezzins continued to greet the caliphs and the provincial governors (*umarā’ al-a’māl*) during the *adhān*, then they would rise for the prayer after the greeting. The caliph or the local commander would come forth and pray with the people. Such was the custom during the time of the Umayyads. Then, during the Abbasid caliphate, the caliphs and the provincial governors would

20 Medinan historian and jurist (d. 207/822), he remains until today an important source for the early Islamic period.

21 Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Jābir b. Dāwūd al-Balādhurī (d. ca. 279/892), historian and genealogist, whose writings count among the most prolific sources for the first centuries of Islamic history.

pray with the people. When the non-Arabs (*‘ajam*) took over,²² the Abbasid caliphs abandoned the prayer with the people, as they abandoned many other customs (*sunan*) of Islam.

None of the Fatimid caliphs prayed the five daily prayers with the people each day. During their time, muezzins gave salutation to the caliph following the *adhān* for the morning prayer from atop the minarets. When the Fatimids' time came to an end, the sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn²³ modified their regulations. The muezzins did not dare to give salutation to him [Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn], out of respect for the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad, and so they substituted the salutation to the caliph with the salutation to the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace). This practice continues in Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz [i.e., to greet the Messenger of God], after the *adhān* of the morning prayer every night. This was added at the order of the *muḥtasib* Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn ‘Abdallāh al-Burullusī:²⁴ “Prayer and peace upon you, Messenger of God.” That was after the year 760 [1359]. It continues until our days, and indeed this is for those [with] beautiful habits and the best deeds.

[p. 86] When Abū ‘Alī Kutayfāt b. al-Afḍal Shahanshāh Badr al-Jamālī²⁵ acquired the rank of vizier, in the days of al-Ḥāfiẓ li-Dīn Allāh Abū l-Maymūn ‘Abd al-Majīd b. al-Amīr Abū l-Qāsim Muḥammad b. al-Mustanṣir bi-Allāh,²⁶ on Dhū l-Qa‘da 16, 524 [November 6, 1130], he placed al-Ḥāfiẓ under house arrest. He seized the wealth and treasures that were in the palace, and brought them to the vizier’s palace (*dār al-wizāra*). Kutayfāt was staunchly Imami—thus differing from the government imposed by the Isma‘ili *madhhāb*—and he proclaimed the call of the Awaited Imam (*al-imām al-muntaẓar*).²⁷ Added to the *adhān* were the words “Hasten to the best of deeds,” and their [Imami]

22 Probably referring to the Turkish takeover of military and political power which started at the time of the caliph al-Mu‘taṣim (r. 218–27/833–42) and became fully established with the Buyids’ dominion from 334/945 onward.

23 Yūsuf b. Ayyūb Abū l-Muẓaffar Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (d. 589/1193), known as Saladin in the West, founder of the Ayyubid dynasty, overthrew the Fatimids in 567/1171.

24 ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abdallāh al-Burullusī was appointed *muḥtasib* of Cairo in 763/1361.

25 Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad b. al-Afḍal, known as Kutayfāt, was the son of the vizier al-Afḍal, who had al-Amīr proclaimed caliph in 495/1101 and was then assassinated in 515/1121. Taking advantage of the assassination of al-Amīr in 524/1130, Kutayfāt organized a coup and imprisoned the then-regent, and future caliph, ‘Abd al-Majīd. Kutayfāt replaced the Fatimids’ Isma‘ilism with Imami doctrine, leading to the hostility of Fatimid supporters and eventually to his death in 526/1131.

26 Abū l-Maymūn ‘Abd al-Majīd, known as al-Ḥāfiẓ li-Dīn Allāh, the seventh Fatimid caliph of Egypt (r. 526/1131–544/1146).

27 The twelfth Imam according to the Twelver Shi‘i, born on 869/255 and went into hiding in 329/941. He is expected by his followers to return at an ungiven time.

phrase “Muḥammad and ‘Alī are the best of mankind.” The invocation (*dhikr*) of Ismā‘īl b. Ja‘far,²⁸ which the Isma‘ilis had imposed, was dropped. When Kutayfāt was killed on Muḥarram 16, 526 [December 8, 1131], rule returned to the caliph al-Ḥāfiẓ, and the *adhān* regained what had been dropped.

The first person who said in the *adhān* at night “Muḥammad and ‘Alī are the best of mankind” was al-Ḥusayn, known as an Amīrkā b. Shakanba (or some said Ashkanbah).²⁹ This is a foreign name, meaning “belly.” He was ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ismā‘īl b. al-Ḥasan b. Zayd b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib. He was the first to perform the *adhān* with those words, during the days of Sayf al-Dawla b. Ḥamdān³⁰ in Aleppo in the year 347[/958]. This was reported by the genealogist al-Sharīf Muḥammad b. As‘ad al-Juwwānī.³¹

The *adhān* in Aleppo was still performed with “Hasten to the best of deeds” and “Muḥammad and ‘Alī were the best of mankind” up to the time of Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd.³² When Nūr al-Dīn opened the great madrasa known as al-Ḥalāwiyya [in Aleppo],³³ he invited Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Balkhī l-Ḥanafī, who came with a group of jurists and gave classes there. When he heard the *adhān*, he ordered the jurists to climb the minarets at the time of the *adhān* and told them: “Order them [the muezzins] to perform the legally ordained (*mashrū‘*) *adhān*. Whoever refuses, throw him down upon his head [from the minaret].” They climbed [the minarets] and did as he had ordered them to do, and the matter continued like that.

28 The eldest son of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. ca. 145/762–3), the sixth Shi‘i Imam. At the time of Ja‘far’s death in 148/765, Ismā‘īl had predeceased his father. The Shi‘i community thus split over who should be recognized as the inheritor of the imamate: those who followed Ismā‘īl’s son Muḥammad (d. ca. 179/796) formed the Isma‘ili Shi‘a, while those who chose another son of Ja‘far, Mūsā, formed the Imami or Twelver Shi‘a.

29 Little is known about Amīrkā. We learn from the historian Ibn al-‘Adīm (d. 660/1262) that he was in Aleppo at the time of Sayf al-Dawla (r. 334–56/945–67) and spent about four years in Egypt. He was a muezzin and died in Manbij, in northern Syria, in 384/994. See Ibn al-‘Adīm, 2701.

30 ‘Alī Abū l-Ḥasan b. Abi l-Hayjā‘ ‘Abdallāh b. Ḥamdān b. Ḥamdūn b. al-Ḥārith Sayf al-Dawla al-Taghlibī (r. 333–56/944–67), governor of Aleppo and northern Syria.

31 Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. As‘ad b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 588/1192), known as al-Sharīf al-Juwwānī, genealogist and historian who held the prestigious position of *naqīb al-ashraf* (“head of the nobles,” i.e., the Prophet’s descendants) in Cairo (or Egypt) under the last Fatimid caliph al-‘Āḍid li-Dīn Allāh (r. 555–64/1160–9) and remained in the entourage of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn after the Ayyubid transition. He wrote *inter alia* several biographical dictionaries and genealogies and was an important source for al-Maqrīzī.

32 Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Zankī (d. 569/1174), the son and successor to Zankī (d. 565/1174) in Syria. He participated in overthrowing the Fatimids and fought against the Crusaders.

33 The building stands on the site of Aleppo’s Byzantine Church of Saint Helen, which was turned into a mosque by the *qāḍī* Ibn al-Khashshāb (d. 519/1125) in 518/1124 in reprisal for Crusader assaults, and then into a religious school by Nūr al-Dīn in ca. 543/1159.

[§ 4. *Ayyubid- and Mamluk-Era Changes*]

[p. 87] As for Egypt, the *adhān* continued in the usual way until the sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Ayyūb took possession of the sultanate of Egypt. The Fatimid state ceased to exist in the year 567[/1172], and the *madhhab* of al-Shāfiʿī³⁴ (may God be pleased with him) was adopted, as well as the doctrine of Shaykh Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī³⁵ (may God be pleased with him). Saying “Hasten to the best of deeds” was removed from the *adhān*, and the *adhān* was performed in the regions of Egypt and Syria like the *adhān* of the people of Mecca, in which the *takbīr* is repeated four times and the two *shahādas* are repeated.

The matter continued like this until the Turks built mosques in the lands of Egypt and the *madhhab* of Abū Ḥanīfa³⁶ (may God be pleased with him) spread there. Then, in some madrasas belonging to the Ḥanafis, the *adhān* was performed like the *adhān* of the people of Kufa, and the prayer was also performed according to their views. It did not change beyond what we have mentioned, except that on Friday nights, when the muezzins had finished the call of the *adhān*, they would greet the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace). This is something that was brought about by the *muḥtasib* of Cairo, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbdallāh al-Burullusī, after the year 706[/1307].

This continued until Shaʿbān 791[/August 1389], when the affairs in the lands of Egypt were in the hands of the emir Miṭṭāsh, who was [the strongman] in charge behind al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ al-Manṣūr Amīr Ḥājjī, known as Ḥājjī b. Shaʿbān b. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn.³⁷ A poor mendicant from Khilāṭ³⁸ heard the muezzins’ greetings to the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) on a Friday night. Several of [the mendicant’s] brothers approved of that, and he said to them, “Would you like that greeting to be in every *adhān*?” They said yes. So he went to bed, and awoke in the morning claiming that he had seen the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) in his dream, ordering him to go to the *muḥtasib* and say that he [the Messenger of God] had ordered the muezzins to greet the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) in each *adhān*. So, the mendicant went to the *muḥtasib* of Cairo, who in those days was Najm

34 Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), famous jurist and eponym of one of the four main Sunni legal schools.

35 ʿAlī b. Ismāʿīl Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935–6), theologian whose doctrine of religious orthodoxy brought him many followers, known as the Ashʿariyya.

36 Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān b. Thābit (d. 150/767), famous jurist and eponym of one of the four main Sunni legal schools.

37 Twenty-seventh Mamluk sultan (r. 783–4/1381–2 and 791–2/1389–90).

38 Ahlat in modern Turkey.

al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ṭanbadī:³⁹ an ignorant, terribly stupid old man, with a bad record as both *muḥtasib* and judge.⁴⁰ [...]

He [the mendicant] said to al-Ṭanbadī, “The Messenger of God has commanded you to order all the muezzins to add to each *adhān* the saying ‘Peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of God,’ as is done on Friday nights.” These words pleased the ignorant man, for he was ignorant that the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) commands nothing [be done] after his death except that which conformed with what God had legislated by his tongue during his life. And God (praise be to Him, the Most High) had prohibited in His Noble Book to add [anything] to what he had legislated, as He said: “Or have they other deities who have ordained for them a religion to which Allah has not consented?” (Q 42:21). The Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) said: “Beware of novelties in [your] affairs.”

But, he [al-Ṭanbadī] commanded this in the month of Sha‘bān in the year mentioned above. This innovation was introduced, and it continues up to today in all the lands of Egypt and Syria. The common people and the ignorant ones started believing that it was one of the phrases of the *adhān* that could not be removed. This led some of the heretics (*ahl al-ilḥād*) in some villages to add, at the end of the *adhān*, a greeting for some of the revered persons (*mu‘taqadīn*) who had died. There is no force nor power except by God, to Him we belong and to Him we shall return!

[§ 5. *The Glorification of God*]

As for the glorification (*tasbiḥ*) of God from the minarets at night, it was not among the practices of the predecessors (*salaf*) of the *umma*. The first known instance of that was from Moses b. ‘Imrān (may the prayers of God be upon him), when the Children of Israel were in the desert after Pharaoh and his people were drowned. Moses took two silver trumpets and two men from the Children of Israel, who blew in them at the time of departure and the time of lodging, on the days of the festivals, and in the last third of every night.⁴¹ At that time, some of the Levites from the tribe of Moses (peace be upon him) would sing a hymn (*nashīd*) that had come down by revelation, in which there was fear, warning, and exaltation of God Most High, and [exhortation] to lower oneself in front of Him Most High, toward the time of the rising of dawn.

39 Market inspector of Cairo (d. 800/1398), the first individual who is said to have paid authorities to obtain this position. See the discussion in Stilt, 63, 72ff.

40 Regarding al-Maqrīzī’s bitterness about the *muḥtasib*, see his *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:324.

41 Perhaps an echo of Numbers 10:1–10.

This practice continued every night throughout the life of Moses (peace be upon him) and after him during the days of Joshua b. Nūn, and the judges who arose among the Children of Israel, up till the rule of David (peace be upon him), who began the construction of the Temple of Jerusalem. Each night, some of the Levites would rise in the last third of the night. Among them there were some who struck musical instruments like the oud, the dulcimer, the lute, the frame drum, and the double reed, and so on. Among them also were those who would raise their voice with hymns revealed to God's prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and hymns revealed to David (peace be upon him). It was said that the Levites numbered 38,000 men.

A detailed account is narrated in the Book of Psalms (*al-zabūr*). When they built the Temple, everywhere throughout Jerusalem men raised [p. 89] their voices with remembrance and glorification of God, but without any musical instruments. For, the musical instruments were dedicated to the Temple of Jerusalem, and it was prohibited to strike them in any other places, so that [the Temple music] might be heard throughout the villages of Jerusalem. In every village, men raised their voices with remembrance of God Almighty until the sound of their remembrances stretched across all the villages of the Children of Israel and their cities.

This continued every night until Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem. The Children of Israel fled to Babylon, and this practice (along with others from the land of the Children of Israel) fell into disuse in Babylon during their 70 years of exile. When the Children of Israel returned from Babylon and rebuilt the Temple, they established their laws and resumed the vigil (*qiyām*) of the Levites in the Temple at night, and the vigil of the people of Jerusalem and the people of the villages and the cities, as they would do at the time of the first Temple. This continued until the Temple was destroyed following the killing of God's prophet John the Baptist (Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā), and the rise of the Jews against the Spirit of God and His Messenger, Jesus, the son of Mary (may God's prayers be upon them both), by Titus. From then on, the laws of the Children of Israel fell into disuse, along with this practice that had fallen into disuse in the land of the Children of Israel. [...]

Thereafter, the emir Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn placed, in a room close to him, men known as the *mukabbirūn* (i.e., people who chant the *takbīr*). They were twelve men, four of whom would take lodging in that room the whole night, appointing subsequently for the other nights the others. They continuously chanted "God is great" and praised and glorified God (praise be to Him!); recited the Qur'ān melodiously; entreated [God's] favor; recited splendid poems; as well as performed the *adhān* at its appointed times. Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn appointed for them a generous wage. [p. 90] When he died and his son Abū

l-Jaysh Khumārawayh succeeded him, Khumārawayh affirmed the position of the *mukabbirūn* and acted with them following the model of his father. From then on, people have adopted the vigil (*qiyām*) of the muezzins atop the minarets during the night. This became known as the “glorification” (*tasbīh*).

When the sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Ayyūb took over the sultanate of Egypt, he appointed as judge Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Malik b. Dirbās al-Hadabānī l-Mārānī l-Shāfi‘ī.⁴² He and the sultan both followed the creed of the *madhhab* of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī in theology (*uṣūl*). Until today, people have adopted his creed, such that those who contradicted it were charged with unbelief. The muezzins were ordered to announce—during the *tasbīh* atop the minarets at night—the creed known as “the guide” (*al-murshida*).⁴³ The muezzins have persisted in mentioning it every night, in all the mosques of Egypt and Cairo, up until our own time.

Also newly established was the “reminder on the day of *jumu‘a*” from the minarets with various invocations, so that people would be ready for the Friday prayer. This was after the year 700 of the Hijra [1301 CE]. Ibn Kathīr⁴⁴ (may God have mercy on him) said: On Friday, Rabī‘a 11 6, 744[/September 27, 1343], it was prescribed to remind [people] of the Friday prayer from all the minarets of Damascus, as was done from the minarets of the Umayyad Mosque. And this was carried out.

42 Referred to as Ibn Dirbās, Ṣadr al-Dīn had been charged by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn to replace all the Fatimid judges in Cairo. He was appointed in 566/1171.

43 Most likely *al-Aqīda al-murshida*, a short treatise laying out the Almohad creed, attributed to the founder and first leader of the Almohad movement, Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130).

44 Ismā‘īl b. ‘Umar, known as Ibn Kathīr (d. 744/1373), a famous Syrian exegete and historian.

Al-Badrī (d. 894/1489) on Hashish and the Senses

Daniilo Marino and Franz Rosenthal(†)

1 Introduction

Long used in the manufacturing of ropes and textiles as well as in medicine, it was only by the 7th/13th century that Arabic authors systematically began to document the growing consumption of the plant of cannabis for recreational purposes. The Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), for instance, relates that in 648/1250, the sultan al-Malik al-Mu‘izz ‘Izz al-Dīn Aybak (d. 655/1257) levied taxes against the production and selling of hashish-based products (al-Maqrīzī, 1:105, 2:90). However, as far as the word hashish is concerned, the expression *jamā‘at al-ḥashīshīyya*, meaning “low-class rabble” and “irreligious social outcast,” appears already in the early 6th/12th-century defamatory campaign against the Nizari Isma‘ilis (Daftary, 92). It can therefore be assumed that hashish consumption in some circles dates back to the late Abbasid period.

This is also the period in which the plant of hemp received a more structured and systematic scientific treatment. Ibn Sinā (370–427/980–1037), al-Bīrūnī (362–442/973–1050), and Ibn Jazla (d. 493/1100) provided detailed botanical descriptions of the wild as well as domestic hemp and listed its properties for the treatment of earaches and dandruff, for reliving flatulence, and reducing inflammation and swelling. However, the excessive consumption of hemp seeds, according to these authors, causes headaches, digestive troubles, and even infertility (Lozano Cámara, “El uso”).

From the 7th/13th century onward, following the growing spread of hemp as an intoxicant, physicians and jurists alike started discussing whether the kind of sensory stimulation produced by this plant was different from the effects induced by fermented drinks like wine. The botanist Ibn al-Bayṭār (d. 646/1248) was the first to assume that the hemp-based products produced intoxication (*sukr*). In his *Summa (Jāmi‘)*, he observes that some Sufis (*fuqarā’*) in Egypt, after consuming pills of hashish made of Indian hemp, a strong species of cannabis, “experience sudden excitement (*yaṭrabūna*) and great joy (*yafrāḥūna kathīran*); maybe it [i.e., hashish] intoxicates them (*yuskiruhum*) until reaching the state of madness or [coming] very close to it” (Ibn al-Bayṭār, 4:39).

Drawing on Ibn al-Bayṭār’s scientific authority, some jurists came to declare hashish illegal. They based this view on the well-attested saying of the Prophet

Muḥammad that “everything that intoxicates is *khamr*, and everything that is *khamr* is forbidden” (Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-ashriba* 74; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-adab* 80), *khamr* being understood as wine made from the fermentation of uncooked grape juice. However, other experts reacted against this conclusion and claimed that, by virtue of its cold and dry nature, cannabis did not excite the senses like warm and moist substances such as wine, but rather caused drowsiness, a drop in vigilance, and a reduction in the ability to react.

An anecdote included in the *Delight of the Souls in Hashish and Wine* (*Rāḥat al-arwāḥ fī l-ḥashīsh wa-l-rāḥ*) (Marino, “Raconter,” 57–60), an anthology of texts on wine and hashish compiled by the Syrian-born littérateur (*adīb*) Taqī al-Dīn Abū l-Tūqā al-Badrī (847–94/1443–89), relates the story of an epileptic and melancholic member of the upper class in Baghdad, a certain Ṣaḥīr al-Dīn, who, after being treated with hashish and listening to music, recovers his senses (see below, § 1, translated by Danilo Marino). The attribution of the tale to al-Rāzī (d. 313/925) is anachronistic, given that the historic figures in the text lived some three centuries after the death of the physician of Rayy, but nevertheless seems credible. Al-Rāzī described epilepsy (*ṣarʿ*) at length in one of his works and also recommended the listening to music as an antidote to melancholia and grief (Isgandarova, 105). However, neither al-Rāzī nor any other physician mentioned the use of hemp for the treatment of mental or behavioral conditions. In fact, in this story it is not a physician healing Ṣaḥīr al-Dīn, which shows that the use of hashish confectionaries as remedy for this kind of diseases was an unconventional (though effective) therapy.

In the story, the musician ‘Alī b. Makkī (*fl.* 6th–7th/12th–13th centuries), the son of a poet at the court of the Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir (r. 575–622/1180–1225) creates a reassuring atmosphere by singing poems accompanied by his lute, thereby preparing Ṣaḥīr al-Dīn for the intake of hashish. Instead of causing humoral disorder, mental confusion, or lethargy, as claimed by most of the juridical sources, the herb restores the balance between Ṣaḥīr al-Dīn’s body and soul to the extent that, when he feels the effects of hemp in all his senses, he suddenly regains full possession of himself and awareness of his condition (Lozano Cámara, *Solaz*, 84–5).

‘Alī b. Makkī is also credited by al-Maqrīzī with composing a long poem on hashish (see below, § 2, translated by Franz Rosenthal), which is also included in the anthology of al-Badrī mentioned above. The poem is built around the synesthetic erotic encounter between the poet and hashish, personified as a beautiful bride dressed in green whose appearance stimulates all the senses and sometimes even takes ordinary sensory experience to a higher level. Like the beloved’s mouth and scent, hashish tastes like honey and has a musky fragrance. It is softer and smoother than the skin of a young and unmarried girl, a

possible hint to the preference of hashish over wine, which is also commonly portrayed as a virgin. The poem states that hashish “makes music superfluous”—maybe a reference to the fact that the repetition of two *shīns* makes listening to the name *ḥashīsh* (which does not appear in the poem) enjoyable, or to the fact that nobody has ever heard about hashish’s stimulating effects before. The poem also describes the visual properties of the plant and in particular its colors, ranging from the deep brownish red of its high stems to the intense green of the leaves, the symbolism of which is often exploited by poets writing verses on hashish (Marino, “Le plaisir”). The concluding lines, where hashish is said to be of “Indian origin,” refers to the legend according to which a certain Shaykh Pīr Rantān from Bengal was the first to note that eating hashish reduces anxiety and sorrow and increases joyfulness and pleasure (al-Maqrīzī, 2:127; al-Badrī, fols. 4a, 5a [MS Paris], fols. 57a, 57b [MS Damascus]).

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2 Translation

Taqī l-Dīn Abū l-Tuqā al-Badrī, *Rāḥat al-arwāḥ fī l-ḥashīsh wa-l-rāḥ*, MS Ar. 3544, Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fols. 5a [text 2], 7b–8a [text 1] = MS majmū‘ 210, 7855, Damascus: Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhiriyya, fols. 57b [text 2], 59a–59b [text 1].

[§ 1. *Music and Hashish Restoring Sense*]

Among the most wonderful stories about the properties of hashish that has attracted my attention is the one narrated by the great scholar Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī in his work called *The Mansurian (al-Manṣūrī)*, a book well known for its benefits and excellent composition. In the article about the treatment of epilepsy, he says: because of its inner properties, the leaves of the domestic hemp plant (*shahdānaj*) immediately relieve [the symptoms of] epilepsy. Proof of the soundness of this is provided by what happened during my time to Ḥāhīr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. al-Wakīl. He was member of one of the most powerful families in Baghdad; his father was chamberlain of the Caliphal Council under the vizierates of Ibn al-‘Alqamī and Ibn Nāqīd in the time of the Abbasid state. Ḥāhīr had an excess of black bile (*al-sawdā’*) that caused him this disease [epilepsy]. Because he was biting his thumbs so hard that he almost severed them, he was chained and locked in his home. He used to suffer from one seizure per week and for almost six months doctors tried to treat him without success.

Then he received the visit of ‘Alī b. Makkī, who was one of the most skilled players of luth and tambourine in his time as well as a composer of excellent poetry, as the masters of the arts confirmed. His father was also a poet during the reign of al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh and Ibn Makkī was one of his chamberlains. He talked to the afflicted Ḥāhīr al-Dīn to distract him and suddenly he started singing and, while still on chains because of his illness, this melody moved him. When Ibn Makkī noticed that, he brought something made of hashish out of his sleeve and, without splitting it, he took [one piece] and offered [the rest] to Ḥāhīr al-Dīn. He first refused because he had never eaten it before, but

then, Ibn Makkī, with his polite and elegant manners, kept delighting him with his unbridled verses and gradually convinced him to eat the hashish. So, Ibn Makkī played again the luth and the tambourine and sang delicate poems and after not even an hour Ṣahīr al-Dīn felt the effect of hashish in his soul and his senses. He regained his right mind and blamed his family for showing no consideration for the misery of his state.

From this day, which was also when he was having his [weekly] seizure, he was cured from the disease, and nobody found a reason for the end of the disease other than the eating of hashish. From this day on, Ṣahīr al-Dīn never stopped taking this herb. I think that this was an extraordinary event and an amazing and refined tale.

[§ 2. *Ode to Hashish*¹]

Now drive sadness away from me as well as harm
 With the help of a virgin(al being), wedded in its green dress.
 It reveals itself to us adorned with brocade.²
 No metaphor in verse or prose is strong enough for it.
 It appears, filling the eyes with light through its beauty,
 A beauty that puts to shame the light³ of meadow and flowers with a
 bright sheen (?).
 It is a bride whose hidden secret gladdens the soul.
 Coming in the evening, it is found in all the senses in the morning.
 In its clarity it gives to taste the taste of honey.
 Through its odor it gives to smell the choicest scent of musk.
 It makes touch dispense with bashful maidens.
 Mention of it makes music superfluous for the ear.⁴
 Its color presents sight with the most beautiful diversion.
 Sight turns to looking at this color rather than that of any other flower.
 It is composed of bright red color⁵ and white, and it bends
 Proudly over the flowers, high of stature.

1 The translation and the explanatory footnotes are by Franz Rosenthal (Rosenthal, pp. 152–3 [republ. ed., pp. 287–8]), based on the text as it appears in al-Maqrīzī, 2:127.

2 This refers to the silvery and golden glow on the plant when it is covered with dew in the morning sunlight.

3 “Light” seems more likely to be meant than “blossom.”

4 The verse is missing from al-Maqrīzī but found in al-Badrī: *wa-fihā ghīnan bi-l-massi ‘an khurradi sitrin / wa-fī dhikrihā li-s-sam‘i mughnin ‘an-i-zamri*. It clearly belongs to the original poem.

5 For the old Arabian color spectrum, cf. Fischer, 237, passim.

The light of the sun is eclipsed by its red color.
 The face of the moon is put to shame by its whiteness.
 It ranks high in beauty. It is as if it were
 The emerald of a meadow drenched by copious rain.
 It appears—and makes hidden feelings appear.
 It comes—and turns away the army of my worry and pensiveness.
 Beautiful of shape, mighty in rank,
 It grows high, and high does my verse grow in praise of it.
 Thus, rise and banish the army of worry⁶ and stay the hand of distress
 With an Indian (maiden) more effective than white (swords) and brown
 (spears),
 With an Indian as to origin, showing people
 How to eat it, not an Indian in color like the brown ones.⁷
 Eating it removes the burning worry from us
 And gives us enjoyment secretly and openly.

6 Al-Badrī: “and protect the army of fun.” The “army” of worry is a common metaphor in hashish poetry.

7 Al-Badrī: “and greenness (?)” (*wa-l-khudri*).

Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) on the Four Princes of Perfume

Geert Jan van Gelder

1 Introduction

Sweet smells rise in the oldest pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. Imru' al-Qays (first half of the sixth century CE) describes his beloved women friends in what is surely the most famous Arabic poem of all time: “When they stood up, the scent of musk wafted from them like breath of the east wind bearing the fragrance of cloves” (trans. Jones, 59); “In the morning crumbled musk lies on her bed” (trans. Jones, 69; see further Shalaq). Al-Marrār, in the first century of Islam, says of his beloved: “The perfume of ambergris and musk cleaves to her, and she is yellow [with saffron] like the raceme of the sugarpalm” (trans. Lyall, 54). Sexual attraction is, however, merely one of the functions of perfume. A few generations before the Prophet Muḥammad, a powerful confederation of clans in Mecca were known as “the Perfumed Ones” (*al-Muṭayyabūn*), because they had sealed their covenant by dipping their hands in a bowl of perfume and wiping them on the walls of the Kaʿba (Ibn Hishām, 1:130–2 [trans. 56–7]; cf. Serjeant, 59, 61–2). It is said that Muḥammad, as a 15-year-old boy, was present, as was Abū Bakr, the first caliph (al-Zabīdī, s.v. ṭ-y-b). Perfume played a part in rituals of purification and burial. The Prophet Muḥammad himself, according to several reports, was fond of perfume: “These things in this world of yours have been made dear to me: women and perfume” is one of his often-quoted sayings; others have been collected, for instance, by the respected theologian Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) in his work on *Medicine of the Prophet* (*al-Ṭibb al-nabawī*) (Ibn Qayyim, 278–80, 309, 336–7, 395). The use of perfume by men is not deemed frivolous or effeminate in Islam: the example of the Prophet and his contemporaries was followed by many of the pious and powerful. The doughty caliph al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 218–27/833–42) is singled out as exceptional: he rarely used perfume and his body usually smelled of rusty armor ([Pseudo-]al-Jāhīz, 155). Not everyone needs perfume: an unnamed man asked, “What is the best scent?” answered, “The smell of a beloved body, or of a child that you raise” (al-Muʿāfā, 3:151).

Perfume has very positive connotations; the most common general word for perfume, *ṭīb*, is related to *ṭayyib* “good, nice.” The second-holiest town of Islam, Medina, was sometimes nicknamed Ṭayba, one is told, because of its sweet scent and because, miraculously, perfumes and other aromatic substances smell much sweeter in Medina than anywhere else (al-Tha‘ālibī, 93–4 [trans. 117–18]). Costly presents of perfume were much appreciated, as may be gleaned from the anonymous *K. al-Hadāyā wa-l-tuḥaf* (*Book of Gifts and Rarities*).

Information on perfumes in the traditional Arab civilization may be found in the works of botanists and lexicographers, such as Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī (d. 283/895), who was both (al-Dīnawarī, 184–223; cf. Ibn Sīda, 11:193–205); of scientists or alchemists, like al-Kindī (d. after 256/870), who wrote a work entitled *The Chemistry of Scent and Distillations* (*K. Kīmīyā’ al-’iṭr wa-l-taṣ’īdāt*; see further Ibn al-Nadīm, 317); in books on erotology (al-Tifāshī, 59–61, 63; al-Tijānī, 135–6; al-Nafzāwī, 137–8); in cookery books, such as those by Ibn al-‘Adīm from the twelfth century entitled *Union with the Beloved: On the Description of Things Nice [to Eat] and Perfume* (*al-Wuṣṣla ilā l-ḥābiḥ fi waṣf al-ṭayyibāt wa-l-ṭīb*) (Ibn al-‘Adīm, 2:481–502, 727–41; cf. the annotations in Ibn al-‘Adīm, 815, 823, 836–7, 850–3, 867–8, 882–3, 888; see on this text, Rodinson), and an anonymous Egyptian cookery book from the 9th/15th century (*Kanz*, 230–51, 284–9; on perfumes in chemistry and cooking, see Aubaile-Sallenave; Bolens; Marín); in literary anthologies like that compiled by the poet al-Sarī al-Raffā’ (d. after 360/970) in his *Book of Lover, Beloved, Smells, and Drinks* (*K. al-Muḥibb wa-l-maḥbūb wa-l-mashmūm wa-l-mashrūb*) (al-Sarī, 2:139–96), or by the great linguist and theologian al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) in his *Springtime of the Righteous* (*Rabī’ al-abrār*) (al-Zamakhsharī, 2:265–88; see also, e.g., al-Ghuzūlī [d. 815/1412], 1:62–4); and in encyclopedias such as *The Ultimate Goal* (*Nihāyat al-arab*) by al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333).

A literary form that usually aims at combining the entertaining and the informative is the literary debate, in which persons or personified objects or concepts try to establish their superiority (see Reinink and Vanstiphout; Wagner). It would seem that the important early prose writer al-Jāhiz (d. 255/869) wrote such a debate, unfortunately lost, between musk and civet (Pellat, 148 n142). The following is a translation of a somewhat similar text by a much later author, the polymath al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505). He called it *al-Maqāma al-miskiyya* (*The Musk Maqama*), or *Maqāmat al-ṭīb* (*The Maqama of Perfume*), a *maqāma* being a short narrative or didactic text usually in highly ornate rhymed prose full of puns and allusions, of which normally only a minimal portion can be retained in translation. Al-Suyūṭī has been berated for calling his text a *maqāma* (Kilito, 152), but there is no reason why a 20th-century critic

should impose on classical writers his own terminological norms, based on a rather narrow definition of the *maqāma*.¹

Many Arab perfumes were, of course, compounds of several ingredients, famous examples being *nadd*, *ghāliya*, *khalūq*, and *barmakiyya*. In the present text four basic ingredients—musk, ambergris, saffron, and civet—compete for superiority. It is not wholly clear why precisely these four are singled out; saffron, after all, is more often used as a coloring agent or spice, although it is used in perfumes, and it is listed, with musk, ambergris, aloes, and camphor, as one of the “basic perfumes” by the famous physician Ibn Māsawayh (d. 243/857) (Marín, 298; cf. al-Mas‘ūdī, 1:194). The four substances are not particularly “Arabian,” unlike myrrh and frankincense, which were long associated with Happy Araby. Three of these four are animal secretions that act as fixatives, or bases, for compound perfumes. Saffron, again, is therefore the odd one out in this company.

Although the four contestants are speaking and are being addressed as persons, there is no question of a debate: most of the text is a monologue spoken by the judge, obviously the author himself. It is possible, but unprovable, that the text is a kind of allegory with a political background, the four contestants standing for a quartet of leading Mamluks who, for a number of years, were involved in securing for themselves the succession of Sultan Qā’it Bey, who died in 901/1496 (al-Durūbī, 68). It can be read, however, simply as a source for medieval lore and learning concerning the religious and medical roles of perfumes; it shows clearly the importance of perfume in Islam, where the sober opinion of Pliny the Elder (“Perfumes are the most pointless of luxuries,” Pliny, 173 [Book XIII:20]) was generally rejected. Not surprisingly, al-Suyūṭī, who thought of himself as a serious and pious scholar, stresses the religious and medical properties and associations of perfume rather than its social, aesthetic, or sexual functions, although these are not altogether absent. To comment in some detail on the medical information given in the text is neither within the scope of this chapter, nor within my competence. However, it may be noted, for instance, that a modern encyclopedia says that saffron “is used as a remedy for catarrhal affections [...] of children, for melancholia (mental depression) and to treat enlargement of the liver” (*NEB*, 9:891), which will be seen to tally reasonably well with al-Suyūṭī’s text.

1 In addition to the edition mentioned below, another edition has been used for this translation: *Maqāmāt al-Suyūṭī*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ghaffār Sulaymān al-Bundārī and Muḥammad al-Sa‘īd Basyūnī Zaghālūl, Beirut, 1986, pp. 105–15 (text incomplete). Al-Suyūṭī’s text has also been translated, lightly annotated, into German by Rescher.

It should not be thought that perfume is always a good thing in Islam. Its associations with sexual attraction makes it dangerous when used inappropriately, which means, as may be expected, publicly by women, who thereby mean to attract men. A story from Tradition literature about the Prophet runs as follows (Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, k. *al-fitna*, b. *fitnat al-nisā'*):

Abū Hurayra [a well-known contemporary of Muḥammad] met a woman who was perfumed, on her way to the mosque, and said to her, "You, servant of the Almighty, where are you going?" She answered, "To the mosque." He said, "Is it therefore that you have put on perfume?"—"Yes."—"I have heard the Apostle of God [viz., Muḥammad] say: 'If a woman puts on perfume and then goes out to the mosque, then her prayer will not be accepted, unless she washes herself.'"

The last two words could also be rendered as "performs the major ritual ablution," necessary when in a state of major impurity, notably after sexual intercourse. In another version of this saying, the Prophet is reported to have said, "If a woman wears scent in public (*istaṭarat 'alā l-qawm*) so that people may smell her, she is a so-and-so!"—the compiler adds: "He used a strong word" (Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, k. *al-tarajjul*, b. *mā jā'a fī l-mar'a tataṭayyab li-l-khurūj*; cf. al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi'*, k. *al-adab*, b. *fī karāhiyat khurūj al-mar'a muta'aṭṭira*). Al-Suyūṭī does not quote these sayings, but he does report the prohibition of strong-smelling perfumes for women. It is only in private and in poetry, redolent with scents, that they may be freely fragrant.

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2 Translation

Jalâl al-Dîn al-Suyūṭî, *al-Maqâma al-miskiyya*, ed. (with commentary) Samîr Maḥmūd al-Durûbî, *Sharḥ Maqâmât Jalâl al-Dîn al-Suyūṭî*, Beirut, 1989, pp. 1082–1111.

[p. 1082] *The Musk Maqâma, Being the Maqâma of Perfume*
 [§1. Introduction]

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. The Four Princes of Perfumes appeared before a master (*imâm*) of eloquence, an orator,² and said,

2 In many literary debates there is a judge who may or may not give a verdict at the end. Often he is to be identified as the dedicatee of such a text. It is not known whether the present text was dedicated to anybody, but it is obvious from what follows that this master of eloquence is none other than al-Suyūṭî, who did not have a low opinion of himself.

—May God support and take care of our master, bestow graces upon him, give him authority, and grant him His blessings, since he is so deserving of them! May He guard and protect him against adversities and let him ascend and reach the summit of glory! [p. 1083] We are a number of friends that assist in doing good, who are always sought for good things, and pursued for warding off harm and evil. We are not seen to do reprehensible things. Whoever comes to us seeking a favor will not be dismayed by us with an ill reception, nor do we take ill what has afflicted him. All kinds of good reports spread about us. Ah, how much have we earned by the time our breath is finally lost!

We were about to quarrel about which one of us is the most exalted in perfumed rank and most generally useful. Then a voice was heard in the congregation, that said, “You people in the assembly, I shall give you sincere advice: ‘Obey God and His Messenger and do not quarrel so that you may become faint and your breath will depart!’” (Q 8:46).³ [p. 1084] So we enjoined one another to behave in a seemly manner and we agreed to be reconciled, for “reconciliation is better” (Q 4:128). We agreed to abandon all debating and fighting and wended our camels from the farthest lands toward you. We crossed, on our way to you, every sea and wadi. Now we come to you, as the noblest guests and visitors, having recourse to your protection, which is a refuge to those seeking a favor. We have come to drink from your sweet spring, which vouches to give all sorts of delights. We look forward to your great fairness and long for your noble character, so that you may divulge what is hidden of our own characters, show clearly our hidden secrets, clothe us with ample and elegant robes of honor, [p. 1085] forgive us our former coarseness, and bestow upon us the pearls of your words that are a cure for those on the brink of death. For our ears have been struck by the *Maqāma of Fragrant Smells* that you have composed,⁴ this wondrous testimony that you have written, with its splendid descriptions, its eloquent composition, the information you packed in it, the brilliant things you revealed in it, the veils you removed from it, the beauties that you divulged in it, the hidden parts of it that you showed, disclosing its face and extracting its concealed treasure from its every nook and cranny!

If you would be so kind as to give us our share and weave some words of your composition! Please allot to us a portion like the others, and give us “a true reputation”⁵ that will be transmitted by learned and intelligent people!

3 Since existing translations obscure the puns that apply here (“become faint,” “lose breath, or smell”), I have made my own version.

4 A *maqāma* on sweet-smelling flowers in a similar style, published in al-Suyūṭī’s *Maqāmāt*, ed. al-Durūbī, 431–78, translated in Rescher, 15–36.

5 The expression echoes Abraham’s request from God (Q 26:84).

He answered forthwith,

—[p. 1086] Welcome, noble visitors! May God protect you from being wronged, or losing value after being bundled. May He let you dwell in the highest class and avert from you any concatenated or circular argument.⁶ When someone like you asks, he is answered, and if he prays his prayer is answered, by your fond praise. Your fragrance fills the milk-skins.⁷ With you suitors adorn themselves. I shall give you “wisdom and a decisive speech!”⁸

Then, anointed with musk and ambergris, he mounted his pulpit, addressed the people, and called upon those seated to listen, saying,

—Praise be to God, who ennobled the various kinds of perfume and spread the scent of their good qualities on the tongue of every orator; who diffused from their sweet odor something more fragrant than fresh sandalwood and elevated them on thrones and couches; who made them dear to prophets, apostles, [p. 1087] and angels, and associated them with desirable religious customs on Fridays and Feast days; “Good fellows they are!” (Q 4:69) I testify that there is no god but God alone, without partner, who placed the sum-total of good things in Paradise, but made some specimens of their effects descend to the world, so that from them it may be inferred what great blessings are awaiting in Paradise. And I testify that our lord and prophet, Muḥammad, is His servant and apostle, who brought the Holy Law most pure, and a path most clear leading to the Truth most sure, and a religion most strong that is closest to God; [Muḥammad] who is good⁹ in constitution and character, from whom may be gathered what is better than musk when he drips with sweat.¹⁰ God bless him, his relatives, and his Companions, as long as wooden pulpits are standing, [p. 1088] musk-bags are imported from the land of Tibet, and bags of ambergris from the shore of the sea.

Ye People! God has given the various kinds of perfume a common honor and great distinction in this world, in the hereafter and in the Barrier.¹¹ He made them dear to His apostles and prophets, to His angels and elect beings. This honor is sufficiently shown in what is reported by al-Ḥākim [al-Nisābūrī,

6 *Tasalsul* and *dawr*: two terms from logic; the present allusion is not clear.

7 Probably meaning “revives the spirit” or “is all-pervading”; the word is used in figurative expressions (cf. “his milk-skins are empty,” i.e., “he died, or was killed”).

8 Quoting God’s words to David (Q 38:20). Unlike God, the author reserves the wisdom and the speech for himself.

9 *Ṭayyib*, with the same root as *ṭib*.

10 According to a tradition, the Prophet’s sweat was collected while he was asleep by a woman, who found it to be sweeter than musk, e.g., al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, k. *al-birr* 69; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-istiʿdhān* 41; al-Nasāʿī, *Sunan*, k. *al-zīna* 117.

11 *Al-Barzakh*, a Qurʾānic expression for a place between Heaven and Hell, sometimes explained as a kind of limbo.

d. 405/104] in his *Emendation*¹² as being an authentic tradition, about Anas b. Mālik [d. between 91/709 and 93/711], servant and dependent of the Chosen One [Muḥammad]: “The Apostle of God (God bless and preserve him, may He honor and exalt him) said, “These things in this world of yours have been made dear to me: women and perfume; the delight of my eye is in ritual prayer.” [p. 1089] In another report, from among the authentic traditions, he said, “Four things belong to the good practice of the apostles: using a toothbrush, perfume, henna, and marriage.” Another: “Whoever is offered perfume should not refuse it, for it is easy to carry and smells good.” On the authority of Anas [b. Mālik], it is said that the Apostle of God never refused perfume, as is reported in al-Bukhārī’s [d. 256/870] *Sound Traditions*.¹³ [Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh] al-Bazzāz [d. 354/965] transmits in his *Musnad*¹⁴ (*Classified Traditions*) an excellent tradition: “God is good (*ṭayyib*) and He loves perfume (*ṭīb*); He is clean and He loves cleanliness.” On more than one occasion in the ritual practices of Islam one is enjoined to use perfume: [p. 1090] on Fridays, the Two Feasts,¹⁵ at solar and lunar eclipses, at ritual prayers for rain, and at entering the state of ritual consecration [of pilgrims at Mecca]. It is prescribed for every living being and for the dead of every tribe or clan. Abū Yāsir al-Baghdādī¹⁶ said, “Perfume is one of the greatest pleasures of mankind and one of the strongest incentives to copulation and the gratification of one’s desire.” According to authentic traditions the Prophet has said,¹⁷ “The perfume of men has a clear smell and a hidden color”—meaning, for instance, musk and ambergris—“and the perfume of women has a clear color and a hidden smell”—meaning, for instance, saffron. That is why clothes dyed with saffron are forbidden to men.¹⁸

You three Princes, Musk, Ambergris, and Saffron, are equals¹⁹ in supremacy and leadership. Proof of that lies in the fact that you are found together in the

12 Al-Ḥākīm al-Nisābūrī collected in his *al-Mustadrak* traditions about the Prophet wrongly omitted, in his view, by the great third/ninth-century compilers al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

13 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-libās*, b. *man lam yarudd al-ṭīb*. Cf. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-alfāz min al-adab*, b. *isti’māl al-misk*; al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, k. *al-zīna*, b. *al-ṭīb*.

14 *Musnad*: a compilation of traditions on the Prophet, arranged according to their first transmitters.

15 The Feast of Sacrifice, during the Pilgrimage, and the Feast of Breaking the Ramadan Fast.

16 Author of a *Treatise on Perfume* (*R. fi l-ṭīb*); see al-Nafzāwī, *Glory*, 109, 111, 137, 185; al-Tijānī, 103–5, 136, 214. I do not know when he lived.

17 See, e.g., al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, k. *al-zīna*, b. *al-faṣl bayn ṭīb al-rijāl wa-ṭīb al-nisā’*.

18 E.g., al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-libās*, b. *al-taza’fur li-l-rijāl*; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-libās*, b. *al-taza’fur li-l-rijāl*.

19 Or “well-matched,” *aqrān*. This equality should not be taken too literally, for the author goes on to show that the three mentioned “princes” are by no means equal.

Sunna, which [p. 1091] is second to the Qurʾān. Ibn Abī l-Dunyā [d. 281/894] transmits the tradition of Anas [b. Mālik] from the greatest prophet who ever ascended a pulpit: “God has created Paradise with musk as its mortar, saffron as its straw, pearls as its pebbles, and ambergris as its earth.”

[§ 2. *Musk*]

Musk,²⁰ however, has a special distinction among you and is superior to you, since it is mentioned in the revealed Qurʾān, which is the supreme honor. God said, as people recite it, “They are given to drink of pure wine sealed, of which the seal is musk—for that let the aspirers aspire” (Q 83:25–6).²¹ And he [Muḥammad], the most truthful and trustworthy, said, intimating its superiority, “The best perfume is musk,” which was transmitted by Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī [d. ca. 65/684] and included by Muslim [d. 261/875] in his compilation.²² [p. 1092] The ancient Arabs are reported to have said, “The only [true] perfume is musk.”

When God’s Apostle died, he was embalmed with musk. Since there was some left, ‘Alī²³ said in his will that he should be embalmed with it, as a blessing with the superiority (*faḍl*) of this superfluity (*faḍla*). Salmān al-Fārisī²⁴ ordered, shortly before his death, that his house should be sprinkled with it, according to an authentic report, and said, “The angels will be with me; they will neither eat nor drink but they will notice the smell.”

Many are the authentic reports that we have learned and transmitted in which musk is mentioned explicitly. The blood of a martyr, for instance, has been likened to it, as is the smell of the mouth of someone who fasts.²⁵ [p. 1093] The rivers of Paradise spring forth from beneath mountains of musk. In Paradise there is a place where one may wallow in musk, just as animals in this world wallow in the sand. A decent companion has been likened to someone carrying musk: whether he shares it with you or you only experience the fragrance, in either case you may smell, feel well, and do well out of it.

The Prophet has ordered that a menstruating woman should use it when she is ritually clean again and performs the ablution. He preferred it to all other kinds of perfume, for a good reason that is well known: it is hot in the second

20 See, e.g., Dietrich, with more references.

21 Bell’s translation.

22 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-alfāz min al-adab*, b. *istiʿmāl al-misk*.

23 His cousin and son-in-law, the fourth caliph.

24 A Persian, the first non-Arab convert to Islam.

25 See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-libās*, b. *mā yudhkar fī l-ṭīb*. The comparison should not, of course, be taken literally: God is said to prefer the bad breath of someone devoutly fasting to the smell of musk.

degree, with a heat that flares up and is not moderate. Therefore it makes conception possible more quickly, and when her husband has intercourse with her she will become pregnant.

Among its benefits and good qualities is its use as a deodorant. It heats [p. 1094] the limbs, is useful against bad winds produced in the bowels, fortifies the heart, encourages sufferers from melancholy, and gives cheer when one feels lonely or gloomy. It opens up stoppages, rectifies one's thoughts, removes worrying thoughts and misgivings, strengthens the outer parts of the body when applied to them, and the inner parts when it is drunk. This shows sufficiently how useful it is. It also has aphrodisiac powers, and it helps against cold headache. If it is applied, with gillyflower oil, to the tip of the penis, it helps to achieve ejaculation quickly and makes frequent intercourse possible. It strengthens the brain and is useful against all cold sicknesses. It counteracts the effect of poisons and snakebites: It is so useful! It is good against fainting²⁶ and debility, palpitation, and winds (colds?) that affect the eye and all other parts of the human [p. 1095] body. It clears the white of the eye, strengthens it, dries up its moistness without any damage. It regulates the belly. It removes the pallor of the face. It alleviates pain from external hemorrhoids when applied repeatedly. It may be used to fortify one's natural heat. In medicaments for the four senses²⁷ it kindles all of these; when mixed with laxative medicines it enhances their purity.²⁸ It helps to weaken the effect of laxative drugs. Dissolved in oil of ben and applied to the head it helps against colds. Sufferers from hemiplegia or a cold apoplexy may be stimulated if it is inhaled. Dissolved in [p. 1096] heated oils and applied to the spine it helps against numbness, hemiplegia, and similar complaints. It is most useful for elderly people and those with a moist [phlegmatic] constitution, particularly in cool periods and regions. It may cause headache to young people and those with a hot constitution, especially in hot regions and periods.

Because of its great importance and high status poets have awarded it a transcendent position: they do not compare it to anything, but make it the *secundum comparationis*. Thus the complexion of the beloved or his mole may be compared to it, or anything with a fragrant smell. Someone said on its color:

Musk resembles you, and you resemble it as to its color, whether you stand or sit,

²⁶ *Ghashy*; or *ghathy* "nausea," as in the edition of al-Bundārī and Zaghlūl.

²⁷ Presumably sight, hearing, smell, and taste.

²⁸ Or, with the edition of al-Bundārī and Zaghlūl, "their preservation."

[p. 1097] There can be no doubt, since you both have the same color, that you are made of the same clay.

Another said, on a mole,

On his red cheek there appeared a mole that confused sensible men.
“Isn’t he a tame fawn,” I said, “and that musk made of gazelle’s blood?”

This comparison originates from Abū l-Ṭayyib [al-Mutanabbī, d. 354/965] when he said, eulogizing his patron,

I have seen you among those that one sees to be kings: you were, as it were, straight amid the crooked.
You surpass mankind while belonging to it yourself? Well, musk is, after all, made of gazelle’s blood.²⁹

[p. 1098] Al-Sarūjī [d. 693/1294] said,

On her cheek, on the right-hand side, there is a spot of musk I wish to kiss.
I thought, when it showed itself, that it was her mole, but I found that its beauty pervaded all of her.³⁰

Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir [d. 692/1293] said,

Ambergris-like, his backside (?)³¹ appeals to me. How often did a lover love to rub it!
[p. 1099] Every time I said, “His mole is musk!” musk answered, “Oh no, I am his slave!”³²

Another said,

29 See, e.g., Arberry, 62.

30 A pun: the line could also be rendered as “I thought, when it appeared, that it was her maternal uncle; but I found that on account of its beauty it was her paternal uncle.” See Ibn Shākir, 2:198.

31 *ʿAjz*; Rescher prefers the variant reading *ʿajn* (“to knead [him]”), which may be better, for it is unlikely that someone’s entire posterior is darkened by a mole. The edition by al-Bundārī and Zaghlūl has *fajr*, which is not clear.

32 Again, like in the following fragment, a pun on two of the many meanings of *khāl* (“mole, maternal uncle”).

It is not strange that he totters from drunkenness: his saliva is palatable red wine.

And why should his breath not be akin to perfume, since musk is his *khāl* (“mole/maternal uncle”)?

I have seen that some poets compare it to youth, which indicates its distinction to those with insight. Wajih al-Din Abū l-Ḥasan Ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Munāwī [*fl.* around 700/1300] said,

[p. 1100] Musk is the most precious perfume: like youth and its grace;
It resembles it in elegance and beauty, in its fragrance and its color.
If perfume had an eye, musk would be its pupil.

He also said,³³

Musk is superior to other perfumes, [as] if it needed arbitration.
Suffice it to point out that it serves as a seal for the wine in eternal Paradise.

[§ 3. *Ambergris*]

As for you, Ambergris,³⁴ you are second to Musk in merit and follow him in constitution, because hotness in ambergris is moderate and because it is nobler than all the rest. Ibn al-Bayṭār [d. 646/1248]³⁵ said, “Ambergris is the lord of perfumes”; although he should have made an exception for musk, since this has precedence on the basis of the words of the Truthful, the Beloved [viz., Muḥammad].

In the Sunna there are several authentic traditions which say that “Ambergris is the earth of Paradise.” Al-Bukhārī [p. 1101] transmitted in his *History* that ‘Ā’isha,³⁶ when asked “Did the Prophet use perfume?” answered, “Yes, the masculine perfumes: musk and ambergris.” Ibn ‘Abbās³⁷ was asked about paying alms tax on ambergris. “It is only something thrown up by the sea,” he said, “and if it is found, a fifth is due to the public treasury.”

God has placed many benefits in it for His servants, which every astute physician has exploited. It gives strength to the heart and the senses; smelling it

33 “Another said” in the edition of al-Bundārī and Zaghāl.

34 See, e.g., Ruska and Plessner, with more references.

35 Famous botanist and pharmacologist.

36 Favorite wife of the Prophet.

37 Often-quoted and authoritative cousin of the Prophet.

helps against diseases caused by bad phlegm, against hemiplegia and palsy. As an unguent it helps against cold pains in the stomach, bad flatulence in the bowels, the brain, and the joints, [p. 1102] and against stoppages. It is useful against migraine, cold catarrh, and headache caused by [bad] mixtures of the humors, when used as incense; also against all kinds of muscular pains and numbness, when it is dissolved in oil of ben and the dorsal vertebrae are anointed with it. It fortifies the mouth of the stomach when a piece of cotton is dipped into it and put upon that spot for a while. Eating it helps against loose bowels caused by a cold and, by implication, against a weak stomach. It strengthens and increases the essence of every spirit in the vital organs.

The poets have declared it to be above comparison; to it they have compared those whose worth they intended to extol. Thus one of these flatterers said,

[p. 1103] A brown girl: her face rivals the spotted full moon, when it looms
in a night of curly hair.
Beloved; her color taken from the bottom of the heart; molded from musk
and rosy ambergris.³⁸

Al-Badr Ibn al-Ṣāhib [d. 788/1386] said,

The ambergris of his mole spreads its perfume over the rose of his cheek:
God, how lovely this fragrance on that rosy ambergris!

[p. 1104] Abū l-Ḥasan al-Jawharī [d. after 377/987], describing an elephant:

A back, built like al-Khawarnaq,³⁹ never exhausted by toil;
A posterior like a bench made of ambergris, with swaying haunches,
towering.

[§ 4. *Saffron*]

As for you, Saffron: authentic traditions say that you are the grass and the earth of Paradise. How noble a quality! It is reported that it was from you that God [p. 1105] created the houris. You are, therefore, third in rank, with firmly established qualities, beloved by every friend, trailing the train of virtue. However, men should not feel free to use you as perfume; there should be no love between them and you, and they must not have a share of you. You are strongly

38 See Ibn Bassām, 1:1, 149. The poem is by Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. Jurj (fifth/eleventh century).

39 A legendary castle built by a pre-Islamic Arab king for a Persian Sasanian prince in the fifth century C.E.

forbidden to them. They are threatened with dire punishment on the Day of the Resurrection if they use you as *khalūq*.⁴⁰

Like your two friends you are hot and dry. Saffron has useful qualities that are obvious: it gives a beautiful and blooming complexion; it remedies putrefaction, and fortifies the bowels. It is an aphrodisiac, it strengthens the organs, sharpens [p. 1106] the eye and protects it against catarrh. It dissolves swellings, helps against inflammation of the spleen and diseases of the fundament and the uterus. It alleviates St. Anthony's fire, acts as a diuretic, and helps to digest food. It is useful against hardening, contractions, and ulcers of the uterus. It has great and wonderful properties in fortifying the heart and the vital spirit. It gives cheer and relief, but used in excess it cannot be tolerated, so that a quantity of 4.5 drams⁴¹ is fatal when drunk. Sufferers from pleurisy are made to smell it; likewise someone suffering from *shawṣa*,⁴² so that he may sleep. It eases breathing and much strengthens its organs.⁴³ It opens up blockages in the veins and the liver. A woman having protracted contractions should drink a little of it, for a speedy delivery, which is a very useful property. A walnut-size quantity, kneaded and hung on a woman or a mare after childbirth, drives out [p. 1107] the placenta. When it is boiled and the infusion is poured on the head, it helps against insomnia resulting from salty phlegm and has a good soporific effect. It is one of its characteristics that it will not change the constitution of humors; rather, it preserves the constituent humors equally. A gecko⁴⁴ will not enter a house in which there is saffron: a peculiar property! It is used as an eyeshadow to countereffect the lividness acquired through some diseases. One should be warned, however, against using too much of it and being addicted to it, for this has harmful effects.

A good comparison is seen in the lines by al-Khwārazmī [d. 383/993]:

Don't you see that fresh saffron? You would think it is burning coal that flares up from under the charcoal ashes.

[p. 1108] Between the leaves that surround it, it looks like streaks of a mole on cheeks that have been slapped;

40 A perfume containing saffron. See, e.g., al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-libās*, b. *al-taza'fur li-l-rijāl* and b. *al-thawb al-muza'far*.

41 Lit. "three *mithqāls*," the equivalent of 4.5 *dirhams* or drams.

42 Various explained in the dictionaries as pain in the belly, throbbing of an artery, and pleurisy, a swelling inside the ribs, a puffiness above the eyes, etc. Cf. also Dozy, s.v.

43 Rescher, rejecting this reading, has "the member" ("das Glied"), which may be correct.

44 *Sāmm abraṣ*, lit. "speckled poisonous one."

Blood to the eye, musk when its perfumed aroma spreads: musk, after all,
has been blood!⁴⁵

[§ 5. *Civet*]

As for you, Civet: although your fame has spread in every congregation, amidst all sedentary and nomadic people, yet you are not counted as the peer of the others, because you are mentioned neither in the Qurʾān nor in a tradition about the lord of the offspring of ʿAdnān,⁴⁶ either in the authentic reports, or in those deemed “weak” or “good.” You are not found in a report of the Prophet’s Companions or the generation that followed them. Therefore do not overstep your bounds [p. 1109] and do not go out of your depths! If you would claim to be on a par with the other three, one would say, “Away with you!” If you were to compete with them in this race, may you fall over miserably! I can inform you of something else: some jurists have decreed that you are ritually impure. This diminishes your value on the perfume market. The most that can be said of you is that you are the sweat of a wild cat, or the milk of a sea cat.⁴⁷ So you have nothing to boast of. You are the least in nobility, with the humblest descent. If only a few hairs from where you come from were plucked out together with you, then you would be worthless.

But I shall restore your reputation and amend your poor state. For God has given you several beneficial qualities and entrusted you with hidden properties. If someone suffering from a cold smells you, he will find relief. Abscesses, when anointed with you, will be less painful. A dram of you, drunk together with the same quantity of saffron, in the broth of a fat chicken, gives an easy delivery to a woman and preserves the precious pearl. You are hot in the third degree, your coldness is moderate for those who want to ... [?].⁴⁸ [p. 1110] I have seen an incompletely transmitted tradition about Umm Ḥabība, wife of the best of apostles [viz., Muḥammad], according to which the wives of the Negus gave her much civet, which she presented to the Prophet. Thus civet acquired honor and rose to an exalted position, becoming splendid among the kinds of perfume and the fourth together with the three other Princes.

45 Cf. the lines on musk, quoted before. The imagery of the second line is not wholly clear to me.

46 The legendary ancestor of the “North Arabs”; also of Muḥammad.

47 See, e.g., al-Damīrī, 2:37–8 (s.v. *ṣinnawr al-zabād*), who says that civet comes from an animal “like the domestic cat, but with a longer tail and bigger,” but records the opinion that it is “the milk of a cat in the sea.” He also discusses the question of its ritual purity or impurity.

48 Al-Suyūṭī, in a punning mood, uses three obscure verbs (*muthāqaba*, *muthāfana*, *munāfatha*), the meaning of which eludes both Rescher and me.

I ask God's forgiveness for any shortcoming toward Him; I ask His pardon for any ignorance of His special attributes. May God make us one of those who turn to Him, repentantly, and listen to the Truth, humbly. May He protect us with His mercy from every idolatry, may He keep us away from every falsehood, lie, and untruth. May He unite us with His servants, in one company with those that are brought near (Q 56:11, 83:21, 28). [p. 111] May He make us one of those who are "given to drink of pure wine sealed, of which the seal is musk" (Q 83:25-6).

PART 3

Philosophical and Scientific Perspectives



Al-Kindī (d. after 256/870) on the Effects of Music, Colors, and Scents

Adam Bursi and Anya King

1 Introduction

Ya‘qūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī was born into a prominent lineage within the Arab tribe of Kinda, for which he is sometimes called “the philosopher of the Arabs” (Adamson, 4). A prolific writer on a wide range of philosophical, theological, and technical subjects, al-Kindī is credited in Ibn al-Nadīm’s (d. ca. 320/932) *Fihrist* (*List of Books*) with over 200 titles, of which only a small fraction has survived (Ibn al-Nadīm, 2:182–94). The bulk of this output occurred during the reigns of the Abbasid caliphs al-Ma‘mūn and al-Mu‘taṣim at the peak of the “translation movement” in Baghdad (Gutas). The translation in this period of a variety of Greek philosophical texts “provided the immediate inspiration for al-Kindī’s own writings” (Adamson, 6).

The *Risāla fī ajzā’ khubrīyya fī l-mūsīqī* (*Epistle on the Informative Parts of Music*) is one of several short texts in which al-Kindī addresses the topic of music (Endress and Adamson, 177–81). As in much of his other work, al-Kindī’s understanding of and approach to this subject is heavily indebted to the Greek philosophical tradition: a fact he alludes to in his introduction, when he harkens back to “the custom of the ancient Greek philosophers” regarding the discussion of rhythm (Kindī, 95). More specifically, al-Kindī was “deeply ... influenced by the Greek Pythagorean tradition” and its interest in “finding correspondences between musical phenomena and (seemingly) non-musical phenomena, including the structure of the cosmos itself” (Adamson, 173). Thus, al-Kindī interprets the different musical rhythms and the oud’s strings as metaphysically and cosmologically connected to “the total scheme of things,” including the signs of the zodiac, the natural elements, the humors of the body, among several other phenomena (Shehadi, 15). Like other medieval thinkers, al-Kindī held the oud to be “the instrument of philosophers,” designed by the ancients to parallel structurally the harmony of the universe (Shiloah, 278). This idea clearly underlies the connections drawn within this text. Yet al-Kindī’s treatment of sensory stimuli here extends beyond the auditory into the visual

and olfactory realms, and the text presents al-Kindī “searching for a philosophy of the sensuous experience that encompasses all the senses” (Shehadi, 32).

The beginning of al-Kindī’s epistle is devoted to musical performance and aspects of its sensory perception. In the first section (*maqāla*), al-Kindī discusses eight types of rhythm (*īqā*), the varieties of poetry that best accompany these rhythms, and the times of days appropriate to their usage (Sawa, 73–93, 494–9). The second *maqāla* then moves into a discussion of the “resemblance” or “affinity” (*mushākala*) between the four strings of the oud and several physical, temporal, astrological, and psychological divisions of the universe. In several cases, al-Kindī does not explicitly outline his reasoning for the proposed connections between the oud strings and these fourfold worldly divisions, such as the four parts of the day, weeks of the month, seasons of the year, phases of the moon, quarters of the zodiac, and sections of the celestial sphere (*falak*). However, these are generally understandable within the context of the elemental and humoral theories to which al-Kindī subscribed. For example, the *zīr* (the thinnest and most highly tuned string) is associated by al-Kindī with fire (the thinnest and loftiest element) and with yellow bile (the humor associated with heat). By analogy, the *zīr* is likewise associated with the hottest season (summer), the hottest part of the day (midday to dusk), and so on. Some of the connections are less immediately apparent, but likely stem from the Pythagorean emphasis on harmonic ratios within the universe (Adamson, 175).

The clearest and most concrete application of these correspondences appears when al-Kindī directly relates the effects of auditory perception to the states of the soul, since “what is perceptible to the senses is impressed (*munṭabīʿ*) upon the soul.” He argues that “the actions of the soul and its change into different states can be compelled by the particular movements of the [oud’s] strings, in accordance with what we have said of [the strings’] nature and their kinships.” Because each of the oud’s four strings is connected to a particular bodily humor, the human behaviors and personalities associated with that humor can be physically and psychically activated by hearing the corresponding string being played. This is also the case with the different musical rhythms, which are likewise said to each stimulate a particular bodily humor. These effects can be further refined by combining the strings with other aspects of playing the oud—such as the particular placements of fingers on the strings, and changes in rhythm during performance—all of which produce “particularities of the soul’s actions” as a result of the different humors stimulated by hearing music.

Having established the “stimulation of the soul’s faculties through the sense of hearing,” al-Kindī then moves into a discussion of other sensory stimuli: colors and smells. Al-Kindī treats these subjects extensively in several of his

other works. For example, Ibn al-Nadīm attributes two works on perfumery to al-Kindī: the *Kitāb al-ʿIṭr* (*Book of Perfume*) and the *Kitāb Kīmīyāʾ al-ʿIṭr* (*Book of the Chemistry of Perfume*). An extant *Kitāb Kīmīyāʾ al-ʿIṭr wa-l-taṣʿīdāt* (*Book of the Chemistry of Perfume and Distillations*) is credited to al-Kindī and was likely compiled by him or members of his school (Garbers). This formulary comprises 107 recipes for aromatic preparations, including ersatz aromatic ingredients, scented unguents, incense, oils, and distilled waters. Elsewhere in his writings, al-Kindī gives considerable attention to the subject of color, especially regarding how his theory of vision accounts for colors' physical existence in the world (Adamson, 170–1, 192–3). Against Aristotle and his commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias (third century CE), who argue that color requires a transparent (*mushiff* or *mustashiff*) body as a substrate (Sadouki, 42–62), al-Kindī states that things are visible because of the non-transparent element of earth that is found in them. He also, albeit implicitly, embraces an emissionist theory of vision (Adamson, 170–1, 192–3).

Unlike these other texts' technical or scientific interests, the focus of the *Epistle on the Informative Parts of Music* is on how sensorily experiencing perfumes and colors affects the psychological states of the soul. While the discussion of the other senses and sensory objects is not nearly as developed here as that devoted to hearing music, al-Kindī suggests that they (or the senses of sight and smell, at least) operate upon the soul in a manner very similar to that of hearing. He prefaces his discussion of the psychic states produced by the sight of different colors with the proviso: "If the affinity is like what we have described previously, then we say ..." The section on scents likewise echoes his earlier discussion of the "faculties produced" by auditory stimuli reaching the soul. In neither case, however, does al-Kindī explain exactly how the different colors and scents are divvied up within the universe's "affinities." However, in another of al-Kindī's texts—*Kitāb al-Muṣawwītāt al-watariyya min dhāt al-watar al-wāḥid ilā dhāt al-ʿasharat awtār* (*Book of Stringed Instruments, from One to Ten Strings*)—a clearly related passage appears, in which particular colors are placed within the fourfold division of the universe. Moreover, colors, scents, and tastes all appear in a very similar discussion of "fourfold things" (*murabbaʿāt*) within the Brethren of Purity's epistle *On Music* (Wright, 15–19 [ed.], 154–8 [trans.]). There, the Ikhwān divide these "sensibilia" (*maḥsūsāt*) according to humoral theory, that is, based on the qualities of hotness, coldness, dryness, and wetness that defined the four bodily humors. Thus, it appears that these non-musical sensory objects likewise produce actions of the soul corresponding to their affinities with the bodily humors.

Indeed, al-Kindī describes a multisensory, perhaps synesthetic, experience that arises when music, color, and scent are all combined in a "balanced"

arrangement during a performance. With these intermingled sensory stimuli, “the resulting faculties and joys of the soul are several times greater” than their experience otherwise, and “the soul’s joy is complete in the intended way.” Al-Kindī here imagines “a sophisticated art, which goes far beyond what we normally associate with music” by incorporating sensory stimuli beyond sound (Adamson, 174). The image here is rather like the multisensory experience of watching singing-girls, as evocatively described by al-Kindī’s contemporary, the belletrist al-Jāhīz (see Patel, 8). Yet it is not clear if al-Kindī intends simple entertainment, or if this multisensory technique might be utilized in a medical context. Both music therapy and aromatherapy were considered useful medicinal techniques in al-Kindī’s milieu, and music in particular was considered to benefit “both body and soul” (Biesterfeldt, 179). According to a legendary anecdote found in Ibn al-Qifṭī’s (d. 646/1248) *Ikhbār al-‘ulamā’ bi-akhbār al-ḥukamā’* (*History of Scholars*), al-Kindī and his students were able to bring a man out of his paralysis through expert playing of the oud (Ibn al-Qifṭī, 279–80). This medical feat emerged from knowledge of “the musical modes (*ṭarā’iq*) for sad-denning, gladdening, and strengthening hearts and souls.”

At the end of the text, al-Kindī includes a collection of philosophical aphorisms (*nawādir al-falāsifa*) on music and its spiritual effects, cited from an unidentified “Ammonius” and narratively situated at a banquet held for the son of the emperor Heraclius. These sayings are partially paralleled in other Arabic texts, including the Brethren of Purity’s *On Music* (Wright, 162–72), and in a text on music by a certain Paul (*Būlus*) rendered into Arabic by one (or both) of the famous ninth-century translators Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq and his son Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn (Rosenthal, 261). Several of the aphorisms in this latter collection—which were themselves translated into Hebrew around 1200 CE by the famous poet and translator Judah al-Ḥarīzī as part of a text called *Musre ha-Philosophim* (*Maxims of the Philosophers*)—closely match those that occur in al-Kindī’s text (Werner and Sonne, 514–16/524–5). It has been suggested that these sayings go back to a treatise on music by Paul of Aegina, a seventh-century Byzantine physician and medical writer (Weinrich, [45]). The extant manuscript of the *Epistle* (Berlin Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz Ms Wetzstein II 1240, fols. 31b–35b) breaks off before the end of the text. But, if the parallels in the Brethren of Purity and elsewhere are any indication of how al-Kindī’s text continued, more philosophical sayings about music and its spiritual value likely followed. The inclusion of these aphorisms illustrates the extent to which al-Kindī’s epistle participates in a much longer tradition of philosophical speculations about music, sensorial stimuli, and their effects upon both body and soul.

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2 Translation

Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī, *Risāla fī ajzāʾ khubriyya fī l-mūsīqī*, in *Muʿallafāt al-Kindī l-mūsīqīyya*, ed. Zakariyyā Yūsuf, Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat Shafīq, 1962, pp. 93–108.

[p. 100] [§ 1.] *The First Part of the Second Maqāla [Regarding the Four Strings]*

Regarding the affinity of the four strings with the four quarters of the Celestial Sphere (*falak*); the four divisions of the zodiac; the four phases of the moon; the essential elements (*al-arkān al-ʿanāšir*); the winds; the seasons of the year; the quarters of the month; the quarters of the day; the parts of the body; the four ages; the faculties of the soul situated in the head;¹ the faculties of the soul in the body; and the manifested acts of the soul within living beings.

The number of strings is four: they are the *bamm*, the *mathlath*, the *mathnā*, and the *zīr*.

The *zīr* is made in correspondence to the first part of the Celestial Sphere, from the middle of the sky to the final part of the West; the zodiac signs between Cancer and Virgo; the phases of the moon between the half-moon and the full moon; the element fire; the south wind; the season of summer; the second week of the month; the quarter of the day between midday and dusk; yellow bile (*ṣafrāʾ*); adolescence; of the soul's faculties in the head, [p. 101] the intellect; of the soul's faculties in the body, the appetitive faculty (*jādhibiyya*); and of the manifest acts in living beings, courage.

As for the *mathnā*, it corresponds to the part of the Celestial Sphere from the end of the West to the first part of the ascendant (*tālīʿ*);² the zodiac signs between Aries and Gemini; the phases of the moon between the new moon and the half-moon; the element air; the east wind; the season of spring; the first week of the month; the quarter of the day between dawn and when the

1 Peter Adamson writes that the internal senses are intended here. See Adamson, 142.

2 On these astrological terms, see Hartner; King and Fahd.

sun is in the middle of the sky; blood; youth; of the soul's faculties in the head, fantasy [i.e., imagination]; of the soul's faculties in the body, the digestive faculty (*hāḍīma*); and of the manifest acts in living beings, reason (*'aql*).³

The *mathlath* corresponds to the part of the Celestial Sphere from the ascendant to the fourth part (*rābi'*); the zodiac signs between Libra and Sagittarius; the phases of the moon from the full moon to the half-moon; the element earth; the north wind; the season of fall; the third week of the month; the quarter of the day between sundown and midnight; black bile (*sawdā'*); adulthood; of the soul's faculties in the head, the power of retention; of the soul's faculties in the body, the retentive faculty (*māsika*); and of the manifest acts in living beings, cowardice.

[p. 102] The *bamm* corresponds to the part of the Celestial Sphere from the fourth part to the seventh part (*sābi'*); the zodiac signs between Capricorn and Pisces; the phases of the moon from the half-moon until the new moon; the element water; the west wind; the season of winter; the final week of the month; the quarter of the day between midnight and sunrise; phlegm (*balqam*); old age; of the soul's faculties in the head, memory; of the soul's faculties in the body, the expulsive faculty; and of the manifest acts in living beings, judiciousness (*ḥilm*).

The actions of the soul and its change into different states can be compelled by the particular movements of the strings, in accordance with what we have said of [the strings'] nature or their kinships. What is perceptible to the senses is impressed upon the soul.

The movements of the *zīr* manifest, in the actions of the soul, happiness, glory, power, hardness of heart, courage, and similar things. It corresponds to the *mākhūrī* and similar rhythms. The capability of this string and this rhythm come from their strengthening and exciting the yellow bile, and quieting and extinguishing the phlegm.

The *mathnā* causes happiness, joy, generosity, nobility, sympathy, tenderness, and similar things. It corresponds to *al-thaqīl al-awwal* and *al-thaqīl al-thānī*. The capability of this string and these two rhythms comes from their strengthening and exciting the blood, and quieting and extinguishing the black bile.

The *mathlath* causes longing, hypocrisy, sadness, [p. 103] different varieties of mourning, submissiveness, and similar things. It corresponds to *al-thaqīl al-mumtadd*. The capability of this string and this rhythm comes from their strengthening and exciting the phlegm, and quieting and extinguishing the yellow bile.

3 Alternatively, *ghufl*, "carelessness."

The *bamm* causes happiness at times—but at other times grief—along with longing and love. It corresponds to the *ahzāj*, the *armāl*, the *khafīf*, and similar rhythms. The capability of this string and these rhythms comes from their strengthening and exciting the black bile, and quieting and extinguishing the blood.

When [the strings] are combined, it is like the combination of the four elemental qualities (*al-ṭabāʾiʿ al-arbaʿ*). Actions of the soul arise from their effects, and these are different from those that arise from their effects separately. The combination of the *zīr* and the *mathlath* are like the combination of courage and cowardice, which is moderation: thus, there is a harmony between them. The combination of the *mathnā* and the *bamm* is like the combination of joy and sadness, which is moderation: thus, there is a harmony between them. Particularities of the soul's actions also occur in regards to the division of the fretting, the placements of the fingers, the tonics and musical breaks, and what is possible for the practitioner when he picks his finger up [from the string?] while searching for [a string?] regarding the many situations of changing its place.

The effects in the soul of the actions of the *zīr* are the excitement of courage and that which is of the nature of courage: power, strength, and generosity. The effects of the *mathnā* are reason (*ʿaql*) and that which is of the nature of reason: it incites joy, pleasure, love, and excellence of character. The nature of the *mathlath* is cowardice and that which is of the nature of cowardice: meekness, greed, regret, and lowliness. [p. 104] The nature of the *bamm* is judiciousness (*ḥilm*) and that which is of the nature of judiciousness: joy sometimes and other times sadness, cutting off of the soul [= isolation?], dirge, and grief.

[§ 2.] *The Second Part of the Second Maqāla: Regarding Combinations of Colors*

We have said what was necessary of the powers of the actions of the strings, the rhythms, and their stimulation of the soul's faculties through the sense of hearing. Let us now mention what is conveyed to the soul, through the sense of sight, of the powers of the combinations of colors. If it corresponds to what we have described previously, then we say:

When red is combined with yellow, the faculty of pride is stimulated.

When yellow is combined with black, the faculty of lowliness is stimulated.

When black is combined with red, yellow, and white together, the faculty of generosity is stimulated.

When rosy black is combined with shining yellow, the faculty of pride is also stimulated.

When pink is combined with reddish yellow and purplish black, the faculties of joy and delight are stimulated together.

When white tinged with yellow (that is, the color of apples) is combined with red, the faculty of pleasure is stimulated together with the faculty of passion.

When all the colors are combined, one after another—like the mixed spices in maidens' cheeks—[p. 105] then all the faculties are stimulated. Imagination, thinking, delusion, and memory are stimulated, such that there arise the royal, proud, generous, joyous, and all the other faculties that we have described, as you plunge into the sea of intellectual pleasures. When two or three of these are combined, and there is opposition between them, then the faculty of each individual color manifests, in accordance with the calculation that we have described.

[§ 3.] *The Third Part of the Second Maqāla: Regarding Combinations of Scents*

Now that we have mentioned what reaches the soul through the senses of hearing and sight, we will now mention what is conveyed to it through the sense of smell. We say that:

The scent of jasmine stimulates the faculty of pride. Narcissus stimulates the faculty of flirtatious pleasure and feminine impulse. Likewise do myrtle, lily, *bahār*,⁴ and anemone when they are mixed with narcissus. When the scents of jasmine and narcissus are mixed, the faculties of pride and pleasure are stimulated. When lily is mixed with rose, the faculties of amorousness and boastfulness are stimulated. When the scent of wallflower is mixed with narcissus, the faculties of generosity and amorousness are stimulated. When the scent of *ghāliya* is mixed with the scent of aloeswood, the faculties of [p. 106] regality and pride are stimulated, together with amorousness, desire, and delight.

Everything which is of the scent of rose, narcissus, and wallflower stimulates ardor, pleasure, and desire: they are feminine scents. Everything which is of the scent of aloeswood, myrtle, violet, jasmine, and marjoram stimulates happiness, might, generosity, and nobility: they are masculine [scents]. Musk, *ghāliya*, and the languid scents are feminine. When these masculine scents are mixed and paired with the feminine scents, they stimulate joy and pleasure according to how the pairing occurs. If the composition (*tarkīb*) is regal, it stirs the faculty of regality, and if the composition is generous, it stirs generosity. The stirring of faculties will be in accordance with the scent's composition.

When rhythm is employed at the times [of day] that we have specified, together with colors and scents in the arrangement that we have proposed, then the resulting faculties and joys of the soul are several times greater than what results from their employment in arrangements different from those we

4 On the identification of this plant, see King, 276 n23.

have described. [The sounds', colors', and scents'] actions are balanced, and their structure is in the arrangement of a balanced system. By means of these things, the soul's joy is complete in the intended way, as we have described.

[§ 4.] *The Fourth Part of the Second Maqāla:*
Philosophical Aphorisms

We have now described what reaches the soul through the three senses: the senses of hearing, sight, and smell. Let us now come to that which the sense of taste shares [p. 107] with verbal enunciations (*al-alfāz al-manṭiqīyya*), and how it is a more exalted resource for the soul than what we have previously described. When one of those [senses] conveys [information] to the soul, it is merely a sense organ, doomed to transience. But the conveyor of these verbal enunciations to the soul (after reasoned critique) is reason (*ʿaql*), and reason is the most exalted of created things. The fifth sense, that of touch, is combined with these four senses in most respects. Therefore, we need not single out what it conveys to the soul of happiness and pleasure, due to its association with the [other] senses in most of their capabilities.

Let us then begin with what has been set forth regarding this field within the philosophical aphorisms:

Ammonius recalled that there was a gathering of philosophers at King Heraclius' banquet for his son. Heraclius ordered the musician to sit with them and observe their aphorisms regarding music.

One of them said: "Music⁵ is a noble excellence. It is difficult for the power of logic, which cannot express it, so the soul expresses it by way of melody. When it is manifested, [the soul] rejoices in it and is delighted by it. So listen to the soul, confide in it, and be observant of the secret whisperings of its nature and its meditation."

Another [philosopher] said: "The virtue of music is that it harmonizes with every instrument, just as the cultivated man harmonizes with every person."

Another [philosopher] said: "Coming from the outside, [music] moves the soul. Coming from the inside, it moves the strings."

One of the philosophers, when he sat to drink, would say to the musician: "Move the soul toward its noble faculties! Those of judiciousness, piety, courage, mercy, justice, and generosity."

One of the philosophers went out with his student, and he heard the sound of a guitar. [p. 108] He said to the student, "Let's go to this guitarist! Perhaps he will acquaint us with some noble form [*ṣūra sharīfa*]." When the two of them

5 Here, literally "singing" (*ghinā*), but the term was often used as a synonym for *mūsīqī*. See Shehadi, 7.

approached, they heard a terrible sound and a disagreeable composition. The philosopher said to his student, “The people of soothsaying and ornithomancy claim that the sound of an owl augurs the death of a man: if that is true, then surely this sound augurs the death of an owl.”

Another [philosopher] said: “Living in isolation, the soul sings sad tunes and reminds itself of its noble world. When Nature (*ṭabīʿa*) sees this and recognizes it, Nature appears and exhibits itself to the soul in a variety of forms, until the soul returns to Nature. The soul abandons its essence and is taken up with Nature’s songs, and the noble synthesis (*al-tawḥīf al-sharīf*) becomes mixed with the adornment of beautiful songs. The soul continues in this way with Nature, not ceasing until it is submerged into the ocean of Nature.”

The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' (Fourth/Tenth Century) on Sense and Sensibilia

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

The *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*), written in Iraq during the heydays of the Abbasid caliphate (r. 132–656/750–1258), form a voluminous compendium, comprising 52 treatises expounding on a variety of scientific, philosophical, and theological topics.¹ There is much scholarly debate about the date of composition, authorship, and ideological commitment of the *Epistles*. Today, most scholars agree that they were written and compiled in Iraq between the third/ninth and the fourth/tenth centuries. It is likewise widely acknowledged that the authors of the *Epistles* came from a circle of philosophically trained littérateurs active primarily in Basra and Baghdad, who sought to cast elements of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic thought (as well as Iranian and Greek scientific traditions) in a religious, revelation-based framework. The *Epistles* also express certain Shi'i, particularly Isma'ili, leanings. As such, they were occasionally branded “heterodox” by Sunni authorities. On one occasion, in sixth/twelfth-century Baghdad, they were even publicly burned. However, many manuscript copies of the *Epistles* survive, and later encyclopedists of the Islamic world mined the *Epistles* liberally for their own work.

The Brethren's theory of knowledge being rooted in sensation is to a large extent Aristotelian (Baffioni). Epistle 24, whose middle part is translated below (see also the 1871 German translation by Dieterici), is devoted to the senses and the sensibilia (*al-ḥāss wa-l-maḥsūs*). It is the tenth epistle in the second volume of the *Epistles*, on anthropology and the natural sciences. To this epistle on sense and sensibilia corresponds Epistle 35, on intellect and intelligibles (*al-'aql wa-l-ma'qūl*) (see Walker et al., 109–35), which is found in the third volume of the *Epistles*, on the soul and its faculties. Other epistles that touch on the senses include Epistle 5 (on music, see Wright), Epistle 23 (on the human

¹ The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant “The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)” (project no. 724951).

body), Epistle 26 (on man as microcosm), next to several others. As Paul Walker stresses, the Brethren write with the overall aim of preparing their readers for an immaterial afterlife “truly authentic of its [the soul's] real disposition and substance,” an afterlife that is “intellectual and [...] neither worldly nor based on sensation” (Walker). In other words, educating readers about how the soul is connected to the body serves the purpose of preparing them for their eventual severance.

In the epistle on the human body, the epistle that precedes Epistle 24, the Brethren develop a number of analogies between the body's senses and the macrocosm. Thus, the body's anatomy is said to correspond to the architecture of a house, or palace. The owner of the house (the intellect) is served by five boon companions (the inner senses) and five classes of military and intelligence personnel (the outer senses): the eyes are his guards, the ears his spies, and the fingers his servants (Ikhwān al-Şafā', 2:384; the passage is reprised in Epistle 35, see Walker et al., 128). Or the soul is to the body what the maker is to his workshop; it uses the sensory organs as its tools (Ikhwān al-Şafā', 2:384–5). Or the sensory organs correspond to trade agents that acquire goods in the surroundings of the city, that is, the body, and transport them back to the marketplace, that is, the brain. There, the sensory impressions (colors and forms, sounds, tastes, smells, and tactile impressions) are received by the faculty of the imagination (*al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*) in the frontal part of the brain, like wholesalers receive goods from the trade agents at the entrance to the marketplace. Then, the sensory impressions are passed on from the faculty of the imagination to the thinking faculty (*al-quwwa al-mufakkira*) in the middle part of the brain, like wholesalers pass goods on to the retailers in the marketplace, who classify and order them. The retailers then put the goods in storage, like the thinking faculty passes on sensory impressions to the memorizing faculty (*al-quwwa al-ḥāfiẓa*) in the back of the brain (Ikhwān al-Şafā', 2:389–90).

These vivid similes set the stage for Epistle 24, which is devoted exclusively to the senses. The epistle begins with a summary discussion of epistemology and ontology (Ikhwān al-Şafā', 2:396–401). Knowledge, according to the Brethren, comes from three sources: the five senses (*ḥawāss*), reason (*ʿaql*), and sound proof (*burhān*). Sensory knowledge is common to all human beings and most animals; reason-based knowledge is the province of all adult human beings; finally, knowledge adduced by proof is only granted to human beings after they have studied mathematics, geometry, and logic.

The sensory faculties (*al-quwā l-ḥassāsa*) of the soul, the Brethren state, are subtle and immaterial (*rūḥāniyya*), and difficult to explain; they are obscure and enigmatic (*ghāmīda*). By contrast, the sensibilia, which are bodily accidents (*a'rād jumāniyya*), can easily be described. The pre-accidental

or “absolute body” (*al-jism al-muṭlaq*), the Brethren continue, is a substance (*jawhar*) composed of matter and form, in other words, a three-dimensional thing. Accidents are added qualities that come to inhere in the body. Next, the Brethren briefly review philosophical discussions about various categories of accidents, some of them disputed, including rest and motion; place and time; light and darkness; natural colors, such as the black of the eye or the green color of plants; and accidental colors, such as the blue of the ocean. “God,” the Brethren state, “has made the blue of the sky and the green of the plants for the benefit of the eyes of living beings, for these two colors fortify the eyes, and all living beings are always required to look at the sky when they move about, and to look at plants in the search for food” (Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, 2:400). Other accidents discussed by the Brethren are heat and coldness, moisture and dryness, heaviness and lightness, and softness and roughness.

The Brethren then turn to the “obscure and enigmatic” topic of the sensory faculties and how they convey information to the immaterial soul. This topic forms the bulk of the translation below.

Epistle 24 ends with a section on the five inner, immaterial senses and with a final section on the middle position of the soul between materiality and immateriality (not translated below). Unlike the outer senses, the five immaterial senses of the soul—the imaginative faculty, the thinking faculty, the memorizing faculty, the articulating faculty (*al-quwwa al-nāṭiqā*), and the productive faculty (*al-quwwa al-ṣāniʿa*)—are not specialized. That is, they can perceive more than just one type of sensibilia. They collaborate in the perception of things, retaining the traces (*rusūm*) of sensibilia when these have become absent to the mind, like a seal imprinted in wax (Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, 2:414). The human soul, according to the Brethren, occupies a “middle position” in the order of things. That is, it is located between, on the one hand, the Creator, reason, and abstract forms and ideas, and, on the other hand, matter, nature, and bodies. The soul comes to know the “lower” things through the senses, by their typical modes of operation: direct witnessing, touch, mixing, and enveloping (*al-mubāshara wa-l-mumāssa wa-l-mukhālaṭa wa-l-iḥāṭa*) (Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, 2:415). By contrast, the soul knows the “higher” things through reason and rational proof; it investigates the higher truths with the “eye of insight” (*ʿayn al-baṣīra*) rather than with the “eye of the head” (*ʿayn al-raʾs*). For this, however, the soul first has to be awakened from its “sleep of oblivion and slumber of ignorance.” In order to reach this state of advanced consciousness, it is indispensable for the soul to examine and critically evaluate the sensibilia—even if the ultimate goal remains at all times to reach beyond the knowledge they can provide (Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, 2:416).

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2 Translation

Ikhwān al-Şafā', *Rasā'il*, 4 vols., Beirut: Dār Şādir, 1376/1957, vol. 2, pp. 401–13 (*Risāla fī l-ḥāss wa-l-maḥsūs*).

[§ 1. Definitions]

Now, let us discuss the five sensory organs, and how the immaterial sensory faculties flow in them. First of all, we ask: What are the five senses, what is a sensory faculty, what is a sensory event (*ḥiss*), what is sensation (*iḥsās*), and what are the sensibilia (*maḥsūsāt*)?

The answer to this is: The senses are tools of the body. They are five: eye, ear, tongue, nose, and hand; each of them is a member of the body. The sensory faculties are immaterial powers belonging to the soul. Each one of them relates to one specific member of the body, as we will show in the following section. The sensibilia are the things perceived by the senses. The senses perceive accidents, which inhere in the natural bodies and have an impact on them [the senses]: they change the quality of their mixture (*mizāj*). The sensory event is this change in the mixture of the senses, occasioned by the contact of the sensibilia with them. Sensation is when the sensory faculties become aware of the changes in the quality of the mixture of the senses.

[p. 402] To elaborate this: the visual faculty flows in the two eyes, penetrating the pupil in the crystalline humor (*al-ruṭūba al-jalīdiyya*). The auditory faculty flows in the ear cavities, penetrating the inner ear, which is adjacent to the posterior brain. The faculty of smell flows in the nostrils, penetrating the cartilage of the inner nose, which is adjacent to the frontal brain. The faculty of taste runs in the mouth, penetrating the moisture of the tongue. The faculty of touch runs through the entire surface of the bodies of creatures equipped with delicate skin. It is particularly acute in the case of human beings, especially in the fingertips. As people say: “The fingertips govern the body.” It penetrates between the outer and the inner skin.

Know that there are five types of sensibilia. The things perceived by touch are ten: heat, cold, moistness, dryness, roughness, smoothness, hardness, softness, lightness, and heaviness. The second type are the things perceived by taste, that is, the flavors. There are nine: sweetness, bitterness, saltiness, fattiness, acidity, acridity, pungent bitterness, freshness, and astringency. The third type are the smells, which are perceived by way of olfaction. They are two: fragrant and foul. The fourth type are the sounds, which are perceived by hearing. They are two: animate and inanimate. Inanimate sounds are either natural or produced by instruments. Animate sounds are either intelligible (*manṭiqī*) or unintelligible (*ghayr manṭiqī*). The intelligible sounds are either signifying (*dāll*) or non-signifying. The fifth type are the visuals, which are perceived by vision. They are ten: light, darkness, color, surfaces, bodies in themselves, their shape, their position, their distance [from one another], their movement, and their rest.

[p. 403] Having enumerated, in summary fashion, the different types of sensibilia, let us now discuss how the sensory faculties perceive their [corresponding] sensibilia one by one. We begin by describing the faculty of touch, because it perceives its sensibilia in a corporeal way. We will end [this discussion] by describing the visual faculty, because it perceives its sensibilia in an immaterial way.

[§ 2. *On the Faculty of Touch*]

To begin, the mixture of the body of an animal is always of a certain heat or coldness. When this subject-body (*badan*) encounters another body (*jism*, the object-body), that object-body is either warmer or colder, or it has the same temperature. If the object-body is warmer, the temperature of the subject-body increases when it affixes itself to it. If the object-body is colder, the temperature of the subject-body drops. The faculty of touch senses this change and transformation. It transmits this information to the faculty of the imagination, which is located in the frontal brain. If the object-body has the

same temperature as the subject-body, nothing is changed, it has no effect on it, and the faculty perceives nothing.

However, the object-body will tend to be rougher or smoother than the subject-body, so that the faculty of touch will sense the change and the transformation. If it is the same also in regard to these two attributes [of roughness and smoothness], [again] it has no effect on it, and no sensory event takes place in it. However, the object-body will tend to be harder or softer than the subject-body, and thus will have an effect on it, and the faculty of touch will perceive the change. It rarely happens that bodies are the same in respect to [all] these six attributes of heat, coldness, smoothness, roughness, hardness, and softness.

The way in which this faculty perceives hardness and softness is this: When an object-body collides with an animal body, one penetrates the other. If the penetration happens in the object-body, as in the case of a finger stuck in dough, the faculty [of touch] perceives softness, [p. 404] and it transmits the information to the faculty of the imagination. If the penetration happens in the subject-body, as in the case of a finger cut by iron, the faculty [of touch] perceives hardness, and it transmits the information to the faculty of the imagination.

The way in which this faculty perceives roughness and smoothness is this: As we said, when the particles on the outer surface of a body have different positions, some elevated, others sunken, then that body is rough, provided it is hard. If the particles are all positioned on the same level, [the body is smooth]. If two smooth bodies collide, they stick to each other without leaving a gap between them. If they are not smooth, or if only one of the two bodies is smooth, they do not stick together, because there remains a gap between them. When a hard object-body collides with a subject-body, the particles on the object-body that protrude push in some of the particles of the subject-body, making the surface of the subject-body rough. The faculty [of touch] perceives this change.

The phenomenon differs according to the mixture in the bodily limbs that are involved. For example, if someone touches a piece of cloth with the hand, it feels soft, but if the person then puts the cloth to his cheek, it feels rough. This is because in most instances, the cheek of a person has softer touch than the hand. Likewise, if a person touches haircloth with the hand, it feels rough, but if he touches it with his foot, it feels soft, because the foot is rougher than the hand. And likewise, when a person who feels refreshed enters the bathhouse, he will find the reception room to be warm. But when he exits the hot room [to return to the reception room], he will find it cold, because his mixture has changed. Don't you see, therefore, that the faculty of touch perceives sensibilia

differently because of the difference in the mixture of the subject-body, [p. 405] that is, its being hot, cold, rough, smooth, hard, or soft, as well as the differences in the sensibilia, and *not* because the faculty [of touch] varies in what it is and in what it is made of?²

The way in which this faculty perceives moisture and dryness is this: If a dry subject-body comes in contact with an object-body, it absorbs the object-body's moisture and wetness. The faculty [of touch] perceives this. If it comes in contact with a dry object-body, it increases that body's moisture and wetness.

The way in which this faculty perceives heaviness and lightness is this: Perception occurs in moments of pushing, pulling, or carrying. What is heavy and what is light differs according to the strength of the body. Some animals, such as ants, can carry their own body weight multiple times. Other animals cannot carry their own body weight. We explained the purpose and the reason for this in the epistle on the characteristics of animals.³

[§ 3. *On the Faculties of Taste and Smell*]

The faculty of taste, which perceives nothing but flavors, is according to nine types: (1) sweetness, which accords with the mixture of the tongue; (2) bitterness, which contradicts the mixture of the tongue; (3) saltiness; (4) fattiness; (5) acidity; (6) acridity; (7) pungent bitterness; (8) freshness; and (9) astringency.

[The faculty] perceives [these flavors] in the following way: The moisture of these tastes connects with the moisture of the tongue and the two mix, whereupon the mixture of the tongue changes according to the flavor. If [the flavor] is sweet, [the tongue turns] sweet, if it is bitter, [it turns] bitter, if it is acid, [it turns] acid, and so on with the other flavors. [The tongue] perceives this. This is because the sensory event is nothing but the mixture of the sensory organ becoming qualitatively similar to the sensed object, and sensation is nothing but the soul's becoming aware that the mixture [of the sensory organ] has changed.

2 Reading *lā li-anna l-quwwa mukhtalifa fī dhātihā wa-jawharihā*. The negation is missing in the Beirut 1376/1957 edition, but it is found in Friedrich Dieterici's partial 1886 edition (196–211, at 203) and translation (at 29). The manuscript Bibliothèque Nationale de France 2304 (one of the manuscripts used by Dieterici), fol. 208v, ult., has *lā bi-anna*. By contrast, the manuscript Bibliothèque Nationale de France 6647 (one of the oldest manuscripts, from the seventh/thirteenth century), fol. 172r, l. 8, has *li-anna*. However, a scribal hand corrected this to *lā bi-anna*.

3 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', 2:178–377 (Epistle 21).

The faculty of smell perceives sensibilia, that is, smells, according to two types: fragrant and foul. Bodies that have a smell continuously release [p. 406] subtle vapors that enter into an ethereal mixture with the air, the air becoming like them in quality. If [the vapors] are fragrant, [the air] becomes fragrant, if foul, [the air] becomes foul.

Animals that have a lung continuously draw in air to cool the vital heat (*al-ḥarāra al-gharīziyya*) of the heart. Air enters the nostrils and the cartilage of the inner nose, and the quality of the air that is there changes accordingly. Then faculty of smell perceives this change and transmits the information to the faculty of the imagination. If the smell is fragrant, nature takes pleasure in it, and if it is foul, it abhors and rejects it.

The ways in which animals perceive smells as pleasant or disagreeable vary profoundly. Some animals, such as swine, cockroaches, flies, and the likes of them, find the smell of dung and cadavers pleasant. Others abhor fragrant smells. For example, when beetles are immersed in flowers, they swoon and stop moving. If someone then wants to revive them, they only have to be returned to a dung heap, and they will come back to life and run off.

Also people are like this, for example dung-collectors and street-cleaners. It is related that a street-cleaner once crossed a perfume market. He fainted, so that people thought he had died. A physician who passed by saw him, realizing what his condition was and why he had fainted. He ordered that some dry excrement be brought, ground, and stuffed up his nose, and [as soon as that had been done] the man sneezed and came back to life. Also sick people are like this. People who suffer from too much yellow bile feel bothered by the smell of musk, while they enjoy the smell of clay. It all depends on the mixture of the bodies and the preponderant component of the mixture in them.

The three faculties discussed up until here perceive sensibilia by way of a corporeal perception based on contact. [p. 407] The acoustic and the visual faculties, by contrast, perceive in a purely immaterial way.⁴

[§ 4. *On Perception by the Acoustic Faculty*]⁵

As regards perception by the acoustic faculty, whose sensibilia are sounds, know that there are two kinds of sounds: animate and inanimate. [Inanimate sounds] are either natural or produced by instruments. The natural [inanimate sounds] are [the sounds produced by falling] rock, iron, wood, thunder,

4 On the spiritual nature of music, see the edition by Wright, 7–13 [trans. 76–81].

5 This section coincides to a large extent with the third section of the epistle on music in the *Rasā'il*. See Wright, 22–5 [trans. 86–7].

wind, and all other inanimate, inorganic bodies. Sounds produced by instruments include the sounds of drums, trumpets, reed and string instruments, and the like.

[Sound] is air that is squeezed through [the gap] between two colliding bodies and then strikes the motionless air in the organ of hearing. There are many types of this.

Animate sounds are of two types: intelligible and unintelligible. The unintelligible sounds are the sounds produced by non-rational animals. The intelligible sounds are produced by human beings. They are either signifying or non-signifying. The non-signifying sounds are, for example, laughter and weeping, as well as every sound not based on the articulation of a sequence of letters. The signifying sounds are speech and pronouncements based on the articulation of a sequence of letters. They are [produced by] cutting up exhalations by contracting the parts of the mouth. From these, letters result. For example, the lips are joined together in such a way as to produce the letter “b,” and they are joined together in a different way so as to produce the letter “m.”

All these sounds are the vibration in the air that happens when bodies collide. Air is so subtle, its substance so light, the movements of its particles so fast, that it passes through all bodies. Now, if a body collides with another body, the air slips away from in between them, in vehement bursts that radiate in waves in all directions. From this movement, there comes about a spherical form that expands like hot glass when the glassmaker blows into it, or like still water into which a stone is thrown, the waves dashing toward the edges of the pond. As this form expands, it loses its tidal momentum, until it subsides and vanishes. People and animals who have ears and are near [p. 408] the place [where the sound originates], [will find that] the air moves, their acoustic faculty perceiving this movement and change [taking place inside it].

Know that every sound has a quality, character, and pneumatic (*rūḥānī*) form that is different from that of another sound. Because air is such a noble substance and because its constituents are so subtle, it carries every sound in its form and character, preserving it so that it will not get mixed up with other sounds and its form be corrupted, until it reaches its ultimate destination in the acoustic faculty, which transmits it to the imaginative faculty. This is how it has been determined by the Mighty All-Knowing One, “who gave you hearing, seeing, and hearts, but you are ungrateful” (Q 67:23).

[§ 5. *On Perception by the Visual Faculty*]

The visual faculty perceives its sensibilia according to ten types: light, darkness, color, surfaces, bodies in themselves, their shape, distance [from one another],

movement, rest, and position.⁶ Among these types only light and darkness are perceived truly and in themselves. Darkness is a thing that is seen, but nothing else is seen by it. Light is [likewise] seen, but by it, other things are seen [as well].

This concerns, first, colors. Given that there is nothing except colors on the surface of bodies, surfaces are seen because of them. Further, given that there is nothing [visible] except surfaces in bodies, they [bodies] are seen by the intermediary of their surfaces. And given that all bodies have shapes, positions, distances, and movements, all these are [likewise] classified as accidents, not essences.

Know that light and darkness are immaterial colors, while white and black are material colors. Light corresponds to white; black to darkness. White shines over the other colors, just like in light, the other visible things are seen. Colors are not discernible in blackness, and in darkness nothing can be seen.

Know, also, that light and darkness run through transparent bodies in the same way in which the spirit flows through [p. 409] the [living] body, and emerge from them in an instant. However, when a beam of light runs through a transparent body it carries with it the colors and the other aforementioned properties in an immaterial way, preserving them in their [own] form, lest they get mixed up, and their form be corrupted. [This happens] in the same way in which air carries sounds in their [unique] form, as we explained previously. [The beam of light] finally transports them to their ultimate destination, all the way to the visual faculty, which penetrates the crystalline humor in the two pupils.

Know that the pupils are just one type of such a transparent body. They are the mirrors of the body. They are [formed by] liquid, enveloped in transparent skins, that is, the skin of the cornea. This basic fact is known to all those familiar with medical practice. Now, when light rays run through transparent bodies, carrying with them the colors of the bodies-that-be, and when they reach the pupils of the living being that is present there, passing through them just like they pass through the other transparent bodies, then the crystalline humor takes on these colors, in the same way in which air takes on light. When this happens, the visual faculty registers this change, and transmits the information to the imaginative faculty, just like the other sensory faculties transmit information about their sensibilia [to the imaginative faculty].

6 As Abdelhamid Sabra comments, “[i]nteresting though these remarks may be, they clearly belong to a universe of discourse quite other than that of I. H.’s [i.e., Ibn al-Haytham’s] *Optics*.” See Sabra, 85–6. On Ibn al-Haytham and his *Optics*, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 21.

Some people may be astonished by our description of how colors carry the shape of bodies with them in an immaterial way, and of how, likewise, air carries sounds. But this does not give them license to deny it, on the grounds that they cannot picture it. The fact that the sensory faculties carry the form of the sensibilia [to the imaginative faculty] is even more astonishing and mysterious. We explain how this works in the epistle on intellect and intelligibles.⁷

Many scientists conjecture that perception of visual objects occurs by means of two rays exiting the eyes, piercing through the air and through transparent bodies, and perceiving the seen object. However, this is the view of those who lack experience in both spiritual and natural phenomena. If they were properly trained in these things, it would be clear to them that what we have said and described is correct.

[p. 410] [§ 6. *The Sensory Faculties Are the Soul*]

Know that the sensory faculties are not a part of the soul in the same way in which the sensory organs are members of the body, and a part of it. Rather, each one of them [the sensory faculties] *is* the soul itself. They only have different names in order to distinguish between the [soul's] different actions. Thus, when the soul performs the act of seeing, it is called "the seeing [soul]," when it performs the act of hearing it is called "the hearing [soul]," and when it performs the act of tasting, it is called "the tasting [soul]."

Likewise, when the soul produces growth in the body it is called "the vegetative [soul]," when it produces sensory events and movements in the body it is called "the animal [soul]," and when it performs the act of ratiocination and discrimination, it is called "the rational [soul]."

In analogous fashion, all other names that are applied to it [the soul] serve to distinguish between its actions. Its actions are according to the different members of the body. This is like the different actions of artisans according to the tools they use. A woodworker carves with an axe and saws with a saw, and a blacksmith hammers with a hammer and files with a file. In the same way, the actions of all other artisans differ according to the tools that they use. This is how the soul's actions in the body differ according to its members, for the members are to the soul what the tools are to the artisan.

[p. 411] [§ 7. *On How the Sensibilia Reach the Imaginative Faculty*]

We say: From the frontal brain, fine and flexible nerves fan out, reaching the bases of the senses and branching out in them. They [likewise] branch out into the bulk of the brain like a spider's web. When the quality of the sensibilia

⁷ Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', 3:231–48 (Epistle 35). See above, introduction.

reaches the various sensory organs, thereby changing the mixture of the senses, this change reaches the nerves of the frontal brain, where all the nerves originate. All the traces of the sensibilia are gathered in the imaginative faculty, like the letters from different informants are gathered in [the office of] the chief intelligence officer, who passes all these letters on to the ruler—who reads them, processes their meaning, and sends them to his archive for safekeeping, until the moment when he needs them [again].

This is how the imaginative faculty, after it gathers the traces of these sensibilia, transmitted to it by the sensory faculties, forwards them to the thinking faculty, which is located in the middle part of the brain, so that it can consider them, investigate their meanings, know what they are and what their harmful and beneficial aspects are. Then it transmits them to the memorizing faculty, to preserve them until they are called back from memory.

[§ 8. *On Sense Deception and the Collaboration of the Senses*]

Know that when a person sees fruits from a distance he knows immediately whether they are sweet or bitter, fragrant or foul, rough or smooth, hard or soft, warm or cold, moist or dry. He knows all these things, not because of the visual but by virtue of the thinking faculty, its insight and experience, and because [he knows] how they [fruits] usually are. Likewise, if he errs in regard to any of these things, it is not because the visual but the thinking [faculty] fails him, judging without [proper] insight and contemplation.

[p. 412] This is like when a person sees a fata morgana, thinking that it is water. What errs is not the visual faculty. Rather, the thinking faculty judges that the colored object [that is seen], being a body of liquid, can be touched and tasted. When [the person] then approaches it, he realizes it is not so. Its [the thinking faculty's] error thus becomes clear.

When the thinking faculty is provided the trace of a single sense by the imaginative faculty, it does not pass judgment without consulting another sense. If it [the other sense] confirms the information, it judges a thing to be this or that. For example, when the visual faculty perceives an apple made of camphor and colored like a real apple,⁸ and when it conveys the information to the imaginative faculty, which in turns conveys it to the thinking faculty, the thinking faculty will not judge the apple to taste, smell, and feel like a real apple without consulting the faculties of taste, smell, and touch. When they

8 There are many references to fruit-shaped pomanders in medieval Arabic literature. Aromatics such as white crystalline camphor could be colored and shaped into decorative forms for display and use at social gatherings (personal communication from Anya King, May 16, 2021).

all report accordingly, the thinking faculty judges that it is this or that, until it forms the correct judgment.

Know, too, that because of this, the articulating faculty is prevented from pronouncing judgments about anything children say about the content of [their] sense perceptions, because following [the description given by children], the thinking faculty cannot judge them and discriminate properly. Then, when the years of education have passed, and when the moon has passed on control to Mercury, the master of intelligibility and discrimination, he sets the tongue of the child free to relate and explain the content of its sense perceptions, which the sense has transmitted to the imaginative faculty.

[p. 413] [§ 9. *On Bodily Pleasure and Pain, Fatigue, and Restfulness*]⁹

We say: Know that living beings feel pleasure, pain, fatigue, or restfulness all the time. This is because the bodies of living beings are made of a mixture of the four elementary substances, that is, the four humors, which have opposite natures inasmuch as they are hot, cold, wet, and dry. They are constantly changing and shifting from a state of surplus to one of deficit. Sometimes the mixture veers off the balance toward a surplus in one of the humors or natures, or toward a deficit in one of them. Pleasure occurs when the mixture regains the balance, after having veered off it. On account of this, living beings only feel pleasure when it is preceded by pain.

Know that every sensed object can make the mixture veer off the balance. In that case, the sense detests it and feels pained by it. [Likewise,] every sensed object can make the mixture regain the balance. In that case, the sense enjoys it and feels pleasure by it. Know that restfulness is to persist in soundness and balance. [...]

9 See Epistle 30, on pleasure and pain, Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', 3:52–83, at 59.

Abū Zayd al-Balkhī (d. 322/934) on the Nature and Therapeutic Use of Odorous Substances

Hinrich Biesterfeldt and Everett K. Rowson

1 Introduction

Abū Zayd Aḥmad b. Sahl al-Balkhī, born around 235/850, was a polymath from Khurasan. As a young student, he went to the Abbasid capital Baghdad with the aim to study Twelver Shi‘ism, a theological denomination that he belonged to. During his eight years that he spent in Baghdad, he studied a wide range of fields, from Islamic theology, comparative religion and philosophy to astronomy and astrology, as well as medicine and the natural sciences. It is unlikely that he was a direct student of the famous philosopher Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī, who died between 247/861 and 252/866, but he must certainly have moved within the circle of this influential intellectual, an heir to the Aristotelian corpus of philosophy and the sciences, and, as he was called later on, the “Philosopher of the Arabs.” The bio-bibliographical accounts of Abū Zayd—primarily those by Yāqūt and al-Ṣafadī—attest to his later impeccable Sunnite convictions and his thorough knowledge of all kinds of the “sciences of the Qur’ān” and list an impressive array of works, ranging from theology and general religious studies to Arabic philology, philosophy, cultural geography (for which he is famous as a founder of a “school” that combined regional maps and commentaries) and cultural history, and courtly etiquette. The wide range of his interests reflects the spirit of the Kindī circle, which did not confine itself to philosophical topics proper, but was curious about all areas of knowledge, including medicine, pharmacology, and perfumes. Most of Abū Zayd’s works are lost. The few fragments that are extant as quotations in later authors show us a highly original thinker, who, for instance, discusses the theory of governance in philosophical terms, or the relation of free will and determinism exemplified by the games of chess and backgammon.

The only entirely preserved monograph of Abū Zayd is his *Maṣāliḥ al-abdān wa-l-anfus* (*Hygiene of Body and Soul*). Its first, larger part is dedicated to the conventional bodily topics of food, drink, sleep, sex, bathing, among others; the second part deals with the precaution against, or therapy of, psychological

disorders: excessive wrath, fearfulness, persistent sadness, and obsessive ideas. Abū Zayd's programmatic conjunction of bodily and mental health has recently generated a little flourish of mostly Muslim commentators, praising a "holistic" concept of health in "Islamic medicine" *avant la lettre*. But the correspondence between body and soul, and between all elements of nature in general, is thoroughly rooted in Galen's physiological teachings, all of them governed by the system of the four basic elements and humors and their interaction, while important elements of Abū Zayd's physiological and psychological ideas (the balance of the mean, *i'tidāl*, between two extremes, or the typology of psychological defects, etc.) may be traced to al-Kindī's reception of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Galenic ideas.

After his stay in Baghdad, Abū Zayd left for his native Khurasan, accepting a local secretarial position, for a time receiving a financial subsidy from his colleague, a minister at the court of the governor of Balkh, Abū l-Qāsim al-Ka'bī al-Balkhī (d. 319/931), and working as a schoolteacher. He died in Dhū l-Qa'da 322/October 934.

We have only few names of students of Abū Zayd: the philosopher Abū l-Ḥasan al-Āmirī (d. 381/992), an otherwise unknown author of a classification of the sciences by the name of Ibn Farīghūn (middle of the fourth/tenth century), and perhaps the famous physician-philosopher Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (known as Rhazes in the Latin tradition, d. probably 313/925). Certainly, Abū Zayd and Abū Bakr knew each other: The latter wrote a recipe (which is extant) for the former who suffered from what we call hay fever—a bad snuffle (*zūkām*) at the period of the rose blossom in Balkh.

Abū Zayd's chapter on aromata (*mashmūmāt*) is the seventh of fourteen chapters that make up the first part of his work. It is preceded by chapters on generalities such as the elements of nature, human anatomy and physiology, climate, clothing, finds its context in food and drink, and is followed by the topics of sleep, bathing, gymnastics, among others. The final chapter on listening to music bridges this part and the part on how to deal with mental disorders.

Aromata, Abū Zayd writes, are, after "earthy" food and liquid water, the subtlest way of material consumption, be it for maintaining or restoring human health. He starts with a rather general division between moist and dry odorous substances, correlating their pleasant kinds with hygiene and their offensive counterparts with therapy, and then gives information on how to apply some of the pleasant kinds of aromatic substances.

All in all, Abū Zayd writes for the general educated reader. He does not quote from technical literature, but tries to give a general picture of his subject in a pleasing manner. (His biographers praise his perfect command of Arabic

prose writing.) His sources are difficult to pinpoint. One influence is certainly al-Kindī, whose interest in aromata is well known and attested. Whether there exist common links with early Arabic authors like Ibn Māsawayh and Greek writers of medical encyclopedias like Paul of Aegina or Alexander of Tralles remains to be examined.

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2 Translation

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[p. 433] Chapter 7: on Odorous Substances

[§ 1.] The Nature of Odorous Substances, Their Bad and Good Effects

We should follow up our chapter on drink with that on odorous substances. They are things with a pleasant or an offensive odor. That is because the primary and the most solid and coarsest nourishment serving as basis of the body is food, which is something earthy, this is followed by drink, which is something watery and thus subtler than food, and this is followed by something still subtler, namely, something carrying odor (*al-rā'iḥa*), that is, odorous substance (*al-mashmūm*), which is airy. Air is subtler than water, as water is subtler than earth.

Pure water does not nourish, it is just a vehicle for food. Drinks other than water provide light nourishment, differing in their nutritive value, which is smaller the finer they are and greater the coarser they are.

The same applies to odorous substances that belong to the species of air. That is to say, pure air does not nourish, just as pure water does not nourish. Things exuding odor provide only light nourishment, less than drink.

Odor arises from earthy and watery as well as fiery things, though that may not be evident. Therefore, the doctors deem it proper to employ odorous substances for the preservation and the restoration of health. Some of them belong to the field of nourishment—these have a pleasant odor, relished and enjoyed by the sense of smell, and they appertain to the field of preservation [p. 434] of health. Others belong to the field of medication and they have a bad odor, from which human nature recoils.

An odorous substance may have a remarkable effect on body and soul, whether used as food or as a drug. This is evident from what drugs do by their odor when somebody smells them, killing him or dazing him, confusing him or giving him a headache. Just as powerful as the harm they can do is their benefit and help they may give to a person of a weak nature who is strengthened by them when suffering from a malady.

[§ 2.] *Different Kinds of Odorous Substances*

There are many different kinds. Some are moist, such as aromatic plants, tree and flower blossoms, plants with a pleasant odor like roses, narcissus, and mandrakes. Some are dry, such as musk, ambergris, and camphor. Corresponding with these objects with a pleasant odor, we have objects carrying an offensive odor. They are of two kinds, moist and dry—dry in the sense of smokiness. We have stated that the pleasant-smelling substances belong to the field of nutrition, and the offensive ones to that of medication. In the field of nutrition, the moist and pleasant-smelling substances are used more frequently than the pleasant and dry ones.

[§ 3.] *How to Employ Pleasant-Smelling Substances*

We have given some information on the extent to which odorous substances contribute to the fields of food and drugs. A person caring for the welfare of his body should [p. 435], among other things, not neglect to derive some enjoyment from pleasant odors. They remarkably effect the strengthening of the spirit and of the innate heat that constitutes the basis of life. An ailing person is more in need of strengthening his nature by them than a healthy one, particularly when he is unable to take his portion of solid and liquid

nourishment, part of whose function in strengthening him is taken over by the odorous substances.

When a healthy and prosperous person wants to enjoy pleasant odors, he should not overdo it, though he may be able to afford it. It is rather better for him to enjoy them in intervals, for two reasons: First of all, all pleasantly smelling substances carry extremely strong heat or cold and often harm a person taking in something that is not compatible with his bodily temperament, as we may observe in the reaction of a hot-tempered person to the *ghāliya* perfume,¹ or a cold-tempered person to the camphor perfume. Someone who continuously smells and sprays [such] perfumes is bound to suffer lasting damage to his brain and his bodily faculties. Secondly, when the sense of smell is drowned in pleasant odors it loses its sharpness, and the pleasure gained from them fades. Someone who overdoes this kind of thing becomes quasi anosmic, not sensing smell at all. This may be observed in the case of perfume producers and sellers: their senses are overpowered by scents to such a degree that scarcely anyone of them is able to smell anything. This also applies to those who smell too many offensive odors, like tanners and others: their senses are used to that stench so thoroughly that hardly anyone feels offended by it. When someone uses [p. 436] perfume now and then, when his soul desires it and his nature longs for it, it is more delectable and appropriate (*mawqī'an minhu*) for him. The same applies to all pleasurable sensory impressions: when one takes a rest from them, until one desires them again and then enjoys them with genuine appetite, one feels real supreme pleasure.

For the proper enjoyment of pleasantly odorous substances there are two precepts: First, one should not put any of them too close to the nose, since all these substances whose faculty is dominated by the quality of heat or cold harm the owner of one or the other temperament. If one smells the perfume from a distance, one is safer from its harm and more resistant to its danger. The best way, however, is to have diffused aromatic vapors around the place in which one gathers, in order to have it cleaned (*li-yakhtamma bihī*), so a given odor reaches him only to a well-tempered degree that is harmless and does not carry anything hurtful. Likewise, one should apply aromatic vapors to one's clothes and put them on, perfumed, so that their odor is more pleasant and lasting, more temperate and less harmful. That corresponds with what we have stated in the chapter on how to keep warm from the cold: that one should heat the house and then sit in some distance from the fire to let the heat of the house's air approach in a temperate degree, which is more pleasant

1 *Galia moschata*; see al-Kindī, 50–9.

and safer from the danger that perhaps threatens someone sitting near to the fireplace and being exposed to its blaze and scorch and being endangered by its intensity.

Secondly, someone enjoying the odorous substances, provided they are aromatic plants, should have them combined from different natures, hot and cold at the same time, tempering each other, so that their odor is balanced and fit for all natures. If they are [p. 437] dry, as in various perfumes, [that result can be achieved] by composing them from contrary kinds of scents, like hot and cold, such as the Barmakī perfume² and the like, which contain many components. Thus, the result is more temperate and healthier for all persons with various natures. Perfume that is exclusively dry should be used only for medical treatment—for instance, for hot-natured persons camphor, sandalwood, among others, and for cold-natured persons musk, aloe, among others. As for substances that are taken for pleasure or as food, they are best if they are thoroughly compounded and contain contrary components in the interest of a good balance of their power and odor.

The same principle holds true as that for food: the more thoroughly it is compounded the more delicious and pleasant it is. The same applies to medicaments: the most precious and beneficial ones for persons of various natures are those that contain many components of different powers, as the great “sacred medicaments” (*iyārajāt*).³

This then is, in a few words, the way to deal with odorous substances.

² Dozy, 1:78.

³ Ullmann, 187, 287, 296.

Ibn al-Jazzār (d. 369/979–80) on Smell, Perfume, and Health

Anya King

1 Introduction

The North African physician Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. Abī Khālid b. al-Jazzār was born to a family of doctors in Qayrawan, in what is today Tunisia. He lived there his whole life, operating a clinic and dispensary where he provided care to the people of Qayrawan, rich and poor alike. Ibn al-Jazzār was known for his rectitude: he “did not indulge himself in pleasures” and engaged in an annual religious retreat (Ibn Abī Uṣaybīʿa, 13.3.2.1). Ibn al-Jazzār’s commitment to piety, charity, and care for the poor was a remarkable aspect of his personality.

Among his voluminous and influential writings is a book on perfumery, the *Book on the Arts of Scent and Perfumery* (*Kitāb fi funūn al-ṭīb wa-l-ʿitr*). Most of the book comprises a formulary, that is, a collection of recipes for different kinds of perfumes. The varieties of perfumes they produced are characteristic of Ibn al-Jazzār’s time, and include scented oils and unguents, distilled aromatic waters, scented powders for sprinkling in clothing, and varieties of incense. Ibn al-Jazzār’s work also provides some of the clearest information from the fourth/tenth century on beliefs about the connections between the sense of smell, medicine, and perfumery.

Ibn al-Jazzār’s conception of smell, and that of Islamicate medicine more generally, lies in the tradition of the late second-/early third-century CE physician Galen (Bouras-Vallianatos and Zipser; Totelin). The basis of Galenic medicine, with its roots in the work of Hippocrates (ca. 440–370 BCE), is the belief in a system of two sets of opposing humors: hot and cold, and dry and moist. Bodily health is maintained when the mixture of humors in the organic parts are in balance; when the humors become unbalanced, illness results (Galen, *Hygiene*, 1:2–11; van der Eijk, 298). Individuals, of course, have their own specific individual compositions of humors, based on such factors as age, sex, and physical characteristics. Substances in nature also possessed these humors in differing ways. The purpose of pharmaceutical therapy was to correct any

imbalance of humors—using natural substances derived from animals, minerals, and vegetables—based on the principle that *contraria contrariis curantur* (an opposite remedies its opposite).

Aromatics were considered particularly potent for medicinal purposes, and were used both in compound medicines and as a part of regular hygiene. Most aromatics were regarded as hot and dry, and thus suitable for checking the illnesses which resulted from an excess of cold and moist humors. Among the hot and dry aromatics were musk, ambergris, and spices such as cloves or cassia. Conversely, some aromatics were cold, including roses, sandalwood, and especially camphor. Many of these aromatics had been unfamiliar or unknown in the time of Galen, but Islamicate medicine and perfumery made extensive use of them (King, “New *materia*”).

We can see these principles in action in Ibn al-Jazzār’s recommendations for the use of different kinds of perfumes. Writing of *ghāliyas* (unguents of musk, ambergris, and ben oil), he explains:

Ghāliyas are compounded from hot substances, and therefore they are suitable for the aged, women, those with cold humors, and especially in the winter and in cold lands. They harm children, youths, and the hot humored, especially in the summer and during the change of weather to the hot.

IBN AL-JAZZĀR, 64

Introducing oils, he writes,

Hot oils [that is, oils composed especially with hot ingredients] are beneficial in the winter for the aged, and in cold weather [...] Cold oils agree with the young and the hot-tempered.

IBN AL-JAZZĀR, 72

For Ibn al-Jazzār, the compounding of perfumes was a careful balancing act, requiring knowledge of the qualities of the aromatic ingredients, as well as the temper of the would-be user, to assure that balance was promoted. He rails against professional perfumers for their ignorance for their ignorance of the humoral properties of aromatics (Ibn al-Jazzār, 38).

Following Galen and ancient Greek medicine, Ibn al-Jazzār believed in the role of the pneumas (animating spirits) as vital principles within the body (Debru, 271–2). The pneumas, as vaporous substances, were derived from and nourished by the air, and thus had a close association with other substances within the air. In the preface to one of the chapters in his book, Ibn al-Jazzār explains that aromatics effect their medical benefits

through inhalation (*istinshāq*) and the arrival of [their] potencies together with the air (which is the matter of the animal pneuma) to the heart, and its arrival together with the animal pneuma (which is the matter of the psychical pneuma) to the brain. The arrival benefits the organs of sensation, motion, and life in this way, God the Exalted willing.

IBN AL-JAZZĀR, 46; cf. Galen, *Usefulness*, 1:346–9

The efficacious perfume, through its inhalation, is thus incorporated into the bodily system. Ibn al-Jazzār writes, “We know also that God the Exalted made a purpose for everything, and the purpose for good scent is perfuming the soul (*ṭayyib al-naḥs*), the health of the bodies, and their soundness” (Ibn al-Jazzār, 108). The meaning of the verb *ṭayyaba*, however, goes beyond becoming literally “perfumed,” and encompasses making or becoming good, delighted, wholesome, and healed. It is related through its root to such words as *ṭayyib* (“good, healthy”), *ṭayyibāt* (“pleasant things,” used especially in reference to food), and not least *ṭīb* (“perfume”): an array of meanings connecting goodness and health with the substances that nourish the body and soul. The value of perfume in Ibn al-Jazzār’s thought extends far beyond simple aesthetics and even medicine into the realm of the spiritual. This comes as no surprise given the prominent role of good scent in Islam (King, *Scent*); an awareness of the spiritually salubrious function of perfume is expected in a pious physician like Ibn al-Jazzār.

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2 Translation

Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. Abī Khālid Ibn al-Jazzār, *Kitāb fī funūn al-ṭīb wa-l-ʿitr*, ed. al-Rāḍī al-Jāzī and Fārūq al-ʿAsālī, Tunis: Bayt al-Ḥikma, 2007, pp. 35–9, 39–40, 82, 94–6.

[§ 1. From Ibn al-Jazzār’s Introduction]

[p. 35] Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. Abī Khālid [Ibn al-Jazzār] said: The best authorities agree that all perfume (*ṭīb*) is, on the whole, hot and mild, with a few exceptions. Because of this, it is most beneficial for those of moist tempers and the aged in wintertime, and harmful for hot-tempered youths in summertime. When the wise one—he who knows the potencies of the perfume, the tempers of the bodies, and the susceptibility of each person to what may counter the nature which prevails over him—combines one ingredient with another, the perfume will be, under this circumstance, entirely beneficial for the brain,

heart, and liver. Together with its benefit for these chief organs (which, through their health, vivify man and lengthen his life), it will also have the ability to delight (*yūṭayyiba*) the soul, bring about happiness, encourage, and strengthen the whole body, and especially the stomach and the other internal organs.

It is necessary for us to know that every sense receives its sensation through the medium of the air. Except, that is, for touch and taste, because they perceive their sensations through proximity: for if something flavorful is not placed upon the tongue, or something tangible upon [p. 36] the feeler (*al-lāmis*), neither one of them could be perceived, due to the concealment of the air that is between them. The other senses are not like that because they only recognize their sensations through the medium of the air: such are sight, hearing, and smell. This means that, when a thing is quite far from a person's eyes, he cannot recognize its color. Likewise, were someone to cry out within the interior of a man's ear, he would not hear because [the crier] did not grant it the air that carries sound and conveys it to him. And, when a thing is placed in the nostrils, one does not smell its scent at all: for the air is what conveys the sound of rapping to the hearing and the scent to the nostrils. Likewise, when one takes perfume into the lands of moist air (such as the coast of the sea and cities near rivers and waters), a scent is not evident in it due to the thickness of the air and its connections to the brain are insufficient. It [perfume] is sweeter (*atyab*) and more pleasant in the lands of fine (*raqīqa*) air, or, rather, its goodness (*tayyibuhu*) exists because of the purity of their air, its fineness, and the goodness of its soil (*turba*). For this reason, they have a scent better than most of the lands over which moisture prevails. So, according to what we profess, smell perceives scents through the medium of the air.

Smell is unlike the other senses, in that every other sense perceives what is pleasant (*ladhīdh*) and what is loathsome (*karīh*), as well as things in between these two. Thus, sight perceives black and white and the colors between them; and likewise taste perceives sweet, bitter, and the range of intermediate flavors between them. But smell is not like that, as it perceives good (*tayyiba*) and loathsome scents, but does not perceive any intermediary between the two scents. This is because when a sense is too weak for the perception [of an intermediary], it can overcome its weakness [as is the case with flavors, where intermediaries between sweet and bitter are detectable]. But if [a sense] cannot overcome its weakness, it cannot cope with [the sensation's] identification as when we identify [an intermediate sensation] in the case of flavors [thus leaving us unable to detect intermediate smells]. So, we say "this is a good scent" and "this is a loathsome scent."

Smell may perceive, [p. 37] despite stillness or motion. That is to say, if a person carries musk or something else that is strongly scented, then—whether

he is standing or walking—whoever smells him will recognize [the scent]. One may also perceive the number [of scents], inasmuch as a person, when he smells the scent of musk, sandalwood, and camphor, recognizes that it is three [different] things. Galen has mentioned that the kinds of odors which the sense of smell can perceive are three: stinking (*muntin*), good, and that which is neither stinking nor good.¹

We must mention the meaning of scent, the cause of its occurrence, and in which of the organs it exists. Then we will return and explain our objective in assembling this book for the service of medicine.

We say that scent (*rā'iḥa*) comes about from vapor (*bukhār*) disintegrating from the odoriferous body (*al-jism dhī l-rā'iḥa*) through the participation of the surrounding air, and penetrates together with it through the nostrils to the brain by inhalation (*istinshāq*). Then the person smells it through the participation of the sensory pneuma (*al-rūḥ al-ḥassāsa*), which is in the ventricles of the brain. Inside the brain is a cavity, within which is a pneuma that is responsible for sensation, motion, thought, vision, and the other psychological functions. This cavity, which is in the forepart of the brain, has in it the pneuma which is responsible for smell and the other senses. We see the indication that smell is only [located] in the brain from [the examples of] the loss of smell in someone in whom the sensation of the brain has become incapacitated, and from what happens to someone who has a cold from an illness that blocks the nostrils. When the vapor from odoriferous things does not reach the brain, it does not smell the good scent or any other of them.² When the natural disposition heals that excess [p. 38] which closed the channel and makes possible the clearance of those channels, then the vapors reach the brain, and it smells and senses the good scent and others.

The concept of scent, and in what organs it resides, is thus clarified. Now we will mention what perfume is healthful to produce from among those we have tested and lauded, and what benefits individuals with hot and cold tempers—but success is with God the Exalted!

We say that the foundations upon which all perfume is built are divided into two classes. One class consists of hot things, which benefit those possessing cold tempers. The foundations of the hot are four: musk, ambergris, aloeswood,

1 Plato, *Timaeus* 67a, has only two kinds of scents, pleasant and unpleasant. A quotation from an Arabic translation of Galen's fragmentary commentary on the *Timaeus* also follows this schema; quoted in Thābit b. Qurra, 45. See also Larrain, 189. On the conception of the sense of smell in ancient scientific literature, unfortunately stopping short of Galen, see Baltussen, 30–45.

2 Cf. Galen, *Doctrines*, 2:466–9 [VII.6.27]. See Rocca, 248, on the olfactory outlet and its communication with the brain.

and saffron. The foundations of the cold [that is, the second class] are also four: camphor, sandalwood, rose, and oakmoss. Then there are the kinds of aromatics that are composed of what is between these foundations. These are suitable for those who have balanced tempers, as well as for those whose tempers are out of balance, when they are entrusted to a wise one knowledgeable in the combinations of the bodies, the natures of humans, and the potencies of the aromatic. As for the perfumers, they are the people most ignorant about these things as well as most corrupting for the health! For they may confront the hot with the hot and the cold with the cold, and thus destroy people by means that they do not understand.³ (If I were to narrate some of these wonders that I have witnessed and seen, it would prolong the book.) As for the other aromatic spices (*afāwīh al-ṭīb*), they are strengthened by means of these bases (*ummahāt*) and foundations, when compounded as necessary and proper.⁴ I will mention the potencies of these foundations and many of their virtues to inform the reader and user of my book, God the Exalted willing.

[§ 2. *Musk*]⁵

[p. 39] Among these [foundational aromatics] is musk.⁶ It is named *mushkā* in Syriac. It is a substance which collects in the navels in the lower parts of the belly of an animal that is like the rabbit, but larger, that is found in Tibet and China. It scratches upon tent pegs set up for it, and those navels break off with the musk inside them. They are hairy with gray-to-white hair. The best musk in appearance and scent is what is apple-like, resembling the scent of a good Lebanese apple, with yellow prevailing for its color. It is intermediate between coarse and fine [in grain]. Next [in quality] is that which is more intensely black than [the best musk], and it is close to it in scent but not comparable

3 Cf. Galen's comments about medically ignorant perfumers in *De Antidotis* (ed. Kühn, 14:24), and Totelin, 26.

4 Cf. al-Ibshīhī, 361: "Al-Ḥasan b. Sahl said, "The bases of the aromatic herbs (*al-rayāḥīn*) become strong by the bases of the aromatics (*al-ṭīb*), thus narcissus is strengthened by rose, rose is strengthened by musk, violet is strengthened by ambergris, basil (*rayḥān*) is strengthened by camphor, dog rose is strengthened by aloeswood."

5 The introduction is followed by a catalog of aromatics with their properties. Ibn al-Jazzār divides this list into foundations (*uṣūl*), as he had described in his introduction, and aromatic spices (*afāwīh*). The latter category includes spikenard, cassia, cloves, nutmeg, and cardamom, among others. The entry on musk, one of the foundational aromatics, is here translated as an example.

6 See King, *Scent*. Musk was unknown in the time of Galen, as was also the ambergris so beloved of Islamicate perfumery; they represent late antique additions to the ancient pharmacopoeia.

to it. Next is that which is more intensely black than that, and it is the lowest [quality] of [musk].

Musk is often adulterated, done with many kinds of additives (*humlānāt*). Their mention is omitted here out of fear that a person with no scruples would, if he knew them, adulterate.

The best musk is that from the billy goat and she-goat (*al-ʿanz wa-l-ʿanza*),⁷ which is musk congealed in the interior of the navel (*nāfija*). Its scent cannot help being evident in every perfume, along with whatever aromatic it is combined with, and ignorant perfumers resort to it, just like ignorant physicians resort to scammony⁸ in every purgative drug. But each substance, when used in something other than its proper place, has a harm that is greater than its benefit.

[p. 40] Musk is hot in the second degree and dry in the third degree: mild, fine, and it strengthens the weak organs by the goodness (*ṭīb*) of its scent. It cures fainting, strengthens the brain and heart, and cures cold ailments in the head. It harms the hot-tempered quickly. It yellows the face and constricts the belly. It benefits the elderly especially in wintertime.

[§ 3. *From the Preface to the Chapter on Incense*]

[p. 82] Wise people use varieties of compound incense⁹ among the types of perfumes. They seek thereby (along with the goodness of their scent) to dispel colds and catarrh; to halt excessive moistures that descend from the brain to the nostrils and chest, especially in the autumn due to the variability of its air, and in the winter because the excessiveness of its cold; and to limit halitosis on account of that. These incenses are produced from ingredients that open and cleanse the moistures in the brain, and repel likewise the harm from the foul air which occurs before plague and epidemic, and kinds of compound fevers many of which are accompanied by varieties of maladies in what adjoins the chest.

[§ 4. *Preface to the Chapter on Thick, Scented Unguents (lakhālikh)*]

[p. 94] As for the perfume of the *lakhālikh*, they are used for the pleasantness of their scent. Aristocrats make use of them by daubing them on the tables upon which their food is presented, and they use them after the bath. Among

7 Ibn al-Jazzār's identification of the goat as the animal that produces musk, rather than the gazelle, is unusual. However, writers' unfamiliarity with the musk deer frequently resulted in attempts to compare it with other animals, such as the gazelle, goat, and rabbit. See King, *Scent*, 12–15, and *passim*.

8 *Convovulus scammonia*, source of a powerful purgative.

9 Incense made of multiple ingredients.

lakhālikh, there are the white types, which are seemly for men, and, the yellow, suitable for the natures of women.

In his book about beauty and pleasure, Plato¹⁰ mentioned that whatever has the scent of rose, narcissus, lily, and violet and the aromas which stir pleasure (*ladhdha*) and passion (*‘ishq*) and what resembles them, like *lakhālikh*: all these are suitable for the use of women. These aromas correspond to the feminine aromas. And whatever of the aromas suits the natures of, and stirs, might (*‘izz*), liberality (*jūd*), and magnanimity (*karam*)—such as the scents of aloeswood, myrtle, jasmine, violet, and marjoram—these correspond fittingly to the scent of men.¹¹

These feminine¹² aromas are for women of feminine natures, and the masculine aromas for those with masculine natures. The circumstances of the colors (in general) flow from this, for among them are those that correspond to men and also those that correspond to women. Whatever is of black, violet, orange (*khīrī*), ruby, and what resembles masculine colors is of the attire of men, while each [p. 95] feminine color is for women. Whatever is made from animal pelts is more fitting for women because it is of the natures of women. Indeed, men wear [pelts]—such as sable, fox, rabbit, and similar things, and the colors of *washy* [multicolored brocade]—because of women’s love for them. Yet [animal pelts] are for women because they correspond to the impulses (*harakāt*) of females.¹³

Likewise, good aromas such as the scent of aloeswood, camphor, and good oils are indeed for women. The account of Plato specifies this. As for those who use *lakhlakha* in the path of treatment instead of pharmaceuticals: they have brought harm to [their patients], whether men or women, for it benefits [only] those who are afflicted by fainting and weakness of the animal faculty, especially when mixed into a plaster which strengthens the stomach. This is because its scent enters the interior of the body through inhalation and strengthens the animal pneuma, which is the matter of the psychic pneuma. This is because the basis of the psychic pneuma is produced from the animal pneuma in the interior (*butūn*) of the heart up to when it ascends to the head in the arterial vessels from beneath the brain. Tissue is woven from those vessels resembling a net.¹⁴ When the stay of the animal pneuma in this net is

10 No such passage is present in Plato, but cf. *Symposium* 196a–b and King, “Aromatherapy,” 46. Ibn al-Jazzār’s quotation may stem from Galen’s commentary on the *Timaeus*, which is only partially extant.

11 On the feelings said to be stirred by different scents, see also *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 17 (al-Kindī).

12 Reading *al-mu’annatha* for the editors’ *al-mawthiqā*.

13 For the parallels in al-Kindī, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 17.

14 Cf. Maimonides, I, 43 (p. 18).

prolonged and its wandering within it extended, it becomes delicate and turns into psychic pneuma. Then those arterial vessels ascend from that net to the brain and empty out that pneuma first into the forepart of its ventricles. When it has become delicate there, it [p. 96] flows once more into the middle ventricle, and then into the furthestmost ventricle, and becomes delicate to the utmost quality.

It is according to this means that the ancient sages stated that the aromas of good perfume (*rawā'ih al-ʿiṭr al-ṭayyiba*) strengthen the chief organs, meaning the brain and heart. Together with their strengthening of these organs, the arrival of that scent to the interior of the body, through inhalation, benefits the ailments that arise in times of epidemic. It especially benefits one convalescing from sickness, heals his soul, corrects dispositions, encourages the coward by means of its strengthening of the animal pneuma, and lengthens the lifespan. Its benefits are greater than those which we have mentioned when the wise one—knowledgeable in the composition of the bodies and their tempers, the seasons and their natures, and the lands with their peculiarities, and their airs—uses it. He will confront every increment of balance with what conforms to it, all the while confronting what has deviated from balance with what conforms to it of its opposite, and then [the patient] will return to his natural condition when any other of its illnesses have been treated with the opposite. I have aimed to clarify this in my book as an example for him to follow, but with God is success.

Ibn al-Haytham (d. ca. 432/1040) on Vision

Jan Hogendijk and Abdelhamid I. Sabra (†)

1 Introduction

Al-Ḥasan Ibn al-Haytham (b. ca. 354/965 or later, d. ca. 432/1040) was born in Basra and spent the first half of his life in Iraq. He then moved to Egypt where he met the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim (r. 386–411/996–1021) and seems to have done most of his scientific research. Not much is known about his life and his scientific network. His most important work was the *Optics* (*K. al-Manāẓir*), which is organized in seven books and which he may have written in the period 410–20/1020–30. The purpose of this work was “to examine afresh, and in a systematic manner, the entire science of vision and to place it on new foundations” (Sabra, “Introduction,” liv).

Different and incompatible theories of vision existed at the time. According to the extramission theory, vision occurs when the eye emits visual rays and senses the visible objects. The visual rays were supposed to be straight lines or very thin cones with the apex in the center of the eye. This extramission theory was held by most mathematicians, following the ancient Greek tradition of Euclid and Ptolemy of Alexandria. The intromission theory, held by most natural philosophers following Aristotle, assumes that vision happens because visible objects emit perceptible “forms” which are transmitted to the eye through a transparent medium.

We have selected for the reader, in the translation of Abdelhamid Sabra, the introduction to the *Optics*, where Ibn al-Haytham explains the main problem, and two characteristic passages in Books I and II where he presents his own theory of vision. Ibn al-Haytham’s theory is based on three basic ideas. The first idea is the notion of primary and secondary light. In the words of Sabra (“Form,” 118),

[L]ight is a form ... in virtue of which material bodies shine forth into the surrounding medium. Either it naturally inheres in the body, in which case it is considered an “essential” form ... or it is temporarily “fixed” in the body’s surface, and in this case it is said to be an “accidental” form ... The light that shines from naturally inherent or essential light ... is called “primary” ... that which shines from accidental light is called “secondary.”

As Sabra has noted (Sabra, "Introduction," lv) the word "form" may seem redundant to a modern reader and might as well be omitted for clarity. Primary light travels along straight lines.

The second idea is the behavior of the secondary light. If an object, such as an apple, is exposed to the sun, every point on the surface of the object which is hit by the primary light will emit secondary light rays in straight lines in all directions. We see the object because each point on the surface of the object emits one secondary light ray entering our eye. In addition, the object emits many other secondary rays which cannot enter our eye. These secondary rays can meet new objects, and each point on the surface of such a new object will then emit new rays in all directions, which one might call tertiary rays, although Ibn al-Haytham mostly subsumes them under secondary rays. Such rays may also enter our eye, and so on.

The third idea is the way in which vision occurs. Assume again that the object is an apple. According to Ibn al-Haytham, each point on the visible part of the surface of the apple emits exactly one secondary light ray which enters the eye, namely, the ray perpendicular to the spherical parts of the eye. Ibn al-Haytham then distinguishes two different ways of seeing: in "seeing at a glance," one sees only the shapes and the colors of the apple, without interpreting what one sees as "apple." In "seeing after contemplation," the faculty of judgment interprets the rays as an image of an "apple," after comparing it to images of apples which had previously been committed to memory.

Ibn al-Haytham proves many of his statements by meticulous experiments. For example, he verifies the travel of secondary light along straight lines even for the light of dawn before sunrise (which he considers to be secondary light emitted by the atmosphere). The descriptions are so detailed that there is little doubt that Ibn al-Haytham actually performed his experiments.

The seven books of the *Optics* deal with direct vision (Books I–III), reflection in mirrors (IV), image-formation in mirrors (v), errors of sight by reflection (VI), and refraction (VII). In the quoted passages below, the reader will notice Ibn al-Haytham's precise style of argumentation. The later Books IV–VII of the *Optics* contain many pages of lengthy geometrical arguments, explained in a precise but unbearably lengthy style, and are therefore difficult to understand. Thus it is no surprise that the circulation and also the fame of the *Optics* in the first century after its composition was limited.

In the east, Ibn al-Haytham's *Optics* became known through the revision by Kamāl al-Dīn al-Fārisī (ca. 700/1300), who shortened the text and thus made the work more palatable (Sabra, "Commentary"). Kamāl al-Dīn added four appendices, including the first correct explanation of the rainbow in history by refraction in raindrops which are considered as small spheres.

One Arabic manuscript of the *Optics* ended up in al-Andalus before 1080, and the work was translated into Latin around 1200; Ibn al-Haytham's first

name, al-Ḥasan, was Latinized as Alhacen and later as Alhazen. Just like Kamāl al-Dīn, the anonymous Latin translator (or translators) abbreviated the work, and the translation was often easier to understand than the original. The Latin translation influenced European scholars of optics, and a version of it was printed (Risner). More recently, the seven books have been edited by Mark Smith from the Latin manuscript tradition. Unfortunately, the first quoted passage is missing in the Latin translation, probably because the beginning of the *Optics* was missing in the Arabic archetype manuscript, but English translations of the Latin versions of the second and third passage can be found in Smith (2:372–4, 516–19).

After Ibn al-Haytham, further progress in the theory of vision was made when Johannes Kepler worked out the focusing properties of eye lens and the image-formation on the retina in 1604. But Ibn al-Haytham was “undoubtedly the most significant figure in the history of optics between antiquity and the seventeenth century” (Lindberg, 58). Today he is one of the most celebrated exact scientists of the Arabic-Islamic tradition.

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2 Translation

Al-Ḥasan Ibn al-Haytham, *K. al-Manāẓir: al-Maqālāt* 1, 2, 3 *fī l-ibṣār ‘alā l-istiqāma*, ed. Abdelhamid Sabra, Kuwait: al-Majlis al-Waṭaṇī li-l-Thaqāfa wa-l-Funūn

wa-l-Ādāb, 1983, pp. 59–62, 158–60, 322–6, trans. Abdelhamid I. Sabra, *The Optics of Ibn al-Haytham: Books I–III; On Direct Vision*, 2 vols., London: The Warburg Institute, 1989, vol. 1, pp. 3–6, 80–2, 211–14 (numbering of paragraphs follows Sabra's translation).

[p. 3] [*From the Preface to Book 1*]

[§ 1.1.1] Early investigators diligently pursued the inquiry into the manner of visual sensation and applied their thoughts and effort to it, eventually reaching the limit to which their investigation had led, and gaining as much knowledge of this matter as their inquiry and judgment had yielded. Nevertheless, their views on the nature of vision are divergent and their doctrines regarding the manner of sensation not concordant. Thus, perplexity prevails, certainty is hard to come by, and there is no assurance of attaining the object of inquiry. How strong, in addition to all this, is the excuse for the truth to be confused, and how manifest is the proof that certainty is difficult to achieve! For the truths are obscure, the ends hidden, the doubts manifold, the minds turbid, the reasonings various; the premises are gleaned from the senses, and the senses (which are our tools) are not immune from error. The path of investigation is therefore obliterated and the inquirer, however diligent, is not infallible. Consequently, when inquiry concerns subtle matters, perplexity [p. 4] grows, views diverge, opinions vary, conclusions differ, and certainty becomes difficult to obtain.

[§ 1.1.2] Our subject is obscure and the way leading to knowledge of its nature difficult; moreover, our inquiry requires a combination of the natural and the mathematical sciences. It is dependent on the natural sciences because vision is one of the senses and these belong to natural things. It is dependent on the mathematical sciences because sight perceives shape, position, magnitude, movement, and rest, in addition to its being characterized by straight lines; and since it is the mathematical sciences that investigate these things, the inquiry into our subject truly combines the natural and the mathematical sciences.

[§ 1.1.3] Natural scientists have inquired into the nature of this subject according to their art, and exerted themselves in it as much as they could. The learned among them settled upon the opinion that vision is effected by a form which comes from the visible object to the eye and through which sight perceives the form of the object. Mathematicians, for their part, have paid more attention to this science than others. They have pursued its investigation, paying attention to its details and divisions. They have distinguished objects of vision, assigning causes to their particular properties and stating reasons for each of them. All the same, they have continued throughout the ages to disagree about the principles of this subject, with the result that the opinions of

the various groups among the practitioners of this art have gone different ways. But for all the disparity in their ranks, their different epochs, and the divergence of their views, in general they agree that vision is effected by a ray which issues from the eye to the visible object and by means of which sight perceives the object; that this ray extends in straight lines whose extremities meet at the center of the eye; and that each ray through which a visible object is perceived has as a whole the shape of a cone the vertex of which is the center of the eye and the base is the surface of the visible object. These two notions, I mean the opinion of the physicists and that of the mathematicians, appear to diverge and contradict one another if taken at their face value.

[§ 1.1.4] Mathematicians, moreover, differ about the structure of this ray and about the manner of its production. Some take the view that the radial cone is a solid body, continuous and compact. Others think that the ray consists of straight lines which are fine bodies the extremities of which meet at the center of the eye and divergently extend until they reach the visible object; and that sight perceives those parts of the surface of the object which the extremities of these lines encounter, whereas the parts of the object's surface that fall between those extremities are not perceived. Thus it comes about that the extremely small parts and minute pores in the surfaces of visible objects are invisible. Again, a group among those who believe the radial cone to be solid [p. 5] and compact thinks that the ray issues from the eye in one straight line until it reaches the object, after which it moves extremely quickly over the length and breadth of the surface of the object—so quickly in fact that the movement is imperceptible—and through this movement the solid cone is produced. Another group believes the matter to be different and that when the eyelids open in front of an object, the cone is immediately produced, all at once, in no sensible time. A group from among all of these thinks the vision-producing ray to be a luminous power which issues forth from the eye to the visible object, and that sensation is brought about by that power. Another group is of the opinion that when the air comes into contact with the eye it receives from the eye only a certain quality which immediately turns the air into a ray through which sight perceives the visible objects.

[§ 1.1.5] Each of those groups was led to its belief by reasonings, arguments, methods, and evidence of its own. But the settled view of all those who have inquired into the manner of visual sensation divides on the whole into the two contrary doctrines which we mentioned earlier. Now, for any two different doctrines, it is either the case that one of them is true and the other false; or they are both false, the truth being other than either of them; or they both lead to one thing which is the truth. [In the latter case] each of the groups holding those two doctrines would have failed to complete its inquiry and, unable to

reach the end, has stopped short of it. Alternatively, one of them may have reached the end but the other has stopped short of it, thus giving rise to the apparent difference between the two doctrines, although the end would have been the same had the investigation been pushed further. Disagreement may also arise in regard to the subject of an inquiry as a result of a difference in methods of research, but when the inquiry is rightly conducted and the investigation intensified, agreement will emerge and the difference will be settled.

[§ 1.1.6] That being the case, and the nature of our subject being confused, in addition to the continued disagreement through the ages among investigators who have undertaken to examine it, and because the manner of vision has not been ascertained, we have thought it appropriate that we direct our attention to this subject as much as we can, and seriously apply ourselves to it, and examine it, and diligently inquire into its nature. We should, that is, recommence the inquiry into its principles and premises, beginning our investigation with an inspection of the things that exist and a survey of the conditions of visible objects. We should distinguish the properties of particulars, and gather by induction what pertains to the eye when vision takes place and what is found in the manner of sensation to be uniform, unchanging, manifest, and not subject to doubt. After which we should ascend in our inquiry and reasonings, gradually and orderly, criticizing premises and exercising caution in regard [p. 6] to conclusions—our aim in all that we make subject to inspection and review being to employ justice, not to follow prejudice, and to take care in all that we judge and criticize that we seek the truth and not to be swayed by opinion. We may in this way eventually come to the truth that gratifies the heart and gradually and carefully reach the end at which certainty appears; while through criticism and caution we may seize the truth that dispels disagreement and resolves doubtful matters. For all that, we are not free from that human turbidity which is in the nature of man; but we must do our best with what we possess of human power. From God we derive support in all things. [...]

[p. 80] [*From Book 1, Chapter 6: on the Manner of Vision*]

[§ 1.6.56] Now that we have shown this, it remains for us to expose the opinion of those who hold the doctrine of the ray and show what is unsound and what is sound in it. We say: If vision occurs only through something that issues forth from the eye to the visible object, then that thing is either a body or not. If it is, then, when we look at the sky and see it and the stars in it and discern and contemplate them, there will issue at that moment from our eyes a body which will fill [the space] between the sky and the earth without the eye losing anything of itself. But this is quite impossible and quite absurd. Vision

does not, therefore, occur by means of a body that goes out of the eye. If, on the other hand, the thing that issues forth from the eye is not a body, then it will not sense the visible object, for sensation belongs only to animate bodies. Therefore, nothing issues from the eye that senses the visible object.

[§ 1.6.57] Now it is evident that vision occurs through the eye. If that is so, and if the eye perceives the visible object only through something that issues from [p. 81] it to the object, and if that issuing entity cannot sense the object, then what issues from the eye does not [itself] sense the object but rather conveys to the eye something of the object through which the latter is perceived by the eye. However, what is said to issue from the eye is not something perceptible by the senses but conjectured. But it is not permissible to conjecture anything unless there is a reason that calls for this conjecture. Now the reason that led those who hold the doctrine of the ray to maintain their doctrine is that they found that the eye perceives the visible object when an interval exists between them; and it was generally recognized that sensation occurred only through touch; so they also thought that vision occurred through something issuing from the eye to the visible object so that this entity may either sense the object in its own place or take something of the object back to the eye where it is sensed.

[§ 1.6.58] But if it is not possible that a body should issue from the eye and sense the visible object, and if nothing can sense the visible object other than an animate body, it only remains to conjecture that what issues from the eye to the object receives from the latter something which it conveys to the eye. And since it has been shown that the air and the transparent bodies receive the form of the visible object and convey it to the eye and to every body opposite the object, then that which is thought to convey to the eye something of the visible object is the air and the transparent bodies placed between the eye and the object. But if the air and the transparent bodies convey to the eye something of the visible object at all times and in any event (provided that the eye faces the object) without the need for something that issues forth from the eye, then the reason that led those who hold the doctrine of the ray to maintain their doctrine ceases to exist. For they were led to assert that doctrine by their belief that vision is effected only through something that extends between the eye and the object for the purpose of conveying something of the object to the eye. But if the air and the transparent bodies placed between the eye and the object convey to the eye something of the object without the need for anything to issue from the eye, and, moreover, if these bodies extend between the eye and the object, then the need to affirm the existence of anything else through which something is conveyed to the eye no longer exists, and there no longer exists a reason for their saying that a conjectural entity conveys to

the eye something of the object. And if no reason remains for maintaining the doctrine of the ray, then this doctrine is invalidated.

[§ 1.6.59] Moreover, all that mathematicians who hold the doctrine of the ray have used in their reasonings and demonstrations are imaginary lines which they call “lines of the ray.” And we have shown that the eye cannot perceive any visible object except through these lines alone. Thus the view of those who take the radial lines to be imaginary lines is correct, and we have shown [p. 82] that vision is not effected without them. But the view of those who think that something issues from the eye other than the imaginary lines is impossible and we have shown its impossibility by the fact that it is not warranted by anything that exists, nor is there a reason for it or an argument that supports it.

[§ 1.6.60] It is therefore evident from all that we have shown that the eye senses the light and color that are in the surface of a visible object only through the form of that light and color, which [form] extends from the object to the eye in the intermediate transparent body; and that the eye does not perceive any of the forms reaching it except through the straight lines which are imagined to extend between the visible object and the center of the eye and which are perpendicular to all surfaces of the coats of the eye. And that is what we wished to prove.

[§ 1.6.61] That, then, is the manner of vision in general. For that which sight perceives of a visible object by pure sensation is only the light and color in that object. As for the other properties that sight perceives of a visible object, such as shape, position, size, movement, and the like, these sight cannot perceive by pure sensation, but only by inference and signs. We shall afterwards explain this thoroughly in the second book when we enumerate the properties perceptible by sight. But that which we have shown, I mean the manner of vision, accords with the view of the learned among physicists and with the generally accepted view of mathematicians. It is now clear from [what we have shown] that the two groups are right and the two doctrines correct, mutually compatible and not contradictory. But neither [doctrine] is complete without the other, for sensation cannot be effected by virtue of one [of these two doctrines] without the other, nor can vision take place without their combination.

[p. 211] [*From Book 2, Chapter 4: on Distinguishing (the Ways in Which) Sight Perceives Visible Objects*]

[§ 2.4.12] We say also that when sight perceives an object whose form is then ascertained by the sentient, the form of that object will remain in the soul and take shape in the imagination. And the form of a repeatedly perceived object will be more firmly fixed in the soul than the form of one perceived only once or a few times. And when sight perceives an individual, then repeatedly and

continually perceives other individuals of the same species, the form of that species will be confirmed in the soul, and a universal form of that species will thus take shape in the imagination.

The proof that the forms of visible objects remain in the soul and in the imagination is [as follows]: when we remember a [p. 212] person whom we knew or saw or met before and whose form has been ascertained, and if we correctly remember that person and the place in which we met him, we will immediately imagine the individual features of that person, the outline of his face, his gait or posture at that time, and imagine the place in which we met him, and may also imagine at the same time other visible objects that were present in that place. But to imagine the form of that person and the form of the place in which we met him and the state he was in, without the presence of the person and the place, is clear evidence that the form of that person and place still exists in our soul and remains in our imagination. Similarly, when we remember a city which we have previously seen and from which we have been absent, we will imagine the form of the city and of the places and individuals we have come to know in it, if we remember all this in the absence of the city and of what we have seen in it. Again, when we remember objects previously seen, and correctly remember having seen them, we will imagine their forms as they were then seen. But to imagine the forms of objects previously seen, in the absence of these objects at the time of remembering them, is clear proof that the forms perceived by sight exist in the soul and are imprinted in the imagination. [...]

[§ 2.4.16] [p. 213] Now for the universal forms which are produced in the soul for the species of visible objects and which take shape in the imagination. To every species of visible objects belong an appearance and a shape which are the same for all individuals of that species, while the individuals differ in respect of particular properties which are also visible. Color [for example] may be the same in all individuals of one species. Now appearance, shape, color, and all properties which constitute the appearance of every individual of a certain species is a universal form of that species. And sight perceives that appearance and shape, and every property which is the same for the species' individuals, from all the individuals of that species which it has perceived; and it also perceives the particular properties in which those individuals differ while agreeing in the universal properties. And as the sight repeatedly perceives the individuals of one species, the universal form in that species will be repeatedly presented to it together with the difference between the particular forms of those individuals. And when the universal form has been repeatedly presented to the soul, it will be fixed and established in it. And from the difference between the particular forms that accompany the universal forms as they

are repeatedly presented, the soul will perceive that the form that is identical for all individuals of the species is a universal form of that species. In this way, [p. 214] then, the universal forms which sight perceives of the species of visible objects are produced in the soul and in the imagination.

[§ 2.4.17] The perceived forms of individual visible objects and the forms of their species therefore remain in the soul and are fixed in the imagination, and as they are repeatedly perceived by sight they become more firmly fixed in the soul and in the imagination; and visible objects are recognized by the sentient by means of the forms produced in the soul for the species of these objects and their individuals. It is on these forms that the sentient relies in perceiving what the visible objects are, because perception of what they are is due only to recognition, and recognition results from comparing the form presently perceived by sight with the form that has been fixed in the soul by the forms of objects already seen, and from likening the presently perceived form to one of the forms in the imagination. Perception of what the object is, therefore, is perception of the similarity between the object's form and one of the forms established in the soul and in the imagination for the species of visible objects. And it is on the universal forms produced in the soul for the species of visible objects that the sentient relies in perceiving what the visible objects are, whereas it is on the individuals' forms produced in the soul for each of the objects previously seen and imagined that it relies in recognizing individual objects. The faculty of judgment tends by nature to liken the forms of objects presently perceived to the form fixed in the imagination and acquired by the soul from the forms of visible objects. When, therefore, sight perceives an object, the faculty of judgment will look for a similar form in the imagination. If it finds such a form, it will recognize the object and perceive what it is; if not, then it will neither recognize the object nor perceive its quiddity. However, because of the speed with which the faculty of judgment assimilates the form of the object at the moment of vision, it may err by likening the object to another, different from it, if the object has a property which exists in the other. Then, when it later contemplates the object and ascertains its form, it will liken it to the form truly similar to it, thus realizing at the second time the error it made in the first assimilation. It is in these ways, then, that the sense of sight perceives what the visible objects are.

Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) on Eyesight and Vision

Hanif Amin Beidokhti

1 Introduction

Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191), known as the *shaykh al-ishrāq* (“Master of Illumination”), is one of the most prominent figures in the tradition of philosophy in the Islamic world.¹ His fame is primarily due to his distinct philosophical system, which has at its core the notions of light and darkness and is described in his *Philosophy of Illumination* (*Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, hereafter: *HI*). Accordingly, he is credited with being the founder of a school of philosophy, known as “Illuminationist philosophy,” much as for later thinkers the so-called Peripatetic (*mashshāʿī*) philosophy is best exemplified by Avicenna (d. 428/1037).

Suhrawardī was born around 550/1155 in Sohravard, in the province Zanjan, in northwestern Persia. After finishing his primary education, he moved to Maragheh to pursue his studies under the little known Majd al-Dīn al-Jīlī (d. ca. 570/1174–5), who also taught Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210). After a period of study in Isfahan, he went to Anatolia and the Levant to further his studies and search for patrons and more advanced scholars. The majority of his works must have been written during this period. These include the Persian *Book of Rays* (*Partawnāma*), *Tablets for ʿImād al-Dawla* (*al-Atwāḥ al-ʿImādiyya*, in Persian and Arabic), and at least three of his largest Arabic works: *Paths and Debates* (*al-Mashāriʿ wa-l-muṭāraḥāt*; hereafter: *al-Mashāriʿ*), *HI*, and *Appositions* (*al-Muqāwamāt*) (for the relationship between his works and their chronology, see Amin Beidokhti). Suhrawardī was imprisoned by the ruler of Aleppo (Saladin’s son and a close friend of Suhrawardī’s), following Saladin’s repeated orders to execute Suhrawardī on charges of heresy. He was later put to death at a young age (36 solar years) in the year 587/1191, hence becoming known as *al-shaykh al-maqtūl*, “the executed master” (or as *al-Suhrawardī al-maqtūl*, in order to distinguish him from other Suhrawardīs) (see Landolt and Würsch).

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Although *ḤI* is Suhrawardī's most famous work, Suhrawardī maintained that it cannot be understood in isolation from his other works, suggesting a study map for his Illuminationist project: *al-Tabwīḥāt* first, then *al-Mashārī'*, and finally *ḤI* (Suhrawardī, *al-Mashārī'*, 194.2–8). It appears that when Suhrawardī wrote *al-Mashārī'*, he had not yet penned *al-Muqāwamāt* (Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, 124.1–3; cf. Suhrawardī, *Talwīḥāt*, 2.6–7).

1.1 *Eyesight and Vision*

In a famous passage of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle writes:

All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses [...]; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer sight to almost everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things.

Metaphysics A, 2 [980a23–28]

This shows how crucial our visual perception is in the formation of our knowledge, be it ordinary or theoretical, of the world around us. Eyesight is one the five sensory perceptions—called external senses (*al-ḥawāss al-ẓāhira*) by Avicenna, the other four being taste, touch, smell, and hearing—shared between non-rational and rational animals. Indeed, eyesight was so significant that almost all ancient and medieval philosophers modeled their epistemology after their theory of sensory vision (McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 104).² In this respect, Suhrawardī is no exception. He develops a theory of eyesight that lays the ground for his famous doctrine of presential knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ḥudūrī*). Suhrawardī achieves his final standpoint through criticizing the then dominant theories of eyesight.

Such theories are broadly speaking divided into two groups: extramissionist and intromissionist. The former was of two sub-branches, one attributed to Plato and the mathematicians (Euclid, Ptolemy), and the other to the physicians (Galen) (see Avicenna, *Dānishnāma*, 87; Avicenna, *De Anima* III.5, 115–16; Ierodiakonou).³ The latter was an Aristotelian position, of which a fully revised and improved version was proposed by Avicenna.

2 On the hierarchy of the senses in Islamic intellectual history, see also *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 13 (Abū l-Majd Tabrīzī), 22 (Suhrawardī), 32 (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya), and *passim*.

3 On intromission/extramission, see also *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 18 (§ 6) (Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ), 21 (§§ 1.1.1–5) (Ibn al-Haytham), 22 (Suhrawardī), 30 (§ 8) (al-Ghazālī), and *passim*.

Suhrawardī discusses the theory of sensory vision in all of his works that include a section on psychology and sense perception (see *Talwihāt*, 151–2; *Partawnāma*, 27–9 [§ 34]). Here, I focus on his discussion in *HI*. Yet before this, I provide an overview of the theories that are being criticized there.

Despite his fame as a Platonic philosopher, Suhrawardī rejects Plato's extramission theory. According to this theory, a luminous body, a soft and unburning fire, or a stream of light is emitted from the observer's eyes and coalesces with daylight, forming one homogeneous body that stretches from the eye to the visible object and functions as a material intermediary instrument of the visual power for seeing (*Timaeus* 45b–46c; see Adamson, 77; Lindberg, 3–6; cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 67c–d; *Republic* VI, 507d–508c; *Theaetetus* 156d–e). This theory has at least two implications: that a ray is a body and that the place where sight takes place is not in the eye. Avicenna attributes a similar position to some physicians, meaning Galen, who wanted to avoid absurdities arising from a more basic version of this theory, which he ascribes to some pre-Aristotelian predecessors. According to this “primitive” version, the rays emitted from the eyes are responsible for the occurrence of seeing (see Avicenna, *Najāt*, 323–7; Avicenna, *Dānishnāma*, 87–95). In Avicenna's overview, especially the supposition of “coalescence with the daylight” is considered to be a Galenic contribution. Euclid's optics strengthened extramission theory with its geometrical explanation.

By contrast, Aristotle suggested that the eyes are considerably more passive in seeing.⁴ He also rejected the idea that light is a subtle body being emitted from another body, namely, from the eyes. According to Aristotle, seeing takes place when the colors of a visual object are transmitted to the eyes through an illuminated, transparent medium, like air or water, and become impressed upon the watery substance of the eyes. Thus, the beholding organ unifies with the beheld object (Aristotle, *De Anima* II.7; Aristotle, *De sensu et sensibilia*, 2–3, 6; see Adamson, 77–83; Lindberg, 9). Here, light turns into a precondition for seeing, making color the only object of sight—unlike touch, which perceives a broader range of objects including warmth and coldness, moist and dryness, coarseness and softness.

Differences aside, the two theories have something in common: the precondition that there must be a medium between objects and eyes (the same applies to smell and hearing). Besides, both theories try to establish a direct contact between subject and object of vision. This direct contact is meant to overcome the apparent incongruence between seeing and other sense perceptions. For instance, in the case of hearing and touch the sensory object is a property or accident of the object—respectively, its sound or a quality

4 On Aristotle's theory of perception and its reception in the Islamic world, see further *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 22 (Suhrawardī), 23 (Ibn Rushd).

of its texture—that comes to the sense organ. In the case of seeing, however, the apparent object of sensation is the distant object itself with its size, three-dimensional shape, color, and so on.

Suhrawardī's discussion of eyesight in *ḤI* is dense and terse. Unlike Avicenna, he does not discuss his terminology and simply makes use of Avicennian notions like light, color, and transparent (*Avicenna, De Anima* III.1, 91–5; see Hasse, 107–19; McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 104–7). Suhrawardī's critique of the previous theories of eyesight starts with a critique of the supposition that rays are bodies, which is constitutive to the extramission theory. In § 99, he mentions a series of absurdities that would arise if rays were corporeal. The most important are the following: Natural bodies move either in a straight line or have spherical motion, whereas rays move in all directions. Furthermore, if rays were bodies, then their emission from their source, for example from the sun, must cause a gradual shrinkage of the source. Besides, an increase in the sources of light should result in an accumulation of corporeal rays. As bodies are by definition three-dimensional, and since they are colored, they would negatively impact vision and not facilitate it. Now, if rays are not bodies, while they are visible, they should be an accident of the visible object. From this, Suhrawardī concludes that rays are inhering features of the visible bodies that occur in them caused by a source of light and the mediation of a transparent body.⁵

Next, in § 100, Suhrawardī criticizes a position that equates rays with colors and claims that the reason why colors are not seen in the dark is that in darkness the colors, which are rays, vanish. The opponent thinks that rays are only the perfect manifestation of a color. In Suhrawardī's view, however, darkness is nothing but the absence of light, and privation cannot veil anything—indeed, cannot do anything at all. So he reasons that rays are a precondition for the manifestation of colors. But he also offers an argument. He grants his opponent that colors are non-existing in the absence of luminous or natural lights (*daw'*), like sunlight. From this, it follows that there is a relationship between them, but not that they are the same thing. An example can illustrate Suhrawardī's point: the sun has a natural light but no color—as Avicenna has defined the notion of luminous light (*daw'*)—yet it is maximally manifest. Also, when such a luminous light shines upon colored objects, it diminishes their colors. Besides, one can sit in a completely dark room and see the stars which are luminous. This shows that rays and colors are different.⁶

5 In Suhrawardī's system, inhering features (sing. *hay'a*) include both accidents and forms.

6 Avicenna criticized a similar position in *De Anima* III.2–3, 95–107.

Having shown that rays are not corporeal and that they are distinct from colors, Suhrawardī critiques the extramission theory using almost the same Avicennian counter-arguments—though he shows no interest in discussing the two subgroups of extramission theory separately.⁷ A corporeal thing is either a body or an accident of it. However, accidents cannot leave their substrates. Now, Suhrawardī adds a new point: If rays are bodies, then they must be moved by our will, because they move in all directions and no natural motion goes in many different directions. So we ought to be able to restrain their motion or retract them once they are emitted and the eyes are open, but this is of course not the case (§ 101). The rest of § 101 is dedicated to the absurdities arising from the assumption of a corporeal ray not moved by will, repeating some of Avicenna's points. Since interpenetration of bodies is impossible, rays should not be able to pass through water and glass so easily; indeed, they could pass through a clay pot easier than through glass, since clay has more pores. For the same reason, seeing the stars and sun would mean that corporeal rays would have to perforate the celestial bodies in order to reach the spheres of the stars and sun, which is impossible. Besides, the motion of bodies takes time, and so we should not see the farther and closer objects, like a tree and the moon, simultaneously. Another absurdity is that the eyes would need to produce enough light to illuminate a whole hemisphere instantaneously.

After debunking the extramission theory by using more or less Avicennian arguments, Suhrawardī embarks on a critique of the Peripatetic theory (§§ 102–3). For making sense of Suhrawardī's critique, it is important to bear in mind that according to this theory, the actual object of eyesight is the visible form in the eye, while the external thing is only the secondary object. This gives rise to the majority of criticisms of this theory, also raised by some of Suhrawardī's close contemporaries, such as Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 560/1165) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (see al-Baghdādī, 2:332–4; al-Rāzī, 925–8).

If eyesight is based on the impression of the sensible form of an object upon the crystalline humor of the eye, how could a mountain with its huge size be impressed upon a tiny pupil? In their defense, the Aristotelians say that both mountain and pupil are infinitely divisible and so there could be a one-to-one relationship between the divisions of the mountain and of the pupil. Suhrawardī rejects this justification by saying that regardless of how far a mountain and pupils are divisible, on every corresponding level of division, the parts of a mountain are by far greater than those of the eyes. This rejection shows that Suhrawardī is criticizing Aristotle's version of the theory, which

7 Yet in the *Ṭabīʿiyyāt of al-Mashāriʿ*, he does so. See Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ*, 339–52.

lacks the geometrical justification incorporated into Avicenna's version of the intromission theory, as well as its anatomical details (see McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 102–11; McGinnis, “New Light”; cf. Suhrawardī, *Mashāriʿ*, 352–7).

Another line of defense was to say that indeed the sensible form of a mountain in a pupil is tinier than the pupil, but the soul calculates the real size based on the size of the impressed form. Suhrawardī is not impressed: the vision (*ruʿya*) of a huge magnitude is due to direct observation and not by inference. Inference involves propositions, but what is seen is just an individual object. Besides, this theory implies that the matter of pupil bears at the same moment two or more different three-dimensionalities, one of its own and another of the impressed form, which is untenable, for accidents and forms must be fully diffused in their bearers, and a single matter can bear only one form of the same kind in one instance.⁸ Besides, defenders of extramissionism could reverse the objection raised against them in § 101, by saying that just as the rays may not be emitted from the eye and reach out to the hemisphere of the cosmos, the image of the hemisphere cannot be impressed on a pupil. If it could, then some reflections of mountains (instead of the hemisphere) must overlap with each other and fall upon the same divisions of the pupil, and so the order and proportions of the beheld including its different dimensions, and hence the sensible form, would be distorted. If they did not overlap, but rather the infinitely divisible parts of the mountain filled in the infinitely divisible parts of the eyes, then the image of mountain would equal the eyes in size, and so its huge magnitude would not be grasped. Denying this would imply that the sensible form of the mountain would be greater than the pupil, so that only a part of the mountain would be seen—which is absurd—or, that the primary object of the eyesight would not be the impressed image.

Suhrawardī's arguments against the Peripatetics in *HI* are succinct compared to *al-Mashāriʿ*, putting aside some stronger objections (like how one object does not result in two impressed visible forms, and not seen as two, given that we have two eyes). However, all he wants to show in *HI* is that the idea of the impression of a visible image (*shabah*) involves at least as many intuitive obscurities as the extramission theory.

His alternative theory is supposed to avoid such abstruseness.⁹ Whereas Suhrawardī's critique of the prior theories of eyesight are introduced in a treatise of the first part of *HI*, entitled “On fallacies and some arbitration between Illuminist and Peripatetic dictums,” his positive theory is

⁸ This point has been used in Suhrawardī's critique of hylomorphism, too.

⁹ In §§ 104 and 255, Suhrawardī discusses the issue of mirrors. Since Nicolai Sinai has studied these passages in detail, I do not address them here. See Sinai.

scattered throughout the second part of *HI* (§§ 3 and 5), in which he puts forth his Illuminationist philosophy. It is, however, a minimalist theory, at least its *HI* version. In § 226, for instance, after recapitulating his previous discussion on eyesight and mirrors (in § 225), he draws an analogy between common sense—which unifies the sense data acquired by the five external senses—and one single faculty in the human soul—which unifies the internal senses of form-bearing, imagination, and estimation—thereby underlining his maxim of human soul as a unity and alluding to his rejection of Avicenna's theory of internal senses (cf. *HI*, § 224).¹⁰ Then he remarks that notwithstanding the material preconditions of eyesight, the viewer is the human soul itself. The material preconditions of eyesight include sound and healthy eyes; yet the eyes are only bodily facilitators for seeing; other preconditions are a luminous or illuminated object, the encounter between the viewer and the object, and the absence of obstacles. Whenever such material prerequisites are fulfilled, the viewer's soul illuminates the object from the opening of the eyes and visually grasps the object itself. There is no place for the impression of an image in the eyes anymore (§ 145). The external object is the primary and only object of eyesight and the viewer is the soul. An objection is considered: if the soul is the sole viewer and beholding is conditioned upon luminous objects and encounter, why do we not see God—given that He is the Light of Lights and we are also lights? Suhrawardī answers that our body is also a veil, hindering the soul from seeing the immaterial lights including God. Yet it is possible to unveil the veil of the body in order to achieve encounter with higher lights. Suhrawardī refers to the experience of those who manage to detach themselves from their bodies and behold the higher lights in luminary encounters (§ 226). Indeed, the encounter is only a precondition for eyesight: in case of immaterial observation the encounter means lack of veil, and separate lights enjoy mutual perfect encounter and observation (§ 228; cf. § 247).

Suhrawardī further clarifies that for him “veil” includes more than just physical obstacles: excessive proximity or remoteness function as veils too (§ 145). In this way, he shows that his account has no need to assume a transparent medium to explain the absence of sight in such cases.¹¹ In general, the removal of a veil between the viewer and the object is the main precondition of eyesight and vision: once it is satisfied, the encounter actually takes place.

10 In this regard, he is influenced by Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī. See al-Baghdādī, 2:312–22. Cf. Suhrawardī, *HI*, § 227.

11 In Aristotle, the reason why we do not see an object that touches our eyes is that for seeing there must be a medium between our eye and that object.

The soul has an immediate, presential knowledge of its powers, which include eyesight. Whenever a luminous or illuminated object opposes it, the soul, who is present in the eyes,¹² beholds the object through its illumination upon it—and this is a real epistemic relationship (§ 227).¹³ Such a relationship, which underlies Suhrawardī's theory, is called an Illuminationist relation (*al-idāfa al-ishrāqiyya*) and must be distinguished from relations that fall under the category of the relatives, like brother, father/son, knowledge/knowables (Aristotle, *Categories*, 11–14 [6a37–8a14]). Suhrawardī insists that knowledge belongs to the category of quality. Thus, he distances his theory of knowledge from that of Abū l-Barakāt and Fakhr al-Dīn. The distinction lies in the fact that categorical relatives must at least be dyadic, namely, having two correlatives, like father/son, and with the disappearance of one the other changes or disappears too. The Illuminationist relation, by contrast, is monadic, depending only on the perceiver (cf. Suhrawardī, *Mashāri'*, § 209).¹⁴ This also explains how—unlike Avicenna's God—Suhrawardī's God has knowledge of particulars as such. Indeed, in § 160, after reminding his reader that seeing is neither through the impression of an image upon the eyes nor the emission of something from them, Suhrawardī states that the absence of a veil between the viewer and the object is sufficient for its occurrence. Since everything is manifest to God, who is the Light of Lights, and since all things are either illuminated or luminous, so “not a mote's weight evades Him in the heavens or on the earth” (Q 34:3). In God, as in other knowers, knowledge and sight (*baṣar*) are one (cf. § 162). This special relation, together with the privative precondition of the absence of a veil, is sufficient for God's knowledge of other things, as it is for knowledge of all knowers. This is proven based on the theory of eyesight (*ibṣār*). Such a relation is intentional or based on attention (*iltifāt*). This is why sometimes when the material preconditions of seeing are fulfilled, as when the eyes are open and an object is lit and across from us, we still do not grasp that object (cf. Suhrawardī, *Mashāri'*, § 208).

In sum, Suhrawardī's minimalist theory of seeing in *HI* is proposed to harmonize our knowledge of our selves with our perception and knowledge of other things. To this end, he offers an account of a direct grasp of all objects. To him, perception does not need a medium, nor the emission of a light, and

12 In the *Dānishnāma*, Avicenna states that if mirrors had a soul, they could see. See *Dānishnāma*, 91.

13 This is in sharp contrast to Aristotle, who in *De sensu* rejects the idea that beholding occurs “in virtue of some merely abstract relationship between” the viewer and the object “such as that between equals.” See *De sensu* 446b10–13.

14 Thus, the famous objection that God would change whenever His knowables change is not applicable to his theory.

in all cases the soul is the perceiver, while the perceived is solely the individual object—so being a direct realist. The motif here is that knowledge is modeled on eyesight.¹⁵ Eyesight and knowledge are based on an Illuminationist relation, which in the case of eyesight is provided through the opening of eyes and by the presential illumination of souls upon individuals (§ 146).

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15 Suhrawardī does not elaborate much on other sense perceptions. For brief remarks on sound and hearing, see *HI*, §§ 105, 258.

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2 Translation

Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, in *Opera metaphysica et mystica*, vol. 2, ed. Henry Corbin, Tehran: Institut d'Etudes et des Recherches Culturelles, 1954, §§ 99–103, 145–6, 226, 228, 247.¹⁶

A Judgment [Denying the Corporeality of Rays]

[§ 99] Some people assumed that the ray is a body, but this is invalid. For if it were body, it would not vanish when a window is blocked suddenly. If one says that tiny, dark bodies remain but their luminous light¹⁷ is eliminated, then one has admitted that the ray itself is not a body. Likewise, if it were a body, it would be reflected better from a solid thing than from something moist; and the sun's body¹⁸ would decrease when rays leave it. Besides, the ray would emerge only at right angles—not in various directions, as is seen to happen—since a single body does not move naturally in various directions. Also, the luminous lights

16 The translation is a modified version of the 1999 translation by Walbridge and Ziai. The footnotes are mine.

17 Avicenna makes a terminological distinction between *nūr* and *ḍaw'*, both meaning light. These have been rendered into English, respectively, as radiant light and luminous light by Jon McGinnis, and *lux* and *lumen* in Latin.

18 The Arabic terms is *jirm*, which is conventionally used for celestial bodies as opposed to terrestrial bodies, for which normally the term *jism* is used.

of multiple lamps would pile up in a dense thick layer, its thickness increasing with every increase in sources of light. Yet this is not so. Thus, the ray is not something moving from the sun or from place to place, but is rather an [inhering] feature, which therefore does not move. And its cause is a luminous thing mediated by a transparent body¹⁹ like air.

[§ 100] Some people assumed that the ray is color and that the ray that is upon something black is nothing other than its blackness. They said, “Colors do not exist in darkness. Yet it is not because darkness hides them, for it is privative, as explained. Therefore, colors are merely qualities manifest to the sense of sight, and the ray is the perfection of their being manifest, not something additional to the coloredness.”

An interlocutor may object that even if one admits to you that colors do not exist when there is no light, it still does not follow that they are the rays themselves. For the [mutual] entailment of things or the dependence of some upon others does not entail the identification of [their] true realities. Among the points indicating that the ray is different from the color is that although “color” may be taken as an expression for manifestation itself or manifestation in a particular aspect, it may not be taken as an expression for the very manifestation to eyesight. For luminous light such as belongs to the sun is not the same as color, but it is manifest to eyesight.²⁰ Likewise,²¹ if a luminous light intensely shines over some shiny black things, like jet, their color will disappear, yet their manifestation is realized by the luminous light. If color is taken not as manifestation absolutely but as manifestation specified in a certain way, then it is [1] either such that the relationship between manifestation and black or white will be similar to the relationship of colorfulness to them in that the manifestation is not additional to the black itself in concrete reality, as we have said regarding colorfulness; so in concrete reality, there is only black, white, and so on, with manifestation being an intellectual predicate. The manifestation of white in concrete reality will be nothing but white itself; and what is more perfectly white should be more perfectly manifest, with the same applying to what is more perfectly black. Yet it is not so. If we place ivory in a ray of light and snow in the shadow, we visually perceive the snow as being whiter than the ivory, while perceiving the ivory in the light as more luminous and brighter than the snow in the shadow. Thus, this indicates that whiteness is not luminosity, and that color is not light. Likewise, if we place something more perfectly black in the shadow and something less black in the light, that which is

19 Read as *jism* with Corbin instead of *jirm* in Walbridge and Ziai.

20 In the sense that sensory vision bears evidence to their difference.

21 Read as *wa-kadhālika* with Corbin instead of *fa-kadhālika* in Walbridge and Ziai.

less black is brighter and that which is blacker is less bright. That is not because of the darkness resulting from its being in the shadow; for if we were to move the blacker thing into the light and the less black thing into the shadow, what is more intensely black would be brighter, though remaining blacker. Or [2] it is such that the manifestation in concrete reality is something other than black or white, which is [our] desired option. It is clear from our exposition that rays are not color although color cannot be realized without them. This topic is not especially important to us and even if it turned out that [our opponents] were right, it would not harm us.

A Judgment [Regarding the Flaws of What Is Said about Eyesight]

[§ 101] Some people assumed that eyesight occurs by the emission of a ray from the eye that meets the beheld. Now, if this ray were an accident, how could it move away? If it were a body and moved away by [our] will, we should be able to restrain it in such a way that we would not see despite looking; but this is not so. If it [were a body and] moved by nature, it would not go in different directions and should penetrate colored liquids easier than clear glass; it should also penetrate clay easier than glass, since clay has more pores [than glass].²² Also, one would not see the nearer and farther planets simultaneously but rather in differing times relative to their distance. Further, this body would have to move instantaneously to the farthest spheres and pierce them, or that which emerges from the eye would have to spread out over a hemisphere! All these consequences are absurd, so vision does not occur due to a ray.

[§ 102] Other scientists said that vision is the imprinting²³ of the thing's form in the crystalline humor [of the eyeball]. But this results in some difficulties for them: Among them is that when we see a mountain with all its size,²⁴ and seeing should be by a form and of a form, if the size of mountain belongs to this form too, how, then, can this great size occur in a tiny pupil? To this, some responded that the crystalline humor can receive division infinitely—as is shown regarding [all] bodies—and the form of the mountain is also receptive to infinite division, so it is possible that the [form] occurs in the [pupil]. This is invalid. For although the mountain is receptive to infinite division and the eye likewise, the magnitude of the mountain is incomparably greater than the magnitude of the eye, and likewise for each hypothetically divided part of the mountain compared to the divisions of the eye. So, how could a huge magnitude fit into a small magnitude?

22 Read with Corbin. Walbridge and Ziai's Arabic text is lacking.

23 Read as *inṭibā'* with Corbin, instead of *inḍibāḥ*.

24 Read as *'izamihi* with Corbin, instead of *'azimatihī*.

[§ 103] Some of them said that although the form is smaller than what is seen, the soul infers from the magnitude of the form what the magnitude of the original must be. This is invalid, since a large magnitude is seen by direct observation, not by an inference. Some of them allowed that a single bulk of matter contains one small magnitude of itself and another large magnitude that is an image of another thing. Yet their adversary can compel them to admit that if the magnitude belonging to a mountain were imprinted in the crystalline humor, the supposed parts of that extension would not come together (*lā yajtami'u*) in one location. Were it so, it would no longer be possible to observe the order [of the parts]. However, if the supposed parts of that extension do not come together, then each supposed part of that extension would be in another part of the crystalline humor. If the magnitude of the crystalline humor were equal to the magnitude of the extended form of the mountain, then it is not conceivable that its size could be observed. If the extended form exceeded the magnitude of the crystalline humor in size and the parts of the crystalline humor were entirely filled with its parts, then there would be parts and extension for the form that fall outside the limits of the eye. Thus, it would not be seen as it is and would not be in a location. He who judges fairly will understand²⁵ the abstruseness of the imprinting of the image. This is an extremely important principle for what we are moving toward.

A Principle Concerning Observation

[§ 145] Since you know that eyesight is not by the impression of the form of the beheld in the eye nor by the emission of something from eyes, it can only be by the encounter of an illuminated object with a sound eye—nothing else. [...] Encounter amounts to the absence of a veil between the viewer and the visual object. Excessive proximity hinders vision only because being illuminated (*istināra*) or luminosity (*nūriyya*) are conditions of the beheld. So two lights must exist: the seeing light and the light seen. An eyelid, when the eye is closed, cannot be illuminated by external lights, nor does the light of eye have the luminous power to illuminate it. Thus, it is not seen due to the lack of illumination. So is the case with all excessive proximities. Extreme distance acts as a veil because of the paucity of encounter. Thus, the nearer the illuminated object or light, the more easily it is beheld, so long as it remains a light or illuminated.

25 Read as *tafaṭṭana bi-* with Corbin, instead of *naqaḍa li-*.

*A Further Illuminist Principle [Stating That Observation of a
Light Is Different from Illumination of Its Ray upon the Viewer]*

[§ 146] Know that your eye both observes and is illuminated by a ray. Being illuminated by a ray is not observing. For the ray falls upon the eye wherever it is, but the observation of sun can only occur from a great distance, as was indicated before. Were the eyelids luminous or the sun as near as the eyelid, both the ray and the observation would be increased accordingly.

[Eyesight and Immaterial Vision Are Alike]

[§ 226] Just as all the senses go back to one single sense—viz. the common sense—likewise, all of the senses go back to one single faculty in the managing light [namely, the human soul], which is its luminous, self-emanating essence. Vision, though preconditioned on the encounter [of the object] with the eye, it is only such that in its process what [really] sees is the commanding light [that is, the human soul]. Yet there are things it does not see before separation [from the body], for something may occur to it [that is, the soul] that hinders it from seeing what it can [in principle] see; the hindrance is like a veil. The practitioners of ascendance (*aṣḥāb al-ʿurūj*) experienced that for the soul there is in the state of intense detachment (*insilākh*) from the body an unambiguous observation more perfect than that belonging to eye. At that moment, they know with certainty that these things they behold are not engravings in one of the bodily faculties. Observation by eyes endures as long as the managing light does. Whoever strives in the path of God as he ought and overcomes [bodily] darkness beholds the lights of the all-highest world more perfectly than what is seen here below. For the Light of Lights and the dominating (*qāhira*) lights are visible to the commanding light and to each other. All the incorporeal lights are seeing, but their seeing does not go back to their knowledge; rather, their knowledge goes back to their seeing. [...]

[§ 228] [...] Since eyesight occurs by its being a luminous sense and by the absence of a veil between it and the illuminated thing, [these preconditions, namely] luminosity together with the absence of a veil must be more perfect in things separate [from matter], given that they are manifest to themselves, therefore, they are [simultaneously] seeing and are seen. [...]

[§ 247] [...] [Observation of incorporeal lights] indicates that encounter is not an absolute condition of beholding; Eyesight alone is dependent on it because encounter is one sort of removal of veils. [...]

Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198) on Sense Perception

Rotraud Hansberger

1 Introduction

The senses are discussed in more than one work by the Andalusian jurist, physician, and philosopher Abū l-Walīd Ibn Rushd (Averroes, 520–95/1126–98).¹ Leaving aside his medical writings, where the focus lies on the sense organs and their way of functioning (see, for example, *Ṭibb*, 149–50, 191–7, 259–74, 349–50), he finds several occasions to write about senses and sense perception within his philosophical oeuvre. This relates to the fact that Ibn Rushd developed his philosophy largely in the process of composing commentaries on the works of Aristotle (384–322 BC). The excerpts that will be presented below are taken from the first chapter of a work known as *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs* (henceforth: *Talkhīṣ*), Ibn Rushd's explanatory paraphrase (*talkhīṣ*) of Aristotle's small treatise *De sensu et sensibilibus* (*On Sense Perception and the Perceived*, henceforth: *De sensu*). However, sense perception is also discussed in Aristotle's *De anima* (*On the Soul*), on which Ibn Rushd, in the course of his life, produced no fewer than three commentaries. This situation has a considerable impact on what we find discussed in Ibn Rushd's explanatory paraphrase of *De sensu*. For one, Aristotle's more general ideas about sense perception, which he develops in *De anima*, are not systematically explained nor discussed in *De sensu*. Some of them are referred to or reiterated in a more or less explicit and extensive manner; some are barely mentioned, but appear to be taken for granted. This practice is reflected in the *Talkhīṣ*: taking his cue from Aristotle, Ibn Rushd emphasizes that *De sensu* is meant to complement and complete the treatment of sense perception as laid out in *De anima*, this being achieved by investigating not the general principles, but rather the more particular issues pertaining to the topic (see below, §§ 1 and 9). This first and foremost aims at the sense organs and their specific objects, with a notable exception: just like Aristotle, Ibn Rushd omits a detailed examination of sound

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and hearing, pointing out that these have already been discussed in *De anima* (B17, 33, G21, 37 [trans. 12, 20]; cf. *De sensu* 440b27–8).²

There is yet another factor relating to *De sensu* that will have shaped the contents of Ibn Rushd's *Talkhīṣ*. This is the character of the Arabic version of the Aristotelian treatise that Ibn Rushd was working with. *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*, the *Book on Sense Perception and the Perceived*, is a heavily adapted Arabic version not just of *De sensu*, but of several treatises Aristotle wrote on functions "common to soul and body" (*De sensu* 436a7–8; cf. Hansberger, "Arabic *Parva Naturalia*"). This collection, which in the Latin tradition was given the title *Parva Naturalia*, also contains writings on memory, sleep and waking, dreaming, the length and shortness of life, respiration, and more. The Arabic version, which represents six of these treatises, takes its general title from the first of them, *De sensu et sensibilibus*.

Unfortunately, the one manuscript known to date that contains the text (MS Rampur Ar. 1752) is missing most of the Arabic *De sensu*. Therefore, one cannot determine with certitude whether or to what extent any discrepancies between Ibn Rushd's *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs* and Aristotle's Greek text are the result of Ibn Rushd's authorial choices, or go back to alterations, omissions, and additions in *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*. On the one hand, we indeed find elements in Ibn Rushd's text that show close affinity to the characteristic changes the anonymous compiler of *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs* makes in the thematically related chapters on memory and dreaming (e.g., below, §§ 14 and 15). On the other hand, a comparison of Ibn Rushd's *Talkhīṣ* with the extant parts of *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs* indicates that he paraphrases the text rather freely and adds his own thoughts and explanations, often by making use of other Aristotelian writings, or of works by the Greek physician Galen (129–ca. 215 CE) (see Hansberger, "Divinatory Dreaming"; Hansberger, "Length and Shortness," esp. 63–7). With respect to the latter, he may well have been inspired by *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs* itself, which draws on Galenic theories. However, Galen would in any case have been an obvious author for Ibn Rushd to refer to in connection with several of the topics treated in *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*. This applies not least to sense perception, given that Galen wrote prominently on the sense organs and was a famous proponent of the extramission theory of vision (see, for example, Ierodiakonou), a theory Ibn Rushd argues against within his discussion of "ancient" theories of

2 Touch and its objects are also not treated in great detail, though this is not registered explicitly.

perception, which is meant to show in a systematic manner the superiority of the Aristotelian theory (*Talkhīṣ*, B20–9, G24–33 [trans. 14–18]).³

According to Aristotle, in sense perception the soul's faculty of perception is passively affected by the perceptible object, to the effect that the potential of the faculty to perceive a given perceptible (e.g., the color red) is actualized. Hence sense perception is, in the end, an affection of the soul, but it is brought about through the affection of a bodily instrument, the respective sense organ. This is why sense perception belongs to the functions "common to soul and body." The crucial point that a bodily affection results in an immaterial perception within the soul is captured by Aristotle's statement that (the faculty of) sense perception is "what receives the perceptible form without the matter" (*De anima* 424a17–19). "Form" here does not mean "shape"; the form perceived by an eye seeing a red apple would be its redness. For Aristotle, in fact, shape would be among the so-called common perceptibles, which, in difference to the specific sense objects like colors or sounds, can be perceived by several senses, for example by sight and touch.⁴

What Ibn Rushd calls "common sense" (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*), in the Arabic tradition is first and foremost understood as the principal sense faculty that collects and integrates the various specific perceptions of the five single senses into one overall sense experience. It is what enables us to identify the same thing as yellow and sweet (honey), or to realize that a barking sound is produced by something looking yellowish and feeling soft and furry. Individuals (for example, the dog Frida) also count as objects of perception for Aristotle, albeit only incidental ones that we perceive via the specific sense objects, that is, color, sound, and so on (*De anima* 418a20–4).⁵

The general idea, within the Aristotelian theory, is that the sense organs are affected by the specific sense objects so as to take on the perceptible quality in question (for example, the color red)—presupposing that they do not actually possess that quality beforehand, but only in potentiality (below, §§ 5 and 6). How exactly Aristotle meant this to work, and in particular whether or not he supposes there to be a material change in the sense organ (so that the eye would literally turn red upon seeing a red apple), has been the subject of intense philosophical debate in the last few decades (see, for example, Caston). Ibn Rushd approaches the issue in a slightly different manner. He combines

3 A small part of this discussion is included below (see §§ 13 and 14). For an analysis of the passage, see Gätje.

4 They further include size, change, rest, and number. See *De anima* 418a17–19.

5 Ibn Rushd does not comment on the difference in the *Talkhīṣ*. While most of the text focuses on the specific perceptibles, Ibn Rushd is likely to think (also) of incidental sense objects where the discussion turns to their further processing in the imagination (see § 14).

the point with the further question of what distinguishes the cognitive contents (*ma'ānī*) we have of immaterial universals (for example, the species dog) from those cognitive contents (*ma'ānī*)⁶ that are the result of sense perception, and hence particular and individual (“this dog over here”). For Ibn Rushd, the answer is linked to the question of how we attain these cognitive contents. While universals are apprehended directly by the intellect, particular *ma'ānī* have to be brought to our mind via sense perception and hence via “intermediaries” (*mutawassīṭ*, pl. *mutawassīṭāt*) (see Black, “Averroes on Spirituality”). Intermediaries include the sense organs, but also the external “media,” a concept introduced by Aristotle in order to explain why (some) senses perceive at a distance (see, for example, *De anima* 11.7, 419a11–b3; cf. below, §§ 3 and 7).⁷ Unsurprisingly, these media turn out to be air and water; however, they are able to act as media not simply because they are air or water, but because of certain qualities they possess. In case of vision, they act as medium on account of their being transparent (once they are illuminated by light, see below, § 8), since the transparent is what is capable of taking on the color of a colored surface “behind” it. In case of hearing and smell, they act as media because they can transmit wave-like motions or smelling fumes (§§ 7 and 12).

Ibn Rushd’s concern, however, seems to lie less with the bridging of a physical distance but with the transition from material object to immaterial perception. As the material object cannot be immediately perceived by the immaterial soul, there needs to be a process of mediation, a task achieved not just by the external media, but more importantly by the sense instruments, which are hence also called “intermediaries.”⁸ Within the intermediaries, the perceptible forms take on a status between materiality and immateriality or “spirituality” (§§ 14 and 15).⁹

6 The term *ma'nā* (pl. *ma'ānī*) is notoriously difficult to translate, and even within similar contexts is used in varying ways by different authors (or even by the same author). Its meaning could perhaps be circumscribed as “thing in so far as it is being thought/as it is in the mind.” Following the Latin tradition, it customarily has been (and is) translated as “intention,” but this rendering has been criticized on various grounds, and several new suggestions have been put forward. See, e.g., Black, “Intentionality”; Key; Hasse, 127–53; Wirmser; Bennett. “Cognitive content” seeks to capture the difference Ibn Rushd makes in §§ 15 and 16 (see below) between the perception of “external matters” and that of *ma'ānī*, though arguably he uses the term in a more inclusive sense in §§ 13 and 14.

7 For Aristotle, strictly speaking all senses perceive through a medium. See *De anima* 423b1–8.

8 The same Arabic word, *mutawassīṭ*, is used for both; in my translation I distinguish between the external “media” (commonly so called in the context of Aristotelian theory of perception) and “intermediaries,” denoting the sense organs, or both together.

9 “Spiritual” is not meant here in its usual present-day sense, i.e., relating to religion or transcendence (“a spiritual experience”). It is a technical term that in some contexts is (near-)identical to “immaterial” or “incorporeal,” as, e.g., already in some Graeco-Arabic translations, where it renders *asōmatos*, “incorporeal” (Endress, 270–3). Arguably, this

In order to receive and pass on these forms, the sense organs, like the media, must exhibit certain qualities that enable them to do so. Hence, for example, the emphasis on the watery nature of the eye (§§ 4 and 8). Ibn Rushd describes in detail how the form is passed on from one layer of the eye to the next, until it becomes available to the common sense¹⁰ (§ 15). He also emphasizes that the corporeal instruments have to be in the right physical condition to be able to perform their task (§§ 4, 6, 8).

The process of transmitting the form continues even after the act of perception, and so does the process of its becoming “more spiritual”: the form is passed on to the faculty of imagination (or formative faculty) which fulfills the task of preserving the perceptible form in the absence of the object itself (§ 15). Further stages of this process will be at issue in the second chapter (*maqāla*) of Ibn Rushd’s *Talkhīṣ* (on memory); it will there be extended to five stages, where the final two are meant to extract and store particular cognitive contents (*ma‘ānī*) that have lost all their material aspects (B42–3, G47–8 [trans. 26–7], cf. Hansberger, “Internal Senses,” 148–50).

This potential for a further processing of the perceived forms for the sake of higher cognitive operations seems to motivate Ibn Rushd to clarify that human sense perception differs from that of animals in a particular way (§ 16). Crucially, humans alone are said to be able to perceive the cognitive contents (*ma‘ānī*) whereas animals remain at the more superficial level of perceiving the perceptible form only. This may be an echo of *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*, which is generally invested in reserving the full use of the epistemic faculties, including perception, for humans alone (cf. Hansberger, “Arabic *Parva Naturalia*,” 54). Perhaps surprisingly, this difference is here attributed to the ways the five senses themselves work in humans and animals respectively, rather than to

may apply to Ibn Rushd’s use of the term here. I nevertheless translate “spiritual” in order to retain a visible reference not only to the concept of spirit/pneuma (*rūḥ*), i.e., the substance that, according to the medico-philosophical tradition, animates the body and is responsible for carrying out the soul’s mental functions (among others), but also to the vacillating usage of the term “spiritual” (*rūḥānī*) in some texts of the Graeco-Arabic tradition, including *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*, where it may refer to a realm between corporeality and incorporeality as well as to the realm of divine transcendence and the intelligible (see Endress). Incidentally, “spiritual” also maps onto the terminology of the contemporary debate on Aristotelian sense perception, where the two strands of interpretations are distinguished according to whether they assume perception to rely on a material change in the sense organs or on a mere “spiritual” one (cf. Caston).

10 In the *Talkhīṣ*, Ibn Rushd comes surprisingly close to endorsing the Galenic (and Avicennian) position that locates the seat of perception, along with the other epistemic faculties of the soul, in the brain. However, in his *al-Kullīyyāt fī l-Ṭibb* (191–3), he affirms the contrary Aristotelian position, situating the common sense in the heart. Cf. Hansberger, “Internal Senses,” 140, and note 134 (p. 82) of H. Blumberg’s translation of the *Talkhīṣ*.

the degree in which animals partake of higher mental functions like memory or imagination. But then again, the examples that are listed as evidence do not refer to the act of perceiving as such, but to the different emotional responses animals and humans exhibit toward certain sense perceptions, which—such seems to be the silent assumption of the text—imply a deeper understanding of these perceptions that does *not* depend on the better functioning of the senses themselves; as well as to the superior use to which humans put their sense perceptions.

The emphasis on the senses' role in knowledge acquisition also speaks to the idea of a teleological principle manifesting itself in the arrangement of the senses. It is perhaps most prominently expressed at the beginning of the text (§ 2), where the senses are said not only to safeguard the existence of animal life, but also to enable higher-order, "better" animal life. The idea of a teleological or providential arrangement pervades the descriptions of the sense organs and applies generally to animals and humans (note, for example, the explanation of the function of eyelids in § 4). However, the marked emphasis on human life as the culmination point of this natural teleology is not restricted to pointing out the cognitive superiority of human beings. The text also claims superiority for human perception more generally, for instance concerning the sense of touch, which contributes to the ability of the human hand to function as a superior tool (§ 5; cf. *De sensu* 440b31–441a2, *De anima* 421a18–23),¹¹ and even concerning the sense of smell (§ 12). While the idea that in humans, sense perception fulfills a yet higher purpose in that it serves and shapes their intellectual development is already present in Aristotle (*De sensu* 4378a1–17), in Ibn Rushd's *Talkhīṣ*—perhaps prompted by tendencies in *Kitāb al-Hiss wa-l-mahsūs*—this thought is amplified and expanded to some extent in order to suggest a more general superiority of humankind even at the level of perception itself.

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11 A link between human intelligence and the possession of hands is also made by Aristotle in *De partibus animalium* 687a7–12. The point is very prominent also in Galen, who opens his *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* with a discussion of the human hand as a prime example of teleological construction, suited to its use by human intelligence (*De usu partium* 1,4 Kühn, see Galen, 1:69–70).

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2 Translation

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[§ 1. *Topics of the Book* = B3.4–4.2, G6.1–12]

Let us now begin to speak about sense perception and the perceptible. The discussion of that topic generally comprises four parts: (1) knowledge of the quiddity (*māhiyya*) of these faculties and of every single one of them; (2) knowledge of the instruments (*ālāt*) through which the function (*fi'l*) of these faculties (*quwā*, sg. *quwwa*) is accomplished; (3) knowledge of the perceptible objects (*mudrakāt*) of these faculties, which are the objects of sense perception (*maḥsūsāt*, sing. *maḥsūs*); and (4) knowledge of the way in which these faculties perceive these perceptibles. All these points he [Aristotle] has already discussed in the *Book on the Soul* in a general manner. Here he wishes to complete the discussion of the particular things belonging to them, and of the specific properties that characterize these faculties individually, as such and in relation to each individual animal, as well as of the specific properties that they have in common. He will further determine [B4] those aspects of the nature of the perceptibles which are left for him to determine; for this topic he so far has discussed in the *Book on the Soul* in utmost generality only.

[§ 2. *The Purpose of Sense Perception* = B4.3–12, G6.13–7.10]

We say: among the sensory faculties (*al-quwā l-ḥissiyya*) taken together, there are those that are necessary in order for the animal to exist, and those that exist

in the animal for the sake of the better.¹² All these senses furthermore differ in animals in terms of strength and weakness. Those that exist in animals on account of [G7] necessity are the sense of touch and the sense of taste, while those that exist for the sake of the better are the sense of hearing, the sense of sight, and the sense of smell. The senses of taste and touch are necessary for the survival of the animal because it is by them that animals discern things that enter their bodies from the outside: By the sense of taste the animal discerns suitable as opposed to unsuitable food, and by the sense of touch it discerns those things that will harm its body from the outside, as well as those that will preserve it and that agree with it. The other senses do not have the task of discerning what enters the body from the outside; therefore they are not necessary for the existence of the animal.

[§ 3. *Sense Organs and Media* = B5.1–3, G7.11–8.2]

It is common to all these faculties that their activity can only be accomplished through an instrument. The two faculties of touch and taste have the specific property of not needing [G8] a medium (*mutawassit*) in order to carry out their functions, while it is a specific property of the three remaining faculties that they do need a medium.

[§ 4. *The Eye* = B5.4–7.8, G8.3–10.7]

The instrument of the faculty of sight is the eye. It is specific to this instrument that its composition be dominated by water, that is, the smooth and transparent body. [Sight's] instrument has this attribute in order that the forms of its sense objects may be imprinted in it, just as an image¹³ (*ṣūra*) is imprinted (*irtasama*) in a mirror. Therefore, its glacial part is of utter clarity and whiteness. The necessity of this instrument for the perceptive activity of this faculty is self-evident. This instrument performs its action only when it is in its natural state in terms of its mixture, without anything occurring to it that would render it turbid or that would set it in motion. Therefore, the gaze (*naẓar*) will be impaired in anybody whose anger has been stirred, whose eyes have become red, and in whom heat has risen to their head. Sometimes they may see [B6] one thing as two, on account of the movement that affects

12 That is, for the sake of a better life, or well-being (cf. Aristotle, *De sensu* 436b12–437a3, *De anima* 435b4–25).

13 Both “form” and “image” translate the Arabic term *ṣūra*. Where the term denotes sense impressions it seems more appropriate to use “form,” as “image” would only make sense with respect to the sense of sight, not to the other senses.

the visual spirit¹⁴ under the condition of anger. For the part of the eye that receives the [visible] form is bound to see the form as two forms when it is in motion. For when that part is moved on [from one place to the next], with another part following after it, the form will be imprinted [G9] in the second part before its trace has been obliterated from the first part. Thus, the one form appears as two at this point, just as the image of the sun will appear as two images when it falls on flowing water.

Since this instrument, I mean the eye, only ever performs its function when its mixture is in balance, its gaze (*naẓar*) will become weak if it is cooled to an unusual degree by things coming from the outside. Therefore, the eye[sight] darkens in regions where there is a lot of snow or a lot of water. For this reason, maritime regions appear turbid and scarcely lit, and the same goes for snowy places. The only thing that preserves the nature of this water [in the eye] in its state is the external air, [B7] because there is a natural affinity between them. Hence the eye's gaze weakens when the heat of the eye is stirred up more than it ought to, or when it is cooled down more than it ought to. Responsible for the eye's acting in this manner is the cold, watery part, as the mixture of this part is the reason for perfect vision (*al-ru'ya al-tamma*). For this reason, I mean in order for their mixture to be preserved from being altered [G10] and muddied by things coming from the outside, eyes that see well have been furnished with eyelids, just as there are sheaths for swords. Therefore, those that have thicker eyelids are stronger when it comes to seeing things in the distance, because the thickness of the eyelids prevents the water [in the eye] being stirred up by external heat, as well as its being solidified and thickened by external cold. On account of this, I mean: on account of the thickness of their eyelids, many animals have turned out to see things in the distance to a higher degree than humans do.

[§ 5. *The Ear* = B7.9–8.7, G10.8–11.5]

The specific instrument of hearing is the air that is dispersed inside the ear. The more subtle (*alṭaf*) and the more perfectly still this air is, the more perfect its activity will be. In like fashion, the instrument of smell is the air dispersed within the nose. The instrument of taste, however, is the tongue, while the instrument of touch is the flesh. It is specific [B8] to the instruments of all

14 Arab. *al-rūḥ al-bāṣir*. In Galenic theory, the animal spirit or psychic pneuma, a fine, air-like substance produced in the brain and transported through the body by the nerves, serves as the instrument of the soul's faculties and hence is also responsible for perception. In Galen's extramission theory of vision (which Ibn Rushd does not endorse), the visual pneuma furthermore emanates from the eyes to connect to the object of sight (see Ierodiakonou).

the senses that they do not in actuality (*bi-l-fi'l*) contain any of the things they perceive—except the instrument of touch, as it is composed of the qualities that it perceives.¹⁵ For this reason it only perceives their excesses, given that it is normally balanced itself. The more balanced the flesh is [G11], the more it will therefore be able to perceive the simple qualities, that is, the hot and the cold, the moist and the dry. On account of this, human beings are best at perceiving among the animals when it comes to this sense, and especially to the flesh of the hand; I mean the flesh of the palm of the hand, and with regard to the flesh of the palm especially the forefinger. It is a sign of intelligence being present in humans,¹⁶ I mean the excellence of the sense of touch.

[§ 6. *The Tongue* = B8.8–13, G11.6–14]

In the tongue, there is no taste in actuality. Hence, when during an illness some mixtures flow into it, its sense of taste is corrupted; this also goes for the instruments of the remaining senses. The reason for this has been given in the *Book on the Soul*.¹⁷ The instruments of the three faculties, I mean hearing, sight, and smell, are distinguished specifically by their being related to the simple elements (*al-basā'it*): thus the eye is related to water, hearing to air, and smell to the fiery and smoky part.¹⁸ This is why odors cure the brain,¹⁹ I mean because the brain is normally cold whereas the smoky part that is being smelled is hot.

[§ 7. *The Media* = B9.1–10, G11.15–12.12]

We have spoken about the specific properties of the instruments of these senses; now let us speak about [G12] the media the three senses require, about their specific properties, and about their concomitants (*lawāzīm*). The medium used by these senses is either air, in the case of land animals, or water, in the case of water animals. That these three senses require a medium is indicated by the fact that such a sense will not perceive its sense objects if they are placed onto it [directly], and equally so if solid bodies which do not lend themselves to being a medium are situated between the sense and the sense objects. Generally, that these senses require a medium in order to carry out their functions is apparent on account of the fact that their activity is damaged whenever the medium is damaged. Therefore, it is specific to the medium

15 Touch perceives qualities (hot and cold, firm and soft, etc.) that bodies have as bodies, and that are directly related to their elemental constitution, i.e., lastly to the elemental qualities (hot and cold, moist and dry) which also form the sense organs themselves.

16 Gätje reads *al-nās* (humans), Blumberg *al-nafs* (the soul).

17 *De anima* 422b5–10.

18 Cf. the slightly different account at *De anima* 425a3–8.

19 *De sensu* 444a3–19.

that it belongs to the genus of the instruments that are specific to it; I mean that it receives the perceptibles in some way or other in which the instruments receive them. The reason for this will become apparent once the nature of the senses that are specifically distinguished by [their use of] the media will be explained.

[§ 8. *The Role of Light in Sight* = B9.11–10.9, 11.3–11, G12.13–13.12, 14.1–14]

Among these three, the faculty of sight (*quwwat al-baṣar*) has the further specific property of requiring, in addition to the medium, light. Evidence for this is that it cannot see in the dark. Also, if there is smoke or [B10] steam in the air, obstructing the air's being permeated by light, vision (*ru'ya*) becomes weak. Therefore, when a man is angry [G13] and heat wells up in his eyes, his eyesight (*baṣar*) grows dark on account of steam, and sometimes he sees, as we have said already, one thing as two. Light is not something that exists for the eye on account of its [i.e., the eye's] nature; it enters it from the outside only. If it were of its very nature, the eye would see things in the dark.²⁰ Therefore it so happens that someone who closes their eyes will not, upon opening them [again], see a thing as it really is, before their sight has been illuminated. It may occur that eyesight (*baṣar*) sees a thing in a spiritual manner (*ru'ya rūḥāniyya*) before it sees it externally, in the condition that it is [really] in; we will explain the cause for that below.²¹ This [kind of] vision most often befalls a person in the dark and in a state of rest. Among the specific features of this kind of perception (*idrāk*) is that it is only good in balanced light, but not in strong light or in deficient light.²² [...]

[B11, G14] It is necessary that the innermost of the membranes²³ of the eye be illuminated by the water present in the eye, just as the water is illuminated by the air; only that the sensing faculty (*al-quwwa al-ḥassāsa*) is in the area of this membrane adjacent to the skull, not adjacent to the air. Therefore, these membranes, I mean the layers of the eye, preserve the faculty of [visual] perception²⁴ by virtue of their being intermediate between it and the air. That

20 This hints at an argument against the extramission theory of vision (proponents of which include Plato and Galen) which claims that the eye emits light-like visual rays (which, so the argument goes, should enable us to see in the dark). Ibn Rushd (B27, G31 [trans. 17]) uses it within his discussion of “ancient” theories of perception.

21 Ibn Rushd here refers to divinatory dreams and visions, which are discussed in the second chapter (*maqāla*) of the *Talkhīṣ*.

22 This seems likely to refer to visual perception generally rather than to the “spiritual perception” which just has been declared to be most likely to happen during darkness.

23 Arab. *shibāk*, sing. *shabaka*, lit. “nets.”

24 Blumberg reads *al-ḥiss* (sense/sense perception) with the Istanbul ms, Gätje *al-naḥs* (the soul) with MSS Modena and Paris.

sight necessarily requires light to reach these membranes is indicated by the fact that when a person receives a blow to the eyelid, their eye becomes dark in one stroke, and the light that was in their eye is extinguished in one stroke, just as a lamp is extinguished, and they cannot see anything. We will explain these matters together with the explanation of how these senses perceive; here, however, those of the causes necessitating such things are being clarified that affect these three senses from the outside.

[§ 9. *Sense Objects* = B11.11–12.5, G14.15–15.7]

As the specific properties of these faculties have been explained with respect to instruments and [G15] media, let us now discuss the sense objects that are specific to these [B12] faculties. A general account of these sense objects has been given in the *Book on the Soul*.²⁵ Here, their discussion will be of a more particular kind, as Aristotle says. We shall say: it has already been said there [i.e., in the *Book on the Soul*]²⁶ that the sense objects specific to sight are colors, those to hearing sounds, those specific to smell odors, those specific to taste flavors, and those to touch tangible objects. What still remains to be addressed with respect to them is an account of their natures.

[§ 10. *Color* = B12.6–9, 13.6–11, 14.10–15.7, G15.7–12, 16.9–17.1, 18.6–19.3]

We say: The elements (*al-uṣṭuqussāt*) differ from each other by [having] a large or small measure of the transparent (*al-shaff*), like air and water, and it is the nature of the transparent [body] (*mushiff*) to receive the light and be perfected through it. Since this is the case, then, when the transparent receives the light and is united with it, different colors are generated from that in accordance with the power or the weakness of the light and the large or small measure of the transparent. [...]

[B13, G16] Thus the color white is generated from the mixture of pure fire with the element that is at the extreme end of transparency, which is air, while the color black is generated from turbid fire mixed with the least transparent element, which is earth. The colors between white and black, meanwhile, are generated through variations (*ikhṭilāf*) of these two things in terms of more and less; I mean variations of the illuminated body, and variations of the transparent body. Therefore, the color white and the color black are the elements of color. [...]

[B14, G18] Given what has been said about the quiddity (*māhiyya*) of color, it has become clear that the air first receives color and then transfers it toward

25 *De anima* 418a7–17.

26 *De anima* 418a13–14, 418a26–424a16.

the eye (*baṣar*), on account of its being transparent and luminous. That the air is affected by color and receives it is evident from the fact that one and the same thing takes on [different] colors in accordance with luminous clouds passing over it; sometimes [B15] walls or individual people shine with the colors [of those things] above which the clouds are just passing. For example, when clouds are passing above green plants, walls and ground are often colored by the color of those plants.²⁷ On account of this it thus has become clear that it is the mixing of fire and transparent bodies that gives rise to the occurrence of color, and that light is not the cause that makes colors reach the eye (*baṣar*), but the one that makes them exist. I also say: just as the color white [G19] that is generated from the mixture is inferior to the color of light, since it is generated from it, thus also the other colors are inferior to the colors white and black since they are generated from these two.

[§ 11. *Flavor* = B17.12–19.4, G21.11–23.5]

Odors, which are the essences of smells and flavors, we must discuss separately. We say that it is clear that no element possesses flavor or smell, and that flavor and smell only belong to what is mixed, on account of its being mixed. Since the form of every [B18] mixed thing is related to the dominance that two of the four [elemental] qualities exert over it, we must [G22] observe to which one of the [elemental] qualities a flavor in a body possessing flavor must relate. We say: since what can be tasted serves as food for animals, and since food is supposed to be similar to the animal,²⁸ and since the body of the animal stands in relation to the dominance of heat and moisture over it,²⁹ flavor must be related to the dominance of heat and moisture. The reason for this being so is that the nature of the moist, which is water, is more closely related to the animal than the nature of earth. What points to the fact that moisture is the cause of mixed things having flavor is that things that can be tasted include those that are tasted potentially (*bi-l-quwwa*), and those that are tasted actually. Those that are tasted actually are the things that are actually moist; whereas the things that are actually dry are the ones that can be tasted potentially. They are only tasted actually when they are actually moist, like salt and similar things, for

27 A similar example is used by Alexander of Aphrodisias (*De anima*, 42; see Alexander of Aphrodisias, 67).

28 Food must have a similar elemental composition to the animal body, so that it can be assimilated to its various tissues via digestion, in order to replace whatever material has been used up.

29 This refers to the idea that the elemental composition of living bodies must be dominated by heat and moisture, whereas it is characteristic of lifeless bodies that they are cold and dry. Cf., e.g., *Talkhīṣ, maqāla* 3, B98, G101–2 [trans. 56].

[salt] does not taste except after it has been dissolved and moisturized. If this is so, then it necessarily must be the mixing of the dry part with the moist part, once it has been ripened by [G23] heat to some degree, that makes flavor occur. [B19] The classes of flavors differ only because of the difference in these two things [i.e., the dominating qualities] in terms of less and more; for sweetness is related to heat and moisture,³⁰ and thus bitterness is related to heat and dryness when compared with the moisture of sweetness, whereas the flavors that are between these are generated from these two flavors, just as the colors are generated from white and black.

[§ 12. *Odor* = B19.4–20.2, G23.6–24.9]

Concerning odors, it is clear that their matter is flavor generated from mixing in dryness with moisture, for it is clear from investigation that everything that has odor also has flavor. It is just that odors, since they belong to the genus of smoky fumes—which is why they are carried by the air—are related to dryness; however, the heat generated from the dryness mixed in with moisture has flavor on account of it [i.e., the moisture] having flavor. That the nature [G24] of odorous things is the nature of smoke is attested by the fact that many things which do not have odor develop an odor when they come close to fire. In this respect humans possess the specific feature of perceiving the odors of things with the help of rubbing them with the hand. For on account of its heat and dryness this instrument will stir up, in things that have flavor, this [odorous] substance. Therefore it seems that when it comes to perceiving differences in objects of smell, humans are better [B20] than other animals, even if many other animals are stronger than they are in perceiving odors at a distance.³¹

[§ 13. *Flaws of the Materialist Position* = B23.11–24.9, G28.6–29.2]

As for those that think that the forms of the sense objects are imprinted in the soul in a corporeal manner, [B24] the futility of their [view] is indicated by the fact that the soul receives the forms of opposites together at the same time, which is not possible with regard to bodies. This is found to apply not only to the soul but also to the media. For it is clear that when someone is looking at two persons, one of whom is white while the other is black, he will receive two opposite colors together, through one part of air. Furthermore, the fact that huge bodies are perceptible to sight through the pupil, despite the latter's

30 The text of this passage ("for sweetness ... moisture") is reconstructed by Gätje and Blumberg according to the Hebrew and Latin translations.

31 This differs from Aristotle's clear admission that humans' sense of smell is inferior to that of animals. Cf. *De sensu* 440b31–441a2.

smallness, so that it even perceives half of the orb of the world, indicates that colors and what goes along with them do not reside in [the pupil] in a corporeal manner but rather in a spiritual (*rūḥānī*)³² way. Therefore, we say that these senses only perceive the cognitive contents (*ma'ānī*) of the perceptibles, divested from [G29] matter, and thus they perceive the cognitive contents of color divested from matter, and in the same way they perceive the cognitive contents of smell and flavor and all other perceptibles.

[§ 14. *Perception as Transition from Materiality to "Spirituality"* =
B24.9–26.3, G29.3–30.8]

As it has become clear that this perception (*idrāk*) is spiritual, we say to those who deny that the perception of the senses takes place through an intermediary that the cognitive contents that the soul perceives spiritually include those that are universal, which are the intelligibles, and those that are particular, which are the sense perceptions. These two [B25] classes of cognitive contents must either be perceived by the soul in one spiritual way, or in two such ways. If it were in one way, the universal and the particular cognitive contents would be one and the same thing, which is absurd. If this is how things are, the soul perceives the universal cognitive contents in one way and the particular ones in another; the universal cognitive contents it perceives in a kind of perception that does not have any share in matter at all, which is why it does not require an intermediary for it. The particular cognitive contents, however, it perceives through things that are related to the particular things, that is, the intermediaries—if that were not the case, the cognitive contents that are perceived would be universal, not particular—with the existence [G30] of the forms in the intermediaries being of a type midway between spirituality and corporeality. For the existence of the forms outside of the soul is purely corporeal, while their existence in the soul is purely spiritual, and their existence in the intermediary is midway between spirituality and corporeality. By “intermediary” I here mean the instruments of the senses as well as, [B26] in the case of the senses that require such [an external medium], the external [mediating] things. For generally, the instruments are only required by the senses because their perception is spiritual but individual (*shakhṣī*): that which is spiritual and universal does not require these instruments.

[§ 15. *Stages of Perception* = B29.8–31.2, G.33.16–35.9]

As it has already been explained in general fashion how the soul perceives, [G34] let us now inspect how, in the case of the three senses that perceive

32 See footnote 9, above.

through media, this perception proceeds in stages from one intermediary to the next. We shall say then that the air first receives the forms (*ṣuwar*, sing. *ṣūra*) of things through the mediation of light; it then conveys them to the outer membrane [of the eye], whereupon the outer membrane [of the eye] conveys them to all other membranes, until the movement arrives at the final membrane, behind which the common sense is positioned,³³ which will then perceive the form of the thing. At [B30] the center of these membranes there is the crystalline membrane (*al-shabaka al-baradiyya*). Like a mirror, it is of a constitution midway between the nature of air and the nature of water. Therefore, it receives the forms from the air, because it is like a mirror, and conveys them to the water, because its nature is shared between both these natures. The water Aristotle says to be behind the crystalline humor (*al-ruṭūba al-baradiyya*) is the one I take Galen to call the vitreous humor (*al-ruṭūba al-zujājiyya*).³⁴ This layer is the last of the layers of the eye, and within it the common sense will look at (*naẓara*) the form. When the common sense has received the form, it will convey it to the formative [faculty] (*al-muṣawwir*), which is the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*), so that the formative [faculty] will receive it in a more spiritual way. Hence this form takes its position in the third rank of [G35] spirituality.

The form therefore has three ranks here: the first rank is corporeal; it is followed by the rank [it has] within the common sense, which is spiritual. After that comes the third [rank]; it is the one [it has] in the imaginative faculty, and [this rank] is more spiritual. Given that it is more spiritual than the one [the form has] in the common sense, the imaginative faculty does not require the sense object to be present externally when it calls it into presence (*fi iḥḍārihā*),³⁵ [B31] in contrast to the case of the faculty of sense perception; though the formative [faculty] only looks at that form and extracts its cognitive content and its image (*mithāl*) after intense rest and much contemplation.

[§ 16. *Animal and Human Perception* = B33.5–35.1, G37.15–39.8]

The specificities of how these five senses perceive (*idrāk*) are not one and the same in [all] [G38] animals. For in human beings, they perceive the things' [internal] divisions and their specific cognitive contents, which are what stands to the perceived thing as the kernel stands to the fruit; whereas in

33 See footnote 10, above.

34 Or vitreous body, the gel-like substance between lens and retina. Cf., e.g., Galen, 2:463–5 (*De usu partium* 11,55–7 Kühn).

35 This expression (*aḥḍara al-ṣūra*) is frequently used in *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*. See Hansberger, "Arabic *Parva Naturalia*," 58, 69–71.

animals they only perceive external matters, which relate to the things as the shell relates to the kernel of a fruit.³⁶ This is indicated by the fact that beasts are not moved (*taḥarraka*) by these senses in the same way as humans are. For humans become excited (*iḍṭaraba*) when they hear melodies, but beasts do not, unless that were to be said equivocally.³⁷ Likewise, humans are moved by seeing shapes and hues [B34] in a way in which beasts are not; and the same applies to the classes of flavors and odors, even if beasts partake in these senses to a greater extent, on account of their [i.e., the senses'] corporeality. Things are the same also in the case of the faculty of touch, for in respect of that [faculty] the hand of a human being has a specific property that no other [animal] possesses.³⁸ Also, humans are guided by smell with regard to suitable and harmful food, and cure themselves with odors just as they cure themselves with foodstuffs; odors may even cause recovery from head complaints,³⁹ because [G39] the head is cold and moist, whereas the odorous is, mostly, hot and dry. Again, in human beings, hearing is the path to learning, because learning occurs through conversation, and conversation can only be attained by way of hearing—notwithstanding the fact that understanding what verbal expressions signify is not up to hearing, but to reason only.

In human beings, each one of these senses constitutes the path to the first intelligibles (*al-ma'qūlāt al-uwal*) arising for them within the respective genus.⁴⁰ This applies in particular to hearing and sight, which is why Aristotle says that those who do not lack these two senses are more intelligent and more perceptive.

36 The shell-kernel simile goes back to *Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*. See Hansberger, "Arabic *Parva Naturalia*," 58, 68–9.

37 I.e., when ascribed to an animal, "excitement" would not mean the same thing as when ascribed to humans.

38 See above, Introduction.

39 See footnote 19, above.

40 I.e., within each genus of sense perception (sight, hearing, etc.).

Al-Jildakī (*fl.* 8th/14th Century) on the Alchemy of the Senses

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

‘Izz al-Dīn Aydamir b. ‘Alī al-Jildakī is a towering figure of the occult sciences in the Islamic world (Ullmann, 237).¹ Ottoman alchemists considered him “one of the greatest authorities of the art” (Artun, 22–3). It is curious, therefore, that his work has received so little scholarly attention. There are to date no reliable editions and only a handful of short studies and translations of his writings (Corbin, “Commentaire”; Harris; Holmyard). His name is mentioned on no more than a couple of pages in two recently published edited volumes that summarize the state of the art of scholarship on magic and the occult in Islam (Günther and Pielow; Saif et al.). The situation is certainly not helped by the fact that al-Jildakī’s oeuvre is intimidatingly vast and often difficult to understand. As Manfred Ullmann has noted, “[t]he enormously rich content” of his work, “which contains theological, philosophical, cosmological, physics, and astrological thoughts as well as letter magic and alchemy, will hardly ever be completely exhausted by scholarship” (Ullmann, 240).

There is little that we know about al-Jildakī’s life. Henri Corbin once suggested that he hailed from Jaldak, a village north of Mashhad, and that his name therefore ought to be spelled al-Jaldakī (Corbin, *Histoire*, 331). However, most scholars now seem to agree on the spelling al-Jildakī (see Forster and Müller). Nicholas Harris has established that the young al-Jildakī, the offspring of a Turkish *mamlūk* serving the Mamluk Empire, was active in Damascus around 737/1336–7. Against Brockelmann and Ullmann, who give 743/1342 as al-Jildakī’s death date (*GAL*, 2:138; Ullmann, 238), Harris suggests that al-Jildakī died “well into the second half of the 8th/14th century” (Harris, 547).

Al-Jildakī’s *Proof on the Secrets of the Science of Balances* (*K. al-Burhān fī asrār ‘ilm al-mizān*), an excerpt of which is translated below, is a sprawling compilation of occult knowledge in four parts. As its title indicates, the *Proof* seeks to

1 The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant “The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)” (project no. 724951).

explicate and promote the “science of balances” (*‘ilm al-mawāzīn*). The theory of balances was a central element in the thought of the famous alchemist from Kufa, Jābir b. Ḥayyān (d. 200/815?); it forms the bedrock of Jābir’s cosmology (see Kraus, 2:187–303).² As Jābir and his followers maintained, all bodies in the earthly and heavenly spheres, including metals and the various parts and organs of the human being, are governed by the relationship of their hot, cold, dry, and moist elements. This fourfold division maps onto the four elements, the four humors, and the four basic metals. In his *Proof* (see the translation by Corbin, “Commentaire,” 44–5), al-Jildakī provides the following basic matrix:

TABLE 24.1 The four mixtures and their corresponding elements, humors, and metals according to al-Jildakī

Mixture	Element	Humor	Metal
Cold and moist	water	phlegm	mercury
Cold and dry	earth	black bile	lead
Hot and dry	fire	yellow bile	copper
Hot and wet	air	blood	iron

By computing and manipulating the balance of properties, alchemists are able to bring about the transmutation of bodies, purifying and perfecting them, and thus investing them with special powers and abilities. Following al-Jildakī, the Jābirian theory of balances found prominent followers in Ottoman times, notably in the so-called ‘Alī Çelebi corpus, which dates to the second half of the 10th/16th century (Artun, 29). A passage from al-Jildakī’s discussion of the human sense of smell appears in the trilingual Qur’ān commentary of the Ottoman scholar and mystic Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Bursavī (d. 1137/1725).³

Al-Jildakī discusses the five senses in Part Four of his *Proof*, in the Third Section (“On the natural world”), in the First Book, the *Book of the Human Being* (*Kitāb al-Insān*), which deals with the anatomy, physiology, and psychology of the human being. The following paragraphs are a precis of the *K. al-Insān* (al-Jildakī, fols. 11b–68a), with a more detailed summary of the chapters devoted to the five senses, to help comprehension of the translation below.

2 Next to a long list of other writings, Jābir b. Ḥayyān is the author of a (lost?) *K. al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs* (Kraus, 1:110 [no. 824]).

3 See the chapter on Bursavī in *ISH*, vol. 3.

Following the introduction to the *K. al-Insān* (a discussion of the superiority of human beings over the angels in heaven), al-Jildakī first describes the human soul (*nafs*) and its faculties (*quwā*) in general terms. The human soul (*nafs*), he states, is an indivisible essence that is neither continuous with, nor discontinuous from, the body. The balance (*mīzān*) of the human body is determined by the effect (*taʿthūr*) of the soul on the body. Next to the soul, al-Jildakī posits the existence of a spirit (*rūḥ*) in the human being. Like the soul, the spirit contributes to the human being's balance. It is a subtle essence created by God's command (*amr Allāh*); it survives the body after death.

Next, al-Jildakī dedicates several chapters to discussing the human being as a mesocosm (*ʿālam awṣaṭ*). He outlines several analogies between the body and natural phenomena of the macrocosmos. For example, he states that God placed vision (*al-baṣar*) in the two eyes, like He placed the sun and the moon in the sky (Jildakī, fol. 13a). In another chapter, he states that the human body is an "occult city" (*madīna muṭalsama*). Al-Jildakī then turns to a detailed analysis of the human soul and its faculties (*quwā*). He relates that the outer and inner faculties of the soul are connected by the *sensus communis* (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*). He enumerates the essential faculties (*quwā aṣliyya*) of the soul, devoting a separate chapter to each of them. These faculties include, among others, the vegetative, appetitive, generative, locomotive, and perceptual faculties. It is in the context of the latter that al-Jildakī finally arrives at his discussion of the five outer senses (*ḥawāss ḡāhira*), the roots of which he locates in the three ventricles of the brain.

Muslim theologians and jurists usually start their discussion of the senses with hearing and then proceed to deal with vision, taste, smell, and touch.⁴ Al-Jildakī follows a different order, one that is often found in the Islamic philosophical tradition (see, for example, Ibn Sīnā, *Nafs*, 85–141; Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, 2:401–13): touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight.⁵ Al-Jildakī leans heavily on the discussion of the five senses in Ibn Sīnā's (Avicenna, d. 428/1037) chapter on the soul in the *Physics* (*K. al-Ṭabīʿiyyāt*) section of his *Book of Healing* (*K. al-Shifāʾ*), sometimes paraphrasing him, sometimes quoting him verbatim.⁶ Like Ibn Sīnā (*Ḥayawān*, 260, 263–5), al-Jildakī relates facts about the physiology of the human senses, and then adds observations about animal sensation.

4 For the theologian-cum-jurist Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 32; for the jurist al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392) and the theologian al-Ījī, see the chapter on al-Zarkashī in *ISH*, vol. 3.

5 For the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 18. For Ibn Sīnā, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 15. However, in *K. al-Najāt* (26–7), Ibn Sīnā uses a different sequence: vision > hearing > smell > taste > touch.

6 For some of the direct borrowings from Ibn Sīnā's text, see the footnotes to the translation.

The fact that Ibn Sīnā was an outspoken critic of the occult sciences, and of astrology and alchemy in particular (Wiedemann, 26), does not seem to have deterred al-Jildakī.

Al-Jildakī rehearses Ibn Sīnā's argument that touch is the most basic and important sense, because no living being can survive without it. Taste is a form of touch, but in addition requires the saliva of the mouth as medium. Smell is the sense that becomes worn most quickly. Sound is perceived in the form of air waves entering the inner ear. As regards vision, al-Jildakī first relates, in Ibn Sīnā's vein, several elements of the intromissionist theory of vision, such as the notion that forms are imprinted in the eye like images are imprinted on the surface of mirrors. Then, however, al-Jildakī pivots to an extramissionist position, stating that vision results from an "inner light that rises from the heart to the visual organ and from there is aimed at the seen objects, like the rays cast by the stars" (al-Jildakī, fol. 38b). There seems to be no trace of Ibn al-Haytham's (d. ca. 430/1040) *Optics* (*K. al-Manāẓir*) in al-Jildakī's *K. al-Insān*.⁷ Either al-Jildakī was unaware of Ibn al-Haytham's work, or he chose to ignore it.

In line with his alchemical, thaumaturgical outlook on the human being, al-Jildakī makes sensory perception contingent on the organic and spiritual balance with which people are born, or which they acquire with the help of the alchemist-physician. According to al-Jildakī, the essence of the human being (*dhāt al-insān*) is shrouded in layers of "thin, opaque veils" (al-Jildakī, fol. 36a) that hamper the sensorium. People must achieve inner purity (*ṣafā'*) in order to sharpen their senses. Properly purified, people perceive minute sensory stimuli, such as sights seen from a great distance, the sound made by ripples of water, or the faint perfume of objects smelled "over a distance of a mile or more." Like Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240), who describes the awe-inspiring sensory powers of certain "masters of sensation,"⁸ al-Jildakī posits the existence of a miraculously sensitive elite, whom he refers to as "the people of mystical disclosure" and "the people of devotion and purity" (al-Jildakī, fols. 36b, 38b). Not only do these people perceive things with greater sensitivity and precision, they hear the voices of spiritual beings and see the angels. They even understand the language of the birds and other animals.

The remaining chapters of the *K. al-Insān* are as follows: the inner senses (*hawāss bāṭina*), like the outer senses, are located in the three ventricles of the brain. They are the *sensus communis* (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*), the imaginative

⁷ For Ibn al-Haytham, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 21.

⁸ For Ibn al-'Arabī, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 36. Cf. also Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's (d. 627/1273) alchemical (!) notion that the saints enjoy "golden senses," as opposed to the "copper senses" of the common people. See *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 38 (§ 6).

(*muṣawwira*), estimative (*wahmiyya*), retentive (*ḥāfiẓa*), and thinking (*mufak-kira*) faculties.⁹ The faculties that human beings possess to the exclusion of other animals are theoretical (*naẓarī*) as well as practical (*ʿamali*). The rational soul (*al-naḥs al-nāṭiqa*), one of these faculties, has four tiers, or levels (*marātib*). Al-Jildakī devotes a separate chapter to the imagination (*al-quwwa al-khayālīyya yaʿnī l-mutakhayyila*). The final pages of the *K. al-Insān* deal with sundry topics: death; the *barzakh*; the heat on the inside the core of the human being (*dhāt al-insān*); the eternal bliss and punishment of the soul after death; as well as further taxonomies of the human soul and body. The last chapter concerns the special properties of human hair.

The following translation is based on the 11th/17th-century MS Arabe 1355 of the French National Library (Bibliothèque Nationale de France), which was compared to the 12th/18th-century MS Sprenger 1916 of the Berlin State Library (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin). While the Paris manuscript conveniently includes a table of content and overall reads more easily, the Berlin manuscript, written in a more elegant hand, seems textually sounder. However, in the passage translated below, there are no substantial textual differences between the two. In at least one instance, both manuscripts agree on a copyist's mistake (see below, footnote 18).

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2 Translation

ʿIzz al-Dīn Aydamir b. ʿAlī al-Jildakī, *K. al-Burhān fī asrār ʿilm al-mizān*, MS Paris BNF, Arabe 1355, fols. 34b–39a (= MS Berlin State Library, Sprenger 1916, fols. 65b–67a).

[fol. 34b] [§ 1.] *The First Sense: Touch*

Know that the first of the aforementioned five senses, which are common to all living beings (*ḥayawān ḥayy*), is the sense of touch. Every living being requires this sense. For the entire composition of a living being, in its primary composition (*fī l-tarkīb al-awwal*),¹⁰ [fol. 35a] results from the essential tactile

¹⁰ That is, in its “natural” state, as opposed to the altered state achieved by the use of the medical or alchemical arts (*ṣanʿa*). According to Jābir b. Ḥayyān, Balīnās (Apollonius of

properties of [sensed] objects. Also [the soundness of] its mixture (*mizāj*) results from them, while its corruption is on account of a disagreement with them. If you are discerning, you ought to realize how much of [a body's] mixture and balance depends on this sense. By researching [how] it [works] in the *mundus artificiosus*,¹¹ you will learn things you did not know.

The five senses are scouts (*ṭalī'a*) for the soul.¹² By definition, scouts are able to indicate the things that ward off harm from the palace¹³ and that ensure its flourishing. Know this! For it is knowledge, knowledge acquired through research (*'ilm min 'ilm al-taḥqīq*), about the effects of the brilliant wisdom and the mighty power that God the Exalted has granted humankind and all the other living beings that are below it, by creating these five senses, the first of which is touch.

It is unlikely that a living being should possess the sense of touch but lack the locomotive faculty. For, if it senses something that agrees [with it], it will seek [to obtain] it, and if it senses something that disagrees with it, it will avoid it.

The things perceived by it are hotness, coldness, moistness, and dryness. Among the concomitant attributes (*lawāzīm*) of these four qualities are smoothness and roughness, lightness and heaviness, and the likes of them, such as hardness and softness, stickiness and brittleness, and so on. We will discuss these in [the chapter dealing with] the regulation of balances according to the science of the *mundus artificiosus*.¹⁴

One should consider that the sense of touch has many faculties and multiple ways of perceiving, as we shall explain presently, God the Exalted willing. The sense of touch is capable of perceiving two opposite tactile stimuli felt in one and the same faculty. Thus, it is possible to perceive heaviness, roughness, [fol. 35b] hardness, and other [attributes] by a [single] touch in the moment when the sensory organ connects with or disconnects from [an object].¹⁵ However, hotness and coldness cannot be perceived in this [integrated] way. That is, the two are not sensed in a similar way in all the loci of touch.

Tyana, *fl.* first century BCE) distinguished between two different creations, the first being divine (*ilāhī*), the second "artificial" (*maṣnū'*), the result of human art (cf. the following footnote). See Kraus, 1:100–1. Ibn Sinā also uses the terminology of "first composition" (Ibn Sinā, *Nafs*, 58.7), but not in the alchemical or occult sense.

11 Arab. *al-'ālam al-ṣinā'ī*, that is, the "artificial world," the alchemical order. The translation follows Corbin, "Commentaire," 38. As Corbin (58 n19) comments, "we use the corresponding Latin term here to avoid the word 'artificial' [*ṣinā'ī*], which in current usage is opposed to 'real,' 'authentic.' Here, what is evoked is the role of alchemy as mesocosm."

12 Verbatim in Ibn Sinā, *Nafs*, 58.8.

13 Lit. "from this temple" (*min hādha l-haykal*).

14 See the *maṭlab fi mizān al-insān*, fols. 46a–47a.

15 Arab. *bi-ḍarb min tafrīq ittīṣāl aw infīṣāl āla*.

Rather, sensation is limited to the locus of the [single] moment [of sensation]. The moment [of sensation] in a single limb does not apply similarly [to the whole body].¹⁶

The fact that this faculty [of touch] is present in the entire skin of the body, because it is needed so urgently, is [a sign of] the wisdom of the Creator, may He be praised and exalted. One can only [experience] touch through contact [with bodies] (*bi-l-mumāssa*). What this faculty senses in the [various] parts of the body is conveyed [to the brain] by nerves, as research in the natural sciences has established. However, this sensation does not depend on the nerves [alone], to the exception of the flesh. [Rather, the flesh senses, too.] Were it not so, then the thing that senses (*al-ḥassās*) [i.e., the nerves] would spread out [in the flesh], and in it there would be a further division into branches, like fibers.¹⁷ However, it [the thing that senses] registers sensations occasioned by touching [with the hand] and [skin] contact, and it conveys whatever [information] the sensorium will receive from it. Understand this!

A further note: Know that the closer a human being's mixtures are to equilibrium (*i'tidāl*), the subtler sensation gets. In the sense of touch, there are specific gradations (*marātib*) and balances (*mīzān*)¹⁸ of perception that determine its contents (*ma'ānīhā*). When [certain] effects and reactions occur, its gradations enable the perception of minute stimuli (*tafāṣīl*). Understand this!

[§ 2.] *The Second Sense: Taste*

The organ [of taste] in the human being and in the [other] known living beings is the nerve that is spread out over the surface of the tongue. It [the sense of taste] is subsidiary to the sense of touch in terms of the benefits [it provides]. It is similar to it in terms of the need [that living beings have for it]. [fol. 36a] It differs from it in that touching [with the tongue], in itself, does not convey flavor (*ṭu'm*). Rather, as far as human beings are concerned, the thing that conveys flavor is a clear liquid [i.e., saliva], which in itself is flavorless.

Taste originates from the organ called "saliva's source."¹⁹ It conveys flavors [to the brain] to indicate health, so that it [i.e., what is healthy] may be known

16 Al-Jildakī seems to be saying here that one can feel hot (e.g., on a summer's day) or cold (e.g., on a winter's day), but not at the same time. However, if one puts a hand in the snow, and a foot in a bucket of warm water, one will feel the first to be cold and the second to be hot, but then the "moment of sensation" will be limited to the hand and the foot.

17 Arab. *shay'an munsharan fihi tafarruqun mā ka-l-lif*. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Nafs*, 61.18–19: *la-kāna l-ḥassās fi jild al-insān wa-laḥmihi shay'an munsharan ka-l-lif*.

18 The sensory organ has a specific balance of mixtures, as does the body as a whole.

19 With Ibn Sīnā, *Nafs*, 64.8, read *al-mula'aba*, instead of *al-muka'aba* ("the quadrangular" [?]), as here and in MS Sprenger 1916, fol. 65b, penult. Cf. Jālinūs, *Tashrīḥ kabīr*, and

by means of them. It is different when there is a flavor mixed into them that opposes it [health], as happens in the case of [flavors that provoke] illnesses. As you know, the flavor and touch [in the mouth] form a single stimulus, one that is not differentiated by the sense [of taste]. It simply becomes a flavor, for example, acidity (*harāfa*), which makes one sweat and feel hot and has a certain tactile effect on the palate.²⁰ It creates a [certain] taste sensation, and no further differentiations are made by the sense of taste. More than what we have mentioned here cannot be said about it. Understand this!

[§ 3.] *The Third Sense: Smell*

[This sense] is relatively weak in human beings: a lot of animals possess stronger olfaction. Also, within the human species, it has gradations of [strength in] perception, as we will explain.

Every living being has a specific strength [of olfaction] in the balance of perception. It is like this with human beings, too: the strength of their olfactory sense is relative and subject to a certain balance. People's perception by means of the olfactory sense is different, as is their perception by means of sight, hearing, taste, and touch.

By my life! Inasmuch as the stuff from which people are made (*ṭīnat al-insān*) becomes thicker, the ability of their senses to perceive sensibles decreases. This is because there are thin, opaque veils covering people's essence (*dhāt*) from the moment they are created. However, if the core [fol. 36b] of the human essence is subtle, or when its subtlety increases, all the senses are invigorated and able to perceive more. Many individuals of the human race perceive perfumes over a distance of a mile or more. Perhaps someone with great subtlety smells [the scent of someone] who possesses none of the common smells, as God relates from Jacob, namely, that he said: "Surely, I smell Joseph's scent, unless you think me demented" (Q 12:94).²¹ Such sensory abilities, however, are particular to the people of mystical disclosure (*ahl al-kashf*), to the exclusion of other people. Under normal circumstances, however, people achieve a certain [moderate] level and balance, depending on the strength that they have been granted.

Don't you see that those who practice vile professions, such as butchers and tanners, do not perceive stench? And that likewise, perfumers lose their

Ibn Sīnā, *Qānūn: wa-tajidu 'an janbatay hādhā l-ribāṭi afwāha 'urūqin wa-tusammā sāki-bata l-lū'ābi*, quoted in WKAS, s.v. *lu'āb* ("saliva").

20 Ibn Sīnā, *Nafs*, 65.10–13.

21 According to the Qur'an, Jacob, residing in Syria, smelled the scent of the shirt of his son Joseph, when it was carried out of Egypt in a caravan. See *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 7 (§ 4.3).

ability to smell pleasant fragrances, because they sniff them uninterruptedly? The olfactory sense becomes worn if it is exposed incessantly to a lot of pleasant fragrances or bad smells. In fact, the olfactory sense becomes worn more quickly than the other four senses. All the senses experience fatigue. The sense of touch, however, is stronger than the other four, and less likely to become worn. Understand this!

Above, we stated that some animals, or in fact most of them, have better olfaction than the human being, something that God the Exalted has granted them because they need this faculty a lot, in order that they may bring about what benefits them [fol. 37a] and ward off what is detrimental to them. That is, they smell the scent of [what can serve as] food for them and in consequence, they chase it with increased purpose. For example, cats smell the scent of mice and of rats. They also smell the scent of vermin toward which they have an aversion, and either they run away from it or they attack, beat, fight, and kill it.

As for the human olfactory sense, [olfaction] is according to balances, in the way in which we explained. When people increase in purity, this sense is strengthened in them, as are the other senses. The balance of perception depends on whether there is a little or a lot of this. Understand this!

A [further] point: Know that the scent of a thing is spread by the air that passes over it, be it a pleasant scent or not. As a poet²² said:

Wine is like the wind: when it passes over something fragrant
it is pure, but it is foul when it passes over carrion.

The air takes on the quality of the thing that smells and conveys it to the olfactory organ. The locus (*ḥāmīl*) of this faculty in the human being is the two protuberances that grow forth from the frontal part of the brain and that resemble the two nipples of the breast,²³ even if fumigation with fire has a share in the perception of smells.²⁴ Peace.

[§ 4.] *The Fourth Sense: Hearing*

This is a sensory faculty in the nerve that spreads out over the surface of the inner ear and that perceives the form (*ṣūra*) of that which is conveyed to it by air waves when air is squeezed between something that hits and something

22 Unidentified.

23 As in Ibn Sīnā, *Qānūn*, 2:7; Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, 26.38.

24 See Ibn Sīnā, *Nafs*, 66.7–68.6, on the question of whether smells reside in the medium (air, smoke, etc.) in such a way that the medium becomes itself the smell, or whether the medium merely conveys the smell to the olfactory organ. Al-Jildakī here seems to follow Ibn Sīnā's position, which is closer to the first of the two views.

opposite that is hit by it, and when this act of squeezing happens with force so that a sound (*ṣawt*) or a phoneme (*ḥarf*) is produced by it. The sound is conveyed in waves to the motionless air that is enclosed in the hollow part of the inner ear, making it move [fol. 37b] with the shape (*shakl*) of its movement. The waves of this movement touch the nerve that we mentioned before.

What we described earlier in this book anticipated [what we say here about] the perception of sounds and phonemes. That is, if the essence (*dhāt*) of people is purified, their hearing is strengthened and increases to the degree that they hear sounds from a [great] distance and perceive many meanings in the whisperings of the air, even in a ripple of water or in the tinkling of pots and pans. They may even hear the voices of spiritual beings (*aṣwāt al-arwāḥ al-rūḥāniyya*) and understand the language of the birds that sing in the trees. Likewise, they understand the language of all the other animals. Understand this, people! We have demonstrated this [elsewhere] in *The Proof on the Secrets of the Science of Balances* and in the chapter on special properties (*khawāṣṣ*) in *The Treasure of Special Attribution*.²⁵ Peace!

[§ 5.] *The Fifth Sense: Vision*

This is a faculty that perceives light and color and that is located in the hollow nerve by which it connects to the eye. [This happens] when the form (*ṣūra*) of the perceived visible object is impressed in the eye's crystalline humor, which resembles a mirror in terms of being cold and solid.²⁶ If a colored and illuminated object is placed opposite it, a likeness of its form is imprinted in it, just like the form of the human being is imprinted in a mirror. [This happens] not in the sense that something is detached from the colored object and extended into the eye. Rather, the likeness of its form occurs in the mirror, or in the eye of the beholder. It [the visible object] must be in a particular oppositional position [to the eye], and the medium [of vision] must be clear and transparent, so that vision can take place.

[fol. 38a] Regarding [the notion that vision occurs] in a continuous way that leaves no empty space [between the eye and the seen object],²⁷ [note that]

25 The full title of this work is *Kanz al-ikhtisāṣ wa-durrat al-ghawwāṣṣ fi asrār al-khawāṣṣ* (*The Treasure of Special Attribution, and the Pearl of the Pearl-Diver, on the Secrets of [Occult] Properties*). This work was lithographed in Bombay, by Mīrzā Muḥammad Shīrāzī, in 1891. See Holmyard, 48–9.

26 This account matches that of Ibn Sina closely. See Lindberg, 49.

27 Arab. *wa-ammā bi-tawassuṭ ittifaqī li-'adam al-khalā*. Some ancient scholars of optics argued that the visual flux emanating from the eye forms a continuous body connecting the eye to the seen object, an idea rejected by Ibn Sīnā. See Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, 28–9; Lindberg, 51.

the image of a big object is not imprinted [in the eye] in its [actual] size but rather, in a small size, which requires the thing to be *perceived*²⁸ according to its [actual] size. Without doubt, a seen object is small in terms of the size that meets the eye in the mirror, while the seen object is [in reality] big, and while vision *perceives* it to be big despite its small size in the mirror or in the eye. This is difficult to understand. Try to inform yourself about it and may you be guided, God the Exalted willing.

The visual sense perceives all things in relation to how its faculties are balanced. It is composed in such a way that it requires the *perception* of the distance between the observer and the seen object. Also, it captures the images that are on the surfaces [of bodies] in a way that the observer *perceives* in them the dimensions of these bodies, the distance between them, and their position vis-à-vis the horizon. Likewise, when brilliant colors are [placed] opposite walls, they [the walls] reflect their light and are illuminated, by the permission of God the Exalted, with reflected colors such as red, yellow, blue, and so on.

Rays are emitted from the eye in a conical shape. Lighthouse engineering (*‘ilm al-manār*) is based on this, as those who study it know well. Among its achievements is the lighthouse in the port of Alexandria, together with the mirrors on its top, which is constructed in such a way that one can observe from there islands in the [Mediterranean] Sea both close and far away, the vessels and ships that set out from them, as well as how many miles their distance is from Alexandria. Among the achievements of the science of optics (*‘ilm al-manāẓir*) are burning mirrors (*al-marāyā l-muḥarriqa*).²⁹ [fol. 38b] We discussed this science in *The Treasure of Special Attribution* in a comprehensive and detailed way. Know this!

Know that in many animals (lions, cats, and vipers, for example), the sense of sight is stronger than in many human beings. Their eyes shine and burn with a fire night and day.

A lot can be said about the visual sense.³⁰ This is the task of the scholars of optics.

28 Perception (*idrāk*), here, is more than just the imprint of an image in the eye. To be complete, visual perception requires judgment (*tamyīz*), comparison (*qiyās*), and inference (*istidlāl*), all of which happen in the brain/soul. See Sabra, 2:78–81. The italics in the translation seek to convey this more specific meaning of *idrāk*.

29 Presumably, al-Jildakī is referring to burning glasses here, that is, convex lenses that concentrate the sun's rays onto a small area, for ignition purposes.

30 Al-Jildakī may be referring here to the long passages that Ibn Sīnā devotes to vision in his *K. al-Nafs* (77–141), in contrast to the relatively short chapters he devotes to the other four senses (58–67).

Vision is different according to the inner light that rises from the heart to the visual organ and from there is aimed at the seen objects, like the rays cast by the stars. Visual perception is different according to whether the eyes are directed straight ahead or upward. The Messenger, God bless him, used to see twelve stars in the Pleiades, while most people with sound vision see about six. Many people fail to spot Alcor (*al-Suhā*) among the seven stars of the Great Bear (*al-Dubb al-Akbar*), also called Daughters of [the] Bier (*Banāt Na'sh*). There are people with such strong eyesight that they see the moon or the sun as a great mountain; others see the moon as a big [flat] disk; again others see it as a loaf of bread, or even less than that. Some people's eyesight is so strong that they see the face of the moon as it really is, in the same way in which they see a person's face: with eyes, eyebrows, nose, mouth, lips, and cheeks. It is like this with all the other illuminated stars, for they all look like human faces. Most eyes, however, [fol. 39a] do not [even] perceive the true face of the sun.

Some people see things from a far distance, for example, the Blue-Eyed Woman from al-Yamāma (*Zarqā' al-Yamāma*),³¹ who used to see things that were at a distance of three days of travel. There is no doubt that the people of devotion and purity (*ahl al-walā' wa-l-ṣafā'*) among the servants of God perceive, with their outer as well as with their inner eyes (*bi-abṣārihim wa-bi-baṣā'irihim*), things that others do not perceive. They see spiritual beings and angels, blessings be upon them. In *The Treasure of Special Attribution*, we have discussed the things that are related to this. Understand this!

Know that the balances of the five senses have to be taken into account in [the study of] the balances of the liquifiable bodies and other medicines that are employed in the *mundus artificiosus*, for example, the touch, taste, smell, temperature, tinkling, and color [of a thing]. All this will be explained to you in its proper place, later in this book,³² God the Exalted willing.

31 A semi-legendary figure of Arabic lore. See Shahid.

32 See the *maṭlab fi khawāṣṣ al-tu'ūm wa-l-abwān wa-l-nu'ūma wa-l-khushūna*, fols. 134a–134b.

Nakhshabī (d. 751/1350) on the Nose

Zhinia Noorian

1 Introduction

Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Nakhshabī (d. 751/1350) was an 8th/14th-century North Indian author, translator, and Chishtī mystic, probably of Ḥanafī persuasion (for summaries of his life, see Berthels; Karimi Zanjani Asl; Mu'adhdhinī; Tafhimi).¹ He was born in Nakhshab (or Nasaf, in Transoxiana), where he finished his primary education. Nakhshabī and his family were among the many Sufis and 'ulamā' who fled to India during the reign of Tīmūr-i Lang (Tamerlane, r. 771–807/1370–1405) (Mu'adhdhinī, xvii).² After settling in Budaun (Uttar Pradesh), Nakhshabī gained mastery in the sciences of his time, including medicine, astronomy, music, jurisprudence, exegesis, ethics, mysticism, languages such as Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic, and literature (Mu'adhdhinī, xix). Among Nakhshabī's teachers in Budaun was Shihāb al-Dīn of Mehmarah (*fl.* late 7th/13th century), a celebrated scholar and poet (Tafhimi, 259–60). A physician by profession, Nakhshabī had an excellent grasp of medicine and medical treatments (Mu'adhdhinī, xix). In Sufism, he was a disciple of the Chishtī shaykh Farīd al-Dīn Nāgūrī (d. 752/1351), under whose guidance he is said to have achieved a high spiritual status (Tafhimi, 261–2).

Indifferent to people's judgments, Nakhshabī led a reclusive life in Budaun. Reportedly, one of his descendants, Mīr Ḥusayn Dūst of Sanbhal, said that Nakhshabī “exerted himself in hiding states,” which ties in with his approval of the adherents of the Malāmātiyya movement (Mu'adhdhinī, xix).³ In a certain tension with such descriptions of Nakhshabī's way of life, some sources give evidence of his collaboration with the North Indian Khaljī sultans, such

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- 1 This chapter is part of the ERC-Advanced Grant project entitled “Beyond Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam,” which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement No. 101020403).
 - 2 Karimi Zanjani Asl dates Nakhshabī's migration to the period of the Mongol incursions. See Karimi Zanjani Asl.
 - 3 Malāmātiyya refers to a pious movement founded on the practice of *malāma* (blame). Malāmātis promoted the mystic's total indifference to people's positive or negative judgments. See de Bruijn, 75–9.

as ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh I (r. 695–715/1296–1316) (La‘lī Badakhshī, 970). Nakhshabī died in 751/1350, and people visited his tomb in Budaun at least until 1788 CE, when Mīr Ḥusayn Dūst of Sanbhal was still alive (Karimi Zanjani Asl).

Nakhshabī is well known for his Persian writings and his Persian translations of Sanskrit books, in which, in a charming style, he expounds basic Sufi teachings. Karimi Zanjani Asl categorizes Nakhshabī’s works as follows: (1) mystical writings, such as *Silk al-sulūk* (*Course of Spiritual Progression*) and *Sharḥ-i Qaṣīda-yi Suryānī* (*A Commentary on the Syriac Ode*); (2) religious books, such as *Ashara-yi mubashshara* (*The Ten to Whom Paradise Was Promised*); (3) literary books, including *Tūtūnāma* (*Tales of a Parrot*) and *The Story of Gulrīz*; and (4) medical works, such as *Chihil nāmūs* (*Forty Nāmūs*) and *Ladhdhat al-nisā’* (*The Pleasure of Women*). Mu’adhdhinī, the editor of *Chihil nāmūs*, adds two more books to the list, *Risāla-yi ‘irfānī* (*The Mystical Treatise*), on spiritual journey and progression (*siyar-u sulūk*), and *Anīs al-‘āshiqīn* (*The Lovers’ Companion*), the latter not being mentioned in most sources on Nakhshabī (Mu’adhdhinī, xxi).

Chihil nāmūs (*Forty Nāmūs*) or *Nāmūs-i Akbar* (*The Greater Nāmūs*), also called *Juz’iyyāt-u kullīyyāt* (*The Parts and the Whole*), is a peerless text in Persian literature, written by Nakhshabī for the Khaljī sultan Quṭb al-Dīn Mubārakshāh (r. 716–20/1316–20) (Mu’adhdhinī, xxii). The book is exceptional in terms of both content and style. Using poetry and prose, Nakhshabī treats a variety of topics in 40 chapters, each dedicated to a single human body part. ‘Alī-Muḥammad Mu’adhdhinī, the editor of *Forty Nāmūs*, suggests that cataloguers of manuscripts have miscategorized the work as merely a book of verse, poetry, mysticism, or medicine. He asserts that, because of its wide range of topics, *Forty Nāmūs* should be considered as a concise encyclopedia of sciences and crafts (Mu’adhdhinī, xv).

In Sufi teachings, the human body has a special place; it is “the pivot point between moral order and cosmic order,” being home to the heart, in which the creative energy brings forth being from non-being (Kugle, 224). In his *Forty Nāmūs*, Nakhshabī reflects similar views. He praises the human body as the most noble and beautiful creation of God. In line with the Qur’ānic notion of the “signs” (Arab. *āyāt*) of God in creation, he regards the various parts of the human body as signs of God’s glory, grandeur, and power. It is interesting to note that Nakhshabī transitions from praising the human body parts to knowing oneself without making a clear distinction between the body and the self. He asserts that human beings do not know themselves and that this is a major shortcoming. For Nakhshabī, knowledge of the self is the pathway to knowing the Creator. Elaborating on the meaning of this knowledge, he states, “those who know that they are created in time (*muḥdath*), know that their Lord is eternal (*qadīm*), and those who know themselves as possible existents (*jāyīz*

al-wujūd), know that God is the Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*), and those who know themselves as worthy of service of God (*‘ubūdiyyat*), know that their God is worthy of lordship (*rubūbiyya*)” (Nakhshabī, 13).

Like other Sufi masters, Nakhshabī’s esteem for the human body evokes the divine saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*), “My earth and My heaven do not encompass Me, but the heart of My faithful servant does encompass Me” (Kugle, 224). After giving detailed, physiological descriptions of the heart and its functions, Nakhshabī says that it is created out of the essence of both worlds, the world of the here and now and the hereafter (Nakhshabī, 298–302). Although Nakhshabī praises the human body as the pinnacle of God’s creation, he does not have equal respect for all body parts. He passes in silence over what he calls the lowly body parts (*a‘ḍā-yi khasīsa*), because, in his opinion, even mentioning the name of some of these lowly parts is shameful. Instead, he dedicates his 40 chapters to body parts that he regards as having a higher status (*a‘ḍā-yi sharīfa*). This explains the use of the term *nāmūs* (lit. honor, dignity; see Steingass, s.v.) in the title of the book. Surmising that his critics will question his selection criteria, Nakhshabī further explains that every part of the body is as significant as the whole body, and that this is why he also chose the appellation *The Parts and the Whole* for his book (Nakhshabī, 15–17).

Nakhshabī’s *Forty Nāmūs* interprets the body as a system of signs, akin to physiognomy but also with important differences. In the chapter dedicated to the nose, for example, Nakhshabī criticizes the expression *buland-bīnī* (“long-nosed,” lit. “tall-nosed”) to refer to people of dignity and elevated status. He also refers to those whose noses are cut off as punishment. Extending his sympathy to this group, he advises the readers not to shy away from their company (Nakhshabī, 94). Mutilation is generally condemned in Islamic law. Nevertheless, in medieval Islamic societies, nose-cutting as a shaming punishment was applied. For example, the practice is known to have existed in 6th/12th-century Seljuq Iraq and Persia (Lange, 72–3). It is also reported to have happened under Quṭb al-Dīn Mubārakshāh. When the prominent *malik* Yaklakhī carried out a revolt in the Deccan against the sultan, Mubārakshāh made an example of him by having his nose and ears cut, thereby disgracing him (Baranī, 397).⁴ While Nakhshabī attempts to prevent the marginalization of those with a cut nose, his attitude toward women punished in this way is different. In a story he relates about the infidelity of women, Nakhshabī states that women belong to a “tribe” who deserve nose-cutting (Nakhshabī, 98–102).

4 I owe this reference to Blain Auer.

Nakhshabī's chapter on the nose (Nakhshabī, 93–103), of which a partial translation is offered below, can be divided into four sections. In the first section (see below, § 1), which can be considered as a sort of introduction, he showcases his dexterity in using a variety of literary devices. He embellishes his advice to the reader about proper conduct by using personification, puns, and metaphors. In the second part, he displays his knowledge of medicine (§§ 2 and 3). Giving a detailed explanation of the nose, the health problems pertaining to it and the treatments, he talks about the two major physiological functions of the nose, namely, breathing and articulation of voice. The third part of the chapter is Nakhshabī's rather long narrative, which is omitted in the translation below, about how two women's infidelity brought misery to a group of men, ending with the assertion that women deserve nose-cutting. He ends the chapter (§ 4) with a short fourth part on the nose as the home of two aromatic substances, musk and ambergris, concluding with a love poem that uses the word *bīnī* as the rhyme word.

The chapter, like all chapters of the book, begins with a few lines in ornate prose and then shifts to simple but poetic prose. Nakhshabī intersperses his writing with fragmentary poems (*qaṭʿa*, also *qīṭʿa*) in an appositional style (*mushākil-u mushābih*; see Mu'adhdhinī, xix), to provide additional explanation and commentary. Nakhshabī claims that his style in writing the book is innovative and that he has not borrowed from earlier writers (Nakhshabī, 15–17). Nonetheless, there are similarities between *Chihil nāmūs* and works such as *Mirṣād al-ibād* by Najm al-Dīn Rāzī (d. 654/1256), *Gulistān* by Sa'dī (d. 691/1292), and *Mathnawī* by Rūmī (d. 627/1273), to name just a few (see Mu'adhdhinī, xxx–xxxv).⁵

Another outstanding feature of Nakhshabī's writing is the recurring use of puns to refer to key concepts in his chapters. In the chapter on the nose, a significant pun that Nakhshabī uses is *havā*, a term that means "air" but also "lustful passion." Next to writing about the air in physiological terms, passing through the nose to the heart, Nakhshabī uses *havā* to refer to the passion, felt in the heart of a lover, for an earthly beloved or for the Beloved, that is, for God. However, the most elaborate pun used by Nakhshabī is the word *bīnī*, which can be understood in three different ways: first of all, as a noun meaning "nose"; secondly, as the second-person singular subjunctive form of the verb *dīdan* ("to see"), which can also be read as a shortened form of the simple present (*mī*)*bīnī* ("you see"); thirdly and finally, as an exclamation, with the same meaning as *ḥabbadhā*, which means "how charming, how excellent!" (see Dihkhudā, s.v. *bīnī*; Steingass, s.v. *ḥabbadhā*).

5 On these authors, see *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 37, 38, 39.

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2 Translation

Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Nakhshabī, *Juz'īyyāt-u kullīyyāt* (= *Chihil nāmūs*), ed. 'Alī-Muḥammad Mu'adhdhīnī, Tehran: Anjuman-i Mafākhir-u Āthār-i Farhangī, 1388sh/2009–10, pp. 93–8, 102–3.

[§ 1. Introduction]

[p. 93] If the class of people who are the lofty summits (*shumm al-jibāl*)⁶ in the world of human elevation smell my spiritual fragrance with the nose of acceptance, the fragrant bag of musk that is attributed to my reed-pen will be made present to the nose of their moment (*bīnī-yi waqt-i īshān*).

The musk bag that is fragrant from reed-pens
attains a place in the nose of the holy ones.⁷

Oh, how do you see? [Look at] the beauty of people! Although the beauty of people is due to the nose (*az bīnī*), I see the beauty of the nose through You/you (*az tū*)!⁸ [...]

[p. 94] O dear! If you see someone with their nose cut off, do not cut them off. But if you see someone without dignity, turn your nose away from them! If you look carefully, [you will realize that] it is not those with a nose twice as long as that of others who are long-nosed. A long-nosed [person] is someone whose glory-nose (*bīnī-yi 'izzat*) is long. You will have conceived this once you see a great [person] as described by this couplet:

6 A pun. Arab. *ashamm* (pl. *shumm*) means “highborn, most honorable,” but also “having a sensitive nose.”

7 According to Anya King, the sense of smell is the most intangible and elusive of the senses, which is the reason for its association with spirituality. King further explains that since the Prophet cherished musk as the best of fragrances, it found a significant and highly symbolic place in Islamic culture. See King, 325–8. In this couplet and the preceding lines, Nakhshabī uses the metaphor of the musk bag to refer to his ink pot, both musk and ink being black. He does so in order to celebrate both his literary excellence and his spirituality, which is present in his writings like the fragrance of musk.

8 These lines are an example of Nakhshabī's use of *bīnī* as a pun (see the introduction, last paragraph), indicated here in boldface: *ay chūn bīnī? jamāl-i mardum, agar chi jamāl-i mardum az bīnī-st amnā jamāl-i bīnī az tū mī-bīnam*. The beginning of the line can also be translated as: “O you who resemble the nose [in beauty]!”

You ask: "How is their nose, tell me!"

In every way you look at them, how excellent, how excellent!⁹

[Someone] praised himself in the presence of his wife, saying: "I am a man who is capable of bearing much." The wife, who was smarter than he, replied instantly: "If you were not capable of bearing much, you would never [be able to] carry such a heavy nose!"¹⁰

Your disposition [is] bad and your nose a heavy mountain.

This is the example of a bad disposition and a heavy burden.¹¹

O you, lion of the thicket of eloquence! The lion's nose is not long, therefore all those with a flat nose are called lion-nosed. What do you see in the flat nose of a lion? Observe that he [the lion] does not permit flies to land on his nose!

How much talk of the ear and the eye and the nose?

A man's glory is his long nose!

[§ 2. *Nose and Health*]

Now, know that the upper half of the nose is [made of] bone and the lower half [of] cartilage. There are two openings in the nose. [God] has created organs with greater benefit in two parts, for if one [part] is inflicted the second can be its deputy and its [the organ's] benefit is not totally lost. The benefit of the nose is that with every breath, it delivers pleasant and fresh air to the heart and carries hot and unpleasant air away from it. If one closes the mouth and the nose in such a way that neither the inside air goes out nor the outside air comes in, [p. 95] the instinctual heat (*ḥarārat-i gharīzī*) will be interrupted and people will die. If [God] did not create the nose long, the cold and hot air would reach the brain sooner and the brain would be injured by it. The air that goes through the nose becomes mild, then it reaches the heart and the brain.

If the voice is smooth, it is through the nose. For this reason, if someone catches a cold, their voice will not come out smoothly. [God] created a hard core for the nose, so that when phlegm flows down from the brain, [people]

9 The second hemistich of this couplet reads: *har chand dar-ū bīnī, bīnī, bīnī*. This could also be rendered: "The more you look at them, the only thing you see is their nose."

10 The word *girān* in Persian has different meanings; see Steingass, s.v. *girān*. In this passage, it means "heavy," but given the passage's sarcastic tone, it could also be translated as "precious."

11 The idiomatic expression *khūy-i bad-u bār-i girān* ("bad disposition and heavy burden") is a line from a quatrain by Rūmī. See Rūmī, 2:1394.

squeeze and blow the nose. If it [the flesh of the nose] were not soft, this result could not be achieved. Blood flows from it in three different ways, as described in the books of medicine. The unpleasant smell that comes from the nose is caused by phlegm turned putrid in the brain. If the phlegm goes down the throat there is a bad smell in the mouth. Putridity of the nose can also be caused by a wound. To treat it, one drips camel's urine into the nose, so as to eliminate the smell. People grind myrobalan (*halīla va-balīla*), saffron powder (*gil-i mu'aṣfar*), and unripe pomegranate (*anār-i khām*) in equal parts and mix in ebony (? *Bā ābnās sitānand*) to cure bleeding and pain of the nose. If they grind long pepper with ginger, rock salt, and the wheat root and apply it with the urine of sheep, it will cure cold and exhaustion of the nose and the head. And if they drip the juice of cotton leaves, mixed with the juice of myrobalan (*halīla va-balīla va-āmula va-biring*), in the nose, the stale mucus and phlegm in the nose (*pukhtagī va-tarqīdagi-yi bīnī*) will be eliminated. [...]

[p. 96] It is unpleasant when sick people breathe only through the nose or when they excrete a lot of liquid through it. If they do not sneeze when something stimulates them to sneeze, it is a sign that they have lost their sense [of smell]. It is also bad when sick people are unable to swallow water or if, when they do swallow, it exits by way of the nose. Moving the nose or agitated movements of the nose are not pleasant for a sick person. [As regards] the sick who perceive the scent of musk, oil, aloewood, or rose fragrance in their nose: one must let go all hope of life for them. However, how can one have hope of life for those who are sick from love, those whose noses are all the time fragrant from the scent of the curls of the beloved? [...]

[§ 3. *Nose, Breath, Heart, and Passion*]

[p. 97] Know that the nose is the place of breathing (*naḥās*), and the current of breath is the cause of life, and the cessation of breath is the cause of the perishing of life. The religious scholars say that a human being breathes 24,000 times in a day and night and that life itself is nothing but a single breath. So it is as if human beings, in one day and night, are given the robe of honor of life 24,000 times.

My dear! The benefits of breathing are so numerous that one risks running out of breath when counting them, and what benefit is higher than people's life, which is attached to it? When people take a breath, because of their breathing air (*havā'ī*) enters their noses. From the nose, this air passes to the throat. There, it finds balance (*mu'tadīl gardad*): if there are any particles and fumes in the air, the particles of that dust and fume remain in the throat, while the pure, balanced air passes from the throat to the lungs. From the lungs, it gradually reaches the heart. The instinctual heat of the heart, because of the

balanced air, remains in a state of equilibrium (*i'tidāl*). From the heart, that air then enters the large veins, and from the small veins it enters [other parts of the body], entering all extremities and regions of the body. The effect of that breeze (*nasīm*) reaches all parts and members of the body. If this air is warm and becomes thick and polluted because of noxious fumes, it returns by the same way it has entered the body. From the depth of the body it enters the small veins, from small veins it enters the large veins, from the large veins it enters the heart, from the heart it enters the lungs, from the lungs it enters the throat, from the throat it enters the nose and exits the nose.

When, by breathing (*tanaffus*), breath (*nafas*) enters your soul (*nafs*),
if it does not immediately (*dar nafas*) see a proper place, it leaves.

My dear! Now that this principle is clarified, [know that] air enters the inside (*bāṭin*) by virtue of breathing, and that, if heat encounters that air, it exits by the same way it has entered. Now listen to a secret! Do you know why the beloved kindles so many fires in the inside of the lover, and why [the beloved] blazes in the burned interior of the lover and keeps it luminous like the walls of an oven? Because if any passion (*havā*) except the passion of the beloved [p. 98] seeks entry into the heart of the lover, due to that heat, it exits by the same way it has entered.

Not everyone has a place in my bosom;
someone who is other than you, I do not place in it.

A real man does not give passions room in his heart, he purifies his pure heart from all turbidites, especially from the passion of women, for no one in the world of purity (*dar 'ālam-i ṣafā*) is more infidel than women. [...]

[§ 4. Sweet Smells and the Nose of the Beloved]

[p. 102] O fellow citizen! The nose is called the village of the sense of smell (*qaṣaba-yi mashāmm*), and there are two gates in this village that are never closed, not even for [the duration of] a breath, and oftentimes the caravan of musk and ambergris passes through these gates.¹² What is this? The prefect (*shihna*) of this village, who is called the sense of smell (*hāssat-i shamm*), has commanded that there be nothing in this village except scents. Yes! The nose is

¹² The special attention Nakhshabī devotes to these two fragrances is probably inspired by their association with the Prophet Muḥammad. See *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 6, 16, 20.

the village of perfumers (*qaṣaba-yi 'aṭṭārān*). This is why there, no other merchandise has as much currency as perfumes. [...]

From every city and place comes a valuable product:

Ḍiyā' from Nakhshab and sugar from Egypt and Sa'dī from Shiraz.¹³

Praise be to God! I am describing the nose, that is, the corridor (*dihlīz*) on the two sides of the brain. The self-centered (*khud-bīnī*), whose noses deserve a *mihār*,¹⁴ says that this is empty talk (*sukhan-i dihliẓī*). To counter the claim of those [p. 103] who do not differentiate between the corridor (*dihlīz*) [to the interior of a house for women] and the courtyard, a ghazal occurs to the mind [lit. "comes to the pen"] with the rhyme word (*radīf*) *bīnī*, which is as honorable vis-à-vis the other *radīfs* as the nose [is] vis-à-vis the face.

Until I saw the nose on the face of the beloved

I had not seen such a blood-drinker! How charming!¹⁵

You will never see a nose like his,

although you may see many noses everywhere.

If his scent does not come into my nose,

I will destroy [my] nose with brick and clay.

Do not throw a knot on that arch-like eyebrow!¹⁶

O do not throw [a knot] every time you see [me]!

13 This line is an example of the tradition of "self-praise" or "boasting" (see Wagner and Farès). Here, Nakhshabī equates himself with sugar as one of the best products of Egypt, and with Sa'dī (d. 691/1292), one of the prominent poets of Shiraz. The word *shakar* in Persian can mean "sugar," "sweet words," and "the lip of a mistress." Sa'dī has been given the epithet *shīrīn-sukhan* (lit. "sweet words"), in admiration of his rare eloquence. For the cultivation of sugar in Egypt, see Waines. For connotations of the word sugar in Persian, see Dihkhudā, s.v. *shakar*.

14 A piece of wood that is put through the nose of a camel to guide it. See Steingass, s.v. *mihār*.

15 The use of violent imagery is not uncommon in classical Persian poetry. The beloved is often described as a "blood-drinker," drinking the lover's blood. See Seyed-Gohrab, *Laylī and Majnūn*, 220–1; Seyed-Gohrab, "My Heart."

16 This couplet combines the idiom *gīrīh bar abrū andākhtan* ("to frown," "to look cross," lit. "to throw a knot on the eyebrow") with the expression *ṭāq-i abrū* ("arched eyebrow"). See Steingass, s.v. *abrū* and *ṭāq*.

Do not take the rose near that delicate nose,¹⁷
 for that nose will be disturbed!
 I heard that yesterday your nose took a breath,
 [your] nose getting bruised from the wound of the breath.
 Ḍiyā' of Nakhshab, deprived of the nose of the beloved,
 puts [his] nose in the dust at every breath.¹⁸

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- 17 The adjective *nāzūk*, here translated as “delicate,” has a wide range of meanings, including “delicate,” “fragile,” “elegant,” “beloved object,” and “mistress.” See Steingass, s.v. *nāzūk*. The choice of this word demonstrates Nakhshabī’s love and respect for his beloved, whom he attributes with an extremely fine and sensitive nose, and who can either be a man or a woman. Since Persian is not a gender-specific language, the beloved’s gender, particularly in lyric poetry, is ambiguous. See Seyed-Gohrab, *Layli and Majnūn*, 218–19.
- 18 The idiom used in this hemistich is *bīnī bar khāk mālīdan* (“to rub the nose in the dust”), which means to become wretched and humiliated. See Dihkhudā, s.v. *bīnī*.

PART 4

Theological Perspectives



Al-Nazzām (d. ca. 230/845) on the Physics of Sensory Perception

James Weaver

1 Introduction

Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Sayyār b. Hānī' (Baghdad, d. ca. 230/845) was more commonly known as “al-Nazzām.” The sobriquet probably arose from his activities as a poet in his youth. If so, it meant “the pearl-stringer,” in reference to the common metaphor of the skilled poet threading motifs together like pearls on a string (TG, 3:302). We are interested here, however, in his activities in another field, one for which he later became more famous: dialectical theology (*kalām*). For al-Nazzām was one of the most prominent figures of the Basran wing of the early Mu'tazila, an Islamic theological school that allotted a larger role to human reason in providing knowledge of God and the correct interpretation of His revelation than did other schools. Indeed, it seems he took this further than most other Mu'tazila: he considered himself a “philosopher” (TG, 3:307).

His biography cannot be reconstructed in detail, and the scraps of information we have are difficult to order. He came to prominence in Basra in the latter days of Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–93/786–809), probably after the fall of the vizierate of the Barmakids and the cessation of the courtly debate-sessions that had brought so many theologians of an earlier generation to Baghdad. But he did eventually make it to Baghdad himself, where he may have been drawn into the fringes of al-Ma'mūn's (r. 198–218/813–33) court (van Ess, *Theology*, 1151–2). It was perhaps there that he caught the attention of Job of Edessa (d. ca. 220/835), the Christian physician, translator, and philosopher, who tried to refute some of al-Nazzām's ideas on the nature of colors, sounds, tastes, and smells in his *Book of Treasures* (*Ketābā de-sīmātā*) (TG, 3:299–300, 333–5). There is no agreement on al-Nazzām's date of death, but most sources place it around 230/845 (TG, 3:301–2).

No work by al-Nazzām is preserved intact and few fragments survive in later citations. In order to reconstruct his views, we are thus largely dependent on doxographies from the end of the third/ninth century (which mostly relied on still earlier, lost doxographies) and on even later doxographical citations (van Ess, *Theology*, 1149). Otherwise, we have three major sources. One

consists of the hints provided by Job in the course of his refutations in the *Book of Treasures*. Another is the work of ‘Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868), who had been a student of al-Nazzām and obviously admired him greatly, despite some disagreements. Al-Jāḥiẓ discusses many of al-Nazzām’s views in natural philosophy in his *Book of the Living* (*Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*). Finally, there are several passages in the Mu‘tazilī theologian Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāt’s (Baghdad, d. ca. 900/313) *The Book of the Vanquishing* (*Kitāb al-Intiṣār*) in which al-Khayyāt tries partially to defend al-Nazzām against attacks penned by the radical skeptic of Islam and critic of the Mu‘tazila, Ibn al-Rāwandī (Baghdad, d. ca. 245/860 or 298/912?).

Many of the early Mu‘tazila took an interest in the part of *kalām* that is concerned with the nature of the physical world; it formed an essential part of their reasoning about the existence and nature of God. However, al-Nazzām stood out for his enthusiasm for such questions. He was also exceptional in the content of his doctrine. The majority of the Mu‘tazila subscribed to an ontology whereby the physical world consisted in two types of primary entities: identical, discrete, indivisible particles or “atoms” (sing. *juz’* or *jawhar*); and differentiated “accidents” (sing. *‘araḍ*) that inhere in the atoms and provide them with their transient attributes, such as motion, color, smell, and so on. Al-Nazzām denied the existence of the former and radically restricted the scope of the latter. He held that the world consisted, rather, of infinitely divisible, essentially permanent or at least durable substances (sing. *jawhar*) or “bodies” (sing. *jism*) that are conceptually indistinct from their properties (Abū Rīda, 120–31; Bennett; Dhanani, 9). Thus, the colors, tastes, smells, and so on that we perceive are themselves the substances that form the physical world. They combine to constitute the composite bodies actually present in the world through a process (or state) of mixture: the substances “interpenetrate” one another (*tadākhala*), which can also lead to one body “being concealed” (*kāmin*) in another, such as oil in the olive or fire in the flint. The only accident he recognized was motion, as this was clearly incorporeal (*TG*, 3:331–42).

Al-Nazzām’s ideas about sensory perception are closely bound up with this ontology. According to him, we perceive only qualities, and every quality we perceive is a substance. To be perceptible, a quality-substance must interact in some physical way with our organs of sense perception. This too he explained through the idea of interpenetration. Sight, for example, happens because rays are emitted by our eyes and “interpenetrate” with the bodies they encounter (*TG*, 3:354–6). Sound is a subtle (*latīf*) body that disturbs the air and/or becomes intertwined with it, eventually permeating the inner ear (*TG*, 3:356–9). Al-Nazzām taught that there were five senses: sight, hearing, smell,

taste, and touch.¹ The bodies belonging to the domain of a particular sense are “in opposition” with another. Thus, two colors, when mixed, interfere and give rise to the perception of a different color. But bodies belonging to the domain of different senses do not interfere even when located in the same place and when interpenetrating one another: a sound does not affect a color. Nevertheless, al-Nazzām held that all sense perception as such is ultimately of one “kind” (*jins*). By this, he seems to have meant that the five senses themselves form a single, coherent class of things that collectively enable perception of external reality (al-Bazdawī, 21). They are assembled by the human “spirit” (*rūḥ*)—itself a subtle body that interpenetrates with the dense (*kathīf*) parts of the human body—and processed there to provide the holistic “image” (*ṣūra*) of the world that we experience.

Al-Nazzām’s specific ideas about sense perception had little impact on later theologians, largely because the latter almost unanimously rejected the underlying ontological model in favor of atomism. Nevertheless, the general commitment to materialist accounts of sensory perception continued, and al-Nazzām’s ideas were often later cited as foils for atomist versions of similarly mechanistic explanations of how humans experience the world.

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1 ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1027) claims al-Nazzām believed in a sixth sense by which the pleasure of sexual intercourse is perceived. See al-Baghdādī, 10. The earlier sources, however, state that he admitted only five senses. See translations §§ 2.3 and 3.4 below. Belief in a sixth sense for this purpose is, however, attributed by al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935–6) to the slightly later Mu‘tazilī theologian ‘Abbād b. Sulaymān (d. second half of the third/ninth century). On this sixth sense, see further *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 27 (§ 1.6).

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2 Translation

- FT* Abū Rashīd al-Naysabūrī (?), *Fī l-tawhīd*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Hādī Abū l-Rīda, Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa al-Mu’assasa al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma, 1969.
- KḤ* al-Jāhiz, *K. al-Ḥayawān*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 7 vols., Cairo: Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā l-Bābī l-Ḥalabī wa-Awlādihi, 1938–45.
- KI* al-Khayyāt, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār wa-l-radd ‘alā bn al-Rāwandī l-mulḥid*, ed. in Henrik Samuel Nyberg, *Le Livre du triomphe et de la réfutation d’Ibn er-Rawendī l’hérétique: Par Abou l-Hosein Abderrahim Ibn Mohamed Ibn Osman el-Khayyat*, Cairo, 1925, pp. 10–173.
- KMA* al-Ash‘arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt al-islāmīyyīn wa-khtilāf al-muṣallīn*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, Istanbul: Devlet Matbaasi, 1929–33.
- KMB* al-Balkhī, *Kitāb al-Maqālāt*, ed. Hüseyin Hansu, Rājiḥ Kurdī, and ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Kurdī, Istanbul: Kuramer, 1439/2018.
- KMN* al-Nāshī’ al-Akbar, *Kitāb al-Awṣat fī l-maqālāt*, ed. in Josef van Ess, *Frühe mu’tazilitische Häresiographie: Zwei Werke des Nāshī’ al-akbar (gest. 293 H)*, Beirut: Ergon-Verlag, 1971, pp. 9–70.
- NI* Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām fī ‘ilm al-kalām*, ed. al-Farīd Jayūm, Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 1430/2009.
- TA* Abū l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, ed. Claude Salamé, Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1990–3.
- UD* Abū Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Hans Peter Linss, Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 1424/2003.

[§ 1. A World Composed of Sensible Substances and Bodies]

[§ 1.1 The Physical World Consists in Quality-Bodies =

KMB, p. 444]

Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām said, “All these visible bodies are color, taste, smell, sound, plasticity (*al-līn*) and the like, nothing else. These latter things are in themselves bodies that combine and interpenetrate one another, such that they become all these dense bodies.”

[§ 1.2 The Only Visible Thing Is Color = *KMA*, p. 362]

Al-Nazzām said, “Accidental properties cannot be seen, and the only accidental property is movement. Human beings can see only colors. Colors are bodies, and the only bodies that the seer can see are colors.”

[§ 1.3 Sound as a Concealed Body = *FT*, p. 40]

[Al-Nazzām] said that sound is a subtle body concealed within dense bodies. It emerges upon impact or release of pressure, just like the fire concealed in stone or iron emerges upon their striking and sparking.

[§ 1.4 Permeation, Difference, and Opposition = *KMA*, pp. 327–8]

Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām said that everything may penetrate what is opposed to it and what is different from it. The “opposed” is that which resists or interferes with another thing, like sweetness and bitterness or heat and cold. The “different” is like sweetness and cold or sourness and cold [...]. He used to claim that color penetrates taste and smell, and that these are bodies. The meaning of “penetration” is that one of the bodies occupies the same space as the other, and that one of the bodies is in the other.

[§ 1.5 Opposition Occurs Only within the Domain of a Single Sense = 4.1. *KH*, Vol. 5, p. 57]

Al-Nazzām said, “Colors are in mutual opposition to one another, as are tastes, smells, sounds, and sensations of touch: heat and cold, dryness and wetness, softness and hardness, smoothness and roughness. These are all the sensations of touch.” And they claimed that mutual opposition occurs only within that which is allotted to a single sense. Since the senses differ from one another, the sensations allotted to one sense differ from those allotted to another sense. They are not in mutual opposition to one another in the way that one color is in opposition to another due to the interference that occurs between them, or in the way that it occurs within the realm of taste or smell, because interference occurs there too. A taste cannot be in opposition to a color, nor a color in opposition to a taste. Rather, they are simply different, neither in opposition nor accordance. They are not in accordance, because they are of different kinds. And they are not in opposition, because they do not interfere with one another.

[§ 1.6 The Mutual Opposition of Colors = *KH*, Vol. 5, pp. 58–9]

They said, “White differs from red and opposes it because it interferes with it, but it does not oppose taste. It stands in the same relation to yellow, brown,

and green. But black is a special case, because white opposes it through mutual interference [...] White can be colored but does not color, while black colors but cannot be colored. The other colors are not like this; they color and are colored [...] When yellow intensifies, it becomes red. When red intensifies, it becomes black. Green is the same: when it intensifies, it becomes black. Black is absolutely opposed to white. The other colors oppose each other in the usual way. But tastes, smells, sensations of touch simply differ from them; they do not oppose them. Some of those who profess [that the things that can be sensed by sense perception are all] bodies considered this doctrine a proof that all colors are composed of black and white, and differ only due to the degree of mixing. They claimed that color consists in reality only of black and white. In regard to the former doctrine, they judged that black is stronger than white since all the colors, as they intensify, get closer to black and further from white, and this continues until they become black.”

[§ 2. *The Faculties of Sensation and the Human Spirit or Soul*]

[§ 2.1 The Sensing Human Being Is the Spirit = *KMA*, p. 331]

Al-Nazzām said, “The human being is the spirit, but this penetrates the body and intertwines with it, such that the entirety of the one is in the entirety of the other. The body is an impediment to it, a prison for it and suppresses it.” Zurqān² reported of him that he taught that the spirit is what senses and perceives, that it is of one part, and that it is neither light nor darkness.

[§ 2.2 The Soul Assembles and Processes Sensory Data =
KMN, p. 113]

As a proof of the existence of the soul, al-Nazzām said the following: “We observe that these senses of ours are differentiated from one another and that none of them can perceive more than one thing. And we do not observe that there is any one part of the body about which one may say that all of the senses are found in it and that the impression of all objects of sensation occurs to it alone. There is thus necessarily something else, in which all the perceptions of the senses are brought together, and which sorts them out and knows what is conveyed to it. And the idea that this thing could be a part of the body is necessarily false. Thus, it is established that it is something else.

2 Abū Ya‘lā Muḥammad b. Shaddād b. ‘Īsā l-Misma‘ī, better known as Zurqān (d. 279/892?), was a student of al-Nazzām and seems to have been the most important Mu‘tazilī doxographer in the first half of the third/ninth century. His lost doxography is cited often in al-Ash‘arī’s *Maqālāt*. See van Ess, *Der Eine*, 1181–3.

[§ 2.3 Sense Perceptions Are of One Kind = *UD*, p. 21]

Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām, one of the Mu‘tazila, said, “For the human being, sense perception is of one kind: awareness of the objects sensed. Being thus, sense perception is not an entity (*shay*”). But hearing is not the same as vision, and smell is not the same as taste. The senses are necessarily five.”

[§ 2.4 Sense Perceptions Are Interpreted Together = *KH*,
vol. 4, p. 441]

Abū Ishāq [al-Nazzām] used to pose the Manicheans a problem that is both easy to grasp and decisive. He also claimed that he did not come up with it himself.

The Manicheans claimed that the world and what is in it consist of ten kinds [of being]: five of them are goodness and light; five of them are evil and darkness. All of them are sensations [...] Although human beings have only five senses, each sense also has a reverse side: its opposing counterpart among the five [remaining] kinds [of being] [...] The sensation of hearing is a kind of its own. Any goodness or light that occurs to the sense of vision cannot come to the aid of whatever goodness occurs to the sense of hearing, nor can it oppose, counteract, or hinder it. It cannot come to its aid, because it is something different and a kind of its own, and it cannot help against it because it is not its opposing counterpart [...]

Al-Nazzām said, “The response to the Manichean is the following: ‘What do you say about the situation where a man says to another man, “Have you seen so-and-so?” and the one asked responds, “Yes, I have seen him”? Is it not the case that hearing has contributed something to vision, and vision has contributed something to taste? If not, then why would the tongue say, “Yes!” if not because the one who possesses it had also heard the sound.’”

[§ 3. *The Functioning of Sense Perception*][§ 3.1 Perception Occurs Only by Contact = *TA*, Vol. 1, p. 389]

According to the view of their leader, al-Nazzām, the true doctrine is that those things that can be perceived with the senses are perceived only through contact and adjacency.³ The hand perceives warmth and cold, smoothness and roughness, hardness and plasticity only through the contact that occurs between the organ of touch and the object touched. Likewise, tastes are

³ A variant of this report preserved by al-Ash‘arī also includes “penetration” (*mudākhalā*) alongside “contact” and “adjacency.” See *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 27 (§ 3.3). It is likely the term was lost in the transmission to al-Nasafi.

perceived through the contact that occurs between the organ of taste—the tongue and the palate—and the food. Smell works the same way. In his view, an odor is a body that departs from the body that is smelled and makes a connection with the nostrils of the one who smells, such that he becomes aware of it. Likewise, in his view, sound is a body: the repressed air that departs from the body and transfers into the atmosphere and enters the hearer's ear canal such that contact occurs between them and he becomes aware of the sound. It must therefore also be that there is contact that occurs between the organ of sight and the object seen. Rays depart from eyes of the viewer and come into connection with the object, such that contact occurs between them and one becomes aware of the object seen. Contact, however, occurs only between bodies. The statement of this condition provides the proof that al-Nazzām understood corporeality to be the cause of visibility, since contact can only be conceived of between two bodies.

[§ 3.2 The Mechanics of Hearing = *NI*, p. 307]

Al-Nazzām adopted the position that speech was a subtle body that is emitted by the speaker and knocks against the particles of the air, such that the latter is agitated by its movement and takes on its form, then the air knocks against the sinew that spreads throughout the ear, such that the sinew takes on its form. Then, according to him, it arrives at the faculty of imagination, from where it is made available to rational thought and thus is it understood.

[§ 3.3 How Multiple People Hear the Same Sound = *KMB*, p. 453]

Sound is a body according to him. It is perceived because it crosses the intervening distance and strikes the ear. He likened this to a man who takes some water in his hand and throws it, such that a part of that water strikes all the people present. Every part of it is, in itself, a sound.

[§ 3.4 Sense Perception Is Involuntary = *KMB*, p. 416]

Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām said, “Knowledge in its entirety consists in two modes: one mode is involuntary and the other is voluntary. However, the first mode has seven subdivisions—i.e., he considered all of them to be involuntary, and the eighth mode to be voluntary. Everything that is perceived is known through the five senses and such perception is involuntary [...] That which is involuntary is, properly speaking, effected by God by means of innate natures (*tibā'*), for He contrived it and brought it forth at the outset. Thus, it is being used in its proper meaning here.”

[§ 3.5 Involuntary Sense Perception Compared to the Movement of the Stone = *KMA*, p. 404]

He claimed that colors, tastes, smells, heat, cold, sounds, and pains are all subtle bodies, and human beings cannot produce (*yaf'alu*) bodies. Pleasure too, for him, is not an act (*fi'l*) of humans. He said that what occurs outside of the confines of the human being is an act of God effected by means of the created nature (*khilqa*) of things, just like the movement of a stone when something pushes it, or its descent after someone throws it, or its ascent after someone lobs it. Perception is likewise an act of God effected by means a created nature. The meaning of this is that God endowed the stone with a nature (*tab'*) such that if something pushes it, it moves.

[§ 4. *The Perception of Color vs. the Real Color of Objects*]

[§ 4.1 *KH*, Vol. 5, pp. 60–2]

They claimed that fire is red and thus went by what the eye sees, but fire is, in reality, white [...] Every light and luminescence is white. It appears red to the eye, however, due to an accident that affects the eye. When it is free of that and the eye is directed toward it, it sees white. The wood-fire that is released from the wood and the oil-fire that is released from the oil are accompanied by smoke that envelops its particles, and when sense perception encounters white and black in a single location, the result in the eye is the perception of red. If smoke occurs between you and the disc of the sun or the moon, you see it as red. Likewise, the disc of the sun in the east is red and yellow due to the haze and the dust that presents itself between you and it, haze and dust being closely related. But when the disc of the sun is at its zenith and comes to be directly overhead, then between your eyes and it, there is only as much dust as can rise upward into the air—and this is very little. So, at that time, you see it as extremely white. But when it is low in the east or west, all of the air containing dust, smoke and haze, fog and moisture comes between your eyes and it, so you see it sometimes either as yellow or red. So, anyone who claims that fire is red is not lying if he intends what the eye sees. But the one who intends reality and what is known of the essential nature of things, then claims that it is red and draws conclusions from that, is ignorant and mistaken. Indeed, we observe that fire can differ [in color] according to the different amounts of blue, black, and white gas. All of that can circulate in the eye alongside a large or small amount of smoke. And we also observe that the color of fire in the eye changes according to the amount of dryness and moisture in the fuel and according to the amounts of different woods and oils. So, we observe it

sometimes to be yellow and sometimes green, if the fuel is like yellow sulfur. We observe that the color of clouds varies from red to white according to the extent of the presence of reflections and accidents. For if it reflects the sun from some angle, and if the cloud is on the western horizon and the sun is low, you will see it as yellow then black, appearing to the eye in accordance with what impinges upon it.

[§ 5. *Sensations on Earth, in Paradise and in Hell*]

[§ 5.1 Sensations Arise from Quality-Bodies Even in Paradise = *κI*, pp. 36–7]

Ibn al-Rāwandī said that Ibrāhīm taught the following: “The spirits [of human beings] are all of one kind, while the other bodies—colors, tastes, and smells—are an affliction upon them.⁴ He also claimed that when those destined for Paradise enter into it, they will do so having been granted relief through the removal of some of these afflictions. However, according to him, some of their afflictions must remain. Otherwise, they could not eat, drink, or have sex.”

Where he says that Ibrāhīm claimed that the spirits are of one kind, he tells the truth. That was Ibrāhīm’s doctrine. But where he says that other bodies—colors, tastes, and smells—are an affliction upon them, what Ibrāhīm really claimed was that such bodies are an affliction for the spirits in this world, which is a realm of tribulation, examination, and trial. So, they are intermixed with afflictions for the purpose of this trial and to make it possible to examine them here. But Paradise, according to him, is not a realm of tribulation and examination but of blessing and reward. Thus, it is not a realm of afflictions. For Ibrāhīm, if God wants to provide the spirits with their reward in the hereafter, it is necessary for Him to expose them to bodies composed of colors, tastes, and smells, because eating, drinking, sex, and other types of blessing are only possible for the spirits when they are exposed to such bodies.

[§ 5.2 The Sensory Capacity of Humans for Punishment in Hell = *κI*, p. 37]

Then Ibn al-Rāwandī said, “Ibrāhīm then claimed that the spirits of the inhabitants of Hell must have some capacity beyond the amount of punishment

4 I.e., although human spirits are individual entities, they all belong to the same class of thing and would thus all act in the same way if they were not presented with the “afflictions” that the physical world imposes upon them. Free will exists in that the individual spirits can choose how to respond to these circumstances. See what follows in this passage and *TC*, 3:377.

they receive. For if the punishment were to fill up their capacity completely, it would then overwhelm them. And if it overwhelmed them, it would render their senses ineffectual and they would no longer experience pain or suffering. By his statement ‘the spirits of the inhabitants of Hell must have a capacity for punishment beyond the amount of punishment they receive,’ he meant that the spirits can bear more punishment than occurs to them.”

Woe to the one who wrote this! What made him lie like this? What kind of comfort or relief is there in lying about an opponent? The doctrine of Ibrāhīm in this matter is the doctrine of the Muslims collectively. This is that God—mighty and glorious is He!—exposes the inhabitants of Hell to only as much punishment as their constitutions can bear. He does not obliterate their reasoning minds or render their senses ineffectual. For if He did that, they would not experience the pain of the punishment or the harshness of the penalty.

Al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935–6) on Mu‘tazilite Claims about the Senses and Sense Perception

David Bennett

1 Introduction

The *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn* (*The Doctrines of the Practitioners of Islam and the Disagreements of Those Who Pray*) is unquestionably our most valuable source for Mu‘tazilite (and other) theological and philosophical positions from the fecund 3rd/9th century.¹ With few and insignificant exceptions, none of the writings of those early Mu‘tazilites survived otherwise, save in fragments and testimonia of varying reliability. Al-Ash‘arī’s remarkable editorial precision reflects his first-hand experience as a practicing Mu‘tazilite himself until ca. 300/912 and his sensitivity to the philosophical concerns animating the school; his reliability may be verified by the continuing evolution of Mu‘tazilite thought documented in the 4th/10th century, such that the *Maqālāt* reads as a prolegomenon to the great compendia of ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) and others. Though his name is associated with the movement opposed to the Mu‘tazilites in textbooks to this day, al-Ash‘arī is therefore, ironically, the Mu‘tazilites’ greatest champion.

Al-Ash‘arī’s split from the Mu‘tazilites is the stuff of legends (see, e.g., Watt, 136–7). Though some questions of authenticity remain unresolved (the issues are explicated in Weaver, 142–52; see also van Ess, *Der Eine*, 456–77), the *Maqālāt*’s structure is easy enough to navigate. The first part (pp. 1–300 in Ritter’s edition) contains a straightforward heresiography of early Shi‘i, Murji‘i, Khārijī, and other positions, followed by a much more substantial presentation

1 The translated passages are excerpted from a complete translation of the work which will be published by the Library of Arabic Literature (NYU/Abu Dhabi). I am grateful to Managing Editor Chip Rossetti and the Editorial Board of LAL for permission to use these passages here. The entire work is being completed in close collaboration with James Montgomery, who has been involved in every phase of the translation. Many other scholars have contributed to my rendering of these passages; in particular I am grateful to Joseph Lowry, Sean Anthony, Peter Adamson, and Sophia Vasalou—now, as well, to my editor here, Christian Lange. Van Ess’s German translations of most of these passages have been my inspiration and guide throughout.

of Mu'tazilite positions on the two key theological issues of the divine attributes and human free will. The second part (pp. 301–482) presents a systematic account of what al-Ash'arī calls *daqīq* issues (“subtle”; one might almost say “trivial,” if one were not excited about how many sides atoms have). Here we find most of the classical Mu'tazilite positions; some of the concerns in the first part are reiterated from a different perspective, but this part begins with a set of questions concerning the physical world. The third part of the work returns to the issue of divine names and attributes, prompting scholars to suppose it is a separate work entirely (perhaps, as some have argued, written after al-Ash'arī's “conversion”).

It is from the second part that the passages translated below have been drawn. The text is arranged in *aporiai* loosely grouped according to themes: thus, the part begins with a series of questions about the nature of bodies, their constituent parts, and accidents; by page 323 al-Ash'arī is asking whether things which are at rest are not still moving in some way. Each question raised elicits a selection of answers—mostly from Mu'tazilites, but occasionally in this section from other groups: philosophers, Christians, various heretics. The term *jawhar*, for example, is explained as the ultimate entity in *kalām* metaphysics, sometimes synonymous with the “atom,” and eventually adopted as Aristotelian “substance” in *falsafa*. Al-Ash'arī situates the various Mu'tazilite definitions in the context of early philosophical and theological theory (see, e.g., Dhanani; Frank; Sabra, among others). It is after a series of questions about physics, metaphysics, and psychology that al-Ash'arī devotes a sequence of questions to human sensation. Between the two sets of passages selected here, we find questions on the persistence of accidents over time, cognizable content (the *ma'nā*), and human action.

Most of the named figures in these passages are prominent early Mu'tazilites. Rather than encumber this introduction with a complete *dramatis personae*, I refer the reader to van Ess's comprehensive guidebook to the field (*TG*, 1991–7; English translation 2017–20²). Not only does van Ess provide a systematic study of each figure's life, work, and influence, but he also provides (in the German edition) voluminous translations of the source material (including, to be sure, most of these passages). Strikingly, however, the first passage in the selection below begins with a review not of Mu'tazilite, but of Dualist conceptions of sensation. The physical theories of these groups were formative influences on early Mu'tazilite thought (Bennett, “Reporting”); these examples show how Dualists' understanding of the fundamental mixture of light and

2 In footnotes, after references to the German edition of *TG*, I provide the corresponding pages in the English edition.

darkness was not limited to cosmogonical speculation, but was incorporated into a robust—if quirky—philosophical anthropology.

The passages on sensation are drenched in technical terminology from *kalām* metaphysics, yet this language was highly contested in Muʿtazilite circles. Al-Ashʿarī's *aporiai* demonstrate that each individual Muʿtazilite held distinctive views on every element of the received metaphysics; hence the need for his comprehensive account of their “doctrines.” If all of reality is reduced to a scheme of accidents (*aʿrād*, sing. *ʿarad*) and ultimate, substantial entities in which they inhere (*jawāhīr*, sing. *jawhar*), then objects of sense perception should belong to the former category. Yet for at least one Muʿtazilite, al-Nazzām (d. ca. 230/845), the only “accident” is motion; all other sensibilia (colors, etc.) are *jawāhīr*. Al-Nazzām's idiosyncratic system of interpenetrating, corporeal *jawāhīr* thus plays a major role in his understanding of sense perception (see below, § 7.1), to which his proposal of the “leap,” ordinarily considered only in terms of problems in atomic motion, is curiously applied.

The sense organs themselves were understood as bodies, but the process of sensation, as in the case of *kalām* epistemology (which asks how instances of “knowing” [*ʿilm*] occur), seemed to elude the accident/substrate dichotomy. Insofar as they are considered accidents, sensibilia (like instances of knowledge) had to inhere somewhere; yet without an Aristotelian faculty-scheme, challenges abounded for simultaneous perception and the transmission of information to the active aspect of the soul, just to name a few cases. Notably, when two major Muʿtazilites are said to claim that the senses themselves (*al-ḥawāss*) are accidents (§ 1.5), al-Ashʿarī is careful to mention his source (Zurqān). A similar problem, of course, occurred with the articulation of divine attributes (God's hearing, seeing, etc.; but also any active aspect of God related to a particular object, e.g., His power over a specific object). This issue with classification (presumably engendered by discussions about the reification of divine attributes) in turn informs the problem of “one class” (*jins*; see especially § 3.3). Thus the Dayṣānite claim (§ 1.2) that all sense properties are essentially undifferentiated mirrors another *kalām* position that God's knowing is the same as God's seeing, hearing, being powerful, and so on.

In this context, positing a sixth sense for “pleasure” (§ 1.6)³ identifies pleasure as an object of sense. But there were other reasons to toy with the enumeration of the senses: already by the time of ʿIṣṣāq (d. 200/815), we see an attempt to resolve what would become a major Muʿtazilite/Ashʿarite controversy concerning the vision of God (§ 2.1). Furthermore, the Dualists and the early

3 This position is erroneously ascribed to al-Nazzām in al-Baghḍādī, 10. On al-Nazzām's counting five senses, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 26 (§ 2.3).

Mu'tazilites were familiar with Aristotelian discussion of the differentiation of senses: the passage in § 3.3 echoes *De sensu* 7 (447b25ff.), and the second-order judgments associated with simultaneous perception of multiple objects of sense were considered by Abū l-Hudhayl (d. 227/841) (al-Ash'arī, 361).

Tensions regarding human agency simmered in 3rd/9th-century *kalām*: the role of human volition in the process of sensation was therefore a topic of debate. Ascribing agency to inanimate properties seemed to infringe upon God's power, turning a huge variety of experiences into a mechanized process. Causality was also an issue for the physics of miraculous events; God mustn't be bound to physical rules. Both problems are crystallized in the proposition that God can make blind or dead people "see" (§ 5.5). The issues discussed in § 5 continued to court controversy in the following centuries; the ensuing *kalām* on sense perception became more and more sophisticated, in parallel with that of the *falāsifa* (Bennett, "Sense Perception").

As noted above, the received text of the *Maqālāt* provides lemmata which usually classify a set of reports to follow. The reports are usually attributed to a particular group or individual figure mentioned at the start of a report or at the very end. It is not always clear whether what follows an introductory phrase like "the Manicheans said ..." (§ 1.1) is meant to be a direct quotation or a paraphrase. Occasionally a mediating transmitter is named, as in §§ 1.5 and 7.1 with Zurqān. Often the proponent of a view will not be mentioned till the end of the passage (as in § 3.1); for convenience, I have moved this up to the beginning of each statement.

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Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash’arī, *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn*, ed. H. Ritter, 4th ed., Beirut: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2005, pp. 337–43, 382–7

[p. 337] [§ 1.] *People Disagreed about the Senses*

[§ 1.1] The Manicheans⁴ said that the human being is the five senses, which are bodies. The human being is nothing but the senses. For, according to them, there are really only two things: the Light and the Darkness. [p. 338] The Light is five senses, and the Darkness is five senses—hearing, sight, taste, smell, and touch.

[§ 1.2] The Dayṣānites said that the Darkness is ignorant, lifeless, and devoid of sensation, whereas the Light is sensing and living by virtue of itself. For the Light, the sense of hearing is the same as sight, sight is the same as tasting, and tasting is the same as smelling. Only its perception is differentiated: it comes to perceive in one way what it does not perceive in another way, for defects mix with it in one way differently from how they mix with it in another. Thus perception differs on account of the difference of accidents. They claimed that the Light is completely white, and the Darkness completely black, but the colors differ: yellow and green (or any two colors) come to be different on account of the different mixture of these two colors. They claim that color is the same as taste.

4 On the Manicheans, Dayṣāniyya, and Marcionites, see TG 1:418–34 (trans. 1:491–509).

[§ 1.3] The Marcionites are reported to have claimed that the human body contains a spirit and five senses, and that the spirit is distinct from both the senses and the human body.

[§ 1.4] Many people who rejected accidents denied the senses outright. They claimed that there is simply the human being, who hears, sees, tastes, smells, and touches; there are no senses of hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, or touching, apart from the physical body. Thus they denied and rejected the senses. [p. 339]

[§ 1.5] According to Zurqān, Abū l-Hudhayl⁵ and Mu‘ammar⁶ asserted that the five senses are accidents distinct from the human body. They asserted that the soul is an accident distinct from the senses and from the human body.

[§ 1.6] ‘Abbād b. Sulaymān⁷ asserted that the human being is⁸ six senses: [hearing, sight, taste,] smell, and touch—he posited pleasure (*faraj*) as a sixth sense.

[§ 1.7] According to al-Jāhīz, al-Nazzām⁹ said that the soul perceives objects of sense from the following orifices: the ear, mouth, nose, and eye. A person does not have a distinct sense of hearing, or a distinct sense of sight: rather, one hears by virtue of oneself, but may turn deaf on account of some defect that afflicts him. Likewise, a person sees by virtue of himself, but may turn blind on account of some defect that afflicts him.

[§ 2.] *They Disagreed about Whether God May Be Attributed with the Power to Create, in Addition to the Five Senses, a Sixth Sense for a Sixth Object of Sense; and Whether He May Be Attributed with the Power to Enable Some of His Subjects to Create Bodies*

[§ 2.1] Ḍirār b. ‘Amr, Ḥafṣ al-Fard, and Sufyān b. Saḥtān,¹⁰ among others, claimed that God may be attributed with such power, [p. 340] and that He creates for His subjects in the hereafter a sixth sense by which they perceive His whatness (*māhiyya*)—that is, by which they perceive what He is. This is denied by most practitioners of *kalām*: Mu‘tazilites, Khārījites, many of the Shi‘ites, and many of the Murji‘ites.

5 *TC*, 3:209–96, 5:367–467 (trans. 3:225–319).

6 *D.* 215/830. See *TC*, 3:63–92, 5:254–82 (trans. 3:68–95).

7 *D.* 250/864. See *TC*, 4:15–44, 6:237–70 (trans. 4:20–51).

8 Ritter and more recent commentators suppose this should be “has”; whereas for the Manicheans in § 1.1 the claim that humans *are* their senses is corroborated, for ‘Abbād and other Mu‘tazilites it would be strange to say this.

9 *TC*, 3:296–445, 6:1–204 (trans. 3:320–453).

10 On this spelling, see *TC*, 3:60–1. The major practitioner of *kalām* here is Ḍirār. See *TC*, 3:32–63, 5:229–51 (trans. 3:34–64).

[§ 2.2] Some said that God can endow His subjects with the power to create bodies; most people deny this.

[§ 3.] *They Disagreed about Whether the Five Senses Constitute One Single Class (jins) or Several Different Classes*

[§ 3.1] Many of the Mu‘tazilites, including [Abū ‘Alī] al-Jubbā‘ī¹¹ and others, said that the senses constitute several different classes. The class of hearing is distinct from the class of sight, and so on for each sense; the class of each sense is contrary to the other classes of senses. Regardless of their difference, they are accidents distinct from the person who senses.

[§ 3.2] Abū l-Hudhayl said that each sense is different from the other senses but we do not say that it is contrary to each other sense, for that which is contrary is contrary by virtue of an instance of contrariety.¹²

[§ 3.3] Al-Jāhiz¹³ claimed that the senses constitute a single class; the sense of sight belongs to the same class as the sense of hearing as well as to that of all the other senses. There is only a difference in the class to which the object of sense belongs, and in the impediments that afflict both the person who senses and the senses themselves. For it is the soul [p. 341] that perceives through these orifices and pathways; they only differ to the extent that impediments intermix with them, such that one serves as hearing, another sight, and another smelling. The essence (*jawhar*) of the person who senses, however, is not subject to differentiation: were it subject to differentiation, it would be subject to impediment and corruption, just as that which is differentiated is subject to impediment, and things that are incompatible are subject to corruption.

He claimed that objects of sense (*maḥsūsāt*), such as color and sound, differ in terms of both class and in themselves. If this indicated a difference between the classes of sight and hearing, then there would necessarily be a greater difference between some instances of sight and between some instances of hearing than between hearing itself and sight itself. For even though blackness is an object of vision, there is a greater difference between it and the class of whiteness than there is between the class of sourness [i.e., a taste] and the class of blackness. Since it is not the case that there is a greater difference between some instances of sight and some instances of hearing than there is between hearing itself and sight itself, it does not follow that the senses differ because the objects of sense differ.

11 Al-Ash‘arī’s Mu‘tazilite teacher, d. 303/915.

12 I.e., which would effectively be the superimposition of another accident of difference.

13 D. 255/868; as a Mu‘tazilite, see *TC*, 4:96–115, 6:313–37 (trans. 4:110–32).

Al-Jāhīz said that the person who senses constitutes one species (*darb*), the senses constitute one species, and the objects of sense constitute three species: differentiated, like taste and color; conforming;¹⁴ and incompatible, like black and white.

In response to the question “Does God have the power to create a sixth sense whose quality (*kayfiyya*) cannot be conceived, for a sixth object of sense whose quality cannot be known?” he answered that, although the quality of that object of sense cannot be known, we do know that it must be perceived either by virtue of adjacency, interpenetration, or connection.¹⁵ Therefore this prospective sixth sense must belong [p. 342] to the same class as the other five senses, just as the sense of sight belongs to the same class as the sense of hearing.

[§ 3.4] Al-Jāhīz claimed that his associates disagreed about the different sensory mechanisms, what confounds them, and what their impediments are. One group claimed that what prevents the sense of hearing from experiencing (*wujūd*) colors is that whatever confounds and impedes it belongs to the class of darkness which prevents the perception of color but not the perception of sound. What prevents the sense of sight from experiencing sounds is that whatever confounds it belongs to the class of glass, preventing the perception of sound but not the perception of color. He [i.e., al-Jāhīz] said: This is how they classified the differences of the impediments of the senses and those things which confound the sensory mechanisms and orifices.

[§ 3.5] Al-Jāhīz continued: Others claimed that the mouth only experiences taste (and not scent, sound, and color) because taste alone can outweigh that which confounds the mouth, whereas everything else other than taste is negligible, impeded, deprived of its force, and diverted. Likewise, it is sound that overcomes that which confounds hearing, and it is scent that overcomes that which confounds the nose.

[§ 3.6] Al-Jāhīz continued: Others claimed that sight only perceives color instead of taste, scent, and sound because of the paucity of colors it can receive: more colors would constitute a greater impediment, [p. 343] and if there were too many in it for [the sense of sight], it would experience no color at all. For it is colors that impede other colors. Therefore [the sense of sight] perceives colors because of the paucity of impeding colors. This is also the case for the senses of taste, smell, and hearing. Al-Jāhīz claimed that this conclusion

14 As Ritter notes, there should have been an example here.

15 These are the ways in which particles or bodies (depending on the atomist's preference) are said to touch.

is [also] derived from the principles of al-Nazzām, for al-Nazzām had argued for the first two positions.

[§ 4.] *They Disagreed as to Whether Smell, Taste, and Touch Are Simply the Perception of Their Objects*

[§ 4.1] Some claimed that they are simply the perception of their respective objects. Others, including [Abū ‘Alī] al-Jubbā‘ī, claimed that they are not just the perception of their respective objects. Perceptions of objects of touch, taste, and smell are distinct from taste, touch, and smell. [...]

[p. 382] [§ 5.] *Practitioners of kalām Disagreed about the Role of the Senses in the Perception of Objects of Sense*

[§ 5.1] Some said: if the causes (*asbāb*) of perception originate with those who do the sensing, then the instance of perception is brought about by them. If they originate with God, then the instance of perception is brought about by God. If they originate neither with God nor with those who do the sensing, then the instance of perception is [still] brought about by [God]. Should anyone claim that the perception is his own act, he does not actually perform it, as he claims, except as a choice: for the entire point of their position is that they make perception consequent upon its causes.

[§ 5.2] The followers of Mu‘ammar said: perception originates from the person who does the sensing; it is brought about by him. However, it is not through choice, but is rather the act of an elemental nature (*tibā‘*).¹⁶ That perception is an act brought about by the substrate by virtue of which it subsists confirms the doctrine of the proponents of the elemental natures.

[§ 5.3] Al-Nazzām said: perception is brought about by God and no one else, as a necessary consequence of His having created the senses. It can only be performed this way. [p. 383]

[§ 5.4] Muḥammad b. Ḥarb al-Ṣayrafī and many of those who affirm the divine attributes¹⁷ said: perception is brought about by God because of a natural disposition¹⁸ He generates in the sense organ that produces it.

[§ 5.5] Ṣāliḥ Qubbah¹⁹ said: perception is brought about by God, who initiates and originates it. If He wishes, He can remove it even from someone whose sight is unimpaired, whose eyes are open, who is right in front of the

16 The fundamental constituent of nature for Mu‘ammar.

17 I.e., those who, like al-Ash‘arī, take them to be literally true.

18 The term used is the same as for “proponents of elemental natures,” but it is not the same concept.

19 *TG*, 3:422–8, 6:206–11 (trans. 3:458–64).

object of his sight, and who has sufficient light to see—indeed, if He wishes, He can create it even in a dead person.

[§ 5.6] Some said: perception is an act of God, who originates it: humans cannot perform it. When a person's eyes are healthy and there is sufficient light to see, it is impossible for God not to produce perception; it is also impossible for God to make perception coincide with blindness, or for Him to produce it in the dead.

[§ 5.7] Ḍirār said: perception is something acquired (*kasb*)²⁰ by humans and created by God.

[§ 5.8] Some of the Baghdadi theologians said: perception is an act brought about by humans; it is impossible for it to be an act brought about by God Almighty.

[§ 6.] *Those Who Said That Perception Is Brought About by Human Choice Disagreed about the Cause of Perception*

[§ 6.1] Some said: the cause of perception is prior to it and precedes the opening of the eyes: it is the act of will (*al-irāda*) that necessitates the opening of the eyes; perception is simultaneous with the opening of the eyes. [p. 384]

[§ 6.2] Some said: opening your eyes is the cause of perception; perception only occurs when your eyes are open, in the same way that combustion only occurs when fire comes into contact with something.

[§ 6.3] Others said: the recumbency of the upper eyelid upon the lower eyelid could be relieved by another agent,²¹ thereby necessitating perception. Thus, opening the eyes does not need to occur first.

[§ 6.4] Another group said: opening the eyes is the cause of perception; it is simultaneous with perception, neither before nor after.

[§ 7.] *They Disagreed about How We Perceive Things by Means of Sight*

[§ 7.1] Al-Nazzām said: we can only perceive things by means of sight when sight leaps to the perceived object, interpenetrating it. He claimed that it is only by means of interpenetration, connection, and adjacency that someone can use his senses to perceive an object of sensation. Zurqān reported that al-Nazzām said that sounds and colors too are perceived by means of interpenetration, claiming that a person can only hear a sound when it strikes him and

20 *Kasb* was apparently introduced by Ḍirār and became fundamental for the explanation of how humans “acquire” acts, or responsibility for their acts, without real agency.

21 I.e., by somebody lifting your upper eyelid for you: the *Clockwork Orange* scenario.

is conveyed to his hearing, whereupon he hears it. His position on smell and taste was like this too. [p. 385]

[§ 7.2] Some said: interpenetration, adjacency, and connection do not apply to the senses, for they are accidents. They claimed that it was impossible for sight or the other senses to leap. Rather we only see a thing when light and the sun's rays make a connection between us and it. We do not smell or taste anything until certain particles by which the taste and scent subsist are conveyed to us when we taste and smell. When we see²² a thing, it is impossible for our sight to be conveyed to the object and vice versa; rather the light and the sun's rays make a connection between us and it with no leap or interpenetration. Thus, too, we hear something without it being conveyed to us, and without our hearing being conveyed to it and vice versa. For that which is heard²³ is an accident to which "conveyance" is inapplicable. So too, smelling and tasting do not occur by virtue of taste or scent being conveyed to us.

[§ 7.3] Al-Nazzām said: it is impossible for accidents to be perceived (*tudraku*), heard, smelled, tasted, or touched by virtue of connection. Only bodies can be seen and heard, for sounds are bodies according to al-Nazzām; and, further, only bodies can be tasted, smelled, or touched. [p. 386]

[§ 7.4] Some speculative thinkers said: only bodies can be tasted, seen, smelled, or touched, but things which are not bodies may be heard.

[§ 7.5] Some said: it is possible for accidents to be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched.

[§ 8.] *They Disagreed about Perception in Another Way*

[§ 8.1] Some said: perception inheres in the heart and is an instance of knowledge about the perceived thing. The pupil of the eye simply directs the eye toward the perceived object when the person puts it before his eyes or his heart. Some of them call this act vision (*ru'ya*).

[§ 8.2] Others said, rather, that vision and perception are one and the same: it takes place in the eye and is not an instance of knowledge. Their position on perception by means of the other senses is the same.

[§ 8.3] Yet others said: perception takes place in the part of the pupil that belongs to the same class as perception. Knowledge takes place in the heart, nowhere else. This is also their position on the other classes of sensation.

22 The MSS have "hearing." Ritter proposed "sight" here because of the "light" and "sun's rays." It seems difficult to accept that "hearing" is what is meant. Van Ess also switches to sight here.

23 Thus in all MSS; Ritter prefers "hearing" instead of "that which is heard."

[§ 9.] *They Disagreed about Whether Perception Is an Act Brought About by the Object We Perceive: Two Positions*

[§ 9.1] Most practitioners of *kalām* said: perception cannot be an act brought about by the object we perceive.

[§ 9.2] Some said: perception can be an act brought about by the object one perceives, as in the case when a person opens his eyes to see, and the object presents itself to him such that he sees it. Thus, sight is an act brought about by the object that presents itself. [p. 387]

[§ 9.3] One thinker held a completely different doctrine about perception: namely, that sight is subsistent in a person even when his eyes are closed, because he is endowed with sight. Therefore, when confronted by an object of sight, and all impediments are removed, the object occurs to the person, and knowledge occurs in him at the same moment. Prior to that, knowledge was concealed in his heart, prevented from occurring by means of the known object. Thus, it occurs with the removal of the impediment, but is not generated, for it was existent already, as we have described. Such was his position on sight.

Al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) on the Impossibility of Seeing God

Fatih Han

1 Introduction

The Mu‘tazilite theologian and Shāfi‘ī jurist al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār (b. between 320/932 and 325/937, d. 415/1025) rose from modest means to eventually becoming *qāḍī al-quḍāt* (“chief judge”) of the Buyid dynasty. Despite this dazzling achievement, the surviving information about his life is fragmentary, as is his scholarly legacy. The latter continues to require close scrutiny, as he arguably brought the Mu‘tazilite school to its zenith. While his full name was ‘Imād al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad b. al-Khalīl al-Hamadānī al-Asadābādī, he is commonly (and henceforth) referred to simply as “the Qāḍī.” Born in Asadābād, a village southwest of Hamadan in today’s Iran (Heemskerk, “Abd al-Jabbār”), the Qāḍī devoted his life from a young age to the rigorous study of, first, Shāfi‘ī jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and later, Mu‘tazilite theology (*kalām*). He became well versed in the intricacies of Islamic law and established a great reputation as a staunch defender of Mu‘tazilite rationalism in the Buyid capital of Rayy (Reynolds, “Abd al-Jabbār”). He left behind works concerning mainly theology and basic tenets of religion, as well as some works in exegesis, *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence, and various other branches of Islamic scholarship.

Unbiased sources for reconstructing a trustworthy biography of the Qāḍī are hard to find, if they exist at all. Seemingly neutral biographies are brief and focus mostly on his exchanges with fellow scholars and disciples, placing the Qāḍī in the context of Buyid power struggles (Reynolds, *Muslim Theologian*, 43). In contrast, the substantial biography of al-Ḥākīm al-Jishumī (d. 494/1101), *Sharḥ ‘Uyūn al-masā’il (Commentary on the Main Questions)* and the two works of the Qāḍī’s contemporary Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023), *al-Imtā’ wa-l-mu‘ānasa (Book of Enjoyment and Bonhomie)* and *Mathālib al-wazīrayn (The Vices of the Two Viziers)* provide what *can* be, and more importantly, what *cannot* be known about the life of the Qāḍī.

Al-Jishumī was a scholar of Mu‘tazilite theology, which he studied under Abū Ḥāmid al-Najjār (d. 433/1042), who was himself a disciple of the Qāḍī

(Mourad). It is thus not surprising that al-Jishumī was fully in awe of the Qāḍī; he expresses his difficulty to truly convey “his place in virtue and his high status in knowledge” (al-Jishumī, 365). As for al-Tawḥīdī, he harbored a personal grudge against all those sewn into the fabric of the Buyid court after he was dismissed by the vizier Ibn ‘Abbād (d. 385/995) for refusing to compile a copy of his writings (Reynolds, *Muslim Theologian*, 42–3). Hence, he describes the chief judge of the Buyids as the *ghulām* (“servant boy”) to the vizier, filled with “filth and cruelty,” accusing him of greed, corruption, and sodomy (al-Tawḥīdī, 1:141–2). The actual Qāḍī is situated in the space between al-Jishumī’s praise and al-Tawḥīdī’s censure.

Turning to the common facts that can be deduced from these ambiguous sources, the Qāḍī started his education in Qazwīn under Zubayr b. ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Asadābādī (d. 347/958–9) and Abū l-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm b. Salama al-Qaṭṭān (d. 345/956–7) as early as 333/944 (Reynolds, *Muslim Theologian*, 45; ‘Uthmān, 23). After performing the Ḥajj in 339/950, which he would repeat in 379/989, he went on to continue his studies in *ḥadīth* in Hamadan in 340/951, and in Isfahan from 345/956 until 352/963 (‘Uthmān, 23–4). After his arrival in Basra in 346/957, the Qāḍī shifted his scholarly efforts to *kalām* under the tutelage of Abū Ishāq b. ‘Ayyāsh al-Baṣrī (d. 386/996), who himself studied with Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī (d. 321/933), the son of the renowned father of the Basran Mu‘tazilī Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī (d. 303/916) (*GAS*, 1:624; Ibn Khallikān 4:267–9; al-Jishumī, 365). The latter is referred to as “our shaykh Abū ‘Alī” in the translation below (‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ*, 156.5). After some time, the Qāḍī left Basra for Baghdad where he came under the influence of the teachings of Abū ‘Abdallah al-Baṣrī (d. 369/980), likewise a student of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī. The Qāḍī praises Abū ‘Abdallah in his own biography as someone who “devoted his day and night to the study of [*kalām* and *fiqh*]” (‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl*, 325).

Having finished his first works in Baghdad, the Qāḍī began dictating his magnum opus, *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-‘adl* (*Summa on the Chapters of Monotheism and Justice*) in Rāmhurmuz after 360/971, which he would continue after being summoned to Rayy to serve as chief judge under Ibn ‘Abbād (Reynolds, *Muslim Theologian*, 49; ‘Uthmān, 25). In this 20-volume work, of which 16 volumes survive until today, the Qāḍī outlines two fundamental doctrines of the Mu‘tazilī thought, namely, unicity (*tawḥīd*) and justice (‘*adl*). He defends the non-anthropomorphic unicity of God and His divine justice, both of which are deemed comprehensible solely by way of contemplation and reasoning.

As has been mentioned, the *Summa* comprises two out of five principles that define the Mu‘tazilīte creed. This systematic framework was first introduced by Abū l-Hudhayl (d. 227/842) in his *al-Uṣūl al-khamsa* (*The Five Principles*) and

was further theorized by the aforementioned Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī (Ullah, 97–8). Both scholars considered these five principles to be the fundamental and essential basis for Mu'tazilite thought. They are as follows: *al-tawḥīd* ("Unicity"), *al-'adl* ("Divine Justice"), *al-wa'd wa-l-wa'īd* ("Reward and Punishment"), *al-manzila bayna l-manzilatayn* ("Intermediate Position [between Belief and Unbelief]"), and *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar* ("Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong"). However, none of the works of Abū l-Hudhayl or Abū Hāshim have survived. The *Kitāb al-Uṣūl al-khamsa* (*Book of the Five Principles*) of the Qāḍī is the only extant version in accordance with *The Five Principles* of the earlier Mu'tazilite theologians. The *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa* (*Commentary on the Five Principles*, henceforth: *Commentary*), from which a section has been translated here, is an additional commentary of the Qāḍī on his own *Five Principles*, often referencing opinions of earlier Mu'tazilite theologians. Thus, the *Commentary* is an invaluable source for the understanding of the development of the Mu'tazilite system of theology and for the reconstruction of the contributions of the early Mu'tazilite thinkers.

The *Commentary*, composed while the Qāḍī was dictating the *Mughnī*, was thought to be the one he claimed ('Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 20:258.6) to have written himself based on his *Kitāb al-Uṣūl al-khamsa* (*Book of the Five Principles*). The latter has survived and has been edited by Daniel Gimaret (Gimaret, *Les Uṣūl*). However, the *Commentary* is in fact the paraphrase (*ta'līq*) of the Zaydite Mānkḍīm Shashdīw (d. 425/1034) of the actual *Commentary*, which remains lost. The error of the first editor, 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān, who in his 1965 edition assumed the *Commentary* to be an original work by the Qāḍī, continues as such in the later, revised edition of Samīr Muṣṭafā Rabāb, which is the one that has been used for the purpose of this publication.

Mānkḍīm was a disciple of the Zaydite imam al-Mu'ayyad bi-Llāh (d. 411/1020) who himself studied with the Qāḍī (Heemskerk, *Suffering*, 61). Mānkḍīm mentions his teacher once in the long introduction of the *Commentary* ('Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ*, 25.12). It is not known whether Mānkḍīm ever studied with the Qāḍī, but he overlapped with him during the last four years of his life in Rayy and is mentioned among those who attended his funeral there in 415/1025 (Madelung, 177–84). Mānkḍīm, as well as his teacher, held views closely aligned with the Mu'tazila. He identifies himself as such by referring to the great Mu'tazilite theologian as *shaykhunā* ("our shaykh"), as is the case in the section translated below.

It appears that Mānkḍīm intervened in the original *Commentary* mainly in the last section regarding the imamate, where he mentions Zayd b. 'Alī (d. 122/740) as the fourth Imam, in accordance with Zaydi belief ('Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ*, 514.7–8). To what extent Mānkḍīm adds, omits, or paraphrases has been

discussed—though not conclusively—by Daniel Gimaret. Two characteristics of Mānkdim’s paraphrase shall be mentioned here. First, the paraphrase follows closely the structure and content of the *Book of the Five Principles*. It starts with a lengthy introduction on the obligation of the believers to use their own intellectual powers (*wujūb al-naẓar*) to reach the knowledge of the existence of God (Gimaret, *Les Uṣūl*, 79–80; ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ*, 15.1–76.2), followed by an introduction on the five principles (Gimaret, *Les Uṣūl*, 80–82.16; ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ*, 76.3–94.10), and finally, the principles in the order mentioned above.

The short passage in the *Five Principles* on the impossibility of seeing God (*ru’yat Allāh*) coincides in content with the *Commentary*, except that in the *Principles*, the Qāḍī affirms the possibility to “see,” in the sense of “knowing” God “with the heart (*qalb*), cognition (*ma’rifā*), and knowledge (*‘ilm*)” (Gimaret, *Les Uṣūl*, 83). Second, Mānkdim’s paraphrase allows his readers to distinguish the passages in which the Qāḍī is directly quoted. The proof of the impossibility of seeing God is introduced with the words: “he [the Qāḍī], may God have mercy on him, began proving this case” (‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ*, 156.7). Elsewhere in the *Commentary*, expansion or omission of content is directly stated (‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ*, 193.10–11, 484.10–11). Additionally, the style of narrative, which introduces a question with *fa-in qīla* (“and if it is said”), and in which the answer is given in the first-person plural, follows the conventions of the fourth volume of the Qāḍī’s *Summa*. This is the volume that corresponds to the translated passage. In sum, one can certainly suppose that the translated section was written although not *by*, but certainly *after* the Qāḍī.

The translated section from the *Commentary* highlights the Qāḍī’s insistence on acknowledging the non-anthropomorphic divine essence of God, which is as such not perceptible by the eye. The Qāḍī does not shy away from revealing at the very beginning of the section against whom he is directing his theological attack: “those Ash’arīs,” and specifically Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash’arī (d. 324/935–6). On the topic of *ru’yat Allāh*, al-Ash’arī positions himself in his *Ibāna ‘an uṣūl al-dīyāna* (*The Elucidation of the Foundations of Religion*) clearly in favor of the possibility to see God. He professes that “God Most High is [possible to be] seen in the hereafter with the eyes, like the moon is [possible to be] seen on the night of the full moon” (al-Ash’arī, 10). Al-Ash’arī supports his claim with the much-cited *ḥadīth* in reference to the *ru’ya* issue, when the Prophet guaranteed his Companions while he was looking at the moon that they would see God as they see the full moon without any trouble (Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-tawḥīd* 97 [#7434]). The dispute on the visibility of God via sight is not confined to the Mu’tazila and Ash’arī schools and has been discussed in scholarship as well (Gardet, 338–46; Gilliot; Gimaret, “Ru’yat Allāh”; *TC*, 4:411–5; Tuft; Vajda, “Šī’ites duodécimains”; Vajda, “Yūsuf al-Baṣīr”).

Marshalling a linguistic argument, the Qāḍī disqualifies the seeing of God by the eye, as God Himself stated in the Qurʾān that “eyes do not perceive Him” (*lā tudrikuhu l-abṣār*, Q 6:103). This argument assumes that the expression that eyes “perceive” (*tudriku*) only alludes to the physical quality of the eye as an ocular organ. As the Qāḍī argues, when Moses asked God to show Himself to him, “so that I may look at you” (*anṣur ilayka*, Q 7:143), he was merely speaking to himself, laying bare his inner wish and yearning, but he was not actually demanding ocular vision to see God. Any objection as to how God can be known if He cannot be seen is dismissed: the Qāḍī accepts that human beings can know Him without being able to see Him, by conducting the first obligation of speculative reasoning, as outlined in detail in the introduction of the *Commentary*. The impossibility of the ocular vision of God factors into the *tamadduh* (“praise”) theory of the Qāḍī, which is first and foremost in his discussion of the visibility of the Divine. God can only be God if His divine essence and attributes differ from those of human beings, and it is this difference that confers praise on God. Thus, God can see human beings but human beings cannot and are not allowed to see Him.

In the *Foundations of Religion*, al-Ashʿarī considers what is understood by the Qāḍī as “eye” to be “vision,” which includes both the sight of the eye and that of the heart, according to philologists (al-Ashʿarī, 17–18). According to al-Ashʿarī, when the Qurʾān states that “eyes do not perceive God” (Q 6:103), it is the sight of the infidels that is meant, for that their hearts are blind (Q 22:46). The Qāḍī is quick to accuse al-Ashʿarī of inventing meanings not found in the Arabic language. Additionally, al-Ashʿarī judges that it would have been inappropriate for Moses, an infallible prophet, to demand that God make Himself visible to him, had it not been possible (al-Ashʿarī, 13–14). Later in the chapter in which the translated passage appears, the Qāḍī raises the objection, which is ignored by al-Ashʿarī, that God answered Moses by saying “You shall not see Me” (*lan tarānī*, Q 7:143), implying neither in the present, nor in the future, that is, *never* (ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ*, 177).

Al-Ashʿarī does not disagree inherently with the Qāḍī about the impossibility of seeing God with the eye in the here and now, but he does believe, as mentioned above, that it is possible in the hereafter, where “radiant faces will be looking toward God” (Q 75:22–3; see al-Ashʿarī, 12–13). Here, too, the Qāḍī objects on the basis that the word *naẓar* in this context does not mean “looking,” but rather *intizār*, indicating the “waiting” for the reward (ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ*, 164). It has to be noted that this objection is also due to the Qāḍī’s belief that *naẓar* denotes “speculative reasoning” to reach the knowledge of God’s existence, which is the first and foremost obligation before any of the five

principles. Thus, if *nazar* were given any properties, other than reasoning, the basis of the Mu‘tazila would be undermined.

An intriguing aspect of the Qāḍī’s line of thought is his subtle, but strict differentiation of the sense of sight from other senses. Against the notion that eyesight is sufficient in processing changes in temperature throughout the day, the Qāḍī argues that this is not possible, since the “nostril” also has to be involved in the process. This rather odd intervention makes a point that is so obvious that one struggles to spot it. By merely looking at the sun and its position in the sky, it is not possible to infer the degree of temperature. Only if either the warm or cold air enters the oral cavity, by breathing in the air through the nose or the mouth, and touches the nasal tissue and the throat, can it be said with certainty that the temperature of the day is warm or cold, increasing or decreasing. This argument further demonstrates the inability of ocular vision to perceive the non-anthropomorphic, visually non-existent nature of beings. The separation of the senses is based on the assumption that each sense fulfills its own limited purpose and that therefore, the senses have to be investigated separately, which is also part and parcel of the very method of the *Commentary*. Here, the Qāḍī first introduces his arguments extracted from *sam‘* (“hearing”), the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth*, initially transmitted orally, that is by way of hearing. Only then does he turn to *‘aql* (“reason”), which describes the operation of the intellect divorced from sense perception, to support his line of proof, beyond the possibilities of the canonical sources, with arguments from metaphysical, philosophical, and linguistic perspectives.

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2 Translation

al-Qāḍī Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa: Ta’līq al-imām Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Abī Hāshim*, ed. Samīr Muṣṭafā Rabāb, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1422/2001, pp. 155–8: “On the rejection of seeing [God]”.

[p. 155] [§ 1.] *Rejecting Vision*

What one must reject about God Most High is that He is seen (*ru’ya*). This is a matter of disagreement between people. In fact, the disagreement in this matter arises only between us and those Ash‘arīs who do not specify how “seeing” occurs. As for the corporealists (*mujassima*), they accept that if God Most High were not a body, it would not be possible to see Him, while we accept that if God Most High were a body, it would be possible to see Him, and talking to them in this matter is pointless.

[§ 2.] *It Is Correct to Prove the Matter by Hearing¹ and Reason*

It is possible to prove this matter by both reason and hearing, because the validity of hearing does not depend on it.² In all matters on which the validity of hearing does not depend, proof by hearing is possible. For that reason, we consider it permissible to prove by hearing that God is living (*ḥayy*), since the validity of hearing does not depend on it. Something that makes this clear is [p. 156] that anyone can know that the world has a wise maker, even if it did not occur to him to consider whether He can be seen or not. For that reason, we do not judge those against us in this matter to be disbelievers, since not knowing that He [God] is not seen does not imply ignorance of His essence or certain of His attributes. For that reason, we consider it possible that the demand of Moses (peace be upon him) in the Qur’ān: “My Lord! Show Yourself to me, so that I may see You” [7:143] was a demand to himself, because the thing that is seen, by virtue of being seen, has no [particular] state or attribute. Accordingly, we do not accuse our shaykh Abū ‘Alī [al-Jubbā’ī, d. 303/916] of ignorance regarding the “comings-to-be” (*akwān*), for saying that they can be perceived by sight.³

1 Reading *bi-l-sam’ wa-l-‘aql* instead of *bi-l-jam’ wa-l-‘aql*.

2 What is meant here is reasoning through hearing (*sam’*) in the sense of the oral/aural transmission (*naql*) of the canonical sources, that is, the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*. See El-Tobgui, 198–9 n62, 339.

3 The *akwān* (“comings-to-be”) theory describes four spatial accidents of substances (atoms or bodies): being in contact (*ijtimā’*), in separation (*iftirāq*), in motion (*ḥaraka*), and in rest (*sukūn*). These “comings-to-be” are deemed non-perceptible by Mu‘tazilite thinkers, including the Qāḍī. See *Sharḥ*, 56.16–57.2.

Having established this matter, then know that he [the Qāḍī], may God have mercy on him, began proving this case by the verse: “Eyes do not perceive Him, but He perceives all eyes. For He is the All-Subtle, the All-Aware” (Q 6:103). What this verse indicates is what has already been proven: that “perception” (*idrāk*), when connected to the eye (*baṣar*), only means “seeing” (*ruʿya*). So it is proven that God Almighty rejects that the eye perceives Him. We find in that praise (*tamadduḥ*) directed at His essence. If the denial [of something] is a praise referring to His essence, the affirmation of [this thing] is a deficiency, and it is not permissible to ascribe deficiencies to God Most High in any way.

And if it is said: “Why did you say: When ‘perception’ is connected with the eye, it can only mean ‘seeing?’”—

[If this is said,] we reply that this is because the seer has no added quality of perceiving because of being a seer. If it [seeing] were a thing added to it [perception], both [perception and seeing] could be separated from each other, because there would be no relation between the two from a rational point of view. But the opposite is known [to be true].

Further, [the verb] *adraka*,⁴ when understood broadly, carries many meanings. It can be used to express “maturity” (*bulūgh*). One says: “the boy *adraka*,” meaning, he reached “the dream.”⁵ It can be used to express “ripeness” (*naḍj*) and “mellowness” (*īmā*). One says: “the fruit *adraka*,” when it is ripe. As for when it is connected to the eye, it only means “seeing,” as we mentioned. The same is the case with [the word] *sukūn* [“tranquility”], which, if connected to “mind” (*nafs*), only means “knowledge” (*ilm*), even if it is possible to derive other meanings.

What we have mentioned demonstrates that there is no difference between saying: “I perceived this person with the eye,” “I saw this person with my eye,” and “I looked at this person with my eye,” to the extent that, if someone were to say: “I perceived with my eyes but I did not see” or “I saw but I did not perceive,” it would be considered contradictory. Among the signs of agreement in the meaning of the two words is that they appear together and disappear together in use. If one of the two words were affirmed and the other denied, the argument would be contradictory. Along the same lines, we know that the meaning of “sitting” (*quʿūd*) and “sitting” (*julūs*) is in agreement, and [the same applies to] other nouns.

4 Arab. *al-idrāk*. Lane, s.v. *dr-k*, gives “to attain, to reach, to overtake, to acquire, to perceive, to attain puberty, to attain ripeness, to attain the proper time, to become mature, to pass away, to become exhausted,” among other meanings.

5 Meaning puberty by way of nocturnal emission.

If it is said: “How is your statement, that among the signs of agreement in the meaning of the two words is that they appear [p. 157] together and disappear together in use, correct? It is known that ‘will’ (*irāda*) and ‘love’ (*maḥabba*) are the same but one of them is used where the other one is not. One says: ‘I love my maid’ and not ‘I want her’”—

[If this is said,] we reply that what we are talking about is when they [the two words] are employed factually, while [in the example] the former [the expression “I love my maid”] is used figuratively. Its actual meaning is, “I want (*uḥibbu*) to have sex with her.” Of course, one could say, “I want (*urīdu*) to have sex with her.”

It is similar with the word *ghāʾit*, which originally means “low-lying ground.” It can then be used figuratively in writing for “[place of] fulfilling one’s need,” and it is not used instead of “the place of tranquility” in writing for “[place of] fulfilling one’s need.” That is because it is used by way of broadening [the sense of the word] and metaphor and not literally, and the same is the case here.

And if it is said: “Do people not say: ‘I perceived with my eye the heat of inclination,’⁶ so how is your statement that ‘perception,’ if it is connected with the eye, only means ‘seeing,’ correct?”—

we answer that this is not in the [Arabic] language at all. Rather, it is something that Ibn Abī Bishr al-Ashʿarī⁷ invented to prove the validity of his doctrine. For it is not found in their [the Arabs’] language, neither in verse⁸ nor in prose.

What clarifies and explains what we have said is that if the preposition “bi-” is prefixed to a noun, it conveys that the noun it precedes is an instrument. For example, one says: “I walked with my legs,” or “I wrote with my pen.” However, the eye is not a tool in the perception of heat, as the nostril is involved in that, and if the eye were a tool, this would not be permissible. Do you not see that when the eye is a tool in seeing, the sense of hearing and other senses cannot be involved? This is necessary to accept in our case.

However, we did not say that if [the word] perception is connected with sight and [then] linked to heat, it can only mean vision, as this would contradict our argument. Instead, we said only that if it is associated with the eye, it only means “seeing.” So this does not apply to what we said.

And if it is said: “Why did you say that the point of this verse is praise?”—

6 Meaning the inclination of the sun, alluding here to the time of the midday (*zuhr*) prayer, when the sun reaches the highest point in the sky, therefore its peak in heat, and the subsequent decline thereafter.

7 Meaning Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī.

8 Reading *manẓūm* instead of *manẓūr*.

we reply that the tenor of the verse requires this, as well as what precedes it and what follows it, because all of it is in praise of God Most High. It makes no sense for the All-Wise to come up with a passage which contains praise and then to mix it with something that is not praise at all. Do you not see that it is not appropriate for one of us to say: so-and-so is devout, pious, generous, on the approved path, black, eats bread, prays at night, and fasts during the day, since him being black and eating bread does not contribute to the praise?

This is demonstrated by the fact that, when the Most High makes it clear that He is different from other types (*ajnās*) of things, by refuting that He has a female companion and children, He also makes it clear that He is different from other essences (*dhawāt*), by not being seen and yet being able to see. Moreover, the Prophet's community have agreed that [p. 158] the [purpose of the] verse is to praise (*tamadduḥ*). There is no discussion about that. The only thing that is discussed is the character of the praise.

[§ 3.] *Views Regarding Praise on Account of Not Being Seen*

Some say that it is praise that the Eternal Almighty is not seen, neither in the here and now nor in the hereafter, in accordance with what we say. Others say that it is praise that He is not seen in this world [but may be seen in the hereafter]. Again others say that it is praise that He is not seen with these [worldly] senses, even though He can be seen with another sense.⁹ It is confirmed that the [purpose of the] verse is to praise, as we have said, and it is not praise other than in the way that we specified.

[§ 4.] *The Praise Is Not [Solely] on Account of [God's] Not Being Seen*

If it is said: "What praise is there in that the Eternal Most High is not seen, [this being something] which He has in common with non-existent things (*ma'dūmāt*), as well as with many of the existent things (*mawjūdāt*)?"—

we reply that praise occurs not only on account of not being seen. Instead, praise occurs on account of His seeing while being invisible. It is not impossible for a thing not to be a praise, and then, by joining something else to it, to become praise. As such, there is no praise in rejecting [God] having a female companion and children alone. However, by the addition that He is Ever-Living and that there is no deficiency in Him, it becomes praise. Likewise, there is no praise in [saying] that He has no beginning, since the non-existent things have that in common with Him. However, it becomes praise by

⁹ Alluding to a spiritual sense beyond the five biological senses. On this sixth, spiritual sense, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 27 (§ 2.1).

joining something else to Him, namely, that He is All-Capable, All-Knowing, Ever-Living, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, Ever-Existing. This is the same in our case.

The conclusion from all this is that praise only occurs when a differentiation (*baynūna*) takes place between Him and other essences. Differentiation only takes place in the way of what we say, because essences are of different kinds. Some of them can see and can be seen, like one of us. Some can neither see, nor be seen, like the non-existent. Some of them can be seen but they cannot see, like inanimate objects. Some of them cannot be seen but they can see like the Eternal Most High, glory to Him. Accordingly, it is correct to praise [Him] by His words “He feeds but is not fed” (Q 6:14).

Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) on Dismissing Sense Perception and on the Eternal Sense

Cornelis van Lit

1 Introduction

Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, d. 428/1037) lived in Bukhara (present-day Uzbekistan) and never traveled further west than Isfahan, but his fame reached far and wide. His *Canon of Medicine* (*al-Qānūn fī l-ṭibb*) remained a standard work in Europe until the dawn of the modern era and his philosophical encyclopedia *The Healing* (*al-Shifāʾ*) exerted great influence over scholastic philosophers and theologians. In the Islamic world, he is known as *al-shaykh al-raʾīs*, “principal shaykh” or “master chief,” and enjoyed an equally influential position for many centuries (Gutas, *Avicenna*; McGinnis).

For Ibn Sīnā, the senses make us decide what to do and what not to do. Every perception we have is translated to a scale of painful to enjoyable. Enjoyable things are sought after, while painful things are avoided. In a way, it is that simple for Ibn Sīnā. Sense perception is thus not about understanding the world around us, at least not fundamentally. Yes, the world around us is a factor in coming to have sense perception, but if we were to receive a similar sense perception without it (say, in a dream), it would not be any less real.

For example, there needs to be a real sugar cube in front of us in order to see and taste one: but encountering one in a dream would give us the same sense of joy. Sense perception, in this philosophical view, is best understood not as the act of seeing (or hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching) something concretely, but as a reading of an instrument. Much like a pilot will look at instruments such as an altimeter and airspeed indicator, so too a soul reads out the external senses to make out if it is steering its body in the right direction. The senses do not perceive, for example, a sugar cube. The eye witnesses a white square and the tongue witnesses something sweet. When we put these perceptions together and reflect on this, especially after encountering it over and over, our mind can classify it as something distinct, label it as “sugar cube,” and consider it to be enjoyable.

The internal faculties are common sense (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*), representation (*al-khayāl*), imagination (*al-mutakhayyila*), estimation (*al-wahm*), and

memory (*al-ḥāfiẓa*) (Rahman, 30–1; cf. Gutas, “Intellect”; Wolfson, esp. 96–7). All ten of the faculties, external and internal, are rooted somewhere in the brain and either accept and process input or store it. Through an intricate collaboration between them, a judgment will come about that is eventually simplified to a consideration of something as desirable or undesirable. The body is then instructed by the soul to move in such a way as to come closer to desirable things and to retreat from or dispel anything undesirable.

How this process exactly works, and what its distinct and essential stages are, was a topic about which Ibn Sīnā changed his mind many times. For example, on the one hand, he knew that some animals do not have all five senses, as ancient literature mentions marine life such as oysters as having only touch. On the other hand, he considered that touch might itself be split up into four distinct senses that measure how hot/cold, dry/moist, hard/soft, and rough/smooth something is. Speaking of touch, is our skin the organ itself or only the medium through which nerves in our flesh receive touch sensation? Ibn Sīnā considered both options, providing an implicit argument for taste as the most intimate of all sense perceptions, as it alone requires direct contact with the object. Similarly, while common sense and representation are distinct in terms of their function, one receiving input and the other retaining it, it may be so that they are physically located within the same part of the brain, thereby being one organ. On the other hand, the one and same faculty of imagination is used for two very different things, either to put images together into new ones when employed in conjunction with representation, or to deliberate over things when it is working together with estimation.

One thing is certain: Ibn Sīnā considered some things far more intensely enjoyable than other things. He offers the example that tasting food is surely superior to merely smelling it, and that we would forego eating something delicious if it allows us to avoid scandal (Ibn Sīnā, *Metaphysics*, 351). The more abstract the perception is, the more enjoyable it can be. The most enjoyable is therefore the most fully abstract of perceptions.

This is actually related to none of the ten previously mentioned faculties, but to something above it, our “rational soul” (*al-naḥs al-nāṭiqā*). As it turns out, this thing defines our personal identity more than anything else, as it is the ultimate thing in charge, the one source to which all other functions and faculties relate back. It may sound like the rational soul is to the faculties what the pilot is to the cockpit instruments, and in a way this is true. However, the rational soul itself also has a capacity to perceive. Yet the kind of thing that it perceives is not sensory stimuli, but intellectual things, notions that are fully devoid of particularization. To develop ourselves into the most perfectly enjoying creatures, we ought to activate this kind of perception as much as possible.

But in order to give our faculty of intellection a chance, we need to satisfy the other faculties and bodily processes. By turning away from our external senses and calming the thoughts that run through our internal faculties, we can fully focus on this highest and most ephemeral kind of perception called “intellection” (*ta‘aqqul*).

There is much discussion in academic literature regarding how intellection works for Ibn Sīnā. The main question is, who actively induces this knowledge? Some scholars interpret Ibn Sīnā to say that intelligibles are offered to the human soul from the supralunar world of intelligibles, and that ultimately we have little agency in it (Davidson, 93). Others maintain that intellection is of our own making, because by thinking through our sense perceptions we are invariably led to intellectual understanding (Gutas, “Empiricism”).

There is, however, an interesting middle case to consider, in which Ibn Sīnā showed himself to be so original that even today we refer to it as a specific argument: namely, the Argument from the Flying Man (see Hasse, 80; Kaukua, *Self-Awareness*, 35; Marmura, 383–95). The argument proposes a thought experiment: imagine yourself without eyesight, without hearing any sounds, and floating so that you are not even touching anything, without trying to receive intelligibles from on high nor trying to remember something. Would you lose your awareness of yourself? The argument in its fullest is found in Ibn Sīnā’s *The Healing*:

We say: one of us should imagine himself created all at once and perfect but with his sight veiled from external things, created floating in the air or a void so that the air resistance does not hit him, requiring him to feel, and that his limbs are separated from each other so that they do not meet or touch each other. He must then reflect whether he affirms the existence of his entity. He will not hesitate in affirming that his entity exists, but with this he will not affirm any limbs, intestines, the heart or brain, or anything external. Rather, he will affirm his entity without affirming for it either length, breadth, or depth. If it were possible for him, in that state, to imagine a hand or some other limb, he would not imagine it as part of his entity or a condition for his entity. You know that what is affirmed is different from what is not affirmed, and what is confirmed is different from what is not confirmed. Hence the entity whose existence he has affirmed is specific to him in the sense that it is he himself, without his body and his limbs which he has not affirmed. Thus, he who takes heed has the means to take heed of the existence of the soul as something different from the body, indeed as different from any body, and to know and be aware of it.

If the argument sounds to you like the *Cogito ergo sum* argument from Descartes (d. 1650 CE), you are not alone. The key sentence from Descartes' *Principia philosophiae* (*Principles of Philosophy*) reads:

We can indeed easily suppose [...] that we ourselves have no hands, or feet, in short, no body; yet we do not on that account suppose that we, who are thinking such things, are nothing: [...] this knowledge, I think, therefore I am, is the first and most certain to be acquired by and present itself to anyone.

DESCARTES, 5

The structure of the thought experiment is the same, down to the dismissal of doubt. But Descartes' argument is unambiguously about the existence of the thinking self, whereas Ibn Sīnā may either be talking about *that* the soul exists or *how* the soul exists (see Adamson and Benevich; Alpina; Kaukua, "Flying"). More importantly, the two philosophers have a completely different understanding of the soul. Ibn Sīnā is here talking about the most singular and abstract part of the soul which, to him, contains the true kernel of the self, that is, the rational soul. But Descartes is much less concerned with these distinctions and thinks in a simple body-soul distinction where all kinds of thinking processes, including imagination, are part of this soul (see Druart; Hasnawi). This also means that the kind of perception that these philosophers wish to point out is vastly different. Descartes is merely pointing out our discursive thinking process. Ibn Sīnā, on the other hand, proposes with this argument a very special kind of perception, unique to the rational soul, best described as self-awareness.

External sensation does not occur in Ibn Sīnā's thought experiment, indeed it never did. The Flying Man's internal faculties are empty, and they never received input from the external faculties. The faculty of intellection is suggested to be neither occupied with input from the human mind, nor from the heavenly, intellectual world. And yet, the faculty of intellection observes *something*. It senses *itself*. Having a very special kind of perception, the faculty of intellection has a special task. Judging from the way Ibn Sīnā incorporates it in the text translated below, we may notice that it is the ultimate decider on how to pursue pleasure and avoid pain. So much of our sense perception is muddled by our daily dealings with worldly affairs. So much of our actions, like eating, turn from means into ends. It is all too easy to forget we are not our body, according to Ibn Sīnā. Ultimately, we are going to leave it behind and have only our faculty of intellection to continue. The self-awareness of our soul brings about the awareness that we as a human species have one foot in the material world and one foot in the immaterial world.

In the text translated for this volume, *The Epistle of the Feast of the Sacrifice* (*al-Risāla al-aḏḥawiyya*), Ibn Sīnā speaks his mind more candidly than in other texts, and without recourse to overly technical-philosophical details. With the Argument from the Flying Man translated already above, the excerpt should provide a good impression of the role of sense perception in Ibn Sīnā's thought, and how he weaved bits of his epistemology, metaphysics, and psychology into a rather novel interpretation of eschatology. I have consulted two modern editions, by Dunyā and Lucchetta. Given the wider availability of Dunyā's edition, the translation refers to page numbers of that edition.

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2 Translation

Ibn Sīnā, *al-Risāla al-aḍḥawiyya fī amr al-maʿād*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā, Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1949, pp. 94–7, 112–25.¹

[p. 94] [§ 1.] Chapter 4: On That Part of a Person Which Is His Stable Being

[§ 1.1 I-ness and Happiness Is Not Based on the Body]

When it happens that a person is reflecting on the thing itself for which it is said "he"² and which he himself calls "I," he imagines it to be his body and his flesh. But when he thinks about it, and considers that if his hand, foot, chest, or any of his visible limbs were not part of his body, this would not make the thing itself void which designates him, and he understands that these parts of his body do not take part in this definition of him. He may reach [in his thinking] the main organs, like the brain, heart, liver, and others, and many of them do not make him any less real upon separation from him, and he could go on for a short or long while. The heart and brain remain [to be considered]. As for the brain, it is possible that a part of it is taken away while the thing itself

1 This corresponds to ed. Lucchetta, 141–51, 190–227.

2 Throughout this translation I shall use "he" when Ibn Sīnā uses a personal pronoun to refer to a human being.

[which he himself calls “I”] remains stable. As for the heart, this is not possible in practice, but hypothetically it holds, as the person may know that his being of which is spoken exists and yet maybe he does not know he has a heart, or how it works, what it is, or where it is. Many people who have never seen a heart draw near to it and believe [a heartbeat] to be a random sound [p. 95] and reckon it to be the stomach. It is impossible that one and the same thing is known and unknown at the same time, or that a part of this one thing takes part in the definition of it but then the thing is understood without the part.

From this it is established and justified that the body in its entirety does not enter into the commonly considered definition of the human being. It could be a locus for it, or a foundation, or a dwelling place, as long as it is considered as something different, outside of its entity. But mankind is intimately familiar with it as its sensations are manifold and its unity with it is so complex that he reckons that he is it. Separating from it would be painful, as separation from many things extrinsic to it would be painful due to its familiarity.

In reality, a person—or the thing considered of the person which encapsulates the notion of identity—is truly its entity of which he is known to be it, which is certainly the soul. Thus, one may rightfully be wary of and anticipate harm and good fortune that reaches himself, but not really the harm and fortune that reaches those things extrinsic to him. [He may be wary] of the anguish and pain, or [he may be anticipating] the joy and delight that he associates with [these extrinsic things], and the pity and hatred, or custom and habit that he has toward it. Good and bad things that befall the body are of this second kind. From this it is clear that when a person says, “Something [p. 96] good or bad has truly befallen me,” it has befallen his soul alone, as this is expressed by a person who is his soul, not the body. Good and bad things that befall his body are extrinsic to him, and he is only associated with it in the above-mentioned manner.

If, then, a person conceives that this being of his has been divested of these bodily dependencies and has lost the kinds of pleasure and pain the person has because of its association with the body, then it is as though he has freed himself of the pleasures and pains existing in his brothers and friends. Then, when the pleasures and pains appropriate for him are bestowed on him, he is at that point truly enjoying pleasure and enduring pain, as he will in the afterlife.

[§ 1.2 The Body’s Supposed Domination over the Soul]

However, the hold his body has over his soul, and his body’s imagination that it is what makes him him, made man forget his soul, surmising that he is something else than he [actually] is. He surmises [the body’s] good fortune and

harm as his own good fortune and his own harm. He surmises that if he is devoid of those good and bad things, he will be completely devoid of good fortune and harm. Thus, he surmises that he will have no bliss as he is without bodily pleasure, and that he will have no misery as he is without bodily pain.

[p. 97] It is not possible to remove this from the minds of people all at once and when beginning to speak. Religious lawmakers were therefore forced to exhort them by reward and dissuade them by punishment,³ describing eschatological bliss as sensory pleasure, and eschatological misery as sensory pain.

The purpose of this chapter is to exonerate wise souls from corruption of this mentioned ill-conceived thought, and from the illusion that—if they cannot be bodies in this form in the next abode, and if their bodies perish—they will change into other things and that it will not be they themselves who will be rewarded and punished. If they do not have sensory pleasures and pains, what, in the next abode, will exhort and dissuade them? For it is as though the person who is rewarded or punished is not among us men, but only a part of us, for example only our hand or our foot is punished or rewarded: how is that a reward or punishment to us? This opinion is very common in the deception of souls.

Since we established that we are our souls, and we argued that our souls remain after our bodies, it is clear that we do not change into anything else in the next life. We are abstracted from the extrinsic things in which we were clothed. In both states we are ourselves: we will not change into something different from what we are now, nor will only a part of who we are now remain. [...]

[p. 112] [§ 2] *Chapter 7: On Explaining the State of the Different Levels of People after Death, Specifying the Afterlife*

[§ 2.1 On Pleasure and Pain]

It is necessary to know that pleasure is not only sensory. Rather, there are also non-sensory pleasures which do not even come close to being sensory. This is likewise the case for pain. Pleasure is the attainment of the agreeable; the agreeable is what contributes to the perfection of the substance of a thing, and the completion of its activity. Thus, the agreeable for the sensory faculty is what perfects the substance of the sensory organ or its activity. The agreeable for the faculty of anger, appetite, imagination, reason, and memory: all of them are similar to that.

3 The notion of *al-tarhīb wa-l-targhīb* has been a staple of popular preaching, which tries to persuade people of doing the right things by reminding them what the consequences of their actions will be in the afterlife (Lange, 84, 94).

Were it not for the considerable length a complete elaboration of this would take, I would have undertaken it. Instead, I offer a general statement: Every faculty of perception is made active or inactive according to a purpose. The thing that joins [p. 113] it and brings it to that purpose, that is the agreeable and enjoyable.

For taste, it is sweetness. This is because it is what nourishes the most of all, and taste is for the sake of nourishment.

For hearing, it is a pleasant, smooth, moderately loud sound, neither too piercing nor too monotone.

For touch, a soothing soft thing touched just for this reason.

The reason for this is that the specific activity of a thing is its essential purpose. The activities of these things come from objects outside of them, such that what does not connect with them, will not be active. But if it connects and does not harm, it is pleasurable and agreeable.

As for true sensory pleasure, it is the sensation of moving toward a natural state, or—if it does better with its contrary—moving away [from it].

Thus, the pleasure of eating and drinking is to move away from hunger and thirst. The pleasure of sex is like the pleasure of tickling. The flow of the liquid through a soft fleshy organ makes it hard because of the force of its flow. This is like a burning sensation and pain, but then it stops suddenly and its hardness becomes soft, thus returning to its state by the moistness of the fluid that is flowing [p. 114] unimpeded through it, and so he senses a pleasure by strength of the member's sensation. This is just like the flow of oil or the moistness of sticky grease close to a festering wound or infected skin which is not able to function afterward.

Furthermore, there is a psychological factor, as the carnal desire for sex adds to this process, which makes the determination in enjoyment even bigger. For this reason, the lover of the pleasure of sexual intercourse wants to have intercourse with whomever delights him the most at that time. Were he to be alone with someone by whom he felt disgusted, he would have an aversion against her and loathe her, while pleasure of intercourse should be the same with either of them. Indeed, it may even be so that the person he feels disgust for is better suited for these purposes, and would cause him more pleasure. If this psychological desire and natural aspiration were not present in animals to have their species continue to exist, it would not be this pleasure itself with which yearning would be instilled or which is the purpose of every state among animals.

As for anger, its pleasure is the attainment of victory, because it is fashioned in animals for the sake of that purpose.

[p. 115] From these simple things one can make pleasurable things. Of these pleasurable things there could be what is pleasurable by association, such as

thinking about victory or pleasure. This is by association between the estimative and imaginative faculty, and the faculty of anger and appetite.

From all of this it is clear that pleasures come from the attainment of what is agreeable, and that what is agreeable are things that make perfect the substance and the activities of something. Thus, pleasures are related to one another, relating the perceiving faculty, agreeable things, perfections, and perceptions.

[§ 2.2 On the Superiority of Disembodied Pleasure over
Sensory Pleasure]

It is well known that the rational soul is perceiving, and that its substance is in itself nobler than the other faculties because it is absolutely simple and completely devoid of matter. What is connected with matter is open to receive composite things and divisions, by reason of matter. [It is also well known that] its perception is nobler than the perception of the senses, because its perception is true, necessary, universal, everlasting, permanent, eternal, and delightful, while the perception of the sense is superficial, particular, and temporary. [It is also well known that] its agreeable perceptions are nobler, [p. 116] because its objects of perception are stable ideas, spiritual forms, the First Cause⁴ for the existence of all things, in His splendor—how great He is!—the archangels, and the realities and entities of the heavenly and earthly bodies.

[It is also well known that] its perfections are nobler than the perfections of the sensory faculties, because its perfections consist of becoming worlds that are free from change and multiplicity, within them a form of the universe, existing abstract from matter.⁵

They are worlds, parallel to the intelligible world and equivalent to it, except that they have been made spiritual, lordly, subtle, and holy. The bodily world, on the other hand, is made sensory, troubled with wickedness, having potentiality and non-existence, thickness, measure.

So how, in the light of these four ideas, does the human soul compare to what is similar to it, like the animal soul?

It is therefore clear that the pleasure related to the human substance, I mean, for his soul, lies in the afterlife. [p. 117] When he becomes perfected, he no longer relates to any of the simple pleasures as they exist in this world of ours. By God! How could the good and the pleasure which is appropriate for

4 A synonym for God favored in philosophical literature of the time.

5 Ibn Sīnā insists that, if we perfect ourselves, we become “worlds.” That is, as we become fully abstract from material affairs, we become an intellect and have direct access to all intelligibles. This is how he says it in *The Healing*: “the perfection proper to it consists in its becoming an intellectual world in which there is impressed the form of the whole” (Ibn Sīnā, *Metaphysics*, 350).

angels stand in comparison with the good and the pleasure which is appropriate for beasts? And human souls are undoubtedly of angelic substance, if they are perfected, for they are intelligible, separated forms.

For our essence is in fact like the form of the angels, except that we do not experience this pleasure, because we are in our bodies. Our bodily faculties have taken mastery over the rational soul, such that the soul has forgotten—while in the body—its pleasures, such that sensation, estimation, anger, and appetite have the upper hand. The proof for that is the diminution of the dominion of the rational soul, to the increase of the dominion of that.

Nevertheless, the existence of that pleasure is necessary, even though we do not sense it while in the body, the reason for this being the body.

Something similar could happen with the sensory faculties too. The foolish could derive pleasure from something sweet, yet still detest it. It is also not impossible that the existence of a pleasure is acknowledged, without picturing what it is and without actually receiving it. [p. 118] Impotent men can acknowledge the existence of the pleasure of sex without receiving it. And the deaf can acknowledge the existence of the pleasure of hearing, and the blind the existence of the pleasure of beautiful sights, without them receiving it. Also, to the extent that the human and animal faculties is attenuated, that pleasure can be sensed and apprehended.

One of the possibilities of the dominion of his rational soul—in this world—over the dominion of the animal faculty is to sense and apprehend something of that [otherworldly] pleasure, incompletely. Those who have it in their disposition and who can back it up with a mastery of their rational faculty over the animal faculty, and inner over outer, such that the animal and the outer do not overrule them, they can perhaps have a piece of that pleasure already in this world. But as for [attaining it] absolutely; there is no possibility for that except in the afterlife.

The afterlife's bliss is obtained after the soul has gotten rid of the body and any trace of nature, abstracting himself from it. The most perfect of all pleasures is to intellectually inquire into the essence of He to whom the most magnificent kingdom belongs, into the spiritual entities who worship Him, into the higher world, [p. 119] and into the obtainment of perfection. Great pleasure comes from that, and the afterlife's misery is opposite to that. So just as that bliss is magnificent, likewise is that misery which is opposite to it very painful.

Even though the soul is in the body—though not as form in matter—it is not the substance of the body that is the obstruction between him and that bliss. Rather, any trace of nature and bodily disposition which are established in him [are obstructions]. For if a bodily disposition is established in the soul, like appetite or anger, or a desire for something undesirable, that is, an earthly

affair, and if they become firmly rooted, they remain fixed in him [the soul] after the separation from the body. This is an impediment for becoming truly perfect and the final bliss. Afterwards, he [the human being] will be as if in a body. To this, some of the sages alluded when they spoke of metempsychosis.

One cannot ascend to that [bliss] except through moderation. The moderate refrains from both extremes, letting himself remain free from both natures. [p. 120] The moderate is therefore not in the hot or cold, except when he does not warm up nor cool down at all, remaining one in meaning. For this reason, they call for moderation.

The soul can free itself from the disgraces of nature, through divine worship and striving to do what the Prophet's law has called him to do, for it is a fortress and garden for the soul, [guarding him] against this danger.

Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) on Visionary Experiences and the Internal and External Senses

Domenico Ingenito

1 Introduction

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) played a major role in the consolidation of the Hellenistic and Islamic theories of sensory perception as key paradigms for the development of Sufi aesthetics during the Seljuq period (Garden, 17–29; Treiger).¹ The *Alchemy of Bliss* (*Kīmīyā-yi sa‘ādat*), in particular, provides, in accessible Persian prose, cohesive descriptions of the relationship between sensory and spiritual experiences.² In this book, al-Ghazālī offers anecdotal, metaphorical, and even poetical illustrations of doctrinal points that influenced major strands of Persian poetry of Sufi inspiration (Hillenbrand, “*Kīmīya-yi sa‘adat*”; Ingenito, 227–31). Scholars in the past have regarded the *Alchemy of Bliss* as merely an abridged translation of al-Ghazālī’s magnum opus in Arabic, the *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyā’ ulūm al-dīn*).³ Even though much of the *Alchemy* relies on materials found in the *Revival*, this book is an original composition that systematizes and clarifies fundamental intellectual and spiritual concerns that occupied al-Ghazālī during the final years of his life (Garden, 130–3). Repeatedly copied and widely circulated over the centuries, al-Ghazālī’s *Alchemy* provided the formative period of Persian literary Sufism with a powerful source of linguistic and intellectual inspiration (Khismatulīn).

As the title suggests, the *Alchemy* is a manual that intends to teach its readers how to achieve spiritual bliss (*sa‘ādat*) in the hereafter. In his elegant yet accessible introduction, al-Ghazālī specifies that what he means by “bliss” is the contemplation, or witnessing (*mushāhada*), of God after the death of the

1 See *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 33, for a biographical note and a description of al-Ghazālī’s major works in Arabic.

2 See Khismatulīn’s and Hillenbrand’s studies for an overview of the *Alchemy*’s structure and contents. A complete English translation of the book was published by Jay R. Crook (2005). Comparison with the original text reveals that almost every page of Crook’s translation contains serious misunderstandings of al-Ghazālī’s medieval Persian syntax.

3 Hillenbrand, “Al-Ghazālī,” 61–2.

body. Even though in many passages al-Ghazālī hastens to stress that the vision of God in the otherworld (*ākhirat*) is a spiritual (and ultimately noetic, that is, intellectual) form of contemplation which does not stem from physical perception, most of his arguments revolve around metaphors involving optical vision and the faculty of the imagination.

One might wonder why a book whose ultimate thematic preoccupation is the condition of a believer's soul in the hereafter relies so heavily on the sensorium for the illustration of its major doctrinal points. In order to respond to this question, we must consider that the *Alchemy* approaches Sufi thought and practices from a predominantly pragmatic perspective. Even when al-Ghazālī spells out some of the most intricate aspects of his theory of the vision of God and the role of the human heart in the conjunction between the internal senses and the invisible realm (see below, § 4), he does so by highlighting the centrality of the role of experience in the believer's quest for the divine presence. In its plain Persian prose, the book exposes sensory experience as a link between the theory and praxis of Sufism in the formative period of its institutionalization (Treiger, 18, 34).

Moreover, the vision of God in the hereafter cannot be achieved without adequately preparing the soul in this world for its afterlife journey. Al-Ghazālī conceives of this spiritual preparation as an alchemical process. He argues that even though the human soul is a celestial substance (akin to the essence of the angels), when a human being comes into existence this precious essence is enmeshed with the body and its base nature and impulses.⁴ By following the "right path" (*sharī'a*) set by prophets and by performing practices that are common among the Sufis, the soul undergoes an alchemical transmutation that allows it to reacquire its original celestial purity.

In the *Alchemy's* introductory praise of God (below, § 1), al-Ghazālī states that when human eyes endeavor to visualize the beauty of the divine Essence, they experience nothing but blinding stupefaction (*khiragī*). According to al-Ghazālī, the senses are both a hindrance and an indispensable tool on the path leading to spiritual knowledge. This paradox sets the tone of the entire book. In fact, human senses can only perceive the visible signs of God's creation (the "wonders of His handicraft," *'ajāyib-i šun'-i ū*). From these, intellectual contemplation causes one to infer the metaphysical origin of all physical beauty.⁵

4 On the alchemy of the senses, see also *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 24 (al-Jildakī) and 33 (§ 6) (al-Ghazālī).

5 Al-Ghazālī's splendid affirmation that God is the only truly existent (*ḥastī-yi ba ḥaqīqat*) while all existing things are nothing but a reflection of His light is a reminder of the fact that general conceptualizations of the so-called doctrine of the "unity of being" later attributed to Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) were already found in Persian texts of Sufi inspiration well before the 7th/13th century (see Griffel, 254–5).

At the same time, al-Ghazālī points out on a number of occasions that abandoning the path of the senses allows Sufi practitioners to enter the invisible world while still alive. This is why, throughout the book, celebrations of the senses and descriptions of suprasensory visionary experiences are often juxtaposed.

As opposed to the feeling of sociopolitical religious urgency that pervades the exordium of the *Revival* (Garden, 105–9), the introductory chapters of the *Alchemy* offer a systematic exposition of metaphysical prolegomena that echo key philosophical and scientific paradigms circulating in the eastern Islamic world during the Seljuq period (Garden, 130–3). In the first one of these “headings” (*‘unwān*), dedicated to the knowledge of the self (*naḥs-i khwīsh*), al-Ghazālī introduces the notion of the heart (§ 2), which is one of his most interesting reconceptualizations of Avicenna’s psychological theory (Treiger, 17–21). In al-Ghazālī’s model, the heart is a spiritual organ that subsumes characteristics and faculties of what the philosophical tradition refers to as the “rational soul” or “intellect.”⁶ The author explains that both the internal and external senses are necessary tools for human beings to grasp the knowledge of God through the contemplation of the world as a divine handicraft. By presenting his own classification of the Avicennian subdivision of the internal senses, with special emphasis on the “common sense” as well as the “retentive” and “compositive” functions of the imagination, al-Ghazālī highlights the central role of the imaginative faculties in his spiritual cardiology.⁷

A few pages later (§ 3), al-Ghazālī combines the image of the spiritual heart as coinciding with the rational soul with the metaphor of the mirror. Through this metaphorical stratagem, he conceives of the soul as an optical device that is capable of exploring both the visible world and the realm of the unseen. This dual articulation is clearly illustrated in the fourth passage (§ 4), which belongs to a section titled “The wonders of the universes of the heart.” In the first part of this passage, al-Ghazālī argues that the spiritual heart is a perceptive device whose outer side features five portals that open onto the physical world through their connection with the five external senses. On the other side, in the inner chamber of the heart, a small aperture communicates with

6 On many occasions, al-Ghazālī points out that nouns such as soul (*naḥs*) and spirit (*rūḥ*) can mean different things according to the semantic contexts in which they are used. In the *Alchemy*, he often specifies that the word heart (*qalb*, in Arabic, *dil*, in Persian) in some cases refers to the physical organ from which the animal vital spirit (also known as *rūḥ*, or *jān*) originates in the body, whereas in other instances (as in this passage) it stands for the rational soul. See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, 3:4–7 [trans. 5–11], for a detailed elaboration on the semantics of these key words that appear in the *Revival*.

7 On the internal senses, see further *ISH*, vol. 2., ch. 18 (Introduction), and *passim*.

the spiritual world, or the realm of the invisible, which is directly connected to the divine knowledge of all things past, present, and future.⁸

Through his spiritual cardiology, al-Ghazālī simplifies the Avicennian theory of the rational soul (whose “practical” and “theoretical” aspects he conflates into one device, capable of processing both sensory perceptions and intellectual operations) in a way that brings both the external and the internal senses to the forefront of his conception of the quest for God as the believer’s primary source of bliss. Throughout the book, al-Ghazālī insists on the necessity of recognizing the divine signs by way of both attentive scrutiny of the wonders of creation and mental contact with the invisible world, which he imagines as a game of reflections between metaphysical mirrors. Al-Ghazālī is adamant about the empirical validity of the visionary experience that the human heart can witness when accessing the invisible: all human beings have a taste of it during sleep, for dreams are nothing but mental images that depict future and otherworldly events when appearing on the mirror-like surface of the heart.

In the second part of the fourth excerpt, al-Ghazālī explains the nature of the invisible realm by relying on the cosmology offered by the Islamic philosophical tradition. He introduces the Qur’ānic notion of the “Preserved Tablet” (*lawḥ-i mahfūz*) which, as the celestial matrix of creation, contains all particulars of past and future events.⁹ This is the cosmic blueprint of creation from which all visionary experiences, including dreams and prophecies, take shape. The sensory boundaries that al-Ghazālī prescribes for the exploration of the “Preserved Tablet” fall within the scope of the human heart as an analogue of Avicenna’s theorization of the rational soul as a cosmological noetic entity. In fact, it has been suggested that al-Ghazālī’s representation of the “Preserved Tablet” is the functional analogue of Avicenna’s soul of the fixed stars, which constantly meditates upon all particulars found on earth (Treiger, 105–7).

In one of the most appealing passages of the *Alchemy* (§ 5), appearing in the introductory chapter dedicated to the knowledge of God, al-Ghazālī traces parallels between the divine design of the cosmos and the physio-psychology

8 Al-Ghazālī provides a detailed illustration of his spiritual cardiology in the 21st book of the *Revival*, titled *Sharḥ ‘ajā’ib al-qalb* (*Explanation of the Marvels of the Heart*). See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, 3:3–70 [trans. Skellie].

9 The epistemological character of the “Preserved Tablet” derives from the conflation of a notion widespread in Semitic languages, which can be traced back to the Babylonian concept of “tablets of fate,” with a probable syntactical misreading of Q 85:22. Among early Qur’ānic commentators, this conflation generated the idea of a correspondence between the expression *lawḥ mahfūz* and the Qur’ānic concept of *unm al-kitāb*, “the matrix of the book,” designating the celestial matrix of the Qur’ān, in which the archetypes of all things past, present, and future are inscribed.

of sensory experiences guiding human intellection and action. He presents different organs of the human body as equivalents of cosmic entities such as the divine Throne (*‘arsh*) and the Pedestal (*kursī*)—mentioned in the Qur’ān, but theorized as celestial spheres already in the epistles of the Brethren of Purity (Griffel, 356 n155). The internal senses, and in particular the retentive imagination, are represented as the microcosmic equivalents of the “Preserved Tablet.”¹⁰

The sixth translated passage is the opening section of a chapter dedicated to the spiritual knowledge of the material world (*dunyā*) as a necessary crossroad in the quest for the divine presence. In this case, too, reliance on the senses constitutes the pivot for al-Ghazālī’s contemplative logic: spiritual cognition (*ma’rifat*; see Ingenito, 277–86) can be acquired through the sensory exploration of the visible world, which is teleologically recognized as the handicraft of God.

Finding balance between teleological aesthetics and inner spiritual insight is a constant leitmotif in the *Alchemy*. One of the key passages (§ 7) in the chapter on knowledge of the “otherworld” (*ākhirat*) describes how manipulation of external sensations—through fasting, meditation, repetition of formulae, etc.—can lead spiritual practitioners to an imaginal contact with the invisible world.¹¹ According to al-Ghazālī, such experiences are similar to what all people witness when dreaming (as illustrated below, § 4). However, a voluntary visionary practice (referred to as *mushāhada*, lit. “witnessing”) involves the internal senses in a more controlled way. In fact, thanks to the intervention of the compositive imagination, as an internal faculty that works in tandem with the heart/rational soul, the practitioner can visualize metaphysical experiences stimulated by their mental contact with the invisible world. In this passage, al-Ghazālī’s language is distinctly Avicennian, as it resonates almost verbatim with passages from Avicenna’s *Book of Science* (*Dānishnāma*), the *Book of Ascension* (*Mī’rājnāma*), and the *Pointers* (*Ishārāt*), especially with regard to the physiological foregrounding of the internal senses theory (Ingenito, 363–6).

10 On the correspondence between the microcosm of the human body and the macrocosm of the universe as a recurrent motif in al-Ghazālī, see Griffel, 269–70.

11 In the context of Islamic eschatology, both Lange (11–12) and Coppens (33) are critical of the forced diachrony that the translation of *ākhirat* as “hereafter” or “afterlife” imposes upon a concept that is fundamentally based on atemporal eschatological representations. The translation upon which both Lange and Coppens agree (albeit for different reasons) is “the otherworld,” which they locate in what Lange refers to as the “everywhen.”

In the *Alchemy's* chapter on music and ecstasy, we find a passage in which al-Ghazālī discusses the permissibility of gazing at beautiful beardless youths as a means to stimulate a connection with the invisible realm, which leads to the contemplation of celestial beauty. The key word here is *shāhid-bāzī*, a form of erotic engagement with youths whose beauty is regarded as an attestation to divine splendor (Ingenito, 224–6). Despite his adamant condemnation of lustful thoughts and acts involving illegitimate objects of desire, al-Ghazālī traces a fine line between sexual impulses and spiritual eroticism. In this case, too, his meditation on the psychology of the connections between external and internal senses constitutes a paramount aspect of his theory of visionary experiences. The excerpt appears at the end of a lengthy discussion of the four situations that make the practice of listening to music for spiritual ends (*samāʿ*) unlawful (*ḥarām*) despite it being permissible (*mubāḥ*) in principle. In the fourth exception that al-Ghazālī brings to the attention of the reader, he argues that, given their sexual excitability, youths should not participate in *samāʿ* sessions that include recitation of erotic poetry. Al-Ghazālī adds that “many men and women” pretend to be Sufis only in order to pursue unlawful sexual acts with younger objects of desire, masquerading their “pimperry” as spiritual engagement (*rūḥbāzī*).

Asserting that no legitimate Sufi master would ever look at youths with lustful intentions, al-Ghazālī concedes that, in some cases, spiritual practitioners might witness visionary experiences during which angelic spirits (*arvāḥ*) appear to them in the shape of young beardless boys (*amrad*) of utmost beauty. Once the visionary experience is over, individuals might seek in the physical world the same kind of beauty that took shape in their mind when accessing the invisible realm. As soon as they cast their eyes on a handsome beardless boy (for example, during a *samāʿ* session) they experience a renewal of their vision by mentally tracing a connection between physical and metaphysical beauty (Ingenito, 403–5).

Al-Ghazālī argues that when such visionary experiences occur, the believer's internal senses convert the highest spiritual contents (*maʿānī*) emanating from the celestial realm into mental images (*ṣuvar*) of extreme beauty. While this excerpt aligns with al-Ghazālī's rhetoric of spiritual sensibility found in all previous passages, its uniqueness derives from the way it combines socio-empirical evidence with the erotic aspect of visionary experience, which is not to be found in his other works, notably including the chapter on music from the *Revival*.

The last series of excerpts belongs to a beautifully written chapter dedicated to the practice of contemplative meditation (*tafakkur*). Formulated on

the model of Avicenna's syllogistic thinking, al-Ghazālī defines contemplative meditation as a rational process whereby beholders actively admire the visible world and recognize its complex perfection as the handicraft of God. These poetically crafted pages expand upon what al-Ghazālī states in the book's prolegomena: attentive contemplation of the created world provides believers with the "indispensable spiritual knowledge" (*ma'rifat*) of the Creator (§ 9). Al-Ghazālī converts the rational foundation of *tafakkur* into an act of sensory exploration of the world and the boundaries of the visible (§§ 10 and 11), including the human body, and the human eye itself (§ 12).

Al-Ghazālī also discusses the interplay between spiritual intellection and sensory perception in the last passage presented in this selection of translated excerpts (§ 13), which belongs to the *Alchemy's* chapter on love. He highlights the noetic origins of his spiritual cardiology and presents the intellect (*'aql*) as a sixth sense, superior to all other senses. After listing the pleasures associated with all five external senses, the author specifies that the intellect is a sense that distinguishes human beings from all other animals and which, similarly to the external senses, can acquire perceptions (*mudrakāt*). Arguing that the intellect experiences a form of pleasure that is hierarchically superior to the five external senses, al-Ghazālī conceives of intellectual meditations on the visible and the invisible—through the senses and beyond sensibility—as the quintessential bliss leading human beings to the contemplation of the divine presence.

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2 Translation

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kimīyā-yi Sa'adat*, ed. Ḥusayn Khadīvjām, 2 vols., Tehran: Shirkat-i 'Ilmī va-Farhangī, 1380/2001, vol. 1, pp. 3–4, 18, 25, 28–9, 53–6, 71–2, 91–2, 487–8, vol. 2, pp. 505, 510, 511, 514, 572.

[§ 1. *All Things Are but the Reflection of God's Light* = Vol. 1, pp. 3–4]

Stupefaction is what all eyes gain from contemplating the beauty of His Essence, and the fruit that all intellects earn from beholding the wonders of His handicraft (*ṣun'*) is necessary spiritual knowledge (*ma'rīfat-i ḍarūrī*). No one shall ever ponder the grandeur of His Essence in order to understand what it is and what it is like. However, no heart shall ever remain unaware of the marvels of His creation for one moment without realizing what its existence is [p. 4] and to whom it belongs, so that all hearts may necessarily recognize that all things (*hama*) are the signs of His power, all things are the lights of His

grandeur, all things are the wonders and the marvels of His wisdom, all things are the reflection of His supreme beauty, all things are from Him, all things belong to Him, and all things indeed *are* Him, as nothing verily exists but He, and the existence of all things is the reflection of the light of His Existence.¹²

[§ 2. *The Heart as an Organ of Inner and Outer Perception* =
Vol. 1, p. 18]

You ought to know that the body is the kingdom of the heart [i.e., the rational soul].¹³ In this kingdom, a number of armies belong to the heart [...]. The heart was created for the sake of the otherworld (*ākhirat*). Its main function is the seeking of bliss, and its bliss lies in the knowledge of God, which it may acquire through knowledge of His handicraft, that is, the entire world. Ultimately, the heart can acquire knowledge of the marvels of the world through the path of the senses. And these senses are tied together through one's physical body. Therefore, knowledge is the [heart's] prey, the senses are its snare, the body is its steed and porter of the snare. This is why the heart requires the body. The body is composed of water, clay, heat, and moisture; hence it[s constitution] is weak and its integrity may be compromised: from within, because of hunger and thirst, and from outside, because of fire, water, or threats posed by enemies and wild animals. [...]

In order to repel threats, the body requires an army: an external one, such as hands, feet, and weapons, and an internal one, such as anger and lust. Since it is not possible for it to procure the food that it cannot see, or repel an enemy that it cannot perceive, it will need perceptions (*idrākāt*). Some of these are external, that is, the five senses, which are the eyes, the nose, the ears, taste, and touch; others are internal, which are five too and are found in the brain: the faculties (*quvvat*) of imagination (*khayāl*), cogitation (*fikr*), recollection (*hifẓ*), memory (*tadhakkur*), and intuition (*tavahhum*).¹⁴

12 Mention of the heart as an organ of spiritual cognition ties in with al-Ghazālī's appropriation of the philosophical concept of the "rational soul." The last sentence offers a clear reference to the beginning of Q 24:35: "God is the light of the heavens and the earth." See Ingenito, 282–6.

13 At the beginning of the introductory chapter on the knowledge of the self, al-Ghazālī specifies that when he talks about the heart in the *Alchemy*, he means the spiritual heart, which corresponds to the human soul (or intellect). Created with the body and attached to it in inexplicable ways, the spiritual heart/rational soul survives the physical heart, which is the seat of the vital spirit (*nafs, jān, or ravān*). In some passages, the author's description of the physical heart has at times confused copyists, editors, and translators (§ 5).

14 For a survey of al-Ghazālī's shifting nomenclature of the internal senses in his works, see Janssens, 40–9.

[§ 3. *The Heart as a Mirror of the Invisible* = Vol. 1, p. 25]

And the heart is like a bright mirror. Reprehensible behavior is like smoke or dullness that causes its surface to go so opaque that, tomorrow [i.e., in the hereafter], being veiled, it will not be able to reflect the divine presence. Good behavior, on the other hand, is like a light that reaches the heart and purifies it from the darkness of all imperfections. [...] At the outset of its creation, the human heart is like iron from which a bright mirror is made—a mirror in which the entire world appears if it is wisely taken care of. Otherwise, it will be entirely covered in rust in such a way that no mirror can ever shine from that iron.¹⁵

[§ 4. *The Heart and the Preserved Tablet: Dreams and Visions* = Vol. 1, pp. 28–9]

All the sciences and wonders that are found in the world are the heart's vocation, and they are all acquired through the path of the five [external] senses. Since this [aspect of the heart] is manifest, everyone knows how to access it. However, what is extraordinary [about the heart] is that inside of it a small window opens onto the celestial world (*malakūt-i āsmān*), whereas its outer side features five gates [i.e., the five senses] opening into the world of sensibilia (*ālam-i maḥsūsāt*), which we call the "physical world," just as the celestial realm is referred to as the "spiritual world." Most people rely only on the sensible physical world [...] and consider that science can be acquired exclusively through the senses, which is a trivially limiting posture. One can scientifically demonstrate that the heart features a small window [opening onto the celestial world] thanks to two pieces of evidence:

The first one is sleep: during sleep, when the path of the senses is closed, the inner window opens up and the realm of the unseen starts appearing from the supernal world and the Preserved Tablet (*lāwḥ-i maḥfūz*).¹⁶ The heart, at that point, starts knowing and seeing what will happen in the future, either clearly, as it will be, or in the guise of images (*mithālī*) that require dream interpretation. It is clear that people often think that one's knowledge is superior during wakefulness. However, when awake, one does not see the unseen [truth about otherworldly realities], which can be apprehended when dreaming and not by the path of the external senses.

While in this book we cannot fully disclose the truth about dreams, it is important to emphasize that the heart resembles a mirror, and the Preserved Tablet is similar to a mirror that contains the forms of all existing things: just

15 In the medieval period, mirrors were often made of metal. See Ingenito, 367–74.

16 The Preserved Tablet, mentioned in Q 85:2, is the celestial blueprint of creation.

as images appearing in a mirror are reflected in another mirror when the latter is held in front of the former, so the images [of all existing things] are reflected from the Preserved Tablet onto the heart. [p. 29] But this can happen only when the heart is clear and free from sensations, as it acquires an affinity with the Preserved Tablet. So long as the heart is occupied by sensations, its affinity with the spiritual world will be hindered. But during sleep, the heart is free from [external] sensations, therefore anything that corresponds to its essence will start appearing from its contemplation of the supernal realm. [...] Nevertheless, even though the senses are shut down because of sleep, the [compositive] imagination (*khayāl*) will be active.¹⁷ This is why whatever the heart sees during sleep will appear in the garb of an imaginary analogue: it will not be clear or fully manifested. [...] But when [the individual] dies, neither the senses nor the imagination remain. At that point [the heart] will see things without veils or imaginings.

The second piece of evidence concerns those who experience the appearance of truthful intuitions (*fīrāsathā*) and suggestions in their hearts by means of inspiration (*ilhām*): rather than stemming from the path of the senses, they appear in the heart without one knowing where they came from.

In sum, one should know that the sciences are not acquired exclusively through the path of sensations and that the heart is not from this world, but from the celestial world. And the senses, which were created for the sake of it[s existence] in this world, are therefore a veil that prevents it from contemplating the celestial world: so long as the heart does not set itself free from them, it will never find a way to access the other world.¹⁸

[§ 5. *The Body as a Sensory Microcosmos of the Celestial World* =
Vol. 1, pp. 53–6]

If you don't know how to rule over your kingdom first, how can you understand the way the King of the universe governs? You first learn about yourself, then about an action of yours. For instance, when you want to write "In the name of God" on a piece of paper, first a desire and an intention appear in you, then

17 In the Avicennian tradition, the compositive imagination is an internal sense that, acting incessantly, produces mental images that are not necessarily found in the external world. Furthermore, the imagination works in conjunction with two other faculties that are known as "estimation" (*vahm*) and "semantic memory" (*hāfiẓa*). See further Ingenito, 329–31, and *passim*.

18 See Ingenito, 412–15, for a comparison between this passage and Avicenna's approach to visionary experiences in the *Pointers*.

something starts moving in your [physical] heart—[that is,]¹⁹ this external heart made of flesh, which is lodged in the left side [of one's chest]—and a subtle body (*jismī laṭīf*) flows from the [physical] heart to the brain. Physicians refer to this subtle body as spirit (*rūḥ*) [i.e., pneuma], and it is the vehicle for all faculties of motion and sensation. This is a spirit that animals too possess and that can decay. The other kind of spirit, which we refer to as the [spiritual] heart, cannot be found in animals and does not perish, for it is the seat of divine knowledge (*ma'rifat-i khudāy*). When this [animal] spirit reaches the brain, the form of “In the name of God” appears in the first storehouse of the brain—which is where the faculty of the retentive imagination (*khayāl*) is found—then the brain leaves a trace on the nerves, which depart from the brain and reach all corners [of the body] and are tied to the fingertips like threads—all of this can be seen on the forearm of a skinny person. The movements of the nerves activate the fingers, which move the pen, the pen moves the ink, then, in accordance with the retentive imagination, the form of “In the name of God” appears on the paper through the aid of the senses, in particular the eyes, for they are necessary to write.

Therefore, just as for the beginning of this action it is necessary that a desire appears in you, the first of all actions [in the universe] is an attribute from among all divine attributes, which is called [divine] will (*irādat*). Just as the first effect of this intention appears in your heart, through which it reaches [p. 54] other locations [of your body], the first effect of the divine will appears in the [celestial] Throne (*'arsh*) before reaching other parts [of the cosmos]. Just as a body as subtle as vapor, called spirit, leaves this trace on the brain through the veins of the heart, there is a subtle substance that God Almighty dispatches from the [celestial] Throne (*'arsh*) to the [celestial] Pedestal (*kursī*), which is called angel (*frīshṭa*), spirit (*rūḥ*), or Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-qudus*).²⁰ Just as the heart influences the brain, and the brain responds to the heart and obeys the ruling of the heart's domain, the effect of the [divine] will reaches the Pedestal from God's Throne, for the Pedestal is beneath the Throne.

And just as the form of “In the name of God,” which corresponds to your intended action, appears in the first storehouse of your brain, on the basis of which action proceeds, the image of anything that is manifested in the world

19 Context and logic suggest that here al-Ghazālī is talking about the physical heart, not its spiritual counterpart. For this reason, I expunged a negation (*nah in dil*) found in Khadīvajam's edition, which unfortunately does not record manuscript variants. My reading is confirmed by a passage from the *Iḥyā'* (3:6 [trans. 11]), wherein al-Ghazālī specifies that the physical heart is to the spiritual heart what the Throne is to God.

20 Also referred to as Isrāfil. See below, footnote 23.

appears first as an image on the Preserved Tablet.²¹ And just as a subtle faculty that is found in the brain moves [all] nerves in order to move the nerves of the hand and fingers to [eventually] move the pen, the subtle substances that depend on the Throne and the Pedestal cause the sky and the celestial bodies (*sitāragān*) to move. And just as the faculty of the brain moves the fingers through their connections with ligaments and nerves, those subtle substances called angelic intellects (*malāyika*) move the natures of the earthly elements (*ṭabāyī-i ummahāt-i ʿālam*), which are called the four elemental qualities (*chahār ṭab*): heat, coldness, moistness, and dryness, thanks to the celestial spheres (*kavākib*) and their connections with the sublunary world (*ʿālam-i suflī*).

Just as the pen spreads and collects the ink so that the form of “In the name of God” may appear, this heat and coldness cause water, earth, and the elements of these compounds to move. And just as the paper absorbs the ink when it scatters or collects on its surface, moistness allows compounds to receive forms, whereas dryness becomes the keeper of such forms, so that they may be kept in place without unraveling. If there were no moistness, [material] compounds would not receive forms, and if there were no dryness, forms would not be kept together.

When the pen is done with its task, it brings its movement to an end [p. 55] and the form of “In the name of God” appears in accordance with the image preserved in the retentive imagination and the aid of the sense of vision. Similarly, when heat and dryness stir the elements of the compounds through the aid of the angelic intellects, the forms of plants and animals of this world appear in accordance with the forms [that are found] on the Preserved Tablet. And just as all workings in the body originate from the heart before spreading to all organs, so the beginning of workings in the physical world appears in the Throne. [...] And know that all of this is the truth, and it is clear to people of sharp insight (*ahl-i baṣīrat*) through exterior unveiling, thus they have understood the true meaning of this: “Indeed God created Adam in His form.”²² [...]

Hence, give thanks to the King who created you and provided you with a king and a kingdom that are testaments to His own kingdom. He made your heart as your Throne, he made the animal spirit, which originates from the heart, as your Isrāfīl,²³ he made your brain as your Pedestal, and out of the

21 Al-Ghazālī ascribes this analogy to the “philosophers” (i.e., Avicenna) in the heading of the 16th discussion of the *Incoherence of the Philosophers*. See al-Ghazālī, *Incoherence*, 153.

22 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 2:315. See further Ingenito, 263–4.

23 Isrāfīl is the angel who is expected to announce the Day of Resurrection with his trumpet. In Islamic eschatology and cosmology, he is considered to be the angel closest to God and His Throne. In the *Alchemy*, al-Ghazālī refers to Isrāfīl as the cosmic “spirit” (but also the

retentive imagination your Preserved Tablet, and out of the eyes and ears and all [p. 56] the senses he made your angels, and out of the vault of the brain, which is the origin of the heart's nerves, he made your sky and stars.

[§ 6. *The Senses Were Created to Acquire the Cognition of God* =
Vol. 1, pp. 71–2]

Know that the world is one of the stations on the religious path, a crossroad for the wayfarer to reach the divine presence, or an adorned market set up in the middle of the desert where travelers collect provisions for their journey. [...] The purpose of this world is [precisely] the provisioning for the supernal realm (*ākhirat*). Even though man, in his original ontogenesis, is a simple and unfinished creation, he is worthy of acquiring perfection by assimilating the form of the celestial realm (*ṣūrat-i malakūt*) into the design of his own heart—so that he may deserve [access to] the divine presence—and eventually find his path toward the contemplation of divine beauty. This is man's ultimate bliss, his Paradise, and this is what he was created for. He will not enjoy such a contemplation unless he opens his eyes to perceive (*idrāk*) that Beauty through the acquisition of spiritual cognition (*ma'rīfat*). And the key to the spiritual cognition of divine beauty (*ma'rīfat-i jamāl-i ilāhiyyat*) is the cognition of the wonders of the divine handicraft (*ma'rīfat-i 'ajāyib-i ṣun'ī ilāhī*). [p. 72] Man's [external and internal] senses are the key to accessing the divine creation, and the [use of the] senses would be impossible without this compounded body (*kalbud-i murakkab*), which is made from water and clay. It is for this reason that [man] fell into this world of water and clay, in order to gather his provisions and grasp the cognition of God Almighty through the key of the cognition of his own self and the cognition of all [worldly] horizons as they are perceived by the senses (*mudrak ast ba ḥavāss*).²⁴

[§ 7. *Visionary Experiences and the Role of the Internal Senses* =
Vol. 1, pp. 91–2]

Those who become absent from themselves and their own sensations (*maḥsūsāt*), and—as it is customary in the beginning of the path of Sufism—delve into their own selves and become immersed in the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God, will have a taste of the otherworld's realities (*aḥvāl-i ākhirat*) through

holy spirit, or simply the “angel” *farīшта*) that mediates between the divine will and the Preserved Tablet.

24 In this context, al-Ghazālī's mention of the “horizons” (*āfāq*) is reminiscent of the opening of Q 41:53 (“We will show Our signs in the horizons and within their souls”), which the author quotes in the opening of the *Alchemy's* prolegomena (1:13).

the [process of] witnessing (*mushāhadat*).²⁵ This is because the animal soul (*rūh-i ḥayvānī*), by going dormant and weakening (even though its physiological balance is not compromised), does not distract them from the truth of their essence. Therefore, their condition will be akin to that of the dead. Anything that to others is unveiled through death will become accessible to them in this world. In most cases, whenever they come back to themselves and to the sensible world, they have no recollection of that experience. However, a trace of it may stay with them: if they witnessed the truth of Paradise, a sense of happiness, comfort, joy, and delight [p. 92] will stay with them. But if Hell was shown to them, they will feel dejected and depressed. And if they recall something, they might talk about it. And if the storehouse of their imagination (*khizāna-yi khayāl*) depicts their recollections (*muḥākātī karda bāshad*), it will appear as an image, for images can be best stored in the memory, so that they may be retrieved.²⁶ The Prophet said: “A bunch of grapes from Paradise was shown to me, and I wanted to bring it to this world.” Do not think that the supernal essence (*ḥaqīqat*) of which the grapes are a [visual] representation can be brought to this world. It is impossible. If it were possible, the Prophet would have brought it here, but what he experienced was a revelation by way of contemplative witnessing (*mushāhada*).²⁷

**[§ 8. Seeing the Invisible through Human Forms of Utmost
Beauty = Vol. 1, pp. 487–8]**

And a further reason [that justifies a spiritual master’s gaze upon youths]—although it rarely occurs—takes place whenever there are people to whom things appear in a way similar to the spiritual inspiration (*hālat*) of the Sufis. It can happen that angelic substances (*javāhir-i malāyika*) and the prophets’ souls are revealed to them in the guise of an image (*mithālī*) [i.e., simulacrum].²⁸ In such circumstances, the revelation takes place in the form of a human being of utmost beauty. Since images necessarily correspond to the reality of the supernal mental contents (*ma’nī*) they represent, whenever that supernal meaning—among all the supernal meanings of the souls—is

25 On *dhikr* and visionary experiences in al-Ghazālī, see Ingenito, 363–4, 467–8.

26 On the Avicennian psychological origins of the process that al-Ghazālī describes in this passage, see Ingenito, 364–8.

27 See also below, § 8. On the early Islamic accounts describing Muḥammad’s “tasting” of Paradise, see Lange, 232–3.

28 Compare with the paragraph on visionary experiences immediately following § 4: “When such is the case, even though these people are awake, the window of the heart opens up and they can see what others see while asleep, and the spirits of the angels (*arvāh-i frīsh-tagān*) will appear to them in beautiful forms” (1:30).

absolutely perfect, the image (*mithāl*) that corresponds to it in the world of forms (*‘ālam-i sūrat*) will also appear as extremely beautiful. Among the Arabs no one was more handsome than Dihya Kalbī, and it was in his form that the Prophet saw the angel Gabriel.²⁹

Therefore, one can receive a mental revelation in the form of a beautiful beardless boy (*amrad*) and will take great pleasure in contemplating him. Whenever the beholder returns from that vision, the supernal meaning [that it represents] will hide again behind the veil, and that person will start longing for the supernal meaning whose image was that form [of the young man]. And it can happen that he or she might not be able to retrieve that supernal meaning again. At that point, if their external eye (*chashm-i zāhir*) falls upon a beautiful form that is similar to that [previous] form [i.e., the beardless boy], the conditions of the previous vision will be revived and the meaning that was lost is now found again, in such a way that they will be overcome by ecstatic pleasure.

Hence, it is permissible to show physical desire for a beautiful face in order to regain such an ecstatic contemplation. And whenever the eyes of someone who is not familiar with such mysteries fall upon the individual who experiences this kind of ecstatic contemplation of beauty, he will think that that person is observing the same [external] attributes that he himself is observing, as he has no idea of those other [inner] attributes [i.e., the connection between the form of the young man and the supernal meanings]. Ultimately, the destiny of the Sufis is particularly dangerous and [p. 488] mysterious. No other practice is subject to so many errors on the path.³⁰

[§ 9. *Spiritual Knowledge Derives from Contemplative
Meditation = Vol. 2, p. 505*]

Know that humankind was created in the bosom of darkness and ignorance. Humans need a light that is capable of bringing them out of darkness, so that they may be aware of themselves, of what they ought to do, and of the direction they are to follow: [Should they strive] toward this world or the supernal realm (*ākhirat*); should they focus on themselves or on the Truth? This [path] cannot be seized without [acquiring] the light of spiritual knowledge

29 Dihya al-Kalbī was the most handsome (and one of the most mysterious) among Muḥammad's Companions. The correspondence between his physical attributes and the manifestation of the angel Gabriel is found in both Bukhārī's and Muslim's collections of *ḥadīths*: "[...] I saw Gabriel (peace be upon him) and I saw Dihya [al-Kalbī] nearest in resemblance to him" (Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-īmān* 271; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-ta'bīr* 33).

30 For a detailed analysis, see Ingenito, 406–8. See also *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 39.

(*maʿrifat*), and the light of spiritual knowledge derives from contemplative meditation (*tafakkur*).³¹

[§ 10. *God's Grandeur Ought to Be Seen in His Handicraft = Vol. 2, p. 510*]

The grandeur of God ought to be sought in the marvels of His handicraft (*ṣunʿ*), for anything that exists is nothing but a light that departs from the lights of His power and grandeur. If one does not have the endurance of staring at the sun, they can endure the vision of the reflection of sunlight upon the ground.

[§ 11. *Contemplative Meditation on the Visible World = Vol. 2, p. 511*]

Therefore, we should confine our focus to the visible world,³² that is, the sky, the sunshine, the moon, the stars, the earth and all that is found upon it, such as mountains and seas, steppes and cities; and anything that is found in the mountains, such as precious gems and minerals, and anything that is found on earth from all kinds of plants to non-human animals, as well as humankind, which is the most wondrous [of all created things]; and anything that is found between the earth and the sky, such as the mist and the rain, snow, hail, thunder and lightning, the rainbow, and all the signs that appear in the air.

[§ 12. *Meditation on the Eye = Vol. 2, p. 514*]

Then meditate on how and to what end each of your organs was created by God. He created the eye from seven layers, in a shape and color of incomparable beauty. He created the eyelids so that they may cleanse its entire surface. He created the eyelashes, straight and dark, to beautify the eye and strengthen the pupils' vision. Whenever the air turns dusty, you let your eyelashes touch each other so that you may see through them while protecting your eyes from dust. And when dirt falls from above, the eyelashes hold it as if they were the hedges of the eye. And what is most wonderful is that even though the pupils are no larger than a few lentils, the image of the sky and the earth's expanse appears in them, for in the instant you open your eyes you can see the entire

31 On contemplative meditation in al-Ghazālī and the later Persian lyric tradition, see Ingenito, 286–95.

32 Here al-Ghazālī presents one's meditation on the visible world as the easiest form of contemplative activity, for "created things," he argues, can be divided into what is known to us and what is not. Among the known things, whatever cannot be witnessed by our senses ("such as the Throne, the Pedestal, angels, demons, fairies, etc.") can hardly become the object of our meditative contemplation.

sky. And many books would not suffice to describe all the marvels of the surface of the eyes and mirrors and all that falsely appears on them.³³

[§ 13. *The Intellect as the Sixth Sense* = Vol. 2, p. 572]

Now you should know that you cannot like or dislike something if you do not develop an awareness of it first. One becomes aware of things through the senses and the intellect. The senses are five, and for each one of them there is a different form of pleasure, which causes one to like things, that is, one's natural disposition is inclined toward them: the pleasure of the sense of vision relates to beautiful forms, greeneries, flowing water, and so on, and this is why one likes them. Ears experience pleasure thanks to beautiful and harmonic sounds, whereas olfaction finds pleasure in pleasant fragrances, taste relates to flavors, touch to what can be touched. All these things are much appreciated, which means that one's nature tends toward them, and all animals experience this.

The sixth sense is something that is found in the [spiritual] heart and is called "intellect" (*'aql*), "inner vision" (*baṣīrat*), or light. Whatever expression you use, it is what distinguishes animals from human beings. It [i.e., the intellect] acquires perceptibles (*mudrakāt*) too, which it enjoys and turns into its object of desire, just as in the case of the other forms of pleasure [mentioned above] that conform to the senses and are desirable to them. This is why the Prophet (peace upon him) said: "Three are the things that I love in the world: women, pleasant fragrances, and the radiance of my eyes during prayer."³⁴ He ranked prayer the highest. Those who are like animals are unaware of their heart and rely on nothing but their senses. They cannot believe that prayer is beautiful and can be loved. Those who are most influenced by the intellect and, as such, are positioned farther from animals, prefer to contemplate with their inner eye the divine presence's splendor, the marvels of His handicraft, and the perfection and majesty of Its essence and attributes, rather than admiring with their outer eye beautiful forms, greeneries, flowing water, and so on, to the point that they will look at the latter [forms] with contempt once the divine presence's splendor is revealed to them.

33 Here al-Ghazālī seems to be referring to Avicenna's intromissionist model of vision, which the Iranian philosopher ardently defends in a chapter in the *Book of Knowledge* (*Dānishnāma*) that opens with a comparison between the eye and mirrors. See Ibn Sīnā, 90–4.

34 See al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, k. 'ishrat al-nisā' 10. See also *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 6 (§ 2.1).

Al-Khāzin al-Baghdādī (d. 741/1340) on the Evil Eye

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

The evil eye (Arab. *al-ʿayn*, Pers. *chishm-i shūr* [“the salty eye”], Turk. *nazar*) is arguably the most famous, or infamous, mode of seeing in the Islamic, and more generally the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean, world.¹ The envious look of the evil eye is held to be the cause of a wide range of misfortunes and illnesses, such as impotence in men, sterility in women, migraine, weight loss, fever, and worse. According to a Moroccan proverb, “the evil eye owns two thirds of the graveyard” (Westermarck, 1:414).

There is no explicit mention of the evil eye in the Qurʾān. Q 68:51 seems to get close: “Those who are ungrateful almost cause you to slip with their glances” (see Abu-Rabia, 245). Other verses castigating people’s envy (*ḥasad*), such as Q 2:109, 4:54, and especially 113:5 (which warns against “the evil of an envier when he envies”), are also discussed by Muslim exegetes in relation to the evil eye. According to Muslim tradition, the Prophet of Islam bluntly stated that “the evil eye is a reality” (*al-ʿayn ḥaqq*), ordering his wife ʿĀisha to use spells against it (al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-Tibb* 35–6). According to a story invoked at the end of the translated excerpt below (§ 3), when the Companion ʿĀmir b. Rabīʿa saw Sahl b. Ḥanīf perform the major ablution (*ghusl*), complimenting him on his delicate white skin, Sahl complained to the Prophet. The Prophet ordered ʿĀmir to perform a minor ablution (*wuḍūʿ*), to relieve the harm suffered by Sahl (Mālik b. Anas, 2:939 [#1679]). Muslim legal scholars of later times sometimes recommended that the person having the evil eye should perform a major ritual ablution, and that the water used in the ablution should be poured over the victim of the evil eye (Szombathy).

In actual practice, a great variety of self-defense devices and strategies can be found all over the Islamic world, including charms and amulets, talismanic shirts (see Nomanbhoy, 174–6), the donning of an inconspicuous outward appearance (especially in the case of children), or the avoidance of bragging. Likewise, in order to undo the effects of the evil eye, numerous

¹ The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant “The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)” (project no. 724951).

ritual techniques are used, such as fumigation, recitation of various formulas, practices involving salt, the giving away of sweets, and spitting (Qamar; Spooner, 315–16).

Although there have always been critics of the belief in the evil eye in the Islamic world, not only texts of magic (e.g., *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, 353–3) affirm its power, but across genres, authors in premodern times took its “reality” for granted (Metzler, 179–204). For example, the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*), writing in fourth/tenth-century Iraq, in one of their philosophical *Epistles*, theorize that an individual soul, by sheer force of looking, can directly affect another person’s soul. “If you look and form an image of the seen [person] in the thinking faculty of the soul,” the Brethren state, “[then] from the soul, there arises a certain something (*badara min al-nafs bādirun*), affecting the soul that is looked at and shaking it up.” As the Brethren declare, “many deny this,” but “it is a thing that is conspicuous and often witnessed, a thing that one hears about all the time” (Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, 4:309–10). Such notions chime with Greek theories of extramissionism: the idea that the eye emits rays that touch the surface of seen objects, leading to visual perception. For example, Ptolemy (d. ca. 168 CE) speaks of a “visual flux” emanating from the eye (Smith, 194–5). In the Muslim *falsafa* tradition, al-Kindī held a similar theory of rays (Daiber, 167). Muslim physicians operating in the Galenic tradition of medicine also admitted the possibility that the evil eye emits a noxious effect. These include Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, d. 428/1037), despite his rejection of the theory of extramissionism in optics (Hasse, 155; Lindberg, 49).

Below follows a translation of a passage from the Qurʾānic commentary of ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Khāzin al-Baghdādī (d. 741/1340) (see also the 1948 German translation by Raimund Köber). As his toponymic al-Baghdādī indicates, al-Khāzin was born in Baghdad (in 678/1279), but later in life he settled in Damascus, where he acquired his epithet, “the collector” (*al-khāzin*). His work of Qurʾānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), *The Choice Interpretations of the Meanings of Revelation* (*Lubāb al-taʾwīl fī maʿānī l-tanzīl*), borrows heavily from Abū Muḥammad al-Baghawī’s (d. 516/1122) *Signposts of Revelation* (*Maʿālim al-tanzīl*), a *tafsīr* work known for including copious narrative material. Al-Khāzin’s reputation in the Islamic world is checkered. For example, the Egyptian scholar Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī (d. 1977), in his *al-Tafsīr wa-l-mufasssīrūn* (*Qurʾānic Exegesis and Exegetes*), criticizes al-Khāzin for drawing on stories of Jewish origin (the so-called *Isrāʾīliyyāt*) as well as for his long-windedness and his habit of omitting information about the channels of transmission of certain sayings and stories (al-Dhahabī, 1:221). However, al-Khāzin’s *tafsīr* has proved popular in regions beyond the Arab world, especially in Muslim Southeast Asia (Riddell, 45–6).

In Q 12:67–8, the prophet Jacob instructs his sons, who are about to set out for a journey to meet their brother Joseph in Egypt, to behave cautiously when arriving at their destination:

He said, “My sons, do not enter by one gate. Enter by various gates. I can avail you nothing against God. Judgement belongs to God alone. I put my trust in Him. Let all the trusting put their trust in Him.” And when they entered as their father had told them, it would have availed them nothing against God. It was simply a need in Jacob’s soul which he satisfied.²

In his commentary, al-Khāzin states that Jacob ordered his sons to use different gates to enter the city in order to reduce harm, should they be assailed by the evil eye. In the discussion that follows, al-Khāzin relies on two earlier commentators, the Syrian al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) and the Egyptian Muḥammad b. Muslim al-Māzarī (d. 530/1135).³ He begins by making short shrift of those denying the reality of the evil eye: they are heretical innovators (*mubtadi‘a*), for belief in the evil eye is both reasonable and true to revelation. Then, al-Khāzin quotes al-Māzarī’s arguments against the explanations of the evil eye by the natural scientists. According to al-Māzarī, the evil eye is an effect created by God, not one that comes about by force of nature (*tabī‘a*), nor by the autonomous actions of the human soul and its faculties. A corollary of this argument is that there is nothing humans can do to avert the evil eye—which, one might add, fits the Qur’ān well: even if Joseph’s brothers had entered the city through different gates, “it would have availed them nothing against God.”

Al-Māzarī, however, does not remain stuck in unqualified occasionalism, that is, the idea that God is the only true, and direct, cause of everything (similarly, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, 130). He grants that it is reasonable to assume that the soul, by way of the evil eye, emits certain subtle particles that settle in the pores of the victim. Then, following His *‘āda* (i.e., His habitual course of action), God creates the detrimental effect in the person afflicted by the evil eye. Al-Māzarī concludes, however, that this is only one of two possible options. The other option is that of the “Followers of the Sunna” (*ahl al-sunna*), who insist that God creates the effects of the evil eye directly and that, therefore, there is no need to speculate about secondary causes. In any case, the

2 Translation by Alan Jones (2007).

3 There are several scholars known by the name al-Māzarī in the 6th/12th century. The most famous of them, the North African Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141), was a jurist. It seems more likely, however, that al-Nawawī relates here the opinion of the Egyptian Muḥammad b. Muslim al-Māzarī, a theologian (*mutakallim*) and an Ash‘arite like al-Nawawī himself.

notion that the evil eye in itself has the power to cause harm, as the natural scientists in the tradition of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' claim, must be rejected.

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2 Translation

‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Khāzin al-Baghdādī, *Lubab al-ta’wīl fī ma‘ānī l-tanzīl*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad ‘Alī Shāhīn, 4 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1425/2004, vol. 2, pp. 540–1.

[§ 1. *The Evil Eye in Muslim Tradition*]

[p. 540] When they departed from Jacob, heading for Egypt, he said to them: "Enter not"—meaning: the city of Cairo (*madīnat Miṣr*)—"by one gate; enter by separate gates." Cairo, at the time, had four gates. Al-Suddī [d. 127/745] commented: "He meant roads not gates, that is, [he wanted them to travel on] separate roads." So, he [Jacob] ordered them [to do so] because he feared the evil eye (*al-‘ayn*) on them: for as sons of a single man, they had [all] been gifted beauty, strength, and tall bodies. He ordered them to separate when entering the city so that the evil eye would not harm them. The evil eye is a reality (*ḥaqq*), as is taught by [the early authorities] Ibn ‘Abbās [d. ca. 68/687], Mujāhid [d. ca. 103/721], Qatāda [d. ca. 117/735], and the majority of exegetes.

Abū Hurayra [d. ca. 58/678] related that the Messenger of God said: "The evil eye is a reality," and al-Bukhārī [d. 256/870] added that he had [also] forbidden tattoos (*washm*). [p. 541] Ibn ‘Abbās related that the Messenger of God said: "The evil eye is a reality, and if something were to prevail over God's destiny (*qadar*), it would be the evil eye. If you want to do a major ablution [to undo the effect of the evil eye], do it!" [The Prophet's wife] ‘Ā'isha is related to have said: "Those having the evil eye (*al-‘ā'in*) were ordered to perform ritual ablution; then the victims of the evil eye (*al-mu'in*) [were ordered] to perform a major ablution." Abū Dāwūd [d. 275/889] listed this tradition [in his *ḥadīth* collection].⁴

Muḥyi l-Dīn al-Nawawī says, following al-Māzarī: "The great majority of scholars accepts the apparent (*zāhir*) meaning of this tradition, stating that the evil eye is a reality. Some innovators, however, refuse to accept it. They are demonstrably wrong: their views are contradictory, do not overturn a single

4 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, k. *al-ṭibb* 15.

truth, and do not invalidate a single proof. It is perfectly reasonable to think that it [the evil eye] exists, and if revelation reports its occurrence, it is mandatory to believe in it and impermissible to make it out for a lie and to refute it. It has been said, however, that one must distinguish between their denial of this [the evil eye] and their denial of what is related about the things of the afterlife.”⁵

[§ 2. *Against the Explanations of Natural Scientists*]

Certain natural scientists, in affirming that the evil eye has an effect, claim that the eyes of [a person casting] the evil eye emit a poisonous energy that afflicts the victims of the evil eye, so that they perish or suffer harm. They state: “This is not impossible, just like it is not impossible that snakes and scorpions emit a poisonous energy that affects the person who has been stung so that he perishes, even if we do not notice it. It is the same with the evil eye.”

Al-Māzarī says: “This [view] is not acceptable. We have demonstrated in our [school’s] works of theology that God is the only [true] agent (*fā’il*), that the doctrine of ‘natures’ is incorrect, and that a created thing cannot do anything to another [in any true sense]. Provided this is correct, what they say is wrong.”

Further, they [the natural scientists] say: “What is emitted by the eye is either a substance (*jawhar*) or an accident (‘*araḍ*’).” It is wrong [to say] that it is an accident, because it [an accident] is intransmissible [from one object to another]. It is also wrong [to say] that it is a substance, because the substances are of the same kind, and one of them is not more likely to corrupt another than the other way round.⁶ So, what they say is wrong.

The most plausible way for those among them who are Muslim consists in saying: “It is not far-fetched to think that the eye of the person having the evil eye emits invisible, subtle particles that reach the victim of the evil eye and settle in his pores. Then, when this happens, God creates perdition [in the afflicted person], just like, by His divine habit, He creates corruption when someone drinks poison. There is no necessity and no nature to which He ties an effect.”

The Followers of the Sunna say it is by virtue of God’s action that the victim of the evil eye suffers harm or perishes when he is looked at by a person having the evil eye. God has made it His habit to create harm when this person [i.e., the caster of the evil eye] meets another person. Are particles involved or not?

5 That is, the denial of the physical afterlife is a graver offense than the denial of the evil eye.

6 The two substances that al-Māzarī talks about here appear to be the light emitted by the eye of the person possessing the evil eye and the light emitted by the eye of the victim of the evil eye. This implies extramissionism.

Both [options] are thinkable. But the question cannot be decided definitively in one way or the other. What must be refuted, however, is the notion that the effect comes from them [the particles]; rather, it must be attributed to God. If Muslim physicians affirm that particles are emitted, they are wrong to affirm this [categorically]; it is merely a possibility.

[§ 3. *Legal Aspects*]

This is what theology has to say about this. As regards jurisprudence, the law stipulates ablution for it on the basis of the story about Sahl b. Ḥanīf, who was struck by the evil eyes while performing lustration, as narrated by Mālik [b. Anas, d. 179/795] in the *K. al-Muwaṭṭaʿ*.⁷ The rules applying to the ablution of the one possessed of the evil eye are mentioned in the *ḥadīth* commentaries and are well-known among the scholars. Let them be looked up there, for here is not the place [to elaborate on them]. God knows best.

⁷ See above, Introduction.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) on the Virtues of the Eye and the Ear

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

The family of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (b. 691/1292, d. 751/1350, henceforth: Ibn al-Qayyim), which hailed from the Ḥawrān region in today's southern Syria, settled in Damascus sometime during the second half of the 7th/13th century.¹ Ibn al-Qayyim's father was the director, or "superintendent" (*qayyim*), of the Jawziyya madrasa, an important center of Ḥanbalī learning in the city, which also functioned as a court of law for the Ḥanbalī chief judge of Damascus.

Ibn al-Qayyim was broadly educated in the religious sciences. From 713/1313 onward, he came under the sway of the famous preacher and anti-speculative theologian Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), "all of whose ideas he can be said to have absorbed and whose work he helped to popularize, while retaining his own personality" (Laoust, 821b). His life-long loyalty to his master's frequently controversial views caused Ibn al-Qayyim some hardship, to the point of being imprisoned in the Damascus citadel and suffering the ignominy of being paraded around town on a camel (al-ʿAsqalānī, 4:22). Unlike Ibn Taymiyya, however, Ibn al-Qayyim was not a public firebrand and troublemaker. Instead, he left a reputation for inward-looking piety and for quiet dedication to proper worship (*ʿibāda*). As his student Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1397) remembered, in prison Ibn al-Qayyim's days were filled with recitation of the Qurʾān and contemplation. "A lot of good things were disclosed to him," Ibn Rajab relates, "and he achieved a great deal of true [mystical] tastes (*adhwāq*) and states (*mawājīd*), so that he came to master the sciences of the people of experiential knowledge and gained access to their secrets; his writings are full of them" (Ibn Rajab, 2:448).

Ibn al-Qayyim left works of legal hermeneutics and practical jurisprudence, theology, ethics and moral psychology, *ḥadīth*, Prophetic medicine, as well as a well-known commentary on the Qurʾān, among others (Krawietz). His *Key*

¹ The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant "The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)" (project no. 724951).

to the Abode of Happiness and the Proclamation to Generate Knowledge and Willpower (*Miftāḥ dār al-sa'āda wa-manshūr wilāyat al-ʿilm wa-l-irāda*), from which several sections are translated below, is a panoramic work full of “musings on phenomena of the physical and animated world, detecting all sorts of hidden wisdoms behind them,” thereby seeking to prove that “God has arranged everything in the best of all manners” (Krawietz, 52–3).

In the translated passages, Ibn al-Qayyim discusses the two senses of vision and hearing. After establishing, first, that the heart is “king,” while the ear is its “messenger” and the eye is its “scout” (§ 1), he proceeds to discussing which of the two sensory organs deserves to be regarded as being nobler (§§ 1–4). In another of his works, the *Badāʾiʿ al-fawāʾid* (*Excellent Wise Sayings*), Ibn al-Qayyim explains that the first to have debated this topic were two scholars from Baghdad: Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), who defended the superiority of hearing,² and Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Anbārī (d. 304/916 or 305/917), who championed seeing (Ibn al-Qayyim, *Badāʾiʿ*, 3:685–6). Houari Touati has suggested that during the third/ninth century, “sight operated an epistemological revolution in the classical Islamic episteme” (Touati, 105),³ and this may well have been the context in which the eye and the ear first “vied for excellence” (*mufāḍala*) in Islamic literature. Henceforth, broadly speaking, scholars committed to the oral/aural transmission of knowledge (*samʿ*) came to argue for the preeminence of hearing over vision, while the proponents of a more disembodied, or bookish, approach to knowledge came to emphasize vision.

However, the issue of how these senses were ranked is far from straightforward, as the history of this debate over the course of Islamic intellectual history has not been charted comprehensively. For example, in the fifth/eleventh century, ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1027) states that the philosophers teach that hearing is superior, because sounds are perceived from all six directions, regardless of whether there is light or darkness. However, as al-Baghdādī relates, “most theologians” think that vision is superior, because by hearing one perceives “only speech and sounds,” while by vision, one perceives “bodies, colors, and all entities (*al-hayāt kulluhā*)” (al-Baghdādī, 10). The famous theologian al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) sides with Ibn Qutayba and the proponents of hearing (al-Juwaynī, 1:28; see below). By contrast, Ibn Ḥazm from Spain

2 There is some confusion about this. In the passage in the *Miftāḥ* that is translated below, Ibn al-Qayyim refers to Ibn Qutayba as the champion of seeing. See below, footnote 15. Most authors, however, agree that Ibn Qutayba had considered hearing to be superior to seeing.

3 See the chapter on al-Jāhīz in *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 7.

(d. 456/1064) judges vision to be the “most eloquent, expressive and efficient” of the four [*sic*] senses (Ibn Ḥazm, 43 [trans. 68–9]; see Puerta-Vílchez, 492–3).

These discussions continued in the following centuries. Around the time of Ibn al-Qayyim, a Persian allegorical “disputation between the ear and the eye” (*Munāẓara-yi sam‘-u baṣar*) was written by Abū l-Majd Muḥammad b. Mas‘ūd Tabrīzī (active ca. 721–3/1321–3) and incorporated in his popular philosophical-scientific anthology, *The Tabrizian Vessel* (*Safīna-yi Tabrīz*).⁴ In the later Persian tradition, the occult philosopher Ibn-i Turka Iṣfahānī (d. 835/1432) likewise composed such an allegorical debate (Ibn-i Turka, 77–85).

Ibn al-Qayyim’s direct source of inspiration for his own conclusion (§ 4), however, is Ibn Taymiyya. After relating the arguments in the debate, Ibn al-Qayyim lifts the “correct opinion” (*al-ṣawāb*)—namely, that both senses can claim excellence, hearing being “more wide-ranging and comprehensive” (*a‘amm wa-ashmal*), sight being “more precise and more complete” (*atamm wa-akmal*)—verbatim from his master (Ibn Taymiyya, 7:324; see also Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārīj*, 2:384; al-Saffārīnī, 1:60). Later authors such as al-Ṣafādī (d. 764/1363) and al-Qārī l-Harawī (d. 1014/1606) were less willing to compromise, both holding that the arguments in favor of hearing are “no doubt stronger” (thus al-Ṣafādī, 16; similarly, al-Qārī l-Harawī, 27–8; see also al-Saffārīnī [d. 1189/1774], 1:61). Al-Ṣafādī, it bears mentioning, expresses himself on the issue in a work extolling the virtues of the blind, written before the advent of sign language in the Near East, a situation that disadvantaged and stigmatized the deaf (Scalenghe, 34).⁵

After Ibn al-Qayyim, the *mufāḍala* between the eye and the ear also appears in al-Zarkashī’s (d. 794/1392) much-used primer in legal hermeneutics, *Luqṭat al-‘ajlān* (*The Catch for the Hasty*), as well as in the multiple commentaries devoted to this work, including those by al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520) and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1332/1914). The two Shāfi‘īs, al-Zarkashī and al-Anṣārī, hold that hearing is superior, attributing the opposite position to “the Ḥanafīs.” Al-Qāsimī, however, pivots to the position of “the Ḥanafīs.”⁶

Another noteworthy aspect of Ibn al-Qayyim’s treatment of the senses in the *Key to the Abode of Happiness* is his notion that next to the outer (*ẓāhir*) visual and auditory senses, there are inner (*bāṭin*) senses of seeing and of hearing. Also Ibn Taymiyya speaks of “inner and outer sensation” (*al-ḥiss al-bāṭin*

4 See *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 13.

5 From the 9th/15th century onward, a sign language was known in the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, where it was used by deaf-mute servants, and sign languages also appear to have existed in the Arab provinces, but from a somewhat later moment in history. See Scalenghe, 45–8.

6 On this triad of authors and texts, see the chapter on al-Zarkashī in *ISH*, vol. 3.

wa-l-zāhīr) (Ibn Taymiyya, 7:324), but Ibn al-Qayyim develops the theme in more depth. His inner senses have nothing to do with the inner senses of Islamic philosophy in the tradition of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, d. 428/1037).⁷ While a direct line connects Ibn Sīnā's inner senses to Aristotle's doctrine of the various faculties of the soul (the *sensus communis*, imagination, memory, and so on; see Wolfson), Ibn al-Qayyim's inner senses derive from other sources. Prominent among these are physiognomy (*fīrāsa*) and mysticism (*taṣawwuf*).⁸

Regarding the "inner sight" gained by the knowledge of physiognomy, Ibn al-Qayyim writes that "in the eye becomes manifest what the heart conceals: love and hatred, friendship and enmity, happiness and sadness, among other things" (*Miftāḥ*, 292). In Ibn al-Qayyim's view, the ability to "read in the eye what is in a person's heart" (*Miftāḥ*, 290), that is, to assay the inner self by means of the careful observation of a person's external appearance, is not per se an occult discipline. In a work on the principles of "ruling in accordance with Sharia" (*al-siyāsa al-shar'īyya*), Ibn al-Qayyim promotes physiognomic vision to the level of one of the essential skills that a judge must possess and cultivate (*Ṭuruq*, 65–166; see Hoyland, 374–6).

Ibn al-Qayyim talks about the more occult, or mystical, dimensions of the inner senses in another of his works, *The Stages of the Wayfarers* (*Madārij al-sālikīn*), in a chapter that deals with the "station of intimacy" (*manzilat al-uns*) between the individual and God (2:381–7). Here, Ibn al-Qayyim explains the concept of spiritual listening (*al-samā' al-rūḥānī*). He states that listening to the Qur'ān affords "a spiritual pleasure (*ladhdha rūḥāniyya*) that touches the heart and the soul and may even spill over to the body." According to Ibn al-Qayyim, the heart has a close connection (*irtibāt*) with the senses, especially to the two senses of hearing and seeing. The senses, therefore, nurture not only the body but also the soul. They capture both exoteric and esoteric forms (*ashbāḥ wa-arwāḥ*). While some people, who in this respect resemble animals, are only able to perceive exoteric forms, others, having cultivated their inner senses, are able to perceive spiritual, esoteric meanings in the phenomenal world. Intriguingly, Ibn al-Qayyim argues that sounds, even ordinary ones, provoke rapture more quickly than visual stimuli.

The last two of the translated passages (§§ 5 and 6) illustrate Ibn al-Qayyim's theodicy, that is, his doctrine that God created the world in the best of all possible ways. The praise of God's wisdom (*ḥikma*) in creating the human body,

7 On the sensorium according to Ibn Sīnā, see *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 22 (Suhrawardī), 29 (Ibn Sīnā), 39 (Sa'dī), and passim.

8 On the mystical inner senses, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 30 (§ 7), and passim.

including the sensory organs, is not unique to Ibn al-Qayyim or his immediate intellectual and religious surrounding. For example, his contemporary, the North Indian Sufi author Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Nakhshabī (d. 751/1350), penned a work called *Juz'iyāt-u kulliyāt* (*The Parts and the Wholes*), in which he discussed 40 body parts, including the eye, nose, ear, and tongue (Nakhshabī, 7–81, 93–103, 112–22, 163–71; see already in al-Ghazālī, 46–9), with the aim of presenting the human body as “a sign of the creator, or rather as a whole *constellation* of signs” (Kugle, 29).⁹

Readers today are likely to find that in Ibn al-Qayyim's discussions of how the senses are designed and function, he tends to reverse cause and effect. For Ibn al-Qayyim, God's wisdom is demonstrated by the fact that the sensory organs are placed in a “noble” part of the human body, that is, the head, “the hermitage of the senses” (*ṣawma'at al-ḥawāss*), and not in other, less noble parts of the body, such as the hands, feet, belly, or back (*Miftāḥ*, 751). Ibn al-Qayyim resolutely refutes the notion that there are more than five senses. The eyes perceive visibles (*mabṣūrāt*), the ears sounds (*aṣwāt*), the nose smells (*rawā'ih*), the tongue tastes (*madhūqāt*), and the skin tactile stimuli (*malmūsāt*). “If there were other things to be sensed,” Ibn al-Qayyim states, “verily He would have given you a sixth sense for it” (*Miftāḥ*, 751).

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[§ 1. *The Heart Rules over the Body*]

[p. 287] The heart is the seat of knowledge, hearing is its messenger (*rasūl*) who brings it [knowledge] to him, and vision is its scout (*ṭalī‘a*).¹⁰ Therefore, it is king over all other limbs [of the body]. It issues orders to them, which they carry out. It directs them and they submit to it obediently, on account of the knowledge that it possesses, but not they. This is why it is their king and their chief of staff (*muṭā‘uhā*).

It is the same with the scholar: he is among the people what the heart is among the parts of the body. The well-being of the parts of the body is on account of the well-being of their king and chief of staff, and their unwellness is on account of his unwellness. This is also the situation of people in regard to their scholars and rulers. As a pious forefather said: “People prosper when two groups prosper, and people decline on account of their decline: the scholars and the rulers.”¹¹ ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak¹² said: “What has ever corrupted religion except kings, evil rabbis, and monks?”¹³

Since hearing and vision enjoy perception to a degree that other parts of the body do not, they are [located] in the noblest part of the human being: that is, the face. They are among the human being’s most excellent parts, limbs, and utilities.

[§ 2. *The Arguments of Those Who Think Hearing Is Better*]

[p. 288] People disagree as to which of the two is better.

One group, including Abū l-Ma‘ālī [al-Juwaynī]¹⁴ and others, says that hearing is better. They argue that this is because, by virtue of it, the felicity of this world and the next is attained, for it [felicity] comes about by following

10 On the senses as the scouts of the heart and the soul, see also *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 7 (§ 7.2), 24 (§ 1).

11 A non-canonical tradition of the Prophet, quoted in Abū Nu‘aym, 4:96 (also 7:5, from Sufyān al-Thawrī [d. 161/778]).

12 A famous learned ascetic of early Islam, d. 181/797.

13 An often-quoted verse; see, e.g., al-Qurṭubī, 8:120.

14 A Shāfi‘ī-Ash‘arī scholar from Persia (d. 478/1085) famous as the Imām al-Ḥaramayn (“Imam of the Two Holy Cities”).

[God's] messengers and accepting their message, and this is known by way of hearing. Those who have no hearing do not know what they [the messengers] have brought.

Also, the most elevated and noblest thing [that exists] is perceived by the ear, that is, the speech of God the Exalted, which is better than [ordinary] speech, just as God is better than His creation.

Also, the sciences are accessed through mutual understanding and conversation, and this only happens by means of hearing.

Also, the object of [auditory] perception is more encompassing than the object of visual perception. For it [the ear] perceives generalities and particulars, manifest and hidden things, present and absent things. The eye only perceives some of the things that are manifest. The ear [by contrast] hears all [kinds of things that can be] known (*yasma'u kulla 'ilmin*). So how does the one compare to the other?

[p. 289] Suppose we were to give two people a task: one of them, to listen to the speech of the Prophet without seeing him in person; the other, seeing, to observe him, although not hearing him due to his deafness. Are the two equal to one another?

Also, those who lose sight lose [their ability to] perceive a portion of the phenomena that are witnessed [in the world], even though they can [still] come to know them by means of them being described [to them], albeit approximately. However, knowledge (*'ilm*) escapes those who lose hearing; they are unable to reach it by means of the sense of vision, not even approximatively.

Also, in the Qur'an, God the Exalted reproaches the unbelievers for their failure to listen more than He reproaches them for their failure to look. In fact, He reproaches them for not looking only *after* [criticizing] their failure to think and listen (*li-'adam al-aql wa-l-sam'*).

Also, the knowledge hearing brings to the heart is not weakened in it [the heart] by dimness, weariness, or tiredness, regardless of quantity and difficulty. [By contrast,] what vision brings to it [the heart] is afflicted by dimness, weakness, and incompleteness. The one who has it [visual knowledge] may be afraid that it will go away, even though it may be irrelevant and insignificant in comparison to [the knowledge earned by] hearing.

[§ 3. *The Arguments of Those Who Think Seeing Is Better*]

Another group [of people], among them Ibn Qutayba,¹⁵ argue that, to the contrary, vision is better. This is because the highest, noblest, and greatest pleasure

¹⁵ Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) was a Sunni polymath active in Iraq. He is considered a major representative of the traditionalism of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a*. Ibn Taymiyya (7:325)

is the contemplation (*naẓar*) of God in the afterworld. This is attained by means of vision. This by itself is enough to prefer it [over hearing].

They say: It [vision] is the heart's frontrunner (*muqaddima*), scout (*ṭalī'a*), and reconnoiterer (*rā'id*). It is located closer to it [the heart] than hearing. Therefore, they [the heart and vision] are often linked in expressions such as the Exalted's injunction: "Reflect, those of you who have [p. 290] eyes (*fa-ṭabirū yā ulī l-abṣār*)" (Q 59:2). Reflection occurs in the heart, and vision occurs in the eye.

The Exalted says: "We turn their hearts and eyes about, just as [We did when] they did not believe in it the first time" (Q 6:110). Note that He does not say: "and their ears"!

The Exalted also says: "It is not the eyes that go blind, but the hearts, which are in their breasts" (Q 22:46).¹⁶

And He says: "They fear a day when hearts and eyes will be turned about" (Q 24:37).

And the Exalted says: "There are hearts on that day that will beat painfully, their looks downcast" (Q 79:8–9).

And the Exalted says: "He knows the treachery of the eyes (*khā'inat al-ʿyun*) and what the breasts conceal" (Q 40:19).

He says about the Prophet: "His heart has not lied [about] what he saw" (Q 53:11). Then He says: "His eye did not swerve nor turn astray" (Q 53:17). This indicates how strongly heart and vision connect and cohere. This is why people read (*yaqra'u*) in the eye what is in a person's heart. People mention this frequently in their poetry and prose. This occurs too often to require [further] explanation here.

From the fact that the heart is the noblest part [of the body], it follows that the thing that is most closely connected to it is better than the rest.

They say: Therefore, the heart trusts it [the eye] in regard to things about which it does not trust hearing. What is more, when it [the heart] is suspicious about something that comes to it from it [the ear], it submits it to the eye, to confirm it [its truth] or reject it. In other words, vision is the arbitrator over it [hearing], [p. 291] and it is trusted above it.

counts him among the proponents of the superiority of hearing, which rings true, given Ibn Qutayba's commitment to the oral/aural transmission of *ḥadīth*. Al-Saffārīnī (1:59), however, follows Ibn al-Qayyim on this point.

16 Note, however, that the preceding sentence in Q 22:46 mentions the ears: "Have they not travelled in the land, so that they have hearts with which they can understand and ears with which they can hear?"

They say: In this vein [there is] the narration related by Aḥmad in his *Musnad*,¹⁷ going back to the Prophet (*marfūʿ*): “The one who is told is unlike the one who witnesses with the eye.”¹⁸

They say: Therefore, God the Exalted told Moses that his people would fall into temptation and worship the calf after [he had left them]. But that which transpired later, when he [Moses] saw it with his own eyes, namely, that he [Moses] threw away the tablets and broke them (Q 7:150), did not yet come to pass; for eye-witnessing is more powerful than hearing an oral report.

They say: This is [why] Abraham, God’s Intimate, asked his Lord, namely, to show him how He gives life to the dead (Q 2:260). He knew this already [i.e., that God could do this] because God had told him, but he wanted [it confirmed by] the best station (*afḍal al-manāzil*), which is the certainty of the heart (*ṭumaʾnīnat al-qalb*).

They say: There are three stages (*marātib*) toward certainty: first of all, hearing; secondly: seeing. This stage is called “the essence [lit. ‘eye’] of certainty” (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*). It is better and more complete than the first stage.

[p. 292] They say: Further, the eye transports [things] to the heart, and [also] transports [things] away from it. For the eye is the mirror of the heart. In it [the eye] becomes manifest what it [the heart] conceals: love and hatred, friendship and enmity, happiness and sadness, among other things. The ear, however, does not transport anything away from the heart at all. Its function is only to connect [things] to it. That is all. So, the eye is more intimately connected to it [the heart].

[§ 4. *Ibn al-Qayyim’s Opinion*]

The correct opinion (*al-ṣawāb*) is that both have a special quality that elevates the one over the other. The objects of hearing are more wide-ranging and comprehensive (*aʿamm wa-ashmal*). The objects of seeing are more precise and more complete (*atamm wa-akmal*). So, while hearing possesses generality and comprehensiveness (*al-ʿumūm wa-l-shumūl*), seeing possesses conspicuousness (*zuhūr*), precision, and completeness of perception.

The pleasure of the inhabitants of Paradise is twofold: one, they look at God; two, they hear His speech and His words. As is related by ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad in *al-Sunna*¹⁹ and by others: “On the Day of Resurrection, when people hear the Qurʾān from the Merciful, it is as if they had never heard it before.” [p. 293]

17 The *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855).

18 Arab. *Laysa l-mukhbar ka-l-muʿayin*. See Ibn Ḥanbal, 1:215, 271: *laysa l-khabar ka-l-muʿayana*.

19 See ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥanbal, 1:147–8 (#123). ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad (d. 290/903) was the son of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, whose literary work, including Aḥmad’s famous *al-Musnad*, he helped spread.

It is known that nothing resembles the way in which He addresses them and talks to them, as [is related] in al-Tirmidhī²⁰ and other works. Nothing is more pleasing to them than this. Therefore, when [in the Qurʾān] the Exalted issues threats against His enemies, He reminds them that He will not speak to them, in addition to warning them that He will be separated from them by a veil, and that they will be unable to see Him. For [hearing] His speech and seeing Him are the greatest pleasures of the inhabitants of Paradise. And God knows best.

[§ 5. *God's Wisdom in Creating the Eye*]

[p. 542] Consider how the head has been made. [Consider] the many bones in it. It is said that there are 55, all with different forms, measurements, and uses. [Consider] how the Exalted has placed it [the head] on top of the body, sitting on top of it like a rider on his riding animal. [p. 543] Now, because the head is placed on top of the body, He put the five senses and all the organs of perception in it: hearing, vision, olfaction, taste, and touch.

He placed the sense of sight in its front, so that it would be like a scout, guardian (*ḥaras*), and explorer (*kāshif*) for the body. He provided each eye with seven layers (*ṭabaqāt*). Each layer is different and has a special quality and size. If one of these seven layers were lost, or if it lost its shape or were displaced, the eyes would become incapable of vision.

Next, the Exalted put in the center of these seven layers a curious disk, that is, the pupil (*insān al-ʿayn*), which is as big as a lentil. With it, people see what is between the eastern and the western horizons, between the earth and the sky. He put it in the same relation to the eye as the heart to the body parts: it rules over it. Those seven layers, the eyelids, and the eyelashes, are its servants, chamberlains, and guardians. How full of blessings is God, the best of all creators!

Look how beautiful He made the form, shape, and size of the eyes. Then He beautified them with the eyelids, to serve as cover for them, as a veil, protection, and embellishment. They keep irritation, specks, and dust away from them [the eyes]. They shelter them from biting cold and heat. Next, [p. 544] at the fringes of the eyelids, He planted the lashes, in order to beautify them, but also for other purposes, beyond beautification. Then He consigned to them [the eyes] that beacon of perception (*al-nūr al-bāṣir*), that brilliant light (*al-dawʿ al-bāhir*), which pierces what is between the sky and the earth, and then pierces the sky, passing beyond to the vision of the stars above. He has

20 A *ḥadīth* scholar (d. 279/892) and compiler of one of the six “canonical” books of *ḥadīth* in the Sunni tradition.

consigned this astonishing secret (*al-sirr al-ʿajīb*) in this small body: in it is imprinted the image of the heavens, despite their vastness and remoteness.

[§ 6. *God's Wisdom in Creating the Ear*]

And He gave humankind the ear. He created it in the most beautiful way, such that it is perfectly efficient in achieving its goal. He made it hollow like a conch, so that it can collect the sounds and transport them to the inner ear, and so that people feel insects crawling [into in it] and can quickly remove them. He made folds in it, cavities and crooked angles that catch the air and the incoming sounds, taming their shrillness and conveying them to the inner ear.

There is also wisdom in this insofar as insects (*ḥayawān*) have a long way to go [before they reach the inner ear]. Before they even get to the inner ear, people wake up and are alerted, and fetch them. And there are also other aspects of wisdom in this.

Further, the Creator's wisdom implied that He should make the liquid of the ear extremely bitter, so that insects do not pass through it to penetrate the inside of the ear. They are tricked into retreating as soon as they approach it. [Likewise,] He made the water of the eye salty to preserve it. For the eye is a chunk of fat that can rot. The saltiness of its water serves to protect and preserve it.

PART 5

Spiritual and Mystical Perspectives



Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) on Listening to Music

Ines Weinrich

1 Introduction

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī was born most probably in 448/1056–7 in Tabaran in the Tus district in Khurasan, close to Mashhad in modern Iran (Griffel, 23–5). He received his early education in Tus, and then went on to study at the Nizāmiyya madrasa in Nishapur with the renowned theologian and jurist al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). In 484/1091, the Seljuq grand-vizier Nizām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092) appointed al-Ghazālī as a teacher to the famous Nizāmiyya madrasa in Baghdad. But after only four and a half years, in 488/1095, he gave up this prestigious position and devoted himself to travel and study. This decision came after a series of political turmoil following the sudden deaths of Nizām al-Mulk and the Seljuq sultan Malikshāh in 485/1092 and wars of succession between members of the Seljuq sultanate and the Abbasid caliphate, in which al-Ghazālī became actively involved. His travels brought him to Damascus, Jerusalem, Hebron, and the Hijaz, and later back to Baghdad before he returned to Tus. All that time he continued to teach at small schools financed by private donations. In Tus, he himself founded a private school and a Sufi convent (*khānqāh*). However, in 499/1106 he returned to teaching at the Nizāmiyya madrasa in Nishapur. He continued teaching in Nishapur and Tus until his death in 505/1111 (Griffel, 19–59).

Al-Ghazālī's written works cover law, philosophy, logic, theology, and mysticism. His most widely read work is his voluminous *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*). The title is indicative of al-Ghazālī's claim to be a "reviver" (*muḥyī*) of religion who would, according to a Prophetic *ḥadīth*, appear every new century, in this case following the turn of the sixth century of the Islamic calendar (Griffel, 25). His departure from Baghdad and the Nizāmiyya came after a period of studying Sufi writings and a newly developed interest in the hereafter and the way to gain felicity (*sa'āda*) in the next world (Griffel, 42, 67). Such an interest is reflected in the *Iḥyā'*, which he described as "the science of the path to the Hereafter" (*'ilm ṭarīq al-ākḥira*) (Garden, 109–10; Griffel, 48). It should be stressed, however, that al-Ghazālī's decision to leave his position did not lead to a life in seclusion, but instead to his actively propagandizing for the religious agenda that he developed in the *Iḥyā'*. This included

the authoring of several other books, among them his so-called autobiography, *The Deliverance from Error* (*al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*), which was written to promote and defend the *Iḥyāʾ* (Garden, 10–11, 143–68).

Al-Ghazālī conceived the *Iḥyāʾ* as a guide for how to live a good life. It is not solely a philosophical, mystical, or legal work, but combines aspects from all three branches. The *Iḥyāʾ* is divided into four parts, with each part consisting of ten books. The first part deals with “acts of worship” (*ibādāt*), covering obligatory rites and supererogatory devotional acts. The second part deals with “customs” (*ādāt*), covering such diverse acts as eating, traveling, and marriage. The third part treats “things that lead to perdition” (*muhlikāt*) and examines disciplining the soul and how to deal with negative emotions and qualities. The fourth part treats “things that lead to salvation” (*munjiyāt*) and examines desired ethical and religious behavior (al-Ghazālī, 119–83; Garden, 63–102; Griffel, 48). The content and arrangement of the *Iḥyāʾ* exhibit al-Ghazālī’s interest in showing believers the way to a life that is rewarded with salvation (*najāt*). As he maintains, such a path not merely means following the legal rules but requires constant engagement in acts that draw the believer near to God, and reflection on one’s actions and emotions (e.g., al-Ghazālī, 139).

The passage translated below comes from one of the books in the *Iḥyāʾ*’s second part (on “customs”) titled the “Book on the Etiquette of Listening and Ecstasy” (*Kitāb Ādāb al-samāʿ wa-l-wajd*). Al-Ghazālī here uses the word *samāʿ* (lit. “listening”): a term that, in a general sense, metonymically designates what is listened to (i.e., music, for example), and in a specific sense refers to the Sufi practice of spiritual audition, in which participants listen to sung poetry in spiritual gatherings. Al-Ghazālī applies the term in both senses. That he uses *samāʿ* instead of *mūsīqī* (“music”) reflects the differentiated terminology for the different fields of music at his time. In the classical division of the sciences, music belonged to the mathematical sciences, and more precisely to the so-called quadrivium, comprised of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. This field of music, the speculative music theory (*musica speculativa*) devoted to the division of strings and the numerical relations of intervals, was referred to as *mūsīqī*: a term that al-Ghazālī does not use. Instead, he employs the terms for practiced music (*musica practica*), namely, *samāʿ* and *ghināʾ* (“singing”), or he mentions specific musical genres.

The *Kitāb Ādāb al-samāʿ wa-l-wajd* is divided into two parts. The first part analyzes music and singing in a systematic approach and defines their place in social life. As customary in the science of music,¹ al-Ghazālī divides sounds into “inanimate” and “animate,” based on their sources of origination, thereby

1 See, e.g., *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 18 (§ 4).

covering organology and animal and human voices. He divides animate sounds into “measured” and “unmeasured,” and furthermore “measured” into sounds that are produced with and without words. He thus reaches his main focus, sung poetry: that is, meaningful, measured sounds that are articulated with a beautiful voice. The book’s second part treats the effects of listening and the behavioral norms for listeners, mainly focusing on listening in the Sufi context. This part explains how the different stages (*aḥwāl*) of understanding lead to ecstasy (*wajd*), and gives concrete guidance for spiritual auditions, ranging from the choice of time, place, and company, to concrete behavior like dance movements or shouting that might disturb other attendees.

The translated passage is from the book’s first part and discusses the general context of social interaction with music. The passage is embedded in al-Ghazālī’s analysis of the different components of singing (*ghināʾ*) and focuses on the impact that different musical modes have on listeners, both human and animal alike. The author discusses seven occasions for listening to singing, where the musical framework should be chosen according to the effect that is required in each occasion. As a jurist, al-Ghazālī was well aware of the controversies surrounding the Sufi practices of *samāʾ*, as well as the questions of listening to music more generally, and he repeatedly engages with the prevailing juridical opinions on such matter. However, the book’s argument should not be reduced to the question of permissibility. Al-Ghazālī’s innovation is in demonstrating how to exploit the impact of musical modes on the human soul and body in the service of religion.

In discussing the effect of musical modes (*ṭuruq*, lit. “ways”), al-Ghazālī incorporates late antique musical philosophy and the theory of *ethos*, according to which specific musical modes and sound properties reflect and evoke specific ethical and emotional states in the listener. Al-Ghazālī is neither the first nor the only Muslim author to engage with the affective impact of music (Weinrich, 42–58). The theory of *ethos* was well-known and circulated in theoretical music writing, as well as in the very popular genre of “anecdotes of the philosophers” (*nawādir al-falāsifa*), or collections of wise sayings. The initial phase of this genre comprised Arabic translations from Greek and Middle Persian, followed by Arabic original compositions and compilations that were based on these translations. The earliest known examples in Arabic are the *Kitāb ʿUnṣur al-mūsīqī* (*The Nature of Music*), compiled most probably by Paul of Aegina (d. after 642 CE), and a collection by Ḥunayn b. Iṣḥāq (d. 873 CE) (Gutas, 466; Kazemi). Regarding his musical terminology, al-Ghazālī follows al-Kindī (d. ca. 256/870) and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ (fourth/tenth century), as well as the Iraqī-Syrian school of describing the melodic-rhythmical qualities of a musical mode (Neubauer, 388–9; Weinrich, 59–64). Al-Ghazālī draws on

these well-known theories without necessarily explaining them to his reader. He takes no interest in speculative classificatory systems that affiliate musical modes with physical elements, scents, or the zodiac as does al-Kindī, nor in practiced music like al-Fārābī (d. 339/950).² Rather, he draws from the above-described wisdom literature and early Sufi writings, which he abundantly quotes in the second part of the *Kitāb Ādāb al-samā' wa-l-wajd*.

Among the criteria for the correct application of music, al-Ghazālī considers the correct application of the musical modes, since these move the soul in a predetermined scheme and inspire certain actions. To make music means to work with the souls of the listeners, as the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' had described a century before al-Ghazālī (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', 6–7, 76–7). Applied correctly, listening to music can thus guide people in two positive directions: inciting them to do what is right or discouraging them from doing wrong. At the end of the book, al-Ghazālī classifies listening to music into four of the five juridical qualifications of human acts, namely, *ḥarām* (“forbidden”), *makrūh* (“reprehensible”), *mubāḥ* (“licit,” or “neutral”), and *mustaḥabb* (“commendable”). The translated passage covers, on the one hand, occasions in which music occurs in a legally neutral way, entailing neither punishment nor reward, such as during weddings or warfare. On the other hand, the author points out situations in which music may be applied in a religiously desirable way, drawing the believer nearer to God. Such situations by no means pertain only to Sufi audition. They include, for instance, singing to stimulate longing for Mecca in someone who may leave for the Ḥajj.

Focussing on the religious channeling of sensual experience toward an interaction with the Divine, al-Ghazālī's most interesting statement regards the musical modes which evoke sorrow. Sorrow is not conceived as a negative emotion but as an inner state that leads to self-reflection and contemplation about the believer's relation to God. Combined with repentance and God's forgiveness (*ʿafw*), the evoked state of sorrow gains a transformative momentum. In his description of “praiseworthy sorrow,” al-Ghazālī shows how sense perception—here, specifically the sense of hearing—can be applied on the path to salvation (*najāt*). He does not depict such a path in detail; rather, he refers to believers' familiar experiences. The key issue lies in the analogy to preachers (*wāʿiẓ*, pl. *wuʿāẓ*) who would insert poetry into their admonition and weep (Ibn Jubayr, 199; Weinrich, 39–41; al-Zabīdī, 489). Such behavior was expected to affect an emotional state in listeners that would lead to their repentance and pleas for forgiveness. Moreover, the sorrow-evoking modes are those that “soften the heart.” This expression evokes the Qurʾānic image

2 On al-Kindī, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 17.

of the “hardened heart” that is incapable of receiving the divine message (e.g., Q 39:22, 57:66). The example of the preacher and the image of the softened heart refer to listeners’ previous knowledge and everyday experiences.

Defining “praiseworthy sorrow” as the sorrow about one’s own shortcomings, which is stimulated by listening to music and verses that soften the heart and evoke sorrow, al-Ghazālī advances listening as a tool for mediating between the transcendent and the believer. This sets in motion a process that encompasses sorrow, confession, repentance, and—given God’s mercy—forgiveness. Listening is thus conceptualized as learned behavior that works in an interplay of internalized theological proposition, affective theory, and social practice. According to al-Ghazālī, listening offers insight and pleasure to Sufis, while also demanding their constant self-conditioning and training. However, the benefits of evoking sorrow are available also to the less-experienced listener, for instance in preaching or mourning assemblies. In addition to listening as a Sufi practice, al-Ghazālī here describes it as a path to felicity in the hereafter for the average believer.

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2 Translation

Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, 16 parts in 6 vols., [Cairo:] Dār al-Sha'b, n.d., part 6, pp. 1131–40 (= photomechanical reprint of Cairo: Lajnat Nashr al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, 1356–7/1937–8, vol. 2, pp. 1137–46).

[p. 1131] [§ 1.] *The Examination [of Singing] from the Angle That It Moves the Heart and Stirs What Preponderates in It*

I say: To God belongs a secret regarding the correlation between measured melodies (*naghāmāt mawzūna*) and souls, such that [melodies] have a remarkable effect on the soul. Some songs cause joy and some cause sorrow; some put to sleep and some cause laughter and delight; and some bring forth movements of the limbs according to their beat, with the hand, the leg, and the head. And one should not think that this is caused by understanding the poetry's meaning. Rather, it happens through the strings, such that it is said, "He who is not moved by spring and its flowers, or by the lute ('ūd) and its strings: the balance of elements in his body is spoiled (*fāsīdu l-mizāj*),³ and there is no remedy for

3 In humoral pathology, *mizāj* designates the balance of elements within the body or temperament. According to the humoral pathology, the body is composed of four humors (blood,

him.” For how could the impact be caused by understanding the meaning [of the lyrics], when it can be observed [p. 1132] with the little boy in his cradle? A beautiful voice will make him stop crying and be calm, since his soul turns its attention away from what makes him cry, and toward the voice.

And the camel, phlegmatic by nature, is deeply stimulated by the caravan driver’s song, such that it no longer feels its heavy load, and the vigor produced by listening makes long distances [appear] short. This arises from the vigor that makes [the camel] intoxicated and bewildered. You can see the camels, when the endless desert stretches before them, how they get exhausted and wearied under the weight of their load: yet when they hear the song of the camel driver, they stretch their necks and turn their attention toward the singer with ears erect, and their pace gets faster, until the load swings to and fro on them. [...]

Therefore: the impact of listening is palpable in the heart. The one who is not moved through listening is defective, lacking equilibrium, and is far away from any spirituality. He has more roughness and thickness in his temperament (*tabʿ*) than camels and birds, in fact more than most animals, as all animals are impacted by measured melodies. This is why the birds used to stop above David’s⁴ head (peace be upon him): namely, to listen to his voice.

Howsoever listening’s impact on hearts is judged, one may not rule on this matter in an absolute manner, regarding it as either [totally] allowed or forbidden. Rather, the ruling depends on the conditions and the persons, as well as on the different musical modes (*turuq al-naghamāt*). [p. 1133] Ultimately, the verdict depends on [what is inside] the heart. Abū Sulaymān [al-Dārānī]⁵ said, “Listening does not place into the heart what is not in it, but it moves what is already in it.”

The chanting of rhymed, measured words is customary in certain situations for certain purposes, which are each linked to their [i.e., the rhymed, measured words’] effects on the heart. These are seven occasions:

[§ 2.] *First: the Singing of Pilgrims*

For they, before their departure, move about in the land with drum (*ṭabl*) and flute (*shāhīn*) and singing. This is licit, because they sing poetry that describes the Kaʿba, the Maqām [Ibrāhīm], the Ḥatīm, the Zamzam well, and other pilgrimage sites, as well as the desert and similar things. The impact of their

phlegm, yellow bile, black bile), associated with specific qualities (cold, humid, dry, hot). These elements need to be in balance (equilibrium), which can be influenced, for instance, by food or music. Note that the state of equilibrium is a precondition for spirituality and that the temperament shapes the sense perception.

4 David is famous in all three monotheistic traditions for his beautiful singing.

5 Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. ca. 215/830) was an early mystic whose sayings were transmitted by his disciple Aḥmad b. Abī l-Ḥawārī (d. 230/844–5).

singing lies in the incitement of longing for the Ḥajj to the House of God the Exalted, and in fueling the fire of longing if longing is already there. Longing then sets in, or [the impact lies] in stimulating longing and triggering it, if it has not yet set in. And if the Ḥajj is a means to draw near to God, and longing for it is praiseworthy, then stimulation [of such longing] with any means is praiseworthy. Just as it is admissible for the preacher to insert verses into his sermon and to adorn it with rhyme, and thereby to stimulate longing for the Ḥajj through the description of the House and the pilgrimage sites, as well as by describing the reward for performing the Ḥajj, so it is allowed for others to perform verses. Because when a meter is added to rhyme, the speech becomes more effective in the heart. And if one adds a beautiful voice and a measured melody, the effect becomes enhanced. And if one adds a drum and flute and rhythmic accompaniment, the impact becomes even stronger. All this is admissible as long as one does not add reed instruments and strings, which are the insignia of evil.⁶

Yes, but if the target of such stimulation is someone who is not permitted to leave for pilgrimage—for instance, someone for whom the obligation of the Ḥajj does not apply, or someone whose parents do not allow him to leave and therefore is forbidden to leave—then it is forbidden to stimulate longing for leaving through listening [to the singing], as well as to listen to any speech that incites longing to leave, since stimulating longing for the forbidden is itself forbidden. The same applies when travel is unsafe and danger is predominant. In such cases, it is not admissible to move hearts and arouse longing.

[§ 3.] *Second: What Is Customary before Military Expeditions for Inciting People to Leave for a Raid*

Like for the Ḥajj, this is licit, too. However, their poetry and the musical modes of their melodies should be different from the pilgrims' poetry and the musical modes of their melodies. For, the stimulation to call to a raid happens through stirring courage and inciting ire and anger against the unbelievers, as well as through making courage appear desirable and the amenities of life and wealth appear despicable.

Verses that encourage are like the following one by al-Mutanabbī:⁷

6 Reed instruments (*mazāmīr*) and strings were played in wine taverns and were thereby associated with forbidden actions (al-Ghazālī, 1126–8, 1144).

7 The Arab poet Abū l-Ṭayyib Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965) is especially famous for his panegyric poetry, including depictions of victorious battles of his respective patron. For these verses (with slight variations), see al-'Ukbarī, 2:300, 356. For al-Ghazālī's quotes, I follow the Cairo edition (and not al-Zabīdī), which is closer to the *Dīwān*.

If you do not die with honor by the sword / you will die dishonorably while suffering humiliation.

Likewise, his verse:

Cowards view cowardice as firmness / yet this is the deception of the wicked temper.

[p. 1134] Verses like these, as well as emboldening rhythmic modes,⁸ differ from those modes that incite longing. Likewise [i.e., as in the case of Ḥajj], this is licit in times when warfare is licit, and is approved when warfare is recommended: but only for someone who is allowed to leave for warfare.

[§ 4.] *Third: Verses in the rajaz Meter That the Brave Use in the Moment of Encounter*⁹

The aim of such verses is the encouragement of oneself and of one's allies and to incite in them the vigor for combat. In such verses there occurs self-praise for bravery and courage. If this is performed in elegant wording and with a beautiful voice, it is more effective in the heart. This is licit in every fight that is licit, and it is approved in every fight that is approved, while it is prohibited in fighting Muslims or the protected people (*ahl al-dhimma*) and in every other prohibited fight. For incitement to the prohibited is itself prohibited. Such is transmitted from the brave Companions (may God be pleased with them), like 'Alī [b. Abī Ṭālib] and Khālid [b. al-Walīd] (may God be pleased with them) and others.

Thus, we say: playing the flute in the field camp should be prohibited, since its voice softens the heart, evokes sorrow, and loosens the knot of bravery. It weakens the flame of the heart and arouses longing for family and the homeland, and thereby brings about slackening in combat. Such is true for most voices and musical modes that soften the heart. The musical modes that soften the heart and evoke sorrow differ significantly from the musical modes that energize and embolden. Whoever does that [i.e., uses voices and musical

8 Ar. *ṭuruq al-awzān al-mushajji'a*. It is not entirely clear if the term *awzān* here refers to the rhythmic cycles of Arab music alone or includes the poetic meters. Some scholars hold the idea that the poetic meters—which are not identical with the rhythmic cycles—each express a distinctive ethos as well; however, this idea bears little relation to the concrete poetic compositions, where a single meter is used for quite different themes and genres. See van Gelder, 49–59.

9 The pre-Islamic warfare technique of chanting verses of encouragement and invective continued to be used in the early Islamic period; see Ullmann, 18–22.

modes that soften the heart] with the aim to change the hearts and weaken the sentiments regarding a necessary fight, he is disobedient [against God]. Whoever does that with the aim to weaken a prohibited fight, he is obedient [to God].

[§ 5.] *Fourth: Laments and Their Melodies*

Their impact lies in the incitement of sorrow and weeping and unceasing mourning. There are two types of sorrow: praiseworthy and blameworthy. Regarding blameworthy sorrow, this is sorrow over what has eluded one. God the Exalted said: "In order that you do not regret what eluded you" (Q 57:23). Of such a kind of sorrow is mourning about death, for it constitutes displeasure about the decision of God the Exalted, or mourning over [worldly] wealth that has eluded one. When sorrow is blameworthy, its incitement through lament is blameworthy: therefore, the clear prohibition of the lament evolved.

Regarding praiseworthy sorrow: this is a man's sorrow about his shortcomings in religious matters and his weeping about his wrongdoings. It is praiseworthy to weep about these things and to induce weeping, as well as to sorrow and induce sorrow. Adam (peace be upon him) wept about such things. The stimulation of such sorrow and its enhancement are praiseworthy because it leads to [p. 1135] taking action to make amends. Therefore, the lamentation of David (peace be upon him) was praiseworthy, since it was devoted to sorrow and weeping about wrongdoings and culpabilities. David (peace be upon him) would weep and evoke weeping, and he would be sorrowful and evoke sorrow, such that the biers would be lifted from his mourning assemblies [away to the funeral]. He would do this with speech and melody. Such a thing is praiseworthy, because leading someone to praiseworthy action is praiseworthy. Taking this into account, it is not forbidden that a preacher with a good voice chants verses from the pulpit using melodies that evoke sorrow and soften the heart, or that he weeps and induces weeping in order to bring others to weep and to stimulate their sorrow.

[§ 6.] *Fifth: Listening in Times of Joy in Order to Enhance Joy or to Stir It Up*

This is licit in cases where joy is licit, such as singing on religious holidays (*ayyām al-ʿīd*); at weddings; when someone arrives who has been long absent; during festive meals and the welcoming rites for a newborn; at the birth of a child and when he is circumcised; and when he memorizes the dear Qurʾān. All these are licit occasions for showing joy through singing. The reasoning for permitting [singing] is that there are musical modes that stir happiness, joy, and delight. And in all cases in which joy is admissible, it is admissible to evoke joy in these cases.

Such is proven by the tradition about the women who, at the arrival of God's Messenger (God's blessings and peace be upon him), chanted from the roofs, using frame drums and melodies:¹⁰

The full moon has risen upon us / from the mountain pass of al-Wadā'
We owe gratitude / as long as someone calls to God.

This [case] constitutes the manifestation of joy on the arrival of Muḥammad (God's blessings and peace be upon him); it is praiseworthy joy, and to show it through poetry, melody, dance, and beating the drum is likewise praiseworthy. It has been transmitted from the [Prophet's] Companions (may God be pleased with them) that they jumped for joy, and we will come back to this issue in [the passage on] the rules of dance. Such a thing is admissible in the advent of every event whose joy on it is admissible and on every licit cause of the causes for joy. [...]

[p. 1138] [§ 7.] *Sixth: Listening of the Lovers to Evoke Longing and Incite Passion as a Delectation for the Soul*

If this happens while seeing the beloved, the intention is the enhancement of the pleasure; and if it happens during separation, the intention is the incitement of longing. Longing, even when it hurts, constitutes a kind of pleasure, when the hope of reunion is added. Hope is sweet and desperation is painful. The power of the hope's sweetness correlates with the power of longing and love for the desired. In this [kind of] listening lies the incitement of passion and the stimulation of longing and thus the pleasure of anticipation that is included in the hope for reunion, in addition to the detailed description [p. 1139] of the beloved's beauty.

This is allowed if the union with the object of longing is licit; for instance, if someone loves his wife or concubine and listens to her singing, such that the pleasure of their gathering multiplies. In this case, the eye savors watching her, the ear savors listening to her, and the heart apprehends the subtlety of reunion and separation. The causes of pleasure follow one another, and this kind of enjoyment is one of the allowed affairs of this world and its delights, for the worldly life "is only diversion and a passing delight" (Q 29:64), and this is one of it. Similarly, when a man's slave girl gets angry at him or something comes

10 This occurrence is said to have happened either during his first arrival in Yathrib/Medina or on returning from the Tabūk expedition. However, the *ḥadīth* scholar Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) is rather skeptical of the accuracy of its transmission (Ibn Ḥajar, 7:261–2, 8:128–9). The verses are considered to constitute the first Muslim song, and they are still sung today.

between them for any reason, he may stimulate his longing through listening and thereby stir up the pleasure of the reunion's anticipation. However, after he sells her or sets her free, all of this is forbidden,¹¹ because it is not admissible to incite longing if it is not admissible to realize the union. [...]

[§ 8.] *Seventh: Listening of the One Who Loves God the Exalted and Feels Passionate about Him and Longs for Encountering Him*

Such a person does not see a thing without seeing God in it, and no sound hits his ear without hearing God in it. Listening in this case serves to incite longing for Him and to enhance his passion and love [for Him]: it [functions as] the moving of his heart's material to strike fire and triggers states of unveiling and benevolence that lie beyond description. He who has tasted them [i.e., such states] knows them, and he whose sense of taste is deficient denies them.

These states are called by the Sufis "ecstasy" (*wajd*), derived from "finding" and "encountering," meaning that he encounters in himself states which he had not encountered before listening. Those states then cause other states, whose flames burn the heart and purge it of turbidity, like fire that purges gems of filth. With clarity setting in, there then follows seeing and unveiling. This is the highest goal of those who love God the Exalted and the ultimate fruit of all means to draw near to God—and what leads to it is the sum of these means, not the sum of disobediences and licit actions.

The reason for the occurrence of such states in the heart through listening [to music and singing] lies in God the Exalted's secret about the relation of measured melodies to the souls, and in the soul's subjugation to them, and in the impact souls receive through them, resulting in longing, joy, and sorrow, as well as expansion and contraction (*inbisāt* and *inqibād*).¹² Knowing the reason behind such effects on the souls [p. 1140] through song belongs to the most subtle of the sciences of the unveiling. The obtuse one, the spiritless one with a hardened heart, he who is deprived of the pleasure of listening: he wonders how the listener senses pleasure, about [the listener's] ecstasy and

11 Because a man is not allowed to have sexual intercourse with a free woman he is not married to.

12 According to the theory of *ethos*, music moves the soul in three ways, which is achieved by the musicians' choice of the appropriate musical framework of composition. Joy, sorrow, and longing roughly correspond to the effects described by Greek authors as expanding (resulting in joy), depressing (resulting in sorrow), and calming (potentially representing the sublime). The threefold impact is taken up in Arabic musical treatises with varying terminology, including *bast* and *qabḍ* (al-Fārābī, 161–3; Ibn al-Ṭaḥḥān, 21–3; al-Kindī, VI, 2 [no pagination]). By adding *inbisāt* and *inqibād*, al-Ghazālī probably refers to these technical terms for "expanding" and "depressing."

the confusion of his state, and the transformation of his mood. He is just like the beast who wonders about the sweetness of *lawzīnaj*,¹³ or the impotent man who wonders about the pleasure of sexual intercourse, or the little boy who wonders about the pleasure people take in governance and in accumulating reasons for fame, or the ignorant man who wonders about the pleasure of knowing God the Exalted, of knowing His grandeur and sublimity and the wonders of His work.

All this has only one reason: namely, that pleasure is a kind of perception, and perception requires something that is perceived and the faculty of perception. He whose faculty of perception is defective cannot be expected to sense pleasure. For how can someone who lost his taste comprehend the pleasure of flavor? And how can someone who lost his ear comprehend the pleasure of melodies, and someone who lost his reason the pleasure of reasoning? The same applies to the taste of listening with the heart: after the sound reaches the ear it is taken up by an inner sense in the heart. And whoever lacks that will inevitably be unable to experience its pleasure.

13 A sweet made from almonds.

The *Taʿwīlāt Najmiyya* (7th/13th Century) on the Body, the Soul, and the Senses

Eyad Abuali

1 Introduction

The *Taʿwīlāt Najmiyya* (*The Najmian Interpretations*), also known as *ʿAyn al-ḥayāt* (*The Well of Life*), is a collectively authored Sufi Qurʾān interpretation (*taʿwīl*), written by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 618/1221) and edited and added to by Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 654/1256). Later, ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī (d. 736/1336) continued the work from the Qurʾānic chapter *Ṭūr* onward, as well as writing an introduction to the text (Elias; Godlas).

These three Sufis are among the most prominent authors in what came to be known as the Kubrawī Sufi tradition. However, the community of scholars that grew around Kubrā also included other influential figures such as Majd al-Dīn al-Baghdādī (d. 616/1219), Sayf al-Dīn al-Bākharzī (d. 659/1261), and Saʿd al-Dīn al-Ḥammūʿī (d. 674/1276). It is perhaps more fitting to refer to these authors as proto-Kubrawīs, since they predate the emergence of a self-defining Kubrawī Sufi order. Despite this, there is a clear consistency in theory and practice between figures such as Kubrā, al-Baghdādī, al-Rāzī, and al-Bākharzī. This includes similar conceptions of psychology, cosmology, and oneirology, as well as consistencies in practices such as *dhikr*.¹ These overlaps point to a community of Sufis that shared similar theoretical frameworks and practices, as well as institutional bonds.

The proto-Kubrawī cosmological, oneiric, and psychological frameworks appear in the *Taʿwīlāt Najmiyya*, perhaps most strikingly and colorfully in the interpretation of the Qurʾānic chapter on the prophet Yūsuf/Joseph (*Sūrat Yūsuf*). In this retelling of the story of Yūsuf, the *Taʿwīlāt* casts each character in the narrative as an organ within the human body or soul, consistent with the

1 *Dhikr*, translated as recollection, is the practice of reciting the names of God, or specific phrases in praise of God. In the Kubrawī context, there developed a practice of recollection that incorporated particular breathing patterns and bodily movements. It was also often performed in rooms of seclusion (*bayt al-khawwa*), which induced sensory deprivation.

framework of the Kubrawī microcosmological and psychological frameworks as they appear in the works of al-Baghdādī and al-Rāzī.

In these early Kubrawī cosmological schemes, human bodies are considered to be the most materially complex existents, being the final species to be created after inanimate objects, plants, and animals. For this reason they contain within them all the realities of the manifest world. Simultaneously, human souls are considered the most significant creations in the hidden world due to the soul being the breath of God. This marks the human out among existents as a microcosm that contains the realities of the cosmos. However, it also explains the descent of man and the banishment of the soul within the complex material composition of the body from which it must be extracted in order to ascend. From a psychological perspective, this means that attributes that humans share with created existents, whether they belong to the hidden or manifest world, must be overcome so that the true nature of the soul may be realized. This is framed as a process of unveiling, observing, and apprehending each reality that constitutes the human being, and it requires the careful conditioning of the body and soul (Algar).

In Kubrawī practice, the training of the senses plays an important role in allowing the Sufi practitioner spiritually to progress. Generally speaking, Sufi discussions of sensation emphasize that the body and the senses must be aligned with God through the purification of the soul, in order to convey, or play a role in conveying, truths to the soul. For example, sensory deprivation in rooms of seclusion is a condition of Kubrawī *dhikr* and is essential for activating the inner senses, which are able to clothe spiritual realities and messages from the hidden world with visual, auditory, haptic, olfactory, and gustatory images. These visions are beheld by practitioners in degrees of truth, according to the extent to which they have purified their hearts. The heart therefore acts as a locus of perception, as well as the spiritual faculty that commands the body. It can be dominated by the lower soul and bodily desires, or by the higher faculties of the soul such as the spirit, or by God. It therefore stands at the center of human psychology in Kubrawī Sufism.

In the chapter of the *Ta'wīlāt* that is translated below, Yūsuf takes the place of the heart, while the brothers who attempt to either kill or banish him into the “well of bodily form and the lowliness of humanness” are the various senses of the body, both outer and inner. Moreover, Yūsuf’s father, Ya’qūb/Jacob, is referred to as the spirit (*rūḥ*) who begets the heart through marriage to Rachel, the lower soul (*naḥs*). Zulaykha, who attempts to seduce Yūsuf, is interpreted as the world (*dunyā*), her house as the physical body (*al-jasad al-dunyawī*). Female characters in the narrative therefore signify temptation and the lower faculty of the soul, offering an insight into the treatment of gender in the *Ta'wīlāt*.

These interpretations refer to the concepts that explain the need for spiritual progression. In this framework, the body and the senses act upon the heart and impair its progress to higher spiritual stations. They must be brought under the command of the higher faculties of the soul instead, and ultimately God. The very existence of the heart, however, is explained as a consequence of embodied existence itself. This retelling thus reimagines the story of Yūsuf as a narrative about the human's body and soul with regard to the organs of perception, as well as their psychological function. The heart takes center stage, and the entire Qur'ānic chapter is rendered a narrative on the human condition. The concern of the authors, then, is to show the centrality of the heart in relation to the human being. However, the discussion shifts toward the end of the chapter and incorporates interpretations from other Sufi works (Ballanfat).

The interpretative technique that is embraced in the chapter also closely resembles the methodology of Kubrawī dream interpretation, where the organs of the human being are represented by the images of the dream (Abuali). These images would then be interpreted in order to inform the dreamer of their spiritual state. This chapter of the *Ta'wīlāt* therefore sheds some light on the interrelation between the Qur'ān and dream interpretation in the Sufism of this period.

The *Ta'wīlāt* is structured according to the order of the appearance of the Qur'ānic chapters, or *sūras*. Each chapter therefore is named after and consists of an interpretation of a given *sūra*, from the first, *al-Fātiḥa*, to the last, *al-Nās*. The Yūsuf chapter, the 13th in the Qur'ān, is singled out by the authors as the “best of stories” (Q 12:3), which most perfectly and completely encapsulates the descent of the human and the subsequent ascent through spiritual exercise. In other words, it is singled out as the narrative in the Qur'ān most clearly illustrating the Sufi path. Given the length of the chapter, it cannot be translated in its entirety here. Therefore, this translation ends when Zulaykha, the wife of Yūsuf's master in Egypt, attempts to seduce Yūsuf, a point at which the text has outlined the human being's composition, the function of the various organs of the soul and body, and the descent of the human being into the darkness of existence, and the beginnings of the ascent back to God.

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2 Translation

al-Ta'wīlāt al-Najmiyya fī l-tafsīr al-ishārī l-šūfī, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazyadī, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2009, vol. 3, pp. 306–315.

[§ 1. Q 12:1–5]

[p. 306] *Alif lām rā'*. These are the verses of the clear book. We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may understand. We relate to you the best of stories through the revelation of this Qur'ān. Even if you were before this you were of the unperceiving. For Yūsuf said to his father: “O father, I have seen the eleven planets, and the sun, and the moon—I saw them prostrating to me.” He replied: “O dear son, do not relate your vision to your brothers, lest they devise a plot against you. For Satan is a sworn enemy to humankind.”²

Alif lām rā': The Qur'ān refers to God with the [letter] *alif*, and to Gabriel with the [letter] *lām*, and to the Prophet with the [letter] *rā'*, referring to what God has bestowed upon Gabriel's tongue [which was then bestowed] upon the Prophet's heart.

² Translations from the Qur'ān are my own.

These are the verses of the clear book: Meaning these are the proofs of the book of the beloved that illuminate, with the most dazzling clarity, the path to the beloved.

We have sent it down, meaning Our book, *as an Arabic Qurʾān,* meaning that it was clothed with the Arabic language in order for it to be read.

So that you may understand the realities of its meanings, its secrets, proofs, and indications in the most brilliant language, just as the Torah was sent to its people in the Hebrew language, and the Gospels were sent in Syriac. And with this God indicates that the reality of God's speech is abstracted in its word-ness (*fī kalāmīyyatihi*) from the clothing of letters, sounds, and languages. However, people are dependent upon the clothing of letters and languages in order to comprehend its meanings.

We relate to you the best of stories: Meaning that the best of stories guides the lover [p. 307] along the path of return, and wayfaring, and reaching the beloved. And indeed, there is an aspect of this in all the stories of the Qurʾān that we have mentioned. However, the story of Yūsuf is the finest, most beautiful, complete, and perfected in relation and in likeness to the conditions of the human being and the return to God and reaching Him. And this is because it refers to the knowledge of the composition of the human being, including the spirit (*rūḥ*), heart (*qalb*), innermost heart (*sirr*), and lower soul (*nafs*), as well as the five outer senses, the six inner faculties of perception, the body and its trials in the world, and all manners of things, until the human matures to the highest degree, as shall be demonstrated in what follows, God willing. *Through the revelation of this Qurʾān:* Meaning We guide you with the light of Qurʾānic inspiration according to the fineness of this story. *Even if you were before this,* meaning before the manifestation of this light, *of the unperceiving* of those realities and specificities, because they are only perceived with the light of inspiration.

It was said in the world of spirits (*ʿālam al-arwāḥ*) *by Yūsuf* the heart *to his father* Jacob the spirit: *O father, I have seen* by the light of spirituality (*rūḥāniyya*) *the eleven planets.* And these are the five outer senses of hearing, sight, smell, taste, [p. 308] and touch, as well as the six inner senses of thought, memory, the imaginal store, the imaginative faculty, estimation, and the *sen-sus communis*.³ For each one of these senses and faculties is a luminous star that perceives a meaning relative to it. And they are the brothers of Yūsuf the

3 The inner senses, or faculties, listed here include the five inner senses described by Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, d. 428/1037). A sixth faculty of "thought" or "thinking" is mentioned here. This appears in the works of other thinkers such as al-Kindī (d. 256/870), as well as the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā (*f.l.* fourth/tenth century). On the inner senses, see also *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 30, 39, and passim. On al-Kindī, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', and Ibn Sīnā, see *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 17, 18, and 29.

heart, because they are generated by the consummation of Jacob the spirit and Rachel the lower soul by the same decree. *And the Sun* [refers to] the sun of the spirit, the lower soul, the senses, and the faculties.

He replied: O dear son, do not relate your vision to your brothers, lest they devise a plot against you. This indicates that the senses and faculties begrudge the heart due to God having bestowed it with the capacity to receive the divine emanation (*al-fayḍ al-ilāhī*), which He did not bestow to them. And they therefore connive, according to their jealousy upon the heart, aided by Satan and his helpers. *For Satan is a sworn enemy to humankind.*

[§ 2. Q 12:6]

“In the same way, your Lord will select you and teach you the interpretation of dreams and perfect His favor upon you, and upon the descendants of Jacob, just as He perfected it upon your forefathers, Abraham and Isaac, for your Lord is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

Then Jacob the spirit interpreted Yūsuf the heart's vision by saying *and so will your Lord select you* from among the rest of creation, preferring you to your kin. *And He will teach you the interpretation of dreams* which is the divine science that is specific to the heart. *And [He will] perfect His favor upon you* in that He will manifest Himself to you and settle upon you, for the heart, among all things, is the true throne of God Most High. Just as God has said, “The heavens and the earth cannot contain Me, but the heart of a believing servant may contain Me.”⁴ And this is true for Yūsuf the heart who is characterized by perfected beauty.

And upon the descendants of Jacob: Meaning, if God Most High manifested Himself to the heart, the lights of manifestation would be reflected by the mirror of the heart upon everything generated by the spirit, such as the senses and faculties and all the progeny [p. 309] of Jacob the spirit.

Just as it was perfected upon your two forefathers: And they are *Abraham* the innermost heart, and *Isaac* the mystery (*khafī*). And with them, the heart becomes deserving of receiving the emanation of divine manifestation. And by God, in this there are hidden subtleties that are grasped only by those who abide in a moment (*waqt*) with God that does not allow space for either an angel or a prophet to intrude upon.⁵ *Indeed your Lord is knowing* of these conditions, [wise] in what He bestows upon those chosen to bear it.

4 See al-Ghazālī, 890 (vol. 3, bk. 1, on the wonders of the heart).

5 The notion here is that the Sufi has entered a moment of exclusive communion with God that does not allow for anything else to be experienced beside Him. Here God is experienced directly, without the intermediary of a prophet or an angel. This echoes a Sufi tradition

[§ 3. Q 12:7–9]

Indeed, there were in Yūsuf and his brothers lessons for those who seek. They said: “Yūsuf and his brother are dearer to our father than we are, and we are a group for our father is clearly misguided. Kill Yūsuf or banish him to a distant land so that our father will be devoted to us then may you become of those who are fortunate.”

The reference to the verses of the story of Yūsuf and his brothers indicates that *indeed there were in Yūsuf* the heart, and *his brothers* the eleven: five senses and six faculties, *lessons for those who seek* for the journey along the path to God, and they are the true seekers.

They, the senses and faculties, *said that Yūsuf*, the heart and *his brother Benjamin*, who is the *sensus communis*, for it has, above all the senses and faculties, a particular relation to the heart, *are dearer to our father* the spirit, *than we are*. And that is because the heart is the throne of the spirit and the place upon which it settles. And the *sensus communis* takes the place of the footstool in relation to the throne. *And we are a group* meaning, the [remaining] ten senses and faculties. *For our father* the spirit *is clearly misguided* for having preferred the two over the ten.

Kill Yūsuf meaning, Yūsuf the heart, with the blade of desire. For the death [p. 310] of the heart takes place within desire, for it is fatal poison for the heart. *Or banish him to a distant land* meaning the land of humanness (*bashariyya*).⁶ *So that our father will be devoted to us* meaning that after the death of the heart, the spirit turns its face toward the senses and faculties in order to satisfy its wants and desires. *Then you may become* after the death of the heart, *of those who are fortunate* in the sense of attaining animalistic and egoistic pleasures.

[§ 4. Q 12:10–11]

One of them said: “Do not kill Yūsuf but cast him down into the bottom of a well, so that perhaps he could be picked up by some travelers, if you must do something with him.” They said: “O father, why do you not trust us with Yūsuf and we will truly watch over him.”

One of them said, and he was Yahuda, the faculty of thought, *do not kill Yūsuf* the heart but cast him away *if you must do something with him*. And *they cast*

attributed to Junayd (d. 297/910), that there are three stages of hearing the Qurʾān. The first is hearing it as if the Prophet recited it, the second is hearing it as if Gabriel recited it, while the third is hearing it as if directly from God. See al-Sarrāj, 114.

6 Here “humanness” is considered a state of being that is lower than a purely spiritual state.

him down into the bottom of a well, the well of bodily form and the lowliness of humanness. *So perhaps he could be picked up by some travelers*, meaning the wandering travelers of the lower soul that act upon the heart.

They said: O father, why do you not trust us with Yūsuf. This indicates the scheming of the senses and the faculties with regard to Yūsuf the heart. For the heart, as long as it is within the sight of the spirit and under its inspection, is not busied in using the senses and faculties for play, desire, and pleasure in the pastures of animalness (*ḥayawāniyya*), and remains sound and at peace. And so, the senses and faculties beseeched the spirit to send Yūsuf the heart with them to their animalistic pastures so that they may take pleasures in the absence of Jacob the spirit. But he did not trust them with him because he perceived their schemes even though they claimed to watch over him and protect him from harm, as they said: *And we will truly watch over him.*

[§ 5. Q 12:12–13]

[p. 311] **“Send him with us tomorrow so he may enjoy himself and play, and we will protect him.”** And he said: **“It would truly sadden me if you were to take him with you, and I fear that a wolf may devour him, while you neglect him.”**

Send him with us tomorrow so he may enjoy himself in our pastures, and *play* in our playgrounds. This is the world (*dunyā*), for it is play and frivolity. *And we will protect him* from the corruption of this world and its harm. *And he, Jacob the spirit said, it would truly sadden me if you were to take him with you*, referring to Yūsuf the heart. *And I fear that a wolf may devour him.* [That is] the wolf of Satan, for if the heart is distanced from the spirit and [beyond] its sight, then the Devil comes nearer to it and acts upon it and destroys it, *while you neglect him* due to you being distracted with satisfying your desires.

[§ 6. Q 12:14–16]

They said: “If the wolf were to devour him despite the strength of our group, then we would certainly be losers.” And when they took him and decided to cast him into the bottom of the well, We revealed to him: **“You will remind them all of this, but they were unaware.”**

They said if the wolf were to devour him, meaning if the Devil destroys him, *despite the strength of our group, then we would certainly be losers*, this is because the demise of the heart causes the demise of all the organs of the human being. However, overcoming them results in the wellness of the heart. *And when they took him and decided to cast him into the bottom of the well—and*

that is because casting the lofty heart into the lowliness of the well occurs by using all the human senses and faculties in seeking desires/pleasures—God then said *We inspired him*, meaning Yūsuf the heart, *you will remind them all of this*. Meaning, that they intended to harm you but aided you instead *but they were unaware*. And [all] this indicates that a consequence of the attachment of the spirit to the bodily frame is the genesis of the lofty heart, the lower soul, the faculties, and the senses. And the spirit and heart are inclined toward the spiritual world while the lower soul, faculties, and senses are inclined toward the animal world. And if the human being allows his nature to rule him, then the lower soul and the body will be victorious over the spirit and the heart, and this is the state of those who disobey. And if the heart is aided by divine inspiration in the abyss of the well of bodily form, when God's eternal care has rushed to it, then the heart is commanded by the spirit and is greater than the lower soul and the body. And this is the state of the blissful.

[§ 7. Q 12:76–20]

And they returned to their father in the evening weeping. [p. 312] They cried: “Father! We raced ahead and left Yūsuf with our belongings and a wolf devoured him. But you do not believe us, no matter how truthful we are.” And they showed him his shirt, stained with false blood. He said: “Indeed your souls have concocted a tale, but patience is more fitting, and I seek God's aid against that which you claim.” And there came a group of travelers who sent their messenger who lowered his vessel and cried out: “Glad tidings, here is a boy!” And they took him to be sold as goods, and God knows what they do. And they bought him for a cheap price, just a few silver coins, and they were self-denying with respect to him.

All this is an allusion to the falsifications of the senses and faculties, their impersonations, fraudulence, fascinations, lies, conspiracies, wiles, schemes, flights of fancy, and enticements that are of their nature. And if they were not so, then they would be [the tools of] the prophets.

He said: Indeed your souls have concocted a tale, but patience is more fitting, indicates that the gnosis (*ma'rifa*) of the spirit that is aided by the light of faith stands above the lower soul and its attributes, as well as what the senses and faculties entice it to. The spirit is not receptive to their falsities and wiles. Instead it perceives all matters from God, including the eternal wisdoms of these matters. The spirit therefore bore *their lies* with a fitting patience, and that is patience maintained until what God has pre-eternally willed comes to be, and it submits to it, and is content with that will.

And with his saying, *and I seek God's aid against that which you claim*, he indicates that he beseeched [God] for patience with regard to what occurs according to His command and decree. And these are all characteristics of the lofty spirit that is aided with God's aid. And one of the fruits of the fitting patience of the spirit is to deliver the heart from the abyss of the well of bodily form with the attractions of divine care,⁷ as [God] said: *and there came a group of travelers*. And these were the gentle breezes that are the breaths of subtlety of the real. [*And they*] *sent their messenger*, meaning a messenger from one of those breaths *who lowered his vessel*, meaning the vessel of attraction from the attraction of the real. And so Yūsuf the heart was delivered from the well of the bodily form's nature.

And [he] cried out: Glad tidings, here is a boy! And they took him to be sold as goods, indicates that just as the heart receives glad tidings in its attachment to divine attraction and being delivered from the well, so is attraction a glad tidings when it attaches to the heart [p. 313] and delivers it from the well [of bodily existence]. And this is among the secrets of [the verse] "He loves them and they love Him" (Q 5:54), and God is all-knowing with regard to the two glad tidings *regarding what they do* with respect to selling him for a meagre price, and that price refers to the aspects [of existence] that perish [that are like] *a few silver coins* that last for a few days.

And they were self-denying with respect to Yūsuf the heart because they did not recognize his value. And that is because the senses and the faculties are prepared to acquire worldly pleasures that perish while the heart is prepared to acquire the everlasting pleasures of the hereafter. Indeed, it is prepared to witness the Divine (*shawāhid al-rabbāniyya*). And if it is watered with the drink of the appearance of the [divine] manifestation of beauty and majesty, that drink is spilt upon the world of souls, faculties, and senses and they acquire [a portion of it]. "And the world has a share in what is spilt from the cup of the generous."⁸ For when they extracted him from the well of nature, they made their way to the land of Egypt, the Sharia.

7 Attraction (*jadhb*) is a Sufi term that indicates being chosen by God. It is a counterpart, and is contrasted, to wayfaring in that the approach to God is effortless on the part of the Sufi practitioner.

8 This is a well-known verse of poetry with no attribution. It is also cited in al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*. See al-Ghazālī, 1439 (vol. 9, bk. 2, on thanks and patience).

[§ 8. Q 12:21]

And he who bought him in Egypt said to his wife: “Take good care of him, perhaps he will be useful to us, or we shall take him as a son.” And thus We established Yūsuf in the land so that We may teach him the interpretation of dreams. And God’s will always prevails, but most people do not know.

And he who bought him in Egypt said, this refers to the ‘Azīz of Egypt,⁹ the Sharia, otherwise known as the guide and trainer upon the correct path, in order to guide him to the world of reality, [who said] *to his wife*, and she is the world (*dunyā*), *take good care of him*, meaning serve him in this bodily state only in accordance to his needs.

Perhaps he will be useful to us, in that he may become a person of Sharia, and a king among the kings of this world who will command us using the elixir of prophecy so that the Sharia will be transmuted into reality (*ḥaqīqa*) and this world will be transmuted into the hereafter. *Or we shall take him as a son*, whom we shall nourish with milk from the teat of Sharia, and the Sufi path, and cut him off from the lowly world.

And thus we established Yūsuf in the land refers to confirming Yūsuf the heart in the world of humanness, for he knows the science of dream interpretation, and that is prophetic knowledge. As he said: *So that we may teach him the interpretation of dreams*. For just as the fruit of a tree emerges when the tree is established in the ground, so do the fruits of divine knowledge [p. 314] and divine witnessing appear upon the tree of the heart when the root of the heart is fixed in the earth of humanness.

And God’s will always prevails has two meanings. The first is that God’s will prevails upon the heart so that the love of God and seeking Him becomes the prevailing desire of the heart. The second is that the attractions of divine care prevail upon the heart in order to place it upon the straight path, that is [toward] annihilation, and subsistence within God. So, his actions will be with God, for God, and within God as he will subsist within His ipseity, annihilated from the selfhood of his self. *But most people do not know* that they were created with the capacity to receive this perfection, and they therefore expend this capacity only on that which brings imperfections and loss.

9 The ‘Azīz of Egypt (the Mighty One of Egypt) is a title that refers to the biblical figure of Potiphar.

[§ 9. Q 12:22–3]

And when he matured to the utmost, We gave him wisdom and knowledge. And so do We reward the good. And she whose house he lived in, tried to seduce him away from himself [...]

And when he matured to the utmost, that is, [reaching] the maturity of perfected capacity to accept the divine emanation, *We gave him knowledge*, and We poured flowing waters of divine wisdom and otherworldly knowledge upon him.

And so do We reward the good: Just as We bequeathed unto the heart what it deserves of wisdom and knowledge from Our beneficence and generosity, so do We reward the primary organs and limbs when they refine their actions and character according to the principles of the Sharia and the Sufi path, with the best of rewards. And that reward is maturing to the station of reality.

And she, whose house he lived in, tried to seduce him away from himself: This indicates that Yūsuf the heart remains attached to the workings of Zulaykha the world, despite reaching the highest degree in the station of reality, annihilated from the attributes of self-ness, and absorption in the ocean of divine attributes, as long as he remains in her house, which is the body. For the body is a worldly abode for the heart. The meaning therefore is that Zulaykha seduced Yūsuf the heart who was in her house at the time, which is the body, and away from his true nature, when she saw that within him was an attachment to the body, calling him [p. 315] to receive worldly pleasures, so that he would take pleasure in her, and she would take pleasure in him.

‘Aṭṭār (d. 618/1221) on the Wayfarer’s Encounter with the Senses

Cyrus Ali Zargar

1 Introduction

Farīd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm ‘Aṭṭār was a poet, hagiographer, and—as his penname “‘Aṭṭār” indicates—an apothecary, that is, a shopkeeper and specialist in herbal remedies, spices, and perfumes. He lived in Nishapur at the time of its conquest by Mongol invaders. In fact, that event, the Mongol sack of Nishapur, marks the year of his death in 618/1221. As a poet without courtly obligations, ‘Aṭṭār composed literary works addressing the themes that mattered to his educated friends, many of whom seem to have been adherents to the Sufi tradition and Shāfi‘ī school as they existed in Nishapur. Those themes included ethics, piety, love, the Sufi sciences, eastern Iran’s intellectual climate, and the history of Muslim saints. His confirmed works, all in Persian, encompass four long narrative poems, a collection of quatrains or *rubā‘īyyāt*, a *dīwān* of mostly ghazals (short lyrical poems) and some longer poems in the *qaṣīda* form, and a collection of saints’ lives in prose, called *The Memorial of God’s Friends (Tadhkirat al-awliyā)*. In terms of legacy, Persian poets after ‘Aṭṭār often saw him as the definitive link in a chain of Sufi-influenced poets that followed Majdūd b. Ādam Ghaznawī (d. ca. 525/1131), known as “Sanā‘ī.” Many pronouncements made by Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273) in his collection of lyrical poems, the *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, attest to this, including, “Seek that brightness (*sanā*) that Sanā‘ī expounded. / Such a singular person (*farīd*) has learned uniqueness (*fardiyyat*) from ‘Aṭṭār” (Rūmī, 336 [no. 824]). Here Rūmī puns on the names of the two poets to emphasize their status in the Persian Sufi didactic poetic tradition.

The translation below comes from one of ‘Aṭṭār’s long narrative poems, *The Book of Affliction (Muṣibat-nāma)*. Like ‘Aṭṭār’s *Book of the Divine (Ilāhī-nāma)*, as well as his masterpiece *Speech of the Birds (Manṭiq al-ṭayr)*, this poem has an overarching frame-tale structure. This larger, framing narrative contains the micronarratives that ‘Aṭṭār uses to illustrate his points about piety, character, and spiritual states. The frame-narrative, or macro-narrative, of the *Book of Affliction* tells of a wayfarer seeking the Real, despondent because of the

lack of clarity in his life and times. He pursues cosmic entities, angels, prophets, and even Satan, in search of a resolution to his existential suffering, but does not find it until the Prophet Muḥammad ushers him inward, into his own soul and toward the source of tranquillity, certainty, and perfection that lies within each of us. To get there, indeed to discover it, the wayfarer must journey to each of the soul’s five internal faculties: Sense, Imagination, Intellect, and Heart, before the Heart can refer him to the Spirit. Sense occupies a notable place among these five internal senses, since it draws directly from the five external senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell), serving a transitional role between external stimuli and internal cognition.

The psychological model in which ‘Aṭṭār places the senses reflects that developed by the philosopher Abū ‘Alī Ḥusayn Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, d. 428/1037), then modified by the theologian and advocate of Sufism, Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). Indeed, much of ‘Aṭṭār’s psychology, which locates the spirit at its center, followed by the heart, reveals a trend common among Sunni intellectuals in his eastern Iranian milieu: the urge to refute Avicenna coupled with the inability to discard his psychology. In fact, one such refutation became its own frame of reference, an outlook on the human soul from which ‘Aṭṭār borrows heavily, namely, that of al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī’s *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*) had a tremendous impact on Islamic philosophical and theological thought, such that, “much of what will be written in Islamic philosophy and theology from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries is a response to Avicenna’s philosophical system and to al-Ghazālī’s critique in his *Incoherence*” (Griffel, 2008). In it, he argues that inspiration (*ilhām*), especially in the prophetic revelation and saintly utterances, forms the basis of advancements made in the rational sciences, such as astronomy or medicine, with rational arguments made in support of these inspirations as an afterthought (Griffel, 198). Divine law (*al-shar‘*) has bestowed upon the sciences the basis for all that which the philosophers claim for the intellect (*‘aql*) (al-Ghazālī, *Incoherence*, 157). This became expounded upon in his Arabic masterpiece, *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*) and summarized in his shorter text, meant for a more popular audience and hence written in Persian, *The Alchemy of Happiness* (*Kīmīyā-yi sa‘ādat*).

Interest in modifying Avicenna’s psychology by placing love, the heart, and revelation in higher regard also led to the composition of an important narrative poem by Sanā’ī, *The Journey of God’s Servants to the Return* (*Sayr al-‘ibād ilā l-ma‘ād*), which served as the model for ‘Aṭṭār’s *Book of Affliction*. Sanā’ī’s poem seems to have been inspired by *Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, an allegorical travel narrative by Avicenna, and perhaps also by a commentary on the *mi‘rāj* (the Prophet’s celestial ascent narrative) attributed to Avicenna (Johnson, 254). Sanā’ī’s

protagonist in this poem undertakes a journey that parallels the development of the soul. His guide, an elderly man, represents the Active Intellect. Yet, in a twist, the protagonist realizes that there is more to be accomplished even after uniting with his guide, the Active Intellect. He must now uncover the secrets of the Qur'ān, seeking a light beyond intellect and a selflessness based in love. The epitome of this higher realization is Sanā'ī's own patron, Abū l-Mafākhir Sayf al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr (*fl.* 6th/12th century). Ibn Maṣṣūr was the chief justice (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*) of Khurasan, originally from Sarakhs, a Ḥanafī jurist known for his sermons. He represents, in the poem, the revealed wisdom, law, and letter of Islam, as opposed to knowledge gleaned by intellectual striving.

What becomes clear in these reactions to Avicenna is that the core difference, for al-Ghazālī, Sanā'ī, and 'Aṭṭār, is one of epistemology. All three of these thinkers modify Avicenna's epistemology to place the heart above the intellect, a shift that begins with al-Ghazālī and spreads most widely through his works. In Sanā'ī, it becomes established in Persian narrative poetry. In 'Aṭṭār, this psychology develops even further and acquires more explicit ties to the love-centric brand of knowledge that the poet touts in opposition to the philosophers and other rationalists. In his *Book of Secrets (Asrār-nāma)*, 'Aṭṭār decries the philosophical interpretation of what is, for him, as for al-Ghazālī before him, a necessary and powerful faculty: the intellect (*ʿaql*). The issue is that philosophers have overemphasized rational matters, such as cause and effect, and underemphasized forms of inspirational knowledge, of which revelation is the apex:

Once the philosophical intellect fell into Cause,
it became deprived of the religion (*dīn*) of Muṣṭafā [the Prophet].

'AṬṬĀR, *Asrār-nāma*, 121, line 801

A person relying solely on rational means misses the mark, since direct vision of God remains endlessly superior to intellectual guesswork. In direct vision lies a knowledge based on union and love:

Comprehension sees nothing but the outward of both worlds,
whereas Love sees nothing but the Beloved.

'AṬṬĀR, *Asrār-nāma*, 110, line 550

If the philosophers have come up short—which, according to critics such as 'Aṭṭār, they have—then it is in the domain of seeing with the heart.

Al-Ghazālī says something quite similar to 'Aṭṭār's above observation when he declares that “whenever the veils are lifted between the heart and the Preserved Tablet, the heart sees the things which are therein, and knowledge

bursts forth into it therefrom, so that it does not have to acquire its knowledge through the avenue of the senses” (al-Ghazālī, *Marvels*, 59). Al-Ghazālī means here that the senses aid in the acquisition of knowledge that suits the intellect, which is a limited sort of knowledge; this too is reflected in ‘Aṭṭār’s passage on the senses. In *The Scale of Deeds* (*Mizān al-‘amal*), as in the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*, al-Ghazālī champions an approach that relies on the intellect only initially, eventually giving way to direct inspiration through ascetic exercises (al-Ghazālī, *Mizān*, 225–6). Indeed, to accomplish this al-Ghazālī explicitly prescribes the “way of the Sufis” (*ṭarīq al-ṣūfiyya*), which entails practices that limit sensory input, such as repeated verbal remembrance of God (*dhikr*), as well as isolationary retreat and silence (al-Ghazālī, *Kīmīyā*, 1:254, 2:35; *Mizān*, 227). These practices also include remaining vigilant about ways in which sensory input alters the heart (Zargar, 163 n56). After all, in al-Ghazālī’s thought, since inspiration comes from within, the cessation of sensory input can facilitate interior knowledge. This parallels what ‘Aṭṭār proclaims, as well, in the passage below: “I’m on 100,000 different branches at once, coming from all directions: / When oh when will I have one devoted direction of orientation (*qibla*) and one face?” Orientation occurs once one limits the distractions of the senses, focusing instead on the *qibla* of God’s remembrance. The collection of one’s focus toward a higher form of knowledge (beyond the senses) is what ‘Aṭṭār dubs “the bringing of things together” (*jam‘iyyat*) in the passage below.

The effects that al-Ghazālī’s psychology had on our poet, ‘Aṭṭār, as well as other intellectuals in eastern Iran, have yet to be fully appreciated, but seem quite substantial. Most significant is al-Ghazālī’s view of inspiration (*ilhām*), a term also used by Avicenna, though less frequently than “intuition” (*ḥads*). Al-Ghazālī prefers *ilhām* to *ḥads*, which avoids implications of a super-rational fast-track to intellection. For al-Ghazālī, it is God and not the Active Intellect that initiates prophetic inspiration (Janssens, 622–3). ‘Aṭṭār would most likely have encountered this in the introduction of al-Ghazālī’s *Alchemy of Happiness*, which became the new house for the “marvels of the heart” section that had once been in the middle of the *Arabic Revival* (Janssens, 616 n6). An important change, also, is one of vocabulary: al-Ghazālī shifts his use of the Persian *dil* (heart) and *jān* (soul or spirit), as translations for the Arabic *qalb* (heart), at will and seemingly without any reason but avoiding repetition for rhetorical purposes. Moreover, and quite significant for ‘Aṭṭār, al-Ghazālī expressly equates the heart or *dil*—the locus of mystical union and divine knowledge in the *Arabic Revival*—with the *rūḥ* or Spirit in his Persian *Alchemy*:

As for the reality of the heart (*dil*), regarding its essence and particular attributes, the divine law (*sharī‘at*) has not given us permission to venture into that topic; it is for that reason that the Messenger never elaborated

on it, as the Exalted Real said, “They ask you about the Spirit (*rūḥ*). Say: ‘The Spirit is from my Lord’s command’ (Q 17:85).”

AL-GHAZĀLĪ, *Kīmīyā*, 1:16

Drawing conclusions from this verse, al-Ghazālī comments that the Spirit is from the “World of Command [...] the created world and the World of Command are distinct” (al-Ghazālī, *Kīmīyā*, 1:17). He continues to refer to the Spirit as *dil* both here and in the passage that follows, equating heart and spirit. In the *Revival*, al-Ghazālī takes great care to distinguish between heart (*qalb*) and spirit (*rūḥ*), and to describe their relationship, even if al-Ghazālī admits that the two faculties cross over, such that by one, a person might mean the other (al-Ghazālī, *Marvels*, 5–8). ‘Aṭṭār maintains the distinction between “heart” and “spirit” found in al-Ghazālī’s *Revival*. Yet al-Ghazālī’s even greater emphasis on the close relationship between heart and spirit in the Persian *Alchemy*, a kind of identification or recognition of one in the other, might help explain the close relationship between the two in ‘Aṭṭār’s *Book of Affliction*.

In ‘Aṭṭār’s section below on sense (*ḥiss*), which prepares the reader to meet both Heart and Spirit, we see al-Ghazālī’s influence. The passage does not refer to Sense as the faculty that sorts and synthesizes all incoming sensory data, what Avicenna had called the Common Sense (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*). Rather, that job is allocated to Imagination (*khayāl*), for ‘Aṭṭār. In this change, ‘Aṭṭār follows that which al-Ghazālī offers in the *Revival*, in his description of the “armies of the heart,” a stripped-down version of Avicenna’s description of the soul and its faculties. It is there that al-Ghazālī also describes the five senses coming together in imagination (*khayāl*); that is, al-Ghazālī locates the Common Sense within the imagination (al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*, 3:6). Similarly, ‘Aṭṭār seems to be following al-Ghazālī in excluding estimation (*wahm*) as a faculty.

In placing the heart (which was foreign to Avicenna’s psychology) centermost, as the faculty served by all the other faculties, including sense, both al-Ghazālī’s and ‘Aṭṭār’s psychologies can be described as “Sufi.” After all, the science of Sufism distinguishes itself in its concern for the heart as a pivotal faculty. It is a locus for states (*aḥwāl*), a means for visionary experience, and a necessity for the experience of love and union. Yet there is one important difference between al-Ghazālī and ‘Aṭṭār, one that reveals just how powerful a medium poetry could be, considering the license allocated to it in premodern Iran and other Islamicate civilizations. While al-Ghazālī, in the *Alchemy*, can only allude to what is beyond the heart, namely, union with the spirit, and to the spirit’s mirroring of the Divine, ‘Aṭṭār can state it explicitly. Moreover, he makes it the climactic conclusion to his narrative. In referring to the reality of the spirit, al-Ghazālī feels obliged to say that “the divine law (*sharī‘at*) has

not given us permission to venture into that topic” (al-Ghazālī, *Kīmīyā*, 1:16). By contrast, ‘Aṭṭār’s section on the reality of the spirit in the *Book of Affliction* spans 82 double-lines or *bayts*, in addition to his many other declarations about the spirit, in this poem and in others.

‘Aṭṭār presents the senses as the origins of self-consciousness and hence the human ego. Of course, in his Sufi-influenced framework, that ego is an obstacle to be overcome. For that reason, ‘Aṭṭār gives it the name *man-ī*, literally, “I-ness.” This term appears in the poetry of Sanā’ī as well, carrying the same negative sense of an egocentricity that must be transcended:

Love for you snatched from me the very basis of we-ness (*mā’ī*) and I-ness
(*man-ī*);
the self had no choice but your selfhood, when faced with selflessness.

SANĀ’Ī, *Dōwān*, 1:728 [no. 530]

This “I-ness” or the ego-state melts away from the lover through the blaze of love, much like a candle’s wax burns, as Sanā’ī says elsewhere (Sanā’ī, *Ḥadīqat al-ḥaqīqa*, 153). In ‘Aṭṭār’s poem, human perfection relies on the construction of the ego-identity, as much as it relies on its erasure, so that the soul can achieve union with the divine beloved.

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[p. 407] Section 36: the Wayfarer's Having Gone to Sense

6226. A wayfarer, nursed by the secrets of his innermost sanctity,
came to Sense, who was the first step (*pāya*).
6227. He called out, "O spy of all that is exterior, as you have been named,
with your interior side ever-undisturbed!
6228. The world's five courtly kettledrums [announcing what enters] are
all yours,
the six directions subject to command are all yours too.
6229. From head to toe, your very essence is I-ness
but what lies outside your essence is safe from I-ness.

6230. Wherever existence is, there is your essence.
Non-existence is above and beyond what you sense.
6231. Because I-ness was not compatible with Proximity,
by necessity I-ness arose in you, from a distance.
6232. Because many distances lie ahead of you
your thirst exceeds that of all others.
6233. You are wetnurse to the Intellect. The sagacious Intellect
was at your teat a suckling babe!
6234. I always see you in states of transmission—
I see you scattering little gifts for the Intellect.
6235. Not until you have gotten the job done in the exterior,
can Intellect become—within the interior—worthy of the secret.
6236. Once, via wisdom, Intellect has come to possess the secret,
It must return to your doorstep.
6237. By bringing me to know the secret,
you’d be granting a beggar the king’s robe of honour.”
6238. Upon hearing this discourse, Sense became melancholy,
the candle of her five modes of perception, from sadness, died out.
6239. She replied, “Because the origin of I-ness is my very own essence,
hence associating false partners [with God] and innovating worship
are also accidental qualities of mine.
6240. When oh when will that pure wine of my declaration of absolute
oneness arrive?
If it arrives, then a scent of my unquestioning yielding to God’s
revealed command (*taqlīd*) will also arrive.
6241. I’m on 100,000 different branches at once, coming from all
directions:
When oh when will I have one devoted direction of orientation (*qibla*)
and one face?

6242. When oh when will I be freed from my multiplicities,
stacked along my neck, one upon the other?
6243. I do not have even an atom of awareness of meaning,
besides the life of the exterior and the worldly, I have nothing.
6244. It's an anomaly for a whiff of the interior to strike
the person whose life is one of the exterior.
6245. If nothing of the scent of meaning's secret is for me,
it's because Sense belongs to associating partners and isn't fit for that
alleyway.
6246. How can Sense, so imperfect, give perfection to anyone,
since then, she can offer you no cure, you have no choice but to
Imagination."
6247. The wayfarer came to the sage of the oceans and lands,
explaining his situation accurately.
6248. The sage said, "Sense is I-ness within I-ness,
her way runs through a valley unsafe.
6249. [p. 408] From head to toe, she's a world of divisions;
she cannot give anyone even an atom of the bringing of things together.
6250. Become unaccustomed to divisions, young man!
So that your Sufi cloak isn't torn to useless shreds.
6251. Recognize eternal fortune as bringing things together.
Whatever you come to learn, regard with this intention.
6252. As long as your I-ness reckons you weak,
your arrogance will hold you powerless.
6253. Till when, because of haughtiness, will you be drunk in the ruins?!
Dirt! That should be answer enough for your arrogance."

Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240) on the Masters of Sensation

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240) is a pivotal figure in the history of Islamic mysticism, and “certainly the most prolific of all Ṣūfī writers” (Ateş).¹ His large oeuvre has given rise to a rich commentary tradition, to many refutations and controversies within the Islamic world, as well as to many modern studies. However, as Alexander Knysh has observed, “[a]lthough his vast work has been analyzed in dozens of academic monographs and in hundreds of articles, Ibn [al-]‘Arabī still poses a major intellectual challenge to his investigators” (Knysh, 1). Ibn al-‘Arabī’s view of the senses is mentioned in studies of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s epistemological theory (notably Chittick, 160, 166–7, and passim), but, as this chapter hopes to demonstrate, it deserves more detailed investigation.

Born at Murcia in 560/1165 and active in Spain and North Africa in the early years of his career, Ibn al-‘Arabī set out, in 598/1202, to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, where he stayed for two years. There, he fell under the spell of a certain Niẓām, the daughter of a Persian scholar who had settled in the city (Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Tarjumān*, xxii–xxv). This event inspired him to compose an anthology of poems, *The Translator of Desires* (*Tarjumān al-ashwāq*), much of which speaks about Ibn al-‘Arabī’s beloved in strongly sensual terms (Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Tarjumān*, 5, 25, 33, passim). Also in Mecca, Ibn al-‘Arabī began to compose his magnum opus, *The Meccan Openings* (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*), which would take him three decades to complete. After further travels in the Near East and Anatolia, he settled in Damascus, where, having led an eventful, peripatetic life (see Addas; Hirtenstein), he died in 638/1240. He lies buried in the suburb of al-Ṣāliḥiyya, in a mosque that bears his name and has become a pilgrimage site for Ibn al-‘Arabī’s global community of followers and admirers.

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According to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s own testimony, *The Meccan Openings* are the record of what was revealed to him by the vision of a mysterious youth (*fatā*) he encountered at the Ka‘ba in Mecca, an experience Ibn al-‘Arabī recounts in the first chapter of his work (Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:175; see Hirtenstein, 151–2). On over 10,000 manuscript pages, *The Meccan Openings* touch on a wide range of topics, including epistemology and the role of the human sensorium in acquiring knowledge of the world and of God. Below follows a translation of five such passages dealing with the senses.

To facilitate comprehension of these passages, it is useful to outline some basic principles of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s theology, epistemology, and cosmology, and then to summarize what appear to be the salient themes in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s theory of the senses. First of all, let us note that Ibn al-‘Arabī stresses the aspect of knowledge in the human relationship with God. God is approached through knowledge rather than love, the latter being emphasized by many other Sufi teachers (Chittick, 147). Knowledge, or at least the kind of knowledge that matters in the ultimate, salvific sense, is attained through experiential states (*aḥwāl*, sing. *ḥāl*). The ability of human reason (*‘aql*) to achieve insight, by contrast, is limited. Ibn al-‘Arabī’s cosmology is essentially Neoplatonic (cf. Ebstein, “Emanation”): God, whom Ibn al-‘Arabī conceives in abstract terms as pure Existence, emanates into the cosmos as a light or by way of the “Breath of the All-Merciful” (*nafas al-Raḥmān*). The cosmos serves as God’s mirror, as the arena of His self-disclosure (*tajallī*) to humankind. Ibn al-‘Arabī envisions a vast hierarchy of living Sufi “knowers” (*‘arīfūn*) and “travelers” (*sālikūn*), presided over by a special elite of saints (*awliyā’*) capable of true and full knowledge of God. These saints are charged with “safeguarding the created world against destruction,” acting as “gatekeepers of the eschaton [and] intercessors with God, and conduits of His mercy” (Gardiner, 38). They are, accordingly, treated with the utmost respect and devotion by their followers. Among other attributes, these saints enjoy special sensory powers: they see, hear, smell, taste, and feel more, and better, than ordinary human beings.

Several of the passages that are translated below revolve around this theme. In § 1, Ibn al-‘Arabī makes the case for the special sensory powers of the saints, whom he refers to as “the masters of sensation” (*aṣḥāb al-ḥiss*). On the pages preceding this passage, Ibn al-‘Arabī has stated that perception by reason (*idrāk al-‘aql*) is of two kinds: (1) perception of axiomatic (e.g., mathematical) truths and (2) perception built on sensory data and the activity of the thinking faculty. When the latter kind results in an error, it is the thinking faculty that is to be blamed, not the senses. The senses are never mistaken (see Chittick, 166). He illustrates this principle with the following example. When looking at a ship on the horizon, some people suffer from an optical illusion, concluding

that it is in fact the coast that moves in front of their eyes, not the ship. This failure to perceive things correctly, Ibn al-‘Arabī explains, is a malfunction of the intellect, not of the eyes, which, under normal (‘*ādī*) circumstances, perceive sensibles as they really are. However, there is another, deeper and more mysterious kind of sensory perception. “The perception of intelligibles of some of God’s servants,” he states, “goes beyond normal perception (*khuriqa lahum al-‘āda fī idrākīhim al-‘ulūm*)” (Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:639). Thus, a “master of sensation,” by touching an object with the hand, comes to know not only the object’s tactile properties but everything there is to know about it.

In § 2, Ibn al-‘Arabī draws attention to the mysterious fact that certain accidents (‘*awāriḍ*)² are perceived only by specific sensory organs. For example, colors can be touched with the hands, but they are only perceived by the eyes. To Ibn al-‘Arabī, this demonstrates God’s divine craftwork, the fact that He is operative in all perceptual events.

In § 3, Ibn al-‘Arabī reiterates the notion that the spiritual elite, “the people of God” (*ahl Allāh*), have special powers of sensation. Thus, they become known to others as “masters of vision,” “masters of smell,” “masters of taste,” and so on. However, in this passage, Ibn al-‘Arabī takes this idea one step further. A master’s sensory virtuosity, he claims, rubs off onto others, to his followers, so that they, too, partake in the master’s sensory knowledge of hidden things. This process of osmotic sensation also connects the master to God. He senses *by* or *through* God (*bi-Llāh*). This is how Ibn al-‘Arabī explains the famous divine saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*), according to which God declares that “when I love My servant, I become the hearing by which he hears, the eyes by which he sees, the hands with which he touches, and the feet on which he walks” (Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:656; see Ebstein, “Organs”).

§ 4 demonstrates that human understanding, according to Ibn al-‘Arabī, is a deeply embodied, sensory affair. Reason is derivative, as it depends on the data provided by the senses. In fact, as Ibn al-‘Arabī provocatively states, reason occupies a lower epistemological rank than the senses. The senses provide the best access to the Divine. Again, Ibn al-‘Arabī invokes the above-quoted divine saying, and he draws attention to the fact that God, in the Qur’ān, declares Himself to be a sensory being: He is the “Hearing” (*samī*), the “Seeing” (*baṣīr*), and so on. By contrast, He never refers to Himself as the “Thinking” (*‘āqil*), the “Reflecting” (*mufakkir*), or the “Imagining” (*mutakhayyil*). Ibn al-‘Arabī’s musings culminate in the astonishing claim that sensation (*ḥiss*) is “God Himself” (*‘ayn al-Ḥaqq*) and that the senses are “God’s vice-regents” (*khulafā*) on earth. The passage concludes with a biting critique of the detractors of

2 On accidents in Islamic atomism, see Dhanani and the literature mentioned therein.

sensory perception—those who insist on the superiority of the intellect over the senses: they are “blind” and “deaf,” as per the Qur’ān (8:21), and ultimately, are lacking in true knowledge and understanding.

How can God be perceived? In § 5, Ibn al-‘Arabī draws a distinction between seeing God by means of ocular vision (*baṣar*) and seeing Him with the inner eye (*baṣīra*), a faculty he connects to the human heart and to the imagination. Both modes of apprehending God, Ibn al-‘Arabī insists, are legitimate and valuable. Most people worship God only in terms of a transcendent being that is located in the “world of the unseen” (*‘ālam al-ghayb*), that is, with the heart and the imagination. Beyond this ordinary, common form of worship, Ibn al-‘Arabī explains, spiritually advanced people worship God also in the “world of witnessing” (*‘ālam al-shahāda*), the physical world of the here and now. The figure of the “perfect man” (*al-insān al-kāmil*) (see Chittick, 28–30, and passim) embodies this ability par excellence. In fact, not only does the “perfect man” see God, or God’s light, in creation. He *becomes* light himself.

In § 6, Ibn al-‘Arabī explains that all three human modes of perception (*idrāk*)—by the intellect, the senses, and the faculty of the imagination—are grounded in light. He states that all objects of perception—be they rationally apprehended, sensed, or imagined objects—manifest as light. As Ibn al-‘Arabī maintains, all five senses can latch onto (*yata‘allaqu bi*) these manifestations of light, because they are themselves light. In a remarkable move, Ibn al-‘Arabī thus extends the model of extramission,³ according to which the eye emits light rays that touch visible objects and thus produce visual knowledge, from vision to the other four senses.

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[§ 1. *The Saints’ Extraordinary Power of Perception* (Book 3, Chapter 34) = Vol. 1, pp. 638–9]

[p. 638] Among God’s servants, there are also those for whom the customary way of perceiving the things that can be known is breached. Some of them are made to perceive [p. 639] intelligibles and sensibles by means of a special faculty of vision, perceiving [by merely looking] what is perceived [by others] by means of all the faculties together. Others [do this] by means of the faculty of hearing. It is like this with all the faculties, and even with accidental things that are unlike the faculties, such as laying on hands (*ḍarb*), movement, rest, and other such things. The Prophet of God said: “God put His hand between my shoulder blades so that I felt the coolness of His fingertips in my chest, and thus I gained knowledge of what was and what is to come.”⁴ [...]

We have explained all this in order to introduce something that we want to attribute to the prophets and saints among the People of God,⁵ namely, that

4 According to Muslim tradition, both God’s hand and the hand of the Prophet Muḥammad have a cooling, healing effect on those touched by them. See Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 5:243: “I saw Him put His palm between my shoulder blades, so that I felt the coolness of His fingertips in my chest.” For the Prophet’s hand, see, e.g., Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, k. *al-marḍā* 13.

5 The “People of God” (*ahl Allāh*) is one of the terms that Ibn al-‘Arabī uses to refer to a special class of spiritually advanced people.

they perceive things in ways that are out of the ordinary. When they perceive [things in these ways], they are linked to the capacity by which they perceive them. Thus, people say that someone is a “master of vision,” that is, by virtue of vision, he perceives all the things that can be known. This is something that I have experienced (*dhuqtuhu*), in common with the Prophet of God. [Or they say that] someone is a “master of hearing,” a “master of taste,” a “master of breath and fragrances,” that is, of olfaction, or a “master of touch.”

[§ 2. *Sensing by the Grace of God (Book 3, Chapter 35) = Vol. 1, p. 653]*

Things are known by different means (*turuq*): through hearing, sight, smell, touch, taste, and reason. This is so both in terms of axiomatic truths (*darūriyyāt*)—that is, [knowledge] that is perceived immediately, without [the help of] another faculty—and in terms of sound thinking (*al-fikr al-ṣaḥīḥ*). [That is, knowledge] comes either by means of the senses or by way of axiomatic truths and intuitive understanding (*badīhiyyāt*). There is nothing else. This is what is called “knowledge” (*‘ilm*).

The things that occur as accidents [of substances] (*al-umūr al-‘arīḍa*) and the knowledge that is gained from them also rely on these basic means [of acquiring knowledge]; they are not separate from them. These things are called “accidents” (*‘awāriḍ*) for the following reason. Normally, colors are not perceived by the sense of touch. Rather, vision perceives them. Occasionally, we may observe a blind person “perceiving” them by touching them. But then, the organ of touch is set up against (*‘urīḍa*) a thing that it is not normally meant to perceive. It is the same with the other means [of perception]. When they are set up against things that they are not normally meant to perceive, one says that “He set them up against them (*‘arāḍa lahā*).”

God has made it thus in order to alert us to the fact that, contrary to what the people of intellectual examination (*ahl al-naẓar*) claim, there is no reality (*ḥaqīqa*) in which the divine power is not operative. Rather, that reality [i.e., color] is [perceived] only according to the form (*ṣūra*) that God has made for it. [...] [It is as if] God says: “It is only [perceived] because We made it so.”

[§ 3. *Osmotic Sensation of Hidden Things (Book 3, Chapter 35) = Vol. 1, pp. 655–6]*

[p. 655] God makes every single one of the People of God know things either through all the faculties, or through a specific one. As we have established, this can be the olfactory organ, making the person the “master of the knowledge of smells” (*ṣāhib ‘ilm al-anfās*); or it can be the eye, making the person the “master of vision” (*ṣāhib naẓar*); or it can be laying on hands (*ḍarb*), which is a type of touch

(*lams*), alluded to specifically by the presence of “cool fingertips.”⁶ The master of the attribute by means of which [p. 656] knowledge is acquired becomes associated with it, so that he is called “the master of such-and-such.” [...]

Now, the “master of the knowledge of taste” becomes [himself] taste (*yaṣīru dhawq*), and the “master of the knowledge of smell” becomes [himself] smell (*yaṣīru sham*), that is, if he is a “master of taste,” he effects in another person what taste has effected in him, and if he is a “master of olfaction,” he effects olfaction in him [the other person]. He [the other person] judges [things] accordingly, becoming himself the sense (*ma’nā*) by which the person perceives things, in the same way in which a person in a mirror perceives things [located behind his back] that he would not perceive in this situation, were it not for the mirror.

The shaykh Abū Madyan,⁷ who was a “master of vision,” had a child from a black woman. This boy, when he was seven years old, would look out [over the sea] and say, “I see on the sea in such-and-such a place a boat, and such-and-such has happened there.” Then, after some days, this boat would arrive in Béjaïa, the city in which this boy lived, and the matter would turn out to be just as he had said. People would ask the boy, “How do you see?” He would say, “With my eye.” Then he would say, “No, rather I see with my heart.” Then he would say, “No, rather I see by my father. When he is present, and I look at him, I see what I report to you; and when he is absent from me, I do not see any of it.”

According to an authentic report (*khābar ṣaḥīḥ*), God said about the people who draw near to Him through supererogatory acts of devotion (*nawāfil*), that He comes to love them: “When I love him, I become the hearing by which he hears, the eyes by which he sees, [the hands with which he touches, and the feet on which he walks] ...”⁸ That is, the person hears, sees, speaks, touches, and runs *by* Him (*bihi*). This is what we meant when we said [earlier in the chapter] that the Verifiers⁹ reproduce the likeness of the ideational form of what they have realized (*taḥaqqāqa*). So, he [the boy] used to look *by* his father,

6 See above, footnote 4.

7 In the *Meccan Openings*, Ibn al-‘Arabī quotes Abū Madyan Shu‘ayb b. al-Ḥusayn al-Anṣārī (d. 594/1198), a mystic from al-Andalus who settled in Béjaïa (Algeria), more than any other Sufi authority, calling him his “shaykh,” even though he never met him personally. See Addas, 43, and passim; Ateş.

8 This famous divine saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*) is known as the “*ḥadīth* of the supererogatory acts of devotion” (*ḥadīth al-nawāfil*). See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-riqāq* 38.

9 See Chittick, 389 n11: “In general the Shaykh al-Akbar [Ibn al-‘Arabī] applies the term ‘Verifiers’ (*al-muḥaqqiqūn*) to the highest category of the friends of God. They follow no one’s authority (*taqlīd*), since in themselves they have ‘verified’ (*taḥqīq*) and ‘realized’ (*taḥaqquq*)—through unveiling and finding—the truth (*ḥaqq*) and reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of all things.”

like a person looks with his eyes by means of a mirror. Know this. It is the same with all the “masters” of any of these faculties. It is even possible that a single person combines the entirety [of these faculties], so that he looks with every faculty, hears with every faculty, and smells with every faculty. This is the most perfect combination.

[§ 4. *The Value and Nobility of the Senses (Book 22, Chapter 346) = Vol. 8, pp. 271–3*]

[p. 271] My friend, think about how you relate to this [particular] human form (*hādhihi l-ṣūra al-insāniyya*),¹⁰ whose spirit and articulate soul (*nafsuḥā l-nāṭiqā*) is Muḥammad (may God’s blessings and peace be upon him). Do you partake in its abilities? Do its abilities inhere in you? Which of its abilities *are* you? Are you its sight? Or its hearing? Or its olfaction? Or its touch? Or its taste? I know, by God, which of the abilities of this type *I* am. Praise be to God for this.

And do not presume, my friend, that by occupying this special position in relation to this type, that is, the position [characterized by the use] of the human sensory faculties (which are also those of animals), we are deficient in respect to the position [characterized by the use] of the spiritual faculties. No, do not so presume! In fact, they [the sensory faculties] are the most powerful of the faculties, for they have the [divine] name of “the Ever-Giving”¹¹ attached to them. For they give to the spiritual faculties the things with which they employ themselves, the things by means of which they thrive in knowledge, whether by way of the faculty of the imagination, of reflection, of memorization, of image-making, of estimation, or of reasoning. All these [faculties] feed off the sensory faculties.

This is why God Exalted says about the servants whom He loves: “I become the hearing by which he hears, the eyes by which he sees, [the hands with which he touches, and the feet on which he walks].”¹² He refers [in this saying] to the sensory organs (*al-ṣūra al-ḥissiyya*), saying nothing about the spiritual faculties. He does not lower Himself to their level [the level of the spiritual faculties], for they are in a position of dependence (*iftiqār*) on the senses. God (*al-Ḥaqq*), however, does not lower Himself to the level of someone who depends on another. The senses [by contrast] are dependent on God, nothing

10 As the preceding paragraphs make clear, Ibn al-ʿArabī is talking here about human beings who have the ability to witness, through their senses, God’s self-disclosure (*tajallī*) in the cosmos.

11 “The Ever-Giving” (*al-Wahhāb*) is one of the epithets of God in the Qurʾān. See Q 3:8, 38:9, 38:35.

12 See the Introduction and above, footnote 8.

else. God lowers Himself to the level of those who [only] depend on Him and do not associate anybody with Him. He richly provides for them [the senses]. The senses are the ones by way of, and from which, things are taken. They do not take [anything] from the other faculties, [they] only [take] from God. Know, then, how noble and how valuable sensation (*ḥiss*) is: it is God Himself (*‘ayn al-Ḥaqq*). This is why the afterworld (*al-nash‘a al-ākhirā*) would not be complete without the presence of sensation and sensibilia (*al-ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*): it could never be complete without God. The sensory faculties, in reality, are God’s vice-regents (*khulafā’*) on this earth.

[p. 272] Don’t you see how God Exalted describes Himself [in the Qur’ān] as “hearing,” “seeing,” “speaking,” “alive,” “knowing,” “capable,” and “willing”? These are all attributes that affect sensed objects, and human beings feel the impact of these [divine] faculties on themselves. [By contrast,] He Exalted does not describe Himself as “thinking” (*‘āqil*), “reflecting” (*mufakkir*), or “imagining” (*mutakhayyil*). He retains only the spiritual faculties for Himself that have a certain connection with sensation. He is “the Preserver” (*al-ḥāfiẓ*) and “the Image-Maker” (*al-muṣawwir*), for sensation has a [direct] impact on [mental] preservation (*ḥifẓ*) and image-making (*taṣwīr*). If they [these two faculties] did not have a connection with sensation, He would not describe Himself with them. He is, however, “the Preserver” and “the Image-Maker.” These two attributes are spiritual *and* sensory.

Therefore, be alerted to what I am calling your attention to, lest you feel deflated when I bring you down to the level of the sensory faculties, because you hold sensation to be ignoble and reason to be noble. I am teaching you that sensation is an entirely noble thing, and that you have been ignorant of what it really is; of how valuable it is. If you knew yourself, you would know God—just like God knows you and the world by His knowledge of Himself. You are [made according to] His image;¹³ it is inevitable, therefore, that you share in this knowledge. You know it by knowing yourself. [...]

If you possess keen understanding, [you will realize that] we have indicated to you how things really are; no, in fact, we have clearly explained this. In doing so, we have suffered the allegations made against us by the blind people who deny what we have alluded to concerning this matter. They are the ones who “know but what is apparent of the worldly life, while they are heedless of the afterlife” (Q 30:7). By God, were it not for this verse, we would have judged them to be blind in regard to both what is apparent of the worldly life and the afterlife, in the same way in which God has judged them to be deaf, despite their having hearing, by cautioning [p. 273], “Do not be like those who say, ‘We

13 See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-janna* 11: “God [...] created Adam in His image.”

have heard,' while they do not hear" (Q 8:21). Despite the fact that they heard, He declared them to be non-hearing. Likewise [non-existent] is the knowledge of these people, [their knowledge] of what is apparent of this worldly life, based on the sensibilia (and nothing else) that their senses perceive. For God Exalted is neither their hearing nor their seeing.

[§ 5. *Worshipping God According to the Sensible World*
(*Book 24, Chapter 355*) = *Vol. 8, p. 447*]

When God created the microcosm of your body (*arḍ badanika*), He placed a Ka'ba inside it: your heart. He made this high abode [the heart] the noblest of all the abodes in [the bodies of] the believers. It is related that neither the heavens, in which there is the Frequented House,¹⁴ nor the earth, in which there is the Ka'ba, encompass Him [God]. [p. 448] They are too small for Him. However, this heart [of yours], which is a part of [the bodies of the group of] created human believers (*min al-nash'a al-insāniyya al-mu'mina*), does encompass Him.¹⁵ What is meant by "encompassing" here is that God Exalted is *known* (*al-'ilm bi-Llāh*). [...]

So, devote yourself to it [your heart] as if you were able see it with the eyes. For your heart is veiled from your ocular vision (*baṣar*), being inside you. Likewise, "worship God as if you saw Him"¹⁶ inside yourself, as befits His loftiness. It is the eye of your inner vision (*baṣīra*) that witnesses Him. To it [the inner vision], He appears in the form of knowledge, so that you see Him with the eye of your inner vision. As regards [the expression] "as if you saw Him" with your ocular vision, combine these two aspects in your worship, [that is, the worship that] He Exalted is due in the [heart's] realm of the imagination (*fī l-khayāl*) and the worship He is due outside of the realm of the imagination. [...] Only we, believing human beings (*hādhihi l-nash'a*), are able to do this. [...]

All created beings worship God according to the [world of the] unseen (*'alā l-ghayb*)—with the exception of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) of faith, who worships Him according to the witnessed world [i.e., the seen world] (*'alā l-mushāhada*), all worshippers requiring faith (*īmān*) for their perfection. He

14 In Islamic tradition, the Frequented House (*al-bayt al-ma'mūr*), sometimes imagined as a tent made of red hyacinth, is the celestial counterpart of the earthly Ka'ba.

15 Ibn al-'Arabī refers here to the divine saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*) that "My heavens and My earth are not vast enough for Me, but the heart of My believing servant (*qalb 'abdī l-mu'min*) is." See al-Ghazālī, 315.

16 According to a Prophetic saying, "good behavior (*al-iḥsān*) [...] is to worship God as if you see Him, for although you may not see Him, He sees you." See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-īmān* 37; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-īmān* 57.

[the Perfect Believing Man] has the brilliant light; nay, he *is* the brilliant light that erases all darkness. Now, when he worships Him in the [world of] witnessing (*‘alā l-shahāda*), he sees Him [manifesting Himself in] all His powers. None but he worships Him in this way, and nobody else should.

[§ 6. *Light as the Ground of Perception (Book 24, Chapter 360) = Vol. 8, p. 524*]

Were it not for light, nothing at all would be perceived—no object of intellection (*ma‘lūm*), no object of sensation (*maḥsūs*), and no object of the imagination (*mutakhayyal*). The names given to the faculties [of perception] differ from “the light,” but these [names] are [just] the names that common people use for them. According to the Knowers,¹⁷ [they are] names that refer to the light by which we perceive. If you perceive sounds (*masmū‘āt*), you refer to this light as “hearing.” If you perceive visible objects (*mubṣarāt*), you refer to this light as “vision.” If you perceive tactile objects (*malmūsāt*), you refer to what makes you perceive it as “touch.” It is the same regarding the things you imagine. It [light] is [in reality] the faculty of touch, nothing else, as well as [the faculties of] olfaction, taste, imagination, memorization, reasoning, reflection, and image-making. Everything by which something is perceived is but light.

As for the objects that are perceived, if they were not in themselves made ready in a way that facilitates the perceiving subject’s perception of them, they would not be perceived. They provide a manifestation (*zuhūr*) to the perceiving subject, and then perception latches on to them (*yata‘allaqu bihā*). The manifestation is light, so that every perceived object is necessarily connected to light. By means of it [the light], it is made ready for being perceived.

[Further,] all objects of intellection are connected to the truth. Truth is light. Therefore, every object of intellection is connected to light. You perceive [even] the “impossible thing”¹⁸ by means of light. Were it not for the manifestation of the “impossible thing,” and were it [the “impossible thing”] not amenable to the perceiving subject’s perception according to what it is, you would not perceive it. Thus, it [light] applies to all categories of reasoning.

17 As noted in the Introduction, Ibn al-‘Arabī often refers to the saints, or “Friends of God” (*awliyā’ Allāh*), as the *‘arifūn*, “the Knowers,” or “the Gnostics.” As William C. Chittick notes, the *‘arifūn* “and recognize God wherever they look.” See Chittick, 4.

18 According to Ibn al-‘Arabī, the “impossible thing” (*al-muḥāl*), one of three basic ontological categories, cannot exist within the cosmos, but “it can exist in a certain fashion in the mind of man or God.” See Chittick, 82, 87, *passim*.

Najm al-Dīn Rāzī Dāya (d. 654/1256) on the Sequence of Visionary Lights

Austin O'Malley

1 Introduction

Najm al-Dīn Rāzī Dāya was born in Rayy in 573/1177, traveled widely throughout Iran, Iraq, and Anatolia, and also visited Egypt and the Hijaz. It was in Baghdad that he was first initiated into Sufism by Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umār al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), the prominent shaykh and de facto founder of the Suhrawardiyya Sufi order, but he received further (and more influential) training in Khwarazm. He was there a disciple of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 617/1220), the eponym of the Kubrawī Sufi tradition, but the bulk of his spiritual training was actually carried out by Kubrā's ill-fated star student, Majd al-Dīn al-Baghdādī, who was executed by the ruler of Khwarazm in 606/1209. Dāya left Khwarazm in 616/1219 in the face of the gathering Mongol storm, and, like a number of Sufi figures from the East, found refuge in Anatolia. There he unsuccessfully sought patronage: first from 'Alā' al-Dīn Kay Qubād 1 (r. 616–34/1220–37), the Seljuq sultan of Rūm, and then from 'Alā' al-Dīn Dā'ūd (r. 622–5/1225–8), the Mengüjek ruler of Erzinjan. He left Anatolia disappointed but enjoyed some favor with the Abbasid caliph, whom he served on a diplomatic mission in 622/1225. He seems to have spent the rest of his life in Iraq, Fārs, and western Iran. He died in 654/1256 and was buried in Baghdad.

In the *Path of God's Servants* (*Mirṣād al-'ibād*)—a Sufi manual that Dāya composed in Persian, and a section of which is translated below—he displays an intense interest in questions of spiritual guidance and pedagogy, which he metaphorically describes as “nursing.” It is likely from this metaphor that his own sobriquet, “the Wetnurse” (*dāya*), is derived. However, only three of his own students are known by name, and they do not figure prominently in later Kubrawī lineages (Algar; Rīāhī, “Dāya”).

Dāya composed several works in Persian and Arabic, but by far the most well-known and influential was the *Mirṣād*. It explores human beings' role in the cosmos from a Sufi perspective, examining both the metaphysical process whereby God brings about creation, and the psychological (and eschatological) process through which human beings mystically reascend toward God.

It exists in multiple authorial recensions, resulting in a knotty textual history. The first version, which was finished in Kayseri in 618/1221, seems to have circulated primarily among Kubrawīs and other dervish communities. It may very well have been intended to garner the patronage of Kay Qubād, but it does not seem to have caught his eye. At the urging of his old master al-Suhrawardī, Dāya compiled a new recension of the text, finished in 620/1223. It included some stylistic changes and a clear dedication to Kay Qubād, to whom it was presented in Sivas accompanied by a letter of introduction from al-Suhrawardī. This version of the text is said to have resulted in a handsome reward for Dāya, though he was not satisfied, likely having hoped for a permanent position in a Sufi lodge or madrasa. He thus produced yet another version of the text in 621/1224, this time under the title *Marzūmāt-i Asadi dar mazmūrāt-i Dāʿūdī* (*The Asadian Secrets in the Davidian Psalms*) for the Mengūjek prince ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Dāʿūd. The new title references the prospective patron's name, and the material is largely an abridgment of the *Mirṣād*, although more emphasis is given to the affairs of kings (Lewis, 74–81; Rīāḥī, "Introduction," 53–6).

Consistent with the institutionalization of Sufism during this period, Dāya emphasizes Sufi novices' reliance on a spiritual master who can guide them through a regime of spiritual exercises aimed at the purification of the soul. Particularly important for the Kubrawīs was the practice of seclusion, in which the disciple would enter a small room for a period of 40 days. They would remain in the cell except for brief periods when participating in communal prayers, relieving themselves, and conferencing with their shaykh. Over the course of this isolation, they would engage in a variety of ascetic practices, including fasting, night vigils, recitation of the Qurʾān, and *dhikr* ("remembrance"; Waley, 519–21). These practices, in combination with the isolation of seclusion, would dampen the noise of the external senses and thereby allow the heart and the spirit to turn toward the unseen realm:

The room must be small and dark, with a curtain pulled over the door so that no light or sound can enter. Then the senses will cease functioning: there will be no seeing, hearing, speaking, or moving. Freed from its occupation with the senses and sensible things, the spirit will turn instead to the unseen world. Once the senses cease functioning, *dhikr* and control of stray thoughts will mitigate those afflictions that had previously troubled the spirit through the hatches of the five senses, and their veils will also fall away. The spirit will thus enjoy intimacy with the unseen as its intimacy with humanity recedes.

The practice of retreat, especially when coupled with *dhikr* (discussed below), inaugurates a shift from the external senses to the internal faculties of perception, and from the visible world to the “unseen”—a realm, that, while formerly veiled, is now subject to perception.

Although a Sufi would engage in a host of ascetic exercises over the course of such a retreat, the practice of *dhikr* played a special role in the production of visions (Abuali). *Dhikr* was a fundamental practice for most Sufis, in which a word or phrase would be verbally or silently repeated in order to direct one's attention—indeed, one's entire being—toward God. In the case of the Kubrawīs, the favored *dhikr* was the Muslim testament of faith, “There is no god but God.” Following what had by then become a common Sufi notion, Dāya describes *dhikr* as a means of “polishing” the mirror of the heart. The metaphor hinges on the specific characteristics of metal mirrors, which were much more common than glass mirrors in the premodern period. These mirrors were subject to oxidation, so they had to be regularly cleaned and burnished to maintain a reflective surface. The more burnished the mirror, the more reflective it becomes: when perfectly cleaned, the surface of the mirror itself seems to disappear and be replaced by the image that it reflects. The heart, according to this metaphorical understanding, is a mirror that reflects God's light, but only if it is burnished through the work of *dhikr*. By burnishing the heart, Sufis cleanse themselves of the “rust” of their human attributes and become sites for the manifestation for God's light. When the mirror of the heart is perfectly clean, the Sufis are so overwhelmed by the reflection of God within that it is as if they themselves have ceased to exist; such a state is referred to in Sufi discourse as “annihilation” (*fanā*).

The notion of the heart-as-mirror is not limited to the Kubrawīs. What sets them apart from other Sufi groups, however, is their robust classification of the various lights and visions that a wayfarer might witness reflected therein (Corbin, 61–110; Elias). Besides the luminescence of the Divine, lights and visions from other sources might also appear in the burnished mirror of the heart, including those of angelic, psychological, and even satanic origin. Dāya devotes an entire chapter to such visions, in which he explains several general principles of interpretation, while also reminding his readers that actual visions should always be referred to one's shaykh for deciphering. For example, visions of beasts—dogs, monkeys, snakes, etc.—generally indicate particular vices or the dominance of the carnal soul. If the Sufi sees himself killing or subduing these animals, he will know that they are besting these traits and leaving them behind. At a higher level, paradisiacal scenes, oceans, pools, and palaces can all indicate the heart, and visions of flight and levitation can signify specific spiritual stations. All of these visions originate in non-material psychic or

metaphysical realms, but they are “translated” into recognizable forms by the viewer’s imagination. While awake, the imagination works to abstract images from the senses and store them, but when the senses cease during sleep or visionary states, the imagination can work in reverse: it receives intelligibles from other realms that are then “clothed” in sensory forms so that they can be perceived by the heart. The imagination was theorized by philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) and al-Fārābī (d. 339/950–1), and although Najm al-Dīn Dāya is rather hostile toward philosophy in principle, philosophical theories of the imagination are key to his understanding of visionary experiences.

The Kubrawīs were particularly concerned with a special class of visions: lights in different shapes and colors. In the chapter translated below, Dāya outlines a hierarchy of lights. If the heart has not yet been completely purified, the lights that appear generally originate within the perceiver’s own psychic being (i.e., the carnal soul, the heart, or the spirit) and indicate their relative levels of purity and strength. They can also originate from pious acts, the Prophet, or the authority of the spiritual guide. At higher levels, when the heart has been polished to a pure reflective sheen, the lights of God’s attributes (*anvār-i šifāt-i ḥaqq*)—which He discloses to those whom He favors—might appear therein. It is at this point that the mystic may experience “annihilation,” an experiential realization that nothing exists but God.

While visionary phenomena are the focus of Dāya’s attention, the other senses are not inactive. The oral production and aural apprehension of *dhikr* facilitates the heart’s reception of these visions and unveilings, some of which can take on an auditory character (Abuali). For example, Moses’ encounter with the burning bush, from which he heard “Truly, I am God” (Q 28:30), is interpreted by Dāya as an instance of God disclosing Himself through the “doors of hearing” and the veils of imagination as an audible voice. Dāya also speaks of “tasting” (*dhawq*), commonly understood in Sufism as a mode of intuitive, experiential knowing through which one can access truths that cannot, as Dāya puts it, “be captured in speech.” He frequently uses the metaphor of “tasting” to characterize the ineffable nature of other modalities of spiritual sensory experience, which thus take on a synesthetic character: different colors of visionary lights, for example, each carry a different “taste.” Moses’ aforementioned audition of God was an instance of a “taste” entering through the “doors of hearing,” and Abraham “tasted” the phrase “I am your Lord” in his spirit before he could utter “This is my Lord” (Q 6:76) with his tongue.

The scholarly edition of the *Mirṣād* used here was first published in 1973 by Muḥammad-Amīn Rīāḥī. He intended to reconstruct the second recension of the *Mirṣād* (dedicated to Kay Qubād), but the two versions of the text are so entangled in the textual tradition that he was forced to abandon this idea and

produce a more hybrid version (Riāḥī, "Introduction," 118–20). The text was translated into English in its entirety by Hamid Algar in 1980. Algar's excellent translation is an invaluable scholarly resource. The rendition offered here, however, is meant to be more accessible for non-experts. I have taken greater liberties with the syntax, avoiding the long strings of nominalizations that characterize the original, shortening and simplifying sentence structure, and adding logical connectors to clarify the thread of Dāya's argument. This means, of course, that my own understanding of the text has colored the translation, which is in many ways more determined than the original Persian. In keeping with the aims of this handbook, I have also attempted, whenever possible, to maintain the sensory connotations of technical Sufi terms and idiomatic turns of phrase.

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Najm al-Dīn Rāzī Dāya, *Mirṣād al-‘ibād*, ed. Muḥammad-Amīn Riāḥī, Tehran: Intishārāt-i ‘Ilmī va Farhangī, 1391sh/2012, pp. 299–309: “The Sequence of Visionary Lights”.

[§ 1. *Lights Appear in the Polished Mirror of the Heart*]

[p. 299] God said: “The heart did not lie about what it saw; would you then dispute with him about what he saw? Truly, he saw it another time, descending” (Q 53:13). And the Prophet said: “Sincerity is that you worship God as if you see Him.”¹

Know that the heart (*dil*) is a mirror, and the phrase “There is no god but God” gradually polishes it: “Everything can be polished, and hearts are polished by the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God.”² When the heart has been cleansed of the rust of human nature and the darkness of human attributes and it begins to shine, it will start to receive lights from the unseen realm. How the Sufi wayfarer sees these lights depends how they manifest themselves and how well he has polished his heart.

At first, most of them will resemble flashes, glimmers, and sparkles:

O lightning that glimmers—
From which protected sanctuary do you shine?³

As the heart is polished further, these lights become brighter and more frequent. Following the flashes, they will be observed in the form of lamps, candles, flames, and kindled fires. Then, celestial lights will appear, first in the form of lesser and greater stars, then in the form of the Moon [p. 300] and the Sun. Finally, they will appear completely abstracted from any locus. Explaining this would take some time, but, God willing, a “scent” of this matter will be presented below.

1 This tradition of the Prophet (*ḥadīth*) is found in most major collections, e.g., Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-īmān* 57.

2 This *ḥadīth* is found in a relatively late compendium of traditions, the *Mishkāt al-maṣābiḥ* of Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī (d. 743/1342).

3 This verse previously appeared in al-Suhrawardī’s *Lughat-i mūrān*, 307.

[§ 2. *Various Sources of Light*]

Know that these lights emerge from diverse sources, including the spiritual being (*rūḥāniyyat*) of the Sufi wayfarer; the sainthood of the shaykh and the prophethood of Muḥammad; the spirits of the prophets, the saints, and the shaykhs; the divine presence; the recitation of “There is no god but God” and other forms of remembrance (*dhikr*); Islam and faith; and various acts of worship and obedience. Each one of these has a different light. Every light springs from a different source, and from every source springs a different light appropriate for it. Each light has its own “taste” and color.

When the lights emerge completely from behind the veils, the imagination no longer interferes in them, so colors fade away. They can then be seen as colorless and formless, lacking location and shape, and without structure or quality: absolute light is purified and abstracted from all of that. Form and color are contamination perceived by the imagination from behind the opaque veils of human attributes. When the spiritual being dominates, these attributes no longer remain, so colorless, formless brilliance appears.

It is difficult to explain in detail, in an abbreviated discussion like this, where each of these various lights specifically comes from. In brief, those lights that appear as flashes and glimmers generally emerge from *dhikr*, ablution, or prayer. Sometimes the spirit’s lights are so overpowering that they rip open the veils of human nature as if they were clouds, and the light of the spiritual being is seen like a bolt of lightning. [p. 301] Once, for example, a disciple of Shaykh Abū Saʿīd-i Abū l-Khayr (d. 440/1049) had performed his ablutions and gone into the cells where seclusion was practiced.⁴ He then screamed and ran out, saying, “I have seen God!” The shaykh, who recognized spiritual states, said: “Ignoramus! That was just the light of your ablution. Look where you still are, compared to where that Presence is!”

When lights appear in the form of lamps, candles, and the like, they have been kindled from the sainthood of the shaykh or the Prophet, who is “a light-spreading lamp” (Q 33:46). Such lights can also be kindled from the benefits of the sciences, or from the light of the Qurʾān or the light of the Faith. These lights—which appear in the form of lanterns and candles—are actually the heart (*dil*), and they display light in accordance with the amount that they have been illuminated from the higher worlds that we have just mentioned. If they appear as a lantern or lantern-niche, they also signify the heart in accordance with a comparison that God has made: “The likeness of His light is like a niche in which there is a lantern” (Q 24:35).

4 Abū Saʿīd was an important Sufi in Khurasan who exemplified the rise of the training master and the institution of the Sufi lodge (*khānaqāh*).

If celestial lights appear, such as stars, moons, and suns, these are the lights of the wayfarer's spiritual being. They appear in the sky of the heart according to its level of polish. If the heart is purified to the level of a star, the light of the spirit (*rūḥ*) will appear therein as a star. Sometimes this star may be seen against the sky, sometimes without the sky. If the sky is visible, then it is the fleshy aspect of the heart; [p. 302] the star is then the light of the spirit in accordance with the purity of the heart, whether that be small or great, little or much. If the sky is not visible, then the star is the reflection of the heart's light, the intellect's light, or faith's light within the pure air of the chest.

Sometimes the carnal soul is purified to the point that it appears to the gaze as the sky, and the heart is seen therein as the Moon. If the Moon is full, the heart is fully purified; if the Moon is partial, then the heart remains turbid to the same proportion. When the mirror of the heart is completely purified, it receives light from the spirit, and the latter is observed as the Sun—and if the purification continues, this Sun will become even brighter, until this image is a thousand times brighter than the external Sun. If the Sun and the Moon are seen together, the Sun is the spirit and the Moon is the heart, which reflects the light of the spirit and is illumined thereby. In such a case, however, the spirit's light still has not risen from behind the veils, which is how the imagination continues to imprint an appropriate image (i.e., that of the Sun) upon it. In actuality, however, the light of the spirit is without form, color, or image.

Sometimes the Sun, Moon, or stars might appear in a pool, the sea, a well, a stream, a mirror, or the like. All of these are the lights of the wayfarer's spiritual being, and the different locations [p. 303] in which they appear are the heart, which the imagination has fashioned in such a way.

[§ 3. *The Light of God's Attributes*]

And sometimes a ray of light from God's attributes goes forth in welcome—in accordance with “Whoever draws near to Me one span, I move toward him one cubit”—and projects a reflection onto the mirror of the heart in proportion to its purity from behind the psychic veils.⁵ This is how Abraham was in the beginning: “And when night veiled him, he saw a star” (Q 6:76).⁶ Because his heart was purified to the level of a star, he saw that light in the amount of

5 A well-known *ḥadīth qudsī* (a saying attributed to God that was related to the Prophet, but which is not part of the Qur'an). See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-dhikr* 20.

6 Dāya is commenting here on the Qur'anic story of Abraham and the celestial bodies, in which he first identifies a star, then the Moon, and finally the Sun as his Lord, only to abandon these identifications when he sees those bodies set (Q 7:74–8). Often understood as Abraham's conversion to monotheism through reflection on creation, Dāya presents a specifically Kubrawī understanding of the story: Abraham was actually witnessing the light of

a star. When his heart was completely freed from the rust of human nature, he saw that light in the image of the moon: "And when he saw the Moon rising ..." (Q 6:77). And when his mirror was totally purified, he saw the Sun: "And when he saw the Sun rising ..." (Q 6:77). In actuality, Abraham's soul gazed on a reflection of the lights of God's attributes that had been projected onto the mirror of the heart. But this reflection was projected through the psychic veils in the station of polychromatic mutability (*tabvīn*), which is why it "set." And Abraham said, "I do not love that which sets ..." (Q 6:76).

These images were all projected from behind the veils, so they appeared in many forms, even though God is above form. And they were witnessed in a state of polychromatic mutability, so they set, even though God never sets. Abraham could perceive rays of light from God's attributes because his heart enjoyed the "taste of witnessing" (*dhawq-i shuhūd*) through God's disclosure. His heart testified to its truth, for the heart is a sincere arbiter, and lies cannot corrupt the heart's vision: "The heart did not lie about [p. 304] what it saw" (Q 53:13). The heart—as a heart—does not perceive lies. Abraham knew "this is my Lord" (Q 6:76) from this ray, which he observed through his heart.

[§ 4. *Lights of Disclosure*]

The lights of God, witnessed by the heart, are lights of disclosure: they disclose themselves to the heart through themselves. A "taste" of presence appears in the soul, and, through that taste, the heart knows that what it sees is from God and no other. This is something that must be tasted: it cannot be easily captured in speech.

This taste admits of different varieties. If the disclosure enters through the doors of hearing, it will be as it was with Moses: "Truly, I am God" (Q 28:30). As long it is disclosed from behind the veils, it will be mediated: "[Moses heard a call ...] from the bush: 'Truly, I am God'" (Q 28:30). But when the veils are lifted, it is heard without mediation: "And God spoke to Moses with speech" (Q 4:164).

And if it is disclosed through the doors of vision while the veils remain, it is likewise mediated. Thus it was for Abraham: "When he saw the Sun rising, he said, 'This is my Lord'" (Q 6:77). Only when he had tasted "I am your Lord" in his spirit could he utter "This is my Lord" on his tongue. But when all the veils are removed, one sees without mediation, as was the case with the Prophet: "The heart did not lie about what it saw; would you then dispute with him about what he saw?" (Q 53:11–12). 'Umar, too, [p. 305] had a little taste of this when

God's attributes in each of these instances, which had been made manifest in mutable forms because it was projected on his heart through the veils of the imagination.

he said, “My heart saw my Lord.” The Prophet also alluded to the fruits of this “tasting” when he explained sincerity: “It is to worship God as if you see Him.”

[§ 5. *Internal and External Vision*]

Someone might ask: did Abraham see the Sun, Moon, and stars in the internal or the external world? We reply that it makes no difference. Once the mirror of the heart is purified, it sometimes sees visions from the unseen world, which are perceived in the world of the heart via the imagination. Other times, one may witness visible manifestations in the external world via the senses, as when the light of God manifests itself in appropriate objects such as the Sun, Moon, and stars, all of which reflect the rays of God’s light—“God is the light of the heavens and the earth” (Q 24:35). In this case, too, it is the heart that actually sees these reflections, which are disclosed by God. With the “taste” of “this is my Lord” disclosed by God, the seen and unseen become one, and the internal and external, too.

[§ 6. *The Lifting of the Veils*]

Sometimes the heart is completely purified, the veils become transparent, and the revelation of “We will show them Our signs in the heavens and in their souls” is revealed (Q 41:53). If you look inside yourself, you will see God as everything. Wherever you look in creation, you will see God therein. As that great man once said, “I have not looked at anything without seeing God within it.”⁷ But when the veils are completely lifted, and the station of direct witnessing is opened, one says: “I have not looked at anything without seeing God in front of it.” And if one is drowned in the endless ocean of witnessing, then oneself as witnesser vanishes and [p. 306] only the Witness remains. As Junayd said, “There is nothing in existence except God.”⁸ In this stage of witnessing, the Witness gazes on His own beauty through the mirror of the human heart. I have humbly composed some verses on this matter:

I have spent a lifetime in search of you, with my head as my feet
I’ve travelled in your footsteps on my eyeballs
For this reason, I am now the mirror of your face,
and I gaze on your face through your eyes.

7 This saying is quoted several times in the *Mirṣād*, attributed to an unnamed “great man.” It is attributed to Muḥammad b. Wāsi‘ (d. 127/744), an early ascetic, in ‘Aṭṭār’s *Tadhkirat al-awliyā’* and Hujwīrī’s *Kashf al-maḥjūb*. See Riāḥī’s edition, 596.

8 Junayd (d. 298/910) was a central figure in early Sufi circles in Baghdad. He was later remembered as a practitioner of a “sober” mode of Sufism as opposed to the more “intoxicated” spirituality of Ḥallāj (d. 309/922) and Bisṭāmī (d. 261/874 or 264/877–8).

[§ 7. *The Color of the Lights*]

The color of the lights depends on the station in which they are witnessed. For example, in the station of the “blaming soul,” a blue light appears, which is the light of the spirit (or the light of *dhikr*) mixed with the darkness of the carnal soul; the spirit’s luminescence together with the carnal soul’s darkness gives birth to a blue light. As the shadow of the carnal soul wanes and the light of the spirit increases, a red light is seen. When the light of the spirit dominates this mixture, a yellow light appears, and when the shadow of the carnal soul no longer remains at all, a white light appears. Then, when the light of the spirit is mixed with the purity of the heart, a green light appears. If the heart is completely purified, a light like that of the Sun radiates forth. When the heart’s mirror is perfectly polished, the light of the spirit appears therein just like the Sun in a flawless mirror; its rays are so powerful that the vision can never contain them.

[p. 307] When a reflection from the light of God is projected onto the light of the spirit, then the vision of lights is mixed with the “taste of witnessing” (*dhawq-i shuhūd*). If the light of God is witnessed without psychic and spiritual veils, it will appear without color, quality, limit, likeness, or opposite; it is necessarily enduring and unchanging. Here there is no setting or rising, no right or left, place or time, proximity or distance, day or night: “For God, there is no morning and no evening.” Here there is no Throne or Carpet, and no World or Hereafter.

A light appears; when it appears, it stabilizes

A sun rises, and he who sees it, believes

The people are content in the darkness of grief’s essence

How much have I spoken, and how much do I speak! But with whom?

[§ 8. *The Lights of Beauty and Majesty*]

The lights of God’s attributes of beauty (*jamāl*) emerge from the world of divine grace. At the beginning of the station of witnessing, they manifest the effects of “annihilation” (*fanā*) described above. The lights of the attributes of majesty (*jalāl*), on the other hand, emerge from the world of divine wrath; they exact the annihilation of annihilation, or even the annihilation of annihilation. This cannot be easily explained. A burning light appears that manifests the property of “It does not let them remain, nor does it leave them” (Q 74:28). The seven hells are, in fact, just a ray of this light. The lights of God’s beauty illuminate without burning, while the lights of God’s majesty burn without illuminating; not everyone can perceive these meanings.

Sometimes the lights of the attributes of majesty are absolutely pitch black. How can the intellect understand a pitch-black light since it thinks the “joining [p. 308] of opposites” (*al-jam‘ bayn al-diddayn*) is impossible? The Prophet alluded to this kind of black light, if you could understand, when he said that Hell was burning for several thousand years before it turned red; another several thousand years until it turned white; and for several thousand years more until it turned black, which is how it is now. How can the intellect comprehend a black fire?

Reality is unity and unicity. Therefore, wherever you look in the two worlds, there is only light and darkness radiating from His attributes of beauty and majesty, respectively. “God is the light of the heavens and the earth” (Q 24:35). That is why, when God established light and darkness, He referred to it as “making” and not “creating”: “He created the heavens and the earth, and He made darkness and light” (Q 6:1). That which is created has a different character from that which is made. There are a number of ramifications to this, but not everyone has the capacity to understand them.

But back to the attributes of majesty: in the station of annihilation of annihilation, they reveal the dreadful terror of divinity and the overwhelming grandeur of eternity. There, a black light is seen that bestows transcendence and subsistence; it is at once fatal and life-giving. It shines forth, breaking the greatest spell and driving away the nebulous forms. Shaykh Aḥmad al-Ghazālī has composed a symbolic verse on this matter:

We saw the world’s secrets and its origin
and easily passed on from disease and dishonor
Know that this black light lies beyond the point of “No”;
We passed that too, and neither this nor that remains.⁹

[p. 309] When the Prophet prayed “show me things as they are,” he was praying that the lights of His attributes of grace and wrath would manifest.¹⁰ Everything in the world that has any existence is born from rays of light from His grace or wrath. Nothing has any real existence outside of this in the sense that it stands

9 Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 517/1123 or 520/1126), the brother of Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, was a Sufi preacher and theoretician. This quatrain appears in his *Savānīh*, but his student ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt attributes it to one Abū l-Ḥasan Bustī. See the notes in Rīāḥī’s edition (631) and Algar’s translation (302). The “No” (*lā*) in the third hemistich is usually understood to refer to the “No” that begins the Muslim testament of faith: “[There is] no god but God.”

10 This tradition does not appear in the standard collections.

on its own; real existence belongs to God without end, just as He declared: "He is the First, and the Last, and the Manifest, and the Hidden" (Q 57:3).

The heart is the kernel of reality; consider the body a husk
 See the beloved's form, clothed in spirit
 Everything that shows the sign of existence
 is either Him or the shadow of His light—Look!¹¹

God's blessing upon Muḥammad and his family.

¹¹ These verses are said to have been composed by Bābā Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī (d. 610/1213–14), a philosopher to whom a large number of quatrains have also been attributed.

Rūmī (d. 627/1273) on Sensory Perception

Asghar Seyed-Gohrab and Alan Williams

1 Introduction

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273) was born in Vakhsh, a town in present-day Tajikistan, in 604/1207. His father, Bahā' al-Dīn (546–628/1151–1231), was a theologian. He became involved in a dispute with the philosopher Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), an event that led to the family's departure from their hometown, Balkh, in 609/1212–3. Their flight took place just a few years before the Mongol raid. The family traveled to Central Asia, Persia, and Anatolia. During these wanderings, Rūmī met great mystics such as Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 618/1221), who made an indelible impression on him. As the family moved from town to town, the journey also had an emotional impact. Rūmī's mother died in Larende, present-day's Karaman in south central Turkey, where the family stayed for seven years. In 626/1228, the Seljuq prince 'Alā' al-Dīn Kay Qubād I (r. 616–34/1220–37) invited the family to Konya. Rūmī's father died three years later. Rūmī succeeded his father as a theologian and a popular preacher.

In 642/1244, Rūmī met Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī (d. 645/1247), a wandering dervish who changed Rūmī's life forever. Following this encounter, Rūmī transformed himself from a theologian into a mystic lover, a disciple (*murīd*) of Shams, who taught him a new way of practicing religion. It was then that Rūmī started to compose lyrical poetry, which he signed using variations of Shams's name. The entire corpus of these ghazals amounts to some 3,500 poems of different lengths, ranging from 7 to 20 couplets, and written in an impressive number of meters and rhythms. While the majority of these poems can be regarded as Rūmī's outburst of love, revealing his feelings of separation from, longing for, and conversation with the absent beloved, several of these ghazals deal with philosophical, ethical, or religious themes.

Due to Rūmī's intense love for Shams, the latter's relationship with his students changed. They became jealous and treated Shams in such a way that he left Konya. After Rūmī had begged him to return, the students murdered Shams (Lewis, 134–202). Rūmī now entered into a period of mourning. In 647/1249 he met Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb, an illiterate man with a winsome personality, with whom he struck up a close relationship for ten years. After Zarkūb's death in 657/1258, Rūmī met Ḥusām al-Dīn Ḥasan Chelebī (d. 683/1283), who replaced

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as his close companion for the rest of Rūmī's life. It was Ḥusām al-Dīn who asked Rūmī to compose his magnum opus, the *Mathnavī-yi ma'navī* (*Spiritual Poem*). The *Mathnavī* is an ethico-didactical poem of some 26,000 couplets in six books, often called a Qur'ān in the Persian language. It is said that when Ḥusām al-Dīn asked Rūmī to compose a poem in the same spirit as the poet Sanā'ī's (d. 525/1130) *The Garden of Truth and the Law of the Right Path* (*Ḥadīqat al-ḥaqīqa wa-sharī'at al-ṭarīqa*), Rūmī took out of his turban the introduction to the poem, the famous "Mourning of the Reed." Next to these poetic works, Rūmī wrote several treatises in prose.

Below, selected passages from the *Mathnavī* on perception and sensation are provided in the translation of Alan Williams, with references to the edition by Muḥammad Isti'lāmī and the translation of Reynold A. Nicholson. References that do not mention Williams' name are my own translations based on Nicholson's rendition. The translated passages are interspersed with a running commentary that aims to situate the passages in the broader context of Rūmī's thinking about the senses.

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2 Translation

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Mathnavī-yi ma'navī*, ed. Muḥammad Isti'lāmī, 6 vols., Tehran: Zavvār, 1372/1993; ed. and trans. Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnavī of Jalāluddīn Rūmī*, 8 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925–40; partial trans. Alan Williams, *The Masnavi of Rumi: A New English Translation with Persian Text and Explanatory Notes*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2020 [Books 1 and 2].

§ 1. Dismissing the Senses

The sensorium appears frequently in Rūmī's poetic oeuvre, both in the *Mathnavī* and in his voluminous corpus of ghazal poetry. In many cases he rejects sensory perception as an impediment to achieving mystical illumination. While

Rūmī elaborates on the senses in one brief chapter in Book 4 of the *Mathnavī* (pp. 11–20; trans. p. 404, see below, § 7), there are many other references and allusions to sensory perception throughout his work. Often, Rūmī mentions the senses when he is advising his audience to look beyond the material world, to leave the bodily senses behind in order to arrive at the World of the Unseen (*‘ālam-i ghayb*). He characterizes the senses of the body as the walls of a prison, as being made of cheap copper, or as bats or asses heading in a wrong direction. All mental activities of the five internal senses (*sensus communis*, the faculty of retentive imagination, the faculty of compositive imagination, the faculty of estimation, and memory),¹ which are in turn based on the five external senses (touch, taste, smell, hearing, sight), remain within the material world and do not allow for access to the World of the Unseen (Book 1, p. 163, ll. 3459–62, trans. p. 187, ll. 3446–48 [Nicholson]):

Your imagination, thought, sense (*ḥiss*) and perception (*idrāk*)
are like a reed-cane upon which children ride, beware!
The sciences of men of heart carry them far;
the sciences of men of body are burdens to them.
When knowledge strikes on the heart, it becomes a helper (*yārī*)
when knowledge strikes on the body, it becomes a burden (*bārī*).

In his retelling of the story of Solomon and Bilqīs (the Queen of Sheba; see Q 27:23–44), Rūmī emphasizes how Bilqīs (Pers. Bilqays) perceives in the hoopoe, Solomon’s envoy, both the physical beauty of the bird and the spiritual qualities hidden from the physical senses. Unfolding a dualism of sensory knowledge and higher, intellectual knowledge, Rūmī condemns the physical senses as “the enemy of intellect and religion” (Book 2, p. 75, ll. 1608–14, trans. p. 304, ll. 1604–10 [Nicholson]):

Her eyes saw hoopoe’s body, her soul the ‘Anqā;²
her senses saw a fleck of foam, her heart saw a sea.
Due to these two-coloured talismans, the intellect was at war
with the senses, like Muḥammad with those like Abū Jahl.³

1 This chapter is part of the ERC-Advanced Grant project entitled “Beyond Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam,” which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement No. 101020403). On the five inner senses, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 30, and passim.

2 The ‘Anqā is a mythical bird in Persian and Arabic sources and is often regarded as an equivalent to the mythical bird Sīmurgh.

3 Abū Jahl (d. 2/624) (lit. the “Father of Ignorance”) was an opponent of the Prophet Muḥammad in Mecca. See footnote 25, below.

The infidels regarded Muḥammad as a man,
 since they did not see his miracle of dividing the moon.⁴
 Throw dust into your sense-perceiving eye,
 the sensory eye is the enemy of intellect and religion.
 God has called the sensory eye blind,
 calling it an idolater and our foe,
 because it saw the foam, not the sea,
 because it saw the present and not tomorrow.
 The master of tomorrow and of the present,
 [yet] he does not see this whole treasure except a penny.

§ 2. *The Heart's Pre-eminence over the Senses*

In Book 1 of the *Mathnavī*, Rūmī discusses the centrality of the heart and how the heart has control over everything, including the senses. In this context, Rūmī recounts the story of how the Prophet Muḥammad once asked his adopted son Zayd:⁵ “How are you doing today? How did you wake up?” Zayd answered: “[This morning] I am a true believer” (Book 1, p. 166, ll. 3514–15). Rūmī takes this exchange to indicate that Zayd has broken through the walls of the sensory world, waking up to and entering into the World of the Unseen by means of self-scrutiny and ascetic discipline.

To detach oneself from the sensory world, it is essential to purify the heart. This is why Rūmī elaborates on the crucial role played by the heart in mystical unveiling. Unlike the intellect, the heart occurs frequently in the Qur’ān. It is the locus of man’s understanding, consciousness, and personality. It is the seat of love’s secret, gnostic knowledge (*ma’rifat*), and the reality of the Godhead. Rūmī compares the senses to a spindle (*nāyiza*) and the heart to a weaver. Whatever the weaver desires, the spindle moves toward (Book 1, p. 168, l. 3580). In order to emphasize the sovereignty of the heart, Rūmī also alludes to the proverbial power of Solomon, who ruled over all animals, jinn, and humans. In the same way that Solomon ruled over all the creatures on the earth, casting his magical spell on them, Rūmī states that the heart controls all the limbs of the body. Comparing the senses to steeds, Rūmī states that the heart pulls on the reins of the senses (Book 1, pp. 168–9, ll. 3579–91, trans. pp. 234–5, ll. 3579–93 [Williams]; p. 194, ll. 3564–78 [Nicholson]):

4 This is a reference to the Prophet Muḥammad’s miracle of splitting the moon, mentioned in Q 54:1.

5 This is an allusion to Zayd b. Ḥāritha (d. 8/629). According to Muḥammad Isti’lāmī, Rūmī is confusing here Ḥāritha b. Surāqa, a Companion of the Prophet, with Zayd b. Ḥāritha. See Isti’lāmī’s comments on this story in Book 1, p. 406.

If it [the heart] desires, it goes to universals,
 or stays within the jail of partial things.
 So all five senses are just like a channel:
 they're flowing at the heart's command and will.
 Whatever way the heart is telling them,
 the senses move and trail their skirts behind them.
 The hands and feet are in the heart's control
 just like the staff held in the hand of Moses.
 The heart desires—and feet are made to dance,
 or flee to increase from deficiency.
 The heart desires—the hand is brought to book
 with fingers so that it shall write a book.
 The hand is subject to a hidden hand,
 from inside this controls the outer body.
 If it desires, it is a snake to foes,
 or it may be a comrade to a friend.
 If it desires, it is a spoon in food,
 or else a mace that weighs a hundredweight.
 I wonder what the heart will say to them
 —such strange conjunctions, stranger hidden causes.
 The heart must have the seal of Solomon⁶
 that it can hold the reins of all five senses.
 Five outward senses are controlled by it,
 five inward senses at its beck and call.
 Ten senses and seven limbs and many others:⁷
 count up the ones that I have overlooked!
 Since you're a Solomon in sovereignty,
 O heart, then cast your spell on sprite and demon.

§ 3. *The Senses Eclipsed*

A little later in Book 1, after relating a few other anecdotes and theoretical explanations about the purity of the heart and the role of the Prophet Muḥammad as a guide, Rūmī continues his elaboration on the senses. In the following passage we read that Zayd “disappeared,” even from his own self. Such disappearance can be regarded as a description of annihilation (*fanā'*). Here Rūmī

6 This is a reference to the magical seal of Solomon. It is reported that God's “greatest name” was engraved upon the seal and it was because of the power of this name that Solomon ruled over the world.

7 The translation reads “ten” but according to the Persian original, the limbs are seven.

compares the realization of the ego to a star and its absorption into the Truth to the star being outshined and made to vanish by the sun. The importance of this passage for the present discussion is that Rūmī presents the senses and intelligences as two means of perception that will be lost in the face of the Truth. Crossing from the world of senses to a heavenly sensation shows that Zayd has transcended the world of bodily sensation and perception, and that he has arrived at the World of the Unseen, attaining union with the immaterial Beloved. In several places in the *Mathnavī*, Rūmī compares life in the world of the senses to that of an embryo in a womb. As long as the embryo is imprisoned in this world, dependent on the food in the womb, it has no awareness whatsoever of the world outside (Book 1, p. 173, ll. 3682–8, trans. pp. 240–1, ll. 3682–8 [Williams]; p. 199, ll. 3668–74 [Nicholson]).

You'll not find Zayd, for he has disappeared,
 he's fled the shoe rack and he's dropped his shoes.
 And who are you? Zayd could not find himself,
 he's like the star on which the sun has shone.
 You'll find there is no sign nor signal of him,
 you'll find no clue along the Milky Way,
 The sense and speech of our forefathers are
 suffused within the light of our King's wisdom.
 Their senses and intelligences lost
 in waves on wave of *'they are here before Us'*.⁸
 When morning comes it is the time of burden,
 the stars that have been hidden go to work.
 God gives sensation to the senseless ones
 to rings of them, with rings upon their ears.⁹

§ 4. Transformation of the Senses

Although Rūmī condemns the senses, he occasionally refers to seeing and vision as a legitimate means to acquire knowledge. The story of the hare in Book 1, he states, is an allegory for understanding the importance of knowledge. In his view, the world is the outward form while “its soul is knowledge.” Man has hidden enemies who “strike at the heart with blows at every moment”

8 Q 36:21, 36:53. The verses deal with the Day of Judgment, when all humankind is brought into the presence of God.

9 The meaning of “ring” (*ḥalqa*) is ambiguous, as it can refer both to a circle of people and to a ring worn on the body. Earrings are a sign of servitude.

(Isti'lāmī, Book 1, p. 55, l. 1039; Book 1, trans. p. 71, l. 1039 [Williams]; p. 58, ll. 1027–40 [Nicholson]). Rūmī illustrates how such dangers threaten humankind, by using the image of a thorny branch in a stream. If a man bathes in such a stream, a thorn will prick him. While the thorn is hidden in the water, the man knows that it is there and ready immediately to prick him if he sets foot in the water. Rūmī thus acknowledges the function of the senses: they enable us to acquire knowledge of hidden dangers and to cope with them (see further Zand Moqaddam and Nourian). In Rūmī's words (Book 1, p. 55, ll. 1043–4, trans. p. 71, ll. 1043–4 [Williams]; p. 58, ll. 1038–40 [Nicholson]),

The wounds of inspirations and temptations
 come from a thousand sources, not from one.
 Be still, so that your senses are transformed,
 that you may see them and the pain is cured,
 And that you see whose words you have refused,
 and who it is you've made your sovereign lord.

§ 5. *Spiritual Senses*

While, as we saw, in some of his discussions Rūmī rejects the senses altogether, in other places he suggests that the senses are channels to the spiritual world. The bodily senses are repeatedly censured, while the “spiritual senses” (*ḥiss-i jān*) are commended. There exists a “religious” or “spiritual sense” (*ḥiss-i dīnī*), which is a ladder to the sky (Book 1, p. 22, l. 304, trans. p. 24, l. 304 [Williams]; p. 20, l. 303 [Nicholson]):

The world's sense is a ladder to this world:
 religion's [sense] is a ladder up to heaven.

This contrast between the two kinds of senses is further underlined by the next couplet, in which Rūmī uses a parallelism to show the difference between the two. While a physician takes care of the well-being of the worldly senses, God as the Beloved is responsible for the spiritual senses (Book 1, p. 22, l. 305, trans. p. 24, l. 305 [Williams]; p. 20, l. 304 [Nicholson]):

To keep *these* senses healthy, see a doctor,
 but for *those* senses' health, see the Beloved!

Rūmī advises to reject the former and to cherish the latter because (Book 1, p. 23, ll. 306–8, trans. p. 20, ll. 305–7 [Nicholson])

the health of the former depends on the well-being of the body;
 the health of the latter depends on the ruining of the body.
 The way to the soul ruins the body;
 after this ruining, it restores it to prosperity.
 Ruining the house to find golden treasures,
 with that same treasure building it in a better way.

§ 6. *Copper and Gold Senses*

The dismissal of the bodily senses and the praise of the spiritual senses continues in Book 2 of the *Mathnavī*, in which Rūmī introduces other ways to arrive at the World of the Unseen. Whereas the bodily senses are compared to cheap copper, the spiritual senses are compared to precious red gold. The bodily senses feed on darkness, a reference to this material world, while the “senses of the soul” graze in the Sun and bathe in Light. In Book 1 (p. 100, ll. 2033–45), Rūmī depicts two parallel worlds, the World of Witnessing and the World of the Unseen, advising his audience to escape the former and join the latter. Even the faculty of imagination, which is based on internal senses, is unable to fathom the world beyond the physical (Book 1, p. 148, ll. 3108–12, trans. pp. 168–9, ll. 3095–9 [Nicholson]):

The realm of phantasies is narrower than non-existence:
 on that account phantasy is the cause of pain.
 Existence, in turn, was narrower than phantasy’s realm:
 hence in it moons become like the moon that has waned.
 Again, the existence of the world of sense and colour
 is narrower than this narrow prison.
 The cause of narrowness is composition and number:
 the senses are moving towards composition.
 Know that the world of Unification lies beyond sense:
 if you want Unity, march in that direction.

In Book 2, Rūmī again emphasizes why the mystic lover should abandon the physical world and not rely on his senses, as these senses are part of the earthly world and only able to assist man to understand the world around him. The knowledge of the created world is a prerequisite to starting a journey to the spiritual dimensions of Reality. Rūmī does not refer to the importance of the physical world in this passage but his forerunners, such as Sanāʿī, whom he profoundly reveres, emphasize the importance of the knowledge of the created world in embarking upon a journey to the afterlife.¹⁰ Rūmī makes a

10 See de Bruijn, 88–95.

contrast between the bodily senses, weak like the bat's vision, and the precious, "pearl-diffusing" heavenly senses (Book 2, p. 11, ll. 47–54, trans. p. 8, ll. 47–54 [Williams]; p. 224, ll. 47–9 [Nicholson]):

Your bat-like senses running to the sunset,
 your pearl-diffusing senses to the dawn.
 The senses' way's the asses' way, O rider!
 O meddler among asses, have some shame!
 There are five senses other than these five,
 they are like pure red gold, these others copper.
 In that bazaar, the men of the last judgment,¹¹
 will they buy copper sense when there is gold?
 The fleshly sense is eating food of darkness,
 the spiritual sense is nourished by a sun.
 O you who have brought sensory goods to Heaven,
 take out your hand, like Moses, from your bosom.¹²
 O you, whose quality's the sun of knowledge,
 whose sun in space is limited to one.
 Now you become the sun and now the ocean,
 and now you are Mount Qāf and now the 'Anqā.¹³

§ 7. *The Sense of the Heart*

Elsewhere, Rūmī introduces the compound *ḥiss-i dil* ("sense of the heart") in contrast to the five bodily senses. While the five senses are limited and can grasp only the material world, the "sense of the heart" enables a view of both the material and the spiritual worlds. This discussion appears in a story in which Sufis bring a complaint before their shaykh regarding a specific dervish. They complain that when this dervish talks he drones like a gong, when he eats he "gobbles down more than 20 men," and when he sleeps he sleeps as deeply as the Seven Sleepers in the cave. The shaykh confronts the dervish and advises him to observe moderation in all his actions. By way of an excuse, the dervish gives a lengthy answer. Rūmī compares the insights of this dervish to those of al-Khiḍr, the legendary prophetic figure who, at Q 18:65–82, is said to have offered insights into esoteric subjects to Moses. While the dervish admits that observing moderation and equilibrium in all situations is good, he says that all

11 The word bazaar is here a commercial metaphor for the afterlife: man exchanges his deeds for God's reward.

12 This allusion refers to a miracle of Moses: he put his hand into his bosom and when he took it out it was white. See Q 7:105, 26:32, 27:12.

13 Mount Qāf is a mythical mountain range around the earth according to Islamic cosmology. It is the dwelling place of the mythical bird 'Anqā (or Sīmurgh).

of this should be viewed in a relative sense. It all depends on a person's aspirations. For instance, one person walks barefoot to the Ka'ba, while another person hardly makes it to a local mosque. The dervish then defines moderation, stating that it is finite, as it has a beginning and an end, two things without which moderation cannot be conceived.

It is within this discussion that the dervish gives an exposition of the senses. As a narrator, Rūmī foresees that the audience may question the dervish's arguments. Rūmī pre-emptively defends the dervish by putting the following lines into his mouth (Book 2, p. 161, ll. 3566–9, trans. p. 225, ll. 3566–9 [Williams]; p. 406, ll. 3551–4 [Nicholson]):

My heart's possessed of five quite different senses:
 the senses of the heart view both the worlds.
 Don't look upon me from your state of weakness,
 what's night to you, that night to me is daybreak.
 What's jail to you, to me is like a garden:
 complete preoccupation gave me freedom.
 Your feet in clay, for me this clay is roses:
 for you it's mourning, for me celebration.

The dervish repeats what bodily senses mean for one person and what the sense of the heart means for another. Skeptics see the night's darkness, while the dervish sees the dawn's light. The dervish says that the contrast between the two categories of senses is that the bodily senses are like a prison for the skeptics, whereas the sense of the heart is a garden for him. The skeptics' feet are in mud (*gil*), while the dervish stands in a bed of roses (*gul*), the two words being homographs in Persian. The skeptics are in mourning while the dervish is feasting.

By putting these words into the dervish's mouth, Rūmī is not only defining perspectives, but also expressing his own view of outward and inward realities. The dervish continues to say that he still exists among people but his position is above thoughts (*andīshahā*): he transcends thought and has become one with those finding themselves outside thought. He says that he is the ruler of thought and is not ruled by it. The reason people are subjugated by thought and are stricken by sorrow and anguish is that thought rules over them (Book 2, p. 161, ll. 3573–4, trans. p. 225, ll. 3573–4 [Williams]; p. 406, ll. 3558–9 [Nicholson]):

Conceiver of the thought, I'm not conceived:
 the builder is the landlord, not the building.

All mortals are the victims of their thought,
so they are sore in heart, so used to sadness.

§ 8. *The Senses Enlivened by Insight*

In another passage on the senses in Book 2, a mighty king, Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. ca. 160/777), trades his luxurious lifestyle and family for a wandering ascetic's life in the desert.¹⁴ In Rūmī's story, Ibrāhīm sits by the seashore when he suddenly sees one of his former commanders. The commander is surprised to see Ibrāhīm leading a withdrawn life of poverty. Ibrāhīm tells him that there are many wonders taking place in the World of the Unseen. This material world is just a skin, while the other world is the substance. Then Ibrāhīm refers to the fragrance of the spiritual garden, emphasizing how a mere sniff will attract the soul, illuminating the eyes. He further relates how Joseph instructed his brothers to throw the shirt on Jacob's face ("cast it on my father's face"),¹⁵ and how the Prophet Muḥammad spoke of perfume delighting his eyes in prayer. The story concludes with Rūmī emphasizing how the senses would create insight into an inner reality (Book 2, p. 147, ll. 3247–50, trans. p. 205, ll. 3247–50 [Williams]; p. 389, ll. 3236–9 [Nicholson]):

The five sense faculties are all connected,
since all these five have grown out of one root.
The power of one becomes the other's power,
each one becomes cupbearer to the rest.
The seeing of the eye increases love,
and love increases insight in the eye.
As insight is enlivening every sense,
the taste becomes familiar to the senses.

After this enlightening passage, Rūmī opens another chapter entitled "The beginning of the illumination of the knower by the light that sees the invisible world." As he elaborates (Book 2, p. 147, ll. 3251–60, trans. pp. 205–6, ll. 3251–60 [Williams]; pp. 389–90, ll. 3240–9 [Nicholson]),

14 Ibrāhīm b. Adham was a famous ascetic, known for his abdication as a ruler of Balkh in order to pursue an ascetic life. According to legend, he was killed while participating in a military campaign against Byzantium.

15 Rūmī cites a part of Q 12:93. In A. J. Arberry's interpretation, this verse runs as follows, "Go, take this shirt, and do you cast it on my father's face, and he shall recover his sight; then bring me your family all together."

When one sense is set free in its progression,
 the other senses all become transformed.
 When one sense has perceived beyond the senses,
 the hidden world appears to all the senses.
 When one sheep of the flock has jumped the stream,
 then all are jumping over in succession.
 So, drive the sheep of senses to the pasture,
 to ruminate on Him '*who brought the pastures*,'¹⁶
 To ruminate on hyacinth and basil
 to reach the garden of realities.
 Your every sense will be the other's courier,
 so one by one each goes towards that Garden.
 The senses tell their secrets to your senses,
 without a 'truth' or tongue, or metaphor.
 Such 'truths' are open to interpretations,
 conjectures are the source of fantasies.
 That truth which comes directly from the source
 is not compounded with interpretation.
 When all your sense is harnessed to your Sense,
 the heavens cannot keep away from you.

§ 9. *Specialized Senses and Immaterial Vision*

In Book 4 of the *Mathnavī*, Rūmī reveals another aspect of his philosophy of the senses. Already in the long title for his chapter treating the senses, he explains that each sense works independently and is unaware of the workings of the other senses (Book 4, p. 119, trans. p. 404 [Nicholson, slightly modified]):

Explaining that every percipient sense (*hiss-i mudrik*) of man has different objects of perception (*mudrakāt*) too, of which the other senses are ignorant, as [for example] every skilled craftsman is unfamiliar with the work of those skilled in other crafts; and its [another sense's] ignorance of that which is not its business does not prove that those objects of perception (*mudrakāt*) are non-existent. Although it virtually denies them, yet here in this place we only mean by its "denial" its ignorance. Your perception is the measure of your vision of the world.

Here again, Rūmī distinguishes between physical and spiritual senses, rejecting the physical sight through bodily organs and praising the vision acquired through direct knowledge from the metaphysical world. Physical sight in the

16 Q 87:4.

physical world (*‘ālam al-shahāda*) is contrasted with spiritual vision acquired from the invisible world (*‘ālam al-ghayb*). In addition, Rūmī introduces the idea that many natural phenomena have eyes, and a type of vision. Vision is not necessarily bound to the physical eye, and natural phenomena have attributes enabling them to connect with God. An example is the motif of pebbles speaking, which appears in various forms and various contexts (see, for instance, Book 1, p. 106, ll. 2165–71, trans. p. 117, ll. 2154–60 [Nicholson]).¹⁷ Rūmī advises the reader to purify his outer senses, to “wash your senses” in order to arrive at the inner senses. In a few instances, Rūmī recommends the reader to leave behind the outward senses; in other places, as in the following citation, he wants the reader to transform the senses (Book 4, pp. 119–20, ll. 2385–2423, trans. pp. 404–6, ll. 2384–2422 [Nicholson]):

Your perception draws the circle of your vision of the world:
 your impure senses veil you from the pure ones.
 Wash your senses for a while with the water of direct apprehension:
 know that this is how Sufis wash their robes.
 Once you are pure, the veil will be lifted;
 the souls of the pure ones will hasten towards you.
 If the entire world were shapely forms and light,
 such loveliness would delight the eye.
 Were you to close your eyes to give your ears first place,
 to show [the beloved’s] idol-like curls and cheeks,
 The ear would say, “I owe no debts to outward form,
 but if the form utters a cry, I’ll hear.”
 “I’m erudite, but only in my special field:
 words and sounds are all I know.”
 [Were you to say], “Hey, nose! Come here, and see this beauty,”
 the nose is not the one to taste this boon,
 [the nose would say:] “If there is musk or rose-water, I can smell them:
 this is my field, my art and expertise.
 How could I see the face of that silver-shanked one?
 Don’t set a task that can’t be done.”
 Once again: the malformed sense sees only malformation,
 whether something bent or straight is set before it.

17 The idea that natural phenomena and even limbs of the body have the ability to witness and speak derives from the Qur’ān. See, for instance, Q 17:44, in Arberry’s interpretation: “The seven heavens and the earth, and whosoever in them is, extol Him; nothing is, that does not proclaim His praise, but you do not understand their extolling.” See also Q 36:66: “Today We set a seal on their mouths, and their hands speak to Us, and their feet bear witness as to what they have been earning.”

O appointed master:¹⁸ be assured that one who squints
 must be dismissed, barred from seeing Oneness.
 You who are a Pharaoh, all plotting and hypocrisy,
 knowing nothing of the difference between you and me.
 O crooked player! Do not project yourself on me,
 that only makes you see the one as two.
 If you could see me briefly through my eyes,
 you'd see an open field, beyond the universe.
 Unconstricted, free from name and fame,
 you'd see love within love, and peace upon you.
 You'd then know that when you're freed from the body,
 ears and nose can be reckoned as eyes.
 That sweet-tongued king¹⁹ has rightly said:
 "Every hair of the true knower becomes an eye."
 Certainly the eye had no vision at first:
 in the womb it was some fetal tissue.
 Deem not that piece of fat the cause of sight, my boy.
 If that were so, no dreamer would see forms.
 The fairy and the demon see the like,
 there is no fat in the eye sockets of those two.
 There was no relationship between light and the fat,
 the loving Creator gave them a relationship.
 Man is made of clay: yet how does he resemble clay?
 The jinn are made of fire, without any fusion.
 These spirits do not resemble fire,
 although their origins are made of fire if you look closely.
 The birds are quintessentially wind, yet how do they resemble wind?
 God gave relationship to the unrelated.
 The relationship between first things and derivatives
 exists without a reason, though God connected them.
 Man is born of strewn clay,
 but what relation is there, between this son and the father?
 If there is a relationship, it's hidden from understanding.
 It is, no reason why: how could the understanding track it down?

18 Muḥammad Isti'lāmī suggests that this might be a reference to Mu'īn al-Dīn Parvāna, one of Rūmī's disciples. See Book 4, p. 320.

19 The word "king" might allude to the poet Sanā'ī, whom Rūmī considered his teacher. Muḥammad Isti'lāmī states that the "king" refers to the great mystic Bāyazīd of Bisṭām (d. 234/848 or 261/875) who was given the title "the sultan of the mystics" (*sultān al-'arīfīn*). See Book 4, p. 320.

If He did not grant the storm vision, without eyes,
 how did it distinguish among the tribe of ‘Ād?²⁰
 Yet it knew the true believer from the enemy,
 just as it distinguishes the bottle from the wine.²¹
 If Nimrod’s fire had no eyes,
 how did it single out and spare God’s Friend [Abraham]?²²
 If the Nile had neither sight nor light,
 how did it know an Egyptian from an Israelite?
 If the rock of the mountain had no sight,
 how did it become David’s friend?
 If this earth had no spiritual eye,
 how did it swallow Korah [Qārūn] in that way?²³
 If the moaning [pillar] had not possessed the eye of the heart,
 how could it see its separation from the wise one?²⁴
 If the pebbles were undiscerning,
 how could they bear witness in the closed fist [of Abū Jahl]?²⁵
 O intellect, unfold your wings:
 Read the sura, *When the earth is shaken with a mighty quaking*.²⁶
 How could this earth bear witness, at the resurrection,
 concerning good and evil, if these were things it had not seen?
 For she will tell what happened and what changed,
 the planet will reveal her secrets to us.

20 ‘Ād refers to a Qur’ānic prophet whose community was destroyed by wind. See Q 7:69.

21 Nicholson translates *kadū* as “gourd-shaped goblet” which refers to the form of a bottle, as *kadū* means “gourd,” “a cup,” “a goblet.” The idea here is to make a distinction between the form and the contents. It is tempting to interpret *kadū* as a derogatory word for a non-believer, but this is pure speculation.

22 Nimrod (Pers. Namrūd) is depicted in Islamic literature as a despotic ruler who threw Abraham into a bonfire. In Persian tradition, it is often emphasized how God protected Abraham by turning the fire into a rose-garden. Nimrod was finally killed by a gnat that entered his nostrils.

23 Korah is a biblical figure who also appears in the Qur’ān (28:76–82, 29:39, 40:24). He is proverbially famous for having a huge treasure.

24 A reference to a pillar in the Prophet Muḥammad’s mosque in Medina. The Prophet used to lean against this pillar when he preached. When a pulpit was made for him, the pillar lamented its separation from the Prophet. Rūmī devotes a chapter to the pillar’s lament. See Book 1, pp. 104–6, ll. 2124–64, trans. pp. 141–3, ll. 2124–64 (Williams); pp. 115–17, ll. 2113–53 (Nicholson).

25 This is an allusion to pebbles in the fists of Abū Jahl giving witness to Muḥammad’s prophethood while Abū Jahl himself denied Muḥammad’s prophecy. Abū Jahl (d. 2/624) (lit. the “Father of Ignorance”) was a derogative name the Prophet gave to ‘Amr b. Hishām b. al-Mughīra of the Makhzūm, a leader of a tribe of Quraysh. Rūmī recounts this story in Book 1 of the *Mathnavī*. See Book 1, p. 106, ll. 2165–71, trans. pp. 143–4, ll. 2165–71 (Williams); p. 117, ll. 2154–60 (Nicholson).

26 A reference to Q 99:1.

Sa'dī (d. 691/1292) on the Senses, the Body, and Imagination

Domenico Ingenito

1 Introduction

Widely recognized as one of the greatest literati of the Persian classical tradition and the most influential poet of medieval Iran, Musharrif al-Dīn Muṣliḥ Sa'dī of Shiraz (henceforth: Sa'dī, d. 691/1292) was also a Sufi master, a political and moral advisor, and, above all, a traveler. In fact, we know that, during the critical phase of the Mongol conquest of the Eastern Islamic world, Sa'dī journeyed extensively throughout West Asia and surrounded himself with young princes and old sultans, wandering mystics, merchants, scholars, and common people of different cultural and religious backgrounds.¹

The Mongol political elites of his time entrusted Sa'dī with a Sufi lodge that was established in the outskirts of Shiraz (Ingenito, 20–5, 443–9). In Sa'dī's spiritual entourage religious piety coexisted with the art of poetry recitation and the visual contemplation of handsome young men—a Sufi practice known as *shāhid-bāzī*, which was based on the idea that human beauty is a reflection of divine splendor (Ingenito, 217–26, 271–300). By means of his appreciation for the power of language and the pleasure that beauty offers to the eye, Sa'dī sublimated his own life experiences and deep understanding of the Persian classical tradition that preceded him into wondrous love poems (ghazals) that circulated for centuries in most regions of the Islamic world, between the Balkans and India, and from Central to Southeast Asia.²

A sense of contemplative wonder exudes from Sa'dī's descriptions of his travels throughout West Asia during the Mongol expansion toward western Iran and Baghdad. The autobiographical (albeit sometimes fictitious) accounts that Sa'dī recorded in the *Rose Garden* (*Gulistān*), his masterpiece in prose and verse, completed in 656/1258, often reveal the pivotal relevance of sensory experience to the artistic and spiritual endeavors of this key figure of Islamic

1 For the most recent historical appraisals of Sa'dī's life and works, see Ingenito, 8–25. See also, in Persian, Bashari.

2 On the Persian ghazal, see Lewis, "Transformation"; Meisami, 237–98.

and Persian civilization (Ingenito, 99–104; Lewis, “Golestān”; Thackston). In an effort to convince his readers of the validity of the political, aesthetic, and ethical values he acquired during his peregrinations, all of his stories are firmly anchored in sensory representations. Full appreciation of Sa'dī's aesthetics would be impossible without recognizing that poetic meditations on the faculties of vision and imagination constitute core themes of his literary production.

While Sa'dī relies heavily on the role of seeing, hearing, and tasting as the main gateways to the spectacle of the world as an aesthetic and intellectual experience, the spiritual dimensions of his literary output ought to be read through the lens of the so-called internal senses of the Avicennian psychological tradition (Ingenito, 324–2; McGinnis, 113–6). According to this anatomical and sensory paradigm, widely accepted by Sa'dī and his contemporaries, the five internal senses are located in different ventricles of the brain and process all sensations provided by the external senses so that intellection, in conjunction with the Rational Soul and the Active Intellect, may take place. Once external data are collected by the internal faculty known as “common sense,” they are registered in the brain by the “retentive imagination” (*khayāl*) and subsequently recombined by the “compositive imagination” (*takhayyul*). The compositive imagination acts incessantly, producing mental images that are not necessarily found in the external world. Furthermore, the imagination works in conjunction with two other faculties that are known as “estimation” (*wahm*) and “semantic memory” (*hāfiẓa*). Through this internal sensory cooperation, human beings can connect with the celestial word, which is also referred to as the “invisible,” “supernal,” or “spiritual” realm. Ultimately, it is this connection that allows the human soul to grasp mental contents (*ma'ānī*) that elicit visions, dreams, and prophecies.

In Sa'dī's works, the internal senses have a twofold function. On the one hand, they allow literary characters such as lovers and mystics to explore the inner paths leading to the “invisible world” (*ghayb, malakūt*), that is, the supernal realm that belongs to God's knowledge and which the external senses alone cannot access. On the other hand, the internal senses provide mundane experiences with compelling meaning: they guide one's exploration of the visible world toward its metaphysical origin and establish multiple links between the visible and the occult.

The role of the imagination as a primary tool for the exploration of the metaphysical world is a well-established topos in the medieval Sufi tradition. Theories concerning the physiology of the faculty of the imagination circulated widely in the intellectual circles of Sa'dī's time, not only in Baghdad, but also in Shiraz and Tabriz (see Ingenito, 301–12). Direct or indirect acquaintance

with these theories allowed Sa'dī to infuse his poetry with constant references to the power of imagination. This is why, in Sa'dī's works, we witness descriptions of a broad range of mental experiences that relate to mysticism without ever denying the epistemological value of the physical world, including real or imagined erotic encounters.

In the present selection of poetry and prose passages, the first group of texts (below, §§ 1.1–3) exemplifies Sa'dī's reliance on the value of sensory experience for the expression of his literary aesthetics. The first excerpt is an autobiographical description of the sensory landscape that allegedly prompted the composition of the *Rose Garden* in a bucolic setting in the outskirts of Shiraz. An erotic subtext usually accompanies the sensory dimension of Sa'dī's descriptions. This correlation is particularly evident in the passage in which the poet describes a furtive urban encounter that took place during his youth (§ 1.2). Despite the lack of physical contact between the two characters of the account, a compelling deployment of images that involve the active use of external senses generates the impression of a sexual encounter between the poet and a comely youth.

As emphasized above, vision is the sense that occupies the center of the aesthetic, sensual, and spiritual dimensions of Sa'dī's literary innovations and philosophical stances. This posture can be described as Sa'dī's characteristic "visual anthropology," that is, the belief in the essential role of vision in the definition of human nature. Echoes of this approach appear in a ghazal in which the eye of the lover/ beholder is the organ that constantly scans the visible world in order to decipher the meaning of desire and its erotic implications vis-à-vis the visual spaces that surround the human gaze (§ 1.3). The special conjunction between vision and sacred eroticism is one of the peculiarities of Sa'dī's lyric voice. By the seventh/thirteenth century, the expression of mystical ideas through erotic images was a well-established literary practice (see, for instance, authors such as Sanā'ī [d. ca. 525/1030–31], 'Aṭṭār [d. 617/1220], Khāqānī [d. ca. 590/1190]). However, it has been argued that Sa'dī was the first major Persian poet who anchored the erotic aspects of his spiritual quest to the lyric expression of visual and visionary experiences.

One of the main tenets of the Sufi aesthetics that Sa'dī developed in his works is the idea that glimpses of God's beauty can be gleaned through the active contemplation of the visible world and its objects, including human bodies (Ingenito, 232–70). According to Sa'dī, if God is the creator and origin of all beauty, logic dictates that all beautiful things are signs attesting to their divine origin. Therefore, the human figure, which important currents of the Persian Sufi tradition view as the most beautiful form in the realm of matter, is the preferred locus for the contemplation of God's power of creation. In Sa'dī's

poetry, the sense of vision is the preferred vehicle for this “rational-inferential” process which leads to the attestation to God’s existence.

Along these lines, the second group of texts (§§ 2.1–5) showcases different aspects of the visual dimensions of Sa’dī’s sacred eroticism. For instance, when the mystic (*ārif*, also translatable as “beholder” in this context) sees a fine beard appearing on the face of a comely young man, he infers that such beauty stems from the handwriting of divine creation (§ 2.1; see Ingenito, 271–300). In these texts, not only does Sa’dī celebrate the necessity of contemplating human beauty, but he also makes sure that his audience is cognizant of the difference between lustful gazing at beautiful bodies and the act of beholding for spiritual ends.

As a Sufi practitioner and spiritual steward of a Sufi lodge, Sa’dī was particularly interested in the problem of the vision of God. Sa’dī’s metaphysical approach to the mystical quest for the divine presence aligns with the sobriety with which, before him, rational Sufi thinkers (such as al-Ghazālī, d. 505/1111) argued that God cannot be seen directly in the world of matter. What one can explore, instead, is the “invisible world” (*ghayb*), which belongs to God and constitutes the highest metaphysical realm that the spiritual hearts of Sufis and saints are capable of perusing (Coppens). Sufi thinkers conceived of the act of contemplating the invisible as a practice that prepares the soul for the vision of God after death. In the medieval treatises and anecdotes describing this quest for the invisible world, authors usually specify that contact with the supernal realm can be facilitated through a set of practices that include spiritual training, dreams, repetition of formulae, as well as the active contemplation of human beauty and listening to music in a controlled environment (Ingenito, 362–89).

Sa’dī is one of the first medieval Persian poets displaying a consistent understanding of the contact with the invisible world as an aesthetic and spiritual experience involving multiple interactions between the external and internal senses. References to internal sensory faculties are scattered throughout Sa’dī’s body of work. The third group of translated texts (§§ 3.1–7) introduces passages in which Sa’dī describes visionary experiences stemming from mental contact with the invisible world. In the *Rose Garden*’s introduction (§ 3.1), Sa’dī stages such visionary experiences as a sensory process through which a Sufi master “translates” metaphysical inspirations (*ma’ānī*) from the supernal world into the vision of a rose garden that is capable of stimulating both optical and olfactory sensations.³ Other texts, mainly ghazals, describe how different

3 Compare this passage with a similar exemplum found in al-Ghazālī’s *Alchemy of Bliss* (*Kīmīya-yi sa’ādat*), translated in Ingenito, 363. See also *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 30.

functions of the inner faculty of the imagination conjure up visions capable of providing the beholder with erotic responses to a mental epiphany (*tajallī*) of supreme beauty. By reason of the Avicennian psychological paradigms that informed the Sufi tradition in which Sa'dī's mystical aesthetics developed, I have referred to this peculiar dimension of the quest for divine beauty as the "imaginal-cosmological" modality (Ingenito, 391–8).

Sudden contact with the invisible world triggers the production of mental images of utmost beauty that connect with the sensory world in multiple ways. As one would expect, Sa'dī's keen interest in the metaphysical exploration of the invisible is never detached from his enthusiastic celebration of physical experiences through the external senses. The fourth group of texts (§§ 4.1–7) shows the point of contact between the mundane aspects of the "rational-inferential" modality (the beauty of the world needs to be enjoyed visually in order to attest to God's splendor) and the imaginal-cosmological approach (mental contact with the invisible produces forms of divine beauty through the imagination of the beholder).

In some of these texts, the act of contemplating human beauty provides the lyric subject with a link to the invisible realm. In other instances, it is the conjunction with the invisible that provides the beholder with the aesthetic guidance that is required to peruse the visible world in a spiritually meaningful fashion. Other lines depict the dramatic discrepancy between the idealized beauty that contact with the supernal realm produces in one's imagination and the lack of spiritual meaning that potentially characterizes physical erotic experiences. In the latter instances, the lyric subject of Sa'dī's poems is torn between different levels of reality: spiritual inspirations, remembrance of past encounters, and carnal forms of longing.

Last but not least, exposure to music and lyric poetry constitutes one of the most important sensory devices on which medieval Sufis relied to achieve ecstatic connections with the invisible (Lewisohn). The diverse array of texts (§§ 5.1–4) in which Sa'dī explores the mystical dimensions of music and poetry highlights how the visual and aural dimensions of Sufi aesthetics belong to similar or even overlapping experiences (Ingenito, 499–518). The blending of sounds and visions at work in this group of passages is similar to the way visionary and olfactory perceptions bleed into each other in the introductory anecdote from the *Rose Garden* (§ 3.1).

The first two prose excerpts (§§ 5.1, 5.2) shed light on the alignment between sounds of nature, poetry recitation, the human voice, and music as elements that stir emotional responses in humans as well as animals. While animals' response to music is primarily physiological, the human beings portrayed in these texts react with forms of ecstatic excitement that are simultaneously

aesthetic, spiritual, and rational. On many occasions, Sa'dī offers a social critique of the religious zeal with which literalists (*ahl-i zāhir*) would forbid the enjoyment of music and poetry. In such instances (§§ 5.2, 5.3), Sa'dī's defense of music correlates to his indulgence toward the visual contemplation of beautiful human beings (§§ 2.2, 2.3, 4.3, 4.7).

A lengthy passage from *The Orchard (Būstān)* (§ 5.3) elaborates on a term, *samā'* (translated here as "lyrical ritual"), which describes the Sufi practice of listening to poetry and music for spiritual ends. Through *samā'*, Sufi practitioners hope to experience an entrancing reaction (*ḥāl*, "state"; *wajd*, "ecstasy") that could connect their inner senses with the invisible world. The last excerpt (§ 5.4) is a ghazal that stages the entire spectrum of the sensorium at work in Sa'dī's literary output: from the interplay between internal and external senses when contemplating human beauty to the effect of music on physical desire, as well as the Sufi's quest for theo-erotic experiences.

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2 Translation

- BB* Domenico Ingenito, *Beholding Beauty: Sa'di of Shiraz and the Aesthetics of Desire in Medieval Persian Poetry*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2020.
- BS* Musharrif al-Dīn Muṣliḥ Sa'dī Shīrāzī, *Būstān-i Sa'dī (Sa'dī-nāma)*, ed. Ghulām-Ḥusayn Yūsufī, Tehran: Khvārazmī, 1363/1984.
- GhS* Musharrif al-Dīn Muṣliḥ Sa'dī Shīrāzī, *Ghazalḥā-yi Sa'dī*, ed. Ghulām-Ḥusayn Yūsufī, Tehran: Sukhan, 1385/2006.
- GS* Musharrif al-Dīn Muṣliḥ Sa'dī Shīrāzī, *Gulistān-i Sa'dī*, ed. Ghulām-Ḥusayn Yūsufī, Tehran: Khvārazmī, 1368/1989.

[§ 1. External Senses and Mundane Experiences]

[§ 1.1 = GS, p. 54]

We decided to spend the night with one of our friends in the middle of a fragrant garden. It was an enchanting and inspiring location, surrounded by lush trees. The flowers on the ground looked like sparkles of iridescent glass, and the Pleiades a necklace shining from the branches of the trees. The following morning [...] my friend filled his robe with roses, fragrant herbs, hyacinths, and fresh mint. I told him: "As you know, fresh roses do not last forever, and the rose garden never fulfills its promises. Philosophers say that the heart should not covet things that don't last." My friend asked: "How does one cope, then?" I replied: "For the delight of the beholders (*nāzīrān*) and the graceful presence of our companions, I shall compose a 'Rose Garden' book (*kitāb-i gulistānī*) whose petals will not be destroyed by the cold winds of winter."

[§ 1.2 = GS, p. 141]

During the days of my youth, I remember that once I passed by an alley in the middle of summer and locked gazes with someone's face. My mouth was dry from the high temperature and the hot wind could bring the marrow in one's bones to a boil. The heat of the sun was unbearable for my human weakness, and I had to seek refuge in the shade of a wall. I was hoping for someone to bring me cold water to cool down from the midsummer heat, when suddenly a light shone from the darkness of a courtyard. No eloquent words could do justice to the beauty I saw. He appeared like the morning sunshine rising amidst

the dark night, or like the water of life gushing from the heart of darkness. He carried a cup of ice water into which he had poured sugar mixed with fragrant liqueur. I do not know whether it contained rose water or whether sweat had dripped from the rose of his face. I took the drink from his gentle hands, and felt that life was coming back to me as I drank.

[Arabic:] A thirst inside my heart: were I to drink
an ocean of limpid water, it won't be quenched.

[Persian:] The stars bestow their blessings upon the eyes
that stare at such a face every day at dawn.

Being drunk with wine will keep you awake all night
the *sāqī*'s beauty⁴ will keep you drunk till resurrection.

[§ 1.3 = *GhS*, pp. 239; *BB*, pp. 530–1]⁵

Listen, the sorcery of your eyes is so seductive,
the eyes of the deer stare at your eyes in awe.

You are in my eyes, yet hidden from the eye:
you cause my eyes to wander in all directions.

Your eyes, your lips, your neck, your ears:
may they never be touched by anyone's arms or evil eye!

The moon shines in people's eyes, but
your eyes and eyebrows outshine the moon.

The dark night is dotted with stars like eyes:
its Indian magic enslaved to your black eyes.

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- 4 The *sāqī*, often translated as “cup-bearer,” is a young man who serves wine at court and who usually appears in the lyric tradition as a metaphor for both mundane and supernal objects of desire. Sa'dī's representation of real wine and wine-drinking (unlike that of his contemporaries and 14th-century poets such as Ḥafiz and Salmān Savāji) is often contemptuous. In his ghazals, wine and wine-drinking are metaphors that stand for the contemplation of beauty as a source of a superior form of intoxication (see Ingenito, 496).
- 5 For each ghazal, references to both Yūsufi's (*GhS*) and Ingenito's critical editions (*BB*) are provided. In a footnote at the end of each translated excerpt, the first hemistich of the ghazal is noted.

One hundred springs will flow from these eyes,
when I set my eyes upon your face.

You closed my eyes with your enchanting locks,
you stole my senses with the sorcery of your eyes.

When night comes, I turn my eyes into lamps
and seek through darkness the lamp and light of my eyes.

I swear on your eyes! Sa'dī is here
with his two eyes, shedding tears like pearls.⁶

[§ 2. *Seeing the Signs of God in the World: Sa'dī's*
"Rational-Inferential" Modality]

[§ 2.1 = *GhS*, p. 35; *BB*, p. 572]

[...] They only see traces of beard
on the page-like cheeks
of beautiful boys.
Their sight is short, whereas
the mystic beholds
the pen of God's creation.

Everyone's eyes peruse your face
with so much passion, but
self-worshippers discern no difference
between lust and Truth. [...] ⁷

[§ 2.2 = *GhS*, p. 298; *BB*, p. 565]

It's me, not you: I can't resist the charm of comely faces,
I'm so sincere and never claim to be a pious bigot.

⁶ *Ay chashm-i tu difarīb-u jādū.*

⁷ *Chashm-i kutah-nazarān bar varaq-i šūrat-i khūbān.* For an analysis of these lines, see *BB*, 275–7. “Self-worshippers” translates the compound *khwad-parastān*, and it refers to individuals who are exclusively preoccupied with satisfying the needs of their carnal self (*naḡs*). Both mystics and the common folk contemplate beautiful boys, but the former, by controlling their sexual instincts, are capable of transcending the boundaries of physical attraction. They do not seek signs of divine beauty within or beyond the flesh, but through it.

You gaze upon faces, and refrain from contemplating:
I admire your strength, for I can't endure the allure.

Turkish beauties are tempting, but virtue asks you to resist.
Alas, this sinful gazer cannot control his carnal soul.

No more will I set out to admire the beautiful valleys
for not all fragrant gardens display a rose as beautiful as your cheek.

I see a spirit in your visage, an angel in your countenance and good
manners,
those who can't love you cannot be human beings!

So many people are blind, even with wide open eyes:
they resemble soulless paintings depicted on the walls.

O brother, the wayfarer on the path won't have to share the pain
of his heart, for this is a pain that is not concealed from you.

I know no creature who is not bewildered by the One
whose powerful Pen bewilders my senses in awe.

O Sa'dī, your precious life has now come to its end,
but the story of your melancholic desire is truly endless.⁸

[§ 2.3 = *GhS*, p. 165; *BB*, p. 620]

Has anyone ever heard of a walking cypress?
He's a pine tree: his neck, his chest—as bright as silver!

Attractive stature is not what you display with your figure
for the narrow-minded onlooker sees nothing beyond forms.

Midnight has passed, and people enjoy their rest,
but the Pleiades and my eyes cannot fall asleep.

I know that setting one's eyes on beautiful faces is blasphemous.
Will I repent? I won't: this is my religion!

⁸ *Dar man īn ast ki šabram zi nīkūrūyān nīst.*

This is a day for crowds to go out and admire the valleys,
especially now that springtime and Farvardīn have come.⁹

Today the meadow resembles Paradise: you must join us
and people will believe that heavenly beauty is here!

Your hands, as white as silver, can harm Sa'dī much more
than a falcon's claws when snatching doves.¹⁰

[§ 2.4 = *GhS*, p. 203; *BB*, p. 585]

[...] You bewilder me: I have no words to describe your senses (*ma'ānī*),
and I'm bewildered by those who look at you
with no bewilderment.

Will I spot defects in your beautiful form?
All magic is found in your seditious,
flirtatious gaze.

You came from God: a sign (*āyat*) of Mercy upon all the people
and you deserve all signs of Grace to shine upon you. [...] ¹¹

[§ 2.5 = *GhS*, pp. 253–4; *BB*, p. 562]

If I behold your face, O idol, as bright as the moon,
in truth I behold the traces of God's grace.

I peruse your figure over and over again from head to toe,
your face—I hope—will impress a sign upon my eyes.

In disdain you look down on my miserable life:
but I loyally admire the soil on which you step.

You are the sun, and I am nothing but a weak, dejected particle.
You stand beyond my sight, how could I behold you?

9 The beginning of Farvardīn, the first month of the Persian solar calendar, coincides with the spring equinox.

10 *Gar kasī sarv shanīd-ast ki raft-ast īn ast.*

11 *Dar tu ḥayrānam-u uṣāf-i ma'ānī ki tu rā-st.* See also *BB*, 332–3.

Your hair is realm of darkness, and water of life your lips:
my gaze in error wanders amidst your darkest curls.

My Indian eyes will stop admiring your Turkic cheeks
if by mistake I gaze upon the Chinese locks of your hair.¹²

The path of loving you takes one far away, but like Sa'dī
I walk and look behind, overtaken by nostalgia.¹³

[§ 3. *The Visionary Experience: Sa'dī's
Imaginal-Cosmological Modality*]

[§ 3.1 = GS, p. 50]

One of the Masters of the Heart (*ṣāhib-dil*) entered into a state of visionary rapture till drowning in the ocean of unveiling (*mukāshafa*). As soon as he reemerged from this imaginal transaction (*mu'āmalat*), one of his associates asked him with joyful enthusiasm: "What present are you bringing for us from the garden of fragrances that you visited?" He replied: "I was resolved to fill my robe with gifts for my companions once I reached the rose bush. But as soon as I approached it [and started picking the roses], the fragrance of those roses intoxicated me so deeply that I lost control and dropped all of them."¹⁴

[§ 3.2 = GhS, pp. 153–4; BB, p. 584]

You left, and yet you linger in my imagination (*khayāl*)
as if you were depicted (*muṣavvarī*) before my eyes.

My thoughts (*fikram*) cannot approach the zenith of your beauty:
you are more splendid than anything I ever imagined.

The moon never walked on earth, no eyes have ever glimpsed a fairy,
how can I see a fairy in you, or a moon in your face?

You must be an angel, for you were not conceived from this clay,
humans come from water and earth, but you from musk and ambergris!

12 Medieval Persian poets often describe specific body parts of the beloved through similes that involve different ethnicities. In this verse, "Indian" and "Turkic" stand for "black" and "white," whereas "Chinese locks" translates the pun *chīn*, which means both "China" and "curls."

13 *Gar rukhsār-i chu māhat ṣanamā mīnigaram.*

14 For a commentary on this passage and the concept of *mukāshafa*, see BB, 360–1.

Too much weeping for you may ruin my sight; who cares?
You are more precious than these two eyes of mine. [...]

Sa'dī, the embrace will not take place this time:
remember him for now, and nothing else today.¹⁵

[§ 3.3 = *GhS*, p. 90; *BB*, p. 578]

[...] I thought that not seeing you
would cause my love
to decline: you leave
and there you are, hidden
while being imagined. [...]¹⁶

[§ 3.4 = *GhS*, p. 129; *BB*, p. 579]

O idol, so beautiful you appear inside my gaze
that you inhabit my sight everywhere I look.¹⁷

[§ 3.5 = *GhS*, p. 217; *BB*, p. 579]

[...] The soil of your door is a balm that causes my vision to shine:
I am a man of insight, and I know the value of your soil.

The cypress of your stature stands in the garden of my imagination,
shame on me, if I were to admire the slender form of pine trees. [...]¹⁸

[§ 3.6 = *GhS*, p. 250; *BB*, p. 590]

Your face stole its soothing freshness from the Paradise above us,
your face's beauty is unique in the picture gallery of the world.

15 *Raftī-u hamchunān ba khayāl-i man andarī*. For an analysis of this ghazal from the perspective of Avicenna's theory of the internal senses, see *BB*, 327–9.

16 *Guftam aqar nabīnamat mihr farāmosham shavad*.

17 *Az bas ki dar nazāram khūb āmadī šanamā*.

18 *Başar-i rawshanam az surma-yi khāk-i dar-i tu-st*.

Your face disfigures the glowing portraits of Mani, although
Mani's finger will never paint an image as beautiful as your face.¹⁹

Your face conquers my heart, for in my eyes your face
is more beautiful than the rose, the moon, the angels.

Unveil your face, uncover Yūsuf's proof of beauty, then
the celestial brides will give up the market of charm.²⁰

The moon and the Pleiades will timidly cover their radiant bodies
if the epiphany (*tajalli*) of your face appears like sunshine at midnight.

Should the eyes of the blind men imagine your face
their pupils would tear apart the veils that prevent them from seeing. [...]

My wisdom imposes the rules of devotion upon amatory practices
but your face strikes the drums of plunder over the field of my piety.

Your face delivered a message with the script of your fine beard,
it inscribed an edict that conquered the entire kingdom of beauty.

Don't blame Sa'dī, my soul, for blame is pointless here:
without your face we ought to resist, while loving and burning.²¹

[§ 3.7 = *GhS*, pp. 223–4; *BB*, p. 608]

Alas, your image (*naqsh*) does not depart from my imagination (*khayāl*).
What will happen to me in this quest for you?

Louder and louder the high and low pitches of my grief:
this is what I suffer from your departure, while loving you.

-
- 19 Mani, who founded Manicheism in the third century CE, became famous in the Persian literary tradition as the epitome of the accomplished painter. Poets often allude to or explicitly mention Mani's *Arzhang* (or *Artang*), a collection of paintings that supposedly illustrated doctrinal points divulged by the Iranian prophet.
- 20 Celebrated in the Islamic tradition as the paragon of human beauty, Yūsuf appears quite often in Persian lyric poetry as analogous to the idealized object of desire. In the literary tradition, Yūsuf's physical and sacred beauty can even transcend gender boundaries.
- 21 *Ay țarāvāt burda az firdaws-i a'lā rīy-i tu*. See also *BB*, 349–51.

The sunshine of your face steals light from the stars
while people point their fingers at the pale crescent of my body.

At every breath the light radiating from your face falls on everyone:
and I'm the only one for whom connection (*ittiṣāl*) is yet to happen.²² [...]

The celestial spheres heard my cries and urged Sa'dī not to despair:
"Your sighs darken the mirror of our supernal beauty."²³

[§ 4. *Visual Connections between the Visible and the Invisible*]

[§ 4.1 = *GhS*, pp. 100–1; *BB*, p. 618]

Do not describe for me your Greek or Chinese beauties:
my heart is bound to one who came from our land.

When he resurfaces to my memory, and only then,
I lose all recollection of the existent and non-existent.

The date is sweet, but the palm tree stands out of reach:
the purest water flows right here, and yet we're thirsty.

That sacred boy (*shāhid*) appears in our imagination:
I know no pious man in town refraining from desire.

No object of gazes resembles his face,
no fragrant bodies compare to his scent.

Neither with him nor without do I seek a joyful life:
a pearl like him cannot be interlaced in my same thread.

Companions! Close your eyes and look beyond:
the mystery we share with him is most concealed (*sirrī-st maktūm*)!

22 The term *ittiṣāl*, "connection" or "contact," primarily signifies a conjunction between celestial bodies and, by extension, in Avicennian terms, the connection between the Rational Soul and the Active Intellect. Avicenna uses this term also to describe the way the internal senses, by mediation of the Practical Intellect, connect with the invisible world. In this specific line, Sa'dī alludes to the possibility for Sufi practitioners to experience an altered state of consciousness that leads to the connection with the invisible world and the wondrous beauty that can be witnessed when this mental contact takes place. See *BB*, 423–4.

23 *Vah ki judā namī-shavad naqsh-i tu az khayāl-i man.*

Should everyone in the world see these forms of his,
no one would grasp the holy meaning (*ma'nū*) behind his face.

The clueless ones can't see the way I'm burning.
What do the healthy know about feverish bodies?

You'll offer me my heart, or take away my life:
submission is a given, then servants give themselves away.

Sa'dī, you won't live through the journey of love:
the traveler is thirsty, but there's poison in this nectar.²⁴

[§ 4.2 = *GhS*, p. 190; *BB*, p. 615]

[...] I wish the curtains were lifted from that surface of splendor,
so that everyone may see the gallery of paintings!

Everyone's eyes will be bewildered by your forms,
and no one would judge my own bewilderment anymore.

However, not everyone has the eyes
to see the image that I see on your face.

I told the doctor about the condition of my crying eyes,
and he urged me to kiss at least once those smiling lips. [...] ²⁵

[§ 4.3 = *GhS*, p. 89; *BB*, p. 588]

I don't know what you resemble in this world:
the world, its things are only images, you are pure soul.

The lovers are willing to walk toward your snare,
catch them, then free them from themselves.

Don't ask me how I am—for I *am* what you want me to be.
Don't ask my name—call *me* by the name you prefer.

24 *Na az chīnam hikāyat kun na az rūm*. For an analysis, see *BB*, 456–8.

25 *Kāshkī parda bar uftādī az ān manẓar-i ḥusn*.

So swiftly you take one's heart upon their first gaze
that no chance is left for a second glance.

You hid yourself behind a veil, and while longing for your beauty
the hidden mysteries appeared: their veils were torn apart.

We sat upon your fire, set ablaze by passionate longing:
you sat too little among us: you won't put out this fire.

Whenever my mind imagines your beautiful form
what should I tell you about the senses (*ma'ānī*) going adrift?

I commit no sin when I glance upon the youths:
as the old man is aware of how short youth is.

Asleep and drunk, your eyes won't open. You don't know
how much I train (*riyādat*) myself, awake all night, till dawn.

I won't be able to tread toward his house, O breeze,
will you please greet for me the one I love?

Sa'dī will never turn his head away from your ties:
you captured him, you know—go ahead and kill.²⁶

[§ 4.4 = *GhS*, p. 268; *BB*, p. 573]

No light shines in the onlooker's lamp of destiny
if their gaze does not behold an object of vision (*manzūrī*).

What pleasure will the pretentious enjoy in Paradise
if he's not inclined today toward these paradisiacal beauties?

What delight from the ritual remembrance (*dhikr*) for those
who experience no secret passion for a praised one (*madhkūrī*)?

26 *Nadānamat ba ḥaqīqat ki dar jahān ba ki mānī*. For a reading of this ghazal in the context of the theory of the internal senses, see *BB*, 341–4.

The mystics (*ʿarīfān*) do not regard as master of gazes (*ṣāhib-naẓar*)
 the one
 whose mind does not contemplate an object of glances (*manẓūrī*). [...] ²⁷

[§ 4.5 = *GhS*, pp. 266–7; *BB*, p. 594]

Your face reflects our mirror so beautifully,
 for the mirror is pure, and your face is splendid.

Glittering wine shines through transparent cups:
 thus your beautiful nature appears through your face.

You are so irresistible to anyone who has walked with you
 or spent a few breaths in your enchanting company. [...]

Sa'dī is a man who contemplates the garden of your beauty:
 it is the poor man's hands that loot the banquet. [...] ²⁸

[§ 4.6 = *GhS*, pp. 36–7; *BB*, p. 583]

Fragrance of roses and chants of birds arise:
 this is the time of joy, for happiness fills the valleys.

Winter spreads new veils of leaves,
 the breeze, like a painter, beautifies the meadows.

Yet, we do not covet orchards and rose gardens:
 our delight will follow you, wherever you are.

They say that gazing at beautiful youths' faces
 is forbidden, but not the gaze that is ours!

The mystery of the unfathomable secret of creation
 appears on your face like water shining through glass.

I shall pull out the sinful gaze of my left eye
 so that a righteous eye alone may I set upon you.

²⁷ *Har ān nāẓir ki manẓūrī nadārad.*

²⁸ *Rūy-i tu khwash mī-namāyad āyina-yī mā.*

Any human who was not conquered by love for your
radiant face is not human, but a bare stone.

So much my inner pot of nostalgic desire is burning
that one day my dry bones and moist limbs will catch fire!

They say that Sa'dī's countless lamentations
poorly fit the demeanor of the wise man;

but what could they know about this abyss
if so serene they sit by the ocean's shores?²⁹

[§ 4.7 = *GhS*, p. 138; *BB*, p. 635]

The glances of God's beholders seek no lust,
necessity guides them, no errors on their path.

The mystics' eyes can glance over and over again,
the common folk cannot look more than once.

You ought to be a florid plant when the breeze is blowing,
not a lifeless mineral that moves not when caressed by the wind.

What bliss if you die with your heart fully alive:
a new life you'd enjoy which no end can dissolve.

Set your eyes upon whomever cleanses your being from darkness:
may God prevent you from staring at those who are bereft of any purity.

Should the beholders' bones burn as reeds on fire,
like beaten tambours they'd feel no pain.

Others shall recount all that I may say about love
but as they have no experience, their words lack insight!³⁰

29 *Būy-i gul-u bang-i murgh bar khāst*. For a comparison between this text and similar ghazals by Sanā'ī of Ghazna (d. ca. 555/1130), Rūmī, and 'Irāqī, see *BB*, 307–12.

30 *Naẓar-i khudāy-bīnān ṭalab-i havā nabāshad*. On this ghazal and the performance that prompted 'Alī Bisūtūn's recension of Sa'dī's collected works, see *BB*, 446–9, 506–8.

[§ 5. *Music and Ecstasy*]

[§ 5.1 = GS, p. 97]

I remember that once I spent the whole night traveling in a caravan. At dawn, I fell asleep on the edge of a forest. A lunatic of love who was journeying with us started screaming and set out for the steppe, without finding respite for one breath. In the morning, I asked him what all that commotion was about. He responded: "I heard how the nightingales began to sing from the trees, and listened to the partridges on the mountains, the toads in the river, and heard critters in the forest. I pondered that it is uncourteous to remain asleep while everything is chanting the lauds of God."

Last night a bird was singing till dawn
I senselessly lost my reason, my patience, my endurance.

My voice then happened to reach the ears
of one of my most beloved companions.

He said: I would never have imagined that
a bird's melody could make you utterly unconscious.

It's not befitting—I said—for the human condition
to keep quiet, while birds are chanting the lauds of God!

[§ 5.2 = GS, pp. 97–8]

Once I was traveling to the Hijaz in the company of a group of young and affectionate masters of the heart. Occasionally, they would hum and chant poems from the true bottom of their hearts. An ascetic was with us, dismissing the condition of the mystics and unaware of their inner pain. Once we arrived at the station of Banū Hilāl, on our way to Mecca, a black Arab boy appeared and started singing with such a voice that caused all birds in the sky to gather. I saw how the camel of the ascetic started dancing, then dropped him off. I said: "O shaykh, the boy's voice moved your camel but not you?"

You know what the nightingale told me at dawn?
Bereft of love, what kind of human are you?

Arabic poetry casts a camel into ecstatic joy
If you have no taste (*dhawq*) for it, you are a degenerate animal.

Anything you see sings aloud His name
a heart that listens will decipher this truth.

Perched on the rose bush, the nightingale lauds God
and all rose thorns are tongues that praise His presence.

[§ 5.3 = *BS*, pp.111–12]

When the heart is filled with passionate ardor
the steps of cattle inspire *samā'* even more than music. [...]

When enraptured, one can't tell
bass and treble timbres apart.

The inspired poor shout joyfully when the birds sing.
Singers may never stop their chants, but
one's ears are not always open to the melodies.

When the inflamed believers start worshipping wine,
they are intoxicated by the pulley that resounds through the well:

like pulleys they twist and whirl around
and cry while dancing and squeaking.

They succumb to pure contemplation, and
when ravished, they tear their cloaks apart!

Don't blame the dervish's ecstatic bewilderment
when he flails his hands and feet: he's drowning!

Brother, I shall not tell you what the lyrical ritual (*samā'*) is
unless I know who listens to its music.

If his bird-like soul is taking off from the tower of inspired meaning
(*ma'nī*),
the angels would be astounded by that flight.

Should he be a playful man devoted to hilarity and amusement,
the demon in his brain will grow ever stronger.

How can the man of lyrical rituals indulge in lust?
A beautiful voice wakes up the dormant, not the drunkard!

The morning breeze enralls the rose,
but only an axe can split the firewood.

The world resounds with music, intoxication, and rapture
but what could the blind man ever see in a mirror?

Have you seen how camels respond to Arab melodies?
How joyfully they dance when music overtakes them?

Music brings passionate joy to the camel's head
but a donkey is a man who feels no emotion. [...]

One night, a father listened to his son's melodies.
He was astonished and bewildered by his music (*samā'*).

With his face covered in sweat, he said:
"This time it is the flute that has set *me* on fire!"

You don't know why those who are frenzied by ecstasy
agitate their hands while dancing?

A door opens upon the heart from the inspirations (*vāridāt*):
they cast their heads and hands upon existence.

May dancing for the Beloved be lawful to anyone
who sacrifices his entire being to Him.³¹

[§ 5.4 = *GhS*, p. 103; *BB*, p. 628]

When smooth faces reflect pure gestures
their light can purify one's body from all darkness.

If your brain's imagination (*khayāl-i dimāghat*) can give up lust
anyone you set your eyes upon will turn into a sacred boy (*shāhid*).

31 For an analysis of this anecdote in the context of a discussion of Sa'dī's attitudes toward *samā'*, see *BB*, 480–5.

Prevent your nature from listening to carnal wants, then in the concert of affection the taste of sacred music (*samāʿ*) will resound inside your heart.

You appear at dawn, and no one bows down to worship your face: the others fear God, whereas bewilderment freezes me.

You may cease to appear again from Sa'dī's door,
but you'll never leave the remembrance he has of you.³²

32 *Pākīza-rūy rā ki buvad pākdāmanī.*

PART 6

Legal and Ethical Perspectives



Ibn Abī Zayd (d. 386/996) on Scent, Sight, Taste, and Touch during the Ḥajj

Adam Bursi

1 Introduction

Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, known as Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, was a renowned Sunni scholar from the North African city of Qayrawan. The author of many (mostly now lost) texts in varied literary genres, Ibn Abī Zayd most famously wrote within the field of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and specifically that associated with the school of the Medinan scholar Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795–6) and Mālik’s immediate followers (Muranyi). Ibn Abī Zayd’s most well-known work was his *Treatise (al-Risāla)*: a short handbook on Mālikī creed and law, which was immediately well-received among Ibn Abī Zayd’s contemporaries and was the subject of several expansive commentaries well into the modern period (Rahman, 147–52; Sezgin, 478–81). Later Mālikīs would remember Ibn Abī Zayd as one of their *madhhab*’s foundational figures, without whom “the Mālikī school would have passed away” (Rahman, 92).

The passages translated below come from Ibn Abī Zayd’s longest work, titled *Rarities and Additions to the Mudawwana from Other Essential Works (al-Nawādir wa-l-ziyādāt ‘alā mā fī l-Mudawwana min ghayrihā min al-ummahāt)*. As the title suggests, the *Nawādir* is a “collection of Mālik’s legal teachings, as well as those of his students (and sometimes his students’ students) that were not included in the *Mudawwana*” of Saḥnūn b. Sa‘īd al-Tanūkhī (d. 240/854) (Fadel, 211). A Mālikī jurist and judge from Qayrawan, Saḥnūn recorded in his monumental *Mudawwana* (or *Code*) the answers to juridical questions posed to Mālik b. Anas by the latter’s Egyptian student ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Qāsim al-‘Utaqī (d. 191/806). While the *Mudawwana* was already reaching canonical status within Mālikī circles by the late third/ninth century, there also circulated several other authors’ textual collections that likewise recorded the words and interpretations of Mālik and his followers (Wymann-Landgraf, 81–4). In his *Nawādir*, Ibn Abī Zayd extensively quotes from these other Mālikī “essential works” (*ummahāt*), creating a sizeable textual supplement to the *Mudawwana* (see Ibn Abī Zayd, 1:9–10). The text provides “a valuable collection of early

sources” of Mālikī jurisprudence, many of which “are entirely lost or of which we have only a few fragments” (Muranyi).

In the selections translated below, taken from the *Nawādir*’s section on Ḥajj, the senses of smell, sight, taste, and touch are all evoked within the context of pilgrimage. Many of the questions posed pertain to the state of ritual purity known as *iḥrām*, during which pilgrims to Mecca were expected to abide by certain bodily rules and regulations, including abstention from wearing perfume (Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 186–91; Bursi, “Scents of Space,” 229–31). As we see in Ibn Abī Zayd’s text, this general rule against perfume provoked many specific questions, such as: could pilgrims anoint themselves with scent before entering *iḥrām*? Were clothes colored with perfumed dyes acceptable to be worn? Could medicinal substances containing scented ingredients be consumed or applied if one fell sick while on pilgrimage? Should one avoid eating foods with aromatic ingredients in them? All of these questions illustrate the sensory world surrounding pilgrimage in the fourth/tenth century, and the effort among Muslim jurists to understand and regulate the details of that world.

Noteworthy are the specific substances that receive the most sustained attention: saffron, safflower, and *wars*. All three of these plants were used both in perfumery and as clothing dyes, each producing varieties of yellow-red coloring (King, 47, 265, 274; Shinikov). Aversion to their usage as perfumes and/or dyes—during *iḥrām* specifically, and sometimes more generally—is attested already in the *ḥadīth* corpus,¹ including in Mālik’s *Muwattaʾ*. There it is reported that the Prophet Muḥammad forbade wearing clothes “dyed with saffron or *wars*” during *iḥrām*, while the caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb even more conservatively banned pilgrims from wearing “any clothing that appears to have been dyed, even if, in fact, it has not been” (Mālik b. Anas, 283–4). In the *Mudawwana*, Ibn al-Qāsim likewise cites Mālik’s disapproval of *iḥrām* garments dyed with *wars*, saffron, and safflower, as they each can “bleed” (*yantafidu*) their color onto the wearer’s skin (Saḥnūn, 1:395–6). However, Ibn al-Qāsim says that Mālik had no problem with other colored dyes: he allowed red-ochre (*mumashshaq*) and dark blue (*kuḥlīyya*) clothes, for example. He even accepted clothes that had been dyed with the aforementioned disliked substances, so long as such clothes were washed thoroughly enough that the dye left the garment completely.

The sensory factors of color and scent often appear intertwined in these materials. For example, in a report in the *Nawādir*, the Egyptian jurist Ashhab (d. 204/819) allows the usage of safflower as a dye for *iḥrām* garments “if its

1 See *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 5 (§ 4.3.2), 6 (§ 1).

color and scent go away when washed [...] but if its scent (*rā'iḥa*) or yellowness (*ṣufra*) remains, then it is not [allowed]" (see below, § 2.4). As Atanas Shinikov notes regarding Muslim jurists' discussions of saffron and safflower, "it is difficult to say whether the olfactory or the visual element prevails," and both sensory elements have "highly symbolic values [...] beyond [their] direct perception or mere aesthetic dimension" (Shinikov, 288–9).

This exemplifies the multisensory character of many of these discussions of the particularities of the Ḥajj. One of the *Nawādir*'s traditions states, "Touching perfume is more serious than smelling it, and drinking it is more serious than touching it" (§ 3.1). Thus, coming into contact with perfume via touch, or ingesting it via taste, was considered more troublesome than simply sniffing it in the air. This is well-illustrated in the discussions about consuming foods and medicines containing perfumed ingredients. The *Nawādir* also addresses an important location where a pilgrim might experience perfume: at the Ka'ba, which was anointed with a saffron-based perfume mixture called *khalūq* (King, 281; Shinikov, 287). The Ka'ba's perfume offers an interesting case, as some early jurists suggested that it offered an exception to the general prohibition against contact with perfume during *iḥrām* (Bursi, "Scents of Space," 216). We see a degree of permissiveness on this issue in Mālik's reported allowance of a "small amount" of the Ka'ba's *khalūq* to remain on one's person (§ 3.4).

Touch clearly offered a nexus of debate in regards to pilgrimage practices. This is seen not only in the discussions of perfumes, but also in questions about the correct ways of physically interacting with the Ka'ba itself. Such questions particularly surrounded the parts of the building most prone to pilgrims' touch: its corners, especially the eastern corner that held the Black Stone; as well as the area on the building's southeastern wall between the Black Stone and the door, called the Multazam. The Black Stone—often called simply "the Corner" (*al-Rukn*) after its location on the Ka'ba—was the site of a ritual called "the greeting/touching" (*al-istilām*), in which visitors would kiss and stroke the Stone or, if unable to reach the Stone physically due to the throng of pilgrims, gesture toward it from a distance. After touching a hand to the Stone, a pilgrim might then raise that hand to their mouth, bringing the Stone's blessed touch more intimately into himself or herself. Pilgrims sometimes performed similar rituals at the Ka'ba's other corners, especially the southern (Yemeni) corner. At the Multazam, roughly meaning "place of clinging," pilgrims would press their hands and bodies against the Ka'ba's wall while making invocations to God, as it was believed to be a place where prayers would be readily answered (Bursi, "You Were Not Commanded," 13).

In traditions transmitted in the *Nawādir* and in other texts, Mālik appears somewhat hesitant about these haptic practices at the Ka'ba. He commands

that one “not kiss your hand during the *istilām* [...] but rather place [the hand] on your mouth without kissing it, and kiss only the Black Stone with your mouth” (Saḥnūn, 1:396; see § 4.1). He appears adamant that one should not prostrate upon the Black Stone—meaning touch one’s forehead to it—even though reports documented Companions doing so (§ 4.1). As for the Multazam, Mālik advocates that one should simply stand beside the Ka’ba and pray there, rather than cling to or kiss the building (§ 5.1). However, some of Mālik’s students transmit opinions saying that there was “no problem in embracing it and seeking refuge with God through it,” and that it was “recommended” (*yustahabb*) to do so (§ 5.4). These divergent statements demonstrate the continuing debates over touch and embodied pilgrimage practice that extended from the early period into later centuries (cf. Bursi, “You Were Not Commanded”).

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2 Translation

Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, *al-Nawādir wa-l-ziyādāt ʿalā mā fi l-Mudawwana min ghayrihā min al-ummahāt*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw et al., 15 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 327, 341–53, 438.

[§ 1. Perfumes before and during iḥrām]

[§ 1.1]

[p. 327] Mālik said in *al-Mukhtaṣar*:² "We prefer the abandonment of [all] perfume during *iḥrām*. As for jasmine oil (*rāziqī*), kewda (*kādī*), and ben oil (*al-bān al-samḥ*), there is no problem [with using them] before the *ṭawāf al-ifāda*."³

2 The *Mukhtaṣar* of ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (d. 214/829), an important Mālikī jurist. See Brockopp.

3 The *ṭawāf al-ifāda* is a ritual circumambulation of the Kaʿba, one of the key components of the Ḥajj. According to Mālik and other jurists, completion of *ṭawāf al-ifāda* releases a pilgrim from the rules of *iḥrām*. See Mālik b. Anas, 286, 317, 327, 346, 352. Jasmine, kewda, and *al-bān al-samḥ* are cited as acceptable likely because they are types of colorless oil, rather than

[§ 1.2]

From the *Majmūʿa*:⁴ Ashhab said, “There is no capability (*laysa la-hu saʿat*) [for a pilgrim] to anoint himself with a perfumed unguent before entering *iḥrām*, and it is not allowed to him before the *ṭawāf al-ifāḍa*. If he does [perfume himself], there is no expiation (*fidya*) required of him, according to what is transmitted about this matter.⁵ I dislike this, because many of the Companions forbade it. Mālik said, “The people introduced [the usage during *iḥrām* of] perfume that retains its scent.”

[§ 1.3]

It is [reported] from him [Ashhab?], from the *Kitāb Ibn al-Mawwāz*,⁶ and from Ibn al-Qāsim that Mālik said: “There is no problem for a woman to comb her hair with henna and with whatever is not perfumed, before entering *iḥrām*, such that she dyes her hair.” It is [reported] from Muḥammad that Mālik said, “She should not put adornment (*ziwāq*) on her head. If she does that, she must redeem herself [by performing an expiatory act], if it is done before entering *iḥrām*.”⁷

[§ 2. *The Colors and Scents of iḥrām Garments*]

[§ 2.1]

[p. 341] From the *Kitāb Ibn al-Mawwāz*: Mālik said, “We prefer white clothes in *iḥrām*, but there is no problem with other [colors].” [...] Mālik said, “Men and women are prohibited from *iḥrām* [in garments] dyed with *wars* (*muwar-ras*), dyed with red safflower (*al-muʿaṣfar al-mufdam*), or dyed with saffron (*muzaʿfar*) and the like. There is no problem with colors other than those. If someone enters *iḥrām* in a garment dyed with *wars* or saffron, then they must redeem themselves.”⁸

perfumes per se. Thus, they were not meant to be used here for scenting or adorning oneself, but rather for oiling one's hair and skin. I thank Anya King for clarifying this point for me. Notably, *al-bān al-samḥ* is said to be “non-perfumed ben oil” (*al-bān ḡhayr al-muṭayyab*) in Saḥnūn, 1:395.

4 The *Majmūʿa* of Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbdūs (d. 260–1/873–5), a contemporary of Saḥnūn in Qayrawan.

5 For the forms of expiation traditionally required for breaking the rules of *iḥrām*, including for using perfume, see Mālik b. Anas, 351; Yanagihashi, 205–21. See also footnote 21, below. On expiation more generally within Islamic tradition, see Chelhod; Lange.

6 The *Kitāb* (also called *al-Mawwāziyya*) of Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Mawwāz (d. ca. 269/882–3), a prominent Mālikī jurist from Egypt. Cf. Wymann-Landgraf, 81–2.

7 Cf. al-ʿUtbi, 70.

8 Cf. the tradition in the fragmentary book on Ḥajj by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbdallāh b. Abī Salama al-Mājiḥūn (d. 164/780–81), published in al-ʿUtbi, 173. Al-Mājiḥūn was a rival of Mālik b. Anas.

[§ 2.2]

From the *Majmūʿa*: Mālik disliked *iḥrām* in [garments] dyed with red safflower [p. 342] for both men and women. Ashhab said, “Regarding [clothes] dyed with safflower, I dislike what leaves a trace on the body. There is no expiation required for a man or woman who wears it, though they have misbehaved [*asāʾa*]. [...] The best clothing for a pilgrim (*muḥrim*) is white. [The *muḥrim*] is not forbidden from [wearing] its like [i.e., colors similar to white]—silk being among the most well-known of these—nor colors even less opaque than white. It is among the colors for which there is no doubt regarding people wearing dyed clothing. There is no problem with it.” Ibn al-Qāsim said that Mālik said, “A woman may wear yellow silk in *iḥrām*.”

[§ 2.3]

From the *Kitāb Ibn al-Mawwāz*: A female pilgrim (*muḥrima*) may wear her menstrual garments if she washes off any blood from them. Wearing such clothes is not disliked, as long as they are not [dyed with] *wars*, saffron, or red safflower. Ibn Ḥabīb⁹ said, “She may wear clothes dyed red, unless they shed [their color], for Mālik disliked that. And she may wear silk (*khazz*) in *iḥrām*.” [...]

[§ 2.4]

[p. 343] From the *Kitāb Ibn al-Mawwāz*: A pilgrim does not enter *iḥrām* in a garment that has the scent of musk or perfume; if he does, then an expiation is not required of him. In the *Majmūʿa*, Ashhab said: “Unless it is a lot [of perfume], or it is as though [the garment itself] has been perfumed: then he must redeem himself.” He said, “There is no problem with pink (*muwarrad*) or yellow [that is produced] without *wars* or saffron. As for safflower (*muʿasfar*), if its color and scent go away when washed, then there is no problem; but if its scent or yellowness remains, then it is not [allowed], unless a garment is prepared that covers it and hides its color.”

[§ 2.5]

From *al-Uṭbiyya*¹⁰ and the *Kitāb Ibn al-Mawwāz*: Mālik said, “There is no [expiation] required for one who enters *iḥrām* in a garment that has a spot of saffron. He should wash it if it is pointed out. There is no problem with entering

9 ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb (d. 238/852–3), a prominent Andalusian Mālikī jurist whose compilation *al-Wāḍiḥa* was drawn upon by Ibn Abī Zayd. Fragments of the *Wāḍiḥa* have been published on the basis of manuscripts kept in Qayrawan. Cf. Ibn Ḥabīb; Wymann-Landgraf, 83.

10 The *Uṭbiyya* (also called *al-Mustakhrāja*) of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Uṭbī (d. ca. 255/868–9), an Andalusian Mālikī jurist. The text was based on traditions transmitted from Mālik by Ibn al-Qāsim (the same source drawn upon in Saḥnūn’s *Mudawwana*), as we see

iḥrām in a garment spotted with unguent (*duhn*).” Ibn al-Qāsim said, “As long as it does not have the scent of musk or ambergris.”¹¹

[§ 2.6]

From the *Kitāb Ibn al-Mawwāz*: Mālik said, “Do not sleep on anything dyed with *wars* or saffron, whether a cover or a cushion, and do not sit [on something dyed] unless it is wrapped in a thick garment. If you do that without having wrapped it, then an expiation is required if it is heavily dyed, or dyed even lightly with saffron. I prefer that you not sleep on something like that, lest you perspire and [the dye] come off on you, unless [the dye] is light and does not come off on your body. Do not rest on a pillow with saffron in it. It is disliked to sleep [p. 344] on a piece of wood treated with saffron (*muzaʿfara*) that has been bleached by the sun, even if it is covered with a white garment.”

[§ 3. Scented Materials during the Ḥajj]

[§ 3.1]

[p. 350] From the *Kitāb Ibn al-Mawwāz*: Touching perfume (*al-ṭīb*) is more serious than smelling it, and drinking it is more serious than touching it. An expiation is [required] for drinking or touching it.

[§ 3.2]

[p. 351] Ibn Wahb¹² said that Mālik said: “Regarding a pilgrim who drinks a beverage (*shirāb*) with a perfume (*ṭīb*) or a scent (*rāʾiḥa*) in it, this does not please me,¹³ but there is no [expiation] necessary for him.” Ashhab also said this. Muḥammad said: “This is [the position] held among us regarding [food] cooked by fire, or something in which the color [of the perfume] has changed and it has no flavor [of the material], such as an antidote (*tiryāq*) and the like, and *fulūniyya*.¹⁴ There is no potency (*qadr*) to the saffron in it, and it cannot be seen.” It is mentioned in *al-Uṭbiyya* on Mālik’s authority regarding *fulūniyya* and antidotes: “There is nothing wrong with one who drinks them.”¹⁵

exemplified here. Cf. Wymann-Landgraf, 83–4. The *Uṭbiyya*’s section on Ḥajj has been edited by Miklos Muranyi.

11 Cf. al-ʿUtbī, 65.

12 ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb b. Muslim (d. 197/813), a prominent Egyptian Mālikī jurist.

13 Here following the text given in the modern editor’s footnote.

14 *Fulūniyya* (more often *falūniyā* or *flūniyā*), from Greek φιλώνειον, refers to an analgesic mixture drunk to treat ailments like toothache, and often containing saffron as an ingredient. See Kahl, 36–7.

15 Cf. al-ʿUtbī, 67.

[§ 3:3]

Ibn Ḥabīb said: “One may eat [food] containing saffron if it has been cooked such that its smell is eliminated and [the scent] does not cling to one’s hand and none comes from one’s mouth. Like this are yellow *khushkanān*¹⁶ and *khabiṣ*.¹⁷ As for *fālūdh*¹⁸ and *duqqa*,¹⁹ no. For *fālūdh* can stain the hand and mouth when it is cooked, and seasoned *duqqa* likewise stains the hand and mouth.”

[§ 3:4]

From the *Kitāb* of Muḥammad:²⁰ Ibn al-Qāsim said, “One who drinks saffron as a medicine must redeem himself.”²¹ Mālik said, “Clean off with your hand whatever you get on you of the Ka’ba’s *khalūq*. No [expiation] is required of you, and you may leave [the perfume] if it is only a small amount. If you get *khalūq* from the Corner [i.e., the Black Stone] on your palm, then I prefer that you wash off your hand before kissing it, if there is a lot [of *khalūq*]. If there is only a small amount, then it is up to your discretion.”

[§ 3:5]

It is disliked that a pilgrim sells jasmine (*zanbaq*) and similar perfumes [i.e., the scents (?)] which cling. If you do that, [p. 352] God will take it into account. It is also disliked that one unpacks loads of perfume in one’s traveling group. But if you take some ban oil with your finger and put it on the back of your hand, then no [expiation] is required of you, as this is not anointing yourself with it. There is no problem with putting your hand over your nose when walking past perfume. In *al-Utbīyya*, Ibn al-Qāsim said, “I prefer that you do that, and there is no problem with plugging your nose from [the odor of] a cadaver or from dust.”²²

16 *Khushkanān* or *khushkanānaj* were dry cookies, often filled with dates and nuts, and were frequently eaten during pilgrimage. See Nasrallah, 418–21, 569.

17 *Khabiṣ* is a general term for condensed pudding, of which there existed a great many recipes for different varieties. See Nasrallah, 388–403, 597.

18 *Fālūdh* or *fālūdhaj* was an aromatic sweet, similar to modern halwa. See Nasrallah, 382–7, 595.

19 *Duqqa* is a blend of spices used to flavor food.

20 Unidentified, possibly the book of Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Mawwāz (*al-Mawwāziyya*).

21 Cf. the tradition from al-Mājishūn in al-‘Utbī, 180, which states that “one who is compelled to cure himself with something perfumed is redeemed through slaughtering a sheep and giving all of it as charity, without eating any of it; or fasting for three days; or feeding six poor people.”

22 Cf. al-‘Utbī, 65–6, 73.

[§ 3.6]

Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam said, on Mālik’s authority, “If you drip non-scented ban oil into your ear because of a pain in it, there is no problem with that. And it is the same if you put it in your mouth.” [...]

[§ 3.7]

[p. 353] From the *Kitāb* of Muḥammad: [...] If a male or female pilgrim applies non-perfumed kohl (*ithmid*) for something other than pain, then an expiation is required. Ibn Ḥabīb said, “If they apply kohl for adornment, then an expiation is required. But if it is for something other than adornment, such as for [treating] a burn (*ḥarr*) and the like, then there is no expiation required, if the kohl is not perfumed.”²³ He said in *al-Mukhtaṣar*: “There is no problem for a man who applies kohl before entering *iḥrām*.”

[§ 4. Touching the Ka‘ba’s Corners]

[§ 4.1]

[p. 437] From the *Kitāb Ibn al-Mawwāz*: Mālik said, “[...] Do not prostrate on the Corner [of the Ka‘ba that holds the Black Stone]. Kiss [the Black Stone] if you are able, or else touch it with your hand, and then place [your hand] on your mouth without kissing [your hand].” It was said to him, “Some of the Companions used to kiss [the Black Stone], and to prostrate on it.”²⁴ He [Mālik] denied that and said, “I haven’t heard of anything but kissing it.” Ibn Ḥabīb said, “It [i.e., reports about prostrating on the Black Stone] had been transmitted from ‘Umar and Ibn ‘Abbās, but perhaps Mālik rejected this out of fear that [prostrating on the Stone] would then be interpreted as being a required act (*wājib*).” [...]

[§ 4.2]

From the *Kitāb* of Muḥammad: Mālik said, “Do not raise your hands when looking at the House, and do not adopt the practice of ‘Urwa [b. al-Zubayr] of touching all of the corners [of the Ka‘ba].²⁵ I do not think you should kiss the Yemeni corner, but [only] touch it with your hand, and do not touch the other [two] corners.” Nothing was transmitted from Mālik regarding kissing

23 Cf. the discussion in Ibn Ḥabīb, 170–1.

24 Cf. al-‘Utbī, 91. On Companions kissing the Stone, see Bursi, “You Were Not Commanded.”

25 Raising one’s hands in front of the Ka‘ba is maligned as a Jewish practice in some reports. Touching all four of the Ka‘ba’s corners during circumambulation is ascribed to the scholar ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr in Mālik’s *Muwatta‘* (Mālik b. Anas, 314). Other reports associate the practice with ‘Urwa’s brother, ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr (d. 73/692), seemingly related to his infamous reconstruction of the Ka‘ba. See Hawting, 10–12.

one's hand after touching the Yemeni corner. There is no problem with doing so, [though] Mālik was not seen kissing his hand then, nor after touching the Black [Stone]. Mālik said, "The people tend to touch the Corner even without circumambulating [the Ka'ba]. There is no problem with that." He said in the *Mukhtaṣar*: "Do not touch the Corner unless you are clean (*tāhīr*)."

[§ 4.3]

Ashhab reported from Mālik in *al-'Utbīya*: "There is no [expiation] required for one who does not touch the Corner."²⁶

[§ 5. *Touching the Multazam*]

[§ 5.1]

[p. 438] From the *Kitāb Ibn al-Mawwāz*: It was said to Mālik, "When a person bids farewell [i.e. performs the final circumambulation of the Ka'ba], does he go to the Multazam, if it is possible for him?" He said, "That is open for discussion." It was said, "And he who goes to the Multazam, does he cling to the coverings of the Ka'ba?" He said, "No, but rather he stands and prays, like what is done at the tomb of the Prophet. And he does not turn his back to the House while praying, but faces it directly."

[§ 5.2]

He said: Ibn 'Abbās used to stand by the Multazam, between the Corner and the door. He did not kiss it, nor cling to it, except that his clothes barely touched the clothes of the Ka'ba.

[§ 5.3]

Ibn Ḥabīb said, on the authority of Ibn al-Mājīshūn,²⁷ on the authority of Mālik: "The Multazam is the area between the Corner and the door."²⁸

[§ 5.4]

Muṭarrif²⁹ said, "The Multazam is the place where a praying person embraces [the Ka'ba] and beseeches God. This is a recommended practice." He [Muṭarrif]

26 Cf. *al-'Utbī*, 86.

27 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 212/827), known as Ibn al-Mājīshūn, was a student of Mālik. He was the son of al-Mājīshūn, mentioned above.

28 This tradition appears in Mālik's *Muwatta'*, where Mālik ascribes it to Ibn 'Abbās. The background to the tradition appears to be a debate about the proper location for the performance of the Multazam ritual. See Bursi, "You Were Not Commanded."

29 Muṭarrif b. 'Abdallāh (d. 220/835), a student (and nephew) of Mālik.

and Ibn Wahb both said this on Mālik's authority, and Ibn Nāfi³⁰ and Ibn al-Mājishūn both also [said this]. Something similar is mentioned in a *ḥadīth* from 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar, on the Prophet's authority.

[§ 5.5]

Ibn Wahb said that Mālik said: "It [the Multazam] is also called the Muta'awwadh. There is no problem in embracing it and seeking refuge with God through it. Do not turn your back to the House when praying there."

[§ 5.6]

'Aṭā' [b. Abī Rabāḥ]³¹ disapproved of embracing or clinging to the Multazam. He would stand beside it to pray, but did not cling to the House with either his belly or his back, nor embrace any part of it. He said, "This is what Ibn 'Abbās did."

30 'Abdallāh b. Nāfi' al-Ṣā'igh (d. ca. 186/802-3), a student of Mālik.

31 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ (d. 114/732-3), an esteemed Meccan jurist.

Al-Qudūrī (d. 428/1037) on Purity

Brannon Wheeler

1 Introduction

The *Mukhtaṣar* (*Compendium*) of Abū l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qudūrī (362–428/972–1037) is an Islamic legal “handbook” from the fourth/tenth century that became the standard reference work for almost all later Ḥanafī jurisprudence. In addition to being cited in full in a range of later Ḥanafī texts, there exist more than two dozen commentaries on the *Mukhtaṣar* (Wheeler, “Identity”). Al-Qudūrī was a prominent scholar of the Ḥanafī school in Baghdad. He is best known for his *Mukhtaṣar* but is also credited with a work on *ḥadīth*, a biography of Abū Ḥanīfa (80–150/699–767), and a comparison of the legal opinions of Abū Ḥanīfa and al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820).

The *Mukhtaṣar* uses examples from the conflict of opinion among the three main Ḥanafī authorities to show the types of interpretive methods and decisions that characterize the Ḥanafī school and legal reasoning in general. Other works of *ikhtilāf* (legal disagreement) of the tenth and eleventh centuries, such as those of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933), attempted to illustrate and explain the conflict of legal opinion among different schools rather than within a single legal tradition. Al-Qudūrī focuses on the opinions of Abū Ḥanīfa, his student Abū Yūsuf (113–82/729–98), and Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (131–89/749–805), the student of both Abū Ḥanīfa and Abū Yūsuf. In only a few places, al-Qudūrī also mentions the opinion of Zufar b. al-Hudhayl (d. 158/775), and some manuscripts include references to the opinions of other early Ḥanafī scholars.

The section translated here, on purity (*tahāra*), typically precedes any discussion of other ritual practices (prayer [*ṣalāt*], fasting [*ṣawm*], alms-giving [*zakāt*], pilgrimage [*ḥajj*]) in most legal textbooks. The order and structure of the section is also typical. Al-Qudūrī begins with the two major types of purification (*wuḍū’* [ablution], *ghuṣl* [washing]), then proceeds to a discussion of what types of liquid can be used for purification, purification without liquid, purification of feet without removing socks, menstruation, other physical impurities, and wiping of the anus.

Touch is, of course, central to the definition of purity, becoming impure, and the practice of purification. Visual, acoustic, olfactory, and gustatory senses are

also involved but only incidentally—the *Mukhtaṣar* does not, for example, state that seeing (substances or objects, or even acts, that would invalidate purity if touched) invalidates impurity (Wheeler, “Touching”). Western scholars of religion have theorized that Islamic law might not regard the human body as a “dangerous” (Douglas) or contagious source of impurity (Reinhart), but others have shown that this is not the case (Burge; Maghen; Safran). Physical contact with certain body parts and bodily emissions (blood, vomit, urine, feces, seminal fluids) serve to invalidate a person’s purity. It is interesting to note that the *Mukhtaṣar*, consistent with other Muslim legal texts, does not state that physical contact causes impurity but rather the contact “invalidates” the temporary state of purity affected by an earlier act of purification. Because the state of purity is invalidated by certain forms of physical contact, the contact in effect requires purification.

It is evident from the conditions that invalidate purity that the “natural” state of being human is impurity. Ablution (*wuḍūʿ*)—washing of the hands, feet, and wiping the head—is required if a person urinates, defecates, bleeds, oozes pus, vomits, or sleeps. Washing (*ghuṣl*)—washing the whole body—is required for conditions associated with procreation: contact with seminal fluid, menstrual blood, childbirth, and physical contact of genitalia (without ejaculation) between a man and woman.

Physical contact with certain substances invalidates purity but other substances (water, other liquids, earth of certain types) purify. Smell, taste, and sound are not mentioned by the text but certainly would be a factor in the actual experience of impurity and purification (think of the taste of vomit, and the smell of blood, urine, feces, semen). Interestingly, sleep is defined *de facto* as resting on a physical object (i.e., sleeping standing up doesn’t count). Running waters opposed to still would have acoustic qualities, as would the act of putting water on the limbs, showering, and so on; and tasting would be a factor with rinsing of mouth (and snorting water up the nose certainly is a visceral experience). Conceivably, a temperature change, from cold or warm water on skin, would also be of a sensory nature.

The *Mukhtaṣar* does not make ethical value judgments—actions, objects, substances, and the conditions physical contact with them produce are not good or evil, but rather are categorized by a range of practicable values (required, recommended, neutral, discouraged, forbidden). Sex, for example, is not bad but it does invalidate purity.

The explanatory comments in the footnotes to the following translation are paraphrases of various explanations found in commentaries on the *Mukhtaṣar*, such as al-Ḥaddād’s (d. 800/1397) *al-Jawhara al-nayyira* and al-Maydānī’s (d. 1298/1881) *al-Lubāb*, as well as other unpublished commentaries.

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2 Translation

Abū l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qudūrī, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī l-fiqh*, in 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Maydānī, *al-Lubāb fī sharḥ al-Kitāb*, Cairo: Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Afandī al-Kutubī wa-Shurakāh, 1913, vol. 1, pp. 10–58.

[§ 1. Purification]

[§ 1.1 Ablution (*wuḍū'*)]

[p. 10] God the Exalted said: "O you who believe, when you arise to pray wash your faces [p. 11] and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads and your feet up to the ankles."¹ The obligatory duty (*farḍ*)² of purity is the

1 Q 5:6. On the general notion of ritual purity in *fiqh* scholarship, see Bousquet; Voller.

2 Obligatory duty (*farḍ*) refers to a rule which does not imply performing anything extra nor permitting anything less. It is established by a definitive textual indication such as one found in the Qur'ān or in a report of Prophetic practice supported by a chain of transmission (*isnād*) that is reiterated at each stage of transmission (*mutawātir*). Rejecting an obligatory duty is an act of unbelief.

washing of the three limbs³ and the wiping of the head, the elbows and the ankles entering into the wash. [p. 12] The obligatory duty concerning the wiping of the head is to the extent of the forelock because al-Mughira b. Shu'ba related that the Prophet came to a trash dump, urinated, and performed the ablution (*wuḍū'*) wiping his forelock and his slippers.⁴ The customary practice (*sunna*)⁵ of purity [p. 13] is the washing of the hands before putting them into the vessel [in which the water for the ablution is contained], when the person performing the ablution awakes from his sleep, [p. 14] the saying of "In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate" at the beginning of the ablution, using the toothpick, rinsing the mouth, snuffing, wiping the ears, [p. 15] combing the beard with the fingers, repeating the washing three times. [p. 16] It is recommended (*yustaḥabb*)⁶ to the person performing the ablution that he intend purity, that he wipe his entire head, and that he perform the ablution in order, beginning with what God first mentions, and with the right side.⁷ [p. 17] That which invalidates the ablution is everything which comes out of the two apertures,⁸ blood, pus, and purulent matter when it comes out of the body and

3 This means the face, hands, and feet. Three is mentioned but the number is five because the arms and legs go together in the regimen of limbs just as in the regimen of wergild (*qiṣās*).

4 Al-Mughira b. Shu'ba (d. 49–50/671) was a Companion of the Prophet Muḥammad. He was active politically under the first four caliphs and the early Umayyad state. He is supposed to have been married and divorced hundreds of times. For his life, see Lammens.

5 Customary practice (*sunna*) literally means a way of acting whether sanctioned or not. The Prophet said: "Whoever establishes a good customary practice has its rewards and the rewards coming from its works until the Day of Resurrection. Whoever establishes an evil customary practice has upon him the responsibility of its works until the Day of Resurrection." See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:217. In *fiqh* scholarship it is an expression for that in which the Prophet or one of his Companions was assiduous. It is dependent upon things said and things done. The *fiqh* scholar Abū l-Layth [al-Samarqandī, d. 373/983] says that customary practice is that which renounces sin and disavows corrupting innovation. Supererogation (*nafl*) is that which does not necessarily renounce sin nor disavow corrupting innovation.

6 Recommended (*mustaḥabb*) is that which a person is asked to do on account of recommended practice but without requirement. In its execution is rewards but there is no punishment for omitting it.

7 That is, he begins with the right hand before the left and the right leg before the left. This is based on the fact that the Prophet had required that a person begin with the right in everything except shoes. This indicates that it is appropriate for the washer to begin with the wiping of the right ear before the left just as with the hands and the feet, except that according to the Ḥanafis the two hands and two feet enter into the wash as one hand or foot. Therefore the washer begins with the right. As for the ears, the washer washes them together with the hands so that it will be easier unless he does not have one hand or one of his hands is ill and he is not able to wash them together in which case he begins with the right ear and them with the left just as he did with the hands and the feet. The proper manner for washing each of the ears is to include the washing of the cheeks along with the ears.

8 The urethral and anal openings.

comes into contact with a place attached to the area of purity, [p. 18] vomit if it fills the mouth, [p. 19] and sleep while in a bed, reclining, or leaning against something that if it were moved away from the sleeper he would fall, [p. 20] and the mind being overcome by unconsciousness, madness, and a guffaw during any prayer in which there is bowing and prostration.

[§ 1.2 Washing (*ghusl*)]

[p. 21] The obligatory duty of washing (*ghusl*) is rinsing the mouth, snuffing, and washing the rest of the body. The customary practice of washing is that the washer begins by washing his hands and his face, removing the physical impurity (*najāsa*) that was on his body. He then performs the ablution for the prayer on his legs, and runs water over his head and the rest of his body three times. [p. 22] He then goes from that place and washes his legs. It is not incumbent upon a woman to undo her braids in the washing as long as the water reaches the roots of the hair. That which necessitates washing is the ejaculation of semen in a gush, the passion [p. 23] of a man and woman,⁹ contact between genitalia without ejaculation, menstruation, and parturition. The apostle of God established as customary practice that washing is necessary for the congregational prayer (*jum'ā*) and entering the sacred area (*ḥaram*).¹⁰ [p. 24] For the emission of clear fluid following masturbation and yellow fluid after urination washing is not necessary, but ablution is.

9 This is in the context of a divorce where it is not proper according to Abū Yūsuf because the man has stipulated to have performed that ablution. As for the opinion of Abū Ḥanīfa and Muḥammad, it is not proper because both the man and the woman are doing what would lead to the cause of ablution, coming out of their desire even if there is not the stipulated emission to the extent that when he discharged from his place in desire, he left without an emission, because the desire is what requires ablution according to Abū Ḥanīfa and Muḥammad. According to Abū Yūsuf it is the stipulation of the desire also according to his leaving. The meaning of Abū Yūsuf's opinion on the aspect of the emission is that it descends following desire. So, even if he was dreaming or imagined a woman in desire and semen was discharged from him in desire (the proximity of the appearance being attached to his mention to the extent that his desire is broken), then he leaves and seeks something that is not connected with desire, ablution is required according to Abū Ḥanīfa and Muḥammad. According to Abū Yūsuf it is not required. Likewise when a whole body is washed before urinating or sleeping then some remaining emission comes out after ablution, ablution is required of him again according to Abū Ḥanīfa and Muḥammad. According to Abū Yūsuf it is not required. Even if it comes out after urinating or sleeping he does not repeat the ablution of the whole body.

10 The Istanbul edition (1:11) of al-Qudūrī's *Mukhtaṣar* (al-Maṭba'a al-'Uthmāniyya, 1303/ [1885]) specifies that this is the congregational prayer of the two festivals, and adds that washing is a customary practice for the standing (*wuqūf*) at 'Arafa during the pilgrimage.

[§ 1.3 Water]

Purification from impurities (*aḥdāth*)¹¹ is permitted with rainwater, river water, spring water, well water, and sea water. It is not permitted [p. 25] with water squeezed from a tree or fruit, with water which has been overcome by something else so that it is no longer of the nature of water such as drinks,¹² vinegar, rose water, vegetable water, soup, or safflower oil. [p. 26] Purification is permitted with water in which something visible is mixed, thereby changing one of its qualities, like the water of the flood tide, or water in which has been mixed potash, soap, or saffron. All water in which some physical impurity has fallen, whether a little or a lot, is not used for ablution because the Prophet ordered that water be protected from physical impurity. He said: “None of you shall urinate in standing water nor cleanse yourselves from preclusion (*janāba*)¹³ in it.”¹⁴ [p. 27] He said: “When one of you wakes up from his sleep, he shall not dip his hand in the vessel until he has washed it three times, for he does not know where his hand spent the night.”¹⁵ As for running water, if there is physical impurity in it, ablution is permitted with it if what remains of the physical impurity is not visible because it does not settle owing to the flow of the water. As for a large body of water, one edge of which is not stirred when the other edge is stirred, [p. 28] if a physical impurity falls in one of its sides, ablution is permitted from the other side because it is obvious that the physical impurity does not reach it. A death in the water of that which does not have circulating blood, [p. 29] like bedbugs, flies, hornets, and scorpions, does not pollute the water. A death of that which lives in the water like a fish, frog, and crustacean does not spoil the water. It is not permitted to use already used water for the purification of impurities. Used water is that water with which impurities were removed or employed in the body in the manner of the waterskin. [p. 30] Every hide which is tanned is already pure, and prayer is permitted with it and ablution is permitted with its contents, except for the skin of the pig and of a

11 Impurities (*aḥdāth*) are those things previously mentioned such as urine, feces, menstruation, parturition, and other things.

12 This includes those things involving liquid from trees or fruit such as pomegranate drink. It is that which is squeezed from something.

13 *Janāba*, here translated as state of physical impurity, is often translated as “state of major ritual impurity.” The Arabic root *j-n-b* means to avoid or be alongside. *Junub* refers to a person not belonging to one’s family or tribe as well as being impure. This carries the same connotation of being barred from membership or participation in something, here being the ritual and community on account of impurities.

14 See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-wuḍūʿ* 68; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-ṭahāra* 94–6.

15 See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-ṭahāra* 87; Ibn Ḥanbal, 2:241, and passim.

human being. The hair of a corpse, its bone, its hoof, its sinews, and its horn are pure.¹⁶

When a physical impurity has fallen in the well, [p. 31] it is scooped out. The scooping of the physical impurity from the water is the purification of the well. If a mouse, a sparrow, a *ša'wa*,¹⁷ a *sūdāniyya*,¹⁸ or a wall gecko dies in the well, then 20 to 30 buckets, depending upon whether the bucket is big or small, are scooped from the well. If a dove, a chicken, or a cat dies in the well, then between 40 and 60 buckets are scooped from the well. If a dog, a cat, or a person dies in the well, then all of the water is scooped from the well. If the animal in the well is bloated or decomposing, then all of the water is scooped from the well, whether the animal is small or big. [p. 32] The number of buckets is determined in accordance with the average-size bucket used in the wells in the area. If the water is scooped from the well with a huge bucket, then the extent to which it exceeds the size of the average-size [p. 33] bucket is calculated accordingly.¹⁹ If the well is a spring that cannot have its water scooped out, and it is necessary to scoop out the water in it, then remove from it a quantity [of water] equivalent to the water it contains. It has been related on the authority of Muḥammad b. Ḥasan [al-Shaybānī] that he says 200 to 300 buckets are scooped from it. When a mouse or something else is found in the well, and it is not known at what time it fell in, and it is not bloated nor decomposing, then repeat the prayers of a day and a night if ablution was performed in it and wash [p. 34] everything with which the water came into contact. If it has become bloated or decomposed, then repeat the prayers of three days and nights, according to the opinion of Abū Ḥanīfa. Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad say it is not incumbent upon those who find a mouse or something that has become bloated or decomposed in the well to repeat anything until they ascertain the time at which what they found fell in. The leftovers of humans and of those animals whose meat is eaten are pure.²⁰ [p. 35] The leftovers of a dog, a pig, and predatory animals are physically impure. The leftovers of a cat, wild

16 The Istanbul edition (1:12) deletes "hoof" from this list.

17 Like a sparrow. A small yellow bird with a red head that is active in the morning.

18 A bird with a long tail by which it is caught. It is active at sunset.

19 The *Lubāb* of 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Maydānī recasts this as: if the water is scooped from the well with a huge bucket, then it is considered equivalent to 20 [average-size buckets]. See al-Maydānī, 1:32–3.

20 Leftovers are of five types: pure leftovers with disbursement, physically impure leftovers with disbursement, leftovers mixed [of both these types], reprehensible leftovers, and leftovers concerning which there is doubt. As to purity, it refers to the leftovers of humans and of those animals whose meat is eaten. Those things which cause a state of material impurity include menstruation, parturition, and the leftovers of unbelievers' drinks like wine.

chickens, predatory birds, and those things which live in houses such as the snake and the mouse are reprehensible (*makrūh*). There is doubt concerning the leftovers of a donkey and a mule, for if nothing else is found, then it is permitted either to perform ablution with them being in the water, or to perform purification without water.

[§ 2.] *Purification without Liquid (tayammum)*

[p. 36] Whoever does not find water while traveling or is at least a mile outside of a civilizational center (*miṣr*), or finds water but is sick and is afraid that using the water will aggravate his sickness, or the precluded person is afraid if he washes with the water that the cold will kill him or will make him sick, then he performs purification without water (*tayammum*), with fine dust.

[p. 37] Purification without water consists of two steps: he wipes his face in the first of them and in the other [he wipes] his hands to the elbows. Purification without water is equal with regard to preclusion and impurity. According to Abū Ḥanifa and Muḥammad, purification without water is permitted with every type of earth, like dust, sand, rock, gypsum, lime, kohl, and arsenic. Abū Yūsuf says that purification without water is only permitted with dust and sand alone.

Intention is obligatory for the performance of purification without water, recommended for the performance of ablution. All the things which nullify ablution nullify purification without water. The sight of water, if it is capable of being used, likewise nullifies purification without water. [p. 38] Purification without water is only permitted with fine dust that is pure.

It is recommended for whomever does not find water and yet hopes to find it at the last minute, that he delay the prayer until the last minute. If he finds water, he performs the ablution and prays; if not, then he performs the purification without water and prays whatever he wants of obligatory and supererogatory prayers.

[p. 39] Purification without water is permitted for a healthy person in a civilizational center when a funeral procession approaches and he is not one of the pallbearers, and he is thus afraid if he washes himself for purity purposes that the prayer might pass, then he performs the purification without water and prays. Likewise, whoever attends a festival (*īd*), and is thus afraid if he washes himself for purity purposes that the prayer of the two festivals might pass, then he performs the purification without water and prays. If the one who attends the congregational prayer is afraid if he washes himself for purity purposes that the congregational prayer might pass, he does not perform the purification without water, but he performs the ablution. If he makes the congregational prayer he prays it; if not, then he prays the noontime prayer of

four sets of bowing and prostration. Likewise, when time is short and he is afraid if he performs the ablution that the time for prayer will pass, he does not perform purification without water, but he performs ablution and prays a make-up (*fā'it*) prayer.

If the traveler forgets water in his baggage and he thus performs purification without water and prays, [p. 40] and then he later remembers some water [he has] at the time [of prayer], he does not repeat the prayer according to Abū Ḥanīfa and Muḥammad. Abū Yūsuf says he repeats it. It is not incumbent upon the performer of purification without water, if he does not suspect that there is water nearby, to search for water. If he suspects that there is water here, it is not permitted for him to perform purification without water until he searches for the water. If his companion has some water, he asks him for some before he performs purification without water. If he refuses to give him some, he performs purification without water and prays.

[§ 3.] *The Wiping of the Slippers (mash al-khuffayn)*

[p. 41] The wiping of the slippers²¹ from every impurity which necessitates ablution is permitted according to customary practice.

[p. 42] When the slippers are put on in a state of complete purity and then become impure and if the wiper is remaining in a place, he wipes within a day and a night's time. If he is traveling he wipes within three days and nights' time, beginning subsequent to the time at which they became impure.

The wiping is to be performed on the slippers' exterior, in strokes with the fingers, beginning from [p. 43] the tips of the toes to the leg. It is obligatory in this wiping to use three fingers. The wiping of a slipper, in which is a hole large enough that three toes can be seen, is not permitted. If the hole is smaller than that, then it is permitted. The wiping of the slippers is not permitted for one who has incumbent upon him the washing.

The wiping is annulled by that which annuls the ablution. The removal of a slipper and the passage of time also annuls it. When the time passes, [p. 44] the wiper removes his slipper, he washes his feet and prays. It is not incumbent upon him to repeat the remainder of the ablution.

Whoever begins the wiping while he is remaining in a place, and subsequently he sets out to travel before an entire day and night's time, he wipes

21 The wiping of the slippers is an expression for making a particular license for a person staying in one place for a day and a night, and for the traveler, for three days and nights. It results in purification without water because both of them purify by wiping or because both of them are substitutes for ablution. It is appropriate for the purification without water to take precedence because it is a substitute for ablution and washing and wiping is a substitute for only the ablution.

within three days and nights' time. The one who begins the wiping while he is traveling and then alights and remains in a place, if he had wiped a day and a night's time [before alighting] or more often, he removes his slippers and washes his feet. If he was wiping for less time than a day and a night's time, then he completes the wiping of a day and a night's time.

Whoever wears galoshes over [p. 45] a slipper, wipes on them. It is not permitted to wipe socks according to Abū Ḥanīfa unless they are made of hide or soled. Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad say: the wiping of socks is permitted when they are thick enough that they do not let water through.

The wiping of a turban, a tiara, [p. 46] a veil, and gloves is not permitted. The wiping of splints is permitted even if the splint-wearer put them on without having performed the ablution. If the splints fall off before the setting is healed the wiping is not void. If they fall off upon the healing of the setting, the wiping is void.

[§ 4.] *Menstruation*

[p. 47] Menstruation that lasts for a period of three days and nights' time or less than that is not considered menstruation, but it is an irregular discharge (*istiḥāḍa*). Menstruation that lasts for a period of ten days and nights' time or more than that is an irregular discharge. That which a woman sees which is red, yellow, or a dingy color during the days of menstruation, it is menstruation until it appears pure white.²²

Menstruation relieves the person menstruating of the prayer. The fast (*ṣawm*) is forbidden for her. She eventually completes the fast, but she does not make up the prayer that she missed. She does not enter [p. 48] the mosque nor circumambulate the temple (*al-bayt*).²³ Her husband does not come to her. The recitation of the Qur'ān is not permitted for the person menstruating nor the person in a state of preclusion. The touching of the scripture (*al-muṣḥaf*)²⁴ is not permitted for the person in a state of impurity unless he takes it by its cover.

If the menstrual blood ceases within the ten-day period, sexual intercourse with her is not permitted until she performs the washing or a complete period of the prayer passes her. [p. 49] If the blood ceases at the end of the ten-day

22 It is said that this is a discharge that appears mixed emerging at the end of menstruation. It is said that when the cotton which the woman uses comes out white, then she is pure.

23 The term here, *al-bayt*, translated as temple, refers to the Ka'ba in Mecca. The use of the common noun *bayt*, usually referring to a house, as referring to a temple is common in Semitic languages as a designation of the "House of God."

24 The "scripture" (*muṣḥaf*) refers to the Qur'ān as a physical object. The menstruating woman, for example, is not allowed to touch the book itself, only its cover.

period, then sexual intercourse with her is permitted before she performs the washing.

When a period of purity comes between two flowings of blood in the course of a single menstrual period, it is still considered a period of flowing blood. The shortest period of purity [between menstruations] is 15 days, and there is no limit with respect to a period longer than that.

The blood of an irregular discharge is that which a woman sees for a period of less than three days or more than [p. 50] ten days. Its regimen is the regimen of a perpetual nosebleed: it does not prohibit the fast, nor prayer, nor sexual intercourse. When the blood flows for more than ten days, and it is a known habit for the woman, her menstruation is considered according to her habit. The blood which exceeds that regime is an irregular discharge. If, beginning at puberty, she is an irregular discharger then her menstruation is ten days from each month, and the remainder is irregular discharge.

[p. 51] The irregular discharger, the one with incontinence of urine, a reoccurring nosebleed, or a lesion that continually flows perform the ablution at the time of each prayer. At that time they pray whatever obligatory and supererogatory prayers they want in the state of purity achieved by that ablution. When the time elapses their ablution is annulled and it is incumbent upon them to perform the ablution again for another prayer.

[p. 52] Parturition (*nifās*) is the blood emerging subsequent to the delivery. The blood which the pregnant woman sees, and that which the woman in the state of parturition sees before the emergence of the child, is irregular discharge. There is no limit with respect to the shortness of parturition, and it is no longer than 40 days. Whatever continues beyond that is irregular discharge. When the blood continues beyond 40 days, the woman having delivered children previously and this being her habit in parturition, she returns to the [number of] days according to her habit. [p. 53] If she does not have an established habit, then her parturition lasts for 40 days. The parturition of whoever delivers twins is that blood which emerges subsequent to the first child according to Abū Ḥanīfa and Abū Yūsuf. Muḥammad and Zufar say: [her parturition is that blood which emerges] subsequent to the second child.

[§ 5.] *Impurities*

[p. 54] The purification of physical impurity from the body of the person praying, from his clothes, and the place upon which he is praying is necessary. The purification of physical impurity is permitted with water and with every pure liquid which is capable of removing physical impurity like vinegar and rose water.

When a physical impurity comes into contact with a slipper, it has substance, and then it dries, it is permissible to wipe it off with earth. [p. 55] Sperm

is a physical impurity which requires washing when wet, but when it dries on clothes it is sufficient to rub the area. When physical impurity comes into contact with a mirror or a sword, it is sufficient to wipe them off. When physical impurity comes into contact with the earth and then it dries in the sun and any trace of it disappears, prayer is permitted in that place, but it is not permitted to perform purification without water with the earth from that place. Whoever comes into contact with a gross physical impurity like blood, feces, urine, and wine as small as or smaller than a dirham-sized spot, prayer is permitted with it. If it exceeds [p. 56] the size of a dirham, prayer is not permitted. If he comes into contact with a light physical impurity, like urine of those animals whose flesh is eaten, prayer is permitted with it as long as it affects less than a quarter of his clothes.

[p. 57] The purification of physical impurity which requires washing is twofold: that which has a visible aspect, the purification of which entails the removal of its visible aspect to the extent that only the trace of what is difficult to remove remains; and that which has not a visible aspect, the purification of which entails its washing until it seems to the washer that it has become pure.

The wiping of the anus (*istinjā'*)²⁵ is a customary practice in which it is permitted to wipe the anus with a rock or other substitute [p. 58] until it is clean. There is no number of wipings specified in the customary practice, but washing the anus with water is preferable. If the physical impurity extends beyond the aperture of the anus, only the use of water is permitted. A person is not allowed to wipe with bone, dung, food, or his right hand.²⁶

25 This is not mentioned along with the customary practices of purity because it is the removal of essential physical impurities (*najāsa ḥaqīqīyya*) and the other customary practices deal with the removal of legal physical impurities (*najāsa ḥukmīyya*).

26 The wiping of the anus is reprehensible with 13 things: bone, dung, excrement, foot, coal, glass, paper, stone, reed, fur, cotton, tattered cloth, and the fodder of animals like grass or other things. If a person wipes his anus with these things it is permitted with reprehension in the event that it is intentional.

Al-Sarakhsī (d. ca. 490/1096) on the Protocol of the Gaze

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

The *Comprehensive Book* (*K. al-Mabsūt*) by the Transoxanian jurist Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī (d. ca. 490/1096) is a milestone in the literature of the Ḥanafī legal school, one of the four Sunni schools of law that have survived into modern times.¹ Al-Sarakhsī's work is a commentary on the *Sufficient Book* (*K. al-Kāfi*) of Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Marwazī, known al-Ḥākim al-Shahīd (d. 334/945). Al-Ḥākim al-Shahīd's *Sufficient Book*, in turn, is an epitome of al-Shaybānī's (d. 189/905) *Book of the Root* (*K. al-Aṣl*), the foundational text of Ḥanafī jurisprudence.

Not much biographical information is available about al-Sarakhsī. In the introduction to the *Comprehensive Book*, al-Sarakhsī states that he dictated his work from prison. From the prosopographical literature, we know the names of several of his students. According to Talal Al-Azem, it is thanks to al-Sarakhsī and his teacher al-Ḥalwānī (d. 448/1056–7) that the Transoxanian branch of Ḥanafism was established, resulting in “the ascendance of the Ḥalwānī-Sarakhsī school in Transoxiana at the expense of older lines and modes or Ḥanafism” (Al-Azem, 67, 71; see also Calder).

Like al-Ḥākim al-Shahīd did before him, al-Sarakhsī discusses the rules regulating the gaze (*naẓar*) in a chapter entitled *The Book of Legal Preference* (*K. al-Istiḥsān*) (al-Sarakhsī, 10:145–85, at 145–59; cf. al-Ḥākim al-Shahīd, fols. 156a–157a). *Istiḥsān* is a characteristic mode of reasoning of Ḥanafī jurists, for which they were often criticized by members of the other legal schools. Al-Sarakhsī seems to place the issue of gazing under the heading of *istiḥsān* because, for him, it is a prime example of how legal norms should be derived not only by way of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) on the basis of the revealed texts (the Qurʾān and the Sunna of the Prophet Muḥammad), but also

1 The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant “The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)” (project no. 724951).

according to considerations of human well-being (see Johansen, 31). *Istihsān*, in al-Sarakhsī's definition, is "to abandon *qiyās* and to hold fast to what is more becoming for people" (*mā huwa awfaq lil-nās*) (10:145.3–4). Accordingly, in several instances in his discussion of the legal protocol of the gaze, al-Sarakhsī invokes the notions of need (*hāja*) and necessity (*ḍarūra*), as well as the principle of "well-known custom" (*āda zāhira*, *urf zāhir*), to justify his normative judgments (see, e.g., 10:145.17, 146, and passim). For example, looking at and even touching certain persons is allowed if it takes place in a courtroom, that is, out of the necessity to ensure the implementation of Islamic law. As al-Sarakhsī maintains, "necessity renders licit what is forbidden" (*al-ḍarūrāt tubīḥu l-mahzūrāt*) (10:154.6; see Hsu, 79).

Al-Sarakhsī structures his discussion as follows: (§ 1) the rules concerning the way men should look at other men; (§ 2) the rules concerning the way women should look at women; (§ 3) the rules concerning the way women should look at men; and (§ 4) the rules concerning the way men should look at women. § 4, by far the longest, is further subdivided: (§ 4.1) men looking at their wives and female slaves; (§ 4.2) men looking at their female unmarriageable relatives; (§ 4.3) men looking at slave girls other than their own; and (§ 4.4) men looking at free, unrelated (and therefore marriageable) women.²

In addition to the argument about necessity, two of al-Sarakhsī's arguments deserve to be highlighted. First, al-Sarakhsī is willing to allow gazing, with the exception of a gaze directed at a certain taboo part of the human body, on the condition that it happens without lust (*shahwa*) or desire (*raghba*)³ and that there is no danger of temptation (*fitna*). This basic principle applies equally to men looking at women and women looking at men (see also Hsu, 76). Secondly, al-Sarakhsī consistently links gazing to touching. As a general rule, one may touch what one may see. However, there are exceptions to this rule. A man is allowed to look at the faces and hands of unrelated women, on the condition that he does so without desire. However, if these unrelated women are young

2 The translation below, for reasons of space, skips a couple of paragraphs. For example, I do not include several paragraphs of § 4.2, in which al-Sarakhsī elaborates on the category of "female unmarriageable relatives." These are women who are unmarriageable by virtue of being blood relatives (mothers, grandmothers, sisters, brothers' daughters, and sisters' daughters); women who are unmarriageable by virtue of a foster relationship (foster sisters, foster nieces); and women who are unmarriageable by virtue of affinity (sisters and nieces born out of an illegitimate union) (al-Sarakhsī, 10:150; see Hsu, 64–5). The translation also skips much of § 4.3, where al-Sarakhsī discusses various disagreements about the extent to which a man is allowed to look at an enslaved woman not owned by him.

3 On looking as a sexual act in the Ḥanafī tradition, see Ali, 224 n68, who states that the "intersections of the scopical and the sexual merit substantial further investigation."

and attractive, he is not permitted to touch their hands or faces, regardless of whether he feels desire. However, touching an unrelated woman who is of advanced age and undesirable is allowed (see also Hsu, 76–7).

While al-Sarakhsī's protocol of the gaze is restrictive in a general sense, his views are relatively permissive in comparison with the views of the jurists of other schools of law in Islam. Concerning the gaze, there are certain differences between the classical doctrines of the four Sunni schools of law (for a succinct summary, see al-Jazīrī, 1:169–70 [trans. 250–4]). As per al-Sarakhsī's discussion, only the Ḥanafī jurists allow Muslim women to show the back of their feet in public. In the case of men looking at other men, the Shāfi'īs do not include the knee in the definition of a body's shame zone, or *'awra*. However, what all the schools have in common, according to Baber Johansen, is that over the centuries, they have "constantly enlarged and extended the norms that prohibit the gaze on and restrict the visibility of free women" (Johansen, 41). Thus, in the 11th/17th century, the Damascene Ḥanafī al-Ḥaṣkafī (d. 1088/1677) argues, against earlier Ḥanafī doctrine, that young women have to cover not just their hair, but also their faces. "This is not," al-Ḥaṣkafī states, "because the face is part of *'awra* but because of the fear of *fitna*, just as when it is touched, even if he [the man who touches it] is immune against lustful desire" (al-Ḥaṣkafī, 1:298; see Johansen, 42). In sum, according to Johansen, Muslim jurists of the later Middle Ages up to the modern period gradually narrowed the male-female gaze.

Further scholarship on the Islamic legal protocol of the gaze is a desideratum. In addition to the study by Shiu-Sian Angel Hsu (1994), which focuses on the doctrines regarding the gaze of the Ḥanafī jurists al-Sarakhsī, al-Kāsānī (d. 587/1189), and al-Mārghīnānī (d. 595/1196), one may consult the articles by Eric Chaumont (2006) and Ze'ev Maghen (2007), both of which deal with the Mālikī jurist Ibn al-Qaṭṭān (d. 628/1231), the author of a lengthy monograph dedicated to the gaze. The studies of Eli Alshech (2004) and Simon O'Meara (2007) deal with a range of other, related aspects of the Islamic legal protocol of the gaze, especially with the question of gazing into other people's house. Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī jurists who wrote works of the *aḥkām al-naẓar* type, such as Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-'Āmirī (d. 530/1136) from Baghdad, or the two Syrian authors, Burhān al-Dīn al-Subkī (*fl.* 8th/14th century) and 'Alī b. 'Aṭīyya al-Ḥamawī (d. 936/1530), are also beginning to attract the attention of scholars.

The translation below includes added information on legal terminology used and jurists mentioned by al-Sarakhsī, but not on the many Companions of the Prophet who are mentioned in the context of Prophetic *ḥadīths*, nor are these *ḥadīths* traced to the *ḥadīth* collections in which they appear. For

such information, one may conveniently consult the paraphrase offered by Hsu (Hsu, 46–88).

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2 Translation

Shams al-A‘imma Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī, *K. al-Mabsūt*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Sa‘āda, 1906, *K. al-istiḥsān*, vol. 10, pp. 146–53.

[p. 146] [§ 1.] *Men Looking at Men*

Men are allowed to look at other men, to the exception of their ‘awra. A man’s ‘awra is what is between his navel until one reaches the knees. This is according to the *ḥadīth* of ‘Amr b. Shu‘ayb > his father > his grandfather > the Prophet, who said: “The ‘awra of men is what is between their navel and their knee.” According to a different transmission, [the wording] is: “[The ‘awra of men is] what is below (*dūna*) their navel until just under the knee.”

On this basis, it becomes clear that the *navel* is not included in the ‘awra.

This is against the opinion of Abū ‘Iṣma Sa‘d b. Mu‘ādh, who declared that the navel is one of the two end points of ‘awra (*aḥad ḥadday al-‘awra*), and that therefore it is [a part] of ‘awra just like the knee, or even more so, because there is more desire involved than in the case of knees.

Our proof (*ḥujja*) consists in what is related from Ibn ‘Umar, may God be pleased with him, namely, that his navel showed when he put on a loincloth.

Abū Hurayra said to al-Ḥasan, may God be pleased with both: “Show me the spot [on your body] that the Messenger of God used to kiss!” He exposed his navel, and Abū Hurayra kissed it.

The way people usually behave in front of each other is that, when they put on a loincloth in the bathhouse, they expose their navel, without censoring one another. This is an indication (*dalīl*) that the navel is not part of ‘awra.

The area just below the navel is ‘awra, according to the clear meaning of the report that we have cited.

Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Faḍl used to say: “Up to the point where hair begins to grow there is no ‘awra.” [He defended this position] on the strength of people’s common praxis (*li-ta‘āmul al-‘ummāl*), that is, letting [the area below the navel] show when they put on a loincloth, [arguing that] to disregard common praxis [needlessly] imposes a restriction. However, this is far-fetched: praxis is not taken into account when it goes against a revealed text (*naṣṣ*). It is [only] taken into account when there is no revealed text.

As for the *thigh* (*fakhidh*), we hold it to be *ʿawra*.

The Zāhirīs⁴ say that a man's *ʿawra* is the area of the navel, not including the thigh. This is because the Exalted says: "Their pudenda (*sawʿa*) became manifest to them" (Q 7:22),⁵ by which He means: their *ʿawra*.⁶ In addition, there is a *ḥadīth* that the Prophet was once in the walled garden (*ḥāʾit*) of one of the Helpers [in Medina] and put his [leg up to his] knee into a water-tank, exposing his thigh. Abū Bakr arrived, but the Prophet did not change his position. Then ʿUmar arrived, and again the Prophet did not change his position. Then ʿUthmān arrived, and the Prophet changed his position and covered his thigh. Asked about it, he said: "Am I not to feel bashful in front of the person in front of whom even the angels feel bashful?" If the thigh were part of *ʿawra*, he would have covered it in front of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.

Our proof regarding this consists in what is related about the Prophet: that he passed by a man called Jurhad, who was praying with his thigh exposed. He said to him: "Cover your thigh! Do you not know that the thigh is *ʿawra*?" The *ḥadīth* of ʿAmr b. Shuʿayb serves as a [nother] revealed text about this.

As for the *ḥadīth* that they [the Zāhirīs] relate: In some transmitted versions, it is [stated] that the knee was revealed [but not the thigh]. Thus, the [correct] interpretation [of the *ḥadīth*] is that having arrived, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar sat down where they could not see [p. 147] the body part that the Prophet had exposed. When ʿUthmān arrived, nowhere remained [for him to sit] from where his knee would not be seen. Therefore, he [the Prophet] covered it.

As regards the verse [of the Qurʾān], *sawʿa* means "heavy *ʿawra*" (*al-ʿawra al-ghalīza*). This is what we say: the "heavy *ʿawra*" is *sawʿa*, but the legal rules concerning *ʿawra* also apply to what is around the two *sawʿas* [i.e., the genitals and the anus], on the basis of proximity [to them]. However, the *ʿawra* rules for [these areas] are less strict.

The *knee*, according to us, is a part of *ʿawra*.

Al-Shāfiʿī [d. 204/820] said that it is not part of *ʿawra*, because of the *ḥadīth* transmitted by Anas [b. Mālik]: "The Messenger of God never exposed his knee in the presence of someone sitting next to him." His intention in relating this was to draw attention to [the Prophet's] excellent character (*shamāʾil*). If the knee were *ʿawra*, covering the knee would be a legal duty and not [just] one of

4 The Zāhirīs, a theologico-juridical school in medieval Islam, were known for their principle of only accepting as veridical knowledge based on Qurʾānic revelation or flowing from direct sensory, rational, or linguistic insight.

5 Qurʾān passages are quoted, with minor adjustments, from the translation by Alan Jones (2007). At Q 7:22, Jones translates *sawʿa* as "bare bodies."

6 The verse refers to Adam and Eve, whose "shameful parts" were revealed to them after eating from the forbidden tree in Paradise. See Hsu, 50.

the excellent character traits. Being the end point of *ʿawra*, however, like the navel the knee is not part of *ʿawra*. The limit of something is not included in the thing that is limited.

Our proof regarding this consists in the *ḥadīth* related by Abū Hurayra, that the Prophet said: “The knee is part of *ʿawra*.” The wording of the *ḥadīth* related by ʿAmr b. Shuʿayb, “until just beyond the knee,” [also] indicates that the knee is part of *ʿawra*.

The knee is where the shank bone and the thigh bone meet, the latter being *ʿawra* but not the former. That is, in the knee, aspects that make it necessary to consider it *ʿawra* and to *not* consider it *ʿawra* coexist. Out of circumspection, [the aspect] that makes it necessary to consider it *ʿawra* prevails. As the Prophet said: “When permittedness and forbiddenness coexist in a thing, the forbiddenness prevails over the permittedness.”

As regards the *ḥadīth* transmitted by Anas [b. Mālik], the [correct] transmitted version is: “The Messenger of God never stretched out his legs in the presence of someone sitting next to him.” This was one of his excellent character traits. The exposure of the knee, as is related in some transmitted versions, is [merely] a figurative way of speaking about the same thing. [...]

The same rules apply to touch (*mass*). One is allowed to touch what is not *ʿawra*, just like one is allowed to look at it.

[§ 2.] *Women Looking at Women*

This corresponds to [the rules pertaining to] men looking at men, on account of membership in the same gender (*jins*). Do you not see that women wash [the corpse of] a woman after she died, just like men wash [the corpses of] men?

Some people argue that women looking at women is like men looking at their female unmarried relatives (*dhawāt maḥārimihī*), so that women are not allowed to look at another woman’s back or belly. This is because of the *ḥadīth* related by Ibn ʿUmar, that the Prophet forbade women to enter a public bath, whether with a loincloth or without a loincloth. Ibn ʿUmar used to say: “Do not let women enter a public bath, except when they are sick or giving birth, but let them cover themselves.”

We, however, say that the intention [of the *ḥadīth*] is to discourage women from going out and [to encourage them] to stay at home. With this, we agree [in principle], but it is a common practice (*ʿurf zāhir*) [p. 148] in all countries to build public baths for women and to allow them to enter them. This indicates that what we have said is correct. Women need to go to the public baths more than men because the aim [of going there] is to embellish oneself. Women require this more than men. Men can perform full body lustration in rivers or ponds, while women are unable to do so.

[§ 3.] *Women Looking at Men*

This corresponds to [the rules pertaining to] men looking at men. As we have explained, a man's navel and what is above it, as well as the leg below the knee, is not *'awra*. Everything that is not *'awra* may be licitly looked at by men and women, for example [body parts covered by] clothes or something else.

In the *K. al-Khunthā* (*Book on Hermaphrodites*), he⁷ pointed out that women looking at men is like men looking at their female unmarried relatives, so that women are not allowed to look at a man's back or belly. He stated: "Is it not the case that hermaphrodites are to undress themselves neither among men nor among women?" The point of this is: when different genders are involved, the rules pertaining to the gaze are severe (*ghaluẓa*). Do you not see that it is forbidden for a woman to wash a man's corpse? If her gaze were analogous to that of a man, she would be allowed to wash him.

Looking at these body parts is allowed as long it is known that, by looking, desire will not be aroused, and if there is [absolutely] no doubt about this. However, if it is known that desire will be aroused, or if this seems likely, then looking is forbidden, because looking out of desire is a kind of adultery (*al-naẓar 'an shahwa naw' zinā*). The Prophet said: "The eyes commit adultery, their adultery is looking; the hands commit adultery, their adultery is touching (*batsh*); the feet commit adultery, their adultery is walking; and the genitals (*farj*) confirm all of this or prove it wrong." All types of adultery are forbidden. The Prophet also said: "Desire's gaze is the Devil's arrow."

[§ 4.] *Men Looking at Women*

This is fourfold: men looking at their wives and female slaves; men looking at their female unmarried relatives; men looking at slave girls other than their own; and men looking at free, unrelated adult women.

[§ 4.1] Men Looking at Their Wives and Female Slaves

This is allowed from top to toe, whether out of desire or without desire. This is based on the *ḥadīth* of Abū Hurayra, according to whom the Prophet said: "Avert your gaze, except in the case of your wives and slave girls!" 'Ā'isha said: "I used to bathe with the Prophet from one container. I would say: 'Save the water for me,' and he would say: 'Save the water for me.'" If looking [at the entire body] were not allowed, neither of them would have stripped naked in front of the other.

⁷ Referring, one presumes, to either al-Ḥākīm al-Shahīd or al-Shaybānī (see above, Introduction).

Furthermore, [men and their wives and female slaves are] allowed to touch and have sexual intercourse, both of which are more serious than looking [that is, looking is allowed *a fortiori*]. The Exalted says: “[Prosperous are the believers] who guard their private parts, save from their wives or what their right hands possess” (Q 23:5–6).

Nonetheless, it is preferable if they do not look at their partner’s *ʿawra*, based on the *ḥadīth* related by ʿĀ’isha, who said: “In spite of cohabitating with the Prophet for a long time, I have not seen anything of the Messenger of God [i.e., his *ʿawra*], nor has he seen anything of me [i.e., my *ʿawra*].” The Prophet said: “When one of you goes to his wife, he should cover [his *ʿawra*] to the extent possible. The two of them should not strip naked like donkeys.”

Furthermore, looking at *ʿawra* causes forgetfulness. One of the excellent character traits of [Abū Bakr] al-Ṣiddīq [p. 149] was that he never looked at his own *ʿawra*, nor touched it with his hand. If this is how he dealt with [looking at his] own *ʿawra*, how do you think he dealt with [looking at the] *ʿawra* of others?

Ibn ʿUmar used to say: “It is preferable that [men] look [at their wives’ and slave girls’ *ʿawra*], in order to attain the highest level of pleasure.”

[§ 4.2] Men Looking at Their Female Unmarriageable Relatives

We say: Men are allowed to look at the loci of their apparent and hidden adornments, for the Exalted says: “[Tell the believing women] to reveal their ornaments only to their husbands,” to the end of the verse (Q 24:31).⁸

This [command] does not refer to the actual adornment, the one that is bought in the marketplace and seen by [all kinds of] unrelated men. Rather, what [the command] aims at is the body part on which the adornment is displayed: the head, hair, neck, bosom, upper arm, forearm, palm, shank, foot, and face. The head is the body part on which crowns and diadems are placed. In the hair, there are hair-locks.⁹ The neck is the body part around which necklaces are hung. The bosom is like the neck, because both light and heavy necklaces reach down to the bosom. The ears are for earrings, the upper arms for

8 In full, Q 24:31 reads (trans. Jones): “Tell the believing women to lower their gaze and to guard their private parts, and to show only those ornaments that normally appear, and to draw their coverings over the openings in their garments, and to reveal their ornaments only to their husbands or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands, or their sons, or their step-sons, or their brothers, or the sons of their brothers or sisters, or their women or what their right hands possess, or their male attendants who have no desire, or children who have no knowledge of women’s nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so that the ornaments which they conceal are known. O believers, all of you turn in repentance so that you may prosper.”

9 Arab. *al-shaʿr mawḍiʿ al-qušāṣ*. The translation follows Hsu, 61.

bracelets, the forearms for bangles, the palms for rings and dye, the shanks for anklets, and the feet for dye.

According to the *ḥadīth*, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn once visited [their sister] Umm Kulthūm as she was combing her hair. She did not cover up.

Unmarriageable relatives visit each other without asking for permission and without feeling inhibited. When they are at home, women usually dress in working clothes and do not cover up. Were they ordered to put on a veil in the presence of unmarriageable relatives, it would cause them [unnecessary] hardship.

It is allowed to touch these loci just like it is allowed to look at them. This is on account of what is related about the Prophet, namely, that he used to kiss Fāṭima and say: "She smells of Paradise." When returning from a journey, he would begin by [greeting] her, hugging her, and kissing her head. Likewise, Abū Bakr used to kiss 'Ā'isha's head. The Prophet said: "When someone kisses his mother's feet it is as if he had kissed the threshold of Paradise." Muḥammad b. al-Munkadir said: "I passed the night touching my mother's feet, while my brother Abū Bakr prayed. I would not want my night to be like his." Thus, looking and touching is allowed, but only if a man can be sure that neither he nor she will be overcome with desire. If a man fears that he or she will be overcome with desire, then it is not allowed. This on the strength of what we have explained, namely, that looking out of desire and touching out of desire is a form of adultery. Adultery with unmarriageable relatives is gravely prohibited.

Just as a man is not allowed to expose himself to forbidden things, so he is not allowed to expose a woman to forbidden things. If a man fears that a woman [may be attracted toward what is forbidden to her], he must seek to avoid it.

It is not permissible for him to look at her back and belly, nor to touch them.

Al-Shāfi'ī says that there is no harm in it. He treats the man and the woman [in this situation] as if they were members of the same sex looking at each other. This, however, is not sound. The rule against *zihār*¹⁰ is firmly established in the Qur'ān [58:2, 33:4], [*zihār*] consisting in a man saying to his wife: "You are as the back of my mother to me!" This formula is rejected because, in it, something that is permitted [i.e., looking at one's own wife] is compared to something that is forbidden [i.e., looking at the back of one's mother]. Were it permitted for a man to look at the back of his mother, something that is permitted would be compared to something that is permitted [which would be acceptable]. Now, if this has been established in regard to the back, it is also

10 A pre-Islamic form of divorce, *zihār* is forbidden by Islamic law, which imposes an expiatory act (*kaffāra*) to make amends for it.

established in regard to the belly, for the latter is closer to the genitals and more likely to be desired. [...]

[p. 150] It is permitted for a man to be alone with unmarriageable female relatives and to travel with them. This is because the Prophet said: “If a man is together with a woman to which he has no [lawful] relation, the third one among them is Satan,” meaning a woman who is *not* [a female relative who is] non-marriageable to him. This indicates that he is permitted to be alone with unmarriageable female relatives, subject to the condition that both of them are free from lust. This is on account of what is related about ‘Ammār b. Yāsir, namely, that [once] he came out his house [visibly] shaken, and when he was asked about it, he said: “I was alone with my daughter and became apprehensive about myself, so I came out.” It is the same in the case of traveling. This is because the Prophet said: “A woman should not travel alone for longer than three days and three nights, except with a husband or an unmarriageable relative.” This indicates that there is no harm [for a woman] to travel with an unmarriageable relative.

If she requires his help in mounting and dismounting [a riding animal], there is no harm if he touches her, provided there is clothing, or that he takes hold of her back or belly. This is on account of what is related about Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr, namely, that he put his hand into ‘Ā’isha’s litter, to help her out of it. He [accidentally] touched her bosom, whereupon she said: “Who is the one who puts his hand where only the Messenger of God puts it?” To which he answered: “It is me, your brother.” [...] [p. 151] There is no *‘awra* when there is proper clothing (*satr*), and no desire when one is an unmarriageable relative. Therefore, there is no harm in carrying and touching when helping a [female unmarriageable relative] to mount or dismount, just like [there is no harm in doing so] in the case of [people of] the same sex.

[§ 4.3] Men Looking at Slave Girls Other Than Their Own,

Including Female Slaves Who Enjoy the Prospect of Manumission¹¹

This corresponds to [the case of] men looking at female unmarriageable relatives, for the Exalted says: “[Tell them] to draw their robes close to them” (Q 33:59).¹² [...]

11 Arab. *al-mudabbarāt wa-ummahāt al-awlād wa-l-mukātabāt*. See Hsu, 67. For the various types of female slaves according to Islamic law, see Ali, 166–72; Schacht, 127–9.

12 In full, Q 33:59 reads (trans. Jones): “O prophet, tell your wives and daughters and women-folk of the believers to draw their robes close to them. That is more appropriate as a way for them to be recognized and not vexed. God is Forgiving and Compassionate.”

[§ 4.4] [p. 152] Men Looking at Free, Unrelated Adult Women

We say: It is permissible to look at the place of apparent adornment, but not that of hidden adornment. This is because the Exalted says: "Let them show only those of their ornaments that outwardly appear" (Q 24:31). 'Alī and Ibn 'Abbās said: "That which appears outwardly is collyrium [i.e., the face] and rings [i.e., the hands]."

'Ā'isha said: "[It refers to] one of her eyes." Ibn Mas'ūd said: "[It refers] to her shoes and her overgarment." He inferred this from his [the Prophet's] saying, "Women are the cords of the Devil; with them he snares men," and his saying, "I have not left after me a temptation (*fitna*) greater to men than women."

Once, in the Prophet's assembly, the question was raised what the best thing is that men can do for women, and what the best thing is that women can do for men. When 'Alī returned to his house, he told Fāṭima about it. She said: "The best thing that men can do for women, is not to look at them; and the best thing that women can do for men, is to make themselves invisible." When he [Alī] told this to the Messenger of God, he said: "She is a piece of me [i.e., she speaks as I would]." This indicates that looking at *any* part of her body is forbidden.

Looking [at free, unrelated adult women] is forbidden on account of the fear of temptation. A woman's beauty resides mostly in her face. Therefore, the fear of temptation is greater in regard to a woman's face than in regard to a woman's other body parts. It is on account of this that 'Ā'isha concluded [that women should cover their whole body]. However, she granted that women, who cannot avoid walking on the street and [therefore] must open their eyes in order to see the street, by virtue of this necessity, are allowed to uncover one of their eyes. A norm that is established on the basis of necessity does not extend beyond the [single] context of necessity.

We, however, follow the opinion of 'Alī and Ibn 'Abbās. There are reports that give license to look at the faces and hands [of free, unrelated adult women]. For example, it is related that a woman showed herself to the Messenger of God. He looked at her, but he did not look with lust. Also, when 'Umar said in a sermon, "Do not give too much bridal dower [p. 153] to women," a woman with dark-brown cheeks said, "Do you say this on the basis of your own reasoning, or have you heard this from the Messenger of God? For we find in the Book of God a passage that contradicts you. God said: 'If you have given them a large sum, take nothing from it' (Q 4:20)." 'Umar was perplexed. He said: "Everybody is more learned than 'Umar, even housewives are!" The narrator [of this story] mentions that the woman had "dark-brown cheeks," a sign of her brownish face.

The Prophet saw the palm of a woman that was not dyed [with henna]. He said: “Is this the palm of a man?”

When Fāṭima handed over one of her sons to Bilāl or Anas,¹³ Anas said, “I saw her palm looking like a quarter moon.” [By saying this,] he indicated that there is no harm in looking at faces and palms [of free, unrelated adult women]. The face is where collyrium is applied; palms are where rings are worn and dye is used. This is what is meant by the Exalted’s words “only those that appear outwardly” (Q 24:31). The danger of temptation may also arise when men look at garments [of women]. As a poet said: “The dye of her palm beguiled me, and her eye’s collyrium, and her yellow clothes.” There is no doubt that it is permissible to look at clothed women, without anybody suggesting that there might be a danger of temptation. It is the same with faces and palms.

Al-Ḥasan b. Ziyād related that Abū Ḥanīfa [d. 150/767] also allowed looking at feet. Likewise, al-Ṭaḥāwī [d. 321/933] explains that it would subject a woman to great inconvenience in legal transactions with men if she had to cover her face. Likewise, it would subject her to great inconvenience if, although she has to receive and hand out [items in legal transactions], she had to cover her hands. Likewise, it would cause her great inconvenience if she had to cover her feet, although walking barefoot or wearing sandals, for perhaps shoes are not always at hand. In the *Collection of the Barmakids (Jāmi‘ al-Barāmika)*,¹⁴ it is related on the authority of Abū Yūsuf [d. 182/798] that it is permissible to look at the elbows [of free, unrelated adult women], because when they are making bread or washing clothes, it would cause them great inconvenience if they had to cover the elbows. It is also said that likewise, it is permissible to look at the middle incisors [of free, unrelated adult women], because in talking with men, she will expose them.

All this only applies, however, if looking happens without lust. If men know that, by looking, lust will be aroused, they are not allowed to look at any part of them [free, unrelated adult women]. This is because he [the Prophet] said: “Whoever looks at the beauties of an unrelated woman under the impulse of lust will have melted lead poured in his eyes on the Day of Judgment.” And he said to ‘Alī: “Do not follow a glance with a second glance. You are entitled to the first, but the second is to your detriment.”

13 Bilāl and Anas were servants of the Prophet Muḥammad.

14 The *Jāmi‘ al-Barāmika*, ostensibly a collection of Ḥanafī legal opinions, is cited four times in al-Sarakhsī’s *al-Mabsūṭ* (vol. 3, p. 13; vol. 10, pp. 153, 189, 190). It seems to have been rather unknown in the later Ḥanafī Transoxanian tradition. It is cited neither in al-Kāsānī’s (d. 587/1189) *Badā‘i‘ al-ṣanā‘i‘* nor in al-Mārghinānī’s (d. 593/1196) *al-Hidāya*.

Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1148) on Touching the Qur’ān

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh Ibn al-‘Arabī (b. 468/1076, d. 543/1148)—not to be confused with the famous mystic Muḥyī l-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240), also from Spain—was a Muslim jurist of the Mālikī school.¹ In his twenties, he went to the east to study with al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) at Baghdad and with other masters in Egypt. Having returned to Seville, the Almoravid capital in al-Andalus (r. 454–541/1062–1147), he was appointed as chief judge of the city. This position afforded Ibn al-‘Arabī great responsibility and power, including control over the Almoravid treasury (Lévi-Provençal, 12). Ibn al-‘Arabī, for example, ordered the construction of Sevilla’s second city wall, to offer additional protection in an increasingly volatile political situation. As a judge, he acquired a reputation for being strict but lenient toward commoners. Toward the end of his life, he was forced to emigrate to Morocco by the new rulers of Sevilla, the North African Almohads (r. 524–668/1130–1269). He lies buried in Fez (Robson).

Ibn al-‘Arabī’s oeuvre includes a work on legal hermeneutics (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), commentaries on Mālik b. Anas’s (d. 179/795) *Muwaṭṭa’* and other *ḥadīth* collections, and a well-known Qur’ān commentary entitled *Norms of the Qur’ān* (*Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*). Works in the genre of *Norms of the Qur’ān* focus on verses that are relevant in a legal and ethical sense. Commenting on Q 56:77–79 (“It is surely a noble Qur’ān in a hidden book that none but the purified [*al-muṭahharūn*] shall touch”), Ibn al-‘Arabī discusses the issue of whether it is allowable to touch the Qur’ān in a ritually unclean state.

Certain scholars of the early Islamic period, such as the exegete Muḥāhid (d. ca. 103/721) and the traditionist al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. ca. 105/723), interpreted the “hidden book” mentioned in Q 56:78 to refer to God’s “well-preserved tablet” (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*, see Q 85:22), the heavenly *Ur-Qur’ān* (al-Ṭabarī, 27:239–40), the implication being that there was no harm in touching a physical copy

1 The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant “The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)” (project no. 724951).

(*muṣḥaf*) of the Qur’ān on earth in a ritually unclean state. However, from the second century of Islam onward, Muslim scholars came to argue that the expression “a noble Qur’ān in a hidden book” referred to Qur’ān codices on earth, and that touching them had to be preceded by ritual ablution, be it a minor (*wuḍū’*) or a major one (*ghuṣl*) (Kister, 310–11).

For example, the historian Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767 at Baghdad), in his biography (*sīra*) of the Prophet Muḥammad, relates a story to this effect about the conversion to Islam of the Companion ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644). According to this story, which is also invoked by Ibn al-‘Arabī, ‘Umar chances upon his Muslim sister and her husband as they are reading a chapter, *Sūrat Tāhā*, from the Qur’ān. He asks to be shown their physical copy of the Qur’ān, but his sister refuses to grant this, “for you are unclean, because of your unbelief, and only the purified shall touch it.” ‘Umar performs the ritual washing, reads, and, impressed by “how good this speech is,” declares his intention to convert (Ibn Hishām, 1:226–7 [trans. 156–7]). In one of the earliest legal discussions of this topic, Mālik b. Anas, the eponym of the Mālikī school of law, argues in his *Muwaṭṭa’* that one must not touch a copy of the Qur’ān when in a state of ritual impurity, nor is one allowed to carry it by a strap, in a cover, or in a cushion (Mālik b. Anas, 2:278–9 [trans. 117]).

Muslims living in the first two centuries of the Islamic period increasingly felt the need to differentiate themselves from the scriptural communities in whose midst they had established themselves. One way of accomplishing this was to restrict access to the material Qur’ān, non-Muslim unbelievers having been declared ritually unclean (*najas*) in the Qur’ān (9:28). Another area in which this idea manifested itself was the developing Muslim law of warfare, which prohibited Muslims from carrying Qur’āns into enemy territory, ostensibly for fear that they would be captured and defiled (Nawawī, 113; see Zadeh, 454). In modern times, the notion that the Qur’ānic codex must only be touched in a state of ritual purity enjoys wide currency (von Denffer, 39–40, 163). There is continuing debate, however, about the related question whether reciting the Qur’ān (that is, without touching it) equally requires ritual purity, and if so, what kind of ritual purity is called for.

In his commentary on Q 56:77–79, Ibn al-‘Arabī first lists the various positions in the debate (below, § 1); then he advances arguments and proofs for his own opinion (§ 2). He rejects the view that the “hidden book” in Q 56:78 refers to the “well-preserved tablet” in heaven, for the simple reason that nobody ever touches the latter, whether “purified” or not. However, Ibn al-‘Arabī admits the possibility that the “hidden book” refers to copies of the Qur’ān that the angels carry in their hands, and that therefore the angels are “the purified who touch

it." He also is willing to entertain the figurative interpretation that "touching the Qurʾān" means being touched in a spiritual sense, measured by the depth of one's religious zeal.

Ibn al-ʿArabī's preferred interpretation, however, is that Q 56:78 refers to physical copies of the Qurʾān on earth, as well as people in a state of ritual purity. His stance, however, is a pragmatic one. He states that Q 56:77–79 does *not* express a concrete prohibition (*nahy*) to touch the Qurʾān in a state of ritual impurity. In his view, the verse is merely "a statement about the normative system" (*khabar ʿan al-sharʿ*). In an ideal world, Ibn al-ʿArabī appears to be saying, there would be no touching of the Qurʾān in a state of ritual impurity. However, in real life, it happens all the time, and it would be unfeasible to prosecute such misbehavior in each instance. In a parallel passage in *Norms of the Qurʾān*, Ibn al-ʿArabī likewise explains that when God says in the Qurʾān (2:197) that "there is no indecent talk and no sinful behavior" during the pilgrimage rites in Mecca, what He means is not that such things do not happen (in fact, they happen regularly), nor that they must be sanctioned on account of their forbiddenness. The point of God's saying that "there is no indecent talk and no sinful behavior" during the pilgrimage rites and that "only the purified touch it" is not to issue a prohibition, but to draw attention to the fact that such behavior conforms with Islamic normativity in a general sense. "This is a nuance that has escaped scholars," he submits, "but the two things are essentially different and described in opposite terms" (Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Aḥkām*, 1:150).

Finally, Ibn al-ʿArabī refers to three episodes involving, respectively, the Prophet Muḥammad, the first caliph, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (r. 11–13/632–4), and the second caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–44) (see above), in order to provide evidence for his understanding of the verse. In conclusion, he voices his disagreement with an opinion that some attribute to the Iraqi jurist Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767), the eponym of the Ḥanafī school of law, namely, that those who are in a state of minor ritual impurity may touch the cover as well as those parts of a physical copy of a Qurʾān that bear no writing, and that they may do so with impunity.

Ibn al-ʿArabī's distinction between "prohibition" and "statement" in Q 56:77–79 does not seem to have left much of a trace in the subsequent history of Islamic jurisprudence.² At any rate, it is not found in the chapter on touching the Qurʾān in the widely consulted *Book of Jurisprudence according to the Four [Sunni] Schools of Law* (*Kitāb al-fiqh ʿalā l-mahdhāhib al-arbaʿa*) of the early 20th-century Egyptian scholar ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jazīrī (d. 1360/1941). In his

2 On the distinction between *amr/nahy* and *khabar* in Islamic legal hermeneutics, see Zysow, 68 n86, and the literature cited therein.

work, al-Jazīrī lists the four schools’ various exceptions to the rule that one has to be ritually clean in order to touch the Qur’ān. According to the Mālikīs, one may touch the Qur’ān in a state of ritual impurity only if the Qur’ān or a part of it is (1) written in a language other than Arabic, (2) engraved on a coin or similar object, (3) carried as an amulet, or (4) touched by a teacher or a student. The Ḥanbalīs hold that the exception applies if the Qur’ān or a part of it is (1) inside a cover, such as a bag or a box, (2) carried as an amulet, or (3) touched by a child (but children should be instructed to perform ablution by their guardian). The Ḥanafīs make an exception if the Qur’ān or a part of it is (1) handled in a situation of “necessity” (*ḍarūra*), for example, in order to prevent it from being burned, (2) inside a cover, or (3) handled by a minor who is taught from it. Finally, the Shāfi‘īs allow touching the Qur’ān in a state of ritual impurity if it is (1) carried as an amulet, (2) engraved on a coin, (3) cited in other another book, such as a commentary on the Qur’ān, but only provided that the commentary text occupies more space than the text of the Qur’ān, (4) written on clothing, or (5) touched by a person in order to learn from it (al-Jazīrī, 1:46–9 [trans. 58–61]).

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[p. 157] [§ 1. Various Interpretations of Q 56:77–79]

Regarding God's phrase "none but the purified shall touch it," there are five issues.

The first issue is: Does this verse explain the status of the Qur'ān in God's books [i.e., in heaven], or does it explain its status in our books [i.e., on earth]? Some say: "It is the well-preserved tablet [in heaven]." Others say: "It is what the angels hold in their hands." Again others say: "It is our physical copies (*maṣāḥifunā*)."

The second issue concerns the expression "none shall touch it." There are two doctrines about this. The first is that it refers literally to touching with a body part (*bi-l-jāriḥa*). But it is also said that its meaning is [figurative]: "None shall experience the taste of its usefulness but those who are purified by virtue of [the teachings of] the Qur'ān." This is what al-Farrā' [d. 207/822] said.

The third issue concerns the expression "none but the purified." There are two doctrines about this. The first is that they [the purified] are the angels, who are untainted by polytheism (*shirk*) and sins. The second is that He [God] means those who are [ritually] purified of a small contamination (*ḥadath*), that is, human beings who are subject to the law.

The fourth issue is regarding the expression "shall not touch it." Is this a prohibition or a negation [of a fact]? Some say that even though the wording [of the phrase] is that of a normal sentence, its meaning is that of a prohibition. [p. 158] Others say that it is a [simple] negation. Ibn Mas'ūd [d. after 30/650]

used to read [the verse] as “none but the purified touch it” (*mā* [instead of *lā*] *yamassuhu illā l-muṭahharūn*) to emphasize the [fact that the phrase expresses a] negation.

[§ 2. *Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Own Position*]

The fifth issue is about putting the[se] doctrines in rights.

As for the doctrine of those who claim that what is meant [in the verse] is the well-preserved tablet: This is incorrect. This is because the angels do not attain it [the well-preserved tablet] at any moment, nor do they touch it in any way. If this [the well-preserved tablet] were indeed the intended meaning, there would be no point in making an exception.

As regards those who say that it is [about] the books (*ṣuḥuf*) that the angels hold in their hands: This is a permissible doctrine, in fact it is the one that Mālik b. Anas chose. He stated: “The best [interpretation] I heard of His [God’s] saying ‘none but the purified shall touch it’ is that it corresponds to the verse in *He Frowned and Turned Away*: ‘Whoso wills, shall remember it upon pages high-honoured (*ṣuḥuf mukarrama*), uplifted, purified (*muṭahhara*), by the hands of scribes noble, pious’ (Q 80:12–15),” meaning that the “purified ones” are the angels, who are described as pure in *He Frowned*.

As regards those who teach that it is about performing ablution on account of the Qur’ān, in case one wants to touch a physical copy of it: There is disagreement among them. [As stated above] some hold that the wording [of the phrase] is that of a normal sentence, but that its meaning is a command [i.e., the command not to touch]. In our writings on legal hermeneutics (*kutub al-uṣūl*) and earlier in this book we have demonstrated that this is incorrect.³ We have established that it is [merely] a statement about the Law (*khabar ‘an al-shar‘*), that is, only those who are purified touch it lawfully. If the opposite happens, it is unlawful.

To state that the meaning [of the phrase] is that “none shall experience the taste of its usefulness but those who are purified of sins, repent and worship [God]”: this is sound. It is al-Bukhārī’s [d. 257/870] choice [of interpretation]. The Prophet said: “Those who gladly accept God as their lord, Islam as their religion, and Muḥammad as their prophet, shall taste the flavor of Islam.” However, [this] interpretation relinquishes the obvious meaning, while no rational argument nor proof from tradition requires it.

Mālik [b. Anas] and others relate that in the letter that the Messenger of God wrote to ‘Amr b. Ḥazm [...] there was [the phrase] “so that none touches the Qur’ān except the person who is ritually clean (*al-ṭāhir*).”

³ See Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Aḥkām*, 1:150; *Maḥṣūl*, 34–5.

[p. 159] It is also reported that ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb entered the room where his sister and her husband, Sa‘īd b. Zayd b. ‘Amr b. Nufayl, were reciting *Ṭāhā*. He said: “What secret talk is this?” and the story continues to the point where he says: “Give me the book (*ṣaḥīfa*)!” His sister replied: “None but the purified touch it.” So he got up, performed ablution, and converted to Islam.

Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq mourned the Prophet [in the following verses]:

We lost the Revelation when you left us,
 and the Word of God left us [as well],
 except that what you left for us in the past,
 transmitted from generation to generation in the noble sheets.⁴

Also the members of the Iraqī school [of jurisprudence] (*ahl al-‘Irāq*), among them Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī [d. ca. 96/117], taught that the Qur’ān is touched only by the person who is ritually clean. However, different points of view are reported from Abū Ḥanīfa: that the person suffering a small contamination (*al-muḥdath*) is allowed to touch it; [but also,] that he is allowed to touch [only] its cover and its margins, and anything on which there is no writing. However, as for the written parts, only the purified are to touch it.

This [is only valid] if one gives up on arguments for which there is strong proof. For the precinct of what is sacrosanct is also sacrosanct (*ḥarīm al-mamnū‘ mamnū‘*). And in the letter of the Prophet to ‘Amr b. Ḥazm is the strongest proof for this. But God knows best.

4 The translation of this poem follows, with minor adjustments, that of Kister, 312.

Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) on Kissing and Handshaking

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

While the English term “handshake” indicates, lexically, a fairly loose, casual gesture, the corresponding Arabic term, *muṣāfaḥa* (“putting surfaces against one another”), has a different, more visceral sense.¹ As anthropologists have observed, in certain cultural and linguistic contexts, handshaking is not just a neutral, “communicative” gesture, but an “expressive” one (Wierzbicka, 226). Touching rituals such as handshaking, or handclapping, are important building blocks of systems of non-verbal communication, both within cultural formations and in the encounter between them.

In their efforts to regulate the human sensorium, medieval Muslim jurists generally argued that whatever people are not allowed to see, *a fortiori* they must not touch either. In the view of these jurists, in other words, looking and touching are related closely.² A look, certainly a stare, is a form of touch. At the same time, they considered touching to be more momentous (*ashadd*) than looking (see below, § 2). Permission to look does not imply permission to touch (see Hsu, 76–7). For example, a man may look at the hands of a female stranger (*ajnabiyya*), at least according to most schools of law in Islam, but it does not follow that it is permissible for him to touch (or, indeed, to shake) them.

Below, we translate three short chapters on kissing and handshaking from a well-known work by the Syrian *ḥadīth* scholar and jurist Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), entitled *Ḥilyat al-abrār wa-shi‘ār al-akhyār fī talkhīṣ al-da‘awāt wa-l-adhkār* (*The Adornment of the Pious and the Sign of Godly People in Summarizing Prayers and Remembrances*). This sprawling work, commonly known by the shorthand *al-Adhkār* (*Remembrances*), functions first and foremost as a collection of various prayers and pious formulas: what to say to a bereaved person, what to say to comfort a sick person, what to say when

¹ The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant “The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)” (project no. 724951).

² See *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 42.

offered food, and so forth. In addition, *al-Adhkār* also provides sundry rules of pious etiquette and manners (*ādāb*): of reciting the Qurʾān, of sneezing, of treating relatives, among other things.

Al-Adhkār illustrates al-Nawawī's way of weaving ethical discourse (*akhlāq*) into jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The bulk of *al-Adhkār* consists in narrations (*ḥadīths*) about the Prophet Muḥammad, gleaned from well-known collections, such as those of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), Muslim (d. 261/875), al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/889), Ibn Māja (d. 273/887), and Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795). However, al-Nawawī also adds his own commentary, in order to draw out the legal and ethical implications of a certain *ḥadīth* and to relate how the scholars of his legal school, the Shāfiʿīs, pronounce on an issue. *Al-Adhkār* enjoyed, and continues to enjoy, great popularity. This is evinced by that fact that it sparked several epitomes and commentaries, including those by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), and Ibn ʿAllān (d. 1057/1647), and that it is available to modern readers in (albeit incomplete) English, French, Persian, and Urdu translations. "Sell your house and buy the *Remembrances!*" (*biʿ al-dār wa-shtari l-Adhkār*), runs a well-known Arabic maxim.

As a general rule, according to al-Nawawī and the *ḥadīths* that he quotes, handshaking is part of polite greeting; it offers a good middle way between the more intimate kissing and hugging and the more formal bow. Kissing the cheek of another person, however, is not completely forbidden according to al-Nawawī: one may do so with children, or when greeting a friend after a long journey. As regards handshaking or kissing of cheeks between the sexes, al-Nawawī does not have to issue a prohibition, as it goes without saying that men and women meeting each other must refrain from both.

The scenario that troubles al-Nawawī is, rather, that of an adult man shaking hands with, or kissing, a beautiful unbearded youth (*amrad ḥasan*). As al-Nawawī states, even to look at a beautiful unbearded youth is forbidden—demonstrating, again, the intimate nexus between looking and touching in Islamic aesthetics. The practice known as *shāhid-bāzī* (Pers. "playing the witness"), "gazing at the form of young males in order to witness the inner, divine presence" (Ridgeon, 3), belongs to the context of mystical Islam, or Sufism.³ While in many cases, it is difficult to know to what extent and in what form gazing at beardless boys was practiced by medieval Sufis, there can be no doubt that the very notion of *shāhid-bāzī* was laden with symbolism and as such, highly contested. Just a generation before al-Nawawī, the defense of *shāhid-bāzī* by the widely traveled Sufi master of Baghdad, Awḥad al-Dīn Kimānī (d. 635/1237–8), had given rise to renewed inner-Sufi controversy (see Ridgeon). It may well be that when drawing attention to the issue, al-Nawawī is reacting to this particular historical background.

3 On gazing at human beauty, see also *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 39 (Sāʿidī).

Another question that al-Nawawī highlights in regard to handshaking is whether one should shake hands after communal prayer. Although there are no *ḥadīths* that indicate that the Prophet practiced this form of handshaking, Muslims developed a habit of doing so. Some, however, wishing to protect Islam against all forms of “innovation” (*bidʿa*), argued against it. In certain instances, the handshake after the communal prayer became a marker of confessional difference in Islam. The Ottoman polymath Kātib Chelebī (d. 1067/1657) relates that in the Ottoman Empire, certain preachers condemned post-prayer handshaking as a “heretical Shiʿite practice,” but adds that after the Friday prayer, or at festivals, the practice is generally tolerated or even encouraged (Kātib Chelebī, 101). One may also mention in this context that *muṣāfaḥa* was an element in Sufi rituals of initiation (Pers. *dast-i bayʿat*, Turk. *el almak*), as well as the name of a specific type of *ḥadīth* works in late medieval and early modern times, given to collections of *ḥadīths* that had been passed on, after their inclusion in an authoritative compilation, by ritual handshaking rather than by adding the names of transmitters to the chain of transmission (*isnād*).

Today, Muslim handshaking (or the refusal to engage in it) has lost nothing of its symbolic import. In modern and postcolonial contexts, handshaking between Muslims and non-Muslims, men and women, and between Muslim men and non-Muslim women in particular, has become a prominent bone of contention (see Deeb, 110; Fadil).

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2 Translation

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[p. 425] [§ 1] Chapter [on Kissing Someone's Cheek]

[§ 1.1]

There is no harm (*lā ba's*) in kissing the cheek [lit., the face] of a righteous dead person (*mayyit ṣāliḥ*) in order to seek blessing, nor in a man's kissing the cheek of a friend when he arrives after a journey, and in other such situations.

[§ 1.2]

In al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, from 'Ā'isha, who said, in a long narration about the passing of the Messenger of God: "Abū Bakr entered [the room in which the body of the Prophet was kept]. He uncovered the face of the Messenger of God, leaned over it, and kissed it. Then he cried."

[§ 1.3]

In al-Tirmidhī's book, from 'Ā'isha: Zayd b. Ḥāritha came to Medina. He went to visit the Messenger of God, who was in his house, and knocked on the door. The Prophet, grabbing his dress, rose to [greet] him, then hugged and kissed him.

Al-Tirmidhī stated that this *ḥadīth* is fair.⁴

[§ 1.4]

However, hugging and kissing the cheek of a person who is not a child nor is arriving from a journey is discouraged (*makrūh*). Abū Muḥammad al-Baghawī

4 There are three basic levels of trustworthiness of *ḥadīth*: "sound" (*ṣaḥīḥ*), "fair" (*ḥasan*), and "weak" (*da'if*). See Pavlovitch.

[d. 516/1122] and other scholars of our school have determined that it is discouraged. The following also indicates this.

[§ 1.5]

In al-Tirmidhī's and Ibn Māja's books, from Anas: A man said, "O Messenger of God, if one of us meets his brother, or a friend, must he bow to him?" He answered, "No."—"And must he embrace and kiss him?"—"No."—"Must he take his hand and shake it?"—"Yes."

Al-Tirmidhī stated that this *ḥadīth* is fair.

[§ 1.6]

What we have stated here regarding kissing and hugging—that is, that there is no harm in it in the case of a person who arrives after a journey and the like, and that it is discouraged otherwise, to protect probity—does not apply to beardless, beautiful young boys (*al-amrad al-ḥasan al-wajh*). It is forbidden, in all cases, to kiss a beautiful unbearded male, regardless of whether he arrives [p. 426] after a journey or not—and obviously, hugging is like kissing, or close to kissing. It does not matter whether the kisser and the kissed are righteous or profligate, or whether one of them is righteous, or both. According to us, the correct opinion is that [even] looking at a beautiful unbearded male (*al-naẓar ilā l-amrad al-ḥasan*) is forbidden, even if one looks without desire and even if there is no danger of temptation (*fitna*). It [looking at him] is forbidden just like [looking at] women is, for he [the unbearded youth] falls in the same category.

[§ 2] *Chapter on Handshaking*

[§ 2.1]

Know that this is an agreed-upon custom (*sunna*) when people meet.

[§ 2.2]

In al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*: Qatāda asked Anas, "Did the Companions of the Prophet shake hands?" He answered, "Yes."

[§ 2.3]

In the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, in the *ḥadīth* of Ka'b b. Mālik, in the story about his repentance [from Ka'b]: "Ṭalḥa b. 'Ubaydallāh hastened to stand up and greet me, so as to shake my hands and hug me."⁵

5 See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-tawba* 9. Ka'b b. Mālik (d. 50/670 or 53/673) was one of the poets supporting the Prophet Muḥammad. He momentarily fell out of favor with the Prophet because

[§ 2.4]

In the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd, from Anas: When the people from the Yemen arrived, the Messenger of God said, “The people of the Yemen have come to [visit] you. They are the first to have brought handshaking.”

[§ 2.5]

In the *Sunans* of Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī, [p. 427] from al-Barāʾ: the Messenger of God said, “When meeting each other, Muslims will be forgiven [their] sins before they depart, if they have shaken hands.”

[§ 2.6]

In al-Tirmidhī’s and Ibn Māja’s books, from Anas: A man said, “O Messenger of God, if one of us meets his brother, or a friend, must he bow to him?” He answered, “No.”—“And must he embrace and kiss him?”—“No.”—“Must he take his hand and shake it?”—“Yes.”

Al-Tirmidhī stated that this *ḥadīth* is fair. There are many *ḥadīths* on this topic.

[§ 2.7]

In the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Imam Mālik [b. Anas], from ‘Aṭāʾ b. ‘Abdallāh al-Khurasānī: The Messenger of God said to me, “Shake hands, so as to drive away antipathy; exchange presents, so that you may love each other, and so as to eliminate enmity.”

I say: This is a loosened (*mursal*) *ḥadīth*.⁶

[§ 2.8]

Know that handshaking is recommended (*mustahabb*) at every meeting [between men]. However, regarding the kind of handshaking that people have taken a habit to after the morning and the afternoon prayers, the way it is done

he remained in Medina during the expedition to Tabūk in 9/630, but was soon forgiven (cf. Q 9:117–18). In the long *ḥadīth* related in Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Ṭalḥa b. ‘Ubaydallāh (d. ca. 36/656), an early Companion of the Prophet, is the only one among a group of Companions to get up and greet Ka’b, despite his repentance. Apparently, misgivings about Ka’b’s behavior lingered. In his *Commentary (Sharḥ)* on Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Nawawī notes that the story shows that it is “commendable to get up to shake hands with the people who arrive in order to show them respect, and to make haste to meet them, in order to demonstrate cheerfulness and joy.” See Nawawī, *Sharḥ*, 9:82.

6 A “loosened” (*mursal*) *ḥadīth* is one in whose chain of transmission (*isnād*) a link is missing. See Pavlovitch.

has no normative basis in the Law (*sharʿ*). However, there is no harm in it. Essentially, handshaking is a custom. [...]

[§ 2.9]

The shaykh and imam Abū Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām [d. 660/1262] has explained in his *Rules (Qawāʿid)* that there are five kinds of innovations (*bidaʿ*): necessary, forbidden, [p. 428] discouraged, recommended, and neutral. He has stated that handshaking after the morning and the afternoon prayer is an example of a neutral innovation.⁷ God knows best.

[§ 2.10]

I say: One has to guard against shaking hands with beautiful beardless boys. Looking at them is forbidden, as we explained in the previous chapter. The people of our school teach that all objects that one must not look at are also forbidden to touch, or rather, touching [such objects] is more momentous (*ashadd*). For example: it is allowed to look at an unrelated woman if one has the intention of marrying her, or when one is selling or buying, or in [other] commercial situations. However, in none of these situations is one allowed to touch her. God knows best.

[§ 3] *Chapter [on the Etiquette of Handshaking]*

[§ 3.1]

It is recommended that, when shaking hands, one should smile, invoke God's forgiveness, and do other such things.

[§ 3.2]

In Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, from Abū Dharr: The Messenger of God said, "You mustn't hold a single custom (*shay' min al-ma'rūf*) in contempt, even were your brother to be without a smile on his face when you meet him."

[§ 3.3]

In Ibn al-Sunnī's *Kitāb*,⁸ from al-Barā' b. ʿĀzib: The Messenger of God said, "When two Muslims meet, shake hands, smile at each other, and give each other good counsel, their sins are dispersed [i.e., invalidated] between the two of them."

⁷ See Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, 2:337, 339.

⁸ Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Sunnī (d. 364/975) was a judge in Ray and author of a well-known work entitled *ʿAmal al-yawm wa-l-layla, sulūk al-nabī maʿa rabbihi (Habits of the Day and the Night, How the Prophet Wayfared with His Lord)*.

[§ 3.4]

According to another version [the Messenger of God said]: “When two Muslims meet, shake hands, praise God, and say, ‘I seek God’s forgiveness,’ God forgives their sins.”

[§ 3.5]

[p. 429] In the same book, from Anas: The Prophet said, “When two servants [of God] love each other in God, and when one of them greets the other, shaking his hand, they will not depart from one another without their former and future sins having been forgiven.”

[§ 3.6]

In the same book, from Anas: When the Messenger of God took the hand of a person and then departed from him, he would say, “Great God, give us good tidings in this world and the next, and spare us from the torment of Hell!”

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) on the Legal Status of the Senses

Christian Lange

1 Introduction

In his *Stages of the Wayfarers* (*Madārij al-sālikīn*), the Syrian jurist and theologian Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (b. 691/1292, d. 751/1350, henceforth: Ibn al-Qayyim)¹ presents a systematic classification of the five senses according to the five judgments (*al-aḥkām al-khamsa*) of Islamic jurisprudence.² The *Stages of the Wayfarers* is a commentary on *Waystations of the Travelers* (*Manāzil al-sā'irīn*) of the Ḥanbalī Sufi master al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089). This commentary, according to Henri Laoust, “can be considered as the masterpiece of Ḥanbalī mystic literature” (Laoust, 822a). However, whether *Stages of the Wayfarers* is really a work of mysticism is debatable. As one recent contributor to the debate has argued, Ibn al-Qayyim “endorsed Sufism devoid of mysticism” (Anjum, 159), while according to another, Ibn al-Qayyim “professed ... a Sufism that ... aimed foremost at a spiritualization of the *ṣarī'a*” (Schallenbergh, 120). Although Ibn al-Qayyim’s exact position in the circle of “Taymiyyan Sufis” in 8th/14th-century Damascus remains to be determined, he is no doubt a representative of a new kind of traditionalist Sufism. This new kind of Sufism emphasized the authority of the Prophet Muḥammad rather than that of the Sufi masters; stressed renunciation (*zuhd*), critical self-scrutiny, proper etiquette, and traditionalist doctrines over mystical beliefs and practices; and rejected speculative-philosophical theological and cosmological notions (Post, 279–82).

Just as it is doubtful whether we should consider *Stages of the Wayfarers* a mystical text, so too it remains unclear whether we should think that the passage translated below somehow captures the “spirit” of Islamic law. It is certainly striking that Ibn al-Qayyim couches the five senses in the all-encompassing

1 A sketch of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s biography is provided elsewhere in this volume. See *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 32.

2 The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant “The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)” (project no. 724951).

normative framework of the five legal judgments. However, Islamic jurists, perhaps contrary to expectation, do not appear to focus in an exaggerated fashion on disciplining the senses. Some authors, such as Ibn al-Qayyim and later Birgivi Mehmed Efendi (d. 981/1573),³ representatives of a law-minded piety, sought to blend legal norms with rules for proper devotion, including sensory etiquettes. This encompassing, totalitarian view of Sharia has made them inspirational figures for Islamic revivalists, be they the Qāḍizādelis of Ottoman times or certain groups among modern-day Salafis. But arguably, this makes them exceptional rather than mainstream representatives of Islamic jurisprudence.

The section from *Stages of the Wayfarers* that is translated here is part of larger discussion of the concept of *ʿubūdiyya*, or servitude, in the face of God's *rubūbiyya*, His absolute lordship over creation. The “millstone of servitude” (*raḥā l-ʿubūdiyya*), in Ibn al-Qayyim's colorful phrasing, revolves around 15 principles. The number 15 results from the Sharia's well-known five normative qualifications (*aḥkām*, sing. *ḥukm*)—obligatory (*wājib*), forbidden (*ḥarām*), recommended (*mustaḥabb*), disapproved (*makrūh*), and neutral (*mubāḥ*)—as they are applied to, first, the actions of the heart (*qalb*); second, the actions of the tongue (*lisān*); and third, the actions of the limbs (*jawāriḥ*). While in the section on the heart, Ibn al-Qayyim lists virtues and vices, the examples that he provides to illustrate the five normative qualifications of the tongue include speech acts like the profession of faith (obligatory), recitation of the Qurʾān (recommended), perjury (forbidden), and “all things that ought to be left unsaid, without however requiring punishment” (disapproved).

By moving from the inside, that is, the heart, to the intermediary organ of the tongue, to the body's external limbs, Ibn al-Qayyim develops an encompassing technique for fashioning a pious self. The outside of servitude, in Ibn al-Qayyim's scheme, hinges on the correct use of the five senses: hearing, vision, taste, smell, and touch. It is noteworthy that Ibn al-Qayyim starts his discussion with the sense of hearing, not seeing. Not only is the ear more important than the eye in terms of acquiring religious knowledge—a point that Ibn al-Qayyim elaborates elsewhere in his work⁴—but also, in a certain way, more dangers attach to listening than to looking: you can hear what happens behind a wall, but you cannot see it, for example. Regarding how Ibn al-Qayyim organizes the senses, it is also striking how he subdivides the sense of touch: touching with the skin in a general sense; touching specific objects with the hand; and touching with the foot, that is, ways of walking.

Ibn al-Qayyim displays what many modern readers would consider a puritanical sensibility: he prohibits listening to instrumental music, touching

3 See the chapter on Birgivi in *ISH*, vol. 3.

4 See *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 32 (§ 3).

pieces of certain board games, and looking at the human body's private parts. Some of his recommendations are tantalizing little windows into medieval Muslim life, for example his warnings to avoid the smell of tyrants (medieval Muslim rulers were known for their extravagant perfumes), his injunction carefully to consider the smell of slaves (the value of slaves was to be assessed, among other things, by their good breath or halitosis), or the jitteriness he displays in discussing the issue of whether it is allowable to touch money, that is, coins. It is not only the description of *objects* of sensation, however, that makes Ibn al-Qayyim's account compelling, but also, how he encourages or discourages certain *modes* of sensation. Certain sounds, sights, and smells, he states, must not be pursued intentionally (proactively, we might say), even if Muslims are under no circumstances required to block their ears, eyes, or noses. Correct looking, but also smelling, is predicated on the absence of desire (*shahwa*) for the object of vision or olfaction. A furtive glance is not a problem; a second look, however, *is*. All frivolous ways of sensing, in sum, are discouraged: people should not look around inquisitively, or stare impertinently; they should not listen to talk in which there is no religious benefit; they should not eat furtively; they should not "sniff out" perfumes, particularly those of women; and they should not fidget around with their fingers, randomly touching objects.

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2 Translation

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Madārīj al-sālikīn*, ed. Muḥammad al-Baghdādī, 2 vols. in 1, Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1423/2003⁷, vol. 1, pp. 136–41: "On the devotion of the limbs".

[§1. *Hearing*]

[p. 136] The five acts of servitude allocated to the body's limbs are according to 25 degrees. For the senses are five, and to every sense correspond five acts of servitude.

As concerns hearing, it is obligatory to give ear and listen to what God and His Messenger have made incumbent upon us, that is, to [the propagation of] piety and belief and the duties deriving from these two; Qur'ān recitation during prayer when the imam pronounces it; and the Friday sermon. This is according to the sounder of two scholarly opinions.

It is forbidden to listen to [the propagation of] unbelief and innovation, unless there is a prevalent benefit in it, for example, in order to respond to it, or to bear witness against those who propagated it, or in order to strengthen [correct] belief and practice, through [knowledge] of their opposites, namely, unbelief and innovation, and so on; the secrets of those who do not want you to know about them and do not wish to inform you about it, unless it concerns a right of God that must be safeguarded, or something harmful to a Muslim which one should counsel and warn him about; the voices of women who are not in the family, suspect [as they are] of inciting social disorder (*fitna*) by means of their voices, unless [p. 137] it is necessary, as in the case of witnessing [in court], of conducting business, of petitioning for a legal opinion (*fatwā*), of judicial proceedings, of medical treatment, or the like. Likewise [forbidden] is listening to musicians and to musical instruments like the *ūd*, *ṭunbūr*, and flute.⁵

However, it is not necessary to block one's ears when one hears such sounds in spite of not wanting to hear them, except if one fears that one will become too familiar with them. In such a case it is necessary to block [all] channels of transmission [of sound], lest one hear it. This can be compared to the following. It is not allowed to sniff out the scent of perfume. However, when the wind carries its scent into the organ of smell, one is under no obligation to block the nose. Likewise, an inadvertent look is not forbidden to the one who looks. However, the second look, actively pursued, is forbidden.

As for the listening that is recommended, this is, for example, listening to whatever is recommended religious knowledge; to the recitation of the Qur'ān; to the ritual remembrance of God; and to everything that God likes. But it is not a duty. It is disapproved to listen to its opposite, that is, everything that is

5 Arab. *ūd* and *ṭunbūr* (*andoura*, *bandura*, *pandore*, *tambura*, etc. are all cognate forms in other languages) are well-known plucked string instruments in the Arab and Ottoman musical tradition.

disapproved of but not punished. [Finally,] as for the [listening that is] legally neutral: this is obvious.

[§ 2. *Seeing*]

It is obligatory to look into the Qurʾān (*al-muṣḥaf*) and into scholarly works, when one learns from them what is obligatory. It is also obligatory to look in order to distinguish between allowed and forbidden substances that one may eat, distribute, or enjoy. [Further, it is obligatory to look at] the things entrusted [by God] to people in order to distinguish between them; and other such things.

It is unconditionally forbidden to look at women who are not in the family with desire. Looking at all other women [is also forbidden] except when there is necessity, such as in the case of the preacher, the person who negotiates [with a woman] or has legal dealings with her, the witness, judge, physician, and a *maḥram*-relative.⁶

It is recommended to look at scholarly works that increase a man's faith and knowledge; to look into the Qurʾān and the faces of righteous scholars and of parents; and to look at the manifest signs of God so as to infer from them His unity, knowledge, and wisdom. It is disapproved to give frivolous looks in which there is no benefit. Some kinds of looking are frivolous, just like some kinds of speech are frivolous. How often does it happen that frivolous looks lead to [other] frivolous habits that are difficult to shed and to be remedied! One of the Pious Forefathers (*salaf*) once said [about the *salaf*]: "They used to abhor frivolous looks just like they used to abhor frivolous talk." Looking in which there is no harm or benefit now or in the future is legally neutral.

[p. 138] [Also] belonging to [the category of] forbidden looking is looking at people's private parts (*ʿawrāt*). There are two kinds: a private part [concealed] behind clothes, and a private part [concealed] behind doors. If a person looks at a private part that is [concealed] behind doors, and if the master of the private part (*ṣāhib al-ʿawra*) throws something at that person and gouges his eye out, then he is under no obligation [to repair the damage], and there is no retaliation. This is on the strength of the revealed text of God's Messenger, in a *ḥadīth* whose authenticity is generally agreed upon, notwithstanding the fact that some scholars have declared it to be weak because the revealed text has

⁶ According to Islamic law, a *maḥram*-relative (*dhū l-maḥram*) is any member of the family a woman is not allowed to marry, that is, the blood relatives, but also certain in-law males and foster siblings, or "milk-sucking *maḥrams*." See *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 42.

not reached them or have given it a figurative meaning.⁷ However, this only applies if the person looking has no motive that would make it allowable for him to look, for example if he sees there a private part that belongs to him or [if he has] a suspicion [that a private part belonging to him is behind the door]: [then] he is commanded, or he has permission, to intrude upon them.

[§ 3. *Tasting*]

It is obligatory to taste when one is in an emergency requiring the consumption of food or drink, or when fearing death [by starvation]. He who abstains [from food], with the result that he dies, dies a sinner and suicide. The imam Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal, d. 241/855] and Ṭāwūs [b. Kaysān al-Yamānī, d. ca. 104/723] said: “Who is compelled to eat carrion [in order to survive] but does not eat, with the result that he dies, enters the Fire.” Is it also obligatory to take medicine when it is certain that it will save one’s life, according to the more correct of two positions. If, however, the cure is only assumed to come about, is it [tasting] recommended, neutral, or better avoided altogether? There is a well-known controversy about this between the Pious Forefathers and the scholars of later times.

It is forbidden to taste wine, lethal poison, and everything that is forbidden to taste during the obligatory fast. Disapproved [tasting] concerns, for example, tasting things of dubious [legal] status; eating beyond satiation; tasting food furtively, that is, eating food hastily and suddenly, regardless of whether you have been invited to it; eating the food of hypocrites at banquets, [dinner or lunch] invitations, and the likes: it is reported in the *Sunan* [works] that the Prophet “prohibited [eating] the food of those who vie with each other [for fame].”⁸ If someone feeds you, it should be out of a sense of respect toward you, not in order to benefit oneself.

[p. 139] Recommended tasting concerns eating that which supports you in showing obedience to God Almighty and which God permitted [you to eat]; eating together with guests so that it may become pleasant for them and so that their wishes be fulfilled; eating the food offered by someone issuing a [dinner or lunch] invitation, whether it be obligatory to accept it [the invitation] or [only] recommended. Some jurists have declared it obligatory to eat [the food offered] in banquets [the invitation for which] one is under an obligation to

7 Ibn al-Qayyim refers here to a *ḥadīth* related by Muslim, and other canonical collectors, in which it is stated that “when someone intrudes into a family home without permission, they are allowed to gouge out his eye” (*man iṭṭala’a fi bayti qawmin bi-ghayri idhnin fa-qad ḥalla lahum an yafqā’ū ‘aynahu*). See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-adab* 43; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, 2:266.

8 See, for example, Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, k. *al-aṭ’ima* 7.

accept, because the Lawgiver has decreed thus. [Finally,] as for legally neutral tasting, [this concerns] the things in which there is no sin or excess.

[§ 4. *Smelling*]

Regarding how the five acts of servitude relate to the sense of smell, it is obligatory to smell all smells that facilitate the distinction between what is allowed (*ḥalāl*) and forbidden (*ḥarām*), for example, the smell on account of which you know whether this [or that] substance is foul or fit for consumption, whether it is a lethal poison or whether there is no harm in it; or [the smell by] which one distinguishes whether there is usufruct or not. To this [also] belongs the olfaction of an assessor or a person of experience when deciding how to calculate the [monetary] equivalent of a thing; [the smell of] slaves; and other such matters.

It is forbidden to smell perfume intentionally in the state of sanctification during pilgrimage (*iḥrām*); to smell perfume that is unlawfully usurped or stolen; and to smell intentionally the perfume of women who are not in the family, out of fear that one should be tempted by what lies behind.

It is recommended to smell smells that facilitate obedience to God, strengthen the [other] senses, and expand the soul [preparing it] for belief and worship. Among such [smells] are perfume and fragrant herbs when they are offered to you as a gift. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, it is related from the Prophet: “Those presented with fragrant herb, let them not reject it, for it smells good and is not difficult to bear.”⁹ It is disapproved to smell the perfume of tyrants, people who sow doubts, and the likes of them. It is legally neutral [to smell] that for which God has announced no hindrance or consequence, and in which there is no religious benefit or relation to the divine law.

[§ 5. *Touching*]

As to how these five [legal categorizations] relate to the sense of touch: it is obligatory to touch one's wife when it is necessary to have intercourse with her, as it is to have intercourse with a female slave because one must keep her chaste.¹⁰ It is forbidden to touch the prohibited parts of women who are not in the family. It is recommended to touch [people] when it helps to avert the gaze, to restrain oneself from a forbidden act, or to keep one's family chaste. [p. 140] It is disapproved to touch one's wife for pleasure during *iḥrām*, and likewise, in a state when one is not in control of oneself, during the retreat in mosques (*i'tikāf*) and fasting. [Also] belonging to this [category] is touching a

9 The exact wording in Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, k. *al-tarajjul* 6.

10 That is, by keeping her from seeking sexual gratification elsewhere.

dead person's body, except when washing it. This is because [dead people's] bodies, in terms of the respect due to them, enjoy the same level of sanctity (*ḥayā'*) as the living. Therefore, it is recommended that they should be covered from sight and that, according to one of two opinions, they should be washed while dressed in a shirt. As regards touching a man's thigh, as we said [earlier], it is part of his shame zone. It is legally neutral [to touch] what neither harms nor benefits in religious terms.

These classifications also apply to [acts of] touching with the hand, or treading with the foot, as examples can easily demonstrate. It is obligatory to touch what money is required to financially support oneself or one's family. There is a difference of opinion about whether it is obligatory to do so in order to fulfil [the requirements of] religion. The correct position is that it is obligatory [to do so], in order to enable one to practice one's religion. It is not obligatory, however, in order to give the alms-tax (*zakāt*). Whether it is obligatory to do so in order to perform the duty of the pilgrimage is [a matter of] consideration. The stronger arguments indicate that it is obligatory, because in this way, people are put in a position that enables them [to go on the pilgrimage] and because in this way, they can perform the sacrifice. The prevalent opinion, however, is that it is not obligatory.

Among the obligatory [acts of] touching with the hand are helping the destitute, throwing pebble stones [at Minā],¹¹ and performing ablution and *tayammum*.¹² It is forbidden to kill [with one's hands] a person whom God has forbidden to kill, to usurp the money of people under guardianship, and to beat someone who cannot be beaten licitly, and similar things. Also, [touching with the hand] is forbidden in games that are declared forbidden by a [revealed] text, such as backgammon (*nard*) or chess, the latter being considered more strongly prohibited by the people of Medina. Likewise, games that are similar [to backgammon and chess are forbidden] according to *ḥadīth*-scholars like Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal] and others. Some even forbid [games that are] more trivial. Likewise, [touching is forbidden when] writing [with the hand] about innovations (*bida'*) that contradict the Sunna, whether by way of composing or copying [a work], except if it is to refute and critique them; or writing to incriminate others or oppress them, to issue a tyrannical order, to accuse women who are not in the family of fornication or to court them; or writing anything that is apt to harm Muslims in their religion and livelihood, especially when earning

11 Minā is a place in the hills east of Mecca, where pilgrims performing the Ḥajj rites symbolically throw stones at a pillar representing the Devil.

12 *Tayammum* is to perform the ritual ablution with sand in the absence of ritually clean water.

money for it—“Woe to them for what their hands have written, woe to them for what they earn!” (Q 2:79); or writing a *fatwā* that is contrary to God’s decree and that of His Messenger, except when this is done by a *mujtahid*-who-errs, for he is free of sin.¹³

[Acts of touching] that are disapproved include fidgeting around and playing games that are not forbidden [in the strict legal sense], and writing in which there is no merit or usefulness in this world and the next. [Acts of touching] that are recommended include any kind of writing that is beneficial to one’s religion, or to the well-being of a Muslim; or good works with the hand to help a workman; to do something for a clumsy person; to share water from one’s bucket by pouring it into the bucket of a water-carrier, or to carry it to his carriage beast for him, or to keep the beast steady while he loads it, or to help him with one’s hands in any way he requires, and such things. Also [recommended is] touching [p. 141] the corner [of the Ka’ba] during circumambulation. There are two different views, however, about whether to kiss it after touching it. [Acts of touching with the hand] that are legally neutral concern all things in which there is neither harm nor reward.

It is obligatory to tread [the ground with one’s feet] when walking to Friday prayer and religious services. This is according to the more correct of two doctrines and supported by more than 20 proofs, which are mentioned elsewhere. Also obligatory is walking around the House during circumambulation; walking between al-Şafā and al-Marwa, either by oneself or with a riding animal; walking when convened to God’s judgment and that of His Messenger; going for [visits in order to promote] family relations and piety toward parents; walking to study circles to seek and acquire obligatory religious knowledge; and walking to perform the pilgrimage if the distance is short and if it implies no harm. It is forbidden to walk in rebellion against God, for this is the way in which the Devil’s foot soldiers walk. God Exalted said: “Assault them with your horses and foot soldiers” (Q 17:64). Muqātil [b. Sulaymān, d. ca. 155/771] commented: “[This means:] Seek them out with your cavalry and infantry.” And all those who ride or walk in the way of rebellion against God belong to the Devil’s army.

13 According to Islamic legal theory, a properly trained jurist (*mujtahid*) who, despite his or her best endeavor, errs in producing a legal norm is excused.

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Contributors

Eyad Abuali, Tanvir Ahmed, Hanif Amin Beidokhti, Shahzad Bashir, Maroussia Bednarkiewicz, David Bennett, Hinrich Biesterfeldt, Julie Bonnéric, Adam Bursi, Fatih Han, Rotraud Hansberger, Jan Hogendijk, Domenico Ingenito, Anya King, Hannelies Koloska, Christian Lange, Danilo Marino, Richard McGregor, Pernilla Myrne, Nawal Nasrallah, Zhinia Noorian, Austin O'Malley, Franz Rosenthal (†), Everett K. Rowson, Abdelhamid I. Sabra (†), George Sawa, Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, Jocelyn Sharlet, Cornelis van Lit, Geert Jan van Gelder, James Weaver, Ines Weinrich, Brannon Wheeler, Alan Williams, Cyrus Ali Zargar.

Christian Lange is Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Utrecht University. His research focuses on premodern Islamic intellectual and cultural history, particularly in the areas of Islamic eschatology, Islamic law and legal theory, Islamic mysticism, and the Muslim sensorium.

Adam Bursi works at Fortress Press in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His research studies early Islam in dialogue with other late antique religions, focusing on the roles of relics, pilgrimage, and healing in the formation and performance of communal membership among early Muslims.

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