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THE EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ

Theory and Practice

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A Thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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Title:	The Educational Thought of al-Ghazālī: Theory and Practice
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This thesis tries to bring together al-Ghazālī's thoughts about different aspects of education, scattered in numbers of works of different kinds and aims at presenting his educational theory in its complete picture. His life, his intellectual career, his mental crises, as well as the solution to these crises were deeply influential in the formation of his educational thought; and it appears that al-Ghazālī was remarkably successful in absorbing the conflicting schools of thought of his time. The theoretical aspect of his educational thought consists of a psychology that focuses on a series of mental operations by which man attains knowledge. Being a Ṣūfī, al-Ghazālī holds that knowledge can be attained through either sensual-rational or purely spiritual ways, believing the latter to be the source of true knowledge. Consequently, in his classification, he places spiritual sciences over the rest of the sciences. The practical aspect of his thought concerning education centers on the duties of student and teacher which must be fulfilled to ensure the success of the learning process.

RÉSUMÉ

Auteur: Hasan Asari
Titre: L'éducation dans la pensée d'al-Ghazālī: théorie et pratique
Departement: L'Institut des études islamiques, Université McGill
Niveau: M.A.

Cette thèse propose de rassembler les propos d'al-Ghazālī concernant différents aspects de l'éducation --éléments qui sont parsemés dans ses nombreux et variés ouvrages-- et de présenter sa théorie de l'éducation sous son visage le plus complet. Sa vie, sa carrière intellectuelle, ses crises psychologiques, de même que les solutions qu'il a aportées à ces crises, eurent tous une grande influence sur la développement de sa pensée sur l'éducation; il semble qu'al-Ghazālī a réussi à intégrer différents courants de pensée conflictuels de son époque. L'aspect théorique de sa pensée sur l'education consiste en une psychologie qui met l'emphase sur une série d'opérations mentales par lesquelles l'homme acquiert la connaissance. Al-Ghazālī, en tant que Ṣūfī, soutient que la connaissance peut être acquise par le biais de moyens sensibles et rationnels ou purement spirituels, croyant que ces derniers sont la source de toute vraie connaissance. Par conséquent, dans son classement des sciences, il situe les sciences spirituelles audessus des autres sciences. L'aspect pratique de sa pensée sur l'éducation met l'emphase sur les devoirs --de l'étudiant et du professeur-- qui doivent être réalisés afin de'assurer le succès du processus d'apprentissage.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Professor Donald P. Little, whose assistance and advice have been very essential for the completion of this thesis. Without his painstaking readings and corrections this thesis would have been far from the way it is now. I would also like to thank Professor Karel A. Steenbrink who also read this thesis and made invaluable corrections and suggestions beyond what I had expected.

I should take this opportunity to record my gratitude and appreciation to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the McGill-Indonesia Project for granting me a two-year scholarship during which the research for this thesis was undertaken. The staff of the Library of the Institute of Islamic Studies have also been very helpful in locating material, and sometimes even in making the less available material available through Interlibrary Loans. Them I thank very much.

Many friends, too many to mention, have contributed to this thesis in one way or another. Here, however, I would like to mention specially Mr. Affandi Mochtar with whom I had many discussions over many points presented in this thesis. To him, as well as others, I record my gratitude.

Last but certainly not least, my sincerest thanks are due to my parents

whose encouraging letters have been very helpful for me, especially during the days of completing this thesis.

H.A.

Montreal, 1993

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in this thesis:

BSOAS = *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.*

EI = *The Encyclopaedia of Islam.* 4 volumes. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1913-1936.

EI^2 = *The Encyclopaedia of Islam.* Second edition. 6 volumes to now. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1954-.

ERE = *The Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics.* 13 volumes. Edited by James Hastings. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908-1926.

JAOS = *Journal of the American Oriental Society.*

JRAS = *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.*

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INTRODUCTION

Education, it can be said, is an aspect of Islamic civilization about which not much information is to be found in comparison with other aspects of the same civilization. When in 1954 Aḥmad Shalabī published his book, *History of Muslim Education*, he opened his introduction with a complaint concerning the scarcity of materials on education that might be consulted when he was writing the book.[1] Shalabī's complaint seems to be justified since almost a decade later another major scholar of this field declared that "the history of Muslim education is still one of the comparatively dark areas in our knowledge of Muslim culture."[2] Since then, however, scholars have paid more attention to the field and a number of works have been published. Worthy of noting, among others, are those of Mehdi Nakosteen[3] and Seyyed Hossein Nasr.[4] George Makdisi has also contributed invaluable works in this field. Scattered in numerous articles that deal with different aspects of Islamic education, his thought seems to have been

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1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kashshāf, 1954), 5.

2 A.L. Tibawi, "Origin and Character of *al-Madrasah*," *BSOAS* 25 (1962): 225.

3 *The Islamic Origins of Western Education A.D. 800-1350, with an Introduction to Medieval Muslim Education* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1964).

4 *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); *Science and Civilization in Islam*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1987).

accumulated in his twin *Rises*.[5] To these we can add the work of Charles Michael Stanton[6] as well as the most recent study in the field by Jonathan Berkey.[7] There are some other works, but these are either very general or highly specialized.[8]

There is no doubt that these works have considerably increased our knowledge about Islamic education. Yet much remains and awaits further studies. The present study is devoted to the educational thought of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (450/1058-505/1111), which is very important and greatly influences almost all subsequent Muslim writers on the subject. In fact, it has been suggested that many of them are merely the repeators of what al-Ghazālī has said before.[9] Even the best-known Arabic work on teaching problems, the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* of Burhān al-Dīn al-Zarnūjī (end of 12th century) contains

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5 *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981) and *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West with Special Reference to Scholasticism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990).

6 *Higher Learning in Islam: The Classical Period A.D. 700-1300* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1990).

7 *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

8 To this we may include: Bayard Dodge, *Muslim Education in Medieval Times* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1962); Munir-ud-Din Ahmed, *Muslim Education and the Scholars' Social Status up to the 5th Century Muslim Era (11th Century Christian Era) in the Light of Tārīkh Baghdād* (Zurich: Verlag der Islam, 1968); Mansoor A. Quraishi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Education* (Baroda: Centre of Advanced Study in Education, 1970); and S.M. Ziauddin Alavi, *Muslim Educational Thought in the Middle Ages* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1988).

9 'Abd al-Amīr Shams al-Dīn, ed., *al-Madhhab al-Tarbawī 'ind Ibn Jamā'ah* (Beirut: Dār Iqra', 1406/1986), 13; A.L. Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems* (London: Luzac & Co., 1972, repr., 1979), 41.

strikingly similar ideas to those of al-Ghazālī.[10] Yet this aspect of his thought has been generally neglected and this is especially true in comparison with the vast material on his Ṣūfī, philosophical, and theological thought.

Al-Ghazālī's educational ideas are contained mainly in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (*The Revival of Religious Sciences*)[11] which he wrote after his systematic investigation of theology (*kalām*), philosophy, Ismā'īlism (*al-bāṭinīyah*), and Ṣūfism[12] by which he became convinced that Ṣufism is the best way. This conviction occupies the central position in his educational ideas and has implications in the way he sees educational matters. For example, he pays more attention to the spiritual side of man, stressing aspects relating to the purification of the soul. On the other hand, he gives less value to *'ilm al-sharī'ah*, despite the fact that he lived at the time when *kalām* (scholastic theology) and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) were very popular and widely studied sciences, and despite the fact that he himself had, earlier, been heavily involved in them. It should not be forgotten, however, that his attempts to tie Ṣūfī and non-Ṣūfī learning are also striking.

Al-Ghazālī's educational thought can be studied in terms of theory and practice. Its theoretical side centers on his concept of knowledge, while its practical side concentrates on his elaboration of student-teacher interaction. On

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10 al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'līm al-Muta'allim Ṭarīq at-Ta'allum, Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning*, trans. G.E. von Grunebaum and Theodora M. Abel (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947), 1 n. 3. This work is now being studied by Affandi Mochtar, my fellow student at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University.

11 Published in numerous editions; I have used (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1358/1939).

12 George F. Hourani, "A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," *JAOS* 104 (1984): 296.

knowledge, al-Ghazālī sets forth detailed views on the theoretical level. He discusses the ways man attains knowledge and its value before proceeding to offer a detailed classification of the sciences. In his classification, al-Ghazālī views the sciences from different angles, including their intrinsic value, their ethical value, and their social effects. He also discusses knowledge from a practical aspect, i.e. from the point of view of students and teachers. Several duties must be performed by a teacher in order to be successful in his teaching activities; so must a student in his study. For al-Ghazālī the Hereafter is the ultimate goal of education, as it is also the final goal of Muslim life. Consequently, the whole process of education must lead to the attainment of this ultimate aim. As will be seen, it also has clear influence in his classification of sciences.

The primary source for al-Ghazālī's educational thought is of course his masterpiece. *Iḥyā'*, and particularly its first book, "Kitāb al-'Ilm" (The Book of Knowledge). In addition to this, his *O Disciple* (*Ayyuhā al-Walad*),[13] *Fātiḥat al-'Ulūm* (*Introduction to the Sciences*),[14] *Mīzān al-'Amal* (*Criterion of Action*),[15] and *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (*The Deliverer from Error*)[16] are also of importance. Rather than focusing on one source, this study puts together his ideas as expressed in different sources.

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13 Trans. George H. Scherer (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1951).

14 (Miṣr: al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥusaynīyah, 1322/1904).

15 (Miṣr: Maṭba'at Kurdistān al-'Ilmīyah, 1328 A.H.).

16 I have used the edition by Farid Jabre (Beirut: al-Lajnah al-Lubnānīyah li-Tarjamat al-Rawā'i', 1969).

Structurally, this study is divided into three chapters. Chapter One summarizes al-Ghazālī's biography with special attention given to his career as student and as teacher. An overview of intellectual currents of al-Ghazālī's time is also covered there. This overview closely follows al-Ghazālī's well-known 'investigation' of different groups of seekers of truth (*al-ṭālibīn*), since these groups represented the main intellectual currents of the time, or at least as seen by al-Ghazālī. The second chapter concentrates on his educational thought in its theoretical aspects. His classification of knowledge as well as various means of attaining it is discussed in this chapter. Special attention is given here to the nature and the role of intellect according to al-Ghazālī in relation to the way man attains knowledge. Chapter three deals with the practical side of his educational thought. It covers discussions about the upbringing of young children and the education of character (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*), as well as the duties of student and teacher by which the aim of education is hoped to be achieved. This chapter is followed by a concluding section.

CHAPTER ONE

AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND

The materials on this particular topic are extensive. The following are the sources on which the present study is based. Needless to say, the most important source on al-Ghazālī's life is his *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*. The English translation of Watt is also used.[1] In addition, numerous biographers include al-Ghazālī's biography in their works. The following are referred to most frequently: Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Khallikān,[2] Abū al-Falāḥ Ibn al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī,[3] Abū al-Qāsim Ibn 'Asākir,[4] and Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī.[5] The introductory part of the *Itḥāf* is also significant for it tries to synthesize different information from previous sources.[6]

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1 W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, Ethical and Religious Classics of East and West (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1953).

2 *Wafayāt al-A'yān wa-Anbā' Abnā' al-Zamān*, 8 vols., ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, n.d.).

3 *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār man Dhahab*, 8 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1350/1931).

4 *Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftarī fī-mā Nusiba ilā al-Imām Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī* (Damascus: Maṭba'at al-Tawfīq, 1347/1927).

5 *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrā*, 10 vols., ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥilw and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanaḥī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1964-1976). Another edition of *Ṭabaqāt*, that is (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ḥusaynīyah, 1323/1905) has also been used. Most of the references are to the new edition. References to the old edition are marked with "(Old)" following the volume number.

6 al-Sayyid Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-Sādat al-Muttaqīn bi-Sharḥ Asrār Iḥyā'*

For the broader historical events, this study relies primarily on Ibn al-Jawzī[7] and Ibn Kathīr.[8]

Among modern English works, I have used the works of Duncan Black Macdonald,[9] Samuel Marinus Zwemer,[10] Margaret Smith,[11] and W. Montgomery Watt.[12] Having no access to Western languages other than English, I have had to neglect a number of important works.[13]

ʿUlūm al-Dīn (Miṣr: Maṭbaʿat al-Maymanīyah, 1311/1893).

7 *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wal-Umam*, 10 vols. (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmānīyah, 1359/1939).

8 *al-Bidāyah wal-Nihāyah fī al-Tārīkh*, 14 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿādah, n.d.).

9 "The Life of al-Ghazzālī, with Especial Reference to his Religious Experiences and Opinions," *JAOS* 20 (1899): 71-132; and *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, The Semitic Series (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903).

10 *A Moslem Seeker after God: Showing Islam at Its Best in the Life and Teaching of al-Ghazālī, Mystic and Theologian of the Eleventh Century* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1920).

11 *al-Ghazālī the Mystic* (London: Luzac, 1944).

12 *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963).

13 This includes, for example, Maurice Bouyges, *Essai de chronologie des ouevres de al-Ghazālī (Algazel)*. ed. M. Allard (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1959); Farid Jabre, *La notion de certitude selon Ghazali dans ses origines psychologiques et historiques* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958); idem, "La biographie et l'oeuvre de Ghazali reconsidérées à la lumière des *Tabaqat* de Sobki," *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicaine d'Études Orientales du Caire* I (1954): 73-102; Henri Laoust, *La Politique de Ghazālī* (Paris: Genthner, 1970); idem, "La Survie de Ghazālī d'apres Subkī," *Bulletin de'Etudes Orientales* 25 (1972): 153-172; idem, "Ghazālī politique et juriste," *Mélange de la Faculte orientale de l'Université St. Joseph de Beirut* 46 (1970-1971): 427-499; A. Renon, "L'education des enfants dès le premier âge par l'Imam al-Ghazali," *Revue de l'Institut des belles lettres arabes* 8 (1945): 57-74; A.J. Wensink, *La pensée de Ghazzālī* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1940). Many other sources are listed in Kōjirō Nakamura, "A Bibliography on Imām al-Ghazālī," *Orient* (Tokyo) 13 (1977): 119-134.

A. Al-Ghazālī's career as student and teacher

It would be very convenient to have a clear division between the life of al-Ghazālī as a student on the one hand and as teacher on the other. If one is to do this, he would probably take al-Ghazālī's departure in 484/1091 from Nishapur to Baghdād as the turning point by which he became a teacher and would consider the period previous to this as the time when he was a student. However, this was true only in its most formal sense. This division will not stand when al-Ghazālī's biography is considered more thoroughly. The later part of his time with the famous scholar al-Juwaynī is significant in this respect. Biographers note that al-Ghazālī had started to teach even while al-Juwaynī was still alive and when al-Ghazālī was actually studying under him, most likely as an assistant (*mu'īd*) to him.[14] Similarly, at Baghdād, when he was carrying on his investigation of *kalām*, (scholastic theology), philosophy, *al-Bāṭinīyah* (Ismā'īlīsm), and Ṣūfism, he can be viewed as a student of these sciences though at the same time he was a professor of the Niẓāmīyah College of Baghdād. So in Nishapur, although he was formally a student of al-Juwaynī, in a sense he was also a teacher. In Baghdād, while being formally a teacher, he was informally also a student. With these facts in mind, despite its convenience, having a strict division of his career as a student and a teacher seems to be oversimplifying the matter without being necessarily helpful. For this reason, in the following it is preferred to discuss the phases together.

Al-Ghazālī was born at Ṭūs, a town near present day Meshed, Iran, in

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[14] Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīn*, 292; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt*, IV, 11.

450/1058,[15] when the Saljūqs, who were to be his future patrons, had just established themselves in Baghdād.[16] Not much is known about the family to which al-Ghazālī was born. Watt says that it was "comparatively poor." Nevertheless al-Ghazālī's father was able to leave some money with a Ṣūfī friend, charging him with the education of al-Ghazālī and his brother Aḥmad.[17] Yet, although poor, "the family seems to have been in live touch with contemporary intellectual and religious currents".[18]

In his *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, al-Ghazālī explains that a thirst for knowledge was present in his spirit from the beginning; this seems to be important for it functions as the underlying element of his later studies and inquiries. He says: "to thirst after a comprehension of things as they really are was my habit and custom from a very early age. It was instinctive with me, a part of my God-given nature, a matter of temperament and not of my choice or contriving."[19] With this God-given nature he pursued his intellectual career and, in the view of many scholars, became "the most original thinker that Islam has produced and its greatest theologian", with towering influence.[20]

Al-Ghazālī had his early education[21] in his hometown, Ṭūs, under Aḥmad Ibn

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15 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, VI, 193.

16 Arvind Sharma, "The Spiritual Biography of al-Ghazālī," *Studies in Islam* 9 (1972): 67.

17 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, VI, 193; Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 20.

18 Sharma, "Spiritual Biography," 68.

19 Watt, *The Faith*, 21; al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 10.

20 Macdonald, "al-Ghazzālī," in *EI*, II, 146.

Muḥammad al-Radhkānī, a scholar of *fiqh* (Islamic law) of the time, of whom we do not know much. Biographers do not go further than just saying that he was one of al-Ghazālī's teachers on *fiqh*.[22] From Ṭūs, we are told by some biographers that al-Ghazālī moved to Jurjān (c. 465/1073) and studied there under Imām Abū Naṣr al-Ismā'īlī,[23] although others, like Ibn 'Asākir, Ibn Khallikān, al-Dhahabī, and al-Ṣafadī, do not mention Abū Naṣr al-Ismā'īlī as his teacher. With the exception of his name, very little is known about him. The assertion of Makdisi that al-Ghazālī took *ta'līqah* (notes taken from lectures or books of a certain professor) on law from Abū Naṣr al-Ismā'īlī, appears to be impossible, given the year of death he cites; that is, 405/1014, which is over forty years before al-Ghazālī was born.[24] Indeed there had been in Jurjān a certain Abū Naṣr al-Ismā'īlī who died that year, but who was more likely a scholar of *ḥadīth* instead of *fiqh*.[25] Margaret

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21 No date is recorded which may tell us the earlier part of this education. But if we are to assume that he followed the normal age of his time to start schooling, eleven, he was eleven by 1069. See Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. S. Khuda Bukhsh and D.S. Margoliouth (London: Luzac & Co., 1937; reprint, New York: AMS Press Inc., 1975), 182. Apparently Mez does not include the *kuttāb* period, where children learned basically the skills of reading and writing, which starts earlier. Ibn Ḥazm suggests that children should start attending *kuttāb* training when they are five. See his *Risālat Marātib al-'Ulūm*, in *Rasā'il Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabīyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1987), IV, 65.

22 'Abd al-Karīm al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Yamānī (Hyderabad: Maṭba'at Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmānīyah, 1386/1966), VI, 29; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, IV, 91.

23 Jamāl al-Dīn al-Asnawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah*, ed. 'Abd Allāh al-Jibūrī (Baghdād: Maṭba'at al-Irshād, 1391/1971), II, 242; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt*, IV, 11; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, VI, 195. Macdonald, "The Life," 76; Smith, *Al-Ghazālī*, 13.

24 Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 127.

25 His biography is found in al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, IV, 92-93; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīn*, 231-232.

Smith suggests that al-Subkī has given this date of death wrongly,[26] but says nothing about the fact that the same date appears in earlier works.[27] The most promising solution to this problem is given by Zarīnkūb. He suggests that it is not possible that al-Ghazālī studied under Abū Naṣr al-Ismāʿīlī, but rather under another al-Ismāʿīlī: Abū al-Qāsim al-Ismāʿīlī, a great scholar who lived up to 477/1085.[28] In addition to this, al-Ghazālī also studied under other scholars, so Zarīnkūb remarks.[29]

It was on his way back from Jurjān that the famous story about him took place. Robbers fell upon him and took away everything he brought with him including his notes. But although he was threatened, he succeeded in convincing the robbers that they should give his notes back because they would be of no use to them.[30] So, whoever his teacher was, it is evident that the notes which took him three years to memorize, when he returned to Ṭūs, had been taken during his study in Jurjān. This also suggests that after his return from Jurjān he stayed at Ṭūs for at least three years. During this period it is related that he accompanied a certain Ṣūfī *shaykh* named Yūsuf al-Nassāj, of whom we know

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26 Smith, *Al-Ghazālī*, 13 n. 3.

27 For example, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tabyīn*, 232; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Lubāb fi Tahdhīb al-Ansāb* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1357 A.H.), I, 46; and ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Yamānī (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmānīyah, 1382/1962), I, 242.

28 For his biograhy see Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, III, 354.

29 ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Zarīnkūb, *al-Farār min al-Madrasah: Dirāsat fi Ḥayāt wa-Fikr Abī Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī* (Beirut: Dār al-Rawḍah, 1992), 27-28. To the knowledge of the present writer, this is the most recent study on the life of al-Ghazālī.

30 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, VI, 195; Macdonald, "The Life," 76.

virtually nothing.[31]

Al-Ghazālī then continued his education in Nishapur, where he became a student at its Niẓāmīyah College. Here he became a disciple and constant companion (*mulāzim*) of the celebrated Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī from whom, according to al-Subkī and Macdonald, he studied theology, dialectics, philosophy, and logic.[32] As has been shown above, in this period al-Ghazālī, besides studying under the Imām, became an assistant to him.[33] Another well

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31 Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf*, I, 9; Macdonald, "The Life," 90; Smith, *Al-Ghazālī*, 14.

32 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, VI, 196. Macdonald, "The Life," 77; See also Smith, *Al-Ghazālī*, 15; Zwemer, *A Moslem*, 79. Concerning this, Muhammad Abul Quasem says: "It was the Imām who introduced al-Ghazālī to logic and philosophy. The main subject of his study under the Imām, however, was doubtless dogmatic theology (*kalām*), a subject on which he does not seem to have been introduced by any of his other teachers." See *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī: A Composite Ethics in Islam* (Selangor, Malaysia: Published by the author, 1975), 17. On al-Juwaynī's life, see Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīn*, 278-285; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, V, 165-222; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 358-362.

33 Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīn*, 292, writes: "*wa-ṣāra anẓar ahl zamāni-hi wa-wāḥid aqrāni-hi fī ayyām Imām al-Ḥaramayn wa-kāna al-ṭalabah yastafīdūn min-hu wa-yudarrisu la-hum wa-yurshidu-hum.*" (He became the best and the most thoughtful of his contemporaries in the lifetime of Imām al-Ḥaramayn; students benefited from him, he taught them and gave them guidance). When reading *Shadharāt*, I have not been able to find the phrase "'he taught law in the lifetime of his master' (*darrasa fī ḥayāti shaikhih*)" cited in Professor Makdisi's *The Rise of Colleges*, 127, despite the fact that I have used the same edition of the book. Nonetheless, I do find a similar phrase which reads "*wa-jalasa lil-iqrā' fī ḥayāt imāmihī*" (he taught (literally, he sat down for reading [session]) during the lifetime of his master), in the section dealing with al-Ghazālī's time with al-Juwaynī. See Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt*, IV, 11. al-'Aydarūs, on the other hand, writes: "*wa-ṣāra anẓar ahl zamāni-hi wa-awḥad aqrāni-hi wa-jalasa lil-iqrā' wa-irshād al-ṭalabah fī ayyām imāmi-hi wa-ṣannafa.*" (He became the most thoughtful and the best of his contemporaries, he taught and guided students during the lifetime of his *imām*, and wrote). See 'Abd al-Qādir al-'Aydarūs, *Ta'rīf al-Iḥyā' bi-Faḍā'il al-Iḥyā'*, on the margin of al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1358/1939), I, 41. See also Smith, *Al-Ghazālī*, 15, where referring to this period she says: "even at this early age al-Ghazālī was lecturing to his fellow-students and beginning to write."

known teacher of al-Ghazālī in Nishapur was the Ṣūfī Abū 'Alī al-Fārmadhī, who had been the student of the celebrated Ṣūfī al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), among others. Without being specific, al-Subkī suggests that al-Fārmadhī had dedicated himself to several jobs in a *madrasah* (*wa-qad mārasa fī al-madrasah anwā'an min al-khidmah*). Perhaps this was the Madrasat al-Qushayrī which was founded in 391/1001, where al-Qushayrī was in charge.[34] Unfortunately, we cannot ascertain whether al-Ghazālī then studied with al-Fārmadhī in the *madrasah* at the same time when he was studying with al-Juwaynī in another *madrasah*, or whether he studied with al-Fārmadhī by attending the latter's circle which was held, we are told, in a beautiful garden of Nishapur.[35]

Becoming a *mulāzim* meant that at this time al-Ghazālī had already become a graduate student and was about ready to become an independent scholar of theology and law.[36] This would go in accordance with the assertion of Watt that the standard of instruction in Ṭūs and Jurjān at the time of al-Ghazālī was high,

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34 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, V, 305; On al-Fārmadhī's life, see Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt*, III, 355-356; On the Madrasat al-Qushayrī, see Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 250.

35 Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, 3rd edition, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ and Muḥammad Na'īm al-Arqasūsī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1406/1986), XIII, 565; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt*, III, 356; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, V, 306; Smith, *Al-Ghazālī*, 17.

36 The term *mulāzim* (verb, *lāzama*) is synonymous with *ṣāḥib* (verb, *ṣāḥaba*) which in medieval Islam meant a graduate student. Students of this level were involved in disputation (*munāẓarah*) and *ta'līq* (to take notes, to record and to report on something based on the lectures or books of a professor). During the Ottoman period *mulāzim* had a different meaning, that is, assistant to a professor of law. See Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 114, 192. *Munāẓarah* as learning method in medieval Islam has been studied, for example, by Larry B. Miller in his "Islamic Disputation Theory: A Study of the Development of Dialectic in Islam from the Tenth Through Fourteenth Centuries," (Ph.D. Thesis, Princeton University, 1984).

at least in the fields of Tradition and Jurisprudence, and thus was sufficient for him as the basis for his graduate study in Nishapur.[37] Indeed, Nishapur and its surrounding cities had been well established as learning and cultural centers since the flourishing of the Sāmānid dynasty.[38] In the fourth/tenth century, Nishapur was in fact the greatest center of learning in the eastern Muslim lands. Designated as 'the birth-place of the *madrasah*', Nishapur had had a number of *madrasah*s (colleges) long before the time of al-Ghazālī: Madrasat Ibn Fūrak, Madrasat Miyān Dahiya, Madrasat Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Ṣibghī, and Madrasat Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarā'inī, to mention some examples.[39]

In the midst of al-Ghazālī's success as a student in Nishapur, his teacher, al-Fārmadhī, died in 477/1084; and in the next year, 478/1085, al-Juwaynī also died. Macdonald puts great importance on these deaths (especially that of the latter) for, according to him, they freed al-Ghazālī from the shadow of his teachers and paved the way for him to become a fully independent scholar.[40] Al-Ghazālī then went to the camp of Niẓām al-Mulk, the Saljūqs' vizier, in the eastern part of Nishapur, where he was invited to participate in discussions with other '*ulamā*' (scholars) which were attended by Niẓām al-Mulk himself. Here he proved himself to be a great scholar and won the attention of Niẓām al-Mulk who later, in 484/1091, appointed him professor in the Niẓāmīyah College of Baghdād.[41]

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37 Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 22.

38 V.F. Buchner, "Sāmānids," in *EI*, IV, 124.

39 Mez, *The Renaissance*, 179-180; For a more complete list of *madrasah*s of Nishapur, with a short explanation of each, see Bulliet, *The Patricians*, 249-255 (Appendix I).

40 Macdonald, "The Life," 78.

Some time during his stay in Nishapur al-Ghazālī underwent a crisis of absolute scepticism for nearly two months. During this period he doubted virtually everything. He could not trust sense-perceptions, nor could he take intellect as reliable. His doubt was so deep that he even questioned the necessary intellectual truths (*al-ḍarūrīyāt*) such as ten is more than three.[42] It has been suggested that his interest in Ṣūfism contributed to this crisis. He studied Ṣūfism and practiced some Ṣūfī exercises, yet he was not satisfied with what he achieved. Similarly, he was also dissatisfied with what he attained from the study of law and of scholastic theology.[43] The exact date of this crisis is still obscure. Roughly, Macdonald places it some time during his stay in Nishapur and before his departure for Baghdād in 484/1091.[44] Later, however, he becomes more certain that it was during al-Ghazālī's stay at the camp of Niẓām al-Mulk, and thus cannot be earlier than al-Juwaynī's death (478/1085), believing that al-Ghazālī could not have fallen into such a crisis as long as he was attached to his

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41 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tabyīn*, 292; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, IV, 217; Adīb Nāyif Diyāb, "Al-Ghazālī," in *The Cambridge History of Islamic Literature: Religion, Learning and Science in the ʿAbbāsid Period*, ed. M.J.L. Young, J.D. Latham and R.B. Serjeant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 425.

42 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 12-13; Watt, *The Faith*, 22-25; idem, "al-Ghazālī," in *EI²*, II, 1039. This first crisis, it seems to me, has so far received far less attention from scholars compared with his second crisis some years later when he was in Baghdād. See, however, D.C. Moulder, "The First Crisis in the Life of al-Ghazālī," *Islamic Studies* 11 (1972): 113-123; and Eric L. Ormsby, "The Taste of Truth: The Structure of Experience in al-Ghazālī's *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*," in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, ed. W.B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 136.

43 Hassan Ibrahim Gwarzo, "The Life and Teachings of al-Ghazālī," *Kano Studies* 1 (1965): 13; M. Saeed Sheik, "al-Ghazālī," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy with Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands*, ed. M.M. Sharif (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1963; repr., Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1983), 584.

44 "The Life," 78.

teachers, al-Fārmadhī and al-Juwaynī.[45] It was after he had passed through this scepticism and once again accepted the necessary truths of intellect that al-Ghazālī started his well known investigation of different existing seekers of truth.[46]

This earnest investigation will be discussed in full together with the discussion of the intellectual currents of al-Ghazālī's time. For now we shall concentrate on his career as a teacher at the Niẓāmīyah College of Baghdād, which seems to have been a complete success. He arrived in Baghdād in Jumādā I 484/June-July 1091 and replaced its former professors: Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ṭabarī and Abū Muḥammad al-Fāmī al-Shīrāzī.[47]

As to what subject (or subjects) was taught by al-Ghazālī, it is hard to ascertain and would require us to revert to the long, unfinished discussion of the nature of the *madrasah* itself. George Makdisi, arguing against Ignaz Goldziher, who insists on the close association of the victory of the Ash'arites over the Mu'tazilites with the Niẓāmīyah *madrasahs*, confines al-Ghazālī to be merely a teacher of *fiqh* to the exclusion of any other science. Central to this assertion is his conviction that the root *'d-r-s'* and its derivatives were exclusively used to refer to *fiqh*; thus *dars* necessarily means *fiqh* lesson; *madrasah* means a place where *fiqh* is taught; *mudarris* means a professor of *fiqh*; and so on.[48] Tibawi, on

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45 *Development*, 218.

46 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 15; Watt, *The Faith*, 26.

47 On these two professors, see Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, IX, 55; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah*, XII, 137.

48 "Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdād," *BSOAS* 24 (1961): 10-11, 40; For Goldziher's view, see his article, "Education (Muslim)," in

the other hand, contends that only *falsafah* (philosophy) was excluded from the curriculum of the *madrasah*. "Apart from this restriction the whole range of *'ulūm al-dīn* [religious sciences] appears to have been within its scope."[49] Moreover, he argues that the root *'d-r-s'* and its derivatives may and, indeed, was used for other subjects than just *fiqh*. To this we may add the conclusion of Naqīb who, after his research, is convinced that "*tadrīs* is a vague term which covers the teaching of more than one subject, and it cannot be invariably equated with *dars*". He further states that his inquiry into the term "yields no general rule as to its exact meaning."[50]

Indeed with his wide-ranging knowledge it is reasonable to assume that al-Ghazālī taught more than just *fiqh*. Furthermore, al-Ghazālī's own statement that he studied philosophy during his free time from writing and teaching religious 'sciences' (*al-'ulūm al-shar'īyah*) indicates that he taught more than one subject[51] which likely included theology, though not necessarily in his formal classes.[52] The obscurity of the subjects taught in the Niẓāmīyah has indeed been

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ERE, V, 198-207 (esp. 199) and his *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 104. See also Aydin Mehmed Sayili, "The Institutions of Science and Learning in the Moslem World," (Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University, 1941), 31, where the central position of *kalām* in *madrasah*s is asserted.

49 A.L. Tibawi, "Origin," 228, 229 n. 4. Tibawi (Ibid., 231, n. 1) further provides references in which disciplines like *adab*, *tafsīr*, and *ḥadith* are reported to have been taught in the Niẓāmīyah.

50 Murtaḍā Ḥasan Naqīb, "Niẓām al-Mulk: An Analytical Study of his Career and Contribution to the Development of Political and Religious Institutions Under the Great Saljūqs," (Ph.D. Thesis, McGill University, 1978), II, 375. Cf. Sayili, "The Institutions," 6-8.

51 *al-Munqidh*, 18.

52 For an example of a definition of *al-'ilm al-shar'ī* that includes theology

one of the sources from which the conflicting opinions of Goldziher, Makdisi, and Tibawi stem. The painstaking study of Naqīb about the career of al-Juwaynī in his relation to the Niẓāmīyah allows him to conclude only that he "did indeed teach Ash'arī *kalām* to a number of disciples, though it is not certain that he did so at the Niẓāmīyah."[53] Similarly, however, there is no evidence that he taught it outside of the *madrasah.*

Perhaps a look at biographies of some of al-Ghazālī's students will be of help. Out of hundreds of students who studied under al-Ghazālī in Baghdād, I have randomly found eighteen names.[54] Three different phrases are used by biographers in describing the nature of their relations with al-Ghazālī, namely, '*tafaqqaha 'alā*', "*allaqa al-ta'līqah 'an*', and '*sami'a al-Ghazālī*'. The first phrase is used most frequently (in fourteen out of the eighteen cases). The second phrase is used in three cases, while the last is used in one case only. Here again, we are confronted with the difficulty of determining the exact meaning of these terms. If '*tafaqqaha*' and '*ta'līqah*' necessarily mean 'to learn *fiqh*' and 'course taught by a professor of *fiqh*' as Makdisi asserts,[55] then it would be inevitable to conclude that *fiqh* was the only subject taught by al-Ghazālī. Another source,

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(*kalām*), see al-Tahānawī, *Mawsū'at Iṣṭilāḥāt al-'Ulūm al-Islāmīyah* (Beirut: Shirkat Khayyāṭ lil-Kutub wal-Nashr, 1966), III, 760.

53 Naqīb, "Niẓām al-Mulk," 404.

54 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, IX, 251; X, 121, 122; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah*, XII, 196, 197, 219, 222, 224; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, I, 99; III, 444; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 278; VI, 30; VII, 36, 81, 83. 84, 90, 93, 101, 118, 179-180, 204, 224, 295, 322; IV (Old), 278; Abū Muḥammad al-Yāfi'ī, *Mir'āt al-Jinān wa 'Ibrat al-Yaqẓān fī Ma'rifat mā Yu'tabar min Ḥawādith al-Zamān* (Hyderabad: Maṭba'at Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Niẓāmīyah, 1390/1970), III, 225. 271, 279, 302. A concise list is in Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf*, I, 44-45.

55 Makdisi, "Muslim Institutions," 12-13.

however, gives considerably different meanings to the terms. Al-Tahānawī explicitly states that *fiqh* covers the whole range of the religious sciences. As an example, he cites Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767) who named his book on *kalām* (theology) *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*.[56] It is interesting to note here that al-Ghazālī himself speaks of change in the meaning of *fiqh* and that at his time it has a different meaning from what it had before.[57] Thus to settle the question decisively it would be necessary to investigate the evolution of the meaning of *fiqh*. This, however, would require an independent study that we cannot possibly pursue here.

Although we do not know in any great detail the subjects al-Ghazālī taught we do know that he was successful in his career as a teacher in Baghdād. Soon he gained popularity and became one of the most prominent scholars of the capital. His lectures drew crowds and attracted not only students but also his contemporary scholars.[58] "Apparently, he attained to all the glory that a scholar could by worldly success, ... his advice began to be sought in matters religious and political," and he came to be influential, in some ways, comparable to the highest official of the state.[59]

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56 *Mawsū'ah*, V, 1157; cf. Duncan Black Macdonald, "Fakīh," in *EI²*, II, 756; and Ignaz Goldziher and J. Schacht, "Fiḳh," in *EI²*, II, 886-891.

57 *Iḥyā'*, I, 38.

58 Ibn 'Aqīl and Abū al-Khaṭṭāb, who were prominent Ḥanbalī scholars, were said to have attended al-Ghazālī's lectures. See 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl 'alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadīyah, 1372/1952), I, 146; Khalīl Ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bil-Wafayāt* (Istanbul: Maṭba'at al-Dawlah, 1931), I, 275.

59 Sheikh, "al-Ghazālī," 584. See also al-'Aydarūs, *Ta'rīf*, 42.

He taught at the Niẓāmīyah in Baghdād for four and a half years. Having concluded his investigation of the paths to knowledge (see section B below), in favor of Ṣūfism, which put him in a difficult situation, he had to choose between staying in Baghdād with its glory or leaving at the expense of all he had. In *al-Munqidh* he tells us how he reconsidered his circumstances and his motives as a teacher and scholar and found out that they were not purely for the sake of God; the sciences he was dealing with appeared to him as religiously worthless and this created disquiet in his mind. For nearly six months, starting from Rajab 488/July 1095, he was torn between the attractions of his worldly career and those of the eternal life. His condition became even worse when this spiritual crisis affected him physically. He developed a speech impediment and lost his power of digestion. So bad was his condition that all physicians gave up hope.[60]

It was in this condition that he finally decided to follow the path of the Ṣūfī, abandoned his position,[61] and left Baghdād for Damascus, where he spent nearly two years in religious and ascetic exercises aimed at the purification of his soul and the improvement of his character. The difficulty of establishing the chronology of his journey during this period has been long recognized. In *al-Munqidh*, however, al-Ghazālī tells us that from Damascus he went on to Jerusalem, and then to Mecca and Medina.[62] Al-Subkī adds that he also went to

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60 *al-Munqidh*, 36-37; Watt, *The Faith*, 56-57.

61 His brother, Aḥmad, then took his place and taught at the Niẓāmīyah as a deputy (*nā'ib*) for about a year. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, IX, 87; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah*, XII, 149, 196.

62 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 38; Watt, *The Faith*, 59; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 169; Macdonald, *Development*, 226.

Egypt and Alexandria and stayed there for a time.[63] Macdonald has suggested the involvement of political factors in his departure from Baghdād.[64] Nevertheless, Faris finds it difficult to establish a definite link between this departure and the contemporary political events. He also casts doubt on the assertion that al-Ghazālī was in disfavor with the rulers.[65] In any case, it is interesting to note that al-Ghazālī was not the only scholar who left his study for the ascetic life.[66]

Despite the many obstacles he had to face, al-Ghazālī continued his wandering ascetic life for about ten years. During this time, many things were revealed to him which cannot be reckoned. He learned that the Ṣūfīs were on the true and the only path toward God and that they lived the best life, had the soundest method and the purest character; a conclusion that he held strongly to the end of his life.[67] Al-Ghazālī's magnum opus, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* was composed

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63 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, VI, 199.

64 Indeed the period when al-Ghazālī was in Baghdād was marked by many political events which likely affected him. He arrived in Baghdād when the power of the Ismā'īlīs, whom al-Ghazālī later criticized, was growing after they had taken the fortress of Alamūt in 483/1090. In 485/1092, a year after al-Ghazālī's arrival, his patron Niẓām al-Mulk was assassinated. Shortly after, Malik Shāh, then the Saljūq sultan, died before a civil war and the breakdown of the empire. When Tutush and Barkiyāruq contested the throne, al-Ghazālī and the caliph, then al-Mustaẓhir, supported the cause of Tutush who was destined to be defeated by Barkiyāruq. A note is also made that al-Ghazālī returned to public life and taught again in Nishapur in 499/1105, a year after the death of Barkiyāruq. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, IX, 62-63; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah*, XII, 139; Macdonald, "The Life," 80.

65 Nabih Amin Faris, "Al-Ghazzālī," in *The Arab Heritage*, ed. Nabih Amin Faris (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), 145.

66 Makdisi, "Muslim Institutions," 40, n. 1. Another example of this is 'Abd al-Malik al-Ṭabarī, a scholar of *fiqh*, who left Baghdād to live an ascetic life at Mecca and stayed there to the end of his life. See al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, VII, 191.

67 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 39; Watt, *The Faith*, 60; Macdonald, *Development*, 227.

during this period of spiritual exile.[68] In this book one sees how he integrated spiritual insights with practical matters and thus produced a distinctive treatment of his subject in which he never fails to relate anything he discusses to the inner state of man. His outlook is also characterized by criticism of the prevalent method of studying *sharī'ah*, in which jurists placed too much stress on abstract details.[69]

During these ten years, he had returned to his family and to his native country, after having a circle in Baghdād for a while,[70] but continued to live an ascetic life and did not take on the public duty of teaching until 499/1106, when Fakhr al-Mulk Ibn Niẓām al-Mulk, who was then the vizier of Khurāsān, urged him to teach at the Niẓāmīyah College of Nishapur. At this point al-Ghazālī felt that it was not right for him to continue his retirement simply on the grounds of laziness and a love of the easy life, nor could it be justified on the basis of fear of worldly contamination or of building spiritual power. Eleven years had passed, then, when he took up this duty and set off for Nishapur at the end of 499/1106, resolving not to revert to his former state in Baghdād, renouncing material considerations and worldly glory in the dissemination of knowledge.[71]

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[68] Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," 296-297; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi al-Tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir [and] Dār Bayrūt, 1966), X, 252.

[69] Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 138, 152; For his charge against the jurists, see al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 28; Nabih Amin Faris, *The Book, Being A Translation of the Kitāb al-'Ilm of al-Ghazzālī's Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1962), 50-52.

[70] al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, VI, 200; Smith, *Al-Ghazālī*, 30-31.

[71] al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 49-50; Watt, *The Faith*, 74, 76; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīn*, 294.

He taught in Nishapur for about three years, where a certain Abū Sa'īd al-Nīsābūrī (476/1083-548/1153) is said to have been his graduate student.[72] In 502/1109, for reasons not clearly known, he left Nishapur and again retired to Ṭūs to head a *madrasah* and a *khānqāh* (monastery) and spent the rest of his days among his personal disciples.[73] At least three of his students are known to us through al-Subkī's biographies: Muḥammad Ibn As'ad al-Ṭūsī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nu'aymī, and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ṣūfī.[74] Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and Ṣūfism were the main sciences to which he devoted most of his last days, both studying and teaching.[75] Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī lists several names of men under whom al-Ghazālī studied *ḥadīth*. Among them are Abū Sahl Muḥammad al-Ḥafṣī al-Marāzī, Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh al-Khawārī, and Naṣr Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī.[76] In Ṭūs, al-Ghazālī died on 14 Jumādā II 505/19 December 1111, after going through "a beautifully complete and round life in which the end came to the beginning."[77]

B. Overview of intellectual currents in al-Ghazālī's time

As shown above, al-Ghazālī, after his first crisis, decided to pursue a

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72 Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt*, IV, 151; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, III, 223; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, VII, 25.

73 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, VI, 200; Macdonald, "The Life," 104; Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 147-148.

74 *Ṭabaqāt*, VII, 152-153, 230; IV (Old), 66.

75 al-'Aydarūs, *Ta'rīf*, 43; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, IV, 218; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, VI, 200.

76 Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf*, I, 19.

77 Sheikh, "al-Ghazālī," 587.

thorough investigation of four types of seekers (*al-ṭālibīn*) of the truth: the theologians (*mutakallimūn*), the philosophers, the Ismā'īlīs (*al-bāṭinīyah* or *ahl al-ta'lim*), and the Ṣūfīs,[78] each of which, in the words of Ormsby,

> may be seen as embodying a quite specific approach to knowledge. Theology, as proceeding by dialectic and controversy: an adversarial and disputatious approach. Ismā'īlī teaching... as epistomizing sheer authoritarian procedures: acceptance of belief on the authority of a sinless *imām*. Philosophy, as dependent on reason and demonstration. And the Ṣūfī way, which relies on inner transformation, on inspiration and illumination, and on realizing these in living practice.[79]

Within this classification, al-Ghazālī covers the whole range of intellectual developments of his time and categorizes them in such a way that facilitates his inquiry.[80] This section focuses on the way in which al-Ghazālī appraises and evaluates these groups, their methods and their teachings, with some attention given to the wider context of intellectual currents. As will be seen none of these groups was completely new to al-Ghazālī when he started his inquiry. To different degrees, he had been acquainted with them in his previous study.

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78 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 15. Perhapas it would be interesting to point out that a contemporary of al-Ghazālī, the renowned 'Umar al-Khayyāmī (d. 517/1123) also classifies the seekers after knowledge into four categories, which are exactly the same as that of al-Ghazālī. Furthermore, he, like al-Ghazālī, recognizes that Ṣūfism is the best of all ways. See Nasr, *Science*, 33-34.

79 "The Taste of Truth," 137.

80 The intellectual life of his time was complex, involving different schools of thought in both religious and non-religious matters. Thus we cannot claim that the four groups singled out by al-Ghazālī were the only existing groups. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to believe that they were the most significant ones. Cf. Muhammad Yasir Nasution, *Manusia Menurut al-Ghazali* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 1988), 5.

The Theologians

Although he probably undertook systematic study of theology in Nishapur at the camp of Niẓām al-Mulk, he had, of course, already studied under the best Ash'arī theologian of the time, al-Juwaynī, so that his knowledge of this subject must have been comparatively advanced. In any case, his stay at the camp (for about six years) must have broadened what he had learned from al-Juwaynī, through direct involvement in theological debates and conflicts with other scholars gathered by Niẓām al-Mulk. Zwemer emphasizes the importance of al-Ghazālī's contacts with different schools of thought, both philosophical and religious, and takes them as a key factor in his literary productivity.[81] It is significant that Niẓām al-Mulk favored Shāfi'ī-Ash'arī scholars in contrast to the policy of the previous vizier, al-Kundūrī (d. 456/1064).[82] This policy generated reactions, especially from the Ḥanbalites who had consistently criticized the Ash'arites (as well as the Mu'tazilites) for their practice of *kalām* (rational theology). Several instances of theological disputes of the time, with a high probability of the involvement of political motives, are recorded.[83]

Theology in the time of al-Ghazālī was actually very much the same as it was before. The incorporation of philosophical principles into Islamic theology pioneered by the Mu'tazilites gained noticable success during the *Miḥna*

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81 Zwemer, *A Moslem*, 54.

82 Naqīb, "Niẓām al-Mulk," II, 342-366.

83 See, for example, Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, I, 19-20; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt* (Old), III, 98-99; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 107; For a summary of the events see Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 106-108.

(Inquisition) (218/833-234/849) but did not go further once the *Miḥna* was over.[84] Then came al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935) and al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), who provided a sort of synthesis out of the conflicting theological viewpoints.[85] During the century between al-Ash'arī and al-Ghazālī, not much change occurred, especially on the question of the use of reason in theological discussion. The extent of the use of reason remained very much the same as it was during the *Miḥna*.[86]

It was against this background that al-Ghazālī carried out his inquiry into theology, as he briefly explains in *al-Munqidh*. From this passage, three points can be extracted: (1) the aim of *kalām* was to preserve the faith against heretics' deviations; (2) *kalām* does not fully achieve its aims since it fails when confronted with sceptics and students of philosophy; and (3) therefore it does not attain al-Ghazālī's aim, despite its invaluable services for others.[87]

That al-Ghazālī's objection to theology focuses on its philosophical side is interesting since it is precisely this aspect that makes him distinct from other theologians of the time. To a certain degree, he deviated from the general attitude of his contemporary Ash'arī theologians, though he continued to belong to this school of theology.[88] According to Watt, he was the first theologian since the

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84 Goldziher, *Introduction*, 87.

85 Ibid., 104.

86 Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 95. For a fuller account on the theological developments during and after the life of al-Ash'arī see George Makdisi, "Ash'arī and the Ash'arites in Islamic Religious History," *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962): 37-80; 18 (1963): 19-39.

87 *al-Munqidh*, 16-17; Watt, *The Faith*, 27-29.

88 Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 119. For a different view on the theological school of al-Ghazālī, see George Makdisi, "The Non-Ash'arite Shāfi'ism of Abū Ḥāmid

Miḥna to take into account the achievements in the field of philosophy made by the Mu'tazilites. And indeed his strong awareness of the philosophers and philosophizing theologians as adversaries and his use of philosophy, especially logic, in his theological exposition constitute a major part of his contribution to the development of Islamic theology in later periods.[89] Through the path he paved, it became common for subsequent theologians to speak of theological matters on philosophical grounds.[90]

The Philosophers

Unsatisfied with the theologians, al-Ghazālī proceeded to study philosophy, about which we have more detailed information in *al-Munqidh* as well as other works. He makes it plain that he did this study during his professorship in Baghdād, using his free time from lecturing for extensive reading without actually having direct contact with any philosopher. It took him about two years of reading in order to have a satisfactory understanding of the sciences of the philosophers, and another year to work over the results of his readings.[91] Two very important books resulted from this study: *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* (*The Aims of the Philosophers*) and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*).

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al-Ghazzālī," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 54 (1986): 239-257, where it is argued that though al-Ghazālī was clearly a Shāfi'ī, he was not necessarily an Ash'arī, despite close asociation of the two at his time.

89 Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 95, 123.

90 W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969), 101-102.

91 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 18; Watt, *The Faith*, 30.

The former, containing a descriptive exposition of the sciences of the philosophers and their aims, was a background work for the latter.[92] Al-Ghazālī classifies the philosophers into three types: materialists (*dahrīyūn*), naturalists (*ṭabīʿīyūn*), and theists (*ilāhīyūn*). Among the last group, he names al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), both of whom drew the close attention of al-Ghazālī,[93] "for they, according to him, held a comparatively more final position and expose the defects of the materialists and the naturalists quite effectively, thus saving him from doing so for himself."[94] The complete sciences of the philosophers are divided by al-Ghazālī into six: mathematics, logic, physics, metaphysics, politics, and ethics. He discusses them in considerable detail, showing what part of them must be rejected, and what is harmless as well as the potential dangers of studying them or rejecting them without having sufficient knowledge of them.[95]

In his study, al-Ghazālī was very careful in making any judgement. He considers it inappropriate to refute any group before thoroughly understanding its system of thought. Thus he spent sufficient time reading philosophy and descriptive writing on it to ensure the thoroughness of his understanding before putting forth his criticism of it. We thus see that "throughout, he is very cautious to mark nothing as unbelief that is not really so; to admit always those truths of

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92 al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1961), 31-32.

93 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 20; Watt, *The Faith*, 30-32.

94 Sheikh, "al-Ghazālī," 594.

95 Ibid., 33-43; al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 18-27; Macdonald, "The Life," 84.

mathematics, logic, and physics that cannot be intellectually rejected."[96] Al-Ghazālī's objections against philosophers center almost entirely on their metaphysical doctrines. His *Tahāfut* testifies to this. Out of twenty philosophical propositions he discusses there, only four are related to physics, the rest relate to metaphysics.[97] The whole book is devoted to showing self-contradictions of the philosophers from a religious point of view. Indeed, his criticism was severe, but he was still cautious. In most of their propositions he does not go further than charging them with heresy (*bid'ah*). Only on three points does he charge them with unbelief (*kufr*), namely, their doctrine of the eternity of the world, their assertion that God does not know particulars, and their denial of bodily resurrection.[98]

His study of philosophy was successful in at least three ways. First of all, he undoubtedly understands the whole range of the sciences of the philosophers, especially those with close relations to theological questions. Secondly, having a thorough knowledge of it, he criticizes it effectively. In this context, Arberry designated al-Ghazālī as the "executioner-in-chief" who gave "the fatal blow to philosophy in Islam."[99] Though this designation seems to be very strong, and

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96 Macdonald, *Development*, 222.

97 al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1958), 84-85.

98 A.J. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957), 62; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1962; paperback ed., 1987), 90. For a full discussion of the issues see al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 122-131, 204-215, 280-304. His challenges and criticisms against philosophy were to be taken up by Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), in a book with a most telling title, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*), referring, of course, to al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut*.

though there must be some other reasons, his criticism, especially in the *Tahāfut*, contributed much to the decline of philosophy in Islam during and after his time.[100] Finally, he was successful in integrating some philosophical techniques into Islamic theology, for example, his use of syllogistic reasoning in his theological work, *al-Iqtiṣād fi al-I'tiqād*. This paved the way for later theologians to do the same.[101]

That he learned much from his study of philosophy, perhaps, can be inferred from the fact that "he never speaks disrespectfully of philosophy and science in their sphere."[102] Nevertheless, it is also clear that philosophy failed to satisfy him fully, so that soon he was ready to put the third group under his scrutiny, wondering if he could find what he was looking for there.

The Ismā'īlīs (*ahl al-ta'līm*)

Al-Ghazālī arrived in Baghdād roughly one year after the Ismā'īlīs under the

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99 *Revelation*, 61.

100 Ibid, 64. Other scholars, however, are against the notion that philosophy died under the attacks of the orthodoxy with al-Ghazālī was the champion. What happened to philosophy, they argue, was a great transformation and radical change in character due largely to the influence of Ṣūfism. See Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2nd edition (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 126; 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, "Awhām Ḥawl al-Ghazālī," in *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī: Dirāsāt fī Fikrih wa-'Aṣrih wa-Ta'thīrih*, ed. Ḥasan Mikwār, et. al. (Rabāṭ: Jāmi'at Muḥammad al-Khāmis, 1988), 242-243; S. Pines, "Philosophy," in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. 2B, *Islamic Society and Civilization*, ed. P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton and Bernard Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 814.

101 Watt, *Islamic Philosophy*, 90; idem, *Muslim Intellectual*, 71.

102 Macdonald, *Development*, 223.

leadership of Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ (d. 518/1124) took the fortress of Alamūt from the control of the Saljūqs, an act which marked their strong presence and growing influence even within the territory of the Saljūqs.[103] Al-Ghazālī himself notes that Ismā'īlīsm and its teachings had been widely known when he settled on his study of it. This coincided with the command of the caliph al-Mustaẓhir (reigned 487-512/1094-1118) for him to write on the religious system of this group, thus reinforcing his original motive to study them. Indeed al-Ghazālī wrote a book on Ismā'īlīsm entitled *al-Mustaẓhirī*,[104] which must have been dedicated to the caliph. There were at least two reasons why al-Ghazālī should be interested in Ismā'īlīsm: (1) it had become a very strong movement with great influence that naturally attracted his attention, and (2) the basic principle underlying its teachings was blind acceptance (*taqlīd*), something that al-Ghazālī had always been combatting.[105] Indeed, not only did the Ismā'īlīs with their *da'wah* become a religious and intellectual problem of the time, they also carried out activities which were politically threatening to the caliphate and the Saljūqs. It was only one year after al-Ghazālī's arrival in Baghdād that his patron Niẓām al-Mulk was assassinated by an agent of this group as their first victim. This was followed by

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103 For the development of the Ismā'īlīs and their relation with the Saljūqs, see Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967; paperback edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 43-63.

104 This work bears different titles: *al-Mustaẓhirī fī al-Radd 'alā al-Bāṭinīyah, Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭinīyah wa-Faḍā'il al-Mustaẓhirīyah*, and *al-Radd 'alā al-Bāṭinīyah*. See 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Mu'allafāt al-Ghazālī* (al-Jumhūrīyah al-'Arabīyah al-Muttaḥidah: al-Majlis al-A'lā li-Ri'āyat al-Funūn wal-Adab wal-'Ulūm al-Ijtimā'īyah, n.d.), 82.

105 Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizārī Ismā'īlīs Against the Islamic World* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1955), 127.

a series of other assassinations, more than forty during the leadership of Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ alone.[106]

As was the case with his study of philosophy, al-Ghazālī started by collecting the Ismā'īlīs' opinions, which he arranged in a way that helped him understand them, and then refuted them. In *al-Munqidh* he lists five books in which his refutation of Ismā'īlīsm is to be found. Most important of them are *al-Mustaẓhirī* and *al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm*.[107] The central point of his objection to the Ismā'īlīs was their insistence on the existence of the mysterious infallible *Imām* from whom one may get infallible knowledge, a point with which al-Ghazālī was eminently disatisfied.[108] Perhaps it is worth noting that it has been suggested that by "Error (*al-ḍalāl*)" in the title of his autobiography, *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, al-Ghazālī meant the *da'wah* of Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ from Alamūt.[109]

No definite result can be assigned to al-Ghazālī's criticism of Ismā'īlīsm, except that perhaps he made it less attractive on the intellectual level.[110] In fact, although it fluctuated in its intensity, the *da'wah* of Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ continued

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106 Lewis, *The Assassins*, 51.

107 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 28, 33; Watt, *The Faith*, 44, 52.

108 Macdonald, *Development*, 224; Watt, *Islamic Philosophy*, 88. Al-Ghazālī's refutation has been critically summarized by Hodgson in his *The Order*, 126-131. A century after al-Ghazālī, an Ismā'īlī scholar, 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad al-Walīd (d. 612/1215), responded to al-Ghazālī's refutation. For an analysis and summary of this response, see Henri Corbin, "The Ismā'īlī Response to the Polemic of Ghazālī," in *Ismā'īlī Contributions to Islamic Culture*, ed. S.H. Nasr (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977), 69-98.

109 Hermann Landolt, "Ghazālī and *'Religionswissenschaft'*: Some Notes on the *Mishkāt al-Anwār* for Professor Charles J. Adams," *Asiatische Studien* 1 (1991): 20.

110 Watt, "al-Ghazālī," in *EI²*, II, 1041.

down to the time when the Mongols destroyed the fortress of Alamūt in 654/1256. Political reasons, rather than the influence of al-Ghazālī, lie behind this destruction.[111]

The Ṣūfīs

Al-Ghazālī turned finally to the Ṣūfīs. When he started this investigation, he must have had some measure of knowledge of Ṣūfism from his previous teachers. Besides being entrusted to a Ṣūfī in his early age, he also studied later with teachers known as pious Ṣūfīs: Yūsuf al-Nassāj in Ṭūs and al-Fārmadhī and al-Juwaynī in Nishapur. As a matter of fact, in the words of Zwemer, "the atmosphere in which al-Ghazālī was educated... was that of mysticism."[112] As he states in *al-Munqidh*, he had learned that the Ṣūfī 'way' consisted of intellectual concepts and beliefs and practical activities, and that for him its intellectual side was much easier than its practical side.[113]

Accordingly he started to read the works of previous Ṣūfī masters like Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, al-Junayd, al-Shiblī, and Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī, as well as other major Ṣūfīs until he had a thorough comprehension of Ṣūfism on its intellectual level. Unlike his study of philosophy, it appears to me that in the case of Ṣūfism, beside his private readings, al-Ghazālī made contacts with

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111 Hodgson, *The Order*, 258-262; idem, "The Ismāʿīlī State," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, *The Saljūq and Mongol Periods*, ed. J.A. Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 479-482.

112 *A Moslem*, 73.

113 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 35; Watt, *The Faith*, 54.

contemporary Ṣūfī masters and received some oral instruction (*al-ta'allum wal-samā'*). Nevertheless, so far no particular Ṣūfī has been identified as his living Ṣūfī mentor in this period. He pursued his study up to the point where only the most distinct part of Ṣūfism was left, the part that cannot be learned save through direct experience and a complete transformation of moral being. Al-Ghazālī illustrates the distinction between these two sides of Ṣūfism as the difference between (a) knowing the intellectual definition of health and (b) enjoying health itself.[114]

Up to this point of development, we have his own statement that reveals his inner condition:

> Now from the sciences I had laboured at and the paths I had traversed in my investigation of the revelational and rational sciences (that is, presumably, theology and philosophy), there had come to me a sure faith in God most high, in prophethood (or revelation) and in the Last Day. These three credal principles were firmly rooted in my being, not through any carefully argued proof, but by reason of various causes, coincidences and experiences which are not capable of being stated in detail.[115]

It was after he finished this study that he finally decided to leave Baghdād to pursue the aspect of Ṣūfism he had not mastered, its practice.

To place this study in a wider context, it is important to see the development of Ṣūfism before and during the time of al-Ghazālī. The late fourth/tenth century was, in many respects, the period of organization and reconciliation of Ṣūfism, during which two developments are significant. First of all, the need to formulate a simpler form of Ṣūfism so that it could be understood and accessible to a

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114 *al-Munqidh*, 36; Watt, *The Faith*, 54-55.

115 Watt, *The Faith*, 55-56; al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 36.

greater part of society. This need appeared as a result of the fact that Ṣūfism, in some ways, developed outside the mainstream of both intellectual and social developments of Muslim society.[116] When to this was added some Ṣūfī utterances and practices which to many seemed strange, or sometimes wrong, the split became more serious. The case of al-Ḥallāj (d. 310/922) probably best illustrates the point.[117] Second was the need to preserve the teachings of Ṣūfī masters and to transmit them in written form in addition to oral transmission. This need manifested itself in the composition of Ṣūfī books during the last quarter of the fourth/tenth century. Moreover, these books were also meant, in the words of Annemarie Schimmel, "to prove to the world the perfect orthodoxy of Ṣūfī tenets."[118]

It was thus when Ṣūfī literature was extensive and when the 'reconciliation' was still an ongoing process, that al-Ghazālī undertook his study of it in the late fifth/eleventh century. Though he was naturally influenced by previous Ṣūfīs through their writings, he himself contributed to the subsequent development of Ṣūfism. Particularly influential for al-Ghazālī were al-Makkī (d. 386/996) and al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857). The former's *Qūt al-Qulūb* (*The Food of the Hearts*) was closely studied by al-Ghazālī and is mentioned in his *al-Munqidh*. It was mainly through this book that al-Makkī "exercised considerable influence" in al-Ghazālī's

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116 Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 162.

117 A.J. Arberry, "Mysticism," in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. 2, *The Further Islamic Lands, Islamic Society and Civilization*, ed. P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970): 613-615.

118 *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 84.

"mode of thought and writing."[119] One scholar goes even so far to say that al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* might be called "an enlargement of the *Qūt al-Qulūb*."[120] "By far the greatest of those who were influenced by al-Muḥāsibī, and the one upon whom he had the greatest influence, was ... al-Ghazālī."[121] The influence of al-Muḥāsibī tends to be more traceable than that of other Ṣūfīs. One only needs to go to al-Ghazālī's masterpiece, *Iḥyā'*, to see the lines where he follows al-Muḥāsibī's *Kitāb al-Tawahhum*. The strength of this influence allows Smith to claim that in fact "it was al-Muḥāsibī who laid the foundations on which Ghazālī has built up the mighty structure of his teaching, al-Muḥāsibī who originated, while Ghazālī, out of his own genius and greater knowledge, has developed and added, and so brought to perfection his own doctrine of the religious life, lived Godward and manward."[122] On the othe hand, Arberry charges that in the *Iḥyā'*, al-Ghazālī "extensively plagiarised from the *Kitāb al-Tawahhum*."[123]

It would be interesting indeed to test the validity of this charge, but it would carry us too far from the present study. It is sufficient, therefore, to state that he owed much to his predecessors. On the other hand, subsequent Ṣūfīs owed him

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119 A.J. Arberry, *Ṣūfism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, 5th impression (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1969), 68.

120 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Ṣūfism," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 4, *The Period From the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R.N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 462.

121 Margaret Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdād: A Study of the Life and Teaching of Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī A.D. 781- A.D. 857* (London: The Sheldon Press, 1935), 269.

122 Ibid., 280, and for details of this influence, see 269-279.

123 Arberry, *Revelation*, 64.

perhaps even more. As has been mentioned above, al-Ghazālī lived in the period of the 'reconciliation' of Ṣūfism to orthodoxy, and it is precisely in this respect that he made one of his greatest achievements. In the development of Ṣūfism, al-Qushayrī (d. 464/1072) is generally acknowledged as the one who completed the formulation of Ṣūfism's mystical doctrines. At his hands many Ṣūfī technical terms were given clear definitions, thus making Ṣūfism a "clearly definable way of life and system of thought."[124] The most decisive moment, that is its reconciliation with orthodox Islam, however, was to wait until

> By virtue of his profound learning in the accepted sciences, al-Ghazālī commanded the respect of all but the narrowest of the orthodox. His legal and theological training qualified him to bring to his constructive work on Ṣūfism an intellect acute and sensitive, a mind ingenious and inventive. He had by heart all the terminology of the philosophers and the theologians. When to these intellectual gifts were added a theoretical knowledge and a personal experience of the Ṣūfī life, al-Ghazālī was ready and able to perfect the work which Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, al-Kalābādhī and al-Qushayrī had all striven so hard to accomplish. Henceforward Ṣūfism, at least of the "sober" type, was accepted as a Muslim science, and a reasonable and laudable way of life.[125]

To sum up this chapter, it would probably be appropriate to say a word or two about some features of education during al-Ghazālī's lifetime which can be

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124 Arberry, *Ṣūfism*, 74.

125 Ibid., 83. For a more detailed treatment of al-Ghazālī's part in this process, see chapter 8 of Yehya S. al-Dijaili, "An Inquiry Into the True Relationship Between Ṣūfism and Islam," (Ph.D. Thesis, California Institute of Asian Studies, 1974), 159-174. Questions, however, have been posed against the notion of al-Ghazālī's great role in this reconciliation, notably by George Makdisi who argues that that notion resulted from the fact that al-Ghazālī has been studied far more than his contemporary scholars. See, for example, Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," in *Studies on Islam*, trans. and ed., Merlin L. Swartz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 243; idem, "Remarks on Traditionalism in Islamic Religious History," in *The Conflict of Traditionalism and Modernism in the Muslim Middle East*, ed. Carl Leiden (Austin, Texas: The Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas, 1966), 87.

drawn from his own experience. First of all, mobility of both student and scholar. Al-Ghazālī's experience ilustrates that students of his time enjoyed a high mobility and were able to pursue their study from one town to another, which often involves hundreds of miles of journey. As we have seen, al-Ghazālī started his study in Ṭūs, continued it in Jurjān, returned to Ṭūs, moved to Nishapur, before he settled in Baghdād as a great scholar. This was to be followed by travels during his Ṣūfī retirement that covered cities such as Damascus, Jerusalem, and Mecca. Secondly, Muslim learning of al-Ghazālī's time had advanced to the point where various schools of thought (*kalām*, philosophy, Ismā'īlīsm, Ṣūfism) developed. The development of these schools of thought involved some serious questions pertaining to whether or not they can religiously be accepted, to which al-Ghazālī's systematic investigation was a response. Thirdly, as is generally acknowledged, the *madrasah* was the Muslim institution of formal education par excellence. While it is difficult to come up with a precise description of its curriculum, we can say for sure that the *madrasah* was exclusively for religious sciences, with *fiqh* (jurisprudence) being the crown subject.

CHAPTER TWO

AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge (*'ilm*) has always been a fundamental concept in Islam and scholars from different periods and different fields have devoted considerable attention to topics pertaining to it. Muslim discussions about knowledge are so marked by controversies that there is no agreement on its definition.[1] Al-Ghazālī develops his own concept of knowledge, and this concept, as will be seen, constitutes an essential part of his educational thought. Our discussion of this concept will be divided into three parts: (1) the role of *'aql* (intellect), (2) the merit of knowledge, and (3) classification of the sciences. Like others, he admits that it is almost impossible to have a single simple definition of knowledge. Al-Ghazālī's major discussion of the definition of knowledge is found in his *al-Mustaṣfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl* (*The Selected from the Science of the Principles [of Jurisprudence]*),[2] which, as its title suggests, is a work on the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). But the first part of this work is devoted to

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[1] For a summary of the different definitions of knowledge by Muslim scholars see al-Tahānawī, *Mawsū'ah*, IV, 1055-1068; Franz Rosenthal, "Muslim Definitions of Knowledge," in *The Conflict of Traditionalism and Modernism in the Muslim Middle East*, ed. Carl Leiden (Austin, Texas: The Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas, 1966), 117-133; idem, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), 46-69.

[2] (Baghdād: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1970).

discussions about *'ilm* and its definitions, among other things. Perhaps, it is also worth noting that *al-Mustaṣfā* represents al-Ghazālī's thinking in his last days, since it was not finished until 503/1109,[3] that is two years only before his death. Various definitions applicable to knowledge are cited in this work. In a very simple way al-Ghazālī defines it as cognition (*ma'rifah*). It can also be defined as identifying an object known as it really is (*'alā mā huwa bih*).[4] Knowledge can also mean a quality (*waṣf*) that enables its owner to act in an orderly fashion.[5] Another definition says that knowledge is the arrival of true images of things in the mirror of the intellect (*'aql*).[6] Elsewhere, in an earlier work on logic, al-Ghazālī suggests that "there is no meaning to knowledge except that of its being an image... that arrives in the soul, which conforms to that which is an image in sense perception, namely, the object known."[7] Despite these possible definitions, al-Ghazālī puts more stress, it seems to me, on the fact that knowledge cannot be defined in a single way, because of its complexity and subtlety. The only way to define knowledge, al-Ghazālī suggests, is through division (*taqsīm*) and illustration (*mithāl*),[8] as he does in the *Iḥyā'*, *Fātiḥah*, and, in a more general way,

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[3] Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," 301.

[4] *al-Mustaṣfā*, I, 24.

[5] Ibid., 25. These first three definitions are closely identical with al-Ghazālī's definitions of intellect (see below).

[6] Ibid., 26.

[7] al-Ghazālī, *Mi'yār al-'Ilm fī Fann al-Manṭiq* (Miṣr: Maṭba'at Kurdistān al-'Ilmīyah, 1329/1911), 39; The translation is from Rosenthal, "Muslim Definitions," 124.

[8] al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā*, I, 25-26. Interestingly, however, Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148) thinks that knowledge needs no definition at all, simply because it is too obvious a concept to need a definition. See Rosenthal, "Muslim Definitions," 118.

in *al-Munqidh*.

A. The role of *'aql* (intellect)

The central position of *'aql* in education and learning would seem to be self evident. Nevertheless, scholars differ on some details concerning the definition and nature of *'aql*, as well as its function in the process of 'knowing'. Al-Ghazālī himself pays great attention to different questions pertaining to *'aql* and devotes long discussions to them in many of his works. As a matter of fact he provides an independent chapter in the 'Kitāb al-'Ilm (The Book of Knowledge)' of his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* to *'aql*, its nature, and its divisions.

The importance of *'aql* and its noble nature is something very obvious that needs hardly any proof or explanation. Al-Ghazālī makes it clear that this is so because of its close relation with man's knowledge and experience.[9] His demonstration of the noble nature of *'aql* involves a threefold argument. First of all, it is clear, he says, from several Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīth*s (traditions). Secondly, it is established through the use of *'aql* itself, i.e., by reasoning. It is *'aql*, observes al-Ghazālī, that distinguishes human beings from animals and other creatures; it is *'aql* that makes it possible for them to become the steward (*khalīfah*) of God; and it is through the use of *'aql* that one can gain success both in the present world and in the world to come. It naturally follows that with these important roles to play, it is just inconceivable that *'aql* is not noble. Thirdly, its noble nature can be perceived instinctively. Al-Ghazālī goes so far as

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[9] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 88; Faris, *The Book*, 221.

to say that even animals which lack *'aql* can still perceive its noble nature. Here we have an interesting illustration: even the physically largest and strongest animal, al-Ghazālī says, would fear a human being because it instinctively perceives that man's *'aql* enables him to put the animal in danger.[10]

Al-Ghazālī suggests four different definitions of *'aql* in the *Iḥyā'*. The first definition suggests that *'aql* is a quality (*waṣf*) by which man is distinguished from all animals and through which he can comprehend speculative sciences (*al-'ulūm al-naẓarīyah*) and becomes aware of mental operations within himself.[11] Here al-Ghazālī cites al-Muḥāsibī, who defines *'aql* as an inborn (*gharīzah*) faculty that is like a light shed into the heart by which the perception of speculative sciences and the understanding of things are possible.[12] In its second meaning, *'aql* denotes the necessary truths (*al-'ulūm al-ḍarūrīyah*) which make their appearance at the time of adolescence when the intellect is fully developed. This, al-Ghazālī says, consists, for example, of the awareness of the possibility of the possibles (*jawāz al-jā'izāt*) and the impossibility of the impossibles (*istiḥālat al-mustaḥīlāt*), such as the knowledge that two is more than one and that a person cannot be in two places at one time.[13] The third meaning of *'aql* is knowledge that is attained through experiences and the interrelation of man with his environment, different events, and changing

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10 al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān*, 139-141; idem, *Iḥyā'*, I, 88.

11 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 90; Faris, *The Book*, 226.

12 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 90; Faris, *The Book*, 226. For an analysis of al-Muḥasibī's definition of *'aql*, as well as those of other Muslim scholars, see Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf*, I, 459.

13 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 91; Faris, *The Book*, 227.

conditions. In this particular sense, one who possesses rich experiences is usually called an *ʿāqil* (experienced person) and he who lacks these experiences is usually called a *jāhil* (inexperienced layman). Lastly, the word *ʿaql* is used to denote the situation in which the inborn power has developed "to such an extent that its owner will be able to tell what the end will be, and consequently he will conquer and subdue his appetite which hankers for immediate pleasures."[14] The owner of such developed inborn power is also called *ʿāqil*.

Having completed his exposition of the multiple meanings of *ʿaql*, al-Ghazālī proceeds to say that the first, i.e., the inborn intellect, is the fountain and the foundation of the other three. The second is the closest branch of the first. The third is a result of the combination of the first and the second, because, al-Ghazālī argues, empirical sciences (*ʿulūm al-tajārub*) are acquired through the use of the inborn intellect (*gharīzah*) and axiomatic knowledge. The fourth is the supreme aim and the ultimate result. He then notes that the first two are inherited properties (*bil-ṭabʿ*) and the other two are acquired (*bil-iktisāb*).[15]

These meanings and divisions of *ʿaql* by no means exhaust al-Ghazālī's complete conception of it. More complicated definitions and classifications of *ʿaql* can be found in his other works. In the *Miʿyār*, for example, he provides a full analysis of *ʿaql* and gives various meanings as it was seen by ordinary people (*al-jamāhīr*), the philosophers (*al-falāsifah*), and the theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*). Here one finds a much more detailed treatment and classification of *ʿaql*, each

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[14] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 91; Faris, *The Book*, 228.

[15] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 91; Faris, *The Book*, 228.

with its own definition.[16] However, since these definitions seem to have been specially formulated by al-Ghazālī for philosophical discussion, they will not detain us in the present context.

Before going any further it is necessary to note that the term *'aql* in al-Ghazālī's writings is closely associated with three other terms: *qalb*, *rūḥ*, and *nafs*. Here we need to define them briefly, not only because they are closely associated with *'aql* but also because, at times, they are equated with it. This will be clear from their definitions as given by al-Ghazālī. *Qalb* (heart) has two meanings: (1) the physical *qalb*, that is the flesh situated in the left side of one's breast; and (2) the spiritual *qalb*, that is the very essence of a human being that perceives and knows (*ḥaqīqat al-insān al-mudrik al-'ālim*). *Rūḥ* (spirit) has two meanings too: (1) a subtle thing originating in the heart and brought by the blood to every part of the human body, and on which one's life depends; and (2) a subtle thing that knows and perceives (the same as *qalb*). There are also two meanings of the term *nafs* (soul): (1) an immaterial entity in which the blameworthy traits such as anger and passion inhere; and (2) the essence of man which functions as the locus of the intelligibles. The condition of this essence may change from time to time (thus there is, for example, the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma'innah*). Although *'aql* has several meanings as shown above, they can be reduced to two: (1) knowledge of things (regardless of the nature of the

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16 *Mi'yār*, 162-167. Al-Ghazālī's account here is very similar to that of al-Fārābī who also provides different definitions of *'aql* according to the understanding of ordinary people, theologians, and philosophers, especially Aristotle. See Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Risālah fī al-'Aql*, 2nd edition, ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986), 3-36. For a short summary of al-Ghazālī's concept of *'aql* as expounded in his different works, see 'Abd al-Karīm al-'Uthmān, *al-Dirāsāt al-Nafsīyah 'ind al-Muslimīn wal-Ghazālī bi-Wajh Khāṣṣ* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1382/1963), 305-315.

knowledge); and (2) the perceiver of knowledge (*al-mudrik lil-'ulūm*).[17]

In this thesis the word *'aql* is taken to denote the faculty of man by which he is able to perceive things and to understand certain concepts; more precisely *'aql* is considered to be a means of knowing or understanding. In the *Iḥyā'*, al-Ghazālī himself uses this term mainly with this meaning.[18] He divides the perceiver (*al-mudrik*) of knowledge, into two aspects: (1) the outward aspect, which is represented by the five senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, and tasting; and (2) the inward, also five in number: common-sense (*ḥiss al-mushtarak*), imagination (*takhayyul*), thinking (*tafakkur*), recollection (*tadhakkur*), and retention (*ḥifẓ*). These he calls the soldiers of the heart (*junūd al-qalb*).[19] In the *Mīzān*, he includes the same discussion under his elaboration of the animal soul (*al-nafs al-ḥayawānīyah*). Here the perceptive faculty is divided into two parts also: the external, the five senses, and the internal. The internal part is further divided into five, using slightly different terms from that of the *Iḥyā'*. They are: the imaginative power (*al-khayyālīyah*), the retentive power (*al-ḥāfiẓah*), the estimative power (*al-wahmīyah*), the recollective power (*al-dhākirah*), and the thinking power (*al-mufakkirah*).[20] The same discussion is also found in his *Ma'ārij* where these divisions are put in a slightly different order and are called

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17 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 3-4; idem, *Ma'ārij al-Quds fī Madārij Ma'rifat al-Nafs* (Miṣr: Maṭba'at al-Sa'ādah, 1346/1927), 11-16; idem, *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn wa-'Umdat al-Sālikīn*, ed. Muḥammad Bakhīt (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-Ḥadīthah, n.d.), 59-61.

18 al-'Uthmān, *al-Dirāsāt*, 307; cf. M. Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy of al-Ghazzālī* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1962), 78.

19 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 6.

20 al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān*, 24-26.

apprehending powers (*al-quwā al-mudrikah*). They are now: common-sense, the imaginative power, the estimative power, the retentive power, and the recollective power.[21] In a quite different fashion, a discussion of what is basically the same is also available in the *Mishkāt*. These powers here appear as classes of the human souls (*marātib al-arwāḥ al-basharīyah*) which are five in number: the sensory (*al-ḥassās*), the imaginative (*al-khayyālī*), the intelligential (*al-ʿaqlī*), the discursive (*al-fikrī*), and the trancendental prophetic (*al-qudsī al-nabawī*) souls.[22]

From the above one understands that al-Ghazālī uses different terms to denote what are essentially the same thing: from *junūd al-qalb* in the *Iḥyāʾ*, *al-nafs al-ḥayawānīyah* in the *Mīzān*, *al-quwā al-mudrikah* in the *Maʿārij*, to *al-arwāḥ al-basharīyah* in the *Mishkāt*. This difference is probably due to the different natures of the books which represent different stages of al-Ghazālī's intellectual development. Chronologically, the *Mīzān* is the earliest of the four works. It belongs to the period when al-Ghazālī was teaching in Baghdād, when he had finished his earnest study of philosophy, and when he was at the gate of his conversion to Ṣūfism.[23] Thus one finds that this work exhibits both philosophical as well as Ṣūfī characteristics. It is very likely that the use of *al-nafs al-ḥayawānīyah* is an adoption from the philosophers, among whom this term

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21 al-Ghazālī, *Maʿārij*, 47-50.

22 al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, ed. Abū al-ʿAlā ʿAfīfī (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmīyah lil-Ṭibāʿah wal-Nashr, 1382/1964), 76-77; trans. W.H.T. Gairdner (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1924), 81-82.

23 Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," 294. See also W. Montgomery Watt, "The Authenticity of the Works Attributed to al-Ghazālī," *JRAS* (1952): 38-40, where the authenticity of the *Mīzān* is discussed. Watt argues that the *Mīzān* in its present form must have been modified with the incorporation of additional material.

was widely circulated. Al-Ghazālī wrote the *Iḥyā'* sometime during his Ṣūfī exile, most likely during his stay in Damascus and Jerusalem, when he had been totally convinced that Ṣūfism was the best way for him.[24] Concerning this matter, Sherif suggests that it is because he does not want to use the terms of the philosophers in the *Iḥyā'*, he calls them *junūd al-qalb* rather than *al-nafs al-hayawānīyah* as in the *Mīzān*.[25] The term *al-quwā al-mudrikah* appears to fit the *Ma'ārij* completely since this work is a book on psychology and deals primarily with psychological and Ṣūfī approaches to theology. In the *Mishkāt*, al-Ghazālī uses the term *al-arwāḥ al-basharīyah*, a concept that develops in his more advanced Ṣūfī thinking. Indeed this work belongs to the works which, in the words of Gairdner, "represent his most developed ṣūfistic thought".[26]

Essentially, this division of the inward perceiver into five is the same as that of the philosophers and one finds the same information in al-Ghazālī's *Maqāṣid* which is a descriptive restatement of the opinions of the philosophers.[27] And this is to find its more developed treatment in the *Mi'yār*.[28] When, in *Tahāfut*, he further analyses the matter and poses his objection towards it, he limits himself to the philosophers' insistence that *al-nafs*, the general term that covers the

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24 Badawī, *Mu'allafāt*, 16; Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," 297.

25 Mohamed Ahmed Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 27.

26 W.H.T. Gairdner, "Al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār* and the Ghazālī-Problem," *Der Islam* 5 (1914): 121. Watt, "The Authenticity," 44, includes the *Mishkāt* into what he calls 'the *dhawq* period' when his concept of *al-rūḥ al-qudsī al-nabawī* is fully developed.

27 al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid*, 356-357.

28 al-Ghazālī, *Mi'yār*, 162-167.

whole range of the division, exists in itself independent of God. As to the rest of the theory, including the way the philosophers divide it, he seems to find no objection since it does not contradict religion (*al-shar'*).[29] Most likely, al-Ghazālī adopts this from Ibn Sīnā,[30] who had developed his theory about the matter before him, and who, together with al-Fārābī, is considered by al-Ghazālī as a major representative of philosophy.[31]

We will, however, not discuss this problem at length. Our immediate concern is that these faculties are essential in the human process of knowing (learning). These faculties of *al-mudrik* work as a team in order for someone to perceive and know something. Thus when one sees an object he gets an image of that particular object in the imaginative part of his brain. This image remains within the mind through the operation of its retentive part. Using the power of thought, he now can think of or reason about what is retained. Thinking or reasoning requires more than one image, and, thus, here the recollective faculty functions as a provider of more images by recalling past images in the storage of the retentive part. Then the sense image is harmonized through the use of common-sense.[32] At this point one would have perceived that object and established his own

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29 al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 254; trans. Ṣabīh Aḥmad Kamālī (M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1955), 242.

30 See Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 30-31; Albīr Naṣrī Nādir, ed., *al-Nafs al-Basharīyah 'ind Ibn Sīnā*, 3rd edition (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986), 59-60. For more about the influences of Ibn Sīnā on al-Ghazālī's doctrines concerning the human soul, see Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Abū Sa'dah, *al-Āthār al-Sīnawīyah fī Madhhab al-Ghazālī fi al-Nafs al-Insānīyah* (Cairo: n.p., 1991).

31 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 20; Watt, *The Faith*, 32.

32 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 6; Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf*, VII, 214.

understanding of it in his mind.

Elsewhere, al-Ghazālī offers an interesting illustration that shows the way *'aql* (*al-mudrik*), with its different faculties, functions. It (*al-mudrik*) is, he says, to a person like a king to a kingdom. The imaginative power (*al-quwwah al-khayyālīyah*) works for the king and is in charge of the postal system (*ṣāḥib barīd*), since all sorts of sensory information come through it. The retentive power (*al-quwwah al-ḥāfiẓah*) is the king's treasurer and is responsible for storage. The speech organ functions as his interpreter (*tarjumān*); the active members as his clerks (*kuttāb*). The five senses serve the king as spies (*jawāsīs*), and each is responsible for different and specific information: the power of seeing is responsible for information related to colors, that of hearing for information related to sounds, and so on. It is with these spies that different bits of information from outside are gleaned and sent, using the postal system, to the treasurer who, on need, presents them before the king, and the king extracts and chooses what is needed to keep his kingdom functioning.[33]

Having all these parts or faculties with their own special functions, how then does the process of 'knowing' take place? Al-Ghazālī says it involves three elements: (1) the perceiver,[34] (2) reality, and (3) the occurrence of reality's image

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33 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 9; A similar analogy is also given by al-Ghazālī in *Ma'ārij*, 106. That the external senses are very significant in the process of acquiring knowledge has also been pointed out by Ibn Sīnā, who says that sensation provides particulars to be intellectually processed. See Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, 54-56. Cf. Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa-Khillān al-Wafā'*, ed. Khayr al-Dīn al-Zarkalī (Miṣr: al-Maṭba'ah al-'Arabīyah, 1347/1928), III, 14-18.

34 Again the word al-Ghazālī uses here is *qalb* which when used to mean the perceiver of knowledge (*al-mudrik lil-'ulūm*) is synonymous with *'aql*. See al-Ghazālī, *Rawḍah*, 61; al-'Uthmān, *al-Dirāsāt*, 61.

in the mind. These three elements are further elaborated by al-Ghazālī saying that the first is the 'knower' where the image of the reality is reflected; the second, the reality, is the 'known'; and the third is the 'knowing'. Two illustrations are given by al-Ghazālī in his attempt to make the process clear. In the first place, he says, it is like the relationship of a mirror with the object it reflects. The image of the object is reflected in the mirror as the image of a 'known' object in one's mind. Second, he illustrates it through the process of holding a sword: the hand represents the perceiver, the sword the known, and the holding the knowing. This, while it might be understood more easily, is inferior to the first illustration since here the actual sword is grasped by the hand. The mirror illustration is closer to the knowing process.[35] Elsewhere, al-Ghazālī adds a fourth element to this process which is the light (*nūr*) that makes the reflection of things possible. Using the same mirror analogy, he here argues that without light the reflection is not possible even if the first three elements are there. He further says that in religious terms this fourth element is often known as the Holy Spirit (*Jibrīl*), while in philosophical terms it is usually known as the Intellect (*ʿaql*) through which knowledge is poured into the human mind.[36]

What we further learn here is that al-Ghazālī holds a fairly idealistic standpoint, believing in the autonomy of the mind (*al-mudrik*), the antecedence of reality, and the placement of the 'knowing' process (the process of reflection) within the natural order of human activities. He himself seems to have stressed this, and says about his illustrations: the mirror and the reflected object exist

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35 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, III, 12.

36 al-Ghazālī, *Maʿārij*, 99.

before the reflection takes place; so too the hand and the sword exist before and independent of the act of holding.[37] Thus, what we have here are images of reality as reflected by our intellect, and the images form our understanding of reality. This process of reflection (mirroring) is actually the process of 'learning' or 'having knowledge'.

Another thing that is of great significance to the problem of education is al-Ghazālī's recognition of individual differences concerning *'aql*. Out of the four meanings, al-Ghazālī excludes the second meaning (the necessary truths) and contends that in this people are the same. In the other three meanings, individuals differ from each other. As for the first meaning, people differ in their inborn *'aql* and this can easily be observed from the fact that some people grasp ideas more easily than others. In its third meaning (experiences), the difference is even more clear. Each individual has his own experiences different from those of any other. The same is true about the ability to control desires (the fourth meaning); individuals differ in their ability as well as in the intensity of their desires.[38] The consequence of this difference is that people differ in their learning ability. Regarding this, al-Ghazālī divides people into three classes: (1) prophets, who get their knowledge without any effort; (2) geniuses, who are able to learn things very quickly; and (3) the rest of the people, who have to endeavor very seriously in order to comprehend things.[39] As will be seen, al-Ghazālī holds that it is essential for the teacher to understand his student's intelligence in order to be

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37 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 12.

38 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 93-94; Faris, *The Book*, 232-234.

39 al-Ghazālī, *al-Risālah al-Ladunīyah*, trans. Margaret Smith, *JRAS* (1938), 369-370; idem, *Mīzān*, 142-143.

able to determine the best way to treat him (see below p. 110-111).

Hindrances to the 'knowing' process

The existence of the intellect and the presence of an object to be perceived does not necessitate the occurrence of the reflection (knowing); that is to say there are some defects that may hinder the reflecting of the object and make it difficult or at times even impossible. We find here al-Ghazālī's use of the analogy of the mirror again. There are five causes that make a mirror fail to reflect an object: (1) a material defect in the mirror itself; for example, if it is not properly fashioned or polished, or if it is made of an inferior material; (2) a stain that fell on the mirror which might otherwise be perfect in itself; (3) a misplacement, for instance when the object to be reflected is situated behind the mirror; (4) the presence of another object between the mirror and the object; and (5) ignorance of the beholder of where to look for the reflection. (Here however, the problem has nothing to do with the mirror, it is solely the beholder's.)[40]

Corresponding to those five barriers of the image from the mirror, al-Ghazālī lists five causes that make the intellect unable to reflect the true images of an object or, in short, causes that make one devoid of knowledge of something. The first cause is natural immaturity of the intellect, such as that of a young child. Due to its immaturity it has not been fully prepared to receive knowledge. This knowledge is not to be confused with the innate ideas and the potential to have knowledge which are naturally owned by all. The second cause is mists and

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[40] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 12; idem, *Maʿārij*, 99. For a short summary of these barriers, see Zarīnkūb, *al-Farār*, 242.

impurities which accumulate in the intellect owing to bad deeds and the multiplicity of desires (*kathrat al-shahwāt*). This contaminates the purity of the intellect, and thus its reflection of objects as well.[41] The third cause is aberration. "As nothing can be seen if a mirror is not directed towards a figure or picture, so a real picture of a thing does not fall into a soul if it is misguided from the real object of research and inquiry."[42] Even a perfectly pure mind can still deviate and head towards a wrong direction; it may, for example, be preoccupied with physical worship (*al-ṭā'āt al-badanīyah*) or worldly pursuits and is negligent about the deeper divine truths (*al-ḥaqā'iq al-khafiyah al-ilāhīyah*). There is no way to get the reflection of things to which attention is not paid. The fourth cause that hinders the reflection is the presence of a veil between one and the object. Blind acceptance of authority (*taqlīd*) or being bound too strictly to a given school of thought (*madhhab*) can veil one from a truth even if one is obedient, is able to subdue the desires, and devotes oneself to thinking about that truth. *Taqlīd* and strict attachment to a *madhhab* prevents one from being able to see what is outside of the *madhhab* and what is disagreeable to established belief, even if it is actually correct.[43] The fifth cause is the ignorance of the seeker of the direction to be followed in order to find the desired truth. Here al-Ghazālī seems to speak of knowledge which is attained through the operation of logic. New knowledge, he asserts, cannot be attained without the use of past

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41 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 12-13; idem, *Ma'ārij*, 99-100.

42 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 13.

43 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 13; idem, *Ma'ārij*, 100-101. For a full account of the use of the term *taqlīd* in al-Ghazālī's works see Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzālī* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1975), 488-502.

knowledge. One has to first have two premises and arrange them in a way that allows them to produce a completely new 'knowledge' unknown to him before. Again al-Ghazālī uses the analogy of one who wants to see the image of his back in a mirror. This can only be done when he has two mirrors and arranges them in a certain way. (One mirror would result in a condition in which either he can see an image but certainly not of his back, or the image of his back is in the mirror without him being able to see it.)[44] It is evident enough that here we have the three parts of a syllogism: the mirrors stand for the two premises (major and minor) and the possibility of seeing the back of the man is the conclusion. The way the mirrors are arranged symbolizes the rules of syllogistic logic.

Another way of knowing

Apart from the knowing process as illustrated above, al-Ghazālī develops another part of this theory in which he asserts that there is another way of acquiring knowledge. It is entirely spiritual, without any relation to the material world and involves no sensual or rational operation whatsoever. In fact we can say that this is the opposite of the previous mechanism; it surpasses the boundaries of the senses and is very Ṣūfī in its nature. His treatment of this topic is part of the discussion of the wonders of the heart (*ʿajāʾib al-qalb*) which constitutes the first chapter of the third quarter of his *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*.

Al-Ghazālī elaborates his theory, once again, by using analogy. The heart, he says, is like an empty pond, knowledge is like water, and the five senses are like

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[44] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, III, 13; idem, *Maʿārij*, 102.

streams (*anhār*). There are two ways to fill the pond with water. First of all, by letting or directing the water into the pond through the five streams until it is full. (This represents the process as elaborated above.) The second way is to shut up the streams completely and to dig the pond deep enough so that the water wells up from its bottom. In the same way one may acquire knowledge by shutting off the senses, going into seclusion (*khalwah*) for the refinement of his character, and diving to the extreme depth of the heart until the spring of knowledge stems from it.[45]

At this point, however, a question can be raised: how is it possible for knowledge to flow from the heart, which is in itself devoid of knowledge? Al-Ghazālī seems to have sensed this objection and thus tries to settle the question. He stresses in the first place that this is part of the mystery of the heart and it is inappropriate to discuss it together with the discussion of practical knowledge (*'ilm al-mu'āmalah*). It follows that the realities of things are inscribed by the Creator in *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* (the Preserved Tablet) in the same way as the plans of buildings are prepared by architects on their canvas. The actual realities are in accordance with the inscription in the *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* as buildings are in accordance with their plans.

In order to explain the way this *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* relates to one's heart, al-Ghazālī gives an illustration of one who looks at the sky and the earth. After a while, he closes his eyes and perceives the images of the sky and the earth as if he is still looking at them. Now, suppose that the sky and the earth are destroyed

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[45] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 19; Smith, *Al-Ghazālī*, 72-73; cf. Ormsby, "The Taste of Truth," 150.

and nothing but the man survives, he would still have those images in him. These images are later transferred to and are kept in his heart. These final images in the heart are in accordance with that of the imaginative power (*al-khayyāl*); that of the imaginative power is in conformity with the actual realities; and the actual realities are in conformity with the inscription of *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*. The final outcome of the argument is that reality has four degrees of existence: (1) existence in *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*, which antedates its actual existence, (2) its actual existence, (3) its imaginary existence, that is, the existence of its image in the imaginative power, and (4) its mental existence (*wujūduh al-'aqlī*), that is, its image in the heart.[46]

The very essence of this theory lies in al-Ghazālī's insistence that knowledge may flow to the heart without following the sequences mentioned above, i.e., it flows directly from *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* to the heart. Thus, according to al-Ghazālī the heart has two doors: one leads to the spiritual world (*'ālam al-malakūt*) and the other, through the senses, leads to the material world (*'ālam al-mulk wal-shahādah*).[47] The majority of people, including the scientists and the *'ulamā'*, acquire their knowledge through the second door. This makes their knowledge different from that of the prophets and the saints (*awliyā'*), who get their knowledge through the first door.[48] It is also quite plain that, in al-Ghazālī's opinion, one cannot actually be a master of the two kinds of knowledge at one

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46 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 19-20.

47 For the definitions of *'ālam al-malakūt* and *'ālam al-mulk*, see Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Imlā' fī Ishkālāt al-Iḥyā'*, on the margin of al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1358/1939), I, 193.

48 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 20; idem, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, trans. Claud Field (London: The Octagon Press, 1983), 22.

time. To go back to the pond analogy, if one intends to get water from its bottom rather than from the streams, one ought to shut off the streams completely first. Otherwise the water will not flow from the depth of the earth: or, even if it does, the streams would contaminate its purity. Thus those who devote themselves to the study of the first kind are generally weak in the second, and those who concentrate on the second are weak in the first.[49]

The process of acquiring knowledge through this second way involves different activities, Ṣūfī in their nature, which belong to two main stages. Al-Ghazālī summarizes them in *al-Munqidh*. The first stage is cleansing the heart from anything but God, which can be accomplished only after having the ability to exercise a complete control over the qualities of the heart, that is to say after the cultivation of the good qualities and the elimination of the evil ones. When it is completely clean, then comes the second stage, that is, filling the heart with remembrance of God, leaving no space for anything else. This leads to a condition in which one experiences complete annihilation in God (*al-fanā' bil-kullīyah fi Allāh*), when the heart becomes fully purified with a very high degree of preparedness and receptivity. When this condition is reached the spiritual realm becomes accessible, and one may see the angels, and the spirit of the prophets, and listen to and learn from them.[50] Furthermore, based on the heart's purity, preparedness, and receptivity, one might receive, through inspiration (*ilhām*), what al-Ghazālī calls "the knowledge from on high (*al-'ilm al-ladunī*)"[51] or "the

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49 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 19; idem, *Mīzān*, 147.

50 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 39; Nasution, *Manusia*, 111.

51 al-Ghazālī, *al-Risālah al-Ladunīyah*, 365.

divine knowledge (*al-'ilm al-rabbānī*)."[52] Apart from the knowledge of the prophets that come through revelation (*waḥy*), this is the highest knowledge one might have in this world.

B. The merit of knowledge ('ilm)

As has been briefly suggested above, the excellence of *'aql* rests upon the excellence of knowledge which is in itself excellent. In various works al-Ghazālī devotes so much discussion to the merit of knowledge that he is regarded as the Muslim scholar who supplies the most extensive treatment of the topic.[53] In all of his works that deal with this topic, he begins his argument by citing verses from al-Qur'ān, then lists many traditions from the Prophet (*al-akhbār*), and finally, a number of sayings of the Companions of the Prophet (*al-āthār*), which we shall not reproduce in the present discussion.[54]

Rather, in the following, attention will be paid to the rational arguments provided by al-Ghazālī in support of the excellence of knowledge. The conclusion of his rational discussion of the problem is that knowledge is the basis of happiness (*al-sa'ādah*) in the present world and in the world to come. Because this happiness is the most excellent thing that can be attained by men, it follows that knowledge is also excellent. He arrives at this conclusion after going through

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52 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 23.

53 'Abd al-Amīr Shams al-Dīn, ed., *al-Fikr al-Tarbawī 'ind al-Ghazālī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Alamī, 1990), 27.

54 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 11-15; idem, *Mīzān*, 139-142; idem, *Rawḍah*, 89; Faris, *The Book*, 10-17 (references of each citation is provided here).

a series of premises. He begins by stating that something precious and desired falls into either what is desired for its own inherent value, or what is desired as a means to achieve something else, or what is desired for both. What is desired for its own inherent value is more virtuous than what is desired for something else; thus happiness in the world to come is more desired than money because the former is sought for its own intrinsic value while the latter is sought as a means to gain something else. The example of the third category is health, which is invaluable in itself and is also necessary for one to achieve his ends other than health itself.[55]

In the case of knowledge, al-Ghazālī says: "know that knowledge is excellent in itself, without consideration of the thing known, so that even the knowledge of sorcery is excellent in itself, even though it be futile."[56] In addition to being excellent intrinsically, knowledge is also important for it facilitates one to achieve the most valuable thing, that is, endless happiness (*al-sa'ādah al-abadīyah*).[57] No one will attain this happiness without obeying the orders of God or without doing good deeds (*'amal*). However, no one can know what is good or evil without knowledge, and thus obeying God and doing good deeds require the possession of knowledge. This means that eternal happiness can be achieved only through having knowledge. Besides this, al-Ghazālī also points out that in the present world knowledge presents its owner with honor, influence over those in

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55 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 19; Faris, *The Book*, 25-26.

56 al-Ghazālī, *al-Risālah al-Ladunīyah*, 192.

57 For a summary of al-Ghazālī's thoughts concerning happiness, see Muhammad Abul Quasem, "Al-Ghazālī's Conception of Happiness," *Arabica* 22 (1975): 153-161.

power, and many other things which add to its merit. Accordingly, al-Ghazālī puts knowledge as the basis of any other thing and views it as the most excellent thing. This assertion, however, applies only in its general sense. Different branches of knowledge vary in their value. This will be seen in the discussion of the classification of knowledge below (part C).[58]

It has to be noted, however, that although knowledge is very important, al-Ghazālī does not regard it as the final goal. Its importance, once again, rests on the role it plays in attaining eternal happiness. For this reason, he insists that knowledge be followed by good actions that lead one to that happiness.[59] Thus we find him saying: "if a man reads a hundred thousand scientific problems and learns them or teaches them, his knowledge is of no use unless he acts in accordance with it,"[60] and that "knowledge without work is insanity and work without knowledge is vanity,"[61] to show how the two should not be separated. The same sense is also expressed in many other places in his works. This conviction, as we shall see, has its implications in his classification of sciences, in that he divides them into practical and spiritual sciences.[62]

Having established knowledge as the most excellent thing, al-Ghazālī goes on to argue that, based on this fact, any activity in the service of knowledge is

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58 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 19; Faris, *The Book*, 26.

59 al-Ghazālī, *Minhāj al-'Ābidīn* (Miṣr: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyah, n.d.), 6; idem, *Rawḍah*, 89.

60 al-Ghazālī, *O Disciple*, 4.

61 Ibid., 8.

62 Cf. Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 195.

automatically noble. Being a student, therefore, is noble since it means acquiring the noblest of all things, knowledge. The same is true of being a teacher, for teaching means promoting knowledge. He further elaborates on the excellence of the profession of a teacher and argues that, in fact, it is the best profession, next only to the rank of the prophets.[63]

The value of any activity, al-Ghazālī argues, is understood through three things: (1) by looking at the inborn faculty (*gharīzah*) of man by which the activity is realized, such as the realization of the superiority of theoretical sciences over linguistics since the former are attained through the use of intellect while the latter is through hearing, and intellect is nobler than the sense of hearing; (2) by studying the benefits and the value of the activity, like the superiority of agriculture over the work of the goldsmith; and (3) by examining the material object of the profession, such as the material object of a goldsmith being nobler than that of a tanner. When the craft of teaching is examined in the light of these three scales, one finds that the teacher deals with knowledge attained through the use of intellect, which is the most excellent faculty of man. As to its general benefit and usefulness, it is plain that people benefit from knowledge disseminated by a teacher since with knowledge they may attain happiness in this world as well as in the world to come. Lastly, teaching is directed toward the intellect and the heart, the noblest parts of human. In conclusion, al-Ghazālī contends that the work of a teacher is partly worship (*'ibādah*) and partly stewardship (*khilāfah*).[64]

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63 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 19; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 5; Faris, *The Book*, 27.

64 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 20; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 6-7; Faris, *The Book*, 28-29.

C. The Classification of sciences

As has been discussed above (pp. 23-38), when al-Ghazālī systematizes all the learning of his time for the purpose of his investigation, he comes up with four main branches: scholastic theology (*kalām*), philosophy, Ismā'īlīsm (*al-Bāṭinīyah*), and Ṣūfism. Al-Ghazālī's standpoint toward these sciences has been stated above and will not be repeated here. Rather, in the following, brief statements will be made to see the positions these sciences occupy in his detailed classification of sciences which he did not write until he had completed his investigation of these four sciences, that is in the *Iḥyā'* and the *Fātiḥah*.

1. *Kalām* has no clear position in this classification. However, as is the case in *al-Munqidh*, he recognizes its significance in defending faith.
2. Philosophy is considered quite apart from the main body of the classification. The sciences that belong to it are enumerated, stressing the fact that parts of it are acceptable while others must be rejected as being contradictory to religion.
3. Ismā'īlīsm is not included in the classification since it is considered unacceptable religiously and intellectually.
4. Ṣūfism is well represented and is considered one of the two major branches of the sciences.

As one might have expected, the positions of these sciences in al-Ghazālī's classification of sciences reflect the conclusion he came to when he investigated them.

It is quite clear that al-Ghazālī sets up his theory on the classification of

sciences, in the *Iḥyā'* and the *Fātiḥah*, partly as a response to the confusion prevalent at his time. While all Muslims agreed on the importance of learning based on Qur'ānic verses and many prophetic traditions, determining what science is compulsory for every Muslim to acquire appears to be at the heart of the confusion. This question became extremely significant in respect to the tradition, "Seeking knowledge is an ordinance obligatory on every Muslim."[65] More than twenty groups claimed their own branch of knowledge as the one to which the tradition refers. Each group had its own reasons: the theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*), the jurists (*al-fuqahā'*), the commentators and the traditionists (*al-mufassirūn wal-muḥaddithūn*), and the Ṣūfīs (*al-mutaṣawwifah*). Thus the theologians argued for theology; the jurists for jurisprudence; the commentators and traditionists for the science of al-Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*; and the Ṣūfīs for Ṣūfism.[66] One of al-Ghazālī's commentators adds that even grammarians argued for the case of grammar, and so did the scholars of medicine.[67]

Regardless of these different claims, we certainly learn one thing from the confusion, that is, the closeness of learning to religion, of which Hossein Nasr says: "Whatever arguments arose as to the definition of that knowledge the acquisition of which was a religious duty, there is no doubt that the Quranic verses and prophetic sayings, which emphasized the importance of learning, along with the fact that the central symbol of the Islamic revelation is a book [i.e.

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65 Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī (Miṣr: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyah, 1372/1952), I, 81.

66 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 20-21; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 36; Faris, *The Book*, 30.

67 Iḥsān Muḥammad Daḥlān al-Kadīrī, *Sirāj al-Ṭālibīn Sharḥ Minhāj al-'Abidin* (Miṣr: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1347/1955), I, 95.

al-Qur'ān], made learning inseparable from religion."[68]

Evidently, al-Ghazālī intended to clarify this confusion by providing a classification of sciences and explaining the legal and moral status of their acquisition. This classification functions as a guideline which determines the place of each science in the Muslim educational system, and the way it is studied must reflect its position in the classification. It tells which sciences are to be taken as priorities and puts limitations on the study of others. In other words, this classification of sciences is intended to guard the unity of learning by showing the relation and position of each science in its relation with other sciences as well as with the aim of education.[69]

Although other scholars before him had produced different classifications,[70] al-Ghazālī's classification is unique for it is based on religious and moral considerations rather than simply an enumeration. In the first place al-Ghazālī

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68 Nasr, *Science*, 65.

69 Cf. Ibid., 59.

70 For some earlier classifications of sciences by Muslim scholars, see Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm*, ed. 'Uthmān Muḥammad Amīn (Miṣr: Maṭba'at al-Sa'ādah, 1350/1931), 1-77; Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il*, I, 202-203; Ibn Sīnā (d. 427/1037), *Risālat Aqsām al-'Ulūm al-'Aqlīyah*, in *Majmū'at al-Rasā'il*, ed. Muḥyi al-Dīn al-Kurdī (Miṣr: Maṭba'at Kurdistān al-'Ilmīyah, 1328/1910), 226-243; 'Alī Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), *Risālat Marātib al-'Ulūm*, 61-90. For those who come after al-Ghazālī, see, for example, Abū Zakarīyā al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), *al-Majmū' Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab* (Dimashq: Idārat al-Ṭibā'ah al-Munīrīyah, n.d.), I, 24-27; and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), III. For a short summary on this matter, see Ḥajjī Khalīfah, *Kashf al-Ẓunūn 'an Asāmī al-Kutub wal-Funūn* (Istanbul: Wakālat al-Ma'ārif, 1360/1941), I, 11-18; A.S. Tritton, *Materials on Muslim Education in the Middle Ages* (London: Luzac & Co., 1957), 132-139; and Franz Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam*, trans. Emile and Jenny Marmorstein (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 54-62.

classifies all sciences into two broad classifications: the practical sciences (*'ilm al-mu'āmalah*) and the spiritual sciences (*'ilm al-mukāshafah*). These major branches correspond to the two different ways of attaining knowledge mentioned above, that is the sensual-rational and the purely spiritual. The greater part of his treatment of the branches of knowledge relates to the first category, though he also provides some discussion of the second.

The practical sciences (*'ilm al-mu'āmalah*)

First of all, al-Ghazālī divides the practical sciences according to the legal status of their acquisition. By this, sciences fall into two groups: (1) sciences whose acquisition is *farḍ 'ayn* (individual obligation), or (2) those whose acquisition is *farḍ kifāyah* (communal obligation). Under certain circumstances, however, a science that is *farḍ kifāyah* may become *farḍ 'ayn* when a community does not have enough people knowledgeable in sciences fundamental to its well being. While both the *farḍ 'ayn* and the *farḍ kifāyah* sciences are important, people should follow a line of priorities in their study. First of all, one has to make oneself knowledgeable in those which are *farḍ 'ayn* before getting into the *farḍ kifāyah* sciences. Among the latter, too, priorities have to be set according to the needs of a community. One has to start with science that is most needed and not concentrate on any science already studied by a sufficient number of people in that community.[71]

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[71] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 35-36; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 39; Faris, *The Book*, 101.

The *farḍ 'ayn* sciences

The first category, the *farḍ 'ayn* sciences, is basically the knowledge of three things:[72]

a. The faith (*al-i'tiqād*). It is obligatory for every Muslim to learn the basic articles of the faith. When one reaches puberty, he ought to learn the meaning of the words of confession (*al-shahādah*), that is to confess that there is no god but Allāh and that Muḥammad is His Messenger. Al-Ghazālī is of the opinion that it is sufficient that one learns and accepts this through authority (*taqlīd*).

b. Action (*al-fi'l*). Next to the profession of faith, it is then obligatory for every Muslim to learn how to perform the obligatory worship and rituals according to individual needs, which might be vary from one person to another. For example, when the time of prayer is approaching, it is then compulsory for one to learn how to perform prayer as well as its prerequisites, like ablution. One is not obliged, however, to learn something unless it is required in the near future. Thus there is no need to learn about fasting until the month of Ramaḍān approaches. The same is true about learning about almsgiving (*zakāt*) for one who is not wealthy.

c. Prohibition (*al-tark*). The acquisition of knowledge about the religious prohibitions is obligatory. However, this does not mean that one should know about all of them. It is sufficient for one to be aware of prohibited

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72 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 21-22; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 36-37; Faris, *The Book*, 31-34.

> things that are present in his community, so that he can avoid them. One is not obliged to acquire knowledge of prohibitions to which he is not likely to be exposed. This is most significant when changes happen in a community. Everyone must determine whether the changes involve the emergence of things prohibited. If so, it is obligatory for the knowledgable to warn those who seem to be unaware.

These are the things whose acquisition is deemed *farḍ 'ayn*.[73] Apparently what is considered by al-Ghazālī as the individually obligatory education is simple in its nature and appears to involve only the most basic teachings of Islam. He does not consider it to be obligatory for everyone to pursue a deep and detailed study of belief as embodied in the science of scholastic theology (*kalām*). Nor does he oblige one to spend time on the hair-splitting science of the jurists. As a matter of fact, he takes a contrary stand to that of the jurists and wants to make the

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[73] Elsewhere, in works that we might call manuals for Ṣūfīs, where the importance of Ṣūfism is strongly emphasized, al-Ghazālī includes knowledge of the conditions of the heart in the *farḍ 'ayn* sciences. These include *'ilm al-tawḥīd*, the science of the unity of God; *'ilm al-sirr*, the science of the secrets of the heart and its conditions; and *'ilm al-sharī'ah*, the science of religious obligations and prohibitions. See al-Ghazālī, *Minhāj*, 7; idem, *Rawḍah*, 90. An eighteenth century commentator of al-Ghazālī, 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Falimbānī (fl. 1765-1788), while acknowledging *'ilm al-tawḥīd*, *'ilm al-sharī'ah*, and *'ilm al-taṣawwuf* as *farḍ 'ayn* sciences, further points out that by his time *'ilm al-taṣawwuf* has covered much of the subject matter of the first two, so that essentially it becomes the only science whose acquisition is *farḍ 'ayn*. Al-Falimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn* (Banda Aceh: Museum Negeri Aceh, 1985, microfiche), 15-16. (Despite its Arabic title, this work is originally written in Malay using Arabic script. The edition used here is a microfiche of a Romanized Malay edition by H.A. Muin Umar). Cf. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), *Itmām al-Dirāyah li-Qurrā' al-Nuqāyah*, on the margin of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ al-'Ulūm* (Miṣr: al-Maṭba'ah al-Adabīyah, n.d.), 3, 192. For a summary of Muslim discussions on the *farḍ 'ayn* sciences, see Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Jāmi' Bayān al-'Ilm wa-Faḍlih wa-mā Yanbaghī fi Riwāyatih wa-Ḥamlih*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad 'Uthmān (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-'Aṣimah, 1388/1968), I, 11-13.

study of religion simpler yet connected more closely to the practical life of the individual.[74]

The simplicity of what is considered by al-Ghazālī as obligatory education is by no means his invention. Educators before him had set more or less the same subjects in this category. The third/ninth century Muslim educator, Ibn Saḥnūn (d. 256/869) was of the opinion that only al-Qur'ān and the basic Islamic rituals are obligatory subjects for every Muslim. Other subjects are deemed supplementary and voluntary.[75]

The *farḍ kifāyah* sciences

The sciences whose acquisition is *farḍ kifāyah* are of two kinds: religious (*shar'īyah*) and non-religious (*ghayr shar'īyah*). What al-Ghazālī means by the religious sciences are "those which have been acquired from the prophets."[76] The rest are deemed non-religious.

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74 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 28; Faris, *The Book*, 50-52.

75 Ibn Saḥnūn, *Risālat Ādāb al-Mu'allimīn*, in *al-Fikr al-Tarbawī 'ind Ibn Saḥnūn wal-Qābisī*, ed. 'Abd al-Amīr Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Alamī, 1990), 83-85; A.L. Tibawi, "Muslim Education in the Golden Age of the Caliphate," *Islamic Culture* 28 (1954), 431. Cf. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Qābisī, *al-Risālah al-Mufaṣṣilah li-Aḥwāl al-Muta'allimīn wa-Aḥkām al-Mu'allimīn wal-Muta'allimīn*, in *al-Fikr al-Tarbawī 'ind Ibn Saḥnūn wal-Qābisī*, ed. 'Abd al-Amīr Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Alamī, 1990), 142; Ibn al-Muqaffa', *al-Durrah al-Yatīmah*, ed. Aḥmad Rif'at al-Badrāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Najāḥ, 1974), 19.

76 Faris, *The Book*, 36.

The religious sciences

The religious sciences are then classified according to their importance in understanding and practicing religious teachings:[77]

a. The fundamentals (*uṣūl*). They are the sciences pertaining to al-Qur'ān, the *sunnah* of the Prophet Muḥammad, the consensus of the Muslims (*ijmā'*), and the sayings of the Companions of the Prophet (*āthār al-ṣaḥābah*). Indeed, these are the sources of the religious teachings of Islam without which correct understanding could not be ensured.[78]

b. The branches (*furū'*). These include the sciences resulting from the understanding and rational commentary of the fundamentals. They might be put into two further divisions: the first is that which deals with the present world, such as *fiqh*. By this, however, al-Ghazālī does not mean that *fiqh* is completely disconnected from religion. It does relate to religion, but only indirectly. *Fiqh*, he says, deals mostly with the outward performance of religion and has little to do with the inner dimension of religious duties. It is, however, related to religion in the same way the present world is the preparation for --and thus is closely related to-- the world to come.[79] The second comprises sciences that relate to the world to come, that is the Ṣūfī sciences of the conditions of the heart and its good or evil character.

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77 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 23-24; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 35-36; Faris, *The Book*, 38-40.

78 Ibn 'Abd al-Barr confines the fundamentals to the sciences of al-Qur'ān and *sunnah* only. *Jāmi'*, II, 41.

79 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 28; Faris, *The Book*, 40.

At this point al-Ghazālī seems to have taken the risk of characterizing *fiqh*, a science that at his time was very popular and highly esteemed, as a science whose main concern was the present world. Accordingly, he provides an answer should questions arise from its exponents. Besides avoiding a complete separation between *fiqh* and religion, he makes it plain that the meaning of *fiqh* had undergone a change. It used to mean knowledge of the way to the Hereafter and of things related to the secrets of the heart. Only later was it used to denote the science mainly of external matters, and occupied its scholars in hair-splitting arguments over non-essential and often unrealistic questions.[80] It is in this sense that we find al-Ghazālī reacting to *fiqh* by saying: "if you knew that your life would not be prolonged more than a week, certainly you would not busy yourself with the sciences of jurisprudence and disputation".[81]

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80 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 38; Faris, *The Book*, 80-83; Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, 380-381. As to when this change took place, it is hard to ascertain. It is very likely that the meaning of *fiqh* had changed long before the time of al-Ghazālī. The definition of *fiqh* by Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023) suggests that it was a science of mainly external religious matters such as the obligations and prohibitions, the lawful and the unlawful, etc. See al-Tawḥīdī, *Risālah fī al-'Ulūm*, ed. Marc Bergé, *Bulletin d'etudes Orientales* 18 (1963-1964): 295. Al-Khwarizmī, who died around 380/990, includes a considerable number of technical terms of *fiqh* in his dictionary of technical terms of different sciences. Yet it reveals no indication that the *fiqh* of his time dealt with the Hereafter and the secrets of the heart. It was limited to practical religious matters (prayer, transaction, marriage, etc.), and appears to be very much the same as it was at the time of al-Tawḥīdī as well as al-Ghazālī. See Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Kātib al-Khwarizmī, *Mafātīḥ al-'Ulūm*, ed. Jawdat Fakhr al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Manāhil, 1411/1991), 18-33. However, Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767) called his book on theology *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*.

81 al-Ghazālī, *O Disciple*, 26. For his view on disputation (*munāẓarah*), see below, pp. 97-99.

Let us not forget, however, that this view represents al-Ghazālī's thoughts after his conversion to Ṣūfism. Earlier in his career he was indeed an earnest student of and a productive writer on *fiqh*.[82] He himself acknowledges this in *al-Mustaṣfā*, a work that happens to be on *uṣūl al-fiqh* (the principles of jurisprudence). He says: "In my early time of youth... I wrote several works on jurisprudence and its principles, then I turned to the science of the Hereafter and acquintance with the inner secrets of religion."[83] His objection to *fiqh* focuses mainly on methodological questions and on the fact that jurists pay too much attention to unreal cases. Even after his conversion to Ṣūfism and in spite of his criticism, we find al-Ghazālī continued his study of *fiqh* and the teaching of it when he assumed the chair of the Niẓāmīyah in Nishapur. As a matter of fact, it was in this period that he wrote his *al-Mustaṣfā*,[84] which contains his final thoughts on *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

The way al-Ghazālī sees *fiqh* in relation to other sciences appears not to have been particularly influential. About a century after al-Ghazālī, the noted Muslim educator, al-Zarnūjī, held an entirely different opinion. Citing a certain Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan, he says:

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82 Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," 291-292, lists six works on *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* which are preserved in manuscripts; and still more which, although lost, are known to be on the same subjects. All were written before his retirement from Baghdād. This includes, for example, *al-Mankhūl fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, *Shifā' al-Ghalīl fī al-Qiyās wal-Ta'līl*, *al-Basīṭ*, *al-Wasīṭ*, and *al-Wajīz fi Fiqh al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī*.

83 al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā*, I, 3-4.

84 This work was completed some two years only before his death, see Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," 301.

1. Learn, for learning is an adornment for him who possesses it, a virtue and a preface to every praiseworthy action.
2. Profit each day by an increase of learning and swim in the seas of knowledge.
3. Give yourself up to the study of jurisprudence, for the knowledge of jurisprudence is the best guide to piety and fear of God, and it is the straightest path to the goal.
4. It is the sign leading on to the ways of proper guidance; it is the fortress which saves [one] from all hardships.
5. Verily, one godly person versed in jurisprudence is more powerful against Satan than a thousand [ordinary] worshippers.[85]

However, it is interesting to note that by the early tenth/sixteenth century the scholar al-Suyūṭī appraised the whole of religious learning and came up with fourteen sciences which he considered most important, and *fiqh* was not one of them. These sciences, he further argues, constitute the complete range of religious learning with which student would need no more (*lā yaḥtāj al-ṭālib maʿa-hā ilā ghayri-hā*).[86]

c. The auxilaries (*muqaddimāt*). Included in this group are linguistic sciences and the science of writing, which are intrinsically not religious. Nevertheless, since their services are needed by the fundamentals, they become indispensable. The understanding of al-Qurʾān and the *sunnah*, for example, requires knowledge of Arabic and its derivatives, just as the preservation of them necessitates the art of writing.[87]

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[85] al-Zarnūjī, *Taʿlīm*, 22. Cf. Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), *Laftat al-Kabad ilā Naṣīḥat al-Walad*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ghāfir Sulaymān al-Banadārī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, 1407/1987), 34: "*fiqh* is the foundation of the sciences (*al-fiqh aṣl al-ʿulūm*)."

[86] Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyuṭī, *Kitāb al-Nuqāyah*, on the margin of Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ al-ʿUlūm* (Miṣr: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Adabīyah, n.d.), 260; idem, *Itmām*, 2.

[87] The great scholar of *adab*, Yāqūt al-Rūmī (d. 626/1229), despite his being

d. The supplementaries (*mutammimāt*). These sciences supplement the fundamentals and relate generally to study of al-Qur'ān and the *sunnah*, such as the science of pronunciation, different readings, the classifications of the verses into general (*'āmm*), particular (*khāṣṣ*), abrogating (*nāsikh*), or abrogated (*mansūkh*) in their relation to al-Qur'ān. In the case of the *sunnah*, this would include the science that distinguishes valid tradition from others and the science relating to the biography of the transmitters.

Elsewhere al-Ghazālī gives a kind of abridged version of this classification where religious sciences are classified into only two: (1) the fundamentals and (2) the branches. The auxiliary and supplementary sciences are included in either. Linguistics and its sub-divisions, for example, are incorporated in the fundamentals and those related to worship are included in the branches.[88]

The non-religious sciences

Al-Ghazālī's classifications of the non-religious sciences seem to have been based on a different basis from that of the classification of the religious sciences. Here, he relates the sciences to their social significance, from which he determines the moral value of each. Thus he divides the non-religious sciences into praiseworthy (*maḥmūd*), blameworthy (*madhmūm*), and permissible (*mubāḥ*).[89] (By this category all religious sciences are praiseworthy.) This can be

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interested much more in *adab* sciences, also recognizes that *adab* sciences are propaedeutic in their relation to religious sciences, and this requires the study of them. See his *Irshād al-Arīb ilā Ma'rifat al-Adīb or Dictionary of Learned Men*, 2nd ed., ed. D.S. Margoliouth, E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series (London: Luzac & Co., 1923), I, 7; Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 91.

88 al-Ghazālī, *al-Risālah al-Ladunīyah*, 353-357.

further explained as follows:[90]

1. Praiseworthy science. That is any science essential to the welfare of a community, such as medicine,[91] arithmetic, agriculture, weaving, politics, and the like. Al-Ghazālī regards the acquisition of these sciences as *farḍ kifāyah*; therefore a given community has to ensure that it has a reasonable number of people whose professions relate to these sciences.

2. Blameworthy science. That is any science which has no benefit to the community in either religious or secular terms; one should therefore refrain from acquiring them. Al-Ghazālī makes it clear that none of these sciences are blameworthy in themselves. A science becomes so for one or a combination of three reasons: (a) it harms people, either its practitioners or others, like magic and talismanic sciences; (b) it is generally (*fī ghālib al-amr*) hazardous, such as astrology; and (c) it has no scientific advantage, such as concentrating on supplementary sciences while neglecting the most important ones or going into detailed and complicated things before knowing even the basic and general principles.[92]

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89 For general accounts of al-Ghazālī's attitude toward non-religious sciences see the articles by Michael E. Marmura, "Ghazālī and Demonstrative Science," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 3 (1965): 183-204; idem, "Ghazālī's Attitude to the Secular Sciences and Logic," in *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science*, ed. George F. Hourani (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1975), 100-111.

90 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 23; Faris, *The Book*, 37.

91 Cf. Ormsby, "The Taste of Truth," 148-149, where al-Ghazālī's health breakdown is analyzed in connection with his attitude toward medicine.

92 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 35-37; Faris, *The Book*, 73-77.

3. Permissible science. Included in this kind are all sciences that are neutral, that is, they do not bring benefits like the praiseworthy sciences; yet they also do not harm people as do the blameworthy sciences. Poetry, history, biography, and similar sciences belong to this group.

In addition to this, al-Ghazālī seems to have taken philosophy as a discipline quite apart from the rest of the sciences. If one is to put philosophy into his whole classification of sciences, however, it is most likely to belong to the non-religious sciences under the third category, i.e., the permissible. According to al-Ghazālī, philosophy is not a single science, but rather a term that covers six sciences:[93]

1. Mathematics, which includes arithmetic and geometry. The study of these is permissible[94] so long as they do not bring about the danger of falling into the blameworthy sciences.

2 and 3. Logic and Methaphysics. Besides being parts of philosophy, both logic and metaphysics are also included by al-Ghazālī under scholastic theology (*kalām*). Interestingly, however, while having an evidently negative attitude towards metaphysics, al-Ghazālī is of the opinion that *kalām* is important for defending the faith. In fact the science of *kalām*

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93 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 20-24; idem, *Iḥyā'*, I, 29; Faris, *The Book*, 53-54.

94 Notice that arithmetic has previously been included in the praiseworthy sciences, but here it is deemed permissible. This inconsistency, it seems to me, reveals al-Ghazālī's concern to social value of the science on one hand and his attitude toward philosophy on the other. As a science that closely related to the welfare of the community, he regards arithmethic praiseworthy; but on the other hand he regards it permisibble only for being part of philosophy.

becomes *farḍ kifāyah* when superstitions are widespread among the masses, that is to say when the necessity to defend the faith arises.[95] Perhaps it would be a safe conclusion to say that logic and metaphysics are important so long as they are used within a *kalām* framework in the context of defending the faith. Indeed the use of logic in *kalām* has been one of the achievements where al-Ghazālī contributes much.[96]

4. Natural sciences (*al-ṭabīʿīyāt*). Some of the natural sciences are considered by al-Ghazālī as contradictory to religion. Others, like the knowledge of the human body, however, are useful, for example, in medicine.

5. Politics. Al-Ghazālī seems to find no objection against politics since according to him it is derived from divine scriptures and the teachings of the early prophets and saints. As a matter of fact he includes politics in the praiseworthy sciences.

6. Ethics. According to al-Ghazālī ethics is derived from the teachings of the

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95 *"fa-idhan al-kalām ṣāra min jumlat al-ṣināʿāt al-wājibah ʿalā al-kifāyah ḥirāsatan li-qulūb al-ʿawwām ʿan takhayyilāt al-mubtadiʿah wa-inna-mā ḥadatha dhālik bi-ḥudūth al-bidaʿ"* al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 29; Faris, *The Book*, 53. See also al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtiṣād fī al-Iʿtiqād*, ed. Ibrāhīm Akāʾ and Ḥusayn Atāy (Ankara: Jāmiʿat Anqarah, 1962), 13-15.

96 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 16, 22-24; Watt, *The Faith*, 27-29, 35-38; cf. Ormsby, "The Taste of Truth," 138. The real attitude of al-Ghazālī towards *kalām* appears as one of the problems faced by those who study him. For an analysis of this, see Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, 382-388. The philosophers before al-Ghazālī, notably al-Fārābī, however, were critical of the methodology of *kalām*. For al-Fārābī *kalām*'s methodology achieves no certain truth, even with the use of logic. See al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ*, 71-77; Alfred L. Ivry, "Al-Fārābī," in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Religion, Learning and Science in the ʿAbbāsid Period*, ed. M.J.L. Young, J.D. Latham, and R.B. Serjeant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 383.

Ṣūfīs, although the philosophers have incorporated materials of their own into it. His standpoint regarding ethics is that one has to be extremely careful when dealing with it. There is danger in both accepting and rejecting it without considerations. Only those who are able to differentiate the original teachings from that of the philosophers are allowed to deal with it.

Spiritual Science (*'ilm al-mukāshafah*)

Due to the subtle nature of this science (in comparison to the practical sciences) we do not have detailed information regarding it. Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī provides some material which might help us in understanding what he meant. It is, he says, a secret and inner science (*al-'ilm al-khāfī al-bāṭin*) that stands as the ultimate aim of the rest of the sciences (including the practical ones).[97] Apparently this science is not attained through the senses or the rational faculties. "It stands for a light which shines in the heart when it is cleansed and purified of its blameworthy qualities."[98] It is this light that facilitates the attainment of the knowledge of the essence of God as well as other spiritual beings.

Attached to *'ilm al-mukāshafah*, al-Ghazālī says, is the science of the way to

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97 al-Ghazālī, *Fātiḥah*, 39. According to Hājjī Khalīfah *'ilm al-bāṭin* is the same as Ṣūfism (*'ilm al-taṣawwuf* or *'ilm al-ṭarīqah*). See his *Kasf al-Ẓunūn*, I, 218. Cf. Ibn Rajab, *Faḍl 'Ilm al-Salaf 'alā 'Ilm al-Khalaf*, ed. Yaḥyā Mukhtār al-Ghazzāwī ([Beirut]: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmīyah, 1403/1983), 61-62, for an opposite view of *'ilm al-bāṭin*.

98 al-Ghazā'ī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 26; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 40; Faris, *The Book*, 47.

the Hereafter (*'ilm ṭarīq al-ākhirah*). This functions as the preparation for *'ilm al-mukāshafah* (the boundaries, however, are not very clear and often the two seem to have been mixed and equated with each other) since it deals with the methods of the removal of barriers from the heart in the same way that dirt is removed from a mirror. It also deals with the qualities of the heart, which might be divided into two aspects: (1) the knowledge of the qualities, their natures, their causes and results, and the signs of their presence; and (2) the knowledge of the ways of cultivating the praiseworthy qualities (such as patience, gratitude, fear of God, hope, contentment, piety, and generosity) as well as the ways of removing the blameworthy ones (such as envy, pride, deceit, hypocricy, hatred, vanity, and brutality). In short, it concerns things that make one fully prepared for the spiritual science, *'ilm al-mukāshafah*.[99] It is to be noted that al-Ghazālī stresses the significance of these qualities for their being the sources of human external actions: the good praiseworthy qualities produce good actions as the evil ones bring about bad actions. This being so, the knowledge of these qualities is considered *farḍ 'ayn* by its exponents, which al-Ghazālī often calls the scholars of the next world (*'ulamā' al-ākhirah*).

In an interesting passage of his *Fātiḥah*, al-Ghazālī tries to put all branches of knowledge into one continuing line by which one understands the position of a science in relation to other sciences as well as its role in one's striving to achieve the highest science, *'ilm al-mukāshafah*, and to attain the ultimate aim, eternal happiness (*al-sa'ādah al-abadīyah*).[100] In this particular passage he uses the

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[99] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 27-28; Faris, *The Book*, 48-50.

[100] Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Risālat Marātib al-'Ulūm*, 81-82, on the interdependence of sciences.

analogy of a slave whose master agrees to free him on the condition that he first make his way to Mecca and perform the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*). The freedom here stands for eternal happiness. This slave, says al-Ghazālī, deals with three basic stages of a program, each of which comprises several activities. The first is the prepatory stage when he has to provide himself with a good means of transportation (camel, horse, etc.) and other necessary provisions for his journey (presumably he lives in a distant country from Mecca). The second stage is when he sets for Mecca, leaving his hometown. With excellent provisions he is most likely to reach his destination. Still, he needs to have courage and self-determination in order to make his way. The third stage is the time after his arrival in Mecca, when he has to perform the actual pilgrimage. Once he finishes his pilgrimage and has done it properly, he is certainly free and no longer a slave. The thing to be noted here is that in each stage, several activities have to be done and they have their own rules.[101]

The whole range of sciences can be compared with these three stages according to their services for one in achieving endless happiness. Some sciences stand for the preparatory stage. These are the sciences which deal with daily life and interrelations among men and the physical welfare of the community, such as medicine, *fiqh*, mathematics, agriculture, and so on. Others, associated with the second stage, are concerned with the process and methods of purifying the heart and removing the barriers between one and God. The equivalent of the last stage is the science by which one attains knowledge about God and the spiritual world and what is in it. This is the ultimate science (*al-ʿilm al-aqṣā*), to which the rest

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[101] al-Ghazālī, *Fātiḥah*, 43. Similar illustrations also appear in his *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 59-60; idem, *Mīzān*, 162-163; Faris, *The Book*, 139-140.

are auxiliary.[102]

What is striking here is that with this continuing line al-Ghazālī in fact tries to tie together all sciences which essentially belong to two different domains. Some might be called the rational sciences. Others, however, in which intuition is more dominant, can be termed the Ṣūfī sciences. But al-Ghazālī connects the two by placing the former as preparatory to the latter. He thus makes every science, from mathematics and medicine to *fiqh* and the Ṣūfī science of the secrets of the heart relevant, to different degrees, for the achievement of endless happiness. While it is evident that he favors the Ṣūfī sciences, he nevertheless is of the opinion that they need to be accompanied by rational sciences in order to be complete.[103]

This classification of sciences, together with his other opinions related to the role of reason and the non-religious sciences, was destined to leave behind a monumental mark on the fate of Islamic education. This is so because "his treatises defined the place of reason in Islamic intellectual life and the role of foreign sciences in the curriculum of higher education... solidified the religious sciences as the main body of studies for those seeking higher education, and ended the influence of *Falsafah* on the curriculum in formal schools."[104] Also, he was successful in securing Ṣūfism a good place in the curriculum of higher

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[102] al-Ghazālī, *Fātiḥah*, 43; idem, *Iḥyā'*, I, 60; idem, *Mīzān*, 163-164; Faris, *The Book*, 140.

[103] al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān*, 46; Arberry, *Revelation*, 110; Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory*, 107; Nasr, *Science*, 59.

[104] Stanton, *Higher Learning*, 87, (italicization added).

learning.[105] And, for better or worse, Muslim intellectual life has ever since followed the direction al-Ghazālī set for it centuries ago, so Hossein Nasr asserts.[106]

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105 Ibid., 88; Nasr, *Science*, 52.

106 *Science*, 307.

CHAPTER THREE

AL-GHAZĀLĪ ON STUDENT AND TEACHER

Although most Muslim scholars who write on education discuss questions related to teacher and student, al-Ghazālī happens to be the first to develop a fairly detailed set of thoughts on this matter, enumerating the duties of the student and the teacher.[1] They are preserved mainly in his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, *Fātiḥat al-'Ulūm*, and *Mīzān al-'Amal*. In the *Iḥyā'*, al-Ghazālī sets out ten duties that a student must observe in order to be successful in his study and eight duties for a teacher. The same information appears in the *Mīzān*. In the *Fātiḥah*, however, the duties of the student are condensed into only six and those of the teacher into seven. Before discussing these duties, we will first deal with a short exposition (*bayān*) in *Iḥyā'* regarding children of pre-school age and their upbringing. In the second part we will discuss al-Ghazālī's ideas regarding the education of character (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*). The third and the fourth sections will cover the duties of the student and the teacher respectively. The fifth part treats the teacher-student relationship and the learning process. In the context of the duties of both sides, attention will be paid to the relevance of his theory of

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[1] This constitutes a relatively large part of his whole educational thought which is often recognized as the most complete ever produced by a medieval Muslim scholar and which has inspired many subsequent writers. On this see Tibawi, *Islamic Education*, 39, 41; Shams al-Dīn, ed., *al-Madhhab al-Tarbawī 'ind Ibn Jamā'ah*, 13.

knowledge (Chapter Two) within this more practical side of education. The last part of this chapter will briefly discuss al-Ghazālī's view of the aims of education.

A. Pre-school and *maktab* education of young children

Islamic educational literature provides little discussion about early development of children, and focuses in the main on the formal, higher level of education.[2] Al-Ghazālī's short exposition of this subject is entitled "*Bayān al-ṭarīq fī riyāḍat al-ṣibyān fī awwal nushū'i-him wa-wajh ta'dībi-him wa-taḥsīn akhlāqi-him* (An explanation of the method of disciplining children in their early growth, the way of their education, and the refinement of their characters)",[3] which according to Winter, "appears a little out of place in the book [*Iḥyā'*], dividing a section on 'the sign of good character' from another on the spiritual struggle of the *murīd*, the Ṣūfī novice."[4] In addition, Winter also points out that in this case al-Ghazālī was inspired by and indebted to Ibn Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) through his work *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, the contents of which were censored, rearranged, and recast by al-Ghazālī within his own framework.[5] The indebtedness of al-Ghazālī to Ibn Miskawayh is quite generally acknowledged by scholars; and it is mainly through Ibn Miskawayh that some of al-Ghazālī's ethical doctrines can be

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[2] Cf. Franz Rosenthal, "Child Psychology in Islam," *Islamic Culture* 26 (1952): 1-22; Avner Giladi, *Children of Islam: Concepts of Childhood in Medieval Muslim Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

[3] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 69-72, trans. T.J. Winter, "A Tract by *Imām* al-Ghazālī on Education," *Muslim Education Quarterly* 8 (1990): 33-39; cf. Abul Quasem, *The Ethics*, 96-99.

[4] Winter, "A Tract," 33.

[5] Ibid., 34.

traced back to their Greek sources. This is particularly true in his conception of the education of young children. While al-Muḥāsibī's *Kitāb al-Tawahhum* and al-Makkī's *Qūt al-Qulūb*, which are considered by scholars to be the sources of the *Iḥyā'*,[6] do not discuss this topic, the similarities between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Miskawayh are indeed very clear; so is the indebtedness of the latter to a Greek source (see Appendix). The title Ibn Miskawayh gives to his section on child education is telling enough to show the point. Verbatim, it runs A section on the education of the young, and of boys in particular, *most of which I have copied from the work of Bryson*", a Greek philosopher of the Neo-Pythagorean School of the first century A.D.[7] We are fortunate that an Arabic translation of this work by Bryson is preserved, bearing the title *Kitāb Tadbīr al-Manzil*.[8]

Although al-Ghazālī's discussion of this topic is short (two and a half printed pages), it appears to be very important since it presents his views about preparing a child for his further education, which is treated more fully, in the discussions of student and teacher (parts C, D, and E below). Here we will focus on al-Ghazālī's most important remarks on the education of young children.

First of all, emphasizing the importance of this stage of development and the natural state of children, al-Ghazālī says:

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[6] Arberry, *Revelation*, 64; Hossein Nasr, "Ṣūfism," 462; Smith, *An Early Mystic*, 122.

[7] Ibn Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, trans. Constantine K. Zurayk (Beirut: The American University of Beirut, 1968), xi, xvii (translator's preface), and 50.

[8] Ed. Luwīs Shaykhū, *al-Mashriq* 19 (1921): 161-181. While Shaykhū does not give a definite identification of the author and the translator, a later study by Zurayk argues that it is indeed the work to which Ibn Miskawayh is referring. See Ibn Miskawayh, *The Refinement*, 201, n. 16 (translator's note).

> A child is a trust in the care of his parents, for his pure heart is a precious uncut jewel devoid of any form or carving, which will accept being cut into any shape, and will be disposed according to the guidance it receives from others. If it is habituated to and instructed in goodness then this will be its practice when it grows up, and it will attain to felicity in this world and the next: its parents too, and all its teachers and preceptors, will share in its reward. Similarly, should it be habituated to evil and neglected as though it were an animal, then misery and perdition will be its lot, and the responsibility for this will be borne by its guardian and supervisor.[9]

Being ready to absorb influence from others, a child should be disciplined and his character refined as early as possible. Thus a child should be kept away from bad company, and should not be suckled and nursed except by a woman of virtue. At this stage of development, al-Ghazālī is of the opinion that a mother's role is as important as that of a father in the training of children.[10] When the ability to differentiate between good and evil begins to emerge, the child should be watched more carefully, in order to make sure that he associates good with good things and evil with evil ones. Modesty and generosity are principles to which a young child should be habituated. He should be dressed in modest clothing, white rather than colored, and taught that giving is better than taking. He should also

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9 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 69-70; Winter, "A Tract," 34. Al-Sharīsī compares a young child's heart to fertile soil that accept anything planted in it. See Rosenthal, "Child Psychology," 17.

10 Smith, *Al-Ghazālī*, 56; cf. Ibn Miskawayh, *The Refinement*, 51. Apart from this case, there seems to be no mention by al-Ghazālī of girls or women in the context of education, an attitude that was shared by all medieval Muslim writers. Generally, the education of girls was limited to basic religious provisions and skills related to house-keeping, and was regarded as the responsibility of fathers or husbands. See Zakī Mubārak, *al-Akhlāq 'ind al-Ghazālī* (Miṣr: Maktabat al-Tijārīyah al-Kubrā, n.d.), 194-195. However, despite their being generally neglected in terms of education, some women pursued their study privately, and many became renowned in different fields. For accounts on women and education in medieval Islam, see Khalil A. Totah, *The Contribution of the Arabs to Education* (New York: AMS Press, 1972), 78-83; Berkey, *The Transmission*, 161-181; Nakosteen, *History*, 44-45; Dodge, *Muslim Education*, 6-7.

be taught the proprieties, for example how to sit politely and not to yawn or blow his nose in front of others. Love poetry, sleeping during the day, arrogance, luxury, and oaths of any kind are things to be avoided. Al-Ghazālī also finds it important to prevent the child from doing things in secret, believing that the child would not hide anything unless he knows that it is ugly.[11]

When he starts his *maktab*-education,[12] parents have to be more careful and make sure that he will manage and divide his time well. He should not be allowed to neglect his study. On the other hand he is not to spend all his time studying. He has to study properly, but he also has to have time for rest, play, and sports, for according to al-Ghazālī, studying without breaks will destroy his young growing intelligence. Courage, responsibility, and respect for parents and teachers are values that have to be introduced to the child in early age. As he is growing up, he has to be introduced to the basic rituals of Islam.

Other things that parents have to be careful about are punishment and reward, of which al-Ghazālī says:

> Whenever a good trait or action manifests itself in the child he should be admired and rewarded with something which gives him joy, and should be

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11 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 70-73; cf. Ibn Miskawayh, *The Refinement*, 51-55.

12 *Maktab*- or *kuttāb*-education is elementary education for the teaching of writing, reading, al-Qur'ān, and the creed. Various instances suggest that there is no agreement as to the age at which a child starts his *maktab*-education. Ibn Ḥazm suggests five, *Risālat Marātib*, 65. Ibn al-Jawzī relates that he attended the *maktab* when he was six, with many classmates who were older than he, *Laftah*, 35-36. Ibn al-'Adīm is reported to have entered a *maktab* when he was seven, Yāqūt al-Rūmī, *Irshād*, VI, 36; and still another when he was ten, Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 19. Despite this lack of uniformity on the age to start *maktab*-education, our sources agree that it is the first and elementary education, teaching children basic skills for a higher level of education.

> praised in front of others; likewise, when once in a while he does something bad it is best to pretend not to notice and not to bring it to the attention of others (but never to reveal to him that it is something which others might be bold enough to do), particularly if the child himself has diligently endeavoured to hide his action, for the exposure of such deeds may cause him to grow emboldened, until he no longer cares when they are made public. Should he repeat the action, he should be privately reproached and made to feel that it was a very serious thing. ... He should not be spoken to at length every time, for this would accustom him to being blamed for his misdeeds, and destroy the effectiveness such words have upon his heart.[13]

Despite the brevity of the *Bayān*, it firmly stresses the importance of the early stage in child development and its contribution to his further development and education. Neglected children will grow up with bad characters, so al-Ghazālī believes.[14]

One last point to be made regarding this topic is that the whole idea of the education of young children is based on the philosophical assumption that they are born in purity (*fiṭrah*) with neutral potential, and therefore ready to accept any form of external influences. This makes children's education an art of nurturing and caring, and a process of providing impetus that leads to positive growth and development. It can also be said that the success of this early stage of education will make the next stages easier. Once this fails and a child grows in an undesirable direction, the task of education becomes greater, since it will comprise the act of redirecting as well as providing the impetus towards the desired direction.

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[13] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 70; Winter, "A Tract," 35-36; cf. Ibn Miskawayh, *The Refinement*, 52.

[14] See also Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, III, 300-301, where the same point is asserted. Ibn Khaldūn points out that what one learns in his youth is rooted deeply and functions in his later education as a foundation to a building.

B. Education of Character (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*)

As it is clear from the discussion about childhood education, character (*akhlāq*) lies at the heart of al-Ghazālī's educational thinking. And, as we have seen in the previous chapter, this influences his classification of sciences in that he emphasizes the ethical more than the intellectual value of science. It is not surprising therefore that in the *Iḥyā'* he provides an independent section for the exposition of character and its education.[15] In this particular section he covers, among other subjects, the essence of good and bad character, the possibility of change in character, as well as the way of changing it. Curiously, this section is based on the presumption of the failure of the early stage of education. In other words, it deals with those whose character has been flawed because of faulty upbringing in childhood. Thus the question here is how to deal with bad character on the one hand, and how to establish a good character in its place on the other. The following passages will summarize the points of that section related to education.

Al-Ghazālī defines character as "a well-established state of the soul from which actions proceed easily without any need for reflection and deliberation. If this state is such that good actions --that is good according to reason and religion-- proceed from it, it is called good character. If the actions which proceed from it are evil, the state from which they proceed is called evil character."[16] Striking in this definition is its insistence on the stability of the state of the soul

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15 That is *Kitāb riyāḍat al-nafs wa-tahdhīb al-akhlāq wa-mu'ālajat amrāḍ al-qalb* (The book of disciplining the soul, the education of character, and the curing of the diseases of the heart).

16 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 52.

and the spontanity of the actions derived from that state. The consequence is that a good act that occurs rarely and that is based on certain conditions cannot, stricty speaking, be considered a result of good character.[17]

According to al-Ghazālī, four powers stand as the root of character: knowledge, anger, appetite, and justice. Good character is manifested in someone whenever these four powers are in a state of balance (*i'tidāl*). Conversely, whenever they are not in balance, bad character will be manifest. In short, the very heart of the education of character is the effort to control these powers and to keep them in a equilibrium.[18]

Without mentioning names, al-Ghazālī says that some people think that character cannot be changed for two reasons: (1) because God has created man with his character, as well as his body. So, to change his character, they argue, is as impossible as it is to change his body, and (2) because they had tried very hard and yet had failed to change their own character. However, al-Ghazālī disagrees with them, arguing that if this is the case, then all prophetic messages, advice, and education would have been groundless. He seems to take a middle position, saying that what is impossible is uprooting a character completely. On the other hand it is possible to control and to influence character by which it can be directed according to one's desire. He further points out that even animals, such as a falcon or a dog, can be trained to perform certain actions which they would

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17 Abul Quasem, *The Ethics*, 80.

18 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 52; cf. Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 199. For a list of subordinate virtues and vices derived from these four main powers, see Abul Quasem, *The Ethics*, 81-82.

not do without training.[19]

As we have mentioned above, al-Ghazālī believes that a child is born in purity, his heart is like an 'uncut jewel', and thus morally balanced. If later on one grows to have good or bad character, it is due solely to the way he is raised.[20] For this reason, he emphasizes that a growing child should have as much exposure as possible to good character, and that the customs in which he grows should be those that are in accordance with the character he is intended to possess later. Then, should one grow up in a bad milieu and with bad character, the first step for him is to clearly identify the bad aspects of his character, because only by having a full awareness of this may he hope to better them. This can be done through four ways: (1) by presenting himself to a teacher (*shaykh*), who in turn will explain the state of his character as well as the way it should be refined. In this case, he must follow the advice of the *shaykh* wholeheartedly; (2) by appointing a close friend, who is trustworthy and knowledgeable in religion to watch over his character and to point out its bad elements. Afterwards, he may choose to handle them by self-training or by following a certain *shaykh*; (3) by listening to what his enemies say about him, for one's weaknesses are disclosed in the speeches of his enemies. Sometimes, this is better than the second way; and (4) by socializing with different people, paying attention to their actions that are unpleasant to him, and then observing himself, whether or not he performs the same actions.[21]

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19 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 54; cf. Mubārak, *al-Akhlāq*, 117.

20 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 59.

21 Ibid., 62-63; Abul Quasem, *The Ethics*, 90-91; Mubārak, *al-Akhlāq*, 119.

According to al-Ghazālī, bad character should be dealt with by confronting it. Thus the whole idea of the education of character is to struggle against evil tendencies derived from anger and appetite by practicing their opposites. For example, stinginess is to be removed by practicing generosity, rashness by patience, arrrogance by humility, etc. For instance, al-Ghazālī advises the teacher to send an arrogant student to a market place to beg. By so doing, his arrogance will be reduced little by little.[22] He also emphasizes that to establish a good character takes considerable time and requires constant practicing of certain qualities leading to it. Usually one will have to undergo some difficulties in changing habits and in practicing things one is not accustomed to. A stingy person, for example, will find it difficult to practice generosity; so does the arrogant in practicing humility. It is here, when one undergoes the difficult period of his moral transformation, that one needs a *shaykh* most, to watch over his improvement, to give encouragement, and to ensure that he will not give up because of having trouble.[23]

According to their responsiveness to character transformation, there are four types of people: (1) the naive person (*al-insān al-ghufl*) who does not distinguish right from wrong nor good from evil things. This type of person only needs a good teacher to guide him; and the character of such person can usually be

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22 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 59. See also Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 198; Abul Quasem, *The Ethics*, 92; Mubārak, *al-Akhlāq*, 120-121.

23 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 56. Abul Quasem, *The Ethics*, 94, points out that al-Ghazālī's discussion of the causes of bad character as well as the way it should be treated is mainly derived from the works of the ethical-philosopher, Ibn Miskawayh and the Ṣūfī al-Muḥāsibī. However, while the first two seem to emphasize counteraction by knowledge more than by action, al-Ghazālī argues that both are equally important.

refined in a short time; (2) the person who distinguishes between good and evil, yet is overcome by his power of appetite; although he is aware of his condition, he is unable to control his appetite. This type is worse than the first. However, there still is a possibility to refine his character, by strengthening his awareness of his evil deeds and at the same time preventing himself from doing them; (3) the person who believes evil things to be good and wrong things to be right. This type of person has very little chance for a refinement of character; and (4) even worse, with almost no hope, is the person who was raised and trained with evil opinions and thus sees evils as virtues and virtues as evils.[24]

Al-Ghazālī also stresses the relation between body and soul in his treatment of the education of character. Character originates in the soul, from which the physical actions are derived. But physical actions can also influence the state of the soul. In fact, this is one of the principal arguments for the education of character. By physically doing certain actions in certain periods of time, the quality behind the actions may be implanted into the soul. For example, by practicing the act of generosity, in the form of giving things away, helping the needy, etc., the quality of being generous may become one of the soul's qualities. And this is the aim of the education of character, that is, that one does virtuous actions physically and spiritually enjoys doing them.[25]

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24 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 55; Abul Quasem, *The Ethics*, 88; cf. Ibn Miskawayh, *The Refinement*, 31-32.

25 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 58. For a list of virtuous acts according to al-Ghazālī, see Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 200.

C. The duties of the student

As we have pointed out above, the greater part of al-Ghazālī's treatment of student and teacher consists of his enumeration of their respective duties. Meant to ensure the success of the learning process, these duties basically concern two things: (1) the proper manner for a teacher to deal with his student and vice versa; (2) the way a student should deal with his study and the teaching of his teacher. It is worth noting that al-Ghazālī is the first to offer a discussion of this topic in such a systematic way.

The first duty of the student is the purification of the soul. Al-Ghazālī stresses the importance of this purification as a prerequisite of successful learning. A student has to have his soul cleansed of such impure traits and evil characteristics as anger, greed, self-indulgence, etc. He says that learning is the worship of the soul (inward worship) and that its performance requires that purification. It is just like the ablution without which physical prayer (*ṣalāh*) cannot be performed.[26]

Al-Ghazālī is fully aware of the objections that might be raised against this assertion and therefore provides the answers to two likely objections. In the first place it is a fact that many students with bad characters do gain knowledge. To this, al-Ghazālī answers that this is not the real knowledge that results from true

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[26] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 55; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 56; idem, *Mīzān*, 149-150; Faris, *The Book*, 126. Cf. Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'ah, *Tadhkirat al-Sāmi' wal-Mutakallim fī Ādāb al-'Ālim wal-Muta'allim*, in *al-Madhhab al-Tarbawī 'ind Ibn Jamā'ah*, ed. 'Abd al-Amīr Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār Iqra', 1406/1986), 111; 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ al-'Almawī, *al-Mu'īd fi Adab al-Mufid wal-Mustafid*, in *al-Fikr al-Tarbawī 'ind al-'Almawī*, ed. Shafīq Muḥammad Zay'ūr (Beirut: Dār Iqra', 1406/1986), 92, 127.

learning. Those students only get superficial knowledge that is useless in the Hereafter and that cannot bring them to eternal happiness. Secondly, should one point out that many persons with blameworthy traits become great scholars of jurisprudence, the answer is that one should understand the nature of the science in which they excelled. Their science, though admittedly held in high esteem, is of little value, al-Ghazālī asserts, and is only significant in the primary stage of one's attempt to get near (*taqarrub*) to God. To support his argument he cites the definition of knowledge by an early pious companion of the Prophet, Ibn Mas'ūd (d. 32/652), which runs: "knowledge is not the prolific retention of tradition but a light which floods the heart".[27] Certainly this definition is telling enough for us to understand that here al-Ghazālī is speaking of knowledge partly in a Ṣūfī sense. Moreover, he is contrasting knowledge that is gained through a sensual rational way with that which is gained through a spiritual way. And while admitting the objections, he is in fact proving, at the same time, that the latter kind of knowledge is more valuable for it cannot be gained by a person with bad traits. In any case, this view of jurisprudence as a subordinate science is consistent with his classification of sciences as outlined in Chapter One.

The second duty of the student is to concentrate at all times on his study and not be distracted by any worldly matter. In al-Ghazālī's opinion, complete concentration is a must, citing an unidentified saying: "Knowledge will surrender nothing to man unless man surrenders his all to it", and adds: "even when you devote yourself completely to it, you cannot be sure that you will attain any of it.

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27 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 55-56; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 57; idem, *Mīzān*, 150; Faris, *The Book*, 128-129. See also Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā' wa-Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā'* (Miṣr: Maṭba'at al-Sa'ādah, 1351/1932), I, 131.

The mind which divides its attention among different things is like a stream, the water of which flows in several directions only to be absorbed in part by the earth and in part by the air with the result that nothing is left for irrigation of planted lands."[28]

In order to ensure the concentration of the student, it is recommended that he should minimize his worldly affairs. It is also good for him to leave his hometown and family, and travel somewhere to pursue his study.[29] Travel (*riḥlah*) for the sake of knowledge was so widely practiced "that it became", in the words of Gellens, "a normative feature of medieval Muslim education."[30] It is related, for example, that Bashar Ibn al-Ḥārith urged his disciples to travel and says: "Keep moving, for water is good only if it flows, if it is stagnant it gets spoiled and changes color."[31] Indeed, for a slightly different reason, the renowned Ibn Khaldūn also emphasizes the significance of *riḥlah*, and says: "Traveling in quest of knowledge is absolutely necessary for the acquisition of useful knowledge and perfection through meeting authoritative teachers (*shaykhs*) and

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28 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 56; idem, *Mīzān*, 150-151; Faris, *The Book*, 129. Al-'Almawī, in addition, suggests that students should not eat much and should sleep no more than a third of each day and night lest they bring their mind away from their study. Furthermore, he stresses that in attending lessons, they should concentrate on the lessons and not fool around. See al-'Almawī, *al-Mu'īd*, 100-103, 137-138.

29 For al-Ghazālī's view on travel *riḥlah* in other contexts, see Smith, *Al-Ghazālī*, 44-45.

30 Sam I. Gellens, "The Search for Knowledge in Medieval Muslim Societies: A Comparative Approach," in *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, ed. Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 55.

31 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād aw Madīnat al-Salām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1349/1931), XIV, 204.

having contact with (scholarly) personalities."[32] One has only to read the biographies of prominent medieval Muslim scholars for some examples. The tradition of *riḥlah* lies behind the high mobility of medieval learning.[33]

The third duty of the student is to pay full respect to the teacher. The student ought to humble himself before his teacher and completely submit to his advice just as a patient follows the advice of a skillful physician. At the time of disagreement, the student has to favor the opinion of his teacher and put his own aside. Although asking questions is recommended, the student has to make sure that he does so at the proper times and that he asks only things he is capable of comprehending. Al-Ghazālī suggests that the teacher usually knows more of what the student is able to understand. The student is also advised to help his teacher should need arise.[34] Respect for a teacher is generally viewed as part of respect for knowledge and learning and is very essential in Islamic education. Perhaps we can say that discussion of it is a common feature that can be found in any Muslim discussion of student-teacher relations.[35]

The fourth duty of the student is avoiding involvement in academic disputes and controversies. This is particularly important for a beginner since controversies can confuse his mind and discourage him from carrying on his

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32 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, III, 308.

33 Shalaby, *History*, 181. For more about *riḥlah* see Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Jāmi'*, I, 111-114; Ahmed, *Muslim Education*, 100-111.

34 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 56; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 57-58; idem, *Mīzān*, 151-153; Faris, *The Book*, 129-132.

35 Cf. Ibn al-Muqaffa', *al-Adab al-Wajīz lil-Walad al-Ṣaghīr*, ed. Muḥammad Ghufrānī al-Khurāsānī (Cairo: 'Alam al-Kutub, 1341 A.H.), 62, 68; al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'līm*, 32; Ibn Jamā'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 120; al-'Almawī, *al-Mu'īd*, 133-135.

study. Accordingly, al-Ghazālī suggests that the student should first restrict his study to the opinions of his own teacher. Only after he has mastered them may he turn to those of other scholars. The acceptance of the teacher's opinions, however, is under the condition that he is capable of reaching personal independent opinions. (As already noted above, Ibn Khaldūn considers that finding such an authoritative teacher is one reason for travelling for knowledge.) It is better for a student to avoid a teacher whose method is merely quoting the opinions of others and commentaries already made upon them. Such a teacher, al-Ghazālī suggests, is usually misleading rather than helpful; it is like having one blind person guide another.[36]

Perhaps at this point it would be interesting to review al-Ghazālī's standpoint regarding the art of disputation (*munāẓarah*), which was widely practiced at his time. Generally, we can say that al-Ghazālī's attitude toward it is negative, as can be seen in the *Iḥyā'* and the *Fātiḥah*.[37] Under some conditions, however, he finds it permissible. He starts his discussion with historical survey of the development of disputation, which we may extract as follows. The first four rightly guided caliphs were righteous, learned in religion, and rarely sought the help of others in making their legal decisions. After them the caliphate passed to those less learned who had to seek help from jurists, some of whom, however, were reluctant to accept governmental posts. Shortly after, the jurists, for non-religious purposes, became job seekers after their advice was sought. Along with this competition for jobs, disputation developed rapidly in the field of

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[36] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 57; idem, *Mīzān*, 153-154; Faris, *The Book*, 132. See also Ibn Jamā'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 134; al-'Almawī, *al-Mu'īd*, 131.

[37] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 51-54; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 52-56.

jurisprudence. Due to the fact that some princes were very interested in theology, disputation was then widely practiced in theological matters as well. Since this practice in theology led to bloodshed and destruction of the country (*ihrāq al-dimā' wa-takhrīb al-bilād*),[38] some subsequent scholars deemed disputation in theology unacceptable and once again preferred to do it on legal questions.[39] This situation was in effect until the time of al-Ghazālī.[40]

Al-Ghazālī warns that disputation which is meant for the aim of overcoming an opponent, displaying one's excellence, boasting, or gaining public favor is a source of blameworthy traits, which are, to various degrees, common to those who perform disputation frequently: envy, pride, rancor, backbiting, self-justification, deception, and hypocrisy.[41] In order to avoid the negative results of disputation, al-Ghazālī insists that it should not be carried out except for the

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38 It is very likely that this bloodshed refers to the Inquisition of the 'Abbāsid caliph al-Ma'mūn (reigned 198/813-218/833) which centered on theological questions about the nature of al-Qur'ān: whether or not it is created.

39 As for the function of disputation in medieval Islamic education, Makdisi says: "The function of disputation was to prepare the law student to become a *muftī*, a jurisconsult, qualified to issue legal opinions (*fatwā*, pl. (*fatāwā*). As such he was also qualified to become a *mudarris*, professor of law. Mastering the art of disputation was the last stage in his preparation for the function of *muftī* as well as that of *mudarris*." See Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 128, (transliteration and italicization added).

40 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 48-49; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 47-48; Faris, *The Book*, 108-110. Al-Ghazālī seems to have not been particularly accurate in his account of the history of disputation. In contrast to what he suggests, the art of disputation appears to have evolved out of non-Muslim disputes with Muslims of early period over theological questions. Only later on that it was adopted and used in other fields, such as philosophy and jurisprudence. See E. Wagner, "Munāẓara," in *EI*^{2}, VII, 565; Josef van Ess, "Early Development of *Kalām*," in *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, ed. G.H.A. Juynboll (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 110-112.

41 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 51-54; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 52-56; Faris, *The Book*, 117-124.

purpose of finding the truth. In doing so, several conditions have to be met: (1) as a means of searching after the truth, disputation is deemed *farḍ kifāyah*; therefore no one should take it up until he fulfilled all his *farḍ 'ayn* duties; and (2) until he fulfilled his more important *farḍ kifāyah* duties; (3) the disputant must have the ability to form his own independent opinion (*mujtahid*) and not be bound by the opinions of other *imāms*; (4) the points discussed in disputation must be actual cases; (5) it must be held in private rather than in the presence of the public or celebrities; (6) the aim of it must be nothing but truth, and both parties must be open to accept the truth regardless of who discovers it; (7) disputation must be free of restrictive rules of dialectic, such as preventing one from relinquishing an argument or illustration in favor of another;[42] and (8) a disputant must dispute only with someone from whom he expects to learn something, not someone he expects to defeat. With these conditions, al-Ghazālī says, those who perform disputation for the sake of God will be distinguished from those who do so for the sake of other things.[43]

The fifth duty of the student is to do his best to study every branch of praiseworthy knowledge and understand the aims and purposes of each. He is not obliged, however, to go into detail in every branch. It is sufficient for him to know the most fundamental topics of each in a general manner. Nevertheless, if he finds enough time, he is advised to choose a branch of knowledge to study in depth. As one might expect, al-Ghazālī recommends choosing religious sciences

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[42] One of the earlier scholars who holds that a disputant must maintain his arguments and must not renege on them is al-Fārābī who sets the rules of disoutation in his *Kitāb al-Jadl*, cited in Miller, "Islamic Disputation," 79.

[43] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 49-51; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 49-51; Faris, *The Book*, 110-117.

that bring the student to happiness. Acquaintance with different sciences is essential for it provides one positive appreciation for them and their exponents. In short, al-Ghazālī argues that the student should have a period of general education before he proceeds and specializes in a particular subject.[44]

The sixth and the seventh duties of the seeker of knowledge are to pay close attention to the logical sequence of the sciences he deals with and to follow their logical order in his learning. Al-Ghazālī is of the opinion that sciences are related to each other; one science can be a necessary preparation for the study of the other, it can also be a natural development of another.[45] Whatever the nature of the sequence, the student has to pursue his study accordingly. Therefore, he must not address himself to a certain science before undertaking a thorough study of that which comes before it. When studying a science a student should regard the science above it as his immediate aim. A student must also take the ethical and religious values of sciences, which are clear from their place in the classification, into consideration in determining the sequence of his learning.[46] Undoubtedly, every Muslim must start his learning with the *farḍ ʿayn* sciences, that is the faith and the basic obligations and prohibitions. Afterward, one may pursue further education in the *farḍ kifāyah* sciences, in either a religious or non-religious branch. In any case a sequence has to be followed. In studying religious sciences

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44 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 57-58; idem, *Mīzān*, 154-155; Faris, *The Book*, 134. Urging students to get themselves acquainted with different fields was in fact one of the features of medieval Islamic education. Accordingly a teacher is required to possess certain amounts of knowledge of different subjects to accommodate the various interests of the students. See Yāqūt al-Rūmī, *Irshād*, VI, 13; Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 84.

45 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, III, 298-299.

46 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 58; idem, *Mīzān*, 155-157; Faris, *The Book*, 134-136.

one has to start with the fundamentals (like al-Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*); followed by the branches (such as *fiqh* and the knowledge of the conditions of the heart); the auxilaries (linguistics); and the supplementaries (such as the variant readings of al-Qur'ān and the science of the biographies of *ḥadīth* transmitters). In studying the non-religious sciences, one has to deal with the praiseworthy ones (medicine, arithmetic, agriculture, etc.) before the permissibles (poetry, history, biography), and must not fall into the study of the blameworthy sciences (magic and talismanic sciences).

Apart from that of al-Ghazālī, different sequences are offered by different scholars.[47] Despite the differences as regard to the rest of the sciences, the science of al-Qur'ān is uniformly put as the first subject to be pursued. Indeed, it is reported that early Muslim scholars did not teach *ḥadīth* or *fiqh* except to those who knew al-Qur'ān by heart.[48] Regardless of the existence of the variants, the following appears to have been generally accepted in medieval Islamic education: "al-Qur'ān; *ḥadīth*; the Qur'ānic sciences: exegesis, variant readings; the sciences of *ḥadīth*, involving the study of the biographies of the transmitters of *ḥadīth*; the two *uṣūl*s: *uṣūl ad-dīn*, principles of religion, and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, principles, sources and methodology of the law; *madhhab*, the law of the school to which one belonged; *khilāf*, the divergences of the law, within one's own school as well as between schools; and *jadal*, dialectic."[49]

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47 For examples see Ibn Jamā'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 133-134; al-'Almawī, *al-Mu'īd*, 143-144; al-Nawawī, *al-Majmū'*, I, 38; Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, *al-Fatāwā al-Kubrā al-Fiqhīyah* (Miṣr: 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad Ḥanafī, n.d.), III, 254.

48 al-Nawawī, *al-Majmū'*, I, 38.

49 Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 80 (transliteration and italicization added).

The eighth duty of the student is to know how to ascertain the nobility of the science he is pursuing or intending to pursue. Determining the nature of a science can be done through examining the fruits resulting from the science on one hand and testing the authenticity of its principles on the other. Here al-Ghazālī gives an example in which he compares the science of religion with medicine. It is observed that the former is nobler since its fruit is eternal happiness while the latter, no matter how useful it might be, only produces temporary physical fitness. If, for example, medicine is further compared with arithmetic, it is clear that the latter is based on more clearly defined principles. Nevertheless, the fruits resulting from medicine are more desirable than those of arithmetic; so medicine is considered nobler than arithmetic. In any case, the fruit is always more important than the principles. Using this method of judgement the student would know the merit of each science he studies. In addition, he is then guarded from concentrating on a subject less meritorious than another to which he could be devoting his time.[50]

The student's ninth duty is to make spiritual purification and nearness to God his aim. He should not pursue his study for the sake of worldly success such as the achievement of authority and influence over people and those in power, or to simply boast before his friends. The logical consequence of this fixed aim is that the student must concentrate his study on the science of the Hereafter for it is the closest way to attain that aim. Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī does not fail to remind the student that he should not disparage other sciences, like jurisprudence, grammar and other sciences, the acquisition of which is deemed

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50 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 58-59; idem, *Mīzān*, 158; Faris, *The Book*, 137.

farḍ kifāyah. He further says that though sciences differ in their closeness to the ultimate aim, they nevertheless are in the same line and that the study of them can also be part of the attainment of that aim.[51] "Whosoever will seek God through knowledge, no matter what kind, he is sure to profit and advance."[52]

The tenth duty of the student is to take into consideration the relationship of the sciences to his ultimate aim. For this purpose, it is essential for the student to have general knowledge about the classification of the sciences. Thus he has to prefer what is closer to the aim rather than a remote and less important one. What is considered most important is what relates to the student's concern in both this world and the world to come, and therefore one has to give preference to the science of the Hereafter over any other science. The student is also reminded of the difficulty of mastering the sciences of both the present and the next world at the same time.[53] Regarding this, al-Ghazālī further says:

> If you read or study science, it must be a science which cleanses your heart and purifies your soul. If you knew that your life would not be prolonged more than a week, certainly you would not busy yourself with the sciences of jurisprudence and disputation and metaphysics and theology and such like; but you would busy yourself with guarding your heart and in learning the attributes of the soul, in withdrawing from the entanglements of the world and in purifying yourself from evil character ...

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51 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 59; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 59; idem, *Mīzān*, 167-169; Faris, *The Book*, 138.

52 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 59; Faris, *The Book*, 138. Al-Zarnūjī, in addition to the Hereafter, includes "the removal of ignorance from himself [student] and from the rest of the ignorant, the conservation of religion, and the survival of Islam" as the aim of education. He also finds it permissible for one to seek positions provided that he will use them to disseminate truth and to work for the case of Islam. See al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'līm*, 25-26.

53 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 59; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 59; idem, *Mīzān*, 158; Faris, *The Book*, 138-139.

and in acquiring good qualities.[54]

These last three duties clearly exhibit al-Ghazālī's unshakable belief in the superiority of the Ṣūfī-ethical approach to learning in comparison to the intellectual approach. Yet his profound open-mindedness and the fact that he lived at the time when non-Ṣūfī sciences were so highly esteemed prevent him from disregarding them completely. Instead he takes the middle way, legitimizing both approaches, but at the same time emphasizing tirelessly that the Ṣūfī-ethical approach is superior.[55]

D. The duties of the teacher

Al-Ghazālī starts his treatment of the duties of the teacher by comparing knowledge to wealth and one's relation to it. There are four states in one's relation to wealth: a state of seeking and collecting; a state of saving or storing what he has collected in which he becomes self-sufficient; a state of spending his wealth on himself; and lastly, and this is the noblest state, a state of generosity and spending his wealth on others and on himself. These four states correspond to the four states in one's relation to knowledge: learning or acquiring knowledge; having and storing it; contemplating and enjoying it; and teaching or

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54 al-Ghazālī, *O Disciple*, 26. In a *risālah*, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' say that a science or character is worthy of seeking only if it leads one to success in the Hereafter or helps him in achieving it. See Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il*, I, 273; See also Ibn al-Muqaffa', *al-Adab al-Ṣaghīr*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī Bāshā ([al-Iskandarīyah]: Jam'īyat al-'Urwah al-Wuthqā, 1329/1911), 44; al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'līm*, 28; al-'Almawī, *al-Mu'īd*, 99.

55 Avner Giladi, "Islamic Educational Theories in the Middle Ages: Some Methodological Notes with Special Reference to al-Ghazālī," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin* 14 (1977-1978): 8.

imparting it to others. Again the last state is the noblest.[56] A teacher, therefore, is one who takes on this very honourable task. With this task the teacher has to observe several duties.

The first duty of the teacher is to love his students and treat them as if they are his own children. The closeness of the teacher-student relationship for al-Ghazālī reaches the point that a teacher possesses a greater right over the students than their own parents have. Al-Ghazālī puts parents as natural causes of the mortal existence of children in this world, while the teacher, through his teaching, brings them to eternal existence and happiness in the next world. Basically, what al-Ghazālī means by teacher here is the teacher of the religious sciences. However, this might be extended to include teachers of non-religious sciences provided that they have good intentions and acknowledge the Hereafter as the final aim of their teaching activities.[57] The significance of the teacher, which seems to be over-emphasized here, is applicable only to older students. As for younger children, al-Ghazālī holds that both parent and teacher share the responsibility.[58] In any case, the combination of the respect of the student for the

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56 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 61; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 60; idem, *Mīzān*, 169; Faris, *The Book*, 144.

57 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 61; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 60; idem, *Mīzān*, 169-170; Faris, *The Book*, 145. See also al-'Almawī, *al-Mu'īd*, 112, where the same principle is asserted; but instead of loving students as children, he says that the teacher should "love for his student what he loves for himself (*an yuḥibb la-hu mā yuḥibb li-nafsih*)." Although he does not go so far to say that the teacher has more right over the students than their own parents, he nevertheless recommends to the teacher to try his best to know as much as possible about his student; and this includes his student's name, family background, country of origin, as well as his personal conditions. See al-'Almawī, *al-Mu'īd*, 114; cf. al-Nawawī, *al-Majmū'*, I, 30.

58 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 69-70.

teacher with the latter's love for the former produces the warm, enduring relationship between the two which has long been recognized as a striking feature in the history of Islamic education.[59]

The second duty of the teacher relates to payment. Al-Ghazālī suggests that a teacher should not charge any fee to his students, nor must he expect any reward from them. The teacher has to follow the example of the Prophet in teaching without payment; he must teach for the sake of God and the Hereafter alone. This principle strictly applies to teachers of religious sciences. The rationale of this lies in his concept of one's relation to knowledge, that is the four states mentioned above. Based on these states, the act of imparting knowledge is the noblest state, while seeking it lies two stages below. It follows that the compensation (from God) for the teacher is greater than that for the students, and therefore the teacher is not supposed to take anything from them. In addition, the act of teaching cannot be performed without students, and this means that the teacher would gain nothing without them. So, how could it be possible for him to charge those on whose existence he relies for his rewards, wonders al-Ghazālī.[60]

Elsewhere, al-Ghazālī asserts the same principle by using another reason. The teacher should not receive any payment because religious knowledge is something meritorious that has to be served rather than serve others (*fal-ʿilm makhdūm wa-laysa bi-khādim*).[61] However, he differentiates between payment

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59 Ahmed, *Muslim Education*, 160.

60 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 62; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 60-61; idem, *Mīzān*, 170-171; Faris, *The Book*, 146-147.

received from the students and payment from an endowment of a *madrasah*, against which he has no objection. From what he says in *al-Munqidh* concerning his departure from Baghdād we may assume that al-Ghazālī himself received a good sum of money from the endowment of the Niẓāmīyah, for which he was then working. He makes it plain that before leaving Baghdād he possessed wealth and praises Baghdād for having the best financial system in supporting scholars. Once he decided to abandon Baghdād, however, he distributed what he had, retaining only as much as necessary for himself and the sustenance of his family.[62] Also, it is well established that the Niẓāmīyah, as well as other *madrasah*s provided salaries for their staffs and stipends for their students.[63] Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī recommends that teachers should take no more than an amount by which they are no longer bothered with financial problems and could concentrate on their academic works.[64]

Al-Ghazālī complained about the practice of many teachers of jurisprudence and theology who received payment and competed with each other in gaining the favor of those in power yet continued to claim that they were spreading knowledge for the sake of God. He further objects to some teachers who expect that their students should follow them in everything and be their supporters. However, despite this complaint, one can easily find examples of philanthropic

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61 *Mīzān*, 171.

62 al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 38; Watt, *The Faith*, 59. Considering that this retirement lasted for ten years, it is perhaps a fair guess that even what he left for himself and his family must have been a considerable amount.

63 Makdisi, "Muslim Institutions," 37; idem, *The Rise of Colleges*, 163-165.

64 al-Ghazālī, *Fātiḥah*, 16, 67.

jurists or theologians who, in contrast, spent their own money on their students to support their study. Al-Ghazālī's teacher, Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, is said to have spent the wealth left behind by his father on his students. He continued to help them from his income as a teacher, after his inheritance was finished.[65] Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī is related to have spent thirty thousand *dīnār*s on his students.[66] Similar remarks were also made about Abū al-'Abbās Ibn al-Ḥabbāb, who was well known for being financially very helpful to his students.[67]

The teacher's third duty is to know to the best possible degree the student's background knowledge in particular subject, so that the teacher could determine the stage of knowledge that suits him. Al-Ghazālī asserts that a teacher should make sure that his students do not engage in any difficult topic before mastering the easier, preparatory ones lest he get inadequate ideas which lead him astray. Furthermore, the teacher ought to understand the intentions of his students. If, for instance, he finds out that a student pursues his learning only for non-religious purposes, then a thorough examination should be undertaken to see if his interest is in praiseworthy sciences or in the blameworthy ones. If it happens that his interest is in the latter, then it is for the teacher to prevent him from engaging in them and to direct him to religious sciences. In the case of a student who is interested in religious sciences for purely secular purposes, al-Ghazālī says

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65 al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, V, 175-176.

66 Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Durar al-Kāminah fī A'yān al-Mi'ah al-Thāminah*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Jād al-Ḥaqq (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, n.d.), V, 108-109.

67 'Abd al-Qādir Ibn Muḥammad al-Nu'aymī, *al-Dāris fī Tārīkh al-Madāris* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1410/1990), I, 118. For more examples see Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 180-181.

that there is no need to stop him. With constant advice and guidance there is still hope that he will eventually understand his mistake and change his purposes.[68]

The fourth duty of the teacher relates to moral instruction.[69] Al-Ghazālī acknowledges this as one of the most complicated problems in the art of teaching. Students often misbehave and do inappropriate things from which the teacher should restrain them. But it is here that he must be extremely careful and should handle the students tactfully. He contends that it is wiser to use some indirect approach. Suggestion is preferred to strong, direct correction; kindness rather than reproach. Suggestion and kindness would cause students to think about the teacher's advice as well as about their conduct. On the other hand, "open dissuasion destroys the veil of awe, invites defiance, and encourages stubbornness."[70] In the end this will damage the relationship between the teacher and the students, which means failure on both sides. Nevertheless, we should not assume that this has always been the practice followed by Muslim teachers. There are cases in which misbehaved students were treated harshly.[71]

The teacher's fifth duty is to respect sciences other than those he teaches. A teacher must not be prejudiced against other subjects and should not disparage their importance before his students. Al-Ghazālī gives an illustration from what happened among linguists, jurists, traditionists, and theologians. It is customary,

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68 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 62; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 61-62; idem, *Mīzān*, 171-173; Faris, *The Book*, 147-148. See also al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'līm*, 46; al-'Almawī, *al-Mu'īd*, 115.

69 See also above Chapter Three, part B.

70 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, 63; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 62; idem, *Mīzān*, 173; Faris, *The Book*, 149.

71 Dodge, *Muslim Education*, 4.

he says, among many of them to underrate the value of the sciences other than their own. For example, some jurists would designate the science of tradition as nothing more than stories, the learning of which requires no intellectual activities whatsoever. The theologians, on the other hand, would criticize jurisprudence as mere hairsplitting discussions and confused disputations over things far less important than the subject matter of theology, and so on. Such denunciations, al-Ghazālī remarks, should be avoided by teachers. In complete contrast to that, the teacher has to show respect to all sciences, encourage his students to do the same, and prepare them for the study of other sciences.[72] Here, the classification of sciences becomes very significant because it allows someone to examine the value of each science and then determine the superiority of one science over another without necessarily condemning any of them. As a general rule, the value of a science is determined by the advantage that one would get from its study.[73] And as we have seen, based on this, al-Ghazālī believes that the sciences of the Ṣūfīs are superior and the rest are only second in their importance.

The sixth duty of the teacher is to take into consideration the understanding ability of his students and teach them according to this ability. This means that in addition to his knowledge of the student's background knowledge, the teacher needs some psychological understanding of his student's intelligence. Based on this understanding the teacher then decides the most proper way in dealing with his student.[74] As has already been pointed out in Chapter One, al-Ghazālī holds

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72 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 63; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 62; idem, *Mīzān*, 173-174; Faris, *The Book*, 149-150.

73 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 35-37; Faris, *The Book*, 73-77.

74 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 63; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 62; idem, *Mīzān*, 174-175; Faris, *The Book*,

that people differ in their intelligence, and therefore in their ability to comprehend things. Most people need great effort in order to establish an understanding of something; others, the geniuses, understand very quickly; and still others, the prophets and the saints, understand things without any effort.[75] The teacher's failure to have a correct estimation of his student's level of intelligence may lead him to wrong treatment that confuses and discourages the student.

The seventh duty of the teacher is the more practical side of the third and the sixth duties; that is that he should pay special attention to a backward student and treat him differently from the average. He should not expect him to do difficult tasks, but rather give him easy tasks he is capable of doing. It is recommended that the teacher try to cultivate the student's self-confidence and should never discourage him despite his backwardness. It is better not to bother him with complicated ideas, controversies, or heavy discussions of details for he will get nothing from these but confusion and despair. Al-Ghazālī suggests that it is more fruitful to confine the backward student to instruction in worship and the basic religious teachings by which he will be able to carry on his religious duties in the correct manner.[76]

Finally, the eighth duty of the teacher is to set an example for his students. His practice must be in accordance with his teachings. This is most important for

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75 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 93-94; idem, *Mīzān*, 142-143; idem, *al-Risālah al-Ladunīyah*, 369-370; Faris, *The Book*, 232-234.

76 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 63-64; idem, *Mīzān*, 175-177; Faris, *The Book*, 151-152.

many find it easier to perceive things through example and illustration. Moreover, contradiction between his practice and teachings would make it difficult for people to accept his ideas and opinions. Here al-Ghazālī seems to set a very high expectation for the teacher and asserts that any fault on the teacher's part will produce a negative effect in his students. He illustrates this by using the analogy of a stick and its shadow, and asks: how could the shadow possibly be straight when the stick itself is crooked? He further points out that misconduct on the part of the teacher is much more dangerous since many will follow and take his error as an example.[77]

E. Teacher-student relationship and the learning process

The teacher-student relationship is such an important topic that most writers in Islamic education, in one way or another, include discussions of it in their works. It has also been realized quite uniformly that the history of Muslim education exhibits a good relationship between teacher and student, based on mutual affection, friendship, and respect.[78] The following passage from Hossein Nasr is relevant:

> [It] has always had a highly personal aspect, in that the student has sought a particular master rather than an institution, and has submitted himself to that chosen teacher wholeheartedly. The relation that has

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77 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 64; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 63; idem, *Mīzān*, 177-178; idem, *O Disciple*, 3-4, 8-9, 11; idem, *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah*, on the margin of al-Ghazālī, *Minhāj al-'Abidīn* (Miṣr: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyah, n.d.), 84; Faris, *The Book*, 152-153.

78 Ahmed, *Muslim Education*, 160; Abdelwahid Abdalla Yousif, "Muslim Learning During the Earlier Abbasid Era 749-861 A.D." (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1978), 125.

> always existed between the teacher and the student has been a highly intimate one, in which the student reveres the teacher as a father and obeys him, even in personal matters not connected with his formal studies.[79]

This characterization can safely be taken as the prevailing view drawn from available sources, mainly in the form of biographies of Muslim scholars.

This section deals with further discussions about teacher and student, stressing the relationship between the two in the context of the way learning is carried out. The learning process will be seen in the light of al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge discussed in the previous chapter. As has been pointed out (Chapter One, part C), al-Ghazālī divides knowledge into two main branches: the practical and the spiritual. These correspond to two different ways of acquiring knowledge: the rational-sensory and the Ṣūfī-spiritual (discussed in Chapter One, part A). Having these two branches of knowledge and two ways of acquiring them, al-Ghazālī admits the existence of two systems of learning, each with its own nature: Ṣūfī learning and other types, which for the sake of convenience we will simply call non-Ṣūfī learning. The point to be stressed here is that al-Ghazālī does not see the two branches of knowledge, the two ways of acquiring them, and the two systems of learning as being in conflict with each other, but rather as complements. In fact, as we have seen, he devoted his last days to the service of both, heading a *madrasah* and a *khānqāh.*

His standpoint regarding knowledge significantly influences the way he sees the teacher-student relationship. In no place can one see al-Ghazālī contrast the

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[79] Nasr, *Science*, 73.

natures of teacher or student of Ṣūfī learning to those of non-Ṣūfī learning.[80] This is equally true about the nature of teacher-student relationship in the learning process. However, there are some points where different stresses are given to one or the other kind of learning, which we may use to compare the relationship between teacher and student in Ṣūfī and non-Ṣūfī learning.

First, it is to be noticed that the teacher has a slightly different significance in the two systems. In Ṣūfī learning a *murshid* (Ṣūfī teacher) is a must. A *murīd* (Ṣūfī student) must pursue his study under the guidance of a *murshid*. Without a *murshid*, a *murīd* is very likely to get lost in his learning, and go astray rather than obtain advancement in the path.[81] The problem is somewhat different in non-Ṣūfī learning. Although the importance of a teacher is emphasized,[82] there is still room for those who prefer to pursue their study alone, and indeed many have been successful. One may recall that al-Ghazālī himself did much of his study --especially the systematic investigation of theology, philosophy, the *ta'lim*, and Ṣūfism-- without a teacher.[83] Interestingly, unlike with the other three sciences, al-Ghazālī ended his self study of Ṣūfism with great dissatisfaction and crisis that led him to abandon Baghdād, completing his knowledge of Ṣūfism with

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80 As a matter of fact, one finds many similarities between what al-Ghazālī sets as the duties of the *muta'allim* (strictly speaking means non-Ṣūfī student) with those of a *murīd* (Ṣūfī novice) offered by Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168) in one of his works that specially deals with the duties of the Ṣūfī student. See his *Adāb al-Murīdīn*, ed. Menahem Milson (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1978), 23-44.

81 al-Ghazālī, *O Disciple*, 16-17.

82 Cf. Shalaby, *History*, 115, where al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820) is related as saying that study from books without knowledge is insufficient.

83 On self-learning in *adab* sciences, see Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 217-227.

actual practices.[84] And it is because of the great significance of this practice, along with its subtle nature, that a *murshid* is indispensable in Ṣūfī learning.

Apart from what has been mentioned in the discussion of the duties of teacher and student, which to some degree reveals the nature of this relationship, we have virtually very little relevant information. What is available is found in his *Ayyuhā al-Walad*, *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah*,[85] and *al-Adab fī al-Dīn*.[86] The *Ayyuhā* is a reply by al-Ghazālī to his former favorite student, who, after being advanced in his study of various sciences, came to a point where he started to think about which of the sciences would be useful for him in the Hereafter. This thought prompted him to write to al-Ghazālī asking for his advice and guidance, and in reply al-Ghazālī composed the *Ayyuhā*, outlining in it some problems pertaining to Ṣūfī learning, including some discussion of the nature of the relationship between *murīd* and *murshid*.[87] As for the *Bidāyah* and *al-Adab*, they are small treatises containing the most important aspects of religion and ethics that have to be known and observed by all Muslims. In a sense we may call them manuals

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84 While it is true that during his earlier days al-Ghazālī had had contacts with several Ṣūfīs, and did some Ṣūfī practices, he had never devoted himself to Ṣūfism to such a level that allow us to call him a Ṣūfī prior to Baghdād period of his career.

85 A commentary edition of this work, Muḥammad Nawawī al-Jāwī, *Sharḥ Marāqī al-'Ubūdīyah* (Miṣr: al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥamīdīyah, 1317 A.H.), adds next to nothing as far as our present point of discussion is concerned. On the other hand, a Malay translation of this work incorporates much other material, mostly from other works of al-Ghazālī. It was prepared by al-Falimbānī, and bears the title *Hidāyat al-Sālikin* (Jakarta: al-'Aydarūs, n.d.).

86 in *Majmū'at Rasā'il*, ed. Muḥyi al-Dīn al-Kurdī (Miṣr: Maṭba'at Kurdistān al-'Ilmīyah, n.d.), 62-94.

87 See Frank Hugh Foster, "Ghazali on the Inner Secret and Outward Expression of Religion in his 'Child'," *Moslem World* 23 (1933): 380-381.

provided for the ordinary folk. It is also to be noted that the authenticity of the *Bidāyah* has been questioned by scholars. Indeed, Watt concludes that the last section of the work, which contains the discussion about the teacher-student relationship, is not authentic; and based on this conviction he excludes it from his translation of the work.[88] Nevertheless since the same ideas as that of the last part of the *Bidāyah* are also expressed in *al-Adab*, which has a higher probability of authenticity,[89] the use of this information seems to be justified, especially because it does not contradict al-Ghazālī's general view about the teacher and the student. So, by combining what we have in these works with what has been mentioned previously we will try to see the nature of the teacher-student relationship in both the Ṣūfī and non-Ṣūfī systems of learning.

Basic things to this relationship is respect by the student for the teacher and the love of the teacher for his student. This principle is equally important in both Ṣūfī and non-Ṣūfī learning. Yet we may say that in practice this principle exhibits somewhat different features in the two systems of learning. Al-Ghazālī says that a student, of either Ṣūfī or non-Ṣūfī learning, should greet his teacher first, that is before the teacher greets him, and should not talk much in his presence. When in class, he should make sure that his attention is directed to what his teacher says. He should be seated politely, not turning right or left, and not having conversation with his neighbours. He must sit during a class the way he sits during the prayer. Indeed, for al-Ghazālī learning is an inward worship as we have seen. When he has something to say, or a question to ask, he has to ask the

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88 Watt, *The Faith*, 9, 152; Badawī, *Mu'allafāt*, 138-140.

89 Watt, "The Authenticity," 31; Badawī, *Mu'allafāt*, 241-242.

teacher's permission first, as part of the way he shows his respect.[90] Despite this, the significance of respecting the teacher appears to be more significant in the Ṣūfī sphere of learning if only for the fact that a Ṣūfī *murīd* is more dependent on his *murshid* for the advancement of his learning than is his non-Ṣūfī student counterpart. Indeed, the veneration of some Ṣūfī masters, in a sense, might be seen as a practice of paying exessive respect for them, a tendency that generally does not occur to non-Ṣūfī teachers.

As has been said above, disputing with one's teacher is considered inappropriate. In fact al-Ghazālī also restrains a student from contrasting his teacher with other scholars by presenting before him opinions contradictory to those of his teacher. Similarly a student is not to assume that he knows more than his own teacher. These structures are equally true in the case of a Ṣūfī *murīd* with his *murshid*. However, in non-Ṣūfī learning, this rule is matched by al-Ghazālī's insistence that a teacher should pay full attention to his student, particularly when he raises a question. Moreover, the teacher must not hesitate to admit his ignorance, be open in discussing any problem, and be ready to accept truths that are based on sound arguments, regardless of its source.[91] But a *murīd* should not challenge his *murshid* even when the *murshid* is mistaken and the mistake is obvious to the *murīd*. Furthermore, for the Ṣūfī student, this

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90 al-Ghazālī, *al-Adab*, 66; idem, *Bidāyah*, 84. See also Ahmed, *Muslim Education*, 164; al-Falimbānī, *Sayr*, 33; idem, *Hidāyah*, 317-318.

91 al-Ghazālī, *al-Adab*, 66; idem, *Bidāyah*, 83-84; al-Falimbānī, *Sayr*, 33-35; idem, *Hidāyah*, 315-316. Nakosteen, *History*, 41-42, explaining the academic freedom in *madrasahs*, that is to say in the non-Ṣūfī learning, has the following: "in the college of Baghdad an inquiring student, who greeted the great teacher with devoted *salāms* [bows] often ended the day with an intellectual fist fight with his master in defence of some principles, refutation of others, or hairspilitting argument over significant details."

external respect has to be followed with an internal one. He is required to believe truly and whole-heartedly whatever his *murshid* says. Doing otherwise would result in his being considered to have committed hypocrisy. Whenever the *murīd* feels that he still has the slightest doubt regarding his *murshid*, he should know that he is not in a condition suitable for learning. He must leave his *murshid* for a while and purify his inner self until his denial is completely removed, in which case he can continue his learning.[92] In another place al-Ghazālī asserts that a *murīd*, due to the obscurity of the path, has to cling to his *murshid*, in the way a blind person clings to his guide. An error on the part of the *murshid* should not cause the *murīd* to doubt his authority.[93] In short, once one decided to become a *murīd* of a certain *murshid*, a complete submission to the authority of that *murshid* is required, regardless of his being correct or mistaken. This makes it very important for a *murīd* to choose his *murshid* very carefully, to ensure that he gets an authoritative one. Describing the authoritative *murshid*, al-Ghazālī says that he must be:

> one who is removed far from love of the world and of rank, one who has been the follower of a discerning person who traces his successorship to the Lord of the Apostles, who has excelled in disciplining himself in little food and sleep and speech and in much prayer and alms and fasting, and who, following the discerning *shaykh*, is making the good qualities of character his way of life --such as endurance, thanksgiving, trust, faith, generosity, contentment and tranquility of soul, moderation, humility, knowledge, sincerety and modesty, trustworthiness, seriousness, and

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92 al-Ghazālī, *O Disciple*, 17.

93 al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, 73; See also Mohammad Ajmal, "A Note on *Adab* in the *Murshid-Murīd* Relationship," in *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, ed. Barbara D. Metcalf (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 244. The absolute obedience in Ṣūfī learning is so profound that a certain Ṣūfī is reported to have said that a *murīd* has to obey and honor his *murshid*, even if the *murshid* happens to be a satan. See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 193.

> similar traits; then he is light from the lights of the Prophet, and he is worthy to be followed; but the presence of such as he is rare, more precious than phosphorous! Whoever has the good fortune to find a *shaykh* such as we have described, and to be accepted by him, must honor him outwardly and inwardly.[94]

One of the manifestations of the love of the teacher of either system of learning for his students is that he be patient with them, especially when dealing with those who, due to the natural differences, do not possess quick minds. In this case the teacher has to explain his lesson patiently until it becomes clear to them.[95] Indeed, the history of Islamic education is marked by instances where, out of their love for students, teachers help them not only with their academic problems but also with their financial problems, which in many cases involves large sums of money. Earlier we have mentioned the cases of Imām al-Ḥaramayn, al-Shīrāzī, and al-Ḥabbāb as examples of philanthropic teachers who were very helpful to their students. We also have records of teachers, sometimes with a party of students, who pay a visit to a sick student, showing their deep concern and support.[96] This kind of teacher-student relationship often results in an enduring companionship going far beyond the time when one is a student or a teacher of another. The story behind the composition of al-Ghazālī's *Ayyuhā al-Walad* is certainly an example of this. Even when he had left al-Ghazālī for years and he himself had advanced in his learning, this particular disciple still found it necessary to write to al-Ghazālī, the beloved teacher, for advice, guidance, and prayer.

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94 al-Ghazālī, *O Disciple*, 16-17.

95 al-Ghazālī, *al-Adab*, 66; idem, *Bidāyah*, 84.

96 For examples, see al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, VIII, 64; XIII, 334; XIV, 246.

F. The aims of education

In the most simple way, we may say that the aims of education are necessarily the same as the aims of life itself, and therefore the aims of Islamic education are the same as the aims of Muslim life. Yet, as life comprises many stages in which one aims for different ends, so does education. It has many stages and involves various activities. People may pursue different branches of knowledge; and even when pursuing the same branch of knowledge, there is still a possibility that people are after different things. The following lines will discuss different aims of Islamic education and their place in al-Ghazālī's educational thoughts. These aims will be seen in the light of his theory of knowledge which has been covered in Chapter One.

In the first place, based on their natures, the aims of education might be divided into two: religious and secular.[97] Within al-Ghazālī's theory the former receives more attention by far. As for the latter, it appears to be subsidiary to the former, and secular ends of education are generally considered less meritorious. Being either religious or secular, the aims of education will be further seen in relation to the different systems of learning based on the nature of the sciences sought, that is, religious learning, non-religious learning, and Ṣūfī learning. Another thing to be remembered is that the aims of education as seen by al-Ghazālī are in accordance with his theory of the interrelation of sciences that, once again, might be illustrated with a straight line, the sciences being situated on different points along the line.[98]

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97 Cf. Nakosteen, *History*, 41.

98 al-Ghazālī, *Fātiḥah*, 43; cf. idem, *Iḥyā'*, I, 59-60; idem, *Mīzān*, 162-163.

From what is considered by al-Ghazālī as the individually obligatory education (above pp. 66-67), it is plain that on this level the aims of education are acquaintances with the basic theological and practical teachings of Islam, proper performance of religious duties, and avoidance of things prohibited. Although study of religious sciences might enable one to attain secular aims such as position, influence, power, and wealth, al-Ghazālī is quite clear that they should not be taken as goals in pursuing religious education. One should not learn *tafsīr, ḥadīth, fiqh, uṣūl,* and the like for the sake of this world.[99]

The case is different when it comes to non-religious learning. Al-Ghazālī explicitly says that one is allowed to learn non-religious sciences such as medicine and mathematics for the sake of worldly wealth and prestige.[100] However, this should not be taken to mean that al-Ghazālī is contrasting the religious and non-religious sciences. In spite of the fact that non-religious sciences are subsidiary in his classification, al-Ghazālī does not fail to bridge the gap between these sciences and religion. As far as religion is concerned, the study of non-religious sciences should be directed to serve religion and to help people carry out their religious duties. Thus while one is allowed to seek wealth and prestige through the study of non-religious sciences, one is, nevertheless obliged to use his wealth and prestige in ways sanctioned by religious law.[101]

In the Ṣūfī sphere, it is clear that the primary aim of education is the

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99 al-Ghazālī, *Fātiḥah*, 9, 15; above, 103-104; cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Risālat Marātib al-'Ulūm*, 63-64.

100 *Fātiḥah*, 15.

101 Cf. al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'līm*, 25-26.

spiritual knowledge that can be attained only after complete purification of the heart and suppression of its evil tendencies. While the nature of this spiritual knowledge may vary and while people might advance to different stages, there seems to be agreement that the ultimate point at which Ṣūfī learning aims is available only in the Hereafter. This ultimate aim is eternal happiness (*al-saʿādah al-abadīyah*) in Paradise, the highest point of which is the vision of God and meeting Him.[102] Commenting on al-Ghazālī's 'Kitāb al-ʿIlm', and examining it against his classification of sciences and the aims of education, Avner Giladi says the following:

> The fact that, in 'Kitāb al-ʿilm', al-Ghazālī defines the branches of learning in the 'higher learning' category as studies which are 'community obligation', not 'individual obligation', suggests that he did not recognize them as an essential stage in the religious advancement of a Muslim, and perhaps even tried to dissuade some of the students from continuing to deal with them. Actually, so al-Ghazālī believes, the believer's goal can be achieved exclusively through studies connected with moral improvement and through moral training in practice, without any advanced, systematic, theoretical studies. Still, evidently in a desire to influence those believers who dedicate their lives to the study of religion in *madrasa*s and similar institutions, al-Ghazālī does not deny the possibility that the way to attain the true knowledge (*ʿilm al-mukāshafa*), the purpose and joy of the Muslim's life --a way chiefly through moral improvement-- may also include stages of a systematic study of religious sciences --those whose learning is 'the obligation of the community'. Al-Ghazālī thus presents the two ways in which religious truths can be acquired --the scholarly and the [Ṣūfī-]ethical-- as ways that combine, and that is perhaps one of his principal contributions to the synthesis of the mystic and orthodox approaches in Islam. Both ways, separately or together, are legitimate for him as means of attaining the believer's goal and the purpose of his life, and even if one of them, the [Ṣūfī-]ethical way, is preferable, the other is not totally rejected.[103]

In summing up this section, suffice it to say that while the aims of education

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102 Abul Quasem, *The Ethics*, 57; cf. al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, I, 59-60; idem, *Fātiḥah*, 43.

103 Giladi, "Islamic Educational Theories," 8.

might be various in some stages, they necessarily lead to and culminate in one sole aim, that is, God.

CONCLUSION

Al-Ghazālī was born with an exceptionally high zeal for inquiry in a milieu that was fertile for the development of this zeal. Indeed his biography reveals that his career was essentially a series of events in which he boldly followed his inquiring mind, venturing into every dark corner of different systems of thought, before Ṣūfism finally gave his mind peace. Two crises, one caused by doubt, the other by truth, struck him. Naturally, this adventure left its marks on his educational thought, which by and large he wrote after his conversion to Ṣūfism.

This thought can be divided into three aspects. The first is a psychological aspect, which covers his opinions about the nature of man, the nature of the faculties by which he gains knowledge, and the way these faculties function. Although at one point of his life al-Ghazālī had a complete distrust of sensual and intellectual perception, in the end he acknowledged them as ways through which man attains knowledge. He holds that intellect has five faculties that are essential in its functioning as the perceiver of knowledge: the common sense, the imaginative, the estimative, the retentive, and the recollective powers. In addition to the sensual-intellectual way, man can also attain knowledge through a completely spiritual process; that is by purifying his heart and maintaining a constant remembrance of God which will make the spiritual realm accessible, he can attain knowledge without intellectual activity. The second aspect is a classification of sciences based on different considerations, the most important of

which is an assessment of their legal and ethical values. The two different ways of attaining knowledge result in two different major branches of sciences: intellectual and spiritual. Based on the legal status of their acquisition, sciences fall into either individual obligations or communal obligations. Ethically, sciences are either praiseworthy, blameworthy, or indifferent. More than just an enumeration, al-Ghazālī's classification of sciences serves as a guideline for the seeker after knowledge in that it defines the significance of each science from both the legal and ethical points of view. The third aspect of al-Ghazālī's educational thought is his discussion about student and teacher that concerns the more practical side of education. He identifies several duties which have to be observed by the student and the teacher in order to ensure the success of a learning process. In addition, al-Ghazālī provides a special discussion of the education of character. For young children, this process consists primarily of the art of nurturing their potentials in the correct direction. For those who have developed a bad character in themselves, however, the major part of their character education would be the process of confronting it, keeping it under control, and gradually replacing it with the desired character.

What is striking in al-Ghazālī's discussions of educational matters is his conviction of the superiority of the Ṣūfī-ethical system and approach to learning as opposed to the rational approach represented by the philosophers, the theologians, and, to a lesser degree, the jurists. For him, Muslim education should include not only a process of transmission of knowledge, or a series of intellectual exercises, but also the awakening of Muslims' moral consciousness.

APPENDIX

The following are parallels from al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, and Bryson's *Tadbīr al-Manzil*, which show the relation between them on the education of young children. They clearly illustrate their sameness in ideas as well as their similarities in expression.[1]

1. On proper manners in eating and that a child should be accustomed to modest food

al-Ghazālī: *Wa-an lā yubādir [al-ṣabīy] ilā al-ṭa'ām qabl ghayri-hi, wa-an lā yaḥdiqa al-naẓra ilay-hi wa-lā ilā man ya'kul wa-an lā yasra' fī al-'akl, wa-an yajīda al-maḍgh, wa-an lā yuwālī bayn al-luqam wa-lā yalṭakh yada-hu wa-lā thawba-hu, wa-an yu'awwada al-khubz al-qaffār fī ba'ḍ al-awqāt ḥattā lā yaṣīr bi-ḥaythu yarā al-udm ḥatman* (III, 70).

Ibn Miskawayh: *Wa-idhā jalasa [al-ṣabīy] ma'a ghayri-hi lā yubādiru ilā al-ṭa'ām wa-la yudīmu al-naẓra ilā alwāni-hi, wa-lā yaḥdiqu ilay-hi shadīdan wa-yaqtaṣiru 'alā mā yalīh, wa-lā yasra' fī al-akl wa-lā yuwālī bayna al-luqam bi-sur'ah, wa-lā yu'ẓimu al-luqmah wa-lā yabtali'u-hā ḥattā yajīd maḍgha-hā, wa-lā yalṭakh yada-hu wa-lā thawba-hu. Wa-lā yalḥaẓ man yu'ākilu-hu wa-lā yatba' bi-naẓri-hi mawāqi' yadi-hi min al-ṭa'āmi, wa-yu'awwad an yu'thira ghayra-hu bi-mā yalī-hi, in kāna afḍala mā 'inda-hu. Thumma yuḍbaṭ shahwatu-hu ḥattā yaqtaṣira 'alā adnā al-ṭa'āmi wa-adwana-hu, wa-ya'kul al-khubz al-qaffār alladhī lā udma ma'a-hu fī ba'ḍ al-awqāt* (71).

Bryson: *Anna-hu yanbaghī an yu'awwada al-ṣabīy an-lā yubādira ilay-hi [al-ṭa'ām] ḥattā yūḍa', wa-lā yanẓur ilay-hi naẓra al-sharh ... wa-idhā jalasa 'alā al-ṭa'ām man huwa akbar min-hu, fa-lā yamuddu yada-hu ilā al-ṭa'ām qabla-hu ... wa-lā yu'aẓẓam luqama-hu, wa-lā yulaṭṭakh yada-hu, wa-lā fama-hu, wa-lā thiyāba-hu, wa-lā yulaṭṭakh aṣābi'a-hu ... wa-lā yanẓur ilā aḥadin min-man ya'kul*

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[1] Some punctuation has been added and references are given at the end of each citation. For the *Iḥyā'* and the *Tadbīr*, the references are to the editions cited in this thesis. For the *Tahdhīb* they are to the edition by Ḥasan Tamīm (Isfahan: Intishārat Mahdawī, 1978).

ma'a-hu ... wa-yu'awwad al-qanā'ah bi-'akhass al-ṭa'ām wal-iqtiṣār 'alā al-khubz bi-lā udm (176).

2. On proper clothing

al-Ghazālī: *Wa-an yuḥibba ilayhi [al-ṣabīy] min al-thiyāb al-bayḍ dūna al-mulawwan wal-ibrīsam wa-yuqarrara 'inda-hu anna dhālika sha'n al-nisā' wal-mukhannithīn wa-anna al-rijāla yastankifūna min-hu* (III, 70).

Ibn Miskawayh: *Wa-yu'lama [al-ṣabīy] anna awlā al-nās bil-malābis al-mulawwanah wal-manqūshah al-nisā' al-lātī yatazayyanna lil-rijāl thumma al-'abīd wal-khawal, wa-inna al-aḥsan bi-ahl al-nabl wal-sharf min al-libās al-bayāḍ wa-mā ashbaha* (70).

Bryson: *wa-yanbaghī ayḍan an-lā yu'awwad al-ṣabīy labs al-layyin wal-raqīq wa-an-la yukabbar fī nafsi-hi haybat al-libās, wa-an yufahham anna dhālika innamā yalīq bil-nisā' wal-mutaraffin* (178).

3. On reward and punishment and preventing a child from love poetry

al-Ghazālī: *Wa-yuḥfaẓu [al-ṣabīy] min al-ash'ār al-latī fī-hā dhikr al-'ishq wa-ahlih wa-yuḥfaẓ min mukhalaṭat al-udabā' al-ladhīna yaz'amūna anna dhālika min al-ẓarf wa-riqqat al-ṭab'i, fa-inna dhālika yaghrusu fī qulūb al-ṣibyān badhra al-fasād. Thumma mahmā ẓahara min al-ṣabīy khalqun jamīlun wa-fi'lun maḥmudun fa-yanbaghī an yukrama 'alay-hi wa-yujāzī 'alay-hi bi-mā yafraḥu bi-hi wa-yumdaḥu bayna aẓhar al-nās. Fa-in khālafa dhālika fī ba'ḍ al-aḥwāl marratan wāḥidatan fa-yanbaghī an yutaghāfala 'an-hu wa-lā yuhtak sitru-hu wa-lā yukāshafa-hu wa-lā yuẓhar la-hu anna-hu yataṣawwaru an yatajāsara aḥadun 'alā mithlih wa-lāsiyamā idhā satara-hu al-ṣabiy wa-ijtahada fī ikhfā'i-hi, fa-inna iẓhāra dhālika 'alay-hi rubamā yufīdu-hu jassāratan ḥattā lā yubālī bil-mukāshafah, fa-'ind dhālika in 'āda thāniyan fa-yanbaghī an yu'ātaba sirran wa yu'aẓẓam al-'amr fī-hi* (III, 70).

Ibn Miskawayh: *Wa-yuḥdhar [al-ṣabīy] al-naẓra fī al-ash'ār al-sakhīfah wa-mā fī-hā min dhikr al-'ishq wa-ahli-hi wa-ma yuwahhimu-hu aṣḥābuh anna-hu ḍarb min al-ẓarf wa-riqqat al-ṭab', fa-inna hadhā al-bāb mufsidatun lil-aḥdāth jiddan. Thumma yumdaḥ bi-kull mā yaẓharu min-hu min khalqin jamīlin wa-fi'lin ḥasanin wa-yukram 'alay-hi. Fa-in khālafa fī ba'ḍ al-awqāt mā dhakar-tu-hu fal-awlā an lā yūbakh 'alay-hi, wa-lā yukashaf bi-anna-hu aqdama 'alayh bal yutaghāfal 'an-hu taghāfala man lā yakhṭar bi-bālih anna-hu qad tajāsara 'alā mithli-hi wa-lā hamma bi-hi, lāsiyamā in satara-hu al-ṣabīy wa-ijtahada fī an yakhfiya mā fa'ala-hu 'an al-nās. Fa-in 'āda fal-yūbakh 'alayh sirran wa-li-yu'aẓẓam 'inda-hu mā atā-hu* (70).

Not found in **Bryson**.

4. On prohibition against sleeping during the day

al-Ghazālī: *Wa-yanbaghī an yumna'a [al-ṣabīy] 'an al-nawm nahāran fa-inna-hu yūrithu al-kasl; wa-lā yumna' min-hu laylan wa-lakin yumna' al-farsh al-waṭī'ah*

ḥattā tataṣallaba aʿḍāʾuh (III, 70).

Ibn Miskawayh: *Wa-yumnaʿ [al-ṣabīy] min al-nawm al-kathīr fa-inna-hu yuqbiḥu-hu wa-yughliẓu dhihna-hu wa-yumītu khāṭirah. Hādhā bil-layl, fa-ammā bil-nahāri fa-lā yanbaghī an yataʿawwada-hu albattata. Wa-yumnaʿ ayḍan min al-firāsh al-waṭīʾ wa-jamīʿ anwāʿ al-turfah ḥattā yaṣlab badanu-hu wa-yataʿawwadu al-khashwanah* (72).

Bryson: *Wa-ammā al-nawm fa-yuqaddar lil-ṣabīy min-hu miqdāra ḥājati-hi wa-yumnaʿ min an yastaʿmila-hu lil-taladhdhudh bi-hi, fa-inna kathrat al-nawm ḍārratun la-hu fī badani-hi wa-nafsi-hi ... wa-yumnaʿ al-ṣabīy min al-nawm bil-nahār illā in iḥtāja ilay-hi li-ḍaʿfin aw liʿillatin* (177-178).

5. On prohibition against doing things in secret

al-Ghazālī: *Wa-yanbaghī an yumnaʿa [al-ṣabīy] min kulli mā yafʿalu-hu fī khafīyah fa-inna-hu lā yakhfī-hi illā wa-huwa yaʿtaqidu anna-hu qabīḥ, fa-idhā turika taʿawwada fiʿl al-qabīḥ* (III, 71).

Ibn Miskawayh: *Wa-yanbaghī an yumnaʿ [al-ṣabīy] min kull fiʿl yasturu-hu wa-yakhfī-hi, fa-inna-hu laysa yakhfī shayʾan illā wa-huwā yaẓunn aw yaʿlam anna-hu qabīḥ* (72).

Bryson: *Wa-matā raʾay-ta al-ṣabīy yaʾkul shayʾan wa-huwa yuḥibbu an yukhfā aklu-hu iyyā-hu, fa-amnaʿ-hu min-hu, fa-inna-hu lam yastur akla-hu illā wa-qad ʿalima anna-hu lā yaḥtāju ilay-hi wa-anna-hu fī akli-hi la-hu mukhṭiʾ* (177).

6. On exercise and its benefits for the child

al-Ghazālī: *Wa-yuʿawwadu [al-ṣabīy] fī baʿḍ al-nahār al-mashy wal-ḥarakah wal-riyāḍah ḥattā lā yaghlib ʿalay-hi al-kasl wa-yuʿawwadu an lā yakshifa aṭrāfa-hu wa-lā yasraʿu al-mashy wa-lā yarkhā yada-hu, bal yaḍummu-humā ilā ṣadrih* (III, 71).

Ibn Miskawayh: *Wa-yuʿawwad [al-ṣabīy] al-mashy wal-ḥarakah wal-rukūb wal-riyāḍah ḥattā lā yataʿawwad aḍḍāda-hā ... wa-yanbaghī an yuʾdhina la-hu fī baʿḍ al-awqāt an yalʿab laʿban jamīlan, li-yastarīḥa ilay-hi min taʿb al-adab, wa-lā yakūn fī laʿbi-hi alamun wa-lā taʿbun shadīd* (72,73).

Bryson: *Wa-kadhālika al-mashy wal-ʿadw wal-rukūb wal-ḥarakah khayrun lil-ṣabīy min al-sukūn wal-daʿah ... wa-lā yarkhā yada-hu wa-lā yaḍummu-humā ilā ṣadri-hi wa-lā yakshifa sāʿida-hu wa-lā yusriʿ fī mashyi-hi jiddan wa-lā yubṭiʾu fī-hi jiddan* (178). *Wa-yanbaghī an yuʾaddaba al-ṣabīy fī baʿḍ al-awqāt fī al-laʿbi, wa-lā yalʿabu laʿban fī-hi qabḥhun wa-lā alamun, fa-inna al-laʿba inna-mā yurādu li-rāḥati al-ṣabīy wa-surūri-hi ḥattā yakūna dhālika ʿawnan la-hu ʿalā yurādu min-hu fī-mā baʿd min al-taʿbi fī al-adab* (180).

7. On arrogance

al-Ghazālī: *Wa-yumnaʿ [al-ṣabīy] min an yaftakhira ʿalā aqrāni-hi bi-shayʾin*

mimmā yamliku-hu wālidā-hu aw bi-shayʾ min maṭaʿimi-hi wa-malābisi-hi aw lawḥi-hi wa-dawāti-hi bal yuʿawwadu al-tawāḍuʿa wal-ikrāma li-kulli man ʿāshara-hu wal-talaṭṭufa fī al-kalām maʿa-hum (III, 71).

Ibn Miskawayh: *Wa-lā yaftakhiru [al-ṣabīy] ʿalā aqrāni-hi bi-shayʾin mimmā yamliku-hu wālidāh, wa-lā bi-shayʾ min maʾākili-hi wa-mā yajrī majrā-hu, bal yatawāḍaʿu li-kulli aḥadin wa-yukrimu kulla man ʿāshara-hu* (72).

Not found in **Bryson**.

8. On avoiding gold and silver (luxury)

al-Ghazālī: *Wa-bil-jumlah yuqabbaḥ ilā al-ṣibyān ḥubb al-dhahab wal-fiḍḍah wal-ṭamʿ fī-himā wa-yuḥadhdhar min-humā akthar mimmā yuḥadhdhar min al-ḥayyāt wal-ʿaqārib, fa-inna āfāt ḥubb al-dhahab wal-fiḍḍah wal-ṭamʿ fī-himā aḍarr min āfāt al-sumūm ʿalā al-ṣibyān bal ʿalā al-akābir ayḍan* (III, 71).

Ibn Miskawayh: *Wa-yubaghghaḍ ilay-hi [al-ṣabīy] al-fiḍḍah wal-dhahab wa-yuḥadhdhar min-humā akthar min taḥdhīr al-sibāʿ wal-ḥayyāt wal-ʿaqārib wal-ʾapāʿī, fa-inna ḥubb al-fiḍḍah wal-dhahab āfātu-hu akthar min āfāt al-sumūm* (73).

Bryson: *Wa-yanbaghī an yubaghghaḍa al-ṣabīy al-dhahaba wal-fiḍḍah wa-yuḥadhdhar massa-humā akthar mimmā yuḥadhdhar min al-afʿā wal-ḥayyah, fa-inna āfāt al-afāʿī wal-ḥayyah inna-mā tadkhul ʿalā al-badan wa-āfāt al-dhahab wal-fiḍḍah tadkhul ʿalā al-nafs, wa-ḍararu-humā fī al-nafs ablaghu min ḍararu al-samm fī al-badan* (180).

9. On sitting in a proper manner

al-Ghazālī: *Wa-yanbaghī an yuʿawwada [al-ṣabīy] an lā yabṣuq fī majlisi-hi wa-lā yamtakhiṭ wa-lā yatathāʾab bi-ḥaḍrat ghayri-hi wa-lā yastadbir ghayra-hu wa-lā yaḍaʿ rijlan ʿalā rijlin wa-lā yaḍaʿ kaffa-hu taḥta dhaqani-hi wa-lā yaʿmad raʾsa-hu bi-sāʿidi-hi, fa-inna dhālika dalīl al-kasl* (III, 71).

Ibn Miskawayh: *Wa-yanbaghī an yuʿawwad [al-ṣabīy] an lā yabṣuq fī majālisi-hi wa-lā yatathāʾab bi-ḥaḍrati ghayri-hi wa-lā yaḍaʿ rijlan ʿalā rijlin, wa-lā yaḍrib taḥta dhaqani-hi bi-sāʿidi-hi, wa-la yaʿmad raʾsa-hu bi-yadi-hi, fa-inna hadhā dalīl al-kasl wa-anna-hu qad balagha bi-hi al-taqbīḥ ilā an lā yaḥmila raʾsa-hu ḥattā yastaʿīna bi-yadih* (72-73).

Bryson: *Wa-lā yadʿam [al-ṣabīy] raʾsa-hu bi-sāʿidi-hi, wa-man faʿala dhālika fa-qad dalla ʿalā anna-hu balagha min istirkhāʾi-hi wa-tafannuni-hi an-lā yaqdira ʿalā ḥamli raʾsi-hi* (179).

10. On prohibition against making oath and the importance of respecting older people

al-Ghazālī: *Wa-yumnaʿu [al-ṣabīy] al-yamīna raʾsan ṣādiqan kāna aw kādhiban ḥatta lā yaʿtād dhālika fī al-ṣighar, wa-yumnaʿu an yabtadiʾa bil-kalām; wa-*

yu'awwadu an lā yatakallama illā jawāban wa-bi-qadr al-su'āl, wa yaḥsun al-'istimā' mahmā takallama ghayru-hu mimman huwa akbaru min-hu sinnan (III, 71).

Ibn Miskawayh: *Wa-yu'awwadu [al-ṣabīy] an lā yakdhiba wa-lā yaḥlifa albattata, lā ṣādiqan wa-lā kādhiban. Fa-inna hadhā qabīḥun bil-rijāl ma'a al-ḥājah ilay-hi fī ba'ḍ al-awqāt, fa-ammā al-ṣabīy fa-lā ḥājata bi-hi ilā al-yamīn. Wa-yu'awwadu ayḍan al-ṣumta wa-qillata al-kalām wa-an-lā yatakallama illā jawāban. Wa-idhā ḥaḍara man huwa akbar min-hu, istaghala bil-istimā'i min-hu wal-ṣamt la-hu* (73).

Bryson: *Wa-lā yanbaghī lil-ṣabīy an yaḥlifa bi-Allāh 'alā ḥaqqin wa-lā 'alā bāṭilin, wa-dhālika ayḍan jamīlun bil-rajul illā anna-hu rubba-mā iḍṭarra ilay-hi wa-laysa ya'ruḍ lil-ṣabīy min al-umūr mā yaḍṭurru-hu ilā al-yamīn ... Wa-yanbaghī an yu'awwada al-ṣabīy al-ṣumta wa-qillata al-kalām wa-an lā yatakallama bi-ḥaḍrat man huwa akbara min-hu illā bi-mā yus'alu 'an-hu, wa-inna-mā yanbaghī lil-ṣabīy idhā ḥaḍara majlisa man huwa akbaru min-hu an yanṣita li-kalāmi-hi, fa-inna al-istimā'a a'wanu la-hu 'alā al-ta'allum, wal-ṣumt bi-kalāmi-hi yadullu 'alā al-ḥikmah wal-ḥayā'* (179).

11. On courage

al-Ghazālī: *Wa-yanbaghī idhā ḍaraba-hu [al-ṣabīy] al-mu'allim an lā yukthira al-ṣarākha wal-shaghba wa-lā yastashfa' bi-aḥadin bal yaṣbir. wa-yudhkar la-hu anna dhālika da'bu al-shuj'ān wal-rijāl wa-anna kathrat al-ṣarākh da'bu al-mamālīk wal-niswān* (III, 71).

Ibn Miskawayh: *Wa-yanbaghī idhā ḍaraba-hu [al-ṣabīy] al-mu'allim an lā yaṣrakha wa-lā yastashfa' bi-aḥadin fa-inna hādhā fi'lu al-mamālīk wa-man huwa khawārun ḍa'īfun* (73).

Bryson: *Wa-lā yanbaghī lil-ṣabīy in ḍaraba-hu al-mu'allim an yabkiya wa-lā yaṣīḥu wa-lā yaḍra'u, fa-inna dhālika min al-fashl wal-jubn, wa-inna-mā yalīq dhālika bil-'abd lā bil-ḥurr* (180).

12. On respecting parents and teachers

al-Ghazālī: *Wa-yanbaghī an yu'allama [al-ṣabīy] ṭā'at wāliday-hi wa-mu'allimi-hi wa-mu'addibi-hi wa-kull man huwa akbaru min-hu sinnan min qarībin aw ajnabīyin wa-an yanẓura ilay-him bi-'ayn al-jalālah wal-ta'ẓīm* (III, 71).

Ibn Miskawayh: *Wa-yu'awwada [al-ṣabīy] ṭā'at wāliday-hi wa-mu'allimi-hi wa-mu'addibī-hi wa-an yanẓura ilay-him bi-'ayn al-jalālah wal-ta'ẓīm* (73).

Bryson: *Wa-yanbaghī an yu'awwada al-ṣabīy khidmata nafsi-hi wa-wāliday-hi wa-mu'allimi-hi wa-man huwa akbar min-hu* (180).

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