

Beauty in Sufism

The Teachings of Rūzbihān Baqlī

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SUNY
P R E S S

ای آفتاب حسن برون آدمی ز ابر
کان چهره مشعشع تابانم آرزوست

O Sun of Beauty! Come out for a moment from the clouds,
For that beaming, resplendent countenance is my wish.

—Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Balkhī Rūmī

CONTENTS

Illustrations	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
Note on Transliteration	xiii
Introduction	1
1. Discourse on Beauty	11
2. The Language of Beauty	27
3. The Theology of Beauty	49
4. The Anthropology and Cosmology of Beauty	75
5. The Prophetology of Beauty	101
Notes	129
Selected Bibliography	153
General Index	171
Index of Qur'ānic Verses	193
Index of Ḥadīths and Sayings	197

4

The Anthropology and Cosmology of Beauty

Indeed We have created the human being in the most beautiful stature.

—Qur’ān 95:4

He who made beautiful everything He has created

—Qur’ān 32:7

The Qur’ān calls God *the most beautiful creator* (Q 23:14), which signifies two things: God is beautiful Himself and what He creates is also beautiful. The present chapter investigates the latter: the beauty of creation. We have seen in the previous chapter how God in His love to be recognized begins to unfold His Hidden Treasure to show forth His most beautiful names and attributes. The unfolding continues by way of the divine acts, or creation. Key questions to be addressed in this chapter are: What is the role of beauty in the creation of the world and human beings? What makes anything beautiful? Why is perception of beauty pleasurable? What differentiates divine, human, and cosmic beauty? What purpose does beauty serve in human life? In addressing these questions, the chapter will trace the entire cycle of created existence, from its origin to return.

Rūzbihān presents the cycle of created existence, particularly human existence, in terms of the journey of the spirits

from their creation by way of their embodied life on earth to their eventual return to God. He enumerates the key stages or stations (*maqāmāt*) that the spirits may go through in their journey to God in two of his Arabic works, namely *Mashrab al-arwāḥ* and *Sayr al-arwāḥ* ("The Journey of the Spirits"). *Mashrab al-arwāḥ* contains Rūzbihān's most elaborate and detailed presentation of these stations, which he counts as 1,001. In many of these stations, beauty has an important role to play.

The story of creation coincides with the story of the Hidden Treasure. In *Sharḥ-i shatḥiyyāt*, Rūzbihān explains that this ḥadīth indicates God's love for His own beauty in eternity, which is love that extends to His beautiful creation as well. Regarding God's love for creation, Rūzbihān distinguishes two kinds: general love and specific love. He maintains that God's general love is the driving force for the creation of all creatures, that is, all divine acts. In contrast, His specific love is connected to His essence, and with this specific love God creates the prophets and saints. The distinction between the general (*āmm*) and the specific (*khāṣṣ*) is a recurring theme in Rūzbihān's discussion of both love and beauty, as will be seen.

When [God] looked at the act through love, He created the universe with desire. This love is general. When He made the lover appear through this love, He looked at him through the eternal essence. This love is specific. He knows this love from Himself in His eternal knowledge; it is His love for the prophets and the saints. Know that *He loves them, and they love Him* [Q 5:54] pertains solely to eternal attributes. It is incomparable with the tenderness of nature and the changes of temporal origination.

In eternity He became the lover of His own beauty (*jamāl*). Inevitably love, lover, and beloved were one. Since they are attributes, they do not have the defect of temporal origination. When He became His own lover, He wanted to create a creation so that it would become the place of His love and gaze, without alienation or intimacy. In His eternity He created

the spirits of the lovers and made their eyes see His beauty (*jamāl*). He taught them that He was their lover before they came to be: "I was a Hidden Treasure so I loved to be recognized."¹

Rūzbihān thus explains the mechanism of how God and His saints and prophets become mutual lovers: first God creates them out of love and then displays His beauty to them, which makes them love God in return.

At the beginning of *Sayr al-arwāḥ*, Rūzbihān enumerates the initial stages of creation, which comes forth from the hidden and unknowable essence in its process of self-disclosure. At the first disclosure of Himself to Himself in His hidden essence, God recognizes His own beauty (*jamāl*). Out of this recognition the multiple attributes emerge. Thereafter begins the process of creation per se, or the manifestation of His creative acts: He creates first His lovers and then the prophets and saints. Finally He creates the world by issuing the engendering command, *Be!* (*kun*), as in the Qur'ānic verse, *When He desires a thing, His command is to say to it "Be!"*; then it is (36:82), to which Rūzbihān alludes by the two letters K and N (which together spell *kun*). The command brings everything into existence except human beings, whose creation requires a more elaborate process.

When [God] shone forth from the rising place of eternity and disclosed Himself to nonexistence through His knowledge, He did not see anything other than Himself. He marveled at His beauty (*jamāl*). His attributes spread apart from one another. Then He brought His lovers into existence so that they might take pleasure in union with Him and rejoice in His subsistence. Then He desired to create the spirits of His prophets and saints, just as He said, "I was a Hidden Treasure, so I loved to be recognized." Then He scooped up some water from the ocean of the letters K and N.²

The process of creation may be better understood if we also examine a parallel passage in *Mashrab al-arwāḥ*, where

Rūzbihān explains how God's self-disclosure takes place in stages. God discloses Himself first to His essence in its absolute unicity; second to His attributes in their multitude, which involves the dynamic tension between beauty and majesty; and finally to His command of love, "*Be!*" (Q 36:82). Rūzbihān says that the driving force for God's creation of the world is His love (*maḥabba*) for the beauty of "the self-disclosure of all the attributes and the essence," which directly connects to the wording of both the ḥadīth, "so I loved (*aḥbabtu*) to be recognized" and the Qur'ānic verse, *the most beautiful* (*ḥusnā*) *names*. In short, it is God's love for the *ḥusn* of His attributes—which embrace beautiful (*jamil*) and majestic (*jalil*) attributes—that leads to the creation of the world.

When God wanted to bring the realm of being into existence, He exalted Himself in His magnificence and disclosed Himself to His essence through His essence and from His essence to His attributes, so beauty was subtilized for majesty and majesty for beauty. He Himself sought from Himself in knowledge of eternity the hiding places that He had recognized from Himself before the known objects. Desire responded to knowledge, knowledge to contentment, contentment to the decree, the decree to the ruling property, and the ruling property to the essence. The beauty (*ḥusn*) of the self-disclosure brought together all the attributes and the essence in the brilliance of love (*maḥabba*) such that the All itself became manifest in the love. He disclosed Himself from the love to the command, and He disclosed Himself from the command in the *K* and *N*, which are among the names and the qualities. From between the two became manifest a light, and that light became the non-compound intellect (*al-ʿaql al-basīṭ*).³

The "non-compound intellect" that emerges from the light in the above passage seems to be what the philosophers and Sufis commonly call "the universal intellect" (*al-ʿaql al-kullī*). Both "non-compound" (or "simple") and "universal"

emphasize the fact that this is a singular intellect (i.e., not multiple) and has no parts (i.e., not composite), yet it is the germ of all created reality. The subsequent stages of creation, namely how multiple things emerge from the non-compound and singular intellect, are presented below.

Beauty in the Creation of Human Beings

The Birth of the Spirits

After God utters the engendering command, “*Be!*,” the multi-stage formation of the human being begins. From the non-compound intellect spirits emerge in all their multiplicity. Rūzbihān describes the process thus: first there was a complete state of equilibrium of the attributes and the essence, but then there appeared agitation due to “the overpowering force of eternity. Then the equilibrium became dispersed. God then gathered together the dispersed things,” and out of them He created the spirits that would eventually become embodied in human form.⁴ Once God created the spirits, He taught or made them recognize the entirety of His most beautiful names. Rūzbihān writes that having created the spirits, God then “kept them in the veils of the unseen in order to make them recognize all the names, attributes, qualities, acts, and the majesty of the essence, and to show them the treasures of the marvels of the eternity of the essence and the wonders of the subtleties of the attributes, just as He said...‘I was a Hidden Treasure, so I loved to be recognized.’”⁵

After the spirits are born in the very first of the 1,001 stations presented in *Mashrab al-arwāh*, they start enjoying God’s self-disclosure, which is described by the subsequent three stations: the spirits taking pleasure in the direct perception of the divine act (the second station); their finding the direct self-disclosure of the divine attributes (the third station); and their vision of the self-disclosure of the divine essence (the fourth station).⁶ In the fifth station, the spirits find servanthood in relation to God. Then the spirits gain preparedness for recognition (the sixth station) and then reach the station of standing still in presence (the seventh station). It is in the

eighth station that the spirits hear the divine address, "*Am I not your Lord?*" (Q 7:172),⁷ which is a key Qur'ānic event to which we will turn next. In sum, in the first seven stations of the spirits' journey, the spirits are born and then through exposure to God's essence and attributes gain the preparedness to encounter God on the Day of the Covenant.

The Day of the Covenant: The First Manifestation of God's Beauty, or a Covenant of Love

The notion of the covenant (*'ahd*, *mīthāq*) is a major discussion in Sufi literature and important in the Qur'ān generally. A key verse reads: *When thy Lord took from the children of Adam, their seed from their loins and made them testify of themselves, "Am I not your Lord?" they said, "Yea, we testify"—lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were heedless of this"* (Q 7:172). Basic Muslim understanding of this verse is that it indicates human beings' primordial acknowledgment of God as their Lord, whom alone they promise to worship. If we turn to Sufi literature, we find that this covenant—often referred to by Sufis as *'ahd-i Alast* ("the covenant of 'Am I not?")—is a recurring theme and has special significance beyond the simple acknowledgment of monotheism.

Rūzbihān refers to the covenant in various places in his writings. He often uses the term (divine) *address* (*khiṭāb*)⁸ to refer to it, emphasizing the auditory nature of the event. When he presents it as constituting the eighth station in the *Mashrab*, he writes that it is an event in which the spirits hear (*samā'*) the divine address of "*Am I not your Lord?*"⁹ "Audition" (*samā'*) is an important practice in Sufism, referring to an auditory encounter with God by way of hearing His words. Audition and vision constitute the two key modes in which human beings may encounter God. In Rūzbihān's view, human audition of God originates in the covenant, for it was the human spirits' primordial audition of the divine address.¹⁰ For this reason, he sometimes uses the term *samā'* by itself to allude to the covenant. Audition was the human experience of God's "address."

A striking feature of Rūzbihān's interpretation of the covenant is that he understands it as an occasion at which God

manifested His beauty to the spirits for the first time. Moreover, since witnessing beauty causes passionate love, he argues that this in fact was a covenant of passionate love. Humans accepted God not only as their Lord but also as their beautiful Beloved. Rūzbihān writes, "The Real unveiled His beauty (*jamāl*) to the spirits of the passionate lovers in His first appearance after introducing Himself to them by saying, 'Am I not your Lord?'"¹¹; and "He unveiled to [the spirits] the beauty (*jamāl*) of [His] majesty, and spoke to them in a specific address."¹² He also says, "He made [the spirits] all become passionate lovers of [God's] beauty and majesty between the light of [His] attributes and the light of [His] essence."¹³ While Rūzbihān is quite explicit in presenting the covenant as a covenant of love for divine beauty, he is hardly the first person to associate the event with beauty. For instance, 'Ayn al-Qudāt (d. 1131) wrote, "Remember that day on which the beauty (*jamāl*) of 'Am I not your Lord' was unveiled to you."¹⁴

Rūzbihān further explains that the covenant was an occasion on which God made the spirits recognize Him through the most beautiful attributes, both the beautiful and the majestic. He writes that the divine address of "Am I not your Lord?" was an expression of God's "making Himself recognized to them as well as self-disclosure to them through the quality of majesty and beauty (*jamāl*). When the spirits' faces became enraptured in eternity's face and when they became impassioned after the [divine] address and the vision of the beginningless and endless essence, they responded to the Real with 'Yea' in love and recognition. This is one of the meanings of their immersion in the witnessing of the beauty (*jamāl*) of His exaltedness, magnificence, and subsistence."¹⁵ Rūzbihān also writes, "The spirits were immersed in the oceans of the eternal beauty (*jamāl*) and became enraptured through the quality of passionate love in the deserts of recognition."¹⁶

In *ʿAbhar al-ʿāshiqīn*, Rūzbihān again discusses the two types of love for God (*maḥabbat-i ilāhī*): general and specific. General love for God derives from seeing God's beauty in creation, which people in general are able to do. In contrast, specific love belongs only to the elect, which originates in their witnessing of God, one of whose occasions is the covenant.

Rūzbihān then applies the distinction between the general and the specific to his categorization of God's attributes and acts.

As for the specific love, it belongs to the elect after witnessing [God]. The folk of witnessing have three occasions of witnessing. One occurs to the spirits before the bodies, before human existence, in the presence of the [divine] glory. When He brought them together, He said to the chieftains of the spirits: "*Am I not your Lord?*" They said "*Yea*" (Q 7:172) voluntarily. The pleasure of the speech reached them. They asked for beauty (*jamāl*) from the Real so that recognition would become complete. The Real took off the veil of invincibility and presented to them the beauty (*jamāl*) of the majesty of the essence. The spirits of the prophets and saints became drunk from the effect of the listening and the beauty of the majesty. They fell in love with the eternal Witness (*shāhid*) without any trace of temporal origination. From that friendship (*walāyat*), their love (*mahabbat*) increased in accordance with the degree of divine nurturing, because when the holy spirits appeared in the earthly form, all became sayers of "*Show me*" because of the ancient love-madness.¹⁷

The last sentence refers to Abraham and Moses, both of whom said "*Show me*" (*arini*) to God on different occasions (Q 2:260 and 7:143, respectively) but who, in Rūzbihān's view, were in the state of intoxication or love-madness, a subject examined in detail in the next chapter.

It is also worth noting that in the above passage Rūzbihān presents the divine address as directed at some of the spirits rather than all: "When He brought them together, He said to the chieftains of the spirits: '*Am I not your Lord?*'" He argues that the specific love belongs to the elect, and it originates in the divine speech addressed exclusively to them. This argument is in line with Rūzbihān's view that while all human spirits saw God's first manifestation of beauty on the Day of the Covenant, only some of them said "*Yea*" (Q 7:172) in acknowledgment of God as their Lord.¹⁸

In sum, the Day of the Covenant proceeds in the following manner: God addresses the spirits while disclosing His beauty and majesty to them. The spirits hear that address and see the divine beauty. Consequently, they come to recognize and love God, not just to serve Him as their Lord. Finally, these human spirits reply to God by saying “*Yea*” to acknowledge God as their only Lord and Beloved. This covenant further indicates the primordially of human love for God, which is a major theme in Sufi literature. A famous example is Aḥmad Ghazālī’s *Sawānīḥ*, in which he extensively discusses the beginninglessness of *‘ishq* and its relation to *ḥusn*.¹⁹ He also describes the covenant as an occasion for the human spirits to witness God’s beauty thereby becoming His passionate lovers, which is in agreement with Rūzbihān’s view.

The Birth of the Human Body

After presenting the primordial witnessing of God’s beauty at the covenant as the eighth station in the *Mashrab*, Rūzbihān gives further accounts of the spirits’ witnessing of God (the ninth to thirteenth stations).²⁰ Thereafter begins the spirits’ gradual descent to earth, which culminates in the bodily birth of the spirits or their entrance into the human body. Rūzbihān’s presentation in the *Mashrab* is elaboration on the Qur’ānic account of the bodily formation of human beings, which is concisely presented by Böwering as follows:

The Qur’ān mentions four stages in the creation of humans...God created the first human being, Adam, from dust (*min turābin*, Q 3:59), procreating human beings through the sperm, shaping them individually to their complete figure, and finally making them male and female. “[God] created you of dust, then of a sperm-drop (*min nuṭfa*), then shaped you in the form of a man (*rajulan*)” (Q 18:37), and “then made you pairs” (Q 35:11), while other qur’ānic verses state that God created every animal of water (Q 24:45) and the jinn from a flame of fire (Q 55:15).²¹

In the *Mashrab*, the fourteenth station marks the spirits' entrance into the realm of sovereignty (*malakūt*). In the fifteenth station, they enter the world of form.²² Thereafter, the spirits oversee the development of the clay, first in the form of a sperm drop (cf. Q 76:2) in the womb, then an embryo, and so on in the subsequent three stations. In the nineteenth station, the spirits gaze at the "beauty of the form" (*jamāl al-ṣūra*), which is then perfected in the twentieth station.²³ Thereafter the spirits enter the bodily form (the twenty-first station),²⁴ which is a process described by the verse, *I blew into him of My spirit* (Q 15:29; 38:72). This marks the birth of human beings proper; earlier there were only disembodied spirits and lifeless bodies. It must be noted that *Mashrab al-arwāḥ* focuses on human beings, and Rūzbihān does not discuss how God created other creatures such as the jinn and angels.

Blowing of God's Spirit and Shaping with His Two Hands

Rūzbihān maintains that God's blowing of His spirit into the bodily form signifies the impartation of the full range of the divine attributes, including those of the essence (one of which is life) and those of the acts (which encompass beautiful and majestic attributes). He writes, "*I blew into him of My spirit*, that is, I brought him into life through My life and spirit, which appeared from the manifestation of [My] majesty and beauty."²⁵ He also writes, "Blowing is the manifestation of the attribute in the act. Do you not see that He says regarding the reality of Adam, *When I shaped him and blew into him of My spirit* (Q 15:29)? The 'shaping' [refers to] the world of the divine act, while the 'blowing' [refers to] the world of the attribute."²⁶ Human existence encompasses two realms: bodily and spiritual. The bodily realm is visible and hence manifests God's activity, such as "shaping," while the spiritual realm pertains to the higher, inner dimension of the human being that is inseparable from the presence of the divine life and the rest of the attributes.

Rūzbihān often discusses the verse *I blew into him of My spirit* alongside another: *I created with My two hands* (Q 38:75). For instance, in *Abḥar al-ʿāshiqīn*, he presents these two verses as constituting the meaning of the ḥadīth, "God created Adam

in His form."²⁷ In other words, he suggests that "God's form" in which Adam was created consists of the divine attributes, one group of which is represented by *spirit* and the other by the *two hands*. The first group is the attributes of the essence, one of which is life, symbolized by spirit here. The other group is the attributes of the act, which are divided into two types as discussed in the previous chapter: beautiful and majestic attributes. As Rūzbihān writes, "The self-disclosure of the essence is what He said: *I blew into him of My spirit*; the self-disclosure of the attributes is what He said: *I created with My two hands*."²⁸

Other key verses describing the process of the formation of the human being are: *He formed thee and made your forms beautiful* (Q 40:64); *He who created thee then shaped thee and balanced thee and composed thee in whatever form He willed* (Q 82:7–8); and *Indeed We have created the human being in the most beautiful stature* (Q 95:4). The root utilized for describing the beauty of the human form (*ṣūra*) and stature (*taqwīm*) in the above two verses is *ḥ-s-n* rather than *j-m-l*. As already mentioned, *j-m-l* has a very limited application in the Qur'ān, whereas *ḥusn* designates all-encompassing beauty, including both *jamāl* and *jalāl*. Hence, *ḥusn* is a more fitting term to describe the beauty of the human being, for human beauty is nothing but a reflection of the full range of the divine attributes, which are altogether the most beautiful (*ḥusnā*). This point is clear from Rūzbihān's interpretation of the verse, "*He formed you and then made your forms beautiful* (Q 40:64): for I clothed you with the lights of My majesty and beauty (*jamāl*) and with My character."²⁹

Elsewhere, he comments on the Qur'ānic notion of *creating* and *forming* the human being: "We created you through the acts and formed you through the attributes. Also, We created you through the command then formed you through the manifestation of the self-disclosure of the attributes to you."³⁰ He thus points out how the distinction between creating and forming parallels that between the body and the spirit, between the act and the attribute, which moreover corresponds to the distinction between *khalq* and *khuluq*, or creation and character. In other words, the human being is made up of a divine act ("Be!") that engenders the clay and the divine attributes ("created with My two hands," "blew into him of My spirit," etc.) that

shape, nurture, and enliven the clay and give it the inner and outer form of beauty. The foregoing discussion may be summarized in the following chart.

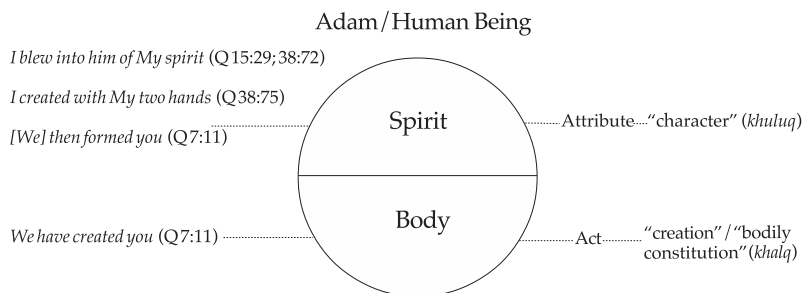


Figure 4.1 A diagram showing human constitution with corresponding Qur’ānic verses

Once human beings begin their life on earth, this also marks the beginning of their long journey back to God, which process takes the rest of the *Mashrab* for Rūzbihān to explain. Given the primordial covenant of love that the spirits made with their beautiful God before entering into their bodies, embodied life is a test of whether they can stay true lovers of God by seeking and finding signs of God’s beauty in the world and in themselves. Whether or not they have kept the covenant will become clear on the Day of Judgment, a key Qur’ānic event in which beauty and majesty, according to Rūzbihān, have major roles to play.

The Day of Judgment: Vision of God’s Beauty or Majesty in the Hereafter

We have seen in the previous chapter that whether humans can have a vision of God in this life and/or the next was a topic of major debate among dogmatic theologians in the early centuries of Islam. Their primary concern seems to have been whether it was possible to see God in this life and the next, not what could have happened *before* this life. As discussed earlier, Rūzbihān’s presentation of the events on the Day of the Covenant is clear: humans not only heard but also *saw* or *witnessed* God: on that day, God addressed humans

and disclosed His beauty to them. Moreover, Rūzbihān affirms the possibility of seeing God in this life and the next, though this does not imply that he thinks that all human beings will attain it.

Two key verses that refer to the vision of God in the afterlife are the following, which describe the Day of Judgment: *Some faces on that day shall be radiant, gazing upon their Lord* (Q 75:22–23) and *Some faces on that day shall shine, laughing and joyous* (Q 80:38–39). Rūzbihān comments on the first verse in this manner:

They gaze upon [God's] beauty (*jamāl*). Then their faces come to gaze [upon it] radiantly, delightedly, and happily. This is due to the beauty (*ḥusn*) of the self-disclosure of His *jamāl*....Had they witnessed Him face-to-face through the description of majesty, tremendousness, and magnificence, then they would have perished at the first of His assaults, and their faces would have been baffled.³¹

With regard to the second Qur'ānic verse, *Some faces on that day shall shine, laughing and joyous* (Q 80:38–39), Rūzbihān comments, "That is due to the brilliance that reaches [the faces] from gazing at God's beauty (*jamāl*)."³² In other words, their faces shine with delight because they are now allowed to see God's beauty.

In contrast, the Qur'ān describes the state of those who fail to attain that joyous state like this: *Some faces on that day shall be scowling* (Q 75:24). This is because they will be seeing God's majesty rather than His beauty. Moreover, Rūzbihān comments on the verse, *On that day there shall be dust on some faces, overspread with darkness* (Q 80:40–41) thus: "Upon them there shall be dust (*ghabra*) of separation on the day of meeting; and upon them there will be darkness (*qatara*) of the lowliness of the veil and the darkness of punishment—we seek refuge in God from rebuke."³³ Rūzbihān then interprets the "dust" as indicating three things: distance, darkness, and separation, following the commentaries of al-Sarī al-Saqāṭī (d. 865), Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 896), and al-Qushayrī (d. 1072), respectively.³⁴ These ideas point to God's majesty.

In short, Rūzbihān maintains that the human story begins with a vision and audition of the beautiful God and ends with a vision of either the beautiful God or the majestic God, depending on whether or not people have kept the covenant of love during their lives on earth. Those who have kept it will encounter God's beauty and mercy, and those who have not kept it will face God's majesty and wrath. The true test lies between the Covenant of "yesterday" and the Judgment of "tomorrow": this earthly existence that they face today. How human beings live today determines how they will re-encounter their Lord after death.

Search for Beauty in the World

Seeing human life as a search for divine beauty, Rūzbihān suggests that all beauty found in this world is a reminder of God's beauty as witnessed on the Day of the Covenant. For this reason, there is great benefit in seeking beauty on all levels, and Rūzbihān encourages people to do so whenever possible. He points out that in each human being there remains at least a vague memory of God's *jamāl* witnessed on the Day of the Covenant. In a key passage in *Mashrab al-arwāḥ*, he writes,

In everyone who witnesses [the Unseen], there remains the sweetness of the address of eternity. When [those who have reached the station of audition] hear any goodly sound, see and witness anything comely and deemed beautiful, or smell any goodly fragrance in this world, they will hear it as an intermediary between the attribute and the essence through the quality of being prior to any act that emerges from the Real. It is as if one hears from the Real through the Real. Hence, every speck of engendered being has a specific tongue that speaks to him with the eternal speech.³⁵

Thus, it turns out that for those who have reached the advanced station of being able to recognize God at all times, every *aesthetic* experience—i.e., a *sensory* encounter with a beautiful

object—is a reminder of the Day of the Covenant as it evokes the same pleasure that they had experienced in beholding God's beauty on that day. In other words, every instance of beauty in the sensible world—be it a flower, a good smell, or a handsome face—triggers recollection of the beautiful God along with the pleasure this brings to its perceiver. Rūzbihān continues, "So, [this eternal speech] stirs him up away from his own existence toward the subsistence of the Real through the quality of annihilation [of everything other than Him]. God said, *Those who hear the speech and follow the most beautiful of it* [Q 39:18]." ³⁶ For those who are able to hear God's speech, that speech is so loud that it annihilates creation from their awareness, making them turn away from creation toward God alone, or away from things' beauty toward God's beauty.

Seeking Intimacy with Every Instance of Beauty

There is a term of particular importance in Rūzbihān's discussion of beauty in general: *isti'nās*, which means "to seek intimacy (with something)." In Rūzbihān's usage, this verb usually takes as its direct object something beautiful. Rūzbihān seems to have taken this expression from a saying of an enigmatic early Sufi, Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 861), though Rūzbihān does not always mention the name. For example, in his Ḥadīth commentary, Rūzbihān explains the saying, "I saw my Lord in the most beautiful (*aḥsan*) form" in this manner: "It was [the Prophet's] seeking intimacy with the beautiful (*ḥasan*) face, just as it has been reported that he used to love beautiful faces, because 'Whoever seeks intimacy with God seeks intimacy with everything comely (*malih*) and every handsome face.'" ³⁷ Rūzbihān attributes the last statement to Dhū al-Nūn in *Mashrab al-arwāḥ*. ³⁸ Dhū al-Nūn's statement serves as one basis for Rūzbihān's defense of the practice of loving beautiful human faces as a commendable activity for Muslims on the example of the prophet Muhammad. Elsewhere, Rūzbihān also observes rather matter-of-factly that it is natural for every "seeker of intimacy to seek intimacy with all things deemed beautiful." ³⁹

In *Manṭiq al-asrār* Rūzbihān explains that gazing on beautiful faces is commendable because seeking intimacy with beauty is a sign of strong yearning for the divine beauty to

which every other beauty connects. Moreover, seeking intimacy with beauty in the world clarifies human beings' vision of reality, increasing their capacity to behold divine beauty. He writes: "Whoever seeks intimacy with the beauty (*jamāl*) of the beginninglessness seeks intimacy with the beauty of the forms of temporal origination by yearning for the quarry of holiness, because no one knows the degrees of intimacy with the Real except those who recognize the saying of the master of humanity: 'Gazing at a beautiful (*ḥasan*) face increases sight.'"⁴⁰ A fuller version of the ḥadīth is mentioned in *ʿAbhar al-ʿāshiqīn*: "Three things increase the power of sight: gazing at greenery, gazing at beautiful faces, and gazing at flowing water."⁴¹

While interpreting this ḥadīth, Rūzbihān points out the ontological difference between human beauty and cosmic or natural beauty. He argues that all creatures are beautiful insofar as they are divine acts, which is the general sort of beauty given to creation. This general beauty is the result of God's "general love" mentioned at the beginning of this chapter; likewise, the specific beauty is the result of God's specific love. Human beings have both general and specific beauty, the latter of which derives from the light of God's essence and attributes. Since all divine acts point to divine beauty, looking at them enhances human insight, which is the ability to recognize reality beyond appearances, but to a much lesser degree than gazing at beautiful human faces does, because they reveal God's essence and attributes. Rūzbihān writes, "In beauty (*ḥusn*) there is the light of the specific act in which the light of the essence and attributes is clothed, while in the purity of greenery and flowing water there is the light of the general act in which the Real manifests the light of the specific act by way of describing Himself."⁴²

Rūzbihān further comments on the above ḥadīth: "This is from the station of the eye of gathering, and in this is an allusion to the station of becoming clothed."⁴³ "Eye of gathering" is a term that Rūzbihān uses to indicate the ability to see the created and the uncreated in a thing at the same time as if gathering the two in one vision. "Becoming clothed" (*iltibās*) is a unique term that appears in his writings. Ernst translates it as "clothing with divinity," which he contrasts with *kashf*, or unveiling.⁴⁴ Ballanfāt notes the peculiar significance of *iltibās* in Rūzbihān's thought and devotes sixteen pages of his book to analyzing it.⁴⁵

He translates the term as *amphibolie* (as Corbin does) and speculates on its etymological connection to *talbīs*. However, he casts a negative connotation on the term by emphasizing its connection to *Iblīs*, a connotation that I do not find in Rūzbihān's use of the term. I translate the term as "becoming clothed" to preserve the literal sense of the word. I do not include "divinity" in my translation of the term as Ernst does, because clothing seems to work both ways—creation becoming clothed by God and God becoming clothed by creation. With regard to the former, Rūzbihān writes, for instance, "the recognizer is clothed with the brilliance of the beauty (*jamāl*) of eternity."⁴⁶ As for the latter perspective, he writes, "Do you not see how Moses fled from his cane when tremendousness was clothed by it?" referring to the episode of his cane turning into a snake.⁴⁷ Here Rūzbihān takes the cane as the thing by which tremendousness, a word often referring to the divine essence, was clothed.

It is the human being in possession of the eye of gathering who is capable of seeing the uncreated Creator clothed by every created thing, for every instance of sensible beauty is a pointer to God, the source of all beauty. Since God's essence and attributes are intangible and too intense to be seen directly by humans, they appear as veiled or clothed by the human form. At the same time, beautiful human beings are clothed in the divine essence and attributes. It is the eye of gathering that can perceive both what is clothed (God) and what clothes (creation) or both what is clothed (creation) and what clothes (God) simultaneously. The opposite mode of perception is called the eye of separation (*tafriqa*), which sees the created apart from the Creator.⁴⁸

Superiority of Human Beauty over Cosmic Beauty

Rūzbihān regards human beauty as far superior to cosmic beauty, because the former is a stronger reflection of divine beauty in that it carries the full range of the divine attributes. In other words, human beauty is specific beauty, whereas cosmic beauty is general beauty. We can see how the tripartite analysis of God in terms of essence, attributes, and acts as discussed in the previous chapter serves as a basis for Rūzbihān's examination of the difference between divine, human, and cosmic beauty.

Because human beings are able to reflect the full range of the divine attributes, it was said, "He who recognizes himself recognizes his Lord," the saying commonly attributed to the Prophet to which Rūzbihān alluded earlier. To know oneself may be sufficient for attaining knowledge of God because the human being can mirror the full range of the divine attributes. The world is a mirror of God, and so are individual human beings. To know God by observing the world is possible, but one must search through the entire world to discover the divine attributes scattered throughout. This suggests the greater "efficiency" of knowing oneself as a path to knowing God than studying the entire world. Rūzbihān ascribes to the common notion of the human being as a microcosm, because "the two worlds are kneaded within the human being." As he writes, "In the creation of the human being and in beautiful (*hisān*) faces the marks of His power are more than those found in the realm of being, because the two realms of being and the two worlds are kneaded within the human being. Within him [God's] work is known. If he recognizes himself, he will recognize his Lord."⁴⁹

Rūzbihān also points out that although humans can become passionate lovers of both God and other humans, they can never become passionate lovers of *things*. In his view, human beauty is superior to cosmic beauty not only in that it reveals the beautiful attributes of God, but also in that it can serve as a window through which passionate lovers witness and adore the beautiful God. In contrast, cosmic beauty as found in non-human creatures can only be objects of due respect as God's beautiful creatures for those naive "ascetics," by which Rūzbihān seems to mean stiff-minded conservatives who condemn passionate love of God and the celebration of human beauty as a manifestation of divine beauty. They are suspicious of passionate love generally because it is not a Qur'ānic term. They are concerned about the potential harm that it may bring, such as leading people away from God. Rūzbihān explains the opposite approaches to beauty taken by the ascetics and the passionate lovers in this passage:

As for the difference between Adamic beauty (*nīkū 'ī*) and non-Adamic beauty among engendered beings and things in this world, it is that human beauty

(*husn*) has the specific characteristic of the lights of God's self-disclosure of the essence, while other things only have beauty from the freshness of the divine act. The vision of an engendered being is the *qibla* of ascetics, whereas the face of Adam is the *qibla* of the passionate lovers.⁵⁰

Rūzbihān's use of the term "specific characteristic" (*khāṣṣiyyat*), which derives from the same root as "specific" (*khāṣṣ*), highlights Adamic beauty's connection to the divine essence, rendering it specific beauty rather than general beauty.

Rūzbihān further points out that while human beauty can cause love, cosmic beauty produces "mere" faith in God devoid of love for Him. In Rūzbihān's view, this is not enough for the ideal human life: one must not only have faith in God but also love Him, so that God's love for humans can be reciprocated, as the Qur'ān says, *He loves them, and they love Him* (Q 5:54). Rūzbihān writes,

The immature in the Shariah carp at us and say, "The signs of the creation of the heavens are greater—why do you not look at them?" Yes indeed, there are signs in the heavens, and the signs are the path for the tight-hearted in the world. But in Adam's face is the emergence of the sun of the self-disclosure of the [divine] essence and attributes, because passionate love came out of Adam's beauty (*husn*), while the light of faith came from the mold of the engendered being.⁵¹

Rūzbihān's contrast between cosmic beauty and human beauty and their association with faith and love, respectively, are also clear from his argument "the signs [i.e., the acts] are the locus of faith" but not of love, because "witnessing the beauty (*jamāl*) of eternity does not occur in the signs."⁵²

Another implication of the above discussion is that the study of things in the world will not make humans passionate lovers of God, however much they may come to admire God as an amazing Creator of this complex world. Rūzbihān's warning toward "the immature in the Shariah" is firmly based on his ontological analysis of cosmic and human beauty, for they fail

to understand the order of things. The more perfect a thing is, the more beautiful it is, because it is more similar to God. The more a thing reflects of God's beauty, the more admiration and love it deserves. The more admirable and lovable a thing is, the stronger its attractive force toward the source of all beauty—God. Therefore, Rūzbihān maintains that there is no reason to restrict human search for beauty in the created domain to non-human objects, ignoring the more obvious human beauty.

In fact, Rūzbihān argues that looking at beautiful human faces is a *means* to finding God—both His beauty and majesty. In his commentary on the ḥadīth, “Seek good in those with beautiful faces,”⁵³ Rūzbihān writes, “The beauty of the face is the garb of the light of God's majesty. He garbs it [i.e., beauty] on the face of everyone characterized by His character. Part of His lofty character is His munificence and generosity, so he who is qualified by His beauty is qualified by His munificence and generosity.”⁵⁴ Moreover, this ḥadīth also means:

Seek the purity of the Real's self-disclosure from the beautiful faces, for they are the locus of the appearance of the lights of [God's] beauty and majesty. Then you may come to love God by means of His act and you may recognize the realities of His art in the holy spirits and pure [bodily] frames. Thus you may attain to the recognition of the secrets of [God's] attributes and the realities of [His] essence.⁵⁵

Rūzbihān also comments on a closely related ḥadīth: “Make use of beautiful (*ḥisān*) faces and the black pupil, for God is ashamed to chastise a comely face in the Fire.”⁵⁶ He further writes, “When God distinguishes a servant with outer and inner beauty (*ḥusn*) and clothes him with the clothing of love for Him, He makes him a niche for the self-disclosure of His beauty and majesty, so His light appears from his light.”⁵⁷

Correspondence between Inner and Outer Beauty

Rūzbihān makes it clear that in speaking of beauty, he is referring not only to physical beauty, but also to a hidden correspondence between the outer and the inner. He refers to this

correspondence by using two Arabic terms that are commonly contrasted: *khuluq* and *khalq*, or character and creation (or physical constitution), which derive from the same root. He argues that it is because of the correspondence between a person's character and creation that the Prophet said, "Let the most beautiful in face among you lead you, for he is more likely to be the most beautiful in character."⁵⁸ Rūzbihān writes, "[The Prophet] explained that beauty (*ḥusn*) of character follows upon beauty (*ḥusn*) of creation."⁵⁹ Thus, outward beauty is understood to be a reflection of inner beauty. In turn, the inner beauty of a human being mirrors divine beauty: "Whoever has more subtle existence has a finer body, a more noble spirit, and a more precious soul. In his [bodily] frame, the light of the [divine] quarry is more apparent from his substance."⁶⁰

The idea that there is a connection between inner and outer beauty is also suggested by another ḥadīth: "'He who prays much by night—his face is beautiful by day,'" on which Rūzbihān comments, "God discloses Himself during the night to those who pray, and then garbs their faces with some of His light. Then their faces become the niche of the lights of the Real's self-disclosure, with the light of the [divine] self-disclosure glitters within them. The beauty (*ḥusn*) to which he alluded is a garb of the Real's light."⁶¹

Those Who Know God Are Loved by People

We have already seen that the more beautiful a thing is, the stronger the love it causes in its perceiver. Moreover, there is a relationship between knowledge and love, especially when it comes to God—the more humans know of God, the more they love Him, because they can see more of His beauty. Here are some of Rūzbihān's descriptions of such lovers/knowers of God:

The truthful, loving recognizer is like roses and sweet basil because his body is created from the dust of the paradises and his spirit from the light of the sovereignty of the All-Merciful. All creatures love him and all things seek intimacy with him, for people find in him a breeze from the Real, and they

perfume themselves with his scent. When someone is accepted by the people, their love for him is an indication of his recognition of God. When someone is not like that, their hatred for him is a mark of his misery—we seek refuge in God! Thus Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī reported from the messenger of God: “Shall I not tell you who is the most beloved to God? They said, “Yes, O messenger of God,” thinking that he would mention a man. He replied: “Surely the most beloved of you to God is the most beloved of you to the people.” Then he said, “Shall I not tell you who is the most hated by God?” We said, “Yes, O messenger of God,” thinking that he would mention a man. He replied: “Surely the most hated by God is the most hated of you by the people.” He made us understand that the love that people’s hearts have for a person is the testimony to God’s love for him, because hearts incline toward whosoever has the garb of Lordship, they love whosoever has the reality of recognition, and they see God’s gifts in the features of the recognizers. Indeed, when God loves a servant, He makes him lovable to the hearts of all creatures from His throne to the earth.⁶²

If lovers of God are loved by other people, how do these lovers themselves see others and the world around them? On this, Rūzbihān remarks: “When the passionate lover’s journey in passionate love is complete, he will not see anything deemed beautiful without seeing God’s beauty (*ḥusn*) within it. This is why the passionate lover loves the beauty of every beautiful thing in existence.”⁶³ Earlier, we saw how Rūzbihān encourages the practice of loving and seeking intimacy with beautiful things as a means to advance on the path to God. At the end of this path, human beings are able to see God’s beauty behind all beautiful things, as if these things become transparent. Rūzbihān refers to this mode of perception by the already mentioned term *the eye of gathering*. He also uses the term *the eye of the spirit* in the same meaning. One of his poems reads: “Being became the mirror of the Real and the Real appeared from it. / With the eye of the spirit I gaze at the spirit in the

mirror.”⁶⁴ Elsewhere, Rūzbihān contrasts the eye of the spirit with the eye of the intellect. While the eye of the spirit sees the beauty of the Creator, the eye of the intellect sees the created object. Given that he uses the eye of the spirit synonymously with the eye of gathering, the eye of the intellect can be understood to correspond to the eye of separation.

Rūzbihān further discusses this idea while commenting on the ḥadīth, “God created Adam upon His form.”⁶⁵ In discussing Adam’s beauty, Rūzbihān recognizes the dilemma of whether to see creation (Adam) as “transparent”—which means to see only God with the eye of gathering—or to focus on the “opaqueness” of creation, which hides its Creator. Rūzbihān addresses this issue by calling God the “Artist” (*ṣāniʿ*) and His creation “art” (*ṣunʿ*). First, he describes the state in which he was once so overcome with the sheer creative power of the Creator such that he could only see the Creator, consequently falling in love with Him. While the eye of the spirit was fixed on God, his other eye, namely the eye of the intellect was fixated on His creation instead.

Faculty	Object Perceived
Eye of the Spirit	God
Eye of the Intellect	Creation

Figure 4.2 A chart showing the two inner eyes and the corresponding objects of their perception

Note that in the following passage, “intellect” refers to the partial intellect belonging to individual human beings, which is inferior to the spirit, as opposed to the universal or non-compound intellect discussed earlier, which is superior to the spirits as they derive from it. Rūzbihān writes,

The bird of the garden of beginninglessness had become hidden in the nest of the acts with the curtain of the art of the pearl. It put on the clothing of *We have created the human being in the most beautiful stature* (Q 95:4) and was ornamented by the beauty

(*jamāl*) of the meaning of “God created Adam upon His form” in the beauty (*ḥusn*) of *He made your forms beautiful* (Q 40:64, 64:3). The art of the Artist was lost in the Artist. I did not know what a rarity that was or what that was. Without choice the eye of my spirit lingered on that mirror, and the tumult of passionate love overcame me. The eye of the spirit remained on the Artist, and, in unbelief, the eye of the intellect on the artifact (*ṣanī‘at*). I saw the eternal beauty (*jamāl*) with the eye of the spirit, and the form of Adam with the eye of the intellect. It also took possession of me and said: “Look at the human world with the human eye.”⁶⁶

At the end of the above passage, Rūzbihān warns, “Look at the human world with the human eye.” The passage is describing Rūzbihān’s visionary encounter with God, who tells him to use the sober eye of separation to look at the human world rather than the intoxicated eye of gathering. This is because the latter induces a state of intoxication in which one would be unable to distinguish between the created and the uncreated.

In fact, Rūzbihān is aware of the danger of being stuck with either eye. If one is stuck with the eye of separation, one would be incapable of seeing anything beyond sensible phenomena, which is also problematic for seekers of God.⁶⁷ His defense of the love of beautiful human faces may even seem to suggest defense of *shāhid-bāzī*, literally meaning “witness-play,” referring to an often-criticized practice of watching beautiful youths merely to enjoy the sight of them as manifestations of divine beauty. Later in Muslim history *shāhid-bāzī* became almost synonymous with homoeroticism in some circles and was vehemently denounced by jurists and theologians. Although Rūzbihān does not use the term *shāhid-bāzī* in his writings, he does use the term *shāhid* in a way that is consistent with much of earlier Sufi literature. For instance, Rūzbihān calls Adam *shāhid*, that is, a beautiful being through whom God is witnessed.

Instead of *shāhid-bāzī*, Henry Corbin uses another term to characterize Rūzbihān’s approach to human beauty:

jamāl-parastī (or *zībā'ī-parastī*), meaning “adoration of beauty.”⁶⁸ However, no Sufis who were later thought to belong to this trend of thought had used the phrase to label themselves in their own times, so this label is hardly perfect, especially since “adoration” may connote “worship,” when the only proper object of worship is God, as Sufi teachers repeatedly affirm. Rūzbihān would support the adoration of the “beautiful” inasmuch as it reminds one of the divine beauty. Gradually, one can cultivate the eye to see that divine beauty disclosing itself in all things.

Summary

Rūzbihān’s distinction between cosmic and human beauty is closely related to his discussion of God’s essence, attributes, and acts. He argues that cosmos has general beauty insofar as it is a divine act, a divine creation. Human beings, in contrast, have specific beauty, consisting of the divine attributes, which in turn describe the divine essence. However, the degrees of their specific beauty vary and largely depend on their effort in beautifying their souls by eliminating vices or ugly qualities.

Rūzbihān presents the driving force for God’s creation as *the most beautiful creator* (Q 23:14) to be His eternal desire to be recognized, as expressed by the ḥadīth of the Hidden Treasure. Beauty creates beautiful things, which seek to return to their origin. In other words, beauty is the origin and end of human existence as well as the means of returning to the origin. Hence, becoming beautiful and finding divine beauty in all things including oneself are the goal of human life. At the same time, they constitute the fulfillment of the covenant, because it was a covenant of love, promising to love only that beautiful God whom human beings witnessed on that primordial day. If they want to encounter that beautiful God again in this life and the next, that is possible only by beautifying their own souls by embodying the full range of the most beautiful names of God. This is a task too heavy for most human beings without guides on the path. And these guides are the prophets, who represent the most beautiful class of human beings.

60. *Mashrab*, 232.
61. The idea that *husn* is a wider notion of beauty than *jamāl* by encompassing both *jamāl* and *jalāl* solves the conundrum discussed by Elaine Scarry regarding Kant's bifurcation of the sublime and the beautiful in her book, *On Beauty and Being Just* (83–85), where the sublime seems to correspond roughly to *jalāl* and the beautiful to *jamāl*. Scarry laments: "The sublime occasioned the demotion of the beautiful" (84); and "The sublime (an aesthetic of power) rejects beauty on the grounds that it is diminutive, dismissible, not powerful enough" (85). Had the notion of *husn* been put into the picture, there would have been nothing to lament about, as *husn* is by definition that which is and transcends the dichotomy between the beautiful / *jamāl* and the sublime / *jalāl* that belongs only to the temporal realm.
62. *Mashrab*, 132.
63. Ibid.
64. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 3, 21.

Chapter 4. The Anthropology and Cosmology of Beauty

1. Rūzbihān, *Sharḥ-i shaṭḥiyyāt*, 166.
2. Rūzbihān, *Kitāb sayr al-arwāḥ*, ed. P. Ballanfat, *Quatre traits inédits de Rūzbehān Baqlī Shîrâzî* (Tehran: Institut français de recherche en Iran, 1998), 6.
3. *Mashrab*, 6.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 7.
7. Ibid., 9.
8. See, for instance, *ibid.*, 306.
9. Ibid., 9.
10. Ibid., 85. Rūzbihān devotes the seventh chapter of *Risālat al-quḍs* to discussing the purpose and effect of *samāʿ*, which has been translated into English as "On Listening to Music," in Ernst, *Teachings of Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), 97–103.
11. *Mashrab*, 10.
12. Ibid., 43. I have translated *khiṭāb al-khāṣṣ* as "a specific address" as Rūzbihān often drops the first *al-* in an adjectival phrase, e.g., *al-khiṭāb al-khāṣṣ*. However, if the *idāfa* construction was intentional, then the phrase would mean "an address for the elect."
13. Ibid., 85.

14. ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, *Tamhīdāt*, ed. ‘Afīf ‘Usayrān (Tehran: Manūchihirī, 1380sh/2001), 106.
15. *Mashrab*, 28.
16. *Ibid.* Cf. ‘*Abhar*, 9.
17. ‘*Abhar*, 129.
18. *Mashrab*, 307.
19. Aḥmad Ghazālī, *Sawānīh*. Also see Pourjavady, “*Ishq-i azalī wa bāda-yi Alast*” [“Eternal passionate love and the wine of Alast”], in *Bāda-yi ‘ishq*, 215–38; and Chittick, *Divine Love*, 32–35 and 43–49, on the ideas of beginningless love and the Covenant according to Anṣārī, Sam‘ānī, and Maybudī.
20. *Mashrab*, 9–10.
21. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, s.v. “God and his Attributes.” Rūzbihān’s commentary on the above verses can be found in the corresponding sections in his Qur’ān commentary, ‘*Arā’is al-bayān*.
22. *Mashrab*, 10.
23. *Ibid.*, 11.
24. *Ibid.*, 12.
25. ‘*Arā’is*, III.199 (Q 38:72).
26. *Mashrab*, 176.
27. ‘*Abhar*, 38.
28. *Al-Maknūn*, <http://lib.eshia.ir/27484/2/46>, #225, vol. 2, 46.
29. ‘*Arā’is*, III.239 (Q 40:64).
30. *Ibid.*, I.418 (Q 7:11).
31. *Ibid.*, III.470 (Q 75:22–23).
32. *Al-Maknūn*, <http://lib.eshia.ir/27484/2/63>, #261, vol. 2, 63.
33. ‘*Arā’is*, III.487 (Q 80:40–41).
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Mashrab*, 85. A similar idea is expressed in the biblical tradition: “from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator” (Wisdom of Solomon 13:5), cited by Frank Burch Brown in *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 100.
36. *Mashrab*, 85.
37. *Al-Maknūn*, <http://lib.eshia.ir/27484/1/327>, #137, vol. 1, 327.
38. *Mashrab*, 133. Rūzbihān’s likely source for Dhū al-Nūn’s saying is al-Daylamī’s *Aṭf*, 135, where this statement is presented as Dhū al-Nūn’s response when he was asked “about the recognizers’ state of seeking intimacy.” Al-Daylamī’s teacher, Ibn Khafīf also seems to have had a similar inclination toward appreciating beauty in creation, as he is reported to have said,

"The spirit's pleasure lies in three things: good smell, beautiful voice, and gazing," in Abū al-Ḥasan al-Daylamī, *Strat al-shaykh al-kabīr Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. al-Khaṭf al-Shīrāzī*, 214. This passage is discussed in Leonard Lewisohn, "Sufism's Religion of Love, from Rābiʿa to Ibn ʿArabī," in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 162–63; and Bell and Shafie, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, xxxix. Thus, it is possible to trace Rūzbihān's strong appreciation of beauty in creation to al-Daylamī (ca. 1000), Ibn Khaṭf (d. 981), and Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 859), all of whom Rūzbihān held in great respect.

39. *Al-Maknūn*, <http://lib.eshia.ir/27484/1/304>, #88, vol. 1, 304.
40. Rūzbihān, *Manṭiq al-asrār*, ed. Mojtaba Shahsavari, unpublished critical edition, 57, paragraph 112. I am grateful to the editor for sharing this extremely important unpublished text. The saying by the Prophet is also quoted in *Mashrab*, 133.
41. ʿAbhar, 37. The closest that comes to this saying is recorded by a later author, al-Suyūṭī: "Three things clear up sight: gazing at greenery, flowing water, and beautiful faces," in *Jāmiʿ al-masānīd wa-l-marāsīl*, IV.157. Lewisohn presents a similar discussion in Rūzbihān's *Sharḥ-i shaṭḥiyyāt* (150), in Lewisohn, "Sufism's Religion of Love, from Rābiʿa to Ibn ʿArabī," 155–56.
42. *Al-Maknūn*, <http://lib.eshia.ir/27484/1/322>, #124, vol. 1, p. 322.
43. Ibid.
44. Ernst, *Rūzbihān Baqlī*, 35.
45. Ballanfat, *Quatre traités*, 184–201.
46. *Mashrab*, 208.
47. Ibid., 236.
48. See for instance Rūzbihān's discussion of *tafriqa* in *Mashrab*, 149.
49. ʿArāʾis, III.173 (Q 36:78).
50. ʿAbhar, 42. Corbin discusses the extended passage in *En Islam iranien*, vol. 3, 96.
51. ʿAbhar, 42. Elaine Scarry argues against various attempts at banishing beauty from modern human life and refutes a similar attack on the contemplation of human beauty in modern discourse in *On Beauty and Being Just*, 72ff. A common theme that runs through both Scarry's contemporary example and Rūzbihān's is the fear that some people feel toward beautiful people—either because they are susceptible to being harmed or because they impart harm to their perceivers, through the sustained gaze. Underlying this fear is the recognition that beauty has power: either to guide or misguide people.

52. ‘*Abhar*, 42.
53. *Uṭṭubū al-khayr ‘inda ḥisān al-wujūh*. This saying is not found in the six books of the canonical Sunni Ḥadīth, but it is recorded in a number of secondary Ḥadīth collections after Rūzbihān’s time, such as al-Haythamī, *Majma‘ al-zawā’id*, #13730, VIII.355; #13732, VIII.356; and al-Suyūṭī, *Jāmi‘ al-masānīd wa-l-marāsīl*, #3204, I.462; #3205, I.463. Also see Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999), 64.
54. *Al-Maknūn*, <http://lib.eshia.ir/27484/1/337>, #156, vol. 1, 337.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., <http://lib.eshia.ir/27484/2/39>, #208, vol. 2, p. 39.
57. Ibid., <http://lib.eshia.ir/27484/1/337>, #156, vol. 1, 337.
58. Ibid., <http://lib.eshia.ir/27484/2/46>, #225, vol. 2, 46.
59. Ibid.
60. ‘*Abhar*, 41.
61. *Al-Maknūn*, <http://lib.eshia.ir/27484/2/63>, #261, vol. 2, 63.
62. Ibid., <http://lib.eshia.ir/27484/1/345>, #162, vol. 1, 345–46.
63. *Mashrab*, 133.
64. Muḥammad Taqī Mīr, *Sharḥ-i ḥāl wa āthār wa ash‘ār-i shaykh Rūzbihān-i Baqlī-yi Fasā’ī-yi Shīrāzī* (Shiraz: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Pahlawī, 1354sh/1975), 88.
65. Cf. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 14.142; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 2.483, 2:496, 2:620, 3:224, 3:326.
66. ‘*Abhar*, 12. I am taking the alternative reading of *bāl* as *bāgh*.
67. Although Rūzbihān does not discuss “two eyes” per se, his contrast between the eye of gathering and the eye of separation seems more or less analogous to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s discussion of the two eyes, consisting of imagination and intellect, that is, one that combines and another that separates, or one that sees *tashbīh* and another that sees *tanzīh*. Cf., Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn ‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 356–81.
68. Henry Corbin and Muḥammad Mu‘īn, introduction to *Le jasmin des fidèles d’amour (Kitāb-e ‘Abhar al-‘āshiqān): Traité de soufisme en person* (Tehran: Institut français de recherche en Iran, 1987), 97ff.

Chapter 5. The Prophetology of Beauty

1. *Mashrab*, 133.
2. Rūzbihān does mention Jesus’s beauty but does not discuss it extensively. This is probably because of his attention to Jesus’s strong association with spirit, which highlights his incomparability (*tanzīh*) more than his similarity (*tashbīh*) to the rest of