AL-GHAZZĀLIYY

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INTRODUCTION

The basic issue that this book will be concerned with is the genetic development of Al-Ghazzāliyy’s epistemology. It is my contention that his epistemology evolved through various stages. Both his life and writings reflect this development. As a student, he began his academic life with an interest in traditional Islamic studies such as jurisprudence (fiqh) and fundamentals of jurisprudence (usūl al-fiqh). After he assumed his first teaching position at the Nizamiyyah school of Baghdad he became a methodological skeptic, a situation which prompted him to study all schools of thought available at the time in search for peremptory knowledge (ilm yaqīn). From skepticism he moved to Sufism (Islamic mysticism), and finally there are indications that he ended up studying the traditions (ḥadīth) of prophet Muhammad, which led many to claim that he shifted to the methodology of the traditionalists (Ahl al-ḥadīth) and that he abandoned Sufism. It is the aim of this study to trace Al-Ghazzāliyy’s quest for knowledge throughout his life.

This study will take into consideration the historical circumstances and the social context in which Al-Ghazzāliyy flourished. It is my conviction that these circumstances influenced his personal and thus his intellectual life as well.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

There are numerous previous studies of Al-Ghazzāliyy. How-
ever, most of these studies dealt with subjects such as Sufism, ethics and jurisprudence. While a very few of these studies dealt with Al-Ghazzalīy’s epistemology, none of them could be considered comprehensive: no studies so far have used all of his books to determine his epistemology. And certainly, these studies did not show the genetic development that took place in his thought.

One of the studies that dealt with Al-Ghazzalīy’s notion of knowledge (ma‘rifah) is Jabe’s La Notion De La “Ma‘rifah” Chez Al-Ghazālī. Although he discussed the relationship of ethics to the notion of ma‘rifah, his approach remains philological. This philological method was also used by Hava-Lazarous Yafeh primarily to determine the authenticity of Al-Ghazzalīy’s works.  

Another study that discussed Al-Ghazzalīy’s theory of knowledge is Dunya’s Al-Haqiqah Fi Nazar Al-Ghazālī. This study was limited in its sources and depended heavily on Mī‘rāj Al-Quds, a book that was attributed to Al-Ghazzalīy but remains unconfirmed because none of the medieval Muslim historiographers listed this book, nor there are cross-references in Al-Ghazzalīy’s confirmed books.

I have undertaken the task of studying all of Al-Ghazzalīy’s works in order to trace the development in his epistemology. The basic working list can be found in Badawi’s Mu‘allafat Al-Ghazālī, numbers 1-72. The criteria for choosing these books are based on any of the two following conditions: the first is that there should be cross-references in Al-Ghazzalīy’s works, as it was his habit to mention books that he wrote, or those he was going to write, and the second is that it has to be mentioned by medieval historiographers such as in Ibn Al-Subbūkī’s Tabaqat al-Sha‘ī‘ygh Min al-Kubrā. This book is a biography of the jurists who belong to the Shāfī‘īyya’s school of jurisprudence; Al-

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1 Farid Jabe, La Notion De La “Ma‘rifah” Chez Al-Ghazālī (Beyrouth: Editions des Lettres Orientales, 1988).
3 Sulaiman Dunya, Al-Haqiqah Fi Nazar Al-Ghazālī (Cairo: Dar Al-Ma‘arif Bt-Misr, 1965).
5 Badawi, Mu‘allafat, pp. 1-238.
7 Badawi, Mu‘allafat, pp. xv-xvii.
INTRODUCTION

The fourth chapter covers the works written during his years of seclusion from 488 A.H./1095 C.E. till 499 A.H./1106 C.E. In this chapter I shall discuss the influence of Sufism on his epistemology. Of especial importance is his introduction of a faculty higher than reason (malakah, fawqa al-'aqil) as a source of knowledge. I shall define the nature of the relationship between this new faculty and prophecy.

The fifth chapter deals with the books that were written during the second period of public teaching at the Nizamiyyah of Nishapur (499-503 A.H./1106-1110 C.E.).

The sixth chapter discusses the last stage in Al-Ghazzâliyy's life (505 A.H./1111 C.E.). This chapter questions the claim that he abandoned Sufism for the method of the traditionalists.

Dr. Mustafa Abu-Sway

Chapter ONE

THE LIFE OF AL-GHAZZÂLIYY

In this chapter I shall present a sketch of Al-Ghazzâliyy's life (450-505 A.H. 1058-1111 C.E.) as an aid to understanding the complexities and the controversies that surround this great Muslim thinker. Not only his writings (e.g., Al-Ghazzâliyy's books on knowledge) but also his life is a direct manifestation of his spiritual and intellectual development. This is especially true when the person is a Sufi (Sûfî), a Muslim mystic, whose everyday life reflects the conditions he endures to acquire higher level of understanding.

In this sketch I begin with the historical conditions

1 In Arabic grammar, every attributed name (Al-Nasabi should have a stressed Yu' suffixed. For more details see 'Abd Al-Ghany Al-Duwâ'iq, Lexicon of Arabic Grammar, (Mujam Qawwâl al-Lughah al-Arabiyah) (Damascus: Dar al-Qalam, 1988) p. 496. In quotations and bibliographic citations I have used Al-Ghazzâliyy's name in its original form (e.g. Algazel). For further discussion of his name see page 15.
2 A.H. = After Hijrah (the migration of prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E. (Christian Era or Common Era). It was the second Caliph, 'Umar Al-Khattab, who used this event to mark first year (which is lunar) of the Islamic calendar. I have chosen to use the A.H. dating because it provides a sense of time that places the topic under discussion in its proper "Islamic context".
3 The word "Sufi" is derived from Arabic suf/wool. Dressing wool, among the Sufis, became a symbol of detachment from worldly pleasures and affairs. For further discussion of "Sufism", see Ibn Taymiyyah, Al-Furqan Bayn Ashârî' Al-Rabû'nu uhr 'Ashârî' Al-Shayyûn (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islâmîyy, 1981) p. 42. In addition, there were those who maintained that the word "Sufi" is derived from Greek "sophia" in an apparent attempt to show that Sufism had its origin in Greek thought and thus disqualify the notion that it stems from Islamic backgrounds.
surrounding the time of Al-Ghazzâliyy's life, especially the political setting. I will then move on to consider his life, education and academic career.

1.1 THE POLITICAL SCENE

The political scene at the time of Al-Ghazzâliyy reflects a disintegrated caliphate. The provincial governors gained considerable powers that left the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad virtually powerless. The Caliphs who ruled during the life of Al-Ghazzâliyy were Al-Qâ'im Bi-Amrillah (d. 467 A.H./1074 C.E.)4 followed by his grandson, Al-Muqtadî Bi Amrillah (d. 487 A.H./1094 C.E.).5 Al-Muqtadî Bi-Amrillah was followed by his son the Caliph Al-Mustazhir Billah (511 A.H./1117 C.E.).6 It is to be noted that Al-Ghazzâliyy attended the ceremony (bay'a) in which Al-Mustazhir was inaugurated.7 The presence of Al-Ghazzâliyy at this ceremony, which was noted by the historians, indicates his support of the Caliph which is also manifested in Al-Ghazzâliyy's book al-Mustazhirîyyûf al-Adî 'ala al-Bâ'înîyyûh which was named after the Caliph. Furthermore, Baghdad itself came under direct rule by warlords who became known as "Sultans". They presented themselves as de facto rulers and restricted the Caliph to dignitary functions (i.e. attending ceremonies). The most important family of Sultans was the Seljuks (Al-Salâjîqâh) who, according to Ibn Kathîr (d. 774 A.H./1372 C.E.) established their reign in Khurasan in 429 A.H./1037 C.E.8 They moved to Baghdad in 447 A.H./1055 C.E. under Tughrul Beg, their first king.9 He remained in power until his death in 458 A.H./1066 C.E. His successor was his nephew Alp Arslan who was killed in 465 A.H./1072 C.E.10 He was followed by his son Malik Shah (d. 485 A.H./1092 C.E.),11 who had to fight his own half-brother, Tutush in his quest for power.12 After the death of Malik Shah, the struggle for power within his family continued between his wife Zubaida and his son Mahmûd (d. 487 A.H./1094 C.E.), who was only five years old at the time, on the one hand, and his son Barkyaruq (d. 498 A.H./1104 C.E.), who was thirteen years old, on the other. The army fueled this struggle by splitting into two divisions; one sided with Barkyaruq, and the other with Mahmûd. It should be noted that the actual struggle over power was not led by the above mentioned children, but rather by their trustees and older family members: they included Zubaida and vizier Taj al-Mulk al-Marzubân rival of Nizâm al-Mulk. This rivalry led the supporters of Nizam al-Mulk, who were convinced that Taj al-Mulk played a role in the death of Nizam al-Mulk, to side with Barkyaruq.13 This dispute was resolved on the battlefield in favour of Barkyaruq who remained Sultan until his death. He was followed by his brother, Muhammad Ibn14 Malik Shah (d. 511 A.H./1117 C.E.) who ascended to power in 498 A.H./1104 C.E. after another internal struggle, this time with his nephew, Malik Shah Ibn Barkyaruq, grandson of Malik Shah, who was four years old.15 After the death of Malik Shah, in 485 A.H./1092 C.E., Zubaida demanded that his son Mahmoud, who was five years old at the time, should have the right of appointing governors (ulûqat al-unmâl). But even more significantly, the scholars of Baghdad, including Al-Mutatabbib16 Abû Muhammad Al-Ḥanafîyy, issued a ruling (fatwa) stating that there was nothing wrong in granting this right to the boy, in an unprecedented move. The only exception to this ruling came, we learn, from Al-Ghazzâliyy, who forbade the transfer of such powers to Mahmûd Ibn

5 Ibn Kathîr, Vol. XII, p. 146.
6 Ibid., p. 142.
7 Ibid., p. 147.
8 Ibid., p. 44.
9 Ibid., p. 66.
10 Ibid., p. 90.
11 Ibid., p. 139.
14 Ibn = Arabic for son (of).
16 Literally, the medical practitioner. Many Muslim scholars used to work in areas not related to their scholarly work in order to avoid taking money from those in office. The scholar would acquire a title related to this profession. It could be that Al-Mutatabbib was one of them.
Malik Shah. Fortunately, the Caliph, Al-Muqtadir, adopted Al-Ghazzaliyy’s position.\(^{17}\) Al-Ghazzaliyy’s 
\(jau\u0143\) was in accordance with the \(Shari\u0143\ah\).

In another \(jau\u0143\): to Yusuf Ibn Tashafin (c. 500 A.H./
1106 C.E.), the Sultan of Al-Maghrib, Al-Ghazzaliyy encou-
raged this Sultan to unite the divided principalities, by 
dismissing their kings (\(Mulk\) \(al-Tau\u0143\i\)\) under his rule.\(^{18}\) The 
impact of Al-Ghazzaliyy on the political scene went 
beyond issuing \(jau\u0143\), and writing letters. Both Ibn Khalik\u0131\u0107 and 
Ibn Khaldun reported that Mu\u0131ammad Ibn \'Abdallah Ibn 
Tumart, a student of Al-Ghazzaliyy, established Almohad 
(\(Al-Muwa\u0131hid\i\)\) rule in Al-Maghrib, replacing the state 
that had been established by Ibn Tashafin, which 

The \(jau\u0143\u0107\)s are significant in showing the role of Muslim scholars (\(\u00b4\u0143\u0131\u0107\\u00b4\u0107\)) 
in the political life at the time.

These incidents reveal that Al-Ghazzaliyy enjoyed a 
prestigious position with those in office at that time 
that enabled him to send daring letters to the various Sultans 
and viziers. He reminded them of their duties toward 
their subjects, and advised them about the affairs of the state. In 
\textit{The Golden Ingot For Advising Kings (Al-\u0161ir al-Mas\u0161ik \(fi\) 
\(N\u0131\u0143tit \(al-M\u0161\u0131lik\))}, Al-Ghazzaliyy addressed the 
Sultan, Mu\u0131ammad Ibn Malik Shah and warned him about the 

17 Ibn Kathir, Vol. XII, p. 129.
18 'Abd Al-Amir Al-'A\u0131\u0107, Al-Fay\u0167lays\u0167 al-Ghazzaliyy (Beirut: Dar 
19 Abu al-Hassan Al-Nadawiyy, 
\(Rijal\) al-Fikr \(wa\) al-Da\u0131\u0143\u2013al-Islam, 7th 
20 Al-Ghazzaliyy used Arabic and Farsi for writing. His Persian works are 

\( \) in the year Tughhrul Beg entered Baghdad there was another 

1.1.1 Al-Ghazzaliyy and the Other Schools 
of Jurisprudence 

In the year Tughhrul Beg entered Baghdad there was another 
environment of for

\( Al-Ghazzaliyy \) which shed light upon the circumstances that he endured. It was 
during this year that a disturbance took place between the Asha\u0131r\u0167es\(^{25}\) and the Hanbalites.\(^{26}\) As a result of this 

\( Al-Ghazzaliyy \) flourished in this atmosphere of 

\( \) of different schools of theology
and jurisprudence within the Sunnite tradition. He himself was considered an Ash'ite and a doctor of the Shafi'ite [Shafi'iyyah] school of jurisprudence. Out of his concern, he tried to curb this attitude of intolerance through his writings. In *The Revival Of The Islamic Sciences* (Ihya 'Uloom al-Din), Al-Ghazaliyy wrote with great reverence about the most prominent doctors of jurisprudence: 'Al-Shafi'yy, Malik, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Abu Hanifah, and Sufyan Al-Thawravy. The order in which he arranged their names was not chronological: rather Al-Ghazaliyy arranged them according to the number of their adherents during his own time. Moreover, Al-Ghazaliyy wanted to emphasize the love and respect that these scholars had for each other; and he wanted the jurists of his time to follow suit. Not only did Al-Ghazaliyy endorse a policy of tolerance and openness towards other schools of jurisprudence, he also gave priority to some of their rulings over those of Al-Shafi'yy. For example, he cited numerous rulings of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal. In addition, he accepted the ruling of Abu Hanifah, agreeing that Al-Shafi'yy's position in the case of divorce had a touch of exaggeration (fakaluff).

Al-Ghazaliyy also praised Abu Hanifah for refusing to accept a governmental office that could have made him responsible for all the money of the Caliphate. This refusal led the Sultan to whip Abu Hanifah twenty times in public. This praise absolves Al-Ghazaliyy of the charge that he disgraced Abu Hanifah without justification. Now Al-Ghazaliyy had been accused of disgracing Abu Hanifah by Sultan Sanjar. These accusations were certainly incompatible with the position Al-Ghazaliyy as stated above; furthermore, he categorically denied such accusations. In fact, they were based upon insults found in copies of Al-Ghazaliyy's *Al-Mankhuul min Ta'qibat al-Uslul*. However, these insults were forgeries, inserted into his book when it was copied. Furthermore, whenever he mentioned Abu Hanifah's name in the above book, Al-Ghazaliyy added a supplication (i.e. may Allah be pleased with him) following his name. This supplication was a clear sign of the respect Al-Ghazaliyy had for Abu Hanifah.

Al-Ghazaliyy saw that his contemporaries busied themselves studying aspects of jurisprudence that might never be needed during their lifetimes, and preoccupying themselves with the differences between the various schools of jurisprudence. According to Al-Ghazaliyy, the followers of the different schools of jurisprudence who did such things were unjust to the founders. Instead, Al-Ghazaliyy suggested that they ought to study medicine in order to be useful.

1.1.2 Al-Ghazaliyy and the Sects of the Time

The relationship between the Sunnites and the Shi'ites, especially the Rawafid who lived in the Karakh district of 36 These were not only example of forgeries of Al-Ghazaliyy's work. Al-Ghazaliyy copies of *Al-Murai'if min al-Dulal* and *Mishkat al-Anwar* were submitted to him for approval (juzul). He reported the incident to the head (ra'is) of Khurasan who imprisoned, and later on deported the person responsible. 37 Al-Qarah Daghi, Vol. I, p. 159-163. 38 Al-Ghazaliyy, *Ihya*, Vol. I, pp. 24-28. 39 Shi'ites (ash'a), Arabic for "supporters of", is a general classification that includes all the different sects that have a position toward 'Ali Ibn Abu Taib, the fourth Caliph and cousin of prophet Muhammad, different than that of the Sunnites. Some of the Shi'ites argue that 'Ali should have been the first Caliph, others adopt an extreme position by claiming that 'Ali has divine attributes. Although Shi'ites started primarily as a political stand, they developed their own theology and jurisprudence.
Baghdad, was also contentious. Almost every year tension used to escalate on the day of 'Ashūrah, which resulted in killings and destruction on both sides. The establishment of a strong Shi'ite political state in Egypt at the hands of the Fatimids in 358 A.H./968 C.E. strengthened the position of the Shi'ites in Baghdad who, in return, had formally acknowledged the Fatimid rulers in Friday ceremonies. This formal acknowledgment also spread to Damascus, Medina and Mecca. According to Ibn Al-Athir's Al-Kāmil, the first reconciliation (ṣūḥ) between the Sunnites and the Shi'ites, took place in 502 A.H./1108 C.E.

Al-Ghazzalīyy was the target of claims that he was a Shi'ite. Sīh Ibn Al-Jawzáyyi claimed, in Rijāl Al-Aḥfām fi Mānāqib Ḥab Al-Bayt, that Al-Ghazzalīyy was a Shi'ite for a while, but later on changed his position. According to Dr. Ahmad Al-Shirbāsyyi, who seemed to be in favour of Al-Ghazzalīyy's Shi'ism, the Shi'ites considered Al-Ghazzalīyy one of their teachers knowing that he was a Sunnite. He also added that the Shi'ites believed Al-Ghazzalīyy wrote Risālah Fi Ism Allāh al-An'am or Shurūj Jannat al-Asma', a book that praised 'All Ibn Abī Tālib. Apparently, this book was not written by Al-Ghazzalīyy. In addition, praising and loving

40 Every year, on the 10th of Muharram, the first Arabic month of the lunar year, the Shi'ites commemorate the martyrdom of Al-Hussayn Ibn 'All, grandson of prophet Muhammad, and son of 'Ali, the fourth Caliph. The Shi'ites commemorate this event by virtually torturing themselves, since they believe that the Shi'ites of Iraq had betrayed Al-Hussayn when he went to Iraq, after they have promised him support in his quest for power.

41 This name is attributed to Fatima, daughter of prophet Muhammad, and wife of 'Ali Ibn Abī Talib. In 492 A.H./1011 C.E., the scholars of Baghdad stated that the founder of the Fatimids was Ubayd Ibn Sa'd Al-Jarmiyī and that he did not descend from the children of 'Ali and Fatima. For further details, see Ibn Kathir, Vol. X. p. 344.

42 Ibn Kathir, Vol. XI. p. 266.

43 Friday prayer (Jum'ah) is composed basically of two short speeches (du'ā'ī) and two acts of prostration (raka'ā'ī). The acknowledgement mentioned above takes the form of a supplication (du'ā) for the sake of the ruler (i.e. asking Allah to guide him) which usually takes place at the end of the second speech before the performance of the two prostrations. This du'ā for the ruler became a symbol of alliance.


They are considered "accusations" because Sunnites have a tendency to think of Shi'ism as a tradition which involves positions that are not in accordance with Islamic Shar'ī'ah.

46 See footnote # 54.

47 Badawi, pp. 47-49.


49 The Fatimids became known as the Bātīnīyyah, Al-Ghazzalīyy listed the names by which they were sometimes known as the Qarmatīyyah, the Qarmatīyyah, the Khurrāsānīyyah.

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ramites, the Khurrmadinates, the Isma'ilites, the Seveners, the Bābikites, the Muḥammirah, and the Ta'limates. Each of these names emphasized certain aspects of this sect: the founders of the different factions, their beliefs, and, in some cases, the time and place in which they were active. The Batinites posed a threat to the Caliphate and to the Sunni creed. In addition, they had resorted to political assassination. Among those who were killed at their hands was ʿAbd al-Mulk al-Malik b. Ṭaʾir, the vizier for Al-Āṣim b. Ṭalha, and Malik Shah. He established the famous Niẓāmiyya college, which was named after him, and assigned Al-Ghazzālī to head the Niẓāmiyya at Baghdad. 90 Fakhr al-Mulk, son of ʿAbd al-Mulk and vizier for Sanjar in Nishapur, met the same fate as his father in 500 A.H./1106 C.E. Among the many other dignitaries who were systematically assassinated was ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Khurasani, who was a bishop in Nishapur, where he was a preacher (khitīb), in 492 A.H./1098 C.E. 100 He was the son of Imam Al-Haramayn Al-Juwainī, who was the educator par excellence at the time, head of the Niẓāmiyya college at Nishapur, and teacher of Al-Ghazzālī. These assassinations have led to at least seven books and treatises to which appears to be a systematic confrontation of their positions during various stages of his life. It is understandable that, in this sea of turmoil, struggle, and intolerance, one might not expect any group to be spared. Yet, Watt, an orientalist, said that Christians and Jews had internal autonomy under their heads. He added that “there was practically no religious persecution”; they enjoyed official protection from the Islamic Caliphate until its breakdown at the turn of the century. The presence of Christians and Jews in Khurāsān, during the early life of Al-Ghazzālī, enticed him to ask questions crucial for his quest for knowledge. In the Delivrance from Error, Al-Ghazzālī said:

The thirst for grasping the real meaning of things was indeed my habit and wont from my early years and in the prime of my life. It was an instinctive, natural disposition

61 See page 142.
63 His name was Al-Hasan Ibn 'Ali Ibn Ishaq, Abu-'Ali. He was born in Tus, the same birth place of Al-Ghazzālī. In 408 A.H./1017 C.E.
64 Ibn Kathir, vol. XII, p.129.
placed in my makeup by Allah Most High, not something due to my own choosing and contriving. As a result, the fetters of servile conformism (taqlîd) fell away from me, and inherent beliefs lost their hold on me, when I was quite young. For I saw that the children of Christians always grew up embracing Christianity, and the children of Jews always grew up adhering to Judaism, and the children of Muslims always grew up following the religion of Islam. I also heard the tradition related from the Messenger of Allah - May Allah’s blessing and peace be upon him - in which he said: ‘Every infant is born endowed with the jîra, and then his parents make him Jew or Christian or Magian.’ Consequently I felt an inner urge to seek the true meaning of the original jîra, and the true meaning of the beliefs arising through slavish aping of parents, the beginnings of which are suggestions imposed from without, since there are differences of opinion in the discernment of those that are false.65

This mode of questioning and quest for knowledge continued with Al-Ghazzâliyy until the end of his life.

1.1.1 The Crusades

In addition to the internal conflicts and turmoil, the Islamic Caliphate suffered from the invasions of the Crusaders who were known in medieval sources as the Franks (Al-Frânj/al-Fîranjî). They conquered Jerusalem, the third holy Muslim site,66 in 492 A.H./1098 C.E.67 Al-Ghazzâliyy

65 Literally, jîra means natural disposition. In the above mentioned hadith it means that all people are born as Muslims, and hence Islam is the religion of jîra.

66 This is a part of a hadith narrated by Al-Bukhariyy in his Sahih. The word Magian (Majusgard) means fire-worshipper. This religion was spread in Persia. In Islamic Shari‘ah, magians were tolerated based on the assumption that they could have deviated from a people who received a book (i.e. through revelation) (shubbat Kitâb) and thus entitled to this tolerance which is a right for the people of the book (ash al-kitâb, Jews and Christians).


68 Here I refer to the hadith of prophet Muhammad in which he allowed Muslims to travel to visit three mosques only: Bayt Allah Al-Haram in Makkah the mosque of the prophet in Medina, and Al-Aqṣa mosque in Jerusalem.

69 Ibn Kathîr, Vol. XII, p. 156.

neither mentioned the Crusaders in his writings nor made clear his position regarding them, and this has proved to be problematic for him. Since the turn of this century, Muslim scholars have criticized his stand and have considered it uncharacteristic of a man of the stature of Al-Ghazzâliyy. In his doctoral dissertation, Dr. Zaki Mubarak blamed Al-Ghazzâliyy’s Sufism for the absence of any role that he could have played in calling for Jîhâd:

“Al-Ghazzâliyy had sunk into his retreat (khalisah), and was preoccupied with his recitations (aurâd) not knowing his duty to call for Jîhâd.”

In Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazzâliyy wa al-Tasâwnuyf, Abd Al-Rahmân Dimashqîyyah also blames Al-Ghazzâliyy’s Sufism. This study lists the position of most contemporary Muslim thinkers.70 It seems that the only scholar who tried to explain Al-Ghazzâliyy’s position in light of Sufism, without blaming him for it, was Dr. Yusuf Al-Qârdawiyy.71

“It could be that the excuse of this honorable Imam was his preoccupation primarily with reformation from within, and that internal corruption is responsible for paving the way for foreign invasion.”72

Dr. Al-Qârdawiyy acknowledged, however, that Al-Ghazzâliyy’s position was “puzzling”, especially since Al-Ghazzâliyy wrote about jîhâd in his book of jurisprudence. Dr. Al-Qârdawiyy ended his discussion of this issue, by stating “that only Allah knows the reality of his excuse.”73

It is a fact, however, that Al-Ghazzâliyy did not include a chapter on jîhâd in his major Iyâd ‘Ulum al-Din, which he used to teach after returning to Baghdad from his travels,74

70 Zaki Mubarak, Al-Akhlaq wa Al-Ghazzâliyy (Beirut: Al-Maktabah Al-Arâmyah, n.d.) p. 17. This doctoral dissertation was defended at the Egyptian University on May 15, 1924. The preface of the publisher, and the introduction of the author, indicate that this dissertation stirred a wave of criticism at the time.


72 Al-Qârdawiyy, Yusuf Abdullah (1925-7). Dean of the college of Sharia‘ and Islamic Studies at the University of Qatar, he is one of the most renowned jurists of the Islamic world today.


74 Al-Qârdawiyy, p. 174.

75 Al-Subkiyy, Vol. VI, p. 200.
which included Jerusalem just before the Crusaders reached it. In addition, he chose to continue the solitary life for about ten years after Jerusalem was captured.

In my opinion, however, Al-Ghazzālīyy’s silence on this matter can be seen in a different light. This requires a more careful understanding of the meaning of jihād. The literal meaning of jihād is “effort”, “striving” or “struggle”. The translation of jihād as “holy war” is incorrect; there is no equivalent use in Arabic language.76 In the Qur’an and the Sunnah, jihād is understood to have more than one meaning. One meaning denotes fighting (qiṭāl). The other meaning, which is overlooked by many, is the ethical and moral jihād. However, in jurisprudence, all four schools77 defined the meaning of jihād as fighting.

In what might express one of his views toward jihād, Al-Ghazzālīyy quoted Abū al-Dardā’, one of the companions of prophet Muhammad [S.A.A.S.]78 who said: “He who thinks that seeking knowledge is not jihād, has a defect in his opinion and reason.”79 Moreover, in Kifāb ‘Al-Ahdhār wa-Al-Da’ā‘wāt (the “Book of Remembrance and Supplication” in The Revival of Islamic Sciences, Al-Ghazzālīyy cited two traditions of prophet Muhammad [S.A.A.S.] that elevates the reward for the performance of dhikr (remembrance) to the level of jihād or even better80. In addition, Ibn Kathir narrates that the people of Baghdad were indifferent to the

77 The Hanifite, the Malikite, the Shafi’ite and the Hanbale.
79 Short for Sūrah Allahu ‘Ala‘gha Wa Sallam (May Allah’s peace be upon him).
80 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Iyās, p. 9.
81 The first tradition, which starts with “Ma Amal Ibn Adam min ‘Amal Anqa Lahu min ‘Adhab Allah min Dhirr Allah ‘Azzza wa-Agil ... etc.” had been narrated by Mu‘adh Ibn Abu Jabal. Ibn Abu Shaybah and Al-Tabaraniyy verified this tradition and said that it has a “good” chain of narrators (iṣnādulu hasan). The second tradition, which starts with “Ala un‘alā khum Bi Khayr al-Mukhlum wa-Aziz ... etc.” had been narrated by Abū al-Dardā’. Al-Tirmidhiyy, Al-Hakim and Ibn majah verified this tradition and said that it has a “sound” chain of narrators (iṣnādulu sāhīh). See Al-Ghazzālīyy, Iyās Ulīm al-Dīn, Vol. I, p. 295.
82 ‘Abī Ibn ‘Aqīl Ibn Muhammad (431 A.H./1039-513 A.H./1110 C.E.). He was the head of the Hanbale at Baghdad and a contemporary of Al-Ghazzālīyy. He was another exception to the prevailing tense relations between the different schools of jurisprudence. Ibn Kathir, Vol. XII, p. 184.
84 “Inna A‘zuma al-Jihād Kullunā Huquq ina Sultanin Jil‘ir”.
85 In the Qur’an, there are verses that praises Christian monks for their humbleness and acceptance of Allah’s revelation (al-Qur’an, Sura al-Mu‘amalat 5:82); yet there are also verse that criticize many of them in relationship to financial affairs (al-Qur’an, Sura al-Tāubah 9:34). In the Sunnah, prophet Muhammad prohibited ‘Uthman Ibn Mau‘un from monasticism saying to him, “O ‘Uthman, monasticism is not required from us; am I not an example for you?” This hadith has been narrated by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, 6: 226.

1.2 HIS EARLY LIFE

His full name was Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Mu-
Although Al-Ghazzālīyy was born in Tus, which is rightly considered non-Arabic land, there were voices advocating the possibility that Al-Ghazzālīyy was of Arabic origin. Whether Al-Ghazzālīyy was an Arab or not does not make much difference. Ibn Kaldun (d. 809 A.H./1406 C.E.) stated “that most Muslim scholars were not Arabs, and in some fields all of them were ‘Ajam (non-Arabs).” Such scholars used Arabic in their writings because it was lingua franca of their world.

Before his death, Al-Ghazzālīyy’s father entrusted him and his brother Ahmad to a Sufi friend. He asked him to spend whatever little money he left behind, to teach them reading and writing. When the money was finished, the Sufi asked them to join a school as students so that they might subsist. According to Al-Subkīyy, schools used to provide room, board and a stipend.

1.3 HIS EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC CAREER

1.3.1 Formal Education

As mentioned above, Al-Ghazzālīyy and his brother Ahmad, learned to read and write at the hand of their Sufi trustee. Although no dates are available about Al-Ghazzālīyy’s early education, the normal age to begin school was eleven. Al-Ghazzālīyy was eleven in 469 A.H./1076 C.E. It could be during this time that he began his study of jurisprudence at Tus where his teacher was Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Al-Radhakaniyy. Al-Ghazzālīyy’s next station was Jurjan where he wrote Al-Tarāqīq from the lectures of Abū Al-Qasim Al-Isma‘īlīyy Al-Jurjānīyy. On his way
back to Tus, his belongings including Al-Taq'iqa were stolen by bandits. Al-Ghazzaliyy followed them and appealed to their commander to return him the books for which he had "travelled in order to listen, to write and know their contents." 106 The commander laughed at Al-Ghazzaliyy because he claimed to know the contents of the books, yet he was stripped of the knowledge the moment they took the books from him. Al-Ghazzaliyy took back his books and decided to memorize them, so he could never be deprived of his knowledge again. Al-Ghazzaliyy's journey to Jurjan must have occurred before 474 A.H./1074 C.E., since he spent three years in Tus memorizing the books he brought back with him before leaving to Nishapur. 107 In 470 A.H./ 1077 C.E., Al-Ghazzaliyy went to Nishapur, where he studied at the Nizamiyah, under Imam Al-Haramayn, Al-Juwaitiyy, until his death in 478 A.H./1085 C.E. During his stay at the Nizamiyah, Al-Ghazzaliyy learned and excelled in the Shia'ite Jurisprudence, comparative jurisprudence (Ibn al-Khulaj, fundamentals of jurisprudence (Usul al-Fiqh), fundamentals of religion (Usul al-Din), logic and philosophy. In the field of philosophy Al-Ghazzaliyy read Al-Farabiyy (d. 345 A.H./950 C.E.) and Ibn Sina (Avicenna) (d. 429 A.H./1037 C.E.). 108 Also, he read the letters of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwân al-Safa), 109 Al-Ghazzaliyy ranked very high among the students of the Nizamiyah; Al-Juwaitiyy used to ask Al-Ghazzaliyy to assist in lecturing to the other students, even in his own presence. Al-Ghazzaliyy began writing his books during the life of Al-Juwaitiyy, which according to Al-Subkiyy, might have been a source of discomfort to his teacher. 104

The Life of Al-Ghazzaliyy

1.3.2 Teaching at the Nizamiyah, The "Spiritual Crisis"

After the death of Al-Juwaitiyy, Al-Ghazzaliyy went to the Camp (Al-Mu'askar), to see vizier Nizam al-Mulk, whose court was a meeting place for scholars. There, Al-Ghazzaliyy debated with other scholars and won their respect. After about six years at Al-Mu'askar, Nizam al-Mulk assigned Al-Ghazzaliyy to teach at the Nizamiyah of Baghdad. He lectured there between 484 A.H./1091 C.E. and 488 A.H./1095 C.E. 105 This position won him prestige, wealth, and "respect that even princes, kings and viziers could not match." 106 According to the Hanbalite scholar Ibn Al-Jawziyy (d. 597 A.H./1200 C.E.) who studied at the hands of Al-Ghazzaliyy's student judge Ibn Al-Arabiyy, Al-Ghazzaliyy came to Baghdad directly from Asfahan where the Camp must have been located. 107

At the Nizamiyah, several hundred students used to attend the lectures of Al-Ghazzaliyy. Some of those students became famous scholars, judges, and few became lecturers at the Nizamiyah of Baghdad itself. 108 Also scholars like Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, among the heads of the Hanbalite school of jurisprudence, attended his lectures and incorporated them in their writings. 109

The end of Al-Ghazzaliyy's career at the Nizamiyah of

105 Al-Subkiyy, Vol. VI, pp. 196-197.
108 They included: Judge Abu Nasr Al-Khamarayj (d. 544 A.H./1149 C.E.): Abu Bakr Ibn Al-'Arabiyy al-Malkiy (d. 545 A.H./1150 C.E.) who was quoted frequently in criticism of Al-Ghazzaliyy: Abu 'Abdullah Shah Ibn 'Abd Al-Rashid Al-Jilibiyy Al-Shadyy (d. 541 A.H./1146 C.E.), whose lectures were attended by Ibn Al-Jawziyy: Abu Manzur Sa'd Ibn Muhammad Al-Bazari (d. 539 A.H./1144 C.E.), who taught at the Nizamiyah, Imam Abu Al-Fath Ahmad Ibn 'Ali Ibn Durham (d. 518 A.H./1124 C.E.), who taught at the Nizamiyah for a short period and Abu 'Abdullah Ibn Tumarti, founder of Al-Muwahhidun state in Al-Maghrib, among many others. Al-Shirbasyyy made a mistake in listing Abu Hamid Al-baqariyy (d. 406 A.H./1015 C.E.), who was one of the heads of the Shafi'ites, among the students of Al-Ghazzaliyy. See Al-Shirbasyyy, p. 32.
109 Al-Shirbasyyy, p. 31.
Baghdad was unexpected. The circumstances surrounding this event became known as the "spiritual crisis" of Al-Ghazzālī. Al-Ghazzālī discussed the reason that prompted him to quit his position in his autobiographical work, *Deliverance from Error* (Al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl), in the section of Sufism. The aim of this book was to show Al-Ghazzālī's quest for knowledge. After discussing the methods of Al-Mutakallimūn, the philosophers and the Batinites respectively, Al-Ghazzālī chose the method of the Sufis as the right method for the acquiring of knowledge. This method had prerequisites; one should abandon all worldly attachments. Al-Ghazzālī thought that, in order to implement this, he should "shun fame, money and to run away from obstacles." He made it clear that any deed that was not for the sake of Allah, was an obstacle. Al-Ghazzālī scrutinized his activities, including teaching, and decided that his motivation was not for the sake of Allah. Al-Ghazzālī wanted to abandon those obstacles but the temptation was very strong. He spent six months struggling to stop teaching, until he no longer had a choice. Of this Al-Ghazzālī said:

"For nearly six months beginning with Rajab, 488 A.H. July, 1095 C.E.), I was continuously tossed about between the attractions of worldly desires and the impulses towards eternal life. In that month the matter ceased to be one of choice and became one of compulsion. (Allah) caused my tongue to dry up so that I was prevented from lecturing. One particular day I would make an effort to lecture in order to gratify the hearts of my following, but my tongue would not utter a single word nor could I accomplish anything at all."  

110 Al-A'lam, p. 42; Al-Shirbasly, p. 34; Dinaashqayyrah, p. 43.  
111 Muslim theologians who incorporated logic in their subject matter, which became known as 'I't al-Kotām.  
113 I used the word "Allah" instead of "God" because the latter has various connotations, in different religions and cultures, that might not represent the Islamic concept.  

The fact that Al-Ghazzālī could not speak caused him grief, which eventually effected his ability to digest food. Soon Al-Ghazzālī's health deteriorated and the physicians gave up any hope and stated that the only way to cure him was by solving his psychological problems. Realizing his impotence, and worsening situation, Al-Ghazzālī "sought refuge with Allah who made it easy for his heart to turn away from position and wealth, from children and friends." He distributed his wealth retaining only as much as would suffice him and his children. In public, he declared that he was going to make pilgrimage to Makkah, while in fact, he was planning to go to Syria. Al-Ghazzālī had this plan because he was convinced that the Caliph and the scholars of Baghdad would not understand his position; he was afraid that they might prevent him from leaving. Al-Ghazzālī asked his brother Ahmād to replace him at the Nizamīyyah and left Baghdad with the intention never to return.

Although Al-Ghazzālī used clear and simple language in describing the reason why he left the Nizamīyyah, there were some contemporary scholars who used Al-Ghazzālī's account of that event to "diagnose" his sickness. Al-Ghazzālī described in great details his physical and spiritual conditions. It seems that those details invited some contemporary scholars to leave the realm of philosophy to medicine in their attempt to diagnose Al-Ghazzālī. Although it is not the aim of this book to define what the job of philosophy is, looking for symptoms in autobiographical works, is not philosophy per se. One can not but criticize and reject such unphilosophical attitudes.

Al-Ghazzālī's declared motives for his departure from Baghdad in *Deliverance From Error* have been challenged by two scholars. Duncan Black Macdonald argued that Al-Ghazzālī left Baghdad because he felt that he was *persona non grata* with the Sultan Baryqar. According to Macdonald, this was because Al-Ghazzālī sided with
Tutush (d. 488 A.H./1095 C.E.), uncle and rival of Barkyaruk. In fact Al-Ghazzalyy mentioned that this opinion was in circulation in Deliverance from Error. This opinion, which goes back in history to the time of Al-Ghazzalyy, contradicts Al-Ghazzalyy’s account of his relationship with those in authority at the time. It is quite clear, rather, that he was courted by them. Besides, if his only goal was to disappear from Baghdad in order to escape political difficulties, he could have done so without going to the trouble of becoming a Sufi.

The other challenge to Al-Ghazzalyy’s account was set forth by Farid Jabre who claimed that Al-Ghazzalyy fled Baghdad for fear of assassination by the Batinites. The criticisms of Macdonald’s opinion also apply here. In addition, one could argue that if it were true that Al-Ghazzalyy feared for his life, he should have looked for places located far away from the influence of the Batinites. However, he went to Damascus and Jerusalem which were under the direct influence of the Fatimids. Furthermore, at the end of his journey, Al-Ghazzalyy returned to Nishapur, which was very close to the strongholds of the Batinites, during the peak of political assassinations. Thus it is untenable that Al-Ghazzalyy’s fear of assassination could have played any role in his departure from Baghdad. His own account, on the other hand, is perfectly comprehensible.

Al-Ghazzalyy’s abandonment of almost everything that he possessed and his choice of the spiritual path of Sufism (taqiyyah) should not come as a surprise. He read the books of Sufis such as Abu Tahlb Al-Makkiiyy’s Ghit al-Qulub (Pond of the Hearts), the books of Al-Harith Al-Muhäsiibiy, and the fragments of Al-Junayd, Al-Shiblîy, and Abu Yazid Al-Bistâmiyy. Al-Ghazzalyy’s position was consistent with those of the above mentioned Sufis. He chose their methodology as the one that could best fulfill his quest for knowledge. Al-Muhäsiibiy (d. 243 A.H./857 C.E.), for example, withdrew from public life and died in want. Likewise, Al-Junayd (d. 298 A.H./910 C.E.), a student of Al-Muhäsiibiy, had doubts whether he was worthy to give lectures. Al-Shiblîy (d. 334 A.H./946 C.E.), a student of Al-Junayd, was the governor of Dunbawind, canton of Rayy, also denounced the world and asked of the inhabitants immunity for his past conduct. He then submitted his resignation. Al-Bistâmiyy (d. 261 A.H./874 C.E.) stated that he gained knowledge of the world by means of a hungry belly. Following suit, Al-Makkiiyy (d. 386 A.H./996 C.E.) advocated self-mortification: he lived for a considerable time on nothing but wild herbs. Their influence on Al-Ghazzalyy is unmistakable.

Al-Ghazzalyy’s internal struggle might have been triggered by the visit of Abu Al-Husayn Ardashir Ibn Mansur Al-Ashury to the Nizamiyyah in 486 A.H./1093 C.E. His preaching, which Al-Ghazzalyy attended, was so influential that “more than thirty thousand men and women were present at his circles, many people left their livelihood, many people repented and returned to mosques, wines were spilled and instruments of play (i.e. music) were broken.”

1.3.3 The Journeys of Al-Ghazzalyy

It was a part of the path of the Sufi to travel from one place to another and to visit tombs of good people. Visiting cemeteries are intended to help the Sufi purify his soul, since the sight of the graves teaches one a lesson about the temporal and limited nature of this life.

128 Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 511.
129 Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 662.
130 Al-Ghazzalyy, Deliverance, p. 131.
chronological order: Damascus (where he stayed “close to two years”), Jerusalem, Hebron, Makkah and Madinah. He later returned to Baghdad in Jumada Al-Akhirah, 490 A.H./June, 1097 C.E. From there he went to Tus and lived in seclusion (khulūq), except when he had to attend to family affairs. Al-Ghazzâliyy ended his seclusion, which lasted for eleven years, to teach at the Nizamiyyah of Nishapur in 499 A.H./1106 C.E. His stay in Nishapur was rather short; he returned to Tus where he remained until his death on Monday, Jumada al-Akhirah, 505 A.H./December 18, 1111 C.E.

There have been other accounts of the route Al-Ghazzâliyy took in his journey; they advocate the notion that he visited Alexandria in Egypt on his way to Yusuf Ibn Tashâfin, and that he returned when he learned that Ibn Tashâfin had died. All other accounts confirm that Al-Ghazzâliyy was in Khorasan, a district in Persia, in 500 A.H./1106 C.E., the year in which Ibn Tashâfin died. The idea that Al-Ghazzâliyy was in Egypt may be refuted on two accounts. His student, Ibn Al-Arabiyah saw him, after returning from his journey, in the wilderness of Baghdad in 491 A.H./1097 C.E. In addition, Al-Ghazzâliyy's account that he was in Nishapur, Khorasan, in Dhu al-Qi'dah, 499 A.H./July 1106, 1116 is a clear indication of the falsity of such claims.

According to Al-Subkiyy, Al-Ghazzâliyy left Baghdad in 488 A.H./1095 C.E., and went to perform pilgrimage in Makkah, before he went to Damascus in 489 A.H./1096 C.E. In Damascus, he stayed for a few days as a faqîr (literally poor, another way of referring to a Sufi) before heading to Jerusalem, where he remained for awhile. From Jerusalem he returned to Damascus. There he chose the western minaret of the Umayyad mosque as his place of seclusion.

From there he returned to Baghdad where he preached, and lectured on his ḫiyâ'a 'Ullum al-Din for awhile. It must be noted that the order of the journey does not correspond to that of Al-Ghazzâliyy.

In Deliverance from Error, Al-Ghazzâliyy states that he stayed in Damascus almost two years. He used to spend his days in seclusion and isolation by locking himself inside the minaret of the mosque of Damascus. For the duration of his stay there, he kept himself busy purifying his soul, polishing his morals, and cleansing his heart to make remembrance (dhikr) of Allah, in the fashion he grasped from the books of the Sûfis.

When Al-Ghazzâliyy left Damascus for Jerusalem, he continued to live in isolation. He used to enter the Rock (Al-Sukhrâ) wherein he locked himself. Then, after visiting the tomb of prophet Ibrahim [a.s.] in Hebron, he went to perform pilgrimage to the Ka'bah in Mekkah and to visit Madinah, where prophet Muhammad [S.A.A.S.] was buried.

At this stage, Al-Ghazzâliyy missed his children. He returned home, to Tus after a brief stay in Baghdad at the Ribât of Abu Sa'id Al-Naysaburiyy, in front of the Nizamiyyah. In Tus, he continued to live in seclusion although his seclusion was interrupted from time to time because of family affairs. Eleven years elapsed between

132 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Deliverance, p. 138.
133 Ibid., pp. 137-139.
135 Watt, p. 201.
136 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Deliverance, p. 136.
137 Ibid., p. 159.
139 Al-Subkiyy, Vol. VI, p. 201.
141 Badawi, p. 23.
142 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Deliverance, p. 159.
143 Al-Subkiyy, Vol. VI, pp. 197-200.
144 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Deliverance, p. 138.
145 This "Rock" is located in the yard of Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. There is a mosque built on that location; it is called Dome of the Rock. Muslims believe that prophet Muhammad traveled from Makkah to Al-Aqsa mosque in a night journey, Al-Qur'an 17:1. From the position of that "Rock", prophet Muhammad [S.A.A.S.] ascended to heavens, before returning to Makkah; all this with the help of Jibril (Gabriel). This event is known as the furû' and Mi'raj. In contemporary Islamic political thought, this event, among other things, is used to support the idea of the Islamization of Jerusalem. Hence it has a spiritual value that led Al-Ghazzâliyy to visit it in his quest for truth.
146 The Ka'bah is the house that has been built by prophet Ibrahim and his son prophet Isma'il (Ismae'el).
147 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Deliverance, p. 138.
148 Lodge for the Sûfis where they can have free room and board.
150 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Deliverance, p. 139.
Al-Ghazzālīyy’s departure from Baghdad to the end of his life of isolation. He wrote Ḥyā‘ al-‘Umār and Al-Risālah al-Qudūsiyyah fi al-‘Aqā‘id. In Hebron, he pledged three things: not to accept money from any Sultan, not to visit any of them, and never to debate any person. Al-Ghazzālīyy fulfilled these pledges. For money, he depended on his estate in Tus, its income provided him with his need. Most importantly, he came to know “without doubt (yaqīn) that the Sufis are the (true) dwellers (sālikūn) on the path of Allah, their conduct is the best, and their method is the best method.”

Al-Ghazzālīyy ended his seclusion, in 499 A.H./1105 C.E., at a request from the vizier Fakhr al-Mulk to teach at the Nizamiyyah of Nishapur. He agreed to return to teaching after “consulting with masters of the hearts” who agreed that he could leave his seclusion. To indicate that there was no contradiction between leaving the Nizamiyyah of Baghdad and joining that of Nishapur, Al-Ghazzālīyy said that at the first he taught sciences that brought about fame, but at the latter, he taught knowledge that led to deserting such fame. He justified his move by quoting several verses from the Qur’ān that made preaching, the job of the prophets, a priority, even if discomfort was the consequence. Furthermore, Al-Ghazzālīyy said that the timing of this coincides with the beginning of the fifth century A.H., which he considered a good omen. According to a hadith, prophet Muhammad [S.A.S.] said that Allah sends to this nation (Muslim), at the head of each hundred years, someone to renew (mujaḍḍad) its religion. Al-Ghazzālīyy believed that he was the renovator (mujaḍḍad) of that century.

The exact duration of Al-Ghazzālīyy’s teaching at the Nizamiyyah of Nishapur is not known. It is believed though that he left after the assassination of the vizier Fakhr al-Mulk Ibn Nizām al-Mulk, by a Batinite, on the day of ‘Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, 500 A.H./1106 C.E.

Subsequently Al-Ghazzālīyy returned to Tus, where he built a lodge for the Sufis (khānqaqāh) and a school next to his house. He had about one hundred and fifty students. There were attempts, by vizier Ahmad Ibn Nizām al-Mulk (d. 544 A.H./1149 C.E.), to convince Al-Ghazzālīyy to return to the Nizamiyyah of Baghdad after the death of its teacher, Iltīyān al-Harāsīyī (d. 504 A.H./1110 C.E.), who was Al-Ghazzālīyy’s colleague during the days of Al-Juwaynīyy. Al-Ghazzālīyy declined the offer.

1.3.4 Al-Ghazzālīyy and the Science of Hadith

Al-Ghazzālīyy has been criticized for his weakness in the science of hadith. It appears that in that milieu, jurists, like himself neglected to a certain degree this science because they considered the scholars of hadith below the level of jurists. Al-Rāziyyī (d. 313 A.H./925 C.E.) said, “As for the people of hadith, they memorize the traditions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah’s peace and prayers be upon him, but they are not capable of reasoning and debate. Every time jurists present them with a question or a problem they fail to answer and get ‘puzzled’.” However, the position of the jurists led scholars of hadith to eventually adopt a similar position.

Moreover, there were many scholars who considered devoting one’s life to seeking hadith and narrating it a worldly activity unless the goal was for the sake of Allah. Abū Tālib al-Makkīyyī (d. 386 A.H./996 C.E.) narrated in Qūt Al-Qudūs, which Al-Ghazzālīyy mentioned in Al-Munqīdh min al-Dalāl as one of the sources that shaped his thought about Sufism, that Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānīyyī

151 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Deliverence, p. 159
153 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Deliverence, p. 139.
155 Arabic-arabic al-qulub, by which Al-Ghazzālīyy meant the Sufis.
156 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Deliverence, p. 159.
157 Al-Qur’ān 29:1, 6:24, and 36:11.
158 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Deliverence, pp. 158-159.
159 This hadith was narrated by Abu Dawud, Al-Hakim, and Al-Bayhaqīyyī.
said: "a man who seeks Ḥadith, gets married or travels to find a job is a worldly person." One could only add that if this was the position of the Sufis, the position of Al-Ghazzālī should not come as a surprise.

Though Al-Ghazzālī was an outstanding scholar in many fields of knowledge, ignoring the Science of Ḥadīth can not be justified because it led to the inclusion of unsound narrations in his writings. This science ('ilm muṣṭalah al-ḥadīth) had developed, as an independent field of study, a century before his birth. At least four major books on 'ilm muṣṭalah al-ḥadīth were written during that time. Moreover, in the last paragraph of his book Qārūn al-Ta'wīl, Al-Ghazzālī confessed that his knowledge in the science of Ḥadīth was little.

In addition, the large number of narrators (muḥaddithūn) indicates the importance of this field which in return explains the criticism to Al-Ghazzālī regarding his weakness in narrating Ḥadīth. According to Al-Khaṭīb Al-Baghdādī (d. 463 A.H./1071 C.E.) in Tarīkh Baghdādī, Baghdād was the home of more than five thousand scholars of Ḥadīth during the first five centuries A.H.

Like all jurists and scholars of the time, Al-Ghazzālī was introduced to the science of Ḥadīth as part of his education. Yet it appears that he did not study this science as an independent subject. Critics of Al-Ghazzālī pointed to this issue as something that undermined his works, especially Ḥiyā' 'Ulmā al-Dīn, because it included "weak" and forged (mauḍūd) narrations. Al-Subkiyyī wrote a whole chapter in which he classified all the forged narrations that were without proper sonād (chain of narrators), that appeared in the Ḥiyā'. Their number was more than nine hundred. It must be noted that Al-Subkiyyī, in his verification of these narrations, considered the maṭn (text) of the Ḥadīth as it appeared in the Ḥiyā' as a whole; some of these narrations included parts that are sound. As a practical precaution, in order to be aware of the status of the hadīth, one should use an edition of the Ḥiyā' that has Al-Ibrāhīm’s (d. 806 A.H./1404 C.E.) verification (taẖkīr) in the margin.

The reporting of a "weak" narration, which has many levels, was not rejected altogether by all scholars of Ḥadīth. Dr. Al-Tahānī states that there were scholars who allowed the use of such narration in preaching, but never in ‘aqīdah (creed), or in jurisprudence. He added that Al-Thawrīyy and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal were among those who allowed such usage. Moreover, this Ḥadīth should be narrated in a "weakened" (tād’ī) form. The scholars who rejected the "weak" narrations altogether include Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Yahyā ibn Ma’in (d. 233 A.H./853 C.E.), Ibn Hazm (d. 456 A.H./1064 C.E.), and Al-Ghazzālī’s student, the judge, Ibn Al-‘Arabiyyī. Among the contemporaries, Ahmad Muhammad Shākir, and Muhammad Nāṣīr Al-Dīn Al-Albānīyy held the latter position. In al-Bā’th al-Ḥadīth, a commentary on

167 The actual number of entries in Tarīkh Baghdādī were 7691 of which 32 were women scholars. It should be noted that Al-Ghazzālī did not include the scholars who were still alive at the time which means that the number of scholars was still higher.

169 A Ḥadīth is considered weak (tād’ī) when it lacks any of the conditions that are necessary to render it ḥasan (good). An example of these conditions is that the chain of narrators (sonād) should not include any one who is not ‘aḍāl, which means "trustworthy", in a regulated sense. A Ḥadīth that is classified ḥasan is still one degree below the level of a narration that is ἱσάḥ (sound).

172 The Ḥadīth should not be introduced by the clause "prophet Muḥammad said", which provides a false impression of a true statement. Reporting a "weak" narration should start with a form close to indirect speech in English grammar (e.g. It has been said/narrated/reported that prophet Muhammad ... etc.).
Ibn Kathir's *Ikhtisaar Ulüm al-Ṣahih*, Shâkir explained the position of the early Muslim Scholars who permitted the use of "weak" narrations by stating that during the time of those scholars (e.g., Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal), narrations were divided into two basic categories, *ṣahih* and *da'if*. The category of *ḥasan*, which was advanced by Al-Tirmidhiyy (d. 279 A.H./880 C.E.), was not yet distinguished from sound narrations. It follows that those scholars were actually permitting the use of the *ḥasan* not the *da'īf*.

It is important to mention that Abû Tâlib Al-Makkîyy adopted the position of Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal in narrating "weak" hadîth. The difference between him and Al-Ghazzâliyy is that he wrote a chapter in *Qūt al-Qûlîn* in which he defended the use of a hadîth *da'īf*.

Towards the end of his life, Al-Ghazzâliyy started studying the narrations of prophet Muhammad [S.A.A.S.] He read Al-Bukhârîyy's *Ṣahih* and Muslim's *Ṣahîh*. According to Abû Al-Ḳasîm Ibn 'Asâkir, Al-Ghazzâliyy studied Al-Bukhârîyy's *Ṣahîh* at the hands of Abû Sahî Muhammad Ibn 'Abd Allâh Al-Hafshîyy. Also, Al-Sanâ'îyy reports that Al-Ghazzâliyy studied Al-Bukhârîyy's *Ṣâhîh* and Muslim's *Ṣahîh* at the hands of Abû Al-Fîyân 'Umar Ibn Abû Al-Ḥasan Al-Rawasîyy Al-Tusîyyî. Furthermore, 'Abd Al-Ghâfir Ibn Ismâ'îl Al-Khâṭîb Al-Fârisîyy (d. 551 A.H./1156 C.E.), who visited Al-Ghazzâliyy several times before and after he changed his way of life to Sufism, narrated that it came to his knowledge that Al-Ghazzâliyy studied the Sunan of Abû Dawûd Al-Sjîstânîyy at the hands of Abû Al-Fâṭîh Al-Hâkimîyy Al-Tusîyyî.

The importance of Al-Ghazzâliyy’s study of the science of hadîth can be found in the question of whether he changed his method again. The answer to this question will be discussed later on in this book.

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177 Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 212.
178 See page 224.
180 By Muslims here I refer to what became known as "aḥî al-sunnah" (people of the sunnah). Also, they are known as "aḥî al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah" (people of the sunnah and the group). As for the sects and groups that were rooted in Islam and had a different position than that of the above, Al-Baghdâdiyyî listed seventy major branches of them in an apparent attempt to relate this number to a narration of prophet Muhammad in which he professed that his people will be divided into seventy branches.
Al-Ghazzāliyy that reflect the way different schools (e.g. al-Ashā'īrah) and scholars (e.g. Ibn Taymiyyah), were treated whenever there was any doubt or claims regarding their creed, even if these claims were politically motivated.

I have chosen Ibn Taymiyyah, a leader of the Hanbalite school of jurisprudence who flourished two centuries after Al-Ghazzāliyy and was one of his critics, as an example. He was considered the leader of the Salafyyah school, yet he was accused of incorporating anthropomorphic elements into his ‘Aqidah Wāsitiyyah. Two councils were convened to verify the claims about his book. In the first one, which was held in Damascus, he was acquitted of the charges. In the second, which took place in Cairo, he was unjustly convicted and sentenced to prison for an indefinite period. 185

As discussed above, 186 the Ashā'īrites, who were almost exclusively Shafi’ites, were denied the right to attend congregational and Friday prayers because of the way they presented the beautiful names (al-asma’ al-husnā) of Allah. Out of more than ninety nine names, 187 Al-Ghazzāliyy followed the footsteps of the Ashā'īrites and used their method of Kūlām (theological argumentation). 188 It should be noted that Al-Asgharī himself and Al-Baqqalīyiy (d. 403 A.H./ 1112 C.E.) followed the path of the Salaf in the way they understood Divine attributes. It was the later Ashā'īrites who chose to discuss the subject matter of a few attributes as representative for their importance, and they adopted the method of metaphorical interpretation (‘a‘lid) in order to avoid questions of anthropomorphism (tajrīm). Those who belong to the latter include Al-Ghazzāliyy and Al-Rāzīyyiy. (d. 606 A.H./ 1209 C.E.) 189

The Ashā'īrites got their method from their rivals, the theologians (al-Mutakallimin). This method, which was intended to defend Islamic Sharī'ah against philosophy in the first place, contained several philosophical terms such as the word ‘essential’ (jawhār) and ‘accident’ (‘ard). It is the use of such philosophical words that upset traditional scholars before and after the time of Al-Ghazzāliyy. His contemporary, Ibn ‘Asīr, head of the Hanbalite school at the time, said about this subject:

“I assure [you] that the companions (of the Prophet S.A.A.S.) died without knowing the (terms) ‘essence’ and ‘accident’. So, if you would like to be like them you can, but if you think that the method of al-Mutakallimin is better than the method of Abū Bakr and ’Umar, 190 this would be the worst of your opinions.” 191

Based on his use of the above mentioned method, Al-Ghazzāliyy was “accused” of being an Ashā'īrite by the Salafyyah school. 192 There were many Muslim scholars who considered him so; they have used neutral language in classifying him as an Ashā'īrite. Among those we find the medieval scholars Al-Sulṭaniyy and Al-Zubayḍiiyy who stated that to judge what someone believes belongs to Allah. He also added that after reviewing most of the works of Al-Ghazzāliyy and the books of his contemporaries who saw him, he reached the conclusion that Al-Ghazzāliyy “was most probably an Ashā'īrite”. 193 In addition, among the contemporaries we find that Sülüzām Dūnya is very supportive

184 Followers of Al-Asgharī, Abu al-Hasan ‘Alī Ibn Isma‘il (260-324 A.H./873-935 C.E.). He was a Mutazilite but returned to the method of the Salaf at later stage in his life and renounced the Mutazilites.


186 See page 17.

187 It is a common mistake to restrict the names of Allah to ninety nine names. In fact, there are more than the above mentioned number. Although they are called “names” (asma‘) as in al-Qur‘ān, Sura al-‘Araf 7:160, they are also called attributes (asfā‘) (i.e. the Mercahul). In discussing the verses in the al-Qur‘ān that include such “attributes”, one refer to these verses as asfā‘ al-asfā‘.


189 Ibn al-Qaṭiyyim, p. 120.

190 Abu Bakr, Abdullah ‘Abu al-‘Asfahānih, the first Caliph, and ’Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb, the second Caliph.


192 Dimashqīyyah, p. 89.

193 Al-Zubayḍīyy, p. 30.
of the idea that Al-Ghazzâlîy was an Asha’rite. In fact, Duniya said that Al-Ghazzâlîy advocated Asha’irism in Al-īṣâṣād fi al-īṭiqād. 194 A rather different opinion came from a medieval Muslim scholar. This time from ibn Rushd (Averroes) (d. 595 A.H./1198 C.E.) the great critic of Al-Ghazzâlîy. Regarding the Asha’irism of Al-Ghazzâlîy ibn Rushd stated in Fasîl al-Maqâl fîna Bayn al-Ḥikmāh wa al-Shurṭah min Rîṣqâl that Al-Ghazzâlîy maintained a relative position and that he did not commit himself to any one school and that “he was an Asha’rite with the Asha’rites, a Sufi with the Sufis and a philosopher with the philosophers.” Among the contemporaries a similar position is held by Dimashqiyah who says that Al-Ghazzâlîy was an Asha’irite only when he addressed the general public (al-‘umâm). 195

A strong position against the Asha’irism of Al-Ghazzâlîy was advanced by George Makdisi. In his article “The Non-Asha’irite Sha’fiism Of Ghazzâlîy,” 196 Makdisi states that Al-Ghazzâlîy was not an Asha’irite for a number of reasons. The first one was that Al-Ghazzâlîy never declared himself an Asha’irite. Yet this argument has the same weight as one saying that Al-Ghazzâlîy never denied being an Asha’irite. The second argument was based on the idea that the deed of the Nizâmiyyah college in Hiva having the Sha’îte Uṣûl al-Fiqh as the official position. It should be taught. According to Makdisi, Al-Shâfi’iyya founded this method against the method of Kalâm. Makdisi adds that the professors of the Nizâmiyyah distanced themselves from the Asha’irites. As for his position towards Al-Ghazzâlîy’s al-īṣâṣād fi al-īṭiqād, Makdisi says, after confirming that Al-Ghazzâlîy followed the Asha’irite method in writing this book, that “this work does not represent Ghazzâlîy’s own inner convictions.” 197

In my opinion, the reality about Al-Ghazzâlîy’s position regarding the Asha’irite method can be deduced from the

"appearances" which for us are restricted to his works, since we do not have access to his "inner convictions". Whether Al-Ghazzâlîy was or was not an Asha’irite, he certainly used that methodology. It appears that he used the Asha’irite methodology or Kalâm, but not blindly. In his introduction to Fâsîl al-Tafrîqâh bayn al-Īslâm wa al-Zandaqa’ah, Al-Ghazzâlîy criticized those Asha’irites who thought that deviating from the method of Al-Ash’ârîyy, no matter how little, was heretical.198 It is rather important to know that Al-Ghazzâlîy referred to Al-Ash’ârîyy in his earlier writings as “our teacher” (shaykhun) which could be an important factor in determining the relationship between the two especially if we know that on the same page where Al-Ghazzâlîy quotes Al-Ash’ârîyy he quotes another scholar without referring to him as “shaykhun”. 199 Towards the end of his life, Al-Ghazzâlîy wrote Iṣâq al-ʿAuâkî on Illm al-Kalâm in which he criticized the method of the Asha’irites and Kalâm. In addition there are numerous places in The Revival of Islamic Sciences where he criticized Kalâm. In the book of knowledge (kitâb al-īlm), which is the first of forty chapters of the Ilyâd, not only Al-Ghazzâlîy criticized kalâm but he also listed it along with unaccepteable innovations (bida) of which children who were reaching maturity should be protected.200

Al-Ghazzâlîy’s position on many other controversial subjects (e.g., logic) will be addressed as they unfold in this book. The idea that Al-Ghazzâlîy’s theory of knowledge has developed throughout his life, shall provide an explanation, and not necessarily a defence, to many of the raised questions. The following chapters will discuss this idea.

194 Dimashqiyah, p. 94.
195 Dimashqiyah, pp. 94-98.
197 Makdisi, pp. 244-249.
199 Al-Ghazzâlîy, Al-Mahkûh, p. 36.
200 Al-Ghazzâlîy, Ḫayâ’, Vol. 1, p. 15.
Chapter TWO

AL-GHAZZÁLIYY’S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE AS A STUDENT
(465-478 A.H./1072-1085 C.E.)

This chapter deals with Al-Ghazzáliyy’s writings as a student and how these writings could be related to his epistemological development during the above mentioned years which ended with the death of his most important teacher Al-Juwaíníyy in 478 A.H./1085 C.E. During these years Al-Ghazzáliyy wrote two major books; Al-Táliqah fi Furi‘ al-Madhbáh (Notes on the Branches of the (Sháfi‘i) School of Jurisprudence) and Al-Munkhúl min Ta‘lígat al-Usúl (The Sifted from the Notes on the Fundamentals of Jurisprudence).¹ In addition, it deals with Al-Ghazzáliyy’s later work Al-Munaqád min al-Dalál (Delivery from Error) in which he projected in clear terms his thoughts knowledge during the same period.

2.1 AL-TA‘LÍQAH

Al-Ghazzáliyy wrote his first book, Al-Ta‘lígah, when he travelled to Jurjan to study at the hands of Abú-Násr Al-Ísmá‘íliyy. It seems that this book was simply a collection of notes on the lectures that he attended during the above mentioned journey.² Al-Ta‘lígah was lost and our knowledge

¹ The word Ta‘lígah is translated by J.G. Hava, S.J. as ‘marginal notes’ or as ‘appendix of a book’. Al-Farúq fi al-Durúq (Détroit: Dar Al-Maḥriq, 1972) p. 495. I think that Al-Ghazzáliyy intended this word, which was used in its singular form Ta‘lígah in the title of the first book and in its plural form Ta‘lígat in the second, to indicate that these notes were taken from the lectures of his teacher (i.e. Al-Ísmá‘íliyy) when he was a student.

of it is restricted to secondary sources. These sources provide a simple historical account of the book without dealing with its contents except simply mentioning that it was about *fiqh* according to the Schaffite school of jurisprudence.3

2.2 AL-MANKHUL: THE QUESTION OF AUTHENTICITY

The only surviving book that could have been written during this period was *Al-Mankhul min Ta’līqat al-Uṣūl*. At least one orientalist and one medieval Muslim scholar doubted that *Al-Mankhul* was written by Al-Ghazzâliyy. The former, Brockelmann, claimed in his *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur* that *Al-Mankhul* was written by one of Al-Ghazzâliyy’s students without specifying the reason that led him to such claim. The latter was Ibn Hajar Al-Hayamiyy (d. 973 A.H./1565 C.E.) who said in his book *Al-Khayr al-Aṣma* that *Al-Mankhul* could not have been written by Al-Ghazzâliyy because it included harsh criticism of Abû Hanîfah while Al-Ghazzâliyy praised him in *Ihyâ’* ‘Ulum al-Dîn. Yet, it seems that Ibn Hajar Al-Hayamiyy was not sure of his position because he narrated a defense of Al-Ghazzâliyy by Hanîlitins who explained that these insults were committed by Al-Ghazzâliyy when he was a student and thus forgivable.4 One could only add, as discussed in the previous chapter, that Al-Ghazzâliyy denied insulting the person of Abû Hanîfah and declared all such insults as forged additions to his book.5 The possibility of altering the works of any scholar at the time was enormous due to the fact that these works were copied manually.

The authenticity of *al-Mankhul* could be proven beyond doubt from the cross-references that Al-Ghazzâliyy made to *Al-Mankhul* in his book *Al-Mustasfa*, which he wrote after returning to teaching at the Nizamiyyah of Nishapur, at the request of some students of jurisprudence who wanted him to write a book on the fundamentals of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) that would include "more details than Al-

Mankhul which is concise and brief."6

There remains the question whether *al-Mankhul* was written before or after the death Al-Juwayniyy. The historiographers (e.g. Al-Subkyyy) maintained that Al-Ghazzâliyy wrote this book during the life of his teacher.7 On the other hand, there were those who claimed that Al-Ghazzâliyy used to write a supplication (*du‘a‘*) right after the name of Al-Juwayniyy.8 This supplication, *ra’imahu Allah* (i.e. may Allah be merciful to him) usually indicates that the person who’s name was mentioned is deceased. The contradiction between those two positions could be resolved by pointing to the concluding paragraph of *Al-Mankhul* in which Al-Ghazzâliyy stated that "this is the completion of *Al-Mankhul* min Ta’līqat al-Uṣūl after omitting the extras." In addition, Al-Ghazzâliyy said that he restricted (himself) to whatever Al-Juwayniyy - may Allah be merciful to him - has mentioned in his lectures.9 It is apparent that at least Al-Ghazzâliyy wrote the original text of this book when he attended the lectures of Al-Juwayniyy. The fact that he omitted the "extras" might indicate that he wrote a modified version of this book after the death of his teacher which explains the presence of the above mentioned supplications in the text of *Al-Mankhul*.

It should also be noted that Al-Ghazzâliyy’s later work in *uṣūl al-fiqh* (i.e. *Al-Mustasfa*) reflects a different approach to the fundamentals of jurisprudence which exemplified the originality of Al-Ghazzâliyy’s writings after the death of Al-Juwayniyy. Accordingly, I would argue that *Al-Mankhul* does not fit into the works of the later Al-Ghazzâliyy that portrayed an independent scholar and thus it could have been written only at an earlier stage (i.e. as a student).

Moreover, the above position towards Abû Hanîfah was explained in another way. In the introduction to a critical edition of *al-Mankhul*, Hito showed that Al-Ghazzâliyy was simply reiterating the position of Al-Juwayniyy, his teacher, in *Mughîth al-Khalq fi Tarîfîh Al-Qawîl*

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3 Al-Zuhayriyy, p. 41.
4 Badawi, pp. 7-9.

8 Hito, p. 35.
2.2.1 Usul al-Fiqh

The fundamentals of jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh), the subject matter of Al-Munkhul, deals with the methodology by which the different questions of jurisprudence are answered. Historically, usul al-fiqh was the outcome of a struggle between the traditionalists (Ahli Al-Hadith) who’s methodology was based on a more or less literal interpretation of the texts of the Shari’ah, and the Hanafite jurists who allowed reasoning to play a more decisive role in determining the laws of the Shari’ah. The latter became known as the rationalists (Ahli al-Ra’i). Although tension ran high between both schools, the Ahli Al-Hadith agreed with Ahli Al-Ra’i on the necessity of having recourse to reason if the texts of the Shari’ah contained no specific reference to whatever case they had. The dispute between these two schools was not resolved until Al-Shafi’iyy wrote Al-Risalah in which he reconciled the two positions by establishing the methodology that later on became known as usul al-fiqh. It is a commonly accepted fact that all works in usul al-fiqh written after al-Risalah were dependent on it.

Following Al-Shafi’iyy’s lead there were many books written in this field. Of these, Imam Al-Juwainiyy wrote Al-

15 It should be noted that the originality of this book was doubted. Although it was listed by Ibn Khalikan as one of Al-Juwainiyy’s books, it was not listed by Ibn Kathir among the books of Al-Juwainiyy. Ibn Kathir, Vol. XII, p. 128.
16 It is not clear on what basis Al-Ghazzalyy’s theory of knowledge as a student is based.
17 In the introduction of Al-Munkhul, Al-Ghazzalyy stated that the fundamentals of jurisprudence aimed at knowing the peremptory proofs regarding the requirements of the Shari’ah. In addition he defined the sources of which the predictions (muqaddamah) of the fundamentals of jurisprudence were derived as ‘ilm al-Kalam (scholastic theology), Fiqh (jurisprudence) and language. It should be noted that these sources are exactly the same as those of

Burhan and Al-Ghazzalyy wrote four books: Al-Munkhul, Tadbir al-Ustul (which is lost), Shifa’ al-Ghalib fi Bayan Maslik al-Ta’til, and al-Mustasfa. In Al-Munkhul, Al-Ghazzalyy ranked jurisprudence as the most important field of knowledge. Yet, he stated that jurisprudence was a branch (far) that could not be totally apprehended without understanding and mastering the fundamental (asel). It is a clear message that promoted the study of usul al-fiqh for those who were interested in studying jurisprudence. In the introduction of Al-Munkhul, Al-Ghazzalyy reduced the sources of knowledge to those declared to be the fundamentals of jurisprudence according to the school he belonged to (i.e. Shafi’i). Although all schools list the Qur’an, the Sunnah and the consensus of the companions of the Prophet s.a.w. as the basic sources for knowledge of the Shari’ah, these schools differed in their position regarding the role of ijihad. Similar to the position of Al-Juwainiyy, Al-Ghazzalyy did not consider criteria that were derived from ijihad as peremptory (qayy’ah) and thus could not be considered as part of the fundamentals of jurisprudence; he would still use such criteria in verifying the validity of certain arguments.

In the introduction of Al-Munkhul, Al-Ghazzalyy stated that the fundamentals of jurisprudence aimed at knowing the peremptory proofs regarding the requirements of the Shari’ah. In addition he defined the sources of which the predictions (muqaddamah) of the fundamentals of jurisprudence were derived as ‘ilm al-Kalam (scholastic theology), Fiqh (jurisprudence) and language. It should be noted that these sources are exactly the same as those of

15 Hiti, pp. 8-9.
16 Al-Ghazzalyy, Al-Munkhul, p. 3.
17 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
18 ‘Ilm al-Kalam, literally the science of talk or speech, but here it refers to scholastic theology. ‘Ilm al-Kalam is the method originally used in tausid (theology) by Abu Hasaan Al-Ash’ariyy. He was followed by his student Ibn Mujahid who in turn was followed by Al-Baghdalyy and after him by Imam Al-Haramayn Al-Juwainiyy before it reached Al-Ghazzalyy. Scholars who followed this method became known as Mutakallimin (philosopher-theologians). The inclusion of Aristotelian logic in this method led to sharp criticism and rejection from scholars who belonged to different schools. Rejection of logic and labeling it haram (prohibited) is still advocated by many.
19 Al-Ghazzalyy, Al-Munkhul, pp. 3-4.

The importance of Tirm al-Kalām in the development in Al-Ghazzāliyy’s thought can be traced to one of its sources: Aristotelian logic. Al-Ghazzāliyy incorporated logic as a distinct subject in his writings. He renamed many Aristotelian logical categories; it seems that he did so in order to overcome the rejection of logic prevailing at the time. In addition, he attempted to show that these logical categories could be derived from the al-Qur’ān and the Sunnah.

A more detailed discussion of Al-Ghazzāliyy’s confirmed contribution to logic and its inclusion in Uṣūl al-Fiqh will follow when I discuss Al-Mustaṣfa min Tirm al-Uṣūl.

2.2.2 Al-Qīyās (analogical reasoning)

On the question of qīyās (analogical reasoning), al-Ghazzāliyy stated that the companions of the Prophet (S.A.A.S.) used analogical reasoning without hesitation in solving problems when there is no direct text in the Qur’an and the Sunnah to address them. The context in which Al-Ghazzāliyy presented his arguments to support his position regarding analogical reasoning indicates that he was on the defensive. It is a clear sign that there were those who opposed the use of qīyās in the Shari’ah. In fact, Al-Ghazzāliyy discussed the position of the various schools of jurisprudence and sects towards qīyās.

In the chapter on analogical reasoning (kitāb al-qīyās),

20 Al-‘Awani, p. 49.
21 One famous example that Al-Ghazzāliyy cited in his book was the Hadīth in which prophet Muhammad (S.A.A.S.) asked Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal when he sent him to Yemen, “What are you going to use for judgement?” He answered, “The book of Allah.” (He the prophet) said, “What if you do not find what you are looking for?” He answered, “Then by the Sunnah of Allah’s messenger-May Allah’s peace and prayers be upon him.” Then he said, “What if you do not find (what you are looking for)?” Abu Mus‘ād said, “I will use my opinion (qiṣḥahīn rā‘iq).” He (the prophet) said, “Praise Allah who guided the messenger of the messenger of Allah.” This Hadith was narrated by Ahmad, Abu Dawud and Al-Tirmidhiyy who stated that the chain of narrators of this Hadith is incomplete. In addition, Al-Bukhārīyy said that this Hadith is not sound, but nevertheless there were those who considered it sound. Al-Ghazzāliyy, Al-Mankhūl, pp. 331.
22 See this discussion on page 145.
24 Al-Ghazzāliyy, Al-Mankhūl, p. 332.
25 The Dawudīyyah, also known as Al-Zahrīyyah, followers of Dawud Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Khalaf (d. 270 A.H./883 C.E.) established a school of jurisprudence that only accepted the literal meaning of the Qur’an and the Sunnah.
26 Al-Nazam (f. 221 A.H./836 A.D.) rejected qīyās shar‘īyyah totally. This position of al-Nazam is similar to the position of most of Al-Khawārij and most Al-Rawafīd. Abu Hasam Al-Jubayrī rejected most of qīyās shar‘īyyah, Al-Ghazzāliyy, Al-Mankhūl, pp. 334-326.
27 Al-Ghazzāliyy, Al-Mankhūl, pp. 34-35.
On the definition of science (‘ilm). Al-Ghazzaliyy listed six different definitions including those of four famous scholars along with his arguments which undermined them all. Al-Ghazzaliyy had a peculiar position towards science: he thought that “science cannot be defined” (‘inna al-‘ilm la hadda lah). Moreover, he explained that science could be known and that “our inability to define (science) does not indicate our ignorance about the same science”. To explain his point, Al-Ghazzaliyy said that it would be similar to his being asked to define Musk perfume; while knowing what it is, he would not be able to do so (i.e. prove a definition [hadīd] of it). In addition, he maintained that science could be distinguished from opinion (ẓarār) and skepticism (shu`kā).29

Al-Ghazzaliyy divided the sciences or knowledge30 into eternal (qādirū) and accidental (ḥaddīh). Eternal knowledge is that of Allah (i.e. knowledge which Allah possesses). This knowledge has no beginning and it encompasses all information.31 Furthermore, “it cannot be described neither as acquired nor as necessary (wa‘alā yusa‘af bika‘numi kās biyājan wālā daruryya‘n).”32 Al-Ghazzaliyy divided accidental knowledge into immediate (ḥajīmīyy)33 and theoretical (nāzārīyy). The ḥajīmīyy is that knowledge which one has to (qādirūn) know with the beginning of reason (bi aswād al-‘aqīf), like knowing the existence of the self (wujūd al-dhāt), pains and pleasures. On the other hand, theoretical knowledge, which is the result of sound thinking (an-nāzār as-hāhī).34

On the essence of reason (maḥbūnut al-‘aqīf). Al-Ghazzaliyy listed the definitions of jurists, Sufis and philosophers; he was not critical regarding all of them. Al-Baḥrillānīyy said that the essence of reason is knowing what is possible and what is not. Al-Ghazzaliyy rejected this definition saying that someone who was unaware of the possible and the impossible could still be rational (‘aqīf). In addition, Al-Ḥarīrī Al-Mulāṣīṣīyy, said that reason was an instinct (gharībāh). This definition was mentioned without any comment. Moreover, Al-Ghazzaliyy listed what he called the philosophers’ definition without any comment.35 He said that the philosophers defined reason as the state in which the brain is prepared for the emanation (fāqīd) of the soul. The most important definition here is that of Al-Ghazzaliyy himself. He defined reason as “the qualification which enables the qualified (person) to perceive knowledge and to think about the cognizable.”36

Al-Ghazzaliyy had a peculiar classification of knowledge. The rank of each aspect of knowledge depended on necessity (darūrah) and intuition (badīhah); the closest to necessity and intuition would be the the clearest and thus ranked first. The following are Al-Ghazzaliyy’s ten levels of knowledge in the order they appear in Al-Maḥkūm:37

1. The knowledge of the existence of the self (al-‘ilm bi wujūd al-dhāt), pain and pleasure.
2. Knowing the impossibility of the agreement of contradictions.

28 They are: Abu Al-Ḥasan Al-Askārīyy, Abu Al-Qasim Al-Iṣkābiyy (d. 452 A.H./1060 C.E.) who was one of Imam Al-Haramayn’s teachers, Ibn Fawrak (d. 406 A.H./1015 C.E.) and Al-Baṣīlīyy whom Al-Ghazzaliyy refer to as the Judge. Al-Ghazzaliyy, Al-Maḥkūm, pp. 36–39.
29 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Al-Maḥkūm, p. 40.
30 Al-Ghazzaliyy used science (‘ilm) and knowledge (maṣrafa) to indicate the same concept. Al-Ghazzaliyy, Al-Maḥkūm, p. 30.
31 The scope of Allah’s knowledge, whether it encompasses all knowledge including details or not, led Al-Ghazzaliyy to dispute the position of philosophers like Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina who claimed that Allah’s knowledge did not comprise details (juz‘āyad) and eventually declared their position as sacrilegious.
32 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Al-Maḥkūm, p. 42.
33 The root of this word is ḥajma which literally means “came about or attacked suddenly”. It seems that Al-Ghazzaliyy here used it to indicate that this kind of knowledge takes place quickly.
34 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Al-Maḥkūm, pp. 42–43.
35 Al-Ghazzaliyy’s usage of the term “philosophers” comprises Greek and Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi. Al-Ghazzaliyy provided a more detailed account of the philosophers in Tabaqat Al-Falāṣiḥ (The Destruction of the Philosophers) and Al-Munqidh Min Al-Dalāl.
36 Emanation (fāqīd) is a neo-Platonic idea that was entertained by various Muslim philosophers and especially by Al-Farabi. The fact that Al-Ghazzaliyy left this notion without comment could be explained by saying that Al-Ghazzaliyy studied philosophy on his own when he was in Baghdad, long after he wrote Al-Maḥkūm. One should be aware of the use of another word to indicate emanation which is sūfra.
37 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Al-Maḥkūm, pp. 44–45.
Knowing the sensibles (al-mahṣūṣāt).

The knowledge that results from more than one source reporting the same news (akhbār al-tawātūr).

Understanding a message (khūṭāb), and the ability to perceive conditions that indicate shyness, anger and fear.

Knowledge of crafts and industries.

Knowledge of theories (naẓārīyyāt).

Knowing of the mission of the messengers (of Allah). 38

Knowledge of miracles.

Knowledge that results from narrations (samʿīyyāt) which is "similar to imitation (taqlīd).” 29

Analyzing the above list, one can see that Al-Ghazzālīyy’s approach was developmental. He started with the clearest and most necessary notion of knowledge and proceeded in the direction of the more complex. The first level was the realization of the existence of the self which he associated with pain and pleasure. The second level of knowledge was logical necessities. In listing the first two levels of knowledge, Al-Ghazzālīyy indicated that these two levels were innate. However, in his Al-Muṣaqīḍ min al-Daʿālī, the first two notions were not mentioned. Instead, the senses were ranked first. 40 This shows that Al-Ghazzālīyy was refining his sources of knowledge due to his continued reflection and interest in epistemology. The changes in themselves are clear indications of the developmental aspect of his

theory of knowledge.

According to Al-Ghazzālīyy, the fourth source of knowledge, akhūbūr al-tawātūr, was a result of a logical necessity and a conventional agreement. The logical necessity came from the notion that it is unlike for a large number of independent narrators of the same news (i.e. hadith) to lie about it. 41 In the language of the scholars of Hadith, the above idea is called "the impossibility of (having) a conspiracy to lie" (istīḥālat al-tawātūr 'ala al-kadhibī). The conventional aspect came in answer to the following question: how many narrators were needed in order to render a narration as mutawātīr? 42 The importance of this source of knowledge could be realized from the fact that Muslim scholars regarded a hadīth which was considered mutawātīr on the same level as the Qur’an in terms of certitude.

The fifth kind of knowledge was analytical. Al-Ghazzālīyy was not the only one to talk about analytical knowledge that resulted from written texts; he also talked about analytical knowledge that could be derived from facial expressions. While he did not provide examples of the former, he listed shyness, anger and fear as examples of the latter. The sixth and seventh level could be described as the practical and theoretical knowledge respectively. 43

The last three kinds of knowledge, which included knowing the mission of the prophets, miracles and knowledge that was based on authority (taqlīd), were all directly related to religion. Taqlīd differs from khabar al-tawātūr in the methodology one adopts in verifying the transmitted knowledge; in the case of taqlīd there is an uncritical acceptance of knowledge (i.e. hadith), while in khabar al-tawātūr one is critical about the methodology of transmitting the hadith. In addition, taqlīd or knowledge of miracles could be related to khabar al-ṣīlah where the number of narrators

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38 It should be noted that the eighth level indicates knowledge of the necessity of having messengers and thus differs from the fourth level which is concerned with knowledge that is transmitted from those messengers through multiple chains of narrators.


40 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Al-Muṣaqīḍ, p. 144.

41 To qualify for acceptance, those narrators should meet very strict criteria in moral character and memory. Al-Tahhan, Musâlah al-Hadith, p. 109.

42 A hadīth is considered mutawātīr if it was narrated by at least ten narrators in each generation (tablāqā). In addition, the circumstances of these narrators should be such that it is impossible for them to conspire to lie (istihālat taqlīdhum 'ala al-Kadhibī). Al-Tahhan, Musâlah al-Hadith, pp. 17-18.

43 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Al-Mankhul, p. 47.
is less than that of khabar at-tauwur. Al-Ghazzālīyy’s listing of the knowledge of miracles as a separate entity might indicate his early preoccupation with this idea, although he did not explain his own position until he responded to the Muslim philosophers’ notion of causality in Tahāfut al-Falāsifah [The Incoherence of the Philosophers].44 By classifying taqlīd as the last kind of knowledge, Al-Ghazzālīyy hinted that he considered it the least clear on his list. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the first source of knowledge that he gave up before his period of skepticism was taqlīd.45

Al-Ghazzālīyy later revised this list and came up with a list of thirteen categories of knowledge that were used by the philosophers as premises in the section on logic in his Maqāsid al-Falāsifah (The Aims of the Philosophers) which he wrote in Baghdad when he assumed his professorial position at the Nizāmīyyah. Al-Ghazzālīyy listed these categories in the following order:

1. Al-Uwūdulijāt (logical necessities): e.g., knowing that “the whole is greater than the part”.

2. Al-Maḥsūsāt (sensibles): e.g., “the light of the moon increases and decreases”.

3. Al-Tajribīyāt (experimentals): they result from the senses and reason together, e.g., “the fire burns”.

4. Al-Mutawwātātāt (knowledge related by a group of narrators): “like our knowledge of the existence of Egypt and Makkah without seeing them”.

5. Al-Qadāyā al-Latī Qiyāsātuhā fī al-Tab‘ Ma‘āhā [the cases that include their proofs within]: premises that were treated as logical necessities because their proofs were forgotten with time as the premise “two is half four” which originally was known through the proof “the half is one of two parts of a whole that is equal to the other”.

6. Al-Wāḥidīyāt (hypothetical): like the premise “it is impossible for it to be true” if one cannot point to it and it is described as being neither inside nor outside this world”.

7. Al-Mashhūrat (famous): as in the case of “lying is bad”. Al-Ghazzālīyy said that this category comprised conventional notions that were good for practical reasons. He added that if there were a man who was rational yet not accustomed to anything, he might reject famous premises.

8. Al-Maqbūlāt (acceptable): premises that were accepted by virtue of the position of the person who provided them (i.e. scholars).

9. Al-Musallamāt (agreeables): premises that were agreed upon between two parties.

10. Al-Mushabbihāt (similarly): premises that only appeared to be corresponding to al-Uwūdulijāt, al-Tajribīyāt or al-Mashhūrat but in reality they were not.

11. Al-Mashhūrat Fī Al-Zāhir (those that appear to be famous): premises that were accepted as true upon hearing them, but rendered false upon reflecting on them.

12. Al-Maznūnāt (probables): premises that were accepted as true with the “feeling that the opposite is possible”.

13. Al-Makhlūdāt (imaginative): premises that were known to be false yet they were influential psychologically.46

In Mī‘yār al-‘Ilm fī al-Mantiq (The Criterion of Science in Logic), Al-Ghazzālīyy maintained basically the same list as above except for the addition of a new category which was Al-Hadīṣīyāt (intuitions). He explained the knowledge that resulted from intuition as that which “cannot be proved.

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44 For a full discussion of Al-Ghazzālīyy’s understanding of causality and miracles see page 85.
45 See Al-Ghazzālīyy, Al-Munṣūdā, p. 77.
cannot be doubted and cannot be shared with others through education". Al-Ghazzalīyy did not provide examples of this kind of knowledge, but he hinted that it is similar to the case of knowledge that is acquired by "taste" dhawq. He maintained that one could only lead the student to the path that he chose, but it is up to the student's ability to achieve such knowledge.47

Moreover, Al-Ghazzalīyy discussed the differences between the senses, whether they are on the same level or whether some rank higher than others. He cited several positions without stating his own thought on this subject. It should be noted that in Al-Munjidh min al-Dalāl (Delivery from Error), which he wrote towards the end of his life, Al-Ghazzalīyy became very clear about this issue: he ranked the senses on different levels in the order of their development and by virtue of this classification they were listed as sources of sensible knowledge.48

Al-Ghazzalīyy concluded his classification of knowledge by stating that there were no differences between the sciences once knowledge is acquired, regardless of how difficult the subject of the science was.49 This view of Al-Ghazzalīyy regarding the equality of the sciences, once they are achieved, is compatible with his position regarding his interchangeable use of the terms "science" and "knowledge".50 Nevertheless, one could still find contradiction on the surface between the above notion and the fact that Al-Ghazzalīyy listed various levels of knowledge in different texts, a procedure that started with Al-Mankhul and continued through out his life. It is rather obvious that in such lists, he classified different categories of sciences leaving the impression that some are more scientific than others. As to the changes in the number of these categories, one can attribute them to the development in his understanding of the concept of science which could be attributed partially to his exposure to philosophy.

2.2.4 The Sources of Knowledge

Prior to stating his position on the sources of knowledge, Al-Ghazzalīyy cited some positions that were circulating at the time. He started with Al-Hashawīyyah51 who's view was that the sources of knowledge were restricted to the Qur'an and the Sunnah without any role for reason. Al-Ghazzalīyy said that this position was obviously false.52 Although one could understand the background of Al-Ghazzalīyy's statement regarding the Hashawīyyah, it was insufficient on his part not to provide a full account of his position. Of course, there is the possibility that Al-Ghazzalīyy thought it was self-evident.

In addition, he listed the ideas of those who restricted the sources of knowledge to the senses, the stance of the Indian philosophers who thought that the sources were thinking and meditation and the position of those who considered inspiration (ihuq) as the source of knowledge. The latter position was based upon the idea that all knowledge belonged to Allah in the first place and then it is passed to human beings. Furthermore, he mentioned the opinion of Al-Qalansīyy who restricted the source of knowledge to reason ('aql) without rejecting the senses. For him, the function of the senses is to perceive, but it is reason that knows at the time the senses perceive (i.e. light). The meaning of this is that Al-Qalansīyy saw the senses as tools that cannot comprehend what they perceive on their own. He tried to support his argument by giving an example of a child who perceives the perceptibles without knowing what they are for his lack of reason.

Al-Ghazzalīyy brought the above discussion to an end by asserting that rational discernment (miṣ) was the source of knowledge. He held that there is a level of discernment that belonged to animals which did not yield any knowledge.53

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48 Al-Ghazzalīyy, Al-Munjidh, pp. 144-145.
49 Al-Ghazzalīyy, Al-Mankhul, p. 48.
50 See footnote 30.
51 Al-Hashawīyyah was a sect that accepted only the literal meaning of the verses of the al-Qur'an and Hadiths that mentioned Allah in language that would add corporeal attributes to Allah. Al-Ghazzalīyy.
52 Al-Mankhul, p. 48.
53 Ibid.
Al-Ghazzâliyy brought this discussion to a culmination by reconciling the two positions together. It could be that language at its beginning was conventional; this conventional beginning could have been made possible by other creatures who were created before Adam. Al-Ghazzâliyy maintained that the above mentioned verse "appeared" to indicate the non-conventionality of language but it was not decisive.56

2.3 DELIVERANCE FROM ERROR (Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalâl)

According to Al-Subkiyy, Al-Ghazzâliyy spent about eight years (470-478 A.H./1077-1085 C.E.) in Nishapur with Al-Juwainiyy.59 At the time Al-Juwainiyy died Al-Ghazzâliyy was at least 20 years old. The importance of these dates and Al-Ghazzâliyy’s age stem from an account of Al-Ghazzâliyy’s thought in his autobiographical work Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalâl which, although written towards the end of his life, included useful information about the development of his epistemology during his early life which fits the frame work of this chapter. At the beginning of Al-Munqidh, he describes his state of mind starting with the prime of his youth when he “reached puberty (al-bulūq), before becoming twenty”, until he became more than fifty years old.60 It is obvious that his timeframe covers the period when Al-Ghazzâliyy wrote his book Al-Mankhul min Ta’līqat al-Usūl.

In al-Munqidh, Al-Ghazzâliyy showed that early in his life he was aware of the differences between the various religions, sects and schools of jurisprudence. This awareness prompted him to “investigate the creed of every sect and to explore the secrets of every denomination”. In addition, he studied the Batinites, Zahirites, philosophers, dialectical theologians (mutakallimūn), Sufis and Manicheans (za-nādūqūṭ).61 Al-Ghazzâliyy realized at a very early stage that

54 Al-Ghazzâliyy used the same Arabic term tamyiz (discernment) for both human beings and animals.
55 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Al-Munqidh, p. 145.
56 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Al-Mankhul, p. 51.
58 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Al-Mankhul, pp. 70-71.
59 Al-Subkiyy, Vol. VI, p. 196.
60 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Al-Munqidh, p. 79.
61 Zanadqūl also means atheists, but generally in medieval sciences it referred to Manicheans who were not atheists.
one major reason for these differences was authority. For him it was parents and teachers who were responsible for such differences. Al-Ghazzālīy saw that "children of Christians were raised as Christians, children of Jews were raised as Jews and children of Muslims were raised as Muslims". 62

As a result, Al-Ghazzālīy wanted to prescind from the knowledge that was based on the authority of parents and teachers. He had "a thirst to perceive the reality of things" which led him to break away from imitating others. Al-Ghazzālīy realized that in order to reach truth, he needed to "seek the reality of knowledge, as it is". 63

2.4 CONCLUSION

Comparing the language of al-Mankhūl to that of Al-Munqīd, one finds a big difference. In al-Mankhūl, Al-Ghazzālīy’s basic interest in knowledge was mainly as a jurist. He concentrated on technical issues that were part of or related to usūl al-fiqh. One example of a technical issue was Al-Ghazzālīy’s discussion of the conditions of the narrators of Hadith. He said that the narrator has to be a rational adult Muslim who could be male or female, free or a slave. For a narrator who fits these conditions, only questions of immodesty render his/her narration unacceptable. 64 Another issue that Al-Ghazzālīy dealt with was the position of Islamic Sharī'ah towards the Shari'ah of the prophets before Islam. The question that underlines this area of discussion is whether Muslim jurists should consider previous Sharī'ah as another source in addition to the Qur’an, Sunnah, consensus of the companions of the prophet [S.A.A.S.], later on became the consensus of the scholars, and iqīṣās (analogy). He started by discussing whether prophet Muhammad [S.A.A.S.] was following any previous Sharī'ah before he became a prophet. After setting forth the positions for several other scholars, Al-Ghazzālīy brought the issue to a culmination by stating that one cannot consider the Shari'ah of past religions as a source of Islamic Shari'ah because there was no reference to such notions in the Sunnah of prophet Muhammad [S.A.A.S.] 65

It should not come as a surprise that, as a student, Al-Ghazzālīy imitated his teacher Al-Juwainīy, a position that he acknowledged at the end of al-Mankhūl. Although he differed in very few cases from his teacher in al-Mankhūl, his originality in usūl al-fiqh was manifested in his later work Al-Mustasfā where logic played a major role in his usūl.

In Al-Munqīd, Al-Ghazzālīy is preoccupied with truth in itself. He did not refer to jurisprudence or the usūl. While usūl al-fiqh, and thus al-Mankhūl, was supposed to solve differences in jurisprudence, it was differences in belief that prompted Al-Ghazzālīy to search for truth. His awareness, during the early stages of his life, of the different creeds of people started him on his first stage of a long journey of systematic skepticism which lasted until the climax of his quest for knowledge during his last days at the Nizāmiyyah of Baghdad.

Al-Ghazzālīy’s critical thinking and regard to general questions of truth and knowledge, while apparent in Al-Munqīd is absent from al-Mankhūl. The fact that these two books reflected different areas of interest in Al-Ghazzālīy’s early life might appear contradictory. One question that might surface as a result of these two areas is: how could someone like Al-Ghazzālīy, who was investigating the general notions of knowledge and their sources as stated in Al-Munqīd, proceed to verify the particular as the case in al-Mankhūl?

There could be one answer, I argue, that explains the above mentioned positions. Al-Ghazzālīy maintained two lines of thought since the days of youth until the last years of his life. The first line of thought, which represents Al-Ghazzālīy’s quest for knowledge, is best illustrated in the following lines from the introduction of Al-Munqīd:

“In the bloom of my life, from the time I reached puberty before I was twenty until now, when I am over fifty, I have constantly been diving daringly into the depths of this profound sea and wading into its deep water like a bold man, not like a cautious coward. I would penetrate far

62 Al-Ghazzālīy, Al-Munqīd, pp. 78-82.
63 Ibid., p. 82.
64 Al-Ghazzālīy, Al-Mankhūl, p. 257.
65 Al-Ghazzālīy, Al-Mankhūl, pp. 231-234.
works were reflecting the first line of thought because they were concerned with particulars. Unlike a reductionist, he addressed these areas of particulars as if there was no relationship between the general notions of knowledge, which he put under investigation, and these particular fields.

The fact that Al-Ghazzālī kept working in the particular fields of the Shari'ah indicates that he was never in doubt about the true validity of the premises which were derived from the Qur'an and the Sunna. In fact, he continued lecturing on these subjects even at the Nizamiyyah of Baghdad, when he was going through what I like to call the climax of his mental discourse regarding the first line of thought. 69

Al-Ghazzālī’s continuous inquiry into both universals and particulars is interesting because on the surface they seem incompatible. One could see that Al-Ghazzālī had an obvious, spontaneous interest in the first. It prompted a good deal of reflection throughout his life. The difficulty is in the question: why did he pursue the second? Part of the answer could be found in Al-Ghazzālī’s formal education which started with training in the particulars (e.g. fiqh). Another partial answer comes from the fact that there was common interest in these particular sciences, especially in jurisprudence. In addition, Al-Ghazzālī pursued his interest in the particulars as a teacher who was expected, and thus there is a sense of duty, to lecture on such topics. All of these aspects and probably more provided the motivation for such pursuit of knowledge in the particulars. Moreover, one could think that once Al-Ghazzālī achieved universal knowledge, he found that his interest in the particulars was in line with his interest in the universals. In addition, there is a sociological element in this equation, where a scholar in the Islamic world is unlikely to be accepted without being deep rooted and having strong interest in the particulars.

67 For Al-Ghazzālī, conformism or taqālīd meant uncritical acceptance of knowledge and belief at the hands of parents and teachers by virtue of their authority.
68 Al-Ghazzālī, Freedom, p. 63.

Al-Ghazzālī reaffirmed the early beginning of this search for truth and the source of this quest: for knowledge in the same introduction. He said:

"The thirst for grasping the real meaning of things was indeed my habit and wont from my early years and in the prime of my life. It was an instinctive, natural disposition placed in my makeup by God (Allah) Most High, not something due to my own choosing and contriving. As a result, the fetters of servile conformism (taqālīd) fell away from me, and inherited beliefs lost their hold on me, when I was still quite young."

Although the above quotations showed the time frame of the first line of thought, which covered Al-Ghazzālī’s life as a student, it remains that there were no books written by the student Al-Ghazzālī, that reflected this independent approach to knowledge and truth. There were many works (e.g. Al-Munqīdth min al-Dalāl) by the later Al-Ghazzālī that embodied this investigative course that he undertook in pursuit of knowledge and truth in what could be called the area of universals.

The second line of thought is represented in Al-Ghazzālī’s works in fields like jurisprudence. Although the first line of thought must have influenced the way Al-Ghazzālī approached areas like fiqh by having that independent spirit which led him not to be a conformist to previous writings in such fields, one cannot claim that these
Chapter THREE

AL-GHAZZÂLIYY’S QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE:
THE FIRST PERIOD OF PUBLIC TEACHING
(478–488 A.H./1085–1095 C.E.)

This chapter deals with Al-Ghazzâliyy’s writings from the
time of the death of Al-Juwainiyy in 478 A.H./1085 C.E.
until he abandoned his professorial position at the Niẓâmiyyah of Baghdad in 488 A.H./1095 C.E.

During this period, Al-Ghazzâliyy wrote at least twenty
books in addition to the written rulings (fatâwa) that he
issued during the same period. These writings, many of
which were lost or remain in manuscript form, covered
several subjects including jurisprudence (fiqh), debates
(munâzarah) in fiqh, fundamentals of jurisprudence (Usûl
Al-Fiqh), philosophy, politics and creed (aqidah). In this
chapter, I shall concentrate on his works in areas that
certain to his quest for true knowledge directly (i.e.
philosophy). Others will be treated briefly.

In addition, it is necessary to also treat Al-Ghazzâliyy’s
Al-Mungidh min al-Dalal in this chapter. Although this work
was written during the second period of public teaching
(499 A.H./1106 C.E.–503 A.H./1110 C.E.), it includes one
of the most important accounts on his thought during the
period leading to his departure from Baghdad. This account
covers his skepticism in addition to his analysis of the me-

1 The writings that were lost include Al-Muntaha fi Ram al-Jadâl
Ma’âkhîd al-Khâlîf, Tahsin al-Ma’âkhîd, Al-Mabâdi’ wa al-Ghayat,
Hujjat al-îqâ al-Ghazzâliyy, and Qawmain al-Batînîyyah. The manuscripts comprise
Al-Bâsit, Khulasat al-Mukhtâsar wa Nasbî al-Mu‘asîr, Shi‘a al-
Ghazzâli, al-Qiyas Wat-Tawîl, Fatawa, Ghayat al-Ghazzâli, and Dirajat al-
Dowr and Al-Ma‘arif al-‘Aqîdîyyah wa Lubab al-Hikmah al-Sahîhyyah.
thodologies of the four "classes of seekers": the dialectical theologians (Al-Mutakallimin), the esoterics Al-Būtūnīyayīn, the philosophers and the Sufis. The pertinence of these issues to Al-Ghazzālīyy's development during this decade will be examined in detail in this chapter.

3.1 ON FIQH, MUNĀZARAH AND USūL AL-FIQH

Al-Ghazzālīyy's works in jurisprudence and the related subjects show his continuing interest in this field, an interest which started in his student days. Although these works reflect a certain development in Al-Ghazzālīyy's perspective on jurisprudence, he remained throughout faithful to the Shāfi‘ī school of jurisprudence.

3.1.1 On Jurisprudence

Al-Ghazzālīyy wrote several books of fiqh, according to the Shāfi‘ī school, during the time regarded by Maurice Bouyges as the first period of his public teaching (478–488 A.H./1085–1095 C.E.). These books, which were considered his first writings, include Al-Bāṣfī, Al-Wāṣfī, Al-Wajīz and Khulūṣāt Al-Mukhtaṣar. In addition, he issued tens of separate rulings (fatāwā) in the area of fiqh. One hundred and ninety of these rulings were gathered in one manuscript which remains unpublished. Ibn Khallikān stated that Al-Ghazzālīyy borrowed the names of the first three books, in the same order, from Al-Wāḥidiyy Al-Mufassirī (d. 468 A.H./1074 C.E.) who wrote three books on the interpretation of the Qur'an.

These three books of Al-Ghazzālīyy were practically the same as one another. The first in the series was Al-Bāṣfī (The Simple). Realizing that this book included unnecessary details and examples which made it difficult for students to read, Al-Ghazzālīyy decided to write a shorter version which he called Al-Wāṣfī (The Median). According to him, Al-Wāṣfī, which was written as a textbook, is half the size of Al-Bāṣfī. In addition, Al-Ghazzālīyy set forth a rule for writing when he explicitly said that "deciding the goal (of a book) should be according to the ability of the student." This rule reflects Al-Ghazzālīyy's exceptional talent as an educator. Later on, Al-Ghazzālīyy wrote a further abridgement which he named Al-Wajīz (The Concise).

The fourth book that Al-Ghazzālīyy wrote on jurisprudence during this period was Khulūṣāt Al-Mukhtaṣar (The Extract of the Compendium). This book was simply an abridgment of the Mukhtaṣar of Al-Mūniyyayī (d. 264 A.H./878 C.E.). Al-Murtada Al-Zubaydyīyy stated that Al-Ghazzālīyy did not work directly on the original book of Al-Mūniyyayī, but rather on an intermediate work which was also an abridgment written by Al-Juwainīyy (d. 438 A.H./1047 C.E.), father of Imam Al-Ḥarāmāyīn Al-Juwainīyy, teacher of Al-Ghazzālīyy. According to Al-Ghazzālīyy, this book was his smallest contribution to jurisprudence.

The contributions of Al-Ghazzālīyy in fiqh are to be expected. After all, his position at the Nizāmīyyah school was given only to scholars of the Shāfi‘ī school of jurisprudence. It was apparent from his writings in fiqh that they were intended as textbooks. Al-Ghazzālīyy dedicated most of his time to teaching and writing. He used his "spare time" to pursue the goal that he designated for himself: his quest for true knowledge.

3.1.2 On the Methods of Debate

Al-Ghazzālīyy wrote four books on debates in the field of jurisprudence Al-Muntahā fi Ilm al-Jadal, Ma‘ākhith al-
Khalif Lubab al-Nazar and Tahsin al-Ma'akhidh were all written as a result of a trend dominant in his time. Concerning that trend, he said in Mi'yar al-'Ilm:

"Because aspirations during our age were almost exclusively inclined to jurisprudence. I was led to write books in the methods of debate. (al-Munażara)."

The fact that Al-Ghazzaliyy wrote many books on debate, and that he spent much time in debating others at the "Camp" of Nizam Al-Mulk, show his personal interest in debates which could not be considered, strictly speaking, part of his quest for knowledge. Al-Ghazzaliyy held that unless the debating parties adhered to etiquette of debate (ta'lab al-munażara) as he outlined in his books, these debates would lead to animosity and hatred. It seems that Al-Ghazzaliyy did not consider debate to be a very positive activity. Indeed, when his visited the tomb of prophet Ibrahim [a.s.] in Hebron after his departure from Baghdad, which marked a new era in his thought, Al-Ghazzaliyy despised debating and made a pledge never again to debate with anyone.

3.1.3 On the Fundamentals of Jurisprudence

On Usul al-Fiqh, Al-Ghazzaliyy wrote two books during the same period: Al-Mabaddi' Wal-Ghadat and Shifa' Al-Ghali fi Al-Qiyas wa al-Ta'll. The first book was lost, and what little information there is about it comes from two references in other writings of Al-Ghazzaliyy. Badawi claimed the subject of Al-Mabaddi' wa al-Ghadat was usul al-fiqh. Such a claim was disputed, but given the scant information, it is virtually impossible to settle the debate regarding even its subject matter.

There are many manuscripts of the second book, Shifa' al-All fi al-Qiyas wa al-Ta'll, which was edited by

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11 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Mi'yar al-'Ilm, p. 27.
12 Qadri Hazir Tagar, Al-Tulm 'ind al-'Arab (Beirut: Dar Iqra', 1983) p. 189.
15 Al-Ghazzaliyy, al-Munqidi', pp. 81-82.
16 Al-Ghazzaliyy, al-Munqidi', p. 82.
17 In his translation of al-Munqidi min al-Dalal, Freedom and Fulfillment, R. J. McCarthy used "sense-data" to translate "al-hissayyad". It was Bertrand Russell who was first to use "sense-data" linguistically to express the contents of sensations. For Russell, there is an element of immediacy associated with the concept of "sense-data" which Al-Ghazzaliyy's idea of sensibles (hissayyad) lacks. Thus, I have departed from McCarthy's translation.
18 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Freedom and Fulfillment (al-Munqidi), p. 64.
make sure that he did not have a false sense of security like the one he had previously with knowledge that he received from parents and teachers.19

With great seriousness, Al-Ghazzālī started meditating on sensibles and self-evident knowledge. He wanted to see whether he could doubt them. As a result, he concluded:

“This protracted effort to induce doubt (tashā'ud) finally brought me to the point where my soul would not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of sensibles. It began to give ground to doubt (tattass'u tishā'ad) and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sensibles?”20

In a rather beautiful style, Al-Ghazzālī presented these reflections in the form of dialogue with his personified soul which brought to his attention examples from sight, the strongest of the sensibles, in order to prove that he could not rely on the senses. One example was the case of shadow where sight “looks at shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then due to experience and observation, an hour later it (the soul) knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest”. His soul showed him that on this and similar sensibles, the sense-judge (ḥākim al-biss) deemed them to be true. But soon, the reason-judge (ḥākim al-ṣagūf) “refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion”.21

After doubting sensibles, Al-Ghazzālī describes himself as provisionally thinking that he could only trust rational data (al-ʿuṣūlīyyāt) which belong to primary truths (al-ṣīraḥatīyyāt). These primary truths would consist of mathematical and logical truths. He said:

“My reliance on sensibles has also become untenable. Perhaps, therefore I can rely only on those rational data which belong to the category of primary truths, such as our asserting that ‘Ten is more than three’ and ‘One and the same thing cannot be simultaneously affirmed and denied’ and ‘One and the same thing cannot be inceptive and eternal, existent and nonexistent, necessary and impossible’.22

At this stage, as Al-Ghazzālī found himself trusting rational data, a challenge was posed by the sensibles which also showed up as a personified character. It addressed Al-Ghazzālī and disputed his acceptance of rational data. Its argument was based upon drawing similarities between his previous acceptance of sensibles and his later approval of rational data as the only trustworthy knowledge. Al-Ghazzālī’s doubt of sensibles was the outcome of the presence of a higher faculty, namely, the judge of reason. Why then could it not be the case that there were yet another judge higher than that of reason which, if manifested, would render reason doubtful? “The sensibles” also argued, even though this other judge was not revealed, this did not indicate the impossibility of its existence.23

Al-Ghazzālī next described himself as puzzled and not knowing what to say. “The sensibles” reinforced its position by appealing to dreams where it said:

“Don’t you see that when you are asleep you believe certain things and imagine certain circumstances and believe they are fixed and lasting and entertain no doubts about that being their status? Then you wake up and know that all your imaginings and beliefs were groundless and unsubstantial. So while everything you believe through sensation or intuition in your waking state may be true in relation to that state, what assurance have you that you may not suddenly experience a state which would have the same relation to your waking state as the latter has into your dreaming in relation to that new and further state? If you find yourself in such a state, you would be sure that all your rational beliefs were unsubstantial fancies.”24

Al-Ghazzālī considered that the latter state might

19 Al-Ghazzālī, Al-Munāqîd, p. 83.
20 Al-Ghazzālī, Freedom and Fulfillment, p. 64. See also, Al-Ghazzālī, Al-Munāqîd, p. 84.
21 Al-Ghazzālī, Freedom and Fulfillment, pp. 64-65.
22 Al-Ghazzālī, Freedom and Fulfillment, p. 65.
23 Ibid., p. 85.
24 Ibid., p. 65.
be the one that the Sufis claim as theirs. They alleged to "see, in their states, conditions that are not compatible with rational data." In addition, he cited a part of a verse from the Qur'an whose meaning could be translated as, "We have removed your veil and today your sight is acute." For Al-Ghazzālī, this verse indicated that one would see things differently after death and, thus, life could be nothing but a long dream of which one could wake up only after death.

Al-Ghazzālī tried to find a solution to this complex situation, but he could not. He stated that any proof used would consist of primary knowledge that was already doubted. Unable to find an answer, Al-Ghazzālī said that he found himself in a state of skepticism which lasted close to two months.

During these two months, Al-Ghazzālī described his situation as that of a skeptic who denied the possibility of knowledge, as indicated in the title of this chapter of Al-Munqidh: "The Avenues for Sophistry and the Denial of the Sciences" (Madakhil al-Safsafah wa-Jihāl al-Ukm). He said that he contained this skepticism within himself, giving it neither utterance nor composition. It indeed appears true that he did not allow his skepticism to influence his lectures or writing. Thus, Al-Ghazzālī maintained two lines of intellectual activity: the first was in pursuit of true knowledge and the second was within conventional areas of study.

Al-Ghazzālī described his state of skepticism as a "sickness", the remedy for which "was not the result of arranging proofs or organizing words." Rather, he claimed that he was healed by "a light (nir), that Allah Most High cast into his chest". At this stage, Al-Ghazzālī regained his trust in logical necessities. He added that "this light was the key to most of the cognitions (ma'arif)."

3.3 SKEPTICISM AND THE CLASSES OF SEEKERS

The section of Al-Ghazzālī's skepticism in Al-Munqidh is extremely important for any attempt to comprehend the development in Al-Ghazzālī's thought. This is especially true because he placed this section before the chapter on the classes of seekers (Aṣnāf Al-Tālibīn) in which he described the next phase of his quest for true knowledge in a fragmented frame of time. As such, the section of skepticism forms the background to his assessment of the classes of seekers.

In his search for the methodology that leads for true knowledge, Al-Ghazzālī looked into the belief and creed of every sect and group, including Manichaeans (zānādiqāh), whom he sought the background of this position which he considered so bold. Eventually, after being relieved of skepticism, he narrowed his search to four groups: the dialectical theologians, the esoterics, the philosophers and the Sūfīs. Before analyzing each of these groups in detail, he listed and described each of them briefly:

31 Al-Ghazzālī, Freedom and Fulfillment, p. 66.
32 Al-Ghazzālī spent three years studying philosophy and six months in his "spiritual crisis" which took place right before he left the Nizāmīyāh of Baghdad at the end of 488 A.H. /1095 C.E. By deducting three and half years, to which one should add the time Al-Ghazzālī spent in studying and writing about the dialectical theologians (Al-Munāzharallūt), and the esoterics (Al-Baṭūtīqāh). I would say that Al-Ghazzālī's skepticism took place after his arrival at the Nizāmīyāh of Baghdad in 484 A.H. 1091 C.E.
33 Al-Ghazzālī's possible meaning for zānādiqāh is "nihilists", and another is "dualists", for the Manichaeans to whom the term zānādiqāh was frequently used were throughgong dualists.
34 Al-Ghazzālī, Al-Munqidh, pp. 72-81.
35 Ibid., p. 89.
1. The dialectical theologians (Al-Mutekallimun), who claim, (yadda`un) that they are men of independent judgment and reasoning.

2. The esoterics (Batinites), who allege (yaz`umun) to be the unique possessors of learning and the privileged recipients of knowledge acquired from the Infallible Imam.

3. The philosophers, who allege (yaz`umun) that they are the men of logic and apodictic demonstration.

4. The Sufis, who claim (yadda`un) to be the familiars of the divine Presence and the men of mystic vision and illumination.\(^{36}\)

Careful attention to the language that Al-Ghazzaliyy used in this classification reveals that he regarded the four independent groups as actually forming two pairs. He used only two verbs in expressing what the groups had to say. He applied the verb "yadda`un" (claim), which is neutral, to Al-Mutekallimun and the Sufis, but the verb "yaz`umun" (allege), which has a subtle negative tone, to the Batinites and the philosophers. It is evident, therefore that Al-Ghazzaliyy had already taken a position that was favourable to two of the four groups. Furthermore, Al-Ghazzaliyy was convinced that only one of these four groups must have the methodology that leads to true knowledge and if not, he believed that his case was hopeless. He felt that he was compelled to proceed in his quest because there was no way to return to conformism. Al-Ghazzaliyy maintained that once someone becomes conscious of his status as a conformist, it becomes imperative for this person to be independent and to search for true knowledge on his own. It should be noted that Al-Ghazzaliyy exempted from this obligation a conformist (muqallid) who is not aware of himself as being one.\(^{37}\)

\(^{36}\) For this part of Al-Munqidh, I have used the translation of McCarthy with slight changes pertaining to the words 'claim' and 'allege'. Freedom and Fulfilment, p. 67.

\(^{37}\) Al-Ghazzaliyy, Al-Munqidh, pp. 89-90.
aim of their (Al-Mutakallimūn) science, their search did not achieve the ultimate goal in it". The interpretation of "ultimate goal" here could be understood in Aristotelian terms. The general meaning of Al-Ghazzālī’s argument is that the dialectical theologians did not reach complete understanding of the Aristotelian categories.

Al-Ghazzālī’s conflict with Al-Mutakallimūn resulted from their appropriation of arguments from the theses of their antagonists. Of this Al-Ghazzālī said:

"But in so doing (protecting religion) they relied on premises which they took over from their adversaries, being compelled to admit them either by uncrirical acceptance, or because of the Community’s consensus (ijma’), or by simple acceptance deriving from the Qur’ān and the Traditions. Most of their polemic was devoted to bringing out the inconsistencies of their adversaries and criticizing them for the logically absurd consequences of what they conceded. This, however, is of little use in the case of one (i.e. Al-Ghazzālī) who admits nothing at all except the primary and self-evident truths." 40

It is clear that at this stage Al-Ghazzālī restricted his acceptance to primary and self-evident truths and denied the same status to the sources of Islamic Shari‘ah: the Qur’ān, Traditions and the consensus of the companions of the Prophet [S.A.A.S].41 This fact shows that Al-Ghazzālī was consistent in his position. He wanted to find an objective truth that would "provide an effective means of dispelling entirely the darkness due to the bewilderment about the differences dividing men". 42

3.5 AL-GHAZZĀLĪ’S ENCOUNTER WITH PHILOSOPHY

According to Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍal‘l, Al-Ghazzālī stated that in his quest for true knowledge he started studying philosophy after he was done with ‘Ilm al-Kalām (which did not provide the remedy for which he was looking). In his introduction to the section on philosophy he outlined his approach to this new field. He wanted to pursue the science of philosophy to a level higher than that of the most knowledgeable in the field. Only then, he argued, could one know the intricate depths of the science.43

Al-Ghazzālī was aware that he could not rely on secondary sources, such as those of Al-Mutakallimūn, in order to study philosophy. For him, their books included fragmented philosophical words that were complex and contradictory to one another. Instead, he decided to read books of philosophy directly without the assistance of a teacher. Although he was teaching three hundred students at the Nizāmīyyah of Baghdad and writing in the Islamic revealed sciences at the same time, in his spare time Al-Ghazzālī was able to master philosophy in less than two years. He continued reflecting on it for almost another year.44 He reached the level where he became so familiar with the measure of its precisions as well as its deceits, deceptions and delusions, that he had no doubt about his thorough grasp of it.45

As a result of his study he wrote two books: Maqāsid Al-Falāṣifah (The Aims of the Philosophers) and Tahāfut al-Falāṣifah (The Incoherence of the Philosophers). It was Al-Ghazzālī’s intention to write a book which would encompass the thought of the philosophers without criticizing or adding anything to it. This book was to be followed by another (i.e. Tahāfut al-Falāṣifah) that would include his critique of the contents of the first one. It was this latter work that prompted Ibn Rushd46 to write (around 576 A.H./1180 C.E.), Tahāfut al-Tahāfut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence) which constituted a

40 Al-Ghazzālī, Al-Munqīdth, p. 93.
41 Al-Ghazzālī, Freedom and Fulfilment, pp. 68-69.
42 The consensus of the companions of the prophet became, in later generations, the consensus of the scholars (ijma’ al-Umm) at any given time.
43 Al-Ghazzālī, Freedom and Fulfilment, p. 69.
44 Al-Ghazzālī, al-Munqīdth, p. 94.
45 Ibid., pp. 94-95.
46 The full name of Ibn Rushd, who is known in Latin as Averroes, was Abu al-Walid Muhammad Ibn Aḥamd Ibn Muhammad Ibn Rushd. He was born in 520 A.H./1126 C.E. and died 595 A.H./1198 C.E.
systematic rebuttal of Al-Ghazzālīyy’s critique of this melange of Greco-Islamic Philosophy.\textsuperscript{50}

Maqāsīd Al-Falāsīfah (which according to Brockelmann was written in 488 A.H./1095 C.E.)\textsuperscript{51} was a pioneer work in its attempt to deliberately present: an objective account of the thought of adversaries without the inclusion of the author’s ideas. Al-Ghazzālīyy wanted to introduce philosophy as the philosophers knew it. Of this objective, he said:

"I thought that I should introduce, prior to the Tuhfāt, a concise account that will include the story of their aims (maqāsīd) which will be derived from their logical, natural and metaphysical sciences, without distinguishing between what is right and what is wrong, without additions and along with that they believed as their proofs.\textsuperscript{52}"

The works of Al-Ghazzālīyy began to be translated into Latin before the middle of the twelfth century C.E.\textsuperscript{53} Of these, Maqāsīd Al-Falāsīfah was so influential in Latin Europe that Fr. Manuel Alonso listed forty four theologians and philosophers, including St. Thomas Aquinas who himself referred to this book thirty one times.\textsuperscript{54}

In Maqāsīd Al-Falāsīfah, Al-Ghazzālīyy divided the sciences of the philosophers into four major categories: mathematical (al-rijā'īyya), logical (al-mantiqiyya), natural (al-tabī'īyya) and metaphysical (al-khāliyya).\textsuperscript{55} He listed politics, economy\textsuperscript{56} and ethics as subdivisions under metaphysics. In Al-Munqād min al-Dalāl, he listed politics and ethics as major sections along with the first four.\textsuperscript{57}

Regarding mathematics, Al-Ghazzālīyy thought that it dealt with geometry and arithmetic. Neither of these subjects contradicted reason. As a result, Al-Ghazzālīyy did not think that he ought to include a detailed account of mathematics in his book.\textsuperscript{58} This way of treating mathematics shows that reason was the criterion that Al-Ghazzālīyy applied when he entertained philosophy.

Al-Ghazzālīyy’s basic position regarding metaphysics was that most of what the philosophers believed in this field was contrary to the truth (al-haq). The correct ideas were seldom included. On the other hand, in logic he thought that mistakes were very rare. The philosophers only differed with their Muslim counterparts, whom Al-Ghazzālīyy called Ahl al-Haq (people of truth), in the terminology, not in the meanings. As for natural science, he held that it comprised a melange of true and false notions.\textsuperscript{59}

Al-Ghazzālīyy’s judgement regarding metaphysics needs some clarification. In Tuhfāt al-Falāsīfah, he held that there were mistakes in translating the works of Aristotle which led to distortions and changes in the Arabic texts. These mistakes prompted the Islamic philosophers to interpret the philosophical texts in a fashion that caused conflict amongst themselves. In addition, he restricted his discussion of philosophy to the books of Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Since Al-Fārābī’s metaphysics was basically a melange of Neo-Platonism and Aristotelianism, one can see the roots of Al-Ghazzālīyy’s position that what the philosophers believed in this field is contrary to the truth.\textsuperscript{60}

Al-Ghazzālīyy defined logic as "the law (qānūn) that distinguishes a sound premise and analogy from a false one, which leads to the discernment of true knowledge."\textsuperscript{61} In addition, he reviewed all the subjects of logic including induction (istiqrā'). He held that induction could be correct only if all parts were covered; if one part could possibly be different, then induction in this case could not yield true knowledge. To prove his point, he used the following argument:

50 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Maqāsīd al-Falāsīfah, pp. 31-32.
51 Ibid., p. 32.
52 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Tuhfāt, pp. 76-77.
53 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Maqāsīd al-Falāsīfah, p. 36.
Every animal is a human being, mare, etc.
Every human being moves his lower jaw when he chews.
Every mare moves its lower jaw when it chews.
And every (animal) other than these two moves its lower jaw when it chews.
The conclusion: every animal moves its lower jaw.

Al-Ghazzālīyy said that if one animal differs, as is the case with the crocodile which moves its upper jaw, then the conclusion does not yield true knowledge. So, by parts he means members of the same species or group as in the case of "mare", "human being" and "crocodile". Al-Ghazzālīyy maintained that induction was suitable for matters of jurisprudence (fiqhīyyāt), but not for true knowledge. This suggests that Al-Ghazzālīyy accepted induction for practical reasons, but not as a source of true knowledge.

In addition to his review of logic in Maqāsid al-Falāṣīfah, Al-Ghazzālīyy wrote several books on logic during this period. He wrote Mi‘yār al-Ilm fi Fann al-Manṭiq (The Criterion of Knowledge in the Art of Logic), Miḥāk al-Nazar fi al-Manṭiq (The Touch-Stone of Reasoning in Logic) and Miṣān Al-A‘mal (The Balance of Action). It was argued that the first book, Mi‘yār al-Ilm fi Fann al-Manṭiq, was the last part of Tahāfut al-Falāṣīfah. Unlike Ibn Sīnā who began his Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt with a discussion of logic, Al-Ghazzālīyy stated that he was going to write the kitāb of Mi‘yār al-Ilm at the end of Tahāfut al-Falāṣīfah. One can see that whether they comprise one or two books depends on how to interpret the word kitāb. If it is interpreted as chapter, then there is one book; if it is interpreted as book then there are two.

Regardless of the latter issue, Al-Ghazzālīyy placed Mi‘yār al-Ilm "after" the Tahāfut in order that those who were already familiar with logic could commence with his criticism of philosophy directly. For those who did not understand the vocabulary that he used in responding to the philosophers, Al-Ghazzālīyy instructed them to start with Mi‘yār al-Ilm. Despite the fact that Al-Ghazzālīyy wanted his presentation of metaphysics and logic in the Tahāfut and Mi‘yār al-Ilm to be different from their order in Ibn Sīnā’s al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt, Marmura argues that “much of the account of demonstration in the Mi‘yār seems to be a faithful summary of Avicenna’s Demonstration (Al-Ishārāt) which in turn is an exposition and an enlargement of Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics”.

There was yet another purpose for Mi‘yār al-Ilm. Al-Ghazzālīyy intended that the relationship between logic and thought to be analogous to that between meter (‘arīd) and poetry. For him, the theoretical sciences (al-‘Ullm al-nazārīyyāt), which correspond to “thought” in the above analogy, were not innate but rather acquired (mustahsōlah). Al-Ghazzālīyy realized that the process of acquiring knowledge resulted in many mistakes in reasoning which required a criterion for science (mi‘yār li al-nazāt) which corresponds to logic.

One of the most important claims in Mi‘yār al-Ilm was Al-Ghazzālīyy’s assertion that, in every person, there were three judges: a sensible-judge (ḥākim ḥisāḥiyāt), an imaginative-judge (ḥākim ushshīmūyāt) and a rational-judge (ḥākim ‘aqlūyāt). He declared the rational-judge to be the only correct one. This suggests that Mi‘yār al-Ilm must have been written after the end of his two months of

62 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Maqāsid al-Falāṣīfah, pp. 89-90.
63 Badawī, p. xvii.
64 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Mi‘yār al-Ilm, Ahmad Shama Al-Din, ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Imāmiyyah, 1990) p. 11.
65 The word kitāb is used in classical Arabic literature to indicate, among many other meanings, either a book or a chapter.
69 Al-Ghazzālīyy defined the judge of illusion in terms of its false judgement such as denying the existence of a being that one "cannot point to its direction", which indicates a being that is spaceless.
70 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Mi‘yār, p. 29.
skepticism for only then had he regained his trust in logical necessities.71

The language that Al-Ghazzâliyy used in his introduction to discuss the above position in Mu‘yar al-Ilm was somewhat similar to the one he used later on in Al-Munqîdât min al-Dalâlî. In Al-Munqîdât, Al-Ghazzâliyy portrayed the different faculties, including the senses, discernment and reason according to their natural evolution in the human being. But he did not mention the imaginative-judge and restricted himself to the sensible-judge and the rational-judge.72 The idea of al-ḥûkûm al-wahmahîyya was not an original idea of Al-Ghazzâliyy. He borrowed the concept, along with that of the imaginative (khayâlîyya) and thinking (muṣâfârîh) powers, from the philosophers.73 He differed from the philosophers, however by attempting to justify his usage of these concepts through texts of the Shari‘a (the Qur’an and the Sunnah) or even with Aṯâr.74

The second book on logic, Mîhak al-Nâzîr fi al-Manâîq, was written as a shorter, refined version of Mu‘yar al-Ilm fi Fann al-Manâîq which was not circulated when it was written because it needed some clarification.75

At the end of Mu‘yar al-Ilm, Al-Ghazzâliyy stated his intention to write a book which would provide a criterion for action (Mîzân al-‘Amal)76 just as Mu‘yar al-Ilm was a criterion for knowledge.77 Al-Ghazzâliyy reiterated the same concept in his introduction to Mîzân al-‘Amal where he discussed happiness. For him, there were two conditions for the attainment of happiness: knowledge and action. He said that he intended to discuss the action which leads to happiness in a way that transcended conformism (taṣlîl) in accordance with the conditions he set forth in Mu‘yar al-Ilm, and planned to begin it with a brief summary of the fundamentals of his criterion of knowledge.78

Al-Ghazzâliyy stated that happiness consisted in the life hereafter; i.e., the eternal.79 Thus he revealed his sympathy with the position of the Sufi leaders regarding eternal happiness, who held that happiness should not be thought of merely as the attainment of paradise or the avoidance of hellfire. They considered such aspirations crass, since there was a more honorable aim.80 Al-Ghazzâliyy explained this aim as unveiling (kashf) divine matters through divine inspiration (iḥlân). He stated, citing the case of the Qur’an, that knowledge is never conveyed directly from Allah to human beings; this act takes place indirectly (e.g. by angels).81 The position of the Sufi leaders, however, contradicts the Qur’an which considers seeking paradise or the avoidance of hellfire to be legitimate.82 By agreeing with the Sufi leaders, Al-Ghazzâliyy’s position could be interpreted as contradictory to that of the Qur’an. It should be noted that Al-Ghazzâliyy, under the influence of Sufism, differed with the Qur’an and the Sunnah if these texts are to be taken literally.

In addition to his emphasis on the correlation between happiness, as he explained above, Al-Ghazzâliyy said that the happiness of anything lies in its perfection. He understood this perfection, in the case of the human beings, to be perceiving the reality of the intelligibles (ma‘âlîkât), as they are in themselves (‘âlâ ma ḥa qa ʿalâh), without the interference of imagination and the sensibles.83 It appears that he was hinting at divine inspiration as a source of knowledge that is not hindered by imagination or sensibles.

Al-Ghazzâliyy maintained that in order to receive this divine inspiration, one should purify his soul from what-

71 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Al-Munqîdât, p. 86.
72 Ibid., pp. 83–85.
74 Aṯâr indicates narrations about the early generations of Muslims. These aṯâr were never considered as part of the Shari‘a. An example of Al-Ghazzâliyy’s use of aṯâr was an account about Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, on page 32 of Mu‘yar al-Ilm.
76 The literal translation of Mîzân al-‘Amal is The Balance for Action.
77 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Mu‘yar, p. 334.
80 Ibid., p. 185.
81 Ibid., p. 205.
82 Al-Qur’an, Sura al-Anbiya’ 21:90, and Sura al-Sajdah 32:16.
ever lust he has. After conquering bodily lust and freeing himself from slavery, one should start spiritual exercise (riyāḍah). To support his argument on the purification of the soul, Al-Ghazzāliyy quoted a verse from the Qur’an which promises success for the one who purifies her/his soul.85

If someone does not receive such divine inspiration, Al-Ghazzāliyy asserted that this person is to be blamed. To explain this, he provided the following metaphorical example:

"There is nothing in the colored picture to prevent it from being reflected in iron; the veil is in the rust and in the lack of a polisher to clean it."86

Similarly, Al-Ghazzāliyy went on to say, not only should one polish the "mirror" by cleaning the dirt if he would like it to reflect pictures, but he should also face it in the direction of what he would like this mirror to reflect.87

By "mirror" Al-Ghazzāliyy meant the soul, by "dirt", wordly desires and by "picture", divine knowledge.

Al-Ghazzāliyy believed in the possibility of changing human behavior. He thought that if it was possible to change the nature of animals (i.e. taming them), then one must not deny human beings the same possibility.88 He stated that human beings have the potential to reach the level where they can acquire truth. If they strive hard enough against their desires, they can reach the level of the angels. And if they allow dirt to accumulate on the mirror of the soul, by following their desires, they join the ranks of the animals.89

To change one’s character, one should attain virtue which could be achieved in two ways. The first is through what Al-Ghazzāliyy called human education (ta’līm bashartiyy) which involves the will and needs time and practice according to the ability of the person involved. The second way takes place through "divine grace (ja'ud ilāhiyya) where the human being becomes knowledgeable at birth as 'Isa Ibn Maryam (Jesus son of Mary [a.s.]) and Yahyā Ibn Zakariyya [a.s.] in addition to the other prophets. Also, it was said that this knowledge might be given to non-prophets".90

Al-Ghazzāliyy’s discussion of virtue is clearly Aristotelian in its inspiration, with many concepts that can be traced back to Nicomachean Ethics. He stated that the soul has two powers: the rational (al-'aqīlīyyah) and the practical intellect (al-'aqī al-'amāliyyah). The first one is responsible for receiving "theoretical practical wisdom" (al-hikmah al-'amāliyyah al-nazariyyah)91 which he defined as truths that are absolute and do not change because of time or place. The second is the practical intellect which attains moral wisdom (al-hikmah al-khulaqiyrah). This moral wisdom is related to the lower part of the soul which Al-Ghazzāliyy defined as that which addresses the concerns of the body.92

Al-Ghazzāliyy believed that all virtues could be classified under four major categories - wisdom, courage, chastity and justice. He maintained that a virtue is a median (wsaq) that falls between two vices: excess and deficiency. Similar to the position of Aristotle, Al-Ghazzāliyy exempted justice from the above rule, stating that justice has only one extreme which is injustice.93

Mizān al-'Amāl can be placed in the development of Al-Ghazzāliyy’s epistemology by means of his statement about the composition of this book - namely, that most of what is in Mizān al-‘Amāl is based upon the Sufi way. In response to a previous question about whether Al-Ghazzāliyy’s account of Sufism in this book reflects his own

84 Al-Ghazzāliyy, Mizān, pp. 196-197.
85 Al-Qur’an, Sura al-Shams 91:9.
86 Al-Ghazzāliyy, Mizān, p. 308.
87 Ibid., p. 218.
88 Ibid., p. 247.
89 Ibid., p. 218.
90 Al-Ghazzāliyy, Mizān, p. 257.
91 Aristotle distinguished between “theoretical” and “practical wisdom”. Nevertheless, we can see that Al-Ghazzāliyy was inspired by Aristotle’s discussion of these two concepts; he departed from Aristotle by bringing these two categories together. See Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Martin Ostwald, trans, and ed, Indianapolis: Bobs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1963) pp. 147-173.
92 Al-Ghazzāliyy, Mizān, p. 265.
93 Ibid., p. 264-273.
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belief, he said that he was only reporting it. Nevertheless, one can see his inclination towards Sufism in many places.

Al-Ghazzâliyy ended Mizân al-ʿAmal in the same way he started it. There was a lengthy yet very important invitation to abandon conformism (taqlid):

"Do not look at the (available) schools (as sources of knowledge), and seek truth through research, so you will have your own school. Do not be like a blind person imitating a leader who guides you in a way, while you are surrounded by a thousand leaders similar to yours, who are telling you that he rushed you into danger and that he misled you away from the right path. You will eventually know the injustice of your leader. There is no salvation except in independence."95

Al-Ghazzâliyy added that it would be good enough if the above words lead the reader to doubt his inherited belief, so he may begin searching for truth because "doubts lead to the truth, and he who does not doubt, does not look, and he who does not look does not see, and he who does not see lingers blind and astray".96

3.6 AL-GHAZALIYY’S CRITIQUE OF PHILOSOPHY

After Al-Ghazzâliyy reported the core of philosophy as he understood it in Maqásid al-Falāsifah, he followed with Tahafut al-Falāsifah. The latter was written basically as a critique of the metaphysics of the ancients (i.e. Greek philosophers).97 Although Al-Ghazzâliyy mentioned Aristotle’s name in particular, he restricted his criticism to whatever Al-Farabi (d. 339 A.H. /950 C.E.)98 and Ibn Sinâ

94 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Mizan, p. 358.
95 Ibid., p. 409.
96 Ibid., p. 76.
97 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Tahafut, p. 75.
98 Ibid., p. 76.
99 The full name of Al-Farabi, who was known in Latin as Alphonse, was Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Tah心 Ibn Uzayr Ibn Nasr Al-Farabi. He was born at Wasj, a village near Farab, in 257 A.H./870 C.E.

[d. 428 A.H./1037 C.E.]100 incorporated in their philosophies.101 Of the issues they dealt with, he commented on twenty: sixteen in metaphysics and four in the natural sciences.102 He listed these issues as follow:

1. The refutation of their theory of the eternity of the world.
2. The refutation of their theory of the incorruptibility of the world and of time and of motion.
3. The demonstration of their confusion in saying that Allah is the agent and the maker of the world in His product and act, and the demonstration that these expressions are in their system only metaphors without any real sense.
4. Showing that they are unable to prove the existence of a creator of the world.
5. To show their incapacity to prove Allah’s oneness and the impossibility of two necessary existents both without a cause.
6. To refute their denial of attributes.
7. To refute their claim that nothing can share with the First its genus, and be differentiated from it through a specific difference, and that with respect to its intellect the division into genus and specific difference cannot be applied to it.
8. To refute their theory that the existence of the First is simple, namely that it is pure existence and that its existence stands in relation to no quiddity and to no
essence, but stands to necessary existence as do other beings to their quiddity.

9. To show their incapacity to prove that the First is incorporeal. 103

10. To prove their incapacity to demonstrate that the world has a creator and a cause, and that in fact they are forced to admit atheism.

11. To show the incapacity of the philosophers to prove what they believe: that the First (i.e. Allah) knows other things besides His own self, and that He knows the genera and the species in a universal way.

12. On the impotence of the philosophers to prove that Allah knows Himself.

13. To refute those who affirm that Allah is ignorant of the individual things which are divided in time into present, past and future.

14. To refute their proof that heaven is an animal moving in a circle in obedience to Allah.

15. To refute the theory of the philosophers about the aim which moves heaven.

16. To refute the philosophical theory that the souls of the heavens observe all the particular events of this world.

17. The denial of a logical necessity between cause and effect.

18. The importance of the philosophers to show by demon-

strate proof that the soul is a spiritual substance.

19. Refutation of the philosophers’ proof for the immortality of the soul.

20. Concerning the philosophers’ denial of bodily resurrection. 104

Al-Ghazzâliyy declared these philosophers blasphemous on three counts: “their saying that all substances (jawâdhir) are eternal, that Allah does not know particular accidents involving people and their denial of the resurrection of bodies.” He held that these three issues “do not fit Islam in any fashion”. 105

In this vein, modern and contemporary scholars have questioned the nature of Islamic philosophy: exactly what is Islamic about it? 106 The only answer, I think, that could reconcile the various positions regarding this issue is the notion that this philosophy is Islamic as a product of the Islamic civilization. Thus, “Islamic” in the cultural sense could be applied to every contribution to knowledge that took place anywhere in the land of Islam during that era, including that of a Jew like Mâsâ ibn Maymûn (Malmonides) or a Christian like Yahyâ ibn ‘Adî. 107 It would be inappropriate to call it Arabic philosophy, since this would imply that those who contributed to it were Arabs:

104 Averroes, Tahâfut al-Tahâfut, pp. vii-viii. I have used Bergh’s translation of these twenty issues with some modifications.
106 An example of this is Leeman’s statement: “It is a shame that Islamic philosophy as a topic of interest is at present largely confined to orientalists (e.g. Goldziher, Muller, Munk, Noldeke, Renan and De Boer) rather than philosophers. The former often have concerns and interpretive methods which are not shared by the latter, and vice versa.” See Oliver Leeman, An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p. xi.
107 Yahia ibn ‘Adî, also known as the Logician (Al-Mantiqûtî), was a tenth century Jacobite theologian and philosopher. He translated Aristotle’s Poetics, Sophistical Topics, and possibly Metaphysics. He was credited with a translation of Plato’s Laws, a commentary on Topics and parts of Physics VIII and Metaphysics, and the whole of De Generatione. In addition, he wrote a series of original philosophical treatises. Fakhry, History, p. 28.
it would be Arabic only in the sense that it was written in the Arabic language. As a matter of fact, those who used Arabic did so because it was *lingua franca*. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 A.H./1406 C.E.) stated in his *Muqaddimah* that in the majority of the sciences, most scholars were non-Arabs (*'Ajam*) except in very rare cases, and in some fields, they were all non-Arabs.\(^{108}\)

Al-Ghazzālī sought to develop a philosophy that is Islamic in its very essence. He knew that in order to do that, he had to establish and verify the epistemology upon which this body of thought depends.

In addition to his criticism of the twenty questions that he listed in the introduction of *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, Al-Ghazzālī argued against the methodology and general acceptance of metaphysics by the philosophers in the Islamic world. This is of particular interest because of the original goal that he established for himself; he was still looking for a method that would lead to true knowledge.

His first argument was that the philosophers (i.e. Al-Fārābi and Ibn Sīnā) acquired their thought through habitually communicated conformism (*taqlīd* sanā‘ī *‘ifl*). According to Al-Ghazzālī, they simply moved from one mode of conformism to another without verification. His second argument was psychological: they accepted Greek philosophy because of the fame of names like Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato and Aristotle.\(^{109}\) The third was based upon Aristotle’s criticism of all his predecessors including Plato, his own teacher, which Al-Ghazzālī thought was an indication of an incoherent metaphysical system. In his last argument, Al-Ghazzālī accused the philosophers of using the accuracy of logic and mathematics to create a false impression of a sound generalization which would encompass metaphysics because he held that metaphysics lacked precise proofs.\(^{110}\)

Regarding the fairness of Al-Ghazzālī’s position, I think that he was consistent in the first point which was directed at the Islamic Philosophers; he rejected confor-

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\(^{111}\) Dunya, "Commentary", *Tahāfut*, by Al-Ghazzālī, pp. 76-77.

\(^{112}\) Al-Ghazzālī, *Tahāfut*, p. 77.

\(^{113}\) *Ibid.*, p. 239.

\(^{114}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{115}\) In Tahāfut al-Tahāfut Ibn Rushd (Avempace) considered Al-Ghazzālī’s concept of causality a denial of the efficient cause, which led him to accuse Al-Ghazzālī of Sophistry. Shetkh, p. 98.
of Ibrahim attempted to punish him for breaking their idols by throwing him into fire but no burning took place. In the Qur'an it was Allah's will that the fire would not harm Ibrahim.\textsuperscript{122} Al-Ghazzaliyy maintained that Allah [S.W.T.] was the agent («a'la) of every action, either directly or indirectly (i.e. by the angels).\textsuperscript{123} This deprivation of lifeless objects (eg. fire) from being the agent can be interpreted as Al-Ghazzaliyy's defence of Allah's omnipotence and free will. Indeed, Ibn Sinâ held that Allah is the supreme essential efficient cause which indicates that the world is a necessary product of His essence (i.e. He cannot but create the world).\textsuperscript{124}

The conclusion that Al-Ghazzaliyy reached after studying philosophy was that this science did not fulfill the aim of his search. In addition, he stated that "reason («a'il) is not capable of attaining all the goals nor can it solve all problems".\textsuperscript{125} Al-Ghazzaliyy used reason in showing the limitations of reason in his criticism of philosophy, and as such he was paving the way for a source of knowledge other than that of reason. Al-Ghazzaliyy's position towards reason had resemblance to the course Kant took in showing the limitations of reason, although in a different way since Kant attempted to reconcile the position of the rationalists and the empiricists (i.e. Descartes and Hume).\textsuperscript{126} Eventually, as it will be shown below in the section on Sufism, Al-Ghazzaliyy wanted to establish a faculty higher than that of reason which drew on the same source of knowledge as prophets. This stance of Al-Ghazzaliyy was an attempt to place prophecy above reason, a position which was antagonistic to that of the Muslim philosophers who raised reason above prophecy.

\textsuperscript{116} Al-Ghazzaliyy, Tahafut, p. 240.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p. 242.
\textsuperscript{118} This particular concept influenced Nicolaus of Autrecourt who argued that "this consequence, namely, 'fire is close to flax and there is no impediment, hence the flax will be consumed', is not evident by an evidence deduced from the first principle." See, Harry A. Wolfson, "Nicolaus of Autrecourt and Ghazzaliyy's Argument Against Causality", Speculum (1969), pp. 234-238.
\textsuperscript{119} Al-Ghazzaliyy, Tahafut, pp. 242-243.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., p. 236.
\textsuperscript{121} This miracle was wrongly disputed by Ilai Alon as the only miracle to be mentioned by Al-Ghazzaliyy in Tahafut al-Tahafut when he discussed causality, Ilai Alon, "Al-Ghazzaliyy on Causality", Journal of the American Oriental Society 100. 4 (1980) p. 402. Al-Ghazzaliyy mentioned three other miracles of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad in chronological order, although he only mentioned the name of Moses in addition to that of Ibrahim which disqualifies Alon's claim. Al-Ghazzaliyy, Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 236.
\textsuperscript{122} Al-Qur'an Sura al-Anbiya' 21:69. The verse reads, "Qulna ya nara kuni bardan una salaman 'ala Ibrahim'. The meaning of it is, 'We (Allah) said. O Prophets! Be cool and peace for Ibrahim.'
\textsuperscript{123} Al-Ghazzaliyy, Tahafut, pp. 243-247.
\textsuperscript{124} Marmarash, p. 186.
\textsuperscript{125} Al-Ghazzaliyy, Al-Munaggh, pp. 117-118.
\textsuperscript{126} In addition to the above similarity between Kant and Al-Ghazzaliyy, although not identical there are other mutual interests of both thinkers. Kant states in the Critique of Pure Reason that he was seeking to provide room for faith and morality, a position that is celebrated in much of Al-Ghazzaliyy's writings.
It has been suggested that Al-Ghazzâliyy was affected in a more substantive way by his review and subsequent critique of philosophy. One of his students, Abû Bakr Ibn Al-'Arabîyy, asserted that his teacher "entered inside the philosophers and wanted to exit but couldn’t." In addition, among contemporaries, Badawi holds that Al-Ghazzâliyy was always faithful to philosophy and that he was an Aristotelian for some time before he ended up a Neo-Platonist. However, the findings of Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, who studied the works of Al-Ghazzâliyy from a philological point of view and used philosophical terms as a criterion of authenticity in his writings shed doubt upon these interpretations. She said that the common medieval philosophical terms (which were mostly Neoplatonic, but to a certain extent also Aristotelian) were entirely absent from those books by Al-Ghazzâliyy which scholars accepted as authentic books written by him. Only in those of his books which dealt with description or reiteration of philosophical doctrines, such as his Maqâsid, Tahâfut, Mihk al-Nazîr, Mit'aâr al-Tin and to a lesser degree also Mit'aâr al-'Amal, did he use terminology appear. Moreover, after stating that Al-Ghazzâliyy was well versed in philosophical doctrines and knew their technical terminology better than any Muslim theologian before him, she added:

"Yet here is a most astonishing linguistic fact that in a large number of his books including his major works, there is nowhere any use of a single philosophical term, even when Al-Ghazzâliyy deals with typical metaphysical and not in the usual orthodoxy way." 1

It should be noted here that Lazarus-Yafeh excluded some books whose authenticity was disputed. She maintained that these books, which did include philosophical terms, could have been possibly written by one of three groups. First, admirers who wanted to expound Al-Ghazzâliyy’s ideas while at the same time incorporating philo-

129 Lazarus-Yafeh, p. 249.

130 Lazarus-Yafeh, pp. 255-257.
131 Al-Ghazzâliyy, al-Munqîdh, p. 118. For further information on this historical period see p. 22.
132 Al-Ghazzâliyy narrated that a similar criticism was directed by Ahmad ibn Hanbal toward Al-Harith Al-Muhaabisîyy when the latter responded to the Mu'tazilîs. Al-Ghazzâliyy, Al-Munqîdh, pp. 118-119.
criticism by saying that it could have been correct if the beliefs of the Batinites were not already known. However in this case their views had been previously disseminated.\textsuperscript{133}

In addition, Al-Ghazzālīyy said that the Batinites claimed that no authors (\textit{musannāfūn}) at the time understood their arguments. Hence, Al-Ghazzālīyy found it appropriate to explain their arguments before criticizing them, an approach similar to his treatment of the philosophers. Al-Ghazzālīyy said that he did not want anyone to think that he criticized the Batinites without understanding them.\textsuperscript{134}

According to the Batinites, there was a need for learning and a teacher, yet not every teacher was equipped to disseminate knowledge which could be acquired only through the infallible (\textit{maṣūm}) teacher or Imam. Al-Ghazzālīyy maintained that the cause of the Batinites flourished because those who argued against the principles advocated by the Batinites were "ignorant". He thought that their premises were true but their conclusion was false. Al-Ghazzālīyy found that the problem was in arguing against the true premises rather than the false conclusion.\textsuperscript{135} He added that one should question the knowledge that they claim to have acquired, and he did. Not only they could not answer his questions, they did not understand them in the first place, and that was exactly why they would return to the notion that only the infallible Imam would know the answer. Al-Ghazzālīyy based his discourse with the Batinites upon numerous historical occurrences.\textsuperscript{136}

Al-Ghazzālīyy criticized the Batinites in several books written during the different stages of his life beginning with the first period of public teaching. He wrote the first, \textit{Al-Mustazhirrīyy}, at the request of the Caliph Al-Mustazhir, (after whom it was named). This was followed by \textit{Hujjat al-\textit{Haq} (The Proof of the Truth)}, which was written as a direct response to the arguments of Batinites which he encountered in Baghdad. After leaving his position at the Nizāmiyyah, he wrote \textit{Mufassal al-Khilāf (The Clarifier of the Dis-agreement)} which was written in reaction to their statements in \textit{Hamadhan} and \textit{Al-Daraj al-Marqūm bi al-Jadwāl} (The Annotated Scroll with Tabulars) which was written in answer to their allegations in Tus.\textsuperscript{137} In addition, Al-Ghazzālīyy wrote \textit{Al-Gistās al-Mustaqīm} (The Correct Balance) which was intended as an indirect response to the Batinites by presenting an alternative source of knowledge other than their infallible Imam. Al-Ghazzālīyy's last written expose of the Batinites, which took place during the second period of public teaching, was in \textit{Al-Mungidh min al-Da'īl} where he devoted a chapter to criticizing them for the last time.\textsuperscript{138}

There is an account in \textit{Al-Mungidh} where Al-Ghazzālīyy characterized the position of the Batinites as part of the philosophy of Pythagoras. Al-Ghazzālīyy probably held Aristotle in high regard because he criticized Pythagoras. Al-Ghazzālīyy learned of this account of Aristotle from the writings of a secretive philosophical group called \textit{Ikhwān al-\textit{Saʿfa}'} (the Brethren of Purity).\textsuperscript{139} It appears that Al-Ghazzālīyy did not see the strong relationship between the Batinites and \textit{Ikhwān al-\textit{Saʿfa}'} However, the first four chapters of the forty-fourth letter reveal that both of them had the same strategy for disseminating their beliefs.\textsuperscript{140} In fact, it was argued that the Brethren were connected with the Batinite propaganda against the Abbasid caliphate.\textsuperscript{141} Once he recognized the truth about the Batinites, Al-Ghazzālīyy

\textsuperscript{133} Many scholars, have had a problem translating the title of this book. I think that the problem arose from their reading the stressed 'd' of Al-Darj, which means a scroll, with a dummy and thus it became Al-Durj which means a small cabinet. 'Scroll' makes more sense than 'cabinet'.

\textsuperscript{134} Al-Ghazzālīyy, Al-Mungidh, p. 127.

\textsuperscript{135} Al-Ghazzālīyy, Al-Mungidh., p. 118.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., p. 118-119.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., p. 120.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., p. 127.
3.8 AL-GHAZALLIY BECOMING A SÚFI

Súfism, or Islamic mysticism as it is sometimes referred to, was the last class of seekers that Al-Ghazzáliy considered in his quest for true knowledge. He said that after his completion of the study of the other sciences, he came to study turaq al-súfitíyyah (the ways of the Súfis). He knew that their way could only be realized through knowledge and activity together. By knowledge, Al-Ghazzáliy meant the theoretical aspect of the Súfí way and by activity its application. Concerning the relationship between theory and practice, Al-Ghazzáliy offered an example in which he said that there is a great difference between knowing the definition of health and being healthy. Analogous to this is the gap between knowing what the reality of zuhd (asceticism) is and being an ascetic.

Soon Al-Ghazzáliy realized that the theoretical part of Súfism was much easier than its application. He started acquiring knowledge of the Súfí way through reading the books of Súfis such as Qíit al-Quláábi (The Food of the Hearts) by Abú Tálib Al-Makkíy (d. 388 A.H./998 C.E.) and the books of Al-Hádhrí Al-Muhásíbiy (d. 243 A.H./857 C.E.). He also studied the known fragments of al-Junayd (d. 297 A.H./909 C.E.), Al-Sháhíy (d. 334 A.H./945 C.E.) and Abú Yazíd Al-Bustámíy (d. 264 A.H./877 C.E.O among others.

None of Al-Ghazzáliy’s books ever mentioned the names of his Súfi mentors. In references to his direct contact with the Súfis, he only referred to men of general terms such as the arbáb al-qlíb wa al-mu-sháhídat (men of hearts and vision) whom he consulted about his return to teaching later on in Nishapúr. Specific references to the names of his Súfi mentors can be found in books of Súfis as Ibn ‘Aljíbhah who stated in his commentary on Fúsús al-álim by Ibn ‘Atí Al-Sákandary, that Al-Kharrár was Al-Ghazzáliy’s mentor. In addition, Al-Subkíy reported that Al-Fárándíy was influenced Al-Ghazzáliy’s Súfism. It should be noted that Al-Fárándíy was placed in a sísílah (a chain of Súfi mentors) after Abú Al-Qásím Al-Jurjániy under whom Al-Ghazzáliy studied jurisprudence and wrote Al-Tu’fláh.

Al-Ghazzáliy attained whatever could be acquired about the ‘way’ of the Súfis through learning and listening (bi al-tulá’im wa al-sámá). He realized that they possessed special knowledge that could only be achieved through what the Súfis call dhawq (tasting). hól (state, as in “ecstatic state”) and the changing of one’s character (i.e. becoming moral).

At this stage and before proceeding to show the impact of studying Súfism on his life, Al-Ghazzáliy asserted that
he had acquired true belief (imān yaqīnīyy) in Allah, the prophecy and the day of judgment. He added that these three fundamentals of faith were firmly established in his soul, not because of any specific formulated proof, but because of numerous reasons, circumstances and experiences.154

In order to be on the right Sufi 'way' and to gain eternal happiness, Al-Ghazzāliyy concluded that he had to sever his ties with worldly things; he had to shun fame and money and to flee from distracting attachments. He scrutinized his conditions and found himself devoid of activities which could be useful in the hereafter. Not even the best of these activities, his teaching, was for the sake of Allah which he considered the criterion for success. He said his teaching had been motivated by fame. Al-Ghazzāliyy realized that he was about to fall into Hell fire if he did not act fast.155

Al-Ghazzāliyy spent six months, starting Rajab 488 A.H./1095 C.E., trying to abandon all things that were not for the sake of Allah. This included his position at the Nizāmiyyah which was to no avail. He was torn apart by worldliness on the one hand and the motivations for the hereafter on the other. Eventually, he developed an impediment of speech which prevented him from teaching. This impediment caused him sadness which, in turn, brought with it a new problem: Al-Ghazzāliyy could not digest food or drink. When he realized his weakness and inability to make a decision, he sought refuge in Allah [S.W.T.] who facilitated his abandonment of "fame, money, wife, children and friends".156

Al-Ghazzāliyy knew that neither the Caliph nor his friends would approve his plans to leave Baghdad and to settle in Al-Sham.157 In addition, he was sure that none of the scholars of Iraq would understand the religious aspect of his plight. All of this led Al-Ghazzāliyy to plan his de-

3.9 AL-GHAZZALIYY'S EPistemology IN HIS WRITINGS ON 'AQIDAH (CREED)

According to Bouyges, Al-Ghazzāliyy wrote four books on 'aqidah towards the end of his first period of teaching: Al-Iqtiṣād fi al-l'tiqād (The Median Course in Creed), Al-Risālah al-Qudsiyyah fi Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id (The Jerusalemite Treatise in the Fundamentals of Beliefs), Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id (The Fundamentals of Beliefs) and Al-Ma'ārif al-Aqīlyyah wa al-Asrār al-Ilāhiyyah (Rational Knowledge and divine Secrets).158 Thus, I cannot conclude this chapter without some mention of his thought regarding 'aqidah. Indeed, his writings on 'aqidah help to define Al-Ghazzāliyy's epistemology as he conceived of it just before he left Baghdad.

According to Badawi, Al-Risālah al-Qudsiyyah fi Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id and Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id are the same book and, as is indicated by the first title, this book must have been written originally as part of Iḥyā' 'Ulum al-Dīn in Jerusalem after Al-Ghazzāliyy had left Baghdad.159 For this reason such a book belongs to the following chapter. As for the fourth book, Al-Ma'ārif al-Aqīlyyah wa al-Asrār al-Ilāhiyyah, it is still in manuscript form and we know of it only through secondary sources. It includes five chapters: on utterance (nātq), on Kalām and the Mu'takallim, on speech (al-qawā'id), on writing and on the desired goal (al-qhorad al-maṭādu).160 Unfortunately, therefore, I am confined to discussing only the first book, Al-Iqtiṣād fi al-l'tiqād, which has a...

154 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Al-Munqīd, pp. 133–134.
155 Ibid., p. 134.
156 Ibid., p. 136.
157 There are two places identified by the name, Al-Sham. One is the area covered by Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. In the second instance, it is used as a synonym for Damascus. Al-Ghazzaliyy used it in the latter sense.
158 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Al-Munqīd, p. 137.
159 Badawi, Mu'īqlat, p. xvi.
160 Ibid., pp. 89–92.
161 Badawi, Mu'īqlat, pp. 93–97. These chapter titles suggest this book might shed considerable light on Al-Ghazzaliyy's philosophical positions at this time in general and his philosophy of language in particular. A thorough study of this work of Al-Ghazzaliyy would be most desirable.
short, yet very important introduction in relation to the topic of Al-Ghazzālīyy’s epistemology. The main themes of this book are the proof of the existence of Allah [S.W.T.] and his attributes (in which he followed the method of the Ashāʿīrites), the proof of the prophecy of Muhammad [S.A.A.S.], and discussion of other articles of faith. In the penultimate section of this book, Al-Ghazzālīyy discussed the need of designating a ruler (imām); he proved the necessity of having a ruler by reason as well as from the texts of the Shari`ah. He ended this book with a section that summarized his position towards all other religions, sects and groups that were predominant at the time.

In the introduction to Al-Ishāṣ, Al-Ghazzālīyy asserted that there could be no contradiction between the Shari`ah and reason (la ma`anadatata baqna al-shar`ah ma`ani al-haq al-ma`qūl). He classified all other positions into two categories: those who restricted themselves to conformism (taqlīd) which he described as a deficiency (tafriḥ); and, the philosophers and the extremists among the Muʿtazilites who relied on reason only. The latter position he regarded as an excess (ifrāq). For Al-Ghazzālīyy, neither reason nor Shari`ah suffices on its own, for the right group is that which brings reason and Shari`ah together. Al-Ghazzālīyy explained his position by the following metaphor:

"Reason is similar to a healthy vision and the Qur`ān is similar to the bright sun. The one who seeks guidance in one of them without the other is certainly among the stupid. If he thinks that the light of the Qur`ān suffices him without reason, then he is comparable to the one who exposes himself to the light of the sun with his eyelids shut, then there is no difference between him and the blind, for (the existence of) reason with Shari`ah is like light upon light."

Thus, one can say that it was Al-Ghazzālīyy’s intention in Al-Iṣlahād to present a "median" account of Islamic creed, which is the meaning of the title of this book, with the help of reason.

In Al-Iṣlahād, Al-Ghazzālīyy restricted himself to the use of six sources of premises. These sources were listed as follow:

1. The sensibles (al-bissiyāt); Al-Ghazzālīyy here defined the sensibles as that which is perceived through external and internal "witnessing" (mustahhada). Examples of external are accidents (a`rād) like sounds and colors, and internal like the presence of pain and joy.
2. Pure Reason (al-`aql al-mahd); an example of this kind of knowledge is reaching the conclusion that there could be no third predicate to those in the premise, "the world is either eternal or accidental".
3. Knowledge related by several sources (al-tawwārub); such as the testimony of the existence of certain prophets (eg. Moses [a.s.]).
4. Premises that comprise other premises that are dependent upon the above three sources.
5. The Shari`ah (al-sam`iyyāt).
6. Premises derived from the beliefs of opponents in arguments against them because they cannot deny them, even if there is no proof of its validity.

It should be noted that Al-Ghazzālīyy criticized the Mutakallimin for their usage of arguments that resemble the sixth category above which he considered conformism (taqlīd). In addition, the fact that he "restricted" himself to the use of these six sources is a clear indication that a complete list is available in a previous book. In fact Miṣ`īr
Al-Ghazzālīyy is the last book during the first period of public teaching to include a comprehensive list of the sources of knowledge: subsequent books (i.e. Mīhak al-Nāẓar and Al-Iqtiṣād fi al-Iqtiṣād) included partial lists only. Mīhak al-Nāẓar included seven sources of “knowledge and belief”; primary knowledge, internal “vision” (al-mushāhada) al-bātūna), external sensibles, experimentalists, knowledge related by many groups (ta’wūs), imagination and famous premises.\(^{160}\)

Al-Ghazzālīyy listed in Miṭyar al-‘Ilm four sources that yield indubitable knowledge; pure rational logical necessities (al-unschallājīf al-‘aqīliyyah al-madīhah), the sensible, the experimentalists and intuition (hads). His list differed from that of the philosophers in Maqāsid Al-Falāṣifah only in the addition of intuition as a source of indubitable knowledge. He held that the knowledge acquired through intuition cannot be proved, cannot be denied, and cannot be taught. It must be for this reason that he did not include intuition in the sources of premises in Al-Iqtiṣād. Al-Ghazzālīyy stated that the only thing that can be done to the student who is seeking intuitive knowledge is to direct him to the same path which led those before him to intuitive knowledge. This guidance does not guarantee intuitive knowledge; the student’s mind should be perfect in terms of strength and clarity in order to be able to have intuition. Although he held intuition to be a source of indubitable knowledge, Al-Ghazzālīyy said that one cannot use arguments from intuition in debates; one should share the experience. For him, this concept of sharing is similar to “tasting.”\(^{170}\) The latter analogy is a clear indication of Al-Ghazzālīyy’s use of the Sūfī language which is a mark of the new direction that he chose to follow.

3.10 CONCLUSION

Al-Ghazzālīyy’s writings during this period, which lasted for a decade, reflect one of the most important stages in his intellectual development. He broke with conformity which dominated his work as a student, and began a systematic inquiry of the schools of thought that were available at the time in search for true knowledge and its sources.

Al-Ghazzālīyy encountered many schools of thought in his quest for true knowledge. Eventually, he restricted the possibility of finding such knowledge to four “classes of seekers”: the dialectical theologians, the Bātinīs, the philosophers and the Sūfīs whose methodology he finally accepted. A careful study of the language that Al-Ghazzālīyy used to describe these four group reveals that he narrowed them to two only: the Bātinīs and the philosophers in one group, and the Mutakallimūn and the Sūfīs in the other. The choice of words reflects a subtle approval of the latter group.

When Al-Ghazzālīyy became a teacher at the Nizāmīyah of Baghdad, he started studying philosophy as part of a systematic approach in which he was attempting to study all sects, religions and schools of thought in search for true knowledge. According to him, he could not find such knowledge in all the traditional subjects of philosophy; the only two exceptions were logic and mathematics. Although he was critical of philosophy, we shall see in the following chapter that he adopted many positions from the works of the philosophers (e.g., Al-Fārābī).

One of the most important contributions of Al-Ghazzālīyy during this period is his position on logic. He wrote several books which he intended as a criterion for science. He held in Miṭyar al-‘Ilm that every person has three judges: a judge of sensibles, a judge of imagination and a judge of reason. It is the addition of a “judge of imagination” here that contributes to the development of his genetic epistemology even though he would drop it later on in Al-Munṣīdah.

Another contribution was in the subject of debate. In what seems to be a reaction to a trend of public debates between the various schools of jurisprudence at the time, Al-Ghazzālīyy wrote four books in which he outlined the etiquette of debate (adab al-munāṣṣarah) without which an unhealthy atmosphere of animosity and hatred would arise. He realized that these debates, in which he participated at the Camp of Nizām Al-Mulk, were motivated by material

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169 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Mīhak, pp. 57-65.
170 Ibid., pp. 178-182.
gains and therefore, he made a pledge later on never to engage in such activity again.

Al-Ghazzâliyy's search for indubitable knowledge led him to reject all knowledge that was based on authority (e.g., parents, teachers) which he blamed for the differences among people. He defined this knowledge in terms of mathematical certitude. He scrutinized all his cognition in search for knowledge that would meet the previous description; he thought for a while that the sensibles and the self-evident truths are conforming to the level of certitude that he was looking for. Nevertheless, meditating upon such knowledge he found that he could doubt them, and thus he found himself devoid of any indubitable knowledge. As a result, he found himself doubting all sources of knowledge including reason which was based upon the possibility of the existence of a higher faculty which he defined in terms of its relation to reason (i.e. the faculty above reason malakah fawqa al-'aql). In fact, he underwent the most genuine and dramatic experience of skepticism in the history of thought. This state of doubt continued for the duration of two months and eventually ended by divine illumination.

The first thing that Al-Ghazzâliyy regained after he emerged from his state of doubt was his trust in logical necessities. According to him, this would not have been possible without divine illumination which he considered a source of knowledge that he called kashf and which he described as acquiring knowledge directly (i.e. from Allah). Evidently, this latter source of knowledge forms the backbone of Sufi epistemology in which he would expand on this concept during his first period of withdrawal from public life which I will deal with in the following chapter.

Chapter FOUR

AL-GHAZZÂLIYY’S QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE:
THE YEARS OF SECLUSION
(488-499 A.H./1095-1106 C.E.)

This chapter deals with the works Al-Ghazzâliyy wrote following his first withdrawal from public life, a period which extended from the time he brought his first teaching career to an end at the Nizâmiyyah of Baghdad in 488 A.H./1095 C.E. and until his return to public teaching at the Nizâmiyyah of Nishapur in 499 A.H./1106 C.E. This period of seclusion was marked by a long journey in which Al-Ghazzâliyy left Baghdad for Damascus from which he went to Jerusalem, then to Hebron for a short visit and eventually to Makkah and Madinah before he decided to return to his homeland.1

During this time, Al-Ghazzâliyy wrote 28 books, letters and treatises2 of which four were written in Farsi: Kûnyâ

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In addition to the traditional subjects that he used to cover in his writings, Al-Ghazzalīy started expressing his deep conviction in the Sufi way. His writings were either direct representations of this new line of thought, or indirect as in the texts (e.g., exegesis of the Qur'an) he wrote with the spirit of Sufism during his years of seclusion. It is the aim of this chapter to discuss the impact of his acceptance of Sufism on his epistemology. Of the many books that he wrote during this period, only about seven of them can be related directly to the development in his theory of knowledge. These are: Iḥyāʿ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn (The Revival of Islamic Sciences), Al-Maqṣūd al-Asmāʿ fī Sharḥ Asmāʿ Allāh al-Husnā, Bidāyat Al-Hidāyah (The Beginning of Guidance) Jawāhir al-Qurʿān and Al-Qistas al-Mustaqīm (The Just Balance), Al-Risālah al-Ladunniyyah and Miskhāt al-Anwār (The Niche for Lights).

These books form a consistent unified whole with “unveiling” (kashf) forming the highest source of knowledge. We shall see that “unveiling” takes more than one form (e.g., vision) but always aiming at peremptory transcendental knowledge. Thus, the following discussion of these books aims at showing Al-Ghazzalīy’s consistency during this period.

4.1 IḤYĀʿ ‘UḤM AL-DĪN

The first book that was written in seclusion was Iḥyāʿ ‘Uḥm al-Dīn (The Revival of Islamic Sciences), a voluminous encyclopedic work. In this book, Al-Ghazzalīy held that the highest forms of knowledge are found in Sufism and that all other forms are subordinate. He argued for the priority of Sufi knowledge among several different fronts, namely the science of action (’ilm al-ma‘ānīlah), sociology of knowledge, the division of the sciences, the intellect, dialectical theology (kašf), philosophy, creed (aqīdal) and dreams. However, as we shall see, his newly attained vision produced an
enthusiasm which led him to set forth several flawed arguments and claims in support of his position. Some of these flaws were overcome in his later writings.

4.1.1 On the Science of Action ('ilm al-Mu'āmalah)

As the title of this book indicates, Al-Ghazzalyy wanted to revive the Islamic Sciences, an intention which he clearly states in the first few lines of the introduction. The concept of "revivification" should be understood as an act directed towards something which is dead or dying. In this case, he was referring to the Islamic sciences which became distanced from the original aims of the Shari'ah (muqāṣarat al-shari'ah). He saw that Muslim scholars, especially in Jurisprudence, preoccupied themselves with trivial and useless details, forgetting the spirit of the Shari'ah. The Ihyā' represents an attempt to reconnect Fiqh with the aims of the Shari'ah.

In the introduction to the Ihyā', which is considered Al-Ghazzalyy's most important work, he stated that the necessary knowledge for attaining happiness in the hereafter ('ilm al-akhirah) is divided into two sections: the science of action ('ilm al-mu'āmalah) and the science of "unveiling" divine knowledge ('ilm al-muqāṣarat). He restricted the subject matter of Ihyā' 'Ulam al-Dīn to the science of action because, as he put it, he had no permission to disclose 'ilm al-muqāṣarat in any books, even though it is the goal to which seekers aspire. He said that his position had to resemble that of the prophets who related this science using metaphoric language because people are not equipped to understand this subject. He added that the science of action is the guide (i.e. a prerequisite) to 'ilm al-muqāṣarat. Al-Ghazzalyy divided the science of action into two sections: exoteric science ('ilm zāhīh) and esoteric science ('ilm bāṭīn). Furthermore, he divided each of these two sections into two subdivisions. These four sections formed the basis for the format of Ihyā' 'Ulam al-Dīn which comprises, in his words, four quarters: the Acts of Worship ('ibādah), the Social Ethics (ṣūrah), the Matters that are Dangerous (muḥākāt) and finally the Things that are Conductive to Salvation (mujtīyād). Each of these four quarters includes ten chapters. A general overview of this book can be obtained from a list of the headings of the chapters:

The quarter on the Acts of Worship:

1. The Book of Knowledge (Kitāb al-Ilm)
2. The Articles of Faith (Qawā'id al-Aqā'id)
3. The Mysteries of Purity
4. The Mysteries of Prayer
5. The Mysteries of Alms giving
6. The Mysteries of Fasting
7. The Mysteries of Pilgrimage
8. The Rules of Reading the Qur'an
9. On the Invocations and Supplications

The quarter on Social Ethics:

1. The Ethics of Eating
2. The Ethics of Marriage

12 Al-Ghazzalyy based his position upon a Hadith that was narrated by Abu Al-Darda' in which prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said, "Scholars are the heirs of prophets" (Al-'ilmah wa-madhīnat al-anbiyā'). This Hadith was verified by Abu Dawud, Al-Tirmidhiyy, Ibn Majah and Ibn Hayyan in his Sunnah.
15 Wort (plural wārāda) is one or more form of collection of Allah (dhuw). In a Suhi order, the novice (wārāda) is assigned certain word to perform by his own Suhi master. Nabi Amin Paris translated the title of the tenth chapter of the first quarter as "On the Office of portions", a translation which does not reflect the subject matter of this chapter. Al-Ghazzalyy, The Book of Knowledge [Ihyā' 'Ulam al-Dīn], Nabi Amin Paris, ed. and trans. (Lahore, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1962) p. 3.
3. The Ethics of Earning a Livelihood
4. On the Lawful and the Forbidden
5. The Ethics of Companionship and Fellowship with the Various Types of Men
6. On Seclusion (al-‘uzlah)
7. The Ethics of Travel
8. On Audition (sama’) and passion (wajd)\textsuperscript{16}
9. On Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil
10. The Ethics of Living as Exemplified in the Virtues of the Prophet

The quarter on the Matters that are Dangerous:

1. On the Wonders of the Heart
2. On the Discipline of the Soul
3. On the Curse of the Two Appetites - the Appetites of the Stomach and the Genitals
4. The Curse of the Tongue
5. The Curse of Anger, Rancour and Envy
6. The Evil of the World
7. The Evil of Wealth and Niggardliness\textsuperscript{17}
8. The Evil of Pomp and Hypocrisy
9. The Evil of Pride and Conceit
10. The Evils of Vanity

\textsuperscript{16} Faris translated wajd as “grief”. See Al-Ghazzaliyy, The Book of Knowledge, p. 4. I think that wajd is an ecstatic expression of the psychological “state” (halt) of a Sufi, which is the outcome of listening to poetry or singing. This “state” could be either that of grief or joy depending on the theme in the song or poetry. In addition, a Sufi can induce such a “state” but in this case it is called tarqad.

\textsuperscript{17} Faris translated bukhål as avarice. See Al-Ghazzaliyy, The Book of Knowledge, p. 5.

The quarter on Those Things That are Conducive to Salvation:

1. On Repentance
2. On Patience and Gratitude
3. On Fear and Hope
4. On Poverty and Asceticism
5. On Divine Unity and Dependence
6. On Love, Longing, Intimacy and Contentment
7. On Intentions, Truthfulness and Sincerity
8. On Self-Examination and Self-Accounting
9. On Meditation

After listing the contents of the \textit{Ihya’}, Al-Ghazzaliyy outlined the specific aims of each of the four quarters. More important than the aims themselves is the language that Al-Ghazzaliyy used to describe these aims. More than once, he mentioned the “mysteries”, “secrets” and the “hidden” elements that were neglected in previous studies and which he now intends to resolve or clarify.\textsuperscript{18} It is clear that this language which is different from previous works of Al-Ghazzaliyy, can be attributed to his new intellectual “state”!

The first quarter, on the acts of worshipping, began with the book of knowledge (Kitāb al-’Iṣlāh) as its first chapter. It is rather peculiar to include such a chapter, let alone assign it priority, among other chapters on subjects such as prayer, alms giving and pilgrimage. The use of jurisprudence (e.g. the details of prayer) is not essential to the aim of the \textit{Ihya’}; knowing that students at the time were interested in jurisprudence, Al-Ghazzaliyy included it in his book to attract them.\textsuperscript{19} Evidently he was aiming at presenting his newly “acquired” understanding of knowledge and the method or “way” to achieve it. He was convinced that people at the

\textsuperscript{18} Al-Ghazzali, The Book of Knowledge, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{19} Al-Ghazzaliyy, \textit{Ihya’}, Vol. I, p. 4.
time were inclined to accept as science what he described metaphorically as the “peels” instead of the pulp.”20 One can interpret these “peels” as the useless or harmful sciences, and the “pulp” as the peremptory knowledge (yaqūn) that is unveiled to the Sufi.

The aim of discussing knowledge at the beginning of the ḭiyā is intended to show the knowledge that is required of everyone. It is obvious that Al-Ghazzāliyy is referring to a hidden knowledge that cannot be derived from conventional sources of knowledge (e.g. the senses, reason). He wanted the seeker to transcend worldly affairs which construct a barrier that prevents one from achieving the knowledge that Sufis claim to have acquired. He asserted that attainment of this knowledge can be promoted by “self-mortification, discipline, and through purifying the heart by freeing it from the affairs of this world, as well as through emulating the prophets and very virtuous people (awliyā’īn) so that it may be revealed to every seeker in proportion to what Allah has allocated (rizqī) for him, rather than in proportion to the seeker’s efforts and labours (jahāl), yet diligence in it is indispensable for self-mortification which is the sole key to guidance.”21

The book of knowledge (Kitāb al-‘ilm) comprises seven sections: 1. On the value of knowledge, instruction and learning. 2. On the branches of knowledge which are fard ‘ayn;22 on the branches of knowledge that are fard kifā-yah;23 on the definition of jurisprudence and dialectical theology (as disciplines) in the science of religion; and on the science of the hereafter and that of this world. 3. On what is popularly but erroneously considered to be the science of religion, including a discussion of the nature of blameworthy knowledge. 4. On the defects of debate and the reasons why people have engaged in dissension and

5. On the qualities of the teacher and the student. 6. On the deficiency of knowledge, the (drawbacks) of the learned, and the characteristics distinguishing the scholars of the science of the hereafter from those of the science of this world. 7. On reason, its value, categories, and what has been said concerning it (in tradition).24 Of these seven, sections one, two and seven are of special importance in the development of Al-Ghazzāliyy’s epistemology.

4.1.2 The Sociology of Knowledge

In the first section of the book of knowledge, Al-Ghazzāliyy discussed the importance of knowledge and ranked the scholars, after the prophets, who were second to none.25 The implication of this hierarchy can be explained as an attempt by him to place revelation as the first source of knowledge and reason second. This position was his response to the philosophers who placed reason above prophecy in their epistemological hierarchy.

Moreover, he raised the question of the definition of man whom he distinguished from animals by virtue of having the faculty of reason. In addition, he stated that the human being was created only for the sake of acquiring knowledge (lam yuḥlil wa lā lilm).26

Al-Ghazzāliyy discussed the knowledge of science that could be rendered fard ‘ayn and he found that there were twenty different positions regarding this issue. He mentioned only four groups along with their positions regarding fard ‘ayn. The Mutakallimūn said that this science must be dialectical theology, the jurists maintained that fiqh was the fard ‘ayn, the scholars of Hadith stated that it was the knowledge of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, and the fourth group was the Sufis who while being different from the other three positions, did not comprise one single position in their understanding of fard ‘ayn. One group of Sufis stated that it is the knowledge of one’s “state” (ḥad) and position (maqārim) in relation to Allah [S.W.T.]. Other Sufis thought it to be the knowledge of sincerity between the

21 Al-Ghazzāliyy, The Book of Knowledge, p. 100.
22 Divinely ordained, and binding for every individual Muslim.
23 Divinely ordained, and binding for the Muslim community as a whole. Therefore this collective obligation can be discharged, for the community by the actions of one or more persons, and is not necessarily binding for each individual member.
26 Ibid., p. 7.
Al-Ghazzaliyy’s Quest for Knowledge: The Years of Seclusion

followers of Allah [S.W.T.] and the followers of Satan. A third group of Sufis said that it was the esoteric science whose acquisition is required only of the qualified, select few, who accordingly did not accept the esoteric meaning of fard 'ayn which would have made it imperative upon everyone to learn this particular science. The last Sufi position was that of Abu Taib Al-Makkiyy who understood it in terms of what later on became known as the five pillars of Islam.

In principle, Al-Ghazzaliyy accepted Al-Makkiyy’s view but he stressed the idea that this fard 'ayn is what he called earlier 'ilm al-mu’tamaalah (the science of action). Moreover, while Al-Ghazzaliyy maintained the same notion as the basis for his science of action, it must be said that he devised a timetable for the acquisition and application of the science that is fard 'ayn taking into consideration the conditions surrounding the person who was on the path of acquiring such knowledge. I found that his accounts in this paragraph are copied almost ad verbam from Al-Makkiyy’s Ghit Al-Qulub. In fact, one can see the influence of this book on a wide range of topics in the Ihyā’.

4.1.3 On the Division of the Sciences

In the second section of the book of knowledge, Al-Ghazzaliyy divided knowledge into two sections: ‘ilm sharḥ ‘uyah (sciences of the Shari‘ah) and the ghayr sharḥ ‘uyah (non-Shari‘ah) such as medicine and mathematics. According to him, the latter sciences are fard kifayah. Nevertheless, he criticized unnecessary studies in these sciences such as the branches of mathematics that do not have practical applications. As for the sciences of the Shari‘ah, he held

That they were concerned with two subjects; the first pertaining to life in this world which is covered by jurisprudence, and the second addresses issues related to the hereafter. He described the second as the science of the states of the heart (‘ilm ahwāl al-qalb) which forms the subject matter of the Ihyā’. Al-Ghazzaliyy stated that jurisprudence cannot extend its jurisdiction to the affairs of the heart, and whenever the knowledge that leads to the hereafter is compared with jurisprudence, the superiority of the former is evident. He divided the science that leads to the hereafter into two parts: the science of unveiling (‘ilm al-mukhāshfahah) and the science of action (‘ilm al-mu’tamaalah). According to him, ‘ilm al-mukhāshfahah is the science of esoteric knowledge (‘ilm al-bāṭir) which is the aim of all sciences. Furthermore, ‘ilm al-mukhāshfahah is the science concerned with those who are favoured by Allah [S.W.T.]. It stands for a light which shines in the heart when it is cleansed and purified of its blameworthy qualities (e.g. pride, the love of this world) which prevent the attainment of such light. Al-Ghazzaliyy provided a long list of the truths that are attained through this light. He said:

“Through this light is revealed the truth of several things, whose names were known, and to which illusions were attached. Through it, these truths are clarified and true knowledge of the essence of Allah [S.W.T.] is attained together with that of his eternal and perfect attributes, his works and wisdom in the creation of this world and the hereafter as well as the reason for his exalting the latterover the former. Through it also is attained the knowledge of the meaning of prophecy and prophet, and the importance of revelation. Through it is obtained the truth about Satan, the meaning of the words angels and devils, and the cause of the enmity between Satan and man. Through it is known how the Angel appeared to prophets and how they received the [divine] revelation. Through it is achieved the knowledge of the kingdom of heaven and earth, as well as the

32 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Ihyā’, Vol. 1, pp. 16-17
33 Revelation (kashf) here means unveiling knowledge that is usually withheld from human beings. This concept is different from (wujūd) which is restricted to prophetic revelation.
knowledge of the heart and how the angelic hosts have confronted the devils. Through it is gained the knowledge of how to distinguish between the company of heaven and the company of the Devil, a knowledge of the hereafter, Paradise, and hell, the punishment of the grave, the bridge (al-ṣūrah) across the infernal fire, the balance of the judgement day, and knowledge (of the day) or reckoning.\textsuperscript{34}

Al-Ghazzālīyy argued that those who attain such knowledge, in addition to others, take different positions regarding their significance. Some consider all the kinds of knowledge mentioned above as mere examples; others hold that some of these kinds of knowledge are mere patterns while the rest of these kinds are identical with the realities indicated by their names. Others hold that the limit to which our knowledge of Allah can reach is knowledge of the inability to know Him. In addition, there are those who claim great things on the subject of knowing Allah (S.W.T.) while others maintain that we cannot go beyond what all the common people (al-ʿawām) have reached, namely, that Allah exists (manāʿil), that He is omniscient and omnipotent, that He hears and sees, and that He speaks.\textsuperscript{35} I find it rather hard to believe that the latter position corresponds to that of common people since the language is clearly Ashārī.

Furthermore, Al-Ghazzālīyy explained ‘ilm al-mukāshafah as that science whereby the veil is removed so that the truth regarding these things becomes as clear as if it were seen by the eye, leaving no room for any doubt. Man would be capable of such a thing had not “lust and rot resulting from the filth of this world accumulated over the surface of the mirror of his heart”.\textsuperscript{36} He asserted that the science of the road of the hereafter is the knowledge of how to cleanse the surface of this mirror from the filth that prevents the knowing of Allah, His attributes, and His works. Such cleansing is possible through desisting from lust and emulating the prophets in all their states. Thus, to the extent the heart is cleansed and made to face the truth, to that same extent will it reflect His reality. To reach this level of knowledge, one should go through discipline (riyāḍah), learning and instruction. These sciences are not recorded in books and are not discussed by the one who is blessed with this grace except among his own circle of intimates who along with him partake of them through discourses and secret communication.\textsuperscript{37} Moreover, he believed that ‘ilm al-mukāshafah is an occult science (‘ilm khaṭīf) and that there were references to it in a Hadith that was judged by Al-ʿIraqīyy to be daʿī.\textsuperscript{38}

The second part, namely, the science of action (‘ilm al-muʿamalah), is the science of the states of the heart. Al-Ghazzālīyy provided two lists of states: the first is a list of praiseworthy states such as that of sincerity (al-ḥikās), and the second is a list of blameworthy states as the fear of poverty. He stated that the knowledge of these states (i.e. of morals) comprises the way to the hereafter which is a must (fard ‘ayn) for every one. He argued that such knowledge is more important than jurisprudence which he called the exoteric science (‘ilm al-zāhir). To support his argument, he stated that the scholars of fiqh, including Al-Shaftīyy and Ibn Ḥanjāl, used to study the science of the hereafter (‘ilm al-ḥikārah) at the hands of the scholars of esoteric knowledge (ulāmāʾ al-bāṭin) whom he also described as the people of the hearts, namely, the Sufis.\textsuperscript{39}

The relationship between the studies of the Shariʿah and Sufism according to Al-Ghazzālīyy can be understood from an account of Al-Junayd and Al-Sarī,\textsuperscript{40} his Sufi teacher. Al-Junayd said:

"Once upon a time my teacher Al-Sarī asked me saying, "When you leave my place whose company do you keep?" I said, "Al-Muhāṣibīyy." To which he replied, "Well have you chosen! Follow his learning and culture, but avoid his affectation in speech and his refutation of the theologians." Upon leaving I overheard him say, "May Allah make you first a scholar of Hadith and then a Sufi rather than a Sufi first and then a scholar of Hadith."\textsuperscript{41}"

\textsuperscript{34} Al-Ghazzālī, The Book of Knowledge, pp. 46-47.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 46.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Al-Ghazzālī, The Book of Knowledge, pp. 48-49.
\textsuperscript{38} Al-Ghazzālīyy, Ilḥāq, Vol. I, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 24.
\textsuperscript{40} Abu Ḥasan ibn Al-Mughallīs Al-Saqqātīyy (256 A.H./870 A.D.)
\textsuperscript{41} Al-Ghazzālī, The Book of Knowledge, p. 92.
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Al-Ghazzalíyy asserted that he who studies the science of hadith and the Shari‘ah before he turns to Sufism comes off well, he who takes to Sufism before learning the Shari‘ah exposes himself to danger. This position can be interpreted as an attempt by Al-Ghazzalíyy to weigh Sufism with the balance of the Shari‘ah. Apparently, his adherence to such criterion was not without loopholes. Ibn Al-Jawziyy criticized him for breaking the laws of jurisprudence more than once to accommodate Sufi doctrines and actions.

4.1.4 On the Intellect (Al-‘Aqí)

The seventh section in the book of knowledge is concerned with the intellect (al-‘aqí); its noble nature, its definition, and its division. Al-Ghazzalíyy said that it is superfluous to show the noble nature of the intellect because it is the source and fountainhead of knowledge as well as its foundation. He described the relationship between knowledge and the intellect, using a Neoplatonic theme, as that between light and the sun. He found sufficient evidence for the nobility of the intellect in the fact that it is the means of happiness in this world and the hereafter. In addition, he maintained that the nobility of the intellect is something known by instinct.

Moreover, Al-Ghazzalíyy attempted to support his argument regarding the nobility of the intellect by citing verses from the Qur’an and reports from the Sunnah, as was his practice. The first of these is a verse that in literal translation reads “Allah is the Light (Nur) of the Heavens and Earth. His Light is like a niche in which there is a lamp – the lamp encased in glass - the glass, as it were, a glistering star.” He interpreted the word, light, as intellect so that the nobility of intellect was established by its likeness to the divine light.

In addition, he related a Hadith, which is considered da‘if, that the intellect was the first thing that was created by Allah. This creation, however, proved to be problematic in Al-Ghazzalíyy’s view. He questioned the nature of the intellect according to this Hadith. Because it is the first thing to be created, he held that the intellect must be either an accident (‘araq) or an essence (jawhar). But how could an accident be created before bodies? Again, if it is an essence, how could it have pure existence which is spaceless (min ghayri tabayyur)?

Al-Ghazzalíyy did not provide an answer to these questions here; he argued that the answer belongs to the science of “unveiling” (‘ilm al-mukhásafah). The meaning is that one has to follow the Sufi path in order to achieve such knowledge.

Al-Ghazzalíyy provided answers to these questions in Fúsal al-Tũfíqah bayn al-Islám wa al-Zandagáh (The Decisive Marker between Islam and Disbelief) which was written at a later stage, though during the same period. In this book, Al-Ghazzalíyy held that the first creation (i.e. intellect, ‘aqí) cannot be an accident; he thought that it must be an angle that is called intellect. Moreover, in a language that reflects Al-Farabí’s influence, he argued that this noun (i.e. intellect) is given to the angel because it is his essence (jawhar) to conceive himself and other things without the need of a teacher. It is lamentable that he had to resort to this Fárabían idea in order to solve a problem which resulted from his inappropriate knowledge of the Hadith.

Another influence of Al-Farabí can be seen in the following argument. Al-Ghazzalíyy’s interpretation of this Qur’anic verse, namely, that light in “Allah is the light” is interpreted as intellect which means that Allah is the intellect of the Heaven and the Earth (i.e. the universe). Not only is this a clear departure from the Sunni approach to the attributes of Allah [S.W.T.] and, thus, the interpretation of such verses, if combined with the Hadith about the

42 Al-Ghazzalíyy, The Book of Knowledge, p. 52.
43 Ibn Al-Jawziyy, Tuhíf Risáh, p. 166.
44 Al-Ghazzalíyy, The Book of Knowledge, p. 221.
45 Al-Qur‘án, Sura al-Nur 24:35.
46 This idea is similar to Descartes regarding the mind which “does not need space nor is dependent on any material thing,” Descartes, Discourse on the Method and the Meditations, John Veitch, tr. (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1998), p. 31.
49 Ibn Kathír related in his Tafsír the interpretation of several prominent scholars from among the first generation al-Salaf of Muslims and the
intellect being the first creation, becomes that the Intellect created another intellect. This idea, although reconstructed, is reminiscent of Al-Farabi’s cosmology which is Neoplatonic in its essence.

In addition, Al-Ghazzaliyy held that the term ‘intellect’ is applied to several things; he found that there are four distinct meanings to this term that are related to knowledge. The first is the quality which distinguishes man from animals and enables him to understand the theoretical sciences (nuzara’iyah), and to learn the abstract (fiqhiyah) disciplines. He held that the intellect is an instinct whereby, as a natural disposition, some animals are capable of grasping the theoretical sciences, except that Allah [S.W.T.], as a matter of fact, imbued man alone with these sciences. He added that “the relationship of this instinct, (namely, the intellect), to the sciences is similar to that of the eye to vision; while the relationship of the Shari’ah to the intellect, in so far as it leads to the unfolding of the sciences, is like that of the light of the sun to seeing”.50

The second meaning of intellect (‘aqil) is explained in terms of its application to logical necessities. Al-Ghazzaliyy maintained that this kind of knowledge “is present even in the infant who discerns51 the possibility of possible things (ja’tiz) and the impossibility of impossible things (mustashalad), such as the knowledge that two is greater than one and that one individual cannot be in two different places at the same time”.52

In the third place the word intellect is applied to empirical knowledge. Al-Ghazzaliyy said that this knowledge

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ledge “is acquired through experience, in the course of events”. To explain the relationship between empirical knowledge and the intellect he said that he who is taught by experience is called intelligent (‘qil).53

In the fourth place the term intellect is used when “the power of the instinct develops to such an extent that its possessor will be able to tell what the end will be, and, consequently, he will conquer and subdue his appetite which hankers for immediate pleasures”. Al-Ghazzaliyy maintained that this is another quality that distinguishes man from animals.54

Al-Ghazzaliyy concluded that “these forms of knowledge are inherent in the intellect by nature, and come to light when some cause which will bring them out takes place”. According to him, this knowledge is latent in the instinct and later appears as if there is no external influence. He illustrated this notion by comparing it to “water in the earth: it appears up on digging and accumulates at the bottom of the well (in this process)”.55 In addition, he cited verses in the Qur’an which indicate that every human being is born with an inherent knowledge of reality. He held that belief is instilled by nature in the human soul, but because of passing time, some people forgot all about it, others forgot it for a while, but finally remembered it. Moreover, he cited another group of verses which include an invitation for recalling and remembering the understanding that the human being was endowed with. He stated that “there are two kinds of remembrance: the one is to recall a picture which once existed in one’s mind but has since disappeared, while the other is to recall a picture which is inherent in one’s mind by nature (fitrah)”.56 In addition, he argued that “these facts are evident to him who exercises his insight, but are abstruse to him who is given to blind imitation and conformism”.57

Al-Ghazzaliyy held that people differ in their intellectual capabilities only in regard to the second field of know-


51 It should be noted that at a later stage in Al-Munqidh, Al-Ghazzaliyy considered “discernment” (ja’tiz) the second level in the epistemological development of man; this level is higher than the sensibles and is possible to children who are seven years old. The knowledge of the “ja’tiz” and the “mustashalud” belong to a higher level, namely, that of reason. See Al-Ghazzaliyy, Al-Munqidh, p. 145.


54 Ibid., p. 228.


56 Ibid., pp. 230–231.
ledge, namely, knowing logical necessities such as what is possible or impossible. As far as the intellect is concerned, it follows a course of development that begins at the age of discretion (tamāzq) and reaches its completion at age forty. 57 It might not be just a coincidence that he was about forty years old himself when he wrote these words. It is quite possible that he believed that he reached the prime of his intellectual capabilities as manifested in the ḳiyā'.

4.1.5 On Dialectical Theology ('Ilm al-Kalām)

Al-Ghazzālīyy's position regarding Kalām and philosophy in the ḳiyā' seems to be stricter than any other book, even those that were written later on (i.e. Al-Manaqīd). For him, “whatever Kalām offers by way of useful evidence is contained in the Qur'an and the Sunnah; anything else is either reprehensible argumentation which, as will be seen, is an innovation (bīdā'), or mere wrangling by dwelling or distinctions or amplification through the array of different opinions, most of which are drivel and nonsense”. Nevertheless, he stated that although Kalām would be considered heresy at the time of the prophet [S.A.A.S.], circumstances changed and it became fard kifayah. 58

4.1.6 On Philosophy

Regarding philosophy, Al-Ghazzālīyy held that it is not a science in itself but comprises four parts: the first includes geometry and arithmetic which are permissible, unless there is reason to fear that they might lead a person to blameworthy sciences. 59 He did not discuss the reasons that led him to take such a position, and thus I find no justification for his position. Perhaps he was carried off by a fervour of Sufi attitude that rendered many things irrelevant to the way of the hereafter. It should be noted that this remark is not normal for Al-Ghazzālīyy and does not reflect his general position regarding arithmetic, geometry and the exact sciences and the Sharī'ah. Rather, he described their relation in neutral language.

The second part of philosophy is logic, which Al-Ghazzālīyy defined as the study of proofs, definitions and their conditions. He maintained that both are included in Kalām. 60 Moreover, he cited a Hadith which indicates that those who deal with logic will be unable to perform good deeds. Al-Iraqīyy held that this Hadith is fabricated and that it has no origin [la qawla lahi] in the Sunnah. 61 Such a narration is an indication that there were people who circulated fabricated Hadith in order to prove a point or to defend a position. This Hadith proved to be problematic for someone like Al-Ghazzālīyy; his position towards logic in his earlier and later works shows an acceptance that is different from the one in the ḳiyā'.

The third part of philosophy is metaphysics which Al-Ghazzālīyy regarded as the science that addresses the existence of Allah and his attributes. He held that this science is also contained in Kalām. He compared the position of the philosophers with respect to this science to that of the Mu'tazilites who represented a branch of Kalām. He described the contribution of the philosophers in this field either as blasphemous or innovation. On the other hand he described the contribution of the Mu'tazilites as invalid (kāfīf). 62 Physics is the fourth part of philosophy, some parts of which contradict the Sharī'ah, religion and truth, and are, therefore, folly. These are not sciences and may be classified as such. The other parts of physics are concerned with the different substances; their properties, transmutation, and change. Al-Ghazzālīyy compared the contribution of the philosophers in physics to medicine but failed to see any practical application for this study and thus declared it useless. 63

In this classification, Al-Ghazzālīyy elevated the know-

58 Al-Ghazzālī, The Book of Knowledge, p. 53.
61 Ibid., p. 41.
62 Ibid., p. 22.
63 Al-Ghazzālī, The Book of Knowledge, p. 54.
describes what the novice needs to achieve such knowledge. He concluded the Book of Knowledge by defending the position of the Sufis who were accused of disparaging the intellect and reason as well as the rational and the reasonable. He said that the reason for such accusations is that "men have transformed the term intellect or reason (‘aql) and the term rational or reasonable (ma‘qūl) to indicate argumentation and debate over contradictions and requisites, things that have to do with dialectical theology (Kalam). Consequently, the Sufis could not tell that men have used this epistemology in ways different than the original meanings; it has not been possible to remove that from their minds in view of its current and well-established usage. As a result, they disparaged reason and rationalism." The later position of the Sufis can be interpreted as a reaction to what might be described as a wave of rationalism that prevailed during the golden age of Islamic civilization which is manifested in the writings of the philosophers, the Mutakallimūn and the Mu'tazilah in addition to others.

4.1.7 On Creed (‘Aqidah)

Al-Ghazzaliyy reiterated his position on the acquisition of knowledge throughout the Ḥiyah. In the chapter on Gāwa'id al-'Aqīd (The Fundamentals of Belief) he said that one is not required to do research or to arrange proofs in order to achieve knowledge; the only thing that he has to do is to follow the path of the hereafter and to preoccupy himself with discipline and self-mortification. Only then will "the doors of guidance open and reveal the truths of this creed through divine light which strikes the hearts". He added that this knowledge is possible because there is a verse in the Qur’an in which Allah promises guidance for those who strive to act virtuously. Therefore, he interpreted the possibility of knowledge through divine illumination as a fulfillment of the latter promise.

64 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Ḥiyah, Vol. 1, pp.22-23.
65 Al-Ghazzaliyy, The Book of Knowledge, p. 100.
67 Al-Qur’an, Surah al-‘Antaḥab 29:69.
68 Al-Ghazzaliyy, Ḥiyah, Vol. 1, p. 94.
4.1.8 On Dreams

In the chapter on the reality of poverty and mysticism (zuhd) where he advocated that intentional poverty is a condition that enables the ascetic, who embraces poverty (al-faqir al-zuhdi), 69 to know things that are not permitted for those who are preoccupied with money whether rich or poor. One of the most important issues here is that he adopted dreams as another source of knowledge. He related a Hadith of the prophet [S.A.A.S.] in which he said, “True vision is a part of forty six parts of prophecy”.70 He commented on this ratio and said that it is not possible to know the reason behind it; he held that any attempt to do so will be nothing more than guessing.71 In another section in the Ihya, he discussed other conditions that pertain to such vision (e.g. purification). In this section, Al-Ghazzaliyy maintained that he could only talk about the nature of dreams through the use of examples because this subject belongs to ‘ulum al-mukâdshafah which should not be discussed.72

It seems that Al-Ghazzaliyy’s position on the possibility of attaining peremptory knowledge through dreams is substantiated by sound traditions, which is not the case with those on poverty. His arguments regarding poverty are filled with traditions that are “weak” and several others that are fabricated (mauwdû). I think that he failed to cite sources in the Sharî‘ah to support his position regarding intentional poverty. In addition, Ibn Al-Jawzîyy criticized him for adopting this position which he considered contradictory to both the Sharî‘ah and reason.73 Thus, if intentional poverty, which is supposed to be an action that brings one closer to the possibility of acquiring peremptory knowledge, is against the Sharî‘ah, how could someone claim that he has a true vision?

4.1.9 Conclusion

Al-Ghazzaliyy had to rethink his position regarding all fields of knowledge upon his acceptance of the Sufi path as the only way that leads to the attainment of peremptory knowledge. He used this Sufi knowledge as the criterion to be used when considering the various subjects that he used; the variety of these subjects made it rather difficult to reconcile all of them within the framework of his epistemology.

Al-Ghazzaliyy held that there exists a faculty higher than reason in which knowledge is “unveiled” to the Sufi. Through this faculty one can achieve knowledge directly from divine sources. He did not discuss the nature of this knowledge, claiming that he had no permission to reveal it, and that language is not suitable to express such experience. Yet, in order to qualify for this divine knowledge, one should lead a disciplined and an immaterial life leading to self-mortification. The Ihya is written primarily as a guide that contains the science of action which is a prerequisite to the attainment of divine knowledge.

The positions Al-Ghazzaliyy took in the Ihya show that he was carried away by Sufism. His positions regarding many subjects (e.g., logic, kalâm) contain flaws. In some cases in his later works, these flaws were overcome by corrected arguments.

4.2 AL-MAQSAAD AL-ASNA Fî SHARI‘ ASMÂ‘ ALLAH AL-HUSNA

The writings that followed the Ihya continued to reflect Al-Ghazzaliyy’s position towards reason and other sources of knowledge. In the Introduction of Al-Maqsaad al-Asna fi Sharh Asma‘ Allah Al-Husna (The Sublime Aim in the Interpretation of Allah’s Beautiful Names) he emphasized the inability of reason to attain transcendent knowledge.
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namely, knowledge of Allah and the reality of his attributes. He added that such knowledge, which he acquired through "unveiling" (mukāshfa), does not conform to the ideas, on this subject, that were presented by the scholars before him. He knew that it is rather a difficult task to change the customs and beliefs that people are accustomed to. Nevertheless, he believed that whoever has "seen" the Truth and knows Allah, cannot but convey such knowledge.⁷⁴

4.3 BIDĀYAT AL-HIDĀYAH

In Bidāyat al-Hidāyah (The Beginning of Guidance), Al-Ghazzālī wrote a chapter on the gradual introduction of guidance. The introduction of this chapter⁷⁵ is an exact repetition of a similar text in his Qawā'īd al-'Aqā'id which stresses discipline and self-mortification as prerequisites for the attainment of peremptory knowledge. This introduction is another proof of the consistency during this period regarding the method or the "path" that Al-Ghazzālī advocated for the attainment of knowledge.

4.4 JAWĀHIR AL-QUR'ĀN

In another book, Jawāhir al-Qur'ān (The Jewels of the Qur'an), Al-Ghazzālī asserted the position that one could have a true vision, as a source of knowledge, while asleep. He argued, similar to his position in the Iḥyā', that this form of knowledge is the equivalent of one forty-sixth of prophecy.⁷⁶ Moreover, he held that such knowledge is always revealed in metaphorical language that represents transcendent knowledge. Since not everyone knows the meaning of these metaphors only those who possess knowledge of the hidden relationship between this world and the other one can interpret them. Once again, he asserted that to unveil the secrets of the other world one should resort to discipline and self-mortification.⁷⁷

In another section in Jawāhir al-Qur'ān, Al-Ghazzālī pointed to insight (bašra) as a source of knowledge. He said, "It appeared to me through clear insight and beyond doubt, that man is capable of acquiring several sciences that are still latent and not existent."⁷⁸ The meaning of this statement is that he perceived sciences other than those existing at the time. These sciences are latent, yet they are within reach of human beings. Though the concept of latent sciences which are not discovered yet is an interesting idea in itself, the emphasis here is on his use of insight as a source of knowledge which is consistent with his position in the Iḥyā'.⁷⁹

There is yet another book of considerable importance to the problem of knowledge, namely, Al-Qistās al-Mustaqīm (The Just Balance). Although this book could be considered primarily as polemic against the Batinites, Al-Ghazzālī also shows his ability to criticize the arguments commonly used in Kalām and jurisprudence. In the course of pursuing this critique, he presents strong arguments on the role of reason in Islam and defines the limits of personal opinion (ru'yah) and analogy (qiyās).⁸⁰

In his argument against opinion, Al-Ghazzālī provided an example from the doctrines of the Mu'tazilites in which they argued that, "Allah is obliged to order the best for His servants". He said that if they are asked to establish this, they have recourse only to opinion that they judge to be good by means of their intellects by analogy between the Creator and His creation and by likening His wisdom to theirs. Al-Ghazzālī assessed their opinion and found it to be false according to the rule of concomitance (mizān al-talāzūm) which he derived from the Qur'ān, saying:

⁷⁷ Al-Ghazzālīyy, Jawāhir, pp. 33-34.
⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 28.
⁷⁹ Al-Ghazzālī, The Book of Knowledge, p. 231.
"If the best was obligatory for Allah, He would have done it. It is known that He has not done it. This demonstrates that it is not obligatory. For He does not neglect that which is obligatory."

He added that if the Mu'tazilites do not admit that "Allah has not done it", he would reply that if He had done that which was best He would have created them in Paradise and would have left them there. One of the most important aspects that can be derived from such arguments, is Al-Ghazzâliyy’s ability to paint Aristotelian logic with Islamic color.

In his criticism of analogy Al-Ghazzâliyy used an example from the Mujassimah who believe that Allah has a body. They said, “He (Allah) is an agent and an artisan and by analogy with other agents and artisans (who have bodies). He has a body”. Al-Ghazzâliyy considered this analogy false. He held that it is called the Great Rule (al-mizân al-qâzâr) and that it runs like this:

“Every agent has a body.
The Creator is an agent.
Hence He has a body.”

According to him, the problem in this analogy is not with the second premise which he accepted; it is the validity of the first premise that he questioned. He said that the Mujassimah derived the first premise from two sources: induction (istiqrâ) and the extended categories (al-qismah al-muntasibah). He stated that induction, in this case, consists of examining all the classes of agents (e.g., the shoemaker, the tailor, the carpenter) and finding that they all have bodies. Al-Ghazzâliyy found this generalization to be incomplete, since they did not examine every agent including Allah [S.W.T.] In addition, he asserted that induction cannot provide a certain conclusion.

With regard to the use of extended categories, Al-

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81 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Al-Qstas, pp. 97-98.
82 Ibid., p. 98.
83 Ibid., pp. 101-102.
84 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Al-Qstas, p. 103.
85 Dar al-Kutub al-‘Imāryah published an Arabic edition of Al-Qstas al-Mustaqâm in which the word qism (categories) was substituted with qism (bodies). I find Brewster’s translation to be more accurate for two reasons. First, it does not make sense to “set aside all bodies and to state that they possess bodies.” The second reason is that Brewster cited the source (i.e., Chedès’ printed text of 1959, which was based on the printed text of Cairo, 1900, revised according to the readings of the manuscripts of the Eusecurial and Kastanou in dated 544 A.H.) that he used for his translation, while the Arabic edition does not cite any manuscripts and thus resembles the many uncritical editions that flood the market. See Brewster, Introduction, Al-Qstas al-Mustaqâm by Al-Ghazzâliyy, p. xxii.
86 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Al-Qstas, p. 103.
4.5 AL-RISALAH AL-LADUNNIYYAH

In Al-Risalat al-Ladunniyyah, Al-Ghazzaliyy appeared to be defending "metaphysical transcendental knowledge (al-ilm al-ghaybiyy al-ladunniyy) upon which elite Sufis depend for knowledge". In terms of certitude, he ranked this kind of knowledge higher than that which is acquired through conventional education. This position was based upon the source of knowledge (i.e., Allah) and not its mode (e.g., rational vs. Shar'yy). Regarding the relationship between the rational sciences and those of the Shari'ah, he stated that he who really knows both fields finds that the distinction that divides them into two fields disappears in many cases. He considered many rational sciences to be part of the Shari'ah and many of the sciences in the field of the Shari'ah to be part of the rational sciences.

Nevertheless, he held that all sciences are important because science indicates the existence of knowledge, and ignorance is the absence of it. Moreover, he maintained that knowledge corresponds to the soul and ignorance to the body. He said that bodies are finite and not equipped to hold the many sciences unlike the soul which accepts all knowledge without any obstacle.

Al-Ghazzaliyy elaborated on the sources of human knowledge which he limited to two: human and divine (rabban). He considered the first as a known path which all intelligent people accept. Knowledge in this source is achieved in two ways: from without which is formal learning, and from within which is thinking. He held that knowledge exists in potentiality inside the souls and defined learning as the process which brings knowledge out of potentiality into actuality. To explain his idea he used an analogy, writing:

"The sciences are concentrated in the souls in potentiality, similar to the seeds in earth... Learning is seeking to bring out that thing from potentiality to actuality, while teaching is bringing it out. The learner's soul imitates that of the teacher and tries to get close to it because the scholar is similar to the peasant in benefiting others, and the learner is similar to the earth in gaining benefit. The science in potentiality is similar to the seed, while in actuality is the plant. Once the learner's soul is perfected (through education) it becomes similar to a fruitful tree."

Moreover, once the basics of any science are learned, the soul uses intuition (hada) to reach that which is required. At this stage an insight brings out the knowledge that exists in his soul from potentiality to actuality. The idea that what is in potentiality comes to actuality by some agency, is Aristotelian. Aristotle said, "For from the potentially existing the actually existing is always produced by an actually existing thing, e.g. man from man". In addition, two words that Al-Ghazzaliyy used in his analogy, namely, "seed" and "earth" were used by Aristotle in his analogy in the Metaphysics which corresponds to the same notion. These similarities indicate the possibility that Al-Ghazzaliyy was aware of this particular concept in Aristotle's Metaphysics.
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The second source of knowledge (i.e. divine) was also divided into two kinds: revelation (wa'ahiy) and inspiration (fikham). Concerning revelation, Al-Ghazzalyy believed that it is restricted to prophets and that it is no longer available after the death of prophet Muhammad [S.A.A.S.]. Regarding inspiration, he stated that unlike revelation where knowledge is presented in clear terms, inspiration constitutes hints of the same kind of knowledge which is called prophetic (nazabuuy) in the first case and kadaami in the second.

Another major difference between these two forms of knowledge is that revelation is known through Allah [S.W.T.], while inspiration is known through the emanation of the universal intellect (al-`aql al-kulliy). Al-Ghazzalyy held that the kadaami knowledge is a condition for the attainment of wisdom which is sufficient; one does not have to go through formal education in order to achieve knowledge. This latter position, which was common among the Sufis, was criticized by Ibn Al-Jawziiyy. Moreover, in Ayjuhuh al-Walad (O Child), Al-Ghazzalyy considered learning or reading subjects such as poetry, Kalam, grammar and medicine, unless it is done for the sake of Allah [S.W.T.], a waste of time that will be regretted.

4.6 MISHKAT AL-ANWAR

Al-Ghazzalyy wrote Mishkat al-Anwar (The Niche for Lights) towards the end of this period of seclusion. The Mishkah was written as a reply to someone who asked him to disseminate the secrets of divine illumination, along with the interpretation of the verses of light (e.g. Allah is the light of Heaven and Earth). His answer to this request was that such knowledge is restricted to the few. In addition, he related the position of some Sufis who held that disclosing the divine secret is blasphemous (fshah si` al-rubuhiyyah kuft). Nevertheless, he was willing to reveal some of this knowledge metaphorically through hints, signs and symbols.

Moreover, he held that it is in Allah's hands to allow the hearts to understand the meaning of these metaphors. The latter idea indicates that he considered the heart (al-qari`), which he distinguishes from the physical one, as a source of knowledge. According to him, the heart has an "eye" for knowledge which is sometimes referred to as intellect, soul and human spirit. He defined it as that "which differentiates the intelligent (human being) from the nursing infant, the animal and the insane".

Al-Ghazzalyy argued that the intellect moves from being insightful in potentiality (bi al-quwaah) to that of actuality (bi al-f`a) when the light of wisdom shines. It is this kind of illumination that allows the "eye" of the heart to perceive the realities of the other world (al'am al-malak`ah) in a fashion analogous to the function of the physical eye in the sensible world (al'am al-shahadaah). He went as far as to describe those who settle for knowledge of the latter world as merely beasts (ba`dmiyyah).

In relation to this neotic illumination, Al-Ghazzalyy distinguishes five levels of spirits with each corresponding to a level of knowledge. The first of these is the sensible spirit (al-r`uh al-hassas) which is responsible for receiving whatever comes through the five senses. This spirit is possible for both animals and infants. The second spirit is the imaginative (al-r`uh al-khayaliyy) which is responsible for storing the sensibles and presenting them to the intellect whenever there is need. He maintained that this one is possible for children and some animals. An example of this is a dog which is hit with a stick, it runs away upon seeing the same stick again. This is an example of conditioned learning, the subject of which is sensible objects. The third is the intellectual spirit (al-r`uh al-`aqiliyy) with which subjects other than the sensibles and imagination are perceived (e.g., generalizations). This spirit is the essence of adult human beings; it is not possible for children or animals, neither any other level beyond this one. The fourth one is the
thinking spirit (al-rūḥ al-fikrīyy) which is responsible for generating knowledge from pure intellectual sciences. The fifth is the holy prophetic spirit (al-rūḥ al-qudūsiyy al-nabawīyy) which is restricted to prophets and some pious people (awliyā‘ī). Al-Ghazzālī argued that it is through this spirit that divine knowledge is acquired. Most importantly, he held that the lower levels (e.g., intellectual) are not equipped to attain such knowledge.  

Towards the end of the Mishkāh, he addressed those who sought retreat in the world of reason. He argued that the possibility of having a faculty higher than that of reason is similar to the possibility of reason being a faculty higher than the level of discernment and senses. The meaning of this is that reason does exist regardless whether someone does not possess it (i.e., his/her faculties are on the level of the sense or discernment); by the same token, a noetic faculty which is higher than reason (i.e., prophetic) also exists. In addition, he believed that through the faculty which ranks higher than reason, elite Sufis are capable of acquiring ultimate knowledge from the same source as the prophets, and therefore, they do not need assistance from them.  

As a devout Sufi, Al-Ghazzālī concluded Mishkāt al-Anwa‘r, by an invitation to strive for divine knowledge which could only be hampered by waves of lust and worldliness. As a matter of fact, his last surviving book to be written during this period, namely, Al-Kashf wa al-Tauḥīd fl Ghuṭur al-Khaḷq Ajmā‘īn (Unveiling and Explanation of the Deception of all Creation), was an attempt to detail the areas where people need to change their worldly behavior. In addition, when he brought his seclusion to an end by returning to public teaching, the declared motives indicate that it was consistent with the principles that led him to abandon public teaching in the first place; he asserted that both were for the sake of Allah [S.W.T.]

4.7 CONCLUSION

Al-Ghazzālī emphasized in his writings the limited capability of reason and that “unveiling” (kashf) is the only source of knowledge that is absolutely capable of attaining indubitable transcendental knowledge. In the Iḥyā‘ Ulūm al-Dīn (The Revival of Islamic Sciences), he stressed the superiority of Sufi knowledge over that which is attained by conventional sources of knowledge. This Sufi knowledge which he referred to as ‘ilm al-mukāḥalāt is the aim of intellectual activity, yet he stated that such knowledge should not be revealed to the public. Therefore, the subject of the Iḥyā‘ is that knowledge which leads to “unveiling” (kashf), namely the science of action (‘ilm al-ma‘ānī). By action, he means self-mortification and discipline which form a prerequisite for attaining peremptory transcendental knowledge. In addition, he held that “unveiling” (kashf) is possible through the faculty higher than reason. The aim of this position is to show the limitations of reason which cannot achieve peremptory knowledge. This position is reinforced by listing prophecy as the highest level in relation to the attainment of knowledge which is followed by the scholars in what might be considered Al-Ghazzālī’s response to the Muslim philosophers who ranked reason as the highest faculty. Finally, he added in the Iḥyā‘ another form for the attainment of peremptory knowledge, namely, vision.

Similar to his position in the Iḥyā‘, Al-Ghazzālī continued in Al-Maqṣad al-ʿAsnā Sharḥ Asnā ‘Alāh al-Ḥusnā (The Sublime Aim in the Interpretation of Allah’s Beautiful Names) to stress the limitations of reason and its incapability to attain peremptory transcendental knowledge. The only way to achieve such knowledge is through “unveiling” (kashf). It is obvious that these two notions are consistent with Al-Ghazzālī’s epistemology in the Iḥyā‘.

As to Bida‘ayat al-Hidāyah (The Beginning of Guidance), there are whole sections which are identical with Qawā‘id al-‘Aqā‘īd which is considered a part of the Iḥyā‘ and therefore it adds to the consistency of Al-Ghazzālī’s epistemology.

102 Al-Ghazzālī, Mishkāh, pp. 165-166.
103 Ibid., pp. 166-167.
104 Ibid., pp. 170-171.
105 Ibid., pp. 172-173.
106 See Al-Ghazzālī, Al-Kashf wa al-Tauḥīd fl Ghuṭur al-Khaḷq Ajmā‘īn (Cairo: Matba‘at Mustafa Muhammad, No Date). This book is printed in the margin of Tanbih al-Muğtamar by ‘Abd al-Walīḥ Abī Shīr rāvīyā."
during this period. In these sections he asserted the notion of discipline and self-mortification as prerequisites to the attainment of peremptory knowledge.

In Jawāhir al-Qur'ān (The Jewels of the Qur'an) which corresponds to his position in the Ḳiyā' and Bidāyat Al-Hidāyah, Al-Ghazzāliyy maintained the notion of discipline and self-mortification as conditions for the attainment of transcendental knowledge. He held that transcendental knowledge can be revealed through true vision in metaphorical language.

In Al-Risālah al-Ladūnnyyah, Al-Ghazzāliyy discussed the notion of “metaphysical transcendental knowledge” (al-ilm al-qhaybīyy al-ladūnnyyah) which is accessible to elite Sufis only. This kind of knowledge can be attained through inspiration (lūhār).

The last book dealing with the epistemology of Al-Ghazzāliyy during the first period of seclusion is Mishkat al-Anwār (The Niche for Lights). He reiterated his position regarding the existence of a faculty higher than reason. According to him, elite Sufis are capable of attaining knowledge directly from the same source, similar to prophets.

Although Al-Ghazzāliyy introduces different sources (e.g., inspiration, insight) for the attainment of knowledge, these six books emphasize Sufism as the common theme and, therefore, this period of seclusion reflects a unified epistemology.

Chapter FIVE
AL-GHAZALIYY'S QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE:
THE SECOND PERIOD OF PUBLIC TEACHING
(499–503 A.H./1106–1110 C.E.)

This chapter deals with Al-Ghazzāliyy’s writings during the second period of public teaching at the Niẓāmiyyah of Nishapur which lasted for about four years. After spending more than a decade in seclusion, he realized that there was nothing that could justify his withdrawal from public life, especially when he could see that the society at large was astraying from the straight path, and was, therefore, in desperate need for reformation. He knew that by attempting to play the role of a reformer, he would win the animosity of many people if not all. Nevertheless, realizing that this return to public life was taking place at the turn of the sixth century A.H. (Dhu al-Qidah, 499 A.H.), he was convinced that he was going to be the expected reformer (mujaddid) in accordance with a Hadith of the Prophet [S.A.A.S.] in which he said that Allah [S.W.T.] will send a reformer to the Muslim nation (ummah) at the turn of each century to revive its religion.1 Al-Ghazzāliyy’s decision to leave his seclusion was made in consultation with prominent Sufis; it was also supported, he argued, by many visions of good people.2 In addition, he received an official request from vizier Fakhr al-Mulk in which he asked him to teach at the Niẓāmiyyah of Nishapur.3

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1 This Hadith (Inna Allaha Tu'ala ya'bi'hu lhabāhī al-ummah, ida ra'st kulli m'iddi saratin man yujaddidu laha dīnhoj) was verified by Abu Dawud, Al-Hakim and Al-Bayhaqīyy. See Al-Ghazzalīyy, Al-Munqith, p. 159.
2 Al-Ghazzalīyy, Al-Munqith, p. 159.
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During these years, he wrote four books⁴: his autobiographic work *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl* (Deliverance from Error), a ruling (fatwā) on divorce Ghayat al-Ghaour fi Dirāyat al-Daur, al-Mustaṣfā min ʾIIm al-Uṣūl (The Chosen from the Science of the Fundamentals of Jurisprudence), and a defence of the *Iḥyāʾ* which he called Ḥal-ʾImām ʾIshāq al-Iḥyāʾ (The Dictation on the Problems of the Revival).⁵ It is the aim of this chapter to continue tracing Al-Ghazzālīyy’s theory of knowledge in these books with the exception of *Ghayat al-Ghaour fi Dirāyat al-Daur* which is not related to the subject matter of this chapter.

5.1 AL-MUNQIDH MIN AL-DALĀL

The first book to be written during this period is *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl* (The Deliverance from Error). This book was written in response to a brother in religion who wanted Al-Ghazzālīyy to communicate to him “the aim and secrets of the science and the dangerous and intricate depths of the different doctrines and views”.⁶ It is not now possible to determine whether this request actually took place; it is likely that this question-answer is nothing but the writing style of Al-Ghazzālīyy. It is possible that he picked up this style from Platonic dialogues.⁷

Al-Ghazzālīyy gave an account of his “trail in disengaging the truth from amid the welter of the sects, despite the polarity of their means and methods”. In addition, he discussed why and how he moved from conformism to independent investigation.⁸ He next deliberately took the reader on an intellectual tour that has Sufism as the last station. This station was not intended as a layover, where the reader would take a rest before returning to his first station; *Al-Munqidh* was designed to take the reader on a one-way journey that has Sufism as the last station. As a matter of fact, he wanted the reader to avoid the other stations because he tried them and found them not suitable for the aim of this tour which is the attainment of true knowledge.

In the introduction of *Al-Munqidh*, Al-Ghazzālīyy described his quest for knowledge, his attempt to examine creed and every sect or group, as an on going process that began when he was less than twenty years old. According to him, this process continued on; he said that it was still the case with him at the time he was more than fifty years old.⁹ This statement supports the idea that he maintained his inquisitive nature throughout his life. Moreover, he declared that his “thirst to perceive the reality of things” was an instinct (ẓarīzah) that was placed in his nature by Allah [S.W.T.] and, therefore, he had no choice but to seek true knowledge.¹⁰

Al-Ghazzālīyy described the history of his search for true knowledge. The first change in his epistemology was to break away from conformism (taqlīd) which he defined as uncritical acceptance of knowledge, presented by parents or teachers, as true. As a result, he rejected all inherited creed (al-ʿaqūd al-mawriyīn). According to him, the inherited creed is nothing but dictated knowledge (taqlīdiyyah) which is received by way of imitation. He held that this source of knowledge (i.e. taqlīd) is responsible for the differences between people.¹¹ He emphasized the necessity to reject conformism as an essential step in any search for true knowledge.

Al-Ghazzālīyy realized the necessity of defining the nature of knowledge as part of his search for the reality of things. He reached the conclusion that peremptory knowledge (al-ʿilm al-yaqīnīyāh) is that knowledge which is indubitable and devoid of mistake or illusion regardless of

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⁴ Bouyges listed two other books, the first is *ʿAṣīb al-Khaṣaṣṣ* (The Wonders of the Qualities of Chemicals and Magic); the authenticity of this book was disputed by many scholars. The second book is *Sir al-ʿAṣyūn wa-khurṣīn ma fi al-Durūr* (The Secret of the Two Worlds); the authenticity of this book was disputed by many scholars including Bouyges himself. See Badawi, Muʿallafat, p. 205 and p. 271.
⁵ Badawi, Muʿallafat, p. xvi.
⁶ Al-Ghazzalī, Freedom and Fulfillment, p. 61.
⁷ In addition to *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*, examples of this style can be found in *Al-Magṣūd as-Sana Sharḥ Asmaʿ Allah Al-Husnā, Al-ḥāṣrāt al-Mustaqim, al-Radīb al-Ladimmayyāt, Fath al-Taqīfīq, and Ayyub al-Walad.*
⁸ Al-Ghazzalī, Freedom and Fulfillment, p. 61.
⁹ Al-Ghazzalī, Al-Munqidh, p. 79.
¹⁰ Ibid., p. 81.
¹¹ Ibid., pp. 81–82.
the circumstances. It is here that he compared the certitude
that he was seeking with that which is generated in mathe-
matics (e.g. as the certitude that results from knowing
that ten is greater than three).\(^\text{12}\)

Al-Ghazzālīyy used his concept of peremptory know-
ledge as a criterion to verify the sciences that he acquired
previously. He found that the sensibles (al-hisāyat) and
logical necessities (al-darārīyātā) which he believed to be
trustworthy for a while, proved to be subject to doubt and,
therefore, he categorized them in terms of certitude along
with the knowledge acquired through conformity.\(^\text{13}\)

Al-Ghazzālīyy’s language in Al-Mun pérdh is differen-
t from that of previous works, where he used to present his
discussions regarding the sources of knowledge in inde-
pendent sentences or clauses. There was a transition
between defining peremptory knowledge and its application
to the sensibles and logical necessities: he used the term
“next” (thumma) at the beginning of a new chapter (i.e. The
Avenues to Sophistry and Agnosticism)\(^\text{14}\) in addition to
other places.\(^\text{15}\) The use of this conjunction in Arabic (i.e.
thumma) creates a sense of continuity that portrays the
whole process as a systematic approach to epistemology.

Al-Ghazzālīyy’s doubt of the senses was based upon
his examination of sight (basa‘) which he considered the
strongest sense; if he could doubt sight then he could
doubt the rest of the senses as well. He provided several
accounts where sight is deceived. In one of these examples
he said:

“...the strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now
this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and
motionless and judges that motion must be denied.”

\(^\text{12}\) Al-Ghazzalīyy, Al-Mun pérdh, p. 82.
\(^\text{13}\) Ibid., p. 83.
\(^\text{14}\) R.J. McCarthy translated the title of this chapter Madakhib al-Safāata
un Jahd al-‘Udm, as “The Avenues of Sophistry and Skepticism.”
I think that Al-Ghazzalīyy did not intend “Jahd al-‘Udm” as skep-
ticism here, a translation which cannot be justified linguistically. The
literal translation is “denial of the sciences” which the context renders
it closer to the concept of agnosticism rather than skepticism or
doubt. Al-Ghazzalīyy, Freedom, p. 64.
\(^\text{15}\) Al-Ghazzalīyy, Al-Mun pérdh, pp. 82-83.

Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later
it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not
move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imper-
ceptible that it was never completely at rest.”\(^\text{16}\)

Al-Ghazzālīyy realized that while the judge of the
senses finds the sensibles acceptable, the reason judge
refutes the latter judgement. At this stage, he trusted
the knowledge that comes through reason and which
belongs to “the category of primary truths (al-auwally-
ūd), such as asserting that ‘Ten is greater than three’,
and ‘One and the same cannot be simultaneously affirmed
and denied’, and ‘One and the same cannot be incipient
and eternal, existent and nonexistent, necessary and
impossible.’\(^\text{17}\)

Soon Al-Ghazzalīyy found that his trust in reason
was also challenged. He was presented with another
problem; it was the personified senses that asked him
the following question, “What assurance have you that
your rational knowledge is not like your reliance on sense
judgment?”\(^\text{18}\) The basic argument is that the existence of a
higher faculty makes the lower one doubtful and if it
was not for the reason judge, he would have trusted the
sense. How then can be be sure that there is not a higher
judge than that of reason which once reveals itself, it
gives the lie to the judgement of reason? Moreover, the
fact that there is no appearance of this higher faculty
does not indicate the impossibility of its existence.\(^\text{19}\)

Furthermore, this problem was reinforced by Al-
Ghazzalīyy’s soul, which hesitated about the answer, by
appealing to dreaming\(^\text{20}\) saying:

\(^\text{16}\) Al-Ghazzalīyy, Freedom and Fulfillment, p. 64.
\(^\text{17}\) Ibid., p. 65.
\(^\text{18}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{19}\) Al-Ghazzalīyy, Al-Mun pérdh, pp. 84-85.
\(^\text{20}\) R.J. McCarthy mistakenly thought that it is the sense judge which
reinforced its position by appealing to dreaming. In Arabic, the term
“judge” (ha‘ăm) is masculine while both the “soul” (al-nafs) and
“reinforced” (injāmad): the verb reinforced has to be in the masculine
form in order for McCarthy’s translation to be correct. In
addition, the suffix pronoun ha‘ in Al-Ghazzalīyy’s problem is feminine
and, therefore, refers to the soul and not the judge. Al-Ghazzalīyy,
Freedom, p. 65 and Al-Ghazzalīyy, Al-Mun pérdh, p. 85.
"Don't you see that when you are asleep you believe certain things and imagine circumstances and believe they are fixed and lasting and entertain no doubts about that being their status? Then you wake up and know that all your imaginings and beliefs were groundless and unsubstantial. So while everything you believe through sensation or intellect in your waking state may be true in relation to that state, what assurance have you that you may not suddenly experience a state which would have the same relation to your waking state as the latter has to your dreaming, and your waking state would be dreaming in relation to that new and further state? If you found yourself in such a state, you would be sure that all your rational beliefs were unsubstantial fancies."

AI-Ghazzalîyy thought this state beyond reason might be either that which the Sufis claim is theirs, or death. In the first case, the Sufis allege in their states that when they concentrate inwardly and suspend their sensation, they see phenomena which are not in accord with reason. The other possibility is death, where he derived this notion from what he falsely believed to be a Hadith in which the Prophet [S.A.A.S.] said, "People are asleep; then after they die they awake." In addition, he held that this notion corresponds to a verse in the Qur'an which says, "But we have removed from you your veil and today your sight is keen."

AI-Ghazzalîyy explained that he could not find a way out of these thoughts, because to arrange any proof he needed to combine primary truths, which was inadmissible at the time. Hence, he was left in the condition of rejecting as false all kinds of knowledge, which lasted for two months. He regarded this condition as practically equivalent to sophistry (safsata), but his condition did not extend to utterance or doctrine.

Al-Ghazzalîyy considered this condition as a sickness which was "healed" by a light (nîr) that Allah has [S.W.T.] cast into his chest. He came to regard this light as the key to most knowledge. From it, he regained his trust in necessary rational knowledge (al-darâ'iyât al-âqîlàyyah). He asserted that one should not restrict the possibility of unveiling truth (al-kashf) to precisely formulated proofs.

Al-Ghazzalîyy reflected on this experience in terms of the concept of "dilation" (al-sharî), in the Qur'an there is a verse which reads, "So he whom Allah wishes to guide aright, He dilates his breast for submission to Himself (i.e. to embrace Islam)." In a Hadith, the Prophet [S.A.A.S.] interpreted this verse as follows, "It is a light which Allah casts into the heart." Then someone said, "And what is the sign of it?" He replied, "Withdrawal from the mansion of delusion and turning to the mansion of immortality." Al-Ghazzalîyy also adverted to other Hadiths on the same subject, concluding that one should seek to unveil truth through that light which oases forth from the divine generosity, and one must be on the watch for it. He added that these narrations are intended so one should seek truth in areas other than primary truths which are given.

After his trust in primary truths was reinstated at the end of this period of doubt, Al-Ghazzalîyy returned to searching for true knowledge in the teachings of every sect and school of thought. Eventually he narrowed the list of the "classes of seekers" to the Batinites, the dialectical theologians (al-Mutakallimîn), the philosophers and the Sufis. His aim was to show that only the Sufis possessed the methodology (i.e. "tasting" or dha\'wa\') that lead to true knowledge.
5.1.1 The Influence of al-Munqidh on Descartes

Uthman Ka'uk related that he found a translated copy of al-Munqidh in Descartes' library in Paris with his comments in the margin. Although there is no account of the nature of these comments, I think a comparison of Descartes' epistemology with that of Al-Ghazzaliyy is in order, because of the remarkable similarities.

Like Al-Ghazzaliyy, Descartes expressed his dissatisfaction with authoritative instruction which he considered deceptively. Therefore, as soon as his age permitted him to pass from under the control of his instructors, he abandoned formal studying: he began travelling and holding intercourse with men of different disposition by way of studying what he described as the great book of the world. This position is similar to that of Al-Ghazzaliyy regarding conformism. Descartes described his delight in the certitude of mathematics. Likewise, Al-Ghazzaliyy made the certitude of mathematics as the criteria he aspired to reach in all knowledge. Again, Descartes considered the revealed truths to be beyond the scope of reason's comprehension, and that there was a need of "some special help from heaven" in order to understand them. This is comparable to Al-Ghazzaliyy's assertion that sharh is some special help from heaven. In addition, like Descartes he held that reason is impotent to verify revealed truth.

The most important comparison between the two is in the steps each one took forward verification of knowledge. Descartes doubted the sense and reason, and then followed with a comparison of knowledge in dreaming to that of being awake. He said:

"When I considered that the very same thoughts (presentations) which we experience when awake may also be experienced when we are asleep, while there is at

that time not one of them true, I supposed that all the objects (presentations) that had ever entered into my mind when awake, had in them no more truth than the illusions of my dreams." He went on to ask:

"How do we know the thoughts which occur in dreaming are false rather than those other which we experience when awake, since the former are often not less vivid and distinct than the latter?"

All these steps made Descartes consider every idea that he had as false, except that he who thinks must exist, and therefore established the first principle of his philosophy. Al-Ghazzaliyy followed the same steps: he doubted the senses, reason and presented a similar account regarding the relationship between knowledge in dreaming and that of being awake, saying:

"Don't you see that when you are asleep you believe certain things and imagine certain circumstances and believe they are fixed and lasting and entertain no doubts about that being their status? Then you wake up and know that all your imaginings and beliefs were groundless and unsubstantial. So while everything you believe through sensation or intellection in your waking state may be true in relation to that state, what assurance have you that you may not suddenly experience a state which would have the same relation to your waking state as the latter has to your dreaming, and your waking state would be dreaming in relation to that new and further state?"

It is apparent that there are numerous similarities between Al-Munqidh and Discourse on Method, which seem to support Ka'uk's observations. Thus it seems that an investigation of Al-Ghazzaliyy's influence upon Descartes might be a profitable line of research. Such an investigation is,
however, beyond the scope of this book.

5.1.2. The Stages of Epistemological Development In Human Beings

Al-Ghazzālīy outlined the epistemological development in human beings in his chapter, "The True Nature of Prophecy and the Need All Men Have for It" in Al-Munqidh. He began with the essence of man in his original condition at the time of his creation and held that man is born devoid of any knowledge of the existing things. Each category of the existing things is known through a perception (idrāk) that is created.42

In the first stage of development, the sense are created in the human being. The first thing to be created in this stage is the sense of touch (ḥissat al-lams). The category perceived with it includes the knowledge of heat and cold, wetness and dryness, and softness and harshness in addition to others. Next, sight is created for him with which he perceives colors and shapes. Al-Ghazzālīy considered this category the largest of the "world" of the sensibles. Next, hearing is created in him with which he hears sounds and tones. Next, tasting is created for him, and so on until he passes the "world" of the sensibles.43

The second stage comes after all the senses are completed. The only thing to be created in the human being at this stage is discernment (tanzaq) and it is created at the age of seven.44 With discernment, the human being perceives things other than the sensibles.45 Al-Ghazzālīy did not provide examples of the things perceived on this level.

Following discernment, the human being ascends to the third level where reason is created. With reason he perceives the necessary, the possible and the impossible in addition to matters that are not perceived in the stages before.46

The fourth stage is that which comes after reason, something which Al-Ghazzālīy does not give a specific name. It is always described in terms of its order relative to reason. He held that another "eye" is opened at this stage, and that it is used to "see" metaphysical things. The knowledge that is acquired through this faculty is the one usually attained by the prophets; only part of it can be achieved through "tasting" (dhaawq) by following the Sufis way.47 Al-Ghazzālīy’s argument in support of the existence of this faculty is based upon the relationship between the different stages, he said:

"Just as the intellect is one of man’s stages in which he receives an “eye” by which he “sees” various species of intelligibles from which the senses are far removed, the prophetic pore is an expression signifying a stage in which man receives an “eye” possessed of a light, and in its light the unknown and other phenomena not normally perceived by the intellect become visible."48

The importance of Al-Ghazzālīy’s account of what might be described as the post-intellect faculty, can be seen as a response to the Muslim philosophers who placed reason as the highest faculty of knowledge and, therefore, denied prophecy. In addition, it can be considered a response to those who equated the Shariah with wisdom (ḥikμah) and, thus, prophecy would appear subservient to the intellect.49

5.2 Al-Mustaṣfā Min ‘Ilm al-Usūl

Al-Ghazzālīy wrote Al-Mustaṣfā Min ‘Ilm al-Usūl (The Filtered in the Fundamentals of Jurisprudence) at the request of some students of jurisprudence at the Nizām ‘Iyāth of Nishapur. They wanted a book which would be median in its

42 Al-Ghazzālīy, Al-Munqidh, p. 144.
43 Ibid., pp. 144-145.
44 It might be that Al-Ghazzālīy chose age seven for the beginning of new stage from a Hadith, part of which indicates that children need to be taught prayer, at age seven though it does not become obligatory (Muru Ausadatun Bi al-Sulati Iduh Balaghuh Sabrūh). This Hadith was verified by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Abu Dawūd, and al-Bukhārī who held that it is sound (sahih) according to the criterion of Muslim.
45 Al-Ghazzālīy, Al-Munqidh, p. 145.
46 Al-Ghazzālīy, Al-Munqidh, p. 145.
47 Ibid., pp. 145-146.
48 Al-Ghazzālīy, Freedom and Fulfillment, p. 96.
size relative to Tuhdhib al-Uṣūl which they have considered very long and Al-Mankanūl which does not have enough details.\footnote{50}

In this section on Al-Mustasfa, I will inquire into whether Al-Ghazālīyy remained faithful to the epistemology contained in Sufism and whether it had any impact on the fundamentals of jurisprudence. His basic epistemological position is included in both the preface and the introduction. Unlike the introduction of Al-Mankanūl which addressed the relationship of jurisprudence to the fundamentals of jurisprudence,\footnote{51} the preface to Al-Mustasfa began with a criticism of this world for being deceptive and for not being a place of happiness. Al-Ghazālīyy was calling people to consider this world as a passage to the next one. According to him, both reason and the Shari‘ah agree to this latter position.\footnote{52} Certainly, the tone of the latter is that of a Sufi rather than that of a jurist.

In this preface, he also provided two classifications of the sciences. In the first classification, he divided the sciences into three categories according to their relations with reason and the Shari‘ah. In the second, he divided the sciences into two categories only: rational (`aqīliyyah) and religious (dīniyyah). The first category comprises purely rational (`aqīlyyy māhī) sciences such as mathematics, geometry and astronomy. These subjects are based on either false opinions, or true knowledge that is no: useful. Al-Ghazālīyy admits that these sciences do yield benefit, but they are worldly and, therefore, do not help in attaining real happiness in the hereafter. This language indicates the continuity of his Sufi vision of the world. In addition, he held that the Shari‘ah is neutral regarding the study of these sciences; it neither encourages nor discourages it.\footnote{53}

The second category is what he considered purely textual (naqīlyyy māhī). It comprises sciences of the Shari‘ah such as Hadith and exegesis (i.e. of the Qur`ān). He argued that these sciences depend on memory and that reason plays no role in them.

The third category comprises the sciences, such as the fundamentals of jurisprudence, that draw on both the Shari‘ah and reason. According to Al-Ghazālīyy, this category is the most honorable. It is better than the sciences that are based on pure reason and do not enjoy the acceptance of the Shari‘ah, and it is also better than the sciences of the Shari‘ah that are based on pure conformism (māhī al-taqlīd) that is not supported by reason.\footnote{54}

Turning to his second classification, Al-Ghazālīyy intended this classification to show the relationship between the fundamentals of jurisprudence and the rest of sciences. The rational includes sciences such as medicine, arithmetic and geometry; these sciences are of no concern to the fundamentals of jurisprudence. The religious sciences comprise dialectical theology, jurisprudence, the fundamentals of jurisprudences, Hadith, exegesis and the science of esoteric knowledge (`ilm al-bātîn) or the science of the heart (i.e. the one that cleans it).\footnote{55}

The rational and the religious categories include some sciences that are concerned with universals and others that are concerned with particulars; the science which is concerned with universals is superior to one concerned with particulars. Among the religious sciences, kalām addresses universals, while all other religious sciences are concerned with particulars. The latter include jurisprudence, fundamentals of jurisprudence, Hadith and exegesis.\footnote{56}

Al-Ghazālīyy elevated kalām to the highest of the religious sciences because all others are dependent on it. He maintained that not everyone has to study it; only those who wish to be considered an absolute scholar (`ālīm muta‘alq) and knowledgeable in all the religious sciences, should acquire kalām.\footnote{57} This position regarding kalām is totally different from that presented in the Ilm in which Al-Ghazālīyy, newly under the influence of Sufism, under-
mined kalām and regarded it as a veil that prevents the attainment of peremptory knowledge.58

The role of kalām is restricted to studying existence by using reason. It establishes the necessity of a Creator and that it is possible for Him to send messengers, and that the possible became reality. The last thing to verify is the truthfulness of the Prophet [S.A.A.S.] and after that, reason receives from the Prophet [S.A.A.S.] knowledge that it can neither reach by itself, nor render impossible.59 The other religious sciences address parts of the message of the Prophet [S.A.A.S.]. "Exegesis is concerned with the meaning of the Qur'an, the science of Hadith verifies the soundness of the Hadith, jurisprudence covers the rulings that are concerned with the actions of the mukallaf;60 and the fundamentals of jurisprudence pertains to the sources of the latter rulings.61"

Of these particular religious sciences, the fundamentals of jurisprudence is especially important. Al-Ghazzālī listed the Qur'an, Sunnah and consensus (al-īmā)62 as the only sources of this sciences.63 He used reason to derive knowledge (e.g. by analogy, qiyyās) from these three sources.64 Al-Ghazzālī emphasized his restriction of the sources of the Shari'ah to these three whenever he mentioned them together by adding "only" (faqad).65 This position is consistent with al-Munkhūl, his first book on the fundamentals of jurisprudence written as a student, in which he also held the Qur'an, Sunnah and consensus as the only three sources of the Shari'ah.66 The question is whether this restriction of the sources of the Shari'ah marks a new stage in the development of Al-Ghazzālī's epistemology, in which he returned to traditional positions? This question can be answered by reference to the theory that I presented in Chapter II,67 where I argued that Al-Ghazzālī maintained two independent lines of thought. In the first, he pursued peremptory knowledge (ilm yaqīn); this line of thought, I believe, constitutes his search for universal truths. In the second, he sought particular truths in sciences such as the fundamentals of jurisprudence.

The last book that Al-Ghazzālī wrote during this period, Al-Imā' fi Mushkīl al-Ihya',68 includes harsh criticism of those who were critical of the Ihya', and very strong arguments in defense of Sufism and the possibility of attaining metaphysical knowledge by the post-reason faculty. This defense asserts beyond any doubt that he maintained his Sufi beliefs, at least till the end of the second period of public teaching.

The introduction to al-Mustaṣfā is for all practical purposes an introduction to logic, which he considered a concise form of what he presented in Miḥāk al-Nazar fl al-Mantiq (The Touch-Stone of Reasoning in Logic) and Miṣyār al-ʾilm fl al-Mantiq (The Criterion of Knowledge in Logic). Although Al-Ghazzālī included this introduction to logic at the beginning of al-Mustaṣfā, he did not consider it a part of the fundamentals of jurisprudence. Nevertheless, he held that logic is the prerequisite of all the sciences, and that whoever does not acquire logic cannot expect to have his knowledge trusted.69

5.3 AL-IMLĀ' FI ISHKALĀT AL-IHYĀ'

This book, Al-Imla' fi Ishkālāt al-Ihya' (The Dictation on the Problems of al-Ihya'), was written in response to the criticism that the Ihya' had endured at the hands of traditionalists whom Al-Ghazzālī did no mention by name. According to Al-Ghazzālī, they held that his book contradicts the Shari'ah in advocating "unveiling" (mukāshafah) as a source
of knowledge and, therefore, they tried to censure it.\textsuperscript{70}

The importance of this book is based on two elements: its subject matter and timing. In \textit{al-Imām}, Al-Ghazzālīyy defends Sufism and the knowledge that can be derived from it. Chronologically, it was written at the end of the second period of public teaching at the Nizāmīyyah of Nishapur. It is clear, therefore that, contrary to the many voices which argue that he began to change his Sufi method towards the end of his life, and that he adopted the method of the traditionalists who stated that “unveiling” (mukāṣṣafah) as a source of knowledge cannot be justified from the point of view of the Shari’ah, that Al-Ghazzālīyy made no such changes in his thought during this period. Rather, in his reply to those who were critical of Sufism, Al-Ghazzālīyy defended the existence of divine knowledge \textit{al-‘ilm al-dāhiyyah}.\textsuperscript{71} It is certain that this work supports the notion that he remained faithful to his Sufi method until the end of this period; whether he maintained the same epistemology during the final period of his life is something that we shall be considering next.

Chapter SIX


This chapter deals with the last stage in Al-Ghazzālīyy's life which extended from his withdrawal from public teaching at the Nizāmīyyah of Nishapur until his death in 505 A.H./1111 C.E. During this period, he wrote three books: \textit{Al-Durrāh al-Fākhirah}, \textit{fi Kashf ‘Ulium al-Ākhirah} (The Precious Pearl in Unveiling the Sciences of the Hereafter), \textit{Ijām al-‘Awām ‘an ‘Ilm al-Kalām} (Preventing the Common People from Engaging in the Science of Kalām) and \textit{Musnāj al-‘Ābidin} (The Course of the Worshippers).\textsuperscript{2}

The aim of this chapter is to trace the last developments in his epistemology and to question the claim that he abandoned Sufism and adopted the method of the traditionalists who consider the Qur'an and the Sunnah as the two major sources of knowledge. According to al-Hāfīz Abū al-Qāsim Ibn ‘Asākir, Al-Ghazzālīyy studied Al-Bukhārīyy’s \textit{Sahih} at the hands of Abū Sahl Muḥammad Ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh al-Hāfīzīyy.\textsuperscript{3} Nevertheless, it seems that ‘Abd al-Ghāfir Al-Fārisīyy, Al-Ghazzālīyy’s student and

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\textsuperscript{70} Al-Ghazzālīyy, \textit{al-Imām}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 16.

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1 According to Badawi, there are no primary sources that contain the exact date of his withdrawal from the Nizāmīyyah. He suggests that Al-Ghazzālīyy might have withdrawn some time after the assassination of vizier Fakhr al-Mulk in 500 A.H./1106 C.E. Badawi's opinion is based on the idea that Fakhr al-Mulk pressured Al-Ghazzālīyy to teach at the Nizāmīyyah of Nishapur, and that when Fakhr al-Mulk was assassinated, he did not feel obligated to continue teaching. See Badawi, \textit{Mu‘ālikfut}, p. xxv.
\textsuperscript{2} Badawi, \textit{Mu‘ālikfut}, p. xvii.
\textsuperscript{3} Al-Subkīyy, Vol. IV, p. 200.
the Khatib4 of Nishapur, was the first one to relate his strong interest in studying Hadith. He said:

"He [Al-Ghazzālī] concluded (the last years of his life) by studying the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. and by interacting with the scholars of Hadith. He began reading the two books of sound Hadith: Al-Bukhārīy's Sahih and Muslim's Sahih.5 Had he lived longer, he would have, in short time, excelled in this art more than everybody else. In addition, he studied Abu Dawud Al-Sūfī's Sunan at the hands of Abū al-Faṭḥ Al-Hākimī Al-Ṭisīy.6"

One cannot deny that Al-Ḥārīsīyy's statement indicates a serious attempt by Al-Ghazzālī to study Hadith. This does not prove, however, as Dimashqīyyah attempts to show that Al-Ghazzālī returned to the method of the traditionalists (al-Salaf).8 The statement is quoted by Dimashqīyyah from a page in Al-Subkīyy's Tobāqat al-Shāfi‘īyyah al-Kubrā in which Al-Ḥārīsīyy held that Al-Ghazzālī, upon his return to Tus, established his own school and built a lodge for the Sufis (khānaqāh li al-Sūfīyyah). Moreover, he devoted part of his time for the Sufis who were described as the people of the hearts (chī al-qlūb).9 It is obvious that this historical account of building a lodge for the Sufis and attending to them is an indication of a continued interest in Sufism. It remains that a study of his last three books is essential in determining Al-Ghazzālī's precise stand regarding Sufism.

6.1 AL-DURRAH AL-FĀKHĪRAH FI KASHF ‘ULŪM AL-ĀKHĪRAH

This book Al-Durrah al-Fākhīrah fi Kashf ‘Ulum al-Ākhīrah

4 Khatīb is the Imam who leads the Friday prayer which includes a Khutbah (sermon). This Khatīb is considered part of the prayer.
6 This is another collection of Hadith which is considered below the level of the Sahih.
7 Al-Subkīyy, Vol. IV, pp. 210-212.
8 Dimashqīyyah, Abū Hamīd al-Ghazzālī wa al-Tasawwuf, p. 366.

(Al-Ghazzālī's Quest for Knowledge: The Second Withdrawing...

(The Precious Pearl in Unveiling the Sciences of the Hereafter) is less theoretical than the other two books. It is concerned primarily with Islamic eschatology; it describes in great details themes such as death, the Heavens and Hell. Nevertheless, there are scattered statements which indicate his high esteem for the Sufis whom he described as the Gnostics (al-‘ārifūn). He said that some of those who die proceed through the seven Heavens until they reach the Throne (i.e. of Allah). Some of them are denied access to Allah; only the Gnostics who know Him (‘ārifūn) will reach Him.10

In another place in the Durrah, he relates the story of Prophet Muhammad's intercession (ṣuḥāb) on behalf of his own people on the day of judgement. This intercession begins with praising Allah (S.W.T.) in a fashion that was not used before. As to the nature of this praise, Al-Ghazzālī quoted some Gnostics (ba‘d al-‘ārifūn) who argued that it was originally "Allah's glorification of Himself" at the time He completed His creation (i.e., of the world).11

The term "Gnostic" is also used in a third context. Al-Ghazzālī listed the categories of those who are saved on the day of judgement. They are: the believers (al-mī‘īnīn), the Muslims (al-mūsūlimīn), the doers of good works (al-muḥīṣīnīn), the Gnostics (al-ārifīn), the believers in revelation (al-sāliḥīn), the martyrs (al-ṣuhādā’īn), the righteous (al-sāḥīfūn) and the messengers (al-mursalūn).12 It should be noted that all of these categories are mentioned in the Qur‘ān, with the exception of the "Gnostics". All of these three instances involving the Gnostics, namely, reaching the presence of Allah, acceptance of their argument regarding the exaltation of Allah (S.W.T.), and creating a special category for them along with the messengers on the day of resurrection are clear indications of Al-Ghazzālī continued acceptance of Sufis.

10 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Al-Durrah al-Fākhīrah fi Kashf ‘Ulum al-Ākhīrah, Muhammad Mustafa Abu al-Ula, ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ġindī, 1968) p. 125. This book was printed as an appendix to Sir al-‘Alamīn, a book that was ascribed to Al-Ghazzālī.
11 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Al-Durrah, p. 151.
12 Ibid.
6.2 ILJAM AL-'AWAM 'AN 'ILM AL-KALAM

Al-Ghazzālīyy wrote Ijām al-'Awām 'an 'Ilm al-Kalām (Preventing the Common People from Engaging in the Science of Kalām) in order to explain the creed of the first generation of Muslims (i.e. al-Salaf) regarding divine attributes, and to prove that their position is right and that any other position is an innovation (bid'ah). He held that this is necessary to avoid questions of anthropomorphism.\(^{13}\)

This book was understood as a criticism of kalām and metaphorical interpretation (ta'wīl) of divine attributes which forms the essential stand of the later generation of Ṣharīrīs including Al-Ghazzālīyy. This position was misunderstood by many scholars including Dimashqīyyah, who said:

“He experimented with Sufism: its illusion, sel'-mortification, “fasting”, emotion, circle of dhikr (hadrāh) and seclusion, believing the claim of its master that what is right is not received from written revelation, but rather from the hidden esoteric (source), and that Allah the Exalted did not provide guidance for the people in whatever verses He sent down for them, but rather in what He hid for the possessors of the stations (maqāma) and supernatural powers (who know through) expositions, unveilings and emanations. He remained like this until it became clear to him when the train of life passed by and the sun of his lifetime dwindled that he had wasted his life in (seeking) a false illusion and the erroneous impossible, while the infallible peremptory source (of knowledge) was within the reach of his hands, rather close to his lips and he died, may Allah be merciful to him, with the Sūhāb on his chest,\(^{14}\) as if he were resisting death so that he might drink from it (the Sāhib) whatever slips to cleans his inside which was studded with (knowledge of) the Batinites, philosophies, kalām and Sufism.\(^{15}\)

Dimashqīyyah held that “unveiling”, the sufi source of knowledge, is a rival of the science of Hadith; he interpreted

Al-Ghazzālīyy’s position as deserting the Sufi path in favour of the Salafīyyah methodology which is based on the Qur’ān and the Sunnah.\(^{16}\) Dimashqīyyah misinterpreted the meaning of “common people” (al-'Awām) in Ijām al-'Awām. Regarding the definition of common people, Al-Ghazzālīyy said:

“The category of common people (al-'Awām) includes the man of letters (al-adih), the grammarian (al-nabāwī), the scholar of Hadith (al-maḥādith), the interpreter (i.e. of the Qur’ān), the jurist and the Mutakallim.”\(^{17}\)

In fact, the Sufis were the only people who were not considered among the 'Awām and, therefore, they were the only ones qualified to achieve divine knowledge. He held that only one in ten Sufis will reach what he described as the kept secret (al-sir al-makhzūn). Al-Ghazzālīyy wanted to prevent all those included in the definition of “common people” from engaging in Kalām and to accept the position of the Salaf regarding the interpretation of divine attributes.\(^{18}\) Thus, the passage Dimashqīyyah refers to provides no basis for the claim that Al-Ghazzālīyy abandoned Sufism.

Instead, Al-Ghazzālīyy maintained the highest rank for the Sufi, as can be seen in the following analogy in which he compared divine presence to that of the Sultan, he said:

“The Sultan has in his kingdom a private palace which is surrounded by a courtyard that has a gate where all the subjects gather without being permitted to enter through the gate; they are not permitted to the edge of the courtyard. Then the elites of the kingdom are permitted to enter through the gate and into the courtyard where they can sit according to their positions (i.e. the higher the rank, the closer one gets to the palace). It could be that only the vizier is permitted to the private palace where the king reveals to the vizier whatever he wishes of the secrets of his kingdom, and the (king) keeps to himself matters that he would not reveal to him. It is the same regarding how close one can get to the divine presence. The gate is where all the 'Awām com-

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14 This anecdote about Al-Ghazzālīyy’s death was mentioned originally by Ibn Taymiyyah. See Dimashqīyyah, p. 367.
15 Dimashqīyyah, p. 369.
16 Dimashqīyyah, p. 368.
17 Al-Ghazzālīyy, Ijām, p. 67.
18 Ibid., pp. 67–68.
mon people) stop and if any one of them trespasses, he should be reprimanded. As for the Gnostics (al-`arifun), they enter through the gate into the courtyard where they spread according to their ranks without being able, to get close, or even look at the sacred place (ka`zirat al-quds) in the center of the court.\(^\text{19}\)

This analogy is a clear indication of Al-Ghazzālī’s classification of the Sufis higher than “common people” which include scholars of Hadith, the very science that he was supposed to accept as the source of knowledge instead of “unveiling” according to the many claims in this respect. To avoid any misunderstandings, I should say that he accepted Hadith as a source of knowledge throughout his life, yet this acceptance on its own should not lead to any conclusion regarding his position towards other sources of knowledge (e.g., “unveiling”, kashf). Another indication that he did not change his position concerning Sufism is his assertion regarding the existence of a faculty higher than reason. He reiterated his argument in respect to the inability of reason to perceive things such as the harm that results from sinning or the benefit that results from obedience (i.e. to the Shari`ah) in relationship to after death. He added that all those who are rational agree that reason cannot lead to specific knowledge similar to that in the Shari`ah, and that only a post-reason faculty can perceive metaphysical knowledge.\(^\text{20}\) It is obvious that Al-Ghazzālī maintained his idea on the limitations of reason which he used to support his argument on the existence of a faculty higher than reason, which is accessible to the Sufis.

6.3 MINHĀJ AL-`ÂBĪDĪN

This book, Minhāj al-`Abīdīn (The Course for the Worshippers), is the last work known to be written by Al-Ghazzālī at the end of his life; ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn `Abdullāh, one of his students, said:

\(^{19}\) Al-Ghazzālīyy, Ijām, pp. 85-86.
\(^{20}\) ibid., p. 87.

“\text{My honorable Sheikh, the successful and happy mystical imam, Proof of Islam and Ornament of religion, the honor of the nation, Abu Hamīd Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Muḥammad Al-Ghazzālīyy Al-Tūsīyy, may Allah sanctify his soul and may Allah raise his rank in Heavens, dictated this concise\(^{21}\) book was the last book to be written by him, and only copied by his very close companions (Khuwāsī aqḥābī).}\(^{22}\)

Ibn `Abdullāh’s preface to his own copy of Minhāj al-`Âbīdīn is important not only because it indicates that this is the last book to be written by Al-Ghazzālī, but also because it comes from one of the close companions, or what might be described as a member of the inner circle, a fact that adds to the certitude of his statement.

According to Al-Ghazzālīyy, this book was written in the same spirit of the Iḥyā’, except that he was hoping that Minhāj al-`Âbīdīn would not draw criticism similar to the Iḥyā’ which he blamed on the inability of the “common people” to understand it. He found consolation in the fact that the Qur’an which is the perfect word of Allah [S.W.T.], was described, by non-Muslims, of being “stories of past nations” (i.e., not revealed).\(^{23}\)

Moreover, he kept referring the reader throughout Minhāj al-`Âbīdīn, because it is a concise book, to read the corresponding chapters in the Iḥyā’: Al-Ghazzālīyy gives no indication that he has retracted the basic positions expressed in the Iḥyā’, which of course includes his views on the superiority of Sufism as a source of knowledge over all other forms. Yet it is clear that he did not mention every thing he knew regarding Sufism for fear of misunderstanding. He cited four lines of a poem by Zayn al-`Âbīdīn\(^{24}\) in which he held that he kept as a secret the jewels of his knowledge fearing an ignorant person who would accuse him of being an idolator or worse, he might get killed if he reveals

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21 Minhāj al-`Âbīdīn which has more than 240 pages is considered a concise book here relative to books like Iḥyā’.
24 Zayn al-`Âbīdīn, `All Ibn al-Husayn Ibn `Ali Ibn Abu Talib, the grandson of the fourth Caliph.
his knowledge.25 This poem represents the outlook of Al-Ghazzâliyy when he wrote this book; it shows that he was not at ease in expressing all that he wanted to say. Nevertheless, we shall see direct statements that he made in favour of Sufism.

Like the Ihyâ', Minhâj al-Âbidîn was written to explain the path to the hereafter.26 Al-Ghazzâliyy described seven obstacles27 that face the person who treads this path. According to him, the arrangement of the contents of this book was an inspiration (ihdâm) from Allah [S.W.T.].28 I will analyze the language that he used in discussing some of these obstacles where he explicitly uses Sufi terms and themes in order to determine whether there were any changes in his epistemology.

The first of these is the obstacle of science and knowledge (râqîbat al-ilm wa al-ma'rîfah). In order to worship, one needs to know what it is that one is worshipping and to be certain about it. To overcome this obstacle, he held that one should seek help “from the scholars of the hereafter (ulama' al-dîkhrah) who are the guides of this path, the saddle of this nation and the leaders of the Imams. One should benefit from them and should ask them for their good supplication (du'a) so that he can cross this path with the help of Allah, praise be to him, in order to attain peremptory knowledge (tim al-yaqîn).”29 Al-Ghazzâliyy maintained, since he accepted the Sufi path as the only way to achieve peremptory knowledge. Thus, I understand the solution that Al-Ghazzâliyy provided to this obstacle as an invitation for people to seek a Sufi Sheikh among those whom he described as “the scholars of the hereafter” who would guide the novice (al-murîd) on this path.

Furthermore, he stated that while studying at the hands of a teacher facilitates knowledge and makes it easier to achieve, Allah bestows his bounty on whomever He chooses from among His servants and becomes their direct Teacher.30 The latter statement conforms to the Sufi notion of achieving knowledge directly from Allah which is known as al-ilm al-kadavrîyî.

In his discussion of another obstacle, that concerning worldly things, he considered the question of whether asceticism (zuhd) is an obligation (fard). Al-Ghazzâliyy held that asceticism is an obligation in regard to forbidden (haram) things; it is voluntary (nafl) concerning what is lawful (halal). That is to say, refraining from things which are forbidden is obligatory on all; but one may refrain, though one is not obliged to do so, in cases of things which are permitted by Islamic law. He maintained that there is a higher level than this where the lawful is considered forbidden and, therefore, asceticism becomes obligatory. This higher level is pertaining to the Sufis who become Abdâl.31 To explain this term “abdâl”, one needs to know the hierarchy of a Sufi order. The Sufi order has one Sheikh in the highest rank: he is described as Qutub (head).32 The Qutub has three deputes (Naqqâb, sing. Naqib) who represent the second level. The third level comprises seven chiefs (Awtâd, sing. Watad).33 The fourth rank includes forty substitutes (Abdâl, sing. Badal).34 It is the members of this latter rank that Al-Ghazzâliyy had in his mind when he made his comments that their asceticism is obligatory in both the lawful and the forbidden. The meaning of this is that once a Sufi reaches the fourth rank or higher, he regards lawful things as if they are dead animal.35 According to Islamic jurisprudence, one can eat of a dead animal only in case where if he did not, he would die. For Al-Ghazzâliyy, the dead animal becomes a metaphor of this world, where the Sufi would use enough of it to subsist in order to be able to continue worshipping.

Moreover, he explained that asceticism should take

25 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Minhaj, p. 15.
26 Ibid., p. 205.
27 These are: 'râqîbat al-ilm wa al-ma'rîfah (the obstacle of knowledge), 'râqîbat al-taubah (the obstacle of repentance), 'râqîbat al-aman (the obstacle of obstacles), 'râqîbat al-buszûl (the obstacle of obstacles), 'râqîbat al-ghâdîb (the obstacle of impatience) and 'râqîbat al-harm wa al-shukr (the obstacle of gratitude and thankfulness).
28 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Minhaj, p. 20.
29 Ibid., p. 16.
30 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Minhaj, p. 27.
31 Ibid., p. 42.
32 Literally qutub means pole.
33 Literally watad means peg or stake.
35 Al-Ghazzâliyy, Minhaj, p. 42.
place in regard to everything except for subsistence. He added that one might subsist with or without food and drink; if Allah wills the body to subsist without a cause (i.e., food and drink) it will do so, as do the angels. On the other hand, if He wills the body to subsist with something, it might be that you seek that thing, or that He would cause that thing to come to you without seeking it. To support his argument, Al-Ghazzâliyy cited a verse in the Qur’ân which indicates that for one who fears Allah, He will find him a way out of his problems and that He will provide him with sustenance in ways that he did not expect.\(^{36}\)

Another obstacle that Al-Ghazzâliyy discussed is people. He held that people will keep one from worshipping, and if he does worship in their presence, he might change the way he worships (e.g., improve it), an act which renders him hypocrite. According to Al-Ghazzâliyy, the solution to this problem is seclusion (al-‘uzlah). He related numerous Hadîths, poems and anecdotes of Sufis in support of this notion. In addition, he defended the existence of Sufi schools and lodges (rihâ‘ât al-sâﬁyyah) which fulfill the notion of seclusion, even though other people are present. He maintained that if problems arise in these special gatherings, then it is legitimate for the scholar to seek absolute isolation even if it leads to the “burial of knowledge”. He emphasized that finding comfort in the presence of people without a need (e.g., for studying) is an indication of emptiness.\(^{37}\)

Al-Ghazzâliyy discussed many other Sufi themes such as poverty and celibacy. He held that poverty is better than wealth and that celibacy is better than being preoccupied with the affairs of the wife and children. His position is based on the idea that the Sufi should be disentangled and independent from worldly affairs.\(^{38}\)

Towards the end of this book, he described the nature of this path that the Sufi needs to follow, saying:

“This path in its length is unlike the existing distances that people cover by feet according to their strength and

weakness, it is rather a spiritual path that is tread by hearts which cover it with thought according to the faith and insight (of the seekers). Its origin is a Heavenly light (farîz samdawiyah) and a divine look (nazar ikârîyyah) which descends on the heart of the servant who uses it to see the reality of both worlds.”\(^{39}\)

As to the length of time one spends in seeking this path, Al-Ghazzâliyy argued that someone might seek it for a hundred years without finding it due to mistakes in the way he seeks it or because he does not exert enough effort. On the other hand, someone else might find it in a moment with the care of the Lord, the Exalted, who is responsible for guidance.\(^{40}\)

6.4 CONCLUSION

It is apparent, then, that Al-Durrâh al-Fâkhirah, Ijââm al-Awâm ‘an Tîm al-Kalâm and Minhâj al-Abîdîn, written during the last stage of Al-Ghazzâliyy’s life, contain clear manifestations of his continued acceptance of Sufism as the path for true knowledge.

In Al-Durrâh al-Fâkhirah, he held that the Sufis, whom he describes as ‘Arîfîn (Gnostics), are the only people who upon their death could proceed through the seven Heavens to reach Allah. In Ijââm al-Awâm, he employed the concept of “common people” to divide every other kind of scholar from the Sufis. He ranked the Sufis higher and he described them as the scholars of the hereafter. Finally, in Minhâj al-Abîdîn, he defended Sufi schools and lodges. In addition, he described the knowledge of the Sufi in terms of a divine light which is typical of “unveiling” (kâshf).

All of these Sufi themes, which were also using Sufi terminology, leave no room for any doubt or hesitation that Al-Ghazzâliyy’s epistemology was Sufi in essence. It should be noted that this is not a defence of Sufism against the Sâlafîyyah movement which tried to present Al-Ghazzâliyy in his final days as someone who abandoned Sufism. What
I am trying to say is that they need a better argument for their position.

CONCLUSION

In this book, I have offered a comprehensive study of Al-Ghazzālī's epistemology in all his confirmed and available works. I have argued that his epistemology evolved through the various stages of his life. He began as a conformist (i.e., accepting knowledge on the authority of parents and teachers), but soon he broke away from conformism while still a child. He stressed the importance of this step for anyone seeking true knowledge. After releasing himself from the authority of conformism, he began a long intellectual journey in quest for truth which led him to question everything and eventually to experience one of the most original and dramatic cases of skepticism in his history of thought. The way out of his skepticism was divine illumination. After he regained his trust in logical necessities, he studied all the existing schools of thought including philosophy, dialectical theology and the Batinites; his search culminated in his acceptance of Sufism as the only path that leads to what he described as peremptory knowledge (ʿilm yaqīn).

In Chapter One, I presented a sketch of Al-Ghazzālī's life as an aid to understanding the complexities and the controversies that surround this great Muslim thinker. Not only his writings (e.g., Al-Ghazzālī's books on knowledge), but also his life is a direct manifestation of his spiritual and intellectual development. This is especially true when the person is a Sufi whose everyday life is a manifestation of the epistemological path he is using.

In the subsequent Chapters (2–6), I analyzed Al-
Ghazzâlîyy’s books in chronological order in order to portray the development in his epistemology.

As a student, Al-Ghazzâlîyy wrote Al-Mankhûl on usûl al-fiqh. His basic epistemological interest in this book was mainly as a jurist. He concentrated on technical issues that were part of or related to usûl al-fiqh. As a student, Al-Ghazzâlîyy imitated his teacher al-Juwaïnîyy, which he acknowledged at the end of this book. Although he differed in very few cases from his teacher in Al-Mankhûl, his originality in usûl al-fiqh was manifested in his later work Al-Mustasfâ.

Although Al-Mankhûl shows Al-Ghazzâlîyy as an imitating student, his bibliographic work Al-Munqîd min al-Dalâlî, which was written towards the end of his life, projects a personality that is preoccupied with truth in itself. It was differences in belief that prompted him to search for truth. His awareness, during the early stages of his life, of the different creeds of people started him on his first stage of a long journey of systematic skepticism which lasted until the climax of his quest for knowledge during his last days as a teacher at the Nizâmiyyah of Baghdad.

Al-Ghazzâlîyy’s critical thinking and regard for general questions of truth and knowledge, while apparent in Al-Munqîd, are absent from Al-Mankhûl. The fact that these two books reflected different areas of interest in Al-Ghazzâlîyy’s early life might appear contradictory. One question that might surface as a result of these two areas is: how could someone like Al-Ghazzâlîyy, who was investigating the general notions of knowledge and their sources as stated in Al-Munqîd, proceed to verify the particular as the case in Al-Mankhûl:

"In the bloom of my life, from the time I reached puberty before I was twenty until now, when I am over fifty, I have constantly been diving daringly into the depth of this profound sea and wading into its deep water like a bold man, not like a cautious coward. I would penetrate far into every murky mystery, pounce upon every problem, and dash into every vast difficulty. I would scrutinize the creed of every sect and seek to lay bare the secrets of each faction’s teaching with the aim of discriminating between the proponent of truth and the advocate of error, and between the faithful follower of tradition and the heterodox innovator." ¹

Al-Ghazzâlîyy reaffirmed the early beginning of this search for truth and the source of this quest for knowledge in the same introduction. He said:

“The thirst for grasping the real meaning of things was indeed my habit and wont from my early years and in the prime of my life. It was an instinctive, natural disposition placed in my makeup by God (Allah) Most High, not something due to my own choosing and contriving. As a result, the fevers of servile conformism (taqdîl) fell away from me, and inherited beliefs lost their hold on me, when I was still quite young.²

Although the above quotations showed the time frame of the first line of thought, which covered Al-Ghazzâlîyy’s life as a student, it remains that there were no books written by the student Al-Ghazzâlîyy that reflected this independent approach to knowledge and truth. There were many works (e.g. Al-Munqîd min al-Dalâlî) by the later Al-Ghazzâlîyy that embodied this investigative course that he undertook in pursuit of knowledge and truth in what could be called the area of universals.

The second line of thought is represented in Al-Ghazzâlîyy’s works in fields like jurisprudence. Although the first line of thought must have influenced the way Al-Ghazzâlîyy approached areas like fiqh by having that independent spirit which led him not to be a conformist to previous writings in such fields, one cannot claim that these works were reflecting the first line of thought because they were concerned with particulars. Unlike a reductionist, he addressed these areas of particulars as if there was no relationship between the general notions of knowledge, which he put under investigation, and these particular fields.

The fact that Al-Ghazzâlîyy kept working in the particular fields of the Shari‘ah indicate that he was never in doubt

² Al-Ghazzâlîyy, Freedom, p. 63.
about the true validity of the premises which were derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In fact, he continued lecturing on these subjects even at the Nizāmīyah of Bagh-
dad, when he was going through what I like to call the climax of his mental discourse regarding the first line of thought.  

Al-Ghazzālīyy's continuous inquiry into both universals and particulars is interesting because on the surface they seem incompatible. One could see that Al-Ghazzālīyy had an obvious, spontaneous interest in the first. It prompted a good deal of reflection throughout his life. The difficulty is in the question: why did he pursue the second? Part of the answer could be found in Al-Ghazzālīyy's formal education which started with training in the particulars (e.g. fiqh). Another partial answer comes from the fact that there was common interest in these particular sciences, especially in jurisprudence. In addition, Al-Ghazzālīyy pursued his interest in the particulars as a teacher who was expected, and thus there is a sense of duty, to lecture on such topics. All of these aspects and probably more provided the motivation for such pursuit of knowledge in the particulars. Moreover, one could think that once Al-Ghazzālīyy achieved universal knowledge, he found that his interest in the particulars was in line with his interest in the universals. In addition, there is a sociological element in this equation, where a scholar in the Islamic world is unlikely to be accepted without being deep rooted and having strong interests in the particulars.  

The next stage in Al-Ghazzālīyy's epistemological development took place when he became the teacher of the Nizāmīyah of Baghdad. His writings during this period, which lasted for a decade, reflect one of the most important stages in his intellectual development. He broke with conformity which dominated his work as a student, and began a systematic inquiry of the schools of thought that were available at the time in search for true knowledge. 

Al-Ghazzālīyy encountered many schools of thought in his quest for true knowledge. Eventually, he restricted the possibility of finding such knowledge to four "classes of seekers": al-Mutakallimūn, the Batinites, the philosophers and the Sūfis whose methodology he finally accepted. 

When Al-Ghazzālīyy became a teacher at the Nizāmīyah of Baghdad, he started studying philosophy in his search for true knowledge as part of a systematic approach in which he was attempting to study all sects, religions and schools of thought in search of true knowledge. According to him, he could not find such knowledge in all the traditional subjects of philosophy; the only two exceptions were logic and mathematics. Although he was critical of philosophy, he adopted many positions from the works of the philosophers (e.g. Al-Fārābī). 

One of the most important contributions of Al-Ghazzālīyy during this period is his position on logic. He wrote several books in which he intended to set forth a criterion for evidence. He held in Mi‘yār al-Tīm that every person has three judges: a judge of sensibles, a judge of imagination and a judge of reason. It is the addition of a "judge of imagination" here that contributes to the development of his genetic epistemology even though he would drop it later on in Al-Munqīdā. 

Al-Ghazzālīyy's search for indubitable knowledge led him to reject all knowledge that was based on authority which he blamed for the differences among people. He defined this knowledge in terms of mathematical certitude. He scrutinized all his cognition in search for knowledge that would meet the previous description; he thought for a while that the sensibles and the self evident truths conform to the level of certitude that he was looking for. Nevertheless, meditating upon such knowledge he found that he could doubt them, and thus he found himself devoid of any indubitable knowledge. As a result, he found himself doubting all sources of knowledge, including reason, which was based upon the possibility of the existence of a higher faculty and which he defined in terms of its relation to reason (malakoh fa’uqa al-‘qīl). In fact, he underwent a most genuine and dramatic experience of skepticism. This state of doubt continued for the duration of two months and eventually ended by divine illumination. 

The first thing that Al-Ghazzālīyy regained after he
emerged from his state of doubt was his trust in logical necessities. According to him, this would not have been possible without divine illumination which he considered a source of knowledge that he called *kashf* and which he described as acquiring knowledge directly (i.e. from Allah). This latter source of knowledge forms the backbone of Sufi epistemology; he would expand on this concept during his first period of withdrawal from public life which he believed to be a condition that he should fulfill in order to attain perempory knowledge.

During the years of seclusion, Al-Ghazzālīyy emphasized in his writings the limited capability of reason and that “unveiling” (*kashf*) is the only source of knowledge that is absolutely capable of attaining indubitable transcendental knowledge. In the *Iḥyā’ Ummūd al-Dīn*, he stressed the superiority of Sufi knowledge over that which is attained by conventional sources of knowledge. This Sufi knowledge which he referred to as ‘ilm al-mukāsafah is the aim of intellectual activity, yet he stated that such knowledge should not be revealed to the public. Therefore, the subject of the *Iḥyā’* is that knowledge which leads to *kashf*, namely the science of action (‘ilm al-mu‘ānakah). By action, he means self-mortification and discipline which form a prerequisite for attaining perempory transcendental knowledge. In addition, he held that *kashf* is possible through the faculty higher than reason which forms one of the most important developments in his epistemology. The aim of this position is to show the limitations of reason which cannot achieve perempory knowledge. This position is reinforced by listing prophecy as the highest level in relation to the attainment of knowledge which is followed by the scholars in what might be considered Al-Ghazzālīyy’s response to the Muslim philosophers who ranked reason as the highest faculty. Finally, he added in the *Iḥyā’* another form for the attainment of perempory knowledge, namely, vision.

Similar to his position in the *Iḥyā’*, Al-Ghazzālīyy continued in *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā Sharḥ Asnā’ Alā‘ī al-Hasnāt* to stress the limitations of reason and its incapability to attain perempory transcendental knowledge. The only way to achieve such knowledge is through *kashf*. It is obvious that these two notions are consistent with Al-Ghazzālīyy’s epistemology in the *Iḥyā’*.

As to *Bidāyat al-Hadīyyah*, there are whole sections which are identical with *Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id* which is considered a part of the *Iḥyā’* and therefore it adds to the consistency of Al-Ghazzālīyy’s epistemology during this period. In these sections he asserted the notion of discipline and self-mortification as prerequisites to the attainment of perempory knowledge.

In *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* which corresponds to his position in the *Iḥyā’* and *Bidāyat al-Hadīyyah*, Al-Ghazzālīyy maintained the notion of discipline and self-mortification as conditions for the attainment of transcendental knowledge. He held that transcendental knowledge can be revealed through true vision in metaphorical language.

In *Al-Risālah al-Ladunniyyah*, Al-Ghazzālīyy discussed the notion of “metaphysical transcendental knowledge” (al-’ilm al-ghaybiyyah al-ladunniyyah) which is accessible to elite Sufis only. This kind of knowledge can be attained through inspiration (ihbār).

The last book dealing with the epistemology of Al-Ghazzālīyy during the first period of seclusion is *Mishkāt al-Anwār*. He reiterated his position regarding the existence of a faculty higher than reason. According to him, elite Sufis are capable of attaining knowledge directly from the same source, similar to prophets.

Although Al-Ghazzālīyy introduces different sources (e.g., inspiration, insight) for the attainment of knowledge, the last six books emphasize Sufism as the common theme and, therefore, this period of seclusion reflects a unified epistemology.

After ending his seclusion and returning to teach at the Niẓāmiyyah of Nishapur, Al-Ghazzālīyy maintained his epistemology as a Sufi. His last book to be written during this period, *Al-Imārāt fī Ishkālāt al-Iḥyā’*, was written in response to the criticism that the *Iḥyā’* had endured at the hands of traditionalists whom Al-Ghazzālīyy did not mention by name. According to Al-Ghazzālīyy, they held that his book contradicts the Sharī‘ah in advocating *mukāsafah* as a source of knowledge. His defence of the *Iḥyā’* is a sign of his
commitment to Sufism as the only path for true knowledge.

After spending about four years at the Ni‘âmiyyah of Nishapur, Al-Ghazzâlîyy withdrew again from public life and settled in his hometown Tus. The most important task regarding the last period of his life in relation to epistemology is to question the claim that he abandoned Sufism and adopted the method of the traditionalists. It is apparent though, that Al-Durrâh al-Fikhrâh, Iljâm al-Awâm ‘an Ilm al-Kalâm and Minhâj al-‘Abidîn, which were written during the last stage of his life, contain direct references to his continued acceptance of Sufism as the path for the true knowledge.

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All of these themes, which were also written using Sufi terminology, leave no room for any doubt or hesitation that Al-Ghazzâlîyy’s final epistemology was Sufi in its essence. It should be noted that this is not a defence of Sufism against the traditionalists who tried to present Al-Ghazzâlîyy in his final days as someone who abandoned Sufism. What I am trying to say is that they need to substantiate their claim.

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This bibliography is divided into four sections. The first is a chronological listing of Al-Ghazzâlîyy’s works in Arabic that were either cited or consulted for this book. The second section is a list of very few translated works of Al-Ghazzâlîyy. The third is a list of medieval primary sources in Arabic and the fourth is a general list of books in Arabic and non-Arabic languages.

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