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Sensing Sound

Aesthetic and Religious Experience According to al-Ghazālī

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ABSTRACT The Muslim theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) is one of the most often cited authors when it comes to "music and Islam." His "Book on the Etiquette of Listening and Ecstasy" (*Kitāb Ādāb as-samāʿ wa-l-wajd*), translated into English more than a hundred years ago, is widely circulated among Muslims in the East and West, in Arabic and English, in print and on the internet. This paper re-examines the text against the background of Arab musical theory of the time when it was written, and analyses selected technical terms that allude to concepts rooted in Late Antique musical philosophy and also become tangible in the Qurʾān. al-Ghazālī recognises both aesthetic pleasure and the transformative power of sounds and gives guidance how to channel the hearing perception into a salvific experience.

KEYWORDS Islam, music, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, sonic dimensions, Muslim ritual

Introduction

The Muslim theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) is one of the most cited authors with regard to the role of music in Islamic culture. During my fieldwork on contemporary religious chanting in Syria and Lebanon, his statements were recurrently present in conversations and religious speeches or lessons. The frequent reference to his arguments is the reason why I chose his *Book on the Etiquette of Listening and Ecstasy* (*Kitāb Ādāb as-samāʿ wa-l-wajd*, see below) for a close reading. That al-Ghazālī, like many of his colleagues before him, built partially on categories that came down with the reception of Greek philosophy is a recognised fact (Griffel 2009; Kukkonen 2015). However, his book on listening has not been the subject of further research in this respect. It was taken foremost as a text voicing the permissibility of using music—mainly in the form of sung poetry—both in general and, more specifically, within Muslim religious practice. This paper is a first attempt to examine al-Ghazālī's classification of sounds and of music's functions in different religious and non-religious contexts within the framework of musicology. It will show that some of his arguments only become clear [1]

in the light of Arabic musical theory, which had appropriated Greek musical philosophy. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean his arguments are understood and used today in the same way they were in the twelfth century. This paper focuses on the evolution of his arguments against the backdrop of Arabic musical theory at his time. The presence and understanding of his arguments in contemporary Muslim practices will be examined in a second paper (Weinrich forthcoming).

'Aesthetic experience' is based on Erika Fischer-Lichte's concept of aesthetic experience as a liminal experience. It is characterised by a transition that comprises physiological, energetic, affective, and motoric changes (2004, 305–14, 2008, 174–80). Aesthetic experience can work as a mediator of religion, but not all aesthetic experiences are necessarily religious. The latter is the case if the goal is directed towards initiating a relation to the Divine. Aesthetic experience is a useful category here because al-Ghazālī understands structured sound in relation to human conditions. He sees beautiful sound as a source of pleasure and, more importantly, music as a tool to incite emotions, and describes how it may be used as a religious tool. It is important to note that the text under study is not an abstract elaboration on beauty but deals foremost with aesthetic experience.[1] Accordingly, the terms *jamāl* or *jamīl* ('beauty' or 'beautiful,' typical for the abstract theory) do not figure prominently in his vocabulary. Instead we find the terms *ṭīb* and *ḥusn* and their respective adjectives *ṭayyib* and *ḥasan*, meaning 'good,' 'pleasant,' and, as a consequence, also 'beautiful.' In addition, al-Ghazālī uses *ladhdha* and *mustalidhdha* (and occasionally *ṭarab* and *muṭrib*), i.e. 'delight' and 'causing delight.' It shows that he is mainly concerned with sensations and processes that are triggered through listening. These processes, or selected parts of it, become channelled as religious experiences. It is this last part which constitutes the focus of the present paper: how, in al-Ghazālī's conceptualisation, is listening and its impact conceived as a religious experience? [2]

I must start by saying that I am mainly interested in the effects of listening as described in a non-Sufi context. This may seem odd, dealing with al-Ghazālī, who is often primarily taken as a representative and defender of Sufism. But, in fact, he also treats the religious function of music in a non-Sufi context. In al-Ghazālī's time of living and writing, the power of music was a well-acknowledged fact. The *Epistle on Music* (*Risāla fī l-mūsīqī*) by the so-called Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ) describes the effect of music on human beings and how it can be found in all domains of life, regardless of class or nation. The Brethren of Purity is the name used by a group of authors of a large encyclopaedic work consisting of about fifty epistles on various sciences that are addressed to a fictive "brother" and written in the tenth century.[2] They write: [3]

> […] the art of music has differing effects on the souls of the listeners […]. Because of this, all nations of humankind make use of it, as do many animals also. A demonstration that it has effect on the soul is that people sometimes use it when there is rejoicing and pleasure at weddings, feasts, and invitations, sometimes when there is sadness, grief, and tribulation, and on occasions of mourning [*maʾātim*], some- [4]

1 For an assessment of al-Ghazālī on beauty, see Puerta Vilchez (2017, 738–55). Puerta Vilchez' seminal study covers a large part of Arabic writing on sense perception until the fourteenth century. It focuses on al-Andalus but also includes some major thinkers in the East. However, when it comes to concrete examples of sense perception, the visual sense clearly dominates.

2 On the Brethren of Purity, see DeCallataÿ (2013) and El-Bizri (2008); especially on their writing on music, see Wright (2008) and Wright (2010). I use the Arabic edition and English translation by Owen Wright; the epistle on music had been studied by Amnon Shiloah and translated into French (1965) and English (1978); on these and the new edition and translation, see Wright (2010, 1–15).

> times in houses of worship and on feastdays, sometimes in the marketplace, at home, when travelling and when settled down, at times of ease and at times of weariness, in the assemblies of kings and the dwellings of commoners. It is used by men and women alike, by young and old, by the learned and the ignorant, by artisans and merchants, and by all classes of people (Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ 2010, 12–13 Arab., 80–81 Engl.).

In the following, I will give a short outline of al-Ghazālī's writing on listening and highlight the different domains and functions of listening the author describes. I will explore some of his technical terms in the light of musical terminology. Given the fact that a large part of the ideas on the effects of sound was shared by Jews, Christians, and Muslims, the paper finally asks about specific Muslim interpretations in this context. [5]

The Author and his Book

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (ca. 1056–1111) was born in the district of Ṭūs in Khorasan, near the modern Mashhad.[3] He became a professor at the famous Niẓāmīya Madrasa in Baghdad in 1091, but after a couple of years he withdrew from teaching, facing a personal crisis. He travelled and studied for a period of eleven years before he finally returned to teaching at the Niẓāmīya. Within the scope of this article, it is not possible to give a full account of al-Ghazālīs's teaching and writing. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the image which dominated Western scholarship on al-Ghazālī in the twentieth century has been re-evaluated recently. This regards mainly two issues: the perception of al-Ghazālī as taking up a hostile position against philosophy (*falsafa*), and even being responsible for a 'decline' of philosophy instead of a naturalisation of philosophy into Islamic theology (*kalām*); and the portrayal of his crisis as a turning point that would also include the change of certain theological positions.[4] [6]

In the following, I will focus solely on his writing on listening to music and singing (*samāʿ*). It has become habitual to take these writings as a main reference for the defence and the permissibility of music.[5] I would like to take a different path and elaborate mainly on two aspects: first, on music as a practice and not as an abstract concept which should be permissible or not; and second, his differentiation between the various functions and impacts of different sounds. [7]

The main source cited with regard to music is al-Ghazālī's *Book on the Etiquette of Listening and Ecstasy* (*Kitāb Ādāb as-samāʿ wa-l-wajd*), which is part of his monumental *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm ad-dīn*). In a modern print, it comprises four volumes of 1.500 pages (al-Ghazālī, n.d.).[6] In short, it represents an ethical guide for Muslims for all aspects of life. Its four sections treat devotional practices (*ʿibādāt*), social customs (*ʿādāt*), things that lead to perdition (*muhlikāt*), and things that lead to salvation (*munjiyāt*). Frank Griffel characterises the *Revival* as follows: [8]

> *Revival* was an unusual book for its time. It was conceived as a work on the 'knowl- [9]

3 For a detailed account of his life, see Griffel (2009, 19–59).
4 For a comprehensive reassessment, see Griffel (2009).
5 For instance, Bruns (1995, 96); Gribetz (1991); Shannon (2006, 114); Shehadi (1995, 115–31). In addition, searching for 'al-Ghazālī' and 'music' in any search engine online will bring about innumerable examples.
6 I also consulted the Cairo print by Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-awlāduh, 1347–48/1928 and have checked important passages against the commentary by Zabīdī ([1414] 1994). For the problems related to the *editio princeps* and modern prints of *Revival*, see Griffel (Griffel 2009, 15–16).

> edge (or: science) of human actions' (*ʿilm al-muʿāmala*) and not on the 'knowledge of the unveiling' (*ʿilm al-mukāshafa*). It wishes to prove that type of knowledge that prompts humans to act rightfully, staying clear of knowledge that has no consequences for human actions. The religious knowledge that al-Ghazālī wishes to revive is 'the jurisprudence of the path to the hereafter.' *Revival* creates a new genre of literature by combining at least three earlier ones: the genre of *fiqh* books on the individual rulings (*furūʿ*) of Shari'a, the genre of philosophical tractates on ethics and the development of character […], and the genre of Sufi handbooks […] (Griffel 2009, 48).

The *Book on the Etiquette of Listening and Ecstasy* was translated by Duncan B. MacDonald under the title "Emotional Religion in Islām as Affected by Music and Singing" in 1901/02 (1901a, 1901b, 1902). The translation has its merits but is only of limited use. The reason lies not so much the old-fashioned, sometimes stilted language; most importantly, it is—naturally—not up to date with our state of knowledge on the musical terminology al-Ghazālī uses. This applies to a number of musical instruments, such as *shāhīn* or *ṭabl* (n. 15), and, more importantly, to the term *ṭuruq* (sg. *ṭarīqa*) for musical modes, which are, as I will show, perceived as evoking different states in the listeners. In the following, I will present a short overview of the text's general structure and content before elaborating on the aspects that are relevant for this paper. [10]

Ādāb as-samāʿ wa-l-wajd: Outline of the Contents

In his general introduction to the book, the author describes the ear as the interface, which is only the entrance point of the sound. The real effect of listening happens in the heart (*qalb*). The main function of listening with intent, according to al-Ghazālī, lies in revealing the secrets which are hidden in the heart. [11]

> Infolded in them [hearts] are their jewels like as fire is infolded in iron and stone, and concealed like as water is concealed under dust and loan. There is no way to the extracting of their hidden things save by the flint and steel of listening to music and singing (*samāʿ*), and there is no entrance to the heart save by the ante-chamber of the ear. So musical tones, measured and pleasing (*an-naghamāt al-mawzūna al-mustalidhdha*), bring forth what is in it and make evident its beauties [in the sense of 'good qualities' (*maḥāsin*)] and defects. For when the heart is moved there is made evident that only which it contains like as a vessel drips only what is in it. And listening to music and singing is for the heart a true touchstone and a speaking standard; whenever the soul of the music and singing reaches the heart, then there stirs in the heart that which in it preponderates (MacDonald 1901a, 199; al-Ghazālī, n.d., pt. 6, p. 1120).[7] [12]

At this point, some explanation on the term *samāʿ* and its translation is needed. *Samāʿ* literally means 'listening'; MacDonald translates generally as "listening to music and singing" (MacDonald 1901a, 236n1). Although he mainly states the Sufi perspective as a reason for his choice, it is indeed an appropriate translation in this context: when talking about *samāʿ*, [13]

7 I use MacDonald's translation in this example to give an impression of his language. Technical terms in brackets are my addition. All translations from Arabic in the following are mine, if not indicated otherwise.

the author foremost refers to the performance of poetry but occasionally also to the sounds of instruments and sounds in nature. Nevertheless, as al-Ghazālī focuses on the listener's perspective and the different impacts of, and responses to, listening, I will translate *samāʿ* in many cases merely as 'listening.' In the course of history, *samāʿ* has, on the one hand, become synonymous with music in general. On the other, it developed into a technical term for listening with spiritual intent in Sufi ritual practice. In the time of al-Ghazālī, the Greek-derived term *mūsīqī* (later becoming *mūsīqā*) denoted primarily the musical theory, whereas for the musical practice, *ghināʾ* ('singing') and more specific genre names were used. al-Ghazālī hardly uses *mūsīqī* in his text but occasionally refers to *ghināʾ*.

[14] The main text of the book is divided into two parts. The first part treats the different opinions (*ikhtilāf al-ʿulamāʾ*) regarding the question of permissibility (*ibāḥa*) of listening. The second part discusses the different effects and the etiquette of listening. Each part is subdivided into steps (*darajāt*) or stages (*maqāmāt*), and these are often further subdivided.

[15] al-Ghazālī starts with presenting traditions (*aḥādīth*, sg. *ḥadīth*) and scholarly opinions against and in favour of listening. He then enumerates "Proofs that show that listening to music and singing is permissible" (n.d., 1124). Like sight, smell, taste, or touch, hearing engages with either pleasant or unpleasant sensations that occur in nature.[8] Listening to a beautiful voice (*aṣ-ṣawt al-ḥasan*) is permitted because God has bestowed this quality upon his creatures. The author here follows one exegetical line of interpreting the Qurʾānic verse "He adds to his creation what he wills" (Q 35:1) as referring to the beautiful voice. He further quotes various traditions underlying that the beautiful voice is part of God's message to humankind, most prominently "God did not send a single prophet without a beautiful voice" (n.d., 1125).

[16] The beautiful measured sound (*aṣ-ṣawt aṭ-ṭayyib al-mawzūn*),[9] the author continues, cannot be forbidden, because it is part of God's created nature. As the prohibition of certain things and practices occurs contextually, one cannot generalise and argue for a general prohibition of the beautiful measured sound. "Measured," here, means "with well-proportioned structures" (*mutanāsiba li-l-maṭāliʿ wa-l-maqāṭiʿ*) that may also be found, for instance, in the singing of birds (n.d., 1126), and thus refers to a rhythmical structure in the widest sense. The author then turns to poetry (*shiʿr*), introduced as "measured (i.e. with a metre)" (*mawzūn*) and "with a meaning" (*mafhūm*). As both rhythm and meaning are not forbidden, both occurring together cannot be forbidden, he argues (n.d., 1128).

[17] He then moves on to an argument he already alluded to in his introduction. Listening is a mover of the heart (*muḥarrik li-l-qalb*), he explains, but it can only move what is already inside the heart (n.d., 1131). This way of argumentation is not exclusively used by al-Ghazālī but typical of early Islamic mystical thought. al-Ghazālī quotes a statement by Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī (d. c. 830): "Listening does not produce in the heart what is not in it, but it stirs up what is in it" (n.d., 1133). It seems that the argument in his time was used in both ways: as a licence and, importantly, also as a warning and an argument for prohibition under certain circumstances.[10] This discussion in general reflects a main issue Muslim scholars had to deal with, namely the unquestioned power of music, which showed in various ways in daily experience, and how to integrate it into religion. al-Ghazālī brings examples of a baby that

8 al-Ghazālī also enumerates 'reason' (*ʿaql*) along these senses, defining the respective opposite experiences as 'knowledge' and 'ignorance' (n.d., 1125).

9 *Ṣawt* means both 'sound' and 'voice.' Here, 'sound' is meant, because al-Ghazālī also discusses 'wordless' sound.

10 The argument was often used in conversations during my fieldwork; it was emphasised mainly as an argument for the justification of religious chanting.

stops crying when listening to something beautiful, and he quotes numerous anecdotes how humans and animals respond to different kinds of sounds and rhythms. Arabic literature is indeed full of such examples.[11]

In this section, his fourth argument in favour of listening, al-Ghazālī describes seven purposes in which the chanting of rhymed measured words (*at-tarannum bi-l-kalimāt al-musajjaʿa al-mawzūna*) is of good use, and continues by enumerating five circumstances in which listening to music and singing is not permissible. He ends with a refutation of the arguments by those who consider listening as not allowable. [18]

The second part of the book treats the effects and etiquette of listening. The term the author uses for 'effect' is *taʾthīr*: he speaks of different impacts (*āthār*, sg. *athar*) listening has for the individual. *Ādāb*, here translated as 'etiquette," refers not only to refined behaviour but carries the notion of socially and ethically approved behaviour, i.e. the knowledge about right and wrong; one could also translate 'codes of behaviour,' or 'behavioural norms.' [19]

This part is subdivided into three stages (*maqāmāt*) of listening, the first of which is understanding (*fahm*). Understanding, al-Ghazālī argues, varies as the conditions of the hearer vary (n.d., 1153). In his elaboration, he starts with listening in general and ends with Sufi listening, in particular. He describes the four different states (*aḥwāl*) of the listener as follows: [20]

First, finding pleasure in the rhythms and melodies. For the author, this represents the lowest form of listening. Nonetheless it is allowable, as finding pleasure in appealing sounds lies in the nature of living creatures. [21]

Second, listening with understanding, but applying it to a concrete creature (*ṣūrat makhlūq*), be it an individual person or not. The author characterises this as the listening of the young, dominated by lust (*shahawāt*), and therefore so low that it is not worth being discussed. [22]

Third, applying what one hears to the stages of one's soul in one's interaction with God (*an yunazzila mā yasmaʿuhu ʿalā aḥwāli nafsihi fī muʿāmaltihi li-llāhi taʿālā*, n.d., 1153). This desirable form of listening denotes the listening of the religious seeker (*murīd*). al-Ghazālī gives a wide variety of examples of how verses of poetry can be applied in different ways, least with a literal understanding. Today, the ambivalence of some kinds of poetry performed during religious occasions is echoed, for instance, in worries like those expressed by Nadhīr Maktabī, who wonders how listeners might know that the *khimār* (lit. a woman's veil) in a certain verse refers to the Kaaba (Maktabī 2000, 144–45).[12] [23]

Finally, the listening of the one who has passed beyond all states and stages (al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1158); in Sufi terminology, he explains, this is the one who "has annihilated himself" (*qad faniya ʿan nafsihi*, n.d., 1159).[13] [24]

The second stage, after understanding and applying (*fahm* and *tanzīl*), treats the phenomenon of ecstasy (*wajd*). The author explains the relation between listening and the soul (*munāsabat as-samāʿ li-l-arwāḥ*) and elaborates on two different kinds of ecstasy, one that immediately comes over the listener, the other as the result of a process (*hājim* and *tawājud*). It is indeed the second type, which I term 'induced ecstasy,' that is of interest for the author. If it is forced or feigned for the sake of hypocrisy, it is blameworthy; if it is acquired and induced through, and with, noble intentions, it is praiseworthy. [25]

The third stage deals with the etiquette of listening, encompassing inner attitudes as well as outward behaviour (*ādāb as-samāʿ bāṭinan wa-ẓāhiran*). al-Ghazālī discusses praiseworthy [26]

11 See Blum (2013, 105–06) for a brief classification and Neubauer (1990, 227–29) for examples.

12 Maktabī strongly advocates unambiguous texts, not open for symbolic interpretations, whereas al-Ghazālī sees no problem with ambiguous texts for experienced listeners.

13 For al-Ghazālī's understanding of annihilation, see Griffel (2009, 254–55).

and blameworthy reactions and gives five rules (*jumal*) of appropriate behaviour (*ādāb*). The author ends with a short conclusion which summarises the circumstances, functions, and effects of listening in legal terminology.

From this short outline, it becomes clear that al-Ghazālī describes not only two but three domains of listening: a non-religious context, a general religious context, and the specific Sufi context. These should not be understood as clear-cut separate realms but rather as stringed on a continuous line leading from non-religious to Sufi listening. We will now zoom into the text at several points where he writes about these domains in more detail. [27]

The Purposes of Listening

In the section on how listening moves the heart, al-Ghazālī discusses the seven purposes (*aghrāḍ makhṣūṣa*) of chanting in rhymed measured words. He starts with the singing of the pilgrims (*ghināʾ al-ḥajīj*) (al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1133). From his short remark we can conclude that before or during the pilgrimage people were singing poems containing descriptions of the pilgrimage sites, accompanied by drums (*ṭabl*) and fifes (*shāhīn*).[14] This singing has a positive outcome, he states, because it instils longing to perform the pilgrimage. [28]

The author is clearly aware of the different effects that different types of sounds have on listeners. The effect of sound can be amplified through various means, which he lists as follows (n.d., 1133): [29]

- *sajʿ*: rhyme [30]
- *wazn*: poetic metre
- *ṣawt ṭayyib*: beautiful voice
- *naghamāt mawzūna*: rhythmic melody
- *ṭabl* or *īqāʿ*: membranophones and idiophones that produce a rhythm[15]

By excluding wind instruments and strings (*mazāmīr* and *awtār*), he leaves the level of musical argumentation and moves towards a contextual argument: the last category of instruments is not forbidden because of the effect they have on the human body but because they are associated with forbidden practices, like wine drinking or sexual overtones not covered by the law. Wind and string instruments were played in wine taverns by singing girls and effeminate singers. These instruments were thus 'occupied' by other social spheres, and this association was so strong that the instruments were of no use for the religious milieu. Nevertheless, in a later passage of his book, al-Ghazālī acknowledges, or rather meditates on, the delightful effect of string instruments. [31]

Further purposes of singing and chanting are: [32]

2. To incite to warfare (*ghazū*); these poems should be in different musical modes (*ṭuruq* [33]

14 Farmer (1929, 16, 47, 74, 154–55) takes *ṭabl* as generic name for any drum; Wright (2010, 24) suggests that in the tenth century, it was a generic term for a double-headed drum beaten with a stick. The *shāhīn* is still unknown to the translator (see MacDonald 1901a, 214n1). According to Farmer (1929, 34), it is a fife. Apparently it was played with one hand while the other hand was used to beat a drum ("shāhīn", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Glossary and Index of Terms*).

15 As an idiophone, al-Ghazālī names the *qaḍīb*. *Qaḍīb* gives the translator a headache, as he cannot find it in the lexica and it was wrongly described by early musicologists such as Laborde, Kiesewetter, and Sachs (MacDonald 1901a, 210n2). It is a "wand or stick for beating the rhythm or īqāʿ pattern" and appears in the tenth-century anthologies *Kitāb al-aghānī* and *al-ʿIqd al-farīḍ* as well as in the writings of the Brethren of Purity; see Faruqi (1981, 251). Wright (2010, 25) assumes that it nevertheless belongs to an earlier stage of musical practice than the tenth century.

alḥānihim) than those for pilgrimage, he remarks.
3. Verses in the *rajaz* metre to encourage fighting; this refers back to the ancient Arab warfare custom when poetry was recited before entering the battlefield.
4. Songs and melodies of lamentation (*aṣwāt an-niyāḥa wa-naghamātuhā*).
5. Listening to music and singing on occasions of joy to incite and amplify joy.
6. Listening of the lovers (*ʿushshāq*) to intensify desire and love (with the restriction that it is permissible only if the object of love is lawful).
7. Listening of the one who loves God and longs for him.

The last part (7) describes listening in the Sufi context: this condition Sufis would call (*bi-lisān aṣ-ṣūfīya*) ecstasy (*wajd*) (n.d., 1139). al-Ghazālī claims: "[T]he knowledge about why souls are affected by sounds belongs to the most subtle knowledge whose revelation the Sufis are granted (*wa-maʿrifatu s-sababi fī taʾthīri l-arwāḥi li-l-aṣwāti min daqāʾiqi ʿulūmi l-mukāshafāt*, n.d., 1139f.). [34]

Yet, this paper asks about what the author has to say on the religious use of musical sound in contexts other than Sufism. This would apply, for instance, to the first example of his enumeration, the singing of the pilgrims. Among the occasions of joy, al-Ghazālī names both religious and social occasions: the canonical feasts (*ʿīd*), having completed the memorisation of the Qurʾān, the return of a long-time absentee, a wedding, a banquet, or a birth (n.d., 1135). The most interesting example, nevertheless, comes in the context of lamentation. There are two kinds of sorrow (*ḥuzn*), he explains: praiseworthy and blameworthy sorrow. On the basis of Qurʾān 57:23, he shows that excessive sorrow about loss and death is blameworthy. Praiseworthy sorrow, on the other hand, is "the sorrow of the human being about his own shortcomings in religious matters, the weeping over his own faults; and weeping and induced weeping (*al-bukāʾ wa-t-tabākā*) and sorrow and induced sorrow about this is praiseworthy" (n.d., 1134). He then continues: the preacher (*wāʿiẓ*) with a good voice may "chant from the pulpit poems that incite sorrow and soften the heart (… *an yunshida ʿalā l-minbari bi-alḥānihi l-ashʿāra l-muḥazzinata l-muraqqiqata li-l-qalb*)" (n.d., 1135). He further continues: "… and he may make cry and induce crying in order to affect the others to cry and to bring about sorrow (… *an yubkā wa-yatabākā li-yatawaṣṣala bihi ilā tabkiyati ghayrihi wa-ithārati ḥuznihi*)" (n.d., 1135). [35]

To fully grasp the meaning and operational mode behind this example of praiseworthy sorrow, we need to explore the further background of the described incident. al-Ghazālī's terminology is very much in line with appraisals of highly popular and successful preachers at that time.[16] Softening the heart, evoking humbleness, and to making one cry (*tarqīq*, *takhshīʿ*, and *tabkiya*) figure as key terms for the successful performance of a preacher. [36]

Crying is an appropriate and desired response to Qurʾānic recitation as well as to religious speech and chanting in the wider sense. It is already mentioned in the Qurʾān (e.g. Q 5:83), and al-Ghazālī refers back to this issue in a later passage of his text (n.d., 1167). "He cried and made others cry" figures, for instance, as the positive valuation of a preacher from Murcia by his contemporary Ibn al-Abbār (d. 1260) (Jones 2012, 232). [37]

The 'soft heart' is an antithesis of the 'hard heart'; the hard heart would not be able to receive or accept the divine message. We find this pairing more than once in the Qurʾān, like in the following verse: "So is one whose heart God has expanded to [accept] Islam and he walks upon a light from his Lord. Then woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance [38]

16 See descriptions in Ibn al-Jawzī (1971); Ibn Jubayr (1959); Jones (2012).

of God. Those are in manifest error“ (Q 39:22). The equivalent for the soft heart, in this verse, is the heart which God has expanded (*sharaḥa ṣadrahu*). This phrasing refers to the earlier Sure 94, which starts with, “Have we [God] not expanded your [Muḥammad’s] breast? / And lifted from you your burden / Which weightened upon your back?” (Q 94:1–3). Angelika Neuwirth understands the expanded breast as “a metaphor of a psychic experience that would be best interpreted as a newly achieved ‘opening up for God’s presence’ ” (2011, 1:90, my translation). This interpretation is in line with the traditional exegetical literature. Scholars explain the breast expanding both as an experience of relief and easing as well as an almost physical widening, like a vessel, to receive knowledge, certitude, obedience, and understanding.[17] In later passages, al-Ghazālī also speaks of the hard heart: in his elaborations on Sufi listening, he describes the one who is not able to receive the different impacts (*taʾaththur*) of listening as “frozen and hard of heart (*al-jāmid al-qāsī l-qalb*)” (al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1140, see also 1178 for another example).

To soften the heart, that is, to enable it to receive the divine message and to make the listener aware of God’s presence, is the task of the preacher. The “preaching superstar” (Dorpmüller 2016, 173) of twelfth-century Baghdad, Ibn al-Jawzī, refers to preaching as “evoking the fear that softens the heart (*wa-amma l-waʿẓ fa-huwa takhwīf yariqqu lahu l-qalb*)” (Ibn al-Jawzī 1971, 11 Arab., 97 Engl.). We know from various accounts that he was indeed successful in achieving this goal.[18] [39]

But it is not content (alone) which has this effect. Describing the performance of young preachers during Ramadan evenings in late twelfth-century Mecca, the traveller Ibn Jubayr emphasises that a successful preacher needs more than religious knowledge. He also needs rhetorical skills, comprising eloquence and voice modulation. He explains: “([…] if the religious admonition (*tadhkira*) comes from the tongue [alone], it does not reach further than to the ear” (1959, 128). This means: if the words are simply produced by the vocal apparatus, they lack any impact. Religious admonition needs an appealing sound, produced by the skilful use of the voice and the rhythm and sound of “measured words,” in al-Ghazālī’s terms, to reach the heart of its listeners. al-Ghazālī thus relates here to concepts that are rooted in the Qurʾān and became further elaborated in Islamic homiletics. [40]

Regarding the interpretation of sorrow (*ḥuzn*), it is worth noting that it does not designate a mere sentiment of sadness. Referring to the deficiencies of the human being vis-à-vis God’s magnificence, it rather describes a dialogical relation. The religious specialist is aware of these deficiencies, and he/she should make others aware of it, that is, evoke sorrow. Whether preaching or chanting is successful or not is revealed in the behaviour of the listeners, because to feel *ḥuzn* leads to specific responses. Tears and other forms of behaviour are regarded as external markers of an inner state of humbleness and repentance. Typical responses to recitation and preaching become part of the relevant reports. From the twelfth century onwards, we find colourful descriptions of how listeners in pious gatherings burst into tears, sob, cover themselves with dust, or offer their forelocks to be cut.[19] [41]

17 See the commentaries by az-Zamakhsharī, ar-Rāzī, al-Qurṭubī, al-Fīrūzabādī, Ibn Kathīr, aṭ-Ṭabarī, and al-Bayḍāwī. A few authors, such as ar-Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Bayḍāwī, additionally offer the story of the prophet’s breast-opening as an act of purification.

18 For instance, Ibn Jubayr (1959, 195–200); Ibn al-Jawzī (1971, 145 Arab., 231 Engl.).

19 In addition to the already mentioned sources, see also Katz (2015); Talmon-Heller (2007), especially chapter 4. It should be noted, however, that scholars also set limits and reproach excessive reactions, feigned weeping, or putting up a ‘show.’ This applies to both sides, performers and listeners. See, for instance, Ibn al-Jawzī (1971, 93–97 Arab., 171–76 Engl.).

The 'Greek Link': Themes, Types, and Terms

[42] Certain vocabulary in al-Ghazālī's text shows confluences with ancient Greek musical philosophy, such as 'measured speech,' 'moving the soul,' or references to harmonious proportions. Some common ideas of Greek musical writing that were taken up in later Arabic writing can be summarised very broadly as follows: In Greek theory, music and dance both depict and produce different states of the soul. Appropriate musical modes generate order and harmony and may counterbalance disequilibrium. The structure (in the sense of: sequence of intervals) and consequent ethos of musical modes generate different qualities accordingly. Plato viewed the Dorian mode as the best mode, since it generated manly qualities such as courage, self-containment, and endurance. By contrast, many other modes were not to be used, since they were considered to generate female, soft, and licentious qualities. The classification of musical modes is based on Pythagorean concepts of numerical relationships. Harmonic proportions are reflected in the ratios of intervals, the most stable intervals being the fifth (3:2 with regard to the length of a string), the fourth (4:3), and the octave (2:1). Harmonic proportions were set in relation to cosmological theories, most notably by Aristides Quintilianus and Ptolemy. Instrumental timbre, rhythmic cycles, and the size of intervals were held responsible for the different effects of music, with a prominent role of the tetrachord in both Greek and Arabic theory. Much writing was devoted to the astronomic and humoral-medical allocations to tones and strings, most often the zodiac, planets, elements, humours, scents, days of the week, hours of the day, or body limbs.[20] In the following, some important Arabic-writing scholars and their works are listed, without claiming to give a complete overview.

[43] The musical theory of ethos—according to which certain musical modes affect and move the soul in a specific manner—was common knowledge in Late Antiquity in the Eastern Levant and Persia (see Neubauer 1990, 228–29; Kazemi 1999, 103). In the late eighth century, Arabs started to translate, amongst other sciences, treatises of Greek musical philosophy. The centre of these activities was Baghdad, the newly founded capital of the Abbasid caliphate.[21] One of the most active translators was Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq (d. 873), an East Syriac Christian scholar and physician.[22] He was a contemporary of Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī (d. 861–866) (Endress and Adamson 2012, 99), a polymath who wrote several influential treatises on music. These include an elaboration on various aspects of the Pythagorean-platonic theory of ethos, such as in the *Book on Stringed Instruments from One to Ten Strings* (*Kitāb al-Mutaṣawwit al-watarīya min dhāt al-watar al-wāḥid ilā dhāt al-ʿasharat al-awtār*), in *On Musical Composition* (*Risāla fī Khubr taʾlīf al-luḥūn*), and in "On Modes and Tones" (*Risāla fī l-Luḥūn wa-n-nagham*). The latter contains a chapter on the musical styles of different peoples and regions at his time (see below).[23]

[44] Likewise, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950) wrote important musical treatises, most notably the *Great Book on Music* (*Kitāb al-Mūsīqī l-kabīr*) and his studies on rhythm (*Kitāb al-Īqāʿat* and *Kitāb Iḥṣāʾ al-īqāʿāt*), which all had a great impact on musical theory in the following cen-

20 See Blum (2013); Haas (2006); Kazemi (1999, 15–105); Neubauer (1998); West ([2005] 2016). See also below for the elaboration on selected aspects.

21 For more on the so-called translation movement, which included Middle Persian, Greek, Syriac, and other languages, see Gutas (1998).

22 On him, see Strohmaier (2017).

23 For a comprehensive account of al-Kindī's work, see Endress and Adamson (2012); on his musical writing, see Blum (2013, 108–11); Endress and Adamson (2012, 115–17); Haas (2006, 661–68); Neubauer (1990, 234–35); Neubauer (1994, 378–79, 381–88, 398–404); Shehadi (1995, 15–33).

turies.[24] He wrote his *Great Book on Music* upon the request of the vizier of the Abbasid caliph ar-Rāḍī bi-llāh (r. 934–940), al-Karkhī, and included not only, as requested, the Greek theorists but also the theories of al-Kindī and the Mawṣilī school.[25]

The aforementioned Brethren of Purity were familiar with the Greek musical philosophy, [45]
which shows clearly in their epistle on music. Both al-Kindī and the Brethren used a treatise by a certain Būlos, most probably Paul of Aegina (d. after 642), one of the earliest Arabic texts on the theory of ethos. Paul of Aegina was a physician who spent most of his life in Alexandria. One of his medical works was translated by Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, which makes it possible that the book on music was also translated either by him or his son Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn (d. 910).[26] We furthermore find passages from a collection of gnomologia with the title *Aphorisms of the Philosophers* (*Nawādir al-falāsifa*), attributed to Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, both in the works of al-Kindī and the Brethren of Purity and also in the book by Būlos. These passages, centring on the ethic and therapeutic effects of music, are by no means fully identical; they rather show the wide circulation and popularity of such writings.[27]

Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), known in the West as Avicenna, [46]
devoted several chapters and passages of his work to music, most importantly in *The Book of Healing* (*Kitāb ash-shifāʾ*).[28] Ibn aṭ-Ṭaḥḥān (d. after 1057), the famous musician at the Fatimid court in Cairo, may serve as a last example. His two-part *Compendium of the Arts to Comfort the Sad* (*Ḥāwī l-funūn wa-salwat al-maḥzūn*) on the history of Arab music and singers and the musical practice in his era includes a wide range of aphorisms and anecdotes. One chapter titled "Aphorisms of the Philosophers" ("Fī jawāhir kalām al-falāsifa") contains music-related sayings by Greek philosophers, starting with Plato (Ibn aṭ-Ṭaḥḥān 1976, 13). By naming some of these influential authors on music, I do not intend to postulate a chronological line of transmission but to show that this knowledge of musical philosophy was translated, studied, and re-appropriated.[29] It is apparent that certain categorisations and topics in al-Ghazālī's writing on listening is owed to his acquaintance with some of these works.

al-Ghazālī speaks of different types of sound in a manner very similar to the classification [47]
given by the Brethren of Purity, which encompasses animate and inanimate sources of sound, such as living creatures and instruments. With respect to animate sources, he differentiates between humans and animals, and he further distinguishes wordless sound and sound with a

24 For an overview and further reading, see Sawa (2015a); see also Haas (2006, 682–97) and Fārābī (n.d.).

25 Ibrāhīm and his son Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī were gifted authors and musicians. In contrast to al-Kindī, their school focuses on musical practice. For more, see below and Neubauer (1994, 382–403).

26 *The Nature of Music* (*Kitāb ʿUnṣur al-mūsīqī*). For an edition of the Arabic text with a German translation, commentary, and introduction, see Kazemi (1999); on the authorship, Būlos/Paul, Kazemi (1999, 117–19); on the question of the translator, Kazemi (1999, 116–17, 119); on al-Kindī and the Brethren of Purity using the text, Kazemi (1999, 105).

27 On *Nawādir al-falāsifa*, see Gutas (2012, 466–68); Kazemi (1999, 111–17, 122–24).

28 The chapters in his *Kitāb an-Najāt* and *Dānesh-nāma-ye ʿalāʾī* do not differ considerably in content from the chapter in *Shifāʾ*, see Wright ([1987] 2011); Wright (2004–2005); Shehadi (1995, 66–80); on al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, see also briefly Blum (2013, 112–15).

29 The transmission and re-appropriation of Late Antique musical philosophy by Arab authors is far from fully researched. In fact, much of musical writing is still unexplored. Since many authors likewise worked in the fields of philosophy, medicine, mathematics, and music, Western scholarship paid least attention to music. George Sawa's statement on al-Fārābī holds true for other authors as well: "Regrettably, Middle Eastern specialists in fields other than music view him [al-Fārābī] only as a political philosopher and logician; musicologists who deal with mediaeval Western music are unaware of his contributions to music theory and his useful commentaries on the treatises of ancient Greek music theorists" (Sawa 2015a; see also Haas 2006, esp. 637–40, 652–56). A notable exception is van Gelder and Hammond (2008), who include musical writing, mostly by al-Fārābī and al-Kindī, with respect to image evocation in Arabic poetry. The studies named in the preceding footnotes show that authors like al-Kindī, the Brethren of Purity, and al-Fārābī treat various aspects of musical theory quite differently.

meaning (*mafhūm*). He does not give a separate classification like the Brethren do but occasionally refers to this system (al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1124, 1126; for the Brethren of Purity, cf. Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ 2010, 22–25; cf. also the table in Wright 2008, 226). In the greater part of his book, however, al-Ghazālī treats sound with meaning, i.e. poetry.

In the section on ecstasy, the author does not argue along theological lines but starts with a [48]
discussion of the relation between listening and the soul (*munāsabat as-samāʿ li-l-arwāḥ*), referring to sayings by Sufis and sages (*al-ḥukamāʾ an-nāẓirīn*). As the briefly presented works on music show, aphorisms are typical of many works that were translated from Greek into Arabic. Indeed, this type of writing—and reading—enjoyed great popularity.[30] al-Ghazālī quotes one of the sages with the following statement: "in the heart lies a noble property that speech is not able to elicit, but the soul can do it with music (*fī l-qalbi faḍīlatun sharīfatun lam taqdir quwwatu n-naṭqi ʿalā ikhrājihā li-l-lafẓ fa-akhrajathā n-nafsu bi-l-alḥān*)" (al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1161).[31] This saying is, with minor modifications, also to be found in the gnomologia that are included in the works of al-Kindī, the Brethren of Purity, and Ḥunayn (Kindī 1962, 107; Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ 2010, 167–68).[32] It furthermore echoes the descriptions by Ibn Jubayr who remarks that by speaking alone (i.e. using the normal speech voice) the admonition lacks its effect (see above).

After enumerating citations and anecdotes by famous Sufi figures, al-Ghazālī quotes un- [49]
named sages who describe different effects of listening. He states that listening arouses or strengthens states such as longing, fear, sorrow, or joy. We will now examine some elements related to these processes against the background of musical philosophy and musical theory in more detail.

Moving the Soul and Producing Emotions: *taḥrīk*, *taʾthīr*, and *ṭuruq*

The process of how human beings actually respond to rhythmic musical compositions and [50]
how different emotional impacts are produced is governed by three technical terms: *taḥrīk*, *taʾthīr*, and *ṭuruq*. Like Būlos and al-Kindī, al-Ghazālī speaks of the soul that is moved by specific sounds (melody and rhythm) in a specific manner. The term the Arabic texts use is a form of root *ḥ-r-k*, 'to move.' al-Ghazālī chiefly uses the causative form II or V (to move somebody or something), either as verbal noun, participle, or verb.[33] He does not give a detailed description of this process but rather takes it for granted, so to speak as a natural fact, in accordance with then current theories. Commenting on the addition of a third parameter to a binary classification of higher/lower pitch or longer/shorter length of a tone, Stephen Blum expounds:

> This is the fundamental structure of the doctrine of the *ēthos*, which may well [51]

30 See Gutas (2012, esp. 463–65); for the context of music, Kazemi (1999, 122–24); Wright (2008, 233); also Blum (2013, 105–06). For an illuminating example of the integration of such material into the Arabo-Islamic court culture, see Biesterfeld (2017) on Abū Zayd al-Balkhī (d. 934).

31 As *alḥān* carries rhythmic as well as melodic aspects, I translate it here simply as 'music.' See also below for the discussion of *laḥn* (pl. *alḥān*).

32 Wright points out that a version is included in the collection *al-ʿIqd al-farīḍ* and in the *Murūj adh-dhahab* by al-Masʿūdī (Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ 2010, 162n317). The saying shows conformances in vocabulary and content but also significant differences. There is not enough textual evidence in form of editions and manuscripts available to me at this time to draw any further conclusions.

33 For instance, *taḥrīk* (al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1120, 1162), *muḥarrik* (n.d., 1124, 1131), *taḥarraka* (n.d., 1120).

> antedate the Greek writings that were the main sources for its subsequent development in the Muslim world and the Latin West. Kindī describes three species (*anwāʿ*, sing. *nauʿ*) of composition (*taʾlīf*) with Arabic equivalents for the tripartite classification of ēthos given by Cleonides and Aristides Quintilianus and presumably reproduced in the Byzantine and Arabic writings that were available to Kindī: *al-basṭī* 'the expansive' for *diastaltikon* 'stimulant'; *al-qabḍī* 'the contracting' for *systaltikon* 'depressant'; and *al-muʿtadil* 'the temperate' for *hēsychastikon* 'calming' […]. To arouse the appropriate movement of the soul (*ḥarakat al-nafs*), verses adorned with a melodic framework (*laḥn*) of one species should be set to the corresponding metric cycle or 'meter' (*īqāʿ*, pl. *īqāʿāt*): quick (*khafīfa*) to inspire delight, slow (*thaqīla*) for melancholy, moderate for a sense of the sublime, the munificent or the beautiful (Blum 2013, 108).

[52] It should be stressed, however, that al-Kindī's focus was devoted to theoretical systems of classification (for instance, Kindī 1962, 83–85) and does not necessarily reflect musical practice. The three-fold system of musical effects, however, was common among theorists.

[53] As becomes clear from the title of the book's second part, *Fī āthār as-samāʿ wa-ādābihā* (On the Effects and Etiquette of Listening), the main term for denoting the different effects of listening to music and singing is *taʾthīr* and its related forms.[34] *A-th-r* in form II means to affect, to produce an effect, or to induce. Referring to the impact (*taʾthīr*) listening has on the soul/heart, al-Ghazālī names recurrently different emotions, most often joy, sorrow, and longing (*faraḥ*, *ḥuzn*, *shawq*) (e.g. al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1131, 1139, 1162 [as *aḥwāl* that are produced or strengthened through listening]).

[54] The most palpable somatic response comes along with these three emotions: "and it [measured tones] produces [in the soul] longing, joy, and sorrow, as well as ease and anxiety (*wa-taʾaththuruhā bihā shawqan, wa-faraḥan wa-ḥuznan, wa-nbisāṭan wa-nqibāḍan*" (n.d., 1139). These last two responses illustrate the binary of relaxation and contraction which marks the rhythm of life and thus has a prominent role in musical theory as well: "Kindī's terms for expansive and contracting melodic frameworks connect musical experience with rhythms on which human life depends—the dilation (*inbisāṭ*) and contraction (*inqibāḍ*) of heart and lungs—and with processes that are fundamental to the entire created order: 'God brings about contraction and dilation'" (Blum 2013, 108).[35] The polarity of hard/soft is typical of Greek and Arabic musical writing. The described processes have last but not least a concrete musical equivalent, as the musical pitch of a string is altered by increase and release of its tension. It is not surprising that we find a variation of this pairing in a vivid description of a somatic response to the Qurʾān, given in the Qurʾān itself: "The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver at the mention of it [the book], then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance of God (*taqshaʿirru minhu [ḥadīth kitābin] julūdu lladhīna yakhshaʿu rabbahum thumma talīnu julūduhum wa-qulūbuhum ilā dhikri llāhi*)" (in Q 39:23). One could also translate this as 'the skins become coarse and then become soft,' as the overall physical process described is the succession of tension and relaxation: the skin becomes coarse (like gooseflesh)/shivers as an indicator of tension, and then becomes soft/relaxes. Skin is a synecdoche for the complete body; therefore, in the second sentence, not only the skin but also the hearts relaxes.

34 E.g. 1132, 1139 (also, *taʾaththur*), 1153 (also, *āthār*), 1174, 1133 (*āthār*), 1140 (*taʾaththur*), 1152 (*yuʾaththir*).

35 *Wa-llāhu yaqbiḍu wa-yabsuṭu* (It is God who holds back and gives in abundance, Q 2:245). The overall context of the verse is the uneven distribution of property in this world, set in contrast to the accumulation of good deeds, which is what counts after death.

al-Ghazālī furthermore refers to emotions in an indirect way. By naming the responses that are caused by listening, e.g. laughter (as a result of joy), sleep (as a result of serenity), or movements (as a result of either joy or energetic stimulation), he denotes the symptoms of emotions, such as in the following quote: [55]

> To God the Exalted belongs a secret regarding the relationship of measured tones to the soul; they do have on the soul a remarkable effect: some make to rejoice and some to grieve, some put to sleep and some cause laugh and delight, and some bring forth movements of the limbs according to their measures, with the hand, the foot, and the head. And this does not happen due to the poem's meaning but is caused by the strings (*li-llāhi taʿālā sirrun fī munāsabati n-naghamāti l-mawzūnati li-l-arwāḥi ḥattā innahā la-tuʾaththiru fīhā taʾthīran ʿajīban fa-mina l-aṣwāti mā yufriḥu, wa-minhā mā yuḥzinu wa-minhā mā yunawwimu wa-minhā mā yuḍḥiku wa-yuṭribu wa-minhā mā yastakhriju mina l-aḍāʾi ḥarakātin ʿalā wazнihā bi-l-yadi wa-r-rijli wa-r-raʾs; wa-lā yanbaghī an yuẓanna anna dhālika li-fahmi maʿānī sh-shiʿri bal hādhā jārin mina l-awtār* (al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1131). [56]

In a second quote, he explicitly refers to dancing within the context of joy: "it [joy] is expressed in verses, melodies, and dance, as also movements are praiseworthy (*iẓhāruhu [surūr] bi-sh-shiʿr wa-n-naghamāt wa-r-raqṣ, wa-l-ḥarakāt ayḍan maḥmūd*)" (al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1135). Naturally, this issue becomes further elaborated in the passages on etiquette in the Sufi context of listening: what kind of movements, to what extent, and out of which motives movements are praiseworthy is then discussed in detail. [57]

Again, al-Ghazālī presents no elaborated theory on how different emotions are evoked. The way Owen Wright (2008, 240) characterises similar statements by the Brethren of Purity also applies in our case: what is important about music, he writes, is "its potential to affect the soul in an ultimately functional way within a predetermined scheme of causality (…)." In his insightful study on "moral psychology," that is the dynamics of the soul and its different qualities in al-Ghazālī's theology, Taneli Kukkonen (2015, 140) similarly comments: "there is much that al-Ghazālī takes for granted, and many important features to which only passing reference is made." He explains this handling with his primary interest in action, which is also the case in our context. However, despite the lack of an elaborated theory, some remarks and technical terms used by al-Ghazālī indicate that specific emotions are connected to specific musical modes. [58]

The Importance of *ṭuruq*

In direct relation to *taʾthīr* stands the term *ṭuruq* (sg. *ṭarīqa*). The impact varies according to the different *ṭuruq*, al-Ghazālī states (al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1174). This term, which the translator, more than one hundred years ago, quite refreshingly commented with, "I leave it untranslated, as the meaning is obscure to me" (MacDonald 1901a, 220n1), becomes clear against the background of musical theory. [59]

In the seventh century, two elaborated musical systems existed in direct proximity to the Arab musical system, that of Persian court music and that of Syrian-Byzantine church music.[36] Both systems were named after the number of modes that constituted the basis for musical [60]

36 The following two paragraphs are mainly based on Neubauer (1994).

structures and, as common in the Ancient Orient, were set in relation to extra-musical elements. These were the Seven Royal Ways (Arab. *aṭ-ṭurūq al-mulūkīya*) of Persian-Sasanian music, on the one hand, and the Eight Modes (*oktōēchos*) of Syrian-Byzantine church singing, on the other. The *oktōēchos* can be traced back to the eighth century (Jeffery 2001); John Damascene (d. c. 749) is considered to have contributed importantly to its development. In Arabic, *oktōēchos* became *al-alḥān al-usṭūkhusīya* or *usṭūkhūsīya*, translated as *al-luḥūn* or *al-alḥān ath-thamānīya* (the eight modes or melodic types) (Neubauer 1994, 377). In his treatise *On Modes and Tones*, al-Kindī states that all sounds, including those by animals, can be traced to the Eight Modes (Kindī 1965, 26–27; Neubauer 1994, 378–79). al-Kindī equates *ēchos* (voice) with *laḥn* (intonation, melody). *Laḥn* in the Qurʾān (47:30) refers to intonation, i.e. the melodic aspect of verbal utterance, and later becomes the common term for 'melody'; *laḥn* is also the technical term for (linguistic) error. Manfred Ullmann (1979, 15) states that *laḥn* as a musical term in the sense of 'melody' can be traced to Greek influence. Eckard Neubauer (1994, 377) agrees but suggests that this happened earlier than assumed by Ullmann. Based on the Arabic title of a book ascribed to Ptolemy as *Kitāb al-Luḥūn ath-thamānīya* (The Book on the Eight Modes), which is mentioned in a fragment of a treatise by Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 819 or 821), he reckons that *laḥn* as a musical term was already in use among multi-lingual Christians in Syria during the eighth century.

al-Kindī's musical writing is primarily devoted to theoretical allocations and speculative systems and less concerned with practical usage. This was different with Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (d. 804) and his son Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī (d. 850), who was, like al-Kindī, employed at the caliph's court in Baghdad. Both father and son were gifted musicians and had a genuine interest in describing musical practice (Neubauer 1994, 381–403). Their school formed an important contribution to the development of Arab musical theory. In contrast to Greek musical theory, which was based on the lyre, the Arabs based theirs on the lute: a tone (*nagham*) was defined by the position of the fingers on the lute's frets. The lute usually had four strings that were tuned in fourths. Both the Mawṣilī school and the system of the *oktōēchos* used a seven-tone scale as musical material for the different modes; also, both systems consisted of eight modes that were divided into two groups.[37] But whereas the Greek and Byzantine systems defined their modes according to melodic modes, the Mawṣilī school defined musical modes according to the musical metre (*īqāʿ*), combined with melodic modes. [61]

The combined definition of mode, referring to the rhythmic aspect of a melody, was named in the Mawṣilī school *ṭarīqa* (way, method) (Neubauer 1994, 388). Songs in collections were accordingly titled with the following information: *fī ṭarīqat ath-thaqīl al-awwal* (in the way of the first heavy, or slow, [metre]) (1994, 389). Rhythm was the primary marker of a mode, which was supplemented with further information on the tones. In the well-known tenth-century compilation *Book of Songs* (*Kitāb al-aghānī*), the *ṭarīqa* of a song is indicated by a combination of rhythm (*īqāʿ*), the position of the finger on the lute's string (*iṣbaʿ*), and melodic course (*majrā*), either by giving all three markers or a combination of rhythm and one of the two melodic markers (Sawa 2015b, 324–25). The combined definition of mode, marked by metre and tones, with the term *ṭarīqa* is also found in the eleventh-century treatise by al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Kātib and with the aforementioned Ibn aṭ-Ṭaḥḥān (Neubauer 1994, 389, 404–07; Ḥasan 1975, esp. 112–17; Ibn aṭ-Ṭaḥḥān 1976). Hence, al-Ghazālī's use [62]

37 In the *oktōēchos*, the two groups consisted of the authentic and plagal modes; in the Mawṣilī system, the modes were grouped along the melodic course that included either a minor or major third or second (*majrā*) (Neubauer 1994, 393n72).

of the term *ṭuruq* points to musical theory as it was used in the Eastern Mediterranean and Iraq in the tenth and eleventh century. His plural form is not exactly typical, though. In early writings we observe the form *ṭurūq*, which could well be, as Neubauer (1990, 376n6) suggests, a form built in analogy to *luḥūn*; in later treatises, *ṭarāʾiq* is the common plural form (see also Neubauer 1998, 420). This notwithstanding, it is important to note that al-Ghazālī is not simply referring to a 'way' of how a musical piece is sung or played in the sense of an individual style. Instead, he is referring to a technical term within a theory that differentiates between different musical modes and sets these in relation to specific emotional states.

al-Ghazālī himself names some of these modes: with regard to pilgrimage songs and those in [63]
the context of warfare, he speaks of modes that stir up longing (*ṭuruq mushawwiqa*) and those that incite strength, courage, and enthusiasm (*ṭuruq mushajjiʿa*) (al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1134). One could add the mode that evokes sorrow (*muḥazzin*), as he mentions measured tones that have the effect of producing sorrow (*yuḥzinu*, 1131, cf. the quote above) and speaks of chanted poems that incite sorrow and soften the heart, which the preacher may chant (*al-muḥazzina al-muraqqiqa*, 1135, see quote above).

This matches some of the modes and their impacts which the Brethren of Purity enumerate. [64]
They list two of them with identical names (*al-muḥazzin*, *al-mushajjiʿ*) and describe the rest through their effects and use. Not surprisingly, in their classification *al-muḥazzin* is also used for prayer and recitation and *al-mushajjiʿ* for war. They further speak of a mode that is used in hospitals to comfort the sick in pain and that may cure illness. Another mode, they write, is used in times of affliction and loss for consolation and relief. A fifth mode is used during heavy physical work. Finally, the Brethren refer to a mode well known and widely used in their time (*fī zamāninā hādhā*). This is a mode for joyous occasions like weddings and banquets. Most Arab and Persian theorists have a classification of musical modes grouped around three main qualities and corresponding effects, in general delight, sorrow, and strength. The number of six is unusual, although one may trace some overlaps in the described functions (Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ 2010, 17–19).

In our context, it is sufficient to notice that the correct mode gains the quality of a precon- [65]
dition of its usage. With respect to warfare, al-Ghazālī states: "their poems and their musical modes should be different from the poems of the pilgrimage and their musical modes (*yanbaghī an tukhālifa ashʿāruhum wa-ṭuruqu alḥānihim ashʿāra l-ḥajji wa-ṭuruqa alḥānihim*)" (al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1133). The fact that al-Ghazālī does not simply speak of 'melodies' (*alḥān*) but uses 'musical modes' (*ṭuruq alḥānihim*) shows that he speaks of specific musical modes that are related to specific bodily and emotional states.[38] He further explains: "and the emboldening rhythmical modes are different from those that evoke longing (*wa-ṭuruqu l-awzāni l-mushajjiʿati tukhālifu ṭ-ṭuruqa l-mushawwiqa*)" (n.d., 1134). Thus, his following verdict has not only moral and social but musical connotations: "but this [if *samāʿ* is allowed or not] depends on the conditions and on the persons and on the respective musical modes that are used (*bal yakhtalifu dhālika bi-l-aḥwāli wa-l-ashkhāṣ, wa-khtilāfi ṭuruqi n-naghamāt*)" (n.d., 1132). In other words, the occasion of listening, the motivation and abilities of the individual listener, and the correct mode in relation to the music's function are the criteria of using musical sound in an acceptable or even desirable way that may lead to religiously meritorious results.

38 Like in the writings of al-Kindī and the Brethren of Purity, the meaning of *laḥn* oscillates between rhythm and melody. Melody foremost refers to the organisation of pitch, but in the Arabic theory was also defined by the succession of tones of different lengths and of pauses—one cycle of these would make up the metre (*īqāʿ*). I translate '(musical) mode' here to avoid a purely melodic association.

Aesthetic, Religious, and Muslim Experience

Making use of the emotive powers of musical modes was not limited to Muslim practices. It was also not perceived as exclusively Muslim, as the following quote, again by the Brethren of Purity, shows: [66]

> With regard to the use of music by the custodians of divine ordinances in temples and places of worship, when reciting [*qirāʾa*] during ritual prayer [*ṣalāh*], at sacrifices, when praying [*duʿāʾ*], supplicating, and lamenting, as the prophet David used to do when reciting his psalms, and as the Christians now do it in their churches and the Muslims in their mosques, with sweetness of tone [*naghma*] and a melodic form [*talḥīn*] of recitation—all that is used for hearts to be softened (*riqqat al-qulūb*) and souls to be humble (*khuḍūʿ an-nufūs*), submissive (*khushūʿihā*), and obedient to the commands and prohibitions of God Almighty, to turn to Him in repentance for their sins, and to return to God, exalted be He, by adopting the practices of His ordinances as they have been prescribed (Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ 2010, 13–14 Arab., 81–82 Engl.).[39] [67]

Some very brief comparative remarks pertaining to the idea of ethos shall be added here. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars participated in the transmission and dissemination of Late Antique musical philosophy. This has already been demonstrated by the interpretation of the Syrian-Byzantine *oktōēchos* and the works by Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq. The aforementioned *Aphorisms of the Philosophers* also circulated in Jewish milieus, not least because of its Hebrew translation by Yehuda al-Ḥarīzī (d. 1235) (Gutas 2012, 467).[40] Another prominent example is the case of Saadiya Gaon (d. 942), whose *Book on Doctrines and Beliefs* (*Kitāb al-Amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*) contains a lengthy paragraph on music.[41] Here, Saadiya Gaon briefly refers to all five senses and then turns to hearing. The overarching topos with all senses is the creation of a harmonious blend within each one (e.g. through the mixing of colours or the mixing of scents) to create a positive effect on human conduct. The main part on music is devoted to the description of eight rhythmic patterns that consist of various combinations of moving and quiescent beats. These are set in relation to their effects: the first two stimulate blood and incite the wish to rule; the third stimulates yellow bile and incites courage; the fourth stimulates phlegm and incites submission; the last four stimulate black bile and incite at times joy and at times sorrow. Again, the overall aim is to achieve an equilibrium of all the described temperaments: [68]

> It is in the habit of kings to blend them [i.e. the various modes] with each other until they are in a state of equilibrium. As a result, the change [lit. motion] produced in their characters when they listen to them will be beneficial to their souls, which will thus be suitable to conduct the affairs of government. They will then [69]

39 Additions in square parentheses/[…] in the original, additions in round parantheses/(…) are mine.

40 A version of the Hebrew text with an English translation is provided by Werner and Sonne (1942–1943, 513–32). For more communalities in Greek, Jewish, and Muslim perceptions on music and its effect, see Shiloah (2000); and, on a broad basis of sources, though outdated in some aspects, Werner and Sonne (1941); Werner and Sonne (1942–1943).

41 For the complete treatise in English translation, see Saadia Gaon ([1948] 1976). The passage on the senses, and especially music, is on page 401–04. Shiloah (2004, 269n5) points to the problematic translation of the musical passage and provides the passages discussed by him in their original languages and his English translation (272–76).

> not be unjust, evincing either excessive clemency or excessive harshness, nor will they show undue courage or cowardice, nor excessive or too little joy and gladness (Saadiya Gaon, transl. by Shiloah 2004, 276).

[70] In the passage on music, there are close resemblances to the description of rhythmic modes by al-Kindī.[42] Amnon Shiloah, however, points out that there are also considerable differences: Unlike al-Kindī's passage on rhythmic modes, Saadiya Gaon's expositions are not part of a treatise on musical theory but are embedded in religious philosophy, and here in a chapter on ideal human conduct. There are also significant terminological differences. For instance, Saadiya Gaon uses *naghma* (tone) instead of *naqra* (beat), used by al-Kindī to describe the patterns. al-Kindī's terminology points to the short-necked lute (*ʿūd*), whereas Saadiya Gaon deliberately avoids any allusion to this instrument which could be taken as referring to the ludic character of music. Shiloah sees precisely the religious context as responsible for these differences (2004, 279–83). Christian interpretations applied the theory of ethos exclusively within the religious field, for instance, ascribing the different modes and their effects to different liturgical times and acts throughout the year (Nieten 2005, 279–81).[43] This is different from the case of al-Ghazālī, who discusses a wide variety of occasions, religious and non-religious, with regard to the different modes.

[71] To recapitulate his arguments, we need to return to the context of al-Ghazālī's *Revival of the Religious Sciences*. al-Ghazālī's main concern in *Revival* is to show how Muslims can live a good life that will lead to salvation in the hereafter. Therefore, he is concerned, on the one hand, with questions of what Muslims should refrain from doing. Applied to the topic of music, the answer pertains to its correct usage: modes that cause a specific emotional state should be used in the corresponding context. For instance, modes that evoke longing may not be used for warfare. Furthermore, the object of longing should be lawful. Instruments associated with forbidden practices, like wine drinking or unlawful sexual relationships, should not be used (al-Ghazālī, n.d., 1133, 1139).

[72] On the other hand, al-Ghazālī is interested in how to make use of the power of musical sound in the religious context. Therefore, he only briefly refers to those forms and contexts of lawful listening whose consequences could be described as 'neutral,' as it has neither positive nor negative consequences. This relates to the context of joy, warfare, and lovers. The most noble form of listening is to apply it in one's relationship to God. The author treats this aspect exhaustively in his elaborations on Sufi listening. Sufis, for al-Ghazālī, are the most experienced listeners and thus may listen to almost anything. Their religious training enables them to apply everything they hear to God. He describes in great length how poetic verses lead to quite different understandings, according to the state of the listener. In the last part of the book, the author elaborates on concrete physical reactions, such as raising one's voice, moving the extremities of the body, or tearing up clothes, and which of these are socially approved.

[73] Yet, beside this Sufi context, al-Ghazālī relates to a religious use of, and experience caused by, listening that is available to everybody within regular religious rites, such as attending Friday prayer or preaching assemblies on any other day. Preaching assemblies were quite popular. Not only were some attended by thousands of listeners (Ibn al-Jawzī 1971, 26, 253) but

42 al-Kindī, *Risāla fī ajzāʾ khabariyya fī l-mūsīqī* (On Parts of Scientific Knowledge on Music), quoted in Shiloah (2004, 272–73, Arabic next to Saadiya Gaon's text).

43 This handling corresponds to the Christian authors who chose to transmit only those aphorisms that were consistent with Christian beliefs (Gutas 2012, 263).

Daniella Talmon-Heller (2007, 119) reports that given high levels of demand, there could have been many more assemblies in Iraq, if only there had been enough Qurʾānic reciters whose readings commonly opened such assemblies. The key term in this context is sorrow (*ḥuzn*). Listeners will experience sorrow—but this sentiment is a dialogical one, as it characterises the acknowledgment of human shortcomings vis-à-vis God's magnificence and magnanimity. Moreover, as we know from depictions of preaching and writings in Islamic homiletics, sorrow becomes closely linked to the soft heart, which is opened up for the divine message, to humbleness and, finally, repentance by the divine message. Repentance in the Islamic context is channelled into asking for forgiveness (*istighfār*), and the merciful God will forgive the sinner (*al-ʿāṣī*, lit. the disobedient). This is one step in the process that ultimately leads to salvation, that is, to the gratification of entering paradise at Judgement Day. This link adds the religious surplus value and explains the cathartic experiences depicted by many authors.

Conclusion

[74] Although a large part of al-Ghazālī's writings on the effects of music and singing is devoted to listening as a Sufi practice, there are several passages which treat listening in a general sense and the religious use of sound in a non-Sufi context. This appears in the seven purposes of listening, in his comments on the preacher who is to use chanting, and in his general elaborations on the relation between sound and the human soul. It is understandable why his arguments are popular for those who seek to rationalise the use of musical sound in religious practice. He takes into consideration (1) the aesthetic quality and emotive power of rhythm, resonance, and rhyme; (2) a classification of different sounds and instruments and their effects; and, finally, (3) listening experiences and self-preparation as a decisive factor for the effect on the individual.

[75] The affinity to musical philosophy and musical theory can be traced in his classification of sounds and instruments, in his mention of all three arts that are treated in Greek musical philosophy (i.e. the art of measured words (verse), the art of tones, and the art of dance), and in the prominence of strings, although stringed instruments were not used in the religious context. Finally, the licence of listening to music and singing in relation to musical modes (*ṭuruq*) is governed by notions rooted in ethos theory.

[76] By contrast, the notion that music created by human beings is an only imperfect reflection of the perfect sound in the celestial spheres, which figures prominently in the epistle by the Brethren of Purity, is only faintly present in al-Ghazālī's book in the passage on longing for God evoked by wordless music. al-Ghazālī is not overtly interested in theoretical musical background. We find no exploration on mathematical ratios, on the division of strings and musical intervals, or on the relation of musical attacks and duration that are typical of al-Kindī, the Mawṣilī school, al-Fārābī, and others. There are also hardly any references to cosmology. Instead, we find allusions to a backgrounded system which relates musical modes to emotional states, but which is not explained in detail. It becomes tangible in his ideas on the functions of listening, in the rules on how to apply musical sounds and rhythms correctly, and in his terminology of *taḥrīk* and *ṭuruq mushajjiʿa*, *mushawwiqa*, and *muḥazzina*.

[77] That we cannot expect more details on how *ṭuruq* work lies, on the one hand, in the time of his writing. The practical application of music in the field of medicine and musical therapy developed only after al-Ghazālī's death with the inclusion of a wider musical, especially melodic, framework into the theoretical system of allocations to extra-musical elements. Musical ther-

apy, comprising both dietary and therapeutic aspects, became a fully elaborated system in the thirteenth century (Neubauer 1990, esp. 233–35). On the other hand, al-Ghazālī is chiefly concerned with the application of sound in his own context, that of a Muslim scholar who seeks to advise believers in their actions that lead to salvation. He thus translates the theoretically described effects into concrete social situations. He differentiates between different contexts, personal experiences, and purposes of listening.

[78] With respect to aesthetic experience, al-Ghazālī recognises both the aesthetic pleasure and transformative power of beautiful sounds. They create delight, joy, longing, sorrow, physical strength, or movement of the limbs. He ultimately relates all beauty to God's creation but does not perceive all listening activities as experiences with a religious goal. He does not choose or exclude particular emotions but treats all effects. However, he focuses on one effect as especially relevant for common religious practice. He opens up the musically created emotion of sorrow for the listener's interaction with the divine and thereby channels it into a personalised experience that can be furnished with salvific qualities.

[79] The appropriation of Greek musical philosophy is evident in various domains of Arabo-Islamic culture, such as in speculative music theory (*ʿilm al-mūsīqā*) or in the aphorisms and gnomologia that formed a popular part of edifying entertainment in court culture. The "Book on the Etiquette of Listening and Ecstasy" by al-Ghazālī constitutes a long-lasting effort to integrate existing musical culture into religious practice. From an intra-religious perspective, we can discern a continuous line, from general listening to Sufi listening, which anybody may achieve with the relevant training. From an inter-religious perspective, much of his elaborations are rooted in a common heritage of the culture of Antiquity that moved across languages and religions.

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