

terpretation of the persecution of the Ash'arites in Khorasan after 445/1053 (p. 12f.), for instance, repeats the old Ash'arite-inspired tale of al-Kunduri's jealousy which has long been dismissed by scholars. The importance of this event for al-Juwayni's political and theological work is overlooked. Historical mistakes are frequent. Khorasan was not, as stated on p. 26, governed by "Aḥmad al-Buwayhi" (Mu'izz al-Dawla?) until 434/1042, but was from 389/999 part of the Ghaznawid empire and before that ruled by the Sāmanids. One page later we read that the social life of the time was dominated by "the ethnic factor." This is not further explained, except by the statement that "society was a result of a blend of many races, societies, and cultures" (p. 29). The religious policy of the early Seljuq empire is characterized in just one sentence which says simply that many schools were opened under the reign of Niẓām al-Mulk and Alp Arslān (p. 31). Current myths are frequently repeated, like the one that al-Fārābī was the leading philosopher of his day (p. 32, quoting Majid Fakhry), although his name does not figure prominently in the middle of the fourth/tenth century and his philosophical fame was established only half a century later.

The neglect of secondary literature is most evident in the translations from the Arabic. Theological texts are always tricky and difficult to translate, but in the case of early Ash'arite texts this difficulty is increased by a lack of lexicographical aids. Only recently, Samiḥ Dughaym's dictionary of kalām terms (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1998) offers some help. Saffo's translations show a clear lack of precision. For instance, on p. 16 *adillat al-ʿuqūl* is rendered as "mental arguments," and one might ask how al-Juwayni distinguished a mental argument from a non-mental one? The arguments in question here are rather of a kind that is convincing by the force of deductive reasoning.

Saffo presents al-Juwayni to us as a lonely man. While Nagel presents al-Juwayni as an exciting writer, deeply concerned with the intellectual and political problems of his time, Saffo's al-Juwayni remains a boring author concerned with seemingly centuries-old questions of bloodless Islamic theology. Nagel may have stretched the limits of his analysis of al-Juwayni too far when he put him into the service of a much broader inquiry into the "triumph and failure of Islamic rationalism." Saffo, however, never attempts to look beyond the writings of his author, and he nowhere tries to assess al-Juwayni's part in the shaping of the Seljuq empire or his role in the history of Islamic theology.

All these flaws could have been addressed in the initial stage of the dissertation. The considerable number of misprints and hasty mistakes—Ibn Taymiyya, for instance, is spelled in three different ways in the bibliography—make the additional shortcomings of this dissertation's research evident.

FRANK GRIFFEL

YALE UNIVERSITY

Al-Ghazālī, The Niche of Lights: A Parallel English-Arabic Text. By DAVID BUCHMAN. Islamic Translation Series. Provo: BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1998. Pp. xxx + 80 (in English) + 53 (in Arabic). \$24.95.

Al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār* has often been considered his most enigmatic book. Regarded as one of his latest writings, it is also seen as the one most inspired by Ṣūfism. In an interpretation of the Light Verse, Koran 24:35, al-Ghazālī lays down how the text of the revelation provides guidance for the soul that seeks ascent to the highest level of human perfection. Al-Ghazālī's distinction between the *ʿālam al-shahāda* and the *ʿālam al-malakūt*, and his conclusion that every verse in the Koran has, corresponding to the apparent meaning, an inner sense, opens the way to long and sometimes farfetched expositions about the inner meaning of Scripture, which have few parallels in al-Ghazālī's other works. As if this were not enough, earlier Western scholars writing on the *Mishkāt* were puzzled by a seeming contradiction in his oeuvre. In the third chapter of the book a *muṭāʿ*, "one who is obeyed," appears and figures as the first creature below God. The *muṭāʿ* has indeed very much the same function as the demiurge of Neoplatonist cosmology. This "Ghazālī-problem," as W. H. T. Gairdner named it in 1914, prompted W. M. Watt to consider the corresponding part of the *Mishkāt* a spurious work not written by al-Ghazālī himself. Yet since then, our understanding of al-Ghazālī's multifaceted styles of writing and of both his rejection as well as his incorporation of elements from *falsafa* and Ismāʿīlism has increased considerably. But even if now there seems to be reconciliation for passages in al-Ghazālī's work that earlier analysts deemed blatantly contradictory, the *Mishkāt* still remains a book that challenges even the boldest understanding of al-Ghazālī as a multi-layered writer.

David Buchman's new translation of the *Mishkāt*, published in what appears will become one of the most respectable series of translations of Islamic texts, will surely draw renewed attention to this enigmatic book. Buchman, like many readers of the *Mishkāt*, comes from Ṣūfī studies and is only marginally concerned with the *Mishkāt*'s place in al-Ghazālī's oeuvre. His account of al-Ghazālī's life follows an often repeated Ṣūfī reading of al-Ghazālī's autobiography and has been challenged for more than fifty years now. According to this narrative, al-Ghazālī was in his youth a bloodless *mutakallim* concerned entirely with the dry practice of jurisprudence until his vividly narrated "tawba" in 488/1095 that paved his way to Ṣūfism. The alleged existence of a conversation in the middle of al-Ghazālī's life also conveniently solves problems of inconsistency in al-Ghazālī's books, albeit at the cost of jumbling the chronology. The *Iljām al-ʿawamm*, a work of kalām literature, is quoted by Buchman as a witness for his early period (p. xix), although its completion is dated in the colophon of two mss. to 505/1111, only days before al-Ghazālī's death.

The dating of the *Mishkāt* to the end of al-Ghazālī's life is far less certain. The text itself only mentions other books that can

be dated to around 490/1097. The main argument for a much later dating of the *Mishkāt* is still Bouyges' reasoning that it represents "le développement le plus avancé de son sūfisme, et qui, par conséquent, fut écrit l'un des derniers" (Maurice Bouyges, *Essai de chronologie des oeuvres de Al-Ghazali (Algazel)*, ed. M. Allard [Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1959], 65f.) This judgment has been supported by al-Ghazālī's silence on this book in his autobiography (assuming that it was composed afterwards), and George Hourani's far-reaching interpretation of a list of books in Ibn Rushd's *al-Kashf ʿan manāḥij*. All this seems less convincing now than it was during the twentieth century, and a cautious assessment should acknowledge that the *Mishkāt* could have been written any time between the *Iḥyāʾ*² and al-Ghazālī's death.

In his introduction Buchman limits himself to a presentation of the English secondary literature on the *Mishkāt* that is mainly concerned with the question of reconciling this book with al-Ghazālī's criticism of *falsafa* and Ismāʿīlism. The parallel Arabic text in his book and his translation are based on ʿAfīfī's edition of 1964 "with minor changes." This edition is, despite Buchman's claims, not critical. ʿAfīfī used only two manuscripts, one of which must be considered unidentified. It is not, as ʿAfīfī claims, MS Istanbul, Sheḥīd Ali Pasha 1712, which was copied less than five years after al-Ghazālī's death.¹ Such a thin basis for the text could have easily been improved by taking additional (preferably older) prints or easily accessible manuscripts from Western libraries into account. The number and the character of Buchman's changes to ʿAfīfī's text are nowhere indicated.

Otherwise, Buchman has made good much of ʿAfīfī's neglect in his brief apparatus. Qurʾānic references and *aḥādīth* have been checked and listed, the translation of difficult passages is explained, and references to comparable passages in Islamic literature are given. The great improvement over Gairdner's English translation of 1924 is Buchman's mostly convincing rendition of the technical vocabulary of Muslim theology and Sūfism. Buchman's translation is much more literal than Gairdner's and thus more precise, albeit sometimes less readable. The references of the Arabic personal and possessive pronouns, for instance, are not always clear in the English translation, where Buchman has rendered them at times too literally. The text, however, benefits fully from the progress made during the last decades of Sūfī studies and translations. Translating *ʿaql* as "rational faculty" and *ʿilm ḍarūrī* as "self-evident knowledge" is adequate in al-Ghazālī's context. There are, however, a number of choices taken that can be contested. The Arabic *ḥaqīqa* still appears, as in many contemporary translations, indiscriminately as "reality," although very little sense can be made out of it. Most often it is used as a linguistic term describing the true denotation of a word. To discover what the word "light" really denotes is, for instance, the aim of the *Mishkāt*'s first chapter. This is not a quest for light's "reality," but for its "real meaning." Arabic *naẓar* is not "consideration," but rather

"speculation" or simply "theology." To translate *ʿarif* as "gnostic" follows a custom in English Sūfī texts, but the usage of "gnostic" is reserved to a particular tradition that al-Ghazālī, for instance, has little to do with. The same applies to "gnostic science" for *maʿrifā* and "gnōsis" for *ʿirfān*. Buchman's rendering of *ʿālam al-malakūt* as "the world of dominion" sounds odd, but gets nevertheless close to most of the associations that come with the Arabic term. Corrections to Buchman's translation include the third sentence in §20 of p. 9: "But you should know that these people have imaginations, fancies, and convictions, and that they assume the judgments of these three are the judgments of the rational faculty. But the errors are indeed connected to the three lower faculties."

¹ ʿAfīfī did not claim to use the Istanbul MS itself but he used the microfilm no. 3659 respectively 3660 *taṣawwuf* at the Dār al-Kutub in Cairo. Although the original MS from which this film is taken has been copied by the same *nāsikh* as MS Istanbul, Sheḥīd Ali Pasha 1712, the Cairo film is not made from this Istanbul MS. The MS Sheḥīd Ali Pasha 1712 does not contain the *Mishkāt al-anwār*. It contains three different texts by al-Ghazālī and none of them is on the microfilm in Cairo.

FRANK GRIFFEL

YALE UNIVERSITY

Maimonides' Empire of Light: Popular Enlightenment in an Age of Belief. By RALPH LERNER, Chicago: UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 2000, Pp. 221, \$35.

Maimonides (1135–1204) a figure of enlightenment? Well, not exactly in the sense of the eighteenth-century Enlighteners, but as a popular instructor who brought "some basic notions of philosophy within the ken of ordinary men and women" (p. 11). It is Maimonides' educational work addressed to a popular readership that Ralph Lerner interprets in a 95-page monograph followed by 109 pages of English translations. The writings discussed are the "Epistle to Yemen," the "Mishneh Torah," the "Treatise on Resurrection," the "Letter on Astrology," and the "Guide of the Perplexed." Lerner also interprets a work by the thirteenth-century Maimonidean Shem-Tov ben Joseph Ibn Falaquera, and Joseph Albo's "Book of Roots" of 1425. Some of the translations are provided by other authors and are thus reprinted from their earlier or future publications, such as Joel L. Kramer's translation of the "Epistle to Yemen," Hillel G. Fradkin's of the "Treatise on Resurrection," and Steven Harvey's translation of Shem-Tov's "Epistle of the Debate." Lerner himself provides the translations of the introduction and the first book of the "Mishneh Torah" and the "Letter on Astrology" (the