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VAN

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A. W. SJITHOFF’S UITGEVERSMAATSCHAPPIJ N.V.
X. — GHAZALI’S MISHKAT AL-ANWAR
(NICHE OF LIGHTS)

Since the Caliphas published two editions of this small treatise, it has aroused the attention of those interested in
Ghazali and his position as a Muslim thinker. As early as 1914
W. H. T. Gairdner 1 compared its contents with the verdicts
of Ibn Ruḥd and Ibn Ṭuḥafṭ, the former of whom had main-
tained that the Ghaṣlī of the Mīṣḥāt had embraced the
discipline of emanation, whereas the latter refers to the opinion
that Ghaṣlī 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 Mīṣḥāt.

In his translation of the booklet 2 Gairdner touches these
problems anew, now connecting them chiefly with the two
passages where the Mutʿī or the Viceroyent occurs 3.

The questions which will be discussed in the present paper,
are chiefly the following: Is the Mīṣḥāt to be called an
esoteric writing? And: Is, and, if so, in how far is Ghaṣlī’s attitude
in the Mīṣḥāt essentially different from his position
in his previous writings such as the Münkīth and the Iḥyā’? 4
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 pretends to be
a commentary upon the Light-verse (Ṣūra 21, 35) and
the tradition on the veils of light and darkness which form a screen
between Allah 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. Thus leads

1) Der Islam, 1914.
2) Al-Ghazalī’s Mishkāt al-Anwar (“The niche for Lights”), London
1904.
3) See the discussion on p. 10 sqq.

GHAZALI’S MISHKAT AL-ANWAR 193
to a discussion of the κομψὸν νοητόν and the κομψὸν αὐθεντήγες
and their lights, as well as to a study of symbolism, on type
and anittype (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 conform 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 Uni-
verse, whereas Allāh Himself is only the mover 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 appreci-
ation; it has to be based on a closer examination of the
Mīṣḥāt, because we desire to know what world of ideas
Ghaṣlī 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 (ṣuḥūr) and
gūhār supposes a relation in so far as the thing necessarily
appears to or is concealed from another. This happens neces-
sarily 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.
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 apprehensive faculties, say 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: Allah created Adam after His own image. Here the author explains 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 potently (ša'iq). The highest wisdom is the Koran; consequently the Koran 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 things 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 the 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 Allah 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 godhead, just as is the light of the angels. All lights thus flow from one spring, Allah.

"The verity of verities". From here the gnostics ascend to the acme of reality, experiencing that there is nothing existent except Allah. Some of them have found this intellectually, others by "note and state" (jihād wu-hilā). 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 nether world to the other. There is no thing in this world, which is not the image of a thing in the celestial world. Sexual expressions in the Koran denote their supernal type: Sin is becoming to avoid the error of the Bihuniya who stains the image, as well as those of the Hayawiya who avoid 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 intellectual spirit (rāh 'alāt) which attains to the ideas lying beyond sense and imagination; it is a peculiar human faculty (jihād rāh); the discursive spirit (rusl fihr) 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 veil tradition. Those who are veiled by pure darkness are atheists and epoists of various kinds.
The second category are veiled by light mixed with darkness; it comprises three divisions: the first, the second and the third 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 muhammadan sects such as the Madijmimma and the Kairidimme; the third comprises classes of Anay'aris and Hanbalites.

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

Finally there are those who attain the highest insight (al-wujud), who deem that Allah’s pure Unity is not safeguarded by the role 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 there 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 (näs #2).

This detailed résumé may show that Ghazali’s booklet does not in the first place intend to be an explanation of the Light-verses 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 Miskht; 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, Allah. The second contains an exposition of the theory of ideas, based on the Platonic one, and illustrated by specifically muhammadan 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 Miskht and in his Ihya’; 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 (7), “that the sensual eye through its visual power alone (which is administered unto it from the beams as it were through a channel) without partaking of other light, is not able to receive [the images] of the different things. All natural apprehensions 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 (8) he plays again upon the ideas of light and sight: “Inteclent 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. Intellectual sight is natural knowledge which by power has been mixed with the order of nature, and which is called natural light. A holy power

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is grace, the sum 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 Ghazzali. Yet the close parallelism between the two in this respect does not show that Ghazzali 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 Ghazzali's Mishkat is nothing but a free paraphrase of the fifth book of the fourth Ennead, the contents of which may be given here in outline 1). After an introductory paragraph on the senses in general and that of sight especially, Plotinus concludes (§ 2) that light 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. 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 action are reproductions of the person or thing reflected.

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

1) The question of light and sight is also treated by Schurwass in his Hikmat al-Ightīyāt; cf. Horst, Die Philosophie der Erleuchtung (Halle 1928), p. 227 sqq. It is to be observed that Schurwass, in his 'Introduction' (transl., p. a) describes his conversion unto the Plotinian school of Plotinus; for mentionnius's and Philonius; no word of Plotin.

Ghazzali uses this comparison in order to illustrate the reflexes of the spiritual fountain-head in the terrestrial beings. 'Translator, Gaertner, p. 79.

I think in the first place of the closing paragraphs of the book De pulchritudine (7, 6, 8 sq.), where the celestial beauty, as it 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 up the bright celestial luminaries; it must get accustomed to contemplating beautiful things. Polish, therefore, thy soul, make it radiant, till the gorgeous beauty of all shines for thee. If thou hast become thus, pure, without impediment, thyselveweracious light only, may 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 sun-like, becomes, 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 Ghazzali had in mind when he wrote his Mishkat al-Ightīyāt? 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 Ghazzali's theosophy. It is the common property of the whole Neoplatonic school 2). We have already seen, how intimately this idea is connected with Plotin's loftiest thoughts (Enneads 1, 6, 8 sqq.). We may add to this a reference to Enneads VI. 6, 18 where the relation between the One and the many 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 Ghazzali'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..."

2) Cf. also Schurwass, o. c. p. 77: Gott ist in allen Bestehungen einfach. Deshalb kann aus dem nur eine Wirkung direkt hervorgehen. Das erste Sein, das aus Gott tervorgeht, ist reinem Licht.
it will obtain strength even till it recognizes the loveliness of the Ṣawq and its light and splendour, may till it recognizes the power of what is there above it, what is the Light of Lights and the Beauty of all Beauty and the Splendour of all Splendours?". 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 Ṣawq from its way through the intermediary of the Ṣawq upon the All-soul of the spheres and from the Ṣawq through the intermediary of the soul upon matter 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 untō it in a kind of longing and swing".

There is another passage in the Theology of Aristotle which is of special interest for the Mishkät, viz. p. 118 sq.: "We say that the primary light, viz. the light of lights, without limitation; it does not abate nor does it stop to illuminate the world of the Ṣawq; therefore the world of the Ṣawq does not have a cause; and because this world of the Ṣawq is endless, it gives birth to offspring and brings forth this world; by offspring I understand the world of the heavens, especially the prospect 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 Ṣawq 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 emergency of the world of the Ṣawq is the primary light and the governor of the world of the heavens is the world of the Ṣawq and the governor of the world of the demons 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 καιρός and καιρον is precisely to this Ṣawq of a light nature that Ghazalli has devoted interesting passages of his book, which we shall discuss later.

It is well known that the so-called Theology of Aristotle is a paraphrase of Plotinus' fourth Ennead. It is highly probable that Ghazalli was acquainted with this Arabic book which may have become to him a means of communication with Plotinus. 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 Subh al-Aswad's Philosophy of Illumination.

As regards the theory of symbolism in its specific Muham- madian form to which the second division of the Mishkät is devoted, it is so much akin to that of Plato's ideas that a dis- cussion of this relation seems superfluous: That Muslim philos- ophers were acquainted with this theory may appear, e.g., from the Theology of Aristotle.

It is an important coincidence in history that Islam which from its beginnings wrote Allah'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. It is not saying too much if we assert that Ghazalli's Mishkät is intrinsi- cally a Neoplatonic composition. But the whole passage (Ibn al-ʿAswad VI, 3, 12) deserves to be paraphrased. Plotinus begins with refusing those who say that the primary Unity may be a unity but that the energies proceeding from it are 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) Ed. Dietrich, p. 46.  
2) p. 3 1f. also p. 57, 58.
the former is derived. So it is in arithmetic. If this connection with arithmetical truth should be declared to not be allowed, Plotin argues: If there were no unity preceding plurality, things would be inchoate. He then discusses the relation between the Unity and the ϕοί. 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 saying that the Unity to the ϕοί, which, immovable in itself, governs the world of the ϕοί, 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.

"Εἶ τοῦτο τὸ πάντων ἀρχικόν κατά τὸ καθίστα τὰ κύρια τοιαύτα, ἵνα τὰ πάντοτε τὰ ϕοί μὴ μεταβαίνῃν τῇ ἀρχῇ τῶν ἄλλων, ἡμεῖς τοιαύτα, οὕτω τοιαύτα εἰς τὰ πάντα παρασκευάζομεν τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν ἄλλων, οὕτω τοιαύτα.

Plotin is moving in exactly the same ethical regions. With him also the problem is the relation between this world of plurality and motion to the Immovable One. According to some the Lord is he who moves the outer sphere of the Universe. So his unity is safeguarded but not his Immovableness. 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 subliterate gradation, however, does not belong anymore to the scope of the Mithkāl, as it is above common understanding. Nevertheless those who have reached this main peak and 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

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 light 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 sublimated theology which is based on views forwarded by philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā 2).

We have now to cast a glance on those passages of the Mithkāl which describe man's ascension from this world of shadow to yonder world of reality. Ğazālī speaks of this in 'anādīd 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 medieuvian 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 1943 and from that on which Gaarder'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 assigned 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, they are said (may Allah bless him); Allah 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. 27. Boeke, Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam, p. 123: Auf dem ersten Ebenen kann also (according to The Stolz) nur Eines hervor- gehen, der erste Weltgott. In diesem entsteht die Vierheit, indem er seine Ursache dient erzeugt er einen dritten Gott, den Leiter der äußeren Sphären.
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 ascents reach 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, whereas 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 source which causes the shadow, or as the relation between the fruit and the tree, or between effect and cause. 1

The second passage which is of interest for our present purpose, deals with ascension as well as with descent. 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 hidden thing 3 , which only the learned in Allāh know; and if they utter it, it is only denied by the ...). It is not far from truth when the learned say that the descension unto the lowest heaven is the ascension unto 4 an angel. But far from truth is what one of the gnostics has fancied. Beza, absorbed in Unity, he says also that he had a descension unto the lowest heaven and that this descension is a descension unto using the senses or to setting in motion 5 the limbs, and that this is affidated 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. تؤل. 3) فارغ الملاط ماء من جنا. 4) من كنال من يدغ مس. 5) Gairdner: If there be, indeed, any change.
8) Gairdner: Allāh, whom he takes as the subject of the following part of the sentence.
9) L. تؤل.
by the fact that Ghazâlî in describing the Observed One uses the Ktzûtic expression "He governs the amn", an expression which he applies also to the mystic, who has reached the utmost goal. Here the mystic is indeed the king 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 Kitzî nor with the Observed One. This opinion is based on the fact that several other mystics describe their ascension and descent in similar terms.

The idea and the description of the mystic's ascension go back to two older 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 and himself. Now ascension 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 descent. The idea and the description of descent 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 Miktâlî. It may be compared with the following passage from Philo, who says that the likeness between God and man consists in the nous, which is to a certain extent the God of the body. Just as God in the Universe so the Nous in the Nous of humans. Therefore...

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

It may be said that Plotin's Enhedûn apo katastasis of the Earth, as well as the ascension of the Nous, is a way of ascent to the supreme light in the work of him who is will to see."  

Here the philosopher speaks, not the mystic; still, that passage in the last book of the sixth Enhedûn, which Maimonides has inserted at the end of the Miktâlî, which is a part of the book becoming what it was before, is...  

1) De opificio mundi, ed. Manzey L, 15 ad 46, Col Verhagen, Jena, text, p. 576, translation, p. 337, 463, 464, whereas this word, which was made the title of the fourth book of the Science of the world, may be called the science of the world, because it embraces all the ends of the earth and farther, above all humans and gods and animals and all that is in them...  

2) Enhedûn VI, 9 3

3) VI, 4 6
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, where 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 to 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 immeasurable different kinds."

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

Ghazali's passage on the descent by way of radiation has a remarkable parallel in Bar Hebraeus' Jawna 1) and ‛Isḥaq 2).

On account of the delight it [viz. the mind] possesses, it cannot return to its former place, save only if its Lord descending it from union with Him. And when it returns it baptizes the members of the body with the fire of the Divine, 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 in its Lord descending it 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 Ḥūnaynī, Ὀρθωρῆς, Stephen of Bar Sulaidī, Isaac of Ninveh 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 same 'ascent' described by Ghazali has a close affinity

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1) Emiradi VI, 9, 31.  
4) Test ed. Beijirp, p. 397; translation (Wensinck 1933), p. 44.  
with the passages cited above and that it applies to the mystic
highest experiences.

Now he has inserted in his descriptions 2 two explanations, not
by himself but by others, of descent, regarding which he
takes a reserved attitude; the first he calls improbable, the
second is far from the truth. But it is not easy to say where
Ghazzallī's disapproval of the second explanation ends. The
whole passage is far from being clear. It refers to a descent
down through the different spheres in each of which the mystic is
dead from a new function. The bodily movement, the senses, the
mind, 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 macrocosmos and the
microcosmos. In this range of ideas descent is not viewed as
the mystic's being loosed from his union with God, but as
the descent of the human soul in general from its spiritual
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. "Vor der Himmel kommt sie, zum Himmel
steigt sie, und wieder niedr zu Erde muss es eintreten." 1

Goeze's lines on the never ceasing circulation of water
apply to the Neoplatonic soul in its collective and in its individual
manifestations. The reticulum is the Arabic term for this
process, which has even found its way to East India.

Leckeb's in his Aglaophasma sieve de theologiae mysticae greg-
orum cuncti II, 93 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
subjectae sphaerae anima delapsa, dum per illas labitur, in
singulius singulorum morum, quos in exercitio est habiturae product,
in Saturni rationalissime et intelligentiam, in Jovis vix anidi,

1) Cf. supra, p. 203 sqq.

2) Ghazzallī’s Mishkat al-ānwar

in Marcus animosam, in Solis sentiendi opinandique naturam,
desideri vero motum in Venere, pronunciandì et interpretandì,
quae sentiat, in orbis Mercurius, naturam vero planetae et aegardi
corpore ingentes globus lunaire exercet; qua a pluribus sed
non eodem modo tradita. Servius Æn. XI, 51. "Dicunt Physici,
quorn nasci cooperium, sortinur a sole spiritum, a luna corpus,
a venere cupiditatem, a saturno hominem, quae consina singulis
reddere videntar extincta" etc.

It seems hardly necessary to add other evidence. The
explanation of descent, which Ghazzallī calls improbable, appears
to be a special application to the mystic of a well known Helle-
nistic 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
ascend 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. Massingham have forwarded
the view, that the subject of the ra'd/a in Ghazzallī's description
is Muhammad (Nicholson), or the mystic Khât (Massingham).
It is certain that the ideas of man's heavenly descent and his
ra'd/a are connected with the conception of heavenly man, a
conception that has perhaps in its remote semitic antiquity,
that is known in several general or semi-genetic systems 3.
And that reaches its highest development in the Muslim idra
of the complete man (al-ānān al-kâmīf) and the pole (Khât)
linked to that of the heavenly man 4.

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

This conclusion is not only important for the understanding

1) See J. M. Grec, The Heavenly Man in Journal of Theological
Studies, XXXVI, 113 sqq.
of Ghazâlî'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 view.

We have finally to ask anew: Does the Minhâj show a new Ghazâlî 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 Gûjanî in general stands with one foot on the Neoplatonic territory, and this may be said of the author of the Ilhâk as well. His other foot is on the domain of Islam. A third prominent feature of the book consists in the decidedly Sûfî attitude which pervades the whole and sometimes touches the borderland of the mystic secrets. Ghazâlî does not divulge more of these than other Sûfî authors. There is one point which he treats 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 downwards. As we have seen, this gradation has in view a sublimation of the relation between God's absolute unity and the world. In his description Ghazâlî does not veil the fact that it deviates from the Ash'arî view in so far as it places between the spheres and Allah two other beings: the mover of the spheres and the Obeyed One. This position, as we have seen, is new. It has a strong likeness with Ibn Sînâ's theory. This explains the opinion spoken by Ibn Rûdî, that Ghazâlî in his Minhâj has joined the philosophical views. But the difference is that Ghazâlî removes this theory from the philosophical to the mystic domain. His declaration 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 we return to the philosophical views which he considered with mistrust in earlier days, but rather a mystic sublimation parallel to philosophy, yet keeping its own position.

1) O. e. p. 25.