

speculative. While the details may be vague, the overall dating of Mandaicism to the late fifth century is based on solid ground.

Chapter 11 discusses the religious environment of Sasanian Iraq. Van Bladel sees Mandaicism as one of the new movements in Sasanian Mesopotamia, all movements reacting to a new context to find a new form of religion while drawing on former idolaters ready to convert as supporters. Admitting (p. 102) himself that there are few sources on paganism in Sasanian Mesopotamia, van Bladel points to the changes of the policy of the Sasanian kings in the late third and late fifth centuries, who turned against idolaters and their temples, leaving idolaters in a sense homeless, ready for conversion.

The final chapter points out Mandaean passages referring to the changes the religion underwent. The book is wrapped up by two appendices giving some key passages from Bar Konay and Ibn Waḥshīyya on the Mandaeans, as well as a bibliography and an index.

On many occasions, the book is speculative. Van Bladel strains the evidence when he (p. 66) searches for the motivation of the Caliph al-Qāhir (r. 932–934) to obtain a legal ruling against the Ḥarrānians being the Ṣābiāns of the Quran in the (undocumented) influence of his vizier Ibn Muqla, claiming that the latter tried to prove that the Mandaeans were the real Ṣābiāns and for this reason wanted the Ḥarrānians out of the way. While the equation of Abū ‘Alī with Ibn Muqla is possible, the rest does not convince.

In the discussion of the demise of Mesopotamian temples (pp. 103–12), van Bladel sees these in terms of wealthy Late Babylonian temples, assuming that their closure caused the rise of a number of new religions, Mandaicism among them, that were not bound to major temples. This ignores the fact that the great temples had never been the sole places of worship in Mesopotamia, so their closure could hardly have affected the life of the population in the countryside and in small villages, which were accustomed to making their offerings in their local temples.

It seems more probable that the old cults gradually lost their credibility when the world around them changed. Christianity and Zoroastrianism were ruling religions, and their prestige led to the birth of religions that combined their features, and also those of Judaism and older religions. A similar phenomenon occurred when Islam encountered local Iranian religions in the mid-eighth century.

The speculative character of some points aside, van Bladel’s book is a major contribution to the study of the early history of the Mandaeans, tapping sources that have hitherto either been ignored or not used intensively enough.

Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila
University of Edinburgh

JOSEPH E.B. LUMBARD:

Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love.

(Suny Series in Islam.) 259 pp. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016. \$80. ISBN 978 14384 5965 3.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X18000204

The younger brother of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, has long been recognized as an important figure in the history of Sufism, at least in the Persian-language scholarship. Until the publication of Lumbard’s monograph, however, Aḥmad’s life and works have not been at the centre of a monograph in Western

scholarship. Lombard's book, a revised version of his doctoral dissertation of 2003, is the first attempt to fill this gap. In doing so, Lombard follows in the footsteps of his two Iranian predecessors, Nasrollah Pourjavady and Aḥmad Mujāhid, who both edited the extant works of Aḥmad and wrote about him – mostly, however, in Persian. Lombard's book is divided in two parts: the first focuses on Aḥmad's life, the sources of his biography, and the authenticity of the works attributed to him. The second discusses the main aspects of his teachings, both practical and theoretical, with an emphasis on his doctrine of love. In examining the authenticity of the books attributed to Aḥmad, Lombard mostly draws on the criteria put forward by Pourjavady and Mujāhid, namely Aḥmad's peculiar literary style and the absence of philosophical concepts and vocabulary in his authenticated works. Whereas the style can justifiably distinguish an authentic work from a spurious one, the author's use of philosophical concepts and jargon is a different matter. Since, according to Lombard, Aḥmad did not have recourse to philosophical jargon in his already authenticated works, most of which are in Persian, he discards as inauthentic all the works with a philosophical-driven language that are attributed to Aḥmad in the manuscript tradition. These are mostly written in Arabic. This argument, however, does an injustice to *al-Dhakhīra fī 'ilm al-baṣīra*, whose unicum (MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Petermann I 587) has in its incipit the name of Aḥmad. Its content is very much in line with what we find in the oeuvre of 'Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadānī, Aḥmad's most famous disciple. Thus, *al-Dhakhīra* calls into question the validity of the presence/absence of philosophical vocabulary, as a functional criterion to identify Aḥmad's genuine works.

In the second part of the book, Lombard identifies two prominent themes in Aḥmad's thought: his sympathy for Satan and the centrality of love. The bulk of the second part is the analysis of Aḥmad's doctrine of love, as presented in his masterpiece *Sawānīh al-'ushshāq*. Lombard's main thesis is that Aḥmad "makes a revolutionary move in Sufi thought by placing love at the center of metaphysics" (p. 112). For Aḥmad not only does the Sufi path hinge on love but also all of creation, because he identifies love with the "Divine essence" (p. 113). Even though Lombard indicates the importance of such a statement for understanding Aḥmad's conception of theology, he does not investigate it because he assumes that the ontological implication of the identification of God's essence with love was not at the centre of *Sawānīh*. Instead Lombard focuses on the influence of this move on the shaping of the various stages of Sufism. As a result of this methodological preference, the rest of the book unfolds in a descriptive way. The question that should have been asked and answered is why Aḥmad made such a move and in what terms this move was a reaction to the theological discussions that were shaping the intellectual milieu in which he was active. Saying that God's essence is love, for instance, would not be a trivial point against the backdrop of the Ash'arite doctrine of the divine essence and attributes. If Aḥmad favoured Ash'arism, as Lombard contends (p. 60), how did he reconcile his assumption about love as the divine essence with the tenets of Ash'arite theology? Because the impact of this doctrine on the modality of cosmogony and the eternity of the world would be huge. When Lombard, for instance, depicts "the descent of the spirit" (p. 167) and refers to a famous saying according to which the "spirit is not subject to the word Be!", he could have addressed the thorny question of spirit's eternity. Sufi manuals before and after Aḥmad contain rigorous discussions about this disturbing implication. Aḥmad's insistence on the origination (*ḥudūth*) of the spirit hence acquires its own controversial meaning, which would have become clear if this question had been contextualized within those debates.

If the book had been revised before the publication, some minor mistakes could have been avoided. On p. 81 for example, Lombard cites a passage of *Majālis* where

Aḥmad would have said: “If you believe, then accept the *outer* holy law (*ash-shar‘ az-zāhir al-muqaddas*)”, whereas in both prints of Mujāhid’s edition there is: “then accept the *pure* holy law” “*al-shar‘ al-muṭahhar al-muqaddas*” (p. 20, *Majālis*, ed. A. Mojahed, Dānīshgāh-i Tīhrān, first edition 1998, second edition 2010). Lumbard also equates the words “*irfān*” and “*ma‘rifā*”; it would be preferable if he did not. Given that Aḥmad never used the word “*irfān*” in this technical sense, this is projecting into Aḥmad’s terminology a shift that happened centuries later. Even though chapter 2 depicts a very useful picture of the time and life of Aḥmad, there are some minor historical errors which could have been avoided. ‘Alī ar-Riḍā is said to be “the seventh Shiite *Imām*” (p. 51), but in fact he is considered to be the eighth *Imām* of the Twelver Shiites. While talking about the political situation of Khurāsān, Lumbard depicts the “several waves of Turkic tribes, such as the Sāmānids” (p. 52) who reigned over the region, but the Sāmānids claimed to be the descendants of the Sāsānid warrior hero Bahrām Chūbīn and did not claim to be Turks (see “Sāmānids”, *EP*). The date of birth given for ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, on the basis of which Lumbard tentatively situates the encounter between him and Aḥmad, is wrong. It is 490/1097 and not 492/1099 (given by Lumbard on p. 73). Despite revisionary efforts there are still some gaps in the bibliography. There is for example no mention of the edited version of *al-Tajrīd fī kalimat al-tawḥīd*, published by Mujāhid in 2005 (Lumbard used the Bibliothèque nationale de France manuscripts of this book in his dissertation and consequently in his monograph).

The big merit of this monograph is to make known to Western academia the life and oeuvre of Aḥmad. The fifth chapter, on love, contains a very clear explanation of Aḥmad’s idea of love and can be used in teaching the theory of love in Sufism. A more comprehensive view of the different aspects of Aḥmad’s intellectual profile could have resulted in a deeper understanding of the importance of this person in the history of Sufism. Nonetheless, this monograph stands out as the first step towards rehabilitating the legacy of Aḥmad and bringing him out of the shadow of his famous brother.

Salimeh Maghsoudlou

MacMillan Center, Yale University

KHALED EL-ROUAYHEB and SABINE SCHIMIDTKE (eds):

The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy.

xii, 700 pp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. £112.50.

ISBN 978 0 199 91738 9.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X18000010

New scientific disciplines often go through three stages of formation. First, scholars from other disciplines come to be interested in a hitherto little-known area of research. Second, this area receives sufficient appreciation and support so that it generates its own discipline of investigation to which more and more specialists devote their expertise. Third, these specialists engage in the teaching of their field of studies at different academic institutions. It is in the transition from the second to the third stage that handbooks and compendia are produced. They are intended to provide a general summary of the achievements of the new discipline, position it among the traditional areas of scholarship, become a manual for teaching and learning, and serve as a reference work for a new generation of scholars.