AL-GHAZĂLĪ
THE MYSTIC

A Study of the Life and Personality of
Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Tūsī al-Ghazālī, together
with an account of his Mystical Teaching and an
estimate of his place in the History of Islamic Mysticism

By
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PREFACE

This book owes its origin to the honour done me by the Committee of Manchester College, Oxford, in electing me to a Senior Research Studentship, which I held from 1936 to 1938. During this period I was able to investigate the material which was afterwards used for this book, the publication of which has been delayed by circumstances beyond my control. I owe a debt of deep gratitude to Manchester College for the opportunity thus given of undertaking this study, and also for the opportunity of working in Oxford, where I found much help for my work.

In times like these it is well to turn our thoughts from the things which are temporal to the things which are abiding and eternal. When we study the life and work of the mystics, we see that their inward vision did not make them less capable of serving other men, but rather of living a fuller life for others in the world, while at the same time they sought always to live a life of the closest fellowship with God.

London,
May 1944.

MARGARET SMITH.
PART I
AL-GHAZÂLI’S LIFE AND PERSONALITY

CHAPTER I
al-Ghazâlî’s birth at Tûs. His Early Years and Education. His Travels and Professional Work. His interest in Šâfi‘î.

Abû Hamîd Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Tâ‘ûs Ahmad al-Tûsî al-Shâfi‘î, known as al-Nishâqdtî, the Proof of Islam, the Ornament of Religion, the Guide to the True Faith, was born in 450/1058 at Tûs, near the modern Meshed, in Khurasân. This district, in the North-East of the old Persian Empire, had been chosen by the Abbasids as the centre for the propaganda which preceded the establishment of their empire in the eighth century A.D., and from that time onwards it was conspicuous for the number of religious teachers, writers, and especially poets, whom it produced.¹

Tûs itself, comprising the two townships of Tâbarân and Nawgân, was a town of considerable size, well-built and thickly populated, famous for its waters and its trees and the mineral deposits in the neighbouring mountains, and still more famous as the birthplace of some of the most outstanding personalities in the history of Islam. Among these was Abû ‘Ali al-Hassan b. Ishâq, known as Nizâm al-Mulk,² who held this district as a fief, conferred on him by the Caliph Malik Shah, and built there two cathedral mosques. The Nizâm al-Mulk was destined to play a great part in the life of al-Ghazâlî himself. Two famous poets were also native of Tûs, Firdawsi (ob. 416/1025), author of the Shahâname, the greatest of Persian epic poems, and the celebrated ‘Umar Khayyâm,³ who was contemporary with al-Ghazâlî.

¹ See Nishâqdtî, Al-‘a’dâm al-mu‘ā‘idd (pp. 125 ff.); the Shi‘i poet Abû ‘Ali b. Mâlik al-Hâfiz, Târiikh al-‘a‘lam al-tâ‘îlî (pp. 126 ff.); and M. W. Thomas, ed., The Khamsa of Nizâm al-Mulk, London, 1931 (pp. 15 ff. and 19 ff.).
² See J. H. M. R. Le Strange, The History of the Persian Empire (pp. 170 ff.).
³ See, e.g., the Khamsa of Nizâm al-Mulk (pp. 355 ff.).
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al-Ghazzali’s kiswa, according to the most reliable authorities, was derived from the village of Ghazala, near Tis. He was, therefore, a Persian, though most of his books were written in Arabic. Some thirty years before al-Ghazzali’s birth, the Seljogs in 1071 A.D. took over the East of Persia. He had established himself in Baghdad. He was ruling as king of the East and of the West at the time of al-Ghazzali’s birth and five years later was succeeded by his nephew Abu Arsalan.

al-Ghazzali was not the first scholar of distinction in his family; there had been another Abdi Hamed al-Ghazzali, his uncle, a teacher from far and wide, who was also a writer. He was buried at spinner hill under a stone, a poor man but devout. It is related that daily prayers were held for him and that al-Ghazzali’s father, however, like his grandfather, was a teacher of Islam, and Abu-l-Futuh Abi Amad, named Najdi (the Glory of Religion), who had such power in preaching and he also, like his brother, was a mystic. Besides this one

Their father died when his sons were still young and before his death he committed them to the care of a Sufi friend, to whom he stated that his sons should have what he had lacked: therefore, much money as he was able to leave them was to be spent entirely on their education. al-Ghazzali’s education at the right school for a boy, i.e., the study of the Qur’an and Traditions, to which he adds what, in his own case, probably

2. Ibid., 161, pp. 22 and 23. 11. 64, p. 54.

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came from his Sufi guardian—stories of the saints and their spiritual states, “in order that the love of the godly may be implanted within him.” He includes also the committal to memory of poems “which contain the mention of passionate love and lovers.”

This Sufi friend undertook the education of the two boys until the small legacy was exhausted, and then, since he himself was a poor man, he advised them to betake themselves to a madrasa or college or academy, where, as students, they would have rooms assigned to them, and this they did. al-Ghazzali afterwards said of this period in his life, “We sought learning for the sake of something other than God, but He would not allow it to be for anything but Himself.”

It was perhaps with the thought of what he owed to this Sufi friend in his mind that al-Ghazzali wrote later on: “Let the student be assured that more is due to the teacher than the father, for the teacher is the cause to him of eternal life and the father the cause only of his temporal life. It was for that reason that Alexander, who was asked whether he honoured his teacher or his father more, replied, ‘My teacher—most certainly.’”

al-Ghazzali writes also of the right conduct of the pupil towards the teacher, which may well have been impressed upon him at this age, that the pupil ought to listen attentively to the teacher and not speak except when asked questions, nor should he contradict his master, saying: “So and so said the opposite of what you say.” Nor should the pupil give advice to his teacher, in opposition to his expressed opinion, in order to appear more learned than he is. It may well be that in his later years, al-Ghazzali’s conscience reproached him in this respect, for he was undoubtedly an ambitious, and probably a self-satisfied boy, at any rate fully aware of his own exceptional ability. He adds that the pupil should not discuss matters in class with his fellow pupils, nor be restless, but should sit silent, with eyes cast down, as quiet and well-behaved as if he were at prayer. A scholar should not pester the teacher when he is tired, nor, when he leaves, should the pupil follow him, asking questions along the road, which
movement, the puppets do not move themselves, but even they perhaps do not know how it is managed, nor understand the matter as the showman understands it. So it is, too, Al-Ghazâlib holds, with the people of this world, who fail to realise that all things and all events are the outcome of the Divine Will. The boy, he holds, must obey both his parents and his teacher and all who are set in authority over him. As soon as he reaches years of discretion, he must learn to fulfil his religious duties and to realise that this world is only a place of preparation for the next, Al-Ghazâlib concludes with the statement that if the boy's upbringing is sound, he will find this rule of life acceptable to him as an adult and it will be as deeply impressed on his heart as the inscription is engraved upon the stone.

He adds a story, which he may have heard from his Sâbî guardian, of the Sâbî Saitb. "Abû Amr al-Tustâbi (ib. 283 f/n7), who, when he was but three years old, used to get up at night to watch his uncle M. Sâbî pray. On one occasion his uncle asked the child if he would not also give praise to his Creator. The boy asked how he should praise Him, and his uncle replied: "When you put on your night-gown, say three times within your heart, without moving your tongue, 'God is with me, God is watching me, God is looking upon me.' The boy learnt to say it and then his uncle told him to say it seven times each night, and the child did so. Then his uncle said "Say it eleven times." The boy carried out his instructions and, speaking of it afterwards, said that the sweetness of the words sank into his heart. At the end of a year his uncle said, "Beau in mind what you have learnt and continue to do this for the rest of your life."" 3

While still a boy Al-Ghazâlib began the study of jurisprudence in Tûnis under Shaykh Abûn b. M. al-Râshidân al-Thânî, 4 and then travelled to Jârzân, in Mazzâdrâb, to study under the Imam Abû Naqr al-Tamîsh, 5 of whose lectures he made notes. Returning to Tûnis, he met with an adventure which is recorded by most of his biographers, on the word of al-Ghazâlib himself.

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1 Târikh, II, pp. 63, 64, IV, p. 83.
2 Târikh, II, p. 38.
3 Ibid., p. 17. The date here given for Abu Naqr’s death appears to be an error.
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The party was attacked by highway robbers, who carried off all that the travellers had with them. Al-Ghazali went after them, though warned by the chief of the brigands that he im-
periled his life by so doing. He persisted, however, and begged only for the return of his precious note-books, which could be of no value to them. “What are your note-books?” asked the robber-chief, and al-Ghazali explained that they contained notes of the lectures he had recently heard and represented his knowledge of them. The robber laughed and said, “How can you lay claim to this knowledge when we have taken it from you?” Being separated from your knowledge, you remain without it.” Then he ordered one of his men to restore the note-books to their owner. al-Ghazali felt that the words of the robber were to be taken as Divine guidance to him, and when he had reached Tus, he took himself to study for three years, during which time he committed to memory all the contents of his note-books, so that if he were robbed again, he could not be deprived of his learning. It seems probable that it was during these three years that al-Ghazali was studying Sufism under the guidance of Yuhfon al-Nasafi. al-Ghazali said later of himself: “At the beginning of my career, I knew nothing of the spiritual ‘states’ of the righteous and the ‘stations’ of the gnostics until I associated with my Shaykh Yusuf al-Nasafi in Tus, but he did not cease to ‘polish’ me by means of self-discipline until I was favored with revelations and I heard the voice of God in a dream saying to me, ‘Ask Him.’ My first thought was that perhaps Satan was addressing me, but he said: ‘Not so, it is your Lord Who is everywhere present with you. O Ask Him, abandon your formal rules, and seek the company of those whom I have appointed to be My friends in the earth, who have renounced both heaven and earth, for love of Me.’ Then I said: ‘By Thy Grace, hast Thou not made me to think rightly of Thee (i.e., as they do) ?’ He answered: ‘I have done so, and that which separates you from them is your pre-occupation with the love of this world. You depart from it of your own choice, before you are cast out of it with ignominy. For I have
1 Subat. Tab. IV, p. 203.

shed upon you the radiance of My glorious Presence, therefore, stretch forth your hand and obtain.’ Then I woke up, happy and rejoicing, and came to my Shaykh Yusuf al-Nasafi and told him of my dream. He smiled, saying: ‘O Ask Him, these are but the planes we use at the beginning. I hope that we have kicked away out if you continue in my company, your inward vision shall be adorned with the sanctity of the Divine assistance, until you behold the Throne of God and those who are round about it. When you have reached that stage, you will not be satisfied until you contemplate what the eye cannot see. So will you be purified from the defilement of your human nature and rise above the limitations of your intellect and you will hear the Voice of God Most High, saying unto you, as unto Moses, ‘Verily I am God, the Lord of all created things.’”

In 470/1077-B, al-Ghazali went to Nishapur, and there, with other students from Tus, joined the classes of Abu’l-Malai al-Jawwayn, known as the Imam al-Haramayn, under whom he studied theology, philosophy, logic, Gnostic and natural science, and possibly also heard something more of Sufism, for it is stated that the Imam had been a pupil of Abu Na’nim al-Isfahani and when he himself was dealing with the doctrines of the Sufis and their mystical states (jawah) he used to draw tears from all present.4

Al-Ghazali early gave proof of great ability and also of a tendency to scepticism. He engaged in debates with other students and seems to have been successful in refuting their arguments. The Imam al-Haramayn allowed much freedom to his students, and this freedom acted as a stimulus to the genius of his brilliant pupil. Even at this early age al-Ghazali was lecturing to his fellow-students and beginning to write, and at this time his health suffered from his over-application to work. Describing al-Ghazali, with two other pupils of his, the Imam al-Haramayn said:

1 M. al-Ma’ani, Indel. 9, p. 31. Subat. Tab. 14, p. 23.
3 Ed. 470/1077, the author of one great biography of the saints known as
4 Ed. 470/1077, the author of one great biography of the saints known as

the Prophet of Islam.

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"al-Ghazali is a sea to drown in, al-Kiya is a raging lion and al-Khuwairi is a burning fire." He is reported to have said also: "al-Khwardimi's strong point is verification, al-Ghazali's is speculation, and al-Kiya's is explanation."

While the Imam was really jealous of him, because al-Ghazali excelled his master in the quickness of his explanations and in his natural capacity, and it was not acceptable to the older man that al-Ghazali, for writings which he had himself publicly written, had made himself the master of every subject to which he had applied himself. It is related that when al-Ghazali had written his Kitab al-Muskabah, he showed it to the Imam al-Haramayn, who observed: "You have buried me while I am still alive. Why did you not have patience to wait until I was dead? For your book has thrust my writings out of sight."  

It was during this period that al-Ghazali became impatient of dogmatic teaching and abandoned the policy of dependence upon authority (taklif) - "he rose up to free his mind from that immense captivity, in order to seek for that which aroused the soul of its happiness and joy."  

From his boyhood, al-Ghazali tells us, he had been possessed by the desire to comprehend the real meaning of things for himself and he had come to the conclusion that the greatest hindrance in the search for truth was the acceptance of beliefs on the authority of past masters or teachers, and a rigid adherence to the heritage of the past. He remembered the traditional saying ascribed to the Prophet that "Every child is born with a naturally religious disposition (al-tashf) and his parents make him into a Jew or a Christian or a Magian." He was anxious to know what was that innate disposition before it was affected by unreasonable convictions imposed by others. So he set out to secure a knowledge which left no room for doubt, and involved no possibility of error or conjecture, and, finding that none of the knowledge which he had acquired, except that which was based of these two fellow-students of pp. 60 ff. below.

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on first-hand experience, satisfied those conditions, from this time onwards he became a seeker after absolute truth and was content with no lower standard. He expressed this in a couplet which became famous:

"Take what you see and let hearsay alone."

When the sun has risen, what need have you of Saturn?"

He justified his scepticism by saying: "He who does not doubt, does not investigate, and he who does not investigate does not perceive, and he who does not perceive remains in blindness and error." All kinds of knowledge, he felt, should be investigated by the scholar, for all might be a help to him and the true scholar should be hostile to none. "For men are hostile to that of which they are ignorant." He says also that it is the business of the true investigator to embark on the deep waters of what is obscure (al-sukkaf), from which the common folk should be kept away, just as boys are kept away from the bank of the Tigris, lest they should be drowned. Just those who are strong may embark upon such studies just as the skilled swimmer is free to dive into deep waters.

During this period al-Ghazali was also studying under the Sheikh Abu 'Ali al-Fadl b. M. b. 'Ali al-Farmadhi al-Thal, a pupil of al-Ghazali's uncle and of al-Qadihny, who had established a circle for instruction, held, as we are told, in a garden full of flowers, at Nishapir, where he enjoyed the patronage of Nasim al-Mulk. His teaching attracted large numbers of students and strangers from other parts, since he was considered to be the greatest leader on the mystic path. He died in Tahir in 477 H, 1182 A.D. From al-Farmadhi al-Ghazali learnt more of the Sheikh "Way" and followed his directions in regard to observing the daily duties of good works and works of supererogation, while engaged in frequent devotions and earnestly striving the while to attain to salvation. Passing beyond this stage, he took to asceticism and self-mortification, but did not find that these brought him
to his goal. It was probably to this period that al-Ghazalî was referring when he stated: "When I desired to set forth upon the Sîhi Path, and to drink of their wine, I considered my soul and saw that it was encompassed by many wells. So I retired into solitude and occupied myself with self-discipline and self-mortification for forty days, and I was given knowledge which I possessed before, purer and finer than I had yet known, and I considered it, and lo, it contained a theologic element. Then I betook myself again to solitude and occupied myself with discipline and self-mortification for forty days, and then I was given other knowledge, still finer and purer than that I possessed at first, and I rejoiced in it: then I examined it and beheld, it contained a speculative element. So I returned to solitude a third time, for forty days again, and I received other knowledge still finer and purer, but when I examined it, behold it contained an admixture of knowledge acquired by human means (‘umr) and so I had not yet overthrown those possessed of knowledge from on high (al-`ulûm al-Ludûniyya). So I realised that writing over what has been erased is not like writing on what was originally pure and clean, and I had not really separated myself from speculation except in a few matters."

He doubt the increasing attraction of the Sîhi teaching, with its insistence upon a direct personal experience of God, added to Ghażalî’s critical dissatisfaction with dogmatism.

The Imam al-Harîmî died in 478/1085, after teaching in Nishâpûr for nearly thirty years, and his biographer records that at the moment of his death, his students, who numbered four hundred and one, broke their pens and ink-skins and allowed a full year to elapse before they assumed his studies.1 Alp Arslân had been succeeded by Malik Shâh in 497/1072, and al-Ghazalî now had a place in the royal camp, where Malik Shâh’s great Vizier Nizâm al-Mulk had gathered around him a circle of the most distinguished scholars of the time, who frequented his hâkims and dedicated their books to him. The Vizier had a great regard for the Shâhid, and had visited relatives

1 Sâbit, f., p. 194.
2 Cf. al-Nihâya, p. 57.

from both the Imam al-Harîmî and al-Qushayrî, to whom he showed great honour. Of him, after his death, his son-in-law wrote:

"Nizâm al-Mulk was a precious pearl, possessed of pure nobility by God the All-Most-Blessed.

So fine was it that the age did not receive its worth, and its Maker, jealous for its honour, restored it to its shell."

Nizâm al-Mulk not only encouraged the scholars of the age to come to his court, but he also founded a number of colleges, Sâfi monasteries, and mosques, in different provinces, building colleges in Baghdad, Balkh, Nishâpûr, Herât, Isfâhan, Buza, Merv, Amûl (in Tabaristan) and Mosul, so that it was said of him that there was a college founded by him in every city of Iraq and Khurâsân.

al-Ghazalî, whose fame as a scholar had preceded him, was received with much favour by the Vizier, who honoured him and showed much of him. Nizâm al-Mulk held frequent assemblies for debate and discussion and al-Ghazalî soon made his mark at these and was conspicuous for his skill in debate. He assumed the leadership among his fellow-scholars, as he had done in Khurâsân, and his name became widespread. Travelers came from afar to hear him, and, as his biographer says, “he was one of those whom men pointed out.”

al-Ghazalî’s reputation as a scholar and especially his profound knowledge of Muslim theology and philosophy led Nizâm al-Mulk to appoint him to the Chair of Theology at the Nishâpûr College at Baghdad, in 497/1072, when al-Ghazalî was only thirty-four.

These Colleges or Academies had taken the place of the mosques, as centres of instruction, because of the increasing numbers of students devoted to learning, who needed some means of maintaining themselves. A madrasa had been founded in Baghdad as early as 383/993 and before long most of the larger cities possessed such schools of learning. To found such a centre of knowledge was reckoned a pious deed and the endowments were made sufficient to cover the general costs of maintenance, the stipends of professors and lecturers.

1 Cf. Ibn Khaldûn, I, p. 413. Similar verses were also inscribed over the tomb of Sahâibard at Nishâpûr, ibid., p. 397.
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and to provide scholarships for students. The buildings were made of stone and over the door was carved a dedicatory inscription, while the interior included an open courtyard, containing a large tank, and behind was the oratory. Round this courtyard were arcades and small rooms opening into the court, together with lecture-rooms and libraries. The upper storey of the building consisted of an open hall, furnished with circular, arched windows. Every encouragement was given to scholarship and learning by the authorities, and the poor scholar, travelling in pursuit of learning, could find free board and lodging at these colleges. There were libraries, both public and private, available for the use of students, the first to be established in Baghdad being Mas'udi’s "House of Wisdom." (Bayt al-Hikma), founded in 215/830. In the thirteenth century Baghdad possessed no fewer than thirty-six libraries.

At Baghdad, not only theology, but medicine and philosophy were taught, and the School of Baghdad was characterized from the first by its scientific spirit, accepting as valid only what was confirmed by experiment. There was complete freedom to teach for any teacher who was competent and knew his subject, and the lectures at Baghdad were attended by Muslim scholars from all parts of the Empire. While there were fixed days and hours for individual lectures, there was no time-limit to lectures, nor any limit to the number of lectures that might be delivered on a given subject. The lecture usually took the form of a prepared treatise and was taken down verbatim by the class. The lecturer could not use the work of other scholars except by written permission, nor could members of the class take use of the substance of the lecture without the lecturer's leave.

The Nizamiyah College, to which al-Ghazali was appointed, had been built by Nizam al-Mulk in 457/1065, the first Director being Abu Ishqāʾ al-Shirāzī, who died in 476/1083.1 His biographer states that when al-Ghazali arrived to take up his appointment at the Nizamiyah, the jurists came to him and said:

"We have been told that it has been the custom for everyone who teaches in this building to invite the jurists to be present and listen, and we wish you to invite us to your lectures on theology (ilm)." Then al-Ghazali replied: "Most willingly, but on one of two conditions, either you shall provide refreshments for the day, and I shall fix the date, or the other way round." They said: "No, you shall provide refreshments, and we wish to be invited for to-day." He rejoined: "Then the food provided must be what I can manage, and it will be bread and vinegar and herbs." Then they explained: "No, by God, but you shall fix the day, and we will supply provisions: we intend to have a supply of chicken and of sweetmeats." Then al-Ghazali said, "Very well, then, the day shall be two years hence." So they admitted that they were baffled and left it all to him.2

But, notwithstanding, al-Ghazali received a warm welcome in Baghdad. We are told that he astonished the Baghdadis by the excellence of his lectures, his fluent delivery, the extent of his learning, the solidity of his conclusions and the lucidity of his explanations, and they conceived a great regard for him and treated him "as the apple of their eye." His lectures attracted large classes, which included the chief savants of the time. His wealth and position became such that his household and the number of his followers were said to exceed those of the great nobles and Amirs and even the court of the Caliph himself. He became the Imam of 'Irāq, as he had been Imam of Khurāsān.3 In addition to lecturing, al-Ghazali was called upon to give legal decisions, based on the Cannon Law (fiqh), e.g. Yusuf b. Ṭāhir, chief of the Almoravides, who had conquered Spain in A.D. 1088, formed an unfavourable opinion of the independent Muslim chiefs who exercised authority there, and referred the matter to al-Ghazali, among others, for his opinion and al-Ghazali, in consultation with Abū Bakr Turṭūshī, a well-known authority on law and tradition (ib. 220/1220), addressed letters of advice to Yusuf, urging him to govern with justice, and at the same time sent decisions with regard to these Muslim

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1. Shb. Jāh. IV, p. 113

2. Shb. 48, p. 204

CHAPTER II
The new Ghaṣālī. His conversion and period of retreat. His return to active life. His later years and his death.

The reasons for the abandonment of his career and for the rejection of all that the world had to offer him—a decision which astonished and perplexed all who heard of it—al-Ghazālī sets forth in his apologia pro sua rebus.1 In this he states that through his study of Sūfism, he had come to realize that knowledge of the way to God was not the same as experience of that way; that to know the meaning of the renunciation of worldliness was not the same thing as actually to renounce this world and all its gifts. From his study of the writings of the Sūfis and their lives, he saw that Sūfism consisted not in words but in actual experience. The attainment of the world to come, for which he sought, depended upon his detachment from this present world and the directing of his whole concern towards God. This could only be accomplished by abandoning reputation and wealth and fleeing from worldly pre-occupations and ties. As he reflected upon his position in Baghdad, it seemed to al-Ghazālī that he was fettered on every hand: his best work consisted of his studies and his teaching and he felt that he was giving his time to what was of no real importance or help in his purpose of drawing near to God, for the real motive of his work was the desire for fame and self-glorification. It must have been of this time that he was thinking, when he wrote later on: "The strongest ties which fetter the soul are those of the creatures and the love of position, for the joy of exercising authority and control and of being superior to others and of being their leader is the joy which in this world most prevails over the souls of the intelligent. And how should it not be so, since its object is that of the attributes of God Himself, namely, Lordship (wahshqiyah). For domination is naturally loved and desired by the heart, because it is related to what is..."

1 al-Nasrī, Sīrat al-Dīn, pp. 72, 73.
2 It was as a result of his pre-occupation with philosophy at this time that he wrote his Miftāḥ al-Falah, which he dedicated to his teacher, al-S̱ufī al-Fārabi, The King of the Philosophers, the author of the Poliphilo, a refutation of their teaching.
3 al-Munāqib, pp. 4 ff.
4 al-Munāqib min al-Ghazālī (The Deliverer from Error).
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Divine—the search for power on the part of men is not blame-worthy, but power is of two kinds, the power which is allied with all kinds of cares and quickly vanishes, for it is transitory and belongs to this life, and the power which is eternal and belongs to the next life. Man has been created subject to death ("ajnāl"). desirous of what is transient, and so he is tempted by what is only temporal."

al-Ghazālī felt at this time as if he were standing on the edge of a precipice whence he would be hurled to destruction, unless he drew back in time. He reflected for some time on his position, unable to make up his mind; one day he resolved to leave Baghdad and to cut loose from all these hindrances to spiritual progress, and the next day the resolve weakened. "I put one foot forward," he writes, "and withdrew the other." In the morning he felt a sincere desire to seek the things pertaining to eternal life, in the evening worldly and sensual desires got the better of him. The love of this world urged him to remain where he was, while at the same time the voice of conscience was calling insistently to him: "Set out, set out, for but little of life remains and the journey before you is long. All your actions and all your knowledge are nothing but hypocrisy and pretension. If you do not prepare now for the life to come, when will you prepare? If you do not detach yourself now, when will you do it?" So al-Ghazālī wrestled with the temptations of the world, the flesh and Satan for nearly six months, and it was to this inward struggle that his breakdown was due. He was probably thinking of this illness when he wrote: "We have sometimes seen a learned man fall sick with some infirmity which affects the head and the breast, so that his soul shuns all knowledge, and he forgets what he has learnt and it becomes confused to him, and all that he has acquired in the past remains hidden within his memory and his recollections." The Caliph, hearing of the Professor's illness, sent his own physician, among others, to treat him. When the doctors had done their best and

were baffled, admitting that the cause was spiritual, not physical, al-Ghazālī tells us that he surrendered himself to the mercy of God, and in Him found the salvation which he had sought so long for himself.

He had asked a Șifti friend whether he should not devote himself to studying the Word of God (the Qur'ān), but the Șifti did not advise that, saying: "The Way to God consists in perseverance in cutting off all hindrances and healing the soul of the evil that afflicts it, and in concerning yourself with that until it becomes habitual to you. The most effective means of ensuring that is to have your native land and your own country, to depart from Iraq, and betake yourself to a life of seclusion and avoidance of sin. Then when that state is established in your heart, you should give yourself continually to solitude, for the purpose of reflection and meditation upon the kingdom of heaven and earth, until your attributes are made perfect, and you are adorned with the virtues after being thus set free from the vices. Then that has come to pass, you will be fit to become an Imām and make it your sole concern to call men unto God." 3

In this way, al-Ghazālī says, God made it easy for him to abandon position and wealth and family ties and friends. Fearing lest the Caliph and his personal friends should prevent him from carrying out his real purpose of going to Syria in order to follow the Șiftī Path and live a life of devotion, he stated that he was going on pilgrimage and so departed. 4

It was not the case that al-Ghazālī now discovered that mysticism, that is, Sufism, was the way of spiritual progress, he had been realising that fact over a period of years, by his theoretical study of it, but now he consecrated himself to it, to make it part of his own personal experience. So he left Baghdad and went to Syria, and remained there for nearly two years, occupying himself, as he tells us, "simply in retreat and solitude, self-discipline and self-mortification, being pre-occupied with the cleansing of the soul, the amendment of character, and the purification of the heart for the recollection of God Most High," in accordance with what he had learnt.
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From his study of Šimalm. 1 It was no doubt in reference to this period that he wrote afterwards in his Rawdat al-Tibā'in (The Garden of the Seekers): "True happiness and everything else that is worth while, which remains with you when your ship is wrecked, consists in two things, one of which is peace of mind, with the heart's freedom from all save God, and the other is the filling of the heart thus freed, with the knowledge of God Most Glorious, for it was to this end that all things were created. The result of combining these two things is a fine personality."

After he went to Damascus, where he arrived in 483/1096. It is related that he entered the city in the garb of a poor man and sat at the door of the Khānqāh al-Samāliyya, 2 until an unknown faqr gave him leave to enter and then he busied himself in sweeping the court for ablations attached to the monastery, and in doing the work of a servant there. Then, one day, when he was sitting in the court of the 'Umayyad mosque, where a number of muwīs were sitting talking together, a village came to them, seeking a legal decision (fatwa), but they gave him no reply. al-Ghazālī, engaged in meditation, saw that no one gave the man any answer and that he was troubled thereby, so he called the rustics to him and gave them a reply. The villager, however, scoffed at him, saying: 'The muwīs gave me no decision and how can this ignorant faqr tell me what I want to know.' The muwīs, meanwhile, were observing them and when al-Ghazālī had finished speaking, they called the villager and asked him what that common fellow had said to him. When the peasant explained the matter, they came to al-Ghazālī and, recognising him, surrounded him, requesting him to establish a discussion circle for them. He held out the hope of meeting them the next day, but instead he left the city that night. 3

Some biographers say that after his stay there, he visited Jerusalem and then returned to Damascus, though al-Ghazālī himself does not mention such a visit to Jerusalem, but only the fact that he settled down to a life of seclusion in Damascus, in the mosque of the 'Umayyads, where he spent much time in prayer and meditation in the minaret of the mosque, which is now called the Minaret of al-Ghazālī. 4 There he shut himself in, so that he might be free from interruption. This place of retreat is said to have been the cell of Shaykh Naṣr al-Maqdisī, and it is related that al-Ghazālī originally set out, with the idea of joining Shaykh Naṣr, and reached Damascus on the day of the Shaykh's death. It happened that he went into the mosque, wearing the garb of a faqr, and came upon Shaykh Naṣr's seat in this place of retreat (zanjūj). While he was there, a group of students arrived and entered into conversation with him, after they had considered him and looked at him for a long time, and as they talked with him, 'They found him an ocean, inexhaustible.' Then he asked them what Shaykh Naṣr was doing, and they replied: 'He is dead and we have just returned from his funeral. When his end was approaching, we asked him who would be his successor and teach his followers, and he said: When my funeral is over, return to my cell and you will find someone there, a stranger,' and he described you to us. He told us to give that stranger his greetings, for he would be his successor.' al-Sukkī, who relates this story, is doubtful whether it can be accepted as true. He points out that Shaykh Naṣr died in 490/1097 and that if this did occur, it could not have been when al-Ghazālī first arrived in Damascus, but after his return from Jerusalem. He thinks, however, that al-Ghazālī may have joined Shaykh Naṣr when he first reached Damascus in 484/1096, and it would have been natural enough for him to return to his former place of retreat. 5

1 Ibn Ijābī (66, 1317 A.D.), a traveller and writer belonging to Granada, who has left an account of his travels between 473 and 528, says: The Tiberias or Steinschul is to the north, and only the fact that he settled down to a life of seclusion in Damascus, in the mosque of the 'Umayyads, where he spent much time in prayer and

2 al-Jābī, p. 72.
4 The monastery belonging to the people of Samsālī, on the Esphraim.
5 Sukkī, Tab., IV, p. 164. Of al-Ghazālī it is related that he had joined Naṣr, but this is very uncertain due to his great activity, al-Asīr al-Darrāḍi, to succeed him. The.

1 483/1096
2 484/1096
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al-Ghazali now lived the life of an ascetic, wearing coarse clothing and practising the greatest abstinence in the matter of food and drink, and giving most of his time to devotion. He found leisure for writing, too, and while here he wrote the greatest of all his works, the Ihya Ulum al-Din (The Revivification of Religion). His biographers relate that one day al-Ghazali happened to enter one of the Damascusan colleges and found a lecturer there who was quoting his teaching, and using the words: 3 al-Ghazali said: """"and, fearing lest he should be overtake 3by pride, he left Damascus, and began to wander about the country. He himself states that he went to Jerusalem, where he gave himself up to the contemplative life, spending much of his time in prayer in the great Mosque of 'Umar, where, as in Damascus, he seduced himself, locking the door of his retreat behind him. As time went on, he seems to have gathered round him a circle of disciples. Abu'l-Futuḥ al-Maraghī stated at a conference in Amal, in Tabaristan, that he had been present at a gathering in Jerusalem, at the ""Cradle of Jesus,"" which included al-Ghazali, Imām al-Hākim, Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Ṭaṣṣalī and Ibrahim al-Shaqqā, al-Jarjūsī and a large number of pious strangers, and these verses were improvised, one account says, by al-Ghazali himself:

""May I be your ransom, if it were not for love you would have
rannoned me.
But by the magic of two eye-pupils, you have made me captives.
I came to you when my heart was straitened by desire.
Had you known how great was my hunger, you would have come
to me."

Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Ṭaṣṣalī was fired with ecstasy and his emotion so affected those present that one of the company died on the spot. 4

From Jerusalem, al-Ghazali went to Hebron and the Ujajā and thence to Egypt, visiting Cairo and Alexandria, where he stayed for a time, and there he seems to have resumed his

1 It is said to have been the Archdeacon Madras, but this was not founded
2 Cf. Le Strange, Jutland under the Caliphs, p. 69.
3 Sahih, Fis. IV, p. 203.
4 C. H. Gasche, p. 248.
5 Ibid.
6 Mudāki, al-Tawqabbah, fol. 194b, 195a. Māṣūr al-Din (Tarjumān), p. 11.

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scholarly activities, and taken up teaching again. After this he appears to have taken once more to a wandering life, visiting various sanctuaries and shrines, living all the time the life of an ascetic, eating dry bread, wearing rags, carrying a bag for his scanty provisions and a staff in his hand, seeking to purify his soul by self-discipline and good works until, as his biographer says, he became the ""Pivot of Existence"" (Qubb al-Waqid), a general blessing to all creatures and a guide to the attainment of the satisfaction of the All-Merciful. 5 It seems most probable that it was during this period that someone followed him, as he was wandering in the open country, wearing a patched garment and carrying a water-jar and staff. Now that person had previously seen him in his lecture-room, lecturing to an audience of three hundred students and a hundred of the notables of Baghdad, and he said: ""O 'Ilmām, is not the work of teaching better than this?"" al-Ghazali looked at him with indifference and replied: ""When the full moon of happiness has arisen in the firmament of desire, then the sun of reason approaches the setting-place of attainment,"" and he recited these verses:

""I abandoned the love of Layla and my happiness was fiar off,
And I returned to the companionship of my first halting-place.
And my desires called out to me, ""Gently, for these
Are the stations, of one whom you love, so slowly, slight."
I had sown a fine thread for them and I did not find
A weaver for my thread, so I broke my spindle."" 6

It was probably during this period of wandering that he paid a visit to Hamadān, and we are told that he had as his companion while wandering, Abū Tāhir al-Shaqqā (called also al-Shaqqā العراقي, a fellow-pupil of the Imam al-Ḥaramayn.

al-Ghazali now returned to his own country and for a time was teaching in Baghdad and lecturing on the Ihya, though evidently still living a life of semi-retirement. He established himself also as a preacher and 7 spoke with the tongue of those who have attained to the Truth. 8 He no longer lectured his teaching on the authority of others, nor did he rely for his instruction on the Traditions. He was now engaged in calling men to repentance.

1 Le Strange, Jutland under the Caliphs, p. 68.
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at this time his manner of life met with general approval and his authority was unquestioned. This state of things continued until Fakhr al-Mulk Jamal al-Shabbadah became Vizier and established his court and títrine in Khurasan: he heard where al-Ghazzali was living and was informed of his high reputation and his great learning and the spiritual state to which he attained, in the purity of his faith, and his manner of life. So Fakhr al-Mulk sought for a blessing from him and visited him and listened to his teaching, and then besought him not to let his rare qualities and gifts remain fruitless, without profit to others, giving no light from their radiance. The Vizier used every opportunity and pressed al-Ghazzali until at last he asked to go, and was carried off to Nishapur, where he was appointed as lecturer in the Maymuna Nizamiya College, being unable to escape from the pressure put upon him by the Government. This was in 499 H.1106-7. al-Ghazzali himself considered that this was the will of God, Who had aroused the desire of Fakhr al-Mulk, in order that al-Ghazzali should combat the decay of faith among Muslims. He felt also that the desire for peace and protection from worldly persecution were not sufficient motives to justify him in persisting in a life of solitude. Furthermore, he had consulted a number of spiritually-minded men, possessed of vision, and they were unanimous in advising him to quit his life of seclusion and go forth from his retreat. In addition to this, a number of these pious men had dreams which confirmed their decision, and indicated that God had predetermined this event for the beginning of the century (A.H. 500).

For "God Most High," writes al-Ghazzali, "had promised a revival of religion at the beginning of every century." So he hoped that this was his God-given task and he went to Nishapur with this purpose in view. The impulse was not from myself, but from God and it was not I who acted, but He Who made me act. I asked him, therefore, first to make me regenerate and then to give regeneration to others through me: to guide me unto the Truth and then to enable me to guide others thereto.

His intention, then, was to give all the guidance he could to

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others, by making known the results of his long meditation, and
to benefit those who sought him out, but without any return
and suffered calamity and slander and disputation, but he
who cast aspersions upon him. Al-Hassan 'Abd al-Ghazal
al-Farisi, who had known Al-Ghazali before his conversion and
his long absence from the world, found a great change in him
now. He saw nothing of his former corruption and his contemptuous
attitude towards other men, whom he despised in his pride and
arrogance, being deluded by what he had been given of
cloquence and intellectual power and the opportunity for good
work, added to his desire for reputation and a high position.
He had now completely changed and was free from these defects.
'Abd al-Ghazal supposed at first that he was simply restraining
himself, but he was convinced, after investigating the matter,
that it was not so, but that the man had recovered his sanity
after being possessed by an evil spirit.
Al-Ghazal used to talk to his disciples at night, of what had
happened to him, from the time when the nature of the journey
along the road to God was first revealed to him, and how he
attained to the mystic experience, after he had for so long been
absorbed in his studies, and had realized his superiority to others,
in his teaching, and the ability by which God had distinguished
him in regard to all types of learning, and his capacity for research
and criticism, until at last he had freed himself from pre-
occupation with theory, apart from practice and concern with the
life to come, and what might help him thereto. So he had
betaken himself to the study of Shi'ism under al-Faradhi. They
asked him then how he came to be willing to leave his life of retirement in his own home and to return to Nishapur
when summoned thither, and he justified his action by saying
that his religion did not allow him to reject the call and to deprive
students of the benefit they might gain through his teaching.

He felt it was incumbent on him to communicate the truth and
to give utterance to it. 'Abd al-Ghazal felt that he was sincere
in his explanation. A statement made by al-Ghazali in one of
his books has a bearing on this decision. He says there that
the work of the teacher is to perfect the human heart, to adore
and purify it and to urge it to draw near to God. Teaching,
therefore, is a form of service to God Most High, a kind of vice-
gerancy of God, and the most glorious of vicegerencies, for God
has given to the learned man that knowledge which is the most
distinctive of human attributes: he is, as it were, the treasurer
of His most precious treasure, who is given leave to expend
it upon everyone who has need of it, and what rank is more glorious,
aeks al-Ghazali, than that of the servant who is a mediator
between God Himself and His creatures, in bringing them near
to Him, and showing them the way to salvation? Al-Ghazali
added that he gave up his teaching work, before it gave him up. As
noted above, he had to suffer much opposition and calamity, and
Fakhr al-Mulk, who might have protected him against such
attacks, was assassinated in a.d. 500/1106-7. It was possibly
at this time, not earlier, as his biographers assume, that
al-Ghazali thought of taking refuge in the West, with Yusuf b.
Tashfin, the Sultan of Morocco, of whose just administration
he had heard (cf. p. 21 above), but hearing of Yusuf's death,
which occurred in this year, he abandoned the project.
He retired once more to his home in Tus and established a
college for students of theology, close by, and also a convent for
Sufis. It must have been during this period that once again
he was summoned by the Grand Vizier al-Sa'id to take up teaching
again in the Nishapuri College in Baghdad, but al-Ghazali
wrote him a decisive letter of refusal, reminding him that he had
given up that same work, in order to betake himself to a life of
devotion, for the sake of God and in accordance with His purpose.
He writes: 'Know that men are divided into three groups,
in turning towards what is their Othma (the direction towards
which all Muslims turn in prayer).

2 Fadl al-Athfar, p. 7.
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(a) The people at large, who limit their consideration to this transient world, and of these the Prophet expressed his disapproval when he said; "No wolves attacking the sheepfold are more destructive to the faith of the Muslim than the love of wealth and honour."

(b) The second are the elect, who give their chief attention to the next world, knowing that it is more excellent and more enduring than this, and they do good works for its sake, but the Prophet showed how they are in error, when he said: "This world is forbidden to those who belong to the next, and the next is forbidden to those who belong to this, and both are forbidden to those who belong to God Most High."

(c) The third are the elect of the elect, and they are those who know that beyond everything is something else which belongs to that set, and the wise man does not love that which sets (i.e., is but transient). These are convinced that this world and the world to come are but the creation of God and the most important things in them are eating and procreation, which are shared with the brutes and the reptiles and neither of the two represents a high rank. Therefore they have turned away from both and turned towards their Creator, Who is the Author of their being and their King. To them has been revealed the meaning of "God is more exalted and abides," and they are convinced of the truth of: "There is no god but God," and none who turns aside to what is other than Him is free from secret polytheism. For them all existent things are divided into two, God and the world to come, and man is less than God. They have considered this under the similitude of the two scales of a balance, and their heart is the tongue of that balance. Whenever they see their hearts inclining towards what is noble and honourable, they judge that the scale is weighted down by good works, and when they see their hearts inclining towards what is base, they judge that the scale is weighted down by evil deeds.

At the first class are common in comparison with the second, so also the second class are common in comparison with the third, and the three classes can be reduced to two. Therefore I say that

1 Sura VI, 6.
2 Sura XX, 75.

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The Chief Vizier has summoned me to descend from the higher rank to that which is lower and I, for my part, summon him to ascend from the lower to the higher, which is the highest of the high. The road which leads to God Most High, from Baghdad and from Tlis and from every other place, is one, no one of them is nearer than any other. Therefore I ask God to arouse him from the sleep of heedlessness, so that he may consider the morrow while it is still to-day, before the matter is taken out of his hands. So farewell!"

During this time in Tlis, al-Ghazali was dividing up his time in the way best fitted to serve the needs of those around him. He devoted himself to reading the Qur'an, to studying the Traditions fresh, to associating with the godly, to teaching work, and to prayer, so that he should not waste a single moment of his own time or of the time of those with him, content now "to wait with Love for Death's unhasting feet." "The mystic," he wrote, "is always mindful of death, because he has been promised union with his Beloved and the lover never forgets such a promise. So he desires the coming of death, in order that he may be delivered from this sinful world and be transported into the Presence of Him Who made the worlds. The highest stage is not to choose for oneself, either life or death, but to desire most that which is most desired by his Lord," and he quotes the words of the Sifah Shihi, as he lay dying, "The house in which Thou dostest have no need of a lamp." As the shadows lengthen, to look upon His Face is enough for His lover, who knows that he is passing out of darkness into eternal light. So al-Ghazali passed his last days in tranquility, waiting, "until Time itself overtook him and the days withdrew the gift that had been bestowed upon his generation and God Most High called him to the glory of His own Presence."

He died on Monday the 7th of Jamadi II, A.H. 505 (Dec. 28th, A.D. 1111), at the age of fifty-three. His brother Ahmad relates that at dawn on the day of his death al-Ghazali performed his ablutions and prayed and then said: "Bring me my shroud,"
and taking it, he kissed it and laid it over his eyes and said: “Most gladly do I enter into the Presence of the King,” and he stretched out his feet and went forth to meet Him. And so passed into the Paradise of God, “worthy of all honour, of loftier station than the stars, giving more guidance to men than the full moon when darkness has fallen.” He was buried outside Tiberias, in a grave near that of the poet Firdawsi, and Ibn-al-San‘ānī records that he visited his grave there.

There is a story to the effect that when al-Ghazālī fell ill and felt that his death was approaching, he sent away those who were with him and no one entered his presence until the next morning, when they went in as he had bidden them and they found him facing the Qiblah, clad in his abaya, dead, and at his head they found a sheet of paper bearing these verses:

“Say to my friends, when they look upon me, dead, Weeping for me and mourning me in sorrow Do not believe that this corpse you see is myself. In the name of God, I tell you, it is not I, I am a spirit, and this is naught but flesh It was my abaya and my garment for a time. I am a treasure, by a talisman kept hid, Fashioned of dust, which served me as a shrine, I am a pearl, which has left its shell deserted, It was my prison, where I spent my time in grief. I am a bird, and this body was my cage, Whence I have now flown forth and it is left as a token, Praise be to God, Who hath now set me free, And prepared for me my place in the highest of the heavens. Until to-day I was dead, though alive in your midst. Now I live in truth, with the grave-clothes discarded. To-day I hold converse with the saints above, Now, with no veil between, I see God face to face. I look upon the Tablet and therein I read, Whatever was and is and all that to be, Let my house fall in ruins, lay my cage in the ground, Cast away the talisman, ‘tis a token, no more. Lay aside my cloak, it was but my outer garment. Place them all in the grave, let them be forgotten. I have passed on my way and you are left alone. Your place of abode was no dwelling-place for me.”


There were many elegies composed in honour of al-Ghazālī after his death, the most famous being that of the poet Abū‘l-Musa‘ef al-Akwārī (Ob. 507/1113). The Imam Ismā‘il al-Hākimī also expressed his grief in lines taken from one of the most celebrated jā‘fīsās of Abū Ta‘lāmīrī:

“I wondered how to endure it, when deprived of him by death, I, who shed tears of blood, when he was away from me. But these are times when so much seems strange, That we have ceased to wonder thereat.”

One of al-Ghazālī’s pupils, the well-known Sāfī Abū‘l-Aḥābāl-Abhār composed verses in praise of both his teacher and his teacher’s masterpiece, the Ḥujjājī. It is related that just after al-Ghazālī’s death, Abū‘l-Aḥābāl Ahmad b. Abī‘l-Khayr al-Yanamī, known as al-Sayyād, had a vision. He was sitting at the open gates of Heaven when a band of angels was descending to the earth, bearing robes of
honour, green in colour, and with them a noble steed. They alighted at the head of a certain tomb and brought one forth from his grave, and having invested him with the robes, set him on that steed, and ascended with him to the heavens, continuing to ascend with him from one heaven to another until he had passed through all the Seven Heavens and, ascending beyond them, he traversed the Seventy Veils. 98 "I was filled with wonder at that," said Abū-l-Abbās, 8 and I desired to know who that rider was, and I was told: "It is al-Ghazālī, and I did not know then, that he had attained to martyrdom." 99 It is said that al-Ghazālī occupied the position of Qādī, the supreme head of the Sāfī hierarchy, for a period of three days. 10 It is also related that someone saw al-Ghazālī, after his death, in a dream and asked about his state and he replied: "If it were not for this 'strange' knowledge, all would be well with us." His biographer is anxious that no one should imagine that "this strange knowledge" should be interpreted to mean the mystical knowledge of al-Ghazālī. This, he holds, would be a Satanic device to prevent others from following in al-Ghazālī's steps and would mean that they were veiled from God and hindered from attaining to the highest degree of saint-hood. He interprets the words to mean that, since it was a celestial vision, of one now in the Presence of God, no longer concerned with the things of sense, the "strange knowledge" was that which was concerned only with this world, with human affairs and relationships, which could have no bearing whatever on life in the world to come, for death means separation from them. So perhaps al-Ghazālī regretted having concerned himself with worldly knowledge which was strange to the heavenly places. But his biographer points out that the knowledge of the mysteries of devotion and what belongs to the world to come could not be "strange" to one who had attained to that world, therefore he urges his readers not to misinterpret these words, lest they be hindered from seeking spiritual knowledge, but to acquire of worldly knowledge only as much as was really necessary. 1

A number of other visions of al-Ghazālī after his death are mentioned by his biographers. Miraculous gifts (bāri'āt) were also ascribed to him as to all the great saints of Islam.

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2. Cf. Qurṭubī, op. cit., pp. 277, 278. "I will negotiate with all mankind, for all mankind is a confused mass," said the Shāīkh, when he passed through the station of the Q. 14
5. "He was a rāy of the Q. 15 in the station of Perfect Manhood—he has the title of Director of Souls and he is a blessing to those who invoke his aid, because he can change the innate capacities of all mankind and, like a camel-driver, speeds everyone to his home." R. A. Nicholson, The Mystics of Islam, p. 105.
CHAPTER III
al-Ghazâlî’s Character and Personality. His sociability. His love of travel. His fondness for and knowledge of animals and plants.

There is much that may be learned of al-Ghazâlî’s character and personality from what we know of his life, and still more from his own writings. His ever-present curiosity to investigate all branches of knowledge, his intellectual pride and self-confidence, were qualities natural to one possessed of such outstanding gifts, and natural to his youth, but there were other more essential and more lasting traits which are revealed as being more truly characteristic of him. He seems to have been sociable and fond of company and given to hospitality. It is good to eat in company, he observes, for it will mean friendly and profitable conversation during meals. He was probably a chess-player, for he remarks that when a man is an expert at chess, he rejoices in the game and if he is kept from it for a time, he will not give it up and cannot endure to be deprived of it. He observes also that one who is expert at the game is prepared to sacrifice his castle and his knight, without hesitation, in order to win the game, while the un instructed spectator laughs at him and is surprised at his action. Elsewhere he notes that the expert at chess, for all its business (i.e., it is only a game) cannot refrain from instructing others in it and speaking about his own moves, because of the pleasure it takes in his knowledge and skill in the game.  

Sociability he considers to be one of the marks of an attractive character and the unsociable man will be found to have an unpleasant personality. An attractive personality naturally secures affection and friendship and good relations with others, while an evil character breeds dislike and jealousy and quarrels. "The believer both gives and receives friendship and there is no good in anyone who does neither." al-Ghazâlî quotes the

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Prophet’s saying that when God wishes well to anyone He gives that one a good friend who, if he is neglectful, remembers him, and if he is mindful, helps him. The Prophet said that two friends meeting together were like two hands, one of which washes the other, and he also said: "To certain people it will be granted to sit around the Throne of God on the Day of resurrection and their faces will shine like the moon, on the night when it is full. Others will flee in terror, but they will regain, and other will fear, but they will be unafraid. These are the friends of God upon whom there shall be no fear, neither shall they grieve." Those who are clothed in light and the prophets and martyrs desire to be of their number. The radiance of their beauty is manifest to the Blessed in Paradise, even as the light of the sun, and it is written upon their foreheads that they are "Those who love one another in God." 3

There were five qualities which al-Ghazâlî thought to be desirable in a friend who was to be a real companion in intellectual interests, in religion and in worldly affairs, and all five of these qualities were conspicuous in al-Ghazâlî himself. The first quality was that of intelligence, he considered that there was no good to be derived from the companionship of the foolish, which would end only in alienation and separation. An intelligent enemy, he thinks, is better than a foolish friend. The second quality is an attractive disposition, and by an unpleasant character al-Ghazâlî means that of a man who is lacking in self-control, who gives way to anger and to lust. The third is a high moral standard, no friendship is to be sought with an evil-doer, who persists in deadly sin. The fourth is freedom from greed, for the company of one who desires this world’s goods is deadly poison, and the fifth is sincerity, for the man who cannot be trusted is like a mirror which makes what is distant seem near to you, and what is near to seem far away." Friends are of three types, he observes, the one with whom you have fellowship in religion, the one whose company you seek in worldly affairs, and the one whose company you avoid as evil and a temptation. The first is like food, which is indispensable to life, the second is

3 Sura II, 36.
4 152, II, pp. 5, 136 ff.
like medicine, necessary at one time, but not at another, and the third like disease, for which there is no need at all. People on the whole, al-Ghazâlî tells us, are like trees and plants, friend who is a help to you for this life, but not for the next: passes away. Some trees bear fruit, but give no shade, like a in the garden of this world, and there are some plants which give Which tears the clothes and produces neither food nor drink, which in his view included silence and speech, each in its single-minded sincerity, and fidelity meant not only continual his children and his friends. He quotes his master al-Shâfi‘i who wrote of his friendship with M. b. b."Abd al-Hâkin: My friend fell sick and I visited him. Then I fell sick from my anxiety for him. And my friend then came to visit me, I was cured by looking upon him." While commending the custom of visiting the shrines of the saints, he expresses the view that, in general, visiting the living is more meritorious than visiting the dead. From contact with others is learnt courtesy and understanding, an experience which cannot be realised in solitude, of an Israelite who wrote three hundred and sixty books on won the Divine approval for his work, but he received a prophetic message, saying: Thou hast filled the earth with hypocrisy, ground cause and thought that by so doing he had secured what 43

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not expect the Divine approval unless he mixed with men and endured tribulation from them. So he went forth into the markets and mixed with men and sat with them and fed them and ate with them and walked with them, and then at last came the message: "Now hast thou attained to My good pleasure." We should judge that al-Ghazâlî was generous and hospitable, from the accounts given of his large household, and from his own expression of deep admiration for those qualities. He quotes the words of the Prophet: "Generosity brings us near to God and to man to Paradise," and again: "Generosity is one of the trees of Paradise, the branches of which hang down to the earth and he who takes hold of one of its branches can climb thereby up to Paradise." He quotes also the saying of Ibn Sâmîk: "I marveled at one who buys slaves (i.e., for the purpose of masumânîs), with his wealth, and does not buy free men with his kindness." He also quotes the lines: You belong to wealth if you retain it, But when you spend it, wealth belongs to you.

He tells with approval a story, comparable to that of the Widow's Mite, related by Abu-l-Hasan, of how al-Hasan and al-Husayn, the Prophet's grandsons, and 'Abdallâh b. Ja‘âfar went on pilgrimage, and, having lost their baggage, suffered from hunger and thirst. They came upon an old woman, in a tent of camel's hair, and asked her for something to drink. She had one ewe lying under the lower flaps of the tent and she lade them milk it and mix water with the milk. They asked them if she had anything to eat. She replied: "Nothing except this ewe. Let one of you slaughter her and I will prepare you something to eat." Then one of them killed the ewe and skinned it and the old woman prepared food for them and they ate and rose up to depart. When they set off, they told her that they were people of the Quraysh and if they returned in safety, she should come to them and they would deal kindly with her.

They went their way, and when her husband returned and she told him what had happened, he was angry and exclaimed:
"Wo be unto you, you have killed my ewe for strangers whom you assert to belong to the Quraysh." Shortly afterwards destitution forced them to go out of the city, where the man was on the proceeds. One day, as the old woman was passing of his house, recognised her, though she did not know him and your guest to bring her to him, when he said: "I was are my father and my mother." He then gave orders that one thousand ewes should be brought for her from the sheep of the and he sent her with his servant to Husayn. The latter asked Husayn commanded that she should be given a similar amount Ja’far, who asked her how much Hasam and Husayn had given and and gave orders that she should be given another, two thousand ewes and two thousand dinars, and observed to both: "If you had begun with me, I would have given her to her husband with four thousand ewes and four thousand dinars. Having travelled widely himself, al-Ghazali has much to say of the advantages of travel, especially on the human side. Perhaps there is a personal resemblance of early fears, in his statement that "a certain one" who was conscious of cowardice and faintheartedness within himself, and desired to make himself sure of great rivers in the East are called "the sea" (possibly the Tigris, who live near them, up to the present day), in winter, when the thinks, to those who are mature enough to reap the benefit, but not for the young, as it is likely to move them idly and

1 The Zakār or alms-tithe levied in kind on the Muslim’s possessions.  
2 Ybd. III, p. 357.  
3 Ybd. III, p. 76.  
4 Ybd. III, p. 15.

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disci1ned to settle down to work. For those who are fitted for it, travel means an increase in knowledge. "Flowing water is good, but stagnant water loses its goodness." The traveller who visits other places, sees their scenery, mountains and deserts and oceans, and all kinds of animals and plants, and these remind him that their Maker is One. He also meets with other men, the learned and the saints, and this is profitable and may induce the traveller to imitate them. Travel, too, serves as a convenient means, as it had done for al-Ghazali himself, of escaping from disturbances to religion, e.g., position and authority and other hindrances; it enables the heart to be at leisure from itself. But al-Ghazali’s fondness for company is suggested by his recommendation not to travel alone, but to choose a good companion, “First the companion, then the road.”

al-Ghazali advocated tolerance and charity towards others and we have the evidence of his friends that he practised these virtues in his nature years. He expressed his disapproval of slander not only because it might cause pain if overheard, but because it was finding fault with God’s handiwork, for God created mankind and their qualities and their actions and their characters and these therefore ought not to be blamed.

al-Ghazali also commends the advice to speak no harsh word to others without a kind word to follow it. The only way to get rid of envy is to look upon all men, whether in a good or an evil state, as being the same fellow human beings, and this state of mind will not come about so long as any attention is paid to this world’s goods. A man must needs "become absorbed in the love of God Most High, like one intoxicated and beside himself, so that his heart at last pays no attention to the different states of men, but he regards all with one eye and that is the eye of compassion, whereby he sees all to be the servants of God and their actions to be the actions of God and all under His control, but this state occurs but briefly, it does not last.”

To show the lengths to which he felt that charity and kindness  

1 Ybd. II, pp. 218 ff. Cf. the saying of Rabi’ b. Adawiyyah of Darra, quoted by al-Ghazali himself, “First the neighbour, then the house.” Ybd. IV, p. 3.  
2 Ybd. III, pp. 30 ff.  
3 Ybd. III, p. 18.  
4 Ybd. II, p. 35.  
5 Ybd. III, p. 159.
to others should be carried, he tells a Franciscan story of how 'Abdallah b. 'Umar did not hesitate to eat with those suffering from leprosy, and how he gathered the lepers and the afflicted and made them sit at his table.  

al-Ghazālī carried his spirit of tolerance to notable lengths when asked whether it was not legal to curse the Caliph Yazid b. Mu‘awiya, who was generally regarded as responsible for the death of the Prophet's grandson Husayn at the battle of Karbalā (61/680), and his name held in execration by most Muslims. But al-Ghazālī replied that it was absolutely forbidden to curse a Muslim. Wherefore, inasmuch as it is not lawful to curse a Muslim after his death he who curses him is a reprobate and disobedient to God. . . . 'Accursed are those who are alienated from God Almighty,' but who those may be is a mystery, except in the case of such persons as die infidels. . . . As for the invocation of the Divine mercy on Yazid, it is allowable, nay acceptable . . . in fact, it is included in those words which we utter in every prayer. 'O God, pardon the men and women who believe,' for Yazid was a believer. God knows if my opinion be right.'  

It was at least the opinion of one who would be neither unjust nor intolerant in his judgment of others, who had the moral courage to express a conviction which was likely to incur the criticism and hostility of others. al-Ghazālī was tolerant even of the religious views of those who were not of his faith and urged that a Christian's teaching should be tolerated except where it conflicted directly with the tenets of Islam.  

With this charity towards other men was associated a sense of humility and of his own unworthiness which, in his more mature years, replaced the intolerant pride of his youth. al-Ghazālī held that for any man to regard another as worse than himself was really pride and he tells a story of the humility of the Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Azīz, to whom a visitor came one night when he was writing and the lamp had almost gone out. So the guest asked if he might replight it. The Caliph replied: 'It is no honour to a man to let his guest do a servant's work.'
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The guest asked then if he should rose the servant-boy, who was sleeping, but the Caliph would not allow it, saying that the boy was enjoying his first sleep. Then he himself rose and fetched the lamp with oil. His visitor of the Faithful?" The Caliph replied: "I was "Umara when I returned. I have lost nothing. The al-Ghazali relates another story in praise of modesty, a quality conspicuous in himself in his later years, of how the preacher said to him: "O Commander of the Faithful, your humility rank." Harîn replied: "That is well said." The preacher a man with good looks, and of high lineage and wealthy and that his wealth and humble in regard to his appearance and munificence with his hand. Then Harîn called for inkhorn and paper and wrote it down.

al-Ghazali was not only a lover of his fellow-men but of the animals, taking a great interest in them and their habits, and plainly very observant of them. He does not seem to have shared the usual Muslim prejudice against dogs. He commends the fidelity of the watch-dog, which is ready to sacrifice itself for his master, and he points out the value of stories to tell of dogs, among these, of how someone found Mâlik, a famous musician of Basrah. 1

1. Ibid., II, p. 226.
2. AL-GHAZALI'S LIFE AND PERSONALITY
3. (AL-GHAZALI, COLLOQ. TRAD. A.D. 386, 807.)
4. (AL-HAJJ A. S. MUKHTAR: Mâlik, p. 47.)
5. (Ibid., II, 2, 220.)
6. Ibid., II, p. 220.
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on his own travels, urging him to be merciful to his beast and not overload it or beat it in the face, which is forbidden, nor should he be injured by his weight. God-loving folk, al-Ghazālī observes, do not sleep upon their beasts, except for a short nap. 

The Prophet himself said: “Do not regard the backs of your morning and evening and give the animal a rest thereby. It by beast, its back is overloaded, that will be required at his hand camel of his when it was dying. “O camel, do not accuse me to thy Lord, for I have not overloaded thee.” To dismiss

and also to its rider, enabling him to stretch his limbs. 1 and he frequently refers to them in his writings. He may himself of many colours about the palaces of the great, and he must refers to the pigeons, who will stand on his feet all day because of his delight in the birds and their movements in flight, as he watches them soaring and wheeze about in the vault of the heaven. 2

He quotes as fitting and beautiful the lines:

"The dove coos in the watches of the night,

Pondered on so very long,

I have said, I swear it, when it said I was a lover,

For the dove surpass me in her lamentation.

While I assert that I am beside myself with love

To my Lord, but I weep not, while even the doves lament.

He comments the cock, too, for its praiseworthy energy, in repeating the Prophet’s words: “There are three sounds sweet to God Most High, the voice of the cock (when it crow at dawn), and the voice of him who recites the Qur’an, and the voice of those

who ask for forgiveness at the break of day.” He also quotes

the saying of the wise man Luqman, to his son, “O my son, let not the cock crow over you in the morning, while you are still asleep.” 3 He was perhaps interested in falconry also, for he advises men to treat the lower self as the falcon is treated when it is to be trained and its hostility to man and its wild nature subdued to obedience and discipline. It must be confined at first in a dark building, with its eyes covered, in order that it may be weaned from its habits of flying in the heavens, until it has forgotten the natural freedom to which it was accustomed. It must be treated kindly and fed with meat, so that it becomes familiar with its owner and grows accustomed to his presence, so that when he calls it, it comes to him and when he hears its voice, it returns to him. 4

There is a story related of al-Ghazālī by Muḥy al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (cf. pp. 250 ff. below) which shows again his interest in birds. Once, when he was in Jerusalem, he saw a crow and a pigeon associating with each other and he said when he saw it: “Their association with each other must be due to some bond of kinship,” and he pointed to them. They moved away and behold, both of them were lame. 5

al-Ghazālī refused to condemn the practice adopted by some of the Ṣūfīs of spending the night with wild beasts in the wilder-

ness, in order to show their trust in God. He urges them, a custom which his critics thought was to be regarded as tempting Providence. It may be that al-Ghazālī himself had personal experience of the practice: at any rate he appears to have held the view that the saints had the power so to subdue and tame wild beasts that they could ride upon them, and rub their ears, and the creatures would obey them. 6 He writes that it is the mark of the saint that he has the power to tame wild creatures and beasts of prey, and the lions and other wild beasts love him, and the lions “wag their tails for him.” 7 He tells a story of Ibrahim al-Raqqī, 8 who visited Abū Ḥāthīr al-Thīmī 9 and found him reading the Fāṭiḥa, and as he went out for his

1 Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥy al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, pp. 77 ff.
7 Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥy al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, pp. 135 ff.
ablations before prayer, he shot a lion and turned back in fear, and told his host what had befallen him. Thereupon Abul-Khayr went out and called to the lion: "Did I not tell you not to approach the guests?" and the lion turned away. al-Raqi'i observed to him: "You were engaged in killing the lion, and the wild beasts were occupied in killing the lion. You were unable to make the lion afraid." It is said also of the gazzelle, mountain goats, and wild asses, used to gather round the herbage. al-Ghazali had also an interest in, and affection for, plants and flowers and trees, which suggests that he was a garden-lover and like most dwellers in the East, he must have spent much time fruit-trees, grown as much for their blossoms as for their fruit, and close attention to the habits of plants. This is clear from the in the sight of different kinds of fruit with their varied forms and apple, and the joy of looking upon green things and running of a gardener in a land where rain falls infrequently and irrigation is necessary. He speaks of the water hidden beneath the dry clay and how it can be discovered and utilised by the digging of conduits, which is easier than the transport of water long-distance is shown in his quotation of the words of Luqman: "O my son, associate with the learned and approach them with great humility, for they are given life by wisdom, as the dead the tree which grows of Rau'd and receives no care, which very but no fruit. Again he writes of the plant which has no depth

1 *Izat, III, p. 22.

2 Loeb, *The Mystical and the Fellows* in *Illum., p. 34 and similar.

3 *Izat, IV, p. 69, 111, p. 132.

4 AL-GHAZALI'S LIFE AND PERSONALITY 53 of soil and so dies, while that which is deeply rooted survives. He compares the imparting of knowledge to the casting of seed into the ground, which will assuredly grow and thrust its roots downwards and extend its branches upwards. He knows something of the guidance of weeds in the rainy season, and observes that to pull them up does not ensure that they will not re-grow as long as the ground is exposed to rain. He compares the self-defended to a man who wishes to clear a field of weeds, who goes over it carefully, searching for the weeds and uprooting each one he sees, but not searching for what has not yet raised its head above the earth, because he supposes that everything that has appeared and shown itself. But from the roots fine shoots may have grown and extended under the soil (perhaps he knew something of kindred), which has been overlooked and neglected, and, how, they grow and become strong and injure the roots of his crop, he knows not how. So also is he who thinks that the outward expression of religion is sufficient and neglects the inward corruption. al-Ghazali had also watched the leaves falling in winter, as they dried up, leaving the tree in its essence, bare, but with a new beauty and delicacy and grace in its bareness, and notes that too, too, sin can fall away from the soul, when it has no longer any encouragement or support. But al-Ghazali thinks of plants and flowers not only as things of beauty and a source of keen delight to every lover of Nature, but also as displaying the wisdom and loving-kindness of God. Who has given the fruit its rind so that it may be protected against the birds, Who has ordained that the roots of the mighty tree shall be buried deep in the ground, in order to drink water therefrom, so that the earth becomes like a nursing-mother to it. The veins of the leaves, he notes, are like those of human beings, and serve the same purpose. It is by the wisdom of God that the leaves appear before the fruit, to protect it while it is still immature and liable to injury from the heat of the sun, or from unseasonable cold winds. Of its kindness to man, the
Creator has fashioned the trees and the fruits and the flowers, of different colours and shapes and flavours and scents, small and great, splendid and humble, of all colours and all shades in those colours: the very sight of them, says al-Ghazālī, purifies the heart of unclean thoughts, and refreshes the mind as it contemplates them; and the soul rejoices in their radiant beauty. He notes that the bough is made strong enough to support the pomegranate, so that it will not fall until it is ripe, and how the melon and the gourd rest on the ground, because their stems cannot support so heavy a weight, and how all these ripen just at the season when man most needs them. He refers to the wonderful means by which the date-palm is fertilised and notes how God has created aromatic roots with medicinal properties, able to relieve and cure the diseases of men. He points out that, by the Divine power, all these, the tree and the blade of grass and the fragrant herb and the flowers, with their varied hues and shapes, all alike have developed from one substance, from which they have derived their nourishment, and that is water, one cause, yet such infinite variety in results.¹

Such a man, then, was al-Ghazālī in his maturity, with his intellectual powers unabated, a keen obsever, possessed of the eager curiosity which was inspired by his passion for truth, a man wise, tolerant and charitable, a leader of his fellow men and of the humbler creation, both animate and inanimate.

¹ al-Ghazālī, 'Ithārat al-Abī, p. 57 R.
dogmatic teaching, he follows the orthodox doctrine as to the subordinate place of women in society, elsewhere it is evident that he fully appreciated the importance and value of their influence in the home and also in a wider sphere. He considers that marriage is a great advantage to a man, not only for the sake of having children, but because of the satisfaction and benefit and refreshment to be obtained from the companionship of a wife, which is a consolation to the heart and strengthens it for the service of God. The soul, he says, sometimes grows weary in well-doing, and the refreshment and joy which it derives from the companionship of women dispels its heaviness and cheers the heart, and so a good wife is of the greatest value to a man's religious life. Moreover, it is the woman's character and religious faith which contribute most to a happy marriage. He who marries a wife for the sake of her wealth and her beauty, he says, makes her beauty and wealth unprofitable to him, but upon him who marries a woman because of her faith, God will bestow both wealth and religion.

We have seen, too, that he considered that the mother's training of the child's character was as important as that of the father and he held that only a godly woman should be allowed to suckle and nurse a child. He gives many stories in which women play the chief part and are held up as an example to the other sex. He advises those who plead that they are unable to follow in the steps of the illustrious leaders of the Faith, to consider the God-fearing women and the degree to which they attained in the spiritual life, and to admonish their own sluggish souls in saying, "O soul, be not content to be less than a woman for it is contemptible that a man should come short of a woman in respect of her religion or her attitude to this world." So, he says, "we will now mention somewhat of the spiritual states of those women who have striven to serve God," and he devotes the rest of the chapter to setting forth the outstanding example of the women saints of Islam.

Among the stories he gives is that of a certain devotee who stopped before Ḥabān b. Ḥilāl, when he was sitting with his

1 Ḥāfaṣ, 1, p. 50.
2 M. Iṣāq, 29, 119, p. 50.
3 Ḥāfaṣ, 11, p. 355.

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friends, and asked if she might put a question to one of them. They bade her ask any question she would of Ḥabān b. Ḥilāl. She then asked them what was their idea of generosity? They replied: "The giving of gifts, and munificence, and the preference of others to oneself." She said: "This is generosity in relation to this world, but what is generosity in respect of religion?" They replied: "That we should serve God Most Glorious, with willing hearts, ungrudgingly." She asked: "Do you seek a reward for that?" They admitted that they did and when she asked why, they answered: "Because God Most High has promised us, for each good deed, a ten-fold reward." She said: "God be praised, if you give one and take ten, how can you be called generous?" Nonplussed, they asked her for her idea of true generosity and she said then: "In my view, generosity means to serve God, with joy and delight in His service, ungrudgingly, and without seeking any reward, so that your Lord may do with you what He wills. Are you not ashamed that God should look into your hearts and know that by one gift you are seeking another? This is considered a shameful thing in worldly affairs."

Another woman saint once asked: "Do you reckon that generosity is concerned only with dirhams and dinars?" She was asked: "With what then?" She replied. "To my mind, generosity means the gift of oneself, body, soul and spirit."

al-Ghazālī was evidently a devoted father, much concerned with the happiness and well-being of his children. His kunya "Abū Hāmid" seems to indicate that he had at least one son, though no sons survived him and perhaps any son or sons died as children. He writes tenderly of the relation of the infant to its mother: "He knows only her and will take refuge only with her and trusts her alone, so that when he sees her, he clings to her skirts and will not leave her and if any trouble overtakes him when she is not there, the first word his tongue utters is a cry of "Mother," and the first thought which comes into his mind is of his mother, for she is his refuge. He depends upon her as his surety and sufficiency and as always full of pity for.
him, and this reliance on her is based on a certain amount of comprehension, through what small power of discrimination if he does not cry for his mother, she will seek him out, and even if he does not cry for her milk, she will give him to drink. 11

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by a counter-attraction, for he notes that the child is weaned like, to distract him from his desire. He also notes how sweet his attention from the cause of his weeping. 8 It was, no doubt, points out that the incapacity of the sucking to appreciate the sweetness of honey and fatted birds and delicious sweetmeats the infant's appreciation of milk indicate that it is the most he has become attached to some plaything, will not be parted from it when it is taken from him, he weeps and protests until and when he wakes up, he remembers it and takes hold of it, he laughs. If anyone disputes his possession of it, he is angry, al-Ghazzali had a deep sense of the obligation of a father to his children. The business of training a child he reckons to be one of the most important that can be undertaken. "The boy, in his state of pristine purity, is a precious jewel, dear to his heart, as pet, from any print or image, but susceptible of every what is good and with a knowledge of it, then he will be happy and his reward will be shared by his teacher and his preceptor. But if he becomes accustomed to is at neglectful (of what is due to God) as the 1

brutes, then he will be wretched and come to an evil end, and the responsibility for that sin will be upon the one who controls and rules him." As the father protects his little child from fire in this life, so also he must protect him from the fire of Hell, which is of much more consequence, and this protection is assisted by a good upbringing, positive training in virtue, and protection from evil companionship.

The boy should not live too easy and comfortable a life, nor be allowed to grow fond of outward adornment, lest he should waste his life when he grows up, in seeking for material possessions, and so perish eternally. As soon as the child shows signs of discrimination, he must be watched more carefully, so that his choice shall be directed towards what is good and the evil shown to be such, and rejected, and so he will maintain purity of heart and attain to a sane and well-balanced judgment.

The boy should lead an active life and take plenty of exercise, lest he grow sluggish, and after he has finished his lessons he should be allowed to play games which he enjoys, but he should not come to play in the presence of his elders. His father must preserve the dignity of speech in talking to his son and should upbraid him but rarely and this only in private, not publicly. The mother should rebuke him for what is shameful and say that she will tell his father if he does not amend his ways. 3

If al-Ghazzali suffered the loss of children while still young, it must have been a consolation to him to remember the tradition, which he quotes, to the effect that on the Day of Resurrection, when all mankind are examined as to their deeds, those who have died as infants will gather round the Judgment Seat of God the All-Merciful, and He, looking upon them, will say to His angels, Take thee hence to Paradise." 4 It was no doubt with his own children to mind that al-Ghazzali says that if a child is no longer with us and we wish to maintain our love for him, absent or present, living or dead, we speak at length of his courage and generosity and his learning and the rest of his lovable qualities, and so our love and our memories are kept alive. 5

al-Ghazzali was survived by three daughters and, apparently,
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by his wife, since it is mentioned more than once that he died in poverty, having reserved of his former wealth only what was sufficient to maintain them. It was presumably the urgent requests of his little daughters to which he refers when he says that 'the prayers of his infant children' induced him to give up a wandering life and to return to his native land. It is much to be desired that we had the letters which passed between al-Ghazali and his wife and children, when he was absent from them. The company of his daughters must have been a great satisfaction to so devoted a father as he, as we have seen, his frequent references to women and girls as exemplars in the religious life does not suggest that he would consider them as of less real consequence than his sons. He quotes with approval the story of a little slave-girl who used to take the Prophet by the hand, in Medina, and relates that he did not withdraw his hand from hers, but used to let the child accompany him wherever she had a son called Ubayd Allah, whose great-great-grandson, Majid al-Din Muhammad was alive in Baghdad, in the year 710/1313, so that al-Ghazali probably had grandchildren to delight his last years. A man with al-Ghazali's personality and capacity for friendship naturally gathered many friends and disciples around him and some of his associates were men of outstanding character and importance. Among his fellow-students in Nishapur was Abu'l-Ma'asir Ahmad al-Khwariz, who also studied under the Imam al-Haramayn and was one of his most distinguished and most favoured pupils, who was permitted to discuss with him by day and by night and earned the highest commendation from the Imam. He was said to earn his living by his success in debate as al-Ghazali was able to earn his by his success in writing. al-Khwariz began to teach in the lifetime of the Imam and was appointed as Qadi of Tars but he gave up his appointment in order to devote himself to the life of a religious ascetic. al-Khwariz died at Tars in 507/1112.

One of al-Ghazali's earliest friends, whose life was exactly contemporary with his own, was Abi Hamid 'Ali al-Tabarai al-Harrashi, Imam al-Din, known as al-Kiya (one of high rank or great influence), born the same year as al-Ghazali, in 490/1099, in Tabaristan, and also a Shafiite. He went to Nishapur and studied under the Imam al-Haramayn, who made him an assistant tutor. We are told that he was a good-looking man, with a clear voice, who expressed himself in a polished and agreeable style, and 'Abd al-Ghafir, one of his contemporaries, declared him to be a second 'Abi Hamid (al-Ghazali). "Nay, more profound in learning, more holy in life, more pleasing in voice and more agreeable in countenance," but he admits that al-Ghazali had the keener intelligence of the two and was quicker in exposition and explanation. It was said that when al-Kiya had memorised a piece of work, he used to repeat it at each step as he went up the stairs leading up to the Nişâmiyya College at Nishapur and there were seventy steps. From Nishapur he proceeded to Basra, where he taught for a time and then went to 'Iraq, where he was appointed chief professor at the Nişâmiyya College, and held his chair for the rest of his life. He was there, we know, in 495, and was high in favour with the Seljuk sultan Majd al-Mulk Barquq, son of Malik Shah, who appointed him chief Qadi. al-Kiya was a traditionist, and in one of his sayings he declares: "When the heretics of the Traditions gallop about in the hippocrime of contestation, the beads of analogical deductions are struck off and given to the winds." He is also said to have been responsible for the following lines, while engaged in a discussion with Abu'l-Wafa' b. 'Uqayl al-Hamali:

'Have pity on thy servant, for he has the dryness Of Media, while thou hast 'Iraq and its waters." al-Kiya died in 507/1112 and the poet Abi Ihsan Ibrahim al-Ghazzali composed this elegy upon him after his death: "Islam weeps the absence of its son and sheds floods of tears, compared with which the rain would not be copious. Behold that learned divine, who used to receive us with an open and smiling countenance; with that look of pleasure which, to a visitor, was the best of welcomes. Teath may tread him under foot, but his vast
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learning has spread abroad to distant climes... Three instructive
features gave new life to Ibn Idris (al-Salafi) and at this com-
position was so fortunate as to have them dawn, cassises now a torch
of by very words, are like the foreheads of brown horses
bracketed by a white star. Did I know them true, I should invoke
from thy riches." Among his works were the Uṣūl al-Dīn
and Aḥkām al-Qur‘ān (The Proofs of Religion) and Aḥkām al-Qur‘ān (The Oculomax)

Another contemporary and intimate friend of al-Ghazali of the
most important, because he has let us so much information.
Iṣḥāq al-Farīsī, born at Nishāpūr in 453/1063. He was an
author of thecribed the article of the Faith in
Persia. He was a grandson
the author of one of the earliest treatises on Sīra.
Khitāb learned also from his grandfather Fātimah abt Abd al-Dabīb al-
Mansūh, as a fellow-student of al-Ghazali and al-Riṣāl.
In his return from his travels, he was appointed
It was while he was here that al-Ghazali returned to take
up teaching work and 'Abd al-Ghafrī was screened in
associate with his one-time fellow-student and was
in Nishāpūr in 553/1163. He died
works, including Kālid al-Arba‘in, Mas‘ūda al-Ghazālī, and

A faithful friend and fellow-student was Iṣḥāq Abūl-Qāsim al-Hākimī al-Tūsī, who went with al-Ghazali to
Iraq. He was a younger, treated
him with great honour and gave him a pecuniary.
The two went together to the Hijāz and Syria.
Al-Hākimī died in
with al-Ghazali.

al-Ghazali numbered among his students some who later became
famous in various spheres of life. Among the best known
of these was Abu AbdAllāh M. Ibn Tūsī, known as al-Maḥfīz,
born 435/1045 at Sīs in Morocco. While still very young, he
became renowned for his piety, and as a youth, desiring to
make the pilgrimage to Mecca, he travelled to Cerdova and thence to
the Hijāz. It was presumably at this time that he met
al-Ghazali in Damascus, while he was living there as an ascetic,
intrusted, and shared his retreat in the mosque of the
Umayyads. Visiting Iraq for the purpose of acquiring
learning, he there met al-Ghazali, al-Riṣāli, and al-Tūsī, and
in Baghdad attended the lectures of al-Ghazali at the Nizāni-
yya, probably attracted to his teaching by his previous meeting
with him. It was while Ibn Tūsī was in Baghdad that news
reached al-Ghazali that the Sultan 'Abd al-Malik b. Tāhān
(637/1241), described as a mild, grave and virtuous prince,
but a Mālikite, and very submissive to the theologians, had
ordered his books to be destroyed, because he was told that they
contained pure philosophy, which he abhorred as heretical.


2. Cf. 3. 27 above. Ibn Idris, op. cit. II, p. 352. These
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When al-Ghazâlî heard this, he foretold that the Amir's power would be taken from him and his son killed and his son's successor would be one who was even then present in his (al-Ghazâlî's) this might come to pass by his means. He returned to Alexandria, where he was received by the Mu'tazilite theologians and the Shi'ite theory of an indivisible historical teaching caused him to be expelled from Tripoli, but himself Mahdi and overthrew 'All and the Almoravides dynasty, titled of al-Mansûrîî, which Ibn Tûmart claimed for himself), disseminated in N. Africa and Spain by his successors. He al-Ülu'ûs dealing with religious philosophy.1 Another of al-Ghazâlî's students, who later occupied a prominent position, was Abû Bakr Mūhâammad Ibn al-Ürâbî, born father in 902. He visited Damascus and Bagdad, where he his teaching, and proceeded to the Hijâz, but returned to Bagdad, returned, by way of Cairo and Alexandria, to Seville, where he there, in 928. He went to him we owe certain replies given to been sent in writing from Spain, or may have been in person and set down by him in writing.1

Sa'dî b. Yâhya al-Nâshîpîrî, known as Muhîy al-Dîn, born in al-Mansûrî, History of the Al-Mahdî, ed. J. Depauw, p. 211. Sa'dî, Tab. IV, p. 411 ff. Abû ‘Abd Allâh Mu'âdh ibn Kâhir notes that: The Shâfi‘i shared in the wisdom of the author, and in so far as he is concerned, I do not feel it necessary to comment on the fact that he was the first to apply the Shâfi‘i law to the practice of the Sufi order.2

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student Abû-l-NasÎf al-Khâwâfî and became an eminent jurisconsult, being appointed as chief of the jurisconsults at Nîshâpûr. So great was his reputation that persons came from all directions to study under him. He lectured at the Nîshâpûr College at Nîshâpûr and later, at the Nîshâpûr College at Herât. It is related that at one of his lectures someone was moved to recite these lines: “The mourning remains of religion and of Islam receive new life from our master Muhîy al-Dîn, son of Yâhya.” When he teaches, he seems to have received a revelation from God, the Lord of the Throne.”

al-Nâshîpîrî said that his master al-Ghazâlî and his knowledge could be known only by one who had himself reached or almost reached, intellectual perfection. al-Nâshîpîrî wrote al-Maškî in explanation of al-Ghazâlî’s Wasâfî. He was killed in battle, when the Ghurîy attacked the Sîlîjids, in 548/1153.2

Another of al-Ghazâlî’s students, who became a distinguished and popular teacher, was Abû-l-Fath al-Ürâbî, born in 466/1073-4, who was at first a Hanbalite, but later studied under al-Ghazâlî and al-Kiyya. He lectured at the Nîshâpûr for a time and then in his own house and pupils thronged to him in such numbers that he was occupied all day long and continued teaching after nightfall. A group of students besought him to lecture to them on al-Ghazâlî’s Ikhâm; he refused at first on the ground of lack of time, but he finally gave way and agreed to lecture on it at midnight. He died in 585/1192.4

Among al-Ghazâlî’s students were Ibn ‘Uqayl and Abû-l-Khâtîb, who attended his classes during the period when he first held his chair in Bagdad, and made notes of his lectures and quoted his sayings in his own works.4 Another faithful recorder of al-Ghazâlî’s words was the Shaykh Sa’dî b. Fâris, known as al-Lahhî, who was present at al-Ghazâlî’s sermons after his return to Bagdad (cf. p. 29 above), when the people thronged his assemblies to hear him preach. The Shaykh made a record of the sessions for extraction and found that they amounted to one hundred and eighty three. The Shaykh read

1 Muhîy al-Dîn is the Reviver of Religion: Yâhya., he lives.
2 The Shâfi‘is, op. cit., p. 648. Sa’dî, Tab. IV, p. 197.
3 Sa’dî, Tab. IV, pp. 40 ff.
4 M. Risik, op. cit., p. 9.
his notes of these addresses to al-Ghazālī, who, after he had
corrected them, gave the Shaykh to make use of them,
and the Shaykh copied them out into two stout volumes.”
Other students and disciples of al-Ghazālī are mentioned by
his biographers, but little is known of the subsequent career
of most of these.

1 Ibid., p. 36. Perhaps the Kitab al-Manwha or the Hikāya al-
Ghazālī.
2 Cf. Mustafa, ibid., p. 44.

CHAPTER V
al-Ghazālī’s Literary Style: His wide resources. His
extensive use of imagery.

al-Ghazālī’s literary style is clear, attractive, readable and,
in some ways, curiously modern. His knowledge of Persian
is perhaps the reason why he uses Arabic with a freedom and
lack of formality which is unusual among Arabic writers. Every-
where he shows himself to be a master of his subject and possessed
of the power of penetrating men’s minds and souls. Much
of his written work represents the substance of his lectures and
bears the marks of a teacher’s endeavour to impress his meaning
upon his audience, but an audience which consisted chiefly of
scholars and divines whose education had been much the same
as his own and whose learning was not greatly inferior. But
there are short works of his written in a style simple enough
for the common folk and with the type of illustration which could
be expected to appeal to them.

To his profound learning and his wide experience of men and
life al-Ghazālī added a religious passion for truth which is revealed
on every page of his greater works and gives them their claim
to immortality. The intellectual curiosity which has combined
with his search for truth to make him study philosophy and natural
science, as well as theology, jurisprudence and the traditions,
enabled him to draw upon a great and varied store of knowledge,
for both his method of exposition and his illustrations. His
arguments are closely reasoned, especially in the most com-
prehensive and characteristic of his writings, the Iḥyā’ l-Ḥalām
al-Dīn,1 which was the outcome of long reflection, culminating
in the period of solitude and meditation which followed his
conversion. In this great work we have his mystical teaching

1 His style, in its ease and lucidity, has been compared with that of St. John
Chrysostom (the Golden-tongued) cf. Carre de Vaux, Les penseurs de l’Islam,
IV, p. 166.
2 He claims, this work may be said to take the place of the Sermons of the
Church. Cf. Thomas Aquinas in Christendom. Cf. L. Guillaume, Prophecy and
Revelation, p. 336.
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set forth in an ordered sequence of thought, original, profound and mature, which is based upon reasoning as sound as it is subtle. But his lesser works show the same literary character of imagery and appeals to analogy. Not only the fact that he had great resources of knowledge at his command, but the additional fact that he was a lover of both plants and animals revealed in al-Ghazálí’s choice of images and analogies. Every bird or beast, and anything which could fly or creep or swim, winds, and, not least, men and women, all have come under his experience, was drawn upon to make its contribution, directly or by way of illustration, to his teaching.

He notes that the gnat, is spite of its minute size, acts with deliberation and intelligence: that, though so small, it has been possessed of all the faculties and functions which other animals enjoy. He goes on to speak of how it is guided to man and the human being, to seek its nourishment and how its eyes, though too small to possess eyelashes, the purpose of which is to preserve the eyes from dust, and it is therefore provided with antennae to serve the same end. Then he observes how, because it is seeking the daylight and supposes the lamp to be a window in a dark room, and if it flies beyond it, yet returns of the wonders of God’s handiwork. The gnat serves as an illustration and ignorance, when he is attracted by the lights of desire and here, but in the fire which is not consumed. al-Ghazálí also bids his readers consider the bee and its capacity that which is hexagonal, not round or square or pentagonal, the square being rejected because the space in the corners would be wasted, while the cells would not fit into the round shape: only the hexagonal is perfectly fitted to its needs. Then, too, from the flowers and fruit blossom the bees obtain nectar, from which they extract the wax for their homes and the honey for their nourishment, and from these two can secure light and medicine. al-Ghazálí goes on to note how the bees preserve the nectar from all delineation and will say any nectar that might enter the hive and defile it, and how they obey their queen, who administers justice impartially towards them. He bids his readers draw the moral from this simple illustration, for as human architects fall short of the bee’s unerring instinct for building, and of its perfect accomplishment of its purpose, so man’s knowledge falls short of the Divine knowledge, for what he knows is not worthy to be called knowledge in comparison with the Omniscience of God.

Of the limitations of science and the need for a knowledge which is beyond that attained by the senses, al-Ghazálí writes: “The mere physicist is like an ant which, as it crawls over a sheet of paper, observes black letters spreading over it, and refers the cause to the pen alone. The astronomer is like an ant of rather wider vision, which catches sight of the fingers moving the pen, that is, he knows that the elements are under the influence of the stars, but he is unaware that the stars are under the control of the angels. So also those whose eyes do not look beyond the phenomenal world are like those who mistake servants of the lowest rank for the king himself.”

Reason is compared by al-Ghazálí with a legsemman going out to hunt, whose horse represents human lust and his dog passion. When the horseman is a skilled rider and his horse well broken in, and his dog thoroughly trained and obedient, he deserves to be successful: but if he lacks wisdom and his horse is restive and his dog savage, and his horse will not obey his urging, nor the dog his signals, he does not deserve to obtain what he seeks. al-Ghazálí gives another illustration taken from hunting, to show how desire and passion can be turned to good purposes and how those in whom they are strong, but well under control,
reach a higher degree than those in whom they are repressed altogether. Some people say that the hunter who hunts without either a horse or dog is more of an expert, and to be esteemed more highly than the hunter using the dog and horse, because he is safe from the danger of his horse bolting with him, and he cannot be attacked, and bitten by his dog, but this view al-Ghazâlî considers mistaken, for he who hunts with horse and dog, if he is strong and has them well-trained and under control, is a hunter of a higher class than the other and will get more enjoyment out of his hunting.\footnote{Ibid., IV, p. 37.} al-Ghazâlî compares this world to a snake, smooth to the touch and attractive in appearance, but possessed of deadly poison, and he advises men to beware of what they admire in it, because its allurements cloak the power to do men deadly harm.\footnote{Ibid., IV, p. 206.} Again he compares self-centred action and absorption in the desires of the self with the action of the silk-worm which spins continuously and comes to a grievous end in the midst of what it spins.\footnote{Ibid., III, p. 187.} So, also, man can destroy himself by a life centred in himself, and it he will take warning from the self-destruction of the silk-worm, he will utterly reject the life of self-indulgence, and save his soul alive.\footnote{Ibid., IV, p. 137.}

al-Ghazâlî frequently uses images derived from his knowledge and love of plants and his experience of a garden and its needs. He compares the man who imagines that human knowledge will suffice him apart from Divine Revelation, to one whose father built him a castle on a mountain-top and placed within it a certain growing herb, with aromatic properties, and impressed upon his son that the castle must never lack this herb for a single hour. The son planted all kinds of sweet herbs around the castle and sought far and wide for cuttings of aloes-wood and saffron and myrrh and many sweet-smelling trees, so that the scent of the original herb was quite overpowered and he said within himself: Doubtless my father made me preserve this herb simply for its fragrance and now with all these scents, we have no need of it and it serves no purpose now except to take up space," so he threw it away. When he had done so

\textit{from a certain hole there appeared a poisonous snake, which bit him and brought him to the point of death. Then he realized, when it was too late, that the herb had been expressly intended to keep away this deadly snake and that his father, in basking him preserve the herb had two purposes in view, firstly, that his son should benefit by its fragrance, a purpose which the son had realised by means of his reason, and secondly, that the deadly snake should be kept away by its scent, and this purpose the son, by his unrational reason, had failed to realise, because he supposed there was nothing beyond what he knew. So al-Ghazâlî draws the moral that human knowledge and reason are not enough for men, they need the guidance of the prophets, to whom is revealed the mystery of God.}
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the kernel is precious in itself, as compared with the outer rind, and as a whole is desirable, it is not free from certain admixture of impurity, in comparison with the fruit which is extracted from the kernel. God to be the Only Agent, has attained a high rank, yet he compared with the mystic who does not regard God in relation to His works as the seeker, but sees Him alone and thought not.

Al-Ghazali says that they consist of knowledge, feeling and action in regard to the stations of those who are seeking God. Referring to the faculty for attaining to perfection, which God has implanted in man, which may be brought from potentiality to actuality, if man chooses the form of life the dust-stone which, he observes, is neither an apple-tree nor a date-palm, but has been created such that it may never become an apple-tree, even with culture—let the necessity for growth, or failure to do so. No, too, we can choose and direct, such lead us to salvation and the life with God. In stating his conviction that it is essential for the novice on the road to God to have a spiritual director at guide and tutor, hinder his progress, and in acquiring those virtues, by the help with the pilgrim who harrows the soil in order to remove the thorns and weeds from the crop, so that its growth may be

Al-Ghazali also compares the different capacities of men for obtaining a water-supply. If wells have to be dug there must be both involved, but as there is water which flows without any work on the part of men, and some which is hidden beneath the earth, which requires perseverance in digging in order to discover it, and some which needs a little, but very little of it, so it is also with the attainment of knowledge within the human soul. Some comes forth from potentiality to actuality without human study, and this is the case with the prophets, for their knowledge is received from heavenly sources apart from human means, and for some, prolonged effort is needed, which is the case with most men, and for others, comparatively little.

Again Al-Ghazali compares the heart to a reservoir, into which rivers which are offensive, turbid, impure, from the rivers of the house, and the purpose of self-discipline is to live the reservoir from such waters and from the mad which defiles it, and also to prevent the water which is clear and pure from being affected by detritus. Now, asks Al-Ghazali, can such water be drained away from the reservoir, while the rivers are free to flow into it, for at every moment the supply is renewed to a greater extent than it is removed? Therefore the sense must be controlled and limited to what serves a necessary purpose, as waters which flow into a reservoir must be controlled and purified, and self-control, he adds, is made perfect only in solitude and freedom from distraction, in which state the seeker hears the call of God and contemplates the glory of the Divine Majesty.

Al-Ghazali illustrates the difference between spiritual and material values by a reference to the merchant in precious stones. To the ignorant it seems that to give one hundred dinars for a gem which weighs but a mithqal (one and one-third) of a drachm, is to give ten times the like of n, since the money weighs ten times as much as the gem, but the jeweller knows better. The worth of a jewel is not perceived simply by looking at it, but by the knowledge of the expert. The boy and the village and the Bedouin deny its value, saying: "This jewel is nothing but a stone, it weighs but a mithqal and the
not to be like the woman who was too lazy to spin and exceed herself by saying that she could manage to spin but one thread
in an hour and asked: "What good is attained by a single thread and what contribution will that make to a garment?"
not realizing that the clothes worn in this life come from thread, as the material substances of the world combine
g into a mesh of particles and so make up the whole. So also
the little deeds of goodness are by no means lost in the sight of
God.¹³
That it is impossible to serve God and Mammon al-Ghazali seeks to prove by the example of the vessel, from which,
as the water enters, the air passes out. It cannot contain them both.
So too, the heart cannot contain both the love of this world
and the love of God, and he who lives in fellowship with God is
pre-occupied with Him and can be concerned with nothing else.¹¹
He uses much the same image to prove that, as Nature abhors
a vacuum and you cannot therefore empty the vessel of air
without replacing it with water or something else, otherwise
it will be filled with air, as a matter of course, so too, the heart
which is occupied in serious reflection or religion is free from
the suggestions of Satan. On the other hand, to be heedless,
even for an instant, of the claims of God Most High, means that
in that very instant Satan enters in.¹² He also observes that
nothing can look from a vessel except what is in it, and so also
the heart gives forth only of that which has taken possession
of it, whether good or evil.¹³
al-Ghazali notes that the darkness of sin cannot exist along
with the light of good deeds, just as the darkness of the night
cannot co-exist with the light of day, any more than the detest-
ableness caused by dirt cannot co-exist with the cleanliness produced
by soap. "Just as the use of clothes for manual work soils them,
and washing them in soap and hot water cleanses them, so also
the concern of the heart with sensual lusts defiles it, and washing
it with tears and burning it with correction cleanses and purifies it.
The hearts which are thus purified are acceptable unto God
and it is for you to cleanse and purify it."¹⁴ The heart of man

¹¹  Idris. IV. p. 97.
¹²  Idris. IV. p. 96.
¹³  Idris. IV. p. 95.
¹⁴  Idris. IV. p. 96.
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al-Ghazali compares to a glass vessel, and evil qualities are like smoke and darkness: if these affect the heart, the way to happiness is darkened, but good qualities are like light and flame, and when these take possession of the heart, it is purified from the darkness of sin; the heart is either enlightened or darkened, and none can hope for salvation save him who approaches God with a pure heart. 1

In reference to the seeker who is sure of the way to God and follows it of his own accord, al-Ghazali says that if God gives illumination on the way to such a seeker, he does not become more certain of it, but he sees it more clearly, just as one who sees a man at dawn, when the sun has risen, is not more certain that it is a man, but sees more clearly the details of his form. 2

The Reason be compared to a lamp and the Canon Law to the oil which supplies it: so long as there is no oil, the lamp is useless and if there is no lamp, the oil cannot serve its purpose. There is a reference to this in the verse: "God is the Light of the Heaven and the earth," for the Canon Law is Reason from without and the Reason or a Canon Law from within. 3

al-Ghazali draws a striking picture of the degree to which men vary in respect of gnosis and faith, upon which their eternal happiness depends, for only by means of the light of knowledge do men pass hereafter into the Presence of God, which is the true meaning of Paradise. Some give forth light like a mountain and some much less, and in the lowest rank is the man who has only light enough for the light of his feet, a light which shines at one time so that he can go forward and at another is extinguished and he stands still. The passage of the faithful over Sawa—the bridge, sharper than the edge of a sword and finer than a hair, which is suspended over the flames of Hell, or mind whether over which they must pass to Paradise—depends upon the light they possess. Some pass like the twinkling of an eye, some like a flash of lightning and others like quicksilver or a shooting star. Some pass like a race-horse at full speed, but he who has light enough only for his great-toe crawls along, face downwards, on his hands and feet, dragging one hand and

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1 Kitab al-Sikhs, p. 11.
2 Ishk. IV, p. 218.
3 al-Caft, p. 33; al-Sikhs, p. 28; al-Tajr. XXIV, 35.

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holding on by the other, with the flames touching his sides, holding on by his way until he is safely across. As the light and so makes the light of all the candles in of the sun, if measured against the light of all the candles in the sun, just as the light of some men's existence, would surpass the light of the passing candle-light possessed by the common folk. The faith of the righteous is a light like that of the moon and the stars, but the faith of the Prophets is that of the noon of the light of the sun, while the horizon of the other, is revealed in the light of the sun, which is the horizon of the ordinary believer and the revelation of the full weight of the mind to the heart of the gnostic, the extent of the Kingdom to the heart of the gnostic. 4

In reference to other worldliness, al-Ghazali quotes the words of Yahiya b. Mu'izzil, "The ascetic for the sake of God, makes you sniff vinegar and mustard, but the gnostic makes the same mystic which you inhale mask and ambrosia." The same mystic as quoted who says: "This world is a bride and the worldling who as saying: 'This world is above all the gnostic blackens her face and seeks her is her fire-woman—the ascetic blackens her face and seeks her is her fire-woman—the mystic pulls out her hair and tears her garments, but the gnostic is so preoccupied with God that he does not even turn towards her.'

Another simile of which al-Ghazali makes use in reference to this world is one derived from the Prophet, who said: "It is as if a rider, journeying on a hot day and seeing a tree, were to take an hour's rest beneath its shade: then he goes on his light, says al-Ghazali, does not rely upon it in this way, having it in mind whether light, says al-Ghazali, does not rely upon it in this way, having it in mind whether

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4 Ishk. IV, p. 59.
5 Ishk. IV, p. 58.
6 Ishk. IV, p. 56.
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this is a clear simile, for the life of this world is a passage to the next and the cradle is the first milestone and the tomb the last, and between the two is a journey, the length of which is limited; men include those who have crossed half the bridge and some who have crossed a third and some two-thirds, and some for whom there remains but a step more. In any case, it must be crossed, and to build upon the bridge and adorn it, in the course of crossing it, is the height of folly. al-Ghazali uses another simile taken from words ascribed to Jesus: "He who seeks this world is like one who drinks salt water, the more he drinks the more his thirst increases until it kills him." He gives another illustration of the worldling's folly, taken from the Prophet, who said: "The worldling is like one who walks on water, and how can anyone walk on water and his feet not give way?" 1

Again al-Ghazali compares this world to a halting-stage or market-place through which pilgrims pass on their way to the next. While in this world, it is a man's business to secure provisions for the way, that is to say, by the use of his bodily faculties, to secure some knowledge of the works of God, and, through them, of God Himself, in the vision of Whom he will find his bliss in the world to come. 2

Dealing with the "lust of the eyes" al-Ghazali quotes from a saying of Prophet that Satan says: "It is mine ancient bow and mine arrow which goes not astray." al-Ghazali is reminded that the Prophet had also said: "The glance of the eye is one of Satan's poisoned arrows, which he shoots with unerring aim and no shield can ward it off save the shutting of the eyes and fleeing from the direction of its course, for this arrow is shot, only from the bow of outward forms and if you turn aside from the (temptation) of those forms, Satan's arrow cannot reach you." 3

Writing of the one who possesses knowledge and acts in accordance with his knowledge, al-Ghazali says that he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven, and compares him 4

1 Ibid. III, pp. 185, 188.
2 Ibid. III, p. 185.
3 Ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Malik (1477-1530) one of the best known of the early Shi'ites.
4 Ibid. III, p. 87, IV, p. 60.
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which sinks together with those on board her.* Another simile derived from his experience as a traveller is used in reference to the virtue of patience, which, he considers, is to faith what the head is to the body: **"There is no body without a head, nor does anyone possess faith without patience. The two half-loads (borne on each side of the camel) and the small package (which is placed on top) are bestowed upon the patient, the two side-loads being Prayer and Compassion, and the small package Guidance."**

In urging his readers to tolerance of those whose beliefs may differ from their own, and pointing out that truth is truth, irrespective of the person who holds it, and that even those who are in error as a whole may be in possession of some measure of truth which can be detached from their errors, he reminds them that gold is obtained from dirt and that no harm comes to the assayer when he thrusts his hand without hesitation into the forger's bag and draws forth the genuine gold and silver from amongst what is debased and bad, trusting to his expert knowledge. It is only the ignorant peasant, he continues, not the expert assayer, who should be prevented from having any dealings with the coiner. So, too, it is the inexperienced swimmer who is kept back from the seashore, not the swimmer who has the skill to surmount the waves, just as a child is prevented from touching a snake, but not so the highly skilled charger. So al-Ghazali defends the seeker for truth, who is experienced in the search, for his study of what contains the false as well as the true.++

It was perhaps his experience of the illness which preceded his resignation which led al-Ghazali so often to use illustrations drawn from the science of medicine. Pointing out that in the matter of knowledge generally, men accept the conclusions of experts, without insisting on testing the matter in question by first-hand experience, he says: **"Suppose we imagine a man, nature and capable of reasoning, who has never before experienced illness, and then falls ill, whose father is a doctor, compassionate and skilled in medicine, whose medical skill has always

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++ Manuel, p. 16.
++ Fath al-Udun, p. 10.

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been known to his son. If his father makes up a prescription and says to him: **"This will help you in your sickness and will heal you of your affliction," what will his reason suggest to such a man? Even though the medicine in bitter and abominable in taste, will he accept it, or will he reject it, saying: **"I understand that this medicine can cure a cure, but I have not myself tested it by experience? Would you not reckon him a fool if he did so? So also teaching which comes down on the authority of the Prophet and his successors is to be accepted even though its validity may not have been tested by the experience of those who receive it, and those who reject it for this reason are but fools who deprive themselves of guidance and help."**

Again, in discussing the comparative values of different types of knowledge and the estimation in which they should be held, he points out that the results to be obtained from any branch of knowledge are the really important thing. Therefore a knowledge of religion is of infinitely greater value than a knowledge of medicine, for the fruit of the latter is temporal life and the fruit of the former is life everlasting.
CHAPTER VI

al-Ghażālī as Poet and Musician. His love of Beauty.

Although al-Ghazālī’s fame as a writer and teacher rests on his prose works, yet he was also a poet, responsible for a volume of poems, 1 and there are verses of his to be found in his prose writings, and quoted by his biographers. Moreover, his writing everywhere, and his choice of words and images, is that of the poet, whose ears and eyes are open to the world of experience which lies behind the world of the senses, but is approached by means of them. “He who is without hearing and sight,” he writes, “cannot enjoy sweet singing and beautiful forms and colours,” 2 and just as it is not given to all to have the sensitive eye and ear, so also many lack the inner power which would enable them to respond to the beauties of sight and sound, that feeling for beauty and that love for the beauty of the natural world, which is the “joy in widest commonality spread.” 3

To al-Ghazālī, all beauty, whether manifested to the eye or to the ear—for he was a great lover of music—made an irresistible appeal. He writes of the beauty of good things, of running water, of a fair face, and of beautiful colours and sounds, and perhaps there have been few of the mystics with whom it was not so: nearly all of the Sufis were poets, and their mysticism expressed itself most often in poetry. There are Divine yearnings within the soul which can be expressed only by means of it and of music, but those who have no poetry within them, who are not responsive to the rhythm and music and imagny of poetry, cannot interpret its significance. “Consider,” writes al-Ghazālī, “the poetic sense by which certain people are distinguished. It is a kind of inspiration, which is so lacking in others that they cannot discriminate between the scansion of a regular metre and that which is irregular. Consider how,

1 Al-Ghazālī, Muqaddimah, p. 310.
2 al-Ghazālī, op. cit., p. 119, IV, p. 23.
3 al-Ghazālī, op. cit., p. 119, IV, p. 23.

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in others, this capacity is so developed that thereby they produce music and melodies, able to provoke sorrow and joy, to produce the shudder and weeping and madness, exciting to combat, or the cause of swooning. But these effects are produced strongly only in one who is himself possessed of this gift, while one who is not is devoid of it, though he also hears the sound, is very little affected by it, and he wonders at the one who is seized with it, and he wonders at the one who is swooned away. So that, if all those who are themselves poets or musicians were to try to explain what it means to them, they could not do so.” 4

al-Ghazālī, who possessed that faculty, writes elsewhere: “He who has a heart (i.e., is spiritually minded) and knows its true nature, knows that it is moved by poetry and music as it is not nature, knows that it is moved by poetry and music as it is not nature.” 5

One of his love-poems, which has been handed down and belongs perhaps to his early days, runs thus:

“The curls 6 about her temples, to the moon of her cheeks, have fallen.
In loveliness so radiant, that none with her can compare,
In the sign of the Scorpion, we have often seen the moon,
To see the Scorpion in the moon, that is a thing more rare.” 7

But these lines might well have a mystical significance, for the hsychoiiche locks of the Abode, in the poetry of the Sufis, represented the One veiled by the Many, and his moon-like face. To check the Divine Essence made manifest by its attributes, verse attributed to him by al-Jawhari expressed his opinion of the religious leaders of his day:

1 M. A. F. H., II, p. 266. Al-Ghazālī, Muqaddimah, p. 119. Cf. the words of a modern mystic: George Russell. “The purple pool, in a focus or burning point, is a kind of inspiration, which is so lacking in others that they cannot discriminate between the scansion of a regular metre and that which is irregular. Consider how,
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"Like lamp-wicks are the men we know,
Whose light burns brightly, but below
Is something other than appears:
As though another aspect wears,
Its worthless nature hid from sight.
When overlaid with silver bright."

There are verses attributed to him in the days when he was travelling and living a life of solitude, after his conversion, which are expressive of what his conversion had meant to him:

"Once I had been a slave: Lust was my master.
Lust then became my servant: I was free.
Leaving the haunts of men, I sought Thy Presence,
Lonely, I found in Thee my company.
Not in the marketplace is found the treasure
Nor by the ignorant, who know not Thee,
Who tamst me, thinking that my search is folly,
But at the end, Thou wilt be found with me." 1

Among his verses on love to God were the following lines:

"Though love afflict me, yet it is not grievous
For death to self, means life in Thee my Lover,
In terrors faint, if that shall be Thy pleasure,
To me, so tender far, than all refinement.
Nothing can grieve me now, save what divides me
From Thee—but with Thee, tonight has power to harm me." 2

There are verses left to us which refer to al-Ghazali's experience in teaching at Nishapur, when he had been persuaded to leave his life of retirement and had to face such calamity and hostility:

"What though the darkness of their enmity,
Like a threatening cloud, envelop me,
Doth not the pearl in darkness show its light,
Against a sombre background shine more bright?
Whether they praise my teaching, or they err,
Despising it as false: though they prefer
Dust to a gem—it matters not to me,
Pearls still are pearls, unvalued though they be." 3

Of whose life was devoted utterly to the service of God—

1 Suh, Tab., IV, p. 115.  2 Suh, Tab., IV, p. 115
3 Nishapir, Hik., p. 24.  4 Suh, Tab., IV, p. 105.

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and perhaps he was thinking of his own flight from the world, he wrote:

"He cast away his books that he might travel without burden.
His provisions, yes, even his sandals, did he cast away."

al-Ghazali also frequently quotes the verses of other poets, though almost invariably in connection with his poetic genius was al-Ghazali's love for music, which was responsible for some of his most inspired writing. "The deaf man," he writes, "misses the joy of sweet sounds and musical notes: he is like one who is absent, though present, and dead, though he be alive." 4 It was a much vexed question among the orthodox in Islam, as to whether listening to music and singing was permissible or unlawful. 5 al-Ghazali ranged himself with those who reckoned it to be lawful, for man, he points out, is not forbidden to delight in that which gives him pleasure, if it is not associated with anything which leads to sin.

With his usual sanity and breadth of outlook, he states his view that it is not possible that listening to music should be unlawful and there is no difference between one throat and another, or between the innominate and the animato. So we ought to draw an analogy from the voice of the nightingale to the sounds which proceed from other bodies, especially the sound which issues from the throat of man, or from musical instruments.

He quotes the tradition of David (obviously founded on the legend of Orpheus), that when he bewitched himself, reciting the Psalms, so sweet was the sound that men, wild beasts and birds used to gather round to listen to his voice. He points out further that even the camel, though stupid by nature, is affected by the musician's song to such an extent that its heavy burdens seem light to it, and listening to music gives it an energy that makes long journeys seem short, and produces an

1 Ibid., p. 102.
2 For further examples of his own verses C. Al-Fayr al-Jami', p. 14, Suh.
3 al-Dhabl al-Jami', p. 102.
5 al-Dhabl al-Jami', p. 102.
excitement which intoxicates it. So when the desert-roads
seem long to them and they are overcome by the fatigue of
travelling and the weariness of the heavy loads upon their
shanks, then the cameleroa summons them with his song
and they stretch out their necks, listening to the singer, with
their ears pricked, and hasten their pace, until their loads and saddles
are shaken upon them, and perhaps they may perish, because
of the violence of their pace and the weight of their loads,
which of them are unconscious, because of their excitement.

Al-Ghazali also tells a story of Abu Bakr. M. Da'di and Dauwarri,
known as al-Raqib, 1 who, when he was travelling in the desert,
met with an Arab caravan and was given hospitality by one
of the men, who brought him into his tent. There Abu Bakr
saw a black slave in fetters and a number of dead camels
in front of the tent, and one camel so weak and emaciated that it
seemed about to die. The slave appealed to Abu Bakr, saying:
"As a guest you have a right to ask favours, therefore intercede
for me with my master, for he will be gracious to his guest and
will not reject your intercession, and it may be that he will
release me from these bonds." So when food was brought in,
Abu Bakr refused to eat and said: "I will not eat until I have
interceded for this slave," to which his host rejoined: "This
slave has reduced me to poverty and destroyed my possessions," and
when Abu Bakr inquired how this had come about, his host said:
"He has a beautiful voice, and I made my living from
hiring out these camels (fit. from their backs), and he loaded
them with heavy loads and then sang to them so that they
accomplished a three days' journey in a single night, because of
the beauty of his song, and when they were unloaded, they all
died except this one camel. But you are my guest and for
your sake I give you what you ask." Then Abu Bakr wished
to hear the slave's voice, and when morning came, he bade him
sing to a camel which was drawing water from a well near by,
and when the slave lifted up his voice, that camel was madness
and snapped its ropes, and Abu Bakr fell upon his face, and
thought he had never heard such a wonderful voice.

If therefore, music has such an effect, ever upon the brute

and spiritual experience of divers kinds is made possible for him thereby.

But the highest type of listening to music, in al-Ghazālī’s view, is the listening of the soul for what God Himself may reveal to it through music.1 “The purpose of music, considered in relation to God,” he writes, “is to arouse longing for Him and passionate love towards Him and to produce states in which He reveals Himself and shows His favour, which are beyond description and are known only by experience, and by the Sufis these states are called ‘ecstasy.’ The heart’s attainment of these states through hearing music is due to the mystical relationship which God has ordained between the rhythm of music and the spirit of man, and the human spirit is so affected by that rhythm that music is the cause to it of longing and joy and sorrow and ‘expansion’ and ‘contraction.’”2 But he who is dull of hearing and unreasonable and hard of heart is debarrd from this joy, and such a one is astonihed at the delight of the mystic and his ecstasy—for enjoyment is a kind of apprehension, and apprehension requires something to be apprehended and the capacity to apprehend, and he who lacks such a perfected capacity cannot imagine such enjoyment.

How can anyone who lacks the sense of taste enjoy food, or he who has no ear, the pleasure of sweet sounds, or one who is out of his mind enjoy intelligible things? So also, after the sound has reached the ear, the true significance of music apprehended by the inner sense within the heart, and he who lacks that sense, of necessity takes no pleasure in it.”3

The fourth and highest degree of listening to music, therefore, is that of the gnostic who has passed beyond states and stages, who is conscious only of God and has become unconscious of self and his own actions and his relations with others. In that state of absorption, he plunges into the ocean of contemplation.

1 Cf. a modern writer, R. Hiller-Steinw, who regards music as the living God within us, “as we deliberate or entertain music, we experience the best light God has left shining within us, to point the way to find Him now.”

2 Mysticism of Music, p. 4.


1. al-Ghazālī, al-Ilm al-Majbūr, p. 234.
by the love of God, in whom music arouses only praiseworthy qualities, for on those who by nature are emotional, the effect of music is greater, fanning into flame the love which has already taken possession of the heart, whether that love be earthly and sensual, or Divine and spiritual.

But music, to al-Ghazâlî, has also a cosmic significance: earthly music is but an echo of the heavenly music. In his Qâfîdâ al-Tâ'îyya al-Ghazâlî explains that the soul responds to music here, in this life, because it is reminded of melodies heard long since, before it was invested with its body, when it listened to the sweet melody of the spheres. So, by some earthly melody, it is reminded of the time of its pre-existence, when it dwelt in the heavenly places, and it longs to be once again united with its Source. When the babe in the cradle is soothed by sweet singing and shows its delight, and lies at peace, it is remembering the celestial music which rejoiced it in the heavenly realms, when the spheres, revolving on their orbits, sang together and offered their praises to the All-High. 5 So, also, al-Ghazâlî writes that the perfected gnostic, within his heart, hears the music of the spheres and has the joy of listening to the angelic choirs, and then he understands the meaning of the songs of the birds, for they, too, uplift their voices in praise of their Maker. 6 In listening to music, therefore, the mystic is sharing in the supernatural harmony, and the human spirit is entering into communion with the Infinite and Eternal Spirit. Music, for al-Ghazâlî, was a door to Eternity.

3 The Merchant of Venice. Scene I, Act V.

5 al-Mašref al-'Aqīyya, fol. 48b.

1 Mosâfîr, pp. 18, 33.
2 Asyârah, 44. fol. 49b.
3 ibid., IX, p. 55.

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CHAPTER VII

al-Ghazâlî as mystic. Asceticism and Solitude. The Life of Prayer.

In his autobiography, al-Ghazâlî states that when he had considered the Sîra way of life, he realised that it could be followed only by means of "knowledge and action." Having acquired the theory by his study of the writings of the Sîûrs, he knew that he must carry it into practice if he was to attain to their spiritual experience and, through mysticism, find his way to God. The first step on the way was the cleansing of the soul from the qualities which hindered its search for God, in order that it might be set free for His service. "The entrance to the Path," he says, "is the absolute purification of the heart from all save God, the beginning of which (just as the Tabula— the acknowledgment of God's Holiness—is the beginning of Prayer) is the complete absorption of the heart in the recollection of God, and the end of it is to pass away altogether into God, the end of the Path, that is, not the beginning of the Unitive Life, and all that precedes it is but the vestibule by which the mystic enters therein." 1

The purification of the Sîra, he states elsewhere, means that "he offers the pleasures of the self as a ransom for the sake of his soul." 2 There was no difference, he held, between a man's worship of himself and his worship of an idol. Whenever man worships any other than God Himself, he is veiled thereby from God. 3 al-Ghazâlî therefore, applied himself to the asceticism which would purify his heart from vice, and enable it to acquire virtue as a fixed habit of life, against which no temptations could prevail, but he did not find it an easy thing, and he felt that it would have been harder still, had he not felt the call of
God while still in the prime of life. "What is acquired in youth," he says, "is like engraving on stone, but it is hard to teach old age." Three things, he felt, were necessary for the healing of his soul, sick as it was with self-love and love of the world: firstly, flight from temptation, for so long as he remained on the scene of his worldly triumphs, desire would get the better of him, and God had made the world wide enough to offer a place of refuge from temptation, as He Himself said: "Is not God's earth broad enough for you to find refuge therein?" Secondly, he must constrain himself to change his whole manner of life, and, for wealth and ease, he must substitute poverty and hardness, exchanging the gash of pomp for the vesture of humility, and, in fact, every aspect of life, in his downsetting and his uprising, he must do the exact opposite of what he did, while still in the world and of it. The remedy must be the antidote for the disease. But, thirdly, he must be watchful in doing this, to go gently and gradually and not rush from one extreme to the other, for human nature is perverse and its attributes cannot be changed in a moment, so renunciation should be first of one thing and then of another, until little by little his evil qualities would be extirpated and the service of God would not seem hateful to him. Asceticism, for al-Ghazālī, began with control of the natural appetites, for self-indulgence he regarded as one of the gates to Hell, and as a consequence, while self-condemnation and contrition were a gate into Paradise, the foundation of which was fasting. The locking of a gate into Hell meant the opening of a gate into Paradise, to be near to one meant being far from the other. He held, too, that moderation in eating kept the body healthy and excess led to sickness, in addition to being a hindrance to devotion. Self-indulgence and the love of this world were the cause of man's destruction in the next and therefore he set himself against both and cut himself loose from worldly attachments, in order that he might be detached to God. Four things, he considered, would guard against "bandits" on the road to God, those temptations which might snatch the traveller back to the world he had abandoned, and

1 Mināk, Al'amal, p. 38.
2 Imam, IV, p. 93.
3 Ihyā', IV, p. 93.
4 Shankar, pp. 151, 170.
6 Shaddad, 1915, p. 192.
7 Shankar, p. 221.
seems to him no remuneration. So the ascetic does not rejoice in what he possesses nor grieve over what he lacks and blame are alike to him, for his fellowship is with God Most High and what predominates in his heart is the joy of obedience. To al-Ghazālī this world seemed to be only a place of sowing for the world to come and the harvest was the consummation for ever of that fellowship with God which has its beginning here on earth. Death to him, was not the end of existence, but merely the separation from this world and a closer approach to God, the Beloved. While in this world he was hindered from continuous fellowship and continuous recollection of Him and the contemplation of His Beauty. The tomb, therefore, seemed to him but the entrance-gate into the gardens of Paradise, whereby he would be set free from the prison of the body and worldly futilities, and could at last be alone with his Beloved. Therefore, while still travelling on the way to that invisible world, he continued to observe a rule of life which would keep him apart from this world and would enable him to give his time to recollection and meditation upon the life to come.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p. 65.}


al-Ghazālī says that he heard one of the Sīfī Shaykhs declare that the traveller to God looks upon the next world while he is still in this, and Paradise is really found within his own heart, when the self has been purified from its defilements and the concern is concentrated upon God. But recollection is possible only to the heart at leisure from itself and for this solitude is necessary. Only in solitude can the mystic hear the call of the Creative Truth and contemplate the Divine Glory.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p. 497.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p. 16.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.}}}


al-Ghazālī himself had sought that experience and he states that all solitaries know this, this is true. He writes of his own experience, when he strove to overcome desire and sought seclusion and tried to give himself to meditation and recollection and found himself continually distracted by Satanic suggestions: \textit{Ibid}, p. 37.

\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


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\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


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\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.


\textit{Ibid}, p. 42.
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Prayer meant to him and of what he felt as to its nature and purpose.

He quotes a saying of Sufyân al-Thawrî that God has a wind which blows at daybreak and bears the praises and supplications of men to the King Supreme. He foretells the objection that there is no end to be reached by prayer if all is pre-determined by the Almighty Will of God, in saying that it is pre-determined that evil shall be averted by prayer and supplication for mercy. Just as the shield serves to turn aside the arrow and water causes the plants to spring out of the earth, and the shield contends with the arrow, so also Prayer and evil wrestle together, and belief in the pre-determining power of God does not debar anyone from using armour or from watering the earth, after sowing the seed. God invites His worshipper to pray, in order that prayer may lead them to recollection and humility and self-surrender, which enlighten the heart and make it receptive of His revelation and mean a continuance of His living-knights. This does not mean dissatisfaction, on the part of those who pray, with God's Will for them, but just as lifting up the water-jar and drinking its contents does not mean dissatisfaction with the thirst which God has decreed, for He has also decreed that water should slake thirst, so also it is right to pray, for prayer is the means appointed by God for the satisfaction of men's spiritual needs. It is characteristic of al-Ghazâlî to believe that even the hungry creation joins with men in offering prayer and praise to God and he observes that it is said that the birds and the insects meet one another on Friday and say: "Peace, peace, this is a sacred day." Of prayers for rain he states that when the streams cease to flow and the rains fail and the clouds are dried up, it is an act of merit for the Imam to bid the people first to fast for three days and to give alms according to their ability, and to refrain from doing injustice, and to repent of their sins. Then, on the fourth day, he should go forth with them, accompanied by old women and boys, all having purified themselves

Khalîl al-Ghazâlî, Jami' al-Tawârîkh, p. 10.
Yusuf, p. 398.
Abû Dâwûd, p. 104.
Friday is the day for public worship in Muslim countries.

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and being clad in coarse raiment, submissive, humble, in contrast to their men on feast-days, and it is said to be a very fitting thing to take with them the cattle, because they also share in the seed, and may fittingly share in their petitions. Al-Ghazâlî held that a man should pray for his friends not only during their life-time but also after their death, and he gives a prayer to be said at the burial of the dead, commending the soul of the faithful departed unto its Lord: "O Lord, Thy creature has returned unto Thee, therefore have pity upon him and show mercy towards him. O Lord, we beseech Thee, open the gates of heaven unto his spirit and welcome him as he approaches Thee. O Lord, if He did good (while here upon earth), then multiply his good deeds and if he did evil, then close Thine eyes to his sins." He also quotes the Prophet's words: "By the prayers of the living, the tombs of the dead are lighted up," and the words of one who said: "Prayer for the dead takes the place of guidance for the living and because of it, an angel enters into the presence of the dead bearing radiant lights and says: "This is guidance for you from such a friend or relative," and the dead rejoices in that as the living rejoice in guidance here." He felt that God Himself called His servants to Pray and pray and made them desire thus to enter into the closest relationship with Himself. "Praise be to God," he says in an oration of thanksgiving, "Who overcometh His servants with His gifts and fills their hearts with the radiance of faith and devotion.... He differs from earthly kings in that He inspires His servants to ask of Him and make their plea unto Him, for He says: "Is there any who calls unto Me? I will answer him. Is there any who seeks for forgiveness? I will grant it unto him." Unlike the rulers (of this world) He opens the door and lifts the veil and gives leave to His servants to enter into intimate familiarity with Him through Prayer. Nor does He limit Himself to giving

1 See, for example, 'Arab, p. 193.
2 See, for example, 'Arab, p. 194.
3 See, for example, 'Arab, p. 104. Cf. the Christian prayer for the dead: "Let Light perpetual shine on them, may they rest in peace." 4 Cf. the archeress of Norway: "I am the ground of thy beseeching: first it is My Will that thou seest it.... and since I make thee to will it... and after I make thee to beseech it and then beseech thee it." 5 Revelations of Prayer, p. 84 (14th Revelation).
AL-GHAZALLI’S LIFE AND PERSONALITY

they leave but He shows His loving-kindness in inspiring them with the desire for this and calling them unto Him."1

The first thought on awakening and the first word upon the tongue, for al-Ghazālī, was the remembrance of God and praise to Him and he gives a morning prayer which we may assume was his own greeting to his Lord on awakening: "Praise be to God, Who hath brought us back to life from death (i.e. from sleep). . . O Lord, I ask Thee that Thou wilt lead me unto all good and that Thou wilt perfect me from evil. . . Through Thee, O Lord, do we arise in the morning and through Thee do we come to eventide. Through Thee we live and through Thee we die and unto Thee do we return. The remembrance of God and the sense of His constant presence, he felt, should be with his servant at all times. "Know," he says, and he is undoubtedly referring to his own experience, "that your Companion, Who never forsakes you, whether you are at home or abroad, asleep or awake, in life or in death, is your Lord and Master, your Protector and your Creator, and whenever you remember Him, He is there beside you. For God Most High hath said: 'I am the Companion of Him Who remembers Me. Whenever your heart is quicken with grief for your shortcomings in religion, He is there at hand, continually beside you. For He hath said: 'I am with those who are con- trite in heart, for My sake.' If you but knew Him in truth, you would take Him as your Friend and liberate all others but Him. If you are not able to do that at all times, do not fail to set apart time both night and day, in which you may commune with your Lord and enjoy His presence in inward converse with Him and may know what it means to have continual fellowship with God. 2

al-Ghazālī bids all who draw near to God to forget this world and its people and to approach Him as He will be approached on the day of resurrection, when the soul will stand in His Presence, with no mediator between. In Prayer he says, "God is face to face with you and you are in intimate conversation with Him and you must know in Whose presence you are stand-
ing, for He is the King Supreme."3

1 Iblīd, p. 129, 130.
2 Ṣalāḥ al-Halwāny, p. 5.
3 Ṣalāḥ al-Halwāny, p. 39.
4 Handful of Twelve, p. 360, 361.
5 Iblīd, p. 129.
6 Iblīd, p. 130.
7 Idem, p. 129.
8 Bāqī, p. 128.
9 Cf. N. Omer, Idea of an Umayyad, pp. 18 ff.
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al-Ghazali says, “When you enter the presence of one accounted great (in this world) who is, after all, a creature, with no real power to injure you or do you good; ought it not then to be present when you are in confidential communion with the King of kings, Whose hand are both this world and the next, Who controls all that comes to you, of good or ill?”

These things, then, al-Ghazali felt it be necessary if Prayer was to be an inward reality and he was doubtless speaking from his own experience. He feels, too, that the external ritual and formalities which accompany prayer must be realised to have a spiritual significance; they were but outward symbols of an inner reality. Of the ritual purification which precede prayer al-Ghazali writes: “When you purify the place in which you pray, which is your outermost container, and then your garments, which are your nearest covering and then your skin, which is your inner rind, do not forget your kernel, which is your real essence, and that is your heart. So strive to cleanse it by repentance and contrition and therewith purify your inmost self, for He Whom you worship is looking thereon.” This purification of the inmost self means that it is emptiness and prepared for the Divine action, for the ultimate purpose of this purification is that the glory of God and His majesty should be manifested to the soul. “The knowledge of God,” al-Ghazali says, “will enter and abide in the soul in very truth until all else but God has been removed from it.”

Then, too, just as in the ritual prayer, the outward face is turned towards the qibla (the direction of Mecca) and away from any other direction, so also during prayer the heart should be turned towards God and to nothing else. “Let the face of your heart,” he writes, “be turned in the same direction as the face of your body and know that the heart does not turn towards God except when it is freed from the thoughts of all but Him.”

He writes elsewhere on this subject, “When you turn your face towards the qibla, then turn your heart towards the Creative Truth and do not rejoice, for you have no reason for it, but remember how you must stand in His Presence on the Day of Judgment. Therefore stand on the feet of fear and hope, detaching your heart from regard for this world and for mankind and transfer your concern to Him, for He will not reject one who take refuge in Him, nor disappoint a suppliant.”

al-Ghazali had much experience of the distraction of thought by which prayer is hindered, but he knew that only those whose prayer was directed solely towards God in humility and adoration could receive the Divine illumination and apprehend the mysteries revealed by God to His saints. In prayer alone were those mysteries revealed and the revelation came only to that one whose heart was not upon God alone. “When you can say, ‘My living and my dying belong to God,’ then,” says al-Ghazali, “you may know that this is the status of one who is lost to himself and found to his Lord.”

For when the creature, so lost to self, approaches God in prayer, He raises the veil between Himself and His servant and meets him face to face.

His own prayers and thanksgivings show that al-Ghazali had this experience of the inner reality of prayer. He quotes the words of the Prophet to the effect that he who gives praise to God in the midst of those who are heedless is like a green tree in the midst of plants that are withered, and like one who fights among those who fee. Again he declares that the dwellers in the celestial regions look down upon those earthly habitations whence prayers and praise rise up to God and see them as shining stars, and he adds his own petition, which he used to offer on entering the Divine sanctuary: “O Lord, give light unto my heart and my tongue and my hearing and my sight, and set light behind me and before me and above me, Lord, give me light.”

One of the best of his prayers is none the less significant because of its brevity: “Lord, make my secret thoughts
better than my outward acts and make my outward acts good."

We have al-Ghazâlî's prayer when he bowed in worship before the Most High: "O Lord, Thee do I adore and in Thee do I put my trust and unto Thee do I commit myself. I bow my face in adoration to Him Who created and fashioned it, Who gave unto me hearing and vision. Blessed art Thou, Who hast created all things well: with heart and mind I worship Thee, my soul transmutes in Thee. I yield to Thy grace, in acknowledging my transgression, and I seek Thy face therein, for Thou alone canst forgive sin." At the close of prayer he would say: "O Lord, Thou art peace, and from Thee comes peace. Thou hast blessed me, O Lord Most Glorious, Who art worthy of all praise."

Thanksgiving played a large part in al-Ghazâlî's prayers and many of these hadis are very beautiful. For the double gift of purification and the means thereto he offers thanks, saying: "Praise be to God Who hath shown favour to His servants and hath called them to serve Him in purity and for the cleansing of their inward selves hath outperused upon their hearts His radiance and His loving-kindness, and for their outward forms hath prepared the purification of pure and limpid water." al-Ghazâlî offers thanks to the All-Glorious Who is also the All-Compassionate, when he says: "Praise be to God Whose glory passes the comprehension of the hearts and minds of His creatures, and they remain amazed therein, by the radiance of Whose Light their vision is dazzled, Who looks upon the secrets of men's inmost selves, Who is aware of what is hidden within their consciences, Who orders all things by His sovereign will, and none but His command or gives Him aid: Who turns men's hearts to repentance and forgives their transgressions: Who casts a veil over their sins and comforts them in their sorrows— to Him be praise."

al-Ghazâlî gives thanks also for the grace of God towards His saints in calling them into fellowship with Him through prayer, saying: "Praise be to God, Who hath magnified His grace towards the elect among His creatures and His chosen, in that He hath made them to be concerned only with His fellowship and hath bestowed upon them the joy of His grace and hath made their hearts to despise the goods of this world and its splendour, so that each one from whose mind the veils and its splendour, so that each one from whose mind the veils have been withdrawn is content to be alone with God and becomes accustomed to the contemplation of the Divine Majesty, in solitude, apart with Him, and is separated thereby from fellowship with mankind, even though it were his closest friend— to Him be praise." We have, finally, al-Ghazâlî's prayers that at the end of this mortal life he may pass into the presence of his Lord among His saints, entering His presence as one who already knows and loves Him: "O Lord, let us not pass from this world except as gnostics, perfected in gnosis, submerged in the ocean of Thine Unicity, set free from the fetters of this world and its pomp and vanities, through Thy mercy, O Thou Most Merciful." Akin to this is his prayer: "We ask God the Merciful." Akin to this is his prayer: "We ask God the Merciful." Akin to this is his prayer: "We ask God the Merciful." Akin to this is his prayer: "We ask God the Merciful." Akin to this is his prayer: "We ask God the Merciful." Akin to this is his prayer: "We ask God the Merciful." Akin to this is his prayer: "We ask God the Merciful." Akin to this is his prayer: "We ask God the Merciful." Akin to this is his prayer: "We ask God the Merciful."
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Shifts and with beginners on the mystic Way, in his latter days at Tus. “To be a Shift,” he said, “means to abide continuously in God and to live at peace with men: whoever abides and deals rightly with men, treating them with unfailing kindness, is a Shift. The right attitude towards your fellow-men is that you should not lay burdens upon them according to your own desire, but rather burden yourself according to their desire. In your dealings with others, treat them as you would wish them to treat you, for the faith of God’s servant is not made perfect unless he desires for others what he desires for himself.”

So al-Ghazâlî gave his last years on earth to the guidance of others on the road by which he had himself been led to a knowledge of—and fellowship with—God.


PART II.

AL-GHAZÀLÌ’S MYSTICAL TEACHING

CHAPTER VIII

al-Ghazâlî’s Sources. Neo-Platonism and Arab Philosophy. Judaism and Christianity. Islamic and Sûfî Sources.

The wide scope of al-Ghazâlî’s studies, aided by his extensive travels, enabled him to draw upon many sources for the ideas which he develops, and the terminology which he uses, in setting forth his mystical teaching, though it is always to be borne in mind that its chief and most essential source was his own personal experience. He himself had experienced illumination and ecstasy, he had received revelations which it was not lawful to describe, he had entered into that direct knowledge of the Divine which was incommunicable, but it was this experience which enabled him to give his teaching with the assurance born of his personal conviction of the truth of what he taught.

His study of philosophy had led him to reject and refute many of its conclusions, but none the less, he was deeply influenced by Greek thought and especially by Neo-Platonism, and this influence is to be seen throughout his mystical writings. From Plotinus is derived the idea of God as the One Reality, the Source of all being, the All-Perfect, transcending all known attributes and existences. “He is the One, the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward, but He is neither body nor substance nor accident, not like anything that exists... He does not exist in anything nor does anything exist in Him, for He is too exalted to be contained in any place and too holy to be limited by time, for He was before time and place were created. He alone is self-existent in His essence.” Again al-Ghazâlî writes: “He cannot be apprehended by the understanding, none can apprehend the One but the One.” So also Plotinus had written of the One, the First-Existing, Transcendent,
light outpouring upon all things, for it is the spirit of all and by the goetia it has been called the Heart of the Universe."  

From Universal Mind emanates Universal Soul, which in its turn gives rise to the phenomenal world and to individual human souls. The human soul, says Plotinus, "is a Divine thing, belonging to another order than that of sense." According to his teaching, the human soul resembles the Universal Mind in containing three principles, the Intellectual, which is the true self, the Reasoning Soul, which represents the normal, human life and the Animal Soul, which is the irrational nature. So, too, al-Ghazali all refers to Universal Soul—related to Universal Mind as Eve to Adam, and next to it in honour and nobility and receptivity— as the second emanation from the One, and that from which individual souls proceed. "Know," he says "that when Universal Soul takes possession of a body, its presence there is called a human soul." Al-Ghazali also refers to the human soul as a Divine thing, belonging, not to the sensual, but the spiritual world (cf. pp. 142 ff. below). That human soul, in al-Ghazali’s teaching, includes the highest self (al-mafs al-mutama sana) which he also calls the "rational" soul (al-mafs al-nilgaj), to be identified with the heart and spirit of man, which is Divine in its origin. There is, secondly, the "reproachful" soul (al-mafs al-anwar), which predominates with the normal human being in whom the voice of conscience is at work to correct the downward pull of the "flesh," and thirdly, there is the "headstrong" soul (al-mafs al-anmaa), which incorporates with the normal human being, under the control of the animal nature.  

al-Ghazali’s cosmology, considering the Celestial World (al-afl al-jabari) and the material, phenomenal world (al-afl al-anbalu) is in accordance with

1 Plotinus, Ennead V, 2, 1–3.
3 Iaasi, IV, pp. 214, 215.
this three-fold principle, and so is his teaching on the three stages of the soul's ascent to God. 

al-Ghazālī's constant use of imagery derived from Light, though it is based to a limited extent upon the Qur'an, is also Hebraic in origin, especially in his identification of knowledge with Light (cf. p. 174 above). Ignorance," he says, "is like a state of blindness and darkness, and knowledge is like vision and light. Especially is this true of the knowledge which comes from above, the Light of God, which, says al-Ghazālī, is "the radiance from the Lamp of the Invisible, shed upon a heart which is pure at leisure, receptive." Plato had also called this knowledge the light within the soul which enlightened it, a light "from above" which gave the soul its brighter life. Again al-Ghazālī writes of earthly lights kindled by celestial lights and these in their turn by the Light Supernal (al-Nur al-asdy al-dīlā), above which there is no light and from which light is shed upon all other things. Elsewhere he says: "God is Manifest (al-Fikhrū) and by Him all things are made manifest, for that which is manifest in itself, which makes all other things manifest, is Light, and whenever existence (al-asdyūd) confronts non-existence, then undoubtedly existence is made manifest and there is no darkness darker than non-existence. Now that which is free from the darkness of non-existence, even, from the possibility of non-existence. Which brings all things out to non-existence into the manifestation of existence, is worthy to be called Light. Existence is light outpoured upon all things from the Light of His Essence. Who is the Light of the heavens and the earth." Plato, too, speaks of material forms, containing light, which need another light so that their own light may be manifested: in like manner celestial beings "all lightsome" need another and a greater Light, so that they may be visible to themselves and others. That Light, to al-Ghazālī, as to Plato, is the Ultimate Reality (al-Maṣūf al-ḥaqq). 

3. al-Dalil al-Dinmi, p. 227, 257. 4. al-Dalil al-Dinmi, 4. 5. Ibid., p. 28. 6. Cf. also Ḥikm, III, p. 46.
7. Cf. plato, y., 7, 8.
before it descended into this world, and therefore stirred it up to joy and longing, and his view of the music of the spheres as a source of delight and as a means of bringing the seer nearer to God, find their counterpart in Platonic teaching.  

al-Ghazālī also accepts the theory of the Seven Heavens, which played a part in Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought, 3 and he recounts a tradition embodying this belief, which told how God created seven angels to guard the Seven Heavens, and how the guardian angels mount with the good deeds which a man has done, from morn till eve, working at the mulberry, until they reach the First Heaven, and there the work is rejected by the Angel who guards the gate, because the servant was guilty of slander. Then the guardian angels come with more good works which they praise and magnify until they reach the Second Heaven, and there are stopped by the Angel guarding it, because in what he did the servant was seeking worldly ends and boasted of his works among men. The guardian angels then ascended with work adorned with the light of almsgiving and fasting and prayer, which excited the admiration of their fellow-angels, and they passed with it as far as the Third Heaven, but were brought to a halt by the Angel there, who rejected the work because the servant was arrogant towards his fellow-men. Once again they ascended with work shining like the stars, a radiance due to the man’s praises and prayers and pilgrimages, until they reached the Fourth Heaven, where the work was rejected because of the servant’s pride in it. Then they ascended as far as the Fifth Heaven, with work adorned like a brioche coming unto her bridegroom, but the Angel who kept the gate refused to let it pass, because the doer was jealous of those whose works were like his. Once more the angels ascended with the servant’s good works of prayer and almsgiving and pilgrimages and fasting, and reached the Sixth Heaven, but the Angel forbade them to pass, because that servant had no pity on the afflicted, but rather rejoiced in their affliction. Again they ascended with the work of fasting and prayer and expenditure for others and aims and striving and piety, work resounding like thunder and shining like the sun, accompanied by three thousand angels, and they bore it up to the Seventh Heaven, but once more the Angel of the gate barred their advance, because the servant had not done his work for the sake of God alone, but had sought therein others besides God, seeking exaltation with the divines, and fame with the learned, and reputation among men. Yet once more the angels ascended with good works as before and also a fair show of religion, and silence and the recollection of God, and the angels of heaven excorted that work until they had pierced all the veils and they brought it before God Most High. Then they stood in His Presence and bore witness to that good work done in sincerity, for His sake. Then God said unto them, “Ye are the guardians of My servant, but I am He Who looks upon his soul. He was not seeking Me, in what he did, he sought another than myself.” So the work was rejected and the Seven Heavens joined in excommunication of that faithless servant. 4

al-Ghazālī owes something to the Platonic theory of Ideas, of things in this world being only a type or symbol or imperfect copy of the archetype, the reality “laid up in heaven.” He likens them to the images which appear in sleep, compared with what is seen in waking hours. So, too, the capacity of the human mind in this life is like that of one who is asleep and what it perceives is but a type of the heavenly reality. But when men die, they awake from the dream of life and know things as they really are. Again he says that if there were no relationships between the visible world and the world invisible and no link between them, any ascent from one world to the other would be inconceivable. Therefore, by the Divine mercy, the visible world was made to correspond to the world invisible and there is nothing in this world but is a symbol of something in that other world. 5 “The Ka‘ba,” he says elsewhere, “is an outward symbol in this material world of that Presence, not seen by the eye, which indwells the Divine world, just as the body is an outward symbol in this visible, phenomenal world, of the heart.

1 I. 283-285. 2. I. 289. 3. I. 34. 4. I. 84. 5. I. 45.
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which cannot be seen by the eye, for it belongs to the world of the Unseen, and this material, visible world is a means of ascent to the invisible, spiritual world for him to whom God has opened the door.¹

These conceptions, and others in his writings which bear traces of a Neo-Platonic origin, al-Ghazali may have derived from his own personal study of the Greek writers, in Arabic translations. He refers to Plato’s theories,² and Arabic translations of the Republic, the Timaeus, and the Phaedo, for which Christian translators were mainly responsible, were available from the ninth century onwards.³ He had also direct access to the teaching of Plotinus, in the so-called Theology of Aristotle, a translation into Arabic of Porphyry’s commentary on the Enneads, IV, V, and VI, and from this undoubtedly he derived both ideas and terminology: sometimes whole phrases and paragraphs embodying the teaching of Plotinus are transferred to his own work and adapted to the purposes of his own mystical teaching.⁴

But al-Ghazali probably owed some of his knowledge of Platonism and Neo-Platonism to the writings of the Arab philosophers, notably al-Kindi (ob. 260/873), considered to be the founder of Arab philosophy, but not an original thinker, rather one who founded his teaching on the Greek commentators of Alexandria. He was also interested in the effect of music, not only as a source of pleasure to the hearing, but as an influence on the spirit of man.⁵ al-Kindi was responsible for a number of translations from the Greek.⁶

The work of systematisation begun by al-Kindi was continued by al-Farabi (ob. 339/950), who is mentioned by al-Ghazali as a representative Islamic philosopher.⁷ al-Farabi accepted

⁶ Muḥaddith, p. 11.
⁷ The Agama of Islam, pp. 357 ff.
must have added greatly to the knowledge of Greek philosophy which he had secured from his own reading of the Greek writers. Al-Ghazali's mysticism owes a certain amount to Judaistic sources: he makes use of some Jewish traditions and was probably acquainted with the Old Testament. The stress he lays on the Kingdom of Heaven ('Adam al-Malakhi, the Divine World), though the term malakhi itself is Aramaic, is due most probably to the use of the word in the Qur'an and to a significance derived from Neo-Platonic sources. He frequently quotes traditions concerning Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jonah, Job and other Old Testament figures, which must have come ultimately from Old Testament sources or Jewish traditions. He makes frequent reference to the Chronicles or Traditions of David (Abbhir Da'd), which appears to be a definite work to which he had access. He also refers to the Talmud and the Psalms and "the writings of Moses and Abraham," as being inspired in order to summon men to their spiritual heritage.

Al-Ghazali also often draws upon Jewish sources to illustrate his teaching, and his religious tolerance, already mentioned, enables him to hold up devout Israelites as an example to the faithful of Islam, e.g., he relates how a certain Israelite worshipped God in sincerity for many years, and God Most High desired to manifest his sincerity to His angels. He therefore sent one of His angels to him with the message: "The Lord Most High asks of thee: How long wilt thou exert thyself and weary thyself in serving Me, since thou art destined for Hell?" The angel delivered the message, to which the worshipper replied: "I am a servant and the servant's business is to serve: He is the Lord and what is the Lord's business none knows but He." The angel returned to his Lord and said: "My God, Thou dost know what is secret and hidden and Thou dost know what they servant said." Then God declared: "If this servant, for a more detailed account of al-Ghazali's indebtedness to the Arab philosophers cf. my al-Kindi as Lehrmeister, J.R.A.S., 1924, pp. 107-117.

A. S. P. VI, 1-73, VII, 8-44.


X. 3. In the case of philosophy, the words of the Prophet: "For eyes to be wakid, except for Thy sake, is vain; Thine eyes shall weep, save for loss of Thee, is folly;" and the words of the Prophet: "However you may live, you will die: how great soever your love, you will be separated therefrom: whatever you do, you will be required thereof;" 11 al-Ghazali undoubtedly owed much to Christian sources, and had made a careful study of the New Testament, using the Arabic texts accepted in it. In one of his writings 12 he bases his arguments on the Fourth Gospel and quotes also from St. Mark. Here he is refusing the Christian doctrine, but as in the case of philosophy, he made a thorough study of the teaching which he wishes to refute and not unfrequently he makes use of New Testament texts, and traditions derived from them, to illustrate his mystical teaching. From St. John's Gospel he had derived the Christian doctrine that Christ was One with God, 13 but this he regards as the error of one who looks in a mirror which reflects a coloured object, and supposes that reflection to be the form of the mirror, but such a one is mistaken, for the mirror in itself has no colour, its function is to reflect colours on its surface, but those who consider only what is apparent, think it is the colour of the mirror itself. So, too, one who does not know the nature of glass and wine, when he sees a glass containing wine does not perceive the distinction between them and sometimes he says: "There is no wine," and sometimes he says: "There is no glass." 14 al-Ghazali, in this connection quotes the lines of the poet: 15

1 For a more detailed account of the relations between al-Ghazali's cosmology and his philosophy cf. his commentary on the Kalam as Lehrmeister, J.R.A.S., 1924, pp. 107-117.


12 St. John ii, 18.


14 St. John X, 40.

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Such, he says, was the statement of that one who said: "I am the Creative Truth," and the poet when he wrote:

I am He Whom I love, and He Whom I love is I."

It was in this way, al-Ghazali considered, that the Christians regarded Christ, for they beheld the radiance of the Light of God shining within him. But he held that they were deluded in supposing that the Divine nature could be made one with the human ( airstab al-Lahdi bi-td-nabi), like one who sees a star reflected in a mirror, or in a sheet of water, and stretches out his hand to take it, but he is deceived.

But he constantly quotes the words of Christ. In reference to religious teachers who are lovers of this world and not spiritually-minded, al-Ghazali gives the lines:

"The sheepfold of the sheep protects them from the wolf, But what if the shepherds include wolves among them?"

and also the verses:

"O ye who are righteous, O salt of the earth, If it loses its savour, what use is the salt?"

Again al-Ghazali observes that most men are unaware of their own faults; a man sees the mote in his brother's eye and fails to see the beam in his own. He gives also the story of the rich young man as an example of the snare of riches and worldliness to those who seek spiritual perfection. As an incentive to trust in God (taawubu) he repeats the words of Jesus: "Consider the birds of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns and God feedeth them day by day." 1

opposite came to him and decorated his cell and walked in procession round it and did him honour and whenever his soul grew weary of devotion, he reminded it of the glory of that hour and so he was able to endure constant effort for the sake of one hour’s glory. “Therefore, O Ḥanîf,” he said to Ḫublîm, “endure tribulation for a brief space, for the sake of eternal glory.”2 And so great was established in Ḫublîm’s heart. The monk asked him if he was satisfied or wished for more, and Ḫublîm asked for still more. The monk told him to go out of the cell and, having let down to him a small bucket containing twenty chickpeas, bade him go into the monastery, for the monks had seen what had occurred. So Ḫublîm entered the monastery, where the Christians gathered round him and said to him: “O Ḥanîf, what did the Shajîkh let down to you?”3 And Ḫublîm told them that it was some of his food. Then they declared that they were more worthy of it than he, and asked him to make a bargain with them: he offered the food to them for twenty dinars,4 and they paid the price. Ḫublîm returned to the monk, who asked for how much he had sold the food and Ḫublîm replied: “For twenty dinars.” Then the monk said: “You made a mistake; if you had bargained with them for twenty thousand dinars, they would have given you that sum. This is the glory of one whom you do not worship, and how great, then, must be the glory of Him Whom you do worship. O Ḥanîf, draw near unto your Lord Himself, and give up visiting His creatures.”5

Writing of the Beatific Vision, al-Ghazâlî again quotes St. Paul’s words, saying that God has prepared for His faithful servants “what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which has not entered into the heart of man.”6

There are many other quotations taken directly from the New Testament, and traditions founded upon the New Testament teachings, to be found throughout al-Ghazâlî’s works and there

5 al-Mawdûf al-Ąqîbûn, lb. 68. Cf. Ephesians, IV, 2; VI, 13, 14.
7 Ḫub. IV, p. 67. Cf. 1 Cor. II, 9.
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is little doubt that he found it a source of inspiration to him in the development of his mystical doctrine.1

During his travels in Syria and Egypt al-Ghazālī must have come into contact with the mystical teaching of Christians belonging to the Greek Church;2 Especially in the teaching of John Cassian (c. 390-435), who lived at Bethléem as a monk and then settled in Egypt, there is a remarkable resemblance to the doctrine developed later by al-Ghazālī, for example, in his division of spiritual knowledge into the active or practical and the contemplative or theoretical (muḥaddith and ḥanāfī). One depends upon purification from sin and the acquirement of virtue, and the other on the contemplation of the Divine, the power of penetrating into the hidden significance of God's Word and seeing with the eye of the soul, a power which comes not through human learning, but by purity of heart and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But the contemplative wisdom, John teaches, can be revealed only by acquiring the practical, for the stain of sin must first be eradicated before the vision of God can be attained. Only that one who understands his sins and has striven to get rid of them can hope to attain to the mysteries revealed in contemplation.3

So also al-Ghazālī declares that spiritual knowledge (ilm al-dhikr) is to be divided into the practical (ilm al-madā‘al), which has to do with action, and the contemplative (ilm al-muḥadditha). The "practical" knowledge has for its purpose action in accordance with what is known, but the "contemplative" knowledge has for its purpose only revelation. The practical knowledge leads on to the contemplative, as the latter leads up to the direct, intuitive experience of God, which is the certainty which comes from the Divine Light "cast into" the heart of a servant who, by unceasing effort, has purified his soul from the stains of sin. This certainty is attained by an inward contemplation which is clearer and more glorious than 1 CI. M. Aleph Palatina, La Mystique d'al-Ghazzali, pp. 86-9. Or, if the text is presented to E. G. Browne, pp. 24. Logia et Aphorismata, Patrologia Orientalis XCVI, XCVII, XCVIII, 96. Or, also 3. Al-Atrash, Monastic World, April, 1937. The world al-Majdūl, patristic.
2 CI. Aqīl, Studies in Early Mysticism, Chapters IV, V, VI for a detailed account of Christian Mystics in the Near and Middle East and for the contacts between Christianity and Islam.
3 Col. XIV, 13. 4.

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the vision of the eyes. But the joy of the Vision lies beyond contemplative knowledge, as contemplative knowledge lies beyond "practical" knowledge, which means the following of the Path to God, by cutting off of all hindrances and getting rid of sin.4 Again al-Ghazālī writes: "By contemplative knowledge we mean that the veil is raised and that the Divine Glory is revealed so clearly that it cannot be doubted, and this would be possible to man, if the mirror were not dimmed by rust and impurity due to the defilements of this world; and by the knowledge of the Way we mean knowledge of how to polish this mirror from the stains which are a veil between God Most Glorious and the understanding of His attributes and His acts, and this cleansing and purification is secured only by refraining from lust. In proportion as the heart is polished and is turned Godwards, is the Divine Reality manifested therein. There is no way to attain this except by self-discipline and knowledge and study."5

But so many of the elements in al-Ghazālī's mystical teaching are to be found in the writings of the Christian mystics of the Greek and even of the Roman Church that we can hardly doubt that he had found inspiration either in Arabic translations of their works or in personal contacts with Christian monks and others. The resemblance between al-Ghazālī's spiritual experience and that of St. Augustine has already been analysed,6 but there is a considerable and interesting resemblance also between their mystical teaching and their outlook on life, e.g., such a passage in al-Ghazālī as: "Beautiful forms are loved for their own sake; the very perception of Beauty is a cause of delight and it is undeniable that it is loved for its own sake. So also green things and running water are loved. It is natural to delight in the sight of the celestial lights and in the flowers and the birds, with their fair colours and varied forms and their perfectly proportioned shapes, and the griefs and anxieties of man are dispelled as he looks upon them,"7 shows the same appraisal of the good and the beautiful as St. Augustine's joy in

4 Ishaq, p. 40; 46. Err. at 12. 5. "Alkāhist al-Umm, 47.
5 Ishaq, IV, p. 57. 6. "Alkāhist al-Umm, 47.
the grace of the heavens, the earth and the sea, the brightness
of the light in the sun, moon and stars, the shade of the woods,
the colours and fragrance of flowers, the kinds of birds and their
varied hues and songs, the diverse forms of beasts and fishes,
whereof the rest are the rarest (for the fabric of the bee or piranha
is more admirable than that of the whale). All these are "a
shady foretaste of the glories to be revealed."1 al-Ghazālī's
interest in the beauty of other small creatures, as being especially
illuminative of the wonders of God's creation, has already been
mentioned.2

There is little doubt that al-Ghazālī, being educated and
studying where he did, must have been in touch also with the
mysticism of the Syriac-speaking Christians of the Middle East.
When he speaks of the heart as a Divine thing, irradiated by
the Divine Light, he adds: "Then, when the beauty of the
heart is unveiled, it may be that its owner turns towards the
heart and sees of its transcendent beauty that which dazzles him."3
This passage bears a close resemblance to the words of Isaac of
Ninveh, of the seventh century A.D.4 "Grace makes manifest
all the glory, which God has hidden in the nature of the soul,
showering the soul this glory and making it glad because of its
own beauty . . . it does not remember the body which hid its
own beauties from its sight. Then it sees heavenly beauties
in itself, as the exact mirror which by its great purity shows the
beauty of faces."5

al-Ghazālī's mystical teaching, therefore, certainly owes
something to those of other faiths, both pagan and Christian,
of the West as well as the East, but it is developed on lines
distinguishingly Eastern and Islamic and there is no doubt that
his chief sources are to be found in the writings of Muslim thinkers,
and above all in those of Sīfī. Like other orthodox Sīfīs,
he claimed the Qur'ān as the sayings of the Prophet and his

al-Muhāṣibī to the effect that generosity is regard to religion (i.e., magnanimity) means that you should be prepared to pour out your very life-blood, spending yourself freely for the sake of God Most Glorious, and that you should be willing to make even the supreme sacrifice of life itself for His sake, willingly, not reluctantly, not seeking therewith any reward, either in this life or the life to come, and even though you are conscious of the reward, yet your predominating thought is of the beauty and perfection of the generosity which abandons the choice to God, so that it may be your Lord Who chooses for you what you are not able to choose for yourself. al-Ghazālī also quotes al-Muhāṣibī’s condemnation of wealth and his praise of godly poverty as the ideal for the traveller on the road to God. He accepts al-Muhāṣibī’s view of the right meaning of trust in God, which does not mean that a man is to refuse to possess anything, or to make means to earn a livelihood. al-Ghazālī, too, claims al-Muhāṣibī, for all his asceticism and rigid piety and his devotion to religion, as a supporter of his own view that listening to music and singing is permissible for the devout seeker after God. In his teaching on the Unitive life al-Ghazālī also depends on a certain extent upon his predecessor. al-Ghazālī’s indebtedness to al-Muhāṣibī is, in fact, much greater than he himself acknowledges.

al-Ghazālī has made use also of the sayings of the famous mystic Abū Yaḥyā al-Bihṭānī (ob. 267/878),7 including his words: “The learned man is not he who studies from a book; for that in case, since the Prophet did not study, he would be ignorant— but who he takes his knowledge from his Lord, when He desires it, without study or instruction: this is the man learned in spiritual things.” It is perhaps upon this that al-Ghazālī bases his own conclusions that the šāfi‘i care chiefly for the knowledge bestowed on them by God (al-‘alām al-‘al-imāma),

7 See Dārāmī, Ṭabārī’s History of the Tabaristan, I, p. 391. As quoted by Dārāmī, see also Ibn al-Ḥādīd, i. 249 a 1; see also Ibn al-Ḥādīd, ii. 66 a 3; see also Ibn al-Ḥādīd, ii. 56 a 2. As quoted by Ibn al-Ḥādīd, i. 249 a 1; see also Ibn al-Ḥādīd, ii. 66 a 3; see also Ibn al-Ḥādīd, ii. 56 a 2. As quoted by Ibn al-Ḥādīd, i. 249 a 1; see also Ibn al-Ḥādīd, ii. 66 a 3; see also Ibn al-Ḥādīd, ii. 56 a 2. As quoted by Ibn al-Ḥādīd, i. 249 a 1; see also Ibn al-Ḥādīd, ii. 66 a 3; see also Ibn al-Ḥādīd, ii. 56 a 2. As quoted by Ibn al-Ḥādīd, i. 249 a 1; see also Ibn al-Ḥādīd, ii. 66 a 3; see also Ibn al-Ḥādīd, ii. 56 a 2.
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Not that acquired by study, and therefore they do not arise to study human knowledge or to pursue what human writers have written, or to discuss statements and arguments, but instead they claim that the Way (which leads to God) is the choice of effort and the elimination of vice and the cutting off of all ties and the setting of the concern entirely upon God, and when that comes to pass, it is God Who takes possession of His servant's heart and is responsible for enlightening him with the light of knowledge from Himself. 1

On the same subject, al-Ghazālī quotes the words of Abū Yazīd to the theologians of his day: "You have taken your knowledge from these learned in outward ceremonial, a dead thing from the dead, but we have taken our knowledge from the Living One, Who does not die." 2 al-Ghazālī's admiration for a-Bī<yānī and his disinterested service of his Lord is shown in his account of how Ahmad b. Khaṣṣārīyā saw his Lord in a dream, and he said to him: "All men seek Paradise from Me except Abū Yazīd, who seeks Me for Myself." Then he tells how Abū Yazīd himself saw his Lord in a dream and said: "O Lord, what is the way to Thee?" And he answered: "Abandon thyself and come unto Me." 3 al-Ghazālī also gives a striking saying of Abū Yazīd: "If it were granted unto you to talk with God face to face as Moses did, and to be filled with the Spirit, as Jesus was, and to enjoy the Divine friendship, like Abraham, yet should you seek what is beyond that, for there is infinitely more to be given by Him, and if you rest content with that, you are veiled thereby, and this is the test for such as these, and one who is like them, for they are in the highest rank." 4 al-Ghazālī had also made a study of the fragments available of the teaching of Abū l-Kāsim al-Junayd of Baghdad (ob. 298 [854]), who had studied under al-Maḥālībī and became one of the most famous of Sufi teachers, though he preferred to talk with a group of intimates, rather than to give formal instruction to a large number. al-Ghazālī states that he would not address more than ten present at once, and the members of his circle never reached as many as twenty. 5 He also repeats Junayd's

1 tifq, II, p. 16.
2 tifq, IV, p. 316.
3 tifq, IV, p. 309.
4 tifq, IV, p. 160.
5 Jāhānshāh, Tadās Janā, pp. 77 ff., 79 ff., 83 ff., 84 ff., 87 ff., 114 ff., 121 ff.
6 jāhānshāh, tifq, p. 311.
7 tifq, IV, p. 306. cl. t. 307 308.

words to the effect that the best and most exalted of company is to sit with Reflection, in the sphere of the Unity, breathing theosophy of Gnosis and drinking the cup of Love from the ocean of attachment (wādād) and having fair thoughts of God. Then he added: "O what company, none more glorious, and what wise, none more delicious: blessed is he who is sustained thereby!" 6 al-Ghazālī relates how Junayd said of his own experience of the Unitive Life: "I have been talking with God for thirty years and people suppose that I have been talking with them: this becomes easy only to one absorbed in the love of God, with an absorption which leaves no room for any other." 7 He quotes also words of Junayd which he may have felt were applicable to his own experience: "The journey from this world to the next (i.e., to give up worldly things for spiritual) is easy for the believer: the journey from the creatures [i.e., separation from them and from dependence on them] to the Creator is hard: the journey from the self to God is very hard, and to be able to abide in God is harder still," and al-Ghazālī adds that the greatest hindrance to the soul arises from mankind and the love of position and the enjoyment of authority. Among the sayings of Junayd on the love of God al-Ghazālī quotes his words: "The sigh of love is constant activity and continual conflict with sensual desire: the body (of the lover) becomes weary, but not the heart." 8

Another of al-Ghazālī's sources was Shabbī [ob. 324-345], 9 a disciple of Junayd and a well-known saint and Sufi, who preached his doctrines at Baghdad. al-Ghazālī quotes a certain number of his sayings, among them his reply when he was asked to describe the gnostic and the lover and said: "The gnostic, if he speaks, is lost, and the lover, if he is silent, is lost." 9 It is Shabbī's lines also that al-Ghazālī quotes on Love:

"Verily love to the All-Merciful has intoxicated me:
Have you seen any lover who was not intoxicated?"
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al-Ghazali made considerable use of the "Qawl al-Qudat" of Abu Ta'lib al-Makki (ob. 356/969), who taught in Mecca, Ba'ara and Baghdad, and especially of his teaching on knowledge, both *ilm and ma'rifah, and the learned (al-alimd). The truly learned, al-Ghazali writes, are those who prefer the next world to this, and God to themselves, and he adds the story of the Izarate who were given also by al-Ghazali (cf. p. 710 above), whose ideal of the truly wise (al-amr al-akhira) corresponds to that of Abu Ta'lib. 3

Again Abu Ta'lib writes that the man wise in spiritual things (al-ilm al-rahbaniyyah), that one who knows and acts in accordance with his knowledge, and teaches men what is good, as "he who is called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." al-Ghazali repeats the statement, adding that such a one is like the sun, which is luminous in itself and gives light to others. 4

Knowledge is compared, by both Abu Ta'lib and al-Ghazali, with a light which God "casts" into the heart. 5 Abu Ta'lib distinguishes between outward knowledge (ilm al-zahr) and inward knowledge (ilm al-libiyy), the former concerned with this world (al-malakhi), and the latter with the world to come (al-malakhiy). 6 And the inner knowledge, he holds, is as superior to the outward as the invisible world to the visible. al-Ghazali makes the same distinction between the inward and the outward knowledge, the former being that of the heart, which is concerned with the spiritual world and the latter that which is concerned with the sensible world. By ma'rifah he means he sees the invisible world perceived by the senses and by ma'rifah the invisible world which is perceived by the light of insight. The heart, the instrument of inner knowledge, belongs to the world of malakhi, and the members, the instruments of outward knowledge, and their actions, belong to the world of muqaddimah. 7 al-Ghazali owes something to those also to Abu Ta'lib's teaching on Contemplation (muqaddamah) and the state of certainty (yaqin), which is really the tutitive life, and he follows Abu Ta'lib in accepting as the foundations of this state of assured faith, repentance, patience, gratitude,

2 Qawl al-Qudat, 11, p. 11. Ibrad, I, p. 40. Cf. Matte, 1, p. 83. 1
3 Ibrad, I, p. 197. Nawaqiy, p. 3.
6 Al-Ghazali's Mystical Teaching. 128

hope, fear, asceticism (muqaddimah), trust, satisfaction and love, that is, the love of the Divine Beloved. 8

al-Ghazali was also acquainted with the work of the historian of early Shi'ism, Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami of Nishapur (ob. 410/1021), whose Tafris (Nisab Harh as-Salih) he mentions 9 and whose Tafris al-Sulami by he may also have consulted, for the sayings of the Shi'is.

al-Ghazali refers to the well-known writer on Shi'ism, Abu'l-Qasim al-Qushayri (ob. 465/1074), a disciple of al-Sulami, who taught at Baghdad and had been the teacher of one of al-Ghazali's early instructors in Shi'ism (cf. p. 17 above), so that al-Ghazali would certainly have been brought into contact with Qushayri's writings, and he does, in fact, make considerable use of al-Ghazali's works. This is notably the case in his treatment on Music. al-Ghazali's quotations from the earlier authorities, including al-Shadhi, are found in Qushayri's chapter on the subject, 10 and also some of his examples of the power of music to affect even the animals, including the story of Koquf and the black slave (cf. p. 86 above). Qushayri had already made use of Jusayl's remark that place, time and company should be taken into account in listening to music and had divided listeners into different classes, of whom the highest were the gnostics. Qushayri, too, had quoted the saying of Abi Sulayman that "A beautiful sound does not bring anything (fresh) into the heart, it only stirs up what is already in the heart." 11 al-Ghazali also states: "When the heart is moved (by music) what is manifested is only what it already contains as from a vessel there drips only what is in it." 12 al-Ghazali seems to be indebted, to some extent, to Qushayri, for his teaching on ecstasy (wuqf). 9 Qushayri compares the Divine revelation which comes to those who are waiting in expectation for it to flashes of light (la'a'idh), then rays of light (lumud), then the light shining in its full splendour (la'mud') and he quotes the lines:

1 Qawl al-Qudat, 11, p. 74. 2 Qawl al-Qudat, 12, p. 12. 3 Ibrad, I, p. 40. 4 Cf. Matte, 1, p. 83. 5 Ibrad, I, p. 197. Nawaqiy, p. 3.
8 Al-Ghazali's Mystical Teaching. 129
"(Lighting which flashes forth: from which horizon of the heavens does this shine?)

First come the flashes, then the rays, then the full splendor like a radiant light,
Manifest only to those who are veiled."

The rays of light, he says, are clearer than the flashes and do not disappear so speedily, and the light in it "spansomor" remains longer still and is more luminous. Thus, God alone can know this remembrance. The sun and moon do not shine in their upward course and are never fully veiled. Not so with God. 

He also observes that the veil is a symbol of the invisible, the incomprehensible, the unattainable, and the unknowable. He who beholds the veil beholds the invisible. He who beholds the visible beholds the comprehensible, the attainable, and the knowable. 

Abu'l-Hassan al-Jallal al-Hujwiri, who was contemporaneous with Quashayr, and died a year or two later, probably between 465/1074 and 467/778. He was a supporter of the Sufis and worked closely with Damascos and Tis in the course of his travels, and settled for a while in Aleppo. 

He wrote a number of mystical works, including the Kashf al-Majhayah (The Unveiling of the Veiled) and the book of which al-Ghazali makes use. Hujwiri divided the Way to God into three stages, and those who have reached these stages may be characterised by waqt (or maqam), hul, and tawab. 

Hul, he says, is that which descends upon waqt and adorns it, as the spirit adorns the body. The one who is still in the stage of waqt has need to advance to the stage of hul, for then he is no more subject to change and is made steadfast. The possessor of waqt may become proficient, but the possessor of hul cannot possibly be so. 

He who has attained to hul does not speak of his state, but his actions speak of its reality. 

The world is sometimes a place of distraction to the owner of waqt because he is absent from his Beloved and distressed by his loss, but it makes no difference to the possessor of hul whether he is subject to affliction or in a state of happiness, for he is always in the place of actual vision. 

Hul is an attribute of the object sought (murrad), while waqt (or maqam) is the rank of the seeker (murrad).
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Hujwírî also gives a story of Ibráhîm Khawâsû and a slave whose beautiful voice so affected the camels of which he had charge that they hastened their pace to the point of exhaustion and so died, a story identical in its details with that related by al-Ghazâlî of Abû Bakr al-Dinawarî.1 al-Hujwírî also gives the legend of David in much greater detail, stating that God made him His vicegerent and gave him a voice so melodious that the wild beasts and the birds came from mountains and plain to hear him, and the streams ceased to flow and the birds fell from the air to the ground. For the space of a month the people who had gathered round him in the desert ate no food, while the children neither wept nor asked for milk. Many died from the ecstasy which resulted from listening to his voice, the number of the dead at one time amounting to seven hundred maidens and twelve thousand old men. Then God, wishing to distinguish between those who merely listened to the voice and those who listened to the spiritual significance of what was sung, allowed Ibhs to do what he would. Ibhs constructed a mandoline and a flute and established himself opposite David, as he sang, and the audience were straight way divided into the blest and the damned: the latter listened to the music of Ibhs, but the former to the voice of David, being conscious of nothing else, for they saw God alone. al-Ghazâlî gives this legend, but in a much attenuated form.2

Many Sîfû terms are used by al-Ghazâlî in the same sense as Hujwírî and often interpreted by him in a way which leaves no doubt that he owes the interpretation also to the earlier writer.

From all these varied sources, then, al-Ghazâlî derived ideas and terminology and inspiration, threads which were woven into the texture of his own developed doctrine of mysticism which, while based upon the foundations laid by the mystics of other times and spheres, yet owed much of its outward form to his own outstanding genius, and in its essence, owed still more to his own personal experience of treading the mystic Path which had led him to God.

2 Kâmî, p. 420. Ibhs, II, p. 239.

CHAPTER IX


al-Ghazâlî’s mystical teaching, like that of other mystics, is based on his doctrine of the nature of the Godhead, his conception of the human soul, and his view of the relationship between God and the soul, and its implications. In a passage in the Ikdî, which is justly famed, he sets forth in full his doctrine of the Godhead: "Praise be to God, the Creator and restorer of all things, Who does what He wills, Lord of the Glorious Throne, the Almighty, Who guides His chosen servants into the right path and the straight road, Who blesses those who acknowledge His Unity, by preserving their faith from the darkness of doubt . . . to them hath He made known that in His Essence He is One, without partner. Unique, there is none like unto Him, Eternal, none resembling Him, set apart and having no equal. He is One, the Ancient of Days, without prior, Eternal, having no beginning, Everlasting, having no end, continuing for evermore. He abides, never ceasing to be: He remains and shall never be cut off; He has never ceased, nor shall cease, to be described by glorious attributes. He is the First and the Last, the Transcendent and Immanent, Whose wisdom extends over all. He is neither body nor substance nor accident. He cannot be likened to anything that exists nor is anything like unto Him, nor is He contained by the earth or the heavens, for He is exalted far above the earth and the dust thereof. Yet is He near unto everything that exists, "nearer to His servant than the gossamer vein." He oversees all things: He is exalted beyond the limitations of space and time, for He was before time and space were created and He is, now, as He always was. The fact of His existence is apprehended by men’s reason and He will be seen as He is by that gift of spiritual vision, which He will grant
unto the righteous, in the Abode of Eternity, when their beatitude shall be made perfect by the Vision of His Glorious Countenance. He is the Exalted, Almighty, Praiseworthy, Who slumbereth not nor sleepeth, neither mortality nor death have dominion over Him. His is the power and the kingdom and the glory and the majesty, and to Him belongs creation and the rule over what He has created: He alone is the Giver of Life.

He is Omniscient, for His Knowledge encompasseth all things, from the deepest depths of the earth to the highest heights of the heavens; not the smallest atom in the earth or the heavens is known unto Him, yea, He is aware of how the ants creep upon the hard rock in the darkness of the night; He perceives the movement of the mote in the ether; He beholds the thoughts which pass through the minds of men, and the range of their fancies, and the secrets of their hearts, by His knowledge, which was from aforesight.

All that is other than Him, men and genii, angels and Satan, the heavens and the earth, animals, plants, inorganic matter, substance and accident, what is intelligible and what is sensible, all were created by His power out of non-existence. He brought them into being, where as yet they had no being, for from eternity He alone existed and there was no other with Him.

But then He chose to create all things that His power might be manifested forth for the establishment of what He had willed aforesight and the fulfilment of His eternal Word. It was not that He had need of them or that they fulfilled anything lacking (to Him), but for the showing-forth of His glory in the work of creation and of bringing into existence by the Word of His power, not on account of any obligation on His part but out of His unfailing grace and living-kindness. But since service is due to Him from His creatures, for He has declared that to be necessary by the tongues of His prophets, He has not left it

1 of the most mystic Nabi!

in world's, where being nothing But
And all the Universe still dormant lay.
Centuries in stillness, One Being was
Exempt from "I", or "Thou" — secure and apart
From all dukkha — Bounty Supreme,
Unmanifest, except unto Him.

Yaud u Zalpaka (trans. E. G. Browne.)
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Again al-Ghazâlî considers the benefit resulting from the succession of the four seasons. In the winter, he points out, the heat "returns" into the trees and plants and there produces in them the substance which will later develop into their fruits. The air in winter becomes laden with moisture and thence come clouds and the rain, which is good for the brute-creation and for all the works of Nature. In the Spring Nature awakes once more and, by God's grace, the plants reappear, and the trees break into blossom, while summer and autumn bring the ripening of the fruits of the earth.

Within the sea are to be found the likenesses of what is in the earth and for these, too, the Creator has made provision for all their needs. "Behold," says al-Ghazâlî, "how God created the round pearl in its shell beneath the water and fixed the coral on the side of the rocks within the sea." Strange, indeed, that any can be heedless of the grace of God as shown forth in all this, whether considered as a whole or in detail. al-Ghazâlî points also to the wonders of God's creation as exemplified in the birds—with tail created to serve as a rudder to keep the bird on its course—in fish and reptile, who have little power to save themselves from danger, but are equipped with hard shells as a protection—in animals created with the instinct to shun death in order to avoid capture, or with the power to adapt their colour to their environment, like the chameleon—in insects endowed with the foresight to store their food like the ant, or, like the bee, to take nectar from the flowers and transform it into honey, as nourishment for themselves and a remedy for man, and the gnat, so minute, yet so perfectly fashioned that all the inhabitants of the universe, celestial and terrestrial, could not have conceived of it and cannot penetrate the mysteries of its being. All these show the wisdom of the Creator manifested in His handiwork and His care for the needs of His creatures.

It is quite clear, therefore, to al-Ghazâlî that man has only to look around him to realise that the existence and attributes of God are shown forth in His universe. All that we behold and
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perceive by our senses, outward and inward,” he writes, “bears
irrefutable witness to the existence of God and His power and
His knowledge and the best of His attributes, the stone and the
cloth, plant and tree and living creatures, earth and star, land
and sea, fire and air, substance and accident. Indeed, we
ourselves are the chief witness to Him—but just as the last sees
only at night, when the light is veiled by the darkness and
cannot therefore see in the daytime because of the weakness
of its sight, which is dazzled by the full light of the sun, so also
the human mind is too weak to behold the full glory of the
Divine Majesty.”

al-Ghazālī gives a mystical interpretation of certain of the
Beautiful Names of God (the Divine Attributes) which might
seem to be contradictory, since He is called the First and the
Last, the Manifest and the Hidden. He is the First, he says,
in relation to existent things, since all have emanated from Him
in their order, one after another, and He is the Last in relation
to the course of those who are journeying towards Him, for they
continue to advance from stage to stage until at last they reach
their goal, that Presence, which is the end of the journey, so that
He is the Last in respect of contemplation and the First in
respect of existence. He is Hidden in relation to those who
dwell in the phenomenal world, who seek to apprehend Him
by means of the senses only, Manifest in relation to that one who
seeks Him within a heart enlightened by that inner vision
which penetrates the Invisible World.

To al-Ghazālī, therefore, God is Transcendent and Immanent,
the Creator and the Sake Cause of all existence, the Prime
Mover of all things, and the Eternal Wisdom. He is also Supreme
Beauty, for just as beauty in the works of men, the poet’s verses,
the painter’s picture, the author’s writings, the architect’s
buildings, indicate the inner beauty of their genius and con-
ceptions—for only from beauty can beauty come forth—so also
the beauty and perfection of the works of God show that He is
Perfect Beauty, the most radiant and most glorious Existence
that can be conceived, and indeed, possessed of a Beauty that is

1 thd4, IV, p. 223.
2 thd4, IV, no. 230, 231.
3 Beyond man’s conception. al-Ghazālī writes of the love of the
servant which is aroused by the Beauty and the Majesty of
God: “The joy of contemplating the Divine Beauty,” he says
“is that to which the Apostle referred when he declared that
God had said: ‘I have prepared for My righteous servants
what eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hand entered into
the heart of man’.” The realisation of the Divine Majesty brings
awe to the servant’s heart, but the contemplation of the Divine
Beauty fills his heart with love and that servant is always
seeking to penetrate the veil of the invisible and to look upon
the All-Beautiful. The meaning of fellowship with God is the
heart’s joy and delight in the contemplation of His Beauty.
It is the Eternal Beauty, of limitless perfection, seen only with
the spiritual eye, more satisfying than all the beauties of this
world, which are but a manifestation of that Absolute Beauty.
al-Ghazālī also conceives of God as Light, which is the source,
as it is the condition, of life and action, of beauty and joy, which
he associated, as already noted, with wisdom and knowledge.
Since, in the physical sphere, light is the embodiment of glory
and splendour, and in the intellectual and ethical sphere, repre-
sents purity and holiness and truth, it is fitting, in his eyes,
to think of God as Light. Moreover, Light, by its very nature,
must manifest itself in enlightenment, and so it is, too, with the
Divine Light. “All existent things in this world,” al-Ghazālī
declares, “result from the power of God and are enlightened
by the Light of His Essence, for in truth there is no darkness more
intense than non-existence and no light more evident than
existence and all things are a ray of the Essential Light of God,
the High, the Holy, since all things are maintained in existence
by the Self-Subsistent, just as the light of material bodies is

1 thd4, IV, pp. 259 ff.
2 thd4, p. 291.
3 thd4, IV, pp. 267, 272.
Each speck of matter did He create
for a space, casting each one to reflect
The beauty of His image.
His Beauty everywhere doth shine itself
And through the forms of earthly beauty shines
Oshamed as through a veil.”

6 Cf. p. 241 above.
maintained by the light of the sun, which is radiant in itself. Whenever part of the sun is eclipsed, it is customary to place a bowl of water in which the sun is reflected, so that it may be possible to look at it, the water being the means which enables the eyes to bear the sight of a small part of the sun’s light. So also the works of God are a means by which we can contemplate the Attributes of Him Who made them, and we are not dazzled by that Essential Splendor, when we see it at a distance in His works. The one Real Light (al-Nur al-Hayyāt), therefore, is God Himself, for all other lights are but partial rays or reflections of His light, imperfect, transitory and incomplete, nonexistent apart from Him. The term ‘light’ applied to any but God is merely metaphorical, without real meaning—God is the highest and ultimate Light. . . . He alone is the True, the Real Light and apart from Him there is no light at all.” 1 The lesser lights, heavenly and earthly, which are derived from Him, are of different grades, for which an analogy can be found in the phenomenal world, by one who perceives the moonlight entering through the window of the house, and falling upon a mirror fixed upon a wall, from which the light is reflected upon the opposite wall and then reflected upon the floor, so that the floor is illuminated by it. It is evident that the light upon the floor comes from that upon the wall, and the light upon the wall from that in the mirror and the light in the mirror from the moonlight and the light of the moon from the light of the sun, for it is the sun’s light which shines upon the moon. So also the lights of the heavens and the earth rise in gradation, but not in an endless series, for they ascend to the First Source, Who is Light in, and through, Himself, for no light comes upon Him from anything else, and from Him all lights receive their light in their different grades. The term ‘light,’ therefore,” 2 al-Ghazālī concludes: “can worthily be applied only to Ultimate Light, Above Whom is no light and from Whom light descends upon all.” 3

1 Hid. IV, p. 330.
2 al-Ma‘ārif, pp. 101 ff.
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"heart" but all mean the same things, which is the real essence of man (baqi'at al-Adam), that which differentiates him from the lower creation. The glory of man and his excellence, whereby he surpasses all other creatures in being receptive of the knowledge of God Most Glorious, which is this world is his adornment and his perfection and his excellence, and in the world to come is his equipment and his treasure, is his heart, for by it alone he can receive knowledge. For the heart is that which knows God, which approaches unto Him, which works for God and strives after Him, that to which revelation is made of the things of God. The human soul, al-Ghazali teaches, is possessed of five faculties or "spirits" (arush): the Sensory faculty, which receives information conveyed by the senses; the Imagination, which records this information; the Intelligence (al-rub' al-aql) which apprehends what is beyond the capacity of the senses and the imagination; the Reasoning power (al-rub' al-fikr) which, from the data of pure reason, deduces fresh knowledge, and lastly the Divine prophetic spirit, which belongs to the prophets and the saints, by means of which the soul receives the revelation of the Invisible and attains to a knowledge of God Himself. The tradition states that "he who knows himself knows his Lord," and al-Ghazali does not hesitate to draw the conclusion that the soul is itself Divine in its origin; it knows God, because it is godlike. The spirit of man is "of the amor of God" and amor has a deeper meaning than that of "command "; it is rather the Divine Spirit. There are two worlds, says al-Ghazali, the world of creation (shahada) and the world of amor and both belong to God. All that is material belongs to the phenomenal world of created things and is subject to modality and dimension, and sensible things have no real existence, but all that is free from modality and dimension and has real existence belongs to the spiritual world, the world of amor and this is the sphere of the human soul. It, like all else belonging to that world,

2 Ibn al-âthir, ed., al-Bâb al-Bâli, p. 11
3 Mâhîyât al-Qudût, pp. 131, 132
4 Ibn al-âthir, op. cit., fol. 158a
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sight." The spiritually-minded (arhab al-qadib) see with the inward eye more clearly than with the outward eyes, for the latter may be at fault, seeing what is far off as near and the large as small, but the spiritual insight cannot be at fault. Each of these eyes, the outward and the inner has a sun and a light, whereby its vision is perfected, one of these lights is external, belonging to the material world, to wit, the sun, and the other internal, belonging to the spiritual world, and it is the Word of God. The veil of man's lusts and his worldly pre-occupations prevent him from seeing anything of the unseen Divine world so long as the veil is not withdrawn from the eye of his heart, but when it is withdrawn, as in the case of God's elect, then undoubtedly man can look upon that Divine world and contemplate its wonders.

There is, too, an "inward hearing." What is heard with the "outward hearing" is only sound and man shares that faculty with the rest of the animals, but by the "inward hearing" (al-sana' al-halām) he can hear and comprehend the spiritual meaning which lies beyond outward speech. To the man whose spiritual hearing is dulled, the song of the birds, the noise of the waves and the sighing of the wind, are mere sounds, but to that one whose spiritual hearing is alert, they are all bearing witness to the Unicity of God and praising Him with eloquent tongue.

This inward perception, which is intuition (al-hayrat al-halām) finds its satisfaction in what is invisible, inaudible, to the outward senses—in the things which are not temporal, but eternal. The heart, therefore, has two gates, one opening outwards, which is that of the senses, and one opening inwards, towards the Divine world, which is within the heart, and that is the gate whereby it receives inspiration and revelation.

Like other mystics, both Christian and Sufi, al-Ghazali compares the human heart or soul, to a mirror. The human soul, he says, is a mirror able to reflect the truth and its perfection, and that by which it is distinguished from all the lower animals, consists in this aptitude, but very often there is a veil over the mirror which hinders the reflection. Yet, as a veil may sometimes be removed by the hand and sometimes by the action of the wind moving it, so also the breezes of the Divine grace may blow, and raise the veil from men's hearts and reveal therein something of the Eternal Truth. That may happen in sleep and also in waking hours, when the veil is raised by God's favour, and there shines within the human heart something from behind the curtain of the Invisible. So to the inmost self Reality as a whole may be revealed so that the whole of existence is reflected in it and it comprehends the Universe.

The human soul, since it is Divine in its origin, the effect of the inbreathing of the Eternal Spirit, existed before the body to which it is temporarily attached while in this world, but with which it has no real affinity, the body being only its vehicle and instrument. The spirit itself is like a radiant sun and its light is dimmed only while it inhabits this temporal body, in which it is straitened, but that sun will rise again when this body, which obscures its light, passes away. In his Ḥaṣāʾ al-Taʾrīṣya, al-Ghazali conceives of the soul as being one in essence with its Lord before it descended into this world for a period of affliction in the body. The death of the body means, for the soul, only a return to the state in which it was before it was abused. He quotes the words of the Prophet, to the effect that "Bodies are the cage of birds or the stable of beasts of burden," but the soul, when released from that cage, flies upwards to its own abode.

This visible world is a road along which man journeys, but his native land and his permanent abode is the world invisible.

2 Ḣurūb, III, pp. 10, 450. III, p. 450. This latter conception finds a curious parallel in the experience of the German mystic Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) who wrote: "I was and knew the being of all beings, the Bya and the Albya, and the spiritual knowledge and the Albya knowledge of all creatures through the Divine Wisdom... In this Light every spirit suddenly saw the way and by all the creatures it knew God Who is in and in Him He Will live." The Awna'at, chap. XI.
3 Ḫarīr al-Athār, p. 251.

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This phenomenal world is like a sleep in relation to the Divine world! as the Prophet said: "Men are sleep and when they die, they awake." The realities of waking hours can be shown in sleep only by images and so what will come to pass in the awakening of the life to come is seen in the sleep of this world under an image, and things are seen only as types. When the soul returns to its Lord, it is awakened and knows the Reality of what was only typified before. 1

Al-Ghazali, therefore, believes in the immortality of the soul. "If the soul is not immortal then all of which we have been told and which we have experienced is vain." 2 He quotes the Qur'anic verse: "Say not of those who are slain for the sake of God that they are dead, nay, they are alive." 3 The soul, being a single essence, having real existence, a spiritual thing, Divine in nature, cannot be subject to corruption or mortality, and al-Ghazali develops the argument with great subtlety, bringing it to a triumphant conclusion. 4 Since the human soul is the sphere of faith and gnosis, death has no power over it. "The heart of the believer does not die and the knowledge he possesses at the time of his death is not obliterated and the state of purity is not defiled, and that is the meaning of the saying: 'The dust does not devour the abode of faith,' nay, rather death is a means of access and approach unto God." 5 That sun, which was temporarily veiled by the body, must return to its Creator and Maker, either darkened and eclipsed, or shining and radiant, and the sun which shines with its pristine radiance will not be veiled from the Divine Presence. 6 The soul which descended from its Divine Source to inhabit a body in this terrestrial world will ascend again to that higher world: "It will look towards its Source and unto Him it will return." 7

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1 Ayk. III, p. 9. IV, p. 11. Cf. St. Paul: "Here we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." 1 Cor., xiii, 12.
2 ibid., p. 29.
3 ibid., p. 125.
5 Ayk. III, p. 18. 
6 ibid., IV, p. 36.

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CHAPTER X

The Beginning of the Azaan. The Creature and the Creator.

It is on this conception of the relation of the human soul to God that al-Ghazali bases his teaching on the mystic Path, by which the soul ascends whence it came. He relates the saying of a certain Gnostic who said that God has two secrets which He makes known to His servant. The first is revealed even when he comes forth from his mother's womb and his Lord says unto him: "I have brought you forth into this world, pure and undefiled, and I have committed your life unto you and given it to you in trust, therefore look how you fulfil that trust and consider in what manner you will meet with Me hereafter." The second is revealed when the spirit returns to Him Who made it and He says: "My servant, what have you done with that which I committed unto you? Have you so preserved it that you can meet Me having fulfilled your trust, so that I can fulfil My promise unto you? Or have you so squandered it, that I must meet you with a claim against you for requital?"

The soul, then, belonging to the spiritual world, bearing the image of the Divine, a mirror able to reflect Reality, was pure (nafs) in its origin—"every child is born with an innate sense of religion," but through its association with a material body in this lower world, the soul has fallen from its high estate. The mirror has become tarnished and the pristine purity of the soul defiled: "that fair countenance has become disfigured by the dust and delusion of sin." 8

In considering the causes by which the human soul has become alienated from it, Divine Source, al-Ghazali has recourse to the tradition: "God hath Seventy Thousand Veils of Light and Darkness: were He to withdraw them, then would the glory of His Countenance consume every one who looked upon Him." al-Ghazali considers that these veils vary according to the

1 Ayk. IV, p. 11.
different natures of those veiled from the One Reality. The first class of these are veiled by Pure Darkness, the atheists who believe neither in God nor His Judgment, and these can be subdivided into those who regard Nature as the cause of this world, and those who are not concerned with causality, but with themselves. Their own selves and their dark lusts are the veil they establish between themselves and God. Of those who are veiled by self some make sensual pleasures their chief aim, others are ruled by the love of power, or riches, or personal renown. All of these are veiled from God by pure darkness, and they themselves are darkness.

The second class are those veiled by light mingled with darkness, and they are of three types. The first are those veiled by the darkness of the senses, all of whom have passed beyond more absorption in themselves, for they look for a God and long for the knowledge of their Lord, the lowest rank of these being the idolaters and the highest the dualists. The idolaters make to themselves images of gold and silver and precious stones and regard these as gods, and they are veiled by the light of Glory and Beauty from the attributes of God and His Splendour, because they attached these attributes to material bodies, and the darkness of the senses has barred them from the Divine Light. Some tribes believe that their god must be something of great beauty, so if they see a beautiful human being, or tree, or horse, they worship it as their god. They are veiled by the light of Beauty, mixed with the darkness of the senses. Others think that their god must be essential Light, but perceptible to the senses. They find that Fire answers to this description and they worship it as divine. These are veiled by the light of Might and Splendour, which really belong only to the Light of God. Others seek for what has absolute control and is exalted and sublime and so they put their faith in astrology and the influence of the stars. These are veiled by the light of Exaltation, of Radiance and Dominium, and these, too, come from the Divine Light alone. Another group hold that their deity must be the greatest of lights, so that they worship the sun, and these are veiled by the light of Grandeur. The last of

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assist your inward vision with the light of Reality; may He empty your inmost self from all save His own Presence.\(^1\)

Since all the veils are due to a wrong conception of God, some setting up themselves and their hosts as gods, some worshipping His gifts instead of the Giver, others mistaking His true nature and attributes, the first step to be taken on the return to Him is for the soul to realize what is His real nature and what is its own relation to Him. It must acknowledge His transcendence as Creator and its own creatureliness and need. Those who neglect this task are no more intelligent than the ant which has made its home in a royal palace, the dwelling-place of fair maidens and noble youths, which is adorned with many rare and precious things. The ant, when it comes out of its hole, talks to its fellow-ants only of its home and its food and how to get it, but the beauties of the palace and the royal state are far beyond its consideration, it is concerned only with itself and its material needs. So, too, man, unmindful of his Creator and the heavens which are His dwelling-place, knows no more of them than the ant in the roof of its own house knows of him. But whereas the ant is incapable of understanding the palace and its rarities, man has the capacity to think upon the Divine world, and to recognize its wonders.\(^2\)

Men are too apt, like the ant, to concern themselves with the means rather than the Final Cause. They think of the rain as bring the means of the sprouting of the seed and its growth, and the clouds as being the cause of the rain, so, too, they think of the wind as causing the boat to sail on its course, but all of this is really polytheism and ignorance. The one who reflects on the real meaning of things realizes that the wind must have some motive force behind it, and that has a further force behind it, which ultimately comes back to the First Movent, Who is not moved in Himself. If a man who has received a royal letter of pardon begins to think about the ink and the paper and the pen with which the pardon was written, and imagines that his deliverance is due to the pen, not to him who employs

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\(^1\) *Iṣḥāq al-Sālihī, p. 99.

\(^2\) *Iḥyā, IV, p. 382.

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it, he is guilty of the greatest folly. But he who realizes that it is controlled by the king's hand, pays no attention to the pen, but gives thanks only to the writer. So, to the spiritually-minded man, every particle in the heavens and the earth has been made articulate by the Divine Power, so that these utter their praises to God Most High, while bearing witness to their own impotence. All things are holding secret and ceaseless converse with the Most High and to the spiritually-minded they whisper the secrets of the King and His Kingdom, but only those who listen will hear.\(^1\)

You ought to know yourself as you really are," al-Ghazālī writes, "so that you may understand of what nature you are and whence you have come to this world, and for what purpose you were created, and in what your happiness and your misery consist, for within you are combined the qualities of the animals and the wild beasts, and the angels, but the spirit is your real essence and all beside it is, in fact, foreign to you. . . . So strive for the knowledge of your origin, so that you may know how to attain to the Divine Presence and the contemplation of the Divine Majesty and Beauty, and deliver yourself from the letters of lust and passion . . . for God did not create you to be their captive, but that they should be your thralls, under your control, for the journey which is before you, to be your steed and your weapon, so that you may therewith pursue your happiness and then cast them under your feet.\(^2\)

The true happiness of everything and its joy consists in its attainment of the perfection belonging to it. The perfection proper to man is his comprehension of the real meaning of things, and this goes beyond imagination or feeling, which the animals share with him. The soul within itself thirsts for this perfection and, through its innate religious feeling, is prepared for it, and is kept from it only by its pre-occupation with bodily desires, when these pre-dominate, but when a man gains control over them and the reason is freed from its servitude to the body, then he concerns himself with reflection upon the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, may more, upon himself and the

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\(^1\) *Iḥyā, IV, pp. 315, 374

\(^2\) *Iṣḥāq al-Sālihī, pp. 6, 5
wonders of his creation, and so attains to the perfection proper to him and to the joy of that attainment.¹

There are three stages on the Path which will lead the soul to re-union with its Source, the salvation which all desire—that of the novice or seeker (al-murid) the creature conscious of its creatureliness and acknowledging the lordship of the Creator; that of the traveler, who is midway (al-adad), the servant walking with 'az Lord: and that of the perfected gnostic, the one who has attained (al-adad), the lover rejoicing in the Beloved.

The novice is concerned with the knowledge of himself and his Lord and its fruits, he is subject to wajib.² This stage means effort and toil, and the drinking of bitter draughts and the sacrifice of pleasure and the undertaking of what is a torment to the self.³ The novice can be greatly helped by a wise spiritual director, who is well acquainted with the defects of the self, and understands its secret sins, which he can make known to the novice, and he can help him to overcome them. ³ He who finds a Shaykh, a gnostic, wise, realising the faults of the self, compassionate, able to give counsel concerning the religious life, one who has accomplished the amendment of his own spiritual life, and is concerned with the amendment of God's servants—has found the physician for hisills. Let him cleave to that physician who will deliver him from the destruction with which he is threatened, for the heart is 'sick' if it cannot accomplish the work for which it was created, knowledge and wisdom and the love of God and His service and delight in the thought of Him, and the preference of that over every other object of desire.⁴

Repentance is the beginning of the Way and the 'key of happiness'⁵ for the novice, for it means the return from alienation to proximity and it is based on faith, the conviction that there is no god but God. Faith appears as a spot of light in the heart and when it leads to doing that which is the will of God.

¹ Suhaib al-Aswad, p. 19.
² Wajib is defined by Tustar in "search for knowledge of the state which exists between them and God in this world and hereafter." Cf. p. 351 above and 1112, 113, 117.
³ Hanife al-Tahawi, p. 142.
⁴ Hadhr, 111, pp. 56, 56, 54.
⁵ It grows and increases until the whole heart becomes bright. Then sin is seen to be poisonous and destructive, and godly fear and contrition give rise to the sincere desire for amendment of life, for the abandonment of sin in the present and the future, and for reparation for sins of the past. "Contrition," writes al-Ghazalî, "results from the realisation that sin intervenes between the sinner and the Beloved; it is the grief of the heart when it becomes aware of the absence of the Beloved." ⁶ So will repentance be made perfect, for the fire of contrition consumes the dross of sin and the light of good works obliterates the darkness of evil deeds. The medicine of Repentance he describes as an elecctuary compounded of the sweetness of knowledge and the bitterness of patient endurance, just as oxyxim combines the sweetness of sugar and the acidity of vinegar, each of which plays its part in the cure, when they are combined together.⁷

Repentance, he says elsewhere, consists of knowledge, feeling and action. The penitent has the knowledge that his heart has become veiled from its Beloved. He is like one upon whom the sun shines, after he has been in darkness, upon whom light is shed by the dispersal of the clouds, or the withdrawal of the veil, so that he is able to see his Beloved. He realises that he had been on the point of destruction, but the fires of love were kindled in his heart and stirred up his desire to arise and amend his life, to cast off "the garments of ill-fate" and to spread out the "carpet of good faith." The penitent can draw near unto God only by cutting off the heart's attachment to the vanities of this world and turning his face wholly towards God, seeking for fellowship with Him, and for love towards Him by the search for knowledge of His Majesty and His Beauty. Sin is the cause of alienation from God, but He is ever ready to accept the repentance of His creature. "When My servant calls unto Me, I answer him, and to him who seeks My forgiveness, I will not grudge it, for I am near at hand, ready to give ear unto his request." Al-Ghazalî, in this connection, quot

¹ Alhad, IV, p. 90.
² Much of the material to the above has been cited from al-Ghazalî's Ihya 'Ulum al-Din, p. 180. ¹Ihya, I, p. 107. IV, p. 11.
³ Ihya, IV, p. 44. ¹Ihya, IV, p. 44.
⁴ i.e., in regard to his Lord. Cf. p. 147 above.
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also the saying of Ibn Mas'ūd,1 that Paradise has eight gates, all of which are sometimes open and sometimes shut, except the gate of Repentance, which has an angel in charge of it, and is never closed.2

Repentance is the realization of the separation from God caused by sin, and it involves spiritual suffering greater than the physical suffering inflicted upon the body, by fire or sword, for while the destruction of the body means the separation of parts closely knit together, that which binds the soul to its Beloved is a still closer bond of union, and the pain of separation is the more intense. Those possessed of spiritual insight, whose eyes are open to their loss, feel this separation from God most keenly; others, less spiritually mature, feel it less, just as the boy, given the choice between the pain of being deprived of hat and ball, and deprivation of royal rank, does not feel the latter to be painful at all and says:3 "A spacious courtyard and the possession of but and ball is dearer to me than a thousand thrones and the right to sit thereon."4

Now the penitent enters upon the contest between the impulse to what is spiritual and the impulse to what is sensual, and the battlefield is the human heart. He needs the patience which will enable him to stand fast by what is spiritual, in the face of what is sensual, and this is the first stage of patience, which means the abandonment of sensual desire.5 Sovereign power is the power to do what one wishes, is dear to all in this world and that is natural enough, al-Ghazālī feels, for lordship (al-qadliyya) is one of the attributes of God and is sought by the human heart because of its affinity with the Divine, but the Law and the Gospel and the Qur'ān and all inspired writings were sent simply to call mankind to a royal power, which is not earthly but eternal. Men are meant to be kings in this world and the next, but true royalty in this world means asceticism and the renunciation of it and contentment with but little therein, and royalty in the world to come is obtained through the approach unto God Most High, whereby man becomes immortal and

1 One of the Companions of the Prophet, ob. 37 H, a great authority on the text of the Qur'ān.
2 Iyād, IV, pp. 39, 40. 152
3 Iyād, IV, pp. 21, 22.
4 Iyād, IV, pp. 39, 36.
5 Iyād, IV, p. 68.
6 We are indebted to the lines of 'Umar Khayyām, a contemporary of al-
Ghazālī, who met him at least once and was probably acquainted with the
quatrains.7

The worldly hope even set their hearts upon,
Tears abased—of it gorp the and amaze
Like snow upon the desert's dusty face
Lighting a little hour or two, is gone.8

Cf. also the Fāzīlī's of the Treasure hid in a field and the Pearl of Great Price.
Matt. XIII, 44-46.

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enters into a glory which does not pass away and joy unknown in this present life. Asceticism means that the seeker controls his passions and makes them subordinate to the spirit, through his faith, and this is sovereignty worthy of the name, since he who has it is set free from the bondage of the flesh, he is no longer a slave to lust. Those who strive to walk upon this road will be victorious both in this world and the next.9

Asceticism, which al-Ghazālī considered to mean striving against the world, the flesh and the devil, like Repentance, includes knowledge, feeling and action. The ascetic, who renounces what is sensual and material, knows that what is abandoned is of small value in relation to what is gained, as the merchant knows that what he receives in exchange is better than what he sold, otherwise he would not sell. The ascetic knows that what is Divine is allying and that the joy of the world to come is greater and more endurable than any pleasure in this world, just as, for example, precious stones are more valuable and more endurable than snow and it is no hardship for the owner of snow to sell it in exchange for precious stones and pearls. So it is with this world and the next, for this world is like snow placed in the sun, which continues to melt until it disappears altogether,10 but the world to come is like a gem, which is imperishable, and he who is assured of that is prepared to sell all that he has for the sake of obtaining that treasure. Again al-Ghazālī compares the ascetic with one who is prevented from entering into the presence of the king, by a dog at the gate of the royal palace, to this dog he throws a morsel of bread and by thus distracting its attention, it is able to enter and approach the king, from whom he obtains all he desires. Will he consider that the morsel of bread thrown to the dog is to be compared in value with what he has obtained?

1 Iyād, IV, p. 68.
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Matt. XIII, 44-46.
Satan is like a dog at the door of the King of kings, hindering men from entering in—though the door is open and the curtain lifted—and this world is like that morsel of bread. 1

In this connection al-Ghazâli quotes the words of ʿIṣâs al-Bisrî, who said of this world:

"It is as dreams when one sleepeth, or a fleeting shadow, the wise are not derided by such as these."

He tells also of an Arab who halted at an encampment, where food was set before him, and afterwards he went to sleep in the shade of one of the tents. They struck the tent, and the sun falling upon him roused him and he stood up and recited:

"Is not this world like the shadow of a mountain?"

Assuredly one day your shade will vanish. 2

So the seeker must be prepared for the sacrifice of everything which veils the heart from God, for the heart controls the outward conduct, and if it is corrupt, then his life and actions will be contrary to the will of God. When the walls of a house are illuminated by the fire-light, but the ceiling is dark and blackened with smoke, you know that the cause of the blackness differs from the smoke. So also, al-Ghazâli observes, what enlightens the heart is different from what darkens it: the former is celestial in origin and the latter a Satanic suggestion. It is by grace that the heart is enabled to receive what is good, and by the seductions of Satan that it welcomes what is evil.

As Abū Yazîd al-Bisrî said: "A heart which is free from Satanic suggestions is like a house, by which thieves pass; if there is no plaster on it, they defile their skill upon it, but if not, they go on their way and leave it alone. So also, if the heart is empty of lust, Satan does not enter it." The novice is like a traveller who finds himself, on a dark night, in the wilderness, where there are many obscure paths, and he cannot hope to find his way except by means of a discerning eye and the light of the sun, when it rises. What corresponds to the discerning eye is a heart cleansed by godly abstinence, and the rising sun is the knowledge which can be gained from the Word of God. 3

Elsewhere al-Ghazâli compares the heart to a well which it is desired to purify from muddy water, so that the water which flows from it may be pure. Every heart which admits Satanic suggestions to poison the remembrance of God, has muddy water in it, which may be drained away at one side, but flows into it from the other, so that the sweeter's toll is fruitless. But the discerning man damns the course of the muddy water and allows only the clear water to rise in the well, that is, he gives his heart over to the remembrance of God alone.

The chief hindrances on this first stage of the Way are, therefore, the world, the flesh, i.e., the lower self, and Satan, and when the seeker, who seeks God alone, has accomplished the purification and amoering of the self and its qualities and has watched over his heart in order to purify it from all defilement, and is following the direct road, and the world is despised in his eyes and therefore he has renounced it; when he has detached his desire from the creatures and does not turn towards them—for his heart is concerned only with God Most High and joy in the remembrance of Him, and in prayer to Him, and the longing to meet with Him—then Satan cannot seduce him with worldly temptations or selfish desires for Satan no longer has any power over him. 4 Sûfism, said one of the Sûfis, is a matter of character, and beauty of character means that evil has been put away and good has taken its place.

The novice is now ready to pass on to the next stage, for the soul has been freed of its fetters, the veils of darkness have been rent, the mirror has been cleansed of its rust, brightened and polished. In reference to this first stage, which is the purgative life, and its fruits, al-Ghazâli relates a beautiful allegory, which tells how the Chinese and the Greeks came into the presence of a certain king and vied with one another in boasting of their great skill in drawing and painting. So the king decided to assign to them a corridor, one side of which should be adorned by the Chinese, and the other by the Greeks, and a curtain should be let down between them, so that neither group could see the work of the other. His commands were carried out,
and the Greeks began by collecting a great quantity of rare
colours. But the Chinese entered upon their task without
any supply of colours at all, and proceeded to brighten their
side and polish it. Then, when the Greeks had completed
their work, the Chinese claimed that they also had finished,
whereat the king marvelled, for how had they finished their
painting, without the use of colours? They were asked:
"How can you have completed it without materials and without
even beginning the work of painting?" The Chinese replied:
"That is not your concern. Raise the curtain." Then the
curtain was drawn aside and behold, on their side, were reflected
all the wondrous paintings and rare colours of the Greeks,
shining with greater brilliancy and more clearly than on the
other, for their side had become like a bright mirror through
their patient efforts, and the beauty of their side was enhanced
by much polishing. So also the seekers after God are solicitous
in the purification of their hearts and the brightening and
polishing of that which is meant to be the mirror of the Divine,
to receive the reflection of the glory of God.1


CHAPTER XI
The Mystic Path. The Servant and his Lord.
The Illuminating Life

The traveller has now passed beyond the stage of the beginner
or novice, concerned chiefly with purification, whose journey
brought him only to the gateway of the King’s abode; but now,
al-Ghazzâlî says, it is for him to enter the wide spaces of the court-
yard, and he quotes the words of a wise man who said: "The
pious say: 'Open your eyes that you may see,' but I say:
'Close your eyes that you may see.'" The first saying is
applicable to the seeker at the beginning of the Way, who is
near to the Royal dwelling, but the second is more fitting for
the traveller who has passed beyond the gateway and entered
the precincts. Such a one jeopardises himself in search for the
Object of his desire, and not all who start on the quest will
face the dangers and the weariness involved in pursuing it to the
end. In this stage the traveller passes from one state to another
(talawîn), as he draws nearer to his goal.2

This stage on the way corresponds to the world of Celestial
Power (jâharî) in al-Ghazzâlî’s cosmological scheme.3 This
scheme includes three worlds through which the traveller must
pass, the first being the material, visible world ('âlam al-mulk
and ‘shahdâ); manifest to the senses, and the third the World
Invisible ('âlam al-malakâ), which is manifest to the spirit.
"There are two worlds," al-Ghazzâlî writes, "Spiritual and
Material, or, if you prefer, Sensitive and Intelligential, or again
a Higher World and a Lower World, according to your point of
view, regarding the worlds themselves, or in relation to the
eye which sees them (outward in the one case, inward in the

Hegel, "The significance of ideas is change and turning from one state to
another," and he notes that this is the stage of those who have not attained
eth, p. 322.
3 Cf. p. 117 above.
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obedience, has the joy of intimate converse with the Most High God and of vast in the knowledge of Him and obedience to His will and long periods of fellowship with Him, and if the servant was to obtain no further reward for his efforts than what he finds of the sweetness of obedience and the sense of fellowship in communion with His Lord, that would be enough.1

The traveler is now walking in the light, which comes from the gift of the Divine grace. It is for the servant to seek help from his Lord, to strive to do His will, to discipline himself in accordance with that Will, but it is God Who gives him help on the way, Who crowns his efforts with success, Who grants grace to make his discipline effective, and Who draws near to the servant seeking to approach Him.2 That does not depend on the servant’s choice, but it is for him to choose to prepare himself for that Divine rapture (al-jadhaa), by detaching his heart from all lower attractions, which would prevent him from being attracted by what is spiritual. It is to be noted that for the Divine grace al-Ghazali uses the term jadhaa (lit. attractive force) for it is the Lord Who draws man unto Himself, He is the true Seeker and the quest is, in truth, evoked by the One Sought. al-Ghazali quotes in this connection the words of the Prophet: “During your life here, your Lord has gifts to bestow upon you (nafaštah, lit. fragrant bouquets), therefore come within reach of them.”3 For those gifts and raptures are of Divine origin. Again the Prophet declared that God descends every night to the firmament of this world, saying: “Is there any who prays? I will answer his prayer.”4 For the Lord hath said: “The righteous have long yearned to meet with Me, but I have a still greater yearning to meet with them.”5

The Lord is ever ready to give: our business, says al-Ghazali, is only to make the place empty and to await the descent of His mercy. We are like one who ploughs the ground and loses it and sows the seed, but all that will not avail him without rain, and he does not know when God will cause the rain to fall, only he trusts in the grace of God and His mercy, in leaving no year without rain. So, too, there is seldom a year or a

1 1934, 1944, p. 52.
2 1934, 1944, p. 5.
3 1934, 1944, p. 134.
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month or a day, without some rapture and some gift. The servant, therefore, must purify the heart from the weeds of animal desire and sow within it the seed of goodwill and sincerity and expose it to the quarters whence blow the winds of mercy. Just as the expectation of rain is greatest in the season of Spring, and when clouds appear, so also the expectation of these Divine graces is greatest in holy seasons, when the concern is concentrated and the heart uplifted. When the whole concern is set upon God, then His grace is outpoured upon that one, and the Divine mysteries are revealed to him and the real meaning of things made plain. The servant has only to prepare himself through complete purification and to have his intention present, with a sincere will and ardent desire, watching with expectation for what God Most High will reveal to Him, of His mercy. For to the saints and prophets revelation was made, and their souls rejoiced in attaining to the perfection possible to them, not by means of study, but by ascetism in this world, and by shunning it, and cleansing themselves from its hindrances, and concentrating their whole concern upon God, and, “when anyone belongs to God, God belongs to him.” In truth, al-Ghazali adds, spiritual states and Divine revelations are actually present within your heart, but you are distracted from them by worldly ties and sensual desires, which veil you from them. But when that veil is raised, then the radiance of the knowledge of God is seen within yourself.1

In such a heart, purified by godliness, the light of the lamp from the niche of Divinity shines forth, so that there cannot be concealed within it that secret polymath which is more secret “than the creeping of the black ant on a dark night,” for nothing is hidden from this light. Such a heart, cleansed from all that is destructive, will soon be furnished with all that makes for salvation — gratitude, patience, fear and hope, trust and other virtues, and so become a heart acceptable unto God, the heart at rest in Him. “ ‘The rule of the Sufi,’” al-Ghazali says: “is that Poverty should be his adoration and Patience

1 Muhaddithunan, p. 12. 2 Syr IV, p. 20. 3 Dir XVI, 35. 4 God is the Light of the heavens and the earth: His Light is like a niche, wherein is a lamp.” 5 Syr, III, p. 40. 6 Al-Ghazali’s Mystical Teaching, p. 163. 7 Leiden, 1924, p. 143. 8 Qayyur, Q. 21, al-Qasab, 1, p. 199
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Giver and the feeling is the joy of the one receiving His gifts, and the action is the observance of what the Giver desires, and what is acceptable to Him. The servant's knowledge is not completed until he knows that all gifts come from God and the means (by which these gifts are bestowed) are under His control. This knowledge lies behind the acknowledgment of the Unity and the Divine Oneness, for these form part of it. When God is known as Essential Holiness, it is realised that One alone is Holy and One alone God. Then the servant realises that everything in the world has been brought into existence by the One and every good gift comes from Him. Nothing in the invocation of God is worth more than “Thanks be to Him” (al-thamad lilah), but it not to be supposed that its value comes from the movement of the tongue in uttering these words apart from the realisation of their significance within the heart.

“Glory be to God” (nabhán) is the phrase which signifies admission of His Holiness, and “There is no god but God” (la allah illa allah), indicates confession of His Unity. This knowledge that all gifts come from the One debarrs polytheism in action, i.e., the servant will not attribute any of them to the creatures, instead of the Creator, nor regard the creatures as responsible for what is profitable or injurious to him.

Perfect gratitude consists in the servant's joy in the gifts of God, because he is thereby enabled to draw near to Him and to dwell in His Presence and to contemplate His Face continually. This is the highest stage of gratitude and the sign of it is that the servant does not rejoice in this world except in so far as it is the place of sowing for the world to come and helps him thereto, and he is grieved by any gift which distracts him from the remembrance of God, for, as Shahíl said: "Gratitude is the vision of the Giver, not the gift."

Fear and Hope also mark stages in the progress of the traveller, and these two can likewise be analysed into the elements of knowledge, feeling and action, for they arise from knowledge and result in action, but the terms apply primarily to the feeling. If expectation, arising from knowledge of God's mercy towards the sinner and also His wrath upon sin, looks towards what is


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abhorred, and produces suffering, it is called Fear, and if towards what is desired, producing joy, it is called Hope. Fear is the result of knowledge, the knowledge which was the mark of the penitent, Hope is the result of assured faith. The sign of Fear is flight, and the sign of Hope is search, and they are symbolised by the sanctuary, (haram, the sacred precincts), and the mosque. He who enters the sanctuary of discipleship is safe from the creatures, and he who enters the mosque, keeps his members safe from sinning against God.3 "Praise be to God," al-Ghazali writes, "Who makes His loving kindness and His reward to be hoped for and His wrath and chastisement to be feared, Who keeps alive the hearts of His saints by the spirit of hope in Him, so that He may urge them on by His loving kindness until they arrive at absorption (in Himself) (fannah), and withdraw from this place of affliction, which is the abode of His enemies." The spiritually-minded know that this world is the sowing-ground for the world to come and the heart is like the soil and faith like the seed therein, and the life of devotion represents the ploughing of the soil and cleansing it and digging the runnels and turning the water into them. The heart which dotes on this world and is absorbed in it is like the earth which is sallow; no crop will grow except from the seed of faith, and faith seldom flourishes in a heart filled with impurity and evil qualities, just as seed will not grow in earth which is saltish. The servant’s hope of forgiveness should be like the hope of the sower, who seeks for good ground and sows therein good seed, neither mouldy nor brackish, and supplies it with what is needful, watering it from time to time, and hoarding the ground and keeping it clear of all that would check the growth of the seed or injure it, and then sits down, expecting that God, by His grace, will keep away thunderbolts and all sources of injury until the seed has grown and the crop is ripe. Such expectation is called Hope. Though God's mercy is due to His grace, not to human merit, yet the servant must at any rate strive to be worthy of it.

“You hope for salvation and do not follow the way thereto, but the ship will not move upon dry land.”

3 Mischaj al-Insan. p. 100.
Action in accordance with Hope, al-Ghazâlî considers to be of a higher order than action as a result of Fear, because the servants nearest to God are those who love Him best, and love prevails through Hope. Yet Fear has its place also, since it is based upon knowledge of what is to be dreaded, which is summed up in the fear of God, which wins Him from His servant, and godly fear leads to action to avoid it. al-Ghazâlî quotes a tradition which declares that God created Hell out of His great mercy, as a severe wheat-field to drive creatures into Paradise. Yet the highest form of Fear is not the fear of chastisement, nor even of sin, but only the servant’s fear lest he should be debarred for ever from the contemplation of the Eternal Beauty. But the servant, as he advances, will pass beyond both these stages to something higher than either, for both are really reins which hinder the soul from complete freedom, and when the soul is truly free, there will be no place for Fear or Hope.

Among the highest of the stations of the travellers who are drawing near to God are those characterised by the virtues of Trust in God (isâlîd) and Unification (tasâbîlîd), which, to the ordinary believer, meant the acknowledgment of the Divine Unity, but to the Sûfî meant the merging of the personal, individual will in the Eternal Will of God. In al-Ghazâlî’s view, these two stations are closely connected. “Praise be to God,” he writes at the beginning of his teaching on this subject, “the Sovereign Ruler of this world and the world to come, Unique in glory and might, Who upholds the heavens by the word of His power alone (lit. upon nothing). Who provides all His creatures therein with their daily bread, Who turns the eyes of the righteous and the wise from the consideration of means and secondary causes to the Ultimate Cause, and prevents them from concerning themselves with what is other than Him, and from reliance upon any power save His. Therefore they worship none but Him, knowing that He is the One, the Unique, the Eternal God, and being convinced that all creatures are but servants like themselves. They need not ask for their 1

1 1 Jâyâ, IV, pp. 192 and 136.
2 1 Jâyâ, IV, pp. 197 and 132.
3 Isâlîd, IV, pp. 192 and 132.
4 Job, XXXIV, 7: “He stretcheth out the north upon empty space and hopeth the earth upon nothing.”

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daily bread, for not the smallest ant but has been created by God, and there is no creating thing that death overtakes, but He provides sustenance for it. So, being assured that He has taken upon Himself to provide for His servants and in Him they can put their trust, they depend upon Him and declare: “God is our Sufficiency and how excellent is He in Whom we trust.”

Like the other virtues, Trust includes knowledge, feeling and action; the term itself is applied generally to the feeling, but that results from knowledge of the power of God. Therefore, “Vast and shoreless sea” Tasâbîîd means the realisation that all things come from God and secondary causes and means are of no account. One of its effects is Trust, and another which al-Ghazâlî notes is that the Unitarian ceases to complain against the creatures or to be angry with them and is satisfied with—and submissive to—the Will of God. Tasâbîlîd he describes as a precious substance which has two outer coverings, one further away from the kernel than the other, and people generally limit the name to the outer rind and the business of preserving it, and completely overlook and neglect the kernel. The first rind is represented by the declaration of the tongue: “There is no god but God” (which excludes, e.g., the doctrine of the Trinity accepted by Christians), but it may be made by the hypocrite, whose outward utterance differs from his inward belief. The second rind corresponds to the affirmation of one who is really convinced of the truth of what he affirms, and this is the Tasâbîîd of the common people and the theologians, who seek to preserve this rind from being corrupted by heresy. But the third type of Tasâbîîd is the kernel, when all things are seen to come from God Most High and the vision of Him obliterates all that comes between, and He alone is the Supreme Other. This kind of Tasâbîîd is the station of the truly sincere (al-Sâidiqîn). The real Unitarian is he who sees only the One and turns his face not to any earthly Qîla but towards Him alone.

Such Tasâbîîd means that the servant can abandon himself
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to God in complete trust and merge his will in the Divine Will. The servant no longer finds his own powers and personality to be adequate, he has ceased to be self-sufficient and has allowed God to dominate his life. In all that he does or leaves undone he is in the hands of God like the corpse in the hands of the one who prepares it for burial: he considers himself as a dead body moved by the Divine decree and is content that the Divine strength should replace his own human weakness. This degree of Trust means the abandonment of intercession for personal needs, for the servant relies upon his Lord's grace and His care, believing that He will take the initiative in giving more than he asks, for how many a gift has been given by Him, before it was asked for and without being deserved. Al-Ghazali quotes the words of Dhul-Nun1 who said of Trust that it was "the casting of the soul into self-surrender (al-ta'kalliyah) and the withdrawal of it from self-assertion (al-rubhibiyah)." Again, al-Ghazali gives the words of one who said: "All of God's creatures receive their provision from Him, but some eat with humility like the beggars, and some with constant labour, like the artisans, and some with glory, like the Sultans, who contemplate the All-Glorious and take their daily bread from His hand and see nothing that comes between (no secondary cause)."

These stations (maqamdah) involve the active life of virtue; the middle of the Sultans' journey, says al-Ghazali, is action and the seeker's effort to move from station to station brings him nearer to the object of his search. But for such progress, which depends upon the Divine gift of "states," the mind and heart of the servant must be open to the influence of the Lord. The object of the self-surrender involved in tawakkul and ta'bid is that the soul of the seeker may be controlled and guided by the Divine light within him, and this means the presence of the heart in the practice of Meditation and Recollection, which lead to Contemplation. For these, solitude and withdrawal are needed if the mystic is to "see" and know God and to enter into communion with the Eternal. Al-Ghazali uses a homely metaphor to prove the need for detachment from worldly affairs and human companionship, in comparing the hearts of men to water-pots: so long as they are filled with water, the air does not enter them and so the heart, pre-occupied with anything but God, has no room for the knowledge of His Majesty. 2 The self cannot become acquainted with its Lord nor become accustomed to the recollection of Him except when it is weaned from its natural habits, by solitude and seclusion, firstly in order that its hearing and its vision may be detached from what is familiar, and secondly that it may become accustomed to praise and recollection and prayer in solitude, until familiarity with the recollection of God prevails over it, in place of familiarity with the world. 3 Solitude sets the heart free for adoration and reflection and communion through confidential intercourse with God. Only the heart at leisure from itself is prepared to receive the revelation of the Divine mysteries and such leisure cannot co-exist with social intercourse and the distraction of human companionship. Time must be made for silent communion with God, for detachment from immediate surroundings and the common round, in order to come into touch with the Ultimate Reality. Withdrawal into solitude is the means for securing such detachment. The solitaries are those who find rest from this world in the recollection of God and so continually do they give themselves to recollection that while they live, He is always in their thoughts, and when they die, it is with His Name on their lips that they pass into His Presence. 4

Meditation and Recollection are the means by which solitude may be used to assist the soul in its ascent to God. The real meaning of Meditation (muqadda), al-Ghazali says, is the attentive apprehension (wuqâq) of the omnipresence of God (al-Râghib), the direction of all concern towards Him, a state of introversion in which the heart is listening to His voice, pre-occupied with Him, all the thoughts directed towards Him, being continually

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2 Fys. IV, pp. 275, 277, 290.
3 Ibrâhîm al-Fâhîn, p. 142. Cf. Husayn, "The term 'station' denotes the way of the seeker, and his progress in the field of exertion—whereas the man that has a 'state' is dead to 'self' and stands by a 'state' which God creates in him." Op. cit., p. 182.
conscious of His Presence. This state results from the realisation that He is aware of the very secrets of men’s hearts, and to Him all things are unveiled, and it is the state of those who have drawn near to Him (al-munqarrabah).

Those can be divided into two classes: the first is that of the Godfearers, the “people of the right hand,” who are always aware of God’s regard upon their outward conduct and their inmost thoughts, who remain conscious of themselves and their actions and feel abashed before God. But the second class is that of the “just made perfect” who meditate upon the Divine Majesty and Glory, when the heart is so submerged in the apprehension of that Majesty and so overcome by awe that it cannot be turned aside to anything else. Such a one, absorbed in Him Whom he worships, gives no thought to himself or his actions, for his concern has become unified and God is sufficient for him. He is forgetful of created things and does not perceive who is present with him, though his eyes are open, and he does not know what is said to him, though he is not deaf, for he who is absorbed in the consciousness of the Presence of God speaks only of Him and hears only in Him and has no need of words and actions save in relation to Him. “This is the degree of those whose hearts in meditation are overwhelmed by the Divine Majesty and Glory, so that there remains in them no place for anything else.”

By Meditation the heart comes to know the joy of entering into the Presence of God and directing towards Him all its thoughts, interests and desires, and having known this joy, it seeks the practice of the Presence of God at all times, which is Recollection (dhyāna), and this, says al-Ghazālī, is the most excellent of occupations, for by it the heart is enlightened and enabled to contemplate the Vision of God. Goodness is the gate to Recollection and Recollection the gate to revelation and revelation the gate to the goal of desire (al-fanā al-ālbān), which is the meeting with God Most High. Recollection is approached by three stages (pūskhah) and the excellence of these

\[1\] Firdawī, IV, pp. 349-351. 2 Firdawī al-Tāhīrī, pp. 187 f. 3 Firdawī, p. 1. 4 Firdawī, II, p. 12. 5 Firdawī, II, p. 34. 6 Firdawī al-Tāhīrī, p. 41. 7 Firdawī, I, p. 112.

stages is in proportion to their power to help the soul to its purpose of attaining to that Presence in which it finds rest and peace. The first stage is Recollection with the tongue only, and the second is Recollection by the heart, which still finds it difficult to concentrate on worship and to keep free of distractions, and the third is Recollection which takes complete possession of the heart and so prevails over it that it can with difficulty be diverted from it to other matters. This leads to the highest degree of Recollection, when He Who is worshipped takes possession of the heart and Recollection itself is obliterated and disappears, and that is the end which is sought.

By Meditation and Recollection the soul is led on to Contemplation (moulkādah), when the veil is raised between the soul and God. The worshipper has entered into the sanctuary and there is no more need of prayer. “When God is present and manifested,” said the Sūfi Dhu’l-Nūn, “there is no need to make intercession. If He were absent, then should intercession be made to Him.”

Contemplation, says al-Ghazālī, is of three types, contemplation bīt-Haqq, which is the vision of things witnessing to the Unity, and contemplation bīt-Haqq, which is the vision of God in things, and finally the contemplation of God Himself, the vision of Reality, which is certain and without doubt. To such a contemplative the manifestation of the Eternal and Invisible God is made as clear as if seen with the eyes. The contemplative, when he reads the Word of God thinks not of himself or what he reads, for in the word he sees the Speaker and in the words His attributes. He is not concerned with himself or his reading or with the favours to be received from the Benefactor, but only with the Speaker, his thoughts are fixed on Him and he is absorbed in contemplation of Him, to the exclusion of all else. This is the rank of those who have drawn near to Him, for such a one no longer thinks of himself, but sees only the Most High and the mystery of the Unseen is revealed to him. This contemplation of the One Creative Truth is sometimes continuous and sometimes comes
unexpectedly like a flash of lightning, and this is what usually happens, continuous contemplation is rare and unusual. But the contemplative who has attained to this highest degree of contemplation has come to the end of the journey and has entered upon the Unitive Life, which was the goal.

CHAPTER XII

The end of the Path. The lover and the Beloved. The life of the Saints in God

The highest contemplation, said Hujwir, "is violence of love and absorption of human attributes in realising the vision of God, and their annihilation by the everlastingness of God." Love is represented by al-Ghazâlî as the final stage of the mystic Way, and as its goal. The lover is the one who has attained (al-maṣṭir): he is the gnostic (al-ṭârîf), for "whoever knows his Lord loves Him," and to him who loves is revealed still greater knowledge of the Beloved, the knowledge which He Himself "casts into" the heart of His lover, by revelation and inspiration (al-maṣ’ah and al-dhâhîm), the knowledge from on high (al-dā’im al-ladunî). To the lover is granted the Beatific Vision here and now, to the lover is given the consummation of his desire, in union with the Beloved.

In al-Ghazâlî’s teaching Love includes Longing (shamp), for the lover song to be with his Beloved, Fellowship (sanâ‘), for he is in intimate communion with Him Whom he loves, and Satisfaction (ridâ). The lover has entered the ranks of the "just made perfect" (al-sâlihi‘), and those whose single-mindedness (ihlâs) is without flaw, for his love has no taint of self-interest. This stage includes the perfection of all the stations and states which have preceded it, which the lover has experienced on the way, but it transcends them all, for the mystic has no longer need of states and stations. He who has reached the end of the journey, al-Ghazâlî states, has attained to "sobriety" (tasâ‘il) and permanence, and is listening at all times...
to the Divine Voice; he has passed beyond the stations and is in the realm of achievement (talâmí, lit. flatly) he is unmoved by fears, and "states" affect him no longer. It is all one to him whether he suffers hardship or is at ease, whether he has little or much, whether men do him wrong or keep faith with him, whether he eats or is hungry, whether he sleeps or wakes. The desires of the self (al-haššá) have vanished, and what pertains to the spirit (al-khujúq) remains. His outward self is with the creatures, his inward self is with the Creative Truth. The place of attainment (al-makhlûk) al-Ghazâlî says elsewhere, belongs to those who have reached perfection and talâmí, and have arrived at the goal. When the servant has perfectly realised what attainment means, then it is assured to him and he has passed beyond stations and states and becomes possessed of makhlûk, as one wrote: "Thy place (makhlûk) within my heart is the whole of it, And there is no room within it, save for Thee." 3

The soul is now called the tranquilled soul (al-nafa al-malûma inna), the soul at rest, which returns to its Lord, satisfied and giving satisfaction to Him, and this stage corresponds to the dârâm al-malâkâtî called also dârâm al-anwâr, in al-Ghazâlî's cosmological scheme (cf. pp. 159, 160 above). "In this world, he writes, 4 'there are wonders, in relation to which this visible world is seen to be of no account. He who does not ascend to that world ... is but a brute beast, indeed he is more in error than any brute beast, since the brutes are not given the wings wherewith to take flight to that world. Know that the visible world is to the world Invisible as the husk to the kernel, as the form and body to the spirit, as darkness to light, and as the ignoble to the sublime. Therefore that Invisible World is called the World Supernal and the Spiritual World and the World of

1 Cfr. Hujârat. "Talâmí denotes the residence of spiritual adepts in the state of perfection and in the highest grade—i.e., in the resting-place of the adept—opposed within a World of the Self (al-tâyrîq al-sâlih) to the spiritual (al-khujûq) of the nafs; and the spiritual (al-khujûq) vanishes away." Abû Hârûn al-Rashîd, Dârâî al-lâmbr, p. 114.
2 Dârâî al-lâmbr, p. 145.
3 Iblîs, p. 35. This passage is quoted verbatim from al-Sâlihî, Kâmâl 44 al-lâmbr, p. 115.
4 Isra, IX, 82, 47, 82.

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Light ... He who is in that world above is with God and has the keys of the Unseen."

This, then, is the stage of perfection, which is the stage of the lover, and al-Ghazâlî has much to say of Love, Love, he says, is of different types and the first is self-love, which includes a man's desire for his own safety and preservation, love of wealth, because it is a means to self-preservation, love of wife and child and kindred and friends. These things are loved not for themselves, but because they are bound up with the continuance of a man's own existence and its perfection. The second type is love for the sake of the benefit received from the person or thing loved, and this, too, comes back to self-interest: the benefactor is not regarded as the desired perfection itself, but as a means to it. So the doctor is loved, not for his own sake, but because he is a means to health, and money because of what it will buy: but if the benefit ceased, the love for the benefactor would cease also. The third type is love of a thing for its own sake, not for the pleasure to be obtained from it apart from itself, and this is real love, which can be relied upon to endure, such as the love of Beauty and Goodness. All beauty is loved by the one who is able to perceive beauty, for the perception of beauty is a delight in itself, which is loved for its own sake not for anything else. Beautiful forms may be loved for themselves, and not for any end to be obtained from them and that cannot be denied; for instance, green things and running water are loved for themselves, not for the sake of drinking the water or eating the green things. So, too, with the blossom and the flowers and the birds, with their fair colours and beautiful shapes and their perfectly symmetrical forms, the very sight of them is a joy in itself and all joy is loved. It cannot be denied that where Beauty is perceived, it is natural to love it and if it is certain that God is Beauty, He must be loved by that one to whom His Beauty and His Majesty are revealed. The fourth type of love is that inspired by Goodness and Beauty in the moral sense. al-Ghazâlî concludes that the beauty and goodness of everything consists in the
presence of the perfection proper to it, e.g., the beautiful horse is one perfect in appearance and form and colour and pace, easy to wheel round in battle, while beautiful handwriting is that which combines due proportion and combination of the letters with the right slope and alignment. The same is true of the beauty which is perceived not by the senses, but by the insight: the moral goodness and beauty which are the perfection of character must be loved. Of this fifth type of love that due to the secret affinity (mundsiba) existing between the lover and the beloved, for love between two persons may exist without any beauty or pleasure as the cause, but simply because their spirits are akin.

If all these causes of love were combined in one person and the attributes which are loved were to reach their highest perfection in that one, would not the result be the highest degree of love? In God and in Him alone are all these causes combined and all things lovable found in their highest perfection. For it is to Him that man owes his very existence and the qualities by which he may attain to his perfection. He is the only real Benefactor, and the Ultimate Cause of all benefits. If, where beauty is found, it is natural to love it, and if beauty consists in perfection, then it follows that the All-Beneficent, Who is Absolute Perfection, must be loved by those to whom His nature and Attributes are revealed. For, as al-Ghazali observes, if love is aroused by the beauty perceived by the physical eye, which is mistaken in much of what it sees, regarding as small what is large, and as large what is small and what is far off as near and what is ugly as beautiful, it is unreasonable that love should be aroused by the eternal and everlasting Beauty, limitless in its perfection, perceived by the eye of insight, which is not liable to error, nor subject to death, indeed, it survives death, alive with God and rejoicing in Him. And finally, it was because of the affinity between the human soul and its Source, because it shares in the Divine Nature and Attributes, because through knowledge and love it can attain to eternal life and itself become Godlike.

1 114, IV, pp. 361-362.
2 114, IV, p. 296.
3 114, IV, p. 295.
4 Such love, when it has grown strong and overwhelming, is called Passion (Fihā) which has no meaning but that of love firmly established and limitless. al-Ghazali gives two examples of this passionate love directed towards a human being, that of Zulayka (Potiphar's wife) for Yuha (Joseph), which meant the loss of her wealth and her beauty, for though (after her husband's death, according to the Islamic legend) she possessed seventy camel-loads of jewels and necklaces, she spent them all in her love for Joseph. To everyone who said to her: "I saw Joseph to-day," she gave a necklace to enrich that one, until nothing remained to her. She remembered nothing except Joseph because of her passionate love, and when she raised her head to the heavens, she saw his name written upon the stars. But after her marriage to Joseph, a greater love took possession of her and she refused to live with him as his wife, saying: "I loved you only before I knew Him, but when I knew Him, love of Him left no room for the love of any other and I cannot give His place to another."
5 The other example is that of Majnūn, who went mad for love of Layla, and when asked his name would reply "Layla." When asked whether Layla was dead, he said: "Layla is within my heart, she is not dead. I am Layla." One day, when he was passing by her house, he looked up to the heavens and someone said to him: "O Majnūn, do not look up at the heavens, but look at the wall of Layla's house and perchance you will see her." But he said: "I am content with the star whose shadow falls upon Layla's house." So, too, it was related of Manṣūr al-Hallāj, a passionate lover, who laid down his life for his love, that his friend Shibli visited him after he had been in prison for eighteen days and asked him: "O Manṣūr, what is love?" and al-Hallāj said: "Do not ask me to-day, but ask me to-morrow." and when the morrow came and he was brought forth from prison and the executioner spread out his carpet, to slay him, Shibli passed by and al-Hallāj called out: "O Shibli, the beginning of love is a consuming fire and the end thereof is death." al-Hallāj, also, when he came to know that everything save God was of no account and that God was the Sole Reality, forgot his own name and when asked:
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"Who art thou?" replied, "I am the Creative Truth" (that is, I am one with Him Whom I love). 1

It is reasonable, al-Ghazálí declares, "to give this passionate love to that One from Whom all good things are seen to come. In truth, there is nothing good or beautiful or beloved in this world, but comes from His loving kindness and is the gift of His grace, a draught from the sea of His bounty. For all that is good and fair and lovely in the world, perceived by the intellect and the sight and the hearing and the rest of the senses, from the creation of the world until it pass away from us, from the summit of the Pindus to the ends of the earth, is in a particle from the treasuries of His riches and a ray from the splendour of His Glory. Is it not reasonable to love Him Who is thus described and is it not comprehensible that those who have mystic knowledge of His attributes should love Him more and more until their love passes bounds? To use the term "passion" for it is wrong in regard to Him, for it fails to express the greatness of their love towards Him. Glory be to Him Who is concealed from sight by the brightness of His Light. If He had not veiled Himself with Seventy Veils of Light, the splendours of His Countenance would surely consume the eyes of those who contemplate the Beauty which is His. 2

But the lover who claims to love the Most High must shew the signs of love, for Love, al-Ghazálí considers, is like a goodly tree, firmly rooted, the branches whereof reach up to the heavens, and its fruits are manifest in the heart and by the tongue and the other members, and these fruits are an indication of love, as much so is an indication of fire. Among the signs of the love to God is that the lover has no fear of death, for it means meeting with the Beloved face to face in the Abode of Peace. To the lover, there is no hardship in journeying from his own land to the home of the Beloved, in order to be blest by the vision of Him; death opens the way to that meeting, it is the gate of entrance to the Vision. To lay down life itself for the sake of loved one; 3, 4 Makhzoum al-Quhid, pp. 73-74.

1 Making this point, the author states: "Up, O ye lovers and away! it is time to leave the world for aye, O heart, toward thy heart's love wand, and O friend, by honeying the friend." 5 R. A. Nicholson, Eastern Poetry and Prose, p. 130. 6

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his Lord is the mark of sincerity in the lover. 1 Another sign of love is the sacrifice of the lover's will to that of the Beloved, and in this connection al-Ghazálí quotes verses which he attributes to Ibn al-Mubarak (ob. A.H. 180), which are attributed elsewhere to the woman mystic Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya of Basra:

"You disobey God, while you claim to love Him: This, by my life, is a strange thing to do. If your love were sincere, you would have obeyed Him, for surely the lover obeys his Beloved."

Another mark of the lover of God is that the remembrance of Him remains ever fresh in his heart, without effort on his part, for what a man, loves he remembers unceasingly and if his love is perfect, it is never unmindful of it. al-Ghazálí gives a tradi-

1 Ma'arif, IV, p. 284.
2 Ma'arif, IV, p. 284.
3 Cited p. 284.
4 Cited p. 282. This recalls a lover of God, who was ever mindful of Him, Rabi'a of Basra, whose prayer al-Ghazálí records: "O my Lord, the stars are shining and the eyes of men are closed and kings have lost their doors and every lover is alone with his beloved and here am I, alone with Thee."
5 Ma'arif, IV, p. 323.
6 Ma'arif, IV, p. 282.
are as angry at the sight of sin, as an angry lion who learns nothing."

Love includes Longing (shaghf), for every lover longs for the beloved when absent. Within his heart is the image of the beloved and he longs that the image should be perfected by vision. The lover of God knows that perfect revelation can be attained only in the life to come, when his contemplation will be uninterrupted and his joy increase evermore, and for that he longs, but he knows that much may be revealed now and now, and he longs to see more of the Beauty and the glory of God and to attain to perfect union with the Beloved. al-Ghazālī relates this tradition of how the Lord said to David: "Tell My people that I am the Lover of him who loves Me and the Companion of him who desires My company and in fellowship with him who seeks My fellowship through Recollection, the Friend of him who is My Friend. I choose him who has chosen Me. There is none who has loved Me with a perfect heart, but I have received him unto Myself and I have loved him with a love passing that of the creatures. He who sought Me in truth, found Me and he who sought any other, found Me not. Come, then, to partake of My grace and My fellowship and sit down with Me and enter into communion with Me and I will hasten to satisfy your love. For I have created the nature of My lovers after the nature of Abraham My friend and Moses My confidant and Muhammad My chosen and I have created the hearts of those who long for Me, from My light, and I have glorified them with Mine own glory." 4

Again al-Ghazālī says that God declared to one of "the just made perfect": "I have some among My servants who love Me and I love them, who love Me as I long to meet them. They keep Me in remembrance and I remember them: they contemplate Me and I look continually upon them. If you have followed in their steps, I have loved you and if you have turned aside from following after them, I have turned aside from you." He said: "Lord, what is the sign of these?"
He said: "They seek the shade by day as the compassionate

shepherd seeks it for his flock and they yearn for the setting of the sun, as the birds yearn for its nest, and when night covers them and darkness falls and every lover is alone with his beloved, they bow down in adoration before Me. The first thing I give them is to cast My light into their hearts and they know of Me what I know of them. As for the second, were the heavens and the earth and all they contain appertained to them, I should think it little for them. The third is that I show them My Countenance and he to whom I shew My Face knows the utmost limit of that which is My secret." 

al-Ghazālī relates also a tradition that David asked who were those who longed for their Lord and the Lord replied: '"Those who long for Me are those whom I have cleansed from all defilement and have aroused to eagerness, and I have opened their hearts so that they may contemplate Me. Their hearts are in My land and I take them forth and set them in My Presence in the heavenly places. Then I summon the noblest of My angels and they, when they have assembled, bow down in worship to Me, and I say: "In truth it was not to worship Me that I bade you come, but to shew you the hearts of those who long for Me, and to boast of them unto you, for their hearts give light to My angels in the heavens as the sun gives light to those who are in the earth."' 5

Love results in Fellowship (wasi). Fellowship, says al-Ghazālī, is one of the most glorious fruits of Love and its real meaning is the rejoining of the heart and its delight in the revelation to it of the proximity of the Beloved and His Beauty and Perfection. Nearness to God means that when the heart has been purified from self-regard He is present with His lover (for between God and man there is only the will of self). He who has drawn near to God knows that all things, from the foundation of the world, exist in anticipation in His knowledge and are a manifestation of Him, brought into existence by His Will and His power, which enabled them to exist and to subsist. The attributes cannot be separated from that one to whom they belong, indeed they subsist in that one, so that the lover who is in fellowship with God does not speak of himself or hear of

1 Idem, IV, p. 256.
2 Ibid., IV, p. 278.
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is strong, so also is the love of fair visiblities within, perceived by the light of insight, and the beauty of the Divine Glory and Majesty, with which no other beauty or glory is to be compared. That one to whom any part of it is revealed is overcome with amazement and is unconscious of what befalls him.

It was related that the wife of Fath al-Mawali stumbled and was hurt, but laughed and when asked if she did not feel the pain, she said: "The joy of His reward has taken from my heart the bitterness of His pain." Said al-Tustari (ob. 283/896) suffered from an illness for which he used to treat others, but did not treat himself, and when asked why, he said: "O friend, the stroke of the Beloved does not wound." But there is also the Satisfaction with pain that is felt and perceived, which is naturally disliked, yet may be desired, e.g., satisfaction with a surgical operation which causes pain, yet is desired, and satisfaction with travail which involves hardship, but also profit and pleasure. So, too, with the lover of God, the will of the Beloved and His good pleasure are what he seeks and if he suffers affliction thereby, he is satisfied. One of these lovers said: "I have loved everything which He loved: even if He desired Hell-fire for me, I should desire to enter the fire." Bishr b. al-Harith (ob. 227/841), a great ascetic and mystic, related that he saw a man who had been beaten with a thousand lashes in Baghdad and yet uttered no cry. When he had been taken back to prison, Bishr followed him and asked why he had been beaten. "Because I was a passionate lover," he answered, and when Bishr asked why he had kept silence under his sufferings, the man replied: "Because my beloved was opposite, regarding me." Then Bishr said: "If only you had set your regard upon the greatest Object of love," and the man gave a great cry and fell dead.

al-Ghazali relates a story from Mubāq, who told how a man lived in the desert and possessed a dog, an ass and a cock. The cock used to wake them for prayer at dawn, 2 they employed the ass to convey water and to carry their tent, while the dog used to guard them. One day a fox came and carried off the

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1 Rawd al-Talibīn, pp. 161, 162.
2 Ibid. IV, pp. 201.
5 "Satisfactions" said Hicketh, in the result of love, instance such as the lover is satisfied with what is done by the Beloved." op. cit., p. 182.

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himselvelf, for it is the Divine attributes which are manifested in and through him. 1

Fellowship, al-Ghazali considers, is to Longing what finding is to search, for when the lover is aware of imperfection and absence, his heart is disturbed and this disturbance is called "longing" for what is absent or invisible. But when joy prevails with him he reaches the Object of his desire and has entered into the presence of his Beloved and is contemplating the Beauty which is revealed to him, that joy in the sense of intimacy is called Fellowship. To such a lover someone said: "You are one of those who long," and he replied: "No, longing is only for one who is absent and when He Who was absent is present, for whom should one long?" "These are the words," writes al-Ghazali, "of one who is absorbed in the joy of what he has attained." The mark of Fellowship with God is the desire to be alone with Him, and a passionate absorption in the sweetness of Recollection. 8 "No one enters into fellowship with God but one who has given much time to the recollection of His, for perfect fellowship means that the mind and the understanding have become absorbed in the joy of inward converse with their Lord, as one who talks with his beloved. 2

Among the fruits of love is Satisfaction (nāʿa'd), which includes the Satisfaction of God with man, and man's Satisfaction with God, i.e., his complete acquiescence in the Divine Will. Satisfaction may be due to the lover's absorption in the object of love, which prevents him from feeling any affliction which comes upon him. Thus, a passionate lover, wholly concerned with his lover, pays no attention to what would otherwise hurt or grieve him, if it comes from some other than his beloved, still less if it is due to the beloved, and if this is conceivable in regard to slight affliction, because of earthly love, is it not conceivable is regard to a greater affliction, if the love is greater? If the love of beautiful forms perceptible by the outward vision
cock, and they were grieved at the loss, but the man was pious and said: "It may be that it is for the best." Then came a wolf and attacked and killed the ass, and they grieved for him also, but again his master said: "Perhaps it is best." Later the dog was taken, and he said likewise. That same day they found that others had been raided and taken captive, while they were left in safety and the man said: "Those others were taken captive because the noise made by their dogs and cocks kept their whereabouts," it had therefore been for their good that their animals were destroyed, in accordance with the Divine decree. So concludes al-Ghazālī, he who knows the secret loving-kindness of the Lord is satisfied with whatever He does in all circumstances. 

al-Ghazālī quotes as an example of satisfaction the saying of Ibn Maš'ūd (ob. 325/940): "Poverty and wealth are two riding-beasts; I do not care which of them I ride, if poverty, I can exercise patience, and if wealth, generosity." He quotes also the definition of Ibn 'Aṭā (ob. 310/922) who said: "Satisfaction is the heart's acquiescence in the eternal choice of God for His servant, assured that His choice for him is best, so he is satisfied therewith and abandons discontent." Abū Sa'ād was asked if it was allowable for a man to be both satisfied and disinterested, and he said: "Yes, it is allowable for him to be satisfied with his Lord and dissatisfied with himself and everything which comes between him and God." al-Ghazālī relates how someone quoted to Hasan b. 'All the words of the famous ascetic Abū Dharr: "Poverty is dearer to me than riches and sickness is dearer to me than health," and Hasan observed: "May God have mercy on Abū Dharr, but I say that he who trusts in the goodness of God's choice for him does not desire to be in any other state than that which God chooses for him." So the lover of God does not make intercession to Him, being satisfied that he needs nothing that is not already his.

Satisfaction results in heart's ease and in joy, for heart's ease comes from the light of Certainty and when that inner light burns steadily the heart rejoices and the inward eye is opened and the excellence of God's ordering of things is made plain and dissatisfaction and disgust find no place. The heart is at rest when it is filled with the sweetness of love, for the true lover is satisfied with all that is done by the Beloved, and it seems to him to be his own desire. Love of God is rooted in the knowledge and understanding of His nature and the lover is therefore the gnostic. "True gnosis," writes al-Ghazālī, "is to abandon this world and the next and to be set apart unto the Lord: it is to be intoxicated by the wine of Love and not to recover therefrom except in the Vision of the Beloved, for the gnostic dwells in the light of his Lord." Gnosis (ma'ānī) is the gift of God, a light which He casts "into the heart." "It is that," says al-Ghazālī, "which is attained without meditation between the soul and its Creator: it is indeed a ray from the Lamp of the Invisible, shed upon a heart which is pure, at serene, spiritualized." Elsewhere he writes: "The sun which enlightens the heart of the gnostic is more radiant than our earthly sun, for that sun may be eclipsed and sets, but the sun of gnostics knows no setting." Deaf to the clamorous voices among them, blind to what goes on around them, uttering no word in answer to those who would summon them to human affairs, the gnostics see by that Divine radiance in the secret place within the veil, which is the Presence of God. 

The gnostics differ in the degree of gnosia to which they attain, for Gnosis is a "shoreless sea," the depths of which cannot be fathomed, since none can comprehend the greatness of the Divine Majesty, and those who plunge into this sea do so in accordance with their strength and the precedence which God granted unto them before time was. al-Ghazālī quotes the words of Junayd in regard to the gnostics: "Their spirits rejoice in communion with the Unseen, abiding in the presence
and he sees in his waking moments that which he sees in dreams, and there appear unto him angelic spirits and the prophets and wondrous forms, fair and glorious to behold, and the kingdom of the heavens and the earth are laid open unto him, and he sees what it is not lawful to describe. This gnosis goes far beyond the knowledge of the learned, for it enters the hearts of the prophets and the saints direct from the Creative Truth Himself, nor can it be comprehended except by those who have experience of it. 3

al-Ghazālī relates the tradition that God said to David: “To know Me is to live in contemplation of Me,” so that Gnosis is made perfect in the Vision of God and the contemplation of Him within the heart. 4 This is Contemplation in its perfection, for that measure of contemplation which was granted to the traveller who was mid-way, was but “permission” to enter upon the way which leads to Union, but this is “finding” (wasqīfī) what was sought, its means entering in and the actual experience (sharq) thereof. The gnostics in this world, says al-Ghazālī, see their Lord with the eye of assured faith and intuition (hay’ir), as in the world to come they see Him with their eyes and face to face, but He is close to them both here and there, and there is no difference between His nearness to them there and His nearness to them here, except that there it increases in subtlety and favour, but in both cases the distance between has been made to disappear 5 It is indeed the possession of gnosis in this life which will mean what is called “Paradise” in the life to come.

al-Ghazālī, on this subject, quotes the words of Rābi’a who, when asked what Paradise meant to her, replied: “First the Neighbour, then the house,” and he continues: “No one who

1 Ibrahīm al- Nadīm, p. 6o.
2 Ibrahīm al- Nadīm, p. 60.
3 Ibid., p. 14s above

References

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of the All-Glorious, the Pre-eminent, in the cloud of Glory which envelopes Him, in the shadow of His Holiness. They have attained to a high station and they pass experience to yet greater perfection, to an absolute glory which is immaterial, and they walk, clad in the mantle of Unification.” But gnosis, Janayd adds, is a thing to be preserved inviolate, a pearl not to be cast before swine: to be given to those of God’s servants, who are worthy to receive it, but to be withheld from the unworthy. It is the “mystery of God” and those who possess it must regard it as such. 1

This gnosis, which is granted only to those who have drawn near to God, means “a light which is manifested in the heart when it is purified from its blameworthy qualities by sincere self-mortification. In that light is revealed the true significance of things, the names of which were heard before and their meaning understood but vaguely. Now their meaning is understood and a real knowledge is attained of the Nature and Attributes of God, of His wondrous works in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and His wisdom in regard to this world and the world to come the gnostic knows the true nature of the human spirit and the relation to the world Invisible which results therefrom. That distinctive nature is manifest when the senses are still in sleep, and the spirit can contemplate the Unseen and perceive what lies in the future, being absent from this world. For the spirit is attached to this world only by means of the senses, and during sleep they are at rest.” 2 But that “window” into the Unseen is not opened only in sleep and after the death of the body. 3 It is opened in waking hours for the gnostic who has striven and is purified, being delivered from the power of sensual desire. Such a gnostic, sitting in solitude, who closes the channels of the senses and opens the eye and ear of the spirit and places his heart in relation with the Divine World, while he says continuously: “God, God, God,” within his heart, being in prayer and tongue, ceases to be aware of himself and of this world and remains seeing only Him Who is Most Glorious and Exalted. Then that window is opened

1 Janayd, p. 11.
2 Janayd, p. 14s above.
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has not known God in this life can hope to see Him in the life to come, and he who has found the joy of gnosia here will find the joy of contemplation there, since none can be in fellow-ship with Him in that world, who has not walked with Him in this. None may reap who has not sown, and a man is raised up only in the state in which he died, and he dies in the state in which he has lived, and he takes with him only that gnosia which was bestowed upon him, which will then be transformed into that gnosia of which he has been the subject.  Thus, as God is dimensionless, so also is man, and his joys therein must be doubled, just as the joy of the lover is doubled when the image of the beloved is exchanged for the reality, for that is the consummation of his joy.

For the bliss of Paradise is to each one there only what he seeks, and he who seeks only the Presence of God finds no joy save in Him and finds all else inscrutable. Therefore, since the bliss of Paradise is in proportion to the love of God and the mystic's love of God is in proportion to his knowledge of Him, the source of that bliss is the gnosia revealed through faith.  "If you say," al-Ghazālī goes on, "that the joy of the Vision, if it is in proportion to the joy of gnosia, is but little, even if doubled, for the joy of gnosia in this world is small, and even if it were great, it would not reach such a degree that all the other joys of Paradise would be despised in comparison with it, know that this contempt for the joy of gnosia arises from being deprived of it. How can he who is without gnosia comprehend its joy?"

But the joy of the Vision of God is given in this life to those whose hearts have been so purified that they can see God. The purpose of the gnosics is only to attain to this high knowledge and to possess in it a consolation revealing to them what to others remains unknown. When it is attained, all cares and sensual desires are obliterated and the heart is filled with its grace. Even if the gnostic were cast into Hell-fire, he would not feel it because of his absorption and if all the delights of Paradise were displayed to him, he would not turn towards them, because his joy has been made perfect and he has attained to what is above all else that can be attained. How can he

1 Ḥyā', IV, p. 269.
2 Ḥyā', IV, p. 289.
3 Ḥyā', IV, p. 300.
4 Ḥyā', IV, p. 212.
5 Ḥyā', II, p. 136.
is the state which means attainment by the seeker, of the Sought." 

For such a one the shadows of his own existence have been overcome by the elevation of the light of his Unification, for the light of his knowledge of the Unity is extinguished in the light of his actual experience, as the light of the stars vanishes in the splendour of the light of day. In this stage the existence of the unitarian is submerged in the contemplation of the Beauty of the One, in the Whole itself, for he contemplates only the Essence of the One and His attributes, and the waves of the current of the Unity overwhelm him and he is submerged in the One and All. 

Again, al-Ghazali writes: "When the worshipper thinks no longer of his worship or himself; but is altogether absorbed in Him Whom he worships, that state, by the gnostics, is called 'fanud', when a man has so passed away from himself that he feels nothing of his bodily members, nor of what is passing without, nor what passes within his own mind. He is absent from all that, and all that is absent from him: he is journeying first to his Lord, then (at the end) in his Lord. But if during that state the thought occurs to him that he has passed away completely from himself, that is a blashphemy and defilement. For perfect absorption means that he is unconscious not only of himself but of his absorption. For 'fanud' from 'fanud' is the goal of 'fanud'."

Orthodox theologians, al-Ghazali continues, "may regard these words as meaningless nonsense, but that is not so, for this state of the mystics in relation to Him Whom they love is similar to your state in relation to what you love of position or wealth or a human love, when you may be overcome by anger in thinking of an enemy or so engrossed in your beloved that you perceive nothing else, and do not hear when someone speaks to you, nor see one who passes, though your eyes are open and you are not dead, for this absorption makes you oblivious of all else and even of the absorption itself. For any attention to the absorption occurs being diverted from the cause thereof.

1 (Ibid. IV, p. 28)

So, having explained to you what is meant by 'fanud' you should cast aside doubt and cease to deny what you cannot comprehend.

... This absorption at first will be like a flash of lightning, lasting but a short time, but then it becomes habitual, and a means of enabling the soul to ascend to the world above, where pure and essential Reality is manifested to it and it takes upon itself the impress of the Invisible World and the Divine Majesty is revealed to it... and at the last it looks upon God face to face. When such a mystic returns to this world of unreality and shadows, he regards mankind with pity, because they are deprived of the contemplation of the beauty of that celestial Abode and he marvels at their contentment with shadows and their allurement by this world of vain deceits. He is present with them in body... but absent in spirit: wondering at their presence, while they wonder at his absence."

These gnostics have ascended from the lowlands of unreality to the mountain heights of Reality and at the end of the ascent they have seen for themselves that there is none in existence save God Alone and that "all things perish save His Countenance... all things have been foredoomed to mortality save the One Himself. These gnostics when they return from their ascent to the World of Reality are agreed that they have seen nothing existent but the One, but some attained to this state through knowledge and some by direct experience and for these latter, plurality passed away entirely. They were submerged in the Absolute Unicity and their human reason disappeared into its abyss, and they remained stupefied therein. They could no longer recall any but God; forgetting themselves, God alone remained with them. It was in this state, al-Ghazali declares, that one said: "I am the One Reality" and another "Glory be to Me. How great is My majesty," and another: "Within this robe is sought but God." But the words uttered by passionate lovers in a state of ecstasy, al-Ghazali feels, should be concealed, not spoken of. This state, in the language of metaphor, is called Identity (utbudd) and in the language of reality Unification (fanudd). 

9 ibid. al-taifah, pp. 52, 53, 55.
10 al-ghazali, XVI, pp. 23.
11 ibid. XVI, XVIII, p. 23.
12 U. S. Abul Qasim, pp. 155-156.
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It means that the mystic has arrived at the goal and passed into the unitive life with God. "He has entered into the pure and absolute Unity of the One, and in the Kingdom of the One and Alone mortals reach the end of their ascent, for there is no ascent beyond it, since ascent involves multiplicity, implying an ascent from somewhere and an ascent to somewhere and when multiplicity has been eliminated, Unity is established and relationship ceases, signs are effaced, there remains neither height nor depth, nor one to descend or ascend. No higher ascent for the soul is possible, for there is no height beyond the highest and no multiplicity beside the Unity, and since multiplicity has been effaced, no further ascent."1

The mystic who has reached the end of the Path and ascended to the highest height is the one who has attained what he sought and arrived at his journey's end in the way. Those who have passed into the unitive life, writes al-Ghazālī, "have attained unto a Being transcending all that can be apprehended by sight or insight, for they find Him to transcend His sanctity all that we have described heretofore. But these can be divided; for some of them, all that can be perceived is consumed away, blotted out, annihilated, but the soul remains contemplating that Supreme Beauty and Holiness and contemplating itself in the beauty which it has acquired by attaining to the Divine Presence, and for such a one, things seen are blotted out, but not the seeing soul. But some pass beyond this and they are the Elect of the Elect, who are consumed by the glory of His exalted Countenance and the greatness of the Divine Majesty overwhelms them and they are annihilated and they themselves are no more. They no longer contemplate themselves, having passed away from themselves and there remains only the One, the Real, and the meaning of His word 'All things perish save His Countenance' is known to them. This is the final degree of those who attain, but some of them did not in their ascent follow the gradual progress we have described, nor was the ascent long for them. At the very beginning, outstripping their compatriots, they attained to a knowledge of the All-Holy and the Divine transcendence.2

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They were overcome at the first by what overcame others at the last. The Divine Epiphany broke in upon them all at once, so that all things perceptible by the sight or by the insight were consumed by the Glory of His Countenance," and al-Ghazālī adds: "Ask that I may be forgiven if my pen has gone astray or my foot has slipped, for to plunge into the abyss of the Divine mysteries is a perilous thing and no easy task is it to seek to discover the Unclouded Glory which lies behind the Veil."3

But the mystic who has passed away from self is subsisting in God's "fana'" gives place, to "kāfā", mortality to immortality. This is the life of the saints in God, al-Ghazālī quotes the words of Bundah:4 who said: "He who draws near to this world, will be consumed by its flames that is, by covetousness, until he is reduced to ashes; he who approaches the world to come will be purified by its fires and becomes a golden ingot which is profitable to others, but he who approaches God is consumed by the flaming splendour of the Unity and becomes an essence of infinite worth."

"Praise be to God," writes al-Ghazālī elsewhere, in solemn thanksgiving for the lives of the saints, "Who hath freed the hearts of His saints from any inclination to the vanities of this world and its glamour and hath purified their inmost souls from the contemplation of aught but His Majesty. These are they whom He hath chosen for Himself that they might be devoted to the proclamation of His Glory, to whom He hath revealed His Names and His Attributes, until they were illumined by the radiance of their knowledge of Him. To them hath He unveiled the Splendour of His Countenance until they were consumed by the fire of His love."5

The saints are those whose hearts are occupied with recollection, whose tongues utter praise to God, whose members are occupied in His service. They find their happiness in fellowship with Him and are never separated from His love. He is always mindful of them as they are of Him, and He loves

1 Ihkāl, al-Adwār, ibid., p. 118.
2 Ihkāl, al-Adwār, pp. 144, 145.
4 See III, p. 182.
5 Ihkāl, IV, p. 232.
them as they love Him and is well-pleased with them, even as they are satisfied in Him. Their capital stock is poverty and their affairs are controlled by necessity. They have realised the bitterness of sin and have found the remedy which cures it.

They are as lanterns, whose light bears witness unto God, by the treasure-house of His wisdom. Their path is made dark before them by a light like that of the rising moon: they are the pure fruit of that blessed tree, the root of which is the Divine Unity and the branches thereof godliness.

For those whom He has chosen to be His saints God pours out a draught from the cup of His love and by drinking thereof, thirst is increased. The saint is as one rapt away, given over entirely to contemplation. His very self and his own attributes have disappeared and he has passed from mortality into the Divine immortality. He is clothed upon with a robe of honour, which is the Divine promise, of My saint bears by Me and sees by Me. God has taken him as His friend: when he speaks, it is only to speak of Him and when he sees, it is by His light, and when he moves, it is by His power, and if he is rapt away, it is by His decrees, and therewith duality vanishes and is transformed into the One Reality. The saints, by the indwelling of the Divine Spirit, have become defined by their love.

al-Ghazālī relates a tradition telling how David asked the Lord to show him His saints, and he was hidden to go to the Lebanon mountains and there he would find fourteen souls, including the young and the mature and the old, and he was to give them greeting from their Lord and the message: Will ye not then, what ye need, for ye are My friends and Mine elect and My saints? I rejoice in your joy and I hasten to respond to your love. At all times I am regarding you with the regard of a pitiful, tender mother." So David went his way and gave them the message, which they received with eyes bent to the ground, and they listened with tears flowing down their cheeks. But they had nothing to ask save that they might draw still nearer to the Divine Light, and their only need was to look upon the Face of Him they loved. The Lord

1 Nishāt al-'Arfa', p. 102.
2 Nishāṭ al-Tawāf, p. 131.

bade David say unto them: "I have heard your words and granted you your desire. I am raising the veil between Me and you, that ye may look upon My Light and My Glory." Then David asked by what means these saints had attained to such grace, and the Lord replied: "By right thinking and detachment from this world and its people and communion, in solitude, apart with Me; and this is a degree to which none attain except him who has ceased to be concerned with this world, whose heart is at leisure, who has preferred Me above all My creatures. Therefore I have inclined unto him and freed his soul, and I have raised the veil between us, so that he looks upon Me face to face and My grace is with him at all times and I shew him the Light of My Countenance. If he falls sick I tend him, even as a pitiful mother tends her child: if he thirsts, I give him to drink and make him to taste of the collection of Myself, and so have I detached his soul from this world and its people and they have ceased to be dear unto him. He does not weary of devotion to Me, but hastens to draw near unto Me. . . . I am loath to decree his death, for in him I make Myself manifest among My creatures. He sees none but Me and I see none but him and I see that his soul is melted within him, and his body emaciated and his hands bruised and his heart broken. By My Glory and My Majesty, O David, I will make him to sit down in Paradise and I will satisfy his desire to look upon Me, until he is content and more than content." 1

But the life of the saint is not limited to the joy of fellowship with God; the light which he receives from the Divine radiance is a torch whereby he gives light to others. It is for the saint, al-Ghazālī points out, to descend from the mountain of transfiguration to the lower levels of this world, so that the weak may seek out his company and may kindle their lights at the radiance which the saint has brought from the heavenly places, as bats find their light in what remains of the sunlight, and are content with the light of the stars in the watches of the night, and thereby live a life suited to their bodily state, though not the life of those who come and go in the full light of the sun.

1 Ḫusayn, IV, p. 279.
The saint is one whose eyes are open, so that he sees clearly
and needs none to lead him, but it is his business to lead the
blind or those weak of sight, for his relation to the weaker
brethren is that of one who walks on water to those who walk
on land. Some may learn to swim, but to walk on the water
is only given to those who have reached spiritual perfection.1
al-Ghazālī says elsewhere that it is the glory of the saint
to spend himself for those in need and to undertake the task of
shepherd their flock into Paradise.2 Again, it is the mark
of saintship to show compassion to all God’s servants, to be pitiful
inward vision passes beyond it to Him Who formed it; if
towards them and to fight for them, and with them, against the
sweet music breaks in upon their hearing; their inmost thoughts
forces of evil.3
pass from it to the Beloved. If any sound reaches them, which
al-Ghazālī gives a word of encouragement to one who cannot
is disquieting or disturbing or affecting or giving rise to joy
reckon himself to be among the saints of God, bidding him at
or sorrow or making for murkiness or for longings or stirring up
any rate to be a lover of the saints, having faith in them and it
excitement—they are disturbed only for His sake, their joy
may be that at the Resurrection he will find himself with those
is in Him alone and they are disquieted only on His account.
he loves. As a proof of this al-Ghazālī adds a tradition that
Their grief is only in Him and their longing is only for that which
Jesus asked the Jews: ‘Where does the seed grow?’ and
is to be found in His Presence, they are averse only for Him,
they replied: ‘In the earth.’ Then He said: ‘Verily I say unto
and it may be, that those who seek to fulfill the condition of saintship will
unto you, Wisdom takes root only in a heart like the earth
(i.e., which is soft and receptive of the truth),’ and it may be,
attain to it, through self-abasement and humility.4
that those who seek to fulfill the condition of saintship will
al-Ghazālī gives thanks for the life of the saints in God in the
words: ‘Praise be unto God, Who hath consumed the hearts
attain to it, through self-abasement and humility.4
of His saints in the fire of His love and hath taken captive
their desires (iḥsan) and their spirits by the longing to meet
with Him and to look upon Him and hath fixed their sight and
their insight upon the vision of the Beauty of His Presence,
until by the inbreathing of the spirit of Union, they have become
rapt beyond themselves and their hearts have become distraught
by the contemplation of the splendors of the Divine Glory,
so that they see naught but Him in this world or the world to
come, and they remember none in heaven or earth save Him
alone. If any form presents itself to their outward gaze, their

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1 Iḥyā, IV, p. 84. Cf. p. 160 above.
2 Iḥyā, IV, p. 286.
3 Iḥyā, IV, p. 306.
CHAPTER XIII
al-Ghazālī's Influence: upon Islam and Sufism: upon Jewish Thought and upon Medieval Christian Mysticism

al-Ghazālī's influence was great even during his life-time, and the widespread appreciation of both his lectures and his writings made his teaching famous, while he was still alive, among all Arabic-speaking Muslims, in the West as in the East. At the same time, his fearless devotion to truth and his consistent support of the Sāli doctrine incurred much criticism and hostility on the part of the most orthodox theologians both before, and after, his death.

In Andalusia, the Qadī of Cordova, Abū 'Abdallāh M. b. Ḥanfīnī, condemned al-Ghazālī's works, and the rest of the Spanish Qādīs accepted the condemnation, with the result that al-Ghazālī's books were burned wherever found throughout Andalusia, and possession of them was forbidden on pain of scourging or death. These books included the Ṣuyūtī, but it is noted by one writer that when it was later brought back to Spain, its return was received with satisfaction and approbation, and he adds that one admirer even copied it out in letters of gold.1 But the Qadī's falsa sees witness to the circulation of al-Ghazālī's writings, even at this early period, throughout Spain, and no doubt this was largely due to the dissemination of his teaching by his students, such as Abū Bakr M. Ibn al-'Arabī, who returned to Spain and taught in Seville after having studied under al-Ghazālī at Baghdad and elsewhere (cf. p. 64 above).

There is similar evidence that al-Ghazālī's books were in circulation in North Africa. The Sūfīn of Maraksh, 'Ali b. Yūnūb b. Tashfin (477/1084-537/1427), whose empire included not only North Africa, but the whole of Spain and the Barbary Coast, was a bigoted fanatic in religious matters, denouncing the authority of the orthodox religious leaders of his time. A devoted Malikite, he regarded both philosophy and scholastic

1 al-Ṭaḥṣīn, op. cit., p. 33. 198

1 M. Ṣarūqī, op. cit., pp. 19, 31.

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theology as destructive to the true faith and al-Ghazālī's books naturally came under his ban. Orders were issued that they were to be burnt and anyone found in possession of any part of them was threatened with confiscation of property and even with death. The biographer who records this observes that the Maghribi theologians were jealous of al-Ghazālī on account of his authoritative position and profound learning and widespread reputation, and so "they did what they did, but they did not attain their desire, for God enabled him to triumph over them and the people welcomed his books and estimated them at their true value."3 Among al-Ghazālī's most bitter critics was Abū'l-Walīd M. Ibn Rushd (Averroes), the Spanish philosopher, born at Cordova in 520/1126. He was Qadī of Seville and for a time acted as Chief Qadī of the whole of Muslim Spain. He paid several visits to Morocco and died there in 555/1161. Ibn Rushd accused al-Ghazālī of inconsistency in advocating the doctrine of emanation in the Muhākāt al-ʿAwar— he might have found other examples elsewhere in al-Ghazālī's works; cf. pp. ff. 206 above—while he expressly denies it elsewhere. Ibn Rushd quotes al-Ghazālī's Maqāṣid and his Tahāfut al-Falāsafa, the Jawāhir al-Quṣūn, the Manṣūḥat min al-Dīn al-Khamsa, and the Tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa-l Ziwaʿda, al-Ghazālī's teaching, 'as considers, is sometimes detrimental to the Sharīʿa and sometimes to philosophy and sometimes to both, but may equally be considered favourable to both.4 Ibn Rushd perhaps failed to distinguish between al-Ghazālī the orthodox theologian and al-Ghazālī the mystic, and between his earlier opinions and those of his later years, and it is to the latter period that the Muhākāt belongs. al-Ghazālī's use of terms in the mystical sense was not necessarily identical with the use of these terms by the philosophers. Ibn Rushd had evidently made a close study of al-Ghazālī's works, even if it was only for the purpose of refuting them. Another critic was Abu'l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī, sunnīd Jamāl al-Dīn, of Baghdad (ob. 597/1190), an able traditionalist

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and a celebrated preacher, and the most learned writer of his
time, whose pen, very frequently, was dipped in gall. Lines
cut by him and directed to his fellow-countrymen in
Baghdad ran thus: “There are people in ‘Iraq for whom I
feel no friendship, but my excuse is this: their hearts are
formed of coarseness. They listen with admiration to the
words of a master, but those of their own townsmen attract
no attention. If a neighbour profited by the water which
flowed from the roofs of their houses, they would turn the
spout in another direction. And when reproached, their excuse
is: That the voice of the songstress has no charms for the
tribe to which she belongs.” 1 He was a bigoted Ishbalite,
who attacked al-Sa’id ibn al-Mubasith, on whose teaching al-Ghazzal
based much of his own (cf. pp. 137 ff. above), and attacked
al-Ghazzali himself, for accepting al-Mubasith’s views, and also,
for his adherence to Shi’ism, to which Ibn al-Jawzi himself was
bitterly opposed. 2

It was for the Shi’is, writes Ibn al-Jawzi, that al-Ghazzali
wrote the Ihya and filled it with false traditions, and was unaware
of their falsity, and spoke of revelation and departed from the
Canon Law, and his words, says Ibn al-Jawzi, are a kind of
esoterism. He quotes also from his writings the statement
that the Shi’is in their waking hours behold the angels and
the spirits of the prophets and hear their voices and receive favours
from them and then they ascend from contemplation of their
forms to degrees which cannot be described. 3 al-Jawzi collected
what he considered to be the errors of the Ihya in a book which
he called Tafsir al-Ihya’ qibla’ al-Ihya and also expressed his opinions of al-Ghazzali’s teaching in his book— Tafsir Ihya. 4
He quotes al-Ghazzali’s statement that the inclination of the
Shi’is was towards knowledge which was revealed and not
acquired by study, and therefore they did not concern them-

1 Ibn Kathir, II, p. 117.
2 Cf. Tafsir Ihya, pp. 171 ff.
4 Ibid., p. 181.
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or his Book of the Refutation of the Bigot which is directed against one who denies that Yazid should be cursed. 1

But al-Ghazali had a much greater influence on those who admired and accepted his teachings. It is stated that his
skepsis, which, in their tolerance and wisdom, reflected his own
religious beliefs, were written down by the Imam Abū-I-Fadl
al-Mazaffar al-Abdī al-Bahārī in the year 564/1170, and
so were available for the guidance of those who came after him,
who had similar questions to settle.2 The large number of
summaries of the Ḥiyā and commentaries upon it, beginning
with his brother Ahmad's Lūḥāt al-Ḥiyā which was followed
by those of many traditionalists and theologians, shows the
deep impression made by a book still widely read in all Islamic
communities. 3

A writer who made a careful study of al-Ghazali's writings and
did not hesitate to pass friendly criticism where necessary,
while at the same time admiring his work and defending it
against those who attacked it, was the celebrated Spanish
philosopher and mystic Abū Bāk̄ Ibn Tufayl (d. 521/1124).
He admits that al-Ghazali, when addressing himself to the
general public "bound in one place and loosed in another and
denied certain things and then declared them to be true." There
are many contradictions in his books, Ibn Tufayl points out,
and he quotes al-Ghazali's own justification for such incon-
sistency, given in the Mašīd al-Amal, where he says that
opinions are of three kinds: (i) that which is shared with the
vulgar and is in accordance with their view; (ii) the opinion
given to anyone who comes asking for guidance; (iii) the opinion
which a man keeps to himself, which is not disclosed except
to one who himself holds it. 4 Ibn Tufayl defends al-Ghazali
against the attacks of critics such as Ibn Rasch, saying:
"Some later writers have read a grave significance into the words
that occur at the end of the Mašīhād, to the effect that those

1 Ibn al-Qiftī, Risāla al-ィの it-tanwī, p. 181.
2 Ibn Hāfiż, p. 106.
3 A list of such summaries is given by the Sayyid Muḥāna in his Ḥiyā, p. 41. Cf. also Brackman, Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur, I, p. 41.
4 Sīrā, 1, p. 288.

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who Attained-to-Union are convinced that the Existent One
can be described by attributes inconsistent with pure Unity,
inferring from this that al-Ghazali asserted that the First Being,
The Reality, Who Alone is worthy to be glorified, admitted of multiplity in His Essence, which God forbid." 5

al-Ghazali's teaching, in Ibn Tufayl's view, consisted chiefly of symbolic utterances and allusions, and none could profit thereby, except that one who, in the first place, examined them by his insight, and used his insight to interpret them, or one
especially fitted to understand them, one possessed of trans-
cendental wisdom, for whom a slight allusion was sufficient.
Ibn Tufayl notes that al-Ghazali himself stated that he composed
books of esoteric doctrine and had set down therein the truth
undisclosed, but these books, Ibn Tufayl observes, had not reached
Andalusia. Books reputed to contain such doctrine were the Kāfā
al-Maʿārif al-Aʿlāiyā and the Kāfā al-Naṣīb waʾl-Fawāziyā, 6
but though these books contain symbolic expressions, Ibn
Tufayl does not think there is much revealed in them beyond
what is set forth in those of al-Ghazali's books meant for the
multitude (though Ibn Tufayl might have found indications of
a belief in emanation, in the former book). 7

It is evident that Ibn Tufayl had made the closest study of
al-Ghazali's writings, and the theme of his own famous romance
Ḥabb b. Yaḥyā, with its emphasis on the value of the life in
solitude in communion with the Divine, which results in attain-
ment to the Vision of God and the knowledge of all things,
may well have been influenced by al-Ghazali's teaching on the
subject. Ibn Tufayl closes his book by stating that he has included in it "secret knowledge which can be received only
by the gnostics in God, and ignored only by those who are
heedless of Him—but the mysteries which we have confided
to these pages, we have concealed with a light veil, easily withdrawn by those fitted to do so, but impermeable by those who
are unworthy of what lies beyond it." a method of teaching which
by his own admission, is characteristically Ghazalian. 8

5 Ḥabb b. Yaḥyā, p. 15.
6 Cf. Shāhā, XV, 24, XXXI, 8, XXXVIII, 12.
8 Ḥabb b. Yaḥyā, p. 118.
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There is no doubt that al-Ghazali's teaching on the mystic path had a profound influence on the founders of the Shi'i religious orders which were being established in Iran, in considerable numbers, from the twelfth century onwards. Among the greatest of these orders was that of the Qadiriyya, named after Abu 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (ob. 561/1166). As a youth of eighteen, he arrived at Baghdad in A.H. 488, just after al-Ghazali's resignation, when everyone was asking why he had given up his post, and this event must have produced a deep effect on the young student Sufian in Baghdad and then spent long years in asceticism and self-discipline until he attained to the mystical experience and the life of the saints. He then returned to Baghdad to accomplish the work to which he felt himself called and devoted his time to preaching, as al-Ghazali had done before him. In A.H. 521 he was appointed Professor at the College of Abu Sa'id al-Mubarak and there his followers built a convent for his Sufi novices. He was responsible for a large number of writings, in which he forms the teaching of al-Ghazali. His teaching on the Vision, and the distinction between sight (the physical eye, harfa) and insight (the eye of the spirit, harfa), on the visible and invisible worlds, on Love, which he calls "a kind of intoxication," Gnosis, which he regards as the knowledge of the hidden meaning of things, and ecstasy (ru'ah), when God pours out the cup of His love, for His saints, and so adorns them to the Garden of Fellowship with Himself, all follows closely that of al-Ghazali on the same subjects.

There is a passage in 'Abd al-Qadir's Futiha al-Ghaṣib, in which he writes: "Die to the creatures, by God's leave, to your passions, by His command, so your will, by His act, and you will then be worthy to the dwelling-places of the knowledge, and the signs of your death to the creatures is that you detach yourself from them and do not look for anything from them. The sign that you have died to your passions is that you come to seek benefit for yourself, or to ward off injury, and you are not concerned about yourself, for you have com-

1 Cl. M. 'Ali, Abu ‘Abd al-Karim Ghazwī, pp. 109 ff. and Chapters IX, XII above

2 Cl. M. 'Ali, Abu ‘Abd al-Karim Ghazwī, pp. 109 ff. and Chapters IX, XII above
present day is Aboi-Awaijs (the Father of the Needy). His doctrine of the Godhead is very like that of al-Ghazālī and is stated almost in his words "It is wonderful that, whilst I seek, Thou art with me: and how I see that Thou art at my side. Still more wonderful that I can know Thee. Infinite, nothing limits Thee: incapable of being represented, Thou hast no body: invisible, Thou hast no form—How know Thee? In what way to appreciate Thee? Thou art not present that I should lay hold upon Thee: Thou art not absent that I should seek Thee. Thou art not within, that one has the right to deny Thee... since all finite things subsist by Thee, they are of necessity near unto Thee: but finite beings have no relation to Thee in dignity, and they are therefore far from Thee."

The Rifi'i Shaykh of the present day says to the novice who desires initiation into the Order: "You are the dead body and I am the washer of the dead. You are the garden, I the gardener," both stoles borrowed from al-Ghazālī. The Rifis also teach the doctrine of the Seventy Thousand Veils and hold that there are four main stages in the task of rending the veils, the Law, the Way, Knowledge and Reality. The novice has to begin with Repentance and getting rid of the gross outward sins, the purgative life. He has then to purify the inner self from the vices and to replace evil by good. His spiritual director tells him that he must be cast into the flames of spiritual love (ishq) so that he may emerge refined, and the fuel of that fire is the constant recollection of God. So the initiate attains to the death of self (al-fana' al-yaghur) and he begins to have the gifts of light and rapture (jāhshah), the illuminative life. But he is still a traveller and has not yet reached the goal of seeing God in all things and all things in relation to himself when he knows himself to be the mirror of all things, and so lives the unitive life.


AL-GHAZALI’S MYSTICAL TEACHING

A very important writer on Sufism, also regarded as the founder of an order, whose writings, concerned largely with the organisation of the Sufi orders, show very plainly the influence of al-Ghazālī, was Suhāb al-Dīn Abū Hafs Umar al-Suhrawardi (d. 582/1184). He had studied under ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jili, while the Persian mystic poet Sa’di was his pupil. He became famed as a spiritual director and gathered many disciples around him. In his ‘Amdār al-Ma’dārī he gives a systematic account of the Sufi way of life, much of which is derived from al-Ghazālī’s Ihya and his other works. Of the Path he says that the beginning of Sūfism is knowledge and the middle of it is action and the end of it is a gift from God. He teaches that the novice requires the guidance of a spiritual director, whose purpose is to help to purify his heart from vice and to cultivate the virtues, so that the heart may become a polished mirror wherein is reflected the splendour of the Divine Glory, and the radiance of the Divine Beauty may be manifested therein. The perfect Shaykh is the true geostic, the chosen saint, and his guidance of the novice is the medicine for the penitent’s affliction, for his teaching brings healing to his soul.

Suhrawardi’s views on Music are evidently derived from those of al-Ghazālī. He points out that music arouses in the heart only what is already there. That one who is inwardly attached to what is other than God is stirred by music to sensual desire, but he who is inwardly attached to the love of God is moved to do His will. He also observes that the spirit responds to the rhythm of music, because it has an affinity therewith. He divides those who listen to music into three classes, the common folk who hear with their outward ears only and whose emotions are stirred; those who are more advanced on the way, to whom it brings the vision of the grace of God, the geostics to whom listening means contemplation; and finally, the spiritually perfect, to whom, through music, God reveals Himself unveiled.
AL-GHAZÂLI’S MYSTICAL TEACHING

Subrahmami accepts al-Ghazali’s cosmological scheme and frequently refers to the different worlds of experience, the ‘alam al-mulk wa’t-khalay wa’t-shahidah, which is that of created forms, and the ‘alam al-amur wa’t-malakah, the spiritual world, to which the heart of man belongs. He writes also of the human heart facing two ways, towards the lower self and towards the spirit, and only the heart which is completely purified faces continually towards the spiritual. Like al-Ghazali believe him, Subrahmami thinks of the bindrances, which prevent the soul from finding God, as veils, and only when these have been rent, can the soul become the mirror of the Divine Reality and the splendour of the Divine Glory be manifested thereon.

Subrahmami also lays stress on the Divine approach to man, on the attractive force (jadid) of the Spirit of God, which draws the human spirit—when it is perfectly tranquillized, and the mirror is so polished that it reflects the Divine radiance—unto its true abiding-place, the Invisible World. This attraction of the human to the Divine, he says, is stronger than that of the iron to the magnet and the iron is mutually attracted because of their affinity in substance, so also there is affinity between the Divine and the human spirit which draws them together.

Subrahmami’s teaching on Prayer owes a good deal to al-Ghazali and he also quotes the words of Abi Sa’d al-Kharrad that when entering upon Prayer a man should approach God as he will on the Day of Resurrection, when he will stand in His Presence, with no mediator between; for he who prays is face to face with Him to Whom he prays and in confidential talk with Him, and it should be remembered that He is the King of kings.

When the pure in heart, says Subrahmami, utter the takbir (God is Most Great), they enter into the heavenly places and are preserved from Satanic suggestions. The hearts of those who seek to draw nigh unto God ascend through the heavenly spheres, and with each sphere to which they ascend, they leave behind them something of the darkness of the self, until they pass beyond the heavens and stand before the Throne of God, and their all thought of the self passes away in the radiant light of the Divine Majesty, and the darkness of the self is extinguished in that pure light, as the darkness of the night disappears in the light of day.

The final stage of the way, to Subrahmami, as to al-Ghazali, is that of tawakkul, and those who attain to it have left the “states” behind them and pierced the veil, and their spirits dwell in Essential Light: they are the lovers, enjoying that fellowship (fana) which Dhu’l-Nun defined as the lover’s joy in the Beloved, which Subrahmami describes as the rejoicing of the spirit in the perfection of the Divine Beauty. They have returned to their Source, they have found that which they sought (baraq al-asfar), and, having passed away from self into God, have attained to the unitive life in Him (uqdat).

But the most important among those who were influenced by al-Ghazali was the Spanish mystic, Mohyl al-Din Ibn al-Arabi, “al-Shaykh al-Akbar,” who was born at Musiek, in Spain, in 560/1164. He lived for some thirty years at Seville, then became a centre of Spanish Sufism, and there he first studied his teaching. He then travelled eastwards, visiting Egypt, Syria, Baghdad, Aleppo, and Asia Minor. He settled finally in Damascus, where he died in 698/1294. His travels brought him into contact with the chief Sufis of his time and his study of al-Ghazali’s writings was proved by his expressed admiration for the earlier mystic, whom he calls one of the farthest of the Sufi Way, possessing a knowledge belonging only to the elect among the Sufis, one able to explain both the name and the named, for whom God had drawn aside the veil, that he might look upon the World Invisible.

In his Kitab al-Filsafia Ibn al-Arabi gives his doctrine of the Godhead: “He is, and there is with Him neither nor above nor below, nor far nor near, nor union nor division, nor how nor how where nor place. He is now as He was. He is the One without oneness and the Single without singleness.

[Numbered footnotes have been converted to text footnotes for clarity.]
AL-GHAZALI'S MYSTICAL TEACHING

He is the very existence of the First and the very existence of the Last and the very existence of the Outward and the very existence of the Inward. So that there is no first nor last nor outward nor inward except Him, without these becoming Him or His becoming them. . . . He is not a thing, nor a thing in Him, whether present in or proceeding forth. It is necessary that thou know Him, after this fashion, not by learning ("ism") nor by intellect, nor by understanding, nor by imagination, nor by sense, nor by the outward eye, nor by the inward eye, nor by perception. By Himself he sees Himself and by Himself He knows Himself . . . His Veil (i.e., phenomenal existence) is (only) the concealment of His existence in His oneness, with out any quality. . . . There is no other and there is no existence to other, than He. . . . He whom thou thinkest to be other than God, he is not other than God, but thou dost not know Him and dost not understand that thou seest Him," Nature, he says, is nothing else than the "breath of God" indwelling forms higher and lower, which are manifest as phenomena. His relation to the world is that of the spirit to the body. But he adds, "He is still Ruler as well as ruler and is still Creator as well as created. He is now as He was as to His creative power and as to His sovereignty, not requiring a creature nor a subject. . . . When He called into being the things that are He was (already) endowed with all attributes, and He is now as He was then. In His oneness there is no difference between what is recent and what is original: the recent is the result of His manifesting Himself and the original is the result of His remaining within Himself."

There is a striking resemblance in this passage to al-Ghazali's declaration of the Nature of the Godhead, in his emphasis on the Divine Self-Sufficiency, and his statement that He is as He always was and the creation was but the shewing forth of His glory, and in his interpretation of the terms First and Last as applied to the Godhead. 4

Again Ibn al-`Arabi writes: "There is no existence save His existence. To this the Prophet pointed when he said: "Revel not the world, for God is the world," pointing to the fact that

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*Everything is perishing*
AL-GHAZĀLĪ’S MYSTICAL TEACHING

except His Face,’¹ that is, there is nothing except His Face, and whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God.’² Later in the same treatise he writes: ‘Just as he who dies the death of the body loses all his qualities, both pre-eminently and blamelessly, so in the spiritual death, all qualities both pre-eminently and blamelessly, are cut off and God comes into his place in all his states. Thus, instead of his own essence, comes the essence of God, and in place of his attributes, come the attributes of God. He who knows himself sees his whole existence to be his essence, and on any change take place in his own essence or attributes. For when thou knowest thyself, thine egoism is taken away and thou knowest that thou art not other than God.’³ This comes very near to al-Ghazālī’s description of the re-union of these-who-attain (al-qāsimūn) with the One, given in the Miftāḥ, where he shows what the divine teaching in the passages quoted, in which the word ‘rā’idān’ is used.

In his teaching on Love and Beauty Ibn al-ʿArabī also followed al-Ghazālī in holding that the object of natural love is self-satiation, which subordinates the object of love to itself, while in spiritual love the self and its desires are subordinated to the Beloved. He also held that the cause of all love is Beauty and it is as Beauty that the gnostic knows Him and


loves Him. On this subject Ibn al-ʿArabī has obviously based his teaching on al-Ghazālī’s Book of Love.⁷

Ibn al-ʿArabī is a trinitarian, in the Plotinian sense and expressly accepts the idea of triplicity (tahlith) as that upon which Reality is based. Like al-Ghazālī, he accepts the Plotinian conception of the Absolute One, Universal Mind and Universal Soul. al-Ghazālī’s teaching that man is made in the image of God and as such can be invested with the Divine attributes⁸ is developed by Ibn al-ʿArabī into the doctrine of the Perfect Man⁹ who has fully realised his oneness with his Divine Source, and so Being, by him, is considered as having three degrees or phases, those of Pure Being, the Perfect Man (the expression of Universal Mind), and the Phenomenal World (the expression of Universal Soul), and these correspond to al-Ghazālī’s classification of the three worlds, that of Makhlūk, the spiritual, invisible world, that of Jabarīr partaking of both the eternal and the temporal, and that of Maḥī and Shabāḥī, this material, phenomenal world.¹⁰

In his Taurusmud al-ʿAbnayn Ibn al-ʿArabī describes the journey of the pilgrims through the dark night of bodily existence, the Purgative way, until they reach the region of the Heavenly Court (cf. p. 159 above) the Illuminative way. Gnosis of God is inspired only by Love and love means the annihilation of the lover and the lover’s attributes: he becomes one in essence with the Beloved and vanishes in Him from himself, the Unitive life.¹¹

While Ibn al-ʿArabī is the most important of the mystics influenced by al-Ghazālī, there were others after him whose admiration of al-Ghazālī’s work led them to base much of their teaching upon him. Among these was Abū ʿl-Ḥasan al-Shākīḥī (d. 509/1114), a native of Tunisia, who spent much of his life wandering from place to place, giving himself to meditation and contemplation. He based his teaching admittedly on the


8 Al-Ghazālī, Fawāid, pp. 259, 261 above.

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Ihyāʾ, and taught his disciples to devote their lives entirely to the service of God and to seek fanaʾ as the goal of their quest. His importance in extending the influence of al-Ghazali is due to the fact that he founded the order of the Shadhiliyya, a Sufi fraternity which is still very influential in North Africa, especially Morocco, Tunis and Egypt, and is represented also in Syria and the Hijaz. Another writer who studied the work of al-Ghazali and spread his fame abroad was ʾAttī al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn ʾAbī al-Ḥārith al-Shadhī, deeply interested in Sufism and the Sufis. A native of Yemen, he travelled to Jerusalem, Damascus and Cairo, became a Sufi and devoted most of his writings to mysticism. He regarded al-Ghazali as one of the greatest of Imāms, to whom the giving of judicial decisions became easier than drinking water. The Ḥiyāʾ Yūsuf considered to be the most precious of books and he commends its literary style, al-Ghazali’s memory, he held, was perpetuated by his writings and he notes that students and writers agreed that no one after him had left anything to equal his work. Yūsuf wrote a Qawāla in eulogy of al-Ghazali and his work. "The Ḥiyāʾ ʾUṣūl al-Dīn, star-like," he writes, "has arisen from the depth of the knowledge of one who sought for light and found it, Abū Hāmid was a spinner (ghazzālī) who spun a fine thread out of knowledge, not spun by a spindle. He was called The Proof of Islam and undoubtedly was worthy of the name, absolutely trustworthiness (in respect of the Faith). How many an epistle (has he given) us setting forth the basic principles of religion; how much that was repetitive has he summarized, and epitomized what was lengthy. How many a simple explanation has he given us of what was hard to fathom, with brief elucidation and clear solution of knotty problems. He used moderation, being quiet but desirous of silencing an adversary, though his words were like a sharp sword-thrust in refuting a slanderer and protecting the high-road of guidance. In thrust and parry he was foremost, like a hero in battle, upheld by his virtuous. The hum of his spinning-wheel reached to the heavens, so that Muhammad looked with favour upon him and bestowed of him to Jesus, as one illustrious in gifts.

1 cf. Ḥiyāʾ pp. 26, 27.

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eloquent in speech, profound in learning." Yūsuf felt that no other writer was his equal for literary style and significance of content, nor was his equal likely to be found "as long as the earth and the heavens endure." Furthermore, his sources were authoritative and reliable. Yūsuf adds that the later Sufis depended upon al-Ghazali and made him their authority. A contemporary of Yūsuf, who also admired al-Ghazali and did what he could to give others a knowledge of his teaching, was the lawyer Tāj al-Dīn al-Sukkī (ibn 771/1370), who held positions as Professor, Mufti, and Qādī, in Damascus and Cairo, where he was Khālid of the Umayyad Mosque. As a Shafiite he devotes much attention to this distinguished adherent of his own school of thought. Asked his opinion of al-Ghazali, he replied: "What can a man say? for his achievements and his fame have covered the earth and he who really knows his teaching knows that it goes beyond his fame." He describes al-Ghazali as the "Highway of Religion, whereby men may be enabled to reach the Abode of Peace." He was a lion, except that in his presence the lion would cower and hide himself, a perfect full-moon, except that his guidance shone by day, and a preacher, able to edify. He taught at a time when people had more need of the truth, than darkness has of the light of the heavens and the barren land of the fruitful rain." He did not cease to defeat the true faith," says al-Sukkī, "with his persuasive words, and to protect the sanctuary of religion, and to dip the tip of his arrow in the blood of the arrogant, until he had established the Faith securely and shone plainly what was contrary to it." For the benefit of his readers, al-Sukkī gives a considerable number of the fatwas and sayings of al-Ghazali, whom he regarded not only as one of the greatest of Imāms, but as a seer of whom he says: "if there had been a prophet after Muhammad, it surely would have been al-Ghazali." Of the Ḥiyāʾ he says that it is one of the books which Muslims ought to study and to recommend to others, so that as many as possible may be enabled to follow its guidance and he adds that there are few who reflect upon it who do not find some word of counsel and help in it forthwith.²

² Ṣuʾūq al-Ṣawākh, fols. 285a, 286b.
² Ḥiyāʾ, p. 104.

² Ṣuʾūq al-Ṣawākh, fols. 285a, 286b.
² Ḥiyāʾ, p. 104.
AL-GHAZALI'S MYSTICAL TEACHING

A traditionist who gave his time to the extension of al-Ghazali's influence by making his work more widely known was Zayn al-Din b. al-Hassayn al-'Iraqi (ob. 868/1464), who travelled in Egypt, Syria and the Hijaz and spent three years as qadi in Medina. He taught for some time in Cairo. 'Iraqi regarded the Ihya as one of the greatest books of Islam, in its analysis of what was lawful and unlawful for the true Muslim, and in its reconciliation of orthodox religion with the mystical doctrine of the卖给. His treatise does not limit himself to what arises out of religious belief (al-fari'ah) and problems of conduct, but he does not "plunge into a fatuousness as" whence it would be impossible to return to the shore. He combines both exotic and esoteric knowledge in his work, and gives due weight to the deepest significance of both. 'Iraqi considers al-Ghazali's literary style to be most felicitous, but never extravagant. He follows the Vas media, in accordance with 'Ali's saying: "The best of this community are those who follow the middle course (al-darajat al-aswala)—the uppertakes them and the fanatic returns to them." 'Iraqi edited and made a collection of the traditions contained in the Ihya, the rough draft of which he completed in a.u. 751 and the fair copy in a.u. 752. This Tahrij is appended to the best-known modern text of the Ihya.\footnote{\textit{al-Sarraj} defines as discipline, morals, spiritual stations and states and al-'Iraqi as laws. \textit{Risab al-Amr}, p. 419.} One of the last of the great Sufis writers to be influenced by al-Ghazali was the Egyptian 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Sharab (called also Shahrab) al-Shari'i (ob. 975/1568) a member of the Shadhiliyya order and therefore naturally attracted towards al-Ghazali's teaching. He wrote a considerable number of books on mysticism and has something to say of al-Ghazali, and it is evident that the followed in al-Ghazali's steps in much of his teaching and conduct, e.g., in his consideration for animals, and his view that the good life was one of service to others, a life productive of good for the Faith and for society. He, too, teaches that the quest is possessed of an inner eye and that when his spiritual understanding is enlightened, he comprehends all mysteries and by the light of gnosis can contemplate the Unseen.\footnote{See my article \textit{al-Sarraj on the Mystic}. The Medieval World, July 1979.} Like al-Ghazali, he holds that this "knowledge from on high" breaks in suddenly upon those to whom God gives a, who have surrendered themselves wholly unto Him, and such He chooses to be His saints, to be in constant communion with Himself.\footnote{\textit{Risab al-Amr}, p. 455.} These are they who, having ascended ever higher and higher, enter the unitive life, dead unto self, but alive in God and in constant contemplation of the glory which has been revealed unto them.\footnote{\textit{Risab al-Amr}, p. 459.} al-Ghazali's influence, therefore, made itself felt, throughout the length and breadth of Islam and affected orthodox and Sufi writers alike, so that his books have been—and still are—cited and studied from West Africa to Oceania.

But it was not only within Islam that his teaching was studied and accepted and made a rule of life to be followed. Those of other faiths, both in East and West, found much in his writings to be admired and much of his teaching on the mystic Way, which could be adapted by mystics who owed allegiance to Islam.

Upon mu'tazilah Jewish thought al-Ghazali had a considerable influence, since his ethical teaching was of a standard and a type which closely resembled that of Judaism, and his works were carefully studied by Jewish scholars, not only those writings dealing with philosophy, which aroused wide-spread interest and discussion in Jewish circles, being studied by Maimonides among others, but his mystical works also, and within a century of his death, Hebrew and Latin translations of his works appeared, e.g., his philosophical works were translated into Latin by Avempace ( Ibn Da'ud) c. 1150 and by Dominic Gundisalvus, Archbishop of Segovia, and his \textit{Munaw al-'Ama'id} was translated in the thirteenth century by Abraham Ibn Hasdai of Barcelona, who did much work in translating from Arabic.\footnote{\textit{Risab al-Amr}, p. 451.}
to Hebrew. The Miskhāt al-Amud also aroused great interest among Jewish thinkers. It was translated by Isaac Alfasi, and quoted by the sixteenth century writer Moses Ibn Habib, a native of Lisbon, who was himself a poet, translator, and philosopher.

Jewish writers, e.g., Johanan Almenassus also found a likeness between the order and gradation of the lights which are derived from the Light Supernal and the theory of lights found in the Qabbalah. In the Zohar, a Jewish mystical treatise, compiled from material sources which appeared in Spain in the thirteenth century, A.D., it is stated that "all the heavenly lights are illuminated from One and depend on One and all the lights there seem only one Light and desire never to be separated, and he who does separate them in his mind is as though he separated himself from life eternal." The Qabbalistic doctrine conceived of the ten Sefirot as spiritual agencies as all manifesting the same Divine Light: the lowest triad corresponding to the Lights Terrestrial and the second triad to the Lights Celestial, while above all, is the Essential Light. The grouping of the Sefirot, of which the three highest represent the intelligent world of creative ideas, the second the moral world of creative formation, and the third the material world of creative matter, correspond, in some measure, to al-Ghazālī's al-dīn al-makābī, the al-dīn al-fubārī, and the al-dīn al-maḥīf maš-hābī. In one of his works he writes definitely of ten emanations from the One, of which the tenth is man.3

The Zoharic theory of the soul also resembles closely that of al-Ghazālī. "When the Holy One created man, He made him on the supernal pattern and breathed into him a holy breath consisting of a triad whose several names are naphsh (nafs), ruah (ruaḥ), and sekhmah (nusumah), the last being the highest, for it is the superior energy by means of which man can apprehend and keep the commandments of the Holy One. For these three aspects of the soul are all one, being merged one in the other in the pattern of the supernal mystery." This

1 Descendant of a Spanish family, who was living in Andrapole in the sixteenth century.
2 See Zohar, p. 574, and Miskhāt, p. 195 ff. above.
3 al-Dīn al-İlahiyat, loc. cit.
4 Zohar, IV, p. 110.

latter corresponds to al-Ghazālī's conception of the "rational soul" and the "soul at rest" and the "heart."4

al-Ghazālī's teaching also had its influence upon Christian writers in the Middle Ages and one of the earliest of these to make a close study of his work and to make it the basis of his own mystical teaching was the Jacobite Christian Yuhana Abūl-Faraj Barbebrasus, known also as Gregory, the son of a Jewish father. Born at Melatia in Asia Minor in A.D. 1226 he became a monk and seems to have studied under Muslim teachers during a period of residence inTripoli. He wrote in Arabic as well as in Syriac and had also some knowledge of Persian. He became successively Bishop of Guba, Lakanah and Aleppo and died in Persia in A.D. 1286. He spent some time in Baghdad, where, no doubt, he came into contact with al-Ghazālī's work, and he made it his business to render Muslim thought accessible to the Persians. The extent of his dependence upon al-Ghazālī in two of his mystical works, The Book of the Dead and the Ethicon has already been fully analysed.5 In his teaching on the inner life, on the purpose of the seeker towards spiritual perfection, on gnosis and its relation to the knowledge of God, as well as in his views on music and its spiritual value, Barbebrasus follows al-Ghazālī very closely and quotes frequently from the Ḥikāyat. It seems probable, too, that he was acquainted with the Miskhāt al-Amud, and this is likely enough, since it was well-known to Jewish circles,—and certain of his expressions suggest an acquaintance also with al-Ghazālī's al-Badal al-Laduniyah and the Kınıyat al-Sāda.6

But it was not only in the East that al-Ghazālī's work bore fruit in the writings of Christian mystics; his influence made itself felt also in the West, where, in Italy and Spain, Christian and Muslim thought came into closer contact. The Crusaders had a considerable effect in spreading the knowledge of Islamic culture and literature and both Arab and Jewish ideas were gaining ground in the universities of the West, from the thirteenth century onwards. In the thirteenth century Frederick II

founded the University of Naples, and encouraged a spirit of free inquiry by welcoming both Arab and Jewish scholars to his court, and their intellectual influence made itself felt at Palermo and Salerno as well as Naples. Arable, in addition to Latin and Greek, was recognised for legal purposes, and in the vernacular forms was in constant use among the people in Sicily, which after a hundred and thirty years of Islam, had come under Christian rule by the Norman conquest, in 1072. Christian scholars gave themselves to the study and translation of Arabic writings.

Toledo, coming under Christian rule once more, in 1085, yet continued to be a centre of Islamic learning, and the Archbishops Raymond (1239-1259) established a school for the translation of Arabic writings into Latin. It was at Toledo, also, that a School of Oriental Studies was started in 1256, and Arabic became a subject of study not only in Southern, but Northern Europe. There can be no doubt that al-Ghazali's works would be among the first to attract the attention of three European scholars. It has now been fully realised that Christian scholastics and medieval Christian mystics derived certain conceptions from Muslim writers, among whom al-Ghazali was included.1

The greatest of these Christian writers who was influenced by al-Ghazali was St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who made a study of the Arabic writers and admitted his indebtedness to them.2 He studied at the University of Naples, where the influence of Arabic literature and culture was predominant at the time.

In reference to the inability of the creature to realise the Majesty of the Creator, St. Thomas uses the very words of al-Ghazali in saying that "the sun, though supremely visible, cannot be seen by the bat, because of its excess of light."3 Again, in dealing with the spiritual aspiration of the human soul, due to its affinity with the Divine, St. Thomas states that the ultimate perfection of the rational creature is to be found in that which is the principle of its being, since a thing

1 Cf. the work of M. S. Iqbal in his "Arabic Thought and St. Thomas Aquinas," 2 St. Thomas Aquinas, De potentia Dei, 1, 3, 6, A. 1.
2 St. Thomas Aquinas, De potentia Dei, 1, 3, 6, A. 1.
3 St. Thomas Aquinas, De potentia Dei, 1, 3, 6, A. 1.
4 Cf. p. 129 above.

is perfect in so far as it attains to that principle. God is the greatest of all goods and He alone is true perfection, and St. Thomas holds that He is the end towards which all things move, in order to achieve the perfection which can be given by Him alone, which is to become like Him. Man must find out wherein his own perfection consists and then seek to pursue it. He was not created simply for sensual satisfaction, for this is common to both man and the beasts, nor for the pursuit of material ends, for man shares the nature of the angels as well as the beasts. This argument is set forth by al-Ghazali, in almost the same terms, in his "Mimaṣa-Saṅgītika and elsewhere."4

St. Thomas teaches that in this life God can be seen mirrored in His works, by consideration of which we can in the first place come to understand the Divinity's wisdom. Then, in the second place, this consideration leads to a recognition of God's power and so the human heart is led to reverence before Him. Thirdly, it leads man to a love of God's goodness. His conclusion is that the goodness and perfection found in individual things is all united in the One Who is the Fountain of all goodness. If, therefore, man loves goodness, beauty and attraction in created things, then the very Fountain of goodness, their Creator, must influence men's minds and draw them to Himself. This is the theme of al-Ghazali's "Hikma al-Mubakkhat Allah" and is emphasised again in the "Hiday," where he shows that all the causes of love are found in God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift.5

But it is in his teaching on the Beatific Vision and the goods which lead to it that St. Thomas seems to have derived most from the teaching of the Moslem mystics and especially al-Ghazali. The goal which man seeks, St. Thomas states, is the contemplation of Truth, for this is appropriate to his nature and no other earthly creature shares it with him. There is no end beyond it for each contemplation is an end and in itself.4 It is impossible for any created intellect to comprehend God," writes St. Thomas, 4 St. Thomas Aquinas, De potentia Dei, 1, 3, 6, A. 1.
5 St. Thomas Aquinas, "Hikma al-Mubakkhat Allah."
and again: “We have a more perfect knowledge of God by grace than by natural reason.” This grace, by which man understands God, is the gnosos which al-Ghazālī calls “knowledge from on high” (al-imān al-ladārī). In order to see the Vision of God, St. Thomas holds that the created intellect needs to be raised “by some kind of outpouring of the Divine grace,” the disposition by which the created intellect is raised to the Beatific Vision is rightly called the light of glory (lumen gloriae), and those who are raised to this rank know all things and the whole order of the universe, for this light is a likeness of the Divine intellect (cf. pp. 143 ff. above). This is the state of Allah, which God “casts” into the heart, “that which is attained without mediation between the soul and its Creator,” wrote al-Ghazālī, “the radiance from the Lamp of the Invisible shed upon the heart which is pure and at leisure.”

The contemplation of the Divine Vision, St. Thomas believes, will be perfected in the life to come, but even now, that contemplation gives us a foretaste of beatitude which begins here and will be continued in the life to come. The Vision is only for those who love and know God. “He who possesses more love will see God the more perfectly and will be the more beatified.” So the bliss of Paradise will be in proportion to the intensity of the love for God, as this love will be in proportion to the knowledge of God gained by His saints on earth and called, by Revelation, the joy of contemplation consists not only in the contemplation itself, but in the love of Him Who is contemplated. “In both respects,” writes St. Thomas, “the delight thereof surpasses all human delight, both because spiritual delight is greater than sensual pleasure . . . and because the love of God surpasses all other love.” It is the ultimate perfection of contemplation that the Truth be not only seen, but loved. It is by the Vision that man is made a partaker of Eternal life.

This is the doctrine of al-Ghazālī concerning the Vision, and is given almost in his words, for he writes: “The joy of

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Paradise is in proportion to the love of God and the love of God is proportionate to the knowledge of Him, and so the source of that joy is the gnosos revealed through Faith,” and he, too states that the joy of the Vision surpasses all sensual joys.

Among Christian writers who made a special study of Islamic teaching and made use of it in their own writings was the Dominican Raymond Martín (or Martí), a Catalanian, who lived for a considerable time in Barcelona and died some time after 1284. He was chosen out to study Oriental languages, for the purpose of missionary work among Muslims and Jews. In his Explanatio Sündoluhi and his Pergo Pidodi he quotes from al-Ghazālī’s Maṣāṣīl al-Falāfīs, his ʿIḥād and his Musān al-ʿAṣāl, in each case to show how al-Ghazālī affirms that the joy of knowing God and of contemplating Him face to face is the most glorious and excellent of all joys. In his description of the ultimate Beatitude, he refers to the chapter in the Mīrāz, where al-Ghazālī states that the true beatitude is the final state of the Blessed. Comparing it with other forms of happiness, al-Ghazālī points out that wealth in the form of dirhams and dinars, even though they may serve to satisfy all needs, are but as pebbles beside it. The good, he writes, can be divided into the beneficial, the beautiful and the enjoyable, but these qualities, when related to earthly goods, are transient and shared with the lower creation, but the beatitude of God’s elect is a spiritual thing, abiding, changeless, a joy for ever, for it exists in the Presence of the Eternal and the contemplation of His everlasting glory, Raymond Martín, therefore, takes al-Ghazālī, among other Muslim writers, as his authority for the view that the joy of the Hereafter is a purely spiritual joy, and as such, above all sensual joys.

Another great Christian mediæval mystic whose writings show evidence of al-Ghazālī’s influence was Ignatius Alighieri.

1 Cf. ʿIḥād, IV, pp. 169 ff. and also pp. 168 f. above. And The Legacy of Islam, pp. 298 ff.
2 Explanatio Sündoluhi (Anniari del Instituti d’istituto cavalli), March 1600. He had also studied the Sūrat and other texts. Cf. Pergo Pidodi, Part I, Cap. 1, par. 1, par. 3, par. 6, par. 7, par. 15, Cap. III, par. 1, par. 3, par. 6, etc. Cf. ʿIḥād, IV, pp. 209 and 314 of Al-Ghazālī, pp. 90 ff. and pp. 38 ff. above.
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(1058-1110), who admits his indebtedness to the Muslim thinkers and quotes al-Ghazali as one of his sources.

...The ascent through the Seven Heavens, where the Blessed dwell, in accordance with their spiritual merits, described in the Divan is, has not been directly accepted as a result of Muslim legends of the Prophet's Ascent to Heaven and al-Ghazali gives a version of it in which he removes the angels. After the Seven Heavens, bearing the good deeds of believers, none of which are acceptable to God, one comes to the skies alone. From this place, al-Ghazali regards himself as being a witness of all that is within heaven and the greater the goodness and perfection, the greater the love, therefore that the Essence which is such that all good found outside of it is only a light from its own ray, draws to itself more than any other the movement of the mind, to love, of that one who realizes the truth of this.

The conception of the Radiant Vision and the means whereby it may be attained in some measure even in this life, an attainment which will be perfected in the life to come, as we have seen above, was derived, at least in part, from Muslim conceptions, by St. Thomas Aquinas, and there is little doubt that his sources were also available to Dante. To the latter the Vision is Light, the Divine Essence is conceived of as a living Light, going forth in creation, kindling the lower lights from its own radiance, two Divine suns which kindled all and each. Looking upon that Divine Light man enters therewith into the Divine life also. In that Light he becomes such that he cannot turn his face to any other light. For the good which he seeks is therein wholly concentrated and therein is perfect all that outside is defective. That is the Light Eternal, in contemplating which the human soul enters into eternal life.  

* * *

To Whom Light is venerated to all other things, which kindles the Lights Celestial and the Lights Terrestrial, which are lit by that Light, as the lamp is lit by fire, for He is Essential Light.

* * *

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Elemental Fire. The Vision, for those who attain, is the contemplation of that Light and those who look upon it, pass away into it. A much later writer to whom the influence of al-Ghazali has been found was the French mystic Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) and his knowledge of the Muslim mystic’s teaching no doubt came to him through his study of Raymond Martin’s Purgatorio which came into his hands in a French edition, towards the end of his life, when he was writing his Penserons, and it is to be noted that Raymond Martin cites his Arabic authorities in Latin and gives the title of the books quoted.

Pascal holds that there are three ways of beholding: reason, custom and inspiration. Reason opens the mind to the truths of religion, and custom brings them home to men, but he holds that it is necessary, by illumination, to invite inspiration, which alone can bring about a sure and lasting conist. It is the heart which is conscious of God and can have a direct experience of Him, not the reason. His faith in intuition recalls al-Ghazali’s belief in the superiority of gnosia to reason. Reason, says Pascal, moves slowly and is for ever falling asleep or going astray, but intuition acts in a flash and is always ready to act. So men should put their trust in it, for it seems assurance. This is the gnosia which comes, says al-Ghazali, like a flash of lightning, but leads to certainty (segan).

Pascal’s famous wager for and against belief in God contains teaching and arguments which are also to be found in al-Ghazali. Pascal held that to wager for the existence of God resulted, if it were true, in infinite gain, and if untrue, in no loss. To wager against the existence of God, if He exists, means infinite loss, and if He does not exist, neither loss nor gain. al-Ghazali had propounded the same alternatives. He gives as an illustration that if a man is hungry, and food is at hand, which he is

**Michel de Montaigne,* Essays*, pp. 110, 121, 127. 128.


**Pascal, *Pensees*,* p. 151.

**Pascal, *Pensees*,* p. 165.

**Pascal, *Pensees*,* p. 179.
ANXIOUS TO EAT, AND A BOY TILLS HIM THAT IT IS POISONED, AND A SNAKE HAS LICKED IT, THE MAN WILL ENDURE HUNGER RATHER THAN RUN THE RISK OF EATING IT. HE SAYS TO HIMSELF THAT IF THE BOY IS LYING, HE HAS ONLY MISSED THE PERFECT FROM THE FOOD, AND IF THE BOY IS SPEAKING THE TRUTH, HE HAS BEEN SAVED FROM DESTRUCTION.

AL-GHAZALI ARGUES, THEREFORE, THAT IT IS WORTH WHILE TO LIVE AS IF THERE WERE A GOD AND A HEREAFTE, FOR IF DEATH MEANS ANNIHILATION, NOTHING IS LOST THEREBY, BUT IF DEATH MEANS PARADISE OR HELL, THEN THE BELIEF MEANS ETERNAL SALVATION FROM THE FACES OF HELL AND HE QUOTES THE VERSE:

"THE ASTROLOGER AND THE PHYSICIST BOTH DECLARED: 'THE DEAD ARE NOT RISEN.' I SAID: 'LOOK TO YOURSELVES! IF YOUR STATEMENT IS TRUE, I SHALL HAVE LOST NOTHING. IF WHAT I SAY IS TRUE, YOU WILL LOSE EVERYTHING!'"

PASCAL NOTES THAT MAN'S THIRST FOR GLORY, WHICH MAY BE TURNED TO EVIL USES, IS ALSO THE VITAL MARK OF HIS EXCELLENCE, AND AL-GHAZALI, TOO, SPEAKS OF SOVEREIGN POWER BEING DEAR TO ALL IN THIS WORLD, BUT THIS IS BECAUSE LORDSHIP IS A DIVINE ATTRIBUTE AND A QUALITY WHICH CAN BE USED TO ENABLE THE BELIEVER TO GAIN THE ROYALTY OF SERVICE TO GOD IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT. PASCAL, AGAIN, LAYS MUCH STRESS ON DISINTERESTED LOVE AND HOLDS THAT THE TRUTH CAN BE REACHED ONLY THROUGH LOVE, AS THE SAINTS KNEW WELL, AND AL-GHAZALI, MORE PERHAPS THAN ANY OTHER SULFIF WRITER, LAYS STRESS ON LOVE AS THE GUIDE ON THE MYSTIC WAY, THAT TRUE LOVE WHICH WILL ULTIMATELY LEAD THE LOVER TO THE CREATIVE TRUTH HIMSELF.

AL-GHAZALI, THEREFORE, HIMSELF INDEBTED TO CHRISTIANITY AND THE WEST FOR NOT A LITTLE OF HIS OWN INSPIRATION, WAS ABLE TO REPAY THE DEBT IN KIND AND TO GIVE TO THE THINKERS OF THE WEST AS WELL AS THE EAST AND TO CHRISTIAN MYSTICS AS WELL AS THOSE OF THEIR OWN FAITH, MUCH THAT WAS INSPIRING AND HELPFUL TO THEM AS THEY ALSO Sought TO TREAD THE PATH WHICH HE HAD TRODDEN BEFORE THEM.

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**Chapter XIV**

Summary of al-Ghazali’s Mystical Teaching. His Place in the History of Sufism

Al-Ghazali, as we have seen was a man who traveled widely, who had been in contact with Hellenic thought as well as the culture of Iraq and Syria, who had made a thorough study of philosophy and theology, of Sufi mysticism and of the mystical teaching of the Christian Church. His teaching, therefore, is that of a scholar, a philosopher and a theologian, and his is a reasoned, philosophic type of mysticism, able to appeal to the intellectual type among his readers, while its sincerity and the use which he makes of familiar illustrations made it equally comprehensible to the common folk.

It was his great aim to reconcile orthodox Islam with the mystical teaching which was widespread in his time, and to this he consecrated his life and his time, and he succeeded in giving Sufism an assured place within orthodox Islam. Possibly based upon orthodox Islamic doctrine, his mysticism yet goes far beyond it and is permeated by another spirit than that of the Qur’an and the Sunna. So, too, he has passed far beyond the ecstatic quasism of the earlier Sufis whose saying he quotes, and his way of life is based upon a theosophic doctrine of mysticism according to which the soul, by the Divinity within it, is urged to make the upward ascent to the Godhead, to which it is akin. The mystical teaching found in his earlier works, such as the Itrat Ulum al-Din, meant for all to read, must be considered in conjunction with the teaching given in his later books or those dealing more specifically with Sufi doctrine, such as Rasul al-Talibin, al-Ma‘riff al-Arifiy, Mishkat al-Anwar, Mizan al-Amal, Mukhtarat al-Qulub, and Risala al-Laduniyya, in which a more developed and more theosophic type of mysticism is found, and this must be held to represent his final conclusions, based on his own personal experience and reflections. He himself refers to “esoteric”...
In his teaching on the Nature of God, he lays stress on the
Divine Unity, God as the Sole-Existant and the Ultimate Cause
of all being. Transcendent yet Immanent, the Eternal Will
which is manifest throughout the universe. To
al-Ghazâlî, He is a Living, Personal God, but all His attributes
are spiritual. He is the Creative Truth, He is the Light of
lights. He is perfect Goodness and Perfect Beauty, the supreme
Object of love, indeed, the Only Object of real love. Yet He
subordinates intercourse with His creatures and makes it possible
for them to enter into fellowship with Himself through prayer
and contemplation and through the gift of gnosis, that mystic
knowledge, which goes beyond the knowledge gained by means
of the senses and beyond the knowledge deduced by the reason,
and leads to "union." He reveals Himself to whom He reveals Himself
are His "friends," the saints to whom is given here and now
the knowledge of the "mysteries of God."

The soul, al-Ghazâlî teaches, belongs to the Divine world and
is itself Divine by origin, made in the Divine image and partaking
of the attributes of God. It is, therefore, capable of receiving
a direct knowledge of God, and entering into a direct relation
with Him. The inner of the soul, though it may have become
rusty and defiled by neglect and sin, if polished and freed from
its blots, can reflect the realities of the spiritual world,
and the soul can return to the state in which it was one with
the Divine.

The purpose of the Sâlih Path is to enable the soul to free itself
from the veils which hinder it from seeing God and having
direct access to Him. It begins with Repentance and Conver-
sion, which is a spiritual crisis, leading the creature to acknow-
ledge its creatureliness before its Creator. It realizes in all
humility what it is, but it also has the vision before it of what

1 Cf. Kitâb al-Majâlis wa-l-Dhâbâh, play, al-Shâh, p. 2. The Tâbil al-
Yâbûr, pp. 131, 4 and pp. 309, 6 above.

2 Cf. pp. 463 ff., above.
lives a life dominated by the spirit. There is no longer strife between the higher and the lower nature; the soul is tranquilised. It is at home in its native abode. It has attained the summit of the ascent. The lover is the mystic, who has found in his direct apprehension of God an attainment above all else that can be attained. To the lover, enlightened by that gnosis, the Divine Beauty is revealed and the joy of that vision is "what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, that which has not entered into the heart of man."

The mystic has pierced beyond the veils and sees God as One Reality, transcending all that can be seen by the sight or apprehended by the insight. In that vision of the Beloved, the soul of the mystic passes into union with Him, and henceforth he lives the life of the saint in God.

al-Ghazali's place in the history of Sīfīsm is that of a great theologian and an original thinker who, as we have seen, desired to recirculate orthodox Islam with the mystical ideas of Sīfīsm, which were widely prevalent in his day. Islam, in his time, seemed in danger from without, for the Crusaders were forging on their swords to exact the Saracens from Syria, and in Spain the Moorish influence was declining. The Faith was in danger also from within from sectarian divisions and from heretical doctrine, and not least from the teaching of pagan philosophy.

al-Ghazali felt himself called to save the Faith from the slow destruction of inward decay by infusing it with the new spiritual life which alone could arrest the process. This desire arose out of the conviction, based on his personal religious experience, that religious life, pure and free from every blemish; and prayer and that moral perfection was to be attained only by following the example of the Sūfis, who were not dependent upon an authority derived from others, our upon knowledge obtained by study, but had developed a practical way of life which they, claimed, was revealed to them by God Himself. al-Ghazali's teaching on the first stage of the way, characterised by asceticism and purification, bears affinity with that of the earlier Sufi mysteries, and especially al-Muḥāsibī, and he does not hesitate to illustrate his teaching in all its phases, by quoting freely from the earlier mystics, Rāhîn al-Adwâyya, Abû Yaʿūb Ṣaḥah and others, but he has his own original contribution to make. He lays the greatest stress on religious experience and consequently on personality. Self-observation, self-knowledge and self-discipline, he holds, are of the first importance for the novice. His epistemology and mystical psychology owe something to al-Muḥāsibī and to philosophic theory, but he develops them on his own lines. He lays much more emphasis than his predecessors among the Sūfīs, on the Divine origin of the soul and its possession of Divine attributes, not the least of which is the possession of a will which controls action. Believing that the Universe is the manifestation of God, he regards man as a microcosm, who is equally the manifestation of God, on a smaller scale. This estimate of man as the image of the Divine means that al-Ghazali takes a lofty view of man's spiritual possibilities; it means too, that man, possessed of will, must himself take an active and strenuous part in seeking to realise his high possibilities. He is endowed with the reasoning faculty (al-'aql al-ʿaqlī wa-l-nafs al-ghurob), which enables him to understand intelligible and make deductions therefrom, and both mind and will must be employed in attaining the purpose of bringing both into conformity with the Mind and Will of God.

But there is a plane beyond that of the Intelligence, and this is the sphere of the Divine spirit, the "inner light" which comes from the Light of lights, and al-Ghazali has added much to this conception, found in a more elementary form in earlier writers. That light will burn steadily and clearly only in a heart pure and at leisure; it will be reflected in its full glory, only in the polished mirror, free from every blemish; and prayer, worship, meditation and recollection are the means of gaining that access to God, which means dwelling in the light. It is when man seeks to draw nigh unto God, that He hastens to draw nigh unto man. 9 al-Ghazali has devoted a whole book to the theme of God as Light and the possession by the human

9Cl. Ibn al-Hajjāj al-Sighārī, where he writes of the human spirit as the emanation [fard] of God's Essence, pp. 2 sq. While meaning that the soul is "enveloped," in the sense of coming into existence in time, he admits that it is "ensouled" in another sense, being self-conscious and immortal. Elsewhere he writes of it as "being, eternal, incorruptible." al-Shaykh al-Labānī, p. 28.

9Cl. al-Maqtar al-Adwâyya, pp. 132, 136.
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absorbing love, which leaves no room for the love of anything else. The doctrine of the Beatific Vision was based not only upon the Qur'an and such a tradition as 3 God hath Seventy Thousand Veils of Light and Darkness: if He were to withdraw them aside, then would the glory of His Countenance consume each one who looked upon Him," but upon legends of the Ascent of Muhammad, an experience to which the Mā'ṣūṣ of the mystic Abū Ya'qub al-Bistāmī approximates very closely. Early mystics, including Rābī' and Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī had realised that the Vision of God in His Beauty, the desire of the lover, might be misconstrued as the gnostics of this life. But it was al-Ghazālī who first gave the doctrine a complete and developed form and he devotes a whole chapter of the Ḥikāt to the subject, writing of the Vision as the result of gnosis, the enlightenment of the understanding by the light of God Himself, and drawing a parallel between the spiritual and the physical vision.

The state of mystical ecstasy in which the mystic loses consciousness of self and remains conscious only of the Divine, when the worshipper is absorbed in Him Whom he worships, which the Sūfis call fanā' (passing away from the self) resulting in fanā' (sublime state) is a concept found among the early Sūfis such as Abū Ya'qub Bistāmī, Abū Sa'ıd al-Khallāzī and Junayd. Al-Ghazālī adds something to this conception in his teaching on the subject, and though he tries to guard himself against the admission that the creature can be actually identified with the Creator, that is in fact the conclusion which he reaches. Fanā' he holds, means that the mystic has become unconscious not only of his body, but of his very self. He has ceased to be self-conscious and has become God-conscious. It was in this state that Ḥalīl and Abū Ya'qub felt themselves to be one with God, and so, to be defined, and it is to be noted that Al-Ghazālī

3 A recent book, Al-Ghazālī's Book of Love, by E. Dingmersen (Leiden, 1938), includes a translation into Dutch of Al-Ghazālī's Book on Love, together with an introduction to Al-Ghazālī's teaching on the subject.

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soul is a measure of that light, which, in the saints and prophets burns brightly and clearly. But the conception finds a place in nearly all his mystical writings.1 All the Sūfī mystics had realised that Love was the guiding principle of the seeker after God; the self with its insistent claims, could only be overcome by a love greater than that of self-love and so, by all of them, God was conceived of, as the Beloved, and the Sūfī thought of himself as the lover, longing for the consummation of his love in union with the Beloved. Rābī' al-Āsh'arīyya had taught that the seeker could only be purified by love and she was almost the first to teach the doctrine of Pure Love, love that gave itself with no desire for reward, seeking only the Beloved and His glory, and al-Ghazālī quotes many of her sayings on love. al-Muhābbī also, had written a book on Love and found that it included both longing for the Beloved and joy in the consciousness of His presence, and Satisfaction he regards as part of Love, for the lovers of God have passed beyond states and stations and have found their rest in Him, al-Ghazālī reproduces much of al-Muhābbī's teaching on this subject word for word. Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī, again, had laid stress on the Pure Love of God, free from all defilement, on Fellowship as the joy of the lover in the Beloved, on the ecstasy produced by the "wine of Love." Abū Ya'qub al-Bistāmī, another of al-Ghazālī's sources, had been a great lover, and to him love was an all-absorbing passion.

So al-Ghazālī had found such teaching on mystic love available to him, and he made full use of it in his great section on Love in the Ḥikāt. It was, therefore, no new doctrine, but he developed it in a new and systematic fashion. He analyses the types of love and the causes of love. Love may be self-love, or it may be disinterested love, the love of a thing for its own sake, which alone is true love. He shows that the chief cause of love is Beauty, in whatever form it shews itself, sensual, intellectual or moral, but affinity is also the cause of love. He concludes that since all the causes of love are combined in God and in Him alone, He alone is worthy of true love, a pure and all-

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He has no word of condemnation for them, only adding that "the words of passionate lovers in the state of ecstasy should be concealed and not spoken of." This, he says, is not real identity (istikhal), but what is meant by the verses of al-Jazuli:

"I am He Whom I love and He Whom I love I am. We are two spirits indwelling one body."

It is as if a man should look into a mirror and suppose that the form he sees in the mirror is the form of himself, one with it, or as if, seeing the water in the glass, he supposes it is the colour of the glass. When such a state prevails with the mystic, it is called fana', even fana' al-fana', because he is unaware that he has passed away from himself. Behind this start, al-Ghazali admits there are mysteries which it is not fitting to discuss. But at the end of the same treatise he does go farther still, and asserts that at the end of the journey the mystic is consumed by the glory of the Divine Conscience and overwhelmed by the Divine Majesty and as a separate personality is absorbed into the One Reality. "All has perished save His Conscience." Elsewhere he writes that the mystic is overwhelmed by the waves of the ocean of Unity and is submerged in the Whole. This is "union" in the deepest mystical sense of the term, though it is the re-union of the drop with the ocean whence it came forth, and the re-union of the spark with the flame, the part still subsistent in the whole.

It can hardly be said to differ essentially from the conception of mystical union maintained by the pantheists, but al-Ghazali is usually careful, at any rate in some of his writings intended for the general public, not to make the transition from theosophy to pantheism: his belief, recognising the transcendence as well as the immanence of God, is in this, more than in the rest of his writings, less of a pantheism. "Not the doctrine that all is God, but the doctrine that all is in God, Who is also above all." None the less, when writing as a commentator on the Confessions of Augustine, he was able to say that he thought of Augustine as a Pantheist of the type of Lactantius in The development of metaphysics in Persia.

mystic, for the benefit of the initiated, he comes very close to pantheism in his inclination towards the doctrine of emanation, which means that the Divine Essence is really the substance of all existent things, for they are one in kind with it, if differing in degree. But al-Ghazali comes still nearer the position of the pantheistic monist when he declares, even in the Fidy, meant for the general reader, that the universe, including the visible and invisible worlds, considered as a whole, is the Divine Reality, which includes all existent things. Again he writes of seeing all multiplicity as emanating from the One, and then, of ceasing to see multiplicity at all, but seeing all existence as One. He expresses this view even more clearly in the Mizah, where he states that there is no space but God (الله الله الله), for wassu is an expression for what can be indicated, and in whatever direction we turn, He alone is indicated (for all things point to Him). Indeed wherever you indicate anything the indication is really to Him, though it may not be realised. Again, he writes that God k 'with' everything at all times, and by and through Him all things are manifested, and the Manifestor cannot be separated from what is manifested. Nothing remains but the One Reality." God, the One, All and the All in All. Here, in al-Ghazali's mystical teaching, is found the anticipation of the development of Mysticism into a definitely pantheistic system of philosophy, of which the greatest exponent was Muhayn al-Din Ibn al-'Arabi, in the century following al-Ghazali's death, and it is evident that the chief principles of his teaching are to be found in essence in al-Ghazali's writings, though Ibn al-'Arabi goes far beyond al-Ghazali in making a fundamentally pantheistic monism the basis of all his mystical teaching. To the same school of thought belonged the great Persian mystic poets Jalal al-Din Rumi, who died some thirty years after Ibn al-'Arabi and Jalal, who lived some two centuries later who wrote:

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"Where'er a veil thou seest,
Behind that veil He hides."

and again:

"He is both Treasure and Casket: there is here no place for I and Thou, which are but phantasies."

Al-Ghazali's place in the history of Sufism, therefore, is that of the thinker who really systematised its doctrines and gave them precision and definition, and by his great influence enabled Sufism henceforward to be accepted as an integral—and the most vital—element in Islam. It was his aim to bring men to a knowledge of God through mysticism; he was convinced that true religion must always be a matter of personal experience, and it was because his teaching was so plainly the result of his own spiritual experience and a reflection of his own inner life, that his leadership was acknowledged and men knew him as one of the greatest of the Sufis, one of the "friends" of God, a second Prophet, and his Shī'ah as a second Qur'ān. His teaching includes all of value that the earlier Sufis had to contribute, to which he added his own great and original contribution, while the reasoned, philosophic form in which it is presented enabled others who came after him to build on the foundations which he had laid and to develop a mystical doctrine, which for him depended upon a deep religious and personal experience, into a definitely pantheistic system of philosophy.

It is a significant fact that at the present time Al-Ghazali's works are still read and studied (and their teaching accepted as authoritative) more widely than those of any other Muslim writer, throughout the length and breadth of the world of Islam.

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