Introduction

it gives relief from work because of self-justification through the attainment of the mystical stations and states. As for Abū Yazīd al-Būšīrahī (May God have mercy upon him!), what is ascribed to him of such saying is not true, even if he were heard saying it. [If so, he] was probably quoting it from God and reporting it in his speech as when he may have been heard reciting, ‘Verily I am God. There is no god but Me. Worship Me.’ (20:141) (Yusuf, 1, 36 [K. ‘Ilm, hbd 3, Bayān mat-badhal...]). Here Ghazali is talking about the harmful effects of these ideas on the mind of the common people, not about the theological implication of the words. He seems to avoid facing the problem.

(50) For example, see Ghazali (tr. by K. Nakamura, Inventions and Supplications, 30 and also ibid. 22, note A.

(51) For example, when Ghazali emphasizes the practical aspect of shahādah as the utilization of the benefits from God for their proper purposes, his is different from other Sufis.

(52) Even ihdād is not entirely free from interpretation (see I. Goldziher, Streitschrift des Ghazālī gegen die Bāqitja-Sekte, 16).


Chapter II

GHAZALI’S THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT

1. Tawḥīd as the Divine Unity

T he problem of the unity of God or tawḥīd constitutes the central theme of Muslim scholastic theology or Kādālī, to such an extent that the terms ‘ilm al-tawḥīd (literally, the knowledge of the unification) and kādālī (or ‘ilm al-kādālī) have often been used interchangeably. All of the theological questions concerning God’s essence (dhāt), His attributes (ṣūКурс) and His acts (‘afuncs) are involved in tawḥīd. It is not an exaggeration to say that the history of Muslim theology has evolved around the problem of tawḥīd, of how to interpret and conceptualize the first half of the testimony (Shahādah) of Islam: “There is no deity but God.” It is therefore quite natural that our discussion of Ghazali’s thought on religious practices should begin with his conception of tawkhīd. As we shall soon see, this concept has a very practical significance in his theoretical scheme of the training (riydah) of the soul.

According to Ghazali, there are four classes of tawḥīd. The first is the tawḥīd of the hypocrites (munkatūfīn) who pronounce the formula: “There is no deity but God,” but in their hearts do not accept it as true. The hypocrites’ life thus is not affected by the profession of the Shahādah at all. Their deceit may be of some use to protect themselves from persecution by Muslim authorities, but it will be of no use in the Hereafter (akhirah). Ghazali calls this verbal expression of tawḥīd without inner commitment “an outer shell.”

The second tawḥīd is that of the common people (‘awdın, pl. of ‘dmün) shared by the scholastic theologians (mukallālim). They
accept the Shahdah as true and understand its implications on an intellectual level, with various degrees of understanding. But the creed (i'tiqad) touches only the surface of their hearts. There is no full commitment to it. Their acceptance is conventional, a “blind imitation” (taqlid) of the tradition, and is based on hearsay. At best, it comes from logically proven necessity. In any case, this type of tawhíd lacks true commitment—a deep-rooted, personal conviction which Ghazali calls yaqín. While it is certain that none of these people have doubts about the mortality of human beings and the coming Day of Judgement, there is no one whose heart is so completely gripped by these ideas that his sole concern in this life is to prepare for death. Therefore, these people lack total commitment to their faith. The only difference between the common people and the theologians is that the latter handle complicated theological problems by intricate, hairsplitting arguments in an attempt to defend the tradition against heretical views. Thus Kalám as such is denied any positive value. This class of tawhíd is again but “an inner shell.”

The third tawhíd is that of those who not only know theoretically, but have realized experientially, by “disclosure” (kashf) and “vision” (mashhadah), that “there is no agent (fā’il) other than God; and that all existence—the creatures, sustenance, giving and taking, life and death, wealth and poverty, in short everything that can be named—has God as its sole creator and originator.” They realize that all created things, human and nonhuman, are mere tools and means under the complete control (masakhab) of God’s power (qudrah) and will (mash’ah) in His execution of the eternal decree (qadd). Therefore, they have no reliance upon nor pay any attention to these “tools and means.” They “see multiple phenomena, all coming from the One Compelling (gahdhr).” Ghazali calls this “the pith” of tawhíd.

In defining this third type of tawhíd, Ghazali stresses that seeing things in their multiplicity coming from the One, from God, is more than words. It expresses a firm spiritual conviction (yaqín) that was revealed to the heart “from on high” and has thus gripped it unshakably. Ghazali goes on to elaborate more fully the meaning of this yaqín:

A hidden subtlety (daqiq ghamîd) is understood only by those who have received so much grace from God as to grasp things by a divine light (nîr ilhâm), rather than by the traditional authority (sâhî). These people, when the secrets of things are revealed (inikshafu) to them as they really are, look at the tradition and the transmitted words, and if these agree with what they have witnessed (shâhîda) by the light of the spiritual conviction (nîr al-yaqîn), they accept them. But if not, they allegorically interpret (a’wala) them. Those who experience this not only know the universal sovereignty of God, but behave according to that knowledge. This is an actual commitment supported by inner conviction.

Let us elaborate further on the conceptualized aspect of this third tawhíd. Suppose that we strike a match to light a fire. It seems apparent that the match, or more correctly speaking, our action of striking the match and the subsequent friction produce the fire. But this is not so in reality, according to Ghazali. The movement of our hand and the friction seem to produce a chemico-physical change in the match and this change seems to create the fire. But this is not correct, since there is no necessary causative relationship in this sequence. The real producer or cause is God. The movement of our hand and the friction are nothing but “causes” (sabab) or means through which God creates the chemico-physical change in the match, and this in turn becomes another “cause” through which God
creates the fire. Even the movement of our hand, when we strike the match, is not in a real sense our own creation. It is created by God working through our power (qudrah) or energy, which is also created when we want to strike a match. Again our desire (irada) itself is created by God through the indication of knowledge (‘ilm), reason (‘aqil), or judgement (lukm), which ultimately comes from His eternal determination through prompting (khidir).\(^{25}\)

In this system of thought there is no room for the law of causality. Every event as well as all beings in the world are completely isolated and lack any relationship to other events or beings. All creation is directly ascribed to God.\(^{14}\) God has, however, an orderly way to fulfill His decree, which is called the custom of God (‘idaah Allâh) or the path of God (sunnah Allâh). It is therefore ridiculous to go into a desert in search of treasure or to neglect one’s crops in expectation of divine help,\(^{26}\) despite the fact that nothing is impossible for the power of God. Such help may simply not be the custom of God. When God withholds from someone, it happens in a certain sequence of events. The punishment may come when he is driving a car, or sleeping in bed, or performing some other activity. God’s will rarely deviates from His custom.\(^{26}\)

This is a conceptualized presentation of the third type of tawhid. It is nothing other than the Ash’ârite theology. However, out of this theology, we can draw two practical conclusions of great significance. One is that it is polytheism (shirk) to connect by causation a series of events which take place customarily in sequence, and thus to see only “causes” (sabab) behind them, rather than God, the Real Cause or Agent.\(^{16}\) This would mean that we have set up another independent agent beside God — a “hidden polytheism” (shirk khafji), if not an open worship of a deity (shirk jalil).\(^{26}\)

In like manner, take the case of our working to earn our living.

If we think that we are supporting ourselves, rather than God bestowing on us the earnings through our work, then we are guilty of shirk. Furthermore, if our actions, in ritual worship (salât), alms-giving, or teaching, are motivated by concerns other than God, e.g. love of fame (jahd), pleasure (hawâ), fear (khawf), or ostentation (riyâ), then we are worshiping idols (ma’bud), called fame, pleasure, fear and other people’s regards. We are thus required to reorient our whole life and to direct ourselves to a single goal — coming close to God and meeting Him (lijd Allah)\(^{21}\) in the Hereafter.\(^{26}\) This is the real commitment which is lacking in the second type of tawhid.

The other conclusion which we can draw from the Ash’ârite teaching is that the notion of the divine causation of every single occurrence (hadith) does not mean that our efforts are unnecessary. It is thus absurd for us to go out to the battle-field without carrying weapons, or not to drink water to quench our thirst on the assumption that God will destroy the enemy, or quench our thirst without our drinking water. This is not the sunnah of God. It is, on the one hand, shirk to pay attention to and rely only on “causes.” To deny these causes totally, on the other hand, is to fail to act in accordance with the divine sunnah and to neglect the divine command (sharâh).\(^{27}\) We cannot, and must not, sit back and wait for the guidance of God, when we want to see His Noble Face and come close to Him. Again although there is nothing beyond God’s power, we must prepare ourselves as much as we can to receive His guidance and help (tawfîq), in accordance with His “customary” way.\(^{28}\) This does not contradict the determination and power of God.\(^{28}\)

Thus, the first conclusion logically necessitates a real commitment to God, and the second makes possible our efforts toward it. These two aspects — intellectual, logical persuasion (‘ilm) and concrete practice (‘amal) — constitute the backbone of the
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Ghazalīan theory of training. This is an intellectual formulation of what Ghazalī considers the third type of tawḥīd.

As far as the conceptualized form is concerned, there seems to be no significant difference between the second and the third types of tawḥīd, except for one of emphasis. In actuality, however, there exists a wide gap between these two. One remains a mere conceptualized creed, while the other implies yaqūn, or a deep inner commitment to the creed. What causes this difference? Where does this yaqūn come from? It does not come from Kāılm, although this shows the way. Ultimately it is something given by God. How can we prepare for it, then? This brings us to the fourth and last class of tawḥīd.

2. Tawḥīd as Fanā'

The fourth tawḥīd is that of those who “see Oneness in all existence.” The many they cannot see. Ghazalī compares this tawḥīd to “the juicy essence,” which is extracted from the pit. It is, according to him, the aum of tawḥīd and what the Sufis call “passing-away in the Unity” (fanā' fi l-tawḥīd). For “they do not see but One and also do not see themselves. When they do not see themselves as they are absorbed in tawḥīd, they have ‘passed away’ from themselves in the sense that they have ‘passed away’ from seeing themselves and the created beings.”

Now, what does Ghazalī mean when he says that “they do not see in existence but One,” or “they do not see themselves”? When he says that his fourth class of tawḥīd is identical to the Sufi idea of fanā’, what is meant by fanā’? There is no consensus on the notion of fanā’ among the Sufis themselves. R.A. Nicholson summarizes the various meanings of the term fanā’ used by the Sufis into the following three groups:

(1) A moral transformation of the soul through the extinction of all its passions and desires.

(2) A mental abstraction or passing-away of the mind from all objects of perception, thoughts, actions, and feelings through its concentration upon the thought of God. Here the thought of God signifies contemplation of the divine attributes.

(3) The cessation of all conscious thought. The highest stage of fanā’ is reached when even the consciousness of having attained fanā’ disappears. This is what the Sufis call “the passing-away of passing-away” (fanā’ al­fanā’). The mystic is now rapt in contemplation of the divine essence.

Our problem is to which of these three groups does Ghazalī’s fanā’ belong? It is difficult to answer this question, partly because it is not possible to neatly classify the innermost, unique human experiences into artificial categories, and partly because Ghazalī lacks clarity and detail in his description of that part of the religious experience which we are now examining. Ghazalī seldom discloses the fanā’-experience in ilm, except in a rather vague and conventional manner. Since it belongs to the science of revelation (ilm al-makādisfah), it is, he thinks, very dangerous to divulge it to the public.

Nonetheless, we can grasp something about it from his scattered descriptions. Ghazalī writes about the state of the Sufis in their highest stage at the sanad-‘seance:

The fourth state is the sanad of him who has passed beyond (spiritual) states and stations. He is far from knowing anything save God to such a degree that he is far even from himself, his states and their relations. He is like one dumbfounded
(madhārsh), absorbed in the sea of the direct witnessing (‘ayn al-shuhūd), whose inner state resembles that of the ladies who cut their hands, witnessing the beauty of Joseph, when they were dumbfounded and their perceptions were gone. The Sufis express this state by saying that “he has passed away from himself” (faniya ‘an nafsī-hi). Whenever a man has passed away from himself, he has passed away from all besides himself. Then it is as if he passed away from everything except the Witnessed One and passed away from the act of witnessing. For the heart, whenever it turns aside to view the act of witnessing and itself as a witness, becomes heedless of the Witnessed One. And for him who is infatuated in a thing which he sees, there is no turning aside, in his state of absorption, toward his witnessing, nor toward his own self through which his vision comes, nor toward his heart in which his joy is. A drunken man tells no word about his drunkenness, nor does he who is taking pleasure about his taking of pleasure. His word is only about that in which he takes pleasure... For the most part it is like swift lightning which is not stable, nor lasts. If it should last, human strength could not bear it. (Emphasis is mine)\(^6\)

Ghazali’s \textit{fand’} in this passage corresponds to Nicholson’s third category and apparently refers to the same state. We must next clarify further this \textit{fand’}-experience itself, delineate its psychological characteristics, and consider its impact on the Sufis’ mind in comparative perspective.

First of all, as we have seen in the previous quotation, \textit{fand’} might be interpreted as the state in which the object, “the Witnessed One,” has so completely permeated and absorbed the mind of the subject that he is not conscious of himself. To be more precise, the subject relinquishes his conscious hold of the object, since he is no longer aware of himself. Neither is he conscious of his witnessing the object. Only the Witnessed One is left in his mind; in this state of mind there is no differentiation between the witness, the witnessed, and the act of witnessing. Thus it is not a state of total unconsciousness. If this interpretation is correct, then we may assume that this state of consciousness is psychologically the same as that which the Yogis call \textit{samadhi}, where, after a long effort of concentration and meditation, the whole consciousness of the subject is absorbed in the object of meditation and finally the barrier between subject and object disappears.\(^6\)

This \textit{fand’}-experience is rich in content. It is sometimes accompanied by a feeling of awe (\textit{tremendum})\(^6\) such as one has before a majestic king. Ghazali writes about the watchful meditation (\textit{murqabah}) of the Šiddiq (see note 36 below) as follows:

It is the meditation of Glorification and Majesty. This means that the heart is absorbed (\textit{mustaghriq}) in meditation of that Majesty and collapses under the awe (\textit{haybah}). There is no room left in his heart for turning aside to others.\(^6\)

It is a completely benumbed passivity\(^6\) before the Majesty and Grandeur of God Who has created heaven and earth by just saying, “Be!”\(^6\)

On the other hand, there is also a strong feeling of joy (\textit{fascinans}),\(^6\) when the mysteries of the divine sovereignty (\textit{mulk}) are disclosed:

...his heart is flooded with rapture which almost carries him away at the occurrence of the disclosure (\textit{kashf}). He is amazed to find himself still standing and enduring the force of his joy and rapture. This is what is known by direct experience (\textit{dhawq}).\(^6\)
The vision (ru'yah) of God is often compared to the dazzling brightness of the sun:

...discursive meditation (fikr) on His essence, His attributes and the meanings of His names — all this is prohibited, as it is said: “Meditate on the creation of God, but not the essence of God.” This is because the intellect becomes bewildered in it. Therefore, no one can raise his sight toward Him, except the Siddiqin. Even they cannot see for long. The state of the eyes of other people in relation to the Majesty of God is like that of the eyes of the bat in relation to the light of the sun.49

Partly because of the Majesty and Grandeur of God and partly because of the ineffability of this experience, man’s small intellect feels crushed under the resulting bewilderment, confusion and astonishment.

At the same time, however, the contemplative mind intuits a knowledge of a dimension completely different from that of ordinary knowledge; the veil which hitherto covered his eyes has now been lifted so that he can see things as they really are:

...the secret of the heart in which the real nature of the Truth is completely revealed so that it is enlarged in such a way as to include the whole world and know all of it, and the form of everything is revealed in it. At this moment, its light shines very brightly since all beings show themselves as they really are. This was previously hindered by a niche which is like the veil of the light.50

When the preparation on the part of man is over,

God now becomes the caretaker of the heart of His servant and undertakes to illumine the heart with the light of Knowledge (‘ilm). When God undertakes the care of the heart, mercy floods in on it and the light shines in, the heart is expanded (istharafa),51 and the secret of the divine kingdom (malakāt)52 is revealed...53

But this state of fanā’ usually does not last long:

Sometimes this contemplation (mushabdah) in which nothing appears but the True One (al-Wāhid al-Haqq) lasts, and sometimes it happens instantaneously like swift lightning — this is the ordinary case. It seldom lasts long.54

These are the characteristics of the fanā’-experience or the fourth type of tawhid which Ghazali describes. But is this mystical experience? We must next examine his fanā’-experience more closely against the general background.

We propose to characterize “mystical experience” and the unitive state under the following five headings.55

(1) Sense of the Beyond — In spite of laborious and meticulous preparation and practice, there is always in this unitive state a feeling that one is caught up by, or unified with, a superior power, the Absolute One, or God. This is because the unitive state is attained or given as a grace from God56 only when one has reached the state of absolute stillness by removing all effort and will to do anything, self-consciousness, and even consciousness of the loss of consciousness. One is completely passive. If something comes and fills the mind, it comes from “outside,” with irresistible force. This leaves so strong an impression that it drastically changes the inner life of the subject. Ghazali speaks, as we have seen, of the sense of awe and dazzling bewilderment in confrontation with the Majesty
and Grandeur of God, and also about the inability “to turn to other,” because of “passing away from everything except the Witnessed One.”

(2) Sense of joy and exaltation — This state is accompanied by a strong sense of joy and rapture. This is explained as “the breaking-up of the restriction imposed on one as an individual being, and this breaking-up is not a mere negative incident but quite a positive one fraught with significance, because it means an infinite expansion of the individual.” We have already seen Ghazali’s description of this state as an unbearable rapture.

(3) Ineffability — All the mystics are unanimous in saying that the unitive state defies expression and cannot be communicated in words; it is something that is experienced in that special state of consciousness in which the disparity of subject and object is utterly obliterated. Consequently, it baffles the human intellect and eludes expression in words. It is, therefore, best characterized by symbols, and direct experience (dhwq) is emphasized. Ghazali speaks of the inadequacy of words to describe this mental state, and of the intellectual bewilderment that is involved. He also warns against the inherent danger that the mystic faces when he attempts to express such an experience.

(4) Intuitive and noetic quality — Nonetheless, this psychological state can be described in terms of intuitive knowledge (insight, enlightenment, illumination, light, or revelation, etc.), which is totally different from ordinary knowledge. Usually special terms such as gnosis, prajñā, or maʿrifa are applied to this supernatural knowledge. This is also true with Ghazali, when he speaks about “knowing (ʿarafa) God,” and “the knowledge (maʿrifa) of God,” when referring to this unitive state. According to him, when the human heart is freed and purified from the stains of the “I” or ego-consciousness, it reflects, like a polished mirror, the real nature of things and the unseen world (ʿalām al-malakāt), which is symbolically expressed as “the Preserved Tablet” (al-lawḥ al-maғfūṣ).

(5) Transience — This experience does not last long. As W. James notes, “Except in rare instances, half an hour, at most an hour or two, seems the limit beyond which they fade into the light of common day.” We have seen above the same descriptions by Ghazali.

It is now easy to draw a conclusion from our discussion of what Ghazali calls the fourth class of tawḥīd or the fanaʾ in tawḥīd. It is, in short, this unitive state of mystical experience. Just as the unitive state imprints its mark on the mystic’s heart and changes his whole spiritual outlook, so the fanaʾ has the same effects on the heart of the Sufi. The Sufi, by annihilating the self, sees nothing but the Witnessed One — neither “I” nor “you”; neither tree nor house. He realizes — or rather it is disclosed to him — that there is nothing in existence but God, the Truth. This comes to him with such force that no amount of logical argument can refute it. This is yawq. After the fanaʾ-experience, he is left with an unshakable spiritual conviction. Now, whatever he looks at, he sees God in it. In this way, the fanaʾ-experience changes the Sufi’s inner life, in such a way that “from one occurrence to another it is susceptible to continuous development in what is felt as inner richness and importance.”

It is obvious now that if the tawḥīd of the fourth class describes the unitive state, then the tawḥīd of the third class points to those who have experienced this unitive state, but reverted to the “normal” state of consciousness, since the unitive state does not last long. Thus, not only do they know that everything is from God, but actually see everything coming from Him and they act accordingly.
The mystic, after this unforgettable, blissful experience, has a strong yearning for this exquisite state of sublime happiness. In the theistic tradition this is expressed in terms of the yearning (shawq) of the lover for the beloved. St. Teresa describes this after-effect superbly as follows:

... the soul has been wounded with love for the Spouse and seeks more opportunity of being alone, trying, so far as possible to one in its state, to renounce everything which can disturb it in this its solitude. That sight of Him which it has had is so deeply impressed upon it that its whole desire is to enjoy it once more."

Now the fire of love (mahabbah) has been kindled in the heart of the mystic. It will never go out until it burns and consumes all in him that is not for his beloved. His sole concern becomes the meeting with God. He finds utmost joy in removing every obstacle for being alone with Him and having confidential talk (munajät). The mystic's thought always returns to Him. To be sure, his every thought and act are for Him." This is the Absolute Single-Heartedness (al-ikhlaé al-mutlaq) that we have mentioned above." Now we are back to the beginning of our discussion — the third tawhíd means an actual commitment to the creed, and this cannot be reached by Kalám.

The only essential practice of the mystic besides the prescribed duties after his unitive experience, "is to always keep his heart in God. Then, nothing appears in his eye that does not give a lesson and a warning from Him, and a thought about Him." There is no possibility of Satanic insinuation (waswás), if there is no room in his heart for love of the world. He becomes free from the world in every aspect (al-záhid al-mutlaq or al-mustaghni). The more he "knows" ('arafa) God, the more he loves Him. His love (mahabbah) turns into passionate love ('ishq), and from this results the state of intimacy (uns) with God and a lasting sense of nearness to Him.

Even at this stage, however, the yearning (shawq) for God does not come to an end. The mystic's life in this world does not allow him to indulge in continuous contemplation (mushhadah). Worldly disturbances mar the clarity of his contemplation and distract his attention. Therefore, the complete vision (ru'yah) of God and the meeting with Him (liqâ' Allah) is only possible in the Hereafter, when the mystic is freed from worldly bonds. Human's highest joy and happiness (sa'ádah) is realized only in the Hereafter (akhirah). This is the ultimate goal (gháybah) of human beings."

Life in this world (dunya) is a preparation for this goal. The more one knows and loves God in the world, the freer one is to be with Him in the Hereafter. On the other hand, if one's heart is sunken in this life, it will yearn for this world even after death, and will therefore be hindered in meeting God. "Man dies in the same state as he has lived, and he is resurrected in the same state as he has died." This world is a training ground for the human heart to be purified. The human body is the tool for it. Thus, the world has a positive meaning in relation to this goal, and the fán'd-experience has an eschatological significance. It is a foretelling of this Supreme Happiness in the Hereafter.

3. Riyádah, or "Training"

We have seen in the previous section that the third type of tawhíd means to learn by direct experience, to see the multiplicity of phenomena of the world as coming directly from the One, God, and therefore not put any reliance on secondary causes. We have also seen that this is the logical conclusion of Ash'ariite theology. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand this view of tawhíd intellectually. However, to grasp this view intellectually is one thing; it is quite another to realize its truth with yaqin and to make a real commitment
to it. There is a deep chasm between these two conditions. Why does this occur? How can we cross this chasm? This leads us to the problem of human nature, or the heart, and the problem of its training.

Ghazali, needless to say, does not mean by the word "heart" (qalb) the physical organ (al-lahmi al-sanawri) in the human body. It is something "subtle (latifah), lordly (rabbani), and spiritual (rabbaniyya)" in all humans, which cannot be grasped through the senses. This heart is also called "spirit" (rūh), or "the serene soul (al-nafis al-mutma'innah)," or "a precious substance" (jawhar nafig), or "noble pearl" (durur azīz). Though not a tangible part of humans, it nonetheless is related to the physical heart: in a way that only a few can know. It is "that part of humans which grasps (mudrik), knows (al-dim), and intuits (ārif)," of which the body is its instrument and vessel. It is a continuous entity of man, or the subject, which thinks, perceives and moves the body. It is something that cannot be the object of thinking and perception." It is the "essence of man" (bashīqah al-insān).

This "essence of man," however, has a transcendental meaning or dimension. Thus it is called "a secret (ārā) of God's secrets," or "a subtlety (latifah) of His subtleties," or something divine (amr ilāhi), which belongs to the eternal decree (amr) of God. It is "the deposit" (amānāh), which God has entrusted to man. Such is it that the heavens, the earth, and the mountains could not bear it and flinched when it was offered to them. It is the primordial purity which Adam possessed before his fall from God's grace. It is the real nature of man in the sense that it is a stranger in the human body, and thus something other than "humanity" (basharıyyah). It is something of which it is said: "He who knows the heart, knows himself. He who knows himself, knows his Lord." It is something which knows God (al-ālim bi-Allāh); something which comes close to God (al-mutagarrith ilā Allāh); something which act for God (‘dmiil li-Allāh); something which strives toward God (al-ṣār ilā Allāh); something in which is revealed what is beside God and with Him. In short, it is something which makes possible the unique relationship between humans and God. Humans can know and love God, thus, in spite of the fact that there is an absolute difference (tanẓīh) between them. Because of this very nature, the human heart essentially yearns for its Origin.

Although man's essence derives from something other than this world, he lives in the physical body, or in the world of the senses (al-dim al-mulq). Consequently, he needs something other than the heart which is not the essence of man, as a means to maintain his bodily life in this world. The limbs, the senses, the intellectual faculty — these, and others are its vessels and tools. The two propensities of shahwah (desire) and ghafāf (anger) are the most basic of them. The former is the human inclination toward something pleasant and the latter is the tendency to reject and turn away from something harmful and unpleasant. These two inclinations constitute the drive of emotion (bdīth al-haww). Humans' essential yearning for their Origin, however, is expressed as the drive of piety (bdīth al-dīn).

When the drive of emotion is well trained and completely tamed (al-nafs al-mutma'innah), and the drive of piety becomes dominant in humans, they then become angelic and thus come close to God. On the other hand, if this drive of emotion is left undisciplined (al-nafs al-ammarah bi-l-sā'), they come close to the animals. Humans occupy the intermediate and ambivalent position between the angel and the animal.

When one neglect the care of the desires, they easily become prey to Satanic insinuation (waswās). They are, in fact, the "food"
(ṣūr) of Satan.⁴⁴ The most basic of these desires are gluttony (shahwah al-baqī) and sexual desire (shahwah al-farāj).⁴⁵ These are protected by “indignation” (ghadab).

When one satisfies these basic desires, one then considers the need to secure the condition of wealth. Hence a love of wealth. Then it is necessary to think of means to secure this wealth — fame (jāh), and its many attributes: knowledge (‘ilm), beauty (jamāl), genealogy (nasab), and position. Hence the love of these things. Thus, worldly desires expand endlessly.

According to Ghazali, a love of wealth, fame, and power is deeply rooted in human nature itself. They arise from the quality of lordliness (ṣīfah rubūbiyāh); that is, a human’s inborn yearning for perfection (kamāl).⁴⁶ Essentially this should be sought for in the yearning for God — the personal knowledge (ma‘rifah) of God and freedom (ba‘rā’iyah) from worldly desires.⁴⁷

However, human beings usually tend to seek for it in the opposite direction — in such worldly values as knowledge, professional skill, beauty, power, etc. Because human abilities are limited, the desire for perfection cannot be absolute. This thirst for perfection is mostly realized through competition with rivals, domination of others, and recognition by other people. When this fact is forgotten and a human being’s relative perfection is mistaken to be an absolute, they are misled to claim divine authority for themselves like the Pharaoh, who said, “I am your Lord Most High.”⁴⁸ The dominant qualities of such humans are thus haughtiness (kibr), conceit (‘ujb),⁴⁹ envy (hasad), rancor (bigh), hypocrisy (riyd), etc. Potentially all humans have such demonic characteristics in their very nature.

The common basis for all this is attachment to the world with the consequent neglect of the Hereafter. “The root of every sin is love of the world.”⁵⁰ The two worlds — this world (dunya) and the Hereafter (akhira)⁵¹ — are mutually exclusive and cannot be compatible. If one is dominant, the other is weakened, and vice versa. They are like a measured amount of water divided in two glasses — the more water in one glass, the less in the other.⁵²

When the glass of this world is filled, that of the Hereafter is empty. In this condition, the chief concern for people is success in this world, either through intellectual pursuit, business, politics, or some other endeavor. This is a disease of the heart. But most people do not know that they are ill. Even if they do, they do not realize how serious it is or how urgent a remedy is needed, since a physical disease terminates with death, but that of the heart does not.⁵³ So they must be cured of all the diseases of the heart before their bodily death, which may come at any moment.

This is the normal state of people in the second tawhid which was discussed earlier. Next must be taken the initial step to bridge the chasm between the second and the third types of tawhid — that is, to use the analogy above, to refill the water glass of the Hereafter by emptying that of this world. This crucial step is repentance (tawbah), which, when sudden and radical, may be called conversion.

Repentance consists of a profound realization (‘ilm) of one’s sins and past sinful life, and a painful remorse (nadam) for these sinful acts through which people have lost their God. Alienated from Him, they make a decision (‘azm) to give up sin once and for all,” and “to return from the way whose guide is desire (shahwah) and whose guardian is Satan to the way of God”⁵⁴ and reclaim humans’ original purity. It is a decision to radically reverse their whole orientation which has been bent toward the world, and re-channel all their energy in an entirely new direction. But this cannot be done in a day.
of course. The more familiar people have been with the world, the more difficult and painful it is for them to part from it. They stand at the bottom of a long and rugged ladder of the Sufi Way (via purgativa) whose laborious climb leads to a complete transformation of character. Their only capital is their own effort in accordance with God’s will and divine help. The serious battle against Satan starts anew at each stage of the Sufi way.

The human heart is the battle-field between two armies — Satan versus the angels. The forces of Satan are “desires” and “insinuations” (wazādid). The former is also called “foot soldiers” and the latter “air forces.” Insinuation is a kind of prompting (khādir) which comes to our mind. It is called Satanic because it insinuates an evil idea into humans and is to be distinguished from the angelic prompting (ilhām) which comes from the angels. The forces of angels fight against those of Satan with their prompting, knowledge (‘ilm), will (irḍāh) and other aids.

Humans sometimes yield to Satan’s assaults of desire and insinuation, and sometimes they withstand them with support of the drive of piety (bd’ith al-dīn) and angelic inspiration. For instance, they know that the Day of Judgement is coming and set out to prepare for it. But they may later change their decision and postpone the preparation, thus yielding to the insinuation of Satan that the Day will not come tomorrow nor in the near future. They still have concerns more immediate than the matter of the Hereafter and God.

However, the higher a person goes up the ladder, the more subtle and dexterous the technique of Satanic temptation becomes. Satan takes on a disguise of piety and faith, and approaches the novice through the back door. Thus the novice may feel proud of his own inner development without being aware of the trap.

During these ascetic exercises (mujāhadah), the temperament sometimes deteriorates, the intellect becomes confused, and the body sick. When the training and correction of the soul do not make progress through knowledge of realities, then the heart is possessed by false fantasies, with which his soul is pleased. This lasts for a long time until he dies and his life comes to an end before he succeeds. How many Sufis there are who walked this path and then remained possessed by a single false fantasy for twenty years! If knowledge had been established beforehand, the trick of that fantasy would have been detected instantly.

The path is haunted by Satanic forces and full of danger and pitfalls. A moment’s heedlessness can hurl one into a bottomless abyss.

Since humans cannot directly stop the Satanic assaults, they must remove their “food” and block the routes of these assaults. They must clean their inside and remove foul residue. Next they must sever worldly ties and attachments by retreating from the world itself (‘ulah) — family, society, possessions, political power, fame, etc. Thus they cut off the main source of Satanic temptation.

This renunciation of the world is extremely difficult. The stronger the tie to the world has been, and the greater share of the world they have had, the more painful it is to separate oneself from it. Satan makes every effort to hold humans back. However, once they have made a decision, they must fight against Satan, with the knowledge that the greatest and most lasting happiness is Meeting with God. Worldly things are of no use to this end and only the love of God can help them. Then they must train and curb their basic desires by ascetic exercises like fasting (jawm), silence (ṣaml), night vigil (ṣahr), and seclusion (khalwah). In this way, they block the routes of Satan, shut all the windows of their senses to the outer world, and minimize Satanic exploitation.
Renunciation of the world itself, however, does not kill one’s love of the world, although it is a significant advance toward that goal. Next the Sufis have to take on the no less difficult task of reshaping their worldview into a God-oriented one. They must acquire “the qualities of God” (akhlaq Allâh), or “the praiseworthy qualities” (al-akhlaq al-hamidah). Indeed, renunciation of the world and asceticism are all included in this task.

How can they perform this task? The theory is that they can acquire a certain habit first by putting this desired trait into practice, and then repeating it over and over again, until it becomes their second nature. The beginning is the most difficult part, and Satanic assaults and temptations are also the toughest to reject at this stage.

So the Sufis must mobilize all the resources of their knowledge to persuade themselves that this must be done. At this stage, they should make full use of that powerful ideological weapon, the dogma of tawhid. Compelled by the logical argument of the tawhid and pushed forward by a strong will, they must commit themselves to practice. When they keep to the same practices in this way, the initial pain and difficulty gradually disappear, and there occurs a change in their character, if that is the will of God.

The important thing is perseverance (muwâzabah or mudawwamah) even if the practices can only be performed a little at a time. Thus, the heart acquires the praiseworthy traits with the help of both knowledge (‘ilm) and practice (‘amal), and replaces the love of the world with the love of God. To improve one’s character to the utmost extent of one’s ability through practice — this is the meaning of training (riyâdah). This is possible because of the hidden relationship between the heart and the bodily members. But all of this occurs as always only if God wills it.

Every disease has a cause (‘illah). The remedy for it is to diagnose the cause and then to begin a proper course of treatment that is directly opposite to this cause and persevere in it. If, for example, the main cause of the disease of the heart is miserliness (bukhâr), the Sufis must first persuade themselves with the knowledge of tawhid, that wealth is of no use in the Hereafter, that miserliness or attachment to worldly possessions is a deadly poison for future Happiness, that wealth and poverty come from God, and so on. At the same time, they practice the virtue opposite to it, namely, generosity. They give away their possessions and persevere in this. The practice is very hard in the beginning. But doing it constantly over a long period of time, the hardship they experienced at the outset gradually disappears, and generosity finally becomes their second nature (khusûl).

If the disease is caused by eye-service (riyd), the newbies must educate themselves to realize that, “if God is watching, that is enough. Praise and renown among the people are of no use in the eyes of God and in the Hereafter. What is the use of people’s recognition of you, when you are damned by God? What matter is their blame of you, when you are blessed by God in the Hereafter?” Terrible battles are fought in this state between Satanic insinuation and the angelic forces. With the help of God (tawfîq), people are persuaded to put into practice the virtue opposite to it — to accustom themselves to hiding their worship until it makes no difference whether or not others watch their acts of worship. If the cause is their haughtiness (kibr), then they must teach themselves that there is no sense to regard themselves as superior to others, since all is the work of God. Thus they persuade themselves to a commitment against Satanic insinuation, and they succeed in humbling themselves through their behavior.

Still it is not easy to kill love of the world by renouncing it and curbing human desires to re-shape the character after the pattern of
God. It takes a long time. This effort must be assisted by a fight on another front. When humans love God and are concerned only about the Hereafter, they do not love the world, since the two are incompatible. When their love of God increases, then their love of the world decreases to the same extent. So they must first attempt to strengthen their love of God. For this endeavor, they need a twofold approach.

Knowledge precedes love. If humans know about God, they love Him. So, novices begin by teaching themselves, based on the dogma of tawhid, the mercy (rahmah) and favors (ni’am) which God has bestowed. They must remind themselves that they owe their existence to God, for He is the Controller of those who do good to them. He is the Creator of the good, the good deed and the good-doer; God is perfect (kamīl) and beautiful (jamīl). All beings love themselves and their own life’s duration. All respond to favors bestowed on them. Hence they love the one who gives favors to them. All love the good, the good deed, and thus all love the good-doer. All love beauty for its own sake. God is all this and He does all this. How could humans not love Him? If they do not, then they educate themselves in all this constantly, over and over again, day after day, until God rewards their endeavor with His grace of love.

Furthermore, when humans love someone, they want to be close to him or her, to mention and praise him or her, and to think about him or her all the time. Thus, they first practise the virtues of the real lover of God. They keep their heart always with God (huṣfūr al-qalb), on intimate terms with Him (uns), ardently remembering (dhikr), mentioning and praising Him. They make an effort to turn all their concerns toward God, the Beloved, and keep their thought on Him constantly.

When they are occupied with the thought of God, there is little chance for Satan to interfere. This in turn helps them in the battle against the love of the world, the first front. But, it is very difficult to keep their heart occupied with God. Satan soon finds a way into the memory and imagination, distracting one’s attention. This is so even when supported by good character, and when the desires of the outer world are blocked in seclusion. At this higher stage a special method is usually required to remove the last residue of Satan’s “food” and to take the final leap toward absolute stillness. We shall discuss in the following chapters the problem of dhikr and du‘ā’ in relation to this training of the heart.
Notes to Chapter Two

(1) Grammatically, sawad is a verbal noun of the second causative form (ya-ala) of wahada ("to be alone, one"). When this derivative form is applied to God, it comes to mean "to make God one," "to profess and declare that God is one." Hence, theologically, this has come to signify upholding the absolute oneness of God and His definitive difference (mahdīgha) from all other beings, while maintaining the "personal" relationship between humans and God which is vividly depicted in the Qur'an.

(2) Literally "speech." For its technical usage, see L. Gerde, "Kalâm" and "Ilām" al-Kalâm, EP, IV, 468-71 and EP, III, 1141-50 respectively. The term sahih al-din ("the roots of religion") is used also as a synonym of kalâm. However, traditionalists and conservative theologians tend to use the term sahih al-din to avoid the innovative connotation of the kalâm.

(3) See al-Dhahīr at-Tādhīrī, Nihal. Needless to say, the latter half of it is: "Muhammad is the Messenger of God" (Muhammad rasūl Allāh).


(5) Cf. Mā ṣīḥy, 16 (Watt, 28). This is originally illegal term for the juridical process of solving a problem by choosing a ready-made answer of the classical authorities, rather than by going all the way through the complicated processes directly based on the Four Roots of Law (wшла al-fiqh)—Qur'an, Sunnah, ijma', consensus and Qiyas (analogical).

(6) To give a brief account of this important term, Ghazālī uses it in two different senses— that of the logicians (mawlawwān) and theologians, and that of the Sufis. In the former sense, it means that one accepts a certain statement because he has been logically proven and is therefore free from any possibility of doubt (shakīb). In the latter sense, it means that one accepts a statement not only because there is no doubt, whether logically proven or based on the generally accepted authority, but because it grips the heart to such an extent that it dominates one's entire concern (See ibid., I, 73 (K. Ilm, bab 6). See also F. Jahān, La notion de certitude selon Ghazālī (Paris, 1956).

W. C. Smith makes a distinction between faith and belief, and says that faith is "deeper, richer, more personal," "a quality of the person, not of the system," "an engagement" (Emphasis is author's), "involvement," "an orientation of the personality, to oneself, to one's neighbor, to the universe," a total response: a way of seeing whatever one sees and of handling whatever one handles: a capacity to live at a more than mundane level; to see, to feel, to act in terms of a transcendental dimension," while belief is "the holding of certain ideas"; "the intellect's translation of transcendence into sensible terms" ("Faith and Belief, As Seen by a Comparative Religionist," Public Lecture at University of Toronto, 1968 [mimeographed], esp. 6-13). We might assume that Ghazālī's two types of sawad nearly correspond to this distinction between faith and belief. However, when Ghazālī says that this latter sawad or faith comes only from the "sawad"-experience as we shall see later, he apparently takes a stand—that of Suffism.

(7) Ibid., I, 23 (K. Ilm, bab 2, Bayān al-ilām, farād kifāyāt). Ghazālī compares the role of the theologian to the watch-dog on the way of the Pilgrimage (Ibid.).

(8) Ghazālī, of course, does not deny the usefulness of knowledge (ilm), especially when it is conducive to the Happiness (sa'ādah) in the Hereafter, namely, knowledge of God, the nature of the human heart and others. Even this sort of knowledge, however, can be harmful when it is used for worldly gains. The usefulness of knowledge largely depends upon humans and their intentions (al-ilm al-aškarīk or al-ilm al-dhānī) (Cf. J. O'Brien, Der philosophische und religiöse Subjektivismus Ghazālīs [Wien u. Leipzig, 1951]).

(9) There occurs at the time of "enlargement" (al-wāhid) of the breast and its "expansion" (iṣṭifāh) and "illumination of the light of the Truth" in it (iṣṣāf) , IV, 241 (K. Tawhīd, Bayān bāqīq al-tawhīdī). These terms will be discussed more fully later in this book.

(10) Ghazālī, IV, 242 (Ibid.).

(11) Cf. ibid., IV, 80 (K. Sābiḥ, shuṭir 7, ruḥika 1, Bayān bāqīq al-shuṭir).

(12) Ghazālī, IV, 240 (K. Tawhīd, Bayān bāqīq al-tawhīdī). This is the sawad of those who are called the Muqarrabān.

(13) Ghazālī, I, 104 (K. Qawā'id al-'agādī, ruḥika 1).

(14) Cf. ibid., IV, 243-44 (Ibid.).


(16) This seems to be a sheer determinism and poses the serious problem of human's moral responsibility or free will in the case of human conduct. However, according to Ghazālī, determinism (jārīs), in the strict sense, is only applied to inanimate objects. Humans are in the intermediate position between the sheer determinism of inanimate beings and the perfect free will (al-ikhwāyā') of God, namely, humans have a predetermined free will (maḥbūr 'allād al-ikhwāyā'). This means that he is a locus of a will (irrādā) which occurs as predetermined (ja'far) after the judgment of reason determines that a certain act is better, and this judgement occurs also as predetermined. This fits well into the actual situation in the sense that we do not know the predetermined will of God until we have actually acted. Thus humans are responsible for their act of murder as an agent (jā'īf) in the sense that he has been a locus where God has created knowledge, will, power, etc. (Ibid.), IV, 249-50 (K. Tawhīd, Bayān bāqīq al-tawhīdī). See also our later discussion on the sunnah Allāh. As for the recent discussions on Ghazālī's conception of causality, see: Kwanie Gyeke, "Al-Ghazālī on Causality," An African Journal of Philosophy, II (1973), 31-39; L.E. Goodman, "Did Al-Ghazālī Deny Causality?" Studia Islamica, XLVIII (1978), 83-120; A. Looney, "Al-Ghazālī on Causality," JASS, 100 (1950), 397-405; B. Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Causality," Studia Islamica, 67 (1988), 75-90; M.E. Murmura, "Causation in Islamic Thought," Dictionary of the History of Ideas, 1 (1968), 288-289; idem, "Al-Ghazālī's Second Causal Theory in the 17th Discussion of His Tāhāfūt," Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism (ed. by P. Morewedge, 1981), 85-112; idem, "Ghazālī's Chapter on
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Divine Power in the istiqādat.” Arabic Sciences and Philosophy, IV (1994), 279-315; idem, "Ghāzalīan Causes and Intermediaries;" JACOS 115 (1995) 89-100; R. Frank, Creation and the Cosmic System: al-Ghazālī A Witwen (Heidelberg, 1992) idem, Al-Ghazālī and the Ash‘arī School (Oxford & London, 1994); idem, “Currents and Counter-currents,” Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society (ed. by P.G. Riddell & T.S. Street. Leiden, 1997), 113-34. (17) Ḣudayr I:333 (See Ghazali, Innovations and Superstitons, 90). (18) Ghazali makes a distinction between precedence (qad’a) and decree (qada). The former is a general, overall determination by God and the latter is His determination for the particular way of fulfillment of the former (See above, and Ghazali, Innovations, 90-91). (19) Ḣudayr IV:242 (K. Tawwāl, Bayān haqīqāt al-tawḥīd). (20) Ḣudayr III:230 (K. Dhamm al-buluk, Baya‘at tāyīf at-t fixtures). (21) Cf. Sūrah 6:154, 15:2, 69:5 and others, Ghazali’s own interpretation will be discussed later in this book. (22) This is called the “Absolute Single-Heartness” (al-ikhkād al-ma‘lūd) (See Ḣudayr IV:40, Mālārī: K. Niyāh, bab 2, Bayān haqīqāt al-ikhkād.). (23) Ḣudayr IV:238 (K. Tawwāl, [Kashkhah]). (24) The Prophet said, “A man has been doing good deeds of the People of Paradise for seventy years so that they suppose that he is one of their group members and there is left only a span of the band between him and Paradise. Then his fortune turns against him and he continues evil deeds of the people of Hell and goes directly to Hell.” Humans really do not know their final destiny until the end of their life (akhirat) has come. For this reason, makes the Sufis cautious of coacting (ṣi‘ah), even at their higher stages (Ḥudayr IV:45, K. Taawwah, mokhāfat). (25) This “pragmatic” attitude of Ghazali, to my mind, helps him to utilize anything conducive to the mystical goal, such as the qunud (musical style) (See Ḣudayr II, 266-302, 93 [K. Sama‘]). (26) Ḣudayr IV:240 (K. Taawwah, Bayān haqīqāt al-tawḥīd). (27) Ḣudayr IV:19. (28) Ḣudayr IV:240. This is the tawḥīd of the Siddiq (see note 36 below). (29) R. A. Nicholson, The Mystics of Islam, 60-61, Husayn means this third find when he says the following: “...that assimilation [fīz] comes to a man through vision of the majesty of God and through the revelation of Divine oneness to his heart, so that in the overwhelming sense of His majesty this world and the next one are obliterated from his mind, and ‘strains’ and ‘stations’ appear contemptible in the sight of his aspiring thought, and what is shown to him of miraculous grace vanishes into nothing; it becomes dead to reason and passion alike, dead even to assimilation itself; and in that assimilation of assimilation his tongue proclaims God, and all his mind and body are humble and abased, as in the beginning when Adam’s postercy were drawn from his loins without admixture of evil and took the pledge of servanthood to God (Kor. xii, 171)’ (Kashkhah al-Ma‘ālah [Nicholson, 246; also see Qunayd’s quotation of Junayd’s opinion on the tawḥīd of the adept in Rishālah II, 584]). (30) See Ghazali, Innovations, 21-22. (31) Cf. Sūrah 12:31. (32) Ḣudayr II, 288 (K. Sama‘), bab 2, ma‘qūf 1. (33) A. Kishimoto, Shala‘ī-hemishigashū, 185-86. T. Iwata explains in terms of linguistic philosophy as follows: As one moves into the state of azadārī, the verbal boundaries (zemanat), which characterize one’s view of the world, dissolve and all become a unified and seamless one (T. Iwata, Issaishū-hemishigashū no Gensetsu, 110-12). (34) After the passage which I have quoted above (above, PP. 33-34), Ghazali cites the following poem in order to explain the real nature of this ‘fīz’-experience: “Fine is the glass and fine the wine; so, you mingle together and the things become hard to distinguish is as though there were wine and no glass, and as though there were a glass and no wine.” In like manner, humans and God are essentially different. There cannot be “union” (itilāh), nor “incarnation” (bi‘an), nor “fusion” (wa‘l) between them. They may look as if there were such things, but this is not reality. Therefore, Ghazali says, it is a complete absurdity to mix up psychology and reality, and assert, “I am the Truth!” as did Hālījī (See also Chapter I, note 40 and Ḣudayr III:395 (K. Dhamm al-sharī‘ah, 178)). On the other hand, this psychological explanation by Ghazali tells us that the ‘fīz’ is psychologically the same as the state in which dichotomy of subject and object, in this case human and God, is obliterated. Therefore, L. Gourlet is correct when, in discussing the development of the dhikr, he says that “al-Ghazālī’s analysis in the Ḣudayr’s habs at this stage” (i.e. the dhikr of the heart and the step of “absorption” (dhikr) of Yoga), falling short of the stage of the dhikr of the “innermost being” (ṣirr) and of azadārī of Yoga ("Zikrīyah," EP, II, 225), in so far as Ghazali’s ahle is concerned. However, it must be borne in mind that this does not represent the whole picture of his mystical experience. (35) Cf. R. Otto (tr. by J. W. Harvey), The Idea of the Holy (A Galaxy Book, 1958), 12-24. (36) Ḣudayr IV, 386 (K. Murqābah, Bayān haqīqāt al-murqābah). (37) Ghazali describes this sense of complete passivity as the highest state of the Siddiq as follows: “A man whose heart is fisted to a thing is a slave of it. So the real slave of God is only the one who is first emancipated from anything else but God and has become absolutely free. When this freedom (lāzīf) shows itself, then the heart becomes empty: and in it appears the creatureliness (‘abdāl-lishāf) toward God, and his concern centers on God and love for Him; and his inner and outer person becomes fisted to His obedience; and he has no goal but God. Then this passes into another state higher than this, called "absolute freedom." This also means emancipation from his desire for God as a Being distinct from himself (min baydhaârikh). Rather he is content with whatever God wishes for him, whether it be His bringing [him] near Himself or His alienation from him. The creature’s will disappears in the will of God. The slave is emancipated from everything other than God and therefore becomes free. Then he returns to [his self] and is emancipated from his self and becomes free and lost to himself. He exists only for his Lord and his Maker. If He lets him move, he moves. If He stops him, he stops. If He tries him, he is satisfied and there is no room left for asking, request, or opposition. Indeed, he is before God just as a corpse is before the corpse-washer. This is the utmost degree of ‘fīz in carmateries to God. The real slave is one whose existence
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is for Master, not for himself, and this is the stage of the Siddiq (Ihyā’, IV, 376-77 [K. Niyah, 
bad 3, Bayān baḥṣaḥ al-ṣidq].
(37) Cf. Sādūq 2: 117, 3; 47 and others.
(39) Ihyā’, IV, 301 (K. Maḥlab, Bayān al-ṣināʾa...).
(40) Ihyā’, IV, 419 (K. Tāfṣīk, Bayān maḥāri ʿākīr).
(42) Cf. above, p. 28, note 9.
(43) See Ghazali, Invocations, 26, note c.
(45) Ihyā’, IV, 241 (K. Taʾwīd, Bayān baḥṣaḥ al-taʾwīl) and others.
(46) W. James gives the ancient classical “four marks” of it: (i) Ineffability, (ii) Noetic 
quality, (iii) Transcendence, and (iv) Passivity (The Varieties, 180-82).
Kishimoto characterizes it by its (i) Unique intensiveness, (ii) Sense of Entity, (iii) Sense of the 
Joyful exaltation, and (iv) Ineffability (Shakki-shinpishū, 46-49).
D. T. Suzuki’s characterization of the Zen Buddhist experience of Enlightenment (natura) 
by (i) Irationality, (ii) Intuitive insight, (iii) Authoritativeness, (iv) Affirmation, (v) Sense of the 
Beyond, (vi) Impressional tone, (vii) Feeling of exaltation, and (viii) Momentariness (Essays in 
the Zen Buddhism, 2nd ed. [Kyoto, 1933], 15-22) is similar.
On the other hand, E. Underhill, criticizing W. James’ notion, proposes “four other 
notes”: (i) True mysticism is active and practical, not passive and theoretical. It is an organic 
life-process, something which the whole life does; not something which intellect holds in 
opinion. (ii) Its aims are wholly transcendental and spiritual. Though the mystic does not, as 
his enemies declare, neglect his duty to the many, his heart is always set on the changeless One. 
(iii) This One is for the mystic not merely the Object of Love, never an object of exploration. 
(iv) Living union with this One — which is the term of his adventure — is a definite state or 
form of enhanced life (Mysticism, 81-94).
It is certainly to Underhill’s credit that he proposed a view mysticism as a matter of 
whole life. In this sense, she is right when she stresses the “active,” “practical,” and dynamic 
character of the mystic life. Certainly what is usually called mystical experience does not 
during his whole spiritual life as a mystic. This “mystical experience” is only one stage which 
all mystics pass through on their way to the ultimate goal. It is, however, still true that the 
above-mentioned characteristic of “mystical experience” as a necessary stage of every mystic 
experience, and I am using it in this particular sense. On the other hand, when she stresses 
for the “living and personal Object of Love” as an essential character of mysticism, it does not take 
into account the “imprisonable” tone of the Zen experience (See above).
(47) Therefore, it is sometimes called “supernatural” D.C. Butler, Western Mysticism 
[Harper Torchbooks, 1966], 243.

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It is puzzling, however, that we often come across in the Ihyā’ so obvious, almost 
tentional violation of this customary rule of distinction between ‘imān and maḥlab (e.g. above, 
p. 37 and Ihyā’, I, 285 [K. Tāwīd, bad 3], IV, 79 and others). Is this due to his view that there 
is no essential difference between ‘imān and the conceptualized contents of maḥlab? This 
question remains unsolved.
(50) Cf. Sādūq 85. 22.
(51) W. James, The Varieties, 381.
(52) It may be necessarily, at this juncture, to make a distinction between union, or the 
unitive state, and trance. Physically speaking, the unitive state is a trance. E. Underhill writes: “The 
subject may slide into a trance gradually from a period of absorption in, or contemplation of, 
some idea which has filled the field of consciousness... During the trance, breathing and 
circulation are depressed. The body is more or less cold and rigid, remaining in the exact 
position which it occupied at the uncoming of the ecstasy.” (Mysticism, 359). Sometimes 
encephantasm and unconsciousness are so deep and complete that there is a total anestheisia or 
there results a state of death like catalepsy, lasting for hours, and even for days. This state is 
very dangerous (See e.g. the death of Nārī ṣīrāj, Luma’, 200). Such physical symptoms, 
however, are not the essential part of the unitive state. They occur sometimes due to certain 
abnormal and pathological psychophysiological conditions. The most peculiar characteristic 
of trance, according to H. Kishimoto (Shakki-shinpishū, 206), is that it does not leave any effect 
of the experience on the inner life of the subject. Even if he tries to recall his experience, he 
cannot remember it. On the other hand, the unitive state leaves a deep impression of the 
experience in the mind. It makes a distinctive mark on the subsequent psychological state and 
spiritual life of the subject. We should regard trance as an abnormal by-product. When these 
two are mixed up and only the physical aspect of trance is emphasized, the result may be 
dangerous.
(53) However, Ghazali is careful in his expression of this as we have mentioned 
before. He says: “There is no agent (idhā’i) other than God” (above, p. 28); “to see in existence 
but One” (Ihyā’, IV, 240); “He does not see but One Agent” (ibid.); “In his vision, there appears 
nothing but the One” (Ibid.); “He who knows the Truth sees Him in everything, as everything 
is from Him, so Him, by Him and for Him. He is everything actually (I’d idhā’i)” (Ihyā’, I, 
284 [K. Tāwīd, bad 3]); (All emphases are mine). But he never says unconditionally. “There 
is nothing in existence except God” or “God is everything” or “God is in everything.” Only once 
he says, “Verily He does not love but Himself in the sense that He is everything and that there 
is nothing in existence but He” (Ihyā’, IV, 319 [K. Maḥlab, Bayān baḥṣaḥ Allāh]). (Emphasis is mine). 
This, however, reminds me of the example which Ghazali has given in order 
to show how we can see one in multiplicity: Man is one in his entirety, but is many at the 
same time since he is composed of many bodily members (Ihyā’, IV, 241). Therefore, this 
statement of his should not be taken in the absolute sense. His taʾwīl is always expressed in terms 
of process, not ontology. He must be aware of the danger in this taʾwīl, which easily slips into 
the pantheism of, say, Ibn ‘Arabi’s wahdah al-wājīd (See A. E. Affifi, The Mystical Philosophy 
of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn Arabī, 55-57).
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(54) D.T. Suzuki mentions this "authoritiveness" as one of the characteristics of satori (See above).

(55) W. James, The Varieties, 381.

(56) Actually, however, the third would not only come after the funda, but also comes before the next funda-experience. By repeating this process, the spiritual life of the mystic may become more and more sublime. And finally, after passing the stage of the unitive state, he attains to the last stage of "the unitive life" (E. Underhill, Mysticism, 413-43), where every single moment of his ordinary life is, so to speak, the state of funda, all the while retaining his personality intact.


(58) For the mystic, this approach to God and love of Him on the part of humans is nothing, but a sign of God's love toward them. Since God is the Creator of all and there is nothing in existence but His work, there can be only God's Self-love, through humans and His other creatures (See ibid., IV, 319 [K. Mahabbah, Baya al-abha Allah]).

(59) See above, pp. 30-31.

(60) ibid., I, 355 (K. Tarb al-shor, bab 1, Baya al-abbas al-abha).

(61) See ibid., IV, 212 (K. Piag, shur 2, Baya al-abbas al-abha) and IV, 186 (ibid., shur 1, Baya al-abbas al-abha).

(62) ibid., IV, 314 (K. Mahabbah, Baya al-ud). According to Ghazali, however, humans cannot have a complete Vision of God even in the Hereafter, as there is no limit to God's essence and attributes (al-umma al-ilahiyyah). Therefore, humans' yearning for God will continue endlessly (ibid.) (Q. Qushayr, Rishah, I, 195).

(63) ibid., I, 305 (Ghazali, Invocations, 28-29).

(64) As we shall discuss below, the connotation of the Arabic word qab is not exactly the same as that of the English word "heart" (See Ghazali, Invocations, 22, note 8). However, this word will suffice in this book.

(65) ibid., III, 3 (K. Qab, Baya al-ud).


(67) ibid., I, 54 (K. Ilm, bab 5).

(68) ibid., III, 3.

(69) ibid.

(70) When Muhammad (PBUH) writes about Ghazali's notion of ego, he is speaking of the heart, in this stanza: "...the ego is a simple, indivisible, and immovable soul-substance entirely different from the groups of our mental states and unaffected by the passage of time. Our conscious experience is a unity because our mental states are related as so many qualities to this simple substance, which persists unchanged during the flux of its qualities. My recognition of you is possible only if I persist unchanged between the original perception and the present act of memory" (The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam [Lahore, rep., 1960], 100).

(71) ibid., III, 3.

(72) ibid., I, 54.

(73) Cf. Surah 17: 85. This verse, according to Ghazali, does not mean "command," as used in opposition to prohibition (audha), nor "a matter" (hukma), which is a mere creation of God. Ghazali classifies the worlds into two, both of which belong to God (Al-Allah): the world of creation (Al-din al-makhd a) and the world of ear (ibid., III, 370-71 [K. Dhamm al-gharib, Baya al-abbas al-abha]). This scheme corresponds exactly to his other cosmological classification of the worlds: the world of phenomena (Al-din al-makhd a al-shahadah) and the unseen world (Al-din al-malaksī). To be more precise, there is another intermediate world (Al-din al-jahār) between these two. See Ghazali, Invocations, 26, note c; C. Nakamura, "Iman Ghazali's Cosmology Considered, with Special Reference to the Concept of Jabbar," Studia Islamica, 85 (1994), 29-46. Judging from this comparison, we might safely assume that Ghazali means by ear what he means by malaks, the eternal divine decree, the world which can be reached when our "humanity" (hukma) is completely annihilated so that there is left no discrepancy between the divine will and ours. The heart is something which makes this relationship possible.

(74) Cf. Surah 33: 72.

(75) When Ghazali says that "God created Adam in His image," he is speaking of Adam's inner qualities rather than his outer form (See below).

(76) ibid., III, 2 (K. Qab, Khebha).

(77) ibid.

(78) In fact, Ghazali mentions "the inner relationship" (mudaddab) between humans and God as the fifth reason for humans' love of God: "Mutual knowledge (al-dawd) is mutual relationship (mudaddab). Mutual denial is mutual alienation. For this reason love of God is necessary, since [there is] an inner relationship between humans and God which is not attributable to the resemblance of forms and shapes, but to inner qualities (mu'dal din binaa)" (ibid., IV, 298 [K. Mahabbah, Baya ana-ajalla]). He also tells us, "Acquire the qualities of God" (al-qab alhsab al-qab Allah) (ibid.) Ghazali, therefore, accepts the Biblical tradition: "Very God has created Adam in His image" (Emphasis is mine), against the major trend of its interpretation in Islam which takes the pronoun "hu" (his) as Adam's (present) image, rather than God's (ibid., IV, 25 [K. Tawba, raka 2, Baya kufiyah]; Held, 187-93). See also W.M. Watt, "Created in His Image: A Study in Islamic Theology," Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society, XVIII (1959-60), 38-49; F. Jahre, La notion de la ma'ula chez Ghazali [Beirut, 1958], 86-108). Ghazali is well aware that he is theologically in a difficult position. But he is also convinced, from the fact of human love of God and possibly from his own experience, that there must be some special relationship between humans and God (for further treatment of this metaphysical problem, see F. Shehadi, Ghazali's Unique Unknownable God [Leiden, 1964]).

(79) Now we have two concepts of the heart—one is the heart as the subject of human consciousness and the other as the primordial, divine purity. Both are, strictly speaking, not the same. Sometimes they overlap, and sometimes not. For example, when the heart (conscience?) is completely veiled and subjected to Satanic forces, the heart as the subject of human consciousness is still there. On the other hand, in the state in which the heart is perfectly
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purified, both become one. Apparently Ghazali is speaking from the standpoint of this ideal state where there is no disparity between them.

(80) Ibn, "Ibn", 65 (K. Sarih, shir 1, Bayan inaw al-sabir). Therefore, human desires are not essentially bad.


(82) Ibn, "Ibn", 34 (K. Qalib, Bayan ma’al al-nafs); 43-44 (K. Tawsh, rukn 3, Bayan agam al-Bid’i). (83) Ghazali defines human’ character (Khalq) as “an established form of the soul which produces acts with ease and smoothness, without any recourse to thinking and deliberation.” This character is composed of the four powers: the power of knowledge (Qiwam al-din), the power of repulsion (Qiwam al-ghaib), the power of ascension (Qiwam al-Ishaa), and the power of equality (Qiwam al-Isha’). When each of these powers is moderate, neither too much nor too little, they are called respectively “wistmer” (Khalq), “bravery” (Qalib), “chastity” (Ibn), and “justice” (Ibn). When all these four traits (Khalq al-ghaib) are moderate and well-balanced in humans, they are said to have “good character” (Khalq al-ghaib) in the absolute sense (Ibn, 35, 53-53 (K. Ridwan al-nafs, Bayan inaw al-khalq). See also M.A. Saffar, Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue (SUNY, 1975).

(84) Speaking about fasting (sawm) as a way to come closer to God, Ghazali says: “The purpose of fasting is to acquire the qualities of God (al-sabrin bl-ghaib min al-khaliq Al-Dalal), who is Eternity, and to emulate the angels in restraining desires as much as possible, for angels are free from desires. Man is on a stage above that of the animal because of his ability, with the light of reason (‘aqal), to annihilate desires, while his stage is below that of the angels because of the domination of the desires over him and its being tested by his exercises (muq’ahad). Therefore, everytime be curbs desires, be deserves to the level of the highest creature and attains to the range of the angels, who are brought near to God. He who emulates them and imitates their traits is brought near to God as they are” (Ibn, 4, 237 (K. Sarih, 32)).

(85) Ibn, "Ibn", 73 (K. Sarih, Bayan inaw al-sabir); 26 (K. Qalib, Bayan tasallul-al-shaytana).

(86) Besides the above-mentioned four powers (Qiwamah) of humans (see note 83), Ghazali also mentions another four tendencies (mayaq) or qualities (Qalibah) of the human heart: the lordly qualities (Qalibah al-badr) — haughtiness, vainglory, love of praise, love of long life, etc.; the Satanic qualities (Qalibah al-sinbad) — rancor, craftiness, deception, inclination to evil, etc.; the animal qualities (Qalibah al-ghawr) — glibness, glibness, greediness, sexual desire, etc.; and the heretical qualities (Qalibah al-dini) — anger, hatred, violet or homicidal tendencies, etc. (Ibn, 3, 274 (K. Dhaman al-dini, shir 1, Bayan inaw al-khalq); 4, 15-16 (K. Tawsh, rukn 2, Bayan inaw al-dinsha). The relationship between these “four qualities” and the previous “four powers” is not clear, although it is evident that the power of repulsion and that of inclination correspond to the heretical qualities and the animal qualities respectively (Cf. Ibn, 3, 10 (K. Qalib, Bayan inaw al-sabir al-Qalib)).

(87) See above, note 86 and also Ibl, III, 274 (K. Dhaman al-dini, Bayan ma’al al-dini).


(90) Ibl means to regard oneself superior to others, and therefore there can be no kib 1f there is only one person in the world (Ibl, 3, 354-55 (K. Dhaman al-kib, shir 1, Bayan al-tariq-1)). On the other hand, ‘ibl means to regard oneself as great without regard to others. Hence, when used in relation to God, it means to regard oneself as so great that he or she deserves the divine favors or he or she is safe from the designs (makul) of God (Ibl, 3, 360 (K. Dhaman al-kib, shir 2, Bayan inaw al-‘ibl)).

(91) Ibl, III, 198 (K. Dhaman al-dini, Bayan inaw al-dini).

(92) It is, however, much too much to say that “this concept [of the world] is a pure subjective one” and therefore the concept of the Hereafter “mean merely two different ideas of our interior,” as J. Obermann says (Der philosophische und religiöse Subjektivismus Ghazalis, 137). To support his thesis, Obermann quotes the following passage: fa-naqdi dayla-ka wo-albirha-ka shirin uun bolaan min-awal qalib-ka... (Ibl, III, 214 (K. Dhaman al-dini, Bayan inaw al-dini)). This should be interpreted as meaning “your relationship to the world” rather than the world itself. A man’s relation to the world terminates when he dies and departs from the world. But the world itself remains until “its appointed time in the Book” (See Ibl, 4, 304 (Ghazali, Innovations, 24-25)). As for the Hereafter, too, Ghazali is not “subjectivist” as to reduce all the eschatological events to “Verfassung ansteuer in nature,” as we have seen when we discussed his notion of ‘adhe (above, p. 41).

(93) Ibl, 4, 60 (K. Ilm, 66) and others.


(96) Ibl, IV, 9 (K. Tawsh, rukn 1, Bayan ana-wajid al-tasawwif...)

(97) Ibl, IV, 62 (K. Sarih, shir 1, Bayan inaw al-sabir).

(98) Ibl, IV, 73 (K. Sarih, shir 1, Bayan inaw al-dini).

(99) Ibl, IV, 25 (K. Qalib, Bayan tasallul al-shaytan).

(100) Ibl, IV, 5, 6 (K. Qalib, Bayan jamiul al-Qalib).

(101) Ibl, III, 19 (K. Qalib, Bayan tafsi al-dini...).

(102) Ibl, III, 18 (Ihid); 44, 73 (K. Sarih, shir 1, Bayan inaw al-dini).

(103) Ibl, III, 73, 74 (K. Dhaman al-nafs, Bayan shurut al-’ibl).


(105) Ibl

(106) Ibl

(107) Ibl, III, 351 (K. Dhaman al-kib, shir 1, Bayan al-tariq-1).


(109) Eye-service, according to Ghazali, means to seek to gain admiration by means of
devotional acts, while fa'awa (jihād) does so by means of other than devotional acts (Ibda', III, 390 [K. Dhamm al-jihād, surāf 2]). See also M. Smith, An Early Mystic of Baghdad (London, 1935), 129-49.

(110) Ibda', III, 303 (K. Dhamm al-jihād, shair 2, Bayda dawā' al-riyāj).

(111) Ibda', III, 357-58 (K. Dhamm al-khākh, shair 1, Bayda al-taṣāfi fi mu`ājāsh al-khākh...).

(112) Ibda', IV, 295 (K. Mahabbah, Bayda amr al-mustalahq...).

(113) This might be called a reversed idhālā — the idhālā still accompanied by efforts (tukulif). After lengthy practice, however, it will turn into the real idhālā.

Chapter III

DHIKR AND DU‘Á’ IN GHAZALI’S THOUGHT

1. Dhikr

The usage of the term dhikr in Ghazali’s writing ranges widely from rather general to highly technical explanations. We may be able to categorize these usages in several groups. Before going into detail, however, it is necessary to make a distinction between the two major types of dhikr in his thought, as well as in the Qur‘ān: mental (dhikr bi‘l-qalb) and vocal (dhikr bi‘l-lisan). Both play distinct, but interrelated roles in his system of thought. Thus we shall discuss each aspect separately.

In Ghazali’s thought, the problem of the mental dhikr ("remembrance," "recollection" or "recollectedness") is naturally vital and basic. In this category, dhikr means, first of all, a laborious effort to turn our thought, mind and concern toward God and the Hereafter. It thus aims to reverse the tide of our whole character and to turn our central concern from this world, with which we have been familiar, to the Hereafter with which we have so far no acquaintance.

As a matter of course, this task is difficult, especially in the beginning. Since our concern is still with this world, we easily slip back into heedlessness (ghaffālah) of God and Satanic insinuation creeps in. Satan incessantly assaults us during this whole process.

On the other hand, as long as we are occupied with dhikr (remembrance) of God, there is little chance for Satanic temptation. In this sense, dhikr of God is the safest refuge from this Satanic insinuation. Obviously the best thing is to try to continue this remembrance of God. However, again, this is a difficult task.