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ORIENTALIA LOVANIENSIA

ANALECTA

————— 278 —————

EGYPT AND SYRIA
IN THE FATIMID, AYYUBID
AND MAMLUK ERAS

IX

Proceedings of the 23rd and 24th International Colloquium

Organized at the University of Leuven in

May 2015 and 2016

K. D'HULSTER, G. SCHALLENBERGH[†]

and

J. VAN STEENBERGEN

(eds.)

PEETERS

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THE MEANING OF “BEAUTY” (*JAMĀL*) IN THE *MUQADDIMA* OF IBN KHALDŪN

My purpose is to analyse the meaning of the word *jamāl* (beauty) in the *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406). Two years ago, on the occasion of the 2013 edition of this colloquium I gave a presentation on “The Philosophical Basis of Ibn Khaldūn’s Poetics”¹. Afterwards I broadened my analysis to the aesthetic views expressed by Ibn Khaldūn in the *Muqaddima*. At this stage it would be premature to draw general conclusions on the esthetics of Ibn Khaldūn. The purpose of the present article is the description and analysis of what Ibn Khaldūn intends by *jamāl*.

In which sense do I use the word “aesthetics”? By aesthetics I do not intend a theory of art but more generally a sufficiently systematic reflection on sensible and intelligible beauty, including its tight relationship with the notions of “good”, of “true”, of “existing” and “real”, that is to say with ethics, philosophy, crafts and sciences, with sensual, rational, immanent and transcendent knowledge. For a long time it was believed that the Middle Ages did not have aesthetics. Indeed aesthetics was established as an autonomous discipline in the 18th century by Alexander Baumgarten (d. 1762)², who, however, by doing so, drastically narrowed its borders. In the mid-twentieth century the works of Edgar de Bruyne³, Umberto Eco⁴, Władysław Tatarkiewicz⁵ and others on Western medieval aesthetics showed that “it is not the Middle Ages that did not have aesthetics. It is the modern world that has a too narrow one”⁶. From the nineties of the twentieth century a number of works on the medieval aesthetics of the Arab and Islamic world have also been published. The studies of Gianroberto

¹ Giovanna Lelli, “We come from afar. The Philosophical Basis of Ibn Khaldūn’s Poetics”, in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, eds. Urbain Vermeulen, Kristof D’hulster and Jo Van Steenberghe [Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, volume CCXLIV] (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), pp. 429-440.

² Alexander Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, trans. Salvatore Tedesco, *L’Estetica di Alexander Baumgarten* (Palermo: Università degli Studi di Palermo, 2000). Incomplete work composed between 1750 and 1758, in Latin.

Alexander Baumgarten, *Methaphysica*, trans. Courtney D. Fugate and John Hymers, *Metaphysics* (London – New Delhi – New York – Sidney: Bloomsbury, 2013). In Latin. First Latin edition 1739.

³ Edgar De Bruyne, *Etudes d’esthétique médiévale*, volumes I-III (Brugge: De Tempel, 1946).

⁴ Umberto Eco, *Il problema estetico in Tommaso d’Aquino* (Milano: Bompiani, 1982). This work appeared as a master dissertation in 1954, and was first published in 1956.

⁵ Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *Storia dell’estetica*, volumes I-III (Torino: Einaudi, 1979-1980). First Polish edition published between 1960 and 1967.

⁶ Eco, *Il problema estetico in Tommaso d’Aquino*, 22.

Scarcia⁷, Doris Behrens-Abouseif⁸, Valérie Gonzales⁹ and Oliver Leaman¹⁰, although with different approaches and focuses, all benefitted from the enormous progress previously made in the field of Western medieval aesthetics. Therefore they no longer needed to justify the legitimacy and relevance of the Arab-Islamic medieval aesthetics as a field of enquiry¹¹.

In the *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldūn the word *jamāl* does not occupy the semantic field of “beauty” alone, which is filled by a number of other terms, like *khayr* and *ḥusn*, to quote only the most evident ones. *Jamāl* is rather a rare word. It occurs only eight times in the whole book. *Khayr* and *ḥusn* are much more often used in reference to beauty. The peculiarity of *jamāl* is that, unlike *ḥusn* and *khayr*, it refers exclusively to sensual beauty. Therefore I believe that its analysis is the most concrete starting point for the study of the aesthetic views of Ibn Khaldūn in the *Muqaddima*. *Jamāl* produces pleasure (*ladhdha*) to the ears through music, to the eyes through forms and colors, to the smell through fragrances and to the taste through flavors. Sensual beauty exerts a great attraction upon man. Its effects can be positive or negative. Therefore it can be dangerous. It has a strong impact on the human soul and pushes man to act in an uncontrolled and unusual manner. Sensual beauty needs to be regulated by the criteria of proportion and harmony (*talāʾum*, *tanāsub*), conformity and convenience (*muṭābaqa*). Beauty needs a good purpose (*gharaḍ*, *qaṣd*) and must not exceed the borders of moderation (*qaṣd*, *tawassuṭ iʿtidāl*). Otherwise it becomes a source of error and perdition religiously, ethically and philosophically.

Ibn Khaldūn employs the word *jamāl* in the following four contexts:

1. Referring to lust and heretical behaviors.
2. Referring to dynasties losing their splendor in their way to inevitable decay.
3. Referring to harmony and proportion in music.
4. Referring to rhetoric embellishments of speech (*ʿilm al-badī ʿ*)

1. SENSUAL BEAUTY (*JAMĀL*) AS REFERRED TO LUST AND HERETICAL BEHAVIORS

Ibn Khaldūn mentions the irresistible attraction of the beauty of the female body and the splendor of material luxury as a dangerous temptation to lascivious and heretical behaviors. This theme appears for instance when he considers

⁷ Gianroberto Scarcia, *Il volto di Adamo. La questione estetica nell'altro occidente* (Venezia: Il Cardo, 1995).

⁸ Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999).

⁹ Valérie Gonzales, *Beauty and Islam. Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture* (London - New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, in association with the Institute for Ismaili Studies, 2001).

¹⁰ Oliver Leaman, *Islamic Aesthetics. An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

¹¹ Francesco Gabrieli, Gustave von Grunebaum and other orientalist of previous generations had already analysed Arab and Islamic literary aesthetics.

various types of false historical information (*kadhib*) that occurs in those historical sources that attribute impious behaviors to Arab personalities of the highest moral and religious integrity, like the caliphs Hārūn al-Rashīd (d. 809) and al-Ma'mūn (d. 833). In this respect Ibn Khaldūn strongly rejects the reliability of the historian Ibn 'Abdrabbih who reported that al-Ma'mūn one night was walking down the streets of Baghdād, then seated himself in a basket let down from one of the roofs, was taken up into a chamber luxuriously furnished (*jamāl ru'yatuhu*) and there spent a night with a woman of extraordinary beauty (*rā'iqat al-jamāl*). A similar reported event, known as the story of the basket, is totally unlikely and unreliable if one takes into account "the circumstances" (*ḥāl*, pl. *aḥwāl*) of the personality of al-Ma'mūn.

"A similar story is the one about the basket reported by Ibn 'Abdrabbih, author of the *Iqd*, in explanation of how al-Ma'mūn came to be al-Ḥasan b. Sahl's son-in-law by marrying his daughter Burān. One night, on his rambles through the streets of Baghdād, al-Ma'mūn is said to have come upon a basket that was being let from one of the roofs by means of pulleys and twisted cords of silk thread. He seated himself in the basket and grabbed the pulley, which started moving. He was taken up into a chamber of such-and-such a condition. Ibn 'Abdrabbih described *the eye and soul-filling splendor of its carpets, the magnificence of its furnishings, and the beauty of its appearance. Then, a woman of extraordinary, seductive beauty is said to have come forth from behind curtains in that chamber. She greeted al-Ma'mūn and invited him to keep her company. He drank wine with her the whole night long. In the morning he returned to his companions at the place where they had been awaiting him. He had fallen so much in love with the woman that he asked her father for her hand.* How does all this accord with al-Ma'mūn's well-known religion and learning, with his imitation of the way of life of his forefathers, the right-guided ('Abbāsīd) caliphs, with his adoption of the way of life of those pillars of Islam, the (first) four caliphs, with his respect for the religious scholars, or his observance in his prayers and legal practice of the norms established by God! *How could it be correct that he would act like (one of those) wicked scoundrels who amuse themselves by rambling about at night, entering strange houses in the dark, and engaging in nocturnal trysts in the manner of Bedouin lovers!* And how does that story fit with the position and noble character of al-Ḥasan b. Sahl's daughter, and with the firm morality and chastity that reigned in her father's house!"¹²

و من أمثال هذه الحكايات ما نقله ابن عبد ربه صاحب العقد من حديث الزنبيـل في سبب إصهار المأمون إلى الحسن بن سهل في بنته بوران وأنه عثر في بعض الليالي في تطوافه بسكك بغداد في زنبيـل مدلى من بعض السطوح بمعلق و جدل مغارة الفتل من الحرير فاعتقده و تناول المعالق فاهترت و ذهب به صعداً إلى مجلس شأنه كذا و وصف من زينة فرشـه و تنصيد ابنته و جمال رؤيته ما يستوقف الطرف و يملك النفس و أن امرأة برزت له من خلل الستور في ذلك المجلس رائقة الجمال فتانة المحاسن فحيته و دعته إلى المنادمة فلم يزل يعاقرها الخمر حتى الصباح و رجع إلى أصحابه بمكانهم من انتظاره و قد شغفته حباً بعته على الإصهار إلى أبيها و أين هذا كله

¹² Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), *Muqaddima*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddima. An Introduction to History*, volumes I-III (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), I: 39-40. Italics are mine.

من حال المأمون المعروفة في دينه و علمه و اقتفائه سنن الخلفاء الراشدين من آباءه و أخذه بسير الخلفاء الأربعة أركان الملة و مناظرته العلماء و حفظه لحدود الله تعالى في صلواته، أحكامه فكيف تصح عنه أحوال الفساق المستهترين في التطواف بالليل و طروق المنازل و غشيان السمر سبيل عشاق الأعراب و أين ذلك من منصب ابنة الحسن بن سهل و شرفها و ما كان بدار أبيها من الصون و العفاف¹³

The purpose of Ibn Khaldūn in this passage is not to speak about beauty, but to criticise erroneous historiographical reports relying upon imaginary “stories”, elsewhere defined as *khurāfāt* and *qīṣaṣ*. His purpose is to affirm the value of his own “new” (*mustahdath*, *mustanbaṭ al-nashʿa*) historical method, scientific and demonstrative, relying upon the accordance (*muṭābaqa*) of every event (*ḥādith*) with its specific circumstances and conditions (*al-aḥwāl*). However, as a matter of fact, Ibn Khaldūn provides us with important information on his aesthetic views. Sensual beauty can be a dangerous temptation inducing man to lascivious and heretical behaviors. Sensual beauty and its effects are opposed to religion (*dīn*), learning (*ʿilm*), nobility and honor (*sharaf*), morality (*ṣawn*) and chastity (*ʿafāf*). Those who attribute such behaviors to personalities well known for their moral integrity, do so because they are themselves inclined to such forbidden behaviors.

“The incentive for inventing and reporting them is a (general) inclination to forbidden pleasures and for smearing the reputation of others. People justify their own subservience to pleasure by citing men and women of the past (who allegedly did the same things they are doing). Therefore, they often appear very eager for such information and are alert to find it when they go through the pages of (published) works. If they would follow the example of the people (of the past) in other respects and in the *qualities of perfection* that were theirs and for which they are well known, it would be better for them, if they would know.”¹⁴

أمثال هذه الحكايات كثيرة و في كتب المؤرخين معروفة و إنما يبعث على وضعها و الحديث بها الانهماك في اللذات المحرمة و هتك قناع المخدرات و يتعللون بالتأسي بالقوم فيما يأتونه من طاعة لذاتهم فلذلك تراهم كثيراً ما يلهجون بأشباه هذه الأخبار و ينقرون عنها عند تصفحهم لأوراق الدواوين و لو ائتمسوا بهم في غير هذا من أحوالهم و صفات الكمال اللاتقة بهم المشهورة عنهم لكان خيراً لهم لو كانوا يعلمون. و لقد عدلت يوماً بعض الأمراء من أبناء الملوك في كلفه بتعلم الغناء و ولوعه بالأوتار و قلت له ليس هذا من شأنك و لا يليق بمنصبك فقال لي أفلا ترى إلي إبراهيم بن المهدي كيف كان إمام هذه الصناعة و رئيس المغنين في زمانه فقلت له يا سبحان الله و هلا تأسيت بأبيه أو أخيه أو ما رأيت كيف قعد ذلك بإبراهيم عن مناصبهم فصم عن عدلي و أعرض و الله يهدي من يشاء¹⁵

¹³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, ed. Khalīl Shaḥāda, *Muqaddima Ibn Khaldūn* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2001), pp. 26-27.

¹⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, I: 40. Italics are mine.

¹⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, ed. Shaḥāda, 27.

These passages confirm that In the Middle Ages, East and West, "the aesthetical battle was fought to demonstrate that the beautiful is not something different from the good (exactly the opposite of what the Moderns would do)"¹⁶.

2. SENSUAL BEAUTY (JAMĀL) AS REFERRED TO DYNASTIES LOSING THEIR SPLENDOR ON THEIR WAY TO DECAY

A second case in which Ibn Khaldūn employs the word *jamāl* is when he refers to dynasties losing their "pomp and beauty" (*al-abha wa l-jamāl*) on their way to decay (*khalal*), according to his naturalist and organic view of history. Civilizations, like the human body, are born, grow, flourish, decay and perish. *Jamāl* in this context refers to the luxury and the sensual beauty that, sooner or later, inevitably corrupt all civilizations and extinguish their vigor and strength, until they fall under the domination of aggressors, or "continue to dwindle and finally disappear like the wick of a lamp when the oil is exhausted, and it goes out"¹⁷.

"At this stage, the tax collectors in the dynasty have acquired much wealth, because vast revenues are in their hands and their position has widened in importance for this reason. Suspicions of having appropriated tax money, therefore, attach to them. It becomes common for one tax collector to denounce another, because of their mutual jealousy and envy. One after another is deprived of his money by confiscation and torture. *Eventually, their wealth is gone, and they are ruined. The dynasty loses the pomp and magnificence it had possessed through them.* After their prosperity is destroyed, the dynasty goes farther afield and approaches its other wealthy subjects. At this stage, feebleness has already afflicted its (former) might. (The dynasty) has become too weak to retain its power and forceful hold. The policy of the ruler, at this time, is to handle matters diplomatically by spending money. He considers this more advantageous than the sword, which is of little use. His need for money grows beyond what is needed for expenditures and soldiers' salaries. He never gets enough. *Senility affects the dynasty more and more.* The people of (other) regions grow bold against it. At each of these stages, the strength of the dynasty crumbles. Eventually, it reaches complete ruin. It is open to domination by (any) aggressor. *Anyone who wants to attack it can take it away from those who support it. If this does not occur, it will continue to dwindle and finally disappear like the wick of a lamp when the oil is exhausted, and it goes out.* God owns all things and governs the whole creation. There is no God but Him."¹⁸

أموال الرعايا من مكس أو تجارة أو نقد في بعض الأحوال بشبهة أو بغير شبهة ويكون الجند في ذلك الطور قد تجاسر على الدولة بما لحقها من الفشل والهزم في العصبية فتتوقع ذلك منهم و تداوى بسكينة العطايا وكثرة الإنفاق فيهم ولا تجد عن ذلك وليجة وتكون جباة الأموال في الدولة قد عظمت ثروتهم في هذا الطور بكثرة الجباية وكونها بأيديهم وبما اتسع لذلك من

¹⁶ Eco, *Il Problema estetico in Tommaso d'Aquino*, 31. Translation is mine.

¹⁷ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, II: 124.

¹⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, II: 123-124. Italics are mine.

جاههم فيتوجه إليهم باحتجان الأموال من الجباية وتفشو السعاية فيهم، بعضهم من بعض للمنافسة و الحقد فتعمهم النكبات والمصادرات واحدا واحدا إلى أن تذهب ثروتهم وتتلشى أحوالهم و يفقد ما كان للدولة من الأبهة والجمال بهم وإذا اصطلمت نعمتهم تجاوزتهم الدولة إلى أهل الثروة من الرعايا سواهم ويكون الوهن في هذا الطور قد لحق الشوكة و ضعفت عن الاستطالة و القهر فتصرف سياسة صاحب الدولة حينئذ إلى إدارة الأمور ببذل المال و يراه أرفع من السيف لقلة غنائه فتعظم حاجته إلى الأموال زيادة على النفقات وأرزاق الجند ولا يغنى فيما يريد ويعظم الهرم بالدولة و يتجاسر عليها أهل النواحي و الدولة تنحل عراها في كل طور من هذه إلى أن تفضي إلى الهلال و تتعوض من الاستيلاء الكلل فإن قصدها طالب انتزعها من أيدي القائمين بها وإلا بقيت وهي تتلشى إلى أن تضمحل كالذبال في السراج إذا فني زيتة و طفئ والله مالك الأمور و مدبر الأكوان لا إله إلا هو¹⁹

3. SENSUAL BEAUTY (*JAMĀL*) AS REFERRED TO IN HARMONY (*TANĀSUB*) AND PROPORTION (*TALĀ'UM*) IN MUSIC

Ibn Khaldūn mentions the word *jamāl* in the most extensive way when he deals with singing (*ghinā'*) and music (*mūsīqā*). Music is harmony of sounds. Harmony produces pleasure (*ladhdha*) and exerts attraction. Not only harmony of sounds, but also harmony of forms, colors, tastes and flavors are pleasant and attractive. This is because the human being is naturally (*bi fīṭratihi*) attracted by what is harmonious and proportionate.

Proportionate objects are in harmony with the soul that perceives them. There is "correspondence" and "harmony" (*talā'um*, *tanāsub*) between the human soul and harmonious objects. "Beauty means" ("the meaning of beauty", *ma'nā al-jamāl wa l-ḥusn*) the harmony of forms (*ashkāl*, *takhāṭiṭ*) of a sensual object that conforms to its specific matter (*mādda*) in a perfectly proportionate way. The reason why the soul is attracted by beautiful objects is that they are in a relationship of harmony and proportion with it. The following two passages of the *Muqaddima* are a good example of how Medieval Islam assimilated at once the Pythagorean, the Platonic and the Aristotelian notions of beauty, then digested synthesized and reinterpreted them through the filter of Neo-Platonism and Sufism.

"If an object of vision is harmonious in the forms and lines given to it in accordance with the matter from which it is made, so that the requirements of its particular matter as to perfect harmony and arrangement are not disregarded that being the meaning of beauty and loveliness whenever these terms are used for any object of sensual perception that (object of vision) is then in harmony with the soul that perceives (it), and the soul, thus, feels pleasure as the result of perceiving something that is agreeable to it."²⁰

¹⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, ed. Shaḥāda, 366-367.

²⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, II: 397-398.

و أما المربيات و المسموعات فالملائم فيها تناسب الأوضاع في أشكالها و كفياتها فهو أنسب عند النفس و أشد ملاءمة لها. فإذا كان المرابي متناسباً في أشكاله و تخاطيطه التي له بحسب مادته بحيث لا يخرج عما تقتضيه مادته الخاصة من كمال المناسبة و الوضع و ذلك هو معنى الجمال و الحسن في كل مدرك. كان ذلك حينئذ مناسباً للنفس المدركة فتلتذ بإدراك ملائمتها²¹

This is why, continues Ibn Khaldūn, lovers want to unite with the beloved one and the "[Neo-Platonic] philosophers" (*al-ḥukamā' al-ilāhiyūn*) say that all beings want to unite with the "Principle" (*al-mabda'*) and the "Universe" (*al-kawn*).

"For this reason passionate lovers express their love as their desire to melt their soul in the beloved's soul. It is a mystery that only lovers understand, that is to say the identity with the Principle. If you look carefully around you, you see that there is an identity in the beginning between yourself and all things, which is a clear sign that we all are one with the universe. In other terms all of existence participates in being, as the philosophers say. Therefore everyone wants to melt with something in which he sees perfection, in order to become one with it. The soul wants to get rid of chimeras in order to attain Truth, which is the identity between the universe and its Principle."²²

و لهذا تجد العاشقين المستهترين في المحبة يعبرون عن غاية محبتهم و عشقهم بامتزاج أرواحهم بروح المحبوب. و في هذا سرّ تفهمه إن كنت من أهله و هو اتحاد المبدأ و إن كان ما سواك إذا نظرته و تأملتته رأيت بينك و بينه اتحاداً في البداءة. يشهد لك به اتحاد كما في الكون و معناه من وجه آخر أن الوجود يشترك بين الموجودات كما تقوله الحكماء. فتود أن تمتزج بمشاهدات فيه الكمال لتتحد به، بل تزوم النفس حينئذ الخروج عن الوهم إلى الحقيقة التي هي اتحاد المبدأ و الكون²³

The beauty and harmony of music also has a positive sense when it acts irrationally on the human soul and generates virtue in man. It generates courage in the warriors who become eager to die (*istamāta*) when they hear their poets singing verses.

"But the truth is that listening to music and sounds no doubt causes pleasure and emotion in the soul. The spiritual temper of man is thereby affected by a kind of drunkenness, which causes him to make light of difficulties and to be willing to die in the very condition in which he finds himself. This (state of affairs) exists even in dumb animals. Camels are influenced by the driver's call, and horses are influenced by whistling and shouting, as everyone knows. The effect is greater when the sounds are harmonious ones, as in the instance of music. It is known what happens to people who listen to music. The non-Arabs, therefore, take musical instruments, drums or trumpets, onto the battlefield with them. Singers with instruments surround the cavalcade of the ruler and sing. Thus, they move the souls of brave men

²¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, ed. Shaḥāda, 536.

²² The free translation of this passage is mine. See Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, II: 398.

²³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, ed. Shaḥāda, 536.

emotionally and cause them to be willing to die. In the wars of the Arabs (in northwestern Africa), we have seen persons in front of the cavalcade sing poetical songs and make music. The minds of heroes were stirred by the contents of the songs. They hurried to the battleground, and everybody went forth eagerly to meet his rival. The same was the case with the Zanāta, one of the nations of the Maghrib. A poet went in advance of the battle lines and sang. His music was such as to move firmly anchored mountains and to cause men who would otherwise not think of it, to seek death. That music is called *tazugait* [tāṣūkāyit] by (the Zanāta). The origin of it all is the cheerfulness created in the soul (through music). It leads to bravery, just as drunkenness leads to (bravery), as the result of the cheerfulness, which it produces. And God knows better.”²⁴

و الحق في ذلك فهو أن النفس عند سماع النغم و الأصوات يدركها الفرح و الطرب بلا شك فتصيب مزاج الروح نشوة يستسهل بها الصعب و يستमित في ذلك الوجه الذي هو فيه و هذا موجود حتى في الحيوانات العجم بانفعال الإبل بالحاء و الخيل بالصفير و الصرير كما علمت و يريد ذلك تأثيراً إذا كانت الأصوات متناسبة كما في الغناء و أنت تعلم ما يحدث لسامعه من مثل هذا المعنى لأجل ذلك تتخذ العجم في مواطن حروبهم الآلات الموسيقية لا طبلًا و لا بوقاً فيحرق المغنون بالسلطان في موكبه بالآتهم و يغنون فيحركون نفوس الشجعان بضربهم إلى الاستماتة و لقد رأينا في حروب العرب من يتغنى أمام الموكب بالشعر و يطرب فتجيش همم الأبطال بما فيها و يسارعون إلى مجال الحرب و ينبعث كل قرن إلى قرنه و كذلك زناة من أمم المغرب يتقدم الشاعر عندهم أمام الصفوف و يتغنى فيحرك بغناؤه الجبال الرواسي و يبعث على الاستماتة من لا يظن بها و يسمون ذلك الغناء تاصو كاي و أصله كأنه فرح يحدث في النفس فتنبعث عنه الشجاعة كما تنبعث عن نشوة الخبر بما حدث عنها من الفرح و الله أعلم²⁵

Because of its irrational effects on the soul, the beauty of music can play a positive but also a negative role. It depends on its purpose. Music can lead to a loss of consciousness, similar to a state of drunkenness and joy, and “joy and gladness are due to expansion and diffusion of the animal spirit (*al-rūḥ al-ḥayawānī*)”²⁶. This physical phenomenon is facilitated by heat, as the emotionalism and feeling for music of the Negroes show. “Negroes are in general characterized by levity, excitability, and great emotionalism. They are found eager to dance whenever they hear a melody”²⁷.

The beauty of sounds plays a dangerous role in the case of the psalmody of the Qurʾān. In this case it must not be called “music”. The melodious reading of the Qurʾān is so sweet that people may be seduced by its beauty, forget their fear of God and take the Qurʾān as music for parties and banquets. This is why “Mālik disapproved of the use of melodies in reciting the Qurʾān, and al-Shāfiʿī permitted it”²⁸.

²⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, II: 48-49.

²⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, ed. Shaḥāda, 319-320.

²⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, I: 174.

²⁷ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, I: 174.

²⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, II: 399.

"Thus, melodious music can, by no means, be combined with the pronunciation under consideration in connection with the Qur'ān. As regards the difference of opinion (among authorities as to the permissibility of melodious music for the recitation of the Qur'ān), the thing (the authorities) have in mind is the plain music to which nature guides the person who is musical (*miḍmār*), as we have stated. Such a person arranges his sounds in certain harmonious cadences, which those who know about singing, as well as others, perceive (as music). This is the point about which the difference of opinion (revolves).

The obvious (fact) is that the Qur'ān is (to be) kept free of it, (exactly) as the imam (Mālik) thought. The Qur'ān is something that causes awe, as it reminds (man) of death and what comes after it. It is not an occasion to give pleasure in the perception of beautiful sounds."²⁹

فلا يمكن اجتماع التلحين و الأداء المعتبر في القرآن بوجه و إنما مرادهم التلحين البسيط الذي يهتدي إليه صاحب المضممار بطبعه كما قدمناه فيردد أصواته ترديداً على نسب يدركها العالم بالغناء وغيره و لا ينبغي ذلك بوجه و إنما المراد من اختلافهم التلحين البسيط الذي يهتدي إليه صاحب المضممار بطبعه كما قدمناه، فيردد أصواته ترديداً على نسب يدركها العالم بالغناء وغيره، و لا ينبغي ذلك بوجه كما قاله مالك. هذا هو محل الخلاف. و الظاهر تنزيه القرآن عن هذا كله كما ذهب إليه الإمام رحمة الله تعالى لأن القرآن محل خشوع بذكر الموت و ما بعده و ليس مقام التذاذ بإدراك الحسن من الأصوات³⁰

Indeed the beauty of music can be associated with lascivious and heretical behaviors, with parties, wine and illegitimate love, as it is the case for the before-mentioned "story of the basket" attributed by Ibn 'Abdrabbih to the caliph al-Ma'mūn.

4. SENSUAL BEAUTY (*JAMĀL*) AS REFERRED TO RHETORICAL EMBELLISHMENTS OF SPEECH (*AL-BADĪ'*)

The last case in which Ibn Khaldūn mentions the word *jamāl* is when he refers to the rhetorical embellishments of style (*al-taḥsīn wa l-tazyīn*), characteristic of that branch of Arab rhetoric called the "science of *badī'*" (*ilm al-badī'*). Such embellishments give "brilliance to speech and pleasure to the ear, and sweetness and beauty, all in addition to indicating the meaning"³¹ (*wa jamāl kulluhā zā'ida 'alā al-ifāda*)³². Arab literary rhetoric comprehends the "science" of *bayān* and the "science" of *badī'*. The definition of these two sciences differs from according to the authors. For Ibn Khaldūn the *badī'* refers mainly to figures of speech and the *bayān* to figures of meaning. In any case they are tightly associated. Ibn Khaldūn says that the *badī'* is found represented

²⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, II: 400.

³⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, ed. Shaḥāda, 537-538.

³¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, III: 402.

³² Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, ed. Shaḥāda, 801.

in the inimitable speech of the Qurʾān (*al-kalām al-muʿjiz*), as in the first two verses of “*Sūrat al-Layl*” (The Night): “By the night when it covers and the day when it reveals itself”³³. Here again beauty is dangerous. *Badīʿ* figures occurred also in pre-Islamic Arab poetry, but “spontaneously and unintentionally” (*ʿafuwan min ghayr qaṣd wa lā taʿammud*). Among the early Muslim poets, like Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī, they occurred “both spontaneously and intentionally” (*ʿafuwan wa qaṣdan*), producing marvels and wonders (*ʿajab, ʿajāʾib*)³⁴. Ibn Khaldūn warns against the rhetoric and stylistic analysis of the Qurʾān in terms of *badīʿ* and *bayān* figures. This kind of analysis may be used by unorthodox commentators to deviate people from truth. For instance the great Qurʾān commentator al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144 ca.) used the rules of *al-bayān* to justify his Muʿtazilite belief and innovations. Only those who have a solid and unwavering faith can read al-Zamakhsharī without being deviated from the orthodox belief of the Sunna.

“This discipline is needed most by Qurʾan commentators. Most ancient commentators disregarded it, until Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī appeared. When he wrote his Qurʾan commentary, he investigated each verse of the Qurʾan according to the rules of this discipline. This brings out, in part, its inimitability. It gives his commentary greater distinction than is possessed by any other commentary. However, he tried to confirm the articles of faith of the (Muʿtazila) innovators by deriving them from the Qurʾan by means of different aspects of rhetoric (*balāgha*). Therefore, many orthodox Muslims have been on their guard against his (commentary), despite his abundant knowledge of rhetoric (*balāgha*). However, there are people who have a good knowledge of the orthodox articles of faith and who have some experience in this discipline. They are able to refute him with his own weapons, or (at least) they know that (his work) contains innovations. They can avoid them, so that no harm is done to their religious beliefs. Such persons do not risk being affected by the innovations and sectarian beliefs. They should study (as Zamakhsharī’s commentary), in order to find out about certain (aspects of) the inimitability of the Qurʾān.”³⁵

وأحوج ما يكون إلى هذا الفن المفسرون وأكثر تفاسير المتقدمين غفل عنه حتى ظهر جاز الله الزمخشري ووضع كتابه في التفسير وتبع أي القرآن بأحكام هذا الفن بما يبدي البعض من إعجازه فانفرد بهذا الفصل على جميع التفاسير لولا أنه يؤيد عقائد أهل البدع عند اقتباسها من القرآن بوجوه البلاغة. ولأجل هذا يتحاماه كثير من أهل السنة مع وفور بضاعته من البلاغة. فمن أحكم عقائد السنة وشارك في هذا الفن بعض المشاركة حتى يقتدر على الرد عليه من جنس كلامه أو يعلم أنه بدعة فيعرض عنها ولا تضر في معتقده فإنه يتعين عليه النظر في هذا الكتاب للظفر بشيء من الإعجاز مع السلامة من البدع والأهواء. والله الهادي من يشاء إلى سواء السبيل³⁶

³³ Qurʾān 92: 1-2 (وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَىٰ ۚ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا تَجَلَّىٰ).

³⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, III: 402-403. The word *badīʿ* itself properly means “marvelous, wonderful, new”.

³⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal III: 338-339.

³⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, ed. Shaḥāda, 762-763.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of my analysis was to describe the meaning of the word *jamāl* (“beauty”) in the *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldūn. I have gone through the meaning of beauty in four different contexts: lust and heretical behaviors, dynasties on their way to decay, music and literary rhetoric. *Jamāl* occurs only eight times in the whole book, but it occupies a large semantic field. Although it would be premature to draw general conclusions on Ibn Khaldūn’s aesthetics, we can undoubtedly affirm that the word *jamāl* opens a window with a large view on the aesthetics of the author of the *Muqaddima* and on the aesthetics of the culture to which he belonged.

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