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Isis, Vol. 25, No. 1 (May, 1936), 9-15.

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The meanings of the philosophers by al-Ghazzālī

Maqāṣid al-falāsifa lil-Ghazzālī. Published in the original Arabic. Cairo, A.H. 1331-A.D. 1912, Sa'āda Press, pp. 328.

ALGAZEL's *Metaphysics*. A Mediaeval Translation. Edited by the Rev. J. T. MUCKLE, C.S.B., Professor of Mediaeval Latin and Palaeography in The Institute of Mediaeval Studies, St. Michael's College, Toronto, Canada, 1933. Pp. xx+248.

These two books are at present our entire available basis for a knowledge of one of the works most fundamentally important in the scholastic theology and philosophy of the mediaeval world, Christian and Muslim. The Arabic and Latin MSS, the Latin edition of Venice 1506, the Hebrew translation, can hardly be regarded as available. For the translations into Latin and Hebrew the simplest reference is to SARTON's *History*, vol. ii, pp. 171, 877. Chapters 1 and 2 of the *Logic* were edited and translated by G. BEER, Leiden, 1888, as a dissertation. Yet the method of the introduction of the book to Europe gave rise to one of the most unhappy misunderstandings in the history of philosophy, a misunderstanding which survives in the title of Professor MUCKLE's edition of the Latin translation. For the book most emphatically is not AL-GHAZZĀLĪ's *Metaphysics* but is an objective statement by him of what the Neoplatonic-Aristotelian philosophers of Islam meant in their books. The word "meanings" in its title is used much in the same way as in the title of CHARLES KINGSLEY's pamphlet, "What, then, does Dr. NEWMAN mean?" This is what the philosophers "meant". A *maqṣad* is what is intended or meant. *Maqṣad al-kalām* is "the intended sense of the saying." The word is thus a synonym of *ma'nā* in the sense "meaning" or "idea." But the whole western world took it that here was AL-GHAZZĀLĪ speaking for himself and drew up lists of his principal errors. They were grievous errors

for that world, but they were not his. There is a full examination of this by FR. MAURICE BOUYGES, S.J., in the *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale*, Université Saint Joseph, Beyrouth, vii, pp. 398 f, 404 ff.

How did this misunderstanding arise? Simply because the Latin translator, through sheer unhappiness, omitted AL-GHAZZĀLĪ's preface and colophon. It is possible, also, that he may have worked from an incomplete MS. A translation of that preface will be given here, with a description of the whole work, and will make the situation perfectly clear. The Cairo edition is not, of course, "critical"; it has no apparatus; it was made apparently from two MSS only; but it gives a sound text. It is the only edition and, according to SARKIS' *Bibliographie Arabe* (1929 but covers only up to 1919), *Fasc. viii. Col. 1415*, it has not been reprinted. The book does not seem to have been common in the East. The Sayyid MURTAḌĀ in his commentary on the *Ihyā* (i, p. 42) knew it, but apparently did not possess it. Yet, according to BROCKELMANN i, p. 425, there is a commentary on it by TAFTAZĀNĪ in the Yeni Library at Istanbul.

The date of this book and of its sequel, the *Tahāfut* can be fixed quite definitely. More than thirty-five years ago I investigated the point in detail in my "Life of AL-GHAZZĀLĪ" which appeared in vol. XX, pp. 71-132 of JAOS for 1899. For the *Maqāṣid* and the *Tahāfut* see there especially pp. 98 f., where the writing of them is put in the years immediately before he left Baghdad, towards the end of A.H. 488, Nov. 1095. The same is given in the Chronological Table which forms Appendix I to my translation of a Book of the *Ihyā* in JRAS for 1901-2, 1902, pp. 14-18. Since then FR. BOUYGES in his edition of the *Tahāfut* (reviewed *Isis*, vol. X (2), pp. 497 ff., June 1928) in 1927, p. ix, gives a note which he has found in a MS of that book, the sequel to the *Maqāṣid*, that the book was finished Muharram II, A.H. 488, that is, January 22, 1095. This date FR. BOUYGES accepts as it agrees with other investigations he has made in the chronology of AL-GHAZZĀLĪ's life. I agree with him in accepting this date. It fits in with the development of AL-GHAZZĀLĪ's studies and thinking and with the psychological crisis of his life.

Following a regular convention in the writing of didactic treatises, AL-GHAZZĀLĪ begins with an address to a supposed disciple who has asked for instruction.

“ You have desired from me a doubt-removing discourse, uncovering the falling to pieces (*tahāfut*) of the philosophers and the mutual contradictions in their views and how they hide their suppressions and their deceits. But to help you thus is not at all desirable except after first teaching you their position (*madhhab*) and making you know their dogmatic structure. For it is absurd to consider the falsity of positions before understanding their sources; it is indeed shooting an arrow blindly and at a venture. So I was of opinion that I should prefix to an exposition of how they fall to pieces a concise discourse (*kalām*) containing a reproduction (*hikāya*) of their meanings (*maqāṣid*) as to the sciences which they cultivate, logical, physical and theological, without distinguishing between the sound and the false in them (*ḥaqq, bāṭil* = real, unreal). That is I intend only to make intelligible the ultimate (*ghāya*) of their doctrine without anything like expansion or addition going beyond what they mean. And I shall state it by way of accurate relation of facts and reproduction, joined with what they hold to be proofs. The object of this book is reproduction of *The Meanings of the Philosophers* (*Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*) and that is its title.

I teach you, then, first, that their sciences are in four parts : mathematics (*riyāḍiyyāt*), logic (*manṭiqiyyāt*), physics (*tabīʿiyyāt*), theology (*ʿilāhiyyāt*). The mathematical sciences consider arithmetic (*ḥisāb*) and geometry (*handasa*) and there is nothing in their requirements contradictory to reason and they cannot be met with denial and contention; so there is no reason why we should trouble to state them. In theology the most of their articles of belief are opposed to that which is sound and little therein is right. In logic most is right and there is little error; it contradicts the people of sound views (*ahl al-ḥaqq*) only in technical terms and in expressions (*ʿirādāt*), as opposed to ideas (*maʿānī*) and meanings (*maqāṣid*), since its object is to correct the methods of proof and that is something in which thinkers agree. In physics the sound is mixed with the false and right is dubiously like to error; so no general judgment can be passed upon it. In the *Tahāfut* will be explained the falsity of what must be held false.

Let us, then, understand that what we are now stating is by way of reproduction (*hikāya*), unconsidered, unrestricted, without investigation as to the sound and the corrupt. When we have finished with that we will begin again seriously and with purpose in a separate book which we shall call, if it be the will of Allāh, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, “ The falling to pieces of the structure built by the philosophers.” Let the beginning be understanding and stating Logic.”

The reiteration here shows how deeply AL-GHAZZALĪ feared that his purpose would be misunderstood, or misrepresented, and that the opinions in this book would be ascribed to him personally. It must have been known that he for some considerable time—three years, he says himself—had been studying the philosophers and meditating on their results. And his fears have been largely fulfilled. As has been said above, the book was held in the West to be an expression of his own position.

The first Part, on Logic, follows on pp. 4-71; the second Part, on Theology, on pp. 74-230. This is really metaphysics and begins with a discussion of Being (*wujūd*) and the Ens (*mawjūd*).

This leads to philosophical theology and a discussion of God as "He whose existence is necessary" (*wājib al-wujūd*). AL-GHAZZĀLĪ explains that it was the custom of the philosophers to treat Physics before Metaphysics, but he has changed the order because of the greater importance of Metaphysics, that it is more controversial and that it is the extreme term (*ghāya*) and real meaning (*maqṣad*) of the sciences. The philosophers postponed it because of its abstruseness and because of the difficulty of approach to it before taking up Physics, but AL-GHAZZĀLĪ will give in the course of the discussion what of Physics is necessary as a basis for the understanding of the meaning. It may be guessed that this change of order reflects how he had himself approached these sciences, and made his notes on them. He would naturally look first into the theology and, then, hark back for explanations to physics. His reproduction of the meanings, or ideas, of this science will be given in two Introductions and five Discussions. The first Introduction is on the division of the sciences and that division is primarily into metaphysical theology, mathematics and physics. The second Introduction is as to the subjects of these three sciences. Then come the five Discussions of metaphysical theology: (i) Being, its laws and essential attributes. (ii) The essence of Him whose being is necessary and what inheres in Him. (iii) His qualities. (iv) His acts. (v) How the being of things proceeds from the first Beginning and of the order of secondary causes and how they mount to One who is the Causer of causes.

The third Part, the so-called Physics, follows on pp. 234-320. It is concerned with the physical world, as subject to change and motion and rest. At the beginning of this Part it is said that it consists of four Discussions, but in the text as it stands, Arabic and Latin, a fifth Discussion is added. The four are: (i) That which belongs to all bodies, form and matter and motion and place. (ii) A consideration of the doctrine of the simple body. (iii) A consideration of the compounded and mixed. (iv) A consideration of the "soul" (*nafs*), plant, animal and human, "and with it the object (*gharaḍ*) is complete."

That seems final, but the fifth Discussion comes on pp. 301-320 and deals with the effects of the "pouring forth" (*faiḍān*) of the Active Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿāl*) on "souls." It is thus,

in a sense, a psychology and links up with the part of the Theology (pp. 220 f.) which describes the "procession" (*ṣadr*) of the ten immaterial Intellects and the nine Spheres from the First (*al-'awwal*). The tenth is the Active Intellect and its Sphere is that of the Moon. In FR. BOUYGES' edition of the *Tahāfut*, p. 114, there is a similar account of the origin of the Intellects and the Spheres. The tenth is the last (*al-'akhīr*), and it is called the Active Intellect because it is immaterial and in continual action upon "souls." This working is considered under ten heads: the evidence of the soul as to the Active Intellect; how that Intellect works on the soul; happiness and misery of the soul after death according as it responds; the cause of spiritual vision true and false; the whole problem of perception of the Unseen World by the soul; the doctrine of prophets and of their evidentiary miracles and of the wonders (*karāmāt*) of the saints. This, then, is a philosophical psychology, an attempt to bring the phenomena of the intellectual and religious life, as experienced in Islam, under the Neoplatonic-Aristotelian scheme of Intellects, Souls and Spheres. In the *Tahāfut* a similar exposition on pp. 254-270, 366ff. should be compared. The Discussion is in AL-GHAZZĀLĪ's style- but, from the nature of its subject, it is markedly more theological than philosophical and may quite easily have been added as an after-thought. That would mean that he had not, in the confusion of his departure from Baghdad, finally revised the book and the book may have got into circulation in an unrevised form. The MSS of the Latin translation have the same contradiction, but it has been removed in the Venice edition of 1506.

It is part, further, of the ambiguity as to the *Maqāṣid* that AL-GHAZZĀLĪ himself seldom (or never?) alludes to it by name. In the *Munqidh* (ed. Cairo, 1303) he tells of his study of the philosophers and names the *Tahāfut* twice (pp. 10, 11, 16), but he does not name the *Maqāṣid*. GOLDZIEHER has pointed out in his *Streitschrift des Gazālī gegen die Bātinijja-Secte* (Leiden, 1916) that AL-GHAZZĀLĪ in this book, his *Mustaḥhiri*, alludes plainly to his refutation of the philosophers but he does not name the *Tahāfut* nor the *Maqāṣid* (pp. 28, 45 and text pp. 9 f.). This, with other considerations (GOLDZIEHER, pp. 25 ff.), gives a date for the *Mustaḥhiri* after the 11th Muharram 488 (Jan. 1095) and before Dhū-l-Qa'da 488 (Nov. 1095) when he abandoned

everything and left Baghdad as a wandering Ṣūfī. In this book there is a very singular passage (text, p. 10, ll. 5 ff.) where he says that a part of the views of the philosophers on prophecy was susceptible of an interpretation which he would not reject. Similarly in his *Mi'yār' al-'ilm*, a book intended to be a standard and guide in intellectual investigations and especially as to the language and technical expressions of the philosophers, he names the *Tahāfut* but not the *Maqāsid* (p. 22 of ed. Cairo, 1329). Also in his *Mihakk an-nazar*, a similar but shorter book, he names the *Tahāfut* (p. 51 of ed. Cairo, Adabiya Press), but not the *Maqāsid*. It may be, then, that the *Maqāsid* was left by its author in an unfinished and quasi-unpublished state; it may represent lectures that never reached book form, much like some of the Aristotelian treatises. We know from a note at the end of his *Mihakk* (p. 133) that the *Mi'yar*, when the *Mihakk* was written, was in such an unfinished condition and not given over to formal publication. Afterwards, to judge from the edition of Cairo 1329, the *Mi'yar* was revised and completed.

The book closes (p. 320) with a reiteration that it is simply a reproduction of the logical, theological and physical sciences of the philosophers without any attempt to distinguish between what is true and what is false. That will be done in the Book of the *Tahāfut*. Like the similar preface, this reiteration does not occur in the Latin translation, and it is a permissible conjecture that the form which reached the West was still more unfinished than the printed Arabic text and had neither the preface nor the ending. Otherwise it is hard to understand how the translator into Latin should have mutilated his source and made AL-GHAZZĀLĪ responsible for those heretical opinions. The mischief thus wrought has been immense and is still abiding. We are deeply indebted to Professor MUCKLE for his most careful edition of the two Books on Metaphysics and Physics—he does not give the Logic—but there is no word of admonition in the preface that these do not give AL-GHAZZĀLĪ's own position. On the title-page they are called "Algazel's Metaphysics" and the single word "translation" is almost the only hint given that they were not originally written in Latin. Otherwise "Algazel" might be a mediaeval European philosopher. The edition is based on a Vatican MS probably of the end of the thirteenth century,

controlled by five Paris MSS and by the Venice print of 1506. The Vatican MS is markedly superior, but full variants are given from two of the Paris MSS. The qualification "almost" above refers to two little notes in Appendix B which gives "Variants and Marginalia." The first of these, p. 241 a, referring to the Latin text, p. 158, l. 6, is correct. The Arabic, p. 269, l. 7, does give *ka-l-quṭuni-l-mandūfi*, "like carded cotton." But the second, p. 247 a, referring to the Latin text, p. 193, l. 8, and suspecting the Arabic word *jinnī* in a corrupt passage, is wrong. The Arabic p. 31 b, ll. 9-11, can be translated: "so often it (*or* he) presents to the sense (apparently the *sensus communis*) the form of the thing feared until he witnesses and sees what he fears, and on account of this a timid coward sees terrible forms, and this is the cause of the speech in desert places of which there is talk and of what is heard of its language."

Finally, it is greatly to be desired that FR. BOUYGES will carry out his promise of 1927 and give us in the "Bibliotheca Arabica Scholasticorum" a thorough edition of the *Maqāṣid*. Professor MUCKLE has now made accessible the Latin version of more than three-quarters of the Arabic text—246 pp. out of 320—and provided one of the necessary preliminaries to that task.

(*Hartford, Conn.*)

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