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On Some "Othering" Terms: The Horror Vacui, The Modern Use of Arabesque etc. and The Allegation of Aesthetics as Content - Evading, Rather than Addressing Meaning in the Use of Design in Islamic Art - Part II.

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ON SOME "OTHERING" TERMS: THE HORROR VACUI, THE MODERN USE OF ARABESQUE ETC. AND THE ALLEGATION OF AESTHETICS AS CONTENT - EVADING, RATHER THAN ADDRESSING MEANING IN THE USE OF DESIGN IN ISLAMIC ART - PART II.

"HORROR VACUI", "ARABESK" VE DİĞERLERİ: ÖTEKİLEŞTİREN BİR GRUP TERİM ÜZERİNDEN İSLAM SANATINDA ANLAMI ARAŞTIRMAKTAN KAÇINMAK - İKİNCİ BÖLÜM

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Abstract

This article is divided into two parts. It concerns some confusions and misapprehensions consequent upon the use of some newly devised and older European terms that have been applied to describe the use of designs in Islamic art, othering terms, that unfortunately if not always deliberately, mislead. The use of these terms has resulted in the widespread mis-reading of the intent and content of design on works of Islamic art that carry what is termed, "decoration," "ornament," "abstract design". This article questions the idea that Islamic designs developed due to iconophobia; or from an alleged fear of open spaces, a rare medical condition termed kenophobia, or, from any supposed fear of leaving empty spaces on a work, termed by orientalists, art historians and others from the late 19th c. onwards in respect to works of Islamic art, "horror vacui". A term dismissive of any content to the designs employed, indicating these designs were employed just to fill otherwise empty space and is a term that continues in use in this context today, amongst a group of related terms repeatedly employed, resulting in the illusion of truth purveyed through their repeated use in the art historical and related literature, and the consequent deliberate(?) denial of content-meaning in the use of Islamic design.

Keywords: Othering discourse, Islamic Art, horror vacui, horror infiniti, Aesthetic, Orientalism, Abstract design, terminology.

Özet

İki bölüm olarak tasarlanan bu makale İslam sanatında kullanılan bir grup bezeme üslubunu adlandırmak için kullanılan Batı kökenli terimlerin yarattığı karmaşa ve yanlış değerlendirmeleri konu edinmektedir. Bazıları yakın zamanda önerilmiş bazıları ise uzun süredir kullanılan bu terimler ne yazık ki İslam sanatını ötekileştirme yönünde, bilinçli olmasa da, yanlış yönlendirmelere yol açmaktadır. "Bezeme", "süsleme" ve "soyut tasarımlar" olarak verilen bu terimler İslam sanatı bezeme sanatı örneklerinin niyet ve kapsamına dair yanlış okumalara neden olmuştur. Makale İslam sanatında tasarımların temelinde figürlü süslemeden kaçınan"ikonofobi" ya da açık alan korkusu olarak tanımlanan "kenofobi" olduğu önerisini sorgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. İslam sanatında eser bezenirken kullanılan ve yüzeyde hiç boş alan kalmayacak şekilde oluşturulan tasarım üslubu bu nedenle 19 yüzyıldan başlayarak sanat tarihçileri tarafından "horror vacui" boşluk korkusu olarak tanımlanmıştır. Herhangi bir şekilde bir bağlamla ilişkilendirilmeyen bu tanımlama, ki günümüzde de hala kullanılmaktadır, benzer başka terminoloji ile birlikte tekrarlanarak İslam sanatının yaratısal anlamda bir bağlamı/anlamı olmadığı, şekillerin basit bir tekrarı ile oluşturulduğu algısını yaratmakta, sanat tarihi ve tarih alanında eserleri anlamlandırma çabalarının (bilinçli ya da bilinçsiz olarak) önünü kesmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ötekileştirme, İslam Sanatı, horror vacui, horror infiniti, Estetik, oryantalizm, soyut tasarım, terminoloji.

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The term *horror vacui*, employed in describing the reason for the use of Islamic design, has been at times associated with other tell-tale pejorative "othering" markers and descriptions such as: absurdly irrelevant - inflated and ubiquitous decoration - without rational meaning, similar to tendencies in barbarian art - adding to their cacophony and horror vacui - associated with the Primitive - "explained" by scholars as a quasi-genetic characteristic of the Oriental mind,[1] a native horror vacui, or primitive dislike for unmodulated surfaces- a kind of psychological aberration or complex known as "horror vacui" - i.e. phobia for empty space- a psychological reaction, or simply, Primitive, as is foot-

[1] Goldin 1976, 48, "Indeed, the regularized, allover density of Islamic decorated surfaces has often been noted. It is usually "explained" by scholars as a quasi-genetic characteristic of the Oriental mind, a native horror vacui, or primitive dislike for unmodulated surfaces." For the so-called "Oriental mind," see for example: R. N. Wornum, *"The Oriental mind appears to be particularly liable to this partiality for display, as we shall have several occasions to show in our progress. It is probably partly the result of climate; but it is also, I assume, an evidence of a lower degree of cultivation, and is partly an extension, perhaps, of one of those indications which the wholly untutored mind invariably exhibits, of what appears to be an innate love of all that glitters*." Wornum 1848, 346; Bayle St. John: "*How different is the construction of the European and the Oriental mind! A friend has just told me, that if he could be convinced of the possibility of angelic or demoniacal agents interfering in human affairs he should cease to exist from mere fright*." St. John 1852, 95; "*It is difficult for an European to imagine the space which the belief in supernatural agency occupies* in *the Oriental mind. Earth, air, and water in the East, are filled with spirits, evil or good, who constantly hold communication with mortals. The number of the evil ones, perhaps, predominates. Every day the fellah is liable to come in contact with them. If he stumble over a clod, he must take care to invoke the name of God in a set form, otherwise he is safe to be possessed; and there is always a devil ready to leap down his throat in case he should happen to gape*." idem 262; Re: the Crystal Palace exhibition, Letter V., "*It is completed by the picture of all the useful arts in which the Oriental mind seems to live its usual strange, heavy, and monotonous round*." Tallis 1852, 240; Journal 1854, 7-8, "*There are peculiarities in the Oriental mind and character which our worthy friends clearly delineated;- the imagination and the memory are strong and active, while the reasoning faculties and power of application are comparatively weak; hence the importance of rather avoiding instruction through the medium of the memory, and making them explain by a process of logical reasoning whatever they learn; they also have peculiarities of temper, and a diffidence of disposition, requiring careful management; in these and some other respects they differ materially from Europeans*." "*Schamyl, who is well acquainted with the fact that the Oriental mind is overcome by magnificence, never moves from his dwelling without a train of 500…*" Wagner-Mackenzie 1854, 88; Richard Burton, "*Nothing takes the Oriental mind so much as a retort alliterative or jingling*." Burton 1855,1, 11; "*The Oriental mind," says a clever writer on Indian subjects, "has achieved everything save real greatness of aim and execution*." idem., 136; "*Both* (teaching and law) *are what Eastern faiths and Eastern training have ever been,-both are eminently adapted for the child-like state of the Oriental mind. When the people learn to appreciate ethics, and to understand psychics and æsthetics, the demand will create a supply*." idem. 160. "*In all these cases, they* (Mohammedans) *follow the construction made use of by the Byzantines; and only in the form of the exterior, when it is so placed as to be especially conspicuous, has a sharply-tapering, or frequently an undulating, convex outline, which, agreeing with the lines of the arch, is a new evidence of the peculiar fantastic tendency of the Oriental mind*." Lübke 1877, 416. And, as cited by Sir James George Fraser from a correspondent of The Times, "***The Oriental mind is free from the trammels of logic. It is a literal fact that the Oriental mind can accept and believe two opposite things at the same time*** ." Fraser 1914, 4. "*But he* (Alexander the Great) ***had underrated the inertia and resistance of the Oriental mind, and the mass and depth of Oriental culture***. *It was only a youthful fancy, after all, to suppose that so immature and unstable a civilization as that of Greece could be imposed upon a civilisation immeasurably more widespread, and rooted in the most venerable traditions. The quantity of Asia proved too much for the quality of Greece."* Durant 1961, 75. See also, in respect to the late 19th c., Abi-Rached 2020, 24, "*Second*, ***what transpires is an early ethno-psychiatric description of the oriental mind. The Orient was invariably defined in terms of deficiency and lack. The oriental mind consequently was considered to be doubly pathological: it was morally deviant, due to its alleged religious inferiority and turpitude, and pathological for being incapable of folly except in its most "primitive" form - notably, religious insanity*.**" Gertrude Bell, in writing her translations entitled, *Poems from the Divan of Hafiz*, published in 1897, encapsulates it thus: "*It is the interminable, the hopeless mysticism, the playing with words that say one thing and mean something totally different, the vagueness of a philosophy that dares not speak out, which repels the Western just as much as it attracts the Oriental mind. "Give us a working theory," we demand*." Ḥāfiẓ 2004, 30. The term was given further publicity when Herman Cyril McNeile "Sapper" wrote a thriller short story entitled, *Bulldog Drummond and the Oriental Mind* (*Detective Fiction Weekly*, Vol. CXVI, No. 2. 1937), that became a Paramount film, but retitled, *Bulldog Drummond's Bride* released in 1939. In part, excluding the racist and religious stereotyping, the problem with the term "Oriental mind," is that it ignores a shared Medieval theocentric understanding of mankind's place in the world, both Oriental and Occidental, and of the consequent reasoning that led for some to the use of design in this fashion in both Orient and Occident.

noted in Part I[2]. This seemingly deliberate denial of content, dismissive of any possible meaning conveyed by Islamic designs and through their use, indicating that design employed in the Medieval Islamic world in all its variety was entirely without the intention of conveying meaning of any significance whatsoever; that these designs signified nothing apart from an alleged fear of leaving an empty space on the surface of an object, or structure[3], attributed at times to a psychological aberration, a so-called quasi-genetic characteristic of the oriental mind, has been the course taken in the descriptions of Islamic art by such formative influential Western scholarly figures concerned with the history of the arts of Islam, as: Ernst Emil Herzfeld, David Talbot Rice, Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar, and Robert Hillenbrand, amongst many others, and has been echoed over time in chorus by their numerous students and followers to form the illusion of truth through its repetition, in passing down this particular orientalist cul-de-sac in comprehension, through wittingly or unthinkingly continuing to employ this dismissive late 19th c. othering terminology into the 21st century.

Some Examples:

The influential art historian Richard Ettinghausen (Frankfurt 1906-Princeton 1979) in respect to Omayyad Mshattā wrote: *On yet another level, however - and here lies the crucial importance of Mshattā for later architecture - its inflated and ubiquitous decoration, with a lace-like delicacy more suited to the minor arts, can be seen to have performed a new function: it was conceived separately from the architecture and was used to obscure rather than to emphasise or to mesh with the structure*[4]. *It therefore led naturally to the horror vacui which characterises the ornament of Sāmarrā and which later became an abiding hallmark of Islamic art.*[5] He also provides us with the following perhaps somewhat bizarre reasoning for this so-called horror vacui, said to be reflected in the use of design in Islamic art, in a paper read in 1977 and published in 1979, a much cited article, entitled, *The Taming of the Horror Vacui in Islamic Art*,[6] republished in 1984: *In Islamic art (that is, primarily in the*

[2] Duggan 2022, fn. 61.
[3] A conception contradicted as pointed by Alami 2001, 94, who notes, "*the principle of horror vacui is absent from figural (narrative-based) representations*" in Islamic art.
[4] Rather, the point of this work was precisely to cover the form of the temporal structure, the intent was to drape the facade in a stone carved *kiswa*, like the cover over the *Ka'ba*. The facade was dressed, draped, in a sense, wrapped, like a work by the artist Cristo, except that meaning was conveyed by the designs that were employed on the "wrapping." The architectural form was not itself to be understood as being the bearer of content, it was the carved representation of a textile *kiswa* with its "zigzag" over the facade that was the bearer of meaning.
[5] Hillenbrand 1981, 76; reprinted Hillenbrand 2001, 150. The Mshattā facade is incomplete and how exactly the Mshattā facade decoration itself "*led naturally to the horror vacui which characterises the ornament of Sāmarrā and which later became an abiding hallmark of Islamic art,*" is neither "*naturally*," if at all, evident.
[6] The recent assertion by P. Blessing that, "*The emphasis on horror vacui in Islamic art is later* (than Riegl and Strzygowski) *and, as Golombek noted, appears in Richard Ettinghausen's work.*" Blessing 2018, 11, seems in error, see for example, EI[1] s.v. "Arabesque," of 1913; Art Institute 1932, 5, etc. Earlier Marks 2015, 258, mistakenly states, "*the term, "horror vacui" coined in 1979 by Richard Ettinghausen...*" when the term had by 1979 already been in use for nearly a century to describe the use of decoration in Islamic art; as was likewise mistakenly repeated in respect to Ettinghausen introducing this concept in 1979, by Esra Akin-Kivanc in 2020, "*The concept of horror vacui was introduced in 1979 by Richard Ettinghausen, who, focussing on artworks in a wide range of media, drew attention away from the individual motifs and toward what he called a "syntactic problem." Ettinghausen posited that the Muslim's artisan's "exaggerated" inclination towards the decorative was his "social and mental reaction" to empty spaces, which the artisan desired to "tame."* Akin-Kivanc 2020, 156. For some earlier published examples of the use of this term in respect to Islamic art before this alleged "coining" in 1979, Duggan 2022 Part I. fn. 59. Although historically assertions not perhaps quite as odd as, "*The concept of horror vacui in the context of fine arts*

minor arts) the decorative urge is more pronounced than elsewhere, and purely ornamental motifs predominate. There are various reasons for this striking aspect of Islamic art. The major cause was most probably another psychological reaction to the vast, featureless and barren landscape around towns and villages. A plain surface on an object of daily life subconsciously evoked the bare, surrounding world, its unpleasantness and its dangers due to lack of water, food and comforts and the presence of ever lurking robbers and jinns. By being ornamented the object lost this bothersome association and the mirror image of a fearful and primitive world became so to say tamed and cultivated and was also made enjoyable.[7] To describe the use of designs dismissively termed *purely ornament* over the course of more than 1300 years in Islamic art from Andalusia to China as being simply a subconscious psychological response on the part of Islamic designers to a barren landscape and to *a fearful and primitive world* is undoubtedly Western academic nonsense of the first order; as is the fallacious categorisation into major and minor arts; as also the idea implicit in this terminology that meaninglessness, that is *purely ornamental motifs predominate* in Islamic arts[8]. While the statement that *the decorative urge is more pronounced* (in the so-called minor arts) *than elsewhere, and purely ornamental motifs predominate*, itself indicates the use of design was no *subconscious psychological response* to *a fearful and primitive world*, as stated by the author, as otherwise it would also have been be found to the same extent in the so-called major arts. Sabiha al-Khemir (Tunus 1959) has well described this orientalist misconception in her novel, *The Blue Manuscript*: '*This is typical of the horror vacui which is at the heart of Islamic art.' 'Horror vacui?' Zohra felt in need of a translation. She looked at the fragments, trying to work out what Dr Evans meant. The art historian's words seemed large containers which rang with an echo devoid of meaning. 'Fear of the void, that's what the Latin expression "horror vacui" means,' explained Dr Evans. 'Because these people originated in the desert, they had an innate fear of empty spaces, so they were afraid to leave any empty space within their designs*.'[9] Yet the designs employed in traditional art from Arctic to Antarctic have properly been identified with the task of conveying of meaning,[10] rather than being the result of a psychological reaction to so-called

was used for the first time in the 19th century by an art and literary critic of Italian origin, Mario Praz." Stated, http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/czy-wiesz-ze/-/a/%E2%80%9Ehorror-vacui%E2%80%9D-czy-%E2%80%9Eamor-vacui%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%93-kilka-refleksji-nad-stosunkiem-do-pustki?view=full Mario Praz was born in 1886 and therefore it is stated he used the term before he was 15 years old. Rather, the term was used in reference to works of art in the late 19th c., as by Boetticher in 1880, by Schliemann, by Perrot-Chipiez, by Alois Riegl in 1893, by Henry Beauchamp Walters in 1896, as by others. When Mario Praz used it in 1933, it had in the context of so-called filling ornament on works of art been a term in use for more than half a century.

[7] Ettinghausen 1994, 70. This passage summarises Ettinghausen 1979, 18-19. It was paraphrased by C. C. Lazar in (1993) 2013 as: "*In Islamic art the decorative urge is more pronounced and purely ornamental designs dominate. Perhaps the secret for this urge to decorate, as in the use of color, is the psychological response to the vast, featureless land the pre-twentieth century Muslims called home. There a plain surface evoked the feel of that bare surrounding world; complete with the dangers of too little food, water and comforts, and the ever-lurking presence of robbers and jinn (an intelligent spirit of lower rank than angels able to appear in human or animal form and to possess humans). An ornamented object was synonymous to the ordered, tamed and cultivated attributes that felt secure and provided creative people with great pleasure."*

[8] An approach described by Carol Bier as, "*an aesthetic "which managed to overcome in a pleasant fashion the horror vacui, yet did not create the impression" of overcrowding. Ettinghausen views ornament as a means for the artist or artisan to establish an aesthetic that avoided the void*." (Bier 2008 493).

[9] Khemir 2008, 127.

[10] Burckhardt 1986, 101-109; Burckhardt 1987, 219-235; concerning the parallels in Medieval Christian art and its relationship to the Almighty, see Coomaraswamy 1956, 61-95.

empty space. The designer-craftsman of traditional art do not deal in their own private fancy or vision, or their own psychological peculiarities, or their own sense of aesthetics, but in presenting reminders of meaning through employing a shared symbolic language of signs, often addressing matters of the spirit. The emphasis through the use of the term *horror vacui* with Islamic design, said to have been employed as a psychological-societal response to inhabiting an allegedly "*featureless and barren*" landscape - as though Islamic art was produced in the main in isolated outposts somewhere out amongst the desert dunes or stony desert, rather than in and for cities – cities with some of the largest urban populations of their time - offers no explanation whatsoever for the fact that unsurprisingly the most common types of Islamic pottery are undecorated, both glazed and unglazed,[11] as for undecorated Islamic monochrome ware;[12] nor, for example, for the production of textiles that are monochrome, without, or with only minimal decoration, or of plain copper tinned vessels,[13] etc. Yet, if this alleged psychological-societal horror vacui response was and is in fact a fact, a consequence of a *quasi-genetic characteristic of the Oriental mind,* the most common and cheapest unglazed Islamic pottery and other functional artefacts produced should perforce be covered in decoration of some sort, filling this supposed reminder of the fearful void, yet the vast majority of surviving examples do not display any evidence of this *psychological reaction to the vast, featureless and barren landscape,* nor of this supposed *quasi-genetic characteristic of the Oriental mind*.

It does need to be noted it is only to an outsider that a *"featureless and barren"* landscape exists, as the numerous words for type of desert, desert features and sand in Arabic[14] as in Persian, and Berber, etc. indicate. The impression that the outsider, the Frank traveller in semi arid or arid lands obtains is through comparison made with a completely different landscape and environment, but the native sees and names features, and does not see any featureless and barren landscape but a landscape of observed meaningful features, named, understood, and remembered, and it is a landscape possessing a very different natural orchestra of sounds. The same caveat applies to the presumed featureless and barren landscape inhabited by the Eskimo, as likewise to the sea or ocean as traversed by a land-lubber, while the mariner, the nomadic inhabitant, sees and survives by the differences observed, the land-lubber sees something featureless and barren called the sea or ocean, a fearful place without visible landmarks.

[11] "*Unglazed ceramics. Despite the attention devoted to the various categories of early Islamic glazed pottery in Persia, the most common single ware was unglazed and frequently without decoration, made for everyday use. Such ceramics account for more than 90 percent of all 4th/10th-century pottery found at Sīrāf and 80 percent from Sīrjān. In the past, such wares were neglected by archaeologists and collectors; more recently they have begun to receive the scientific attention they deserve, and information on local production is now available from Susa, Nīšāpūr, and Sīrjān*." D. Whitehouse, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ceramics-xiii

[12] For example 7th-10th c. undecorated monochrome green-glazed ware, as from Sāmarrā, and opaque white glazed ware from Sāmarrā and Sīrāf.

[13] Recognised as a type and termed, plain, Tr. "*sade*," see for example the references in Glassie 1993, 850.

[14] For a glossary of some Arabic terminology concerning deserts, see Goodall-al-Belushi 1998, 611-620.

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Richard Ettinghausen And "The Non-Muslim Western Mind"

Richard Ettinghausen in 1979 makes no suggestions concerning the perhaps somewhat more fruitful work of understanding the content of the designs employed within their cultural-religious-historical context, beyond stating, *is true in more recent years Near Eastern scholars have become interested in questions of Muslim aesthetics* (sic.), *especially the religious implications, and they have lectured and written about it. Their suggested explanations of the phenomena have, however, not yet been too convincing, especially to the non-Muslim Western mind* (sic.[15]), *but it should be admitted there exists the possibility of religious connotations, although they still appear to be rather vague.*[16] However, in terms of

[15] What exactly is indicated by the use of the expression *non-Muslim western mind* by the western mind of Richard Ettinghausen is unclear. There is a single subsequent published use of this rare expression, see Malik 2009, 10, "*The Truth of the Quranic verse about the inimitability of the Quran could be better understood by the non-Muslim western mind if the challenge was made to produced the like of Prophet Jesus…*" The *non-Muslim Western mind* as employed by Richard Ettinghausen may perhaps reflect the longstanding published Western assumptions about the so-called "*Oriental mind*," with the "Oriental Mind," a creation of occidentals and by definition having a mind other than a supposedly "rational and logical Occident mind." In the 19th c. it was far easier to justify rule over others, defined as orientals, and so, by definition being of an irrational and illogical/superstitious mind, hence the 19th and 20th century civilising missions by those said to possess a "rational Occident mind." op. cit. fn. 1. For a different mid-19th c. contrast drawn between Oriental and Western minds, see John Ruskin, "*XXXV. And observe, farther, how in the Oriental mind a peculiar seriousness is associated with this attribute of the love of color; a seriousness rising out of repose, and out of the depth and breadth of the imagination, as contrasted with the activity, and consequent capability of surprise, and of laughter, characteristic of the Western mind: as a man on a journey must look to his steps always, and view things narrowly and quickly; while one at rest may command a wider view, though an unchanging one, from which the pleasure he receives must be one of contemplation, rather than of amusement or surprise.*" Ruskin 1853, 148. For the use of the term "Mahometan-Mohammedan-Saracenic-Mussulman-Muslim mind," see for example: Bentham 1818, 89, "*set before it the Koran, it is a Mahometan mind*." Frankland 1830, 213, "*When I was in Constantinople, such was the impression still remaining upon the Mussulman mind, that the Franks were all, more or less, at the bottom of the Moreote insurrection;*" Sargent 1834, 243, "*The effect of his treatise on the Mahometan mind, might, it was feared, be very unfavourable; that of the apostacy itself on numbers calling themselves Christians, was instantly and extensively prejudicial.*" Martineau 1858, 58, "*After the Vellore mutiny* (10 July 1806), *and the facts it brought out, of the unfitness of some of the missionaries to address the native mind and heart, it will be the fault of the State if men who know no more of the Hindoo and Mussulman mind than of the language of birds, are permitted to excite either ridicule or passion among native hearers.*" Duff 1858, 117, "*and having the honours of titular Emperor of India personally accorded to him - has united to stimulate and perpetuate in every Mohammedan mind, the certain expectation that, some day or other, all the glories of their ancient dynasty would be revived.*" Evangelical 1858, 24, "*The spirit of inquiry" which is said to have sprung up in the Muslim mind, and to be so widely prevalent, surely does not prevail here*." Wherry 1886, 154, "*It was intended to impress more deeply the Muslim mind with the solemnity of the law which preceedes it.*" Bellew 1875, 79, "*A journey of which he has no conception other than it is somehow to carry him to that sacred spot which holds so mysterious a sway over the Muslim mind*." Hamlin 1877, 318, "*The Saracenic mind was never much troubled with contradictions, of which the Koran itself is an eminent example*." Lacroix 1878, 277, "*The Mahometan mind had from the first taken to the study of geography, which made immense progress after the eighth century in all the Arab schools*." Lane-Poole 1886, 242, "*which fitly portrayed, to the Muslim mind, the fabulous beast Borāk…";* Alberuni 1887, xxxi, *"But soon after, things grew worse, the darkness of medieval times closing in upon the Muslim mind from all sides."* Baedeker 1894, 310, *"The Muslim mind had, moreover, been much excited by the insurrection against the English in India."* Snider 1905, 452, *"But it is the Arch which the Mahometan mind will hover around, transmute and decorate in many ways."* Herrick 1912, 100, *"The book presents with great force and in detail the prevailing bent of the Oriental and especially of the Mussulman mind towards the supernatural, its vivid sense of the presence and power of the Unseen, and shows in how many and various ways this presence and power are manifested."* idem. 166, *"The native Christians repel the Mohammedans because of their apparent worship of pictures and crosses, which idea it is almost impossible to eradicate from the Mussulman mind."*

[16] Ettinghausen 1979, 18. On this matter, S. Redford in 2015 writes: "*A cottage industry of writers and publishers has regularly imparted religious, especially mystical, meaning to works of Islamic art and architecture. The subject of mystical interpretation of a work of Islamic architecture, therefore, is a sensitive one, not only because it is hard to prove but also because maintaining that artistic traditions exist mainly to embody eternal religious verities opens one up to the charge of cultural essentialism.*" Redford 2015, 165. However, Ettinghausen 1979, 18, admits to, *the possibility of religious connotations;* while Oleg Grabar in 2008, linked the "bevelled style," to "*occasionalism*," Grabar 2009, 248, indicating a theological underpinning to a style of design; as was earlier indicated by Tabbaa 2002, in respect to differences between the Fatimid and the Sunni designs of the 11th-12th centuries; as likewise with

the context within which these designs were made and were understood, it is perhaps worth noting, not only that one of the Divine Names is The Enricher, *Al-Mughni*[17], Qurʾān *An-Najm*, The Star, 53:48, *And that it is He who enriches and suffices*, which can be understood in its human aspect as defining the work of the designer-craftsman, enriching by means of design and colour; but also that Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī in the second century A.H. (874-936 A.D.) posed the question, *Why do you say that God is knowing (ʻālim)? On the one hand, al-Ash'ari is asserting that only a knowing being could design something that is well constructed and well-ordered, and since God is the all knowing, he must be the creator of all things. An unknowing creature such as man could not possibly create even such a thing as a well-patterned brocade according to al-Ash'ari, and so God must be the creator. Likewise, the universe is a well-ordered system and since only God is such a knowing agent, only he could have understood such a thing, designed it and created it.*[18] That is, the Almighty must be the (Real) creator of the design, with the human designer of *a well patterned brocade*, or, for example, the designs on tile-work and the *muqarnas* of a dome, the stucco forms or tile-work designs of a *miḥrāb,* or of the right form for a *muqarnas* vault, with the human agent being the instrument of the Creator[19], and the work of design itself understood to embody a communicable religious truth, a reminder or indicator of the presence of the Almighty, of the Infinite in this world, through the use of such designs on the objects employed by Muslims. As also of the relationship of the arts to the will of the Almighty and that the beauty of everything that is beautiful is from Him, as Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) in his *Kimiya-yi Sa'ādat, The Alchemy of Happiness*, written after 1096, 150 years after al-Ashʿarī, remarks that the arts and skills are given to mankind through *the will of God*: *As man's primary necessities in the world are three, viz: clothing, food and shelter, so the arts of the world are three, viz: weaving, planting and building. The rest of the arts serve either for the purpose of perfecting the others, or for repairing injuries. Thus the spinner aids the work of weaving, the tailor carries out that work to perfection, while the cloth-dresser adds beauty to the work. In the arts, there is need of iron, skins and wood, and for these many instruments are necessary. No person is able to work at all kinds of trades,*

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the use of knotting interlace design, *al-i'tiqād,* Duggan 2019b, 104-108. It seems most probable that some of the changes in decoration-design were design responses articulating in visual forms theological-intellectual positions-statements, the ongoing expressions of the reformulations of content-meaning, rather than being so-called "natural changes," driven by the alleged horror vacui and some supposedly inevitable course of stylistic "development."

[17] Hence the name, Abdul-Mughni.

[18] Huff 2017, 87-88, citing from R. J. McCarthy, Ed. & Trans. *The Theology of Ash'ari*, Imprimerie Catholique, Beirut, 1953, 12-13.

[19] "*The acts of man are created and…a single act comes from two agents, of whom one, God, creates it, while the other, man, 'acquires' it…; and (according to this view) God is the agent of the acts of men in reality, and…men are the agents of them in reality.*" Huff 2017, 88. Earlier the Mu'tazilite Abū ʿAmr Ḍirār ibn ʿAmr al-Ghaṭafānī ı-Kūfī (c. 728-815) was explicit on this matter, "*acts are created, and the single act belongs to two agents: one of them creates it, and that is God; the other acquires* (*iktisāb*) *it, and that is man. God is the agent of acts of men in reality, and men are their agents in reality'* (Maqālāt, 281) (Bennett 2016, 154). An experience known to mathematicians, physicists, chess players, artisans-artists and many others, where the solution to a seemingly insolvable problem arrives fully formed, when a "breakthrough" occurs, and the person to whom this occurs knows the solution was given to them fully formed, a moment of illumination, e.g. Cédric Villani, Fields Medal winner in 2010, who describes this experience as, "*the famous direct line, the one that connects you to God,"* and as, "*illumination*". *"Probably no one who read the article that finally appeared in Acta Mathematica had the least inkling of the euphoria I experienced that morning. Technique is the only thing that matters in a proof. Its a pity there's no place for the most important thing of all: illumination."* Villani 2015, 142-143.

but by the will of God, upon one is devolved one art and upon another two, and the whole community is made dependent, one member upon the other.[20] Beauty is to be added by the designer-craftsman to the work made by human hands, *adds beauty to the work*, embellishing[21] the work, thereby making the perfected work carrying design that serves as a human reminder that the beauty of everything that is beautiful is from Him. As Jālāl ad-Dīn Rumī more than 150 years after al-Ghazālī in the 13th c. stated, of *His* (the Almighty's) *veil-making* = (that is the creation of phenomena);[22] in the sense, not only that the veil, the creation of phenomena, both conceals its Maker, Al-Baatin (The Hidden), but also, that the veil indicates through its very existence, the existence of the Maker of this veiling, Az-Zaahir (The Manifest), and, in consequence, the designs employed in Islamic art were understood to have their origin in The Hidden, not in some supposed artisanal or designers' or craftsmans' psychological fear of empty space, nor in some supposed solely human, personal aesthetic. Rumī could not be more explicit in respect to the Real Designer, as distinct from the designer-craftsman who through acquisition (*iktisāb*), is given knowledge of it, from its Real Source: *Therefore, realise that in this world things happen as God wills. His is the Design, and all purpose comes from Him*.[23] *God bestows contentment and happiness on everyone in the work that is theirs, so that even if their life should last a hundred thousand years they would still find love for their work. Every day the love for their craft becomes greater, and subtle skills are born to them, which brings them infinite joy and pleasure*.[24] *After all, all these trades and professions - tailoring, building, carpentry, goldsmithery, science, astronomy, medicine and the rest of the world's countless and innumerable callings - all these were discovered from within by some person, they were not revealed through stones and dirt.*[25] *So when you investigate all trades (crafts), the root and origin of them was revelation, men have learned them from the prophets and they are The Universal Intellect.*[26] *Did He* (The Almighty) *bring you forth, give you existence, and make you capable of service and worship that you should boast of serving Him? These services and sciences are just as if you carved little shapes of wood and leather, then came to offer them up to God, saying, "I like these little shapes. I made them, but it is your job to give them life, you will make my works live. Or, you do not have to - the command is entirely Yours.*[27] *When God bestows knowledge, sagacity and shrewdness, people claim all credit for themselves, saying, "Through my skill and abilities, I gave life to these actions and have attained ecstatic joy." Abraham said, "No, it is God who gives life and brings death*."[28] *When the picture (creature) struggles hand to hand with the painter (Creator) it only tears out its own moustaches and beard.*[29] *What authority should*

[20] Homes 1873, 68-69.
[21] S.O.D.[3] 1969 s.v. "Embellish," Middle English from Old French, *embelliss*, a. To render beautiful. b. To beautify with adventitious ornaments; to ornament.
[22] Rumi, 1982, Bk. VI, 2883.
[23] Arberry 1977, 291.
[24] Arberry 1977, 166-167.
[25] Arberry 1977, 95.
[26] Arberry 1977, 38. For the earlier, Ismā'īlī Ikhwān al-safā position on the relationship of the crafts and the Almighty, see for examples, Ghabin 2009, 149-150, as, "*for this perfect art, or skilful art-craft, God likes him* (the craftsman-artist)."
[27] Arberry 1977, 367-368.
[28] Arberry 1977, 368.
[29] Rumi 1982, Bk. III., v. 937.

the pictures (phenomenal forms) desire to exercise over such an Artist for the purpose of testing Him? If it (the picture-phenomenal form*) has known and experienced any trial, is it not the case that the Artist brought that (trial) upon it? Indeed, this form that He fashioned – what is it worth in comparison with the forms which are in His knowledge?*[30] It is worth reminding in this context as noted above that the word arabesque, derived from *rabbesco, arabesco*, means *in the manner of ar-Rabb, in the manner of The Lord*, clearly associating this form of Islamic design with the religion of Islam and with the Almighty from the 14th c. onwards in western sources, not with any supposed fear of empty space or horror vacui. Even the formalist Alois Riegl (1858-1905) in his *Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik, (Problems of style: foundations for a history of ornament)* of 1893 had explicitly described the urge to decorate as a two-stage process, *The unrestrainable impulse which drives the entire process is the urge to decorate, that is one of the most elemental human drives among primitive peoples, in a "naive stage of art" which hardly goes above and beyond a horror vacui, whereas, in the higher stages it is to be identified as a zeal for beauty, mature artistic sensibility that strives to capture in physical form the supreme and the divine.*[31] And, consequently, unless one thought, or wished to believe, or wished the reader to think that Muslims were from the 8th century onwards at a *naive stage of art*, among the so-called *primitive peoples*, it would seem not to be entirely surprising to find *religious connotations* in decoration termed and recognised as Arabesque – *ar-Rabb esco* – a key element of Islamic art, where a mature artistic sensibility strives to remind in decorative form of the supreme and the divine, and where, within a particular theocentric worldview, the supreme and the divine are represented through design, rather than represented as a *physical form*, to rewrite part of Alois Riegl's sentence.

Richard Ettinghausen did not suggest finding and employing the translation of the relevant descriptive expressions or the actual terms that were current at the time the work was produced to describe these designs, to determine what particular names were given to particular design types, and so to make suggestions from the available recorded evidence as to what these particular designs at that time may have signified within a particular context. That is, to establish what the use of particular designs repeated in this veiling or covering fashion signified in respect to Islam and the cultures shaped by it. This entire approach was dismissed by Richard Ettinghausen in 1979 in the following extraordinary manner: *The difficulty of finding a proper explanation for a decoration is even more obvious when we consider that most of the employed designs are non-figural, that is to say purely ornamental so that an intellectual interpretation is scarcely possible with a credible amount of assurance.*[32] The statement that non-figural art is *purely ornamental so an intellectual interpretation is scarcely possible,* indicates to the reader that Islamic ornament-design, unlike for example the contemporary 1970's Western Abstract Art, is to be understood as supporting no meaning, it lacks conceptual purpose, and was produced to simply deliver a

[30] Rumi 1982 Bk. IV., v. 381 ff.
[31] Riegl 2013, 120.
[32] Ettinghausen 1979, 15.

sensory-aesthetic experience,[33] a suggestion supported only by the author's assumption made as to the meaninglessness of Islamic design[34]. It can be suggested that this belief is for example contrary to the evidence in respect to the quite particular locations and uses made of the so-called "*zigzag*" design in Islamic art over the past 1300 years,[35] including the "*zigzag*" on the Kaba *kiswa*, on tomb covers, in *muqarnas*, on domes, as on the monumental Mshattā facade, a "*zig-zag*" which has often mistakenly been described as triangles, as by Richard Ettinghausen[36]. It may be that this same concern with the so-called *horror vacui*, the alleged Islamic fear of empty space, lies behind Scott Redford's suggestion of 2015 concerning the so-called harpies and the so-called sphinx figures depicted on the 8-pointed sun-star tiles in the tiled revetment of the Seljuk palace at Kubadabad (also employed elsewhere in Rūm Seljuk palaces and pavilions), *Or did the single figures on these tile dadoes also "stand in" for the activities of the court, populating spaces during the long months the palaces lay empty with sphinxes and harpies to guard them?*[37] But there was no fear of empty space, these figures were not painted to guard in the sultan's absence the empty palace, they were painted to remind of the Sultan's title, The Second Sulaymān, indicating through the representation of the members of his four armies, of jinn, men, birds and beasts, that he was to be understood as being The Just Ruler of the Age, with these so-called harpies and so-called sphinx figures, depicting the good jinn working for the Second Sulaymān.[38] When Richard Ettinghausen penned the remarkable statement in 1979, that *an intellectual*

[33] A suggestion explored at some length, unfortunately leading towards further obfuscation including the use of yet another newly devised collection of terms, derived not from Arabic, the language of the Qurʾān, but from ancient Greek, *calliphoric, ternopoietic, chronotopic* and, *monoptic*, as employed by Oleg Grabar in the volume from his A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1989, *The Mediation of Ornament*, (Bollingen Series, 35/38.) Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1992; and *cosmophilia*-love of ornament, S. S. Blair - J. M. Bloom, *Cosmophilia: Islamic Art from the David Collection*, Copenhagen, Boston, 2006, Likewise, *haptic*, "pertaining to the sense of touch," 1890, from Greek, haptikos "able to come into contact with." Riegl considered the unity only on a surface as addressing haptic space in terms of the gaze, the eye's tactile sense.

[34] It of note that the form of some of the window lattices of the Chinese, as well as other Chinese lattice designs, have explictly religious designs, such as the swastika that symbolises the sacred heart of Buddha, or the, four "Ju I" scepters of Taoist symbolism, (Dye 1937, 25-26), like the *shabaka* designs of Islamic art, some of which carry explicit religious symbolism, such as the legible shadow cast through the calligraphic *shubbāk* of the circular window light over the entrance in the facade of the Cairene 1125 al-Aqmar mosque, with the names Muhammad and Ali (on this, see for example Bierman 1998, 114-115). Unfortunately the underlying assumptions are of long standing, as for example expressed by Wilhelm Lübke (1826-1893) a century earlier, "*As, therefore, in its political condition, the East ever remained on the low plane of a strongly hierarchical despotism, as any higher independent progress beyond that was out of the question, so its art, also, was imprisoned in a narrow circle of lifeless symbols, and was compelled in a sober way to copy the outward facts of life, or to employ in fantastic extravagance the phantoms of a grotesque mysticism. Thus it could neither reach a high development nor any positive progress. A further cause for this state of things was the slavish dependence in which sculpture and painting were held by architecture; for these arts can only freely unfold in independent growth when the rights of man as an individual are recognized. Important, therefore, as the productions of Oriental art are in themselves, they can yet lay but small claim to an absolute and universal significance.* ***In this respect, this art*** (of the East)***, through the growth of ages, ever remained a child, obliged to have recourse to outward symbols, instead of employing intellectual means of expression.***" Lübke 1877, 117-118. Explicitly recording a western homocentric world view. However, from a theocentric view in the post-medieval period it seems the reverse is the case. While an *outward symbol* can of course be an *intellectual means of expression*, such as concerning the Hajj and the sacrifice, as with the related literature, poetry and depictions, as likewise for Christian baptism, if one looks at the meaning expressed through the eye of the intellect, rather than simply the external practice or form, unless that is, one accepts Lessing's exclusion of religious symbols from art, Lessing-Frothingham 2013, Ch. IX, 62, cited in fn. 86, below.

[35] Duggan 2019a, on the meaning and use of the so-called zigzag design in Islamic art.

[36] Ettinghausen-Grabar, 1994, 68: "*on certain triangles*", "*On Mshatta triangles*", caption to Figs. 45 and 46, "*carved stone triangles,*" rather than more accurately describing them as a '*zig-zag*' along the facade.

[37] Redford 2015a, 236-237.

[38] Duggan 2018.

interpretation is scarcely possible as the *designs are non-figural* it was already well known that geometric design of a high order underlies both building construction and the designs employed in the Islamic world, and that likewise *non-figural* geometry was employed in designs in antiquity, as in the arts of Medieval Christianity, as elsewhere. The use of *non-figural* geometric forms has long been recognised as supporting meaning,[39] not least in reminding the believer of the Divine Order[40], the Divine Intellect and at times, of due proportion, of order in the Pythagorean and Platonic sense.

Richard Ettinghausen concludes, *there remains one final question to be asked: Why were Islamic artists obsessed by the horror vacui? Historical or literary sources from the Muslim world can hardly be expected to give an answer, as this civilization never developed a critical system of artistic evaluation and there are only occasional references to or descriptions of buildings and objects*.[41] It seems rather to have been the case that over the last century some orientalists, art historians and others have been obsessed with the alleged Islamic artistic response to this alleged horror vacui[42], but both the term and concept of the *horror vacui* as the motivating force for the use of design in Islamic art has been imposed from outside through the use of this term upon examples of Islamic art, a part of the Orientalist, Imperialist and Modernists' "othering discourse," towards Islam, and it seems this concept of the use of filling ornament due to a fear of empty space was a concept that was entirely unknown to both designer-craftsmen and to the authors of historical and literary sources produced in the Muslim world before the 20th c. and certainly, and to the point, there simply is no recorded evidence to support what has been suggested, that Islamic designers and artist-craftsmen[43] were, due to a supposed fear of empty space, through an alleged *horror vacui*, obsessed with the application of meaningless designs to entirely cover surfaces.

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[39] Burckhardt 1987.

[40] Thesmos, the divine order, that which sustains the whole universe, and, relating to this, the knowledge of "eternal law" (lex aeterna), and a sense of proportion. Pythagorean numerical relationships, harmony, measure and order. Plato, The Republic 500e "*The lover of wisdom associating with the divine order will himself become orderly and divine, insofar as this is possible*." As Al-Ghazali writes of music, "*These harmonies are echoes of that higher world of beauty which we call the world of spirits; they remind man of his relationship to that world, and produce in him an emotion so deep and strange that he himself is powerless to explain it*." (Field 1909, 74).

[41] Ettinghausen 1979, 18.

[42] As to if the use of this term was to deny content to these designs from ignorance, combined with a lack of a desire to understand them; or, to deliberately belittle the content of design in Islamic art, as meaningless decorative patterns; to forestall inquiry into and the investigation of meaning, driven by a different religious perspective, or from atheism, or from denying serious content to art forms other than "Classical,"- Western art; or, simply from unthinkingly repeating the Latin term as being in Latin, and therefore "academic," and therefore employed in the academic fashion, is in many cases today uncertain. A series of positions held that in part grew out of the distinction made by Lessing, "*assuming that a sharp distinction is to be drawn between works created purely for the purposes of art and works created under religious influences. The latter he maintains, ought not to be regarded as art; only when the artist was perfectly free to follow the impulses of his own mind was he truly an artist*." Sime 1877, I., 258; "*Superstition loaded the [devotional images of] gods with symbols" such that all works "that show an evident religious tendency, are unworthy to be called works of art*."

[43] The distinction between the designer termed *nakkaş* with the *handasa*, geometer-engineer-*handasiyya-mühendis*, trained in geometry working in a court-palace design studio-*nakkaşhane,* and the craftsman executor of the design or of a particular material form (*sūrat*), to a supplied design-pattern, is often not drawn today, but they are of course not necessarily, or even often, the same person. The craftsman, working in wood, ceramics, textiles etc., to learnt or supplied designs, is today frequently conflated with the designer into a single figure and word, the artist-*sanatçi* from the Arabic word *sinā'a* etc. On the influence of religious figures, of the knowledge of *ilim*, in the context of the subject of the work of painters (Christian trained but working in an Islamic environment) and of the proper use of the artistic imagination, "*We proved and assisted his art in respect of a proper artistic imagination, which he*

It is however the case that the use of design in a similar way served similar purposes to elements of Coptic, as also to so-called Christian Insular Art, to works of design such as those contained in the Book of Durrow c. 680[44], the Lindisfarne Gospels of c. 700, the Godescalc Evangelistar of 782[45], and in the Great Gospel of Colum Cille, the Book of Kells from before 807, and this, it seems evident, is for some similar and related reasons concerning the problems consequent upon representing in visual form The Spirit of the Almighty, representations of the Holy. Designs that are consequent upon the impossibility of meaningful portrayal in any temporal naturalistic form of the omniscient, omnipotent Almighty. Giraldus Cambrensis (c.1146-c.1223) in his *Topographia Hibernica*, provides a Medieval Christian description of such work in his description of the Book of Kells: *If you look at these superficially and with the usual lack of close attention, they will look like daubs rather than connected forms; you will perceive no subtlety in things that in truth are all subtlety. But if you adjust your eyes to sharper vision, and if you penetrate far deeper into the secrets of this art, then you will perceive intricacies so delicate and subtle, so compactly and skillfully made, so intertwined and interwoven, and in colour still so fresh, that you will declare all these things to be composed rather with angelic than with human care*.[46] Islamic designers, as well as the designers of Coptic and of Insular Art understood that another path of representation needed to be found, with which to thereby indicate the Formless and Omnipresent Reality, The Spirit. The key element in this understanding is the interlace, or, in Islamic works, the arabesque, the bond, the putting together (as in the Latin *re-ligio*, religion, *Ligo* to bind, tie, tie up, make fast, hence to re-link, re-join, re-bind), the re-binding - of right belief, *al-i'tiqād*, indicating the binding promise and the tying together of the human spirit in right belief, with The Spirit[47]. This re-joining of that which has been separated represented through the forms of the interlace/ arabesque, including the reminder of the binding oath, displayed through the display of knotting interlace. The use of design in this manner concerns a key element of religion, it is not therefore to be understood, nor is it to be properly described as the product of any fear of empty space - *horror vacui*, or of meaningless filling ornament, but rather of reminding through its use, in Islamic, as in Coptic and Insular art, of the everpresent Presence of the Spirit of the Almighty.

lacked" (Austin 1971, 40-1). Likewise, abbot Wibald of Stavelot (1098 - 1158), in a letter to a monk, describes the beginning of wisdom as interior knowledge, and the role of the teacher to stimulate and to guide: "*Let our example stimulate you, imitation rouse you, concern incite you*"; and later: "*You learn if you see him, you are instructed if you hear, you are perfected if you follow*." Wibald, letter to a monk, epistles 127 and 167, *Monumenta Corbeiensia, Bibliotheca rerum Germanicarum I,* Weidmann, Berlin, 1864. It is the model, exemplar, the design, or section thereof, or the cartoon provided, that was the key element in the production of the work, who was not necessarily the artisan.

[44] The colours employed limited to green, orange and yellow, the traditional colours of Coptic and Merovingian manuscript painting, and indicating a shared international style, which in terms of representation belongs to the "othered," the "non-classical" tradition, concerning the representation of the Spirit in non-temporal forms. There is of course the remarkable resemblance between examples of the bevelled style at Sāmarrāʾ and examples of similar representations in insular art, as with designs employed in the Book of Durrow, Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 57, fol. 3v, of c. 660-80 A.D. with perhaps closer analogies in the use of design within a monotheistic context, than to those that are so often suggested, as belonging to the Pagan, so-called "animal style."

[45] BnF, Manuscrits, Nouv. acq. nal.1203 fol. 2v-3

[46] Quoted in Pacht 1999, 22. See also, https://medievalhollywood.ace.fordham.edu/items/show/76

[47] Duggan 2019b, 104-108.

In respect to the unfortunate and misleading allegation made by Richard Ettinghausen that "*this* (Islamic) *civilization never developed a critical system of artistic evaluation,*" it can be noted in addition to the quote from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī from the 10th c., from Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī in 11th c., and those by Jālāl ad-Dīn Rumī in the 13th c., given above, concerning the crucial matter of who in fact in Islam is regarded as The Maker, The Enricher, The Designer, The Creator, and that it is the human master designer-master craftsman who acquires (*iktisāb*) this ability through the use of *a proper artistic imagination*. It can be noted for example that Muhyīd-Dīn ibn Arabī (1165-1240) not only recorded a most accurate evaluation by a Muslim of what lay at the heart of Christian Orthodox art, writing: *The Byzantines developed the art of painting to its perfection because for them the unique nature (fardāniyyah) of Jesus (sayyidnā 'Isā), as expressed in his image, is the foremost support of concentration on Divine Unity.*[48] But also, while in Konya in 1210, he relates: *It is from the Divine Name the Creator...that there derives the inspiration to painters in bringing beauty and proper balance to their pictures. In this connection I witnessed an amazing thing in Konya in the land of the Rum. There was a certain painter whom we proved and assisted in his art in respect of a proper artistic imagination which he lacked*.[49] This passage is explicit that it is *From The Divine Name the Creator comes the inspiration*, the illumination, that brings beauty and balance to paintings, this, through the use of *a proper artistic imagination*. It is evident from this passage that ibn Arabī guided the painter, not in the matter of practical skill, but guidance in the matter of content, of representation addressing the Divine Unity. And it is noteworthy that Ibn Arabī continues: *One day he painted a picture of a partridge and concealed in it was an imperceptible fault. He then brought it to me to test my artistic acumen. He had painted it on a large board, so that its size was true to life. There was in the house a falcon which, when it saw the painting, attacked it, thinking it to be a real partridge with its plumage in full colour. Indeed all present were amazed at the beauty of the picture. The painter, having taken the others into his confidence, asked my opinion on his work. I told him I thought the picture was perfect, but for one small defect. When he asked what it was, I told him that the length of its legs were out of proportion very slightly. Then he came and kissed my hand*.[50] Further, insofar as record of the presence of *a critical system of artistic evaluation* is concerned, nearly a century ago, in 1928, half a century before Richard Ettinghausen stated Islamic *civilization never developed a critical system of artistic evaluation and there are only occasional references to or descriptions of buildings and objects*.[51], it is the case that Sir Thomas Arnold (Devonport 1864-London 1930) in 1928 in his study of *The Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture*, showed through his translation of a passage from the 14th c. physician 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh al-Bahā'ī al Ghuzūlī's work[52], not only that it was widely known at that time in the 14th c. that

[48] Burckhardt 1987, 222.
[49] Austin 1970, 40-41. An important text concerning artistic intention in an Islamic context unfortunately missing from Fairchid Ruggles 2011. Some idea of the kind of thinking concerning the spiritual imagination as understood by ibn 'Arabi is surely evident from reading Chodkiewicz, 1999, 226-231.
[50] For further concerning this matter see: Duggan 2001, 258, a text not in Fairchid Ruggles 2011.
[51] Ettinghausen 1979, 18.
[52] *Matālī' al-budūr fī manāzil as-surūr*, (Al-Ghuzūlī, ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn ʿAlī Ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bahāʾī, Maṭāliʿ al-Budūr fī Manāzil as-Surūr, Maktabat ath-Thaqāfa ad-Dīniyya, Port Said, 2000).

works of pictorial art of certain types served therapeutic purposes, but that pictures of *high artistic merit* were required in the ideal bath-house, and that beautiful pictures gladded and refresh the soul and strengthen the heart; as also of the required harmony of colour in the bath-house in the three types of scene: animal, spiritual and natural, as had earlier been noted by Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakarīyā al-Rāzi (865–925). On the ideal bath al Ghuzūlī writes, *It should contain pictures of high artistic merit and great beauty, representing pairs of lovers, gardens and beds of flower, fine galloping horses and wild beasts; for pictures such as these are potent in strengthening the powers of the body, whether animal, natural or spiritual. Badr ad-Din ibn Muzaffar, the Qādī of Ba'albak, says in his book Mufarrih an nafs (The gladdener of the soul): "All physicians, sages and wise men are agreed that the sight of beautiful pictures gladdens and refreshes the soul, and drives away from it melancholic thoughts and suggestions, and strengthens the heart more than anything else can do, because it rids it of all evil imaginings." Some say, If a sight of actual beautiful objects is not possible, then let the eyes be turned towards beautiful forms, of exquisite workmanship, pictured in books, in noble edifices or lofty castles. Such is also the thought that Muhammad ibn Zakarīyā ar-Rāzī expresses and strongly urges on any one who finds within himself carking cares and evil imaginings that are not in harmony with the poise of nature; for he says, When in a beautiful picture harmonious colours such as yellow, red and green are combined with a due proportion in their respective forms, then the melancholy humors find healing, and the cares that cling to the soul of man are expelled, and the mind gets rid of its sorrows, for the soul becomes refined and ennobled by the sight of such pictures. Again, think of the wise men of old, who invented the bath, how with their keen insight and penetrating wisdom they recognised that a man looses some considerable part of his strength when he goes into a bath; they made every* effort *to devise means of finding a remedy as speedily as possible; so* they *decorated the bath with beautiful pictures in bright cheerful colours. These they divided into three kinds, since they knew that there are three vital principles in the body-the animal, the spiritual and the natural. Accordingly they painted pictures of each kind, so as to strengthen each one of these potentialities; for the animal power, they painted pictures of fighting and war and galloping horses and the snaring of wild beasts; for the spiritual power, pictures of love and of reflection on the lover and his beloved, and pictures of their mutual recriminations and reproaches, and of their embracing one another, etc.; and for the natural power, gardens and beautiful trees and bright flowers.*[53] So one may well wonder what caused Richard Ettinghausen nearly half a century after this evidence of a critical system of artistic evaluation had been published in translation into English to write *this* (Islamic) *civilization never developed a critical system of artistic evaluation,…*, it was not that he was unaware of sir Thomas Arnold's work[54]. There were Muslims who knew that sacred art

[53] Arnold 1965, 88. An important text missing from Fairchid Ruggles 2011.
[54] Richard Ettinghausen cites Sir Thomas Arnold's 1928 work in his publications, but oddly chose not to read the selected and translated texts presented therein as providing any evidence for, *any critical system of artistic evaluation.* Likewise the relevant passages cited above: from Arthur J. Arberry's translation of the *Fihi Ma Fihi, Discourses of Rumi* first published in 1961; the last volume of Reynold J. Nicholson's translation of Rumi's *Masnavi* was published in 1940; Ralph W. J. Austin's, *Sufis of Andalusia: The Rūḥ Al-quds and Al-Durrat Al-fākhirah* of Ibn 'Arabī, was published in 1971, all of which contain relevant primary source material on this matter, together with Donald R. Hill's translation of al-Jazari, *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices: Kitáb fí ma'rifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya*, of 1973, passages of which not only provide terminology, but describe aims in terms of the

requires the proper artistic imagination (knowledge of the *'Ālam al-Mithāl*[55]), and who could teach the means to acquire it; who knew not only the subject of Islamic art, but knew also that the aim of Christian Orthodox art was to function as an aid to concentration on the Divine Unity by means of the representation of Isa/Jesus, and, who were able to detect a flaw in a naturalistic portrait of a creature, indicating awareness of both the representation of the sacred and of temporal appearances. A critical system of artistic evaluation has been both employed and has been recorded over the centuries in the Islamic world, one that knew that colour[56], and the painting of different subjects served different therapeutic purposes and that both colour and figural representation had psychological effects; knew both the nature of its own sacred art, how it differed from that of the Christian Orthodox, and of the fitting subject matter for naturalistic art, the accurate depiction of the creatures of the temporal world, that subsidiary art, less explicitly concerned with reminding of The Real, and of the goal of passing through the veil of varied appearances of this temporal world towards the Truth, hence the prioritising of meaningful design in Islamic art over figural and naturalistic representation.

It seems to be the case that it has been some orientalists' own longstanding evasion of the matter of meaning in Islamic design, an unwillingness, fearfulness, rejection of, or inability to recognise and engage with the expression through design of the attributes of the Almighty, as forming, together with the expression through the use of these designs of the permeability of this temporal physical world, indicating the acknowledgement of the illusion of this temporal reality in the face of The Real, as being the reasons for and the main subject of Islamic design itself; while there are an enormous variety of types and varients of designs employed, some carrying quite specific meanings, as in the use of the so-called *zig-zag*. That is, there has been orientalist rejectionism rather than the attempt at understanding, a serious unwillingness or inability on the part of noteworthy Western figures concerned with the explication of Islamic art to a wider public, to recognise that the representation of the attributes of the Almighty can be represented in any other than anthropocentric terms, combined with a homocentric-secular humanist approach to the designs employed that carry religious content, which has been the main problem over the past century in some Western orientalists' approach to and explication of the use of design in Islamic art. Together with the implicit rejection of the function of design applied to a surface to render the temporal material form itself, insubstantial, permeable to the Divine. This misapprehension as to the content in Islamic design, stemming from an education and a cultural worldview that expects and values figural art and "naturalistic" representation, in the Greco-Roman, Christian and debased Christian traditions of figural representation, that reinforces an anthropocentric-homocentric, humanist view of art and of the world, of the individualistic "personality" of the artist; of personal, individual and psychological expression, of atheism, human psychology and

use patterns to fill areas up to borders, all of which had been published, some decades before, and remarkably, none of which was noted by Richard Ettinghauen as providing any indication or evidence of *any critical system of artistic evaluation.*

[55] The term not to be translated as the "world of the imagination," a realm of human psychology, but, as the Imaginal World (as translated in Burckhardt 2001), a world of archetypes, a different metaphysical realm.

[56] For the recognised importance of colour in the modern medical environment, see for example: Pantalony 2009.

aesthetics as the motivating forces in art; a homocentric view of art, rather than a theocentric one addressing by means of art so far as is possible, the Truth, in which the language of pattern and design and script are seen as the most appropriate means of expressing and reminding the believer of the Uniqueness of the Almighty, the attributes of that which is found impossible to represent otherwise than through design and calligraphy, being neither void, nor of worldly temporal form-substance; and, in a tradition where the designer-craftsman is understood to be the human instrument, a slave of the Almighty in the aspect of The Creator, The Designer, The Enricher, and who has acquired not only the necessary skills, but also through the employment of the proper artistic imagination, of the illumination that is necessary to represent this subject, brought together through the makers' virtue in realising *iktisāb*. Art of this nature to those aware cannot be other than alive, being of both the spirit and of the intellect.

Oliver Leaman in *Islamic Aesthetics: An Introduction*, of 2004 provided a further variant of this orientalist discourse, stating, "*There is a horror of the empty in Islamic art*."[57] And, "*The horror vacui is a function perhaps of the inability of Islamic art when it is decorated to have a main subject or theme*[58] *and so filling up all the space prevents the viewer from looking for it. But it is a finite space which is filled up, and so the horror at emptiness, if it exists, can be replaced by the satisfaction of having done away with emptiness within the space in question.*"[59] This remarkable passage displays the complete unwillingness or the inability of the author to recognise designs as being employed to remind of the main subject and theme of Islamic art, the presence at all times of the Almighty, The Lord *ar-Rabb*. He further, strangely, divisively and illogically states that this alleged horror vacui, mentioned repeatedly in his book, relates to Arab rather than to Islamic culture, "*One theme of particular interest is that cities are corrupt places, whereas nature and the countryside is the repository of traditional values. This is sometimes identified with the horror vacui that is said to prevail in Islamic, or at least Arab culture. Arab cities are places controlled by governments and have thoroughly corrupted the values and ideals of Arabic culture.*"[60]

Richard Ettinghausen also makes a point concerning the many inscriptions found on works of Islamic art, that most were written in Arabic, and that, *most of the people were, until recently, illiterate*,[61] and wonders in consequence at the reason for the use of Arabic inscriptions on and in works of Islamic art. One may likewise wonder at the far lesser use of Latin inscriptions in Christian art where even more *of the people were, until recently, illiterate.* However, for the functionally illiterate Muslim, no difficulty is found in

[57] Leaman 2004, 40.
[58] Indicating an inability or unwillingness to see "*the main theme or subject"* as the varied representations-reminders of the divine- the holy, if these are expressed in the context of Islam, and unsurprisingly in non-figural, non-naturalistic forms, but frequently found in proximity to the inscribed text and at times combined with it.
[59] Leaman 2004, 68.
[60] Leaman 2004, 85. The association of the horror vacui with traditional values and the countryside made here, seems quite unrelated to Islamic art, where the prime examples of Islamic design were themselves produced and displayed in cities and in rulers' palaces, bringing elements of the landscape itself into the manmade environment, from gardens, pools, fountains and water-courses, to plants and leaves and flowers on tile-work and on painted and carved furnishings, in textile designs and carpets, etc.
[61] Ettinghausen 1979, 15.

recognising the form of the inscribed Arabic letters of the Name of the Almighty, nor in recognising from the form, the letters comprising *Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*, and, in recognising that an inscription is written in the letters of the Arabic Qurʾān, recognition that would have served to remind of the Almighty and to contextualise the work, including the designs employed on it. Further, the literacy required to not only accurately read the text of an inscription, but to understand its meaning in context, and the "visual literacy" required to recognise a text as written in the Arabic letters of the *Mushaf* are quite different things. Both the literate and the illiterate but visually literate are addressed through the visual language of design and through the varieties of symbolism employed in Islamic design, and through the inscriptions employed. The designs were made to be "read," "texts" to remind, and also to communicate, and these signs, numbers, patterns, shapes, colours in designs were in their time understood at a number of levels. Simply put, a language of signs is employed when a design is displayed on a work of traditional Islamic art. The fact that it is often difficult today to "read" with exactitude and certainty the content, the meaning, that was formerly conveyed through the choices made of particular designs applied to fashion a particular part or surface of a work of Islamic art, in more than general terms, doesn't mean the design wasn't made and placed in a particular position to a purpose, to convey meaning, to be "read," nor that it wasn't "read" in the past, like a written text or inscription[62]. It just means that the particular content of the signs of this language represented through the use of design on a particular object at a particular time and place have been largely forgotten over the course of time, the way that other languages, both those written and those formed of designs, have been lost and so require their decipherment for their fuller understanding, although the overall intent in the use of design in the Islamic world, of reminding of The Formless, as stated in Qur'ān Ash-Shuraa, 42:11, *Nothing is like unto Him*, can be understood as being the general reason for the use of Islamic designs, rather than any supposed consequence of *kenophobia*, or fear of empty space, or from some so-called aesthetic impulse.

There is the relatively recent and ongoing search by some art historians and others to determine the meanings conveyed through the use of designs in works of Islamic art, as was noted by the '*non-Muslim Western mind*' of Richard Ettinghausen in 1979, designs which have been recognised as having content, supporting meaning, rather than being thought of as meaningless filling of so-called ornamentation-decoration, to be read only as typological markers of changes in style, providing indications as to influence and dating and as examples of symmetry and tessellation. The Western and western trained way of looking at non-figurative largely non-western art as a study in the typology of ornament, stems in part from the desire to categorise and form typologies of designs, a Victorian colonial and neo-colonial exercise articulating the desire to exercise control over "the other," defining the borders of the mental frame through which "the other" has to be seen by "society", covering over original content, dismissing the matter of the meaning expressed through design, through the application of the words, "decoration," and, "ornament," as unfortunately by

[62] For further on this matter of reading both the inscriptions and the designs employed, together, and the explication to some extent of this relationship in the context of the Seljuk Qaratā'ī-Karatay Medrese, Konya, of 1251, see Duggan 2016.

Owen Jones (1809-74) in his influential volume, *The Grammar of Ornament*[63], first published, Day and Son, London, 1856, second edition, Bernard Quaritch, London, 1868, third edition, Bernard Quaritch, London, 1910. The "project" set in motion was to derive principles of design that would have universal application, a universal grammar, and, as Carol Bier writes, *until the fourth quarter of the twentieth century, it was deeply unfashionable to treat Islamic art as anything but decorative*[64]. Owen Jones wrote of the ornament of the Alhambra: *The ornament wanted but one charm, which was the peculiar feature of the Egyptian ornament, symbolism. This the religion of the Moors forbade* (sic.)*; but the want was more than supplied by the inscriptions*,[65] establishing the ongoing perception that in Islamic art, inscriptions are the bearers of meaning, the equivalent of the depictions of the human figure in Greco-Roman, Christian and debased Christian art; while the "ornament," itself carries no symbolism or legible content, and is of itself meaningless, except as filling ornament. The "Ornamental", being a matter of passing "fashion," rather than employed with the aim of addressing matters of substance, of meaning, with this sole exception in the case of Owen Jones of Ancient Egyptian ornament which he understood to carry "symbolic" content. Yet, in this reductionist manner, to separate the text of an inscription from the surrounding designs on a work of Islamic art, and to read the inscription, while not "reading," and largely ignoring the content and forms of the designs employed, regarding these as meaningless and irrelevant surface filling decoration, simply a consequence of *horror vacui*, may resemble going to an art gallery, not looking at the pictures, but simply reading the text of the labels and then leaving, thinking one has seen and understood the exhibition; or, reading the words of a libretto without having any idea of the musical score. Of course, if the intent is not to understand the work itself, but instead to promote some orientalist or modernists' prejudiced global perspective and agenda, this would perhaps be rather unsurprising.

Owen Jones unfortunately also employed a further divisive, reductionist approach to the examples of designs he collected, in a presentation that broke down the content and connections of Islamic art into separate so-called linguistic-national groups: Arabian Ornament[66], Turkish Ornament, Moresque Ornament from the Alhambra, Persian Ornament, and, Indian Ornament, as though the use of designs divided along national-linguistic lines, and what content there is, concerns the developments of forms in geometry, symmetry and

[63] Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, 1856, as likewise: Aloïs Riegl, Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste (Historical grammar of the visual arts) (1966) 2004; as also, *Foundations for a History of Ornament*, 1893; Daniel Sheets Dye, *A Grammer of Chinese Lattice*, 1937; Eds. Sylvia Auld – Robert Hillenbrand, *Ottoman Jerusalem, the living city: 1517-1917,* includes, *A Grammar of Architectural Ornament in Ottoman Jerusalem,* 2000; Scott Redford, *'A Grammar of Rūm Seljuk Ornament*', Mésogeios, 25/26 (2005): 283–310; etc. etc. Odd that the word, grammar, a body of forms and usages, should be repeatedly employed in this respect, favouring form over content, as though form was without content, only empty ornament. As distinct from the realisation that there is meaning carried by ornament.
[64] Bier 2009, 830.
[65] Jones 1868, 66. Likewise he described "*symbolism,*" as lacking from Greek ornament, "*It was meaningless, purely decorative, never representative, and can hardly be said to be constructive;*" (Jones 1868, 33).
[66] The term '*Arabian Art*,' had earlier been repeatedly employed in describing Islamic art, as by James Cavanah Murphy and Thomas Hartwell Horne in, *The History of the Mahometan Empire in Spain*, London, 1816.

derived from nature through "style", to "ornament,"[67] rather than relating to the meaning that is conveyed through the use of these designs which concerns the shared religion - which was not to be mentioned - perceived as disturbing and a threat to European colonial rule over the other, particularly after the events of 1857-1859 in East India Company ruled India. Yet, it is known for example, that Indian craftsmen were brought from Multan to Gazni in the 11th c. and designers-master craftsmen from Syria, Ahlat, Iran, Georgia and Azerbaijan worked in 13th c. Rūm Seljuk Anatolia; as later, masters were brought to the Timurid capital Samarkand, from throughout conquered territory, including from Iznik and from Delhi where *several thousand craftsmen and men of skill*[68] were enslaved. While others went to work in Muslim India; as ceramic masters from Tabriz came to Bursa under Sultan Mehmet Fatih, while the Madrasa Ashrafiyya of 1482 in Jerusalem was built by Mamlūke craftsmen brought from Egypt. Designer-craftsmen from Tabriz were among 3000 families brought to Istanbul in 1514 under Sultan Selim; while others arrived at the Ottoman *nakkaşhane* from Syria, Bosnia, Egypt, Iran, and elsewhere, as the published surviving 16th c. records of the members of the Ottoman *ehl-i hiref* record.[69] Likewise Mir Sayyid 'Ali was one of the Tabriz masters who met the exiled Humāyūn in 1549 in Kabul, moved to India becoming a founder member of the Mughal School of painting, as, for example Mudejar craftsmen expelled from Spain after 1600 altered the arts in Tunisia. Consequently the works produced belong to the international art of Islam and cannot accurately be described or understood when divided up in terms of the five particularist language-nations-ethnicities as employed by Owen Jones in 1856, as by others employing today a modern nationalist frame for the study of Islamic art. Earlier Owen Jones had written in his 1838 lecture entitled, 'On the Influence of Religion Upon Art,' that, *where the Arabs, not finding the Byzantine churches ready to their hands, were left to the full play of their imaginations, and produced the most fanciful and voluptuous of all kinds of art, as well as the most faithful to their religious principles*,[70] indicating thereby he saw a clear relationship between the religion and the decorative arts of Islam (presumably in reference to the stucco-work of the Mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, and the absence of figural depiction of human beings)[71]. Rather than any *horror vacui* being the driving force for Islamic design, during the period when the majority of the populations within Caliphal territory were non-Muslims, it seems reasonable to suggest that the largely non-figurative designs employed in Islamic art, in a general sense, rather than through any particular motif or pattern, were designed and employed to serve both to distinguish and to mark the work as belonging to the people of Islam, with the designs, the patterns and motifs, together with any inscriptions, in their combination employed to act as a reminder, a marker, a seal or *khātam*

[67] It was at The Museum of Ornamental Art, later renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum, that Owen Jones delivered the Inaugural lectures in June 1852, entitled, "The True and the False in the Decorative Arts." Published by Chapman & Hall, London, 1863.
[68] Habib 1997, 296.
[69] Atıl, 1987, 289-297.
[70] Jones 1863, 18-19.
[71] Re-written with no explicit mention of *religious principles* on the first page of the chapter on Arabian Ornament in *The Grammar of Ornament* of 1856, to read, "*The Mohammadans very early in their history, formed and perfected a style of Art peculiarly their own*."

of Islam, over the physical form or surface, as for example on the *kiswa* carved on the Mshattā facade, legible to both the literate and the illiterate.

The use of design in Islamic art can perhaps best be characterised, if one needs for some particular reason today to employ a Latin terminology, now that Latin is no longer the *lingua franca* of the European academic, by the terms "*amor infiniti - amor omnipotentis,"* expressing the love of the Infinite, of The Almighty (not by just the term, *amor infiniti,* except if it is clearly understood from the context as indicating the infinite love of The Almighty, the Infinite, and, understood in this context to mean the visual representation through human design of reminders of The Infinite), as described by the Divine Names: *al-Bāqī, Al-Qayyoom,* and, *Al-Akhir,*[72] - as a reflection of The Infinite, represented through these varied representations in design, reminders of The Almighty, the Infinite. However, the term, *amor infiniti* was preferred to the term *horror vacui* by Sir Ernst Hans Josef Gombrich (Vienna 1909-London 2001), a further pioneer of the application of the psychology of perception to the study of art, in his, *The Sense of Order: A study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*, (The Wrightsman Lectures v.9) of 1979, where he writes:[73] *The urge which drives the decorator to go on filling any resultant void is generally described as horror vacui, which is supposedly characteristic of many non-classical styles. Maybe the term amor infiniti, the love of the infinite, would be a more fitting description* (of this urge).[74] The art historian David R. Topper wrote in 2014, *Modifying this notion* (of the horror vacui), *the late brilliant theorist of imagery, E. H. Gombrich, envisaging an artisan lovingly repeating patterns into smaller and smaller spaces, coined* (sic.) *the analogous Latin term amor infiniti, or love of the infinite, for this process*.[75] However, the translation of *amor infiniti,* as meaning, *the (urge to) love the infinite (detail),* is in this context a deliberate misuse of the medieval sense and usage of the Latin term, a term which was not *coined* by Gombrich, he borrowed it and bent it out of context, misusing it. The term *amor infiniti,* relates to, *the love of the infinite* (for human beings), with the infinite being an attribute, not of any finite human being, "decorator" or "artisan," filling up empty or void surfaces, but concerns the love of the Almighty, The Infinite. The term, *amor infiniti,* was employed in this sense for example by the Franciscan scholastic theologian, Joannes, Duns Scotus, Doctor Subtilis, (c. 1266-1308. Beatified 1993, Nov. 8th) in *Theologia Scoti;*[76] "*ergo amor infiniti boni necessario Deo convenit*" – "*therefore, the love of the infinite good, necessarily belongs to God.*" As likewise in this sense, by the Franciscan scholastic theologian, Walter (of Chatton) (c. 1290–d. 1343, Avignon) in his second commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, entitled: *Lectura*

[72] Three of the 99 Names of the Almighty: *al-Bāqī*, The Immutable, The Infinite, The Everlasting; *Al-Qayyoom*, The Self-Subsisting One, the One who remains and does not end, and, *Al-Akhir*, The Last. The One whose existence is without End.
[73] See for example, V&A Album 1985, 247, "*The intense creative spirit seems to him to derive its energy from what he calls the amor infiniti - love of the infinite - the artist's positive response to nature's hatred of the void.*"
[74] Gombrich 1979, 80. For the distinction between ornament and decoration, see Duggan 2022 Part I. fn. 1.
[75] Topper 2014, 35.
[76] De Voluntate Divina, "*Denique, amare infinitum bonum est summa perfectio: ergo amor infiniti boni necessario Deo convenit.*" Trans. Finally, it is the sum of the infinite love of perfection: therefore, the love of the infinite good, necessarily belongs to God." Scotus, 1900, 133. As earlier, Frassen 1744, 97. Doctoris Subtilis wrote on Aristotle's Categories, On Interpretation, and Sophistical Refutations, an Expositio on Aristotle's Metaphysics and a set of questions on Aristotle's On the Soul.

super Sententias: Liber I, distinctiones 1-2,[77] amongst other examples.[78] Unfortunately, Sir Ernst Hans Josef Gombrich secularised *amor infiniti*, to refer to the craftsman's love in filling up an empty space with infinite detail in design, used as an analogous term, which it is not, to the supposed urge to fill up empty space with patterns caused by the fear of empty space itself, *horror vacui*. As to if *amor*-love is in some way analogous to *horror*-fear, and if *infinitum*-infinite is analogous to *vacui*-empty-vacant, in both cases this is most dubious and misleading, and, read from a religious perspective as indicating that the infinite, a name for the Almighty in both Christianity and Islam, is a void-vacuum, is of course, a direct expression of unbelief.

The reason for the use of design in this manner is that, *"The Grammar employed is the Knowledge or Art of expressing our Thoughts in Motifs joyn'd together in Symmetries of Designs, according to the fitting Use, Form, and Propriety of Islam,"*[79] in that, like the written and spoken language, there is a grammar, an *adab*, to the language of motifs employed in Islamic repeat designs, not just *adab* in the sense that for example there are no depictions of creatures carved in the exterior of the *qibla* wall of Mshattā, but because the designs employed themselves form a language reminding of knowledge of the sacred, of the Universal Intellect, of which nothing else is like. The use of the term horror vacui, dismissive of the content and meaning of the design applied, has been, in part, replaced by another term over the last 20 years, likewise derived from the dead language of ancient Greek, often employed by some of the same people who dismiss the idea of meaning conveyed by the use of designs in Islamic art, and a term likewise dismissive of content and meaning – the etymology of the term, aesthetics, *αἴσθητικὸς*, meaning of the senses, as opposed to *νοητά*, that is, of thought, or intelligence;[80] as though beauty relates primarily to the senses, to pleasure; rather than beauty as a reminder, a sign to the heart of the aware of the source of that beauty, *Al-Musawwir*, a reminder of that which is The Shaper of Beauty. The term aesthetic was not employed in English in the Medieval period, but from 1798[81] onwards, and the relevance of this term to the aims and works of the makers of Medieval Islamic art is unrecorded in the sources. In respect to Islam a distinction in relationship is explicitly recorded by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) in his *Kimiya-yi Sa'ādat, The Alchemy of Happiness,* written after 1096, concerning the function of the beauty

[77] Walter (of Chatton), 2009, Vol. I., 242. "*Confirmo, arguendo idem argumentum de circumstantiis: amor unius btoni est alicuius meriti ceteris paribus, et amor maioris boni ceteris paribus est maioris meriti, igitur amor infiniti boni est infiniti meriti; sed amor quo Deus amatur est huiusmodi; igitur etc.*"

[78] Eg. Araujo 1734, 254. "*435. Secundo. Quilibet actus dignificatur in propria specie: ergo amor infiniti valoris in genere amoris debet excedere temperantiam, quamvis infinitam in fuo genere.*" As in the sense expressed by St. Angela da Foligno (1248 – 4 January 1309, canonised 9th Oct. 2013) "*Il primo è amore ineffabile.* ***O amore infinito****, e trafformato, è amore troppo ineffabile,*" - the first is ineffable love, or infinite love and transformed love is too ineffable love, Foligno 1669, 263; idem. 85, 156. It is worth noting that in 1982 the theologian John Gordon Davies expressed a religious view on this matter, "*This conclusion means that the overall pattern is not the result of a horror vacui, of a dislike of the void, so that everything has to be covered up; on the contrary it is evidence of an amor infiniti or love of infinity.*" Davis 1982, 134, "*This infinity and oneness are in fact the architectural embodiments of an understanding of the divine nature*." idem 126, indicating *amor infiniti* as understood as love of the Divine nature represented through "*the overall pattern*".

[79] Rephrasing the description employed in the review of, *A Grammar of the English Tongue*, of Isaac Bickerstaff, in, *The History of the Works of the Learned*, Vol. 12, November, 1710, 686-692, 687.

[80] S.O.D.[3] s.v. aesthetic.

[81] S.O.D.[3] s.v. aesthetic.

of the temporal world concerning the spirit of the believer, in that it serves both as a reminder, and also, for those who are to a degree aware, or, on the journey, a distraction: *But I have heard that the mystics say that external knowledge is a veil upon the way to God, and a hindrance in the journey to the truth*. *For, external knowledge is derived from the sensuous world, and all objects of sense are a hindrance to him who is occupied with spiritual truth; for whoever is attending to sensual objects, indicates that his mind is preoccupied with external properties. And it is impossible that he who would walk in the way of truth, should be for a moment unemployed in meditation, upon obtaining spiritual union and the vision of beauty*.[82] *You should know also that the enjoyments of this world that are procured through the senses are cut off at death. The enjoyment of the love and knowledge of God, which depends upon the heart, is alone lasting. At death the hindrances that result from the presence of the external senses being removed, the light and brilliancy of the heart come to have full play, and it feels the necessity of the vision of beauty.*[83] *Man's felicity, which consists in the contemplation of the beauty of God, cannot be vouchsafed to him, until the eye of his judgment is opened. But the eye of judgment is opened by the contemplation of the works of God, and by understanding his almighty power. The contemplation of the works of God is by means of the senses, which become the key to all knowledge of God*.[84] *It is clear then that the beauty of form possessed by man and the beauty of many other things arise from their being created from the light of the Lord. Consider then, as far as human reason can reach, if such beauty and elegance exist in spirits formed out of one drop of the light of the blessed God, what must be the beauty and splendor of the Lord God himself. Since then the beauty of every beloved object is derived from his light, and that the beauty of everything that is beautiful is from him, it follows that he who is wise, ought not to permit himself to be deceived by the soul which passes away, and to be attracted to that beauty which is fleeting, but that he should turn to the contemplation of* ***that painter*** *who is full of all perfection, and of* ***that maker*** *with whom is no change, and earnestly seek after the vision of his beauty with his whole heart. Let him continue day and night with burning and consuming desire in humble prayer, longing after his beauty and after union with him.*[85] Explicit in the above extracts is that to al-Ghazālī, all the beauty in the world is but a reminder, signs indicative of the absolute beauty of the Almighty, *The Painter, The Maker or Fashioner, The Enricher*/*The Embellisher*, *Al-Mughni*, and, as noted above, it is a reminder of that beauty which is to be added by the designer-craftsman to the work made by human hands, *adds beauty to the work*, (thereby making the work itself serve as a reminder to the believer of the same).

In contrast, it can be noted that the Enlightenment position on this matter, that underpinning Western-style modernity, is a quite different thing, as was indicated by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1721-1789) in his, *Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* of 1766, *Religion often exercised such constraint upon the old artists. A work devotional in character, must often be less perfect than one solely to produce pleasure.*

[82] Homes 1873, 31-32.
[83] Homes 1873, 36-37.
[84] Homes 1873, 66.
[85] Homes 1873, 106-107.

Superstition loaded the gods with symbols which were not always reverenced in proportion to their beauty.[86] A statement in which the expression of religion through symbols is regarded as hindering pleasure in art.

Lisa Golombek (1939-), in 1988, in describing the designs employed in the Timurid-Gurkanid period Islamic architecture of Iran and Turan, wrote, *This characteristic has often been called "horror vacui," fear of empty space, but the term is misleading, for it obscures the artist's intent*.[87] And then goes on to describe this so-called *intent* or, apparently, *impulse*, as though intent and impulse are synonyms, not in terms of representing content/meaning, but that, *It is more constructive to think of this impulse as a means of achieving depth and movement in a two-dimensional world. The more divisions within a form, the greater the number of levels available for carving, for example, or the possibilities for varying a palette.* So we are led to understand that the complexity of the patterns and designs employed in Timurid-Gurkani art was simply an artistic impulse to enrich *a two-dimensional world* with greater movement and depth. Which is quite simply an astounding explication.

To which can be added the recently employed expression, *The Mirage of Islamic Art.* An article so entitled that includes the preposterous statement: *There is no evidence that any artist or patron in the fourteen centuries since the revelation of Islam ever thought of his or her art as "Islamic," and the notion of a distinctly "Islamic" tradition of art and architecture is a product of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western scholarship, as is the terminology used to identify it. … In short, Islamic art as it exists in the early twenty-first century is largely a creation of Western culture*.[88] Preposterous, because the designs on works of Islamic art were identified in the 14th c. by contemporaries, Italians, as others, as being made, *in the manner of The Lord*, that is what the word *arabesco* meant when it was used by Boccaccio in the 14th c.[89] But, for current modern opinions concerning the term Arabesque it is worth reading the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Islamic Art's statement concerning, "Vegetal Patterns in Islamic Art": *It was not until the medieval period (tenth–twelfth centuries) that a highly abstract and fully developed Islamic style emerged, featuring that most original and ubiquitous pattern often known as "arabesque." This term was coined in the early nineteenth century* (sic.) *following Napoleon's famed expedition in Egypt, which contributed so much to the phenomenon of Orientalism in Europe and later in the United States. Arabesque simply means "in the Arab fashion" in French* (sic.), *and few scholars of Islamic art use it today* (sic.).[90] And in 2017, *The first is the identification of the*

[86] Lessing-Frothingham 2013, Ch. IX, 62. "*Ein solcher äußerlicher Zwang war dem alten Künstler öfters die Religion. Sein Werk, zur Verehrung und Anbetung bestimmt, konnte nicht allezeit so vollkommen sein, als wenn er einzig das Vergnügen des Betrachters dabei zur Absicht gehabt hätte. Der Aberglaube überladete die Götter mit Sinnbilden, und die schönsten von ihnen wurden nicht überall als die schönsten verehret*."
[87] Golombek 1988, 119.
[88] Blair-Bloom 2003, entitled, "The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field", 153. Bulletin, 85(1), 2003, 152-84. For a review of this and the related statements, see Duggan 2019.
[89] Employed in Boccaccio's Tale of Saladin as a Merchant - *Saladino mercante*, as noted in, Vocabolario 1612, 70.
[90] Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/vege/hd_vege.htm (October 2001) Even though arabesque is a term recorded from the 14th c. onwards, it is here said to have been coined in the late 18th c. But, it is a compound word, Arabic *ar-Rabb* with the Romance languages suffix *esco*, so it is not French. And it was in use in 2000, and certainly remains

"arabesque" (a term coined in early modern Europe) (sic. in Medieval Europe) *not only as the epitome of Islamic art but also as the epitome of the ornamental.*[91]

The curator from 1917 to 1947 of the Indian Section of the Boston Museum of Art, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy wrote seventy years ago and which remains relevant today: *A conception of "art" as the expression of emotion, and a term "aesthetics" (literally, "theory of sense-perception and emotional reactions"), is a conception and a term that have come into use only within the last two hundred years of humanism. We do not realise that in considering Mediaeval (or Ancient or Oriental) art from these angles, we are attributing our own feelings to men whose view of art was quite a different one, men who held that "Art has to do with cognition" and apart from knowledge amounts to nothing, men who could say that "the educated understand the rationale of art, the uneducated knowing only what they like", men for whom art was not an end, but a means to present ends of use and enjoyment and to the final end of beatitude equated with the vision of God whose essence is the cause of beauty in all things.*[92] There is of course no point whatsoever in *attributing our own feelings to the work of men whose view of art was quite a different one*, and if we do so, systematic misunderstanding of the object of study through the use of an inappropriate terminology is, perhaps inevitably, even if not at times as it appears intentionally, the result.

Despite the 18th c. Western Enlightenment *essentialism* in respect to what is acceptable in form and content for what is to be called art, as defined by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's influential anti-religious reductionist theory of Art for Art's sake, espoused in, *Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* of 1766, which stated that *Superstition loaded the [devotional images of] gods with symbols,* **such that all works *that show an evident religious tendency, are unworthy to be called works of art***,[93] that is, not art in the service of belief, an aid and expression of the religion, but instead, art in the service of beauty severed from religion to give aesthetic pleasure, this being an 18th c. European Enlightenment secular perspective on what is worthy to be called a work of art; followed by a variety of attempts by western intellectuals from the 19th c. into the 21st century to deny the very existence of Islamic art. This, firstly, and unsurprisingly in an age of Western imperialism by dividing it up into regions to be studied separately, and to subdivide the study of texts from the designs that surround them, one the speciality of epigraphers, the other of art historians; while repeatedly denying for more than a century that the designs employed in the making of Islamic art were employed to convey any meaning at all, but instead, were only meaningless ornament consequent upon the designer's alleged deep seated fear of empty space. However, there certainly remains today the need to look at the designs applied to objects and structures of traditional Islamic Art, not as designs on objects and structures produced by artistic *impulses*, nor produced for alleged past so-called *aesthetic appreciation*,

a term in use by scholars of Islamic art today e.g. Tabbaa 2002, 73-102; Aziz 2004, 902; Canby 2008, 26-31; Bloom & Blair 2009 (Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art and Architecture) passim, amongst others.

[91] Flood-Necipoğlu 2017, 26.

[92] Coomaraswamy 1956, 110-111.

[93] Dufallo 2013, 108 and fn. 1; Lessing-Frothingham 2013, Ch. IX, 63. "*Alles andere, woran sich zu merkliche Spuren gottesdienstlicher Verabredungen zeigen, verdienet diesen Namen nicht, weil die Kunst hier nicht um ihrer selbst willen gearbeitet, sondern ein bloßes Hilfsmittel der Religion war,*"

this because, to provide aesthetic-sensory appreciation was not the primary aim of the designer-craftsman in either occident or orient until the advent of modern times. Nor yet, as has been stated by Western intellectuals for more than a century that design was employed as a consequence of some supposed horror vacui, some alleged fear of empty space experienced by members of the Muslim community over the past more than 1300 years, supposedly a psychological reaction to the vast, featureless and barren landscape, a quasi-genetic characteristic of the oriental mind. What is required is for the work to be read, understood for the meaning, the content it reflects, reminds of, and represents through its presentation on a particular surface, object or building in a particular place and time. The reason for its making in that particular way by the designer, who was understood to be inspired by The Designer, The Almighty, when through *iktisāb*, the Muslim designer and craftsman obtained *a proper artistic imagination* and so became the instrument of The Designer. Within this religious art of the medieval period, articulating, like that of the contemporary Christian medieval art, a theocentric view of the world, it was understood that *everything that is beautiful is from Him*[94] and that beauty of pattern and design in Islamic art, from carpets to tile-work was and is still displayed to remind of beauty's origin, giving acceptable form through the use of these designs for the remembrance of the presence of the Almighty in the man-made environment. In addition to this general meaning, particular designs at times serve as quite specific markers and reminders, such as the so-called 'zig-zag' design, the eight-pointed and six-pointed sun-star - Seal of Sulaymān designs, the representation of composite creatures, the crescent moon - *hilal*, crescent moon and star, etc.

In this context, to not employ where known the Arabic or Persian Medieval terminology for the designs and forms in Medieval Islamic art, but instead for them to be described by some orientalists and art historians from the 19th into the 21st c., through the use of a newly applied and inappropriate Greek or Latin terminology, including terms such as: *horror vacui, aesthetics, calliphoric, ternopoietic, chronotopic, haptic, monoptic, cosmophilia*, etc., seems perverse. After all, through the illusion of truth, through repetition, the term *arabesque* today means, *in the Arab manner*, not, as formerly indicating in the medieval period, *in the manner of the Lord*. As likewise the religious term *amor infiniti*, was secularised to mean *the craftsman's love of the infinite detail*, as is noted above. It gives the impression of Western scholars employing an inappropriate terminology that has been over the course of more than a century carefully and repeatedly employed[95] to obfuscate and appropriate as meaningless Islamic design, rather than to explicate, as, through this ongoing process of renaming with a Greek or a Latin terminology the art of the Islamic world, content is obscured while an artificial and spurious sense of ownership over the work of the "other" has been claimed in published works employing such terms into the 21st century. This, while the matter of the content, meaning represented through Islamic designs is sidestepped as being only filling ornament due to an alleged fear of empty space, but for which statement there has been not one single Medieval Muslim text that has been presented to corroborate

[94] Homes 1873, 106.
[95] Op. cit. Part I, fn. 60 and 62.

this allegation and so to support the use of this Latin term in this context by those who have employed it over the last century and a quarter. There was no *kenophobia*, no *horror vacui* driving the use of design in Islamic art, consequently - not subconscious - but conscious, deliberate, reasoned choices were made as to where and why to use particular patterns and designs, and which areas were to be left plain, on tooled leather book covers, as on prayer rugs, as elsewhere in the man-made environment inhabited by Muslims.

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