AL-GHAZĀLĪ AS AN ISLAMIC REFORMER
(*MUŞLIḤ*):
An Evaluative Study of the Attempts of the Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī at Islamic Reform (*İslāḥ*)

by

MOHAMED ABUBAKR A AL-MUSLEH

A thesis submitted to
The University of Birmingham
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Theology & Religion
School of Historical Studies
The University of Birmingham
July 2007
In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
ABSTRACT

Notwithstanding the enduring and rich “legacy of islāh (Islamic reform),” the study of it is relatively scarce and remarkably limited to the modern times. The present study attempts to shed some light on this legacy by evaluating the contribution of an outstanding pre-modern Muslim scholar, al-Ghazālī. Surprisingly, some studies create an absolutely positive picture of him, while others portray him in an extremely negative light. Thus, this study raises the question of whether it is justifiable to classify him as a muslih (Islamic reformer). In light of the analysis of the concept “islāh” and the complexity of al-Ghazālī’s time, the study demonstrates his life-experience and verifies that he devoted himself to general islāh at a late period of his life, after succeeding in his self-islāh. Further, the study assesses his islāhī teachings in general, namely those formulated in the Iḥyā’, and evaluates the claimed effects of his attempts at islāh. The study also highlights a number of strengths and weaknesses of al-Ghazālī’s efforts and critically discusses some of the criticism directed at him. By weighing up the points for and against al-Ghazālī, this study concludes by asserting that classifying him as a muslih appears to be fairly justified.
DEDICATION

To the one who has sacrificed much for me; to the one who has added a sweet taste to my unsettled life; to my wonderful and supportive wife, Aisha Al-Emadi.
Praise belongs to Allāh, the One who has blessed me in my entire affair. Without His help, nothing can be accomplished. Next, I must thank my supervisor, Dr. Bustami Khir, for his valuable feedback throughout the four years of my PhD programme, and for treating me as his younger brother and not just as a student. Thanks to Abū Faṭīmah, Shihab al-Mahdawi, for introducing me to Dr. Khir. I would like also to express my grateful thanks for all those who have helped or encouraged me, in any way, during my work on this study. To start with I sincerely thank my respected teacher at the University of Qatar, Dr. ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Dīb, who suggested that I should base my thesis on al-Ghazālī. I must also thank Mr. Muhammad Hozien, the webmaster of al-Ghazali website, whom I owe a great deal because he has made my search for sources on al-Ghazali much more easy by providing many of them online and in PDF, in fact discovering his website through Google was a great treasure for me. My friend Mokhtar Ben Fredj deserves warm thanks for always being forthcoming. I want also to thank Dr. Abdulla al-Shamahi for lending me some useful sources. I should not forget to thank Dr. Eve Richard and Mr. David Oakey, from the English for International Students Unit at the University of Birmingham, for reading parts of my thesis and for their useful feedback on my English. Mr. Elfatih Ibrahim, who has proofread the entire thesis, deserves special thanks. My deepest gratitude is to all my family and relatives, namely my respected blood parents and my parents in law, for their continuous praying and sincere wish for my success. Finally, it is beyond the ability of my words to express my heartfelt thanks to my darling wife for her continuous support and great patience throughout my exhausting higher education life.
Contents

List of Transliteration i

Introduction 1
  I.1 A Thematic Background 1
  I.2 The Literature on al-Ghazālī 3
  I.3 The Problem 7
  I.4 The Hypothesis 8
  I.5 The Methodology and the Structure 8
  I.6 The Scope 11

Chapter 1: Analytical Definition of Iṣlāḥ 12
  1.1 Introduction 12
  1.2 Iṣlāḥ in the Arabic Language 15
  1.3 The Islamic Perspective of Iṣlāḥ 20
  1.4 Phrasing the Definition of Iṣlāḥ 30
  1.5 Iṣlāḥ and Reform: Degree of Equivalence 31
  1.6 The Relationship between Iṣlāḥ and Other Concepts 32

Chapter 2: Setting the Historical Context 41
  2.1 Introduction 41
  2.2 The Overall Condition of Islamdom 42
  2.3 The Political Setting 43
  2.4 The First Crusade and the Muslim Response 70
  2.5 The Religio-Intellectual life 71

Chapter 3: The Life-Experience of al-Ghazālī 88
  3.1 Introduction 88
  3.2 Dependent Learning and Premature Authorship 90
  3.3 Highly Distinguished Scholarly Career 96
  3.4 Epistemological Crisis 98
  3.5 Independent Examination of the Seekers After Truth 104
  3.6 Serious Inspection of the Inner State 113
  3.7 Seclusion and Self-Iṣlāḥ 120
  3.8 Striving for General Iṣlāḥ 127

Chapter 4: Survey of al-Ghazālī’s Iṣlāḥī Efforts 134
  4.1 Introduction 134
  4.2 Al-Ghazālī’s Diagnosis of Fasād 135
  4.3 Al-Ghazālī’s Iṣlāḥī Attempts to Eradicate the Roots of Fasād 155
  4.4 Al-Ghazālī’s Iṣlāḥī Treatments of the Phenomena of Fasād 173
Chapter 5: Assessment of al-Ghazālī’s Iṣlāḥī Teachings 201
  5.1 Introduction 201
  5.2 Originality 201
  5.3 Clarity 208
  5.4 Deepness 215
  5.5 Balance between Individualism and Collectivism 216
  5.6 Realism and Practicality 221
  5.7 Islamic-Justification 228

Chapter 6: The effects of al-Ghazālī’s Attempts at Iṣlāḥ 244
  6.1 Introduction 244
  6.2 The Impact of al-Ghazālī’s Iṣlāḥī Teachings on his Pupils 245
  6.3 The Claimed Studentship of Ibn Tūmart under al-Ghazālī 249
  6.4 The Influence of the Iḥyā’ 252
  6.5 Al-Ghazālī’s Effect on Sufism 260
  6.6 The Effect on the Movement of Philosophy 264
  6.7 The Effect of al-Ghazālī’s Quarrel with the Bāṭinīs 268
  6.8 The Influence of al-Ghazālī on the Successive Iṣlāḥī Movement 268

Conclusion 270

Appendix: The Chronological Sequence of the First Crusade and the Muslim Response: 277

Bibliography 292
Transliteration List

- The transliteration system follows the *Transliteration Scheme for Arabic Scripts*, approved by the Library of Congress and the American Library Association, available online:
  http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/arabic.pdf
- Terms which have become very common in English usage—such as names of dynasties and others widely used un-technical terms—particularly those which appear in most of the extended English dictionaries are written as they appear in the dictionaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romanization of Constants</th>
<th>Romanization of Short Vowels</th>
<th>Romanization of Long Vowels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ء = '</td>
<td>ـ = a</td>
<td>ـَـ = ā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ب = b</td>
<td>ـٍ = u</td>
<td>ـَـَـ = ā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ت = t</td>
<td>ـَـ = u</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ث = th</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ج = j</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ح = h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>خ = kh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>د = d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ذ = dh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ر = r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ز = z</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>س = s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ش = sh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ص = ṣ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ض = d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ط = ṭ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ئ = ṭ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>غ = gh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ف = f</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ق = q</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ك = k</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ل = l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>م = m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ن = n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ه = h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>و = w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ي = y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I.1 A Thematic Background:

“Yet thy Lord would never destroy communities for doing wrong while as its members were mushlihūn” (Q.11:117). This translated Qur’ānic āyah (verse) reveals one of the Divine norms relating to the life of communities; the efforts of the mushlihūn, i.e., those who fulfil islāh which may be translated roughly as reform, are safeguards for the whole of their communities from general destruction. This signifies, from a Qur’ānic point view, the necessity of ongoing islāh in any community. This necessity increases when ifsād (spreading or causing corruption), the opposite of islāh, increases, because the spread of fasād (corruption) in a community is a real threat to all its members, as the Qur’ān warns.

Furthermore, the mission of the prophets, according to the Qur’ān, is to fulfil the duty of islāh, as Prophet Shu’ayb clearly stated: “I desire only al-islāh, as far as I am able” (Q.11:88). Thus, islāh is an essential duty in the Islamic doctrine.

By attempting to correct the aspects of fasād, the mushlihūn undertake a prophetic mission and fulfil a vital Islamic duty. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that in

2 Sing. mushīlī.
3 More about the meaning of islāh, and its English equivalent, will be discussed in Chapter One.
4 This is based on the Tafsīr (Exegesis) of the Prophet’s renowned companion, Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687f), see Ibn ‘Abbās, Tafsīr, Q.11:117, online version: http://altafsir.com/Tafsir.asp?MadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=10&tSoraNo=11&tAyahNo=117&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0, visited on 11/07/2007.
5 More about this term will be discussed below.
6 Read, for example, Q.17:16.
every generation along the history of the Islamic Ummah, there were a number of
devoted Muslims working towards the fulfilment of the duty of istrāh, though every
one in his own way. These continuous efforts of the muslihūn throughout Islamic
history resulted in what can be called the “legacy of the muslihūn,” which includes
their istrāhī teachings, as well as their istrāhī actions.

Although there have been continuous attempts at istrāh along the Islamic history and the “legacy of the muslihūn” is so rich, the study of istrāh as a separate topic is somewhat new and the knowledge gap in the literature of istrāh is noticeably wide. The available studies that deal with istrāh as a separate topic are relatively few, and are mainly limited within the views and the achievements of a number of distinguished muslihūn of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who are considered the main contributors to the early modern movement of istrāh.

The study of istrāh, I believe, should not be limited to the contribution of these muslihūn, and should not ignore the earlier efforts of distinguished persons, who richly contributed to the “legacy of the muslihūn.” This is particularly because istrāh, as Merad justifiably puts it, “…is deeply rooted in the basic soil of Islam, and cannot therefore be viewed solely in relation to the intellectual trends that appeared in the Muslim world at the beginning of the modern period.”

New scholarship studies on the muslihūn in a wider scope are needed in order to discover their rich “legacy” in depth, and shed more light on the topic of istrāh, as a distinctive Islamic duty. This is very important, particularly in the contemporary age

---

9 For an informative outline of the contributers to this movement, though within the Arab nationalist dimension, see: Basheer M. Nafi, The Rise and Decline of the Arab-Islamic Reform Movement, London: The Institute of Contemporary of Islamic Thought, 2000.
in which the calls for islāḥ have become very popular in the Islamdom,\textsuperscript{11} and led to an ongoing debate over various aspects of the projects of islāḥ. By such new studies, it is hoped that much of these controversial issues would be treated systematically.

The present thesis is one step towards discovering part of the rich “legacy of the musliḥūn” and is a conscious effort to shed some fresh light on the topic of islāḥ as a distinctive Islamic duty by introducing the Imam Abū Hāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (450/1059-505/1111) as a musliḥ (Islamic reformer), whose name “springs to mind” among the long and honourable chain of the musliḥūn,\textsuperscript{12} and by studying his main efforts and teachings, from an islāḥ perspective.

This study may very likely meet some immediate objections, and in fact I have already experienced this. For those who may raise such abrupt objections at the outset, I would like to say right at the beginning that a fair judgment should be based on evaluating the methodology and the findings of the study rather than simply judging by the title.

I.2 The Literature on al-Ghazālī:

Numerous studies have been done on al-Ghazālī, in almost all the major languages of the world.\textsuperscript{13} This is partially because he has been regarded as a highly respected thinker, and his thoughts have been fully appreciated by countless Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Masses of Muslims over the centuries since his time have regarded

\textsuperscript{11} I have borrowed this practical term from Hodgson who defines it as “the society in which Muslims and their faith are recognized as prevalent and socially dominant in one sense or another—a society in which, of course, non-Muslims have always formed an integral, if subordinate, element....” Marshall G. S. Hodgson, The Venture of Islam, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974, Vol. 1, p. 58. The term Islamdom, as Hodgson has practically noticed, has the following three advantages over the other alternative term, i.e., “Islamic world”: (1) More efficient in compound phrases; (2) “Islamic” is too broad; and (3) the world is one, see \textit{ibid}.

\textsuperscript{12} Merad, “islāḥ,” EI, Vol. 4, p. 142.

\textsuperscript{13} To gain a rough idea about this interesting phenomenon, visit the following website, which contains hundreds of books and articles about al-Ghazālī in various languages: http://www.ghazali.org.
him as the mujaddid\textsuperscript{14} (revivalist) of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century A.H. as well as hujjat al-Islām\textsuperscript{15} (the Proof of Islam) and thus for them he is a leading authoritative figure and a unique Imām. At the same time, a number of well-known non-Muslim scholars have paid tribute to al-Ghazālī, and have heaped lavish words of praise on him, such as the following: “one of the greatest intellectualls of the Islamic society,”\textsuperscript{16} “a great writer,”\textsuperscript{17} “one of the most renowned and influential writers in the history of Muslim religious thought,”\textsuperscript{18} “the greatest of all Muslims since the day of the Prophet,”\textsuperscript{19} and “one of the greatest thinkers Islam [has] ever produced.”\textsuperscript{20}

The vast number of studies on this highly distinguished man is also due to the fact that he has contributed richly to various fields of thought, to the extent that he has been considered “a composite of great personalities [and] a master of various disciplines.”\textsuperscript{21} This explains why he has been introduced in a number of studies as a Sufī (Muslim mystic),\textsuperscript{22} as a faqīḥ (jurist),\textsuperscript{23} as a mutakallim (theologian),\textsuperscript{24} as a critic

\textsuperscript{17}Margaret Smith, \textit{al-Ghazālī the Mystic}, London: Luzac and co., 1944, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{19}Samuel M. Zwemer, \textit{A Moslem Seeker After God}, p. ii.
\textsuperscript{20}Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, \textit{Studies in Al-Ghazali}, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{22}As in the book of Smith, \textit{al-Ghazālī the Mystic}, London: Luzac and co., 1944.
\textsuperscript{23}As in the study of Hammād, “Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s Jurist Doctrine in al-Mustaṣfā.”
of Kalām (Islamic theology), as a faylasūf (philosopher) and as a critic of philosophy at the same time.

Another reason which contributed to the considerable increase in the studies on al-Ghazālī is that his very complex course of life, as well as a number of his views and works, both the genuine ones and those whose authenticity has been questioned, have sparked off ongoing debates amongst scholars and have provoked sharp criticism among his critics since his age up to the present time.

This fact about the number of the studies on al-Ghazālī has led some to say that it is difficult to find any element of originality in a new study on him, because he has been given all the deserved attention in academic research. On the contrary, it has been argued that al-Ghazālī is far greater than to be fully covered in the studies to date, and that there is still much need for more studies on him.

Although it is true that with this significant amount of studies, it is very challenging to display originality in a fresh study, I side with the second view. Moreover, I would add that there are various aspects of his life and thought, which have still not been adequately studied yet, and thus they deserve to be studied further. One of these, in my view, is the aspect of islāh, which, despite its special importance, does not seem to have gained enough concern from researchers. As Ṣāliḥ al-Shāmī has rightly noticed, due to the blinding glare of the two famous honorific titles of al-

---

28 For an outline of a number of the critics of al-Ghazālī over the centuries and a brief discussion of their main criticisms, see Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī bayna Mādih wa-Nāqidīh, Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 1994, pp. 117-86.
29 As in the book of al-‘Asam, al-Faylasūf al-Ghazālī.
Ghazālī, i.e., *hujjat al-Islām* (the Proof of Islam) and the *mujaddid* (revivalist) of the 5th century A.H., other titles are less well known, if at all, including the title “*muṣliḥ*” (Islamic reformer).  

To the best of my knowledge, there is as yet no detailed and focused study on al-Ghazālī as a *muṣliḥ*, but there are relatively few studies which have partially dealt with this crucial aspect. For example, in a chapter entitled “*al-Imām al-Muṣliḥ*,” al-Shāmī, in his well-presented general book about al-Ghazālī, gives just a few representative examples of his *iṣlāḥī* role. Similarly, al-Nadwī, in a section of his book *Rijāl al-Firkr wa-al-Da‘wah fi al-Islām*, presents him as a “*muṣliḥ ijtīmā‘ī*” (social reformer), and briefly discusses his social reform as represented in al-Ghazālī’s most celebrated work, *Iḥyā‘ Ulūm al-Dīn*. In a more interesting way, al-Kilānī devotes a section in his unique book, *Hākadhā Ẓahrā jīl Ṣalāh al-Dīn wa-Hākadhā ʿĀdat al-Quds*, to al-Ghazālī’s *iṣlāḥī* efforts. The purpose of that section of the book was to briefly show al-Ghazālī’s role in the *iṣlāḥī* movement, which, according to al-Kilānī, developed over the 5th-6th century A.H. and resulted in a reformed Muslim generation, to which the Muslim leader Salāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin, d. 589/1193) belonged, which could defeat the Crusaders. Al-Ghazālī, al-Kilānī argues, was the founder of that fruitful movement. However, it was not intended in al-Kilānī’s book to study closely the *iṣlāḥī* efforts of al-Ghazālī. As a result, there are important relevant points, which have not been covered by al-Kilānī, that deserve to be studied. Furthermore, some of his arguments, though positively presented, are

---

questionable, and thus need to be examined. Moreover, he completely ignores the controversy over al-Ghazālī. It is hoped that the present study overcomes these shortcomings.

I.3 The Problem:

Besides the absolutely positive picture of al-Ghazālī as a *muslih* created in the above studies, a remarkably conflicting image of al-Ghazālī has been given by other writers. A good representative of these is al-Mahdāwī who considered al-Ghazālī as a representation of the backwardness of the Muslim *Ummah* at that time, and that he reflects the defeat of the Muslims before the Crusaders,37 totally opposite to al-Kīlānī’s argument mentioned previously.

In a similar way, there have been two contrary positions on the worth of al-Ghazālī’s thought. In the view of Lazarus-Yafeh, for example, al-Ghazālī’s “ideas about religion, faith, the relationship between God and man and between man and man have always seemed extremely “modern” to me and are expressed so convincingly that they crossed the barriers of time and religion.”38 Yet according to al-Mahdāwī, his views are outdated and only deserve to be stored in “museums of thoughts.”39

Such great controversy leads us to raise the following two central questions at the outset: (a) how far is it justified to consider al-Ghazālī as a *muslih* and (b) to what extent do al-Ghazālī’s teachings of *īslāhī* nature withstand criticism and prove worthy over time?

As a deliberate attempt to answer these controversial and challenging questions in a balanced way, I suggest the following positive hypothesis, and I will do my best to verify it in the course of subsequent chapters.

I.4 The Hypothesis:

The present study attempts to verify the following positive hypothesis:

At a late period of his life, al-Ghazālī sincerely devoted his career to īslāh. During this period, he made serious īslāhī efforts, and effectively conveyed his īslāhī teachings. These teachings have various great strengths, which withstand criticism highly and have proven useful over the centuries, as well as some serious weaknesses, which are potentially of negative influence, and are very open to criticism. As a result, his teachings have had two contrary effects: one is positive and favourable and the other is negative and unappreciative. Despite such weaknesses, and regardless of their negative consequences, al-Ghazālī can still be properly classified as a muslih.

It is difficult to claim that by determinedly attempting to verify this hypothesis, I would resolve the problem concerning the conflicting images of al-Ghazālī illustrated above, but it is hoped that valid interpretation of the causes of this phenomenon will be given, and that some possible partial solutions will be proffered.

I.5 The Methodology:

Hoping to verify the above hypothesis, I have taken the following methodological steps:

1. Constructing an analytical definition of īslāh: To correctly judge whether al-Ghazālī was a muslih necessitates that we first define the term “īslāh.” In addition, the definition of īslāh shall provide us with essential prerequisites
and important tools for systematically studying al-Ghazālī as a *musliḥ*. Since I, with the best of my ability in literature search, have not been able to find a definition of the term which is sufficient for the purpose of the present study, I have had to construct a provisional definition in **Chapter One**. To achieve this, I have analysed the morphology of the term “īślāḥ” and its lexical explanation. Besides, because it is an Islamic concept, I have also analysed its usages in the Qurʾān and the Ḥadīth. In addition to defining it, I have taken the following two steps to further clarify the term: firstly, I have examined the extent to which the English term “reform”, which is usually used as a rendering of *īślāḥ*, is an equivalent translation of it. Secondly, I have examined the similarities and differences between “īślāḥ” and each of the following concepts which are sometimes connected to it, whether justifiably or not: *tajdīd* (renewal or restoration), *taghyīr* (change), and *al-amr bi-al-maʿrūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar* (commanding right and forbidding wrong).

2. **Setting the historical context:** In the belief that it is important to bear in mind the historical context in which al-Ghazālī lived, in order not to misunderstand and misjudge his efforts and teachings, I have presented an overview of his age in **Chapter Two**. The overview focuses on the political setting and the religio-intellectual life at that time, which shall provide sufficient background and an essential foundation for the unfolding discussion.

3. **Discussing the life-experience of al-Ghazālī:** To clearly and justifiably show in which period of his life, he really sought *īślāḥ*, and which of his works represent that period, I have discussed in **Chapter Three**, at considerable length, his life-experience, relying primarily on his own account about his spiritual and intellectual progression in his genuine book *al-Munqidh min al-*
Đalāl (Deliverance from Error), and also on the primary available biographies of al-Ghazālī. Since the truthfulness of al-Ghazālī’s account has been the object of doubt, I have closely dealt with such doubt throughout the chapter.

4. Surveying al-Ghazālī’s īlāḥī efforts: Since it is essential to determine the extent of al-Ghazālī’s īlāḥī efforts, in order to be able to fairly justify the classification of al-Ghazālī as a muslih, I have tried to objectively survey his main īlāḥī efforts in Chapter Four. The survey is based on a careful study of al-Ghazālī’s major authentic works, which belong to his īlāḥī period, namely the Ḳiyā’.

5. Assessing al-Ghazālī’s īlāḥī teachings: For the purpose of discovering the main strengths and weaknesses of al-Ghazālī’s īlāḥī teachings and judging how far they stand criticism, I have devoted Chapter Five to the assessment of his īlāḥī teachings in general, and to a discussion of the main criticisms levelled against his views and teachings. The assessment in this chapter is based on the following major criteria: (1) originality, (2) clarity, (3) deepness, (4) balance between individualism and collectivism, (5) realism and practicality, and (6) Islamic-justification. By judging with this range of criteria, though apparently limited, the assessment has, I hope, covered the key points which serve the intended purpose.

6. Studying the effects of al-Ghazālī’s attempts at īlāḥ: To evaluate the consequences of al-Ghazālī’s attempts at īlāḥ, I have discussed in Chapter Six a number of phenomena which have been regarded as effects of al-Ghazālī’s efforts and I have assessed the main controversy surrounding the evaluation of these effects.
I.6 The Scope:

The present study, like other research studies carried out within the confines of a limited time frame, is bound to have a finite scope. Although the present study introduces al-Ghazālī as a muṣliḥ, it by no means deals with all the issues which are related in one way or another to his agenda of islāḥ. In fact each of the following chapters has its limitations, as will be defined in its respective introduction. These limitations, however, are hopefully justified on the grounds that the intended purposes of each chapter will be satisfactorily fulfilled and thus the hypothesis of the study will be reasonably verified regardless of the limitations.
CHAPTER ONE
***************

ANALYTICAL DEFINITION OF IŞLĀH

1.1 Introduction:

Defining the concept of iṣlāḥ is an essential and practical start for studying al-Ghazālī as a muṣliḥ (Islamic reformer). The definition is a form of reference for the topic. To judge correctly whether al-Ghazālī was a muṣliḥ or not, depends initially on what is meant by iṣlāḥ.

Moreover, a number of basic elements, which form a sound and logical foundation for the topic, are expected to be obtained by dealing with this essential question. A list of key words on the topic of iṣlāḥ is developed through the activity of defining it. The field and the scope of iṣlāḥ are also very likely to be specified in its definition. In addition, the definition, when precisely constructed, provides proper parameters for limiting the topic, and excluding that which does not relate to it. Similarly, the distinguishing characteristics which clarify iṣlāḥ and separate it from other topics, with which it might be confused, is provided by the definition. Furthermore, the criteria by which an occurrence of iṣlāḥ is determined are invoked in its definition. Based on all these necessary elements, it can be decided what aspects of al-Ghazālī’s thought and efforts are related to the topic of iṣlāḥ, and thus should be considered in the present thesis.
Since it does not seem that there is a ready-made definition of *islāh* to satisfy the purpose of the present thesis in the available related literature,\(^1\) there is a special need to construct a satisfactory definition of the term at the very beginning of the present study.

Having stated this, the following question arises: which method of defining can fulfil the present need? Among the various possible methods of defining,\(^2\) the analytical method appears to be the most useful and thus it is chosen here to define *islāh*. In addition to the fact that it is broadly considered the best method of defining,\(^3\) the analytical method is very fruitful in the context of the present thesis. Defining *islāh* by giving a detailed analysis of it provides much-needed elaboration of the concept and not just a simple introduction to its meaning.\(^4\)

The approach taken in this analysis is semantic. This approach, “as the name itself reveals, literally means to analyse the structure of [a] word along the lines indicated by the articulation of its meaning.”\(^5\) This method of semantic analysis, as Toshihiko Izutsu clearly explains, “consists in applying a careful procedure of linguistic analysis to the meaning structure of [a] word, in splitting up its complex structure of meaning into a number of well-defined constituents.”\(^6\)

The choice of this method leads to another logical question: what data should be considered in this analysis in order to attain the previously stated essential and practical result? Since *islāh* is essentially an Arabic term, the first obvious piece of data which needs to be considered here is the available meaning and usages of the term in the

---


\(^3\) Robinson, *Definition*, p. 97.

\(^4\) For a scholarly discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of the analytical method of defining, see Robinson, *Definition*, pp. 97f.


\(^6\) Izutsu, *The Structure*, p. 6.
Arabic language. This is done in two steps described in section 1.2 below: the first is analysing the morphological description of īslāh, and the second is analysing the available explanation of the term in a number of leading and celebrated Arabic lexicons.7

In addition to this essential type of data, the original Islamic perspective of īslāh also has to be considered in defining the concept. This is because firstly īslāh is an Islamic concept, as “it is deeply rooted in the basic soil of Islam.”8 Secondly, the topic of the present thesis lies within an Islamic context—al-Ghazālī is studied as an Islamic reformer—and thus the definition of īslāh is employed particularly in this context. For these reasons, the usages of the term īslāh in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth—the two essential Islamic resources which provide the basis of the Islamic conception of the term—are analysed in section 1.3.

Based on the findings of all these analysed dimensions of the concept, the definition of īslāh is practically formulated in section 1.4.

Other than the first essential aim of defining īslāh, this chapter has two more objectives, which shall contribute in clarifying the concept of īslāh. The first is to examine the extent to which the English term “reform,” which is usually used as a rendering of īslāh,9 is an equivalent translation of the Arabic term īslāh. In section 1.5, this examination is done in the light of the constructed definition of īslāh, and the meanings of the term “reform” as well as its usage.

---

7 Namely: (1) Kitāb al-‘Ayn of al-Khalīl b. Ahmad (d. 170/786); (2) Jamharat al-Lughah of Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933); (3) al-Muhī fī al-Lughah of al-Ṣāhib ibn ‘Abbād (d. 385/995); (4) al-Ṣihāf fī al-Lughah of al-Jawhari (d. 393/1003), (5) al-Muhkam wa-al-Muhī fī al-‘A’zam fī al-Lughah of Ibn Sīdah (d. 458/1066); (6) Asās al-Balūghah of al-Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144); (7) Lisān al-‘Arab of Ibn Mańzar (d. 711/1311); (8) Tāj al-‘Arūs of Muṭṭadā al-Zābīd (d. 1205/1791); (9) and finally the late lexicon, al-Mu‘jam al-Waṣīṭ of the Arabic Language Academy in Cairo. For a scholarly and informative English account on the traditional Arabic lexicons, which is drawn chiefly from the unique work of al-Suyūṭī, al-Muzhir, see the preface to Lane’s Madd al-Qāmūs: an Arabic—English Lexicon, London: Williams and Norgate, 1863, pp. xii-xx.


9 See, for example, Merad, “Īslāh,” Vol. 4, p. 141; and Voll, “Renewal and Reform,” p. 32.
The last objective of the present chapter is to understand the differences and similarities between *islāḥ* and other concepts which are sometimes connected to it, justifiably or not. Since “it is not often that one can analyse a concept without also considering other concepts which are related to it, similar to it, or in some way importantly connected with it,”¹⁰ *islāḥ* is compared and contrasted with each of the following concepts in section 1.6: “*tajdīd*” (renewal or restoration), “*taghyīr*” (change), and “*al-amr bi-al-maʾrūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*” (commanding right and forbidding wrong).

### 1.2 *Iṣlāḥ* in the Arabic Language:

To satisfactorily analyse the meaning of the term *islāḥ* in Arabic, at least two essential pieces of linguistic information have to be studied: the morphological description of the term and the available lexical explanation of it. The former gives the basics and provides some useful hints for consulting the Arabic lexicons, while the lexicons themselves provide the literal meanings of the term, and also cross-refer to the related words and demonstrate their usage by Arabs. This will be evident in the following two sub-sections.

#### 1.2.1 Morphological Description of *Iṣlāḥ*:

The term *islāḥ* is the *maṣdar* (infinitive noun) of the transitive verb “*aṣlaḥa*” since the *wazn* (stem form) of its verb is “*afʿala*,” as is known in Arabic morphology. The basic root of this transitive verb is “*šalaḥa*,” an intransitive verb which is derived from its *maṣdar* “*šalāḥ*.” And the epithet from *šalāḥ* is *šāliḥ*, whereas the epithet from *islāḥ* is *muṣliḥ*. All these derivatives share the same three basic radical letters, which are *s-l-ḥ*.

From this basic morphological explanation, four essential general conclusions emerge. First, *islāh* denotes the same phenomenon as that indicated by its verb “aṣlāha” but it is free from time or tense, unlike the verb. Second, *islāh* is a causative term, the outcome of which is *salāh* or a *sālih* thing/person. Third, the performer of *islāh* is called *muṣlih* or in other words *a muṣlih* is one who conducts *islāh*. Fourth, all these derivatives are related and thus studying them should all help in clarifying the idea of *islāh*.

Before proceeding to the next sub-section, an important limitation of the topic should be presented at once. According to al-Jawharī, the *maṣdar* of *ṣulh*—a noun which means *silm*\(^{11}\) (peace) and *tasāluḥ*\(^{12}\) (reconciliation)—is not *salāh*, but rather *ṣilāḥ*,\(^{13}\) which means *muṣālaḥah*\(^{14}\) (conciliation). On the basis of this precise lexical explanation, two main divisions of *islāh* can be differentiated here in respect of their outcome: the first causes *salāh*, while the second brings *ṣulh*. Consequently, it can be stated that the latter does not lie within the scope of this thesis, though it is called *islāh* and the epithet derived from it is *muṣlih*.

By studying al-Ghazālī as a *muṣlih*, it is not intended to study him as one who makes *ṣulh* (reconciliation) between disputants. Therefore, whatever is related to the topic of *ṣulh* is not part of the concern of the present thesis, and in the interests of conciseness, is not even considered in the proposed definition of *islāh*.

---

14 See al-Jawharī, *al-Sīhāh*, under the radical letters ș-l-h.
1.2.2 Lexical Explanation of Islâh:15

The term islâh16 is defined as the opposite of ifsâd in the consulted Arabic lexicons, which explicitly mention the term,17 and no further interpretation is given. Supposedly, studying the meaning of ifsâd in its respective location18 in the lexicons sheds some light on the meaning of islâh in a contrary way; however, no direct definition is given there. This makes it a necessity to study the other related derivatives of islâh, as well as ifsâd, in order to find clues for more clarification of the idea of islâh.

Starting with the transitive verb “ašlaḥa,” two related senses of the term are given in two different contexts. The phrase “ašlaḥa al-shay’ (a thing)” means “azâla fasâdah”19 (He removed its fasâd). And in the phrase “ašlaḥa al-shay’ ba’da fasâd,”20 the verb “ašlaḥa” means “aqāma”21 (to set right or correct). Thus, the phrase can be translated as “he set right or corrected the thing after fasâd.”

These senses of “ašlaḥa” clearly show that the act of islâh is directed only against fasâd, and this is a crucial limitation of the idea of islâh. Moreover, they suggest that islâh is a corrective change of fasâd. This indication ought to be the core of the definition of islâh, since it presents the superior category to which islâh belongs—i.e., that of change—and at the same time it highlights an essential distinguishing characteristic of islâh, that is, correctness.

---

15 All the explanations concerning islâh and its related derivatives are found in Arabic lexicons under its three basic radical letters: ṣ-l-h. In some lexicons, all the words containing these radical letters are listed under the last letter “h” whereas in others they are listed under the first letter “ṣ”, depending on the method of listing in the respective lexicon.

16 The term is introduced in the Arabic lexicons with the definite article “al,” which is of the generic type in this context.

17 See, for instance, al-Jawhari, al-Sihâh, under the radical letters ṣ-l-h; and Ibn Manzûr, Lisân al-ʿArab, Beirut: Dâr Sâdir, 1997, under the radical letters ṣ-l-h.

18 Under its radical letters f-s-d.


20 Ibn Sîdah, al-Muḥkam, under the radical letters ṣ-l-h.

21 Ibn Sîdah, al-Muḥkam, under the radical letters ṣ-l-h.
By linking this very significant finding with the fact that the outcome of *islāh* is *salāh*, as stated earlier, *islāh* can be basically defined as a corrective change of *fasād* into *salāh*. Now, to expand this rather vague definition, the available meanings and usages of both *fasād* and *salāh* in the lexicons must be studied.

As to *salāh*, it is defined in almost all of the consulted lexicons only by its opposite: *ta'lāh* in some lexicons and *fasād* in others. The *Mu'jam al-Waṣīṭ*, however, is an exception, for it gives two senses for *salāh*. The first sense is *istiqāmah*. It literally refers to being in a path following a straight line and it is figuratively likened to being in a right path. Obviously, this figurative meaning of *al-istiqāmah* is the one which is applicable to *salāh*, rather than the literal meaning. The second sense of *salāh* is “*al-salamah min al-'ayb*” (being free from defect), which is a negative sense of the term.

Furthermore, *salāh* may also refer to a state of benefit, as can be concluded from one of the senses of the intransitive verb “*salaha*.” In the *Mu'jam al-Waṣīṭ*, this verb can be used in the sense of “*kāna nāfi ‘an*” (being beneficial). Another shade of meaning for *salāh* is observed by reflecting on a figurative usage of the aoristic verb “*yasluhū*” stated in some lexicons as in the following sayings: “*hādhā al-shay’ yasluhū lak*” (this thing is suitable for you), “*hādhā al-adīm yasluhū lil-na’l*” (this leather is suitable for sandals), and “*fulān lā yasluhū liṣuḥbatik*” (such

---


23 See al-Jawhari, *al-Siyāh*, under the radical letters *s-l-h*; and Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, under the radical letters *s-l-h*.

24 Musṭafā et al. (eds.), *al-Mu‘jam al-Waṣūl*, under the radical letters *s-l-h*.


26 Musṭafā et al. (eds.), *al-Mu‘jam al-Waṣūl*, under the radical letters *s-l-h*.

27 See al-Jawhari, *al-Siyāh*, under the radical letters *s-l-h*.


29 *al-Zamakhsharī, Asās al-Balāghah*, under the radical letters *s-l-h*.
a person is not appropriate to accompany you). According to this usage, ُـَلُـَح implies suitability or appropriateness.

In the light of the senses of ُـَلُـَح previously discussed, it can be stated that the outcome of the act of ِـَلُـَح is a state of benefit, directness in the sense of commitment to a right path, absence of defect and suitability.

Turning to the two opposites of ُـَلُـَح, a number of meanings and usages of the terms are mentioned in Arabic lexicons and are thus worth studying. With regard to ُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَـُـَ&n...
Unlike fasād, no direct and explicit meaning is found in the lexicons for the second antonym, ʿtalāh. However, a meaning is given to a related infinitive: al-ʿtalāḥah, which means “al-iʿyāʾ”36 (fatigue, jadedness, or tiredness) and “al-suqūṭ min al-safar”37 (travel-weariness).38 Related to ʿtalāh also, ʿitlāḥ is given as a maṣdar for the transitive verb “atlaḥa” as in “atlaḥtuḥ anā ʿitlāḥa”39 meaning ḥasartuḥu40 (I weakened him or I fatigued him). Another similar usage is stated for the related inflection ʿtalīḥ. It is used as an epithet in the saying “nāqah ʿtalīḥu asfār”41 meaning “jahadahā al-sayr wa-ḥazalāhā”42 (a she-camel exhausted and rendered lean by its journeys). By linking all these similar and related meanings, it can be concluded that ʿtalāḥ implies lack of ability to function according to one’s essential nature, due to overwork or overuse.

In addition, al-ʿtalāḥ implies lack of goodness or benefit, as is indicated by a usage of the related word ʿtāliḥ. When it is applied to a man, ʿtāliḥ means “lā khayr aḥī fīh”43 (in whom there is no goodness or benefit).

1.3 The Islamic Perspective of Islāḥ:

As with any Islamic term, the definition of ḫslāḥ has to include the Islamic dimension of the term, especially when the definition is used within an Islamic context, such as the present topic. This vital dimension is highlighted below by examining the usages of the term in the two essential Islamic resources: the Qurʾān and the Ḥadīth.

---

36 Ibn Sīdah, al-Muhkam, under the radical letters t-l-h.
37 Ibn Sīdah, al-Muhkam, under the radical letters t-l-h.
38 In translating the lexicographical quotes, I have benefited much from the unique Arabic-English lexicon of Lane, Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003.
39 See Ibn Durayd, Jamharah, under the radical letters h-t-l.
40 al-Jawhari, al-Sihāb, under the radical letters t-l-h.
41 al-Jawhari, al-Sihāb, under the radical letters t-l-h.
42 al-Jawhari, al-Sihāb, under the radical letters t-l-h.
43 See Ibn Manzūr, Lisān al-ʿArab, under the radical letters t-l-h.
1.3.1 The Qur’anic Usages of *Islāh*:

The term *islāh* and the related derivatives are used in the Qur’ān in various contexts.⁴⁴ Some of these usages, however, are beyond the scope of the present examination and thus they are excluded right from the beginning. Among these excluded usages are those in the context of *ṣulh*,⁴⁵ because it is outside the range of this thesis, as noted above. Also the usages of *islāh* as a direct action of Allāh⁴⁶ are excluded for the same reason.

Thus, the examination here is restricted to the Qur’ānic contexts in which the idea of *islāh* is referred to as a human task, the outcome of which is a state of *ṣalāh*. The approach of this examination is semantic. It attempts to derive the meanings from the text itself. For the purpose of elucidation, two helpful tools are used. The first is to examine each Qur’ānic text in the light of its context. The context usually gives helpful hints for the intended meaning of the text.⁴⁷ The second useful tool is to link the text under examination with the related Qur’ānic texts in other places since very often “the Qur’ān explains itself.”⁴⁸ Within the extent of this approach, a number of the most celebrated Qur’ānic exegeses, both early and late, are consulted, with special attention given to exegeses focusing on semantic indications.

A very basic point observed by examining the Qur’ānic usages of *islāh* meaning a human task is that the term *islāh* does not seem to be transferred from its original Arabic meanings to a purely religious or technical meaning as in the usages of some

---


⁴⁸ For the history and the significance of this principle in interpreting the Qur’ān, see Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur’an: Themes and Style*, London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1999, pp. 160-2.
other Qur'anic concepts. Moreover, the idea of *islāh* is presented in the Qur'ān as meaning the opposite of *ifsād*. This is evident in a number of āyāt (Qur'ānic verses) which mention the two ideas in conflict with each other. For instance, the Qur’ān states “*Allāh knows the mufsid from the muṣliḥ*” (Q.2:220).

However, the Qur’ānic usages of *islāh* and its opposite indicate a number of distinguishing characteristics of the Islamic perspective of *islāh*, which add some unique Islamic nuances to the concept. It is important then to consider these characteristics and nuances in defining the concept of *islāh* from the Islamic perspective.

One of these distinguishing characteristics concerns the evaluation of *islāh*. The Qur’ān considers *islāh* as an extremely necessary, very honourable and highly praised task. From the Qur’ānic prospective, *islāh* is a safeguard for society, as the Qur’ān clearly states: “*Thy Lord would not destroy communities unjustly while their members were muṣliḥūn*” (Q.11:117). In addition, the reward of the *muṣliḥūn* is guaranteed in the Qur’ān; Allāh states: “*surely We leave not to waste the reward of the muṣliḥūn*” (Q.7:170). At the same time, the *mufsidūn*, totally opposite to the *muṣliḥūn*, are strongly condemned in the Qur’ān: “*Allāh loves not the mufsidūn*” (Q.5:64 & Q.28:77).

Moreover, fulfilling the task of *islāh* was the utmost concern of the prophets mentioned in the Qur’ān. The Prophet Shu'ayb, for instance, clearly states to his people: “*I desire only the islāḥ, as far as I am able*” (Q.11:88). Similarly, the Qur’ān quotes the Prophet Śāliḥ as he forbids his people from *ifsād* (Q.7:74). Accordingly, those who occupy themselves chiefly with *islāh* tread in the steps of the prophets and thus they are appropriately regarded as *muṣliḥūn* from the Islamic perspective. This, then, may
rightly be considered an Islamic standard for a muslih, i.e., islāh should be the top priority of one who ranks among the muslihūn.

Comprehensiveness is another characteristic of the Qur’ānic perspective of islāh. The Qur’ānic scope of islāh is very broad; it includes various fields and is not limited within the confines of religion in its strict sense. This appears in the following observations.

First, the usage of the term islāh denotes generality in the following āyah: “They ask thee concerning orphans. Say: islāh for them (lahum) is good” (Q.2:220). As the term islāh here is indefinite and followed by “lahum,” it is not restricted to any particular matter to do with orphans but instead is related to all their affairs.49

Second, the verb aslaha is linked with tawbah (Islamic repentance) for different kinds of sin and crime: (a) theft (sariqah) in Q.5:38-9, (b) fornication (fāhishah) in Q.4:15-6, (c) evil (sū’) in Q.6:54 & Q.16:119, (d) concealing what Allāh has sent down in clear proofs and guidance (kitmān mā-anzala Allāh min al-bayyināt wa-al-hudā) in Q.2:159-60, (e) denying belief after believing (kufr ba’da īmān) in Q.3:86-9, (f) hypocrisy (nifāq) in Q.4:145-6, and (g) accusing chaste women of fornication (qadhf al-muhšanāt) in Q.24:5. It is worth noting that the idea of islāh in these contexts is related to the self, as the contexts suggest, although the verb “aslaha” has no explicit object in any of them.50

Finally, the broad variety in the examples of the mufsidūn, and similarly the examples of ifsād mentioned in the Qur’ān, indicate in a contrary way the wide scope of the Qur’ānic perspective of islāh. Some of the clearest examples of the mufsidūn given in the Qur’ān are as follows. Firstly, hypocrites: in referring to them, Allāh says:

---

50 According to some mufasirūn (Qur’ān exegesists), it is possible that the verb ḏaslaha” in some of these contexts, namely in Q.3:89, is an intransitive verb in the sense of “dakhala fī al-salāh” (to come under the state of salāh), see, for example, Mahmūd al-Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854), Rūh al-Maw’āni fi Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm wa-al-Sāb’ al-Mathānī, Beirut: Dār Ihyyā’ al-Furū’ah al-Arabiyy, 1997, Vol. 3, p. 217.
“Truly, they themselves are the *mufsidūn* but they are not sensible” (Q.2:11).

Secondly, the people of the Prophet Lot: in Q.29:30, for example, the Prophet Lot prays: “My Lord, give me victory over the people who are *mufsidūn*.” Thirdly, Pharaoh and his chiefs: “Then We sent, after them, Moses with Our tokens to Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they acted unjustly towards them. So behold thou how was the end of the *mufsidūn*” (Q.7:103). Fourthly, the sorcerers of Pharaoh before they believed in the Lord of the Prophet Moses:

> “Then, when the sorcerers came, Moses said to them, ‘Cast down whatever you will cast.’ And when they had cast, Moses said, ‘What you have produced is sorcery; Surely Allāh will suppress it. Surely, Allāh upholds not the work of the *mufsidūn*” (Q.10:80-81),

Lastly, the transgressors (*al-fāsiqūn*): after mentioning them in Q.2:26, the Qur’ān in the following āyah lists some of their attributes. Among these attributes is that they are “causing corruption (*yufsidūn*) in the earth.”

Among the examples of *ifsād* indicated in the Qur’ān are the following:

(1) Barring others from the path of Allāh, as is suggested by the following āyah: “For those who disbelieve and bar [others] from the path of Allāh, We shall add chastisement over their chastisement, for that they were causing corruption (*yufsidūn*)” (Q.16:88). The āyah shows that these people deserve two penalties. Since they are disbelievers, it is understood that the first penalty is for their disbelief. The additional penalty therefore has to be for their additional evil deed, that is, barring others from the path of Allāh.⁵¹ Thus, their act of *ifsād* refers to this evil deed since it is

---

the cause of their additional penalty, as is understood from the phrase “for that they were causing corruption (yufsidūn).”

(2) Shedding blood: after being told by the Creator that a successor will be set on the earth, the angels reply in Q.2:30: “How can Thou set therein one who will cause corruption (yufsid) on it and shed blood…” Since the conjunctional style in this reply is in the type of ‘atf al-khāṣ ‘alā al-‘ām’ (joining the particular to the general), then it is understood that shedding blood is ifsād.

(3) Destroying tillage and stock: with the same conjunctional style as in the above example, the verb “yuﬁsidu” is joined with the phrase “to destroy tillage and stock” in Q.2:205.

(4) Turning away from the truth and following falsehood: this can be derived from Q.3:62-63. Following an episode from the story of Jesus, the Qur’ān comments:

“This certainly is the true narrative. There is none worthy of worship save Allāh, and surely Allāh is the All-mighty, the All-wise. And if they turn away, surely Allāh knows the mufsidūn” (Q.3:62-63).

This context shows that turning away from the truth and following falsehood instead is ifsād.53

The most distinguishing characteristic of the Qur’ānic perspective of 伊斯兰 is the one concerning its criteria. It is essential to note that, from the Qur’ānic perspective, not every claim of 伊斯兰 can be justified as a real 伊斯兰. The claim of the hypocrites which is refuted in the Qur’ān proves this. When it is said to the hypocrites that they should not cause ifsād, they are quoted in the Qur’ān as saying: “we are only muṣliḥūn” (Q.2:11), but the Qur’ān refutes this claim: “Truly, they themselves are the mufsidūn but they are not sensible.” (Q.2:12).

52 See al-Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854), Rūh al-Ma‘ānī, Vol. 1, p. 221.
53 I was led to this point by the inspiring interpretation of the āyah by Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, Vol. 2, p. 55.
This shows that certain criteria have to be met in order to justify a case of ِیِسَلِّه from the Qur’ānic perspective. The Qur’ānic usages of ِیِسَلِّه and the related words indicate a number of such essential criteria.

Among these criteria is conforming to the original right order of the earth and its beneficial norms, which have been set by the Creator. This is indicated in Q.7:56: “Do not cause corruption (ِیِسَلِّهُدَیِنَب) in the earth after the ِیِسَلِّهَ of which.” The phrase “after the ِیِسَلِّهَ of which” indicates that it is ِیِسَدَد to change the original right order of the earth and its beneficial norms which have been set by the Creator. As a result, conforming to them is a criterion of ِیِسَلِّه.

Another criterion of ِیِسَلِّه indicated in the Qur’ān is being committed to truthfulness, since the opposite is a criterion of ِیِسَدَد, as stated in the Qur’ān. Following an episode from the story of Jesus, the Qur’ān comments:

“This certainly is the true narrative. There is none worthy of worship save Allāh, and surely Allāh is the All-mighty, the All-wise. And if they turn away, surely Allāh knows the ِیِسَدَدَن” (Q.3:62-63).

This context shows that turning away from the truth and following falsehood instead is a sign of ِیِسَدَد. On the contrary, committing to truthfulness is a criterion of ِیِسَلِّه.

Two further criteria of ِیِسَلِّه are: being firmly committed to the Scripture of Allāh and seriously worshipping Him. These criteria can be highlighted in the following examination of the ۖیِلَّاه Q.7:170. This ۖیِلَّاه starts with the relative pronoun “those” and is followed by two descriptions, those “who hold fast to the Scripture and keep up the prayer.” It appears from the predicate in the ۖیِلَّاه, which is “surely we do not waste the wage of the ِمُسَلِّبُن,” that these descriptions are for the ِمُسَلِّبُن.

54 For a justified argument of this indication, see Ibn ‘Āshūr, al-Tahrîr wa-al-Tanwîr, Q.7:56.
55 I was led to this point by the inspiring interpretation of the ۖیِلَّاه by Ibn Kathîr, Tafsîr, Vol. 2, p. 55.
1.3.2 Prophetic Usages of Islāḥ:

Being the second primary source of Islam after the Qur’ān, the Prophetic Ḥadīth need to be consulted in order to gain a complete picture of the original Islamic perspective of the concept of islāḥ. What does this primary source add to the Qur’ānic semantic and characterizing points concerning islāḥ? By searching in a number of the leading collections of Ḥadīth,56 two groups of Prophetic traditions are found helpful to examine for the sake of the present task: the traditions which related to islāḥ and those which related to its opposites.

Several useful semantic and characterizing points which shed more light on the Islamic perspective of islāḥ are indicated in some Prophetic traditions, in which islāḥ or related derivatives are employed. The most striking Prophetic tradition related to islāḥ is the one about the strangers (al-ghurabā’). Among the different narrations of this tradition,57 the extended narration of al-Tirmidhī is of special significance, because it refers explicitly to the idea of islāḥ. The last part of this narration reads:

“Surely the Din was strange when it began and it will become strange as in its beginning, so blessedness for the strangers (al-ghurabā’) who will set right or correct what people would have corrupted or perverted in my norm (yuṣlihūn mā-afsada al-nnās min sunnati).”58

By praising the strangers and introducing them as muslihūn, this unique narration gives a valuable Prophetic justification for islāḥ. In addition, the narration clearly shows that

---

56 These are: (1) the Sahih of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870); (2) the Sahih of Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875); (3) the Sunan of Abū Dawūd al-Sijisti (d. 275/889); (4) the Musnad of Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855); (5) the Sunan of Ibn Mājah (d. 273/887); (6) the Sahih of al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892); (7) and the Sunan of al-Nasā’ī (d. 303/915).

57 The basic wording of this tradition is narrated in several books of Ḥadīth, including Muslim’s Sahih under Kitāb al-Imān, Bāb Bada’ al-Islām Gharibā (for the traditions narrated by Muslim, I consulted the abridged edition of al-Mundhirī, Mukhtasar Sahih Muslim, edited by Muhammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1987).

one task of \textit{iṣlāḥ} from the Islamic perspective is to restore the original norm of Islam as exemplified in the life of the Prophet Muḥammad.

Another Prophetic tradition related to \textit{iṣlāḥ} is that in which the Prophet used the verb “\textit{yuslihu}” in the sense of repair. As narrated by Abū Dawūd, the Prophet said: “When a thong of one of you is cut, then he should not walk in one sandal until he repairs (\textit{yuslihu}) his thong…”\footnote{Abū Dawūd, \textit{Sunan}, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Khālidī, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1996, under Kitāb al-Libās, Bāb fī al-Intī ṭāl, no. 4137, Vol. 3, p. 72.} By being directed to the way someone dresses, this Prophetic teaching signifies that among the Islamic dimensions of \textit{iṣlāḥ} is the outward appearance or the exterior and not just the purely inward religious dimensions, a point which assures the comprehensiveness of the Islamic perspective of \textit{iṣlāḥ}.

Although it is true that Islamic \textit{iṣlāḥ} can be directed to the exterior, the priority, however, should be given to the interior. This is another distinguishing characteristic of the Islamic perspective of \textit{iṣlāḥ}. The priority given to looking inward is evident in the very well-known Prophetic tradition in which it is clearly stated that the \textit{ṣalāh} and the \textit{fasād} of the whole body depend on the condition of the heart.\footnote{See al-Bukhārī, \textit{Ṣaḥīh}, Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1999, under Kitāb al-Imān, Bāb Fadl man Istabraʾ li-Dīnah, no. 52, p. 12.} This shows that the priority in \textit{iṣlāḥ} should be given to the interior state.

Before leaving this tradition, an additional significant indication can be highlighted. The tradition indicates that self-based \textit{iṣlāḥ} can be in the form of purifying the heart. More elucidation on this form of \textit{iṣlāḥ} is found in the following interesting Prophetic tradition: “Truly, \textit{sāliḥ} mode (\textit{ḥadīr}), \textit{sāliḥ} manner (\textit{samṭ}), and moderation (\textit{al-iqtīṣād}) are one part of twenty five parts of Prophecy (\textit{al-nubūwh}).”\footnote{Abū Dawūd, \textit{Sunan}, under Kitāb al-Adab, Bāb fī al-Waqāʾ, no. 4776, Vol. 3, p. 253.} In addition to showing the degree of importance of self-purification from the Islamic perspective, this tradition indicates that self-purification is meant in the religious sense.
One further Prophetic tradition related to *islāḥ*, which is worth noting, is the tradition about the *muṣliḥ* slave. As narrated by the Imam Muslim, the Prophet said: “For the owned slave who is *muṣliḥ* there are two rewards.”\(^{62}\) The sense of *islāḥ* in this narration becomes clear when another narration of the same tradition is linked with it. In the other narration of the tradition—which is also narrated by the Imam Muslim but from another chain of narrators—the Prophet said: “Surely, if the slave advises his master and perfects his worship to Allāh, his reward will be doubled for him.”\(^{63}\) This narration explains that what qualifies the slave to be a *muṣliḥ* and thus to deserve a double reward are his advice and the perfection of his worship. Thus, giving advice and perfecting one’s worship are two *islāḥī* works.

Reflecting on the Prophetic usages of the opposites of *islāḥ* leads correspondingly to some additional elucidation of the Islamic perspective of *islāḥ*. One of these usages is in the following Prophetic tradition in which *fasād* is articulated:

> “If someone, whose religiousness (*dīn*) and morality (*khuluq*) please you, proposed to marry a girl through you, then you should accept his proposal; unless you do that, there would be *fitnah* (temptation) on earth and wide *fasād*.”\(^{64}\)

This tradition shows that preference should be given to the religiousness (*dīn*) and morality (*khuluq*). Although it is specifically mentioned in the context of marriage, this principle can also be applicable in other matters. Therefore, giving the priority to the *dīn* and *khuluq* can be considered an Islamic criterion of *islāḥ*.

Having mentioned the *dīn*, it is worth mentioning another Prophetic tradition which indicates a unique Islamic form of *islāḥ* concerning the *dīn*. In this tradition, the

---

\(^{62}\) Narrated by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, under Kitāb al-Aymān, Bāb Thawāb al-`Abd wa-Ajurh Idhā Nasāḥ li-Sayidīh wa-Aḥsan `Ībādat Allāh.

\(^{63}\) Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, under Kitāb al-Aymān, Bāb Thawāb al-`Abd wa-Ajurh Idhā Nasāḥ li-Sayidīh wa-Aḥsan `Ībādat Allāh.

comparative form of the adjective fāsid—i.e., afsad—is used in an interesting comparison: “Two hungry wolves released in a herd of sheep are not more harmful (afsada) to them than one’s greed for wealth and fame to his dīn.” Conversely, to cure spiritual illnesses such as the greed for wealth and fame is an Islamic way of islāh in the circle of dīn.

1.4 Phrasing the Definition of Islāh:

In light of the previous analysis, we may attempt to incorporate all the features of islāh in the following tentative definition: islāh, as an Islamic concept, is a human corrective task in which any state of fasād is correctively changed into its opposite desired state which meets the Islamic criteria presented in the Qur’ān and/or exemplified in the Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad (S. A. W); and by fasād it is meant a state of loss of the benefit of a thing, inexcusable detriment, or unjustified deviation from a moderate norm.

Now, if there is any change in the meaning of islāh over time, as has been recently argued, it would be, in our view, due to the differences on the justification of the criteria of both fasād and its opposite state, which are the variables in the definition of islāh.

---

66 Voll, for instance, states that “over the centuries the specific meanings of tajdid and islah [sic] have changed, depending on the evolution of Islamic thought and the changing circumstances of the Islamic community,” (Voll, “Renewal and Reform,” p. 32).
1.5 ِIšlāḥ and Reform: Degree of Equivalence:

In the literature in English concerning the topic of ِIšlāḥ, the term is generally translated as reform. To justify this translation, however, the degree of equivalence between the two terms needs to be precisely examined.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, there are various lexical senses of “reform” when it is used as a transitive verb. By examining these senses and comparing them to those of ِIšlāḥ discussed above, the following two observations can be made.

First, there are some senses of “reform” which are equivalent or at least very similar to some shades of the meaning of ِIšlāḥ. These senses are:

1. to make a change for the better in (an arrangement, state of things, practice),
2. to correct, put right (an error or mistake),
3. to bring (a person) to abandon some evil conduct and adopt a right one,
4. to improve one’s own character,
5. to bring into a better state or improve, either by some change of form, or by the removal of faults or abuse, and
6. to put an end to (disorder etc.) by introducing a better procedure.

Second, “reform” has some other equivalent or very similar senses to some of those indicated by ِIšlāḥ, which are now obsolete. These include the following:

1. to restore to the original form,
2. to rebuild after (destruction…), and
3. to repair (damage…). The image associated with these senses of “reform” is crucial to the meaning of ِIšlāḥ. Being out of date, however, these senses of the term are no longer

---

68 Which is the most comprehensive English dictionary.
70 See The Oxford English Dictionary, the entry “reform.”
71 Compare these senses with the lexicographical meanings of “Išlāḥ” above.
72 See The Oxford English Dictionary, the entry “reform.”
73 See The Oxford English Dictionary, the entry “reform.”

31
reflected in its current usage. This considerably reduces the degree of equivalence between Īlāh and reform in its current usage.

But even if all the senses of reform are considered, the scope of Īlāh is still broader. Thus, some essential dimensions of Īlāh will be lost when the term is replaced by “reform.” This loss is enough to make the serious researcher avoid the use of “reform” in place of Īlāh, at least for the sake of precision. At the very most, “reform” is only a partial equivalent for Īlāh.

What really widens the gap between the two terms are their religious overtones. Īlāh is an Islamic concept, whereas “reform” is ecclesiastical: it has been tied to the tradition of the Reformation of the 16th century which led to the establishment of the Protestant churches. Therefore, using the latter to refer to the former may cause considerable misunderstanding.

In short, to avoid any confusion, the term Īlāh should not be translated as “reform.” Alternatively, it should be used in its transliterated form and explained in detail whenever there is a need. When translation is unavoidable, however, the adjective “Islamic” should be used before “reform” as a rendering for Īlāh in order to reduce the gap between the two terms.

1.6 The Relationship between Īlāh and Other Concepts:

This section compares and contrasts the Islamic concept Īlāh with the following three concepts: “tajdīd” (renewal or restoration), “taghyīr” (change), and “al-amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar” (commanding right and forbidding wrong). The aim of this step is not, however, to fully analyse these concepts, but rather to shed more

---

light on the concept of *islāh* itself by highlighting the main similarities and differences between *islāh* and these three concepts which are sometimes, justifiably or not, associated with *islāh*. This aim alone guides the following examination and controls its points of interest.

### 1.6.1 *Islāh* vs. *Tajdīd*:

The term *tajdīd* is used in some studies\(^\text{75}\) to mean the same or similar to the Islamic term *islāh*. But the examination below shows that, although there are some similarities between the two terms, there are also some important differences which need particular attention.

Unlike *islāh*, the concept of *tajdīd* is not Qur’ānic, i.e., the word does not appear in the Qur’ān. It originated as an Islamic concept, however, from a unique Prophetic tradition in which the derived verb *yujaddid* is employed: “Verily, Allāh will send to this *Ummah* (Muslim nation) at the head of each hundred years *man* (the one or those who) *yujaddidu* for it its *dīn*.” As a result, the concept *tajdīd*, which is the *maṣdar* (infinitive noun) from the verb “*yujaddidu*,” refers in the Islamic sense to the task mentioned in this tradition. The one who fulfils this task is called the *mujaddid*.

In order to precisely compare and contrast *islāh* and *tajdīd*, it is essential to fully examine the implications of the task referred to in the above tradition. The starting point in this examination is the indication of *dīn* to which the task of *tajdīd* is directed.

The term “*dīn*” is a comprehensive Islamic concept. Based on a deep examination of the uses of the term “*dīn*” and the related derivatives both in classical Arabic and in

---

\(^{75}\) See, for example, Voll, “Renewal and Reform,” pp. 33f.
the Qur’ān, a study by Maududi\(^{76}\) demonstrates that the Qur’ān employs the term in one or more of the following four senses or shades of meaning: “(1) Sovereignty and supreme authority, (2) obedience and submission to such authority, (3) the system of thought and action established through the exercise of that authority, and (4) retribution meted out by the authority, in consideration of loyalty and obedience to it, rebellion and transgression against it.”\(^{77}\)

The study also shows that in some Qur’ānic contexts, the term is used in a sense of “a whole way of life in which a person gives his submission and obedience to someone whom he regards as having the ultimate authority [i.e., Allāh alone in the case of the dīn of Islam]; [he] shapes his conduct according to the bounds and laws and rules prescribed by that being, looks to him for recognition, honour, and reward for loyal service, and fears the disgrace or punishment that could follow any lack on his part.”\(^{78}\)

These nuances of meaning of “dīn” show how comprehensive this concept is. It is, however, vital to recall that the primary signification of the concept is obedience and submission. This distinguishes “dīn” from other similar Arabic terms referring to a system of religion, such as “millah.” As al-Asfahānī states, “dīn is similar to millah but the former is used as regard to obedience and submission to the Sharī’ah.”\(^{79}\)

Now, what is meant by the task of tajdīd when it is directed to the dīn of the Muslim Ummah in the above sense of “dīn”? To answer this question, we should study the meaning of the verb “yujaddidu” mentioned in the tradition about tajdīd. Being a transitive verb in the mudāri’ (aorist) tense, “yujaddidu” means to make or render

\(^{77}\) Maududi, *Four Basic Qur’ānic Terms*, p. 94.
\(^{78}\) Maududi, *Four Basic Qur’ānic Terms*, pp. 99f.
“jadīd.” With regard to the meaning of the epithet jadīd, there are three possible senses in the lexicons. The primary sense of jadīd is derived from “al-jadd” meaning “al-qat” (cut); it is said “thawbun jadīd” meaning a garment newly cut off by the weaver. Based on this primary sense, jadīd is used, as al-Asfahānī states, for anything which has been newly or recently originated. A second sense of jadīd is learned from its maṣdar (infinitive), “al-jiddah,” as opposed to “al-bīlā or al-khalq” (the state of becoming shabby or worn out). A third sense of jadīd presented in some lexicons is “mā lā ‘ahda laka bih” (a thing of which you have had no knowledge).

It is obvious, however, that the task of tajdīd mentioned in the tradition about the mujaddid should not be interpreted—in the light of the indications of the first and the last senses of jadīd—as changing the dīn of the Ummah or making it different in a sense amounting to a loss of original identity, otherwise this tradition would contradict with other Prophetic traditions which proscribe bid’ah (innovation in the dīn). Therefore, to avoid falling into this kind of contradiction, the Islamic tajdīd should be bound by the original model of the dīn which is presented in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah and is believed to have been exemplified by the first Muslim Community.

Having considered this, the only possible sense of jadīd, in the light of which the task of tajdīd can be interpreted correctly, is the third one. Accordingly, the Islamic task of tajdīd can be understood as a human corrective activity by which the dīn of the Muslim Ummah is revived and restored in the light of its original model after a state of obliteration, loss or deviation.

80 See Ibn Sīdah, al-Muhkam, under the radical letters j-d-d, al-Jawhārī, al-S̱iḥāḥ, under the radical letters j-d-d; and Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, Tāj al-ʿArūs, under the radical letters j-d-d.
81 al-Jawhārī, al-S̱iḥāḥ, under the radical letters j-d-d; and Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, Tāj al-ʿArūs, under the radical letters j-d-d.
82 al-Rāghib al-As̱fahānī, under the radical letter j-d-d.
83 See Ibn Sīdah, al-Muhkam, under the radical letters j-d-d; al-Jawhārī, al-S̱iḥāḥ, under the radical letters j-d-d; Ibn Manzūr, Lisān al-ʿArab, under the radical letters j-d-d; and Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, Tāj al-ʿArūs, under the radical letters j-d-d.
84 See Ibn Sīdah, al-Muhkam, under the radical letters j-d-d; Ibn Manzūr, Lisān al-ʿArab, under the radical letters j-d-d; and Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, Tāj al-ʿArūs, under the radical letters j-d-d.
Comparing and contrasting this interpretation of *tajdīd* and the previous definition of *islāḥ*, the following similarities and differences can be accepted:

1. Both *tajdīd* and *islāḥ* are Islamic corrective tasks; however, the former was introduced only in the Ḥadīth, while the other was introduced in both the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth.

2. Unlike *islāḥ*, the scope of *tajdīd* is restricted within the field of *dīn*, as is stated in the tradition of *tajdīd*.

3. It is in the field of *dīn* only, where *islāḥ* may overlap with *tajdīd*.

4. Every mujaddid is muṣliḥ but not every muṣliḥ is mujaddid.

5. The task of *tajdīd* is bound by more restrictive conditions than those of *islāḥ*.

### 1.6.2 Ḩayyār vs. Ṭaghṭyīr:

The term ṭaghṭyīr in Arabic is the *masdar* (infinitive noun) of the transitive verb *ghayyara*, as in the phrase “*ghayyarahu*” which can mean one or more of the following: ḥawwalhu, baddalhu, and j’alahu ghayra ma-kān (he transformed it, converted it and rendered it different). Thus, it is equivalent to the term “change” in English. This shows that ṭaghṭyīr can linguistically be either a change for the better or a change for the worse.

In the Qur’ān, however, the aoristic form of verb “*ghayyara*”—i.e., “*yughayyiru*”—appears only in contexts where change is for the worse: “Surely I [Satan] will mislead them…and surely I will command them so they will change (*fala-yughayyirunna*) Allāh’s creation…” (Q.4:119), “…Allāh would never change a grace that he conferred on a people until they change (*yughayyirū*) what is within themselves”

---

85 Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, Tāj al-ʿArūs, under the radical letters gh-y-r.
(Q.8:53), “…Surely Allāh does not change (yughayyiru) the condition of a people until they change (yughayyirū) what is within themselves. And whenever Allāh wills harm (ṣū') for a people, nothing turns it back; apart from Him, they have no protector.” (Q.13:11).

It is worth noting that taghyīr cannot be considered either an Islamic concept or an Islamic task such as ʾislāḥ; it does not seem that there is a direct Qurʾānic or Prophetic appeal to change for the sake of change. The only exception to this observation occurs when taghyīr is directed against al-munkar. It is only then that taghyīr becomes part of the Islamic unique duty “al-amr bi-al-maʿrūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar,” as will be shown when this duty is compared and contrasted with ʾislāḥ.

In addition to the above essential difference between ʾislāḥ and taghyīr, another major difference between the two terms can be clearly observed from the meaning of the term taghyīr itself: taghyīr is more general than ʾislāḥ. Therefore, not every taghyīr is ʾislāḥ whereas every ʾislāḥ is a particular form of taghyīr, since ʾislāḥ is a corrective change. The two terms may overlap only when taghyīr is directed against fasād.

1.6.3 Ḥisāḥ vs. “al-Amr bi-al-maʿrūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar”:

The phrase “al-amr bi-al-maʿrūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar” is a combination of two parts. The first part consists of two terms which are opposite in meaning to those in the second: “amr,” which means “commanding” or “enjoining,” stands opposite to “nahy,” which means “forbidding”, while “maʿrūf,” which literally means “known,” is the opposite of “munkar,” which literally means “unknown.”

---

86 As the closing of the āyah indicates, the change here is for the worse. In addition, there is an agreement among the classical musfrīn (Qurʾānic exegeses) on this connotation.
87 See the previous note.
88 The term maʿrūf is derived from “ʾirfān” which means ʾilm (knowledge) whereas munkar is derived from its opposite “nakirah,” see Ibn Manzūr, Lisān al-ʼArab, under the radical letters ʾ-r-f.
Similar to *islāḥ*, the duty of “*al-amr bi-al-ма'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar*” is firmly rooted and highly valued in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth. There are numerous favourable references to the doctrine in these two basic sources of Islam. These references clearly establish the obligatory nature of the task and show the need for it. In the Qur’ān, for instance, Allāh addresses the believer as follows: “*Let there be a nation of you, calling to what is good, and commanding what is ma’rūf, and forbidding what is munkar; those are the prosperers*” (Q.3:104).

The external sense of this doctrine suggests that it denotes merely a verbal duty and thus it may seem far distinct from *islāḥ*, which is a sort of change. However, by fully examining both the Qur’ānic and Prophetic references related to this subject, it becomes evident that the duty is not always verbal, but can be in other forms as well, particularly as a response to *munkar*. In a famous Prophetic tradition, which can be conveniently called “the three modes tradition,” the Prophet, for instance, states: “Whoever sees a particular *munkar* and is able to change it with his hand, let him do so; if he can’t, then with his tongue; if he can’t, then with his heart…” It is not within the purpose of the present discussion, however, to examine all the possible “modes” of the duty and the controversial issues which they may raise. What is connected to the present theme, nevertheless, specifically arises when the duty is in the form of changing “*munkar*” physically. This is mainly because the duty in this form becomes a sort of “human corrective change” and thus it belongs to the same general classification of *islāḥ*.

In order to know precisely the relationship between *islāḥ* and “changing *munkar*,” we should analyse the meaning of the term “*munkar*” as an Islamic concept and compare, or contrast it with “*al-fasād*.” To start with, “*al-munkar*,” as its literal sense reveals, indicates disapproval and rejection. Like “*fasād*,” the term can be generally

---

89 I have borrowed this name from Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 32.

90 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, under Kitāb al-‘Imān, Bāb min al-Imān taghyīr al-Mnkar.
classified as a categorical negative value term. There is disagreement among the Qur'ānic exegeses, however, on what can justifiably be listed under this categorical term; some have restricted it to particular sins, while others have widened it to include every evil. The external sense of the term, nevertheless, suggests, as Abū Ḥayyān points out, al-‘umūm (generality or general character). This general character makes the present task of comparing and contrasting the meaning of “munkar” and “fasād” very difficult.

Yet, within the Islamic discipline of fiqh (jurisprudence)—where the rules and conditions of the duty of “al-amr bi-al-ma‘rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar” are normally studied—the generality of the term “munkar” has been restricted by certain conditions which have to be present in a particular case, in order to justifiably consider such a case a munkar and thus eligible for opposition as a duty. By considering these conditions, the present task becomes easier. According to al-Ghazālī’s account, there are four conditions with regard to munkar: (1) being forbidden in the Sharī‘ah, (2) currently existing, (3) being apparent for the exponent of the duty, and (4) being known without the need of ijtihād.

In the light of the above conditions, it becomes apparent that munkar overlaps with fasād when all these conditions exist in a particular case; however, fasād is wider than munkar since the former is not necessarily restricted by all these conditions. As a result, islāh partially overlaps with “changing munkar.”

---


93 The comprehensive body of Islamic rules and laws.

94 The scholarly mental activity of deriving a rule of the Sharī‘ah from authoritative evidence.
Another difference between the two tasks appears in their ultimate goals. The task of changing a particular munkar, such as drinking wine publicly, can be fulfilled by simply stopping it. The task of islāh, in contrast, is not completely fulfilled unless a fāsid person—e.g. one who drinks wine—is guided to repent and to become ṣalīh instead.
2.1 Introduction:

When studying a historical figure like al-Ghazālī, it is essential to consider the historical context in which he lived. Failure to do so may in the first instance lead to serious misunderstanding of his thoughts; essentially, as Samuel Zwemer puts it, “...we cannot understand a man unless we know his environment.”¹ In the second instance, it could cause extremely incorrect evaluation of his achievement particularly since, as ʿAbd al-Maqṣūd has rightly stated,² the criteria of judgment and the circumstances in the time of al-Ghazālī were very different to those in the contemporary age.

In order to avoid committing such a serious methodological oversight, it is not enough to simply know al-Ghazālī’s biography since, as Zwemer has interestingly pointed out, “…biography is only a thread in the vast web of history, in which time is broad as well as long,”³ but more than that we need, he continues, to “…transport ourselves to the time in which he lived.”⁴ Thus, I ought to present an overview of the age of al-Ghazālī in this chapter, before turning to the main task of the study. The focus of this overview is the historical information which is important to bear in mind.

---

at the outset, and at the same time shall establish a necessary foundation and introductory background for the forthcoming discussions. Thus, it is not intended to give an inclusive overview of the age of al-Ghazālī; however, the best attempt is made to point out the main features of that age.

2.2 The Overall Condition of Islamdom:

At the beginning of the age of al-Ghazālī, Islamdom was spread across three continents. The Arab Peninsula, the Levant, Mesopotamia, the Persian Plateau, Northern Africa and al-Andalus (Muslim Spain) formed Dār al-Islām at that time. However, the frontiers of Islamdom kept changing slightly over the age. Muslims gained new strategic lands, while losing other valuable ones, as shall be demonstrated shortly.

Over this age, Islamdom was noticeably in a complex, diverse and changing condition, to the extent that making any sweeping generalization here may create an unbalanced picture of that age. The classical Muslim society with its dominant purely Arabic-language culture under the uniting umbrella of the magnificent caliphate had changed into a diverse society, both linguistically and culturally5, which was ruled by multiple independent “governments” with no single uniting political force. On one hand, there were clear symptoms of decline in Islamdom, and the Muslims, generally speaking, were suffering from fundamental weaknesses; in the words of Hillenbrand, they “were living through exceptionally turbulent times.”6 On the other hand, there were, at the same time, particular elements of prosperity and strengths, and overall the

Muslim *Ummah* was still, as Hodgson put it, “…certainly the most widely spread and influential on the globe.”

To better understand the complex condition of Islamdom in the age under study, and to gain a balanced picture of that age, an extended overview is necessary. Thus, a somewhat detailed outline of the political and religio-intellectual dimensions of that age will be drawn below.

### 2.3 The Political Setting:

Al-Ghazālī lived in a time of totally new political order compared to the earlier classical Abbasid era. By the birth of al-Ghazālī, the Abbasid Caliphate had already been suffering from political disintegration. There was no single political power ruling the whole of Islamdom at that time. Instead, the Islamic *Ummah* was ruled by various individual local “governments.” Furthermore, the Caliphate had been challenged by the competing Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt based on Ismā‘īlism and which had been receiving advantageous support from the Ismā‘īlī Shiite all around Islamdom, but this opponent Caliphate suffered from symptoms of weakness during the age of al-Ghazālī.

While the early part of the age of al-Ghazālī witnessed the rapid rise of the Seljuk and Almoravid dynasties, towards the end of the same age they started to decline.

To adequately understand the changing political setting of that age, an overview on the status of the Caliphate and the provincial “governments” of the time is presented under the following sub-headings.

---

2.3.1 The Status of the Abbasid Caliphate:

Al-Ghazālī lived through the reigns of three successive Abbasid caliphs: al-Qā’im Bi-amr-Allāh,8 al-Muqtadī Bi-amr-Allāh,9 al-Mustazhir Bi-Allāh.10 With regard to their personal characteristics, it is reported that all three caliphs were religious, and were men of Islamic morality and noble personality.11 The good characters of the three caliphs, however, are not projected in the status of the Caliphate itself which, although it somehow retained its authority, had lost its previous power.12

During the reign of al-Qā’im, to begin with, the Caliphate suffered from a dramatic decline and its centre experienced a state of disorder for a while. Moreover, the Caliph himself was debased to the extent that he was imprisoned for a period of

8 Abū-Ja’far Abd Allāh b. Ahmad al-Qādir, titled al-Qā’im Bi-amr-Allāh who was the twenty sixth caliph in the line of the Abbasid dynasty. He became Caliph in 422/1031 and continued to hold the position until his death in 467/1075. At the time of this caliph’s death, al-Ghazālī, who was seventeen years old, had not moved to Baghdad yet.

9 Abū-al-Qāsim Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Abd Allāh, titled al-Muqtadī Bi-amr-Allāh who, at the age of twenty, succeeded his grandfather, al-Qā’im, and held the Caliphate till he died in 487/1094.


11 The historian Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), for example, characterized al-Qā’im as “pious, religious, ascetically-minded, learned, held a strong trust in Allāh Almighty, and very patient” (Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, p. 406.) With regard to al-Qā’im’s attitude to ruling, Ibn al-Athīr reported that “he was devoted to justice and fair treatment, and always wanted to satisfy people’s needs, not thinking to deny anything which was requested from him” (Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, p. 406.) Similarly, al-Muqtadī was religious, beneficent, and a man of strong personality and great zealousness (Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyutī (d. 911/1505), Tārikh al-Khulafā’, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 1988, p. 338.) Concerning al-Mustazhir, it is reported that he was of good morality, beneficent, charitable, kind, generous, and that he loved ‘ulamā’ and pious people (al-Suyutī, Tārikh al-Khulafā’, p. 341.) It is worth mentioning that al-Mustazhir was highly praised by al-Ghazālī in his book, Faḍ’āh al-Bātîniyya wa-Faḍ’āl al-Mustazhirīyah, in which he firmly states that the Caliph al-Mustazhir was qualified for the Imāmah (supreme leadership of the Muslims) since he, as al-Ghazālī passionately argued and desperately attempted, though not very convincingly, to prove from the Sharī’ah perspective, was gifted with the requisite qualities and conditions for that position (see al-Ghazālī, Faḍ’āh al-Bātîniyya, ed. Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmiyyah, 1964, pp. 169-94, trans., Richard Joseph McCarthy, “Faḍ’āh il-Bātîniyya,” in Richard Joseph McCarthy, Deliverance from Error, translation of al-Munqūdūn min al-Dalāl and other relevant works of al-Ghazālī, Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, n. d, pp. 234-9.)

12 For a discussion on the distinction between “authority” and “power” and the attraction between them as illustrated in the Abbasid Caliphate during the fifth/eleventh century, see George Makdisi, “Authority in the Islamic Community,” in George Makdisi, History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad, Hampshire: Variorum, 1990, part VIII, pp. 118-20.
time by the the commander and chief of the army of Baghdad, Arslān al-Basāsīrī.\(^{13}\) As the populace inclined towards al-Basāsīrī,\(^ {14}\) a rebellion took place during which the harem of the Caliph was entered without permission and the Caliph’s palace was plundered.\(^ {15}\)

From the time of al-Basāsīrī’s revolutionary movement in Baghdad, the name of the Abbasid Caliph was replaced by the name of the Fatimid Caliph in the Friday \textit{khutbah} and in the coins struck.\(^ {16}\) This ignominious fall from power of the Abbasid Caliph did not end until al-Basāsīrī fled Baghdad in 451/1059 as the first great Seljuk\(^ {17}\) Sultan Tughril-Beg,\(^ {18}\) responding to an appeal for help from the Caliph al-Qā`im,\(^ {19}\) marched into Iraq, with no other thought but, as Ibn al-Athīr reported,\(^ {20}\) to restore the Caliph to his Court.

To a considerable extent, the Caliph al-Qā`im was rehabilitated by the Sultan Tughril-Beg\(^ {21}\) who initially regarded the Caliph, from whom he had obtained a valuable legitimacy of his rule,\(^ {22}\) as his master and treated him with great respect on

---

\(^{13}\) This was in the year 450/1058 when the commander and chief of the army of Baghdad, Arslān al-Basāsīrī, who turned away from al-Qā`im and supported the Fatimid Caliph, al-Mustansir bi-Allāh, instead, took control of Baghdad and imprisoned the Caliph al-Qā`im (see Zāhīr al-Dīn Nishābūrī (d. ca. 579/1184 or 80/1185), \textit{The History of the Seljuk Turks From the Jāmi’ al-Tawārīkh: An Ilkhanid Adaption of the Saljūq-nāma of Zāhīr al-Dīn Nishābūrī}, Translated from Persian by Kenneth Allin Luther, ed. C. Edmund Bosworth, Richmond (Surrey): Curzon Press, 2001, p. 42; see also Ibn al-Athīr, \textit{al-Kāmil}, Vol. 8, pp. 341f.).


\(^{15}\) See Nishābūrī, \textit{The History of the Seljuk Turks}, p. 42.

\(^{16}\) See Nishābūrī, \textit{The History of the Seljuk Turks}, p. 42.

\(^{17}\) Transformed from the Turkish Selchūk; also spelled Saljuq which is transformed from the Arabic \textit{Saljūq}, (see Carla L. Klausner, \textit{The Seljuk Vezirate: A Study of Civil Administration}, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973, p. iv).

\(^{18}\) Abū Tālib Toghril-Beg Muhammad b. Mikā’il b. Saljūq.

\(^{19}\) Nishābūrī, \textit{The History of the Seljuk Turks}, p. 42.


\(^{21}\) Although he possessed various excellent qualities, he had some bad traits of character; according to Ibn al-Athīr, he was “wise, tactful, one of the most forbearing of men, and the most able to keep his secrets…He used…to take care of the daily prayers, and to fast in Mondays and Thursdays,” at the same time he was “tyrannical, brutal and cruel,” (Ibn al-Athīr, \textit{al-Kāmil}, Vol. 8, p. 362).

\(^{22}\) The Caliph al-Qā`im gave orders for the \textit{khutabā} (Muslim pulpits) of Baghdad mosques to give the Friday \textit{khutabah} in the name of Toghril-Beg (see, for instance, Nishābūrī, \textit{The History of the Seljuk Turks}, p. 41; and Ibn al-Athīr, \textit{al-Kāmil}, Vol. 8, p. 323).
various occasions. The Caliph in turn was so pleased with him to the extent that he placed him in control of all the lands that were under the Caliph’s authority and addressed him as Malik al-Mashriq wa-al-Magrib (the King of the East and West). In addition, to cement his relationship with the Sultan, he married his niece.

Nevertheless, great tension developed shortly between the two. Some of Tughril-Beg’s actions disturbed and offended the Caliph. Moreover, the actual control in Iraq, including Baghdad—the hometown of the Caliph and the centre of the Caliphate—passed within a couple of years into the hands of Tughril-Beg and thus the power of the Caliph became very limited, even in the purely Caliphate responsibilities, such as the administration of the revenues of Iraq.

On one hand, the spiritual dominion of the Caliph al-Qā’im became wider during the reign of Tughril-Beg’s successor the Sultan Alp-Arsān (455/1063-465/1072) who succeeded in occupying new lands in the name of the Abbasid Caliphate. In return, the Caliph bestowed on the new Sultan the honorific titles ‘Aḍuḍ al-Dawlah (the Strong Arm of the State) and Ḫiyā’ al-Dīn (the Light of the Religion). Furthermore, the cordial relation between the two was strengthened to a certain extent when the Caliph’s son and heir apparent, al-Qā’im, married the Sultan’s...

---

25 Her name was Arslān Khāṭūn, also called Kahdijah; she was the daughter of Dāūd, brother of the Sultan Tughril-Beg. The marriage was in 448/1056, a year after the first arrival of Tughril-Beg in Baghdad. (See Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, p. 327).
26 Tughril-Beg’s daring marriage to the Caliph’s daughter is a case in point. The marriage broke the noble tradition of the previous Abbasid caliphs, because it was the first marriage of a non-Arab to a member of the Caliph’s own family (see Muḥammad Muṣīr al-Zahrānī, Nuḥūth al-Sulṭāniyyah al-Sūsī fi al-Dawlah al-Abbasidūyah, Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, p. 102.) In addition, the marriage took place despite the initial opposition of the Caliph who was eventually compelled to accept it (see, for example, Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, pp. 357f and al-Suyūṭī, Ṭāriḥ al-Khulafā’, p. 335.)
27 See, for example, al-Zahrānī, Nuḥūth al-Sulṭāniyyah, pp.107f.
30 See below (2.3.2).
daughter in 464/1071-2. On the other hand, the new Sultan gradually interfered in the Caliphate’s affairs to the extent that he dared to appoint Caliphal officers without the knowledge of the Caliph and even without paying attention to his annoyance.

Following the death of the Caliph al-Qā’im, the Caliphate in al-Muqtadī’s days, as Ibn al-Athīr states, became greater than it had been before. New strategic and valuable lands were occupied by Malik-Shāh—the Seljuk Sultan who succeeded Alp-Arsān—and came under the spiritual dominion of the Caliph al-Muqtadī. To a certain extent, al-Muqtadī was honoured by the Sultan Malik-Shāh, but he also was eventually intensely annoyed by the growing control and interference of the Sultan and his officials in the Caliphate’s prerogatives.

During the reign of al-Mustāżhir, the Caliphate experienced very difficult times; yet, as Muir puts it, “whether in the history of the fanatical strife at home, or of the Crusade Christians in the Syrian lands, the Caliph’s name is hardly ever noticed.” In addition, he, as well, experienced disturbance by the Seljuks similar to that in his father’s days, but to a relatively lesser extent, due to the conflicts which occurred among the Seljuks themselves during his reign.

---

35 See below (2.3.2).
37 For example, Malik-Shāh made the Caliph unwillingly discharge his vizier, Fakhr al-Dawlah. (see al-Zahrānī, Nufūth al-Salājiqah, pp. 109f.) Although al-Muqtadī, on the advice of Nizām al-Mulk—the wise and pious vizier of Malik-Shāh—married Malik-Shāh’s daughter seeking his cordiality, the marriage soon ended in separation, and the relation between the two became wors to the extent that Malik-Shāh marched from Ispahan to Baghdad aiming to replace the Caliph, but he died before he completed his plan (Ṭāj al-Dīn Abū Naṣr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), Ṭabqāt al-Shāfi‘īyya al-Kubrā, Cairo: al-Matba‘ah al-Ḥusaynīyah, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 143.)
38 Muir, The Caliphate, p. 582.
40 See below (2.3.2).
It is important to bear in mind though that these serious tensions between the Abbasid Caliphs and the Seljuk Sultans did not, as precisely noted by Huart, “…have its roots in religious questions but was of a personal nature.” The Seljuks always regarded the office of the Caliphate as the highest authority of the whole Islamic Ummah, and thus, as Sunni military leaders loyal to the Abbasid Caliphate, they were religiously responsible for defending it.

Although the Abbasid Caliphate had lost its classical fame by the time of al-Ghazālī, the Caliph of the time continued to exercise some power and authority, though it was limited, and seems to have been mostly symbolic or prestigious. The Caliph, for instance, was still responsible for appointing the Caliphate officials such as Qādī al-Qudāh (the Chief Jurist). Moreover, he continued to be considered a political legitimizer for the independent local rulers. In order for the position of any ruler to be considered legitimate in a particular province, and thus be supported by both the general public and the ‘ulamā’, the ruler had to be accredited by the Caliph of the time. This explains the determination of the rulers of that time to receive such legitimacy.

As an upholder of the Sharī‘ah and within his power—regardless of how limited it was—the Caliphs of the time also attempted to combat some aspects of fasād that

---

43 A good example for this is when the Almoravid Emir Yūsif b. Tāshfīn took control over Granada in 483/1090, which was the beginning of his rule in al-Andalus (Muslim Spain), he wrote to the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadī in Baghdad seeking his accreditation; the Caliph in turn legitimized his rule, and thus the Emir received his letter of investiture from Baghdad (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, p. 448.)
appeared in their reigns. He also prohibited the outflow of waste water from bath-houses into the Tigris, and made their owners dig pits for the waste water.

The caliph’s officials of the time also played certain administrative roles. However, the real players in the whole political scene at that age were not the Caliph or his officials, but rather the Seljuk Sultan and his officials, as we shall further illustrate below.

### 2.3.2 The Seljuk Sultanate:

Before spreading their supremacy over Iraq and before starting their noticeable interference in the Abbasid Caliphal office in Baghdad, the Seljuks had already furthered their sway over vast areas of Central and Western Asia, displacing the former Ghaznavid and the Būyid authorities there. In the first three decades of the age of al-Ghazālī, the expansion of the Seljuks continued and reached its zenith at the death of the Sultan Malik-Shāh in 485/1092, which was a turning point in the history of the so-called “Great Seljuks.”

After establishing his rule in Kirmān, which was almost independent, the Seljuk commander, Qāwurt, succeeded in crossing the Persian Gulf and bringing Oman...
under his control, putting an end to the Būyid rule there, during the reign of his younger brother, the Seljuk supreme Sultan Alp-Arslān (455/1063-465/1072).

Moreover, the Sultan Alp-Arslān himself successfully mounted daring raids into the Byzantine Empire. A year after his accession, Alp-Arslān campaigned in Armenia, capturing its old capital, Ani, and other key Armenian cities from their Byzantine garrisons. In addition to expanding his Sultanate by conquest, Alp-Arslān succeeded in making some rulers of the time give allegiance to him.

During the reign of the forceful Sultan Malik-Shāh (465/1072-485/1092), the Seljuks further expanded their frontiers by conquering new strategic lands including al-Ḥijāz, Yemen, Samarqand, and Kashghar. In this reign also, Sulymān b. Qutalmish, a distant cousin of Malik-Shāh, succeeded in making new conquests in Asia Minor, capturing Byzantine cities as far as the shores of the Sea of Marmara, and founding a Seljuk dynasty in Anatolia with its capital at Nicaea in about 470/1077.

Being Sunnis and loyal to the Abbasid Caliph, the Seljuks attempted to put an end to the Fatimid Shiite rule, as they had successfully done with regard to the Būyid Shiite authority. Concerning their attempt against the Fatimids, the Seljuks were

---

52 This tremendous achievement was, as reported by Ibn al-Athīr, an occasion for rejoicing in Muslim communities and a victory which attracted special praise of the Abbasid Caliph in whose Court the victory’s report was read. (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, pp. 368-70, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, pp. 152-5.)
53 For example, in 457/1064-5, as the Sultan crossed the Oxus marching towards Jand, where his ancestor had been buried, the ruler of Jand received him and loaded him with magnificent gifts, and pledged his allegiance (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 375, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 157.)
54 Being ordered by the Sultan to conquer al-Ḥijāz and Yemen, a number of the Seljuk emirs marched on this campaign in 485/1092-3 until they reached Yemen and took control of it, treating its inhabitants wickedly (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 8, p. 478, trans., see Richards, *The Annals*, p. 252.)
56 This was an almost totally independent dynasty which lasted to the early years of the eighth/fourteenth century and which has become known as the Seljuks of Asia Minor or al-Rūm (see, for instance, Cl. Huart, “Seldjûks,” in *EI*, Vol. 4, p. 211; and C. E. Bosworth, “Saljûkids,” in *EF*, Vol. 8, p. 948.)
partially successful for they liberated some key lands during the age under study; an achievement which may be seen as a victory for all Sunnis of the time.

Despite their remarkable expansion, the Seljuks had various internal weaknesses, some of which were inherent in their Sultanate system. As Klausner rightly pointed out, “the tendency toward internal quarrels and the division of the imperial territory into petty principalities during the Seljuk period may be considered a basic weakness of the empire and a major cause of its demise.” Internal disputes over supremacy among the Seljuk emirs occurred frequently throughout Seljuk history, including the period of the Great Seljuks.

---

57 In addition to al-Hijāz and Yemen, Aleppo slipped from the Fatimids’ hands, and submitted to the Sultan Alp-Arslān in 463/1070-1 (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 387, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 168); Jerusalem and other neighbouring towns were taken from Egyptian garrisons by Atsiz al-Khawarzmi, one of the emirs of the Sultan Malik-Shāh, in 463/1071 (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 390, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 173); the same Emir also besieged Damascus, which had been under the suzerainty of the Fatimids, in 468/1076 (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 410, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 191); and at Malik-Shāh’s command, his brother, Tutush, conquered Homs and other Fatimid Syrian coastal cities in 485/1092-3 (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, pp. 47f). In 456/1063, Shihāb al-Dawlah Qutalmish, a member of the Seljuk family, rebelled against the Sultan Alp-Arslān and marched with large forces to Rayy to seize control, but the Sultan despatched a great army to suppress the rebellion, and the two armies joined in a battle which ended in the death of Qutalmish and the overwhelming defeat of his army (see Nīshābūrī, The History of the Seljuq Turks, p. 45; and Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 367, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 151-2). In the same year, Fakhr al-Mulk Payghu b. Mīkhā’īl, who had ambitions to take power for himself, rebelled in Herat against his nephew Alp-Arslān, who as a result marched against him with large forces and suppressed the rebellion, however he spared his uncle’s life and treated him respectfully (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 366, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 149). Three years later, the Sultan Alp-Arslān went into another battle, but this time against his elder brother Qāwurt, the ruler of Kirmān, after he rebelled against the Sultan; yet the Sultan succeeded in suppressing the rebellion, forgiving his elder brother and restoring him to his rule (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 379, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 160). The death of the Sultan Alp-Arslān in 465/1072 provoked a bloody dispute over the throne of the Sultanate between Malik-Shāh, who was named by his father Alp-Arslān as his successor, and his uncle Qāwurt who again declared an armed rebellion against the new Sultan and unsuccessfully intended to seize the Sultanate (see Nīshābūrī, The History of the Seljuq Turks, pp. 57f). Similarly, Tekesh rebelled against his brother the Sultan Malik-Shāh in 473/1081, seized Tirimidh and other towns, and marched to Nīshāpūr, with the ambition of controlling Khurasān. However, the Sultan hastened to Khurasān and arrived before his brother, who withdrew to Tirimidh; peace was then arranged between the two (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 423, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 202), though it did not last long. Four years later, Tekesh abandoned his allegiance to his brother and declared a new rebellion which again was put down by Malik-Shāh, who took his brother prisoner this time (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 435, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 216).

60 Klausner, The Seljuk Vezirate, p. 10.
61 In 456/1063, Shihāb al-Dawlah Qutalmish, a member of the Seljuk family, rebelled against the Sultan Alp-Arslān and marched with large forces to Rayy to seize control, but the Sultan despatched a great army to suppress the rebellion, and the two armies joined in a battle which ended in the death of Qutalmish and the overwhelming defeat of his army (see Nīshābūrī, The History of the Seljuq Turks, p. 45; and Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 367, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 151-2). In the same year, Fakhr al-Mulk Payghu b. Mīkhā’īl, who had ambitions to take power for himself, rebelled in Herat against his nephew Alp-Arslān, who as a result marched against him with large forces and suppressed the rebellion, however he spared his uncle’s life and treated him respectfully (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 366, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 149). Three years later, the Sultan Alp-Arslān went into another battle, but this time against his elder brother Qāwurt, the ruler of Kirmān, after he rebelled against the Sultan; yet the Sultan succeeded in suppressing the rebellion, forgiving his elder brother and restoring him to his rule (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 379, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 160). The death of the Sultan Alp-Arslān in 465/1072 provoked a bloody dispute over the throne of the Sultanate between Malik-Shāh, who was named by his father Alp-Arslān as his successor, and his uncle Qāwurt who again declared an armed rebellion against the new Sultan and unsuccessfully intended to seize the Sultanate (see Nīshābūrī, The History of the Seljuq Turks, pp. 57f). Similarly, Tekesh rebelled against his brother the Sultan Malik-Shāh in 473/1081, seized Tirimidh and other towns, and marched to Nīshāpūr, with the ambition of controlling Khurasān. However, the Sultan hastened to Khurasān and arrived before his brother, who withdrew to Tirimidh; peace was then arranged between the two (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 423, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 202), though it did not last long. Four years later, Tekesh abandoned his allegiance to his brother and declared a new rebellion which again was put down by Malik-Shāh, who took his brother prisoner this time (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 8, p. 435, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 216).
Beside their internal weaknesses, the Seljuks faced some very serious external threats. One of the biggest threats was the Christian Byzantine counter-attack. This began in 462/1069-70 when the Byzantine Emperor, Romanus, attacked Manbij in al-Shām with a large army, plundering its territories and killing its inhabitants, but because of the serious lack of provisions he returned to his home lands.  

In the following year, he marched again with a vast heterogeneous army, but this time eastward, aiming first to reoccupy Armenia, which had been recently conquered by the Seljuks.

The Seljuks, however, responded well, though temporarily, to this external threat. As soon as he received the news of Romanus’ march, the awe-inspiring Sultan Alp-Arslān announced *jihād* against the Emperor and hurried with relatively small troops to confront this grave threat immediately. At Malazgirt, the two armies clashed in a decisive one-day battle on Friday, 14/11/463-19/8/1071, ending with a bitter defeat for the Byzantine army, and the capture of the Emperor Romanus himself, who was treated honourably and kindly by the Sultan, who freed him for a ransom, the release of all Muslim prisoners in the Byzantine Empire, and a promise of military support whenever needed.

Although this historic victory of the Seljuks, as Runciman put it, “was the most decisive disaster in Byzantine history,” it did not put an end to the Byzantine danger. It only provided a temporary protection of the Seljuk frontiers and removed the threat of a possible alliance between the Byzantines and the Fatimids.

---

64 See above.
66 Also spelled Malazgird and Mantzkirt.
68 Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, p. 64.
In addition to the Byzantine threat, the Seljuks suffered terribly from the revolt of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī Shiites, known also as the Bātinīyah, which seriously attempted to put down the whole Seljuk rule.69 Towards the end of Malik-Shāh’s reign, followers of this Shiite schism, under the leadership of Ḥasan al-Ṣabāḥ (d. 518/1124), secured themselves in the fortress of Alamūt in the mountains of Daylam north of Qazvīn.70 Considering this a growing threat, Malik-Shāh commanded the Emir Arslān Tāsh to march against this dangerous group in 485/1092, but the Emir was completely defeated.71 Consequently, these Ismāʿīlī Shiites adopted a policy of open revolt which took the form of dreadful large-scale assassinations of their enemy’s effective political, as well as intellectual leaders.72 The assassination of the Sultanate’s renowned vizier Niẓām al-Mulk73 in 485/1092 is a case in point.74

This murder was a severe blow for the Sultanate. In his capacity as the vizier or the chief minister for thirty years, he played a fundamental role in the expansion and the administration of the Seljuk Sultanate. During the reign of Alp-Arsān, Niẓām al-Mulk, as Bosworth concisely put it, “had a free hand in directing the administration of the empire; in addition, he spent much time on military duties, accompanying his

---

73 Abū ʿAlī Hasan b. ʿAlī al-Ṭūsī, he is mostly known by his honorific title Niẓām al-Mulk, meaning Order of the Kingship.
master and also undertaking expeditions of his own.” His authority became greater during the reign of Malik-Shāh who handed him all the administrative affairs. Thus, much of the Seljuk achievements in these two reigns resulted from the contribution of Nizām al-Mulk.

The death of Nizām al-Mulk was a tremendous loss, not only for the Seljuks, but also for all the subjects of the Sultanate especially the Sunni ‘ulamā’ of the time. Being just and pious, he abolished many types of dues and taxes. He was credited with enhancing the Sunni educational and intellectual activities by founding—and generously supporting—the Nizāmīyah madrasahs (institutions of Islamic specialized learning) in several cities of the Sultanate. Being himself a scholar, Shāfi’ī in madhhab, he cancelled the cursing of the Ash’arīyah from the Friday khutbah and brought the Ash’arī ‘ulamā’, who had fled the lands in which the cursing applied, to their home towns. It is reported that the Vizier’s court was bustling with leading ‘ulamā’ and men of letters from whom he received much praise.

---

76 Despite his noticeable authority in the Sultanate, Nizām al-Mulk encountered considerable opposition. Various Sultan’s officials and relatives challenged his power and caused him disturbance (for a discussion on his opponents from within the Seljuk administration, see Bosworth, “The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217),” in The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 5, pp. 74-77.).
78 See, for example, Ibn Khaldūn, Kitāb al-‘Ibar, Vol. 5, p. 15; and Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, p. 481, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 257.
79 Named in his honour.
82 This cursing started during the reign of the Sultan Tughril-Beg who was persuaded by his Vizier ‘Amīd al-Mulk al-Kunurī to order the cursing of both the Shiites and the Ash’arīyah. (see, for instance, Ibn Khaldūn, Kitāb al-‘Ibar, Vol. 5, p. 15; and Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, p. 481, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 257)
83 See, for example, Ibn Khaldūn, Kitāb al-‘Ibar, Vol. 5, p. 15; and Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, p. 481, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 257.
Only a month after the murder of his Vizier, the Sultan Malik-Shāh faced his death. Consequently, the Seljuks painfully experienced a relatively long period of internal disorder and violent conflict, in which a visible decline of the Sultanate started. As Bosworth nicely and precisely described, “instead of that sultan’s firm rule, a situation immediately arose involving various young, untried princes and their ambitious mothers, with no wise and restraining hand in the state like Nizām al-Mulk.”

When Malik-Shāh died, his ambitious widow, Turkān Khātūn, with the help of her vizier Tāj al-Mulk, placed her six-year-old son, Maḥmūd, on the throne of the Sultanate, after securing the backing of the army and emirs, by distributing large sums of money to them, and after getting a conditional agreement of the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadī. Fearing that Barkyāruq, Malik-Shāh’s oldest son and Maḥmūd’s thirteen-year-old half-brother, may dispute the Sultanate with her son, Turkān Khātūn duly issued an order for his arrest. Soon after he was arrested in Isfahan, however, the adversary Nizāmīyah party, which consisted of Nizām al-Mulk’s relatives and partisans, rioted in the city, freeing Barkyāruq from prison and proclaiming him Sultan. Driven only by their hate of Tāj al-Mulk, who had been a

---

87 Nīshābūrī, The History of the Seljuq Turks, p. 65.
89 When Turkān Khātūn sent to the Caliph requesting his agreement concerning the mentioning of her son’s name in the khutbah as the Sultan, he agreed on the condition that the Emir Anz should lead the armies and care for the country on the advice of Tāj al-Mulk who should also be in charge of the regulation of the officials and the collection of revenues. She initially refused this condition, but finally she agreed as she was told, by al-Ghazali who was the Caliph’s messenger to her, that the Sharī‘ah does not allow her son to be ruler because of his age (see Ibn Khaldūn, Kitāb al-‘Ibar, Vol. 5, p. 16; and Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, pp. 484f, trans., see Richards, The Annals, pp. 262f).
90 See Nīshābūrī, The History of the Seljuq Turks, p. 65.
deadly enemy of their murdered master, Niẓām al-Mulk. As a result, Turkān Khātūn and her son marched with the army from Baghdad to Isfahan, but as they approached the city, Barkyāruq and the Niẓāmīyah party left the city towards al-Rayy, whereupon several emirs with their troops joined Barkyāruq’s group, forming a single force. Consequently, Turkān Khātūn sent the army to fight Barkyāruq and the two forces joined in a fierce battle, which resulted in complete defeat of Turkān Khātūn’s army and the capture of Tāj al-Mulk, who was then killed by the Niẓāmīyah men in 486/1093. This defeat though did not stop that ambitious lady from acting against Barkyāruq until her sudden death in 487/1094, followed shortly by her son’s death.

Another serious dispute over succession occurred in these troubled times between Barkyāruq and his uncle Tutush, the governor of Damascus, who attempted unsuccessfully to take over the Sultanate following his brother’s death.

At the beginning of the year 487/1094, Barkyāruq gained the recognition of the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadī, who bestowed on him the honorific title Ruk al-Dīn (Pillar of Religion), and his name started to be mentioned in the Friday khutbah in

---

97 When Tutush with his troops succeeded in taking control of some Syrian and Iraqi territories and set out to Azerbaijan in 486/1093; consequently, Barkyāruq took his army and marched against his uncle. At this critical point, two of the chief commanders in Tutush’s troops agreed to leave him and join Barkyāruq, whereupon Tutush withdrew to al-Shām, realizing that he had become incapable of meeting Barkyāruq’s force (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, pp. 487-9, trans., see Richards, The Annals, pp. 265f; and Ibn Khaldūn, Kitāb al-‘Ibar, Vol. 5, pp. 17f). In the following year and after gathering numerous troops, Tutush resumed his activity to usurp the Sultanate by attacking and controlling several cities in al-Shām, Iraq, Armenia and Azerbaijan (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, p. 494, trans., see Richards, The Annals, p. 273; see also K. V. Zettersteen, “Barkiyārūk,” in EI, Vol. 1, p. 662). This violent attack ended only when he was completely defeated, and then slain in a decisive battle with his nephew Barkyāruq, which took place near Rayy in 488/1095 (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, p. 502, trans., see Richards, The Annals, pp. 278f; ; and Ibn Khaldūn, Kitāb al-‘Ibar, Vol. 5, p. 19. See also K. V. Zettersteen, “Barkiyārūk,” in EI, Vol. 1, p. 662).
Baghdad. Nevertheless, Barkyāruq did not enjoy this recognition long, for a number of his close relatives, other than his uncle Tutush, rebelled against him.\textsuperscript{99}

The most serious and long-running revolt against Barkyāruq was led by his half-brother Muhammad. In a period of eight years, starting from 490/1097, there were ongoing fierce struggles with changing success between these two brothers.\textsuperscript{100} This period was characterised by changes of allegiance among the Turkish, Kurdish, and Arab emirs which added to the general confusion of the time.\textsuperscript{101}

This long-standing dispute, which lead to massive destruction and widespread harm, ended only when Barkyāruq, lacking resources, took the initiative and arranged for a permanent peace agreement in 497/1104, consisting of agreed division of the Sultanate between him and his brother Muḥammad so that each one would be an independent sultan in his own lands.\textsuperscript{102} In the following year, Barkyāruq died, after appointing his fourteen-year-old son Malik-Shāh as his successor,\textsuperscript{103} who was shortly dethroned by the Sultan Muḥammad.\textsuperscript{104} Thus, Muḥammad became the only supreme Seljuk Sultan for the following thirteen years (498/1105-511/1118).\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{99} His uncle Arslān Arghūn repelled in Khurāsān, before he was murdered by a page in 490/1097; Barkyāruq whereupon controlled Khurāsān without fight and handed it to his brother Sanjar (see Nishābūrī, \textit{The History of the Seljuq Turks}, p. 68; Ibn al-Athīr, \textit{al-Kāmil}, Vol. 9, pp. 7-9, trans., Richards, \textit{The Annals}, pp. 289-91; and Ibn Khaḍūn, \textit{Kitāb al-Ībar}, Vol. 5, pp. 20-2). In the same year, Muḥammad b. Sulaymān, a cousin of Barkyāruq’s father, allied with the ruler of Ghazāna, who supported him with a large well-equipped army, rose in revolt against Barkyāruq in Khurāsān, but it was suppressed by Sanjar (see Ibn al-Athīr, \textit{al-Kāmil}, Vol. 9, p. 9, trans., see Richards, \textit{The Annals}, p. 291; and Ibn Khaḍūn, \textit{Kitāb al-Ībar}, Vol. 5, p. 22).
\textsuperscript{100} At least five battles raged between the two (see Nishābūrī, \textit{The History of the Seljuq Turks}, p. 71; and Ibn Khaḍūn, \textit{Kitāb al-Ībar}, Vol. 5, pp. 25-380).
Similar to the previous Sultans, Muḥammad, in order to secure his reign, had to deal with members of the Seljuk dynasty who rebelled against him.\textsuperscript{106}

The gravely everlasting internal crisis, from the death of Malik-Shāh onwards, profited only the lurking enemies of the Seljuks. The Bāṭīnīs, the old enemies of the Seljuks, intensified their dreadful activity during this crisis, contributing to the turbulence of the time. Moreover, in the same period, the Crusaders\textsuperscript{107} came onto the scene, starting a fierce military campaign and eventually invading valuable Muslim lands in Anatolia and the Levant, which became an awful nightmare for the Seljuks, in particular, and all Muslims of the time, in general.\textsuperscript{108}

\textbf{2.3.3 The Fatimid Independent Caliphate:}

The existence of the Fatimid Caliphate clearly exemplified the serious problem of the political disunity of Muslims during the time of al-Ghazālī. By completely rejecting the authority of the Abbasid Caliph and adopting the name of Caliphate, the Fatimid Caliphate broke the symbolic political unity of the Muslim \textit{Ummah}. According to the Fatimid’s ideal, however, the adaptation of the name of Caliphate was a dream to restore the Muslim unity.\textsuperscript{109} Although the Fatimid Caliphate was an outcome of an Ismā‘īlī \textit{da‘wah} (religious preaching),\textsuperscript{110} it was not meant to be a state representing the Ismā‘īlīs only, but all Muslims, a dream which never became real.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{106} In 499/1105, he suppressed the rebellion of Mankubars (or Mengū-Bars), a grandson of Alp-Arslān, in Nahāwand (see Ibn al-Athīr, \textit{al-Kāmil}, Vol. 9, p. 88; and Ibn Khaldūn, \textit{Kitāb al-Ībar}, Vol. 5, pp. 43f). In the following year, Qilij-Arsalān (or Qilīch-Arsalan), the Seljuk independent ruler of al-Rūm, controlled Mosul, omitted the name of the Sultan Muḥammad from the \textit{khuṭbah} and replaced it with his name; but then he was defeated by the Sultan’s commander Jāwlī,\textsuperscript{106} and eventually drowned in a river (see Ibn al-Athīr, \textit{al-Kāmil}, Vol. 9, pp. 104-7; and Ibn Khaldūn, \textit{Kitāb al-Ībar}, Vol. 5, p. 45).

\textsuperscript{107} Called al-\textit{īfranj} (Franks) in the Islamic classical sources. Cf. Hillenbrand, \textit{The Crusades}, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{108} See the appendix.


Being based on the Ismā’īlī’s tradition, the legitimacy of the Fatimid Caliphate was always challenged. The Fatimid’s claim of being descendants of the daughter of the Prophet, Fāṭimah, and her husband ‘Ali, the cousin of the Prophet (S.A.A.W.), through Ismā’il son of Ja’far al-Ṣādiq—on which the Fatimids relied in legitimizing their authority—was denied by their opponents. Furthermore, the claimed origin of the Fatimids is wrapped with uncertainty, for several different genealogies are found in the sources, even those of the Ismā’īlīs. The Sunni historians, with very few exceptions, refer to the Fatimids as ‘Ubaydīs, connecting them to ‘Ubayd-Allāh al-Mahdī, the first Fatimid Caliph.

Regardless of its legitimacy, the Fatimid Caliphate was a real challenge to the Abbasid Caliphate. However, the extent of this challenge was reduced by the rise of the Seljuks who, being ideological and political enemies of the Fatimids, displaced the Fatimids from a number of their former provinces, as shown above. Similarly, more Fatimid provinces came under other different authorities. As a result, the dominion of the Fatimids became very limited. Other than Egypt itself, and with the exception of temporary recognition in some lands, only Yemen, under the dynasty of the Ŝulayḥīs, remained loyal to the Fatimid Caliphs, before it was also conquered by the Seljuks in 485/1092-3.

In addition to its shrinking threat, the Fatimid state suffered from serious challenges during the age of al-Ghazālī. One of these challenges was the shaky loyalty...
of the leaders of the state. There were incidents of disloyalty of some leaders in the Fatimid state even in Egypt itself.\footnote{118}

The most serious challenge for the Fatimid state was the disorder in Egypt itself for a period of time. A major cause for this was the very terrible seven years’ famine (457/1065-464/1072), which exhausted the resources of the state.\footnote{119} The military disturbance contributed much to the disorder. Among the Fatimid troops, which consisted of soldiers of different origins, including Berbers, Turks, Daylamīs, and Sudanese slaves, there was always a feeling of jealousy and hatred.\footnote{120} This feeling provoked battles between the troops on some occasions, as in 454/1062 and 459/1067.\footnote{121}

The insecurity of the viziers, which generally speaking characterized the Fatimid vizierate,\footnote{122} seems to be another cause for the disorder in Fatimid Egypt. There was continual coming and going of viziers between 454/1062 and 466/1074.\footnote{123}

Another serious challenge faced the Fatimid state was its loss of the support of the Ismā‘īlī “diaspora” resulting from the Nizārī schism.\footnote{124} The death of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansīr in 487/1094, who had reigned for fifty-eight years, provoked a deep split between the Ismā‘īlīs over the succession to the imāmah.\footnote{125} When al-Mustansīr’s youngest son Aḥmad was raised to the throne and given the title of al-Musta‘lī by the Fatimid Vizier al-Aḍḍal, his eldest brother Nizār, who had been originally nominated by his father as successor, rose in revolt. However, this was

\footnote{118} In 462/1070, for example, Nāṣir al-Dawlah stopped the khutbah in the name of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansīr in Alexandria and the surrounding areas and replaced it by the name of the Abbasid Caliph of the time (see Canard, “Fāṭimids,” \textit{EI}, Vol. 2, p. 859).


suppressed and consequently Nizār was put in prison. As a result, the imāmah of al-Musta'īlī was accepted by the majority of the Egyptian Ismā'īlīs, many in Syria and all of the Yemeni Ismā'īlīs, while the Persian and some Syrian Ismā'īlīs were in favour of Nizār, refusing the imāmah of his younger brother.

In spite of the above symptoms of decline, the Fatimid state—generally speaking—“enjoyed great prosperity.” In addition, the Fatimid Caliphs of the time, namely al-Mustanṣīr who was the richest among the Egyptian caliphs, lived extreme luxurious life.

With regard to the Fatimid administration, the actual power was mainly not in the hands of the caliphs. This was partially because the three consecutive Fatimid caliphs of the time were placed on the throne while they were mere children. As a result, there was usually a regent who acted on behalf of the caliph and maintained great power. This led to the interference of women in government, which was an evident feature of the Fatimid state.

Moreover, the actual control was in hands of the viziers or military leaders even when the Caliph became mature. For example, the all-powerful Vizier and Amīr al-Juyūsh (head of the troops) Badr al-Jamālī, who was summoned by the Caliph hoping to save the state from downfall upon its serious deterioration, held full control of the civil, judicial and religious affairs. The power of the Fatimid viziers and the

---

130 al-Mustanṣīr waṣ seven-years old, al-Musta'īlī aged eight, and al-Āmir was only five (see Canard, “Fātīmids,” EI², p. 860).
131 During the first years of his reign, al-Mustanṣīr, for instance, was under the regency of his mother (see Grafe, “Fātīmids,” EI, Vol. 2, p. 91).
military leaders was so great to the extent that on some occasions they acted against the will of the caliphs.134

2.3.4 The Almoravid Rule:

Shortly before the birth of al-Ghazālī, the Almoravids (al-Murābitūn), under the spiritual leadership and the supreme authority of the Mālikī scholar ‘Abd-Allāh b. Yāsīn,135 had enthusiastically emerged136 from the Western Sahara spreading his ʾišlahī teaching,137 abolishing illegal practices and announcing jihād against the infidels, the oppressors and the superficial followers of Islam in that desert, which was inhabited by disputing tribes.138

In a relatively short time, the Almoravids succeeded in making the Saharan tribes either under their authority or their allies through diplomacy, missionary work and eventually a number of challenging militant campaigns,139 which had been led, in addition to Ibn Yāsīn, initially by the Emir of the army Yahyā b. ʿUmar, who was killed in one of the battles in about 448/1056, and then by his brother the Emir Abū Bakr.

---

134 For instance, al-Mustansīr was forced by the army to accept al-Afdal, son of Badr al-Jamālī, as his Vizier after the death of his father in 488/1095.
135 This scholar has been introduced as the founder of the Almoravids, (see, for instance, Doutté, E. “ʿAbd-Allāh b. Yāsīn,” EI, Vol. 1, p. 32) while Yūsūf b. Tāshufīn has been regarded as the real founder of the Almoravids dynasty (see, for example, Halima Ferhat, “Yūsūf b. Tāshufīn,” EI², Vol. 2, p. 356.).
136 There is no agreement on the details about the emergence of this movement, as has been correctly observed by Norris (H. T. Norris, “al-Murābitūn,” EI², Vol. 2, p. 583), but the outline which follows is based on the broadly accepted account of the development of the movement. For a critical treatment of the diverse reports about the Almoravids, see I. Hrbek, and J. Devisse, “The Almoravids,” in M. Elfasi, (ed.) General History of Africa, California: University of California Press, 1988, Vol. 3, pp. 337-366.
As a response to a complaint which had been sent to Ibn Yāsīn from the inhabitants of Sijilimāsah about the oppression of its emirs, the Almoravids army marched to the country, liberated its people and appointed their own governor. This being done, the trans-Saharan trade routes came under the control of the Almoravids.

Following this achievement, the Emir Abū Bakr urged his people to control the Maghrib, which had been divided into pretty tribal principalities. Between 448/1056 to 451/1059, they were able to bring under their control strategic territories, including Wādī Dar‘a, the Sūs region and Aghmāt whereupon Abū Bakr married the widow of its ruler, the redoubtable and intelligent queen Zaynab al-Nafrāwīyah, who would soon play a noticeable role in the history of the Almoravids before her death in 464/1071.

In about 451/1059, the Almoravids lost the founder of their movement, Ibn Yāsīn, in a raid against the heretic Bargwāta Berbers. With this incident a new phase of the Almoravids movement began. It transformed itself into a dynastic rule. Although it is reported that Ibn Yāsīn was succeeded by Sulymān b. ‘Adū as a religious reference, who in turn faced his death in 452/1060, but he had no significant role in the history of the Almoravids when compared to Abū Bakr b. ‘Umar, who appeared to be the sole ruler of the Almoravids to the extent that the Almoravids golden dīnārs were struck in his name.

---

140 See Ibn Khaldūn, Kitāb al-‘Ibar, Vol. 6, pp. 216f.
144 See Ibn Khaldūn, Kitāb al-‘Ibar, Vol. 6, p. 217.
Having established himself as a ruler, Ibn ‘Umar made another raid against the Bargwāṭa, succeeding this time to subjugate these Berbers whose lands extended to the north as far as the Atlantic Ocean. Before finishing the campaign in the Maghrib and the establishment of the Almoravids new capital of Marakesh, Ibn ‘Umar returned to the Sahara in order to resolve a serious dispute between two branches of the Saharan tribes threatening the unity of the Almoravid state, but before that he appointed his cousin Yūsūf b. Ṭāshfīn as his lieutenant in the Maghrib, committed to him the task of continuing the conquests in the Maghrib and even abounded his new wife Zaynab, after divorcing her, to him. Having intensified the Almoravids army and made it composed of heterogeneous soldiers changing its old character of being dependent only on particular Saharan tribesmen, the new leader gradually completed the conquest of the whole Maghrib up to Tilimsān which fell in 476/1083. Meanwhile, he continued the construction of Marakesh, the new capital and his base.

It is reported that Ibn Ṭāshfīn was known as a pious, strong-willed and subtle man, who was generous to the ‘ulamā’, whom he was constantly consulting. Though faithful to his desert customs, Ibn Ṭāshfīn ruled his subjects nicely, avoiding cruel acts.

On the advice of his wife, Zaynab, he subtly showed his cousin Ibn ‘Umar that he was not willing at all to give him back the supreme authority in the Maghrib when the

---

152 The construction of this capital was completed during the reign of Ibn Ṭāshfīn’s son, ’Alī, see Ibn Khaldūn, Kitāb al-ʾIbar, Vol. 6, p. 218.

Due to the religious vigour of Ibn Tāshfīn and his formidable troops, he was called by the Andalusain Muslims to defend their country from the Spanish Christian invasion.\footnote*{160}{See Ibn Khaldūn, Kitāb al-‘Ibar, Vol. 6, p. 220.} After responding successfully to this external challenge, Ibn Tāshfīn found himself with the great opportunity to unite the Andalusian petty states under his rule. As he did in the Maghrib, he succeeded in uniting al-Andalus. “It was under this union that the Muslim civilization of Spain made its greatest impact on Morocco.”\footnote*{161}{Levtzion, “The Western Maghrib,” Cambridge History of Africa, Vol. 3, p. 331.}

The achievement of Ibn Tāshfīn was acknowledged with pride not only in the Maghrib, but also in the Mashriq to the extent that the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad legitimized his rule upon his request.\footnote*{162}{See Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, p. 448.}

In 500/1106, Ibn Tāshfīn faced his death, passing on to his son ‘Alī\footnote*{163}{He was carefully chosen by his father as his successor from four other sons, see Lévi-Provencal, “‘Alī b. Yūsūf b. Tāshufīn,” EI², Vol. 1, p. 389.}, a vast state extending from the Atlantic Ocean to Bijāya (Bougie) in the North-East and to the Sudan in the South-East; and from Ghana in the South to the north of the Iberian peninsula.\footnote*{164}{Cf. Norris, “al-Murābitūn,” EI², Vol. 7, p. 585; and Bel, “Almoravids,” EI, Vol. 1, p. 319.} ‘Alī b. Tāshfīn was acknowledged as Amīr al-Muslimīn throughout the Almoravid provinces, save in Fez where its governor, ‘Alī’s cousin Yahyā b. Abī,
refused to submit to him. Consequently, ‘Alī marched against him and removed him from his position.

During the reign of ‘Alī, which lasted more than the age of al-Ghazālī, the Almoravids rule was troubled by serious challenges and thus it marked the beginning of its decline. The ensuing dramatic events, however, are beyond the scope of this chapter.

2.3.5 The Muslim Rule in al-Andalus:

During the first three decades of al-Ghazālī’s age, there was a state of political confusion in the Iberian Peninsula, al-Andalus, which had started since the central government of the Ummayyad Caliphate in Cordoba—the capital and the symbol of unity of al-Andalus throughout its history—had become paralysed and eventually collapsed in 422/1031. The Islamic rule there at the time was nothing but a variety of politically disunited petty kingdoms and states, which depended on local resources. Their rulers, who were known as *mulāk al-tawā’if* (kings of parties or factions), represented varied ethnic groups, namely Berbers, Slavs and local Arab families. A number of these rulers were mainly driven by their own interests, without much concern for the general benefit of Andalusians as a whole. They

---

169 For an outline of these events, see Lévi-Provençal, “‘Alī b. Yūsūf b. Tāshufīn,” *EI*, Vol. 1, pp. 389f.
tended to seek control of their neighbours\textsuperscript{175} and thus grasp more resources.\textsuperscript{176} To achieve their interests, they did not refrain from forming depraved alliances with the Christian rulers in the north against their brethren Muslims.\textsuperscript{177}

There were at least thirty-eight\textsuperscript{178} \textit{tā'ifah} kingdoms and states, which were of varied strength and size.\textsuperscript{179} The strongest among them was in Seville,\textsuperscript{180} which was ruled by Banū 'Abbād. During the reign of al-Mu'tamid\textsuperscript{181}(461/1068-484/1091), the boundaries of this small kingdom were expanded in the west and south-west.\textsuperscript{182} Moreover, Cordova itself, which had been ruled—since the collapse of the Caliphate there—by Banū Jahwar,\textsuperscript{183} who had always adopted a peaceful policy towards their neighbours,\textsuperscript{184} was added to the kingdom of Seville in 461/1069.\textsuperscript{185}

In the north of al-Andalus, there was the Hūdids kingdom, with its capital in Saragossa, which had been founded by Sulymān b. Muḥammad b. Hūd who had made his five sons governors along the kingdom: Aḥmad in Saragossa, Yūsif in Lleida, Muḥammad in Calatayud, Lub in Huesca and al-Mundhir in Tudela.\textsuperscript{186} Following the death of their father, every one acquired a firm grip on his territory. However, Aḥmad, who was extremely ambitious, did not refrain from using evil tricks to get rid of his brothers, in order to control what their possessions; in this he largely succeeded.\textsuperscript{187}

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{175} See al-Ḥijjī, \textit{al-Ṭārikh al-Andalusi}, p.324.
\item\textsuperscript{176} Kennedy, \textit{Muslim Spain}, p. 144.
\item\textsuperscript{177} Cf. al-Ḥijjī, \textit{al-Ṭārikh al-Andalusi}, pp. 325f.
\item\textsuperscript{178} This is according to the list of Wasserstein which is based on data in numerous sources, see David Wasserstein, \textit{The Rise and Fall of the Party-Kings: Politics and Society in Islamic Spain 1002-1068}, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, pp. 83-98.
\item\textsuperscript{179} See al-Ḥijjī, \textit{al-Ṭārikh al-Andalusi}, pp. 354f.
\item\textsuperscript{180} Cf. Watt, \textit{A History of Islamic Spain}, p. 92.
\item\textsuperscript{181} His full name is Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād, but he is mostly known by al-Mu'tamid which is abbreviation of his honorific title al-Mu'tamid 'Allā Allāh. He succeeded his father al-Mu'tadīd (433/1042-461/1068).
\item\textsuperscript{182} See Watt, \textit{A History of Islamic Spain}, p. 92.
\item\textsuperscript{184} See Kennedy, \textit{Muslim Spain}, p. 137.
\item\textsuperscript{185} See al-Ḥijjī, \textit{al-Ṭārikh al-Andalusi}, p.325.
\item\textsuperscript{186} Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākūshī, \textit{al-Bayān al-Mughrib}, Vol. 3, p. 222.
\end{itemize}
To the south of this kingdom, there was another ṭāīfah state with its capital in Valencia, which was ruled by al-Manṣūr ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Muḥammad b. ‘Āmir, who died in 452/1061 and was succeeded by his son al-Muẓafar ‘Abd al-Malik.\(^{188}\) In 1065, al-Ma’mūn Yahyā b. Dhī al-Nūn, the ṭāīfah king of Toledo and the father-in-law of al-Muẓafar, added Valencia to his Ŧāīfah kingdom and replaced his son-in-law by Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-‘Āzīz.\(^{189}\) When the king of Toledo died in 467/1075, he was succeeded by his grandson al-Qādir, Valencia became independent again, but it continued to be ruled by Abū Bakr.\(^{190}\)

These selected examples clearly show the dangerous political disunity of al-Andalus during this period regardless of its preserved religious and cultural unity.\(^{191}\) Although there were still striking Andalusian achievements at the time, noticeably in literary activities and particularly in poetry,\(^{192}\) the Andalusians of this period experienced regrettable conditions chiefly in political affairs as a result of their disunity. They in short, as Kennedy clearly put it, “were increasingly harassed, both militarily and financially, by the Christian powers to the north, and their rulers seem to have been powerless to respond except by paying large sums of money…to their tormentors.”\(^{193}\)

As they became aware of the weakness of the Andalusians, the Christian rulers in the north made use of this opportunity to force ṭāīfah kingdoms to pay excessive


\(^{191}\) On such unity, see Wasserstein, “Mulūk al-Ṭawāif,” *EF*, Vol. 7, p. 553.


\(^{193}\) Kennedy, *Muslim Spain*, p. 145.
tributes to them.\textsuperscript{194} More grievous experience for the Andalusians of the time was the Christians’ aggressive invasion of valuable parts of their lands.\textsuperscript{195}

In response to this sorrowful and threatening condition, a number of Andalusian sincere ‘ulamā’ supported by few rulers, or vice versa, made serious efforts to rescue their lands and to revive their unity.\textsuperscript{196} Some of these efforts were fruitful. A good example is the successful mobilization of local volunteers for the jihād against the invaders of Barbastro, an effort which led to liberation of the city in 475/1065.\textsuperscript{197} The most striking effort was the emergency meeting, following the crisis of Toledo, which was summoned by the ūmumā king of Seville, al-Mu‘tamid, and was attended by some ‘ulamā’ and other ūmumā rulers.\textsuperscript{198} The result of this was an agreement to seek the support of the Almoravids’ Emir, Ibn Tāshfīn, and his strong army.\textsuperscript{199}

Responding to this call, Ibn Tāshfīn crossed with his army from the Maghrib to al-Anadalous where he was joined by some of the ūmumā rulers and their troops. These joint forces clashed with the Christians army under Alfonso VI at Zallāqah on Friday 12 Rajab 479 (23/10/1086), which lead to a decisive defeat of the army of Alfonso VI and its retreat to Toledo with great loss.\textsuperscript{200} Shortly after this, Ibn Tāshfīn and his army, save a garrison unit, returned to the Maghrib for uncertain reasons.\textsuperscript{201}

The defeat of Alfonso VI at Zallāqah did not stop the Christians’ growing serious threat in al-Andalus, and this threat was by no means enough reason for the ūmumā

\textsuperscript{194} For example, the ruler of Castile and Leon, Alfonso VI (457/1065-502/1109), was able to force al-Mu‘taḍ, the king of Seville, to enter into the established tributary system (see Kennedy, Muslim Spain, pp. 145-9; and Watt, A History of Islamic Spain, p. 93).
\textsuperscript{195} Barbastro, for instance, was catastrophically invaded by Normans and Franks after desperate resistance from its people in 456/1064 (see Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākūshī, al-Bayān al-Mughrib, Vol. 3, pp. 225f; and al-Hījī, al-Tārikh al-Andalusī, pp. 359ff). In the same year, the Andalusians lost Coimbra (Wasserstein, The Rise, p. 249). More striking was the fall of Toledo in the hands of Alfonso VI in 478/1085 (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 8, p. 439).
\textsuperscript{196} See al-Hījī, al-Tārikh al-Andalusī, pp. 336-54.
\textsuperscript{198} Cf. Kennedy, Muslim Spain, p. 162; and al-Hījī, al-Tārikh al-Andalusī, p. 392.
\textsuperscript{199} Cf. Kennedy, Muslim Spain, p. 162; and al-Hījī, al-Tārikh al-Andalusī, p. 392.
\textsuperscript{200} See Kennedy, Muslim Spain, p. 163 and al-Hījī, al-Tārikh al-Andalusī, pp. 407ff.
\textsuperscript{201} Cf. Kennedy, Muslim Spain, p. 163.
rulers to unite and halt the disputes between them. As a result, a number of letters from the Andalusian notables and *fatāwā* from some *fuqahā'* of the Mashriq, among them was al-Ghazālī, were sent to Ibn Tāshfīn urging him to rescue Islam and Muslims in al-Andalus.\(^{202}\)

In response to this, Ibn Tāshfīn marched to al-Andalus, but this time with two challenging tasks: resisting the Christian threat and dethroning the depraved *tāifah* kings, a matter in which he was supported by *fatāwā* from some of the Andalusian *fuqahā*.'\(^{203}\) On both, he performed effectively. Before his death in 500/1106, he could occupy almost all of al-Andalus,\(^{204}\) establishing the Almoravids rule there which lasted more than the age of al-Ghazālī.

2.4 The First Crusade and the Muslim Response:

As shall be examined below, the response of al-Ghazalī to the grave challenge of the Crusaders has prompted heavy criticism. Before examining al-Ghazalī’s position on that challenge, it is important to recall its historical context and to know what really happened and what the response of the Muslims of the time in general was in order to fairly and properly examine al-Ghazalī’s position in particular. Therefore, the chronological sequence of the Crusading campaign and the Muslim response to it need to be studied closely. However, since by doing so in this chapter would make it to appear disproportionate and would probably be seen as a digression, I have devoted an appendix to undertake this task.

---


\(^{204}\) On this, see al-Hijji, *al-Tārikh al-Andalusī*, pp. 442-4.
2.5 The Religio-Intellectual life:

Despite the political disintegration of the Islamic state in the fifth/eleventh century, there was striking intellectual productivity in various provinces of Islamdom. As al-Dīp has pointed out, each of the provincial “governments” at the time was eager to have its own madrasahs, ‘ulamā’, men of letters and poets. Associated with the productivity in the intellectual life, however, there were intellectual disputes among various schools of thought.

The purpose of the present section is to shed some light on the main features of the religio-intellectual life of the time, by outlining the major religious movements and intellectual trends. This is in preparation for discussing al-Ghazālī’s life and thought. Since it is important to bear in mind the background of these movements and trends, their development prior to the age under study will be briefly mentioned. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a full-fledged background of these movements and trends, a determined effort is made to give a satisfactory account of them which should fulfil the intended purpose.

2.5.1 The Trends of Sufism:

Before al-Ghazālī’s support for Sufism, it had gradually gone through a number of phases. It had started as merely various notable and influential trends of asceticism (zuhd), scrupulousness (wara’) and devotion to divine worship (‘ibādah) as represented by a number of ascetic Muslims in the first/seventh and second/eighth

---


206 It should not be expected from this account though neither to examine al-Ghazālī’s effect on these trends and movements nor to survey his discourse in the relevant areas of intellectual debates, as this will be dealt with in some detail in the forthcoming chapters.

207 Transformed from the Arabic term *tasawwuf*.

208 Namely al-Ḥasan al-Baseṣrī (d. 110/728), Mālik b. Dinār (d. 128/745), Ibrāhim b. Adham (d. 160/77), Ibn al-Mubārk (d. 181/797), Rābi‘ah al-‘Adawiyah (d. 185/801) and Fūḍayl b. ‘Iyād (d. 188/803).
centuries. However, it was only during the second/eight century, in which worldly aspirations increased among Muslims, compared to the earlier generation, when the name mutaṣawwīfah or ṣūfīyah, which stands for the advocates of Sufism, was specially given to those who aspired to divine worship.

With the emergence of purely Sufi works during the third/ninth century, Sufism transformed to “a complex theory of the mystical discipline, and thereafter to a highly developed theosophy.” Thus, this marked the formation of Sufism as a distinct Islamic discipline, called ‘Īlm al-Taṣawwuf (the knowledge of the Islamic Mysticism) or as more precisely sometimes called ‘Īlm al-Bātīn (the knowledge of the inner self) as juxtaposed with ‘Īlm al-Zāhir (the perceptible knowledge).

In this phase, two distinct trends appeared within Sufism. The first was a moderate trend, largely ethical in nature, represented by Sufis who attempted to justify their taṣawwuf in the light of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. The second trend, which tended to be philosophical, was exemplified by extreme Sufis who gave utterances of their claimed very intimate experiences which became known as šaṭāḥāt (ecstatic utterances). This extreme trend is usually linked with both Abū

---

For a recent English survey of the devotional trends of these ascetic Muslims and their diversity, see Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, pp. 10-35.

209 Commonly appears in the English sources as Sufis.


211 Such as Kitāb al-Rī‘ayah li-Ḥuqūq Allāh (Book of Observance of What is Due to God) by al-Ḥārith al-Muhāsibī (d. 243/857), Kitāb al-Kashf wa-al-Bayān (Book of Unveiling and Elucidation) by Abū sa‘īd al-Kharrāz (d. ca. 286/899) and the various rasā’īl (epistles) of al-Junayd (d. 298/910).


218 See, for example, al-Tiftazānī, *Madhkal*, p. 126.
Yazīd al-Bistāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/848), who is reported to say “subḥānī, subḥānī”, (praise be to me, praise be to me), and al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, who was executed by the authorities in 309/922 due to his šaṭaḥāt, though their ecstatic utterances, as stated by Knysh, “varied considerably and represented two distinctive types of mystical experience.”

It has been widely argued that during this phase some foreign or un-Islamic elements penetrated into the Islamic tašawwuf as is particularly evident in the sayings of the extreme Sufis. Farrūkh, for example, lists four sources of such elements: Greek philosophy, Indian religions, Christianity and even Chinese philosophy. However, such link between the Islamic tašawwuf and foreign sources has been questioned.

During the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries, the movement of Sufism entered a third phase in which the Sufi tradition developed considerably with the appearance of various Sufi literature covering all the key aspects of ‘Ilm al-Tašawwuf. Notable examples of the Sufi works representing this phase and which became classical and original references for the later Sufis are the following:

---

222 Such as his saying “anā al-Ḥaqq” (I’m the Truth), as stated by al-Ghazālī (al-Ghazālī, Ḥiyā’, Vol. 1, p. 36). However, there is no agreement on the reason behind al-Ḥallāj’s execution. Some argue that this was due to his challenging political views (see, for example, ‘Umar Farrkh, Tārīkh al-Fikr al-‘Arabī Ḳilā Ayyām Ibn Khaldūn, Beirut: 1981, p. 4742). Ironically, he has been considered by some, particularly by European writers, as a “martyr of mystical love,” (see, for example, Annemarie Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975, p. 62; and Louis Massignon, The Passion of al-Hallāj, trans., Herbert Mason, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 280f).
223 Knysh, Islamic Mysticism, p. 140.
224 Knysh, Islamic Mysticism, p. 69.
228 For an overview of these works and their authors, see Knysh, Islamic Mysticism, pp. 118-27.
1. *Kitāb al-Luma‘ fī al-Taṣawwuf* (The Book of Flashes) by Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988);
2. *al-Ta’arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al- Ṭaṣawwuf* (An Introduction to the Ṣūfī Doctrine) by Abū Bakr al-Kalābādī (d. 380/990);
3. *Qūt al-Quʿlāb* (The Nourishment for the Hearts) by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996);

Towards the end of this phase, there was a sort of decline in the originality of Sufism, as witnessed by the distinguished Sufi of the fifth/eleventh century, Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072). In his very famous Sufi book, *al-Risālah* (the Epistle) which was completed in 438/1046 as mentioned in his introduction, he sadly describes this phenomenon by stating that most of the earnest (al-muḥaqqīqīn) Sufis had eventually vanished. Moreover, he records his sorrowful observation of the rise of pretend Sufis who “claim that the secrets of the Oneness [of God] have been unveiled to them and that they have been freed from human rules.” Worrying that this would be considered as the path of the original Ṣūfīyyah, he composed his book attempting to revive Sufism in the light of the ideas and practices of the earlier true Sufis, whom he carefully distinguished from pretend Sufis. The book is described as “a carefully designed and admirably complete account of the theoretical structure of Sufism.”

---

The *Risālah* of al-Qushayrī “…carries a clear apologetic message, casting Sufism as a legitimate and respectable Islamic science that is in complete harmony with the precepts of the *Sharī'ah*.” Thus, al-Qushayrī on this regard, al-Tiftazānī argues, paved the way for al-Ghazālī who adopted the same idea.

Al-Ghazālī’s famous strong announcement that the method of the ṣūfiyyah is the soundest method, after experiencing and examining various branches of knowledge and after receiving outstanding recognition, and his serious effort to prove this in the light of the *Sharī'ah* can be considered a turning point in the history of the movement of Sufism. No wonder he, as Knysh puts it, “…is seen by many as Sufism’s greatest champion.”

Like al-Qushayrī, al-Ghazālī attacked most of the contemporary Sufis, accusing them of pretence and falsehood and revealing their faults. In addition, he criticized and rejected the *shataḥāt* of the extreme Sufis, considering them as harmful innovations. Therefore, he can be classified as one of the moderate Sufis and in fact he has been considered as “the master of moderate medieval mysticism.”

Although it is true that the movement of Sufism had succeeded in attracting great champions like al-Ghazālī, it is equally true that there have been a number of very noticeable critics and opponents of Sufis, even those who have been widely classified

---

236 As we shall discuss in Chapter three.
as moderate, since its early formative period. The distinguished Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) is a case in point. He is reported to warn of his contemporary, the renowned Sufi al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāṣibī (d. 243/857) by stating: “Don’t be deceived because he lowers his head. He is a bad person. You cannot know him unless you have tested him. Don’t talk to him, and don’t pay respect to him.”

Similarly, Abū Zar’ah used to warn from the books of al-Muḥāṣibī.

The anti-Sufi trend continued to exist during the age of al-Ghazālī. This is especially evident in the Maghrib where the Almoravids appeared to oppose the movement of Sufism, “despite a certain Sufi flavour in the lifestyle of the Saharan men in their early ribāṭs.”

More striking is the anti-Sufi movement which existed in al-Andalus during the Almoravid rule there. The rulers as well as some of the Andalusian ‘ulamā’ were involved in this movement, which lead to the burning of al-Ghazālī’s Iḥyāʾ. However, there have been considerable controversies over the reasons behind this extremely hostile reaction.

---

242 For a recent collection of papers on the polemics between Sūfīs and anti-Sūfīs throughout the Islamic history, see Frederick De Jong and Bernd Radtke (eds.), Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics, Leiden: Brill, 1999.


2.5.2 The School of the Falāsifah:247

By the second half of the fifth/eleventh century, the activity of the falāsifah in Islamdom had already taken the shape of an intellectual school. Its foreign seeds had been sown in the productive Islamic soil through Arabic translation248 of Hellenic philosophical works,249 a process which was seriously developed250 during the reign of the ‘Abbāsid Caliph al-Manṣūr (137/754-159/775) and then it was systematically progressed during the reign of al-Ma'mūn (198/813-217/833).251

The precursor252 of the school and “the earliest systematic protagonist of Hellenism”253 was al-Kindī (d. c. 256/873), who is called the faylasūf al-'Arab (philosopher of the Arabs)254 and is said to have effectively participated in the translation process.255 He was followed by a number of adherents of Greek philosophy who participated considerably in the development of falsafah in Islamdom, namely al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), who, as Ibn al-Nadīm states, “was one of the leaders in

---

247 This Arabic word—sing. faylasūf—refers to the adherents of falsafah which is used in this context as a technical term referring to all branches of philosophical sciences of Greek origin as had been established and developed in Islamdom since the second/eight century. This is usually called Muslim Philosophy in the English modern sources (see B. Carra de Vaux, “Falsafa,” EI, Vol. 2, p. 48) or Islamic philosophy (see, for example, W. Montogomery Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1962) and in the Arabic modern sources it is called al-falsafah al-Islāmīyah (see, for instance, Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Rahmān Marḥāb, Min al-Falsafah al-Yūnānīyah lā al-Falsafah al-Islāmīyah, Beirut: Manshūrāt ‘Uydāt, 1983, pp. 336f). In the Muslim classical sources, however, falsafah does not seem to be given an Islamic label (see, for instance, Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddimah, Beirut: Dār Ihyyā al-Turāth, n.d., pp. 480f). Since this labelling has always been controversial, it is avoided here.


249 Such as those which are ascribed to Socrates, Aristotle and Plato.

250 According to to Ibn al-Nadīm, the Umayyad prince Khalid b. Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah, who was called the “Wise Man of the Family of Marwān,” initiated the process of translation into Arabic by commanding a group of Greek philosophers to translate books on alchemy from Greek and Coptic into Arabic (See Ibn al-Nadīm, Kitāb al-Fihrist, ed. Gustav Flügel, Leipzig (Germany) : Verlag Von F. C. W. Vogel, 1871, p. 242, trans., Bayard Dodge, The Fihrist of al-Nadīm, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, Vol. 2, p. 581). Fakhry, however, states that “it is certain that the process of translating scientific and philosophical works did not begin in earnest until the ‘Abbāsid period, and in particular until the reign of al-Mansūr...”(see Majid Fakhry, A History of Islamic Philosophy, pp. 16-8).

251 See Fakhry, A History of Islamic Philosophy, pp. 18-24.


253 Fakhry, A History of Islamic Philosophy, p. 113.


255 See Fakhry, A History of Islamic Philosophy, pp. 82f.
the field of logic and the ancient sciences,” and Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) who, according to de Vaux, “placed the sum total of Greek wisdom at the disposal of the educated Muslim world in a readily intelligible fashion with his own ingenious developments of it.”

Since the early stages of the emergence of this school, there had been an ongoing conflict between the *falāsifah* and the *mutakallimūn*, particularly the Ashʿarīs, who were engaged in refuting various philosophical theories which they found incompatible with Islamic doctrine. Some of the *falāsifah* in their turn had attempted seriously to reconcile between *falsafah* and Islam. This, however, had not resolved the serious disagreement between the two parties, which seems inevitable because, as Bello rightly pointed out, “their sources of authoritative knowledge and their educational background are divergent in essence and nature.”

Despite the attack of the *mutakallimūn*, *falsafah* continued to be influential during the age under study, particularly among educated Muslims, to the extent that a group of them, as al-Ghazālī himself sadly observed in his time, abandoned all the Islamic duties as a result of being influenced by the *falāsifah*. What intensified such influence of the *falāsifah*, according to al-Ghazālī, was the weak arguments of those...

---

257 Known in English sources as Avicenna.
259 As pointed out by Arnaldez, “since strictly orthodox Sunni Islam has never welcomed philosophic thought, *falsafah* developed from the first especially among thinkers influenced by the sects, and particularly by the Shi‘a; and this arose from a certain prior sympathy, from such sects having absorbed gnostic ideas, some related to Hellenistic types of gnosis, others to Iranian types…” (R. Arnaldez, “Falsafa,” *EI*, Vol. 2, p. 769).
262 Bello, *The Medieval Islamic Controversy*, pp. 3f.
who opposed them. This is why he criticized the approach of the mutakallimūn, before him, in refuting falsafah by stating that what they had to say in their books “...was nothing but obscure scattered remarks, patently inconsistent and false, which could not conceivably hoodwink an ordinary intelligent person, to say nothing of one familiar with the subtleties of the philosophical sciences.” At the same time, he criticized those who presumed that the way to defend Islam from the ‘evil’ of falsafah was to reject all their sciences. Moreover, he argued that none of the 'ulamā had directed his endeavour to fully and deeply grasp falsafah in order to be eligible to undertake the task of refuting its unsound elements. To fill this gap, al-Ghazālī composed his book Tahāfut al-Falāsifah (The Collapse or Inconsistence of the Philosophers) which is a thoroughgoing refutation of particular metaphysical theories of ancient philosophers, after achieving “a profound knowledge of the doctrine of his opponents,” as is evident in his book Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah, which was written before the Tahāfut, as we shall further discuss in the following chapter.

2.5.3 The Movement of the Bāṭinīyah:

The name of the Bāṭinīyah was very noticeable during the age of al-Gahzālī, not only in the political field, but also in the religious and intellectual circles. Among the

---


268 His reaction to these as well as his position from other philosophical sciences will be further discussed below (4.2.2.5).

various appellations given to the Ismāʿīlī sect over different ages, “al-Bāṭinīyah,” according to al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), was the most popular one, particularly in Iraq. The reason behind this appellation is explained by al-Ghazālī himself as follows:

“They were thus named simply because of their claim that the zawāhir [pl. of zāhir: exoteric meaning] of the Qur’ān and the Traditions have bawātīn [pl. of bātīn: esoteric meaning] analogous, with respect to the zawāhir, to kernel with respect to the shell; and the zawāhir by their forms instill in the ignorant and foolish clear forms, but in the view of the intelligent and discerning they are symbols and indications of specific truths.”

In order to educe the bātīn from the zāhir, the Bāṭinīs developed a distinct type of t’awīl which, as Hodgson correctly and shortly describes, “was symbolical or allegoristic in its method, sectarian in its aims, hierarchically imparted, and secret.”

Another name for this sect which is worth mentioning is al-Ta’līmīyah, so called because, as al-Ghazālī explains, “the basis of their doctrine is the invalidation of al-ra’y (individual reasoning) and the invalidation of the exercise of intellects and the call to men to al-ta’lim (instruction or learning) from the infallible Imām.” This name, according to al-Ghazālī, was the most appropriate in his time because the contemporary Bāṭinīs emphasised this idea in their propaganda.

In the age of al-Ghazālī, the movement of the Bāṭinīyah was greatly stimulated by the activity of Ḥasan al-Ṣabāḥ (d. 518/1124) who travelled widely in Persian regions,

---

271 al-Ghazālī counted ten appellations given to this sect and he gave a particular reason for each one (al-Ghazālī, Fadāʾiḥ al-Bāṭinīyah, pp. 21-5, trans., McCarthy, “Fadāʾiḥ,” pp. 156-8).
272 al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal, p. 82, trans., Kazi and Flynn, Muslim Sects, p. 165.
acting as a missionary and thus winning numerous partisans. This activity transformed into a widespread dangerous revolt in al-Ghazālī’s age, when the followers of al-Ṣabāḥ carried out assassination missions in various regions, targeting particularly active Sunni political officials and ‘ulamā’ alike.

In addition to its threat to the Sunni political system, shown above, this movement was a real challenge for the Sunni ‘ulamā’ of the time as well. The seriousness of this challenge is evident in the number of al-Ghazālī’s books which were devoted to refute their doctrine, as we shall discuss below.

2.5.4 The Status of ‘Ilm al-Kalām:

In this context, ‘Ilm al-Kalām is used to refer to the discipline which, as defined by Ibn Khaldūn, “involves arguing (alḥijāj) with rational proofs (bi-al-adillah al-‘aqliyyah) in defence of the articles of faith (al-‘aqāid al-imānīyah) and refuting innovators (al-mubtadi’ah) who deviate in their dogmas from the early Muslims (al-salaf) and the Ahl al-Sunnah.” Before the contribution of al-Ghazālī in the field, ‘Ilm al-Kalām in this sense had established itself as a distinct branch of Islamic knowledge.

---

279 The Arabic term ‘ilm means “a branch of knowledge” while the term al-kalām literally means “word or speech”. As an approximate rendering, it, as Gardet pointed out, is often translated as “theology” (L. Gardet, “‘Ilm al-Kalām,” EI², Vol. 3, p. 1141), but this seems a misleading translation.
281 This term is translated by Rosenthal as ‘Muslim orthodoxy’ (Rosenthal, The Muqaddimah, p. 34) but this is liable to prove misleading. To avoid this, it is better to transliterate it and consider it as a technical term. While the Mu’tazilah called themselves Ahl al-‘Adl wa-al-Tawḥīd, the name Ahl al-Sunnah was given to those who opposed them, particularly the Ash‘arīyah and the Māturidīyah (See Aḥmad Amin, Zahr al-Islām, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Maṣriyyah, 1955, Vol. 4, p. 96).
It is difficult, as correctly noted by Gardet,\textsuperscript{282} to precisely know when ‘Ilm al-Kalām became a distinct discipline. It can be generally stated, however, that it had gradually developed as a result of the disputation on certain details of Islamic faith in the first half of the second/eighth century which led to the rise of the Mu‘tazilah and other theological sects as separate entities.\textsuperscript{283}

The one who has been regarded as the leader (imām)\textsuperscript{284} of the mutakallimūn\textsuperscript{285} among the Sunnīs, is Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (260/873-324/935), the founder of the Ash‘arīyah theological school, for he intensively used kalām or rational argument to the defence of Islamic faith and to refute the innovations of the Mu‘tazilah and the Imāmīyah,\textsuperscript{286} though he was not the first who adopted this approach.\textsuperscript{287} His approach was followed by numerous disciples and followers,\textsuperscript{288} mainly adherents of the Shāfi‘īyah School of fiqh, who became known as the Ashā‘irah.\textsuperscript{289}

Al-Ash‘arī’s approach in kalām was then considerably enhanced by al-Qādī Abū Bakr al-Baqilānī (d. 403/1013), who “became the head of the approach”\textsuperscript{290} at the time. By al-Baqilānī’s important contribution, which included the introduction of rational

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{282} Gardet, “‘Ilm al-Kalām,” \textit{EI\textsuperscript{2}}, Vol. 3, p. 1141.
\item \textsuperscript{285} This technical term, sing. mutakallim, refers to the practitioners of kalām.
\item \textsuperscript{287} See Montgomery Watt, “al-Ash‘arī, Abu’l-Ḥasan,” \textit{EI\textsuperscript{1}}, Vol. 1, p. 694.
\item \textsuperscript{289} At the same time, besides the Ash‘arīyah, there was the Māturīdīyah school, which was named after its founder Abū Mansūr Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Samarqandi al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) and followed by the Hanafis; both schools represented the Sunnis at the time (see D. B. Macdonald, “Māturīdī,” \textit{EI}, Vol. 3, p. 414; and W. Madelung, “Māturīdiyya,” \textit{EI\textsuperscript{2}}, Vol. 6, pp. 847f).
\item \textsuperscript{290} This quote is my translation of Ibn Khaldūn’s statement in the \textit{Muqaddimah} (p. 465): “tasadara lil-imāmah fī tarāqatihim,” which strikingly mistranslated by Rosenthal (p. 50) as “he attacked the problem of the inmate in accordance with the way they had approached it!”
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
premises on which arguments and speculation on the subject depend, this approach, according to Ibn Khaldūn’s evaluation, “was perfected and became one of the best speculative disciplines and religious sciences.”

Despite such perfection, the approach was by no means universally accepted even within Sunnī schools. The use of rational arguments was considered by the Ḥanbalīs as an objectionable innovation. The Mālīkī School of fiqh, which was dominant in the Maghrib, did not welcome theological speculation.

In the second half of the fifth/eleventh century, a new approach of kalām was adopted and it was called the approach of the later mutakallimūn (tariqat al-muta’akhkirīn). Unlike the earlier mutakallimūn, the practitioners of the new approach heavily employed logic in their argumentation, considering it as a norm and yardstick for arguments in general and not restricted to philosophical sciences. With the help of this yardstick, they, as Ibn Khaldūn pointed out, rejected many of the basic premises which the earlier mutakallimūn had established. Moreover, to refute the falāsifah, who became serious opponents of the later mutakallimūn after the tide of the Muʿtazilah had receded, they had to “recourse to the weapons which their rationalist opponents had borrowed from the Greeks.”

The forerunner of this new approach was al-Ghazālī’s teacher Imām al-Ḥaramayn Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). Although Ibn Khaldūn states that al-

---

298 This technical term is discussed below (2.5.2).
301 Majid Fakhry, A History of Islamic Philosophy, p. 6.
Ghazâlî was the first to write in accordance with this new approach, traces of such development, as pointed out by Watt, appear in al-Juwaynî’s works. Regardless of whether or not he initiated this approach, al-Ghazâlî had a distinguished contribution in this field as we shall discuss below.

During the time of al-Ghazâlî, kalâm attracted a lot of adverse publicity. This is evident in the occurrence of dreadful incidents and trials, particularly in Baghdad, as a result of heated disputes over kalâm even within the Sunnîs themselves, not to mention opposing sects. Two such incidents, which are reported by Ibn al-Athîr, are extremely striking and thus worth mentioning. The first was in 469/1077 when Abû Naṣr, son of Abû al-Qāsim al-Qushayrî, visted Baghdad and held preaching sessions in the Nizâmîyah Madrasah. Because he supported the school of al-Ash‘arî and his followers became numerous, his Ḥanbalî opponents attacked the Market of the Madrasah, killing a number of people.

In 470/1077, the second incident occurred when the preacher al-Sharîf Abû al-Qāsim al-Bakrî al-Maghribi, who was also Ash‘arî, was appointed by Nizâm al-Mulk in the Nizâmîyah of Baghdad. In his preaching there, he would insult the Ḥanbalîs by saying “((Solomon was no unbeliever, but the devils disbelieved)), by Allâh Aḥmad [i.e. Ibn Ḥanbal] was no unbeliever, but his followers have disbelieved.” Consequently, fights and trials occurred between him and his followers on one side and the Ḥanbalîs in the other.

These and similar incidents clearly show how serious the effect of the publicity of kalâm was during that time.

---

307 Quoting the Qur’anic ðayah [Q: 2:102].
2.5.5  The Condition of ‘Ilm al-Fiqh:

By the age of al-Ghazālī, ‘Ilm al-Fiqh (the Discipline of Islamic Jurisprudence) had passed through its formative stages and had become mature and distinct Islamic scholarship. Only four madhāhib—sing. madhhab—of fiqh (schools of jurisprudence) had continued to be followed and considered as authoritative by the Sunnīs: the Mālikī, the Ḥanafī, the Shāfi’ī and the Ḥanbalī schools.

It has been repeatedly stated and commonly accepted that the gate of ijtihād had been closed since the fourth/tenth century with the agreement of the fuqḥā’—sing. faqīh —(Muslim jurists) themselves. This, however, has been seriously questioned by Hallaq. By systematically and chronologically examining original works of fiqh belonging to the fourth/tenth century onwards, he has definitively proven that the activity of ijtihād had continued to be used in developing positive rules by the capable fuqḥā’, who were known as the mujtahidūn, in each madhhab throughout the first fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries.

During the age of al-Ghazālī, there were a number of highly qualified fuqḥā’, such as—in addition to al-Ghazālī himself—Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Dāmīghānī (d. 478 A.H.), ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī (d. 483 A.H.), Abū al-Walīd Sulymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī (d. 494), Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad b. ʿĀḥmad b. Rushd al-


312 As Hallaq precisely put it, “ijtihād is the exertion of mental energy in the search for a legal opinion to the extent that the faculties of the jurist become incapable of further effort,” (Wael B. Hallaq, “Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?” in Wael B. Hallaq, Law and Legal Theory in Classical and Medieval Islam, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1994, Part V, p. 3).


314 Sing. mujtahid, i.e. practitioner of ijtihād.

Qurṭūbī (d. 525 A.H.), Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Umar al-Tīmīmī al-Māzīrī (d. 526 A.H.), Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. ‘Alī al-Fayrūzabādī al-Shīrāzī (d. 476 A.H.), Ibn al-Ṣabbāg Abū Naṣr ‘Abd al-Saīyd b. Muḥammad (d. 477 A.H.), Abū al-Maʿālī ‘Abd al-Malik ‘Abd Allāh al-Juwaynī (d. 487 A.H.), and Ibn ‘Aqīl. Some of them considered themselves as capable mujtahīdūn within the principles of the schools to which they belonged, and they were regarded by others as such. They produced outstanding extended fiqh literature which characterized that period.

This period was also characterised by the prevalence of intense debates among fuqahā’ of various madhāhib, especially between Ḥanafīs and Shāfīʿīs, and often in the presence of viziers and nobles, particularly in Irāq and Khurāsān. In these debates, each faqīḥ aimed to prove the correctness of his respective madhab, to clarify its methodology, to defend the principles of its rules against refutation and to highlight the pitfalls of his opponent madhab in the light of certain rules. This activity, in which al-Ghazālī himself was seriously and skilfully engaged during a particular time of his life, was called the art of al-khilāf wa-al-jadal (polemics and dialectics).

Although this intellectual activity produced interesting subtle scholarship, it, as al-Ghazālī disapprovingly observed, often resulted in evil consequences such as envy, rancour, backbiting and haughtiness, not to say the engagement of those who

---

316 Hallaq, “Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?” in Hallaq, Law, Part V, p. 15.
321 As shall be discussed in Chapter three.
lack self-restraint in impatient cursing and fierce quarrels. Thus, generally speaking it was motivated by fanaticism, rather than scholarly purposes.  

CHAPTER THREE

THE LIFE-EXPERIENCE OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ

3.1 Introduction:

Al-Ghazālī lived for fifty-five years during which he had a very rich and complex experience. This chapter discusses his life-experience. The principal aim of this discussion is to answer the following key question: in which stage of his multi-stage life did he really seek *islāḥ*, and which of his numerous works represent that stage? Answering this question is of a real significance to the present thesis as the subsequent discussions will be founded on it. To satisfactorily and justifiably answer this question, I need to examine closely the whole life-experience of al-Ghazālī. In this examination I will rely rather heavily on al-Ghazālī’s own honest avowals about his spiritual and intellectual development reported in his undoubtedly authentic book *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (Deliverance from Error) in addition to the primary available biographies of him.

Before I proceed further, however, I shall pause for a while to clear up the specious doubts which have been cast by al-Baqarī on the truthfulness of al-Ghazālī in *al-Munqidh*. In his book entitled *I’ṭirāfāt al-Ghazālī* (The Confessions of al-Ghazālī), which frustratingly discusses in detail al-Ghazālī’s account in *al-Munqidh*, al-Baqarī bluntly concludes that this account is mostly not true and generally does not correspond to the historical reality; it is rather by and large a fictional didactic story which al-Ghazālī wished to be his; a story composed of chiefly idealistic confessions with few truthful ones from al-Ghazālī. Thus, the book—al-Baqarī spuriously
argues—should no longer be considered as a reliable source neither for his own intellectual history nor for his personal spiritual evolution.¹ In his book, al-Baqarī insistently wants to convince his reader that al-Ghazālī, would have sought, “…very consciously and often very judiciously, to leave to posterity a fictional image of his personality and to give an interpretation of his life which give him an unrivalled place in all the domains of thought and of the life of the Muslims of his time.”²

I will closely deal with al-Baqarī’s extremely critical discussions of al-Ghazālī’s book throughout this chapter, but I ought to express a number of general reservations right at the outset:

1. The approach of al-Baqarī is subjectively selective, which seems intentional; accepting as truth al-Ghazālī’s confessions, which support his preconception, while rejecting his other declarations contradicting with his own speculation.

2. Doubting al-Ghazālī’s honesty by relying solely on extremely critical reading of a single book, i.e., the Munqidh, as al-Baqarī has done, is far from being a sound approach.

3. In his discussions, al-Baqarī has totally ignored the biographies of al-Ghazālī, namely the one by his contemporary Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Ghāfir b. Ismā’īl al-Fārisī, and other historical evidences which strongly prove the truthfulness of al-Ghazālī’s account, as shall be seen shortly.

4. The overall structure of al-Baqarī’s argument is harmfully affected by, as Abd-El-Jalil perfectly puts it, “…its apriorism, its contrived [systematique]

² The quote is a good summary for the explicit message which al-Baqarī repeatedly puts across to his reader; it is originally from an article for J. M. Abd-El-Jalil in Autor de la Sincérité d’Al-Gazzālī. Vol. I. pp. 57-72, Damascus: Mélanges Louis Massignon, 1956, which is a counter argument of al-Baqarī’s book, and it is cited in the introduction of McCarthy to the Deliverance from Error, p. 24.
character, its aggressiveness, its “lacunae,” its paralogisms, and “the geometric spirit” of its author.”

Therefore, I side with McCarthy’s comment in totally agreeing with Abd-El-Jalil’s conclusion regarding al-Baqārī’s doubts that “nothing of that authorizes a doubt about Ghazālī’s sincerity. The human, intellectual and spiritual value of the Munqidh remains firm, though it cannot of itself alone serve as a historical source.”

Having said this, I feel confident then to use the Munqidh as a primary source in this thesis and particularly in this chapter. However, since, as McCarthy rightly points out “Ghazālī’s primary purpose in writing seems to have been didactic, not to give a detailed and precise historical account of himself,” I must not rely solely on the book, but rather I shall consult also the primary available biographies of al-Ghazālī whenever the need arises.

3.2 Dependent Learning and Premature Authorship:

The first reported learning experience of al-Ghazālī started when his poor and pious father, who—regretting that he himself was illiterate—heartily wished that his only two young sons Muḥammad and Aḥmad become learned and educated, charged—on his death—a Sufi friend to educate and take care of them. Following the death of the father, the Sufī began the task until the little money which had been left by the father for this purpose was exhausted. Consequently, the Sufī sent the two brothers to a madrasah where free food and accommodation were provided in

---

addition to teaching. Referring to this incident, al-Ghazālī at a later age used to say “we sought knowledge not for the sake of Allāh, but it was unwilling to be for the sake of any other than Allāh.”  The truthfulness of the second part of this frequently cited statement, however, has been extremely doubted by al-Baqarī while he selectively has assured the first part, as I shall discuss below.

No certain details are available about the sort of learning al-Ghazālī received in his early childhood, but it seems that he was taught basic Islamic and Arabic studies. For the later time, however, the biographies of al-Ghazālī mention that he studied, while he was still a child, a portion of fiqh under Aḥmad al-Rādhkānī in Ṭūs. Then, he left for Jurjān (Gurgan) where he studied under Abū Nasır al-Ismāʿīlī with whom he recorded al-Taʿlīqah, which is his first reported publication on the Shafiʿī fiqh.

The writing of the taʿlīqah, which is in this context refers to what Makdisi rightly explains as a “collection of notes taken from the lectures of his master, or from both the master’s lectures and works,” at al-Ghazālī’s time was an essential method of learning. Such taʿlīqah used to be “…studied, memorised and submitted to the

---

9 See, al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, Vol. 4, p. 102.
10 See, al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, Vol. 4, p. 102.
11 See, al-Baqarī, I’tirāfāt al-Ghazālī, p. 28.
13 Or al-Zādkānī.
15 See, the biography of al-Ghazālī by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusaynī al-Wāsīṭī (d. 776/1374), which is originaly recorded in his unprinted book, al-Ṭabaqāt al-ʿAlīyah fī Manāqiḥ al-Shāfiʿīyyah, but a seperate manuscript of the biography itself has been recently edited by ‘Abd al-Amīr al-ʿAsam and printed as an appendix in al-ʿAsam’s book, al-Faylasūf al-Ghazālī, p. 177; see also, al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, Vol. 4, p. 103.
master for examination and quizzing with a view to being promoted to the class of ifta'.”

In the case of al-Ghazālī, however, he “…neglected to impress on his memory what he had written” in the Ta’līqah, as the following denoting story shows. Road robbers fell upon him in his way back to Ṭūs and seized all what he had. When they left, he ran after them, but the robber chief threatened him with death, whereupon al-Ghazālī begged him for the return of his Ta’līqah only, explaining that it would be of no use for them and that he had travelled just for the sake of hearing, recording and obtaining the knowledge in it. The robber chief then gave it to him, but after scoffing at al-Ghazālī’s claimed knowledge, which could be lost by simply taking away the Ta’līqah.

Reflecting on this sardonic comment, al-Ghazālī drew a salutary lesson which marked a major turning point in his intellectual experience. Believing that Allāh had made the robber say this in order to guide him, al-Ghazālī returned to Ṭūs and spent three years in memorizing the Ta’līqah by heart, so that he would not be stripped of knowledge by simply losing his notes, as he is reported to have said.

The most rewarding learning experience of al-Ghazālī started when he travelled in his youth to Nishapur and attached himself to the renowned Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī. This Imām was one of the most leading scholars of the time, not only as a prominent theologian, as he has rather imprecisely been primarily introduced, but

---

21 The story is recorded by al-Subkī on the authority of both As’ad al-Mayhanī and the Vizier Nizām al-Mulk who heard it from al-Ghazālī himself, see al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, Vol. 4, p. 103.
22 al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, Vol. 4, p. 103.
23 See, for example, Watt, Muslim Intellectual, p. 23.
also and in fact in the first place, as al-Dīb justifiably presents him, to a brilliant scholar of fiqh and usūl (principles of Islamic jurisprudence).

By being trained under this distinguished scholar, al-Ghazālī entered a distinct stage, which lasted until his teacher passed away in 478/1085; and in which he, through hard work, grew to be a notable person. He became, in a relatively short period, fully proficient in Shāfi‘ī fiqh, highly skilled in kalām and a leading figure in al-khilafl wa-al-jadal (jurisprudential polemics and dialectics). During this early stage, he proved to be so talented a pupil that his teacher, al-Juwyanī, appraisingly described him as “a sea to draw in.” In addition, while his teacher was still alive, he used to teach his fellow-students and composed some books.

According to al-Subkī, al-Ghazālī wrote his book entitled al-Mankhūl, which is his earliest known authentic book on the discipline of usūl al-fiqh, during the

---

24 Being specialized in al-Juwaynī and an editor of a number of his books, ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Dīb is considered an authority in this regard. In light of his deep study of al-Juwaynī, he has concluded that introducing this Imam principally as a theologian and that theology or kalām is his first discipline is a false postulate and that his books in fiqh and usūl, which are his first fields, are much more than those on kalām, see, for example, his introduction to al-Juwaynī’s book, al-Ghiyāthī, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Dīb, Doha: al-Shu’ūn al-Dīnīyah, 1400 A.H., p. 17f.


26 For the condition of fiqh during the age of al-Ghazālī, see above (2.5.5).

27 For the definition of this branch of knowledge, see above (2.5.4).


32 al-Subkī, Tabaqāt, Vol. 4, p. 103. The authenticity of the book has been confirmed by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Mu’allaqāt al-Ghazālī, p. 6-10) and more recently by the editor of the Mankhūl, Muḥammad Ḥasan Ḥiftū (in his introduction to al-Ghazālī’s al-Mankhūl min Ta’līqāt al-Uṣūl, Muḥammad Ḥasan Ḥiftū (ed.), Damascus, n.p., 1970, pp. 31-3), who has convincingly cleared up the doubts which have been aroused over its authenticity.
lifetime of al-Juwaynī. The ending part of the book is “an exposition of the reason for the preference (taqdim) for al-Shāfi‘ī’s madhab, may Allāh be pleased with him, over other madhāhib.” This part contains extreme prejudice and harsh criticism against Abū Ḥanīfah in particular, accusing him of turning the Sharī‘ah upside down, disrupting its course and changing its system. In an earlier part of the book, Abū Ḥanīfah is also denied the status of Mujtahid, because, as it stated, he lacked knowledge of Arabic language rules and Ḥadīth. Most probably it is this book about which Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 973/1565) writes in al-Khayrāt al-Ḥisān fī Manāqib al-Nu’mān the following:

“Some of fanatics…brought to me a book attributed to Imām al-Ghazālī containing extreme prejudice and coarse debasement of Imām al-Muslimīn and the unique among the Mujtahid Imāms, Abū Ḥanīfah…as if this al-Ghazālī is the known Imām Muḥammad, the Proof of Islām, while he is not; because in his Iḥyā’ there is praise for Abū Ḥanīfah...Furthermore, on the copy which I saw it is stated that it is compiled by Maḥmūd al-Ghazālī, who is not the Proof of Islam; and this is why it is written on the margin of this copy: this is a Mu’tazilī man, his name is Maḥmūd and not the Proof of Islam.”

In the closing paragraph of the Mankhūl, al-Ghazālī states that the book has been restricted to what Imām al-Ḥaramayn mentioned in his ta‘ālīq (sing. ta‘liqah which in this case could be al-Juwaynī’s lectures and works). Thus, in this book al-Ghazālī,

---

34 Al-Subkī’s dating of the Mankhūl has been recently doubted by the editor of the book, Muhammad Ḥasan Hitū, because of the occasional appearance of the phrase “rahimahu Allāh” (may Allāh have mercy upon him) following the name of Imām al-Ḥaramayn which indicates, in the view of Hitū that the book was written after his death (Hitū’s introduction to al-Ghazālī’s al-Mankhūl, pp. 34f). However, this is not a definite proof since it is possible that such phrase was added in later versions of the book.
35 al-Ghazālī, al-Mankhūl, pp. 488-504.
36 al-Ghazālī, al-Mankhūl, p. 488.
37 al-Ghazālī, al-Mankhūl, p. 471.
38 Cited in Badawi, Mu’allafāt al-Ghazālī, p. 8.
39 al-Ghazālī, al-Mankhūl, p. 504.
as Hītū points out, does not look independent.\textsuperscript{41} If there is any element of originality in the \textit{Mankhūl}, it would be in its organisation and sectioning, about which al-Ghazālī was curious as he himself states in it.\textsuperscript{42} This, however, does not mean that al-Ghazālī merely copies his master in this book. As a matter of fact, he, as Hītū clearly shows, critically discusses al-Juwaynī’s views, rejecting many of them.\textsuperscript{43}

Al-Juwaynī’s early influence on al-Ghazālī seems to have been dominant. His influence, as al-Dīb has noted,\textsuperscript{44} is evident by comparing some of the thoughts and even words of al-Ghazālī with those of al-Juwaynī. Moreover, al-Dīb argues that due to the fact that the fame of al-Ghazālī has exceeded al-Juwaynī’s and that his books have been much more widespread than those of his teachers, many of the thoughts, particularly in the field of \textit{fiqh}, which have been credited to al-Ghazālī, originally belong to al-Juwaynī.\textsuperscript{45} Although al-Juwaynī’s influence on al-Ghazālī cannot be denied as it appears particularly in his early works, the argument of al-Dīb cannot be fully followed without reservation, for it is, unfortunately, not free from overstatement. Being full of admiration for al-Juwaynī and curious to show al-Juwaynī’s originality, al-Dīb seems to have exaggeratedly discredited al-Ghazālī in favour of his teacher. It is true that al-Juwaynī was an outstanding original scholar and highly influential, but it is equally true that al-Ghazālī was talented and had considerable degree of independence and uniqueness.

\textsuperscript{41} See, Hītū’s introduction to al-Ghazālī’s \textit{al-Mankhūl}, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{42} al-Ghazālī, \textit{al-Mankhūl}, p. 504.
\textsuperscript{43} Hītū’s introduction to al-Ghazālī’s \textit{al-Mankhūl}, p. 36.
3.3 Highly Distinguished Scholarly Career:

At the age of twenty eight, al-Ghazālī left Nishapur aiming for the camp-court of the Seljuk Vizier Nizām al-Mulk, which was a centre of gathering of the ‘ulamā’ and the literary men. From contact with established ‘ulamā’, meeting tough adversaries and debating with the distinguished, al-Ghazālī witnessed fine encounters. Due to his excellence in polemics and his flowing expression, al-Ghazālī’s name gained a great reputation, which spread to distant lands.

Soon after this, being greatly regarded and highly honoured by the Vizier, al-Ghazālī was appointed by him to the professorship in his renowned Nizāmīyah madrasah at Baghdad. In 484/1091-2, he arrived in Baghdad and entered into teaching. His lessons drew crowds of pupils; their number reached 300 at a time, as he himself recorded in the Munqidh. Among those who joined his lessons and were impressed by his skills and abilities were a number of distinguished ‘ulamā’ such as Ibn ‘Aqīl and Abū al-Khatāb, as reported by Ibn al-Jawzī.

---

51 See al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, Vol. 4, p. 103f. In this year al-Ghazālī reached the age of thirty-four.
Throughout his stay in Baghdad, which lasted for four consecutive years, al-Ghazālī had a conspicuous amount of public success. His lecturing and debating, as al-Fārisī narrated, delighted everyone. Furthermore, after reaching the rank of imāmah in Khurasān, he became the imām of Iraq. Similarly, he, according to Ibn Khallikān, “filled the people of Iraq with admiration, and they conceived for him a great respect.” Moreover, it is reported that he possessed an enormous dignity and that his reverence became so great to the extent that it surpassed the honour of the notables and the princes.

As a faqīh, al-Ghazālī composed, at this stage in his life, a number of works on the Shāfi‘ī madhhab, which he revived (jaddada) according to al-Fārisī. The most celebrated fiqhī books of al-Ghazālī are al-Basīt, al-Wasīt, al-Wajīz, and Khulāsāt al-Mukhtaṣar which have become primary references in the madhhab. Furthermore, he composed some works in the field of usūl al-fiqh (principles of jurisprudence) namely Shi‘a’ al-Ghalīl. He also wrote books in the art of al-khilāf wa-al-jadal (juridical polemics and dialectics) such as Ma‘ākhidh al-Khilāf, Lubāb al-Nazar, Taḥsīn al-Ma‘ākhidh, and al-Mabādi` wa-al-Ghayāt. In addition to these works, he composed several others in various fields, as shall be mentioned below.

---

55 Tell 488/1095.
3.4  Epistemological Crisis:

In the Munqidh, al-Ghazālī records that due to his instinctive thirst for grasping ḥaqāʾiq al-umūr (the actual reality of things) right from the prime of his life, he was emancipated from the bonds of taqlīd (conformism or acceptance of religious dogmas on authority) as early as the age of adolescence. He reveals that—after observing that children of Christians, Jews and Muslims always grew up adhering only to their respective religion and by reflecting on the saying of the Prophet (S.A.A.W) “every infant is born endowed with the ḥaṭrah (a sound nature); then his parents make him Jew or Christian or Magian”—his inmost being was moved to seek the reality of the original ḥaṭrah and to sift the beliefs arising through initially the inculcation of the parents and teachers, as there are differences of opinions in discerning what is true from that what is false of these taqlīdāt. Consequently, he became preoccupied with inner quest for what he calls ʿilm al-yāqīn (knowledge of certitude) which he defines as:

“That in which the known thing is disclosed in a way that no doubt remains along with it, that no possibility of error or illusion accompanies it, and that the mind cannot even entertain such thing. Not only that but also this security from error is so bound to certainty to the extent that even if it is challenged to be wrong, for example, by someone who turns stones into gold or sticks into snakes, this does not create any doubt or denial.”

By scrutinizing all his cognitions in the light of this definition of certain knowledge, al-Ghazālī tells us that he suffered an inner state of safsaṭah (sophistry) for nearly two months in which he extremely doubted within his soul the certainty of all of his knowledge including the maḥṣūsāt (sense-perception) and even the

---

65 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 64; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 55, & Watt, The Faith, pp. 21f.
darūrīyat (necessary intellectual facts). He was not cured from this malady until he regained the confidence in the certainty of the necessary intellectual facts by “a divine light being cast into his breast,” as he puts it.

This vivid story of al-Ghazālī’s epistemological doubt has been radically questioned by al-Baqarī; he totally rejects this account of al-Ghazālī’s doubt and presents his own interpretation of it. His extremely odd interpretation is summarized as follows: al-Ghazālī made up this story and narrated it at the beginning of the Munqidh to show that his forthcoming quest for the actual reality was original and independent since this is the normal approach of free thinkers; he took this idea of doubt, but with modification, from the adherence of sophistry without crediting them in the Munqidh unlike the case in his other book, Faḍāʾîh al-Bāṭinīyah, where he discussed the sophistic doubt and explicitly ascribed it to the adherence of sophistry; he did so in the latter, because in it he is arguing against the Bāṭinīyah, who, by being equipped with philosophy, would discover the source of the idea if he did not mention it and thus covering it would count against him, whereas in the Munqidh he is writing to the general readers, so he wanted to convince them that the idea of doubt is his own.

Unlike al-Baqarī, Watt states that there is no reason to doubt al-Ghazālī’s experience of such scepticism; yet he strongly doubts that it occurred during an early stage of his life because, according to Watt, it had a philosophical background which “…is shown by the fact that he links it up with a consideration of the nature of

---

knowledge and certainty,” and thus, Watt adds, “…it must have been preceded by some study of philosophy.”

Apparently, both al-Baqa’rī and Watt presuppose that the reported doubt of al-Ghazālī was solely philosophically oriented, and only on this assumption are their views based. This, however, can be effectively challenged by the justifiably convincing findings of Bakar’s detailed and in depth analysis of al-Ghazālī’s doubt. To illustrate this well, it is necessary to cite rather heavily from Bakar. Before doing so, it is important to bear in mind that when al-Ghazālī recorded this early doubt in the *Munqidh*, he was over fifty, as he mentioned in the preface of the book, and thus the style of his account is not a spontaneous outcome of that early period, but is a product of his late, well-organized and deep thought, as Abu-Sway rightly points out. This does not seem to be taken into the consideration of al-Baqa’rī and Watt.

Totally unlike al-Baqa’rī and Watt, Bakar rightly looks at the doubt of al-Ghazālī “as an integral element of the epistemology of Islamic intellectual tradition to which al-Ghazālī properly belongs.” He draws our attention to two important factors in the development of al-Ghazālī’s doubt. The first is “…the specific intellectual, religious, and spiritual climate prevailing in the Islamic world during the time of al-Ghazālī, which no doubt constitutes the main external contributory factor to the generation of doubt in the early phase of his intellectual life.” The second “…concerns the whole set of opportunities which Islam ever places at the disposal of man in his quest for

---

74 Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 40.
75 Bakar, *History and Philosophy*, p. 40.
certainty, and what we know of al-Ghazzālī’s life tells us that he was very much exposed to these opportunities.\textsuperscript{76}

Bakar’s discussion of al-Ghazālī’s methodological criticism of \textit{taqlīd} in the \textit{Munqidh} shows that al-Ghazālī was dissatisfied with \textit{taqlīd} because “…it could not quench his intense intellectual thirst.”\textsuperscript{77} Bakar also shows that it was obvious to al-Ghazālī right from his early age that \textit{taqlīd} is “an avenue to both truth and error, but as to what is true and what is false there was an open sea of debate around him, which disturbed him profoundly.”\textsuperscript{78} This, according to Bakar, led al-Ghazālī “to contemplate upon one of the most central questions in philosophy, namely, the question of what true knowledge is, and this marked the beginning of an intensification of his intellectual doubt.”\textsuperscript{79}

In addition to this factor in generating al-Ghazālī’s doubt, Bakar points out to “…another, and more important, religious and spiritual current which contributed to the genesis of his doubt and which deeply affected his mind.”\textsuperscript{80} Al-Ghazālī himself, Bakar explains, mentioned this “as the existence of numerous schools of thought (\textit{madhāhib}) and groups (\textit{firaq}) within the community of Islam itself, each with its own methods of understanding and affirming the truth and each claiming that it alone is saved.”\textsuperscript{81} This religious atmosphere, as Bakar refers to, is described by al-Ghazālī in the opening of the \textit{Munqidh} as “a deep sea in which the majority drown and from which only few are saved.”\textsuperscript{82}

After briefly presenting the views of a number of scholars on the nature of al-Ghazālī’s doubt, Bakar states that he agrees with the common view of these scholars

\textsuperscript{76} Bakar, \textit{History and Philosophy}, pp. 40f.
\textsuperscript{77} Bakar, \textit{History and Philosophy}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{78} Bakar, \textit{History and Philosophy}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{79} Bakar, \textit{History and Philosophy}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{80} Bakar, \textit{History and Philosophy}, pp. 45f.
\textsuperscript{81} Bakar, \textit{History and Philosophy}, p. 46.
that “at the time of his crisis, al-Ghazzālī was neither a philosophical nor a religious sceptic, and that the crisis was an epistemological or methodological one. The Munqidh provides ample evidence to support this view.”

To illustrate that al-Ghazālī was not a philosophical doubter, Bakar adds:

“He never contested the value of metaphysical certitude. He was always certain of the de jure certitude of truth. Thus, he never questioned the possibility of knowledge of haqā‘iq al-umūr. His natural, intellectual disposition toward seeking that knowledge was, in a way, an affirmation of his personal conviction in the de jure certitude of truth.”

Explaining how al-Ghazālī never fell into the “philosophical temptation of the agnostics and relativists,” Bakar further states that al-Ghazālī’s doubt was not of truth itself, yet it was “of modes of knowledge and modes of accepting truth. But, since by truth, he meant here the inner reality of things, his quest for that reality also implied a quest for its corresponding mode of knowledge.” This was motivated by “a real theoretical awareness of the possibility of another mode of knowing, which the Sufis claim as theirs” and this possibility, in the view of Bakar, “must have agitated his mind through his direct personal encounter with the way of the Sufis” in his early educational background. Based on al-Ghazālī’s early background, which was influenced by a number of Sufis, Bakar is convinced that he:

“…was increasingly attracted to the idea of a direct personal experience of God emphasized by the Sufis. However, he felt a bit disheartened when, in these early attempts at following the Sufi path, he failed to attain that stage where the

---

83 Bakar, History and Philosophy, p. 52.
84 Bakar, History and Philosophy, p. 52.
85 Bakar, History and Philosophy, p. 52.
86 Bakar, History and Philosophy, p. 52.
87 Bakar, History and Philosophy, p. 52.
88 Bakar, History and Philosophy, p. 53.
mystics begin to receive pure inspiration from “high above.” In the light of this background, there is a strong reason to believe that Sufism plays a central role in leading al-Ghazzālī to his epistemological crisis.”

To show how al-Ghazālī was never a religious sceptic, Bakar quotes al-Ghazālī’s declaration in the Munqidh:

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

Commenting on this statement, Bakar says: “The doubting mind of al-Ghazzālī was never cut off from revelation and faith. On the contrary, it was based upon a “sure and certain” faith in the fundamentals of religion.” This “sure and certain” faith has its roots in the idea of degrees of certainty (yaqīn) in Islamic gnosis, as conclusively demonstrated by Bakar.

Now, it would appear possible to accept the conclusion of Bakar that “it is therefore in the light of Islamic epistemology and, especially in the light of the idea of degrees of certainty (yaqīn) in Islamic gnosis that the famous Ghazzalian doubt should be studied and understood.”

---

89 Bakar, History and Philosophy, pp. 53f.
90 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 102; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 78, & Watt, The Faith, p. 56.
91 Bakar, History and Philosophy, p. 54. Although there is no reason to doubt that al-Ghazālī was not a religious sceptic, we may raise the reservation that the quotation to which Bakar refers to does not seem relevant to the doubting period.
92 See, Bakar, History and Philosophy, pp. 55-9.
93 Bakar, History and Philosophy, pp. 53f.
3.5 Independent Examination of the Seekers After Truth:

Al-Ghazālī tells us in the Munqidh that after his recovery from the sickness of doubt he started to investigate the paths of those seeking the truth whom he categorised into four classes: (I) al-Mutakallimūn (the Muslim Theologians), (2) al-Baṭīnīyah, (3) al-Falāsifah (the Philosophers), (4) al-Šūfīyah (The Mystics). Explaining the reason behind this limitation, he states: “The truth cannot transcend these four classes, for these are the followers of the paths of the quest for truth; and if the truth eludes them, there remains no hope of ever attaining it.” Reminding us with his abandonment of taqlīd, which was a result of his inmost quest for grasping ĥaqā‘iq al-umūr (the actual reality of things), he adds: “For there is no way to return to taqlīd after leaving it, since a condition of being a muqallid (a conformist or uncritical follower of authority) is that one does not know himself to be such.” Thus, he applied himself to thoroughly examine “firstly ‘ilm al-kalām (Islamic theology), secondly the way of al-falsafah (philosophy), thirdly the teachings of the Bātinīyah, and fourthly the way of the Sufis.”

Before I continue with al-Ghazālī’s account, I ought to first deal with the valid question which has been raised by al-Baqrī as to why al-Ghazālī restricted his search in these four groups, and assumed that the truth does not exceed them. I share with al-Baqrī this wonder, but I do not agree with his speculation that “this is because he knew in advance that the truth which he would follow was only with the Sufis, or because he wanted to make fictitious premises to conclude this.” Opposite to this speculation is the following more convincing view of Bakar:

---

95 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 69; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 58, & Watt, The Faith, p. 27.
96 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 69; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 58, & Watt, The Faith, p. 27.
97 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 70; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 59, & Watt, The Faith, p. 27.
98 al-Baqrī, l’irāfāt al-Ghazālī, p. 65.
99 al-Baqrī, l’irāfāt al-Ghazālī, p. 66.
“There is no doubt that al-Ghazzālī had undertaken this comparative study of all the seekers of the Truth with the view of exhausting all the possibilities and opportunities that were open to him in the pursuit of the highest level of certainty, although by then one could already detect in him a special inclination and sympathy towards Sufism.”

I may add to Bakar’s view that what appeared to be a prior inclination towards Sufism in al-Ghazālī’s account could be due to the fact that it was written long after he concluded his examination, as mentioned earlier. Furthermore, even if we presume that “he knew in advance that the truth which he would follow was only with the Sufis,” this does not necessarily lead to al-Baqarī’s conclusion that his examination was fictitious. Instead, it can still properly be seen as an attempt by al-Ghazālī to affirm or verify his ‘prior opinion’ about the ultimate truth by conducting an independent examination of all claimed seekers after truth known to him.

3.5.1 Experience with the Discipline of Kalām:

With regard to his experience with ‘ilm al-kalām, al-Ghazālī states: “I obtained a thorough grasp of it. I consulted the works of the most authoritative mutakallimūn, and I wrote on the subject what I wanted to write.” Despite that he found this discipline adequate for its own purpose, which is, in his view, protecting the Sunnī creed and defending it against the confusion of the innovators, he realized that it was insufficient for his aim: “So Kalām was not sufficient enough in my case, nor was it a remedy for the malady of which I was complaining.” He further explains the extent to which Kalām was insufficient for his case:

100 Bakar, History and Philosophy, p. 58.
101 al-Ghazālī, al-Munjīd, p. 71; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 59, & Watt, The Faith, p. 27.
102 al-Ghazālī, al-Munjīd, p. 72; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 60, & Watt, The Faith, p. 28.
“It is true that when the discipline of Kalām developed, the mutakallimūn showed an earnest desire for progressing from simply defending the Sunnah (orthodoxy) to search for ḥaqāʾiq al-umūr, and they plunged into the study of substances and accidents with their principles; however, since that was not the aim of their own discipline, their discussion of the subject did not reach conclusiveness. Therefore, it did not provide an effective means of dispelling completely the darkness of the bewilderment due to the differences dividing men.”

In his extremely critical discussion against the Munqidh, al-Baqarī noticeably miss-presents al-Ghazālī’s evaluation of ‘ilm al-kalām. Following his misleading selective quoting of al-Ghazālī, he erroneously restates the assessment in view, and on the basis of which he criticises al-Ghazālī. I do not wish to further illustrate and discuss al-Baqarī’s criticism for it is based on a deceptive restatement of al-Ghazālī’s evaluation, but here I shall highlight his misleading way of quoting al-Ghazālī. His selective quoting starts as follow:

“I began studying ‘ilm al-kalām and thus I obtained a thorough grasp of it and I wrote some books on it. Subsequently, I found it a discipline adequate for its own aim, which is conserving the Sunī creed and guarding it from the confusion of the innovators. But a group of the mutakallimūn relied on premises which they took over from their adversaries, being compelled to admit them either by taqlīd, or ijmāʿ of the Ummah (the Muslim Community’s consensus), or because merely they are from the Traditions and the Qur’ān. “This, however, is of little use in the case of one who admits nothing at all except the primary and self-evident truths.”…”

In addition to his impreciseness throughout his quoting, al-Baqarī plainly disregards the following sentence, which is mentioned by al-Ghazālī just before the
last quoted sentence: “Most of their polemics was devoted to bringing out the inconsistencies of their adversaries and criticizing them for the logically absurd consequences of what they conceded.”

By this omission, the quote deludingly imposes the meaning that al-Ghazālī was dissatisfied with the Kalām because the mutakallimūn “(1) were men of taqlīd, (2) because they follow the ijmā’ of the Muslim Ummah, (3) because they accept the ayāt of the Qur‘ān just because they are Words of Allāh, (4) and because they hold fast to the Traditions of Muḥammad only because they are the sayings of the Messenger of Allāh.”

One cannot but be surprised at such a misleading approach.

3.5.2 Examination of the Way of the Falāsifah:

After finishing his examination of ‘ilm al-kalām, al-Ghazālī says that he turned to the science of falsafah (philosophy). At this juncture, he had the following firm conviction:

“One cannot recognize what is unsound in any field of knowledge unless he has a complete grasp of that field to the extent that he reaches the level of the most knowledgeable in the principles of that field; then he must even excel him and attain even greater eminence so that he becomes cognizant of the intricate profundities which have remained beyond the ken of the acknowledged master of the field. Then, and only then, it is possible that the defects he alleges will be seen as really such.”

Believing that no one among the Muslim scholars directed his attention and endeavour to that end, he girded his loins for the task of learning the science of falsafah by “the mere perusal of their writings without seeking the help of a master

---

107 al-Baqārī, Fīrirāfāt al-Ghazālī, p. 67.
and teacher.”

This was in his spare time in Baghdad, as he states in the Munqidh: “I devoted myself to that in the moments I had free from writing and lecturing on the fields of Sharī‘ah; and I was then burdened with the teaching and instruction of three hundred students in Baghdad.”

About the duration and the result of this independent study of falsafah, al-Ghazālī writes:

“Through mere reading in those embezzled moments, Allāh Most High gave me an insight into the farthest reaches of the philosophers’ sciences in less than two years. Then, having understood their doctrine, I continued to repeatedly examining its intricate and profundities until I comprehended certainly the measure of its deceit and deception, and its precision and delusion.”

This experience made al-Ghazālī realize with certainty that “al-‘aql (the intellect or reason) alone is incapable of fully grasping all issues or of resolving all problems.”

The outcome of al-Ghazālī’s examination of falsafah can be properly appreciated by referring to two of his books: Maqāsid al-Falāsifah (The Meanings of the Philosophers) and Tahāfut al-Falāsifah (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), which both belong to the stage in his life in view. The purpose of the Maqāsid is to provide a necessary background for his criticism of particular metaphysical and physical views of the philosophers in the Tahāfut by objectively representing the doctrine of the philosophers, as he clearly states in the introduction of the book:

---

110 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 74; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 61, & Watt, The Faith, pp. 29f.
111 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 74; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 61, & Watt, The Faith, pp. 29f.
113 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 91; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 71, & Watt, The Faith, p. 44.
114 As Macdonald precisely explains, “A maqsad is what is intended or meant. Maqsad al-kalām is “the intended sense of the saying.” The word is thus a synonym of ma‘nā in the sense “meaning” or “idea.”” D. B. Macdonald, “The Meanings of the Philosophers by al-Ghazzali,” Isis, Vol. 25, No. 1, May 1936, p. 9, available online in PDF: http://www.ghazali.org/articles/dbm1.pdf.
“You have asked me, my brother, for a thorough exposition, which would contain a refutation of the philosophers, the contradiction of their opinions and (the disclosure of) their hidden errors and mistakes. But you cannot hope to refute them before you know their doctrines and study their dogmas, for to grasp the falsehood of certain doctrines before having a complete understanding of them is absurd. Such an effort leads only to blindness and error. Therefore, before entering upon a refutation of the philosophers, I deemed it necessary to present an exposition and a full description of their ideas of the logical, physical and metaphysical sciences without, however, distinguishing between the true and the false... The purpose of this book is to give an account of “The Meanings of the Philosopher;” and that is its title.”

Then, he adds “only after we have completed the exposition will we begin, earnestly and with zeal, a separate book, to be called Tahāfut al-Falāsifah.”

With regard to the Tahāfut, al-Ghazālī reports the story behind writing it at the beginning of the introduction of the book. He starts by describing a group of his contemporaries who renounced their religion:

“Now, I have observed that there is a class of men who believe in their superiority to others because of their greater intelligence and insight. They have abandoned all the religious duties Islam imposes on its followers. They look down at the positive commandments of religions which enjoin the performance of acts of devotion, and the abstinence from forbidden things. They defy the

---

117 As Macdonald points out, “following a regular convention in the writing of didactic treatises, al-Ghazzalī begins with an address to a supposed disciple who has asked for instruction,” (Macdonald, “The Meanings of the Philosophers,” p. 10).


injunctions of Shar‘ (Islamic Law). Not only they don’t abide to the limits prescribed by it, but also they have renounced the Religion altogether…”

Next, he shows how their heresy was a result of their uncritical emulation (taqlīd) of the philosophers:

“The heresy of these people has its basis only in taqlīd (uncritical acceptance) of whatever one hears from others or sees all around…These heretics have heard the awe-inspiring names of people like Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc. They have been deceived by the exaggerations made by the followers to these philosophers—exaggerations to the effect that the ancient masters possessed extraordinary intellectual powers: that the principles they have discovered are unquestionable: that the mathematical, logical, physical and metaphysical sciences developed by them are the most profound: that their excellent intelligence justifies their bold attempts to discover the Hidden Things by deductive methods; and that with all the subtlety of their intelligence and the originality of their accomplishments they repudiated the authority of religious laws: denied the validity of the positive contents of historical religions, and believed that all such things are only sanctimonious lies and trivialities. When such stuff was dinned into their ears, and struck a responsive chord in their hearts, the heretics in our times thought that it would be an honour to join the company of great thinkers for which the renunciation of their faith would prepare them.”

Then, he states that he wrote the book as a response to this phenomenon: “When I saw this vein of folly pulsating among these idiots, I decided to write this book in order to refute the ancient philosophers. It will expose the incoherence of their beliefs and inconsistency of their metaphysical theories.” He further explains the purpose of

---

121 al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, pp. 73f; trans., see Kamali, *al-Ghazali’s Tahafut*, pp. 1f.
122 al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, p. 75; trans., see Kamali, *al-Ghazali’s Tahafut*, p. 3.
the book by saying: “Let it be known that the purpose is to awaken those who think too highly of the philosophers, and consider them to be infallible.”

Related to the *Tahāfut* is al-Ghazālī’s book entitled *Miʿyār al-ʿIlm* (The Criterion of Knowledge), which is most likely written in this same stage of his life. According to Dunyā, the editor of the book, the *Miʿyār* is part, and specifically the last part, of the *Tahāfut* which is in his view a trilogy discussing three philosophical subjects: Physics, Metaphysics and Logic for which al-Ghazālī gives various names such as *Miʿyār al-ʿIlm* and *Madārik al-ʿUqūl*; and for this precise finding, Dunyā provides clear internal evidences from the *Tahāfut* itself.

The *Miʿyār*, as Macdonald puts it, is “a book intended to be a standard and guide in intellectual investigations and especially as to the language and technical expressions of the philosophers.”

### 3.5.3 Investigation of the Teachings of the *Bātinīyah*:

After telling us that falsafah was also inadequate to satisfy his aim fully, al-Ghazālī starts to reveal his experience with the *Taʿlīmīyah*, i.e., *Baṭinīyah*. In addition to his interior motive in investigating their teachings, it happened that he was commanded by the Abbasid Caliph of the time, al-Mustazhir, to compose a book revealing the reality of their doctrine. Explaining his approach in fulfilling his task, he states:

---

“I began to seek out their works and to collect their views. I had already been struck by some of their novel utterances which were the brainchildren of our own contemporaries but were not consonant with the methodology of their predecessors. So I collected those utterances, arranging them perfectly and formulating them thoroughly, then I conclusively answered them.”

Al-Ghazālī’s summarizes his findings from the investigation of the Baṭinīyah with the following words:

“These also we have examined thoroughly, probing their inside and outside. Their reality comes down to deceiving the common folk and the dim-witted by showing the need for the authoritative teacher, and to disputing men’s denial of the need for the authoritative teaching by strong and effective argument. So it goes until someone tries to help them about the need for the authoritative teacher by saying: “Give us some of his lore and acquaint us with some of his teaching!” Then the disputant pauses and says: “Now that you have conceded to me that much, you need to seek him by yourself, because my aim was limited to this much.” For he knows that, were he to add anything more, he would be put to shame and would be unable to resolve the simplest problem. Nay, but he would be unable to understand it, let alone give an answer to it! This, then, is the reality of their condition…Thus, when we had had experience of them, we also washed our hands of them!”

3.5.4 Exploration of the Method of the Sufis:

Passing all the previous stages, al-Ghazālī turned with his firm will to explore the method of al-Ṣūfīyah, knowing that their method is fully accomplished by the union of knowledge and practice, but since their knowledge was easier for him, he therefore

---

began to gain their knowledge. For this purpose, he—in addition to hearing from contemporary Sufi masters—consulted a number of Sufi writings such as Qūt al-Qulūb of Abū Ṭalib al-Makkī, the books of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, and various reported teachings of al-Junayd, al-Shiblī, and Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī, as he states in the Munqidh. As a result, he grasped the very essence of the Sufi theoretical principles and all of what could be gained theoretically of their teachings. Then, it became clear to him that their most distinctive characteristic could not be gained through theoretical knowledge, but only by experiencing al-dhawq (spiritual taste), al-ḥāl (the state of real ecstasy) and the moral change. He states:

“I knew with certainty that the Sufis were arbāb al-ahwāl (masters of real ecstatic experiences) and not men of words, and that I had apprehended all what can be gained by theoretical knowledge. There remained, then, only what was attainable, not by hearing and study, but by experiencing al-dhawq (spiritual taste) and al-sulūk (actual disciplining).”

This conviction led al-Ghazālī to a totally new experience and a dramatic change in his life, as will be shown below.

3.6 Serious Inspection of the Inner State:

When he acquired thorough knowledge of al-Ṣūfīyah, as illustrated above, al-Ghazālī lived a period of a very serious self-reflection during which he critically examined his inward conditions. Telling about this period he writes in the Munqidh:

---

131 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 100; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 77, & Watt, The Faith, p. 54.
132 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, pp. 100f; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 77, & Watt, The Faith, p. 54.
133 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, pp. 100f.
“I attentively considered my circumstances, and I saw that I was immersed in al-
'alā'iq (worldly attachments or involvements) which had encompassed me from all sides. I also considered my activities, the best of which being teaching and lecturing, seeing that in them I was applying myself to branches of knowledge unimportant and fruitless in the pilgrimage to the hereafter.”

About his intention behind teaching in this period he honestly declares: “I saw that it was not purely for the sake of Allāh Most High, but rather was instigated and motivated by the quest for fame and widespread prestige.” Thus, he alarmingly became certain that he was “on the brink of a crumbling bank and already on the verge of falling into the Fire,” unless he would mend his conditions.

As a result, al-Ghazālī seriously thought about migrating from Baghdad and quitting all of his worldly interests, but he kept wavering about it: “I incessantly vacillated between the contending pull of worldly desires and the appeals of the afterlife for nearly six months, starting from Rajab of the year 488 A.H. (July 1095 A.D.).” At the end of this period, he became tongue-tied and consequently became severely sick of grief to the extent that the physicians lost hope of treating him. In the Munqidh, al-Ghazālī explains how this crisis was over:

“When I perceived my helplessness and when my capacity to make a choice had completely collapsed, I sought refuge with Allāh Most High as does a hard pressed man who has no way out of his difficulty. He answered me…and made it easy for my heart to turn away from fame, wealth, children and associates. I openly showed that I had resolved to set out to Mecca, while planning in my

---

136 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 103; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, pp. 78f, & Watt, The Faith, p. 56.
137 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 103; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 79, & Watt, The Faith, p. 56.
138 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 103; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 79, & Watt, The Faith, p. 56.
139 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 104; trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, pp. 79f, & Watt, The Faith, pp. 57f.
mind to travel to al-Shām. This I did as a precaution, lest the Caliph and the group of my associates might learn of my resolve to settle in Damascus.”

Consequently, he left Baghdad after he had distributed what wealth he had, save that suffice his essential needs and the sustenance of his children with the excuse that “the money of Iraq was earmarked for the welfare of the people, since it was an endowment for Muslims.”

This straightforward story of al-Ghazālī’s remarkable deportation from Baghdad and the reasons behind it has become a subject of controversy. Opposing views about the reality of this reported event and of al-Ghazālī’s condition prior to it have been put forward by a number of writers on al-Ghazālī. Some have strangely dared to make a diagnosis for his described sickness. Ormsby, for instance, thinks that “certain of his symptoms suggest “melancholy” (sawdā’), though the temporary loss of speech may point to other conditions.” Similarly, Farrūkh confidently, though weirdly, states that “we assert that al-Ghazālī was afflicted with “al-kanz” or “al-ghanz,” which is a psychological disease largely appears among those who are of extreme religious course.” At the end of his long description of the disease, which is based on medical sources, Farrūkh states that the patient of “al-kanz” normally inclines towards a religious life.

This awkward approach has been criticised by Abu-Sway. Challenging particularly Farrūkh, he states that “even if Farrūkh were a physician or a clinical psychologist, which he is not, none of al-Ghazālī’s statements warrants the decisive

---

145 Farrūkh, Tārīkh al-Fikr, p. 496.
Commenting on Farrūkh’s last statement, Abu-Sway says: “The latter statement misleads the reader to conceive al-Ghazālī’s ‘conversion’ as a symptom of a disease rather than a genuine religious experience.” I fully agree with Abu-Sway and add that one cannot but be greatly astonished at such a risky approach in dealing with historical accounts.

About the motive behind al-Ghazālī’s departure from Baghdad, there have been various theories which, to variant extent, question his own clear account. Farid Jabre, for example, claims that the migration was because of his fear of assassination by the Bāṭinīs. Attempting to prove this, Jabre quotes al-Ghazālī’s associate, al-Fārisī, stating that al-Ghazālī “told us, “the door of fear was opened. It was so dreadful that I could not do any work, and finally lost interest completely in all other things.”” This “fear,” Jabre argues, is not that of Helfire, but that of assassination of the Bāṭinīs. Less vigorously, Macdonald, though does not doubt the truthfulness of al-Ghazālī’s account, suggests that “political complications may have helped to bring on his nervous breakdown,” and more specifically he refers to the fact that “Barkiyārūk became Great Seljuḵ and killed his uncle Tutuš immediately before the flight of al-Ghazzālī, and the Khalīfa at whose court al-Ghazzālī held important place declared for Tutush.”

These speculations, however, do not stand criticism. This is simply because the evidences claimed to support them are far from being convincing. Against Jabre, I side with Nakamura who states that “I simply do not understand why this “fear”
cannot be that of Hellfire as Ghazālī himself confessed.”¹⁵⁴ Challenging Jabre, Nakamura convincingly points out that “if he had feared the assassination, he would not have dared to criticize the Bāṭīnis;”¹⁵⁵ and “if it is said that Ghazālī was ordered by the Caliph, al-Mustazhirī, to do so, then, I would say, how can it be explained that he kept on criticizing them at Hamadhan and Tus after his retirement?”¹⁵⁶ Adding to Nakamura, Abu-Sway logically argues that if it were true that al-Ghazālī feared assassination, he would not have resided in places under the easy reach of the Bāṭīnis.¹⁵⁷ He further adds: “Why would he wait for a total of six months in Baghdad, before embarking on his journey, if there was imminent danger and if he was preoccupied with his personal safety?”¹⁵⁸

As in the case with Jabre’s claim, the view of Macdonald has been criticized. Abu-Sway again has challenged it by stating that if al-Ghazālī’s only goal was “to disappear from Baghdad in order to escape political difficulties, he could have done so without the trouble of becoming a Sufi, the hardships associated with the distribution of his wealth and leaving his family behind in Baghdad.”¹⁵⁹

In a much more niggling way, al-Baqarī threw nagging doubts on al-Ghazālī’s reported motive behind his departure from Baghdad.¹⁶⁰ Totally opposite to what al-Ghazālī clearly stated that he fled from fame and worldly desires, al-Baqarī claims that he did so to satisfy his longing for more fame and prestige by pretending to be one of the Sufis, who—al-Baqarī argues—were, and always are, respected to the highest degree by the general folk in the Muslim community and taken as close

¹⁵⁸ Abu-Sway, “al-Ghazālī’s Spiritual Crisis,” p. 90.
¹⁶⁰ al-Baqarī, I’tirāfāt al-Ghazālī, pp. 106f.
associates by the elites.\textsuperscript{161} Attempting to support this sweeping generalization about the esteem for the Sufis, al-Baqarī mentions no more than that al-Ghazālī saw how “Nizām al-Mulk used to respect only claimers of knowledge (\textit{ad’iyā’ al-’ilm}) and poor Sufis, standing up for them whenever they enter his court, out of respect, and seating them close to him…and when he was once asked about this, he said: “These men, when I bring them close to me, they would appraisingly attribute to me what I don’t deserve!”\textsuperscript{162}

Before going further with presenting al-Baqarī’s speculation, I cannot resist making two quick criticisms against his weird approach so far. Firstly, what he mentions about Nizām al-Mulk, for which he does not mention any source, is obviously false. It is most likely a fabrication of the following incident reported by Ibn al-Athīr:

“Whenever the Imām Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī or the the Imām Abū al-Ma’ālī al-Juwaynī came into the presence of Nizām al-Mulk, he would stand up for the them [i.e., to greet them] and then resume his seat on his cushion. But whenever Abū ‘Alī al-Fārmadhī came in, he would rise to receive him, seat him where he himself had been, and take his seat before him. This was remarked on to him, and he said: ‘The first two and their like, when they come in to my presence, say to me: ‘you are such and such,’ praising me for what is not in me. Thus, their words increase my self-satisfaction and pride. The latter Shaykh tells me of my soul’s faults and how wicked I am. My spirit is thereby humbled and I recoil from much of what I am doing’”\textsuperscript{163}

This incident, however, does not support the claim of al-Baqarī. The incident does not indicate that “Nizām al-Mulk used to respect only claimers of knowledge (\textit{ad’iyā’ al-’ilm}) and poor Sufis,” and rather it signifies that he used to have a high regard for this

\textsuperscript{161} al-Baqarī, \textit{I’tirāfāt al-Ghazālī}, p. 106.
particular Shaykh not simply because he was a Sufi but for his honest advice and
daring warning. Surely, not every Sufi has such quality as that Shaykh. Similarly, not
every sovereign welcomes such advice and warning like Nizām al-Mulk who, as Ibn
al-Athīr reported, “was a scholar, a man of religion, generous, mild-mannered, very
forbearing of miscreants, and given to long silences.” In addition, the claim of al-
Baqarī about this Vizier totally contradicts the reported fact that “his court was
bustling with Qur‘ān readers, fuqahā’, leading Muslim Imāms (religious scholars),
and men of charity and piety.”

Secondly, his generalization about the admiration of people for the Sufis is not
convincing enough. Thirdly, if al-Ghazālī’s aim were to add to his prestige—which
had already reached an outstanding level before his withdrawal—by pretending to be
a Sufi, then there was no need for him to spend eleven years in seclusion and self-
reforming, as will be illustrated below.

Referring to the report of al-Zabaidī that al-Ghazālī appointed his brother of
teaching instead of him prior to his leave, al-Baqarī uses this single incident to accuse
al-Ghazālī of being untruthful in his declaration that he abandoned teaching because it
is unimportant and fruitless in the way to the Hereafter otherwise he would not have
exposed his brother to such evil. Al-Baqarī here, however, totally neglects the fact
that his brother was a true Sufi by that time and thus al-Ghazālī did not doubt his
sincerity in teaching. In addition, al-Ghazālī did not state that all teaching was not
worthwhile in the Hereafter, as al-Baqarī apparently claims, but only mentioned that
he himself was engaged in teaching such sort of knowledge. Thus, his brother, being a
Sufi, would not bother himself with such knowledge. Moreover, the testimony of al-
Fārisī, which will be presented below, proves the sincerity of al-Ghazālī and leaves no

166 al-Baqarī, I’tirāfāt al-Ghazālī, pp. 123f.
room for speculated doubts such as that of al-Baqarī, Jabre, Macdonald or any one who would echo them.

3.7 Seclusion and Self-īslāḥ:

For about eleven lunar years\textsuperscript{167} followed his first migration from Baghdad, al-Ghazālī lived in a sort of seclusion for the purpose of self-īslāḥ. According to his account in the 	extit{Munqidh}, this started in Damascus where he lived for nearly two years during which his only occupation was “seclusion and solitude, together with spiritual disciplining and combat, and engaging in self-purification, character reforming and heart cleaning for the constant remembrance of Allāh Most High,” in the way he had learned from the knowledge of al-ṣūfīyah.\textsuperscript{168}

From Damascus, al-Ghazālī states, “I travelled to Bayt al-Maqdis (in Jerusalem), where I used to go daily into the Dome of the Rock and shut myself in.”\textsuperscript{169} Then, he adds, “I was inwardly moved by an urge to perform the duty of Ḥāj (the Muslim pilgrimage) and to draw succour from the blessings of Mecca and Medina and the visit to the tomb of the Messenger of Allāh Most High—peace be upon him…”\textsuperscript{170} Therefore, he travelled from Jerusalem to Ḥijāz.\textsuperscript{171}

Although al-Ghazālī migrated from Baghdad with the intention of not going back, as he states, he was drawn to it by certain concerns and the appeals of his children.\textsuperscript{172} After returning to Baghdad in 490/1097, however, he chose to live in seclusion, still

\textsuperscript{167} Started in 488/1095 and ended in 499/1106 as al-Ghazālī mentions in the 	extit{Munqidh}, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{168} al-Ghazālī, 	extit{al-Munqidh}, p. 105; trans., see McCarthy, 	extit{Deliverance}, p. 80, & Watt, 	extit{The Faith}, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{169} al-Ghazālī, 	extit{al-Munqidh}, p. 105; trans., see McCarthy, 	extit{Deliverance}, pp. 80f, & Watt, 	extit{The Faith}, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{170} al-Ghazālī, 	extit{al-Munqidh}, pp. 105f; trans., see McCarthy, 	extit{Deliverance}, p. 81, & Watt, 	extit{The Faith}, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{171} al-Ghazālī, 	extit{al-Munqidh}, p. 106; trans., see McCarthy, 	extit{Deliverance}, p. 81, & Watt, 	extit{The Faith}, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{172} al-Ghazālī, 	extit{al-Munqidh}, p. 106; trans., see McCarthy, 	extit{Deliverance}, p. 81, & Watt, 	extit{The Faith}, pp. 59f.
longing for solitude and heart purification, though with some occasional disturbances which resulted from the necessities of livelihood, as he declares.\textsuperscript{173}

In the course of those periods of seclusion, al-Ghazālī reveals, “things impossible to count or list in detail were disclosed to me.”\textsuperscript{174} However, for the purpose of profiting his reader, he gives his general evaluation of the Sufis and their way:

“I knew with certainty that the Sufis are those who uniquely follow the way to Allāh Most High, their mode of life is the best of all, their way the most direct of ways, their ethic the purest. Indeed, were one to combine the insight of the intellectuals, the wisdom of the wise, and the lore of scholars versed in the mysteries of revelation in order to change a single item of Sufi conduct and ethic and to replace it with something better, no way to do so would be found. For all their motions and quiescences, exterior and interior, are learned from the light of the niche of prophecy. And beyond the light of prophecy there is no light on earth from which illumination can be obtained.”\textsuperscript{175}

Despite this lavish praise, it should not be taken as representing the exact and only position of al-Ghazālī towards the Sufis and Sufism even after his conversion. As Sherif precisely points out, “the fact that Ghazali identifies himself with the mystics and praises their methods does not mean that he accepts everything they say.”\textsuperscript{176} I agree with Sherif in stating that “there are many things in which he does not agree with the mystics.”\textsuperscript{177} As it will come apparent below, serious criticism against \textit{al-sūfiyah} and their \textit{ṭariqah} (method or way) is voiced in the \textit{Iḥyā’} itself.

Al-Ghazālī’s stage of asceticism and self-disciplining has been mentioned in a number of early biographies, though they differ in matter of details, particularly with

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{177} Sherif, \textit{Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue}, p. 166.
\end{flushleft}
regard to the places he visited, the duration of his stay in each destination and his activities during these visits. Two of these biographical accounts are well worth quoting: that of al-Fārisī and Ibn Khallikān. According to al-Fārisī’s account, al-Ghazālī first performed Ḥaj, and then entered al-Shām where he remained for nearly ten years, visiting _al-mashāhid al-m’azzamah_ (the venerated sanctuaries), disciplining his soul, and regulating his character; subsequently, “he returned to his native land where he kept fast to his house, preoccupied with meditation, tenacious of his time, a godly goal and treasure for hearts to everyone who repaired to him and visited him.” While he is in al-Shām, he, as al-Fārisī narrated, “began to compose the renowned works to which no one had preceded him, such as _Iḥyā‘ Ulūm al-Dīn_ and the books abridged therefrom, such as _al-Arba‘īn_ and others.” Ibn Khallikān, however, reported the following:

“He abandoned all the occupations in which he had been hitherto engaged, and entered on the path of asceticism and retirement from the world. He then undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca, and, on his return, he proceeded to al-Shām and stopped for some time at Damascus. During his residence in that city, he gave lessons in the western corner of the Great Mosque. He then set out for Jerusalem, where he applied himself with ardour to the practices of devotion, and visited the holy monuments and venerated spots. He next passed into Egypt and remained for some time at Alexandria, whence, it is said, he intended to sail to Maghrib, in hopes of meeting with the emir Yūsuf b. Tāshafīn, the sovereign of Marrakish; but, having received intelligence of that prince’s death, he abandoned the project…On Leaving Egypt, he returned to Tūs, his native place where he was preoccupied with meditation.”

---


Al-Fārisī’s account can be harmonized with that of al-Ghazālī if we would follow the following interpretation suggested by Watt:

“Some of the early biographical notices say that he spent ten years in Syria, having returned there after his pilgrimage to Mecca. Now it seems probable that he returned to Damascus, and that he regarded his pilgrimage and his visit to Jerusalem as belonging to his Damascus period. This is in accordance with his account, provided that we take his phrase about the “journey to the Ḥijāz” to mean a journey to Mecca and back to Damascus; this seems to be a reasonable interpretation.”\(^{182}\)

On his visit to Egypt and intended plan to visit Ibn Tāshafīn, as it is reported by Ibn Khallikān, there have been conflicting views. Watt, for example, states that “it is certainly possible that there was such a visit on the way to or from Mecca. If it took place, however, it can have been little more than an incident of the journey, and the absence of any mention in Deliverance from Error indicates that it had no spiritual significance to al-Ghazālī.”\(^{183}\) Abu-Sway, however, totally rejects this report:

“All other accounts confirm that Al-Ghazzāliyy [sic.] was in Khurasan…in 500 A.H./1106 C.E., the year in which Ibn Tāshafīn died. The idea that Al-Ghazzāliyy [sic.] was in Egypt may be refuted on two accounts. His student, Ibn Al-ʿArabiyy [sic.] saw him, after returning from his journey, in the wilderness of Baghdad in 491 A.H./July 1106, is a clear indication of the falsity of such claims.”\(^{184}\)

Leaving aside the controversy surrounding the details of this mysterious period of al-Ghazālī’s life, for it seems extremely difficult to resolve completely because of the contradicting reports, I go on to say that this stage, in general, marked a turning point

---

\(^{182}\) Watt, Muslim Intellectual, p. 145.

\(^{183}\) Watt, Muslim Intellectual, p. 146.

in the whole personality of al-Ghazālī. His contemporary and associate, al-Fārisī, provides us with an eyewitness account of al-Ghazālī’s serious tawbah (repentance) or fundamental corrective conversion at that stage. Before delivering his account, it is worth noting that al-Fārisī is introduced by al-Subkī as “thiqah (trustworthy)”\textsuperscript{185} which, as Abu-Sway correctly states, “in this context is a technical term, which considered by many scholars of hadith as the highest rank attributed to a Muslim narrator.”\textsuperscript{186} Thus, his account is highly reliable.

About al-Ghazālī’s conversion, al-Fārisī states:

“The devil of frivolity and of seeking leadership and fame and of taking on bad qualities was transformed into serenity of soul and nobility of qualities, having done with [outward] forms and rites. He took on the appeal of the godly and reduced his hope and devoted his time to the guidance of men and summoning them to what concerned them regarding the afterlife…”\textsuperscript{187}

Al-Fārisī tells us that his witness was based on investigation and examination, and not merely observation:

“Indeed, I often visited him, and I did not find in him what I had formerly been familiar with in his regard, viz. maliciousness and making people uneasy and regarding them disdainfully and looking down upon them out of haughtiness and arrogance and being dazzled by his own endowment of skill in speech and thought and expression, and his quest of glory and high status: he had become the exact opposite and had been cleansed of those impurities. I used to think that he was wrapped in the garment of affectation and pretence. Then, I thought, after investigation and examination that, that the matter was not as I thought, and that the man had recovered from madness.”\textsuperscript{188}

\textsuperscript{185} al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, Vol. 4, p. 106.

\textsuperscript{186} Abu-Sway, “al-Ghazālī’s Spiritual Crisis Reconsidered,” p. 85.


\textsuperscript{188} al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, Tabīn, p. 294, trans., McCarthy, Deliverance, pp. 16f.
These remarks are of vital importance. They, as Nakamura\(^{189}\) and Abu-Sway\(^{190}\) rightly point out, prove the authenticity and the truthfulness of al-Ghazâlî’s conversion. They also clearly show how al-Ghazâlî was before and after his experience of self-\(iślāḥ\). This leaves no room for doubting the sincerity of al-Ghazâlî’s corrective transformation and thus renders any further discussion of this matter unnecessary.

Having stated this, it is not intended here to overstate the significance of al-Ghazâlî’s conversion. Instead, I agree with Nakamura in stating, against Macdonald’s dual division of al-Ghazâlî’s life based on al-Ghazâlî’s remarks after his conversion,\(^{191}\) that “I do not take the clear-cut division of Ghazâlî’s life into two parts: the former is this-worldly, irreligious and the latter other-worldly, religious.”\(^{192}\) However, I do not follow Nakamura in arguing that I cannot take the remarks of al-Ghazâlî about his conversion at their face value on the basis that they “were written or uttered when Ghazâlî as a veteran Sûfî looked back upon his non-Sûfî way of life long after his conversion,”\(^{193}\) and thus, Nakamura adds, it is “quite natural that he should tend to be exaggeratingly critical about it.”\(^{194}\) I cannot fully agree with Nakamura because seeking worldly gains such as fame through supposedly religious activities, which was the case of al-Ghazâlî during his teaching career as he himself confessed, is a dangerously serious matter not only from Sufi point view, as Nakamura apparently states, but also from Islamic perspective in general, since it is agreed upon that purification of the intention is of a vital importance according to the Islamic teachings.


\(^{190}\) Abu-Sway, “al-Ghazâlî’s Spiritual Crisis Reconsidered,” p. 58.


Our rejection of Macdonald’s clear-cut dual division of al-Ghazālī’s life, however, is based on another standpoint. It is simply because his view indicates that al-Ghazālī lived almost entirely a secular life before his conversion. This, in our view, is quite extreme. Al-Ghazālī’s remarks about his life before his conversion do not necessitate that all his activities in that period were “on purely business basis” or “that he thought only of the reputation and wealth which they were bringing him.” Rather, there are clear indications in his remarks that some of his early activities were purely religiously motivated. His examination of various sects at the time is a lucid example. He clearly states in the Munqidh that his only motive behind that examination was “to discriminate between the proponent of truth and the advocate of error, and between the faithful follower of the Sunnah and the heterodox innovator,” and that is undoubtedly a purely religious aim. Therefore, al-Ghazālī’s avowal regarding his impure intention during his teaching career should not be reflected back on all his previous activities.

Now, it would seem reasonably justified to argue that al-Ghazālī’s period of seclusion marked the beginning of his attempt at general ʿīslāḥ. This is firstly because the outcome of that period, as illustrated above, was his self-ʿīslāḥ, which is according to his own teaching a prerequisite for general ʿīslāḥ. Secondly, he, as mentioned above, composed in the same period his celebrated work, the Iḥyā’, which is intended to be a major project of ʿīslāḥ, as will be shown below.

---

3.8 Striving for General Īṣlāḥ:

Following his noticeably long experience of seclusion and self-īṣlāḥ illustrated above, al-Ghazālī entered a distinct period which can be properly considered as a stage of striving for general īṣlāḥ. This classification of that stage, which lasted till his death, is based firstly on al-Ghazālī’s account in the Munqidh which clearly shows that his sole desire at that stage was īṣlāḥ. After revealing his experience of seclusion in the book, al-Ghazālī immediately informs us about his observation of the widespread of the weakness of men’s faith among various classes and of the reasons behind that according to his own investigation.\(^{199}\) Subsequently, he saw that it was inevitable at such a time to abandon his seclusion and engage in exposing such sophistries, particularly because he considered himself a very skilled practitioner in such activity, but he kept hesitating and making excuses to remain in seclusion:

“Then, I said to myself: “When will you devote yourself completely to laying bare this affliction and to battling against this dreadful darkness? It is a time of tepidity and an era of error. But even if you were to engage in calling men from their evil ways to the truth, all the men of this age would be hostile to you: how, then, would you stand up against them? And how could you put up with them? For that could be done only at favourable time and under a pious and irresistible Sultan.””\(^{200}\)

His hesitation, however, ended when he was strictly summoned by the authority to hasten to Nishapur in order to teach in its Nizāmīyah. Thus, al-Ghazālī states, “it occurred to me that “the reason for excusing yourself has lost its force. Hence your motive for clinging to seclusion should not be laziness, ease, self-aggrandizement and


protecting yourself from the harm caused by men.”

Shortly, he became more convinced and encouraged to make such move, as he explains:

“I consulted on that matter a number of those skilled in discerning hearts and visions. They unanimously advised me to abandon my seclusion and to emerge from my zāwiyah (hospice). In addition to that, many recurrent dreams of pious men attested that this move would be a source of goodness and right guideness, and that it had been decreed by Allāh—Glorious be He—for the head of this century. For Allāh—Glorious be He—has indeed promised to revivify His religion at the beginning of each century. So my hope was strengthened and I became quite optimistic because of these testimonies.”

Al-Ghazālī, then, concludes his account about this new move by revealing his intention in returning to teaching and clearly stating his desire for ʾišlāḥ:

“I know well that, even though I have returned to teaching, I have not really returned; for returning means coming back to a previous state. Formerly, I used to convey the knowledge by which fame is gained, and to invite men to it by words and deeds, and that was my aim and my intention. But now I invite men to the knowledge by which fame is renounced and its lowly rank recognized. This is now my intention, my aim, my desire. Allāh knows that to be true of me. I now earnestly desire to achieve the ʾišlāḥ of myself and others.”

Secondly, the following biographical notices of al-Fārisī concerning the same stage, which generally agree with al-Ghazālī’s account, support the above classification. Explaining how the Vizier Fakhr al-Mulk, son of Nizām al-Mulk, insistently asked al-Ghazālī to return to teaching, al-Fārisī states:

“He [i.e., Fakhr al-Mulk] heard of and verified al-Ghazālī’s position and rank and the perfection of his superiority and his standing and the soundness of his belief

\[\text{al-Ghazālī}, \text{ al-Munqidh}, \text{ p. 121}; \text{ trans.}, \text{ see McCarthy, Deliverance}, \text{ p. 91,} \& \text{ Watt, The Faith}, \text{ p. 74.}
\]

\[\text{al-Ghazālī}, \text{ al-Munqidh}, \text{ p. 122}; \text{ trans.}, \text{ see McCarthy, Deliverance}, \text{ p. 92,} \& \text{ Watt, The Faith}, \text{ p. 75.}
\]

\[\text{al-Ghazālī}, \text{ al-Munqidh}, \text{ p. 123}; \text{ trans.}, \text{ see McCarthy, Deliverance}, \text{ p. 92,} \& \text{ Watt, The Faith}, \text{ p. 76.}
\]
and the purity of his conduct. So he sought a blessing from him and had him brought and listened to what he had to say. Then he asked al-Ghazālī not to let his breaths and useful lessons remain sterile, with no one profiting from them or learning from their lights, and he went all out in importuning and suggesting until al-Ghazālī agreed to go forth…He could not but yield to the authority.”

Distinguishing between al-Ghazālī’s motive at this stage and that in his first teaching experience, al-Fārisī explains that “by bringing forth that with which he had busied himself, he aimed at guiding the deviators (al-shadhāh) and benefiting the seekers of guidance (al-qāsidīn) without going back to what he had been divested of, viz. seeking honour and wrangling with his peers and condemning the headstrong.” In addition, al-Fārisī reports that he, and others, wonderingly asked al-Ghazālī about his wish for doing what he was summoned to do, and thus al-Ghazālī in defence of that said: “According to my religion I could not conceivably hold back from the summons and the utility of benefiting al-tālibīn (the disciples). It was indeed imperative for me to disclose the truth and to speak of it and to call to it—and he was truthful in that.”

Showing that his desire for benefiting and reforming others continued even after his abandonment of formal teaching, al-Fārisī goes on to say:

“He set up a nearby a madrasah for the seekers of knowledge and khāniqāh (sojourn) for the Sufis. He apportioned his time to the task of those present, such as the recital of the Qur’ān and keeping company with the men of hearts and sitting down to teach, so that not a single moment of his time or of those with him was profitless until the eye of the time attained him and the days begrudged him

to the men of his age. Then the Merciful translated him to His gracious
proximity.”

Thirdly, the reported activities of al-Ghazālī at that stage are mostly, if not all, of
islāḥī nature. He, for example, was teaching the Iḥyā’. The book is undoubtedly
intended to be a major project of islāḥ from al-Ghazālī’s point of view. This is clearly
indicated in the introduction of the book. To illustrate this well, there seems no better
way than literally quoting the words of al-Ghazālī. Addressing his imagined wayward
reader, al-Ghazālī states:

“For what has loosened the bond of silence from my tongue and imposed the
responsibility of speech and the obligation of utterance on me is your persistent
blindness to the essence of reality along with your obstinate aid of what is
baseless, flattering ignorance, and stirring up of evil against anyone who prefers
to depart slightly from the ways followed by mankind and who inclines a little
from the common practice of men in order to conform to the dictates of
knowledge.”

Explaining the reason behind such insistence on going astray at the time, he adds:

“There is no reason for your persistent disapproval except the malady which has
become an epidemic among the multitudes. That malady consists in insufficient
observation of the high importance of this matter, the gravity of the problem, and
the seriousness of the crisis; in not seeing that the next life is approaching and
this world is waning; that death is imminent but the journey is still long; that the

---

207 al-Ghazālī’s biography by al-Fārisī, cited in Ibn ‘Asākir al-Dimishqī, Tābīn, pp. 295f, trans.,
McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 18.
208 al-Zabīdī lists a number of pupils who orally received the book from al-Ghazālī, see Murtada al-
Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), Iḥyā’ al-Sādah al-Mutanāqīn bi-Sharḥ Iḥyā’ Ulūm al-Dīn, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub
provisions are scanty, the danger is great, and the road is blocked; and that whatever learning or work not purely devoted to Allāh is rejected.”

Clarifying the seriousness of the malady of the time and the difficulties surrounding its treatment, he goes on to say:

“With neither guide nor companion the journey on the road to the next life, with its many pitfalls, is toilsomely tiresome. The guides to the road are the ‘ulamā’ (religious scholars) who are the heirs of the prophets, but our time is void of them and only the superficial [or those who just apparently resemble them] (al-mutarassimūn) remain, most of who have been overcome by Satan and lured by iniquity. Every one of them has become infatuated with his immediate fortune. Thus, they have begun to consider good as evil and evil as good, so that the knowledge of religion has become effaced and the torch of guidance has been extinguished in all over the world. They have made the people imagine that there is no knowledge except the fatwā of a government by which judges seek help in settling disputes when the foolish people quarrel; or ability in disputation by which one who seeks glory arrays himself to conquer and silence by argument; or adorned rhymed prose by which the preacher seeks to gradually persuade the common folk, since they do not see anything but these three to trap and snare unlawful vanities (of this world). As to the knowledge of the path to the next life, according to which the pious forefathers trod and which Allāh in His Book called fiqh (discernment), hikmah (wisdom), ‘ilm (knowledge), diyā’ (illumination), nūr (light), hidāyah (right guidance), and rushd (rectitude), it had become folded away and quite forgotten among people.”

---


211 al-Ghazālī, Ḥiyā’, Vol.1, p. 2; trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 3f, and also Fāris, The Book of Knowledge, p. x.
Then, he clearly states that writing the *Iḥyāʾ* was an attempt to treat that malady:

“Since this is a penetrating breach and an intensely black calamity in religion, I have deemed it important to occupy myself in composing this book in order to revive the knowledge of religion and to reveal the ways of the early *imāms*, and to clarify the beauties of the beneficial branches of knowledge current among the prophets and the virtuous fathers.”

The *īṣlāḥī* nature of the *Iḥyāʾ* is also apparent throughout the book for therein are corrective treatments for various phenomena of *fasād* diagnosed by al-Ghazālī, as shall be extensively illustrated in the following chapter.

Other than the *Iḥyāʾ*, al-Ghazālī composed and taught works of *īṣlāḥī* purposes at this particular stage. The following two in particular are worth a brief mention. The first is the *Munqidh*; besides his didactic account about his intellectual and spiritual experience, which in itself has an *īṣlāḥī* function, al-Ghazālī includes in the *Munqidh* his diagnosis of the slackness of *Imān* (Islamic faith), which was a phenomenon of *fasād* in his time, and directs to his suggested remedies for it, as shall be illustrated in more detail in the following chapter.

The second work of *īṣlāḥī* significance is al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥjām al-‘Awāmm ʿan ʿIlm al-Kalām*, which is his last known book. As the title indicates, the book was a corrective response to the phenomenon of the publicity of *kalām* at the time of al-Ghazālī, which had harmful consequences as was shown above.
In addition to composing and teaching such *îslāḥī* works, al-Ghazālī sent several letters\(^{216}\) of *îslāḥī* purposes to ruling members as well as ‘ulamā’ and other contemporaries, responding correctively to particular wrongdoing and challenges of the time, as shall become apparent in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

SURVEY OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ’S IṢLĀḤĪ EFFORTS

4.1 Introduction:

The previous chapter has broadly shown how al-Ghazālī became solely concerned with iṣlāḥ at a late stage of his life. This leads to the following question being raised: to what extent did al-Ghazālī at that stage correctly respond to the fasād of his age? In our view, it is essential to tackle this question in order to fairly justify the classification of al-Ghazālī as a muslih, recalling that iṣlāḥ, as has been defined above, is a corrective task in which any state of fasād is changed into its opposite Islamically justified state. To objectively answer this question, it is necessary to survey al-Ghazālī’s efforts of iṣlāḥī nature. This chapter is devoted to this task.

The approach adopted in this chapter is inductive; a number of al-Ghazālī’s major authentic works which belong to his iṣlāḥī stage, particularly the Iḥyāʾ, have been carefully studied in light of the analysis of the term iṣlāḥ revealed in chapter one and the historical context of al-Ghazālī’s time presented in chapter two in order to extract sufficient particulars and then to objectively incorporate them in an intelligible and handy account. This account is by no means exhaustive, but the best attempt is made to cover most of the main iṣlāḥī efforts of al-Ghazālī as they appear in the works under study and to satisfactorily show the extent of these efforts. So the principal focus of this

---

1 Namely the Iḥyāʾ, al-Munqidh, Iljām al-ʿAwāmm, al-ʿQiṣṭās al-Mustaqīm, Faysal al-Tafrīqah bayn al-Islām wa-al-Zandaqah, some of al-Ghazālī’s Letters to the sovereigns of his time, al-Maqṣad al-ʿAsnā fī Sharḥ Maʿānī Asmāʾ Allāh al-Ḥusnā, and al-Mustusfā min Ṭīm al-Usūl (for a chronology of these works and other works of al-Ghazālī, see George F. Hourani, “A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī’s Writings,” in JAOS, Vol. 104, No. 2, Apr.-June 1984, pp. 289-302). The other works of al-Ghazālī belonging to the same stage but do not seem to have iṣlāḥī aspects, such as Mishkāt al-Anwār (The Niche of Lights), are beyond the scope of this survey.
chapter is neither to outline each of these works as a whole nor to address all the issues which may fall within the *islāhī* agenda of al-Ghazālī\(^2\) rather to highlight the *islāhī* aspects of his treatment of a number of key issues raised in these works which can be considered as main *islāhī* efforts.

It is not intended though to undertake a critical assessment in the present chapter. This is because, firstly, including such an assessment here would take up disproportionate space. Secondly, we believe that objectivity necessitates that we present al-Ghazālī’s *islāhī* efforts as perceived, before any assessment is made. Therefore, the assessment will be postponed to the following two chapters, which will be devoted to that purpose, though in an overall way. This, however, does not mean that the present survey is merely descriptive but rather analytical, to some extent, as well. The extent of the analysis is directed by the purpose of highlighting the *islāhī* aspects of al-Ghazālī’s efforts under study.

For the sake of intelligibility, the present chapter is divided into the following three main sections:

- Al-Ghazālī’s diagnosis of *fasād*.
- Al-Ghazālī’s *islāhī* attempts to eradicate the roots of *fasād*.
- Al-Ghazālī’s *islāhī* treatments of the phenomena of *fasād*.

### 4.2 Al-Ghazālī’s Diagnosis of *Fasād*:

The basis of al-Ghazālī’s *islāhī* efforts is his diagnosis of *fasād*. This includes not only particular phenomena of *fasād* in his time, but also what, in his view, lies at the root of *fasād* in general. Therefore, it is important to start with his analysis of the roots of *fasād*, before dealing with the diagnosed phenomena.

---

\(^2\) This seems almost an impossible dream to achieve in a single study especially in a timed one like the present.
4.2.1 The Roots of Fasād:

Getting at the roots of fasād, in general, can be considered the starting point of al-Ghazālī’s attempt at istr̄ah. This is based on his general rule that istr̄ah cannot be fully achieved without knowing the roots of fasād against which istr̄ah is directed. In the Iḥyāʾ, he repeats “one cannot prescribe a remedy (al-dawāʾ) without diagnosing the malady (al-dāʾ); for remedy means to counteract the causes of the malady.”

Clarifying this rule, he continues “for every disease results from a cause (sabab), the remedy for it consists of dissolving the cause, removing it and cancelling it.”

At least four dangerous roots of fasād are clearly dealt with in the works of al-Ghazālī under review:

- Ignorance.
- Love of the dunyā (purely worldly pleasure).
- Weakness of the impulse or motive of dīn (religion).
- The dominion of the innate stimuli of fasād.

These will be explained below in turn.

4.2.1.1 Ignorance:

Ignorance (jahāl) is seen by al-Ghazālī as the root of all misery (shaqāwah) and the source of every loss (khusrān).

Throughout his life, and particularly in his late years, as is evident in his works, al-Ghazālī was always concerned to find out what causes people to be ignorant, or more specifically not to perceive realities or truth. In the Iḥyāʾ, for example, he highlights a number of main causes of ignorance in this sense, namely:

---


5 al-Ghazālī, Iḥyāʾ, Vol. 4, p. 401.
1. Taqlīd: By taqlīd al-Ghazālī specifically means “accepting an opinion (qawl) without proof (ḥujjah).”6 As a general rule, taqlīd, in the view of al-Ghazālī, “is not a way to knowledge (laysa ṭarīqan ilā al-ʿilm), neither in al-usūl (the fundamentals of religion) nor in al-furu’ (the branches of religion).”7 Moreover, taqlīd, he states, can be a veil which obscures the reality of things from the heart, which, according to his teaching, is the seat of knowledge.8 Al-Ghazālī noticed that it was this veil that prevented most theologians (mutakalimūn), fanatical followers (mutaʿṣibūn) of the schools of jurisprudence (madhāhib) and even righteous men (ṣāliḥūn) from the perception of realities.9

2. Satisfaction with the mere intellectual sciences while dispensing with the religious knowledge, which is gained by learning and understanding the Qur’ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet (S.A.W.), or the vice versa. On the one hand, al-Ghazālī believes that anyone who relies entirely on the intellect alone, without benefiting from the light of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, is deluded.10 On the other hand, he is convinced that anyone who entirely sets aside the intellect and is satisfied with mere taqlīd in religion is ignorant.11 For him, “the intellectual sciences are like food and the sciences of Sharīʿah are like medicines,”12 and thus, he adds, one cannot do without the other.13

---

6 See al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 140.
7 See al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 139.
3. Lack of knowledge of the reality of man’s own heart (qalb).\textsuperscript{14} According to al-Ghazālī, the lack of knowledge regarding the reality of man’s heart (qalb) leads man to be ignorant of his Lord, because man, al-Ghazālī explains, is predisposed to know God simply by reason of his heart (qalb), not because of any of his other faculties.\textsuperscript{15} If a man, he declares, fails to know his heart (qalb), he indeed knows not himself and thus he indeed knows not his Lord.\textsuperscript{16} And the one, al-Ghazālī further states, “who knows not his heart is even more ignorant of other things.”\textsuperscript{17} He believes that most people do not know their hearts and therefore they do not really know their own selves.\textsuperscript{18} What has intensified man’s ignorance about his own reality, in the view of al-Ghazālī, is that he is wrapped up and involved heavily in worldly works, which have initially resulted from the need for food (qūt), dress (kiswah), and home (maskan).\textsuperscript{19} Such engagement, in excess, spoils people’s minds and causes them to forget or misconceive not only their real nature, but also the purpose of their creation and their final destination, as al-Ghazālī explains.\textsuperscript{20}

4.2.1.2 Love of the Dunyā:

Another major root of fasād diagnosed by al-Ghazālī is love of the dunyā.\textsuperscript{21} In this context, al-Ghazālī does not use the term dunyā in its literal sense, which is this world’s

\textsuperscript{14} It is worth noting that al-Ghazālī’s usage of the term heart in this context is not in its material meaning, but rather it is in its spiritual sense denoting the essence of man, as shall be explained below.
\textsuperscript{19} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 3, pp. 225 & 228.
\textsuperscript{20} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 228.
life; he uses it rather to refer to any purely worldly pleasure which does not contribute to the joys of the Afterlife.22

This root of fasād has been given very considerable emphasis by al-Ghazālī because of its extremely harmful effects. As al-Ghazālī warns us, it is “the beginning of all misdeeds” (ra’s kul khatī‘h),23 “the fountain-head of destructive sins” (ra’s al-khaṭāyā al-muhlikah),24 “the root of all deficiency,” (asās kul nuqṣān) and “the source of all fasād” (manba‘ kul fasād).25 This is why al-Ghazālī considers the dunyā a very dangerous enemy to man.26

Al-Ghazālī relates various sorts of fasād and sins to love of the dunyā.27 Examples of these are the following:

- This love is the root of all engrossing mental distractions (khawātīr) which disturb the concentration of a Muslim’s devotional prayer (ṣalāh).28
- This love stops us from fulfilling the duty of “forbidding wrong” (al-nahy ‘an al-munkar). This is because greed, which is a symptom of this love, leads to cowardice and weakness.29
- This love prevents from loving God for these two loves do not gather in one heart, as al-Ghazālī explains.30
- This love leads to various afflictions of the heart, such as envy.31

---

22 al-Ghazālī, Ḥiyā‘, Vol. 3, p. 219. For more elaboration on what al-Ghazālī means by love of the dunyā, see below.
23 al-Ghazālī, Ḥiyā‘, Vol. 1, p. 165 & Vol. 4, p. 36.
24 al-Ghazālī, Ḥiyā‘, Vol. 4, p. 130.
25 al-Ghazālī, Ḥiyā‘, Vol. 1, p. 165.
26 See al-Ghazālī, Ḥiyā‘, Vol. 3, p. 201.
27 For a further discussion of the teachings of al-Ghazālī on love of the world as the vice from which all other vices come, see Muhammad Abul Quasem, The Ethics of al-Ghazālī: A Composite Ethics in Islam, Selangor (Malaysia): Central Printing Sendirian Berhad, 1976, pp. 124-6.
29 al-Ghazālī, Ḥiyā‘, Vol. 2, p. 357.
31 al-Ghazālī, Ḥiyā‘, Vol. 3, p. 196.
According to al-Ghazālī, what makes people greedy for the dunyā is their excessive desire for food and sex.\(^{32}\) In addition, he explains that preferring the dunyā over the Afterlife is man’s dominant trait, as Allāh says, “Yet you prefer the life of this world, while the Afterlife is finer and more lasting”\(^{33}\) (Q.87:16-7).

Al-Ghazālī reminds us that there are many aspects of this love.\(^{34}\) Among them are: love of wealth and love of status.\(^{35}\)

### 4.2.1.3 Weakness of the Impulse of Religion:

A further dangerous root of fasād in the eyes of al-Ghazālī is the degrading of the impulse or motive of religion (bā’ith al-dīn). By this, he means “the will-power (quwwat al-irādah) emerging in response to the signals of certainty (tanba’ith bi-ishārat al-yaqīn), and taming the desire (al-shahwah) which emerges at the direction of devils (ishārat al-shayātīn).”\(^{36}\) Thus, the impulse of religion, according to the teachings of al-Ghazālī, is a condition of man’s heart\(^{37}\) and it is one of the major distinctions between men and animals, since it is not found in animals. This denotes that when the impulse of religion degrades, it cannot bring desire under control and this leads to fasād.

### 4.2.1.4 Dominion of the Innate Stimuli of Fasād:

Another big root of fasād, according to al-Ghazālī, is the dominion of what he calls the inherent qualities of man which stimulate fasād or more specifically sins (mathārāt

---


In the *Ihyāʿ* al-Ghazālī specifies that there are four of such qualities: wildness (*bahīmīyah*), bestiality (*sabʿīyah*), devilry (*shayṭānīyah*), and superiority (*rabbānīyah*). He clarifies that all these qualities are collected in the heart of every man from the time of his creation.

When any of these four qualities becomes predominant and are not controlled, it results in various forms of *fasād*. To further explain this, al-Ghazālī goes on to say that the dominion of anger or irascibility (*ghadāb*), which is a principle quality of bestiality, causes man to commit the fierce and cruel acts of a predatory animal. Similarly the dominion of appetite or desire (*shahwah*) makes man behave like a beast in acts of greed and lust. Like anger, desire is naturally very rebellious; it often tends to exceed its proper rational limits and causes *fasād*. Al-Ghazālī elucidates that what makes appetite very difficult to control by reason or intellect (*al-ʿaql*) is that it is perfected or completed in man at a much earlier age, than his reason is. Furthermore, by continuously following and satisfying desire, it develops quickly and thus becomes stronger than the power of reason. This is why desire, in the view of al-Ghazālī, is man’s worst enemy. “And since man is distinguished from beast by discernment, but at the same time shares with them anger and appetite, there results in him devilishness. So he becomes evil, using discernment to devise varieties of evil and attaining his purpose by cunning and artifice and deception.” In addition, based on the divine

---

41 In his classification of sins (*dhunūb*) in the *Ihyāʿ*, al-Ghazālī lists various examples of sins that are caused by each of these qualities, see al-Ghazālī, *Ihyāʿ*, Vol. 4, p. 16, trans., see Stern, *al-Ghazzali on Repentance*, p. 55.
element in his soul, man claims lordship for himself, and loves mastery and supremacy and such things.\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihya’}, Vol. 3, p. 10, trans., see McCarthy, “\textit{Kitāb Sharḥ ‘Ajāb al-Qalb},” p. 321.}  

\subsection*{4.2.2 Phenomena of Fasād:}  

Besides the roots of \textit{fasād}, al-Ghazālī diagnoses a number of phenomena of \textit{fasād}, which were prevalent in his time. At least eight major phenomena are very evident in the \textit{iṣlāḥī} works of al-Ghazālī and these will be outlined below.

\subsubsection*{4.2.2.1 Widespread Weakness and Laxity of \textit{Imān}:}  

One of the phenomena of \textit{fasād} diagnosed by al-Ghazālī is the widespread weakness and laxity of \textit{Imān} (Islamic faith). After ascertaining that this was widespread in his time, al-Ghazālī records in the \textit{Munqidh}\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{al-Munqidh}, p.118, trans., see McCarthy, \textit{Deliverance}, p. 89, and also Watt, \textit{The Faith}, pp. 70f.}, the method by which he discovered the reasons behind it. He states that “for a time I went after individual men, questioning those who fell short in following the \textit{Shar’} (Islamic revealed Law).”\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{al-Munqidh}, p.118, trans., see McCarthy, \textit{Deliverance}, p. 89, and also Watt, \textit{The Faith}, p. 71.}  From this investigation, he concluded that there were four reasons behind the laxity of people’s \textit{Imān}:\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{al-Munqidh}, p.117, trans., see McCarthy, \textit{Deliverance}, p. 88-9, and also Watt, \textit{The Faith}, p. 71.} These are demonstrated below.

(1) Deception by those engrossed in the science of philosophy. Al-Ghazālī mentions two forms of such deception in the \textit{Munqidh}.\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{al-Munqidh}, pp. 79-119, trans., see McCarthy, \textit{Deliverance}, pp. 63-89, and also Watt, \textit{The Faith}, pp. 33-72. As an earlier response, al-Ghazālī’s observation of this deception was recorded in the \textit{Tahāfut}, as he states in the introduction, \textit{(Tahāfut}, pp. 72-4, trans., see Kamali, \textit{al-Ghazali’s Tahafut}, pp.1-2).} The first may be summarized as follows: being amazed by the precision of the philosophers in some divisions of their sciences, such as mathematics, many people formed what al-Ghazālī finds\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{al-Munqidh}, p.79, trans., see McCarthy, \textit{Deliverance}, p. 63, and also Watt, \textit{The Faith}, p. 33.} a high opinion of the
philosophers and started to accept everything they said as truth. Consequently, people blindly followed them even as far as heresy, supposing them to be justified. According to al-Ghazālī, what intensified the deception unwittingly caused by the philosophers was the weak counterarguments of those who opposed them.\(^53\) The second form of this deception is evident in the claim that by studying philosophy, they became followers of wisdom, which in their view is the true meaning of prophesy, and were thereby absolved from following authority and conducting acts of worship which are—as they claimed—intended for common people in order to control their misdeeds.\(^54\)

(2) Having strayed through the path of Sufism. Two examples are mentioned in the \textit{Munqidh} for those whose faith is weakened as a result of this. The first is those who claim that they have reached a degree in mysticism which is beyond the need of regular worship.\(^55\) The second is those who offer one of the specious arguments of the Latitudinarians (\textit{Ahl al-Ibāhah}) as an excuse for the slackness of their faith.\(^56\) An example of such an argument is, as it appears in the \textit{Iḥyā́}, the assumption that the purpose of spiritual disciplining (\textit{mujāhadah}) is to completely suppress all desires; and since this is impossible, they deny the religion and licentiously follow their desires.\(^57\)

(3) Being confused by the specious arguments of the party of Ta’līmīyah or Baṭānīyah. Al-Ghazālī explains in the \textit{Munqidh} that because of the confusion caused by the fallacious arguments of this party, some people become doubtful of every doctrine, declaring that “the truth is doubtful, the way to it blocked, there is much disagreement about it, and no one view is preferable to any other. Moreover, rational proofs

\(^{53}\) al-Ghazālī, \textit{al-Munqidh}, p.120, trans., see McCarthy, \textit{Deliverance}, p. 90, and also Watt, \textit{The Faith}, p. 73.


\(^{57}\) al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā́}, Vol. 4, p. 42.
contradict one another so that no reliance can be placed on the opinion of independent thinkers…”

(4) Being deceived by the bad actions of those popularly regarded as ‘ulamā’. Al-Ghazālī states that by asking those who have fallen short in following the Shar‘ about the cause of their failings, some would reply that “if this were a matter one was bound to observe, then the ‘ulamā’ would be those most properly bound to it. But among the most renowned among the learned, so-and-so does not perform the prescribed Prayers, and such a one drinks wine, and another devours the assets of religious endowments and the property of orphans, and another feathers his nest with the lavish largesse of the Sultan without being circumspect over what is ḥarām (Islamically unlawful), and another accepts bribes for his judgments and testimony, and so on in many similar instances!”

4.2.2.2 Widespread Sickness of Heart and Evil Character:

A vital phenomenon of fasād diagnosed by al-Ghazālī is the widespread of heart sickness (amrād al-qulūb) and evil character (akhlāq khabīthah), which, according to his teaching, is a reflection of the former, as we shall see below. In different places in the Ihyā‘, he warns that the heart’s sickness is noticeably more widespread in his time than in the past, and there is a worrying ignorance about how to treat it, to the extent that this type of knowledge—as he sadly and worryingly notes—has quite vanished.

The ignorance about healing sickness of the heart was a real concern of al-Ghazālī at the stage in view. About this ignorance, he states that “people neglect the knowledge

---

58 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p.119, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 89, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 72.
60 Heart in this context is in its spiritual sense, as has explained earlier.
of purifying the hearts and are concerned only with ways to treat physical ailments.”

Al-Ghazālī’s concern was based on his observation that the spread of this sickness was more serious than physical illness and mentions three reasons for this:

1. The affected person does not realise that he is sick.
2. Unlike physical illness, its aftermath (‘āqibah) does not appear in this life.
3. The lack of doctors (aṭibā’) to treat it and the vanishing of knowledge about it.

Another reason for al-Ghazālī’s concern was that, unlike physical illness, the sickness of the heart “abides even after death, and for all eternity.”

In the Iḥyā’, al-Ghazālī sets forth in detail the symptoms of this sickness, its causes, and its consequences. In a section entitled “An Exposition of the Signs of the Heart Diseases and the Signs of its Return to Health” (Bayān ‘Alāmāt Amrāḍ al-Qulūb wa-‘alāmāt ‘adīhā ilā-al-Sīḥḥah) al-Ghazālī presents a general symptom of the sickness, as follows:

“Know that each member of the body has been created for a particular function, and that it becomes ill when it is no longer able to perform it, or else does so in a disturbed fashion: the hand ails when it can no longer strike…Likewise the heart falls ill when it becomes incapable of performing the activity proper to it and for which it was created, which is the acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, and gnosia (maʿrifah), and the love of Allāh and of His worship, and taking delight in remembering Him, preferring these things to every other desire, and using all one’s other desires and members for the sake of His remembrance…Therefore, whosoever possesses a thing which is more dear to him than Allāh is harbouring a sickness in his heart, just as a man who, loving to eat mud, and having lost his desire for bread and water, must needs suffer a sickness in his belly.”

---

64 The view of al-Ghazālī on this blackness will be elaborated on more below.
4.2.2.3 Prevalent Spurious Religiousness:

Al-Ghazālī’s diagnosis of fasād includes forms of spurious religiousness which, as he observed, were prevalent in his time. One form of such religiousness is extravagance (tanātu’) of devotion. In various places in the Ihyā’, al-Ghazālī warns against religious extravagance, since it often leads to harmful consequences. For example, he warns against excessive scrupulousness (wara’) and considers it a form of extravagance in religiousness.68 Even if it does not harm the scrupulous person himself, it may, as al-Ghazālī precisely observes, suggest to others that such scrupulousness is vital and thus, because they cannot fulfil even what is easier than this, they would totally ignore scrupulousness altogether.69 According to al-Ghazālī such a conviction made many people of his time give up trying to live a religious life.70

Other forms of spurious devotion diagnosed by al-Ghazālī are those which were represented by the following groups.

(1) The majority of Sufis: In the Ihyā’ al-Ghazālī severely criticizes most of the Sufis of his time for being idle, for relying on charity, and for imitating pious people in their dress and words, just for show and the seeking of followers, while their heart is devoid of true piousness.71

(2) Groups of worshippers (arbāb al-‘ibādah): Al-Ghazālī diagnoses in the Ihyā’ various forms of spurious religious activities as practised by the adherents of the following types of Islamic worship or duties: devotional prayer (ṣalāh), recitation of the Qur’ān, pilgrimage to Mecca (haj), asceticism (zuhd) and “commanding right and forbidding wrong” (al-amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar).72

---

(3) Classes of wealthy people (*arbāb al-amwāl*): Al-Ghazālī gives selective examples in the *Ihyā’* of spurious religious activities performed by groups of wealthy people.\(^73\) A case in point is choosing forms of worship in which no expenditure is necessary while hoarding their money out of stinginess.\(^74\)

### 4.2.2.4 Popularity of Public Wrongs:

Another phenomenon of *fasād* diagnosed by al-Ghazālī is the popularity of wrongs (*munkarāt*) which are commonly met with in public. In the *Ihyā’*, he states that there are many examples of such wrongs in his age, to the extent that it is impossible to enumerate all of them.\(^75\) He nevertheless mentions a representative selection of these wrongs in a chapter entitled “Common Wrongs in Customs” (*al-munkarāt al-ma’lūfah fī al-‘ādāt*). This selection, which is likely to have been contemporary, includes wrongs in mosques (*al-masājid*), wrongs in markets (*al-aswāq*), wrongs in streets (*al-shawāri’*), wrongs in bath-houses (*al-ḥammāmāt*), wrongs of hospitality (*al-diāfah*) and general wrongs.\(^76\)

The main cause behind this phenomenon, as explained by al-Ghazālī, was the virtual disappearance of the knowledge and practice of the duty of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” in his age.\(^77\) Consequently there was a great deal of flattery (*mudāhanah*) among people of his time.\(^78\)

---

4.2.2.5 Widespread Heretical Innovations:

Another phenomenon of fasād with which al-Ghazālī was greatly concerned was widespread heretical thoughts or forms of heretical innovation (bid‘ah) in his time. He diagnosed many forms of bid‘ah during his life. I shall, however, focus on those forms which he considered very dangerous. Such forms may fall into three categories: Sufic deviant thoughts, philosophical heresy, and Baṭinī deviated teachings.79

A. Sufic Deviant Thoughts:80

In the Iḥyā‘, al-Ghazālī classifies some of the claims evolved by some of the Sufis of the time as very harmful ecstasy (shatāh). A case in point of such claims is the claim of excessive love (‘ishq) of Allāh which leads to the assertion of having attained “unity (ittiḥād) [with God], lifting of the veil (ḥijāb), seeing by vision (al-mushāḥadah bi-al-ru’yah) and addressing by speech (al-mushāfah bi-al-kitāb).”81

According to al-Ghazālī such claims do great harm, particularly to the common folk, since it leads to giving up outward deeds and idleness.82 Satisfying themselves with the self-justification offered by such claims, several farmers, as al-Ghazālī narrates, relinquished their farms.83

---

79 It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss in detail al-Ghazālī’s view on all the heretical innovations diagnosed by him or to review extensively his position on Sufism, philosophy, and Baṭinīyah.
80 Although al-Ghazālī considered the method of the Sufis as the soundest method, as has been mentioned above (2.5.1), he strongly rejected some of the Sufic deviant thoughts. This needs to be borne in mind when evaluating al-Ghazālī’s effect on Sufism (see 6.5 below). Despite his rejection of such Sufic deviant thoughts, he has strongly accused of relying on Sufi traditions which contradict Islamic principles, as shall be examined below (5.7.2).
Another example of Sufic deviance against which al-Ghazālī warns is the claim of some that they are free from religious commandments, giving false excuses for disobeying the Islamic rules.\textsuperscript{84}

B. PHILOSOPHICAL HERESY:

The second type of thinking which al-Ghazālī has classified as heretical includes a number of metaphysical theories, which were originally developed by ancient philosophers, and which were blindly accepted by a group of people in his time.\textsuperscript{85} According to him, the thoughts of philosophers—excluding things which are not to be denied at all, because they are not connected to religion—fall under two categories: the first is what must be counted as unbelief (\textit{kufr}) and the second is what must be counted as heretical innovation (\textit{bid’ah}); out of twenty main wrong doctrines of the philosophers connected to metaphysics, three count as unbelief and the rest count as \textit{bid’ah}.\textsuperscript{86} The first three are as follows:\textsuperscript{87} (1) There is no resurrection for bodies and only spirits are rewarded and punished. (2) God knows universals but not particulars. (3) The world is everlasting, without beginning or end. However, their doctrine on certain further issues in metaphysics—such as their denial of the attributes of God—is close to that of the Mu’tazilites who, al-Ghazālī declares, should not be considered infidels because of such views.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{84} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihya’}, Vol. 3, p. 405.
\textsuperscript{85} See al-Ghazālī, \textit{al-Munqidh}, pp. 79f. Earlier than the \textit{Munqidh} and in more detail, al-Ghazālī dealt with this type of innovation in \textit{Tahāfut al-Falāsifah}, as mentioned above, but this book is beyond the scope of the present chapter.
\textsuperscript{88} al-Ghazālī, \textit{al-Munqidh}, p.84, trans., see McCarthy, \textit{Deliverance}, p. 67, and also Watt, \textit{The Faith}, p. 38.
Although geometry and arithmetic, as part of philosophy, are both permissible (mubāḥ) according to the teachings of al-Ghazālī, most of those who practise them have, al-Ghazālī noticed, crossed the line to admit innovations (bida‘).\(^{90}\)

C. BAṬINĪ DEVIATED TEACHINGS:

The third form of dangerous bid‘ah diagnosed by al-Ghazālī is the esoteric interpretation of the Baṭinīs, which dismisses the obvious literal meaning of words in favour of esoteric meanings.\(^{91}\) In the Ḩiyā‘, al-Ghazālī mentions this method as an example of what he calls heresies (ṭāmār); and he considers it unlawful and capable of great harm. He explains the reason behind this judgment as follows:

“When words are changed from their literal meanings, without either holding fast to authoritative tradition from Sāhib al-Shar‘ [i.e., the Prophet (S.A.W.)] or a necessity justified by reason, the loss of confidence in words becomes inevitable and the benefits of the words of God and His Apostle are in sequence nullified. For no trust can be placed in whatever is understood therefrom, while esoteric meaning cannot be verified; rather opinions differ therein and it is open to various interpretations.”\(^{92}\)

Relying on this method, the Baṭinīs, al-Ghazālī states, destroyed all the Sharī‘ah by interpreting all its literal meaning to conform to their own views.\(^{93}\) According to al-

---

\(^{89}\) See al-Ghazālī, Ḩiyā‘, Vol. 1, p. 22, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 87, and also Fāris, The Book of Knowledge, p. 46.


Ghazālī the adherents of this widespread and harmful innovation sought nothing but strange things because human nature is fond of the unusual.94

Al-Ghazālī states in the Munqidh that although such innovation was weakly supported, it was widespread, due to the weak counterarguments of its critics who out of fanaticism contradict the Batīnīs in everything they said, even when their arguments were sound.95 Thus, hearing these sound arguments and the weak counterarguments of their critics, many were seduced into thinking that the doctrine of the Batīnīs is sound.96

4.2.2.6 Fasād of the Vast Majority of the ‘Ulamā’:

A crucial phenomenon of fasād according to the diagnosis of al-Ghazālī is the fasād of the vast majority of the ‘ulamā’ of his time. In the introduction of the Ihyā’, he states that his time is bereft of true ‘ulamā’ and only the superficial, or those who just apparently resemble them (al-mutarassimūn), remain, “most of whom have been overcome by Satan and lured by iniquity; every one of them was so wrapped with his immediate fortune that he came to see good as evil and evil as good.”97 This seems the most serious phenomenon of fasād in his diagnosis. This is mainly because al-Ghazālī held such ‘ulamā’ originally responsible for the general fasād of the time. He repeatedly states in the Ihyā’ that “the fasād of the people is due to the fasād of the kings and the fasād of the kings is due to the fasād of the ‘ulamā’.98 In his view, had it not been evil judges (qudāh) and evil ‘ulamā’, the fasād of the kings would have been

95 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 93, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 72, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 45.
96 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 93, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 72, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 46.
98 See, for example, al-Ghazālī, Ihyā’, Vol. 2, p. 357.
decreased because they would have been fearful from the forbidding of the ‘ulamā’ of their wrongdoing.\textsuperscript{99}

After al-Ghazālī’s self-īslāh, this phenomenon received very considerable attention from him. In the \textit{Ihā’}, al-Ghazālī gives emphasis to the fasād of the ‘ulamā’ and highlights various symptoms of it. He uses the term evil ‘ulamā’ (‘ulamā’ al-sū’) for those who suffer from these symptoms. Examples of these symptoms are listed below.

1. Love of the \textit{dunyā}.\textsuperscript{100} The most remarkable symptom of this fasād diagnosed by al-Ghazālī is that the ‘ulamā’ of his time were ill with love of the \textit{dunyā}.\textsuperscript{101} Instead of treating people from this source of fasād, the ‘ulamā’ themselves became its victims.\textsuperscript{102}

2. Envy: Another symptom of the fasād of the ‘ulamā’ highlighted by al-Ghazālī is envy. He diagnosed the cause of it by stating that seeking wealth and status (jāh) through their knowledge is what causes envy between them.\textsuperscript{103} Following his habitual approach, al-Ghazālī specifies what he means by the term jāh: to dominate the hearts (mulk al-qulūb).\textsuperscript{104} He further explains how seeking of wealth and status causes envy between the ‘ulamā’ themselves.\textsuperscript{105}

3. Not forbidding wrongs out of cowardice: In the \textit{Ihā’}, al-Ghazālī accuses the ‘ulamā’ of his time of lack of courage for they were not fulfilling the duty of “commanding right and forbidding wrong,” particularly when the wrongdoer is a ruler.\textsuperscript{106} According to him such cowardice resulted from their greed for worldly pleasures.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{100} See, al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihā’}, Vol. 4, p. 51.  
\textsuperscript{101} See, al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihā’}, Vol. 4, p. 51.  
\textsuperscript{102} See al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihā’}, Vol. 3, p. 63.  
\textsuperscript{103} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihā’}, Vol. 3, p. 195.  
\textsuperscript{104} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihā’}, Vol. 3, p. 195.  
\textsuperscript{106} See, for example, al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihā’}, Vol. 2, p. 357.  
\textsuperscript{107} See, for example, al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihā’}, Vol. 2, p. 357.
4. Teaching undeserving students: A further symptom of the fasād of the ‘ulamā’ according to al-Ghazālī is that they did not mind teaching anyone, regardless of his characters and motives. He noticed that some of the ‘ulamā’ were teaching foolish (sufahā’) and wicked (ashrār) people, who were engaged in wickedness and whose ultimate purpose for attaining knowledge was to argue with ‘ulamā’, and to seek prestige and wealth. What encouraged these ‘ulamā’ to do so, in the view of al-Ghazālī, was their love of supremacy, seeking many followers, and boasting, though they were claiming that their intention was to spread knowledge regardless of who would receive it.108

5. Relying on the approach of hope (rajā’): Similarly al-Ghazālī accused the preachers of his time of preferring the approach of hope (rajā’) over the approach of intimidation although the former was not suitable for the people of his time in his view.109 Nevertheless, since the aim of the preachers was to please people so that they would praise them in return, they relied on the approach of hope for it is easier on the heart and more pleasant than the other approach.110 As a result, fasād increased and the transgressors persisted in their transgression as al-Ghazālī sadly noted.111

6. Pride: Pride is another symptom of fasād among the ‘ulamā’ according to the diagnosis of al-Ghazālī. He generally thinks that it is very rare to find a scholar (‘ālim) free from pride. Moreover, according to him, it was very unusual to find a scholar in his time who would have felt sorry for losing the quality of being free from pride.112

---

110 al-Ghazālī, Ihyā’, Vol. 4, p. 146.
111 al-Ghazālī, Ihyā’, Vol. 4, p. 146.
7. Being fully engaged in controversies and debate: Al-Ghazālī accused the ‘ulamā’ in his age of being fully engaged in juridical controversial issues. In the Ihya’, he explains that the reason behind this was that there were celebrities who enjoyed listening to debates in jurisprudence, so the ‘ulamā’ favoured what these celebrities favoured but they claimed that they were doing this for the sake of Allāh.\footnote{See al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihya’}, Vol. 1, p. 42, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 170, and also Fāris, \textit{The Book of Knowledge}, pp. 102f.}

8. Fanaticism (\textit{ta’assub}): According to al-Ghazālī, the evil ‘ulamā’ in his age adopted fanaticism (\textit{ta’assub}) as their rule of conduct and their method of approach (\textit{‘ādatahum wa-alatahum}).\footnote{See al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihya’}, Vol. 1, p. 40, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 136.} In the context of discussing the causes of fanaticism and the reasons behind its continuation in his time, al-Ghazālī states in the \textit{Ihya’}:

\begin{quotation}
“The \textit{madāris} (religious institutions of learning) have been given to people whom fear of Allāh has become little, whose insight into religion has grown weak, whose desire of this present world has become intense, and greed to seek followers has grown strong. They have not been able to have a follower and attain fame (\textit{jāh}) except through fanaticism. So they have veiled this fact within their own breasts, and have not reminded their followers of the wiles of Satan therein, but indeed they have acted as the agents of Satan in carrying out his wiles against them. So men have continued in fanaticism and have forgotten the major principles of their religion (\textit{ummahāt dīnihim}). Thus they have perished and caused others to perish.”\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihya’}, Vol. 3, p. 35, trans., see Skellie \textit{“The Religious Psychology,”} pp. 138f.}
\end{quotation}

4.2.2.7 \textit{Fasād} of Ruling Members:

In addition to the ‘ulamā’, al-Ghazālī holds the rulers responsible for the spread of \textit{fasād} in the society. In general, the \textit{fasād} of the subjects (\textit{ra’iyah}), al-Ghazālī believes, is due to the \textit{fasād} of the kings.\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihya’}, Vol. 2, p. 150.}
Al-Ghazālī on one hand believes that the caliphate after the rightly guided caliphs passed on to men who—generally speaking—undeservedly occupied it. On the other hand, he legitimized the Abbasid Caliph of the time and the sultans who give him their pledge of allegiance. This legitimization, however, does not mean a complete approval of their policies and administrations.

As in the case of the fasād of the 'ulamā’, al-Ghazālī in various places of the Ihyā’ diagnoses aspects of fasād among ruling members in his time. He states that injustice among them was widespread. One of the most crucial aspects of their fasād diagnosed in the Ihyā’, besides their general injustice, is that related to their financial policies. In his detail discussion on what is lawful (ḥalāl) and unlawful (ḥarām) of the income of the sultans of his time, he states that the majority of their wealth (amwāl) is ḥarām, and that the ḥalāl in their hands is nothing or rare. Similarly he states that the majority of the wealth of the militant men is ḥarām. This is mainly because of their unlawful financial policies such as taking jizyah (per capital tax) unjustly, applying kharāj (tax on agricultural land) on Muslims, and accepting bribery (rashwah).

In addition, other aspects of fasād among ruling members were highlighted by al-Ghazālī’s in some of his letters to some Seljuk sovereigns, as shall be seen below.

4.3 Al-Ghazālī’s Iṣlāḥī Attempts to Eradicate the Roots of Fasād:

Al-Ghazālī did not satisfy himself with simply getting at the roots of fasād, but he, as is evident in his ʿislāḥī treatises, attempted to eradicate them. His attempts will be illustrated below in the same order as the roots of fasād demonstrated above.

---

4.3.1   Counteracting the Causes of Ignorance:

The main efforts of al-Ghazālī which can be considered as counteractions of the causes of ignorance listed above are summarized under the following sub-headings.

4.3.1.1   Distinguishing between Acceptable and Unacceptable Taqlīd: 124

In general, al-Ghazālī strongly condemns taqlīd since it can lead to ignorance or lack of perception of realities, as mentioned above. Rejecting the view of the Ta’līmīyah that the way to get at truth (tarīq ma’rifat al-ḥaqiq) is taqlīd, he, in the al-Mustasfā min ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl, which is his latest known book in the genre of uṣūl al-fiqh, clarifies that “by taqlīd we specifically mean accepting an opinion (qawl) without proof (ḥujjah) so whenever there is a lack of proof, and truth is not known, neither by common sense (bi-ṭarūrah) nor by evidence (bi-dalīl), then imitation (al-ittibā’) therein would be based on ignorance (jahil).” 125 Furthermore, in the course of his refutation of the Ta’līmīyah’s speculations, he quotes a number of āyāt (Qur’ānic verses) which, he states, forbid taqlīd and direct to knowledge, 126 namely: “Pursue not that you have no knowledge…” (Q.44:36) “Produce your proof, if you speak truly.” (Q.2:111)

He, however, does not completely oppose taqlīd, 127 rather he distinguishes between acceptable and unacceptable taqlīd. While he strongly supports the prevailing view of the ‘ulamā’ that taqlīd is ḥarām (Islamically unlawful) in the case of those who are capable of ijtiḥād, 128 he totally refuses the odd argument of a group of Qadarīyah that

---

127 As Frank points out, “…since, under his [i.e. al-Ghazālī’s] analysis, belief held by taqlīd, though intrinsically weak, is not universally characterized by instability and contaminated with doubt, he has, unlike earlier Asharites, no prima facie reason to reject it outright as a valid basis for orthodox religious assent…” (Frank, “Al-Ghazālī's on taqlīd,” p. 208).
128 The scholarly mental activity of deriving a rule of the Sharī’ah from authoritative evidence.
even *al-'awāmm*, i.e., the ordinary people or general folks, must look profoundly into the evidence (*yalzamuhum al-nazar fī al-dalīl*).\(^{129}\) He entirely rejects this opinion on the basis of the following two proofs. The first is, “the consensus of the Companions (*ijmā‘ al-ṣaḥābah*), for they used to give *fatwā* (jurisprudence views) to the *‘awāmm* without ordering them to achieve the rank of *ijtihād*.”\(^ {130}\) The second is that, “a consensus has been reached (*al-ijmā‘ mun’aqid*) that *al-‘āmī* (an ordinary man) is charged (*mukallaf*) with *al-ahkām* (Islamic rules), and thus enjoining him to achieve the rank of *al-ijtihād* is impossible, because it would lead to the abandon of crops and live-stock, the quit of the industries and the crafts, and the ruin of the world when all people would have to seek *al-‘ilm* ([religious] knowledge).”\(^ {131}\) In short, *al-‘itibā‘*, i.e., the following of the *‘ulamā‘* or the *muftīs* in this context, is, for practical reasons, unavoidable in the case of the *‘awāmm* according to al-Ghazālī.

In addition, al-Ghazālī sets out some conditions which have to be met in order that *taqlīd* or *itibā‘* in the case of the *‘awāmm* proves to be acceptable. With respect to seeking *fatwā*, a *‘āmī* must ask only a person who is known for *‘ilm*, i.e., religious knowledge, and *‘adālah* (righteousness).\(^ {132}\)

In the matter of *imān* (Islamic faith), however, al-Ghazālī necessitates, as in the *Iḥyā‘* for example, that every *mukallaf* firstly learn and understand the *Shahādah*, i.e., there is no god but Allāh and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh, and secondly firmly believe in it without any doubt or hesitation.\(^ {133}\) This, however, can, as he assures,

---


be obtained by mere taqlīd without necessarily the means of investigation (baḥth), penetration (naẓar), and formulating evidence (taḥrīr al-addillah).\textsuperscript{134}

This is why al-Ghazālī seriously attacks in \textit{Faysal al-Tafriqah bayn al-Islām wa-al-Zandaqah} a group of mutakallimūn who charge the ʿawamm with unbelief (kufr) just because they do not acquire Islamic creed through their own way of Kalām.\textsuperscript{135} He accuses them of being extremist, because firstly they restrict the mercy of Allāh and the entrance of Paradise to a limited group among the mutakallimūn, and secondly they are ignorant of what has been reported, through tawātur way, that the Prophet (S.A.A.W.) and his Companions accepted the Islam of the illiterate Arabs who did not concern themselves with the science of reasoning (ʿilm al-dalīl).\textsuperscript{136} Similarly, he challenges the speculation that the means to find imān is Kalām and abstract reasoning, because imān, he declares, “is light (nūr) which is cast by Allāh on the hearts of His servants as a bestowal and gift from Him.”\textsuperscript{137} Al-Ghazālī, however, does not deny that the reasoning of the mutakallimūn may lead to imān, but this, according to him, is very rare and it is not the only way to imān.\textsuperscript{138}

According to al-Ghazālī, Kalām is not only unnecessary for the ʿawamm but also extremely risky, because it may lead this group of people to unbelief (shirk).\textsuperscript{139} To warn against this potential risk, he composed his book \textit{Iljām al-ʿAwāmm ʿan ʾIlm al-Kalām} (Restraining the General Folks from the Science of Kalām). In the opening of the book, he states that one of the purposes of the book was to distinguish between what is obligatory on general people in matters of faith and that which they should be


\textsuperscript{136} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Faysal al-Tafriqah}, p. 93.

\textsuperscript{137} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Faysal al-Tafriqah}, p. 93.

\textsuperscript{138} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Faysal al-Tafriqah}, p. 94.

restrained from.\(^\text{140}\) Answering a possible objection that forbidding the ‘āmmī from investigation in matters of faith would lead him to be ignorant about the belief in Allāh and his divine attributes, which are obligatory, he asserts that firmly rooted belief (al-taṣdīq al-jāzim) has six levels and that some of which can be obtained by the ‘awāmm without being involved in Kalām and that the Qur’ānic evidences are enough to secure their faith.\(^\text{141}\) Although he states that the most superior belief is that which is supported by sound reasoning, he still believes that the ‘āmmī, with such acceptance of faith, is no doubt a believer.\(^\text{142}\)

To fully appreciate al-Ghazālī’s position from taqlīd on matters of faith, we need to be acquainted with his view on the role of the intellect on these matters, which shall become clear below.

### 4.3.1.2 Assuring the Need for Both Intellectual Knowledge and Religious Knowledge:

Against the two extreme attitudes towards intellectual knowledge and religious knowledge, demonstrated above, al-Ghazālī assures the need for both and calls for unity and harmony between them.\(^\text{143}\) To correctly understand his position from both, we need first to be acquainted with what he means by the two types of knowledge.

By intellectual knowledge (al-‘ulūm al-‘aqliyah), he means that “by which the innate intellect makes its judgments and which does not come into existence through imitation (taqlīd) and hearing (samā’);”\(^\text{144}\) and he divides it into: a) axiomatic (tarāriyah) such as man’s knowledge that one person cannot be in two places, and b)

---

\(^{140}\) al-Ghazālī, Iljām al-‘Awāmm, p. 41.

\(^{141}\) al-Ghazālī, Iljām al-‘Awāmm, pp. 79-81.

\(^{142}\) al-Ghazālī, p. 81.


acquired knowledge (‘ulūm muktasabah) which is gained by learning and deduction (istidlāl). While by religious knowledge, he means that which is gained by way of acceptance on authority (taqlīd) from the prophets and it is “acquired by learning the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of the Apostle of Allāh, and understanding their meaning after having heard them.”

Now regarding the need for these types of knowledge, al-Ghazālī asserts that with religious knowledge, man’s soul can be perfected in quality and cured from its diseases. Intellectual knowledge, he adds, is not sufficient to cure man’s soul, though it is needed. Explaining how the intellect is needed, while it is insufficient alone, he further states:

“…just as the intellect is not sufficient to make continuous the causes of physical health, but needs to gain the experiential knowledge of the properties of medicines and herbs by learning them from the physicians (atībbā’) and not by reading in books, since the intellect alone cannot find this knowledge. But after it is heard it cannot be understood except by means of the intellect.”

Thus, he concludes, “the intellect cannot dispense with hearing (samā’) [i.e., revelation in this context] nor can hearing (samā’) dispense with the intellect.”

Rejecting the supposition of those who think that intellectual knowledge is opposed to that of religion, and that it is impossible to achieve harmony between them, he declares that such supposition “arises from blindness in the eye of insight (‘ayn al-baṣīrah).”

---

Despite his assertion of the need for intellectual knowledge, al-Ghazālī does not consider all intellectual sciences praiseworthy. In this respect, he divides these sciences into three types:

A. Praiseworthy knowledge (‘ulūm mahmūdah): all the intellectual sciences which are connected with what is beneficial to the present world, as medicine and arithmetic, and they are two divisions: a) fard kifāyah (Islamically ordained on the Muslim community as a whole): every branch of knowledge which is indispensable to the welfare of this world, such as medicine and arithmetic; but if some members of the community undertake it, the obligation falls away from others;

and b) faḍīlah (a virtuous knowledge but not obligatory) which is the extra investigation into the details of the above sciences, which, though helpful in reinforcing the efficacy of whatever is absolutely needed, is not necessary.152

B. Blameworthy (madhmūmah) knowledge: any intellectual knowledge which is blamed for one of the following three reasons:

1. When it leads either its possessor or someone else into harm, such as magic and talismans which are used for harming people.153

2. When it is harmful to its possessor in the majority of cases, such as astrology, which in itself is not blameworthy, for it has two parts: (a) one concerned with calculation, and (b) one concerned with the decree of the stars and is inferential.154 The Prophet (S.A.A.W.) has warned against it for three reasons: (a)

It is harmful to most people who get the impression that the stars cause effects, as

most of man’s observation is limited to the subordinate causes.\textsuperscript{155} (b) The rules based on it are purely conjecture (\textit{takhmīn maḥdī}) and prognostication is right only by coincidence; thus, disapproval of it lies in the fact that it is ignorance from this respect.\textsuperscript{156} (c) There is no benefit in it and results in a great loss of valuable time; what it decreed is finished, and it is impossible to guard against it.\textsuperscript{157}

3. When its practitioner does not gain a real learning advantage because it is beyond his depth, as learning details of sciences before their major principles, or the obscure things before the plainly seen; so such knowledge is blameworthy for this particular practitioner.\textsuperscript{158}

C. Permissible (\textit{mubāh}) knowledge: such as learning poetry which has nothing unsound in it, history, and the like.\textsuperscript{159}

However, with regard to the religious (\textit{sharī‘yah}) branches of knowledge, al-Ghazālī states that they are all praiseworthy (\textit{maḥmudah kulluhā}), but sometimes they are confused with those which are thought to be religious, though really blameworthy (\textit{madhmūmah}),\textsuperscript{160} as shall be further explained below.

\textbf{4.3.1.3 Revealing Aspects of the Reality of Man:}

It has been stated earlier that one of the major causes of ignorance according to al-Ghazālī is the lack of knowing the reality of man’s own heart (\textit{qalb}), which leads man to be ignorant about his reality and his Lord. As a counter to this, al-Ghazālī reveals in

\textsuperscript{156} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 1, p. 30, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 120, and also Fāris, \textit{The Book of Knowledge}, pp. 69f.
the *Ihya*’ various aspects of man’s reality, which shall be briefly illustrated under the following sub-headings.

**A. THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MAN’S HEART:**

One fundamental aspect of the reality of man can be identified, in the view of al-Ghazālī, by exposing the essential characteristics of man’s heart (*qalb*). This is based on his belief that if a man knows his heart, he would know himself.¹⁶¹ This is why al-Ghazālī often stresses the importance of the knowledge of the heart. For him “the knowledge of the heart (*qalb*) and of the true meaning of its qualities is the root of religion.”¹⁶²

For the purpose of exposing the characteristics of man’s heart as one aspect of his reality, al-Ghazālī devoted the first *kitāb* (book) of the third *rub*’ (quarter) of the *Ihya*’ to this matter. At the beginning of this *kitāb*, he clarifies that the word heart (*qalb*) does not refer to the physical heart; however, it is employed—as in the Qur’ān—in the following sense: “a spiritual, divine subtlety (*latīfa*)...which is the essence of man...is what perceives, knows, and realizes...is spoken to, punished, blamed and responsible.”¹⁶³

For various states of this spiritual essence, al-Ghazālī applies three other terms: spirit (*rūḥ*), self or soul (*nafs*), and intellect (*’aql*).¹⁶⁴ Because he noticed that there was great obscurity about the difference and applications of these terms among the ‘ulamā’; al-Ghazālī explains their meanings and applications right at the beginning of the above

mentioned *kitāb*: entitled *Kitāb Sharḥ ‘Ajā’ib al-Qalb* (Book of Explanation of the Wonders of the Heart).\(^{165}\)

Unlike the body, which belongs to the material world, the heart in the teachings of al-Ghazālī is immortal. Thus, it is more precious and essential than any other part of man. In his view, it is considered the sixth unique sense of man, which can also be called *nūr* (light).\(^{166}\) What is perceived by this sense—he believes—cannot be mistaken, whereas what is perceived by citation can be wrong—e.g. seeing what is far, close and what is small, big.\(^{167}\)

Only through the heart—al-Ghazālī believes—man is prepared to know Allāh, and not by any members of his body.\(^{168}\) It is the means by which man works for Allāh, strives towards Him, and draws near to Him.\(^{169}\) Allāh’s acceptance or rejection of man relies on the condition of his heart.\(^{170}\)

In addition, the good and evil qualities of a man’s external aspect are merely reflections of the condition of his heart—al-Ghazālī points out.\(^{171}\) Moreover, all members of the body are originally under the control of the heart and all follow its instructions.\(^{172}\)

In order to fully understand the relationship between the heart and the bodily members, al-Ghazālī specifies that the original purpose for which the heart is created is to travel over the spiritual stations (*manāzil*) to the meeting of Allāh.\(^{173}\) In its spiritual journey, the heart is in need of two essential things: the body as a mount and knowledge

---

as provisions.\textsuperscript{174} Thus, caring for the body and maintaining it is—al-Ghazālī believes—a necessity for fulfilling the original purpose of the heart.\textsuperscript{175} For this purpose, the heart is provided with the following helpers or soldiers (\textit{junūd}) according to al-Ghazālī’s terminology: First, for the need of feeding the body, the necessary appetites or desires (\textit{al-shahwāt}) are created in the heart, and the organs are created as their tools.\textsuperscript{176} Second, for protecting the body from destructive things, anger (\textit{ghaḍāb}) and the hand and foot, which function under the demands of anger, are created.\textsuperscript{177} Third, for knowing nourishment, the senses and the sense organs are created.\textsuperscript{178}

All these soldiers are originally submissive to the heart, but the soldiers of anger (\textit{ghaḍāb}) and desire (\textit{shahwah}) may, as al-Ghazālī explains,\textsuperscript{179} oppose it to the extent of dominating and enslaving it and thus becomes a real loser, as it is being cut off from its spiritual journey. However, the heart has other soldiers, namely knowledge (\textit{‘ilm}), wisdom (\textit{ḥikmah}), and reflection (\textit{tafakkūr}), which are provided—al-Ghazālī further explains—as helpers against anger (\textit{ghaḍāb}) and desire (\textit{shahwah}).\textsuperscript{180}

Furthermore, the unique characteristics of man’s heart are, according to al-Ghazālī, knowledge and will (\textit{irādah}) which are not found in animals.\textsuperscript{181} Al-Ghazālī illustrates that this will (\textit{irādah}) is different than that of desire (\textit{shahwah}) and can even be contrary to desire.\textsuperscript{182} Without this \textit{irādah}, the judgment of the intellect or reason (\textit{al-\textsuperscript{\textit{‘}aql}), which perceives the consequences of matters, would be wasted, because this
irādah is the spur that moves the bodily members according to the judgment of reason.\textsuperscript{183}

B. THE REAL PURPOSE OF MAN’S LIFE:

Another aspect of the reality of man, which is clarified by al-Ghazālī, is the real purpose of man’s life. This can be seen as a response to the people’s forgetfulness or failure to know the real purpose of their life, which resulted from their full busyness and engagement in worldly works, as mentioned above.

Al-Ghazālī’s account on this aspect is based on his rejection of some assumptions about the purpose of man’s life. Five of these assumptions are worth mentioning before presenting what is regarded the real purpose of life in the view of al-Ghazālī. The first is of those who think that the purpose of life is just to survive for some time, so they work hard to gain food and then eat to be able to work again and so on.\textsuperscript{184} The second assumption which is rejected by al-Ghazālī is of those who claim that the aim of this life is not to be exhausted by hard work, but rather to enjoy life by satisfying the desires for food and sex, which in their view is the ultimate happiness.\textsuperscript{185} The third wrong assumption in the view of al-Ghazālī is of those who think that achieving happiness is the purpose of life and it consists in gaining big wealth, so they work day and night for this purpose.\textsuperscript{186} The fourth view about the purpose of life, which al-Ghazālī rejects, is of those who assume that widespread fame is what brings happiness in this life, so they exhaust themselves in gaining money not to spend it on food but in getting expensive things in order to attract attention and seen to be wealthy.\textsuperscript{187} The fifth rejected assumption is of those who claim that happiness is not about gaining respect and

\textsuperscript{184} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā‘}, Vol. 3, p. 228.
\textsuperscript{186} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā‘}, Vol. 3, p. 229.
influence, so their efforts are directed towards gaining wide political authorities so that their orders would be followed.\textsuperscript{188}

Totally unlike these assumed purposes of life, the real purpose of life according to the teachings of al-Ghazālī is to prepare for being qualified for attaining the otherworldly happiness, which is, he believes, the true ultimate aim of man and is the true blessing as it consists of life without death (\textit{baqā’ lā fanā’a lah}), joy without sorrow (\textit{surūr lā ghamma fīh}), knowledge without ignorance (\textit{‘ilm lā jahla ma’ah}), and wealth without poverty (\textit{ghinā lā faqra ba‘dah}).\textsuperscript{189}

C. THE TRUE PERFECTION OF MAN:

A further aspect of the reality of man which is illuminated by al-Ghazālī is the true perfection of man. Although al-Ghazālī admits that evilness is part of human nature,\textsuperscript{190} he believes that man can achieve true perfection in this life.\textsuperscript{191}

However, as in the case of man’s purpose of life, the true perfection of man was—as al-Ghazālī noticed—widely confused with fancied perfection.\textsuperscript{192} For the purpose of unveiling the truth on this critical matter, al-Ghazālī devoted a section in the \textit{Ihyā’} titled: “Exposing real perfection and fancied (\textit{wahmī}) perfection which is not real.” In this section he sets criteria for true perfection.

For al-Ghazālī what forms true perfection of man are the qualities that are characterised by both eternality in a sense of accompanying man’s soul after death, and usefulness in the Afterlife in a sense of bringing man’s soul nearer to Allāh.\textsuperscript{193} Based

\textsuperscript{188} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 229.
\textsuperscript{189} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihyā’}, Vol. 4, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{190} See, al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihyā’}, Vol. 4, pp. 3 & 44.
\textsuperscript{192} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 282.
\textsuperscript{193} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 284.
on these criteria, al-Ghazālī explains that man’s true perfection has three aspects. The first is the perfection of knowledge that consists of knowing Allāh, His attributes, His works, and His wisdom in the creations. The second aspect of perfection is power that is needed only as a mean to knowledge. The third aspect of perfection is freedom (hurrīyah) from enslavement to carnal desires.

In light of this concept of perfection, al-Ghazālī states that most people are concerned with what they mistakenly think is perfection, namely fame, and wealth which are not eternal.

4.3.2 Guiding to the Way of Being Free from Love of the Dunyā:

Since love of the dunyā (purely worldly pleasure) is a very dangerous cause of fāsād, as explained earlier, al-Ghazālī paid considerable attention to attempting to show how to be free from this love. His effort can be divided into two major thrusts: the first is the explication of the reality of the dunyā and the second is the illustration of the true nature of death and the Afterlife.

4.3.2.1 Explicating the Reality of the Dunyā:

In the Iḥyā’, al-Ghazālī explicates the dispraise (dhamm) of the dunyā, its reality, its features, the need of it, and the way by which it deceives people. By this detailed explanation, he aims to warn from the harm of the dunyā so that it can be avoided. In his view, to remove its harmful love from the heart it is not enough that its lovers know the dispraise of the dunyā but also they should know what is meant by the dispraised...
dunyā and how to distinguish between that which should be avoided in it from that which should not be shunned.\textsuperscript{198}

The dispraised dunyā, al-Ghazālī explains, is every purely worldly desire that would not have any fruit in the Afterlife at all,\textsuperscript{199} and is called hawā\textsuperscript{200} (base desire). Consequently, he excludes two types of worldly desires from the dispraised dunyā: any desire in the worldly life the fruit of which continues into the Afterlife, and every desire that is necessary for survival and health in this life, unless the intention behind it is purely worldly.\textsuperscript{201}

Attempting to show to what extent the dunyā in this sense is dispraised, al-Ghazālī quotes and comments on numerous influential citations from Prophetic traditions (akhbār), non-Prophetic exempla (āthār), and exhortations (mawā‘īz) which dispraise the dunyā.\textsuperscript{202} He, however, does not quote from the Qurʾān because, as he points out, the āyāt on this theme are so many and so obvious to be cited.\textsuperscript{203}

In order to explain how the dunyā deceives people, al-Ghazālī illustrates some remarkable features of it using imaginary examples.\textsuperscript{204} Among these imaginary examples are:

- In its quick and invisible movement, the dunyā like shadow appears still, but in reality it is moving continuously, and its movement is not noticed except when it disappears.\textsuperscript{205}

- In its unnoticed decisiveness, the dunyā is similar to confused dreams in that their decisiveness is not realized except after awakening.\textsuperscript{206}

\textsuperscript{198} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{200} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 222.
\textsuperscript{201} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{205} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 214.
• In its enmity for its people and its dreadful harm, the \textit{dunyā} is like a woman
  who attracts men to marry her, but kills them after they do.\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 214.}
• In that its appearance does not reflect its evil essence, the \textit{dunyā} is like an
  elderly woman who puts on adornments to deceive people by her look.\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 215.}

Following these and other imaginary examples of the \textit{dunyā}, al-Ghazālī exposes
how people have become fully engaged in the \textit{dunyā} and how they have misunderstood
the purposes of this life and have thus gone astray.\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihyā’}, Vol. 3, pp. 224-30.} To fulfil this aim, al-Ghazālī first
classifies the substances\footnote{According to al-Ghazālī, “all what is on earth can be classified into three sections: mineral, plants, and
Second, he specifies their relationships with man: a relation with the heart (\textit{al-qalb}),
i.e., his love for them, and another relation with the body, i.e., being busy in making
them usable.\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 224.} Third, he discusses in detail the causes, the needs, and the consequences
of the crafts and careers generated from the second relation of man with the substances
of the \textit{dunyā}.\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihyā’}, Vol. 3, pp. 225-8.} Finally, he gives various examples of people whose way of thinking
had been spoiled by the full engagement in the works of the \textit{dunyā}, and thus hold false
views about how to live in this life.\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihyā’}, Vol. 3, pp. 228f.}

Al-Ghazālī also clarifies the real purpose of this world by repeated reminder that
this world is only the sowing-ground of the next (\textit{al-dunyā mazra’tu al-ākhirah}).\footnote{See, for example, al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 58.}
From this aspect, the world is very essential: it is a venue for the happiness in the
Afterlife, which is the only complete or perfect happiness in the teachings of al-
Ghazālī, as stated earlier. In order to gain this happiness, however, its necessary means
need to be achieved in this life.\textsuperscript{216} This is why each breath in this life is considered by al-Ghazālī as “a precious jewel which does not have an equivalent substitute.”\textsuperscript{217}

Based on this discussion, it is wrong to assume, as al-Ghazālī explains, that hating the \textit{dunyā} is intended in itself.\textsuperscript{218} He believes that the perfect position to adopt regarding the \textit{dunyā} is neither to hate nor to love it, as both distract from the love of Allāh.\textsuperscript{219}

He also believes that the way of totally removing the love of the \textit{dunyā} from the heart is by patiently living an abstinent (\textit{zuhd})\textsuperscript{220} life.\textsuperscript{221}

The above account, however, is only a general treatment for the malady of love of the \textit{dunyā}, and since the \textit{dunyā} consists, as al-Ghazālī states,\textsuperscript{222} of various elements, he also gives a detailed treatment for each primary element which is considered an aspect of the love the \textit{dunyā}. Among these primary elements is, for example, love of wealth (\textit{al-māl}), which al-Ghazālī discusses in a considerable detail.\textsuperscript{223}

\subsection*{4.3.2.2 Illustrating the true Nature of Death and the Afterlife:}

In addition to explicating the reality of the \textit{dunyā}, al-Ghazālī illustrates the true nature of death and the Afterlife in the concluding \textit{kitāb} (book) of the \textit{Iḥyā’} as an attempt to awaken the heedless lovers of the \textit{dunyā}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{216} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 4, p. 103. For a detailed discussion of these means, see Abul Quasem, \textit{The Ethics of al-Ghazālī: A Composite Ethics in Islam}, Selangor (Malaysia): Central Printing Sendirian Berhad, 1976, pp. 58-64.
\item \textsuperscript{217} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 4, p. 394.
\item \textsuperscript{218} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 4, p. 192.
\item \textsuperscript{219} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 4, pp. 191f.
\item \textsuperscript{220} al-Ghazālī defines \textit{zuhd} as a state in which man controls his desires (\textit{shahawāt}) and anger (\textit{ghadab}) so that they follow the motive (\textit{bā'ith}) of \textit{dīn} and the signal (\textit{ishārah}) of faith (\textit{imān}), see al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 4, p. 79.
\item \textsuperscript{221} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 4, p. 316.
\item \textsuperscript{222} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 3, p. 231.
\item \textsuperscript{223} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā’}, Vol. 3, pp. 231-52. For an extended discussion of this aspect, though in an ethical context, see Abul Quasem, \textit{The Ethics}, pp. 127-9.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
After refuting three false and mistaken notions about the nature of death, al-Ghazālī exposes death as only a change in the state of man in which the spirit (al-rūḥ) after leaving the body—i.e., the body is no longer subject to its dictates—is not extinguished but rather it will continue to survive either in a condition of torment or bliss.\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā‘}, Vol. 4, pp. 493f, trans., see T. J. Winter, \textit{The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife}, translation of \textit{Kitāb Dhikr al-Mawt wa-ma Ba‘dah} of al-Ghazālī’s \textit{Iḥyā‘}, Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1989, p. 122.} Between the states of death and life, he continues, there are two differences: The first is that man upon death is deprived of all his bodily parts as he is deprived from all of his belongings and relatives and the second is that certain things which have never been disclosed to man in life are going to be revealed to him after death.\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā‘}, Vol. 4, p. 494, trans., see Winter, \textit{The Remembrance}, pp. 123f.}

In addition to this exposition of the true nature of death, al-Ghazālī covers, in the same \textit{kitāb}, other topics related to death, its preludes and consequences, and the conditions of the next world, so that, as he states, “this may act as an encouragement to preparedness.”\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā‘}, Vol. 4, p. 494, trans., see Winter, \textit{The Remembrance}, p. 2.} This is because, he believes, “preparation for something can never be easy unless its memory is constantly renewed in the heart, and this can only be done through reminding oneself by paying attention to those things which cause it to be recalled and by looking to those matters which tell of it.”\footnote{al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā‘}, Vol. 4, p. 494, trans., see Winter, \textit{The Remembrance}, p. 2.}

\subsection*{4.3.3 Introducing Measures to Strengthen the Impulse of Religion:}

To resolve weakness of the impulse of religion (bā‘ith al-dīn), al-Ghazālī introduces measures by which this impulse or motive is strengthened. In his view, this can be strengthened in two primary ways: a) Reflecting on the fruits of struggling against (mujāhadah) what oppose the impulse of dīn, i.e., the desires (al-shahawāt);
and b) training the will-power (*quwwat al-*irādah) gradually to overcome the desires by acting against them.  

In addition to these measures, al-Ghazālī suggests a negative way to strengthen this impulse. That is weakening the motive of passion (*bā‘ith al-*hawā*), against which the impulse of *dīn* continuously struggles; the weaker the motive of passion becomes, the stronger the strength of *dīn* would be, and vice versa, as al-Ghazālī teaches us.  

According to al-Ghazālī’s teachings, the motive of passion is weakened by self-disciplining, as shall be further explained below.

### 4.3.4 Withstanding the Innate Stimuli of *Fasād*:

Al-Ghazālī discusses how to withstand the innate stimuli of *fasād*, when he deals with what he calls the disciplining of the soul (*riyādat al-nafs*). Since the teachings of al-Ghazālī on this form of disciplining are going to be discussed below under the means of treating sickness of the heart, it seems better to postpone the discussion on this point till then.

### 4.4 Al-Ghazālī’s *Islāhī* Treatments of the Phenomena of *Fasād*:

In addition to his attempts to eradicate the roots of the *fasād*, al-Ghazālī was predominantly concerned, at this stage in his life under study, with treating the phenomena of *fasād* diagnosed by him. The purpose of this section is to show how al-Ghazālī treated these phenomena. For each phenomenon mentioned above, particular treatments are evident in al-Ghazālī’s works of *islāhī* nature, as will be shown below.
4.4.1 Prescribing Remedies for the Weakness of Imān:

After analysing the four reasons behind the phenomenon of widespread weakness and laxity of imān (Islamic faith) as mentioned above, al-Ghazālī mentions in the Munqidh four remedies for this phenomenon.\textsuperscript{230}

The first treatment is for those who were perplexed by the teachings of the Ta’līmites or Baṭīnīs. The treatment for them is, al-Ghazālī says, “what we have mentioned in our book al-Qistās al-Mustaqīm (The Correct Balance).”\textsuperscript{231} In al-Qistās, al-Ghazālī records an argumentative dialog between him and a Baṭīnī who questioned him and disputed with him over the true balance by which true knowledge is perceived. The dialog starts with the following question from the Baṭīnī:

“I see that you claim the perfection of knowledge. By what balance, then, is true knowledge perceived? Is it by the balance of independent reasoning (al-ra'y) and analogy (al-qiyās)? But that is extremely contradictory and ambiguous and is the cause of disagreement among men. Or is it by the balance of authoritative instruction (al-ta'lim)? In this case you would be obliged to follow the infallible Teacher-Imām—but I do not see you desirous of seeking him out.”\textsuperscript{232}

After totally rejecting balancing true knowledge by independent reasoning and analogy, al-Ghazālī states that he weighs knowledge by the “correct balance” following the Qur’ān\textsuperscript{233} [Q.17:35]. According to him, this balance consists of five Qur’ānic scales of knowledge.\textsuperscript{234}

By being asked about the way by which he knew the correctness of this balance, al-Ghazālī answers:

\textsuperscript{230} al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, pp.124-31, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, pp. 93-8, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 77-85.
\textsuperscript{231} al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p.124, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 93, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 77.
“I also know that by authoritative teaching (al-ta’lim) but from the Imām of Imāms Muḥammad b. ‘Abd-Allāh b. ‘Abd-Al-Muṭalib (S.A.A.W.). For I, though I do not see him, hear his teaching which has come to me through impeccable transmission (tawātur) which I cannot doubt. His teaching is simply the Qurʾān, and the clearness of the correctness of the Qurʾān’s scales is known from the Qurʾān itself.”

Following that, he explains in detail each of the five scales by elucidating its meaning, its standard, and its use in argumentation. Then, he mentions examples of the scales by which Baṭīnīs weighed their arguments and he highlights their falsity. Finally, he discusses the dispersion by Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.A.W.) and the ‘ulamā’ from any other imām.

The second treatment targets those who offer one of the specious arguments of the Latitudinarians (Ahl al-Ibāḥah) as an excuse for the slackness of their faith. Al-Ghazālī says in the Munqidh: “as for the fanciful assertions of the Latitudinarians (Ahl al-Ibāḥah), we have listed their specious arguments under seven categories and resolved them in our book Kīmyā’ al-Saʾādah (The Alchemy of Happiness).”

The third treatment is directed to those “whose faith has become corrupt through philosophy to the extent of rejecting the very principal of prophesy (nubūwah).”

---

237 al-Ghazālī, al-Qisṭās, pp. 48f, trans., see McCarthy, “the Correct Balance,” pp. 264f.
239 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 124, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 93, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 77.
240 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 124, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 93, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 77.
For them, al-Ghazālī discusses in the Munqidh the true nature of prophesy and its existence.

This discussion is founded on the main argument of al-Ghazālī that man goes into various stages in perception, and in each stage he perceives particular categories of existents by specific means of perception. Al-Ghazālī lists eight stages of perception:

1. The stage of touching in which certain categories of existents are perceived such as heat and cold, moisture and dryness, smoothness and roughness.
2. The stage of sighting in which colours and shapes are perceived.
3. The stage of hearing of sounds and tones.
4. The stage of tasting.
5. The stage of perceiving the other sensibles.
6. The stage of discernment (tamyīz) at nearly the age of seven, in which things additional to the world of sensibles are perceived.
7. The stage of perceiving through the intellect (al-ʿaql), in which things necessary, possible, and impossible that do not occur in the previous stages are apprehended.
8. The stage of perceiving through prophecy, in which things beyond the ken of intellect are seen, i.e., the unseen (al-ghayb).

Against the doubt of some intellectuals about the existence of things perceptible through prophecy, al-Ghazālī states that they do not have any supporting reason except that they have not attained that stage themselves. Moreover, he presents two further
proofs for its existence. The first is that there is an analogous sample of the special character of prophecy; in that which is apprehended in dreaming.245 “For the sleeper perceives the unknown that will take place in the future, either explicitly or in the guise of an image, the meaning of which is disclosed by interpretation.”246 The second proof is that there is knowledge in the world of the same sort as that perceptible through prophesy; that is knowledge which could not conceivably be obtained by the intellect or observation alone, but can be acquired only by a divine inspiration.247 “For instance there are some astrological rules (ahkām nujūmīyah)248 based on phenomena which occur only once every thousands years; how, then, could knowledge of that be obtained empirically?”249

In addition to the above discussion, al-Ghazālī discusses the claim of those who verbally profess belief in prophecy, but equate the prescriptions of revelation with philosophic wisdom. According to al-Ghazālī, this is in reality a disbelief in prophecy because “faith in prophecy is to acknowledge the affirmation of a stage beyond reason: in it an eye penetrates whereby a special perception of certain perceptibles (mudrakāt khāṣah) is apprehended; from the perception of these, the intellect is excluded.”250

Attempting to convince them of the possibility of the existence of such prophetic perception, al-Ghazālī relies on proofs drawn from arguments which pertain to the philosophers’ own science. Setting forth examples of marvellous perceptions acknowledged by natural philosophers and astrologers as ‘special perceptions,’ al-

---

245 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, pp. 111f, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, pp. 84-5, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 64-6.
246 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 111, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 84, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 64.
247 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 112, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, pp. 84f, and also Watt, The Faith, pp. 65f.
248 This term has been mistranslated as ‘astronomical’ by both McCarthy (Deliverance, p. 85) and Watt (Watt, p. 65).
250 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 124, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 93, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 78.
Ghazālī wonders how those who are influenced by philosophers believe in such perception, while they deny the prophetic special perceptions which are confirmed by miracles!^{251}

The fourth treatment is devoted to tackling the weakness of faith resulting from scandalous conduct of the ‘ulamā’. This treatment consists of three lines of thought,^{252} which are summarized as follows:

1. The ‘ālim^{253} who commits forbidden deeds knows that such deeds are prohibited, and yet he does so because his desire overcomes him as in the case of an ordinary man.

2. The ordinary man ought to believe that the ‘ālim can be brought to safety even if he leaves some duties undone because of the merit of his knowledge, though it might be additional evidence against him. But the ordinary man has no intercessor whatsoever if he gives up good works.

3. True knowledge stands between the learned man and commission of sins, except slips from which, in moments of weakness, no man is free. This sort of knowledge, however, is not attained by means of the various types of knowledge with which most people busy themselves.

4.4.2 Teaching How to Cure Sickness of the Heart and Refine Character:

As an iślāhī response to the wide spread of sickness of the heart and bad characters, al-Ghazālī taught how to cure sickness of the heart and refine character. In the Iḥyā’, al-Ghazālī gives two accounts of how sickness of the heart can be treated and how the

---

^{251} al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, pp. 125-9, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, pp. 94-7, and also Watt, The Faith, pp. 78-83.

^{252} al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, pp. 130f, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, pp. 97f, and also Watt, The Faith, pp. 84f.

^{253} singular of ‘ulamā’.
traits of character may be refined: the first is general and the second is detailed. These
two accounts are briefly presented below. Before this, however, it is worth listing what
can be considered as guiding rules in al-Ghazālī’s treatment.

4.4.2.1 Setting out Guiding Rules for Curing Sickness of the Heart and
Refining Character:

Throughout the Iḥyā’, one comes across what can be considered as guiding rules or
principles for curing sickness of the heart and refining the character. The most striking
of such rules are the following:

1. Whenever the cause of a disease is not known, such disease cannot be cured,
because curing it is nothing but treating its causes.\(^{254}\)

2. The disease does not vanish unless its origins are suppressed or uprooted and
any other way of treating it is only an easement for it, but the disease appears
again and again.\(^{255}\)

3. There has to be a great deal of seriousness in treating a particular disease after
knowing its causes and danger.\(^{256}\)

4. The heart diseases should be treated one by one and in order.\(^{257}\)

5. Patience is an essential pillar in the treatment of sickness of the heart and
refining character.\(^{258}\)

6. Awareness of the harm of a disease, without will and strength, is not enough.\(^{259}\)

7. Every disease needs a special theoretical knowledge, as well as an empirical
action to treat it.\(^{260}\)

---

\(^{256}\) al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 3, p. 49.
\(^{257}\) al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 3, p. 64.
\(^{258}\) See, al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 4, pp. 49f.
\(^{259}\) al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 4, p. 63.
4.4.2.2 Providing a General Account for Curing Sickness of the Heart and Refining Character:

In the Ihyā’, al-Ghazālī gives the second “book” (kitāb) of the third “quarter” (rub‘) the following title: “The Book of Disciplining the Soul, Refining the Character, and Curing the Sicknesses of the Heart” (Kitāb Riyāḍat al-Nafs wa-Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa-Mu‘āla‘at Amrād al-Qulūb). The purpose of this kitāb, as al-Ghazālī himself clarifies, is not to mention the treatments for particular sickness of the heart or to give details about refining specific traits of character, but rather to teach in an overall way how to treat sickness of the heart and how the traits of character can be refined as an introduction to a more detailed discussion of this topic. The main points which show how al-Ghazālī fulfilled this purpose are presented below under the following subheadings.

A. Unveiling the True Nature of Good and Bad Character:

To unveil the true nature of good and bad character, al-Ghazālī first examines some of previous sayings on what good character is, and concludes that they only treat the fruit of good character, not its essence, and they do not even cover all of its fruits. Then, he defines a trait of character in general as follows: “a firmly established condition of the soul (hay‘ah rāṣikhah fī al-nafs), from which actions proceed easily without any need for thinking or deliberation.” Thus, a good character according to al-Ghazālī is a name given for this condition, if it causes beautiful and praiseworthy acts, i.e., those which are acknowledged by the intellect and the Sharī‘ah (Islamic

260 al-Ghazālī, Ihyā’, Vol. 4, p. 75.
Revealed Law), whereas a bad character trait is a name for the condition which causes ugly acts.\textsuperscript{264}

In the light of this definition, al-Ghazālī states that character is none of the following: a) the acts themselves, for there may be a man of generous character, for example, but does not make donation because of lack of wealth or any other obstacles; b) the ability to act, since every man has been created to be by disposition (fitrāh) capable of acting ugly or beautifully; and c) one’s knowledge of the beautiful and the ugly, for knowledge pertains to both in the same way.\textsuperscript{265}

To elucidate more, al-Ghazālī compares and contrasts between “creation” (khalq) and “character” (khuluq), as the former refers to the external form of man, while the latter refers to the inward or the internal form, but both forms can be either ugly or beautiful. Moreover, as man’s external appearance looks perfectly beautiful only when all his features are beautiful, so too in order to achieve beautiful character in all aspects, the following four pillars of man’s internal must all be beautiful, i.e., settled, balanced, and in the correct proportion to each other: the faculty of rationalness (quwwat al-‘ilm), the faculty of irascibleness (quwwat al-ghaḍab), the faculty of desire (quwwat al-shahwah), and the faculty which makes a just equilibrium between these three things (quwwat al-‘adl bayn hādhih al-quwā al-thalāthah).\textsuperscript{266}

B. SPECIFYING CRITERIA FOR GOOD CHARACTER:

For each of the four faculties mentioned above, al-Ghazālī specifies the criteria by which its goodness can be recognised:

“The faculty of rationalness (quwwat al-‘ilm) is sound and good when it is easily able to distinguish honesty from lies in speech, truth from falsehood in beliefs, and beauty from ugliness in actions. When this faculty is sound it bears fruit in the form of wisdom (hikmah), which is the chief of the good traits of character…Regarding the faculty of anger (quwwat al-ghadab), this is sound when its movements lie within the bounds required by wisdom. Likewise, the faculty of desire (quwwat al-shahwah) is sound and good when it is under the command of wisdom, by which I mean the command of the Shar’ (Islamic revealed law) and the intellect (al-‘aql). As for the faculty of making a just equilibrium (quwwat al-‘adl), it is this which sets desire and anger under the command of the intellect and the Shar’.”

C. PROVING THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING THE TRAITS OF CHARACTER:

In this general account, al-Ghazālī also proves that the traits of character are susceptible to change. This is his response to the claim of those who state that “the traits of a man’s character cannot conceivably be refined, and that human nature is immutable.” He states that their claim, which is due to their deficiency, remissness, foulness, and slothness, may be supported by two things: firstly, as the created outward form (khalq) of man cannot be changed, and so is the case with the inward form, i.e., character (khuluq), secondly, goodness of character requires suppression of one’s desire and anger, which are part of human nature, and thus this, as tested by means of a long inward struggle, is impossible.

In order to refute this view and unveil the reality of this matter, al-Ghazālī adduces the following points in support of the possibility of changing the traits of character:

- All commandments, discipline, and teachings would be useless, if the traits of character were unchangeable.

Since it is possible to change even the character of an animal through training, how could such change be denied with respect to man.

Although anger and desire cannot be suppressed and dominated completely, yet they can be rendered docile by means of self-discipline.

Al-Ghazālī, however, admits that men’s temperaments vary in their susceptibleness. This, al-Ghazālī explains, depends on two factors: the first is the original strength of man’s instinct (gharīzah) and its existing time length. The second factor for this disparity is the degree to which man acts in accordance with his traits of character—as they are reinforced by acting accordingly—and the degree of his satisfaction with them. Accordingly, al-Ghazālī classifies people into four degrees: a) Those who are simply innocent (ghufl), but not indulged into desires and thus their character can be refined in a very short time; b) those who know evilness and know they are not acting righteously as they should, but still follow their desires as they are controlled by them; the refining of the character of such people is possible but it is more intractable than the first; c) those who regard evil character as right; the reforming of such people is almost impossible and very rare; and d) those who, due to their being reared with corrupted way of thinking and work accordingly, believe that merit lies in evilness; they are the most difficult to reform.

D. DEMONSTRATING WAYS FOR DISCOVERING THE FAULTS OF THE SELF:

Since discovering the faults of the self or the soul, according to al-Ghazālī, is a prerequisite for treating them, he teaches four ways by which a man may discover the faults which acquire his soul (‘uyūb nafsih):275

1. Being a disciple of a Shaykh (spiritual master) who is insightful into the faults of the soul so that the Shaykh will ascertain his faults.

2. Appointing a truthful, perceptive, and a religious friend to be his overseer so that he draws his attention to his dislikeable traits.

3. Listening to what his enemies say about him, for a hostile eye brings out defects (‘ayn al-ṣukḥt tubdī al-masāwiyyā).

4. Mixing with people and attributing to one-self their blameworthy traits, because men’s temperaments are very similar.

However, al-Ghazālī admits that the first two ways are hardly accessible in his age: such Shaykh is hardly to be found, and it is rare to find a friend who is neither a flatterer concealing some of your defects, nor jealous, so considering something a fault when it is not.276

E. OFFERING MEANS FOR CHARACTER’S REFINING AND THE SOUL’S PURIFICATION:

Although al-Ghazālī believes that some people may possess good character naturally through Divine grace, such as being born with good character, he suggests in this general account other means of refining character and purifying the heart. A primary mean suggested by al-Ghazālī is spiritual struggle (mujāhadah) and self-training (riyādah) in a sense of “constraining of the self to perform the actions which

necessarily proceed from the required trait.” For example, the arrogant man who wishes to possess the quality of modesty should struggle against his self in imitating the behaviour of the modest for a long time, until modesty becomes part of his nature and delightful to him.

Refining character and purifying the soul may also be achieved by renouncing everything one finds blameworthy in others. Al-Ghazālī considers this a very effective way of self-discipline. He tells us that “were all people only to renounce the things they dislike in others, they would not need anyone to discipline them.”

The best mean of all in the view of al-Ghazālī is to be a disciple of a qualified Shaykh in self refinement and to follow his instructions in disciplining (mujāhadah). For al-Ghazālī all other means are just alternatives for the one who does not have a Shaykh, but the one who finds such a qualified Shaykh, he “should stay with him, for it is he who will deliver him from his sickness.”

4.4.2.3 Giving a Detailed Account for Treating Sickness of the Heart and Blameworthy Character:

The detailed treatment of al-Ghazālī of sickness of the heart and blameworthy character generally consists of two parts: theoretical and practical. As al-Ghazālī repeatedly states, there is no treatment for any heart disease except through theoretical knowledge (‘ilm) and empirical action (‘amal), or in other words a mixture of the two. These two parts are broadly illustrated in the following lines.

---

282 See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Ihya‘*, Vol. 3, pp. 196 & 358.
283 al-Ghazālī, *Ihya‘*, Vol. 4, p. 75.
Although knowledge in general is a treatment for sickness of the heart, each heart disease or blameworthy character needs a specific type of knowledge according to al-Ghazālī’s teaching. Thus, he teaches in the Iḥyāʾ the detailed knowledge required to cure a number of major heart diseases. His account on such knowledge commonly consists of the following: (1) a collection of numerous passages—selected from the Qurʾān, the Ḥadith, and the dicta of the early Muslim generation—on condemnation of the disease, (2) explanations of the disease and the causes of it, and (3) exposition of its harmful effects.

In addition to the theoretical part, al-Ghazālī gives practical prescriptions for treating each of the heart diseases or blameworthy character discussed in the Iḥyāʾ.

### 4.4.3 Providing a Guiding Reference for True Religiousness:

To treat spurious religiousness, al-Ghazālī provides a guide to true religiousness in the Iḥyāʾ. The introduction of the book indicates that the book is intended to be a comprehensive reference for a true religious life. Moreover, throughout the book al-Ghazālī is very concerned to set standards for a true religious man in almost all aspects of his life, including those which relate to his inward self, those which regard his relation with God, and those which concern his relation with his fellow-men.

### 4.4.4 Reviving the Knowledge of Commanding Good and Forbidding Wrong:

Responding to the main cause behind the phenomenon of the wide spread of public wrongs (*munkarāt*) mentioned above, al-Ghazālī devotes a whole *kitāb* in the Iḥyāʾ to

---

the duty of commanding right and forbidding wrong (al-amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar). Following his announcement of the near-absence of anyone seeking to revive the knowledge and practice of this vital duty, al-Ghazālī states that he shall teach its knowledge in four chapters, indicating a revival of it. The first chapter is on the obli-gatoriness of the duty, its merits, and the condemnation of ignoring it, as indicated in the Qur’ān, the Ḥadith, and the dicta of early Muslim generation. The second chapter discusses the four pillars (arkān) of the duty—which are the performer of the duty, the incident in which the duty shall be performed, the wrongdoer to whom the duty shall be directed, and how to perform the duty—and the conditions (shurūt) of each pillar. The third chapter lists some representative selection of “common wrongs in customs” (al-munkarāt al-ma’lūfah fī al-ʿādāt), as was referred to earlier. The fourth chapter focuses on how to perform the duty when the wrongdoer is an emir or a sultan.

In addition to theoretically reviving the knowledge of this duty, al-Ghazālī performed the duty himself, particularly against the wrongs committed by some sultans and viziers of the time, as will be demonstrated below.

4.4.5 Refuting Widespread Innovations and Warning from their Drawbacks:

As a response to the spread of the three forms of heretic innovations mentioned above, al-Ghazālī occupied himself, particularly at the islāḥī point in his career, with

---

289 al-Ghazālī, Ḥiyā', Vol. 2, pp. 312-35.
290 al-Ghazālī, Ḥiyā', Vol. 2, pp. 335-42.
refuting them and warning of their drawbacks. Starting with the first form, which is Sufic heretic ecstasy (shaṭah), al-Ghazālī strongly attacks in the Iḥyāʾ such form of innovation and warns from its harmful consequences.292 Moreover, he states in the Munqidh that he has explained in his book al-Maṣṣad al-Asnā (The Noblest Aim) the nature of the error in such Sufic ecstatic utterances, namely oneness or unity (ittiḥād) with God, and inherence or incarnation (ḥulūl).293 In the Maṣṣad, al-Ghazālī clearly asserts that the claim of unity between man and God is obviously false, because unification between any two similar essences is impossible and it is more impossible when it applies to different essences such as black colour and knowledge, to say nothing of much greater different essences as those of man and God.294 Similarly, he asserts that inherence (ḥulūl) in the sense that the Lord inheres in man and man inheres in the Lord is also impossible because “anything which is self-subsisting cannot inhere in something else which is self-subsisting save in terms of the proximity that may exist between bodies; if inherence is inconceivable in respect of two men, then how is it conceivable between man and the Lord Most High.”295

As regard to the second form, which is Philosophic heresy, al-Ghazālī states in the Munqidh that the refutation of this form of innovation is the subject matter of his book Tahāfut al-Falāsifah (The Incoherence of the Philosophers),296 which was composed prior to the stage under study and thus is beyond the focus of this chapter.

What concerns us here, however, is al-Ghazālī’s response regarding this innovation in his works belonging to his late career. Generally speaking, al-Ghazālī in these works,

293 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 107, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 82, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 61.
particularly in the *Munqidh*, concerns himself much with warning from the drawbacks which may arise from dealing with philosophy. In the *Munqidh*, he records the drawbacks which he believes resulted from or are connected with the six divisions of philosophical sciences at the time, i.e., mathematics, logic, physics or natural science, theology or metaphysics, politics, and ethics.\(^{297}\)

Although he believes that mathematical sciences deal with demonstrated facts (*umūr burhānīyah*) which cannot be denied and nothing in them entails denial or affirmation of religious matters, yet he finds two drawbacks connected to them.\(^{298}\) The first is that by admiring the fine precision of their details and the clarity of their proofs, one may wrongly assume that all sciences of the ancient philosophers have the same degree of preciseness and thus blindly follow them, even in their metaphysical views contradicting religion, refusing to admit that their arguments in mathematical topics are apodictic (*burhānī*), whereas those in metaphysical questions are conjectural (*takhmīnī*).\(^{299}\) Because of this drawback, al-Ghazālī warns off anyone who would embark upon the study of these mathematical sciences.\(^{300}\) In the *Ihyāʾ*, however, he classifies them as permissible and thus no one should be barred from studying them, except the weak-minded person who by studying them might step over into blameworthy sciences and heretic innovations, like most of those who devoted themselves to these sciences as noted by al-Ghazālī.\(^{301}\) The second drawback connected to these sciences derives from an ignorant friend of Islam who rejects all sciences ascribed to the philosophers, accusing them of ignorance therein and claiming that all

---


\(^{300}\) al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 80, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 64, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 34.

their sciences contradict with the *Sharī'ah*, even their theory of the eclipses of the sun and the moon.\(^{302}\) Al-Ghazālī accuses anyone who supposes that Islam is defended by the denial of these sciences of committing a great crime against religion because this denial leads those who have knowledge of such matters to believe that Islam is based on ignorance and the denial of apodeictic proof.\(^{303}\)

Similarly, while asserting that nothing in the logical sciences should be denied, al-Ghazālī states that those who admire the apodeictic demonstrations therein may think that the infidel doctrines of the philosophers are backed up by similar demonstrations and thus hasten into unbelief.\(^{304}\)

With regard to physical sciences, he concludes that nothing therein should be rejected except certain points which he mentioned in the *Tahāfut*.\(^{305}\)

Turning to metaphysical sciences, al-Ghazālī argues that they include most of the errors of the philosophers, because they could not satisfy the conditions of proof they lay down in logic.\(^{306}\)

As regard to political sciences, he argues that the philosophers “took them from the Divine scriptures revealed to the prophets and from the maxims handed down by the predecessors of the prophets.”\(^{307}\) Similarly, he argues that the philosophers took the ethical sciences from the teachings of the mystics, and mixed them with their own doctrines in order to promote the circulation of their own false doctrines using the lustre

\(^{302}\) al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, p. 80, trans., see McCarthy, *Deliverance*, p. 64, and also Watt, *The Faith*, p. 34.


afforded by these mystic teachings. According to al-Ghazālī, from this practice of incorporating prophetic and mystic teachings in the philosophers’ books, two wrong tendencies arise. The first is in the case of those who totally eschew these teachings and even blame anyone who cites from them, assuming that they are erroneous since they are recorded in the philosophers’ books and mixed with their false doctrines. Al-Ghazālī strongly criticizes this tendency, and accuses its adherents of being weak-minded who measure the truth by men and not vice versa. The second wrong tendency is in the case of those who through approving and accepting the prophetic and mystic teachings, which are mixed with the philosophers own doctrines, form a high opinion of the philosophers and thus may readily accept their false doctrines.

Concerning the third form of heretic innovation, which is esoteric interpretation of Baṭinīs, al-Ghazālī summarizes his refutation to this innovation in the Munqidh.

The starting point in his refutation is his acknowledgment of the Baṭinīs’ argument on the need for an authoritative infallible teacher. Opposing their claim of the hidden Imām, al-Ghazālī asserts that this infallible teacher must be the Prophet (S.A.W.). Following that, he answers all of their possible objections. Next, he explains how they deceive common folk and weak-minded people by effectively proving the need for an authoritative teacher and his teaching, until such people concede to them that much and

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
ask them for some of his teaching, then they pause and say go and search for it yourself, knowing that if they were to say anything more, they would be put to shame as they would be unable to resolve even the least problematic matters.\textsuperscript{316}

### 4.4.6 Renewing the Mission of True ‘Ulamā’:

Al-Ghazālī made every effort to renew the mission of true ‘ulamā’, as an islāḥī reaction to the fasād of the vast majority of the ‘ulamā’, which he considered a crucial phenomenon of fasād in his time as shown above. The foundation of his effort in this regard is his determined attempt to set standards for true ‘ulamā’ or those whom he calls ‘ulamā’ al-ākhira (otherworldly scholars), and to distinguish between them and those who only apparently resemble them. He clearly states in the Ihyā that “one of the great tasks is to know the signs which distinguish between ‘ulamā’ al-dunyā (worldly scholars) and ‘ulamā’ al-ākhira (otherworldly scholars).”\textsuperscript{317}

By ‘ulamā’ al-dunyā, he means those “whose sole purpose in pursuing knowledge is enjoying the pleasure of this life and gaining fame (jāh) and status (manzilah) among its people.”\textsuperscript{318} Following this definition, he quotes a number of traditions condemning such ‘ulamā’ and concludes that they “will occupy a more inferior position and will receive a more severe punishment than the ignorant person.”\textsuperscript{319} Conversely, the true ‘ulamā’, or ‘ulamā’ al-ākhira (otherworldly learned men), “will be the winners and will be brought close to God.”\textsuperscript{320}


To distinguish them from the ‘ulamā’ of the dunyā, al-Ghazālī mentions twelve signs or characteristics of the ‘ulamā’ of the ākhiraḥ. Al-Ghazālī’s reference in specifying these signs are the qualities of the true ‘ulamā’ of the early blessed generation (al-salaf). He states that each one of these signs “represents several qualities of the ‘ulamā’ of the early blessed generation (al-salaf).”

These signs are summarised as follows:

1. They do not seek the worldly desires by their knowledge, rather they give the Hereafter the priority over the present world.

2. Their deeds do not contradict their words; they do not enjoin what they would not be the first to do.

3. Their concern is to obtain knowledge which is useful for the Hereafter and they avoid knowledge which is of little benefit or which leads to disputation.

4. They are not interested in luxurious life, but prefer moderation and are satisfied with the least of the necessary worldly things.

5. They try to distance themselves from sultans, avoid visiting them and being their associates as long as they can do so, for the present world is attractive and one who visits sultans may not help being smitten with it. “On the whole, mingling with them is the key to evils, while the way of the otherworldly ‘ulamā’ is circumspection.”

6. They do not to hasten to give fatwā (jurisprudence opinions), but rather avoid it whenever possible.

---


7. Most of their attention is directed toward knowledge of the inward (‘ilm al-bāṭīn) and spiritual development.

8. They are greatly concerned with strengthening their certitude (yaqīn).

9. They reflect signs of awe towards God in all aspects of their life.

10. They direct most of their study towards knowledge of practical religion (‘lm al-a‘māl) and what may corrupt the deeds as well as knowledge of the condition of the heart (qalb).

11. Their learning should depend on their insight and understanding with purity of heart, not books or taqlīd, for only the Prophet (S.A.A.W.) and his Companions are the ones who should be followed.

12. They strictly guard themselves from religious innovations, and not being deceived by people’s agreement on innovations contradicting with the norms of the time of the Companions.

The ‘ulamā‘ of such qualities occupy a very important position in the islāhī teachings of al-Ghazālī. He believes that their degree in religious dignity is second after the prophets.324 Thus, following the prophets, their real role is to be guides to the right path.325 And the extent in which they occupy themselves with islāḥ of their selves and others reflects the degree of their dignity.326

In addition, true ‘ulamā‘ are regarded by al-Ghazālī as the doctors of religion (atibā‘ al-dīn) for they deal with the knowledge of treating sickness of the heart (amrād al-qulūb).327 Accordingly, al-Ghazālī says that it is a must (fard ‘ayn) on all ‘ulamā‘ not only to treat the transgressors who seek treatment from them, but also to enlighten

324 al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā‘, Vol. 4, p. 98.
325 See, for example, al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā‘, Vol. 1, p. 2, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 3, and also Fāris, The Book of Knowledge, p. x.
326 al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā‘, Vol. 4, p. 98.
327 See, for example, al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā‘, Vol. 4, p. 50, trans., see Stern, al-Ghazzali on Repentance, p. 115.
those who are unaware of their transgression, and those who are ignorant in religion since those sick in the heart (marḍā al-qulūb) do not know about their illness.\textsuperscript{328} For this reason, al-Ghazālī necessitates that each ālim should become responsible for a particular area, instructing its inhabitants in their religion and distinguishing that which may harm them and make them miserable, from that which may benefit them and lead them to true happiness.\textsuperscript{329} The ālim, he states, must not wait to be approached and rather he “must devote himself to call the people, as the ‘ulamā’ are the heirs of the prophets and the prophets did not abandon the people to their ignorance, but instead, they called upon the people in their assemblies,…seeking them one by one in order to give them guidance.”\textsuperscript{330}

Al-Ghazālī considers the true ‘ulamā’ to be safeguards from wrong religious practices. On various occasions, al-Ghazālī necessitates the supervision of a qualified ālim in order guarantee true religiousness. For instance, to be safe from extravagance in scrupulousness (wara’), al-Ghazālī warns from engaging in details of wara’ without the consultation of an experienced ālim.\textsuperscript{331}

In addition to his substantial theoretical effort to renew the mission of true ‘ulamā’, al-Ghazālī tried seriously to be a good example of such ‘ulamā’ himself. In light of the discussion in the previous chapter about his life-experience, it can be stated that from the period of his self-islāḥ onwards, he was very concerned to meet the standards of true ‘ulamā’ which he specified. The testimony of his associate, al-Fārisī, about him, which has been quoted above, shows that his attempt in this regard was highly successful.

\textsuperscript{328} al-Ghazālī, Ihyā’, Vol. 4, p. 50, trans., see Stern, al-Ghazzali on Repentance, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{329} al-Ghazālī, Ihyā’, Vol. 4, p. 50, trans., see Stern, al-Ghazzali on Repentance, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{330} al-Ghazālī, Ihyā’, Vol. 4, p. 50, trans., see Stern, al-Ghazzali on Repentance, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{331} al-Ghazālī, Ihyā’, Vol. 1, p. 112.
After being successful with his self, al-Ghazālī occupied himself with bringing up and training a new generation of ‘ulamā’, who fulfil the mission of true ‘ulamā’. This was initially through his experience of teaching in the Nizāmīyah of Nīshāpūr and then by setting up a private madrasah and khāniqāh (sojourn), as has been shown in the previous chapter.

Besides all this effort, he concerned himself with advising and urging the ‘ulamā’, with whom he was contemporary, to undertake their supposed responsibilities and possess the attributes of true ‘ulamā’. This is clearly evident in a number of his letters directed to some ‘ulamā’ of his time. In his letter to a judge (qādī) in al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā, he writes “I would like to employ a rich counsel which I offer you as a gift from the learned,”332 and he goes on to advising him by saying:

“You should open your eyes and look into the future and find out what good deeds you have done for tomorrow. Remember none is more sympathetically inclined towards you than your own heart. Think deeply for a minute or two and decide what it is that you run after.”333

He warns him from being attracted to worldly temptations by stating:

“If you want to dig up wells or canals, think how many of them have fallen into ruins with time. If you intend to build a grand house, remember how fast the magnificent buildings, already erected have disappeared and if you want to lay out a beautiful garden read: “How many were the gardens and the water springs that they left behind. And the corn lands and the good sites and pleasant things wherein they took delight! Even so (it was) and we made it an inheritance for other folk: And the heaven and the earth wept not for them, nor were they reprieved.”(Q.44:22-5)…”334

---

He further warns him from being associated with the ruler: “God forbid, if you want to
serve the king, you should read this Ḥadīth: “On the Day of Resurrection the Kings
and the viziers would rise like ants from earth and the common folk would tread them
roughly under their feet.”335

4.4.7 Counselling Ruling Members and Forbidding their Wrongdoing:

The ruling members are given a considerable amount of attention in al-Ghazālī’s
islāḥī teaching. To adequately understand his islāḥī attitudes towards them, we need to
be acquainted with the following two starting points. The first is his idea about their
supposed role. According to him, “the state (al-mulk) and religion are twins; religion is
a foundation while the sultan is a guard, and whatever has no foundation is destroyed,
and whatever has no guard is lost.” Moreover, he believes that the degree of religious
dignity of just sultans or rulers comes immediately after the degree of the ‘ulamā’,
because they put right the life of people, while the ‘ulamā’ put right their religion.337 In
addition, he considers that being a just and sincere caliph or emir is one of the best
types of worship (min afdal al-‘ibādāt).338 Furthermore, he makes the rulers responsible
for vital islāḥī tasks. He, for example, demands that “all sultans must appoint, in each
village and quarter, a devout faqīh to instruct the people in their religion.”339

The second point, with which we need to be acquainted, is his opinion on the
association with them. In general, al-Ghazālī at his late age used to warn from
associating with the rulers or sultans, though, before his experience of self-islāḥ, he
used to frequently associate with them and even served as an ambassador between the

335 Abdul Qayyum, Letters of al-Ghazzali, p. 119.
336 al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 1, p. 17, trans., see McCall, “The Book of Knowledge,” p. 68, and also Fāris,
The Book of Knowledge, pp. 33-4.
337 al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 4, p. 98.
Seljuk Sultanate and the Abbasid Caliphate. He clarifies in the *Ihyāʾ* the risk of associating with them by stating the following:

“One who associates with them is not free from undertaking to seek their approval and to incline their hearts towards him, although they are unjust. Every religious person (*kul mutadayyin*) ought to disprove of them and straiten their bosoms by making their injustice obvious and by showing the foulness of their deeds. One who visits them either shows regard for their luxury and despises the grace of Allāh or he refrains from disapproving them. Then he becomes a dissimulator to them, or in his speech he pretends to please them and approve their condition, and that is clear calumny; or he longs to obtain some of their worldly goods, which is downright unlawful (*suḥr*).”

This explains why he vowed, while he was in Jerusalem, that he shall neither attend the court of a ruler, nor take any form of governmental emoluments.

Bearing in mind these two points, we turn now to al-Ghazālī’s *islāḥī* response to the *fasād* among contemporary ruling members. His response to that phenomenon of *fasād* can be classified into direct response and indirect response. The latter took the form of daring *fatwā* against the contemporary unjust sovereigns in general. A number of such *fatwā* appear in the *Ihyāʾ*. One of these, is his *fatwā* that the majority of the wealth (*amwāl*) of the sultans and militant men of the time is *ḥarām*, as stated earlier. Accordingly he forbids taking gifts from sultans except under strict conditions.

---

340 In one of his letters to the Sultan Sanjar, al-Ghazālī writes: “on several occasions I served as an ambassador on behalf of your father to the court of the ‘Abbāsid caliph Muqtadar Billāh and did all that was possible to remove certain misconceptions between the Seljūq Empire and the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate,” (Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, p. 28).


Similarly, he devotes a section of the book to discuss in detail what is lawful and unlawful with respect to mingling with unjust sultans.\textsuperscript{344}

The direct response of al-Ghazālī to the \textit{fasād} among contemporary ruling members is reflected in his letters to a number of Seljuk sovereigns,\textsuperscript{345} counselling them, urging them to fulfil their duties, warning them of letting any injustice to appear in the territories under their control, soliciting them to care for their subjects, and forbidding their wrongdoing. To vividly illustrate the \textit{islāhī} nature of his letters to those sovereigns, we shall quote selective extracts from three of his letters in the following lines.

In one of his letters to the Seljuq Vizier, Nizām al-Dīn Fakhr al-Mulk, he blames him of using flattering titles: “Be it known that the flattering titles conferred on men are a devilish invention and as such are improper for a pious Muslim to accept.”\textsuperscript{346} Urging him to control his lusts and passions, he continues: “According to the strict letter of Islam, the \textit{Amīr} is the one who rules with absolute authority over his lusts and passions.”\textsuperscript{347} He further advises him to be a practicing Muslim: “I, therefore, exhort you to live the ascetic life and fear God and lay upon a store of good works against the day of Reckoning.”\textsuperscript{348}

In another letter to the same vizier, he brings to his attention how bad the condition in Ṭūs was, due to famine and savage actions of the administrators, urging him to look after the welfare of the residents: “Let me tell you that this city was a howling wilderness due to famine and cruelty meted out to the inhabitants by all government officials...You should be merciful to your subjects and God would be merciful to

\textsuperscript{344} al-Ghazālī, \textit{Iḥyā‘}, Vol. 2, pp. 142-52.
\textsuperscript{345} As Brown rightly points out, “in the \textit{Fadā’il al-anām} alone we have twelve letters that al-Ghazālī wrote to viziers and five to military commanders,” (Brown, “The Last Days of al-Ghazālī,” p. 96).
\textsuperscript{346} Abdul Qayyum, \textit{Letters of al-Ghazzali}, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{348} Abdul Qayyum, \textit{Letters of al-Ghazzali}, p. 37.
you.” 349 After continuing his daring advice, he concludes his letter by stating: “Meditate on possibilities for an hour or two and think deeply upon the poor people, whose blood and sweat is being consumed by the Government officials…” 350

To another Seljuk vizier, Muḥīr al-Dīn, al-Ghazālī writes a letter of strong words, warning him from oppression and injustice: “Refrain from torturing the innocent masses or else great will be your disgrace from Allāh. If you want to escape this punishment, fight the forces of cruelty and injustice like a spiritual here and do not yield to their behests.” 351

---

CHAPTER FIVE
***************

ASSESSMENT OF AL-GHAZĂLĬ’S İṢLÂḤİ TEACHINGS

5.1 Introduction:

Having shown the extent of al-Ghazālī’s īṣlāḥī efforts in the previous chapter as objectively as I am able, now it is proper that I carry out a general assessment of his īṣlāḥī teachings, attempting to firstly discover the main strengths and weaknesses therein, and secondly to show how far they stand against main criticisms. By doing so, hopefully I will make a further key step towards the verification of the hypothesis of the present thesis.

Hoping to achieve this aim, the present chapter judges al-Ghazālī’s īṣlāḥī teachings in general, according to the following major criteria: (1) originality, (2) clarity, (3) deepness, (4) balance between individualism and collectivism, (5) realism and practicality, and (6) Islamic-justification.

With this selection of criteria, I certainly do not claim that I will conduct a full or detailed examination of al-Ghazālī’s īṣlāḥī teachings. This range of criteria, however, shall fulfil the purpose of the present chapter.

5.2 Originality:

It can be generally stated that originality characterizes al-Ghazālī’s īṣlāḥī teachings in the main. This is clearly reflected in his diagnosis of fasād above, which is mainly based on his own observation and reflection, as is evident in the many fresh
and contemporary examples provided in his examination of the roots and phenomena of *fasād* in his time. His lengthy list of the various deluded groups and his detailed explanation of how they were deluded, in the *Iḥyāʿ*, reflects his own wide observation and fresh reflection. His selection of the “Common Wrongs in Customs,” mentioned above, which includes various contemporary examples also shows his continuing dependence on his observation and reflection.

Another aspect of al-Ghazālī’s originality which is reflected in his diagnosis is his reliance on his own investigation. This is particularly visible in his approach to discovering the reasons behind the phenomenon of the widespread weakness and laxity of *imān* (Islamic faith). As has been mentioned above, he questioned for a period of time those who fell short in following the Islamic Revealed Law (*al-Sharīʿah*) and came out with his own conclusion.

The originality of al-Ghazālī is also reflected, to a great extent, in his treatments of the phenomena of *fasād*, which are supported by his fresh insights and unique reasoning. In fact it is typical of al-Ghazālī that he does not simply represent previous thoughts in the topics he discusses, rather he often highlights their shortcomings before he presents his own treatment. This makes his treatments very far from being blindly imitative to any previous ones. A good illustration of this is his discussion of the true nature of good and bad character, which is based on his critical examination of the views of his predecessors and on his highlighting of their shortcomings, as has been stated above.

Al-Ghazālī’s originality has greatly impressed a number of distinguished scholars in the East and West, to the extent that he has been considered by some as “the most

---

original thinker that Islām has produced.² This, however, may be challenged by the following. As is commonly known among the students of al-Ghazālī, his teachings contain various elements which are identical, in one way or another, to their counterparts in other earlier works, namely Sufi, philosophical, and religious sources. This has led some to accuse al-Ghazālī of plagiarism in a sense of copying from these sources without crediting them. In his book on al-Ghazālī’s critics and admirers, al-Qaraḍāwī³ lists this attitude,⁴ which he himself has noticed also, as one of the criticisms which have been raised by some of the contemporary Arab critics of al-Ghazālī.

This criticism is also popular among the orientalists; Arberry, for instance, criticizes al-Ghazālī of extensively plagiarising from Kitāb al-Tawahhum of al-Muḥāṣibī in the concluding Kitāb of the Iḥyā’.⁵ Likewise, in the brief entry on al-Makkī in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, Massignon writes that whole pages of his Qūt al-Qulūb⁶ have been copied by al-Ghazālī in the Iḥyā’.⁷ In a similar way, but without taking it as a judgment on al-Ghazālī’s ethical attitude, Lazurus-Yafeh states that “al-Ghazālī evidently copied not only ideas, images, proverbs, quotations and such like; he copied whole parts of books without mentioning the authors’ names.”⁸ Similarly, Margaret Smith, in her article entitled “The Forerunner of al-Ghazālī,” asserts that to al-Muḥāṣibī “al-Ghazālī owes much more of his teaching than has been generally realized, and much that has been attributed to al-Ghazālī as representing his original

⁴ For an apology for al-Ghazālī on this attitude, see al-Shāmī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī, pp. 169-73.
⁶ As it has been stated above (2.5.1), this book became one of the classical and original references for later Sufis.
ideas, are in fact based upon the earlier teaching of al-Muḥāṣibī and, in many instances, is directly borrowed from him.\textsuperscript{9}

All this apparently contradicts what have been stated about al-Ghazālī’s originality. For various reasons, however, it is difficult to follow those who make such accusations, and it cannot be taken as a postulate and without considerable reservation. The accusation, firstly, does not seem to consider the fact that the concept of plagiarism and the attitude towards it have changed over time; the criteria of this act in the current age is considerably different than that in al-Ghazālī’s time.\textsuperscript{10} Therefore, it is not a fair approach to use criteria which have been comparatively recently developed in judging works that belong to an age heavily relying on memorisation of knowledge by heart, and on oral transmission of it, as that of al-Ghazālī.

Secondly, in some places of his books, al-Ghazālī does indeed credit the sources from which he directly quotes.\textsuperscript{11} In his general account of condemning richness (\textit{al-ghinā}) and praising poverty (\textit{al-faqr}) in the \textit{Ihyā’}, for instance, he acknowledges borrowing al-Muḥāṣibī’s teaching on this topic and clearly states that it deserves to be quoted literally.\textsuperscript{12}

Thirdly, the approach of selecting particular passages from al-Ghazālī’s works and accusing him of copying them from other sources without looking to each work as a whole, leads, I argue, to misleading conclusions. However, by considering each of his works as a whole and then comparing it with the earlier sources which he consulted, one may come to entirely different conclusions. The \textit{Ihyā’}, for example, is evidently a


unique book of its kind, compared to all the sources from which al-Ghazālī borrowed some material here and there. None of al-Ghazālī’s critics dares to argue that the \textit{Iḥyā’}, as a whole, is similar to any earlier work of al-Ghazālī’s predecessors such as al-Makkī’s \textit{Qūt al-Qulūb} or al-Muḥāsibī’s \textit{Kitāb al-Tawāhhum}. Thus, by viewing al-Ghazālī’s works from this angle, his originality proves itself.

As a matter of fact, achieving such a sort of originality was intended by al-Ghazālī when he composed the \textit{Iḥyā’}, as he clearly states in the introduction of the book:

\begin{quote}
“Indeed people have composed books concerning some of these ideas, but the present book differs from them in five ways: First, by clarifying what they have obscured and elucidating what they have treated causally; second, by arranging what they have scattered and organizing what they have separated; third, by condensing what they have made lengthy and proving what they have reported; fourth, by omitting what they have repeated and affirming what they have written correctly; fifth, by determining ambiguous matters which have been difficult to be understood and which have not been dealt with in books at all.”
\end{quote}

Fourthly, it is partial and simplistic approach to accuse al-Ghazālī of plagiarism by merely highlighting materials which al-Ghazālī borrowed from other sources and isolating them from their wider respective contexts. What really matters is not whether al-Ghazālī borrowed particular ideas from other sources, but rather how he uses them in his works. This question seems to be ignored by those who have accused al-Ghazālī of plagiarism.

To scholarly deal with this critical question, it is essential, as Sherif puts it, “to reconstruct and obtain a comprehensive view of al-Ghazālī’s thought and understand the way he synthesizes the different traditions…”\textsuperscript{14} By attempting to tackle this


\textsuperscript{14} Sherif, \textit{Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue}, p. 108.
question in this way, Sherif has proven that al-Ghazālī’s deployment of these various and diverse elements serves particular functions in his own teachings, which are very different from their functions in their original sources. By deeply studying al-Ghazālī’s ethical teaching—as presented in his principal works—which is, as he observes, a central theme in al-Ghazālī’s writings and a good representative of all the diverse fields to which he contributed, Sherif has explored in detail the nature of this aspect of al-Ghazālī’s originality, though he has called it “the unity in al-Ghazālī’s thought.” He has thoroughly examined the treatment of al-Ghazālī of three different and apparently contradictory elements which are present in his ethical writings, namely virtues in philosophical, religious-legal, and mystic traditions, and has intelligently shown how al-Ghazālī was able to synthesize his unique composite theory of virtue—which is in his view a key aspect of his ethical theory—by bringing all of these elements together in a special way in which they complement each other and makes a whole “which is not merely the sum of the parts, but has its own characteristics as an ethical theory.” Thus, he assures that al-Ghazālī “never merely copies or combines diverse ideas in a random way, but selects, transforms, and weaves certain aspects of them together with a view to a particular end, ultimate happiness.” Sherif concludes by stating that al-Ghazālī freely moves “from one tradition to another, filling in the gaps in the one with the complementary element of the other, and modifying those aspects which cannot, in their original form, be incorporated into his new framework.”

15 Sherif, Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue, p. 2.
17 Sherif, Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue, pp. 22f.
18 Sherif, Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue, p. 22.
19 Sherif, Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue, p. 164.
20 Sherif, Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue, p. 163.
In a wider scope, Abul Quasem in his lengthy account of the ethical theory of al-Ghazālī has discussed this composite nature of al-Ghazālī’s teaching and has asserted that “with his extraordinary genius, al-Ghazālī was able to mingle the various elements and systemize them into a well-ordered and consistent whole.”

Another testimony to the originality of al-Ghazālī, but in another subject area, is delivered by Michael Cook in his book, which surveys the accounts of the duty of “commanding good and forbidding wrong” appearing in literature of the major Islamic sects and schools. Although al-Ghazālī belongs to the Shāfi’ī law-school, Cook is convinced that a distinction should be made between al-Ghazālī’s account on the duty and that of all other Shāfiʿīs. Therefore, he devotes a whole chapter to al-Ghazālī’s account. A major reason behind this, as he points out, is the high distinctiveness of al-Ghazālī’s account. Recording his observation of the originality of al-Ghazālī’s account of this duty as presented in the Iḥyā’, Cook states: “to the best of my knowledge it is almost entirely his own.” He further states that even when al-Ghazālī employs earlier thoughts, he presents them in clearly different wordings. In addition, he has observed two further aspects of al-Ghazālī’s originality in his account: its striking structure with its unique divisions and its innovative terminologies, and its uncommon perspective which includes the practicalities of the duty.

All these scholarly testimonies effectively acknowledge al-Ghazālī’s originality and thus render any further discussion of the accusation of plagiarism unnecessary.

---

21 Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, p. 35.
24 Cook, *Commanding Right*, p. 446.
25 Cook, *Commanding Right*, p. 446.
5.3 Clarity:

Besides originality, admirable clarity is a striking strength of al-Ghazālī’s islāḥī teachings. By this quality, I mean that his teachings are highly readable and remarkably coherent. As a matter of fact, this characterizes al-Ghazālī’s style in general. To illustrate this characteristic, I shall highlight below a number of aspects of the clarity of al-Ghazālī’s style supported by representative examples.

A. Presenting Overviews Before Detailed Discussions:

In his discussion of a particular topic, al-Ghazālī often presents a vivid overview of the topic under study first, then he follows it with detailed discussion. This attitude is very evident, for example, in his treatment of curing heart sicknesses in the Ḩiyā‘. Before discussing the cures for specific heart sicknesses in detail, he gives a general account of the topic in “The Book of Disciplining the Soul, Refining the Character, and Curing the Sicknesses of the Heart” (Kitāb Riyāḍat al-Nafs wa-Tahdīḥ al-Akhlaq wa-Mu‘ālajat Amrād al-Qulūb). In the introduction of this Kitāb, he explains the purpose of this general account as follows:

“In this Book we shall indicate a number of sicknesses of the heart, and provide a general discourse on how these are to be treated, without giving details of cures for specific ailments, since these will be set forth in the remaining Books (Kutub) of this Quarter (Rub‘). Our present purpose is to review in an overall fashion how the traits of character may be refined, and to provide a preparatory method for this.”27

In addition to being important in preparing the reader for the detailed discussion to come, al-Ghazālī is convinced that this method is essential for attaining a

---

27 al-Ghazālī, Ḩiyā‘, Vol. 3, p. 49, trans., see Winter, Disciplining, p. 5.
comprehensive understanding. Commenting on the interesting organization of his book al-Mustasfū, al-Ghazālī explicitly mentions this additional significance:

“I have composed it and brought to it an admirable, delicate organization. The reader shall at first look become aware of all the aims of this science and shall grasp all the dimensions of thoughts within it. For every science where the student cannot get at the outset its foundations and structure, leaves him no chance of attaining its inner secrets and goals.”

B. PRÉCISING AFTER DETAILING:

What adds to the clarity of al-Ghazālī’s writing is his habitual stylistic attitude of making concise précis after his extended discussions. This is very visible in al-Ghazālī’s works in general and in the Ihyā’ in particular, where précising phrases, such as “in short” (bi-al-jumlah), appear quite often. A good representative example for this stylistic habit in the Ihyā’ is the précis given at the end of the exposition of the reasons of arrogance (al-kibr). Al-Ghazālī summarizes his detailed discussion of these reasons in the following very well thought out and precise sentence: “In short, every a blessing (ni’mah) which may be regarded as a perfection (kamāl), even if it is not really perfection in itself (bi-nafsih), can become a matter of arrogance.”

C. GIVING DIFFERENT NAMES TO DISTINGUISH DISTINCT IDEAS:

For the purpose of clarity, al-Ghazālī usually distinguishes between the ideas or the thoughts which he discusses by giving a name to each distinct one. This point

---

29 In some contexts, al-Ghazālī uses the same expression for generalization.
becomes clearer by considering the following example from the *Iḥyā*’. In discussing the involuntary suggestions (*khawāṭir*) which take place in the heart (*al-qalb*) and stir up the desire (*al-shahwah*), he divides them into two categories: “that which provokes evil (*al-sharr*), I mean that leading to a harmful aftermath; and that which motivates to good (*al-khayr*), I mean that which is profitable in the next world.”32 Explaining the need for giving each type a different name, he says that “these are two different suggestions and thus need two different names.”33 Then, he distinguishes between them by name: “The praiseworthy suggestion (*khāṭir*) is called *ilḥām* (inspiration) and the blameworthy suggestion, I mean that which leads to evil is called *wiswās* (whispering).”34

This attitude is based on the general rule, which al-Ghazālī mentions in several places in the *Iḥyā*’ that “there is no restraint in terminologies when the meanings are understood” (*lā hājr fi al-asāmī ba‘da fahm al-ma‘ānī*).35 This explains why al-Ghazālī focuses on meanings or contents rather than expressions.36

### D. DEFINING THE MEANINGS OF THE TECHNICAL TERMS:

Normally al-Ghazālī does not leave the key terms which he uses in technical or special usage without a clear definition, and thus his reader would not become uncertain about what he really means by them. This habitual practice adds to the clarity of al-Ghazālī’s teachings, as is very noticeable in his works in general and the *Iḥyā*’ in particular. It has been shown in the above survey of al-Ghazālī’s *islāḥī* efforts that a number of key terms used in al-Ghazālī’s diagnosis and treatments in special

---

meanings are fully defined by him, such as *al-taqlīd*, *al-qalb*, *al-dunyā*, *bā‘ith al-dīn*, and *al-khuluq*.

**E. Using Apt Metaphors:**

Another aspect of the clarity of al-Ghazālī’s style is that he frequently uses apt metaphors to illustrate his teachings, particularly when he wants to clarify subtle ideas. Many of such metaphors are given in the *Iḥyā‘*. A striking example is his use of a pig, a dog, a devil, and a sage to represent the four inherent qualities of man’s heart (*qalb*) in order to elucidate the harm of these qualities, when any of them becomes predominant, and to show how to bring them under control. After specifying these four qualities, which are wildness (*al-bahīmīyah*), bestiality (*al-sab‘īyah*), devilry (*al-shayṭānīyah*), and superiority (*al-rabbānīyah*), and the forms of *fasād* resulting from each one of them when it becomes predominant, he uses these four metaphors as follows:

“Every man has within him a mixture of these four qualities—I mean superiority (*al-rabbānīyah*), devilry (*al-shayṭānīyah*), bestiality (*al-sab‘īyah*), and wildness (*al-bahīmīyah*)—and all of these are collected in the heart (*al-qalb*), as though the total in a man’s skin is a pig, a dog, a devil, and a sage. The pig is appetite (*al-shahwah*), for a pig is not reproached because of its colour or shape or form, but because of its greed, covetousness, and avidity. The dog is anger, for the carnivorous beast and the mordacious dog are not dog and beast from the standpoint of their appearance or colour or shape, but rather the essence of the meaning of bestial quality is voracity and hostility and mordacity. Now in man’s interior are the voracity and rage of the beast, and the greed and lust of the pig. Thus, the pig through greed invites to the vile and the abomination, and the wild beast by anger calls to injustice and harmful acts. The devil continuously stirs up the appetite of the pig and the wrath of the wild beast, and seduces one by the other and presents to them in a favourable light that for which they have a natural propensity. The sage, who represents the intellect (*al-‘aql*), is in duty to repel the
craftiness and cunning of the devil by revealing his deception through its piercing insight and radiant and clear light; and to break the greed of this pig by making the dog its master. For by means of anger he breaks the vigour of appetite. He wards off the voracity of the dog by making the pig its master and bringing the dog in subjection under its rule. If he does that and is capable of it, the matter is in equilibrium (i’tdal al-amr) and justice is manifest in the kingdom of the body, and all proceeds on the straight path; but if he is unable to overcome them, they dominate him and bring him into servitude, and so that he is continually seeking out stratagems and carefully thinking to satisfy the pig and please the dog, and thus he will always be in servitude to a dog and a pig.”

F. GIVING IDENTICAL SIMILES:

In addition to parables, al-Ghazālī’s writings are full of similes which clarify abstract notions. He has a striking ability of giving similes which are highly identical to the ideas which he wants to explain. A good example is the simile in which he compares the disciplining of the soul (riyādat al-nafs) to the weaning of young children and the training of riding beasts. After stating that the soul (al-nafs) “do not become tame before its Lord or enjoy His remembrance until it is weaned from its habits…,” and that “this is a heavy burden for the aspirant at the outset, but ultimately becomes a source of pleasure,” he gives the following two similes:

“Like a small boy who finds being weaned from the breast a hardship, and cries bitterly and with anguish, and is repelled by the food which is set before him as a substitute for his milk. However, if he is then denied any milk at all, he finds his abstinence from food extremely exhausting, and when hunger overmasters him, he eats. Although this is an effort at first, in due course it becomes second nature to him, so that were he to be returned to the breast he would leave it alone and dislike its milk, having acquired a familiarity with food. Similarly, a riding-beast initially shies away from saddle and bridle, and will not be ridden, and has to be

---

forced to endure these things, and must be restrained with chains and ropes from the roaming at will which had been its custom. Later it becomes so familiar with these things that when it is left untethered it stands quite still."40

G. MAKING HELPFUL CROSS-REFERENCES:

Al-Ghazâlî’s habit of cross-referring to relevant information in his works contributes to the clarity of his style. Throughout his principal books, rich cross-references are often made, an impressive skill prior to the invention of the press particularly in works in the size of the Iḥyā’.

There are three forms of cross-references that appear in al-Ghazâlî’s works. The first is that directing to pertinent discussion to come in the same work.41 The second is that referring to relevant information mentioned earlier in the same source.42 The third is that pointing to other books of al-Ghazâlî.43 All this make tracing the related discussions easy and thus helps in attaining a comprehensive understanding of al-Ghazâlî’s views.

II. ARRANGING AND STRUCTURING HIS THOUGHTS IN A LOGICAL WAY:

The writings of al-Ghazâlî are easy to follow because they, in general, are arranged and structured in a logical way. In addition, it is one of his stylistic habits that he explains the logic behind the arrangement and the structure of the topics he intends to discuss right at the introduction of his works and also at the beginning of almost every chapter of his books. A case in point is the logic behind the structure of

43 See, for example, al-Ghazâlî, Iḥyā’, Vol. 1, p. 37, where he refers to his book al-Mustazhirî, see also Vol. 1, p. 40, where he refers to his book Qawâ'id al-Ī'tiqād and his three books of fiqh, al- BAşî, al-Wâṣî, and al-Wâjî, and also Vol. 1, p. 50, where he refers to his book Mi'yâr al-Īlm.
the whole *Ihya*’ which is explained by al-Ghazālī in the introduction of the book as follows:

“What have made me to arrange this book in four parts is two things: The first, which is the fundamental motive, is that this arrangement in establishing what is true and in exposition is imperative; because the branch of knowledge by which one approaches the next world is divided into the knowledge of the Praxis (*‘ilm al-mu‘āmalah*) and the knowledge of the Unveiling (*‘ilm al-mukāshafah*). . . . This book only concerns with the knowledge of the Praxis and not with the knowledge of the Unveiling, which is not permitted to be recorded in books. . . . The knowledge of the Praxis is divided into outward knowledge (*‘ilm zāhir*), I mean the knowledge of actions done by bodily members (*‘ilm a’māl al-jawārih*), and inward knowledge (*‘ilm bātīn*), I mean the knowledge dealing with the activities of the hearts (*a’māl al-qulūb*). . . . The outward part, which is connected with the physical members, is subdivided into acts of worship (*‘ibādah*) and habitual acts (*‘adah*). The inward part, which is connected with the states of the heart and the characteristics of the soul, is subdivided into blameworthy and praiseworthy states. So the total makes four divisions. . . . The second motive is that I have noticed that the eager interest of students is in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) . . . which is set fourth in four divisions, and he who follows the style of one who is beloved becomes beloved.”

I. ADOPTING CONSISTENT STYLE:

The considerable consistency in al-Ghazālī’s style is another factor of his clarity. This is also typical of al-Ghazālī. The analysis of Lazarus-Yafeh of the expressions and idioms which very frequently appear in al-Ghazālī’s basic and authentic works and thus can be considered, according to her,

45 typical of al-Ghazālī’s style shows that there is a remarkable consistency in his style throughout his life.


J. USING LUCID AND UNSOPHISTICATED LANGUAGE:

A further element of al-Ghazālī’s clarity is that the language of his writing is lucid and free from sophisticated expressions. Thus, it is highly readable. This would be very appreciated if al-Ghazālī’s language is compared to, for example, that of his teacher, al-Juwaynī, which has been considered as mysterious even by early established scholars such as al-Subkī.47

5.4 Deepness:

Deepness is another strength of the ʾislāḥī teachings of al-Ghazālī. I have particularly noticed this in his diagnosis of fasād, which reflects a deep scrutiny of the nature of the fasād in his time. As has been shown in the preceding chapter, he deeply diagnosed not only various phenomena of fasād in his time, but also the roots of fasād in general.

This aspect of al-Ghazālī’s deepness has been highlighted in other studies on al-Ghazālī. With reference to the Ihyāʾ, al-Nadwī, for instance, points out that al-Ghazālī examined therein the whole of the Muslim society at the time.48 Following his outline of al-Ghazālī’s wide and thorough examination of the society and its various classes, al-Nadwī assures that the Ihyāʾ shows that al-Ghazālī’s observation is deep and that he was expert in people’s ways of life.49

The deepness of al-Ghazālī is also reflected on his scholarly approach in both his diagnosis of fasād and his ʾislāḥī treatments. It is typical of al-Ghazālī that when tackling a particular issue, he does not satisfy himself with partial treatment of it, but rather he amazingly gives careful attention to almost all the related aspects. In his

discussion of the main roots of fasād, for example, we have seen how he pays close attention to various aspects of these roots, explaining in detail what causes them and what their consequences are.

Likewise, al-Ghazālī’s deepness is evident in the scholarly methods, which he adopted in his diagnosis of the phenomena of fasād. A good illustration of this is his investigation of the reasons behind the phenomenon of widespread laxity of Imān. He did not rely on his mere impression or quick observation, but rather he questioned for a period of time a number of those who were affected by this phenomenon, as was mentioned above.

What adds to al-Ghazālī’s deepness is his insightful analysis. This is also typical of his teachings, which are full of deep insights. A good illustration for this is his profound psychological analysis of man’s reality, as has been outlined above.

5.5 Balance between Individualism and Collectivism:

The question of whether al-Ghazālī in his islāhī teachings balances between individualism and collectivism, as a test of quality, is problematic and thus requires careful examination.

To begin with, al-Ghazālī has been seriously accused of failing to meet this criterion. Commenting on al-Ghazālī’s ethics, Muḥammad Mūsā, for instance, has strongly attacked al-Ghazālī for not being concerned with the interest of the collective in his school of ethics, and that he was solely concerned with the interest of the individual, for he specifies as the ultimate goal of ethics, achieving the individual’s happiness and not the happiness of the community as a whole. 50 Similarly, Su‘ād al-Ḥakīm has condemned al-Ghazālī for overemphasizing the salvation of the individual

whereas Islam, as she has described, commingled between the salvation of the individual and that of the collective.\textsuperscript{51}

It is true that what may be called “individual-orientedness” characterizes al-Ghazālī’s \textit{islāhī} teachings in general, and by this it is meant that the utmost goal of his teachings is the individual spiritual salvation of man and his attainment of the ultimate happiness in the next world.\textsuperscript{52} It is also true that al-Ghazālī’s emphasis on the individual may create a sort of selfish spirit among his followers; by literally following specific instructions in the \textit{Iḥyā’}, in particular, one may end up living a selfish life in the meaning of being exclusively, and probably excessively, concerned with the spiritual development of the self. For example, after warning from being concerned with \textit{islāh} of others before finishing the task of \textit{islāh} of the self, al-Ghazālī explains in the \textit{Iḥyā’} what he means by finishing from the self-\textit{islāh}: “When you have finished purifying yourself and you have become able to forsake the outer and the inner sins and that has become a habit and a second nature…”\textsuperscript{53} Now, since it is very difficult, if not impossible, to reach that level of purification, the ardent follower of this advice most likely will never become concerned with \textit{islāh} of others.

Although such instruction of explicitly individualistic nature strongly supports the above criticism against al-Ghazālī, it is difficult to form a definitive judgment on the question in view. This is simply because there are several other instructions from al-Ghazālī which clearly show that caring for the collective and taking on responsibilities towards them are two essential elements in his teachings. A good


\textsuperscript{52} Sherif has noticed this in his study on al-Ghazālī’s theory of virtue; he states that his theory “is oriented towards the well-being of the individual. It concerns itself primarily with man’s individual spiritual salvation, the attainment of ultimate happiness in the Hereafter,” (Sherif, \textit{al-Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue}, p. 169).

representative example for this is his teachings on the duties of brotherhood, companionship, neighbourhood, relatives, and Muslims in general for which he devoted a whole Kitāb in the Ihya‘.\(^{54}\) A more self-evident example is his account on the duty of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” (al-amr bi-al-ma‘rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar).\(^{55}\) This account as a whole, and particularly his strong argumentation against the view that uprightness (al-‘adālah) is one of the conditions for performing the duty and that a transgressor (jāsiq) cannot perform it,\(^{56}\) clearly shows apparently opposite position on the issue of islāh of others before the completeness of islāh of the self, in contrast with the above view.

Now, the difficult problem is how to resolve the apparent contradiction between al-Ghazālī’s teachings of individualistic spirit and those of collective nature. This, in our view, is a very challenging problem and really deserves a separate study, but meanwhile one cannot but affirm such contradiction and consider it a serious weakness in his islāhī teachings. As a provisional attempt to interpret this apparent contradiction, I may suggest that it is a partial contradiction between al-Ghazālī’s fiqhī views and his teachings, which are based on Sufi tradition or legacy.

I would now like to discuss another criticism levelled against al-Ghazālī, which is not unrelated to the criterion in view. That is the accusation of being passive toward the grave challenge of the Crusaders facing the Muslim Ummah in his time. It is a popular criticism among contemporary critics of al-Ghazālī that he kept silent on this external crisis, as there is no reference to it in his works or fatāwā, although he witnessed the Frankish invasion of some Muslim lands, namely Jerusalem in 492/1098.\(^{57}\)

\(^{54}\) al-Ghazālī, Ihya‘, Vol. 2, pp. 157-220.
\(^{56}\) al-Ghazālī, Ihya‘, Vol. 2, pp. 312-4.
\(^{57}\) See, for example, al-Qaradāwī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī, pp. 172f.
There have been various theories on this unexpected silence. Al-Qaraḍāwī, for example, while admitting that al-Ghazālī’s position on this regard is “puzzling,” for a man of his status knows what should have been said and done in such condition, he offers two interpretations which can be paraphrased as follows. The first is that when that external threat started and developed al-Ghazālī was in seclusion during which his main concern was self-purification and his own salvation; but even after his abandonment of seclusion, there was no indication of being concerned with that issue, which was related to the future of the whole Muslim Ummah. This, al-Qaraḍāwī continues, has led some to say that Sufis, including al-Ghazālī, believed that the Crusader invasion was a Divine Punishment for Muslims as a result of their sins; and thus, they were negative towards it. The second interpretation offered by al-Qaraḍāwī, which is more apologetic, is that al-Ghazālī was primarily preoccupied with islāh from within, for internal fasād paves the way for external invasion, as the Qur’ān indicates.

Similar to this second interpretation is the view of Abu-Sway who says:

“In my opinion, Al-Ghazzāliyy [sic.] realized that the Islamic Caliphate at the time was corrupt and filled with social and ideological trends that ran against Islamic Shari‘ah. I think he was convinced that the disease was within the state, and that the Crusaders were nothing but the symptoms. Al-Ghazzāliyy [sic.] understood that the core of the issue was moral. To solve this problem, he wanted to educate people and to revive the role of the Shari‘ah and its aims (maqāṣid).”

---

58 al-Qaraḍāwī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī, p. 172.
60 al-Qaraḍāwī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī, pp. 173f.
What really matters to the present study is whether this criticism disproves the classification of al-Ghazālī as a muṣliḥ. In order to fairly answer this question, it is important to consider the following points:

1. The real position of al-Ghazālī on the challenge of the crusaders is not known for certain. This is simply because it is difficult to claim that everything about him was reported, especially during his seclusion period, about which only little is known for sure, as stated above. The fact that nothing was reported as a direct response from him to that challenge does not seem a sound proof to base on it a positive view about his real position or to put in his mouth words that he had not uttered. Silence alone is open to interpretation.

2. By recalling the historical context of the First Crusade and the overall Muslim response, which I have been purposely illustrated in the appendix of this study, it can be stated that one of the major reasons behind the defeat of Muslims by the Crusaders was the internal conflicts among Muslim leaders in particular, and lack of unity among Muslims in general. As Hillenbrand puts it in short: “It is a familiar tenet of Crusader history that the warriors of the First Crusade succeeded because of Muslim disunity and weakness. Had the First Crusade arrived even ten years earlier, it would have met strong, unified resistance from the state then ruled by Malikshah, the last of the three so-called Great Seljuq sultans.”63

3. These internal conflicts mainly resulted from the struggle over worldly interests, or according to al-Ghazālī’s terminology in his ʾislāḥī teachings “love of the dunyā.” So, by treating this particular reason behind the internal conflicts, which was one of the major concerns of al-Ghazālī as was shown

---

previously, one can say that he was indirectly responding to the major cause of the defeat of Muslims. In other words al-Ghazālī was concerned with treating what has been called by al-Kīlānī “becoming disposed to defeat” (qābilīat al-hazīmah).\textsuperscript{64}

4. As was shown in the previous chapter, al-Ghazālī’s attempts at īslāh focused on several internal challenges of the Muslim Ummah, which were no less serious than the external ones, not to mention the challenge of the Baṭīnīs, which contributed to the general weakness of Muslims. Now, even if he did not directly respond to the challenge of the Crusader invasion, despite its seriousness, this alone is not enough to discredit him as a musliḥ. It is not necessary that one has to deal with all the challenges of one’s time in order to be considered as a musliḥ from the Islamic perspective, for not even every prophet did so.

5.6 Realism and Practicality:

For the sake of convenience, realism and practicality are considered here as a dual criterion because they are somehow related.

Making a general judgment on whether al-Ghazālī’s īslāḥī teachings meet this dual criterion is problematic. On one hand, there are various aspects of realism and practicality clearly appearing in his teachings. To start with, it is very evident that al-Ghazālī in his īslāḥī teachings focuses on practical issues. This can be considered as a characteristic of his religious and spiritual teachings in general. As Timothy Gianotti has recently emphasised, “when it comes to spiritual and religious direction, al-

\textsuperscript{64} al-Kīlānī, Hākadhā Zahra jīl Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, p. 106.
Ghazālī is a most practical man.”⁶⁵ This, he further states, “is nowhere more clearly seen than in the *Ihyā*’ itself, which is designed to be a step-by-step manual for religious and spiritual formation.”⁶⁶ Gianotti has concluded his study on what he calls “al-Ghazālī’s unspeakable doctrine of the soul” by the following statement: “In the end, I argue that he was, above all else, a practical man, even in his mysticism.”⁶⁷

This characteristic appears right at the Introduction to the *Ihyā*’ in which al-Ghazālī states that “the book only concerns with the knowledge of the Praxis (*’ilm al-mu’āmalah*) and not with the knowledge of the Unveiling (*’ilm al-mukāshafah*), which is not permitted to be recorded in books.”⁶⁸ Commenting on this, Gianotti says:

“...So, even though he touches on the knowledge of the Unveiling in this and many other parts of the *Ihyā*, he tells us in no uncertain terms that the work itself is about the knowledge of Right Practice—which is for everyone—and not about the disclosure of the contents of mystical noesis—which is beyond most people’s ability to bear and is no way a requirement for salvation.”⁶⁹

Al-Ghazālī’s practicality is also reflected in his continuous warning in the *Ihyā*’ from wasting time on issues that do not lead to actions, or issues for which there is no actual need. For example, he blames the ‘*ulamā*’, who rather than occupying themselves with problems of their day and those of frequent occurrence, pursue the unusual issues and exhaust themselves in dealing with problems which most likely never occur.⁷⁰

---

⁶⁶ Gianotti, *al-Ghazālī’s Unspeakable Doctrine*, p. 28.
In addition to being focused on practical issues, al-Ghazālī’s islāḥi teachings are based on existing facts rather than visionary. All the problems which are mentioned in the survey above existed in his time, and none of them can be classified as imaginary.

Furthermore, al-Ghazālī often explicitly rejects impracticable thoughts and ideal solutions. For instance, as has been shown previously, he does not necessitate a complete suppression of desires in order to achieve goodness in character; and he rejects the assumption of a group of Sufis that the purpose of spiritual struggling (mujāhadah) is to completely suppress all desires.

On the other hand, there are elements of apparent idealism or extremeness voiced in al-Ghazālī’s islāḥi teachings, and this has led students of Islamic thought to evaluate some of al-Ghazālī’s teachings as being impractical, and even harmful, in the case of many people, if not the majority. Al-Ḥakīm, for example, has condemned al-Ghazālī’s division in the Iḥyā’ of a twenty-four-hour Muslim day into specified parts (awrād) and his arrangement of obligatory and voluntarily Islamic worship accordingly, reserving that such an “ideal” pattern of Muslim day cannot be followed except by very few Muslims, and blaming him of addressing himself to a restricted group of Muslims, i.e., devoted worshipers (al-‘ubbād). In reference to the Iḥyā’ also, al-Nadwī, though he appraises the book in general, states that many of those who restrict their reading to this book, or very often and avidly read in it, would adopt an extreme attitude of asceticism, renouncement of permissible worldly pleasure, and excessive disciplining to the extent that it would affect their health and mind.

---

71 al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 3, p. 44.
72 al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 4, p. 42.
73 See al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 4, p. 42.
To fairly deal with this problematic issue, it is important to consider the following clarifying points about al-Ghazālī’s teachings. First, his teachings are based on his differentiation between the strong in religiousness (al-aqwiyā’ fī al-dīn) or the select few (al-khawāṣ), who have high religious and spiritual qualities, and the weak (al-du’afā’).\textsuperscript{75} In fact, he explicitly states in the \textit{Ihya} that “the aim of such a book as this is that it be helpful to the aqwiyā’ and established ‘ulamā’,” though he says that “we shall strive to make the du’afā’ understand by means of giving examples so that it may be close to their understandings.”\textsuperscript{76} Thus, it is crucial to distinguish his teachings which are merely directed to the aqwiyā’ or the khawāṣ from those which are intended for the others. Failing to do this may lead to imprecise judgment.

Second, al-Ghazālī usually takes into consideration the differences in the circumstances of people in his teachings. He, for example, states that “the method of struggle (mujāhadah) and discipline (riyādah) varies from one person to the next, in accordance with their circumstances.”\textsuperscript{77} Therefore, applying his teachings without considering the different circumstances of people may lead to unfavourable effects.

Third, he considers gradualness a condition for success in religious disciplining and soul purification; and thus he continuously warns from ignoring gradualness for it may lead to reversing results. For example, in his direction of breaking the greed of the stomach, he highlights the harm of not applying gradualness by stating that “the constitution of a man who is accustomed to eating much, and who then changes all at once to eating only a little, will not be able to sustain this, and will be weakened, resulting in considerable hardship and distress.”\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{75} See, for example, al-Ghazālī, \textit{Ihya’}, Vol. 3, pp. 98, 318, 323 & 325.
Fourth, moderation is an essential general guiding principle in al-Ghazālī’s teachings for he clearly states that “the most exalted desideratum in all matters and morals is the mean (al-wasat), for the best of affairs is the middle course, and both extremes in any matter are blameworthy,”79 and that “the mean is required in all traits of character which have opposite,”80 quoting the saying of the Prophet (S.A.A.W.), “the best of affairs is the middle course (khayr al-umūr awāšītuḥā).”81

Fifth, although al-Ghazālī teaches that moderation should be aimed for, he at the same time believes that following the middle course should be only after one’s nature has been set in equilibrium. A good illustration for this precise point is particularly found in al-Ghazālī’s “Exposition of the Variance in the Rule and Merit of Hunger in Accordance with Circumstances of Men” (Bayān Ikhtilāf Ḥukm al-Jū’ wa-Faṭīlatih wa-Ikhtilāf Ahwal al-Nās Fīh).82 After his general statement about the mean (al-wasat) quoted above, he goes on to say:

“Our discourse concerning the merits which attach to hunger may have suggested that extremeness is required in this regard, but this is certainly not the case. For it is one of the secret wisdom of the Sharī‘ah that whenever man’s nature demands that he go to an unsound extreme, the Sharī‘ah also goes to extreme in forbidding this, in a fashion which to an uninformed man might suggest that it requires the complete opposite of what human nature (ṭab‘) demands. The ‘ālim (the learned), however, realises that it is the mean that is required. This is because human nature, demanding as it does the maximum of satiety, must be countered by the Sharī‘ah with praise of extreme hunger, so that the instincts of man’s nature and the prohibitions of the Sharī‘ah stand opposite one another, thereby bringing about an equilibrium. For it is unlikely thing that a man might suppress his nature entirely, rather he will realise that he shall never

82 al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā‘, Vol. 3, pp. 96-8, trans., see Winter, Disciplining, pp. 154-60.
reach this goal. Even were he to go to the greatest extreme in countering his nature, the \textit{Sharī'ah} would indicate that he had erred.”\textsuperscript{83}

Explaining the mean in eating for a man of moderate nature, he continues:

\begin{quote}
“You should also know that the best course for a man of moderate nature is to eat so that his stomach is not heavy, but without feeling the pangs of hunger. One should forget one’s belly, and not harbour any preference for hunger. For the purpose of eating is the preservation of life and the gaining of strength for worship: a heavy stomach is an obstruction to worship, and so are the pangs of hunger, for they distract the heart.”\textsuperscript{84}
\end{quote}

Al-Ghazālī, however, makes the following exception for this general principle:

\begin{quote}
“This, however, comes about after one’s nature has been set in equilibrium. At the outset, should the soul have a tendency to bolt, crave the satisfaction of its desire, and incline to excess, the mean (\textit{al-wasat}) will yield it no advantage; instead one must go to extreme lengths to hurt it with hunger, in the way that one must employ hunger, blows and other things to hurt a riding beast that is not broken in until it becomes moderate in its temperament. When it is broken in, becomes balanced, and reverts to the equilibrium, one may cease training and hurting it.”\textsuperscript{85}
\end{quote}

Although this extreme disciplining is exception to the rule, the following explanation from al-Ghazālī indicates that he believes that it is the best way of disciplining in most cases:

\begin{quote}
“Since the dominant condition of the soul is one of greed, desire, rebellion, and refusal to worship, the most profitable thing for it is hunger, the pain of which it feels under most circumstances, and which leads to its subjugation. The intention
\end{quote}

is that the soul should be broken in this way until it becomes balanced, which condition will abide even after it returns to its food.”

In his closing of this “Exposition,” al-Ghazâlî directly addresses those who are in charge of disciplining “wayfarers on the Path of the next world” (sâlîkî ūtarîq al-ākhirah) by stating:

“These secrets should not be unveiled by a Shaykh of the Path to his aspirants. Instead he should confine himself to praising hunger, and not summon them to moderation (al-i’tidâl), for if he did so they would certainly fall short of it: he should rather summon them towards the very extremes of hunger, in order that such moderation might become easy for them. He should not tell them that the prefect gnostic (al-‘ārif) may dispense with self-discipline, for this would furnish the devil with a pathway to their hearts, so that he would constantly be whispering to each of them, “You are a perfect gnostic; what more gnosis and perfection could you need?”…The strong (i.e., in religiousness: al-qawî), when he devotes himself to disciplining and iślâh of others, must descend to the level of the weak in order that he might resemble them and be gentle when driving them towards their saving felicity…”

In the light of all the discussion above, I conclude that al-Ghazâlî’s iślâhî teachings are considerably realistic and practical, particularly his general principles, but when it comes to matter of details, especially with regard to Soul disciplining, there appear unrealistic and impractical aspects. This is mainly because he necessitates extreme disciplining in most cases, though he believes in moderation as a general rule. In our view, such extreme disciplining can easily lead to alienation from the outset in the case of many people. Thus, I consider it a major weakness in al-Ghazâlî’s iślâhî teachings, regardless of his attempt to justify it, simply because his way of justifying this particular point does not stand criticism, as shall be further discussed below.

5.7 Islamic-Justification:

In the main, al-Ghazālī’s islāhī teachings are supported by proofs from the Islamic fundamental sources, namely the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. This typifies the works of al-Ghazālī under study. Even in presenting his own insights and reflections in these works, al-Ghazālī almost always justifies them by quoting evidences from the Islamic primary sources. As a general rule, “any insight (istibṣār),” he explicitly states, “which can’t be justified by (lā-yashhad lah) the Qur’ān and the Sunnah is not reliable.”88 Thus, there is no wonder that his works are full of citation from these two sources.

Al-Ghazālī’s justification of his teachings, however, has been seriously challenged by a number of distinguished Muslim scholars over the centuries. This will be further discussed under the following three sub-headings: (1) the “foreign elements” in al-Ghazālī’s teachings, (2) al-Ghazālī and the unjustified Sufi tradition, and (3) al-Ghazālī’s reliance on unsound aḥādīth.

5.7.1 The “Foreign Elements” in al-Ghazālī’s Teachings:

This section focuses on the question of justification of what have been called “foreign elements” presented in al-Ghazālī’s works and which may be traced back directly or indirectly to un-Islamic sources, namely the works of ancient philosophers. Because of such elements, al-Ghazālī has been criticized since his time. His contemporary al-Māzirī89 (d. 536/1141), the celebrated Malikī scholar, is a good representative early example of those who raised such criticism. In the course of his reply to a question about his view on the Iḥyā’, he accused al-Ghazālī of (a) relying

much on Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) in his philosophical thought, (b) engaging in reading Ikhwān al-Ṣafā which, as he pointed out, a mixture of philosophy and knowledge of Sharī’ah, and (c) mingling between the knowledge of Sufis and the views of philosophers.\(^90\)

Al-Māzirī was undoubtedly a distinguished Muslim scholar, but one cannot regard his accusation as serious, though it has been continually repeated by the critics of al-Ghazālī, because of the following reasons. First, strangely enough, his view was based on what he heard from al-Ghazālī’s students and companions and not on his own reading of the Ihyā’, as he admitted.\(^91\)

Second, his accusation has been effectively challenged by other established Muslim scholars, namely al-Subkī (d. 771/1370).\(^92\) Deprecating the claim that the Ihyā’ includes un-Islamic philosophical thoughts, al-Subkī, who unlike al-Māzirī was a close reader of al-Ghazālī’s works, refuted the view of al-Māzirī and stated that al-Ghazālī charged Ibn Sinā and the philosophers with disbelief, so how can it be said that he followed them and based his work on their teaching.\(^93\) In his view, the difference in the school of jurisprudence (fiqhī madhhab), the approach (taraqqah), and the disposition (mazāj) of al-Māzirī in contrast with al-Ghazālī necessitated repulsion between the two.\(^94\)

Third, the criticism of al-Māzirī is far from being as convincing as al-Ghazālī’s own detailed reply to some of his contemporaries who accused him of recording in some of his books thoughts from the works of the ancient philosophers. He states in the Munqidh, “as a matter of fact, some of them [i.e., the claimed philosophical thoughts] are the product of my own reflections and it is not improbable that ideas

---

90 Cited in al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, Vol. 4, p. 123.  
93 Cited in al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, Vol. 4, pp. 126f.  
should coincide, just as a horse’s’ hoof may fall on the print of another hoof.”

In addition to the possibility of coincidence, al-Ghazālī further clarifies that some of the thoughts under question “are found in the shar‘ī (religious) books and the sense of most is found in the writings of the Sufis.” Even with the assumption that a thought is found only in the writings of the philosophers, al-Ghazālī further states that “if what is said is reasonable in itself and corroborated by apodictic proof and not contrary to the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, then why should it be shunned and rejected?”

This last statement reflects, to begin with, al-Ghazālī’s open-mindedness; as a principle he did not totally reject a thought just because it was mentioned by the philosophers. Thus, he, in the words of Winter, “was not a crude ‘fundamentalist’, opposed on principle to any possibility of learning from abroad.” In fact one of al-Ghazālī’s concerns was to highlight the harm which may result from such tendency. He states in the Munqidh that “if we were to open this door and aim at forgoing every truth which had been first formulated by the mind of one in error, we would have to forgo much of what is true.” He further says that such tendency “would be an invitation to those in error to wrest the truth from our hands by putting it into their own books.” This principle position of al-Ghazālī agrees with the well-known teaching of the Prophet of Islam who says: “Wisdom is the lost animal of the believer; wherever he finds it, it is he that has the most right to it.”

95 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 88, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 69, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 41.
96 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 88, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 69, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 41.
97 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 88, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 69, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 41.
98 Winter, Disciplining, p. XLVII.
99 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 88, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 69, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 41.
100 al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh, p. 88, trans., see McCarthy, Deliverance, p. 69, and also Watt, The Faith, p. 41.
The above statement of al-Ghazālī also shows his criteria for accepting “foreign elements”. The first is that they have to be supported by justified proofs. The second is that they do not contradict the Qur’ān and the Sunnah.

It is far beyond the limitation of the present study and the limitation of my own knowledge too, however, to fully verify whether al-Ghazālī complied with these criteria in all his islāhī teachings which may be traced back to the works of philosophers. Nevertheless, this can be partially proved by the finding of the previously mentioned study of Sherif with regard to the compliance of al-Ghazālī with these criteria in his theory of virtue, which is very relevant to the present study. Sherif has interestingly demonstrated how al-Ghazālī justifies his employment of some philosophic analysis, which he finds useful in synthesising his own theory of virtue either by drawing upon direct related Islamic argument or at least by showing that they do not contradict with Islamic teaching. Eliminating any possible wrong assumption that al-Ghazālī’s attitude is a superficial way of “Islamization,” Sherif has concluded that,

“unlike some other Muslim thinkers who welcome any device which can be used to reconcile philosophic ethics with Islamic moral teachings, al-Ghazālī does not consider the partial modifications he introduces into philosophic virtues sufficient to justify synthesizing those virtues with their Islamic counterparts; a more comprehensive approach, transforming these virtues into an integral part of a new, wider framework, is necessary.”

5.7.2 Al-Ghazālī and the Unjustified Sufi Tradition:

Another criticism which has been raised since a very early time against al-Ghazālī’s justification of his teachings is that he often relies on Sufi traditions which

---

101 Sherif, Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue, pp. 24-76.
102 Sherif, Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue, p. 162.
contradict with Islamic principles found in Islamic primary sources, or at least cannot be supported by Islamic evidence. One of the earliest holders of this criticism and a well-known representative of it is Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) who strongly attacked al-Ghazālī in a number of his books, namely *Talbīs Iblīs*, and whose attack has been noticeably repeated since his time. Because his criticism has been widely followed and because it has been considered a very serious criticism, it deserves a detailed discussion.

In *Talbīs Iblīs*, Ibn al-Jawzī criticizes al-Ghazālī in the context of his extreme lengthy criticism against the approaches of the Sufis and his polemic against a number of their teachings which in his view completely contradict with the *Sharīʿah*. Concerning al-Ghazālī, the starting point of his criticism is that he accused him of composing the *Iḥyāʿ* in the same approach of earlier Sufis chiefly al-Muḥāsibī and that he acknowledged their wrong teachings and strongly supported them. Ibn al-Jawzī mentions three reasons behind al-Ghazālī’s support of such teachings:

- Dispensing with *fiqh* and ignoring its law for the sake of Sufism.
- Becoming Sufi himself made him in fully support of the Sufi teachings.
- Relying on fabricated and unsound traditions attributed to the Prophet (S.A.A.W.) without knowing that they are spurious.

By examining the criticism of Ibn al-Jawzī, the following comments regarding the validity of his criticism can be made, excluding the point concerning al-Ghazālī’s reliance on fabricated prophetic traditions, which will be discussed in the following sub-heading.

---

First, there is a considerable misquoting of al-Ghazālī by Ibn al-Jawzi; he quite often omits some of al-Ghazālī’s words which have crucial effect in understanding the true position of al-Ghazālī on the issues under question. For example, he denounces al-Ghazālī for writing the following statement in the *Ihyā*': “The disciple should not concern himself with marriage,” whereas the original text of the *Ihyā*’ reads: “The disciple, in his beginning, should not concern himself with marriage.” Noticeably and very strangely the phrase “in his beginning” is omitted in Ibn al-Jawzi’s quoting, indicating that al-Ghazālī discourages marriage in general and not in a particular situation and for particular reasons as the original words as well as the context clearly reveal.

Second, Ibn al-Jawzi often disconnects al-Ghazālī’s quotes from their respective contexts and does not seem to consider these contexts in his criticism. This leads to great misrepresentation of al-Ghazālī’s views. Ibn al-Jawzi, for example, attacks al-Ghazālī’s saying in the *Ihyā*’ that “some say: The Lordship has a secret if it was unveiled, the Prophecy would become null…,” while unexpectedly he totally ignores al-Ghazālī’s comment immediately following this quote which says: “The one who says this if he did not mean by it that nullity of the Prophecy is with reference to weak people due to their shortcoming in their understanding, then what he said is not true and the reality is that there is no controversy on it [i.e., the *Sharī’ah*].”

Third, similarly, the approach of Ibn al-Jawzi in presenting the view of al-Ghazālī which he criticizes is very selective; he selects specific quotes from particular places in the *Ihyā*’ and ignores some related discussions either in the same context or

---

109 The emphasis here, and in the following quotes as well, is mine.
111 This attitude of Ibn al-Jawzī has been noticed also by al-Shāmī, see al-Shāmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, pp. 175-9.
elsewhere in the same book, which are important in understanding the true position of al-Ghazālī regarding the problems in view. This shortcoming of Ibn al-Jawzī can be perfectly illustrated in the following example.

In the context of his refutation of the wrong assumption of groups of Sufis who think that having trust (tawakkul) in God necessitates giving up means (al-asbāb), Ibn al-Jawzī accused al-Ghazālī of being apologist to such groups by accepting the idea of travelling in a desert without food with the intention of relying on God, though with some conditions. 114 This, however, does not precisely reflect the true view of al-Ghazālī on giving up means in the name of having trust in God or tawakkul. This is because al-Ghazālī in this particular context is just discussing the conditions that should be met in order to make such travel lawful, as it obviously appears from the context. 115 Nevertheless, his true position from this issue is clearly stated after couple of lines from the above quote where he clearly states that “being away from all means is in defiance of (murāghamah) wisdom and an act of ignorant of the Norm (sunnah) of Allāh Almighty; for acting according to the Norm of Allāh Almighty with having trust in Him…, and not the means, does not contradict with tawakkul.” 116 He further states that if one decides to live in a mountain where there is no water nor grass and where no one normally passes by, then one would be sinful and leading one’s self to destruction. 117

Furthermore, in another context in which al-Ghazālī gives examples for self-delusion (ghurūr) among Sufis, he mentions the following example, which Ibn al-Jawzī entirely ignores:

---

115 See al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 4, p. 266.
116 al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 4, p. 266.
117 al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 4, p. 266.
“Among them [i.e., Sufis] one who travels in desert without food in order to justify his claim of tawakkul, but he does not realize that this is innovation in religion (bid’ah) and it has not been reported from the righteous previous generations (al-salaf) nor the companions of the Prophet, who were more knowledgeable in tawakkul than him, yet they did not understand tawakkul as an act of risking life and giving up food....”

Fourth, it is difficult to follow Ibn al-Jawzī without any reservation on fully equating the approach of al-Ghazālī in the Iḥyā’ with that of the previous Sufis on the basis of al-Ghazālī’s support for their views. In addition to what has been already mentioned with regard to the originality of al-Ghazālī with reference to his use of Sufi works, the following reservation can be expressed over Ibn al-Jawzī’s opinion. Although al-Ghazālī in various places in the Iḥyā’ relies on the literature of earlier distinguished Sufis, he does not restrict himself to their views, and does not simply follow their teachings without critically examining them. In fact, he often highlights the shortcomings of their views and adds essential remarks to their thoughts. Moreover, as a general evaluation, al-Ghazālī characterizes the views of the Sufis as deficient (qāṣīr) because every one of them, he clarifies, habitually talks on the basis of his own experience or condition (ḥāl) only. This is why in various issues, especially those which were debatable among the Sufis, al-Ghazālī did not satisfy himself with what had been said by the earlier Sufis, and thus made his independent examination and came up with his own views on those issues.

Fifth, Ibn al-Jawzī’s argument that al-Ghazālī dispensed with the law of fiqh in the Iḥyā’ in favour of Sufism is an unfair generalized judgment. Throughout the book, the

---

119 See, for example, his remark on the classification of Abū Tālib al-Makkī of the major sins where he states that it is not sufficient, see al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 4, p. 18.
120 See al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 4, p. 42.
121 See, for example, his examination in the Iḥyā’ of what is better: patience or thankfulness, Vol. 4, pp. 135-41.
fiqh of al-Ghazālī is distinctively voiced. In fact, even when he agrees with particular views of earlier Sufis, including those which are quoted by Ibn al-Jawzī, he normally justifies his choice using the reasoning of fiqh, in addition to other sorts of reasoning, regardless of whether we agree or disagree with his justification. A case in point is his agreement with al-Muhāsibī’s view that poverty is better than richness.122 Following his long quote of al-Muhāsibī’s argument on this issue, al-Ghazālī states that this view can be supported by all the traditions which he mentioned in the “Book of Condemnation of the Dunyā” and the “Book of Poverty and Abstinence” of the Ihyā’, in addition to other evidences, which he would further mention.123 Thus, he did not follow the view of al-Muhāsibī just because al-Muhāsibī was a Sufi, but because al-Ghazālī was convinced that it could be justified by evidences from the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, notwithstanding how sound his evidences were. It is worth noting that al-Ghazālī quotes al-Muhāsibī in this specific context because he wanted to show that poverty is better than richness in general, but his detailed view on the issue is presented in the “Book of Poverty and Abstinence” in which he discusses the controversy on the issue and deeply examines it,124 which itself shows his deepness in fiqh.

This, however, does not mean at all that the Ihyā’ is free from Sufi tradition which clearly contradict with fiqhī rules. In fact, al-Ghazālī himself does not deny this, as shall be seen in a moment. This poses the challenging question about al-Ghazālī’s true position on such tradition. To adequately tackle this problem, there is a need for a separate detailed study, but, meanwhile, I ought to sum up the controversy surrounding this problem and then give a provisional assessment.

A good representative example of the Sufi tradition contradicting fiqhī rules quoted in the Iḥyā‘ is the following story. In his discussion of the practical part of treating love of status (jāh), and specifically in the course of describing how some Sufis may treat their soul diseases by some methods which can be seen as unlawful from a fiqh perspective, al-Ghazālī recounts the incident of a Sufi whose well-known abstinence had brought him high status and many followers; thus, he entered a bath-house and intentionally wore the clothes of someone else, then, he stood outside on the road; consequently, he was caught, and beaten, and the clothes were taken from him, and as a result, people renounced him.\(^\text{125}\)

Referring to this incident, but again not giving any attention to the related discussion in the same context, Ibn al-Jawzī severely condemns al-Ghazālī’s telling of such incidents and states:

“Glorious is He who moved Abū Ḥāmid from the circle of fiqh by his composition of the book of the Iḥyā‘, I wish that he had not mentioned in it such things which are unlawful. Strange enough from him to say them, praise them, and call their people Arbāb Ahwāl (People of Spiritual States).”\(^\text{126}\)

Defending al-Ghazālī, with reference to the same story, Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (1205/1791) argues that Sufis are mujtahidūn in the way of soul purification, so, what they find most beneficial for their hearts they go for it; and that particular incident is consistent with the Islamic principle which states that when two potential harms are in dilemma, the less harmful should be committed.\(^\text{127}\)

More convincing apologia for al-Ghazālī and a recent strong counter-argument against Ibn al-Jawzī is that of al-Shāmī:

\(^{126}\) Ibn al-Jawzī, Talbīs Iblīs, p. 399.
“We side with Ibn al-Jawzī on wishing that al-Ghazālī had not mentioned that story, but we don’t side with him in disconnecting it from its immediately preceding context in which al-Ghazālī gives his fiqhī opinion: al-Ghazālī asserts that “the action of the Malāmatiyyah—that is committing apparently disgraceful deeds (al-fawāḥish) in order to lower their status in the eyes of people—is unlawful for every individual...Bu what is lawful is doing permissible acts (fi’l al-mubāḥāt) which lower the status among people...” That is what al-Ghazālī has asserted and that is a clear legal opinion, free from ambiguity.”

After emphasising that the story under question is mentioned in that particular context and that al-Ghazālī points out that such an act is questionable from a fiqh point view, i.e., there is no agreement that it is lawful or unlawful, al-Shāmī states “al-Ghazālī, then, mentions a fact that Sufī mashāyikh sometimes treat their personal conditions with different methods than that of faqīh. So, what is wrong in al-Ghazālī’s position, and where did that cross him out from the circle of fiqh!?”

Now, I agree with al-Shāmī on the total importance of considering the context in which al-Ghazālī mentions such Sufī tradition, and I side with him on that al-Ghazālī’s telling of such incidents in such contexts does not bring him out of the circle of fiqh, but I cannot agree with him that there is nothing wrong in al-Ghazālī’s approach. Instead, I may argue that al-Ghazālī’s reporting of such deviant acts, of which nothing similar seems to have been reported from the early Muslim generations, which is one of al-Ghazālī’s own criteria of justification, as has been quoted above, despite his true position on them, is an unfortunate mistake. Such acts are potentially harmful, for they may direct, though unintentionally, to excessive religiousness among the eager readers of al-Ghazālī. In addition, they can easily lead to misunderstanding of the actual position of al-Ghazālī, particularly because not

---

128 al-Shāmī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī, pp. 177f.
every reader of the *Ihya‘* has the ability to perform close and comprehensive reading, bearing in mind the large size of the work. Lastly, these odd stories, as I have personally experienced, often sidetrack the reader from the major principles of al-Ghazālī’s teachings.

### 5.7.3 Al-Ghazālī’s Reliance on Unsound *Aḥādīth*:

A very popular criticism against al-Ghazālī’s justification of his teachings, namely in the *Ihya‘*, is that he heavily relies on weak and fabricated *aḥādīth* (traditions attributed to the Prophet of Islam). On this, in the words of al-Shāmī, “there is a consensus among the critics.”\(^{130}\) In his harsh criticism of the *Ihya‘*, Ibn al-Jawzī, for example, frankly accused al-Ghazālī of filling the *Ihya‘* with spurious (*bāṭilah*) *aḥādīth* without knowing their spuriousness.\(^{131}\)

Although no one can deny al-Ghazālī’s reliance on such *aḥādīth*, this fact has been greatly overstated, and thus it deserves a careful reassessment. As a humble attempt to do so, I would like to highlight the following points.

First of all, it is a gross exaggeration and even a false accusation to say, as al-Ṭartūshī reported claiming, that al-Ghazālī filled the *Ihya‘* “with lying upon the Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him, for I do not know a book over the face of the Earth which is more lying than it.”\(^{132}\) To totally reject such a puzzling claim, it is important to emphasise that al-Ghazālī quoted the traditions under question from earlier works without being aware of their falsity. Al-Subkī asserts that al-Ghazālī in the *Ihya‘* “did not report a single *ḥadīth* on his own

authority."\textsuperscript{133} This means that al-Ghazālī did not commit the crime of ḥādīth fabrication, and this can be supported by al-Ghazālī’s strict view about that major sin:

“Some presupposed that it is permissible to fabricate ṣaḥīḥ, encouraging virtuous deeds and warning from sins, and they claim that such a purpose is right; but it is an absolute wrong, for the Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him, said: ((Whoever lies upon me, deliberately, should reserve his seat in Hell-fire)) and that must not be committed except when there is an absolute necessity; but there is no absolute necessity, for truthfulness is an alternative to lying and the revealed āyāt and the reported traditions are enough. Now, the word of that who says, “those have been repeated and have become ineffective, while what is new is more influential,” is a mania (hawas) because that is not a justified purpose in contrast with the harmful consequences of lying upon the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him, and upon Allāh Almighty, and that will open the door for things which confuse (tushawwish) the Sharī‘ah, so, the intended good purpose does not resist the evilness of its consequences. Moreover, lying upon the Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him, is one of the major sins (min al-kabā‘ir)…”\textsuperscript{134}

Secondly, there is a real need to revise what has been considered as a postulate among the students of al-Ghazālī that he ignored the study of the discipline of Ḥadīth.\textsuperscript{135} It is true that this has been supported by al-Ghazālī’s utterance in his book Ḥanūn al-Ta‘wīl that his knowledge in ‘ilm al-Ḥadīth is little (biṭā‘atī fī al-ḥadīth muzjāh),\textsuperscript{136} but this should not be taken at its face value. The fresh and unique study of al-Mahdālī about al-Ghazālī’s knowledge in the field of Ḥadīth has interestingly shown that he had a considerable interest in this discipline, and that he had a wide study of it.\textsuperscript{137} By carefully studying al-Ghazālī’s books, the Mankhūl, the Iḥyā’, and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{133} al-Subkī, Ṭabqaṭ al-Shāfi‘īyyah, Vol. 6, p. 127.  
\textsuperscript{134} al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’, Vol. 3, p. 139.  
\end{flushright}
the Mustasfā, al-Mahdālī has found thereupon expositions and allusions, which clearly show that al-Ghazālī had a knowledge of Ḥadīth.\(^{138}\)

Thirdly, the accusation of Ibn al-Jawzī, and those who follow him, that al-Ghazālī filled the Ihyyāʾ with such traditions\(^{139}\) is only an exaggeration,\(^{140}\) for it indicates that the majority of the traditions in the Ihyyāʾ are false, and that is incorrect, as has been statistically proven in the study of al-Mahdālī employing the following steps.\(^{141}\) As a starting point, he counted the number of all the traditions in the Ihyyāʾ for which al-Subkī could not find isnād\(^{142}\) (chain of narrators), and thus he found that they are about a quarter of the total number of the quoted traditions in the Ihyyāʾ.\(^{143}\) This, al-Mahdālī states, “shows that most of the traditions of the Ihyyāʾ have isnād, but not finding isnād for the rest of the traditions does not necessarily mean that the rest do not have isnād because al-Subkī’s verification (takhrīj) is not final.”\(^{144}\) Next, based on Mādmūhʾ’s index of the aḥādīth of the Ihyyāʾ,\(^{145}\) al-Mahdālī has added up the total number of these aḥādīth, which becomes four thousand eight hundred and forty eight (4,848) traditions, excluding the repeated ones which are not included in the index.\(^{146}\) It is worth mentioning, as al-Mahdālī clarifies, that there are other traditions in the Ihyyāʾ which are not included in the index, though they are few.\(^{147}\) Now, this total number, al-Mahdālī has concluded, shows the following:\(^{148}\)

\(^{139}\) Ibn al-Jawzī, Talbis Iblīs, p. 186.
\(^{140}\) al-Mahdālī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-’Ilm al-Ḥadīth, pp. 89f.
\(^{141}\) al-Mahdālī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-’Ilm al-Ḥadīth, pp. 91-116.
\(^{142}\) al-Mahdālī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-’Ilm al-Ḥadīth, p. 91.
\(^{143}\) al-Mahdālī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-’Ilm al-Ḥadīth, p. 91.
\(^{144}\) al-Mahdālī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-’Ilm al-Ḥadīth, p. 91.
1. Al-Ghazālī quoted the *ahādīth* of the *Iḥyāʾ* from many sources, books of Ḥadīth in particular and other sources in general, because this number is not found in the works of Sufis and *fuqahāʾ*, nor even half of it.

2. Al-Ghazālī used to consult books of Ḥadīth.

3. He had knowledge of Ḥadīth and this is what led him to consult books of Ḥadīth, before and after the *Iḥyāʾ*.

Finally, the important question which should be raised here is to what extent were al-Ghazālīʾs teachings influenced by unsound or weak traditions? This is another critical question which deserves a detailed study, but for the time being, I can offer the following provisional answer.

I have noticed that at least a number of al-Ghazālīʾs teachings were influenced to a considerable extent by such traditions and that is a serious weakness in his teachings. To representatively illustrate this, I shall go back to the above discussion of his “Exposition of the Variance in the Rule and Merit of Hunger in Accordance with Circumstances of Men” (*bayān ikhtilāf ḥukm al-jūʿ wa-faṭīlatih wa-ikhtilāf ahwal al-nās fih*). The starting point of his exposition, as has been quoted above, is the following:

“Our discourse concerning the merits which attach to hunger may have suggested that extremeness is required in this regard, but this is certainly not the case. For it is one of the secret wisdom of the *Sharīʿah* that whenever manʾs nature demands that he go to an unsound extreme, the *Sharīʿah* also goes to extreme in forbidding this…”

Now, what is the basis of al-Ghazālīʾs argument that “whenever manʾs nature demands that he go to an unsound extreme, the *Sharīʿah* also goes to extreme in


forbidding this”? It seems that it is those traditions quoted by him at the beginning of “The Book of Breaking the Two Desires” (Bāb Kasr al-Shahwatayn) which encourage hunger. Based on the verification (takhrīj) of al-‘Irāqī and that of al-Zabīdī as well, all these traditions are unsound. Thus, al-Ghazālī was influenced here by these unsound traditions. This renders his point on extreme disciplining, discussed above, which is based on this argument, unjustified Islamically and that proves our point.

152 See al-Irāqī’s examination of these traditions in the footnotes of the Ihyā’, Vol. 4, pp. 80-2.
154 There are few sound traditions condemning satiety, but they are irrelevant to the present point.
CHAPTER SIX

***************

THE EFFECTS OF AL-GHAZĂLĬ’S ATTEMPTS AT İŞLÂH

6.1 Introduction:

The analytical definition of ışlâh in the first chapter suggests that in order to fully judge an effort from the ışlâh perspective, one needs to know to what extent it has led to the desired corrective change. Based on this, the present chapter attempts to study the main effects of al-Ghazâlî’s ışlâhî efforts, in order to complete the task of verifying the hypothesis of the present study.

Achieving this purpose in full, however, is almost an impossible dream. As Knysh has pointed out “a balanced account of the influence of al-Ghazâlî will probably not be possible until there has been much more study of various religious movements during the subsequent centuries.”¹ What intensifies the difficulty of such a balanced evaluation is the nature of the historical sources. As al-Kîlânî has correctly noticed,² the mainly biographical nature of the historical sources has shattered the thematic unity of many historical social phenomena, and thus it has become difficult to reconstruct the whole pictures of these phenomena. In the words of Cook, speaking about the limitation of the sources, “it is notorious that we tend to know too much about scholars in the pre-modern Islamic world and too little about anyone else—apart from rulers.”³

¹ Knysh, Islamic Mysticism, p. 147.
³ Cook, Commanding Good, p. xiii
Despite the limitation of the sources, various phenomena have been considered as effects of al-Ghazâlî’s efforts, but the evaluation of these effects has been very controversial. I shall discuss below a number of such effects, and assess the main controversial evaluations of them.

6.2 The Impact of al-Ghazâlî’s Iślâḥî Teachings on his Pupils:

A central aim of al-Ghazâlî’s iślâḥî efforts was to bring up and train a generation of true ‘ulamâ’, as a major part of his attempt to renew the mission of true ‘ulamâ’, as was shown above. I seek here to discuss the extent to which he achieved in this aim.

In his discussion of al-Ghazâlî’s effect, as a founder of an iślâḥî movement, al-Kîlânî stresses that he, through organized and independent teaching, was able to lend his personality together with his line of thought to a large number of pupils, who undertook his message and started to propagate it among all classes of society, and in the schools and the mosques in which they held guiding positions.4 This argument, however, has been insufficiently supported.5 In fact it seems almost impossible to fully evaluate such an effect, because we neither know exactly all the pupils of al-Ghazâlî, particularly in his iślâḥî stage, nor do we know to what extent his pupils were influenced by his iślâḥî teachings, and what their exact role in the claimed iślâḥî movement was. Therefore, it is difficult to fully and confidently accept al-Kîlânî’s overstated argument. Nevertheless, it may at least be partially supported by the following historical data.

To begin with, we recall here that al-Ghazâlî returned to teaching in the Niẓâmîyah of Nishapur for some time, and in his private school in Ţūs afterwards,

---

4 al-Kîlânî, Hâkadhâ Zahrâ jîl Šalâh al-Dîn, p. 172
5 As a support for this generalized argument, al-Kîlânî strangely gives only three examples of al-Ghazâlî’s pupils and mentions too little information about them, see al-Kîlânî, Hâkadhâ Zahrâ jîl Šalâh al-Dîn, pp. 172f.
until his death, as has been illustrated in chapter three. In that period, it is most likely that many pupils were eager to be taught by al-Ghazālī because of his previous great reputation as an impressive teacher in addition to the reputation of his books, particularly the *Ihyāʾ*, as has already been mentioned. As a matter of fact, al-Ghazālī mentioned in one of his late letters that there were one hundred and fifty students who were studying under him at Tūs.7

Some relevant information about at least a number of al-Ghazālī’s pupils can be highlighted by studying the biographical sources which mention some of them by name. In his introduction to the *Ithāf*, al-Zabīdī8 lists twenty three of al-Ghazālī’s pupils. At least four of them were taught by him in Tūs,9 in which he spent his last years teaching in his private school, one was taught in Nishapur,10 where he returned to official teaching, and two accompanied him in al-Shām,11 where he started his self-islāḥ. Thus, they were certainly belonging to al-Ghazālī’s islāḥī stage, and as a result they were most likely influenced highly by his islāḥī teachings.

Even some of the pupils who were taught by al-Ghazālī in the period earlier to his islāḥī stage became highly interested in his late works, including those of islāḥī nature, and consequently played a considerable role in popularizing them. Among these were Abū ‘Abd-Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd-Allāh al-‘Irāqī al-Baghdādī

---

6 In Baghdad, the number of students attending al-Ghazālī’s lessons reached three hundred, as has been mentioned above.


8 Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, Vol., 1, pp. 60-2. By checking some biographical sources, namely al-Subkī’s *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah al-Kubrā*, some of these names appear to be inaccurate or misspelled in the *Ithāf*, at least in the edition which I have used. Thus, the spelling which is given here is what I think is more accurate.


(d. 540f./1145) and Abū Sa‘īd Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd-Allāh al-Jāwānī (d. c. 560/1164) who both narrated al-Ghazālī’s book *Iljām al-‘Awām*. Among them was also Abū Ṭalib ‘Abd-al-Karīm b. ‘Alī al-Rāzī (d. c. 522/1128) who memorized the *Iḥyā’* by heart. In addition to al-Qādī Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1148) and Abū Sa‘d Muḥammad b. As‘ad b. Muḥammad al-Nawaqānī (d. 556/1161) who were both among those who orally received the *Iḥyā’* from al-Ghazālī, and they in turn narrated it to others.

Other than these, al-Zabīdī lists seven names of those who orally received the *Iḥyā’* from al-Ghazālī and transmitted it to others. These names contributed to the phenomenon of the continuous and wide narration of the book down the centuries, as will be demonstrated in the following section.

By referring to the biographies of all these names, two further remarks are worth making in this context. Firstly, some of these had certain qualities of high righteousness, which shows that those who carried al-Ghazālī’s teachings, particularly in his *īlāhī* stage, were in general of righteous qualities. Since the biographies do not clearly state whether this was a result of al-Ghazālī’s influence on them, we cannot be certain on this particular point, but it is most likely that he played an essential role in this. Secondly, a number of the above names became very distinguished scholars and impressive intellectuals. This tentatively indicates that they played an effective role in propagating the *īlāhī* teachings of al-Ghazālī.

Table (1) below summarizes the biographical notes about the standing and the qualities of some of the above names.

---

12 al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*.
16 For this purpose, I have consulted a number of biographical sources, see the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Biographical Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Abū al-Fath Āḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Barhān (d. 518/1124) | - Became a “model of knowledge.”
|  | - One to whom crowds of pupils were bound.
|  | - Taught in the Nizāmīyah for some time. (al-Subkī, Tabaqāt) |
|  | - His preaching attracted many people.
|  | - A virtuous man. (al-Subkī, Tabaqāt) |
| 3. Abū-Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd-Allāh al-‘Irāqī al-Baghdādī (d. 540f./1145) | - Became one of the most distinguished Shāfī scholars. (al-Dhahbī, Tārīkh al-Islām, Vol. of ys 541-550, p. 85) |
|  | - His name became widely recognized.
|  | - Unique in knowledge and asceticism at the time.
|  | - Even scholars used to travel to him, seeking knowledge. (al-Dhahbī, Tārīkh al-Islām, Vol. of ys 541-550, p. 337) |
| 5. Abū Tāhir Ibrāhim b. al-Muṭṭahir al-Jurjānī (d. 513/1119) | - Became one of the distinguished scholars.
|  | - His teaching and preaching were widely welcomed because of his virtuousness. (Ibn Manẓūr, Mukhtasar Tārīkh Dimashq) |
|  | - Became in charge of teaching in the Amīnīyah school in Damascus. (al-Subkī, Tabaqāt) |
|  | - A pious and virtuous man. (al-Subkī, Tabaqāt) |
|  | - Was among the most well-known scholars at the time.
|  | - A well-mannered man (al-Subkī, Tabaqāt) |
| 10. al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Abd-Allāh b. al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1148) | - Was very well-established in various sorts of knowledge.
6.3 The Claimed Studentship of Ibn Tūmart under al-Ghazālī:

Having discussed al-Ghazālī’s influence on his pupils, it is relevant to investigate the conflicting claims about the effect of al-Ghazālī on Ibn Tūmart, who succeeded in establishing a reformist movement in the Maghrib which resulted in the rise of the dynasty of al-Muwahḥidūn (Almohads).

Within his outline of al-Ghazālī’s positive effects as a founder of an ʾiṣlāḥī movement, al-Kīlānī17 includes the claimed influence on Ibn Tūmart. Relying solely on Ibn Khaldūn’s account about the claimed studentship of Ibn Tūmart under al-Ghazālī in Baghdad, al-Kīlānī plainly states that after being influenced by his teachings, Ibn Tūmart returned to the Maghrib in order to put these teachings into practice.18

This positive claimed effect, on the contrary, has been negatively evaluated by others. Al-Ṣallābī in his book on al-Muwahḥidūn, for instance, presents Ibn Tūmart’s movement as a deviated and oppressive school of preaching; and thus he criticizes those who positively evaluate his studentship under al-Ghazālī, arguing that al-Ghazālī was unsettled in his theological teachings.19

In both of these opposing evaluations, however, no attention at all has been given to the doubtfulness connected with the story about Ibn Tūmart’s studentship under al-Ghazālī. Although the claimed meeting between the two appears in a number of historical sources, it is still a very doubtful story. For example, Ibn Khaldūn, on whose account al-Kīlānī based his argument, reported the story, but his report denotes uncertainty for he uses the phrase “فائمازائم”20 (as they have claimed). Moreover,

18 al-Kīlānī, Ḥākadhā Zahra jīl Ṣalāh al-Dīn, p. 108.
some other early Muslim historians, such as Ibn Al-Athīr,\textsuperscript{21} asserted that Ibn Tūmart never met al-Ghazālī.\textsuperscript{22} This assertion can be supported by some historical evidences. Historical sources agree that Ibn Tūmart’s trip to the Mashriq did not start before the year 500 A.H., but by this time al-Ghazālī had already permanently left Baghdad, where the meeting between the two was claimed to have occurred.\textsuperscript{23}

This strong doubt, nevertheless, may be questioned by the clear reference to Ibn Tūmart appearing in the introduction to \textit{Sir al-‘Ālamīn}, a book which has been attributed to al-Ghazālī. This reference, it has been argued, removes the doubts which have been raised on the meeting between the two.\textsuperscript{24} Based on this, Ḥanashī argues that the book is considered the manifesto of Ibn Tūmart’s movement against the state of al-Murābitūn (Almoravids).\textsuperscript{25}

However, this argument can be strongly challenged by the questionable authenticity of the book under question. Several studies, which have discussed the authenticity of the works attributed to al-Ghazālī, have agreed that the book is almost certainly not authentic.\textsuperscript{26} This is based on eternal evidences which may be summarized in the following points:

1. The connection between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Tūmart mentioned in the introduction is spurious.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{27} Watt, “The Authenticity,” p. 34.
2. The book includes materials of superstition, which are almost impossible to be written by a Muslim scholar in the weight of al-Ghazālī.\(^{28}\)

3. Contrary to al-Ghazālī’s distinguished stylistic characteristic, which appears in his genuine works, the materials’ distribution in this book is not that systematic.\(^{29}\)

4. The author makes references to some of his works, such as *Nasīm al-Tasnīm*, which neither appears in any other authentic book of al-Ghazālī, nor in the sources listing his genuine works.\(^{30}\)

5. The book in general is biased against Umawīs and this, as al-‘Allāf states, suggests that it was written by a Bāṭinī.\(^{31}\)

In addition to these remarks, I may add that the purpose of the book which is to provide a guide for kings to support them in their worldly purposes, as frankly stated in the introduction,\(^{32}\) entirely conflicts with the interests and the teachings of al-Ghazālī at the time in which the book supposed to be written.

This strong doubt on the direct connection between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Tūmart from the outset renders any judgment of direct effect of the former on the latter very shakily founded. This of course does not eliminate the possibility of indirect influence on Ibn Tūmart by al-Ghazālī, i.e., through the works of the latter, but that is another issue which is beyond our present concern.


\(^{29}\) Watt, “The Authenticity,” p. 34, quoting Asin.


6.4 The Influence of the *Ihyā’*:

As has been previously illustrated, the *Ihyā’* of al-Ghazālī is his major project of *īslāḥ*, and it includes most of his main *īslāḥī* teachings. Therefore, assessing the influence of the book as a whole serves principally the purpose of the present chapter. This is hoped to be achieved firstly by highlighting the great interest in the *Ihyā’* over the centuries, and then by generally evaluating this interest.

6.4.1 The Great Interest in the *Ihyā’*:

Since al-Ghazālī’s time and down the centuries, there has been exceptionally great interest in the *Ihyā’*. This phenomenon can be supported by plentiful evidences. The following are striking selective pieces of these evidences.

Firstly, there has been considerable eagerness with which the book was studied and taught to others over centuries. A denoting early story illustrating this is that of Abū al-Fath ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭabāqāt b. Barhān (d. 518/1124), who was one of al-Ghazālī’s pupils for some time, and who then became a distinguished and hard-working teacher to the extent that he had teaching circles from early dawn to after dark; when he was once asked by a group of students to teach them the *Ihyā’*, he initially declined due to lack of time, but at their insistence, he devoted a teaching circle on the book at midnight.\(^{33}\)

Secondly, down the generations, the *Ihyā’* has been transmitted by various chains of narrators which go back to al-Ghazālī himself. Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791) was one of those who received the book via various *asānīd* (chains of narrators by whom the book was transmitted) which go back to the author. In the lengthy introduction of his extensive commentary on the *Ihyā’*, al-Zabīdī lists a number of

these asānīd starting from the ones who orally received the book from al-Ghazālī all the way down to him: several ones were through Jamāl al-Islām ‘Alī b. al-Muslim al-Salamī (d. 533/1139), another was through ‘Abd-al-Khāliq b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd-al-Qādir al-Baghdādī (d. 548/1153), two others were through Muḥammad b. Thābit b. al-Ḥasan al-Khūjandī (d. 483/1090f.), several others were through al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1148), another was through Abū Tāhir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Silāfī (d. 576/1180), and several more.34

Thirdly, there has been incredible attitude of people who learned the book by heart. One of those who memorized the entire Ihyā’ is Abū Tālib ‘Abd-al-Karīm b. ‘Alī al-Rāzī (d. c. 522/1128) who was one of al-Ghazālī’s pupils.35 In later centuries there were people who had similar attitude towards the Ihyā’, indicating a continuous remarkable interest in the book. At the beginning of the sixth/seventh century, the Tunisian Sufi Abd al-Salām al-Tunisī (d. 486/1093) succeeded in convincing the intellectual circle in Tilimsen of the importance of the Ihyā’ and consequently the book began to be transcribed and memorised by the people of Tilimsen.36 In the seventh/thirteen century, there was, for example, Sharaf al-Dīn Abū al-Fadl Aḥmad b. al-Shaykh al-Mawṣīlī (d. 622/1225) who was teaching the Ihyā’ from memory.37 Similarly, in the nine/fifteenth century there was Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Bilālī (d. 820/1417), who was continuously reading from the Ihyā’ until he developed a special ability in it and almost memorized it all.38

These particular reported examples, however, do not seem in any way enough to say, as al-Kīlānī puzzlingly claims, that all of al-Ghazālī’s pupils down the centuries had this attitude.\textsuperscript{39} They can, however, be used as additional examples for the exceptional interest in the \textit{Iḥyā’} down the centuries.

Fourthly, the book has been very widely disseminated. This, as Cook has rightly observed, “is documented by a mass of evidence that remains largely unstudied.”\textsuperscript{40} A good representative of these is the multiple transcripts of the book available around the globe. There are at least one hundred and nine manuscripts of the \textit{Iḥyā’}, which have been written at different dates since the time of the author, available in various cities around the world; they are listed and briefly described in Badawī’s work on al-Ghazālī’s books.\textsuperscript{41}

Lastly, a vast number of summaries and customised versions of the \textit{Iḥyā’} have been written over the centuries by people from different origins, sects, schools of thought, and even different religions. To obtain a good idea of the multiplicity, as well as the variety of the summaries and customised versions of the \textit{Iḥyā’} and the diversity of their authors as well, it is worth listing in table (2) below, a number of these in chronological order and highlight the sect, religion or school to which the authors belong, in addition to their origins and places of residence.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{39} Although al-Kīlānī strangely claims that all al-Ghazali’s pupils down the centuries had learned his books by heart, he only mentions two examples, see al-Kīlānī, \textit{Hākadhā Zahra jīl Šalāh al-Dīn}, p. 173.

\textsuperscript{40} Cook, \textit{Commanding Good}, pp. 450f


\textsuperscript{42} In this table I have benefited much from Cook’s well-referenced outline of a number of the summaries of the \textit{Iḥyā’}, both published and unpublished (Cook, \textit{Commanding Good}, pp. 451-55). However, I have not restricted myself with this outline for I have consulted other sources as well, and I have mentioned more summaries than those mentioned by Cook.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Category &amp; Origin of the Author</th>
<th>Short Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Lubāb al-Iḥyāʾ</em></td>
<td>Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. c.520/1126)</td>
<td>Sufi-Shāfiʿī from Tūs resided in Baghdad</td>
<td>He is al-Ghazālī’s brother who, according to al-Zabīdī, was the first who composed a summary of the <em>Iḥyāʾ</em>. (Murtaḍī al-Zabīdī, <em>Iḥṭāf</em>, 1:56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unknown title</td>
<td>Muḥammad b. al-Walīd al-Fihrī al-Ṭūrṭūshī (d. 520/1126)</td>
<td>Andalusian Mālikī resided in Alexandria</td>
<td>In this work, the renowned author “is described as emulating (<em>yuʿārid bihi</em>)” the <em>Iḥyāʾ</em>. (Cook, <em>Commanding Good</em>, p. 373 citing Manūnī, <em>‘Iḥyāʾ</em>, pp. 135-7, and others) He states in the introduction that “of the countless works on piety (<em>taqwā</em>), the <em>Revival</em> is the best, but that it suffers from a number of faults which he proceeds to list.” (Cook, <em>Commanding Good</em>, pp. 453f, citing Manūnī, <em>‘Iḥyāʾ</em>; p. 135.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Unknown title</td>
<td>Ibn al-Rammāmah (d. 567/1172)</td>
<td>Mālikī who was the judge of Fez</td>
<td>A third summary of the <em>Iḥyāʾ</em>. (Cook, <em>Commanding Good</em>, p. 373 citing Manūnī, <em>‘Iḥyāʾ</em>; pp. 132f.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Mukhatasa Dar al-Iḥyāʾ</em></td>
<td>Muḥammad b. Saʿīd al-Qurayzī (d. 575/1179)</td>
<td>Shāfiʿī who was the judge of Lahj (Yemen)</td>
<td>A fourth summary of the <em>Iḥyāʾ</em>. (Cook, <em>Commanding Good</em>, 451-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Al-Tafakur Fīmā Tashtamil ‘Alayh al-Suwar wa-al-Āyāt min al-Mabādiʿ wa-al-Ghāyāt</em></td>
<td>Abū ‘Alī al-Hasan b. ‘Alī al-Masīfī (d. late sixth/twelfth century)</td>
<td>Mālikī lived in Birjāyā (which is now in Algeria)</td>
<td>It is reported that this book was written on the model of the <em>Iḥyāʾ</em> and it became more popular than the <em>Iḥyāʾ</em> particularly in Birjāyā. (Būnābī, <em>“Nashʿat</em>,” opcit, citing Aḥmad Bābā al-Timbiktī, <em>Nayl</em>, p. 104; and al-Ghubrānī (d. 704/1304f.), <em>“Unwān</em>,” p. 67)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE (2) (CONT.): SUMMARIES AND CUSTOMISED VERSIONS OF THE *IHÇA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Category &amp; Origin of the Author</th>
<th>Short Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>Minhâj al-Qâṣiḍîn</em></td>
<td>Abû al-Faraj `Abd-al-RâhÎn b. ‘Alî, widely known as Ibn al-Jawzî (d. 597/1201)</td>
<td>Ḥanbalî from Baghdad</td>
<td>As stated in his introduction, Ibn al-Jawzî noticed that the true disciple resolving to live in spiritual seclusion and wanting a guiding book would prefer the <em>Ihçâ</em>, claiming it to be unique of its type and valuable by itself (<em>inârâdhû fî jinsih wa-nafâsatuhan fî nafsîh</em>), but since it has faults known only to the scholars, he decided to compose for such a person this work which, as he states, is free from the faults of the <em>Ihçâ</em> but it preserves its sound elements. So this is a reworked summary of the <em>Ihçâ</em>. (See the abridged version of this work made by Ahmad b. ‘Abd-al-Rashîm b. Qudâmah al-Maqîsî (d. 689/1290), <em>Mukhtâsar Minhâj al-Qâṣiḍîn</em>, Beirut &amp; Damascus: Dâr al-Khayr, 1998, p. 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Unknown title</td>
<td>&quot;&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;&quot;</td>
<td>An eighth summary by the previous author but a bigger size than <em>Rûh</em>. (See Ibn Khallikân, <em>Wafayyât al-A‘yân</em>, 1:108.8.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><em>Dhukhr al-Muntaḥî fî al-‘IÎm al-Jâlî wa-al-Khâfî</em></td>
<td>Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad b. ‘Abd-Allâh al-Khwârîzmi al-Shâfî‘î (d. 679/1280f?)</td>
<td>Sufi-Shâfî‘î from Mecca</td>
<td>A ninth summary. (See Cook, <em>Commanding Good</em>, 452 n. 163, including a description of the manuscript of this summary and some additional information about the author.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ethicon</td>
<td>Gregory Barhebraeus (d. 684/1286)</td>
<td>Syrian Christian</td>
<td>Cook describes this book as a Christian recension of the <em>Ihçâ‘</em> and he states that “a characteristic feature of this book is its extensive dependence on the <em>Ihçâ‘</em>…” (Cook, <em>Commanding Good</em>, pp. 455 &amp; 601)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><em>Tasfîyat al-Qulûb min Daran al-Awzâr wa-al-Dhunûb</em></td>
<td>al-Mu’ayyad Yaḥyâ b. Ḥamzah (d. 749/1348f)</td>
<td>Yemeni Zaydî</td>
<td>This book, as Cook noticed, can fairly be considered as a Zaydî recension of the <em>Ihçâ‘</em>. (Cook, <em>Commanding Good</em>, 246)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**TABLE (2) (CONT.): SUMMARIES AND CUSTOMISED VERSIONS OF THE ḤYĀ’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Category &amp; Origin of the Author</th>
<th>Short Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Qanātir al-Khayrāt</td>
<td>Abū Ṭāhir Ismā‘īl b. Mūsā al-Jayṭālī (d. 750/1349f)</td>
<td>Ḥanafī from Ḥijāz (now in Libya)</td>
<td>This Ḥanafī book was written on the model of the Ḥyā’. (Cook, Commanding Good, p. 401)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Janat al-Ma‘ārif or Ḥyā’ al-Ḥyā’ fi al-Taṣawwuṭ</td>
<td>Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Bilālī (d. 820/1417)</td>
<td>Ṣūfī-Ḥanafī lived in Cairo</td>
<td>A tenth summary which was written in 807/1405. (See Cook, Commanding Good, p. 457 n. 211) The summary was widely beneficial especially for Maghribīs. (al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497), al-Daw’ al-Lāmi’, Cairo: 1353 AH, Vol. 8, p. 178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>al-Mahājījah al-Bayḍā’ fi Tahdhib al-Ḥyā’</td>
<td>Muḥammad Muḥsin b. Murtaḍā, known as al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680)</td>
<td>Persian Ḥanafī-Shī‘ī</td>
<td>This is another recension of the Ḥyā’ but in Ḥanafī version. (Cook, Commanding Good, 246)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Ḥaḍīf al-Sādah al-Muṭaqīn bi-Sharḥ Ḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn</td>
<td>Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Zabīdī, widely known as Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791)</td>
<td>Indian Ḥanafī lived in Zabīd (Yemen) for long time and then in Cairo where he died.</td>
<td>This is an extensive commentary on the Ḥyā’. In addition to its lengthy explanations and comments on al-Ghazālī’s words, it includes the author’s extended takharīj (Ḥadīth verification) of the Prophetic traditions mentioned in the Ḥyā’. (See Murtaḍā al-Zābīḍī, Ithāf, Vol. 1, p. 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Maw’īzat al-Mu’mīnīn min Ḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn</td>
<td>Muḥamma Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1332/1914)</td>
<td>Syrian Salafī</td>
<td>A thirteenth summary the author of which states in the introduction that in his long experience in teaching, he has found that the most useful source from which preaching topics can be selected is the Ḥyā’. (al-Qāsimī, Tahdhib Maw’īzat al-Mu’mīnīn, n.p., n.d., p. 31.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table (2) (Cont.): Summaries and Customised Versions of the *Iḥyāʾ*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Category &amp; Origin of the Author</th>
<th>Short Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td><em>al-Mustakhlas fī Tazkiyat al-Anfus</em></td>
<td>Saʿīd Ḥawwā (d. 1409/1989)</td>
<td>One of the leaders of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in the last century</td>
<td>A fourteenth summary but with modifications and rearrangement of the selected materials. The author states in the introduction that he summarized from the <em>Iḥyāʾ</em> the uncontroversial elements on purifying the soul for which there is a real need in the modern age with some rearrangements and addition of some new topics. (Saʿīd Ḥawwā, <em>al-Mustakhlas fī Tazkiyat al-Anfus</em>, Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 1984, p. 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td><em>Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn fī al-Qarn al-Wāḥid wa-al-ʿIshrīn</em></td>
<td>Suʿād al-Ḥakīm (contemporary author)</td>
<td>Lebanese academic specialized in Sufi traditions particularly Ibn al-ʿArabī’s thoughts</td>
<td>This is a contemporary rewrite of the <em>Iḥyāʾ</em>. The purpose of this work, as the author states, is to show that there is “a consensus Islam” (<em>Islām muttafaq ʿalayh</em>) which suits “an absolute man” (<em>insān mutlaq</em>). To achieve this purpose, she has put for herself a number of guidelines, namely: (1) simplifying al-Ghazālī’s wording, (2) omitting issues which have been criticized by distinguished scholars, (3) rearranging the topics of the <em>Iḥyāʾ</em>, and (4) recording al-ʿIrāqī’s verification of the Prophetic traditions cited in the <em>Iḥyāʾ</em>. (Suʿād al-Ḥakīm, <em>Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn fī al-Qarn al-Wāḥid wa-al-ʿIshrīn</em>, Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2004, pp. 8 &amp; 45)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4.2 Evaluation of the Great Interest in the *Ihyā’*

Although the above mass of evidence for the considerable interest in the *Ihyā’* needs intense study in order to come out with a thorough assessment, the following quick observations can be recorded as a provisional evaluation.

The first observation is that the *Ihyā’* has proven to be very successful across different generations, different schools of thought, different sects and even different religions.\(^43\) This can be used as a sufficient proof for Lazarus-Yafeh’s general evaluation of al-Ghazālī’s thoughts that they “are expressed so convincingly that they crossed the barriers of time and religion.”\(^44\)

This extraordinary success of the *Ihyā’* proves that the book, and consequently al-Ghazālī’s *islāhī* teachings, has been continuously very influential. It is interesting to note that even the critics of al-Ghazālī have been influenced by him to some extent. This is clearly evident in the works of some of his critics, which are based on the *Ihyā’,* and their admiration for the book in general, or at least in part, as shown in table (2) above. It is possible to argue, though, that these works could be seen as attempts from these critics to reduce or to stop the harm, which may result from what they considered as faulty elements in the *Ihyā’*.

In fact the noticeable interest in the book may be used as evidence for accusing al-Ghazālī of being responsible for unfortunate phenomena, such as the wide publicity of fabricated traditions quoted in it among Muslims. As al-Qaraḍāwī states, “because of the dignity of al-Ghazālī among Muslims and the value of the *Ihyā’,* these weak and fabricated traditions have spread among the Muslim masses.”\(^45\)

\(^{43}\) Cf. Cook, *Commanding Good*, p. 450.

\(^{44}\) Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzali*, p. 3.

Another evaluative observation about the great interest in the *Ihyā’* is that the reproduction of the *Ihyā’* in various forms over centuries signifies that the book, in general, has proven generally usable up to our present time. The imitations of al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’*, as Fierro points out, “indicates that the work itself was considered as catering for certain religious needs.”\(^{46}\)

However, it is important to bear in mind that the customized versions and critically modified summaries, such as al-Ṭūrṭūshī’s and Ibn al-Jawzī’s, indicate partial agreement only. Moreover, the omission and the partial modification of the original materials in most of the above customised versions and reworked summaries may indicate that there is an agreement among their authors that the teachings of al-Ghazālī cannot be taken in full and that they need partial modification or correction. At the same time, nevertheless, it may be stated that they seem to admire the *Ihyā’* in general since they considered the book as a model for their works.

In short, such continuing interest in the *Ihyā’* clearly shows that the book has proven to be very influential, but on this alone we cannot confidently judge whether the influence has been positive or negative and this is open to debate.

6.5 Al-Ghazālī’s Effect on Sufism:

It seems pointless to show how relevant to the purpose of the present chapter is the question of al-Ghazālī’s effect on Sufism. So, without being detained by such unnecessary activity, let us turn to the real business and say that al-Ghazālī’s announcement of being a champion of Sufism has been considered the greatest victory which the movement has ever made.\(^{47}\) The rapid spread of Sufism in the

---


\(^{47}\) See, Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 74.
successive centuries has been linked with his influence. In addition, after being limited to particular distinguished scholars before al-Ghazālī, Sufism, al-Anṣārī argues, became popular also among general folks after al-Ghazālī.\(^48\)

The evaluation of al-Ghazālī’s effect on Sufism, however, has been controversial. On one hand, it has been evaluated as a great achievement by a number of students of Islamic thought. Arberry, for example, states that al-Ghazālī perfected the work of earlier distinguished Sufis, and thus Sufism started to be “accepted as a Muslim science, as a reasonable and laudable way of life.”\(^49\) In addition, a reconciliation and assimilation of Sufism with Sunni theology and \textit{fiqh}, Arberry further states, was achieved by al-Ghazālī.\(^50\) Similarly, Nicholson assures that “through his work and example the Sūfistic interpretation of Islam has in no small measure been harmonised with the rival claims of reasons and tradition.”\(^51\)

In addition, it has been positively argued that al-Ghazālī largely succeeded in making corrective changes to the movement of Sufism, namely the following:

1. Trying to set right some Sufi words and actions, so that they agree with the \textit{Sharī'ah}.\(^52\)

2. Transferring Sufism “from being concerned solely with \textit{dhawq} (mystical intuition), \textit{tahliq} (spiritual flying), \textit{shaṭaḥ} (ecstasy) and \textit{tahwîl} (exaggeration) into a practical ethical science.”\(^53\)

3. Treating the causes of deviation through Sufism, such as ignorance and being concerned with self-discipline before mastering knowledge.\(^54\)


\(^49\) Arberry, \textit{Sufism}, p. 83.

\(^50\) Arberry, \textit{Sufism}, p. 74.


On the other hand, al-Ghazālī’s effect on Sufism has been negatively evaluated in some studies; the emergence of “deviated” Sufi trends and thoughts has been traced back, by some writers, to al-Ghazālī’s influence to certain degree. Farīd al-Anṣārī is a good representative for this viewpoint. In the course of his criticism of what he calls Sufi spiritual mediating (wasāṭah rūḥīyah), i.e., religiousness through a Sufi mediator (wasīt), which in his view is a serious deviation from the original path of Islam, al-Anṣārī seriously accuses al-Ghazālī of being responsible for the publicity of such a way of religiousness in the Muslim Ummah. Although al-Anṣārī states that “al-Ghazālī did not explicitly necessitate the adherence to a mediator (wasīt) or paying homage (mubāya’ah) to a shaykh and rather he asserted that it is wrong,” he still holds al-Ghazālī responsible for implanting the idea of wasāṭah through the following:

(a) legitimizing the Sufi approach in general by considering Sufism as the essence of Islam and the best of all methods, which was an extreme reaction that resulted from his spiritual conversion; that was enough for people to adopt Sufism in that age which was known for blind imitation (taqlīd maḥt); and thus, Sufism, with its pitfalls namely the wasāṭah, became widespread;

(b) giving fiqh the name of ‘ilm al-dunyā (worldly knowledge) while naming Sufism ‘ilm al-ākhirah (knowledge of the next world); and that is the beginning of implanting the Sufi wasāṭah, for naturally the followers would have inclined towards Sufism and would have become disinterested in fiqh and even the fuqahā’ themselves would have sought Sufi mediators;

---

(c) highly praising Sufism and Sufis, with exaggeration, which led to a negative effect in the *Ummah*, for religiousness would have to be sought only through Sufis;\(^{59}\)

(d) mentioning the spiritual importance and the high value of a Sufi *Shaykh* in the *Iḥyā‘*.\(^{60}\)

Having summarized the major controversy over the evaluation of al-Ghazālī’s effect on Sufism, I would like to make the following concluding remarks:

1. It is an overstatement to say that al-Ghazālī succeeded in reconciling Sufism and Sunni theology and *fiqh*, because firstly this argued reconciliation between *Sharī‘ah* and Sufism, as Arthur has pointed out, could not put an end to the debate on the authenticity of Sufism.\(^{61}\) Secondly, as Knysh points out, “the extent to which his teachings were responsible for “reconciling” Sunnism with Sufi piety is difficult to ascertain.”\(^{62}\) This is particularly because the tendency “to bring Sufism into the fold of Sunnī Islam by demonstrating its consistency with the ideas and practices of the “pious ancestors”…”\(^{63}\) had started before al-Ghazālī.

2. It is difficult to positively hold al-Ghazālī responsible for the emergence of “deviated” Sufi trends, for Sufism had been already established by his time, as illustrated in chapter two above. In addition, Sufi deviated thoughts started before al-Ghazālī, who himself attacked some of them and attempted to correct them, as illustrated in chapter four. It is equally difficult to deny that some of his teachings, particularly those which can be regarded as an extreme


\(^{63}\) Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, p. 140.
reaction resulting from his personal experience, can potentially lead to, or justify, extreme Sufi trends.

3. The influence of al-Ghazālī on the movement of Sufism cannot be denied since his books of Sufi nature, namely the Ḥyāʾ, have become main references in the field. To make a balanced judgment, this influence, in our view, is two sided, good and bad; the first is the result of the strengths of his teachings, while the second is due to the pitfalls therein.

6.6 The Effect on the Movement of Philosophy:

“Al-Ghazālī’s study of philosophy undoubtedly had far-reaching results.”64 What concern us here, though, are the following two questions: the first is to what extent al-Ghazālī’s criticism affected the movement of philosophy in Islamdom and the second is what the value of his effort in this regard is.

There have been noticeable controversies over these two questions. Although there is some measure of agreement among the researchers that there was a sort of decline in the movement of philosophy in Islamdom for some time after al-Ghazālī, there is a considerable dispute over whether this phenomenon can be linked to al-Ghazālī’s criticism of philosophy. This link, on one hand, has been asserted by a number of researchers. According to Nakamura, “philosophy declined in the Sunnī world after al-Ghazālī, and his criticism of philosophy certainly accelerated this decline.”65 Even with the serious efforts of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) to resist this decline by his refutation of al-Ghazālī’s Tahāfut, he, Nakamura further states, could not stop

---

the trend. Similarly, Mclean asserts that “despite Averroes’s reply in *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* some decades later, Ghazali succeeded in quite marginalizing philosophy, especially in Sunnite Islam, and thereby terminating the tradition of Islamic work in Greek philosophy.” In a stronger expression al-Ghazālī’s criticism has been widely described as the fatal blow to philosophy.

On the contrary, this claimed strong effect has been rejected by others. Badawi, for instance, argues that it is the most serious illusion about al-Ghazālī, and he gives two reasons for this. One is that al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut*, as Badawi has investigated, does not appear in the works of those who dealt with philosophy in the Mashriq during the four successive centuries after al-Ghazālī, such as those of the killed al-Sahruḍī (d. 587/1191), al-Fakhr al-Razī (d. 606/1209), al-Shahristānī (d. 548/1153), `Umar al-Kātibī (d. 675/276), `Aḍūd al-Dīn al-Ijī (d. 675/1276), indicating, Badawi argues, that they did not pay attention to the book and that it did not have the claimed effect in turning people away from philosophy. The second reason is that it “is very naive to think that a single book or a criticism of a single author—regardless of how great he was—could put an end to an established branch of knowledge such as philosophy.”

Likewise, Watt states that the claim that philosophy was killed off by the effort of al-Ghazālī may be supported by the fact that there were no pure philosophical works.

---

68 See, for example, al-Shāmī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī, p. 82; al-Nadwī, Rijāl, Vol., 1, p. 287; and al-Qaraḍāwī, al-Imām al-Ghazālī, p. 38.
in the Islamic East after al-Ghazālī’s time, but how far this decline of philosophy was due to his critique or other factors is not evident. Since the distinguished philosopher, Avicenna, had died twenty years before al-Ghazālī, the decline of philosophy, Watt concludes, may have started much earlier than the *Tahāfut*. In addition, since “the traveller Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217) could still find people who professed to follow al-Fārābī and Avicenna,” then al-Ghazālī’s critique, Watt argues, did not put an end to philosophizing, but it may have contributed to the transformation of its study into two new trends: the first was that philosophical conceptions and methods became part of rational theology and *Kalām*, and the second was the fusion of philosophy with Shiite views.

The arguments of both sides of this dispute, however, do not seem that satisfactory, and thus a conclusive study of the question under review is largely needed in order to provide a definite conclusion. Provisionally, one may conclude that no one can deny the effect of al-Ghazālī’s criticism on the weakening of the movement of philosophy to some extent, but it is hardly convincing that this criticism put an end to philosophising in Islamdom.

This brings us to the second question regarding the value of this effect which is also disputable. On the one hand, it has been seen as a great achievement by some. According to al-Nadwī, for example, al-Ghazālī provided outstanding support for the religion by putting down the scientific value of philosophy, which had been very influential and prestigious, since the philosophy circle could not present a strong refutation of his *Tahāfut* till the time of Ibn Rushed. Similarly, al-Qaraḍāwī argues

---

75 Watt, *Islamic Philosophy*, p. 91.
that al-Ghazâlî had won the battle against philosophy, and that his attack on it succeeded in removing its past halo. In the same way, al-Shâmî\textsuperscript{78} considers al-Ghazâlî’s attack as a victory for Islam, and that he succeeded at least to put philosophy in a state of defence, after it had been in a state of attack.

On the other hand, the same effect has been negatively valued by others. Nasr, for example, has accused al-Ghazâlî of being responsible to a large extent for the destruction of rationalism as a major force in the Islamdom,\textsuperscript{79} which resulted from his attack against “rationalistic” philosophers.\textsuperscript{80} Similarly, El-Ehwany argues that al-Ghazâlî unintentionally shut the door on science by his enthusiastic defence of religion, his attack on the doctrines of philosophers, and by his adaptation of the Sufis method, which, in the view of El-Ehwany, is incompatible with rational methods of science.\textsuperscript{81} Consequently, since he was considered the Proof of Islam (\textit{\textit{Hujjat al-Islâm}}), the Muslims, El-Ehway further argues, followed him and gradually neglected the study of the sciences.\textsuperscript{82}

It seems that this dispute is mainly due to the difference of the reference of judgment. The reference of the negative evaluation seems to be the intellectual movement, in general, regardless of whether it is incompatible with Islamic justification. In contrast, the positive evaluation is judged by whether the effect was in favour of Islamic religiousness. In our view, based on the Islamic criteria of \textit{islâh} discussed in chapter one, this effect is obviously an \textit{islâhî} outcome.

\textsuperscript{78} al-Shâmî, \textit{al-Imâm al-Ghazâlî}, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{80} Nasr, \textit{Science and Civilization}, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{82} El-Ehwany, “Ibn Rushd,” p. 556.
6.7 The Effect of al-Ghazâlî’s Quarrel with the Bâtinîs:

Unlike the case with his effect on philosophy, it does not seem that al-Ghazâlî’s quarrel with the Bâtinîs has significantly attracted the attention of the researchers. In my search for relevant literature, I have not been able to find sufficient discussions of this effect. Therefore, only a few tentative remarks can be made here:

1. Al-Ghazâlî’s refutation of the Bâtinîyah doctrine seems to be successful, since there is no mention of noticeable counter-argument of al-Ghazâlî’s refutation appears in the relevant sources.

2. The decline of the Bâtinîyah movement is evident in the sources, but how far al-Ghazâlî’s efforts contributed to it is not evident. However, by being noticeably influential as shown above, it could be assumed that al-Ghazâlî’s effort had a considerable effect on the trend.

3. Watt seems to be correct in the following provisional assessment of the influence of al-Ghazâlî’s criticism of the Bâtinîyah: “[i]t may have helped to reduce the intellectual attractiveness of the movement, but its comparative failure, after its success in capturing Alamût, is due to many other factors.”

6.8 The Influence of al-Ghazâlî on the Successive Islâhî Movement:

The most striking claimed outcome of al-Ghazâlî’s Islâhî effort has been enthusiastically argued by al-Kîlānî; the main point in this argument is that the reformed generation of Salâh al-Dîn, who succeeded in restoring Jerusalem to Muslims, was an outcome of a reforming process started by al-Ghazâlî’s Islâhî efforts. As support for this claim, al-Kîlānî has linked al-Ghazâlî to the rise of many reforming madrasahs, mainly Sunnî-Sufi, in the successive years which, in the view

---

of al-Kīlānī, reflect a Sufi islāḥi movement, the fruit of which was the rise of that generation.\textsuperscript{85} He further argues that these madrasahs were largely inspired by al-Ghazālī’s approach to islāḥ.\textsuperscript{86} Foremost among these is the Qādirīyah madrasah in Baghdad, which was founded by ʿAbd-al-Qādir al-Jilānī who, as al-Kīlānī states, was largely influenced by al-Ghazālī as appears in his works.\textsuperscript{87} Al-Ghazālī’s influence on al-Jilānī, al-Kīlānī further argues, appears also in his approach to self-islāḥ which was an adaptation of al-Ghazālī’s attitude of “withdrawal and return” (al-insiḥāb wa-al-ʾawdah).\textsuperscript{88}

Although the argument has been interestingly presented, it has some grave pitfalls. The most crucial of which is that it includes some assumptions which lack sufficient supports or proofs. A case in point is al-Kīlānī’s central argument that all the madrasahs mentioned by him had a unified curriculum, which is virtually identical to that of al-Ghazalīyah and al-Qadiriyyah madrasahs, an argument for which no evidence has been given at all.\textsuperscript{89} Thus, the argued link cannot be regarded as a postulate, because it has not been convincingly verified.

\textsuperscript{85} al-Kīlānī, Hākadhā Zahra jīl Ṣalāḥ al-Ｄīn, p. 177.
\textsuperscript{86} al-Kīlānī, Hākadhā Zahra jīl Ṣalāḥ al-Ｄīn, p. 177.
\textsuperscript{87} al-Kīlānī, Hākadhā Zahra jīl Ṣalāḥ al-Ｄīn, p. 184.
\textsuperscript{88} By this expression, al-Kīlānī refers to al-Ghazālī’s retirement from formal teaching in the Nizāmīyah for the purpose of self-islāḥ and his return to formal teaching afterwards, see Ibid, p.184.
\textsuperscript{89} al-Kīlānī, Hākadhā Zahra jīl Ṣalāḥ al-Ｄīn, p. 238.
CONCLUSION

***************

The significant findings of all the six chapters above, despite their limitations which are quite unavoidable especially in a timed study like the present, are positive enough to make us rather confidently say that our suggested hypothesis is reasonably verified and that the intended purposes of the study are considerably accomplished.

To illustrate this in short, I shall conclude this challenging and time-consuming, though worthwhile, study by summing up the key findings of all the discussion above and add few fresh clarifying points, which have not found a proper place in the previous chapters.

1. Based on the interesting results of the semantic analysis of the lexical, Qur’ānic, and Prophetic usages of the term *islāh* (1.2 & 1.3), *islāh*, as an Islamic concept, has been provisionally defined (1.4) as a human corrective task in which any state of *fasād* is correctly changed into its opposite Islamically justified state, where *fasād* means a state of loss of the benefit of a thing, inexcusable detriment, or unjustified deviation from a moderate norm. This has provided us with a very useful objective measure of classifying al-Ghazālī as a *muṣliḥ*; to attain a basic level of justifying such a classification, one needs to know the extent of which he correctly responded to the states of *fasād* at his time, and also the extent to which his response led to the intended corrective change. This important finding has largely shaped the entire study.

2. The examination of the degree of equivalence between this Islamic concept and the meaning and usage of the English term “reform,” which is usually
considered as a rendering of \textit{islāh}, has shown that the gap between the two is considerably wide; therefore, for the sake of preciseness and to avoid confusion, I have concluded (1.5) that the term \textit{islāh} should not be replaced by “reform” and instead needs to be transliterated and defined whenever it is necessary, but when translation is unavoidable, then “Islamic reform” seems a more precise and less confusing rendering.

3. By comparing and contrasting between the Islamic concept \textit{islāh} with the following three concepts: \textit{tajdīd} (renewal or restoration), \textit{taghyīr} (change), and \textit{al-amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar} (commanding right and forbidding wrong), it has become very evident that although there are some similarities and partial overlapping between \textit{islāh} and these concepts, there are considerably major differences between them (1.6). This confirms that \textit{islāh} is a distinctive Islamic duty and thus it deserves to be studied as a separate topic, without confusing it with other Islamic concepts.

4. The extended, and hopefully balanced, overview of the historical context at the time of al-Ghazālī (Ch. 2) has clearly demonstrated that he lived in an exceptionally complex, diverse, changeable, and challenging age. Considering that context throughout the study has proven to be crucially important, and has really helped in dealing with the controversy surrounding al-Ghazālī’s life and thought.

5. The relatively lengthy discussion of al-Ghazālī’s life-experience (Ch. 3) has led to the following two main findings. The first is that his period of seclusion, which was a dramatic turning point in his entire life, marked the starting point of his determined \textit{islāhī} efforts (3.7). This has been readily justified by the following two successful \textit{islāhī} outcomes of that period (3.7): (a) he went
through a fundamental self-islāh or corrective conversion, which is a necessary condition for desiring general islāh, according to his teachings, and (b) he formulated his main islāhī teachings in his most famous book, the Ihyā’ which is aimed to be a major islāhī project. These outcomes, as has been shown (3.7), were asserted by al-Ghazālī’s contemporary and associate, al-Fārisī, whose eyewitness testimony renders the doubts which have been cast on the truthfulness of al-Ghazālī’s account in the Munqidh about his conversion totally unreasonable. The second main finding is that the entire period following al-Ghazālī’s successful self-islāh can be properly considered as a stage in which he strived for general islāh (3.8). This has been supported by the following proofs (3.8): (a) al-Ghazālī’s assertion in the Munqidh that his sole desire at that stage was islāh, (b) al-Fārisī’s biographical notices concerning the same stage which back up the above classification, (c) and almost all of al-Ghazālī’s reported activities during that stage are of islāhī nature. Based on these two very significant findings, the proceeding survey of al-Ghazālī’s islāhī efforts has been justifiably limited to that stage.

6. By surveying al-Ghazālī’s main islāhī efforts during the stage in which he devoted himself to islāh (Ch. 4), it has become quite clear that the extent of such efforts is remarkable. In light of the analysis of the concept of islāh performed in Chapter One, the extended, and hopefully objective, survey has amply illustrated firstly al-Ghazālī’s analysis of the major roots of fasād (4.2.1), secondly his diagnosis of a number of widespread phenomena of fasād at his time (4.2.2), thirdly his islāhī attempts to eradicate the roots of fasād analysed by him (4.3), and lastly his islāhī treatments of the phenomena of fasād diagnosed by him (4.4). Considering these enormous efforts, which all
appear to be of *islāhī* nature, is of crucial importance in verifying the suggested hypothesis, but before giving our final judgment the following findings need to be taken into account.

7. The focused assessment of al-Ghazālī’s overall *islāhī* teachings, namely those in the *Iḥyā’*, has revealed that his teachings, generally speaking, are highly original (5.2), abundantly clear and easy to follow (5.3), noticeably deep (5.4), and considerably realistic and practical, particularly his general principles (5.5). Besides these striking strengths, the assessment has shown that his teachings have some serious weaknesses as well, namely: (a) the apparent contradiction between his teachings of individualistic spirit and those of collective nature (5.5), which is really problematic and thus deserves a separate detailed study, (b) there are some elements of extremeness in his teachings, though he believes in moderation as a general rule (5.6), (c) his reporting of some Sufi practices which clearly contradict *fiqhī* rules, regardless of his true position which is also problematic and thus needs a separate detailed study (5.7.2), (d) and a number of his views were considerably influenced by unsound or weak traditions attributed to the Prophet (S.A.A.W.) (5.7.3). Such weaknesses, in our view, can be easily singled out for valid criticism.

8. By discussing a number of criticisms, which have been directed against al-Ghazālī’s teachings (Ch. 5), it has been found that most of them are not convincingly justifiable and thus they cannot be considered as postulates, though they have been continuously repeated and widely accepted. These are: (a) the accusation of copying from earlier sources without crediting them; for various reasons (5.2), it is difficult to follow such accusation, (b) the
accusation of implementing in his teachings un-Islamic or “foreign elements,” which may be traced back directly or indirectly to the works of ancient philosophers; but again for a number of reasons (5.7.1), this criticism cannot be regarded as serious or convincing, (c) the criticism that he fully supported Sufi tradition even those which contradict Islamic principles found in the Islamic primary sources; yet various reservations can be raised against such a criticism (5.7.2), (d) and the commonly repeated criticism that he relied heavily on weak and fabricated ahādīth, namely in the Iḥyāʾ; but there is an element of exaggeration on this criticism (5.7.3).

9. By discussing a number of phenomena which have been considered as effects of al-Ghazālī’s efforts and assessing the main controversial evaluations of these (Ch. 6), the following results have been reached.

(a) Because of the limitations in the sources, it is almost impossible to fully assess the effects of al-Ghazālī’s islāhī attempts or his efforts in general (6.1).

(b) Al-Ghazālī’s islāhī teachings most likely influenced many pupils, but the extent of this influence, the whole number of these pupils, and their exact role in passing on his teachings cannot be known for certain (6.2).

(c) The direct connection between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Tūmart, the founder of Almohad dynasty, is extremely doubtful, if not a myth, and thus the available evaluations of al-Ghazālī’s direct effect on him are shakily founded (6.3).

(d) The exceptionally great interest in the Iḥyāʾ can be supported by ample evidences (6.4.1). This clearly shows that the book, and thus its islāhī
teachings, has proven to be very successful, highly influential, and largely useable over the centuries and across different generations, despite their different schools of thought, sects, and even religions (6.4.2). However, whether its influence has been positive or negative remains debatable.

(e) Al-Ghazālī’s effect on Sufism cannot be denied, but it has been overstated by those who positively evaluated it as well as those who negatively looked at it (6.5). In our view, this effect has both a positive side and a negative one.

(f) It is difficult to totally reject that al-Ghazālī’s criticism of philosophy weakened its subsequent movement to some extent, but to claim that it put an end to philosophising in Islamdom is far from being convincing (6.6). The debate over the value of this effect is mainly because of the difference on the reference of judgment; the negative evaluation seems to disregard the Islamic justification, while the positive evaluation is based on whether the effect was in favour of Islamic religiousness, but looking at it from the İslāh perspective, it becomes evident that it is a favourable İslāhī effect (6.6).

(g) The effort of al-Ghazālī with regard to the challenge of the Baṭinīyah movement seems to be fruitful, but how far it contributed to its decline is not clear (6.7).

(h) The theory which links al-Ghazālī to the emergence of the Muslim generation which succeeded in freeing Muslim lands from the Crusaders has not been convincingly supported, and thus this cannot be positively regarded as one of al-Ghazālī’s İslāhī effects (6.8).
By weighing up all these findings, and considering in a balanced way all the points for and against al-Ghazālī, I can quite confidently assert that classifying al-Ghazālī as a *musliḥ* is fairly justified and that he significantly contributed to the rich “legacy of the *muṣliḥūn*”. His remarkable *iṣlāḥī* efforts, the great strengths of his *iṣlāḥī* teachings, and his favourable effects considerably outweigh his weaknesses and his unappreciative effects, regardless of how serious they are. I believe that it is gravely unfair to overstate his weaknesses, and disregard his impressive achievement. In fact, it sounds very unreasonable to expect from a single person like al-Ghazālī to accomplish more than what he achieved in order to consider him as a *musliḥ*, particularly in his extremely challenging and complex time.
Appendix: The Chronological Sequence of the First Crusade and the Muslim Response:

Through the determined and successful efforts of both Pope Urban II and the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Commenus, large allied western European forces, under various independent princes joined with several priests and assisted militarily and logistically by the Emperor, devotedly launched a military campaign—which has become known as the First Crusade—aiming eventually to capture the sacred city of Jerusalem from Muslims after freeing the way across Asia Minor and the Levant from the Seljuk and any other Muslim rulers; and thus reoccupying the lands which had been recently lost from the Christian Byzantine Empire following its grave defeat by the Seljuks at Malazgirt in 463/1071.¹

Unwilling to wait for the arrival of the main crusading forces and ignoring the advice of the Byzantine Emperor, over 20,000 initial French, German and Italian Crusader armies, called the People’s Crusade in the sources, launched savage raids into western Anatolia, plundered a number of villages—torturing and killing their Greek Christian inhabitants—and drove to the gates of Nicaea, the capital city of the Seljuk Sultan of al-Rūm, Qilij-Arsalān. Eventually, however, they were completely defeated by this Sultan towards the end of 489/1096.²

Underestimating the actual threat of the coming Crusades, and self-deluded by his dazzling victory, Qilij-Arsalān left his capital city at that critical time and marched eastwards to deal with his rival, the Emir Dānishmend, who had controlled north-eastern Anatolia—after the death of Qilij-Arsalān’s father—and blockaded the

Armenian city Melitene. This was the ideal chance for the Crusaders to advance towards Nicaea. When he received the news that the Franks had laid siege to Nicaea, Qilij-Arsalān declared a truce with Dānishmend and rushed to save his capital. After a valiant but unsuccessful attempt to break through the firm Crusader siege all around the city, the Sultan helplessly withdrew eastward, leaving the garrison of Nicaea to their own devices. They soon completely surrendered on 29-6-490/18-6-1097; and Byzantine troops entered the city, and thus it came under the mercy of the Emperor, which provoked the bitterness of the European Crusaders.

Soon after his painful withdrawal, the Sultan Qilij-Arsalān started to prepare seriously for undertaking jihād against the Christian invaders, gathering more Turkish troops and even allying with his opponent the Emir Dānishmend against their common enemies. On 12/7/490-30/6/1097, these joint Turkish troops set up an ambush near Dorylaeum, and waited for the arrival of the Crusaders who had set out from Nicaea in regiments. Shortly after a Crusading army set up camp close to Dorylaeum, it was fully surrounded by the Turks and shot by hail of arrows which killed many Christian soldiers. Unaware that the trapped army was just a group of the Crusaders, the Turks were badly shocked as they saw another Crusading army come to reinforce their fellow Christians. In a while, panic spread through the Turk camp as a third Crusading army appeared suddenly from the rear, whereupon the Turkish
troops put to flight in crucial defeat. In his flight, Qilij-Arsalān met Syrian troops who came to assist him, but it was too late.

This decisive defeat of the Turkish forces opened the way for the Crusaders to advance up to the frontiers of the Levant in a period which lasted from 15/7/490-3/7/1097 to 6/11/490-20/10/1097, during which they entered several Anatolian cities, ending the Turkish control over them, and these were restored to the Byzantine Empire. This period did not witness Muslim resistance which is worth mentioning, save occasional appearance of limited Turkish troops and garrisons which could not withstand the Crusaders. Nevertheless, in particular parts of their expedition, the Crusaders encountered severe difficulties due to scarcity of water and provisions, as well as bad weather and road conditions, which caused the loss of many lives. However, by having a number of refreshing rests in some relieving fertile lands on their way, they eventually managed to approach to the walls of Antioch, which had slipped from the Byzantines to the Seljuks in 477/1085.

When the Crusaders crossed the frontiers of the Levant, time was on their side. As shown above, the main Seljuk armies in the east, which were supposed to play an effective role in resisting the Crusading invasion, were fully engaged in ongoing internal warfare. Moreover, the Levant itself was a field of internal serious dispute among various emirs, namely between the Seljuk Emir Ridwān b. Tutush of Aleppo and his brother the Emir Duqāq of Damascus.

---

10 See Runciman, A History of the Crusades, Vol. 1, p. 186; and Ma'lūf, al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah, p. 35.
15 Not long before the advance of the Crusaders to Antioch, there was a bloody war between the Emir Ridwān, supported by a large host of Turcomans under Suqmān b. Artuq of Saruj, on one side and the Emir Duqāq with the governor of Antioch, the Turcoman Emir Baghi-Siyān (or Yaghi-Siyan), who had recently abandoned the Emir Ridwān and inclined towards his brother, and their forces on the other side, which ended with the defeat of Duqāq and his forces (see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Ḳāmil, Vol. 9, p. 11: trans., see Ricahards, The Annals, pp. 293f).
On 6/11/490-20/10/1097 the Crusading armies arrived at the walls of Antioch, and laid siege to the city, which was strongly fortified against attack and full of supplies. As the blockaders’ almost ran out of provisions in about two months, the Prince of Taranto, Bohemond I, and the Count of Flanders, Robert II, with 20,000 men were dispatched to raid the villages in the Orontes valley and to bring more supplies. At the village of Albara, Robert with his men, who were in the vanguard, were suddenly surrounded by Muslim forces, under Duqāq b. Tutush of Damascus, to whom Baghī-Siyān had sent his own son to directly appeal for rescuing his city, and joined with the Emir of Ḥamāh, who were in their way to relieve Antioch. However, a surprising assault commanded by Bohemond on the rear of the Muslim forces, at the last moment, rescued Robert’s men and forced the Muslims to withdraw to Ḥamāh with more grievous losses than their enemies. Consequently, Bohemond and Robert returned, with almost nothing but exhaustion caused by this clash, to their camp at Antioch, which they found in an extremely depressing state due to the shock of a night attack by a group of Turks from inside the blockaded city shortly after they had left, followed by bad winter weather condition, in addition to the growing food and health crisis.

Following the withdrawal of Duqāq’s relief army, Baghī-Siyān of Antioch was forced to urgently plead for help from the Emir Riddān of Damascus, who had remained extremely unresponsive to the threat of the Crusaders in short-sighted revenge for Baghī-Siyān’s disloyalty during the previous war with his brother Duqāq. Nevertheless alarmed by the seriousness of the threat, he finally embarked on a

---

campaign to deal with the Crusaders supported by the Emir Suqmān b. Artuq of Diyār-Bakr and the Emir of Ḥamāh. Learning of their approach to Antioch, 700 knights among the Crusaders set up an ambush for the Riḍwān’s joint forces between the river and the lake of Antioch. On 28/2/491-8/2/1098, the knights took these forces by surprise, and a fierce battle took place leading to the retreat of the Riḍwān’s forces to Aleppo in total disarray. Meanwhile, Baghī-Siyān suddenly attacked in full-scale the Camp of the blockaders, forcing its defenders to be driven back, but by seeing the victorious knights coming back, he ordered his soldiers to return to the city.

By the sixth month of the siege of Antioch, the Crusaders’ condition had been eased, while the situation of their blockaded enemies had become more critical. Provided by workmen and building materials from Constantinople, the blockaders had built fortresses to completely prevent any access to the city. As a result, they had succeeded in capturing large quantities of provisions destined for the people of Antioch.

While the situation in Antioch was getting worse, Karbūghā of Mosul, accompanied with other forces from various quarters under different emirs, was on his way to rescue the city. Miscalculation led Karbūghā, despite the reservation of other army chiefs, to march first against Edessa, which had come under the rule of Count Baldwin who had separated from the Crusaders to raid into Armenia. Karbūghā was unaware that Baldwin was too weak to attack him, yet was wholly secure in his strong

---

26 Also spelled Kerbogha and Kirbogha.
fortresses; however, after wasting three critical weeks before the walls of Edessa, he finally turned to Antioch.\(^\text{28}\) In the meantime, Bohemend, through top secret communication, concluded an agreement with a senior commander in Antioch’s government on selling the city to the Crusaders.\(^\text{29}\)

The approach of the Karburghā’s forces caused panic among the Crusaders to the extent that many of them started to desert.\(^\text{30}\) Shortly before the actual arrival of the relief forces, however, the city had suddenly fallen. Through the plot of the treacherous commander who was in charge of guarding one of the Antioch’s towers, the Crusaders stormed into the city at the break of dawn of 25/6/491-3/6/1098, massacring all the Turk population who they found, men and women alike; while Baghī-Siyān with some of his men fled in terror; however, he was eventually killed by a band of Armenians.\(^\text{31}\) Unlike Baghī-Siyān, his brave son Shams-al-Dawlah managed to gather some soldiers and firmly hold the citadel of the city, repelling the assaults of the invaders against it, but unable to mount any offensive attack.\(^\text{32}\)

A few days after the fall of Antioch, Karburghā arrived and laid siege to the invaded city.\(^\text{33}\) Shams-al-Dawlah sought help from Karburghā and requested that he retain command, but the latter demanded that the citadel should be handed over to his


\(^{31}\) See Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, pp. 233f; and Ma‘lūf, *al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībiyyah*, pp. 54f. The chronicler Ibn al-Athīr narrated the fall of Antioch, mentioning the story of the treachery and the retreat of Baghī-Siyān, but according to his narrative, the march of Karburghā started after the city had fallen and his account does not include any of the previous rescue attempts (see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 9, pp. 14f). In my description of this event, as well as other events mentioned in this section, I have chiefly relied on the detailed account of the distinguished historian Steven Runciman on the First Crusade which is an outcome of an in-depth scholarly research on numerous original Western European, Latin, Greek, Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Syriac and Hebrew sources in addition to many secondary sources, as appears in his rich footnotes and extensive bibliography.


commander Ḥāmid b. Marwān. To prevent any attempt to break into the city from this most vulnerable part, the Frankish invaders had fortified it by constructing a separate wall and by intensifying their defence there. These precautionary measures proved successful. Ibn Marwān mounted an attack from the citadel, but was driven back with heavy loss.

As the siege continued, the blockaded city sank into gloom. Provisions were growing scarce to the extent that the poor among the Franks started to eat carrion and the leaves of trees, while the rich were eating their sumpters. The morale of the Crusaders declined dramatically. However, “at this juncture the spirits of the Christians were raised by a series of events which seemed to them to show God’s special favour,” namely the finding of a lance which claimed to go back to the time of Christ.

Meanwhile, Karbughā’s coalition of forces started to look dangerously shaky. His arrogance and mistreatment alienated the other commanders in the coalition and many of them decided to desert him. Moreover, there was growing discord among Karbughā’s own troops. Despite these worrying internal problems, Karbughā refused a proposal for conditional surrender of the Franks and insisted on fighting.

---

41 Ibn al-Athīr (al-Kāmil, Vol. 9, p. 15) states that the lance was buried by a priest who was among the Crusaders. For a discussion of this story, see Runciman, A History of the Crusades, Vol. 1, p. 241-6.
Consequently, the Crusaders marched out on 20/7/491-28/6/1098, prepared for the clash with high courage.\footnote{Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 247.} While they were emerging in small groups, the Muslims wanted to pick them off straight away but Karburghā forbade them, preferring to attack all of them in one blow; however, when all the Franks came out and stood in a great array, many of Karburghā’s troops deserted the battle field due to Karburghā’s mistreatment and his order of delaying the attack.\footnote{Ibn al-Athīr, \textit{al-Kāmil}, Vol. 9, p. 16. In her discussion of the fall of Antioch, Hillenbrand unfortunately misrepresents Ibn al-Athīr’s account particularly on this quote by firstly mistranslating the phrase “
\textit{tārabū mas\=āfan ‘az\=īman}” as “they attacked strongly,” when it should be translated as “they stood in a great array,” and secondly by omitting the reported reason behind the desertion of the Muslim troops (Cf. Hillenbrand, \textit{The Crusades}, p. 58).} Shortly, Karburghā himself fled, following other chief commanders, but a group of true \textit{mujāhids} stood firm, fighting for the sake of God and aiming martyrdom.\footnote{Ibn al-Athīr, \textit{al-Kāmil}, Vol. 9, p. 16.} Thousands of these Muslims were killed by the Franks.\footnote{Ibn al-Athīr, \textit{al-Kāmil}, Vol. 9, p. 16.} When the men in the citadel saw that the Muslims were defeated, they surrendered and thus the Crusaders won unexpectedly a complete victory.\footnote{Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 249.}

Before the fall of Antioch, the Fatimids had come onto the scene of the Muslim-Crusader conflict, but rather shamefully in a bad spot. During the Crusader siege of Antioch, a suspicious embassy was dispatched by the Fatimid all-powerful Vizier and actual ruler of Egypt, al-Afdāl, to the Crusaders.\footnote{This contact is clearly mentioned in the Western Crusader sources, see Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 229.} The proposal of al-Afdāl, as Runciman points out, “seems to have been that a division should be made of the Seldjuk empire; the Franks should take northern Syria and Egypt should take Palestine.”\footnote{Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 229.} The Franks, however, “far from being willing to aid the Egyptians to recover Palestine, had every intention of themselves marching on Jerusalem.”\footnote{Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 265.}
Nevertheless, underestimating the actual plans of the Franks and profiting from the weakness of the Turks, their traditional enemies, who had been recently defeated by the Crusaders in Antioch, the Fatimid army under al-Afdal undertook an ill-timed expedition to Jerusalem and after blockading it for more than forty days they eventually recaptured it from the Seljuks, despite the initial resistance of its population. Al-Afdal, however, would discover too late the real objectives of the Crusaders, as we shall see shortly.

In addition to al-Afdal, there were other Muslim leaders who had unfortunate contacts and forms of collaboration with the Crusaders against their fellow-Muslim political opponents. For example, after the fall of Antioch, the Emir of A’zāz (Azaz), ‘Umar, who rebelled against the Emir Riḍwān of Aleppo, sought the help of the Franks when his old master intended to suppress his rebellion.

Following the Franks’ complete victory in Antioch, there was a delay to the Crusade for a couple of months due firstly to a serious disagreement among chief Crusader princes, namely Bohemond I of Taranto and Raymond IV of Saint-Gilles, over the possession of Antioch, and secondly to a major epidemic which broke out in the city. An eminent victim of the epidemic was the Bishop of Le Puy, Adhemar, who, as the Pope’s representative in the Crusade, had played a very significant role in its success.

Before the resumption of the march to Jerusalem, a number of successful small but fierce raids into the lands nearby Antioch were conducted by segments of the

---

54 The city was in the actual hands of the two Turkman emirs: Suqmān b. Artuq and his brother Ilghāzī, who had vowed homage to the Seljuk Emir of Damascus, Duqaq, see Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, Vol. 9, p. 19; and Runciman, A History of the Crusades, Vol. 1, p. 265.
Crusaders, securing provisions and capturing some Syrian towns including Rugia and Albara.\textsuperscript{60} On 26/12/491-28/11/1098, a Frankish attack was launched against the town of Ma’rrat al-Nu’mān but it was strongly resisted by its Arab population, whereupon the city was entirely blockaded.\textsuperscript{61} After thirteen days of blockading the town, the Franks, using a large movable wooden tower, forced their way into the town, massacring thousands of its population\textsuperscript{62} and even engaging in cannibalism.\textsuperscript{63} 

In early 492/1099, Raymond and his army set out from Ma’rrat al-Nu’mān to resume the Crusade independently, helplessly leaving Antioch in the full control of the Prince Bohemond.\textsuperscript{64} Shortly, other Crusading leaders, save Baldwin and Bohemond, decided to join Raymond and thus he became unchallenged leader of the Crusade.\textsuperscript{65} 

As Raymond reached Kafartab, the Emir of Shayzar\textsuperscript{66} sent a delegation to him, proposing to provide the Franks with provisions and guides on condition that they would not invade his lands.\textsuperscript{67} By accepting the proposal, Raymond followed the Emir’s guides and led the Franks across the Orontes River.\textsuperscript{68} When they reached the town of Masyaf on 22/2/492-22/1/1099, its head reluctantly entered into a treaty with them.\textsuperscript{69} Next, they captured Ḥiṣn al-Akrād, taking considerable booty.\textsuperscript{70} At this fortress, the Crusaders received envoys from the independent emirs of Hums and Tripoli, helplessly offering precious gifts and proposing treaties.\textsuperscript{71} Despite the

\textsuperscript{60} Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 257.
\textsuperscript{63} See Ma’lūf, \textit{al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalīḥiyah}, pp. 63f.
\textsuperscript{64} See Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 261.
\textsuperscript{66} Or Shaizar.
\textsuperscript{68} Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 267.
\textsuperscript{69} Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 267.
\textsuperscript{71} See Ma’lūf, \textit{al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalīḥiyah}, pp. 66f.
initiative of the Emir of Tripoli, the Crusaders raided his territory and laid siege to the
city of Arqa on 15/3/492-14/2/1099.\textsuperscript{72}

In the meantime, a detachment of the Crusaders, encouraged by Raymond, made a
surprise attack on the coastal port of Tortosa, which led to its evacuation and thus it
easily fell into the hands of the Crusading army, a key triumph for the Crusade; for “it
opened up easy communications by sea with Antioch and Cyprus and with Europe.”\textsuperscript{73}
This accomplishment provoked feelings of jealousy among the Crusaders who had
remained in Antioch and consequently groups of them set out to follow Raymond.\textsuperscript{74}

The siege of Arqa, however, was not successful, mainly because of its strong
fortifications and determined resistance of its garrison.\textsuperscript{75} After camping behind the
walls of the city for three months, Raymond disappointedly decided to lift the siege
and continue his march southwards.\textsuperscript{76}

As the Crusaders drew near Tripoli, its Emir provided them with guides,
provisions and horses.\textsuperscript{77} On 20/6/492-19/5/1099, they entered the Fatimid northern
lands where they did not meet any resistance.\textsuperscript{78} When they approached Beirut, its
people offered them gifts and safe passage through, if they would leave their rich
gardens undamaged and so the Crusaders did.\textsuperscript{79} Unlike the case of Beirut, when the
Crusaders reached Sidon, they were daringly attacked by its garrison, but it was
repelled by the Crusaders who in return damaged the gardens in the suburbs.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{72} See Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 270; and Ma'lūf, \textit{al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībih}, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{73} Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 270.
\textsuperscript{74} Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, pp. 270f.
\textsuperscript{76} See Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 274f; and Ma'lūf, \textit{al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībih}, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{77} Ma'lūf, \textit{al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībih}, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{78} Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 275.
\textsuperscript{79} See Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 276; and Ma'lūf, \textit{al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībih}, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{80} See Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 276; and Ma'lūf, \textit{al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībih}, pp. 73f.
Next, the Crusaders marched along the coast and passed by Tyre, Naqoura, Acre, Haifa, Caesarea and Arsuf without any opposition worth mention. Then they turned inland and by the time they reached the fully Muslim town, Ramleh, its inhabitants had already fled, leaving the city to easily become a Christian prize.

On 10/7/492-7/6/1099 the Crusaders arrived before the walls of Jerusalem and besieged the Sacred City, which was a great fortress and which had been well prepared for long siege by its Fatimid governor Iftikhār al-Dawlah. Soon the Franks were in great hardship due to scarcity of water and food, in addition to the rough summer weather. After their initial assault failed, they started to construct wooden siege towers in order to enhance their attack. Meanwhile, the priest Peter Desiderius played a considerable role in boosting the morale of the Crusades, which had been sapped by the disappointing circumstances.

Despite being continuously struck with stones and liquid fire from the defence, the Crusaders succeeded in bringing their wooden towers right up to the walls and forced entry into the city on 23/8/492-15/7/1099. Consequently, showing no mercy to its inhabitants, even those who sought refuge in the mosque of al-Aqṣā, the Crusaders horribly massacred a great number of Muslims and Jews alike.

Similar to what happened after capturing Antioch, the fall of Jerusalem generated tension among the remaining Crusader princes over the issue of the throne, but it was finally released by the election of Godfrey of Bouillon as ruler and the hopeless...

---

departure of other chief princes, namely Raymond, from the city. Despite this tension, as the news came to them that a relieving Egyptian army under the Fatimid Vizier, al-Afdal, had approached the Palestinian city of Ascalon, the Frankish princes agreed to join together against this threat. On 22/9/492-12/8/1099, the Franks caught the Egyptian army entirely by surprise as they suddenly attacked their camp near Ascalon, killing many of them and taking a lot of booty. Al-Afdal and some of his men, however, managed to flee back to Egypt, suffering a bitter defeat.

Following the defeat of al-Afdal, the Muslims in the city of Ascalon, followed by those in the town of Arsuf, offered to surrender to Raymond in person, because of his reputation of keeping his word to those who had surrendered to him at Jerusalem; however, the deal fell through as a result of the objection of Godfrey to such surrender. Consequently, Raymond and other Frankish chief commanders, with their men, angrily deserted Godfrey and thus he became too weak to attack the garrisons of these two locations.

Subsequently, Tancred, the Crusader leader who remained in Palestine after the Battle of Ascalon, raided with his small army in the Palestinian central plateau, over which there had been recent warfare between the Fatimids and the Emir Duqāq of Damascus. Profiting much from the disunity of the Muslims and the ongoing family fights among the Turkish emirs, Tancred easily overran this region and established himself as Prince of Galilee.

---

By strengthening his armed power with many of the Frankish pilgrims who had arrived at Jerusalem five months after its fall, the ruler of Jerusalem, Godfrey, was able to extend his sway over new Palestinian lands.\textsuperscript{97} From April 1100 (5/493), the emirs of Ascalon, Caesarea and Acre ended up paying monthly tributes to him.\textsuperscript{98}

Shortly before Godfrey’s death on 9/9/493-18/7/1100, he had concluded a treaty of alliance with a strong Venetian fleet at the port of Jaffa, agreeing to arrange a joint expedition against the coastal cities of Acre and Haifa.\textsuperscript{99} His death postponed the assault on Acre, but the expedition against Haifa was carried out under a number of Crusader commanders with the support of the Venetian fleet.\textsuperscript{100} Despite the determined resistance of its small Fatimid garrison and its inhabitants, who were mainly Jews, which initially discouraged the Venetians, the city was finally captured by the Franks, who massacred the majority of its Muslim and Jewish inhabitants.\textsuperscript{101}

In the summer of 493/1100, the situation in northern Syria was developing remarkably. Responding to an appeal for help from the ruler of Melitene, Gabriel, against the threat of the Danishmend Emir Gümüşhtekin, who had been raiding Gabriel’s territory, the Prince Bohemond set out from Antioch with a small army to save Melitene.\textsuperscript{102} On his way, Bohemond was caught in ambush which had been set up by the Danishmend Emir; Bohemond’s army was routed and he was taken captive.\textsuperscript{103}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{98} Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 309.
\textsuperscript{100} See Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 316.
\textsuperscript{101} See Runciman, \textit{A History of the Crusades}, Vol. 1, p. 316.
\end{flushleft}
Regardless of such occasional and limited successful resistance, the Muslims, throughout al-Ghazālī’s age, could not liberate their occupied lands from the Crusaders.
Notes:

- Dates of publications shown are Christian dates, unless they are followed by A.H., which stands for hijrī date.
- Last names starting with “al-” are kept with “al-” but are listed under the letter following the “al-”.
- Translated classical sources are in English, unless otherwise stated, and are listed under the name of the translators, but they are cross-referred to under the entries of the original authors.


Bibliography


___, Ḥiyāʾ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn, Beirut: Dār Ḥiyāʾ al-Turāth al-Arābī, n.d.; trans.: Kitāb ʿĀdāb al-Akhlāq, see Johnson-Davies, Denys. al-Ghazālī, Kitāb ʿĀdāb Tilāwat al-Qurʾān, see Abul Quasem, Muhammad. The Recitation,

Kitāb al-Adhkār wa-al-Daʿwāt, see Nakamura, Kojiro. al-Ghazālī.

Kitāb Asrār al-Ṣalāh, see Calverly, Edwin Elliot. The Mysteries, Kitāb Asrār al-Ṣawm, see Fāris, Nabīh Amīn. The Mysteries of Fasting,

Kitāb Asrār al-Ṣīrah, see Fāris, Nabīh Amīn. The Mysteries of Purity,

Kitāb Asrār al-Zakāh, see Fāris, Nabīh Amīn. The Mysteries of Almsgiving,

Kitāb Dhikr al-Mawt wa-ma Baʿdah, see Winter, T. J. The Remembrance.

Kitāb al-ʿIlm, see Fāris, The Book of Knowledge, and also McCall, “The Book of Knowledge”.

Kitāb Riyāḍat al-Nafs and Kitāb Kasr al-Shawatayn, see Winter, T. J. al-Ghazālī.

Kitāb al-Tawbah, see Stern, M. al-Ghazālī.

___. Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk, trans., see Bagley, F. R. C. Ghazālī’s.
___. Tahāfut al-Falāsīfah, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā, Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1980; trans., see Kamali, Sabīh Ahmad. al-Ghazālī’s.


---


---


---


---

297
trans.: of sections related to the history of the Seljuk Turks over the year 420/1029 to the year 490/1096-7, see, Richard, D. S. *The Annals*.


Karra de Vaux (Bernard), Baro. al-Ghazālī, Translated into Arabic by ‘Ādil Zu′aytar, Cairo: Dar Ihīyā′ al-Kutub al-‘Arabīyah, 1959.


__. “Māturīdīyya,” EI², Vol. 6, pp. 847f.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


___, “*al-Asḥāriyya,*” *EI*², Vol. 1, p. 696


al-Zabīdī, known as Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, see Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī.


Zambaur, E. V. “*Ḥisba,*” in *EI*¹.

