

The Sufi Doctrine of Man: Şadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's Metaphysical Anthropology, by Richard Todd (Leiden: Brill, 2014), ISBN: 978-9004-27123-4, €107.00 / \$138.00 (hb)

Richard Todd's recent work should be welcomed as a very useful short and accessible introduction to the work of Şadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, who, as Todd describes, was an important figure in Turkish Islamic history as a main expositor and disseminator of the teachings of and the foremost disciple of the great Andalusī mystic, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240). Al-Qūnawī was one of the most influential Muslim intellectual figures of his day, a Sufi master, religious scholar, and a lucid thinker, actively involved in the intellectual and spiritual life of the Near East. Al-Qūnawī was able to expound and interpret Ibn 'Arabī's thought to a wide circle of students and peers. He interpreted Ibn 'Arabī's thought and systematized its structure and scope but was also a talented metaphysician in his own right.

As the author notes, the image of al-Qūnawī as a Sufi intellectual figure comes from certain factors. We see the focused nature of his expositions, his acquaintance with the works of Ibn Sīnā and the Ikhwān al-ṣafā'. Al-Qūnawī used Avicennian terminology and was ready to engage the pre-eminent philosopher of his day in reasoned debate. Todd notes however that al-Qūnawī was frequently at pains to highlight the limitations of philosophical methodology in its discursive form. This was true especially where the fruits of syllogistic reasoning clashed with revelation. This struggle to harmonize reasoning with revelation makes a contemporary reading of al-Qūnawī's work interesting.

Todd's recent work on al-Qūnawī is in two major sections, the first section containing an introduction which describes a biography of al-Qūnawī, his anthropology in context, the political setting, the cultural and intellectual climate, and his biography in medieval sources. Todd describes al-Qūnawī's major works and his methodology. Al-Qūnawī claimed that his works are not the product of thought and deliberation but of inspiration and he is not in the habit of quoting and referring to others, and Todd deems these claims accurate.

The author describes al-Qūnawī's work in relation to Ibn 'Arabī's and that al-Qūnawī's and Ibn 'Arabī's works are not merely the same but coincide or differ in terms of doctrines, structure, and style. Al-Qūnawī makes a critique of rational inquiry but is seeking not to dismiss the validity of rational inquiry outright but rather to highlight its inevitable limitations vis-a-vis metaphysics. Todd describes al-Qūnawī's doctrinal synthesis as being Aristotelian in its premise: the nobility of a science is determined by the nobility of its object and nobility is judged by the criteria that general sciences are superior to specific ones. Todd analyzes how al-Qūnawī is compared to and departs from other Islamic philosophers in general questions of the noblest divine science. Todd describes and compares this work with terms such as "Neoplatonism" and "Hermeticism." There is a final stage of perfection with describable characteristics. Various different currents can be integrated within an Islamic perspective.

Todd provides a context for al-Qūnawī's "anthropology" and Todd establishes a conceptual framework surrounding al-Qūnawī's treatment of cosmology, where it agrees and departs from standard theories of his times. From the "First Intellect/Sublime Pen/the Universal (Muḥammadan) Spirit down to "the Human Being," Todd describes a familiar medieval Neoplatonic structure. Todd also describes cosmological questions in letters to al-Ṭūsī and also the "sublunary world," completing the first section of his book.

The subject of the second major section of Todd's work is a defining theme in al-Qūnawī's doctrines, what Todd calls his "anthropology," his doctrine of man. As Todd describes, al-Qūnawī's anthropology focuses not only on the nature of human beings in their earthly state and afterlife but also, and more fundamentally on the metaphysical principles underpinning their existence and teleological end. For Ibn 'Arabī and al-Qūnawī the study of man is grounded in a primarily metaphysical meaning of human nature. This understanding reaches its apogee in the concept of the perfect human being, *al-insān al-kāmil*. This is conceived of as a theophanic manifestation in which God contemplates the hidden treasures of His Essence and through whom the world's existence is sustained. The vicegerency (*khilāfab*) according to Ibn 'Arabī, befits none save the perfect human being alone, for God has made his outer form from the forms and realities of the cosmos and has made his inner form after his own image. For al-Qūnawī as for his master, this reasoning is grounded in the Qur'ān. The idea that the human being encapsulates the cosmos

is one that can be found in other intellectual traditions, the Hermetic corpus, with influence clearly discernible in early and medieval Islam. The concept of man as microcosm is echoed by different authors and schools. Al-Qūnawī is not the first medieval Muslim thinker to lay emphasis on the study of human nature, nor does his metaphysical doctrine of man constitute a break from the spirit of the tradition in which he wrote: but it remains significant nonetheless by dint of its breadth, complexity, and lasting legacy. Todd's analysis of al-Qūnawī's anthropology is founded upon an examination of all of al-Qūnawī's major works and has been structured according to the overarching scheme of man's *exitus* and *reditus*, or existential journey. This is described first by describing man's metaphysical origins, the nature of worldly dependence upon God. Todd outlines al-Qūnawī's description of this relationship and how al-Qūnawī differs from other philosophers. Todd considers al-Qūnawī's theories regarding the spiritual principles underlying man's existence in areas of "indeterminacy and determination," "the cognitive relationship," "the Divine affairs," "the immutable essences," "the common measure," "the Barzakh," the "five presences," and the "Divine secret." Todd describes "the human state" whereby, for al-Qūnawī, human beings occupy a privileged place in the universal scheme of things. Todd examines al-Qūnawī's theories about the seemingly paradoxical relationship between mankind's elevated metaphysical stature and his lowly, earthbound nature. Because al-Qūnawī considers the human being's underlying essence to be a distinct relationship to God's knowledge, al-Qūnawī speaks of a process whereby the individual becomes manifest in the corporeal world as a passage from knowledge to concrete essence.

In Todd's chapter on "liberation," al-Qūnawī treats man's existential journey culminating in perfection, and consciously actualizing all degrees of existence within himself. Todd notes that al-Qūnawī speaks of the complete journey of man qua man, from origin until its final end and what he has in mind is not the relative evolution achieved by the vast majority of humankind ending in heaven or hell. Rather he sees a voyage of a few progressing beyond the highest degrees of paradise and the constraints of all determinate worlds in order to realize the theophany of the Essence. This is a potential in all human beings. Todd's conclusion places al-Qūnawī in his historical context and concludes that his doctrine of man includes not only the Qur'ānic portrayal of man as the summit of creation and God's

vicegerent on Earth, but also many echoes of the mystical and philosophical traditions of the Hellenistic world, a blend of Abrahamic and Greek thought. Todd notes however that this is not to detract from the scale and significance of al-Qūnawī's achievement.

As Todd notes, until recently only two of al-Qūnawī's works had been edited while the rest were long-lost lithographs or unedited manuscripts as are many of Ibn 'Arabī's works. Todd notes that studies of al-Qūnawī so far are in two groups: those devoted to his work and own thought and those that are concerned with the part al-Qūnawī played in Ibn 'Arabī's milieu and there has been a dearth of material on al-Qūnawī's doctrines. Amidst this dearth of material, Todd succeeds in introducing al-Qūnawī's work but also in showing points of differentiation exemplified by al-Qūnawī's thought as it sometimes converges and diverges with other intellectual figures in its medieval setting. Todd's portrayal of divergences in al-Qūnawī's thought demonstrate a diversity of Islamic thought in the medieval period, also showing that, as today, simple descriptions of Islamic thought as monolithic and insular do not do justice to the tradition but a proper appreciation of the depth and diversity of the philosophy requires deeper study and reflection. Todd's work is a good beginning for those wishing such. This recent work by Richard Todd is interesting as an important contribution to the field of Islamic Studies as there has hitherto been no major published work about Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī available in English. Especially for English-speaking students of Islamic philosophy and Sufism, this book bridges an important gap. Todd's analysis of al-Qūnawī's thought, his description of his works, and sample excerpts succeed in giving a rich introduction and overview and should be a very welcome addition to the field.

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