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SEMIETISCHE STUDIËN UIT DE NALATENSCHAP

VAN

PROF. DR. A. J. WENSINCK

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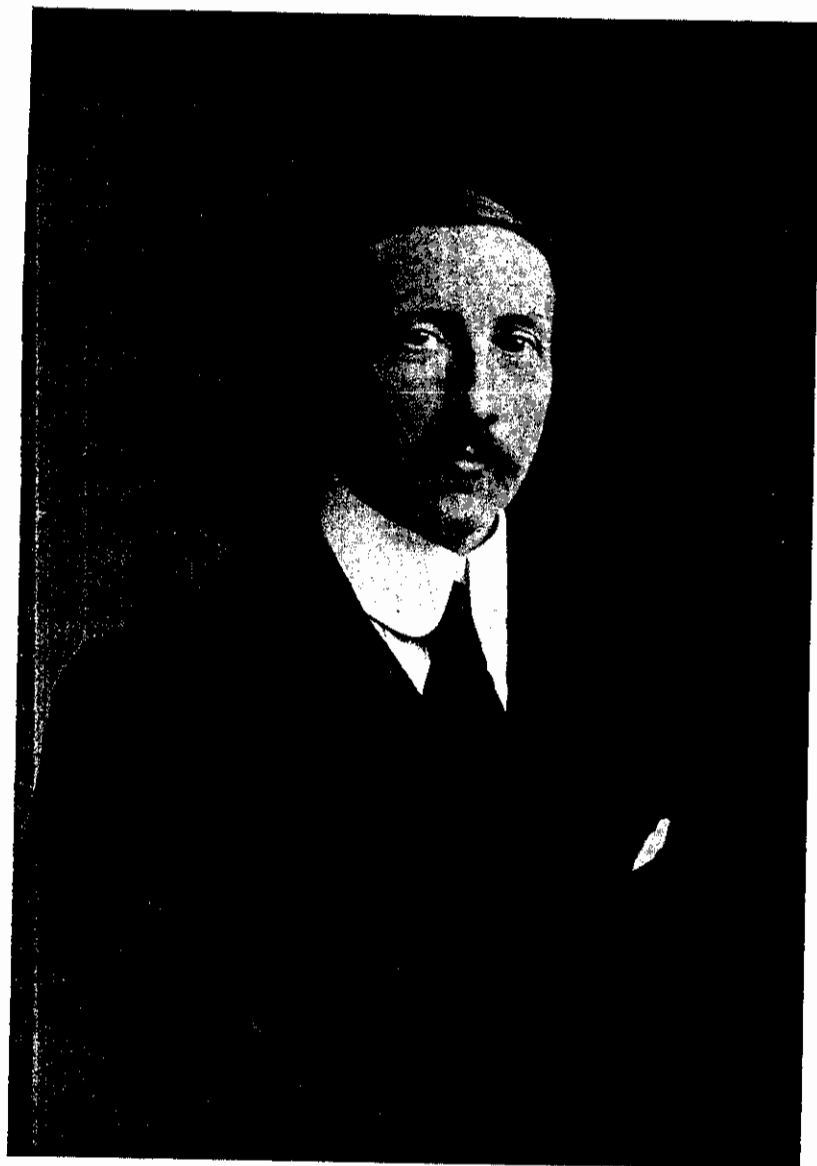
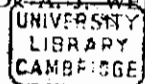


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PROF. DR. A. J. WENSINCK



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A. W. SIJTHOFF'S UITGEVERSMAATSCHAPPIJ N.V.

X. — GHAZĀLĪ'S MISHKĀT AL-ANWĀR (NICHE OF LIGHTS)

Since the Cāiropresses published two editions of this small treatise, it has aroused the attention of those interested in Ghazālī and his position as a Muslim thinker. As early as 1914 W. H. T. Gairdner¹⁾ compared its contents with the verdicts of Ibn Rushd and Ibn Ṭufail, the former of whom had maintained that the Ghazālī of the *Mishkāt* had embraced the doctrine of emanation, whereas the latter refers to the opinion that Ghazālī ascribes to the Highest Being some sort of plurality.

Gairdner has shown that these two opinions find no sufficient support in the text of the *Mishkāt*.

In his translation of the booklet²⁾ Gairdner touches these problems anew, now connecting them chiefly with the two passages where the *Mutā'* or the Vicegerent occurs³⁾.

The questions which will be discussed in the present paper, are chiefly the following: Is the *Mishkāt* to be called an esoteric writing? And: Is, and, if so, in how far is Ghazālī's attitude in the *Mishkāt* essentially different from his position in his previous writings such as the *Munqidh* and the *Ihyā'*?

A rapid survey of the contents of the book may be given as an introduction to the discussion of these questions.

The disposition of the book is given by its pretending to be a commentary upon the Light-verse (Sūra 24, 35) and the tradition on the veils of light and darkness which form a screen between Allāh and the world. The first part treats of light, of physical light to begin with; then of the eye as the recipient of light, consequently of sight. To physical light and physical sight correspond intelligible light and intelligence. This leads

to a discussion of the *κοσμὸς νοητός* and the *κοσμὸς αἰσθητός* and their lights, as well as to a study of symbolism, on type and antitype (part II). The third part gives the application to the Light-verse and the veils tradition, dividing mankind in four classes regarding their being more or less enlightened in their knowledge of God. Those who are veiled by pure darkness are the atheists and those who live to satisfy their lusts. Those who are veiled by mixed light and darkness, idolaters and some Muslim heretics. The third class comprises those who are veiled by pure light, i.e. those who confer Allāh's Unity, they fall into three divisions: those who deny Allāh's attributes; those who recognise Allāh as the mover of the outermost sphere, whereas each of the spheres is moved by an angel and those who are higher recognising an angel as the mover of the Universe, whereas Allāh Himself is only the movent by way of command, not by way of act.

These are the outlines of the book, which, as a matter of fact, is more than a commentary on the Light-verse and the veils tradition. But it is not enough to pronounce this appreciation; it has to be based on a closer examination of the *Mishkāt*, because we desire to know what world of ideas Ghazālī is moving in and what the purpose of the book is.

Part I bears the following title: A demonstration that essential Light is Allāh and that the application of the word Light to any things beside Him is purely metaphorical, without reality.

In order to prove the truth of this thesis, the author takes the long way of going through the different meanings of the word Light, beginning from the simplest, which is generally known. Here the word denotes a phenomenon (*zuhār*) and *zuhār* supposes a relation in so far as the thing necessarily appears to or is concealed from another. This happens necessarily to the perceptive faculties, of which the strongest are in the general opinion the senses. To these belongs sight and in relation to this sense its objects fall into three categories: dark bodies which are not seen by themselves; bodies which are visible by themselves but through which no other bodies are seen, e.g., the stars and fire which does not glow; bodies which are visible by themselves and which make other bodies visible, e.g., sun and moon and fire which glows, and lamps.

¹⁾ Der Islam, 1914.

²⁾ Al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār* („The niche for Lights"), London 1924.

³⁾ See the discussion on p. 10 sqq.

The word Light is also applied to what proceeds from these luminaries unto dark (thick) bodies, e.g., when the light of the sun falls on the earth or when the light of a lamp falls on the wall.

Now, as the blind does not perceive the phenomenon of light, the seeing spirit is a necessary element for the apperceptive faculties, nay it is even more important and the word Light is with full reason applied to the seeing eye and to the seeing spirit.

This is the second meaning of the word. The physical eye is subject to several defects. But in man's heart there is an eye which is called mind, spirit, soul. This faculty is more properly called light than is the eye, because it is free from those defects. It pervades the Universe and moves freely about the throne. This faculty may disclose the true meaning of the tradition: Allāh created Adam after His own image.

Here the author resumes his demonstration in the following way: the word Light is applied to what is usually understood by it; more justly, however, to the eye; and still more justly to the intelligence, so that only the last deserves the name Light at all.

Now it is only when wisdom dawns, that man sees actually after having seen potentially (*bi 'l-kuwwa*). The highest wisdom is the Kor'an; consequently the Kor'an is to be compared to the sun, as intelligence is to be compared to the eye.

Just as there are two eyes, an outward and an inward one, and two kinds of light, so there are two worlds, the world of the senses and the celestial world; the former is, compared to the latter, as the rind to the kernel, as darkness to light. The opening of the mind to this celestial world is the first ascension.

When the ascension of the prophets reaches the celestial world, they reach the highest goal, being above the totality of the unseen world, as he who is in the celestial world is with Allāh with Whom are the keys of the unseen, i.e., from Him descend the causes of this created in the visible world, as the visible world is as the shadow as compared with the person; consequently the visible world is only an image of the celestial world.

Through the intermediary of the prophetic spirit light dawns on the creation. This light is kindled by the light of the god-head, just as is the light of the angels. All lights thus flow from one spring, Allāh.

"The verity of verities". From here the gnostics ascend to the acme of reality, experiencing that there is nothing existent except Allāh. Some of them have found this intellectually, others by "taste and state" (*dhawk wa-hāl*). Here all plurality vanishes, from here there is no ascension, here remains neither high nor low. The only change possible here is the descent unto the lowest heaven, viz. by illumination from above downwards. This is the goal of goals. It is not without truth when the gnostics say that the descent unto the lowest heaven is the descent of an angel.

There are two worlds, one spiritual, the other corporeal. There is a correspondence between the two; if there were not, it would be impossible for man to ascend from the one into the other. There is no thing in this world, which is not the image of a thing in the celestial world. Several expressions in the Kor'an denote their supernal types. Still it is becoming to avoid the errors of the Bāṭiniya who annul the image, as well as those of the Ḥashwiya who annul the type.

The human spiritual faculties are five in number: the sensory spirit, which is even in brutes and infants; the imaginative spirit which records and moulds that which is conveyed by the senses; the intelligential spirit (*rūh 'akli*) which attains to the ideas lying beyond senses and imagination; it is a peculiar human faculty (*djawhar*); the discursive spirit (*rūh fikri*) which operates with the data supplied by the intellect; the fifth is the prophetic spirit, with which were endowed the prophets and some of the saints; through its intermediary the mysteries and the statutes of the other world, and knowledge regarding the kingdom of heaven and earth, nay regarding the godhead, are disclosed.

Through these five faculties light is spread on the species of the creatures; the power of this light is very different in the classes of men, different regarding their knowledge of God. This is the sense of the veils tradition. Those who are veiled by pure darkness are atheists and egotists of various kinds.

The second category are veiled by light mixed with darkness; it comprises three divisions; the first errs through the senses, the second through the imagination, the third through the intellect. The first division comprises several classes; the first class is formed by the idolaters, the last by the dualists and between them are several other classes. The second division is on a higher plane; to it belong some muhammedan sects such as the Mudjassima and the Karrāmites; the third comprises classes of Ash'arites and Hanbalites.

Those who are veiled by pure light have attained to a more spiritual idea of Allāh; they separate Him from the world by the spheres which are each under the command of an angel, whereas Allāh Himself is only the mover of the outer sphere which comprises the other ones. Others, who are still higher, even deny that Allāh moves this outer sphere; this must be the act of a being under His command, an angel whose relation to the pure divine lights is like the relation of the mover to the sun. But this insight is too exalted for common minds and lies beyond the scope of the author's book.

Finally there are those who attain the highest insight (*al-wāṣilān*), who deem that Allāh's pure Unity is not safeguarded by the rôle entrusted to the angel just mentioned. They leave this angel and the godhead who commands him to move the spheres, behind them and reach a Being which is exalted above all the descriptions mentioned before.

Yet here are again two classes. To the first all vanishes, save self-consciousness directed towards the divine beauty and holiness; to the second even self-consciousness fades away; there remains nothing except the One, the Reality (τὸ ἕν).

This detailed résumé may show that Ghazālī's booklet does not in the first place intend to be an explanation of the Light-verse and the veils tradition, but an exposition of light and sight in their natural as well as in their spiritual meaning. The two cannot be separated; one belongs to the other. This is no particular feature of the *Mishkāt*; it belongs to the Neoplatonic system. The whole book could be styled as a résumé of Neoplatonism viewed from the two ideas of light and sight. The first part treats the theory of light and sight in nature and in man, and their source, Allāh. The second contains an exposition

of the theory of ideas, based on the Platonic one, and illustrated by specifically mohammedan examples. The third gives a classification of men according to the degrees of their partaking of the divine light especially with a view to their knowledge of God.

The plan of the book explains sufficiently why its author shows here a side of his spiritual existence different from that which he shows in his *Munqidh* and in his *Ihyā'*; this does not mean, however, that he himself has changed his views of philosophy and theology.

For the sake of convenience, we will discuss a) the general theory of light and sight; b) its application to the mystic experience.

a) Light and sight in their mutual relation have been treated by Isaac of Ninive, who was not a philosopher, but a mystical ascetic. He does not, therefore, treat their relation as a problem, but he is struck by this relation, which leads him also to the higher spheres. "You must know, my brethren" — he says ¹⁾, "that the sensual eye through its visual power alone (which is administered unto it from the brains as it were through a channel) without partaking of other light, is not able to receive [the images] of the different things. All natural apperceptions are placed on the same level as the intelligible things as regards spiritual behaviour in this respect; and [as for] the natural force of the intellect, which is also psychic knowledge—it is impossible for the soul to participate in truth by contemplation, without receiving divine light".

What Isaac means to say is this: As the eye by itself is not able to see, if it does not receive other light, just so the soul wants divine light in order to see spiritually.

In another passage ²⁾ he plays again upon the ideas of light and sight: "Intellect is a spiritual sense which is made a recipient of the visual power, as the pupil of the fleshly eyes into which perceptible light is poured. Intelligible sight is natural knowledge which by power has been mixed with the order of nature, and which is called natural light. A holy power

¹⁾ Text ed. Bedjan, p. 474; translation (Wensinck 1923), p. 318.

²⁾ Text ed. Bedjan, p. 472; translation (Wensinck 1923), p. 316 sq.

is grace, the sun of distinction for those things, which hold a middle position between light and sight. Species are those things which are intermediary and distinguished by light so as to become sight", etc.

It is clear that Isaac is dealing here with the same subject as Ghazālī. Yet the close parallelism between the two in this respect does not show that Ghazālī is dependent upon Isaac. But it shows that both are dealing with one of the topics of the school. What this school is, is not difficult to say: *the question has been treated elaborately by its master Plotinus in the fifth book of the fourth Ennead which even bears the title: De Visione.* It may be even said that the first part of Ghazālī's *Mishkāt* is nothing but a free paraphrase of the fifth book of the fourth Ennead, the contents of which may be given here in outlines¹). After an introductory paragraph on the senses in general and that of sight especially, Plotinus concludes (§ 2) that sight originates from the conjunction of the visual light with intermediary light unto the perceived object. The ray of the eye may reach the object, or the ray from the object may reach the eye, or both these processes may work together. He then discusses the details of this process and the different opinions concerning it. Light depends, not upon the illuminated, but on the fountain of light; the chief fountain of light is the sun. So all light is an image of heavenly light, which is an energy of the heavenly soul. From this fountain-head all light flows, even in its remotest corners; just as the image in the mirror and its actions are reflexes of the person or thing reflected²).

This is a very short extract only from Plotin's chapter; it may, however, show the close affinity existing between it and the first part of Ghazālī's *Mishkāt*. The parallelism may be completed from other passages in the Enneads. I, 6 § 9; VI, 8 § 18; IV, 4 § 7; V, 3 § 12. Zeller 458.

¹) The question of light and sight is also treated by Suhrawardī in his *Hikmat al-Ishrā'q*; cf. Horten, *Die Philosophie der Erleuchtung* (Halle 1912), p. 27 sqq. It is to be observed that Suhrawardī, in *The Introduction* (transl., p. 2) describes his conversion unto the Platonic school of Plato; he mentions Finarus and Phaedon; no word of Plotin.

²) Ghazālī uses this comparison in order to illustrate the reflexes of the spiritual fountain-head in the terrestrial beings. Transl. Gairdner, p. 56.

I think in the first place of the closing paragraphs of the book *De pulchritudine* (I, 6, 8 sq.), where the celestial beauty, as is to be expected, is chiefly described as a luminary object of sight. How is this sight to be reached? By closing the sensual eyes before all worldly things, for these are only images, by acquiring a new visual faculty which every one possesses, but which a few only make use of. What does this inner sight perceive? Hardly awake, it cannot look upon the bright celestial luminaries; it must get accustomed to contemplating beautiful things. Polish, therefore, thy soul, make it radiant, till the godlike beauty of ἀπερὶν shines for thee. If thou hast become thus, pure, without impediment, thyself veracious light only, nay even sight, then direct thy gaze; for such an eye alone contemplates the great beauty. This sight is only possible, because then eye itself is light and sunlike. Become, therefore, first wholly godlike and wholly beautiful, if thou wilt see God and the Beautiful. Here, in intelligible beauty, dwell the ideas; the highest good is the fountain-head and the beginning of the beautiful.

Does not this passage look like an example which Ghazālī had in mind when he wrote his *Mishkāt*? Ghazālī, after his discussion of light and sight, proceeds to show that God is the fountain-head of all light. This idea again is not in the least peculiar in Ghazālī's theosophy. It is the common property of the whole Neoplatonic school¹). We have already seen, how intimately this idea is connected with Plotin's loftiest thoughts (*Enneads* I, 6, 8 sq.). We may add to this a reference to *Enneads* VI, 6, 18 where the relation between the One and the *νοῦς* is explained, first by a comparison with the relation between two circles which have the same centre; then, by a comparison with the relation between the only light which always remains the same, still shines in many luminaries (again think of Ghazālī's spiritual lamps receiving light of their common fountain-head).

In the Theology of Aristotle the highest ascension of the mind unto the highest height is a recognition of light: "Then

¹) Cf. also Suhrawardī, o. c., p. 37: Gott ist in allen Beziehungen einfach. Deshalb kann aus Ihm nur eine Wirkung direkt hervorgehen. Das erste Sein, das aus Gott hervorgeht, ist reines Licht.

it will obtain strength even till it recognizes the loftiness of the $\nu\theta\zeta$ and its light and splendour, nay till it recognizes the power of what is above the $\nu\theta\zeta$ and this is the Light of Lights and the Beauty of all Beauty and the Splendour of all Splendour" ¹). This is true Neoplatonic thought. Compare with this passage the following, from the Introduction: "The scope of this book is . . . to show . . . that the lightpower of the godhead radiates on the $\nu\theta\zeta$ and from it through the intermediary of the $\nu\theta\zeta$ upon the All-soul of the spheres and from the $\nu\theta\zeta$ through the intermediary of the soul upon nature and from the soul through the intermediary of nature on the existing and transient things and that this process takes place without movement; yet the movement of all things is caused by the godhead and all things move unto it in a kind of longing and swing ²). There is another passage in the Theology of Aristotle which is of special interest for the *Mishkāt*, viz. p. 118 sq.: "We say that the primary "That" (*Ann*) is primary light, viz. the light of lights, without limitation; it does not abate nor does it stop to illuminate the world of the $\nu\theta\zeta$; therefore the world of the $\nu\theta\zeta$ does not abate nor cease; and because this world of the $\nu\theta\zeta$ is endless, it gives birth to offspring and brings forth this world; by offspring I understand the world of the heavens, especially the princes of that world. For if the latter were not cognate with the former, it could not be governed by it. If the world of the $\nu\theta\zeta$ should cease to seek the light which is above it, it would not be easy for it to govern the world of the heavens. So the governor of the world of the $\nu\theta\zeta$ is the primary light and the governor of the world of the heavens is the world of the $\nu\theta\zeta$ and the governor of the world of the senses is the world of the heavens and these forms of government receive their strength from the first Governor who provides it with the power of government and dominion".

The Arabic word for government and governor used in this passage is تدبير and مدبر; it is precisely to this مدبر of a light nature that Ghazālī has devoted interesting passages of his book, which we shall discuss later.

¹) Ed. Dieterici, p. 44.

²) p. 3; cf. also p. 51, 53.

It is well known that the so-called Theology of Aristotle is a paraphrase of Plotin's fourth Ennead. It is highly probable that Ghazālī was acquainted with this Arabic book which may have become to him a means of communication with Plotin. Still, it is far from being a translation from the Enneads; the theory of light and sight is lacking in it. Consequently there must have been a more literal Arabic translation of the Enneads or of a part of it. It has already been said above, that these questions were emphatically debated among the Arabic writing philosophers, as may be seen from Suhrawardī's Philosophy of Illumination.

As regards the theory of symbolism in its specific Muhammadan form to which the second division of the *Mishkāt* is devoted, it is so much akin to that of Plato's ideas that a discussion of this relation seems superfluous: That Muslim philosophers were acquainted with this theory may appear, e.g., from the Theology of Aristotle ¹).

It is an important coincidence in history that Islam which from its beginnings wrote Allāh's Unity in its banner should come into the closest contact with Neoplatonism which also leads to a final Unity which with the utmost care is kept pure from any connection with plurality, to such a degree that the relation between this absolute Unity and the world with its plurality remains a mystery. It is, however, important to observe that Plotinus in a passage devoted to this relation finds one image only to make it clearer, and that this image is the relation between the sun and the light spreading from it ²). It is not saying too much if we assert that Ghazālī's *Mishkāt* is intrinsically a Neoplatonic composition. But the whole passage (Enneads V, 3, 12) deserves to be paraphrased. Plotin begins with refuting those who say that the primary Unity may be a unity but that the energies proceeding from it are a plurality. He says: if the essence of the Unity is energy, and if this energy is pluralistic, its Unity must participate of plurality. This is not true, he continues; for before plurality there must be unity, from which

¹) p. 118, 163.

²) The passage has certainly influenced the Theology of Aristotle (p. 118 sq.) as cited above.

the former is derived. So it is in arithmetics. If this connection with arithmetical truth should be declared not to be allowed, Plotin argues: If there were no unity preceding plurality, things would be incoherent. He then discusses the relation between the Unity and the *νοῦς*. It is impossible that the former should produce the latter on account of a desire. For such a desire would render the Unity imperfect. But it is clear that, if there should originate anything after the Unity, the latter must have remained unmoved. How is this possible? The relation may be expressed by comparing the Unity to the sun, which, immoveable in itself, governs the world of the *νοῦς*, or shines on it eternally. For, though it shines, nothing is taken from it, but it remains, seeing and recognizing itself and being the first recognizer; it does not want anything, even not recognition; for recognition belongs to a second nature.

Ἐν γὰρ τι καὶ τὸ γινώσκειν· τὸ δὲ ἔστιν, ἄνευ τοῦ τι, ἐν· εἰ γὰρ τι ἐν, οὐκ ἂν αὐτὸ ἐν· τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ, προ τοῦ τι¹⁾.

Ghazālī is moving in exactly the same ethereal regions. With him also the problem is the relation between this world of plurality and motion to the Immoveable One. According to some the Lord is he who moves the outer sphere of the Universe. So His unity is safeguarded but not His Immoveableness. Those who are higher transfer the setting in motion of the outer sphere to an angel who acts on the command of the Lord of the Universe, who is the Obeyed One and who communicates with the angel by way of command only, any direct contact between God and the Universe thus being suspended. This subtle gradation, however, does not belong anymore to the scope of the *Mishkāt*, as it is above common understanding. Nevertheless those who have reached this stage, are not yet on the highest scale of the ladder. There are more subtle spirits "to whom it has even been revealed that this Obeyed One is described in a way which, on account of a mystery not to be revealed in this book, is not consistent with pure Unity and absolute perfection, and that the relation between this Obeyed One and the real Entity is the same as that between the sun and essential light or that

¹⁾ Cf. also the sixth Ennead. For a description of Plotin's conception of τὸ ἐν see Zeller, *Phil. d. Griechen III/II*, 422 sqq.

between the glowing coal and elemental fire itself; so they leave behind them Him who moves the heavens and Him who gives the command to move them and reach a Being bare of all that the sight and the insight of the seeing reach, and they find It bare of and elevated in holiness above all what we have described above" ¹⁾).

Here is certainly a subtilized theology which is based on views forwarded by philosophers such as Ibn Sinā ²⁾).

b) We have now to cast a glance on those passages of the *Mishkāt* which describe man's ascension from this world of shadow to yonder world of reality. Ghazālī speaks of this *mi'rādj* for the first time at the end of his description of dualism which divides the world and what it comprises into two: that of appearance, matter, image and that of reality, spirit, idea. Man has to ascend from the former to the latter; this is the first ascension; the angels on the other hand do not need this ascension, because they are permanently in that supernal world; the prophets, in their ascension, have reached the hidden knowledge. This is neoplatonic thought and practice in a moḥammadan form. Here may follow a translation of the passage from the Leyden Ms. which deviates in some, not altogether unimportant points from the text printed at Cairo in 1325 and from that on which Gairdner's translation was based ³⁾).

"And this is the first ascension for every pilgrim, at the beginning of his progress to approach the Presence Dominical. For man is consigned to the lowest depth and from there he ascends unto the highest world. Now as for the angels, they belong to the celestial world, dwelling in devotion in the holy precinct, and from there moving through the world below. Therefore he said (may Allāh bless him): Allāh created the creatures in darkness, then He sent an effusion of His light upon them,

¹⁾ In the Leyden Ms. this passage is mutilated, apparently on purpose.

²⁾ Cf. De Boer, *Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam*, p. 123: Aus dem ersten Einen kann also (according to The Sinā) nur Eines hervorgehen, der erste Weltgeist. In diesem entsteht die Vielheit. Indem er seine Ursache denkt erzeugt er einen dritten Geist, den Lenker der äußersten Sphäre.

³⁾ Deviations from either any importance are printed in italics. Cf. the edition of the text.

and: Allāh has angels who know the works of men better than they do themselves. As regards the prophets, when their ascent reaches the highest point, they were in the possession of the main portion of *hidden knowledge*, as he, who dwells in the celestial world, is with Allāh and with *Him* are the keys of things hidden, i.e. from *Him* descend the causes of the things existing in the visible world, as the latter is one of the vestiges of yonder world; *the relation* between the two is as the relation between a shadow and the thing which causes the shadow, or as the relation between the fruit and *the tree*, or between effect and cause¹⁾.

The second passage which is of interest for our present purpose, deals with ascension as well as with descension. I translate the latter half, again from the Leyden Ms.: If there be *a different state caused by change*²⁾, it is through the descension unto the lowest heaven, viz. through illumination, from above downwards; for the highest has a lower, but it has no higher. This is the last goal and the utmost point which spiritual research can reach; who knows it, knows it, and who knows it not, denies it. It belongs to the knowledge which is as a hidden thing³⁾, which only the learned in Allāh know; and if they utter it, it is only denied by the . . .⁴⁾. It is not far from truth when the learned say that the descension unto the lowest heaven is the descension unto⁵⁾ an angel. But far from truth is what one of the gnostics has fancied. Being absorbed in Unity he says also that *he*⁶⁾ had a descension unto the lowest heaven and that this descension is *a descension unto using the senses or to setting in motion*⁷⁾ the limbs, and that this is *alluded to* in the saying: I become his hearing through which he hears and his sight through which he sees and his tongue; in this

¹⁾ The Ms. has interchanged the two.

²⁾ L: فان كان ثم تغير من حال: فان كان من تغير حال: Gairdner: If there be, indeed, any change.

³⁾ كنهه المكنون. So also Gairdner. C perhaps better: كنهه المكنون

⁴⁾ C and Gairdner add: بالله

⁵⁾ Gairdner: of.

⁶⁾ Gairdner: Allāh, whom he takes as the subject of the following part of the sentence.

⁷⁾ L: تاجويل

case *he* is the hearing and the seeing and the speaking, no other; *and that to this points* his saying: I was sick, but thou visitedst me not etc. — Consequently the movements of this mystic are from¹⁾ the lowest heaven, his senses such as hearing and sight from a higher heaven, his mind from a still higher heaven; from the heaven of mind he ascends unto the utmost goal of the ascension of the angels and the kingdom of unity, unto the *last of seven stores*. Then he sits down upon the throne of Unity and from there he governs the *amir* throughout the storied heavens. It may be that one, looking unto him, would apply to him the saying: Allāh created Adam after the image of the Merciful, till his sight would be satiated and he would know that this saying has to be interpreted *through* the saying: I am truth, and: Glory to me, just as the Prophet's saying: I was sick and thou visitedst me not and: I am his hearing and his sight and his tongue. But now I think it becoming to draw the rein of the tongue for I suppose that thou canst not bear more of this kind than this measure.

This passage, though not always clear, authorizes us to the conclusion that we have here two descriptions of the mystic's ascension and descension. Gairdner's translation could leave some doubts concerning this point, as it speaks, in the first passage indicated, of the *descent of an angel*, in the second of *Allāh's* descent. Nothing of this is in the Leyden Ms., which I consider as the better text, in this passage as in many other ones. It is not at all clear what of al-Halladj's utterings is accepted by Ghazālī, what not; but so much is evident, that here is a description of the highest goal the mystic may reach in his ascension. The question is of some importance, because it is connected with two other ones, discussed by Gairdner and others²⁾. They have thought of the ascension of the *Ḳuṭb*, as well as of a connection between the subject of this ascension and the Obeyed One who is placed by Ghazālī between the world and absolute Unity. The latter connection is laid near

¹⁾ L: التجر

²⁾ Nicholson and Massignon; cf. the former's *Idea of Personality*, p. 44 sqq.

by the fact that Ghazālī in describing the Obeyed One uses the Kor'anic expression "He governs the *amr*", an expression which he applies also to the mystic, who has reached the utmost goal. Here the mystic has indeed become the lord of the Universe.

According to my opinion this is said of the mystic, who, on account of these descriptions, must neither be identified with the *Ḳuṭb* nor with the Obeyed One. This opinion is based on the fact that several other mystics describe their ascension and descension in similar terms.

The idea and the description of the mystic's ascension go back to two other kinds of ascension, viz. that of the prophets and that of the soul. Students of the history of religions are acquainted with the literature concerning both of them; it need not be mentioned here. Of special importance for our purpose is the fact that in the ascension of the prophet as well as in that of the mystic the secrets of the universe are disclosed, so that there originates a certain relation between him who ascends unto heaven and God Himself. Now mysticism is of a nature to lay stress precisely on this point, and the mystic in his ascension is described as becoming himself the lord of the universe, who creates it anew and issues his command throughout the heavens. These supreme moments must be followed by descension. The idea and the description of ascension are connected with the descriptions, in Neoplatonic literature, of the divinely free spirit itself, which, not being subject to the defects of the material eye, elevates itself above matter and its fetters. We have such a description in the *Mishkāt*. It may be compared with the following passage from Philo, who says that the likeness between God and man consists in the *νοῦς*, which is to a certain extent the God of the body. Just as God in the Universe so *ἀνθρώπινος νοῦς ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ ἀόρατός . . . ἐστίν, αὐτὸς πάντα ὁρῶν καὶ ἄδηλον ἔχει τὴν οὐσίαν, τὰς τῶν ἄλλων καταλαμβάνων καὶ τέχναις καὶ ἐπιστήμασι πολυσχιδεῖς τε ἀνατέμνων ὁδοὺς καὶ λεωφόρους ἀπάσας, διὰ γῆς ἔρχεται καὶ θαλάττης, τὰ ἐν ἐκατέρῃ φύσει διερονώμενος καὶ πάλιν πτηνὸς ἀρθεῖς καὶ τὸν ἀέρα καὶ τὰ τούτου παθήματα κατασκευάμενος, ἀνωτέρω φέρεται πρὸς αἰθέρα καὶ τὰς οὐρανόους περιόδους. Πλανήτων τε καὶ ἀπλανῶν χωρεῖται συμπεριποληθεὶς κατὰ τοὺς τῆς μουσικῆς τελείους νόμους, ἐπόμενος ἔρωτι σοφίας*

ποδηγετιῶντι, πᾶσαν τὴν αἰσθητὴν οὐσίαν ὑπερκύψας, ἐνταῦθα ἐφίεται τῆς νοητῆς, καὶ ὧν εἶδεν ἐνταῦθα αἰσθητῶν, ἐν ἐκείνῃ τὰ παραδείγματα καὶ τὰς ιδέας θεασάμενος, ὑπεβάλλοντα κάλλη, μέθη νηφαλίῳ κατασχεθεὶς, ὡσπερ οἱ κορυβαυτιῶντες, ἐνθουσιᾷ, ἑτέρου γεμισθεὶς ἡμέρου καὶ πόθου βελτίονος, ὅφ' οὗ πρὸς τὴν ἄκραν ἀψίδα παραπεμφθεὶς τῶν νοητῶν, ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἵνα δοκεῖ τὸν μέγαν βασιλέα. Γλιχομένου δὲ ἰδεῖν, θείου φωτὸς ἄκρατοι καὶ ἀμυγεῖς αὐγαὶ χεῖμαρρον τρόπον ἐκχέονται ὡς ταῖς μαρμαρυγαῖς τὸ τῆς διανοίας ὄμμα σκοτοδιαιῶν· ἐπεὶ δ' οὐ σύμπασα εἰκὼν ἀρχετύπῳ παραδειγματι ἐμφορῆς, πόλλοι δ' εἰσὶν ἀνομοιοί ¹⁾.

The reader will have noticed the striking similarity between this passage and the whole tenour of the *Mishkāt*; apart from the style, it could be called Plotinian as well. The reader will also have noticed that Philo's description speaks of the *νοῦς* in general.

It may be said that Plotin's *Enneads* end in a supreme climax effectuated by the description of the ascension of the *νοῦς* unto τὸ ἐν. That here is no question of the ascension of the "fewest of the few" — to use Ghazālī's vocabulary — may appear from the sentence: ἡ δὲ θεὰ αὐτοῦ ἔργον ἤδη τοῦ ἰδεῖν βεβουλημένον "to ascend to this supreme sight is the work of him who is willed to see" ²⁾. Here the philosopher speaks, not the mystic; still, that passage in the last book of the sixth *Ennead*, which Marsilius Ficinus has given the title becoming to it: *Beatitudo animae contemplantis deum* ³⁾ — this hymn moves in the same sphere as the nearly esoteric descriptions of Ghazālī. I cannot forbear to cite the final sentence of this chapter in which the beauty of Greece and the religion of the Semites seem to melt together: Ὁρᾶν δὴ ἐστὶν ἐνταῦθα κάμεινον καὶ ἑαυτὸν ὡς ὁρᾶν θέμις, ἑαυτὸν μὲν ἡγλαῖσμένον, φωτὸς πλήρη νοητοῦ, μᾶλλον δὲ φῶς αὐτὸ καθαρόν, ἀβαρῆ,

¹⁾ *De officio mundi*, ed. Mangey I, 15 sq. Cf. Bar Hebraeus, *Jawna*, text, p. 571, translation, p. 53: „ . . . when his mind beholds the divine power that penetrates the universe; when, without impediment, it pervades all the ends of the earth and farther, above all heavens and seas and oceans and all that is in them . . . ”.

²⁾ *Enneads* VI, 9 § 4.

³⁾ VI, 9 § 9.

κοῦφον, θεὸν γινόμενον, μᾶλλον δὲ ὄντα, ἀναφθέντα μὲν τότε· εἰ δὲ πάλιν βαρύνοντο, ὥσπερ μαραινόμενον.

Here is Ghazālī's light-theology another time; here is also his ascension and the question of how descension is brought about. Plotinos speaks also of it in the passage that follows on the words cited above: Why does not the soul always remain in that beatified state? Because it has not yet entirely shaken off the body. Eternal sight will be possible when the body will no longer be an impediment.

Just as in Ghazālī's description of the highest degree of the attainers (*wāṣilān*), Plotin then proceeds to speak of the unification: τότε μὲν οὖν οὔτε δρᾶ, οὔτε διακρίνει ὃ τε δρῶν, οὐδὲ φαντάζεται δύο, ἀλλ' οἷον ἄλλος γινόμενος, καὶ οὐκ αὐτὸς, οὐδ' αὐτοῦ συντελεῖ ἐκεῖ· κἀκεῖνον γινόμενος ἔστιν, ὥσπερ κέντρον, κέντρον συνάψας.

Here even the philosopher cannot keep aloof from mystic secrecy: it is only allowed to speak of such verities to those who have experienced this *θεῖον*¹⁾. In this point Plotin and Ghazālī meet again.

As is well known, Neo-platonism has strongly influenced Stephen Bar Sudailē, the author of the Book of Hierotheos. He describes the ascent of the mind very elaborately in the concluding chapters of his work. When finally the mind has reached the stage of unity, all distinctions are removed and all human attributes, also those of man's religious functions, have now ceased. The mind will²⁾ "then begin, by a new and holy brooding, to create a new world, and will create a new man in its image imageless, and according to its likeness likenessless. It will mete out heaven with its span, and will measure the dust of the earth with its measure: it will number the drops of the sea, and weigh the mountains in a scale" etc. This is another example of how the mystic, in his highest moments, becomes like God and a new creator like Him.

A cognate language is spoken by Isaac of Niniveh³⁾: "First he will free this whole [world] from its state so that it is reduced

¹⁾ Enneads VI, 9 § 11.

²⁾ Frottingham, Stephen Bar Sudailē, p. 109.

³⁾ Text ed. Bedjan, p. 256; translation (Wensinck 1923), p. 172.

to nothing, analogous to the first state of the body. Then he will elevate himself intellectually beyond the beginnings of the creation of the world, when there was no creation nor anything, no heaven, no earth, no angels, nor any of the created things. Then of a sudden he will bring all things into existence, his will being sufficient to effect that all is before him in a state of perfection. Then he will descend in his mind and visit all God's creatures. And in his high and wondrous works the wisdom of his creating power will show itself. His power subdues all minds, the amazing and powerful strength of his creating force brings into existence out of nothing a creation with innumerable different kinds".

Thus far Isaac, whose description, again, has in view the ascent of the mystic.

Ghazālī's passage on the descent by way of radiation has a remarkable parallel in Bar Hebraeus's *Jawna*¹⁾ and *Ethikon*²⁾. "On account of the delight it [viz. the mind] possesses, it cannot return to its former place, save only if its Lord loosens it from union with Him. And when it returns it baptizes the members of the body with the fire of the Divinity, which has remained in it. When it desires to ascend again, the body is near to be dragged along with it, so that it can scarcely be shaken off like a shoe". And: "And there takes place transition, which is described by our holy Fathers, so that it is impossible to return from its delight. And if its Lord loosened it not from union, it would forget its partner, the body. And when it returns to it, it imparts to the limbs some of the divine fire, which has remained in it, so that they also participate in the enjoyment of the spirit. And when the mind returns again [to the Lord] the body is almost borne along with it, and the soul can scarcely shake it off when it is elevated".

As I have stated several times, the descriptions of ascent and descent adduced from the works of Philo, Plotin, Stephen bar Sudailē, Isaac of Niniveh and Bar Hebraeus have in view the highest possibility of the human mind, as they are experienced by the philosopher and the mystic. There cannot be the slightest doubt that the *mi'rādī* described by Ghazālī has a close affinity

¹⁾ Text ed. Bedjan, p. 567; translation (Wensinck 1919), p. 49.

²⁾ Text ed. Bedjan, p. 498 sq.; translation (Wensinck 1919), p. 110.

with the passages cited above and that it applies to the mystic highest experiences.

Now he has inserted in his descriptions ¹⁾ two explanations, not by himself but by others, of descent, regarding which he takes a reserved attitude; the first he calls not improbable, the second is far from the truth. But it is not easy to say where Ghazālī's disapproval of the second explanation ends. The whole passage is far from being clear. It refers to a descent through the different spheres in each of which the mystic is clad with a new function: the bodily movement, the senses, the mind. Above the highest sphere takes place union and here the mystic becomes the ruler of the universe.

We have seen that this last function is ascribed to the mystic by several authors. But we have not yet met with the idea, that several components of man's being originate in different spheres. This idea is well known to the Hellenist world. Here it is however not chiefly applied to the mystic, but to man in general, because it is an outflow of that other well known idea of the correspondence between the makrokosmos and the mikrokosmos. In this range of ideas descent is not viewed as the mystic's being loosened from his union with God, but as the descent of the human soul in general from its supernal abodes. It was already said that there is a close affinity between Neoplatonic philosophy and mysticism also in this point. It appears here anew. Descent and ascent are the never ceasing motions of the soul. „Vom Himmel kommt sie, zum Himmel steigt sie, und wieder nieder zur Erde muss es entsteigen.“

Goethe's lines on the never ceasing circulation of water apply to the Neoplatonic soul in its collective and in its individual meaning; *radj'a* "return" has become the Arabic term for this process, which has even found its way to East India.

Lobeck in his *Aglaophamus sive de theologiae mysticae graecorum causis* II, 932 sqq. has collected some passages regarding the relation between human affections and the heavenly spheres. Macrobius Somn. I, 12, 68 "de zodiaco, inquit, et lacteo ad subjectas sphaeras anima delapsa, dum per illas labitur, in singulis singulos motus, quos in exercitio est habitura producit, in Saturni ratiocinationem et intelligentiam, in Jovis vim agendi,

¹⁾ Cf. supra, p. 203 sqq.

in Martis animositatem, in Solis sentiendi opinandique naturam, desiderii vero motum in Veneris, pronunciandi et interpretandi, quae sentiat, in orbi Mercurii, naturam vero plantandi et augendi corpora ingressu globi lunaris exercet", quae a pluribus sed non eodem modo tradita. Servius Aen. XI, 51. "Dicunt Physici, quum nasci coeperimus, sortimur a sole spiritum, a lana corpus, a venere cupiditatem, a saturno humorem, quae omnia singulis reddere videntur extincti" etc.

It seems hardly necessary to add other evidence. The explanation of descent, which Ghazālī calls improbable, appears to be a special application to the mystic of a well known Hellenistic view of the descent of the soul and its properties, and of man in general. It is in such conception that is to be sought the link between the descriptions of the philosopher's and the mystic's ascent and descent on the one side, and the descent and ascent of the divine man on the other. I would scarcely have touched upon this subject, were it not that such distinguished scholars as R. A. Nicholson and L. Massignon have forwarded the view, that the subject of the *mī'radj* in Ghazālī's description is Muḥammad (Nicholson), or the mystic Kuṭb (Massignon). It is certain that the ideas of man's heavenly descent and his *radj'a* are connected with the conception of heavenly man, a conception that has perhaps its roots in remote semitic antiquity, that is known in several gnostic or semi-gnostic systems ¹⁾. And that reaches its highest development in the Muslim idea of the complete man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) and the pole (*Kuṭb*) linked to that of the heavenly man ²⁾.

I do not deny that Ghazālī may have been acquainted with these doctrines. But ¹° the passage in Ghazālī's *Mishkāt* which shows a close affinity with the descriptions of the heavenly man's descent, is the reference to a view called improbable by Ghazālī himself; and ²° Ghazālī's descriptions of ascent are of exactly the same type as those by Plotinus, Isaac of Nineveh etc. cited above. The latter apply to the mystic or the philosopher in general; there seems to be no reason to suppose that Ghazālī applies them to Muḥammad or to the mystic pole only.

This conclusion is not only important for the understanding

¹⁾ See J. M. Creed, *The Heavenly Man* in *Journal of Theological Studies*, XXVI, 113 sqq.

²⁾ See R. A. Nicholson's art. *Insān Kāmil* in the *Encyclopaedia of Islām*.

of Ghazālī's description of ascent and descent. If it is true, there is no intrinsic connection between the subject of ascension and the Obeyed One; he who ascends is man, the Obeyed One is a divine being, to which man may be united in his moments of ecstasy. This conclusion agrees very well with Gairdner's view¹⁾.

We have finally to ask anew: Does the *Mishkāt* show a new Ghazālī or not? On the one hand the book means certainly an approach unto the Neoplatonic frame of thought. As we have seen, the question of light and sight is a Neoplatonic topic. But Sūfism in general stands with one foot on the Neoplatonic territory, and this may be said of the author of the *Ihyā'* as well. His other foot is on the domain of Islam. A third prominent feature of the book consists in the decidedly Sūfic attitude which pervades the whole and sometimes touches the borderland of the mystic secrets. Ghazālī does not divulgate more of these than other Sūfic authors. There is one point which he styles as a mystery himself and which is perhaps not found in any of his other writings, viz. the gradation of the heavenly beings from the angels of the spheres onwards. As we have seen, this gradation has in view a subtilizing of the relation between God's absolute unity and the world. In his description Ghazālī does not veil the fact that it deviates from the Ash'arite view in so far as it places between the spheres and Allāh two other beings: the mover of the spheres and the Obeyed One. This position is, as we have seen, not new. It has a strong likeness with Ibn Sinā's theory. This explains the opinion spoken by Ibn Rushd, that Ghazālī in his *Mishkāt* has joined the philosophical views. But the difference is that Ghazālī removes this theory from the philosophical to the mystic domain. His declaring that the subtle discriminations between all those supernal beings, i.e., the elevation beyond the common orthodox view, is a mystery, seems to say that this is no longer a matter of the philosophical intellect but of mystic experience. Here is no return to the philosophical views which he considered with mistrust in earlier days, but rather a mystic subtilization parallel to philosophy, yet keeping its own position.

¹⁾ o. c. p. 25.

