

Chapter Title: To Grieve or Not to Grieve? The Ambivalence of *Huzn* in Early Sufism

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Book Title: Mysticism and Ethics in Islam

Book Editor(s): Bilal Orfali, Atif Khalil, and Mohammed Rustom

URL: <https://www.aub.edu.lb/aubpress/Pages/Mysticism-and-Ethics-in-Islam.aspx>



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TO GRIEVE OR NOT TO GRIEVE? THE AMBIVALENCE OF ḤUZN IN EARLY SUFISM

Riccardo Paredi

The present paper traces the concept of ḥuzn — variably translated as “sadness,” “grief,” “sorrow,” or “affliction”¹ — in the early development of Islamic thought. It begins with an examination of how the term is used in the Quran and the canonical hadith corpus, proceeds through the time period of the early renunciants and proto-Sufi and Sufi authors, and ends with the second half of the fifth/eleventh century. At first glance, the Quranic “do not grieve!” (*lā taḥzan*) seems to stand in stark contrast to early Sufi teachings on sadness, the latter being a necessary trade (*ṣināʿa*) of the wayfarer (*sālik*) and the noblest act of devotion (*afḍal al-ʿibāda*). The question then arises, what should the believer do? To grieve or not to grieve?

1. Depending on context, we will translate ḥuzn as “grief,” “sorrow,” “affliction,” “pain,” and “sadness.” For a brief overview of these terms in English, see Stanley W. Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression. From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 311–312. See also Mary H. Kayyal and James A. Russell, “Language and Emotion: Certain English–Arabic Translations Are Not Equivalent,” *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 32, no. 3 (2013): 261–271.

Ḥuzn, one Emotion among Many

Ḥuzn, like such similar concepts as *khawf*, *farah*, and *ghaḍab*, denotes an inward emotional state,² and is often mentioned in the Quran and in later Islamic texts.³ It is not to be confused with its usage in other contexts as a recitational or musical technique,⁴ or with its possible external manifestations.⁵ Before proceeding, let us clarify what precisely is this inward state. What is *ḥuzn*? To answer this question, we briefly turn to the field of lexicography and etymology. Confronting what Louis Massignon describes as the multiple degrees of freedom of the Arabic language, we begin here with *ḥuzn*'s semantic root (ḥ–z–n).⁶ The *Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic* records one of the earliest uses of this root (*ḥazan*, defined as grief—*ghamm*), in 230 CE (–404 H), in a poem attributed to Salima b. Mālik b. Fahm al-Azdī.⁷ In “classical” lexicographical reference works such *al-Furūq al-lughawiyya* by Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī (d. c. 400/1010), *Lisān al-ʿArab* by Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311), and *K. al-Taʿrīfāt* by ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413), *ḥuzn* is defined as grief (*asaf*) dealing with real things and especially what has passed (*mā fāta*)—i.e., unpleasant events that have happened—or on account of an object of love that has gone away. It is an enduring emotion located in the heart (*fuʿād*); it is more intense than *hamm* (often translated as “affliction”) and an intensification (*takāthuf*) of *ghamm* (also “grief” or “distress”).⁸ Finally, a glimpse into other nuances of the semantic root ḥ–z–n might give us further insight: *ḥuzn* designates “roughness,” denoting a hard

2. Does *ḥuzn* correspond to one of the six basic emotional states of humanity suggested by Ekman (i.e., anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise)? See Paul Ekman, *Emotion in the Human Face* (Los Altos, California: Malor Books, 2013). There is no academic agreement upon the definition of our object of study (i.e., emotion, and specifically “grief”) and the history of emotions in Islamic scholarship is still much undeveloped. See the recent contribution to the field by Julia Bray and Helen Blatherwick, eds., “Arabic Emotions: From the Qurʾān to the Popular Epic,” *Cultural History* 8, no. 2 (2019). Here we rely on Bauer’s “tentative working definition of emotion,” which she applies to the Quranic text: “An emotion is a feeling, universal in nature, but which has learned elements that affect its expression, the triggers for it, and the meanings attributed to it. Despite these cognitive elements, an emotion is not the result of a rational process of thinking, and often involves a physiological response. Emotions are a means of social communication, and as such they are related to language and structures of social power.” Karen Bauer, “Emotion in the Qurʾān: An Overview,” *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 19, no. 2 (2017): 1–30.

3. In his thought-provoking working paper, Paul Heck makes some exploratory remarks on sadness (*ḥuzn*, but also *ghamm* and *hamm*) in Classical Islam. In particular, he identifies a Stoic and a Neo-Platonic trend, while arguing that an Aristotelian trend might be identified in further research. As we shall expose, sadness as a virtuous emotion might be close to Heck’s “Aristotelian–Islamic” sadness “as something to be discerned for the insight it offers into the life of virtue, thus acting as a step [. . .] towards the face of God.” See Paul Heck, “Sadness in Classical Islam: Its relation to the Goals of Religion,” in *Emotions Across Cultures Working Papers*, proceedings of a workshop held in February 2014 at NYU Abu Dhabi. Consulted online 21 February 2020. <https://archive.nyu.edu/bitstream/2451/34037/2/Heck.Emotions.NYUAD%281%29.pdf>. On sadness in Persian literature, see Sylwia Surdykowska, “The Idea of Sadness. The Richness of Persian Experiences and Expressions,” *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 68, no. 2 (2014): 68–80.

4. In the genre “Manuals on the etiquette of [Quranic] recitation” (*ādāb al-tilāwa*), *ḥuzn* is considered a recitation technique concurring in creating a whole religious and aesthetic experience. See Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qurʾān: The Early Revelations* (Ashland: White Cloud Press, 1999), 28, and Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qurʾān* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985). Compare it with Tala Jarjour, *Sense and Sadness: Syriac Chant in Aleppo* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). *Ḥuzn* in music augments the worshippers’ desire of God and their devotion, as we read in Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. On Music: an Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 5*, ed. and trans. Owen Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

5. We are especially referring to *bukāʾ* (weeping practices), a topic that received much more scholarly attention in Islamic studies. See, for instance, William Chittick, “Weeping in Classical Sufism,” in *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination*, ed. Kimberley Christine Patton and John Stratton Hawley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 132–144; Linda G. Jones, “‘He Cried and He Made Others Cry’: Crying as a Sign of Pietistic Authenticity or Deception in Medieval Islamic Preaching,” in *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History*, ed. Elina Gertsman (London: Routledge, 2012), 102–135.

6. Louis Massignon, *Opera Minora II*, ed. Youakim Moubarac (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), 540 ff.

7. See *Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic*, s.v. “ḥuzn”, date accessed October 4, 2019, <https://www.dohadictionary.org/#/dictionary/ḥuzn>.

8. See the entries on *ḥuzn*, *hamm*, and *ghamm* in Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *al-Furūq al-lughawiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Salīm (Cairo: Dār al-ʿIlm wa-l-Thaqāfa, 1997); Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, ed. ʿA. ʿA. al-Kabīr, M. A. Ḥasaballāh, and H. M. al-Shādhilī (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1985); ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *K. al-Taʿrīfāt*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Rahmān Marʿashli (Beirut: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 2003).

ground, rugged mountains, a rough spirit or creation—in this case, the opposite of “plain,” “flat,” “smooth” (*sahl*). As Stephan Guth points out, it is difficult to establish the (causal?) relationship between the sides of this double, two-fold value of the Arabic root of *ḥuzn* as “rough ground” and “to be(come) sad.” Nevertheless, if *ḥuzn* originally designated distress caused by a rocky terrain, then Arabic would be the only Semitic language to have preserved this primary value.⁹

Quranic *ḥuzn*

Moving on from this etymological prelude and from late lexicographical definitions in “classical” lexicographical references, it is based on the Quranic text that the majority of Islamic concepts like *ḥuzn* take shape. As Karen Bauer puts it, it is Revelation (*wahy*) that moulds a new community of believers through new emotional ties and plots woven into its basic eschatological message.¹⁰ The root ḥ-z-n is mentioned forty-two times in the Quran, in three derived forms and thirty-five times in a negative form (*lā taḥzan/ū*).¹¹ This leads Bauer to conclude that “the main message about grief in the Quran is that one should not grieve, because God relieves grief,”¹² taking as an example the stories of Maryam, Ya‘qūb, and Umm Mūsā. On the other hand, the nuanced conclusions of Mahshid Turner’s *The Muslim Theology of Huzn* shed a more positive light on our emotion.¹³ Notably, her Izutsian approach¹⁴ highlights the strong relational meaning between *ḥuzn* and *khawf* (paired seventeen times in the Quran). Thus, Quranic *ḥuzn* is predominately portrayed as an undesirable emotional state that the believer should obviate. In fact, the true believer should not dwell and cannot actually dwell in it if he possesses faith (*īmān*), especially in Divine decree (*qadar*). The Quranic formula “do not grieve,” mainly directed by God to the believer, is indeed prevalent, and God is never explicitly said to give grief, while He is often said to relieve believers of it.¹⁵ By contrast, secret conversations (*najwā*) originating from Satan, grieve the believers (Q 58:10). Surely, as Turner underlines, *ḥuzn* felt in trials or *ḥuzn* as a tool for guidance—especially in Prophetic narrations—might lead to positive outcomes. However, Quranic *ḥuzn* remains ontologically “rough,” undoubtedly linked with loss, being instrumental to higher spiritual achievements.¹⁶

9. Stephan Guth, “Arabic Emotions – Back to the Roots,” in *Reading Slowly: A Festschrift in Honour of Jens Braarvig*, ed. Lutz Edzard, Jens W. Borgland, and Ute Hüsken (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), 199–219.

10. Bauer, “Emotion in the Qur’an: An Overview,” 10.

11. See the entry on *ḥuzn* in the *Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, ed. Elsaid Muhammad Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem (Leiden: Brill, 2008). Consulted online on 04 November 2019. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_dqu_SIM_000415.

12. Bauer, “Emotion in the Qur’an: An Overview,” 24.

13. Mahshid Turner, *The Muslim Theology of Huzn: Sorrow Unravelling* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2018).

14. A method of semantic analysis first utilized by Toshihiko Izutsu (d. 1993) that approaches the terms and concepts of the Quran as they stand in relation to each other to define the semantic boundaries of these terms through an internal analysis of the text itself. Such analysis aims at mapping out the ethical and ontological worldview of the Quran. See Afif Khalil, *Repentance and the Return to God: Tawba in Early Sufism* (Albany: University of New York Press, 2018), 23 ff.

15. As Lane notes, following the comment of al-Rāghib al-İsfahānī (fl. before 409/1018) in his *al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qur’ān*, the imperative *lā taḥzan/lā taḥzanū* does not actually denote a prohibition of becoming sad since sadness does not come by the will of man (*ikthiyār*). It must be interpreted as: “do not acquire (*mā yūriḥ al-ḥuzn wa-iktisābuhu*) sadness.” However, Lane himself notes that this is “not in every case admissible.” Edward William Lane and Stanley Lane-Poole, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), 562.

16. The bibliography on the subject, although not vast, is surely more extensive. See, for instance, Nādir Nimr Wādī, *al-Faraḥ wa-l-ḥuzn fī ḥawā’ al-Qur’ān al-karīm wa-l-sunna al-nabawiyya* (Damascus: Dār al-Muqtabas, 2018).

Ḥuzn in Canonical Hadiths

If *ḥuzn* has a role in Prophetic narrations as well, how did the Prophet deal with it?¹⁷ Limiting our analysis to the canonical hadith corpus—i.e., *al-kutub al-sitta*—we may safely conclude that the value of *ḥuzn* as an emotional state does not essentially diverge from the Quranic use: *ḥuzn* is an exquisitely inner emotional state¹⁸ largely associated with death,¹⁹ satanic inspirations,²⁰ sins, and hellfire—i.e., the place of *ḥuzn ilā ḥuzn*.²¹ Moreover, hadith sources indicate that *ḥuzn* is an undesirable emotional state from which the Prophet himself sought refuge.²² Thus, true believers and friends of God do not grieve.²³ However, a positive connotation of *ḥuzn* timidly emerges from the hadith corpus: nothing is purposeless or unavailing in God's creation, and *ḥuzn* is no exception. Although ontologically negative, it leads to positive outcomes; it strengthens the believer's patience and it provokes God's mercy, "purifying" the believer: "A believer is never stricken with *ḥuzn* unless God will expiate his sins as the leaves of a tree fall."²⁴

Ḥuzn in *zuhd* Works from the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th Centuries

Building on this scriptural understanding, we may now proceed to investigate *ḥuzn* through the vastness of early *zuhd* literature,²⁵ an essential transition point between the first/seventh century (the milieu of Revelation) and the development

17. As done with the Quranic text, we only consider the mentions of the root *ḥ-z-n* and not any other root denoting grief in the hadith corpus.

18. In the hadith corpus, *ḥuzn* is definitively portrayed as an internal emotion (felt at the level of the heart) although sometimes this internal grief is externalized, being visible on the face (see, for instance, al-Bukhārī 1299). On this internal/external relationship, Juynboll affirms that "for every point of view expressed in the debate traditions could be adduced, from harsh Prophetic commands to contain oneself to the Prophet openly weeping [. . .] In the final analysis, restraining oneself and keeping grief hidden is the preferred conduct." G. H. A Juynboll, *Encyclopedia of Canonical Hadith* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 135.

19. Muḥammad shed tears and his heart was grieved for the loss of his son Ibrāhīm (al-Bukhārī 1303) on the deathbed of his companion Sa'd b. 'Ubāda (al-Bukhārī 1304) and for the deaths of Zayd b. Ḥāritha, Ja'far b. Abī Ṭālib and 'Abd Allāh b. Rawāḥa (Abū Dāwūd 3116–3122); he also grieved after the death of Warāqa b. Nawfal, when the Divine Inspiration weakened (al-Bukhārī 4953). Finally, Muḥammad's saddest appearance occurs after the death of the *qurrā'* (al-Bukhārī 1300). The Prophet is not the only one to grieve: some hadiths report Anas b. Mālik's intense grief (*shiddat al-ḥuzn*) over those who had been killed in the Battle of al-Ḥarra (al-Bukhārī 4906); the companions of the Prophet were overwhelmed with grief and distress on his return from al-Ḥudaybiyya (Muslim 1786); and Fāṭima's *ḥuzn* is also mentioned (Ibn Māja 1689). Generally speaking, *ḥuzn* is predominantly present in the chapters on funerals (*K. al-Janā'iz*) of the hadith corpus, but it can also be traced to sections on food, drink, and medicine: for instance, the gruel known as *talbina* gives comfort to the aggrieved heart and it lessens grief (al-Bukhārī 5417).

20. Muslim 2263.

21. Al-Tirmidhī 2383.

22. A common narrative on *ḥuzn* is presented in *variatio* on the following hadith directly attributed to the Prophet: "O God! I seek refuge in You from affliction (*ḥamm*) and grief (*ḥazan*), from incapacity and laziness, from cowardice and miserliness, from being heavily in debt and from being overpowered by (other) men." See, for instance, al-Nasā'ī 5449.

23. Numerous hadiths evoke the Quranic passages that urge one not to grieve (*lā taḥzan/ū*): Muḥammad comforts Abū Bakr, telling him not to grieve, although pagans were pursuing them; and the believer should not dwell in *ḥuzn* if God is with Him (al-Bukhārī 3652). Among the *lā taḥzan/ū* passages, the most quoted is Q 10:62, on the friends of God (*awliyā' Allāh*), followed by Muḥammad's explanation that these *awliyā'* will be envied by prophets and martyrs on the day of the resurrection and they will not grieve when [other] people will grieve" (Abū Dāwūd 3527). This passage receives much attention in ascetic and Sufi literature, both for its subject (the *awliyā'*) and its eschatological value.

24. Al-Bukhārī 5647.

25. Obviously, the hadith corpus previously analyzed partially overlaps with sayings traceable in *zuhd* literature. However, we prefer to present the *zuhd* literature after the hadith corpus, given the preeminent legal and moral authority of the latter. On the concept of *zuhd*, see Leah Kinberg, "What is Meant by *Zuhd*?" *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985): 27–44. On the relationship between "pietism" and "hadith literature," see Stephen R. Burge, "The 'ḥadīṭ literature': What is it and where is it?" *Arabica* 65 (2018): 64–83; Lahcen Daaiḥ, "Dévots et renonçants: L'autre catégorie de forgerons de Hadiths," *Arabica* 57 (2010): 201–250; Christopher Melchert, "The Piety of the Hadith Folk," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34 (2002): 425–439.

of later Sufi doctrines.²⁶ Our analysis takes into consideration *zuhd* works of the second/eighth century by ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), Mu‘āfa b. ‘Imrān al-Mawṣilī (d. ca. 185/801 or 204/819) and Wakī‘ b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/812)²⁷ as well as works from the third/ninth century by Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855),²⁸ and Hannād b. al-Sarī b. Muṣ‘ab (d. 243/857).²⁹ What does this *zuhd* literature tell us about *ḥuzn*?³⁰

First, *ḥuzn* is differently represented in these works:³¹ some authors reserve an entire chapter or section for it, like Ibn Mubārak’s *Bāb al-bukā’ wa-l-ḥuzn* in what is deemed to be the earliest extant *zuhd* work, the *K. al-Zuhd wa-l-raqā’iq*, or like Wakī‘’s *al-Ḥuzn wa-faḍluhu* in his *K. al-Zuhd*, while other writers treat it less systematically.

Second, *ḥuzn*, as with all other aspects in this literature, should be read in light of the *dunyā/ākhirā* dichotomy: sadness of/for this world and sadness of/for the hereafter are incompatible (*lā ajma‘*)³² and inversely proportional.³³ On one hand, this world, with its passions (*shahawāt*) and its inhabitants,³⁴ is a source of sorrow.³⁵ Thus, the true believer cannot but be in this world in prolonged grief and reflection³⁶ (we note here the strict relationship between *tafakkur* and *ḥuzn*).³⁷ On the other hand, God may reward *ḥuzn* (like Ya‘qūb, whose grief earned him a reward

26. *Zuhūd and nussāk* of the second century are widely regarded as forebears of the Sūfīs of the later third century. See Christopher Melchert, “Asceticism,” in *EB*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krāmer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson. Consulted online on 04 November 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_0022. In fact, authors of *zuhd* works entrust to us a multitude of sayings on *ḥuzn* which will later become the “building blocks of the later Sufi tradition.” See Alexander Knysch, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 21.

27. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak, *al-Zuhd wa-l-raqā’iq*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd (Riyadh: Dār al-Mi‘rāj al-Dawliyya, 1995) Abū Mas‘ūd Mu‘āfa b. ‘Imrān al-Mawṣilī, *K. al-Zuhd*, ed. ‘Amir Ḥasan Ṣabīrī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyya, 1991); Wakī‘ b. al-Jarrāḥ, *K. al-Zuhd*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Faryawā’ī (Medina: Maktabat al-Dār, 1984).

28. Or by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s school, as suggested in Christopher Melchert, “Ahmad ibn Hanbal’s Book of Renunciation,” *Der Islam* 85 (2008): 349–353.

29. Abū Bakr ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 12, *K. al-Zuhd*, ed. Usāma b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad Abū Muḥammad (Cairo: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadītha li-l-Tabā‘a wa-l-Nashr, 2007); Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal, *K. al-Zuhd*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Salām al-Shāhin (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1999); Hannād b. al-Sarī al-Kūfī, *K. al-Zuhd*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Faryawā’ī (Kuwait: Dār al-Khulafā’ li-l-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1985).

30. Given the vast bibliography, the treatment of *ḥuzn* in *zuhd* works by itself would require an independent study that could also take into consideration later texts where *ḥuzn* is quoted with different intensity. For instance, *ḥuzn* is barely quoted in *K. al-Zuhd* by al-Ḥusayn b. Sa‘īd al-Ahwāzī (d. 301/913); in *Zuhd al-thamāniya min al-tābi‘īn*, attributed to ‘Alqama b. Marthad (d. 120/737–738) following Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī’s (d. 327/938) version; and in *al-Fawā’id wa-l-zuhd wa-l-raqā’iq wa-l-marāthī* by Ja‘far al-Khuldī (d. 348/959). On the other hand, it is abundantly quoted in *Kitāb fihī ma’nā l-zuhd wa-l-maqālāt wa-ṣifāt al-zāhidīn* by Ibn al-A‘rābī (d. 340/951) and in *K. al-Zuhd al-kabīr* by Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066).

31. *ḥuzn* is not omnipresent in all minor *zuhd* works of the third/ninth century. It is absent, for instance, in Asad b. Mūsā’s (d. 212/827) *K. al-Zuhd*, in the *K. al-Zuhd* within the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim (d. 261/875), and in al-Marrūdhī’s (also, al-Marwazī; d. 275/888) *al-Warā’*, where *ḥuzn* is only reported once, quoting Q 9:40.

32. Mu‘āfa n. 135.

33. For instance, Mālik b. Dīnār (d. around 127/744–5 or 130/747–8) affirms: “As much as you grieve for this world, your concern for the hereafter will leave your heart and as much as you grieve for the hereafter, the concern for this world will leave your heart,” (Ibn Ḥanbal n. 1864).

34. For instance, Abū al-Dārdā’ (d. early 30s/650s?) stresses the detachment from people and from one’s own *nafs* to avoid sorrow (Ibn Abī Shayba n. 36647); similar sayings can also be traced in Ibn Ḥanbal (Ibn Ḥanbal n. 713–772) and in Ibn al-Sarī (Ibn al-Sarī n. 599).

35. Remembrance of death (*dhikr al-mawt*) (Ibn al-Mubārak n. 260–266) is associated with a positive *ḥuzn* that does not corrupt the heart, while even a short moment of worldly lust might bring long sorrows (Ibn al-Mubārak n. 290 and 850; Ibn al-Sarī n. 499). Prophets, too, developed this idea. For instance, Muḥammad is reported to have said: “Indeed, renunciation in this world relieves the heart and the body. Indeed, desire of/in this world prolongs affliction and sadness,” (Ibn Ḥanbal n. 51), while ‘Isā, depicted as a sorrowing traveler in such *zuhd* works, is reported to have commented on Q 10:62, stating that the friends of God grieve instead of rejoicing from what they gain from this world (Ibn Ḥanbal n. 339).

36. Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī (d. ca. 48/668) affirms that from this world only comes *ḥuzn* and *fitna*. (Ibn al-Jarrāḥ n. 66). Similarly, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) affirms that the believer does not feel anything but sadness in this world (Ibn al-Mubārak n. 123). Al-Ḥasan himself later states that humble hearts do not grieve because they don’t attach importance to this world nor to its people (Ibn al-Mubārak n. 397).

37. See Ibn Mubārak, n. 209. Also Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778) affirms that reflection (*tafakkur*) on this world leads to sorrow and that “sadness is to the extent of one’s foresight,”—i.e., on this world (Ibn al-Mubārak n. 128–167).

equal to that of one hundred martyrs)³⁸ or, at least, He can relieve it (as in the case of Ibrāhīm, whose sorrow for being the only worshipper on earth was relieved).³⁹ Moreover, *ḥuzn* has different positive outcomes: it prevents the corruption of the heart (Mālik b. Dīnār affirms: “A heart without sorrow is like a ruined house”)⁴⁰ and it augments virtuous action (“Affliction and grief augment good deeds while sin and ingratitude augment bad deeds”).⁴¹ In another anecdote, abundance of *ḥuzn* is something to hope for.⁴² In a saying attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās (d. around 68/686–8), sadness caused by trials is equal in virtue to joy brought on by blessings: the first generates patience while the latter engenders gratitude.⁴³ Thus, in the *zuhd* literature, *ḥuzn* can be, at the same time, the best devotion to God or the sign of doubt in one’s faith, a hellish punishment and an increaser of good deeds. Where does this ambiguity come from? It is caused by the direction of *ḥuzn*—i.e., the ultimate locus of our sadness. Thus, as stated by Ibrāhīm b. Adhām (d. 161/777–8), the same exact emotional state of *ḥuzn* can be counted for us (*lanā*) or against us (*‘alaynā*), depending on where we want to direct it, on the intentionality towards the focus of the emotion.⁴⁴

Third, in regard to the topic of *ḥuzn*, one cannot ignore the impact of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who later became the most influential prototype of the grieving ascetic, “honoring spiritual sorrow.”⁴⁵ He is often described as being of long and constant sorrow (*aṭwal al-ḥuzn*). He famously said, “The believer should wake up and retire for the night overtaken by sorrow,”⁴⁶ and “God was never better worshiped than by constant sorrow.”⁴⁷ Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī’s teachings have been constantly reported in the vast majority of *zuhd* works, definitively shaping a more positive perspective on *ḥuzn* as a major characteristic of the true believer and the best act of worship (*afḍal al-‘ibāda*).⁴⁸ His overwhelming presence may bias our understanding of the importance of *ḥuzn* for other contemporary *zuhād*, causing us to overemphasize the role of this concept in Islamic piety.⁴⁹ However, we can safely affirm that

38. Ibn Abī Shayba n. 35293.

39. Ibn Abī Shayba n. 36341.

40. “A heart (*qalb*) in which there is no sorrow (*ḥuzn*) is like a ruined house (*bayt kharib*),” (Ibn Abī Shayba n. 36684). Similarly, we read in Ibn Ḥanbal: “A heart without sorrow is like an abandoned house: it will go to ruin,” (Ibn Ḥanbal n. 1870).

41. Ibn Ḥanbal n. 932, attributed to Manṣūr b. Zādḥān (d. between 127/745 and 129/747).

42. Ibn Ḥanbal n. 1757.

43. Ibn Abī Shayba n. 35798.

44. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *K. al-Hamm wa-l-ḥuzn*, ed. Majdī Fathī al-Sayyid (Dār al-Salām, 1991), n. 31. On this *double-entendre*, see Heck, “Sadness in Classical Islam: Its relation to the Goals of Religion,” 6.

45. The sorrowful pietism of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is well known. However, as Suleiman Ali Mourad states, we must consider with caution his sayings, sermons, and anecdotes, bearing in mind the crucial role that the perceived reputation, image, words, and practices of al-Ḥasan played in the later development of Islamic thought (an observation that applies to most of the early ascetic figures that were later incorporated in a predominant Sufi narrative). See Suleiman Ali Mourad, *Early Islam Between Myth and History: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī* (d. 110H/728CE) and the Formation of His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship (Leiden: Brill, 2006). For a general overview, see Mun‘im Sirry, “Pious Muslims in the Making: A Closer Look at Narratives of Ascetic Conversion,” *Arabica* 57 (2010): 437–454.

46. Ibn al-Mubārak n. 278 and 989.

47. Ibn al-Mubārak n. 126.

48. Massignon theorized that the spiritual weeping in Baṣra was connected doctrinally to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī’s shaping of the concept of grief. See Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1968), 114. In fact, other ascetics of Baṣra are similarly described: the mu’tazilite ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd (d. ca. 144/761), disciple of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, “embodied *ḥuzn*.” See Ibn al-Murtaḍā’s description in Osman Aydinli, “Ascetic and Devotional Elements in the Mu’tazilite Tradition: The Sufi Mu’tazilites,” *The Muslim World* 97, no. 2 (2007): 174–189.

49. Feryal Salem stresses the hadith traditions on smiling and interacting with a cheerful face as a form of charity towards other fellow believers, reporting four sayings that wish to counterbalance an exaggerated sorrowful portray of the early Muslim community. In particular, these sayings would reflect the composure of the Prophet rather than his sadness. Salem, *The Emergence of Early Sufi Piety and Sunni Scholasticism: ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak and the Formation of Sunni Identity in the Second*

sadness is indeed predominant in *zuhd* works and enjoys more attention, value, and virtue than its opposites—i.e., joy and happiness and their possible external manifestations, laughing and smiling. A renowned saying attributed to the Prophet should suffice: “Indeed, God dislikes joyful people; indeed, God dislikes cheerful people; indeed, God detests all overweight people and He dislikes the people who eat opulent food; indeed, God loves all sorrowful hearts.”⁵⁰

Lastly, *ḥuzn* in *zuhd* literature calls for empathy, following the idea that the believer’s emotion should mirror the emotions of other believers.⁵¹ Such an idea evokes the important role of shared/sympathetic emotions in forming (religious) communities, an idea that will accompany *ḥuzn* throughout Sufi sources.⁵²

Before concluding our investigation of *zuhd* literature, we add to this variegated corpus the *K. al-Hamm wa-l-ḥuzn* by the Baghdadi *adīb*, traditionist, and *muṣannif* Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d. 281/894),⁵³ who chronologically follows the texts analyzed thus far and to whom we owe the most systematic and important collection of sayings (one hundred seventy-nine) on *hamm* and *ḥuzn* in the first two centuries and a half of Islam. The work aims to cover every Islamic personality related to or reporting on *ḥuzn*, from the prophets (Muḥammad—who himself is described as being in constant sorrow and everlasting reflection⁵⁴—Ādam, Ya‘qūb, Dāwūd, ‘Īsā, and Mūsā) up to Ibn Abī al-Dunyā’s contemporaries. Beyond the well-established *ḥuzn-farah/dunyā-ākhirā* dichotomy,⁵⁵ the positive portrayal of sadness and its virtues is clear and well supported both by teachings and living examples⁵⁶ (for instance, pious people enduring the sorrow of all creatures—i.e., *ḥuzn al-khalq*).⁵⁷ It is beneficial for the person who prays;⁵⁸ it leads to reflection and self-control,⁵⁹

Islamic Century (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 112–121. Indeed, balance, appropriateness and moderation are often quoted as personal traits of Muḥammad. However, in the case of emotion, it is worth noting that the Prophet’s attitude to smiling is opposed to overtly laughing, which is mostly considered inappropriate throughout the *zuhd* works analyzed here, and no virtues are indicated for either of the two. Moreover, one who feels empathy with other believers, as we shall see, is not only restricted to joy or cheerfulness, but also contemplates emphatic sadness and communal weeping too (Ibn al-Mubārak n. 662).

50. Mu‘āfā n. 186.

51. Al-Ḥasan states that the believer is a mirror (*mir‘āt*) for other believers. Thus he rejoices when another believer rejoices, and he grieves when the other believer grieves (Ibn al-Mubārak n. 662).

52. How did emotional ties shape ascetic and Sufi communities? Does *ḥuzn* create, for instance, a feeling of mutual belonging? Could an inner emotional state such as *ḥuzn* be shared and acquire a “communal value”? Or are communal ties inevitably linked with or proved by external manifestations, as in the case of the *bakkā‘ūn*? More research on “Sufi emotions” is needed, as Arin Shawkat Salamah-Qudsi states: “recent scholarship into early Sufism lacks attempts to reveal some of the hidden facets of early Sufis’ everyday lives, their emotions, concerns, interpersonal relationships, and conflicts.” See Arin Shawkat Salamah-Qudsi, *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety: Personal and Communal Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

53. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *K. al-Hamm wa-l-ḥuzn*, ed. Majdī Fathī al-Sayyid (Dār al-Salām, 1991). Ibn Abī al-Dunyā is also the author of a *K. al-Zuhd* and *K. al-Itibār wa-‘aḳāb al-surūr wa-l-aḥzān*. Many of the sayings reported in these works overlap with the ones in *K. al-Hamm wa-l-ḥuzn*, and the majority of dicta concerning *ḥuzn* elaborates on the *dunyā/ākhirā* dichotomy.

54. “The Prophet of God was continuously in sorrow, in everlasting reflection, without rest (*rāḥa*), in long silence, and he would not talk unless needed,” (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 1). In the second saying, Muḥammad affirms: “Indeed God loves all sorrowful hearts,” (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, n. 2). Thirdly, ‘Ā’isha reports that the Prophet said: “If the sins of the servant increase, and he does not have a way to expiate them, God gives him the trial of sorrow in order to expiate them,” (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 3). It is interesting, here, to note how the concepts of *tafakkur* and *tawba* closely relate to *ḥuzn*, which seems to be a precondition for both actions.

55. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 9, 33, 59, 62, 83, 84, 91, 92, 121, 129, 135, 138, 165.

56. A large number of sayings depict sorrowful people as models of imitation (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 34, 52, 53, 76, 110, 125–128, 139–147). On the importance of ascetics and proto-Sufis’ *ethos* as a criterion for recognition, reliability, and influence, see Feryal Salem, *The Emergence of Early Sufi Piety and Sunni Scholasticism*.

57. On the sorrow of (all) creatures, see Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 41, 43, 132. In his work, we encounter all the previous sayings of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and new anecdotes often further exaggerating his sadness (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 21, 22, 35–37, 42, 45, 93, 171, 175).

58. In fact, invocations (*al-du‘ā’*) of the sad person are answered (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 16).

59. Sorrow is the luminosity (*jalā’*) of hearts that facilitates the believer’s reflection and it brings cautiousness and self-

and to proximity with God;⁶⁰ and it is propaedeutic both for good deeds (increasing them) and for bad (facilitating forgiveness and regret).⁶¹

The idea of sadness as an amplifier of good deeds is often expressed by a suggestive metaphor: sorrow as fertilization. An early saying runs: “Prolonged sorrow in this world is fertilization (*talqīh*) for good deeds.”⁶² Similarly, Mālik b. Dīnār states: “For everything there is a seed (*laqāh*), and indeed this sorrow is a seed of good deeds.”⁶³

Finally, *ḥuzn* represents a primary, cathartic drive: it ripens the *nafs*, polishes the heart, and elevates the believer,⁶⁴ as in the words of Bishr b. al-Ḥārith (d. 227/841 or 842): “Sadness is a king that only inhabits a purified heart, and it is the first level (*daraja*) of the hereafter.”⁶⁵ Being so positive, it is no surprise that a servant like Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyād (d. 187/803) is reported to have advised others to actively request it.⁶⁶

Ḥuzn: From Proto-Sufism to Classical Manuals

In this last section, we explore proto-Sufi and Sufi literature’s treatment of *ḥuzn*. Fatemeh Lajevardi, in her *Encyclopedia Islamica* entry on *bukāʿ*, affirms that “from the very beginning, Sufi authors, or authors with Sufi inclinations, have always paid particular attention in their writings to the subjects of fear (*khawf*), sadness (*ḥuzn*), and weeping (*bukāʿ*).”⁶⁷ However, while both *khawf* and *bukāʿ* have entries in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, *ḥuzn* does not, although it appears in various manuals of Sufism and is the subject of numerous *falsafa* treatises.⁶⁸ Indeed, from the

control (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 19 and 76).

60. *Ḥuzn* brings the believer closer to God and, thus, one must not lament for sorrow, but for too little sorrow (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 55, 56, 106).

61. Good deeds: Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 17, 18, 23; bad deeds: Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 28, 30, 81. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā also approaches *ḥuzn* “medically”: Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 68–71, 97–101. He also reports sayings on the well-established relationship between *ḥuzn* and the recitation of the Quran: Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 87, 137, 151–154.

62. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 167. In later works, this saying is often attributed to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

63. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 33.

64. See also: “Nothing polishes hearts as much as sadness (*ḥuzn*), nothing enflames them more than the *dhikr*” (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 50). Similarly, God reveals to Mūsā that *hamm* and *ghamm* clean the heart (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 131). Dreams (*manām*) play an important role in establishing such virtue (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 38, 40). Eventually, ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Awzā‘ī (d. 157/774) affirms that sorrowful people reach the second highest degree (of closeness to God? Of devotion?), right behind the first, which pertains to the ‘*ulamāʿ*’ (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 161).

65. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 162

66. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 159. The day Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyād died, it was said: “Today sorrow left the Earth,” (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 149). Importantly, *ḥuzn* cannot be separated from other emotional states or attitudes (*tawba*, *tafakkur*, *bukāʿ*) nor from other believers’ emotional states in a sort of common emotional tie. Although *ḥuzn* and *bukāʿ* are obviously intertwined and often quoted together, it is important to emphasize that this relationship is not unavoidable. *Bukāʿ* is certainly the most common externalization of *ḥuzn* (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 78). However, as an external phenomenon, it is not easily interpreted and can acquire different meanings and values. Al-Ḥasan differentiates between weeping of the eyes and weeping of the heart, preferring the latter (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 123). Weeping out of sadness is sweet, while weeping out of fear is bitter (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 74). Weeping is said to bring solace and to dissipate *ḥuzn* (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 73, 77), although concealing sadness in one’s heart is more important (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 65, 66). Interestingly, we might suggest that sadness, especially when externalized, seems to hold a “community character.” Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna (d. 107/725) states: “If a person in this *umma* who is overcome with sadness weeps, God Almighty will pardon the entire *umma* because of his tears.” (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā n. 76).

67. Fatemeh Lajevardi and Mukhtar H. Ali, “*Bukāʿ*,” in *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, ed. Wilferd Madelung and Farhad Daftary. Consulted online on 04 November 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-9831_isla_SIM_05000019.

68. As we shall analyze the finely “psychological” approach of proto-Sufis and Sufis, we at least mention that, especially from the third/ninth century, the topic of *ḥuzn* also received a remarkable amount of attention in the field of *falsafa*. Above all, al-Kindī’s (d. ca. 256/873) *Risāla fī-l-ḥila li-daf al-ahzān*, the earliest Arabic text in the *consolatio* genre, deeply influenced later authors in its treatment of *ḥuzn*, such as Abū Zayd al-Balkhī (d. 322/934), Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 313/925 or 323/935), and Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037).

teachings on sadness of the proto-Sufi Rābi‘a al-‘Adawīyya (ca d. 185/801) in the second/eighth century until Sa‘īd Nūrsī’s (d. 1379/1960) “theology of *ḥuzn*” in the thirteenth/twentieth century, *ḥuzn* permeates Sufi teachings.⁶⁹

A short time before Ibn Abī al-Dunyā wrote his work on *ḥuzn*, another master and precursor of the Classical Sufis⁷⁰ was exploring the richness of the human soul, carrying reflections on *ḥuzn* from a *zuhd*-centered to a more Sufi-centered perspective. We are referring to Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), who noticeably was influenced by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī’s teachings. In two of his works, in particular,⁷¹ *Ādāb al-nufūs* and *K. al-Qaṣd wa-l-rujū‘ ilā Allāh*, he frequently provides advice on how to obtain sadness, and he delineates its defining features and spiritual benefits (especially in overcoming passion).⁷² As Picken observes, “maintaining and inculcating grief into the *nafs* is a major goal in al-Muḥāsibī’s system of purifying the soul from the negative quality of its appetites.”⁷³ For al-Muḥāsibī, the quality is an intrinsically valuable and necessary element for the full flourishing and refinement of the soul. His insights into how to educate the *nafs* not only help underscore the positive instrumental value of sadness, but also they are echoed in later Sufi texts.⁷⁴

Ḥuzn in “Classical” Sufi Manuals

We conclude our investigation of *ḥuzn* by focusing on teachings extrapolated from fourth/tenth- and fifth/eleventh-century self-conscious normative Sufi literature.⁷⁵ Although many of the sayings and anecdotes overlap, each of these works lay a new “sediment of meaning” over *ḥuzn*. *Ḥuzn* is practically absent in the two seminal works of Sufism: *K. al-Luma‘* by al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī (d. 378/988) and *K. al-Ta‘arruf* by al-Kalabādhi (d. 380/990 or 384/994).⁷⁶ Nevertheless, in the same period,

69. Here are a few extemporary examples: Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Junayd al-Khuttālī (d. 260/873 or 270/883) affirms that the pleasure of this worldly life consists in the *dhikr* and in the enjoyment of sadness (*taladhhdhudh bi-l-ḥuzn*). See Bernd Radtke, *Materialien zur alten islamischen Frömmigkeit* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 69. In his *Tafsīr*, commenting on Q 55:19, Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) compares the human heart and soul to the sea, containing various gems among which we find *ḥuzn* (together with other important Sufi terms such as *īmān*, *ma‘rifa*, *tawhīd*, *riḍā*, *maḥabbā*, *shawq*, etc.). See Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*, ed. and trans. Annabel Keeler and Ali Keeler (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2011), 216. For the teachings of Rābi‘a, see Rkia Elaroui Cornell, *Rābi‘a From Narrative to Myth: the Many Faces of Islam’s Most Famous Woman Saint, Rābi‘a al-‘Adawīyya* (London: Oneworld, 2019); for Nūrsī, see Turner, *The Muslim Theology of Ḥuzn: Sorrow Unravelling*, 139 ff.

70. As Alexander Knysch states, he can safely be considered one of the major exponents of the mystical and ascetic tradition that flourished in Baghdad in the second part of the third/ninth to the early fourth/tenth centuries, although he never described himself as a Sufi. See Knysch, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, 47–48.

71. *Ḥuzn* can also be traced in other works. See Gavin N. Picken, *Spiritual Purification in Islam: The Life and Works of al-Muḥāsibī* (London: Routledge, 2014), 131.

72. Al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-nufūs*, ed. Majdī Fathī al-Sayyid (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 1991), 126–127; al-Ḥārith b. Asad, al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Waṣāyā – al-Qaṣd wa-l-rujū‘ ilā Allāh – Bad‘ man anāba ilā Allāh – Fahm al-ṣalāt – al-Tawahhum*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1986), 302–304. Constant sorrow is propaedeutic; it educates and purifies the soul, and contrasts with Iblīs, who seeks the destruction of the believer’s heart. See al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-nufūs*, 49–51. *Ḥuzn* is nearly always coupled with *hamm*, and they both are associated with repentance (*tawba*), regret (*nadāma*), vigilance (*tayaqquz*), and hunger (*jū‘*), and it is said that it kills desires (*raghba*) and passions (*shahawāt*). Al-Muḥāsibī often referred to hunger as a similar purifier, a juxtaposition that can be later found in Abū Qāsim al-Qushayrī’s (d. 465/1072) *Risāla*, where the chapter on sadness is immediately followed by the chapter on hunger.

73. Picken, *Spiritual Purification in Islam: The Life and Works of al-Muḥāsibī*, 179.

74. Al-Muḥāsibī sometimes refers to *ḥuzn* as a *maqām*. However, the division between *aḥwāl* and *maqāmāt* is practically absent in al-Muḥāsibī’s works. Later Sufi authors defined *ḥuzn* as a *maqām* (like al-Hujwiri, d. between 465/1072 and 469/1077) or as a *ḥāl* (like al-Qushayrī).

75. Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism the Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 83 ff.

76. In *K. al-Luma‘*, *ḥuzn* appears in a description of the Prophet’s traits (*akhlāq*), as we have already encountered in Ibn Abī al-Dunyā. See Abū Naṣr Abū al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-luma‘ fi’l-taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1914), 100.

we find an extensive examination of *ḥuzn* in Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's (d. ca. 386/996) *Qūt al-qulūb*.⁷⁷ A possible reason for such a broad treatment is al-Makkī's intention to show that Sufism started in Baṣra, the home of al-Ḥasan's teachings on sorrow that later influenced al-Makkī himself.⁷⁸

Beyond the 'classical' *zuhd* association⁷⁹ and the exaggerated sadness of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī,⁸⁰ al-Makkī noticeably recalls the necessity of sorrow for true repentance (*tawba*) and its positive value when remembering someone's sins.⁸¹ On the other hand, *ḥuzn* has a negative connotation if the believer is actually grieving for temporary miseries or for what has passed, it being a sign of little faith and a "veil of discontentment."⁸² Interestingly, in two of the many maxims attributed to the Prophet, there is a clear stress on how to avoid sorrow, especially through faith.⁸³ Thus, it is evident that the connotation of *ḥuzn* in the whole compendium ultimately depends on its function for the believer: it can be actively requested by the servant in prayer and given by God,⁸⁴ representing a station (*maqām*) or an effect of other stations,⁸⁵ or on the contrary, it can be considered a sign of disobedience and, even more, a crime for the gnostic (*ʿārif*).⁸⁶

Progressing into the fifth/eleventh century, both Abu 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī's (d. 412/1021) *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*⁸⁷ and Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 430/1038) *Ḥilyat al-awliyā' wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā'*⁸⁸ not only sum up all the facets of *ḥuzn* that we have previously encountered, but also standardize and canonize them, defining Sufi archetypes. In both works, we trace the double value of *ḥuzn* (*laka* and *ʿalayka*)⁸⁹ and we further note the predominant juxtaposition of *ḥuzn* with *khawf*,

Similarly, *ḥuzn* is barely quoted in the *K. al-Ta'arruf*: the only significant appearance can be traced in al-Nūrī's (d. 295/907) description of ecstasy (*wajd*) as a flame that agitates (*taḍṭarīb*) the body with delight (*tarab*) or sadness (*ḥuzn*). Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhi, *K. al-Ta'arruf li-madhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Arthur John Arberry (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānī, 1994), 82. The absence of any relevant discussion of *ḥuzn* in the *K. al-Luma'* and in the *K. al-Ta'arruf* may also simply rest on the relative brevity of these texts in relation to the *Qūt al-qulūb*, the latter of which is much closer to an all-embracing encyclopedia of Islamic spirituality.

77. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb fī mu'āmalat al-maḥbūb wa-waṣf ṭarīq al-murīd ilā maqām al-tawḥīd*, ed. 'Aṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī. 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2005).

78. Suleiman Ali Mourad, *Early Islam Between Myth and History: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī*, 98.

79. Al-Makkī 1:70, 1:316, 2:278.

80. See, for instance, the evolution of his sadness in al-Makkī 1:381.

81. Al-Makkī 1:325; 1:362; 2:43; 2:264. *Huzn* (and especially perpetual sadness – *dawām al-ḥuzn* or *al-ḥuzn al-dā'im*) is related to *nadam* (al-Makkī 1:303) for passions and sins (al-Makkī 1:306), and to *tawba* (al-Makkī 1:307 ff), and it is associated with *khawf* and *khushū'* (al-Makkī 1:401), *ḥasra*, *ghamm* and *bukā'* (al-Makkī 1:392), and *tafakkur* and *ishfāq* (al-Makkī 1:395).

82. Al-Makkī 1:365.

83. Al-Makkī 1:21, 1:198, 1:261, 2:66.

84. Al-Makkī 1:24, 1:25, 1:314.

85. Al-Makkī 2:101, 2:104.

86. Al-Makkī 1:312, 2:54.

87. Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998).

88. Abū Nu'aym, al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā' wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā'*, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1985).

89. Ḥātim al-Aṣamm (d. 237/851–2) elaborates on the previously reported teaching of Ibrāhīm b. Adham on the double value of *ḥuzn* (Abū Nu'aym 8:77, 10:49, 10:159). Evidently, as in al-Makkī, the same emotion acquires positive or negative connotations depending on its subject. For instance, in Abū Nu'aym, sorrow over sins (Abū Nu'aym 1:324, 8:82) is extremely encouraged (Abū Nu'aym 5:62) and actively sought (Abū Nu'aym 10:44) since it avoids corruption of the heart (Abū Nu'aym 5:76) and brings proximity to God (Abū Nu'aym 8:101) and repentance and refuge in God (Abū Nu'aym 6:176). It is a characteristic of the obedient servant (Abū Nu'aym 6:94, 10:160) even the most devoted (Abū Nu'aym 8:194). It is felt by those who miss God (Abū Nu'aym 10:95–97). It adds to the servant's good deeds (Abū Nu'aym 3:59), and there is consolation (Abū Nu'aym 6:51) and recompense (Abū Nu'aym 4:47, 6:39, 6:56) to such positive sorrow. Therefore, it is better to be sorrowful (Abū Nu'aym 8:350), and Sufis grieve for not grieving enough (Abū Nu'aym 7:286). In sum, this sorrow must be embraced, it being the trade (*ṣinā'a*) of the Sufi (Abū Nu'aym 1:23). On the other hand, there is a negative, more "ascetic-oriented" *ḥuzn* similar to the Quranic "do not grieve": the believer should not grieve for worldly affairs (Abū Nu'aym 2:325, 2:337, 3:129, 3:182, 3:232, 4:69, 3:239, 8:63, 9:266); for disgraces (Abū Nu'aym 3:244); for his poverty (Abū Nu'aym 4:257, 5:364–365, 8:68); for worldly things he loves (Abū Nu'aym 3:244, 4:61, 5:292), desires (Abū Nu'aym 6:288) or needs (Abū Nu'aym 3:134, 7:370); for things that pass or that will come (Abū Nu'aym 2:14). The *zāhid* is indeed above these feelings (Abū Nu'aym 8:34, 8:204)

accordingly to an emotional plot traceable to the Quranic text: *ḥuzn* is said to be the sign of fear; a loss in sadness brings a loss in fear. Sarī al-Saqāṭī (d. c. 251/865), describing ten stations (*maqāmāt*) of the fearful believer, indicates *al-ḥuzn al-lāzim* as the first one.⁹⁰

This last saying brings us to a second observation: in these works, *ḥuzn* timidly tries to find its place in Sufi wayfaring (*sulūk*). For example, Bunān al-Ḥammāl (d. 316/928) states that *ḥuzn* and *ḥubb* pertain to the *maqām* in the second of the seven heavens. Other Sufi sayings stress the interplay of *ḥuzn* with other states or stations, such as *qabḍ*, *shukr*, *shawq*, and *jūʿ*, which will later find a more stable standardization.⁹¹

For his part, Abū Nuʿaym definitively canonizes another aspect of *ḥuzn* that will later prove influential: its relationship with *bukāʿ*. Its evidently hagiographic tone, its hyperbolic praises, and its focus on manifest, external pietism result in an institutionalization of the sorrowful ascetic-Sufi,⁹² often overlapping with the profile of the *bakkāʿūn*.⁹³

We finally turn to *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ʿilm al-taṣawwuf*⁹⁴ by al-Qushayrī, among the most popular of Sufi manuals.⁹⁵ The powerful novelty of al-Qushayrī's treatment of *ḥuzn* lies both in content⁹⁶ and in form: content-wise, *ḥuzn* is described and canonized as a *ḥāl* and one of the necessary attributes of the Sufi wayfarer, "speeding" him towards God;⁹⁷ form-wise, al-Qushayrī's treatment of *ḥuzn* is

and detached even from people (Abū Nuʿaym 6:345). To this world pertain long sorrows (Abū Nuʿaym 5:164, 6:172, 6:198, 6:267, 8:361), similar to Hell (Abū Nuʿaym 4:65, 4:215, 8:184). In sum, as Shaqīq al-Balkhī states, the *zāhid* should rejoice at being deprived of everything (Abū Nuʿaym 8:60). Sadness for such deprivation is something that God never taught them (Abū Nuʿaym 5:4).

90. Al-Sulamī n. 40 and 158; Abū Nuʿaym 8:207, 9:289 and 10:118.

91. On Bunān al-Ḥammāl, see al-Sulamī n. 255. On *shawq*, Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859 or 248/862) affirms that constant sorrow is one of the signs of burning desire for the Beloved (Abū Nuʿaym 9:342); on *shukr*, Abū Nuʿaym 6:158; and on *jūʿ*, Abū Nuʿaym 10:67 and al-Sulamī n. 372. In this emotional plot, the elements that strengthen *khawf* and *ḥuzn* are *tafakkur* and *tadhakkur* (al-Sulamī n. 61, 123 and 336). For the sake of completeness, the voice of al-Shiblī on *ḥuzn* seems to be a discordant one, giving priority to joy rather than sorrow (al-Sulamī n. 261).

92. Abū Nuʿaym definitively institutionalizes the sorrowful ascetic/Sufi. See, for instance, the description of ʿUtba al-Ghulām's (d. 167/783) sorrow, which is said to be "like the one of al-Ḥasan" (Abū Nuʿaym 6:226). The hagiographical purpose brings many admiring descriptions for (exaggeratedly) grievous people (Abū Nuʿaym 1:85, 1:142, 2:131, 4:372, 6:165, 6:169, 6:236, 6:269, 7:84, 8:87, 10:118).

93. On the *Bakkāʿūn*, see Abū Nuʿaym 1:102, 2:13, 2:13, 7:359, and 10:159. On *ḥuzn* and *bukāʿ*, see Abū Nuʿaym 2:375, 5:235, 5:113, 5:200, 6:167, 6:299, 6:302, 7:14, 9:327, and 10:295.

94. Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. al-Sharīf. 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1966).

95. Two other important early Sufi manuals of approximately the same period of al-Qushayrī basically show the same treatment of *ḥuzn* of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī with few prior sayings and anecdotes. See Abū al-Ḥasan al-Sīrjānī, *Sufism, Black and White a Critical Edition of Kitāb al-Bayāḍ wa-l-Sawād of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Sīrjānī* (d. ca. 470/1077), ed. Bilal Orfali and Nada Saab (Leiden: Brill, 2012), and Abū-Khalaf al-Tabarī, *The Comfort of the Mystics: a Manual and Anthology of Early Sufism*, ed. Gerhard Böwering and Bilal Orfali (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

96. Al-Qushayrī, in his *Bāb al-ḥuzn*, in addition to earlier sayings, quotes new *dicta*: Fuḍayl b. ʿIyād reports that pious ancestors (*salaf*) said that constant sadness is the almsgiving (*zakāt*) of the intellect (*ʿaql*), a saying traceable in *Shuʿab al-ʾImān* by al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066); Ibn Khafīf (d. 371/982) affirms that sadness prevents the *naḥs* from increasing (*nuhūd*) vain pleasure (*tarab*); Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī (d. 298/910) reports that the sorrowful person has no time for asking about sadness; therefore, he suggests: "seek sadness, then ask questions," (al-Qushayrī 1:267 ff). Sadness is mentioned not just in this chapter, but also elsewhere: Ibn Khubayq (d. 200/815–16) states that one of the characteristics of the best kind of fear is the one that fills you with sorrow over your omissions (al-Qushayrī 1:72); al-Tustarī underlines the importance of not showing off grief (al-Qushayrī 2:433); Abū Bakr al-Kattānī (d. 322/934) recalls that *taqwā* inhabits the heart of every sorrowful person (al-Qushayrī 2:569); and, on his side, Abū Turāb al-Nakhshabī (d. 245/859) indicates the light of contentment and enjoyment of the coolness of compliance (*muwāfaqa*) as two conditions that dispel sorrow (al-Qushayrī 2:420).

97. Sorrow is also described as a mystical moment (*waqt*) and a mystical occurrence (*wārid*). More importantly, al-Qushayrī identifies *ḥuzn* as a state (*ḥāl*) while in al-Hujwiri's *Kashf al-mahjūb*, *ḥuzn* is a station (*maqām*) and specifically the station of Dāwūd. See ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, ed. and trans. Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (Leiden: Brill, 1911), 371. In this latter work, the treatment of *ḥuzn* is less systematic and evidently less extensive than in the *Risāla*.

authoritative and systematic, and it will be highly impactful: he shows how Sufi perspectives on *ḥuzn* are well-grounded in the Quran and the Sunna, and he claims and stresses the unanimous consensus of Sufis around *ḥuzn*'s virtues, functions and features.⁹⁸ Thus, al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* has proven to be a turning point for many Sufi concepts, and sadness is no exception: *ḥuzn* has acquired an official role in the whole Sufi experience.⁹⁹

Sediments of Sadness

To conclude our investigation, we move back to the etymological richness of *ḥuzn*—i.e., considering *ḥuzn* as rugged ground (*arḍ ḥazna* or *arḍ ḥazniyya*) composed of sediments of meaning. In describing this emotion, we have followed a chronological line—i.e., from the Quranic text until the second half of the fifth/eleventh century.¹⁰⁰ Textual evidence brings us to the conclusion that all the works analyzed here have attempted to “make sense” of *ḥuzn*, going beyond the Quranic major *consolatio* theme. Surely, the believer should not grieve, because God relieves grief. However, sadness is a basic and necessary component of life. It has played a role in the lives of Ya‘qūb, Umm Mūsā, Maryam, and even in Muḥammad's and other prophets' lives. Thus, every author has added layer over layer of meaning, adding *sensus* (in its etymologically *double entendre*, both “meaning” and “direction”) to *ḥuzn*. First, they directed *ḥuzn* towards the “hereafter event,” thus giving it the right *direction*, which in turn gives *meaning* to every worldly affair; second, they focused on the positive outcomes of *ḥuzn*—on its functions, its “virtuosity.” Sediment after sediment, *ḥuzn* ‘*alā ḥuzn*, the believers' perceptions of *ḥuzn* have slowly changed and have been “sensified” to the point that a detestable event could be considered as a Divine gift (the mystical state—*ḥāl*)—i.e., a virtuous emotion.¹⁰¹

See, on the divergences: Abdul Muhaya, *Maqāmāt* (stations) and *Aḥwāl* (states) According to al-Qushayrī and al-Hujwiri: A Comparative Study (PhD diss., McGill University, 1994).

98. “People have *lengthily* discussed *ḥuzn*. All of them say [. . .] Indeed, *ḥuzn* for/of the hereafter is praiseworthy, while *ḥuzn* for/of this world is not praiseworthy,” (my italics). Once again, the object of *ḥuzn* determines its positive or negative value as evident in two different sayings of Abū ‘Uthmān al-Ḥīrī: the latter considered sadness, in all its aspects, a virtue (*faḍīla*) and a surplus (*ziyāda*) for the believer, rectifying (*tamḥīṣ*) him. However, he also states that sadness is a virtue as long as it is not caused by sins (al-Qushayrī 1:267 ff).

99. Heck engages with both Ibn Abī al-Dunyā and al-Qushayrī. The latter treatment of *ḥuzn* leads him to conclude that sorrow is not a mere religious duty, but has a spiritual depth to it, a mark of a spiritual elevated state of the soul. See Heck, “Sadness in Classical Islam: Its relation to the Goals of Religion,” 7–10.

100. Surely, Sufis have integrated *zuhd* materials into their teachings and, in turn, *zuhd* literature has drawn nearly all its vocabulary from the Revelation. However, conceptual history does not lie only on a diachronic evolution; rather, we also have to consider Reinhart Koselleck's “layers of time,”—i.e., the unfolding of history along several different but coexisting sediments of time which hold diverse features in terms of duration, speed, and intensity, where the singular (unique) and the recursive event are related. See Reinhart Koselleck, *Sediments of Time on Possible Histories*, ed. and trans. Sean Franzel and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Stanford: California Stanford University Press, 2018). *Ḥuzn*—this rugged ground that causes sorrows—is hence composed of the interplay of these sediments of time. Moreover, a map of the works analyzed might also help us understand why certain authors have placed stress on particular “emotional plots.”

101. “An emotion able to tap into moral value, or even the driving and sustaining force of the moral virtues.” See Kristján Kristjánsson, *Virtuous Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 31.

Similar to al-Muḥāsibī's teachings that urge one to instill grief in one's *nafs* in order to educate it to virtues, *ādāb al-nufūs* can be seen, especially in its early stages,¹⁰² as a process of sensitization to proper emotions, thus overlapping emotional and ethical development.¹⁰³ In this perspective, *ḥuzn* is both the hard ground that needs to be cultivated (worldly *ḥuzn*) and the seed, the fertilization (*talqīh*) through which this cultivation will be possible (hereafter *ḥuzn*). Thus, sadness is healed by more meaningful, "fruitful" sadness—i.e., sadness with/in the right *sensus*:

Sufyān al-Thawrī once lamented: "O sadness!" Rābi'a answered: "Do not lie. Say, instead: how little sadness! [. . .] I am not sad because of my sadness, but because of how little sadness (*qillat al-ḥuzn*) I feel."

It is remarkable that this Sufi tendency to "sensify" *ḥuzn* somehow overlaps with contemporary psychology scholarship. In his 2018 article on "the quiet virtues of sadness,"¹⁰⁴ Lomas identifies three major virtues of sadness, characterized by instrumental and intrinsic usefulness. First, instrumental sadness, as a protection from prompting disengagement, echoes detaching oneself from unattainable goals as the purely ascetic/philosophical approach to *ḥuzn*; second, in its intrinsic value, sadness can be an expression of care, such as a manifestation of longing, which recalls Dhū al-Nūn's concept of *shawq ḥazīn*, or compassion, and eliciting care (as in the sayings stressing the emotional bonds between believers—the "mirror" of the other believer); third, sadness is intrinsic to flourishing—i.e., as a moral sensibility or an engendering psychological development—through shifting one's locus of concern outwards to other people, which clearly recalls al-Muḥāsibī's approach and the idea of sorrow as the seed of good deeds (for God and for others).

To conclude, as this brief comparison has shown, ascetics and later Sufi writers recognized sadness as a necessary component of a sincere devotional life, moulding a rough ground into a fruit-bearing soil to the point of exclaiming, in the words of Mālik b. Dīnār: "Indeed, sadness has ripened me!"

102. We stress the virtuosity of *ḥuzn* in the early stages of wayfaring. In fact, *ḥuzn*, as a virtuous emotion closely associated with fear as well as remorse over past sins, could also become a vice in relation to the soul's effacement in God (i.e., in later stages) since it reflects an excessive preoccupation with the self, as in the saying of al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899) on the necessity of abandoning weeping upon arrival (See Khalil, *Repentance and the Return*, 100).

103. Kristján Kristjánsson, *Virtuous Emotions*, 26.

104. Tim Lomas, "The Quiet Virtues of Sadness: A Selective Theoretical and Interpretative Appreciation of its Potential Contribution to Wellbeing," *New Ideas in Psychology* 49 (2018): 18–26.

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