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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

**CAUSALITY, RATIONALITY, AND MYSTICISM: AN INQUIRY INTO GHAZALI'S  
THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE**

**BY**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Abdu Yimer Abegaz, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been fully acknowledged.

Declared by Abdu Yimer Abegaz

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**IN MEMORY OF MY GRANDMOTHER-KELEL YUSUF (MAY ALLAH HAVE  
MERCY UPON HER SOUL)**

## ABSTRACT

*Philosophers have largely and unceasingly disputed the epistemological place of rationality and the relationship between observational causes and effects. The purpose of this study is to examine the epistemological relationality between Ghazali's critique of the necessitarian notion of causality as well as pure rationality. Building upon, his emphasis in underlining the compatibility of the rational knowledge with the religious one, along with his introduction of secondary theory of causality, this study argues that, Ghazali never nullified observable causal relations and the role of reason in one's epistemological search. Nevertheless, his critique of necessitarian causal nexuses resulted from his belief of creating an epistemic space for miracles on the one hand, and he also challenged the totalitarian place of rationality to create an epistemic space for the Sufi's mystical experiences, on the other. This thesis will provide that, following his/her achievement of the hard task of polishing the heart, the Sufi saint could possibly acquire an epistemic state that transcends rationality and became able to perform some miracles that trespass the observable causal connections. Therefore, I situated the Sufi saints as a pivotal point within which the epistemological relationality takes place.*

**Keywords:** Causality, Miracles, Rationality, Sufi-experiences, Epistemic-relationality

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## Introduction

*How should we approach the study of Ghazali's Sufi epistemology?* Our educational journey, from its genesis until now, shaped our beliefs about what an appropriate educational trend should be like. It appears that, when we attempt to comprehend the notion and reality of previously unheard or strange areas of epistemic referents like Islamic mysticism or Sufism, we should immediately recognize that we are confronting very difficult pitfalls. Over time, we also often construct assumptions and prejudices from what we suddenly see, hear, and read about a tradition that doesn't belong to us. For instance, when people encounter with some opinions about Sufism on books or media at one time and Islam at other times, they may unconsciously construct an assumption about these inseparable areas, which depict them as if they are mutually exclusive. After reading some mistranslated Sufi poets, some may even incline to think that Sufism is a deviant sect that stands against Islam, unbeknown to them that Sufism is one of the pearls and jewels of Islam. If this is the case, so as to perceive the unmediated image of the Sufis such as the central figure of this study, we need to frame our search of this unfamiliar tradition carefully. Upon doing this, in addition to our alleged educational trend, we are expected to allow ourselves to engage in other enriching trends, as well as to leave behind our previously held conscious or unconscious assumptions and prejudices about Sufism.

*To what extent can we academically study Sufism meaningfully?* We may witness a certain spiritual ecstasy of a Sufi sage as an outsider, or we may read several books about Islamic mysticism or Sufism, but no amount of knowledge that obtained from learning Sufi texts in a simple factual level or an outsider's testimony of a certain Sufi sage's state is going to divulge to us the reality of the experiences of the partisans from the viewpoint of the partisans themselves. The higher aspects

of Sufi experiences cannot be conveyed in conventional language. If this is the case, what use is our external knowledge of the outward manifestations of the Sufi experiences? Here, I am not undermining the significance of an academic study on such experiences. However, an academic study in this vein has to acknowledge the fact that we are incapable of grasping the totality of such religious experiences. Even though we can appreciate the literature of Sufism, we can only be able to understand it in a limited manner. Hence, one should bear in mind that, for the Sufis in general and Ghazali in particular there is always an experience that lies beyond their compiled written works.

*Why Ghazali's epistemology is worth studying?* In addition to his original philosophical ingenuity and his brilliant insights that suit a modern reader, part of Ghazali's significance in his mystic epistemology lies within his role to furnish the way to understand Islamic theology, philosophy, and mysticism. We couldn't belittle the importance of knowing the "role of Muslim philosophy in transmitting Greek thought to the West [...] in supplying a mould for the shaping of Western scholasticism [...] and in providing stimulus to the speculation of Western thinkers from Descartes to Kant" (Sharif, 1963, p. 8).<sup>1</sup> Besides their philosophical depth Islamic theology and mysticism on their own could also help us to understand Islam in general. Understanding Islam, at least partially, is undeniably important given that, the religion is a major phenomenon of the past, the present, and most likely the future world.

The first chapter of this study structured to disclose the life of Ghazali and the intellectual atmosphere of his time. To understand his intellectual journey one must initially recognize that there is a strong linkage between the works he authored and his existential vicissitudes. As MacDonald (1903, p. 216) rightly observed, "[e]verything that [Ghazali] thought and wrote came with the weight and reality of personal experience." For the reason that he is well aware of the

inseparability of his life along with his works, Ghazali offered us an intellectual autobiography entitled *Deliverance from Error*. In this introductory part, I have attempted to narrate the spiritually and epistemologically epic story of Ghazali with the hope of not committing injustice to the evolving nature of his thoughts. Above all, I have presented Ghazali's response to these questions: To what extent is scholastic theology essential? Which part of philosophy is compatible with Islamic thought? Which part of philosophy should be abandoned? Why did Ghazali prioritize Sufism?

Chapter two is the heart of this study because it directly enters into the detailed discussion of Ghazali's epistemology. As we are going to see, understanding the nature, source, and extent of knowledge was indeed the question that mattered in his intellectual journey. As a result, he exerted an indispensable effort in pinpointing the role of empirical data and rational data. In this chapter I have tried to expose his reflection on empirical data and rational data from two books authored by himself: firstly I have attempted to show his reflection on sense data from his intellectual autobiography entitled *Deliverance From Error*. Moreover, for chapter two, his notion of rational data as well will be taken only from this particular book. Secondly, by extracting some essential points from his philosophical masterpiece *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, I will figure out his notion of empirical data in relation to causality.

My central thesis of this study lays its foundation in chapter three, and bears its fruit in the last chapter. In the third chapter I have argued that without neglecting "causality" in its entirety, Ghazali aimed at creating an epistemic space for miracles. Furthermore, the other important thing of this chapter is that it shows the place of "rationality" in Ghazali's quest for knowing the nature of things as they really are. Here again, I believe Ghazali places a limit on pure reason but without

negating “rationality” in its entirety. Ghazali’s purpose in so doing is to create a space for the “transcendental experience” or “mystical experience” of the Sufi’s.

In the final chapter of this study, I would like to discuss the *origin* and *telos* of the Sufi’s kind of knowledge briefly; thereafter I will conclude my research with two remarks: First of all, I have vividly demonstrated the epistemic relationality between the space created for transcendental experiences and miracles. Second of all, I have argued that being followers of the footprints of the Prophets, the Sufis in their spiritual state could illustrate the possibility of miracles that transgress uniform and observable causal relations, on the one hand, and their state could also be a shred of evidence for the possibility of a knowledge that surpasses reason, on the other.

## Chapter One

### Ghazali's Biography and The Intellectual Atmosphere of His Time

#### 1.1 Ghazali's Life with Reference to His search for Higher Knowledge

Approximately a millennium ago, in 1058 CE (common era) a poor expectant mother from a small city called Tus, relieved from her labor happily and gave birth to one of the greatest Muslim theologian, mystic, philosopher, psychologist and jurisprudent of all time. The family of this newly born baby arrived at a consensus to name him Ghazali. Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's earthly journey began in Tus, a city very close to Khorasan, the northeast of the Old Persian Empire, or present-day Iran. His father was the chief provider of their house, but unfortunately, he couldn't live for long to see what his children have become. He passed away when Ghazali and his other brother Ahmad were still boys and while he was at his deathbed he confides them to the care of his trustworthy Sufi friend. When their father leaving them to his friend, he told him that he had to wipe out his remorse of lacking a proper education for himself, at least by enabling his kids to get what he had lost. For that reason, the dying father asked his friend not to spend their inheritance money other than on their education (Smith, 1983).

Their father's friend kept his word and the boys had taken a preliminary education as long as the inherited money allowed them; afterward, since the caregiver “was himself a poor man, he advised them to betake themselves to a *madrassa* (college or academy), where, as students, they would have rations assigned to them, and this they did” (Smith, 1983, p. 11). During his boyhood, Ghazali began to learn jurisprudence in Tus under Shaykh al-Radhkani. Thereafter he went to “Jurjan, in Mazardaran, to study under the Imam Abu Nasr al-Isma'ill, of whose lectures he made notes” (Smith, 1983, p. 13). He earnestly studied his lecture notes for about three years. In those three years he also most likely mentored to Sufism by the supervision of Yusuf al-Nassaj. In 470/1077-

8, Ghazali and his companions traveled from their hometown Tus to Nishapur, and became the attendants of the classes of the great Imam who earned the title of *al-ḥaramayn* (the imam of the two sacred cities of Mecca and Medina) and theologian al-Juwayni. Being the attendant of al-Juwayni's lectures, Ghazali became well-acquainted with disciplines like jurisprudence, “theology, philosophy, logic, dialectic and natural science” (Smith, 1983, p. 15). While imparting knowledge to his pupils, we are told, the master al-Juwayni used to bear witness to the brilliance of one of his pupil (who is the central figure of this study) in the following description: “al-Ghazali is a sea to drown in” (Smith, 1983, p. 16). During this period, in juxtaposition to the rational sciences mentioned earlier, Ghazali was also studying the unveiling sciences of the Sufi’s under the revered Sufi master al-Farmadhi (Smith, 1983).

At such time as he was the student of al-Juwayni, Ghazali untied himself from *taqlid* or servile conformism, as a result of his unsatisfying urge of comprehending “the real meaning of things” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 3). Echoing the religious authorities blindly and swallowing their saying without any critical exploration was indeed bothersome for great minds like him. This is because there were rampant religious sects in his time and astonishingly “[e]ach group alleges that it is the one saved, and each faction is happy about its own beliefs” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 2). He seems to ponder that, if every follower of each sect claims to discern the whole truth of this universe and contradicts each other, how on earth can one identify the authentic possessor of the truth? (Rafiabadi, 2002) His wonderment triggered when he witnessed the huge effect of upbringing in determining the religious life of a child, for instance 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 [...] Islam” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 3). Such kind of acceptance to beliefs that children inherit from parents has no place in Ghazali’s quest for the true

nature of things. Thus, for Ghazali, there should be “some authority other than one’s family denomination to distinguish the true religion from the false one” (Rafiabadi, 2002, p. 141).

During the reign of Malik Shah, who was the successor Alp Arslan in 1072, Ghazali already became familiar to the royal palace. Malik Shah’s great Vizier Nizam al-Mulk warmly welcomed scholars with a great distinction to his courtyard. He also liked a company of Sufi masters. For this reason, the Vizier’s courtyard was full of the most renowned intellectuals of the epoch. These scholars in return used to dedicate their books as a token of gratitude for the Vizier’s kindness. In addition to his dearest hospitality for the intellectuals of the age, in his name, he also built a plenty of “colleges, Sufi monasteries, and mosques, in different provinces [...] of Iraq and Khurasan” (Smith, 1983, p. 19).

The Vizier Nizam al-Mulk has never lost sight of the ingenuity of Ghazali as, the fame of Ghazali in scholarly gatherings made it easy to gain the respect and favor of the Vizier. Ghazali’s brilliance of theology and philosophy obliged the Vizier to appoint him to a higher rank. Therefore, the Vizier assigned Ghazali as the Chairman “of Theology at the Nizamiyya College at Baghdad, in 484/1091, when al-Ghazall was only thirty-four” (Smith, 1983, p. 19). The Baghdadis also wouldn’t turn a blind eye to Ghazali; by the time he got there, they were very happy to see him. When they attend his instructions they couldn't control their astonishment by his eloquent delivery and elegant explanations. Students were flooded from near and far just to attend his teachings. Apart from his instructions he became the Imam of Iraq; and people used to summon him to provide judgments on legal matters. In terms of wealth and position, it is said that “his household and the number of his followers were said to exceed those of the great nobles and Amirs and even the court of the Caliph himself” (Smith, 1983, p. 21).

## 1.2 His First Existential Crisis

In the meantime, even if Ghazali had what he wanted outwardly, he, inwardly, confronted with two great crises, and these crises, as we shall see, altered the course of his life altogether. After untying himself from blind imitation of authority or *taqlid* while he was a youngster, Ghazali now became a person, whose favorite thing to do in life was to find an explanation for his existence. He had dreams about unraveling the mystery of this universe, as he told us in his own words, “[t]he thirst for grasping the real meaning of things was indeed my habit” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 3). And he began to understand the delicacy of the matter from his early years. It was this unquenched thirst for realizing the true meaning of things that pushed him to free himself from *taqlid* in the beginning, and it is this same urge that chiefly caused the two great crises of his life. If we turn to the immediate causes of the crises, we could find the former one aroused by a skeptical attitude towards both the sense data and the intellect; whereas the latter one occurred because of a failure to pay a sacrifice that needed to be paid to attain the unshakable truth.

Before knowing the true meaning of things, Ghazali underlines that he should explore the true meaning of knowledge itself. He then proceeded to emphasize that the truth of knowledge was valid in its certainty in a way that “no doubt clings to it” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 3). He realized that his knowledge is supplied by his sense-data and the intellect. Thus, he should examine the undoubtfulness of both sense data and intellect. Unfortunately, to rely on sense data for attaining certain knowledge is futile due to counterexamples such as: “[n]o eye could perceive the movement of a shadow, but still the shadow move[s]; a gold piece would cover any star, but [if we refer geometrical proofs] a star [is] a world larger than the earth” (MacDonald, 1903, p. 218).

If the sense data stand corrected by the intellect (by the geometrical proofs for instance as in the case of the star), then the remaining alternative is rational data. Ghazali then intended to rely on *a*

*priori* truths such as “[t]en is more than three, and [o]ne and the same thing cannot be simultaneously affirmed and denied” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 4). Here, Ghazali portrayed, interestingly, the narration as if there is a dialogue between the senses and the intellect. Following this, the sense data is unwilling to accept the truth of the intellect by saying:

[...] there may be, beyond the perception of reason, another judge. And if the latter revealed itself, it would give the lie to the judgments of reason, just as the reason-judge revealed itself and gave the lie to the judgments of sense. The mere fact of the nonappearance of that further perception does not prove the impossibility of its existence. (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 4)

To strengthen his idea about the existence of further arbiter that lies beyond reason Ghazali came up with the notion of dreaming, as Eric Ormsby (2007, p. 96) wraps it up: “[i]n dreams we believe in the truth of events that waking reveals as illusory.<sup>2</sup> How can we know that what we believe when awake is not also illusory, in relation to some as yet unrevealed truth?” In grappling with this problem, the youngster Ghazali finds himself in the middle of skeptical breakdown. However, as Ghazali himself noted that, he was rescued by God after a two month of insanity (Al-Ghazali, 1980).

### **1.3 The Theologians and the Philosophers**

Subsequent to his dramatic relief from his crises Ghazali didn't want to waste more time, he immediately continued his intellectual wandering around the dogma of the seekers of truth. During his time Ghazali noticed that there are four groups of people that were known for seeking the truth, these are: the Theologians, the Ismailis, the Philosophers, and the Sufis. He deeply studied each of the fourfold seekers of truth and wrote an outstanding book about each of them. I believe it would go far beyond the scope of this research to go through the central topic of each group, but leaving (since its necessity is lesser than the others), behind the Ismailis who believed that “reality is compounded of esoteric truths known only to a designated spiritual leader or [infallible] Imam”

(Ormsby, 2007, p. 99).<sup>3</sup> I need to introduce a bird's-eye view of the beliefs of at least the three groups before entering to pin down what Ghazali has to say about them.

If we start with *Kalam*/theology, the reason behind its appearance in Islam can be located in the early expansion of the religion. As Chittick and Murata (1996, p. 201) reported Islam has highly expanded to the areas like “Iran, North Africa, and what is today the Arab Middle East,” during the first century of its existence. These areas previously held prominent religions such as “Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, Manichaeism, and the Sabeanism of Harran; some of these religions were made up of competing sects or schools of thought” (Chittick & Murata, 1996, p. 201). Moreover many residents of these areas were already accustomed with Greek philosophy and Neoplatonism. Following their arrival, when the Muslims start their daily routines with these non-Muslims, some of the Muslims were inclined to engage in religious discussions. So as to discuss and debate with people who had themselves been disputing many sophisticated philosophical and theological topics for several years, it was a necessary condition for Muslim individuals with intellectual tendency to study the right approach, and construct their own meaningful argument that equate them with adherents of other religions (Chittick & Murata, 1996).

All in all, it can be said that *Kalam* is one of the “religious sciences” of Islam, which commonly represents *speculative theology*. On account of the above discussion, we find *Kalam* in its very nature to be contentious, though the very translation of the Arabic term *kalam* literally means *speech*; it is also frequently connotes *debate* or *dispute* (Chittick & Murata, 1996). On that note, the great philosopher of the Islamic golden age, Al-Farabi defines theology as “a science which enables a man to procure the victory of the dogmas and actions laid down by the Legislator of the religion and to refute all opinions contradicting them” (Lewis, Menage, Pellat, & Schacht, 1986,

p. 1141). The specialists of theology (*mutakallimun*) themselves also hold an analogous view, as Lewis et al. (1986, p. 1141) showed according to them kalam is a “science which is concerned with firmly establishing religious beliefs by adducing proofs and with banishing doubts.”

The first worth mentioning and a separate group of scholars that can be categorized as doctors of Kalam (*mutakallimun*) were the followers of Wasil b. `Ata (699-748) along with their name the *Mu'tazilites*, who “first appear toward the beginning of the second/eighth century” (Chittick & Murata, 1996, p. 205). The English equivalent translation of their name means “Withdrawers or Secessionists,” and it was given to them by the people who felt discomfort by the Mu'tazilites' radical emphasis on reason (Valiuddin, 1963, p. 200). In view of the fact that the Mu'tazilites were distinctive in their radical emphasis upon reason as the chief method, if they come across with a Koranic verse that seems to be incompatible with logic, they didn't hesitate to interpret and defend it in a way that demonstrates compatibility (Chittick & Murata, 1996).

Apart from their given name, the proponents of Wasil's school of theology call themselves as ‘People of Unity and Justice’. To offer a taste of their argument, I can cite their position over the justice of God as an example. Firstly, for the Mu'tazilites’, “God’s [...] justice necessitates that man should be the author of his own acts; then alone can he [sic] be said to be free and responsible for his deeds” (Valiuddin, 1963, p. 200). Secondly, the Mu'tazilites’ questions that, “if man is not the author of his own acts and if these acts are the creation of God, how can he be held responsible for his acts and deserve punishment for his sins?” At this very point, they legitimately continued their question: “Would it not be [an] injustice on the part of God that, after creating a man helpless, He should call him to account for his sins [?]” Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that “the justice of God makes it incumbent upon Him not to do anything contrary to justice and equity” (Valiuddin, 1963, p. 201).

The other worth mentioning school of theology that was popular by its adversarial stand against the Mu'tazilites' is called the *Asharism*. *Asharism* emerged "in Basra in the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century." Their name indicates an eponym of their leader al-Ashari (d. 935), who was an insider enemy of the Mu'tazilites'; I mean he "was a former [Mu'tazilites'], who used the rationalistic tools of the [Mu'tazilites'], in order to defend the doctrines of traditional Islam and to defeat the [Mu'tazilites']" (Holtzman, 2010, p. 57). To be brief, unlike the Mu'tazilites who fails to acknowledge the limits of reason, this school "can be seen as a swing of the pendulum back toward the authority of revelation and the recognition that reason has its limits" (Chittick & Murata, 1996, p. 295). In their admission of reason's limit the Ash'arites left a room for revelation, but "[t]he Mu'tazilites reveled in the power that reason gave them to understand all things, and in this, they were deeply influenced by the Greek philosophical tradition (Chittick & Murata, 1996, p. 295). Whether Ghazali was an Asharite theologian or not, is still open to debate.<sup>4</sup> For me at some point in his life, he was an Asharite, but he was not an ardent proponent of the whole doctrine of Asharism as we will see below.

At the time of his Asharism, Ghazali presented his response to the Mu'tazilites, by arguing that if it is incumbent upon God "to follow and obey objective principles of justice" then, it drags Him down from His "greatness and autonomy". Undeniably, for Ghazali "God can do anything he wants, he can punish virtuous people and reward the wicked, he is under no obligation at all to his creatures" (Leaman, 2002, p. 25). Our thinker here is saying that the rational anthropomorphic depiction of God is not far from flaws at all. For that reason, he said, "God has no purposes and his actions cannot be described using human notions like justice at all, so whatever he may do to his creatures cannot be called either just or unjust" (Leaman, 2002, p. 25). After studying the scholarly resources of the theologians as well as producing his own books on the subject matter

Ghazali “found it a science adequate for its own aim, but inadequate for [him]” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 6). That is because the chief objective of theology “is simply to conserve the creed of the orthodox for the orthodox and to guard it from the confusion introduced by the innovators” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 6).

In protecting the orthodox for the orthodox from heretical innovations Ghazali admitted the fact that some theologians performed their task in a good manner. Nevertheless, for Ghazali in doing so, these theologians based themselves on the “premises which they took over from their adversaries, being compelled to admit them either by uncritical acceptance, or because of the Community’s consensus, or by simple acceptance deriving from the Qur’an and the Traditions”. Without discussing his approval or disapproval towards someone “who sought a cure in kalam”. Ghazali in his *Deliverance from Error* unambiguously told us that since “healing remedies differ as the sickness differs, and many a remedy helps one sick man and harms another [...] kalam was not sufficient in my case, nor was it a remedy for the malady of which I was complaining” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 6).

In his book entitled as *The Decisive Criterion for Distinguishing Islam from Masked Infidelity* he replies to a request from his student about the appropriateness of the charge that accuses Ghazali as if “he has; written works that contradict the doctrine of the master-theologians, particularly those of the Ash'arite school, and that to go against that school, even in the smallest of details, is an act of Unbelief (kufr)” (Al-Ghazali, 2002, p. 44). The response of Ghazali in relation to this question can clarify whether Ghazali was an ardent follower of Asharism or not. Ghazali here replied astonishingly, by questioning the reason why the Ash'arites or any other individual who follows another school of theology for that matter enjoys “a monopoly over the truth such that their claims against their adversaries should have any more validity than those of their adversaries

against them.” To put it in question, Ghazali asks, if it is possible for the Ash’arites to brand the Mu’tazilites as unbelievers, why this privilege should “be denied to the latter against the Ash’arites?” (Al-Ghazali, 2002, p. 45).

In his line of argument, we can easily figure out that Ghazali harshly rejects those who declare a monopoly over truth. Moreover, in light of the above interrogations, one can derive a very important idea that portrays Ghazali as a scholar who looks at the bigger picture and seeks to identify the truth and falsehood of any school of theology (so as to uphold what has identified as truth clearly and distinctly), instead of being an extremist or sectarian follower of any school. Here in this work, he also ascertains that theology should hold guarding the religion against heretical innovations as a primary task. Beyond guarding the religion, theology is not purposeful except for two conditions: “1) a thinker who develops doubts may use kalam to clear these up; 2) a scholar may learn kalam in order to treat those who develop doubts or to beat back the efforts of those who attack Islam” (Al-Ghazali, 2002, p. 61).

After exploring the views of the major Islamic theologians Ghazali unsatisfactorily proceeds to fathom the central tenets of the other relevant subject matter namely *falsafa* or philosophy. Before a detailed discussion of Ghazali’s treatment of the philosophy of his time, I must provide some awareness to my reader about the traits of Islamic philosophy in Ghazali’s time. As Majid Fakhry (2000, p. 1) precisely noted its temporal shift, philosophy “crossed the Aegean Sea” and it went “from Western Asia Minor into mainland Greece” afterwards “for a thousand years, Athens became its home.” At the time when Alexander the Great discovered Alexandria in 332BCE, [before the current era] “philosophy began its eastward migration, which was virtually completed in 529 CE [current era].” Apart from its eastward migration, in the year of 529 CE “the Byzantine Emperor Justinian ordered the School of Athens to be closed owing to its pagan sympathies which,

as defender of the Orthodox faith, Justinian regarded as a threat to Christianity”. During the great expansions of the Arabs towards Egypt in “641, Alexandria was still flourishing as a centre of Greek philosophy, medicine and science, as well as a Hellenized form of Christian theology which had a decisive impact on Muslim philosophy and theology”. Besides Alexandria some cities of Syria were also centers of Greek learning.

The academia of the then time adored and revered Aristotle “especially his logical works as interpreted by the Neoplatonic commentators were studied intensively” (Averroes, 1969, p. 4). In addition to this, “many Neoplatonic and Neopythagorean writings were still known, and also, very probably, some of the old Stoic concepts and problems were still alive and discussed” (Averroes, 1969, p. 4). Historically speaking, “we note that the cultural scene began to shift eastwards, first to Damascus in the Umayyad period (661– 750) and subsequently to Baghdad, during the ‘Abbasid period (750– 1258).” Even though systematic Muslim philosophy commenced around the initial verge of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, by al-Kindi (d.c.866), yet it reached to its perplexity by Al Farabi and especially by Avicenna (Fakhry, 2000, p. 2). The earlier period of falsafa could be known as Avicennan for his influence, the falsafa of this period characterized by its “synthesis of Neoplatonic metaphysics, natural science and mysticism: Plotinus enriched by Galen and Proclus” (Lewis , Pellat, & Schacht, 1997, p. 771).

When we deal with Muslim philosophy, we may admit the fact that, philosophy in its sophisticated and systematic form originated in Islam from translated Greek texts. Unlike Lewis et al. (1997, p. 771) I am hesitant<sup>5</sup> to say that “[t]he origins of falsafa are *purely* Greek” nevertheless I couldn’t completely deny that “the activity of the falsafa begins with Arabic translations of the Greek philosophical texts”. The great period of this translation mostly through the intermediary of Christian Syrians took place between the years 750 and 850 (Averroes, 1969). Per the definition

of falsafa, we can figure out the very wording from “an Arabised form of the Greek philosophia.” Moreover, the Arabic word *hikma* may also plausibly be used interchangeably with the term falsafa (Ziai, 2008, p. 57). According to Al-Kindi falsafa “*is the knowledge of the reality of things within people’s possibility, because the philosopher’s end in theoretical knowledge is to gain truth and in practical knowledge to behave in accordance with truth*” (Nasr S. , 1996, p. 59 emphasis mine). Without contradicting his predecessor’s definition but adding his own color on it Avicenna says “*Al-hikmah is the perfection of the human soul through conceptualization [tasawwur] of things and judgment [tasdiq] of theoretical and practical realities to the measure of human ability*” (Nasr S. , 1996, p. 60 emphasis mine).

Let me provide a drop of taste from the ocean of Avicenna’s writings. In one of his dazzling thought experiments known as the “flying man argument,” he invites us to picture “someone being created out of thin air, and indeed into thin air, all at once and as a perfectly functioning adult” (Adamson, 2016, p. 174). Avicenna wanted us to continue our imagination of this “someone” as follows:

The man is suspended, or flying, or falling, in mid-air. His vision is somehow veiled, and there is no noise. Also he isn’t touching anything, not even the ground, and his limbs are splayed out so that he is not even in contact with his own body. Thus, he is in a state of total sensory deprivation. Furthermore, he has only just been created, so he has no memory of ever using any of his senses (Adamson, 2016, p. 174).

Now the question emerged as follows: “will this person be aware of anything at all?” Avicenna responds : “He will not doubt his affirming his self existing, but with this he will not affirm any limb from among his organs, no internal organ, whether heart or brain and no external thing. *Rather, he would be affirming his self without affirming it for length, breadth, and depth ...*” (Wilson, 1996, p. 1821 emphasis mine). Avicenna was astounded by our affirmation of our

existence. Unlike the flying man our minds are furnished with sensory perceptions and mental activities i.e. memories and thoughts. Because of this we might wrongly consider our self-awareness or affirmation of our existence akin to nothing but our having of some sensations and mental activities. However, according to Avicenna “self-awareness is more fundamental than any such mental activity. Indeed, all other mental activity presupposes self-awareness, since whatever I think or experience, I must always be recognizing it as *my* thought or experience” (Adamson, 2016, p. 175).

In what follows, let me focus on Ghazali’s treatment of philosophy. From Muslim philosophers, Ghazali chose only *al-Farabi* (d. 950) and *Avicenna or Ibn-Sina* (d. 1037) for their brilliance in transmitting the uncorrupted philosophy of Aristotle. The corrupted transmission of other Muslim philosophers could push one's study far away from comprehensibility, above all “how can the incomprehensible be rejected or accepted?” Ghazali’s reception of these well transmitted and articulated Aristotelian philosophies can be seen with three approaches, these are: “a part which must be branded as unbelief; a part which must be stigmatized as innovation; and a part which need not be repudiated at all” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 8). Bearing this in mind, he divided the sciences of the philosophers into six divisions. In the first and the second place, we encounter with the mathematical<sup>6</sup> and logical sciences.

Mathematical sciences used to concentrate on arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. However, concerning these sciences, there is nothing that implies “denial or affirmation of religious matters.” Instead, these sciences strictly focus on “demonstrated facts which can in no wise be denied once they are known and understood”. In the case of the second division which he called logical sciences, for Ghazali, there is nothing that implies “denial or affirmation of religious matters”.

Rather, the logical sciences are “the study of the methods of proofs, of syllogisms, of the conditions governing the premises of apodeictic demonstration [...]” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 9).

But two kinds of vices may emerge in relation to mathematics and logic. A person who engages in these sciences might be allured by the precision and clarity of both mathematical and logical proofs. His mental state of being allured by the expertise will likely lead him to be allured by the experts. Afterwards, he supposes that other than logic and mathematics, they must have the same accuracy in all of their sciences. Here Ghazali pointed out, in addition to his own state of allurements about the experts in all aspects of their study, he would hear “the talk of the town” about the philosopher’s (mathematicians and logicians in this regard) unbelief, negative attitude, and disdain for the Divine Law. Following this, he blindly accepted what the town talked and turned into atheism. If someone asks him why he ceases to believe, he arrogantly responds “*If religion were true, this would not have been unknown to these philosophers, given their precision in this science of mathematics*”. Or in line with logic, he assumes that the atheism of the philosophers must be supported by sound arguments, so that he becomes an atheist, without even trying to study their metaphysical claims. Such a person should be reminded the notion of specialization, one who is trained exclusively in jurisprudence and Kalam should be considered as a reliable authority, only in line with such disciplines. However, if this person tends to participate in philosophical and medical topics he may lack credibility in what he discusses. Thus, the accuracy of the logicians and the mathematicians in their field of expertise doesn't necessarily imply their accuracy in other disciplines (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 9).

The other vice emanated from exploring mathematical and logical sciences originates from an ignorant adherent of the religion, who fancies that Islam “must be championed by the rejection of every science ascribed to the philosophers”. For this reason, this ignorant friend of Islam repudiates

the philosopher's science altogether in a blink of an eye, by “claiming that they display ignorance and folly in them all.” In accordance with mathematics such persons “even denies their statements about eclipses of the sun and the moon and asserts that their views are contrary to the revealed Law.” When such mistaken repudiation heard by an expert who certainly knew the accurateness of his proofs, he will be misled to think that Islam stands against his authentic proofs. He then will invest deeply in his proofs, without giving a glimpse of view to Islamic thought. The same is true in logic, when one’s mistaken repudiation heard by a clever logician, he will inevitably despise the fool repudiator and unfortunately, the religion. Ghazali underlines that this ignorant friend of Islam committed a huge crime against the religion of Islam<sup>7</sup> by supposing that “Islam is to be championed by the denial of these mathematical [and logical] sciences. For the revealed Law nowhere undertakes to deny or affirm these sciences [...] (Al-Ghazali, 1980, pp. 9-10 emphasis mine).

In Ghazali's discussion of the sciences of the philosophers, we can find the physical sciences,<sup>8</sup> next to the mathematical and logical sciences. In demonstrating his position towards these sciences, Ghazali mentions “just as religion does not require the repudiation of the science of medicine, so also it does not require the repudiation of the science of physics, except for certain specific questions which we have mentioned in our book *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*.”<sup>9</sup> From such question, a special mention could be made to his painstaking refutation of the necessitarian approach of the philosophers towards causality; for him as we will see in the coming chapter, there is no necessary connection “between what is habitually believed to be a cause and what is habitually believed to be an effect.” In two distinct or separate things such as “the quenching of thirst and drinking, satiety and eating, burning and contact with fire,” Ghazali brings

to light that “the affirmation or negation of one of these things implies neither the affirmation or negation of the other” (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 166).

The last sciences of the philosophers in Ghazali’s discussion are political and moral science, in the first case Ghazali unearths that the philosophers in their political conceptions, were a mere plagiarist from prophetic revelations. The remaining one is the moral sciences and for Ghazali the philosopher’s notions about the moral sciences were also plagiarized from “the sayings of the Sufis.” The philosophers not only took the ideas of the Prophets and Sufis, but they also made injustice on these ideas by mixing “them with their own doctrines [...] to promote the circulation of their own false teaching.” The Islamic philosophers’ mixture of the Prophetic and the Sufi sayings with their own ethical doctrine effect two defects: on the one hand, for the rejecter and on the other, for the approver (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 11).

The former ones are severe, just because the philosophers brought a given idea from the Prophetic and the Sufi sayings and present it in mixture with their own wrong doctrine, some fool individuals assume that the doctrine must be discarded altogether. This act of the fool individuals resulted “because they have heard that doctrine in the first place only from the philosophers. So their weak minds straightway judge it to be erroneous because the one who voices it is in error on other matters”. Ghazali describes the act of these fool individuals, as an act of “men who know the truth by men, and not men by the truth.” But the clever individual, “first knows the truth, and then he considers what is actually said by someone. If it is true, he accepts it,” regardless of the speaker’s defect or success in other issues. Such a clever man “will often be intent on extracting what is true from the involved utterances of the erring, since he is aware that gold is usually found mixed with dirt” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 12).

The second effect resulted from the “total acceptance of their ethical teaching.” Here the individual witnesses in the book of the philosophers a prophetic and Sufi sayings mixed with their wrong doctrine and he “often approves of their writings and accepts them and forms a good opinion of them”. Afterwards, this individual may enthusiastically swallow their defects “mixed up with those borrowed truths because of a good opinion acquired about what he has seen and approved.” For this reason said Ghazali, “[...] just as children must be kept from handling snakes, so the ears of men must be protected from the farrago of those sayings” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 13).

Furthermore, Ghazali asserts that in taking heed about shallow individuals, the authentic learned man is like “the snake charmer” who doesn’t handle a snake in front of his little son for the fright of his son’s future mimesis of his particular act. Ghazali in conclusion made a beautiful point by saying that, “when a skilled snake-charmer takes a snake and separates the antidote from the poison and draws forth the antidote and renders the poison harmless, he is not free to withhold the antidote from anyone in need of it [...]” The same is true in the case of an authentic scholar, after isolating the defective thoughts from the wrong ones he is not in liberty to keep the pure thoughts only for himself. In addition to this, “a man in need of the antidote whose soul feels a great loathing for it, because he knows that it has been extracted from the snake which is the seat of the poison, must be properly instructed”<sup>10</sup> (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 13).

#### **1.4 The Sufis and His Later Crisis**

Lastly, Ghazali directed his attention towards Sufism. I think here is the right place to say a few points about the general worldviews of the Sufis. Initially, we should keep in mind the fact that “Islam is spoken of in general throughout the Quran as *the Way of God*, that is, the path ordained by God, which may be said to include both esoterism and exoterism” (Ed-din, 2008, p. 411 emphasis mine). Bearing this in mind, we can say that “in the Islamic context, mysticism means

the esoteric dimension of Islam identified for the most part with Sufism [...]” (Nasr S. , 1996, p. 663). Sufism or Tasawwuf being a “phenomenon of mysticism within Islam” etymologically demonstrates “one who wears woolen clothes (suf), the rough garb of ascetics and mystics” (Bearman, Bianquis, Clifford, & Van Donzel, 2000, p. 313). The followers of the Sufi path characterized by asceticism, “much given to fasting, wakefulness, constant prayer and meditation, and voluntary poverty” (Ormsby, 2007, p. 18).

As a matter of fact, “[a]lready among the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad [Pbuh] there were persons who wanted more than just to strive after the outward observance of the religious law and of the usages founded by the Prophet.” These individuals, beside to, performing their Islamic duties, they introspectively discern “what was happening to their souls and tried to harmonize these internal Experiences with the external observances by means of renunciation of the world and asceticism since they knew that many characteristics of the Prophet's [pbuh] message favored such an act” (Bearman, Bianquis, Clifford, & Van Donzel, 2000, p. 313). If this is the case, one shouldn't heedlessly consider Sufism and its history as “the story of some deviant sect or cult, no mere chronicle of a motley collection of wayward Muslims.” Instead, Sufism “is integral to the history of the global faith community of Islam. Wherever Muslims have traveled over nearly 14 centuries, there Sufis have gone” (Renard, 2005, p. 1).

After the Prophet died in 11/632, contrary to the principles of the original Islamic community, the 7th-8<sup>th</sup> centuries welcomed an excessive amount of materialization of life and luxury, and from this catastrophe, the truly God-fearing person could save himself only by departing from this world (Bearman, Bianquis, Clifford, & Van Donzel, 2000, pp. 313-4). Individuals who were most prominent for their holiness and self-discipline like the great master Al-Hasan al-Basri gave voice to the need for constant alertness and asceticism following “the model of the Prophet” (Renard,

2005, p. 3). Al-Hassan, being the voice of the early Islamic mysticism, which mostly “were inspired by a rejection of Umayyad rule”, he was known for his hatred to accommodate political vices (Al-Ghazali, 1995, p. xxiii). When he heard the Umayyad Caliphs claiming that “all actions, including the Caliphs’, were predestined by God. Accordingly, they could not be held responsible for them, however unjust or vile they were.” He used to vehemently censure “those kings or rulers who impute the responsibility for their evil actions to God” (Fakhry, 2000, p. 14).

The ultimate goal of a Sufi is to accomplish a “sensitive relation with God.” The breathtaking thing of all is, that they came up with an amazing notion of Divine Love, and backed up this notion by Quranic verses like “V,54: **He loves them, and they love Him.**” So as to deepen their nearness to God, the Sufis used “an artistic expression by playing music and [...] poetry, in particular love poetry [...] and the love relation described in them was their relation to God” (Bearman, Bianquis, Clifford, & Van Donzel, 2000, p. 314 emphasis mine). The most astonishing instance of such Divine Love could be illustrated by the great female mystic Rabi‘ah al-‘Adawiyah (d. 801), we are told, once she was asked to compare her love of God and her hatred of Satan, she answered: “My love of God Almighty has filled my heart to such an extent that there is no room left [in it] for the love or hate of anyone else” (Fakhry, 2000, p. 74). She also adores to send her prayers for her Beloved as follows: “O God, whatsoever Thou hast apportioned to me of worldly, things, do Thou give that to Thy enemies; and whatsoever, Thou hast apportioned to me in the world to come, give that to Thy friends; for Thou suffices me.” And again the holy woman continues “O God, if I worship Thee for fear of Hell, burn me in Hell and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise; but if I worship Thee for Thy own sake, grudge me not Thy everlasting beauty” (Attar, 2000, p. 47).

One can't overcome the common misconception about asceticism (*zuhd*) in line with Sufism unless he/she grasps it "not as the simple renunciation of the world, but as an indifference to its temptations". As the great Sufi master Junayd urged, asceticism "is for the heart to be empty of what the hand is empty of." However, achieving this level of indifference to worldly attachments requires "the hard test of self-discipline." The Sufis remarked that worldly attachments like envy, lust, greed, gluttony, pride, and so forth "draws man away from God and towards the lower possibilities of the human condition." A Sufi aspirant can draw himself close to God when these attachments "purged from the heart, and replaced by their praiseworthy opposites." Putting aside some detailed aspects of self-discipline nearly, all the early Sufis concentrated on four practices: "solitude, silence, hunger, and sleeplessness" (Al-Ghazali, 1995, p. xxvii).

Now let me turn to sketch out Ghazali's treatment of Sufism. As Ghazali himself told us in his *Deliverance from Error*, basically after dealing with the sciences of Kalam and philosophy, he turned the compass of his intellectual journey to Sufism. He has never been unaware of the fact that the particular way of the Sufis "is consummated only by knowledge and by activity." Without losing sight of the Sufis priority of practice over theory, Ghazali starts to explore the enormous corpus of the Sufis like "The Food of Hearts by Abu Talib al-Makki" by saying "theory was easier for me than practice" (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 18). However, to understand the heart of the Sufi's doctrine adequately, one shouldn't underestimate the need for an elevation in manner, which is not a simple matter as it seems. Thus, Ghazali ought to abandon his bookish habit to grasp a truth that couldn't be found in books or "a truth not communicable through language" (Ormsby, 2007, p. 105).

His study enabled Ghazali to comprehend the theoretical fulcrum of the Sufis. But he lacks the "most distinctive characteristic" of the Sufis which "is something that can be attained, not by study, but rather by fruitional experience and the state of ecstasy". In order to attain what he lacked,

Ghazali knew that he had to rebel against his egotistic soul and craving. This rebellion can be launched only when one breaks his “heart’s attachment to the world by withdrawing from this abode of delusion and turning to the mansion of immortality and devoting [one’s self] with [a] total ardor to God Most High.” And this could only be accomplished “by shunning fame and fortune and fleeing from [one’s] preoccupations and attachments” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 19).

As described earlier, Ghazali already became a very famous scholar of his time and he also delivered several lectures that attended by a large group of people in the great college of his time. The dialogue that he gently made with his solitude proved to him that whatever he was doing in his present state is intended for nothing other than showing off and ostentation, he found out that he was such a narcissist who needed a constant praise and exaggerations about himself and his works. Let me allow Ghazali to speak in his own words:

I was immersed in attachments which had encompassed me from all sides. I also considered my activities the best of them being public and private instruction and that in *them I was applying myself to sciences unimportant and useless in this pilgrimage to the hereafter. Then I reflected on my **intention** in my public teaching, and I saw that it was not directed purely to God, but rather was instigated and motivated by the quest for fame and widespread prestige* (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 19 emphasis mine).

He understood that he was blinded by the veil of his egotistic cravings for mundane glory and wealth. He battled to overthrow the idol of the ego from within and thereby to attain the true meaning of things, but it was not easy to do so. Indeed as Jalalu’d-din Rumi (1925, p. 105), the great Sufi poet, underlines, it is difficult to win the self:

The idol of your self is the mother of (all) idols,  
because that (material) idol is (only) a snake,  
while this (spiritual) idol is a dragon.  
[...]  
'Tis easy to break an idol, very easy;

to regard the self as easy (to subdue) is folly, folly.

He unceasingly and un-hesitantly wrestled with his inner self, one day he strongly declared his departure from Baghdad by abandoning his career of lecturing in the prominent university of the world of the then time, but the other day an evil spirit approached him to whisper to him that he couldn't make it. Hence, he realized that he was "on the brink of a crumbling bank and already on the verge of falling into the Fire" he can only attain salvation if and only if he molds his manners (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 19).

One day, the hour of his detachment from worldly shackles becomes inevitable, given that he lost his ability to speak. As he expressed his state "[f]or God put a lock upon my tongue so that I was impeded from public teaching. I struggled with myself to teach for a single day, to gratify the hearts of the students [...] but my tongue would not utter a single word". Even the best medical doctors of his time were incapable of rescuing him, they instead tended to hypothesize that maybe his problem has something to do with psychological anxiety. Thereafter, noticing his unbearable breakdown Ghazali understood that his only genuine way out lies in the hand of God. Fortunately, his prayer answered and he got relief from the dilemma that haunted him until physical collapse, given that God emancipated Ghazali's heart from the captivation of this world like "fame and fortune, family, children, and associates." This is what we call the second crisis encountered the adult Ghazali, and it was not benign as the former one was, rather it lasted malignantly for about six months (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 20).

Having a certain guarantee that he had never been left alone by God, Ghazali made his announcement to go to Mecca for spiritual pilgrimage. This announcement is a cover story for the people around him provided that they may not understand his situation. His real plan was to

execute his divorce from this world, devoid of the intent for re-connecting again. Even though the hour of departure from worldly lusts has arrived, Ghazali didn't want to cast away his family carelessly. Thus, before his departure, he "appointed his brother Ahmad to take his place in the Nizamiyya College, [and] gave away all his wealth, except the small amount necessary to maintain his family, and in 488/1096 he left Baghdad" (Smith, 1983, p. 22). In this moment of his life Ghazali shunned not only from his present fame, rather as Duncan MacDonald beautifully expressed it, he also "had put his brilliant present and brilliant future absolutely behind him; had given up everything for the peace of his soul" (MacDonald, 1903, p. 226).

Leaving Baghdad behind, Ghazali in the first place traveled to Syria, and stayed there for almost a couple of years "occupying himself [...] in retreat and solitude, self-discipline and self-mortification, being preoccupied with the cleansing of the soul [...] for the recollection of God Most High, in accordance with what he had learnt from his [theoretical] study of Sufism" (Smith, 1983, p. 25). After his two years seclusion in Damascus, he also had subsequent journeys to Jerusalem and Hebron; made the pilgrimage; returned to Damascus. In these years of seclusion, Ghazali was not a loser; rather he recounts what he attained as follows:

In the course of those periods of solitude *things impossible to enumerate or detail in depth were disclosed to me*. This much I shall mention, that profit may be derived from it: I knew with certainty that the Sufis are those who uniquely follow the way to God Most High, their mode of life is the best of all, [...] all their motions and quiescences, exterior and interior, are learned from the light of the niche of prophecy. And beyond the light of prophecy, there is no light on earth from which illumination can be obtained (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 21 emphasis mine).

Ghazali's high restraint in relation to enumerate his experience comes because he knew that if we haven't experienced it as he did, we couldn't have any idea of the Sufis state. This situation beautifully indicated by Rumi (1925, p. 1970) as follows: "Spiritual experience is (like) the women who look [in *hijab*] modestly: it shows no sign but to its possessor." Let me quote one interesting

paragraph from his book *Letter to a Disciple*. In this book, he responds to his beloved student's request for a summed up advice that remains in the heart of the student for the rest of his life:

Know that the answers to some of the things about which you asked me are not brought about through writing and discussion. If you attain to that state you will know what they are, and if not—knowing them is an impossibility, in that they pertain to *direct experience*. The description of anything to do with direct experience is not furnished through discussion, as the sweetness of what is sweet and the bitterness of what is bitter is not known except by taste. Thus it was related that an impotent man wrote to a friend of his to tell him what the pleasure of sex was like. So he wrote back to him in reply, 'O so and so, I thought you were just impotent! Now I know that you are impotent and stupid *since this pleasure is to do with direct experience —if you attain it you know it —otherwise, the description of it is not furnished through talking and writing!*' (Al-Ghazali, 2005, p. 24 emphasis mine).

Ghazali also understood that there may arise some serious defect in expressing the states of the Sufis in words, he says their “state ascends from the vision of forms and likenesses to stages beyond the narrow range of words” thus, an attempt to reduce their state to words is absurd. However, one may lawfully express their state generally as “closeness to God,” by avoiding expressions like “indwelling,” “union,” and “reaching” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 21).

During the eleven years from 1095 to 1106, Ghazali composed his major Sufi works like the voluminous *Revival of the Religious Sciences* and such works passed the test of time, which is why they are still studied widely by both religious and secular circles. Later on, he returned to Iraq and spent few times in Baghdad and Hamadhan. Afterwards, he returned to his childhood village, Tus, and spent nearly seven years thereby mentoring some inquirers and devotee of the divine mysteries. Thereafter, by the unceasing request of the then time vizier Fakhr al-Mulk he returned to teaching at the Nizamiyya in Nishapur, and it is at this point in his life that he wrote his aforementioned autobiographical treatise. Four years later he abandoned public teaching and returned to Tus where he resumes his guidance to the aspirants of the Sufi path (Ormsby, 2007).

On December 18, 1111, at the age of 53, the earthly journey of the greatest person on earth comes to an end. His proper burial performed in Tus, a place where everything was started. We are told that sometimes before his time of earthly departure, Ghazali was conscious that death is approaching him, thus “at dawn on the day of his death al-Ghazall performed his ablutions and prayed and then said: “Bring me my shroud,” and taking it, he kissed it and laid it over his eyes and said: “Most gladly do I enter into the Presence of the King,” (Smith, 1983, pp. 35-36). His siblings also found his final poetic verses in a piece of paper beside his dead body. And I can’t control the temptations to quote some lines from these bewildering poetic last words:

*Say to my friends, when they look upon me, dead,*

*Weeping for me and mourning me in sorrow*

*Do not believe that this corpse you see is myself.*

*In the name of God, I tell you, it is not I*

*I am a spirit, and this is naught but flesh*

*It was my abode and my garment for a time* (Smith, 1983, p. 36).

The above poem rings the final bell of Ghazali’s life, but he is always remembered and lives on through the heart of those who benefited from his works.

## Chapter Two

### His notion of Causality and Rationality

#### 2.1 The Reliability of Sense Data

Ghazali is well aware of the logical necessity that if one strives to attain the knowledge of the true nature of things, then this person in the first place must explore “what the true meaning of knowledge is” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 3). Thereafter, Ghazali states that “certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 3). Thus, if the things to be known appear as they really are, without the possibility of doubt, error, and deception then that is what certain knowledge is for Ghazali. This definition of certain knowledge, as Omar Moad (2009, p. 91) nicely commented contains an idea of “degree of knowledge, rather than knowledge *per se*”. If this is not the case, according to Moad, “we would have a rather circular definition of knowledge as a certain kind of knowledge (the certain kind, at that).”

By comparing Ghazalian understanding of certain knowledge with what he calls knowledge *per se*, Moad argues, for Ghazali certain knowledge is a manifestation of a thing, which exceeds the mental possibility of complete nullification, by some other higher degree of manifestation, instead of a further confirmation of it. Here we should keep in mind the fact that, the impossibility of nullifying certain knowledge by some other higher degree of manifestation doesn't imply the negation of the possibly emerging further certainties. (See Bakr's discussion of degrees of *yaqin* below, under the title of ‘The Role of doubt in his thoughts’) In connection with knowledge *per*

se, due to the variety of degree of manifestation, the individual's arrival at a higher manifestation could possibly make him nullify the lower one (Moad, 2009).

As depicted in his *Deliverance from Error*, Ghazali's deep inward looking towards his cognition enabled him to assert that whatever cognitions he has, are acquired through sense data and self-evident truths. But, asks Ghazali, could empirical data and rational data (self-evident truths) be reliable and safe from defect, or are they simply similar with his formerly rejected source of knowledge which is the dicta of authority? (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 3) To find the answer to this question, Ghazali starts to doubt the sense data and he says:

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. 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 imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 4).

Since what is in question is its own reliability, Ghazali is careful not to beg a question that the sense data could be a judge for its own reliability. Because of this, Ghazali made rational data in a position to question and judge sense data. Thus according to the reason judge, sense data is not reliable. If we take the above-mentioned case of the shadow, a contradiction occurs given that the strongest of the sense organs, our naked eye told us the shadow was motionless, but after an hour we couldn't find the shadow in the place where it was earlier. How can the shadow then be moving and motionless?

## 2.2 Causality and Observation

In what follows, let me turn to the second source of this topic; the main objective of Ghazali in the seventeenth discussion of *The Incoherence of The Philosophers* as described in the prologue of this particular discussion is “to affirm miracles and [...] to the effect that God has power over all things” (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 165). Ghazali aimed at demonstrating the possibility of miracles as well as ascertaining God's omnipotence because, the philosophers contradict these core issues in their conception of causality. According to the philosophers, cause and effect relations are a matter of necessity; as a result, they believe there is no power and possibility that brings what is habitually taken to be “the cause without the effect or the effect without the cause.” For Ghazali, the philosophers mostly interpret the Quranic miracles metaphorically<sup>11</sup>, the resurrection of the dead, for instance, according to the philosophers shouldn't be taken literally instead it implies “the cessation of the death of ignorance through the life of knowledge.” They also inferred that the staff of Moses that demolishes the magic of the magicians underlies the refutation of the doubts of those who refuse to believe in one God by the divine proof (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 163).

Having put these points in the prologue, Ghazali begins the seventeenth discussion of his book *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* by explaining his position towards causality in a vivid manner. He ascertained that there is no necessary connection “between what is habitually believed to be a cause and what is habitually believed to be an effect” (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 166). Ghazali in his own words clarified the issue as follows:

But [with] any two things, where “this” is not “that” and “that” is not “this” and where neither the affirmation of the one entails the affirmation of the other nor the negation of the one entails negation of the other, it is not a necessity of the existence of the one that the other should exist, and it is not a necessity of the nonexistence of the one that the other should not exist—for example, the quenching of thirst and drinking, satiety and eating, burning and contact with fire, light and the appearance of the sun, death and decapitation [...] and so on to [include] all [that is] observable among connected things in medicine, astronomy, arts, and crafts. *Their connection is due to the prior decree of God*, who creates them side by side, not to its being necessary in itself, incapable

of separation. On the contrary, it is within [divine] power to create satiety without eating, to create death without decapitation, to continue life after decapitation, and so on to all connected things (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 166 emphasis mine).

In the above passage, at first blush, we find a thought experiment on two distinct or separate things such as “the quenching of thirst and drinking, satiety and eating, burning and contact with fire”. Ontologically speaking, in these two distinct things, for Ghazali “the affirmation or negation of one of these things implies neither the affirmation or negation of the other.” Moreover, in these two distinct things, “the existence or non-existence of one does not imply the existence or non-existence of the other” (Alon, 1980, p. 399). Thereafter, Ghazali explains the connection of these two distinct things as a “prior decree of God, who creates them side by side, not to its being necessary in itself, incapable of separation.” Ghazali’s favorite example is “the burning of cotton [...] when [it is] in contact with fire” (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 166). By employing this example, Ghazali unlike the philosophers, argues that the contact of the cotton and the fire is not a necessary condition for the combustion. In other words, according to him, God can create the contact of the cotton with the fire devoid of combustion or “without the burning” as well as “the cotton’s transformation into burnt ashes without contact with the fire” (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 166). It is because they deny this possibility that the philosophers encountered with Ghazali's harsh criticism.

Following this, Ghazali entered in the discussion by charitably presenting three positions of his philosophical adversary and answering them one by one. In the present discussion I will confine myself on the first position. Here, the philosopher underlines that “the agent of the burning is the fire alone, it being an agent by nature [and] not by choice—hence, incapable of refraining from [acting according to] what is in its nature after contacting a substratum receptive of it” (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 167). Ghazali brought an epistemic defeat on the reliability of **observation** so as to answer his opponent’s counterexample. He argues:

The one who enacts the burning by creating blackness in the cotton, [causing] separation in its parts, and making it cinder or ashes is God, either through the mediation of His angels or without mediation. As for fire, which is inanimate, it has no action. *For what proof is there that it is the agent? They have no proof other than **observing** the occurrence of the burning at the [juncture of] contact with the fire. **Observation, however, [only] shows the occurrence [of burning] at [the time of the contact with the fire] but does not show the occurrence [of burning] by [the fire] and [the fact] that there is no other cause for it [...]** It has thus become clear that [something's] existence with a thing does not prove that it exists by [that thing].* [For example] If a person, blind from birth, who has a film on his eyes and who has never heard from people the difference between night and day, were to have the film cleared from his eyes in daytime, [then] open his eyelids and see colors, [such a person] would believe that the agent [causing] the apprehension of the forms of the colors in his eyes is the opening of his sight and that, as long as his sight is sound, [his eyes] opened, the film removed, and the individual in front of him having color, it follows necessarily that he would see, it being incomprehensible that he would not see. When, however, the sunsets and the atmosphere becomes dark, he would then know that it is sunlight that is the cause for the imprinting of the colors in his sight (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 167 emphasis added).

In the above passage, Ghazali denies the idea that the agent of burning is the fire alone, and he instead ascertains that being Free Chooser and Transcendent from natural compulsion the sole agent is God “either through the mediation of His angels or without mediation”. Here Ghazali also reiterated “what he had argued for in the 3rd Discussion [out of the 20 discussions of the whole book] that what is inanimate [like fire] has no causal action” (Marmura, 1981, p. 89). In order to hold fire as a sole cause, the philosophical adversary relies only on “observing the occurrence of the burning at the [juncture of] contact with the fire.” But observing the coincidental event of the burning during contact with the fire is not a sufficient reason to assume that the fire caused the combustion. In other words, as Ghazali explained it above meticulously, observation exhibits only the coexistence of the event of contact with the fire and the combustion, but it doesn’t exhibit the event of combustion “**by** [the fire] and [the fact] that there is no other cause for it”. Above all, the mere existence of something with or after another thing doesn't imply that it caused by that other thing.<sup>12</sup>

In his autobiography, Ghazali doubted sense data because it fails to provide a guarantee for the attainment of knowledge of things as they really are, whereas in the *Incoherence* his purpose was different which is to show the shortcoming of those who believe on the occurrence of necessary causality by relying on observation, which apparently is sense data. In these two works, we can simply detect that Ghazali doesn't really hold sense data as a sole authentic way to know things as they really are.

### 2.3 The Rational and the Transcendental

If we return back to his *Deliverance from Error*, we encounter with Ghazali losing his faith in sense data, and put his hope on rational data or self-evident truths like: “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 [...] existent and nonexistent” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 4). As I said earlier, Ghazali presented the issue as if there is a dialogue between the senses and reason. Hence, the sense data at this time came up with complaints provided that it was due to the superiority of rational faculty that the senses lost their credibility. The senses interrogate him (Ghazali) as follows:

What assurance have you that your reliance on rational data is not like your reliance on sense-data? Indeed, you used to have confidence in me. Then the reason-judge came along and gave me the lie. But were it not for the reason-judge, you would still accept me as true. So there may be, beyond the perception of reason, another judge. And if the latter revealed itself, it would give the lie to the judgments of reason, just as the reason-judge revealed itself and gave the lie to the judgments of sense. *The mere fact of the nonappearance of that further perception does not prove the impossibility of its existence* (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 4 emphasis added).

As Marmura interpreted it here, “Ghazali found no guarantee that the primary principles of reason – the principle of the excluded middle, for example – can be trusted. For one cannot demonstrate their truth without circularity, without assuming them” (Marmura, 2005, pp. 138-139). It is indeed circular reasoning if one intended to show the validity of reason employing reason itself; hence

the need for a faculty that stands beyond reason was necessary for Ghazali. Or as Syed Zamir (2010, p. 224) puts it, “[s]ense-data’s fallibility was revealed to al-Ghazali through rational-data. By consequence, fallibility or infallibility of reason could only be revealed by another faculty since reason could not be the judge of its own excellence or limitations.”

Sense data without surrender come up with an argument to refute rational data by showing another alternative, by bringing dream; sense data says:

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? If you found yourself in such a state, you would be sure that all your rational beliefs were unsubstantial fancies (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 4).

Now Ghazali obliged to think about the possibility of a faculty that stands beyond reason. He says “[i]t may be [...] that which the Sufis claim is theirs [...] [since] in the states they experience when they concentrate inwardly and suspend sensation, they see phenomena which are not in accord with the normal data of reason” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 4). Here, Ghazali has never hide his previous acquaintance with the Sufis, but the commitment he had in his earlier acquaintance is much lesser than the forthcoming. In finding another possibility Ghazali surprisingly points out that the transcendental state might be death, by reminding Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) saying that: ‘Men are asleep: then after they die they awake.’ Thus, Ghazali says maybe this earthly life is a deep sleep in comparison with the hereafter (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 4). Or in other words, he seemed to say that what if death is awakening?

At this time, Ghazali encountered with the existential predicament of being a human being; he tried to deal with the issue bravely, but his “effort was unsuccessful since the objection could be refuted only by proof. But the only way to put together a proof was to combine primary cognitions. So if, as in [his] case, these were inadmissible, it was impossible to construct the proof.” This skeptical crisis of Ghazali stayed with him for two months, he says: “During that time I was a skeptic in fact, but not in utterance and doctrine” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 4).

Finally, he becomes well-guaranteed that he has never been abandoned by God, he then received divine assistance; he expresses this moment as follows:

At length God Most High cured me of that sickness. My soul regained its health and equilibrium and once again I accepted the self-evident data of reason and relied on them with safety and certainty. But that was not achieved by constructing a proof or putting together an argument. On the contrary, it was the effect of *a light which God Most High cast into my breast*. And that light is the key to most knowledge. Therefore, whoever thinks that the unveiling of truth depends on precisely formulated proofs has indeed straitened the broad mercy of God (Al-Ghazali, 1980, pp. 4-5 emphasis mine).

This Divine light that casted into Ghazali’s heart is the beginning of Sufi epistemology, or in other word, this is Ghazali’s first state of attaining a mystical knowledge that stands beyond reason. The next chapters will elaborate this state of the Sufi’s in general and Ghazali’s in particular as much as words could express.

## **2.4 The Role of doubt in his thoughts**

The skeptical crisis of Ghazali impressed many scholars, but in their analysis of Ghazali’s doubt, most of them arrived at a different conclusion. One of the most interesting interpretations of Ghazalian doubt was made by Osman Bakar. For him methodic doubt is not the heart of Ghazali’s epistemology and in his *Deliverance from Error* Ghazali is not promoting methodic “doubt as an instrument for the investigation of truth.” The crisis that haunted his mind was never been activated

by a philosophical or a religious skepticism, rather it was a result of “an epistemological or methodical one” (Bakar, 1986). Having said that, Bakar proceeds to justify his claim, for him Ghazali was never been a philosophical skeptic during his crisis due to the fact that he never questioned “the value of metaphysical certitude. He was always certain of the de jure certitude of truth.” He is well aware of the possibility of knowledge of the reality of things “as they really are.” But what he wanted is “an affirmation of his certainty of the de jure certitude of truth” (Bakar, 1986). If this is the case what is his doubt all about? Bakr responds by saying;

[h]is doubt is not of truth itself, but of the mode of knowing and of accepting this truth. But since by truth here, he means the inner reality of things, his quest for that reality also implies a quest for its corresponding mode of knowledge. His criticisms of all the modes of knowing that were then within his practical realization were motivated by a real theoretical awareness of the possibility of another mode of knowing, which the Sufis claim is theirs (Bakar, 1986).

By citing the earlier life of Ghazali, which shows his previous intimacy with the Sufi sages (see page 6 of this paper), Bakar argues the Sufi’s notion “of a direct personal experience of God” catches the attention of Ghazali very much. But Ghazali was a little anguished, that he may not arrive at the Sufi’s level of understanding which is “to receive pure inspiration from **high above**” (Bakar, 1986). Thus, for Bakr it could be possibly argued that:

Sufism plays a central role in leading al-Ghazzali to his epistemological crisis. Al-Ghazzali’s doubt of the trustworthiness of reason was not generated from “below” or by the reflection of reason upon its own self but was suggested from “above” as a result of his acquaintance with the Sufi’s mode of knowledge which claims to be supra-rational and which offers its own critiques of reason. Likewise, the doubt was removed not by the activity of reason, but from “above” as a result of the light of divine grace which restores to each faculty of know-ledge its rightful position and its validity and trustworthiness as its own level.

For Bakar, Ghazali also has never been a religious skeptic. This is because, Ghazali in his *Deliverance From Error* told us that in his relentless search for certainty, he has never doubted the three basics of the Islamic faith:

From the sciences which I had practiced and the methods which I had followed in my inquiry into the two kinds of knowledge, revealed and rational, I had already acquired a sure and certain faith in God Most High, in the prophetic mediation of revelation, and in the Last Day. These three fundamentals of our Faith had become deeply rooted in my-soul, not because of any specific, precisely formulated proofs, but because of reasons and circumstances and experiences too many to list in detail (Bakar, 1986).

If Ghazali's skeptic approach had nothing to do with faith and revelation; as well as if his faith in the fundamentals of religion was *sure and certain* in an unshakable manner, then "what is the distinction between the "sure and certain" faith which al-Ghazzalī always has and the certainty which he seeks?" (Bakar, 1986) Bakar overcame this question by bringing the level of certainty (yaqīn) in Islamic gnosis. These levels are "ilm al-yaqīn (science of certainty), 'ayn al-yaqīn (vision of certainty) and haqq alyaqīn (truth of certainty). These have been respectively compared to hearing about the description of fire, seeing fire and being consumed by fire." In the light of these Quranic terminologies, Ghazali's search for certainty (yaqīn) could easily be manifested in the first level "to 'ilm al-Yaqīn since the acceptance of the truth is inferential in nature, based as it is upon the data furnished by revelation and the authority of the Prophet." Let me put it this way, at this level of faith there is no direct or immediate experience of the truth. However, since faith infers a particular degree of knowledge and certainty, as far as the degree of one's act of faith allows "one participates in the truth through both his [sic] reason and heart." For this reason, Bakar argues that from the genesis of Ghazali's search "for the true knowledge of the Real, a certain element of certitude was always present" (Bakar, 1986).

His previous intimacy with the Sufis way made Ghazali "aware of the de jure certitude of truth" of a superior rank. During his crisis Ghazali "was certain of this certitude only in the sense of 'ilm al-yaqīn," which is the first level of certainty. But following the epistemological crisis, due to "the light of intellectual intuition which he receives from Heaven, that certainty was elevated to the

level of ‘ayn al-yaqīn,” this is the second level of certainty. Apparently, “[t]his new-found certainty is not the end of al-Ghazzali’s intellectual and spiritual quest. He is too aware of the Sufis’ claim of mystical experience but which he himself has not been able to realize yet, and this must have been a lingering source of inner disturbance for him” (Bakar, 1986).

Accepting to Osman Bakar’s conclusion, as true Syed Zamir pointed out that, Ghazali’s doubt rests on showing the limits of reason. Zamir puts it:

[...] the determination of the extent of reliance one could place on the faculty of reason. This question in consequence raised other epistemic problems for him: since rational data judges senses, even sense-data had become questionable. Determination of the existence or non-existence of this ‘faculty beyond reason’ could only restore his reliance on these faculties; this determination, however, was impossible from within al-Ghazālī’s epistemological framework. It needs to be emphasized that al-Ghazālī’s doubt rested on a particular epistemological impediment, a blockage in his inquiry. Thus his doubt was not of a comprehensive skeptical kind where none of our beliefs are certain [...] (Zamir, 2010, p. 225).

On the contrary, Sobhi Ryan came up with the idea that portrays Ghazali as the one who uses doubt, not for a specific content rather than a formal system. He argues:

[Ghazali’s] doubt was not an issue of specific content, but a formal system whose purpose was to deal with certain contents and reveal their facts. It is not the “content” of thinking but the ‘method’ of thinking that attempted to review the content and achieve certainty [...] al-Ghazali’s “doubt” is an intellectual method and approach of critical thinking that aims at purifying knowledge from faults and impurities and at revealing the truth of things [...] it is a reviewing of the sources of knowledge and criticizing them again. It is also a critical rethinking of data that are considered implicitly correct in the social and epistemological consciousness or taken for granted. Doubt is a method of thinking directed at the process of thinking, rather than its content. In fact, it is a process of returning the content to the form (Rayan, 2004, p. 164).

In defining the role of doubt in Ghazalian thought, Sobhi Ryan quotes a passage from Ghazali’s own account: “doubts are the things that lead to right; he who does not doubt has not looked, and he who does not look did not see, and he who does not see remains all his life in blindness and ignorance.” He furthermore clarified it by saying “Ghazali does not feel satisfied with defining the

role of doubt as a method that leads to truth, but also warns against the negative results of non-use of this method: staying in blindness and ignorance” (Ryan, 2004, p. 170).

I think what Osman Bakar failed to notice is the special emphasis of Ghazali on doubt as aforementioned in the discussion of Ryan, and what Ryan failed to notice is that Ghazali’s unshakable religious faith which constitutes the above stated three basics of the Islamic faith. Therefore, here I agree with another interesting middle roader scholar in this topic, named Mohammad Abulaylah (2001, p. 2001), he argues, Ghazali not only “doubt[ed] what he had been told” rather as we have discussed earlier, he also insisted others to doubt. For Abulaylah Ghazali, “considers skepticism as a source of knowledge and discovery because anybody who blindly accepts is not investigating or fathoming what he accepts.” However, according to Abulaylah (2001), Ghazali “*occupies a unique position among Islamic philosophers in recommending doubt within the boundary of faith. He was original and pioneering.*” I believe this approach can alleviate both the problems of Bakar and Ryan given that the former hesitated to accept Ghazali’s huge emphasis for doubt and the latter failed to recognize the essential boundary made by Ghazali in faith for unshakable certainty.

Above all, it could be said that the doubting mind of Ghazali relentlessly searched to discover the true meaning of things or to know things as they really are. His remarkable arguments so as to think a transcendental rational faculty is indeed to furnish the Sufi path. During his epistemological crisis, it is the Sufis' notion of light that cast in his heart from God almighty. In short, it is this light that rescued him from the skeptical breakdown. He hinted that this state that stands beyond reason may be the state which the Sufis assume as theirs. Hence, we should continue to unravel the bewildering epistemological position of the Sufi’s to the possible extent of exposition.



## Chapter Three

### Causality and Rationality: Their Limits and Transcendence

#### 3.1 The Possibility of Miracles

In chapter two an attempt was made to discuss Ghazali's approach to address the first position of the philosophical adversary concerning causality and observation. Holding Ghazali's first refutation of necessitarian causal relations from chapter two as my first input, here, in this chapter I have tried to disclose the second position of the philosophical opponent in line with Ghazali's additional response for the possibility of miracles. In the second position, the philosophical adversary "concedes that fire is not the true efficient [agent] cause of the cotton's ignition" (Griffel, 2009, p. 153). He also concedes that "these temporal events emanate from the principles of temporal events" The principles of these temporal events "*proceed from them necessarily and by nature, not by way of deliberation and choice, in the way [that] light proceeds from the sun, [receivers] differing in their reception because of the differences [of] disposition*" (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 168 emphasis mine).

In other words, as Griffel ( 2009, p. 153) clarifies it, by ignoring his previous supposition that causal processes proceed "by means of deliberation and choice by the efficient cause," in the second position, the philosopher wanted to ascertain the necessity and inseparability of causal connections. He wanted to do so, by emphasizing that, "[c]ausal processes proceed with necessity and in accord with the natures of things". Moreover, the philosophical adversary also remarked that "all things have a certain predisposition that determines how they react to other things." And such predisposition is an immutable part of the thing's nature. Due to the immutability of these

natures, “the things react necessarily to given circumstances. Cotton, for instance, necessarily burns when it comes in contact with fire” (Griffel, 2009, p. 153).

The philosophical adversary contends, to the extent that we assume fire as having a certain predisposition that determines how it reacts to other things, (like cotton for instance) and we assume two identical pieces of cotton that come into contact with the fire in a similar manner, “how would it be conceivable that one should burn and not the other, when there is no choice [on the part of the agent]?” For this reason, he “denied the falling of Abraham in the fire without the burning taking place, the fire remaining fire.” Unless it is possible to take “the heat out of the fire which makes it no longer [a] fire” or unless Abraham’s body become a fireproof, the philosopher can’t imagine the falling of Abraham into a blazing fire without the burning taking place. Thereafter the adversary maintained that, both taking the heat out of the fire, as well as altering the essence of Abraham’s body are impossibilities (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 169).

Ghazali afterwards brought two ways of replying his philosophical adversary's questions: Initially, he contends, by declaring the willful or deliberate agency for God to cause the combustion “when the piece of cotton comes into contact with the fire” Ghazali, asserts, it is not impossible “[for God] not to create [the burning] with the existence of the contact” (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 169). Here Ghazali is well aware of the emerging severe objections that would be pointed out by the philosophical adversary:

For if one denies that the effects follow necessarily from their causes and relates them to the will of their Creator, *the will having no specific designated course but [a course that] can vary and change in kind, then let each of us allow the possibility of there being in front of him ferocious beasts, raging fires, high mountains, or enemies ready with their weapons [to kill him], but [also the possibility] that he does not see them because God does not create for him [vision of them]. And if someone leaves a book in the house, let him allow as possible its change on his returning home into a beardless slave boy—intelligent, busy with his tasks—or into an animal [...]* For God is capable of everything, and it is not necessary for the horse to be created from the sperm nor the tree to be created from the seed—indeed, it is not necessary for either of the two to be

created from anything. Perhaps [God] has created things that did not exist previously (Al-Ghazali, 1997, pp. 169-70 emphasis added).

Ghazali in response states that, even though “all of the possibilities the adversary mentions are possible, there is a difference between possibility and actuality” (Griffel, 2009, p. 154). However, to admit the possibility of something doesn’t necessarily entail any guarantee for it to be true. As Griffel (2009, p. 154) elucidated it, Ghazali ascertains that: “If God had created this world in such a way that we would make no distinction between what is possible and what exists in actuality, we would indeed be confused about the possibility of a book transforming into a horse.” But that is not the case; rather, “God created human knowledge in such a way that we *do* distinguish what is merely possible from what occurs in actuality.” Following this, it may sound awkward but still it is not impossible for God “to change books into horses at any moment, we know that in our world such an event never occurs, whether in our presence or in our absence.” This is because, “***God’s past habits have given us some guidance about what we consider possible or impossible***” (Griffel, 2009, p. 154 emphasis added). Or in Ghazali’s own words: “the continuous habit of their occurrence repeatedly, one time after another, fixes unshakably in our minds the belief in their occurrence according to past habit” (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 170).

Ghazali in his secondary approach to deal with the philosophical adversary, admitted for a moment “that fire is created in such a way that, if two similar pieces of cotton come into contact with it, it would burn both, making no distinction between them if they are similar in all respects” (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 171). Here I agree with Michel Marmura (1981, p. 93), in holding this approach as the first point of Ghazali’s introduction of his secondary theory of causality. Ghazali’s secondary approach to show the possibility of miracles was presented in four subdivisions. But I will restrain myself to examine the first one for its greater relevance. Here, as said before, indeed now for Ghazali if two similar pieces of cotton come into contact with fire, the fire would burn

both without discrimination. In light of this, Ghazali “now allows one of the two philosophical views he had discussed earlier and rejected.” These philosophical views are: “that (a) inanimate things have causal action and that (b) this action proceeds as the necessary consequence of their very nature.” Here, as Marmura underlined, Ghazali didn't allow this possibility out of the blue; instead, he allows it “with the important *qualification that the divine act remains voluntary*. God now is omnipotent in the sense that He can intervene directly in the natural course of events, not, however, to change the nature of things, but to interpose impediments that causally thwart their action” (Marmura, 1981, p. 93 emphasis added).

To clarify the above point with the fire example, Ghazali said:

there would come about either from God or from the angels a quality in the fire which restricts its heat to its own body so as not to transcend it (its heat would thus remain with it, and it would [still] have the form and true nature of fire, its heat and influence, however, not going beyond it), or else there will occur in the body of the prophet a quality which will not change him from being flesh and bone [but] which will resist the influence of the fire (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 171).

Hence, Ghazali here most emphatically allowed the possibility that the prophet may be thrown in the fire without being burned if God either creates a quality in the fire which restrains its heat (to remain with it) or a quality in the prophet which will resist the influence of the fire.

### **3.2 The Mystical Experience of the Sufis**

The genesis of the Sufis search for their type of knowledge demonstrated in Ghazali's intriguing book entitled “*The Alchemy of Happiness*”. He wrote this book as a spiritual guide for his disciples. As a spiritual master, he directly addresses his novice with learnable stories, anecdotes, analogical examples, and questions, and in this part of my discussion, I will attempt to forward his points without leaving the way he presented them. Ghazali most emphatically argues that having genuine knowledge of one's ‘self’ is a necessary condition to attain some sort of divine knowledge.

In one of his introspective interrogation, he asks his lad “since there is nothing nearer to thee than thyself, and that still with thy soul alone, thou canst not discriminate anything, and art impotent to find out and know thyself, in what way canst thou become acquainted with anything else, and with that which is even separate from thyself?” (Al-Ghazalil, 1873, p. 8). Oh, my student said Ghazali, you ought to know that your knowledge of your body parts is not the knowledge of who you really are. Even the lower beasts are well-acquainted with their own body parts. Your need for food in the time of hunger and shelter in cold times also doesn’t differentiate you from the lower beasts. If knowing yourself is not as easy as it seems, then, “how should’st thou be able to comprehend God, [?] who in his nature cannot be comprehended [?]” (Al-Ghazalil, 1873, p. 8)

The knowledge that enables you to find out the divine mysteries is to understand who/what you really are; “how you are created; whence you are; for what you are here; whither you are going; in what your happiness consists, and what you must do to secure it; in what your misery consists, and what you must do to avoid it” (Al-Ghazalil, 1873, p. 8). Bearing this in mind, it should also be known to you my learner, said the master, that you possess four internal qualities, and the qualities that predominantly manifest in you and creates your true happiness, may tell something about or determine who you really are. Firstly, if you unceasingly strive for food and drink day and night, then your qualities are chiefly piggish “*animal*.” Secondly, if you manifest such characters like “to tear and rend, to injure and destroy” then, your qualities are mainly *ferocious* in kind. Thirdly, if you spent more time in a conspiracy, “in evil machinations, deceit and delusion” then your qualities are *devilish*. Finally, if you always sought “to worship God in sincerity and continually to await the vision of His beauty,” then, you are endowed with *angelic* qualities. All of the four qualities are endowed to man “that by their means the body might be adapted to be a vehicle for the spirit,

and that the spirit, by means of the body which is its vehicle, while herein this temporary home of earth, might seek after the knowledge and love of God” (Al-Ghazalil, 1873, pp. 8-9).

Witnessing that most of the qualities of the angels are alien to man, one may be bewildered by the question that how it is possible to know that man really is endowed with the qualities of the angels. Above all, how can one know that man is created to know and to sincerely worship his Creator? In the first volume of his mystical magnum opus, *Revival of the Religious Sciences*, at one point Ghazali expresses his impression about this question by underlining the excellence of man in his potential to unravel the true natures of things, with the following passage:

[...] it is knowledge which distinguishes man from the other animals. Furthermore, man is a human being, not because of his physical prowess for physically the camel is his superior; not because of his size for the elephant is larger; not because of his courage for the lion is more courageous; not because of his appetite for the ox has the greater; not because of coitus for the least of the birds is more virile than he; but rather by virtue of his noble aims and ideals. [As a matter of fact] he [sic] was only created to know [God] (Al-Ghazali, 1962, p. 8).

If we dig his *Revival of the Religious Sciences* deeper, in volume three and book twenty one, we can find a detailed Ghazalian mystical epistemology from the theoretical point of view under the title of *The Marvels the of Heart*, in addition to the above point. This particular book constitutes fifteen chapters that dealt with an authentic Ghazalian Sufi theory of knowledge consistently. Ghazali believed that most of his intellectual contemporaries lack an in-depth awareness of terms like *heart, soul, spirit and mind*, he witnessed that there is only an outward understanding of these terms in the works of the intellectuals of his time, for instance when the Sufis say the *soul* one might only think their usage as the ego-soul which represents “the powers of anger and appetite in man” instead of the epistemic faculty, or for those who understand it in the outward sense of the term, the *heart* connotes “the organ of flesh which is in the chest of man and animal [...] which physicians study and treat.” For this reason, apart from the outward understanding of these

religious scholars, Ghazali aimed at bringing a ‘Sufi usage’ of these terms with the emphasis of inward meanings (Al-Ghazali, 2010, pp. 5-6).

Without distinguishing these four terms in their inward meanings, Ghazali turns his complete concentration on the *heart*. He doesn't need to distinguish these terms because as both Walter James Skellie (2010) and Alexander Treiger (2012) noted, we can employ the remaining three terms as interchangeable for the *heart* in their inward meanings. After all, for Ghazali the *heart* implies “a subtle tenuous substance of an ethereal spiritual sort [...] which is connected with the physical heart. [It] is the real essence of man [...] which perceives and knows and experiences [...]” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 6). The heart is the essence of man given that man is both superior and different from animals for his capacity to know God, and this knowledge could only be attained through the heart. One may wonder that, how on earth could the physical heart possibly connect with the spiritual and immaterial heart? Ghazali was conscious that this question would emerge. But he wants to abstain from answering this question for two reasons: “first, because it deals with mystical sciences (*Ulum Al-Mukashafah*) and [his] aim in this book is limited only to the science of practical religion (*Ilm Al-Mu'amalah*). Second, to verify it summons disclosure of the secret of spirit, concerning which the [prophet ‘PBUH’] did not speak, and Therefore, no one else should speak” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 6).

In the first volume of *Revival of the Religious Sciences* Ghazali clarified the above mentioned two sciences, he states that the sciences of the hereafter can be divided into two: “the science of practical religion and the science of revelation” (Al-Ghazali, 1962, p. 39). If we borrow Alexander Treiger’s (2012, p. 34) expression of these sciences, the first one represents “the ascetic *praxis* (Ar. *mu‘āmala*, purification of the self)” and secondly we encounter “the mystical *theoria* (Ar. *mukāshafa*, “unveiling” and illumination with divine realities).” Ghazali's objective is to deal with

the former one, not to the latter one because exposing the mystical *theoria* in any kind of writing is strictly forbidden “although it is the ultimate goal sought for by saints, and the wanted desire of the eyes of the Sincere.” And astonishingly, Ghazali stated that the *ascetic praxis* is the way that enables us to arrive at *mystical theoria*.

If we turn back to his *Alchemy of Happiness* Ghazali states that beyond the visible body man is also made up of an invisible entity “that is called spirit and heart”. As discussed above, the heart, here again, shouldn't be taken outwardly or we shouldn't think the heart that the physicians study. This is because the outer heart belongs to this world, however, the internal heart or spirit is a stranger “to this world, and although it has come to this world, it has only come to leave it.” The heart is the king “of the body, which is its vehicle, and all the external and internal organs of the body are its subjects. Its especial attribute is to know God and to enjoy the vision of the beauty of the Lord God.” There is nothing precious than struggling for knowing what the heart really is since it “is the key to the knowledge of God.” According to Ghazali, in its origin, the heart “comes from God, and again returns to [H]im” (Al-Ghazalil, 1873, p. 9).

Mankind is made up of the *world of the decree* on one aspect, but he/she is also made up of the *created world* on another aspect. To the former man's heart belongs in that it does not contain the external appearance, “quantity or form”, and to the latter one belongs man's body “which do[es] have both quantity and form.” Ghazali conceives the heart as a created entity but not in the material sense, or not in the same sense that the body was created with external appearance, quantity, or form. In other words, the heart is created without any quality or form. Thus, it is wrong to assume the heart as if it has no beginning. It is also wrong to assume the heart as an *accident* “which subsists with something else” because it is self-subsistent or “exists by itself in the body.” Again people may wrongly assume the heart as a *matter* but this should be discarded immediately because

“matter is that which can be divided, and [the heart] is not susceptible of division.” The heart is not “found in beasts, nor is it matter or an accident. The heart, on the contrary, has been created with angelic qualities. It is a substance of which it is difficult to apprehend the essence.” Although the religious law of Islam strictly forbids the attempt to disclose the essence of the heart or the spirit, Ghazali believes that it is permitted to explain the way how the heart operates for the fellow spiritual traveler who is engaged in the task earnestly (Al-Ghazalil, 1873, pp. 8-10).

For Ghazali, the heart is the abode of knowledge, and it reflects the true nature of things or things as they really are, in an analogous manner with a mirror. Ghazali clarifies the process as follows:

And just as the mirror is a distinct item, and the images of persons are a separate item, and the occurrence of their likeness upon the mirror still another, so that it is a question of three distinct items, so the three in this instance are, specifically, the heart, the true natures of things, and the occurrence of those true natures in the heart and their presence there. The term knower is a reference to the heart in which the likeness of the true natures of things dwell, while that which is known refers to the true natures of things, and knowledge refers to the occurrence of the likenesses in the mirror (Renard, 2004, p. 288).

Thus, here the heart being the seat of the things as they really are, corresponds to the knower, and the form which is reflected in the mirror corresponds to the thing known or the things as they really are, and lastly, the actual reflection of the thing known or things as they really are in the mirror is like knowledge. Ghazali underlines that because of its angelic character, the heart “alone of God's creatures is potentially capable of knowing all realities through their reflection in it” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. iix). Nonetheless, due to five conditions man's heart could be averted from such divine knowledge. Ghazali still holds his analogy of the mirror while discussing these conditions. For uninterrupted understanding (of terms like polish, unfinished metal, rusted, tarnished...) here we should bear in mind that, as Alexander Trierger (2012, p. 36) correctly observed, when Ghazali

mention mirror in the discussions below, we shouldn't confuse it to the mirrors of the present days which are made of glass, because "ancient and medieval mirrors were – of metal, not of glass."

Firstly, Ghazali asserts that "like an unfinished metal mirror [is] incapable of reflecting reality," the heart of a child is also incapable of this divine knowledge (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. iix). In the second condition that averts the heart from knowledge, Ghazali states that like an image is not reflected in the mirror due to "the presence of a blemish, rust, or tarnish, even if it is perfectly shaped," the same is true in the case of the heart, "the tarnish of sins and the imperfections that have accumulated on the face of the heart as a result of a multitude of cravings, robbing the heart of its purity and clarity, so that the efflorescence of the truth in it is foreclosed by its darkness and its accretion of blemishes" (Renard, 2004, pp. 290-91). Just as the mirror which was blemished, rusted and tarnished could possibly "be polished by burnishing," so as to "increase its clarity beyond its former sullied condition," the acts of "obedience to God" and shattering the cage of excessive attachments could possibly "clarifies and purifies the heart" (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. iix).

Thirdly, the image is not reflected in the mirror because it is turned "away from facing the image and [directed] toward something else, as when the image is behind the mirror." For similar reasons, the attention of the heart may avert from the divine knowledge which is worth seeking. Here a righteous person's heart, "although it is bright, does not have the clear statement of the Real revealed in it, for he does not seek the Real and does not have his mirror opposite to the direction of the thing sought." In the life of this person "anxiety over fulfilling specific necessary bodily deeds or securing means of livelihood often intrudes." He failed to direct his complete attention towards "the Lordly presence and the hidden divine truths" (Renard, 2004, pp. 290-92). Hence, what has revealed for this man is "only that which he thinks about, whether it is the minute defects

of his [religious] works or the hidden faults of the soul if it is these which occupy his mind or the interests of gaining a livelihood if he thinks of them” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 37).

Fourthly, due to “the interposition of a veil between the mirror and the image,” it is impossible to reflect the image in the mirror (Renard, 2004, pp. 290-92). Similarly, servile conformism and “blind acceptance of dogma” interpose “as a veil between the heart and reality” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. iix). Finally, the remaining condition of the heart that impedes it from the spiritual journey is “[i]gnorance of the direction of reality and of the sources of knowledge,” akin to “[...] ignorance with respect to where the desired image is, so that one becomes unable to orient the mirror directly toward the image” (Renard, 2004, pp. 290-92). Here, Ghazali, astonishingly assured that, like we do these days in barbershops “man's eye can see the back of his neck by the use of two mirrors. Similarly, the heart can perceive the truth by the proper correlation of two items of knowledge from which a third is derived as in the [case of] syllogism” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. ix).

According to Ghazali the goal of one’s obedience to God is “the purification of the heart so that it may receive divine illumination.” The divine knowledge of the heart corresponds to this illumination and it has three hierarchical degrees. In the initial point, we get the faith of the individuals “who accept dogma on authority,” this faith can be seen in resemblance with believing that Zaid [a randomly selected name of a person for the sake of analogy] is in the house based on the testimony of a credible person (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 42). This is not far from flaws given that defects may arise in relation to “what one hears from anyone” (Renard, 2004, p. 294). Secondly, there is the faith of the scholastic theologians that constitute some “element of proof, like hearing Zaid's voice from within the house, and so believing that he is there” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. ix). Even though in this level the faith of the individual is supported with evidence, that doesn't make him free from defects. What if the voice here is similar to another voice? “it could [possibly] be

mimicry employed as a ruse, but it has not occurred to the listener that he has any grounds for suspicion, nor does he suspect that this involves a deliberate deception and ruse” (Renard, 2004, p. 294).

Finally, the higher degree of knowledge is that which is attained by the faithful prophets and saints, and it is “like the knowledge of one who enters the house and sees Zaid face to face” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. ix). This knowledge is clear and distinct. It is not of those who bear testimony for the truth based on other authorities; rather, it is an “authentic experiential knowledge and certain witnessing, and it is similar to the experiential knowledge of those who draw near to God and those who attest to the truth *because they believe on the basis of contemplative vision.*” Here in the first place, the faith of these individuals is not contradictory to the faith of those who we mentioned in the first degree and second degree. Nevertheless, “they are different *by virtue of the superiority of the evident proof by which they elude the possibility of error*” (Renard, 2004, p. 294 emphasis added).

In continuing his discussion, Ghazali reminds us that the heart by its very nature inclined “to receive the true natures of things known.” However, here the type of knowledge that dwells in the heart could be distinguished into the *rational* and the *religious*. The former could be distinguished further into the *necessary* and the *acquired*, and again “the acquired still further differentiated into the *this-worldly* (i.e. medicine, mathematics, engineering, astronomy, and the other professions and trades) and the *otherworldly*” or the hereafter [i.e. such as the doctrines of religion. Here, speculative theologians stress this sort of acquired knowledge as being most important] (Renard, 2004, p. 295).

What Ghazali means by rational knowledge is “that which the natural disposition of the intellect calls for and which is not found in uncritical acceptance of authority and hearsay.” This rational

knowledge in its *necessary* part corresponds to an innate or inborn knowledge that an individual naturally endowed from God, because as Ghazali underlines it, “the individual does not perceive whence or how it has come about, as when an individual knows that one person cannot exist in two places and that a single thing cannot be simultaneously new and old, or existent and nonexistent.” With respect to the acquired knowledge, as the name indicates, “they are derived from instruction and deductive inference, and both of the two aspects are called intellectual understanding” (Renard, 2004, p. 295). Here, Ghazali states in the forms of rational knowledge, the natural endowment alone doesn't bring closeness to God, for this reason, it is essential for a man (at the age of maturity) to have the acquired knowledge which is gained through inner spiritual insight so as to supplement his natural endowment of necessary knowledge (Renard, 2004).

In relation to the religious knowledge (i.e. the knowledge of the states of the heart, of defects in spiritual works, and the knowledge of God, the Exalted, and His attributes and His acts), the ordinary believer can gain this knowledge “by way of acceptance on authority (taqlid) from the prophets.” Furthermore, the prophets and Sufi saints received it directly, in case of the former through *divine revelation*, and the latter through *inspiration*. Rational knowledge is like food, however, food alone will not give health to the soul, and so religious knowledge, which is like medicine, is needed as well (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 47). Ghazali witnessed some people who mistakenly assumed that the two types of knowledge “are incompatible” and in so doing they betrayed the religion. This is not the case for him, given that there is “an inner harmony between [the two types of knowledge].” The knowledge of the *this-world* and the *hereafter/religious* come into conflict only when one “applies himself to one of them and goes deeply into it” at the expense of the other (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. ix).

The knowledge which is not necessary, “but which come[s] into the heart at certain times,” could vary in the way of attainment. On the one hand, attainment could occur to the heart, not through deduction and study; instead, knowledge could “simply *falls into* the heart effortlessly from unknown sources.” On the other hand, knowledge could be “gained through deduction [...] and study” (Renard, 2004, p. 297 emphasis added). In the former case, it “is called *general inspiration*.” The later one “is called *reflection...and mental perception*,” this is simply the knowledge of the learned/instructed. The knowledge that grasped not in deduction and study could also be divided into two classes. Initially, we can find the case of a man who has a blurred idea of the way how he achieved the knowledge. This man’s situation is exactly what Ghazali means by “general inspiration, and inbreathing into the heart.” The form of knowledge in general inspiration could be exclusively given to the Sufi saints. But, secondly, there is a man who is well aware of “how he achieved it [because] he is acquainted with the secondary cause from which he has derived that knowledge, which is the vision of the angel who casts it into his heart.” Ghazali calls this a “*prophetic inspiration*” this divine revelation is “an exclusive characteristic of the prophets” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, pp. 51-52 emphasis mine).

If it breaks the five aforementioned hindrances, then the heart “as a mirror is capable of having true reality revealed in it by means of reflection from the preserved Tablet.” These hindrances are like “a veil that hangs down between the mirror of the heart and the Preserved Tablet.” Ghazali notes that “[t]he reflection of the real nature of knowledge from the mirror of the Tablet upon the mirror of the heart is like the reflection of an image from one mirror to another mirror opposite it” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, pp. 51-52 emphasis mine). This veil between the two mirrors may be drawn aside either by direct divine unveiling or by man's volition. The former one described by Ghazali’s own words as follows:

[...] the winds of divine favor sometimes blow and the veils are drawn aside from the eyes of hearts so that there is reflected in them something of that which is written upon the Preserved Tablet. Sometimes this takes place *during sleep*, and thereby ***there is revealed [...] that which will come into being in the future***. *The veil is completely lifted by death* when the covering is withdrawn. At other times [inspiration] is made during waking hours and the veil is lifted by a secret favor from God, the Exalted, and some of the marvels of knowledge glisten in the heart from behind the curtain of the unknown. This may be like a dazzling flash of lightning, or it may be continuous up to a certain point, but its continuance is most rare. Inspiration... then does not differ from the acquisition as regards the knowledge itself, its seat, and its cause, but it differs only in the removal of the veil, for ***this is not accomplished by man's volition***. General inspiration does not differ from prophetic inspiration in any of these respects, but only in the matter of the vision of the angel who imparts the knowledge; for our hearts attain knowledge only by means of the angels (Al-Ghazali, 2010, pp. 52-53 emphasis mine).

Having said this much about the removal of the veil by direct divine unveiling, Ghazali proceeds to discuss the latter one in line with the Sufi's notion of knowledge. First of all, he made a point that the Sufis inclined to attain knowledge through inspiration rather than through deduction and study. For this reason, the Sufis “*do not jealously covet the study of knowledge, nor the acquisition of that which authors have written, nor discussion about the statement of doctrines and proofs [...]*” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 53 emphasis added). For the Sufi saints, the authentic “[...] way of knowledge is to put foremost spiritual striving, to abolish blameworthy traits, to cut all ties, and to advance toward God, the Exalted, with utmost concern.” If this occurs, then, “God becomes the ruler over the heart of His creature [,] and the surety for his illumination with the light of knowledge” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 53). If this takes place, Ghazali states:

When God becomes the ruler of the heart, He floods it with mercy and sheds His light upon it, and the breast is opened and there is revealed to it the secret of the world of spirits and by a gift of mercy there is cleared away from the surface of the heart the veil of whiteness that blinds its eye, and there shines in it the real nature of divine things. The servant has only to make himself ready by *a thorough purification*, by summoning intention along with a sincere desire, by complete yearning, and by watching with constant expectation for the mercy that God, the Exalted, may grant to him. *For prophets and saints have had divine things revealed to them, and the light has flooded their breasts, not by learning and study and the writing of books, but by asceticism [...] in this present world, by cutting the self-off from all of its ties, by emptying the heart of all of its busying affairs, and by advancing with the utmost concern toward God, the Exalted; for whoever belongs to God, God belongs to him* (Al-Ghazali, 2010, pp. 53-54 emphasis mine).

According to the Sufis, so as to travel in this path the individual must un-tie himself from worldly shackles “and by emptying the heart of them, by taking away concern for family, possessions, children, homeland, knowledge, rule, and rank.” The individual ought to bring “his heart into that state in which the existence of all these is the same as their nonexistence” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 54). After doing so, Ghazali continues:

[...] he [the individual] must withdraw alone, apart, into a place of private devotion, and limit himself to the prescribed religious duties and the supererogatory prayers. He must sit with an empty heart and concentrated purpose. He must not divide his thought by reciting the Quran, nor the contemplation of its exposition, nor by books of *hadith*, nor anything else. But he must strive [such] that nothing save God, the Exalted, shall come into his mind. Then after he has seated himself in a place apart he shall keep saying continuously with his tongue, “**Allah**, “**Allah**,” and his heart shall be fixed on it too, until he comes finally to a state in which the motion of the tongue will cease and it will seem as though the word is flowing over his tongue. He must continue patiently in this until every trace of the word is effaced from the tongue and he finds his heart persevering in this devotional exercise (*dhikr*). Still, he shall persevere until the form and letters of the expression and the very appearance of the word is effaced from the heart and there remains present in it naught save the ideal meaning which is, as it were, adhering to and inseparable from the heart (Al-Ghazali, 2010, pp. 54-55 emphasis added).

Ghazali concludes this part, by saying that to arrive at this point is a matter of the individual's *volition*, but his volition ceases to exist with regard to attaining “the gift of the mercy of God, the Exalted.” This is because, the individual in his spiritual struggle so far “has exposed himself to the breezes of God's mercy, and it only remains for him to wait for such mercy as God may grant to him, even as He has, in this way, given His mercy to the prophets and saints” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 55). Finally, Ghazali, wraps up his idea of general inspiration in the states of the Sufi saints, in the following manner:

if his [the Sufi's] desire is sincere, his [sic] intention pure, and his perseverance good, and if his lusts do not draw him aside nor the suggestions of the self him with the ties of this present world, there will shine forth the gleams of reality into his heart. In its beginning, this will be like a blinding flash of lightning. It is not continuous but it returns, although it may delay. If it returns it may continue, and it may be but a flash. If it continues it may be for a longer or shorter time. These different types may appear, the one succeeding the other, or they may be limited to one

sort only. The stages of the saints of God, the Exalted, in this are unlimited, even as the superiority of their nature and moral characteristics is not to be reckoned. So this way goes back to an absolute purifying and clarifying and brightening of the heart on your part, and then only to make ready and wait in expectation (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 55).

By realizing that the direct divine unveiling to the heart is not bounded to dream and death. (See chapter 4. Below under the title of ‘The origin of the Sufi’s illumination’) If one smash the idol of the ego from the heart and make it pure from the filth of such egotistic cravings he/she could possibly attain this knowledge regardless of expecting fortunate dream while falling asleep or without a need of expecting the remorseful awakening that comes after death. This is the Sufi knowledge that Ghazali called inspiration or knowledge from on high. When he emphasizes the uneasiness of their way, he said, those who claim to seek the path of the Sufis are numerous “yet those who attain to the end are exceedingly rare” (Al-Ghazalil, 1873, p. 18). The most bewildering thing of all is that Ghazali is the symbol of the general inspiration of the Sufis, and by fulfilling all the ascetic requirements he already became one of the few saints who arrived at the general divine inspiration. As Ghazali himself told us in his *Deliverance from Error* at the time of his ten years seclusion “several points became clear to me of necessity for reasons I cannot enumerate at one time by fruitional experience, at another time by knowledge based on apodeictic proof, and again by acceptance founded on faith” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 25). What he meant by fruitional experience here is the exact correspondence to the general divine inspiration that I have attempted to mention above.



## Chapter Four

### The Source, *Telos* and Manifestation of Mystic knowledge in his Sufi Epistemology

#### 4.1 The Origin of the Sufi's Illumination

Even though the marvels of the heart, as well as the heart in itself, transcends sense perception in its entirety, to understand the knowledge of the learned that attained from *without* and the Sufis from *within* Ghazali often employed tangible and analogous examples. In one of his analogy Ghazali wants us to compare the heart with a pool into which five rivers flow from outside and these rivers flow clearly at one time, and muddy at another, as a result, the bottom of the pool contains much mud. Furthermore, the pool can also be filled with water from the inside or underground waters (Treiger, 2012). If an individual would like to purify the pool “and to get rid of the mud in the bottom, he must first dam up the course of the running [rivers], and then stir up and put in motion the mud, and until the muddy water has been carried off by the pure water that gushes up at the bottom of the [pool], he will not allow any other water to run in” (Al-Ghazalil, 1873, p. 17).

Here we can analogously consider the five external senses to the rivers “from which various kinds of knowledge, notions and prejudices proceed to the heart [from *without*], of which some are pure and purifying, and some are corrupt and corrupting” (Al-Ghazalil, 1873, p. 17). The heart, Ghazali elucidates like the pool can also be filled with knowledge from *within*, through the knowledge received from the Preserved Tablet (Treiger, 2012). But it is unthinkable for the seeker of divine wisdom to accomplish his mission of attaining the fountain of knowledge that bursts forth from *within* the heart, unless he/she strives to dam up the various conditionings of the (*without*) external senses from flowing into it “by solitude and seclusion and averting the eyes from seeing, and then

to resolve in the depths of the heart to purify it and remove from it the layers of veils” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 57).

But here, says Ghazali one can come up with a counter-argument as follows: how can illuminating knowledge revealed or burst forth from *within* the heart, while itself is devoid of it? Ghazali here answers that one shouldn't anticipate him to address his question completely for the reason that it doesn't belong to the sciences of the hereafter which he intended to discuss in this book, namely the science of practical religion. In other words, this question belongs to the science of revelation which is not allowed to be transmitted in words. However, Ghazali attempts to give us some hint about the origin of the Sufi's illumination. It should be known that for the Sufi sages in general and Ghazali in particular “the real natures of things are written down in the Preserved Tablet”. He states that in a similar manner to an architect who writes an archetype of his artifact like a certain building before bringing it into actuality, God, too in the first place “wrote an archetype of the world from beginning to end upon the Preserved Tablet”, afterwards He in the second place brought the world as we know it “into actuality in accordance with that archetype” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 58).

The world that emerges into actuality in the image of the archetype also in the third-place instigates “another image that is the object of sensation and imagination.” If an individual gazes at the sky and after an instant at the earth, and if he afterwards closes his eyes” then, he will most likely “sees in his imagination the image of the sky and the earth, so that it is as though he were looking at them; and were the sky and the earth annihilated and he himself remained”. Fourthly, we can find the intellectual existence of the world. By this Ghazali mean “the existence of its image *within* the heart.” For Ghazali,” [i]t is conceivable that the real nature of the world might be represented in the heart,” and the world’s mental image sometimes derived from the senses and sometimes from

the Preserved Tablet. This is conceivable in the way that “the image of the sun should be represented in the eye,” sometimes derived from looking directly at it, and sometimes “from looking at the water on which the sun shines which reproduces its image” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 58). Thus, here, Ghazali ascertains:

[...] whenever the veils are lifted between the heart and the Preserved Tablet, the heart sees the things which are therein, and knowledge bursts forth into it there from, so that it does not have to acquire its knowledge through the avenues of the senses. This is like the bursting forth of water from the depths of the earth. Whenever the heart becomes occupied with things in the imagination derived from sensibles, this veils it from examining the Preserved Tablet, just as when water is collected from rivers [into a pool]; it is thereby prevented from bursting forth from the earth; or just as he who looks into the water that reproduces the image of the sun is not looking at the sun itself (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 59).

Hence, for Ghazali the heart constitutes two doors. On the one hand, there is the door that “opens toward the world of spirits, which is the Preserved Tablet and the world of the angels.” On the other hand, there is the door that “opens toward the five external senses that are tethered to the visible material world” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 59). In relation to its attainment Ghazali underlines that:

Now the fact that the door of the heart is opened to the acquisition of knowledge through the senses is a thing you understand. But regarding its door that opens to the world of spirits and [can] see the Preserved Tablet, *you have certain knowledge through meditating upon the wonders of dream-visions and the heart's observation in sleep of what will be in the future or what was in the past, without any acquisition on the part of the senses*. That door, however, is opened only to one who devotes himself exclusively to the remembrance (dhikr) of God, the Exalted (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 60 emphasis added).

Ghazali concludes by underlining the fact that unlike the learned scholar's ways of attaining knowledge from *without* through the door of external senses the Sufis way of attaining knowledge go beyond from the external senses, they rather attain knowledge from within or directly from the door that “opens toward the world of spirits, which is the Preserved Tablet and the world of the angels” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. 61).

## 4.2 Separation and Return

In his precise treatise, “Treatise Concerning Knowledge from on High” we encounter with the *telos* and culmination of Ghazali’s Sufi epistemology. Here Ghazali ascertains that from an Islamic point of view every human being is born with an implanted knowledge on his or her soul. For him it should be known that “knowledge is implanted within all human souls and all of them are capable of receiving all types of knowledge, only a soul may miss its appointed share of that, because of something intervening or something occurring to it unexpectedly from outside” (Al-Ghazali, 1938, p. 368). What he means by the “soul” and “Knowledge from on High” here represents our previous usage of the term “heart” and “Inspired knowledge” respectively. The souls or hearts said Ghazali, is “prevented from apprehending the true meaning of things” and also missed their appointed share of the implanted knowledge because “infirmity has come upon them through their preoccupation with the adornment of the flesh and setting it upon a sure foundation and putting its basis in order” (Al-Ghazali, 1938, p. 370). I think I should include Ghazali’s description of this situation from his *Alchemy of Happiness*:

The heart of man while in the spiritual world knew its maker and creator; it had mingled with angels and knew for what service it was created...Afterwards the heart descended from the world of [the] divine union to this house of *separation*, from that assembly of love to this station of sorrow, and from the spiritual to the material, and entering within the curtain of the senses, it became occupied with the care of the body and was overcome by the animal affections and material pleasures. The heart of man, veiled with the garments of heedlessness, forgot the assembly with which it had been familiar, and imagining that this miserable place was to be its mansion of rest, it chose to establish itself here in this world of perdition, as if this was its home (Al-Ghazali, 1873, pp. 14-15 emphasis added).

Since the souls became preoccupied with fulfilling bodily cravings, they have affected by clouds of forgetfulness. For this reason, the soul is in need of a sound purification so as to strive “for the recollection of what it had forgotten.” In this vein, the purpose of a Sufi aspirant’s quest “is only the *return* of the soul to its own proper substance and the bringing forth to [the] actuality of that

which is contained (in potentiality) in its own inner self, seeking thereby to perfect itself and to attain to its true happiness” (Al-Ghazali, 1938, pp. 370-71). When the souls overcome their unbalanced attachment to the body and polish themselves accordingly, they will recognize “the existence of *knowledge from on high* and realize that they were wise [knower] in their original state and pure when they were first created, and their ignorance arose only through their association with this gross body and their continuance in this abode of trouble and place of darkness” (Al-Ghazali, 1938, p. 371 emphasis added).

According to Ghazali, it is good to acquire knowledge from different disciplines, but if one fails to attain *knowledge from on high* he remains in his state of ignorance, this is because “true wisdom is attained by knowledge from on high, and so long as a man does not attain to this rank he is not wise, for wisdom is one of the gifts of God Most High.” Nonetheless, if an individual arrives at this stage “having no need of much acquisition and the weariness of learning, study little and learn much, and their toil is light and their rest is long” (Al-Ghazali, 1938, p. 367). Ghazali in the *Revival* also underlines that the “heart and its mystical knowledge are both immortal” (Al-Ghazali, 2010, p. ixiv). Knowledge from on high is not a kind of knowledge that can be attained through a director or intermediary, rather it “is attained without mediation between the soul and its Creator ; it is, indeed, like the radiance from the Lamp of the Invisible, shed upon a heart which is pure, at leisure, subtle” (Al-Ghazali, 1938, p. 365). For Ghazali, it should also be known for the seeker of knowledge from on high that, it is “the irradiation of the light of inspiration, and inspiration comes after completion [...] and completion is *the making sound of the soul and its return to its original disposition*” (Al-Ghazali, 1938, pp. 372-373 emphasis added).

### 4.3 The Epistemic Relationality between Miracles and Mystical Experiences

In this part of this chapter, what I want to discuss in the first place is that, being the follower of the footprints of the prophets, the Sufis in their spiritual state could be evidence for miracles that transgress uniform and natural causality. For instance, here Ghazali noted that the Sufi saints, after they complete their starting point that bases upon “the total purification of the heart from everything other than God Most High” as well as their key manner “which is analogous to the beginning of the Prayer, [which] is the utter absorption of the heart in the remembrance of God.” To its end which “is being completely lost in God.” They became capable to see “the angels and the spirits of the prophets and hear voices coming from them and learn useful things from them” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 21). To cite further instance in relation to the higher knowledge attained by the Sufis that could possibly contain a way to somehow break the necessitarian chain of cause and effect, Ghazali ascertains an ability that goes beyond the normal or an ability to perform a miracle as follows:

[I]f the heart should not be tarnished with the rust of rebellion, and if the animal and ferocious qualities should not be dominant, that it would be capable, on account of the presence in it of angelic properties, of manifesting...influence over other bodies. If it should look upon a lion or tiger with severity, they would become weak and submissive. If it should look with kindness upon one who is sick, his infirmity might be changed to health. If it should look upon the vigorous with majesty, they might become infirm (Al-Ghazalil, 1873, p. 16).

The transgressions described earlier, however, are not intended to make natural causality meaningless. I believe Ghazali understood that this misunderstanding would arise. Therefore, in my opinion, Ghazali introduces his secondary theory of causality in order to avoid this misunderstanding. As discussed above, Ghazali allows the view (which he rejected earlier) of the philosophers that states “inanimate things have causal action and that this action proceeds as the

necessary consequence” and he still proves the possibility of miracles by taking God's voluntary acts for granted.

Marmura (1981, p. 107) pointed out two responses for the question: why did Ghazali introduce the secondary theory of causality? The first obvious response is that “it is introduced as an additional refutation of the philosophers’ denial of the possibility of certain miracles” (Marmura, 1981, p. 106). Ghazali believed that since God’s acts are voluntary, even by granting “the philosophers their premise that a natural inanimate element like fire has causal efficacy [...] [h]e can still show that the miracles deemed impossible by them are possible.” Secondly, for Marmura, “Ghazali may also have in mind those Muslims who do not reject natural causation, to provide them with an alternative theory that does not commit them to the philosophers’ denial of certain miracles”.

Marmura’s second response can also be expanded to say that, in his secondary theory of causality Ghazali aimed at creating an epistemic space for miracles. By broadening his line of thoughts even to the extent of giving a causal power to involuntary and natural inanimate things, Ghazali holds that miracles are possible but still natural causation must not be rejected. Thus, what Ghazali seems to say about causality shouldn’t be misunderstood as if his notion defies every known law of science and nature. Nevertheless, what he really meant I believe is without reducing everything to the empirically observed uniformity of nature we can still possibly think of the disruption of the normal and habitual causal connections. In other word, we don't have any guarantee in our expectation to absolutely stick to the normal and rule out the paranormal.

Now let me focus on my other point, in their state that transcends both acquired and necessary truths, the Sufis surpass pure rationality. By reminding, our division of rational knowledge: to the *necessary* and the *acquired* let me demonstrate how Ghazali limits the place of reason without

rejecting it. From the divisions of knowledge discussed so far, as we recall, in relation to the acquired knowledge under the umbrella of rational knowledge, Ghazali states that “the difference between the knowledge of the prophets and saints and that of the learned...” depends on the fact that “the knowledge of the former comes from within the heart through the door that is opened toward the world of spirits” while the latter gain their knowledge “through the doors of the senses that open to the material world.” Again in relation to the innately endowed necessary knowledge, from the umbrella of the rational like “[o]ne and the same thing cannot be simultaneously affirmed and denied,” and “[o]ne and the same thing cannot be incipient and eternal, existent and nonexistent, necessary and impossible.” Ghazali, as discussed in chapter two, argued that “the nonappearance of that further perception than [this rational knowledge] does not prove the impossibility of its existence.” And the Sufis knowledge [for instance, as mentioned above their communication with the angels and the spirits of the prophets] is a perception that transcends rational knowledge. If this is the case, how could one possibly give a totalitarian authority to rational knowledge?

Ghazali here didn't deny rationality in its entirety because he believes that the rational and the religious knowledge are not contradictory, instead they have inner harmony. As we mentioned earlier, Ghazali believes that rational knowledge is like food. However, food alone will not give health to the soul, so that religious knowledge, which is like medicine, is needed as well. Ghazali witnessed some people who mistakenly assumed that the two types of knowledge are incompatible and he equated them with the one who betrayed the religion. This is not the case for him, given that; there is “an inner harmony between them.” But what Ghazali insists is the fact that without giving reason a totalitarian authority to judge and know every inner and outer activity of human life, we should be eager to look for at least one alternative way of arriving at the truth. It is not

denying the significance of rational knowledge, it is questioning the assurance that we gave for a reason to know everything. At least we should have one alternate possibility.

Thus, here one can argue that Ghazali wanted the possibility of surpassing the observable causality and the cognitive faculty of reason to create an epistemic space for miracles and Sufi experiences respectively. After fulfilling all the ethical and mental requirements, when the Sufi saint performs a miracle then the relationality of such epistemic spaces became visible. It doesn't astonish me if someone calls such mystic experiences as far-fetched because obviously, one can find it hard to believe in something when he/she can't understand it. It is also understandable if one says such experiences are all about seeing things that one wants to see. But if we are open-minded enough, we couldn't deny their ability to perform miracles. They do have well documented and testified stories of performing miracles that may somehow disrupt the course of nature. We must understand that, just simply because we didn't know a Sufi saint who performs a miracle nowadays doesn't necessarily make the whole Sufi thing a hoax.

#### **4.4 Concluding Remarks**

The notions of rationality and causality are the most hotly debatable issues of epistemology. In this thesis, I investigated the issue from Ghazalian point of view. I individually discussed every texts of Ghazali that could be brought up as a potential source of his epistemology. Upon doing this, other than the genuine works attributed to Ghazali, I never relied on texts that arise controversies of authorship. Among other things, it has been argued that, Ghazali created a space for miracles and mystical knowledge without defying but limiting causal laws and rationality. After rebelling against *taqlid* or inherited beliefs, Ghazali couldn't satisfactorily rely on sense data, due to the rebuttal that comes from the higher faculty of reason. Since causal laws presuppose observation as a reliable source of knowledge, he also didn't want to take its process as a matter

of necessity. If its grounds could turn out to be shaky by the possibility of other faculty such as the Sufi's inspiration, Ghazali realize that reason, as well, couldn't help him to arrive at certainty.

However, one should recall that, Ghazali not even in a single place wanted to defy rational knowledge and causal laws. Then again he wanted more, he wanted certainty but he didn't get it both from the senses and reason. When his reliance on the senses and reason began to crumble, the heart appeared as another abode of knowledge, which in itself is capable of guarantying certainty, and enabling him to regain his faith both in the senses and reason. He then understand that the Sufis were indeed right in their attempt to bring forth knowledge from within the heart. As a result of this Sufi's divine inspiration, Ghazali limited the claim of reason to be the sole and independent source of knowledge. By crushing the necessitarian approach to causality he argued in favor of the occurrences of miracles.

The researcher has defended that, Ghazali's limit on pure reason and necessitarian causal relations is both *justified* and *acceptable*. It is *justified* because, as I have shown earlier due to the presence of other sources of knowledge that surpasses reason, we can't give a totalitarian place to rationality. In the case of causality, it is not rationally convincing to believe in necessitarian causal relations by relying on observation. It is *acceptable* because it accommodates both reason and causal laws with little requirements. Putting aside its totalitarian claim, the research has shown why it was compulsory for Ghazali to use reason. I have also attempted to demonstrate why there is no problem for an individual to accept uniform causal laws without negating possible intrusions and without reducing the whole natural process into nothing other than observable causal laws. The research has argued that, it is possible to find an epistemic relationality between the space created for miracles and mystical knowledge. It has been established that the qualified Sufi saint in his/her

mystical awakening and ability to perform some sorts of miracles is the focal point of this epistemic relationality.

Finally, let me address some remnant questions that I thought, perhaps, would emerge from my readers. If one inquires that, how could it be possible for an individual to draw himself closer to God without knowing the existence of such a being? In my defense, I remind him/her that the Sufi saint's higher knowledge could also be interpreted as a religious experience that proves the existence of God. As discussed earlier the Sufis higher knowledge is not like the faith of individuals who accepts the dicta of authority or who believes "that [Mr. X] is in the house" based on the testimony of a credible person. It is not also like the faith of the scholastic theologians that constitute some "element of proof, like hearing [Mr. X's] voice from within the house, and so believing that [Mr. X] is there." The higher degree of knowledge of the Sufi's is rather "like the knowledge of one who enters the house and sees [Mr. X] face to face." This knowledge is clear and distinct. It is "authentic experiential knowledge and certain witnessing". It is absurd to deny or approve such kind of different ways of proving the existence of God by those who claim to participate in the mystical experience unless one first becomes a partisan himself. In other words, since the partisans of the experience in no place provide rational proofs, one couldn't falsify or authenticate their mystical experience on rational grounds.

So as to attain this mystical knowledge, the inquirer obviously needs a strict self-purification of the heart from his/her filthy desires like lust, gluttony, sloth, pride, anger, and extra. People however may become hesitant and they may doubt the possibility of attaining such knowledge. For this reason, on account of uncertainty, one may come up with such kind of question: "why should I pass my precious life in devotional austerities, and forbid myself the delights and pleasures of the world?" (Al-Ghazalil, 1873, p. 54) Even though Ghazali here came up with a broad reply

which constitutes the religious faith in general, but it would not be wrong for me to use it epistemologically to assert why we should mind on the possibility of attaining the religious experience. Ghazali presented his answer as follows:

According to your principles, the probabilities are balanced as to whether the events spoken of as belonging to the future world will or will not happen. It follows then as a most rational conclusion, that you ought to act in the same way you would do if you wished to preserve yourself from a great risk and danger. For, if these events should take place, you may thereby be saved from intense torment and obtain eternal felicity; whereas, if they should not occur, you will have suffered no injury from your precautions (Al-Ghazalil, 1873, pp. 54-55).<sup>13</sup>

Based on the above paragraph I can pragmatically argue that the person who hesitates to devote himself/herself for attaining the mystical knowledge on account of being uncertain of its possibility should revisit his/her stand. This person wouldn't deny that, if one fulfills the requirement of purifying the heart, then the attainment of the mystical knowledge will or will not take place. If this is the case, this person evidently needs an answer and explanation of many things in his/her life; he strives to know not only the *how* of things but the *why* as well. His need for an explanation for his life assures that not having such an explanation left the individual in darkness.

If the attainment of the mystical knowledge should take place, then the individual may be rescued from his/her lack of explanation and attain enlightenment from the darkness; if they should not take place, the individual still is not a loser, at least he/she narrows his/her scope of finding the genuine path by falsifying the Sufi path. Ghazali also said that there is also “the *inspired word* which declares that all these things will take place; and all the prophets... and all the saints and teachers of religion...have testified to the truth of them.” Whether we like it or not, we can't think our life independent of external influences and conditionings, if so, do we really lose something in giving a try to the influence of the saints and the prophets for the higher purpose of nearing ourselves to their epistemic elevation?

Do we even have the courage to seek such kind of wisdom in our technological era? As we have seen in one of his analogy Ghazali likens the heart with a pool into which five rivers flow clearly at one time, and muddy at another, the same as this pool the heart gains knowledge from the five external senses “which some are pure and purifying, and some are corrupt and corrupting.” It is unthinkable to get pure water from the inside of the pool and to avoid the muddy ones unless one first dam up the course of the running rivers. Similarly, it is unthinkable for the seeker of divine wisdom to accomplish his mission of attaining the fountain of knowledge that bursts forth from within the heart unless he/she strives to dam up the various conditionings of the external senses from flowing into it “by solitude and seclusion and averting the eyes from seeing, and then to resolve in the depths of the heart to purify it and remove from it the layers of veils.” Now a days, most of the advertisements, movies, books, music, and extra made the transference of corrupting and confusing knowledge easier. We knowingly or unknowingly agreed to pretend as if nothing is going on in our inner self. We are conditioned to struggle for only the conventional outward success. In this era the most important concerns of life aren't important anymore, it is a strange thing to worry about fundamental questions of life like the essence of the truth and the meaning of life. Thus, in our era it is hard to dam up confusing external streams via seclusion in order to bring, as the Sufis insisted, something important and pure from within, but it is not impossible.

I believe our existence presupposes something beyond our ken. For that reason, the unsolved mysteries of a life that lies in the middle of birth and death requires some kind of convincing explanation and I think finding this explanation is the holy grail of a thinking mind. We couldn't give any sense to our present, past and future regardless of our persuading explanation to life. In other words, the explanation that we gave to our life is our truth and this truth is the *why* of our existence which would give sense to the *how* of it. Ghazali relentlessly pondered to find a meaning

for his existence, and as we have seen above he even consulted most of the self-acclaimed possessors of the truth of his time and figured it ridiculous to him to accept them blindly with their contradictory claims. But he finally arrives at his best comprehension of the truth that explains everything. After his awareness of his state, he doesn't want to keep the footprints of his long journey unknown to others. Up until now, I have attempted to defend his positions for several reasons. At last, I want to remind my readers most emphatically that, either to follow or decline his call to this particular path is completely up to us, but we should make sure to overcome the naivety of rejecting or accepting his path without traveling at least half of it.

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<sup>1</sup> Even if I am anticipated here in this thesis to articulate 'Ghazal's mystic epistemology' solely, without losing the fulcrum of the topic I have gone beyond this limit and compared some of Ghazali's notions with modern philosophers such as Rene Descartes, David Hume and Blaise Pascal. This is because: first, these brief comparisons of mine may somehow support the above claim; secondly, it is also essential in broadening the horizon of our comprehension of Ghazali's position.

<sup>2</sup> At first glance my reader may wonder about the similarity of Ghazalian and Cartesian lines of thoughts. Even if he didn't give any credit for any of the medieval Muslim thinkers, Rene Descartes whom we all know as the founder of modern philosophy, according to Sharif was highly influenced whether directly or indirectly by the philosophical treatises of scholars like Ghazali. Sharif (1966, pp. 1381-82) argues, "Muslim philosophy had penetrated deep into the west much before Descartes' time, and most of the works of al-Ghazali had been translated into Latin before the middle of the sixth/twelfth century, and since then had exercised a considerable influence on Jewish and Christian scholasticism." Having Descartes fluency of Latin both in reading and writing from his works [Meditationes de prima philosophia and Principia philosophiae] in mind, for Sharif "it is difficult to believe that he did not know al-Ghazali's general position and was not influenced by it through the Latin scholastics, whom beyond question he must have read" (Sharif, 1966, p. 1382).

Although unlike Ghazali's other works, Sharif don't have a proof that his *Deliverance from error* was translated into Latin and read by Descartes, yet due to the special resemblances of this particular work to Descartes' *Discourse on method*, even in the absence of the Latin translation for Sharif one is justified to think that probably there have been a translation of this work (which he couldn't find) in Latin and Descartes must have read it. Soon thereafter, in 1976 a Tunisian historian Othman Al-Kaak "was able to find material proof in the library of Descartes for the fact that Descartes had indeed acquainted himself with Al-Ghazali's thought [...]" (Zakzouk, 2003, pp. 53-54). Al-Kaak ascertains "that Descartes had read a translation of al-Ghazali's biography al-Munqidh, which he saw in Descartes' library in Paris with his comments on the margins." This claim gained confirmation from Vitaki V. Naumkin (Zamir, 2010, p. 221). If we compare

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these two works we discern that, Descartes embarked on and went through his journey with the exact similarity of Ghazali's Deliverance from error. Sharif summed up the whole thing as follows:

Both of these works [...] are autobiographical. Both [...] began the stories of their lives from their youth (M.4,D.8). Both realized how, despite having the same reasoning faculty, the children of Muslim or Christian parents, thanks to custom and example, had different beliefs from the beliefs held by those brought up by Jewish parents, and how those brought up among French men were different from those brought up among the Germans (M.6, D.19). Both, therefore, decided that they would not believe anything that was based on tradition, custom, or example (M.5-6, D.13), and both walked into every dark spot to discover the truth (M.4, D.19). Both held, [...] that the senses cannot yield certain knowledge (M.8-9, D.36). The language and the examples of the defects of sense-experience given by both of them were almost identical (M.8-9, D.36, 37). Both studied all the literature that came into their hands, and in the accounts of their studies both mentioned the same subjects: philosophy, mathematics, logic, theology, and physical sciences. After examining all these subjects and all creeds one by one both concluded that they all fell short of certain knowledge and so resolved to discard all authority (M.17-62,D.8-14); and, thus, both became extremely skeptical about all that had passed as knowledge up to their times and boldly rejected the opinions they had so far held (M.12,D.17). Both of them, considering that the very same experiences as they had in waking life might occur also while they slept without there being at that time any truth in them, decided to feign that everything that had entered their mind still then was no more than illusion of dreams (M.10, D.31) [...] Both devised a new method of discovering the truth and this method was exactly the same for both. It consisted in taking only that as true which was conceived very clearly and very distinctly without any possibility of doubt (M.5, 20,D.20). Both thought that the clarity and distinction they demanded of every truth must be at least that found in mathematics, that which we see, for example, in apprehending that 10 is greater than 3 or that the sum of the three angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles (M.7,D.35). Both modestly declared that the purpose of their discourses was not that everybody should follow their example, but only to relate the story of their own method of finding the truth; others may find the truth in some other ways (M.19,D.36f). [M' stands for al-Ghazali's treatise al-Munqidh [...] and D' stands for [Descartes'] Discourse [...]] (Sharif, 1966, pp. 1383-84).

For Sharif (1966, p. 1384) this similarity is beyond coincidence, because it is highly improbable to reduce “the entire plan of their respective works, the whole treatment of the subjects discussed, and the whole content of these subjects down to detailed arguments, examples, and relatively unimportant matters, culminating in scepticism and in ultimate discovery of the method of finding the truth,” to mere coincidence. Moad (2009, p. 89) puzzled why “Sharif discusse[d] only the Discourse, since the similarity between the Deliverance and the first and second Meditations is far more explicit and striking.” Nonetheless, here I should remind my reader the fact that there are some important points of divergences between these two thinkers, firstly, it not as Akdogan (2003, pp. 488-89) said “to show that sense data or the things we clearly perceive such as our wakefulness may be deceitful [...]” that Ghazali used the dreaming argument, rather Ghazalian and Cartesian dream arguments contain a different purpose, as Khashoggi (2016, p. 8) in his thesis underlined “Descartes uses it primarily to solidify his doubt in sense-experience, and al Ghazali uses it primarily to doubt reason.” In addition to this, these two thinkers also gained their solutions from two different directions, as Saed (1982, pp. 87-88) explained it Ghazali resolved his doubt not by “reason but [by] mystic experience: [by] the light which God caused to enter his heart.” And Descartes resolved his doubt of sensory, inherited and acquired knowledge by “finding certainty in the dictum cogito ergo sum — ‘I think; therefore I am.’ Both Descartes and Ghazali passed through very similar stages of doubt. But, “Descartes held that reason was competent to explain the ultimate reality” whereas Ghazali “went further and doubted even thought as an organ for the knowledge of reality [and] disbelieved in the absolute powers of reason [...]

<sup>3</sup> Ghazali attacks these peoples for their “servile acceptance.” For him they also are the supporters “of a truth handed down by authority, based neither on reason, independent judgment, nor mystical insight, as in the other three traditions he has explored” (Ormsby, 2007, p. 99).

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<sup>4</sup> For Frank (1994, p. 87) “Ghazali's basic theological system is fundamentally incompatible with the traditional teaching of the Ash'arite school. Instead “while rejecting significant elements of Avicenna's cosmology, al-Ghazali adopted several basic principles and theses” (Frank, 1992, p. 11). Thus, according to Frank Ghazali is more Avicennian than to be an Asharite. Putting aside my responses to those who accuses Ghazali as a killer of philosophy in the Islamic world for my next topic (See endnote 10 of this study), let me say a few words about such accusation, in relation to the debates on determining the place of Ghazali towards Kalam in general and Asharism in particular. By attempting to uncover Avicennian influence on Ghazali, Frank’s view pulled the first trigger in debunking the previous misunderstanding of Ghazali that portrayed him as a destroyer of philosophy. That said, as a result of his alleged discovery of Avicennian influence towards Ghazali, Frank caused a paradigm shift in Ghazalian study. In fact, following Frank’s work, the recent studies on Ghazali aims at showing the depth and intricacy of the philosophical dimensions of his works instead of exerting much effort on justifying the incorrectness of the above accusation. In accordance with Ghazali’s epistemology for instance, while striving to unravel the Avicennian foundations on Ghazali’s mysticism A. Triger (2012, pp.109-10) in his recent work argued that “Ghazālī’s analysis of [mystical concepts like] dhawq and his analysis of mushāhada rest on a firm Avicennian foundation, which has not been sufficiently explored by modern research.”

Richard Frank’s bold assertion in rejecting Ghazalian Asharite theological thoughts, however was open to debate. By defending Ghazali’s Asharite approach Marmura (1995, p. 89) for instance, asks “if this is the case, how is one to explain those affirmations of al Ghazali that belong to the classical Asharite tradition?” Richard Frank’s and Michael Marmura’s enlightening debates on categorizing Ghazali either as an Asharite or Avicennian schools of thoughts resulted fundamentally from a need to locate his place towards efficient causation. On the one hand, Frank in his two monographs, *Creation and the Cosmic System: Al-Ghazālī & Avicenna* and *Al-Ghazali and the Asharite School*, argued that “al-Ghazali posited efficacious, causal powers in created things in opposition to traditional Asharite occasionalism” (McGinnis, 2006, p. 439) In Frank’s point of view:

Ghazali holds (1) that the created universe is a closed, deterministic system of secondary causes whose operation is governed by the first created being, an “angel” (or “intellect”) associated with the outermost sphere, (2) that God cannot intervene in the operation of secondary causes, celestial or sublunary[...] (Frank, 1994, p. 4)

On the other hand, Michael Marmura “in several articles as well as the notes to his translation of al-Ghazali’s *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* has argued that al-Ghazali maintained the traditional occasionalism of Ash’arite Kalam, and suggested how al-Ghazali modified his philosophical understanding of science to accommodate this occasionalism” (McGinnis, 2006, p. 439) Marmura in his own words argued as follows:

Asharism... regarded all temporal existents as the direct creation of God, decreed by His eternal attribute of will and enacted by His attribute of power. What humans habitually regard as sequences of natural causes and effects are in reality concomitant events whose constant association is arbitrarily decreed by the divine will. Between created things, there is no necessary causal connection— indeed, no causal interaction at all. God is the sole cause: all events are His direct creation. There is no inherent necessity in the uniformity of nature. Hence, when at certain times in history God interrupts this uniformity by creating a miracle on behalf of a prophet or holy man, no contradiction ensues. *In his works of kalam, al-Ghazali ardently defended this atomist-occasionalist doctrine on logical and epistemological grounds.* (Al-Ghazali, 1997, pp. xvi-xvii emphasis mine).

In their search for bringing a third alternative, thinkers like Jon McGinnis (2006, p. 440) argued that Ghazali, “holds an intermediate position between traditional Ash’arite occasionalism and the *falasifa*’s theory of efficient causation.” Furthermore, by taking Frank’s and Marmura’s works as a thesis and

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antithesis Frank Griffel ( 2009, p. 11) in his book *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* “wishes to be considered a synthesis” in the fashion of Hegelian dialectics. Griffel argues:

Perched between the Asharite and the Avicennan poles, al-Ghazali develops his own cosmology. Al-Ghazali was a very systematic thinker, and given that the Avicennan system is much more systematic than the Asharite one, it is unsurprising that his synthesis owes much more to Avicenna than to al Ashari. Through his analysis, he finds a very elegant path toward adopting Avicenna's determinist cosmology while remaining a Muslim theologian who wishes to preserve God's free choice over His actions (Griffel, 2009, pp. 11-12).

In addition to this, Griffel ( 2009, p. 12) also wants to “explain why al-Ghazali is indeed the first Muslim theologian who actively promotes the naturalization of the philosophical tradition into Islamic theology.”

<sup>5</sup> I am hesitant because apart from the above discussion, we should be mindful of two arguments, firstly the contemporary Iranian philosopher Nasr (1996, p. 68) brought an interesting argument; for him the Eurocentric scholarship wrongly characterized Islamic philosophy “as simply Graeco-Alexandrian philosophy in Arabic dress, a philosophy whose sole role was to transmit certain important elements of the heritage of antiquity to the medieval West.” But if it is scrutinized from its own point of view “and in the light of the whole of the Islamic philosophical tradition which has had a twelve-century-long continuous history and is still alive today, it becomes abundantly clear that Islamic philosophy, like everything else Islamic, is deeply rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith” . Nasr elaborates his case clearly as follows:

Islamic philosophy [...] derives its principles, inspiration, and many of the questions with which it has been concerned from the sources of Islamic revelation [...] The very presence of the Qur'an and the advent of its revelation was to transform radically the universe in which and about which Islamic philosophers were to philosophize, leading to a specific kind of philosophy which can be justly called “*prophetic philosophy*” [...] The prophetic consciousness which is the recipient of revelation [...] had to remain of the utmost significance for those who sought to know the nature of things. How were the ordinary human means of knowing related to such an extraordinary manner of knowing? How was human reason related to that intellect which is illuminated by the light of revelation? [...] Such questions [...] remain, therefore, central to over a millennium of Islamic philosophical thought. ***One might say that the reality of the Islamic revelation and participation in this reality transformed the very instrument of philosophizing in the Islamic world.*** The theoretical intellect [...] of the Islamic philosophers is no longer that of Aristotle although his very terminology is translated into Arabic. The theoretical intellect, which is the epistemological instrument of all philosophical activity, is Islamicized in a subtle way that is not always detectable through only the analysis of the technical vocabulary involved (Nasr S. , 1996, pp. 68-69 emphasis mine).

The other essential point in discussing Islamic philosophy was made by Oliver Leaman (2002, pp. 7-8) Leaman denied the above claim which pictures the origins of *falasfa* as “purely Greek” , as if noting philosophical were never been in Islam, for him it is a huge error to consider Islamic philosophy as it was begun “with the translation of Greek texts.” According to Leaman without denying the later influence of the translated Greek texts, we should acknowledge the presence of an eye-catching “philosophical distinctions [that] arose in Islamic theology without any apparent direct connection with philosophy, but rather through the development of appropriate rules of legal reasoning.” Here I am not underestimating the influence of the Greek philosophers on Muslim philosophers. In fact, if we briefly explain the characteristics of their thought, we inescapably perceive them relying on “rational inquiry [, as] a sufficient means to understand the nature of reality” (Chittick & Murata, 1996, pp. 207-208). Even though they officially accepted Islam and undeniably swayed by its pillars, in accordance to intellectual references, the philosophers, unlike the theologians, “tend to avoid Koranic references and instead appeal to observation and logical reasoning.” Furthermore, the Muslim philosophers “accepted many of the findings of the Greek philosophers as true” and they used to boast of their acquaintance of Greek philosophy. They even used to call Aristotle the “First Teacher” and it is after Aristotle that Al-Farbi earned his title as the “Second

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Teacher” (Chittick & Murata, 1996, p. 208). Thus, rather than underestimating the Greek influence, my plan in the aforementioned discussions is to differ those who overlook the fact that, there were philosophical discussions before the presence of the Greek texts as well as those who failed to acknowledge the effect of prophecy on the thoughts of the Muslim philosophers.

<sup>6</sup> Here we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that in medieval times Mathematics was not a distinct subject matter as in our time rather it was part of philosophy.

<sup>7</sup> In his widely viewed short video talk entitled 'The Intellectual Collapse of Islam' Neil deGrace Tyson (2012) claimed that “there was a fertile time in Islam between 800-1100 AD [and] the intellectual center of the world was Baghdad, [...] Arabic numerals, Arabic names of stars, algebra, algorithm” traced back to this epoch. And he then questioned that, why this golden era of Islam has collapsed? His answer was astonishingly fallacious, he obviously committed false cause fallacy in his saying it is because of Ghazali that the Golden era of Islam in mathematics came to an end. As a result of Ghazali's statement that “Manipulating numbers was the work of the devil” said Tyson, “the entire mathematical enterprise of that period” has crumbled, and according to him “Islam has not recovered from that since.” Prof. Basil (2016) Altaie in his short video response entitled 'Neil Tyson's Accusations of Al Ghazali' challenged Tyson to provide at least a single concrete evidence belonging to Ghazali that contains such statement as “Manipulating numbers was the work of the devil.” Tyson didn't come up with any solid evidence or any document to support his bold accusation. As we have discussed above in a vivid manner Ghazali proclaimed the neutrality of mathematics in religious matters of Islam, he even warned those fool believers who blindly reject it. Thus, it is reasonable to say that Tyson's accusation is nothing, but full of nonsense. Furthermore, Dr. Joseph Lombard (2017) in his short video clip entitled 'Neil deGrace Tyson, Abu Hamid Al Ghazali and the Decline of Science' replied to the factual and historical inconsistency of Tyson's accusation. Lombard argued that “there was not a decline in mathematics after the death of Abu Hamid Al Ghazali.” As a matter of fact, Lombard contends, “if we identify the golden age of astronomy in the Islamic world, it was yet to come. The observatory of Maghara and Samarakand founded in the 13th and 15th centuries respectively were probably the greatest observatories that the Islamic world had ever known and many of the stars that have Arabic names were in fact discovered at these two observatories.”

<sup>8</sup> During Al-Ghazali's time the present-day scientists categorized under the umbrella of the philosophers, particularly they were known as natural philosophers.

<sup>9</sup> To provide some sort of clue concerning *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Ghazali's motive to write this book is that he witnessed a bunch of philosophers who “had been led to repudiate Islamic beliefs and neglect the ritual basis of worship as unworthy of their intellectual attainments.” Unfortunately, the origin of their unbelief in most of them was nothing more than the prestige given for the classical philosophers. Ghazali here differentiates the “philosophical sciences such as mathematics and logic [and] those which, like physics and metaphysics” as we have seen so far, the former ones are not the subject of conflict and thus we don't need to abandon them, even if some of the latter ones were conflicting and mistaken Ghazali didn't rush to deem the physical sciences as heretical. Thus, in his book, his objective was to refute the philosophical thoughts of Al-Farabi and most importantly Avicenna as the two most reliable Islamic representatives of Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism (Fakhry, 2004, pp. 228-29).

He divided the book into two parts. The former one constitutes sixteen discussions on metaphysical questions; and the latter embraces four discussions on the natural sciences. In his reaction of the metaphysics of the philosophers, Ghazali presented three harsh objections which could unmask them as an unbeliever, these are: one because they affirmed “that men's bodies will not be assembled on the Last Day, but only disembodied spirits will be rewarded and punished, and the rewards and punishments will be spiritual, not corporal.” Here Ghazali states that the philosophers “were indeed right in affirming the spiritual reward and punishments, for these also are certain; but they falsely denied the corporal

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rewards and punishments and blasphemed the revealed Law in their stated views”. Secondly, Ghazali taxed the philosophers as unbelievers in their affirmation that God only “knows universals, but not particulars.” What they missed here according to Ghazali is that “there does not escape Him [God] the weight of an atom in the heavens or the earth.” Thirdly, Ghazali's characterization of the philosophers as unbelievers resulted from their declaration of “the eternity of the world” (Al-Ghazali, 1980, pp. 10-11). In other lines of thoughts, Ghazali, as already noted, was much careful so as not to discard the views of the philosophers as heresy. However, this don't work in the aforementioned three metaphysical thoughts because it is the place where we find the position of the philosopher's heretical defects. There is no patience concerning these issues in the revealed Law, which is why Ghazali is unapologetic.

<sup>10</sup> Mainly because of the *Incoherence of the Philosophers* a half dozen of scholars accused Ghazali as a destroyer of philosophy in the Islamic world. Solomon Munk cited in Griffel (2009, p. 5) for instance says Ghazali “struck a blow against philosophy from which it never recovered in the Orient.” According to Ernest Renan “a war was waged against philosophy in all lands of Islam during the century following al-Ghazali's condemnation (Griffel, 2009, p. 5). But to understand the falsity of such accusations, it is enough to cast even a cursory glance at his works; none of them acknowledge the complete refutation of philosophy. As Peter Adamson (2015, p. 53) correctly noticed “Al-Ghazālī criticized Avicenna not for doing philosophy, but for making mistakes in his philosophy (‘reckless precipitance of the philosophers’ would be a more literal translation of the title of his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* than ‘incoherence of the philosophers’).” Other than that, as noted above, Ghazali proclaimed the neutrality of logic and mathematics, he also tolerated part of the political and ethical sciences of the philosophers except for some metaphysical thoughts. Above all, how could he be a killer of philosophy in the Islamic world and the anticipator of some major modern philosophical thoughts at the same time? A careful exploration into his work can reveal that he had exactly similar thoughts with modern thinkers like Hume and Descartes. There might be a bit exaggeration in his claim but Akdogan (2003, p. 487) was not entirely incorrect when he trace the genealogy of some modern philosophies back to Ghazali. He argued that apart from their difference of frame work “the parallel between Ghazali and Descartes, particularly on the issues of absolute truth, scepticism, dreamlike reality, and the separation of soul from body, is very conspicuous.” In addition to Descartes, whom we all know as the father of the modern philosophy, Ghazali also anticipated “Hume's work on causality which in turn inspired Kant [...] to achieve the greatest revolution in modern philosophy by relinquishing the correspondence theory of truth. Since things are always perceived through mind, we cannot know objects or their real properties as they are in themselves” (Akdogan, 2003, p. 502). In short, Akdogan (2003, p. 502) by quoting al-Attas' statement summed it up, “in the act of perception, the perceiver perceives the form of the external object, that is, an image or representation of the external reality, and not the reality itself”. Hence, if Ghazali's thoughts play a huge role in disabling the Islamic world unlike the west, from having philosophical speculations, then how could his thoughts become the central philosophies of the the west?

We should also question the very notion of alleged death of philosophy in the Islamic world because mainstream Islam continued integrating philosophy after Ghazali's death. Abdelhamid I. Sabra expressed this continuity as follows:

[...] after a period of appropriation of the Greek sciences in their translation from Greek to Arabic and in the writings of the falsafa up to Avicenna (Ibn Sina, d. 428/1037), philosophy and the Greek sciences were naturalized into the discourse of kalam and Islamic theology. The discipline of kalam, that is, Muslim rationalist theology as it had been developed by the Mutazilites and continued by Sunni and Shiite schools of thought, most prominently the Asharites, offered a new homeland to falsafa. The situation was in this respect similar to that in the Latin Middle Ages, during which the study of philosophy could not be distinguished from Christian theology. The discourse of Islamic theology integrated the tradition of falsafa so much so that Muslim theologians such as Fakhr al-Din al Razi (d. 606/1210), Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 672/1274), and many other scholars of this period must be considered philosophers as well as theologians. They studied the works of the philosophical tradition in Islam, most notably those of Avicenna; composed comments on these works; discussed the philosophers'

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teachings; and often adopted positions that were developed by one of the earlier *falasifa*. With highly original theories, many of the later Islamic philosophers such as al-Suhrawardi (d. 587/1191) or Mulla Sadra Shirazi (d. 1050/1640 ) founded their own philosophical schools (Griffel, 2009, p. 6).

<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, there are three exceptional instances that the philosophers admitted for the possibility of “miracles that disrupt the habitual courses of nature.” Firstly, they maintain that once the *imaginative faculty* of the prophets become strong enough to surpass the shackles of the senses, they will attain the capability to experience in their waking hours what others might grasp in a rare dream, which is “the preserved tablet, the forms of future particular events becoming imprinted in it” (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 165). Secondly, the philosophers claim that the prophets could have a special property that belongs to the *theoretical rational faculty*. This faculty enables the prophets “to pass rapidly from one idea to another, such as from a problem to its solution and vice versa” What is so special about this faculty is that unlike other people’s, here, the prophet’s intellectual faculty is well developed even in the absence of any learning at all (Alon, 1980, p. 398). The third special property attributed to the prophets is “practical faculty of the soul, which may reach a point [in strength] whereby [natural things] are influenced by it and do its bidding.” In other words, for the philosophers, the body is a vehicle for the soul and the soul is not restrained to utilize only one’s own body. If the soul is pure and strong, it is likely that “the natural power outside his [sic] body would serve it.” Thus, the prophet’s soul can blow wind or cause the falling of raindrops without a visible natural cause. But such kind of miracle “would only occur in an atmosphere disposed to receive [such action]”. Thus, for the philosophers “it would not extend to having wood change into an animal” (Al-Ghazali, 1997, pp. 164-65).

<sup>12</sup> The above discussion reveals that preceding David Hume “Ghazali argued that habit and observation are the imperfect sources of our knowledge of the external world” (Halevi, 2002, p. 32). Hume as quoted in Akdogan (2003, p. 498) expressed his denial of necessitarian notion of causality as follows:

When one particular species of event has always, in all instances, been conjoined with another... we call the one object, Cause-, the other, Effect. We suppose that there is some connexion between them; some power in the one, by which it infallibly produces the other, and operates with the greatest certainty and strongest necessity. It appears, then, that this idea of a necessary connexion among events arises from a number of similar instances which occur of the constant conjunction of these events...But there is nothing in a number of instances, different from every single instance, which is supposed to be exactly similar; except only, that after a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist. This connexion, therefore, which we feel in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion.

Like Ghazali Hume holds that “the law of causality...originates from our experiences and is linked by psychological habit [or] our mind acquires the conception of causality after being affected by the habitual succession of events in time (Akdogan, 2003, p. 498). Even witnessing the exact similarity of Ghazalian and Humean denial of necessitarian notion of causality, I beg to differ with Zakzouk’s (2003, p. 54) saying that “David Hume has not added anything new to this theory.” This is because, although Hume was not the original source of the idea, the outcome of their thought makes all the difference. Indeed, the outcome of these thinkers denial of necessitarian causal connections is divergent. As Stephen Riker ascertained, their “denial leads them, respectively, to radically different positions on religious issues. For instance, while al-Ghazālī uses the position to defend divine omnipotence and the possibility of miracles, Hume is led thereby to the denial of the possibility of miracles and to skepticism about the very existence of God” (Moad, 2008, p. 26).

<sup>13</sup> This argument may remind us Blaise Pascal's 'betting' or 'wager', which intends to prove God’s existence by appealing not to evidence; rather to pragmatic rationality of faith in God. For Pascal one can say “an action is pragmatically rational implies that [if] it is in one's best interests to do that action. Rationality and

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truth can diverge, of course. But in the absence of conclusive evidence of truth, [...] rationality should be our guide” (Jordan, p. 172). In one of its many forms Pascal’s wager can be summarized as follows:

[...] a person, just by virtue of being in the world, is in a betting situation such that one must bet one's life on whether there is or is not a God. This may be a world in which God exists or this may be a world in which God does not exist [...] if one bets on God and believes, then there are two possible outcomes. Either God exists and one enjoys an eternity of bliss, or God does not exist and one loses very little. On the other hand, if one bets against God and wins, one gains very little. But if one loses that bet, the consequences may be horrendous (Jordan, p. 172).

According to those who investigated the matter deeply it wouldn’t be insane to think the root of Pascal’s wager back to Ghazali. Paslacios for instance in his book *Huellas des Islam* contends that the “conformity between al-Ghazali's and Pascal's ideas about the next world” is much more than a mere coincidence (Sharif, 1966, p. 1363).

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