B. Secondary sources


*EF* = *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden 1960 ff.


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IBN TABĀTABĀ ON THE PERCEPTION AND INFLUENCE OF POETRY

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The famous book of Ibn Tabātabā al-Ṣalwī (d. 334/933) from tenth-century Isfahān, titled *‘īyār al-ṣīr* (The Standard of Poetry), has a special place in the history of Arab criticism. In this work Ibn Tabātabā analyses the main elements of literary communication: the author, the literary work of art and the perceiver (actually, the *ṣāmi*, hearer). Ibn Tabātabā describes the literary process as a complete unit and at the same time he demonstrates its main elements in progress, *in statu nascendi*. He is the first author in the history of medieval Arab criticism who studied systematically the perception of literary work and its effect on the perceiver. The purpose of this paper is to outline Ibn Tabātabā’s concept of this perception and his ideas on the effect of the literary work.

The book has a short theoretical introduction1, and, for the greatest part, it contains practical criticism and stylistics (Ibn Tabātaba, *‘īyār* 25-219). If we are to understand Ibn Tabātabā’s idea, we have to follow the main issue of the theoretical introduction.

Ibn Tabātabā’s work is poetics, a systematic doctrine of poetry in the classical meaning of the word. This conception states that “poetry cannot be anything except: 1) poems which ‘narrate’ (yuqṭas) things (aṣyā) already present (qa’ima) in men’s souls and minds (an-nufus wa-l-cuqul)…, 2) poems which ‘give’ wisdom (hikma), and 3) poems which contain truthful descriptions (ṣifat ṣadiqa), suitable similes (tasbihāt muwāfiqa) and appropriate parables (amāl mutābiqa), or poems which contain these elements”. Keeping in mind these general statements concerning the content, the author defines poetry as: *kālam manzūm bana can al-mantur* (Ibn Tabātaba, *‘īyār* 5). This definition and its background constitute the most important side of Ibn Tabātabā’s concept in examining the author’s activity.

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2 There is only one copy of this work in the Library of the Escorial (No. 327, 22-57). al-Ḥāǧirī and Saḥām edited it from a photocopy in 1956. The revised version was produced by Saḥām in 1980 from the same source. The last and the most reliable edition by al-Mānī appeared in 1985.

3 For an evaluation of this work see Heinrichs 1973.

4 We used al-Mānī’s edition. Further references are to this edition. The introduction covers pp. 5-24.


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First of all he makes an important distinction at this point between two preliminary conditions of poetry, seated in the personality or subjectivity of the author. These are natural disposition (tabb) and the knowledge of the whole Arabo-Muslim literary culture, named in this context as ‘the tools of poetry’ (adawat al-‘iṣr), mastered by the intellect (‘aqil) of the poet.

Ibn Tabatabā does not deal with natural disposition at length; it can be regarded as a kind of natural sense (talent) or literary taste (dawq). It is an inborn faculty of the author, but it may be acquired by studying as well (Ibn Tabataba, ‘Iyār 6). This idea, however, gives us a free hand in the interpretation of Ibn Tabataba’s concept: it seems to us that this inborn capability is restricted to the natural sense of rhythm, does not mean an imaginative faculty, and does not include at all the poet’s mythical formation, its inspiration, the urge or devotion that sets a poet to work. We do not find in Ibn Tabataba’s work the usual stories about the inspiration of poets by demons (ginn). Naturally, the question arises: what is the cause of this lack? Although Arabic literary traditions have preserved the testimonies of pagan poets about these phenomena and it is probable that our author knew of these data, he excluded them from his investigation. I think that this is a conscious step, and it seems to be dictated by his own understanding of poetic activity. The exact answer needs more investigation concerning the ideological issues of Islam and the Weltanschauung of medieval Muslim civilization. Leaving now aside these general elements, let us examine our text for an answer. If we follow the way of expression present in the concept of tabb (also meaning ‘natural disposition, the sense of rhythm’), we can detect a kind of literary phenomenon known in the history of literary criticism: the usage of this word vaguely reminds us of the two main constituent elements of literary theory, i.e., ingenium, and its opponent, studium. The traditional pre-Islamic concept states that the poet’s inspiration comes from outside of himself, and now, in this work, we read that the source of this operation is in the inner, inborn world of the poet. This is a new concept, a new understanding of poetry. Poetically it is expressed in Abu Nuwas’s poem: “gayra anum qu’illun ma atdni * min zinni najshqin lu-l-iydn / ahiqun naʃʧi bi-taʃʧi ʃayin * wahhdin fi l-lazʃi ʃattal ma’dan i / qa’timun fi l-wahmi battat ida ma * runmutu ruqmu mu’amma l-maknani”. The answer may be that it was a conscious decision not to mention inspiration.

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6 Grunebaum (1952:323) stressed the importance of this question: “medieval Muslim thought never abandoned Aristotelian psychology, which assigns imagination a comparatively low place, ranking it with the animal faculties”.


8 See the story of ‘Abid b. al’Abra (Diwan 1-2).

9 Abu Nuwas, Diwan 18, wa-mu’ṯti ṣaʃr, ll. 4-6.
First of all he makes an important distinction at this point between two preliminary conditions of poetry, seated in the personality or subjectivity of the author. These are natural disposition (tabl) and the knowledge of the whole Arabo-Muslim literary culture, named in this context as ‘the tools of poetry’ (adāwiṣ al-aṣʿīr), mastered by the intellect (ṣaqī) of the poet.

Ibn Ṭabāṭaba does not deal with natural disposition at length; it can be regarded as a kind of natural sense (talent) or literary taste (ḏawq). It is an inborn faculty of the author, but it may be acquired by studying as well (Ibn Tabataba, Ḣiyār 6:7). This idea, however, gives us a free hand in the interpretation of Ibn Tabataba’s concept: it seems to us that this inborn capability is restricted to the natural sense of rhythm, does not mean an imaginative faculty⁶, and does not include at all the poem’s mythical formation, its inspiration, the urge or devotion that sets a poet to work. We do not find in Ibn Tabataba’s work the usual stories about the inspiration of poets by demons (ţinn). Naturally, the question arises: what is the cause of this lack? Although Arabic literary traditions have preserved the testimonies of pagan poets about such phenomena⁷ and it is probable that our author knew of these data, he excluded them from his investigation. I think that this is a conscious step, and it seems to be dictated by his own understanding of poetics. The exact answer needs more investigation concerning the ideological issues of Islam and the Weltanschauung of medieval Muslim civilization. Leaving now aside these general elements, let us examine our text for an answer. If we follow the way of expression present in the concept of tabl (also meaning ‘natural disposition, the sense of rhythm’), we can detect a kind of literary phenomenon known in the history of literary criticism: the usage of this word suggests that the two main constituent elements of literary theory, i.e., ingenium, and its opponent, studium. The traditional pre-Islamic concept states that the poet’s inspiration comes from outside of himself, and now, in this work, we read that the source of that operation is in the inner, inborn world of the poet. This is a new concept, a new understanding of poetry. Poetically it is expressed in Abū Nuwāṣ’s poem: "gayra anni q’illun mā ṣānī * min ṣūnīna mukhribnū l-fiyānī // ahdiḏun naṣī bi-ta’Tisfī sayīn * wahidīn fi l-alāṣī ṣatṭa l-ṣānī // qa’īmīn fi l-wahmi ḥattā idā mā * ruṃntubhu ṣumtu mu’ammā l-makānī”⁸. The answer may be that it was a conscious decision not to mention inspiration.

As to the second preliminary condition, it includes the knowledge of Arabic vocabulary, the grammatical, historical and genealogical traditions as well as the poet’s familiarity with the whole of Arabic poetry (Ibn Tabataba, Ḣiyār 6:7), inherited from the pre-Islamic and the early Muslim centuries. It contains elements of the cultural background of poetry, structural requirements, language, imagery etc. This enumeration demonstrates a kind of “classicism”, the basis of which is a belief that the great age of poetry is in the past and that it contained all the models of poetic excellence. To sum up the second preliminary condition of poetry, Ibn Tabataba says: ġām’ ḥādīḥi l-aḍawṣī kamāl al-aṣʿīr * wa-ṯār al-ḥasan, wa-qīmābī al-qabīb wa-wadl al-abjī al-mawṣūdīḏabā (Ibn Tabataba, Ḣiyār 7).

The distinction between ingenium and studium reminds us of the Hellenistic concept of dynamics and techne, or natura and arts, as sources of poetry and shows that Ibn Tabataba, consciously or not, belongs to this tradition in the study of the poet’s activity. The poet’s natural sense of rhythm together with literary education and qualification are the main sources of a poetic work. Ibn Tabataba’s opinion follows the scheme of the well-known philological tradition embodied in the works of Ibn Qutayba (Ṣīr, author’s introduction), Qudama b. Ǧa’far (Naqā) and others.

As an inevitable consequence of the preliminary factors, Ibn Tabataba presents the poet as a conscious worker and gives dominance to functions of intellect, ṣaqī, in this activity. The poet works out the poem in details, fits words together according to his intention (iṭrāda) under the continuous control of intellect. The poetic tools, metre, rhythm and rhymes, of traditional Arabic poetry become formal elements of a pattern-store; the genres, motifs, images become matter for the poetic intention. Ibn Tabataba describes the literary composition as a unity of matter, pattern and poetic intention. This structure of the construction in poetry is identical with that of the painter’s and the goldsmith’s. Ibn Tabataba uses the method of weaving, building and goldsmith’s work in order to illustrate his main issue: poetry belongs to the special human activity of the arts, it is a ṣīnāa, and the poem is an artefact (Grunebaum 1952:325).

Ibn Tabataba examines the poem (qasida) on different levels. He says that the poem ‘ala tašīl ġīnhī wa-ma’rīfat iṣṣībi muṣalābīh al-qumla muṭaṣāfīn at-tašīl (Ibn Tabataba, Ḣiyār 10). This statement shows us that our author recognized the poem as an entity, as an independent unit. Further, Ibn Tabataba says, that poems differ from each other kaḥdīḏal an-nas fi suwarīm.... wa-qawālīka al-ṣār muṭaṣāfīlā fi l-han ‘ala tasawwīhā fi l-ġīns (ibid). These statements deserve consideration in many respects. The most important for us is that in Ibn Tabataba’s opinion the poem is a unity which appears in different forms and shapes. The relative evaluation examines the inner relations in a given poem (like harmony, symmetry, appropriateness etc.) between the poetic instruments. This is the question of the relationship between concepts (mu’ānā) and expressions (aṣfāz). Ibn Tabataba says: li-mu’ānī aṣfāz ṣaṣākilabā fa-taḥsīn fīḥā wa-taqubby fī ṣāyīḥā (Ibn Tabataba, Ḣiyār 11). This idea reminds us

⁶ Grunebaum (1952:323) stressed the importance of this question: "medieval Muslim thought never abandoned Aristotelian psychology, which assigns imagination a comparatively low place, ranking it with the animal faculties".


⁸ See the story of ‘Abid b. al-‘Abraḍ (Diwan 1-2).

⁹ Abū Nuwāṣ, Diwan 18, wa-mu’ālī ṣatāfī, II. 4-6.
of the concept of "classical" art. We can read in Ibn Ṭabāṭabā that the poet, composing a new work of art, connects contents and appropriate expressions. There work two registers in the process of poetic work: the register of content, concepts (maʿāni, ṣeṣ), and the register of expressions (alsūj, verba). We are familiar with this Horatian idea in the history of literary criticism from the antiquity, and we know that the theory of imitation (or the lack of originality) is among the distinctive features of the pre-romantic concept of art. Medieval Muslim and Christian poets were expected to imitate the classical pattern in classical matter and in classical literary forms. Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, turning himself and his readers to the past, fits into this tradition, or we can say that his activity shows parallel features.

Historically, it is clear that it is not Ibn Ṭabāṭabā who first expresses these requirements in the history of Arabic literature. Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, claiming a coherent theory of poetry, uses the results of philological, exegetical and other literary activities, and outlines the theoretical background of medieval Arabic literary "classicism".

The linguistic tools of classical Arabic poetry are description (wasf), simile (talbīb) and proverb (bikma). The word hikma means 'wisdom, sentence, gnome, proverb' and expresses the concise reflections of mankind about themselves and the surrounding world. In this context, Ibn Ṭabāṭabā enumerates the main linguistic tools of poetic work, therefore the word hikma does not mean 'maxims, gnome etc.' but it denotes a vehicle, a proverb-like structure of poetic expression, a characteristic syntax of poetic sentence. Actually, the usage of hikma in poems reminds us the well-known problem of "molecular structure" in Arabic literature, initiated by Kowalski in the thirties of the century. Now, these linguistic-rhetorical tools belong to the formal elements of a poem, and their main concern is to guarantee the structural connection between concepts and expressions.

On a different, conceptual level, there works a special dichotomy in the description of these rhetorical instruments, too. It seems, on the one hand, that Ibn Ṭabāṭabā stresses wasf and talbīb as representing mankind’s environment, Lebensraum. They also might be used to reflect the outward appearance of the world. On the other hand, he does not completely preclude the possibility of understanding hikma as giving exact summary of ethical norms and maxims. As for description and simile, Ibn Ṭabāṭabā stresses the importance of truthfulness and agreement between the reality of the outward world and the poetic world created by these tools and instruments. The value of traditional literature lies in its truthfulness. Poets in the past

10 See Quintilianus, Instituta (chapter II) 68 ff. about imitation.

“kānū waʾssīlūna aš-šarhūn ʿalā l-maʿāni llatī rakkahābih ʿalā l-qasād li-s-sīdīq fi-hā mā idhā wā-hiğāʾan” (Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, ʿiyār 13). On the other side, he gives us a catalogue of the ethical values. It is a full list of positive and negative ethical categories. Ibn Ṭabāṭabā examines their place and the role they play as dominant elements in constituting the panegyric and satirical genres of Arabic poetry. We can also observe that Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, dealing with the linguistic tools of poetry, and, more closely, with the initial moment of poetic activity, speaks about the virtues and their opposites. In Ibn Ṭabāṭabā’s opinion, as we have seen, the poet constructs his poem on the basis of ethical categories, to compose a panegyric or satirical poem, he uses description, simile and proverb-like sentence-structures (the truthful methods of poetry construction), and builds up his artefact under continuous intellectual control. Also, in the last analysis, we find here "ein Beispiel für Ethisierung der Poesie" (Rundgren 1970-71:99). The examination of the elements of the poet’s activity, and the genre-foundation show us that in this system of ideas truth and ethics are the main sources of poetry. We can also state that Ibn Ṭabāṭabā have laid the foundation of a literary theory which includes the main points of the author’s activity and shows us a comprehensive, logical system of ideas. According to this theory, the poet constructs a perfect poem, by an active intellect, on the basis of morality and truth, and following the patterns of the traditional art. This concept corresponds with the literary theories of antiquity and that of the Christian Middle Ages (Curtius 1954:527-529). This concept of art opposes the so-called “inspired” art, which does not recognize the meticulous work of the artist, but originates the poetry in the poet’s supernatural inspiration.

Turning now to Ibn Ṭabāṭabā’s opinion about the reception of the poem, we read that the "keen wit", the understanding mind evaluates the poem: "waʾiyār al-ʿlīr an yusrada ʿalā l-fahm t-diqib f-ma qabilahu wa-stafahu f-ma maggahu wa-nafakh fa-husaa nāqis" (Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, ʿiyār 19). Ibn Ṭabāṭabā reports to us that there is an analogy between the function of understanding (fahm) and the function of organic senses. He enumerates the organic senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch), to illustrate his thesis. Two principles serve as the background for this analysis. The first is that the sense reacts upon the impression which corresponds to its own nature; and the second is that the effect can be either pleasant or disagreeable. Moreover, the good or bad effect in the senses depends on the nature of the impression: if it is agreeable, the effect is likewise good, pleasing; if it is unpleasant, the effect too is unfavourable and bad. This theory has been well-known and held valid for the organic senses from the antiquity. As far as we know, it is Ibn Ṭabāṭabā’s effort in the Muslim Middle Ages, to extend this pattern to the territory of the understanding (fahm) and, more precisely, to analyse the influence of a poem in this
of the concept of "classical" art. We can read in Ibn Ṭabātābā that the poet, composing a new work of art, connects contents and appropriate expressions. There work two registers in the process of poetic work: the register of content, concepts (ma'ānī, re), and the register of expressions (alṣūr, verba). We are familiar with this Horatian idea in the history of literary criticism from the antiquity, and we know that the theory of imitation (or the lack of originality) is among the distinctive features of the pre-romantic concept of art. Medieval Muslim and Christian poets were expected to imitate the classical pattern in classical matter and in classical literary forms. Ibn Ṭabātābā, turning himself and his readers to the past, fits into this tradition, or we can say that his activity shows parallel features.

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framework. I think that this idea corresponds with the psychology of Ibn Ţabātabā’s cultural environment, and, as the terminology used in the source matter shows us, this idea or its main tenets were accepted by his successors, as well.14

Ibn Ţabātabā introduced the function of understanding, and rendered it in a way of epistemology, but, unfortunately, he did not explain its nature, its structure and its relations to other functions of the human psyche. Is it the sensus communis or is it another element in the human entity? The question is unanswerable at the present stage of our work. The only thing we know is that fahm is the receptive element of speech in the human being, and, secondly, that the cognitive ascertaining or judging of a poem fulfils its valuation. Our author says in this concern that “al-fahmiya ya’nasu min al-kalami bi-l-adli s-syuabi l-haqqi wa-l-ţa’izi l-ma’riti l-ma’ufi wa-yatashawwasi ilayhi wa-yataqallabu labu wa-yastawwisi min al-kalami al-ţa’izi l-ţa’izi l-ba’ili wa-l-mu’abab il-ma’abab il-munkaru wa-yansafuru minhu wa-yasda’u labu” (Ibn Ţabātabā, Ḥijar 20). These lines give us a sketchy picture of the connection between understanding and speech (kalām) on a general level, and at the same time they show that Ibn Ţabātabā insists on truth and gives it a favoured and distinguished position.

But, naturally, understanding refuses those poems which do not have the above-mentioned formal, conceptual and structural peculiarities. Every-day speech relies on truth, but qualified speech, poetry, complies with further requirements as well. The question arises how a given poem gets formal, conceptual and structural features? The main element in the creative process is temperance. Symmetry plays a dominant role in poetry; as Ibn Ţabātabā expresses: “ṣillatu kulli hasasin maqbulin al-qidālu karnā anna ṣillata kulli qabihin mansfyyin al-qidārābu” (Ibn Ţabātabā, Ḥijar 21). It is significant that Ibn Ţabātabā speaks about beauty and ugliness in this respect and only in this place. He does not analyse their nature at all but repeats the traditional opinion: the criteria of beauty are temperance, harmony and symmetry. Reading again the description of composition, we see that in Ibn Ţabātabā’s concept the mind (intellect, ‘aql) penetrates matter, it imposes form (i.e., order, proportion, quantity and quality) upon it, and in this process concepts do get appropriate expression. At the end of composition, inasmuch as the objects which the perceiver discerns harmonize in form, or, in our terminology, make a perfect form, they are beautiful. When understanding accepts the poem, it identifies and weights construction, proportion, the actual form of concept, and realises in it the perfection or the shortcomings of the ideal form. Ibn Ţabātabā says that a poem which stirs pleasure and joy, is a perfect work (fāṣiḥ), and, on the other hand, a poem which incites unpleasant experiences is an imperfect work (naqīs). The criteria of truth, ethical good and unity, which we detected in the progress of constructing a work of art, get a new dimension at the moment of perception, a new couple of parameters, the perfection – imperfection

14 See below at the problem of arbīyya.
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Ibn Tabātabā, analyzing the perception and influence of the work of art, demonstrates its cognitive and ethical sides. A question arises at this moment: What is the basis of these ideas, what is the source of the cognitive, intellectual view of poetry? As for the structural aspect, we have already stressed that poetry in Ibn Tabātabā's system belongs to the artificial activities like the work of a painter or that of a goldsmith. This structural analysis can explain construction, rules and formulas of a literary work, but not its nature in the progress of perception. It needs a more generalised and metaphysically valid argumentation. Ibn Tabātabā's words which give a general view of poetry can be traced back into the Muslim past, referring to a well-known and important case of perception, that of the holy Qur'ān. It seems to me, that Ibn Tabātaba drew a parallel between the effect of the Qur'ān and that of poet­ry. The Qur'ān is the guidance, the command and the leading speech for mankind. The cognitive intellect has a distinguished role in its acceptance, in the perception of this divine message. The perceiving soul understands it by the cognitive function of the mind. It is known in the Muslim tradition that sometimes this acceptance results in an unusual psychological state. A report says that a Bedouin collapsed when hear­ing the Prophet's recitation. This effect is reported as a kind of purification which changed the mind of the hostile Bedouin, and changed his directions, wishes, emotions, too. Ibn Tabātabā did not refer to the Qur'ān in his argumentation. The Qur'ān and its role, however, always need to be investigated in Muslim intellectual activities. Ibn Tabātabā wrote his work in the beginning of the tenth century. This century was the formative period of the Muslim dogma, and the emergence of the concept of the Qur'ān's inimitability (*iğâz al-qur'ān*) happened at this time as well.

14 See below at the problem of *arâyihyya*.
The common analysis of poetry and the Qur'an was legitimated by the fact that both of them were regarded as special manifestations of the same Arabic speech (kalâm). Ibn Tabataba says that poetry contains the main ethical principles and values of mankind, and demonstrates it in a magic, bewitching form. This double character appears in the so-called prophetic words: inna min al-fârî māh kāfīn and the other one: inna min al-bayyân la-sibran. It seems to me that these statements and the traditional perception of the Qur'an are the central points of universe for Ibn Tabataba in his poetics and literary criticism.

The poem results in pleasure and joy. We have seen that Ibn Tabataba uses different words to denote pleasure and joy of the perceiving intellect. These are: ārāhiyya, tarāb or itriyāh, iltiqād. We find these expressions at other authors, like al-Askari (K. as-sinā'atayni), al-Qadi al-Gurgānī (Wasāṭa 4, 19, 27, 100), ‘Abdalqāhar al-Gurgānī (Asrār 247 and Dālā‘īl 21), al-Marzubānī (Mu‘atgīḥa 70, 422), Ibn Haldūn (Muqaddima III, 1318) etc., too. According to al-Asmacī ārāhiyya is biṣṣa, while according to al-Gawhari (Sīhāh I, 371) ārābi means al-wāsī‘ al-ṣulūq, and other authors repeat these explanations and interpretations. And these explanations constitute the essence of this experience. It seems that for Ibn Tabataba ārāhiyya has a sensual and an intellectual reference at the same time. But the perceiving soul exceeds the sensual stage at the very moment of perception. Acceptable poems open the way to the very essence of a human being. This happens by a magic, bewitching and pleasure-inciting power, the sensual-oriented side of poetry. Ibn Tabataba says: ‘al-silīm lāmi fa-tū māmākā r-rihā wa-lāmā ‘isma l-fāhīma wa-kānā anfāšā min nafṣī s-sibīr wa-albâb dâbībān min ar-rūqā wa-al-dāddā ir-tībān min al-gūnā’ (Ibn Tabataba, ‘Iyār 23). The result of this state is that the very essence of the perceiving change: ‘fa-sallā s-sabā’īma, wa-bīlālā l-nuqāda wa-sabba’i s-sabīrā w- la-lāgā l-lantāna’ (bid.). Pleasure originates in recognizing harmony, unity, and truth; and the mind dominated by rationality, through this recognition and perception, wishes and longs for good and beneficence.

Is then ārāhiyya an aesthetic or a purely cognitive state of the soul? The answer could be very important. As for aesthetics we can say that ārāhiyya is not one of its categories because the progress of perception is dominated by the cognitive function of the human soul. As for the pure cognitive function, we can say that ārāhiyya, by reason of sensual references, is not one of its categories either. Ultimately, ārāhiyya is a kind of enthusiasm, the intellect’s appetitive activity.

The history of literary criticism shows various patterns of critical and poetical interests that are regarded as types, because they recur constantly, and independently, in different literatures. A few arise out of philosophical issues, others represent theoretical cross sections of criticism, where the evaluation of works and authors is distinguished from analytical description on one side, and literary theory on the other, and considered as a type of judicial criticism. We have already stated that Ibn Tabataba’s present work is poetics par excellence, his main issue being to give a concise description of the nature and work of the Arabic poem. Dealing with the literary phenomena in question, Ibn Tabataba uses a vague framework of ideas which are congenial with that of the late Hellenistic and Christian Middle Ages. The intellectual and cultural environment of tenth-century Isfahan, the historical fact that his work is among the first poeties of Arabic literature, and that it demonstrates a "frustratingly inconsistent" form of descriptive and philosophical, prescriptive and regulative statements demand our interest and necessitates a further comparative analysis of his views as to what poetry is, and as to what poetry should be.

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15 Ibn Tabataba uses these sentences in his argumentation, ‘Iyār 22-23.

16 Hamori (1984:385) uses these words speaking of Ibn Tabataba.
The common analysis of poetry and the Qur'an was legitimated by the fact that both of them were regarded as special manifestations of the same Arabic speech (kalâm). Ibn Tabatabâ says that poetry contains the main ethical principles and values of mankind, and demonstrates it in a magic, bewitching form. This double character appears in the so-called prophetic words: inna min alšfír ‘in khatmâtan and the other one: inna min al-bayân l-ašbáran’. It seems to me that these statements and the traditional perception of the Qur'an are the central points of universe for Ibn Tabatabâ in his poetics and literary criticism.

The poem results in pleasure and joy. We have seen that Ibn Tabatabâ uses different words to denote pleasure and joy of the perceiving intellect. These are: aryaibhiyya, tarab or irtyyâh, iltidâd. We find these expressions at other authors, like al-‘Askari (K. as-sinâ’atiyâ), al-Qâdi ‘al-‘Urgânî (Wasâãa 4, 19, 27, 100), ‘Abdalqahir al-‘Urgânî (Arâr 247 and Dalâ’îl 21), al-Marzubânî (Muwaštâh 70, 422), Ibn Haldûn (Muqaßâhîm, III, 1318) etc., too. According to al-‘Asma’i aryaibhiyya is biha, while according to al-‘Gawhari (Shihâh 1, 371) aryaib means al-wâsi‘ al-iyluq, and other authors repeat these explanations and interpretations. And these explanations constitute the essence of this experience. It seems that for Ibn Tabatabâ aryaibhiyya has a sensual and an intellectual reference at the same time. But the perceiving soul exceeds the sensual stage at the very moment of perception. Acceptable poems open the way to the very essence of a human being. This happens by a magic, bewitching and pleasure-inciting power, the sensual-oriented side of poetry. Ibn Tabatabâ says: ‘alšfír ‘al-mâšîf ... mǎrâqa rÝihâ wa-l’âma l-fahmâ wa-kâna anšâda min nasîl sâhih wa-šâfi‘i daabîdan min ar-nuqâ wa-al=adda irtâbân min al-gînâ’” (Ibn Tabatabâ, ‘Iyâr 23). The result of this state is that the very essence of the perceivers change: “fa-salla s-sâhab’îma, wa-šbâllâla l’tuqada wa-sâhâbî 1âribîha wa-lağdıda l-gâbâna” (Ibid). Pleasure originates in recognizing harmony, unity, and truth; and the mind dominated by rationality, through this recognition and perception, wishes and longing for good and beneficence.

Is then aryaibhiyya an aesthetic or a purely cognitive state of the soul? The answer could be very important. As for aesthetic we can say that aryaibhiyya is not one of its categories because the progress of perception is dominated by the cognitive function of the human soul. As for the pure cognitive function, we can say that aryaibhiyya, by reason of sensual references, is not one of its categories either. Ultimately, aryaibhiyya is a kind of enthusiasm, the intellect’s appetitive activity.

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Ibn Qutayba, Šîr = Abû Muhammad ‘Abdallâh b. Muslim Ibn Qutayba ad-Dinawâri, Kitâb alšfir wa-tashâ‘ara‘. Cairo n.d.

15 Ibn Tabatabâ uses these sentences in his argument, ‘Iyâr 22-23.

16 Hamori (1984:385) uses these words speaking of Ibn Tabatabâ.
The Kitāb al-idrāk li-lisān al-ʿatrāk (literally, 'the book of the grasp of the language of Turks') is an outstanding work from many points of view. On the one hand, it can be regarded as the first true grammar of the Turkish language (previous books which include grammatical notes are mainly lexicographic in character). On the other hand, it is the only case of a work written by a major Arab grammarian (Abū Hayyān al-Garnāṭī, the teacher of Ibn ʿAqīl and Ibn Hisām) which is not concerned with Classical Arabic. The importance of such a choice is hard to overestimate. Arab grammarians did not confine themselves to the study of Arabic language for lack of knowledge of other languages: many of them, including prominent scholars like Sibawayhi or az-Zamahšāri, came from a Persian stem, and had a good command of Farsi. Rather, this self-limitation stems from an epistemological choice. The aim of nabū and tasrif was mainly to get a better understanding of the Qurʾān and to choose among alternative readings: far though the vertiginous theoretical constructions of Arab grammarians went, this basic assumption always lay in the background. Consequently, only the data relevant to the reconstruction of the Purest Arabic language were taken into account; the rejection of suspicious material went so far to give hadīt only a marginal role (mainly limited to cases where no evidence from more reliable sources was available) owing to the risk of linguistic contamination through the chain of transmitters.

Why did a grammarian as Abū Hayyān so blatantly deviate from this basic theoretical tenet? The sources, as usual, give an anecdotal account, and explain everything by appealing to the curiosity of the author towards foreign languages, an account strengthened by Abū Hayyān's own statements. Modern scholars, both Easterners and Westerners, generally accept this explanation with unbelievable lack of criticism; the only exception is Mansuroğlu (1977-88) who views the Idrāk as an answer to the desire, widespread among Egyptian 'ulama',