"A Philosophical Approach to The Study of Islamic Art"

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Abstract:

Since the nineteenth century, the field of Islamic art has been studied vastly from different angles. Most of these studies do not investigates Islamic art from a deeper level. In fact, they address the field as decorative and meaningless. These studies primarily investigate Islamic art either through its history or through its material and decorative characteristics. This has led to a generalized understanding of the field and therefore lacked any rooted meaning or theoretical grounding. In this study, I propose that in order to have a deeper understanding of Islamic art and its meanings, it needs to be studied through Islamic philosophy. I show that philosophy has great connections to Islamic art in its formation period. Proving that it was deeply influenced by it and that it is necessary for us to study Islamic art through Islamic philosophy in order to understand it from within.

Keywords: Islamic art, art history, Islamic philosophy, Islamic studies.

1. Introduction:

The term 'Islamic art' usually refers to the visual artefacts which were made from the seventh century onwards by people who were living in territories ruled by Islam. Islamic art is often hard to define because it covers a vast area of territory over a long period of time from the seventh to the sixteenth centuries. The term is also used to refer to art created from different mediums, such as ceramics, textiles, glass and wood, and also in architecture. Although the term was coined in the West in the nineteenth century and was rejected by some scholars, the similarities in the art production over this wide geographical area and long period of time have made it acceptable to many scholars today[1] (Akkach, 2005, p.16). Across this geographical spread and long history, Islamic art went through several periods of development which led to different styles and changes. Despite these differences, they all maintained an essential quality and unique identity. This essential quality is what makes Islamic art recognizable as a unified type of art. Islamic art shares similar style of creating interlocking geometrically shaped motifs from floral and vegetal forms in addition to other qualities of balance and symmetry. The aspect of Islamic art that I use in this current study is focused on these similarities which are shared by most forms of Islamic art and this enables me to investigate the fundamental elements which it expresses.

Although several scholars have criticized the scholarly study of Islamic art that I will mention later, they have nevertheless agreed that it was only studied partially and investigated through a historical context or examined by its material and decorative qualities. Islamic art has been studied by historians, orientalists, fundamentalists and philosophers (see Figure 1). In the following paragraphs, I shall discuss some of the limitations which the study of Islamic art encountered during its long history. This is necessarily a limited analysis which cannot offer an in-depth investigation of Islamic art because it is more focused on understanding the visual elements rather than the inner meanings.

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[1] The subject of the term "Islamic art" is highly augmented. Please read Wendy M.K. Shaw article The Islam in Islamic Art History: Secularism and Public Discourse (2012) page 3, where she discusses different arguments of the term and its uses between scholars such as (Ettinghausen,1951; Blair and Bloom, 2012).
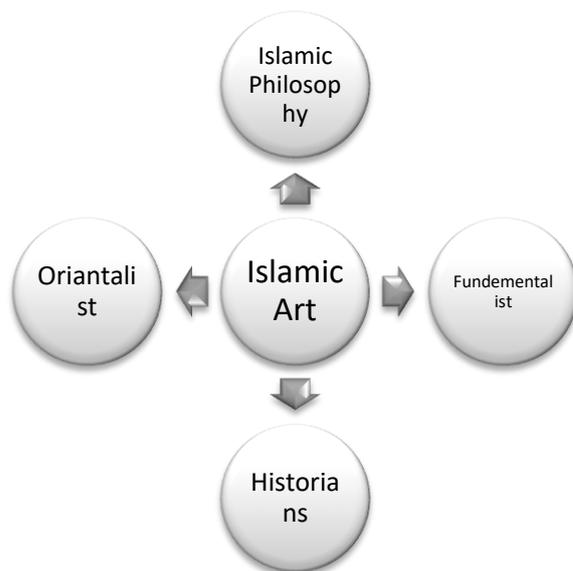
Figure 1: Illustration showing the different approaches Islamic art was studied

2. Previous studies in Islamic Art:

At the beginning of the twentieth century, as evidenced by Graber in his article Reflections on the Study of Islamic Art (1983), the field of Islamic art was primarily studied by scholars from the West and was less of a subject of interest for scholars from the Islamic world. Islamic art pioneers such as Graber, Blair and Bloom, and Necipoglu agreed that the study of Islamic art was done mainly through archaeology, history and the largely contested notion of orientalism. The diversity of these studies caused controversial opinions in defining the field of Islamic art. One of the reasons for this controversy is that Muslims in the twelfth century did not write about art. Tabbaa (2001, p.4) explained the lack of artistic writings in the Islamic art literature as that "Islam, quite unlike other religions, did not concern itself with architecture and the visual arts as necessary expressions or applications of dogma, and consequently did not leave a body of text that dealt with these matters". This lack of a body of text created space for interpretations which came from different angles and at the same time led art historians to reject any interpretations which came from Islamic belief and did not present either textual or contextual rigorous evidence to support their claims. This eventually limited scholars from concluding theoretical meanings in Islamic art and ultimately caused a controversial and widely debated field for defining Islamic art which is still continuing today.

Archaeologists and collectors minimized their analyses of the field. They would examine Islamic art objects from particular areas in the context of their different regions and Caliphates, from the Umayyad and Abbasid to the Fatimid. For instance, this approach was used to evaluate palaces from a specific era or to analyse Islamic objects in terms of their materiality, including ceramics, rugs and metal works. Both of these approaches focused on technical definitions and descriptions of the time and the location of the objects' manufacture. Studies of this kind only touched on artefacts' visual elements and intricate craftsmanship. As much as these studies are valuable to the field, they do not contribute fully to the understanding of the symbolism in Islamic art, especially when these studies are also used as a method of defining aesthetics (Akkach, 2005). Graber (1983) criticized these studies because they examined objects in detail but lacked a wider conceptual framework which could provide a modified understanding of their meaning. Blair and Bloom (2012) and Tabbaa (2001) suggested that a useful way to form a conceptual framework for understanding the field of Islamic art is by combining and connecting works of documentation with works of literature and cultural analysis. This suggestion can unfold a wider understanding of Islamic art theories and cultural styles. However, this seems to be a complex task to undertake and requires the collaborative work of specialists from these different fields.

Orientalists and Islamic art historians in the beginning of the 20th century have also studied the field of Islamic art. However, their methods suffer from serious limitations as Graber (1983) and Shaw (2012) confirmed. Shaw (2012, p.4) clarified the limitation in the studies which art historians carried out in the field of Islamic art through their cultural aesthetics rather than their intellectual or religious aesthetics, stating: "In limiting Islamic aesthetics to formal qualities, this approach has also limited the ability of Islamic objects to function as 'art': that is, as a mode of cultural production distinguished from other visual cultural forms through its expression of meaning beyond the visual, whether that meaning is conceptual or narrative". Art-historians' formal approach to studying Islamic art was quite descriptive and lacked a conceptual framework. They analysed the materialistic details of historical objects and divided them into themes such as calligraphy, arabesque and geometry. This was also done through Western values and concepts and by using research methods, which had traditional Western techniques. These concepts and techniques became the standard for analysing art but were not applicable to the study of non-Western cultures. In fact, Shaw (2019) argues that art historians accustom image terminologies specifically to Western history. It normalized it understanding to an extent that it erased any other aesthetical concepts or vocabularies from other cultures including the Islamic culture. A good example of this can be seen in their studies on the existence or non-existence of figurative representation. Erzen (2007, p.69) wrote that "What analysis and evaluation of Islamic art and aesthetics there was, was done by Orientalists who viewed Islamic art and aesthetics mainly through Western values and concepts". In fact, Shaw (2012) claimed that those studies were less concerned with understanding Islamic art and more concerned about discovering the origin of European art through Islamic art. That is to say, their interest in gaining a rigorous understanding of the field was restricted.

Many scholars from the Middle East, such as Yusuf al-Garadawi, focused on identifying Islamic prohibitions in art in general. Examples of such prohibitions are the prohibition against figurative representation, taswir, in art and the prohibition against using specific instruments in music.[2] Studies of this kind did not add to the understanding of Islamic art itself but rather to the influence of Islam on the arts. The prohibition of figurative representation was mentioned through several situations in the Hadith[3] by the prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) and was analysed by many religious scholars creating different views into what and how exactly figuration is prohibited. In fact, figurative representation within the arts is not strictly prohibited in Islam. Shaw wrote in her article The Islam in Islamic Art History: Secularism and Public Discourse (2012) that the fact that "no such overarching prohibition exists in any foundational Islamic sources reveals less about how Islamic art functions than it does about the image normativity of the spectator". Prohibition only comes in specific situations such as idealizing figures for worshipping. [4]

Many studies from the Middle East, such as the works of Afif Bahnassi (1998, 1986), supported the Western approach to the field by continuing orientalist methods and applying Western aesthetics to Islamic art. Necipoglu (2012, p.7) commented on this continuation stating that "the ethicized aesthetic judgments of European publications often became mirrored in the nationalist narratives of native scholars in predominantly Muslim geographies, alongside pan-Islamic discourses on the timeless unity of the arts". In addition, one of the methods which scholars used as a theoretical approach was the concept of jamaal, which is the Arabic word for 'beauty' or 'aesthetic'. The Egyptian scholar Tawfiq in his Tahafut Mafhum Eulim al-Jamaal ('The Incoherence of the concept of jamaal') (1997) analysed the writings of Arab scholars in

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[2] The sources of such prohibitions did not come from the Qur'an but from the hadith of the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him). For example, Ibn 'Abbas said:

"I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) saying, 'Every painter will go to Hell, and for every portrait he has made, there will be appointed one who will chastise him in the Hell'. Ibn 'Abbas said: If you have to do it, draw pictures of trees and other inanimate things" (Riyad- us- Saliheen, Al-Bukhari and Muslim, book 18 Hadith 1680).

Analysing these sayings of the Prophet formed many opinions regarding this issue. These opinions came from scholars of Islamic art and scholars of Islamic studies (the Qur'an and the Hadith).

[3] See previous footnote.
[4] See further references discussing the prohibition of figurative representation in Islam in The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam (1982) by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and Islamic Imaging: Its Origins, Position in Islam its Principles and Schools (2000) by Abu al-Hamed Mahmoud.

regard to the concept of jamaal in art and criticized the misusage of the term and the way it was studied as relevant to notions in Islam or ethics and not through philosophy. The concept of jamaal was also used from a Western point of view instead of understanding it from Islamic philosophy. Approaching Islamic art through the concept of jamaal is still a popular theoretical approach in studies deriving from the Middle East as Idham Hanash notes in his book Nazariat Alfani Al'islamy: Almafhum Aljamaliu Walbanyat Almaerafia ('The Theory of Islamic Art: The aesthetic concept and the cognitive structure') (2013) that it is rarely that we can find in modern studies to the understanding of jamaal any kind of Islamic approach.

Some Middle Eastern scholars such as Abu Saleh Alalfi (1998) have tended to base their analysis on cultural and religious principles and values rather than theoretical principles. For instance, they would connect some of the characteristics of Islamic art, such as the equality between shapes and spaces, with the equality between people in Islam. Another example is that of ornamented abstraction, which originates in nature and is formed in that particular style, so it does not emulate or compete with God's creation. In this case, Islamic symbolism is explained as the tendency to avoid figurative representation. Therefore, the approach which was used to justify the analysis came from cultural and religious perceptions. Such approaches did provide a very broad way of studying the topic without basing their concepts and analyses on a theoretical grounding, which would also imply a limited way of understanding.

Another line of inquiry in the study of Islamic art was the universalist approach, which various scholars (e.g. Shaw, 2012; Blair & Bloom, 2012; Necipoglu, 2012) have named nationalist, perennialist and fundamentalist. It is based on connecting Islamic art to a particular sect or mathhab, crossing regions and periods and attributing to it a universal meaning. One of the dilemmas of this approach is the recognition of one particular theological or philosophical school, such as the Sufi or the Asha'rite School, and its views about the universe and God and overlooking other schools. The universalist approach was heavily criticized by scholars for its obvious favouritism. Examples of scholars who used this approach are Sayyed Hossein Nasr (1987), Titus Burckhardt (1971) and more recently Jale Erzen (2007) and others who have used Sufi thinking to interpret the meanings and analyses of Islamic art. Many believe that Sufism[5] played an essential role in influencing Islamic art. Erzen (2007) wrote about how important Sufi thinking is to Islamic art in that it addresses aesthetics with useful terminologies and understandings, suggesting that the Sufi experience tends to take the human intellect to a luminous world of spiritualty. Oleg Grabar (1983), however, argued that it would be unfair to assume that Sufism is the only influence on Islamic art in places where other types of Islam are practised.

Certainly other Islamic sects also played a role in influencing the arts, such as Shi'ism and Sunnism and their various branches. Even though these studies were biased, I believe that they made a contribution and provided a logical alternative way to study the field of Islamic art. Nevertheless, Akkach (2005) believed that the universalist path gave a cosmological inquiry to the field through philosophy. Not only did it provide an alternative way of study but also, in my opinion, led to the appearance of recent studies which seek to connect Islamic art with Islamic thought and philosophy. None of the previous studies fulfilled the severe lack of a deep analysis of the visible and latent aesthetics of Islamic art, which can add a different level of understanding to the field and, most importantly, provide a framework for contemporary and future Islamic artists.

Recently, some writers have studied Islamic art through its philosophical origins. Examples are Gulru Necipoglu's The Topkapi Scroll (1995) in which she focused on Ottoman architectural drawing by attempting to draw some meaning from the philosophical texts which are common to all Islamic art. Also, Yasser Tabbaa in The Transformation of Islamic Art During the Sunni Revival (2001) discussed the political and religious changes which occurred in Islamic art focusing on the eleventh- and twelfth-century Sunni revival following the Mu'taziliti school. Finally, Mohammed Alami, in his recent book The Origins of Visual Culture in The Islamic World (2015), suggested that the origins and the formation of Islamic art were based on the philosophical notion of proportions from the writings of a philosophical school named Ikhwan al-Safa[6] during the Fatimid Empire. Alami found the Ikhwan al-Safa theories encyclopaedic in the way that they represented the intellectual knowledge of their time. These studies showed more rigorous connections between the art and the philosophy and examined Islamic art from a deeper point of view based on theoretical grounding. His approach enriched the field of Islamic art with many conceptual ideas. I believe that investigating Islamic art through Islamic philosophy is the most appropriate way.

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[5] Sufism is the inner mystical dimension of Islam. It is a path which a person takes to reach a spiritual experience. Sufis built their own philosophical ideas on many of the issues, including God and our knowledge.
[6] Ikhwan al-Safa (The Brethren of Purity) were an anonymous group of philosophers in the eleventh century who wrote Rasa'il Ikhwan al-safa, an Encyclopaedia of the Brethren of Purity comprising fifty-two epistles.

The true meaning of Islamic art lies in the Islamic intellectual literature adabb, which is a combination of writings on philosophy, poetry and science. Shaw (2012) explained the problem with contemporary art historians lack of understanding the potential importance of building a theoretical Islamic module for perception and saw the importance of studying the field by drawing conceptual meanings from Islamic philosophy, where she wrote that this type of historical study "indicates an otherwise unacknowledged need for Islamic art to be conceptualized through an epistemology grounded not simply in formal or even secular/historical terms, but in meanings rooted in Islam itself". Her argument confirms that Islamic art should be properly conceptualized from a religious Islamic perception. Conceptualizing meanings for Islamic art should be from sources within Islamic text. Unlike other historical arts such as Buddhist art, we cannot find any direct literature linking Islamic art with Islamic philosophy, but we can draw some conclusions about Islamic art and how it was intellectually perceived. It is my intention in this study that the most appropriate way to investigate these theoretical meanings of Islamic art is through investigating different arguments in Islamic philosophy. By investigating concepts and ideas, which were mainly raised in Islamic philosophy and were argued at length by philosophers during that time between the tenth and fourteen century, it is possible that this will give us a more suitable direction into understanding the meaning behind Islamic art.

The study of Islamic art has so far been through a variety of approaches like history and archaeology. Research in this field should be investigating it on a deeper level. It has been also misguided to examine it through Western aesthetics instead of focusing on the content of Islamic art through Islamic philosophy. The lack of appropriate studies has caused many problems; Alami (2011: 6) stated that "The near absence of architectural criticism in many Arab and Muslim countries facilitates the largely unquestioned propagation of these views, and has opened the door to superficial speculation about the meaning and identity of art and architecture of the Islamic world". These approaches have varied from being superficial and often only coincidentally juxtaposed, to being personally vested and often vague and limited in their holistic understanding about a vast body of work. In order to truly understand Islamic art and its inner meanings, it is necessary to study the context and mentality within which it was produced and to highlight its concepts and perceptions. It is also important to understand the way in which these notions and concepts influenced the arts. With this valuable approach to the study, it will only then be possible to find new ways to create Islamic artworks.

3. Bridging Philosophy with Art:

Back in the 12th century of the Islamic culture, sciences, thought and spirituality were interwoven. Philosophy provided these practices with logical and rational tools they need to flourish and expand. Nasr (2006, p.43) stated that "One must always remember the important role of philosophy Falsafah in early Islam in providing the appropriate intellectual background for the encounter of Muslims with the arts, sciences and philosophies of other civilizations". It is also worth mentioning that many philosophers were also great scientists, such as Ibn Sina, Al-Farabi, Al-Razi and Al-Biruni[7]. Moreover, many Islamic scholars are difficult to categorize as scientists, theologians, philosophers, or mystics, confirming the integrated realm of knowledge in which intellectual activity mixed the sacred with the secular. As a result, the quality of the arts has reflected the advancement of knowledge. It's not surprising that Nasr asserted in (1987) stating that "It is not accidental that whenever and wherever Islamic art has experienced a peak of its creativity and perfection there has been present the powerful, living intellectual – which also means spiritual – current of the Islamic tradition. And conversely, this causal nexus provides the reason for understanding why whenever there has been a decay or eclipse of the spiritual dimension of Islam the quality of Islamic art has diminished". As a result, once Islamic art was at its most creative and perfect, a force of intellectual activity as well as spirituality could be discovered, and whenever intellectual activity was low, the arts would be less developed. A close link appears to exist between knowledge, philosophy, and the arts.

Through Islamic history in the Middle East, philosophy had been drawn away from Islamic art studies. This was due to the revival of the religion in the late nineteenth century led by Mohammed Ibn Abdu al-Wahhab, founder of the Wahhabi sect that emerged from Hanbalism[8], which influenced those studies (Shaw, 2012). The scholarly approach to

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[7] For example, Ibn Sina, known as 'Avicenna', wrote on medicine, philosophy, astronomy, alchemy and geography among other topics; Al-Farabi wrote on philosophy, mathematics, logic and ethics.

[8] Hanbalism is one of four traditional Sunni schools of jurisprudence. The other three is Hanafie, Malikie and Shfi'ie. It was named after scholar Ahmed Ibn Hanbal (d. 855). Read more about Islam's intellectual diminish in Tamara Albertini, 'The Seductiveness of Certainty: The Destruction of Islam's Intellectual Legacy by the Fundamentalists', Philosophy East and

religious studies became stricter and relied on the Qur'an as the only source. Studies of Islamic art shied away from making interpretations and became less mystic and philosophical. According to Albertini (2003, p.457) "In contemporary Islamic fundamentalism, however, scriptural texts serve primarily as a source of ritual and legal obligations. As a result, an already thin theological textual basis is further reduced by a selective thematic focus." This long resistance to philosophy and theology throughout Islamic history led Muslim scholars to reject the idea of addressing Islamic art from a philosophical point of view. Philosophical approaches were avoided by scholars from many Muslim parties, instead scholars preferred not to contradict one another and avoided clashes by not using philosophy in their studies.

The study of Islamic philosophy was identified through either the Islamic Sharia law or Kalam theology and then studied through a particular dimension, or studied under a particular Islamic sect. Muslim scholars avoided investigating philosophy and its relation to art because they were afraid of being viewed as radical. Orientalists also studied Islamic philosophy. According to Nasr (2006), although Islamic philosophy was initially influenced by the rationality of ancient Greek philosophy, orientalists' studies lacked a deep grasp of the philosophical and theological extent which derived from analysing the Qur'an.

In the early centuries of the Islamic civilization, Islamic art was influenced by the civilizations which had existed before Islam such the Byzantine[9] and Sassanian Empires (see Figure 2, 3 and 4) to compare the similarities between them, but as soon as philosophy and science developed, the arts developed accordingly and a new style could be seem to evolve (Khemir, 2014). One of the recognizable things about Islamic artworks is that they all share some characteristics regardless of where or when they were formed. Islamic art arose and invented new aesthetics and found new visual solutions. It thrived through a revolution of science, culture, thought and spirituality.

West, 53(4), 2003, 455-70. Read also Itzchak Weismann, 'Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism – A Reappraisal of the Origins of the Salafiyya from the Damascene Angle,' Die Welt des Islams, 41(2), July 2001, 206-37.
[9] For further reading on these influences, see Oleg Grabar's article 'Islamic Art and Byzantium' (1964).

Figure 2: Islamic Mosaic located above the Western gate, The Umayyad Mosque, 715 AD, Damascus, Syria.

Figure 3: Byzantine Mosaic, The Basilica of San Vitale Church, 549 AD, Ravenna, Italy.

Figure 4: Vessel with Pierced Designs, Bronze, The Umayyad Empire, 7th century, Syria.

Muslims have evolved a unique perspective on the world over the course of Islamic culture (Tabbaa, 2001). This allowed them to express themselves in a unique way. Scholars have claimed that during the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, Muslims developed a symbolic language in art and literature. Some, like Alami (2015), supported this claim with evidence from the evolution of language in poetry before and after Islam, when a more symbolic expression emerged. Others, also like Tabbaa (2001), have claimed that rulers supported forms of symbolism in the visual arts during the late Abbasid caliphate, which were later accepted and evolved by the rest of the Islamic world. Developing a symbolic language became also important in theological and philosophical writings. Scholar and philosopher Abu Hamid al-Gazzali's[10] in his book Mishkat al-Anwar offered many visual theories which gave us phenomenological perspective towards our relation with God (Shalem, 2012). Similar thoughts regarding sensing light through the physical eye and what a human being may envision were also written by Suhrawardi, an eleventh-century Shaik al-Ishrag luminous philosopher (Nasr, 1987). As a result, many Islamic intellectuals' writings overlap and reflect the relationship between physical and spiritual discourses in symbolic language.

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[10] Abu Hamid al-Gazzali was one the most influential philosophers of the eleventh century.

Figure 5: Examples of Geometry in Nature, Sunflower and Crassula plants.

Islamic spirituality is embedded in the Muslim mind, including artists, through religious practices. The daily prayer which is performed and the remembrance of God (dhikr), which comprises short phrases or prayers which are repeatedly recited silently in the mind or aloud to glorify God, are a constant reminder to the human soul of the Divine. The continuous references in the Qur'an to the afterlife and the temporal world in which we live also mould the creations of the maker into a spiritual and symbolic attitude. The practice of contemplating and absorbing the universe and nature with its geometry and harmony led to the appreciation of the underlying structure and patterns in nature and to applying them into a symbolic art form (see Figure 5). Paul Marchant (2013, p.20) stated, "In Islam, nature is also regarded as a book of God, containing a myriad of symbols to be contemplated as a mirror reflecting a higher reality. The symbols are a bridge between the earthly domain and the heavenly realm". All of these concepts are reflected within the Islamic arts. The Sufis have developed their own symbolic view; Muhyideen Ibn Arabi, one of the early Sufi thinkers and poets in the twelfth century, wrote that "Symbolism is of vital importance, to the extent that the Universe speaks to them in the language of symbols and that everything, besides its external value, has a symbolic significance as well" (Nasr, 1976, p.31). For them, symbolism was a way for a person to be awakened, transformed and expressed (Erzen, 2007). It is through symbolism that one can sense God and His manifestation in the visual, sensible universe.

Islamic philosophers developed their thinking in relation to how humans progress knowledge and how it influences our practice. Alami (2015, p.46) wrote of the eleventh-century Ikhwan al-Safa that "according to them invention is possible, but it is only as long as humans can watch natural creatures, learn from nature, and imitate what they have learned through the creation of knowledge, arts and crafts". They believed that practicing art with spiritual intention can only develop our knowledge of God who is the ultimate creator, and in doing so we become closer to Him. From their perspective, therefore, the more perfect our creation and creativity, the closer we become to God. The Ikhwan al-Safa also considered the practice of the arts as a noble practice since they believed that it affects the soul. Sufis have developed a similar philosophy of gaining knowledge through mysticism: according to them, the journey to develop knowledge is a spiritual one. For Sufis, "any kind of artistic involvement may be a path to the knowledge of God, who is manifested in the physical, sensible appearance of the world. For the artist, the goal is to create something worthy of the creation of God" (Erzen, 2007, p.71). They consider the Sufi path as a way towards true knowledge, which is the essence and infinity of the Divine. These notions formed the way believers thought about their practice, and the conscious relationship between them and God from which they would gain rewards or reach a Divine experience.

Another conceptual element which traditional Islamic philosophers discussed in their writings was the notion of beauty, al-husun or al-jamaal, and the practice of perfection through the theory of proportions. Islamic philosophers in the tenth and eleventh centuries had a specific set of views about proportions which were based on neo-Platonic ideas. Philosophers such as Ikhwan al-Safa believed that understanding geometry with its proportions can add to the understanding of the soul and ethics. The eleventh-century Islamic philosopher Ibn Miskawayh wrote about refining morals in Tahadhib al-akhlaq, and Alami (2015, p.50) interpreted his idea about proportions and their essence as an ethical practice and commented "The reformation of the soul is the search for perfection, a process only accessible by learning and science. The first level of perfection is theoretical perfection, which translates into sharp reasoning, straight conscience, right convictions and belief in truth. This theoretical perfection needs to be implemented in practice at the level of morals". Perfection contributes to how we perceive beauty, and rationality is the first step towards reaching beauty. The perception of beauty is linked to the soul and not only to the sensory eye. When perfection is used as a moral practice, it provides satisfaction to the soul. Therefore beauty is not only grasped visually but also conceptually when it comes from the soul. This form of perception offers a deeper level of comprehending beauty and enjoying art.

These are some of the elements which contributed to the making of Islamic art. As discussed and demonstrated above, these notions developed a symbolic language, the heritage of the Muslim view of the world and the philosophy of proportions. Along with Islamic philosophy, these ideas indirectly influenced artistic practice.

Conclusion:

The bridge between thought and art has not been investigated extensively. The few scholars who have made this connection have been either theorists or historians and as much as their valuable work is appreciated, they are not practitioners. On one side of the argument, there are scholars who have examined Islamic art from a historical or analytical approach, and on the other side there are contemporary artists who continue to create Islamic artworks by drawing upon their own influences and inspirations. The difficulty is that there is a lack of scholarly works on traditional Islamic art, as well as of ways to link this literature with the practice of new Islamic artworks. The latter has acquired a canonical status within the field of Islamic art practice in recent years as is evident in the works of several art organizations. Making it more urgent for this kind of studies where we connect Islamic art with Islamic philosophy providing the field with conceptual tools to not only understand the past but also the future works of Islamic art.

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