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### Laughter Is a Serious Matter: Humour in Medieval Arabic Philosophy

In medieval times, physicians writing in Arabic dominated the discussion on the concepts of laughter and humour in Islamicate societies. Sometime around the tenth and eleventh centuries, however, the topic of laughter entered the fray of philosophical debate and soon occupied a relatively significant place in philosophical literature in medieval Arabic writings.

In what follows, we will focus on the philosophical value of laughter as presented in the writings of the controversial philosophical thinker Abu Hamid Ghazali (d. 111). According to Ghazali, laughter is amazement and something that our reason struggles to come to terms with. When humans laugh they give in to animality. To overcome this lapse, Ghazali offers mostly ethical-juridical and some philosophical instructions on the temperament of laughter. It will be shown that while Ghazali does condemn excessive laughter, because it drives one away from truthful discourse, he does however find some efficacy in humour as a vehicle of persuasion that communicates truthful messages to friends and foes.