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by placing the philosophical arguments in the larger context of the value that these thinkers placed on such argument.

Patil's book should be read with the perspectival nature of his study of Ratnakīrti very much in mind. He provides a rigorous philosophical reconstruction of Ratnakīrti, but that is not the same as providing a philosophical analysis of Ratnakīrti's arguments themselves, in that this is not a critical evaluation of the worth of these arguments. I will mention two examples. Patil has little to say about Ratnakīrti's reliance on the doctrine of momentariness and its various difficulties, despite aiming to provide the larger context of Ratnakīrti's worldview. More germane to this book is the structure of Ratnakīrti's argument against *īśvara*. Patil has a short concluding section in chapter 5 (pp. 309–310) on who the Buddhist thinks "created" the world, the answer being, in an idealist vein, the constructive activity of (our) awareness. This is, as far as I know, a unique argument against God in any tradition. But because he does not look more closely at the significance of this alternative view, he consequently does not note the tension between Ratnakīrti's argument for (1) all effects having makers (in his case, individual mental constructions) and (2) his argument that unseen makers of temples can be inferred but—intuitively—not makers of mountains (pp. 159–160), which is in effect a materialist argument more familiar in the West (and also something a non-theist Hindu like Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa as well as, of course, the materialist Cārvāka school would accept).

This is a brilliant, erudite, formidable, and intricately argued first book, which shows the arrival of an outstanding Indologist and philosopher. The book calls for concentration and an eye for detail, but it amply rewards the reader. I have, naturally, not been able to do justice either to the many different layers of argument or to their interlocking in this review. It is a model for how the Indian philosopher should work today: with close attention to and intimate knowledge of original texts, a fluent command of multiple philosophical traditions, and an analytic eye for the conceptual riches of the classical material. On the evidence of this book, Parimal Patil should come to be recognized as one of the foremost cross-cultural philosophers of his generation in the coming years.

Note

1 – I have benefited from reading a review of this work by Stephen Phillips at <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=25550>.

Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology. By Frank Griffel. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. xiii + 408. Hardcover \$74.00.

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As we near the nine-hundredth anniversary of the death of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, his writings remain as popular as ever. This is not surprising, not only because of these texts' historical importance but also because aspects of them still feel relevant

to today's reader, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. The vast amount of scholarly output on him attests to al-Ghazālī's preeminence in Islamic intellectual history.

To this large field, Frank Griffel has contributed his new book *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*. In it, Griffel has synthesized his long-standing and extensive work on al-Ghazālī into one book that covers a variety of topics. The title is well chosen as all these topics add in some way to the view that positions al-Ghazālī "as someone who contributed to the process of the naturalization of *falsafa* within the Islamic theological discourse" (p. 7).

Griffel's book can be divided into two parts: one on al-Ghazālī's life and his early followers, the other on his teachings on epistemology and cosmology (p. 7). In fact, his discussion of al-Ghazālī's cosmology focuses mainly on the way true knowledge can be obtained and on the concept of causality, specifically the difference between secondary causality (usually associated with the *falāsifah*) and occasionalism (usually associated with the Ash'arites). This is an issue that has been intensely debated among scholars, including Fakhry, Marmura, Goodman, Alon, Abrahamov, and Frank. It is in this tradition that Griffel puts forward a new thesis, positioning himself between Frank, who has argued that al-Ghazālī adhered to the *falāsifah*, and Marmura, who has argued that al-Ghazālī never broke with Ash'arite theology.

At first, these positions seem mutually exclusive, so a middle position is hard to envision. After all, a necessary, essential causality that extends to creatures is hard to reconcile with occasionalism, according to which all effects are directly traceable to one cause: God. Moreover, the demonstrative science that the philosophers propagate to understand the world seems to be intrinsically connected with this notion of necessary, essential causality. The middle position between Frank and Marmura, which holds that al-Ghazālī accepts the methodology of the philosophers' demonstrative science but rejects its ontology, seems difficult to defend. However, Griffel does a fine job in arguing for such a middle position (a 'philosophical theology,' so to say), repeating that al-Ghazālī remained uncommitted to a choice between secondary causality and occasionalism.¹ Griffel writes early on in his book: "al-Ghazālī believed that neither revelation nor demonstration provides a conclusive answer as to how God acts upon His creation. . . . Once he realized that neither of the two principal sources in his own epistemology—reason and revelation—could settle the matter, al-Ghazālī simply lost interest in cosmology as a scientific question" (p. 122). It is thus al-Ghazālī's epistemology that held him back in making extensive claims about cosmology. With this tension between al-Ghazālī's epistemology and cosmology as a focus, Griffel studies most of the well-known works of al-Ghazālī and shows how his thesis finds support throughout the Ghazālian corpus.

The most interesting chapters of the book are chapters 6–9, in which Griffel's main argument is set out. Chapter 6 gives a detailed account of the *locus classicus*: the seventeenth discussion of al-Ghazālī's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifah*). While it is true that analyses of this text can be found in many other books and articles, Griffel's account adds value by virtue of its clarity and comprehensiveness. For him, this text represents the basis of al-Ghazālī's thought, the text where al-Ghazālī shows that he does not refute the methodology of the philosophers

but that he “questions the assumptions of an ontological coherence between this world and our knowledge of it. Certain predications—which, for Avicenna, apply to things in the real world—apply, for al-Ghazālī, only to human judgments” (p. 164). Because we can have knowledge of the world around us, secondary causality can be said to be true in a certain way. However, as argued for in chapter 7, it should be understood that for al-Ghazālī, “[a]lthough the universals may exist as entities in the active intellect, such an existence cannot be demonstrated. The realist understanding of the universals may or may not be true” (p. 178). Griffel argues that because the fact that such questions cannot be determined by demonstration, al-Ghazālī refrains from comprehensively setting out a cosmology, and leaves the matter unsettled.

In chapter 8 Griffel discusses *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*) and covers topics such as whether or not human beings have a free will and the concept of ‘the best of all possible worlds,’ both of which relate to the restrictions on God and the problem of evil. Chapter 9 discusses texts written after the *Iḥyāʾ* and focuses primarily on *The Niche of Lights* (*Mishkāt al-anwār*) as this is a text that does include some hints on a cosmology as envisioned by al-Ghazālī. In it, “al-Ghazālī aims to explain the veils of light and darkness that prevent people from grasping who or what God is” (p. 246). Griffel identifies the second highest group, the group that is veiled by pure light, with the philosophers. However, “al-Ghazālī sees the God of philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Avicenna, who believe that this world emanates from God according to His nature, to be simply a creation of the real God. The real God is the creator of the being that the *falāsifa* consider to be God” (p. 253). Griffel argues that on the highest level, that is, among the fourth group of people, it is realized that “He is the only true existence, and He is the one who truly bestows existence on His creatures” (p. 254). Griffel concludes that al-Ghazālī “implies that the fourth group has accepted many teachings of the third, while integrating their own superior insight that all being *is* God” (p. 255).

Returning to earlier chapters, chapter 5 offers a good introduction for those unfamiliar with the background of discussions on cosmology and causality in earlier times in the Islamic world. This introductory attitude does, however, give room for a less precise and less well documented way of writing, and has thus a different flavor from the rest of the book. For instance, the earliest period is summarized in one sentence: “In the first/seventh century, the theological conflict between a human’s responsibility for his or her actions and God’s omnipotence initiated discussion that subsequently led to the development of comprehensive theological systems” (p. 124). While this may be true, a reference to, for example, Watt’s *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* would have been helpful to readers who are new to the subject.²

Chapters 3 and 4 study how al-Ghazālī envisioned the relation and difference between reason and revelation as sources for knowledge. As such, it is a bit more removed from a discussion on cosmology but nevertheless undergirds Griffel’s thesis.

Chapters 1 and 2 form the part on al-Ghazālī’s life. The most notable result of Griffel’s research for these chapters is the dating of al-Ghazālī’s birth at 448/1056–1057 (p. 24), one year earlier than usually assumed, which Griffel arrives at after an

extensive discussion of the available sources. Chapter 1 in particular is densely written and is clearly not meant for students who are new to al-Ghazālī. Chapter 2 discusses some of those whom Griffel sees as al-Ghazālī's earliest followers. It consists of a brief discussion of five people and the account of a story in which Griffel sees "a literary personification of the famous scholar" (p. 87). It must be said that at best it provides an intriguing anecdote and that there are no direct references to al-Ghazālī in the context of this story. Griffel's account of the story can best be summarized by his own concluding remark that "[t]he striking parallels between the jackal's biography and the way al-Ghazālī wrote about his own life may indeed simply be because of a similar analysis of the historical situation" (p. 95). The account of al-Ghazālī's five early followers is tentative since few of their writings are analyzed and the choice of these five people itself is not fully justified. It would be interesting to see a study focused solely on the early followers of al-Ghazālī and their incorporation of his writings, since it would both shed light on al-Ghazālī's position and provide insight on the impact of his writings. As such, the chapter gives a good indication as to which way such a study should be heading.

An aspect that makes this book very useful is the detailed annotation. Thirty percent of the book consists of notes and bibliography. As noted before, the book touches upon a wide variety of topics, and the footnotes give plenty of opportunity to the reader to continue to study these topics. As such, this book is very suitable for advanced undergraduates and graduate students who are new to al-Ghazālī's philosophical thought, although some understanding of medieval philosophy is recommended. In this case, it is best read together with the seventeenth discussion of *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*³ and al-Ghazālī's autobiography, *The Deliverance from Error*,⁴ supplemented by the notes and bibliography Griffel supplies. More advanced students and scholars who are already familiar with al-Ghazālī will undoubtedly benefit from studying the main argument Griffel puts forward.

Further, I would like to suggest the following readings, as the originals may confuse the reader: on page 102, third line from the top, instead of 'word' read 'world'; on page 223, two lines above note 45, instead of 'work' read 'world'; on page 252, end of the second citation, instead of 'cannot not' read 'cannot'; on page 254, end of the second citation, instead of 'how think of it' read 'how they think of it.'

Notes

- 1 – Compare pp. 147, 178, 204, 212, 235, 264, 266, and 285.
- 2 – W. M. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973).
- 3 – M. E. Marmura, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers = Tahāfut al-falāsifah: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, Islamic translation series (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1997).
- 4 – A good translation is R. J. McCarthy, *Deliverance from Error: Five Key Texts Including His Spiritual Autobiography al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999).