The Muslim WORLD

Al-Ghazālī, Ramon Llull and Religionswissenschaft

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Al-Ghazālī in the Muslim West

Historians of the intellectual life of the medieval Muslim West often face the problem of discrepancies between the iconic function of an Eastern author in philosophy or other fields of learning on the one hand and the actual knowledge of his texts on the other hand. Ibn Sīnā is a case in point. Ibn Ṭufayl's mystical appropriation of the *shaykh al-raʾīs* in the introduction to his *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* and Ibn Rushd's critical response to his metaphysics suggest that Ibn Sīnā's name and elements of his philosophy circulated in Almohad al-Andalus, but these references do not add up to a clear picture of which texts were available at what time and in which circles of Andalusi scholars.[1]

Similar problems surround al-Ghazālī whose career in the Muslim West was turbulent and whose success was connected with that of the Almohads. Al-Ghazālī's fame spread in al-Andalus already during his lifetime. Evidence for the esteem which Westerners had for the Eastern scholar is the letter which al-Ghazālī wrote in favour of the Almoravids.[2] With this support, al-Ghazālī responded to a request from the Andalusi Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī (1076–1148), known as the *qāḍī* (as opposed to the Sufi). In the wake of the Almoravid conquest of his native Seville, Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī had left the city in the company of his father Abū Muḥammad in 1092 on a journey to the East which combined the typical aims of a pilgrimage and search for education (the *riḥla fī ṭalab al-ʿilm*) with a political mission.[3] Four years into their journey, Ibn al-ʿArabī senior started to lobby in

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[1] For Ibn Ṭufayl see Dimitri Gutas, "Ibn Ṭufayl on Ibn Sīnā's Eastern Philosophy", *Oriens*, 34 (1994), 222–241. For the position of Ibn Sīnā in the Muslim West under Almohad rule, see my "Ibn Sīnā in the Arab West: The Testimony of an Andalusian Sufi", in *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale*, 21 (2010), 287–312.

[2] María J. Viguera, "Las cartas de al-Gazālī y al-Ṭurṭūšī al soberano Almorávid Yūsuf b. Tāšufīn", *al-Andalus* 42 (1977), 341–374.

[3] On this journey see Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (New York/Oxford, 2009), 62–67 on Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī.

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public on behalf of the Almoravids. Their campaign was crowned with success when they obtained a letter of support from the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Mustaẓhir in 1098. As mentioned above, another such letter was successfully requested from al-Ghazālī whom they had met in the previous year in Baghdad. With these letters in his bag, Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī felt much more confident making his way back to al-Andalus where he arrived in 1102. His father had died in 1099 in Alexandria on the return journey. Yet, it was not al-Ghazālī's letter of support alone which Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī brought back with him. His *Sirāj al-murīdīn* contains a list of works which he carried with him on his way to the West. The list includes a number of works by al-Ghazālī (*al-Mankhūl*, *al-Taʿlīqa*, *Shifāʾ al-ghalīl*, *Miḥakk al-naẓar*, *Miʿyār al-ʿilm*, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, *al-Iqtiṣād fī'l-iʿtiqād*) and offers crucial information about the publication of these texts and their introduction to the West. Other treatises should be added to this list though — as Ibn al-ʿArabī's *al-ʿAwāṣim min al-qawāṣim* suggests, the author also had access to *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*.[4] While it is not unusual for historians of the Muslim West that they find Eastern sources earlier and more reliable than Western testimonies, Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī seems to be a reverse case.[5] Frank Griffel has even described the scholar from Seville as "among his contemporaries . . . the most important source of information about al-Ghazālī's life and his teachings".[6] There is no indication that Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī had to face any negative repercussions in al-Andalus because of his connection to al-Ghazālī.

Then, however, events took a turn which modern historians have struggled to explain. In the following four decades several Andalusi scholars criticised al-Ghazālī for various reasons, sometimes singling out *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. According to some of them, this text in particular should be burned. Even though we do not have a clear understanding of the relationship between these scholars and the Almoravid rulers, it is generally assumed that such burnings did actually take place. Delfina Serrano mentions two possible official campaigns, "the first taking place in 503/1109, during the government of ʿAlī b. Yūsuf (d. 538/1143), and the second during the short reign of Tāshufīn b. ʿAlī (538–40/1143–45)".[7] A common explanation for this negative reaction is that in *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, al-Ghazālī criticised his fellow *ʿulamāʾ* for their involvement in politics, although the authority he assigned to Sufis may also have been crucial.[8] As

[4] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 64 and footnote 31. For the list see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Al-Naṣṣ al-kāmil li-Kitāb al-ʿawāṣim min al-qawāṣim*, ed. ʿAmmār Ṭālibī (Cairo, 1997), 377–379, and ʿAmmār Ṭālibī, *Arāʾ Abī Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī al-kalāmiyya*, 2 vols (Algiers, [1974]), I, 64–65.

[5] Andalusis were aware of "superiority" of Eastern sources in various areas. See Maḥmūd ʿAlī Makkī, "Egypt and the Origins of Arabic Spanish Historiography: A Contribution to the Study of the Earliest Sources for the History of Islamic Spain", in Maribel Fierro and Julio Samsó (eds), *The Formation of al-Andalus*, Part 2 Language, Religion, Culture and the Sciences (Aldershot, 1998), 173–233.

[6] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 62.

[7] Delfina Serrano Ruano, "Why Did the Scholars of al-Andalus Distrust al-Ghazāli? Ibn Rushd al-Jadd's *Fatwā* on *Awliyāʾ Allāh*", *Der Islam* 83 (2006), 137–156, 137.

[8] Serrano Ruano, "Why Did the Scholars of al-Andalus Distrust al-Ghazāli?". See also Maribel Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus", in Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke (eds), *Islamic Mysticism Contested. Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics* (Leiden, 1999), 174–206, 184–197.

Kenneth Garden has shown, many accusations that Andalusi scholars directed against al-Ghazālī had been voiced earlier by their Eastern peers.[9]

The events surrounding the suppression of al-Ghazālī's influence were appropriated by Almohad propaganda alongside some of the scholar's ideas, most notably the rational access to the foundation of the Islamic religion.[10] The movement divulged a story according to which an encounter between their mahdi Ibn Tūmart and al-Ghazālī had taken place in Baghdad. Al-Ghazālī enquired how his *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* was received in the West. After some hesitation, Ibn Tūmart admitted that the text was burned under the Almoravids whereupon al-Ghazālī asked God to make Ibn Tūmart the instrument of his revenge. Most modern scholars agree on the legendary nature of this event — during the time when Ibn Tūmart may have studied at Baghdad's Niẓāmiyya, between 1106 and 1117, al-Ghazālī was already in Khorasan. As Frank Griffel has pointed out, although the biographical data do not even confirm for certain that Ibn Tūmart actually studied at the Niẓāmiyya, the use of philosophical elements in his theology suggests that he absorbed the intellectual trends of this milieu.[11] Marc of Toledo (fl. 1193–1216) too, who translated Ibn Tūmart's creed (*ʿAqīda*) into Latin, presented the mahdi as a follower of al-Ghazālī.[12]

Legends abound in the historiography of the Berber empires of the Muslim West. Another one which concerns the burning of *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* is of modern provenance. In a study published in 1914, Miguel Asín Palacios presented the idea of a "School of Almería", a tradition of philosophical Sufism which had its origin in the works of Ibn Masarra (883–931) and was founded by Ibn al-ʿArīf (1088–1141).[13] This "School" allegedly opposed the burning of al-Ghazālī's works in a more or less organized manner. To put it

[9] Kenneth Garden, *Al-Ghazālī's Contested Revival:* Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn *and its Critics in Khorasan and the Maghrib*, PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 2005.

[10] On the significance of al-Ghazālī for the Almohads see among others Vincent J. Cornell, "Understanding is the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tūmart", *Studia Islamica* 66 (1987), 71–103; Madeleine Fletcher, "The Almohad *Tawḥīd*: Theology which Relies on Logic", *Numen* 38 (1991), 110–127 and "Ibn Tūmart's Teachers: The Relationship with al-Ghazālī", *al-Qanṭara* 18 (1997), 305–330; Tilman Nagel, *Im Offenkundigen das Verborgene. Die Heilszusage des sunnitischen Islams* (Göttingen, 2002). Griffel sees al-Ghazālī's influence among other areas in Ibn Tūmart's "moralistic approach" which he displayed upon return to the Maghreb. *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 78. See also M. A. Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, 2000), 427–468 on al-Ghazālī, 458–459 for the connection with Ibn Tūmart.

[11] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 77 and idem, "Ibn Tūmart's Rational Proof for God's Existence and Unity, and his Connection to the Niẓāmiyya *Madrasa* in Baghdad", in Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro and Luis Molina (eds), *Los Almohades: Problemas y perspectivas* (Madrid, 2005), 753–813, for the legendary nature of the encounter 753–756.

[12] Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny and Georges Vajda, "Marc de Tolède, traducteur d'Ibn Tūmart", *al-Andalus* 16 (1951), 109–115 and 259–307 and 17 (1952), 1–56 (102 and 269 for the reference to al-Ghazālī). The article is reprinted in Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, *La connaissance de l'Islam dans l'Occident médiéval*, ed. Charles Burnett (Aldershot, 1994).

[13] Miguel Asín Palacios, *Abenmasarra y su escuela. Orígenes de la filosofía hispanomusulmana* (Madrid, 1914); English translation: *The Mystical Philosophy of Ibn Masarra and his Followers* (Leiden, 1978).

in the words of another modern historian: "Masarrī ideology became the principal root of the dialectical thought of the Sufis of al-Andalus, and was highly influential within . . . the 'School of Almería', whose central members acquired such power that the *fuqahā'* of Almería . . . were the only ones of their time who dared to condemn the burning of al-Ghazālī's writings."[14] In recent years, this reconstruction of Almería's intellectual and religious milieu has attracted criticism for a number of reasons: the philosophical dimension of Ibn Masarra's works,[15] their significance for later Andalusi Sufis, the institution of a "School of Almería", the role of Ibn al-ʿArīf in this context, and the reaction of Andalusi or Almería Sufis to the burning of *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*.

Although the idea of an Almería-based Sufi resistance movement in favour of al-Ghazālī and against the Almoravids is no longer upheld, he is still believed to have had a significant impact among Andalusi scholars with mystical, ascetic and — broadly speaking — "intellectual" tendencies. Kenneth Garden even credits him with the rise of Western Sufism in the twelfth century. In several ways, the kind of Sufism represented by al-Ghazālī may indeed have been appealing to Andalusi mystics and ascetics. Although the connections between Ibn Masarra and later Sufis suggested by Asín Palacios have been put in doubt, there seems to have been in al-Andalus a prominent streak of systematic, rational or intellectual Sufism which is somewhat reminiscent of al-Ghazālī's own combination of mysticism and rationalism. The trend has been labeled as "theoretical Sufism", "intellectual esoterism" and similar terms.[16] The best-known representative of such a phenomenon might be Muḥyi al-Dīn ibn ʿArabī (1165–1240). The idea that Andalusi Sufis of his and the following generations introduced philosophical elements into their asceticism and mysticism already appears in medieval polemics.[17]

As is well known, al-Ghazālī still enjoys a somewhat dubious reputation among modern scholars of Islamic or Arabic intellectual history. For a long time he was a rather dark figure who dealt the deathblow to Islamic philosophy with his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*. Historians now reject this as a myth and reflection of an earlier teleological worldview which contrasts a (late) medieval Islamic decline with a simultaneous rise of European

[14] Miguel Cruz Hernández, "Islamic Thought in the Iberian Peninsula", in Salma Khadra Jayyusi (ed.), *The Legacy of Muslim Spain* (Leiden, 1994), II, 777–803, at 780.

[15] The most recent examination of Ibn Masarra's work comes from Sarah Stroumsa and Sara Sviri, "The Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra and his 'Epistle on Contemplation' ", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 36 (2009), 201–253.

[16] For the first expression James Morris, "Ibn ʿArabi and his Interpreters, Part II: Influences and Interpretations", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986), 733–750 (738); for the second expression Steven M. Wasserstrom, "Jewish-Muslim Relations in the Context of Andalusian Emigration", in Mark D. Meyerson and Edward D. English (eds), *Christians, Muslims and Jews in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Notre Dame, 2000), 69–87 (80–81).

[17] Anna Akasoy, "What is philosophical Sufism?", in *In the Age of Averroes. Arabic Philosophy in the 6th/12th Century*, ed. Peter Adamson (London, 2011), 229–249, and "The al-Ghazālī Conspiracy. Reflections on the Inter-Mediterranean Dimension of Islamic Intellectual History", in Y. Tzvi Langermann (ed.), *Avicenna and his Legacy. A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy* (Turnhout, 2009), 117–142.

civilization.[18] On the other hand, this vindication of al-Ghazālī did not put him on the map of Arabic philosophy as an unambiguous contributor to the tradition.[19] This modern ambivalence has precedents in the medieval West where scholars expressed a number of criticisms of al-Ghazālī's doctrines apart from the two explanations for the burning of *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* mentioned above. The ascetic and Mālikī jurisconsult Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī (1059–1126) objected to the text because of the philosophical element in it — using philosophy to defend religion was like washing a clean garment with urine. This criticism was echoed by Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī.[20] Ibn Ṭumlūs (born 1150–56, died 1223–24) who began his *Introduction to the Art of Logic* (*Madkhal li-ṣināʿat al-manṭiq*) with a short history of philosophy and religious sciences in al-Andalus, recognized in his use of logic the innovative force of al-Ghazālī and the reasons for the suppression of his ideas under the Almoravids. At the same time, however, Ibn Ṭumlūs considered al-Ghazālī's logic, which the scholar had integrated into an Islamic framework, inferior to al-Fārābī's works that informed Ibn Ṭumlūs's own logical treatises.[21] Despite the much more positive attitude of the Almohads, Ibn Rushd too criticized al-Ghazālī in his *Faṣl al-maqāl* for his approach to doctrinal and disciplinary boundaries. According to the Andalusi scholar, he discussed *taʾwīlāt* in books with poetical, rhetorical and dialectical methods, although they should only be the subject of demonstrative treatises.[22] Al-Ghazālī also showed chameleon-like behaviour. He was an Ashʿarite with the Ashʿarites, a Sufi with the Sufis, and a philosopher with the philosophers.[23] In similar

[18] For a deconstruction of this worldview see, for example, Dimitri Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century. An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29 (2002), 5–25, and George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2007).

[19] See the chart in Dimitri Gutas, "The Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 1000 — ca. 1350", in Jules Janssens and Daniel De Smet (eds), *Avicenna and his Heritage*. Actes of the International Colloquium, Leuven — Louvain-la-Neuve, September 8 — September 11, 1999 (Leuven, 2002), 81–97. Al-Ghazālī's name appears in chevrons as part of the Avicenna tradition.

[20] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 66. See also Garden, *Al-Ghazālī's Contested Revival*, and Akasoy, "The al-Ghazālī Conspiracy". Afifi al-Akiti suggests along similar lines that the inclusion of philosophical material from the *Maḍnūn* corpus in the *Iḥyāʾ* afforded al-Ghazālī's opponents in the West with legal arguments for their complaints. See M. Afifi al-Akiti, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of *Falsafa*: al-Ghazālī's *Maḍnūn, Tahāfut*, and *Maqāṣid*, with Particular Attention to their *Falsafī* Treatments of God's Knowledge of Temporal Events', in *Avicenna and his Legacy*, ed. Langermann, 52–100, 90–91 in particular.

[21] *Introducción al arte de la lógica*, ed. and trans. Miguel Asín Palacios (Madrid, 1916); Abdelali Elamrani-Jamal, "Éléments nouveaux pour l'étude de l'Introduction à l'Art de la Logique d'Ibn Ṭumlūs (m. 620/1223)", in *Perspectives arabes et médiévales sur la tradition scientifique et philosophique grecque*, eds Ahmad Hasnawi, Abdelali Elamrani-Jamal and Maroun Aouad (Louvain, 1997), 465–483.

[22] Ibn Rushd, *The Book of the Decisive Treatise determining the Connection between the Law and Wisdom*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Provo, Utah, 2001), 21.

[23] Ibn Rushd, *The Book of the Decisive Treatise*, 22. See also Frank Griffel, "The Relationship between Averroes and al-Ghazālī as it Presents itself in Averroes' Early Writings, Especially in his Commentary on al-Ghazālī's al-Mustaṣfā", in J. Inglis (ed.), *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition in Islam, Judaism and Christianity* (Richmond, 2002), 51–63.

words the Sufi and philosopher Ibn Sabʿīn of Murcia (ca. 1217–1270) said about al-Ghazālī: "One time he is a Sufi, another time a philosopher, a third time and Ashʿarite, a fourth time a jurist, and a fifth time a perplexed man."[24]

Ramon Llull and al-Ghazālī in the Latin West

This brief outline of the Arabic response to al-Ghazālī in twelfth- and thirteenth-century al-Andalus is incomplete even as a superficial account of the scholar's fate in the Western Mediterranean. Like the example of Ibn Sīnā mentioned at the beginning, in this multi-lingual and multi-religious region, al-Ghazālī's influence extended beyond those who shared his faith and also included, in addition to Jewish readers, Christian philosophers to the north of al-Andalus. When we speak about the translation of Arabic philosophical texts into Latin and, albeit more as an afterthought, other Romance languages, we have mostly two milieus in mind. After the "humanism" of the school of Chartres with its best-known translators Hermann of Carinthia (fl. 1138–43) and Robert of Ketton (fl. 1141–56), a number of translators, most notably Dominicus Gundissalinus (ca. 1110–90) and Gerard of Cremona (1114–87), were active in Toledo, where they translated above all al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā into Latin. It was also in Toledo where the career of the most important translator of the thirteenth century, Michael Scot (died before 1236), began. He became later the philosopher at the court of the emperor Frederick II (reg. until 1250) who — alongside Alfonso X of Castile and Leon (reg. 1256–84) — was one of the greatest patrons of the medieval Arabo-Latin translation movement.[25]

The career of the Latin al-Ghazālī is only partly located in these circles.[26] Gundissalinus translated his *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* into Latin.[27] Slightly less attention has been paid to later translators who are often considered as having had "ulterior motives", namely Christian mission. The Dominican missionary Ramón Martí (ca. 1220 — ca. 1285) included elements from a number of untranslated Arabic texts into his *Pugio fidei*, among them several by al-Ghazālī (*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, *Mīzān al-ʿamal*, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, *Kitāb al-tawba* and

[24] Ibn Sabʿīn, *Budd al-ʿārif*, ed. Jūrj Kattūra (Beirut, 1978), 144. For both quotations see Akasoy, "The al-Ghazālī Conspiracy", 129.

[25] Charles Burnett, "Arabic into Latin: the Reception of Arabic Philosophy into Western Europe", in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, eds Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor (Cambridge, 2005), 370–404.

[26] Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, "Algazel dans l'Occident latin", in Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, *La transmission des textes philosophiques et scientifiques au Moyen Age*, ed. Charles Burnett (Aldershot, 1994), article VII. As I argue in "Ibn Sīnā in the Arab West", the use of Latin testimonies for the history of Arabic philosophy is fraught with difficulties, but may nevertheless be attempted. For the use of the Latin tradition see also Ayman Shihadeh, "New Light on the Reception of al-Ghazālī's *Doctrines of the Philosophers* (*Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*)", in Adamson (ed.), *In the Age of Averroes*, 77–92.

[27] Jules Janssens, "Al-Ġazālī, The Latin Translation of his *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa*", in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy. Philosophy between 500 and 1500* (Dordrecht, 2011), VII, 387–390. I would like to thank the author for providing me with a copy of his article before publication.

al-Maqṣad).[28] Another translator who is usually not primarily classified as such is the Catalan missionary Ramon Llull (1232–1315).[29] Although his native Mallorca had been under Muslim rule until 1229 and Islam and Arabic must have been very present on the island, it did not come naturally that Llull absorbed this culture. According to his autobiography, the *Vita coaetanea*, it was only after his internal conversion at the mountain Randa — probably sometime between 1263 and 1265 — that Llull bought a Muslim slave and asked him to teach him Arabic. Llull had come to the conclusion that improving his linguistic skills would also improve his chances of converting Muslims to Christianity. Crucial too was the *Art*, his new rational and quasi-mathematical method which allowed Llull (this, at least, is what he hoped) to establish a common ground with non-Christians and convince them by means of demonstrative evidence of the truth of the Christian religion. Llull had realized that references to Scripture alone were useless if the person he tried to convince did not already share his belief in the text's divinely sanctioned nature. This insight has a parallel in al-Ghazālī's reasoning in his *Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*. What this text and Llull's project have in common is the ambition to put received truths on a new and more certain epistemological basis. Both take a step back, regard authority with caution and then provide the reader with a more independent line of reasoning. Modern readers, of course, would recognize both al-Ghazālī's inner insight and Llull's premises as elements of their own, respective religious cultures. We will return to this modern perspective later. Apart from their similar argumentative strategies comparisons between al-Ghazālī's autobiography and Llull's works have not yielded any result which would suggest that Llull was familiar with this text. If we wanted to argue in favour of a connection between them we would have to assume indirect and informal channels of transmission. The Almohads as champions of al-Ghazālī and with their promotion of a "rationalist fundamentalism" might provide such a channel.[30]

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[28] According to d'Alverny ("Algazel dans l'Occident latin", 9–10), Martí also cites *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* according to the Latin translation of Gundissalinus.

[29] For Ramon Llull see *Raimundus Lullus. An Introduction to his Life, Works and Thought*, eds Alexander Fidora and Josep E. Rubio (Turnhout, 2008). The biographical sketch here relies on the chapter "Life" by Fernando Domínguez and Jordi Gayà (pp. 3–124). Despite the substantial number of more recent specialized articles still worth consulting is Dominique Urvoy's *Penser l'Islam. Les présupposés islamiques de l' "Art" de Lull* (Paris, 1980). Another frequently cited publication is Charles Lohr, "Christianus arabicus, cuius nomen Raimundus Lullus", *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 31 (1984), 57–88.

[30] This is not the place to explore these two streaks in Almohad ideology. For this ideology see, in addition to the literature cited in footnotes 10 and 11 above, Maribel Fierro, "Revolución y tradición: Algunos aspectos del mundo del saber en al-Andalus durante las épocas almorávide y almohade", in María Luisa Ávila and Maribel Fierro (eds), *Biografías almohades*, II (Madrid, 2000), 131–165, and Maribel Fierro, "The Legal Policies of the Almohad Caliphs and Ibn Rushd's *Bidāyat al-mujtahid*", *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10 (1999), 226–248. For a critical assessment of the motives for Almohad patronage for philosophy see Sarah Stroumsa, "Philosophes almohades? Averroès, Maïmonide et l'idéologie almohade", in Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro and Luis Molina (eds), *Los Almohades. Problemas y perspectivas* (Madrid, 2005), II, 1137–62.

For historians of philosophy, Llull's reputation might be a little bit blemished because of his outspoken religious interests and because we have to rely on his own words regarding his success in mastering the Arabic language. Although he says about several of his texts that he wrote them in Arabic first, no trace of such Arabic writing has come down to us. An argument in favour of Llull's knowledge of Arabic and indeed of al-Ghazālī's philosophy is the earliest item in his vast oeuvre. The *Compendium logicae Algazelis* (1271–72), which is based on the logic in *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, is one of the texts which Llull declares he wrote in Arabic first, but only a Latin translation is preserved, in addition to a Catalan verse version based on the Latin text. These versions are independent of Gundissalinus's earlier Latin translation of the *Maqāṣid*.[31] Llull also incorporated elements of al-Ghazālī's text into his own, independent treatises, notably his *Logica nova* (1303).

Even though it is likely that Llull relied with this later text on his own earlier reception of al-Ghazālī, other Arabic texts have been suggested as sources. As Alexander Fidora and I have argued elsewhere though, it does not seem likely that Llull exploited Ibn Sabʿīn's *Budd al-ʿārif* here which does not offer any details which Llull included, but which do not appear in al-Ghazālī.[32] Exceptions are a list of nine "subjects" and one of nine questions which do indeed appear in Ibn Sabʿīn's book, but not in *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*. We have a good alternative source to the relatively unknown mystic and philosopher though, the popular *Epistles* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', where both distinctions are included. There are other cases too in which Llull may have used the *Rasā'il*.[33]

Llull and Arabic Philosophy

The paradigms of the Western historiography of medieval philosophy have undergone substantial changes in the last few decades. According to an older worldview which is nowadays dismissed as Eurocentric, the Arabs preserved an essentially Western philosophical heritage during Europe's "dark ages". Since, according to such a view, the philosophical contribution of Muslims to medieval philosophy was negligible, differences between philosophical trends and milieus within the Dār al-Islām also seemed to

[31] See for this Charles Lohr, *Raimundus Lullus'* Compendium Logicae Algazelis. *Quellen, Lehre und Stellung in der Geschichte der Logik*, doctoral thesis, University of Freiburg, 1967. The *Compendium logicae Algazelis* also includes fragments of Petrus Hispanus.

[32] "Ibn Sabʿīn and Raimundus Lullus — The Question of the Arabic Sources of Lullus' Logic Revisited", in Anna Akasoy and Wim Raven (eds), *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2008), 433–458. For Llull relying on Ibn Sabʿīn see Charles Lohr, "Islamic Influences in Lull's Logic", *Estudi general* 9 (1989 = *El debat intercultural als segles XIII i XIV*), 147–157.

[33] For a detailed discussion of these and other parallels see our article in the previous footnote. For traces of the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' in other of Llull's writings see, for example, John Dagenais, "New Considerations on the Date and Composition of Llull's *Llibre de bèsties*", in M. Duran, A. Porqueras Mayo and J. Roca Pons (eds), *Actes del segon col-loqui d'estudis Catalans a Nord-Amèrica*, Yale 1979 (Barcelona, 1982), 131–9 and Josep Puig Montada, "Ramon Llull and the Islamic Culture of the Mediterranean", in Akasoy and Raven (eds), *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages*, 503–519.

be of secondary importance. This view has changed fundamentally. In recent years, scholars have more and more compared the texts translated into Latin and contemporary Arabic philosophy. They have pointed out that Gerard of Cremona's translation programme reflects not a hypothetical generic Arabo-Islamic continuation of the classical tradition, but much more specifically al-Fārābī's influence and the authors popular among Muslim writers of al-Andalus while Gundissalinus reflects much more Jewish intellectual culture and Ibn Sīnā.[34] The only text by al-Ghazālī translated in this milieu was *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*. This fits insofar into the general agendas of the two translator teams that the text is based on Ibn Sīnā's *Dānishnāmeh*. Especially without al-Ghazālī's prologue to *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, the author appeared as a faithful disciple of Ibn Sīnā.[35] A case can also be made for an Almohad influence on the corpus of Arabic texts translated into Latin insofar as the movement promoted philosophy (earlier authors like al-Ghazālī as well as contemporary ones like Ibn Rushd).[36] How does Llull fit into this picture? Again, we are facing the problem of a lack of reliable biographical information. Apart from the anonymous slave we do not know of any collaborators. It stands to reason that it was in Mallorca and perhaps also in the North African cities Llull visited as a missionary as well as from Muslims in Western lands under Christian rule that he acquired the Arabic learning which influenced his texts. We should thus assume that Llull too — if anything — reflected a Western Arabic intellectual landscape. Charles Lohr suggested in his doctoral thesis of 1967 that Llull may have been familiar with contemporary Eastern Arabic treatises on logic. If evidence could be found to confirm this theory it would probably radically alter our idea of Llull's access to Arabic philosophy or the state of Western philosophy at the time. In the meantime, we can reasonably interpret his reliance upon al-Ghazālī as a reflection of the Almohad milieu. If, however, we add the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ to the picture, it becomes more complicated.

At first glance, such an — albeit indirect — connection between al-Ghazālī and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ might seem ironic. The author had, after all, severely attacked the Ismāʿīlīs in his *Munqidh* and other texts. His criticism of this sect, however, did not stop al-Ghazālī from exploiting the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ's *Rasāʾil* in his views on cosmology and psychology.[37] At the same time, in his *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī presented the treatise of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ "as an example of a misleading philosophical text, particularly because

[34] See Burnett, "Arabic into Latin" for further references. See also Dimitri Gutas, "What was there in Arabic for the Latins to Receive? Remarks on the Modalities of the Twelfth-Century Translation Movement in Spain", in *Wissen über Grenzen. Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter*, eds Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener (Berlin and New York, 2006), 3–21.

[35] Janssens, "Al-Ġazālī, The Latin Translation of his *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa*"; d'Alverny, "Algazel dans l'Occident latin". Unlike his contemporaries, however, Ramón Martí did not count al-Ghazālī unambiguously as a philosopher.

[36] Another consequence of Almohad rule was the displacement of Jews — some of whom served as collaborators in the translation project.

[37] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 199–200.

it aims at appealing to the religious scholar".[38] This criticism has a curious parallel in the above-mentioned criticism of Andalusi writers directed against al-Ghazālī. This parallel has a larger historiographical context. In modern scholarship, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ too are placed somewhat at the margins of "serious" (at least implicitly understood as "secular") philosophy. The explanation for their status may lie in their more pronounced religious tendencies. Griffel, for example, observes: "In general, the presentation of prophecy in the Brethren's *Epistles* shows closer connections among philosophical teachings, Muslim religious discourse, and Qur'anic passages than we see in al-Fārābī's and Avicenna's more theoretical treatments of prophecy."[39] Apart from al-Ghazālī's own references to the *Rasāʾil*, connections between him and the Ikhwān were already made by medieval authors who suspected al-Ghazālī of having copied from the philosophical encyclopaedia.[40] In Almoravid al-Andalus, the political suspicions directed against al-Ghazālī were connected with the Ismāʿīlīs,[41] and the *Rasāʾil* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ were also burned.[42] A parallel too can be identified between the Almohad appropriation of al-Ghazālī and other aspects of the movement. Philosophy was not the only tradition they incorporated which was previously considered marginal or heterodox. The quasi-Shiism of their Mahdism is a more obvious expression of this tendency. Another Andalusi would also fit well into this picture: Ibn Ḥazm (994–1064). Known for his literary and philosophical works, the scholar is known as the most significant representative of the Ẓāhirī legal school, a trend embraced by the first Almohads before they returned to the Mālikism predominant in the Muslim West. Modern scholars have detected the influence of Ibn Ḥazm on Llull in various areas, although the parallels are too general as to allow for plausible alternatives.[43] For our purposes in what follows, it is most important that Ibn Ḥazm, like Llull, wrote a book on religions, *Kitāb al-fiṣal fī ʾl-milal waʾl-ahwāʾ*

[38] Ibid., 200. For al-Ghazālī's knowledge of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ* see 62–67 and 199–200.
[39] Ibid., 199.
[40] Ibid., 200. For Ibn Taymiyya's view that al-Ghazālī incorporated some of their ideas see Yahya Michot, "Misled and Misleading . . . Yet Central in their Influence: Ibn Taymiyya's Views on the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ", *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and their Rasāʾil. An Introduction*, ed. N. el-Bizri (Oxford, 2008), 139–179. The author requests that readers consult the corrected version which is available on the website www.muslimphilosophy.com.
[41] "By the time of Ibn Rushd al-Jadd [d. 1126] and Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī there was a perception that Ghazālī's thought might provide legitimacy to doctrines considered heretical and held by extreme Sufis and bāṭinīs." Serrano Ruano, "Why Did the Scholars of al-Andalus Distrust al-Ghazāli?", 155.
[42] Maribel Fierro, "Bāṭinism in Al-Andalus. Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964), Author of the *Rutbat al-Ḥakīm* and the *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm (Picatrix)*", *Studia Islamica* 84 (1996), 87–112 (108).
[43] For the Almohads and Ẓāhirism see Maribel Fierro, "The Legal Policies of the Almohad Caliphs and Ibn Rushd's *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*", 226–248. For Ibn Ḥazm as a possible influence on Llull see Lohr, "Christianus arabicus", 79–81, and Markus Enders, "Das Gespräch zwischen den Religionen bei Raimundus Lullus" (in *Wissen über Grenzen*, 194–214), 203. Enders argues that Anselm is a more likely source for Llull's idea of the *rationes necessariae* than Ibn Ḥazm or al-Ghazālī. For further parallels see also Maribel Fierro, "Notes on Reason, Language and Conversion in the 13th Century in the Iberian Peninsula", *Quaderns de la Mediterrània* 9 (2008 = *Ramon Llull and Islam, the Beginning of Dialogue*), 49–58, 51–52 on Ibn Ḥazm.

wa'l-niḥal, in which he deals with both Islamic and non-Islamic communities.[44] As other medieval authors of such treatises, Ibn Ḥazm is more concerned with doctrines than with rituals or other practical aspects. A parallel with Llull's *Book of the Gentile*, to which we will return below, is the emphasis on reason. To sum up the state of the art in a few words, it is probably fair to say that Llull's use of Arabic texts reflects the trends prevalent at the time and in the region, although one should be careful not to use "Almohadism" as a monocausal paradigm.

If we return to an earlier point in this article and compare al-Ghazālī and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' as Llull's Arabic sources with the profiles of other Arabo-Latin translation projects it might be significant that all three had more pronounced religious tendencies. This, of course, is a very — possibly too — general remark, and a note of caution is also in place. Even though scholars have explored the question of Ramon Llull's Arabic sources for a while already, there are still parallels which have not yet been identified or which are in need of further exploration. In what follows, rather than discussing other potential Arabic sources of Llull, I would like to explore a parallel between Llull and al-Ghazālī which has not yet been suggested. It is not only their attitudes to their own religion which one can compare, but also their approaches to religious diversity.

Even though Llull responds to religious diversity in one way or another in various of his writings, the text which has attracted more attention than any other is the *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men*. In what follows I will present a short introduction to the text, focusing on Llull's presentation of Islam, and then return to a comparison of medieval views of religious diversity, in particular with respect to certain modern concepts of religion.

The Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men

Anthony Bonner dates the *Book of the Gentile* to 1274–1276, relatively at the beginning of Llull's career as a writer.[45] In later years, he would abandon the irenic attitude which distinguishes this text and campaign for Crusades.[46] During Llull's lifetime the text was translated into Latin and French and in 1378 into Spanish.[47] The *Book of the*

[44] See Ghulam Haider Aasi, *Muslim Understanding of Other Religions. A Study of Ibn Ḥazm's Kitāb al-fiṣal fī 'l-milal wa'l-ahwā' wa'l-niḥal* (Islamabad, 1999). For a very brief description see Jacques Waardenburg, "The Medieval Period 650–1500", in *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions. A Historical Survey*, ed. Jacques Waardenburg (New York and Oxford, 1999), 18–69, 25–26.

[45] *Selected Works of Ramon Llull*, ed. Anthony Bonner (Princeton, 1985), 99–100.

[46] There are numerous publications on the subject of Llull's attitude to non-Christians. To those mentioned in other places in this article add Eusebio Colomer, "Raimund Lulls Stellung zu den Andersgläubigen: Zwischen Zwie- und Streitgespräch", in *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, eds B. Lewis and F. Niewöhner (Wiesbaden, 1992), 217–236; Ermenegildo Bidese, Alexander Fidora, Paul Renner (eds), *Ramón Llull und Nikolaus von Kues. Eine Begegnung im Zeichen der Toleranz — Raimondo Lullo e Niccolò Cusano: Un incontro nel segno della tolleranza* (Turnhout, 2005).

[47] *Selected Works of Ramon Llull*, 99–100.

Gentile fits into the category of medieval "inter-religious dialogues".[48] Modern scholars agree that these "dialogues" are not accounts of actual encounters, but literary representations in which authors refute other religions and present interpretations of their own confessions. Llull's dialogue with the otherwise unidentified ʿUmar, recorded in the *Liber disputationis Raimundi christiani et Homeri saraceni*, might be an exception. The text was written in April 1308 in Pisa after Llull returned from a missionary journey to North Africa. In Bougie, he had a debate about religion with the learned Muslim, but did not succeed in convincing him. "Lull offered the Arabic transcript of the dispute to the principal governor of Bougie. He had Llull arrested and later deported on a Genoese ship."[49] The transcript of the text was lost during a shipwreck, and Llull wrote down a new transcript in Latin.

Llull's *Book of the Gentile* is deeply marked by the *Art*, but it is fair to describe it, as Anthony Bonner has done, as "sugar-coated by Llull's literary skill".[50] The author explicitly says that he wrote the work in plain words and for laymen. Later in the text, Llull avoids controversial and specialized questions such as the createdness of the world which he has discussed in other treatises.

In the book's background story which resembles that of the Buddha,[51] a learned Gentile is overcome by great sadness because of the prospect of old age and death and wanders into a beautiful forest. At the same time, three wise men — a Jew, a Christian and a Muslim — meet outside a city. "All three decided to enjoy themselves together, so as to gladden their spirits overtaxed by studying."[52] They walk into the same forest where they come across Lady Intelligence who presents five trees to them. Some scholars have identified in the symbol of the tree in this as well as in other texts of Llull a possible Islamic or Arabic influence, although others have been more cautious.[53] In the *Book of the Gentile*, the trees serve as instruments to introduce the *Art* and to apply its principles. The *Art* operates with lists of various elements, mostly divine attributes, which are combined in numerous ways and thus allow a description of all of reality. The elements are often represented by letters and combined in tables. (Llull's *Ars brevis*, written in

[48] In addition to *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter* see *Juden, Christen und Muslime. Religionsdialoge im Mittelalter*, eds Matthias Lutz-Bachmann and Alexander Fidora (Darmstadt, 2004).
[49] Fernando Domínguez, "Works", in *Raimundus Lullus. An Introduction*, 125–242 (195).
[50] *Selected Works of Ramon Llull*, 97.
[51] Colomer ("Raimund Lulls Stellung", 225) even sees the source for the literary presentation of the *Book of the Gentile* in *Barlaam and Josephat*, the version of the Life of the Buddha which circulated in medieval Eurasia in several languages.
[52] *Selected Works of Ramon Llull*, 113.
[53] For the cautious side see Miguel Cruz Hernández, "El símbolo del árbol en Ramon Llull e Ibn al-Jatīb", in *Studia lullistica. Miscellanea in honorem Sebastiani Garcias Palou* (Mallorca, 1989), 19–25. Dominique Urvoy ("Le symbole de l'arbre chez les auteurs arabes anterieurs à Lull", in *Constantes y fragmentos del pensamiento luliano*, Actas del simposio sobre Ramón Llull en Trujillo, 17–20 septiembre 1994, eds Fernando Domínguez Reboiras and Jaima de Salas [Tubingen, 1996], 91–97) suggests that Llull may have used the tree because he wanted to make himself understood to readers in the Islamic world where the symbol was much more popular.

1308, offers a short version of the *Art* at a late stage.) In the *Book of the Gentile*, the first tree has 21 flowers representing God and His essential, uncreated virtues. "The tree has, among others, two conditions. One is that one must always attribute to and recognize in God the greatest nobility in essence, in virtues, and in action; the other condition is that the flowers not be contrary to one another, nor one be less than another."[54] This statement already contains the basic principles of the book and again reflects fundamental ideas of the *Art*. The remaining four trees have 21 or 49 flowers each, representing virtues and sins. Lady Intelligence leaves and one of the wise men expresses the wish that the trees be used to unite all human beings under one religion and end the hatred which divides them because of religious diversity. He suggests that they sit down and discuss their beliefs with the help of the flowers. Putting one of Llull's key insights into words, he says "Since we cannot agree by means of authorities, let us try to come to some agreement by means of demonstrative and necessary reasons."[55] Their audience is the Gentile who runs into them at this point. The main part of the text is divided into four Books — one general monotheistic Book and one Book each in which the Jew, the Christian and finally the Muslim explain their religions, focusing on their articles of faith.

In the First Book the wise men present their common beliefs in God and Resurrection. Even though the *Art* aims at describing all of reality in a rational way, Llull also acknowledges the limits of reason: "Faith is a good thing, for through faith a man believes and loves that which his understanding cannot understand; and if there were no faith, man would love nothing he did not understand."[56] Later, he argues — and this is typical of the proofs in the book: "If God exists, faith and hope are in better accord in both plurality and unity; in plurality insofar as each reveals itself as a greater and nobler virtue if God exists than if God does not exist; in unity insofar as together they unite the better to share the same object if God exists than if God does not exist."[57] Throughout the book and following the "conditions" of the trees, Llull operates with such dichotomies in which either "positive" or "negative" elements reinforce each other. The underlying ontological distinction is between being and non-being, the aim to associate the "positive" elements with being, the "negative" elements with non-being.

In the following three Books, the wise men present their respective religions. They each begin with a ritual prayer, list their articles of faith and then demonstrate their truth with the help of the flowers of the five trees. The articles of the Jewish faith in the Second Book are relatively uncontroversial and the conflict with the other two religions is mostly limited to a formal note of disagreement. Since a common assumption in interpretations of inter-religious dialogue is that the authors aimed mainly at their own brothers in faith, the Third Book, in which the Christian speaks,

[54] *Selected Works of Ramon Llull*, 114.
[55] Ibid., 116.
[56] Ibid., 127.
[57] Ibid., 137.

is of great interest. Llull's Christian character in all likelihood reflected the author's own view of his religion. For this author, there is probably more reason to assume than for other authors of "dialogues" that he wrote this fictitious debate at least with the prospect of an actual encounter in mind.

In what follows, I would like to focus on the Fourth Book. Before turning to this part of the text, I would like to point out an interesting feature of the Christian's presentation in the Third Book which is significant for the overall assessment. Right at the beginning, the Christian wise man warns: "I would have you know, Gentile, that the articles of our faith are so sublime and so difficult to believe and understand that you will not be able to comprehend them unless you apply all the strength of your mind and soul to understanding the arguments by which I intend to prove the above-mentioned articles. For it often happens that one gives a sufficient proof of something, but since the person to whom the proof is directed cannot understand it, he thinks that no proof has been given of something that is in fact quite provable."[58] This is a curious carte blanche — if the other characters in the text object to the Christian's arguments in favour of his own religion one should not take their arguments too seriously, and if the reader does not follow, it is their own fault. At least from a modern point of view, one can probably distinguish different ways in which a reader may fail to understand (which implies accept) Llull's argument — one may find Llull's entire approach unconvincing, for example because the Christian element in it renders its universal ambition unsuccessful. But one may equally find the ways the characters apply the *Art* unconvincing. At what level the reader in the Christian's statement above may fail to understand is not clear. Apart from the doctrines which the Christian wise man in the *Book of the Gentile* presents, Llull introduces silently others. How much he relies on his own Christian premises is obvious in the section about the Trinity. The Christian argues that it has to exist because three self-sufficient elements of infinite goodness, greatness, power, wisdom, love, and perfection would be better than one. The Gentile enquires that if superiority was merely numerical, then why could there not be four or five or a thousand such elements in God. The Christian replies with the apodictic statement that such infinity and self-sufficiency was possible with three only. Any more would lead to finite qualities.

In the Fourth Book, the Muslim, like the Jew and the Christian before him, begins with a prayer that has both a physical component and a formula. While both are more or less accurately rendered according to actual Islamic ritual, Llull explains the ablution as "a sign of original sin and cleanliness of heart".[59] The Muslim then presents twelve articles of faith which are similar to the *ʿaqāʾid* of medieval Islam, but do not have any one equivalent. We can only speculate about the background of this representation — Muslims do not believe in original sin; Llull may have misunderstood the meaning of ablution, he may have deliberately put a Christian layer on top of the Islamic ritual, he

[58] Ibid., 192.
[59] Ibid., 258.

may have been misinformed — for whatever reason. Nothing in this passage or elsewhere in the text suggests that Llull relied on a "heterodox" selection of Islamic literature.

The Muslim may have an advantage in the discussion since he comes last, but many of his arguments are interrupted by the Gentile either because the issue has already been discussed or because he heard what the Muslim had to say without being convinced. The Gentile's objection often stands at the end of a section. The most controversial aspects concern Muhammad and the Qur'ān and even more Paradise.[60] Many disputes turn on quantitative aspects of religious ritual and faith, and the solution is often apodictic.

The Muslim argues in a similar way as the Jew and the Christian and following the principles introduced by Lady Intelligence. Combining power and prudence, for example, he explains in the section about Muhammad's prophecy: "if God did not bring about these changes of customs and laws by different prophecies at different times, prudence would not be so enlightened in its knowledge of God's power" (263). The participants of the dialogue all proceed in such ways — they identify relevant flowers and demonstrate how each positive element works even better if combined with other positive elements. The Gentile, however, objects that the Muslim's argument would lead to contradictions and that God would send more and more prophets. The Muslim does not really counter this, but lists more virtues of Muhammad: because he was illiterate, for example, he was also humble. Another argument of the Muslim is that God would not allow Muhammad to be honoured so much if he did not deserve it. The Gentile replies that the same could be said about Jesus Christ. Many arguments peter out without any conclusion being reached.

The third article of faith ("That Muhammad is Prophet") is interesting from a modern point of view because the Muslim offers a slightly more detailed historical context than the Jew for Moses or the Christian for Jesus. It seems that history is meant to support the truth of the revelation not only in the sense of precedence (i.e., we are right either a) because we said it first, or b) you said it first, and then we corrected it), but in a sense much closer to our understanding of history. It is not only something that happened at some point in the past, but something for which empirical evidence can be adduced. With this verifiable or falsifiable foundation, the Islamic religion also offers a vulnerable flank: one can adduce historical evidence (or challenge that provided by believers) in order to undermine the doctrinal truth claims of Muslims. In the *Book of the Gentile*, such a "historicization" of doctrine and polemics hardly takes place — Muhammad remains by and large the representation of dogmas rather than the historical man. Since in the course of this article we will turn to the question whether or to what extent Llull's approach to religious diversity might be comparable to the modern academic study of religion, we will return to this aspect which might seem insignificant within the argumentative framework of the *Book of the Gentile*.

[60] The material nature of Paradise remains an important part of Llull's polemics, for example in his *Disputatio Raymundi christiani et Hamar saraceni*. See Colomer, "Raimund Lulls Stellung", 232.

Another interesting passage appears in the final discussion of the Muslim Paradise. Asked whether all Muslims subscribe to the same concept, the Muslim responds, "there are others among us who take this glory morally and interpret it spiritually, saying that Mohammed was speaking metaphorically to people who were backward and without understanding . . . These men are natural philosophers and great scholars, yet they are men who in some way do not follow too well the dictates of our religion, and that is why we consider them as heretics, who have arrived at their heresy by studying logic and natural science. And therefore it has been established among us that no man dare teach logic or natural science publicly."[61]

This is a curious statement coming from someone involved in the Arabo-Latin translation movement. While Christians in the Latin West may not have credited Muslims with superior intelligence, to suggest that they persecuted philosophers takes the criticism of Islam as a sensual religion one step further. The idea of more or less systematic persecutions is usually associated with Leo Strauss and the "Straussians".[62] In the modern world, such a claim may find on a superficial level confirmation in the situation of the Islamic world which does not seem to have "kept up" with the West with respect to cultural innovation, economic productivity, political stability, social justice and military strength. That the situation in the Middle Ages was different is obvious not least from the confident argument of the Muslim in the *Book of the Gentile* that their rule over Jerusalem was evidence for the truth of their faith.[63] Llull was clearly aware of the military and political power of the Muslims and he must have been aware of it even before the Islamic re-conquest of Acre in 1291 which seems to have triggered Llull's support for military Crusades. Why did Llull put the statement concerning the persecution of philosophers in the mouth of his Muslim character? Was it based on knowledge of what was happening or had at some point happened in the Islamic world, did he express a prejudice here, did he try to compensate an inferiority complex, or should we consider the statement from the point of view of the inner logic of the text — the four options are not mutually exclusive. Although it does not seem likely that Llull's knowledge of the Islamic world was such that he knew of the persecution of Ibn Rushd, this might have been the historical episode behind the statement. Given that critical remarks regarding philosophy appear here and there in medieval Arabic literature, Llull may have come across such comments, perhaps from an oral source. As John Tolan has shown, medieval

[61] *Selected Works of Ramon Llull*, 292.

[62] For a critique of the Straussian version of the history of Arabic/Islamic philosophy see Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century". For a discussion of the debate see Anna Akasoy, "Was Ibn Rushd an Averroist? The Problem, the Debate, and its Philosophical Implications", in Anna Akasoy and Guido Giglioni (eds), Proceedings of the conference *Renaissance Averroism and its Aftermath*, Warburg Institute 2008 (*forthcoming*). For the persecution of Ibn Rushd see Émile Fricaud, "Le problème de la disgrace d'Averroès", in André Bazzana, Nicole Bériou and Pierre Guichard (eds), *Averroès et l'averroïsme (XIIe–XVe siècle): un itinéraire historique du Haut Atlas à Paris et à Padoue* (Lyon, 2005), 155–189.

[63] *Selected Works of Ramon Llull*, 266.

Christian authors frequently referred to a conflict between "Islam" and "philosophy" and its social and political manifestation — the persecution of philosophers as heretics.[64] Llull may simply have perpetuated an earlier topic of anti-Islamic polemics. Then again, if he believed this was actually true, how efficient may Llull have thought this policy was? As mentioned above, we do not know where he got access to the Arabic texts he used and it may very well have been from a source which did not suggest that the texts were actively studied in the Islamic world. If he used contemporary philosophical Arabic texts, he probably understood that such persecutions — if they existed — were not fully efficient.

But what might be the function of the statement in the text? Can we assume that Llull approved of such a policy insofar as it shed a negative light on Islam — a religion whose followers could not face the challenge of defending their faith with rational arguments? Should we perhaps assume that those Muslims who were open to rationalism found it easier to agree with Christians? It was, after all, Llull's hope that such an agreement would lead to peace. Persecutions of philosophers could thus be interpreted as an obstacle to harmony between the religions. The situation becomes more complicated if we consider Llull's later *Liber de quinque sapientibus* in which a Muslim who was alienated from Islam when he studied philosophy meets Christians of four different denominations and begins a religious dialogue.[65] If we assume that Llull wrote the *Book of the Gentile* to prepare missionaries for their work in the Islamic world, one might understand the statement as an encouragement for Muslims to accept the philosophical line of argument — within their own religion and eventually leading to an acceptance of Christianity. Could Llull expect this to be successful? Either way, within the *Book of the Gentile*, the observation does not put the Muslim wise man in any worse position than his Christian and Jewish counterparts.

Curiously, at the end of the book, the Gentile does not reveal which religion he finds most convincing. He is just about to do this when he sees two other Gentiles approaching and the meeting is interrupted. The three wise men decide to continue with their meetings until they all agree on one religion. There are different ways of interpreting Llull here. One option, of course, is that this open end reflects Llull's own point of view that there was so much truth in all three religions that one could not decide in favour of one and dismiss the others. For a man of such a conviction of religious equality though, Llull had a bewildering career and his efforts as a missionary would be somewhat inexplicable. The most plausible interpretation, apart from radical biographical change, is that Llull wanted to guide the reader gently to the insight that Christianity

[64] John Tolan, "'Saracen Philosophers Secretly Deride Islam'", *Medieval Encounters* 8 (2002), 184–208. For examples of early modern European acknowledgement of the Muslim contribution see Charles Burnett, "The Translation of Arabic Science into Latin: A Case of Alienation of Intellectual Property?", *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 4 (2002), 145–157, 148.

[65] Colomer, "Raimund Lulls Stellung", 229–230. As in the *Book of the Gentile*, the decision of the participants in the debate is not revealed.

was the true religion.[66] The Gentile's declaration that he understands the Muslim's arguments may thus be not a full validation of their logic, but rather a rhetorical and diplomatic strategy. The sections in which the Christian and the Muslim speak suggest that the Gentile is more convinced of the former's presentation and rejects Islam. He challenges the Muslim frequently and the reader is not left with the impression that the Muslim has provided a satisfactory reply. Based on the initial statement he may have thought that it was only faith which tipped the balance in favour of this or that religion.

Llull may have written the *Book of the Gentile* with the practical purpose of mission in mind, but, as mentioned above, he was probably also indebted to a literary tradition of "religious dialogues" in the West. Given his direct exposure to Islam and Llull's otherwise attested use of Arabic texts it stands to reason that the *Book of the Gentile* does more than simply continue a Latin tradition. Llull himself supports such an assumption with his curious remark at the beginning of the text that he wrote it "following the manner of the Arabic Book of the Gentile" (*sequens modum Libri Arabici de Gentili*).[67] To be sure, no Arabic text has been identified which may have served as a model for the *Book of the Gentile*. This would in fact be rather unlikely given the extent to which the text is shaped by Llull's very own philosophy. We can, however, identify a number of parallels between Llull's thought (as expressed in this and other treatises) and Islamic religious culture. One of these are the parallels between Llull's divine dignities and the beautiful names of God in the Islamic tradition.[68]

The *Book of the Gentile* and *Mishkāt al-Anwār*

In what follows, however, I would like to discuss a parallel between the *Book of the Gentile* and a passage in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār*. I should state right at the beginning in no uncertain terms that I am not suggesting here that Llull made use of this text. He may have never seen it in his life. My reasons for juxtaposing the two texts for an initial comparison are threefold:

1) To explore further potential Arabic sources of Llull, possibly absorbed via informal channels. Al-Ghazālī and Llull have in common that they address the subject of religious

[66] Enders, "Das Gespräch zwischen den Religionen bei Raimundus Lullus", summarises an interpretation of Fernando Domínguez ("Der Religionsdialog bei Raimundus Lullus. Apologetische Prämissen und kontemplative Grundlage", in *Gespräche lesen. Philosophische Dialoge im Mittelalter*, ed. Klaus Jacobi [Tubingen, 1999], 263–290) according to whom the main purpose behind the text may have been to promote dialogue. Enders argues that the main aim was to demonstrate the truth of the Christian faith.

[67] *Selected Works of Ramon Llull*, 110.

[68] For Islamic mystical influences see Charles Lohr, "The Islamic 'Beautiful Names of God' and the Lullian Art", in *Jews, Muslims and Christians in and around the Crown of Aragon. Essays in Honour of Professor Elena Lourie*, ed. Harvey Hames (Leiden and Boston, 2004), 197–205, and Bernd Manuel Weischer, "Raimundus Lullus und die islamische Mystik", in *Islam und Abendland. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. André Mercier (Bern and Frankfurt, 1976), 131–157. Comparisons have also been made with the Kabala. See José María Millás Vallicrosa, "Algunas relaciones entre la doctrina Luliana y la Cábala", *Sefarad* 18 (1958), 241–253.

diversity within the framework of a rationalist and universal epistemology. One could argue that such an appreciation of reason was mediated by Almohad ideology.

2) Jacques Waardenburg has argued that the Islamic approach to the history of religions was distinctive because of the idea of Islam as the original religion (and presumably the related notion of *fiṭra*).[69] This idea has several aspects. One of them is historical and concerns the faith of past people as well as salvation history — the relationship between God and mankind — and another one is individual and concerns, among other things, the status of children. This was not simply a debate among theologians. Legal scholars had to decide which religious affiliation they had to assume for children who were not clearly part of a family.[70] We will explore Waardenburg's suggestion by looking at the *Book of the Gentile* and the final section of *Mishkāt al-anwār* — al-Ghazālī's "theology of religion" may not have been too different from the Christian text which could mean 1) that the Islamic attitude was not so distinctive, after all, or 2) that what Waardenburg described as characteristically Islamic may not apply to all texts written by Muslims, or 3) that Llull adopted a characteristically Islamic attitude to religious diversity.
3) We will take an article by Hermann Landolt about the passage in question in al-Ghazālī's work as a starting point for exploring in a comparative manner what distinguishes al-Ghazālī's and Llull's approaches to religious diversity from the modern discipline of "Religionswissenschaft" which Landolt identified to a certain extent in al-Ghazālī.

In order to introduce al-Ghazālī's text, albeit very briefly only, we will begin with Landolt's article and then turn to the first two questions.

In 1991, Hermann Landolt published an article with the title "Ghazālī and 'Religionswissenschaft' ", in which he discussed aspects of the "veils section" which stands at the end of al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār*.[71] In this section, Ghazālī distinguishes religious (and philosophical) groups according to whether they are veiled by veils of pure darkness, veils of darkness and light, or veils of pure light. In the first category are the *mulḥida* whom Ghazālī identifies with "those who do not believe in God and the Last Day". They include "materialists" who look for the cause of the universe in dark matter as well as those interested only in their own selves and their passions and those who pretend to be monotheists out of fear or conformism. The veils of darkness in the second category are divided into those of sense-perception, imagination and "false

[69] Jacques Waardenburg, "World Religions as Seen in the Light of Islam", in *Islam, Past Influence and Present Challenge*, eds Pierre Cachia and Alford T. Welch (Edinburg, 1979), 245–275, especially 246–247. Steven M. Wasserstrom reviewed several translations of Shahrastānī's *Kitāb al-milal* in *History of Religion* 27 (1988), 405–411 under the title "Islamicate History of Religions?". The reviewer does not explain his use of the term "Islamicate", coined by Marshall Hodgson for what is more frequently referred to as "Islamic culture" or "Islamic civilization". If Wasserstrom chose the term to indicate a non-religious cultural context, we can assume that he would not have agreed with Waardenburg's interpretation.

[70] Camilla Adang, "Islam as the Inborn Religion of Mankind: the Concept of *Fiṭra* in the Works of Ibn Ḥazm", *al-Qanṭara* 21 (2000), 391–410.

[71] "Ghazālī and "Religionswissenschaft": Some Notes on the *Mishkāt al-Anwār* for Professor Charles J. Adams", *Asiatische Studien* 45 (1991), 1–72. Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights/Mishkāt al-anwār*, A parallel English-Arabic text translated, introduced and annotated by David Buchman (Provo, Utah, 1998), 44–53.

analogical reasoning" (*muqāyasāt ʿaqliyya fāsida*). The communities in this group include idol-worshippers, dualists, Karrāmiyya and anthropomorphists. Landolt identifies another group in this category with Ḥanbalites, Ashʿarites and Muʿtazila. Given al-Ghazālī's own Ashʿarite inclinations, this would be surprising. The third category includes those veiled by veils of reason. They refrain from relying on the attributes, but rather use the Peripatetic idea of God as the unmoved mover and the Neoplatonic concept of emanations. Al-Ghazālī makes a difference here between those who stop at the highest emanation in this world and the "attainers" who are not interested in this world, but recognize the Lord beyond the highest emanation.

Above, we have pointed out the irony behind the fact that al-Ghazālī and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ were exposed to similar suspicions in al-Andalus. Landolt's interpretation of the "veils section" would support those who harboured such suspicions. He identified not only in the superior cosmology of the last groups Ismāʿīlī Neoplatonism, his main argument in the article was that the entire "veils section" betrayed Ismāʿīlī influence, specifically Epistle 42 of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* about the different beliefs and religions (*ārāʾ wa-diyānāt*). Landolt recognized, for instance, a parallel between al-Ghazālī's sympathy for the "remote Turks" who worship objects in nature and the "Ismāʿīlī Neoplatonists of Khurāsān and in particular, Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī and Abū ʾl-Haytham al-Jurjānī, both of whom according to Persian Ismāʿīlī texts of the 5th century A.H., held the peculiar doctrine that 'the beauty of Nature is spiritual'".[72] As far as I can see, there is no parallel in Epistle 42 of the *Rasāʾil*. Deciphering the individual elements in al-Ghazālī's description of different religious beliefs is, no doubt, important if we want to reconstruct his philosophy and view of the intellectual and religious communities he knew of. Suffice it to say on this particular issue that a) the contemplation of beauty in nature is not exclusive to Ismāʿīlīs among Muslims and that b) al-Ghazālī's qualification of the religious beliefs and customs of the "remote Turks" as a slightly more advanced form of worship is not unique. What is interesting about the position of the "remote Turks" though is that they find themselves in the same larger category as a number of Islamic sects. An approach to internal religious diversity frequently described as a heresiography is thus combined with something which is more likely to be classified as a history of religions, i.e., an account of external religious diversity.

Landolt's interpretation has not found acceptance among other al-Ghazālī scholars. The parallels he lists with Ismāʿīlīs are indeed often fairly general and while both al-Ghazālī and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ deal with epistemology, doctrines concerning God and the world and different religious groups, there are no parallels in the wording, structure or approach of the two texts which suggests that al-Ghazālī used this Epistle as a model for his "veils section". Frank Griffel completely rejected the idea of an Ismāʿīlī influence in the *Mishkāt al-anwār*'s final section and identified the superior groups instead with the philosophers. I shall leave further investigations of this topic to those who are more knowledgeable in this area and would like to focus instead on a different

[72] Landolt, "Ghazālī and 'Religionswissenschaft' F", 34.

aspect of Landolt's evaluation of al-Ghazālī's approach to religious diversity, namely what may amount to a modern character.

Al-Ghazālī and Religionswissenschaft

Here too, Landolt recognized Ismāʿīlī influence. He attributes to both Ghazālī and the Ikhwān a "universalistic approach to religion" which is inclusive in the sense that it even accommodates idol worshippers. As already alluded to above, in itself, the inclusion of idol worshippers in an account of religion in such a context is not exceptional for Muslim authors. Idolaters and polytheists appear not least in the Qurʾān. The difference between these and other religious communities which are closer to Islam is that the latter enjoy a higher degree of acceptance. The problem with the idol worshippers is not that their idols do not exist or that what they practice is not a religion, but it is misguided religion. It is usually another Ismāʿīlī author who is credited with establishing comparative religion or a history of religion: al-Ghazālī's slightly younger contemporary al-Shahrastānī (1086/7 — 1143) who had several predecessors who are usually classified as authors of heresiographies.[73] Al-Shahrastānī divided his *Kitāb al-milal waʾl-niḥal* into two parts, the first part dealing with people who have a revealed religion, the second part with other communities (Sabians, philosophers and polytheists from various regions). It seems that in this text as well as in many others which cover a variety of religions privilege is often given to Christianity and Judaism. As in the "veils-section", the considerable attention paid to Muslim communities places many treatises at the border between histories of religions and heresiographies.[74] Another predecessor of al-Ghazālī is the above-mentioned Ibn Ḥazm.

Landolt, however, identifies an element peculiar to al-Ghazālī and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ. A parallel with the Epistles can be seen in Landolt's observation concerning the *Mishkāt*: "This basic structure is evidently intended to be all-comprehensive in a logical and not in an empirical or historical sense." (p. 26) This observation conflicts with a

[73] This is not the place to discuss al-Shahrastānī in any detail. For recent publications see Diana Steigerwald, "Al-Shahrastānī's Contribution to Medieval Islamic Thought", in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam. Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought.* Essays in Honour of Hermann Landolt, ed. Todd Lawson (London, 2005), 262–273; Hilman Latief, "Comparative Religion in Medieval Muslim Literature", *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 23/4 (2006), 28–62; Adam R. Gaiser, "Satan's Seven Specious Arguments: Al-Shahrastānī's *Kitāb al-milal wa-l-niḥal* in an Ismaʿili Context", *Journal of Islamic Studies* 19 (2008), 178–195. For one of Shahrastānī's sources see Wilferd Madelung and Paul E. Walker, *An Ismaili Heresiography. The "Bāb al-shayṭān" from Abū Tammām's Kitāb al-shajara* (Leiden, 1998). Another author who is usually not classified as a historian of religion is al-ʿĀmirī who compared Islam with Judaism, Sabianism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and polytheism. See Everett K. Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and its Fate. Al-ʿĀmirī's Kitāb al-Amad ʿalā l-abad* (New Haven, 1988), 17–18.

[74] For another example see Shin Nomoto, "An Early Ismaili View of Other Religions: A Chapter from the *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ* by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. ca. 322/934)", in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam*, 142–156. Al-Rāzī compares non-Islamic communities with Muslim groups (the Murjiʿa with the Jews, the Rāfiḍa with the Christians, and the Qadariyya with the Zoroastrians).

statement by Carmela Baffioni who translated Epistle 42 into Italian.[75] Al-Ghazālī and the Ikhwān usually do not appear among historians of religion — perhaps because al-Ghazālī in particular does not offer many details about the different communities, but also because in both cases the primary purpose of the text is not comparative religion. Not being part of the same literary genre does not mean that the intellectual exercise was not comparable. A closer inspection of the category of "comparative religion" may lead to a revised classification of al-Ghazālī and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ in this respect.

Be this as it may, Landolt seems to credit al-Ghazālī with a modern appreciation of religion. He cites a distinction discussed by Charles Adams according to which comparative views of religion are characterized by two elements: *epochè*, the irenic bracketing of one's own religious convictions, and the attempt to develop a taxonomy which reflects one's own background.[76] Both, Landolt says, are represented in the "veils section" of the *Mishkāt*, but it is probably fair to say that one can identify the same two elements in other descriptions of other religions by Muslim authors too. A crucial question for an evaluation of comparative views of religion is related to the issue of the taxonomy and concerns the abstract notion of religion. Landolt seems to suggest that al-Ghazālī's understanding of the category of religion was not only something that can be identified in between the lines, from the way the author selects or classifies religions in his text. When rendering the original Arabic in English, Landolt chose terms which imply a meta-perspective on religion. The term *taʾalluh*, for example, which Buchman, in line with many other translators of medieval Arabic texts,[77] translates as "striving to become godlike", is rendered by him as "religiosity".

Most striking is Landolt's use of the German term "Religionswissenschaft", which he derives from a German publication of 1921.[78] Although Landolt expresses skepticism regarding the modern character of al-Ghazālī's approach to religion,[79] he retains the

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[75] Baffioni states "L'Epistola XLII, infatti, non consiste soltanto nell'esposizione di un nucleo dottrinale (più o meno aderente ai principi ispiratori della filosofia e/o della scienza antiche o, al contrario, rispecchiante i più propri criteri della daʿwah iḫwāniana), ma costituisce una sorte di historia della interpretazioni — antiche e musulmane — di Dio e del mondo, dell'anima e della material, in una parola, perciò, una sorta di historia (dal punto di vista, come spero di dimostrare, e del ʿilm, e della maʿrifah, šīʿite) di quelli che sembrano porsi, a un pensiero 'religioso', quali gli oggetti 'filosofici' per eccellenza." *L'epistola degli Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ "sulle opinioni e le religioni"* (Naples, 1989), 5.

[76] Landolt, "Ghazālī and 'Religionswissenschaft'", 28. Charles J. Adams, "Islamic Religious Tradition", in *The Study of the Middle East. Research and Scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Leonard Binder (New York, 1976), 29–95, especially 38ff and 49f., where Adams distinguishes different modern Western approaches to Islam.

[77] See, for example, the entry θεός in Aristotle, *The Arabic Version of the Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Douglas Dunlop, ed. Anna Akasoy and Alexander Fidora (Leiden, 2005) and the entry 'lh in Gerhard Endress and Dimitri Gutas, *A Greek and Arabic Lexicon (GALex). Materials for a Dictionary of the Medieval Translations from Greek into Arabic* (Leiden, 2002–).

[78] Julian Obermann, *Der philosophische und religiöse Subjektivismus Ghazālīs. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Religion* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1921).

[79] "Ghazālī's frequent polemics against all those he felt were undermining Islam, notably the Ismāʿīlī 'Esotericists' (*al-Bāṭiniyya*), but also the 'Philosophers' (*al-Falāsifa*) in general and the 'Libertines'

German expression, implying that al-Ghazālī somehow anticipated an academic tradition of the nineteenth century. Although he does not follow such a line of argument in the article under consideration here, Landolt may have cited the work of Jacques Waardenburg as a prominent modern historian of Islamic approaches to other religions. The Dutch scholar of religion with a particular expertise in Islam — like or even more than nineteenth-century German Orientalists[80] — may also be a good point of comparison with the medieval authors since they combine a general understanding of religion, albeit presumably shaped by Christianity, with knowledge of Islam. He could thus count as both al-Ghazālī's and Landolt's fellow "Religionswissenschaftler". Waardenburg suggested that the history of religion as known in the modern West had a much longer tradition in the Islamic world. If one considers an understanding of religion as a universal category an essential part of such an approach, then Waardenburg may have had a point, although the presence of such a notion among other historical cultures is a different matter — as well as the question to what extent such a notion actually shaped the ways treatises on "comparative religion" were composed. In any case, if we regard this approach to religion as outlined by Waardenburg as constitutive of Religionswissenschaft, then al-Ghazālī would not be the only medieval Muslim representative of such a discipline and it would also be difficult to defend it as something characteristically Ismāʿīlī. Before I return to the separate issue of whether such an approach may have been exclusive to medieval Muslims, I would like to have another look at the term Religionswissenschaft. Landolt and Waardenburg in his publications about the history of comparative religion had pre-modern texts in mind and may have used the terms "Religionswissenschaft" and "comparative religion" with the intention to compare medieval and modern approaches (whatever the result of such a comparison). I would therefore like to consider very briefly self-definitions of Religionswissenschaft which have no discernible primary interest in historical ancestors of the field. A good starting point might be definitions of Religionswissenschaft which German universities offer to their prospective students. While they seem to agree on the principle of the neutrality of Religionswissenschaft, modern self-definitions of the field offer a certain diversity: At the University of Heidelberg, for example, Religionswissenschaft involves the study of any religion in past or present, its origins and development and significance of religious people for the culture and history of their time.[81] In Tubingen, the field is limited to religion as defined in Europe since early modernity, although what exactly that

(*al-Ibāḥiyya*), make it indeed somewhat difficult to see in him an ancestor of modern *'Religionswissenschaft'* — particularly if that child of the European Enlightenment can be distinguished from more traditional theological concerns by what Charles Adams aptly calls the 'irenic' approach to the faith of other men." Landolt, "Ghazālī and 'Religionswissenschaft' ", 20–21.

[80] On this subject see now Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire. Religion, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge, 2009).

[81] http://www.zegk.uni-heidelberg.de/religionswissenschaft/studium/ueberblick.html (accessed 6 March 2010).

entails remains unexplained in the document.[82] The profile is interdisciplinary, includes the study of law and science and is focused on European or Eurasian history. These two self-definitions seem to be opposed to Landolt's observation concerning the logical framework of al-Ghazālī's attitude to religious diversity. The University of Potsdam offers a fairly different interpretation which is closer to the medieval authors.[83] Religionswissenschaft here involves the social function of religion, but also a study of the rituals and authoritative texts of religions as well as their views on important ethical questions. Curiously, it also addresses the question: "Warum ist überhaupt etwas und nicht vielmehr nichts?" ("Why is anything at all and not nothing?") This last definition of the field may be controversial among those who believe that the insider should not have a monopoly or even a privileged position in the academic description of a religion. The debate about the profile of Religionswissenschaft has gained a new dimension with the integration of non-Christian religions, above all Islamic theology, into Religious Studies departments. Perhaps in order to compensate for centuries of Christian definition of religion in Europe — i.e., for the fact that general taxonomies of Religionswissenschaft may still reflect the Christian tradition, there is a certain openness to include non-Christian insiders as authoritative interpreters of their respective religions. The study of religion thus becomes representational. In one of his publications concerned with religion in the present day, Waardenburg included in a list of different kinds of Religionswissenschaft a variety ranging from those that are empirical and "neutral" to those that require the insider's point of view.[84]

If we accept that such not strictly neutral approaches to religion should be included in the category of Religionswissenschaft, it seems less problematic to apply the term to al-Ghazālī. His view may have been neutral enough to write about other religions without falling into a polemical mode. On the other hand, his perspective as an insider is obvious and he makes no effort to disguise his views as to which religious doctrines were closer to the truth and which ones more remote. The same can be said about Llull who combines an irenic attitude (expressed, for example, in the polite manners of the three wise men) and a taxonomy of religion which reflects his own background. Although Llull might be less inclusive in this particular text than al-Ghazālī, who includes polytheists, he is more inclusive in the sense that in the *Book of the Gentile* the three monotheistic religions are on the same level.

We are, however, facing another problem if we accept the term "Religionswissenschaft" for texts such as the "veils section" — or the *Book of the Gentile* for that matter. If any not explicitly polemical approach to religious diversity which operates with a

[82] http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/religwiss/stp1.html (accessed 6 March 2010).

[83] http://www.uni-potsdam.de/db/religion/index.php?ID_seite=305&ID_professur=1 (accessed 6 March 2010).

[84] Jacques Waardenburg, "Religionswissenschaft heute. Motivationen, Ziele und Wege der Forschung", in *Perspektiven der Religionswissenschaft* (Würzburg, 1993), 8–35. For further literature on Religionswissenschaft see Hans-Joachim Klimkeit (ed.), *Vergleichen und Verstehen in der Religionswissenschaft* (Wiesbaden, 1997).

taxonomy of religion can be described as "Religionswissenschaft", any distinctly modern features of the phenomenon lose significance. We are dealing with similar problems when applying other concepts to the Middle Ages which are often considered peculiar to modernity such as "nation" or "state". We may, of course, come to the conclusion that there is nothing distinctly modern about "Religionswissenschaft", but a comparison of al-Ghazālī, Llull, and the self-descriptions at German universities suggests otherwise. Llull and al-Ghazālī do not ignore the historical dimension of religion, but their primary concern is doctrine. The explanation of their taxonomies as well as of other analytical criteria is fairly basic and also reflect a primary interest in the truth, i.e., in epistemological matters or ways of demonstrating the truth.

Llull and the Islamic "Theology of Religions"

I would now like to return to the two issues previously mentioned. Regarding the universality and inclusiveness of al-Ghazālī's approach to religious diversity as well as that of other medieval Muslim writers, we can probably observe the same for Llull. If he did not borrow this approach from Arabic sources it was the confrontation with Islam — and with Muslims like al-Ghazālī whose approach to a very similar religious tradition was very similar to his own — which opened his perspective and may have allowed him to develop a more universal concept of religion.

If we accept Waardenburg's analysis of the Islamic tradition of dealing with religious diversity, we might assume that Ramon Llull's approach to this phenomenon was different from that of medieval Muslim writers, among them probably also al-Ghazālī. Muslims, according to Waardenburg, had a distinctive "theology of religions". "The history of the many religions is basically . . . the history of the primordial and revealed religious through the prophets from Adam to Muḥammad and of the response of the prophets' communities to their warnings and revealed books."[85] The idea of Islam as the primordial religion has a parallel on the individual level: *fiṭra*, often translated as "original disposition". According to a wide spread understanding of this concept, when left alone, human beings automatically tend towards Islam — it is only their environment which turns them into followers of other religious traditions. This interpretation of *fiṭra* involves a number of problems — if we think of Ibn Ṭufayl's Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān as the ideal example of such a person, we can easily see that 1) either his understanding is incomplete because it may be accurate regarding the metaphysical truths of Islam, but deficient regarding its social and legal dimension, 2) or it is complete in which case one can dispense with revelation. It was this problem — associated with the Muʿtazilite idea of revelation as merely confirming a truth humans could also grasp alone — which, according to Frank Griffel in his contribution to the present volume, made Muslim theologians reluctant to regard *fiṭra* as including or being identical with Islam.[86] Focussing on al-Ghazālī's understanding of *fiṭra* and the related interpretations of the

[85] Waardenburg, "World Religions as Seen in the Light of Islam", 246.

[86] I would like to thank Frank Griffel for providing me with a copy of this article before publication.

concept by Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī, Griffel reconstructs a philosophical meaning of *fiṭra* ranging from certain mental skills to knowledge which is common to all human beings. The knowledge covered by *fiṭra*, however, is limited, and at least for al-Ghazālī, for moral judgments one has to rely on the Qur'ān.

In medieval studies, the category of religion is often taken for granted. Matters of social, political and cultural history require new investigations into this category. One starting-point are medieval approaches to the category of religion, but as one can easily see from the above, fundamental issues have not yet been explored in much detail. An interesting question for future research would be to what extent one can reconstruct from what may have been disparate views on religion a more complex "theology of religion", and whether such a theology had an impact — as Waardenburg implies — on Muslim descriptions of other religions.

To what extent were the views Griffel and Waardenburg describe exclusive to Islam? How does Llull compare in this context? He is as inclusive as many Muslims in the sense that he includes, although in other texts, polytheists. Looking at the character of the Gentile in the *Book of the Gentile*, we can identify a certain disposition — or, in other words, an anthropological foundation of religion — which is perhaps not too far away from the *fiṭra* of the *falāsifa*.[87] He is also not as autonomous as Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān — which is an argument against the Almohad dimension of the *Book of the Gentile* — and in need of external instruction. This instruction comes from the wise men, but it also depends on the trees and the explanations from Lady Intelligence. As part of nature the trees may not be primordial, but may perhaps be regarded as as old as humankind. An interesting question for further exploration would be to what extent Llull continues earlier Christian anthropologies or theologies of religion or whether one can detect an Islamic influence here. When Waardenburg spoke about the "theology of religion", however, he had texts like al-Shahrastānī's *Kitāb al-milal* in mind and not like al-Ghazālī's "veils section". And while it might be possible to find equivalents to the latter in the Latin Christian tradition, the former do not seem to have any medieval Latin corresponding tradition. The explanation for this situation is less obvious.

Finally, our first question was whether al-Ghazālī and Llull are connected. As outlined above, while we know that Llull was familiar with *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, in other areas we are probably dealing with informal transmission. If — as also mentioned above — one considers histories of religion, Ibn Ḥazm might be as plausible source for Llull as al-Ghazālī. What the two Muslim authors and Llull have in common is the ambition to combine an account of religious doctrines with a rational and universal framework. For the purposes of analysis and comparison, we can distinguish two poles within an anthropology of religion. On the one end stands the individual human being, the need

[87] Compare Enders, "Das Gespräch zwischen den Religionen", 198. About the Gentile's anxiety, Enders remarks: "Darin dürfte ein Hinweis auf Lulls Überzeugung von dem anthropologischen Entstehungsgrund, wenn nicht von Religion überhaupt, so doch von monotheistischer Religiosität liegen, die dem Menschen ein zeitenthobenes und daher bleibendes Aufgehobensein bei Gott verheißt."

for religion which emerges from anxieties about the transience of life as well as the epistemological possibilities to recognize a superior metaphysical truth. On the other end are collective manifestations of religion in history. Medieval writers on religion were concerned with doctrine, and they addressed both levels from this point of view. Anthony Bonner described the speech of the Christian in the *Book of the Gentile* as more deeply marked by the *Art* than the presentations of the Jew and the Muslim, "where sociological considerations are more interesting".[88] In comparison with modern examples of sociological studies of religion, these, however, are insignificant.

As medieval predecessors of Religionswissenschaft al-Ghazālī and Llull may not have a lot to say to us today, but as participants in inter-religious encounters they may. Although al-Ghazālī's former reputation as the destroyer of philosophy has now been corrected, he does not count as a philosopher. Frank Griffel has argued that al-Ghazālī naturalized philosophy, and Llull can be said to have employed philosophy for a similar purpose. From a modern point of view both authors may look reactionary because their innovative force is visible in their ambition to provide demonstrative evidence for religious truth, but they clearly did not take it to the point where they made a radical new start. Both Llull and al-Ghazālī play an important role in modern debates about religion, in particular in the reason vs. faith discussion. To conservative minds both offer the possibility to maintain the long standing foundations while lending them a more confident face. They both offer an appreciative view of other religions, which might be a positive example to modern participants in the dialogue. Their desire to establish reason as a common ground may even make them palatable to critics of religion.

[88] *Selected Works of Ramon Llull*, 98.