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AESTHETICS IN THE QUR'ĀN

A THEMATIC STUDY BASED ON SELECTED MODERN EXEGESES

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the notion of aesthetics from a Qur'ānic perspective by adopting the methodology of thematic exegesis with special reference to modern exegeses. The aim of adopting this specific exegetical genre is to construct a 'unified' understanding of what may be considered the Qur'ānic view of the notion of aesthetics.

This study finds that aesthetics in the Qur'ān is expressed using a number of terms, all of which have specific connotations. The study shows that the term *ḥusn* is the most significant term related to the notion of aesthetics. It also finds that aesthetics from a Qur'ānic perspective is an aspect of reality and it is deliberately incorporated into God's creation. Knowledge of the Creator and other religious functions are the ultimate purposes of aesthetics from a Qur'ānic perspective. Perfection, pleasure and goodness are intrinsically linked to the Qur'ānic conception of aesthetics. Qur'ānic discourse refers to nature as the most rewarding source of aesthetic experience. Aesthetics from a Qur'ānic perspective is not merely related to physical domains; it is rather an ethical perspective. Qur'ānic teaching disseminates an understanding of aesthetics throughout all facets of ethical conduct. The concept of *iḥsān* has a crucial role in Qur'ānic discourse on the ethics of aesthetics. Aesthetics in the Qur'ānic conception is not always mentioned with positive implications; it also can have negative connotations.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my brother Omar, whose place will never be filled. May Allah bestow His mercy and forgiveness upon him.

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

Consonants

أ	’	د	D	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	R	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	Z	ع	‘	ن	n
ج	J	س	S	غ	gh	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

Short vowels

fatḥah ◌َ	a
kasrah ◌ِ	i
ḍammah ◌ُ	u

Long vowels

ālif (اَ)	ā
yā’ (ي)	ī
wāw (و)	ū

Hamzah (*’*) is omitted at the beginning of a word.
Final *hā’* (ة) is transliterated (*h*).

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, one can see that the popular image of Islam is of a religion that promotes violence and terrorism. The aesthetics of Islam in general, and the Qur'ān in particular as the revealed text of Islam, have been neglected. Even when the notion of aesthetics is discussed with reference to Islam, it is usually connected with Islamic art. In fact, it can be argued that the notion of aesthetics occupies a central place in Islam's revealed text. Studying the nature of aesthetics in the Qur'ān, as the main source of understanding the religion of Islam, is a complicated endeavour since this notion falls into various disciplines, all of which attempt to define this concept from their own perspectives. Muslim scholars over time have been mainly preoccupied with the linguistic approach to understanding the aesthetics of the Qur'ān, which have tended to be understood as an attribute of its linguistic structure.[1]

However, the Qur'ān also contains other aspects of aesthetics: that of "a quality in persons or objects".[2] These may be physical, which manifest themselves in three main domains: nature, human artefacts and the celestial paradise, or ethical in human moral conduct. Both of these will be elaborated further in this study. Aesthetics in the Qur'ān is defined using various terms such as *jamāl, ḥusn*, *zīnah, zukhruf* and *bahīj*. Investigating these aesthetic terms throughout the Qur'ān reveals various aesthetic dimensions from the perspective of Qur'ānic discourse. This provides new insights into the Qur'ānic point of view concerning the notion of aesthetics. Therefore, this study attempts to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the aesthetic aspects depicted in Qur'ānic verses. However, this study will not be concerned with either the literary or the juristic perspectives of aesthetics

[1] Navid Kermani, 'The Aesthetic Reception of the Qur'ān as Reflected in Early Muslim History', in Issa J. Boullata, ed., *Literary Structure of Religious Meaning in the Qur'ān* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 254.
[2] Rosalind Ward Gwynne, 'Beauty', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ā*n (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1:212.

presented in Qur'ānic discourse. It focuses on close reading of what the Qur'ānic verses reveal about aesthetics by examining the Qur'ānic terms in those locations in which there are textual references to aesthetics. It aims to examine various aspects and elements of aesthetics in the Qur'ān in order to determine the nature, significance, functions and domains of aesthetics as a theme within a Qur'ānic context.

In order to gain a better understanding of the notion of aesthetics, and to construct a comprehensive image of the Qur'ānic perspective of aesthetics, the Qur'ān must be taken in its entirety. Although the Qur'ān was revealed piecemeal over 23 years, Muslim and Western scholars have long debated the coherence of the Qur'ān.[3]

Various works have been produced to investigate the integrity and coherence of the Qur'ānic text. Addressing the issue of coherence as an essential element of the Qur'ānic text was the subject of a number of recent scholarly attempts.[4] In fact, the issue of coherence in recent time is, as Nevin Reda claims, the "modern revival" of established genres in the Qur'ānic tradition: *naẓm* (order, arrangement and organization) and *munāsabah* (suitability, correlation and connection).[5] A historical survey of the development of the notion of coherence is not the concern of this introduction.[6] Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that the notion of coherence has experienced increasing scholarly attention in recent times. Observation led a number of scholars to examine the factors that have prompted this increasing attention to issues of coherence. Mustansir Mir claims that the proliferation of the study of coherence in the Qur'ān is in response to three main factors: firstly, Western

[3] Raymond Farrin, Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation: A Study of Symmetry and Coherence in Islam's Holy Text (Ashland: WhiteCloud Press, 2014), xi-xv.
[4] See, for example, Mustansir Mir, Coherence in the Qur'ān: A Study of Iṣlāhī Concepts of Naẓm in Tadabbur-i Qur'ān (Indianapolis: American Trust Publication, 1986); Salwa M. S. El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'ān: Relevance, Coherence and Structure* (London: Routledge, 2006); Nevin Reda El-Tahry, 'Textual Integrity and Coherence in the Qur'ān: Repetition and Narrative Structure in Surat al-Baqara' (PhD thesis, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilization, University of Toronto, Canada, 2010).
[5] Nevin Reda, 'Holistic Approach to the Qur'ān: A Historical Background', *Religion Compass* 4, No. 8 (2010): 495. Both terms *naẓm* and *munāsabah* are concerned with the study of text relations in the Qur'ān either in word-meaning relationship or linear connection levels. See Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'ān*, 11.
[6] See, for example, El-Tahry, 'Textual Integrity and Coherence in the Qur'ān', 16-45; Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'ān*, 10-24; El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'ān*, 10-24.

scholars' accusations that the Qur'ān is a disjointed work; secondly, the need to provide new approaches in coherence theory in order to better understand the underlying unity of the Qur'ānic text; thirdly, the reaction to recent developments in modern literary theory which have provided new methods for reading the Qur'ān, by focusing on the text as a whole.[7] Reda suggests another factor: that of the appearance of literature as an academic discipline studied within modern universities as in the case of scholarly attempts by Bint al-Shāṭi'.[8] Andrew Rippin, in order to identify the reasons behind the recent emphasis on the study of coherence, looks outside the field of Qur'ānic studies, to Biblical studies. He claims that the tendency to emphasise the unity of extended segments of the text is "a general academic response" aimed at a better understanding of the composition of the text.[9] Thus, it is worth mentioning that the reformation movement in the Islamic world has impacted on the call for new approaches to the Qur'ānic text, based on the Qur'ānic text itself as a whole literary unit.[10]

From the historical development of the theory of coherence in Qur'ānic studies, it can be observed that coherence-related approaches in recent times are often quite different from traditional attempts. Mir summarises this shift when he points out that the notion of coherence was traditionally identified with the Qur'ānic inimitability of connecting words to meanings. It was then understood in terms of linear connections between verses and *suwar*. In recent times, scholars were mainly occupied with the thematic unity of the Qur'ān, whether within the boundaries of particular *sūrah* or in the entire text. Thus, it can be said that contemporary scholars paid more attention to thematic coherence, and traditional writers

[7] Mir, Coherence in the Qur'ān, 19.
[8] El-Tahry, 'Textual Integrity and Coherence in the Qur'ān', 43-44.
[9] Andrew Rippin, 'Contemporary Scholarly Understanding of Qur'ānic Coherence', *al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 11, no.2 (2013): 9-11,
[10] On the reformation movement in the Islamic world, see for example, Nasr Abu Zayd, *Reformation of Islamic Thought: A Critical Historical Analysis* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006); Katharina Völker, 'Quran and Reform: Rahman, Arkoun and Abu Zayd' (PhD thesis, University of Otago, New Zealand, 2011); Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism*, ed. Ebrahim Moosa (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000).

emphasise the word-meaning relationship and linear connection between verses and *suwar*, as seen in the theory of *naẓm* and its sister *munāsabah*.[11]

However, this idea of thematic coherence is what suggests an affinity between the thematic exegesis that emerged in modern time as a specific exegetical genre and coherence-related approaches in recent times, focusing mainly on themes, whether that is discerned within the boundaries of *suwar* or goes beyond, treating the entire Qur'ānic text as whole integrated unit. This can be seen in thematic interpretation, which is the concern of this study. Thus, thematic interpretation as a distinct exegetical genre revolves around two main ideas: the theme or topic to be investigated within the Qur'ānic text and the idea of unity that characterises the specific theme investigated throughout the Qur'ānic text, to constitute an integrated coherent whole.[12]

In thematic exegesis, two main approaches can be identified, one that treats each *sūrah* as a coherent whole, and another that approaches the entire Qur'ānic text to investigate a certain theme by following it throughout the entire text. While there is much in common between these two approaches, there is a distinction between them in terms of their scope, methodology and general aim. Contemporary scholars, such as 'Abd al-Sattār Sa'īd, argue that the former is more related to the well-established coherence-related approaches focusing on a single *sūrah,* as seen in the previous genres of *naẓm* and *munāsabah*, which led to the exclusion of the *sūra*-based approach from thematic interpretation as a distinct genre of hermeneutics.[13] Accordingly, investigating a single theme and following it throughout the entire Qur'ānic text is the main concern of thematic exegesis as a distinct emerging Qur'ānic genre. This latter meaning of thematic exegesis is the focus of this study. More observations on this exegetical genre will be made in Chapter One.

[11] Mir, Coherence in the Qur'ān, 24.
[12] Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesawi, 'The Methodology of al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī: A Comparative Analysis' *Intellectual Discourse* 13, no. 1 (2005): 3.
[13] 'Abd al-Sattār Fatḥallah Sa'īd, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī* (Port Said: Dār al-Tawzī' wa al-Nashr al-Islāmiyyah, 2nd ed., 1991), 24.

0.1 Rationale

Aesthetics as a specialised branch of thought did not exist in Islamic literature and has not been treated as a separate subject by Muslim scholars. Instead, they have discussed several related issues, such as the nature of beauty.[14] It is true that there are no extensive works devoted exclusively to aesthetics in Islamic thought as a topic articulated on its own. However, beauty and its opposite, ugliness, as universal notions, have been discussed by Muslim scholars since the Middle Ages. In addition, a considerable number of Muslim philosophers, linguists and theologians[15]devoted segments of their works to the discussion of relevant issues related to the notion of beauty.[16] Moreover, aspects of aesthetics are dealt with concomitant with the nature of love; the relationship between love and pleasure; harmony, which is the "key aesthetics category mentioned in the literature";[17] and perfection. Recently, there have been many studies that examine aesthetics from different disciplines. While there are a number of studies in Islamic art, mystical aesthetics and linguistic aesthetics, there has been no scholarly attempt, as far as I know, to investigate in depth the concept of aesthetics from a Qur'ānic perspective, with a focus on thematic exegesis. Only a few attempts have dealt briefly with some related aspects, as will be seen in the literature review. This proposed study, attempts to fill this gap in Qur'ānic studies in general and thematic exegesis in particular. It is hoped that this present study will contribute to the field of Qur'ānic studies and reinforce thematic exegesis as a genre of Qur'ānic hermeneutics in its own right. This study presents a close reading of the Qur'ānic meaning of aesthetics as one of its significant

[14] Valérie Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture* (London: I.B. Tauris: 2001), 2; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'Islamic Aesthetics', in Eliton Deutsch and Ron Bontekoe, ed., *A Companion to World Philosophies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 448; Deborah L. Black, 'Aesthetics in Islamic Philosophy' in *Concise Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 2000), 1:75-79.

[15] See for example: Abū Hāmid Muḥmmad al-Ghazālī, *The Revival of Religion Learnings: Love and Attachment*, trans. Al-Haj Maullana Fazal Ul-Karim (Lahore: Kazi Publication, 1978), 2:301f.; Ibn Sīnā, *Kītāb al-Najā*, ed. Majīd Fakhāri (Beirut, Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1985) quoted in Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam*, 11-15.

[16] Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam*, 5; John Renard, 'God is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty: Aesthetics and Spirituality in the Islamic Tradition' *Studies in Formative Spirituality and Humanities* 4, no. 4, (1983): 97; Nasr, *Islamic Aesthetics*, 448.

[17] Renard, 'God is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty', 97.

themes.[18] The interest of this study is not linguistic, theological, mystical, artistic or jurisprudential, which can be considered the dominant perspectives when understanding the concept of aesthetics. The interest of this study is rather an exegetical investigation of a Qur'ānic theme and its forms. The intention is to examine the Qur'ānic presentation of aesthetics by using the genre of thematic exegesis, which approaches the Qur'ān as a whole integrated unit. The exegetical discussions will be in light of selected modern Qur'ānic exgeses, where more attention is paid to a number of exegetical aspects considered in thematic exegesis.

The main objective of this study is to contribute to establishing 'aesthetics' as a distinct theme in the study of the Qur'ān. The methodology is to review all references to aesthetics in the Qur'an and study how they are interpreted in exegetical works to develop a substantive and clear interpretation of aesthetics as a Qur'ānic theme.

0.2 Research Questions

The present study will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What are the key Qur'ānic terms that describe the concept of aesthetics in the Qur'ān, and what qualities do these represent?

2. How do those semantically different Qur'ānic terms complement each other in presenting the Qur'ānic view on aesthetics?

3. How are aesthetic concepts in the Qur'ān presented in modern Qur'ānic hermeneutics, with special reference to the verses that talk about aesthetics in the Qur'ān?

[18] For major themes in the Qur'ān, see for example Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed., 1989); Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999; reprint, London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

4. How and why does the Qur'ān give its theological teachings and juristic rulings an aesthetic dimension?

5. How does the Qur'ān portray the universe and natural phenomena in a way that stimulates the aesthetic feelings of human beings?

6. How does the Qur'ān acknowledge the aesthetical aspects of human artefacts?

7. What is ethical aesthetics in Qur'ānic discourse, and what role does it plays in shaping the general concept of aesthetics in the Qur'ān?

0.3 Objectives of the Study

The above research questions are designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Categorise the Qur'ānic verses that deal with aesthetic concepts in both physical and moral dimensions as presented in the Qur'ānic text.

2. Perform a lexical analysis of the key Qur'ānic terms frequently employed to denote the concept of 'aesthetics'. This analysis will be of two kinds: linguistic, through a survey of the most essential lexicons of Arabic language, and by providing a discussion of selected modern exegetes and seeking to elicit the meaning of aesthetic concepts according to Qur'ānic discourse.

3. Investigate the semantic differences between Qur'ānic aesthetic terms. This task aims to determine the exact Qur'ānic usage of each particular term, which will shed more light on the underlying meanings of the Qur'ānic concept of aesthetics.

4. Explain the aesthetic qualities that characterise the notion of aesthetics as presented in the Qur'ānic text. This will provide the base for some kind of theoretical definition of aesthetics in Islam in general.

5. Demonstrate the physical aesthetic dimension mentioned in the Qur'ānic text. This physical aesthetic is portrayed in three main domains: nature, human artefacts and the celestial paradise.

6. Investigate the meaning of the ethical aesthetic and its significance in the Qurā'nic concept of aesthetics.

0.4 Literature Review

When surveying literature concerning the Qur'ān, a recent development of interest in studying the concept of aesthetics can be seen. However, while there are a number of works that investigate the concept of aesthetics from the viewpoint of various Islamic disciplines (art, language, education, Sufism, philosophy), there have been few scholarly studies undertaken to present aesthetics within the Qur'ānic text. This study seeks a better understanding of the concept of aesthetics from a Qur'ānic perspective, as presented in the discussions of modern exegetes, by using the genre of thematic exegesis. There follows a survey of the most relevant literature in this regard. Thus, the focus will be on the literature that discusses aesthetics in the context of the Qur'ān. This will consist of literature written by Muslim scholars, as well as Western contributions.[19] Other studies that demonstrate aesthetics in different disciplines will not surveyed in this section, although they are not discarded completely. Instead, they will be consulted in specific sections of the study, as will be shown in the coming chapters.

[19] The following works are reviewed in chronological order.

The first contribution within Muslim literature came from Ṣaliḥ Aḥmad al-Shāmī, who wrote a series of three volumes entitled *Dirāsāt Jamāliyyah Islāmiyyah* (Islamic Aesthetics Studies).[20] This series was first published in 1986 and it can be considered the first dedicated effort in recent times to present the concept of aesthetics in an Islamic context. In his introduction, the author explains that his aim is to formulate a holistic perception of the aesthetic phenomenon in Islam. He argues that to achieve this, three basic components must be clarified: firstly, the common features and characteristics that constitute the Islamic view of aesthetics; secondly, the aesthetic domains from Islamic perspectives that reflect the Islamic conception of aesthetics; thirdly, aesthetic education in Islam.[21] Accordingly, the author dedicates each volume of his series to one of these three components. It should be mentioned that al-Shāmī presents a number of insightful points, particularly related to the treatment of aesthetic qualities, in the first volume, a number of which will be considered in Chapter Three.

However, while this study pinpointed attitudes towards a number of aspects of the concept of aesthetics in Islam (generally), it did not focus on the Qur'ān. Rather, the author bases his work mainly on discussions comparing Islam in general with other human civilisations, including long quotations from several scholars who belong to different schools of thought.

Another work, published in 1989, whose title is similar to that of this thesis, is *al-Jamāl fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm: Min Jamāl al-Insān wa al-Kawn ilā Wujūd Allah wa 'Aẓamat Khalqih* (Aesthetics in the Qur'ān: from the Beauty of Human Beings and the Universe to the

[20] This series was published in three volumes: Ṣaliḥ Aḥmad al-Shāmī, *al-Ẓāhirah al-Jamāliyyah fī al-Islām* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1st. ed., 1986); idem, *Mayādīn al-Jamāl fī al-Ẓāhirah al-Jamāliyyah fī al-Islām: al-Ṭabī'ah, al-Insān, al-Fann* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1st. ed., 1988); idem, *al-Tarbiyyah al-Jamāliyyah fī al-Islām* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1st. ed., 1988).
[21] Al-Shāmī, al-Ẓāhirah al-Jamāliyyah, 11.

Existence of God and the Greatness of His Creation) written by ʻAbd al-Razāq Ḥajjāj.[22] Although the title of Ḥajjāj's work might signify very relevant contributions to the subject, it is actually a general overview of the Qur'ānic discourse on aesthetics. It does not include a systematic analysis of the major topics that reflect a Qur'ānic conception of aesthetics. Moreover, a number of discussions are not related to the main topic, such as Darwinian evolution and theories of a number of Western scientists and philosophers, which show no apparent relevance to the Qur'ānic view of aesthetics.

Although Naḍīr Ḥamdān in his book *al-Ẓāhirah al-Jamāliyyah fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Aesthetic Phenomena in the Qur'ān),[23] published in 1991, has a similarly-named thesis, he approaches the subject from different perspectives. His main focus is on revealing the aesthetic quality of the Qur'ānic literary structure. In fact, the aesthetics of Qur'ānic language has been emphasised ever since early Muslim literature. The influence of traditional literature concerning the literary aesthetic of Qur'ānic language, for instance the works of al-Khaṭābī, al-Jurjānī and al-Bāqillānī, is noticeable in Ḥamdān's discussions.

A similar method to Ḥamdān's linguistic approach to understanding the Qur'ānic aesthetic can be found in the work of ʻAbd al-Jawād al-Maḥṣ, *al-Jamāl fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm: Mafhūmah wa Majālātah* (Aesthetics in the Qur'ān: its Concept and Domains), published in 2005.[24] The author states clearly in the introduction of his book that his contribution to the study of aesthetics in the Qur'ān is in the aesthetic values of the Qur'ānic literary structure and its style. Al-Maḥṣ' main focus is in the rhetorical beauty of Qur'ānic words and narrations. The work of ʻĪd Saʻd Yūnus entitled *al-Taṣwīr al-Jamālī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Aesthetic Depiction in the Qur'ān)[25] has adopted the same linguistic approach. In

[22] ʻAbd al-Razāq Ḥajjāj, *al-Jamāl fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm: Min Jamāl al-Insān wa al-Kawn ilā Wujūd Allah wa ʻAẓamat Khalqih* (n.p: n.p., 1989).
[23] Naḍīr Ḥamdān, *al-Ẓāhirah al-Jamāliyyah fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Jeddah: Dār al-Manārah, 1st. ed., 1991).
[24] ʻAbd al-Jawād al-Maḥṣ, *al-Jamāl fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm: Mafhūmah wa Majālātah* (Cairo: n.p., 2005).
[25] ʻĪd Saʻd Yūnus, *al-Taṣwīr al-Jamālī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: ʻAlm al-Kutub: 1st ed., 2006).

his work, Yūnus sheds light on the artistic imagery of a number of Qur'ānic verses and the aesthetic implications in terms of literary quality

Two relevant contributions to the subject were published in 2012, while this study was in progress. The first was written by Sa'īd bin Aḥmad Bū 'Aṣāb under the title *Al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wa al-Da'wah ilā Tanmiyat al-Ḥiss al-Jamālī* (Qur'ān and the Call for Enhancing Aesthetic Sense).[26] Bū 'Aṣāb starts his work by briefly touching on the meaning and features of aesthetics in a Qur'ānic context. Then in the rest of his book he explains that the entire religion of Islam is 'beauty' in all its aspects. He illuminates, at some length, the aesthetic implications of several jurisprudential commands related to three major principles in Islamic law: acts of worship, family law and transactions. The last chapter from Bū 'Aṣāb's book concerns the aesthetic aspects of Islamic ethics in general. However, it can be argued that while this work contributes to an understanding of a number of aesthetic aspects related to various Islamic law commands, it does not give sufficient attention to a systematic analysis of the relevant Qur'ānic passages. The author depends heavily on common characteristics of Islamic law in general and on considering it as an aesthetic quality. Furthermore, it can be seen that Bū 'Aṣāb's discussions are very general and superficial, in that he does not refer to the locations in the Qur'ānic text where there are textual references to a sense of aesthetics. He considered that the entire Qur'ān denotes aesthetics, without performing a systematic analysis of the Qur'ānic passages that denote an aesthetic sense. Bū 'Aṣāb's study would have been more beneficial to the field if it had attempted a more rigorous examination of Qur'ānic discourse. Thus, the present study starts with the Qur'ānic text, focusing on the relevant terms connoting aesthetics, and then the discussions on and investigations into the Qur'ānic perspective on aesthetics are based on these relevant passages. Furthermore, while

[26] Sa'īd bin Aḥmad Bū 'Aṣāb, *al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wa al-Da'wah ilā Tanmiyat al-Ḥiss al-Jamālī* (Tangier: Maṭba'ah Litūgrāf, 1st ed., 2012).

Bū ‘Aṣāb’s study is limited in its treatment of the Qur’ānic concept of aesthetics, this study intends a comprehensive reading of the aesthetic sense conveyed by Qur’ānic aesthetic terms.

The second study published in 2012 is ‘Abd al-‘Aẓīm Ṣaghīrī’s ‘*Ilm al-Jamāl: Rū’yah fī al-Ta’sīs al-Qur’ānī* (Aesthetics: Insight in the Qur’ānic Foundation).[27] Unlike Bū ‘Aṣāb’s study, this study gives considerable attention to the Qur’ānic text, particularly in a semantic analysis of the terms employed to denote the concept of aesthetics. Therefore, a number of similarities can be found between Ṣaghīrī’s book and the observations highlighted in this study, particularly in Chapter Two, with regards to the lexical analysis of aesthetic terms employed in the Qur’ānic text. There are, however, differences in the range of aesthetic words selected. While Ṣaghīrī investigates a limited number of these terms, the present study selects the most relevant terms connoting a sense of aesthetics, in order to construct a comprehensive image of the Qur’ānic conception of aesthetics. Furthermore, this study investigates the semantic differences between the key terms which cluster around the notion of aesthetics, while Ṣaghīrī’s does not.

Furthermore, for almost half of his book, Ṣaghīrī analyses a broad sense of aesthetics gained from the Prophetic Tradition and perspectives of Muslim scholars. Another issue Ṣaghīrī raises in the last chapter is what he calls ‘the enterprise of establishing an Islamic aesthetic’ as a distinct discipline in Islamic literature. He briefly outlines a number of general features that need to be considered in this enterprise in order to distinguish ‘Islamic’ aesthetics from other forms of aesthetics. While Ṣaghīrī’s study offers insight into the concept of aesthetics in general within a Qur’ānic context, his investigation focuses mainly on discussing aesthetic terms. A number of aspects related to the notion of aesthetics are not given any attention. These neglected aspects, for instance those related to characteristics and domains, are essential to a comprehensive understanding of aesthetics in Qur’ānic discourse.

[27] ‘Abd al-‘Aẓīm Ṣaghīrī, ‘*Ilm al-Jamāl: Rū’yah fī al-Ta’sīs al-Qur’ānī* (Qatar: Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs, 1st ed., 2012).

Therefore, although Ṣaghīrī's study discusses a number of essential aspects related to the Qur'ānic conception of aesthetics, it cannot be considered a specialised study of the Qur'ānic concept of aesthetics. It does not offer a close reading of Qur'ānic teaching concerning the concept of aesthetics as an essential theme found in the Qur'ānic text.

It is also important to mention that there are two master's theses conducted in this subject, which the researcher could neither find detailed information about, nor obtain copies of. The first was submitted to the University of Hassan II Mohammedia, Casablanca, in 2002 by Muṣṭafā al-Ḥayyā and is entitled *'Ilm al-Jamāl wa al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī: Muḥawlāt fī al-Ta'ṣīl wa Muqarabāt li al-taṭbīq* (Aesthetics and Islamic Conception: Attempts at Authentication and Application).[28] From the title, it can be noted that this thesis is not devoted exclusively to Qur'ānic discourse, but is rather on general Islamic perception. From the brief extract found, it seems that al-Ḥayyā mainly adopted a linguistic approach to present aesthetics in Qur'ānic language. Furthermore, he outlines the general principles of a number of aesthetic qualities.[29]

The second thesis was submitted to the University of Al Imam Al Ouzai, Beirut, in 2005 by Anas Muḥammad Qaṣār and is entitled *al-Jamāl fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Aesthetics in the Qur'ān).[30] The researcher attempted to obtain a copy of the thesis, or detailed information on its content and methodology, by contacting the library staff at the University of Al Imam Al Ouzai and by contacting the author personally. Unfortunately, these attempts failed to provide information about the thesis. The only information found regarding this thesis indicates some similarities with this study in terms of the main headings, which is not

[28] Muṣṭafā al-Ḥayyā, ''Ilm al-Jamāl wa al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī: Muḥawlāt fī al-Ta'ṣīl wa Muqarabāt li al-taṭbīq' (PhD thesis, University of Hassan II Mohammedia, College of Arts and Human Sciences, Casablanca, 2002).
[29] Muṣṭafā al-Ḥayyā, 'Jamāliyyat al-Islūb al-Qur'ānī', accessed 21st September 2011, http://islamtoday.net/bohooth/artshow-34-11718.htm.
[30] Anas Muḥammad Qaṣār, 'al-Jamāl fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm' (M. A. diss., University of Al Imam Al Ouzai, Beirut, 2005).

enough to identify the approach used and to present the subject and the dissertation's content.[31]

Concerning Western literature, while there is a vast amount written on Islamic aesthetic from various perspectives,[32] there is no single monograph dedicated to investigating, in a comprehensive systematic analysis, the concept of aesthetics as presented in the Qur'ānic text. Studies that examine aesthetics from Qur'ānic perspectives mainly refer to its stylistic perfection and its aesthetic reception.[33] This conception of Qur'ānic aesthetics can be discerned in the writings of Navid Kermani, who pays great attention to the aesthetic experience of the Qur'ān caused by its aesthetic impact upon recitation. Investigating the aesthetic fascination with Qur'ānic recitation was the central theme of his studies entitled *The Aesthetic Reception of the Qur'ān as Reflected in Early Muslim History*[34] and *Recitation and Aesthetic Reception* (the latter in collaboration with William A. Graham).[35] Kermani's book *God* is *Beautiful: the Aesthetic Experience of the Quran*,[36] which was recently translated into English, is an in-depth study into the same conception of the Qur'ānic aesthetic experience: that of the impact of the aesthetics of Qur'ānic language and its melodious recitation. Thus, it is apparent that Kermani's inquiry into Qur'ānic aesthetics is based mainly on the auditory aesthetic experience caused by the recitation of the Qur'ānic text. This perception of aesthetics is not intended in the present study. The aim here, as previously mentioned, is to investigate, using the genre of thematic exegesis, the Qur'ānic references to aesthetic aspects

[31] See the following news article: 'al-Jamāl fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm' *al-Mustaqbal*, April 2, 2005.
[32] From an artistic point of view, see for example, Valérie Gonzalez, *Beauty and* Islam; Debra Richardson, 'Tawheed in Islamic Art: Defining an Aesthetic Theory' (PhD thesis, University of Wales, UK, 1997). From a Sufi perspective, see for example, Cyrus Ali Zargar, 'Aesthetic Principles of Islamic Mysticism: Beauty and the Human Form in the Writings of Ibn 'Arabī and 'Irāqī' (PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, USA, 2008); Kazuyo Murata, 'God is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty: Ruzbihan Baqli's Sufi Metaphysics of Beauty' (PhD thesis, Faculty of Graduate School, Yale University, USA, 2012).
[33] Kermani, 'The Aesthetic Reception of the Qur'ān', 257.
[34] Ibid., 255-276.
[35] William A. Graham and Navid Kermani, 'Recitation and Aesthetic Reception' in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 115-141.
[36] Navid Kermani, *God is Beautiful: The Aesthetic Experience of the Quran*, trans. Tony Crawford (Malden: Polity Press, 2014).

as being a quality in an object or person (visual and moral aesthetic), using several aesthetic terms. It is also hoped that collecting the dispersed Qur'ānic verses relating to aesthetics into one comprehensive picture will reveal a Qur'ānic conceptual framework of aesthetics.

Finally there are two other specific works in aesthetics from a Qur'ānic viewpoint, Naseer Ahmed Nasir's *Aesthetics in the Light of Quran* and Kharaghani Hassan's *The Holy Quran: Source of Aesthetics*.[37] The former is a book published in Urdu, originally entitled *Jamaliaat Quran e Hakeem Ki Roshani Mai*. The latter is an article published in the Journal of Interdisciplinary Quranic Studies in the Persian language. Since there is neither an English nor an Arabic translation for these sources, neither can be used as background literature for this study.

This brief survey of the related literature has shown that aesthetics in an Islamic context has been discussed from a variety of perspectives. Therefore, this study will endeavour to offer a close reading of the Qur'ānic concept of aesthetics. It will undertake a contextual reading of Qur'ānic aesthetics by looking at those locations throughout the entire Qur'ānic text where aesthetic terms occur, in order to present a unified picture of the concept of aesthetics using thematic exegesis, with special reference to a number of modern exegeses.

0.5 Methodology

This study is based on thematic exegesis genre, which aims to elucidate Qur'ānic teaching and its viewpoints on the notion of aesthetics, in light of the views of selected modern Qur'ānic exegetes.

Surveying the literature on thematic exegesis and its methodological approach indicates a general agreement on the basic theoretical framework adopted in this specific genre of hermeneutics. Although there are a number of variations on the specific

[37] Kharaghani Hassan, 'The Holy Quran: Source of Aesthetics', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Quranic Studies* 1, no. 3 (2009): 67-77.

methodological procedures of thematic exegesis,[38] which in some cases depend on the specific nature of the theme selected for study, basic exegetical aspects must be taken into consideration when embarking on thematic exegesis. These general principles of the methodology of thematic exegesis, which constitute the basis of the approach adopted in this study can be summarised in the following general principles. Firstly, since the Qur'ānic text is the main source of this study, textual analysis is the basic method adopted. According to Fikret Karcic, study of the text is the predominant approach applied in the Islamic scholarly tradition.[39] The adoption of a textual analysis approach in this study is in order to understand and elaborate the meanings and contents of the Qur'ānic text. The views of the modern Qur'ānic exegetes selected for this study will be examined in relation to the text to be studied, i.e. the Qur'ān.

Secondly, the cross-referential approach, or what might be known as intertextuality and a self-referential approach, is another significant methodological approach adopted in this study, as in thematic exegesis in general.[40] This approach, as Muhammad Abdel Haleem points out, is the most relevant method for understanding the Qur'ānic text, since it focuses attention on the text itself and its internal relationships.[41] The aim of using this methodological approach is to present a holistic view of the theme as discussed throughout the entire Qur'ānic text. Three essential elements need to be taken into consideration when implementing a cross-referential method: firstly, the involvement of all the Qur'ānic verses, or more precisely the most relevant to the theme under discussion; secondly, the recognition of the underlying meanings of the terms and concepts constituting the theme studied; and

[38] Bint al-Shāṭi', for example, pays more attention to the literary aspects when adopting a thematic interpretation of the theme selected for study. See, for example, 'Ā'ishah 'Abd al-Raḥmān Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 5th ed., 1987), 2:13-19; Issa J. Boullata, 'Modern Qur'ān Exegesis: A Study of Bint Al-Shāṭi''s Method', *The Muslim World* 64, no. 2 (April 1974): 111; Shuruq Naguib, 'Bint al-Shāṭi's Approach to Tafsīr: An Egyptian Exegete's Journey from Hermeneutics to Humanity', *Journal of Qur'ānic Studies* 17, no. 1 (2015): 67.

[39] Fikret Karcic, 'Textual Analysis in Islamic Studies: A Short Historical and Comparative Survey,' *Islamic Studies* 45, no. 2 (2006): 191.

[40] Abdel Haleem, Understanding the Qur'an, 158.

[41] Ibid., 158, 161.

finally, paying attention to the context in which these terms are employed, in order to determine the specific Qur'ānic usage of them.[42] It should be mentioned that the cross-referential approach is not a newly-developed method for examining the Qur'ānic text. Rather, it is a classical principle known as *al-Qur'ān yufassir ba'ḍahu ba'ḍā* (parts of the Qur'ān interpret other parts). However, it can be argued that the application of a cross-referential approach is not taken as seriously in classical studies as it is in the genre of thematic exegesis.[43]

In practical terms, the attempt to construct the Qur'ānic view and its perspective on the notion of aesthetics is approached by applying various practical procedures in light of the methodological approaches stated above. After defining aesthetics as a theme to be investigated in this study, verses related to the theme will be identified, gathered and classified. Therefore, the entire Qur'ān has been surveyed in preparation for this study, using the cross-referential approach explained earlier. However, the fundamental principle of selecting related verses and key terms that deal with aesthetics in the Qur'ān depends on linguistic usage, exegetical context and the conceptual framework.

A comprehensive study of the verses related to the theme under discussion will be achieved through various procedures, which include examining the exegetical discourse, paying attention to the context of the verses and investigating the semantic function of terms. This systematic analysis of the related terms and verses will identify specific categories and sub-categories that will constitute the structure of the study.[44]

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[42] See, for example, Bint al- Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1:17-18; Sahiron Syamsuddin, 'An Examination of Bint Al-Shāṭi''s Method of Interpreting the Qur'ān', (MA diss., Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 1998), 48-49.

[43] Muḥammad Amīn, 'A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi''s Exegesis', (PhD thesis, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 1992), 28-29.

[44] For practical procedures applied to thematic exegesis, see, for example, Hassan Hanafi, 'Method of Thematic Interpretation of the Qur'an' in Stefan Wild, ed., *The Qur'an as Text* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 203-207; El-Mesawi, 'The Methodology of al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī', 6; Sāmir 'Abd al-Raḥmān Rashwānī, *Manhaj al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm: Dirāsah Naqdiyyah* (Aleppo: Dār al-Multaqā, 1st ed., 2009), 141-228; Muṣṭafā Musallam, *Mabāḥith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1997), 37-39; 'Abd al-Sattār Sa'īd, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī* , 56-94.

It should be mentioned here that there are other kinds of exegetical aspects considered to be essential sources for textual information, as argued for instance by Muḥammad Ḥijāzī and Amīn al-Khūlī. These aspects, for instance what Amīn al-Khūlī called "*mā ḥawl al-naṣṣ*"[45] (what is around the text), refer to information outside the text but essential for an understanding the text.[46] These include the consideration of, for instance, chronological order, occasions of revelations and the differences between Meccan and Medinan verses. There is no doubt that these exegetical principles contribute to an understanding of certain Qur'ānic meanings relating to a particular themes, such as that concerning deduction of jurisprudential rules and historical issues, they are not of significant role in other Qur'ānic themes, such as investigating aesthetics in the Qur'ān.[47] These exegetical principles have no major role in conveying Qur'ānic teachings relating to aesthetics as a theme presented in the Qur'ān that is not concern of historical context or jurisprudential issues for instance. Chronological considerations of a certain Qur'ānic themes, i.e., aesthetics can detract from getting a unified understanding of the Qur'ānic message in particular themes. These specific exegetical aspects as Mir claims are irrelevant since the Qur'ān in its present form characterised by coherence. Rather, they are of historical importance.[48] In addition, if the problem of chronology, for instance, is controversial issue that has not gained overall consensus in the field of Qur'ānic study and attempts to reconstruct the Qur'ān chronologically is not widely accepted then it is no means to consider these exegetical aspects

[45] Amīn al-Khūlī, *Manāhij Tajdīd fī al-Naḥwi wa al-Balāghah wa al-Tafsīr wa al-Adab* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'rifah:1961), 305.
[46] Hassan Khajehei and Alireza Shakarami, 'An In-Depth Linguistic Analysis of the Thematic Connectivity in the Holy Quran', *Linguistic Academic Research International* 2, no. 2 (March 2012): 689.
[47] For this general argument see, for example, Rashwānī, *Manhaj al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 153-164; Ziyād Khalīl Muḥammad al-Daghāmīn, *Manhajiyyat al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī li- al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Amman Dār al-Bashīr, 1st ed., 1995), 36-38.
[48] Mir, *Coherence*, 101.

as of significant importance in thematic exegesis where the main aim is to construct a unified understanding of the Qur'ānic guidance in a particular theme.[49]

Since this study will highlight the views of selected modern exegetes, comparative analysis will be used in order to comprehensively understand their position on the subject under discussion. It therefore must be mentioned that, besides the interpretation of modern exegetes selected for this study, references will be made to different writers where they present pertinent insights concerning the discussion of aesthetics from a Qur'ānic perspective.

All translations of Qur'ānic verses are quoted from M.A.S. Abdel Haleem's *The Qur'ān: A New Translation* unless otherwise stated. The letter Q will be used to refer to the Qur'ānic chapter (*sūrah*) followed by the verse (*āyah)* number, as in Q5:85, which means chapter 5, verse 85.

In this study, the terms "modern' and 'contemporary' are used in the same sense to indicate twentieth-century hermeneutics, scholars, writers, etc. Others belonging to earlier time periods are 'traditional' or classical'. Furthermore, the terms 'text' and 'discourse' are used interchangeably when referring to the Qur'ān.

0.6 Structure of the Study

This study consists of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One contains two parts. The first part will present some discussions on the definitions of aesthetics and beauty in both Western and Islamic literature. The second will deal with exegetical perspectives as an approach employed in the present study.

Chapter Two will identify the key terms in the Qur'ān that surround the notion of aesthetics. Terms such as *jamāl, ḥusn, zīnah, zukhruf* and *bahīj* will provide a theoretical

[49] Rashwānī, *Manhaj al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 153-164; al-Daghāmīn, *Manhajiyyat al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī,* 36-38; Kate Zebiri, 'Towards a Rhetorical Criticism of the Qur'an', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 5, no. 2, 2003, 114.

foundation upon which the following chapters will be based. Chapter Three will highlight the characteristic features of aesthetics in the Qur'ān. This means that analysis of *āyāt* from different *suwar* that are thematically related will provide some insight into aesthetic properties in the Qur'ān, which will characterise this notion from the exegetical perspective, and this will provide the base to establish an aesthetic theory of the Qur'ān.

Chapter Four consists of two parts. The first part will portray the physical meaning of aesthetics in the Qur'ān in verses related to God's creation, aesthetic artifacts produced by human beings and the aesthetic aspects in descriptions of Paradise. The second part will identify the ethical aspects of aesthetics in the Qur'ān. The conclusion will contain a summary and the significant findings of the study, in addition to offering some suggestions for further research in this field.

CHAPTER ONE

AESTHETICS: DEFINITIONS AND EXEGETICAL APPROACHES

1.1 Introduction

The term 'aesthetics', which has been adopted from the West, is new in Islamic literature since as an abstract concept it does not exist in Islamic thought. One of the obstacles to discussing the concept of aesthetics within Islamic literature has been the difficulty of attempts to find an equivalent expression denoting the same meaning as is understood in Western writings. From Islamic literature on related topics, several Arabic terms can be seen, which include *'Ilm al-jamāl* (the science of beauty), and *Jamāliyyāt* and *Jamāliyyah* (both revolving around the word 'beauty'). Other scholars prefer to use the word *Istaṭīqā*, which is a literal translation of the term 'aesthetics'.[1] It shall be argued here that this literature yields no evidence to justify the choice of one term over the others, but it is plain that all of them, excepting the literal translation, revolve around the Arabic term *jamāl* (commonly translated as 'beauty'). This may be ascribed to the fact that discussion of the concept of 'beauty' in Islamic literature antedates that of 'aesthetics'. Another reason, as will emerge from the following discussion on the definition of 'aesthetics', is that to some extent the two terms 'aesthetics' and 'beauty' are used as equivalent terms (connected in some way), though this is a matter of scholarly dispute.

[1] See, for example, 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Rawās Qal'ah Jī, *'Ilm al-Jamāl al-Islāmī* (Beirut: Dār Qutaybah, 1991); Ma'mūn Sulimān Ḥasan, 'Jamāliyyāt al-Ta'bīr al-Qur'ānī fī Sūrah al-Ḥajj' (MA diss., Kuliyyah al-Dirāsāt al-Fiqhiyyah wa al-Qānūniyyah, Al al-Bayt University, Jordan, 2009); 'Afīf al-Bahnasī, *al-Jamāliyyah al-Islāmiyyah fī al-Fann al-Ḥadīth* (Damascus: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1998).

Therefore, the first step in attempting to settle the debate on the use made of the concept of 'aesthetics', is to examine this concept according to the Western understanding of it, since the term 'aesthetics' was first coined by a German philosopher in the eighteenth century. The concept of 'beauty' is discussed here together with that of 'aesthetics', since some scholars argue that they can be used as equivalent expressions, a point discussed below in further detail. Moreover, it should be stated that the focus of this chapter is to outline a general overview of how the concept of 'aesthetics', as well as 'beauty', is defined by Western thinkers, without claiming an allegiance to any of them, since this study will focus on Qur'ānic discourse. Additionally, any other discussions on related aspects such as aesthetic properties, aesthetic attitudes and aesthetic experience are not discussed, for a detailed elaboration of them is beyond the scope of this chapter.

For further analysis of the way in which the concept of 'aesthetics' is presented in Islamic literature, this chapter briefly discusses how Muslim scholars understand aspects of aesthetics. In the light of this discussion, the question arises how far discussions on beauty in Islamic thought are linked to Qur'ānic discourse.[2] Determining the notion of 'beauty' in Islamic thought is not solely a matter of the human intellect; rather it is determined by revelation. Furthermore, if the concept of 'beauty' is determined by revelation, what aspects of beauty are presented in Qur'ānic discourse? Before addressing these questions, this chapter first outlines the method through which this objective is to be attained. This includes an exposition of the *tafsīr* genre to which the present study belongs, and the exegetes and their contributions, which contain the textual sources selected for this study.

In order to mark the current departure points of this study, it should be pointed out that there are numerous works on the literary beauty of the Qur'ān. Muslim scholars have, over the ages, emphasised the beauty of the Qur'ānic language and have appreciated its

[2] The main focus of this study is the Qur'ānic text. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that *sunnah* (ḥadīth literature) attributed to the Prophet Muhammad has impacted on Islamic aesthetical thought. Detailed discussion of the aesthetic discourse derived from the ḥadīth is not intended in this study.

literary style; this aspect is discussed with reference to the doctrine of the *i'jāz* (inimitability) of the Qur'ān. In this respect, literature references to the beauty of the Qur'ān are focused on the various aspects of its literary beauty in its language and style - the linguistic elements remain prominent in understanding the beauty of the Qur'ān. However, this beauty is not confined to the province of language and style; hence the study will focus on Qur'ānic references to other aspects of the concept of aesthetics, as presented in those of its verses that deal with it.

1.2 Definitions of Aesthetics

Before defining 'aesthetics', it should be highlighted that like most philosophical terms, this one conveys different meanings. Many modern researchers, therefore, consider it misleading and ambiguous.[3] Richard Shusterman states that attempts to define aesthetics "have often expressed distinct frustration and sometimes even scepticism concerning this concept and its cognates".[4] The discussion below is not concerned with a detailed discussion of the historical development of the concept or any other notions of aesthetic principles as discussed by scholars of aesthetics. Moreover, it is not the primary objective here to promote or defend any of the term's definitions, but to give a general overview of the concept, wherein its common principles and concerns can be highlighted, despite the general disagreement over its subject matter, and then to clarify the ways in which defining this notion is a controversial issue.

The term 'aesthetics' was introduced more than two hundred years ago by the philosopher Alexander Baumgarten. The term is derived from the Greek word *aeskesis* which

[3] See, for example, John E. Kaemmer, 'Elements of Research in Aesthetics', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 9, no. 1 (Jun 1978): 121; Felix M. Gatz, 'The Object of Aesthetics: The Place of Beauty and Art in Aesthetics', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 1, no. 4 (Winter 1941-1942): 35; Frank Sibley, *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics*, ed. John Benson, Betty Redfern and Jeremy Roxbee Cox (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1.

[4] Richard Shusterman, 'Aesthetic Experience: from Analysis to Eros', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 217.

literally means 'sense perception'.[5] Thus, Baumgarten defines it as "the science of how things are cognised by means of the senses".[6] For Baumgarten, aesthetics was the study of sensibility as a particular kind of cognition. He later came to use it in reference to the perception of beauty by the senses, in particular in art.[7] From this set of usages, it seems that "Baumgarten wanted to produce a science of beauty based upon sense perception".[8]

One of the obstacles to defining aesthetics, which is seen as a serious problem, is the number of competing theories on the objects defining aesthetics. Gatz points out that these theories can be divided into two categories. Most aestheticians in the first category believe that aesthetics has more than one object, i.e., beauty and art; or beauty, natural beauty and art; or nature and art. However, this claim is inevitably followed by a question about ranking their value. Plato, Hegel and Schelling are the greatest examples of those who have asked this question. In contrast, the aestheticians of the other group consider beauty and art to be utterly different and, therefore, not to be considered as objects belonging to one science. Two of the most prominent representatives of this view are Max Dessoir and Conrad Fiedler.[9] Accordingly, inquiring about definitions of key terms in aesthetics, such as 'beauty' and 'art', has led some philosophers to try to formulate theories to define these key terms, while other philosophers have rejected the possibility of defining them or theorising on them.[10] Thus, aesthetics hardly seems to be a unified field of inquiry.[11]

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[5] Christopher S. Nwodo, 'Philosophy of Art Versus Aesthetics', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 24, no. 3 (Summer 1984): 199; Daniel Herwitz, *Aesthetics Key Concept in Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2008), 22.
[6] Jerrold Levinson, 'Philosophical Aesthetics: An Overview', in Jerrold Levinson, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 9; Donald Phillip Verene, 'Philosophical Aesthetics', *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 40, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 90.
[7] Ibid.; Alan Goldman, 'The Aesthetic' in Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2001), 181.
[8] Marcia Muelder Eaton, *Basic Issues in Aesthetics* (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1988), 2.
[9] Gatz, 'The Object of Aesthetics', 36-39.
[10] The aesthetician who is sceptical about the possibility of defining key aesthetic terms is Morris Weitz. For more details, see Eaton, *Basic Issues in Aesthetics*, 5-7.
[11] Kendall Walton, 'Aesthetics: What? Why? And Wherefore?', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 150.

Nonetheless, philosophers since antiquity have reflected on the philosophy of art and beauty, which preceded the appearance of aesthetics in the full sense, as will be explained later.[12] Ancient Greek philosophical speculation on art and beauty, the writings of Plato and Aristotle for instance, contributed to the foundation of a history of aesthetics.[13] Defining these fundamental concepts was always a matter of dispute. The definitions have themselves been of distinct kinds.[14] However, the discussion here is not intended to provide a detailed survey of the various definitions offered over time. Nonetheless, generally speaking, the philosophy of art, which has become a central notion in aesthetics, has always dealt with the nature of taste, imagination, creativity, representation, expression and expressiveness.[15]

Thomas Aquinas's work on aesthetics is considered the most influential among medieval philosophers. One of Aquinas's contributions to the history of aesthetics is his treatment of beauty and the beautiful. Susan Feagin summarised Aquinas's position by saying that it lies in his emphasis on the contemplative pleasure immediately occasioned by 'beholding' some integrated, well-proportioned and complex natural or manufactured object.[16]

In the eighteenth century, numerous works on art, beauty and other several notions, such as taste, imagination, natural beauty and imitation, which are considered to be the major concerns of aesthetics, contributed to the development of what is known as modern aesthetics. This period was marked by the appearance of a number of important works, including Joseph Addison's eleven essays "On the Pleasure of the Imagination" in *The*

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[12] Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present: A Short History* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 21.
[13] Christoper Janaway, 'Plato', in Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2001), 3.
[14] Annette Barnes, 'Definition of Art', in Michael Kelly, ed., *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1:511.
[15] Susan L. Feagin, 'Aesthetics' in Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd., 1999), 12-13.
[16] Joseph Margolis, 'Medieval Aesthetics', in Berys Guat and Dominic McIver Lopes, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2001), 33.

Spectator in 1712. Addison employs the concept of imagination, and argues that the exercise of the imagination affords us multiple possibilities for pleasure. This primary pleasure of the imagination is divided, according to Addison, into three fundamental kinds: grandeur, novelty and beauty.[17] Thus, the current understanding of the term 'aesthetics' covers a number of topics, such as the character of aesthetic attitudes, aesthetic emotions and aesthetic value; the logical status of aesthetic judgments; the nature of beauty and its allied notions; and the relation between moral education and works of art. It also encompasses problems dealt with by the 'philosophy of art', such as the nature of art and the perception, interpretation and evaluation of works of art.[18]

The above discussion suggests that the absence of consensus over what constitutes aesthetics is a primary reason for considering the term itself ambiguous, although many attempts have been made to define it precisely. Unfortunately, none of these attempts have led to a universally acceptable definition.[19]

In the absence of a single widely accepted formal definition,[20] different definitions will be highlighted here. The first definition to be mentioned in this context is the one attributed to Levinson, who defines aesthetics as that "branch of philosophy devoted to conceptual and theoretical inquiry into art and aesthetic experience".[21] Donald Crawford defines aesthetics as the "philosophical activities which involve the critical reflection on our experience and evaluation of art. Critical reflection consists in part of conceptual analysis,

[17] See, for example, Paul Guyer, 'The Origins of Modern Aesthetics: 1711-35', in in Peter Kivy, ed., *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 29-35; William H. Youngren, 'Addison and the Birth of Eighteenth-Century Asthetics', *Modern Philology* 79, no. 3 (February 1989), 267-283.
[18] Nickolas Bunnin and Jiuuan Yu, ed., *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 17-18.
[19] Dabney Townsend, *An introduction to Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 1997), 47; Eaton, *Basic Issues in Aesthetics*, 2.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Levinson, 'Philosophical Aesthetics: An Overview', 3.

formulation of principles of interpretation, critical meanings, and evaluation".[22] Aesthetics, according to Goldman:

> …qualifies not only judgements or evaluations, but properties, attitudes, experience, and pleasure or value as well, and its application is no longer restricted to beauty alone. The domain of aesthetics remains broader than that of aesthetically pleasing art works: we can experience nature aesthetically as well.[23]

To return to the previous point, while scholars such as Scruton and Levinson claim that contemporary aesthetics refers to a great extent to the philosophy of art, Eaton also observes that modern aesthetics is more concerned with art than discussing beauty.[24] Townsend argues that aesthetics is not limited to art. Yet even if art monopolises the central meaning, the term can still be extended to cover natural objects.[25] Munro claims that aesthetics maintains, even nowadays, its concern with the understanding of beauty and its manifestations in art and nature.[26] According to Bradley, aesthetics and the philosophy of the beautiful are used as equivalent expressions.[27] Nwodo concludes that "there would seem to be some sort of consensus that aesthetics has to do with the nature of beauty".[28]

Thus, the discussion of definitions shows that some scholars, Nwodo, for instance, seem to consider beauty the dominant concept in the aesthetic discourse, whether it is manifested in art or nature. Consequently, they regard the study of beauty as the first step in determining aesthetic value. Nwodo recalls that Plato, who is considered the father of the West's theories of art as well as those on beauty, separated his theory of art from that on beauty, which is often connected with love more than with art and the artist.[29] However, scholars including Stolnitz and Goodman oppose the use of the terms 'aesthetics' and

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[22] Ibid., 15.
[23] Goldman, 'The Aesthetic', 181.
[24] Roger Scruton, 'In Search of the Aesthetic', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 47, no. 3 (July 2007): 236; Levinson, 'Philosophical Aesthetics: An Overview' 4; Eaton, *Basic Issues in Aesthetics*, 5.
[25] Townsend, *An Introduction to* Aesthetics, 56.
[26] Thomas Munro, 'Aesthetics' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: William Benton Publisher), 1:222.
[27] A.C. Bradley, *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1909), 38.
[28] Nwodo, 'Philosophy of Art Versus Aesthetics', 199.
[29] Ibid.

'beauty' as equivalents. Stolnitz argues that beauty has received less attention and has even disappeared from contemporary aesthetics. Goodman considers beauty to be "an alternative and misleading word for aesthetic merit". [30]

To sum up, it seems that there is no clarity in the use given to the concept of aesthetics, yet it can be said it has something to do with art and beauty or, in other words, it has to do with the philosophy of art and beauty. But the relation between these cannot be clearly apprehended and has been a source of great confusion. Despite the debate over the importance of the concept of beauty in aesthetics and whether or not aesthetics should no longer be organised around the concept of beauty, it can be argued that beauty may never have stopped being centrally important to aesthetics. Moreover, a discussion by Brand in a symposium entitled "Beauty Matters" suggests that beauty has once again begun to matter within philosophical aesthetics in ways that revive the past; despite losing its appearance, beauty has resurfaced.[31] A similar view comes from Lorand, who claims that without the concept of beauty, no theory of aesthetics can have reasonable explanatory power.[32] The next section gives an overview of the way in which the concept of beauty, as a central concept in aesthetics, is defined in Western literature.

1.3 Definitions of Beauty

Despite the wide range of applications of the word 'beauty' in describing a variety of objects, which is not confined to man-made objects, but consists of various human states and processes as well as a wide range of natural configurations,[33] beauty as a concept remains a

[30] Jerome Stolnitz, 'Beauty: Some Stages in the History of an Idea', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22, no. 2 (April/June 1961): 185; .Nelson Goodman, *Language of Art: an Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 255.
[31] Peg Zeglin Brand, 'Beauty Matters', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 4.
[32] Ruth Lorand, 'Beauty and Its Opposites', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52, no. 4 (Autumn 1994): 399.
[33] Theodore M. Greene, 'Beauty and the Cognitive Significance of Art', *The Journal of Philosophy* 35, no. 14 (July 1938): 366.

term which is difficult to comprehend. This view is discussed by Winn, who notes that when intellectual terms are in play, it becomes difficult to construe the essence of beauty other than merely enjoying it.[34] Further, he highlights three reasons for ambiguity in the term 'beauty': first, the beauty of objects is a matter of taste and opinion rather than knowledge and truth; second, philosophers and artists disagree among themselves on the conceptual meaning of beauty, even when they agree on what specific objects are beautiful; third, the word 'beauty' is singular, but the phenomena that it refers to are of several types, e.g., the beauty of nature and the beauty of art.[35]

Qadir expresses another view in discussing the confusion surrounding the use of the word 'beauty', by ascribing the cause of the multiple definitions of beauty to the flexibility of language. He maintains that "no real definition of beauty can be offered since no language can comprehend and reveal total essence".[36] Indeed, this view has been supported by most of those who tackle the concept of beauty, in particular those who admit that the conceptual meaning of beauty is "endlessly debatable and ambiguous."[37] Bosanquet states that "there is no definition of beauty that can be said to have met with universal acceptance",[38] while another version maintains that the concept of beauty is "simple and unsusceptible of further elaboration".[39] Mary Mothersill in her *Beauty Restored* disagrees with the tendency to see beauty as mutable by defining the concept of 'beauty' as "like knowledge or action, a 'standing' concept, that it is taken for granted in critical discussion of the arts, and that it is indispensable".[40]

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[34] Ralph B. Winn, 'The Beauty of Nature and Art' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 2, no. 5 (Spring 1942): 3.
[35] Ibid., 3-4.
[36] C. A. Qadir, 'The Nature of Beauty', *Pakistan Philosophical Journal* 6 (1962): 37.
[37] Jared S. Moore, 'Beauty as Harmony', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 2, no. 7 (Winter 1942-1943), 40. See also, Lorand, 'Beauty and Its Opposites', 399.
[38] Bernard Bosanquet, *A History of Aesthetics* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1892), 4.
[39] Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, 'The Great Theory of Beauty and Its Decline', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31, no. 2 (Winter 1972): 178.
[40] Mary Mothersill, *Beauty Restored* (New York: Adams, Bannister, Cox, 1991): 247.

In order to illustrate the ambiguity underlying the concept of 'beauty', various articulations about the definition of beauty may be cited that include some sort of historical demonstration of the concept. According to Susan Sontag, the best theory of beauty is its history.[41] However, the ancient concept of beauty was understood in an extensive sense. It was applied widely to include material substances, a moral excellence and intellectual activities.[42] In addition, it is linked with other concepts such as 'knowledge', 'goodness' and 'truth'.[43]

Plato, for example, discusses the nature of beauty in connection with love. He believed, as Mothersill states, that "beauty is a kind of good which can be possessed by items of any kind and which is linked with pleasure and inspires love".[44] In his discussion, Plato was concerned with the form of beauty; he talks about the essential characteristics of beauty with an emphasis on measure and proportion.[45]

Medieval and modern thinkers tend to adopt some of the ancient account of beauty in their own thought. Thomas Aquinas defines beauty as "that which pleases when seen".[46] He mentions three main distinctive features of beauty: integrity, proportion and clarity.[47] By the eighteenth century the concept was experiencing a critical period; British thinkers such as Hume and Burke had turned to the 'philosophy of taste'. They understood beauty as the "absence of regularity, vitality, and expressiveness, suggesting that beauty either cannot be defined or is subjective, in the mind".[48] Another change in the concept of beauty was the development of other notions such as the notion of the sublime and the

[41] Susan Sontag, 'An Argument about Beauty', *Daedalus* 131, no. 1 (Fall 2002): 22.
[42] F.E.Sparshott, *The Structure of Aesthetics* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1963), 63. See also Tatarkiewicz, 'The Great Theory', 165.
[43] Stephen David Ross, 'Beauty', in Michael Kelly, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1:238.
[44] Mothersill, *Beauty Restored*, 262.
[45] Nwodo, 'Philosophy of Art Versus Aesthetics', 200; George Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Indianapolis: Pegasus, 1971), 5; Brand, 'Beauty Matters', 2.
[46] Dickie, Aesthetics: An Introduction, 7.
[47] Ibid., 8; Nwodo, 'Philosophy of Art Versus Aesthetics', 200.
[48] Ross, 'Beauty', 241.

picturesque. Although this improvement enhances the understanding of the concept, it made the concept less unified.[49]

As far as beauty in the twentieth century is concerned, Ross identifies three theories that help to clarify the concept of beauty. The first is mainly based on Kant's and Hegel's understanding and is partly based on Aquinas'. This views beauty as bypassing the romantic ascendancy of the sublime. Here, 'pleasure' is a central element in beauty. The second theory perceives beauty as something strongly attached to art through a traditional link with nature, goodness and the Divine. The third theory continues to pursue the traditional linking of beauty with nature and goodness, but here it is more concerned with questioning the values of order and perfection.[50] Thus, it is clear from the previous "historical sketch"[51] that there is no universally acceptable definition of the concept of 'beauty'.

From the above discussion defining the concept of aesthetics as well as beauty, it can be deduced that it is extremely difficult to determine a precise meaning for either of these concepts. This is because they carry several shades of meaning. Furthermore, it can be concluded from the opinion that aesthetics and beauty are used as equivalent expressions, that the concept of 'aesthetics' may be regarded as a concept or theory of beauty. Thus, the aim in the usage of the term 'aesthetics' is not as a modern western field with controversial connotations, it is rather a term concerned with the understanding of beauty. For this reason, both terms will be used interchangeably throughout this study. This conclusion can be justified by reference to the understanding of the concept of 'aesthetics' by Muslim scholars, as will be shown in next section. Hence, it should be clear that, in this study, the term 'aesthetics' will not be used in terms of a modern discipline, rather it will be used in the sense of 'beauty'. Both terms will be used interchangeably, albeit with more commitment to 'beauty'. This commitment is justified by the fact that the occurrence of the term 'beauty' is

[49] Dickie, Aesthetics: An Introduction, 11.
[50] Ross, 'Beauty', 143.
[51] Tatarkiewicz, 'The Great Theory', 166.

favoured and widespread, and also that in Islamic literature it antedates that of 'aesthetics', a term introduced to Islamic scholarship only recently. Another reason for this consideration is that, as mentioned earlier, aesthetics in Muslim literature is discussed, to a great extent, as a theory of beauty.

1.4 Islamic Approach to Defining Aesthetics and Beauty

Having discussed the concept of aesthetics and beauty from the standpoint of Western literature, it is now important to tackle the use of both terms in Islamic literature, because discussions concerning these key terms vary from one culture to another. It should be recalled at the outset that the concept of 'aesthetics' as a distinct branch of philosophy does not exist in Islamic literature, though it is familiar to Muslim scholars today; instead, the concept of 'beauty' is extensively discussed.[52] Furthermore, in the Islamic view, revelation is considered to be the main source for beauty judgements which are not based solely on the individual's intellectual ability or his sensory perception.[53] However, revelation (the Qur'ān in this study) has its own criteria for judging what is beautiful and what is not, as will be explained in chapter three.

Contemporary scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr state that aesthetics as a separate and specialised branch of thought has never been part of Islam for Muslim scholars. Moreover, they state that there are no works exclusively dedicated to aesthetics as an

[52] It might be interested to consider the word *adab* as a concept of cultural aesthetics in Islamic literature. The word *adab* consider a polysemous concept that has undergone various transformations in meanings. It can refer to ethics, aesthetics and education beside its references to literature in modern times. Although it might be difficult to draw a precise link between the the ethical sense of the word *adab* and its aesthetic meaning as Makram Abbès points out, it can be still argued that the ethical and aesthetic meanings are overlapped in the conetations of the word *adab*. Thus, the word *adab* will not discuss in the next chapters since it did not exist in the Qur'ānic text which is focus of this study. For more about the word *adab* and its connotations to aesthetics, see for example, Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage: The Development of Its Genres and Literary Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 220-222; Makram Abbès, 'Adab and the Formation of Men', in *Arab-Muslim Civilization in the Mirror of the Universal: Philosophical Perspective* (Paris: UNESCO, 2010), 33.

[53] Omar W. Nasim, 'Toward an Islamic Aesthetic Theory', *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 15, no. 1 (1998): 83.

independent branch of Islamic though.[54] Although in Islamic literature one cannot find studies devoted exclusively to aesthetics, as there are in Western literature, classical and modern Muslim scholars address issues that substantially impinge on the concept of 'aesthetics'. This view is confirmed by the assertion of Dories-Behrens Abouseif that, although Muslim scholars did not articulate 'aesthetics' as an abstract concept, aesthetics as a theory and concept of beauty can be analysed in Muslim thought from many perspectives and with reference to a wide range of texts from the classical period through to modern studies.[55]

Although it would go beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the views of Muslim scholars concerning different aspects of aesthetics in a comprehensive sense, it is appropriate to present a general articulation of the arguments of several Muslim scholars on defining beauty. It can be noticed that within the various Muslim intellectual schools, philosophers and Sufis are the most notable groups to have engaged in sophisticated discussions on beauty. Nevertheless, Muslim discourse on beauty involves litterateurs, jurists, theologians and others, from various disciplinary perspectives.[56] In the following discussion, particular attention will be paid to the discourse of famous philosophers and Sufis on beauty. The main focus, therefore, will be on the approach of Abū Hāmid Muḥmmad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), as a central Muslim approach to understanding the various aspects of the concept of beauty. The reason for specifically highlighting al-Ghazālī's views as a Muslim scholar, is that he is considered one of the most famous theologians, jurists, and mystics, whose works reveal a deep analytical treatment of the concept of 'beauty'. The other reason is the

[54] Nasr, 'Islamic Aesthetics', 448; L. Black, 'Aesthetics in Islamic Philosophy',75; Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam*, 2.

[55] Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE online, s.v. 'Aesthetics', http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=ei3_COM-23736 (accessed February 3, 2011).

[56] See, for example, Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam*, 5-25; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999), 22-34; Black, 'Aesthetics in Islamic Philosophy', 75; Aaron W. Hughes, *Texture of the Divine: Imagination in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 146-184; Murata, 'God is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty', 20-49.

conclusion drawn by Nasr, who maintains that beauty is more vivid in al-Ghazālī and other Sufi writings, than in those of other Muslim philosophers.[57]

1.4.1 Islamic Philosophers' Approach to Defining Beauty

Muslim philosophers' conceptions of 'beauty' are derived from different disciplinary perspectives. Hughes points out that Muslim philosophers' discussions on beauty are, often, subsumed within their treatment of various disciplines, for instance ontology, epistemology, metaphysics and ethics.[58] However, as will be seen later, the main concern of philosophers, as well as Sufis, is divine beauty and the role of sensual beauty in realising God's beauty. The following is a brief account of the common aesthetic speculations of al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 427/1037).

Beauty in the thought of al-Fārābī is closely connected with the notion of perfection. He defines beauty as that which "is in its most excellent state of existence and has attained its ultimate perfection".[59] According to al-Fārābī, the degree of beauty in a substance is according to the proportion of perfection in itself. However, God's beauty surpasses all other types of beauty since, according to al-Fārābī's expression, "the First is in the most excellent state of existence".[60] Moreover, al-Fārābī claims that pleasure is associated with the comprehension of beautiful objects, and it increases according to the intensity of beauty in the perceived object.[61]

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[57] Nasr, 'Islamic Aesthetics', 454.
[58] Hughes, *Texture of the Divine*, 160. See also, Murata, 'God is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty', 23.
[59] Abu Nasr Al-Fārābī, *al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's Mabādi' ahl al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*; a revised text with introduction, trans. & comment. by Richard Walzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 85-86.
[60] Ibid., 85.
[61] Ibid.; See also, Hughes, *Texture of the Divine*, 163-164; Murata, 'God is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty', 25; Black, 'Aesthetics in Islamic Philosophy', 75-76.

Ibn Sīnā defines beauty as a quality inhabiting a substance, when he says "the beauty and splendour of all things consists in that everything has to be as it has to be".[62] Furthermore, he defines beauty with consideration for three particular aesthetic qualities: order, composition and harmony.[63] Likewise al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā asserts that God's perfection is the source of these sublime qualities. He says that "the Necessary Being possesses beauty and pure splendour. It is the origin of every harmony".[64] He further argues that both animals and intellectual beings are attracted by physical beauty, which is considered to be the access point to intellectual beauty, through the imaginative faculty that he elaborated in detail in various discussions.[65]

1.4.2 Sufi Approach to Defining Beauty

One of the most central discussions in Sufi literatures the concept of beauty. In fact, as Gibb points out, Sufis are most concerned with the attributes of beauty and love, particularly on the side of the Divine.[66] For Sufis, the perception of divine beauty causes the contemplator to enter a state of intimacy.[67] Another quality widely discussed in Sufi writings in relation to beauty is God's majesty. Ibn 'Arabī, for instance, had investigated in detail, in his treatise on majesty and beauty, the relationship between these two divine qualities.[68] The following is a

[62] Fakhr al-Dīn al-'Isfarāyinī al-Naysābūrī, *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Najāah*, ed. Ḥamid Nājī Iṣfahānī (Tehran: Anjimen 'Āthār wa Mafākher Farhankī, 1963), 272. See also, Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam*, 14.
[63] al-Naysābūrī, *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Najāah*, 272. See also, Hughes, *Texture of the Divine*, 160; Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam*, 14.
[64] al-Naysābūrī, *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Najāah*, 272. See also, Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam*, 14.
[65] Emil L. Fackenheim, 'A Treaties on Love by Ibn Sina', *Mediaeval Studies* 7, no. 1 (1945): 220-221; Hughes, *Texture of the Divine*, 165-166.
[66] Hamilton A. R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, ed. Stanford J. Shaw and William R. Polk (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1962), 211. See also, William C. Chittick, *Sufism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), 14.
[67] Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Arabī, *Rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1st ed., 2001), 25. See also, Pablo Beneito, 'On the Divine Love of Beauty', *The Journal of Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī Society* 18 (1995): 2.
[68] Ibn 'Arabī, *Rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī*, 24-36. See a translation of this short treatise by Rabia Terri Harris, 'On Majesty and Beauty: The Kitāb al-Jalāl wa al-Jamāl of Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī', *The Journal of Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī Society* 8 (1989): 5-32.

general outline of the aesthetic thought of Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240) and Ibn al-Dabbāgh (d. 699/1300).

Ibn ‘Arabī’s concept of ‘beauty’ is inseparable from his theory of love. According to him, beauty is that which causes love.[69] For Ibn ‘Arabī, God owns the absolute beauty which causes Him to love Himself.[70] Moreover, Ibn ‘Arabī points out that all created substances are beautiful since God infuses the entirety of creation with His beauty.[71] Therefore, human form is given a high standing in Ibn ‘Arabī conception of beauty. According to him, the human form is more able to arouse intense love since it reflects divine beauty more than any other created objects.[72]

Ibn al-Dabbāgh, in a number of his articulations, comes close to al-Ghazālī’s understanding of the concept of beauty, but with more emphasis on mystical perception.[73] For him, likewise the majority of philosophers and Sufis, perfection has a central role in defining beauty.[74] According to Ibn al-Dabbāgh, beauty is divided in two categories: absolute and limited. The former is only for God and no one can share it with Him. The latter has two kinds: the universal and the partial. What Ibn al-Dabbāgh means by universal beauty is the divine light that penetrates the entirety of existence. Partial beauty is the effect of this holy light that yields pleasure for the contemplator. Hence, Ibn al-Dabbāgh divided partial beauty into external beauty, which is related to material forms and attained through senses, and

[69] Muḥyīaddīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makiyyah*, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2006) 3:489; Ibid. 4:256f. See also, Zargar, ‘Aesthetics Principles of Islamic Mystism’, 54-59; Suleyman Derin, ‘From Rabī‘a to Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Towards Some Paradigms of the Sufi Conception of Love’ (PhD thesis, Department of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies, the University of Leeds, United Kingdom, 1999), 232-234; Muḥammad ‘Alī Ātharshib, ‘al-Jalāl wa al-Jamāl fī Shi‘r Ibn ‘Arabī’, *Majallat al-Turāth al-‘Arabī* 80 (2000): 88-89.
[70] Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makiyyah,* 3:489; Zargar, ‘Aesthetics Principles of Islamic Mystism’, 57.
[71] Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makiyyah*, 4:246.
[72] Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makiyyah*, 3:489-492; Zargar, ‘Aesthetics Principles of Islamic Mystism’, 69-77.
[73] Binyamin Abrahamov, Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism: The Teaching of al-Ghazālī and al-Dabbāgh (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 109.
[74] ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin Muḥammad al-’Anṣārī, *Kitāb Mashāriq Anwār al-Qulūb wa Mafātiḥ Asrār al-Ghuyūb*, ed. H. Ritter (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1959), 39.

internal beauty, which transcends the external, and is applied to spiritual forms that can be obtained through the application of intellect.[75]

1.4.3 Al-Ghazālī's Approach to Defining Beauty

The concept of 'beauty' and its nature in al-Ghazālī's discourse is part of a "complex structure of argumentation"[76] in which love, happiness, knowledge and perfection are all specifically presented in his works in particular such as *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, *Kīmyā' al-Sa'ādah* and *al-Maqṣid al-Asnā fī Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā.*[77]

Al-Ghazālī defines beauty as "the presence of perfection which is possible and befitting for a certain object".[78] It can be understood from this definition that the beauty of an object lies in the appearance of that degree of perfection that can be realised and is in accord with its nature. When all the possible characteristics of perfection appear in an object, it presents the highest state of beauty. However, when only part of them occurs, it has that measure of beauty that appears in the realised degree of perfection.[79] Furthermore, al-Ghazālī adds that everything has its own special 'characteristic perfection' which is appropriate and realisable for its nature. He explains the variability of the essence of perfection that makes objects beautiful, by showing that what makes a man beautiful does not make a horse beautiful and what makes writing beautiful does not make a voice beautiful. He declares:

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[75] Ibid., 42-51. See also, Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism*, 105-113.

[76] Carole Hillenbrand, 'Some Aspects of al-Ghazālī's Views on Beauty', in Alma Giese and J. Christoph Bürgel, eds., *Gott ist schön und Er liebt die Schönheit: God is beautiful and He loves beauty : festschrift in honour of Annemarie Schimmel presented by students, friends and colleagues on April 7, 1992* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1994), 262.

[77] See Abū Hāmid Muḥmmad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-'Aṣriyyah, 2nd ed., 1996), 4:288 f.; Abū Hāmid Muḥmmad al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣid al-Asnā fī Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Qur'ān, n.d.), 104; and in English translation see Abū Hāmid Muḥmmad al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Religious Learning*, trans. Al-Haj Maulana Fazlul Karim (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, reprinted 2008), 4:263 f.; Abū Hāmid Muḥmmad al-Ghazālī, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, trans. Claud Field (London: Octagon Press, 1980), 100 f.; Abū Hāmid Muḥmmad al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God*, trans. David B. Burrell and Nazih Daher (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1992), 112 f.

[78] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā',* 4:291; Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism*, 105.

[79] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā',* 4:291; Hillenbrand, 'Some Aspects of al-Ghazālī's Views on Beauty', 255; Richard Ettinghausen, 'Al-Ghazzālī on Beauty', in Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, ed*., Islamic Art and Archaeology: Collected Papers* (Berlin: Mann, 1984), 163.

> "the beautiful horse is that which combines everything that is characteristic of a horse with regard to appearance, body, colour, beautiful movement and tractability; a beautiful writing combines everything that is characteristic of writing, such as harmony of the letters, their correct relation to each other, right sequence and beautiful arrangement... The beauty of each object lies just in its characteristic perfection. Man is not beautiful for that which constitutes the beauty of the horse, writing not for that which makes the beauty of the voice..."[80]

Moreover, the concept of beauty in al-Ghazālī's discourse is not confined to external domains that are subject to attributes perceived through the senses, but can also be found in objects open to inner perception. This may justify why al-Ghazālī addresses two categories of beauty: outer and inner beauty.

Outer beauty, as mentioned above, refers to the physical beauty that can be perceived by the external senses. This category of beauty can even be felt by children and animals.[81] Hence, al-Ghazālī points out that the term 'beautiful' was used initially for external beauty and later applied to interior beauty.[82] In the context of physical beauty, the beauty of the human body is emphasised because it is the "key to knowing the greatness of the Creator". Al-Ghazālī singles out man's creation as an object of unique wonder, since God created man in the finest harmony and most perfect balance. [83]

Inner beauty, which is much more sublime in al-Ghazālī's view, is the beauty of inward qualities that do not have a physical form and cannot be comprehended by the five senses. Al-Ghazālī refers to "reason", "the spirit", "light" and "the heart" as inner senses in which inner beauty can be clearly demonstrated.[84] He compares outer to inner beauty more than once, stressing that inward vision is stronger than outward vision and the beauty perceived by the heart is more perfect and greater than that perceived by the eye. In addition, he claims that internal beauty is difficult to comprehend. Most people can perceive and

[80] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā',* 4:290, 295; Ettinghausen, 'Al-Ghazzālī on Beauty', 163.
[81] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā',* 4:295.
[82] Al-Ghazālī, The Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God, 112.
[83] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā',* 4:291; Hillenbrand, 'Some aspects of al-Ghazālī's Views on Beauty', 251.
[84] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā',* 4:291-299; Süleyman Derin, *Love in Sufism: From Rabia to Ibn al-Farid* (Turkey: Insan Publication, 2008), 147.

appreciate external beauty, since it is manifest to the eye and does not need further endeavour to be perceived, whereas internal beauty can be perceived only by those who have spiritual qualities.[85]

Another theme can be discerned in al-Ghazālī's discourse on the concept of beauty: he devotes a section to discussing the notion of loving beautiful things for the sake of beauty itself. He considers this category of love to be a great and genuine love, since one can hope to gain no benefit from it. Al-Ghazālī goes on to justify this claim:

> To this category [of love of something for its own sake] belongs the love of beauty... because the perception of beauty is pleasure in itself and is loved for its own sake and not for anything else. Do not believe that love of beautiful forms is conceivable only for the satisfaction of sensual desire. The satisfaction of such a desire is another type of pleasure for which beautiful forms can also be loved. However, the perception of pure beauty also gives pleasure and can be loved for its own sake alone. How can this be denied? A green meadow and running water are loved although one does not drink the water, eat the grass nor even gain any advantage from it beyond looking at it. [86]

Like the abovementioned Muslim scholars, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā for instance, al-Ghazālī undertakes a profound reflection on the subject of divine beauty. He maintains that God's beauty is absolute, and lies behind the manifestation of man's beauty and that of the rest of creation, as well as behind abstract beauty. All the beauty that can be perceived by the senses or the inner faculties is a reflection of God's beauty, which combines all the attributes of beauty and perfection, and therefore He deserves to be loved. This stage of perception is considered in al-Ghazālī's discourse to be the greatest pleasure and the ultimate objective of human beings.[87]

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[85] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā',* 4:291 f.; Ettinghausen, 'Al-Ghazzālī on Beauty', 163; Derin, *Love in Sufism*, 147; Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture*, 24.

[86] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā',* 4:290. See also Ettinghausen, 'Al-Ghazzālī on Beauty', 164; Derin, *Love in Sufism*, 147; Hillenbrand, 'Some aspects of al-Ghazālī's Views on Beauty', 253; Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture*, 23.

[87] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā',* 4:286-303; Al-Ghazālī, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, 100; Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture*, 25; Hillenbrand, 'Some aspects of al-Ghazālī's Views on Beauty', 258.

Underlining all these discussions on defining beauty in Islamic literatures, it is appropriate to conclude that although the approaches used by Muslim philosophers and Sufis, for instance, differed from one another, it can still be claimed that the general content of their discussion is to define beauty according to its qualities and properties, which might then vary from one school to another. The most central feature is that of perfection. Other qualities mentioned include: order, composition and harmony. Moreover, defining beauty is related to defining its consequences: pleasure and love. Divine beauty takes chief place in all discussions on beauty. It is the highest of all kinds of beauty.

However, while the views of philosophers and Sufis on the concept of beauty contribute substantially to an understanding of how such a notion is presented in Islamic thought in general[88], the views of exegetes also add richness to the investigation of various aspects of beauty in the Qur'ān, among other issues. It is noticeable that increased attention has been paid to the genre of *tafsīr* within Qur'ānic studies, since it is, as McAuliffe claims, "a remarkably cohesive and continuous body of discourse, fully preoccupied with an established range of concerns and considerations".[89] Furthermore, *tafsīr* can be considered a major source for wider aspects of various Qur'ānic discourses because of the extensive exegetical materials within Qur'ānic commentaries. Calder points out that the main purpose of *tafsīr* as a literary genre is to perceive the Qur'ān in the light of the various scholastic disciplines of Islam, including theology, law, prophetic history, rhetoric and *taṣawwuf* (mysticism).[90] For the present study, which is concerned with the examination of aspects of

[88] It is plain that several scholars, such as al-Dabbāgh, draw from al-Ghazālī's discussion of the concept of beauty, and the framework of his division of it into inner and outer beauty can be found in the writings of other scholars such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. See, for example, Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism*, 109; Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Rawḍah al-Muḥibīn wa Nuzhah al_Mushtāqīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992), 159-167.

[89] Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 35.

[90] Norman Calder, 'Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the description of a genre, illustrated with reference to the story of Abraham' in G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Hader A. Shareef eds., *Approaches to the Qur'ān* (London: Routledge, 1993), 106. See also Shuruq Naguib, 'The Meaning of Purity in Classical Exegesis

beauty as presented in Qur'ānic discourse, the contribution of the *tafsīr* genre has so far, unfortunately, been underexplored. This study, therefore, will highlight the theme of beauty in the Qur'ān using exegetical literature. To study the exegetical extension of Qur'ānic discourse on various aspects of beauty, the method for carrying out this task must first be examined. It includes an explanation of *tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī* (thematic exegesis) as a *tafsīr* genre adopted here and the selected books of exegesis, with a brief mention of the exegetes who produced them. For the sake of brevity, only certain exegeses are selected.

1.5 Exegetical Sources Relevant to the Study

Among all the exegetical genres of the Qur'ān[91], this study focuses on the genre of *tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī*. This genre only emerged as an exegetical method in its own right in the last quarter of the twentieth century when, according to Muṣṭafā Musallam, a course was taught under this title at al-Azhar University in Cairo.[92] Modern scholars, such as Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and Fazlur Rahman,[93] expressed a general dissatisfaction with the traditional approach, mainly *al-tafsīr al-taḥlīlī* (analytical hermeneutics). They complained that this approach cannot present the ideas and themes of the Qur'ān in a unified and coherent manner, since it focuses on the immediate meaning of individual verses and thus may make the guidance of

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of the Qur'ān' (PhD thesis, Department of Middle Eastern Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Manchester, United Kingdom, 2003), 38.

[91] During the different historical phases of the *tafsīr*, various genres can be discerned that identify the methodology applied by exegetes. For example, *al-tafsīr al-taḥlīlī* (analytical exegesis) the most common, in which all verses are analysed according to their arrangement in a given *sūra*; *al-tafsīr al-ijmālī* (synoptic exegesis) in which the exegete provides a general meaning of the verses according to their arrangement in a certain *sūra;* and *al-tafsīr al-muqāran* (comparative exegesis) in which the exegete compares and contrasts the views of different exegetes on an exegetical problem represented by a given *āyah*. For more about *tafsīr* genres see, for example, Hussein Abdul-Raof, *School of Qur'anic Exegesis: Genesis and Development* (London: Routledge, 2010), 92-99.

[92] Musallam, Mabāḥith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī, 17.

[93] Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm: al-Mushtahir bi ism Tafsīr al-Manār* (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 2nd ed., 1947), 1:7-10; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), 1-11; Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'ān: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (London: Routledge, 2006), 4.

the Qur'ān less accessible.[94] This was why thematic exegesis emerged in reaction to the "fragmentary method of analysis",[95] the domain of classical hermeneutics. Furthermore, this new approach to interpreting the Qur'ān began as an attempt to meet the changing needs of Muslims in the modern world, in terms of going beyond the classical *tafsīr*'s grammatical, linguistic, philosophical and legal approaches and relating Qur'ānic commentary to contemporary problems and circumstances. Thematic exegesis also emerged in response to the modern tendency to interpret the Qur'ān by paying great attention to a comprehensive view of the Qur'ān's topics and themes.[96]

A number of contemporary Muslim scholars, such as Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and Fazlur Rahman, claim that traditional exegeses and the Muslim heritage of literary and methodological approaches employed in Qur'ānic interpretation should be reassessed in a way that harmonises with the general reformist trend of Islamic thought. They assert the need for new and more adequate approaches to interpreting the Qur'ān that relate the Qur'ānic message and guidance to contemporary Muslims' needs and circumstances[97] and also stimulate believers to understand the message of Qur'ānic guidance holistically. The "atomistic approach", as Fazlur Rahman named it, treats the Qur'ān in a piecemeal, ad hoc way that has caused a "general failure to understand the underlying unity of the Qur'ān".[98]

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[94] El-Mesawi, 'The Methodology of al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī', 2; Taufik Adnan Amal and Samsu Rizal Panggabean, 'A Contextual Approach to the Qur'ān' in Abdullah Saeed, ed., *Approaches to the Qur'ān in Contemporary Indonesia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 109; Kate Zebiri, *Maḥmūd Shaltūt and Islamic Modernism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 151.

[95] Jacques Jomier, 'Quelques Actuelles de I'Exégése Coranique en Egypt Révélées par une Polémique Récente' *Mélanges de I'Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orintals* 1 (1954): 39-72, quoted in David Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers: A Qur'anic Study* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999), 20.

[96] Zebiri, Maḥmūd Shaltūt and Islamic Modernism, 169.

[97] See for example, Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 1:7-10; Christian Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978), 144-170; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, 1-11; Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 9-23.

[98] Rahman, Islam and Modernity, 2-3.

Rudi Paret makes the same claim: that traditional Qur'ān exegetes focus on the immediate context of a verse instead of emphasising the unity of meaning of the Qur'ān as a whole.[99]

Therefore, thematic exegesis emerged as a more advanced counterpoint to this 'atomistic approach'; it considered the Qur'ān as a "unified text"[100] and emphasised the coherence of its verses. However, it should be stressed that Muslims' earlier efforts to interpret the Qur'ān should not be rejected outright and thematic exegesis, or any modern hermeneutic approach, cannot be perceived as an abrogation of traditional methods. It is rather an "advanced step"[101] in interpreting the Qur'ān, to bring it closer to the needs of today. Classical hermeneutic should not be entirely replaced by the contemporary approach; rather, contemporary Muslims can learn from its capacity to offer benefits for contemporary life, as Abdullah Saeed suggests.

Another point to address is how to value the classical approach when interpreting the Qur'ān, now that the new approach of thematic exegesis has arrived. The basic input of modern *tafsīr* is no different from that of the classical, Rippin argues, and classical and modern *tafsīr* together constitute a coherent body of literature.[102] In this regard, Shihab is aware that while a thematic approach might provide a conclusive interpretation, the relevant verses are still subject to different perspectives. He adds that the thematic approach does not assume any deep structure of the verses, but focuses on the central idea under discussion, while *al-tafsīr al-taḥlīlī*, for example, provides procedures and possibilities for understanding particular verses in greater detail.[103] Thus, while it is certain that thematic exegesis has gained more influence as an approach in modern Qur'ānic hermeneutics, other approaches, such as

[99] Rudi Paret, *Grenzen der Koranforschung* (Stuttgart: kohlhammer, 1950), 7, quoted in David Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*, 19-20.
[100] Abdullah Saeed, 'Introduction: the Qur'ān, Interpretation and the Indonesian Context' in Abdullah Saeed ed., *Approaches to the Qur'ān in Contemporary Indonesia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5.
[101] El-Mesawi, 'The Methodology of al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī', 2.
[102] Andrew Rippin. 'Tafsīr', in Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 14:242; McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, 28.
[103] Muhammadiyah and Kusmana, 'Purposive Exegesis: A Study of Quraish Shihab's Thematic Interpretation of the Qur'ān' in Abdullah Saeed, ed., *Approaches to the Qur'ān in Contemporary Indonesia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 70.

al-tafsīr al-taḥlīlī, cannot be avoided entirely since they contribute to the understanding of specific verses.

1.5.2 Definitions of Thematic Exegesis

An investigation into the definitions of thematic exegesis reveals a common tendency towards agreement on the prime denotation of thematic exegesis, which is represented in the study of a particular theme of the Qur'ān or aspects of Muslim life that are referred to in the Qur'ān. These definitions, as will be articulated later, show variations in the scope and the methods applied.[104] Amīn al-Khūlī emphasised that thematic interpretation is an adequate approach in the *tafsīr* genre[105] and his definition provides a basic framework that can be found in the definitions used in this chapter. According to him, the verses that are related to a specific theme should be gathered with their chronological order and the occasions of their revelation in mind, to allow them to be interpreted thematically.[106] A similar view is taken by 'Abd al-Sattār Sa'īd when he points out that thematic interpretation consists of collecting those verses that have a common meaning. These are then grouped together under a theme, which is extracted from the Qur'ān.[107] Ḥijāzī's definition of thematic exegesis provides a wider analysis of this approach by listing its methodological stages. According to him, thematic exegesis is the process of collecting all the relevant verses together under a specific theme and rearranging them according to their chronological order of revelation, while focusing on analysing them systematically and comprehensively within the context of the *sūrah* to which they belong; this gives an integrated theme running through the whole Qur'ān.[108] After presenting several definitions, Musallam defines thematic exegesis in a concise statement: thematic exegesis is "a discipline which deals with the *qaḍāyā* (issues)

[104] El-Mesawi, 'The Methodology of *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*', 1.
[105] Al-Khūlī, *Manāhij Tajdīd*, 306.
[106] Ibid.
[107] 'Abd al-Sattār Sa'īd, al-Madkhal ilā al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī, 20.
[108] Muḥammad Maḥmūd Ḥijāzī, *al-Wiḥdah al-Mawḍū'iyyah fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1970), 29-31.

according to the *maqāṣid* (objectives) of the Qur'ān in one *sūrah* or more". [109] Here, it can be noted that Musallam chooses the word *qaḍāyā* instead of *mafāhīm (*concepts) to include all the different approaches that can be discerned in thematic exegesis, which will be determined in more details later. This definition is adopted by Ṣalāḥ al-Khālidī.[110]

Based on the above definitions of thematic exegesis, it can be said that most of these definitions revolve around the idea of the 'theme' as the significant point in thematic exegesis, while emphasising the notion of 'unity' throughout the verses with the same 'theme'.

1.5.3 Approaches in Thematic Exegesis

An examination of exegetical literature reveals that opinions vary among contemporary Muslim scholars on the possible types of thematic interpretation. Some, such as 'Abd al-Sattār Sa'īd, confine it to the study of specific Qur'ānic themes. Other scholars, such as Ḥijāzī and al-Sayyid al-Kūmī, suggest that two approaches can be discerned in thematic exegesis: taking either a theme (or themes) derived from a particular *sūrah* or themes taken from a group of related verses scattered throughout the Qur'ān.[111] Finally, some scholars, such as al-Khālidī, add the study of Qur'ānic terminology to thematic exegesis.[112]

This classification (theme, *sūrah* and terms) has always been a point of dispute among modern scholars such as 'Abd al-Sattār Sa'īd and al-Kūmī,[113] since many aspects of thematic exegesis remain unanalysed. However, scholars, such as al-Khālidī and al-Daghāmīn,[114] clearly agree that the first of these approaches is the closest to the true meaning

[109] Musallam, Mabāḥith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī, 16.
[110] Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Fatāḥ al-Khālidī,*al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī bain al-Naẓariyyah wa al-Taṭbeīq* (Amman: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1997), 30.
[111] Ḥijāzī, *al-Wiḥdah al-Mawḍū'iyyah*, 404-405; Aḥmad As-Sayyid al-Kūmī and Muḥammad Aḥmad Yūsuf al-Qāsim, *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī li-al- Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: N.p, 1st ed., 1982), 22-23.
[112] Al-Khālidī, al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī, 59.
[113] 'Abd al-Sattār Sa'īd, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 24-26; al-Kūmī and al- Qāsim, *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī li-al- Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 22-23.
[114] Al-Khālidī, al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī, 78; al-Daghāmīn, *Manhajiyyat al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 20.

of thematic exegesis. Musallam states that the study of Qur'ānic themes as they are presented throughout the Qur'ān is the most common approach within this genre and when thematic exegesis is mentioned, it is likely that this approach is meant.[115] As far as the second type is concerned, some scholars do not consider it thematic exegesis at all because it addresses the *sūra*'s attributes, whereas the essence of thematic exegesis is to unveil the unifying relationship that links parts of a single theme together as an integrated whole, according to Qur'ānic highlights, and not in any partial form.[116] Nevertheless, if the third type is taken to address a term used in the Qur'ān, such as *zakāh* (almsgiving) and *ummah* (the community of Muslims worldwide), then there is no difference between it and the first type. If, however, it is used to explain the literal significance or semantic meaning of a term in its various contexts, then it is different from thematic exegesis in terms of its significance and methodological approach.[117]

Thus, it can be concluded here that the common meaning of thematic exegesis is the study of a certain theme dealt with by the Qur'ān, in order to understand the Qur'ānic viewpoint concerning this theme using the Qur'ān's specific terminology.

1.6 Exegetes and their Commentaries

Four major contemporary[118] works of Qur'ānic exegesis have been selected to constitute the main sources of this study, due to their usefulness for investigating how aspects of beauty are presented in the Qur'ān. The exegeses of Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1353/1935), Sayyid

[115] Musallam, *Mabāḥith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 27.
[116] See 'Abd al-Sattār Sa'īd, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 25; al-Daghāmīn, *Manhajiyyat al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 20f.
[117] See also Ibid.; Sulimān al-Daqūr, 'al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī: 'Ishkāliyyat al-Mafhūm wa al-Manhaj', University of Sharjah Conference, accessed July 24, 2010, https://journals.ju.edu.jo/DirasatLaw/article/viewFile/2638/4124.
[118] The history of the *tafsīr* genre can be roughly divided into three stages: the formative, from the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammed until the second/eighth century; the classical, from the first quarter of the second/eighth century to the pre-modern period; and the modern, from the late nineteenth century to the present. See Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'ān*, 8-12; Abdul-Roaf, *School of Qur'ānic Exegesis*, 11; Rotraud Wielandt, 'Exegesis of the Qur'ān: Early Modern and Contemporary', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 2:124-142.

Quṭb (d. 1385/1966), Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Sha'rāwī (d. 1418/1998) and Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn 'Āshūr (d. 1393/1973) are the most widely-circulated works of exegesis in modern *tafsīr*. They are frequently consulted in studies concerning modern Qur'ānic hermeneutics. In addition, their authors exerted significant influence over other modern exegetes.[119] They also pay more attention to the thematic genre when interpreting the Qur'ān, as is discussed in more detail below. What follows is a brief account of the selected exegetes, outlining their lives and the main aspects of their method of Qur'ānic hermeneutics, as presented in their interpretations.[120]

1.6.1 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā

Before presenting Riḍā's biography and his commentary, the "question of authorship"[121] should be mentioned, to justify ascribing *tafsīr al-Manār* to him. It seems that there is no consensus on the real author of this work. Scholars such as Charles C. Adams and Joseph Schacht claim that *al-Manār* is the work of Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1323/1905). This view is based on the series of lectures given by 'Abduh at al-Azhar (begun in 1900), in which he presented his Qurā'nic exegesis. Rashīd Riḍā attended these lectures and took notes, which he afterwards modified and published as *tafsīr al-Manār*.[122] Other scholars attribute *tafsīr al-Manār* to Riḍā, in terms of the work's composition, although acknowledging the influence of his mentor 'Abduh on it, and argue that attributing it to 'Abduh is incorrect and that Riḍā should be credited with primary authorship.[123] Jane McAuliffe argues that *tafsīr al-Manār* is

[119] See for example, Rippin. 'Tafsīr', 87; McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, 85; Wielandt, 'Exegesis of the Qur'ān: Early Modern and Contemporary', 2:128; Kate Zebiri, *Maḥmūd Shaltūt and Islamic Modernism*, 133.
[120] Other methodological and interpretative aspects will be mentioned in later discussions.
[121] Kosugi Yasushi, 'al-Manār Revisited: The 'Lighthouse' of the Islamic Revival' in Stéphane A. Dudognon, Komastu Hisao and Kosugi Yasushi, eds., *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World: Transmission, Transformation, Communication* (London: Routledge, 2006), 19.
[122] Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 111; Joseph Schacht, 'Muḥammad 'Abduh' in C. G. Bosworth ed., *Encyclopaedia of Islam: New Edition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), VII:418-419. See also McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, 78; Iftitah Jafar, 'Modern Qur'ānic Exegesis: A Comparative Study of the Methods of Muḥammad 'Abduh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā' (MA diss., Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 1998), 32.
[123] Ibid.; McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, 78-79; Yasushi, 'al-Manār Revisited', 17.

largely Riḍā's work, based on the fact that Riḍā alone wrote two-thirds of the work as published.[124] Some scholars hold that *tafsīr al-Manār* is a collective work. According to Jomier, *tafsīr al-Manār* is the culmination of the efforts of a group of figures associated with the periodical *al-Manār*.[125] Ibn ʻĀshūr considers it the work of a trio of reformers, namely Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1314/1897) who held ideas on modernity and reformism; ʻAbduh, who directly embarked on an interpretation of the Qur'ān based on al-Afghānī's principles; and Riḍā, who in writing *tafsīr al-Manār* expanded his mentor's interpretative approach.[126] Kosugi Yashushi expresses the same view when he discusses the relationship between the "trio of Islamic Reformists" adding that "al-Afghānī initiated the task of reading the Qur'ān in the light of modern conditions of the Islamic world, and ʻAbduh later gave actual lectures on Qur'ānic hermenutics. Then, Riḍā recorded it, and expanded it with more details".[127]

Thus, when it comes to a serious investigation of *tafsīr al-Manār*, it appears that to a certain extent the first part (consisting of *sūrah* one, *al-Fātiḥah*, to *sūrah* four, *al-Nisā'*, verse 125) ought to be attributed to both ʻAbduh and Riḍā, since they consist of lectures transcribed by Riḍā. Although this part paraphrases 'Adbuh's lectures, Riḍā's contribution was not merely to record and take notes; he went further by expanding ʻAbduh's interpretation with his own explanations and comments following his own line of argument. Sometimes, Riḍā even raises objections to ʻAbduh's interpretation.[128] The remaining part of *tafsīr al-Manār* is by Rashīd Riḍā; it begins at *sūrah* four*, al-Nisā'*, verse 126, the point where ʻAbduh's lectures in al-Azhar stop, and continues as far as *sūrah* twelve, *Yūsuf*, verse

[124] McAuliffe, Qur'ānic Christians, 79.
[125] O. P. J. Jomier, *Le Commentaire Coranique du Manār* (Paris : G. P. Maisonneuve, 1954), 25, quoted in Jafar, 'Modern Qur'ānic Exegesis', 33.
[126] Muḥammad ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Tafsīr wa Rijāluh* (Cairo: Majmaʻ al-Buḥūth al-Islāmiyyah, 1997), 205 f. Although Ibn ʻĀshūr, regards *tafsīr al-Manār* as a work of three individuals, he later admits that Riḍā deserves to be credited as the real author of *al-Manār*.
[127] Yashushi, 'al-Manār Revisited', 19.
[128] For more information, see Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 1:15-16, 84; Ibid., 3:276; ʻAbdullah Maḥmūd Shaḥātah, *Manhaj al-Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1963), 36; Yasushi, 'al-Manār Revisited', 18.

101.[129] However, this investigation implies that the printed work in *tafsīr al-Manār* is all by Rashīd Riḍā. This should not let us underestimate the effort and impact of 'Abduh's method of exegesis. [130]

Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, a Syrian scholar, has attracted a great deal of attention in the Muslim world, and also the West, as one of the most influential figures in contemporary Arab and Islamic thought. He was born in 1865 in the village of al-Qalamūn near Tripoli, now a city in northern Lebanon. Riḍā came from a pious family that claimed descent from the family of the Prophet. He received his initial education in his village *madrasah* (traditional school), then moved to Tripoli to study in the Turkish government school and from there moved to the National Islamic School founded by Shaikh Ḥusayn al-Jisr (d. 1324 /1909), which had some influence upon Riḍā's studies and intellectual progress. Finally, he pursued his studies in *al-Madrasah al-Dīniyyah* (the Religious School) until he gained a diploma in 1897.

One of the significant factors considered a turning point in Riḍā's life was the reading of the periodical *al-'Urwah al-Wuthqā* issued by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh. This periodical changed his outlook on life; in this new phase, Qur'ānic guidance inspired his reformist vision. Consequently, he emigrated to Cairo after al-Afghānī's death in 1897, and remained close to 'Abduh. Riḍā continued his association with 'Abduh until the latter's death in 1905. After Riḍā settled in Cairo, he started producing and disseminating an Islamic journal entitled *al-Manār* which was concerned with religious,

[129] The printed version of *tafsīr al-Manār* runs through *sūrah* twelve, Yūsuf, verse 52. According to al-Dhahabī, Bahjat al-Bayṭar (d. 1976) completed the exegesis of this sūrah and published it separately in the name of Riḍā. See Muḥammad Husayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn: Baḥth Tafṣīlī 'an Nash'at al-Tafsīr wa Taṭawwuruh wa Alwānuh wa Madhāhibuh ma'a 'Arḍ shāmil li Ashhar al-Mufassirīn wa Taḥlīl kāmil li Ahamm Kutub al-Tafsīr min 'Aṣr al-Nabiyy Sallā Allāhu 'Alayhi wa sallam ilā 'Aṣrinā al-Ḥāḍir* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2005), 2:507.

[130] Riḍā admitted that *al-Manār* is not a copy of 'Abduh's lectures, whilst at the same time he acknowledged his debt to 'Abduh on the title or cover page of each volume. For more evidence for this conclusion, see, for example, Rida, *al-Manār*, 1:15; McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, 79; Yasushi, 'al-Manār Revisited', 18; Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tafsīr wa Rijaluh*, 206.

intellectual and social reform and emphasised the unity of the Islamic *ummah* and the validity of Islam in modern times. He continued to publish this journal until his death in 1935.[131]

Among the disciplines that gave Riḍā his reputation was Qur'ānic commentary through his exegesis *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm*, famously known as *tafsīr al-Manār* since parts of it were serialised in the periodical *al-Manār*. *Tafsīr al-Manār* is considered one of the most influential modern works of exegesis since it has had a great impact on many later exegetes and is also quoted in a considerable number of modern commentaries.[132]

Tafsīr al-Manār introduced a new principle of Qur'ānic interpretation, which al-Dhahabī calls *al-tafsīr al-adabī al-ijtimā'i* (socio-literary exegesis). This exegetical approach interpreted the meaning of the Qur'ānic through its literary style and applied the Qur'ānic message and guidance to modern human societies. Al-Dhahabī claims that this genre of hermaneutics is appropriate for the present day, since it enables the exegete to discuss contemporary social and political issues within the framework of Qur'ānic guidance.[133]

The characteristic features of *tafsīr al-Manār,* which reflect the exegetical approach of 'Abduh and Riḍā as well as singling out the features of their innovative exegetical school, is remarkable at different levels. An attempt is made below to determine the main features of the methodological aspects adopted in *tafsīr al-Manār* that provide it with its methodological uniqueness. [134]

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[131] For more on the biography of Rashīd Riḍā see, for example, Jafar, 'Modern Qur'ānic Exegesis', 42-51; Yasushi, 'A-Manār Revisited', 8-11; McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, 80-82; Nayel Musa Al-Omran, 'Rashīd Riḍā's Efforts in Calling for Muslim Unity and Political Reform' *Journal of Islam in Asia* 6, no. 1 (July 2009): 150-153; Aḥmad al-Sharabāṣī, *Rashīd Riḍā: al-Ṣaḥafī, al-Mufassir, al-Shā'ir, al-Lughawī* (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-A'lā li al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1977), 10-90; Ana Belén Soage, 'Rashīd Ridā's Legacy', *The Muslim World* 98, no. 1 (January 2008): 1-2; Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tafsīr wa Rijāluh,* 207-213.

[132] Many authors who write about *tafsīr al-Manār* declare that it had great influence on later exegetes. See, for example, Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, 2:401; Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tafsīr wa Rijāluh*, 206-207; Jafar, 'Modern Qur'ānic Exegesis', 3; Yasushi, 'A-Manār Revisited', 16, 20 ; McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, 85; al-Sharabāṣī, *Rashīd Riḍā*, 98.

[133] Al-Dhahabī, al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn, 2:401.

[134] In this regard some scholars claim that 'Abduh and Riḍā shared the same methods, while others insist that they were different. Although they differ in some ways, they share many points of similarity in their exegetical approach. For more explanation, see, for example, Jafar, 'Modern Qur'ānic Exegesis', 78-115; al-Sharabāṣī, *Rashīd Riḍā*, 98-152.

‘Abduh and Riḍā condemn some of the exegetical approaches employed in the classical *tafsīr,* such as the widespread grammatical, rhetorical, philosophical, jurisprudential and theological disputes that led it to deviate from the primary message of Qur’ānic guidance. Furthermore, they argue that Qur’ānic exegesis needs to be made more accessible to modern Muslims, by writing it in a way that observes the modern requirement for simplicity of expression without dwelling on extended theoretical dispute.[135] Consequently, the approach that ‘Abduh and Riḍā took in *tafsīr al-Manār* aims to minimise these theoretical arguments. Despite their criticism of classical hermeneutics, ‘Abduh and Riḍā appreciate some examples of it, such as *tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, because its author was careful in his use of the *ḥadīth* (Prophetic traditions). Moreover, the influence in *tafsīr al-Manār* of certain classical exegetes was sometimes obvious, although ‘Abduh and Riḍā differ in their use of other Qur’ānic exegetes, which indicates that the traditional form of *tafsīr* can still work in conveying new ideas through its interpretations.[136]

Another main exegetical method can be seen in *tafsīr al-Manār*: the condemnation of the use of *isrā’īliyyāt* (Israelite narrations in exegesis) to fill in the gaps in the Qur’ānic stories. This was a common feature in most preceding exegeses, as Riḍā claims in the introduction to his interpretation.[137] In addition, he points out that *isrā’īliyyāt* consists of unreliable reports that “draw a veil over the Qur’ān and divert the reader’s attention from its higher aims”.[138] Consistent with the avoidance of unauthentic traditions in *tafsīr al-Manār* is the rejection of *mawḍū‘* (fabricated) and *ḍa‘īf* (weak) traditions in interpreting the Qur’ānic

[135] Riḍā, *al-Manār,* 1:7; Jafar, ‘Modern Qur’ānic Exegesis’, 35; Zebiri, *Maḥmūd Shaltūt and Islamic Modernism*, 133.
[136] Yasushi, ‘al-Manār Revisited’, 17; Jafar, ‘Modern Qur’ānic Exegesis’, 116.
[137] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 1:7-10.
[138] Ibid., 1:10. See also Zebiri, *Maḥmūd Shaltūt and Islamic Modernism*, 133.

verses.[139] These principles, as al-Dhahabī remarks, ensure that interpretation does not rely on legends that both *'aql* (reason) and *'aqīdah* (faith) consider unreliable.[140]

Furthermore, *tafsīr al-Manār* is concerned with contemporary social issues raised by the *ummah* and highlights the requirements from modern Muslims to reform religious institutions. These two writers also were concerned with a desire to demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with modern civilisation.[141] 'Abduh and Riḍā, through *al-Manār*, embarked on a path of reformism and they *"*were able to justify reformist ideas [religious, educational and political] with the Qur'ānic verses and ground these ideas in sacred scripture. They also expanded understanding of the Qur'ān by reading these [reformist] ideas in its verses".[142]

Finally, *tafsīr al-Manār* made a significant contribution in terms of thematic exegesis, about which previous commentaries had been less concerned. *Tafsīr al-Manār* deals with individual topics in an integral manner and there are frequent cross-references to other parts of the Qur'ān that are linked to the topics under discussion.[143] An example of his thematic approach can be seen in his interpretation of the conception of *tawakkul* (trust) in the Qur'ān, as seen in Q14:12, Q17:29 and Q65:3. McAuliffe points out that in *tafsīr al-Manār*, "the notion of context and integrity enters as a hermeneutical principle expressed in terms of the literary excellence (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān".[144] According to Bint al-Shāṭī', socio-literary-oriented exegesis begins by examining the collected verses on an issue and analysing the linguistic sense of the word or words involved. The exegete then investigates the structure

[139] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 1:7-10.
[140] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn,* 2:432. For more on this feature, see, for example, Jafar, 'Modern Qur'ānic Exegesis', 79-80; Abdullah Saeed, 'Introduction', 4; Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 3rd ed., 2005); Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, 2:401f.; Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 1:7-10.
[141] Zebiri, Maḥmūd Shaltūt and Islamic Modernism, 134.
[142] Yasushi, 'al-Manār Revisited', 20.
[143] 'Abdullah Maḥmūd Shaḥātah, Manhaj al-Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1963), 35-44; Zebiri, Maḥmūd Shaltūt and Islamic Modernism, 139.
[144] McAuliffe, Qur'ānic Christians, 85.

of the verse as a whole to determine the Qur'ānic use of the words.[145] While Mustansir Mir fails to include 'Abduh and Riḍā in his list of contemporary Qur'ānic exegetes who regard *sūrah* as a 'unity', 'Abdullah Shiḥāta (d. 1423/2002) claims that Abduh's major contribution lies in coherently explaining the general idea of the *sūrah* together with related issues, a practice carried on by Riḍā.[146] This approach is valued by such scholars as Dawam Rahardjo, an Indonesian author, who points out that Riḍā had two functional methods in his exegesis: extracting the verse's meaning as a general concept before embarking on a detailed interpretation and applying the thematic approach of examining the contexts of other related verses and considering them as a logical unit.[147]

1.6.2 Sayyid Quṭb

Since he is considered one of the most influential contemporary figures in the Muslim world, much has been written on Quṭb's life and thought. Several scholars prefer to divide Quṭb's life into different stages as many political, socio-cultural, economic and psychological events had an effect on his life and determined his direction[148], therefore this chapter will provide a brief biographical sketch. However, the main focus here will be on Quṭb's most important

[145] Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 1:10f.
[146] Shaḥātah, *Manhaj al-Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh*, 36; Mustansir Mir, 'The Sūra as a Unity' in G.R.Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef , eds. *Approaches to the Qur'ān* (London: Routledge, 1993), 212. For more information, see for example, McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, 84-85; Yasushi, 'al-Manār Revisited', 19-20; Jafar, 'Modern Qur'ānic Exegesis', 93-96.
[147] Dawam Raharjo, *Ensiklopedia al-Qur'ān: Tafsir Social Berdasarkan Konsep-Konsep Kunci* (Jakarta: Penerbit Paramadina, 1996), 454, quoted in Jafar, 'Modern Qur'ānic Exegesis', 74.
[148] Some scholars divide Quṭb's life and thought into a secularist and an Islamic period, others into a formative phase, which consists of his youth until 1947, then from 1947 to 1952, and finally the events after 1952. For more about these divisions, see, for example, William Shepard, 'The Myth of Progress in the Writings of Sayyid Qutb' *Religion* 27, no. 3 (1997): 257-259; Asyraf Hj Ab Rahman, 'The Concept of Social Justice as Found in Sayyid Qutb's *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, Faculty of Arts, United Kingdom, 2000), 7f.; Mhd. Syahnan, 'A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qur'ān Exegesis in Earlier and later Editions of His *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* with Specific Reference to Selected Themes' (MA diss., University of McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Montreal, Canada, 1997), 6f.; William Shepard, 'The Development of the Thought of Sayyid Quṭb as Reflected in Earlier and Later Edition of Social Justice in Islam' *Die Welt des Islam* 32 (1992): 196-197.

work, which reflected his thought during various stages of his life: his interpretation of the Qur'ān called *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*.[149]

Sayyid Quṭb Ibrāhīm Ḥassan al-Shādhilī was born in 1906, in Mūshā, a village in Asyūṭ in Upper Egypt. He started his education at the age of six in a modern school, rather than a traditional one. At the age of ten, he completed his memorisation of the Qur'ān. In 1921, he left his village to complete his studies in Cairo, where he lived with his journalist uncle, and after completing his studies in 1933 he obtained a B.A. in Education from Dār al-'Ulūm's Teachers College. Upon graduation, Quṭb was offered a lectureship at the same college and was then appointed an inspector in Egypt's Ministry of Education.

One of the most influential experiences in Quṭb's life was his journey to the USA to study modern Western methods of education, at the behest of the Egyptian government. The influence of this journey can be discerned in the transition of Quṭb's thought from a literary and educational orientation to an intense religious commitment.[150] This impact is mentioned by Algar, who says that for Quṭb his two-year visit to America was "decisive in turning [him] fully to Islam as a total civilisation alternative".[151] He returned to Egypt in 1951, and immediately resigned from his inspectorship. In 1953, he joined the Muslim Brotherhood, the leading Islamic activist group of the time, and become one of its leading ideologues. In 1954, when the government banned the Brotherhood, Quṭb, along with other key figures, was arrested and did not often leave prison until he was executed in 1966. He spent his remaining years writing new works, in addition to revising earlier ones, and it is from this period that his most prominent works emerge.[152]

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[149] Henceforward, *al-Ẓilāl*.
[150] Syahnan, 'A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qur'ān Exegesis', 10.
[151] Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, trans. John B. Hardie, rev. trans. with introduction by Hamid Algar (New York: Islamic Publication International, 2000), 2.
[152] For more on the life of Quṭb see, for example, J.J.G Jansen, 'Sayyid Quṭb', in P.J. Bearman, et al., *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: New Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), IX:117f.; Mohammed Shah Bin Jani, 'Sayid Quṭb's View of Jihād: An Analytical Study of His Major Works' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, Department of Theology, Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts, United Kingdom, 1998), 29-85; William Shepard, 'The Myth of Progress in the Writings of Sayyid Qutb', 257-258; Syahnan, 'A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qur'ān Exegesis', 1-

As mentioned earlier, in the various phases of Quṭb's life he moved through distinct phases of thought, which resulted in an enormous quantity of works that he produced during his lifetime, many of which have been studied by others, Muslims and non-Muslims, and translated into different languages.

In his earlier intellectual thought, he dealt with literary studies including poetry, fiction and literary criticism. The next phase witnessed a shift from his literary career to analysis of social and political concerns from an Islamic perspective. In his final period, Quṭb turned from moderate Islamic views to a radical Islamic approach.[153]

Of the works penned by Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* is the most popular and widely-circulated. It reflects most of Quṭb's intellectual career, whether as a poet, a literary critic, an ideologue or a Qur'ānic interpreter.[154]

Although most of *al- Ẓilāl* dates from Quṭb's later career, his interest in Qur'ānic studies began at an earlier stage with the publication of his earliest article in 1939, entitled "*al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qur'ān*" (Artistic Portrayal in the Qur'ān) in *al-Muqtaṭāf* magazine. A few years later this appeared in extended form as a book. In 1947, his second book about the Qur'ān appeared, entitled "*Mashāhid al-Qiyāmah fī al-Qur'ān*" (Scenes of the Day of Judgment in the Qur'ān). At this stage, Quṭb's focus was on the literary aspects of the Qur'ān and his main theme was the artistic beauty of Qur'ānic imagery, through its use in conveying the Qur'ān's religious message.[155] In both *Taṣwīr* and *Mashāhid*, Quṭb explains that his intention is to address Qur'ānic expression from a literary angle and express his appreciation of the inimitability of its literary style. He states that "the artistic side and the literary

74; Shahrough Akhavi, 'Quṭb, Sayyid', in John Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3:400-404; Rahman, 'The Concept of Social Justice', 7-25.

[153] Syahnan, 'A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qur'ān Exegesis', 2.

[154] Al-Makin, 'Modern Exegesis on Historical Narratives of the Qur'ān: The Case of 'Ād and Thamūd according to Sayyid Quṭb in his *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān'* (MA diss., University of McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Montreal, Canada, 1999), 30-39; Rahman, 'The Concept of Social justice', 2.

[155] Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālidī, *Madkhal ilā Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* (Amman: Dār 'Amār, 2000), 37f.; Sayyid Quṭb, *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif , 1994), 7f.; Rahman, 'The Concept of Social Justice', 48-50.

qualities should be brought forward; and attention should be drawn to its aspects of beauty".[156] Thus, it seems that after this extended intellectual concern with emphasising the literary and aesthetic dimension of Qur'ānic expressions, Quṭb was able to see the Qur'ān from a new standpoint, understanding it as a unique guide and system for human life in all its aspects, which preoccupied his mind when writing a*l-Ẓilāl* and accompanied his work on aesthetics.[157]

Quṭb, through his exegesis, introduced a unique practice in interpreting the Qur'ān by "inviting his reader into a kind of virtual reality similar to the environment in which the Qur'ān was revealed". He maintained this approach in several works, conveying feeling as well as meaning, in the belief that by speaking in this way, people could truly comprehend the Qur'ān's message and make use of its guidance. He states that "there is only one model and method of returning to God, which is to replace one's entire lifestyle with the system that is found in the Qur'ān".[158]

Concerning the approach adopted in *al-Zilāl*, various opinions can be discerned. Rajā' al Naqāsh, an Egyptian scholar, claims that Quṭb was, in writing *al-Zilāl,* mainly occupied with expressing his appreciation of the literary beauty of the Qur'ān, as he was in *Taṣwīr* and *Mashāhid*.[159] Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' maintains, in contrast, that Quṭb was no longer interested in the literary and aesthetic forms of Qur'ānic expressions, but instead focused on the social and ideological dimensions of Islam.[160] Ṣalāḥ al-Khālidī demonstrates that the first edition of *al-Ẓilāl* was based on Quṭb's appreciation of the aesthetic aspect of Qur'ānic imagery, coupled with *al-Manhaj al-Fikrī* (the ideological approach), since he had been interested in this approach before writing *al-Ẓilāl*. Nevertheless, it was the revised edition to

[156] Sayyid Quṭb, *Mashāhid al-Qiyāmah fī al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993), 9; Rahman, 'The Concept of Social Justice', 14-15.
[157] See also Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 169; Rahman, 'The Concept of Social Justice', 51-52.
[158] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 1:15-16. See, also, Rahman, 'The Concept of Social Justice', 89.
[159] Rajā' al Naqāsh, Manhaj Sayyid Quṭb fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, *Majallat al-Hilāl* 85 (February 1977): 180-181.
[160] Abu-Rabi', Intellectual Origins, 169.

which he added his new approach, called *al-Manhaj al-Ḥarakī* (the dynamic approach), which, according to al-Khālidī, is the most significant approach in the latter, followed by the artistic and the ideological approaches.[161]

Both the literary and ideological approaches, then, are significant, since the writing of *al-Ẓilāl* was undertaken during various stages of Quṭb's thought, as mentioned earlier, and the work obviously demonstrates his tendency of thought during those phases. Furthermore, what al-Khālidī considers a new approach in the revised edition of *al-Ẓilāl* it is in fact an assertion of the ideological approach that characterised the earlier edition of *al-Ẓilāl*. *Al-Manhaj al-Ḥarakī* did not represent a new way of thinking that was unlike his earlier Islamic position, except with regards to the assertion and implications of his Islamic thought as a new position.[162]

Although *al-Ẓilāl* appeared in the twentieth century with other books of exegesis that seem to share several common features, Quṭb's exegesis is coloured by consistent features that have secured it wider acceptance over the period from its publication until the present day. One of the most noticeable features is the division of each *sūrah* into units or lessons, on which the commentary is in turn divided into three main sections: introduction, revelation and expansion of the text. Furthermore, in his comments on each unit, which carries his understanding of the verses, he outlines the main features of the *sūrah* and deals with the application of the verses in practice. More important is the introduction to the *sūrah*

[161] Al-Khālidī distinguishes between the ideological approach and the dynamic, which is the unique feature of *al-Ẓilāl*. In his opinion the ideological approach concerns the social and ideological dimensions of Islam, whereas the dynamic involves the practical role of the Qur'ān in solving the problems and challenges facing Muslims and the struggle to establish a just Muslim community. For more about the difference between these approaches see Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Al-Khālidī, a*l-Manhaj al-Ḥarakī fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* (Amman: Dār 'Amār, 2000), 18:25-32.

[162] See also Syahnan, 'A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qur'ānic Exegesis', 56; for more about the revision of *al-Ẓilāl* and its significance see: Al-Khālidī, *Madkhal ilā Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*, 256-290; Syahnan, 'A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qur'ānic Exegesis', 52-58.

under consideration, which provides the reader with sufficient understanding of it. Al-Khālidī describes this as a comprehensive introduction to the content of each *sūrah*.[163]

In this way, Quṭb was keen to demonstrate the unity between the different components of each *sūrah* as well as between the different *suwar* of the Qur'ān. A marked manifestation of this affirmation is his systematic exposition of the link between the different components, together with the introduction and conclusion of the *sūrah*. In addition, when dividing verses into groups, he places them into logical units which are analysed over several pages. Throughout *al-Ẓilāl*, Quṭb specifically deals with each *sūrah* as a unit on its own, having its own distinguishing features that harmonise with the whole body of the Qur'ān in which it is set.[164]

Another function of Quṭb's description of the thematic unity of the Qur'ān is the connection between the verses and *suwar* under consideration and other related verses, showing that they share the same theme. A considerable number of examples of thematic exegesis in this notion can be extracted from *al-Ẓilāl,* such as *al-Selm fī al-Qur'ān* (Peace in the Qur'ān) and *Ahl al-Kitāb fī al-Qur'ān* (People of the Book in the Qur'ān). Furthermore, his book entitled "*Mashāhid al-Qiyāmah fī al-Qur'ān*" (Scenes of the Day of Judgment in the Qur'ān), mentioned earlier, considered an apparent example of his thematic approach in interpreting the Qur'ān. Finally, another aspect of thematic exegesis which that be seen in *al-Ẓilāl* is the correlation between the interpreted verses and various contemporary religious, social, economic and educational events in the secular world.[165]

One of the features of *al-Ẓilāl* that is in agreement with other modern books of exegesis is the way it avoids unnecessary philosophical, grammatical and jurisprudential polemics. Quṭb gets rid of them because he realises that they lead the reader away from the

[163] See the introduction for each *sūrah* in *al-Ẓilāl*. See also, Al-Khālidī, *al-Manhaj al-Ḥarakī*, 203-222; Syahnan, 'A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qur'ānic Exegesis', 45-46; Badmas 'Lanre Yusuf, 'The History of Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān' *The Islamic Quarterly* XLI, no. 2 (1997): 92-93.
[164] See Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 1:28-35; Ibid., 2:1015; Ibid., 3:1243.
[165] Al-Khālidī, *Madkhal*, 111-115, 245-246.

objectives that he sets for his interpretation. On several occasions, he clarifies that jurisprudential dispute is not part of his exegetical style and directs the reader to books on jurisprudence.[166] The same methodology can be discerned in his attitude towards *isrā'īliyyāt*. He maintains that these stories about ancient nations "lead to deviation in Muslim thought because there is no sound tradition or Qur'ānic reference to support their validity".[167] Linked to this view is his position on issues about which the Qur'ān is silent. Quṭb does not indulge in his own speculation on such issues, since he believes that if more clarification of them had been needed, the Qur'ān would have supplied the believer with more details.[168]

1.6.3 Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Sha'rāwī

Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Sha'rāwī was a popular contemporary Egyptian Qur'ānic interpreter, born in Daqādūs, in al-Daqahilyyah Governorate, in 1911. He was educated in al-Zaqāzīq and graduated from al-Azhar's Arabic Language Faculty in 1941. Two years later, he received a teaching certificate from the same institute and then started his teaching tour. He taught at the al-Azhar institutes of al-Zaqāzīq, Ṭanṭā and Alexandria. He then pursued his teaching career at King 'Abd al-'Azīz University in Saudi Arabia. In the early sixties, he returned to Egypt and worked in leading Azharite positions. By 1976, he was appointed Minister of Endowment and worked in this position for two years. He received an honorary doctorate from the University of Minufiyya in 1985 and from the University of Munsura in 1990.[169]

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[166] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 2:984-988; Ibid., 3:1518f.; Al-Khālidī, *al-Manhaj al-Ḥarakī*, 86-92, 444-454; Yusuf, 'The History of Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān', 94-95; Syahnan, 'A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qur'ānic Exegesis', 42-43; Rahman, 'The Concept of Social Justice', 80-81.

[167] Syahnan, 'A Study of Sayyid Quṭb's Qur'ānic Exegesis', 44. See also Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl,* 1:299; Ibid., 2:875; Al-Khālidī, *al-Manhaj al-Ḥarakī*, 408-416.

[168] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 1:393; Yusuf, 'The History of Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān', 93-94.

[169] For more on the biography of al-Sha'rāwī see, for example, J.J.G.Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 121-146; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, 'Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha'rawi: A Portrait of a Contemporary 'Alim in Eygypt', in Gabriel R. Warburg and Uri M. Kupferschmidt, ed., *Islam, Nationalism and Radicalism in Egypt and the Sudan* (New York: Praeger, 1983), 281-297; Arthur Goldsmith Jr., *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt* (Boulder, Co:

Al-Sha'rāwī's popularity stems from his impact on the Egyptian, as well as the wider Arab, audience through his frequent appearances on television programmes discussing various aspects of Islam. Perhaps his most influential appearance was on the Fridays programme about Qur'ānic interpretation, which later appeared as a printed book called *Khawāṭirī Ḥawl al-Qur'ān* (My reflection/inspiration concerning the Qur'ān) and in other editions called *Tafsīr Al-Sha'rāwī*. The printed text covers up to *sūrah* 62 in the Akhbār al-Yawm Publications edition, with the other *suwar* available on al-Sha'rāwī's website in audio format.

A number of scholars, Johanna Pink for instance, did not consider *Tafsīr Al-Sha'rāwī* a work of *tafsīr* in the proper sense. Rather they considered it closer to a sermon on the meanings of the Qur'ān.[170] They claim that al-Sha'rāwī himself entitles his comments on the Qur'ānic text 'reflection' or 'meditation', as mentioned earlier. Certainly, al-Sha'rāwī's exegesis is one of the major contemporary contributions to Qur'ānic commentary in terms of its popularity among other modern Qur'ānic exegetes.[171] Nonetheless, other scholars, Uthmān 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qumayḥī, for instance, classify al-Sha'rāwī's exegesis as an interpretational work with specific methods and style. He points out that al-Sha'rāwī's exegesis is not entirely personal reflections on the Qur'ān, rather it is a detailed explanation of Qur'ānic verses with consideration of the various *tafsīr* disciplines addressed by other Qur'ān commentators.[172]

It can be noticed that al-Sha'rāwī, through his exegesis, did not base his understanding of the meanings of the Qur'ān entirely on mere reflections and meditation;

L. Reinner, 1999), 191; Ḥusām Abū Jabārah, 'Al-Shaykh Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Sha'rāwī' *Majallat al-Wa'y al-Islāmī* 564 (2012): 85.

[170] Johanna Pink, 'Tradition, Authority and Innovation in Contemporay Sunnī Tafsīr: Towards a Typology of Qur'an Commentaries from the Arab World, Indonesia and Turkey', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12 (October 2010): 61-62.

[171] Ibid., 61.

[172] Uthmān 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qumayḥī, 'Naḍariyyah Al-Sha'rāwī fī Tafsīrih: Muqārabah Ta'ṣīliyyah', accessed February 17 2011, http://vb.tafsir.net/tafsir22033/.

rather he employs, in several places, what is known in the *tafsīr* genre as *al-tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* (traditional exegesis). In this regard, he interprets a number of verses using other verses that explain each other. In addition, he depends on the exegetical narrations of the Prophet, his companions and their successors. Furthermore, al-Shaʻrāwī based his exegesis on explanatory accounts of other *tafsīr* disciplines that consist, for instance, of occasions of revelations, abrogation and interconnection between Qur'ānic verses and chapters.[173]

Like other modern Qur'ānic interpreters, al-Shaʻrāwī did not engage in detailed discussions of jurisprudential and theological explanation. The primary importance for him is to reveal the divine guidance expressed in the Qur'ānic text by leaving aside unnecessarily arguments.[174] Another exegetical feature for al-Shaʻrāwī exegesis is his assertion of literary aspects of the Qur'ānic verses. He was concerned with the grammar, rhetoric and stylistic aspects of the Qur'ānic language.[175] Another major concern for him in his exegesis is the Muslim life reality in the social, economic and political perspectives. He addressed a number of issues related to these aspects which result on the fame of this exegesis among publics.[176] Like Riḍā and Quṭb, al-Shaʻrāwī was concerned with the thematic unity of the Qur'ānic text. An example of his thematic approach can be seen in his interpretation of the concept of *taqwā* (piety) in the Qur'ān, as seen in Q2:197, Q5:2, Q7:26, Q9:109 and Q49:3.

1.6.4 Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʻĀshūr

A distinctive twentieth-century figure, Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʻĀshūr was born in 1879 in Tunis to a famous Idrīsid family. His parental grandfather, Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʻĀshūr (d. 1284/1868), was a leading scholar and government official. His maternal grandfather

[173] Manṣūr Kāfī, 'al-Shaykh Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Shaʻrāwī wa Manhajah fī al-Tafsīr', *Majallat al-Ṣirāṭ* 12 (February 2006): 123-132; Rūlā Muḥammad Muḥsin, 'Manhaj al-Shaykh Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Shaʻrāwī wa fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm' (MA diss., Faculty of al-Dirāsāt al-Fiqhiyyah wa al-Qānūniyyah, Alalbayt University, Jordan, 2000), 47-70.
[174] Rūlā Muḥsin, 'Manhaj al-Shaykh Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Shaʻrāwī', 106-111.
[175] Manṣūr Kāfī, 'al-Shaykh Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Shaʻrāwī', 147-149; Rūlā Muḥsin, 'Manhaj al-Shaykh Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Shaʻrāwī', 72-82.
[176] Rūlā Muḥsin, 'Manhaj al-Shaykh Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Shaʻrāwī', 127-138.

Muḥammad al-‘Azīz bū ‘Attūr (d. 1324/1907) was the first minister of ‘Alī Bey III (d. 1319/1902). However, Ibn ‘Āshūr the younger seems to have been influenced by his family's deep involvement in the reformist movement. Ibn ‘Āshūr began his education at a young age through the traditional education system, known at that time as *kuttāb*. In 1892, he entered Zaytūnah, where he studied with a number of well-known Mālikī scholars of the time. During his study years at Zaytūnah, Ibn ‘Āshūr demonstrated a high level of personal commitment and excellent ability in various scholastic disciplines. By 1869, he had completed his formal studies and was soon appointed to various prominent positions where he was involved in reforming Tunisian education at all levels. In 1932, he was nominated the *Mālikī Shaykh al-Islām* (Mālikī Grand Muftī), the highest religious authority in the country.[177]

Despite the various prominent official positions that Ibn ‘Āshūr occupied, he was considered a prolific scholar writing across a wide range of Islamic disciplines, as well as Arabic literature. His most famous contributions are his works in *Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah al-’Islāmiyyah* (Objectives/ Purposes of Islamic Law) and a Qur'ānic interpretation in 15 volumes called *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* (The Verification and Enlightenment). This title suggests the author's intention behind his interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses. He expresses this intention explicitly when entitling his commentary, by saying that he calls it "emancipating the correct meaning and enlightening the modern Muslim intellect through interpretation of the Qur'ānic text".[178] This long title was abbreviated by Ibn ‘Āshūr himself to *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr,* as mentioned earlier. The completion of this exegesis took around

[177] For more on the biography of Ibn ‘Āshūr see, for example, Basheer M. Nafi, ‘Ṭāhir ibn ‘Āshūr: The Career and Thought of a Modern Reformist ‘ālim, with Special Reference to his Work of Tafsīr', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 7 (April 2007): 1-17; Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn ‘Āshūr, *Ibn Ashur Treatise on Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah*, trans. Mohamed el-Tahir El-Mesawi (Herndon: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2006) III-XV; Muḥammad Maḥfūḍ, *Tarājim al-Mu'allifīn al-Tūnisiyyīn* (Beirut:Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1984), 3:304-307; al-Ṣādiq al-Zammarlī, A‘lām Tūnisiyyūn, trans. Ḥamādī al-Sāḥilī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1986), 361-367.

[178] Muḥammad al-Ṭahir ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* (Tunisia, Al-Dār al-Tūnīseyyah, 1984), 1:8-9. See also, Nafi, ‘Ṭāhir ibn ‘Āshūr', 17; AlirezaDelafkar and Mahmood Khosravi, 'The Intellectual Interpretation Method in Al-Mizan as well as al-tahrir and al-tanvir', *International Research Journal of Applied and Basic Sciences* 4, no. 2 (2013), 368; Ḥamīd ‘Anbūrī, ‘Madkhal li Dirasah Manhaj al-Ṭahir ibn ‘Āshūr fī Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr', *Majallat Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ḥusaniyyah* 13 (1996): 317-318.

39 years, which reflects the commentator's deep scholarly knowledge of Islamic disciplines.[179]

Ibn 'Āshūr, in his introduction to the commentary, states in general the methodology he intends to follow when interpreting Qur'ānic verses. Before going farther in outlining Ibn 'Āshūr's methods in his exegesis, it is worth mentioning that he starts his commentary with ten introductory discussions of various aspects and concepts relating to Qur'ānic hermeneutics. Here, Ibn 'Āshūr delineates his approach to interpreting the Qur'ān. Furthermore, in the fourth introductory section, Ibn 'Āshūr lists his objectives when interpreting the Qur'ānic text, which are in fact the ultimate purposes of the *tafsīr* genre. These include: reforming the Islamic educational system, elucidating correct beliefs, defining Qur'ānic law, clarifying the means with which the Muslim community can be protected and reformed, explicating the history of ancient nations, moral admonishment and elaborating the miraculous attributes of the Qur'ān.[180]

Taking into account that *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* represents modern Qur'ānic exegesis, Ibn 'Āshūr adopts a classical approach in a number of aspects. He paid more attention to the various linguistic aspects of the text, which reflects his profound knowledge of Arabic language.[181] In the fifth introductory discussion, Ibn 'Āshūr clarifies that *asbāb al-nuzūl* (the occasions of revelation) are an essential instrument for understanding the Qur'ān that should be grasped by Qur'ānic commentators. He points out that there are five categories of *asbāb al-nuzūl* that differ in the circumstances of their revelation. However, he claims that

[179] Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm al-Ḥamad, *al-Taqrīb li tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr li al-Ṭahir ibn 'Āshūr* (Riyadh: Dār Ibn Khuzaymah, 2008), 1:35.
[180] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 1:38-42. See also, Nafi, 'Ṭāhir ibn 'Āshūr', 20.
[181] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*,1:8. See also, Ḥamīd 'Anbūrī, 'Madkhal li Dirasah Manhaj al-Ṭahir ibn 'Āshūr', 324-332.

a number of the occasions of revelation cited in classical exegeses are invented and, therefore, he rejects the expansion of these incidents as occasions of revelation.[182]

With regard to his position in what is known as *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* (exegesis by opinion/reason), Ibn ʻĀshūr based his exegesis on careful reflecting and pondering on the Qur'ānic text using the various instruments required for the task of *tafsīr*. For him, *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* is not a mere human conjecture on the Qur'ānic text; it is rather a deep reflection on the Qur'ān with consideration of: Arabic language, Islamic law, textual context and the other essential tools of the *tafsīr* genre.[183] Another important feature of *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* is his unique insight into *maqāṣid* theory, which he elaborated in details in his book, *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʻah al-'Islāmiyyah,* mentioned earlier. A number of scholarly treatises have investigated the influence of this aspect on Ibn ʻĀshūr's exegesis, especially verses related to notions of Islamic law.[184]

Furthermore, a number of jurisprudential and theological arguments run through Ibn ʻĀshūr's exegesis. He employs his deep knowledge of Islamic disciplines to analyse verses without adhering himself to a certain *maḍhab* (Islamic sect).[185] Ibn ʻĀshūr, in *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, shows a profound knowledge of other disciplines (principles) required to undertake Qur'ānic interpretation. These include, for instance: the transmitted tradition of the Prophet, the tradition of Qur'ānic recitation, Meccan and Medinan verses, clear and ambiguous verses, Qur'ānic abrogation, the order of *suwar* and other various principles of

[182] Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 1:46-50. See also, Nafi, 'Ṭāhir ibn ʻĀshūr', 18-19; Muḥammad al-Ḥamad, *al-Taqrīb li tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 1:112-113.
[183] Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 1:28-37. See also, Nafi, 'Ṭāhir ibn ʻĀshūr', 19; Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Awdāt, 'Uṣūl al-Tafsīr 'ind ibn ʻĀshūr', *Silsilat Dirāsāt'Arabiyyah wa Islāmi yyah* 43 (1983): 42-46.
[184] For more about *maqāṣid* theory in Ibn ʻĀshūr's exegesis see, for example, Nashwān 'Abduh, 'al-Tamayyuz al-Manhajī fī 'Arḍ al-Maqāṣid al-Qur'ānniyyah 'ind al-Ṭāhir ibn ʻĀshūr fī Tafsīrih', accessed February 22, 2014, http://wefaqdev.net/pic/studies/301_5174.pdf; Nashwān 'Abduh, 'Dawr al-Istiqrā' fī Ithbāt al-Maqāṣid al-Qur'āniyyah 'ind ibn ʻĀshūr', *Majallat Majma'* 4, (2012), 1-24.
[185] Nafi, 'Ṭāhir ibn ʻĀshūr', 22-23; Muḥammad al-Ḥamad, *al-Taqrīb li tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 1:40-42; Ḥamīd 'Anbūrī, 'Madkhal li Dirasah Manhaj al-Ṭahir ibn ʻĀshūr', 337-340.

religious and secular knowledge.[186] Like other modern exegetes selected for this study, Ibn ʻĀshūr paid attention to the thematic unity of the Qur'ānic themes. An example of his thematic approach can be seen in his interpretation of the verses on *ribā* (usury) in the Qur'ān, as seen in Q2:275, Q3:130 and Q4:161.

Thus, these specialised discussions run through *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* reflects, beside Ibn ʻĀshūr's mastery of Qur'ānic disciplines, the position of Ibn ʻĀshūr's exegesis in enlightening modern Muslim intellect through the Qur'ān.

1.7 Conclusion

Despite the vast amount of literature produced by Western scholars in covering aspects of both 'aesthetics' and 'beauty', there are no unified definitions for the employment of these concepts. Aesthetics, as a branch of philosophy, has developed a wide range of expositions, but what is certain is that it has critical links to art and beauty, as well as to other disciplines. Beauty, which precedes aesthetics, is used to characterise a variety of aspects. One of the common obstacles in aesthetics is to examine the relationship between art and beauty, as well as the position of beauty within the concept of 'aesthetics'. In this regard, it can be said that although it has been argued that 'beauty' no longer has significance in aesthetics, it has continued to be a central concept nonetheless. This position justifies the choice to consider 'aesthetics' in Islamic literature under various terms, all of which revolve around the concept of 'beauty'.

In Islamic literature, the concept of beauty is frequently discussed. Here, al-Ghazālī's analysis of the concept of 'beauty' may be considered the most comprehensive; he links it to other notions such as perfection, pleasure, love and the beauty of God.

[186] See Ibn ʻĀshūr's introduction to his exegesis in Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 1:51-130. See also, Ḥamīd ʻAnbūrī, 'Madkhal li Dirasah Manhaj al-Ṭahir ibn ʻĀshūr', 324-342; Muḥammad al-Ḥamad, *al-Taqrīb li tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 1:39-60.

Furthermore, in Islamic thought, determining the presence of beauty is not confined to the human intellect but is determined by revelation, a tenet in the Qur'ānic discourse on which the present study focuses. In order to examine how the concept of beauty is linked to the Qur'ān, or in other words, how this concept is presented in Qur'ānic discourse, the *tafsīr* genre is considered the proper field of investigation, in which to carry out this task. This is because, more than any other branch of Islamic scholarship, the *tafsīr* genre is a primary source for a wider perspective on the Qur'ānic discourse on beauty, among other issues, since it explains the Qur'ān in the light of different Islamic disciplines.

Among all the *tafsīr* genres, thematic exegesis, which has been increasingly emphasised in modern books of exegesis, is considered the appropriate approach to revealing the Qur'ānic discourse on beauty. The main purpose of thematic exegesis is to give a holistic view of different parts of the Qur'ān, (those on beauty in this case) and it also aims to allow the Qur'ān to express itself by linking verses on the same topic to each other.

The discussion of the concept of beauty as presented in the Qur'ānic discourse is guided, in the present study, by the thought of Rashīd Riḍā, Sayyid Quṭb, al-Sha'rāwī and Ibn 'Āshūr. One of the closest similarities between these selected exegetes is their view that the Qur'ān is not a source of theoretical dispute, but a book for guidance and inspiration for life; it enlightens the reader on aspects of this world and the hereafter. In addition, they attempt to conceive the Qur'ān as a dynamic and living text, which is compatible with today's world whilst at the same time reviving contemporary Muslim societies in the light of Qur'ānic perspectives. Furthermore, another area of agreement between them is their attempts to examine most parts of the Qur'ānic discourse on several issues by means of thematic discussions. This conclusion was reached by several researchers at the University of Sharjah Conference on Thematic Exegesis held in April 2010. The thematic approach employed by these exegeses will be used in further analysis of Qur'ānic text thought to be relevant to

aesthetic terms found in Qur'ānic discourse. Analysing these terms in their various contexts will be dealt with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

AESTHETIC TERMS IN THE QUR'ĀN: AN ANALYSIS OF THEIR MEANING AND USAGE

The concept of 'aesthetics' as a distinct field of study is a modern addition to Islamic, including Qur'ānic, sciences. For instance, it is not recognised as a theme in exegetical works. Accordingly, in order to trace this until-recently unrecognised concept in the Qur'ān, this study will review the Qur'ānic terms that can be linked to aesthetics. The purpose is to show that the late introduction of the science of Qur'ānic aesthetics does not reflect the absence of the elements of this science from the Qur'ān, but of the failure of scholars to recognise and categorise them properly.

2.1 Introduction

The notion of 'aesthetics' in Qur'ānic discourse is better understood if it is examined in a wider context. This is best done by drawing attention to terms frequently employed to denote the concept of 'aesthetics', employing a method of semantic analysis previously used by the Japanese scholar Izutsu in his seminal studies of the Qur'ānic text. He summarises his method as a semantic analysis of the key terms of a certain language, in our case the language of the Qur'ān. In doing this, Izutsu could sum up the ethical and ontological worldview of the Qur'ān.[1]

Accordingly, this chapter focuses on an analytical investigation of the Qur'ān's key aesthetic terms which, Izutsu claims, "play a decisive role"[2] in making up the basic conceptual structure of the Qur'ānic worldview and hence form its notion of 'aesthetics'. The

[1] Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'ān: Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, new ed., 2002), 3.
[2] Ibid., 4.

method applied in the present chapter is close to Izutsu's. This is to analyse the aesthetic terms that cluster around a given concept and tend to be judged as synonyms or near synonyms. The semantic analysis is either linguistic, which Izutsu claims to be the other side of the conceptual[3], or else semantic. This latter kind will go beyond Izutsu's contextual analysis and embrace modern interpretations of key Qur'ānic terms.

In addition, this chapter investigates the semantic differences between the key terms that surround aesthetics in the Qur'ān. The aim here is to determine the exact Qur'ānic usage of each particular term, in an attempt to shed more light on the underlying meanings that fall within the aesthetic aspects of Qur'ānic discourse.

Some preliminary observations on the methodology should first be made. First, the key terms discussed here are only those treated as synonyms and near synonyms. The reason for this limitation is that the notion of aesthetics in Qur'ānic terms is connected with the concept of 'good', which is expressed in Qur'ānic discourse through various terms, such as *khayr*, *ṭayyib*, *ṣāliḥ* and *ḥalāl.* This can be seen in Izutsu's treatment of the concepts of 'good' and 'bad'. Second, discussion in this chapter is limited to lexicographical materials in the Arabic language alone, since most of the specialised materials in this area are in Arabic. This linguistic discussion will be based on classical lexicographical materials, since they are more concerned with specialised linguistic analysis. This will consist of several references to classical lexical authorities, books that focus on the Qur'ānic vocabulary and books of *ilm al-wujūh wa al-naẓā'ir* (the meanings of the Qur'ān).[4] Third, terms that serve to express

[3] Ibid., 34.

[4] This branch of Qur'ānic discipline, as Andrew Rippin argues, seems to fall under the modern heading of a kind of semantic lexicology. It deals, as Rippin makes clear, with homonyms and polysemy. In other words, *wujūh* explains the semantic expansion of a single word to multiple meanings in different contexts in the Qur'ān, such as *rūḥ* (mercy, a certain angel, Gabriel, revelation, Jesus...). *Naẓā'ir*, in contrast, deals with different words having the same meaning in the Qur'ān, such as *jahannam*, *nār*, *jaḥīm*, s*aqar* and *ḥuṭamah*, all of which mean Hell. See, Andrew Rippin, 'Lexicographical Texts and the Qur'ān', in Andrew Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 162; Muqātil bin Sulymān, *al-Wujūh wa al-Naẓā'ir fī al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ḥātem Ṣāliḥ al-Ḍāmin (Dubai: Markaz Jum'ah al-Mājid, 1st ed., 2006), 7:170-171; Hikmet Yaman, 'The Concept of Ḥikmah in Early Islamic Thought' (PhD thesis, The Department of

opposing meanings are not discussed, following Izutsu's example. It is interesting to note here that in Qur'ānic discourse there is no mention of such conflicting terms as *qubḥ* (as opposed to *jamāl*) or *ḥusn* and *shayn* (as opposed to *zayn*). With regards to the word *ḥusn* and other derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n*, their antitheses are mentioned several times, but none of them are discussed in this chapter. The focus here, as noted above, is on terms regarded as synonyms or near synonyms. Finally, Qur'ānic chronology is not considered, unless it raises exegetical questions.

2.2 Aesthetic Terms in the Qur'ān, Their Meaning in Arabic and Their Qur'ānic Usage

As shown below, Qur'ānic discourse employs different words to express aesthetic concepts, each of which signifies a different aesthetic quality. These are analysed with a view to shedding more light on Qur'ānic aesthetics as a whole.

Methodologically, the fundamental principle of selecting these terms is linguistic; they were chosen by surveying the Qur'ānic lexicon for terms denoting aesthetics.[5] The focus, however, is on a total of six terms, which are the most often mentioned ones in the relevant lexicographical studies. These are *jamāl* and *jamīl* from the root *j-m-l*, derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n*, those from the root *z-y-n*, those from the root *z-kh-r-f*, those from the root *b-h-j* and those from the root *n-ḍ-r*. The discussions in the following sections are based mainly on the derivatives from the first three roots noted above, which occur frequently in the Qur'ānic text.

Near Eastern Language and Civilizations, Graduate School of Arts and Science, Harvard University, USA, 2008), 42.

[5] This is based on the Qur'ānic concordance of Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988). In addition, books of *al-wujūh wa al-naẓā'ir* and other lexicographical materials will be consulted.

2.2.1 The Root *j-m-l*, Its Meaning in Arabic and Its Qur'ānic Usage

Five forms of this root occur in the Qur'ān and the forms occur eleven times in total: the nominal form *jamāl* (beauty, grace, elegance) once; *jamīl* (adjective form of the noun *jamāl*) seven times; *jimālātun* (camels; thick ropes; copper) once*; jamal* (camels; thick rope) once and *jumlatun* (whole, in totality) once.[6]

The linguistic meaning of the root *j-m-l* can be traced back to two major concepts, mentioned by Ibn Fāris (d.395/1005), namely the assemblage and greatness of created objects on the one hand, and 'beauty' on the other.[7] These two meanings represent the primary definitions of the root *j-m-l* in most Arabic language dictionaries.[8]

From the first meaning (greatness and assembling), the forms *jimālātun*, *jamal* and *jumlatun* can be traced. Al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī (d.756/1355) pointed out that this meaning can be ascribed to the word *jamal* since the camel was the biggest animal familiar to Arabs at that time.[9] Thus, the second meaning of this root is the focus of this section, since it confers an aesthetic sense, with which the noun *jamāl* and the adjective *jamīl* are associated.

Arabic lexicographers, such as Ibn Fāris, quoting from Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889), state that the word *jamāl* and the adjective *jamīl* bear traces of a physical origin; that is, melted fat and thereby plumpness,[10] which was a sign of beauty in the harsh environment of the Arabian Peninsula. Rotundity and plumpness were desirable qualities, redolent of prosperity and well-being. Thus, it is no wonder that pre-Islamic poets tended to praise plump

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[6] Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 171.
[7] Abu al-Ḥusyn Aḥmad bin Fāris bin Zakāriyyā, *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Harūn (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 1:481.
[8] See, for example, Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, ed. 'Abdullah 'Alī al-Kabīr et al. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1981), 1, 683-686; al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Kilānī (Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1999), 97-98; Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Ḥusayynī al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-'Arūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, ed. Maḥmūd Maḥmmad al-Ṭanāḥī (Kuwait: Wazārah al-I'lām, 1993), 28:230-243.
[9] Aḥmad bin Yūsuf bin 'Abd al-Dā'im al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *'Umdat al-Ḥuffāẓ fī Tafsīr Ashraf al-Alfāẓ*, ed. Muḥammad Basil 'Uyūn al-Sūd (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1996), 1:340.
[10] Ibn Fāris, Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah, 1:481.

women.[11] Consistent with this basic meaning, the camel was called *jamal* because, for Arabs, it is indeed a beautiful animal.[12]

In Arabic lexicographical discourse, the word *jamāl* is not confined to physical attributes but also extends to abstract meanings.[13] Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233) states that this dual dimension of the word *jamāl* can be derived from the Prophetic *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet is reported to have said: "Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty",[14] that is, Allah is benevolent and perfect.[15] Al- Jurjānī (d.816/1413) states that: "beauty in the attributes is related to satisfaction and kindness".[16] Furthermore, al-Tahānawī (d.1185/1745) maintains that "beauty is ascribed to two meanings: first, beauty as accepted by all, i.e., purity of colour, softness of touch; second, real beauty which consists in each organ or limb being in the best possible shape, condition and character".[17] The word *jamāl,* according to al-Rāghib, refers to:

> "*al-ḥusn al-kathīr* (*ḥusn,* abundance), in terms of possessing much [in the way] of beautiful qualities, and it is of two types. First, man-related 'beauty' which includes abstract and ethical beauty. Second, a type of 'beauty' that is communicated from its possessor to another. Of this later type of beauty is the *Hadīth*, in which the Prophet is reported to have said **"**Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty". It can be inferred from this *Hadīth* that Allah is the unceasing benevolence. Therefore, He loves those who do such; i.e., likewise".[18]

Thus, the above discussion summarises the Arabic lexicographers' discourse on the meaning of the word *jamāl*. With regard to the attitude of modern commentators to the

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[11] See, for example, Ṭaha Ghālib 'Abd al-Raḥīm, 'Ṣūrah al-Mar'ah al-Mithāl wa Rumūzahā al-Dīniyyah 'ind Shu'rā'al-Mu'allaqāt' (MA diss., Faculty of Graduate Studies, An-Najah National University, 2003), 138-155; Jibrail S. Jabbur, *The Bedouins and the Desert: Aspects of Nomadic Life in the Arab East*, ed. Suhayl J. Jabbur and Lawrence I. Conrad, trans. Lawrence I. Conrad (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 237; Aḥmad Ṭi'mah, 'Maẓāhir al-Jamāl al-Unthawī fī al-Shi'r al-'Abbāsī', *al-Turāth al-'Arabī* 102: (2006): 225-228.

[12] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 98; Al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-'Arūs*, 28:236.

[13] See, for example, Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa al-Athr*, ed. Ṭāhir Aḥmad al-Zāwī and Maḥmūd al-Ṭanāḥī (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah,), 1:299; Ibn Sīdah, *al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ* (Bierut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1965), 2:151-153; Al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-'Arūs*, 28:236; al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 98.

[14] This part of the Prophetic hadith is reported in various narrations. See, for example, Muslim bin al-Ḥajāj al-Qushyrī al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah, 2006), 55.

[15] Ibn al-Athīr, al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa al-Athr, 1:299.

[16] 'Alī bin Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīfāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1st ed., 1983), 78.

[17] Muḥammad 'Alī al-Tahānawī, *Mawsū'at Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn wa al-'Ulūm*, ed. 'Alī Daḥrūj (Beirut: Maktabah Lebanon, 1st, 1996), 1:570.

[18] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 97.

Qur'ānic verses that mention the word *jamāl* as a noun or the word *jamīl* as an adjective, however, it is noteworthy that they do not pay the same attention to the linguistic meanings of *jamāl* as did their predecessors. This can be attributed to the general tendency of modern commentaries, which is not to indulge in extensive linguistic, jurisprudential or philosophical discussion. Nevertheless, modern commentators tackle the general meanings of *jamāl* and their implications wherever the word occurs. Al-Sha'rāwī, in his definition, associates the word *jamāl* with pleasure; he considered it as an intrinsic quality which can be discerned without the need for any external intervention. To him, *tazyīn* (adornment) is an additional embellishment on an original structure, applied for the purpose of attracting and tempting. As for *jamāl*, it is self-sufficient and does not depend on *tazyīn*.[19] According to Ibn 'Āshūr, *jamāl* is the highest quality in a given object, as mentioned in his definition. *jamāl al-ṣabr* (the beauty of patience) refers to the highest form of patience. Indeed, it can be inferred from his definition that *jamāl* and perfection are connected, in particular when it is asserted that the *jamāl* of any object should not be correlated with something likely to attenuate its characteristics[20]; an interpretation which is clear in Quṭb's discussion.

Jamāl in Quṭb's understanding is an intrinsic, deliberate factor; it is a predominant feature of the universe and in the general outlook of the Qur'ān and of Islam, in turn. According to him, the bounties of God are not solely restricted to daily necessities, such as food, drink and mobility. Rather they go beyond, to include "the sense that enjoys beauty and seeks pleasure, and also satisfies human feelings".[21] It should be noted that Quṭb does not provide a definition of *jamāl* in his commentary. However, he associates it in several places with perfection. In fact, he claims that they are the two sides of a single truth: "Like perfection, 'beauty' is also deliberately included in the universe. Indeed, the two stem from

[19] Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī* (Cairo: Akhbār al-Yawm, 1999), 13:7816; Ibid., 6:3861.
[20] Muḥammad al-Ṭahir ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* (Tunisia, Al-Dār al-Tūnīseyyah, 1984), 12:239.
[21] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2161; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 11:10.

the same truth".[22] Elsewhere, Quṭb points out that the beauty of the universe is of a profound nature and "purposefully incorporated", not a superficial or casual element; its design rests on its correspondence with the beauty of structure, as well as on the perfection of function.[23] This connection between beauty and perfection is the predominant feature of Quṭb's discourse on 'beauty', in particular when he talks about the universe, God's creation.[24] This account by Quṭb can also be reconciled with what some Arabic lexicographers have said regarding *jamāl;* for example, al-Tahānawī insists that "the real 'beauty' of each organ or limb lies in being of the best possible shape". [25]

2.2.2 The Root *ḥ-s-n*, Its Meaning in Arabic and Its Qur'ānic Usage

Words derived from this root occur more often than words with other roots in the semantic field of *jamāl*. They occur a total of 195 times in 14 forms: *ḥasuna* (to be or become good, fine, beautiful; used in the sense of how beautiful, how fine, how desirable) three times; *aḥsan* (to do perfectly, to perfect; to make agreeable, to make beautiful; to do good; to do well, to treat well) 21 times; *ḥusn* (beauty, charm; goodness; kindness, to be kind; to treat someone well, with good treatment) 13 times; the singular *ḥasanah* and the plural *ḥasanāt* (good; fair, gracious; proper, goodly, a good deed, an act of piety, a good work; a benefit, a boon, a piece of good fortune; a good reward) occur 28 times and three times respectively. In addition, *ḥusnā*, *ḥusnayayn*, *aḥsan* (all meaning 'the best') are found 17, two and 36 times, respectively. *Ḥisān*, meaning beautiful or fine, comes twice. *Iḥsān,* meaning good work, doing good deeds; uprightness, correct piety, appears 12 times. *Muḥsin* occurs three times and its plural form, *muḥsinūn,* 35 times, while the plural feminine *muḥsināt* is used once. It

[22] Ibid., 6:3633; Ibid. 17:137.
[23] Ibid., 5:2984; Ibid., 14:240.
[24] Ibid., 5:2809; Ibid., 6:3359, 3585; Ibid., 13:364f.
[25] al-Tahānawī, Mawsū'at Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, 1:570.

always refers to one who does good, who is good, a charitable person and a righteous person.[26]

The linguistic meaning of the root *ḥ-s-n* merits extended discussion, since it occurs very often and takes various forms that have a wide range of applications. Scholars such as Jihād[27] considered it the most significant term in the semantic field of *jamāl,* not because of its frequent appearance in Qur'ānic discourse, but rather because it can be the "focus word" of the Qur'ān's key concepts, a point adopted and explained by Izutsu.[28]

Below is an examination of the linguistic meaning of the most important derivatives, according to the Arabic lexicographers consulted in the present study.

2.2.2.1 *Ḥusn*

It is worth noting that, according to most Arabic lexicographers, the primary meaning of the root *ḥ-s-n*, which is observed in all its derivatives, is considered a synonym of the more common word (*jamāl*) in the same semantic field.[29] For Ibn Fāris, the root *ḥ-s-n* that makes up the word *ḥusn* has one primitive connotation, which is as a synonym of the word *jamāl*, and *ḥusn* is the antonym of the word *qubḥ* (ugliness).[30] Indeed, al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791) states that *ḥusun* means *jamāl* and they are synonymous.[31]

Scholars have several definitions of the word *ḥusn*. Al-Raghib al-'Aṣfahānī (d. 502/1108) defines it as that which delights and is desirable, with three aspects: what is approved by the intellect, what is approved by natural desire and what is approved by the faculty of sense. They are all used for substances as well as events. The word *ḥusn*, as he

[26] Badawi and Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage, 209-211
[27] Hilāl Muḥammad, Jihād, 'Jamāliyyāt al-Qur'ān: Mashrū' Falsafah Jamāl 'Arabiyyah-Islāmiyyah Mu'aṣerah', accessed February 2, 2011, http://www.i-epistemology.net/v1/attachments/855_203halalmjihad.pdf.
[28] Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'ān*, 22-28. See also Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2002).
[29] See, for example, Al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-'Arūs*, 34:418; Ibn Fāris, *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, 2:57; Ibn Sīdah, *al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ*, 2:152.
[30] Ibn Fāris, Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah, 2:57.
[31] Al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-'Arūs*, 34:418.

points out, is used in common conventional language for what is approved by the sense of sight, but in the Qur'ān it usually applies to what is approved by mental perception.[32] Al-Kafawī (d. 1094/1683) mentions that *ḥusn* is the proportion of several parts that is desired or wished for.[33] In addition, al-Tahānāwī in his definition gives a further dimension to the concept of *ḥusn*, arguing that *ḥusn* can be defined in three ways and the same can be said of *qubḥ,* its opposite. The first is that an object is harmonious to our senses. Conversely, something in conflict with them is *qabīḥ* (extremely flawed). Thus, that which is consonant with our natural disposition is *ḥasan*, such as something that is sweet, and that which is in disagreement with it is *qabīḥ*, such as something that is bitter. Anything that is neither, is neither *ḥasan* nor *qabīḥ*. This may sometimes be defined as that which involves *maṣlaḥah* (beneficent action) or *mafsadah* (maleficent action). If it involves *maṣlaḥah*, it is *ḥasan*; if it involves *mafsadah*, it is *qabīḥ*. That which is neither *maṣlaḥha* nor *mafsadah* is obviously neither one nor the other. The second meaning of *ḥusn* refers to the perfection of an object. Conversely, an object is *qabīḥ* when it is extremely flawed. For instance, knowledge is *ḥasan* because it is perfect, whereas ignorance is *qabīḥ* because it is imperfect. An object is *ḥasan* when it is praiseworthy. Conversely, it is *qabīḥ* when it is blameworthy.[34]

2.2.2.2 *Aḥsana*

This transitive verb and its infinitive *iḥsān* are considered "one of the key ethical terms in the Qur'ān" by Izutsu.[35] It conveys two meanings: to act well or perfectly and to do profoundly good deeds for others. The second meaning can be considered a synonym for the word *in'ām*.[36] Arabic lexicographers differentiate between the two words when used in the sense of

[32] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 118-119. See also part of the translation, Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (Beirut: librairie Due Liban, 1968), 2:570.
[33] Abu al-Baqā' Ayūb bin Mūsā al-Ḥusaynī al-Kafawī, *al-Kulyyāt: Mu'jam fī al-Muṣṭalaḥāt wa al-Furūq al-Lughawiyyah* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2nd ed., 1889), 402.
[34] Al-Tahānawī, Mawsū'at Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, 1:666.
[35] Izutsu, Ethico-Religious Concepts, 224.
[36] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 1:878; Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 118-119.

doing good to others. For al-Rāghib (d. 502/1108) and Ibn Manḍūr (d. 711/1311), the word *iḥsān* is more general than the word *in'ām*: *iḥsān* means both being good to oneself and to others, whereas *in'ām* is used only in the context of doing good to another.[37] In terms *of 'ilm al-wujūh wa al-naẓā'ir*, al-Fayrūzābādī (d. 817/1414) introduces a quite elaborate examination of the meaning of the word *iḥsān* as used in the Qur'ān. He lists thirteen contexts in which he believes *iḥsān* is used, which might all be considered to have the semantic content of *iḥsān*. Izutsu also mentions some of these in his examination of *iḥsān*.[38] The thirteen semantic contexts of *iḥsān* mentioned by al-Fayrūzābādī are:

1. *Īmān* (belief), as opposed to *kufr* (disbelief), which occurs, for example, in verse Q5:85, "For saying this, God has rewarded them with Gardens graced with flowing streams, and here they will stay: that is the reward of those who do good".

2. Night prayer, which occurs, for example, in verse Q51:16, "They will receive their Lord's gifts because of the good they did before".

3. Giving charity, which occurs, for example, in verse Q2:195, "Spend in God's cause: do not contribute to your destruction with your own hands, but do good, for God loves those who do good".

4. Showing kindness to parents, which occurs, for example, in verse Q2:83, "be good to your parents".

5. Pardoning others, which occurs, for example, in verse Q3:134, "who restrain their anger and pardon people, God loves those who do good".

[37] Ibid.
[38] Izutsu, Ethico-Religious Concepts, 224-226.

6. Striving hard in worship are meanings which occur, for example, in verse Q29:69, "But We shall be sure to guide to Our ways those who strive hard for Our cause: God is with those who do good".

7. Performing acts of obedience, which occurs, for example, in verse Q10:26, "Those who did well will have the best reward and more besides".

8. Sincerity in belief, which occurs, for example, in verse Q16:90, "God commands justice, doing well and generosity towards relatives".

9. Doing good to those who are in need. This occurs, for example, in verse Q28:77, "Do good to others as God has done good to you".

10. Uttering good words that ensure one avoids Hell, which occurs, for example, in verse Q17:7, "whether you do good or evil it is to your own souls".

11. Uttering the declaration of belief with the tongue and being certain of its truth in the heart. This occurs, for example, in verse Q55:60, "Shall the reward of good be anything but good". The meaning of the first *iḥsān* in this verse is *tawḥīd* (the oneness of God) whereas *kalimat al-shahādah* means 'the word of witness'.

12. Paradise, which is the meaning of the second *iḥsān* in the above verse.

13. Invoking blessings on the Prophet, which occurs, for example, in verse Q6:160, "Whoever has done a good deed will have it ten times to his credit". [39]

This list of explanations concerning the aspects of meaning of the word *iḥsān*, helps to comprehend the proper meaning of the word *iḥsān* conveyed by the importance of *'ilm al-*

[39] Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Ya'qūb al-Fayrūzābādī, *Baṣā'ir Dhawī al-Tamyīz fī laṭā'if al-Kitāb al-'Azīz,* ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d), 2:68-70.

wujūh wa al-naẓā'ir. These different nuances of meaning depend on the individual context in which the word *iḥsān* is mentioned. In addition, one may argue that al-Fayrūzābādī's interpretation sheds light on the importance of the concept of *iḥsān* as a comprehensive term that covers all of the life affairs of human beings, whether in their relationship with Allah or their interaction with their brethren.

The last verse mentioned by al-Fayrūzābādī (Q6:160) actually fits the next derivative better, since it comes with the word *ḥasanah*, as discussed below. Interestingly, the verse that al-Fayrūzābādī mentions as an example of the last semantic meaning of *iḥsān* is mentioned by other scholars as an example of the word *ḥasana's*, carrying the semantic meaning of 'doing good'.[40]

2.2.2.3 *Ḥasanah*

This word is the feminine form of the adjective *ḥasan* and its plural is *ḥasanāt*. It signifies any rejoicing, gladdening, good or benefit that affects each individual's soul, body and circumstances.[41] The word *ḥasanah* in this sense occurs repeatedly in the Qur'ān in close combination with its opposite, *sayy'ah*, both sometimes appearing in the plural form.[42] As far as *'ilm al-wujūh wa al-naẓā'ir* is concerned, the word *ḥasanah* and its antithesis *sayy'ah* show six semantic aspects in the Qur'ānic text:

14. *Ḥasanah* is *tawḥīd* (the oneness of God); *sayy'ah* is *shirk* (polytheism). This meaning is shown, for example, in verse Q27:89-90, "Whoever comes with a good deed will be rewarded with something better, and be secure from the terrors of that Day, but whoever comes with evil deeds will be cast face downwards into the Fire".

[40] See, for example, Muqātil bin Sulymān, *al-Wujūh wa al-Naẓā'ir fī al-Qur'ān*, 35; Jamāl al-Dīn Abī al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Jawzī, *Nuzhat al-A'yun al-Nawāẓir fī 'Iilm al-Wujūh wa al-Naẓā'ir*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 3rd ed., 1987), 259-260.
[41] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 118-119. See also the translation by Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2:571.
[42] See Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), 203. See also, Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, 223.

15. *Ḥasanah* is conquest and spoil; *sayy'ah* is being killed or defeated. This occurs, for example, in verse Q3:120, "They grieve at any good that befalls you [believers] and rejoice at misfortunes".

16. *Ḥasanah* is rain and fertility; *sayy'ah* is drought and barrenness. This applies, for example, to verse Q7:131, "then, when something good came their way, they said, 'This is our due!'. When something bad came, they ascribed it to the evil omen of Moses and those with him".

17. *Ḥasanah* is safety and health; *sayy'ah* is trials and oppression. See, for example, verse Q13:6, "They ask you to bring on the punishment rather than any promised rewards".

18. *Ḥasanah* is saying good words; *sayy'ah* is saying bad or evil words. This occurs, for example, in verse Q28:54, "repel evil with good".

19. *Ḥasanah* is doing good deeds; *sayy'ah* is doing bad or evil deeds. This meaning comes, for example, in verse Q6:160, "Whoever has done a good deed will have it ten times to his credit".[43]

2.2.2.4 *Ḥasan*

This derivative, as we have seen, has a wide range of applications within a Qur'ānic context. It means having or possessing the quality termed *ḥusn*. This adjective can be applied to almost anything that is felt to be pleasing, satisfying, beautiful or admirable and its scope covers both the secular and religious spheres of human life.[44]

The Qur'ānic exegetes' discourse defining the root *ḥ-s-n* and its derivatives shows that their definitions reflect lexicographers' conception of the same root in the context of

[43] Muqātil bin Sulymān, al-Wujūh wa al-Naẓā'ir fī al-Qur'ān, 35; Ibn al-Jawzī, Nuzhat al-A'yun al-Nawāẓir, 259-260.
[44] Izutsu, Ethico-Religious Concepts, 221.

Islam. Accordingly, Riḍā in *al-Manār* associates the word *ḥusn* and its antithesis *qubḥ* with anything that may be considered beneficial and harmful, respectively. In fact, he defines the word *ḥasan* as "that which is useful in religious spheres and in human life".[45] Elsewhere, he defines the word *ḥasanah*, a derivative of *ḥusn*, as "beneficial, whether it is concrete or abstract".[46] Often when *ḥusn* is mentioned, Riḍā highlights the beneficial aspects, in relation to both religious notions and human life. For example, when he interprets verse Q2:83, "speak good words to all people", he explains that what is meant here is not only to say gentle words and be courteous in speech (though this is in itself a good thing) but also to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. Such a command is indeed beneficial and edifying to both the community and the individual.[47] Similarly, Riḍā defines the word *ḥusn* and its antithesis *qubḥ* by associating them with the terms *maṣlaḥah* and *mafsadah*, in such a way that what conforms to *maṣlaḥah* is *ḥusn* and what does not is otherwise. This meaning comes from his interpretation of "good loan", which in several verses, Q2:245, Q5:12, Q57:11, 18, Q64:17 and Q73:20, denotes that which is met with *maṣlaḥah* and that which, for example, is spent in the public interest to promote the good of Muslims, one of the legal aims of Islamic law.[48]

Another aspect of the word *ḥusn* as defined by Riḍā is related to pain and pleasure, or more specifically, to the impact of these on the self. Apparently, this aspect is in his view closely connected to the Arabic lexicographers' definition, as noted above, of the derivatives *ḥasan* and *ḥasanah* as something that causes rejoicing or gladness; that which is desired or wished for. Riḍā interprets the word *ḥasanah* and its antithesis *sayy'ah* as used in verse Q4:78, "When good fortune comes their way, they say, 'This is from God,' but when harm befalls them, they say, 'This is from you [the Prophet]" thus: the former being what one sees

[45] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 1:368.
[46] Ibid., 4:92.
[47] Ibid., 1:368.
[48] Ibid., 2:466f.

as good, i.e., as prosperity and fertility; the latter being what one sees as hardship and adversity. This clearly shows the impact of *ḥasanah* and *sayy'ah* on the self, in addition to the intrinsic harm and benefit related to them.[49] Clearer than this interpretation is the interpretation of verse Q9:50, "If you [the Prophet] have good fortune, it will grieve them", in which Riḍā defines *ḥasanah* as "all that is pleasant and gladdening".[50] Thus, these explanations suggest that rejoicing and gladdening is the common quality denoted by the word *ḥasanah*, although the specific meaning may differ according to context: it can mean booty or victory, fertility or prosperity, depending on the perspective dictated by a specific context and the nature of what it is applied to.

It is worth mentioning that this account by Riḍā is similar to that of his teacher 'Abdū. For the latter, *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* are inherent in several meanings: first, *ḥusn* is perfection and *qubḥ* is extremely flawed. Second, with regard to being consonant either with our senses or our intellect, the former indicates what we relish, while the latter indicates that which, broadly speaking, is beneficial. Finally, it denotes that which is applicable to the praiseworthy/blameworthy.[51] As far as *iḥsān* is concerned, Riḍā agrees with most scholars, as indicated earlier, that *iḥsān* has essentially the two meanings mentioned above: to perfect, and to do profoundly good deeds to others. For Riḍā, the term 'profoundly good deeds to others' can be interpreted according to its specific context as, for instance, in verse Q2:83, "be good to your parents". *Iḥsān* here is defined as the peak of *bir* (righteousness), which encompasses all types of caring.[52] The second meaning of *iḥsān* can be seen, for example, in his interpretation of verse Q3:172, "Those who responded to God and the Messenger after suffering defeat, who do good and remain conscious of God, will have great rewards". Hence,

[49] Ibid., 4:267f.
[50] Ibid., 10:556.
[51] Muḥammad 'Abduh, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* (Cairo, Dār al-Shurūq, 1st ed, 1994), 67-79.
[52] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 1:366.

he mentions the same linguistic meaning which is to perfect the doing of things.[53] In his analysis of the term *iḥsān* as used in the Qur'ān, Riḍā states that several of the verses in which *iḥsān* is found indicate obligatory deeds, as in verse Q9:91, while some refer to what is recommendable and others to perfecting things in general.[54]

In his work *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Ibn 'Āshūr introduces a fundamental definition of *ḥusn*. He defines it as follows: "*ḥusn* is the '*jamāl*' of an image and the opposite of *qubḥ*. It is an inward quality that entails the acceptability of its appearance. *Ḥusn* is also applied to abstract matters that are approved by the intellect".[55] Elsewhere, he defines *ḥusn* in a discussion of the word *iḥsān:* "*Iḥsān* is to provide a substance with such a quality of *ḥusn* as to be praiseworthy, in that it meets the criteria of what it is intended to be".[56] It may be pointed out that Ibn 'Āshūr's definition seems to present a fundamental contribution to the definition of *ḥusn* and other derivatives, namely that *ḥusn* is an inherent quality in a substance. He also emphasises other qualities asserted by other commentators, namely that *ḥusn* is desirable, delighting and praiseworthy, in addition to being beneficial and satisfactory.

2.2.3 The Root *z-y-n*, Its Meaning in Arabic and Its Qur'ānic Usage

Four forms of this root occur in the Qur'ān, totalling 46 occurrences in different contexts: *zayyana* 16 times, *zuyyina* ten times and *izzayyanat,* in the sense of to decorate, to ornament and to adorn, once. The noun form of this root *zinah* occurs 19 times, meaning: adornment; treasure, valuables and jewellery; luxury and pomp.[57]

Lexicographers of the Arabic language analysing the linguistic meaning of this root reach a consensus in defining the various derivatives. For Ibn Fāris, the root *z-y-n* signifies

[53] Ibid., 4:238.
[54] Ibid., 2:431f.
[55] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 25:84.
[56] Ibid., 21:215.
[57] Badawi and Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage, 410.

the means of being *ḥusn* as well as being adorned or ornamented.[58] Furthermore, the word *zīnah* denotes 'beautifying', or embellishing a substance by using other objects; often by apparel, or an ornament of gold or silver or of jewels or gems, or by aspect In fact, the word *zīnah* encapsulates everything used to embellish and adorn.[59] Al-Rāghib makes the point that *zīnah* denotes what does not disgrace or render one in any bad state or condition, either in the present world or in the Hereafter. It can be of three kinds: mental, with reference to knowledge or science, and to good tenets; bodily, with reference to strength, tallness of stature, and beauty of aspect; and extrinsic, with reference to wealth and rank.[60]

As far as *'ilm al-wujūh wa al-naẓā'ir* is concerned, Ibn al-Jawzī elucidates the semantic meaning of the Qur'ānic use of the word *zīnah* as follows:

1. *Ḥusn*, which occurs, for example, in verse Q2:212, "The life of this world is made to seem glamorous to the disbelievers".

2. Jewellery, which occurs in verse Q20:87, "We were burdened with the weight of people's jewellery".

3. Splendour; this meaning appears, for example, in verse Q18:46, "Wealth and children are the attractions of this worldly life".

4. Servants and attendants, which occurs in verse Q28:79, "He went out among his people in all his pomp".

[58] Ibn Fāris, Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah, 3:41.
[59] See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 3:1903; al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-'Arūs*, 35:163; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nuzhat al-A'yun al-Nawāẓir*, 339; Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 3:1279.
[60] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 218. See also for part of the translation, Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 3:1280.

5. Clothes, which occurs in verse Q7:31, "Children of Adam, dress well whenever you are at worship".[61]

Al-Dāmghānī (d. 478/1085) adds to these five meanings two others, making seven in all. The first is being colourful, which is the case in verse Q10:24, "But when the earth has taken on its finest appearance, and adorns itself". The second evokes stars and planets, and occurs, for example, in verse Q37:6, "We have adorned the lowest heaven with stars".[62] In addition, al-Fayrūzābādī presents a wider semantic classification of the uses of the word *zīnah* in the Qur'ān, which includes both the physical and the abstract. He lists twenty-one applications, as follows: the adornments of this worldly life, as mentioned, for example, in verse Q57:20; the adornment by clothes, which occurs in verse Q33:28; that of covering up one's private parts, as mentioned in verse Q7:31; that of Korah's wealth and pomp, which occurs in verse Q28:79; that of women's jewellery, which occurs, for example, in verse Q24:31; that of elderly women and their clothes, as mentioned in verse Q24:60; that of feasts, which occurs in verse Q20:59; that of the Copts' jewellery, as mentioned in verse Q20:87; that of the people of Pharaoh, which occurs in verse Q10:88; that of worldly goods, which occurs, for example, in verse Q18:46; that of travellers' carriages, as mentioned in verse Q16:8; that of disobedience in the eyes of profligate people, which occurs, for example, in verse Q35:8; that of killing children, which occurs, for example, in verse Q6:10; that of life in the eyes of rebellious people, which occurs, for example, in verse Q2:212; that of the conditions of the life and death (of people) in the eyes of disbelievers – meant to deceive them – as mentioned in verse Q41:25; that of Satan misleading his followers, which occurs, for example, in verse Q15:39; that of God forsaking His enemies, which occurs, for example, in verse Q27:4; that of the sky to farsighted people, as mentioned in verse Q15:16; that of the

[61] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nuzhat al-A'yun al-Nawāẓir*, 339.
[62] Abu 'Abdullah al-Ḥusayn al-Dāmghānī, *al-wujūh wa al-naẓā'ir li Alfāẓ Kitāb Allah al-'Azīz*, ed. 'Arabī 'Abd al-Ḥamīd 'Alī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d), 251-252.

earth with vegetation and aromatic plants, as mentioned in verse Q10:24; that of the celestial sphere with stars and planets, which occurs, for example, in verse Q41:12; and finally, that of faith in the hearts of believers, which is mentioned, for example, in verse Q49:7.[63]

Here, it is worth pointing out that in Qur'ānic discourse the act of adornment itself is ascribed to Allah in a number of verses, as mentioned, for example, in verse Q49:7, noted above. In other verses it is attributed to Satan, as in, for example, verse Q8:48. In various verses, however, adornment is mentioned without naming the agent, as in, for example, verse Q3:14. In addition, while several verses use *zīnah* as a commendation, as seen, for example, in verses Q7:31 and Q49:7, others more frequently associate it with criticism, such as verses 2Q8:79 and Q10:88.

Regarding the commentators' interpretations of the root *z-y-n* and its derivatives, it may be noted that they do not depart from the linguistic meanings mentioned above, central to which is the idea that the word *zīnah* and other derivatives signify the addition of further improvements by enhancing the original qualities to make something desirable and attractive, even when it was not so at first. Ibn 'Āshūr, however, defines *zīnah* as "the qualities of a substance that urge the beholders to acquire it".[64] He defines the word *tazyīn* (to adorn) as "making an object 'beautiful' and attractive. It is improving that which needs to be improved and eliminating what spoils or blemishes it".[65] Elsewhere, he says that *tazyīn* means "to make an object acquire attractiveness or to make it appear attractive even though it initially was not so".[66] In consequence, according to Ibn 'Āshūr, *tazyīn* can be done to what was *ḥasan* in itself, as in the verse Q49:7, and also to what is not recognised as *ḥasan*, by covering up its defects, as in the verses Q28:79 and Q10:88. Adornment or embellishment can be praiseworthy and blameworthy; Ibn 'Āshūr argues that the latter can be of three kinds. The

[63] Al-Fayrūzābādī, *Baṣā'ir Dhawī al-Tamyīz*, 3:159-160.
[64] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 3:179.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., 7:433.

first occurs when an object is neither *zaynun* in itself nor in its appearance, because it is utterly harmful and appears pleasant only through the deceitful and illusory insights of Satan, such as drinking intoxicants. The second is that which is pleasant in itself but has unpleasant and harmful results, as with adultery, for example. The third is pleasant, but is surrounded by that which renders it blameworthy, as, for instance, rescuing one's oppressors.[67]

Moreover, for Quṭb and al-Shaʻrāwī, words deriving from the root *z-y-n* connote becoming beautiful and attractive or raising the degree of *ḥusn* and *jamāl* in an object, by conferring additional improvements in terms of making its appearance more pleasant and attractive.[68]

Thus, it can be concluded that most scholars agree that derivatives from the root *z-y-n* mean additional qualities in a substance that are not recognised as original.

2.2.4 The Root *z-kh-r-f*, Its Meaning in Arabic and Its Qur'ānic Usage

Of this root, only one form occurs in the Qur'ān,[69] *zukhruf* (decoration, ornamentation, gold), which is found four times, three of which use it in a literal sense (see verses Q17:93, Q43:35 and Q10:24). The last example uses it metaphorically (verse Q6:112).

According to most Arabic lexicographers, the primary meaning of the word *zukhruf* is gold; it can be applied to any ornament, embellishment and decoration, hence any act of adorning or embellishing a substance primarily with gold.[70] Indeed, the word *zukhruf* is used as synonymous with the word *zīnah*.[71] According to al-Rāghib, it signifies embroidered ornamentation.[72]

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[67] Ibid., 2:295
[68] See Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 5:2627, 2926; Al-Shaʻrāwī, *Tafsīr al-Shaʻrāwī*, 6:3861; Ibid., 7:3958f.
[69] Badawi and Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage, 396.
[70] See, for example, Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʻArab*, 17:1821; al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-ʻArūs*, 23:378; Ibn Sīdah, *al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ*, 12:23; al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *ʻUmdat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 2:137.
[71] See, for example, Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʻArab*, 17:1821; Ibn Sīdah, *al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ*, 12:23.
[72] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 212.

In the form *'ilm al-wujūh wa al-naẓa'ir*, the word is mentioned in the Qur'ān and given three semantic variants:[73]

1. Gold, as mentioned in verse Q17:93, "or have a house made of gold".

2. *Ḥusn,* as mentioned in verse Q10:24, "but when the earth has taken on its finest appearance, and adorned itself".

3. *Zīnah,* as mentioned in verse Q6:112, "they suggest alluring words to one another in order to deceive".

Modern Qur'ānic exegetes mainly quote lexicographers' definitions of the word *zukhruf* and their explanations are primarily linguistic. For instance, Ibn 'Āshūr says "*zukhruf* means *zīnah*. It also indicates gold because gold is used to adorn objects".[74] The same meanings are found in the commentary of Riḍā. He states: "*zukhruf* is *zīnah* such as flowers for the land, gold for women and imaginative language for poetry".[75] Al-Sha'rāwī defines *zukhruf* in a more detailed statement: "*zukhruf* is that which is beautiful, attractive and pleasing to the beholder".[76]

2.2.5 The Root *b-h-j*, Its Meaning in Arabic and Its Qur'ānic Usage

Two forms of this root occur in the Qur'ān: *bahjah* (delight, beauty, joy) once and *bahīj* (joyful, delightful, lovely and pleasing) twice.[77] It is worth mentioning that both forms appear in a material context, in particular the context of vegetation, to express its positive state, as seen in verses Q22:5, Q27:60 and Q50:7.

[73] Al-Dāmghānī, *al-wujūh wa al-naẓā'ir*, 248-249; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nuzhat al-A'yun al-Nawāẓir*, 235-236.
[74] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 11:143; Ibid., 25:206.
[75] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 8:7.
[76] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 10:5862.
[77] Badawi and Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage, 117-118.

Considering the linguistic meaning of the root *b-h-j*, Ibn Fāris points out that this root means joyfulness and brightness.[78] According to other lexicographers, *bahjah* means *ḥusn*. It is used to indicate 'beauty' and 'brightness or splendour'. When it is applied to a plant, it indicates beauty and brightness; when applied to a man, the meaning is refined and it denotes the laughing or happy appearance of the beautiful parts of the face; or the appearance of joy or gladness; or a joyful, glad, or happy aspect or appearance.[79]

Qur'ānic exegetes, in defining these derivatives, maintain that they convey the same meaning as the terms *ḥusn* and *jamāl*, but with additional associations of joy and gladness. In fact, Ibn 'Āshūr defines *bahjah* as that which looks *ḥasan* and delights the beholder.[80] Quṭb, whenever his commentary deals with the term *bahjah*, emphasises the connection between *ḥusn* and *jamāl* and the gladness that they evoke in the beholder. For him, the contemplation of whatever is *ḥusn* or *jamāl* instils joy and rejoicing in the heart.[81] This kind of close connection between the term *bahjah* in terms of gladness and *ḥusn* or *jamāl* is also found in al-Sha'rāwī's commentary.[82]

2.2.6 The Root *n-ḍ-r*, Its Meaning in Arabic and Its Qur'ānic Usage

Two forms of this root occur in the Qur'ān: *naḍrah* (freshness, radiance and glow) twice and *nāḍirah* (radiant, glowing and shining) once.[83] These three occurrences are applied to the faces of believers in the Hereafter, as seen in verses Q75: 22, Q76:11 and Q83:24.

The linguistic meaning of this root denotes 'beauty'/'brightness'. Ibn Fāris states that the root *n-ḍ-r* denotes *ḥusn wa jamāl wa khulūṣ*, where it means beauty, freshness, glow and

[78] Ibn Fāris, Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah, 1:308.
[79] See, for example, Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 4:369; al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-'Arūs*, 5:431; al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *'Umdat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 1:236; al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 212; Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:264f.
[80] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 17:204.
[81] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 5:2656.
[82] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 16:9713f.
[83] Badawi and Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage, 946.

lustre.[84] Others, such as Ibn Manẓūr and al-Zabīdī, mention that the original meaning for *naḍrah* is beauty and brightness in faces.[85] In fact, it signifies a state of blessedness.[86]

From the debates of the commentators, it can be seen that the meaning of *naḍrah* revolves around the meanings applied to the words *jamāl*, *ḥusn* and *bahjah,* but gives more emphasis to appearance, in particular that of facial features. Ibn ʻĀshūr, for instance, defines *naḍrah* as the "*ḥusn* and *bahjah* that appear on a satisfied, happy face".[87] Elsewhere, he explains *naḍrah* as the beauty of complexion resulting from inward joy and serenity, the latter caused by the former.[88] Furthermore, Quṭb puts forward the meaning of brightness and radiance for the above terms when discussing the effect on the human soul of contemplating the beauty of the universe.[89]

2.3 Semantic Differences of Aesthetic Terms in Qur'ānic Discourse

This section discusses one of the significant issues in the Arabic language in general and in the language of the Qur'ān in particular that has been long debated by scholars, namely "the issue of synonyms".[90] [91] The cluster of aesthetic terms in Qur'ānic discourse discussed earlier would seem to raise this issue. Muslim scholars, however, are not unified on the issue; one group, which includes Ibn al-Sikīt (d.244/858), argues that synonyms exist, while the other, including Abu Hilāl al-ʻAskarī, rejects the validity of synonyms. Its members claim that each word has its individual meaning, which cannot be applied to other words. In the present case,

[84] Ibn Fāris, Muʻjam Maqāyīs al-Lughah, 5:439.
[85] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʻArab*, 49:4454; al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-ʻArūs*, 14:236.
[86] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʻArab*, 49:4454; al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-ʻArūs*, 14:236.
[87] Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 29:388.
[88] Ibid., 30:205.
[89] Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*, 6, 3771.
[90] This expression is quoted from Muhammad Rafii Yunus, 'Modern Approaches to the Study of Iʻjāz al-Qur'ān' (PhD thesis, Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Michigan, USA, 1994), 101.
[91] For more details about *mushkilat al-Tarāduf* 'the case of synonyms' see, for example, 'Ā'ishah 'Abd al-Raḥmān Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Iʻjāz al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān wa Masā'il Ibn al-Azraq: Derāsah Qur'āniyyah Lughawiyyah wa Bayāniyyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʻārif, 1987), 210-214; Muḥammad Nūr al-Dīn al-Munjed, *al-Tarāduf fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1st ed., 1997), 17-92; Nādyah Ramaḍān al-Najār, 'al-Tarāduf fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm: Sūrat Yūsuf Namūdhajā', *Majalat Kulyyat al-Ādāb* 8, no. 75 (2007): 2-8.

one of the significant findings of Bint al-Shāṭi's method of interpretation, which may be considered a kind of thematic interpretation, is that synonyms have no place in the language of the Qur'ān. She points out that each word in the Qur'ān conveys a specific meaning which cannot be replaced by any other word.[92] It should not be forgotten, however, that the debate over synonyms has lasted for many centuries. Still, scholars such as Bint al-Shāṭi' have claimed that in modern times most scholars reject the existence of synonyms and it may be supposed that new methods of studying the Qur'ān, for example thematic exegesis, have finally brought an end to this long debate.[93]

In investigating the specific meaning of the aesthetic terms in Qur'ānic discourse outlined earlier, in light of the above debate, the principal aim is not to resolve the issue of whether synonyms exist but rather to understand the specific meaning presented in Qur'ānic discourse that is conveyed by each word or term as an aesthetic concept. The method applied here is similar to that of Bint al-Shāṭi',[94] which is to deductively survey all the passages in the Qur'ān where these words occur in their various forms. In addition, contextual interpretation that focuses on the Qur'ān is examined, in order to understand these passages in their wider context. Modern examples of Qur'ānic exegesis are consulted for this purpose, since the main focus of this study derives from them, but classical lexical authorities also represent an important discipline in understanding Qur'ānic discourse.

2.3.1 *Jamāl* and *Jamīl*

It should be noted that the Qur'ān mentions the derivatives *jamāl* and *jamīl* from the root *j-m-l* no more than eight times, once as a substantive (*jamāl*) in the context of material beauty, that of cattle, and seven times as an adjective (*jamīl*), all in the context of ethical beauty. This

[92] Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān*, 210. See also, Muhammad Rafii Yunus, 'Modern Approaches to the Study of I'jāz al-Qur'ān', 102; Boullata, 'Modern Qur'ān Exegesis', 109.
[93] For more details about the debate over synonyms in modern times, see Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-I'jāz al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān*, 210. See also, idem, 'The Problem of Synonyms in the Light of the Qur'ān', *Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth International Congress of Orientalists 1964* 4 (1970): 185-186.
[94] Bint al-Shāṭi', al-I'jāz al-Bayānī li al-Qur'ān, 214.

implies that the term *jamāl* in the Qur'ān is not restricted to outward, material beauty, but goes beyond to draw attention to the inward, abstract beauty of ethical notions. Commentators have all spoken about the meaning of *jamīl* in the contexts in which it serves as an abstract value, namely asking what the significance is of 'beautiful' patience, 'beautiful' forgiveness, 'beautiful' divorce and 'beautiful' forsaking, questions that are tackled in the fifth chapter, below.

Looking at the verses where the words *jamāl* and *jamīl* appear, one notices that the commentators, in their definitions of *jamāl*, follow the general trend of equating *jamāl* with *ḥusn* or taking *jamāl* to mean an abundance of *ḥusn*. This position of the Qur'ānic exegetes in their analysis closely resembles that of most Arabic lexicographers, as seen above. A reasonable explanation for this may be that linguistically speaking the root *j-m-l* has two meanings, one of them being *ḥusn*, as Ibn Fāris indicates. Indeed, most of those who define the word *jamāl* equate it with *ḥusn*. The definitions of Ibn Sīdah (d. 458/1066) and al-Zabīdī exemplify this. Al-Rāghib is cited by other scholars in defining *jamāl* as the abundance of *ḥusn*.[95] Athough al-Rāghib puts forward no justification for his account, his definition can be understood from acknowledging the other meaning of the root *j-m-l*, which is abundance. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that even Bint al-Shāṭi' in her interpretation of verse Q92:6 seems to equate them.[96]

It should be said here that those who attempt to distinguish the word '*jamāl*' from other related words, such as '*ḥusn*', rely on the noteworthy statement of Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. 389/993) concerning the semantic differences between '*jamāl*' and '*ḥusn*'. His book *al-Furūq al-Lūghawiyyah* deals in part with the differences between words that are held to be synonyms. He states that "*ḥusn* was originally used for images and was then used to describe deeds and ethical matters. The reverse applies to *jamāl*: it was used first to describe deeds and

[95] See, for example, al-Fayrūzābādī, *Baṣā'ir Dhawī al-Tamyīz*, 1:395; al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, 'Umdat al-Ḥuffāẓ, 1:341.
[96] Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, 2:105

ethical values, and later was used for images".[97] A few observations on this statement should be made. First, the distinction between those two terms is not clearly drawn and is still a matter of scholarly dispute. Although Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī discusses the original usage of both *jamāl* and *ḥusn*, his work tends to treat them as synonyms since both can be used interchangeably in the same contexts of material and abstract beauty. Second, he does not include linguistic evidence to support any semantic evolution from the concrete to the abstract, or from the abstract to the concrete. Nevertheless, although it may be difficult to adopt Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī's pronouncements, in full, it is still possible to accept them as partly valid, most of all the last section of his statement: "*jamāl* denotes the deeds and moral values; the abundance of physical and material gains which elevates man and make him/her famous. All this has cannot be ascribed to *ḥusn*. Do not you see that people say there is '*jamāl*' in this and never say there is '*ḥusn*' therein".[98] It can be inferred from his argument that a substance and even a value can have the quality of *jamāl* while at the same time not possessing the quality of *ḥusn*.

To consider the Qur'ānic verses that contain *jamāl* and *jamīl*, the Qur'ān sometimes clearly places these words in contexts where the word *ḥusn* cannot be substituted and vice versa. For example, when the Qur'ān describes the beauty of women in the life of this world in verse Q33:52 and in Paradise in the Hereafter in verse Q55:70, it is the derivatives *ḥusn* and *ḥisān* from the root *ḥ-s-n* that are assigned and not the word *jamāl*. As another example, the ethical values described in all their occurrences in Qur'ānic discourse by the adjective *jamīl,* namely patience, forgiveness, divorce and forsaking, are almost never described using derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n*. More observations in this case are discussed in Chapter Four. However, the word *ma'āb* (return), for example, which occurs in verses Q3:14, Q13:29 and Q38:25, 40 and 49, and the word *qawl* (speech) which occurs in verses Q2:83 and Q39:18,

[97] Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, *al-Furūq al-Lūghawiyyah*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Salīm (Cairo: Dār al-'Ilm wa al-Thaqāfah, 1997), 262.
[98] Ibid.

both described by the derivative *ḥasan,* are never described in the Qur'ān by the adjective *jamīl* from the root *j-m-l*. This kind of survey strengthens the assumption that each word has its own specific meaning that cannot be conveyed by any other word.

On reviewing what commentators say about the verses where the words *jamāl* and *jamīl* occur, in particular verse Q16:6, it should be noted that they speak of the effects impressed on the beholders as they see cattle returning from their pastures, namely, a sense of joy, pleasure and delight. Al-Sha'rāwī explicitly declares that 'beauty', expressed by the word '*jamāl*', is that which causes the self to feel pleasure and delight.[99] Other commentators claim that 'beauty' manifests itself at the sight of herdsmen releasing the cattle and sheep in the morning and leading them back in the afternoon, which makes the valleys and hills reverberate with their mooing and bleating, fills their owners with joy and satisfaction and increases the respect and honour in which the people hold them.[100] This interpretation of the verse is given by a number of classical and modern Qur'ānic exegetes who, in diverse ways, agree that the 'beauty' in livestock lies in the sight of their being released in the morning and taken back in the afternoon with "filled bellies and milk-laden breasts".[101] All this points to the conclusion that 'beauty' lies in the effect of such a sight on the self, whether one owns the animals or not. However, this view can be supported by the explicit declaration from other commentators that the 'beauty' mentioned in association with cattle lies in the feeling of ownership among the cattle owners and the implicit meaning that the latter are well off, notable and respected because of this very ownership.[102] Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that, although commentators invoke the sense of 'beauty' caused by seeing the cattle being

[99] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 13:7816.
[100] See, Sayyid Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 32nd [ed], 2003) 4:2161; Sayyid Quṭb, *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, trans. and ed. Adil Salahi (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2005),11:10; Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 13:7816.
[101] See, for example, al-Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm wa al-Sab' al-Mathānī* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d), 14:99; Muḥammad bin 'Alī bin Muḥammad al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr al-Jām' bayn Fannay al-Riwāyah wa al-Dirāyah min 'Ilm al-Tafsīr*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Amirah (Cairo: Dār al-Wafā', 1994), 3:205.
[102] See, for example, abū Ḥyyān al-Andalusī, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, ed. 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd et al (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1st ed., 1993), 5:461;

driven to pasture and back, they mention that "their flanks become fat, their udders fill with milk and their humps become bigger" as a sign of their 'beauty'.[103] At the same time, the point remains that the description of their beauty is mainly concerned with the pleasant sight itself of their being herded, as a number of commentators testify.

Taking the above into account, it can be argued that the words *jamāl* and *jamīl* appear in the context of showing the effect of a described object on the self without necessarily providing any of its objective characteristics regarding the self. This means that the use of the word conveys the effect of the beheld object on the self, whether the satisfaction comes via the senses (as in the verse Q16:6) or via the self's emotional satisfaction (as in the verses in which moral beauty is qualified). In other words, the term *jamal* reflects the part concerning, or focusing mainly on, the 'effect' or 'influence' caused by a 'beautiful' object on the beholder, without qualifying its 'beautiful' properties. Moreover, when the ethical values qualified with 'beauty' are listed, it can be seen that the quality of being beautiful is associated with ethical values that are unquestionably tough and demanding (patience, forsaking, divorce and forgiveness). Al-Sha'rāwī expresses this point thus: "you may note that the term '*jamāl*' in the Qur'ān comes in connection with tough matters that involve hardship".[104] It is perhaps worth remembering that these matters are not particularly beautiful in themselves, in that they may have a negative effect on the self, i.e. they can cause pain, as in the case of forsaking and divorcing. Nonetheless, the word 'beautiful' has been associated with them as an accompanying quality, thereby implying that their effect on the senses or the self is, or should be, gentle and satisfying.

Likewise, it is noteworthy that what commentators say about the verses in which the adjective *jamīl* appears – re-visited in more detail in Chapter Four – revolve around the nature of beautiful patience, beautiful divorcing, beautiful forsaking and beautiful

[103] See, for example, Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 13:7816; Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4, 2161; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 11:10; Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 14:105.
[104] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 19:12005

forgiveness. The commentators explain that these ethical experiences can be 'beautiful' if they are associated with qualities likely to lessen their painful impact on the self and make them more readily acceptable, despite the otherwise negative psychological effects involved. In other words, a matter can become 'beautiful', not through its inherent nature, but if it can exercise a 'beautiful' effect on the self. In this respect, al-Jurjānī (d.471/1078) states that "the beauty, as expressed through the word '*jamāl*', of a moral quality lies in the satisfying gentleness of the concomitant feeling".[105] Furthermore, this refinement of the meaning of *jamāl* may justify what scholars such as al-Kubaysī, say about the distinction between *jamāl* and *ḥusn*, namely that the former is relative while the latter is absolute.[106] Accordingly, what some people see as *jamīl*, others may consider differently, since differences in feelings towards an object originate in the differences in its effect on different people.

'Abbās Tawfīq makes the same assumption. He explains that "the words *jamāl* and *jamīl* express emotional characteristics without their meaning that the object in itself is 'beautiful'. Rather, they mean that the 'beauty' lies in its effect". He adds that "the adjective '*jamīl*' does not appear in the context of 'beautiful divorcing' and 'beautiful forsaking' to denote gentleness only, but also the effect of that gentleness on others, so that the action does not generate a negative excitement or grudge or hatred".[107] Indeed, in one of the episodes of his television programme, *al-Ḥayāt kalimah* (Life is a Word), Salmān al-'Uwdah said that there is a difference between the words *jamāl* and *ḥusn* as used in the Qur'ān. The word *jamāl*, he points out, reflects a person's feeling towards a substance. He justifies his argument by the use of the word in verse Q16:6 where Allah says "for you", which implies that the cattle are not described as beautiful in themselves because we own the beauty in them, so the sense brings out our feelings towards them. In other words, the 'beauty' expressed in the

[105] Al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīfāt*, 78.
[106] Aḥmad al-Kubaysī, 'Ḥusn al-Ṣiyām', accessed October 25, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3UL61RXGI8.
[107] 'Abbās Tawfīq, 'Alfāẓ al-Jamāl fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm', accessed March 22, 2011, http://islamselect.net/mat/10157.

word *jamāl* is one's own subjective impression of an object rather than an objective description of it. It is the expression of a person's own observations or feelings, while the word *ḥusn* expresses an objective description.[108]

To conclude, the word *jamāl* is, then, more closely linked with the beholder than with the object itself, for it presents mainly the object's 'subjective beauty' and not the characteristics of 'objective beauty' inherent in the object itself – an area which is the focus of the next discussion.

2.3.2 Derivatives from the Root *ḥ-s-n*

It must not be forgotten that in Qur'ānic discourse the derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n* are more often employed than any other term in the field of aesthetics. It is used 195 times in 50 *sūrah,* a fact that shows the importance of the term *ḥusn* and its derivatives. This importance stems not from mere quantitative superiority, but from the fact that, semantically speaking, it attains the status of a key concept since it is the locus of the many "conceptual spheres"[109], such as the concept of *iḥsān*, that are built up around it. These derivatives occur in a wide range of different contexts: in descriptions of sensual 'beauty', as in verse Q33:52; with a number of actions and acts of worship on the part of man, as seen in such verses as Q2:83, Q3:172, Q4:28 and Q5:12; with the description of Allah's acts in his quality of being a creator, a benefactor and the sender of revelation, as seen, for example, in verses Q2:183, Q23:14 and Q39:23; and to describe the divine attributes and names in four places, Q7:180, Q17:110, Q20:8 and Q59:24.

As far as the verses where these derivatives occur are concerned, in addition to the verdicts of lexicographers and commentators, it can be claimed that they indicate an objective

[108] Salmān al-'Uwdah, 'Kun Jamīlan', accessed November 9, 2011, http://www.islamtoday.net/salman/mobile/mobartshows-28-7290.htm. See also discussion on the general use of the term *jamāl* in the Qur'ān in Bū 'Aṣāb, *al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wa al-Da'wah ilā Tanmiyat al-Ḥiss al-Jamālī*, 33-56.

[109] Izutsu, God and Man in the Qur'ān, 22.

quality in an object. The sense of 'beauty' described by the word *ḥusn*, for example, indicates an intrinsic beauty rather than merely a feeling towards it. Ibn 'Āshūr remarks on this from time to time in his commentary. For instance, in verse Q7:180 he claims that the 'beauty' expressed using the word *ḥusn* indicates an objective quality in a substance.[110] In verse Q39:23, he notes that the word *ḥusn* highlights the 'beauty' inherent in a 'beautiful' object.[111] Furthermore, when considering the linguistic meaning of the word *ḥusn* and its derivatives, it should be recalled that a great many definitions are drawn in a similar frame of mind. For instance, al-Tahānawī's definition of the term *ḥusn* highlights three objective qualities, namely the beauty that is related to a benefit or utility, that which is a quality of perfection and that which is connected to praise.[112] Apparently, such qualities must necessarily exist in the object being described in order for al-Tahānawī's strictures to apply to them. Moreover, Riḍa's definitions of the derivatives of *ḥasan* and *ḥasanah* mention that they mean what is beneficial on earth and in the Hereafter, whether tangible or abstract.[113] Similarly, the term *iḥsān*, as established earlier, includes the qualities of perfection and the fulfilment of an intended action. These are actual qualities that exist in the described object and indicate that the perfection and accomplishment of this object are not emotional impressions, but independent properties.

Examining the occurrence of the derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n* in light of this argument clearly shows that it asserts that the quality denoted by these derivatives is an objective quality inherent in a substance. A few examples of this in context will suffice:

1. The verses where the derivative *ḥusn* occurs in the context of the great and wonderful reward prepared by Allah for believers, as seen in verses Q3:14, 148 and 195; Q13:29; and Q38:25, 40 and 49 indicates an objective quality. Accordingly, the

[110] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 9:185.
[111] Ibid., 25:84.
[112] Al-Tahānawī, *Mawsū'at Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn*, 1:666.
[113] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 1:386; Ibid., 4:92.

"excellent rewards" (Q3:14 and 148) and "a good place to return to" (Q13:29 and Q38:25, 40 and 49) are not merely feelings impressed on the self at the Day of Resurrection. Rather they are elicited by objective goodness; most commentators interpret the "excellent rewards" and "a good place to return to" as Paradise.[114] Needless to say, the beauty of Paradise and all that it contains is real and based on factual features, as stated in the Qur'ān (see also a more detailed discussion in the Chapter Four). Indeed, a further proof that the terms "excellent rewards" and "a good place to return to" refer to Paradise is that Allah reveals "Gardens of lasting bliss with gates wide open" in verse Q38:50, after naming "a good place to return to" in the same verse. Hence, al-Shaʿrāwī states that "since the 'good place to return to' is in general unspecified, Allah Almighty wanted to clarify and specify it. So, He said 'Gardens of lasting bliss'. This expression is in apposition to 'a good place to return to'. It is almost as though Almighty Allah restricted the meaning of 'a good place to return to' to 'Gardens of lasting bliss'".[115]

2. The derivative *ḥasan* is used in association with 'loan' in six verses: Q2:245, Q5:12, Q57:11,18, Q64:17 and Q73:20; with 'provisions' in four places: Q11:88, Q16:67,75 and Q22:58; with 'promise' in two places: Q20:86 and Q28:61; with 'reward' in two places: Q18:2 and Q48:16; with 'acceptance' in verse Q3:37; with 'wholesome' in verse Q11:3; with 'trail' in verse Q8:17; and with 'deed' in verse Q35:8. In all these instances, it can be seen that the commentators under consideration interpret the derivatives of *ḥasan* as the actual qualities inherent in the object itself. This is exemplified by what Riḍa says about "good provision" in verse Q11:88, meaning permissible earnings, as opposed to those from defrauding or cheating in

[114] Ibn ʿĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 23:242; al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr al-Shaʿrāwī*, 21:12969.
[115] Al-Shaʿrāwī, *Tafsīr al-Shaʿrāwī*, 21:12971.

measurement.[116] Similarly Ibn ʿĀshūr interprets "good provision" in verse Q16:75 to mean "that which is not marred by ugliness in its nature, such as paucity in times of need; or the acceleration of decay, such as wheat worms or decomposition".[117] Explicit evidence that the derivative *ḥasan* indicates an objective quality and not the mere feeling of it is found in verse Q2:83. Hence it can be argued that the "good words" are those that are good in themselves and not only good in appearance, the latter being only good in relation to the perception of them, disregarding whether they are good in themselves or not. Indeed, such a thought can be found in Riḍa's interpretation of the same verse, which claims that "good words" are not evidence of mere courtesy and kindness in speech; more than that, they show the good of something beneficial in the secular and religious spheres of human life.[118]

3. Verses in which the derivatives *ḥasanah* (singular) and *ḥasanāt* (plural) are used have been explained by exegetes as meaning whatever is beneficial, whether material or abstract, and the specific meanings of *ḥasanah* and *ḥasanāt* vary according to the specific context in which they appear and the scholarly view of them.

4. Verses in which *iḥsān* and its derivatives are mentioned carry, as noted above, two implications: that of perfecting and that of doing good, both in objective terms.

The above argument can be applied to all other derivatives that indicate an inherent quality in the intended object. However, this does not imply that the derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n* have no impact on the beholder in terms of joy and happiness. This latter result is obvious from the linguistic meaning and scholarly comments noted above. Finally, scholars mention that, in respect of the usage of derivatives of *ḥusn*, in conventional language they are

[116] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 12:144.
[117] Ibn ʿĀshūr, al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr, 14:224.
[118] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 1:368.

mostly applied to what is approved by sight, but in the Qur'ān mostly to what is approved by religious and mental perception.[119] [120]

2.3.3 Derivatives from the Root *z-y-n*

As noted above, the word *zīnah* and the other derivatives from the root *z-y-n* occur 46 times in 28 *sūrah*. They are used in the context of praise, such as the adornment of faith that occurs in verse Q49:7 and that of the earth and the sky, as seen, for example, in verses Q15:16, Q10:24 and Q50:4. In other places, they appear in the context of blame, such as the adornment of Pharaoh in verses Q10:88 and Q16:8.

When considering the linguistic meaning and the comments of the Qur'ānic exegetes, it is clear that the word *zīnah* and other related derivatives indicate the meaning of embellishing and improving a substance by using other objects. This embellishing can be addressed to what is originally 'beautiful' or 'good', or it can be intended to cover up deficiencies and remove defects and ugliness so that an object is disguised by being made to look attractive and pleasing. The latter kind of embellishment is to be found in the context of blameworthy adornment in the Qur'ān, as Ibn 'Āshūr and other commentators remind us.[121] In this respect, it can be seen that the word *zīnah* and the related derivatives are observed more often in the context of blame than of praise.

This being the case, it can be argued that the word *zīnah* and other related derivatives from the root *z-y-n* indicate that the sense of 'beauty' expressed through these derivatives can be attributed to an external element. In other words, it refers to a supplementary beauty added to an object, not a beauty originating in and integrated with its substance. Al-Sha'rāwī supports this assumption by claiming that *zīnah* usually refers to what is added to an essence

[119] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 118-119.
[120] This conclusion is supported by deductively surveying all the passages in the Qur'ān where these words occur in their various forms. See alsothe general discussion on the term *ḥusn* in the Qur'ān in Bū 'Aṣāb, *al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wa al-Da'wah ilā Tanmiyat al-Ḥiss al-Jamālī*, 66-82.
[121] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 3:179; Ibid., 7:433; Ibid., 2:295; See also Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 5:2627, 2926; Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 6:3861; Ibid., 7:3958f.

or substance.[122] Elsewhere, he points out that "it is an accidental, foreign matter".[123] Furthermore, it can be claimed that the clearest evidence to put forward in this respect is that of Muḥammad al-Shanqīṭī (d.1393/1974) in his discussion of the word *zīnah*. He shows that the word *zīnah* is often used in the Qur'ān to describe external and not original adornment. It does not mean 'having some parts of an original'. This meaning can be seen, for example, in verse Q7:32 and Q37:6, where external 'beauty' is described as something not originally part of the object.[124]

Thus, the word *zīnah* and its derivatives indicate 'beauty', but of an 'added' kind, not part of the essence of an object; as outlined earlier, this adornment and embellishment can be addressed to an object that was originally 'beautiful', to enhance its quality or make it more attractive, or it can be applied, with other intentions, to something without any beauty of its own.

Some final remarks should be made about the meanings of verses Q16:6 and Q16:8. It is clear from these verses that the Qur'ān uses the word *jamāl* when speaking about cattle and the word *zīnah* when speaking about horses, mules and donkeys. To justify this, Qur'ānic exegetes such as al-Shanqīṭī, mention that because the Arabs used to take pride in and adorn their horses and camels, but not their cows and sheep, the word *jamāl* is used in the Qur'ān in the context of herds and the word *zīnah* in the context of horses, mules and donkeys.[125] [126]

[122] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 3:1311.
[123] Ibid., 7:3958f.
[124] Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shanqīṭī, *Aḍwā' al-Bayān fī Īḍāḥ al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān* (Judah: Dār 'Ālm al-Fawā'id, n.d), 6:222.
[125] Ibid., 6:264.
[126] See also the general discussion on the term *zīnah* in the Qur'ān in Bū 'Aṣāb, *al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wa al-Da'wah ilā Tanmiyat al-Ḥiss al-Jamālī*, 57-65.

2.3.4 Derivatives from the Root *z-kh-r-f*

It was noted above that the term *zukhruf* is mentioned four times in the Qur'ān and most scholars link its meaning to that of the word *zīnah*; another meaning for it is gold, and some go so far as to consider this the original meaning of *zukhruf*.

From the context in which this word occurs, it can be argued that it is often associated with adorning objects that are outwardly lovely but inwardly worthless. This leads to aspects of deceit and falsehood becoming attached to the meanings of *zukhruf*. Ibn Manḍūr reports this too, saying that the initial and basic meaning of *zukhruf* was gold, then all types of adornment were called *zukhruf*, then it was applied to anything deceitful, and specious falsehoods of all kinds.[127] Al-Sha'rāwī claims that *zukhruf* is that which is outwardly ornamented but inwardly worthless.[128] Further, he adds that *zukhruf* is the epithet for matters that are superficial, without depth or value.[129]

Given the context in which the word *zukhruf* appears, this point seems valid. For instance, in verse Q6:112, "They suggest alluring words to one another in order to deceive", there is a clear indication of deceit through embroidered discourse. Hence, Ibn 'Āshūr mentions that discourse is described by the word *zukruf* when it has benefited from improvement and embellishment, lacking the property of being acceptable in itself and leading to harm, which obliges the speaker to resort to embellishing it for fear that people will ignore him.[130] Likewise, Riḍā outlines the meaning of deceitful and falsehood connoted by the word *zukhruf* as used in Qur'ānic discourse when he explicates verse Q10:24, "The life of this world is like this: rain that We send down from the sky is absorbed by the plants of the earth, from which humans and animals eat. But when the earth has taken on its finest appearance, and adorns itself, and its people think they have power over it, then the fate We

[127] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 20:1821.
[128] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 7:3879.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibn 'Āshūr, al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr, 8:10.

commanded comes to it, by night or by day, and We reduce it to stubble, as if it had not flourished just the day before. This is the way We explain the revelations for those who reflect". He points out that manifest corruption has spread throughout our present life, caused by an excessive desire to enjoy its pleasures and ornaments; this sets forth an eloquent similitude, the content of which turns the sensible person away from taking pride in their possessions, guides them to moderation and temperance and helps them avoid arrogance, coercion and oppression in pursuit of their desires. In this similitude, aspects such as the dazzle and luxury of life, people's yearning to attain them and their rapid collapse after they have become the subject of enjoyment are compared, metaphorically, to a land to which Allah brings the rain. No sooner does it bring forth luxurious, delightfully pleasant vegetation than a disaster devastates it and wipes it out, just before it becomes ripe and ready to yield its benefits.[131]

Thus, the word *zukhruf* in Qur'ānic discourse does indicate beauty, but of a kind that is associated with implications of deceit and falsehood. Nevertheless, it will be recalled that *zukhruf* has no bad sense in and of itself, but acquires its negative quality through being used as a means to deceive and distort facts.

2.3.5 Derivatives from the Root *b-h-j*

As stated above, the words *bahjah* and *bahīj* are mentioned three times in the Qur'ān to indicate a sense of 'beauty'. According to their linguistic meaning and commentators' discussions, as outlined above, they indicate in particular the sense of 'beauty' that is compounded by gladness. In other words, a sense of pleasure and delight is what distinguishes these terms. In addition, in a Qur'ānic context, *bahjah* and *bahīj* occur solely in the context of vegetation. More details on this are to be found in the next chapter.

[131] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 11:347.

2.3.6 Derivatives from the Root *n-ḍ-r*

The sense of 'beauty' expressed by these derivatives specifically denotes the qualities of radiance and clarity. In a Qur'ānic context, it is used solely to describe the beauty of faces in the Hereafter when they contemplate bliss, which implies the dominance of beauty.

2.4 Conclusion

It becomes clear from the above analytical study of the key words expressed in Qur'ānic discourse in the semantic field of aesthetics that they emphasise different qualities within this notion, each of which has specific connotations. It seems that these various terms follow a consistent pattern of usage in terms of thematic context: *jamāl* mainly expresses a subjective view among beholders regarding a substance of interest, *ḥusn* signifies an objective quality in what is beheld, *zīnah* addresses added improvements, *zukhruf* highlights the meanings of deceit and falsehood, *bahjah* indicates the quality of pleasure and gladness, but occurs solely in the context of vegetation, and *naḍrah* represents an intense beauty of countenance in the Hereafter. In terms of the occurrence of these terms in Qur'ānic discourse, the first three terms discussed above, namely *jamāl*, *ḥusn* and *zīnah*, are the most significant in the field of aesthetics within the Qur'ān. Thus, discussions in the coming chapters will mainly concentrate on these three terms.

Moreover, an important issue to do with the notion of 'aesthetics' within Qur'ānic discourse should be addressed here. This is the high significance of the word *ḥusn* in Qur'ānic discourse, compared with the other two terms. As indicated earlier, this significance is based not on the frequency of its use in Qur'ānic discourse, but rather on it being a "focus word", since a host of other concepts can be built up around it. The interesting point to note here is that in Islamic literature it is the word *jamāl*, and its adjective *jamīl*, that are often used to express the notion of 'aesthetics' or 'beauty' and not the word '*ḥusn*', although in the

Qur'ān, the former is mentioned no more than eight times and in restricted contexts, whereas the latter is mentioned a total of 195 times in 14 forms in wider contexts. It can be argued, therefore, that the widespread use of the term *jamāl* may be attributed to the Prophetic *ḥadīth* mentioned earlier, "God is beautiful and He loves beauty". However, although there are variations in scholarly understanding of both *jamīl* and *jamāl* as mentioned in this *ḥadīth* (see the case of al-Rāghib mentioned earlier), this saying from the Prophet gives a significance to the word *jamāl* in Muslim discourse that the term *ḥusn* does not possess.[132]

Further observations on the underlying meaning of the aesthetic terms employed in Qur'ānic discourse and the 'aesthetic' aspect of the Qur'ānic outlook form the content of the next chapter.

[132] See also, Murata, 'God Is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty', 55-57.

CHAPTER THREE

AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS IN THE QUR'ĀN

3.1 Introduction

Having analysed the meaning of the semantic terms of the notion of 'aesthetics', on the basis of works of Arabic lexicography and modern exegeses of the Qur'ān, a primary analysis of the qualities characterising this notion of aesthetics in Qur'ānic discourse will be performed in the next few pages, which may shed more light on the underlying meanings and allow a closer understanding of this key notion. It is essential to note that the aim here is not to reach a definition of 'aesthetics' in the Qur'ānic text; rather, it is an attempt to emphasise or determine the prominent or essential characteristics or qualities that characterise 'aesthetics', in order to clarify discussions of the notion of 'aesthetics' as it appears in Qur'ānic discourse.

In the same way there are several Qur'ānic terms that are related to aesthetics, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Qur'ān expresses aesthetic concepts using several characteristics. Recognising and analysing all these characterstics is critical to developing a complete understanding of the concept of aesthetics in the Qur'ān. These characteristics might not, at times, look completely distinct from each other, with some overlap between them, but they are not synonomous, and should therefore be treated as different.

One prominent characterstic is the beauty of 'perfection'. 'Perfection' is presented as an objective quality, so it is not a matter of personal judgement. Any beauty that the Qur'ān attributes to God is presented as an objective fact, not subject to opinion. Such beauty is presented as something that one ought to learn to recognise and appreciate. It is no surprise, therefore, to see beauty in the Qur'ān presented as something that God deliberately placed in creation.

The second quality that characterises aesthetics is that it creates a feeling of pleasure in individuals. The third characteristic of aesthetics in the Qur'ān can be described as 'goodness' and 'usefulness'. Also, the Qur'ān stresses that the beauty in God's creation is something for the human being to contemplate, which may be considered as a fourth quality of aesthetics in the Qur'ān.

3.2 *Itqān*[1]

The first of these characteristics is *itqān*, which is found in verse Q27:88 describing God's creation: "this is the handiwork of God who has perfected all things". This Qurʾānic verse asserts that '*itqān*' is the visible feature of the entirety of God's creation, which reflects excellence and perfection in the whole. This feature might be considered, in light of its common linguistic meaning and Qur'ānic hermeneutics,[2] an umbrella term which involves all the qualities proposed as the properties of a 'beautiful' object.[3] It encompasses the principles of proportion, harmony, order, equilibrium, perfection, symmetry, etc. which are often expressed as universal criteria of beauty.[4] In fact, Qurʾānic discourse goes beyond this to emphasise a sense of beauty beyond the perfection and excellence of God's creation, explicitly using the term *aḥsana* as seen in verse Q32:7, "who gave everything its perfect form". Although the translation does not signify the sense of beauty seen in the Arabic term,

[1] This Qur'ānic term is translated as 'perfection' in most Qur'ān translations. See, for example, Abdel Haleem's *The Qur'an*, 243; 'Abdullah Yūsuf Alī, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'ān* (Maryland: Amana Publications, 1992).

[2] See, for example, al-Kafawī, *al-Kulyyāt*, 39; Al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-'Arūs*, 34:316; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 5:437; Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1, 309; Badawi and Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage*, 134-135; Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 5:2669; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 13:364; Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 17:10858-10859.

[3] Karolyn Korsmeyer, 'Taste' in Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2001), 193.

[4] Scholars have long been concerned with the essential characteristics of beauty. For example, Plato emphasises proportion and measure. Mediaeval philosophers, in particular St. Thomas Aquinas, assign three conditions of beauty: perfection, proportion or harmony and brightness or clarity. Muslim scholars, al-Ghazālī for example, talk about perfection. Ibn Sīnā, as mentioned in Chapter One, considered order, composition and harmony. Furthermore, Behrens-Abouseif points out that the Arabs inherited from the Greeks the doctrine that proportion was the basis of beauty. See Nwodo, 'Philosophy of Art Versus Aesthetics', 200; Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction*, 7-9; Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture*, 37.

the sense of beauty is clearly understood from the term *aḥsana*, besides its connotation of perfection, as explained in Chapter Two. This instance justifies the claim to translate the term *iḥsān* and all related derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n* as 'making beautiful'.[5]

In this regard, one might argue that the usage of the word *iḥsān* (the infinitive of *aḥsana*) to signify the first quality of aesthetics in Qurʾānic discourse is more appropriate since it implies the sense of beauty clearly. However, it is worth mentioning that the term *iḥsān* is a very comprehensive term and thus the cluster of meanings around it denote, for instance, beauty, excellence, virtue, doing well, doing good, etc.[6] This variation in the connotations of this term might create confusion, while the precise meaning of the word '*itqān*' makes it more appropriate for this context. Certainly, this term '*itqān*', when applied to God as mentioned in verse Q27:88, means beauty, since God created the entire universe in a beautiful form, according to the verse Q32:7. Another reason for this preference is that the word '*itqān*' is used by Arabic lexicographers and and Qur'ānic exegetes when explaining the word *aḥsana* and all related derivatives (*aḥsantum*, *aḥsanū*, *tuḥsenū*, etc.).

As far as Qur'ānic exegesis is concerned, the quality of *itqān* is often mentioned as a basis for aesthetics in the sense of perfection and the absence of shortcomings and confusion. In fact, Quṭb considers this connection to be two sides of the same coin, or two facets of a single truth.[7] Such a connection between *itqān*, referring to complete perfection, and the theme of beauty can be found in Riḍā's exegesis. He points out that 'beauty' lies in being associated with perfection. In fact, perfection, according to him, is the quality of 'beauty' and imperfection is the quality of 'ugliness'.[8] In this respect, he is in perfect agreement with his

[5] Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (Minnesota: Paragon House, 1994), 269; Reza Shah-Kazemi, 'Truly God is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty: Aesthetics and Metaphysics in the Light of *Tawḥīd*' (Lecture, Prince's School of Traditional Art, London, November 27, 2013).
[6] Murata and Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, 265.
[7] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 6:3633; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 17:137.
[8] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 4:238.

teacher, ‘Abduh, as mentioned in Chapter Two.[9] Indeed, through Ibn ‘Āshūr’s explanation of the word *ḥusn*, he relates that which is beautiful to the quality of perfection and the absence of defects.[10]

Moreover, in the Qur’ānic text, a clear connection between the sense of ‘beauty’ and perfection in terms of the absence of defects is drawn in verse Q50:6 “Do they not see the sky above them – how We have built and adorned it, with no rifts in it”. This verse mentions the beautiful aspects of sky. It seems to assert that one of the characteristics of ‘beauty’ is the absence of shortcomings and confusion beside its adornment with stars, for instance. This absence of defects can be understood as perfection expressed in another way. Furthermore, it is worth noting here that aesthetic qualities such as brightness and radiance, or splendour, can be understood from the Qur’ānic aesthetic terms *naḍrah* and *nāḍirah* (radiant, glowing and shining) from the root *n-ḍ-r* as mentioned in Chapter Two. More observations in this regard in a Qur’ānic context will be made in the next chapter.

3.3 Pleasing the Beholder

The second quality that can be characterized as ‘aesthetic’ in Qur’ānic discourse acts through its impact on the self, as borne out by evidence in Qur’ānic verses. For example, in verse Q2:69 “God says it should be a bright yellow cow, pleasing to the eye”. This sentence clearly alludes to the fact that pleasure is the result of beholding ‘beauty’. Al-Sha‘rāwī points to this when he states “Whoever looks at it is pleased with its brightness, cleanliness, the elegance of its appearance and the symmetry of its body”.[11] In fact, as mentioned in Chapter Two, he defines ‘*jamāl*’ by associating it with the pleasure generated in the self. Furthermore, in describing Paradise in verse Q43:71, “Dishes and goblets of gold will be passed around them

[9] ‘Abduh, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, 67-79.
[10] Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 21:215.
[11] Al-Sha‘rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha‘rāwī*, 1:394.

with all that their souls desire and their eyes delight in", an obvious implication is that delight to the eye is one of the effects of beholding 'beauty'. Ibn 'Āshūr elucidates this by stating that the "delight of the eye is caused by seeing beautiful shapes and pleasing colours".[12] Indeed, for him the delight of the eye leads to the delight of the self, 'pleasure'.[13]

Moreover, it can be claimed that the word *bahjah* and its adjective *bahīj* can be considered, according to its linguistic meaning and on the commentators' conclusions mentioned in Chapter Two, obvious evidence that pleasure is an essential characteristic of 'aesthetics' in Qur'ānic discourse. The power to delight and gladden us, by association with prettiness, is more obvious in the connotations of the word *bahjah*. Indeed, it is worth mentioning here that the practice of defining 'aesthetics' through its effect governs several discussions in 'aesthetics', by both Aquinas and Kant for example. They claim that 'beauty' has a pleasant effect when it is perceived.[14] With reference to an Islamic context, al-Fārābī, mentioned in Chapter One, associates pleasure with the comprehension of beautiful objects. He claims that pleasure increases according to the intensity of beauty in perceived objects. Behrens-Abouseif states that "the only universal principle that governed beauty in Arabic culture was its association with pleasure".[15]

3.4 'Beauty' and the 'Good'

One of the striking characteristics of 'aesthetics' is its relation to the idea of function or usefulness or, in other words, its relation to the idea of 'good'. Nwodo summarises the historical background of the relation between the 'beautiful' and the 'good' by pointing out that identifying the good with the beautiful is sustained by a number of philosophers and scholars since ancient Greece. Plato, for example, identifies the two without hesitation. In

[12] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 25:255.
[13] Ibid.
[14] See, for example, Nwodo, 'Philosophy of Art Versus Aesthetics', 200; Gatz, 'The Object of Aesthetics', 21.
[15] Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture*, 42.

fact, Jacques Maritain claims that in Greek writings the expressions for the good and the beautiful are equivalent. Indeed, both Aquinas and the Scholastics maintain that the beautiful, the good and the true are "convertible".[16] Rosenthal asserts that the equation between 'beauty' and 'good' can be found in several languages, one of which is the Arabic language. She exemplifies her argument by claiming that the term *ḥusn* is used in Arabic to denote the good and *jamāl* to denote beauty.[17]

In Qur'ānic discourse, both of the previously-mentioned tendencies can be found. The notion of beauty is mentioned in itself as well as being identified with usefulness and goodness. With regard to the association between 'beauty' and usefulness, seen several times in the Qur'ānic text where 'beauty' is mentioned, the idea of exercising a function or being useful is highlighted in, for example, verses Q 37:6, Q 41:12 and Q 67:5. Furthermore, derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n* indicate that the sense of beauty and goodness are intertwined, as highlighted earlier in chapter two from its linguistic meaning and commentators' texts. Lexicographers and Qur'ānic exegetes, as indicated earlier in Chapter Two, assert that one of the meanings of *ḥasan* and other related derivatives is something connected to utility or usefulness, whether material or abstract. In fact, the sense of usefulness and the good can be seen in this root more than in other 'aesthetic' terms used in the Qur'ān. This is what justifies translating the term *ḥasan* and related derivatives in most cases as 'good'.[18] Izutsu, for example, in his analysis of major concepts in the Qur'ān, treats the root *ḥ-s-n* in the semantic field of the concept of good. Indeed, he considers the derivation of the word *ḥasanah,* which is the feminine form of the adjective *ḥasan,* as synonymous, at least in a certain context, with the word *khayr,* which is also discussed in the same semantic field.[19]

[16] Nwodo, 'Philosophy of Art Versus Aesthetics', 201.
[17] Franz Rosenthal, *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam* (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1971), 12.
[18] As mentioned above, Rosenthal uses the word *ḥasan* for 'good'' and *jamīl* for 'beautiful'. See Rosenthal, *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam*, 12.
[19] Izutsu, Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān, 203-249.

Another quotation is verse Q16:5-8 which shows that the sense of 'beauty' as mentioned in Qur'ānic discourse expresses 'being itself' in addition to being identified with usefulness and goodness: "And livestock—He created them too. You derive warmth and other benefits from them: you get food from them; you find beauty in them when you bring them home to rest and when you drive them out to pasture. They carry your loads to lands you yourselves could not reach without great hardship". Here, it can be noted that 'beauty' is mentioned in the context of two utilities, namely "You derive warmth and other benefits from them: you get food from them" and "They carry your loads to lands you yourselves could not reach without great hardship". At the same time, it can be argued that although 'beauty' is mentioned between these two utilities, it is independent of both, in that the feeling of beauty aroused in the beholder when watching them, as it is made obvious in the verse, is not triggered by the utility derived from the cattle, i.e. the cattle are not beautiful in the eyes of people merely because they are useful to them, but also because they satisfy a particular emotional need for the beholder.[20] It can be concluded that, although the verse, on one hand, does not connect beauty with usefulness explicitly, it does not, on the other hand, separate the two concepts completely. In fact, it considers the feelings concerning beauty aroused by watching them as one of their benefits. The implication of this is that beauty is stressed as a distinct value in itself, despite or regardless of other benefits, as shown above.

3.5 'Beauty' is Deliberately Placed

In the Qur'ānic view, beauty is a fundamental component of this universe and is intended in the origin of creation. In other words, it is not a superficial element in the universe but rather

[20] See, Muḥammad 'Imārah, *al-Islām wa al-Funūn al-Jamīlah* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1st ed., 1991), 18; Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-Shāmī, *al-Ẓāhirah al-Jamāliyyah fī al-Islām* (Beirut: Al-Maktab aIslāmī, 1st ed., 1986), 122; 'Abbās Tawfīq, 'Alfāẓ al-Jamāl', 2-3.

"an essential part of its nature".[21] This view is asserted in several places in Qur'ānic discourse, a few of which are discussed here. First, in verse Q32:7 mentioned earlier, "who gave everything its perfect form". It is clear that this verse sufficiently emphasises aesthetics as an indispensable element in the entirety of God's creation. This conclusion is drawn from the usage of the Qur'ānic term *aḥsana*, which signifies clearly the sense of aesthetics in addition to its implication in the aspects of perfection and excellence. As discussed earlier in the first characteristic of aesthetic, *itqān*, verse Q27:88 highlights the perfection and excellence of God's creation, while verse Q32:7 goes beyond by emphasising the sense of beauty through the usage of the aesthetic term *aḥsana*. Thus, verse Q32:7 stresses the fact that beauty is mentioned by the Qur'ān as one of the intended purposes of creation.[22]

Another Qur'ānic example that demonstrates that 'beauty' is deliberately placed in the universe, is verses Q50:6 and Q67:3-5 about the creation of the heavens. The notable point here, however, is that these verses go beyond describing the perfection of the creation of the heavens, to emphasising the aspects of their beauty. In verse Q 67:3-5, "who created the seven heavens, one above the other. You will not see any flaw in what the Lord of Mercy creates. Look again! Can you see any flaw? Look again! And again! Your sight will turn back to you, weak and defeated. We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps and made them [missiles] for stoning devils". Thus, whilst the Qur'ān turns our attention to the perfection of heaven's creation by challenging us to detect any flaw or defect, it specifically addresses its 'beauty' and glory.

Considering the attitude of modern commentators, Quṭb, for example, asserts this characteristic several times. He points out that the aspects of perfection and excellence, and not merely what takes place in the existence of the universe, are reflected in the aspects of harmony, accuracy, balance and perfect function; indeed, 'beauty' is attained in the universe

[21]Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 5:2984; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 14:240.
[22] Discussion of the implication of the meaning of the word 'everything', mentioned in verse Q32:7, is not intended in this regard. The focus here is on the connotations of the term '*aḥsana*'.

as a whole.[23] As stated in Chapter Two, he says that "like perfection, beauty is deliberately placed in the universe".[24]

To sum up, beauty according to Qur'ānic discourse is intended in the universe. It is independently deliberated upon, not for the sole enjoyment of humans, but rather as an integral component to serve a religious purpose along with the entire Islamic system; a point which will be further developed later in this chapter.

3.6 Contemplating Beauty

It is worth mentioning that an interesting point in Qur'ānic discourses on 'beauty' is that, although the Qur'ān portrays instances of the beauty of the universe in extraordinary verse, it also specifically directs our attention to the contemplation of 'beauty' which, in turn, indicates the significance of the entire concept of 'aesthetics' within the fabric of Islam. Indeed, contemplating the beauty of God's creation is one of the greatest ways of contemplating the universe, and at the same time is in general considered a form of worship in Islam. This is what Malik Badri stresses in his book, *Contemplation: an Islamic Psychospiritual Study*, when he counts the observation of the beauty of the universe as one of the main methods to be found in the Qur'ān to encourage the contemplation of the creation of universe.[25]

In Qur'ānic discourse on 'beauty', it is clear that, as noted earlier, both 'beauty' and the invitation to contemplate it are inevitably linked. Indeed, contemplation is a significant aspect deliberately placed in the discourse of 'aesthetics'. This can be seen in verse Q6:99, "Watch their fruits as they grow and ripen". This verse comes in the context of describing the beauty of plants and therefore shows an emphasis on the contemplation of their beauty more

[23] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2133; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 10:260.
[24] See Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 6:3633; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 17:137.
[25] Malik Badri, *Contemplation: an Islamic Psychospiritual Study*, trans. Abdul-Wahid Lu'lu'a (Herndon: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2000), 57-58.

than any other aspect, i.e. that they can be eaten. Quṭb, in interpreting this verse, claims that the emphasis here is on the "splendid aspects of creation", so we are invited to contemplate 'beauty' rather than any other aspect, since through contemplation the senses will be familiarised to appreciate such 'beauty'.[26] Moreover, al-Sha'rāwī has an interesting interpretation of the same verse; he claims that when God asks humans to contemplate 'beauty', He makes this contemplation a basic right for all individuals, whether they can benefit from it or not.[27] Indeed, al-Sha'rāwī claims that the same view can be found in verse Q16:6-7. He points out that God, before mentioning the benefit gained from horses, i.e. that they can be ridden, mentions their beauty before other benefits, as even if an individual does not own horses, he still can enjoy their beauty.[28]

In this regard, it is worth pointing out that the significance of the notion of contemplation can be seen in most theories of aesthetics, as Dickie claims, from the time of Plato, for whom contemplation was a central theme in the theory of beauty.[29] Furthermore, a number of scholars, such as Stolnitz and Austin, maintain that the aesthetic experience requires contemplation for its perception and hence its appreciation.[30] However, Reid and Richmond, for example, claim that the aspect of contemplation in the experience of aesthetics has in recent years been neglected.[31]

The notion of contemplating 'beauty' or, more generally, contemplating God's creation is, in Qur'ānic discourse, not for mere enjoyment or to evoke pleasure; it is rather a form of worship, as noted above. Muslim scholars enumerate a number of religious aspects achieved through contemplation, all of which serve the central theme of Islam, which is

[26] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 2:1161; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 5:223.
[27] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 6:3827.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Dickie, Aesthetics: An Introduction, 8.
[30] Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism: a Critical Introduction* (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), 35; M.R Austin, 'Aesthetic Experience and the Nature of Religious Perception' *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 14, no. 3 (1980): 22.
[31] Louis Arnaud Reid, 'Knowledge, Morals, and Aesthetic Education' *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 2, no. 3 (July 1968): 50; John W. Richmond, 'Reconsidering Aesthetic and Religious Experience: A Companion View', *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 42.

tawḥīd. This, as Quṭb states, can be summarised as follows: that through contemplating the beauty of the universe "we feel the link between the Creator and creation".[32] More of these religious aspects will be discussed in further detail below.

3.7 Nature is the Vast Domain of Physical 'Aesthetics'

The beauty of the universe or its natural beauty, in terms of physical beauty, in Qur'ānic discourse, is emphasised more than any other kind of physical beauty. Qur'ānic verses in different *suras* refer to the various wonders of the whole universe in its various physical phenomena. Qur'ānic discourse on the aesthetics of nature can be seen in a number of verses considered in this study, notably verses Q16:6 and Q16:8, which mention the beauty in the creation of animals. In addition, beauty constitutes an essential aspect in the creation of the heavens and the earth, as can be seen in several verses, for instance, Q15:16, Q37:6, Q41:12, Q50:6, Q10:24 and Q27:60. In this respect, the beauty of humankind is emphasised as an object of special wonder, since, as al-Ghazālī claims, it is the "key to knowing the greatness of the creator".[33] The Qur'ānic references to the 'beauty' of the human body can be seen in verses Q33:52, Q40:64, Q64:3 and Q95:4. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the derivatives from the root *z-y-n* are often used in the context of the beauty of the heavens and the Earth, while the derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n* are used when referring to the beauty of human beings.

There is yet another aspect of the physical aesthetic mentioned in the Qur'ānic text; that is the aspect of man-made beauty or what may be called 'art'.[34] This kind of aesthetics is mentioned less often than the aesthetics of the natural world and it can be argued that the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba mentioned in verse Q27:44 is the first verse that

[32] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 5:2808; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 13:364.
[33] Hillenbrand, 'Some aspects of al-Ghazālī's Views on Beauty', 251.
[34] Winn, 'The Beauty of Nature and Art', 8.

one might turn to in the Qur'ān for its implications about art. As Gonzalez claims in this regards, the aesthetic principles found in the *ṣarḥ* (palace) prepared for the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon is widely applied in Islamic art and architecture.[35] In addition, the references to an 'artistic aesthetic' in Qur'ānic discourse include indirect references to what might be considered the Qur'ānic "consideration for art and architecture".[36] These indirect implications can be seen, for example, in verses Q7:74, Q13:71 and Q34:31. Hence, it should be remembered that, as Oleg Grabar observes, Qur'ānic discourse in this context does not contain what might be construed specifically as a theory of visual art; rather a number of disjointed observations can be inferred that might have implications for art and architecture.[37]

It is worth mentioning that the question of appreciating nature and art, or defining the realm in which aesthetics can present itself, has always been a matter for debate in Western aesthetics. Scholars such as Carlson and Hepburn claim that philosophical aesthetics neglected natural beauty and was dominated by an interest in art. Nature was appreciated through its representation in art and literature, despite the fact that individuals have always responded aesthetically to the nature surrounding them.[38] In this context, Brady reminds us that in the classical period the aesthetics of nature was of little interest and that philosophical aesthetics was equated with the philosophy of art, a position which did not change until the eighteenth century, when the appreciation of natural aesthetics reached a turning point. Kant was the first to represent a theory of the aesthetical appreciation of nature and Schelling and a few other thinkers in the nineteenth century were followed by a wider discussion of environmental aesthetics.[39]

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[35] Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam*, 37.
[36] Oleg Grabar, 'Art and Architecture' in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1:162.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Allen Carlson, Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture (London: Routledge, 2002), 5.
[39] Carlson, Aesthetics and the Environment, 5; Brady, Aesthetics of the Natural Environment, 32.

In sum, this discussion has briefly reviewed the appreciation of art and nature in Qur'ānic discourse and in the next chapter there will be further observations which will focus on the Qur'ānic representation of natural aesthetics.

3.8 'Subjectivity' and 'Objectivity' of Aesthetics

An important characteristic of aesthetics in Qur'ānic discourse is what is famously known in this area as subjective and objective theories, which are considered by Moore as "the leading theories of beauty".[40] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the question revolves around the idea that beauty can be identified both as an object in a substance (objective) or as referring to the experience of beauty (subjective), which means that beauty is merely an idea in the mind or a personal feeling towards an object. If so, then the object in question cannot be described as beautiful or ugly itself, but only appearing so according to our own feelings about it.

When considering this issue from a Qur'ānic perspective, it may be said that although beauty in the Qur'ān is identified with emotional feelings, as indicated earlier, it can still be asserted that beauty in Qur'ānic discourse is an objective reality inherent in a substance, and not merely an impression formed by the beholder. This assumption can be substantiated through several pieces of evidence in the Qur'ānic text:

Through Qur'ānic discourse on identifying beauty by its effect on beholders, it can still be seen that these effects are phrased in a general pattern so that they encompass all beholders. In verse Q2:69, for example, "God says it should be a bright yellow cow, pleasing to the eye", al-Sha'rāwī asserts that it "includes anyone who looks at it".[41] Apparently, if beauty were not a quality inherent in the object looked at, the pleasure would not involve any beholder. The same view is found in verse Q43:71, "Dishes and goblets of gold will be

[40] Moore, 'Beauty as Harmony', 41.
[41] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 1:394.

passed around them with all that their souls desire and their eyes delight in". Thus the delight appeals to every eye and, in addition, scholars such as al-Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Alūsī mention that "*al*" (the definitive article 'the') in the Qur'ānic word *al-a'yun* (the eyes) refers to *lil'istighrāq,* which they take to mean that it encompasses all the addressees, in this case, all eyes that see Paradise.[42]

As mentioned in the previous chapter, several terms are used in the Qur'ān to indicate a sense of aesthetics, each of which has its specific perspective in expressing one sense of the term. The concern here is that the term *ḥusn* and the other derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n* denote an intrinsic quality in a 'beautiful' object and therefore that its beauty is an objective quality.

With the use of the concept of *itqān*, as an obvious element in the notion of aesthetics as presented in Qur'ānic discourse through the use of the derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n*, it can be asserted that the availability of such characteristics in a given object offers clear evidence that beauty represents an independent fact, rather than a contingent feeling or emotional effect whose existence or non-existence depends on the beholders.

Several verses in the Qur'ānic text invite us to contemplate the beauty inherent in God's creation, as seen, for example, in verse Q50:6 "Do they not see the sky above them – how We have built and adorned it, with no rifts in it". Accordingly, if beauty is claimed as an idea in the mind or mere emotional feeling derived from a beautiful experience, such an invitation to contemplate the universe would have been preposterous or unachievable. For Muslims, according to verses Q23:115 and Q44:38-39, Allah transcends vanity and His commands are free from such absurdity.

[42] Al-Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm wa al-Sab' al-Mathāī* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d), 25:99.

3.9 Religious Function of the Notion of Aesthetics

It can be argued that the notion of aesthetics in Qur'ānic discourse is not there for mere enjoyment or to evoke pleasure, or simply a psychological state brought on by an eschatological form. Rather, it is always connected with moral and religious purposes and is not solely of emotional or eschatological concern. Indeed, Qur'ānic discourse concerning the notion of aesthetics aims to lead us to believe in God's existence, as well as serving all Islam's commands and rituals. According to the verses under consideration in this study, it can be claimed that a number of religious purposes are fulfilled by the notion of aesthetics as presented in the Qur'ānic text; these are as follows.

3.9.1 *Tawḥīd* (Oneness of God)

As the most fundamental Islamic doctrine, which encapsulates the core of Islamic faith, the Qur'ān consistently asserts divine oneness in various ways. The most obvious is by reflecting the beauty of the creation of the vast universe, including the creation of the human race. Reflecting on the beauty of God's creation, according to Qur'ānic discourse, will bring us to know God, the Creator. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that in His creation and its beauty, Allah reveals himself, and the beauty of this universe is a reflection of divine beauty.[43] All the verses describing the beauty of nature reveal that this marvellous creation in its perfect form is a sign of Allah. Indeed, it shows not only God's existence but also His oneness, sovereignty and unlimited power.[44] However, it is important to highlight here that this is one of the three basic features characterising the doctrine of *tawḥīd* (in full, *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyyah,* oneness of lordship) which signifies believing in one God: the sole Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe; *tawḥīd al-'ilūhiyyah* (oneness of worship) also implies that

[43] See, for example, Daniel A. Madigan, 'Themes and Topics', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 83; K.K Aziz, *The Meaning of Islamic Art: Explorations in Religious Symbolism and Social Relevance* (Lahore: Al-Faisl, 2004), 1:9; Yūsuf al-Qrāḍāwī, *al-Islam wa al-Fan* (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1995), 9.
[44] Fazlur Rahman, Major Themes of the Qur'ān , 67.

Allah is the only deity worthy of worship and *tawḥīd al-'asmā' wa al-ṣifāt* (the oneness of God's names and attributes) [45] is to be discerned in Qur'ānic considerations of the notion of aesthetics embodied in the universe as a whole. The term *rubūbiyyah* is derived from the word *rabb* which means 'lord', 'master', or 'owner'. This concept denotes the fact that there is only one God, who created everything and who manages that creation. All manifest and subtle actions ultimately belong to this one God; nothing can be attributed to anyone other than Him.

This Qur'ānic fact, related to taking the beauty of the vast universe as a proof of Allah's existence – that is, as a manifestation of God's other attributes such as His power – is rehearsed a number of times in the Qur'ānic text, as can be seen in verse Q37:4-6 "truly your God is in unity as well as sovereignty One, Lord of the heavens and earth and everything between them, Lord of every sunrise. We have adorned the lowest heaven with stars". Hence, it follows that highlighting the beauty discerned in the universe, i.e. the heavens being adorned with stars, is mentioned in the context of the oneness of God; the Creator and Sustainer of the diverse universe. Similarly, in verse Q67:1-5 "Exalted is He who holds all control in His hands; who has power over all things; who created death and life to test you [people] and reveal which of you does best—He is the Mighty, the Forgiving; who created the seven heavens, one above the other. You will not see any flaw in what the Lord of Mercy creates. Look again! Can you see any flaw? Look again! And again! Your sight will turn back to you, weak and defeated. We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps and made them [missiles] for stoning devils". Here the same argument is presented, the fact that the beauty of the universe is addressed in the same breath as God's power and sovereignty, which extends to the furthest universe in this worldly life and Hereafter. Thus, addressing beauty in the context of God being the single Creator of all this beauty surrounding human beings, in

[45] Hussein Abdul Raof 'Tawhid', in Oliver Leaman, ed., *The Qur'an: an Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2006), 651.

turn will assert the oneness of God. In this regard, Quṭb presents the same view when he argues that what is mentioned in verse Q67: 3-11 signifies what was mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah al-Mulk* (Dominion: Chapter 67), that the beauty of creation is an aspect of "God's complete dominion of the universe".[46] Elsewhere, he points out that appreciating the beauty of creation leads to knowing the Creator's own beauty.[47]

It might be claimed here that the most important conclusion in the relationship between the Qur'ānic notion of aesthetics and the doctrine of *tawḥīd* is that God consistently describes His divine names and attributes in the Qur'ān with the quality of *ḥusn* on four occasions in the same statement "*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*", as can be seen in verse Q7:180, "The Most Excellent Names belong to God", in verse Q17:110, "the best names belong to Him", in verse Q20:8, "the most excellent names belong to Him" and verse Q59:24, "The best names belong to Him". While Abdel Haleem translates the word *al-ḥusnā* as excellence and superiority, it is often translated as 'beautiful'.[48] Hence, it can be argued that both translations are acceptable, since that the word *al-ḥusnā*, the feminine form of *al-aḥsan*, means, in addition to the quality of 'beauty', 'good' as established above; the word *ḥusn* denotes both the meanings of beauty and goodness. A similar argument is presented by Oliver Leaman, who claims that, although the word *al-husna* is frequently translated as 'beautiful,' the sense of 'goodness' might be considered the most appropriate meaning of the word *al-husna*.[49] Likewise, Adil Salahi, in his translation of Quṭb's exegesis, points out that "the Arabic

[46] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 6:3631; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 17:134.
[47] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 6:3634;.Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 17:138.
[48] It is widely known that the most famous translation of '*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*' is 'the beautiful names'. This translation can be found in several writers. See, for example, Abū Hāmid Muḥmmad al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God. al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fī Asmaā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, trans. David B. Burrell and Nazih Daher (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Socity, 1992); Gerhard Böwering, 'God and His Attributes' in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 2:317; Zeki Saritoprak, 'Allah', in Oliver Leaman, ed*., The Qur'an: an Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2006), 39.
[49] Oliver Leaman, 'Al-Rahman', in Oliver Leaman, ed., *The Qur'an: an Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2006), 528.

adjective *al-ḥusnā,* translated as 'the most gracious', also means 'beautiful', 'attractive', etc".[50]

Indeed, the most deep-seated quality subsumed in the meaning of the word *al-ḥusnā*, in particular when referring to God's names and attributes, is the quality of 'perfection'. In this regard, the qualities of beautiful, good and perfect can be found in the interpretations by exegetes of the four verses mentioned above. Ibn 'Āshūr, in interpreting the meaning of "*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*" states several times, as mentioned in Chapter Two, that the quality of *ḥusn* is an inherent quality and an essential property of the object in question, not a transient feature that might not be appropriate or accepted by everyone. For him, the meaning of "*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*" indicates perfection, since it refers to an actual perfection, and this perfection in God's names and attributes can be discerned on two levels: first, that certain of these names cannot be understood in any complete or comprehensive way except as describing God, such as *al-'Azīz* (The Eminent), *al-Ḥakīm* (The Wise), *al-Ḥayy* (The Living) and *al-Ghanī* (The Self-Sufficient). Second, the meanings of other names will not be good or acceptable unless by the side of such divine names as *al-Jabbār* (The Compeller) and *al-Mutakabbir* (The Proud). Such names, as Ibn 'Āshūr claims, cause corruption on the part of human beings, while on the part of the Divine, they signify justice.[51] Moreover, al-Sha'rāwī expresses another aspect of perfection embodied in the meaning of "*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*". He claims that the meaning of certain names in the mouths of human beings may not be identical to the condition of the person named. He gives the example of someone called *Sa'īd* (happy), who might be otherwise. For him, the excellence or the 'beauty' in names rest in their being identical to the object named. However, as stated by Ibn 'Āshūr, the name may be identical to the object named but not on the same high level, which will still be a kind of deficiency.[52] Thus, the account from al-Sha'rāwī of a name's meaning or not meaning a quality possessed

[50] Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 16:448.
[51] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 9:186-187.
[52] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 14:8808.

by its owner does not require discussing. Yet the most important aspect to mention here is that the divine names and attributes as described in the Qur'ān are the most beautiful, excellent and perfect names, showing the appropriateness of these names to describe and praise God.

A different aspect can be discerned in Qur'ānic discourse of aesthetics which may be included among the "tenets of faith",[53] that the notion of aesthetics addressed within the context of God's favours enumerated in the Qur'ānic text can be seen, for example, in verses Q16:2-18, Q35-12 and Q13:17. Hence, addressing aesthetics within the context of enumerating God's favours and blessings granted to all human beings in the heavens, the earth and even in themselves, implies that aesthetics is one of those favours that satisfies not only bodily needs but in fact all necessities and desires. However, these uncountable favours, as mentioned in the Qur'ānic text, verse Q16:18, function as reminders of God's blessings and mercy and are also signs for us to comprehend. Accordingly, reflecting on these favours or graces around us causes us to be grateful for such blessings and to express our gratitude towards God. Rather more importantly, it turns us to belief in God. Thus, this conclusion of thankfulness to God and belief in him is frequently mentioned in Qur'ānic discourse on God's grace. For example, the words, *tashkurūn* (to be grateful), *tadhakkarūn* or *yadhdhakkarūn* (to reflect, take heed) and *yatafakkarūn* (to think) are all used to invite human beings to express gratitude and deep comprehension and contemplation when they realise that beyond this wonderful creation is the one God with no partners, which signifies the crux of Islamic faith in *tawḥīd*.[54]

[53] Hussein Abdul-Raof, 'Tawhid', in Oliver Leaman, ed., *The Qur'an: an Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2006), 651.
[54] See for example, Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2161; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 11:2; Ibid., 14:143; Oliver Leaman, 'Nature live and the Qur'ān', in in Oliver Leaman, ed., *The Qur'an: an Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2006), 452.

3.9.2 Trials

There is no doubt, according to Qur'ānic discourse, that trials and tribulations are aspects of God's law in creating this life, as can be seen in verses Q11:7 and Q67:2. Indeed, human beings as individuals or even nations are subject to trials and tribulations in this worldly life. The Qur'ānic text portrays from time to time different forms of trial by evil as can be seen in verse Q2:155, "We shall certainly test you with fear and hunger, and loss of property, lives, and crops". Furthermore, different perspectives on the purposes behind all kinds of trial afflicting human beings are taken in the Qur'ānic passages. An example can be seen in verse Q29:2-3 "Do people think they will be left alone after saying 'We believe' without being put to the test? We tested those who went before them: God will certainly mark out which ones are truthful and which are lying". Another use of the Qur'ānic perspective on the reasons for the trials that afflict human beings, in particular believers, is shown in verse Q47:31, "We shall test you to see which of you strive your hardest and are steadfast; We shall test the sincerity of your assertions". Thus, these verses make it quite clear that the purpose behind trials is to test human faith and submission to God's will and power.

However, trials in the Qur'ānic concept are not limited to evil and hardship alone; they are extended to trials by what is good, as stated clearly in verses Q21:35, "We test you all through the bad and the good, and to Us you will all return" and in verse Q7:168, "We tested them with blessings and misfortunes, so that they might all return". Accordingly, one of the aspects of being tried by what is good, in Qur'ānic discourse, is trial by the notion of aesthetics. This is seen, for example, in verse Q18:7, "We have adorned the earth with attractive things so that We may test people to find out which of them do best" and in verse Q20:131, "and do not gaze longingly at what We have given some of them [other people] to enjoy, the finery of this present life: We test them through this, but the provision of your Lord is better and more lasting". Hence, it may be noted that the sense of aesthetics is expressed in

the first verse by the word *zīnah* (adorned) and in the latter with the word *zahrah* (finery), which only occurs in this one location. Ibn ʻĀshūr explains the purpose of trials by the form of good, in general, and by aesthetics in particular. He points out that this kind of trial arouses some people to contemplate their Creator and be thankful to Him, which will lead to the enhancement of faith in and worship of God. What matters most is to deal with it accordance with God's commands. To do otherwise would be to deny the Creator and the wisdom behind creation, and people may also submerge themselves in sensory enjoyment without expressing their gratitude to and worship of God, or with no concern for what God had made in the Hereafter of sublime splendours.[55] Moreover, Quṭb considered being tried by what is good and pleasurable to be more difficult than being testing by hardship. For him, being tested by something with the form of evil and hardship is still endurable; one is not overawed and maintains one's dignity. In contrast, few can withstand being tried by something good, since it tempts one to continue, despite the loss of dignity or the bearing of humiliation, in order to acquire it and not to lose it.[56] Elsewhere he adds that trials by all the wonders, comforts and pleasures that God bestows on us in this world will prove which of us are good and which will deviate from the right path.[57] Indeed, this kind of trial will segregate those who pursue worldly pleasures from those who are preoccupied by the noble rewards that God has guaranteed for people who have withdrawn their desires from the chance of being controlled by earthly wonders and pleasures.[58]

Thus, it should be clear through this aspect in Qur'ānic discourse, that aesthetics can be seen as a form of trial, that the notion of 'aesthetics' deliberately placed in this universe is not unworthy of inclusion in the Qur'ān. Quṭb claims, in this regard, it is:

[55] Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 15:257.
[56] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2377f.; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 12:24f.
[57]Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2258; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 11:194.
[58] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 1:373f.; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 2:29f.

> an encouragement to hold on to true and lasting values, to maintain one's ties with God and be contented. This is the best way to resist the temptation of the splendour and attractions of this life. When we maintain such values, we are free to rise above the lure of false temptations, splendid as they may appear.[59]

Indeed, he maintains that this aspect of aesthetics in the Qur'ānic outlook will purify and exalt the human soul, prevent it from being ridden by physical earthly pleasures and enable people to experience earthly pleasures and the benefits of them appropriately according to the Qur'ānic view of them as *zahrah*, things whose splendours fade before long. Indeed, it will maintain the link with God as He promotes those who fall under the spell of worldly splendours at the cost of the noble and sublime wonders which are provided in the life Hereafter. [60]

3.9.3 Worship of God

In Islam, generally, the sense of aesthetics has an essential role in the concept of worship; it is considered as a requirement which must be fulfilled in performing worship, in order to be accepted by God. The Qur'ān confirms this accompaniment to prayer as a kind of worship, with the notion of 'aesthetics' in verse Q7:31, "Children of Adam, dress well whenever you are at worship". In this verse, the Qur'ānic word *zīnah* is translated, by Abdel Haleem, as to "dress well", and this translation can be understood according to the jurisprudential interpretation of the meaning of the word *zīnah* according to the interpretation of most scholars.[61] However, others, for instant Riḍā, claim that, rather than being well-dressed, the meaning of *zīnah* in this verse can be understood in a comprehensive way, which includes

[59] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2357; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 11:368.
[60] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 1:374; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 2:30f.
[61] See, for example, Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr,* 8:92-94*;* Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 3:1282; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 6:63; Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 8:380f.

several kinds of *zīnah* according to what is known in each community.[62] This may extend to the width of Ali's application:

> Beautiful apparel: zinah adornments or apparel for beautiful living: construed to mean not only clothes that add grace to the wearer, but toilet and cleanliness, attention to hair, and other small personal details which no self-respecting man or woman ought to neglect when going solemnly even before a great human dignitary, if only out of respect for the dignity of the occasion. How much more important it is to attend to these details when we solemnly apply our minds to the presence of God.[63]

In light of the circumstances in which this verse was revealed, an important inference about aspects of the Qur'ānic outlook on the notion of 'aesthetics' must be drawn. Al-Wāḥidī (d.468/1076) reports that in pre-Islamic days, Arab pagans, with the exception of the *Ḥumus* (the people of *Quraysh* and their descendants), used to perform a *ṭawāf* (circumambulation) around the *Ka'bah* (the Sacred House) in stark nakedness. This verse was revealed not only to prohibit a pre-Islamic Arab practice, but also to command people to adorn themselves when at worship.[64] Scholars such as Riḍā and Quṭb comment that this immodesty was found in the pre-Islamic era, not only among Arabs, but among many nations, which even nowadays indulge in similar practices (expose nakedness).[65] Thus, Qur'ānic discourse makes clear throughout this verse and the preceding verses (Q7:26-29) that nakedness and the immodest exposure of the body is not an aesthetic practice nor a kind of adornment but the evil influence of Satan, as stated clearly in these verses. These verses refer to an essential aspect of the story of Adam and Eve, in which they are sent down to earth because, under Satan's influence, they went about naked. Indeed, these verses comment on human beings that beautifying their bodies not only covers their private parts but, as most scholars and

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[62] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 8:381.
[63] Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'ān* (Maryland: Amana Publications, 1992), 351.
[64] Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī bin Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb Nuzūl al-Qur'ān*, ed. Kamāl Basyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1991), 228-229.
[65] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 8:382f.; Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 3:1283; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 6:52f., 58. See also Sayyid Abul A'lā Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān: Abridged Version of Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*, trans. & ed. Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2006), 309.

Qur'ān exegetes agree, for instance Riḍā and Quṭb, requires them to wear proper apparel, which gives them a decent appearance.[66]

According to Quṭb, human beauty is the beauty of dress and cover and, in contrast, appearing naked is not beautiful and those who considered it so "suffer from a distortion of human taste" and also a corrupted human nature, which intrinsically abhors the exposure of bodily nakedness.[67] For Riḍā, Qur'ānic guidance on the prohibition of nudity in public and the commands for adornment are basic aspects of the Islamic vision of religious and secular reformation. This aspect can be understood in light of ancient civilisation. Even in our own day, human civilisation sometimes depart from modesty and indulge in revealing nakedness, but when Islam penetrates a society, it promotes the values of modesty and reserve which are not mere aspects of civilisation, but aspects of faith and worship.[68]

3.9.4 Pure and Ultimate Rewards for Believers

A cursory look through the Qur'ānic text reveals that the Qur'ān promises, via the aesthetics of Paradise, pure and ultimate rewards for believers in the Hereafter, as well as the secular 'aesthetic' pleasures created for them and all human beings to enjoy in this world. This function is stated in verse Q7:32, "Say [Prophet], 'Who has forbidden the adornment and the nourishment God has provided for His servants? Say, 'They are [allowed] for those who believe during the life of this world: they will be theirs alone on the Day of Resurrection". This verse, however, promises that pure aesthetics, using the Qur'ānic word *khāliṣah* (pure), in all its various forms, will be there in the Hereafter for all who offer their submission to God during the life of this world.

[66] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 8:380f.; Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 3:1283; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 6:63. See also Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān*, 310.
[67] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 3:1275; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 6:51f., 58.
[68] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 8:382f.

Regarding the meaning of the word *khāliṣah* in this verse, the Qur'ānic exegetes chosen for this study all agree that "the adornment and the nourishment" mentioned are exclusively for believers on the Day of Resurrection. Unbelievers will not deserve such rewards.[69] Another aspect of the meaning of the word *khāliṣah* is added by exegetes such as al-Sha'rāwī: that this ultimate reward, for believers exclusively, will be pure and devoid of all circumstances that might lessen their enjoyment, as seen in the earthly life. Al-Sha'rāwī exemplifies these circumstances are of individual conditions, which might prevent a person from complete enjoyment, such as sickness, weakness and poverty.[70] The Qur'ān, however, portrays vividly in several passages the beauty of Paradise, which will be demonstrated in a more detailed form in the next chapter.

3.10 Negative Aspects

In Qur'ānic discourse, negative aspects of the notion of aesthetics are addressed. This is known by scholars, both Qur'ānic exegetes and Arabic lexicographers, as *zīnah ma'thūmah* (blameworthy adornment). This duality in the notion of 'aesthetics' from the Qur'ānic perspective is a result of the nature of the duality of good and evil in creation. It relates to the fact that human beings in this world, as discussed, are subject to trials by both aspects of aesthetics.

It is worth mentioning that the negative aspects of aesthetics in Qur'ānic discourse are expressed through the derivatives of the roots of both *z-y-n* and *z-kh-r-f* which, as explained in the previous chapter, denote additional qualities in a substance that are not recognised as original. This result confirms that the negative aspects of aesthetics are not original features inherent in the purpose of the existence of aesthetics; they are rather external

[69] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* 8:96f.; Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 7:4115; Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 8:390.
[70] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 7:4115.

influences, or more precisely evil acts either from *shayṭān* (Satan) or another unnamed agent, as can be found in the Qur'ānic discourse shown below.

Another essential aspect should be mentioned with regard to the use of derivatives of the root of *z-y-n*, in particular, to express negative aspects of aesthetics. This is that, since such aspects are negative, they need to be adorned, decorated and embellished in terms that will make them acceptable and enjoyable to human beings. In fact, as Quṭb and Riḍā claim, human beings will not commit wicked deeds unless they are made to seem fair and attractive by the Devil's agency, whether it is by Satan's devilish whispers or by human beings themselves to each other, known as *quranā'* (companions) or *shurakā'* (partners), as mentioned in verses Q6:137 and Q41:25, or as *hawā,* which are a person's own Satanic desires, as can be seen, for example, in verse Q47:14.[71] Riḍā stresses that without the *tazyīn* for these negative aspects of aesthetics, whether physical or moral, one might refuse to commit them and might comprehend their harmful and negative traits, and thus their consequences both in this world and in the Hereafter.[72] In this regard, Quṭb concludes that human beings need to keep in mind when they find something attractive that this weapon may come from Satan to deceive them.[73]

Another important aspect should be stated regarding Qur'ānic discourse on the negative aspects of the notion of aesthetics, which is that it applies to the moral context as well as the physical. In terms of the moral context, it can be noted that what is addressed as a negative aspect of the notion of aesthetics is evil deeds and disobedience to God's commands and obligations. Examples of these deeds are: arrogance and not turning to God (see verse Q6:43), permitting what God has forbidden (see verse Q9:37) and abandoning the way presented by Messengers (see verse Q16:63). However, few details are given about what can be considered the physical negative aspects of the notion of aesthetics articulated in Qur'ānic

[71] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2141; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 10:274; Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 3:238.
[72] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 3:238.
[73] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2141; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 10:274.

discourse. The aspect most often mentioned is, according to the Qur'ānic statement, *zīnat al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* (the attractions of this worldly life), as in verses Q2:212 and Q18:28, 46. A similar statement, *al-ḥayāt al-dunyā wa zīnatuhā* (the life of this world with all its finery), is found in verses Q11:15, Q28:60 and Q33:28. As pointed out by Qur'ānic exegetes such as Ibn ʿĀshūr, *zīnat al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* encompass all worldly desires, splendours, lusts and all this world's various enjoyments.[74] Furthermore, the attractions of this worldly life can be seen in greatest detail in verse Q3:14, "The love of desirable things is made alluring for men – women, children, gold and silver treasures piled up high, horses with fine markings, livestock, and farmland – these may be the joys of this life". Other blameworthy aspects of physical aesthetics are the kind that are set out for unbelievers and disobedient human beings, such as Pharaoh and Qarun, mentioned in verses Q10:88 and Q28:79. Very closely connected to the negative physical aesthetics mentioned in the Qur'ānic passages are the commandments to believing women not to reveal their adornment before others, except a number of their relatives and other persons, as listed in verse Q24:31. Hence, it must be stated that these kinds of aesthetics are blameworthy, since female beauty is not being used according to God's commands and guidance, but instead for temptation and leading others astray.

Thus, by highlighting two distinct aspects of the Qur'ānic outlook on the negative aspects of the notion of aesthetics, we may conclude the following: first, that worldly aesthetics is not forbidden or undesirable in principle, since it is Allah who has brought it forth for His creatures to enjoy, so obviously it is not intended to be forbidden. It is prohibited when it does not fulfil its religious purpose, when it tempts human beings from the right path revealed by God, or when it is used to lead others astray. It is forbidden when it leads people to become overwhelmed by earthly splendours and not see beyond to God's

[74] Ibn ʿĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 2:294.

greater rewards in the life Hereafter.[75] Second, in several passages in which these worldly aspects are disdained, the Qur'ānic text transfers attention to the greater and sublime pleasures granted by God in the Hereafter to those who guard themselves against evil whispers by obeying God's guidance and worshipping him (see in verses Q18:46, Q28:6 and Q57:20).

Furthermore, unbelievers and unfaithful servants are those addressed in these negative contexts, as shown in verse Q15:39 "Iblis then said to God, 'Because You have put me in the wrong, I will lure mankind on earth and put them in the wrong, all except Your devoted servants". The same meaning is found in verses Q2:212, Q6:122, Q10:12 and Q47:14 as well. There seems to be no doubt that all human beings are subject to the Devil's temptation, except for God's devoted servants who guard themselves against evil by obeying God and following the divine path of right, looking forward to what God has granted for them in the Hereafter.

Moreover, it can be noted that in Qur'ānic discourse such negative aspects of the act of adornment are ascribed in two verses to Allah (see verses Q6:108 and Q27:4). The Qur'ānic exegetes under consideration are in consensus that this kind of ascription cannot be understood as its literal meaning, but is better understood in light of human nature, which has the intrinsic quality of being inclined to aesthetic objects, whether they are acceptable and permissible or of the forbidden and false kind; Allah is the only One who has created this human quality, so the term refers to this inner quality, created by Allah, not to the act that shows it.[76] Quṭb comments that it is God who has moulded human nature in such a way that they love pleasure, good or bad, and each one thinks he has done well and defends his actions.[77] A similar view comes from Ibn 'Āshūr – that it is a human propensity to be tempted

[75] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 1:214f.; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 1:262f.
[76] See, Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 3:239; Ibid., 6:667f.; Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr,* 2:294; Ibid., 7:433; Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 2:898.
[77] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 2:1169; Ibid., 5:2627; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 5:232; Ibid., 13:85.

by what is aesthetic, but people exaggerate their impulse to pursue such pleasure without heeding God's guidance.[78] Elsewhere he makes the same point, claiming that it is God who endows human beings with the ability to makes their deeds seem fair and attractive even when they are not.[79] Thus, parallel with this view, it should be mentioned that although God moulds human nature with the ability to love and enjoys what is aesthetic, he does not leave people without guidance to the right path, in enjoying what he has created for their pleasure. This fact is asserted several times in the Qur'ān, for example in Q18:66. Another essential aspect should be addressed here, that as a matter of fact, as can be seen in the implications of verse Q7:32, the fundamental perspective in the Qur'ānic outlook of the notion of aesthetics is that the beauty of the world is created for human beings to enjoy and to satisfy their needs and it is, initially, permissible unless it contradicts God's commands. Hence, human beings are naturally created to love and adore these worldly enjoyments.

However, the adorning of negative kinds of aesthetics is ascribed mainly to *shayṭān* (Satan or the Devil) as can be seen, for example, in verses Q6:43, Q8:48, Q16:63 and Q29:38. What has been ascribed to the Devil in the Qur'ān is notably that he can make evil deeds seem good, fair and attractive, as in verse Q6:43, "If only they had learned humility when suffering came for Us! But no, their hearts became hard and Satan made their foul deeds alluring to them" and in verse Q27:24 "I found that she and her people worshipped the sun instead of God. Satan has made their deeds seem alluring to them, and diverted them from the right path: they cannot find the right path". Ibn 'Āshūr claims that this act by the Devil, of alluring human beings, is a metaphor for sins, evils and false deeds.[80] Moreover, in Qur'ānic discourse in the verse Q15:39, "Iblis then said to God, 'Because You have put me in the wrong, I will lure mankind on earth and put them in the wrong, all except Your devoted servants", the Devil declares that his weapon is to deceive and lead human beings astray from

[78] Ibn 'Āshūr, al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr, 2:294.
[79] Ibid., 7:433.
[80] Ibn 'Āshūr, al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr, 14:194.

God's guidance through *tazyīn* (adorning, alluring and tempting), according to the Qur'ānic text. Quṭb, in his interpretation of the same verse, states that it is *Iblīs* himself who has chosen the battleground, which is the earth, and he himself also states what he will use for a weapon. He will simply tempt mankind by making what is foul appear to be fair, so that they are tempted to engage in it.[81]

In a number of verses, the agent who tricks out evil, the negative kind of aesthetics, is left unnamed, as in verses Q 2:212, Q2:14 and Q10:12. Accordingly, the Qur'ānic exegetes selected for this study ask who makes these negative aspects seem fair and attractive. Two major answers to this question are presented by these commentators. In fact, these two tendencies are the same as presented above, which can be summarised as: first, the agent for making such negative aspects or false deeds seem fair and attractive is Allah, since he ingrained this natural inclination in human beings towards worldly allurements, with the emphasis by commentators, as mentioned earlier, that this ascription should be understood in terms of the realities and nature of human beings, created by none other than Allah. It is not that Allah tempts human beings to gratify their prohibited worldly desires.[82] Qur'ānic commentators, such as Quṭb and Riḍā, mention that this ascription to Allah can be understood only to say that human beings are tested by these prohibited deeds and desires to see how they will conduct themselves and in what way enjoy them, in light of God's commands.[83] Second, the one who makes things "alluring" is Satan, by his evil whispers, which make evil desires seem good and attractive.[84] Moreover, in explaining the purpose of not specifying who makes evil alluring, Qur'ānic commentators such as Ibn 'Āshūr claim that this Qur'ānic practice is intended to put great emphasis on the act rather than the one who commits it, in

[81]Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2141; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 10:274.
[82] See, Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 3:239; Ibid., 6:668-667; Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr,* 2:294; Ibid., 7:433; Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 2:898.
[83] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 3:1201; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 5:256f.; Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 3:246; Ibid., 7:670.
[84] See, Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr,* 2:294; Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 2:898; Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 3:239.

order to give a general warning and to attach criticism more to the behaviour than to the person. This being the case, the doer may take heed and return to his Lord and repent of the acts that he has been warned against.[85]

3.11 Conclusion

Since there is no unified definition that embraces the essence of aesthetics, investigating the qualities that characterise aesthetics may capture, to some extent, its nature. This chapter, however, analysed number of qualities that characterise the notion of aesthetic in the Qur'ānic text. The first of these qualities is that aesthetics embodies *itqān*. This characteristic is composed of various aesthetic qualities, such as order, harmony, proportion, balance, etc. The modern Qur'ānic commentators selected for this study assert that the quality of *itqān* is often mentioned, in Qur'ānic discourse, as a basis for aesthetics. The second characteristic mentioned is that the notion of aesthetics is defined by its impact on the beholder, i.e. pleasure. This aesthetic feature is more obvious in the connotations of the aesthetic terms derived from the root *b-h-j* mentioned in the Qur'ān: *bahjah* and *bahīj*. Another essential quality mentioned is that in the Qur'ānic view, aesthetics is inseparable from goodness. This relationship is obvious in the aesthetic terms derived from the root *ḥ-s-n*.

Furthermore, in the Qur'ānic view, aesthetics is intended in the origin of God's creation, and human beings, in turn, are invited to contemplate it. This leads, according to Qur'ānic discourse, to knowledge of the Creator. Aesthetics, indeed, is "a dimension of reality" not a subjective state in the eye of the observer.[86] In the Qur'ānic presentation of aesthetics, the universe is the vast realm of physical aesthetics. Aesthetics in the Qur'ānic view is not for emotional enjoyment or mere intellectual analysis; it is rather for religious

[85] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 3:180; Ibid., 8:46; Ibid., 26:93f.
[86] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 222.

functions. It has major roles in a number of religious aspects as shown above. Finally, the Qur'ān addresses an important perspective related to aesthetics. It relates to the delusive aspects of aesthetics; when it becomes alluring and causes human beings to deviate from the purpose of their creation according to the Qur'ān, i.e. worshiping Allah.

Another essential characteristic regarding the aesthetic speculations mentioned in Qur'ānic discourse is that aesthetics has two main domains, physical and moral. The next two chapters will focus on these two aspects. Chapter Four will investigates the physical and the ethical aesthetic in the Qur'ānic text.

CHAPTER FOUR

PHYSICAL AND ETHICAL AESTHETICS IN THE QUR'ĀN

4.1 Introduction

Having surveyed the main characteristics that constitute the concept of aesthetics in the Qur'ān, this chapter now turns to discussing two specific aspects of aesthetics in the Qur'ān: the physical and the ethical or moral dimension of the notion of aesthetics as presented in the Qur'ānic text.

4.2 Physical Aesthetics in the Qur'ān

It can be claimed that, as deduced from the Qur'ānic verses that touch on the notion of aesthetics, the physical aesthetics that can be discerned fall into three main groups, namely a group representing aesthetics in the natural world, or God's creation, which is the kind portrayed most often in the Qur'ān; a group evoking aesthetical experiences produced by human beings, or what might be called 'art'; and a group that reveals a different aspect of physical aesthetics, the descriptions of Paradise.

4.2.1 Aesthetics of the Natural World

In the Qur'ānic text, nature has a substantial role; it is used in support of the fundamentals of the Qur'ān: its laws, values, miracles, injunctions, narrations and its various teachings intended to guide humankind through worldly life.[1] These natural references pertain to the earth, the heavens and various natural phenomena.[2] Conversely, God swears by various

[1] Sayed Abdul Wadūd, *Phenomena of Nature and the Quran* (Lahore: Khalid Publisher, 2nd ed., 1994), 1.
[2] The abundance of natural imagery in the Qur'ān can be seen in many entries in a number of concordances with the Qur'ānic text.

aspects of the natural world in such verses as Q56:75-76, Q91:1-6 and Q86:1-3. Moreover, a number of Qur'ānic *suras* have titles naming natural objects and phenomena, as can be seen for example in *suras* such as *al-An'ām* (Livestock), *al-Ra'd* (Thunder), *al-Kahf* (The Cave), *al-Nūr* (Light) and *al-Qamar* (The Moon). In the Qur'ānic text, several verses invite humankind to learn about nature and reflect upon God's creation, for example verses Q10:101, Q51:20-21, Q29:20 and Q86:5. It has been claimed that nature in the Islamic worldview is a varied source of knowledge and the study of nature can be approached through many different disciplines derived from Qur'ānic discourse.[3] Nasr claims that several scholars in different disciplines have been attracted to the study of the natural world in this way, such as natural scientists, geographers, historians, theologians, philosophers and Sufis. The most important point is that in each discipline it is the Qur'ānic view of nature that is of significant interest.[4]

Muslim scholars point out that the natural references in the text appear to fulfil certain purposes in the Qur'ān. Accordingly, scholars such as Fauzia Tanveer Sheikh enumerate different functions for the natural imagery presented there. Some of these functions are: proof of the Creator and His oneness (Q7:54, Q39:62, Q40:62), illustrations of God's attributes (Q25:2, Q65:12), concrete presentations of abstract religious concepts and facts (Q2:255, Q9:118), proof of resurrection (Q13:2, Q35:9), incentives for human beings to believe and to be grateful (Q16:14, Q41:9-10), invitations to ponder and contemplate (Q3:190), examples of scientific truths (Q21:30, Q16:15) and tests of humankind's powers (Q31:20, Q22:65).[5]

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[3] Osman Bakar, *The History and Philosophy of Islamic Science* (Cambridge: Islamic Text Society: 1999), 63.
[4] See, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Studies: Essays on Law and Society, the Science and Philosophy and Sufism* (Beirut: Systeco Press, 1967), 56-61; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Socity, 1987), 92; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (London: George and Unwin Ltd, 1968), 94.
[5] Fauzia Tanveer Sheikh, 'Nature Imagery in al-Qur'an' (PhD thesis, Faculty of Advanced Integrated Studies and Research, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, 2005), 79-80. For more details, see Kāṣid Yāsir al-Zaydī, *al-Ṭabī'ah fī al-Qur'ān* (Amman: Dār Al-'Abrār, 2011), 201-355; Fauzia Sheikh, 'Nature Imagery', 80-88; Mehdi Golshani, *The Holy Quran and The Science of Nature* (Tehran: Islamic Propagation Organization, 1986), 87-94.

Accordingly, the fundamental characteristic of nature in the Qur'ānic view is that it points to the Creator, Allah Almighty, and that it is an indispensable element in attaining faith in the One God. References to nature as a sign of Allah are stressed throughout the entire Qur'ān, occurring, for example, in verses Q2:164, Q3:190, Q30:21, Q45:3 and Q51:20-21. Mehdi Golshani judges that studying nature is "analogous" to knowing Allah the Creator.[6]

Another essential aspect pertaining to natural imagery in the Qur'ān is its aesthetic appeal, which leads to the claim that nature as presented in the Qur'ānic text is a vital source of aesthetic experience. It can be noticed that throughout the Qur'ānic discourse, wherever the various forms of the universe are mentioned, their aesthetic attributes are presented clearly, including their perfections, accuracy, flawlessness and wonder. In addition, various verses, notably in the third chapter, encourage human beings to explore the aesthetics of the physical world and to contemplate the beauty of God's creation. Before proceeding to offer the presence of a natural aesthetic in the Qur'ān, an outline definition of nature *per se* should be attempted, since the element most frequently encountered in the text is in the field of 'natural aesthetics'. For the sake of brevity, no other concepts to express this kind of aesthetic, other than that included in the notion of aesthetics of nature, will be defined in detail. All other terms will be used, in a broader sense, rather as synonyms of the word 'nature'. These terms include the cosmos, universe, the physical world and the environment. The concepts of 'the universe' and 'the physical world', in particular, are the most frequent, along with the concept of 'nature'. Next comes a brief investigation of the Qur'ānic terminology and its implications, with the aim of identifying what Qur'ānic terms might be considered to express the concept of nature as understood in modern discussions.

[6] Mehdi Golshani, The Holy Quran and The Science of Nature, 81.

4.2.1.1 Definition of the Concept of 'Nature'

It is interesting that the word 'nature', according to its original meaning in classical dictionaries in Western thought, as well as in Arabic writings, came to mean something different from its original meaning. With regard to the Western tradition, Crawford notes that the concept of nature to designate the physical world with its various components is not mentioned in the early Greek tradition.[7] The root meaning of the current word 'nature,' corresponding to both the Latin *natura* and the Greek *phusis,* according to *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, is "essential qualities or innate character".[8] Curiously, the same root meaning is found in the classical Arabic lexicographical authorities discussed below. Most importantly, the meaning of the essential properties characterising a 'thing', which is carried in the original connotation of the word 'nature', is not used in contemporary discussions of 'nature'.[9] However, despite this fact, it can still be argued that a similar connotation can be inferred between the primitive meaning carried in the root of the word 'nature' and the sense in which it is employed in contemporary discussions. This implication is discussed below.

Various concepts of 'nature' have often been invoked in contemporary discussion; what follows will mainly be restricted to the basic group underlying these concepts, namely "all objects that are not human artefacts".[10] Thus, the word 'nature' designates the physical world with which human beings come into contact through their senses.[11] This definition encompasses all living creatures and natural phenomena.[12] It seems that this definition of the concept of nature can include even human beings as a part of nature. Moreover, when

[7] Donald W. Crawford, 'The Aesthetics of Nature and the Environment', in Peter Kivy, ed., *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 313.
[8] C. T. Onions, G. W. S. Friedrichsen and R. W. Burchfield, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 604.
[9] See also, Crawford, 'The Aesthetics of Nature and the Environment', 313.
[10] R. W. Hepburn, *Wonder and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), 34.
[11] Mehdi Golshani, The Holy Quran and The Science of Nature, 81.
[12] R. W. Hepburn, *Wonder and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), 34; Emily Brady, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 53.

applying the concept of nature, this study takes in the "aerial environment"[13] as well. Therefore, for the purpose of limiting the field of study, we can leave out several disputed natural objects and refer only to the range of different phenomena that merit attention in the context of aesthetics.[14] The concept of 'nature' will be used to designate the natural physical world, as opposed to human artefacts which are discussed separately. However, no precise dichotomy between these two concepts is intended.

4.2.1.1.1 The Qur'ānic Vocabulary and its Implications

As far as the Qur'ānic vocabulary is concerned, it should be mentioned that the Qur'ānic text does not have a single (unitary) abstract concept to signify the domain where a 'natural' aesthetic is represented. Instead, the Qur'ān has many different terms that come close to the meaning of 'nature' as used nowadays. A closer look at all the verses relating to the notion of 'aesthetics' reveals this tendency. The chapter next briefly investigates the Qur'ānic terms encountered in the context of physical aesthetics, including *ṭabī'ah*, *kawn*, *khalq*, *al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* and *al-samāwāt wa al-arḍ*.

The word *ṭabī'ah*, the term most often employed in the context of natural aesthetics, comes from the root *ṭ-b-'*, which is considered equivalent to the word 'nature' in Western traditions; it is not found in the Qur'ānic text.[15] However, the root itself occurs 11 times in Qur'ānic passages in different connotations, which are unconnected with the noun (denoting the physical world).[16] According to al-Rāghib and other Arabic lexicographers, derivatives from the root *ṭ-b-'* signify the meaning of "impressing a thing with the engraving of the signet and stamp … more general in signification than the word *khatam* [to seal] and more

[13] Brady, Aesthetics of the Natural Environment, 58.
[14] For more details see, for example, Brady, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment*, 55-59.
[15] The form of the word itself, '*ṭabī'ah*', occurs in the Arabic lexicon but in a different meaning.
[16] In all Qur'ānic occurrences, for example Q4:155, Q7:100, Q9:93, Q16:108 and Q47:16, the word *ṭaba'a* has a negative implication. It means God's punishment to set a seal upon the hearts of the unbelievers and those who immerse themselves in sins and did not follow the right path. Mustansir Mir, *Dictionary of Qur'ānic Terms and Concepts* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), 193.

particular than the word *naqash* [to engrave]".[17] Hence, Arabic lexicographers point out that the word *ṭabī'ah* from the same root means 'characterising a substance with certain qualities by habit and more particularly by creation'.[18] Therefore, the word *ṭabī'ah* or *ṭabī'ī* relates "to the natural, native, or innate, disposition, or temper, or other quality or property… resulting from the Creator's ordering of the natural disposition in the body [or any other substance]".[19] In later centuries, the meaning of *ṭabī'ah* developed from its primitive meaning and came to designate the natural world.

To sum up, it is plain that the meaning of the word 'nature' in the Arabic lexicon was at first similar to that seen in the West. In its primitive meaning in both traditions, it indicates the essential or characteristic properties of something. In later usage, it is used to mean the physical world or the universe. Hence, the connection between the word *ṭabī'ah* or nature in its primary meaning and its later usage in modern discussions can be inferred. In both usages, the classical and the modern, it denotes the basic or essential qualities that exist in some entity. In modern discussions it is used, in the broadest sense, to express the physical world in its innate disposition and essential qualities, as distinguished from the results of human interaction and from manufactured objects developed by human beings, which are often known as human artefacts.[20]

Another term widely employed by Muslims when referring to the entire universe is *kawn* (the universe). The word *kawn* itself, like the word *ṭabī'ah*, does not occur in the Qur'ān. However, *kawn* is etymologically related to the word *kun,* from the root *k-w-n*. Several derivatives of this root are mentioned in the Qur'ān; most important, in this context,

[17] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 301; Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 5:1823. See also, Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 29:2634f.; al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *'Umdat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 2:394.
[18] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān, 301; Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, 5:1824.
[19] ; Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, 5:1824.
[20] A definition of artefacts is given in Emily Brady, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment*, 54-55.

is the word *kun* which signifies the act of creation and bringing into existence.[21] However, Arabic lexicographers judge that the word *kawn* itself conveys the meaning of "engendered existence".[22] Hence, it can be argued that the word *kawn* is the closest term to the concept of *ṭabī'ah* or nature as used by modern thinkers. It has the same abstraction as is found in the concept of 'nature'. In addition, it means the physical world.

Another key term used in this context, is *khalq* or *khalq Allāh* (God's creation), a noun from the verb *khalaqa*. This term is the most frequently encountered in the context of God's act of creation. According to lexicographical authorities, the root *kh-l-q* signifies the act of measuring or determining proportions; bringing into being or existence and creating an invented model.[23] Furthermore, this term is used to "designate Creation in its entirety".[24] Al-Rāghib, for example, points out that the word *al-khalq* is also used in the sense of *al-makhlūq*, meaning 'what is created' or 'creature'.[25] Thus it is not surprising that the term *khalq* or *khalq Allāh* might come to represent the realm or the dominion of what God created, though when found in a Qur'ānic passage it refers more often to the act of bringing into existence than to the creatures themselves.

As far as the concept of *al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* (the life of this world) is concerned, it should be mentioned that the Qur'ān distinguishes between the usage of *al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* and the usage of *al-dunyāas* as a single word. It seems, from the context in which the word *al-dunyā* (this world) is mentioned, that it denotes the present world, in contrast to *al-akhirah* (the Hereafter, or the world to come).[26] In the same context, the status of human beings in this

[21] See, for example, Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 42:3959; al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 445; al-Fayrūzābādī, *Baṣā'ir Dhawī al-Tamyīz*, 4:939.
[22] Osman Bakar, 'Cosmology', in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1:322. See also, for example, al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 445; al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *'Umdat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 3:438; al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīfāt*, 185.
[23] See, for example, al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 157; Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2:799; al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-'Arūs*, 25:251.
[24] R. Arnaldez, 'Khalḳ', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New ed., IV:980.
[25] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 185; Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, 2:801.
[26] 'Ūdah Khalīl Abu 'Ūdah, *al-Taṭawwur al-Dalālī bayn Lughat al-Shi'r al-Jāhilī wa Lughat al-Qur'ān al-Karīm: Dirāsah Dalāliyyah Muqāranah* (Al-Zarqā': Maktabah al-Manār, 1st ed., 1985), 349.

life or the results of their deeds are not mentioned.[27] Hence, the word *al-dunyā* stands in contrast to the term *al-akhirah*.[28] This point applies to such verses as Q2:130, Q3:152, Q4:134 and Q33:57. However, the phrase *al-ḥayāt al-dunyā*, although it signifies this worldly life, suggests how human beings immersed in lust and enjoyment ignore their ultimate desires, having no eye for what God grants in the Hereafter.[29] In all verses in which the term *al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* is mentioned, this connotation is clearly underlined, for example in Q2:212, Q28:79 and Q29:64. Furthermore, it can be inferred from the various contexts of *al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* that this line of thought is emphasised, since they imply the same underlying attitude to *al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* in several different expressions. Verses Q3:14, Q9:38 and Q20:57, for instance, describe *al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* as *matā'* (enjoyment), or occasionally *matā' al-ghurūr* (illusory pleasure). Elsewhere, in four places, verses Q6:32, Q29:64, Q47:36 and Q20:57, *al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* is described in the phrase *la'ib wa lahw* (an amusement, diversion or attraction).

Most important, the word *zīnah*,[30] as an aesthetic term mentioned in the Qur'ānic text, is always connected to the concept of *al-ḥayāt al-dunyā*, with implications of the general Qur'ānic view of *zīnah*. In its present meaning, *zīnah* of all kinds is not what is meant to be the ultimate goal for humanity. Indeed, it is the lowest form of life, no more than an illusion of life unless it is used to move closer to the Creator, who creates it as a sign of His blessing to men and women leading their lives on earth. To sum up, although the concept of *al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* suggests the meaning of 'the present life', it is closer to something that means 'the human earthly viewpoint, earthly life'.[31] Thus, it does not possess the abstract meaning represented by 'nature'. The same applies to *al-dunyā*. Although it signifies the present world

[27] Ibid.
[28] Izutsu, *God and Man*, 86.
[29] Abu 'Ūdah, al-Taṭawur al-Dilālī, 349-350.
[30] The form *zīnah* (noun) whenever it appears comes to represent a physical aesthetic.
[31] Jane Mirella Amphlett, 'An Islamic Perspective on Nature: A Study of Seyyed Hossein Nasr' (M.Phil. diss., Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, 1987), 14.

in contrast to the world to come, as mentioned above, it still does not have the connotation of the physical world suggested by other previously mentioned concepts such as *kawn* and *ṭabī'ah*.

However, the expression *al-samā' wa al-arḍ* or *al-samāwāt wa al-arḍ* (the heavens and earth), which occurs repeatedly in the Qur'ānic text, is more relevant to the modern concept of nature. This Qur'ānic expression is extended in some verses to include *al-samāwāt wa al-arḍ wa mā baynahun*, meaning 'the heavens and the earth and all that is between them'. In the contexts in which these expressions occur, various natural objects and phenomena are mentioned; see, for example, verses Q13:3, Q15:16; Q16:3; Q22:5, Q25:61; Q26:7 and Q50:7. Hence, it can be argued that although all these references to nature can be attributed to the universe as a whole, it is still not the same abstraction as is found in the concept of nature.[32] Moreover, in a number of verses the expression *al-samāwāt wa al-arḍ* is mentioned in conjunction with the Qur'ānic word *mulk* or *malakūt* which relates more closely to the sense of 'possessing control over the heavens and the earth'. The word *malakūt* is used four times; two of them, with *al-samāwāt wa al-arḍ*, can be understood as 'God's world of corporeal things'.[33] Nonetheless, according to a number of Arabic lexicographical authorities, such as Al-Zabīdī and Ibn Manẓūr, it is linked with the meaning of 'possessing control or ownership'.[34]

To sum up, a number of different terms directly presented in the language of the Qur'ān, or by inference from a Qur'ānic origin, all signify different aspects of the meaning of nature as used in the present time. These concepts, despite their diversity, reflect the single unified truth of *tawḥīd*. They assert that all the creatures in *al-samāwāt wa al-arḍ* or in the general *malakūt* belong to one Creator, who made them, who owns them and who has control

[32] The same inference can be found in Amphlett, 'An Islamic Perspective on Nature', 15.
[33] Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, 8:3023.
[34] See, for example, Al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-'Arūs*, 27:350; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 6:4266; al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *'Umdat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 4:110.

over them. All the *khalq* are signs of *al-khāliq*. The chapter next investigates the aesthetic proper to nature, as found in Qur'ānic discourse, consisting of aesthetics in the heavens, the earth and human beings. It should be noted that references to the heavens and the earth are drawn from all their various components. The concept of the heavens will include the sun, the moon and the stars (verse Q25:6, Q13:2). Likewise, the concept of the earth will contain its animals, plants and mountains. The reason for limiting the beauty of the whole universe to the beauty of the heavens and the earth is that references to the whole universe in the Qur'ānic discourse are summed up in the phrase 'the heavens and the earth' or sometimes 'the heavens and the earth and all that is between them'. Moreover, the expression 'the heavens and the earth' is constantly stressed in the Qur'ānic text, referring to the most important components of the entire universe and they in turn stand for the whole universe. This can be seen in numerous verses, for instance Q5:97, Q6:1, Q9:36, Q10:101 and Q11:7.

4.2.1.2 Aesthetics of the Heavens

Numerous references are made in the Qur'ān to the heavens. The word *samā'* in its singular form occurs 120 times and the word *samāwāt,* the plural form, 190 times. The expression 'the heavens and the earth and all that is between them' is mentioned 20 times.[35] The Qur'ān also mentions various heavenly bodies, of which the sun, the moon and the stars are the most often mentioned; for instance, in verses Q7:45; Q10:5; Q25:61 and Q29:61. The word *burūj* occurs in three verses, Q15:16; Q25:61 and Q85:1, and each time it is mentioned in connection with its place, the heavens. Scholars, lexicographers and Qur'ānic exegetes differ over the precise meaning of the word *burūj* in its context. They point out that it means the stars or the great stars. It also means asterisms or constellations.[36] Another celestial body

[35] 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras*, 362-366.
[36] See, for example, Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 3:244; Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2132; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 10:260, Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 14:28f.

mentioned among the Qur'ān's references to the heavens is *shuhub* (meteor), mentioned in verses Q15:18, Q27:7, Q37:10 and Q72:8, 9.

Various other aspects of the heavens are mentioned in the Qur'ān, such as their creation, description, function and relationship to the earth.[37] The focus in this study is the Qur'ānic portrayal of the wonders of the heavens. A direct reference to the aesthetic aspects of the heavens can be seen in five verses: Q15:16, Q37:6, Q41:12, Q50:6 and Q67:5. In all five occurrences, the aesthetic aspects of the heaven are emphasised using the term *zīnah*. This term, as discussed in Chapter Two, above, expresses the meaning of beautifying or adorning, using other qualities. In the context of 'adorning' the heavens, four verses state that the sky is beautified by its planets and stars, using the term *maṣābīḥ* (lamps or lights) twice (verses Q41:12 and Q67:5) and also the words *kawākib* (stars) and *burūj* (constellations). The meaning of the word *maṣābīḥ* can be worked out from the two other words, *kawākib* and *burūj*, which suggest its meaning. Here, *maṣābīḥ* means stars.[38] Hence, Qur'ānic exegetes draw attention to the usage of the word *maṣābīḥ* in two ways: they mention the reason that these stars and planets are an 'adornment' for the heavens, or more precisely the lower heaven; it is because of their light and brightness. This can be understood from the usage of the word *maṣābīḥ*.[39] They also mention that the Qur'ān states in verse (Q21:32), for example, that Allah "made the sky a well-secured canopy", so the usage of the word *maṣābīḥ* is consistent with heavens as a "canopy".[40]

At the same time, the beauty of the heavens can be understood from the repeated Qur'ānic references to the greatness, stability, untrammelled freedom and perfection in the creation of the heavens. These qualities can be seen, for example, in verses Q21:32, Q22:65,

[37] See, 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras*, 362-366.
[38] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 24:251.
[39] Ibid.
[40] See, for example, 'Abdullāh bin Aḥmad al-Nasafī, *Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Ḥaqā'iq al-Ta'wīl*, ed., Sayyid Zākariyyā (Mecca: Maktabah Muṣṭafā Nizār al-Bāz, n. d.), 4:1242; Muḥyī al-Dīn Darwīsh, *I'rāb al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wa Bayānuh* (Damascos, Beirut: Al-Yamāmah, Dār Ibn Kathīr, 3rd ed., 1992), 10:150.

Q25:61, Q40:57 and Q51:47. Hence, it may be said that, although all these qualities in the creation of the heavens presented in the Qur'ānic text are aesthetic characteristics and, in turn, sufficient to represent the beauty of the heavens, the Qur'ān directly emphasises the aesthetic aspects of the heavens as they are adorned and beatified for the sake of human beings. All these references assert that beauty is purposefully incorporated in the creation of the heavens and indeed in the entire universe. Furthermore, from a linguistic point of view, the aesthetic aspects are emphasised as deliberately part of the creation of the heavens, as verse Q67:5 shows, through using the particle of certainty (*laqad*) which is asserted by the emphatic prefix (*lām*) and through the subject pronoun (*nā*) in the verb *zayyannā* (we have adorned), spoken by Allah. This can also be found in verse Q15:16.[41]

Thus, modern exegetical discourse on the aesthetic aspects of the creation of heavens as presented in the Qur'ān seems to reveal a tendency to present the aesthetic aspects of the heavens as an intended purpose in creating the heavens. Accordingly, al-Sha'rāwī for example, in his interpretation of verse Q15:16, maintains that the value of beauty is intended in the creation of the whole universe, as a separate value alongside with the value of goodness or usefulness. He claims that an object might be useful and beneficial for humankind, but not necessarily beautiful. However, in God's creation the value of beauty is intended, in addition to its usefulness to human beings. He cites the example of the creation of stars and constellations. Beside their usefulness in guiding people on their way, they appear beautiful to us all.[42] In Quṭb's commentary, one notices that whenever he deals with aesthetic questions concerning the creation of the heavens, he pays a lot of attention to portraying their beauty. This tendency in Quṭb is justified in that, as discussed in Chapter One, he was more concerned than modern commentators are with the 'artistic beauty' of Qur'ānic imagery. In his interpretation of verse Q15:16, for instance, he states:

[41] See, for example, Bahjat 'Abd al-Wāḥid Ṣāliḥ, *al-I'rāb al-Mufaṣṣal li Kitāb Allāh al-Murattal* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n. d.), 12:89.
[42] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 12:7664.

> Undoubtedly, the sight of the stars in the sky is immensely beautiful. Such beauty is always renewed, emanating different aspects at different times, morning or evening, sunrise or sunset, a moonlit night or a moonless one, clear skies or overcast ones. Indeed, its beauty differs from one hour to the next, from one observatory or angle to another. Yet the sky is always awesome in its beauty. Look at that single star flickering at a distance, as though it is a beautiful eye, shining with the appeal of love. Those two other stars appear removed from the rest, as though they are two lovers whispering to each other, away from the crowd. Look around and you see clusters joining together here and there, as if they are a group enjoying a night out in the great and vast open space. They seem to come together or go their separate ways like those attending a night performance in the open air. The moon appears in full splendour one night, dreamy on another. Look also at this vast space that stretches way beyond what our eyes can see. It is all part of the beauty of this universe; a beauty we can only look at and enjoy, but about which we do not have the words and expressions to describe.[43]

In his interpretation of verses 15:16 and 50:6, he elaborates the beautiful image of the sky in much the same way.

4.2.1.3 Aesthetics of the Earth

In the Qur'ān, there are numerous references (more than 450) to the earth. In fact, the word *arḍ* (earth) in a Qur'ānic context is not applied merely to the terrestrial body of the planet Earth as opposed to the heavens, although this is its primary meaning. It is used in several senses, according to the lexicographers. Al-Fayrūzābādī, for instance, gives 14 meanings for the word *arḍ* as mentioned in the Qur'ān.[44] Furthermore, Badawi and Abdel Haleem identify five meanings of the same word in a Qur'ānic context: as the earth (Q16:3); land, soil (Q36:33); ground (Q50:44); country (Q20:57) and domain (Q29:56).[45] However, the focus of this study will be on the verses in which the word *arḍ* is given its primary meaning (with the definite article *al*) as distinguished from the heavens. This also includes the verses in which *arḍ* takes on the meaning of land/soil. The discussion now moves on to the aesthetic aspects of Qur'ānic discourse concerning the earth. First, the discussion looks at the Qur'ānic

[43] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 6:3633f.; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 17:137f.
[44] Al-Fayrūzābādī, *Baṣā'ir Dhawī al-Tamyīz*, 2:54-56.
[45] Badawi and Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage, 25.

references to the beauty of the earth in general. Then it considers the aesthetic aspects of the different terrestrial elements, that is, the aesthetic aspects of plants, animals, water and mountains as presented in the Qur'ān.

Regarding the Qur'ānic references to the beauty of the earth in general, it can be claimed that the sense of them is presented mainly through the repeated Qur'ānic assertions of the earth's perfection and its usefulness to man. This includes the Qur'ānic description of the earth and its being made manageable, spread out and suitable for serving the needs of mankind. These meanings are found in verses such as Q2:22, Q43:10, Q67:15, Q71:19, Q77:25 and Q78:6. In addition, the Qur'ān mentions in several verses the diversity of the earth's elements or features, such as rivers, plants and mountains. These references can be seen in verses such as Q13:3, Q15:19 and Q27:61. In this regard, it can be noted that, although the Qur'ān uses several terms to indicate the compatibility of the earth with human needs, which can, for example, be seen in the words *ma'āyish* (livelihood), *dhalūlā* (manageable) and *mihādā* (smooth). The aesthetic aspects of the earth using the aesthetic terms of the Qur'ān can be further discerned when evoking the beauty of different features of the earth, such as plants and animals. There are only three Qur'ānic passages where these aesthetic terms are mentioned in connection with the word *arḍ*. These can be found in verses Q10:24, Q15:39 and Q18:7. Generally, the description of the beauty of the earth comes from the aesthetic terms *zīnah* and *zukhruf*. In addition, the comments of the Qur'ānic exegetes on verses Q15:39 and Q18:7 mainly suggest that these terms do not refer to the physical aesthetic features of the earth; instead these exegetes understand the meaning of the word *arḍ* as 'worldly life', since *arḍ,* the earth, is the place where this life is led.[46] The only exception

[46] See, for example, al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 12:7703.

is in Ibn ʻĀshūr's interpretation of verse Q10:24.[47] He points out that the word *arḍ* can be understood in its literal meaning, besides its wider implication of the life of this world.

As mentioned earlier, the Qur'ānic portrayal of the aesthetics of the earth, using several aesthetic terms, is mainly concerned with different terrestrial features. Next, the chapter investigates in detail the Qur'ānic description of the beauty of plants, animals, minerals and mountains.

4.2.1.3.1 Beauty in Plants

No-one can fail to notice that the Qur'ān describes the beauty of plants in several *suras*. It is also obvious that in this context the Qur'ān draws attention to the way in which they benefit humanity. This occurs, for example, in verses Q10:24, Q23:20, Q24:35 and Q50:9. Furthermore, the Qur'ān lists other aesthetic characteristics in the creation of vegetable life, for instance symmetry, using the word *mawzūn,* as in verse Q15:19, and variety, using the word *karīm,* as in verses Q26:7 and Q31:10. Hence, the word *karīm* does not signify variety alone, but also means a variety of fine and noble vegetation, as agreed by Qur'ānic commentators.[48] Indeed, the same quality of variety in type, shape and taste is stated in verse Q6:99, "It is He who sends down water from the sky. With it We produce the shoots of each plant, then bring greenery from it and from that We bring out grains, one riding on the other in close-packed rows. From the date palm come clusters of low-hanging dates and there are gardens of vines, olives and pomegranates, alike yet different. Watch their fruits as they grow and ripen! In all this there are signs for those who would believe". The same impression of variety in vegetation is given in verse Q13:4. In other verses, the beauty of the varied colours of plants is mentioned; see verses Q16:13 and Q35:27.

The Qur'ān gives special attention to the impact of the beauty of plants on the beholder. This aesthetic aspect is emphasised directly by the words *bahjah* in verse Q27:60

[47] Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al*-Tanwīr, 11:142f.
[48] Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 19:101; Al-Shaʻrāwī, *Tafsīr al-Shaʻrāwī*, 17:10542.

and *bahīj* in verses Q22:5 and Q50:7. Ibn ʻĀshūr, in his interpretation of verse Q22:5, observes that the description of the pleasant feeling of looking at a plant is distinguished from the plant as illustrating God's omnipotent creation of plants and gardens. Hence, this description conveys that the blessing of beauty is one of the greatest blessings that God bestows on human beings.[49] Al-Shāmī brings out the same point when stating that the reference to 'delight' in verse Q27:60 ("We cause gardens of delight to grow") is intended independently to indicate that such beauty is deliberately placed in the universe.[50] Another point worth mentioning here, which is made in several places in al-Shaʻrāwī's commentary, is that the Qur'ān, in different verses, emphasises the aesthetic sense in that Allah created the world for all human beings, but there is no compulsion to ponder and reflect upon it. The beauty in what God creates is everywhere, whether or not people own things or benefit from them.[51] Al-Shaʻrāwī, like other commentators such as Quṭb, contends that human beings have basic needs to satisfy, one of which is their need to reflect on and contemplate beauty.[52] In verse Q6:99, for example, the Qur'ān asks human beings to contemplate the beauty of plants before seeking any benefits from them. Whilst it is true that contemplating beauty is not mentioned directly in this verse (Q6:99), it can still be understood from the Qur'ānic command to contemplate plants' growth: "watch their fruits as they grow and ripen". This understanding, in this specific verse, is in conjunction with the Qur'ānic command to reflect upon the beauty of plants in other verses mentioned earlier.

To sum up, the Qur'ānic expression of beauty in the creation of plants is presented in different images. It includes portraying the shapes, tastes and colours of various types of plant, and also references their beneficial qualities for humankind. The feeling of pleasure caused by seeing the beauty of plants is much emphasised. All this loveliness in growing

[49] Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 17:204.
[50] Al-Shāmī, al-Ẓāhirah al-Jamālyyah, 136.
[51] Al- Shaʻrāwī, *Tafsīr al-Shaʻrāwī*, 6:9713-9714.
[52] Ibid., 6: 3827-3828; Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2161; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 11:10.

plants is to the Qur'ān like an adornment for the earth. In verse Q10:24, "But when the earth has taken on its finest appearance and adorns itself", the meaning of the finest appearance and the adornment of the earth refers to its plants, as mentioned at the beginning of the same verse. The Qur'ānic exegetes mention that in this verse the earth, with its lovely appearance and its finest adornments, looks metaphorically like a bride waiting for her happiest night.[53]

4.2.1.3.2 Beauty in Animals

In the Qur'ānic discourse relating to the creation of animals, what several verses emphasise is that Allah created them for humankind to enjoy their aesthetic qualities no less than their other benefits. This purpose is directly mentioned in verse Q16:6, using the word *jamāl,* and in verse Q16:8 using the word *zīnah*. In verse Q3:14, the Qur'ān demonstrates that the enjoyment of horses and cattle, among other worldly pleasures, is one of the delights of this life.[54] Verse Q35:28 refers to their diversity of colour and verse Q2:69 speaks of the impact on the beholder of the beautiful colour of the cow of the Children of Israel. Moreover, the Qur'ān demonstrates their benefits to humanity in various verses, such as Q16:5-8, Q16:80 and Q22:36

In verse Q16:6, which is the only verse in which the aesthetic term *jamāl* has a physical meaning, it is notable that the focus of the commentators' interpretations is on the impact of the aesthetic scene of the cattle returning from pasture. This impact can be noted in the pleasure of such a scene, which is felt by anyone who looks at them and in the feeling of power and wealth in owning them. It is worth mentioning here that the uses of the pronoun *lakum* ('you' or 'for you') implies that what is meant here is the human aesthetic enjoyment of this kind of scene. Furthermore, in the same context, verse Q16:8 uses the aesthetic term *zīnah* instead, to describe the aesthetic appeal of the creation of horses, mules and donkeys. Accordingly, as mentioned in Chapter Two, al-Shanqīṭī explains that, because Arab take

[53] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 11:143; Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 3:1775; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 9:47.
[54] Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 2:30.

pride in their horses and camels, in the eyes of others they are a kind of adornment of the owner.

4.2.1.3.3 Beauty in Mountains and Minerals

The last aspect of the beauty of the earth's features to be mentioned here is that relating to the physical environment of mountains and minerals. With regards to the aesthetic aspect of the creation of mountains, it is noticeable that the diversity of colour in the mountains is one of the main themes elaborated by the Qur'ān to evoke the beauty in the creation of mountains. This diversity in the colour of mountains is mentioned in verse Q35:27.

With regards to water, which gets a lot of attention in the Qur'ān, it can be argued that the first aesthetic aspect of water in the Qur'ān is the variety of its forms. Here, one finds a number of references to seas, rivers, streams, rains and springs, for example. This occurs in verses such as Q2:60, Q13:3, Q14:33, Q16:4, Q17:66, Q18:33, Q26:134 and Q36:34. Moreover, the Qur'ān refers to the sea as a source of ornaments to be worn: pearls and corals, as can be seen in verses Q16:14 and Q55:22, for example. The Qur'ān refers to two different but beautiful seascapes: one sweet and one salty, with a barrier between them. This wonderful image occurs in verses Q25:53, Q27:61, Q35:12 and Q55:19. Another aesthetically pleasing Qur'ānic image relating to the sea is that of ships "cutting through its waves" in verses Q2:164, Q10:22, Q16:14 and Q35:12, for example. Quṭb, in his comments on verse Q16:14, draws attention to the aesthetic aspects of this scene. He points out that the reference to ships ploughing through the waves hints at an aesthetic element and satisfies a human desire.[55]

4.2.1.4 Beauty in the Creation of Human Beings

It should be noted here that the Qur'ān, when referring to the creation of human beings, frequently uses a number of aesthetic terms reflecting that human beings, according to the usage of these certain terms, are objects of special wonder and a subject of divine care. These

[55] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2163; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 11:13.

terms are *aḥsan* (to make beautiful, to do well, to perfect), *sawwā* (to fashion, to form and to shape) and *ṣawwara* (to shape and to form).[56]

The aesthetic term *aḥsan,* derived from the root *ḥ-s-n*, occurs three times in the context of the creation of human beings, namely verses Q40:64, Q64:3 and Q95:4. Another usage, of the different but linked derivative *ḥusn,* is found in verse Q33:52 to describe the beauty of women. As discussed in Chapter Two, this term indicates an objective aesthetic quality. Interestingly, in the Qur'ānic discourse no other derivatives from the same root, expect the terms *aḥsan* and *ḥusn* mentioned above, are used to describe any other aspect of physical aesthetics. However, the only usage is of the term *aḥsan*, which occurs in verse Q32:7, to indicate that the entire universe is not only perfect but exhibits aesthetic aspects. According to such Qur'ānic exegetes as Ibn 'Āshūr and Quṭb, the interpretation of the above verses (Q40:64, Q64:3 and Q95:4) assumes that the usage of the word *aḥsan* denotes that human beings are perfect and their creation combines perfection with beauty.[57]

Another term that denotes aesthetic sense, which is used in the context of the creation of humankind, is *ṣawwara*. It occurs in five verses, all of which refer to human beings. This can be seen in verses Q3:6, Q7:11, Q40:64, Q64:3 and Q82:2. According to Ibn 'Āshūr, it means having the status of perfection in the act of creation. This perfection applies to the physical appearance of human beings as well as all the other qualities bestowed by God.[58] In a different context, verse Q40:64 states that the verb *ṣawwara* denotes the status of divine care.[59]

[56] The term *ṣawwara* is mainly restricted in the Qur'ān to the creation of human beings (in verses such as Q40:64 and Q64:3). The other two terms are used in the context of the creation of other creatures (the heavens for instance in verse Q2:29). What is meant here is that these terms are commonly used in the context of the creation of human beings. In addition, the frequent usage of these terms in the Qur'ān is in the context of the creation of human beings in contrast to other creatures.
[57] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 28:265; Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 6:3585; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 17:49f.
[58] Ibn 'Āshūr, al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr, 8:36.
[59] Ibid., 24:191.

4.2.2 Aesthetics of Artefacts

Another aspect of physical aesthetics mentioned in the Qur'ān is the beauty produced by human beings. The Qur'ān refers to various artefacts, by which it means objects produced by humans, which merit some of the aesthetic terms discussed in this study, and there are other references to human artefacts that also have aesthetics implications. However, before discussing these Qur'ānic references to human artefacts, the Qur'ānic attitude to the production by human beings of aesthetic qualities in what is known as the arts should be considered.

4.2.2.1 Qur'ānic Attitude to Art

Taking into account all that has been discussed in previous chapters, it can be said that the Qur'ān is explicit in stating that the various aspects of aesthetics seen throughout creation are deliberately placed and integral parts of the whole universe, and are not in it by coincidence. As seen in a number of verses already cited, the aesthetic value of what God has created is present as one feature among others, such as utilitarian aspects. By this, the Qur'ān is acknowledging that aesthetic awareness is an intrinsic quality in human beings. However, at the same time it can be claimed that the Qur'ānic discourse on aesthetics is meant to fulfil this human need. What supports such a view is that, as mentioned in Chapter Two, several Qur'ānic passages encourage humans to enjoy these aspects and, most importantly, to ponder the aesthetic features all around them in God's creation. Perhaps the most important point to make here is that revealing God as Creator was the main purpose for aesthetic reflection on God's creation.

Perhaps the main understanding to be inferred from this is that aesthetics, in the Qur'ānic view, is not a passive belief, but rather an active value. Qur'ānic discourse does not stop at revealing aesthetic features in what God creates for human beings to enjoy; these include things which satisfy their basic needs as well as having the religious significance of

nurturing a belief in God. Instead, the Qur'ān asks human beings in general and Muslims in particular to produce aesthetic objects and make them an integral part of their life on earth. This meaning occurs in verse Q7:31, for example. In this verse, the Qur'ān addresses all human beings, not just Muslims, by saying "children of Adam"; this asserts that aesthetic features are intrinsic to the nature of human beings. Therefore, all humans are entitled to ornament and beautify themselves. With regards to the meaning of the ornamentation mentioned in this verse, scholars point out that a wider context can be inferred from these phrases, allowing Muslims to claim that they are entitled to put beautiful things all around them. According to Muḥammad 'Amārah, for instance, the word *masjid* (a Muslim's place of worship), mentioned in verse Q7:31, means in Islamic thought any place that is suitable for the prostrations of prayer. Thus, this means that all places are at all times a *masjid* for Muslims.[60] Consequently, Muslims are required to apply aesthetic features to every aspect of their life. Furthermore, Muḥammad Ḥusayin Faḍlallāh (d.1431/2010) mentions that the meaning of 'aesthetic' in verse Q7:31 extends to encompass all Muslim architecture.[61] Hence, it seems that these views of the meaning of ornamentation mentioned in verse Q7:31 are based on linguistic grounds, that is, on the meaning of the word *zīnah*. As discussed in Chapter Two, the word can be applied to all objects that are used to embellish and adorn. Another justification for this way of interpreting verse Q7:31 is derived from the exegetical principle that, in certain cases, what is considered in a text is the general meaning of a word or verse, not the specific reason or circumstance. Exegetes such as al-Rāzī apply this principle to the meaning of this verse.[62] They mention that, although this verse is applied to a specific circumstance, as mentioned in Chapter Three, its meaning embraces a wider context.

Another relevant passage that reveals the Qur'ānic attitude to aesthetics as being of active value to human beings can be seen in verse Q7:32. The underlying meaning of this

[60] Muḥammad 'Amārah, *al-Islām wa al-Funūn al-Jamīlah* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1991), 22.
[61] Muḥammad Ḥusayin Faḍlallāh, *Tafsīr min Waḥy al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 1998), 10:95.
[62] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr wa Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1st ed., 1981), 14:65.

verse is that it censures the prohibition of the adornments given by God.[63] On the significance of this verse, Riḍā points out that verses Q7:31-32 are the basic principle underlying the different aspects of human civilisation in the arts. He mentions that the human inclination to ornament objects, as well as being permissible and acceptable as a gift from God, inspires humans to apply aesthetic features to their civilisation.[64] With regards to *zīnah Allah* (the adornment by God or the adornment God has provided), the possessive construction mentioned in the same verse, Riḍā mentions that this possessive construction finds acceptance for adornment and raises it to a high or honoured status. It is a blessing from Allah which requires proper gratitude.[65] Another supporting idea derived from the same verse comes from the meaning of the Qur'ānic statement "God has provided". Riḍā states that this means that Allah has created the sources of aesthetic awareness and has taught humankind to use beautiful substances through their innate sense of appreciation and their intellectual ability to find out how to use them.[66]

One point to make here is that the Qur'ān, in linking human appreciation of aesthetic features on the one hand, and the human production of aesthetic objects on the other, refers to several sources that might yield different aesthetic aspects. Perhaps the most obvious one occurs in verses Q16:14, Q35:12 and Q55:19-23, where the Qur'ān refers to the sea as a source of different ornamental forms. The final point in this regard is that the Qur'ān states in verses Q21:80, Q34:11, Q34:13 and Q27:44, in reference to the Prophets David and Solomon, that even prophets contribute to the production of aesthetic objects. This study discusses this topic below.

[63] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 6:3585; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 3:1282; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 6:64.
[64] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 8:388f.
[65] Ibid., 8:388.
[66] Ibid.

4.2.2.3 Qur'ānic References to Art

With regards to Qur'ānic references to artefacts, these can be divided into two types, as shown by the verses related to the Qur'ānic discourse on aesthetics mentioned earlier. The first group mentions references to human artefacts using aesthetic terms. The second group refers to verses that have implications for artists.

4.2.2.3.1 Direct References to Art Using Aesthetic Terms

It can be argued that the word *zīnah* in the first category is the most frequently used term in connection with human artefacts. It occurs in such verses as Q10:88, Q18:46, Q20:87, Q24:31, Q28:60 and Q33:28. To recall the previous interpretations of the meaning of the word *zīnah* in the Qur'ān, mentioned in Chapter Two, it may be noticed that the word *zīnah* has a very wide semantic application, which can apply to almost every human artefact. The implication of this, according to al-Sha'rāwī in his commentary on verse Q18:46, is that this usage of *zīnah* comes from the category of *kamāliyyat* or *taḥsīnat* (embellishments or improvements), which comes next to *ḍarūriyyāt* (necessities) in the division of Islamic legislation. Al-Sha'rāwī says that *zīnah* of this kind brings comfort and ease to human beings. Furthermore, he asserts that the most important duties in this life are to worship God and to act according to His law.[67] Another meaning that can be applied to the use of the word *zīnah* when referring to human artefacts, as seen in Chapter Two, is that human beings can be traced by such aesthetic aspects. Their trail can be discerned in different ways which, for example, can be inferred from their use, or even their production of objects according to God's commands as, for instance, with the trail of Korah mentioned in verse Q28:79. Men should indeed feel proper gratitude for this blessing, since it is conferred by God to satisfy human needs.

[67] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 14:8925f.

Other Qur'ānic references to human artefacts use the word *zukhruf,* as in verses Q17:93 and Q43:35. From the semantics of the word *zukhruf* mentioned in Chapter Two, it can be seen to denote in particular the kind of *zīnah* that is made of gold. Furthermore, the word *ḥilyah* signifies ornaments.[68] It also signifies any ornaments used to ornament a woman.[69] This term occurs in verses Q7:148, Q13:17, Q16:14 and Q35:12. The verbs *yuḥallawn* and *ḥulū* from the same root mean to adorn[70] and appear in contexts referring to aesthetic aspects in the Hereafter. According to lexicographers, the word *rīshan,* mentioned once in verse Q7:26, signifies ornaments and beauty.[71] It also denotes fine clothing and garments.[72] To sum up, all these Qur'ānic references signify objects that have aesthetic appeal, using terms that signify beauty and ornamentation, according to Arabic lexicons.

4.2.2.3.1 Implications for Visual Art

The next discussion will investigate the other type of Qur'ānic reference to human works of art, specifically what is known as visual art. This category embraces everything that might be considered a Qur'ānic reference or allusion to the visual arts. In this regard, Oleg Grabar claims that there are two kinds of reference in the Qur'ān to the visual arts: direct references and indirect allusions to them.[73] Of the direct references, Grabar proposes three categories, the first of which consists of Qur'ānic words referring to forms of manufacture, in particular those referring to construction. All these terms are mentioned in verse Q34:12-13, namely *'ayn alqiṭr* (fountain of molten brass), *maḥārīb* (palaces), *tamāthīl* (statues), *jifān* (basins) and *qudūr* (cauldrons). Another significant term in this context, which according to Grabar reflects the Qur'ānic references to works of art, is *ṣarḥ* (hall, palace or pavilion). The second categories comprises Qur'ānic terms relevant to forms of settlement. These are *qaryah*,

[68] See, for example, al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *'Umdat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 1:449; Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2:635.
[69] Ibid.
[70] See, for example, al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *'Umdat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 1:449; Badawi and Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage*, 232-233.
[71] See, for example, Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 17:1792; Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 3:1200.
[72] Badawi and Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage, 391.
[73] Grabar, 'Art and Architecture', 162.

madīah, *masākin*, *balad*, *bayt*, *dār* and *qaṣr,* each of which refers with different connotations to a kind of settlement. The last category includes the three words *masjid, miḥrāb* and *ṣalawāt,* referring to places of worship. Among the indirect references, Grabar includes the Qur'ānic description of Paradise because this has an impact on the Qur'ānic vision of works of art. He argues that these references illustrate different aspects of architecture and planning.[74] A fuller discussion of the aesthetic aspects to be found in the Qur'ānic description of Paradise may be found in the next section.

Another related view on Qur'ānic references to the visual arts is presented by Gonzalez. In her investigation of the Qur'ānic references to the aesthetic dimension to be found in verse Q27:44, she asserts that the subject of the same verse constitutes "an artefact in an architectural space".[75] Further, she argues that the Solomonic aesthetic pattern described in the same verse becomes an artistic model that impacts on later Islamic architecture, and she goes on to cite various instances from Islamic history, such as what remains of a medieval residence in Raqqa in Syria.[76]

The point to be noted here is that both Grabar and Gonzalez build their arguments on the artistic dimension of the Qur'ānic, mainly the story of Solomon and the aesthetic aspects of what the *jinn* made for him, mentioned in verse Q34:13, and through the architecture of the palace that he built when he invited the Queen of Sheba to visit him; see verse Q27:44. From this perspective, other Qur'ānic references can also be claimed to have indirect implications for art, for instance verses Q7:74, Q15:82 and Q26:149. These verses refer to the artistic power of sculptures from ancient civilisations. Likewise, a few artistic aspects, in particular concerning architecture, can be deduced from the Qur'ānic passages that refer to the ruins of ancient cities, mentioned in verses Q34:15 and Q89:715.

[74] Ibid., 1:162-168.
[75] Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam*, 27.
[76] Ibid., 32.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that, despite the significance of these passages for the claim that the Qur'ān alludes, whether directly or indirectly, to aesthetic concepts, it must be noted that the contexts of these passages have nothing to do with such arguments.[77] The references to the various artefacts mentioned in the parable of Solomon, for instance, are not included for mere artistic purposes or as works of art produced by humans or even spirits. They are instead manifestations of the special favours bestowed by God upon Solomon. This understanding is asserted in the conclusion of the same verse, which enjoins a proper gratitude for God's grace. With regards to verses Q7:74, Q15:82, Q26:149, Q15:82 and Q26:149 they share a context which demonstrates God's punishment for any 'architectural civilisation' that rejects God's commands and shows arrogance before God's revelation.[78]

Therefore it can be concluded that, although these Qur'ānic passages have some sort of implication relevant to the arts, it can still be claimed that the Qur'ān has little to say about artistic matters. Thus, the significance of these references is more about religion, rather than artistic for art's sake. Indeed, it can be argued that these scattered Qur'ānic references to what might be considered artistic matters do not lead any sort of artistic theory to be derived from the Qur'ān, or any detailed Qur'ānic account of art. It is rather through basic observations that we can infer a Qur'ānic attitude to art; some of these are mentioned above and others will be stated later. This Qur'ānic attitude towards art, notably the visual arts, has been repeatedly questioned and much has been written about it over the years.[79] Perhaps the most striking issue arising from it is its account of the representation of living creatures by artists. In this respect, no detailed discussion of the Islamic perspective on this "key problem in Islamic

[77] Grabar mentions the significance of the Qur'ānic context in his argument on the Qur'ānic account of figurative representations. See, Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, rev. & enl. ed., 1987), 79.
[78] Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 6:114.
[79] See, for example, Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, 72-98; Alexandre Rapadpoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*, trans. Robert Erich Wolf (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1979), 48-59; Lois Lamyā' al-Fārūqī, *Islam and Art* (Islamabad: National Hijra Council, 1985), 16-19; 'Amārah, *al-Islām wa al-Funūn al-Jamīlah*, 109-135; Mehmet Aga-Oglu, 'Remarks on the Character of Islamic Art', *The Art Bulletin* 36, no. 3 (September 1954): 191-200.

art"[80] will be offered, since it is frequently investigated in literature concerning Islamic art.[81] Rather, it is to be remarked here that, despite the scholarly dispute over the lawfulness of figurative representations, the Qur'ān never directly prohibits such representations. The Qur'ānic references, commonly to statues and representations of figures, are in the context of the condemnation of idol worship, as seen in verses Q5:90, Q6:74, Q7:138, Q14:35, Q21:57 and Q22:30. Another Qur'ānic passage quoted in questioning the lawfulness of the representation of images and figures is verse Q3:49. This verse is actually mentioned in the context of Jesus' miracle given to him from God as a sign to the "Children of Israel". The last verse to mention in this context is verse Q34:13: "They made him whatever he wanted-palaces, statues, basins as large as water troughs, fixed cauldrons". In fact, this verse is utilised by both proponents and opponents of the view that the Qur'ān allows representational art that depicts living creatures. Graber points out that the statues mentioned in this verse are not identified as artistic creations. They are rather "divine symbols of the uniqueness of Solomon's position".[82] In addition, a number of Muslim scholars mention that the word "statues" in verse Q34:13 might not necessarily imply the image of human beings or animals, which the majority of Muslim scholars agree is forbidden in Islam.[83] The word 'statues' might refer to portrayals of plants, since it is mentioned in the general sense. Moreover, Muslim scholars argue that if making statues was lawful at that time, it was abrogated by the *sharī'ah* (law) of the Prophet Mohammad.[84] Therefore, the forbidding of figural representation is stated clearly in the tradition of the Prophet Mohammad, which is generally accepted as the source for Islamic law. Hence, detailed discussion on the condemnation of

[80] Rapadpoulo, Islam and Muslim Art, 48.
[81] See, for example, Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, 81-103; Richardson, 'Tawheed in Islamic Art', 209-228; Thomas W. Arnold, *Painting In Islam: A Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2nd ed., 2004), 1-40; Alexandre Rapadpoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*, 48-59.
[82] Grabar, The Formation of Islamic Art, 82.
[83] See, for example, Hilmī 'Abd al-Hādī, 'Ḥukm al-Taṣwīr al-Mujassam mā lā Rūḥ lahu wa mā lahu Rūḥ fī al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah', *Majallat al-Najāḥ li al-Abḥāth* 13, no. 1 (1999): 168-186; Sayyid Abul A'lā Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān*, 883; Ṣaliḥ bin Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, *Ḥukm Mumārasat al-Fann fī al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah: Dirāsah Fiqhiyyah Muwāzanah* (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1st ed., 1997), 357-359.
[84] Ibid.

figural imagery derived from the Prophetic *ḥadīth* is beyond the scope of this chapter. An extended analysis of the Prophet tradition in this context can be found in literature concerning Islamic art and that dealing with the jurisprudence of figural imagery in Islam.[85]

To sum up, it can be argued that, while the Qur'ān clearly demonstrates the aesthetic aspects of the natural world, it appears to have limited references to the aesthetic features of human products, in short to 'art' as used in this study. Gathering all the dispersed Qur'ānic references to 'art' into one comprehensive picture helps us to define the overall Qur'ānic attitude to this kind of physical aesthetic in some final remarks. First of all, it must be admitted that the Qur'ān, through its verses, conveys aesthetic awareness and, in turn, urges human beings, and the followers of Islam in particular, to develop an aesthetic sense. Indeed, the pursuit of aesthetics is enjoined by Qur'ānic discourse, which asks them to ponder God's creation. Furthermore, the Qur'ān, through all its references to the human production of aesthetic objects, demonstrates that human beings are allowed to enjoy the beauty that God has created for them and, most important, that they are required to apply it to what is around them and to be aesthetically oriented. Nonetheless, the Qur'ān in its text guides human beings to a proper attitude towards aesthetic productions. Hence, it can be claimed that the most obvious implication for humans is that they should be thankful to God for this great blessing and should use it to believe in Him and, consequently, to act according to God's commands. Thus, all these references reveal that there is no Qur'ānic objection to the arts or indeed the artefacts themselves. Indeed, they show a general acceptance of the appropriate use of art. Finally, although the Qur'ān praises proper hand-made aesthetic products and shows its approval, human beings are directed to turn to the sublime aesthetic aspects of Paradise, which are discussed in the following section.

[85] See, for example, Richardson, 'Tawheed in Islamic Art', 209-224; al-Ghazālī, *Ḥukm Mumārasat al-Fann*, 347-365; Hilmī 'Abd al-Hādī, 'Ḥukm al-Taṣwīr al-Mujassam', 168-186.

4.2.3 Aesthetics of Paradise

The last aspects of physical aesthetics to be mentioned here are those of the Qur'ānic imagery of Paradise, which is commonly referred to as *jannah* (Garden) in the singular, or *jannāt* in the plural. The physical aesthetics of Paradise are among the characteristics of its depiction. Other characteristics are those of the last abode: peace, pleasure, purity, perfection, spontaneity and immortality.[86] However, the Qur'ānic description of the last abode of the righteous[87] includes numerous references to various aesthetic qualities related to its landscape (of a garden), those who abide there and the various blessings and delights that they will enjoy, to be detailed below. Before going further, it should be mentioned that the discussion of the physical aspects of paradisiacal aesthetics relates to another basic conception of the delights of Paradise in particular, and to the whole of the afterlife. Thus, Islamic thought has questioned, over the years, whether the various delights of Paradise as presented in the Qur'ānic text and in the Prophetic tradition should be understood literally or symbolically. This means whether the Qur'ānic references to the delights of Paradise represent sensual or spiritual pleasures. While the disputation on this issue represents a variety of speculation, it may be sufficient, given the constraints of space, to give a general view of this disputed issue in the Muslim traditions and to omit a more detailed discussion of it.[88]

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[86] Harry B. Partin, 'Paradise', in Lindsay Jones, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2nd ed., 2005), 10:6983.

[87] This definition of Paradise is quoted from Leach Kinberg, 'Paradise' in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 4:12; Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999; reprint, London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 96.

[88] A detailed discussion can be obtained from Jane Idleman Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 83-142; Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an*, 100-109; Kinberg, 'Paradise', 17-18; Muḥammad 'Abdullāh Drāz, *Dustūr al-Akhlāq fī al-Qur'ān: Dirāsah Muqāranah li al-Akhlāq al-Naẓariyyah fī al-Qur'ān*, trans. and ed. ' tr al-Ṣabūr Shāhīn (Beirut: Mū'sasat aRisālah, Kuwait: Dār al-Buḥūh al-'Ilmeyyah, 1973), 378-387; Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 3:248; Ibid., 7:474.

In discussing this issue, scholars tend to divide Muslim thought into different categories according to the common traditions handed down from earlier times.[89] Others prefer to express Muslim thought on this topic in terms of classical and modern approaches.[90] Hence, several tendencies can still be distinguished, while there are also a few exceptions to the general position at any given time. Thus, it can be claimed that the predominant understanding has been that the delights of Paradise were of a sensual nature.[91] Indeed, it can still be argued that, although the other tradition which exclusively 'spiritualises' the joys of paradise continues to be stressed by various writers, the view of its corporeal character has always been upheld in the belief of contemporary Muslims.[92] However, while scholars represent this view of the material reality of its pleasures, they have generally maintained that these sensual characteristics are not identical to those of the world we know.[93] They have in fact nothing in common except their names.[94] Scholars claim that the reality of the recompense of the Hereafter will be beyond our current comprehension and the real nature of these delights, according to verse Q32:17, "is kept hidden".[95] But this belief affirms the fact that in the Qur'ānic passages there are explicit references to spiritual delights. These can be drawn, for example, from verses Q2:158,245, Q10:26, Q14:23, Q18:108, Q33:47, Q35:34-35, Q43:68, Q66:8, Q76:22, Q78:35 and Q98:8.[96] According to a number of Qur'ānic verses, the spiritual rewards mentioned in the above verses are infinitely superior and greatly exceed our

[89] Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition online, s.v. 'Ḏjanna', http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/djanna-COM_0183 (accessed 3rd March 2013).
[90] Smith and Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding*, 63-146.
[91] Smith and Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding*, 84; Ibid., 135; Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an*, 100.
[92] Feras Q. Hamza, 'Afterlife', in Lindsay Jones, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2nd ed., 2005), 1:162.
[93] Smith and Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding*, 84.
[94] Maḥmūd Shaltūt, *al-Islām 'Aqīdah wa Sharī'ah* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 18th ed., 2001), 42.
[95] See, for example, Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-Arwāḥ ilā Bilād al-Afrāḥ* (Amman: Dār al-Fikr, n. d.), 255-260; 'Omar Sulymān al-Ashqar, *al-Jannah wa al-Nār* (Amman: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1991), 147-149; Smith and Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding*, 84; Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an*, 109.
[96] See, for example, Smith and Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding*, 83-142; Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an*, 100-109; Kinberg, 'Paradise', 17-18.

sensual experiences. This can be seen in verses Q3:15 and Q9:72 for example. In fact, to examine this understanding of the Qur'ānic portrayal of the delights of Paradise reveals a median position between the two main traditions: the exaggeratedly sensual and the extremely spiritual.[97] Hence, Abdel Haleem points out that an interpretation of the rewards of Paradise in both the physical and spiritual senses is the most fitting to the Qur'ānic style, which habitually addresses both the material and spiritual nature of human beings.[98]

Therefore, whether these aspects of the delights of Paradise are interpreted literally or symbolically, it should be noted that they are presented in the Qur'ān in a concrete form. The corporeal delights of Paradise are the most frequently elaborated in Qur'ānic discourse. In this context, it can be seen that the elements of natural aesthetics, as well as artistic aesthetics, are employed in the Qur'ān's depiction of eternal Paradise. Ian Netton states that "the celestial paradise is made credible by reference to terrestrial nature".[99] With regards to the artistic aspects, Grabar comments that various architectural features are deployed in the Qur'ānic image of Paradise.[100] This combination of natural and artistic aspects can be viewed as typical of the Qur'ānic style. However, the visual representation in the Qur'ānic description, using familiar reality to express a reality of which humans have no experience, would make it comprehensible. This kind of concrete description, called *mathal*, as Abdel Haleem points out, is stated clearly in the Qur'ānic text, as can be seen, for example, in verses Q13:35 and Q47:15. Abdel Haleem adds that the Qur'ānic word *mathal* is usually translated as 'parable', 'similitude' and 'likeness'. All these translations signify "specific representations of things that belong to this world but are used to refer to the next".[101]

[97] See also, Smith and Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding*, 134.
[98] Abdel Haleem, Understanding the Qur'an, 106.
[99] Ian Netton, 'Nature as Signs' in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ā*n (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 3:533.
[100] Grabar, 'Art and Architecture', 165.
[101] Abdel Haleem, Understanding the Qur'an, 109.

In the following discussion, it would take too long to detail the Qur'ānic description of the physical aesthetics of Paradise. Instead, the essential characteristics will be outlined in two main categories: first, relating to the structure of the Paradise gardens; and second, relating to the inhabitants of Paradise and the various delights that they will enjoy. With regards to the landscape of Paradise, Behrens-Abouseif maintains that it is not "wild pure nature", but beautified with different artistic elements that resemble those created by artists in this world.[102] The gardens of Paradise, according to the Qur'ān, are lofty. This description occurs quite often, for example in verses Q25:10, Q88:10 and Q69:22. Another important element in the physical aesthetic of Paradise is water. Rivers are the most frequently mentioned feature. The Qur'ānic expression "gardens graced with flowing streams" recurs frequently, for example, in verses Q2:25, Q3:15, Q9:100 and Q16:31. In this context, the Qur'ānic passages mention rivers of different kinds, which can be seen in verse Q47:15: "rivers of water forever pure, rivers of milk forever fresh, rivers of wine, a delight for those who drink, rivers of honey clarified and pure, [all] flow in it". Apart from these rivers, the Qur'ān mentions running springs and fountains, as in verses Q55:46, Q44:52 and Q88:12 for example. Some of these 'paradisiacal springs' have specific names; for example, *salsabīl,* which occurs in verse Q76:18 and *tasnīm,* which occurs in verse Q83:27. The pavilions of Paradise where *ḥūr* (houris) shelter and the lofty dwellings with flowing streams are mentioned several times, in verses Q25:75, Q29:58, Q39:20 and Q55:72. Furthermore, the weather in Paradise is described as pleasant; as verse Q76:13 says, it has "neither scorching heat nor biting cold". Closely related to this is the spreading shade described in verses Q13:35, Q36:56 and Q76:13. The last aspect to be mentioned in this regard is the Qur'ānic depiction of the fruits of Paradise, among them date palms and pomegranates. The Qur'ānic

[102] Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture*, 46.

text describes the fruits in Paradise as "abundant fruits, unfailing, unforbidden" (verses Q56:32-33) and "clustered fruit within his reach" (verse Q69:23).[103]

With regards to the dwellers in Paradise, the Qur'ānic verses portray their status in Paradise and say much about the different delights that they enjoy. Three verses describe the faces of the righteous as they will display radiance and clarity when they see what God bestows on them for the rewards of Paradise. As mentioned in Chapter Two, this occurs in verses Q76:11, Q75:22 and Q83:24. Furthermore, the garments of the righteous in Paradise will be "green garments of fine silk and brocade", mentioned in verses Q18:31, Q22:23, Q35:33 and Q44:53. They will also be adorned with "golden bracelets and pearls". In addition to these lovely garments, the righteous "will be comfortably seated on soft chairs", as verse Q18:31 confirms. Verse Q36:56 says that "they and their spouses [will be] seated on couches in the shade". Their cushions will be "arranged in rows" as in verse Q52:20. Moreover, the blessed inhabitants of Paradise will be served by "everlasting youths [who] will go round among them" serving them "with glasses, flagons and cups," "silver plates and gleaming silver goblets" as mentioned in verses Q56:17-18 and Q76:15-16. The last aspect to be mentioned here is that of the *ḥūr* granted to the dwellers in the celestial paradise. It has been argued that the Qur'ānic sensual vision of houris in Paradise has caused disputes between theologians from different traditions.[104] The criticism of these delights of paradise is part of the general opposition to the other physical rewards of the Qur'ānic Paradise, as noted above. This difficulty of accepting the materialistic vision of these joys as the Qur'ān describes them has led to interpreting them metaphorically or spiritually. In several Qur'ānic passages, the *ḥūr* are described with different physical qualities. For instance, in verse

[103] This description is obtained mainly from the Qur'ānic verses describing Paradise. It can also be obtained from, for example, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-Arwāḥ*; al-Ashqar, *al-Jannah wa al-Nār*, 117-228; Kinberg, 'Paradise', 12-18.

[104] See, for example, Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 238; Kinberg, 'Paradise', 18; Maher Jarrar, 'Houris' in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ā*n (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 3:457.

Q44:54 they are described as having "large, dark eyes" and a similar description occurs in verses Q55:72 and Q52:20. In verse Q56:22 they are described "like hidden pearls" and in verse Q37:49 "like protected eggs".[105]

Another observation worth making is the occurrence of the most common Qur'ānic aesthetic terms, discussed earlier, in the context of the description of the delights in Paradise. It can be noted that the terms *jamāl* and *zīnah*, with the various derivatives of the latter, do not occur in the Qur'ānic imagery of Paradise. This can be understood in light of their linguistic meaning, as well as their usage in the Qur'ān, as discussed in previous chapters. The word *jamāl,* which does not occur in many contexts and has a mainly moral connotation, signifies in its physical sense a variation of the impact of aesthetics on those who experience them. However, this implication may be difficult to apply to the context of describing the various rewards in the heavenly Paradise. As the Qur'ānic passages indicate, all the blessed in Paradise will enjoy what pleasures God has granted them, whether sensual or spiritual. This can be seen in verses Q43:70 and Q30:15 for example. Furthermore, it is clearly stated in the Qur'ānic passages that the dwellers in Paradise will praise God for what he has bestowed upon them, as seen in verses Q10:10, Q35:34 and Q98:8. With regards to the most frequent term used in the Qur'ān to denote a physical aesthetic, and indeed a moral one, the word *zīnah* is not employed in any depiction of the delights of Paradise. It is obvious from this that the word *zīnah* comes to represent a quality added to a substance to enhance its aesthetic, which in some cases may have compensated for some sort of deficiency in its original aesthetic, as it does in a number of verses. Thus, both sets of connotations related to the usage of the word *zīnah* are unacceptable in the context of heavenly pleasures.

[105] This description is obtained mainly from the Qur'ānic verses describing Paradise. It can also be obtained from, for example, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ḥādī al-Arwāḥ*; al-Ashqar, *al-Jannah wa al-Nār*, 117-228; Kinberg, 'Paradise', 12-18.

However, the word *ḥusn* and the other derivatives from the same root are frequently used to describe the delights of the celestial paradise. These terms are employed to indicate the nature of the rewards to be enjoyed there. They are, according to Qur'ānic discourse, the most perfect, the most superior and the most enjoyable. All these meanings occur, for example, in verses Q3:14, Q3:148, Q18:3 and Q25:76. Furthermore, it can be claimed that the word *ḥusn* and the other related derivatives do not occur in Qur'ānic discourse with any negative connotations or unpleasant characteristics. These underlying meanings of the occurrence of the word in the Qur'ānic vision of Paradise are presented by several commentators. For instance, al-Sha'rāwī mentions in his interpretation of verse Q3:148 that Qur'ānic descriptions of the delights of the present life do not use the word *ḥusn*, whereas in depicting the delights of Paradise, these terms are deployed in a number of verses. This usage, he continues, signifies that the aesthetic of Paradise is to be desired, since it is eternal, while that of this worldly life is transient.

The final feature to mention here is the influence of the Qur'ānic description of celestial gardens on the design of terrestrial gardens in Islamic art. Grabar remarks upon this when he considers the Qur'ānic vision of the gardens of Paradise to have an indirect influence on art and architecture. Artists studying Islamic architecture, such as Dickie, claim that the gardens planned in the early centuries of Islam closely followed the descriptions of the Qur'ānic Paradise.[106] In portraying this influence on Islamic art, Schimmel points out that the Qur'ānic description of rivers flowing beneath celestial gardens inspired Muslim architects to develop the canals running through the gardens of Iran and Mughal India.[107] Radscheit proposes that the fountains and basins found in the courtyards of Muslim mosques

[106] James Dickie, 'The Islamic Garden in Spain', in Elisabeth B. Macdougall and Richard Ettingausen, eds., *The Islamic Garden* (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1976), 90.
[107] Annemarie Schimmel, 'The Celestial Garden in Islam', in Elisabeth B. Macdougall and Richard Ettingausen, eds., *The Islamic Garden* (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1976), 15.

reflect those described in the celestial gardens.[108] Another example by Grabar is that the various physical rewards granted to the righteous in the eternal paradise and mentioned in Qur'ānic discourse are essential elements in developing the various concentrations of luxury in the early Muslim community. The same Qur'ānic image, he adds, is reflected in later Persian painting.[109] A similar view, that architectural designs were inspired by the Qur'ānic description of gardens in Paradise, is found in al-Sha'rāwī's exegesis. He states that the Qur'ānic image of lofty dwellings under which rivers flow inspired the design of constructions on bodies of water.[110]

4.3 Ethical Aesthetics in the Qur'ān

In the text of the Qur'ān, another vast domain of the notion of aesthetics is also presented. Ethical aesthetics is mentioned in a number of its verses, using the aesthetic terms that are mentioned in this study, such as *jamīl* (the adjective from the term *jamāl*) and several derivatives from the roots *ḥ-s-n* and *z-y-n*. It can be claimed that these aesthetic terms suggest moral qualities in the object being described, in addition to its aesthetic description. Indeed, it can be claimed that when an aesthetic sense is used to point to a moral quality, it means that the object being described is of the highest level in its moral status. It also means that its ethical character is the best of its kind, compared with the same value when not given an aesthetic sense. All these meanings presented by Qur'ānic commentators and lexicographic authorities are discussed in detail in the second part of this chapter. However, it can be argued at the outset that the aesthetics of these ethical characterisations are not to be understood merely as goodness, but instead to have further dimensions when the sense of moral goodness is integrated with an aesthetic sense that is demonstrated below. Furthermore, it can be noted

[108] Matthias Radscheit, 'Springs and Fountains', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ā*n (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 5:124.
[109] Grabar, 'Art and Architecture', 166.
[110] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 14:8894.

throughout the texts presenting the ethical aesthetic that the concept of ethical aesthetics in Qur'ānic discourse has two implications: positive and negative.

The discussion here will centre on the ethical dimension of the notion of 'aesthetics' as presented in the Qur'ān. This consists of the ethical aesthetic already mentioned, together with the accompanying aesthetic terms. Before this discussion, this section analyses the cluster of terms used in the Qur'ān to denote ethical goodness. The aim of this is not to imply a clear dichotomy between these terms, but rather to gain an understanding of Qur'ānic discourse overall with regards to the notion of moral goodness.

4.3.1 Moral Goodness in Qur'ānic Discourse

The Qur'ānic text contains various ethical terms that denote the concept of moral goodness and virtuous conduct. Izutsu may be considered the most prominent scholar among those who analyse a number of Qur'ānic key words to grasp the essence of the Qur'ānic definition of ethical goodness. To this end, he employs a semantic approach in the study of the Qur'ānic concepts of good and evil. In his book *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*, he claims that various Qur'ānic terms indicate a concept of good. According to Izutsu's interpretation, these terms are: *ṣāliḥ*, *birr*, *ma'rūf*, *khayer*, *ṭayyib*, *ḥalāl* and finally, the various derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n*, which, with the other aesthetic terms used in this context, are the focus of this chapter. There follows a brief account of the broader meaning of ethical goodness, as conveyed by the most common of these terms that imply virtuous acts.[111] As a result, a linguistic discussion of semantic differences will not be of major concern. The antitheses of these terms are also not mentioned, since the focus here is purely on the concept of moral goodness. However, the point to note here is that in Qur'ānic discourse there is no unified

[111] See also, A. Kevin Rinhart, 'Ethics and the Qur'ān' in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ā*n (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 2:61.

system of abstract concepts of moral goodness.[112] The terms used in the Qur'ān to qualify moral goodness have a wide range of meanings and applications, which in a number of instances have little to do with human virtues.[113] Moreover, on many occasions Qur'ānic verses do not specify the exact virtues of moral goodness. They rather exemplify it through a number of types of virtuous conduct that imply the boundaries of moral goodness, for instance fulfil compact and have integrity mentioned in verse Q2:177.[114] Thus, while the work of Izutsu in analysing the key terms denoting moral goodness is considered to be one of the most significant contributions, the theory of Qur'ānic moral goodness needs to be paid particular attention in terms of a full analysis of the Qur'ānic conceptual framework of moral goodness, and to determine the semantic differences of each particular term in order to clarify the specific Qur'ānic usage of each term in its specific context.

The term *ṣāliḥ*, from the root *ṣ-l-ḥ*, which contrasts with *fāsid* (corrupt), means to become or to be good, uncorrupted sound, right, or in a proper state.[115] This term is commonly translated as righteous or good; it and other related words from the same root *ṣ-l-ḥ* – for example, *ṣāliḥāt* – are the most frequently occurring words qualifying moral conduct.[116] Therefore, according to Qur'ānic lexicographers, the concept *ṣāliḥ* refers most often to actions.[117] Moreover, in the Qur'ān, the words *ṣāliḥ* and *ṣāliḥāt*, are very often connected with the concept of believing in God and being in fear of Him. The juxtaposition of 'having faith' and 'behaving on the basis of that faith' occurs repeatedly in the Qur'ānic text. Nonetheless, the Qur'ānic expression "those who believe and do good", mentioned in numerous verses, such as Q2:25, Q3:57, Q4:173 and Q5:9, exemplifys that *ṣāliḥ* is outward

[112] Izutsu, Ethico-Religious Concepts, 203.
[113] See for example, Al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *'Umdat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 2:347f.; Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 284; Badawi and Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage*, 531; Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, 205.
[114] See also, Rinhart, 'Ethics and the Qur'ān', 2:60.
[115] Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, 4:1714. See also, 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 284; Badawi and Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage, 531.
[116] See for example, 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 410-412; Rinhart, 'Ethics and the Qur'ān', 2:60.
[117] Al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *'Umdat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 2:347; Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 284.

conduct reflecting inward belief.[118] Furthermore, the terms *ṣāliḥ* and *ṣāliḥāt* appear in connection with an eschatological context. They are mentioned to describe an act in this worldly life that deserves reward in the life to come, as seen in verses Q11:23, Q13:29 and Q32:19, for example.[119] Indeed, they are listed among other good deeds that are ascribed to a righteous Muslim.[120] This occurs in verses Q2:277 and Q5:69, for example.

The word *birr*, from the root *b-r-r*, means originally "a wide tract of land", as opposed to *baḥr* (the sea), signifying ample, large and extensive. From this linguistic meaning, the sense of comprehensiveness and generality, found in the word *birr*, is derived. Then it is used to denote every kind of goodness.[121] It is commonly translated as piety, goodness or righteousness.[122] The term *birr* is mentioned less often in the Qur'ān than the other ethical terms listed above. Scholars such as Izutsu claim that the word *birr* is a comprehensive concept, connoting moral virtue and the Islamic creed in general.[123] Fakhry argues that the concept of *birr* is the best way to express the moral spirit of Islam.[124] In a Qur'ānic context, it can be said that the context of verse Q2:177 sheds more light on the meaning of *birr*. It is used to enumerate the good and virtuous deeds that help to constitute Islamic ritual. However, Izutsu points out that the ethical elements defining *birr* are found in the ethical conduct suggested by *ṣāliḥ*.[125] This can be understood, as mentioned above, by reflecting that this concept is the most comprehensive ethical term used for invoking the commandments of

[118] See for example, 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 411-412; Mustansir Mir, *Dictionary of Qur'ānic Terms and Concepts* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1987), 84; Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, 204-205; Fazlur Rahman, 'Some Key Ethical Concepts of the Qu'ān', *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 171-172.
[119] Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 13.
[120] Rinhart, 'Ethics and the Qur'ān', 2:60.
[121] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 40; Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, 2:176; Badawi and Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage, 86-87.
[122] Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, 208; Rinhart, 'Ethics and the Qur'ān', 2:60; Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 13.
[123] Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, 209; 'Abdullah al-Kitānī, 'Mafhūm al-Birr fī al-Islām', *al-Manhal* 9 (1984): 25.
[124] Fakhry, Ethical Theories, 13.
[125] Izutsu, Ethico-Religious Concepts, 208.

Islam. Often when the term *birr* occurs, it is connected with another fundamental Qur'ānic concept, namely *taqwā* (the fear of God).[126]

The concept of *ma'rūf*, from the root *'-r-f*, literally means "that which is familiar, recognized, well-known, reasonable"[127] and may be defined as what is known to be good by revelation, intellect and even customarily.[128] Fakhry claims that this term might be best translated as 'approved'.[129] Scholars, for instance Izutsu, claim that the concept of *ma'rūf* is one of the pre-Islamic ethical terms that were incorporated into the Qur'ānic ethical constitution to convey new ethical dimensions.[130] In the Qur'ān, the term *ma'rūf* is often contrasted with its antithesis *munkar* (false, untrue, disapproved of and reprehensible) as seen in the Qur'ānic phrase "order what is right and forbid what is wrong", mentioned in several verses, such as in verses Q3:110, Q9:71 and Q22:41.[131] According to Izutsu, those opposed terms in this Qur'ānic expression offer a "very general and comprehensive idea of religiously good and religiously bad: *ma'rūf* meaning any acts arising from, and in consonance with, true belief, and *munkur* any acts that would conflict with God's commandments".[132]

The term *khayr* from the root *kh-y-r*, contrasting with the word *sharr* (worse, evil), is mentioned very frequently in the Qur'ānic text, as is the word *ṣāliḥ* or *ṣāliḥāt*.[133] Izutsu argues that this word is the most appropriate equivalent to the word 'good' in English.[134] In Qur'ānic discourse, the semantic constitution of the concept of *khayr* is extended to include

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[126] Ibid.
[127] Mir, Dictionary of Qur'ānic Terms and Concepts, 46. See also, Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 331; Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, 5:2013; Badawi and Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage, 613-614.
[128] See, for example, Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 331; Al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, *'Umdat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 3:61; Al-Fayrūzābādī, *Baṣā'ir Dhawī al-Tamyīz*, 4:57; Mir, *Dictionary of Qur'ānic Terms and Concepts*, 65; Rinhart, 'Ethics and the Qur'ān', 2:62.
[129] Fakhry, Ethical Theories, 12.
[130] Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, 213. See, also, Rinhart, 'Ethics and the Qur'ān', 2:61; Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 12.
[131] A good discussion of this Qur'ānic expression can be found in, for example, Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13-17.
[132] Izutsu, Ethico-Religious Concepts, 215.
[133] See, for example, 'Abd al-Bāqī, al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 249-251; Fakhry, Ethical Theories, 12.
[134] Izutsu, Ethico-Religious Concepts, 215.

both worldly and religious meanings; they connote emphatic references to what is valuable, beneficial, useful and desirable.[135] With regards to worldly affairs, it comes in a number of verses as synonyms of wealth. In the context of religious concerns, it denotes two kinds of moral sense: that of God's benefits to human beings and the good done by humans.[136]

The terms mentioed above are the most common ethical terms connoting the notion of moral goodness presented in Qur'ānic discourse. Yet in Qur'ānic teaching, the quality of goodness is not separated from the quality of aesthetics in ethical disciplines. The role of Islamic practice, as Nasr claims, is to incorporate beauty with goodness in a way that ensures they complete each other. Aesthetics, in an Islamic perspective, is disseminated in the spiritual, intellectual and physical aspects of the religion.[137] Hence, it can be argued that, according to the Qur'ānic text which will be discussed in detail later, believers are required to incorporate aesthetics into their entire lives, and certainly into their moral behaviour. Nonetheless Muslims, as William Chittick points out, treat aesthetics as an essential principle for their ethical conduct.[138] Therefore, the sense of aesthetics intertwined with ethical goodness is presented in a number of terms chosen for this study. Below is a discussion of the moral indications in the common aesthetic terms: *jamīl*, *zīnah* and derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n*.

4.3.2 The Root *j-m-l* and the Ethical Aesthetic

The adjective *jamīl* (from the nominal form *jamāl*) is mentioned in seven verses in the Qur'ān. It is mentioned in connection with four kinds of ethical behaviour. It is mentioned with *ṣabr* (patience) in three verses: "but it is best to be patient" in Q12:18, Q12:83 and "so

[135] Ibid., 217.
[136] George F. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 35; Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, 220.
[137] Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, 223-224.
[138] William C. Chittick, 'The Aesthetics of Islamic Ethics', in Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed., *Sharing Poetic Expressions: Beauty, Sublime, Mysticism in Islamic Occidental Culture*, Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology in Dialogue, vol. 6 (Dordrecht; Springer, 2011), 3.

be patient" in Q70:5. It is also mentioned with *sarrāḥ* or *tasrīḥ* (devours) in Q33:28 "release you with kindness" and in Q33:49 "release them in an honourable way". Moreover, it is mentioned with *ṣafḥ* (forgiveness, pardon, overlooking...) which occur in Q15:85 "so [the Prophet] bears with them graciously" and *hajr* (forsaking and abandonment) in Q73:10 "ignore them politely".

It should be noted in the abovementioned verses that the sense of aesthetics expressed in the adjective *jamīl* is understood as an ethical quality in the conduct being described, not to be understood in any 'physical' aesthetic sense. Thus, in order to grasp the meaning of the aesthetic connotation employed in Qur'ānic ethical discourse, the aim should be to approach this notion from the linguistic and exegetical point of view. Hence, a number of the past articulations of the linguistic meaning of the word *jamīl* should be recalled. This sheds light on the use of aesthetic terms to suggest an ethical meaning. The first consideration is that there is almost consensus among the lexicographical authorities cited in Chapter Two that the concept of *jamāl* can be used in a physical sense, as well as in describing ethical behaviour and human actions. However, the physical aesthetic meaning, which was discussed in some detail in previous chapters, refers to material notions. Sight is reflected and has its impact on the beholder. The aesthetic value of ethical and human deeds is to be praiseworthy and to be of such a kind as to lead to benefits and to avoid harm.[139] Another noteworthy point to make here is the view of Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, which was cited in Chapter Two, that the term *jamāl* was used first to describe abstractions – deeds and ethical values – and only later, in the Arabic language, applied to physical qualities.[140] Hence, it can be claimed that although Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī did not mention evidence for his understanding, it can still be inferred that derivatives from the root *j-m-l* are used for both meanings, abstract and physical. The original usage of the substantive *jamāl* or the adjective *jamīl* is abstract. Thus, in Qur'ānic usage, the

[139] Al-Tahānawī, Mawsū'at Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, 1:666.
[140] Al-'Askarī, al-Furūq al-Lūghawiyyah, 262.

adjective *jamīl* occurs seven times in connection with ethical values and once associated with a physical object, using the nominal form *jamāl*. The last linguistic aspect in the meaning of the adjective *jamīl* to be mentioned here is that, according to al-Rāghib, the word *jamīl* signifies abundance in a described quality. He mentions verse Q12:18 as an example of his understanding.[141]

The second view to be addressed here is the pronouncements of a number of Qur'ānic commentators on the meaning of the adjective *jamīl* in the verses mentioned above. Within the corpus of Qur'ānic hermenutics, most commentators bring out the same point in determining the meaning of *jamīl*. In Q12:18 and Q12:83, the statement from Jacob when he has lost his beloved son Joseph, and Q70:5, which is about God's command to the Prophet Mohammad to be patient with the unbelievers, commentators such as Quṭb and Riḍā claim that the meaning of "*al-ṣabr al-jamīl*" means patience without tension or complaint. It is a gracious kind of patience with no trace of disquiet.[142] Al-Sha'rāwī, in his comments on these verses, brings out these meanings.[143] Perhaps the most refined view of these verses is presented by Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretation. He asserts that the aesthetic sense of ethical conduct lies in the best status of the given ethical behaviour. He considers an attribute to have an aesthetic sense when it is not accompanied by anything that might affect the essence or the core character of the given value. He gives an example of this position in his interpretation of the meaning of *jamīl* which describes patience in Q12:18, Q12:83 and Q70:5. He remarks that "*al-ṣabr al-jamīl*" (beautiful, best, good, gracious, sweet, comely patience) is the best status of this ethical conduct, patience. He later adds that "*al-ṣabr al-jamīl*" is the complete, pure kind of patience that is unaccompanied by anything that might affect its purity, such as tension or resentment.[144] Nevertheless, there is another meaning of the adjective *jamīl* in

[141] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 97.
[142] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 3:1976; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 10:39; Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 12:267.
[143] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 11:6891.
[144] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 12:239.

these verses that seems to recall the physical sense of this term. Commentators, for instance al-Zamakhsharī and al-Qurṭubī, observe that patience here has a beautiful countenance, with no sadness or frowning.[145]

In verse Q15:85 "so [Prophet] bear with them graciously", God commands the Prophet Muhammad to forgive his opponents' faults in a manner that indicates an aesthetic sense. The Qur'ānic exegetes maintain that the meaning of the aesthetic sense in "*al-ṣafḥ al-jamīl*" here is 'gracious forgiveness', that is, gracious forbearance and fair pardon.[146] However, Ibn 'Āshūr insists that "*al-ṣafḥ al-jamīl*" here means noble forgiveness with no blame or penalty.[147] Moreover, the same meaning of 'the noble manner' connoted by the adjective *jamīl* is mentioned in verse Q73:10 "patiently endure what they say, ignore them politely". The command "*al-hajr al-jamīl*" means, according to Ibn 'Āshūr, ignoring politely with tactful avoidance and noble, gracious relinquishment, avoiding harm and abhorrence.[148] Quṭb explains the meaning of "*al-hajr al-jamīl*" by saying that it suggests abandoning with "no need for any remonstration, or show of anger, friction or hostility".[149] In this verse, al-Mawdūdī comments that this command from God to the Prophet Muhammad is not because of any weakness in him in not responding to his opponents' manner, but rather an instruction to His Prophet to adopt this noble attitude.[150]

The last verses to be mentioned here are Q33:28 and Q33:49, regarding divorce from a wife. These verses mention *al-sarāḥ al-jamīl* (kindness in releasing, fair release) as an adjective describing the way in which divorced women are to be released from a marriage.

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[145] Abū al-Qāsim Jār Allāh Maḥmūd bin 'Omar al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl*, ed. Khalīl Ma'mūn Shīḥā (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 2009), 508; Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥmmad bin Abī Bakr al-Qurṭubī, *Al_jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān wa al-Mubayyin limā Taḍamanahu min al-Sunah wa Āy al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abdallāh bin 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Beirut: Mi'assah al-Risālah, 2006), 11:290-291.

[146] See, for example, Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2153; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 10:294; Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 13:7757f.

[147] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 14:77.

[148] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 29:268f.

[149] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 6:3747; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 17:343.

[150] Mawdūdī, Towards Understanding the Qur'ān, 1229.

The common interpretation given by Qur'ānic commentators, for instance Quṭb and Ibn ʻĀshūr, is that the divorced woman should be released in a gracious manner with no hardship or vilification.[151] Al-Shaʻrāwī maintains that divorce should be graceful and kind, without any kind of threats or bad feeling. He adds that divorce in itself involves hardship which has a negative impact, and by His command of *al-sarāḥ al-jamīl*, God forbids further hardship to be added.[152]

It is worth mentioning that the command to release women from marriage kindly and gracefully is mentioned in another verse, using the term *iḥsān,* namely verse Q2:229, and using the term *maʻrūf* in verse Q2:231. Ibn ʻĀshūr is the only commentator from the group surveyed in this study who discusses the use of these two terms in the context of divorce for women. In his elucidation, he mainly quotes the interpretation of Ibn ʻArafah on these two verses. In verse Q2:229, Ibn ʻĀshūr tells us that the word *maʻrūf* is more general than the word *iḥsān* mentioned in the verse. He adds that the concept of *maʻrūf*, which he defines as what is known to be good by revelation and the customary law of a community, is more appropriate to the context of marriage, since the concept of *maʻrūf* is general enough to include all the instructions, commands and kindness required for marital relationships, whereas the context of divorce requires only fair treatment and respect for financial rights when women are released from a marriage contract.[153] According to Ibn ʻArafah, the obligations related to the concept of *maʻrūf* are easier to fulfil than those of *iḥsān*. The concept of *iḥsān*, according to Ibn ʻArafah, is closer to giving a released woman her financial rights, which for some men might be a hard duty to carry out.[154] This explanation justifies, in the view of Ibn ʻArafah, the correlation between divorce and the concept of *iḥsān* in this verse. Thus, it can be argued here that Ibn ʻArafah in his interpretation seems to colour the

[151] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 5:2875; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 14:80; Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 22:62.
[152] Al-Shaʻrāwī, *Tafsīr al-Shaʻrāwī*, 19:12005.
[153] Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 2:407.
[154] Abū ʻAbdullāh Muḥammad bin Muḥammad bin ʻArafah, *Tafsīr Ibn ʻArafah*, ed. Jalāl al-Asyūṭī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmiyyah, 2008), 1:277.

other meaning of the word *iḥsān* with this concept of its meaning. Ibn ʻArafah's understanding of *iḥsān* refers to doing good deeds to others, hence to provide maintenance for a divorced wife, a meaning which can be considered to embody the meaning of *inʻām* as mentioned in Chapter Two.

In Q2:231, divorce is mentioned in terms of *maʻrūf*; in commenting on it, Ibn ʻĀshūr mentions two possible meanings. The first is that the concept of *iḥsān* invoked in verse Q2:229 is the same kind of *maʻrūf* as in verse Q2:231, since it is more general than *iḥsān*. Second, the repetition of the commands for kindness in divorce is to emphasise the gracious and fair treatment of a divorced wife. A husband who might harm a divorced wife is far from *iḥsān*, which is a specific meaning, but he still can be asked to observe *maʻrūf* by not inflicting harm or hardship on his divorced wife.[155] Furthermore, Ibn ʻArafah points out, as mentioned earlier, that obligations related to *maʻrūf* are easier to fulfil than those of *iḥsān*. So, when in verse Q2:229 divorce with *iḥsān* is mentioned, it might be understood as an obligatory command which leaves no choice in conducting divorce in this specific manner.[156] However, in verse Q2:231, the term *maʻrūf* indicates that this way of conducting a divorce, in a noble manner, is permissible and even recommended. This leads to the conclusion that the use of both concepts and the specific meaning for each individual term are not clearly drawn. These ways of using them can indeed be called matters of scholarly interpretation. Moreover, several other meanings can be elucidated in the concepts of the gracious divorce mentioned in these two verses from s*urat al-Baqarah* (The Cow). But most of these interpretations concern jurisprudential commands relating to divorce, which are not the focus here.

The most remarkable point to be noted here concerns the Qur'ānic usage of the term *jamīl* and the two terms *iḥsān* and *maʻrūf* in the context of divorce. From the Qur'ānic text in which these terms occur, it can be seen that both the latter terms are mentioned in the context

[155] Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 2:422-423.
[156] Ibn ʻArafah, *Tafsīr Ibn ʻArafah*, 1:277.

of the rules of divorce, indicating that these concepts are among the procedures of divorce. The term *jamīl* is used after specifying what should be provided to a divorced wife, because it is not the same. These occurrences have an effect on the commentator's discourse, which shows that in these concepts, their demonstration of the word *jamīl* focuses on the kindness, graciousness and fair treatment of the divorced woman, without elucidating any jurisprudential commands. In contrast, in their interpretation of the two terms *iḥsān* and *ma'rūf*, these commentators detail the law relating to divorce.

It can be argued that the underlying idea in the preceding discussion is that the term *jamīl* comes to represent the idea that, whether this kind of 'aesthetics' is a physical or ethical matter (see Chapter Two), the concepts of *jamāl* and *jamīl* are most closely related to the impact of an event on the beholder. It can also be claimed that what Ibn 'Āshūr states about the ethical aesthetic expressed in the word *jamīl* is that the ethical sense of a word lies in its status at its best. This can be understood in the light of the Qur'ānic usage of the term *jamīl* in that it refers to a manner not limited to fulfilling, for instance, financial requirements. Hence, it can be concluded that the contribution of an aesthetic aspect to a given manner signifies an action of a higher calibre and thus of a higher level to attain. This understanding is consistent with the general trend found particularly strongly in the Qur'ān, and in Islam generally, of elevating the human soul to a higher level. Moreover, the expression of an aesthetic sense applied to ethical matters indicates the sense of uniqueness and sublimity that the Qur'ān targets in its stipulations. It is not merely an ethical performance; it is rather something with an aesthetic dimension.

4.3.3 The Root *ḥ-s-n* and the Ethical Aesthetic

As shown in Chapter Two, the root *ḥ-s-n*, according to lexicographers, carries a primitive meaning of aesthetics and beauty which sheds light on other forms from the same root. However, the various derivatives from the same root convey another two dimensions of

lexical meaning: perfection/excellence; and benevolence (beneficence)/kindness (in particular in the words *aḥsana*, *iḥsān* when followed by a preposition). In the Qur'ān, the verses where various derivatives from the trilateral *ḥ-s-n* are found can be divided into two chief domains according to their subject, whether it refers to God or to human beings. The various forms derived from the root *ḥ-s-n* in each domain will be analysed in detail, investigating the ethical implications of various derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n*, when applied to God and to human beings. These various derivatives will be grouped under three basic headings: *iḥsān*, *ḥusn* and *ḥasan*.[157] This analysis will start with the most significant concept in this field, *iḥsān.*

4.3.3.1 The Concept of *Iḥsān*

The concept of *iḥsān* within this group of derivatives is the most significant and is considered to be the "pinnacle" of Islamic ethics.[158] It is a comprehensive concept which embraces all human affairs, referring either to their relationship to God or to their brethren in society.[159] The concept of *iḥsān* has been explained extensively by a number of Muslim scholars discussing the deeper meanings attached to the concept of *iḥsān*.[160] Scholars focus on the famous set of Prophetic traditions known as the *Hadith of Gabriel*, which conveys several of the meanings of *iḥsān*.[161] Giving a detailed definition of this great Islamic concept and the

[157] The concept of *ḥasanah*, which is frequently used in the Qur'ān, will not be mentioned here. It mostly signifies, as mentioned in Chapter Two, any rejoicing or gladdening, good or benefit that betides a man in his soul and his body and his circumstances.

[158] Atuallah Siddiqui, 'Ethics in Islam: Key Concepts and Contemporary Challenges', *Journal of Moral Education* 26, no. 4 (1997): 425.

[159] See, for example, Quṭb, al-Ẓilāl, 3:2190; Quṭb, In the Shade, 11:68; Jamaal al-Din M. Zarabozo, 'He Came to Teach You Your Religion': the Hadith of the Angel Gabriel Explaining the Foundation of Islam, Imaan and Ihsaan (Boulder: Al-Basheer Company for Publications and Translations: 1997), 198.

[160] See, for example, Aḥmad bin Sa'ad al-Ghāmidī, 'al-Iḥsān fī Ḍaw' al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah: Dirāsah Mawḍū'iyyah' (PhD thesis, Faculty of Da'wah and Usūl a-Dīn, University of Um al-Qurā, Makkah, 2001/1422); Ḥasan Muḥammad Shabālah, 'al-Iḥsān: Mafhūmahu wa Anwā'ahu wa Ṣuwaruhu fī Ḍaw' al-Qurḍān wa al-Sunah', *Majallat al-Kulliyyah al-'Ulyyā li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* 6 (2008): 18-79; 'Abdullah Aḥmad al-Ziyūt, 'al-Iḥsān fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm: Dirāsah Mawḍū'iyyah' (MA diss., Department of Usūl a-Dīn, Faculty of al-Dirāsāt al-Fiqhiyyah wa al-Qānūniyyah, Al-albayt University, Jordan, 2002).

[161] See, for example, Zarabozo, *'He Came to Teach You Your Religion'*, 199-206; Fāliḥ bin Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr, *Ḥadīth Inna Allāh Katab al-Iḥsān'Alā kul Shay'* (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Athīr, n.d), 24-27; Al-Ziyūt, 'al-Iḥsān fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm', 8-10

several meanings attached to it as discussed by scholars is beyond the scope of this section. The focus here will be on the general meaning as it occurs in a Qur'ānic context.

The concept of *iḥsān*, in its various forms, occurs numerous times in the text of the Qur'ān.[162] In other verses, the concept of *iḥsān* is mentioned in connection with other Qur'ānic concepts, for example *imān* (belief), *islām* (submission), *taqwā* (God fearing), *'adl* (justice) and *ṣāliḥāt* (doing good deeds). Scholars including al-Ghāmidī and Shabālah claim that the specific connotation of the concept of *iḥsān* depends on its specific context.[163] Nevertheless, lexicographers and Qur'ānic commentators mention, as discussed in Chapter Two, that the general meaning of the concept of *iḥsān* implies two ethical qualities. The most common meaning is that of doing good for someone else, of beneficence and kindness. The other implication of the verb *aḥsana* and the infinitive *iḥsān* refers to perfecting performance with a higher standard and performing deeds in a worthy way. The goodness of manner or action is defined by its relevance to the "compatibility of its components with each other and that of the deed with its objectives".[164] Therefore, *iḥsān*, in this regard, means letting the action preserve the compatibility of the two fields. In the Qur'ānic text, these two implications of the concept of *iḥsān* are applied to God and human beings, a point shortly to be tackled in more detail.

With regards to the concept of *iḥsān* in the *Hadith of Gabriel*, which is often cited when defining *iḥsān*, it may be noted that the Prophet does not define it in a specific statement when he states that *iḥsān* means "that you worship Allah as you see Him. And even though you do not see Him, He sees you"[165]. Instead, the Prophet illustrates another

[162] 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras*, 202-204.
[163] Al-Ghāmidī, 'al-Iḥsān', 15; Shabālah, 'al-Iḥsān', 19.
[164] Mustafayi Muhammad and Gharavi Naini Nahla, 'The Semantic Study of the Term 'Ihsan' Based on Its Field of Meaning in Personal Domain', abstract, *Tahqiqat-e Ulum-e Quran wa Hadith* 13, no. 1 (2010): 57.
[165] This part of the Prophetic hadith is reported in various narrations. See, for example, Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf bin Ibrāhīm al-Wargalānī, ed., *Kitāb al-Tartīb fī al-Ṣaḥīḥ min Ḥadīth al-Rasūl Ṣallā Allāh 'Alayh wa Salam* (Muscat: Maktabah Muscat, 2003), 48; Muṭafā Dīb al-Bughā, ed., *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5th ed. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1993), 4:1793.

implication of the concept: that of performing worship[166] in a perfect and excellent manner without any shortcomings. In this statement, the Prophet brings out the presence of Allah as the main motivation for worship. This sincere awareness will motivate a believer to please his God by performing the signs of obedience in the best way possible and making himself responsible for attaining excellence and perfection in his worship.[167] This meaning of *iḥsān* is evidently closer to the second meaning shown above, which suggests a loftier standard of performance to be applied either to worship or to any secular act or behaviour. Another remarkable point in this discussion is that the lexicographical authorities, like all Muslim scholars, hark back to the original meaning of the root *ḥ-s-n*; that of *ḥusn*: the aesthetic sense, when they define the concept of *iḥsān*. In this respect, Al-Kafawī mentions that *iḥsān* is something that so greatly benefits someone else that he will be in a state of *ḥusn* from this beneficence. The word implies also that the doer of *iḥsān* will himself be in *ḥusn* by the good action and his praiseworthy manner of performing it.[168] It may be helpful to recall the qualities inherent in the concept of *ḥusn* according to the lexicographical authorities mentioned in Chapter Two. According to them, *ḥusn* is defined in terms of what delights and is desired, involves benefits, perfection, is praiseworthy and in harmony with the senses.

Therefore, it can be pointed out that a sense of the aesthetic pervades all forms derived from the root *ḥ-s-n*. Moreover, it can be argued that the ethical and the aesthetic, in Qur'ānic discourse, are inseparable from each other. However, this understanding also implies that the sense of goodness and the aesthetic are both the most distinguishing features that make up the concept of *ḥusn* and all related forms in a Qur'ānic context. What follows is a thematic analysis of the concept of *iḥsān* when applied to God and to human beings.

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[166] Worship of God here is used in a broader sense that covers all aspects of Muslim life. The narrow sense of worship of God refers to the different acts of worship, such as the five pillars of Islam and other acts of supplication to God and remembrance. See, for example, Murata and Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, 274.
[167] See, for example, Zarabozo, *'He Came to Teach You Your Religion'*, 199.
[168] Al-Kafawī, *al-Kulyyāt*, 53. See, also, Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 119; Al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīfāt*, 78.

4.3.3.1.1 The Concept of *Iḥsān* Coming from God

This concept, when attributed to God, has two meanings: the perfection and excellence of Creation and God's benevolence and kindness to His creatures. It is worth mentioning here that the notions of both perfection throughout Creation and God's beneficence can be understood from various Qur'ānic contexts, a number of which are discussed in Chapter Four. Therefore, the discussion here will be limited to the context in which the concept of *iḥsān* occurs.

The *iḥsān* from Allah in terms of His perfecting whatever is created can be seen in the verses that mention these features as a general rule in the creation of human beings and of the whole world. This meaning occurs in Q32:7 "who gave everything its perfect form" and Q40:64 and Q64:3, both with the same phrase "He shaped you, formed you well". The same meaning occurs in Q23:14 and Q95:4. Another group of verses elucidates that revelation from God is perfect and has been revealed in an excellent manner. They also stress that the teachings of the Qur'ān, i.e. commands, parables and narrations, are excellent in manner with no contradictions and perfect in their consistency. These meanings occur in Q39:23 "God has sent down the most beautiful of all teaching: a Scripture that is consistent" and in Q39:55, "follow the best teaching sent down to you from your Lord". The same meaning occurs in verses Q12:3 and Q25:33. Verse Q5:55 describes God's judgment as being better than all others. A similar connotation but with a different word from the same root, *al-ḥusnā*, can be found in verses Q7:180, Q17:110, Q20:8, Q59:24 and Q7:137. These verses describe God's names and attributes as being the most excellent and best names. Ibn 'Āshūr mentions that God's names indicate the complete perfection of His divine essence.[169]

The other aspect in the meaning of the *iḥsān* from Allah, which denotes God's benevolence, kindness and graciousness, occurs in verse Q28:77, "do good to others as God

[169] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 9:187.

has done to you" and verse Q12:100, "and has been gracious to me", which occur in a specific context in the story of the Prophet Joseph. It must be added that the underlying meaning of this aspect of the meaning of *iḥsān* is brought out by other Qur'ānic concepts, for instance, *ni'mah* (favour, blessing) in, for example, verse Q33:37, and *faḍl* (favour, bounty) in, for example, verse Q5:54. Perhaps the most comprehensive Qur'ānic concept expressing divine benevolence is the related derivatives from the root *r-ḥ-m*, from which God's names *raḥmān* and *raḥīm* are derived.[170] Moreover, the perfection of the creation of human beings themselves represents some kind of *iḥsān* for them, since it has brought them beneficence.

4.3.3.1.2 The Concept of *Iḥsān* Coming from Human Beings

Iḥsān when applied to human beings signifies a similar meaning to the above one: the goodness of deeds and kindness to others. The subject of the former embraces all human activities whether related to religious actions (worshipping) or to all other human activities performed in today's world, which in Islamic understanding can indeed be a kind of worship as well. An important point to note in this context is that the first meaning has an impact on the second. This means that perfecting a deed has an effect on the individual agent themselves, conferring benefits both in this life and in the life to come, and also to one's fellows. Therefore, anyone who performs an action perfectly is, in turn, *muḥsin* to himself. This understanding is mentioned explicitly in verse Q17:7 "whether you do good or evil it is to your own souls". Furthermore, this Qur'ānic view can be found in verses where the notion of performing well is connected with its pleasurable results both physically or morally which is sometimes signified by the word *ḥasanah*. This understanding occurs, for example, in verses Q10:26, Q16:30 and Q39:10.

In the Qur'ānic text, the concept of *iḥsān* is mentioned in a number of verses in connection with the general concept of *'amal* (a performed deed, conduct), for example,

[170] See, for example, Mawlana Abul Kalam Azad, *Turjumān al-Qur'ān*, ed. & trans. Syed Abdul Latif (Hyderabad: Pragati Art Printers, 3rd ed., 1981), 1:47-85.

verses Q11:7, Q18:7 and 67. It is also associated with a particular kind of conduct, for instance speech in verse Q17:53, "[Prophet], tell My servants to say what is best"; to follow the best examples of speech in verse Q39:18, "who listen to what is said and follow what is best"; or greeting in verse Q4:86, "when you [believers] are offered a greeting, respond with a better one", arguing when calling people to believe in the One God, as in verse Q17:125, "[Prophet], call [people] to the way of your lord with wisdom and good teaching, Argue with them in the most courteous [manner]"; and handling the property of orphans, as in verses Q6:152 and Q17:34, "do not go near the orphan's property except with the best [intention]". Hence, it is noteworthy, as mentioned above, that the specific meaning of the concept of *iḥsān* as defined in this specific context is alluded to by Qur'ānic commentators. However, despite the multiple meanings of *iḥsān* in specific contexts, exhibiting excellence and distinction of manner is the single quality most often to be observed.

With regards to behaving well towards others, various verses in Qur'ānic passages enjoin believers to treat fellow humans kindly. Verse Q4:36 is the most comprehensive verse, listing the kinds of people to whom others are commanded to show kindness and good behaviour. These are "Be good to your parents, to relatives, to orphans, to the needy, to neighbours near and far, to travellers in need, and to your slaves". Within this group of people, *iḥsān* to one's parents is emphasised most, as in other verses: Q2:83, Q6:151, Q17:23 and Q46:15. In this verse, and likewise in verse Q2:83, it is clear, according to Quṭb for instance, that the Qur'ānic text starts by commanding kind treatment and compassionate behaviour towards one's relatives before moving out to the wider community. Going beyond the closest circle of next of kin, orphans come before any other needy person, since they have most immediate need of kindness and beneficence. Kindness is then urged towards neighbours and then to the remainder of the group mentioned in this verse.[171] However,

[171] See, for example, Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 2:660; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 3:123-133.

giving details of the kind of *iḥsān* meant in each specific case examined by Qur'ānic exegetes is not the concern of this section. It should however be remarked that in Qur'ānic discourse the circle of showing kindness and good manners to others is wider than that mentioned in verse Q4:36. In fact, in a number of verses, such as in Q2:195, "do good", the command of *iḥsān* is applied in a general statement without specifying an agent, which proves that *iḥsān* is a comprehensive Islamic concept.

The last point to note here is the Qur'ānic term *muḥsin* in the singular form, which occurs in four verses: Q2:112, Q4:125, Q31:22 and Q37:113. Also, *muḥsinīn* in the plural form occurs in 33 verses, for instance Q2:58, Q3:48, 9:91 and Q39:34; *muḥsinūn* in verse Q16:128; and *muḥsināt* (feminine plural) in verse Q33:29. These forms of the singular *muḥsin* refer to those who do *iḥsān*. In the Qur'ānic text, various attributes that characterise *muḥsinīn* are mentioned; all of them refer to the basic meaning of *iḥsān*: that of perfection and excellence in the worship of God and good ethical conduct towards others. Some of these attributes are: "who direct themselves wholly to God and do good deeds" in verse Q2:112; "who restrain their anger and pardon people" in verse Q3:134; "who are mindful of God and steadfast in adversity" in verse Q12:90; and "who strive hard for Our cause" in verse Q29:69. Moreover, the Qur'ān names several rewards that God bestows upon this group of people, both in this mortal life and the life to come. Some of these rewards, for instance, are that there is "no fear for them, nor will they grieves" in verse Q2:112; "God never wastes the reward of those who do good" in verses Q9:120, Q11:115, Q12:56 and Q12:90; "for God is with those who are mindful of Him and who do good" in verse Q16:128; and "the mercy of God is close to those who do good" in verse Q7:56. Hence, a greater reward is mentioned using a word from the same root of *ḥ-s-n*, *al-ḥusnā*. For example, this is mentioned in verses Q10:26, Q13:18, Q18:88 and Q53:31. Qur'ānic commentators describe this reward as Paradise. Therefore, the other significant remark in the context of *muḥsinīn* is that the Qur'ān

mentions, in five verses, that Allah loves people as a reward for the manifestation of *iḥsān* in their actions. According to Ibn ʻĀshūr, since *iḥsān* is the highest level of the worship of God, it therefore deserves the love of God, which is the ultimate goal to be attained.[172]

4.3.3.2 The Word *Ḥusn*

From a linguistic point of view, the word *ḥusn* is the general, comprehensive source noun from which all other related forms stem. This signifies that the quality that it denotes is more strongly emphasised and discerned in this form. However, two forms of this word occur in the Qur'ānic text: *ḥusn* and *ḥusnā*. The form *ḥusn* occurs in seven verses; five with the word *ma'āb* (place to return to) in Q3:14, Q13:29 and Q38:25, 40, 49, and two with the word *thawāb* (reward) in verses Q3:138 and Q3:195. This form is used to describe the quality of the reward from God, whether it means Paradise, as it is commonly interpreted to mean, or some other reward from God. Hence we focus on the other form (*ḥusnā*), since the former (*ḥusn*) has more physical connotations.

The form *ḥusnā* is mentioned in Q2:83, Q18:86, Q27:11, Q29:8 and Q42:83, all of which refer to ethical conduct. In verse Q2:83, "speak good to all people", Riḍā says that the adjective *ḥusnā* here does not mean mere courtesy and kindness in speech, but rather what is of benefit to the listeners in life, whether religious or secular.[173] In verse Q18:86, in the story of Dhū al-Qarnayn (the Two-Horned One), God says to him "you may choose [which of them] to punish or show kindness to". In this verse, the word *ḥusnā* means the intense kindness and generosity of treatment, an apparently unending source of mercy.[174] Moreover, in verse Q29:8, "We have commanded people to be good to their parents", which concerns filial kindness, note that the command of kindness here comes through the word *ḥusnā,* while the other verses mentioned above employ the word *iḥsān.* Al-Shaʻrāwī, in order to clarify this

[172] Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 1:216.
[173] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 1:368.
[174] Ibn ʻĀshūr, al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr, 16:26f.

Qur'ānic usage, points out that in this verse (Q29:8) the injunction concerns doing *ḥusn* itself, because this context concerns non-Muslim parents. In a situation in which diversity in religion between parents and children occurs, the command to give kind treatment must be emphasised, since different religious beliefs could give rise to negative feelings.[175] Thus, the same point of view on the Qur'ānic usage of the word *ḥusn* should be brought to bear on the other verses where this word occurs.

4.3.3.3 The Word *Ḥasan*

According to lexicographers and Qur'ānic commentators, the word *ḥasan* relates to the meaning of *ḥusn,* since the latter is the infinitive from which the former and other derivatives derive.[176] In Qur'ānic passages, the word *ḥasan* comes to describe the following objects: *qarḍ* (loan) in six verses, Q2:245, Q5:12, Q57:11, Q57:18, Q64:17 and Q73:20; *rizq* (provision) in four verses, Q11:88, Q16:67, Q16:75 and Q22:58; *matā'* (wholesome enjoyment, provision, enjoyment) occurs once in verse Q11:3; *wa'd* (God's covenant) in two verses, Q20:86 and Q28:61; *'ajr* (reward) in two verses, Q18:2 and Q18:48; *balā'* (testing believers) in verse Q8:17, *nabāt* (acceptance and growth of Mary) in verse Q3:37; and *sū' al-'amal* (evil deeds) occurs once in verse Q35:8. However, Ibn 'Āshūr shows a consistent view of the meaning of the adjective *ḥasan,* which is in harmony with his common understanding of the various derivatives from the trilateral *ḥ-s-n*. He contends that *ḥasan* signifies perfection in the properties and qualities of the described object, which makes it acceptable, desirable and praiseworthy.[177] Therefore, several different meanings of the word *ḥasan* are presented by the Qur'ānic commentators for these verses. For instance, verses refer to '*qarḍ ḥasan*' (charitable spending, in addition to its common meaning of lending money) means that, according to Riḍā, money is to be spent on proper objects if it is to bring benefits and what is meant is to

[175] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 18:11086.
[176] See, for example, Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 1:431.
[177] Ibn 'Āshūr, al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr, 27:377

spend with pure intentions for the sake of God.[178] For Quṭb, the implication is that this spending is allowed by God, to increase several times over in this life, with happiness and greater reward in the life to come.[179] Ibn ʻĀshūr adds other qualities that relate to the spenders themselves: those of acceptance and willingness to spend with a smile and without any selfish motive or desire to harm others.[180]

Moreover, the meaning of *ḥasan* that describes this provision depends on the specific meaning of the word *rizq* that occurs in each verse. For instance, in verse Q11:88 the word *rizq* may mean 'a known physical provision for sustenance'. Other commentators, for instance al-Shaʻrāwī, claim that it means the mercy of Prophethood, since it comes in the specific context of Prophet Shuʻayb (Shuaib).[181] Hence, the common interpretation is the first meaning and *ḥasan* here may refer to ethical qualities, for instance the lawfulness of earning without aggression and with an understanding of the rights of others.[182] It may also refer, in contrast, to physical appearances, as seen in the interpretation of verse Q16:75 in the view of Ibn ʻĀshūr.[183]

With regards to the adjective *ḥasan* when it describes God's covenant, it connotes a specific meaning in verse Q20:86 in the context of the story of Moses and the Children of Israel. A number of commentators, such as Quṭb and Ibn ʻĀshūr, claim that the "gracious promise" means the several favours God shows them, such as the descent of the Torah, freedom from enslavement by their enemy, provision in the desert, victory and entry to the Holy Land.[184] The adjective *ḥasan* here means something that brings benefits to them, in this life and in the Hereafter.[185] In verse Q28:61, the "good promise" mentioned here, according

[178] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 2:436.
[179] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 1:265; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 1:235.
[180] Ibn ʻĀshūr, al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr, 27:377.
[181] Al-Shaʻrāwī, *Tafsīr al-Shaʻrāwī*, 11:6621.
[182] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 12:144.
[183] Ibn ʻĀshūr, al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr, 14:224.
[184] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2347; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 11:348; Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 16:282.
[185] See, for example, Al-Shaʻrāwī, *Tafsīr al-Shaʻrāwī*, 15:9357; Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 16:282.

to Quṭb and Ibn ʻĀshūr, refers to the general rewards bestowed by God to believers and specifically to Paradise. The quality discerned in this context is the wonder and sublimity of eternity and the abundance of this reward.[186]

Thus, a similar line of meaning can be applied to all the verses that contain the adjective *ḥasan*. As noted above, the specific meaning of *ḥasan* is understood according to its specific context. However, as we have seen, all these meanings are inferred from the primitive meanings of the root *ḥ-s-n*; pleasantness, perfection, beneficence, desirability, acceptance and praiseworthiness.

4.3.4 The Root *z-y-n* and the Ethical Aesthetic

The interesting point to be noted from Qur'ānic discourse on the ethical connotations of aesthetic terms from the root *z-y-n* is that they occur only once in a positive context, in verse Q49:7, "God has endeared faith to you and made it beautiful to your hearts". All other occurrences imply negative connotations, making bad deeds temptingly attractive. This meaning appears in the Qur'ānic text no less than 19 times, for instance in verses Q6:108, Q8:48, Q16:63, Q27:4, Q35:8 and Q47:14.

Reviewing past articulations of the meaning of derivatives from the trilateral *z-y-n*, it should first be noted that, in terms of ethical aesthetics, the object to be beautified, adorned and embellished can be beautiful, good and attractive in itself, for instance faith, as mentioned in verse Q49:7. But objects that lack beauty, goodness and attractiveness in themselves can also be made appealing. However, the meaning of *tazyīn* in the context of the second type of object is to cover the defects of something and make it more tempting and alluring. In the Qur'ānic text, this kind of thing is generally bad deeds, which are the most frequently mentioned objects of *tazyīn* in a number of verses. It is an interesting to think that the positive form of *tazyīn* – that of beautifying and adorning faith in God – is mentioned

[186] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 5:2705; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 13:204; Ibn ʻĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 20:154f.

once, set against several occurrences of the negative form of *tazyīn* - that of making sins seem pleasing, alluring and acceptable. This suggests that religious faith, Islam, as in verse Q49:7, is good and attractive in its original form and by definition. However, the need for extra qualities or artificial embellishments to make such faith seem pleasing and attractive is mentioned less often in the Qur'ān, since its goodness is inherent in its noble nature. Indeed, as noted previously in this chapter, in particular in connection with the derivatives of the root *ḥ-s-n*, numerous Qur'ānic commands and virtues are described as being good, beautiful and beneficial in themselves and their consequences, and this makes them seemly in the hearts of believers. Qur'ānic commentators, Quṭb for instance, claim that the "beautification" of faith signifies that God has endowed it with traits and qualities capable of "making their [believers] hearts warm to it as He has revealed its beauty and benefit".[187] It signifies, also, that God supplies evidence for the truth of Islam. This "beautification" connotes, moreover, the rewards that God promised to grant believers in this life and the life to come.[188] Moreover, closely related to this division is the division of the subject of *tazyīn* into two types: commendable and condemnable. The former relates to the good and praiseworthy deeds which, for instance, endear faith to Muslims and make it beautiful, as discussed above. The latter relates to bad, evil and blameworthy deeds and seeks to make them specious.[189]

A point to consider here is the subject of the act of *tazyīn* shown in the Qur'ānic text. In other words, who makes deeds look fair, good, beautiful and attractive to human beings? First, there are indeed some verses that attribute the act of *tazyīn* to Allah. Others, however, state clearly that it is Satan who has made bad deeds seem fair to human beings. A third

[187] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 6:3342; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 16:87.
[188] See, for example, 'Alī bin Muḥammad al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa al-'Uyūn Tafsīr al-Māwardī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Mū'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, n.d), 5:329; Naṣr bin Muḥammad al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr al-Samarqandī*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad Ma'awwaḍ et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1993), 3:263.
[189] See, for example, Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 8:5100; Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 3:239; Zayd Muḥammad al-Rumānī, 'al-Zīnah fī kul min al-Lughah wa al-Qur'ān wa al-Iṣṭilāḥ', *Majallat al-Dā'ī al-Shahriyyah* 12 (2006): 4; Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Mū'assah al-A'lamī llmaṭbū'āt, 1997), 3:112f.

group of these verses uses a passive verb, without naming the agent. The first group, which attributes the act of *tazyīn* to Allah, consists of verses Q49:7, Q6:108 and Q27:4. Certainly verse Q49:7 cannot be questioned in this regard, since it signifies the endearing of faith to believers. It is stated clearly that Allah is the One who adorns and beautifies His religion in the hearts of believers, obviously a commendable and praiseworthy kind of *tazyīn*. In verse Q6:108, "To each community We make their own actions seem alluring", and verse Q27:4, "As for those who do not believe in the life to come, We have made their deeds seem alluring to them", however, the act of *tazyīn* is also ascribed to God, using the subject pronoun. Hence, it can be noted that although they connote negative implications from the context of these verses - reviling God in Q6:108 and denying the Hereafter in Q27:4, the act of alluring and attracting by evil acts is seen as God's act. Therefore, scholars such as Ibn 'Āshūr, Riḍā and Quṭb claim that the meaning of the act of *tazyīn* here must refer to the intrinsic nature of human beings and their propensities, and not to the initial meaning of embellishing bad deeds to make them seem fair. These scholars point out that God has moulded human beings to see their own deeds as good and acceptable and defend them, whether good or evil, unless they receive divine guidance.[190] It is God's Law, according to Quṭb, that comes into operation, making their deeds seem fair and attractive to human actors.[191] Thus *tazyīn* here indicates that the tendency to praise one's own deeds is part of human nature. Riḍā supports this view, saying that this power from Allah to embellish does not mean that He has made faith attractive to some nations and disbelief attractive to others. Such beautification is the result of human beings' initial response to God's call. If they follow His guidance, their choice will allure them. If they respond negatively and go astray, this will also seem fair and good, owing to self-beautification.[192]

[190] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 7:668f.; Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 7:433; Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 2:1169; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 13:86.
[191] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 2:1169; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 13:86.
[192] Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 7:669.

With regards to the second group of verses (for instance verses Q6:43, Q8:48, Q27:24 and Q29:39), which attribute this power to Satan, the Qur'ān in verse Q15:39 states clearly that Satan will use the tool of beautifying what is evil as a significant weapon in his battle to capture human beings. Likewise, verse Q16:63, "By God, We have sent messengers before you [Muhammad] to other communities, but Satan made their foul deeds seem alluring to them" states that Satan's act of *tazyīn* will be his way with every nation throughout the centuries. Qur'ānic exegetes such as Riḍā elaborate on the deep effect of such allure, as without it one might, for instance, stop uttering falsehoods. This makes it difficult to turn away from sins and bad deeds that seem good, beautiful, pleasurable and attractive, since it will not lead to reviewing these deeds to see if they are right or wrong.[193] Quṭb warns us significantly about this Satanic strategy: that Satan is always behind what seems attractive and pleasurable unless it is initially in accordance with God's commands.[194] Therefore, the Qur'ān, in several verses such as Q14:22, emphasises that Satan has no effect on human beings except to tempt and allure them through his whispers. On the Day of Judgment, Satan himself will declare this truth and he will absolve himself from turning people away from God's path and from all their evil deeds.

In the Qur'ānic text, a number of verses give examples and incidents of Satan's "beautification" of evil deeds to make them seem tempting and fair. For example, in verse Q8:48, the Qur'ān describes what happened in the Battle of Badr, when Satan deceived the unbelievers and led them to fight against the believers, saying that "Satan made their foul deeds seem fair to them, and said, 'No one will conquer you today, for I will be right beside you', but when the armies came within sight of one another he turned on his heels, saying, 'This is where I leave you: I see what you do not, and I fear God – God is severe in His punishment". In this verse is a clear Qur'ānic statement that Satan tempted the unbelievers to

[193] Ibid., 3:238.
[194] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2141; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 10:274.

take up arms against the Muslims. It is also clear according to this verse that Satan tempted the unbelievers by promising that no force could overcome them and that they would have his support and protection. Quṭb claims that the Qur'ānic text of this verse confirms that the unbelievers were misled into fighting but gives no details of how it occurred.[195] The same verse also asserts the Qur'ānic statement, mentioned above (verse Q14:22), that Satan has no power over human beings except in their response to his temptations. This fact is seen in the Qur'ānic statement "but when the armies came within sight of one another he turned on his heels, saying, 'This is where I leave you'". Hence, al-Sha'rāwī points out that Satan had no effect on the result of the battle. All that he can do is to deceive the unbelievers and make their choice of action seem acceptable, by giving them the impression that they will win.[196]

Another example of Satan's "beautification" of evil deeds mentioned in the Qur'ān is in the story of Sheba, verse Q27:24. The Qur'ān says in regard to the worship of the sun instead of God that "Satan has made their deeds seem alluring to them, and diverted them from the right path: they cannot find the right path". Another example of making disobedience to God's seem fair and good to past nations occurs in the story of the people of *'Ād and Thamūd*, verse Q29:38. The Qur'ān states that Satan 'beautifies' the action of going astray from God's guidance. Quṭb points out that Satan plays on the people's false self-esteem and their arrogance in the wealth and power that had been bestowed on them.[197] Yet there are two verses, Q6:137 and Q41:25, which ascribe this act of *tazyīn* to 'partners', without specifying anyone. According to a number of Qur'ānic commentators, such as Ibn 'Āshūr, Quṭb and Riḍā, 'partners' here may refer to both devils and wicked human companions.[198] Ibn 'Āshūr points out that the partner mentioned in verses Q6:137 and Q41:25 refers to complicity in going astray, irrespective of wicked human companion

[195] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 3:1531; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 7:135f.
[196] Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 8:4735.
[197] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 5:2735; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 13:252.
[198] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 8:99; Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 3:1218; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 5:285; Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 8:125f.

outwardly or devils inwardly. Both can veil one's sins to make them seem fair and attractive.[199]

The third group mentioned in the Qur'ānic context of 'beautifying' evil deeds to make them look alluring, in terms of specifying the subject of the act of *tazyīn*, uses the passive voice with an unspecified agent. This occurs in verses Q2:212, Q3:14, Q6:122, Q9:37, Q10:12, Q13:3, Q35:8, Q40:37, Q47:14 and Q48:12. Commentators such as Ibn 'Āshūr and Riḍā agree that the main concern in these verses is the act itself, not the one who is responsible for it. The aim of these verses is to present bad deeds that are attractive to their doers. The main issue then is to shed light on the act and its result, to learn lessons from their consequences.[200] Ibn 'Āshūr adds that believers know that the act of *tazyīn* may refer to Satan or to the evil done by human beings; this ascription is to be found in other verses, such as Q8:48 and Q6:137.[201] Furthermore, Qur'ānic exegetes agree that, in accordance with mainstream Islamic thought, bad deeds in this context cannot be attributed to God. Therefore, the Qur'ānic precedent does not attribute negative *tazyīn* to God; instead it is attributed to an unspecified agent who might be Satan, the evildoer himself or a wicked companion. The only instances where negative *tazyīn* is attributing to Allah is seen in verses Q6:108 and Q27:3. However, as discussed earlier, this indirect ascription may refer to the nature of human character (the natural inclination in human beings). Quṭb for instance, in his interpretation of verse Q6:122, states that it is an intrinsic quality in human nature to be susceptible to the duality of evil and good. It is also God who has moulded human beings to praise their own choice and be proud of it, whatever it is, unless he judges his choice in the light of divine teachings. When someone chooses darkness, it will be attractive to him and the whisperers of evil will continue to inspire him with the speciousness of his actions.[202] In verse Q13:33,

[199] Ibn 'Āshūr, al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr, 8:99.
[200] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 8:46; Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 11:314.
[201] Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 11:112.
[202] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 3:1201; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 5:256f.

Quṭb claims that if this kind of allurement is interpreted in isolation from the whole Qur'ānic context, this might provoke a discussion on what is known in Islamic thought as free will and predestination. He stresses that such allurement results from someone's initial choice and negative response. He maintains, indeed, that if someone chooses not to follow God's path, God's law will operate against him. According to Quṭb, "God's law operates when the causes for its operation come together".[203] Furthermore, other commentators, such as al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, understand this reference to God to mean that Allah has giving "permission" to Satan and all other causes of evil to have a negative influence on human willpower in order to attain the divine purpose of the trial, i.e. the battle between human beings and Satan, so that the doers of good may succeed and attain Paradise while the sinners may be separated from them.[204]

It is worth mentioning here that the Qur'ān states in verse Q29:38 that the act of *tazyīn* is not restricted to ignorant and foolish people, but extends to those who have a mind and the ability to distinguish good from bad. This verse occurs in the context of the story of the nations of *'Ād* and *Thamūd*; the most civilized of their time. Therefore, even though they had the ability to perceive the righteous path, they chose to follow the fabricated allurement of evil veiling their false deeds. From this Qur'ānic proposition we may draw two conclusions. First, that Satan and evil whisperers approach human beings not only through making their worldly desires seem pleasurable and attractive, but even through false logic. Satan's temptation varies according to each individual's interests. He can allure them and by false logic make evil attractive for those who take pride in being knowledgeable and civilised. To accomplish his ultimate goal of deceiving human beings and leading them astray, he can also play on areas of intellectual discipline to deceive intellectuals. Second, the act of *tazyīn* despite the endowments of intelligence and skills is the most effective weapon Satan has against mankind. In verse Q15:39, Satan declares that his greatest weapon in

[203] Quṭb, *al-Ẓilāl*, 4:2063, 2073; Quṭb, *In the Shade*, 10:162f., 177f.
[204] Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mīzān*, 3:111f.

tempting human beings will be making what is evil and foul seem fair and good. The dangerousness of this Satanic strategy is explained by Qur'ānic exegetes such as Quṭb. He points out that when Satan embellishes evil deeds to make them look fair, people start to admire their own actions and, therefore, will not pay attention to self-criticism. Hence, people lose their insight about themselves and can no longer see how foul their deeds are. They are bereft of a balanced judgment and cannot distinguish good from evil, but continue to see their sins as good and pleasant.

4.4 Conclusion

The physical aesthetic in Qur'ānic discourse reveals that there are three domains in which such aesthetics can be discerned, namely in nature, art and the celestial paradise. The discussion in the first part of this chapter reveals that the aesthetic aspects to be found in nature are stressed more than those in human artefacts. In fact, the Qur'ān frequently refers to examples and images from nature in its various aspects. The aesthetic aspects are singled out intentionally. It is obvious from Qur'ānic discourse that the religious significance of the aesthetic aspects is of crucial importance alongside the aspects of human enjoyment and appreciation. From the Qur'ānic point of view, the aesthetic aspects of the natural world are paths to the revelation of God and a closer approach to Him. They are signs from God, bearing testimony to His oneness. Even if the Qur'ānic text does not explicitly mention that these are signs, it is nevertheless understood that they are such. Another reason that justifies the frequent references to the aesthetics of nature is that it provides easy access for all human beings, compared to other domains, such as the arts for instance. In other words, nature surrounds humans on all sides and can be contemplated universally.

With regards to the Qur'ānic references to human artefacts, they reveal that there is no primary opposition to art in the Qur'ān, but there is an indication that the pursuit of aesthetics is enjoined. Furthermore, they highlight the value of aesthetics as a basic quality in human life. They also emphasise that they constitute one of greatest kinds of bliss that God bestows. More importantly, they show the characteristics to adopt that best suit their use. Hence, it should be clarified that the Qur'ān, as commonly known to Muslims, is not revealed to be a book about art, or a manual of instructions, or a collection of sophisticated arguments. It is rather meant to guide people in leading their lives. When applied to secular life, it grants basic insights that lead to proper moral conduct. The Qur'ān insists on the religious significance that pervades all its stipulations.

Modern scholars, in the Western world in particular, seem to have devoted less attention to the aesthetics of the natural environment. Brady states that natural aesthetics were of minor concern throughout the history of aesthetics. With a few exceptions, aesthetic philosophers paid more attention to art as the primary object of aesthetics, whereas they neglected the aesthetics of nature.[205] Likewise, Hepburn claims that the aesthetics of the Middle Ages was defined as 'the philosophy of art'.[206] Brady states that the eighteenth century marks a 'turning point' in Western interest in the aesthetic dimension of nature.[207] Hepburn supports this claim, adding that there was a 'curious shift' at the time towards a serious reflection on the natural environment and an aesthetic appreciation of it.[208] But only in the last decades of the twentieth century has there been a revival in the concern with natural aesthetics.[209]

[205] Emily Brady, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 1:29-31.
[206] Hepburn, Wonder and other Essays.
[207] Brady, Aesthetics of the Natural Environment, 54.
[208] Hepburn, Wonder and other Essays, 9.
[209] Malcolm Budd, *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), vii.

In later Western thought, scholars on one hand tended to reveal the positive advantages of appreciating the natural environment as an object of aesthetic experience. On the other hand, they compared different natural scenes to artistic objects. In Brady's account, Kant, according to his aesthetic theory, considered nature an appropriate object of the aesthetic response.[210] Hepburn considers the natural environment to have offered a "richly complex set of relevant data" to those who were aesthetically appreciative.[211] Developing this idea, Carlson maintains that nature is the most "rich and rewarding" object to which to make an aesthetic response. In nature there is "much to see, to hear and to feel".[212] Thus, human beings as spectators of the aesthetic aspects of nature can be completely immersed and involved through their different senses in an 'ideal object' of aesthetic experience.

With regards to the differences between the natural world and works of art, writers on aesthetics draw attention to the fact that the latter are 'framed'. Carlson clarifies the boundaries set around a work of art in terms of time, as with a dramatic work or a musical composition, or in space, as with a painting or sculpture.[213] Thus, whatever aspects are excluded from the 'frame' set for a certain object of art cannot be included in the relevant aesthetic experience.[214] This meaning extends to signify not only the physical borders, but even the origins of a man-made object. When the work of art is made by an artist, it reflects its maker's ideas and intentions.[215] In contrast, nature is 'frameless'; "it moves through time and it is extended through space".[216] Hence, Hepburn adds that any "sound or visible

[210] Brady, Aesthetics of the Natural Environment, 35.
[211] Hepburn, Wonder and other Essays, 11.
[212] Allen Carlson, Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciating of Nature, Art and Architecture (London: Routledge, 200), xviii.
[213] Carlson, Aesthetics and the Environment, xviii.
[214] Hepburn, Wonder and other Essays, 14.
[215] See, for example, Brady, Aesthetics of the Natural Environment, 60-64; Carlson, Aesthetics and the Environment, xviii; Hepburn, Wonder and other Essays, 12-13.
[216] Carlson, Aesthetics and the Environment, xviii.

intrusion from beyond the original boundaries of our attention can challenge us to integrate it in our overall experience".[217]

The last remark to make here from Western discussions on the aesthetics of the natural environment concerns the most recent phase of the positive attitude towards it. It has been argued that the entire natural world is intrinsically beautiful. Hence, such scholars as Carlson distinguish between virginal or untouched nature and nature as modified by human beings. He claims that the former has mainly positive aesthetic qualities.[218] Indeed, he devotes an entire chapter in his book *Aesthetics and the Environment* to articulating this notion from various perspectives. Throughout this chapter he stresses the idea that nature is "essentially aesthetically good".[219] Moreover, Budd points out that the aesthetic appreciation of nature can only be positive, while the appreciation of art is critical with regards to our aesthetic response, and he argues this allows for negative aesthetic criticism.[220]

Below, an attempt will be made to examine the above findings from the Qur'ānic standpoint, though without any intention to compare the two areas of aesthetic response. I want rather to shed light on Qur'ānic discourse in order to understand these notions from its point of view. Recalling previous discussions, the Qur'ān claims unequivocally that the *iḥsān* in verse Q32:7, which combines the meaning of perfection and aesthetic perception, can be discerned in all that Allah has created. Thus nature, which is the handiwork of God, is in its design and creation a perfect and ideal object of aesthetic appreciation. This Qur'ānic view reveals in itself a justification for finding in natural objects of positive aesthetic appreciation, since its artist is divine and not fallibly human. This justification is known in the Western tradition as the 'divine justification' for the view that nature possesses positive aesthetic

[217] Hepburn, Wonder and other Essays, 12-13.
[218] Carlson, Aesthetics and the Environment, 72.
[219] Ibid., 72-95.
[220] Budd, The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature, 97. See also Carlson, Aesthetics and the Environment, 75.

qualities.[221] Accordingly, Qur'ānic discourse referring to nature as the domain of the physical aesthetic is never associated with negative connotations. The only exception to this is in verse Q10:24, but there the negative connotations presented mainly refer to human attitudes than to any description of the physical aesthetic of nature. Another essential aspect to be mentioned in this regard is that Qur'ānic verses frequently instruct humans to contemplate the aesthetic aspects of the natural environment that is the closest to them, and thus the easiest to think about. They should obey the command to ponder and reflect on God's creation. Moreover, the claim that nature is the richest and most rewarding source of aesthetic experience is obviously supported by the variety of Qur'ānic examples of the aesthetic appeal that God intended in His creation. Finally, notwithstanding the significance of such examples, the most important feature is that they stand as a sign of God's existence and oneness.

Finally in this section, the physical aspects of aesthetics mentioned in the Qur'ānic descriptions of the delights of Paradise carry a far greater religious significance. They are meant to direct human beings to a realm of more perfect and sublime aesthetics. Humans must not tie their desires to transient and evanescent worldly delights, but should instead concentrate on eternal ones.

Following on from the notion that physical aesthetics in the Qur'ān have spiritual resonance and meaning, there are abundant references to another type of aesthetic, the ethical or moral aesthetic, which is altogether different. Aesthetics and ethics are intertwined in Qur'ānic discourse; Ethical goodness is defined, in the Qur'ānic text, by the use of several terms, and a number of aesthetic terms are used in ethical contexts. This Qur'ānic usage can be viewed in the light of the knowledge that believers are required to promote an aesthetic sense in all their ethical activities. As discussed in previous chapters, aesthetics from a Qur'ānic perspective is not for mere enjoyment or theoretical investigation. It is rather an

[221] Carlson, Aesthetics and the Environment, 75.

essential trait of Islamic faith. Therefore, the Qur'ān frequently commands believers to demonstrate aesthetics in their moral behaviour on every level of their daily lives. The usage in Qur'ānic discourse of aesthetic terms in a moral context signifies that Muslims are required to perform activities in a moral manner and to a high degree of excellence, which leads to positive consequences. An interesting point in the Qur'ānic usage of aesthetic terms in a moral context is their usage with negative connotations. These negative connotations imply that bad deeds can be made temptingly attractive. Hence, humans need to be aware of these kinds of deceptive beautifications.

CONCLUSION

Elements of the concept of aesthetics in the Qur'ān has been approached in the past by a number of studies from philosophical, Sufi and artistic angles. These studies did not focus exclusively on aesthetics or discuss it in detail, but they dealt with it in the context of addressing other subjects. Aesthetics as a distinct branch of knowledge, therefore, is not known in Islamic literature, but is usually referred to in discussions across various disciplines. This thesis addresses this deficit by undertaking a detailed and focused study of aesthetics in the Qur'ān.

In order to explore aesthetics in the Qur'ān, a detailed analysis of the Qur'ānic text is needed. The type of primary sources that is most suited for such a study is the *tafsīr*, as it represents a scholarly reading of the Qur'ānic text. As aesthetics is a multifaceted subject, in which cross-referencing between different verses and Qur'ānic terms is critical to developing a holistic understanding of aesthetics, the type of *tafsīr* known as *al-tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī* (thematic interpretation) has been used in this study. The current work has given special attention to the exegetical views of a number of modern exegetes, namely Quṭb, Riḍā, Ibn 'Āshūr and al-Sha'rāwī.

This study has found that the Qur'ān uses several terms that refer to various aspects of aesthetics. The terms that are most frequently mentioned are *jamāl* and *jamīl*, from the root *j-m-l*, derivatives of the root *ḥ-s-n* and derivatives of *z-y-n*. The other, but less frequently-mentioned, aesthetic terms are derivatives of the roots *z-kh-r-f*, *b-h-j*, and *n-ḍ-r*.

The noun *jamāl* appears once (verse Q16:6) in a context signifying physical aesthetics. The adjective *jamīl* from the root *j-m-l* occurs seven times in ethical contexts. One interesting finding to emerge from the discussions in Chapter Two is that the term *jamāl* is more widely considered to signify aesthetics than the various derivatives from the root *ḥ-s-n*. This can be understood in light of the Prophetic tradition "God is beautiful and He loves

beauty", using the term *jamāl* to connote a sense of aesthetics. Yet this study has found that the term *ḥusn* is more comprehensive than *jamāl*. Besides its connotations with regards to aesthetics, the former possesses the quality of 'goodness', which the latter lacks. This understanding justifies the tendency to translate the concept of *ḥusn* and other related terms from the same root to connote 'goodness'.

The root *z-y-n*, on the other hand, refers to additional qualities in the described objects, which are not recognised as original. Derivatives from this root are used at times to imply negative aspects of aesthetics, both physical or ethical.

Investigating the various key aesthetic terms in the Qur'ān reveals significant semantic differences between them. *Jamāl* mainly expresses a subjective view in the eyes of the beholder regarding the substance in question, wherease *ḥusn* signifies an objective quality in what is beheld. *Zīnah*, on the other hand, often addresses additional aesthetic qualities in the given objects, which in a number of instances are not originally beautiful.

Chapter Three examined the various qualities that characterise aesthetics in the Qur'ān. One of the basic features of aesthetics in Qur'ānic discourse, which other qualities build upon, is that aesthetics is an objective reality inherent in the substance and not merely an impression formed by the beholder. Perfection, meaning the absence of defects, is closely integrated with aesthetics in the view of the Qur'ān, as can be seen in various Qur'ānic passages. 'Aesthetics' and 'goodness' are also intertwined in the Qur'ānic conception. Another quality that characterises aesthetic is that it creates a feeling of pleasure in individuals.

The Qur'ān reveals its aesthetics in two realms: the physical and the ethical. The former is discerned in three domains: nature, human artefacts and Paradise. Natural aesthetics is by far the most commonly mentioned in the Qur'ān. This includes references to the heaven and the earth; their components, such as mountains, rivers, the Sun, the Moon, and the stars;

phenomena such as the night and day; and human beauty. Elements of aesthetics in Paradise are also mentioned frequently in the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān also promotes ethical aesthetics, i.e. it stresses the beauty intrinsic to moral behaviour and the inherent ugliness that characterises any behaviour that does not comply with God's will. This is clear in the use of derivatives of the root *ḥusn* to describe moral conduct. Morality here covers all aspects of human life: the way a human being treats themselves, other human beings, other creatures and the environment. All these, of course, are elements of their relationship with God.

Therefore, unsurprisingly, the current study has also shown that aesthetics in the Qur'ānic view serves a critical religious function: knowing God, the Creator. When mentioning forms of aesthetics, the Qur'ān goes on to remind people that it is God who created those various expressions of beauty. It emphasises, explicitly and implicitly, the expression of the oneness of God in the diverse forms of beauty. In doing so, the Qur'ān makes appreciating beauty a form of worship. In fact, any sense of aesthetics that is not interpreted as a sign of God's presence and oneness, and does not lead to obedience to Him, is not understood as Qur'ānic aesthetics at all.

While having a significant religious purpose, aesthetics can also be misused and abused by people, the Qur'ān stresses. A person may divorce their appreciation of aesthetics from its Qur'ānic message that God is its One Creator and the only one who is worthy of worship. Some take this dissociation even further, making forms of aesthetics influence their behaviours in a way that contravenes the divine will. So aesthetics is another aspect of God's creation that is designed to help people know and draw near to Him, but which may also be used to disobey and abandon Him.

The current study has presented a detailed examination of the Qur'ān's conception of aesthetics, focusing on identifying all elements of aesthetics in it. Being the first such

dedicated effort, this work should provide a framework for conducting future research that focuses on more specific areas and expands into related fields. One interesting area of research would be to examine how the aesthetic values of the people of Arabia before Islam contrast with the Qur'ān's aesthetics, including exploring social and other changes that embracing the Qur'ān demanded from them. Another area of research of immense interest would be comparing various elements of Qur'ānic aesthetics with their equivalents in other scriptures.

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