in the field of geography. He passes for a good Muslim, but he was an admirer of that very independent Faylasûf, Ibn-Zakariyyâ'Râzî.

Falsafah and the problem of spiritual experience: Ibn-Sînâ

The ending of the High Caliphal state was perhaps more significant for the more strictly 'philosophical' side of Falsafah, in which the total sense of the cosmos and of the place of human beings in it was being assessed, than for more positive scientific inquiries. Here also the great synthesis of al-Fârâbî made it more possible to see where the gaps were. But the times themselves raised new questions. In an age when the caliphal state no longer seemed to offer the option of a philosophically ordered society, and when a Sharî'ah-minded Islam was enforcing its norms on all, the personal and social mission of Falsafah had to be envisaged anew, and in particular its relation to the ruling popular religion.

The most intriguing attempt at this, done in the years following 983 CE, was that of the Ikhwân al-Safâ', the 'Pure Brethren'. They formed a fellowship of men at Basrah and probably another at Baghdad, dedicated to enlightening and spiritually purifying themselves and to propagating their ideas in the various towns of Islamdom, quietly winning as much of the population as possible to ways of truth and purity and so raising the level of society. They produced an encyclopedia of the sciences of rationalistic Philosophia as a handbook for this purpose. This encyclopedia, which is all that really remains of the association, shows that they were associated with the Bâtiniyyah among the Shî'îs. (If it is true that the Faylasûf Abû-Sulaymân al-Sijistânî was one of the brethren, as we are told, then they did not insist exclusively on a Bâtinî approach.) The encyclopedia looks to an imâmate that should represent divine cosmic rationality among mankind, and delights in finding hidden symbolisms in Qur'ân and Sharî'ah. But its teaching was more explicitly Falsafah than that of the great Ismâ'îlî dâ'îs in Egypt, whose political leadership the brethren, or some of them, may have respected. It presented in an essentially independent way, without precommitment to any sectarian organization, the myth of the microcosmic return (more or less as it had been developed among the neo-Platonists, but Islamicized): that is, the idea that the world in all its complexity emanated from the ultimate One, which was expressed in cosmic Reason; and that all this complexity was resumed in human beings as microcosms, who by purifying their individual reasoning powers could reascend in intellectual contemplation to the original One.

The Ikhwân al-Safâ' suggest an exciting vista. To the extent that the group represented Ismâ'îlî inspiration, it apparently meant a new departure in Ismâ'îlî idealism. They clearly had more than personal aims: they wanted to leaven Muslim society in a new way by transforming the lives of individuals. What was distinctive in their effort was the idea of mutual enlighten-

ment and support in little groups of studious friends everywhere, evidently without insistence on doctrinaire uniformity. Nothing much seems to have come of this project. The encyclopedia did become very popular, and continued so till the end of Islamicate civilization, popularizing one aspect of Falsafah culture. But even it did not lead into further intellectual or spiritual developments. It was not intellectually well disciplined. There was little trace of the work of al-Fârâbî here; the ideas mostly derived from a wide range of Hellenistic schools, without rigorous integration. Hence the problems raised were not sharply posed.

The Ikhwân al-Safâ' point up, by contrast, the strength of the work of the greatest Philosopher of the time, Abû-'Alî Ibn-Sînâ (called, in Latin, Avicenna; 980-1037), during whose childhood they were at work. Ibn-Sînâ did build upon al-Fârâbî (and upon Aristotle as al-Fârâbî had made him known). In doing so, he also found that in the post-High Caliphal age, Falsafah was not accounting for political and social, and even personal, reality unless it made sense more explicitly than had al-Fârâbî (his chosen guide to Aristotle) of *religion*—in particular of the Sharî'ah; and then of the religious experience which went with it. But he rejected the Bâtinî path which had interested his family. And his work proved capable of opening up great new intellectual resources—though not of transforming society.

Ibn-Sînâ was born near Bukhârâ (in a Shî'î family of officials), and learned all he could as a youth in the Sâmânî court libraries. He tells us that by the age of eighteen he had devoured libraries in his reading and had acquired all the book-learning he was to have, at least in the various disciplines of Falsafah. He was already practicing medicine with success. He made a point of entering the service of munificent courts, but he did not want to go to Ghaznah, and when al-Bîrûnî and others were taken off by Mahmûd, Ibn-Sînâ took refuge from Mahmûd's importunities at ever more distant courts in western Iran. There he became vizier for the most successful of the later Bûyid rulers, going with him on his campaigns. In the midst of all this, he found time to compose both numerous small treatises and two great encyclopedic works in his two favourite fields, medicine and metaphysics.

Al-Fârâbî had attempted to account for Islamic revelation and its Sharî'ah law in rationalistic terms, yet like al-Râzî he was still relatively independent of Islam as an intellectual force. With time, such aloofness became less feasible. In his metaphysics, Ibn-Sînâ was the harbinger of a Falsafah that would be more closely integrated with the Islamic tradition as such. Acknowledging the importance of the Sharî'ah as it had been developed, he took far more pains than had al-Fârâbî to justify not merely the general principle of the need for a prophetic legislator but in particular the revealed legislation ascribed to Muhammad. He expounded elaborately the social usefulness of the various Shar'î rules for the masses and even for the élite—with the understanding, in the latter case, that the 'philosopher' as sage could dispense with details for overriding reasons. Thus he defended the

usefulness of ṣalât worship as a discipline of the attention even for the 'philosopher', but he allowed himself wine on the ground that he found it helpful and knew how to avoid excess—the danger of which among the masses had been the ground for the Prophetic ban of it.

But he was also concerned with the psychology of revelation itself. Al-Fârâbî had left prophecy to the imaginative faculty, which rationalistic Philosophers did not take very seriously as compared to the rational. Ibn-Sînâ presented an analysis in which being a prophet would seem to pre-suppose being an ideal 'philosopher' too and having even fuller access to truth than the best 'philosopher' who remained on the level of discursive reasoning. He came to this by way of accounting for the mystical experience of the Ṣûfîs, with whose spiritual experience he had to come to terms in any case. Making use of the neo-Platonist system of logico-rational emanations from the One down to the world of compound beings, he explained that it was possible for the soul to have immediate intuitions of the cosmic Active Intellect governing events of this world, more immediate than those percep-tions to be gained by deductive demonstration. The evidence, in effect, was the ability of Ṣûfîs to arrive at certain insights in which they got beyond conventional presuppositions and came to what had to be admitted was a philosophic point of view without the use of syllogism and rational category. These intuitions could be translated into images by the imaginative faculty, and so presented to others by either Ṣûfîs or prophets. The prophet was he who was perfected in this way in the highest degree.

In the course of this analysis, Ibn-Sînâ was led to invoke a psychology that proved congenial to later Ṣûfîs themselves. He asserted that the human mind was not reasonable simply by participation in the universal Active Intellect, as al-Fârâbî had held; that is, by its effective recognition of the rational universals underlying all transient appearances, a recognition which 'actualized' the potential intellect in each individual. Ibn-Sînâ insisted that the potential intellect in each individual was a distinct individual entity; it was immaterial and hence rational and indestructible, no matter how inadequately it had been 'actualized'. He supported this thinking in two ways. He cited such phenomena as autosuggestion and hypnotism and interpreted them as showing the direct action of the soul on its own body and on others, rather than as showing the intervention of disembodied spirits, as some in the Hellenic tradition had done; and he made unprecedentedly persistent use of the principle that distinguishable concepts must answer to distinguishable entities—a principle implicit in the faith of the Hellenic Philosophic tradition that human reason must find its analogue and its fulfillment in cosmic harmonies. By means of such practical evidence and of such normative principles, he established the independence of the soul from the body as a separate substance—differing here not only from Aristotle but also from Plotinus. This principle allowed for an individual survival after death (as against merely a general 'survival' in the ever-present Active

Intellect) and permitted an otherwise essentially Aristotelian system to accommodate itself to the Muslim (and Platonic) doctrines of the afterlife by spiritualizing it. But it also helped more speculative Ṣûfîs to make more sense of their own experiences of a self which remained their own distinct self and yet was somehow beyond the world of time-and-space limitations.

Such an approach was supported with a comprehensive reinterpretation of every relevant point in the Philosophic system, from the process of intellec-tion to the nature of existence. The reinterpretation was focused in the doctrine of God. God was made to remain a simple being, as was required by rationalistic Philosophy; yet that being was assigned traits more consistent with an actual object of human worship. A careful analysis of the primary divine attributes showed that, if one used the proper logical distinctions, they could all be retained as identical with the divine essence (as Necessary Being). And it could even be shown that the ultimate simple God of universal rationality could be expected to 'know' not merely universal essences as potentialities in His rationality (as Philosophers had generally supposed), but even particular individuals or events—though only 'in a universal way', as a particular eclipse must be 'known' implicitly if one knows all the celestial essences and their possibilities of combination and interaction. It was in pursuit of such analyses that Ibn-Sînâ developed his complex doctrine of existence (wujûd), set over against essence. Taking Aristotle's logical distinc-tion between what a thing is and the fact that it is, he assigned the distinction an ontological role: existence is something superadded to an essence, by which it can be asserted. The import of this ontological role emerges strikingly in a derivative distinction, that between necessary and merely possible existence, which for Ibn-Sînâ marks the difference between God and the creation; for by making God's existence be of a radically different sort than any other, this distinction sets God off as more than merely one point in the total system of nature, as He can seem to be for Aristotle.

The most impressive achievement of Ibn-Sînâ was to make the system of Aristotle more serviceable both for the understanding and for the disciplining of religious experience. But it seems to me that this was not so much by way of adapting it to Islam, as by way of making use of the metaphysically solid work of Aristotle to support the life-orientational dimension of the Philo-sophic tradition itself—the religiousness in it that had already been promi-nent in Socrates and Plato and that was less congenial to Aristotle. He was doing more soundly what the sort of Philosophers that the Ikhwân al-Ṣafâ were following had done less soundly for want of an adequate reckoning with Aristotle. He did this, in part by invoking some of the religious values of the Abrahamic prophetic tradition as represented in Islam, and notably its stress on divine transcendence. To this degree, his was a real synthesis between the two life-orientational traditions, in both of which he seriously participated. But the Philosophic life-orientation tradition remained pri-mary: he continued to find ultimacy rather in the rational harmonies of a

universal nature taken as normative than in the challenging historical events the Abrahamic communities took as revelatory. Thus the mission of Muhammad remained for him primarily a political event, wfth little ultimately orientational significance for the true 'philosopher'; and he denied any future moment of bodily resurrection—save in his works ior tne general public, where belief in such resurrection was recommended only as a point of 'faith', that is, of religious allegiance. Most of his adaptation to Islam, in fact, continued to be just what was called for when one envisaged Islam as a legitimate political and social order.

Thus Ibn-Sînâ went further than al-Fârâbî in recognizing the institutional religious tradition in two ways: by granting a somewhat more dignified role to the Islamic revelation in particular; and by allowing more philosophical space to the sense of ultimate relation between person and cosmos which marks religious traditions generally—including the more religious aspects of the Philosophic tradition. Accordingly, Ibn-Sînâ's philosophy, unlike al-Fârâbî's, became the starting point for schools of speculation in which the values associated with Ṣûfî mystical experience were primary. The Ṣûfî study of the unconscious self eventually came to presuppose the terminology of Ibn-Sînâ.[8]

Later, Ibn-Sînâ became a bone of contention. The strictest Peripatetics, notably Ibn-Rushd, quarrelled with him on points of logic as of metaphysics, preferring to hold by al-Fârâbî.[9] But not only the Ṣûfîs but also many later men of kalâm disputation founded their philosophy upon him, and he became the starting point of the greater part of later Islamicate rational speculation. The attitude among later Ṣûfîs to Ibn-Sînâ's work is summed up in a surely apocryphal anecdote: Ibn-Sînâ and a great Ṣûfî met and talked together for a long time; when they emerged, Ibn-Sînâ reported of the conversation, 'All that I know, he sees'; and the Ṣûfî reported, 'All that I see, he knows'. To what extent Ibn-Sînâ himself would have welcomed the constructions later put on his work by the more mystically inclined is not clear.[10]

[8] The later commentators of Ibn-Sînâ interpreted him, accordingly, in Ṣûfî terms. It is not entirely clear how far this was justified by Ibn-Sînâ's own thought. Henry Corbin, in *Avicenne et le récit visionnaire*, vol. i (Tehran, 1954), maintains the Ṣûfî tradition. Anne-Marie Goichon, in *Le récit de Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓân commenté par les textes d'Avicenne* (Paris, 1959), contradicts him. At least on the level of the immediate meaning of the story in question, Goichon seems to have the better of the argument in insisting that it can be most unequivocally understood as remaining strictly within the Aristotelian tradition of Falsafah as enlarged by Ibn-Sînâ himself.

[9] S. M. Stern gives an illuminating example of this Faylasûfs' dislike of Ibn-Sînâ in the physician (and travel writer) 'Abd-al-Laṭîf: 'A Collection of Treatises by 'Abd al-Laṭîf al-Baghdâdî', *Islamic Studies*, i (Karachi, 1962), 53–70. (Cf. for the same point, in the same journal, D. M. Dunlop, 'Averroës (Ibn Rushd) on the Modality of Propositions', pp. 23–34.)

[10] The 'mashriqiyyah' wisdom, which Ibn-Sînâ refers to in some logical or metaphysical connections but does not clearly expound, seems to be a key to part of this question. (The word is sometimes misrendered 'Oriental' philosophy, as if Ibn-Sînâ shared the notion that Greece was somehow 'Occidental' and Iran 'Oriental' and this should be reflected in philosophy.) The point at issue is his attitude to mysticism. It has been

The kalâm of the madrasahs: triumph and inanition

During the formative generations of the Earlier Middle Period, kalâm, as a speculative method, only gradually won through to independent maturity, and still more gradually won the respect of many Sharî'ah-minded 'ulamâ'. As it matured, its relation to Falsafah metaphysics became its great problem. The original Mu'tazilî school of kalâm continued to be represented both among Jamâ'î-Sunnîs and especially among Twelver Shî'îs, and made progress even outside Islâm: many Jewish scholars professed a kalâm that was Mu'tazilî in substance. But the more creative labour was done in the schools of al-Ash'arî (associated with the Shâfi'î legal madhhab) and al-Mâturîdî (associated with the Ḥanafî). The Ḥanbalî and Ẓâhirî and (at first) Mâlikî scholars tended to stay aloof.[11]

It was a Mâlikî qâḍî, however, al-Bâqillânî (d. 1013), who did the most to popularize the Ash'arî system in the Fertile Crescent. He set forth with

extensively debated whether the term means 'eastern', in the sense of Khurâsân or else Jundaysâbûr against Baghdad, or 'illuminative'. In the former case, it would refer merely to certain practices and logical teachings on which Peripatetic schools differed; in the latter case, it could refer to the mystical implications of certain ontological points which were undeniably included in its scope anyway. Cf. Carlo Nallino, 'Filosofia "orientale" od "illuminativa" d'Avicenna', *Rivista di Studi Orientali*, 10 (1923–25), 433–67; Louis Gardet, *La pensée religieuse d'Avicenne* (Paris, 1951), p. 23; A. M. Goichon, *Le récit de Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓân*, cited above; and Henry Corbin, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques de Shihabaddin Yahya Sohrawardi*, i (Tehran and Paris, 1952), Prolégomènes. Possibly Ibn-Sînâ intended a pun. Ibn-Sînâ's disciples certainly took it in the sense of 'illuminative', and supposed that he intended a mystical implication; but this may not have been in his mind.

The rendering with 'orient', which Henry Corbin likes, is legitimate only if 'orient' is remembered clearly to refer to the sunrise, taken metaphorically—not to any geographical sector of mankind. If, later, Suhravardî took over the same notion and linked it especially to Iran, this resulted simply from the chance that he felt that the Iranian tradition—not some generalized 'East'—happened to expound the nature of illumination.

[11] George Makdisi, 'Ash'arî and the Ash'arites in Islamic Religious History', *Studia Islamica*, 18 (1962), and subsequent issues notes that the usual notion that Ash'arism became 'orthodox' (whatever that may mean) at an early date is based on a small number of Syrian and Egyptian Ash'arî writers of the Later Middle Period, who were in fact trying to maintain a thesis rather than simply presenting a well-known fact. His excellent and important article helps clarify the way in which scholars have been misled by relying on a particular local Sunnî Arab tradition for scholarly understanding of what Islam was and was not. (It also makes it less necessary to rely on such amateur efforts as Asad Ṭalas, *L'enseignement chez les Arabes: la madrasa nizamiyya et son histoire* [Paris, 1939], filled with errors.)

Unfortunately, Makdisi does not himself altogether escape the effects of the scholarly pattern which he has helped to show the pitfalls in. He seems still to accept the conventional image of Islam as being from the start Jamâ'î-Sunnî and Sharî'ah-minded, its tradition being essentially the tradition of the ḥadîth; only introducing the new point that Ash'arî kalâm was long not accepted among most of the ḥadîth-minded 'ulamâ'—at least in Syria and Egypt (he does not go much further afield) well into the Later Middle Period. His larger misconception is reflected in, and perhaps was reinforced by, his use of the term 'Tradition' for a ḥadîth report. The inconveniences of such a notion of 'traditionalism' are analyzed in the section on usage in Islamics studies in the Introduction in volume i.

comprehensive clarity such doctrines as atomic creation as conceived by the school. Perhaps his popularity resulted in part from his bold application of reasoning to the revelatory events as unique events. The Ash'arîs were developing a close analysis of just what sorts of reports of such events could be relied on: how widespread a report must be, for instance, for it to be accepted without a detailed authentication of each of the alleged witnesses. The revelatory quality of the events themselves, once properly evidenced, also needed study. Al-Bâqillânî is especially associated with the doctrine of evidentiary miracles, which he saw as a practical indication of prophethood even though they had no metaphysical standing.

In particular, he stressed the special importance of the inimitable Qur'ân—whose literary style, Muslims believed, was such that no one else could produce a work that could properly compare with it—as the chief evidentiary miracle of Muḥammad. As a revelatory fact it had the unique status not only of being the undeniable residuum of what had happened in the Ḥijâz, but of being perpetually accessible. By way of a detailed analysis of its style, he tried to show what it is makes the Qur'ân humanly compelling as a concrete phenomenon.

But al-Bâqillânî's work was oriented to polemic within the tradition of kalâm, without serious care to challenge minds outside the tradition. It sometimes seems naïve: he seems even to have insisted, countering the Ash'arîs' opponents' intolerance with its equivalent, that he who believed for no good reason was no sound believer; that therefore those who did not accept (Ash'arî) kalâm were not even true Muslims. This point some Ash'arîs tried to show by arguing that just as correct proofs of a thesis showed that the thesis itself was correct, so false proofs of a thesis entailed the falseness of the thesis itself; hence the correct proofs of orthodox positions, which the Ash'arîs thought they had found, were as important to admit as the original positions. This specious argument seems to have been set aside by the time of Imâm-al-Ḥaramayn Juvaynî (1028–1085), who used subtler methods than his earlier predecessors. His purpose was still polemic within the tradition, and he continued to present the atomistic doctrine and all that was associated with it; but he did so in a more rationalistically philosophic spirit. There is nothing naïve about his work. Inevitably, it dominated the Ash'arî school of his time. Yet possibly it fulfilled its task less appropriately than did the work of some earlier kalâm scholars.

Juvaynî inherited the religious questions he occupied himself with and even the basic viewpoints that he publicly represented. His father, originally from Juvayn, had become head of the Shâfi'î legal madhhab in Nîshâpûr in Khurâsân; when he died, the son succeeded him in his teaching post at the madrasah, though he was only eighteen at the time—clearly, his unusual gifts were already apparent. He had also studied with an Ash'arî teacher. A recognized scholar from the beginning, Juvaynî did his chief work in clarifying the basic principles of his two traditions—Shâfi'î fiqh (which he

defended against other madhhabs) and Ash'arî kalâm. But at least in kalâm, his outstanding gifts allowed him to carry forward the inherited tasks to what could seem a point of completion.

At the same time, he witnessed the last major effort of the Ḥadîth folk to suppress kalâm disputation altogether. The Seljukid Ṭoghril-beg's vizier, al-Kundurî, ordered that all Mu'tazilî teaching (in which he included other kalâm as well) cease, and Juvaynî had to leave home; but in Mecca and Medina, where he took refuge, he gained such a name—though still in his twenties—that his followers subsequently called him 'imâm of the two holy cities', Imâm-al-Ḥaramayn. When Niẓâmulmulk came to power as Alp-Arslân's vizier, however, Juvaynî and the other scholars of kalâm were without difficulty restored to favour; only in a few places, notably Baghdad, did Ḥadîthî resistance against them remain effective.

In Juvaynî's work in kalâm, two traits stand out. If one contrasts Juvaynî's work with earlier work—with the writings ascribed to al-Ash'arî himself, for instance, or even with later pieces—one is struck with the degree of sophisticated detail to which the disputation on every controverted point had been refined. But this refinement and precision express, in turn, a second trait: an awareness of the intellectual standards in logic and metaphysics maintained by the Faylasûfs. Though he was not arguing expressly with them, yet their categories were everywhere present.

Juvaynî recognized, for instance, that the old Ash'arî attempt to maintain God's omnipotence was less than satisfactory by rationalistic standards. It could be objected to their doctrine of kasb (that humans morally 'acquired' their good and bad works even though God was the sole cause of them), that it was unintelligible; and once it was no longer acceptable just to state whatever could be deduced from revealing facts, whether it could be seen to fit into a harmonious system or not, then that a point was unintelligible meant that it could not be regarded as proven. This Juvaynî acknowledged. His solution was to try to define what he could call a middle position between sheer determinacy and indeterminate free will, in which the words answered to the demands of the Ḥadîthî insistence that only God could really make or do anything, while the conditions appended to them virtually satisfied the Mu'tazilî insistence that people could not be responsible for what they could not choose to avoid.

Often what seems to be happening in his work (as his doctrine of kasb) is a return in substance to the early, more common-sense positions of kalâm, those of the Mu'tazilîs before the rise of Ḥadîthî piety forced a modification. For instance, in asserting the divine attributes (such as God's eternity), Juvaynî insisted that God does have them (as the Ḥadîthîs said)—they are not merely modes of his being, as for the Mu'tazilîs; yet they are not based on anything added to his being: which comes to the same. (He acknowledged rather apologetically that he had deviated here from earlier Ash'arîs.) And Juvaynî even allowed for metaphorical understanding of some attributes,

when linguistic usage could be found in support, though far less readily than did the Mu'tazilîs.[12]

But actually Juvaynî had added something to the Mu'tazilîs' stance. If one compares Juvaynî's doctrine with Ibn-Sînâ's on the same point, one finds a rather similar concern with finding formulations that will define an effectively worshipable God without sacrificing what seemed necessary—for a rationalist—to define His transcendence. One can suppose a sequence of intellectual needs: that for the earlier Mu'tazilîs, still consciously carriers of the Qur'ânic mission to a conquered world, the God of worship needed no closer definition, and what was called for was simply a defence of the essentials of Islamic monotheism; and then for the Ḥadîth folk, for whom certain traits of that monotheism were more nuanced, God's transcendence was sufficiently guaranteed by insisting on His incomprehensibility; whereas for the more rationalistically inclined, once the issues had been well posed, the transcendence which a monotheistic sense of the numinous called for had to be reconciled with the ultimate rational harmonies a rationalist tried to see in the cosmos. In such a task, the Faylasûfs inevitably posed the most sophisticated standards then available. Juvaynî's concern with them is illustrated by his interest in the three-term Aristotelian logical syllogism, though in practice he usually used the more convenient two-term form of argument that had been customary in kalâm, in which some of the logic was left implicit.[13] He established the subsequent form of an Ash'arî treatise by introducing serious prolegomena on the nature of abstract reasoning.

I have the impression that in the very moment of its triumph, in the act of perfecting its own tradition, the Ash'arî kalâm was near losing sight of its very purpose: the rational defence of a non-rationalistic kerygmatic position, in which key individual events are held to have revealed more about what life and its commitments mean than can any universal uniformities of nature. Juvaynî could no longer understand, for instance, why the doctrine of 'commanding the right and forbidding the wrong' should ever have been given the special treatment the Mu'tazilîs and earlier Ash'arîs had given it as a primary doctrine alongside the unity of God and the prophethood of Muḥammad. For them, it had dealt with the historical commitment of the

[12] The new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* omits mention of a modest and not very perceptive, but useful, opuscule on Juvaynî, Helmut Klopper, *Das Dogma des Imân al-Haramain al-Djuwainî und sein Werk al-'Aqîdat an-Niẓâmîya* (Wiesbaden, 1958), including a translation of the latter.

[13] He rarely used the syllogism form itself; it was left to Ghazâlî to take advantage of its logical efficiency (see W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: The Struggle and Achievement of al-Ghazâlî* [Edinburgh University Press, 1963]). Ibn-Khaldûn contrasted the kalâm of the earlier period as the 'old way' to the kalâm of the flowering of the Earlier Middle Period as the 'new way' (for he disliked seeing Falsafah diluted with kalâm, and preferred the kalâm left relatively naïve if there must be kalâm at all) and he has been followed by modern scholars. For an analysis of what is involved, so far as we know it (for the work of the older kalâm is largely lost), see Louis Gardet and M.-M. Anawati, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane* (Paris, 1948), pp. 72–76.

faithful; but for Juvaynî, typically of his time, it seemed to deserve no more than a minor place among the other rules of fiqh, covering the ways one Muslim should admonish another on an everyday basis. A viewpoint was beginning to be adopted—and not only by Juvaynî—that could receive its fullest and freest expression only in Falsafah or its equivalent. To be sure, the revelatory value of events that can only be 'heard about', not reasoned out from recurrent experience, was still given exclusive credit. But even the proofs offered for prophethood were touched with a rationalistic spirit.

We may say that from the time of the Ḥadîth folk on, with their cautious view of Muslim political responsibilities, the kerygmatic force of Sharî'ah-minded piety had been being reduced in favour of a greater degree of ritualistic-minded piety: that is, Muslims were more inclined to articulate the 'paradigm-tracing' piety into an enduring, almost natural cosmos, in which the patterns of proper Shar'î life into an eternal datum almost as much as it was a challenging event. Such a mood could call for a timelessly rationalistic outlook. But there may have been also a more directly intellectual reason for the shift.

Without a more general doctrine of history as such—that is, without a general form for reasoning effectively about events as morally committing rather than as merely exemplifying natural possibilities—any more satisfactory method of reasoning expressly appropriate to the problems of prophethood was presumably out of the question. If such methods can ever be found, one may speculate that they could not have been expected in an agrarianate-level society anyway. There, the strong kerygmatic tone of Islamic thinking, in which certain historical events were explicitly vested with ultimate values, had issued in communalism, in which the Sharî'ah was reinforced by way of exclusive group loyalties—so that the Qur'ânic event became intellectually more isolated even than in the Qur'ân itself, where it appeared as one in a long chain of revelatory events. No general doctrine of meaningful historical events could arise in such a context. That is, there could be no pattern of rational analysis to rival the refined Philosophic doctrine of nature. Hence the more the kalâm was rationally elaborated, the more it came into competition with Falsafah, and the more it could seem threatened with futility in such a competition. Henceforth in all the great figures in kalâm disputation one can see clearly what was only implicit in Juvaynî: to the extent that they took kalâm seriously at all, it was in the form of modifying the conclusions of Falsafah so as to bring its analyses into accord with Islamic community loyalties.[14]

[14] For those who cast the history of Islamicate civilization into the form 'what went wrong with Islam?', there have been two answers on the level of intellectual history: that Muslims failed to give full effect to the Greek heritage, or that they allowed the Greek heritage to inhibit unduly their own more concrete and historically-minded (kerygmatic) heritage. I am not, here, siding with those few who take the second view, of course; I am not clear that anything more did go wrong with Islam than with any other tradition. I am only trying to state one problem that arose. As we shall see, the resolution of this crisis represented by Ghazâlî, though it produced its own problems as all resolutions do, cannot be regarded as marking an intellectual failure of Islamicate civilization.

Ghazâlî's re-evaluation of the speculative traditions: kalâm and Falsafah

It was only with Juvaynî's disciple, Abû-Ḥâmid Muḥammad Ghazâlî (1058–1111), that the kalâm came to make full use of the resources of Falsafah and was able to meet it on its own terms. But it was also with Ghazâlî that it received its rudest discounting as a means to truth. For Ghazâlî, the crisis in kalâm finally led beyond kalâm to a new approach to religion generally, on both personal and social levels.

Abû-Ḥâmid Ghazâlî and his brother Aḥmad (almost equally famous as a Ṣûfî) were born at a village near Ṭûs in Khurâsân and were supported through their schooling by a small bequest left in trust by their father, whose brother (or uncle) was already established in the city as a scholar. Both boys had outstanding minds, and Abû-Ḥâmid particularly rose fast. At about thirty-three years of age, in 1091, the aged Niẓâmulmulk made him director of his Niẓâmiyyah madrasah at Baghdad. There, as a teacher of fiqh law as well as of kalâm, he won great prestige even with quite Sharî'ah-minded men. His innovations in kalâm itself were incisive.

But he became personally dissatisfied with his very acceptable expositions. At length he found himself crippled by a persistent crisis of personal doubts, which coincided with but can hardly be reduced to a political crisis at Baghdad among Ghazâlî's friends after Niẓâmulmulk's assassination. Suddenly he left his post at the Niẓâmiyyah madrasah (1095) and fled his public, retiring secretly to Damascus and Jerusalem. (He even left his family behind, providing for them by way of public waqfs.) Only years later did he re-emerge, with a sense of personal mission, to teach publicly. Therewith he attempted, and carried through, a more fundamental revision of the foundations of Islamic thinking than a mere sprucing up of kalâm. Such was his prestige that his opinions, fitting in well enough with the trend of the times to be sure, carried great weight; and while the development that followed was not all due to his work, it may be understood through an analysis of his line of thought.

Ghazâlî wrote a schematic little book in which he summarized the attitude he took (worked out in detail in other volumes) to each of the major traditions of life-orientational thinking in his time, *Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalâl*, the *Deliverer from Error*.[15] This was put in the form of a sketch of his own life; but it was not a straight narrative autobiography. The intimate autobiographical form was foreign to the Islamicate reticence about personal matters, and the *Deliverer* dealt, in fact, with intimate matters. Ghazâlî himself points out that he feels it impossible to describe all the living details relevant to his conclusions. The book did describe certain crucial moments in his experience. But this was done rather in the manner of the schematic

[15] *Al-Munqidh min al-dalâl*, translated by William Montgomery Watt in *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazâlî* (London, 1953); his is a better version than is an earlier one, but still more fluent than exact sometimes.

autobiographies popular among those Ismâ'îlîs whom he wrote so many works to refute, as a dynamic statement of faith in terms of the facts of his own life.

The work began by presenting the intellectual helplessness of the human condition in itself. He described how earlier in his life he came to doubt not only all religious teaching, but even all possibility of dependable knowledge of any kind. He had overcome the problem for a time but then, at his personal crisis, he doubted the validity of all that he was teaching of religious lore; he could be healed only by accepting a moral decision to withdraw and lay new bases for his life through Ṣûfî practices. The classical 'ulamâ' scholars, whether exponents simply of ḥadîth and fiqh or exponents of kalâm as well, had discussed proper belief as if (once it was correctly established) it were simply a duty which a good man accepted and a bad man rejected. Ghazâlî made it clear that this is not a matter of simple choice; doubt is beyond a person's deliberate control, and sound thinking is like sound health—a state of being rather than an act of will.

In particular, a state of total doubt, where one thinks about whether one can or cannot think, is existentially not so much an error in logic (which it is) as a mental disease. If it has blocked one, one must be restored by receiving fresh vitality from God, rather than by a syllogism. But even less drastic states of doubt, if at all radical, require more than purely intellectual instruments for their healing. When doubt and error arise in religion, they must be looked on as diseases to be cured rather than just as sins to be condemned. The various available intellectual paths must be explored not merely for their informative value but as possible means of curing people of error. Hence, in principle, the Sharî'ah-minded objection to kalâm simply as an intellectual luxury cannot stand; the question becomes whether kalâm can cure anyone of error. It was on this basis that Ghazâlî depreciated kalâm.

Ghazâlî continued to be a major exponent of kalâm, but he ultimately took, in the *Deliverer*, an attitude toward it that departed minimally from the feeling about it of such Ḥadîth folk as Ibn-Ḥanbal (whom indeed he made a point of citing favourably in a relevant context). He denied that it led to any positive truth in itself. It was no use at all to the ordinary person whose faith was still sound (and such a person should be protected from exposure to its doubt-engendering argumentation). It was of use only with those who had come to doubt the truth and adopt errors that must be corrected. And, even as a corrective of errors, its function was limited. Its use was to confute various more or less trivial heresies, by showing that they are untenable on their own grounds; accordingly, it started from any assumptions admitted by the heretics, without needing to question whether such assumptions be sound or not. But this made it appropriate only to such doubters as had not pushed their doubt in a truly philosophic direction. Kalâm was useless for the truly independent mind. Thus Ghazâlî assured kalâm a necessary but not very honourable niche in Islam. (Al-Ash'arî had

seen kalâm in a somewhat similar light, but did not draw such weighty conclusions.)

In contrast, Ghazâlî allowed Falsafah great honour and even a basic role. This was muted by his attack on the crowning glory of its system, that is its metaphysics, which he insisted was false and dangerously misleading. But he attacked its metaphysics in the name of fidelity to Falsafah itself. He insisted that the very sort of reasoning that allowed Philosophy its triumphs in the natural sphere, in mathematics and astronomy, for instance, no longer served if one turned to seeking out absolute truths beyond the natural sphere of the mind and senses; that the Faylasûfs had been unfaithful to their own principles in making the attempt. (His masterly and minutely argued work, *Tahâfut al-falâsifah*, 'The Incoherence of the Philosophers'[16] is devoted to showing that the arguments the Faylasûfs used on the level of metaphysics lack the indubitable cogency the Faylasûfs pride themselves on elsewhere; that, indeed, other equally sound arguments could lead to other positions, even orthodox Muslim ones, though they would admittedly not prove these latter either.) While rejecting Falsafah metaphysics, he held, therefore, that Muslims should accept the findings of the Falsafah sciences in their proper sphere—knowledge of nature—contrary to the attitude of many Sharî'ah-minded persons. Moreover, he went on later to apply to the Islamic tradition itself a basic principle of Falsafah, that truth must be ultimately accessible to and verifiable by any individual human consciousness; he did not, however, call the principle 'Falsafah' at that point.

Yet even so, his attitude to Falsafah was informed by the spirit of the Hadîth folk. The Hadîth folk were radically utilitarian: a man should be concerned with living and believing correctly for the sake of divine blessings in this world and salvation in the other; he should not meddle in what does not concern him, and should seek knowledge only for its use as a guide to living, not out of idle curiosity. Ghazâlî used precisely such criteria in defining the scope and value of the Falsafah sciences: they were to be cultivated so far as they are useful, but the speculation of Falsafah was not to be tolerated merely because of its beauty. And, consistently enough, if the perils in Falsafah for any given person outweighed its utility, such a person should not be permitted to study it, lest he be led astray by the tempting delusions of its metaphysics in that point which is most important of all: correct religious belief. Therefore only qualified scholars should be allowed to dip into philosophic and scientific writings.

On such a basis, the populist sentiments of the Hadîth folk were vindicated, in that Falsafah was declared dangerous because it could not be properly

[16] Translated into English by Sabih Ahmad Kamali (Pakistan Philosophical Congress Publication No. 3, Mohammad Ashraf Darr, Lahore, 1958). The bulk of it is also translated as a part of Ibn-Rushd's answer to Ghazâlî's book, *Tahâfut al-tahâfut*, 'The Incoherence of the Incoherence', translated by Simon Van den Bergh (Unesco Collection of Great Works, and E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, London, 1954).

understood by the average man, whose religion was both sufficient and of paramount importance. Yet, as in the case of kalâm, an exception was made in the condemnation, a niche was found for it. And because of the inherent consequence of Falsafah, the niche turns out to be of moment, for it implies, as the exception for kalâm did not, an élite in the midst of common mankind: not an élite in anything essential to religion, of course, but yet an intellectually privileged minority.

The debate between kalâm and Falsafah seems to end with both forms of speculation rather heavily discounted. But Ghazâlî had a broader perspective in mind than the men of kalâm had normally had. His intention was to build a comprehensive foundation for effective religious life in an age which, as he put it, had degenerated not only from the simple purity of the pristine Medina but even from the relatively high moral standards of the scholars of al-Shâfi'î's time. The new age needed a new religious awareness and commitment. This new religious life required a new intellectual basis; and in this, Falsafah was to play a larger role than Ghazâlî directly acknowledged in the *Deliverer*. Then it required a new pattern of religious teaching and guidance built upon that basis. (From Ghazâlî's viewpoint, of course, what was new in either case was merely that what could be left implicit in better times had to become explicit in his generation.)

Ghazâlî's quarrel with the Ismâ'îlîs

The *Deliverer* embodies the key points of his intellectual foundation for the new life. If kalâm gives correct answers but on a trivial foundation and if Falsafah rears a sound foundation but cannot yield correct answers to the crucial questions, the remedy for the disease of philosophic error and ultimate doubt must be sought outside either apologetic or rationalistic intellectual analyses. In the *Deliverer*, Ghazâlî suggested, in effect, a twofold solution. Ultimately, he had recourse to Sûfism.

But for ordinary persons who have had the misfortune to lose their childhood simplicity of faith, he recommended a course based upon universal human capacities and leading to historical authority. He introduced this approach through a refutation of the position of the Shî'ah, more precisely that of the Ismâ'îlî Shî'îs of his generation, who were then launching their great revolt against the whole Jamâ'î-Sunnî order of the Seljuk amîrs.

Ghazâlî's listing of the major traditions of life-orientational thinking of his time, to which the *Deliverer* is devoted, can be surprising at first sight: kalâm, Falsafah, Sûfism, and the doctrine of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs; he assures us that truth must be found among these four schools of thought or nowhere. Three of these a modern person may generalize readily enough as theology, philosophy, and mysticism; but the fourth is a single doctrine held within a single sect—and even if one takes it as symbolic of authoritarianism generally, as if that were a way of seeking truth distinct from, say, theology, one might

suppose authoritarians were to be found closer at hand, such as the Han-balîs. Other Shî'îs, even other Jamâ'î positions, to say nothing of non-Muslim religious traditions, are ignored. The prominence assigned to the Ismâ'îlîs, which reappears in many of Ghazâlî's works, has been explained as due to his dislike of authoritarianism—perhaps there was danger in attacking authoritarianism more directly, though he did directly oppose the imposition of conformity upon qualified scholars in deciding legal points. More cogently, it has been seen as a response to the urgent threat posed by the Ismâ'îlî revolt. But the confrontation with Ismâ'îlî teaching is too inti-mate, and is taken up in diverse forms too repeatedly, to be accounted for in a purely external way. He refuted the Ismâ'îlîs over and over, I think, because he found something in their position to be persuasive—persuasive on a level with the other three positions he lists.

I think what this was may become clearer if we characterize the four schools of thought as forming, in their mutual contrasts, a comprehensive schema of life-orientational possibilities. Two of the schools represent exoteric, public positions, in which the seeker takes the whole initiative and his process of thinking can be followed at will by anyone else. Kalâm was founded on dialectical argument on the basis of commitment to a historical revelation; Falsafah was founded on demonstrative argument on the basis of the timeless norms of nature. The other two schools represent esoteric, initiatory positions, in which part of the process of coming to understanding does not depend simply on the seeker and cannot be reproduced at will. The Ismâ'îlîs appealed to a privileged historical institution, the imâmate and the community that had been built around it. Like the men of kalâm, they insisted on a kerygmatic vision, but that vision was on an esoteric rather than an exoteric plane. The Ṣûfîs appealed, as mystics, to privileged individual but potentially universal awarenesses. That is, like the Faylasûfs, they appealed to present normative experience, not to any kerygmatic event; but again on an esoteric plane.

Each of the four spots in the schema (which is, of course, my schema, not Ghazâlî's) was represented by the tradition that seemed best to exemplify it. (I would assume, for instance, that for this purpose the Ḥanbalîs would appear—so far as they offered any argument at all—simply as a case of imperfect kalâm, better represented by the Ash'arîs.) Ghazâlî does not, finally, adopt one of the four positions to the exclusion of the others. Both the kerygmatic and the non-kerygmatic, both the exoteric and the esoteric have their place. What he adopts from Ismâ'îlism (without admitting as much, of course!) is elements that help show how a kerygmatic tradition can be validated on the basis of a more or less incommunicable personal experience, in which the historically revealed authority comes to be acknowledged without external proofs. Much of this viewpoint emerges directly out of the passages devoted to refuting the Ismâ'îlîs, when he argues that Muḥam-mad himself fills the role of infallible imâm; but the viewpoint is consum-

mated only in the role that he gives to the Ṣûfîs—who are assigned a function in validating a kerygmatic, historical vision as well as a more properly inward mystical role.

As it found itself losing out in the attempt to win the allegiance of the masses, Shî'ism was forced into two alternative postures: accommodation, represented especially by the Twelvers, who often tried to win tolerance from Sunnîs as a minor deviation; and defiance, expressed especially by the Ismâ'îlîs. It was in this latter posture that the Shî'î position could become intellectually most challenging. The Ismâ'îlîs seem to have developed at that time a peculiarly trenchant simplification of the all-Shî'ah doctrine of *ta'lîm*: of the necessity for exclusive religious authority in an infallible imâm. One of their leaders, Ḥasan-e Ṣabbâḥ, argued with telling subtlety a position which may be summed up thus: that for absolute truth, such as religion seemed to require, a decisive authority (an imâm) is needed, for otherwise one man's reasoned opinion is as good as another's and none is better than a guess; that this proposition itself is in fact all that reason as such can furnish us with; finally then, that, as no reasoned proof could demonstrate who the imâm was (only that he was needed), the imâm must be he who relied on no positive, external proof of his own position, but only on pointing out ex-plicitly the logically essential but usually only implicit need; and as it was the Ismâ'îlî imâm alone that made so unconditional a claim, he thus stood as his own proof—by fulfilling the need in the act of pointing it out.[17] (This was, in effect, to point to commitment to the Ismâ'îlî community itself and to its revelatory teaching. For, of course, it was not the imâm in person that anyone found, but his authorized hierarchy; and then the truth the seeker would find was not merely the solution to a logical dilemma, but a moment of existential recommitment posed in logical form.)

Ghazâlî rejected this case for ta'lîm authoritarianism, partly by pointing out its inherent elements of self-contradiction (he showed, as with kalâm and Falsafah, that they could not prove their case, even though it might not be disproved); but primarily by putting forward a slightly different inter-pretation of reason. He granted that reason shows the need for an authority beyond reason; but he maintained (in effect) that reason could not only establish the need, but could at least begin to recognize when the need had been fulfilled: that is, it could recognize the true imâm not merely through a logical impasse but through his positive qualities as a teacher. This true imâm, he claimed, was none but the Prophet himself, whose teaching would be found valid in each person's own life. The need for an authority, of course, arises from the general human need for spiritual guidance; and Ghazâlî main-tained that if a person followed closely the advice and example of the Prophet, he would find in time that the spiritual needs he had confronted were being

[17] For an analysis of this doctrine and of Jamâ'î-Sunnî responses to it see my *The Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs against the Islamic World* (The Hague, 1955).

met. In this way he could recognize a prophet, just as he could recognize a physician as a man able to meet medical needs. Indeed, the very personality of Muḥammad in its kindness and concern, as it shone through Qur'ân and ḥadîth, would prove itself. (This was to invoke a sense of Muḥammad's prophethood as comprehensive as al-Shâfi'î's, but closer in feeling to the 'Alid-loyalists' sense of heroic personality than to the legally exemplary figure posited by al-Shâfi'î.) Not unrelated to this appeal to personal experience was a secondary appeal made elsewhere to the very fortunes of the Muslim Ummah, which had come historically to be the dominant community (so it seemed) among mankind.

The Ismâ'îlîs were right (Ghazâlî admitted implicitly and sometimes explicitly) in denying that any particular proof (for instance, any miracle) could indicate the man of true authority; and they were right in pointing rather to the authority's self-validation as head of the saving historical community, which would be discovered because it answered an inner need otherwise unmet. But the truth would be recognized not by way of a single existential dilemma but by cumulative experience, which the Ismâ'îlî argument did not allow for. The experience Ghazâlî pointed to, both personal and historical (that is, derived from the history of the Islamic community as a whole), was such experience as every human being went through at least to some degree; therefore, if any person were fully honest with himself and serious in his search, he could discover who was the needed authority and, by following his teachings, be as sound in faith as any. What was needed, where doubt had sprung up, was healing grace from God, sincere endeavour on the part of the individual, and warning and encouragement by those who had come to the truth.[18]

Here the Muslim community at large played a central role (as the Ismâ'îlî community did for Ismâ'îlîs). It guaranteed the truth for those of its members who were not afflicted with doubt and so need not think for themselves. And it provided the stimulus and guidance needed by those who were seeking. (It was perhaps this appeal to the living community that made Ghazâlî—and many later Ṣûfî-influenced scholars—somewhat careless of proper isnâd documentation in citing ḥadîth reports. It was the present community, not that of Marwânî times or even Medina times, that played the role of guarantor.)

In this way, the populist spirit of the Ḥadîth folk, as well as its kerygmatic

[18] The Christian theologian Paul Tillich, in *Dynamics of Faith* (New York, 1956), gives an existential interpretation of faith which, I believe, can be helpful toward understanding what men like Ghazâlî have been confronted with and have achieved. Tillich's great merit is to have clarified certain common confusions which have led to misappreciation of some religious writers. But in particular he sketches, from a modern perspective, the essentials of how reason leads to the need for ultimate faith but awaits revelation to carry it further. Though Ghazâlî cannot be called an existentialist in the modern sense, Tillich's analysis makes more sense of Ghazâlî's position (and the Ta'lîmîs') than do some less sophisticated readings: it is not a matter of supplementing reason in its own realm but of complementing it in total experience.

vision, was maintained—for no man's religion need be essentially better than another's; and revelation and the holy community were made indispensable. But at the same time, the basic principle of the Faylasûfs, validation by universal human experience, was tacitly given its due among an élite.

Yet for the most perceptive, the cumulative experience that would verify the presence of the Prophet must be capped with an ingredient that Ghazâlî did not mention immediately in the *Deliverer*; for it need not be pointed out in advance for the general point to be made to the satisfaction of any but his most demanding readers, and these latter would perceive it themselves from what he had to say about Ṣûfism and prophecy. That is: the requisite cumulative experience must include some touch of prophesying itself. One must be able to perceive the ultimate truth, in however slight a measure, in the same way the prophets perceived it, in order to verify definitely that they were prophets—just as one must be in some slight measure oneself a physician to judge of physicians. One must know what it is, to have not merely knowledge about the truth but immediate acquaintance with it as prophets had. Otherwise, the cumulative experience would still allow only a superior sort of kalâm, merely probably in its conclusions. A further way to truth was called for, beyond kalâm, beyond Falsafah, beyond even an ordinary pursuit of an authority that would meet the needs that reason disclosed.

This lay in the Ṣûfî experience. When Ghazâlî fled from his public eminence at Baghdad into retirement at Jerusalem, his purpose was to explore more deeply the Ṣûfî way. He did not have major mystical experiences, but he had enough to convince him that there was indeed a sort of awareness that could not be reduced to Aristotelian syllogism and yet carried its own conviction; enough, indeed, to convince him that the claims of more advanced Ṣûfîs could be trusted.

For him this had the consequence that the Ṣûfîs' certification of the Prophetic message in its essentials was also to be trusted. And in Ṣûfî experience he thus saw the challenge, posed by the Ismâ'îlîs, finally met. It was through the psychological teachings of the Faylasûfs, particularly Ibn-Sînâ, that Ṣûfî experience could be so interpreted. Ghazâlî interpreted prophecy not as an unparalleled event but, in the Faylasûfs' terms, as a special natural species of awareness which merely took its most perfect form in Muḥammad. This awareness was of the same sort as the Ṣûfîs gained, though of a much higher degree. Hence Ṣûfîs were in a position to recognize full-scale prophecy when they saw it. Indeed, he went further. Just as prophetic awareness took a minor form among Ṣûfîs, so it might even be genuinely echoed in analogous experiences of ordinary people. Ghazâlî cited especially the sort of awareness that can come through dreams; which, however, Ghazâlî (like some of the Faylasûfs) saw not as revealing unconscious forces, as moderns do, but unforeseeable external events—though perhaps the practical difference is less than it might seem. Thus though the Prophet was long since dead, a touch of prophecy was always present

and accessible in the community—as it was for the Ismâ'îlîs with their imâm.

The intellectual foundation of Ghazâlî's mission, then, was an expanded appreciation of Ṣûfism. Kalâm was relegated to a secondary role; and the most valuable insights of Falsafah and even of the Ismâ'îlî doctrine of ta'lîm authority were subsumed into the re-valorized Ṣûfism, which now appeared as guarantor and interpreter of even the Shar'î aspects of the Islamic faith.

Ghazâlî recognized the dangers attendant upon Ṣûfî freedom and warned against them—the Ṣûfî, for all his special graces, must not imagine himself exempt from the common human obligations of the Sharî'ah. The inward spirit (the bâṭin) must not be allowed to displace the outer law and doctrine (the ẓâhir). But the bâṭin of the Ṣûfîs was indispensable. The Islamic faith could not ultimately stand without the continuous re-experiencing of its ultimate truths by the mystics. They did not merely know about truth on the Prophet's authority; they knew it directly, personally, within themselves. In every generation they alone could bear witness, to those willing to listen, to the truth not merely of such fragments as an individual might chance to verify in an ordinary lifetime, but of the whole of the Prophet's message. Thus the Ṣûfîs were assigned a crucial role in supporting the historical Muslim community as a body, as well as in guiding personal lives. (This was probably one reason why Ghazâlî was so insistent that Ṣûfîs were subject to the community law—only so could they serve the community as witnesses to its mission.)

Spiritual ministry and the gradation of knowledge

Having established an unimpeachable intellectual basis, appropriate to his age, on which the new religious life should be built, Ghazâlî had to work out a new pattern of teaching and guidance in which the consequences of his intellectual re-evaluations should be put into practice. This was probably central to his thoughts from a very early time.

Ghazâlî had long wished to become a religious and spiritual guide to his people. His restless exploration of every sort of opinion, his attempts to achieve Ṣûfî experience (which had begun even before he was raised to the Niẓâmiyyah madrasah at Baghdad), the doubts he was repeatedly tormented with, all seem to have been directed not only toward achieving a personal religious certainty but also toward giving him a sound basis for religious leadership. Before his retirement from Baghdad he had spoken of founding an independent Ṣûfî doctrine of his own. But it is perhaps even more consistent with his sense of mission that Ghazâlî was so persistently interested in intellectual method, much more so than in systems of ultimate truth for themselves—which could hardly be put in publicly accessible terms anyway. Even a work of his that has the appearance of Ṣûfî speculation on the

cosmos, the 'Niche for Lights', is devoted primarily to elucidating ways of understanding words and symbols and doctrines. (Hence attempts to reduce his thought to a set of cosmological conclusions are bound to miss the point of it and succeed only in making him look self-contradictory.) One of the achievements he was proudest of was a test to settle how far one can go in taking the Qur'ânic images metaphorically as the Faylasûfs and the Ismâ'îlîs were wont to do; he was rather naïvely sure that the justice of his 'scales' could not be denied and would settle most disputes if attended to.

During his years of retirement—during which he travelled a good deal, though probably settling down finally in Khurâsân—he seems to have never matured his ideas of what role he could play in the Ummah. He never resumed his chair at Baghdad, the most prominent teaching post in Islamdom; perhaps because of the danger of assassination by the Ismâ'îlîs, whose revolt was still in full course; but probably also because his conception of his mission was no longer compatible with an outward career so prominent and controversial. Ghazâlî does seem to have regarded himself as called by God to the office of *mujaddid*: the renewer of Islamic faith that Muslims had come to believe God would send at the start of each new century of the Hijrah. In 1106 (499 of the Hijrah) he accepted the call from a son of Niẓâmulmulk, himself now vizier, to teach publicly again. But he did so only in Nîshâpûr, not far from his home in Ṭûs, and ceased when his patron was assassinated. His teaching was such as required not so much a spectacular confutation of opponents as a pervasive influence, at many levels, of a very personal sense of life. It could be done as well at home and through his writings.[19]

His masterpiece is the *Ihyâ 'ulûm al-dîn*, the *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (composed in Arabic, as was the *Deliverer*). Under Ṣûfî inspiration, it interprets the whole Sharî'ah corpus as a vehicle for a sober inward personal

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[19] Farid Jabre, *La notion de certitude selon Ghazali dans ses origines psychologiques et historiques* (Paris, 1958), has studied the structure of Ghazâlî's thinking with great care, and his works are the best point of departure for further study on him. (He is more penetrating than W. Montgomery Watt in *Muslim Intellectual*, see n. 13 above, a work which is too brief to allow Watt to counterbalance his oversimplified psychology of how people hold ideas with a close analysis of the data from the viewpoint he adopts; but Watt's work remains useful.) Jabre gives considerable bibliography. In his main theses, Jabre seems to me sound: Ghazâlî surely was committed throughout to the validity of revelation, and the certainty he was seeking was not a validation of intellectual processes for supporting it, as such, but rather a state of the soul to which such processes might or might not contribute. Yet I find Jabre's picture not very human: he makes Ghazâlî unduly singleminded. A continuing commitment need not be incompatible with times and moods of intense doubt—and what is doubted is just the themes of the tradition to which one is committed; that one has come to certain conclusions early does not preclude a repeated rediscovery of them in the course of one's life, and the rediscovery may make a crucial difference. If Ghazâlî writes as a physician to heal others' doubts, if he stylizes his manner to meet the reader where he is, one must not take the resultant doctrinaire posture too literally. And perhaps Jabre does not sufficiently credit the degree to which critical rationality can enter into the understanding of historical revelation as well as of recurrent experience. My own understanding of Ghazâlî is a development from that of Duncan B. MacDonald.

regimen. Every Shar'î rule is interpreted ethically and given a devotional dimension such that it can become the starting point for inner purification. The social implications of the Sharî'ah become, if anything, more attenuated than before. (Ghazâlî relegated political life explicitly to the amîrs and wrote a manual for kings—in Persian—in the Iranian tradition.) Ghazâlî was not writing for a judge or a *muhtasib* supervisor of markets, but for a private person concerned for his own life or charged with the spiritual direction of others. Some advice he gave presupposed a man (not a woman) whose trade allowed him a fair amount of leisure during his day: a scholar particularly, though also, at need, a kâtib or merchant or even a craftsman working on his own account. Only a person whose time could be largely devoted to religion could afford to make use of the Shar'î life to the full as Ghazâlî interpreted it.

But the social implications of the *Revival* are nonetheless important: as Ghazâlî pointed out in the *Deliverer*, the sort of life led by the men of religion could become an influence to form the lives of Muslims generally. Thus indirectly the *Revival* might influence many more than the religious scholars. In the *Revival* he grades society into three classes: those who believe the truths of religion without questioning; those who learn reasons for their beliefs—who are especially the religious scholars (particularly the men of kalâm); and those who directly experience religious truth, the Sûfîs. This is a distinction not merely of knowledge but implicitly of moral function. For each class could teach those below it and might serve as an example to them. The Sûfîs, whose direct perception of truth was held to be akin to that of the prophets themselves, might have a mission, as Ghazâlî did, to infuse the religious forms of the time with spiritual life. It follows that the Shar'î men of religion had the responsibility to receive the Sûfî inspiration so far as they could and to spread the inward spirit of religion, and not merely the outward doctrines, among the populace generally. Thus the high evaluation of Sûfî experience as a vindication of truth had social consequences which Ghazâlî did not quite dare spell out but which he himself provided a living example of.

One may suspect that in a society where personal relations counted for so much, especially on the local level, such an outlook was eminently practical as a social programme. To a large degree, I think, it was in fact approximated in subsequent centuries, as we shall see in the next chapter, though the Sûfîs often had more direct influence on the populace than they did on the Shar'î scholars. In this sense, the work of Ghazâlî may be said to have given a rationale to the spiritual structure that supported society under the decentralized political order, the order that resulted in part from the work of his patron Nizâmulmulk.

But such a programme presupposed a more or less hierarchical religious life, a gradation of men of religion from the viewpoint of their role in spiritual ministry to the Muslim community. This might be justified on the basis of the ancient principle that Muslims were to be graded—in point of dignity, at least—according to their degree of piety. But a hierarchism based on the

special sort of insight to which Sûfîs had access required, in turn, a crucial principle which would have horrified the early Muslims. Religious knowledge itself must be graded. Though the full and sufficient validity of the faith of the ordinary person was carefully safeguarded, much knowledge that was important, even in a way essential to the community, was not accessible to him; nay, it should be kept carefully concealed from him lest, misunderstood, it cause him to stumble.

This principle finds broad application in the *Deliverer from Error*. Thus the writings of the Faylasûfs should not be studied by the weak-minded lest, through respect for the writers, they be misled into sharing the writers' infidelity. But still more important, those who have not entered on the Sûfî way under proper guidance should not be informed of the secrets that Sûfîs discover; they must receive only the general witness the Sûfîs can bear, that they know the faith is true. Ghazâlî was one of those who maintained that al-Hallâj's error in declaring 'anâ 'l-haqq', 'I am the Truth', lay not in the sentiment itself, which represented a legitimate Sûfî hâl state, but in having uttered it publicly where it could confuse common people; for this he had to be punished lest the common people suppose that blasphemy was to be tolerated.

Indeed, in the very principle of using whatever argument might be most weighty with a given audience, Ghazâlî already illustrated what this tendency could mean on the level of common discourse. In the *Deliverer* itself, for instance, he appealed on occasion to the supposed miracles of the Prophet as evidence of his prophethood where he was speaking to those who might be expected to be convinced by miracles, though from other passages it is obvious that he had no real use for such 'proofs'. For the *Deliverer* was a book of kalâm in Ghazâlî's sense—thus an *instrument* rather than a piece of information: the Arabic participle 'deliverer' in the title is intentional, for the book was designed to deliver from error by whatever means might be appropriate, rather than to state positively truth as such. Positive truth must be come to, as he makes clear, not by argument but in personal growth. In the tactical details of his argument, indeed, Ghazâlî hardly went beyond a practice that is always tempting to the dialectical polemist. But in endorsing more generally the principle that one is to keep concealed the more profound truths from all those unworthy of them, giving (in effect) the appearance of a simple orthodoxy despite one's own internally more complex approach, he endorsed a far-reaching ambiguity in religious truthfulness. He did not invent the principle of concealment. The Ismâ'îlîs had systematically interpreted in this sense the general Shî'î principle of taqiyyah, of precautionary dissimulation of faith; and the Faylasûfs and especially the Sûfîs had developed a practical form of the principle which Ghazâlî was here taking over. In his writings it was generalized and legitimized as a basis of religious ministry.

In the end, the basic position of the Hadîth folk had been maintained in

certain fundamental respects; Falsafah and Ṣûfism both were re-evaluated in the light of Sharî'ah-minded sentiment. Yet the introduction of Ash'arî kalâm was almost a trifle to what was now being offered the 'ulamâ'. Elitism in an extreme form was being superimposed upon Islamic populism. This had potential consequences Ghazâlî could hardly have envisaged. The tastes and needs of almost everyone might be accommodated within the limits of toleration of such a new Shar'î system. At best, the ground was laid for a full and varied intellectual as well as spiritual development with the blessing of Islam. But it might open the way to centrifugal licence. For it was done at the price of sacrificing the common and open exchange of opinion and infor-mation on which the 'ulamâ' had depended for re-creating, in some measure, the intimate common life of Medina, and which the Shar'î movement itself had presupposed in its search for the Divine will.

With the establishment of the international Islamicate social order, how-ever, there had come into being new ways of ensuring the unity and even the discipline of Muslim society. The autonomous, private institutions of the towns depended on the Sharî'ah, but also on other structures; and among these (as we shall see) were the forms of organization that came to undergird popular Ṣûfism itself, which proved, in its flexibility, appropriate to the private and indefinitely varied character of the local institutions. By the end of the formative phase of the Earlier Middle Period, then, Muslims were ready for such a pattern as Ghazâlî offered. His moral authority seems to have been widely accepted even in his lifetime. And some such intellectual synthesis among kalâm, Falsafah, and Ṣûfism as he expressed became, in effect, the starting point of the intellectual flowering of the Earlier Middle Period.