

THE "LOVE OF GOD" IN GHAZALI'S VIVIFICATION OF THEOLOGY¹

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Ghazali who lived in the eleventh century is generally regarded as the greatest theologian in Islam. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge and wrote a great number of books on many subjects: dogmatics, ethics, mysticism, law and philosophy. Although many books have been written about him, he is still relatively little known, just because of the vastness of his work. His chief work *The Vivification of Theology* consists of fifteen hundred closely printed pages, not more than a quarter of which has been translated. Very little attention has been given to the sources of his ideas. Obermann for instance, in a much praised book, regards him as a great and original thinker; somehow a forerunner of Kant. He could not have done so, if he had seen how much Ghazali depended on his predecessors and how much he reflected the theological and mystical aspect of his time. To me Ghazali is the typical representative of that syncretism in Islam in which ideas from different Greek sources are used to rationalize the religious dogmas. This penetration by Greek ideas is one of the characteristics of Islam. In rationalistic theology Stoicism is preponderant, in mysticism Platonism and Neoplatonism.

I will today discuss with you some points in Ghazali's chapter on "The Love of God" in his *Vivification of Theology* and try, as far as I am able, to relate them to their Greek sources. We shall find in Ghazali as a dogmatist and a mystic both Stoic and Neoplatonic influences.

The love of God—Ghazali says—is the final aim and the highest degree of the stages of spiritual progress, anything beyond it, for instance the passionate longing after God, is but its fruit;

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everything before it, for instance, patience, renunciation and ascetism, is but its preparation. Still—he says—although the belief in the Love of God is strong, there are some thinkers who have denied its possibility and asserted that its meaning can only be obedience to God; in its real sense—they say—love of God is impossible, for love can exist only between members of the same genus, between individuals having the same degree of being. God is too high above us to inspire human emotions. We have here an interesting point. Indeed the love of God is not accepted by orthodox Islam, in which there is a strong opposition to the emotional mysticism of the Sufis, to whom also Ghazali belongs, and especially against its excesses of enthusiastic ecstacy. Also some of the Mutakallimun, the more or less rationalistic theologians of Islam, deny it for the same reason. I may add here that these Mutakallimun are strongly influenced by Stoicism which condemns the passions and believes in reason, and although love when it is pure is not thought incompatible with the Stoic Sage, the Sage should be unemotional in his one desire for reason and truth. On the other hand, the Platonists and Neoplatonists praise the love of beauty and the beauty of God. That there can be no love between God and man because of the too great distance between them had been already affirmed by Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics. The Nicomachean Ethics had been translated into Arabic and this saying of Aristotle's may have become a common notion.

It is generally acknowledged—Ghazali continues—that the love of God and the prophet is a religious duty. Now, how could something that does not exist be regarded as a religious duty and how could the term "love" be explained by obedience—since obedience is a consequence and a fruit of love and love precedes it? Besides, the existence of the love of God is mentioned in God's own words (that is in the Qur'an which is supposed to be inspired by God) and Ghazali quotes then Surah II, 160 in which there is an indication that men should love God and Surah V, 59 where the love of God towards men and man's love towards God is mentioned. Ghazali proceeds then by giving a number of traditions ascribed to Muhammed in which he made the love of God a condition of faith. I may remark here, and it is common knowledge, that the traditions ascribed to Muhammed are of very varied origin, and that there is hardly a religious opinion held by any of the different religious schools in Islam which they do not base on a saying of the prophet. There are

even traditions which have a Neoplatonic tenet, for instance the famous saying "Know thyself and then thou wilt know thy God" which is sometimes ascribed to the prophet, sometimes to Ali, Muhammed's cousin and son-in-law. I will give here a few of these traditions which are mentioned by Ghazali in this context: When someone asked the prophet what faith is, he answered: that God and the Prophet are more beloved to you than anything else. And the prophet said in his prayer: "O God, provide me with Thy love and the love of those who love Thee and the love of all the things which bring me nearer to Thee and make Thy love more beloved to me than cool water!" There is also a tradition concerning Abraham, who in the Qur'an is called "the friend of God". It is said of Abraham, when the Angel of Death came to take his soul, that he cried out: "Did you ever see a friend who caused the death of his friend?" Then he heard these words of God: "Did you ever see a lover who was loth to meet his Beloved?" Whereupon Abraham called out to the Angel of Death: "Now come and take my soul!" And according to a tradition it has been said that on the Day of Resurrection the peoples will be summoned by the names of their prophets, and it will be called out: "Oh, people of Moses", "Oh, people of Jesus", "Oh, people of Muhammed", except the lovers of God; for to them the call will be made: "O, saints of God, come hither, come hither to your God" and they will be overcome with joy. And there is also a tradition where these words of God are mentioned: "The weight of one grain of love is more beloved to me than seventy years of servitude without love."

Having established that the love of God is generally acknowledged in Islam, Ghazali proceeds by stating the different causes or reasons for love. But first he poses as a condition of love that it must be preceded by knowledge and that therefore love cannot be imagined in the lifeless, but is proper to the living, perceiving being. This would rather seem a truism. However, in mystical Neoplatonic theology, as it is for instance found in Islam in Avicenna, love is regarded as wider than knowledge, it is extended also over the inorganic, it is, as it were, the first instinct of everything existing (the origin of this conception is already in Plato and Aristotle). This idea is found also in St Augustine where he says: "Everything that can love, loves God, either consciously or unconsciously." According to this conception all movement is based on attraction, both in its physical and psychological sense, and expresses an unconscious or conscious

desire for the approach to the Divine. Indeed, even when moderns use the term in its mysterious physical sense, a faint animistic tendency seems implied. Now, Ghazali says, things perceived can be generally divided into three classes, those that are in agreement with the nature of the perceiver produce pleasure and therefore are beloved, those that are in disagreement with the perceiver produce pain and therefore are hated, and those that are indifferent, or neutral, and are neither beloved nor hated. Man, when he is sound of nature will by nature love and seek that which gives him pleasure and hate and avoid the painful. Now this whole conception is of Stoic origin. "In agreement with nature" is a typical Stoic term, *ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει*, and for the Stoics living in agreement with nature, *ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν*, is the ethical ideal. Stoic too is the division into three classes and the term "indifferent", in Greek *ἀδιάφορον*, in Latin *indifferens* or *neuter*, has been coined by the Stoics who like to place a middle term between two opposites. Galen, for instance, puts between the terms "sick" and "healthy" a third term "the indifferent". "Soundness of nature" too is a Stoic concept and *ὀρθὸς λόγος*, right or sound reason, the *lumen naturale* in Latin, different translations of which exist in Arabic, is Stoic too. As there are five senses, Ghazali says, there are five classes of the lovable and of pleasure, those given by sight, hearing and so on. Those pleasures can be shared by the animals, and if there were no other senses possible, it might be said, since pleasure and love depend on the senses, that God cannot be loved, since he cannot be perceived by the senses nor represented by images. But there is another, a sixth sense, which is a characteristic of man and differentiates him from the animal and which may be called intellect or heart or light, or whatever you like. And this inner sight is stronger than the exterior sight, and the perceptions of the heart are more powerful than those of the eye, and the beauty of the forms perceived by the intellect is greater than the beauty of the forms of the exterior world, and the delight of the heart in perceiving the sublime divine things is greater and more perfect than the pleasures which derive from the senses, and the longing of the sound intellect or sound nature for those divine things is the most powerful. For love is nothing but the longing for the delight of things perceived. This last sentence "Love is nothing but the longing for the delight of things perceived" is a typical Platonic statement. "Love is of the beautiful", says Plato in his *Symposium*. Platonic is also the

view that the delight given by the ideal forms is greater than the joy given by purely sensuous beauty. On the other hand, it is the Stoics who declare that the difference between man and animal consists in this, that the animal is bound to perception by the senses, whereas man acquires the idea of God in his soul through the logos. The logos is regarded by the Stoics as something like light. Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus too compare the intellect to light. That the seat of the soul is in the heart is Stoic, and as the Stoics are materialists, one has to take this in a purely material sense. But Ghazali as a mystic is a spiritualist, and for him the term "heart" has a spiritual meaning and is synonymous with intellectual intuition. I may, however, point out that Ghazali in his attack on the philosophers in his book *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* follows the sect of theologians, called Ash'arites, who are strongly influenced by the materialistic theories of the Stoics and that Ghazali himself tries there to refute the view of the philosophers that the soul is immaterial. Another remark I would like to make is that when I distinguish here between a Stoic and a Platonic source I do not imply that the synthesis between those two philosophies was always made by Ghazali himself. Ghazali may well have followed a source where this synthesis was already established and as a matter of fact this synthesis existed already in some way in Greek philosophy and is connected at its origin with the great name of Posidonius.

But let us return now to Ghazali. According to Ghazali there are five reasons for the love of God. And the first reason is that every living being loves first itself and the meaning of self-love is that by nature every living being has the desire to persevere in its existence and to avoid non-existence and death, since that which is loved by nature is that which is in agreement with the lover, and what is more in agreement with him than his own self? And therefore man loves the continuance of his existence and fears death, not only out of fear for the pains of death, and for punishment in the beyond; and if through afflictions he might desire non-existence, he does not love it because it is non-existence, but because it will cause the cessation of his afflictions. Here Ghazali states the important Stoic principle that the desire to preserve himself, and self-love, is the first instinct in man, and the first attraction in accordance with nature. In the words of Cicero, *de finibus*, III, 16: It is the Stoic view that immediately after birth every living being feels an attachment for itself and

an impulse to preserve itself and to feel affection for its own constitution and for those things which tend to preserve that constitution; while, on the other hand, it conceives a dislike for destruction and those things which appear to cause destruction. This principle has a very great diffusion in east and west, it is found, for instance, in St Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, Telesio, Campanella, Hobbes and Spinoza, who says: *una quaeque res quantum in se est, in suo perseverare conatur*—each thing wants to remain in the condition in which it is by itself.

Now, for the Stoics nature does not only create self-love in the individual, but creates also in the parents an affection for their children, and this parental affection is the germ of that social community of the human race to which we afterwards attain, and from this parental affection is developed the sense of mutual attraction which unites human beings as such. Man is a social being, love of others is not based on self-love, although it may be posterior to it. Seneca says: "You cannot but live for others, if you want to live for yourself."

Ghazali, however, as we shall see presently, derives parental love immediately from self-love, and here he gives a somewhat Platonic turn to his Stoic principle. Plato in his *Symposion* bases love on the desire of mortal nature to be eternal and immortal, and since like all earthly things he is bound to destruction and death, he cannot attain his aim except through generation. Through his children man in a certain way can preserve his existence beyond death and fulfil somehow his longing for immortality. Ghazali proceeds: The object of his love is for man first himself, then the integrity of his members, then his property, his children, his kinsfolk and his friends. Now, the integrity of his members is beloved because the perfection and the continuance of his existence depend on it (this is still Stoic) and man loves his property because it is an instrument for the continuance of his existence, and this is also the case with the other objects of his love. And man does not love these things for themselves but because his own satisfaction with the continuance and perfection of his existence depends on them. A man loves his children even when he does not receive any benefit from them, but suffers sorrows through them, because he leaves them in an existence after his own. For the continuance of his offspring is a kind of continuance of himself, and through the strength of his longing for the continuation of himself he loves the continuation of him

who stands, as it were, in his stead. Still, if he had to choose between being killed himself and having his child killed, while he himself would keep his integrity, he would choose his own continuation rather than that of his child, because the continuation of his child resembles his own continuation only in some way, but is not really his own continuation. This last sentence does not seem very moral and is not found in Plato's *Symposium*. Plato, however, says that a man for his own glory, which gives also a kind of immortality, will take greater risks than he would take for the sake of his children.

After this first reason, Ghazali gives as the second reason for love, the love for those by whom we benefit, and for this reason we often love a stranger or a foreigner to whom no ties bind us. Ghazali says this second type is very much like the first, the difference consists in this: that when a man loves his members, this love is an aim itself, for the integrity of his members implies his own integrity of existence, but this second type concerns only a means. The physician and the teacher are only a means to attain health and wisdom, which are the ends on which the perfection of man's existence depends. It is the characteristic of this second type that once the aim is attained, the means to that aim loses its value, the physician and the teacher are loved, are of value, only as long as the aims they can give, health and wisdom, are not attained. (Aristotle says in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that, in friendship based on usefulness, the friendship is dissolved when the usefulness ceases.) The distinction of these two classes is rather illogical, since in his first class Ghazali included, for instance, property, which is only, as Ghazali himself recognizes, a means to the perfection of a man's existence.

The third reason of love (and this indeed is Aristotle's definition of true love or friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII) is that a man loves a thing for its own sake, not for any benefit he may receive from it; indeed, it forms by itself his happiness and this is, in fact, the true, perfect love, a love which is not bound up with man's existence. Beauty, for instance, is loved in this way, for all beauty is beloved by him who perceives it, and the perception of beauty is the essence of delight, and delight is beloved for its own sake, for one should not believe that the love of beautiful forms serves only the satisfaction of physical desire: verdant plants and running water are beloved, not because one can eat the plants and drink the water, or receive from them any benefit, but solely for the beauty seen

in them. We are following here, of course, a train of Platonic thought. But one question may be asked: can one truly say that one loves a beautiful thing for its own sake, when one seeks it for the delight one derives from it, and is not the search for delight a selfish motive? The question has been asked and is answered in the positive by the hedonists, modern and ancient, and is a point of dispute between the hedonistic Epicureans and the Stoics. Whereas the Epicureans hold the theory that pleasure is the chief good, and that all morals are based on it, the Stoics emphatically reject the view that we adopt or approve either justice or friendship for the sake of their utility. Indeed, the very existence of both justice and friendship will be impossible—they say—if they are not desired for their own sake. It is a significant fact that Ghazali refers to this dispute, although, so far as I know, nobody held the hedonistic view in Islam, significant, because it shows that he depends on Stoic sources. Men of little understanding, he says, have asserted that it is impossible to love another thing for its own sake without any profit to oneself, but as a matter of fact—he affirms—this happens. Ghazali proceeds then by explaining the meaning of beauty and he says that those who are imprisoned in the bonds of sensations and representations think that beauty refers only to well-proportioned shapes (that measure and symmetry are the basis of beauty is a Greek idea, already found in Plato) and agreeable colours. Indeed, men use the term mostly for the beauty seen by the eye and the beauty of men (beauty, I may remind you Plato says, is the most palpable to sight) and so it has been thought that beauty cannot be imagined to exist except in what is perceived or imagined by sight. But beauty is not limited to visual perceptions. All things perceived are liable to be judged beautiful or ugly, and the meaning of beauty in which they all share is that there exists in them the possible perfection that is befitting them, and when in a thing all its possible perfection is present, it has attained its extreme perfection. A beautiful horse is a horse that combines all the qualities of form, colour, gait, behaviour that are befitting a horse, and each thing has its own specific beauty that is befitting it, so that a man is judged beautiful for other qualities than a horse. Now, this definition is closely related to the Stoic definition of the beautiful and the good, namely that the beautiful or the good is that which by nature has the specific use which is befitting it. The idea of perfection we find in Plato who regards it as one of the conditions of beauty that it should have per-

fection and who says in the *Philebus* that nothing can be beautiful that is imperfect. I spoke just now of the beautiful *or* good. It will be known to all of you that this near-by identification of the beautiful and the good is typical for the Greeks in whom the aesthetical element is so strong, and who have one word, *Kalos*, to express both concepts. But whereas the Greek masses connected the beautiful with the good, and thought that all things beautiful cannot be but good, Plato, as it were, turned the process and affirmed that all things that are good cannot but be beautiful, or rather that the beautiful is but the reflex in the mirror of our earthly world of that good beyond sensuous perception, the glorious beauty of which can be seen only by the inner light of the mind. This identification of the good and the beautiful is originally quite foreign to Islam and is a gift of the Greeks and of Plato to Islam and to the world. I may also remark that this identification is much less emphasized in the sober, rationalistic philosophy of Stoicism, where the undisturbed wisdom of reason is sought, than in Platonism and especially Neoplatonism, with their emotional longing for the very experience and contemplation of Truth itself.

Ghazali, continuing in this Platonic strain, gives, as a fourth reason for love, the love for beauty generally, for the term "beauty" can be applied to things not perceived by the senses. So, when we speak of a beautiful character which implies knowledge, intellect, modesty, courage, all qualities which cannot be seen by the senses, but are perceived by the light of the inner sight; and all these beautiful qualities, and those who possess them, are beloved by the man who understands them. So by nature (here we have the Stoic concept of *lumen naturale*) there is implanted in man the love for the prophet and all the great religious men and teachers, although some may never have seen them in the flesh. And man will love the chief of the special school of law to which he belongs, and be ready to spend all his property in defence of him; nay, sacrifice his life for him, although he may never have seen the visual form of this chief and, if he had seen it, might not have thought it beautiful, but the love which makes him behave like this is not for a perceptible form, which continually changes through its changing matter, but for a hidden form which is stable, and the beauty of which can be only seen through the light of inner perception. If you speak of a king in a distant part of the world who is just and good you will excite love for him in those who, because of the distance of

their country, cannot have any share in his good works, and this shows that you do not love a man only because he does good to you, but that you love a man because he does good absolutely, without any reference to yourself. And how great is the difference between him who loves a picture painted on the wall because of the beauty of its exterior form, and him who loves the prophet because of the beauty of his inner form!

The fifth reason for love is this mysterious relationship which can exist between two persons, not because of beauty, or of any material advantage, but solely because of a spiritual affinity. To resume, there are five reasons or types of love:

- (a) Self-love. That is the natural desire of every living being to persevere in its existence.
- (b) Love for a selfish motive.
- (c) Unselfish love.
- (d) Love for the beautiful.
- (e) Love based on affinity.

If I may make a little critical remark here: this division into five classes is rather illogical. The five classes, since they overlap, should be reduced to two: self-love and altruistic love. Besides, there is a great difference between loving a thing for *its* own sake, for instance, a beautiful thing for the delight it gives, that is for its intrinsic value, and loving another person for *his* sake, unselfishly, altruistically.

The distinction is important for ethics. If there is an intrinsic value in the pursuit of beauty and truth, the contemplative life, the contemplation of beauty and truth and of God will have a value of its own, different from the social virtues related to one's fellow-men.

But there is already some confusion in Plato, who founds love on the wish for generation, on the wish of mortal being for immortality, but at the same time bases all love on the delight of beauty perceived.

Now, Ghazali says it is clear that when all these reasons are united in one person, the love for him must be doubled, just as when one has a child of beautiful shape, beautiful character, perfect in wisdom, beautiful in his behaviour, doing good to his father and doing good absolutely, his father will love him exceedingly. And when all these qualities are themselves of an extreme degree and of an extreme beauty, they will be loved in an extreme degree. And it is clear, now, that these five reasons for love in their totality, and in their extreme degree, can only refer

to God, and that it is only God to whom love in its innermost sense is due. For, although they may be found in others singly, the totality of the reasons for love exists only in God; their totality in others is a mere illusion and a symbol. For it is clear that you cannot truly love anyone but God. For *as to self-love* or self-knowledge he who knows himself, knows absolutely that he does not exist through himself. He knows that his existence, his continuance and perfection are from God and towards God, and that God is his creator. By himself alone man has no existence, on the contrary, he is pure obliteration and mere nothingness. Nothing exists by itself, everything receives its existence through God who truly exists by Himself. And if a man does not love God that is because he is ignorant of himself and of his love of himself. *As to the second reason* for love, i.e. the love for a benefactor, this must determine, indeed, man to love God. For if man has attained true wisdom, he knows that God is his only benefactor, for the kinds of favours he bestows on his servants cannot be enumerated, since they are beyond limits. A man can really bestow favours only on himself, on others this is impossible for the created. For just as a man does not throw his money into the sea, because there is no aim in it, he does not put it into the hand of another without an aim. You on whom he bestows his gift are not the aim yourself. Your hand, in accepting the gift, is only the instrument through which his aim is reached, namely, the praise and gratefulness of others. Therefore, nobody has a right to be thanked and loved for favours, and this for two reasons, first because God made him do this, second because the donator sells his favours for his own gratification, and to one who sells things to you no thanks are due. This passage has as its ultimate source a sentence in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, viii, 6 where it is said that when friendship is built on utility, the giving is nothing but a mere exchange—pleasure for utility. The idea of God's generosity is Platonic (in the *Timaeus*) and Neoplatonic.

The third reason for love, true love for a benefactor without your receiving any favours from him, is implanted in man (as we saw, altruistic love is, according to the Stoics, as natural to man as self-love). Now, this love also requires the love for God; requires, indeed, that you cannot love anything except in its relation to God. For God is the benefactor of the whole of creation and all the created. First, by creating them; secondly, by perfecting them with members that are necessary for them,

e.g. the head, the heart and the liver; thirdly, by favouring them with members that are useful for them, e.g. the eye, the hand, the foot, although they are not absolutely necessary to them; fourthly, by beautifying them, e.g. the curve of the lips, the almond shape of the eyes. This passage is certainly based on a Stoic division. In Cicero's *de natura deorum*, II, 121 it is said that none of the bodily organs, at least those contained in the body, is superfluous or not necessary, and there a long list of examples is given. Whereas, in Cicero's *de finibus*, III, 18 it is asserted that certain parts of the body appear to be intended solely for ornament. Now these three qualities, i.e. necessity, usefulness, beauty, Ghazali says, are found in all animals, nay, in all plants, nay in every species of the created from the top of the world to the bottom. How could there, therefore, be another benefactor than God?

As to the *fourth reason* for love, that is the love for the beautiful for beauty's sake, he who loves the prophet or one of the holy men does not love him for the beauty which appears to him; although the visible beauty of their actions indicates the qualities which are the source of them just as the beauty of a poem indicates the beauty of the poet. Now, we love the hidden beauty of men for three qualities: for their knowledge, their power and their self-restraint. (It is interesting to note that these qualities are three of the four cardinal virtues of the Stoics, the fourth, justice, is omitted.) But, in fact, these qualities belong to God alone. For how can God's knowledge, which comprises everything with an infinite knowledge, so that not one particle in Heaven or on Earth escapes Him, be compared to the knowledge of man? If all God's creatures in Heaven or Earth came together to understand God's wisdom in the details of his creation of a single ant or fly, they would not succeed for a hundredth part. Indeed, man does not understand anything but the little that God himself has taught him, and the knowledge of the learned is but ignorance in comparison to His knowledge. And if the beauty and the majesty of knowledge are to be loved and God himself is the beauty and the perfection in those who are called beautiful and perfect, then, for that reason, God alone should be loved. Now, as to power, power is a perfection, and weakness a deficiency, and all perfection and majesty and courage and glory is beloved and its perception is pleasant. So that when a man hears of the battles of the famous generals in Islam there arises in his heart, although he has not witnessed them necessarily, a

great joy, and this causes necessarily a love in his heart for him who has shown these qualities. But all power in man is limited, for, although he may have power to restrain his passions, or restrain the passion in other men, he will have only the power over certain qualities of his soul and over certain people and certain things. And man's power does not derive from himself and not through himself, but God created man and his power and the instruments of his power, and the possibility of his power. A mosquito, if God enables it to do so, may kill the mightiest king. Therefore, it is impossible to love the power and the beauty of power of one of God's servants without loving God. For there is no power but through God. Now, as to self-restraint. Abstaining from the imperfections, faults and vices is one of the conditions of love and of beauty of the inner forms. And, although the prophets were free from imperfections and faults, the perfection of holiness and restraint cannot be imagined but in the One, the Truth, the King of Holiness. For no creature can be free from imperfection, since being created implies imperfection, and it is impossible that a full perfection could exist in another than God, since the lowest degree of perfection implies that one should not be subjected to another. All perfection but God's is relative, related to what has more imperfection, so a horse is perfect in comparison with a donkey, and a man is perfect in comparison with a horse. But the root of imperfection is in all. (This relativity of perfection is Stoic; cf. Cicero, *de finibus*, v, 19.)

The fifth reason of love, as we have seen, is that of affinity, for like seeks like, youth seeks youth, and birds seek their own species and flee from others. I may perhaps draw your attention to the fact that this sentence is found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle, speaking of friendship, says "Some define it as a kind of likeness and say 'like people are friends', whence come the sayings 'like to like', 'birds of a feather flock together', and so on." Aristotle too says that young men become friends quickly. Sometimes, Ghazali says, this affinity is based on something visible and sometimes it is hidden, as the unity of two persons without there being any consideration of beauty or a wish of material possession. Now, this affinity exists between man and God (this idea is Platonic, Stoic, Neoplatonic). Some of this affinity can be expressed in books, but some of it cannot be written down but must be jealously guarded, and can only be experienced by those who follow the mystic way, having

accomplished its conditions. That which can be mentioned causes the servants of God to draw nearer to their maker through the divine qualities they acquire of wisdom, generosity and pity, which he ordered them to imitate and assimilate, so that they are said to have assimilated themselves to the divine qualities. (This assimilation to God, in so far as it is possible, ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν, is Plato's ethical ideal.) As to that special relation between man and God, which should not be written down in books, there is an allusion to it, Ghazali says, in one of the religious traditions which has: "God says: 'My servant does not cease to approach himself to me till I love him and when I love him, I become the hearing through which he hears, the seeing through which he sees, the tongue by which he speaks'." I may remark here that it is a mystical tradition that the secret of the mystic should not be revealed to the non-initiated. The reason of this, Plotinus says, is that the divine is ineffable, and it is forbidden to allude to it to those who have not had the bliss to perceive it. The love based on affinity—Ghazali affirms—can truly only be given to God. For true love—Aristotle had said this already—is exclusive, can be given only to one, but every human being can share lovable qualities with others, only God is unique and can be loved in an exclusive way. After this, Ghazali distinguishes two ways to the knowledge of God, the way of the strong and the way of the weak. The way of the strong is the way of those whose first knowledge is *God* and who will know through him all other things. This is the way of the Neoplatonic mystic, whose knowledge is not a scientific or logical knowledge, but who knows him through a παρουσία (through a "presence"). The way of the weak is the way of those whose first knowledge is of God's *works* and who will gradually lift themselves up from them to their Creator. The former way, to understand through God all other things, is obscure, and there is no use in writing it down in books. The second way—and this is the way of the Stoic who sees in the world the realization of God's design—although not outside human understanding, is not much understood, because it needs withdrawing from the passions and occupations of the world, but especially because of the infinity of the objects of knowledge, for there is no particle from the top of heaven till the bottom of the earth which does not testify to the perfection and to the power of God. Ghazali goes on to mention in the true Stoic fashion (one should consult Cicero's *de natura deorum*, II) some of the signs of divine rational

design in the created. Amongst his different examples I may mention here the curious comparison he makes between the mosquito and the elephant. Even to the smallest of his creatures—he says—God has extended his providence. See the power of the mosquito—compared to its size—see how God has created it in the shape of an elephant, the biggest of the animals, since God has given it a proboscis like the elephant's and has given it in miniature all the members he created for the elephant, still adding wings to it. This example I have not found in classical literature, although Cicero mentions in the *de natura deorum* that divinity has provided the elephant, because of the great distance of his mouth from the earth, with a kind of hand, namely its trunk. Now the love of men for God, Ghazali says, is different because the understanding in men is different. The intelligent man who reads a book of value admires and loves the author, whereas the ignorant man may know the author, but not knowing the content of the book can only have a vague appreciation both for author and book, just as the man who understands the wonders of the mosquito's creation will admire and love its creator more than the vulgar can do, and the more man understands, the greater his love will be, and there is no shore to the ocean of God's wonders.

God is the most evident of all things, therefore, the knowledge of him ought to be the first in time and the easiest to obtain. Still, we see that things happen just the other way. The knowledge of God comes late in man's development. For, although there is nothing in the world that does not testify God's existence, human intelligence is stupefied in perceiving it, and this by God's infinite evidence itself. Just as the bat does not see the daylight, not because the daylight is itself obscure, but because of the bat's weakness of sight which cannot cope with the strength of daylight and can only see when the day's light is mingled with obscurity—and in this way its evidence becomes weaker—our intellects are weak in front of the Divine Majesty and its Splendour which illuminates everything (this metaphor is found at the beginning of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*). It seems strange, Ghazali continues, that God's evidence is the cause of his being hidden, but generally things are understood by their opposites, and if some things indicated God's existence, while other things denied it, we would much easier perceive the difference. If the sun would never set and it were light for ever, we would never learn to know the existence of light which we

learn only through its negation, darkness. That we know things only through their opposites is already found in Aristotle. *Omnis determinatio est negatio*, Spinoza will say later. The Stoics use this idea to explain the existence of evil, since without the existence of evil the idea of good could never be understood.

Now that God loves his servants, Ghazali says, is shown by different testimonies in the Qur'an, and Ghazali mentions three passages. But the word "love" as applied to God's love cannot have the same meaning as when applied to man, since all the words we use have a sense different from their human sense when applied to God. Everything under God is a "being" only in so far as it proceeds from God, and, therefore, the word "being" must have another sense when applied to God than when applied to the creature. It is very evident that there is a difference in meaning for concepts like knowledge, will and power when applied to humans, or when applied to God. But the man who originated language fixed the meaning of words in the first place in relation to the created whose nature can be easier understood than God's nature: to God they can be applied only metaphorically. Love in the creature implies a need and a deficiency, and this is impossible for God, since God possesses all perfection, all beauty and all majesty which he possesses eternally and necessarily, to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken, for he is the only true reality. Therefore, God does not love any but himself, and what has been said about his loving his servants must be taken in an allegorical sense, and its meaning is that God lifts the veil from their hearts till they see him and are enabled to draw nearer to him, and that he wills this from eternity. God's love for the man who loves him is eternal in so far as it refers to his eternal will to enable his servants to approach to him. But when it refers to his act by which he lifts the veil from the heart of his servant, then this love is transitory and occurs when transitory causes produce it. A king can call to himself a servant because he needs a service from him, but he can call him also, because his servant has laudable qualities which make him worthy of approaching his king, and when in this latter case the king draws the curtain which separates his servant from him, it may be said that he loves him, and when the servant, through his qualities, causes the curtain to be drawn, it may be said that he makes himself beloved to the king. Now this former case, based on a need, cannot be applied to God's love, but through the latter case we

may represent by an image how a man can be loved by God. This whole conception is Neoplatonic. In God's eternal stillness no changes can occur, and when we speak of God's causation—Plotirius says—it is not to attribute something to Him, but to us. This is also affirmed in Christian dogma. When it is said of God that he changes his will—St Augustine says—we must admit that it is rather we who change than he. And one may perhaps compare Spinoza's words: "The intellectual love (*amor intellectualis*) of the mind for God is God's love itself through which he loves his own self, not in so far as it is infinite, but in so far as it can be understood by the essence of the human mind *sub specie aeternitatis*, that is: the intellectual love of the mind for God is part of that infinite love through which God loves his own self."

I will end my summary here, although I have only been able to give a very brief and necessarily imperfect account of Ghazali's ideas on this subject. I have tried to show that there is nothing specifically Muhammedan in them, but that they are taken from Greek sources. 'That man starts' by self-love but gradually extends his love till it comprises first his family, then his kinsmen, and his country, then humanity in its totality, and finally reaches God; and again that through his love for God man loves man, because every man carries in his soul a spark of that divinity through which man becomes sacred to man, this is an idea first consciously expressed by the Stoics, and you will find it in many medieval and renaissance authors. But, although it has been first consciously expressed by the Greeks, perhaps this idea is neither Greek, nor Christian, nor Jewish, nor Muhammedan, but expresses a universal truth, an eternal truth, a divine truth.