CHAPTER 32

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) on the Virtues of the Eye and the Ear

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1 Introduction

The family of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (b. 691/1292, d. 751/1350, henceforth: Ibn al-Qayyim), which hailed from the Ḥawrān region in today's southern Syria, settled in Damascus sometime during the second half of the 7th/13th century.[1] Ibn al-Qayyim's father was the director, or "superintendent" (*qayyim*), of the Jawziyya madrasa, an important center of Ḥanbalī learning in the city, which also functioned as a court of law for the Ḥanbalī chief judge of Damascus.

Ibn al-Qayyim was broadly educated in the religious sciences. From 713/1313 onward, he came under the sway of the famous preacher and anti-speculative theologian Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), "all of whose ideas he can be said to have absorbed and whose work he helped to popularize, while retaining his own personality" (Laoust, 821b). His life-long loyalty to his master's frequently controversial views caused Ibn al-Qayyim some hardship, to the point of being imprisoned in the Damascus citadel and suffering the ignominy of being paraded around town on a camel (al-ʿAsqalānī, 4:22). Unlike Ibn Taymiyya, however, Ibn al-Qayyim was not a public firebrand and troublemaker. Instead, he left a reputation for inward-looking piety and for quiet dedication to proper worship (*ʿibāda*). As his student Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1397) remembered, in prison Ibn al-Qayyim's days were filled with recitation of the Qurʾān and contemplation. "A lot of good things were disclosed to him," Ibn Rajab relates, "and he achieved a great deal of true [mystical] tastes (*adhwāq*) and states (*mawājīd*), so that he came to master the sciences of the people of experiential knowledge and gained access to their secrets; his writings are full of them" (Ibn Rajab, 2:448).

Ibn al-Qayyim left works of legal hermeneutics and practical jurisprudence, theology, ethics and moral psychology, *ḥadīth*, Prophetic medicine, as well as a well-known commentary on the Qurʾān, among others (Krawietz). His *Key*

1 The research for this chapter was funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant "The Senses of Islam: A Cultural History of Perception in the Muslim World (SENSIS)" (project no. 724951).

to the Abode of Happiness and the Proclamation to Generate Knowledge and Willpower (*Miftāḥ dār al-saʿāda wa-manshūr wilāyat al-ʿilm wa-l-irāda*), from which several sections are translated below, is a panoramic work full of "musings on phenomena of the physical and animated world, detecting all sorts of hidden wisdoms behind them," thereby seeking to prove that "God has arranged everything in the best of all manners" (Krawietz, 52–3).

In the translated passages, Ibn al-Qayyim discusses the two senses of vision and hearing. After establishing, first, that the heart is "king," while the ear is its "messenger" and the eye is its "scout" (§ 1), he proceeds to discussing which of the two sensory organs deserves to be regarded as being nobler (§§ 1–4). In another of his works, the *Badāʾiʿ al-fawāʾid* (*Excellent Wise Sayings*), Ibn al-Qayyim explains that the first to have debated this topic were two scholars from Baghdad: Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), who defended the superiority of hearing,[2] and Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Anbārī (d. 304/916 or 305/917), who championed seeing (Ibn al-Qayyim, *Badāʾiʿ*, 3:685–6). Houari Touati has suggested that during the third/ninth century, "sight operated an epistemological revolution in the classical Islamic episteme" (Touati, 105),[3] and this may well have been the context in which the eye and the ear first "vied for excellence" (*mufāḍala*) in Islamic literature. Henceforth, broadly speaking, scholars committed to the oral/aural transmission of knowledge (*samʿ*) came to argue for the preeminence of hearing over vision, while the proponents of a more disembodied, or bookish, approach to knowledge came to emphasize vision.

However, the issue of how these senses were ranked is far from straightforward, as the history of this debate over the course of Islamic intellectual history has not been charted comprehensively. For example, in the fifth/eleventh century, ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1027) states that the philosophers teach that hearing is superior, because sounds are perceived from all six directions, regardless of whether there is light or darkness. However, as al-Baghdādī relates, "most theologians" think that vision is superior, because by hearing one perceives "only speech and sounds," while by vision, one perceives "bodies, colors, and all entities (*al-hayʾāt kulluhā*)" (al-Baghdādī, 10). The famous theologian al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) sides with Ibn Qutayba and the proponents of hearing (al-Juwaynī, 1:28; see below). By contrast, Ibn Ḥazm from Spain

2 There is some confusion about this. In the passage in the *Miftāḥ* that is translated below, Ibn al-Qayyim refers to Ibn Qutayba as the champion of seeing. See below, footnote 15. Most authors, however, agree that Ibn Qutayba had considered hearing to be superior to seeing.

3 See the chapter on al-Jāḥiẓ in *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 7.

(d. 456/1064) judges vision to be the "most eloquent, expressive and efficient" of the four [*sic*] senses (Ibn Ḥazm, 43 [trans. 68–9]; see Puerta-Vílchez, 492–3).

These discussions continued in the following centuries. Around the time of Ibn al-Qayyim, a Persian allegorical "disputation between the ear and the eye" (*Munāẓara-yi samʿ-u baṣar*) was written by Abū l-Majd Muḥammad b. Masʿūd Tabrīzī (active ca. 721–3/1321–3) and incorporated in his popular philosophical-scientific anthology, *The Tabrizian Vessel* (*Safīna-yi Tabrīz*).[4] In the later Persian tradition, the occult philosopher Ibn-i Turka Iṣfahānī (d. 835/1432) likewise composed such an allegorical debate (Ibn-i Turka, 77–85).

Ibn al-Qayyim's direct source of inspiration for his own conclusion (§ 4), however, is Ibn Taymiyya. After relating the arguments in the debate, Ibn al-Qayyim lifts the "correct opinion" (*al-ṣawāb*)—namely, that both senses can claim excellence, hearing being "more wide-ranging and comprehensive" (*aʿamm wa-ashmal*), sight being "more precise and more complete" (*atamm wa-akmal*)—verbatim from his master (Ibn Taymiyya, 7:324; see also Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij*, 2:384; al-Saffārīnī, 1:60). Later authors such as al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363) and al-Qārī l-Harawī (d. 1014/1606) were less willing to compromise, both holding that the arguments in favor of hearing are "no doubt stronger" (thus al-Ṣafadī, 16; similarly, al-Qārī l-Harawī, 27–8; see also al-Saffārīnī [d. 1189/1774], 1:61). Al-Ṣafadī, it bears mentioning, expresses himself on the issue in a work extolling the virtues of the blind, written before the advent of sign language in the Near East, a situation that disadvantaged and stigmatized the deaf (Scalenghe, 34).[5]

After Ibn al-Qayyim, the *mufāḍala* between the eye and the ear also appears in al-Zarkashī's (d. 794/1392) much-used primer in legal hermeneutics, *Luqṭat al-ʿajlān* (*The Catch for the Hasty*), as well as in the multiple commentaries devoted to this work, including those by al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520) and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1332/1914). The two Shāfiʿīs, al-Zarkashī and al-Anṣārī, hold that hearing is superior, attributing the opposite position to "the Ḥanafīs." Al-Qāsimī, however, pivots to the position of "the Ḥanafīs."[6]

Another noteworthy aspect of Ibn al-Qayyim's treatment of the senses in the *Key to the Abode of Happiness* is his notion that next to the outer (*ẓāhir*) visual and auditory senses, there are inner (*bāṭin*) senses of seeing and of hearing. Also Ibn Taymiyya speaks of "inner and outer sensation" (*al-ḥiss al-bāṭin*

4 See *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 13.

5 From the 9th/15th century onward, a sign language was known in the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, where it was used by deaf-mute servants, and sign languages also appear to have existed in the Arab provinces, but from a somewhat later moment in history. See Scalenghe, 45–8.

6 On this triad of authors and texts, see the chapter on al-Zarkashī in *ISH*, vol. 3.

wa-l-ẓāhir) (Ibn Taymiyya, 7:324), but Ibn al-Qayyim develops the theme in more depth. His inner senses have nothing to do with the inner senses of Islamic philosophy in the tradition of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, d. 428/1037).[7] While a direct line connects Ibn Sīnā's inner senses to Aristotle's doctrine of the various faculties of the soul (the *sensus communis*, imagination, memory, and so on; see Wolfson), Ibn al-Qayyim's inner senses derive from other sources. Prominent among these are physiognomy (*firāsa*) and mysticism (*taṣawwuf*).[8]

Regarding the "inner sight" gained by the knowledge of physiognomy, Ibn al-Qayyim writes that "in the eye becomes manifest what the heart conceals: love and hatred, friendship and enmity, happiness and sadness, among other things" (*Miftāḥ*, 292). In Ibn al-Qayyim's view, the ability to "read in the eye what is in a person's heart" (*Miftāḥ*, 290), that is, to assay the inner self by means of the careful observation of a person's external appearance, is not per se an occult discipline. In a work on the principles of "ruling in accordance with Sharia" (*al-siyāsa al-sharʿiyya*), Ibn al-Qayyim promotes physiognomic vision to the level of one of the essential skills that a judge must possess and cultivate (*Ṭuruq*, 65–166; see Hoyland, 374–6).

Ibn al-Qayyim talks about the more occult, or mystical, dimensions of the inner senses in another of his works, *The Stages of the Wayfarers* (*Madārij al-sālikīn*), in a chapter that deals with the "station of intimacy" (*manzilat al-uns*) between the individual and God (2:381–7). Here, Ibn al-Qayyim explains the concept of spiritual listening (*al-samāʿ al-rūḥānī*). He states that listening to the Qurʾān affords "a spiritual pleasure (*ladhdha rūḥāniyya*) that touches the heart and the soul and may even spill over to the body." According to Ibn al-Qayyim, the heart has a close connection (*irtibāṭ*) with the senses, especially to the two senses of hearing and seeing. The senses, therefore, nurture not only the body but also the soul. They capture both exoteric and esoteric forms (*ashbāḥ wa-arwāḥ*). While some people, who in this respect resemble animals, are only able to perceive exoteric forms, others, having cultivated their inner senses, are able to perceive spiritual, esoteric meanings in the phenomenal world. Intriguingly, Ibn al-Qayyim argues that sounds, even ordinary ones, provoke rapture more quickly than visual stimuli.

The last two of the translated passages (§§ 5 and 6) illustrate Ibn al-Qayyim's theodicy, that is, his doctrine that God created the world in the best of all possible ways. The praise of God's wisdom (*ḥikma*) in creating the human body,

7 On the sensorium according to Ibn Sīnā, see *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 22 (Suhrawardī), 29 (Ibn Sīnā), 39 (Saʿdī), and passim.

8 On the mystical inner senses, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 30 (§ 7), and passim.

including the sensory organs, is not unique to Ibn al-Qayyim or his immediate intellectual and religious surrounding. For example, his contemporary, the North Indian Sufi author Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Nakhshabī (d. 751/1350), penned a work called *Juzʾiyyāt-u kulliyyāt* (*The Parts and the Wholes*), in which he discussed 40 body parts, including the eye, nose, ear, and tongue (Nakhshabī, 7–81, 93–103, 112–22, 163–71; see already in al-Ghazālī, 46–9), with the aim of presenting the human body as "a sign of the creator, or rather as a whole *constellation* of signs" (Kugle, 29).[9]

Readers today are likely to find that in Ibn al-Qayyim's discussions of how the senses are designed and function, he tends to reverse cause and effect. For Ibn al-Qayyim, God's wisdom is demonstrated by the fact that the sensory organs are placed in a "noble" part of the human body, that is, the head, "the hermitage of the senses" (*ṣawmaʿat al-ḥawāss*), and not in other, less noble parts of the body, such as the hands, feet, belly, or back (*Miftāḥ*, 751). Ibn al-Qayyim resolutely refutes the notion that there are more than five senses. The eyes perceive visibles (*mabṣūrāt*), the ears sounds (*aṣwāt*), the nose smells (*rawāʾiḥ*), the tongue tastes (*madhūqāt*), and the skin tactile stimuli (*malmūsāt*). "If there were other things to be sensed," Ibn al-Qayyim states, "verily He would have given you a sixth sense for it" (*Miftāḥ*, 751).

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9 On Nakhshabī, see *ISH*, vol. 2, ch. 25.

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2 Translation

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[*§ 1. The Heart Rules over the Body*]

[p. 287] The heart is the seat of knowledge, hearing is its messenger (*rasūl*) who brings it [knowledge] to him, and vision is its scout (*ṭalīʿa*).[10] Therefore, it is king over all other limbs [of the body]. It issues orders to them, which they carry out. It directs them and they submit to it obediently, on account of the knowledge that it possesses, but not they. This is why it is their king and their chief of staff (*muṭāʿuhā*).

It is the same with the scholar: he is among the people what the heart is among the parts of the body. The well-being of the parts of the body is on account of the well-being of their king and chief of staff, and their unwellness is on account of his unwellness. This is also the situation of people in regard to their scholars and rulers. As a pious forefather said: "People prosper when two groups prosper, and people decline on account of their decline: the scholars and the rulers."[11] ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak[12] said: "What has ever corrupted religion except kings, evil rabbis, and monks?"[13]

Since hearing and vision enjoy perception to a degree that other parts of the body do not, they are [located] in the noblest part of the human being: that is, the face. They are among the human being's most excellent parts, limbs, and utilities.

[*§ 2. The Arguments of Those Who Think Hearing Is Better*]

[p. 288] People disagree as to which of the two is better.

One group, including Abū l-Maʿālī [al-Juwaynī][14] and others, says that hearing is better. They argue that this is because, by virtue of it, the felicity of this world and the next is attained, for it [felicity] comes about by following

10 On the senses as the scouts of the heart and the soul, see also *ISH*, vol. 2, chs. 7 (§ 7.2), 24 (§ 1).

11 A non-canonical tradition of the Prophet, quoted in Abū Nuʿaym, 4:96 (also 7:5, from Sufyān al-Thawrī [d. 161/778]).

12 A famous learned ascetic of early Islam, d. 181/797.

13 An often-quoted verse; see, e.g., al-Qurṭubī, 8:120.

14 A Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī scholar from Persia (d. 478/1085) famous as the Imām al-Ḥaramayn ("Imam of the Two Holy Cities").

[God's] messengers and accepting their message, and this is known by way of hearing. Those who have no hearing do not know what they [the messengers] have brought.

Also, the most elevated and noblest thing [that exists] is perceived by the ear, that is, the speech of God the Exalted, which is better than [ordinary] speech, just as God is better than His creation.

Also, the sciences are accessed through mutual understanding and conversation, and this only happens by means of hearing.

Also, the object of [auditory] perception is more encompassing than the object of visual perception. For it [the ear] perceives generalities and particulars, manifest and hidden things, present and absent things. The eye only perceives some of the things that are manifest. The ear [by contrast] hears all [kinds of things that can be] known (*yasmaʿu kulla ʿilmin*). So how does the one compare to the other?

[p. 289] Suppose we were to give two people a task: one of them, to listen to the speech of the Prophet without seeing him in person; the other, seeing, to observe him, although not hearing him due to his deafness. Are the two equal to one another?

Also, those who lose sight lose [their ability to] perceive a portion of the phenomena that are witnessed [in the world], even though they can [still] come to know them by means of them being described [to them], albeit approximately. However, knowledge (*ʿilm*) escapes those who lose hearing; they are unable to reach it by means of the sense of vision, not even approximatively.

Also, in the Qurʾān, God the Exalted reproaches the unbelievers for their failure to listen more than He reproaches them for their failure to look. In fact, He reproaches them for not looking only *after* [criticizing] their failure to think and listen (*li-ʿadam al-aql wa-l-samʿ*).

Also, the knowledge hearing brings to the heart is not weakened in it [the heart] by dimness, weariness, or tiredness, regardless of quantity and difficulty. [By contrast,] what vision brings to it [the heart] is afflicted by dimness, weakness, and incompleteness. The one who has it [visual knowledge] may be afraid that it will go away, even though it may be irrelevant and insignificant in comparison to [the knowledge earned by] hearing.

[*§ 3. The Arguments of Those Who Think Seeing Is Better*]

Another group [of people], among them Ibn Qutayba,[15] argue that, to the contrary, vision is better. This is because the highest, noblest, and greatest pleasure

15 Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) was a Sunni polymath active in Iraq. He is considered a major representative of the traditionalism of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*. Ibn Taymiyya (7:325)

is the contemplation (*naẓar*) of God in the afterworld. This is attained by means of vision. This by itself is enough to prefer it [over hearing].

They say: It [vision] is the heart's frontrunner (*muqaddima*), scout (*ṭalīʿa*), and reconnoiterer (*rāʾid*). It is located closer to it [the heart] than hearing. Therefore, they [the heart and vision] are often linked in expressions such as the Exalted's injunction: "Reflect, those of you who have [p. 290] eyes (*fa-ʿtabirū yā ulī l-abṣār*)" (Q 59:2). Reflection occurs in the heart, and vision occurs in the eye.

The Exalted says: "We turn their hearts and eyes about, just as [We did when] they did not believe in it the first time" (Q 6:110). Note that He does not say: "and their ears"!

The Exalted also says: "It is not the eyes that go blind, but the hearts, which are in their breasts" (Q 22:46).[16]

And He says: "They fear a day when hearts and eyes will be turned about" (Q 24:37).

And the Exalted says: "There are hearts on that day that will beat painfully, their looks downcast" (Q 79:8–9).

And the Exalted says: "He knows the treachery of the eyes (*khāʾinat al-aʿyun*) and what the breasts conceal" (Q 40:19).

He says about the Prophet: "His heart has not lied [about] what he saw" (Q 53:11). Then He says: "His eye did not swerve nor turn astray" (Q 53:17). This indicates how strongly heart and vision connect and cohere. This is why people read (*yaqraʾu*) in the eye what is in a person's heart. People mention this frequently in their poetry and prose. This occurs too often to require [further] explanation here.

From the fact that the heart is the noblest part [of the body], it follows that the thing that is most closely connected to it is better than the rest.

They say: Therefore, the heart trusts it [the eye] in regard to things about which it does not trust hearing. What is more, when it [the heart] is suspicious about something that comes to it from it [the ear], it submits it to the eye, to confirm it [its truth] or reject it. In other words, vision is the arbitrator over it [hearing], [p. 291] and it is trusted above it.

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counts him among the proponents of the superiority of hearing, which rings true, given Ibn Qutayba's commitment to the oral/aural transmission of *ḥadīth*. Al-Saffārīnī (1:59), however, follows Ibn al-Qayyim on this point.

16 Note, however, that the preceding sentence in Q 22:46 mentions the ears: "Have they not travelled in the land, so that they have hearts with which they can understand and ears with which they can hear?"

They say: In this vein [there is] the narration related by Aḥmad in his *Musnad*,[17] going back to the Prophet (*marfūʿ*): "The one who is told is unlike the one who witnesses with the eye."[18]

They say: Therefore, God the Exalted told Moses that his people would fall into temptation and worship the calf after [he had left them]. But that which transpired later, when he [Moses] saw it with his own eyes, namely, that he [Moses] threw away the tablets and broke them (Q 7:150), did not yet come to pass; for eye-witnessing is more powerful than hearing an oral report.

They say: This is [why] Abraham, God's Intimate, asked his Lord, namely, to show him how He gives life to the dead (Q 2:260). He knew this already [i.e., that God could do this] because God had told him, but he wanted [it confirmed by] the best station (*afḍal al-manāzil*), which is the certainty of the heart (*ṭumaʾnīnat al-qalb*).

They say: There are three stages (*marātib*) toward certainty: first of all, hearing; secondly: seeing. This stage is called "the essence [lit. 'eye'] of certainty" (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*). It is better and more complete than the first stage.

[p. 292] They say: Further, the eye transports [things] to the heart, and [also] transports [things] away from it. For the eye is the mirror of the heart. In it [the eye] becomes manifest what it [the heart] conceals: love and hatred, friendship and enmity, happiness and sadness, among other things. The ear, however, does not transport anything away from the heart at all. Its function is only to connect [things] to it. That is all. So, the eye is more intimately connected to it [the heart].

[*§ 4. Ibn al-Qayyim's Opinion*]

The correct opinion (*al-ṣawāb*) is that both have a special quality that elevates the one over the other. The objects of hearing are more wide-ranging and comprehensive (*aʿamm wa-ashmal*). The objects of seeing are more precise and more complete (*atamm wa-akmal*). So, while hearing possesses generality and comprehensiveness (*al-ʿumūm wa-l-shumūl*), seeing possesses conspicuousness (*ẓuhūr*), precision, and completeness of perception.

The pleasure of the inhabitants of Paradise is twofold: one, they look at God; two, they hear His speech and His words. As is related by ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad in *al-Sunna*[19] and by others: "On the Day of Resurrection, when people hear the Qurʾān from the Merciful, it is as if they had never heard it before." [p. 293]

17 The *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855).

18 Arab. *Laysa l-mukhbar ka-l-muʿāyin*. See Ibn Ḥanbal, 1:215, 271: *laysa l-khabar ka-l-muʿāyana*.

19 See ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥanbal, 1:147–8 (#123). ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad (d. 290/903) was the son of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, whose literary work, including Aḥmad's famous *al-Musnad*, he helped spread.

It is known that nothing resembles the way in which He addresses them and talks to them, as [is related] in al-Tirmidhī[20] and other works. Nothing is more pleasing to them than this. Therefore, when [in the Qurʾān] the Exalted issues threats against His enemies, He reminds them that He will not speak to them, in addition to warning them that He will be separated from them by a veil, and that they will be unable to see Him. For [hearing] His speech and seeing Him are the greatest pleasures of the inhabitants of Paradise. And God knows best.

[*§ 5. God's Wisdom in Creating the Eye*]

[p. 542] Consider how the head has been made. [Consider] the many bones in it. It is said that there are 55, all with different forms, measurements, and uses. [Consider] how the Exalted has placed it [the head] on top of the body, sitting on top of it like a rider on his riding animal. [p. 543] Now, because the head is placed on top of the body, He put the five senses and all the organs of perception in it: hearing, vision, olfaction, taste, and touch.

He placed the sense of sight in its front, so that it would be like a scout, guardian (*ḥaras*), and explorer (*kāshif*) for the body. He provided each eye with seven layers (*ṭabaqāt*). Each layer is different and has a special quality and size. If one of these seven layers were lost, or if it lost its shape or were displaced, the eyes would become incapable of vision.

Next, the Exalted put in the center of these seven layers a curious disk, that is, the pupil (*insān al-ʿayn*), which is as big as a lentil. With it, people see what is between the eastern and the western horizons, between the earth and the sky. He put it in the same relation to the eye as the heart to the body parts: it rules over it. Those seven layers, the eyelids, and the eyelashes, are its servants, chamberlains, and guardians. How full of blessings is God, the best of all creators!

Look how beautiful He made the form, shape, and size of the eyes. Then He beautified them with the eyelids, to serve as cover for them, as a veil, protection, and embellishment. They keep irritation, specks, and dust away from them [the eyes]. They shelter them from biting cold and heat. Next, [p. 544] at the fringes of the eyelids, He planted the lashes, in order to beautify them, but also for other purposes, beyond beautification. Then He consigned to them [the eyes] that beacon of perception (*al-nūr al-bāṣir*), that brilliant light (*al-ḍawʾ al-bāhir*), which pierces what is between the sky and the earth, and then pierces the sky, passing beyond to the vision of the stars above. He has

20 A *ḥadīth* scholar (d. 279/892) and compiler of one of the six "canonical" books of *ḥadīth* in the Sunni tradition.

consigned this astonishing secret (*al-sirr al-ʿajīb*) in this small body: in it is imprinted the image of the heavens, despite their vastness and remoteness.

[***§ 6. God's Wisdom in Creating the Ear***]

And He gave humankind the ear. He created it in the most beautiful way, such that it is perfectly efficient in achieving its goal. He made it hollow like a conch, so that it can collect the sounds and transport them to the inner ear, and so that people feel insects crawling [into in it] and can quickly remove them. He made folds in it, cavities and crooked angles that catch the air and the incoming sounds, taming their shrillness and conveying them to the inner ear.

There is also wisdom in this insofar as insects (*ḥayawān*) have a long way to go [before they reach the inner ear]. Before they even get to the inner ear, people wake up and are alerted, and fetch them. And there are also other aspects of wisdom in this.

Further, the Creator's wisdom implied that He should make the liquid of the ear extremely bitter, so that insects do not pass through it to penetrate the inside of the ear. They are tricked into retreating as soon as they approach it. [Likewise,] He made the water of the eye salty to preserve it. For the eye is a chunk of fat that can rot. The saltiness of its water serves to protect and preserve it.