THE QUR'ANIC HERMENEUTICS OF ABŪ ḤĀMID AL-GHAZĀLĪ WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS UNDERSTANDING OF *TA'WĪL*

Martin Whittingham

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

2002



DECLARATION

I hereby declare that both this thesis and the research upon which it is based are my own work.

Martin Whittingham
August 2002

For my parents,
with love and gratitude

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to fill an important gap in the study of Ghazālī by examining his theory and practice of Qur'an interpretation. Attention is given to Ghazālī's understandings of *ta'wīl*, a term which can be translated as 'interpretation', but which, as the thesis demonstrates, Ghazālī employs in a variety of ways. After an introductory chapter, the thesis is divided into two parts. Part One explores Ghazālī's different theories of interpretation, while Part Two concentrates on his interpretive practice. Part One consists of three chapters. Chapter Two concentrates on four presentations of Ghazālī's Sufi-influenced ideas, drawn from two books within *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, and also *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* and *Mishkāt al-anwār*. Chapters Three and Four move on to non-Sufi theories. Chapter Three explores *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa'l-zandaqa*, while Chapter Four offers an analysis of the section on *ta'wīl* from *al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl*.

Like the first part of the thesis, Part Two also comprises three chapters. These discuss, in probable chronological order, the only three works by Ghazālī which make Qur'an interpretation their central concern. *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* introduces a range of Ghazālī's theological concerns into interpretations of Qur'anic passages. By contrast, *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm* and *Mishkāt al-anwār* are both concerned with a single issue, the attainment of certain knowledge. While *Qisṭās* enlists the Qur'an in support of syllogistic logic, *Mishkāt* draws on it to underpin a theory of the soul based closely on that of Ibn Sīnā. All three texts exhibit Ghazālī's complex shifts between Sufi and non-Sufi stances.

The thesis establishes the sometimes surprising sources shaping Ghazālī's Qur'an interpretation. It also draws attention to divergences between his theory and practice of interpretation, and highlights how Sufi and non-Sufi ideas are woven together in a complex pattern which makes generalising about Ghazālī's approach to the Qur'an hazardous.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Carole Hillenbrand, for her insightful and diligent guidance of this research. Her kindness and attention to detail were an invaluable combination. Dr. Bill Donaldson taught me Arabic with great clarity and friendliness, while Mrs. Lel Gillingwater, secretary of the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, provided good-humoured assistance on countless administrative matters. I would also like to thank the University of Edinburgh for the award of a Faculty of Arts Scholarship, and the Whitefield Institute, Oxford, for their sponsorship over several years. The Institute's Dr. David Cook provided welcome comments at various stages of the development of this study. David Coffey first suggested my undertaking research in this field, while Kerry Pratt offerred valuable advice on computing matters. Many others provided various forms of support and encouragement, notably Christ Church Roxeth, St. Mungo's Balerno, International Community Church in Oxshott, Richard and Ruth Bowman and Margaret Hanson.

Finally, I am indebted to three generations of my family. First, my parents helped to finance this endeavour, and their sustained interest could always be relied upon. Secondly, my wife Helen has been unfailingly generous in her encouragement, and has also enhanced my love of learning no end. Finally, Anna's exuberant presence during the final two years of this research made the time fly.

ABBREVIATIONS

AJISS	*American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
EI (1)	*Encyclopaedia of Islam* (First Edition)
EI (2)	---------- (Second Edition)
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*
IQ	*Islamic Quarterly*
IS	*Islamic Studies*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JHP	*Journal of the History of Philosophy*
JIS	*Journal of Islamic Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
MW	*Muslim World*
REI	*Revue des Etudes Islamiques*
SI	*Studia Islamica*
ZGAIW	*Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften*

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Classification of Qur'anic Verses and Sciences in *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*.....38

Table 2: The Division of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* in *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*.....142

Table 3: A Comparison of Ibn Sīnā's Interpretations of Q24:35.....204

Table 4: A Comparison of Ibn Sīnā's and Ghazālī's Interpretations of Q24:35....214

THE QUR'ANIC HERMENEUTICS OF ABŪ ḤĀMID AL-GHAZĀLĪ WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS UNDERSTANDING OF *TA'WĪL*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....i

Acknowledgements.....ii

Abbreviations.....iii

List of Tables.....iv

Note on Transliteration and Dates.....v

Table of Contents.....vi

Chapter One: Introduction.....1

1.1 Aims and Scope of the Thesis.....1

1.2 The Life of Ghazālī.....5

1.3 Important Terminology.....7

1.4 Recent Scholarship on Ghazālī.....10

PART ONE: GHAZĀLĪ'S HERMENEUTICAL THEORIES

Chapter Two: *Kitāb Ādāb Tilāwat al-Qurān, Jawāhir al-Qur'ān, Mishkāt al-Anwār* and *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id*.....19

2.1 Introduction.....19

2.2 Hermeneutics and Cosmology in Ghazālī's Writings.....20

2.3 *Kitāb Ādāb Tilāwat al-Qur'ān*.....23

2.3.1 Preliminary Discussion of the Text.....24
2.3.2 Hermeneutical Theory.....26
2.3.2.1 Hermeneutics and Cosmology.....26
2.3.2.2 Arguments from Tradition and Reason used in Defence of Sufi Qur'an Interpretation.....28
2.4 *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*.....33
2.4.1 Preliminary Discussion of the Text.....33
2.4.2 Hermeneutical theory.....36
2.4.2.1 Hermeneutics and Cosmology.....36
2.4.2.2 The Classification of Religious Sciences.....37
2.4.2.3 *Ta'wīl* and Dream Interpretation.....43
2.5 *Mishkāt al-Anwār*.....45
2.5.1 Preliminary Discussion of the Text.....45
2.5.2 Hermeneutical theory.....49
2.5.2.1 Hermeneutics and Cosmology.....49
2.5.2.2 Ghazālī's *ta'wīl* and Theories of Imaginative Prophecy.....51
2.6 *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id*.....58
2.6.1 Preliminary Discussion of the Text.....59
2.6.2 Hermeneutical theory.....61
2.6.2.1 Hermeneutics and Cosmology.....61
2.6.2.2 *Ta'wīl* in *Qawā'id*.....62
2.7 Conclusion.....78

Chapter Three: *Fayṣal al-Tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa'l-Zandaqa*.....81

3.1 Introduction.....81
3.2. Preliminary Discussion of the Text.....85

3.3 *Ta'wīl* in *Fayṣal*.....95

3.3.1 *Ta'wīl* as a Defensive Device.....95

3.3.2 *Ta'wīl* and Levels of Interpretation in *Fayṣal*.....100

3.3.3 *Ta'wīl* and Syllogistic Logic.....103

3.3.4 *Ta'wīl* as process or result of interpretation.....106

3.4 Conclusion.....108

Chapter Four: *Ta'wīl* in *Al-Mustaṣfā Min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*.....110

4.1 Introduction.....110

4.2 Preliminary Discussion of the Text.....113

4.3 *Ta'wīl* in *Mustaṣfā*.....121

4.3.1 *Ta'wīl* and Figurative Language.....121

4.3.2 *Ta'wīl* in *Mustaṣfā* as Process of Interpretation or Result of Interpretation.....124

4.3.3 The Role of Reason in Interpretation.....126

4.4 Conclusion.....128

PART TWO: GHAZĀLĪ'S HERMENEUTICAL PRACTICE

Chapter Five: *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*.....131

5.1 Introduction.....131

5.2 Isolated Interpretations.....132

5.2.1 *Ta'wīl*.....132

5.2.2 Qur'anic Interpretation and Intellectual Disciplines.....138

5.3 Chapters on the Interpretation of Important Passages.....140

5.3.1 *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* (Sura 1).....141

5.3.2 The Throne Verse (Q2:255).....149

5.3.3 *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* (Sura 112).....153

5.4 Conclusion.....154

Chapter Six: *Al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm*.....157

6.1 Introduction.....157

6.2 Preliminary Discussion of the Text.....161

6.3 The Qur'an and the Syllogism in *Qisṭās*.....176

6.3.1 Ghazālī's Examples of Syllogisms in the Qur'an.....177

6.3.2 Other Qur'anic Verses Interpreted with Reference to the Syllogism..184

6.3.3 The Hermeneutical Framework of *Qisṭās*.....187

6.4 Conclusion.....193

Chapter Seven: *Mishkāt al-Anwār*.....197

7.1 Introduction.....197

7.2 Ibn Sīnā on the Light Verse.....200

7.2.1 Basic Assumptions Concerning Ibn Sīnā's Symbolic Method.....200

7.2.2 Ibn Sīnā's Doctrine of the Intellect and the Interpretation of the Light Verse.....202

7.3 Ghazālī on the Light Verse.....211

7.3.1 The Niche, Lamp and Glass.....215

7.3.2 The Olive Tree andthe Oil.....216

7.3.3 The Fire and Light Upon Light.....222

7.3.4 Implications for Ghazālī's View of Reason.....225

7.3.5 Evidence from Other Texts.....229

7.4 Other Interpretations in *Mishkāt*.....232

7.5 Conclusion.....235

Chapter Eight: Conclusion.....238

Bibliography.....246

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

> Truly speaking, the entire history of Islam is one of exegesis of the Qur'an; and it is only by viewing the entire history of Islam *in its relation to the Qur'an* that we can attain any unity of perspective on that history. All other ways of viewing that history will present a disjointed and fragmentary picture (author's emphasis).[1]

1.1 AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE THESIS

This thesis provides the first full-length study of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's theory and practice of Qur'an interpretation. It examines both his hermeneutical theories and his actual interpretations of the Qur'an, paying particular attention to his understanding of *ta'wīl*, a term which can be translated as 'interpretation', but which has a range of nuances in Ghazālī's works.

The thesis is divided into two main parts. Part 1 of the thesis seeks to shed light on Ghazālī's hermeneutical theories, exploring possible influences on them and the underlying concerns which shaped their formation. Part 2 turns to Ghazālī's interpretations of actual texts. The relation of these interpretations to Ghazālī's hermeneutical theories will be probed, along with the nature of the subjects forming the most prominent concerns of his Qur'an interpretation, and possible influences on his interpretations. Both parts of the thesis contribute to forming a more accurate picture than previously established of what Ghazālī means by his use of the term '*ta'wīl*'. In addition, a methodological question can be posed in the light of Rahbar's words quoted above. To what extent does looking at a Muslim writer's work through the filter of his treatment of the Qur'an yield clearer understanding of his thought?

---

[1] Daud Rahbar, "Reflections on the Tradition of Qur'anic Exegesis" *MW* 52 (1962), p. 298.

Given the importance of the Qur'an, do the core beliefs of a Muslim theologian come more clearly into the light when this Qur'anic filter is imposed on texts?

Tidy distinctions aid clarity, but often prove vulnerable under close scrutiny, and one such distinction found in the present study requires comment. This concerns the separation of hermeneutical theory and practice in Ghazālī's works. In the works themselves this is not an absolute separation, since at times Ghazālī will illustrate a theory with examples of interpretation, while at other times theoretical comment will enter into his exploration of an actual text. The categorisation of Ghazālī's works in what follows is based on the dominant aspect of the material under discussion, and is not intended to deny that other elements may also be present.

As for the scope of this study, a range of works from Ghazālī's extensive corpus is examined, drawn from texts of undisputed authenticity.[2] Where texts are grouped together, chronological order has been observed as far as evidence permits. In Part 1 theoretical discussions of *ta'wīl* are analysed, covering Sufi-influenced discussions of *ta'wīl* in Book VIII of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, entitled *Kitāb Ādāb tilāwat al-Qur'ān*, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, *Mishkāt al-anwār*; and Book II of *Iḥyā'*, entitled *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'aqā'id*. The first three of these form a group, while the fourth exhibits both connections with and differences from these, and is therefore analysed last. Different, less Sufi, treatments of *ta'wīl* in *Fayṣal al-tafriqa* and the later *al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl* are then examined.[3] Part 2 of the thesis does not aim at the same

---

[2] The main casualty of this approach for the present thesis is *Qānūn al-Ta'wīl*, ed. M. al-Kawtharī (Cairo: 1359/1940), attributed to Ghazālī by N. Heer, "Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's Esoteric Exegesis of the Koran" in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi* (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), pp. 235-57, and partly translated by him in J. Renard (ed.) *Windows on the House of Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 48-54. This work is the subject of my separate study, "Ghazālī and the Authorship of *Qānūn al-Ta'wīl*" (forthcoming). Problems of authenticity and chronology concerning texts attributed to Ghazālī frequently arise in discussions of individual works. For general treatment of the issue of authenticity see W.M. Watt, "The Authenticity of the Works Attributed to Al-Ghazali" *JRAS* 1952, pp. 24-45, and Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in Al-Ghazzālī* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), pp. 249-63.

[3] Full details of editions used are given in the relevant chapters of this thesis.

comprehensiveness, given the ubiquity of interpretations, often brief, in Ghazālī's works. The second part devotes a chapter each to three texts by Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān, al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm* and *Mishkāt al-anwār*. These are the only three works in which Ghazālī makes Qur'anic interpretation a prominent concern or shaping principle. This means that while two books from *Iḥyā'* are discussed in Part 1, Ghazālī's most famous work does not receive attention in Part 2. None of the books of *Iḥyā'* gives such attention to the Qur'an as do the three under discussion, and while a survey of Qur'an interpretation in *Iḥyā'* would form a valuable enquiry in its own right, the scale of such an undertaking would require a separate study.

What should be the nature of an enquiry into hermeneutics? This study is historical, since discussion of how the Qur'an *should* be interpreted, a generally prescriptive approach, can be illuminated by the descriptive activity of exploring how it *was* interpreted by those who previously undertook the task. However, understanding of the ways in which hermeneutical judgments are arrived at has recently bifurcated.[4] The first of these understandings, and the only one until recent times, presupposes that authorial intention is of primary importance. Embedded in a text, this intention can be extracted by an interpreter largely unaltered, language being a sufficiently stable medium to make such communication possible. Since meaning can be thus reliably conveyed, the important hermeneutical questions concern how to gain access to that meaning. Study of the hermeneutics of particular interpreters therefore involves examining the principles they employ in attempting to uncover a stable core of meaning.

The second approach is fundamentally different, involving reflection on the process of understanding itself. This approach challenges the assumption that

---

[4] For a summary of these ways, see Richard Palmer, "Allegorical, Philological and Philosophical Hermeneutics: Three Modes in a Complex Heritage" in S. Kresic (ed.), *Contemporary Literary Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Classical Texts* (Ottawa: Ottawa University Press, 1981), pp. 15-38.

meaning can be embedded in a text without the author losing control over how it is received. Instead, the role of the interpreter rather than the author is highlighted. The view of a text as an object to be analysed and dissected by a detached subject is rejected as a misunderstanding of the interpretive process. Instead, profoundly influenced by his or her context, the interpreter inevitably constructs or adds to meaning in the very act of interpretation, whether consciously or not.[5] The role of authorial intention is consequently partially or wholly displaced. This focus on the interpreter and the act of interpretation is regarded as liberating texts to interact more dynamically with changing circumstances and consequently enabling them to become a richer resource. This approach "is not a competing form of methodological hermeneutics - a superior *method* of exegesis - but a body of critical reflection about the event of understanding."[6] While not prominent in recent hermeneutical approaches to the Qur'an, one recent example is Farid Esack, who, in his *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective,* comments that, "all readings of any text are necessarily contextual".[7] The work of Mohammad Arkoun is also important in this regard, and is discussed later in this chapter in relation to Ghazālī.

The study of the hermeneutical methods of a historical figure such as Ghazālī connects with both of these views of what constitutes hermeneutical enquiry. It is stating the obvious to note that Ghazālī was convinced of the divine authorship of the Qur'an and of the primacy and authority of authorial intention in conveying meaning:

> It is not allowable to apply the Word of God Most High except to what God Most High intended, but the saying of a poet is allowable to apply to other things besides what the poet meant...it is incumbent to reverence the Word of God and to guard it from such danger.[8]

---

[5] 'Context' here includes social, political and intellectual factors.

[6] Palmer, "Three Modes", p. 32.

[7] Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), p. 255.

[8] *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn,* 4 vols., (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, n.d.), Book XVIII, *Kitāb Ādāb al-samā' wa'l-wajd. Iḥyā'* II: 297; tr. D.B. Macdonald, "Emotional Religion in Islam as Affected by Music and Singing" *JRAS* 1901, p. 744.

Ghazālī was, then, concerned to outline what he considered appropriate ways of interpreting the Qur'an in the light of the authority it possesses over the reader.[9] However, to adopt Palmer's phrase, one way of contributing to our own "critical reflection about the event of understanding" is to analyse how another interpreter has experienced that event, and in what ways their context and experiences influence their understanding. As Rippin notes, "It is precisely through the exegetical works that we can establish a history of reader reaction to the Qur'an".[10]

1.2 THE LIFE OF GHAZĀLĪ

The events of Ghazālī's life have frequently been described, and need only brief rehearsal here.[11] Born in Tus in Khurasan, in what is now North Eastern Iran, in 450/1058, he studied under al-Juwaynī in Nishapur until the latter's death in 478/1085. He then joined the court circle identified with the Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk, who in 484/1091 appointed him teacher at the *madrasa* which he had founded in Baghdad. Here he enjoyed notable public success. His earliest biographer, al-Fārisī, states that, "His rank and entourage in Baghdad became so great that it

---

[9] As the above quotation shows, this was his declared aim, even though his Sufi interpretation might lean towards eisegesis.

[10] Andrew Rippin, "Introduction" *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 4.

[11] Ghazālī's *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl,* Arabic text printed with Farid Jabre's French translation *Al-Munqid_ min Aḍ-Ḍalāl* (*Erreur et Délivrance*) ((Beirut: Commission Internationale pour la Traduction Des Chefs-D'œuvre, 1959), tr. R.J. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment* (Boston: Twayne, 1980) is the author's account of his spiritual development. Other biographical sources include the earliest, the account by 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1129), tr. in McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment,* pp. xiv-xx; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayat al-A'yān,* tr. W.M. De Slane (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1843), vol. II, pp. 621-624; D.B. Macdonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzali, with special referenceto his Religious Experiences and Opinions" *JAOS* 20 (1899), pp. 71-132; Farid Jabre, "La Biographie et l'œuvre de Ghazālī reconsiderées à la lumière des *Ṭabaqāt* de Sobki" *MIDEO* 1 (1954), pp. 73-102; Margaret Smith, *Al-Ghazali the Mystic* (London: Luzac and Co., 1944); A.L. Tibawi, "Al-Ghazali's Tract on Dogmatic Theology Edited, Translated, Annotated and Introduced" *IQ* 9 (1965), pp. 65-122; W.M. Watt, *Muslim Intellectual* (Edinburgh: E.U.P., 1963) and "Al-Ghazālī" *EI (2),* II: 1038-41.

surpassed the entourage of the notables and the princes and the residence of the Caliph".[12] After four years, however, Ghazālī suddenly left Baghdad in 488/1095, spending the following eleven years in travel, retreat and writing. By his own account his departure was precipitated by a spiritual crisis leading him to embrace the Sufi life.[13] In 499/1106 he returned to teaching at Nishapur, eventually withdrawing once more to Tus, where he died on 14 Jumada II 505/ 19th December 1111.

Ghazālī did not unite Sufism and 'orthodox' Islam in the sense of bringing together two starkly opposed trends. As Malamud notes:

> The Sufism he described had been cultivated and elaborated in the 10th and 11th centuries by a number of urban religious scholars and Sufis, many of them from Khurasan. Moreover, Sufism was integrated into the fabric of Islamic social and communal life well before the 12th and 13th centuries. In late 10th- and 11th-century Khurasan, Sufi organizations and structures of authority were closely connected with those of the ulema.[14]

Nevertheless, Ghazālī's great status even during his lifetime undoubtedly helped to strengthen the position of Sufism.[15]

Various thinkers influenced Ghazālī. In the area of Sufi and speculative thought the most notable are al-Muḥāsibī, al-Makkī, al-Qushayrī, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', and, in particular, Ibn Sīnā. Ghazālī was a Shāfi'ī in matters of law, as is evident in Chapter 4, below, while al-Juwaynī and in particular al-Ash'arī helped to shape his theological views. The questions of influences and of the nature of Ghazālī's commitment to Ash'arī views are explored in the course of the present study.

---

[12] Al-Fārisī, tr. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment,* p. xvi.
[13] See *Munqidh, passim.*
[14] Margaret Malamud, "Sufi Organizations and Structures of Authority in Medieval Nishapur" *IJMES* 26 (1994), p. 427. See also George Makdisi, "The Sunnī Revival" in D.H. Richards (ed.), *Islamic Civilization, 950-1150* (Oxford: Cassirer, 1973), pp. 161ff.
[15] Cf. al-Fārisī, quoted above. For an indication of this status after his death, see Eric Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought* (Princeton: PUP, 1984), pp. 131ff.

1.3 IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY

In order to understand more adequately how the term *ta'wīl* has been understood in the history of Qur'anic interpretation, it is first necessary to trace the development of a pair of terms with which it is closely associated, *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*.

These terms can be translated as 'literal and allegorical', 'exoteric and esoteric', 'outer and inner', or 'apparent and hidden'. They occur together in the Qur'an on five occasions (Q6:121; 6:152; 7:33; 31:21; 57:3), but not in the context of textual interpretation.[16] *Ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* came to embody the view that a text had dual aspects, though these aspects could be regarded as being in conflict or complementary. As Heath notes, positing *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* of a text "is an assumption of interpretation rather than a result".[17]

In the exoteric tradition *ẓāhir* was understood in one of two ways. It could signify the literal meaning of a text not susceptible to any other interpretation. This is the understanding of Dawūd b. 'Alī al-Ẓāhirī and Ibn Ḥazm. Alternatively, *ẓāhir* could denote the most likely of several possible meanings, a view held by al-Shāfi'ī.[18] Weiss, following the second of these understandings, rejects the translation of *ẓāhir* as 'literal'.[19] He argues that the term should be rendered in two different ways according to its precise application. When applied to an expression, it should be translated as 'univocal', since, unlike an ambiguous (*mujmal*) expression, which might have several equally probable literal meanings, a *ẓāhir* expression is

---

[16] Qur'anic references here and throughout this thesis are taken from *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*, tr. M.M. Pickthall, (Delhi: Kutub Khana Ishayat-ul-Islam, n.d.) unless otherwise stated. Of the above Qur'anic references to outward and inward aspects, the first three refer to sin or indecency, the fourth to God's blessings, and the fifth to God himself.

[17] Peter Heath, "Creative Hermeneutics: A Comparative Analysis of three Islamic Approaches" *Arabica* 36 (1989), p. 200, n. 50.

[18] Ignaz Goldziher, *The Ẓāhiris: Their Doctrine and Their History*, tr. and ed. Wolfgang Behn (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), p. 24.

[19] Bernard Weiss, *The Search for God's Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf al-Din al-Amidi* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), pp. 138-41.

distinguished by the preponderance of one meaning as the most probable intended meaning. When applied to meaning, Weiss prefers to translate *ẓāhir* as 'apparent', since this likewise emphasises the term's denoting a single, most probable meaning from a range of possible meanings, rather than the fact that the meaning involved is literal. Linked with the *ẓāhir* in the exoteric tradition, the *bāṭin* is the product of figurative interpretation and does not involve Sufi insights.

In the esoteric tradition, while *ẓāhir* denotes the apparent meaning of the text, *bāṭin* signifies a concealed or mystical meaning accessible only to the initiated. Given Ghazālī's frequent condemnation of the Ismā'īlī trait of undermining the *ẓāhir* in favour of the *bāṭin*, it should be noted that this was not the theoretical position of all Ismā'īlīs, whatever the emphasis of their practice. Ja'far b. Mansūr al-Yaman, for example, clearly asserts the interdependence of the two.[20]

The term *ta'wīl* occurs seventeen times in the Qur'an. Eight of these occurrences are in Sura 12 (6, 21, 36, 37, 44, 45, 100, 101) where the word signifies dream interpretation, while Wansbrough argues that the other references signify 'outcome/ sequel'.[21] In post-Qur'anic usage the term has been understood in a variety of ways. Early general usage signified not interpretation but the Qur'an's "applicability to religious and social practices".[22] Versteegh argues that although *ta'wīl* did not signify allegorical interpretation in the early stages of its use, Muqātil prepares the way for this sense through his quotations from Ibn 'Abbās in his *Tafsīr al-kabīr*.[23]

---

[20] Ja'far b. Mansūr al-Yaman, *Al-Shawāhid wa'l-bayān*, quoted by Ismail K. Poonawala, "Ismā'īlī *Ta'wil* of the Qur'an" *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, ed. Rippin, p.199, states that "the *bāṭin* does not stand up without the *ẓāhir*"; See also Henri Corbin, "The Ismā'īlī Response to the Polemic of Ghazali", tr. J. Morris, in S.H. Nasr (ed.), *Ismā'īlī Contributions to Islamic Culture* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977), pp. 69-98.

[21] John Wansbrough, *Qur'anic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: OUP, 1977), p. 157.

[22] C.H.M. Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qur'anic Exegesis in Early Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), p. 63, quoting 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Musannaf*. Similarly, he quotes Sufyan's *Tafsīr*, and 'Abd al-Razzāq using the verb *ta'awwala* with the sense of "to apply a verse to a given situation" (pp. 63-4).

[23] Versteegh, p.64, who notes that Ibn 'Abbās indicates both that *ta'wil* is something known only to God, yet elsewhere that it is something which people ought to know.

Goldfeld goes further, maintaining that both Ibn 'Abbās and Muqātil "refer by *ta'wīl* to a meaning more than literal" and also that both "believe that without being allegorized the Qur'an might have no meaning to later generations". This would suggest that Goldfeld, although not making this explicit, considers Muqātil to understand *ta'wīl* as allegorical interpretation.[24]

Another way of understanding *ta'wīl* is proposed by Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī (d. 332-2/944) in his *Kitāb Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*.[25] He regards *tafsīr* as a definitive explanation of a verse which could only be carried out by the Companions of the Prophet.[26] *Ta'wīl*, by contrast, is a more tentative undertaking, understood as outlining the different possible interpretations which certain Qur'anic verses allowed.[27] *Ta'wīl* presents what a verse might mean, rather than what it definitely means. It uncovers the *bāṭin*, but this does not carry a Sufi connotation. Rather, the *bāṭin* is what is suggested through the interpretation of anthropormorphic expressions.[28] In addition to using *ta'wīl* to oppose anthropomorphists, al-Māturīdī employed it in using *reductio ad absurdum* to criticise Mu'tazilī interpretations.[29]

In a Sufi or Shī'ī context understanding *ta'wīl* as 'allegorical interpretation' is sometimes held to be inappropriate. It is frequently noted that the term is associated with return (*awwal*) to the origin, and various English translations have been suggested, including "spiritual exegesis"[30], "disallegorization", or "bringing back to a

---

[24] Y. Goldfeld, "The Development of Theory on Qur'anic Exegesis in Islamic Scholarship", *SI* 67 (1988), p. 17.

[25] Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*. According to Ahmad Galli, "Some Aspects of al-Maturidi's commentary on the Qur'an" *IS* 21 (1982), p. 19 n. 1, the first part of this text has been published as *Ta'wīlāt ahl al-Sunna*, vol. 1, ed. Ibrahim 'Awadayn and al-Sayyid 'Awadayn (Cairo: 1391/1970).

[26] See Manfred Götz, "Māturīdī und sein *Kitāb Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*" *Der Islam* 41 (1965), pp. 31-33.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 40. Galli, p. 4, considers this way of distinguishing between the terms to be unique.

[28] Götz, p. 38 n.27.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[30] Henri Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, tr. Willard Trask (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 28. Corbin objects (p. 30) to the use of 'allegory' in connection with *ta'wil* since he regards this as denoting an arbitrary sign, preferring 'symbol', which is "the unique expression of the thing symbolized".

higher plane".[31] Nwyia argues that *ta'wīl* is a term that should be used to describe the Shī'ī search for a hidden meaning, while Sufis call their interpretive method *istinbāṭ*, or discovery, referring to eliciting the truth.[32] However, both terms are employed by many Sufi writers.[33]

A remark by Chittick fittingly closes this discussion of *ta'wīl*. He suggests concerning *ta'wīl* and *tafsīr* that, "The history of these two terms and their interrelationship is one of the many monographs on Islamic thought waiting to be written".[34]

1.4 RECENT SCHOLARSHIP ON GHAZĀLĪ

Discussion of Ghazālī's hermeneutics is not extensive in comparison with the attention paid to other aspects of his work, and the most significant discussions of this topic, along with treatments of other aspects of Ghazālī's work which relate to it indirectly, are referred to in the course of the present study. However, consideration of other recent writing on Ghazālī will show in due course how the findings of this thesis concur or depart from some of the principal currents of thought on Ghazālī. The following survey is chronological with the exception of one writer whose work raises distinct issues considered at the end of the discussion.

Lazarus-Yafeh covers a diffuse range of topics in her study of Ghazālī.[35] These include applying literary stylistic analysis to Ghazālī's vocabulary, and exploring his use of philosophical terms, light symbolism, and religious

---

[31] The latter two are from, respectively, W. Ivanow, *Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismailism* (Bombay, 1952), p. 24, n. 1, and Alessandro Bausani, *Persia Religiosa* (Milan, 1959), p. 205, both cited by Nikki Keddie, "Symbol and Sincerity in Islam" *SI* 19 (1963), p. 55.
[32] Nwyia, p. 34.
[33] See below on al-Muḥāsibī.
[34] Willliam Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1989), p. 199.
[35] Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzālī* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975).

commandments. She also includes short studies on Jews and Christians in Ghazālī's writings, and on the attribution to Ghazālī of *al-Radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyat 'Isā bi-ṣarīḥ al-injīl*, which she rejects. She notes a remarkable consistency in Ghazālī's vocabulary through his career,[36] and argues for the influence, probably indirect, of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 285 or 320/898 or 932) on Ghazālī.[37] If such an influence existed at all, however, it is eclipsed by more direct influences on Ghazālī's Sufi writings, as this thesis will demonstrate. Lazarus-Yafeh also criticises Watt's view that a development can be traced in Ghazālī's writings towards the view that highest knowledge of God is available through means beyond reason. She argues that Ghazālī indicates such a stance in some of his earlier works.[38] A valuable point is her observation that Ghazālī's understanding of prophecy reflects Neoplatonic influence, making it, "only the highest and last stage of man's development on earth".[39] This observation, which she calls, "very dangerous from the orthodox point of view"[40] is confirmed by the discussion of *Mishkāt al-anwār* in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

A wide range of issues is also addressed in the UNESCO publication, *Ghazālī: la raison et le miracle*.[41] The question of borrowing is raised by both Pines and van Ess. Pines draws attention to Ghazālī's borrowing not only from Ibn Sīnā, but also from Miskawayh,[42] while van Ess draws attention to a precedent for Ghazālī's famous four-fold categorisation of paths to knowledge in *Munqidh*, that is, theology,

---

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 50-52.

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 264ff. For a translation of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's *Bayān al-farq bayn al-Ṣadr wa'l-qalb wa'l-fu'ād wa'l-lubb* (*Explanation of the difference between the breast, the heart, the inner heart and the intellect*) see N. Heer, "A Ṣūfī Psychological Treatise" *MW* 51 (1961), pp. 25-36, 83-91, 163-72, 244-58.

[38] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, pp. 299-300.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 304.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 305.

[41] *Ghazālī: la raison et le miracle*, Table Ronde Unesco, 9-10 December, 1985 (Paris: Maisonneuve et larose, 1987).

[42] Shlomo Pines, "Quelques notes sur les rapports de l' *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* d'al-Ghazālī avec la pensée d'Ibn Sīnā" in *Ghazālī: la raison et le miracle*, pp. 12-13.

philosophy, Ismā'īlīsm and Sufism.[43] This predecessor, says van Ess, is Umar Khayyam, who wrote a brief tractate using the same scheme a few years before the appearance of *Munqidh*. Van Ess notes that the borrowing of a literary model need not, however, invalidate the sincerity of the ideas which such a model clothes. The issue of literary borrowing and its implications is one motif appearing frequently in the present study.

Makdisi takes a different line on Ghazālī. While not denying his interest in Sufism, Makdisi argues that, "law is the one field of knowledge that was his steady occupation from early youth in college to the end of his life."[44] Yet such a view assumes that *Mustaṣfā*, Ghazālī's late work on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, expresses the heart of his concerns in the final years of his life. This assumption is questioned in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Makdisi denies that Ghazālī advocated Ash'arite *kalām*, seeing it as, "nothing but an instrumental science, not a means of access to religious knowledge".[45]

Makdisi is joined in doubting Ghazālī's Ash'arism by Frank, who has produced two monographs on this theme. These two works form the most significant revisionist analysis of Ghazālī to appear in recent years. The first, *Creation and the Cosmic System*, argues that significant elements of Ghazālī's thinking on causality and the workings of the universe are profoundly influenced by Ibn Sīnā.[46] In particular, Frank contends that Ghazālī accepts causal efficacy in beings other than God, including angelic intermediaries, contrary to Ash'arite understanding.[47] Michael Marmura, however, points out various weaknesses in Frank's argument.[48] One of these is Frank's omission of the full context of Ghazālī's discussion of *kasb*

---

[43] Josef van Ess, "Quelques remarques sur le *Munqiḏ min aḍ-ḍalāl*" in *Ghazālī: la raison et le miracle*, pp. 65ff.
[44] George Makdisi, "The Non-Ash'arite Shafi'ism of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī" *REI* (1986), p. 239.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 257.
[46] Richard Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System: al-Ghazālī and Avicenna* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992).
[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 34ff.
[48] Michael Marmura, "Ghazālian Causes and Intermediaries" *JAOS* 115 (1995), pp. 89-100.

(acquisition) - his view of the power of God. Another is Frank's failure to mention that the three points on which Ghazālī charges the philosophers with unbelief in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*[49] - the pre-eternity of the world, God's knowledge of particulars, and the possibility of bodily resurrection - all undermine aspects of Ibn Sīnā's cosmology, and thus call into question Frank's conclusions. Questions over Frank's perspective are likewise raised indirectly by Gyekye's argument that Ghazālī in *Tahāfut* criticises the philosophers for claiming that God can be both a purposive agent and yet act necessarily.[50] For Ghazālī, to be an agent means to bring something from non-existence to existence. Thus action is not a necessary process, as Ibn Sīnā argues, since this would involve actions being eternal, a concept which for Ghazālī is incoherent.[51]

Frank's second work, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School,* posits a personal higher theology as Ghazālī's central concern.[52] Following on from *Creation and the Cosmic System,* Frank concentrates here on Ghazālī's attitude to *kalām* and his relationship to traditional Ash'arism.[53] He considers that Ghazālī's works require careful reading on account of their attempts to blend the influence of Ibn Sīnā, Ghazālī's own ideas and those of Ash'arism by developing a distinctive use of vocabulary in which typical Ash'arite terms are invested with a particular meaning.[54] It is Ghazālī's attempt to present sometimes distinctive views yet simultaneously associate himself with Ash'arism at the level of his elementary teaching which causes

---

[49] *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa,* ed. and tr. Michael Marmura as *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997).
[50] Kwame Gyekye, "Al-Ghazālī on Action" in *Ghazālī: la raison et le miracle,* pp. 83-91.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[52] Richard Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School* (Durham, N. Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994).
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[54] *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

Ghazālī to appear inconsistent.[55] Details of Frank's discussion are taken up in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

In a recent thesis, Pawan Ahmad proposes a stark opposition between Ghazālī, an orthodox Muslim, and the less orthodox al-Fārābī.[56] He glosses over the tensions and complexities of Ghazālī's intellectual debts to the Islamic philosophers, creating a simplified picture of Ghazālī's views on his chosen topics of reason and revelation. Chapter 2 of the present study explores these debts in relation to the notion of revelation.

The most recent general treatment of Ghazālī is by Massimo Campanini, who takes a traditional view of Ghazālī as an Ash'arite.[57] He also comments that, "al-Ghazzālī keeps religion and philosophy well separated, being aware of the essential irreducibility of the two positions".[58] This is a surprising remark in view of the periodic intertwining of these two fields in Ghazālī's writings.

Mehmet Aydin has produced an article on Ghazālī and interpretation which makes one main point.[59] This is that Ghazālī is inconsistent in labelling the philosophers as unbelievers while in his own works advocating the acceptability of metaphorical interpretation.[60] This simplifies the nature of Ghazālī's criticisms, and ignores the role of reason in determining the validity of employing *ta'wīl*, as will be discussed in this thesis.

---

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
[56] I. Pawan Ahmad, *The Epistemology of Revelation and Reason: the Views of al-Fārābī and al-Ghazālī* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1998).
[57] Massimo Campanini, "Al-Ghazzālī" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy* Part I (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 259-260.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 262.
[59] Mehmet Aydin, "Al-Ghazālī on Metaphorical Interpretation" in Ralph Bisschops and James Francis (eds.), *Metaphor, Canon and Community: Jewish, Christian and Islamic Approaches* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 242-56.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

Farouk Mitha has recently produced a new study of Ghazālī's *Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭiniyya wa faḍā'il al-Mustaẓhiriyya*.[61] Mitha concentrates on an overview of the historical context of this work, and the arguments of the text itself, offering a relatively short analysis of the significance of *Faḍā'iḥ*. In the course of this analysis he argues that *al-Mustaẓhirī* embodies a particular attitude towards the concept of orthodoxy.

> At the very core of this attitude is the assumption that the disciplines of law and theology are systems of interpretation, and hence orthodoxy is ultimately not a given postulate but represents a problem of interpretation... Al-Ghazālī would not have claimed as much - for to declare that the issue of orthodoxy revolved solely around questions of interpretation would have been tantamount to making the truth seem relative.[62]

Yet, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate, particularly in Chapter 3, for Ghazālī a great deal revolved around questions of interpretation, including, at times, questions of orthodoxy.

One other writer on Ghazālī questions the assumptions behind the way in which studies of thinkers from previous ages have been conducted. Mohammed Arkoun strongly opposes any approach to a writer which analyses his thought in isolation from that individual's role as a member of a wider society.[63] Scholarly discussion of Ghazālī has concentrated on the first of the two approaches to hermeneutics outlined at the outset of this thesis, the elaboration of methodological principles largely independent of a writer's socio-political context. Arkoun's approach, however, derives from his emphasis on the need for anthropology to inform Islamic studies.

While this thesis will engage with Ghazālī's context, it should be noted that Arkoun's understanding of revelation is sufficiently different from that of both

---

[61] Farouk Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001); cf. Ghazālī, *Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭiniyya wa Faḍā'il al-Mustaẓhiriyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo: Dār al-Qawmiyya li'l-Ṭabā'at wa'l-Nashr, 1383/1964).

[62] *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

[63] Mohammad Arkoun, "Révélation, vérité et histoire d'après l'œuvre de Ġazālī" *SI* 31 (1970), p. 59. He charges Farid Jabre, for example, with making Ghazālī appear as a mind at once "exceptionnel et inutile" (p. 57).

Ghazālī, and of many of the writers analysing him, as to make it unsurprising that he should raise strong objections to their approach. For Arkoun, any mediation of God is radically context-relative. "There is no way to find the absolute outside the social, political condition of human beings and the mediation of language".[64] However, it is debatable whether the historical conditioning of a sacred text entirely defines the limits of its potential to enable people to, "find the absolute". Language could also be regarded as an adequate medium, yielding sufficient, although not comprehensive, knowledge of the transcendent, knowledge adequate to bear the weight of the claims made by a theistic understanding. Arkoun sees previous Qur'anic interpretation as using the text as a pre-text.[65] Yet Arkoun himself refers to "critical objective knowledge" which is the product of what he terms "the new rationality".[66] This 'objective knowledge' is apparently attained through profound awareness of the historically-conditioned nature of texts and their interpretations. Esack notes that Arkoun seems to imply, "that there can be a class of 'super readers', expert historians or linguists who will be able to access the true meaning of a text".[67] Such a position is only a more extreme version of the commonplace recognition that understanding contextual factors relating to scriptural texts helps the interpreter to avoid his interpretation being unwittingly but fatally bound by his or her own context. Arkoun's method appears thus to be not so much a new approach as an intensification of the existing attention paid to contextual factors, with the same goal of finding the 'true meaning'.

Detailed exploration of the issues raised by Arkoun is beyond the scope of this thesis. The aim of this brief outline is simply to indicate that Arkoun's position is not without its own problems. Arkoun suggests that questions of sincerity and

---

[64] Arkoun, "The Notion of Revelation" *Die Welt des Islams* 28 (1988), p. 81.
[65] *Ibid., passim.*
[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 88.
[67] Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, p. 73.

intellectual development are simply products of an essentialist approach, while the true interest of a work emerges from considering the author as a product of his age.[68] Yet this forces apart areas of enquiry which can fruitfully be held together. Questions of sincerity, intellectual development and historical context will all be addressed in the ensuing study, which begins with four discussions of hermeneutical theory occurring in Ghazālī's Sufi-influenced texts.

[68] Arkoun, "Révélation, vérité et histoire", p. 59.

PART ONE

GHAZĀLĪ'S HERMENEUTICAL THEORIES

CHAPTER TWO

KITĀB ĀDĀB TILĀWAT AL-QUR'ĀN, JAWĀHIR AL-QUR'ĀN, MISHKĀT AL-ANWĀR AND *KITĀB QAWĀ'ID AL-'AQĀ'ID*

> God views with compassion those who attribute to Him the apparent meaning of His expression and those who stray in the method of *ta'wīl*. If His compassion for the former is greater than for the latter, it is because compassion comes in accordance with the measure of the error, their error being greater even though they share in the common misfortune of being deprived of the truth.[1]

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will examine four works by Ghazālī in order to ascertain the views they present regarding Sufi-influenced *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an. These works are *Kitāb Ādāb tilāwat al-Qur'ān,* which constitutes Book VIII of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn, Jawāhir al-Qur'ān, Mishkāt al-anwār* and *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'aqā'id,* which is Book II of *Iḥyā'*.[2] The first three of these texts form a sub-group on account of their shared ideas, and will be discussed in chronological order of composition according to the account given by Hourani, although, as he acknowledges, whether *Mishkāt* was

---

[1] Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-Tawba* (Book XXXI of *Iḥyā'*), *Iḥyā'* IV: 24-25, tr. M.S. Stern, *The Book of Repentance* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1990), p. 71, with alteration.

[2] The following texts have been used, with translations from which quotations are taken unless otherwise stated: *Kitāb Ādāb Tilāwat al-Qur'ān*, in *Iḥyā'* I: 273-95, tr. by Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Recitation and Interpretation of the Qur'an: al-Ghazālī's theory* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1982); *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Al-Maktabat al-Tijāriyya, 1352/1933), tr. by Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Jewels of the Qur'an: al-Ghazālī's theory* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1983); the Arabic text and English translation of *Mishkāt al-Anwār* are taken from *The Niche of Lights,* tr. David Buchman, (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998); *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id,* in *Iḥyā'* I: 89-124, tr. Nabih Amin Faris, *The Foundations of the Articles of Faith* (Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1974). For all of these works except *Mishkāt,* two page references are given , the first referring to the Arabic text, the second to the translation. For *Mishkāt* one page reference is given, since the Arabic text and facing English translation are identically numbered.

written before or after *Jawāhir* is open to question.[3] In the absence of decisive evidence to the contrary, the present study will assume that *Mishkāt* is the latest of the three. Following this, attention is given to *Qawā'id,* which exhibits both similarities with these three texts but also important differences from them. The aims of the chapter are to examine the influence of Ghazālī's cosmology on his basic assumptions regarding the Qur'an, and to identify the different ways in which he argues for the idea of hidden or inner meanings in Qur'anic verses. The conclusions arising should shed light on what is meant by the term 'Sufi influence' on Ghazālī in these works.

Ghazālī's cosmological assumptions are a thread running through various of his works, including the first three of the four discussed in this chapter. It is therefore convenient to preface the examination of particular texts with an outline of these cosmological ideas as they bear upon his approach to the Qur'an.

2.2 HERMENEUTICS AND COSMOLOGY IN GHAZĀLĪ'S WRITINGS

Lazarus-Yafeh provides a useful starting point for the present enquiry:

> It would seem that no attention has been paid in the voluminous study of Al-Ghazzālī to the obvious fact that his approach to cosmology is the basis of his outlook on a multitude of subjects, such as man, body and soul, the Qur'ān and its exegesis... By 'cosmology' I mean the recurring description (usually without any philosophical terminology) which occurs in many of Al-Ghazzālī's authentic books of three worlds, and more often of only two worlds, which, according to Al-Ghazzālī, constitute the 'Cosmos'.[4]

---

[3] G. Hourani, " Revised Chronology" p. 299, discusses which of these two texts was composed first, concluding that there is evidence for the prior composition of *Jawāhir*. See also below on the date of *Mishkāt* for further discussion of this point.

[4] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies,* p. 503. An extensive discussion of Ghazālī's cosmology is provided by Richard Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System: al-Ghazālī and Avicenna* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992). Frank's discussion, however, does not focus on the basic distinction of two (or three) worlds which influences Ghazālī's hermeneutics, but rather on exploring Ghazālī's alleged move away from Ash'arite occasionalism and towards Avicennan determinism of the cosmic system. See Chapter 3 of this thesis for more discussion of this topic.

The principal cosmological notion that impinges on Ghazālī's Qur'anic hermeneutics is his distinction between two worlds. These are the visible, physical realm and the invisible, spiritual realm. Ghazālī uses a range of terms for these realms, apparently interchangeably. The visible world is variously termed *'ālam al-mulk* ('the world of power'), *'ālam al-mulk wa'l-shahāda* ('the world of power and witnessing'), *'ālam al-khalq* ('the world of creation') and *'ālam al-ḥiss wa'l-takhyīl* ('the world of sense and imagination'). Likewise, the invisible, spiritual realm is termed *'ālam al-malakūt* ('the world of the kingdom'), *'ālam al-ghayb* ('the world of the hidden') or *'ālam al-amr* ('the world of command').[5] These terms for the spiritual realm function as synonyms for each other, as do those for the visible world, and it is the existence of the bi-partite structure itself, rather than its terminology, which is significant in attempting to understand Ghazālī's hermeneutical theories.[6] In addition, a third realm, termed *jabarūt*, occupies an intermediate position.[7] Nakamura provides the fullest analysis to date of what constitutes *jabarūt* in Ghazālī's thought, concluding that it occupies an insignificant place in his writings relative to that of *mulk* and *malakūt*.[8] When Ghazālī's cosmological theories bear significantly on his hermeneutical approach, he presents a bi-partite, rather than tri-partite division.

Ghazālī holds that just as the world around us has a visible, apparent aspect, it also has a spiritual aspect which only those with discernment can detect. The same therefore applies to the Qur'anic text. Ghazālī often argues or assumes that Qur'anic

---

[5] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, pp. 503-04.

[6] Ghazālī frequently emphasises that it is the distinction of the two realms itself, not the particular vocabulary used in denoting those worlds, which is important; see, for example, *Mishkāt*, p. 26/26.

[7] A.J. Wensinck, "On the Relation Between Ghazālī's Cosmology and his Mysticism" *Mededeelingen Der Koninklijke Akademie Van Wetenschappen*, Afdeelung Letterkunde, Deel 75 (1933), pp. 193-96. *Jabarūt* is presented as an intermediate realm in texts which are now regarded as secure in their attribution to Ghazālī, although Wensinck also discusses others now regarded as inauthentic, which include a different arrangement. See also Kojiro Nakamura, "Imam Ghazālī's Cosmology Reconsidered with special reference to the Concept of *Jabarut*" *SI* 80 (1994), pp. 29-46.

[8] Nakamura, p. 38. See *EI (2)*, "'Ālam", I: 350-52, for a summary of the positions of Ghazālī and others on the relation of *jabarūt* and *malakūt*.

verses possess two levels of meaning, apparent (*ẓāhir*) and inner (*bāṭin*), these different levels of meaning being complementary, not contradictory.[9] Ghazālī bases his belief in this complementarity on his understanding of cosmology. For example, in *Jawāhir*, he writes of his own text:

> In every sentence which has occurred, there are hints and indications of a hidden meaning understood by him who understands the relationship between the world of possession and perception and the world of the unseen and dominion, since everything in the former world is only a form (*mithāl*) of something spiritual in the unseen world, as if that thing which is in the world of possession and perception were the same as that which is in the world of the unseen and dominion, in respect to its spirit and meaning though not in respect to its shape and form. *The physical form from the world of perception is included in the spiritual meaning of that world* (emphasis added).[10]

So the physical form is part of the spiritual world, distinct but not entirely divided from it. This is the basis of Ghazālī's view that texts have an outer form which is a part of the hidden inner meaning and complementary to it. As in his own text, so, by implication, the same applies to the text of the Qur'an, since, as quoted above, "everything in the former world is only a form of something spiritual in the unseen world".

Ghazālī was not, however, the first to relate an epistemological framework to cosmological theories, and possible influences on him can be identified. Al-Muḥāsibī relates three levels of knowledge to a tri-partite cosmology.[11] The first realm is that of this world (*dunyā*), and the knowledge related to it is external, concerning the law and its application. The second realm is that of the hereafter (*al-akhīra*), giving rise to an inner knowledge linked to virtuous practice modelled on the example of the Prophet.

---

[9] See, for example, *Ādāb tilāwat*, p. 295/104, discussed below. See Chapter 1 of this thesis for discussion of the terms *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*.

[10] *Jawāhir*, p. 28/49.

[11] L. Librande, "Islam and Conservation: The Theologian-Ascetic Al-Muḥāsibī" *Arabica* 30 (1983), pp. 125-46, which includes the Arabic text and translation of his *Kitāb al-'Ilm*. On the question of al-Muḥāsibī's influence on Ghazālī see Margaret Smith, "The Forerunner of al-Ghazālī" *JRAS* (1936), pp. 65-78.

The third level of the cosmological scheme is God himself, who might occasionally bestow a knowledge which is otherwise impenetrable.

Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī uses the terms *mulk* and *malakūt* in a way which foreshadows Ghazālī, and he is probably the dominant influence on Ghazālī in this regard.[12] He is the first to make a clear distinction between the realm of *mulk*, denoting the visible world, and that of *malakūt*, denoting the invisible, spiritual realm, describing, for example, "the people of *malakūt*" as "the masters of hearts", while outer knowledge (*'ilm al-ẓāhir*) is from the realm of *mulk*.[13]

In examining the hermeneutical theories and assumptions of the four works considered in the present chapter, one concern will be to gauge the importance of Ghazālī's cosmological framework as the basis of his belief in levels of meaning in the Qur'an.

2.3 *KITĀB ĀDĀB TILĀWAT AL-QUR'ĀN*

Although *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* has generated great scholarly interest, *Kitāb Ādāb tilāwāt al-Qur'ān* has received scant attention in its own right. Heer gives a descriptive summary of the part devoted to Qur'an interpretation, while Quasem terms Ghazālī's argument for Sufi interpretation, "deep, penetrating and logical".[14] The following account will help to gauge the accuracy of this assessment.

---

[12] Wensinck, "On the Relation", p. 191.

[13] Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 4 vols., (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Miṣrīyya, 1401/1932), I: 200-01.

[14] Nicholas Heer, "Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's Esoteric Exegesis of the Koran" in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi* (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), pp. 235-57; Muhammad Abul Quasem, "Al-Ghazālī in Defence of Ṣūfistic Interpretation of the Qur'ān" *Islamic Culture* 53 (1979), p. 65. Quasem also describes *Ādāb Tilāwat* in his, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Qur'an Exegesis According to One's Personal Opinion" *International Congress for the Study of the Qur'an* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1980), pp. 69-90.

2.3.1 Preliminary Discussion of the Text

Authenticity and Date

The authenticity of *Iḥyā'* has never been questioned, and does not require examination here. The exact period of composition of *Iḥyā'* is not known, though Hourani, having surveyed various strands of evidence, suggests that the work was completed in the years 489-90/1096-97.[15] Such a precise dating for the work seems difficult to substantiate, however, on the basis of present evidence. It is fair to note, nonetheless, that at least five works were written between Ghazālī's finishing *Iḥyā'* and his return to Nishapur in 499/1106.[16] The dating of individual volumes within *Iḥyā'* is not known, so the date of *Ādāb Tilāwat* can only be placed within the period of composition of the *Iḥyā'* as a whole.

Purpose

The purpose of *Ādāb Tilāwat* is of course linked to the wider purpose of the entire *Iḥyā'*. On this, Lazarus-Yafeh comments that Ghazālī seeks to influence those who might be open to the Sufi way but have not yet embraced it.

> He tried to arouse their interest in hidden truths in a slow and gradual way, by disclosing a little and concealing twice as much... The *Iḥyā'* is, therefore, to be considered Al-Ghazzālī's "map" of gradual education, in which he opens the eyes of worthy readers in many ways.[17]

The evidence of *Ādāb Tilāwat* supports this view. Ghazālī argues for a Sufi approach to the Qur'an, but does so by drawing mainly on non-Sufi assumptions, that is, arguments drawing on hadiths and reason. As in other works, Ghazālī seeks to lead people to accept his conclusions by using arguments based on assumptions or sources of authority which they already accept.

---

[15] Hourani, "Revised Chronology", pp. 296-297, discusses the date of *Iḥyā'*.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 296.
[17] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, p. 373.

Summary

Ādāb Tilāwat has two distinct concerns. Of its four chapters, three discuss recitation of the Qur'an, while the fourth deals with interpretation, specifically issues relating to interpretation according to personal opinion (*tafsīr bi'l-ra'y*). The first chapter concerns the excellence of the Qur'an, and its capacity to reproach those unmindful of it, and is comprised largely of a collection of relevant hadiths. The second chapter lists ten 'external rules of Qur'an recitation', addressing such issues as the condition of the Qur'an reciter, the amount to be recited, and ways of reading the Qur'an aloud. The third chapter outlines ten mental tasks in Qur'an recitation, in which Ghazālī emphasises the importance of reflecting on and understanding what is heard, and addresses problems of concentration. The aims of these chapters are exhortatory, legal and practical.

The fourth chapter, the main focus of the present study, is entitled, "Understanding the Qur'an, and its Explanation by Personal Opinion which has not come down by Tradition."[18] Here Ghazālī presents an extended justification for latitude in interpretation, basing his argument on what he considers to be the real meaning of the hadith, "The man who explains the Qur'an according to his personal opinion (*bi-ra'yihi*) shall take his place in hell".[19] This hadith provides the context for Ghazālī's argument that personal opinion (*ra'y*) is legitimate.[20] In explaining the hadith, Ghazālī simultaneously mounts a case for the existence of hidden meanings in

---

[18] *Ādāb tilāwat*, pp. 290-295/86-104.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 290/86. This hadith occurs in al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi'*, "*tafsīr*" 1, IV: 268, and is discussed by R. Marston Speight, "The Function of *ḥadīth* as Commentary on the Qur'an as seen in the Six Authoritative Collections" in A. Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 66ff.

[20] In *Al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm* Ghazālī argues against the validity of *ra'y*. The reasons for these two different attitudes are linked to the different purposes of the two works; where *Ādāb Tilāwat* seeks to present the validity of Sufi interpretation, *Qisṭās* criticises the Ismā'īlīs, and Ghazālī does not therefore wish to seem too sympathetic towards the use of *ra'y*, an approach the Ismā'īlīs condemned. On *Qisṭās*, see Chapter 6 of this thesis.

Qur'anic verses, meanings which require the exercise of *ra'y* to discern. He also sets the whole enquiry in a Sufi context by referring to the opposition between those who are expert in outer exegesis (*ẓāhir al-tafsīr*) and Sufis, "those exegetes who subscribe to sufism in the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of Qur'anic sentences contrary to the explanations given by Ibn 'Abbās and other exegetes".[21] Thus, throughout his defence of *ra'y* in this fourth chapter Ghazālī also implicitly defends a Sufi approach to the Qur'an.

2.3.2 Hermeneutical Theory

2.3.2.1 Hermeneutics and Cosmology

Although Ghazālī's discussion of Qur'an interpretation is concentrated in the fourth chapter of *Ādāb tilāwāt*, there is more explicit reference to his cosmological assumptions in the third chapter. In outlining the sixth mental task for Qur'an recitation Ghazālī writes:

> The meanings of the Qur'an are among the sum-total of the invisible world (*al-malakūt*). Everything which is beyond the senses and which can only be apprehended by the light of spiritual insight (*nūr al-baṣīra*) belongs to the invisible world.[22]

He then discusses four veils which hinder understanding of the Qur'an.[23] Further evidence for the influence of Ghazālī's bi-partite cosmology occurs later in the third chapter. Discussing the tenth mental task relating to recitation, ridding oneself of self-satisfaction concerning one's state of purity and own ability, Ghazālī again mentions

---

[21] *Ādāb Tilāwat*, p. 290, my translation. The Arabic reads *ahl al-taṣawwuf min al-mufassirīn al-mansūbīn ilā'l-taṣawwuf fi'l-ta'wīl kalimāt fi'l-Qur'ān* On Ibn 'Abbās, usually regarded as the first Qur'anic exegete, see *EI2*," 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās", I: 19-20.

[22] *Ādāb tilāwat*, p. 285/69.

[23] *Ibid*, pp. 285/69-72. The four veils are, first, an unhelpful pre-occupation with exact pronunciation, secondly, unthinking adherence to a particular school of thought without having reached conclusions "by spiritual insight and mystical vision," thirdly, falling victim to pride and human passions, in Ghazālī's view the most common veil, and fourthly, the belief that the only legitimate exegesis is outer exegesis passed on by earlier authorities such as Ibn 'Abbās and Mujāhid.

the invisible world. Whenever someone moves beyond the state of self-satisfaction, and sees in his reading of the Qur'an God alone, then "the secret of the invisible world (*sirr al-malakūt*) is revealed to him directly."[24] Cosmology, however, while implicitly underlying Ghazālī's approach in *Ādāb tilāwat*, is not his main focus. In fact, the terms *mulk* and *malakūt* do not occur in the fourth chapter, which deals with interpretation.

Although cosmological terms are not prominent, Ghazālī clearly states that all Qur'anic verses have hidden meanings, not just those which admit of metaphorical interpretation. His most explicit affirmation of this occurs when he discusses the alleged logical impossibility found within two Qur'anic verses. One is " *Ye slew them not, but Allah slew them*" (Q8:17). The other reads " *Fight them; Allah will chastise them at your hands*" (Q9:14).[25] Ghazālī argues that the logical problem inherent in these verses - how God and human beings can both be regarded as agents of the actions described - points to the fact that only help from "hidden sciences" (*'ulūm al-mukāshafāt*) can solve this puzzle.[26] He remarks that a lifetime might be needed in seeking the unveiling of such a problem, and adds that, "a study of the real meaning of every sentence of the Qur'an needs a duration like this."[27]

Ghazālī makes no explicit comment here on what value he attributes to apparent (*ẓāhir*) meanings, other than to argue that they present logical problems. His concern is rather to emphasise that such problems serve a positive function in pointing to the existence of hidden meanings which add to apparent meanings, rather than replacing

---

[24] *Ibid*, p. 289/83.

[25] *Ibid*, p. 294/102.

[26] Although Ghazālī implies that these two verses lead to the same logical difficulty, they in fact present two slightly different problems. Q8:117 attributes what appeared as human agency solely to God, thus providing Ghazālī with an example of the logical problem he wishes to highlight. Q9:14, however, only refers to divine activity working *through* human agency. The second verse therefore presents divine and human activity as co-existent, not mutually exclusive.

[27] *Ādāb tilāwat*, p. 294/102. The text reads, " *mā min kalimati min al-Qur'ān ilā wa taḥqīqihā muḥūj ilā mithl*".

them. In fact, Ghazālī explicitly denies that the apparent meaning is redundant, emphasising in the work's closing lines that inner and outer meanings are complementary.[28] He also illustrates this view elsewhere:

> One who claims to possess understanding of the deep meanings of the Qur'an, without being prudent at its outward exegesis, is comparable to a man who claims to reach the upper part of a house without crossing its door, or claims to understand the purposes of the Turks when he does not understand the language of the Turks.[29]

So, in seeking to persuade those not yet fully committed to a Sufi approach, Ghazālī is at pains to emphasise that no-one can dispense with the *ẓāhir*. Furthermore, the same caution is evident in his indicating but not emphasising his views on the invisible realm. Instead, he bases most of his arguments on tradition and reason, sources of knowledge already accepted by his readers.

2.3.2.2 Arguments from tradition and reason used in defence of Sufi Qur'an interpretation

Ghazālī begins Chapter 4 of *Ādāb tilāwat* by quoting a hadith from al-Tirmidhī: "The man who explains the Qur'an according to his personal opinion (*bi-ra'yihi*) shall take his place in Hell."[30] The whole chapter comprises a sustained argument for a particular understanding of this hadith. In the second century A.H. the division between supporters and opponents of *tafsīr* was replaced by a new opposition between proponents of *tafsīr bi'l-ra'y* and *tafsīr bi'l-'ilm*, since it had come to be acknowleged that every theological stance relied in some way on *tafsīr*.[31] The opposition of these two types of *tafsīr* is reflected in the work of al-Tirmidhī and al-Ṭabarī, such as the hadith from al-Tirmidhī quoted by Ghazālī. *Ra'y* in this context

---

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 295/104.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 292/94.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 290/86. For hadith reference, see above, n. 19.
[31] Harris Birkeland, *Old Muslim Opposition Against Interpretation of the Koran* (Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos Jacob Dybvad, 1955), p. 30 and *passim*.

would have denoted independent reasoning in general, and not a phenomenon associated with Sufism. Ghazālī, however, smuggles in his argument for Sufi approaches to the Qur'an under cover of the broader argument that *ra'y* is legitimate. In so doing he assumes, rather than justifies, the notion that *ra'y* encompasses Sufi insights. Ghazālī seeks first to demonstrate that, on the basis of both tradition and reason, the hadith cannot be understood to constitute a blanket prohibition on Sufi exegesis. Secondly, he explains what he believes the tradition actually means.

Ghazālī begins his rebuttal of the view that the hadith represents a complete prohibition on Sufi interpretations by arguing that statements by the Prophet, his companions and other early believers prove that there is diversity in the meanings of the Qur'an. These include Ibn Mas'ūd's statement that, "The Qur'an has an outward aspect, an inward aspect, a limit and a prelude".[32] Ghazālī also refers to the claim that the Prophet repeated the opening verse of the Qur'an twenty times, which he explains as further evidence that Muhammad must have believed in and sought inner meanings. Ghazālī also quotes 'Alī, Abū'l-Dardā' and Ibn 'Abbās.[33]

Ghazālī makes interesting use of an exhortation attributed to Ibn Mas'ūd to the effect that those who wish to acquire the knowledge of the ancients and moderns should ponder over the Qur'an.[34] Although Ghazālī does not explicitly connect this exhortation to his ensuing comments that all human knowledge is implicitly present in the Qur'an, a link can easily be inferred. Immediately after Ibn Mas'ūd's statement comes Ghazālī's claim:

> The truth is that to everything pertaining to reflective and intellectual matters which has become ambiguous to men of reflection and in which people have differed, there are indications and implications (*rumūz wa dalālāt*) in the Qur'an which can be grasped by men of understanding. How can these indications and implications be completely conveyed by the translation of its

---

[32] *Ādāb tilāwat*, p. 290/87.
[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 290-291 /87-90.
[34] *Ibid*, p. 290/88.

outward meanings and by its [outward] exegesis? This is the reason why the Prophet ordered, "Read the Qur'an and seek to know its strange meanings."[35]

According to Amīn al-Khūlī, Ghazālī was the first to make the claim that the Qur'an contains the principles of all human knowledge, and this idea resurfaces in a number of Ghazālī's works.[36] Here it is enlisted to support the contention that Sufi exegesis is essential to a proper understanding of the text.[37]

Ghazālī concludes his discussion of hadiths by stating that his discussion proves "that outward exegesis which has come down by tradition is not the end of the understanding of the Qur'an."[38] This is a conclusion useful to Ghazālī in preparing the way for the remainder of his discussion, relying on evidence not drawn from hadiths.

Ghazālī continues his case for Sufi exegesis with four points appealing to logical reasoning. However, the first three of Ghazālī's four arguments are in fact the same point illustrated three times.[39] This point is that the requirement that all interpretations should be traceable back to Muhammad is a stipulation frequently ignored in practice. The first illustration of this is that if such a test were applied, then even interpretations by Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Mas'ūd would be excluded on the grounds that they are explanation by personal opinion. Secondly, the fact that companions of

---

[35] *Ibid*, p. 290/88.

[36] Amīn al-Khūlī, *Manāhij al-Tajdīd fi'l-Naḥw wa'l-Balāgha wa'l-Tafsīr wa'l-Adab* (Cairo, 1961), pp. 287-88, cited by Naṣr Abū Zayd, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 58, no. 1/2, column 223. Al-Khūlī's work was unavailable to me. For further discussion of these claims by Ghazālī, see Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis. Quasem, *The Jewels of the Qur'an*, p. 20, n. 14, in discussing an earlier reference by Ghazālī in *Jawāhir* to sciences of the ancients and moderns, states that the phrase refers to, "all Islamic subjects of study that came into existence from early Islam up to al-Ghazālī's time". Yet evidence from *Qisṭās*, discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis, shows that there is no basis for limiting the meaning of the phrase "sciences of the ancients and moderns" to so-called "Islamic subjects".

[37] The claim that the Qur'an includes the principles of all human knowledge is also made in *Jawāhir*. There, however, the claim is not used primarily as evidence for the importance of Sufi exegesis, although this is mentioned in the closing sentences of the chapter (*Jawāhir*, p. 28/48). Rather, Ghazālī's principal interest is in emphasising the point in its own right, and extolling the virtues of familiarity with scientific and other knowledge. The Qur'an's encompassing all human knowledge is also asserted in *Qisṭās*, in support of stressing the need for knowledge of syllogistic logic; see Chapter 7 of this thesis.

[38] *Ādāb tilāwat*, p. 291/90.

[39] *Ibid*, pp. 291-292/90-92.

the Prophet and other exegetes produced conflicting explanations of Qur'anic verses shows that they could not all have received these from Muhammad. Personal opinion must have influenced their views. Thirdly, Muhammad prayed that God would teach Ibn 'Abbās the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the Qur'an, yet this would be an unnecessary prayer if all interpretation was revealed from God through Muhammad himself.

Ghazālī's fourth point is that God affirms that men of learning can reflect on questions of meaning and reach conclusions as a result of their reflection (*istinbāṭ*). He quotes as evidence for this view part of Q4:83, which reads, " *Those among them who are adept at eliciting the truth would know its* [*real nature*]".[40] Ghazālī's argument is that "eliciting of meaning is something beyond hearing".

In concluding, Ghazālī asserts that anyone can interpret the Qur'an in proportion to their understanding (*fahm*) and intelligence (*'aql*).[41] This completes his refutation of the view that interpretation is restricted to what is learnt from authorities, a refutation which has drawn on both hadiths and reason.

After concluding his rebuttal of what he considers a misunderstanding of the hadith about *ra'y*, Ghazālī presents his view of its real meaning. He argues that the prohibition of explanation according to personal opinion applies to two types of interpretation. The first is interpretation influenced by nature (*tab'*) and passion (*hawā*). The second type is interpretation which disregards exegetical authorities in treating unusual Qur'anic words and phrases (*gharā'ib al-Qur'ān*). In these cases knowledge of authorities *is* needed:

> Then transmission [from an authority] and hearing [from him] are necessary for outward exegesis first, so that the exegete may, by them, be safe in places where mistakes are likely to be made. After this, understanding will be wide and the eliciting of deep meanings will be possible.[42]

---

[40] Quasem's translation of the verse is preferred here to that of Pickthall, since rendering *yastanbiṭūnahu* as "eliciting the truth" reflects better Ghazālī's wider point about spiritual insight than Pickthall's "think out the matter".

[41] *Ādāb tilāwat*, p. 292/92.

[42] *Ibid*, p. 292/94.

Ghazālī offers six different types of linguistic phenomena which he believes require the interpreter to possess knowledge of authorities.[43] These are "conciseness by omission and suppression of words" (*al-ījāz bi'l-ḥadhf wa'l-iḍmār*), "inversion" (*al-manqūl al-munqalib*), "repetition which breaks the connection of speech" (*al-mukarrar al-qāṭi' li-waṣl al-kalām*), "the occurrence of a word before or after its proper place (*al-muqaddam wa'l-mu'akhir*), "ambiguous expression" (*mubham*) and "progression in exposition" (*al-tadrīj fi'l-bayān*), by which he denotes details being added later in the Qur'an to an initial statement.[44]

So to summarise, *Ādāb tilāwat al-Qur'ān* presupposes but does not rely heavily on Ghazālī's bi-partite cosmology. Instead, in arguing for the legitimacy of Sufi exegesis Ghazālī makes more explicit use of sources of authority which he considers acceptable to his readers, namely appeals to hadith and reason. As part of this strategy, Ghazālī introduces his argument for the legitimacy of Sufi approaches under the cover of a wider argument in favour of the concept of *tafsīr bi'l-ra'y,* a type of *tafsīr* which did not in fact necessarily involve any Sufi influence. Quasem's comment that *Ādāb Tilāwat* is "deep, penetrating and logical" overstates the merits of what is a comparatively brief treatment of its subject. Ghazālī certainly pursues his argument with logical force, but also attempts a certain sleight of hand in enlisting *tafsīr bi'l-ra'y* to the cause of Sufi thought.

---

[43] *Ibid*, pp. 292-294/94-101.

[44] *Ādāb tilāwat*, pp. 294/100-01. Ghazālī illustrates this last point with reference to Ramadan, and the subsequent revelation of the *Laylat al-Qadr* or Night of Power.

2.4 *JAWĀHIR AL-QUR'ĀN*

A notable recent treatment of Ghazālī's understanding of *ta'wīl* in *Jawāhir* is found in the final sections of Naṣr Abū Zayd's work *Mafhūm al-naṣṣ*.[45] Abū Zayd draws primarily on *Jawāhir* in a discussion at times sharply critical of Ghazālī. He notes that the use of symbolic language in *Jawāhir*, such as the division of Qur'anic verses into jewels and pearls, to be discussed below, is an attempt by Ghazālī to copy what he regards as the symbolic function of language in the Qur'anic text itself.[46] More negatively, Abū Zayd also considers Ghazālī's stance on *ta'wīl* to be marked by many inconsistencies (*tanāquḍ*) caused by his attempt to hold together the type of Sufi approach evident in *Jawāhir* with the Ash'arite method.[47] Ghazālī's turning the text of the Qur'an into a collection of secrets conflicts with the intentions of revelation and the law, while his use of terms such as jewels, pearls and rubies encourages an approach to the text which treats it as a precious object to be revered rather than understood, and as a promise of future hope which removes the need to tackle present suffering.[48]

2.4.1 Preliminary Discussion of the Text

Authenticity

There is little doubting the authenticity of *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*. It is referred to several times in *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*, references which are fully explored in Chapter 6 of this thesis, while Ghazālī's *Kitāb al-Arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn* refers to itself as a sequel to *Jawāhir*.[49] *Al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl* also refers to *Jawāhir*.[50] As for

---

[45] Naṣr Abū Zayd, *Mafhūm al-naṣṣ: dirāsa fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āma li'l-Kitāb, 1990).
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 318.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 319.
[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 336-37.
[49] *Kitāb al-Arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'at al-'Ashriyya, 1344/1926), p. 305.

internal evidence, the work exhibits various features characteristic of Ghazālī's preoccupations, including a love of classification and organisational schemes, and a number of themes which are concerns of Ghazālī in other works, both Sufi concerns, discussed below, and also theological issues, outlined in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Date

Jawāhir cannot be dated precisely. However, *Mustaṣfā* mentions that it was completed before Ghazālī's return to teaching in Nishapur, so before Dhū'l-Qa'da, 499/July 1106.[51] It would not come from the very end of this period as it is followed by both *Kitāb al-Arba'īn* and *Qisṭās*.

Purpose

Ghazālī states that his concern is to reveal the existence of deeper meanings in the Qur'an. He employs the image of the Qur'an as an ocean which yields jewels to those who dive deep into its meanings:

> I then wish to rouse you from your sleep, O you who recite the Qur'ān to a great length, who take its study as an occupation, and who imbibe some of its outward meanings. How long will you ramble on the shore of the ocean, closing your eyes to the wonders of the meanings of the Qur'ān?... Why do you not emulate those people who waded through their waves and thus gained red brimstone... [Ghazālī then lists other types of jewels]... I now wish to guide you to the manner of the journey of these people, of their diving and of their swimming.[52]

So Ghazālī's aim is to show his readers the manner of the journey towards deeper meanings. He seeks to achieve this in two ways. First, he offers the most elaborate framework in any of his works for showing the connections between different Islamic disciplines and Qur'an interpretation. This framework and his other theoretical comments on interpretation are analysed in the present chapter. Secondly, Ghazālī

---

[50] *Al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl*, 2 vols., (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'at al-Amīriyya, 1322-24/1904-6), I:4.
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, pp. 8/19-20.

offers examples of Qur'an interpretation in practice, in order to illustrate the principles he has presented. These Qur'anic interpretations are analysed in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Ghazālī outlines in *Jawāhir* his reasons for emphasising the importance of guiding his readers to hidden meanings. His concern is that believers should be helped to hold onto their faith, whereas he states that he has seen faith undermined when people perceive there to be problems or contradictions arising from exoteric interpretations of particular passages.[53]

Summary

Jawāhir is composed in two quite distinct parts. The first of these presents Ghazālī's ideas, the second reproduces the text of a large number of Qur'anic verses without any authorial comment. This thesis, both in the present chapter and in Chapter 5, will concern itself only with the first part of *Jawāhir*.

The work begins with a discussion of different types of Qur'anic verses and an outline of sciences related to the Qur'an. There follows an argument for Ghazālī's belief that the principles of all sciences are found in the Qur'an.[54] Chapters 6-10 of *Jawāhir* discuss the reasons for allegories and symbols in the Qur'an, relating these to the bi-partite cosmology discussed earlier in the present chapter. Ghazālī then moves on to practical examples of Qur'an interpretation, discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis. He justifies his practice of highlighting certain verses for attention by asserting that they are the most excellent in the Qur'an. Ghazālī then describes the condition of those *'ārifūn* who seek encounter with God.

---

[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37/62-63.

[54] *Ibid.*, pp. 25-28/45-48. Johannes Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), p. 44, notes that in contemporary Egypt Ghazālī is often cited in defence of scientific exegesis of the Qur'an, *Jawāhir al-Qur'an* being his most frequently quoted work in this context.

Having concluded Part 1 with a brief introduction to Part 2, the second part of *Jawāhir* presents the text of all the Qur'anic verses which, according to Ghazālī, fall into the first two of six categories of verses which he finds in the Qur'an. These six categories are outlined in Part 1 of *Jawāhir*, and are discussed below.[55]

2.4.2 Hermeneutical Theory

2.4.2.1 Hermeneutics and Cosmology

In contrast to *Ādāb tilāwat*, Ghazālī in *Jawāhir* explicitly highlights his bi-partite cosmology as the foundation of his justification of inner exegesis. It is worth revisiting a quotation already given earlier in the present chapter given its centrality to the topic of cosmology and its influence.

> In every sentence which has occurred, there are hints and indications of a hidden meaning understood by him who understands the relationship between the world of possession (*mulk*) and perception (*shahāda*) and the world of the unseen and dominion (*ghayb wa'l-malakūt*), since everything in the former world is only a form of something spiritual in the unseen world, as if that thing which is in the world of possession and perception were the same as that which is in the world of the unseen and dominion, in respect to its spirit and meaning though not in respect to its shape and form. *The phyical form from the world of perception is included in the spiritual meaning of that world* (emphasis added).[56]

So the outer world is in fact part of the invisible world, albeit the lowest part. This is why the physical world forms one of the stages on the path to God. It is also the reason why exoteric and esoteric interpretations are complementary. Gaining access to hidden or esoteric spiritual truths is impossible without first comprehending external realities, just as human experience of the spiritual world cannot be acquired without also living in the physical world.

---

[55] The six divisions, first mentioned on p. 9/21, are outlined in the course of the third chapter of *Jawāhir*; pp. 10-17/ 23-33.

[56] *Jawāhir*; p. 28/49; cf. above, p. 4 of the present chapter.

However, if the connection between the visible and invisible realms is not understood, then outward understanding of the Qur'an is held in isolation from inner meanings. This leads to scorn for piety:

> Because their intellect was confined to the study of shapes of things and their imaginative forms; their consideration was not extended to the spirit and realities of things, and they did not understand the parallelism (*muwāzana*) between the visible world and the invisible... Neither did they understand anything from the spiritual world through immediate experience (*dhawq*) such as the understanding of the elite (*khawāṣṣ*), nor did they believe in the unseen as is the belief of the layman (*'awwām*). Thus their intelligence destroyed them.[57]

So a correct grasp of cosmology, or, specifically, the importance of recognising the existence of the two realms, is necessary for a proper understanding of the Qur'an, which in turn makes possible a pious life.

2.4.2.2 The Classification of Religious Sciences

Since Ghazālī's framework of ideas presented in *Jawāhir* involves an elaborate set of connections between types of Qur'anic verses and intellectual disciplines which arise from them, the following table is provided as a summary of his discussion. The types of verse, and of intellectual discipline, which Ghazālī considers most important, are located at the top of the table, and the others follow in descending order of importance. The verse type in the left column gives rise to the discipline facing it in the right column. Understanding this scheme is not only important in comprehending Ghazālī's theoretical constructs; he also uses it as the justification for some of his interpretations of Qur'anic passages analysed in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

---

[57] *Jawāhir*, p.37/63. On the same page Ghazālī refers to *'ālam al-arwāḥ* ('the world of spirits') as another designation of the invisible realm.

Table 1: Classification of Qur'anic Verses and Sciences in *Jawāhir al-Qu'rān*

Six types of verse	Ten sciences of the Qur'an
	A) Sciences of the pith
1) Jewels - Knowledge of God's essence attributes and works	1) Knowledge of God and the Last Day
2) Pearls - knowledge of the Straight Path	2) Knowledge of the straight path
3) People's condition on meeting God	
4)= The affairs of this world	3)= *Fiqh*
4)= Arguments of infidels and their refutation	3)= *Kalām*
6) Accounts of Qur'anic figures	5) Preaching and story-telling
	B) Sciences of the shell
	6) Exoteric exegesis
	7-8) Sciences of language and grammar of the Qur'an
	9-10) Sciences of readings and pronunciation of letters.

Ghazālī first gives an account of his classification of Qur'anic verses, (the left column in the above table), and subsequently offers his correlation of these types with various disciplines (shown in the right column). The same order is retained in what follows, an examination of his classification of verses being followed by an analysis of how he collates these with the various sciences.

The first verse category comprises verses concerning the essence, attributes and works of God, these verses being the "jewels" of the title. The second category, forming what Ghazālī terms the "pearls" of the Qur'an, consists of those verses which he considers define the path of advancement towards God. This path is traversed by means of perseverance combined with opposition to whatever distracts from God.[58] The third category concerns verses treating of people's condition at the time when they come into the presence of God for judgment, either for the reward of Paradise or the punishment of Hell. These three categories are, for Ghazālī, the most important, but are complemented by three others with a subordinate role.[59]

Two of these subordinate categories are given equal status. One comprises verses regulating the affairs of earthly life, including financial and family matters. The importance of these verses derives from this world's being one of the stages on the path to God, its affairs therefore demanding attention from the faithful believer. The other category gathers verses concerning the arguments of unbelievers against Qur'anic truths, together with their refutation. The issues in view here are false descriptions of God, accusations against Muhammad, and denial of the resurrection, judgment, Paradise and Hell. The sixth category consists of verses giving accounts of people mentioned in the Qur'an, from Adam onwards, who have followed the path to God, along with parallel accounts of those who denied and disobeyed God.

At one point Ghazālī further divides these six divisions into ten types.[60] However, both the title of the work and the collection of 'jewels' and 'pearls' included in Part II indicate that the six-fold division is the predominant one, since the jewels

---

[58] The verses which Ghazālī considers should be included in these two categories form the content of Part II of *Jawāhir*.

[59] The following three categories are presented in the order in which Ghazālī ranks them. He *describes* them in a different order.

[60] He lists the ten types as, "The divine essence, divine attributes, divine works, the life to come, the straight path, i.e. the purification and beautification [of the soul], the conditions of the saints, the conditions of God's enemies, [His] arguments with the infidels, and [finally] the bounds of legal judgments" (*Jawāhir*, p. 17/33).

encompass the first three of these ten subdivisions, and form the first major category. Ghazālī also alludes briefly to the difficulty of classifying verses. When a verse includes more than one of these six types of statement his approach is to classify it according to its most significant elements, so that a verse embodying both jewel and pearl is regarded as a jewel.[61]

Having classified Qur'anic verses, Ghazālī then presents what he regards as the corresponding Qur'anic sciences. He divides these sciences into those of the shell, and those of the pith, beginning with the sciences of the shell. Whereas in his account of the six types of verses he begins with the most important, in setting out the ten types of science he begins with the least important. For the sake of clarity, in the table above the most important sciences are listed at the top, so as to make clear their correspondence with the most important types of Qur'anic verse. The following analysis, however, in order to reproduce the order of Ghazālī's account, begins with the least important sciences. Hence the discussion below begins at the bottom of the right column and progresses through to the top.

Ghazālī terms the less important sciences the sciences of the shell:

> The shell of the jewels of the Qur'an, its garment, is the Arabic language. From this shell branch off five sciences which are the sciences of the rind, the shell and the garment [of the Qur'an].[62]

The four sciences of the shell numbered seven to ten in Table 1 are: the sound, or pronunciation of letters; the science of the language of the Qur'an (*'ilm al-lugha*), including the science of the strange words of the Qur'an;[63] grammar (*'ilm al-naḥw*); and the science of readings (*'ilm al-qira'āt*). Of these, grammar and *'ilm al-lugha* are more significant than the other two.

---

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 52/87.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 18/34.

[63] Ghazālī discusses these *gharā'ib al-Qur'ān* in *Ādāb tilāwat*, pp. 292-294/94-101; see above, pp. 32-33.

Following these, and more significant still, is the fifth and highest science of the shell, exoteric exegesis (*tafsīr al-ẓāhir*). Ghazālī terms this "the last grade of the shell of the Qur'an", and contends that its proximity to the pearl explains why some mistake it for the pearl itself.[64] He offers both criticism and affirmation of those engaged in such exegesis. On the one hand, "How great are their deception and deprivation, for they have imagined that there is no rank beyond the rank of theirs!" More positively, theirs is "a rank high and noble" compared with those who are only familiar with the previous four sciences.[65] So exoteric exegesis is important, but the limitations of that importance must be recognised.

The five sciences of the shell of the Qur'an are subordinate to the five sciences of the pith.[66] These are divided into two levels, just as the six divisions of Qur'anic verses already outlined are also divided into two sections. The lower grade of sciences of the pith comprises three individual sciences. One is knowledge of Qur'anic stories and characters, expressed through preaching and storytelling. This corresponds to the sixth category of verse types. The second lower grade science of the pith is *kalām*. Ghazālī defines this as responding to the group of verses describing unbelievers' arguments. The other lower grade science of the pith is *fiqh*, corresponding to the division of verses dealing with correct regulation of earthly affairs. As in his treatment of the exponents of outer exegesis, Ghazālī appears ambivalent in his attitude towards the jurists and theologians. Positively, he states that both are necessary for the well-being of the world. Yet if they practise their chosen occupation while failing to traverse the path to God, "their rank will be very low".[67]

---

[64] *Jawāhir*, pp. 19-20/36.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 20/36.
[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 20ff/37ff.
[67] *Ibid*, p. 23/42. Ghazālī also comments on *fiqh* (p. 40), "We wasted a good part of our life writing books on its disputed problems", and feels that while *fiqh* has some value he should have written less than he did in this field. For a yet more negative view of *fiqh*, see Ghazālī's analysis of Sura 1, discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

The two noblest sciences of the pith form the last category. The noblest of all is the knowledge of God and the Last Day, and below this is knowledge of the straight path and how to travel along it. For the latter, Ghazālī refers his readers to the second half of the *Iḥyā'*.[68] Of the former, the science of the knowledge of God and the Last Day, he writes:

> This knowledge is connected with the science of gnosis (*'ilm al-ma'rifa*) and its real meaning is knowledge of man's relation to God at the time of being drawn near to Him through knowledge or being veiled from Him by ignorance. Some of the principles of these four types of knowledge - i.e. knowledge of divine essence, attributes and works, and knowledge of the future life ... we set forth in some of [our] works but did not disclose.[69]

Ghazālī's presentation of these ten sciences, five of the shell and five of the pith, exhibits a characteristically high degree of schematisation. It can be assumed that not every correspondence or subdivision is of paramount importance for understanding his thought.[70] What is important, however, is to discern how inner exegesis fits into the scheme of ten sciences outlined above. Although outer exegesis ranks sixth out of ten sciences in importance, Ghazālī does not make the place of inner exegesis explicit. However, it seems that it must be presupposed as essential in obtaining the knowledge of God which is the pinnacle of his system as presented in *Jawāhir*.

Two different hierarchies are apparent in Ghazālī's approach to the Qur'an in *Jawāhir*; dealing with content and method respectively. The first of these, dealing with the content of verses, privileges texts dealing with the essence, attributes and works of God. The second hierarchy, dealing with interpretive method, privileges an

---

[68] *Ibid*, p. 24/42.

[69] *Ibid*, p. 25/44. This veiled cross-reference to other writings prompts Quasem, in a note to his translation, p. 44, n. 72, to suggest that Ghazālī refers here to *Al-Madnūn bihi 'alā ghayr ahlihi*. The authenticity of this work has been questioned, however, being accepted by Watt, "Authenticity", p. 43, but rejected by Lazarus-Yafeh, pp. 251-53, and Hourani, "Revised Chronology", p. 298.

[70] Cf., for example, his different classification in *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, Book I of *Iḥyā'*, tr. Nabih Amin Faris as *The Book of Knowledge* (New Delhi: International Islamic Publishers, 1988 edn.), pp. 31-3. This classification is based on the four-fold division of sources (*uṣūl*), branches (*furū'*), auxiliary sciences (*muqaddimāt*) and supplementary sciences (*mutammimāt*). Here "exposition which rests on authoritative transmission", or exoteric, literal exegesis, is placed in the fourth group.

esoteric interpretive approach which detects symbolic meanings within every verse of the Qur'an. It might be assumed that these two systems intersect, attributing greatest importance to esoteric interpretations of verses treating of the essence, attributes and works of God. Although not stating this directly, Ghazālī seems to indicate this in his subsequent discussion of Suras 1, Q2:255 and Sura 112, selected because of their content, but interpreted according to Ghazālī's belief in inner meanings. Ghazālī's interpretations of these Qur'anic passages are dealt with in detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

2.4.2.3 *Ta'wīl* and Dream Interpretation

Another important aspect of Ghazālī's hermeneutical theory in *Jawāhir*, closely linked to his cosmology, is the parallel drawn between *ta'wīl* and dream interpretation. Ghazālī exhorts those who find symbolic interpretation of the Qur'an difficult to accept to consider an example drawn from what commentators write concerning Q13:17. This verse begins, "*He sendeth down water from the sky...*". The interpretation which Ghazālī presents is discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Here it is sufficient to note that Ghazālī's interpretation seems to be taken from the *Rasā'il* of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', or Brethren of Purity, the tenth century circle of Baghdad thinkers.[71] While it is possible that both Ghazālī and the Ikhwān drew on a common source, it is more plausible that Ghazālī drew directly on the *Rasā'il* since he makes clear in *Munqidh* that he knew their work. In *Munqidh*, however, he terms the *Rasā'il* "the refuse of philosophy (*ḥashw al-falsafa*)", this assessment contrasting with his apparent reliance on them at this point.[72] The importance of Ghazālī's interpretation

---

[71] As noted by Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1920), p. 199; see *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4 vols., (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957), IV: 76-77, and cf. III: 299-300. For a brief description of the Ikhwān's interpretation, see I.R. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), pp. 80-81.

[72] *Munqidh*, p. 33, tr. McCarthy, p. 89.

for the present argument lies in its being an example of the parallel which Ghazālī sees between textual interpretation and dream interpretation:

> Know that everything which you are likely to understand is presented to you by the Qur'an in such a way that if in sleep you were studying the Protected Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*) with your soul, it would be related to you through a suitable symbol which needs interpretation. Know that interpretation of the Qur'an (*ta'wīl*) occupies the place of interpretation of dreams (*ta'bīr*). This is why we have said that a commentator of the Qur'an (*al-mufassir*) is concerned with its rind.[73]

This similarity between textual and dream interpretation occurs because this life is like a state of sleeping, a state brought to an end by awakening when we die.[74] So:

> Before that time it is impossible for you to know the realities except when they are moulded in the form of imaginative symbols (*al-amthāl al-khayāliyya*). Because of the concentration of your look upon the sensuous, you think that the sensuous has only imaginative meaning, and you become unmindful of its spirit, as you become unmindful of your own spirit and only understand your body.[75]

This passage's references to the imagination are significant. Both the imagination's role in forming symbols which make possible some grasp of truth, and also its limitations, seen in the dismissive phrase "only imaginative meaning" point to the influence on Ghazālī of the Islamic philosophers' theories of imaginative prophecy. This approach to scriptural revelation regards it as the transformation of abstract truths into concrete symbols brought about by the imagination. These ideas emerge more clearly in *Mishkāt al-anwār*; so an examination of them is given in the next section.

In surveying the hermeneutical theories of *Jawāhir* as a whole, it is evident that Ghazālī marshalls various types of argument in support of discerning the *bāṭin* in the Qur'anic text. He gives considerable time to an elaborate classification of religious sciences, which relates not only to his Qur'anic interpretations to be examined in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Ghazālī's scheme is also intended to explain the subordinate

---

[73] *Jawāhir*; p. 31/52. Quasem's translation, which includes the Arabic terms given in this quotation, has the misprint *ta'wīr* in place of *ta'bīr*.
[74] *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2/53-54.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 32/54-55.

status given to exoteric approaches to the Qur'an (*tafsīr al-ẓāhir*) which is assumed throughout *Jawāhir*. Secondly, bi-partite cosmology is called upon, unsurprisingly in the light of the preceding discussion of *Ādāb Tilāwat*. More unexpected are glimpses of the influence of the philosophers' views of prophecy, glimpses which turn into a fuller view in *Mishkāt al-anwār*, the next text to be considered.

2.5 *MISHKĀT AL-ANWĀR*

2.5.1 Preliminary Discussion of the text

Authenticity

Discussion of the authenticity of *Mishkāt al-Anwār* has centred on the authorship of the final section, which concerns the hadith stating, "God has seventy veils of light and darkness; were He to lift them, the august glories of His face would burn up everyone whose eyesight perceived Him."[76] While this section is not central to the treatment of *Mishkāt* in this thesis, the issues raised regarding authenticity relate to the work as a whole and therefore deserve comment. Of the two detailed studies of the authenticity of the text, the first, by Watt, maintains that the final section is inauthentic, on the grounds that its apparently Neoplatonic ideas conflict with more 'orthodox' views expressed in the earlier parts of the text.[77] However, a more recent and thorough study of the issues is offered by Landolt, who argues that Watt is correct in some of his evidence, but wrong in his conclusions.[78] Specifically, Landolt agrees with Watt that the final section of *Mishkāt* reveals Neoplatonic influences, but argues

---

[76] *Mishkāt*, pp. 44-53. While the source of this wording is not known, a similar hadith occurs in Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, *"muqadimma"* 13, I: 71, beginning, "His veil is light" instead of, "God has seventy veils of light and darkness".

[77] W.M. Watt, "A Forgery in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt*?" *JRAS* 1949, pp. 5-22.

[78] Hermann Landolt, "Ghazālī and "Religionswissenschaft": Some Notes for Professor Charles J. Adams" *Asiatische Studien* 45 (1991), pp. 19-72.

that these influences can also be found throughout the rest of the work. He cites Wensinck's argument that the first of the three sections of *Mishkāt* is, "nothing but *a free paraphrase of the fifth book of the fourth Ennead*" (author's emphasis) by Plotinus.[79] Landolt also argues for the integrity of *Mishkāt* on the basis that each of its sections reveals the influence of *Risāla 42* from the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*.[80] In addition, Landolt gives reasons for suspecting that two different versions of *Mishkāt* might have circulated from an early date, with material presented in different order. After presenting evidence from discussions by Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, Landolt concludes that this issue is yet to be resolved.[81] Following Landolt, the account of *Mishkāt* given below assumes the entire text to be Ghazālian, while the arguments presented in the present chapter and in Chapter 7, below, are not affected by the ordering of the sections within the text.

Date

Mishkāt is generally considered to be written late in Ghazālī's life, though no exact year can be ascertained. Gairdner suggests 500/1106-7, Bouyges a little earlier on account of *Mishkāt's* marked dissimilarity to *Mustaṣfā*.[82] Hourani contends that Ibn Rushd's list of some of Ghazālī's works in his *Kitāb al-Kashf 'an Manāhij al-Adilla* is chronological. From this he concludes that *Mishkāt* must be later than

---

[79] Wensinck, "Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār* (Niche of Lights)" in *Semietische Studiën uit de Nalatenschap van Professor Dr. A.J. Wensinck* (Leiden: A.W.Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatchappij N.V., 1941), p. 198, as noted by Landolt, " Some Notes", p. 28, n. 41. Wensinck refers to Plotinus, "On Sight"; see *Plotinus*, vol. IV (*Enneads* IV.1-9), tr. A.H. Armstrong, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1984), pp. 280-315. For information on Arabic paraphrases and adaptations of Plotinus, see Peter Adamson, "Aristotelianism and the Soul in the Arabic Plotinus" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (2001), pp. 211ff.

[80] See Landolt, "Some Notes", esp. pp. 29, 31 for a summary of influences from *Ihkwān al-Safā'*. The authenticity of *Mishkāt* is accepted by Bouyges, p. 66, n.5, Jabre, *La Notion de Ma'rifa*, p. 100, n. 1, and Davidson, *Intellect*, p. 131, n. 20.

[81] Landolt, "Some Notes", pp. 64-72.

[82] W.H.T. Gairdner, "Al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār* and the Ghazālī-Problem" *Der Islam* 5 (1914), p. 133 n.3; M. Bouyges, *Essai de Chronologie*, pp. 65-66. Bouyges' point is not necessarily significant; on the possible reasons for Ghazālī's writing *Mustaṣfā*, see Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Jawāhir since it occurs later in the list.[83] If *Mishkāt* is later than *Jawāhir*, however, it also appears to be earlier than *Munqidh*. Ghazālī's Persian work *Kīmiyā-yi Sa'adat* quotes from *Mishkāt*,[84] while *Munqidh* refers to *Kīmiyā*, so at least part of *Mishkāt* must have been written before *Munqidh*. The most that can be concluded regarding the date of *Mishkāt*, if Hourani is correct in regarding Ibn Rushd's list as chronological, is that *Mishkāt* appears to have been written at some time between the composition of *Jawāhir* and *Munqidh*.

Purpose

Mishkāt is written to explain:

> The mysteries of the divine lights, along with an interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the apparent meanings (*ẓawāhir*) of those recited verses and narrated reports that allude to the divine lights, like his words, "God is the light of the heavens and the earth"; and [that I explain] the sense of His comparing this with the niche, the glass, the lamp, the olive, and the tree; and likewise the saying of the Prophet: "God has seventy veils of light and darkness; were He to lift them, the august glories of His face would burn up everyone whose eyesight perceive Him."[85]

Ghazālī's purpose, then, can be summarised as expounding three subjects. The first is the meaning of the Qur'anic phrase, "*Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth*", the opening of the so-called Light Verse. The second is an exploration of the various elements mentioned in 24:35, such as the niche, lamp, and so on, while the third section focusses on the hadith about seventy veils of light and darkness. The Light Verse in full reads:

> *Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no*

---

[83] G. Hourani, "A Revised of Ghazālī's Writings" *JAOS* 104 (1984), pp. 299-300; see Ibn Rushd, *Al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla*, ed. M. Ḥanafī (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdat al-'Arabiyya, 1998), pp. 150-51; tr. Ibrahim Najjar as *Faith and Reason in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), pp. 68-69.
[84] Landolt, "Some Notes", p. 24, n. 18.
[85] *Mishkāt*, p. 1.

fire touched it. Light upon light, Allah guideth unto His light whom He will. And Allah speaketh to mankind in allegories, for Allah is Knower of all things.

Summary

The work itself is in three parts, corresponding to the three main topics outlined above. The first comprises a wide-ranging exploration of the terms 'God' and 'light', in order to explain the opening statement of the Light Verse. The second gives an exposition of the principles and practice necessary for interpreting the symbolism of the Light Verse, and the third section comprises a discussion of the hadith concerning the veils of light and darkness. The second of these three parts is of greatest relevance to this thesis, the principles of interpretation being treated in this chapter, the actual interpretation in Chapter 7.

Ghazālī gives the first part of *Mishkāt* the subtitle, "Clarifying that the real light is God and that the name 'light' for everything else is sheer metaphor, without reality".[86] Aiming to show that all lights come from God, Ghazālī argues that the term light can be applied to the phenomenon of light as commonly understood, to the eye, and to the intelligence. These three ways relate, first, to the sense of sight, secondly to the seeing spirit, or our capacity to perceive and understand things by means of sight, and thirdly to the rational faculty, the eye of the heart. The rational faculty is a faculty of the soul.[87] However, God is the only real light, and all other lights flow out from this source. Furthermore, there is nothing in existence except God. There is clear presentation of the bi-partite cosmology already discussed, which will be treated below. Those who achieve ascent to heaven see nothing but the One, the Real. This leads to a state of "extinction" (*fanā'*), which Ghazālī carefully defines as

---

[86] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[87] On faculties of the soul and the influence of Ibn Sīnā on Ghazālī, see below, Chapter 7.

"'unification', according to the language of metaphor" or, "'declaring God's unity', according to the language of reality".[88]

The second part of *Mishkāt,* which expounds the symbolism of the Light Verse, will be discussed in detail both in what follows and in Chapter 7. The third part discusses the veils hadith. Using this hadith as a foundation, Ghazālī presents a classification of the different spiritual states of humankind. Some are veiled by darkness, some by light and darkness, and some by pure light. The light radiating from God, described in the first part of *Mishkāt,* is shed on these classes of people in proportion to their spiritual state.

2.5.2 Hermeneutical Theory

The following discussion of hermeneutical theory in *Mishkāt* can conveniently be divided into two parts. The first briefly presents the evidence for the cosmological ideas discussed earlier in the present chapter, but which Ghazālī emphasises most clearly in *Mishkāt.* The second part of the discussion compares the theory of *ta'wīl* in *Mishkāt* both with philosophical theories of prophecy, and with statements in other works by Ghazālī.

2.5.2.1 Hermeneutics and Cosmology

Ghazālī's bi-partite cosmology is frequently in evidence in *Mishkāt.* The vocabulary he employs primarily distinguishes between the realms of *shahāda* and *malakūt.*[89] After a brief introduction, the opening words of the section on interpretive principles are, "Know that the cosmos is two worlds: spiritual and bodily (*rūḥānī wa jismānī*)".[90] In an important passage, Ghazālī states that:

---

[88] *Mishkāt,* p. 18.
[89] See, for example, *Mishkāt,* pp. 11-14. The terms *al-ḥiss* (p. 10), and *al-mulk* (p. 26), also occur as descriptions of the visible realm.
[90] *Mishkāt,* p. 25.

> The visible world is a ladder to the world of dominion, and traveling on the 'straight path' consists of climbing this ladder... If there were no relationship and connection between the two worlds, climbing from one world to the other would be inconceivable. Hence, the divine mercy made the visible world parallel to the world of dominion; *there is nothing in this world that is not a similitude (mithāl) of something in the world of dominion* (emphasis added).[91]

So divine mercy is the reason why everything in the visible realm is in fact a symbol of the invisible. Ghazālī presumably therefore sees himself as helping his readers to benefit from this mercy by explaining at least part of that invisible realm. Furthermore, Ghazālī's statement helps to prepare the ground for the idea that the apparent meanings of Qur'anic verses are in fact images of hidden truths.

As in *Ādāb tilāwat* and *Jawāhir*, Ghazālī in *Mishkāt* stresses the complementarity of outer and inner meanings. "Those who look only at the outward are literalists, those who look only at the inward are Bāṭinites, and those who bring the two together are perfect".[92] A little later, Ghazālī writes that, "the perfect one (*al-kāmil*) does not allow himself to leave aside a single prescription of the *sharī'a*, even though he has perfect insight".[93] Ghazālī's theoretical justification for this position is based partly on cosmology. However, as Hodgson notes:

> Ghazālī was so persistently interested in intellectual method, much more than in systems of ultimate truth for themselves. Even a work of his that has the appearance of Sufi speculation on the cosmos, the *Niche for Lights*, is devoted primarily to elucidating ways of understanding words and symbols and doctrines.[94]

So it should not come as a surprise that Ghazālī also introduces another justification for his hermeneutical approach. This justification comes in the form of a theory of prophecy which challenges images of Ghazālī as an 'orthodox' theologian.[95]

---

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[93] *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[94] Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3 vols., (London: University of Chicago Press, 1974), vol. II: 189-90.
[95] See the discussion of Pawan Ahmad's thesis, below, p. 57.

2.5.2.2 Ghazālī's *Ta'wīl* and Theories of Imaginative Prophecy

Ghazālī gives clear evidence that his approach to the Qur'an in *Mishkāt* is shaped by theories found in the works of Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī. In what follows, discussions of *ta'wīl* from *Mishkāt* are first presented, then set in the context of similar statements in the works of the two philosophers, along with an explanation of the phenomenon which they termed imaginative prophecy. Finally, other statements by Ghazālī on the same topic are considered.

Ghazālī quotes the hadith in which Muhammad states, "I saw 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf entering the Garden crawling".[96] Ghazālī interprets this statement as a reference to 'Abd al-Raḥmān making the journey from the visible to the spiritual realm, but doing so by "crawling" because the forward momentum he gains from his faith is counteracted by desire for this world dragging him back. After offering this interpretation of the hadith, Ghazālī provides a theoretical basis for it:

> This lets you know how the prophets see forms (*al-ṣuwar*) and how they witness the meanings (*al-ma'ānī*) behind the forms. In most cases, the meaning is prior to the inward witnessing. Then the meaning radiates (*yashruqu*) from the witnessing upon the imaginal spirit (*al-rūḥ al-khayālī*), whereupon *the imagination becomes imprinted with a form that parallels the meaning and resembles it.* This type of revelation in wakefulness needs interpretation (*ta'wīl*), just as in dreams it needs dream interpretation (emphasis added).[97]

Here we find the same parallel of textual and dream interpretation as found in *Jawāhir*.[98]

Ghazālī justifies not only interpretation of hadith but also interpretation of the Qur'an by referring to this phenomenon of the imprinting of images on the prophet's imagination. Referring to God's command to Moses, "*Doff your two sandals!*" (Q20:12), he writes:

---

[96] *Mishkāt*, p. 34. Cf. Aḥmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad* VI:115, cited in A.J. Wensinck *et al.* (eds.), *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1933-), I:416.

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[98] See above, pp. 45-46.

EA LIBR. UNIV. EDINBURGH

> The outward doffing of the sandals calls attention to the abandonment of the two engendered worlds. Hence, the similitude in the outward aspect is true, and its giving rise to the inward mystery is a reality. Those who are worthy of having their attention called through this similitude have reached the degree of the 'glass,' in the sense in which the glass will be discussed.[99]

Ghazālī states later in *Mishkāt* that the glass represents the imaginative spirit (*rūḥ al-khayālī*), the third in a hierarchy of five faculties of the soul discussed in detail in Chapter 7 of this thesis. Ghazālī continues:

> Imagination, which provides the clay from which the similitude is taken, is solid and dense. It veils the mysteries and comes between you and the lights. But when the imagination is purified so that it becomes like clear glass, then it does not obstruct the lights; rather, it becomes a *pointer toward the lights*.. Know that the *low, dense, imaginal world became for the prophets a glass*, a niche for lights, a purifier of the mysteries, and *a ladder to the highest world* Through this it comes to be known that the outward similitude is true and behind it is a mystery. Deal in the same way with the similitudes of the 'mountain,' the 'fire,' and so on (emphasis added).[100]

So this world, despite being both "low (*suflī*)" and "dense (*kathīf*)" is a bridge between the physical and spiritual realms; it is, in fact, the "niche for lights" of the title. Ghazālī includes the Qur'anic text as a whole in this hermeneutical explanation, as can be seen by his adding to the example of the sandals, "Deal in the same way with the similitudes of the 'mountain', the 'fire' and so on." As Davidson notes, such an understanding of the Qur'an is "tantamount to Avicenna's thesis that imaginative prophecy frames figurative images of the theoretical truths learned through intellectual prophecy".[101] What, then, is the difference between the phenomena termed "imaginative prophecy" and "intellectual prophecy"?

In the context of the present discussion of *Mishkāt*, only a concise explanation of al-Fārābī's and Ibn Sīnā's understandings of prophecy can be attempted.[102] The ideas of al-Fārābī provide the starting point, since these had a major

---

[99] *Mishkāt*, p. 34. Q20:12 is quoted from Buchmann's translation of *Mishkāt* (p.32), so as to accord with his translation of Ghazālī's discussion of the phrase, also quoted.

[100] *Mishkāt*, p. 34; the mountain (Q28:29) is mentioned on p. 29, the fire (Q20:10) on p. 30.

[101] Davidson, p. 141.

[102] For a survey of the two philosophers' understandings of prophecy see Falzur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958), chaps. 1 and 2.

influence on Ibn Sīnā. Both propounded forms of Islamic Neoplatonism, in which a descending series of immaterial intellects emanates from the First Source (God), until the tenth, the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fā'il*) is reached. This Active Intellect is the conduit for prophetic inspiration to human beings, forming, as the lowest in the hierarchy of intellects, the link between the spiritual realm and the physical world.[103]

There are a number of possible antecedents for some of the contours of al-Fārābī's and Ibn Sīnā's views on the human and divine intellects, including Alexander of Aphrodisias, Plotinus, Themistius and works attributed to John Philoponus.[104] Al-Fārābī appears original in giving the Active Intellect the position of the tenth and last in the hierarchy of celestial intelligences.[105] The Active Intellect emanates knowledge without ceasing to the soul of every human being, though only those who are intellectually developed and spiritually aware are able to receive that knowledge. Al-Fārābī argues that while the rational faculty of the soul receives abstract knowledge, the imaginative faculty, a lesser faculty, transforms this knowledge into figurative images. This activity of transformation is necessary since only the philosophically gifted few can understand rational knowledge, while the masses can understand and be motivated by the figurative images formed from it. Only a prophet possesses this double capacity both to receive abstract knowledge and also to convert it into a form

---

[103] For diagrams showing the place of the Active Intellect in the emanationist hierarchies of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, see I.R. Netton, *Allah Transcendent* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 116, 165. Davidson, *Intellect*, p. 124, writes: "The active intellect, although not powerful enough to emanate an unchanging body, a soul to accompany an unchanging body, and a further eternal incorporeal intelligence, does emanate analogues of the three. It emanates the matter of the sublunar world, natural forms in the sublunar world, and human intelligible thought...The active intellect is, as it were, an eternal cosmic transmitter, broadcasting an undifferentiated range of forms, as well as the substratum that can receive them, and properly attuned portions of matter automatically receive the natural forms appropriate to them. The active intellect is accordingly called the 'giver of forms'. Matter blended to the highest possible degree of homogeneity receives an incorporeal human soul from the active intellect's emanation".

[104] Davidson, *Intellect*, p. 7. On the influence of the first of these on al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā see Charles Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001), pp. 20-25.

[105] Davidson, p. 18. Davidson, pp. 58-62, gives a detailed account of al-Fārābī's understanding of the Active Intellect and its role in prophecy.

which everyone can understand. The text of the Qur'an consists of the figurative images formed by the Prophet's imaginative faculty, and so the Scripture's inner meaning lies not in these images themselves, but in the abstract truths for which they are merely the outer garments. Hence the need for *ta'wīl,* because, for al-Fārābī, religion is the imitation of philosophy.[106]

Al-Fārābī writes of prophecy:

> It is not impossible, then, that when a man's faculty of representation [i.e. the imaginative faculty] reaches its utmost perfection he will receive in his waking life from the Active Intellect present and future particulars of their imitations in the form of sensibles, and receive the imitations of the transcendent intelligibles and the other glorious existents and see them. This man will obtain through the particulars which he receives 'prophecy' (*nubuwwa*) (supernatural awareness) of present and future events, and through the intelligibles which he receives prophecy of things divine. This is the highest rank of perfection which the faculty of representation can reach.[107]

Such a theory raises the question of to what extent the images convey the truth of the abstract principles, or intelligibles, which they are said to represent. This, however, is a question lying outside the scope of the present discussion.[108]

Ibn Sīnā's account of prophecy draws heavily on the work of al-Fārābī, albeit with some modifications, and he too considers texts passed on to humanity through prophetic revelation to be the figurative representation of abstract truths. For those with a particularly strongly developed imaginative faculty, "frequently an image appears to them... This is the prophecy specific to the imaginative faculty."[109] It is also worth quoting the relevant lines from *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt* given its influence on *Mishkāt,* to be discussed in Chapter 7, below. "Representations of the

---

[106] See al-Fārābī, *Taḥsīl al-sa'āda,* tr. Muhsin Mahdi as *The Attainment of Happiness* in Arthur Hyman and James Walsh (eds.), *Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 222-32, esp. p. 229.

[107] *Al-Fārābī on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's Mabādi' Ārā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* ed. and tr. Richard Walzer, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 223-25.

[108] On this question see Miriam Galston, *Politics and Excellence* (Princeton: P.U.P., 1990), pp. 43-47.

[109] Ibn Sīnā, *De Anima,* ed. F. Rahman (London: O.U.P., 1959), p. 173; for a general account of this type of prophecy see pp. 173-82. For an account of Ibn Sīnā and the Active Intellect, see Davidson, *Intellect,* esp. pp. 84ff.

invisible world are imprinted in the soul, which then flow to the world of the imagination and are then imprinted in the common sense".[110] Having described this as a phenomenon occurring in the state of sleep or disease, Ibn Sīnā adds that the powerful soul experiences this in wakefulness.[111]

Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā differ in describing how the prophet receives revelation. Where al-Fārābī sees philosophical wisdom and prophetic revelation as two separate functions of the soul, Ibn Sīnā sets forward two types of prophetic revelation, intellectual prophecy and imaginative prophecy.[112] Furthermore, while al-Fārābī regards prophecy as being received only after the prophet's intellect has been fully developed, that is, reaching the stage of acquired intellect, Ibn Sīnā considers that prophecy can be received suddenly, through intuition (*ḥads*) without the prophet first acquiring philosophical wisdom by the usual intellectual processes.[113] However, the two philosophers hold the same notion of what the final revelation amounts to, that is, philosophical truth expressed in figurative language. It is worth noting in closing that neither al-Fārābī nor Ibn Sīnā set down any limits to the method of *ta'wīl* which their theories of prophecy inevitably presuppose as the path to correct understanding of revelation.[114]

Ghazālī's discussion in *Mishkāt* of the imaginative spirit being imprinted with forms is clearly indebted to the theories of imaginative prophecy described above. However, Ghazālī gives ideas of imaginative prophecy more negative coverage in

---

[110] Ibn Sīnā *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*, ed. Dunya, IV:136, tr. by C. Shams Inati as *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism: Remarks and Admonitions Part Four* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), p. 100.
[111] *Ibid.*, IV:138; tr. Inati, pp. 100-01.
[112] Michael Marmura, "Avicenna's Theory of Prophecy in the Light of Ash'arite Theology" in W.S. McCullough (ed.), *The Seed of Wisdom: essays in honour of T.J. Meek* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 166; see also *idem*, "The Islamic Philosophers' Conception of Islam" in Richard Hovannisian and Spyros Vyronis, Jr., (eds.), *Islam's Understanding of Itself* (Malibu, California: Undena Publications, 1983), p. 98.
[113] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, p. 31. For a longer account of Ibn Sīnā's understanding of *ḥads* see Chapter 7 of this thesis.
[114] Majid Fakhry, "Philosophy and Scripture in the Theology of Averroes" *Mediaeval Studies* 30 (1968), p. 79.

some of his earlier writings. He describes the theory in *Tahāfut*,[115] concluding that it constitutes unnecessary speculation over the process of revelation: "There is no need for any of these things you have mentioned, for there is no proof in this".[116] In *Faḍā'iḥ al-bāṭiniyya wa faḍā'il al-mustaẓhiriyya*, Ghazālī writes of the Ismā'īlī adoption of the philosophers' teaching on prophetic missions, "Some of it can be interpreted in a way we do not reject, and the amount which we reject we have already gone deeply into the way to refute the Philosophers regarding it".[117] "The amount which we reject" is presumably a reference to Ghazālī's remarks in *Tahāfut*[118] Similarly, in *Iqtiṣād*, Ghazālī writes of the philosophers:

> They claim that if a prophet ranks high in prophecy, the purity of his soul leads to his seeing, in his state of consciousness, marvellous forms (*ṣuwar 'ajība*) and he hears from them harmonious sounds which he learns by heart while those around him hear and see nothing. By [these marvellous forms] they mean the vision of the angels and the hearing of the Qur'an from them. But [a prophet] who does not rank high in prophecy sees [these forms] only in [his] sleep. This is the gist of the ways of error (*tafṣīl madhāhib al-ḍalāl*).[119]

From these texts, it appears that Ghazālī has little sympathy for the philosophers' conception of how prophecy is revealed.

Yet such dismissals do not represent the full story of Ghazālī's reactions to theories of imaginative prophecy. Ghazālī hints at a more positive treatment of the idea in *Kitāb 'Aja'ib al-Qalb*, Book XXI of *Iḥyā'*. This work, like *Jawāhir*, links revelation and dream vision, such a linkage in Ghazālī often constituting a sign of some influence of the theory of imaginative prophecy:

> Now regarding the unveiling of a thing in sleep by means of an example which needs interpretation, and likewise the appearance of angels to prophets and

---

[115] *Tahāfut*, pp. 158-159.

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

[117] *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 42, tr. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), p. 198.

[118] As noted by Marmura, "Avicenna's Theory of Prophecy in the Light of Ash'arite Theology, p. 176.

[119] *Al-Iqtiṣād fi'l-i'tiqād*, ed. I.A. Çubukçu and H. Atay (Ankara: Nur Matbaasi, 1962), p. 130. Partial English translation by Abdu-r-Rahman Abu Zayd as *Al-Ghazali on Divine Predicates* (Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1970), p. 66, from which the above translation is taken, with alteration.

saints in different forms, these are among the secrets of the wonders of the heart.[120]

There are hints here of Ghazālī regarding these issues as needing more discussion, but he chooses to evade revealing his understanding of the process of revelation. In *Mishkāt,* however, as shown above, there is no such reticence at explaining in a positive light the workings of prophecy in relation to the imagination, in contrast to the more negative remarks found in *Tahāfut, Mustaẓhirī* and *Iqtiṣād.* Any overdrawn contrast between Ghazālī and the philosophers on the nature of prophecy, therefore needs to be qualified by the evidence of *Mishkāt,* with its fainter echoes in *'Aja'ib al-Qalb* and *Jawāhir.* Pawan Ahmad's recent thesis, which includes an examination of revelation as a theological concept in al-Fārābī and Ghazālī, frequently relies on positing a stark contrast between Ghazālī as a representative of traditional Islam, and the less orthodox al-Fārābī. For example, Pawan Ahmad states that, "Al-Ghazālī objected to the philosophers' concept of how the prophet receives revelation".[121] Making no mention of *Mishkāt,* the thesis simplifies Ghazālī's range of responses to the philosophers.

Ghazālī is well-known for opposing both the philosophers and the Ismā'īlīs. Ironically, however, in *Mishkāt* he embraces the very theories - concerning what prophecy is and how the text of the Qur'an should therefore be understood - which helped to shape these opponents' ideas. As Marmura notes, the philosophers' theories on scriptural interpretation gave "an intellectual sanction" to the Ismā'īlīs' search for esoteric meanings. Furthermore, "It is the theory of metaphorical interpretation that has allowed the philosophers to uphold three doctrines which, for al-Ghazālī, are utterly irreligious".[122] In the light of these considerations it is all the more striking that

---

[120] *Kitāb 'Aja'ib al-Qalb,* in *Iḥyā'* III: 24; tr. Skellie, p. 99.
[121] Pawan Ahmad, *Epistemology,* p. 81.
[122] Marmura, "Avicenna's Theory of Prophecy", pp. 176, 178. The three doctrines were the resurrection of the body, God's knowledge of particulars and the pre-eternity of the world.

Mishkāt explicitly draws on the notion of the imprinted imagination which underpins the philosophers' stance.

One possible explanation for Ghazālī's apparently ambivalent attitude towards the philosophers' theories of prophecy is provided by the historical context. Doctrinal conflict over the issue of scriptural interpretation was one battleground in the political conflict between Sunnism and Shi'ism.[123] So perhaps when Ghazālī is more positive towards the philosophers' ideas it is not only because of changes in his own views, but also because he is writing more personally in *Mishkāt*, without having to work within the constraints imposed by the need to launch a doctrinal attack for political reasons. However, without more decisive evidence this view remains speculation.

To anticipate the discussion of Chapter 7, it is worth noting in closing that since Ghazālī in *Mishkāt* draws on the work of Ibn Sīnā in formulating his own hermeneutical theories, it is not surprising that his actual interpretation of the Light Verse is likewise strongly influenced by his predecessor.

Thus far three texts with a common assumption about the dual nature of Qur'anic texts have been examined. Attention can now be paid to a further account of *ta'wīl* by Ghazālī which shows both similarities with these three texts, but also striking differences.

2.6 *KITĀB QAWĀ'ID AL-'AQĀ'ID*

This section will expound and analyse Ghazālī's views on *ta'wīl* found in the second book of *Iḥyā'*. Heer, in his discussion of Ghazālī's theory of esoteric interpretation, refers to this section of *Qawā'id* as an example of Ghazālī's classification of the secrets which he believes can be found in Qur'anic texts.[124]

---

[123] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[124] Heer, "Esoteric Exegesis", p. 256, n. 61.

Heer's article focusses principally on Ghazālī's Sufi-influenced ideas, and draws extensively on *Kitāb Ādāb tilāwat al-Qur'ān*. As a result, whether intentionally or not, Heer's reference implies that the passage fits into Ghazālī's Sufi framework of ideas as outlined in the discussion of the first three texts analysed in the present chapter. The following account examines to what extent such a fit can be achieved.

2.6.1 Preliminary Discussion of the Text

Authenticity and Date

In relation to the authenticity and date of *Qawā'id*, the comments made in the previous chapter regarding *Kitāb Ādāb tilāwat al-Qur'ān* apply; that is, the authenticity of *Qawā'id* has never been questioned, and the dating of individual books of *Iḥyā'* is not possible on the basis of the evidence available.

Purpose

Ghazālī does not provide a statement of the overall purpose of the book, but it is unified by its concern with matters of correct belief. Within that unity, the four different sections of the text each have a separate aim. The first is an exposition of the *shahāda*, 'There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his messenger' for young people. This "should be presented to the child in his early years in order that he may commit it to memory".[125] The second section discusses the different stages of belief, which only need to be mentioned to someone who, "should wish to be one of the travellers along the path of the hereafter", as opposed to the person who aims simply to know the basics of the faith.[126] At the close of this section, Ghazālī states, "Our aim was only to make clear that the esoteric and exoteric (*bāṭin* and *ẓāhir*) may be in

[125] *Qawā'id*, p. 93/13.
[126] *Ibid.*, p. 94/15.

harmony (*muwāfaqa*) with one another and that no disagreement exists between them".[127] Ghazālī's discussion in pursuit of this aim forms the focus of the present chapter.

Ghazālī also states at the close of the second section that his first section is not only for children. It should also prove sufficient for the common people, but if their simple belief is unsettled by heresies, then the third section of *Qawā'id, risālat al-qudsiyya,* offers, "a brief and undetailed outline of the obvious proofs".[128] This *risāla* can also help if a heresy becomes common, and there is a danger of children being affected. "There would be no harm in teaching them the equivalent of what we have included in the book entitled *al-risāla al-qudsiyya* as a means for overcoming the influence of the disputations of innovators".[129] The fourth section of *Qawā'id* discusses whether *islām* (submission) is identical with *īmān* (belief). Thus the discussion of the *bāṭin* and the *ẓāhir* analysed in the present chapter is set in the context of other sections which, while not closely related to it, are all concerned with the general issue of discerning what constitutes right belief.

Summary

The first of the four chapters of *Qawā'id* presents Ghazālī's exposition of the *shahāda*, or confession of faith. This exposition discusses God's attributes and, in relation to the affirmation, "Muhammad is his messenger", concentrates on the need to affirm this status of Muhammad on the Last Day. The second section addresses two related issues. One is the debate over the validity of *kalām*, in which Ghazālī adopts a middle position after outlining its merits and demerits. He emphasises that *kalām* cannot reveal the most important realities about God, and that therefore the pursuit of

---

[127] *Ibid.*, p. 104/53.
[128] *Ibid.*, p. 104/53.
[129] *Ibid.*, p. 97/30.

God's light of revelation through inner struggle is necessary. The second concern of the section follows from this. Is there a contradiction between the law and an understanding of Islam which acknowledges a reality deeper than pursuit of the law? Ghazālī seeks to show that no such contradiction exists. The third section of *Qawā'id al-'aqa'id* comprises Ghazālī's *risālat al-qudsiyya* or *Jerusalem Epistle*. It discusses knowledge of God's essence, attributes and works, and which matters should be accepted on authority. In the fourth and final chapter Ghazālī discusses the relationship between *islām* and *īmān*. Here he explores aspects of the distinction between inner acceptance (*īmān*) and an outer submission which may or may not encompass that inner conviction.

2.6.2 Hermeneutical Theory

2.6.2.1 Hermeneutics and Cosmology

In contrast to the texts examined in the previous chapter, Ghazālī does not in *Qawā'id* draw on a bi-partite cosmological scheme in support of his hermeneutical theories. The distinction between the visible and spiritual realms does occur once, using the vocabulary of *'ālam al-mulk* as opposed to *'ālam al-malakūt*, *'ālam al-shahāda* or *'ālam al-ghayb*.[130] However, rather than using this distinction to justify his hermeneutical approach, Ghazālī employs it in discussing the link between good deeds and the spiritual state of the person who performs them. Good works increase the belief of the doer even though the body belongs to the visible world while the heart, or spiritual centre of the individual, belongs to the invisible world. It is only because of the interdependence of the two worlds that the body can influence the heart or spiritual centre. It is likely that Ghazālī does not rely on his cosmological

[130] *Ibid.*, p. 120/119.

framework in his hermeneutical discussion for the same reasons mentioned in relation to *Kitāb Ādāb Tilāwat al-Qur'ān*. That is, Ghazālī wishes to take a more subtle approach, in order to lead his reader towards embracing his conclusions without emphasising assumptions which such a reader may not yet accept.

2.6.2.2 *Ta'wīl* in *Qawā'id*

Ghazālī's argument for the complementarity of exoteric and esoteric interpretations constitutes approximately half of the second section of *Qawā'id*. There are several indicators that Ghazālī presents his discussion of *ta'wīl* in *Qawā'id* in the context of Sufi influence. The first of these, albeit not decisive in itself, is the Sufi overtones of the language in which relevant passages are couched. Early in *Qawā'id* Ghazālī writes of the believer:

> If he should wish to be one of the travellers along the path of the hereafter and be fortunate therein, so that he could continue to act (according to his knowledge), holding fast to piety, "restraining his soul from lust," and practising self-discipline and inner struggle (*mujāhada*), there would be opened for him gates of guidance which would reveal to him the realities of this doctrine through a divine light cast into his heart by inner struggle... This is, in truth, the precious pearl which is the ultimate goal of the belief of the saints and the favourites of God... The revelation of this secret, nay these secrets, has different stages, depending upon the degree of inner struggle and upon the degree in which the inner self is clean and free of things other than God, as well as upon the obtaining of guidance by means of the light of certainty (*yaqīn*).[131]

Later, in introducing his discussion of *ta'wīl*, Ghazālī uses similar language:

> As to dispelling doubts, revealing truths, knowing things as they really are, and comprehending the mysteries (*asrār*) which the words of this creed signify, there is no way to attain any of them except through inner struggle and the subduing of passions, through seeking God wholeheartedly... If you should say that this discourse implies that these sciences have external as well as internal meanings (*ẓawāhir wa asrār*)... then you should know that the division of these sciences into hidden and obvious is not denied by anyone of any insight (*baṣīra*).[132]

---

[131] *Ibid.*, pp. 94/15-16

[132] *Ibid.*, p. 99/35.

In addition to Ghazālī's language at this point, more Sufi associations are imparted by his provision of a selection of texts from both the Qur'an, and, principally, from the Hadith, in support of his contention that the Law does indeed possess both evident and hidden aspects. He first quotes the same words of Muhammad which he also employs in *Kitāb Ādāb Tilāwat al-Qur'ān*, "Verily there is to the Qur'an an apparent meaning and an inner meaning, a scope and a point (*ẓāhir wa bāṭin wa ḥadd wa maṭla'*)".[133] Ghazālī also quotes the verse, "*As for these similitudes (amthāl) we coin them for mankind, but none will grasp their meaning save the wise*" (Q29:43). He then presents eight hadiths which elaborate the related themes of the abundance of knowledge, the fact that people understand at different levels, and, most importantly, that some of this knowledge is secret and therefore inappropriate for general disclosure. For example, Ghazālī relates the words of Ibn 'Abbās, who, when asked about Q65:12, said, "Were I to relate its interpretation, you would stone me".[134]

A further feature increasing the Sufi assocations of the discussion is Ghazālī's inclusion of three sayings on the theme of secret knowledge. One is from the Sufi Sahl al-Tustarī, stating that, "The learned man (*'ālim*) possesses three kinds of knowledge: exoteric (*ẓāhir*) which he imparts to the followers of exoteric knowledge; esoteric (*bāṭin*) which he cannot reveal except to his own people; and finally a knowledge which lies between him and his God and which he cannot reveal to anyone".[135] The second saying is from an unnamed *'ārif*, and reads, "To divulge the secret of Lordship (*rubūbiyya*) is unbelief".[136] The third statement is entirely unattributed, and runs, "Lordship has a secret, if revealed, prophecy will become

---

[133] *Ibid.*, p. 99/36; cf. *Ādāb tilāwat*, p. 290/87.

[134] *Qawā'id*, p. 99/36. The verse reads, "*Allah it is Who hath created seven heavens, and of the earth the like thereof. The commandment cometh down among them slowly*".

[135] *Ibid.*, p. 99/37. On Sahl al-Tustarī, see Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Qur'anic Hermeneutics of the Sufi Sahl at-Tustarī* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980).

[136] *Qawā'id*, p. 99/37.

obsolete; prophecy has a secret, if divulged, knowledge will become useless; and the learned men of God have a secret, if disclosed, the law will become of no force".[137] Ghazālī hastens to make clear that he takes this saying to mean that prophecy's becoming obsolete would only apply to the feeble-minded, who cannot understand and would thus fall into confusion. Ghazālī twice states that his aim is to make clear that there is no contradiction between exoteric and esoteric interpretations. This is also his stated aim in his discussion in *Ādāb tilāwat*.[138] Ghazālī's use of the first hadith mentioned, concerning the Qur'an, also found in *Ādāb tilāwat*, and the reference to Sahl al-Tustarī, make particularly clear that he places his subsequent discussion of five types of secrets in a Sufi framework. All this evidence suggests that Ghazālī intends his discussion of interpretation to be understood in a Sufi context.

Ghazālī introduces discussion of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* with the question of an imagined opponent. This person, concerned that verses and traditions may be subject to several interpretations (*ta'wīlāt*), wants to know how the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* differ. On the one hand, he claims, if they are contradictory, this destroys the Law, but, by contrast, if they are not contradictory, then there is no difference between them, and no hidden meaning exists.[139] Ghazālī replies that, "this question raises a grave issue" which he only addresses to avoid stirring up doubt, and to prevent the spread of the false idea that there is any contradiction between the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin*, a situation which could undermine the law.

Ghazālī introduces his rebuttal of the view that any contradiction exists between the *bāṭin* and the *ẓāhir* with the remark that "the secrets whose comprehension is peculiar to the favourites of God (*al-muqarrabūn*)" can be divided

---

[137] *Ibid.*

[138] *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9 and p. 53; cf. *Ādāb Tilāwat*, p. 295/104.

[139] *Qawā'id*, pp. 100/37-8.

into five categories.[140] Before examining this classification in detail it can be briefly summarised. The first category comprises matters which are "subtle (*daqīq*) and beyond the comprehension of most minds". The second is formed of those things which are intelligible (*mafhūm*), but whose mention can be harmful to most people. The third category contains matters which are intelligible, and not harmful, but which are usually expressed through metaphor or allegory (*al-isti'āra wa'l-ramz*) in order to make a deeper impression. The fourth consists of things which can be understood in a general way, and yield their particulars after "investigation and experimentation (*taḥqīq wa'l-dhawq*)". The fifth category comprises the non-literal use of language (*yu'abbaru bi-lisān al-maqāl 'an lisān al-ḥāl*). The following discussion will demonstrate that Ghazālī's third and fifth categories of the relationship of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* do not conform to the complementarity model which Ghazālī's introductory remarks lead the reader to expect. Instead these two categories oppose the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*, discussing how to determine when the *ẓāhir* must be set aside.

Ghazālī explains the first category of secrets, matters beyond the comprehension of most minds, as wisdom revealed to the elite, that is, to Muhammad and probably some saints and learned men. This knowledge, which should not be shared with those unable to understand it, encompasses attributes of God which bear no resemblance to human attributes. This total non-resemblance means that such attributes could not be understood, unlike other attributes such as knowledge and power, which have human analogues enabling some measure of comprehension, albeit indirect and inadequate. It is perhaps not surprising that Ghazālī does not mention the Qur'an explicitly in his discussion of the first category, since he is emphasising what in his view can be known only to a few. However, Ghazālī also includes in this first

---

[140] *Ibid.*, p. 100/39. The five categories, along with different groups' approaches to *ta'wīl*, are outlined on pp. 100-103/39-52.

category two further examples. The first is the spirit (*al-rūḥ*)[141], presumably an indirect reference to Q17:85, "*The Spirit is by command of my Lord*", a verse sometimes quoted by Ghazālī to illustrate the mystery of the divine. The other example is the hadith concerning seventy veils of light veiling the majesty of God's face. This hadith, as previously noted, also occurs in *Mishkāt*, where, unlike in references in *Iḥyā'*, it also includes reference to veils of darkness.[142]

As an example of the second category, those things which are intelligible but harmful to most people, Ghazālī discusses certain decrees of God. His principal example is knowledge of when the day of resurrection is to occur. This, he says, would cause moral and spiritual laxity if it were said to be far distant, and panic, leading to the breakdown of society, if it were heard to be imminent.[143] Apart from this example Ghazālī offers analogies, such as the harm that would arise from the discussion amongst the majority of people of the fact that unbelief, adultery, sin and evil exist by God's decree. If we know this to be true, he argues, then we must admit the likelihood of other truths which are harmful to some. As with the first category, Ghazālī chooses not to provide Qur'anic examples illustrating this second category of secrets.

These first two categories are unsurprising as examples of what Ghazālī might consider to be secret knowledge. His third category, however, presents something of an anomaly. It consists of things expressed through metaphor or allegory (*al-istiʿāra wa'l-ramz*) so as to create a deeper impression.[144] Ghazālī's exposition of this category fits less neatly into a discussion of 'secret knowlege', since the material

---

[141] *Ibid.*, p. 101/41

[142] For hadith reference, see n. 76, above. Watt, "Forgery? ", p. 13, n. 1, draws attention to this difference between *Iḥyā'* and *Mishkāt*.

[143] *Qawāʿid*, p. 101/42.

[144] *Ibid.*, p. 101/43.

discussed in the third category is hardly mystical or secret, as a brief analysis will demonstrate.

Ghazālī's first example is of a person who argues for the futility of spreading knowledge among listeners incapable of understanding it. Such a person, rather than arguing explicitly, states that he has seen someone place pearls round pigs' necks. Ghazālī suggests that such a metaphorical statement would have the effect of separating ordinary listeners from those who, realising the literal understanding to be untrue, would perceive the "inner or esoteric meaning" (*al-sirr wa'l-bāṭin*).[145] Ghazālī then adds other similar examples, including two statements of Muhammad. The first is, "Verily the mosque will shrink when people spit on its courtyard just as the piece of skin will shrink when it is placed over the fire".[146] This is followed by the Prophet's question, "Is he who raises his head from prostration before the imam not afraid that God will transform his head into that of a donkey?"[147] Ghazālī interprets the reference to spitting in the first of these examples as dishonouring the mosque courtyard, while the reference to the head of a donkey indicates the foolishness of the Muslim who raises his head prior to the imam. These are metaphors which do not require Sufi insights for their interpretation. The fact that Ghazālī is not in fact arguing for the complementarity of exoteric and esoteric is confirmed when he states of the second hadith, "This, however, will never take place literally but only metaphorically". The opposition, rather than complementarity, of the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* is highlighted by Ghazālī's statement that determining whether there are "inner meanings which differ from the outer significations" (*al-sirr 'alā khalāf al-ẓāhir*), depends on rational (*'aqlī*) or legal (*sharī'ī*) evidence.[148]

---

[145] *Ibid.*, p. 101/43.
[146] *Ibid.*, pp. 101/43-4; the hadith is unidentified.
[147] *Ibid.*, p. 102/44; cf. al-Tirmidhī, II: 48.
[148] *Ibid.*, p. 102/44.

By rational evidence for an inner interpretation Ghazālī means evidence that the outer meaning appears to be impossible on rational grounds, and that a different meaning must therefore be intended. Such an approach represents the standard Ash'arite stance: "The Qur'ān is to be understood literally, and it is not for us to understand it in any other way, except by proof".[149] Such a view forms a central tenet of *Fayṣal*, the text forming the subject of the next chapter. Ghazālī provides a Qur'anic example for such rational evidence in discussing the verse, "*And our word unto a thing, when We intend it, is only that We say unto it: Be!, and it is*" (16:40):

> The outward meaning of this verse is not possible because if the saying of God 'Be' was addressed to the thing before that thing came into existence, then it would simply be an impossibility since the non-existent does not understand address and therefore cannot obey. And if it was addressed to the thing after the thing has come into existence, then it would be superfluous, since the thing is already in existence and does not need to be brought into being. But whereas this metaphor (*kināya*) has been more impressive upon the minds in conveying the idea of the greatest power, recourse has been made to it.[150]

Here Ghazālī seems to have laid aside his Sufi concerns for secret knowledge. The same type of reasoning occurs elsewhere in *Qawā'id*, where Ghazālī is not discussing his five categories of secrets. For example, in discussing the controversy over whether the reference to seeing God in Paradise should be taken literally, Ghazālī affirms that it should, on the grounds that this does not lead to anything impossible.[151] Similarly, in affirming that Paradise and Hell are created, he again argues for a literal interpretation of a verse, since such an interpretation does not lead to an impossibility.[152] In both of these cases he raises the question of whether the apparent meaning of the verse should be jettisoned, although, in contrast to his first illustration

---

[149] Al-Ash'arī, *Al-Ibāna 'an Uṣūl al-Diyāna* (Cairo: Idārat al-Ṭabā'at al-Munirīyya, 1348), p. 14, tr. W.C. Klein, *Al-Ibānah 'An Uṣūl Ad-Diyānah* (New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Series, vol. 19, 1940), p. 57.

[150] *Qawā'id*, p. 102/45.

[151] *Ibid*, p. 107/69. See 75: 22-23, "*That day will faces be resplendent, looking toward their Lord*".

[152] *Ibid*, p. 114/94. The verse (Q3:133) reads, "*And vie one with another for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Paradise as wide as are the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who ward off (evil)*".

of the third category, in these examples he considers that the apparent meaning should be retained. So the rational evidence for Ghazālī's third category solves the problem of conflict between the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* by shedding the *ẓāhir* altogether. This is an approach rooted in linguistic, contextual and logical considerations, with little connection to Sufi notions of a complementary inner meaning. This approach will be prominent in the discussions of Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

The same remoteness from Sufi concerns holds true for the examples which Ghazālī provides of legal evidence for his third category of secrets. Such evidence is relevant in cases when, although the *ẓāhir* is possible, it is narrated that "a meaning other than the outward (*ghayr al-ẓāhir*) was intended".[153] The verse Ghazālī chooses to illustrate this is Q13:17, "*He sendeth down water from the sky, so that valleys flow according to their measure, and the flood beareth on its surface swelling foam*". Ghazālī does not cite any authorities in support of his interpretation of this verse, as might be expected in an argument based on legal evidence. Instead he states:

> Here the word water stands for the Qur'an while the torrents represent the hearts. Some of the hearts receive and hold much; others receive much and hold nothing at all. The foam represents unbelief and hypocrisy, which although it rises to and floats upon the surface of the water, does not last; but guidance which benefits men endures.[154]

As previously noted in relation to *Jawāhir*, this interpretation appears to be based on that of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'.[155] The interpretation of Q13:17 is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis, which focusses on actual Qur'anic interpetations, since Ghazālī uses the same interpretation, with one small alteration, in *Jawāhir*. However, while Ghazālī interprets the foam as unbelief and hypocrisy, for the Ikhwān it represents the outer meaning of the Qur'an. This outer meaning will eventually disappear, leaving the *bāṭin* of the verse as its lasting meaning. It is no surprise that

---

[153] *Ibid.*, p. 102/45.

[154] *Ibid.*, p. 102/46. In the first line of this quotation, Faris has 'which', presumably a misprint for 'while'.

[155] See above, pp. 45-46.

Ghazali refrains from drawing such a conclusion; what is more surprising is that Ghazālī borrows ideas from the Ikhwān as his 'legal' evidence at all.[156]

Having presented legal sanction for latitude in interpretation, Ghazālī goes on to limit metaphorical interpretation if it involves matters relating to the hereafter. He forbids metaphorical interpretation of the balance and the bridge, stating that such interpretation, "is innovation because it was not handed down by tradition, especially since its literal and outward interpretation is not impossible."[157] The reference to the question of the impossibility of an outward meaning again emphasises that Ghazālī appears not to be employing his Sufi framework at this point.

Ghazālī's fourth category of secrets returns us to the model of the complementarity of the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* They are likened to general and more particular knowledge of an object, where the second stage is gained through "investigation and experience" (*taḥqīq wa'l-dhawq*).[158] Generalised knowledge is akin to the husks (*qishr*) while the particular is the pith (*lubab*), terms found frequently in *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*[159] In sum, Ghazālī views the esoteric emphatically as the completion (*istikmāl*) of the exoteric.[160] Ghazālī does not provide a Qur'anic example of this category, but it is not difficult to relate his terminology to that of *Ādāb Tilāwat* and *Jawāhir*. However, the concept of general and more particular knowledge being two ways of interpreting a Qur'anic verse raises interesting questions about how Ghazālī would apply this category in actual interpretations. Chapter 5 of this thesis shows Ghazālī providing one set of interpretations based on this distinction of husks and pith.

---

[156] Cf. also Landolt, "Some Notes", p. 23 and *passim* on Ghazālī's probable borrowing from *Risāla* 42 in *Mishkāt*, as noted in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

[157] *Qawā'id*, p. 102/46.

[158] *Ibid.*, substituting "experience" for Faris' "experimentation".

[159] See above, Chapter 2.

[160] *Qawā'id*, pp. 102/46-7. Ghazālī repeats the point in his closing sentence of the section, p. 102/47.

Ghazālī's discussion of the fifth category resembles his treatment of the third since it describes the opposition rather than complementarity of the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*. He begins by explaining that this category covers cases, "where concrete words are used figuratively (*yu'abburu bi-lisān al-maqāl 'an lisān al-ḥāl*)".[161] He then offers a series of examples which in fact demonstrate the opposition of inner and outer interpretations, despite these examples carrying a veneer of Sufi language. This veneer is also evident in his remark, even before giving any illustrations, that, "he who discerns realities will comprehend the secret it contains" (*al-baṣīr bi'l-ḥaqā'iq yadruku al-sirr*).[162]

Ghazālī gives two Qur'anic examples of the fifth category, in both cases contrasting the person who interprets the text literally, "the stupid one" (*al-balīd*), with the person who realises the need for figurative interpretation, or "he who has insight" (*al-baṣīr*).[163] The first example reads, " *Then turned He to the Heaven, when it was smoke, and said unto it and unto the Earth: Come both of you, willingly or loth. They said: 'We come obedient'*" (Q41:11). It is interesting to note in passing that, in relation to this verse, Ghazālī would have to classify al-Ash'arī as one of the "stupid" ones, since his famous predecessor takes literally the phrase, ' *We come obedient*'.[164] The second verse reads, " *There is not a thing but hymneth his praise*" (Q17:44). Ghazālī rejects literal interpretations of both of these verses, which would predicate of inanimate objects the ability to speak. Instead, for Ghazālī, the first verse quoted conveys the fact that Heaven and Earth are subject to the divine will, the second, that created objects praise God by their very existence.

---

[161] *Ibid*., p. 102/47.
[162] *Ibid*.
[163] *Ibid*., p. 103/48.
[164] Al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb al-Lumā'*, in *The Theology of al-Ash'arī*, ed. and tr. R.J. McCarthy (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953), p. 17 (Arabic text), p. 22 (Engl. tr.). McCarthy expresses puzzlement over why al-Ash'arī adopts this stance.

Ghazālī offers one further illustration of his fifth category. This is the expression that a well-made object testifies to its maker's skill. Ghazālī points out that this does not refer to actual speech on the part of the object, and he uses this to illustrate the way in which creation testifies to the power of God. He adds:

> Such a witness is comprehended by those who have insight (*al-baṣā'ir*), not those who stand still and venture not beyond externals. For this reason God said, "*But ye understand not their praise*" (Q17:44).[165]

Yet realising that objects do not literally speak scarcely requires Sufi insight. Ghazālī partly obcures the banality of this point by adding two statements which, while true, refer to limited numbers of people. While "the feeble minded" (*al-qāṣirūn*) do not understand this point about non-literal testimony, it is only understood imperfectly even by "the favourites of God" (*al-muqarrabūn*) and "the versatile learned men" (*al-'ulamā' al-rāsikhūn*).[166] Ghazālī avoids making the more obvious comment that most believers in a creator God could infer that inanimate objects do not speak without first having to seek mystical insight.

So Ghazālī's five categories of "the secrets whose comprehension is peculiar to the favourites of God"[167] in fact reveal quite different ways of approaching the relationship of the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*. Furthermore, similarly elusive evidence is provided in his subsequent discussion of *ta'wīl* according to different groups of Muslim thinkers.[168] Ghazālī mentions in turn those who are excessive (*musrif*) in interpreting, staunch literalists, such as Ḥanbalites, thirdly followers of the middle way - Ash'arites- and also the Mu'tazilites and the philosophers.

Ghazālī terms excessive (*musrif*) those who would dispense with the apparent meaning of verses and events related to the Last Day. He does not name any particular groups or schools of thought here, but rejects the general approach, quoting verses

---

[165] *Qawā'id*, p. 103/49.
[166] *Ibid.*
[167] *Ibid.*, p. 100/39.
[168] *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104/49-52.

which in his view should be taken literally.[169] "*Hands speak unto us and their feet bear witness*" (Q36:65) and "*And they say unto their skins: Why testify ye against us? They say: Allah hath given us speech Who giveth speech to all things*" (Q41:21). Likewise the apparent meaning of references to the existence of Munkār and Nakīr, the angels who carry out the interrogation in the grave, the balance, the bridge and the day of judgment itself should all be accepted literally.

Secondly, Ghazālī discusses Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his followers, those most critical of *ta'wīl*.[170] He comments that Ibn Ḥanbal's prohibition was for the common good:

> Whenever it [*ta'wīl*] is allowed matters become worse and go out of control, overstepping the limits of moderation. Things which go beyond the limits of moderation are beyond control.[171]

Ghazālī does not attempt to integrate this statement into his wider discussion of *ta'wīl*. Makdisi assumes that Ghazālī endorses Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's stance in principle, not simply as a pragmatic check on potential error among the majority. He remarks that, "Ghazzālī then approves this attitude of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, saying that the conduct of the pious Fathers of Islam attests to its being right".[172] How Makdisi would explain the presence of Ghazālī's preceding discussion of five categories of secrets is unclear. Furthermore, three statements from *Qawā'id* suggest that Ghazālī approves of this prohibition of *ta'wīl* on pragmatic grounds, as a check on false belief spreading among the masses, rather than because he agrees entirely with Ibn Ḥanbal.

The first factor weighing against Makdisi's reading is the following statement by Ghazālī, shortly after his alleged approval of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal:

---

[169] *Ibid.*, p. 103/50 for discussion of extremists.
[170] *Ibid.*, pp. 103/50-1.
[171] *Ibid.*, p. 103/51.
[172] G. Makdisi, "The Non-Ash'arite Shafi'ism of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī" *REI* 54 (1986), p. 250. The same point occurs in *idem*, "Al-Ghazâlî, disciple de Shâfi'î en droit et en théologie" in *Ghazâlî: La raison et la miracle* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1987), p. 49.

> The true middle-road between the complete allegorism and the rigidity (*jumūd*) of the Ḥanbalites is subtle and obscure. It is found only by those who enjoy divine guidance and comprehend things by the aid of divine light (*nūr ilāhī*), not by listening (*samā'*). Then when the mysteries of things are revealed by them, so that they see them as they are, they go back to [the Qur'an] and the traditions and their wording; whatever agrees with what they see with the light of certainty they affirm, and whatever disagrees with it they interpret allegorically (*awwalūhu*).[173]

This passage makes clear that the Ḥanbalite attitude to *ta'wīl* is hardly Ghazālī's own position. Indeed, Landolt argues that this reliance on divinely inspired *ta'wīl* whenever the light of certitude appears to disagree with the authoritative texts goes well beyond the 'orthodox' Sufism with which Ghazālī is usually identified. Landolt maintains that it is closer to Shī'ism, except that the source of guidance is subjective perception rather than the authority of the imam.[174] Whether or not this is the case, Ghazālī deserves mention here for provoking such opposite reactions from Makdisi and Landolt in the space of a few lines.

Secondly, immediately following the comment quoted above, Ghazālī states, after enumerating the different positions on *ta'wīl*:

> But he who bases his knowledge of these things on tradition (*sam'*) will thereby fail to secure a firm foothold or gain a well-defined position therein. Such a man who confines himself to tradition would do better to follow the position of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal".[175]

This too is hardly resounding affirmation of the Ḥanbalite position; it more closely resembles Ghazālī's familiar view that *ta'wīl*, while valuable, is to be kept from the masses. In the context of the reference to the rigidity (*jumūd*) of the Ḥanbalites, already quoted , it is clear that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's is a fallback position for Ghazālī, approved because it limits the spread of error.

---

[173] *Qawā'id*, p. 104/52.
[174] Landolt, "Some Notes", p. 37.
[175] *Qawā'id*, p. 104/52, with alteration.

The third passage which calls into question Makdisi's reading of *Qawā'id* is Ghazālī's reference to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's forbidding *ta'wīl* of all but three hadiths.[176] This is significant because the same point, with the same hadiths quoted, is made in *Fayṣal*.[177] In that work, however, Ghazālī's point is that *even* the Ḥanbalite position requires some use of *ta'wīl*, implying that the Ḥanbalite opposition to *ta'wīl* in principle has to yield to unavoidable evidence in practice. Makdisi makes no mention of *Fayṣal*, but this work undermines his understanding of Ghazālī's attitude in *Qawā'id* by providing a plausible key with which to interpret the same statement in *Qawā'id*. It thus seems clear that the one position which Ghazālī is definitely not endorsing in his discussion is Ḥanbalite rigidity.

Following his discussion of the Ḥanbalite position, Ghazālī turns to his third group, the Ash'arites. He describes them as occupiers of a middle position (*iqtiṣād*), allowing *ta'wīl* concerning divine attributes but not in relation to the Last Day.[178] Although Ghazālī uses the same term, *iqtiṣād*, to describe this middle position and his own statement about the way which is "subtle and difficult", quoted above, whether Ghazālī equates his own statement concerning the light of certainty with the Ash'arite position is an open question. In other words, does Ghazālī present a range of groups, from which he chooses one, the Ash'arites, or does he instead endorse none of them, preferring to hint at, though not fully explain, his own personal alternative? Both the Ash'arite position and his own statement, quoted above ("whatever agrees with what they see with the light of certainty they affirm, and whatever disagrees with it they interpret (*awwalūhu*)", involve departing from the *ẓāhir* where this seems essential. However, the phrase "light of certainty" would not seem to describe the rational search

---

[176] *Ibid.*, p. 103/50. The hadiths, which are unidentified, read: "The Black Stone is the right hand of God in the earth"; "The heart of the believer lies between two of the fingers of the Merciful"; and "Verily I shall find the soul of the Merciful from the direction of al-Yaman".

[177] *Fayṣal*, pp. 16-17/155-156.

[178] Debate has recently arisen over how Ash'arite Ghazālī's views really were, an issue to be discussed in the next chapter.

for *burhān* or decisive proof which is needed according to al-Ash'arī before a departure from the *ẓāhir* is regarded as legitimate.[179] Yet caution is needed in interpreting Ghazālī's phraseology, since he sometimes uses language implying Sufi associations in the context of his non-Sufi writing. Once again the best available option is to admit that Ghazālī does not reveal enough to resolve the issue.

After the Ash'arites, Ghazālī mentions the Mu'tazilites and the philosophers. The Mu'tazilites, while interpreting figuratively elements of the Last Day and other aspects of belief, retain literal understanding of the resurrection of the body, the pleasures of Paradise and the torments of Hell. The philosophers, however, go furthest in denying the *ẓāhir*; and rejecting the literal understanding of both bodily resurrection and the experiences of Paradise and Hell. Ghazālī therefore labels the philosophers extremists.[180]

Ghazālī's account of some of the most important groups in Islamic thought and their distinctive positions makes reference, albeit extremely briefly, to the great theological debates of the preceding centuries of Islam. These debates occurred without any reference to Sufi assumptions. Ghazālī's discussion of these groups' stances in relation to *ta'wīl* is thus based on quite different presuppositions from his argument for the complementarity of exoteric and esoteric interpretations, which, as shown earlier, is set in a framework with definite Sufi associations. In short, while his five categories ostensibly relate to Sufism, his discussion of other groups does not, with the possible exception of the enigmatic statement of his own view. Again, as in *Ādāb tilāwat*, Ghazālī weaves together Sufi and non-Sufi material to create a complex pattern.

---

[179] See Chapter 4, below, for more on Ghazālī's view of *burhān*.

[180] The precise nature of Ghazali's disagreement with the philosophers over these and other matters is set out in *Tahāfut*.

The discussion so far raises the obvious question of whether this mingling of approaches is accidental or deliberate, and, if intentional, what its purpose might be. Finding a definitive solution to this dilemma appears unlikely, but Lazarus-Yafeh's remarks on the purpose of *Iḥyā'* as a whole bear repeating. In attempting to explain why "sometimes...the reader would get the impression that a section had been penned by two different authors simultaneously," Lazarus-Yafeh focusses on the question of Ghazālī's intended readership, suggesting that it consists of those who might be open to the Sufi way but have not yet embraced it.[181]

> He tried to arouse their interest in hidden truths in a slow and gradual way, by disclosing a little and concealing twice as much... The *Iḥyā'* is, therefore, to be considered Al-Ghazzali's "map" of gradual education, in which he opens the eyes of worthy readers in many ways.[182]

Is it plausible that Ghazālī deliberately mingled Sufi and non-Sufi discussion of *ta'wīl* in *Qawā'id* with such a purpose in mind?

In favour of such a view, evidence from Book I of *Iḥyā'*, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, shows Ghazālī well able to distinguish two different types of non-literal interpretation, corresponding to non-Sufi and Sufi figurative interpretation. In discussing four categories of praiseworthy sciences, Ghazālī terms the second category the branches (*furū'*).[183] These branches are inferences drawn from the sources (*uṣūl*):

> Not according to the literal meaning (*mawjib al-alfāẓ*) but through meanings (*ma'ānī*) which are adduced by the minds (*'uqūl*)... This last thing may be of two kinds: the first pertains to the activities of this world and is contained in the books of law and entrusted to the lawyers, the learned men of this world; the second pertains to the activities of the hereafter. It is the science of the conditions of the heart...All these [the conditions] are treated in the last part of this book [i.e. the fourth quarter of the *Iḥyā'*].[184]

The distinction of the world (*al-dunyā*) and the hereafter (*al-ākhira*), together with reference to the fourth quarter of the *Iḥyā'*, containing as it does various teachings

---

[181] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, p. 363.
[182] *Ibid.*, p. 373.
[183] *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, *Iḥyā'* I: 17, tr. Nabih Amin Faris, *The Book of Knowledge* (New Delhi: International Islamic Publishers, 1988), pp. 31-32.
[184] *Ibid.*, p. 17, tr. Faris, p. 31.

strongly influenced by Sufism, are indications that Ghazālī is here referring to the same two types of non-literal interpretation which are found intermingled in the extended discussion in *Qawā'id*.

Against such a view, it can be argued that too great a significance should not be given to *Kitāb al-'Ilm* in providing explanatory keys to *Qawā'id* until more is known about the order of composition of the different books, and about how Ghazālī perceived any possible relationship between them. Furthermore, it is possible that Ghazālī is simply inconsistent here, inattentive to the tensions within his own arguments. On the basis of the evidence available it is does not seem possible to determine whether Ghazālī is careless or calculating in his discussion of the five categories of secrets analysed above.

2.7 CONCLUSION

In assessing the first three of the four texts discussed above, certain distinctives in their theories of Qur'an interpretation were identified within a basic unity of approach. *Kitāb Ādāb tilāwat al-Qur'ān* presents an argument for the legitimacy of Sufi exegesis based on hadiths and reason rather than on Sufi assumptions. *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* sets out a detailed scheme for locating exoteric exegesis in the broader scheme of Qur'anic sciences. Ghazālī's well-known love of classifications should, however, caution us against seeking to apply this framework to others of his works, although its general outlines, and particularly the relatively low status granted to exoteric exegesis, are significant. *Mishkāt*, meanwhile, draws on al-Fārābī's and Ibn Sīnā's theory of imaginative prophecy, and also provides the fullest discussion of the cosmological basis for Ghazālī's Sufi approach to the text.

However, despite these distinctives in emphasis and presentation, all three texts affirm that both exoteric and esoteric interpretations are necessary and that esoteric interpretations supplement and build on exoteric exegesis, rather than replacing it. The central hermeneutical message of these texts is that every verse has both an exoteric and an esoteric interpretation. To neglect the latter, according to *Ādāb tilāwat*, constitutes, as noted above, the fourth veil in hindering proper understanding of the Qur'an.[185]

By contrast with these three texts, *Qawā'id* moves deceptively between two models of *ta'wīl*. In one, the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* are complementary, a model which legitimises a form of Sufism which seeks to broaden the understanding of a text without undermining the validity of the *ẓāhir*. The second model presents a different debate concerning the legitimacy of non-apparent meanings displacing rather than complementing apparent meanings. Despite Sufi terminology and reference to Sahl al-Tustarī in *Qawā'id*, Ghazālī only sometimes presents *ta'wīl* as involving Sufi perception of hidden meanings. At other times the term denotes the non-mystical process of determining whether and how a given verse employs non-literal language.

This leads to a further question. Why does Ghazālī appear to understand the term *ta'wīl* in two apparently conflicting ways? One response to this, necessarily tentative, suggests that Ghazālī's frequent shifts between the two senses of *ta'wīl* in *Qawā'id* in fact serve a tactical purpose. The aim is to persuade the reader who is undecided as to the legitimacy of Sufism that Sufi thinking operates in a way compatible with other types of theological reflection and analysis, although the nature of this compatibility Ghazālī leaves deliberately undefined. Such an approach, as would be expected, can then be regarded as similar to that found in *Ādāb Tilāwat*, whereas the understanding of *ta'wīl* in *Jawāhir* and *Mishkāt* is presented by Ghazālī

---

[185] See above, p. 27. Such a view influenced Ibn al-'Arabī; see Goldziher, *Richtungen*, p. 238.

in more overtly Sufi terms. This 'Sufi' understanding is characterised by sometimes surprising influences, but it is at least more consistent. In *Qawā'id*, the surprise lies not so much in Ghazālī's sources as in his mingling of Sufi and non-Sufi discussion.

Returning to the questions raised at the outset of the chapter, Ghazālī does, as Lazarus-Yafeh suggests, use bi-partite cosmology to justify his approach to the Qur'an. The prominence of this cosmological framework varies across the texts discussed, but it is present in the first three texts examined above. Regarding the import of the term 'Sufi influence' there is a strongly intellectual element in Ghazālī's formulations of the role of esoteric exegesis. This is evident in the elaborate arrangement of sciences in *Jawāhir*, and in the influence of the philosophers' theories in *Mishkāt*. This should be no surprise given the imprint of Ibn Sīnā on Ghazālī's work, a figure whose own relationship to Sufism has caused scholarly disagreement.[186]

Sufi influence is not the only factor shaping Ghazālī's understanding of *ta'wīl*, and other influences now require discussion. Chapter 3 begins this process, examining *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa'l-zandaqa*.

[186] See below, Chapter 7.

CHAPTER THREE

FAYṢAL AL-TAFRIQA BAYN AL-ISLĀM WA'L-ZANDAQA

> The lad's father never missed an opportunity of telling the following tale about the sheikh: "Someone said in his presence that according to Al-Ghazzaly in one of his books, the Prophet could not be seen in a dream. Then the sheikh was angry and said, 'I thought better of you, O Ghazzaly! I have seen him with my own eye riding his she-mule.' And when that was mentioned to him on another occasion, he said, 'I thought better of you, O Ghazzaly! I have seen him with my own eyes riding his she-camel'. From this the lad's father concluded that Al-Ghazzaly had made a mistake, and that the generality of mankind were able to see the Prophet in dreams.[1]

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The task of this chapter, in addition to shedding light on the outburst quoted above,[2] is to examine Ghazālī's statements on *ta'wīl* in *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa'l-zandaqa*.[3] The title of this work can be translated as *The Decisive Criterion for Distinguishing between Islam and Godlessness*.[4] *Fayṣal* is unique amongst Ghazālī's works in focussing so consistently on the issue of *ta'wīl*, and this chapter will explore four questions raised by the work. The first asks why Ghazālī embarked on such a particularly sustained treatment of *ta'wīl* as is found in *Fayṣal*. Secondly, how seriously are the details of the hierarchies of existence and interpretation in *Fayṣal* to be taken? Thirdly, what are the implications of Ghazālī's making the decision to resort to *ta'wīl* dependent on an understanding of syllogistic logic? The final question to be raised is whether the term *ta'wīl* always denotes a process of interpretation, as is commonly assumed.

---

[1] Ṭahā Ḥussein, *The Days*, one volume English edition, tr. E.H. Paxton *et al.*, (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1997), p. 57.

[2] See below, p. 89.

[3] *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa'l-zandaqa*, Arabic text printed in Hogga Mustapha, *Le critère décisif de distinction entre L'islam et le manichéisme* (Casablanca: Editions Maghrebines, 1983).

[4] English translations are taken, with alterations, from Richard McCarthy, "Appendix I" in *Freedom and Fulfilment*, pp. 145-74.

Exactly why Ghazālī uses the term *zandaqa* ('godlessness, unbelief') in his title is not clear. Massignon notes that the term is stronger than *kufr*.[5] Lewis remarks that the term had, "a horrible precision", belonging to the administrative rather than simply theoretical sphere, and carried the threat of arrest and punishment.[6] However, although Ghazālī prefers *zandaqa* for his title, instances of the use of *kufr* and its derivatives outnumber those of *zandaqa* in the text by more than ten to one.[7] On one occasion Ghazālī writes concerning the attribution of *kufr*; "Explicit texts have come to us in the case of the Jews and Christians, and attached to them with greater reason are the Brahmans, the Dualists, the *zanādiqa* and the Materialists (*al-dahriyya*)."[8] Ghazālī does not, however, make clear the identity of any group denoted by the use of the term. Elsewhere, in a discussion which features the great majority of derivatives of the root *z-n-d-q*, Ghazālī distinguishes between absolute godlessness (*al-zandaqa al-muṭlaqa*) and godlessness which gives a certain, faulty acknowledgment to the prophets. Discussing the right understanding of the hadith, "My community will split into seventy sects, all of which will be in the Garden except the *zanādiqa*",[9] Ghazālī clearly has the Islamic philosophers in view as representatives of godlessness qualified by faulty acceptance of the prophets.[10] This is evident when Ghazālī states that the hadith cannot mean by *zanādiqa* those who categorically deny the afterlife or God's existence, since such people would not be part of the Muslim community at all. Instead the reference must be to those who affirm the afterlife but interpret its rewards and punishments entirely metaphorically, and also affirm God's existence while

---

[5] See *EI (1)*, "Zindīḳ" vol. VIII, pp. 1228-1229.

[6] Bernard Lewis, "The Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam" *SI* 1 (1953), p. 55.

[7] Mustapha, *Le critère décisif*, pp. 66, 68, notes that derivatives of *kufr* occur 105 times, as opposed to 10 instances of words from the root *z-n-d-q*.

[8] *Fayṣal*, p. 8/150.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 25/161, with alteration. A more famous similar hadith reads, "My community will split into seventy groups, all of which will end in hell except for one" (al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmī ' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV: 135). It is unclear where Ghazālī found inspiration for his much more optimistic variation on this hadith.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25/161.

limiting the scope of His knowledge of particulars. These are two of Ghazālī's three key criticisms of the philosophers in *Tahāfut*.

Elsewhere, however, the term *zandaqa* is simply equated with *kufr*: Defaming the Prophet and the trustworthiness of his transmission of God's revelation is called, "pure unbelief (*kufr*) and *zandaqa*."[11] Now it appears that over time, "The jurists more and more made *zandaḳa* an intellectual rebellion insulting to the Prophet's honour",[12] and, as will be made clear below, the question of valid interpretation is likewise closely linked in *Fayṣal* with the issue of accusing the Prophet of lying. However, whether this trend in the use of the term *zandaqa* influenced Ghazālī's adoption of it for the title of *Fayṣal* is difficult to determine. What is clear is that no specific group is linked to the term in a prominent or consistent way in Ghazālī's text.

Ibn Rushd composed a rejoinder to *Fayṣal* entitled *Faṣl al-Maqāl*.[13] This work is a legal response to *Fayṣal*, examining the basis of *ta'wīl* in such a way as to vindicate the philosophers in reaction to *Fayṣal's* condemnation of them. Ibn Rushd accepts the classifications of levels of interpretation in *Fayṣal*, probably because they can be made to serve the argument he presents.[14] Ibn Rushd also refers to *Fayṣal* in *al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla*.[15] In this work and in *Faṣl* he regards *Fayṣal* as harmful even though, according to Ibn Rushd, it outlines the nature of the relationship between philosophy and religion. Its harm lies in the fact that philosophy should not be discussed with the general public.

---

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 16/155.

[12] *EI(1)*, "Zindīḳ", VIII: 1228.

[13] Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-maqāl wa taqrīr fī mā bayn al-ḥikma wa'l-sharī'a min al-ittiṣāl* ('The Book of Distinction of the Discourse, and a Determination of what there is of Connection between Religion and Philosophy'), ed. G. Hourani (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959); tr. by G. Hourani as *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (London: Luzac & co., 1961), pp. 44-71.

[14] Hourani, *Harmony*, p. 59. For more on Ibn Rushd's acceptance of Ghazālī's classification, see below, sect. 3.3.2.

[15] Ibn Rushd, *al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla*, p. 152, tr. Najjar, *Faith and Reason in Islam*, p. 70.

Goldziher regards Ghazālī generally, and *Fayṣal* in particular, as advocating a laudable tolerance as to matters of heresy and unbelief.[16] Along similar lines, Izutsu pays attention to the work in the context of his discussion of the concept of *takfīr*, that is, condemning someone as an unbeliever (*kāfir*).[17] He highlights the problem which developed of unrestrained condemnation of others by representatives of many different theological positions, and regards *Fayṣal* as, "a typical instance" of attempts to formulate a measured theory of *takfīr*.[18] A contrasting approach is taken by Frank, who sees Ghazālī's agenda as being to defend himself against criticism, rather than to attempt to solve a general problem.[19] The stances of Izutsu and Frank are discussed below. In addition, Bello devotes a chapter to *Fayṣal*, largely describing its theory of *ta'wīl* with little analysis.[20] Kemal concentrates principally on *Fayṣal* in a short article discussing the interaction of logic and figurative language in Ghazālī's thought.[21] Curiously, Kemal does not mention *Fayṣal* by name, and his discussion is in general cursory, although he makes an interesting point, discussed below, in connection with the function of Ghazālī's scheme of levels of existence.[22] Mustapha includes with his French translation a quantitative linguistic analysis of the frequency of key terms. There is also a recent German translation with introduction by Griffel.[23]

---

[16] Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, tr. A. and R. Hamori, (Princeton: PUP, 1981), pp. 165-66.

[17] Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology* (Tokyo: Keio University, 1965), pp. 17-34.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[19] Frank, *Ash'arite School*, pp. 76ff.

[20] Iysa Bello, *The Medieval Islamic Controversy Between Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989), pp. 52-65.

[21] Salim Kemal, "Al-Ghazālī, Metaphor and Logic" in D. Agius and I.R. Netton (eds.), *Across the Mediterranean Frontiers: trade, politics and religion, 650-1450* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), pp. 205-23. Kemal quotes from *Fayṣal* but cites these quotations as coming only from *Freedom and Fulfilment*, McCarthy's translation of a number of Ghazālī's works.

[22] See below, p. 105f.

[23] Mustapha in *Le critère décisif*, pp. 65-94; Frank Griffel's translation, *Über Rechtgläubigkeit und Religiöse Toleranz* (Zürich: Spur Verlag, 1998), was unavailable to me.

While the focus of this thesis is on Qur'anic hermeneutics, Ghazālī's discussion of *ta'wīl* in both *Fayṣal* and *Mustaṣfā*, the subject of the next chapter, draws on both the Qur'an and Hadith. It is legitimate to include Ghazālī's discussions of particular hadiths in a discussion primarily treating his attitude to *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an, since Ghazālī in practice treats both sources comparably in his hermeneutical discussions. Indeed, he makes clear, at the outset of the section of *Mustaṣfā* devoted to the Sunna, that both are part of *waḥy*, or revelation:

> He [Muhammad] did not speak on caprice. It was but revelation (*waḥy*) revealed to him. But a part of the revelation is recited, and is therefore called the Book, and a part is not recited, and this is the Sunna.[24]

The term 'scriptural hermeneutics' therefore more satisfactorily describes the focus of this chapter and the next.

3.2 PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF THE TEXT

Authenticity

Ibn Rushd's engagement with *Fayṣal*, mentioned above, is an instance of its acceptance as a genuine work. Internal evidence of authenticity includes various distinctives of Ghazālī's writing. As will become clear in the ensuing discussion, these include the frequent cross-references to his other works, his fondness for developing formal frameworks as a basis of his argument, a concern to uphold the value of syllogistic logic, and an orderly structure.

---

[24] *Mustaṣfā*, I: 129; tr. Hammad, *Juristic Doctrine*, p. 541. See also Henri Laoust, "La Pédagogie d'al-Ġazālī dans le Mustaṣfā" *REI* 44 (1976), p. 75. Weiss, *Spirit*, p. 45, notes that even though the Prophet's words as recorded in the Hadith do not represent *verbatim* the divine speech, they represent its meaning without any error. It is issues of meaning which form the core of *ta'wīl* discussion.

Date

This work dates from Ghazālī's long period of retirement from 488/1095-499/1106.[25] There is little evidence to place it precisely, but it mentions *Qisṭās* and is mentioned in *Munqidh*.[26] It therefore falls into the latter part of Ghazālī's retirement, assuming a relatively late date for *Qisṭās*, on which see Chapter 6 of this thesis.

Purpose

Ghazālī does not offer an explicit statement of the overall purpose of *Fayṣal*, but its ostensible twin aims are readily apparent. These are, on the one hand, to establish a definition of unbelief (*kufr*), and secondly, closely allied to this, to determine the extent and limits of acceptable *ta'wīl*. The question of why Ghazālī was so concerned with the issue of unbelief is explored in the course of this chapter. Regarding interpretation, Ghazālī's principal aim is to argue for independence in interpretation, and therefore for tolerance towards those who interpret as long as the interpretive process follows a clearly defined procedure and operates within given limits. *Fayṣal* seeks to outline this methodology.

Within this focus on unbelief and *ta'wīl* the dominant concern of the work, as stated by Ghazālī, is legal.

> Unbelief is a legal category, like slavery and liberty for example, since it means declaring blood licit and the sentence of eternity in the Fire. Its meaning is legal and is perceived either by an explicit text or by an analogy with something made explicit by a text.[27]

This legal approach to the question of *kufr* is foreshadowed in a section of *Faḍā'iḥ al-Mustaẓhiriyya*.[28] This work distinguishes Bāṭinite beliefs which are classed as error from more serious unbelief. Ghazālī states that, "It would take a volume to treat even

---

[25] Hourani, "Revised Chronology", p. 300; Bouyges, p. 57-58.
[26] *Fayṣal*, p. 20/158; *Munqidh*, p. 24/77.
[27] *Fayṣal*, p. 8/150, with alteration.
[28] *Faḍā'iḥ*, pp. 146-68/265-274.

summarily what necessitates unbelief and "excommunication" - so let us restrict ourselves in this book to what is important".[29] *Fayṣal* can be seen as this volume, and this remark makes clear that Ghazālī also saw a need earlier in his career to address these same issues. In *Faḍā'iḥ* he goes on to refer briefly to issues of *ta'wīl* and unbelief, stating that verses on the afterlife should not be interpreted. However, "the course of this discussion would require the unfolding of a mass of the mysteries of religion, were we to start treating it exhaustively".[30] Again, *Fayṣal* provides a continuation of issues raised in this earlier work.

There is therefore some justification in Bello taking *Fayṣal* at face value when he describes Ghazālī's purpose in *Fayṣal* as being, "to expound the legal grounds upon which he has condemned the philosophers to infidelity".[31] For Bello, *Fayṣal* is composed primarily as a defence of the legal basis of his judgments in *Tahāfut,* and the roots of such an interest have been indicated in *Faḍā'iḥ.*

However, Ghazālī's sustained arguments for tolerance over issues of interpretation raise the question of whether Bello's reading overlooks a different underlying motivation. Frank sees *Fayṣal* as an argument for tolerance towards, and a defence of, certain departures by Ghazālī from Ash'arism.[32] While consideration of Ghazālī's relationship to Ash'arism is related to the purpose of *Fayṣal,* it also involves consideration of Ghazālī's use of *ta'wīl* as a means of defining orthodoxy, and is thus included in the section on '*Ta'wīl* in *Fayṣal*', below.

Brief comment is needed on the occasional use of Sufi language and cosmological terms in *Fayṣal.* The text is not Sufi in orientation despite the occasional occurrence of what in Ghazālī's usage is often Sufi terminology. For example, the overall topic of the work, the question of the attribution of unbelief, is described as an

---

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 151/266.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 155/268.
[31] Bello, *Controversy,* p. 1.
[32] Frank, *Ash'arite School,* p. 78.

aspect of the *asrār al-malakūt* ("mysteries of the kingdom").[33] Furthermore, in criticising *kalām* Ghazālī states that, "faith is a light which God casts into the hearts of his servants",[34] and describes true faith as being accompanied by worship and remembrance of God (*dhikr*) until there are revealed to him the lights of knowledge (*ma'rifa*).[35] He also asserts that "men of insight" (*ahl al-baṣā'ir*) have learnt of this mercy "through causes and revelations (*asbāb wa mukāshafāt*) other than what they had of Traditions and reports (*al-khabār wa'l-athār*)", although Ghazālī does not elaborate on the nature of these "causes and revelations".[36] It is presumably such terminology which leads Jabre to regard *Fayṣal* as sharing the same hermeneutical approach as *Ādāb tilāwat,* Book VIII of *Iḥyā'*.[37] However, there is ample evidence, as this chapter will make clear, for distinguishing the two works. The Sufi terms do not influence the views put forward in the book, and reason, specifically syllogistic logic, lies at the centre of Ghazālī's arguments.[38]

Summary

A detailed summary of *Fayṣal,* setting out its many points concerning textual interpretation, is necessary to provide the basis of this chapter's ensuing discussion. *Fayṣal* opens by referring to, "some calumnious remarks directed by a group of envious persons against some of our books written about the mysteries of the practice of our religion".[39] After drawing an implicit parallel between his own hardships and

---

[33] *Fayṣal,* p. 3/147.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 33/167.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 36/169.
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] Farid Jabre, *Essai sur le Lexique de Ghazali* (Beirut: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1970), p. 18.
[38] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies,* p. 362, regards *Fayṣal* as written for the general reader, in contrast to *Mishkāt,* aimed at the "initiated".
[39] *Fayṣal,* p. 1/146. Chapter numbers follow the Arabic text of Mustapha rather than McCarthy's translation.

Muhammad's suffering for the truth, Ghazālī then stresses that true understanding of what constitutes unbelief is only revealed to those with a pure heart.

The second chapter concerns false definitions of unbelief based on loyalty to particular schools of thought or individuals. Ghazālī is emphatic that opposition to a figure such as al-Ash'arī on a particular point should not cause the person to be accused of unbelief (*kufr*). Chapter 3 offers Ghazālī's own definition of unbelief. "Unbelief is taxing the Apostle with lying with reference to anything of that which he brought".[40] The principal question underlying the remainder of *Fayṣal* arises from this definition. When does someone employ interpretation in such a way as effectively to deny the truth of a scriptural text and therefore accuse the Prophet of lying?

Chapters 4 and 5 outline the heart of Ghazālī's scheme for determining whether and how to interpret texts. This scheme is based on a proposed correspondence between levels of existence and types of interpretation linked to them. Chapter 4 describes five grades of existence.[41] The first is "essential existence" (*al-wujūd al-dhātī*) which denotes objective existence independent of human perception. Secondly, sensible existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥissī*) is what is represented, "in the visual power of the eye and which has no [such] existence outside the eye", that is, some form of vision. Ghazālī's examples of this phenomenon are the way in which the Prophet perceived the Angel Gabriel, and the appearance of the Prophet himself in dreams. Ghazālī comments concerning dreams of the Prophet:

> But seeing him is not in the sense of the transfer of his person from the Garden of Medina to the place of the sleeper: rather it is by way of the existence of his image [form] in the sensing of the sleeper, and that only".[42]

It was probably this statement which led to the exclamations quoted at the outset of the present chapter.

---

[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11/ 151-52.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 10/152.

The third grade is "imaginative existence" (*al-wujūd al-khayālī*) which describes picturing something in the mind's eye when it is not present. The fourth category is "intellectual existence"[43] (*al-wujūd al-'aqlī*), whereby reference to an object conveys an abstract concept, Ghazālī's examples being the hand signifying the power to strike, and the pen signifying "that by which cognitions are written". The fifth grade is "analogical existence" (*al-wujūd al-shabahī*), explained by Ghazālī in Chapter 5 and so outlined in the summary of that chapter given below.

The fifth chapter describes the five categories of interpretation which correspond to these grades of existence.[44] The first grade of interpretation is linked to essential existence, and denotes acceptance of the apparent meaning (*'alā'l-ẓāhir*) which should not be interpreted. The second level of interpretation, related to sensible existence, concerns something which is impossible if taken literally, and which should be understood as a vision shown to the Prophet. For example, Ghazālī quotes the hadith, "On the Day of Resurrection death will be brought in the form of a black and white ram, and it will be slaughtered between the Garden and the Fire".[45]

The third category of interpretation is illustrated by the hadith beginning, "It was as though I were looking at Yūnus wearing two cotton cloaks".[46] Ghazālī contends that Muhammad's use of the phrase "as though I were looking" (*ka'annī anẓuru*) suggests that, unlike the second category, this hadith refers not to a vision, but to something represented in Muhammad's imagination.

In illustrating the fourth type of interpretation, relating to intellectual existence, Ghazālī repeats his previous point that God's 'hand' denotes the power to strike, adding that it could also signify the power to give, bring about or hold back. Ghazālī

---

[43] A translation preferred to McCarthy's, "mental existence".
[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-15/ 152-55.
[45] Al-Bukhārī, *The Translation of the Meaning of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 9 vols., Arabic and English parallel text, tr. M.M. Khan (Ankara: Hilal Yayinlari, 1976 2nd edn.), VI: 226-27.
[46] Unidentified.

illustrates the fifth category, relating to analogical existence, by discussing the anger of God. The angry person experiences imperfection and pain, and since these cannot be predicated of God, references to His anger must refer to another divine attribute with equivalent results, such as the will to punish.

Chapter 6 terms these fourth and fifth categories of interpretation *majāz* and *isti'āra*. It also states that anyone interpreting texts in line with the principles just described cannot be accused of unbelief. Nor can using them constitute unbelief since everyone must resort to *ta'wīl*. Ghazālī supports this claim by citing Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's interpretation of three hadiths, his point being that even the Ḥanbalite must use *ta'wīl* occasionally. Ghazālī uses the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* dichotomy ('real meaning' and 'non-literal expression') in describing his fourth category, although he does not emphasise this as part of his theoretical framework. This is the only instance in *Fayṣal* where *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* are employed together but Ghazālī, while aware of the resonances of this pairing of terms in linguistic discussions, as is evident from *Mustaṣfā*, does not explore them in *Fayṣal*[47] Here *majāz* is equated with intellectual existence, the fourth category, in which an object is understood to refer to an abstract concept.

In the seventh chapter Ghazālī explains the most important principle of interpretation in *Fayṣal*. This is that an interpreter can only move from the first level of interpretation to the second, and so on through the sequence, if he has decisive proof (*burhān*) that the previous type of interpretation is impossible. Ghazālī makes clear his understanding of decisive proof in Chapter 10, summarised below. No group

---

[47] McCarthy's translation masks the linguistic dimension of Ghazālī's comments here. His translation reads (p. 155) that a "trope (*majāz*) or a metaphor (*isti'āra*)" is, "that farthest removed from reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*)". Yet *ḥaqīqa* here is better translated as, "real meaning", in contrast to the *majāz*. On Ghazālī's attitude in *Fayṣal* towards technical linguistic discussion see also comments on Chapter 10, below. On the history of the usage of *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*, see Wolfhart Heinrichs, "On the Genesis of the *Ḥaqīqa-Majāz* Dichotomy" *SI* 59 (1984), pp. 111-40. Ghazālī discusses these terms in *Mustaṣfā*, I: 341-5.

should consider its adversaries to be unbelievers because of a disagreement over decisive proofs, although it is acceptable to call someone "one astray" (*ḍāl*) or "an innovator" (*mubtadi'*).[48] Ghazālī adds that there are two general positions regarding interpretation.[49] One is for the general populace, who should not depart from apparent meanings, and who should be wary of allowing an interpretation not permitted by the companions of the Prophet. The second is for those accustomed to intellectual enquiry who experience a measure of doubt, and who can proceed with interpretation when they believe that there exists decisive proof that it is needed.

In Chapter 8 Ghazālī states that even resorting to interpretation without adequate proofs should not lead to accusations of unbelief if the issue does not concern fundamental beliefs. He criticises the philosophers for denying three such beliefs concerning the physical nature of punishment in the afterlife, God's knowledge of particulars, and the physical resurrection of bodies.

Chapter 9 continues the theme of the importance of distinguishing primary and secondary issues in determining judgments of unbelief. Ghazālī warns against branding as an unbeliever any Muslim who affirms the words of the *shahāda* and does not accuse the Prophet of lying. He then adds that speculation must recognise two types of issue. One concerns basic beliefs, which are belief in God, the Prophet and the Last Day. The second type, branches as opposed to roots, concerns all else and these should not be the subject of accusations of unbelief unless someone denies a fundamental idea known to have derived from the Prophet. To do so would amount to denying the truthfulness of the Prophet.

Chapter 10 lists five factors which must be considered before someone is charged with unbelief. The first of these is whether the text is open to interpretation, a matter which can only be determined by those familiar with the "science of language

---

[48] *Fayṣal*, p. 19/157.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 20/158.

(*'ilm al-lugha*)" relating to the deployment of metaphors (*isti'ārāt*) in Arabic.[50] However, Ghazālī in *Fayṣal* in fact ignores the theories of *'ilm al-lugha* in favour of his scheme of levels of existence despite his familiarity with such linguistic questions.[51]

The second point in considering whether an interpreter should be charged with unbelief concerns whether the text is *mutawātir*; that is, conveyed by an impeccable chain of transmitters. The third factor is whether an interpreter believed a text to be based on *tawātur* or whether, alternatively, a view based on consensus (*ijmā'*) had reached him. If the interpreter does not realise that either *tawātur* or *ijmā'* support the apparent meaning of the text in question, he can only be charged with ignorance or error, not with unbelief. The fourth consideration is whether the interpreter's proof for the need to interpret fulfils the conditions for decisive proof (*burhān*). Ghazālī's references to his earlier works, *Al-Qiṣṭās al-mustaqīm* and *Miḥaqq al-naẓar* show that he means here syllogistic demonstration. If the proof is not decisive, it permits only a proximate, rather than remote interpretation.[52] The implications of this emphasis on syllogistic logic are considered below. The fifth factor determining if an interpreter is guilty of unbelief is whether mentioning an interpretation would bring harm to Islam, or if it is obviously too foolish a suggestion to cause damage by misleading anyone.

In Chapter 11 Ghazālī argues that true faith is not dependent on knowledge of *kalām* as some *mutakallimūn* claim. There are other stimuli to faith, including

---

[50] *Ibid.*, pp.29-30/164.

[51] Wolfhart Heinrichs, "Contacts Between Scriptural Hermeneutics and Literary Theory in Islam: The Case of *Majāz*" *ZGAIW* 7 (1992), p. 254, comments that strong compartmentalization between different areas of Islamic scholarship had developed by the fourth/tenth century. "It is only in the next century that al-Ghazālī made a point in embracing the best of all these aspirations, thus breaking down the barriers between them and welding them together in a unified Islamic ideal - this with considerable theoretical, and historical, success". While this may be so elsewhere in Ghazālī's works, *Fayṣal* represents an exception. Here Ghazālī's reference to *'ilm al-lugha* only draws attention to his disregard for this discipline in *Fayṣal*.

[52] The term 'proximate' here refers to an interpretation not far removed from the apparent meaning, while 'remote' indicates an interpretation further removed from that meaning.

experiencing a vision, the good example of another believer, and the threat of the sword. Ghazālī contends that the pursuit of *kalām* is unlawful except for two types of person. The first is one with a genuine doubt over an issue of belief, the second one who wants to help such a person.

Mercy, judgment and punishment form the subject of the twelfth chapter. Its main emphasis can be summed up in the words, "Have, then, a broad view of God's ample mercy and do not weigh divine things with limited conventional scales".[53] Ghazālī aims to counter the charge that not simply the *mutakallimūn* but Muhammad himself clearly stated God's severity.

The final two chapters of *Fayṣal* are brief. Chapter 13 states that charging with unbelief derives from the law, not reason, and was meaningless before the coming of that law.[54] An attempt is also made to establish guidelines for defining unbelief. It is a category which applies to someone who disbelieves not only in God, but also in the Prophet and the Last Day. However, it is not applicable to someone who errs regarding God's attributes. The fourteenth and final chapter cautions once more against hasty accusations of unbelief.

---

[53] *Fayṣal,* p. 41/172.

[54] This view is defended in *Mustaṣfā,* I: 63-65; English translation in Kevin Reinhart, *Before Revelation* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1995), pp. 101-04.

3.3 *TA'WĪL* IN *FAYṢAL*

3.3.1 *Ta'wīl* as a defensive device

The focus on *ta'wīl* in *Fayṣal* serves the function in Ghazālī's discourse of marking out a boundary between himself and his critics. This defensive function is highlighted by certain remarks of the author. For example, he refers to:

> Calumnious remarks directed by a group of envious persons against some of our books written about the mysteries of the practice of (our) religion. These persons pretended that these books contain matter contrary to the teaching of the masters of old and the leading *mutakallimūn*. They also claimed that deviating from the doctrine of al-Ash'arī by even so much as a palm's width is unbelief, and that differing from him in even a trivial matter is error and perdition.[55]

In similar vein, in describing the person who defines unbelief too rigidly, Ghazālī comments, "Perhaps this fellow has a leaning, from among all the systems, toward the Ash'arite".[56] Furthermore, "you know that one who precipitously taxes with unbelief him who contradicts al-Ash'ari or others is a reckless fool".[57] So it seems that charges that Ghazālī is not sufficiently Ash'arite underlie some aspects of *Fayṣal*.

There are several criticisms in *Fayṣal* of the narrowness of *kalām* and the need for mercy. For example, Ghazālī states:

> But among the followers of every religion one possessed of faith in God and in the Last Day cannot be remiss in the search after [he has seen] the appearance of signs due to causes which violate customs. So if he busies himself with reflection and searching and does not flag, and death overtakes him before the completion of his inquiry, he also will be pardoned and will then receive the ample mercy of God.[58]

As previously noted, Ghazālī also states that men of insight have had this mercy revealed to them by special causes and revelations.[59]

---

[55] *Fayṣal*, p. 1/146.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 5/148.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 32/166.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 41/172.
[59] See above, p. 88.

Ghazālī's aim of defending himself also emerges through an aspect of the structure of *Fayṣal*. He makes tolerance the subject of his opening and closing chapters. In the former there is criticism of intolerance, in the latter he states that it is wrong to charge someone with unbelief simply because they have likewise charged you. Secondly, if you charge a person with unbelief despite knowing that he believes in God and the Prophet, you are guilty of unbelief for making such a charge. However, if you accuse such a person because you are mistakenly but sincerely convinced that they have charged the Prophet with lying, you are not guilty of unbelief.

In what follows, the perspectives of both Izutsu and Frank can be accommodated.[60] Izutsu's view that Ghazālī is attempting to solve the general problem of unrestrained accusations of unbelief has merit, particularly given that Ghazālī also inveighs against the danger of disputations between sects in Book XXI of *Iḥyā'*, *Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajā'ib al-Qalb*.[61] However, Frank's belief in an agenda driven by personal defence also finds support in the text, as previously noted. Out of personal need Ghazālī could craft a work of wider usefulness.

Ghazālī seeks to defend himself not primarily by argument over specific interpretations, however, but by setting demanding standards for the decision to resort to *ta'wīl*. A reading of *Fayṣal* makes two points plain. One is that Ghazālī's hermeneutical suggestions are not readily applicable in practice, but serve instead a rhetorical function in marking out Ghazālī's territory. Secondly, and closely related, Ghazālī discusses the theoretical basis of *ta'wīl* as a means of arguing for tolerance towards some of his own views which, tantalisingly, are not made explicit in *Fayṣal* itself. There is a defensive note sounded by much of the work, a note which sets the mood for the entire discussion of *ta'wīl*. After drawing attention to remarks

---

[60] See above, p. 84 on Izutsu, p. 87 on Frank.
[61] *Iḥyā'*, III: 33ff.

contributing to this defensiveness, its possible causes will be explored, thus probing what the discussion of *ta'wīl* might be designed to protect.

It seems, then, that Ghazālī is defending himself, but why? Addressing this question leads to consideration of Ghazālī's understanding of causality, since Frank argues that *Fayṣal* implicitly defends a particular *ta'wīl* involving Ghazālī's, "conception of the operation of the cosmic system in the determinate causation of events, including the voluntary actions of human agents, in the sublunary world."[62] Frank offers as evidence from *Fayṣal* itself the fact that Ghazālī illustrates his fourth, 'intellectual level' of interpretation (*al-wujūd al-'aqlī*), with reference to the interpretation of 'hand' as intermediary angels.[63] Frank's main evidence, however, is presented in his earlier work, *Creation and the Cosmic System*. Here, as noted in the opening chapter of this thesis, he contends that Ghazālī's views on causality and cosmology are in fact strongly influenced by those of Ibn Sīnā.[64] He argues that Ghazālī does not consistently uphold the Ash'arite doctrine of habitual causation, according to which events are individually caused by God with no necessary causal link between them, and that Ghazālī instead accepts a closed, determined system of causality.

Ghazālī's ideas on causality have generated much scrutiny, full analysis of which would require a separate discussion. However, in order to keep *Fayṣal* in focus, the present discussion engages principally with Frank, who explicitly cites causality as the reason for *Fayṣal's* arguments for tolerance in *ta'wīl*[65]

---

[62] Frank, *Ash'arite School*, p. 78. Frank's statement implies that *ta'wīl* is not only the protective shield, but also a particular interpretation being protected. On the issue of *ta'wīl* as process or result of interpretation, see below, sect. 3.3.4.

[63] Frank, *Ash'arite School*, pp. 78, 100.

[64] Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System*, *passim*.

[65] Goodman and Abrahamov have recently denied that Ghazālī consistently held to Ash'arite occasionalism; see L.E. Goodman, "Did al-Ghazālī Deny Causality?" *SI* 47 (1978), pp. 83-120, and Binyamin Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Causality" *SI* 67 (1988), pp. 75-98. Oliver Leaman, "Ghazālī and the Ash'arites" *Asian Philosophy* 6:1 (1996), pp. 17-27, argues that while Ghazālī utilises the language of his opponents the philosophers, he does not adopt their conceptual framework.

In Frank's favour it is true that *Fayṣal* features references to deviation from Ash'arism, already noted above. Frank is correct to highlight Ghazālī's apparent concern about being perceived as not sufficiently Ash'arite to please certain critics. It is certainly no longer straightforward to call Ghazālī "that Ash'arī of Ash'arīs".[66]

However, trying to identify the views which *Fayṣal* seeks to defend raises complex issues and demands caution. If Ghazālī accepts determined causality, as Frank argues, as opposed to Ash'arite occasionalism, this would undermine his defence of the rational possibility of miracles. For Ghazālī, the possibility of miracles is an issue closely linked to textual interpretation. Ghazālī believes that the scriptural accounts of miracles can be accepted literally, and should not be subject to *ta'wīl*, since these accounts do not depend upon an impossibility - they do not violate reason. Yet they are rationally acceptable for Ghazālī because of habitual causation, the view that any event can occur by God's power without necessary causal connection to any apparent cause.[67] Miracles do, however, violate reason if the philosophers' belief in determinate causation is accepted, a belief which compels them to regard accounts of miracles as merely symbolic accounts of higher truths. So, "Al-Ghazālī's doctrine of the habitual causes... is at the basis of his doctrine of metaphorical interpretation of scriptural language".[68] It is implausible that Ghazālī would compose *Fayṣal* with two apparently contradictory aims in view, on the one hand to vindicate the judgments of *Tahāfut*, but on the other indirectly to defend views which undermine the assumptions behind *Tahāfut's* defence of miracles.

In addition to this problem raised by Frank's views, there are a number of other weaknesses in his argument. There is neither space nor need to discuss these in full, but two points made by Marmura deserve comment. First, Frank fails to engage

---

[66] A.J. Arberry, *Reason and Revelation in Islam* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957), p. 30.
[67] See *Tahāfut*, Discussion 17, pp. 170-181. Ghazālī's concern to safeguard the literal interpretation of scriptural miracles is apparent on pp. 175, 176 and 178.
[68] Michael Marmura, "Ghazālian Causes and Intermediaries" *JAOS* 115 (1995), p. 91.

with the full context for Ghazālī's discussions of *kasb*, or acquisition.[69] This is the view that human beings 'acquire' acts created by God which they then carry out, a belief designed to safeguard both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Frank sees Ghazālī's references to *kasb* as incorporating genuine causal capacity in the human agent, thus undermining habitual causation. However, he makes no mention of the doctrine of the pervasiveness of divine power (*'umūm al-qudra*) which underpins *kasb* in Ghazālī's thought.

The second criticism of Frank's thesis concerns *Fayṣal* more directly. Ghazālī attributes unbelief to the philosophers for three reasons, one of which is upholding the world's pre-eternity, an idea at the heart of Ibn Sīnā's cosmology.[70] Ghazālī makes this charge in *Tahāfut, Iqtiṣād, Fayṣal* and also in *Munqidh*. The consistency of this criticism sits ill with the notion that Ghazālī had in fact adopted the most important aspects of Ibn Sīnā's cosmology.

It is not clear for what issues Ghazālī had been criticised, but the discussion of *ta'wīl* in *Fayṣal* certainly shows us Ghazālī marking out territory for himself. This is the stimulus for the elaborate and sometimes impassioned arguments set forward. This view finds support in the use of the concept of *ta'wīl* as a defensive device in *Iljām al-'awāmm 'an 'ilm al-kalām* ('The Restraining of the Masses from the Science of Theology'), Ghazālī's final work.[71] Frank argues persuasively that this work is a continuation of the apologetic concerns which Ghazālī expresses in *Fayṣal*.[72] In *Iljām* those who cannot understand *ta'wīl*, the masses or *'awāmm* of the title, are defined in a surprising way; they are, "the man of letters, the grammarian, the hadith specialist,

---

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 94.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[71] *Iljām al-'awāmm 'an 'ilm al-kalām* (n.p.: Idārat al-Tabā'at al-Muniriyya, 1351/1932). This work was completed in the first days of Jumāda II, that is, a few days before Ghazālī's death on the 14th of Jumāda II 505/ December 18th, 1111. The evidence for this is a colophon in a very early manuscript dating from 507/1113, according to Hourani, "Revised Chronology", p. 302.
[72] Frank, *Ash'arite School*, pp. 80-85.

the exegete, the jurist and the theologian, indeed every scholar except those who devote themselves to learning to swim in the seas of knowledge (*ma'rifa*)".[73] This terminology indicates that Ghazālī's interests in *Iljām* lie in excluding all those who disagree with him. So *Iljām* is more explicit even than *Fayṣal* in appealing to *ta'wīl* as a means of drawing a boundary between Ghazālī and other scholars with whom he disagrees. Frank notes that the group listed in *Iljām* comprises those who do not accept his higher theology. This point can be accepted in general terms even if Frank's own understanding of the nature of Ghazālī's higher theology is to be regarded as more definite than is warranted by the evidence. Aspects of Ghazālī's thought which might have drawn criticism for their reliance on, for example, Ibn Sīnā have already been discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis.

Ta'wīl, then serves a function in Ghazālī's discourse over and above its role in determining the nature of beliefs. Ghazālī extends this role to make *ta'wīl* a means for determining his own legitimacy. Many authors, of course, regard their own interpretations as establishing their author's correctness, but Ghazālī takes this approach a step further by using not just actual interpretations but theories of *ta'wīl* to buttress his own defence. These theories now require attention.

3.3.2 *Ta'wīl* and levels of interpretation in *Fayṣal*

Are the details of Ghazālī's understanding of *ta'wīl*, involving hierarchical schemes, simply an elaborate ornament to an argument for tolerance, or a sincere statement of Ghazālī's hermeneutical principles? Bello accepts their sincerity, entitling a chapter surveying *ta'wīl* in *Fayṣal*, 'Ghazālī's Concept of Interpretation (*Ta'wīl*)'.[74] Ibn Rushd in *Faṣl al-maqāl* was also willing to accept these categories, writing that:

---

[73] *Iljām*, p. 16.
[74] Bello, *Controversy*, ch. 4, pp. 52-65.

> Scripture is divided into apparent and inner meanings: the apparent meaning consists of those images which are coined to stand for those ideas, while the inner meaning is those ideas [themselves] which are clear only to the demonstrative class. These are the four or five classes of beings mentioned by Abū Ḥāmid in *The book of the distinction.*[75]

It is clear that Ghazālī's references to different levels of existence and interpretation, already outlined, suit Ibn Rushd's argument here concerning the nature of revelation. The substance of this argument resembles the philosophers' understandings of revelation outlined in the previous chapter of this thesis. Ibn Rushd also accepts Ghazālī's classification in *Kitāb al-kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla.*[76] Here, it is used to support Ibn Rushd's argument for presenting information to a person only in accordance with their level of understanding. This differs from Ghazālī's use of the classification as a foundation for his view that decisive proof is needed before moving from one level of interpretation to the next. So Ibn Rushd's references to Ghazālī's schemes for *ta'wīl* in both *Faṣl* and *Kashf* should not be taken as vindicating the importance of the details of *Fayṣal,* since they are in fact used for Ibn Rushd's own purposes.

More significantly, and undermining the importance of the details of the scheme in *Fayṣal,* Ghazālī presents a different scheme for levels of existence in Book XXI of *Iḥyā', Kitāb Sharḥ 'Aja'ib al-Qalb,* and another scheme still in *Iljām* and *Mustaṣfā,* all departing from that found in *Fayṣal.* This strongly suggests that the details of the scheme in *Fayṣal* are not as important to Ghazālī as the underlying point he seeks to make, which differs from text to text. In *'Aja'ib al-Qalb* four levels of existence are described.[77] Existence on the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*) is the archetype of existence in this world. Secondly there is real (*ḥaqīqī*) existence,

---

[75] Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl,* p. 24, tr. Hourani, *Harmony,* p. 59. Hourani, p. 104, n. 127, suggests that the reference to four of five classes perhaps arises from Ibn Rushd being unclear as to whether the *ẓāhir* should be included as a class.

[76] Ibn Rushd, *Al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla,* p. 206, tr. Najjar, *Faith and Reason in Islam,* p. 130.

[77] *Iḥyā'* III: 20; for an English translation of Book XXI of *Iḥyā'* see Walter Skellie, *The Religious Psychology of Al-Ghazālī* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Hartford Seminary, 1938). The relevant passage is found on pp. 80-81.

independent of human perception, thirdly existence in the imagination (*khayālī*), and fourthly within the intellect (*'aqlī*). Correspondence exists between each of these degrees of existence. Ghazālī's point here is epistemological: the usual path which knowledge takes is from the Preserved Tablet through the other stages of existence to the heart, or spiritual centre of the individual. Sometimes, however, knowledge can pass directly from stage one to stage four, that is, from the Preserved Tablet to the heart.[78] So Ghazālī uses the same approach, the presentation of a hierarchical scheme of existence, in support of his Sufi-influenced teaching on knowledge, and also, in *Fayṣal*, for teaching presenting itself as grounded in logic and law.

In *Iljām* a different scheme occurs. Ghazālī writes:

> Know that everything has four grades of existence. Existence in the entity itself (*a'yān*), existence in minds (*adhhān*), existence in speech (*lisān*) and existence on the written page.[79]

This scheme is introduced to promote a goal which is neither hermeneutical, as in *Fayṣal*, nor epistemological, as in *'Ajā'ib al-Qalb*. Instead it provides an ontological basis for the Ash'arite distinction between the recitation (*al-qirā'a*) and what is recited (*al-maqrū'*).[80] The same scheme is presented in *Mustaṣfā*.[81]

The above evidence puts in perspective the details of Ghazālī's scheme in *Fayṣal*. Yet a core of genuine views is identifiable beneath the apparent ornament. Ghazālī's two main points in *Fayṣal* are that there is a need for tolerance in considering the interpretations of others, and secondly that there is a logical basis for determining whether to interpret a text. The nature and implications of this logical basis can now be explored.

---

[78] *Iḥyā'*, III: 20.
[79] *Iljām*, p. 49.
[80] Frank, *Ash'arite School*, p. 82.
[81] *Mustaṣfā*, I: 21-22, where the four categories are described as, "first, reality in itself (*ḥaqīqatuhu fī nafsihi*), secondly, the establishment of the reality of images in the mind (*thubūt mithāl ḥaqīqatuhu fi'l dhihn*)... thirdly, the production of the sound in letters (*ta'līf ṣūt biḥurūf*)... fourthly, the production of writing (*ta'līf ruqūm*)".

3.3.3 *Ta'wīl* and syllogistic logic

Ghazālī in *Fayṣal* makes syllogistic logic the criterion for deciding whether *ta'wīl* can be employed. This accords with his highly schematised approach to existence and interpretation already outlined, since syllogistic logic offers an apparently objective way of selecting an option from the scheme which Ghazālī presents. The overall effect is to imply that *ta'wīl* is not a matter of subjective viewpoint, but arises logically from careful consideration of the nature of reality, text and reasoning. Such an effect suits the apologetic purpose of *Fayṣal* by appearing to reinforce the objectivity and hence validity of Ghazālī's views.

However, Ghazālī does not explain the nature of this logic in *Fayṣal*, referring his readers instead to other works, primarily *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*. In keeping with Ghazālī's approach in *Fayṣal*, the following discussion will not examine in detail the nature of syllogisms, a topic analysed as part of the discussion of *Qisṭās* in Chapter 6 of this thesis. It is useful at this point only to sketch the form of the syllogism in outline. It consists of two premisses and a conclusion, in the form of, "All A is B; and all B is C; therefore all A is C." Variations on this basic framework are treated in Chapter 6, below, but the focus here is rather on the implications of making syllogisms the determinant of whether to resort to *ta'wīl*.

After outlining the different levels of interpretation, Ghazālī states:

> Now it is not possible to turn from one degree to what is beneath it except because of the necessity deriving from demonstration (*burhān*). So the disagreement really comes down to the matter of demonstration.[82]

Ghazālī goes on to make clear that he understands *burhān* to derive from syllogistic logic. Acknowledging that clear proof, "is not something simple and easily grasped",

---

[82] *Fayṣal*, p. 19/157, with alteration.

he refers his reader to his earlier work *al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm* and its discussion of five types of syllogism.[83] Ghazālī extols the value of these syllogisms:

> They are those about which dispute is absolutely inconceivable once they have been understood. Nay more, every one who understands them acknowledges that they are the channels of sure and certain knowledge in a decisive fashion. For those who have learned them it is easy to be fair and equitable and to uncover the truth and eliminate dispute.[84]

This is high praise indeed. However, such a stance raises questions, since it appears to make the correct interpretation of Scripture dependent on a mastery of syllogistic logic, thereby restricting the number of those who can interpret texts correctly to a small group of scholars. The stances taken by Ibn Rushd in *Faṣl* similarly imply that philosophers are uniqely qualified to employ *ta'wīl* because of their knowledge of demonstration.[85] Whether Ghazālī seeks to be equally exclusive in commending syllogisms is unclear. In *Qisṭās*, Ghazālī, rather than wanting to restrict the use of *ta'wīl* by linking it to an understanding of syllogisms, aims to extend the use of syllogistic logic amongst Muslim scholars.[86] However, in *Fayṣal*, a more self-consciously defensive work even than *Qisṭās*, Ghazālī might be willing to erect an intellectual barrier blocking criticisms of him. His comments on *ta'wīl* in his final work, *Iljām*, reinforce this impression that defence became more important for Ghazālī than popularising any particular cause.

Making the decision to resort to *ta'wīl* dependent on rational proofs attained by demonstration is not unique to *Fayṣal*, since it is an approach also found in *Tahāfut*.[87] In Ghazālī's twentieth and final discussion, which debates the philosophers' denial of bodily resurrection, *ta'wīl* is the underlying issue. Ghazālī's argument in essence is that *ta'wīl* of verses describing the resurrection of bodies is unacceptable because the

---

[83] *Ibid.*, p. 20/158. *Qisṭās* is also commended, along with *Miḥakk al-naẓar*, on p. 32/166, as a source for understanding syllogisms. See Chapter 6 of this thesis.
[84] *Fayṣal*, p. 20/158.
[85] See Hourani, *Harmony*, p. 24.
[86] See Chapter 6, below.
[87] *Tahāfut*, pp. 212-229.

philosophers have not furnished proof that bodily resurrection is impossible, and something must be proven to be impossible before the apparent meaning is abandoned in favour of an interpretation. By contrast, Ghazālī regards as acceptable the *ta'wīl* of anthropomorphic verses precisely because he deems it impossible for God to have, for example, a physical hand or eye. Hence, while the possibility of physical resurrection is the issue in dispute, the question of possibility is important to Ghazālī because proof of impossibility of the *ẓāhir* is required before resorting to *ta'wīl*. So *Tahāfut* shows that, although *Fayṣal* is an apologetic work, Ghazālī's defence draws on long-held views, not innovations in his thought. The contrast between *Tahāfut* and *Fayṣal* lies in the fact that the earlier work finds Ghazālī on the offensive, criticising the philosophers for using *ta'wīl* without proof of its being needed.[88] In *Fayṣal*, however, Ghazālī conversely is in defensive mode, claiming that he uses *ta'wīl* only with satisfactory proof based on syllogistic demonstration.

Before concluding this discussion of the significance of the syllogism for the design of *Fayṣal*, it is worth considering Kemal's proposal that a link exists between syllogisms and Ghazālī's rules for *ta'wīl*:

> Just as Aristotle took the first figure of the syllogism to be obvious and undeniable, and defended this status by showing how all other argumentative forms were ultimately reducible to the first figure through a series of generalisations and basic categories, so too al-Ghazālī seems to propose a parellel structure whereby the different levels of interpretation find their ultimate justification by reference to essential existence and rules of interpretation. In effect, essential existence plays the same fundamental role as the first figure of the syllogism does for Aristotle, and for al-Ghazālī refers to the roots of faith and given traditions.[89]

This suggestion has an appealing neatness in that it brings together two of Ghazālī's great pre-occupations, logic and scriptural interpretation, as does *Qisṭās*. However,

---

[88] Ghazālī's fourth introduction to *Tahāfut* (p. 9) makes clear that when he accuses the philosophers of not proving something he is referring to syllogistic proof: "We will make it plain that what they set down as a condition for the truth of the matter of the syllogism.. and what they set down as a condition for its form... [are things] none of which they have been able to fulfill in their metaphysical sciences".

[89] Kemal, "Al-Ghazālī, Metaphor and Logic", pp. 216-17.

Kemal's view privileges the role in Ghazālī's scheme of essential existence, and its interpretive counterpart, the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*). Yet Ghazālī in *Fayṣal* is emphatic that a wise interpreter must at times resort to *ta'wīl*, by implication denying to the *ẓāhir* the foundational status Kemal attributes to it. Instead, it is the five degrees of interpretation *taken together* which are Ghazālī's chief concern, for these define the boundaries of acceptable belief:

> Know that anyone who reduces some utterance of the trustee of the Law to one of these degrees is of the number of those who believe. Imputing lying is simply that one deny all these meanings and allege that what the Apostle said is meaningless... Unbelief need not necessarily be affirmed of interpreters so long as they continue to adhere to the law of interpretation as we shall point it out.[90]

Naturally *ta'wīl* always carries some connection to the apparent meaning, but this is to state a truism. There is no sense in *Fayṣal* of the apparent meaning having an overarching authority or presence equivalent to that of the first figure of the syllogism. It is possible that the five figures of the syllogism which Ghazālī discusses in his earlier *Qisṭās* in some way prompted him to choose five levels of existence and interpretation. However, the previous discussion of the different schemes of existence found in different texts by Ghazālī cautions against reading such significance into the details of any single framework.

3.3.4 *Ta'wīl* as process or result of interpretation

In addition to the hermeneutical and theological ideas explored so far in this chapter, a linguistic point arises concerning the usage of the term *ta'wīl*. Bello assumes that in Ghazālī's writings, "The process of choosing a less evident but possible meaning as against a more evident one and, in most cases, as against another possible but less evident meaning/s (when there is evidential proof to substantiate this)

---

[90] *Fayṣal*, p. 16/155.

is called *ta'wīl, interpretation*" (author's emphasis).[91] However, the evidence presented below shows that *ta'wīl* is not always used to denote a process of interpetation, but can also refer to a view resulting from interpretation.[92]

In the following examples the Arabic text is included for the sake of clarity. The most striking example of the term *ta'wīl* used to denote the result of an interpretive process occurs in a discussion of demonstrable proof:

> And if it be not decisive, it sanctions only a proximate interpretation occurring spontaneously to the understanding (*fa'idhā lam yakun qāṭi'an lam yurakhkhiṣ illā fī ta'wīl qarīb sābiq ilā'l-fahm*).[93]

Additionally, in a reference to factors affecting the validity of a charge of unbelief, there is an implicit reference where the word *ta'wīl*, having been used once, is implicitly referred to a second time. The first occurrence refers to a process of interpretation, the second, implicit, occurrence to a result:

> One of them is whether the revealed text the literal meaning of which is abandoned is susceptible of interpretation or not. If it is, is it a proximate or remote interpretation (*aḥaduhumā anna al-naṣṣ al-shar'ī al-ladhī 'udila bihi 'an ẓāhirihi hal yaḥtamilu al-ta'wīl am lā? Fa'in iḥtamala fahal huwa qarīb am ba'īd?*)[94]

There is also one occurrence of the dual form, where Ghazālī states, "But [our] aim is not to justify one of the two interpretations (*walaysa al-gharaḍ tashīḥ aḥad al-ta'wīlayn*).[95]

It appears that Ghazālī is using *ta'wīl* in two different senses in *Fayṣal*. One possible influence on Ghazālī using *ta'wīl* to denote the result of interpretation is al-Muḥāsibī. Unusually, he equates the *bāṭin* and *ta'wīl*, rather than making *ta'wīl* the

---

[91] Bello, *Controversy*, p. 52, author's emphasis. He cites *Mustaṣfā*, I:387, as his source for this comment, but intends it to apply generally to Ghazālī's thought in the texts he has in view, principally *Fayṣal* and *Mustaṣfā*. Chapter 4 of this thesis considers this issue in relation to *Mustaṣfā*.
[92] Bernard Weiss, *The Search for God's Law* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), p. 474, suggests a third understanding for *ta'wīl* (see Chapter 4 of this thesis).
[93] *Fayṣal*, p. 32/166.
[94] *Ibid.*, p. 29/164.
[95] *Ibid.*, p. 18/157.

activity which reveals the *bāṭin*.[96] Similarly, Ibn Rushd's *Faṣl al-maqāl* employs *ta'wīl* in two different ways. It is defined as, "extension (*ikhrāj*) of the significance of an expression from real to metaphorical significance", clearly describing a process.[97] Yet elsewhere Ibn Rushd uses the term in a different sense when he mentions two positions concerning the validity of departing from the apparent meaning of texts on the future life and its states. He refers to the Ash'arites as adhering to the apparent meaning, and others who do not:

> In this class must be counted Abū Ḥāmid and many of the Ṣūfis; some of them combine the two interpretations (*ta'wīlayn*) of the passages, as Abū Ḥāmid does in some of his books.[98]

The same phenomenon of *ta'wīl* used to denote the result of interpretation, can also be found in *Mustaṣfā*, an issue discussed in the next chapter of this thesis, and in other works, such as *Mishkāt*.[99]

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated that care is needed before drawing conclusions regarding Ghazālī's general views on *ta'wīl* from *Fayṣal* alone. In particular, a defensive agenda is at work in response to criticisms Ghazālī received regarding the insufficiently Ash'arite credentials of some of his previous writings. However, it is not possible to identify the nature of these allegedly unacceptable teachings, since Ghazālī uncharacteristically chooses not to criticise systematically the substance of any such attacks. Those such as Bello who look for Ghazālī's general theory of *ta'wīl* in

---

[96] Josef van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥārit al-Muḥāsibī* (Bonn: Orientalischen Seminar der Universität, 1961), pp. 209-13.
[97] Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-maqāl*, p. 14; tr. Hourani, "Harmony", p. 50.
[98] *Ibid.*, p. 26; tr. Hourani, "Harmony", p. 61.
[99] See below, p. 236, n. 149.

Fayṣal do so at some risk, since Ghazālī's main purpose is to argue for latitude in interpretation on account of responding to criticisms he has received.

The need for caution is reinforced by the second conclusion, that Ghazālī's schemes of existence and interpretation are not the definitive word on his understanding of these matters. This is evident from the fact that different schemes of existence occur in *'Ajā'ib al-Qalb*, *Mustaṣfā* and *Iljām*, the latter two of these works being composed after *Fayṣal*.[100]

Attention has been drawn to the emphasis Ghazālī places on syllogistic logic in determining whether *ta'wīl* should be employed concerning a given text. This has been shown to be consistent with statements and approaches in *Tahāfut*, even though the defensive agenda of *Fayṣal* contrasts with Ghazālī being on the offensive in *Tahāfut*. Finally, the assumption that the term *ta'wīl* always refers to a process of interpretation was shown to be misplaced, as Ghazālī occasionally uses the word to refer to the result of such a process.

Fayṣal presents a paradox. It argues for tolerance and independence in interpretation within certain limits. Yet the guideline it presents for regulating *ta'wīl*, namely syllogistic logic, would, if applied in practice, be restrictive since relatively few scholars had mastery of such logic at the time of Ghazālī's writing *Fayṣal*. So Ghazālī is in practice arguing for tightly-controlled liberty. This paradox reinforces the view that Ghazālī is unlikely to be proposing a practical method of interpretation in *Fayṣal*, but is instead constructing a defensive strategy to protect his own position. An understanding of his agenda is therefore necessary in grasping the significance of his comments on *ta'wīl*. The same contextual understanding is needed in approaching his statements on *ta'wīl* in *Mustaṣfā*, the subject of the next chapter.

---

[100] On the date of *Mustaṣfā*, see Chapter 4 of this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

TA'WĪL IN *AL-MUSTAṢFĀ MIN 'ILM AL-UṢŪL*

> The law was the fruit or crop; the formulator of the law was the husbandman who facilitated the appearance of the crop (*istithmār, istikhrāj*). For people living in an agrarian society, this agricultural language conjured up the image of the cultivator toiling daily under the sun, struggling against the adversities of climate, weed, and sometimes intractable soil.[1]

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter concentrates on Ghazālī "toiling daily under the sun". It provides an analysis of Ghazālī's section on *ta'wīl* in his major legal work, *Al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl* ('The Quintessence of the Science of Roots').[2] *Mustaṣfā* is a work of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (roots of the law), a genre of Islamic religious literature characteristised by detailed linguistic arguments. This characteristic is reflected in the present chapter, which aims to clarify Ghazālī's understanding of *ta'wīl* in *Mustaṣfā,* and also to examine an important concept linked to it, that of *majāz.* A comparison can then be made with the conclusions drawn in the previous chapter regarding *Fayṣal.*

The literature of *uṣūl al-fiqh* is concerned not so much with defining legal positions as with the methods to be used in arriving at those positions. Hence the legitimacy of both sources and their interpretation lies at the heart of its concerns. Ghazālī in *Mustaṣfā,* for example, accepts as sources the Qur'an, the Hadith and Consensus (*ijmā'*), but rejects the views of the Companions, juristic preference (*istiḥsān*), the public good (*maṣlaḥa*), and the Mālikī acceptance of the consensus of

---

[1] Bernard Weiss, *The Spirit of Islamic Law* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1998), p. 89.

[2] *Al-Mustaṣfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl,* 2 vols., (Bulāq: Maṭba'at al-Amīriyya, 1322-24/1904-6). The section on *ta'wīl* translated below is taken from I:384-402. Ahmad Zaki Hammad, *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's Juristic Doctrine in al-Mustaṣfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of Chicago, 1987), includes a translation of all introductory material except the section on logic, and of the first two of the four *quṭbs* into which the work is divided. The passage on *ta'wīl* discussed below occurs in the third *quṭb.*

the people of Medina.[3] The second focus of *uṣūl al-fiqh* literature, the appropriate interpretation of sources, shows why hermeneutical concerns are bound to be a prominent feature. However, this literature was not the forum for speculative hermeneutical enquiry. On the contrary, it is grounded in preservation, defence, and the continuity of a tradition, albeit with some individual variation of opinion, as will emerge over the understanding of *ta'wīl*, discussed below.[4] Wael b. Hallaq prefers to emphasise the diversity of *uṣūl* literature,[5] but nevertheless notes that *Mustaṣfā* represents for its author, "a marked retreat to fearsome piety... in which Ghazālī safely stated the 'minimum' doctrine without risking what might be taken as daring".[6]

Mustaṣfā, although the last of Ghazālī's legal works, is not the longest, this attribute belonging to *Tahdhīb al-uṣūl*, no longer extant.[7] However, *Mustaṣfā* became the most well-known of his legal works, being summarised by several scholars, including Ibn Rushd, and mined extensively in *Rawḍat al-Nāẓir wa Junnat al-Munāẓir* by the Ḥanbalite Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1233).[8] It is sometimes argued that Ghazālī's importance as a legal scholar has been underestimated in comparison to the attention given to other elements of his writing. Hammad describes the "central endeavour" of Ghazālī's life as, "the breathing of the spirit of Islam into the corpus of the religion's jurisprudence and the coherent and cogent formulation of its juristic doctrine".[9] This claim will be assessed in discussing below the purpose of *Mustaṣfā*.

---

[3] See Norman Calder's article, "Uṣūl al-fiḳh" in *EI (2)*, X: 932.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 931-33.

[5] See, for example, his, "*Uṣūl al-fiqh*: Beyond Tradition" *JIS* 3 (1992), pp. 172-202.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

[7] Hammad, *Juristic Doctrine*, pp. 158-174, surveys Ghazālī's legal output and compiles the following chronological list: *Al-Ta'liqa fī furū' al-Madhhab* (which may not be a separate work); *Al-Mankhūl min Ta'liqat al-Uṣūl; Al-Basīṭ; Al-Wasīṭ; Al-Wajīz; Al-Mukhtaṣar; Shifā' al-Ghalīl; Ghāyat al-Ghawr; Tahdhīb al-Uṣūl;* and *Mustaṣfā*.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 276-80.

[9] Hammad, *Juristic Doctrine*, p. 3. See also Henri Laoust, "La Pédagogie d'al-Ġazālī dans le *Mustaṣfā*", *REI* 44 (1976), p. 79.

In contrast to its influence in the centuries immediately following Ghazālī, *Mustaṣfā* has generated little recent scholarship in European languages. There is no book exclusively devoted to it, but a few shorter treatments of specific topics exist. Weiss analyses Ghazālī's discussion of *tawātur,* or impeccable transmission.[10] In addition Bello discusses the treatment of *ijmā'* in *Mustaṣfā,* while Reinhart translates its discussion of the status of acts before revelation.[11] More generally, Laoust offers a survey of the teaching of *Mustaṣfā* on a range of topics, from the sources of the law, its interpretation, and the nature of *ijtihād.*[12] In a later article, he makes the point that there is no opposition in Ghazālī's work between legal and Sufi writing, since his Sufism is always "a legal sufism".[13]

Only Hammad pays detailed attention to analysing and translating a substantial proportion of *Mustaṣfā* His thesis is in two parts, the first providing background information and context for *Mustaṣfā,* discussing the traditional sources of the *Sharī'a,* and surveying the field of writing in *uṣūl al-fiqh.* As already noted, the second part provides an English translation of the first half of *Mustaṣfā* except for the introduction on logic. Hammad has also produced an article on Ghazālī's discussion of legal rules (*aḥkām*) in *Mustaṣfā,* based on the first of the four *quṭbs.*[14]

Two features of the present chapter require comment. First, the remarks made in the previous chapter concerning Ghazālī's use in *Fayṣal* of texts from both the Qur'an and Hadith in exploring *ta'wīl* apply equally to *Mustaṣfā.* That is, Ghazālī in practice treats both sources in the same way, and discussions illustrated by Qur'anic

---

[10] B. Weiss, "Knowledge of the Past: the Theory of *Tawātur* According to Ghazālī" *SI* 61 (1985), pp. 81-105.

[11] Bello, pp. 29-43; Reinhart, *Before Revelation,* pp. 87-104, translates *Mustaṣfā,* I: 55-65, the opening of the first *quṭb*.

[12] Henri Laoust, *La politique de Gazālī* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958), pp. 152-183.

[13] *Idem,* "La pédagogie d'al-Ġazālī dans le *Mustaṣfā*" REI 44 (1976), p. 79.

[14] Ahmad Zaki Hammad, "Ghazālī's Juristic Treatment of the *Sharī'ah* Rules in *al-Mustaṣfā*" *AJISS* 4 (1987), pp. 159-77.

verses and hadiths together can therefore be used to illumine his views on the subject of Qur'an interpretation.

Secondly, the boundaries of the extract from *Mustaṣfā* selected for attention in this chapter require comment. Ghazālī's discussion of *ta'wīl* occurs in a section entitled *al-ẓāhir wa'l-mu'awwal* ('the apparent meaning and the interpreted meaning'). This section covers ten issues (*masā'il*), five concerning *ta'wīl*, the other five discussing specification of general statements (*takhṣīṣ al-'umūm*). While the section title might imply that Ghazālī regards *takhṣīṣ al-'umūm* as part of *ta'wīl*, he in fact separates them at the end of his discussion of the first five issues, stating that, "These are examples of *ta'wīl*. Now we mention examples of specification (*takhṣīṣ*)."[15] For this reason only the first five issues of *al-ẓāhir wa'l-mu'awwal*, those concentrating on *ta'wīl*, are discussed below. Weiss notes with puzzlement the same subsuming of *takhṣīṣ* under *ta'wīl* in the work of al-Āmidī, although Kamali regards this arrangement as standard.[16]

4.2 PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF THE TEXT

Authenticity

The widespread influence of *Mustaṣfā* in succeeding generations, although not guaranteeing authenticity, strongly supports it. External evidence abounds that it was treated as an authentic text in the years following Ghazālī's death. Ibn Rushd's summary has already been mentioned, and many other scholars left summaries,

---

[15] *Mustaṣfā*, I:401. On *takhṣīṣ* see M.B. Arifin, *The Principles of* 'Umūm *and* Takhṣīṣ *in Islamic Jurisprudence* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1988).

[16] Bernard Weiss, *The Search for God's Law* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), pp. 478-479; cf. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991 revd. edn.), p. 88.

commentaries or reference to *Mustaṣfā*.[17] Internally, the work is marked as Ghazālian by its distinctive logical prologue, unprecedented in a work of *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

Date

Mustaṣfā can be precisely dated. It was completed on Muḥarram 6, 503/ August 5, 1109.[18] Hourani judges that the composition of *Munqidh* and *Mustaṣfā* probably overlaps, *Munqidh* being completed first.

Purpose

One aim of *Mustaṣfā* is to refute Ḥanafī views. This is not surprising when it is noted that the context for the writing of both *Mustaṣfā* and Ghazālī's earlier *Shifā' al-Ghalīl*[19] was the tension between the Ḥanafī and Shāfi'ī schools of law. In particular, it would appear from *Shifā' al-Ghalīl* that Ghazālī was concerned to counter the arguments of a earlier work of Ḥanafī *uṣūl al-fiqh*, al-Dabbūsī's *Taqwīm Uṣūl al-Fiqh*.[20] Al-Dabbūsī is mentioned at the outset of *Mustaṣfā*, in the context of Ghazālī's objection to an approach to *uṣūl* which he felt was overly concerned with discussion of practical cases of *fiqh*. Ghazālī writes that, "the love for *fiqh* has led a

---

[17] See Hammad, *Juristic Doctrine*, pp. 276-80; see also the list of summarisers and commentators on *Mustaṣfā* in H.M.F. Qariballah, *The Influence of al-Ghazālī upon Islamic Jurisprudence and Philosophy with special reference to period* [sic] *1100-1400 A.D.* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1969), pp. 37-38.

[18] Hourani, "A Revised Chronology", p. 301; see also Bouyges, *Essai de Chronologie*, pp. 73-75.

[19] Hammad cites in his bibliography *Shifā' al-Ghalīl fī Bayān al-Shabah wa'l-Mukhīl wa Masālik al-Ta'līl*, ed. Hamad al-Kubaysī (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-Irshād, 1390/1971). Hammad notes that this title is the correct one, not that given in Hourani, "Revised Chronology", p. 291. For brief comments on the dating of this work see Bouyges, pp. 18-19, and Hourani "Revised Chronology", p. 291.

[20] Abū Zayd 'Ubayd-Allāh al-Dabbūsī (d. 430/1038), *Taqwīm Uṣūl al-Fiqh wa Taḥdīd Adillat al-Shar'* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, MS. 255). Ghazālī states in *Shifā'* (p. 9), that the circulation of Dabbūsī's views had prompted him to write on *uṣūl*, and he goes on to mention him twenty-four times in this work (Hammad, *Juristic Doctrine*, pp. 237-38). Al-Dabbūsī's *Ta'sīs al-Naẓar*, ed. Zakarīyā 'Alī Yūsuf, (Cairo: Imam's Press, 1320/1902), his only published work according to Hammad, *Juristic Doctrine* (p. 245), is discussed by Brannon M. Wheeler, *Applying the Canon in Islam: The Authorization and Maintenance of Interpretive Reasoning in Ḥanafī Scholarship* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1996), pp. 132-50. Wheeler records his name as 'Alī b. 'Umar al-Dabūsī.

group of legists from Transoxania, namely Abū Zayd and his followers, to mix many questions about the details of *fiqh* with its principles".[21] Despite the anti-Ḥanafī purpose, however, it is worth noting that *Mustaṣfā* is less hostile to Abū Ḥanīfa than Ghazālī's earlier major legal work, *al-Mankhūl,* reflecting his development towards a more measured approach. One of the key areas of dispute was the Ḥanafīs' more positive view of the role of reason relative to the Shāfi'īs.[22]

Mustaṣfā was composed during Ghazālī's late period at Nishapur (1106-c.1109), and such abstract Ḥanafī-Shāfi'ī differences as the role of reason also need to be set in the context of wider tensions between the two groups. These tensions endured throughout a period including the time of the composition of *Mustaṣfā.* Bulliet outlines these problems which troubled the city for two centuries.[23] According to Bulliet the names 'Ḥanafī' and 'Shāfi'ī' denoted not only the titles of two legal schools of thought, but also two patrician political parties whose hostility led at times to rioting. Bulliet, who describes his conclusions as, "unsatisfactorily tentative",[24] describes the Ḥanafīs as emphasising rationality and an underlying conservatism. This contrasted with the Shāfi'ī support for newer trends, specifically "mysticism and semideterminism instead of rationality and free will". The Shāfi'īs also tolerated the use of Persian in religious and legal writings.[25] The two groups vied for important political posts, and this factional religious climate might help to explain Ghazālī's return, in the Shāfi'ī cause, to *uṣūl al-fiqh.* This was a field of scholarship which he had otherwise left behind in order to devote himself to work focussing on other concerns, particularly Sufism.

---

[21] *Mustaṣfā,* I: 10, tr. Hammad, *Juristic Doctrine,* p. 322.
[22] See Reinhart, *Before Revelation,* pp. 43-56.
[23] Richard Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), esp. pp. 28-46.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

It is true that in *Mustaṣfā* itself Ghazālī makes positive comments about legal writing which could indicate a genuine desire to return to such issues. Having described knowledge which is either purely rational or based on traditions, Ghazālī states:

> Yet the noblest knowledge is where Reason and Tradition are coupled, where rational opinion and the Sharī'a are in association. The sciences of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and its principles (*uṣūl*) are of this sort, for they take from the choicest part of the Sharī'a and Reason... Those who know it enjoy the highest station among the learned, are the greatest in honour, and have the largest following of helpers.[26]

These remarks contrast markedly with the modest status afforded to *fiqh*, obviously closely related to *uṣūl al-fiqh*, in Ghazālī's classification of the religious science in *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*. Here he writes of *fiqh* that, "We wasted a good part of our life writing books concerning its disputed problems".[27] It is possible that Ghazālī had undergone a dramatic change of perspective, yet there is no statement of personal motivation in these comments, only general phrases extolling the nobility of the discipline. In fact, there is some evidence that Ghazālī was less than enthusiastic about the enterprise, and remarks in both *Mustaṣfā* and *Munqidh* indicate that external pressure was brought to bear on Ghazālī.

Some introductory comments by Ghazālī in *Mustaṣfā* imply a certain ambivalence about his project. Ghazālī notes that he had written on the Law and its principles earlier in his career:

> Subsequently, I devoted myself to the knowledge of the path of the Hereafter and the hidden secrets of religion. I wrote extensive books in this field, such as *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn;* concise ones such as *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān;* and [books] of moderate [length] such as *Kīmiyā al-Sa'āda*. But Allah's determination impelled me to return to teaching and benefitting students, a group of whom, who had acquired the science of *fiqh*, proposed to me that I should write a book on *uṣūl al-fiqh*... So I responded to their request, seeking Allah's help.[28]

---

[26] *Mustaṣfā*, I: 103, tr. Hammad, *Juristic Doctrine*, pp. 303-304.

[27] *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, p. 22/40. *Uṣūl al-fiqh* receives the following brief comment in the same passage: "It concerns the control of the rules of seeking information, by Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions, about the judgements of the revealed law" (p. 23/41). See also Chapter 2 of this thesis.

[28] *Mustaṣfā*, I: 4/ 304-305.

The phrase "Allah's determination" glosses over the factors behind Ghazālī's return to teaching, but he offers fuller comment in *Munqidh*. In this work, after describing the poor religious condition of the period as a state of "tepidity", Ghazālī writes concerning the Sultan Sanjar:

> God Most High determined to move the Sultan of the time to act on his own, and not because of any external instigation. He peremptorily ordered me to hasten to Nīshāpūr to face the threat of this tepidity. Indeed, so peremptory was his order that, had I persisted in refusing to comply, it would have ended in my disgrace (*ilā ḥadd al-waḥsha*).[29]

A similar account is given by Ghazālī's earliest biographer, al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134) who writes of Sanjar's vizier, Fakhr al-Mulk:

> He went all out in importuning and suggesting until Ghazālī agreed to go forth. He was transported to Nīsābūr... Then Ghazālī was invited to teach in the blessed Niẓāmiyya School... He could not but yield to his master.[30]

Ghazālī's statements and the account he relayed to al-Fārisī could of course be an attempted justification for his change of heart, as van Ess argues.[31] Whatever Ghazālī's reasons for agreeing to go to Nishapur, it is possible that once there Ghazālī was caught up in Nishapur's Ḥanafī-Shāfi'ī conflicts and added the weight of his writing to the Shāfi'ī cause. So the social situation in Nishapur might help to shed light on why Ghazālī produced *Mustaṣfā* at a time when he had otherwise long given up writing works of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. In this context, Ghazālī's discussion of *ta'wīl* could lie close to the heart of his Shāfi'ī concerns, since, as Hallaq notes:

> In the final analysis, the defense of the school did not consist in a preoccupation with doctrinal trivia or with the mere collection and rehearsal of opinions. Rather, on a quite substantive level, it was a defense of *methodology and hermeneutics*; for the school itself was essentially founded upon a set of identifiable theoretical and positive principles, which in turn gave rise to an infinite variety of individual legal opinions and cases (emphasis added).[32]

---

[29] *Munqidh*, p. 49, tr. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment*, p. 106.
[30] Al-Fārisī, tr. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. xvii.
[31] J. van Ess, "Quelques Remarques", pp. 61ff.
[32] Wael b. Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), p. xi.

A second aim of Ghazālī's in composing *Mustaṣfā* was to produce a clear manual for students, and this goal influences the length and structure of the text. Ghazālī describes his text as:

> Taking a middle road between insufficiency and being boring - not as in *Tahdhīb al-Uṣūl*, for it is too exhausting and lengthy, but more than *Al-Mankhūl*, which tends to be too brief and concise. So I responded to their [students'] request, seeking Allah's help, joining herein both organization and precision to facilitate comprehension of its meanings, for one cannot dispense with one without the other. I have composed and brought it to an admirable, delicate organization.[33]

This aim was fulfilled. *Mustaṣfā* is well-known for being more clearly organised than other works of *uṣūl* in order to aid students' understanding, a feature which might reflect the influence of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's *Al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-fiqh*.[34]

Summary

After giving a brief outline of the structure of *Mustaṣfā* as a whole, the following summary will concentrate on Ghazālī's discussion of *ta'wīl*. *Mustaṣfā* comprises a preface, an exordium dealing with definitions and an overview of *Mustaṣfā*, an introductory section on logic and four main parts, each termed a *quṭb*. The first *quṭb* discusses the Sharī'a rules, the second the sources of those rules, the third how to derive rules from the sources, and the fourth the requirements for being a *mujtahid*.

Ghazālī's discussion of *ta'wīl* occurs in the third *quṭb*, which concerns how to derive rules from the sources. This *quṭb* is divided into four parts (*funūn*), and the discussion of *ta'wīl* occupies one of four sections occurring in the first part of the *quṭb*. The first section discusses 'the ambiguous and the clear' (*al-mujmal wa'l-mubayyan*), then follows the discussion of *ta'wīl* as part of a section entitled 'the

---

[33] *Mustaṣfā*, I: 104/ 304-305.

[34] A suggestion of Hammad, *Juristic Doctrine*, p. 221, referring to Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 1044) *Al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-fiqh* (Beirut: Institut Français de Damas, 1964-5).

apparent meaning and the interpreted meaning' (*al-ẓāhir wa'l-mu'awwal*). Thirdly, there is 'the imperative and prohibitive' (*al-amr wa'l-nahī*), and finally 'the general and particular' *(al-'amm wa'l-khāṣṣ)*.[35] The second section, the focus of the present chapter, is further sub-divided into two parts. The first covers introductory material and five issues (*masā'il*) regarding *ta'wīl*.[36] The second part discusses five issues related to *takhṣīṣ*, or specification of general statements.[37] As previously noted, the first five issues are the focus of the present chapter.

Ghazālī begins with a discussion of the nature of the *naṣṣ*, or unequivocal meaning, in which he emphasises that, unlike the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*), the unequivocal meaning does not permit *ta'wīl*.[38] After discussing the unequivocal meaning Ghazālī turns his full attention to *ta'wīl*, beginning with the important statement that, "*ta'wīl* is equivalent to a possible meaning (*iḥtimāl*) supported by an indicator (*dalīl*)". Ghazālī immediately adds that, "every *ta'wīl* is a diversion (*ṣarf*) of the expression from the *ḥaqīqa* to the *majāz*".[39] The concept of *majāz* is central to a full understanding of *ta'wīl* in *Mustaṣfā*, and is explored below.

Having concluded his introductory discussion of *ta'wīl*, Ghazālī turns to the five issues (*masā'il*) which constitute the remainder of his treatment of the topic. The interest of these discussions lies not in Ghazālī's choice of examples, but in his treatment of them; as Weiss notes, these *masā'il* were inherited from "generations of prior debating".[40] The first issue concerns the fact that contextual indicators (*qarīna*, pl. *qarā'in*) combine together to affirm the primacy of the apparent meaning over

---

[35] These four sections of the third *quṭb* occupy respectively vol. I: 345-83, 384-410, 411- II: 31, and II: 32-186.
[36] *Mustaṣfā*, I: 384-401.
[37] *Ibid.*, I: 401-10.
[38] *Ibid.*, I: 384.
[39] *Ibid.*, I: 387.
[40] Weiss, *Search*, p. 48.

against a possible alternative interpretation.[41] Ghazālī uses examples from hadiths concerning Ghaylān[42] and Fayrūz al-Daylamī;[43] Ghaylān had ten wives, while Fayrūz was married to two sisters. Their question was whether, having accepted Islam, they needed to contract new, Islamic marriages with the wives they chose to retain. Ghazālī rejects this Ḥanafī view, considering instead that the existing marriages with the retained wives remained valid under Islam.

The second issue continues the discussion of marriage and new converts. It refutes the Ḥanafī view that the reason their marriages needed new contracts was because the events took place before the restriction on the number of wives allowed had come into force.[44]

The third issue finds Ghazālī refuting the view that, "every *ta'wīl* abolishes the unequivocal meaning or aims to do so (*kullu ta'wīl yarfa'u al-naṣṣ aw shay' minhu*").[45] The example given is Abū Ḥanīfa's *ta'wīl* permitting the substitution of the value of a sheep in place of an actual sheep, when offering one in every forty sheep as alms. Ghazālī argues that the text is unequivocal (*naṣṣ*) and that its meaning cannot therefore be re-interpreted in any way since unequivocal meaning does not admit of interpretation. Substituting the equivalent value in place of the animal is therefore invalid.

The fourth and fifth issues both concern *zakāt*. The fourth discusses whether *zakāt* can be given to one person in view of the reference to "*the poor and needy*" in the plural (Q9:60). Ghazālī maintains that expenditure on one person is invalid,

---

[41] *Mustaṣfā*, I: 389-92. On the nature of the *qarīna* see Wael b. Hallaq, "Notes on the Term *Qarīna* in Islamic Legal Discourse" *JAOS* 108 (1988), pp. 475-80. A *qarīna* can take the form of words in the text itself which indicate the way in which another word is to be understood, or "extra-linguistic circumstances surrounding the verbal usage" (p. 476) which qualify or clarify the meaning of a term or command.

[42] See al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. II, pp. 298-99.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

[44] *Mustaṣfā*, I: 393.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 394. Issue Three is discussed on I: 394-99.

because the verse is unequivocal regarding sharing. In the fifth discussion Ghazālī again upholds the status of a Qur'anic verse as an unequivocal text. This time the issue concerns the status of the phrase, "*the feeding of sixty needy ones*" (Q58:4), an action prescribed as an alternative to two months of fasting before returning to a wife previously renounced. Here again Ghazālī rules out *ta'wīl* because the verse is unequivocal.

4.3 *TA'WĪL* IN *MUSTAṢFĀ*

Three issues arising from Ghazālī's discussion of *ta'wīl* are explored below. The first of these is the nature and significance of the relationship between *ta'wīl* and *majāz*. The second is the adequacy of defining *ta'wīl* as a process of interpretation, while the third concerns the role of reason in *ta'wīl* according to *Mustaṣfā*.

4.3.1 *Ta'wīl* and Figurative Language

Ta'wīl in *Mustaṣfā* involves taking a statement to be in the *majāz* mode.[46] But what exactly does *majāz* encompass? Two difficulties arise regarding the accurate definition of *majāz*, the first involving identifying what the category *majāz* might include, an area of "lively debate" within the literature of *uṣūl al-fiqh*.[47] The second difficulty is the need to avoid the danger of squeezing understandings of *majāz* into the mould of European language terminology, distorting it in the process. Margaret Larkin, writing about al-Jurjānī, notes concerning "figurative expression", the most common translation of al-Jurjānī's understanding of *majāz*:

> Though this translation, "figurative expression" is innocuous enough, it is nonetheless not completely accurate... The categories of what are generally

---

[46] *Mustaṣfā*, I: 387.

[47] Weiss, *Search*, p. 136; see also *ibid.*, p. 476, where Weiss refers to "the extremely comprehensive character of the concept of *majāz* in the thinking of the Muslim jurisprudents".

> thought of as figurative devices in Western languages - to the extent that there is any agreement about what they are - do not, in fact, correspond to the rhetorical divisions put forth by al-Jurjānī.[48]

Where writers use the adjective 'figurative', it is difficult to know whether they are aware of the less than perfect fit between it and *majāz*.[49]

Larkin goes on to quote al-Jurjānī's own definition of *majāz*:

> If a word (*lafẓ*) is made to depart from what is required by its original position in the language system, it is described as being "*majāz*", meaning that they extended it beyond its original position, or that it went beyond the place it was originally set down in.[50]

Ghazālī likewise shows in his discussion of *majāz* in *Mustaṣfā* that his understanding of what the term signifies is broader than the category of figurative language as metaphor and simile, the dominant notions in the West.[51] In the course of his discussion he briefly outlines three categories of expressions which he regards as representing *majāz*. Only the first of these refers to figurative language as commonly conceptualised in Western language discussion, treating instances of resemblance between, for example, a brave man and a lion. It is legitimate to call such a man 'a lion' because courage is an acknowledged characteristic of this animal.[52]

The second category of *majāz* refers to pleonasm, or the existence of apparently redundant linguistic elements in a phrase.[53] Ghazālī's example is the Qur'anic phrase, "*Naught is as his likeness*" (Q42:11) (*laysa ka-mithlihi shay'*), where the *kāf* must be regarded as adding nothing to the meaning.[54] If it were to do so, the verse would mean "Like the likes of Him there is naught".

---

[48] Margaret Larkin, *The Theology of Meaning*, (New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Society, 1995), p. 72, n. 1.
[49] For example, M.Y. Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics* (London: Curzon Press, 1999), p. 88.
[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.
[51] *Mustaṣfā*, I: 341-45.
[52] *Ibid.*, I: 341.
[53] *Ibid.*, I: 342.
[54] Cf. Heinrichs, "Contacts", p. 266.

The third category of *majāz* mentioned is the converse of pleonasm, ellipsis, in which a word is omitted.[55] As in the second category, Ghazālī's example is a common one, quoting the verse, "*Ask the township*" (Q12:82), which is clearly intended to refer to asking the people of the township. Neither pleonasm nor ellipsis are examples of figurative language, although their occurrence nonetheless requires interpretive choices.[56]

It is worth glancing for a moment at Ghazālī's discussion of specification of general statements (*takhṣīṣ al-'umūm*) to put in context the points made above. Ghazālī defines *takhṣīṣ* as an activity which, "returns the expression from the *ḥaqīqa* to the *majāz*".[57] Ghazālī argues that to apply specification to an expression involves regarding it as a *majāz* expression. (This differs both from those who regard a expression subject to specification as remaining entirely literal, and those who consider that such an expression would sometimes be seen as *majāz* and sometimes as literal).[58] Ghazālī thus regards *ta'wīl* and *takhṣīṣ*, though distinct, as both being employed because an expression is understood to be an instance of *majāz*. So *majāz* encompasses statements which must be understood in a way which departs from the apparent meaning, not only on account of any alleged figurative use of language, but also because of factors external to the text, such as the historical or logical considerations warranting *takhṣīṣ*.

To summarise, if Ghazālī views *ta'wīl* as involving a diversion of an expression to a *majāz* mode, and if *majāz* does not necessarily involve figurative

---

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] Heinrichs, "Contacts", p. 263-66, discusses the phrase "ask the city" (his translation) and its treatment at the hands of various authors in relation to the concept of *majāz*.

[57] *Mustaṣfā*, p. 387. It is noteworthy that in his partial translation of *Mustaṣfā*, Hammad translates *iḥtimāl* as "interpretation", for example on I: 130, 131 (Hammad, *Juristic Doctrine*, pp. 544, 546). A *dalīl* or indicator can be either rational or textual, that is, derived from Hadith, the former being predominant. Weiss, *Search*, p. 42, suggest that the German term *Beweis* better captures the sense of the Arabic than the English words "evidence" or "proof". On the *dalīl* see Weiss, *Search*, pp. 42-46.

[58] Weiss, *Search*, p. 426. For discussion of specification see M. B. Arifin, *The Principles of 'Umūm and Takhṣīṣ* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1988).

language, then neither does *ta'wīl* necessarily involve figurative language. This point is borne out by the discussion of issues found in Ghazālī's section on *ta'wīl*. As already noted, the first two of these do not deal with figurative language.[59] Hence to describe *ta'wīl* in Ghazālī's thought as the interpretation of figurative language is an over-simplification if *Mustaṣfā* is brought into the reckoning.[60]

4.3.2 *Ta'wīl* in *Mustaṣfā* as process of interpretation or result of interpretation

In the previous chapter the meaning of the term "*ta'wīl*" in *Fayṣal* was discussed and it was shown that it could signify either the process, or, occasionally, the result of interpretation. As previously noted, Bello states that in a number of works, including *Mustaṣfā*, *ta'wīl* is "the process of choosing a less evident but possible meaning as against a more evident one".[61] Other recent scholarship would support this judgment that *ta'wīl* in *Mustaṣfā* is a process. Laoust, describing the section of *Mustaṣfā* under discussion, writes that, "*ta'wīl* is the process (*démarche*) consisting of giving a different meaning to the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*)".[62] Ali also understands Ghazālī in *Mustaṣfā* to describe a process when using the word *ta'wīl*. This view apparently guides his translation of the phrase *kullu ta'wīl ṣarf li-lafẓ 'an al-ḥaqīqa ilā'l-majāz*,[63] which he renders, "each process of *ta'wīl* involves a diversion from *ḥaqīqah*-mode to *majāz*-mode".[64]

However, despite the apparently widespread assumption that the term *ta'wīl* refers to a process, this would not seem to be Ghazālī's understanding according to his

---

[59] See above, p. 26.
[60] Jabre, *Lexique*, pp. 16-18 on *ta'wīl* does not refer to *Mustaṣfā*.
[61] Bello, *Controversy*, p. 52.
[62] Laoust, *La politique de Gazālī*, p. 173.
[63] *Mustaṣfā*, I: 387.
[64] Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, p. 128. Wael b. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1997), p. 47, in describing legal theory in general rather than Ghazālī specifically, writes of "a process of interpretation, technically known as *ta'wīl*".

discussion in *Mustaṣfā*. Weiss draws attention to comments on Ghazālī's definition of *ta'wīl* by the Shāfi'ī jurist Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233).[65] In his *al-Iḥkām fī-Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, ('Perfection Concerning the Principles of Judgments') al-Āmidī criticises Ghazālī for identifying *ta'wīl* with a possible meaning (*iḥtimāl*), which an indicator (*dalīl*) shows to be the more probable meaning.[66] This presumably derives from al-Āmidī's reading of Ghazālī's remark, "*Ta'wīl* is equivalent to a possible meaning supported by an indicator, causing it [the *ta'wīl*] to become the most likely meaning to which the *ẓāhir* points (*al-ta'wīl 'ibārat 'an iḥtimāl ya'ḍuduhu dalīl yaṣīru bihi aghlab 'alā'l-ẓann min al-ma'nā al-ladhī yadullu 'alaybi al-ẓāhir*).[67] Hence the term *ta'wīl* denotes a possible meaning arrived at through interpretation, rather than referring to the process of interpretation.

Al-Āmidī prefers to define *ta'wīl* as "the diversion [*ḥaml*], attested by a [contextual] indicator, of an expression to a meaning that is not its apparent meaning but is nonetheless a possible meaning".[68] Weiss concludes from this that al-Āmidī understands *ta'wīl*, "as an intertextual operation, not something the *mujtahid* does but something he discovers". In other words, *ta'wīl* is a quality inherent in the text, a quality discovered when that text is set alongside contextual indicators. Hence, for al-Āmidī as for Ghazālī, *ta'wīl* does not signify a process of interpretation.

There are grounds for trusting al-Āmidī's assessment of Ghazālī's intent. Al-Āmidī was immersed in the discipline of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and died only one century later than Ghazālī, making him, by the standards of the age, still a relatively near successor.

---

[65] Weiss, *Search*, pp. 473-474.

[66] Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *Kitāb al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, 4 vols., (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Khidīwīya, 1914), III, p. 74, cited by Weiss, *Search*, p. 473. Al-Āmidī's work was unavailable to me.

[67] *Mustaṣfā*, p. 387. Al-Āmidī also criticises Ghazālī's discussion of *ta'wīl* on two other points. It does not include *ta'wīl* based on certain rather than probable factors, nor does it make clear that it refers to valid *ta'wīl* rather than *ta'wīl* in general (Weiss, *Search*, pp. 473-74).

[68] Al-Āmidī, *Iḥkām*, III, p. 74, tr. Weiss, *Search*, p. 474.

It appears that the commonly held view that *ta'wīl* signifies a process of interpretation is upheld by neither of these writers of *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

4.3.3 The Role of Reason in Interpretation

Ghazālī's comments concerning the relationship of reason and revelation in this section of *Mustaṣfā* have given rise to recent debate. On the one hand Ghazālī writes:

> Contradiction of the rational indicator would not be possible in any aspect whatever (*dalīl al-'aqli lā tumkinu mukhālafatuhū bi-wajhin-mā*).[69]

A few lines later he adds:

> Concerning reasoning adherence to the *naṣṣ* is only allowed in the second usage, which was the one which neither a proximate nor remote possible meaning treats (*falā yajūzu'l-tamassuk fī'l-'aqlīyāt ilā bi'l-naṣṣ bi'l-waḍ' al-thānī wa huwa al-ladhī lā yaṭatarraqu ilayhi iḥtimāl qarīb wa lā ba'īd*).[70]

Ghazālī has previously explained the second usage of *naṣṣ* or unequivocal meaning, in outlining three different interpretations of the term *naṣṣ* by the *'ulamā'*.[71] The second usage, which Ghazālī prefers, is that which does not admit any variable meaning, for example the word 'five', which cannot be interpreted as denoting six or four. This prompts Bello to comment that Ghazālī, "seems to give preponderance to *naṣṣ* over what is otherwise considered 'rational'".[72] He notes that this is in conflict with *al-Iqtiṣād fī'l-I'tiqād*, where Ghazālī writes:

> Concerning what reason rules to be impossible, what the Revelation says about it requires *ta'wīl*.[73]

Bello later repeats his view that Ghazālī sometimes gives priority to revelation over reason. However, he appears uncertain as to its significance, writing, "One should

---

[69] *Mustaṣfā*, I: 388.
[70] *Ibid.*, I: 388-89.
[71] *Ibid.*, I: 384-86. The other two senses of *naṣṣ* which Ghazālī mentions are, first, al-Shāfi'ī's calling the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) *naṣṣ*, and in addition allowing the term *naṣṣ* to describe a text seen as accommodating a departure from the evident meaning when supported by a proof.
[72] Bello, *Controversy*, p. 53.
[73] *Iqtiṣād*, p. 212.

apply caution against giving this inference too much weight".[74] Furthermore, by making this point part of the conclusion to his entire work, Bello takes the view that Scripture takes precedence over reason, which he finds in *Mustaṣfā,* and implicitly also applies it to *Fayṣal.*[75] He does so without demonstrating how *Fayṣal,* the main subject of his chapter on the *ta'wīl* of Ghazālī, manifests this supposed preference for Scripture over reason in the case of unequivocal meaning (*naṣṣ*). In fact, *Fayṣal* makes no such claim, discussing only the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*), not the unequivocal, and emphasising that rational impossibility should prompt departure from the apparent meaning.

Frank rejects Bello's interpretation, emphasising the first of Ghazālī's apparently conflicting statements quoted above wherein Ghazālī denies that reason can be countermanded.[76] He therefore concludes that Bello has misunderstood Ghazālī and ignored the import of *Tahāfut al-falāsifa,* which emphasises the role of reason in argumentation. However, a position between those of Bello and Frank seems preferable. As noted above, Bello implicitly claims more for the significance of Ghazālī's remark in *Mustaṣfā* than seems warranted. Conversely, Frank claims less, since Ghazālī does state that there are instances wherein the unequivocal text takes precedence over reason. However, these instances might be limited in practice - Ghazālī does not go into detail about the possible applications of his statement. It is probably unnecessary to seek to harmonize Ghazālī's view with those which he expresses in other works, since such overall harmony can be less important to him than shaping his argument to the concerns of his target readership or audience for a particular work.[77] This is particularly plausible since Ghazālī here writes a safe manual

---

[74] Bello, p. 68.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 145.
[76] Richard Frank, review of Bello in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 49:3-4 (1992), p. 546.
[77] See, for example, the treatment of *ra'y* and the interpretation of Q7:200 on *dhikr* discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

for students, as previously noted, within a genre of writing grooved by tradition. On this issue at least, there seems justification for Ibn Rushd's remark that Ghazālī was, "an Ash'arite with the Ash'arites, a Ṣūfī with the Ṣūfīs and a philosopher with the philosophers".[78] He did not add, "and an *uṣūlī* with the *uṣūlīs*".

4.4 CONCLUSION

Examing Ghazālī's writings on *ta'wīl* in *Mustaṣfā* has shown, as in previous chapters, that caution is needed before extrapolating general principles concerning his use of the term from one particular work. First, the term need not imply that the text to which *ta'wīl* is relevant is couched in what is often deemed 'figurative' language. Secondly, *ta'wīl* does not refer to a process of interpretation, but can refer to a particular meaning arrived at through interpretation. Thirdly, regarding reason and revelation, Bello overstates the case in implying that *Mustaṣfā* conflicts with *Iqtiṣād* on this issue. It is only with regard to a particular sense of the unequivocal meaning that revelation has priority.

The aims of Ghazālī's discussions of *ta'wīl* in *Mustaṣfā* and *Fayṣal* can be contrasted. While his concern in *Fayṣal* is to argue for tolerance towards *ta'wīl*, in *Mustaṣfā* he seeks to restrict the use of *ta'wīl*, asserting the importance of adherence to examples of explicit texts over against the practice of the Ḥanafī jurists. Where *Fayṣal* appears a highly personal *apologia*, *Mustaṣfā* is an *apologia* not for the author as much as for the Shāfi'ī cause. Consequently, the overall argument of the discussion of *ta'wīl* in *Mustaṣfā* moves in a different direction to that of *Fayṣal*. Instead of urging tolerance and latitude in interpretation, Ghazālī commends caution against the greater latitude of the Ḥanafī approach. Once again, Ibn Rushd's criticism,

---

[78] Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-maqāl*, pp. 27-28, tr. Hourani, *Harmony*, p. 61.

quoted above, if not directly applicable, at least casts a shadow over the comparison of these two works.

Part I of this thesis has examined Ghazālī's hermeneutical theories in a range of his writings. These include works bearing the influence of Sufi thought, the ideas of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, the blend of Ash'arism, appeal to syllogistic logic and a personal *apologia* in *Fayṣal,* and an example of the hermeneutical approaches distinctive to *uṣūl al-fiqh* found in *Mustaṣfā.* This diversity prepares the ground for Part II, which brings into focus Ghazālī's interpretive practice. Is this diversity reflected in the interpretations found in Ghazālī's three works which engage most deliberately with the text of the Qur'an?

PART TWO

GHAZĀLĪ'S HERMENEUTICAL PRACTICE

CHAPTER FIVE

JAWĀHIR AL-QUR'ĀN

> He did not realize the contradictory conceptions and ideas he insisted on holding together, that of Ash'arait's [sic] theology and that of Sufism... To hold them together is in fact to try to have fried ice.[1]

5.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the concerns of Chapter 2 of this thesis was to outline the theory of interpretation and the classification of Qur'anic verses which Ghazālī presents in *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*. The present chapter extends the discussion of *Jawāhir* to explore the examples of Qur'ānic interpretation which Ghazālī provides. However, the large selection of verses which Ghazālī quotes in the second half of *Jawāhir* as the jewels and pearls of the Qur'an will not be examined. The principles of selection he employs are set out in Part 1 of *Jawāhir*, and form part of the subject of the present chapter. However, Ghazālī does not interpret the verses he chooses, presenting only a very lengthy list.

The Qur'anic interpretations in *Jawāhir* are presented in two different settings. Ghazālī discusses some verses in the process of presenting an argument of his own. In what follows such treatments of verses are termed isolated interpretations. At other times Ghazālī makes the discussion of a particular passage from the Qur'an the organising principle of a chapter.

The isolated interpretations fall into two categories. One is interpretations which reflect Ghazālī's views on *ta'wīl*.[2] This approach presupposes that Qur'anic revelation comprises two levels of discourse. One is the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*), which is in fact a depiction of abstract spiritual truths in a readily understandable,

---

[1] Naṣr Abū Zayd, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Interpretation" *Journal of Osaka University of Foreign Studies* 72 (1987), p. 20.

[2] See Chapter 2 of this thesis for discussion of these views.

concrete form, necessary so that the common people can understand and obey the commandments of Islam. However, there is also a second, inner meaning (*bāṭin*) which special insight can reveal, and which is the most profound and important meaning of the text. The second type of use of isolated verses is in Ghazālī's treatment of the issue of scientific knowledge in relation to the Qur'an. This discussion encapsulates views which deserve attention not least for their fame in succeeding centuries.

In the chapters of *Jawāhir* where more detailed comment is given on a particular verse or passage Ghazālī turns his attention to *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, the opening sura of the Qur'an, to the Throne Verse (Q2:255), and to *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* (Q112).[3] Chapter 17 affirms that readers who take note of this type of treatment of Qur'anic verses will find that their knowledge becomes abundant and their mind opened, so that they may enjoy the Paradise of the *'ārifūn* ('those who know').[4]

5.2 ISOLATED INTERPRETATIONS

5.2.1 *Ta'wīl*

Ghazālī advances a number of isolated interpretations which rely on his understanding of *ta'wīl*.[5] That is, discerning the verses' true significance depends on accepting that a spiritual meaning lies behind the apparent meaning of the words. Ghazālī does not always make this assumption explicit, but it is evident from the nature of his discussions. These interpretations can be divided into four groups, analysed in the order in which they occur in *Jawāhir*.

---

[3] Despite promising (*Jawāhir*, p. 38/65) to interpret Sura 36, Ghazālī does not in fact do so. The chapter devoted to this sura (p. 48/81) simply urges the reader to apply the same principles which Ghazālī has set forth in his previous interpretations.

[4] *Jawāhir*, p. 49/83.

[5] See above, Chapter 2, for full treatment of this understanding.

1) The first such interpretation is of Q96:4-5, which refers to God, "*who teacheth by the pen, teacheth man that which he knew not*". Ghazālī states that this refers to:

> Anything in existence by means of which the forms of knowledge are engraved on the plates of human souls... This pen is spiritual, since the spirit of pen and its reality are found in it... A pen being made of wood or reed does not belong to the reality of pen.[6]

He terms this an example of *ishārāt*, allusions or pointers, saying that "It is not improbable that pointers of this kind are present in the Qur'an".[7] In support of this type of interpretation, Ghazālī calls attention to what he terms the *tafsīr* of Q13:17.[8] This '*tafsīr*' is in fact an interpretation found in the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', more likely to be borrowed directly than through an intermediate source given other instances of influence on Ghazālī deriving from the Ikhwān.[9] The Ikhwān and Ghazālī share a similar approach to this verse, albeit with differences in points of detail, as a brief comparison will demonstrate.[10]

Ghazālī concentrates on the first part of the verse, which reads:

> *He sendeth down water from the sky, so that valleys flow according to their measure, and the flood beareth (on its surface) swelling foam...*

Ghazālī writes, "Observe how God has likened knowledge (*'ilm*) with water, hearts (*qulūb*) with valleys and springs, and error (*ḍalāl*) with foam".

The Ikhwān interpret the same verse as follows:

> '*He sendeth down water from the sky*' means the Qur'an. '*So that valleys flow according to their measure*' means the receptivity of hearts, according to their measure, either small or great. '*And the flood beareth on its surface swelling foam*' means what its expressions and apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) convey as obscure meanings received by the hearts of hypocrites.[11]

---

[6] *Jawāhir*, p. 30/51. Cf. Book XXXV of *Iḥyā'*, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd wa'l-tawakkul*, *Iḥyā'* IV: 245, for a longer discussion based on the same understanding of this verse.
[7] *Jawāhir*, p. 30/51.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 30/52.
[9] See especially Landolt, "Some Notes", *passim*.
[10] Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 43-44.
[11] *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, IV: 77.

So the Ikhwān, like Ghazālī, see the valleys as representing *qulūb*, specifying that here there is a reference to memorising the Qur'an according to one's capacity. This image of hearts as valleys corresponds exactly with Ghazālī's account, providing a common background within which differences of detail occur. For the Ikhwān, water symbolises the Qur'an, rather than knowledge in general. The foam, error (*ḍalāl*) for Ghazālī, represents for the Ikhwān, again being more specific than Ghazālī, obscurities (*mutashābihāt*) in the meanings of Qur'ānic verses, memorised by hypocrites. Whereas Ghazālī introduces the verse as evidence for his belief in hidden meanings, the Ikhwān draw on it to describe the establishment of God's law on earth. However, while the details of Ghazālī's adherence to and departure from the interpretation of the Ikhwān are of interest, the significance of the comparison for the present study lies in Ghazālī's borrowing his approach to this verse from the *Rasā'il*.

Ghazālī's reliance on the Ikhwān is confirmed by reference to two of his other works. As noted in Chapter 2 of this thesis, in his interpretation of Q13:17 in Book II of *Iḥyā'*, *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id*, Ghazālī interprets the water not as *'ilm*, as in *Jawāhir*, but as representing the Qur'an, the same interpretation as is found in the *Rasā'il*.[12] In *Mishkāt* Ghazālī, again writing on Q13:17, covers both options in stating that, "the Qur'anic commentaries say that water is knowledge and the Qur'an, while the riverbeds are hearts."[13] This covert dependence on the Ikhwān in *Jawāhir*, *Qawā 'id al-'Aqā'id* and *Mishkāt* is notable given Ghazālī's harsh criticism of them in *Munqidh*. In this work he describes the *Rasā'il* as, "the refuse of philosophy".[14] However, Ibn Sab'īn (d. 669/1270) describes Ghazālī's works as, "mostly *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, weak in philosophy like its source".[15] These raids on sources he

---

[12] *Iḥyā'*, I: 102; tr. Faris, *Foundations*, p. 46. In this passage he also adopts more explicitly the Ikhwān's discussion of souls being like valleys in their capacities to receive differing amounts. The foam reprsents here unbelief and hypocrisy, equivalent to *ḍalāl* in *Jawāhir*.

[13] *Mishkāt*, p. 32.

[14] *Munqidh*, p.33, tr. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment*, p. 89.

[15] A.L. Tibawi, "The *Ikhwān as-Ṣafā'* and their *Rasā'il*: a review of a century and a half of research" in his *Arabic and Islamic Themes* (London: Luzac and co., 1974), p. 180.

publicly denounces are not uncharacteristic of Ghazālī, as also seen in his borrowing from the philosophers' theory of imaginative prophecy discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

2) The second category of verses interpreted via reliance on *ta'wīl* concerns the general issue of discerning the secrets of the invisible world. Ghazālī writes:

> How will you be able to understand these when you do not understand the language of states (*lisān al-aḥwāl*)? On the contrary, you suppose that in the universe there is only that of statement (*maqāl*). This is why you did not understand the meaning of the words of God " *there is not a thing but hymneth his praise*" (Q17:44). Nor do you understand the meaning of the words of God, " *We come obedient*" (Q41:11).[16]

On a similar theme Ghazālī quotes the verse:

> *That which God openeth unto mankind of mercy none can withhold it, and that which he withholdeth none can release thereafter. He is the Mighty, the Wise'* (Q35:2).

He relates this reference to mercy to the knowledge granted to the *'ārif* who discerns the secrets of the invisible world.[17] Ghazālī uses these verses to emphasise his belief that *ta'wīl* is needed in order to penetrate the true meaning of the verses in question.

3) The third category of discussion relying on *ta'wīl* occurs when Ghazālī gathers verses in support of his contention that the Paradise which the *'ārifūn* enjoy is different from that experienced by the majority of believers.[18] He weaves Qur'anic phrases into his account to strengthen his argument that the defining experience of this Paradise is beholding God's glory (*al-naẓar ilā jalāl Allāh*).[19] This Paradisal experience is contrasted with the Paradise which satisfies "sensuous desires" (*al-shahawāt al-maḥsūsa*). Ghazālī describes the experience of the *'ārifūn* as " *a Paradise as wide as are the heavens and the earth*" (Q3:133), and where " *the clusters* [of fruits] *are in easy reach*" (Q69:23). For Ghazālī these fruits are the attributes (*ṣifāt*) of the *'ārifūn*, and are " *neither unfailing nor forbidden*" (Q56:33). In its demotion of the

---

[16] *Jawāhir*, p. 33/57 with alterations.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 37/63.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 50/ 85.
[19] *Ibid.*

physical rewards of Paradise *Jawāhir* here resembles *Iḥyā'* Book XL, *Kitāb Dhikr al-mawt wa ba'duhu*. In this work Ghazālī states that, in comparison with meeting God, "as for the rest of Heaven's delights, man's participation in them is no more than that of a beast let loose in a pasture".[20]

In addition to the common Sufi stress on ultimate felicity in Paradise as a spiritual experience transcending and disregarding physical pleasure, Ghazālī's views here might reflect the influence of Ibn Sīnā. For example, in *Kitāb al-Shifā': al-Ilāhiyāt* Ibn Sīnā distinguishes different understandings of the afterlife. Concerning the issue of communicating to the common people its nature, he states :

> He must instil in them the belief in the resurrection in a manner they can conceive and in which their souls find rest. He must tell them about eternal bliss and misery in parables they can comprehend and conceive. Of the true nature of the afterlife he should only indicate somthing in general: that it is something that 'no eye has seen and no ear has heard'.[21]

However, it is difficult to know in this instance how significantly, if at all, Ibn Sīnā exercised influence on Ghazālī.

The diversity of Ghazālī's recorded views on the nature of Paradise, some of which are expressed in *Jawāhir*, creates a trap for the unwary commentator. Stroumsa quotes Ghazālī's objection in *Tahāfut* to Ibn Sīnā's stance on this topic, but does so selectively.[22] She correctly notes Ghazālī's statement that the denial of corporeal pleasures in Paradise contradicts Islamic teaching,[23] but concludes that the very idea of an allegorical interpretation of the Qur'anic verses on Paradise "is thus seen by al-Ghazālī as heretical".[24] However, this is to overstate the case. Ghazālī sees

---

[20] *Iḥyā'* IV: 528, tr. T.J. Winter as *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1989), p. 251.

[21] Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Shifā': al-Ilāhiyāt*, Book X, Chapter 2, tr. Michael Marmura, "Healing: Metaphysics X", in Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi (eds.), *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 101. A number of other quotations from Ibn Sīnā are gathered in the discussion by Sarah Stroumsa, "Paradise in the Thought of Avicenna and Maimonides" *Medieval Encounters* 4 (1998), pp. 58ff.

[22] Stroumsa, "Paradise", p. 63.

[23] *Tahāfut*, p. 218/218. For a brief survey of Ghazālī's views on Paradise see also Muhammad Abul Quasem, "Al-Ġazālī's Conception of Happiness" *Arabica* 22 (1975), pp. 153-61.

[24] Stroumsa, "Paradise", p. 63.

the *purely* allegorical interpretation of such verses as unacceptable, but immediately continues:

> What, then, is there to stand in the way of realizing the combination of both [kinds] of happiness, the spiritual and bodily ?... Rather, combining the two represents what is more perfect, [rendering] the thing promised the most perfect of things. Moreover, this is possible; hence belief in it (in accordance with religious law) is obligatory.[25]

In *Jawāhir,* this combination of spiritual and physical pleasure is presented with much greater emphasis on the superiority of the spiritual pleasures than is found in *Tahāfut,* yet the seeds of such a view can be seen in the earlier work.

4) The fourth example of implicit reliance on *ta'wīl* occurs in the same chapter of *Jawāhir* in which the Paradise of the *'ārifūn* is discussed. Ghazālī draws a parallel between the mockery such *'ārifūn* suffer and the scorn directed at Noah.[26] 'Those who know' are made to quote Noah's words, " *Though ye make mock of us, yet we mock at you even as ye mock; And ye shall know to whom a punishment that will confound him cometh* " (Q11:38-9). For Ghazālī, linking the fate of the *'ārifūn* to that of Noah is apposite because, "The *'ārifūn* are preoccupied with the preparation of the ship of salvation (*safīnat al-najāt*) for others and themselves". The *Ikhwān* refer to their own teachings as *safīnat al-najāt*,[27] and it is possible, in view of the influence of the *Rasā'il* demonstrated above, that Ghazālī adopted this image for his own use. Hence, according to both Ghazālī and the *Ikhwān,* the initiated are brought on board the ship because of their special knowledge.

To sum up, the above four discussions of Qur'anic verses presuppose the need for *ta'wīl.* There are two possible instances of influence derived from the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā',* while the conception of the afterlife might reveal the influence of Ibn Sīnā.

---

[25] *Tahāfut,* p. 218.
[26] *Jawāhir,* p. 51/85.
[27] *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā',* IV: 18.

5.2.2 Qur'anic Interpretation and Intellectual Disciplines

Ghazālī's categorisation of the religious sciences which derive from the Qur'an, found in Chapter 4 of *Jawāhir*, was discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. After presenting this categorisation, Ghazālī argues that it is not only religious sciences that can be found in the Qur'an. The "principles" of all other disciplines are "not outside the Qur'an (*laysat awā'il khārija 'an al-Qur'ān*)".[28] This includes disciplines which have fallen out of use, and those which have not yet been discovered, that is, disciplines of the past and the future, as well as those encompassed by present knowledge. All of these disciplines are aspects of God's works, these works being one of the categories of Qur'anic teaching.

Ghazālī offers examples involving medicine, astronomy, and anatomy. He argues that it is impossible to understand the true meaning of a work of God which involves such disciplines unless one possesses the requisite knowledge. For example, Ghazālī quotes Abraham's words, "*And when I sicken, then He healeth me*" (Q26:80). With reference to healing he contends that, "This single work can only be known by him who knows the science of medicine completely".[29] Although his explicit reference here is to a work of God, the entire discussion has in view the issue of the meaning, and by implication the interpretation, of relevant verses, as the following discussion demonstrates.

Ghazālī quotes the words, "*O man! what hath made thee careless concerning thy Lord, the Bountiful, who created thee, then fashioned, then proportioned thee?*" (Q82:6-8). He then adds:

> The complete meaning (*kamāl ma'nā*) of God's words [i.e. in these verses]... can only be known by him who knows the anatomy of man's limbs and internal organs, their number, their kinds, their underlying wisdom, and their uses. God points to (*ishāra*) these in many places in the Qur'an.[30]

---

[28] *Jawāhir*, p. 26/46.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 26/ 46.

[30] *Jawāhir*, p. 27/47, with alteration. This remark seems double edged in its relationship to the tradition known as Prophetic medicine (*al-ṭibb al-nabawī*). This tradition advocated medical precepts drawn from the Qur'an and Hadith. While Ghazālī's main point is clearly to affirm the Qur'an as a

These remarks make it understandable that *Jawāhir* has become a well-known source cited in support of the type of interpretation known as 'scientific exegesis' or *tafsīr 'ilmī*.[31] This interpretive approach assumes that the Qur'an refers indirectly to all modern scientific discoveries.[32] Amīn al-Khūlī notes that, although this line of thought has gained particular prominence since the ninetheenth century, its principles, and opposition to them, can be found in writing of a much earlier period.[33] Al-Khūlī identifies Ghazālī as an obvious representative of his age for this understanding of the Qur'an, and discusses *Jawāhir* as a leading example of such thought. He then goes on to discuss a rebuttal of such thinking by the Andalusian al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388) in his *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī uṣūl al-sharī'a*.[34] While the latter does not refer directly to Ghazālī he is likely to have had in view the works of such a famous predecessor.

Although Ghazālī is famous for his stance on this topic, it is possible that the seed of his thoughts can be traced back to Ibn Sīnā. Bearing in mind Ghazālī's attraction to elements of Ibn Sīnā's theory of imaginative prophecy, outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis, it is striking that Ibn Sīnā states that the principles of all knowledge are first received by the "masters of intuition" (*arbāb tilka'l-ḥudūs*) and then taught to others.[35] In those most endowed with intuition (*ḥads*) this two stage process would represent the operation of intellectual prophecy and imaginative

---

source of scientific principles, his remark could also be taken as an indirect criticism of the religious rather than medical writers who wrote in the tradition of *al-ṭibb al-nabawī*, since he emphasises the need for detailed medical knowledge for a proper understanding of texts such as those he quotes. See *EI (2)*, "Ṭibb", X: 453.

[31] J.J.G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), p. 38.

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 35-54, gives examples.

[33] Amīn al-Khūlī's comments are found in his note added to the article on *Tafsīr* in the Arabic translation of *EI (1)*, *Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Islāmiyya*, vol. 5. That part of his note which concerns scientific exegesis (pp. 357-62) is translated in J. Jomier and P. Caspar, "L'exegèse scientifique du Coran d'après le Cheikh Amīn al-Khūlī" *MIDEO* 4 (1957), pp. 269-280. Al-Khūlī also cites *Kitāb Ādāb Tilāwat al-Qur'ān*, Book VIII of *Iḥyā'*, on which see Chapter 2 of this thesis. See also al-Khūlī, *Manāhij al-Tajdīd*, for details of which see above, p. 31, n. 36.

[34] Jomier and Caspar, pp. 274-277. On al-Shāṭibī see *EI* (2), IX: 364-365.

[35] Ibn Sīnā, *Avicenna's De Anima* (London: OUP, 1959), p. 249; this passage and its possible influence on Ghazālī is discussed by Michael Marmura, "Ghazālī's Attitude to the Secular Sciences and Logic" in G. Hourani (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany, N.Y: SUNY, 1975), p. 103.

prophecy respectively, an observation supported by the occurrence of Ibn Sīnā's discussion in the context of his equating intellectual prophecy with the intuition of intelligibles.

Ghazālī seeks by his comments on intellectual disciplines to emphasise the centrality of the Qur'an as a source of knowledge. Paradoxically, however, his argument assumes the partial opaqueness of many verses to the vast majority of believers who are not, for example, medical doctors or astronomers. For Ghazālī, then, the Qur'an hints at such scientific knowledge. Yet his theory renders interpretation more problematic, since the Qur'an does not, of course, also include a full account of any such science, but only the relevant principles.[36] Ghazālī does not attempt to integrate his discussion of knowledge and Qur'anic interpretation with his other ideas on methods or requirements for understanding the text. His purpose is to affirm a dogma - that the Qur'an lacks nothing - rather than to explore the epistemological ramifications of such a belief. However, in *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*, the subject of the next chapter of this thesis, Ghazālī outlines further the manner in which the Qur'an might encompass all knowledge.

5.3 CHAPTERS ON THE INTERPRETATION OF IMPORTANT PASSAGES

As noted in Chapter 2 of this thesis, much of the theorising of *Jawāhir* is related explicitly or implicitly to Ghazālī's hierarchical classification of Qur'anic verses. It is thus no surprise that in his interpretations of important passages Ghazālī

[36] In response to any protest concerning the resultant opacity of the Qur'anic text, Ghazālī might reply pragmatically. The verses achieve what they are intended to achieve for the majority, while the specialist can gain extra benefit from the riches of knowledge indicated in the Qur'an. This pragmatic approach is evident in Ghazālī's understanding of statements in the Qur'an concerning God's attributes; see Fadlou Shehadi, *Ghazālī's Unique and Unknowable God* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964), p. 103. On the question of attribution see also below, p. 143, n. 41.

gives by far the greatest attention to texts chosen to show that the Qur'an justifies his classification.

5.3.1 *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*

As previously noted, Ghazālī concludes Chapter 3 of *Jawāhir* by stating that the ten types of verse he has identified concern ten subjects found in the Qur'an:

> The divine essence, divine attributes, divine works, the life to come, the straight path, i.e. the purification and beautification [of the soul], the conditions of the saints, the conditions of God's enemies, [His] argument with the infidels, and [finally] the bounds of legal judgements.[37]

In discussing *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* he shapes his interpretation around this classification:

> Thus the Sura of Opening has comprised eight of the ten divisions [of the Qur'an] - divine essence, attributes and works, description of the life to come and of the straight path together with both its sides, i.e. purification [of the soul] and making it beautiful, description of [God's] favour to His friends and of His anger towards His enemies, and [finally] description of the resurrection.[38]

Ghazālī also takes aim at two disciplines he wishes to denigrate:

> Only two divisions [of the Qur'an] fall outside this sura, namely, God's argument with infidels and judgements of jurists - two subjects from which the sciences of theology (*kalām*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) stem off. From this it becomes clear that [in reality] these two subjects fall into the lowest of the grades of religious sciences. It is only the love of wealth and influence [obtainable by them] which has raised them to a higher status.[39]

In examining how Ghazālī achieves a precise fit between the contents of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* and his classification of Qur'anic verses, his interpretation of the sura will be examined as he presents it, phrase by phrase. To enhance the clarity of the discussion the table given below anticipates and summarises the results of this examination. Note that Ghazālī discusses two Qur'anic phrases in reverse order, and correspondingly reverses the order of his presentation of fifth and sixth categories of verse. In Table 2, these phrases and the verse categories corresponding to them are presented below in accordance with the original Qur'anic order.

---

[37] *Jawāhir*, p. 17/ 33; cf. Chapter 2, p. 20 of this thesis.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 43/72.
[39] *Ibid*

Table 2: The Division of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* in *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*

Ghazālī's Classification of Verses	Corresponding Phrase in *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*
1. Divine essence	*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.*
2. Divine attributes	*The Beneficent, the Merciful.*
3. Divine works	*Lord of the worlds.*
4. The Life to come	*Owner of the Day of Judgment.*
5. Purification of the soul	*Thee (alone) we worship.*
6. Beautification of the soul	*Thee (alone) we ask for help.*
7. God's favour to his friends	*The path of those whom thou hast favoured.*
8. God's anger toward his enemies	*Not the path of those who earn thine anger nor of those who go astray.*

1) " *In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*" (*bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*).[40] Ghazālī states that these words, "give information concerning his essence", the subject of the first of his types of Qur'anic verse. He does not state what this information is, but adds instead that the words *al-raḥman al-raḥīm* also inform us of one of God's special attributes, that which invokes (*tastad'ī*) all other attributes. The remainder of the discussion concerns attributes, the subject of the second type of verse. The mention of the attribute of mercy also has a powerful effect on those

[40] In quotations from *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* both the Arabic and English wording is included since the brevity of each phrase makes this possible without encumbering the text of the discussion. This will not, however, be the usual practice in Qur'anic quotations in the present chapter.

people on whom mercy has been bestowed, namely familiarizing them with God, filling them with longing for him and encouraging them to obey him.[41]

2) "*Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds*" (*al-ḥamdu li-llāh rabb al-'ālimīn*). This phrase encompasses two components. One is gratitude, which is the basis of praise. Ghazālī describes this as "the beginning of the straight path", and in fact half of that path.[42] Gratitude occupies this exalted position because it proceeds from joy, not fear, and it is always preferable to be motivated by love rather than fear.[43] The second component identified by Ghazālī in this phrase is all of God's works and their relation to him. This relation is summed up in the idea of Lordship. Divine works are the third of Ghazālī's types of verse.

3) "*The Beneficent, the Merciful*" (*al-raḥman al-raḥīm*). The second occurrence of this phrase prompts Ghazālī to state that there is no repetition in the Qur'an. By this Ghazālī means that any recurrence of a Qur'anic verse always yields additional benefit on each re-appearance and there is thus no vain repetition. Ghazālī then explains that in this case the second mention of mercy adds nuances of meaning to the phrase immediately preceding it, reference to all the worlds, and to what follows it, that is, reference to the Day of Judgment. He then explains these nuances.

The juxtaposition of the mention of mercy and the reference to the worlds, is explained as follows. Mercy is apparent in God's creating the worlds, since, "He has created every one of these according to the most perfect and best of its kind and has given it everything it needs".[44] There follows a lengthy description of the ingenious

---

[41] Note Shehadi's discussion, pp. 103-14, of Ghazālī's understanding of our knowledge of God's attributes. These in fact tell us nothing about God as he really is, since He is utterly unknowable. Rather they guide us in how we should conceive of God so as to live the life which he requires from us. Their function is pragmatic, to shape human behaviour, not factually descriptive of God in any way.

[42] The other half of the path is patience, Ghazālī referring the reader to Book XXXII of *Iḥyā', Kitāb al-Ṣabr wa'l-Shukr; Iḥyā'* IV: 59-138.

[43] The author commends Book XXXVI of *Iḥyā', Kitāb al-Maḥabba wa'l-Shawq wa'l-Uns wa'l-Riḍā'; Iḥyā'* IV: 286-350.

[44] *Jawāhir*, p. 39/67.

design and capabilities of the gnat, fly, spider and bee.[45] Ghazālī finds in these creatures signs of divine mercy, because in creation "the lowest constitutes evidence of the highest" (*al-adanī bayyinat 'alā'l-a'la*). This particular statement follows a tradition best exemplified by Galen.[46]

Ghazālī here introduces into his interpretation of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* a brief reference to his belief that God has created the best of all possible worlds.[47] Ormsby notes that subsequent commentators focussed on Ghazālī's discussion of this topic in four of his works: *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd wa'l-tawakkul,* (Book XXXV of *Iḥyā'*), *al-Imlā' fī mushkilāt al-iḥyā'; Kitāb al-Arba'īn* and *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa.*[48] There is also a brief discussion in *al-Maqṣad al-asnā.*[49] The fullest exposition of the idea occurs in the passage from *Iḥyā',* and, as in much of his writing, Ghazālī is not original, drawing instead on a number of possible sources, the most prominent of which is al-Makki's *Qūt al-Qulūb.*[50] Once more, however, the influence of Ibn Sīnā and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' might also be at work. In *al-Shifā'* Ibn Sīnā writes that God, "is by His very nature a cause of goodness and perfection insofar as possible and He wills it".[51] The Ikhwān state that God, "has arranged the world's affairs in the most excellent order, and its order in the perfection of wisdom".[52]

In *Jawāhir* Ghazālī offers examples from the animal domain to demonstrate the perfection of the world as we find it. He compares the design of the gnat and the

---

[45] Cf. Q16:68, "*And thy Lord inspired the bee, saying: Choose thou habitations in the hills and in the trees and in that which they thatch.*"

[46] *Jawāhir,* p. 41/69; Eric L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 45-46, notes that Galen's *De usu partium* was translated into Arabic in the 3rd/9th century.

[47] On Ghazālī's arguments that this world is the best of all possible worlds, and the role of the natural order in helping to prove this, see Ormsby, *Theodicy,* pp. 32-51.

[48] For detailed references see Ormsby, *Theodicy,* pp. 35-36.

[49] *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā* (Cairo: Al-Maktabat al-'Ālimiyya, n.d.) p. 34; tr. Burrell and Daher, *The Ninety Nine Beautiful Names of God* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society), pp. 69-70.

[50] The relevant passage from *Iḥyā'* is translated in full by Ormsby, *Theodicy,* pp. 39-41, who draws attention (p. 41) to its close affinity with *Qūt al-Qulūb,* 4 vols., (Cairo: 1351/1932), III: 52.

[51] Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Shifā', Ilāhiyāt,* ed. I. Madkour *et al.,* 2 vols., (Cairo: 1960) II: 415 [Book 9, chap. 6], quoted in Ormsby, *Theodicy,* p. 82. The Arabic text was not available to me.

[52] *Rasā'il,* IV: 72-73; Engl. tr. Ormsby, p. 82.

elephant, both possessing a long proboscis suited to their needs. Ghazālī probably derives this illustration from *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* of al-Jāḥiẓ, where the same discussion occurs.[53] Ghazālī also draws attention to the bee's great skill in producing hexagonal shapes in honeycombs, shapes perfectly suited to the bee's requirements despite its lack of awareness of the superiority of such a shape for its purposes.[54]

Ghazālī's view that the world we inhabit is the best possible design, touched on so briefly in *Jawāhir*, led to a storm of protest in succeeding centuries on account of its apparent infringement of God's omnipotence and freedom of choice. Ghazālī's stance is cited by Frank as another example of his following Ibn Sīnā rather than Ash'arism, and Ormsby gives a detailed account of defenders and critics of Ghazālī on this score.[55] The key point for the purpose of this study, however, is that by referring briefly in *Jawāhir* to the issue of the perfection of the world, Ghazālī introduces into his interpretation of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* a theological theme found in many of his other works.

As noted above, according to Ghazālī the mention of mercy colours not only the phrase preceding it, but also influences reception of what immediately follows it, reference to the Day of Judgment. Here the juxtaposition is said to underline the role of God's mercy in allowing into Paradise those who accept the creed and formal worship of Islam.[56]

4) "*Owner of the Day of Judgment*" (*mālik yawm al-dīn*). These words receive only brief attention. They are an allusion to the life to come, the fourth of Ghazālī's types of Qur'anic verses. They are also an indication of the meaning of kingdom and owner which are among the attributes of divine glory.

---

[53] Ormsby, *Theodicy*, p. 46, n. 43, citing al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, 8 vols., ed. M. Hārūn (Cairo: 1938-43), VII: 169.

[54] This discussion also occurs in *Iqtiṣād*, pp. 88-90; tr. in Michael Marmura, "Ghazālī's Chapter on Divine Power in the *Iqtiṣād*" *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 4 (1994), pp. 304-05, with Arabic pagination marked.

[55] Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System*, pp. 60ff; Ormsby, *Theodicy*, p. 34, who refers to several critics of Ghazālī.

[56] A theme forming the very last discussion of *Iḥyā'*; see IV: 528-32.

5) " *Thee (alone) we worship* " *(iyyāka na'budu)*. For Ghazālī this phrase draws attention to two points. One is the need for sincere worship, which Ghazālī terms the spirit of the straight path.[57] This path encompasses the fifth and sixth types of Qur'anic verse, those encouraging the purification and beautification of the soul. The second point in this phrase is *tawḥīd*, described here as the belief that none other than God deserves worship. Ghazālī then advances his view that *tawḥīd* is achieved by:

> Abandonment of belief in [man's] ability and power, and by the knowledge that God is alone in [the execution of] all works and that man is not independent by himself and without his help".[58]

Ghazālī's statement that God is "alone in all works" (*munfarid bi'l-af'āl kullihā*) is an assertion that God, not human beings, is the agent of actions, a view which he expounds in *Iqtiṣād*, and which opposes the Mu'tazilite view that human beings create their own deeds.[59] This issue bears on the question of whether Ghazālī's understanding of causality is more indebted to Ibn Sīnā than to Ash'arism, a question addressed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Ghazālī once again grasps the opportunity to introduce what he considers to be an important theological affirmation - that God is the author of all acts - into his interpretation of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*. This interpretation of worship and sincerity involves "making the soul beautiful", the sixth of the ten types of verse he finds in the Qur'an, discussed prior to the fifth.

6) " *Thee (alone) we ask for help* " (*wa iyyāka nasta'īn*). According to Ghazālī this phrase alludes to purification from belief in partnership (*shirk*) and from giving attention to man's ability and power. This purification of the soul is the fifth of the ten types of Qur'anic verse. Following reference to this fifth type, Ghazālī then summarises his comments on this phrase and the preceding one, stressing that together

---

[57] Ghazālī refers the reader to Book XXVIII of *Iḥyā'*, *Kitāb Dhamm al-jāh wa'l-riyā'*; *Iḥyā'* III: 268-326.

[58] *Jawāhir*, p. 42/70-71.

[59] *Iqtiṣād*, pp. 80-99; Engl. tr. in Michael Marmura, "Ghazālī's Chapter on Divine Power in the *Iqtiṣād*" *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 4 (1994), pp. 296-315.

they refer to the purification and beautification of the soul outlined in his classification of verses. This analysis, linking these two phrases to the straight path, enables Ghazālī to connect his comments to the next line of the Qur'anic text.

7) "*Show us the straight path*" (*uhdinā li'l-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*). Ghazālī describes this phrase as, "a prayer which is the marrow of worship",[60] and comments that the prayer highlights two points. First, it reminds the believer of the need to pray. Secondly, it emphasises that a person's paramount need is guidance along the straight path.

8) "*The path of those whom thou hast favoured; not the path of those who earn thine anger nor of those who go astray*" (*ṣirāt alladhīna an'amta 'alayhim ghayr al-maghḍūb 'alayhim wa lā'l-ḍālīn*). These phrases cover Ghazālī's seventh and eighth types of verses, the conditions of the saints and of God's enemies. According to Ghazālī they engender both encouragement and awe in the believer.[61] In addition they are a reminder of the division between those whom God has favoured and those who deny or oppose God. Ghazālī refers to the former as "the prophets", although he does not make clear whether he aims to limit the definition of "*those whom thou hast favoured*" to the prophets alone.

As Table 2 and the above discussion have demonstrated, Ghazālī finds in *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* a justification for his classification of Qur'anic verse types. In addition to this, Ghazālī also offers two other brief discussions of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* in the course of *Jawāhir*. These could have been discussed in the previous section of the present chapter, as isolated interpretations, but instead they are included here so as more easily to provide a complete picture of what Ghazālī states regarding *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*.

The first of these two brief treatments is based on an unidentified saying of Muhammad which, according to Ghazālī, states that, "the *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* is the key to

---

[60] Ghazālī adds a cross-reference to Book IX of *Iḥyā', Kitāb al-Adhkār wa'l-da'āwāt, Iḥyā'* I: 295-333.
[61] This balance is also the theme of Book XXXIII of *Iḥyā', Kitāb al-Khawf wa'l-rajā', Iḥyā'* IV: 138-185.

Paradise".[62] Ghazālī draws on this statement to emphasise his view, already outlined, that there are eight types of utterance in the sura. Each one of these, he maintains, is a key to one of the doors of the Paradise of the *'ārifūn*. Presenting the same bi-partite understanding of Paradise as discussed earlier in this chapter, Ghazālī argues that this Paradise of the *'ārifūn* is far superior to Paradise as conceived by the majority, for whom it is a place for satisfying physical appetites.

Later in *Jawāhir* Ghazālī adds one further brief comment on *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*[63] He remarks that the first half of the Sura comprises jewels, that is, verses relevant to knowledge of God, while the second half consists of pearls, verses concerned with following the straight path. This division of religious teaching into the theoretical and practical is based on an Aristotelian approach to knowledge which occurs in a number of Ghazālī's works.[64] This approach is most likely derived from Ibn Sīnā, Ghazālī's primary Aristotelian influence. Ibn Sīnā describes this division in his short work *Fī Aqsām al-'Ulūm al-'Aqliyya*[65] Here he mentions that an example of the theoretical part of knowledge is *tawḥīd*, the knowledge of God's oneness, while the purpose of the practical part is forming an opinion for the sake of action. "Therefore, the end of the theoretical part is truth, and the end of the practical is the good".[66] This description corresponds to Ghazālī's division of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, although Ghazālī has transposed the second Aristotelian category more fully than Ibn Sīnā into Islamic terminology, recasting good acts as knowledge of the straight path (*ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*).

This comment by Ghazālī on the structure of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* introduces the extensive list of Qur'anic verses which forms the second part of *Jawāhir*. Like the

---

[62] *Jawāhir*, pp. 43-44/73-74.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 52/87.
[64] Avner Gil'adi, "On the Origin of Two Key-Terms in Al-Gazzālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*" *Arabica* 36 (1989), pp. 81-92, shows the influence of the Aristotelian categorisation of knowledge on a number of Ghazālī's works.
[65] Ibn Sīnā, *Fī Aqsām al-'ulūm al-'aqliyya* in *Tis' Rasā'il* (Cairo, 1908), pp. 105, 107-108, tr. Muhsin Mahdi, "On the Divisions of the Rational Sciences" in Lerner and Mahdi (eds.), *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, pp. 95-97.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 105/96.

sura, this list is also divided into jewels, or verses relevant to the knowledge of God, and pearls, verses concerned with following the straight path. Hence the structure of Part 2 of *Jawāhir* is also shaped by the Aristotelian distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge.[67]

There are, then, three elements to Ghazālī's interpretation of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* in *Jawāhir*. All three depend on analysing not only the words, but also the structure of the sura. The principal discussion identifies eight types of verse, an analysis which accords with Ghazālī's classification found earlier in *Jawāhir*, and discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. As part of this discussion, there is frequent indirect or direct reference to Ghazālī's theological views on a range of topics, including, most importantly, the perfection of the world and the divine authorship of all actions, as well as God's mercy in judgment, and the need for gratitude, love and prayer. The second aspect of Ghazālī's discussion of the sura is based on this eight-fold division of elements. Ghazālī argues, on the basis of a hadith stating that there are eight doors to Paradise, that *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* is the key to these doors. Thirdly, Ghazālī's division of the sura into two parts, comprising theoretical and practical elements, reflects Aristotelian influence, most probably also absorbed through Ibn Sīnā.

5.3.2 The Throne Verse (Q2:255)

Ghazālī devotes his next short chapter to a consideration of the so-called 'Throne Verse'.[68] This reads:

> *Allah! There is no God save him, the Alive, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh him. Unto him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that intercedeth with him save by his leave? He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them while they encompass nothing of his knowledge save what he will. His throne includeth the heavens and the earth, and he is never weary of preserving them. He is the Sublime, the Tremendous.*

---

[67] As noted by Gil'adi, "Origin", p. 90.
[68] *Jawāhir*, pp. 45-47/75-78.

Ghazālī's discussion of this verse consists of an explanation of an unidentified hadith which states, "The Verse of the Throne is the chief (*sayyida*) of Qur'anic verses".[69] Ghazālī explains the hadith as he explained *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, by means of his classification of verses outlined earlier in *Jawāhir*.[70] His hierarchical scheme locates knowledge of God, that is, of his essence, attributes and works, as the highest form of knowledge. Ghazālī contends that since the Throne Verse is concerned exclusively with these three types of knowledge it deserves the title of the chief of Qur'anic verses. Ghazālī then offers a phrase by phrase interpretation of the verse. In what follows this interpretation is not divided into sub-sections, as in the discussion of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, since some of Ghazālī's comments are very brief.

First, the occurrence of the word 'God' indicates his essence. Ghazālī then discusses the next phrase, "*There is no God save him*" in terms of *tawḥīd*. These phrases are "an indication of the unity of his essence". The description '*the alive the eternal (al-ḥayy al-qayyūm)* indicates that God is not dependent on anything for his existence, while all other things are sustained by him. Thus he is the only necessary rather than contingent being, in the sense that he is the only being to exist "through itself".[71] This aspect of God's existence is central to Ghazālī's understanding of God's utter uniqueness,[72] as is evident when he emphasises that, "this is the ultimate of glory and greatness".[73] There are two strands of possible influence here. One is that of Ibn Sīnā, the other al-Juwaynī, both of whom give prominence to this aspect of the divine being.[74]

---

[69] For a summary of a range of interpretations of the Throne Verse, see Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, vol. I (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1984), pp. 247-52.

[70] *Jawāhir*, pp. 16-17/ 32-33.

[71] Herbert Davidson, "Avicenna's Proof of the Existence of God as a Necessarily Existent Being" in Parviz Morewedge (ed.), *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1979), p. 166. Davidson distinguishes this sense of necessary being from that of "a being whose existence can be established by a prior, logical necessity".

[72] Shehadi, *Unknowable God*, pp. 18-19.

[73] *Jawāhir*, p. 45/76.

[74] Jules Janssens, "Ibn Sīnā's Ideas of Ultimate Realities: Neoplatonism and the Qur'an as Problem-Solving Paradigms in the Avicennian System" *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 10 (1987), p. 262,

The phrase '*Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh him*' shows us, according to Ghazālī, that God is free from the attributes of accidents, since these are impossible in his case. Once again Ghazālī emphasises God's utter difference from creation in every respect.[75] The phrase '*Unto him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth*' is a reference to all his works, and that all these have their origin in him and return to him. This repeats Ghazālī's belief in God's origination of all acts, also asserted in his interpretation of the phrase '*Thee (alone) we worship*' from *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa,* discussed above. The phrase '*Who is he that intercedeth with him save by his leave?*' concerns God's sole sovereignty over granting the right of intercession. This is in part a negation of *shirk,* or associating anything with God.

The phrase '*He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them while they encompass nothing of his knowledge save what he will*' treats God's attribute of knowledge, and that all knowledge is given as a gift in accordance with His will, rather than being gained independently of Him. The phrase, '*His throne includeth the heavens and the earth*' indicates his sovereignty and perfect power. However, writes Ghazālī, there is in this concept of God's throne a secret which cannot be known, since "knowledge of the throne, of its attributes and of the wideness of the heavens and the earth" is a special form of knowledge with which much other knowledge is bound up. Ghazālī here refers indirectly to the controversy over whether the reference to God's throne should be understood literally or figuratively. His reluctance to comment might be based on the approach to

---

remarks that, " *Wājib al-wujūd (bi-dhātihi)* the Necessary Being is the name one may encounter in almost all of Ibn Sīnā's writings". For references to al-Juwaynī, see Frank, *Creation,* p. 17.

[75] Shehadi, *Unknowable God,* pp. 20-21, lists four respects in which God, for Ghazālī, is utterly unique. He is the only one who has any given attribute which he possesses. Secondly he is necessarily, not accidentally unique. Thirdly, he is absolutely unlike regarding the degree of difference, even in attributes which in verbal form can be applied to God and beings other than God. Fourthly, he is absolutely unlike in total nature, that is, the third category, absolute degree of difference, applies to every possible aspect of the Divine being. This summary provides a context for Ghazālī's comment at this point in *Jawāhir.* It is linked to his fundamental understanding of God, which is a negative understanding in the sense that nothing can be affirmed of God. Shehadi's study explores some of the implications of this stance.

interpretation known as *bilā kayf*. Associated with Ash'arism, this phrase is commonly rendered in English as, "without asking how", though it could also be rendered as, "without modalities", emphasising its denoting a "refusal to speculate on the supernatural with the vocabulary of physical experience" rather than simply a call to blind faith.[76] Ghazālī does not invoke this approach explicitly, and avoiding drawing attention to his own caution is unsurprising when it is remembered that *Jawāhir* promises at its outset to teach its readers how to dive for the jewels of the Qur'an.[77] This is one dive which Ghazālī does not attempt.

The phrase "*He is never weary of preserving them*" refers to the divine attributes of power and perfection. For discussion of the phrase "*He is the Most High, the Most Great*" Ghazālī refers the reader to *Al-Maqṣad al-asnā*, stating that he lacks space in *Jawāhir* to discuss these two attributes.[78] Ghazālī then concludes his chapter on the Throne Verse with brief reference to other parts of the Qur'an which contain some of the merits of the Throne Verse. These verses, however - and they include *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* -do not rise to the heights of concentrating the most important elements of the Qur'an in one verse.[79]

In his interpretation of the Throne Verse Ghazālī touches on the issues of God's uncaused and therefore necessary existence, freedom from the attributes of accidents, God's origination of all actions, and a statement to the effect that the understanding of God's Throne must remain a mystery. As in Ghazālī's interpretation of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, his exploration of the Throne Verse is not so much exegesis as a series of references to some of his favourite theological views.

---

[76] A.K. Tuft, "The *Ru'ya* Controversy and the Interpretation of Qur'an Verse VII (*Al-A'rāf*): 143" *Hamdard Islamicus* 6 (1983), p. 32.

[77] See p. 1 of the present chapter.

[78] Ghazālī's exposition of *Al-'Alī* ('The Sublime') in *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā*, pp. 50-52, tr. Burrell and Daher, pp. 102-05, concentrates on the meaning of highest as denoting uncaused. He also mentions that the highest being occupies that place necessarily, not simply comparatively. His comments on *Al-'Aẓīm* ('The Tremendous), pp. 112-14/99-100, define this greatness as that which is inconceivable since it goes beyond every intellectual limit. In sum, Ghazālī emphasises that God is uncaused and unknowable.

[79] The texts mentioned are Q3:18, Q112, Q3:26-7, Q1, Q59:22-24 and Q57:1-6.

5.3.3 *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* (Q112)

This short sura reads:

Say: He is Allah, the One!
Allah the eternally besought of all!
He begetteth not nor was begotten.
And there is none comparable to him.

Ghazālī argues that this sura is equal to one third of the Qur'an, drawing on the hadith, "Say: 'He is God, the One' is equal to a third of the Qur'an".[80] He explains this statement by reference to his own categorisation of Qur'anic material. This time he draws on his division of verses into six, rather than ten categories, wherein knowledge of God's essence, attributes and works is regarded as one category, knowledge of God, rather than three separate categories.[81] Knowledge of God is the first of the three categories which he considers the most important, the others knowledge of the next world and of the straight path. *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* deals with knowledge of God, the first of these, and therefore represents one third of the value of the Qur'an since it addresses one third of the most important concerns (*uṣūl*) of the Qur'an. Abū Zayd criticises Ghazālī for inconsistency in defending his evaluation of the sura as one third of the Qur'an by this appeal to its being one third of the *uṣūl*.[82] Abū Zayd points out that a few lines previously Ghazālī had rejected as demeaning to the Prophet's words the argument that the valuation of the sura as one third of the Qur'an was a device to encourage its recitation, not a factual statement. He thus considers Ghazālī to be shifting between defending the accuracy of the statement and then re-defining it to suit his own interpretation. However, Ghazālī asserts the accuracy of the value of the sura as one third of the Qur'an; it is true, as Abū Zayd notes, that he then explains this

---

[80] *Jawāhir*, p. 47/79; cf. Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2 vols., ed. M.F. 'Abd al-Bāqī (Cairo: 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1972), vol. II, "Kitāb al-Adab", p. 1244. The hadith is also recorded by Abū Dawūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī, and Mālik; see Wensinck *et al.*, (eds.), *Concordance*, I: 296. Quasem, in his translation of *Jawāhir*, p. 79, n. 168, mistakenly attributes this hadith to Muslim, and cites al-Tirmidhī's "Kitāb al-Ḥajj" instead of his "Thawāb al-Qur'ān".

[81] See *Jawāhir*, pp. 10-17/23-33.

[82] Abū Zayd, *Mafhūm al-naṣṣ*, p. 328.

value in terms of his own classification of Qur'anic topics and verses, but this argument remains within the scope of Ghazālī's assertion of the accuracy of the valuation. Abū Zayd's accusation of inconsistency, while understandable, therefore seems overstated.

According to Ghazālī the first two verses of the sura asserts God's unity, and the view that only he can meet human needs. The final two verses eliminate the possibility of origin, branch and equality of any other being with God. His attribute of being "*eternally Besought of all*" also informs people that only He can meet needs. Ghazālī's emphasis on God's oneness and self-sufficiency introduces nothing new or unusual to *Jawāhir*. Rather, Ghazālī once again backs up his earlier classification of verses by means of a Qur'anic example.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Four points can be drawn from Ghazālī's Qur'an interpretations in *Jawāhir*. First, he uses Qur'anic interpretation to justify his hermeneutical theory of Qur'anic verse types. Secondly, he uses his interpretations of short individual verses, and of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* and the Throne Verse, as an opportunity to introduce his views on various theological topics which he considers important. These include the paradisal experience of the *'ārifūn*, the need for *ta'wīl*, the presence in the Qur'an of the principles of every intellectual discipline, God's necessary being, an argument for the perfection of the world, and God's origination of all acts. He refrains, however, from giving his view on one of the most controversial subjects he raises, the nature of the throne.

Thirdly, Ghazālī tends to explain hadiths in accordance with principles which he had earlier derived from his classification of Qur'anic verses. The hadiths

employed are not the foundation on which he builds his classifications of Qur'anic material, but are introduced to support these classifications.

Fourthly, in defending his approach to the Qur'an, Ghazālī is not averse to drawing on a number of sources of support which go unnamed, but whose ideas he would in other contexts disavow. The most prominent of these are the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and the work of Ibn Sīnā.

In Chapter 17 of *Jawāhir*, immediately following his chapters on particular Qur'anic passages, Ghazālī defends the right of the Prophet to identify particular parts of the Qur'an as the most excellent. After asserting Muhammad's complete trustworthiness, he writes in defence of his own prioritising of particular passages:

> Then be mindful of this kind of freedom in dealing with the striking verses of the Qur'an and of what will follow this, in order that your knowledge may be abundant and your mind opened, in which case you will see wonders and signs and be delighted in the Paradise of different kinds of knowledge (*ma'rifa*).[83]

This statement suggests that such knowledge is elusive and requires a "mind opened" in a particular way. It also implies that *Jawāhir* is an attempt to demonstrate the method or path to the acquisition of such knowledge. However, as already noted, Ghazālī's Qur'anic interpretations actually advance ideas found elsewhere in his writings. Despite the underlying assumption of the importance of seeking an inner meaning for Qur'anic verses, in practice no Sufi or other esoteric framework of thought influences the actual interpretations presented in *Jawāhir*. Ghazālī uses the hadiths he cites to confirm the truth of knowledge which he in fact offers to the reader via his classification of the different elements of the Qur'an.

Ghazālī's classification of verses is the only knowledge particular to *Jawāhir*. More than other elements in Ghazālī's text, this classification must therefore bear the weight of his opening claims, quoted at the beginning of the present chapter, "to guide you to the manner of these people" who, "sail to the midst of the fathomless ocean of

---

[83] *Jawāhir*, p. 49/83, with alteration.

these meanings in order to see their wonders".[84] The verse classification of *Jawāhir* does not in fact attempt to guide in this way, by introducing, for example, a range of new or speculative interpretations. On the contrary, as is evident to those familiar with Ghazālī's other writings, *Jawāhir* leads the reader on a tour of Ghazālī's existing theological interests. Abū Zayd's words about "fried ice", quoted at the outset of this chapter, therefore apply particularly well to *Jawāhir*; since in this work Ghazālī combines elements of Ash'arite and other interpretations with a framework of promises and terms drawn from Sufism.

[84] *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9/19-20.

CHAPTER SIX

AL-QISṬĀS AL-MUSTAQĪM

> Yes, when they [the philosophers] say that the logical sciences must be mastered, this is true. But logic is not confined to them.[1]

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In *Al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm* (*The Correct Balance*) Ghazālī seeks to demonstrate that syllogistic logic is found in the Qur'an, and is therefore a legitimate tool for Muslim theologians to use.[2] Put differently, he wishes to show that revelation and reason do not conflict because revelation incorporates reason. Ghazālī takes the phrase providing the work's title from the Qur'an (Q17:35 and 26:182), in order to emphasise that his subject matter is indeed Qur'anic. In this analysis of *Qisṭās* the first aim is to explore what prompted Ghazālī to use the Qur'an in support of syllogistic logic. This puts the specific Qur'anic interpretations in the context of the thought of Ghazālī and of his predecessors. The second aim is to present and examine the Qur'anic interpretations which Ghazālī offers as evidence for his argument. In order to achieve the first of these aims the preliminary discussion of the purpose of *Qisṭās* will be longer than the comparable discussions of other texts considered in this thesis. However, this extended treatment is necessary in order properly to understand the role of the Qur'anic interpretations occurring in *Qisṭās*

In relation to the second aim, the discussion of interpretations is shaped around three aspects of Ghazālī's own presentation in *Qisṭās*. Ghazālī converts some Qur'anic

---

[1] *Tahāfut*, p. 9.

[2] *Al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm* in M. Al-Kurdī (ed.), *Al-Jawāhir al-ghawālī min rasā'il al-Imām ḥujjat al-Islām al-Ghazālī* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Sa'āda, 1353/1934), pp. 156-203. Translations are quoted from McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment*, Appendix III, pp. 287-332, unless otherwise stated. Where two page references are given for *Qisṭās*, the first refers to the Arabic text, the second to the translation. Syllogistic logic as it occurs in *Qisṭās* will be explained in detail below. A typical example would be: 'All A is B; all B is C; therefore all A is C'.

verses into syllogistic form, and draws on a number of other verses in support of his case for the Qur'anic vindication of logic. Both groups of verses are considered below. Thirdly, the present chapter also seeks to identify the hermeneutical framework within which Ghazālī presents his chosen verses, and to compare this framework and its use to those in other works by Ghazālī.

Four questions form the basis for the present discussion. First, what is Ghazālī's principal reason for writing *Qisṭās*? Secondly, the related issues of the accuracy, plausibility and sincerity of Ghazālī's interpretations require consideration. Thirdly, what hermeneutical framework is presented, and, fourthly, how does *Qisṭās* understand the Qur'an to provide certain knowledge? The focus of the chapter is thus on issues relating to the Qur'anic material in *Qisṭās*, rather than on attempting more general consideration of logic except where such consideration is relevant to discussion of Ghazālī's use of the Qur'an.

Early in *Qisṭās* Ghazālī gives a warning regarding *ta'wīl* and the correct understanding of the term 'balance' in the Qur'an, "So fear God and do not interpret arbitrarily".[3] However, the limited number of scholars who have made *Qisṭās* the subject of attention characteristically regard Ghazālī's own interpretations in this work sceptically. Among brief remarks, McCarthy describes *Qisṭās* as, "a somewhat curious attempt to Islamicize, or 'Quranize', some of the Aristotelian, and Stoic, logic which he expounded more 'scientifically' in others of his works".[4] Madkour comments that Ghazālī "pretends" to draw his list of syllogisms from the Qur'an,[5] while Watt calls the interpretations "somewhat forced" and asks of the exposition of the first figure of the categorical syllogism, "Why should a man like al-Ghazālī, capable of writing a full technical exposition of Aristotelian logic, spend time on

---

[3] *Qisṭās*, p. 158/289. The Arabic text reads, "*Fa'ataqa Allāh wa lā tata'sifu fi'l-ta'wīl*".
[4] McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment*, p. 287.
[5] Ibrahim Madkour, "La logique d'Aristote chez les Mutakallimūn" in Parviz Morewedge (ed.), *Islamic Theology and Philosophy* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1979), p. 61.

trivialities of this kind?"[6] Watt's question will be addressed later in this chapter.[7] Marmura's language is more non-committal, describing the work as Ghazālī's, "most drastic effort" to convince Ash'arites of the acceptability of logic.[8] Brewster and Chelhot both give an overview of the work in introductions to their respective translations.[9]

Two more substantial studies are those of al-Sayyed and Kleinknecht. Al-Sayyed explores *Qisṭās* in the context of his broad-ranging analysis of Ghazālī's logical writings in general.[10] After a survey of logic in the Islamic world up to the time of Ghazālī, al-Sayyed's first main chapter states that Ghazālī's attitude to logic was consistent throughout his career, and that his distinctive idea was to argue that logic was religiously neutral, being an instrument that could be used in the service of any cause, including Islam. Al-Sayyed's next chapter examines the relationship of logic and certain knowledge, drawing primarily on *Mi'yār al-'Ilm* to outline, for example, the types of certain premisses. After a chapter on *Qisṭās,* to be discussed presently, al-Sayyed adds a discussion of logic and jurisprudence based on *Mustaṣfā.* This considers Ghazālī's introduction into *uṣūl al-fiqh* of Aristotelian approaches to definition, induction and inference. Al-Sayyed notes Ghazālī's view that rational and legal arguments can be reduced to propositions which are similar in form though different in matter, thus allowing the form of logic to be utilised in discussing legal questions.

---

[6] Watt, *Muslim Intellectual* (Edinburgh: EUP, 1963), pp. 69, 70.
[7] See below, pp. 162ff.
[8] Michael Marmura, "Ghazālī's Attitude to the Secular Sciences and Logic" in G. Hourani (ed.), *Essays in Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany, New York: SUNY, 1975), p. 103.
[9] ; D.P. Brewster, *The Just Balance* (Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1978), pp. xi-xxiii. Victor Chelhot, " *'Al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm'* et la connaissance rationelle chez Gazālī" *Bulletin D'Etudes Orientales* 15 (1955-1957), pp. 1-36.
[10] A. Al-Sayyed *Al-Ghazālī's Views on Logic* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1981).

Al-Sayyed's discussion of *Qisṭās*, like the rest of his thesis, is short on analysis, being largely devoted to a descriptive account of Ghazālī's text. However, he does examine the examples of syllogisms which Ghazālī draws from the Qur'an. Al-Sayyed is generally sceptical concerning Ghazālī's Qur'anic interpretations in *Qisṭās*, stating that he gives verses wider application than the actual context of the words can yield and terming the result "unconvincing".[11] At the same time, he explains Ghazālī's use of these verses by referring to the Qur'an's inspirational power, which, combined with Ghazālī's concern to promote logic, led him to interpretations which could have a "successful" effect on the reader.[12] Without more elaboration than al-Sayyed provides, however, the meaning of this assertion is unclear.

Kleinknecht, in a careful study of *Qisṭās*, takes a notably more positive attitude than other scholars to Ghazālī's Qur'anic interpretations.[13] She terms them an example of *tamthīl*, or figurative interpretation,[14] and also refers to the work's charm, plausibility and appeal.[15] She stresses that *Qisṭās* should be seen as a linguistic experiment, rather than an attempt at rigorous exposition of the syllogism, in view of its focus on the justification of the divine origin of logic rather than on a systematic exposition of the subject.[16] Kleinknecht also argues that, for Ghazālī in *Qisṭās*, syllogisms provide knowledge of God, "in the sense of Ghazālī's Sufi-soaked piety", a claim to be discussed below.[17] However, Kleinknecht's exposition of *Qisṭās*, while useful, does not attempt to explain the motives behind Ghazālī's distinctive Qur'anic

---

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 184-5.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[13] Angelika Kleinknecht, "*Al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm*: Eine Ableitung der Logik aus dem Koran", in S.M. Stern, A. Hourani and V. Brown (eds.), *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Cassirer, 1972), pp. 159-87.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 166.
[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 182-83.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 172.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 180; cf. below, pp. 36f.

interpretations. Identifying these motives is the main task of the following preliminary discussion.

6.2 PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF THE TEXT

Authenticity

The authenticity of *Qisṭās* has never been questioned. The earliest manuscript dates from 544/1149-50,[18] within forty years of Ghazālī's death in 505/1111. *Qisṭās* is also accepted as authentic by both Bouyges and Watt,[19] mentions *Jawāhir*,[20] and is itself mentioned in *Fayṣal* and *Munqidh*.[21] In addition, as will be argued below, *Qisṭās* builds on ideas expressed more briefly elsewhere in Ghazālī's works.

Date

It is difficult to determine an exact date of composition for *Qisṭās*, though it is later than *Jawāhir*, which it mentions.[22] Kleinknecht, citing Bouyges, assumes a date of 497/1103,[23] although Bouyges himself is less specific, stating only that a date before Ghazālī's return to teaching in Nishapur in 1106 is probable.[24] No evidence is given by Bouyges for these dates, but the fact that *Qisṭās* pre-dates *Fayṣal* lends some support to this view. Hourani offers no specific date, but the placement of *Qisṭās* in his list of Ghazālī's works would fit a date before 1106.[25] While there is thus some consensus, these dates must be regarded as provisional until firmer evidence emerges.

---

[18] Chelhot, "*Qisṭās*", p. 10.
[19] Bouyges, *Essai de Chronologie*, p. 57; Watt "Authenticity", pp. 31, 44.
[20] For references, see below, p. 169.
[21] *Fayṣal*, p. 20/158; *Munqidh*, p. 33/88.
[22] See references in previous section of this chapter.
[23] Kleinknecht, "Ableitung", p. 159.
[24] Bouyges, *Essai de Chronologie*, p. 57.
[25] Hourani, "Revised Chronology", p. 300.

Purpose

In what follows, an attempt will be made to answer the question quoted above from Watt concerning what led Ghazālī to "spend time on trivialities of this kind."[26] Watt's own answer is that the text is written to explain logic to those incapable of fully grasping the subject in any other way.[27] This solution seems inadequate, however, for reasons to be outlined below, and the following discussion probes the issue on two levels. First, which was Ghazālī's principal concern in writing *Qisṭās*, logic or Ismā'īlī thought? The answer to this influences the answer to the second question, concerning the underlying motivation in taking on such a concern.

The question of Ghazālī's principal purpose is complicated by the fact that *Qisṭās* has two different sets of opponents in view. One of the two groups consisted of those who already supported, or who were considering support for, the Ismā'īlīs.[28] The other comprised those who opposed or ignored the use of syllogistic logic, as many theologians and jurists did. Ghazālī aims to convince this group of the Qur'anic basis of syllogisms,[29] and it is necessary to determine which of these two groups was foremost amongst Ghazālī's concerns.

Qisṭās is composed as a debate betwen the author and a member of a sect which Ghazālī terms *Ahl al-Ta'līm* or 'People of Authoritative Teaching'.[30] This group is identified by Ghazālī's hypothetical interlocutor as the Ismā'īlīs of Alamūt, or Nizārīs, led by Ḥaṣan-i Ṣabbāḥ, when he refers to, "our master, the lord of the stronghold of Alamut".[31] This group was characterised by authoritarian leadership and

---

[26] See above, p. 159.
[27] Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, p. 70.
[28] As Watt notes, *Muslim Intellectual*, pp. 70-71, polemic literature can be aimed not only at adherents of a position, but at those considering adopting it.
[29] On attitudes to logic amongst Muslim thinkers, see below, pp. 14ff. On the logic of the *mutakallimūn*, see below, pp. 9-10.
[30] *Qisṭās*, p. 156/287. Ghazālī argues in *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 17, tr. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment*, pp. 182-83, that this is the most appropriate of the various terms for the group also known as Bāṭinites.
[31] *Qisṭās*, p. 178/309.

opposition to the Sunni Seljuqs, opposition which could involve assassinating important figures.[32] No record by Ḥasan-i Sabbāḥ of the *ta'līm,* or authoritative teaching, survives but a summary is preserved in the heresiography of al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), *Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal*.[33] As a result, historians are dependent on the integrity of al-Shahrastānī's summary, which cannot be evaluated. Al-Shahrastānī states that he has translated a Persian account of the *ta'līm* into Arabic for his readers, and presents the following as its main points.[34] First, Ḥasan asserts the need for a teacher, rather than reliance on reason, in order to understand religious truths. Secondly, there must be only one teacher rather than several. Thirdly, the teacher must be accepted without being able to demonstrate his reliability. Fourthly, in answer to the dilemma raised by the third point, the authority of the teacher could be known through the being of the imam for whom he speaks. This is because once the logic of the first three points is accepted, then in relation to the imam:

> The very nature of his claims are his own proof. He offers himself as fulfilling and in turn making intelligible the need of men for an imām, which is up against a blank wall until the imām presents himself in this particular logical relationship, and by his existence makes everything clear.[35]

One teacher speaks for this infallible imam.

---

[32] For a general account of the Ismā'īlīs, see Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: their history and doctrine* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990). For discussion of the nature of the Seljuq response to their threat during the period in which Ghazālī produced most of his writings, see Carole Hillenbrand, "The Power Struggle Between the Saljuqs and the Ismā'īlīs of Alamūt, 487-518/1094-1124: The Saljuq Perspective" in Farhad Daftary (ed.), *Medieval Ismā'īlī History and Thought* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), pp. 205-20. A contemporary account of the rise of the Ismā'īlīs is given by the Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk in his *Siyāsat-Nāma* (*The Book of Government*), tr. H. Darke (London: Curzon, 2002), pp. 208-31.

[33] Al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal*, partial translation by A.K. Kazi and J.G. Flynn, *Muslim Sects and Divisions* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1984). The relevant passage is found in *Muslim Sects,* pp. 167-70. This passage is also translated in Marshall Hodgson, *The Order of the Assassins* (The Hague: Mouton & co., 1955), pp. 325-28, and discussed in *ibid.*, pp. 54-57.

[34] These points are distilled in the form given above by Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs,* pp. 369-70

[35] Hodgson, *Assassins,* p. 56.

It is undeniable that anti-Ismā'īlī writing is a prominent strand of Ghazālī's work, notably in *Fadā'iḥ al-Bāṭiniyya*.[36] Opposition to the Ismā'īlīs is also clearly evident in *Qisṭās*, so much so that Brewster comments that, in comparison to the refutation of Ismā'īlī teaching, the promotion of logic is "a subsidiary theme", albeit "of considerable importance".[37] Furthermore, Ghazālī's opposition to Ismā'īlīsm acquires added prominence from the work's structure as a debate with a representative of the sect. In this matter Ghazālī took advantage of the lack of any prescribed genre for logical works by borrowing from *kalām* the form of the disputation (*munāẓara*) to dramatise his criticisms of Ismā'īlīsm.[38]

However, although *Qisṭās* is evidently written in part as an ideological offensive against the Ismā'īlīs, the importance of this purpose of the work should not be overstated. Ghazālī makes clear in his conclusion where his priorities lie, in expressing the hope that others might:

> Find profit in the contents of these conversations by the comprehension of *things more sublime than the correction of the doctrine of the devotees of ta'līm*. That then, was not my aim (emphasis added).[39]

This remark would seem to put beyond doubt that arguing for the acceptability of syllogistic logic within Islamic theology is the principal aim of *Qisṭās*. Furthermore, Ghazālī's brief conclusion concentrates entirely on remarks which emphasise his method of presenting logic in an unusual way. He states, "Beware of changing this order, and of stripping these ideas of this apparel!"[40] There is no mention of the

---

[36] See n. 24 above. For discussion of an Ismā'īlī reply to this work, see Henri Corbin, "The Ismā'īlī Response to the Polemic of Ghazālī", pp. 69-98.

[37] D.P. Brewster, *The Just Balance*, p. xx.

[38] Dimitri Gutas, "Aspects of Literary Form and Genre in Arabic Logical Works" in Charles Burnett (ed.), *Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts: The Syrian, Arabic and Medieval Latin Traditions*, Warburg Institute Surveys of Texts XXIII (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1993), p. 31, states that, "Philosophy and logic in medieval Islam were not subjects taught in formal institutions of learning, and hence did not acquire, or develop, rigid scholastic forms and genres, as they did, for example, in medieval Latin culture". On *munāẓara*, see *EI (2)*, VIII: 565ff.

[39] *Qisṭās*, p. 202/331. Cf. Chelhot, "*Qisṭās*", p. 6, who draws attention to this passage.

[40] *Ibid.*

Ismā'īlīs other than the comment already quoted which displaces them from the centre of Ghazālī's concern.

While the frequent attention which Ghazālī pays to logic in other works is not in itself proof that it is the main concern of *Qisṭās,* such attention does provide corroborating evidence to support the view argued for here, and to help to explain the focus of Ghazālī's concluding remarks. Ghazālī's interest in logic first emerges in the logical sections of *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa,* his summary or interpretive translation of Ibn Sīnā's *Dānesh nāmeh.*[41] Logic is then exempted from his criticisms of the philosophers in *Tahāfut al-falāsifa.*[42] Ghazālī provides an exposition of essentially Avicennan logic in *Mi'yar al-'ilm* and *Miḥakk al-naẓar;*[43] while there is discussion and use of syllogisms in *Iqtiṣād.*[44] After the distinctive treatment of logic in the Qur'an in *Qisṭās, Munqidh* makes two statements concerning the subject. One is that the philosophers' logic differs from that used by theologians only in its terminology and in its greater detail. Secondly, logic is a neutral tool which presupposes no prior commitment to any particular view of God and the world.[45] Finally, Ghazālī argues for the importance of logic in the introduction to *Mustaṣfā.*[46] *Qisṭās,* then, while Ghazālī's only attempt to argue for the Qur'anic basis of logic, is a particular

---

[41] *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa,* ed. Shaykh al-Dīn Ṣabrī al-Kurdī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1912), pp. 1-71. The first two of the five parts of the logical discussion in *Maqāṣid* (pp. 1-19) are translated into German by Georg Beer as *Al-Gazzālī's Maḳāṣid al-Falāsifat* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1888). Jules Janssens, "Le *Danesh-Nameh* d'Ibn Sīnā: un texte à revoir?" *Bulletin de Philosophie Medievale* 28 (1986), pp. 163-77, discusses the dependence of *Maqāṣid* on *Dānesh Nāmeh.*

[42] *Tahāfut,* pp. 8-10.

[43] *Mi'yār al-'Ilm,* ed. M.S. al-Kurdī (Cairo: Zakī al-Kurdī, 1329/1911); *Miḥakk al-Naẓar,* ed. M. Ḥalabī and M. Qabbanī (Cairo: Adabiyya Press, n.d.).

[44] *Iqtiṣād,* pp. 15-20 and *passim.*

[45] *Munqidh,* p. 22; tr. McCarthy in *Freedom and Fulfilment,* pp. 74-75. Michael Marmura, "Ghazālī's Attitude to the Secular Sciences and Logic", in G. Hourani (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1975), p. 111, points out that Ghazālī does not succeed fully in demonstrating the validity of these claims.

[46] *Mustaṣfā* I: 10-55. For a discussion of the influence of the logical introduction to *Mustaṣfā'* on subsequent jurists see Wael b. Hallaq, "Logic, Formal Arguments and Formalization of Arguments in Sunnī Jurisprudence", *Arabica* 37 (1990), pp. 315-58.

expression of his general interest in logic, a subject which clearly pre-occupies him for much of his career.

The syllogistic logic which Ghazālī advocates contrasts with the logic of the *mutakallimūn*, who emphasised the hypothetical, since the *mutakallimūn* preferred to argue from assumptions based in revelation and tradition rather than *a priori* reasoning.[47] The three main types of reasoning in *kalām* can be briefly summarised.[48] One is the analogy of the hidden to the evident (*qiyās al-ghā'ib 'alā'l-shāhid*), in which a common quality is considered to be shared by two entities. For example, all created things have a maker, so, since the world is created, it too must have a maker. Another type of reasoning is investigation and disjunction (*al-sabr wa'l-taqsīm*). This is in fact equivalent to the separative conditional syllogism, to be discussed below,[49] and is based on the approach, 'A is either B or C or...; but A is not C or ...; therefore A is B'. A third type of *kalām* reasoning involves deduction of conclusions from premisses (*intāj al-muqāddimāt li'l-natā'ij*). This differs from the syllogism in that there is only one premiss, rather than two, from which a conclusion is inferred.

> *Kalām* logic, then, will never pretend to state a priori what can or cannot happen in the world. Rather, it must work from hypotheticals: 'Given this, our expectation would be that'... in a *world radically dependent* on discrete and ultimately arbitrary *acts of grace*; little, perhaps nothing, remains for the critical 'always' and 'never' to govern. Every event is now thought of historically rather than generically or specifically (emphasis added). [50]

Regarding events in this world as dependent on acts of grace made the *mutakallimūn* wary of Aristotelian logic's belief in essential efficient causes. Ghazālī, however, set himself the task, in *Qisṭās* and other works, of advancing syllogistic logic while never abandoning Ash'arite occasionalism for Aristotelian essential causes.[51]

---

[47] Goodman, *Avicenna*, p. 194.
[48] See al-Sayyed, *Logic*, pp. 105ff.
[49] See below, pp. 183f.
[50] Goodman, *Avicenna*, p. 193.
[51] Michael Marmura, "Ghazālī on Ethical Premises" *Philosophical Forum* 1 (1968), p. 393, notes that one of the main purposes of *Mi'yār* is, "to render Avicennian logic acceptable and palatable to the Ash'arites". Marmura, "Ghazālī and Demonstrative Science", *Journal of the History of*

The conclusion that the principal purpose of *Qisṭās* is to advocate syllogistic logic to scholars hostile to it indirectly calls into question Watt's discussion of the target audience of *Qisṭās*. Watt suggests that Ghazālī writes for the less educated section of the populace, who could not cope with the full complexity of logic. For Watt, explaining logic to those who could not understand it is what prompts Ghazālī to "spend time on trivialities of this kind".[52] However, a relatively uneducated audience for *Qisṭās* is highly unlikely given both the degree of complexity found in the text, and Ghazālī's references to three different groups of people, the elite (*al-khawwāṣṣ*), the common people (*al-'awāmm*), and thirdly the contentious wranglers (*ahl al-jadal wa'l-shaghab*), groups which need to be persuaded of anything by different methods.[53] Since Ghazālī's aim is to explain how he aims to convince the elite (by syllogistic logic), there seems little reason for him to explain this to people whom he deems unable to comprehend such a method of approach.[54] The present chapter will assume that *Qisṭās* is aimed at changing the minds of those Muslim scholars who held a negative view of syllogistic logic.

While Ghazālī's support for logic, rather than condemnation of the Ismā'īlīs, is the principal aim of *Qisṭās*, the two are closely related. For Ghazālī, the authority of the Ismā'īlī infallible teacher as a source of certain knowledge is replaced by the authority of Muhammad, since he was the bringer of the Qur'an, itself a source of certain knowledge because of its use of syllogisms. So Ghazālī accepts the Ismā'īlī

Philosophy 3 (1965), pp. 183-204, shows how Ghazālī in *Mi'yār* deals with the apparent tension between accepting both demonstration by means of syllogisms and also occasionalism.

[52] Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, p. 70.

[53] *Qisṭās*, p. 189/318. Keddie, "Symbol and Sincerity in Islam", p. 57, n. 1, draws attention to Ghazālī's borrowing the general idea of an elite and the masses, each requiring different treatment, from the philosophers. She quotes as an example a passage from Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā': al-Ilāhiyāt*, chap. 10, which is translated by Michael Marmura, "Healing: Metaphysics X", in R. Lerner and M. Mahdi (ed.), *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1972 edn.), pp. 100-101.

[54] Brewster, Appendix III, p. 127, of *The Just Balance*.

category of the authoritative teacher, but argues that Muhammad is the rightful holder of such a title.

Taking the defence of the syllogism as an important element of *Qisṭās* is a stance which gains support from remarks in two other works by Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* and *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*. Although Ghazālī does not make the connection explicitly, *Qisṭās* can be seen as providing justification for the statement in *Tahāfut* quoted at the outset of the present chapter. Logic is not, "confined to" the philosophers, it is not their exclusive preserve, but instead can be used by others, including Muslim theologians.

In addition to this implicit connection with *Tahāfut*, Ghazālī implicitly and explicitly relates *Qisṭās* to *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, although he does not make entirely clear the nature of the relationship between the ideas of these two works. As previously noted, Ghazālī states in *Jawāhir* that the principles of all branches of knowledge are contained in some way in the Qur'an.[55] In *Qisṭās* he writes:

> All sciences (*'ulūm*) are not present in the Qur'an explicitly, but they are present in it potentially (*bi'l-quwwa*) because of what it contains of the just balances by means of which the doors of limitless wisdom are opened.[56]

By "just balances" Ghazālī refers to various forms of the syllogism. For Ghazālī, this presence of the balances in the Qur'an proves true the verse, "*Not a thing, fresh or withered, but it is in a Book Manifest*" (6:59).[57] The reader of *Qisṭās* who is also familiar with *Jawāhir* can infer from the reference in *Qisṭās* to "all sciences" in the above quotation that syllogisms are the explanation for the claim in *Jawāhir* that all knowledge is potentially present in the Qur'an.[58]

---

[55] See above, p. 138.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 195/324, altering McCarthy's English translation of *'ulūm* from "knowledges", so as to make clear the connection with *Jawāhir*. This connection emerges clearly in the quotations from *Qisṭās* presented in the next paragraph of the present chapter.

[57] Adopting McCarthy's translation of the verse, p. 324. Pickthall's, "Naught of wet or dry but (it is noted) in a clear record", where 'clear record' for *kitāb mubīn* makes clearer the reference to the Qur'an than Pickthall's translation.

[58] See Chapter 5 of this thesis.

There are also three statements which link *Qisṭās* and *Jawāhir* explicitly.

> And just as in the Qur'an there are the balances of all the sciences, so also in it are the keys of all the sciences - as I have indicated in [my] book *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*.[59]

Men of insight, who understand syllogistic logic:

> Know by the like of this method the veracity of the Apostle and the truth of the Qur'an, as I have mentioned to you, and take from it the keys of all the sciences along with the balances, as I have mentioned in [my] book *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*[60]

After mentioning the subjects of Ismā'īlī *ta'līm* and the Imam, Ghazālī writes:

> I add for you to this - if you could give up servile conformism - the teaching of the marvels of the sciences and the mysteries of the Qur'an, and I deduce from it [Qur'an] for you the keys of all the sciences, as I have deduced from it the balances of all the sciences, according to my indication of the manner of the branching of the sciences from it in [my] book *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*... from it I deduce all the secrets of the sciences.[61]

The following remark indirectly sheds light on Ghazālī's views on the relationship of the keys and the balances.

> The clear primary cognitions (*'ulūm*) are the principles [for knowing] of the obscure and hidden cognitions and they are their seeds. But they are to be cultivated by one who is expert in cultivating by ploughing and inferring the pattern of coupling them.[62]

In this passage Ghazālī refers to "clear primary cognitions", that is, propositions. They are the seeds which can develop into further knowledge if they are cultivated in the right way, that is, by coupling them through syllogistic logic. "Cultivating by ploughing and inferring the pattern of coupling them" (*al-istithmār bi'l-ḥirātha wa'l-istintāj bi-iqā' al-izdiwāj baynahumā*) refers to the deployment of syllogistic logic. The potentiality of the propositions is referred to as seeds needing cultivation, but Ghazālī could equally have used the image of keys needing turning.

---

[59] *Qisṭās*, p. 177/308.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 195/325.
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 196/325.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 165-66/296, with alteration.

In using the term *istithmār* to describe the use of syllogisms, Ghazālī, perhaps deliberately, borrows a term used in the literature of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, which employs the language of cultivation as a metaphor for the formulation of the law.[63] It is possible that in using the term *istithmār*, Ghazālī seeks to enhance the Islamic credentials of syllogistic logic by associating it with the unquestionably Islamic discipline of *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

Even if Ghazālī does not examine thoroughly the connection he sees between *Jawāhir* and *Qisṭās*, *Jawāhir* does outline the principle that the Qur'an encompasses all knowledge. Ghazālī in *Qisṭās* regards syllogisms as the answer to how this can be so, putting in context the focus of *Qisṭās* on syllogistic logic.

Having examined Ghazālī's goals in writing *Qisṭās*, and concluding that the promotion of logic was his principal aim, it is also necessary to explore possible underlying motives for Ghazālī's making this his target. A brief review of differing Muslim attitudes to Greek logic at the time of Ghazālī's writing will help to illuminate his reasons for promoting logic in Qur'anic terms.

Logic (*manṭiq*) was amongst the disciplines known by Muslim writers as *'ulūm al-awā'il* ('sciences of the ancients'), or also *'ulūm al-qudamā'* ('sciences of the ancients) or *al-'ulūm al-qadīma* ('ancient sciences).[64] These included medicine, astrology, arithmetic, geometry and music. Until recently, the account given by Goldziher of the attitude of Muslim scholars towards logic and the other disciplines has been widely accepted.[65] Goldziher portrays a widespread negative reaction to

---

[63] Weiss, *Spirit*, pp. 22, 89; cf., for example, the term's use in *Mustaṣfā* I:7.

[64] Goldziher, "The Attitude of Orthodox Islam towards the Ancient Sciences" in Merlin I. Swartz (ed. and tr.) *Studies in Islam* (New York: O.U.P., 1981), pp. 185-209. The terms cited above are discussed on p. 185.

[65] Goldziher's article is referred to as, "the classic study of Muslim oppostion to the Greek sciences in general and logic in particular" by Nicholas Rescher, *The Development of Arabic Logic* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964), p. 40, n. 10. Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 166, in presenting a critique of the work, notes that, "it has been constantly referred to as the expert opinion on the subject".

these Greek disciplines on the part of a supposed 'Islamic orthodoxy', with only a few exceptional figures accepting and seeking to promote logic and the other disciplines. Gutas, however, challenges the idea of any such unified 'orthodoxy', and details how the various hostile reactions to logic recorded by Goldziher can be explained by specific historical circumstances which gave rise to particularly negative reactions. Gutas therefore posits a current of support for the ancient sciences greater than that portrayed by Goldziher.[66]

Gutas' view notwithstanding, the very existence of advocates for logic indicates the existence of opposition to it.[67] A detailed study of the socio-political influences on the intellectual currents of Ghazālī's period remains to be written, but some suspicion of Greek sciences in general can be assumed as the context for Ghazālī's defence of mathematics in both *Tahāfut* and *Munqidh*.[68] *Qisṭās* certainly indicates Ghazālī's perception of the need for greater acceptance of syllogistic rather than *kalām* logic in religious circles.

In addition to the negative stimulus of a climate hostile towards logic, was there a positive precedent in the writings of predecessors for Ghazālī's attempt to promote syllogisms in Islamic terms? Some precursors can be identified, although lines of influence are in most cases difficult to trace. Al-'Āmirī's *I'lām bi-Manāqib al-Islām* expounds the benefits of philosophy for religion, while al-Tawḥīdī's *Risāla fī'l-'Ulūm* defends logic specifically.[69] Furthermore, some writers attempt to present

---

[66] Gutas, *Greek Thought*, pp. 165-75, discusses Goldziher's article. For an argument foreshadowing the more positive place attributed to logic by Gutas, see A.I. Sabra, "The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement", *History of Science* 25 (1987), pp. 223-43.

[67] More research might resolve the tension between the views of Goldziher and Gutas. Wilferd Madelung, in his review of Gutas' book (*Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 10 (1999), pp. 391-92) terms Gutas' assessment of opposition to the foreign sciences a "distinct underestimation" (p. 392).

[68] *Tahāfut*, pp. 8-9; *Munqidh*, pp. 20-21, tr. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment*, p. 73.

[69] Cited by Gerhard Endress, "The Defense of Reason: The Plea for Philosophy in the Religious Community", *ZGAIW* 6 (1990), pp. 25-26, who gives references for these works.

philosophy as belonging to an Arab or, like Ghazālī, an Islamic heritage. Al-Kindī (d. shortly after 256/870) devised a genealogy purporting to show that the Greek sciences were in fact Arab in origin, since the originators of the Greek and Arab races were brothers.[70] Al-Fārābī apparently composed a work, no longer extant, comprising a defence of logic based on sayings of the Prophet.[71] Another work seeking to reconcile Greek philosophy and Islam is Nasir Khusraw's *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*.[72] Ghazālī gives no indication of awareness of such works, though it is possible that he had seen some of them.

One notable precursor of Ghazālī was Ibn Ḥazm (384-456/994-1064). His *al-Taqrib li-ḥudūd al-manṭiq wa-madkhaluhu* (*Facilitating the understanding of the Rules of Logic and Introduction to it*) commends logic, although Ibn Ḥazm's purpose is solely to enhance the practice of theology.[73] Ibn Ḥazm's intention regarding unfamiliar expressions was to, "present the meaning of these in terms that are easy and straightforward to understand",[74] a purpose which Ghazālī would have endorsed. However, it is not known whether Ghazālī was familiar with Ibn Ḥazm's logical writings, although there is a general reference to Ibn Ḥazm in *Al-Maqṣad al-asnā*.[75] It is noteworthy in the context of the present study that Ibn Ḥazm adopts logic as a means of analysing language, in order to interpret the Qur'an, an approach not taken by Ghazālī.[76]

---

[70] Gutas, *Greek Thought*, p. 88, who does not cite his source. On al-Kindī's attempts to reconcile philosophy and Islam, see also Endress, pp. 4ff.

[71] Goldziher, "Attitude", p. 188.

[72] See Alice Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw: The Ruby of Badakhshan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 14 and 258, n. 15 for references to this work.

[73] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Taqrīb li-ḥudūd al-manṭiq*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: 1959), cited by Anwar Chejne, "Ibn Ḥazm of Cordova on Logic" *JAOS* 104 (1984), pp. 57-72, which includes a summary of Ibn Ḥazm's text. Much of this article also occurs as part of Chejne's book, *Ibn Ḥazm* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1982), pp. 157ff.

[74] Ibn Ḥazm, *Taqrīb*, p. 6, tr. in Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 270.

[75] *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā*, p. 83, tr. Burrell and Daher, *Ninety Nine Beautiful Names*, pp. 175-76. Chejne, *Ibn Ḥazm*, pp. 15-16, briefly lists affinities and differences between the ideas of Ghazālī and Ibn Ḥazm.

[76] See *EI (2)*, "Manṭiḳ", VI: 444-46.

Ghazālī's designation of logic as a 'balance' is not original. For example, the term *mīzān* is used to denote logic in the debate in Baghdad in 320/932 on the merits of logic and grammar between Abū Bishr Mattā and al-Sīrāfī.[77] A more direct influence on Ghazālī, however, might once more be Ibn Sīnā. He suggests *tarāzū* ('scales') as a Persian name for logic in *Dānesh Nāmeh*, stating that, "The science of logic is the science of the scales".[78] He also uses the terms *mi'yār* ('gauge'), *mikyāl* ('measure'), and *mīzān* ('balance') in *Al-Shifā'*.[79] Ibn Sīnā experiments with a range of terms to replace the usual *manṭiq* so as to weaken the association between logic in general and Greek logic in particular. He does this in order to commend his own logic, which he regards as a development from that of the Greeks.[80] Ghazālī likewise wishes to weaken the perception of logic as a foreign discipline, in his case to strengthen the case for logic as an instrument in theological study. Gutas justly states:

> Ġazālī was in this respect *Avicenna's collaborator and mouthpiece*; through whom Avicenna's logic was advertised and ensconced in Islamic culture through the use of *Avicenna's method* of presenting logic under a different name (emphasis added).[81]

Qisṭās is an extension of Ghazālī's programme to present logic to his readers using terminology which is both graphic, to aid understanding, and familiar, to aid acceptance. The second of these tasks, stressing the acceptability of logic in an Islamic milieu, is taken to its ultimate extreme by locating it in the text of the Qur'an itself.

---

[77] D.S. Margoliouth, "The Discussion Between Abu Bishr Matta and Abu Sa'id Al-Sirafi on the Merits of Logic and Grammar", *JRAS* 1905, pp. 79-129, includes the Arabic text and English translation of the debate, taken from Yāqūt's slightly abridged account in his *Biographical Dictionary*. The reference to *mīzān* occurs on p. 93 (Arabic), p. 112 (English). Details of Yāqūt's version, and of the fuller account by al-Tawḥīdī in his *Al-Imtā' wa'l-Mu'ānasah* can be found in Muhsin Mahdi, "Language and Logic in Classical Islam" in G.E. von Grunebaum (ed.), *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrossowitz, 1970), p. 55, n. 10, n. 12.

[78] Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 282; cf. *Avicenna's Treatise on Logic* (Part One of *Dānesh-nāme Alai*), tr. Farhang Zabeeh (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p. 14.

[79] Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifā'; al-Qiyās*, ed. S. Zayed (Cairo: 1964), p. 11, cited by Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 282. The Arabic text was not available to me.

[80] Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 284. See pp. 267-85 for a discussion of the significance of the naming of disciplines in medieval Islam.

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 284.

The influence of Ibn Sīnā might also be detectable in this effort to link logic to the Qur'an. Al-Sayyed suggests that Ibn Sīnā seeks to bring logic within the sphere of Islamic sources by introducing a new category of certain premiss to those adduced by Aristotle. This category is those things known by reliable transmission, or *al-mutawātirāt*.[82] When Ghazālī establishes the types of certain premisses, he follows Ibn Sīnā in listing as sources of certain premisses sensation, experience, reliable transmission, primary rational truths, or deduction from any of the above. This contrasts with Aristotle's statements that certain premisses are axioms, hypotheses and definitions. It is possible, then, that, as in other aspects of his thought, Ghazālī took his inspiration from Ibn Sīnā when he sought to locate the study of logic firmly within the confines of Muslim sources, although his particular deployment of the Qur'an in *Qisṭās* seems to be an original development. In addition, Ghazālī's use of the image of the balance, if not derived solely from Ibn Sīnā, is probably encouraged by its occurrence in the latter's writings.

To summarise, in taking on the task of promoting syllogistic logic in Islamic terms, Ghazālī would have been prompted not simply by his personal conviction of the superiority of syllogistic logic to other forms of reasoning. The wider context shaping his writing included the negative attitudes of many Muslim scholars to syllogistic logic, and encouragements from elements in the work of Ibn Sīnā, and perhaps of others, both to adopt and to adapt the presentation of this logic.

Summary

As outlined previously, the central argument of *Qisṭās*, a work of ten chapters, asserts that the Qur'an incorporates syllogistic logic. There is no need for any new

---

[82] Al-Sayyed, *Logic*, pp. 18-19; cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt wa'l-Tanbīhāt*, ed. S. Dunya, (Cairo: 1971), I: 349; tr. Inati, *Remarks and Admonitions Part One*, p. 121. Ibn Sīnā's classification of premiss-types from *Ishārāt* is usefully set out by Deborah Black, *Logic and Aristotle's* Rhetoric *and* Poetics *in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), pp. 97-98.

authoritative teacher, as the *Ta'līmiyya* maintain, since Muhammad is the true authoritative teacher, a position he holds by dint of bringing revelation which incorporates syllogistic logic. Chapter 1 sets out the basis of the debate with the Ismā'īlī opponent, focussing on how the truth of knowledge is to be assessed. Ghazālī's interlocutor asks him whether he resorts to using analogy (*qiyās*) and independent judgment (*ra'y*), (methods which were anathema to Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ), since Ghazālī does not seem eager to submit himself to an authoritative teacher. Ghazālī denies using these two methods, arguing that instead he assesses knowledge by the balance, quoting the verse: " *Weigh with a right balance*" (Q17:35). Explaining that this balance consists of the five rules of measurement revealed in the Qur'an, he states that, "There is no method with regard to knowledge apart from it".[83] The next five chapters are devoted to the exposition of these rules, that is, five different forms of the syllogism, one rule being discussed in each chapter. Chapters 7-10 then discuss other related matters.

Chapter 2 concerns 'the Greater Balance of Equivalence' (*mīzān al-ta'ādul al-akbar*), which is in fact the first figure of the categorical syllogism.[84] Ghazālī begins with a justification of the whole notion of "a spiritual balance". While the balance encountered on the Day of Judgment is the most spiritual, the Qur'an's balance for knowledge is also spiritual. The Greater Balance is then discussed. The third chapter of *Qisṭās* discusses what Ghazālī terms 'the Middle Balance of Measurement' (*al-mīzān al-awsaṭ*), or second figure of the categorical syllogism. Chapter 4 moves on to 'the Lesser Balance of Measurement' (*al-mīzān al-aṣghar*), the third figure of the categorical syllogism. The fifth and sixth chapters deal respectively with two conditional syllogisms. Chapter 5 presents 'the Balance of Concomitance' (*mīzān al-*

---

[83] *Qisṭās*, p. 157/288.

[84] *Qisṭās*, p. 160/291ff. A description of this and other types of syllogism occurring in *Qisṭās* can be found in the discussion below of Ghazālī's Qur'anic examples of them.

talāzum) or connective conditional syllogism, while Chapter 6 concerns 'the Balance of Opposition' (*mīzān al-ta'ānud*) or separative conditional syllogism.

Moving on from his exposition of syllogisms in the Qur'an to related matters, in Chapter 7 Ghazālī discusses false syllogisms. He regards these as being of Satanic origin, and discusses how the *ahl al-ta'līm* use them. Chapter 8 focusses on Muhammad, Ghazālī arguing that he is the only authoritative teacher needed, and stating how his truthfulness is established by means of syllogisms rather than reliance on miracles purporting to demonstrate Muhammad's veracity. Chapter 9 concerns the types of controversies which can arise between three groups of people, the elite, the common people and the contentious wranglers. Ghazālī recommends three different types of approach to them, logic, preaching and disputation respectively. Chapter 10 discusses *ra'y* and *qiyās* and their inadequacy as tools of enquiry in comparison with syllogisms. Finally, in a brief conclusion, Ghazālī urges his readers to retain the imagery in which he has clothed his discussion of syllogisms. He contends that this imagery is valuable in making the logical method comprehensible and showing its importance.

Having surveyed the context and content of *Qisṭās*, it is now possible to turn to detailed exposition of Ghazālī's treatment of the syllogism, which he regards as present in, and advocated by, the Qur'an.

6.3 THE QUR'AN AND THE SYLLOGISM IN *QISṬĀS*

Atttention is given below to examples of syllogisms which Ghazālī argues are embedded in the Qur'anic text. Following this, other verses which Ghazālī interprets as general references to syllogistic logic are discussed. Finally, Ghazālī's hermeneutical justifications for his approach to the Qur'an in *Qisṭās* are considered.

6.3.1 Ghazālī's Examples of Syllogisms in the Qur'an

Kleinknecht argues that the accuracy of Ghazālī's delineation of Qur'anic examples of syllogisms is not the most important aspect of *Qisṭās*, syllogisms being expounded more rigorously in *Mi'yār al-'Ilm* and *Miḥakk al-Naẓar*. She is correct to emphasise that *Qisṭās* should not be seen primarily as an exercise in technical accuracy, but regarded "from a hermeneutical point of view as a linguistic experiment".[85] Nonetheless, it is still valuable to determine how, and how easily, Ghazālī converts his chosen Qur'anic examples into syllogistic form.

As a preface to Ghazālī's treatment of the syllogism in *Qisṭās*, a brief account of the syllogism itself is required. This account does not seek to be comprehensive, but rather aims to situate Ghazālī's presentation of the syllogism in the context of its strongest influence, the work of Ibn Sīnā. The present chapter will draw on *Ishārāt* as a source of reference, a work which defines the syllogism as a type of proof in which:

> If its propositions are admitted, then another statement necessarily follows from them.[86]

The syllogism contains three propositions, two of which are premisses, the third the conclusion.[87] Each proposition comprises two terms, the subject and predicate. The terms have a qualitative relation to each other; they either apply or do not apply to each other. They also have a quantitative relation; they may apply (or not) universally or particularly. The predicate of the conclusion is known as the major term, the subject of the conclusion as the minor term. The middle term is absent from the conclusion, but present in both premisses. Ghazālī's examples, discussed below, illustrate these aspects of the syllogism.

---

[85] Kleinknecht, "Ableitung", p. 172.

[86] Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, I: 373, tr. Inati, *Remarks and Admonitions Part One*, p. 131. This definition follows that of Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, I, 1, 24b. *Ishārāt*, while more concise than Ibn Sīnā's exposition of the syllogism in *Al-Shifā'*, does not differ from it in its ideas; see Nabil Shehaby, *The Propositional Logic of Avicenna*, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1973), pp. 1, 23 n.2.

[87] The following summary draws on Joep Lameer, *Al-Fārābī and Aristotelian Syllogistics: Greek theory and Islamic practice*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), pp. 65ff.

Ibn Sīnā divides syllogisms into two main types in *Ishārāt,* a division reflected in *Qisṭās.*[88] One type is the categorical or conjunctive (*iqtirānī*) syllogism, in which two categorical propositions together yield a third. For example, "All A is B; and all B is C; therefore all A is C." The other type, (*istithnā'ī*), has been translated variously as the conditional, (the translation used below), hypothetical or repetitive.[89] In such a syllogism, one premiss is conditional, the other categorical, leading to a categorical conclusion. For example, "If P then Q; P; therefore Q." *Qisṭās* presents the three figures of the *iqtirānī* syllogism as the greater, middle and lesser balances of equivalence. The other two syllogisms which Ghazālī discusses, and which would fit Ibn Sīnā's classification as *istithnā'ī,* are the connective conditional, involving an "if...then" premiss, and the separative conditional, involving an "either...or", premiss.

In *Ishārāt,* Ibn Sīnā distinguishes the three figures of the categorical syllogism according to the role of the middle term.[90] In the first figure, the middle term is the subject of the major premiss (the premiss containing the major term), and the predicate of the minor premiss; in the second figure, it is the predicate of both; in the third figure it is the subject of both. These three figures can be subdivided into fourteen moods, or different sets of propositions, varying according to qualitative and quantitative relations, that is, for example, 'all A is B'; 'no A is B'; 'some A is B'; and 'some A is not B'. Only those syllogistic moods illustrated by Ghazālī will be discussed below.[91]

In Chapter 2 of *Qisṭās* Ghazālī discusses the first figure of the categorical

---

[88] *Ishārāt,* I: 374/131-132.

[89] See Kwame Gyekye, "The Term *Istithnā* in Arabic Logic" *JAOS* 92 (1972), pp. 88-92, who opts for 'conditional'. Ghazālī's *Maqāṣid,* p. 29, uses the terms *iqtirānī* and *istithnā'ī.*

[90] *Ishārāt,* p. 377, tr. Inati, p. 134.

[91] A presentation of all fourteen moods can be found in Lameer, *Al-Fārābī,* pp. 68-70, from which summaries of individual moods are taken in what follows. However, where Lameer follows Aristotle in placing the predicate before the subject in his summaries, the ensuing discussion reverses this in accord with Ghazālī's presentation of the syllogism. The present discussion, following Lameer (p. 66), also employs the Aristotelian set of letters designating terms.

syllogism, which he terms the Greater Balance of Equivalence (*al-mīzān al-akbar min mawāzīn al-ta'ādul*).[92] He states that the logical principle of this figure is that the judgment applying to the more general also applies to the more particular.[93] Ghazālī argues that it is found in Abraham's response to an unbeliever, Nimrod, who claimed attributes akin to that of Abraham's God (Q2:258). Ghazālī converts the verse, "*God brings the sun from the east: do you bring it from the west*",[94] into two different syllogisms. The first reads:

> Whoever can make the sun rise is God.
> But my God can make the sun rise.
> [Therefore] my God is God - and not you, Nimrod.

This is an example of the mood DARII.[95]

Ghazālī presents the second syllogism as follows:

> My Lord is the one who makes the sun rise.
> And the one who makes the sun rise is a god.
> So it follows from it that my Lord is a god.[96]

This is an example of the mood BARBARA.[97] Ghazālī notes that the Qur'an, referring to this exchange, calls Abraham's argument "*our proof*" (*ḥujjatunā*) (Q6:83).[98]

Chapter 3 presents Ghazālī's discussion of the second figure of the categorical syllogism, which he terms the Middle Balance of Equivalence (*al-mīzān al-awsaṭ*).[99]

---

[92] *Qisṭās*, pp. 160ff/291ff.

[93] Ghazālī's explanation of the logical principle of the first figure is found in the subsequent chapter, *Qisṭās*, p. 168/298.

[94] All Qur'anic quotations in section 6.3 of the present chapter are taken from McCarthy's translation of *Qisṭās*, so as to conform to the terminology of his translations of Ghazālī's syllogisms, based on these same verses. Verse numbering remains that of Pickthall.

[95] McCarthy, p. 293. The form of the mood DARII is, 'all B is A; some C is B; therefore some C is A'. Cf. Al-Sayyed, p. 140, who mistakenly classifies this syllogism as an example of the mood BARBARA.

[96] McCarthy, p. 294, notes that in this second syllogism the first and second premisses should be reversed, since the first should be universal, the second affirmative ; cf. L.S. Stebbing, *A Modern Introduction to Logic* (London: Methuen, 1930), p. 87, for discussion of this rule. However, the order in which the premisses occur does not affect the validity of the argument (Lameer, p. 69).

[97] The form of this mood is, 'all A is B; all B is C; therefore all A is C'.

[98] *Qisṭās*, p. 162/292.

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 167ff/297ff.

The logical principle of this figure is that if something is affirmed of one thing and denied of another, then those two things must be different.[100] Ghazālī uses the mood CESARE of the second figure.[101] This is also linked to Abraham, in this case his statement, "*I love not the things which set*" (Q6:77). Drawing on the Qur'anic context of the passage, Ghazālī presents this as follows:

> The moon is a thing which sets.
> But God is not a thing which sets.
> Therefore the moon is not a God.

This is one of two occasions where Ghazālī seeks to justify his claim of having identified a syllogism in a Qur'anic passage by reminding his reader of the Qur'an's brevity of expression.[102] The comment is necessary here as the Qur'anic passage does not include the major premiss, which is, however, implicit. Hence Ghazālī is conscious that here the Qur'an offers only an enthymeme syllogism, that is, a syllogism in which one premiss is implicit and one explicit.[103]

Ghazālī subsequently offers two further examples of the second figure of the categorical syllogism. One is God's statement to Muhammad regarding the Jews' and Christians' claims to be sons of God, "*Say: Why then does he chastise you for your sins? No, you are but mortals, of His creating*" (Q5:18). Ghazālī converts this to a syllogism of the mood FESTINO:

> Sons [of God] are not chastised [by God].
> But you are chastised [by God].
> Therefore you are not sons [of God].[104]

The second example concerns the Jews claim to be favoured by God.

---

[100] *Ibid.*, p. 168/298.

[101] The form of this mood is: 'No N is M; all X is M; therefore no X is N'.

[102] *Qisṭās*, p. 162/293, refers to *ḥadhf* and *ījāz* p. 167/297 refers to *ījāz* and *iḍmār*; all three terms denoting ellipsis.

[103] On the enthymeme syllogism, see Stebbing, *Introduction to Logic*, p. 83.

[104] McCarthy, p. 299. The form of this mood is, 'no N is M; some X is M; therefore no X is N'. Cf. Al-Sayyed, *Logic*, p. 148, who classifies this syllogism as an example of the mood CESARE.

Say: you of Jewry, if you assert that you are the friends of God, apart from other men, then desire death, if you speak truly. But they will never desire it" (Q62:6-7).

Ghazālī presents this in the mood CAMESTRES of the second figure of the categorical syllogism:[105]

Every friend desires to meet his friend.
But the Jew does not desire to meet God.
Therefore he is not the friend of God.

Ghazālī here treats his chosen Qur'anic passage as an enthymeme syllogism, since the major premiss ("every friend desires to meet his friend") is implicit rather than explicitly stated in the Qur'anic text. Ghazālī's syllogism should in fact be re-formulated as:

Every friend of God desires to meet his friend God.
But the Jew does not long to meet God.
Therefore the Jew is not a friend of God.[106]

In Chapter 4 Ghazālī discusses the third figure of the categorical syllogism, which he terms the Lesser Balance of Equivalence (*al-mīzān al-aṣghar*).[107] He defines this figure as follows: if two qualities are both found in one thing, then some aspect, though not all, of one of the two must be qualified by the other.[108] The example given is the statement:

They measured not God with His true measure when they said: God has not sent down aught on any mortal. Say: Who sent down the Book that Moses brought as a light and a guidance to men? (Q6:92).

Ghazālī converts this into a syllogism of the mood DARAPTI:[109]

Moses is a man.
Moses is one upon whom the Scripture was sent down.
Some man has had sent down upon him the Book [Scripture].

---

[105] The form of this mood is: 'All N is M; no X is M; therefore no X is N'.
[106] McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment*, p. 299.
[107] *Qisṭās*, pp. 169/300ff.
[108] *Ibid.*, p. 170/301.
[109] The form of this mood is, 'all S is P; all S is R; therefore some R is P'.

Ghazālī adds, "And by this is refuted the general claim that Scripture is not sent down upon any man at all", referring to the challenge of the unbelievers' words in the Qur'an, " *God has not sent down aught on any mortal.*"[110]

Chapters 5 and 6 concern *istithnā'ī* syllogisms. In such a syllogism, one premiss is conditional, the other categorical. Stoic in origin, the introduction of these syllogisms into Arabic logic was effected by Ibn Sīnā.[111] Chapter 5 concerns the connective (*muttaṣila*) conditional syllogism, termed connective since the conditional premiss is in the form of "if... then". This contrasts with the separative (*munfaṣila*) conditional syllogism, the subject of Chapter 6 of *Qiṣṭās*, in which the conditional premiss is in the form of "either... or".[112]

Ghazālī names the connective conditional syllogism, the subject of Chapter 5 of *Qiṣṭās*, the Balance of Concomitance (*mīzān al-talāzum*).[113] He states that the logical principle of this type of syllogism is, "everything which is a necessary concomitant (*lāzim*) of a thing follows it in every circumstance".[114] Once again, Ibn Sīnā's influence on Ghazālī's vocabulary is a possibility. Ibn Sīnā uses the term *talāzum* to describe mutual implication, that is, the relation of two conditional propositions wherein it is possible immediately to infer one from the other: "Let us explain the different cases of *al-talāzum*."[115]

Ghazālī quotes three verses to illustrate the connective conditional syllogism, forming syllogisms from two of them.[116] The first reads, " *Why, were there gods in*

---

[110] *Qiṣṭās*, p. 169-70/300.

[111] See Goodman, *Avicenna*, pp. 196ff.

[112] Aristotle termed such syllogisms "hypothetical" rather than conditional (*shartiyya*); the latter term is favoured by Ibn Sīnā. On Stoic logic regarding implication and disjunction, see Benson Mates, *Stoic Logic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), pp. 42-57.

[113] *Qiṣṭās*, pp. 171ff/302ff.

[114] *Ibid.*, p. 174/303.

[115] Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifā': al-Qiyās*, Book VII, tr. Shehaby, *Propositional Logic*, p. 163; cf. Shehaby's discussion of the term on pp. 266-67. The Arabic text was not available to me.

[116] The third verse, not presented in syllogistic form, is " *If those had been gods, they would never have gone down to it [Gehenna]* " (Q21:99).

them [earth and heaven] other than God, they would surely go to ruin" (Q21:22).

This is converted as follows:

> If the world has two gods, heaven and earth would have gone to ruin.
> But it is a known fact that they have not gone to ruin.
> So there follows from these two a necessary condition, viz. the denial of the two gods.[117]

The second verse quoted states, "*If there had been other gods with Him, as they say, in that case assuredly they would have sought a way unto the Lord of the Throne*" (Q17:42). Ghazālī presents this as:

> If there had been with the Lord of the Throne other gods, they assuredly would have sought a way to the Lord of the Throne.
> But it is a known fact that they did not seek that.
> So there follows necessarily the denial of gods other than the Lord of the Throne.[118]

In both cases, the Qur'anic verses provide only the conditional premiss, not the categorical premiss or the conclusion. Both of these syllogisms are correct forms of the mode *tollendo tollens*[119]

Chapter 6 concerns the separative conditional syllogism, which *Qisṭās* labels the Balance of Opposition (*mīzān al-ta'ānud*).[120] Ghazālī describes the logical principle of this syllogism as being that if something is found in two mutually exclusive categories, its existence in one of them must entail its denial in the other.[121] This is the syllogism equivalent to the method of the *mutakallimūn* known as *al-sabr wa'l-taqsīm*.[122] Ghazālī quotes the verse:

> *Say: 'Who provides for you out of the heavens and the earth?' Say: 'God'. Surely, either we or you are upon right guidance, or in manifest error*" (Q34: 24).

---

[117] *Qisṭās*, p. 182/302.
[118] *Ibid.*
[119] On compound modes, see Stebbing, *Introduction*, pp. 104-05. The form of *tollendo tollens* is, 'if P, then Q; but not P; therefore not Q'. The name of this and the mode *tollendo ponens* (see below) derive from the Latin verbs *tollere* ('to abrogate') and *ponere* ('to assert') (cf. Stebbing, p. 104, n. 2).
[120] *Qisṭās*, pp. 173ff/304ff.
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 174/305.
[122] See above, p. 166.

This is presented as:

> We or you are in manifest error.
> But it is known that We are not in error.
> So there follows from their coupling a necessary conclusion, viz. that you are in error.

This is an example of the mood *tollendo ponens*.[123]

From this account of Ghazālī's Qur'anic examples of the syllogism,[124] it is evident that while the syllogisms he derives are accurate, he sometimes draws on verses containing only one of the premisses of the alleged syllogism. Such verses, incorporting only one premiss, could equally be used to support the practice of *intāj al-muqqāddimāt*.[125] In the case of the three figures of the categorical syllogism, Ghazālī has also chosen to illustrate the alleged presence of syllogisms in the Qur'an by examples which include the first mood of each of the three figures, BARBARA, CESARE and DARAPTI. This enhances the sense that Ghazālī has approached the Qur'an with a prior plan of what he wants to find within it.[126]

6.3.2 Other Qur'anic Verses Interpreted with Reference to the Syllogism

Ghazālī's concern to use the Qur'an in the service of his argument in favour of syllogistic logic also explains his interpreting other Qur'anic verses in ways which makes them endorse this type of logic. Ghazālī interprets a number of verses so as to

---

[123] This mood has the form: 'Either P or Q; but not P; therefore Q'.

[124] Ghazālī's account of false syllogisms in the subsequent chapter does not form part of this study. While the account discusses the Qur'an, it does not represent how Ghazālī himself interprets the text, but only how it should evidently not be interpreted. His examples of contradiction in false syllogisms are extremely obvious and reveal nothing regarding trends in his thought.

[125] See above, p. 166.

[126] Robert Brunshvig, "Pour ou contre la logique Grecque chez les théologiens-juristes de l'Islam: Ibn Ḥazm, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taimiyya" in his *Etudes d'Islamologie* (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1976), vol. I, p. 321, states only that the first mood of each figure is illustrated. The implication that could be drawn from Brunschvig's comment, that these are the only moods exemplified, would, however, overstate the degree of schematisation in evidence. As already noted, in his first two figures, Ghazālī also includes the moods DARII, CAMESTRES and FESTINO.

find in them a reference to the syllogism. The most prominent, since it is cited either fully or in part on five separate occasions, reads, " *Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way* " (Q16:125).[127] Ghazālī uses this verse to explain his belief in the need for different approaches in influencing different groups of people. According to Ghazālī, the elite (*al-khawwāṣṣ*) are in view in the phrase, " *reason with them in the better way* ", which he interprets as a Qur'anic exhortation to use syllogistic logic. This contrasts with the approach to the common people (*al-a'wāmm*), who need preaching (*al-maw'iẓa*), and the contentious wranglers (*ahl al-jadal wa'l-shaghab*), who need disputation (*al-mujādala*).[128] His principal point in quoting Q16:125 is the need to use syllogistic logic to summon the elite.[129] He also identifies the elite from amongst those given to disputation but who are capable of a high level of understanding.[130]

Ghazālī finds another reference to the syllogism in Q7:200, " *The godfearing, when a visitation of Satan troubles them, remember, and then see clearly*".[131] Ghazālī states regarding the need to 'remember':

> If something causes difficulty for you, you submit it to the balance and "remember" its conditions with serene mind and full diligence, and "then you will see clearly".[132]

So 'remembering' involves analysing a problem by means of syllogistic logic. This interpretation is in marked contrast to Ghazālī's understanding of the verse's call to "remember" as a reference to Sufi *dhikr*, found four times in *Kitāb 'Ajā'ib al-Qalb*, Book XXI of *Iḥyā'*.[133]

---

[127] *Qisṭās*, pp. 156-7/288, 188-9/318-319, 193/323, 195/324, 203/332.
[128] *Ibid.*, p. 189/319.
[129] *Ibid.*, p. 193/323.
[130] *Ibid.*, p. 195/324. Ibn Rushd later adopted Ghazālī's interpretation of Q16:25; see Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-maqāl*, pp. 12-13; tr. G. Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 49.
[131] *Qisṭās*, p. 185/314; Qur'anic translation from McCarthy.
[132] *Ibid.*
[133] *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, III: 12, 27, 29 and 35. Q7:200 is the verse most often quoted in *Kitāb Sharḥ 'Ajā'ib al-Qalb*. Kojiro Nakamura, "Makkī and Ghazālī on Mystical Practices", *Orient* 20 (1984), pp. 88-89, outlines five understandings of *dhikr* in *Iḥyā'*. None of them involves syllogisms.

Ghazālī states that the presence of examples of syllogisms in the Qur'an explains why the Qur'an is called 'light':

> And were it not for the Qur'an's containing the balances it would not be correct to call the Qur'an "light", for light is not seen in itself but by it other things are seen, and this is the quality of the balance.[134]

This is a reference to verses describing the Qur'an as light, such as, "*we have sent down to you a clear light*" (Q4:175). Ghazālī makes the same point, that the Qur'an deserves to be called 'light' on account of its capacity to make things other than itself visible, in *Mishkāt al-anwār*.[135] In *Mishkāt*, however, Ghazālī does not link the Qur'an's capacity to shed light with its incorporation of syllogisms, even though syllogisms are mentioned elsewhere in *Mishkāt*.[136]

Ghazālī also draws on three passages mentioning a balance, a term which he takes as a reference to logic. The first of these, "*Weigh with a right balance*" (Q17:35 and Q26:182) is also, as previously noted, the verse from which Ghazālī takes the title of *Qisṭās*.[137] In both occurrences the context of the phrase is that of fair dealing in trade. Another text used is, "*The Beneficent hath made known the Qur'an...and the sky he hath uplifted; and he hath set the balance, that ye exceed not the balance, but observe the balance strictly*"(Q55:1-2, 7-9).[138] Thirdly, Ghazālī quotes, "*We verily sent our messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the balance*" (Q57:25). The context of these verses leaves the precise meaning of the term 'balance' more enigmatic, opening the way for Ghazālī to interpret the term in line with his emphasis on logic.

In all of these interpretations by Ghazālī, of Q16:125, Q7:200, verses such as Q4:175, and the three references to the balance, the role of the syllogism is

---

[134] *Ibid.*, p. 195/324.

[135] *Mishkāt*, p. 12/52. Just a few pages later (pp. 16-17/57) in *Mishkāt*, Ghazālī makes the different point that God alone is truly light, and that any other usage of the term 'light' is metaphorical.

[136] On *Mishkāt al-anwār* and the syllogism, see Chapter 7 of this thesis.

[137] All three verses discussed in this paragraph occur in *Qisṭās*, pp. 157-58/288-89.

[138] Translating the word *mīzān* as 'balance' in place of Pickthall's 'measure'.

foregrounded. This is no surprise given its central role in *Qisṭās* as a whole, but the charge could be levelled that these interpretations are implausible. Such a charge raises the question of what hermeneutical justification, if any, Ghazālī offers for an approach to the Qur'an which produces both these interpretations and his Qur'anic examples of syllogisms already described.

6.3.3 The Hermeneutical Framework of *Qisṭās*

Ghazālī's comments in *Qisṭās* on his theoretical approach to the text are brief but nonetheless significant. He gives two justifications for his approach, the most important, to be discussed first, the belief in hidden meanings in Qur'anic verses, a belief also analysed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. In addition, Ghazālī makes a claim about the presence of syllogisms in scriptures pre-dating the Qur'an.

Ghazālī presents the view in *Qisṭās* that the Qur'an contains hidden meanings,[139] a view discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis in relation to *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān, Kitāb Ādāb Tilāwat al-Qur'ān,* Book VIII of *Iḥyā'*, and *Mishkāt al-Anwār,* all works reflecting greater Sufi influence than *Qisṭās.* This emphasis on hidden meanings presupposes that the duality between the visible, material world and the invisible, spiritual realm is present in microcosm in the Qur'an, thus indicating that there are hidden meanings embedded within the Qur'anic text. Ghazālī also makes the comparison between true understanding of the Qur'an and the interpretation of dreams (*ta'bīr*), as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Ghazālī then adds an example of dream interpretation which he attributes to Ibn Sīrīn.[140] He also claims that he has removed any covering between the individual and the true meaning of the text, stating

---

[139] *Qisṭās,* pp. 177-78/308. The same assumption that the outer or material contains the more important spiritual reality, is evident on p. 161/292, when Ghazālī discusses the spiritual nature of the Qur'an's balance.

[140] Ibn Sīrīn (34-110/654-728) was held from the 3rd/9th century onwards to be a prominent interpreter of dreams in the early period of Islam; see "Ibn Sīrīn", *EI (2)* III: 947-48.

his claim in the words of the Qur'an, " *We have removed from thee thy covering, and piercing is thy sight this day*" (Q50:22). Finally he adds that confirmation of his arguments on this theme can be found in the chapter on the reality of death in *Jawāhir*. This would seem to be a mistaken reference, either by Ghazālī or a scribe, since there is no such chapter in *Jawāhir*, but rather in *Kitāb Dhikr al-Mawt*, Book XL of *Iḥyā'*.[141]

The clear implication of Ghazālī's discussion of his hermeneutical framework is that there exist deeper meanings to Qur'anic texts. Ghazālī therefore offers to unlock these meanings for his readers, either by revealing them directly, or by teaching the correct method for understanding the Qur'an, and thereby enabling his readers to discover them for themselves. The theme of hidden meanings is a familiar one in Ghazālī's Sufi-orientated writings, but its presence is more surprising in *Qisṭās*, a work concerned primarily with syllogistic logic and generally lacking in Sufi emphasis.[142] However, it should come as no surprise to find Ghazālī weaving different strands of his thinking into his works in varying combinations, as a comparison of *Qisṭās* with other works demonstrates.

The same specific examples of dream interpretation found in *Qisṭās* are also found in *Fayṣal*, which, as outlined in Chapter 3 of this thesis, does not argue for belief in hidden meanings within every verse. Instead, the examples of dream interpretation in *Fayṣal* are used to argue for the possibility of figurative meanings of the Qur'anic text which can be adopted if there is decisive proof (*burhān*) that the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) is impossible. So a comparison of *Fayṣal* and *Qisṭās*

---

[141] A possible affirmation of his arguments, intended by Ghazālī, might be *Iḥyā'* IV: 484ff., where Ghazālī presents three degrees of belief in the events surrounding death. This apparent mistake is hinted at by Brewster, *The Just Balance*, p. 52, n. 15, who, in a footnote to the reference to *Jawāhir*, directs the reader to "see also" the final book of *Iḥyā'*.

[142] For a possible exception see below, pp. 191f.

reveals that Ghazālī uses the same illustration in support of two different hermeneutical frameworks.

Similarly, a shared hermeneutical framework found in two texts by Ghazālī does not necessarily indicate that he will take the same stance on an issue of interpretation in those two texts. In *Kitāb Ādāb tilāwat al-Qur'ān* he argues in favour of the exercise of personal opinion (*ra'y*) in interpretation, an argument evidently aimed at justifying his support for hidden meanings.[143] However, in *Qisṭās*, the exercise of *ra'y* is condemned despite the presentation of the same hermeneutical framework.[144] This is because Ghazālī does not wish to leave himself vulnerable to Ismā'īlī criticisms that those who do not follow the teaching of an infallible teacher simply resort to *ra'y*. Evidently Ghazālī's varied treatment of the topic of *ra'y* is an example of his choosing arguments to suit his purpose.

Ghazālī's tendency is thus to maintain no rigid boundary lines between Sufi and non-Sufi areas of his hermeneutical thought. The *ad hoc* nature of Ghazālī's use of the concept of hidden meaning is clearly evident in that, although the hermeneutical framework presented in *Qisṭās* and Ghazālī's more Sufi texts is the same, the nature of the hidden meaning explored in *Qisṭās* is clearly quite different. In *Qisṭās* it consists of syllogistic reformulations of verses and the Qur'an's consequent affirmation of syllogistic logic as the path to knowledge of the truth. As an understanding of *ta'wīl* this is certainly novel. The meanings which Ghazālī uncovers are not metaphorical, nor are they hidden in the usual sense intended by Ghazālī, as, for example, in *Jawāhir*, where an apparently fleeting or indirect reference to a subject is extrapolated into the supposed basis for Ghazālī's own

---

[143] See Chapter 2 of this thesis.
[144] *Qisṭās*, pp. 197-98/326-27.

theological ideas.[145] Instead, the hidden meanings in *Qisṭās* simply require knowledge of how to deduce syllogisms from given statements.

In accord with the view expressed in *Qisṭās* that syllogisms make up the Qur'an's hidden meanings, Ghazālī also describes the use of syllogisms as a form of spiritual ascent (*al-mi'rāj al-rūḥānī*). He argues as follows: we can know by observation that the universe is marvellous and well-ordered, indicating that its maker is knowing; if He is knowing He is also living, and if living and knowing, then He subsists in himself. Ghazālī then states:

> Thus, then, we ascend from the quality of the composition of man to the attribute of his Maker, viz. knowledge; then we ascend from knowledge to life, then from it to the essence. This is the spiritual ascension (*al-mi'rāj al-rūḥānī*), and these balances are the steps of the ascension to heaven, or rather to the Creator of heaven, and these balances are the steps of the stairs.[146]

So using syllogistic reasoning is seen as the path to greater closeness to God. Given this high view of the syllogism, it is not surprising that in writing *Qisṭās* Ghazālī is concerned to emphasise its Qur'anic credentials, since without these credentials, he could be taken to be arguing that spiritual ascent to God is available by means of a method with no explicit or implicit foundation within the Qur'an.

Ghazālī's connecting the use of logic with the language of spiritual ascent leads Kleinknecht to conclude that, according to *Qisṭās*, using such reasoning enables the individual to attain "knowledge of God in the sense of Ghazālī's Sufi-soaked piety".[147] This statement requires examination, since it leads to the heart of the complex debate over the relationship in Ghazālī's thought between the rational and experiential as sources of supreme knowledge. This debate is explored more fully in the next chapter of this thesis, concerning *Mishkāt*, so remarks here will be restricted to *Qisṭās* alone.

---

[145] See above, Chapter 5.

[146] *Qisṭās*, p. 172-73/ 303, translating *mawāzīn* as 'balances' rather than McCarthy's 'principles', so as to make clear the point that syllogisms form the steps on the ascent.

[147] Kleinknecht, "Ableitung", p. 180.

Several factors influence the question of whether *Qisṭās* presents knowledge of God as *fully* attainable solely through the rigorous use of logic.

In support of Kleinknecht's view, Ghazālī argues that people think syllogistically all the time, albeit without realising:

> For every cognition which is not primary necessarily comes to be in its possessor through the existence of these balances in his soul, even though he is not conscious of it.[148]

So any thought processes can be broken down into the three propositions of a syllogism. Furthermore, with reference to knowledge gained from syllogisms, Ghazālī states that in contrast to the faith of the common people and the *mutakallimūn*, "The faith of those who possess vision and who see from [through] the niche of Lordship, that is the way it comes to be".[149]

However, against Kleinknecht's view, arguing that Ghazālī makes syllogistic reasoning the path to the fullest knowledge of God seems unlikely given his stance in both *Munqidh* and *Iḥyā'*. In *Munqidh*, having discussed logic amongst other fields of study, he writes:

> I knew with certainty that the Sufis were masters of states, not purveyors of words, and that I had learned all I could by way of theory. There remained then, only what was attainable, not by *hearing and study*, but by fruitional experience (*dhawq*) (emphasis added).[150]

Similarly, in *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, Book I of *Iḥyā'*, almost certainly written before *Qisṭās*, Ghazālī makes logic subordinate to direct experiential knowledge. Having stated that logic is part of theology (*kalām*)[151] he later adds that:

---

[148] *Qisṭās*, p. 184/314.

[149] *Ibid.*, p. 187/317, in contrast to Brewster's translation, *The Just Balance*, p. 74, n. 20, who interprets Ghazālī's remark here as a reference to mysticism. However, the boundary lines between logical and mystical approaches are not always clear in Ghazālī's thought; cf. Chapter 7 below.

[150] *Munqidh*, pp. 35-36, tr. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment*, p. 90.

[151] *Iḥyā'* I: 23, tr. Nabih Amin Faris, *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 47.

> *To know God*, his attributes, and his works as well as all that we referred to under the science of revelation *does not result from theology* - in fact, theology is almost a veil and a barrier against it. Those are not attained except through self-mortification which God has made the pre-requisite for guidance (emphasis added).[152]

The resolution of these apparently conflicting approaches to knowledge can be approached, even if not fully achieved, by considering their treatment in *Mishkāt al-anwār*, the subject of the next chapter. The evidence of *Qisṭās* itself suggests that there is no higher way to God than logic, but *Mishkāt* helps to place such an apparently clear cut statement in a more nuanced context.

The aim of Ghazālī's second hermeneutical justification for his argument, the relevance of previous scriptures, is to counteract the impression that in *Qisṭās* he is using the Qur'an in an unprecedented way. When asked if he is the first to invent the names of the balances (syllogisms) and to derive them from the Qur'an, he replies that although the Qur'anic basis is his new contribution:

> Among some of the past nations, prior to the mission of Muhammad and Jesus they [the balances] had other names which they had learned from books (*suḥūf*) of Abraham and Moses.[153]

So syllogisms were present in, and derivable from, previous scriptures. Such a claim seeks to avoid the criticism that, if syllogisms are the supreme path to truth, then truth was not fully accessible before the exposition of syllogisms by Aristotle. Just such a criticism is made by Ibn Taymiyya, as one of three criticisms of Ghazālī's view in *Qisṭās* that the Qur'anic references to the balance are references to syllogistic logic.[154] Ibn Taymiyya objects that the balance, whatever it might be, was revealed to Noah, Moses and other prophets before the Greeks expounded logic, and that therefore the

---

[152] *Ibid.*, tr. Faris, *The Book of Knowledge*, pp. 48-49.

[153] *Qisṭās*, p. 175/306.

[154] Al-Suyūṭī, *Jahd al-qarīḥa fī tajrīd al-naṣīḥa* (an abridgement of Ibn Taymiyya's *Al-Radd 'alā manṭiqiyyīn*), tr. Wael b. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 162. Ibn Taymiyya's other two objections are that the earliest Muslims knew nothing of Greek logic, and that many Muslim scholars criticised this logic once it became prevalent.

term 'balance' could not be a reference to this logic on chronological grounds.[155] In criticising *Qisṭās* in this way Ibn Taymiyya either overlooks or chooses to ignore the fact that Ghazālī's claim that syllogistic logic itself was revealed in scriptures which predated the Greek tradition sidesteps just such a criticism. Ghazālī implicitly claims that this tradition only formalised what already existed, rather than being an entirely new development. Ibn Taymiyya thus fails to engage with the full extent of Ghazālī's defence of his position.

In summary, Ghazālī is clearly aware of the need to justify his use of the Qur'an in *Qisṭās*. He does so by reference to hidden meanings and to previous scriptures, although whether these justifications helped the reception of his argument is unclear since there are no known discussions making specific reference to the influence of *Qisṭās*. However, there is an echo of its central idea in the writing of Ibn al-'Arabī. He comments that syllogisms are "the true scales set up on the Day of Judgement (21:47).[156] More than in his other works, however, Ghazālī engages in what could be termed apologetic hermeneutics, making moves to justify the unusual steps taken in *Qisṭās*.

6.4 CONCLUSION

Four questions were raised at the ouset of this chapter. The first concerned Ghazālī's reasons for writing a book characterised by Watt as "trivialities", while the second related to the nature of Ghazālī's Qur'anic interpretations. The third question explored the hermeneutical framework underpinning the highly distinctive use of the

---

[155] For Ibn Taymiyya, the 'balance' is rather, "the consideration of a thing in the light of its equivalent or opposite, so that similar things are treated as equivalent and distinct things as different"; or, more succinctly, it is, "the truth" (*Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, pp. 163, 164).

[156] Cited by Endress, "Defense", p. 34, who does not provide a primary source for this remark, citing instead secondary discussions of Ibn al-'Arabī.

Qur'anic text in *Qisṭās*, and the fourth discussed how Ghazālī understands the Qur'an to provide certain knowledge. Responses to these questions can now be gathered together.

As for the first question, the motivation for writing *Qisṭās*, it is clear that this is not as puzzling as Watt suggests. Ghazālī sought to render more acceptable the discipline of logic, frequently regarded with suspicion on account of its perceived foreign origins. In so doing he seems to follow the lead of Ibn Sīnā, a frequent influence on him. Furthermore, *Qisṭās* can also be seen as expanding on Ghazālī's comment in *Tahāfut*, that logic is not confined to the philosophers, and his remarks in *Jawāhir* on the way in which the Qur'an encompasses all knowledge.

Secondly, regarding Ghazālī's interpretations, he is generally able to produce accurate syllogisms from his chosen verses, although part of the syllogism he formulates is sometimes only implicit in the Qur'anic verse. However, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Ghazālī stretches the significance of his chosen texts, finding in them support for ideas he has drawn from Ibn Sīnā. Having said that, Ghazālī presents two arguments which might serve to defend his sincerity in *Qisṭās*. First, by maintaining that syllogistic logic is present, though unrecognised, everywhere in human thought processes, Ghazālī enhances his claims that it is present in the Qur'an, since he could argue that he is not searching for something rare, but rather a phenomenon which is so common that it is usually overlooked. Secondly, if the concept of hidden meanings in Qur'anic texts is extended sufficiently broadly to include syllogistic logic (as it is extended in *Jawāhir*, discussed in the previous chapter, to include a number of theological stances), then this concept could be another framework within which Ghazālī genuinely felt that he could include his more surprising uses of the Qur'an. However, it is striking that Ghazālī's interpretation of Q7:200 in *Qisṭās*, in support of the syllogism, is at such variance with his use of the

verse in *Kitāb 'Aja'ib al-Qalb* to support the Sufi practice of *dhikr*. Either Ghazālī felt that the concept of hidden meaning genuinely extended to cover two specific and contrasting interpretations, or he shows himself here to be deploying his hermeneutical theory to suit different purposes in different works without regard for overall coherence in his thought. While nothing in Ghazālī's theory prevents the first of these alternatives, many examples in his works indicate that he was content to tailor his arguments to the demands of the moment, sometimes at the price of consistency.[157]

Thirdly, regarding both the nature of the hermeneutical framework in *Qisṭās* and its use, there is a marked similarity to *Jawāhir*. In both works Ghazālī presents a Sufi hermeneutical framework to justify his claim for hidden meanings in the Qur'an, while both texts in fact interpret the Qur'an in ways unrelated to Sufism. Instead, both are shaped by ideas which Ghazālī wishes to underpin with Qur'anic texts - in *Jawāhir*, a range of theological interests, in *Qisṭās*, a narrower focus on epistemology.

The fourth question concerns Ghazālī's understanding of how the Qur'an provides certain knowledge. On this point *Qisṭās* is characterised by shifts between apparently Sufi thinking and other ideas seemingly unrelated to Sufism. Belief in hidden meanings in the Qur'an and the possibility of spiritual ascent are notions placed alongside the promotion of syllogistic logic. Such shifts are found not only in *Qisṭās*, but also in other works by Ghazālī, as already noted. In particular, the question of whether Ghazālī believed that logic or direct, mystical experience of God provides the path to the highest knowledge of God continues to exercise scholars. In *Qisṭās* Ghazālī draws on the Qur'an using Sufi hermeneutical categories, while in fact making logic predominant. However, this does not necessarily mean that logic came to dominate his thinking exclusively. Chapter 7, below, will shed more light on the tensions apparent in Ghazālī's treatment of this issue.

---

[157] As already noted, for example, in his support of *ra'y* in *Kitāb Ādāb tilāwat al-Qur'ān*, and his criticism of it in *Qisṭās*.

Ghazālī's use of the Qur'an in *Qisṭās* might suggest that he is using the text in a way which he knows to be outside its original intention.[158] However, his longstanding commitment both to the Qur'an and to logic confronted him with the challenge of integrating these two sources of knowledge so as to avoid presenting them as rival paths to truth. *Qisṭās* is the response to this challenge.

Ghazālī's concern to use the Qur'an in the service of the syllogism in *Qisṭās* highlights both his pre-occupation with epistemology, and also the influence of Ibn Sīnā upon his work. In the next chapter both of these elements are again apparent, though manifested in a quite different form in Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār*.

[158] Cf. Ghazālī's statement of the importance of the original intention of the text quoted in Chapter 1 of this thesis, pp. 4-5.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MISHKĀT AL-ANWĀR

> And because of those problems which used to baffle me, not being able to solve the middle term of the syllogism, I used to visit the mosque frequently and worship, praying humbly to the All-Creating until He opened the mystery of it to me and made the difficult seem easy.[1]

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will examine Ghazālī's Qur'anic interpretations in *Mishkāt al-anwār*, concentrating on his treatment of the so-called Light Verse, Q24:35. This verse, quoted in Chapter 2, is given again here for ease of reference:

> *Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon Light, Allah guideth unto his light whom He will. And Allah speaketh to mankind in allegories, for Allah is knower of all things.*

The aim of the present chapter is to explore the influence of Ibn Sīnā on Ghazālī's interpretation of the symbolism of this verse. The theme of Ibn Sīnā's influence has recurred frequently throughout the present study, but it will be argued that it is most clearly in view in Ghazālī's interpretation of the Light Verse in *Mishkāt*. The source, extent and implications of this influence form the basis of the ensuing discussion. After a section expounding Ibn Sīnā's interpretation of the Light Verse, a detailed comparison is made with Ghazālī's treatment of the same verse. Finally, attention is given to Ghazālī's explanation of the first phrase of the Light Verse, "*Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth*", and to other, briefer interpretations in *Mishkāt*. As part of the discussion, the evidence for the influence of Ibn Sīnā is presented more systematically than has previously been attempted. The opening chapter of *Mishkāt*,

---

[1] *The Life of Ibn Sīnā*, ed. and tr. William Gohlman (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1974), p. 29.

which presents itself as an interpretation of the opening words of the Light Verse, will not be analysed here. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this chapter is an elaborate essay along Neoplatonic lines on the theme of light. While engaging briefly and marginally with the Qur'anic text, discussion of its details and sources would require a separate study, leading as they do far from the focus on the Qur'an which is the concern of this thesis.

Herbert Davidson and Binyamin Abrahamov, apparently independently, have recently argued that Ghazālī's interpretation of this verse is profoundly influenced by similar interpretation in the work of Ibn Sīnā .[2] They infer from this that Ghazālī's alleged Sufism was in fact a theory of rational cognition merely decorated with Sufi terminology. They assume that if Ghazālī borrowed many of his core ideas from Ibn Sīnā he cannot have intended to impart a Sufi message, even if a superficial reading of *Mishkāt* might suggest otherwise. The present chapter will test this assumption, exploring issues of borrowing and influence, and also address the question of what Ghazālī understands by his use of the term *dhawq* in a number of texts. Watt discusses Ghazālī's understanding of *dhawq* when responding to Jabre's discussion of this term.[3] Watt and Jabre, however, examine this topic without regard for the possibility of Ghazālī's work drawing on the thought of Ibn Sīnā, the issue at the heart of the present discussion.

Davidson concurs with the attitude towards *Mishkāt* expressed by Ibn Rushd, who wrote of Ghazālī:

---

[2] Davidson, *Intellect,* pp. 127-153; Binyamin Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to Know God" *SI* 77 (1993), pp. 141-168.

[3] W.M. Watt "The Study of Al-Gazālī" *Oriens* 13-14 (1961), pp. 121-131, discussing Farid Jabre, *La Notion de la certitude selon Ghazali* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958) and *La Notion de la ma'rifa* (Beirut: L'Institut de Lettres Orientales, 1958).

> It appears from the books ascribed to him that in metaphysics he recurs to the philosophers. And of all his books this is most clearly shown and most truly proved in his book called *The Niche for Lights*.[4]

Davidson examines Ghazālī's interpretation of Q24:35 as part of his wider concern with the overall metaphysical framework presented in *Mishkāt*. Abrahamov's examination ranges across the Ghazālī corpus but draws substantially on *Mishkāt*, concluding that Ghazālī's supreme way to know God, "is a philosophical system which sometimes appears in Ṣufic disguise."[5]

This chapter agrees with Davidson and Abrahamov in arguing that Ghazālī borrows significantly from Ibn Sīnā in his interpretation of the Light Verse. However, two questions arise from such a finding. First, to what extent is Ghazālī's borrowing creative, adapting rather than simply appropriating another's ideas? Secondly, what are the implications of any such borrowing? While Davidson and Abrahamov are correct in observing that Ghazālī draws on Ibn Sīnā, the conclusions they infer from this observation are less satisfactory.

The subject of this chapter forces to the fore the question of how the term 'Sufism' is to be understood. In what follows the term is treated as interchangeable with 'mysticism'. Attempts to determine exactly what is denoted either by Sufism or mysticism are frequent, but less than complete clarity of definition need not prevent meaningful discussion of the phenomenon.[6] Brainard attempts a definition of mystical experience on the basis of two core concepts. One is profound content, that is, content concerned with ultimate questions. The second core concept is non-ordinary

---

[4] Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, tr. Simon van den Bergh, 2 vols., (London: Luzac & co., 1954), I: 69, cited by Davidson, p. 130.

[5] Abrahamov, "Supreme Way", p. 167. Abrahamov also comments on these issues in an earlier article, "Ibn Sīnā's Influence on al-Ghazālī's Non-Philosophical Works" *Abr-Nahrain* 29 (1991), pp. 1-17, where his remarks on *Mishkāt* are presented in less detail.

[6] A point well made by F. Samuel Brainard, "Defining 'Mystical Experience'" *JAAR* 64 (1996), pp. 366-379, who notes (p. 367) that, "Few people... could give definitions for 'is' or 'reason' or 'virtue' or 'truth' or 'beauty' that match the sophistication of our habitual use of these words in conversation".

experience, or experience inexplicable in purely naturalistic terms.[7] However, his definition raises the question of whether mystical experience is simply a synonym for spiritual experience. The latter could also include, for example, joy, or a sense of being guided to take particular action. Yet mysticism historically has been understood more specifically than this, emphasising immediate experience or apprehension of God, a union with (though not necessarily absorption into) God often accompanied by a radical surrender of self and indifference to the external world, and a stress on experience being beyond words.[8] These considerations, then, will provide a broad theoretical framework in the remainder of the chapter.

7.2 IBN SĪNĀ ON THE LIGHT VERSE

7.2.1. Basic Assumptions Concerning Ibn Sīnā's Symbolic Method

A number of factors have led some to conclude that Ibn Sīnā had a secret doctrine.[9] These include his references to 'Easterners' and 'Eastern Philosophy', his use of extended allegories and his symbolic Qur'anic interpretations. However, the following discussion assumes that Ibn Sīnā did not develop and conceal an esoteric 'Eastern Philosophy' which was either a departure from, or in opposition to, his other recorded views. Gutas surveys the sources mentioning Eastern Philosophy and the

---

[7] Brainard, pp. 371-379. Another recent attempt to characterise mysticism, this time defined in contrast to asceticism, is Christopher Melchert "The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E." *SI* 83 (1996), pp. 51-70. Melchert identifies as distinctively mystical the notions of communion with an immanent God, a conception of divinity as diffuse, rather than clearly personal, and confidence in God's abundant grace.

[8] For partial definitions by early Sufis see R. Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufiism [sic], with a list of definitions of the terms 'Ṣūfī' and 'Taṣawwuf', arranged chronologically" *JRAS* 1906, pp. 303-48.

[9] See, for example, G. Hourani, "Ibn Sīnā's Essay on the Secret of Destiny" *BSOAS* 29 (1966), p. 42.

Easterners in works both by Ibn Sīnā and those referring to his thought.[10] He concludes, following Ibn Rushd,[11] that the designation 'Eastern' is Ibn Sīnā's term for his own philosophy, a designation he adopted for a limited period but subsequently ceased to use, probably around 422/1031.[12] The term denotes for Ibn Sīnā the fundamentals of his philosophy as opposed to topics studied simply because they were part of the historical tradition of philosophical enquiry. *Mashriq* ('Eastern') refers to Ibn Sīnā's background in Khurasan, and is intended to contrast with the 'Western' school of Iraq.[13]

Ibn Sīnā had a specific purpose in sometimes using a symbolic mode of expression.[14] In his view, demonstrative language, that is arguments based on rigorous philosophical distinctions, cannot be understood by the majority of people. Important concepts must therefore be conveyed in simplified, symbolic form, while concealing the fact that this re-formulation has occurred. Gutas remarks that the symbolic method is therefore nothing more than a necessary but inferior way of impressing truths upon the minds of those who could not otherwise comprehend them.[15] Such a bold assertion of the inferiority of figurative language needs tempering since such expression possesses an imaginative force lost in 'translating' it into other

---

[10] Gutas, *Avicenna*, pp. 115-30.

[11] Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, tr. van den Bergh, I: 254, cited by Gutas, p. 118.

[12] Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 127, n. 26.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 127; Goodman, *Avicenna*, pp. 39-40. Davidson, p. 6, likewise rules out an esoteric Oriental philosophy in Ibn Sīnā. For a different view, see S.H. Nasr "Ibn Sīnā's Oriental Philosophy" in S.H. Nasr and Oliver Leaman, (ed.), *History of Islamic Philosophy* Part I (Routledge History of World Philosophies) Vol.I, pp. 247-251. Nasr equates this 'Oriental Philosophy' with passages such as the ninth section of *Ishārāt*, on which see below, pp. 208-09.

[14] The following account draws on Gutas, *Avicenna*, pp. 297-307. Gutas, pp. 300-01, translates Ibn Sīnā's remarks on the function of allegory in the work of a prophet in *Al-Shifā', al-Ilāhīyāt*, eds. S. Dunyā *et al.* (Cairo, 1960), pp. 442-443. The understanding of Ibn Sīnā's thought assumed in the present chapter contrasts with the approach to Avicennan symbolism advocated, for example, by H. Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, pp. 28ff.

[15] Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 301. This consistency was first analysed by Goichon, *Le Récit de Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān commenté par des textes d'Avicenne* (Paris: 1959), cited by Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 306, n. 12.

terms.[16] Nevertheless, Gutas is correct in emphasising the consistency of thought between Ibn Sīnā's demonstrative and allegorical writings. The effect of this multi-layered approach, in Ibn Sīnā's view, is that the majority are enabled to understand, while those of greater philosophical ability are prompted to further exploration, this time using the demonstrative method. As illustrated in Table 3 below, Ibn Sīnā intends precise one-to-one correspondences between symbols and philosophical concepts wherever he composes an allegory or interprets a symbolic text.

7.2.2 Ibn Sīnā's Doctrine of the Intellect and the Interpretation of the Light Verse

Ibn Sīnā explores the Light Verse most fully in a short work entitled *Fī Ithbāt al-nubuwwāt*.[17] A slightly shorter but better known treatment along similar lines can be found in *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*, a late work dating from 421-25/1030-34.[18] Both discussions are utilised below in setting out Ibn Sīnā's interpretation of the verse, which expounds in symbolic form his doctrine of the intellect. This presentation will make possible the identification of which text had the greater influence on *Mishkāt* when the interpretations of Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā are compared. In Table 3 the elements are listed in the order in which they occur in the Qur'an with one exception. 'Oil' is placed earlier in the table than the phrase 'neither from East nor West' so as to

---

[16] See Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), p. 154, 163-165. In discussing Gutas' analysis, he argues that the symbolic method is of equal value and has a "heuristic function" equal to that of Ibn Sīnā's philosophical discourse.

[17] *Fī Ithbāt al-nubuwwāt wa ta'wīl rumūzihim wa amthālihim*, ed. Michael Marmura (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār, 1968); tr. by Marmura as, "On the Proof of Prophecies and the Interpretation of the Prophet's Symbols and Metaphors" in Lerner and Mahdi (eds.), *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, pp. 112-121. Ibn Sīnā's authorship of this text is defended by Marmura in the English introduction to his Arabic edition, p. viii, on the grounds of content, terminology and style. It is also accepted by Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 164, n. 41, and Heath, *Allegory*, p. 186 *et al.*, although Davidson, p. 87 n. 56, is less certain

[18] *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*, 4 vols., ed. Sulayman Dunya , second edition (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), II: 388-94; an English translation of the passage on the Light Verse occurs in Gutas, *Avicenna*, pp. 164-165. For discussion of the dates of *Ishārāt*, see Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 140.

enable the first five parts of the table to list the five faculties of the human intellect in the order in which Ibn Sīnā conceives their status, beginning with the most basic, material intellect, and moving through to the highest, intuition.[19] These are followed by three other elements of the Light Verse. Where a phrase, rather than a particular term, is given this is a summary of Ibn Sīnā's remarks.

[19] *Ishārāt*, II: 388-92, translation from Gutas, *Avicenna*, pp. 164-165; *Ithbāt*, pp. 50-52, translation from Marmura, "Proof", pp. 116-17.

Table 3: A Comparison of Ibn Sīnā's Interpretations of Q24:35

Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt		*Fī Ithbāt al-nubuwwāt*
'aql hayūlānī (material intellect)	**Niche**	*al-'aql al-hayūlānī* and *al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*
'aql bi'l-fi'l (actual intellect)	**Lamp**	*al-'aql al-mustafād bi'l-fi'l* (acquired actualized intellect)
'aql bi'l-malaka (intellect in *habitu*)	**In a glass**	that which mediates between the above two faculties
fikra (reflection)	**Olive Tree**	*al-quwwa al-fikriyya*
ḥads (intuition)	**Oil**	*al-quwwa al-fikriyya*[20]
-	**Neither from East nor West**	cogitative power is neither purely rational nor purely animal
al-'aql al-fi'āl (active intellect)	**Fire**	*al-'aql al-kullī* (universal intellect)
'aql mustafād (acquired intellect)	**Light upon light**	-

The epistemological scheme linked to the Light Verse, and outlined in different ways in other texts, is central to Ibn Sīnā's concerns, "the *via regia* to his philosophical system."[21] Ibn Sīnā offers a Qur'anic presentation of ideas frequently found expressed in non-Qur'anic terms elsewhere in his writings, presumably to enhance the acceptability of his ideas to other Muslims.[22] Underpinning Ibn Sīnā's doctrine of the intellect is his understanding of the Active Intellect, discussed in Chapter 2, above. He believes this to be an incorporeal being emanating from God which enables the human intellect's potential for thought to be realised.[23] Plotinus had

[20] There is an ambiguity in the degree to which Ibn Sīnā distinguishes reflection and intuition in some texts, of which *Ithbāt* is an example. On this issue, see below, pp. 217ff.
[21] Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 159.
[22] See, Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 172 and passim. H.A. Wolfson "The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophic Texts" *HTR* 28 (1935), pp. 69-133, sets Ibn Sīnā's exploration of the intellect in the context of others' enquiries into the same area.
[23] Davidson, *Intellect*, p. 4.

first posed the question of how a diverse universe can derive from a unitary source, his answer being to posit a series of emanations. In Ibn Sīnā's scheme, the active intellect is the tenth such emanated incorporeal intelligence, there being nine others above it in the celestial hierarchy.[24] It is also the figure intended by the Qur'an's depiction of an angel of revelation, and is the source of the human soul and abstract thought.

The role of the human intellect in relation to the Active Intellect resembles that of a mirror. A thought is reflected in the human intellect if it faces the Active Intellect.[25] This reflection occurs by the human intellect's conjunction (*ittiṣāl*)[26] with the Active Intellect, a phenomenon not to be confused with union between the two intellects resulting in the absorption of the individual.[27] Whether Ibn Sīnā can be taken to understand *ittiṣāl* as a Sufi phenomenon is a question addressed after the other terms in Table 3 have been explained.[28]

'Material intellect' denotes the basic human potential for thought, as yet completely unactualised. 'Actual intellect' refers to having acquired a full range of concepts and propositions. Despite the implication of the term, this is an advanced stage of potentiality. 'Intellect *in habitu*'[29] describes the stage of having learned the first principles of thought although not actually thinking them at a given moment. Acquiring the potentiality signified by 'intellect *in habitu*' is necessary in order to

---

[24] For a full description of the sequence of emanation, including the view that the First Intelligence emanates the soul and body of the outermost sphere, see Davidson, p. 75.

[25] *Ishārāt*, p. 129, cited in Davidson, p. 94. This image is drawn from Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.4.10, cited by Davidson, p. 25. Ghazālī's frequent use of this image as a portrayal of the human heart before God is well-known.

[26] Another term drawn from Plotinus, this time *Enneads*, V 3.17, VI 9.11, cited by Goodman, *Avicenna* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 181, n. 79.

[27] Goodman, *Avicenna*, pp. 166-170. Davidson, p. 105, contends that such conjunction has no mystical content; see below, pp. 10-13.

[28] For a detailed discussion of these terms see Davidson, ch. 4, "Avicenna on Emanation, the Active Intellect and Human Intellect", pp. 74-126, and especially pp. 84-87, 94.

[29] Ibn Sīnā takes the term from Alexander of Aphrodisias; see Davidson, *Intellect*, p. 10.

move on to actual intellect. These stages are achieved by conjunction with the Active Intellect.[30]

The fourth, cogitative faculty combines propositions to produce conclusions, achieving this in two different ways. One is reflection (*fikra*), the other intuition (*ḥads*). Ibn Sīnā describes these in a passage central to the remainder of the present chapter.

> Perhaps you now wish to find out about the difference between "reflection" (*fikra*) and "Intuition" (*ḥads*). Listen: Reflection is a certain motion of the soul among concepts, having for the most part recourse to imagination. *It looks for the middle term* (or, in case it cannot be located, [it looks for] anything analogous to it which might lead to a knowledge of the unknown), by surveying the stock [of ideas] (or whatever is analogous to it) stored inside. Sometimes it reaches what is sought and sometimes it falls short. Intuition occurs *when the middle term presents itself to the mind all at once*; either as a result of a search or desire [for it] but without any [corresponding] motion [of the soul], or without any desire and motion. The term is a means to something; that, or something like it, presents itself [to the mind] along with the middle term (emphasis added).[31]

According to *Ishārāt*, as quoted in Chapter 6, above, the syllogism is:

> A discourse composed of statements. If the propositions which the syllogism involves are admitted, this by itself necessarily leads to another statement.[32]

Ibn Sīnā explains the middle term (*al-ḥadd al-awsaṭ*) as follows. "Every C is B; every B is A; from this it follows that every C is A", where B is the middle term.[33] Reflection (*fikra*) involves the usual intellectual processes of syllogistic reasoning, that is, proceeding from two premisses to a conclusion.[34] By contrast intuition (*ḥads*) is Ibn Sīnā's term for the more spontaneous acquisition of the same insight, likewise resulting in perceiving the middle term of the syllogism. *Ḥads* is the medieval Arabic

---

[30] *Ishārāt*, II: 392; Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 165

[31] *Ishārāt*, II: 392-394; Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 165.

[32] *Ishārāt*, I: 370; tr. Inati, *Remarks and Admonitions Part One*, p. 130. This definition corresponds to Aristotle's in *Prior Analytics* I 1 (24b 19-20) in Jonathan Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle* The Revised Oxford Translation (Princeton: PUP, 1984), p. 40.

[33] *Ishārāt* I, pp. 373, 377; tr. Inati, pp. 130, 133.

[34] See Gutas' section on 'Logic', in *Avicenna*, pp. 177-181.

translation of Aristotle's term *eustochia*,[35] the capacity for "hitting correctly upon the mark". The phrase 'more spontaneous' is preferable to simply 'spontaneous' given Ibn Sīnā's differing descriptions of *ḥads*; some of which depict it as gradual rather than as an instantaneous moment of realisation. Although Gutas portrays a straightforward picture of spontaneity contrasted with gradual reflection and study, Ibn Sīnā's presentation is more varied than this. In Discussion 467 from *Mubāḥathāt*[36] he mentions a lesser form of *ḥads* in which the intelligible is received with difficulty, only after reflection (*fikra*) has taken place. Yet Discussion 468 appears to say that an intelligible received after reflection is not intuited.[37] Similarly, in *Ithbāt* Ibn Sīnā remarks that:

> The rational soul... receives at times directly and at others indirectly.... We have also seen that there are different degrees of strength and weakness, ease and difficulty, in that which receives and that which is received.[38]

This mention of "degrees of ease and difficulty" might explain the interpretation of the olive tree and the oil which occurs later in *Ithbāt*, the two elements being less clearly distinguished than in *Ishārāt*:

> By *kindled from a blessed tree, an olive*, is meant the cogitative power (*al-quwwa al-fikriyya*), which stands as subject and material for the intellectual acts in the same way that oil stands as subject and material for the lamp... The saying, *its oil almost shines even if no fire touched it*, is in praise of the cogitative power.[39]

There is also a link in Ibn Sīnā's thought between *ḥads* and the Qur'anic concept of *fiṭra*, or natural intelligence, though the nature of this connection is disputed.[40]

---

[35] *Organon*, ed. A. Badawi (Cairo 1948-52) 2.406, cited by Davidson, p. 99. This translation of *eustochia* is from Gutas, *Avicenna*, pp. 166-167. Note his argument (p. 166, n. 46) that the equation of *ḥads* with Aristotle's *anchinoia* ('acumen'), made by Goichon and Rahman, is incorrect. Aristotle's use of the term *eustochia* can be found in *Posterior Analytics* (I.34, 89b10-11, 14), in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, p. 147. See also Davidson, *Intellect*, p. 99. Gutas, *Avicenna*, pp. 159-76, translates and discusses an extensive selection of Ibn Sīnā's discussions of *ḥads*.

[36] Gutas, *Avicenna*, pp. 143-44, gives details of the various manuscript recensions of this work.

[37] Marmura, "Plotting the Course", p. 336.

[38] *Ithbāt*, p. 45/114.

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 51-2/117.

[40] Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 170, contends that Ibn Sīnā regards them as identical, but this is challenged by Marmura, "Plotting the Course", p. 337. Marmura argues that *fiṭra* in Ibn Sīnā's understanding is a

The concept of *ḥads* is integral to Ibn Sīnā's understanding of prophecy, since a very highly developed capacity for intuition is what marks out a prophet. In *Ishārāt* this is not made explicit, but immediately following the explanation of *fikra* and *ḥads* Ibn Sīnā offers his usual argument that logically there must be persons of the lowest and highest possible degree of *ḥads*.[41] It is likely that he had himself in mind in his description of those most highly gifted in this way, but elsewhere he also links this capacity to prophecy. Note also that Ibn Sīnā sometimes uses different terminology instead of *ḥads* terminology later to find resonances in Ghazālī's *Mishkāt*. *The State of the Human Soul*, *The Cure* and *The Salvation* state that, "This is a kind of prophethood - indeed its highest faculty - and the most appropriate thing is to call this 'sacred faculty' (*qūwwa qudsiyya*)".[42] Similarly in *Mubāḥathat* Ibn Sīnā refers to "the sacred faculty of the soul".[43]

The use of these terms raises the important question of whether Ibn Sīnā envisages a Sufi phenomenon when discussing *ḥads*. It has often been assumed that there is a Sufi component to Ibn Sīnā's thought, especially in the light of the ninth section of *Ishārāt*, which describes the progress of the *'ārif*.[44] In particular, after

---

narrower concept, referring specifically to the comprehension of self-evident truths and the premises linked to them. See *Al-Shifā'; Logic V; Demonstration*, ed. A.E. Afifi (Cairo, 1955), p. 64, cited by Marmura, "Ghazālī's attitude to the Secular Sciences and Logic" in G. Hourani (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1975), p. 110, n. 20. See also *EI (2)* "Fiṭra", II: 931-32.

[41] *Ishārāt*, II: 394 ff. The same point is made in *Ithbāt*, p. 46/115, and, according to Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 163, in *Dānesh Nāmeh*.

[42] Translation from Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 163, who gives Arabic page references for the three texts, *Ḥāl al-Nafs al-Insānīya*, *al-Shifā'*, and *al-Najāt*.

[43] *Mubāḥathāt* in Badawi, *Aristū 'inda'l-'Arab* (Cairo, 1947) p. 231; translation from Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 165. Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 176, also argues that in *On the Rational Soul* Ibn Sīnā refers to those who possess *ḥads* when he mentions *ahl al-ḥikma al-dhawqiyya*. However, Marmura, "Plotting the Course", p. 341, questions this, suggesting that in this context *dhawq* is to do with direct experience of the rational soul rather than with intuiting the middle term.

[44] See, for example, Parviz Morewedge, "The Logic of Emanationism and Ṣūfism in the Philosophy of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Part I" *JAOS* 91 (1971), pp. 467-76, and Part II, *JAOS* 92 (1972), pp. 1-18. Goichon, Gardet and Corbin, cited by Davidson, p. 105, n. 125, also make this assumption.

describing the *'ārif's* gradual progress in the ability to be united with the truth through knowledge, Ibn Sīnā writes of the final step:

> Following this, he abandons himself. Thus, he notices the side of sanctity only. If he notices his self he does so inasmuch as it notices the Truth, and not inasmuch as it is ornamented with the pleasure of having the Truth. At this point, the arrival (*al-wuṣūl*) is real.[45]

Shortly after this Ibn Sīnā adds:

> He who finds knowledge... plunges into the ocean of the arrival. Here there are steps not fewer in number than those that have preceded. We have preferred brevity concerning them, for conversation does not capture them, a phrase does not explicate them, and discourse does not reveal anything about them. No power responsive to language other than the imagination receives even a semblance of them.[46]

Note the emphasis here on experience which is beyond words and description (even for Ibn Sīnā). These passages raise the question of whether the journey of the *'ārif* is simply another way of describing a highly developed capacity for *ḥads*. Alternatively, does such a journey either contradict Ibn Sīnā's reliance on syllogisms, or move beyond it but without contradiction. Davidson regards the *'ārif* described here as simply a "knower, man of knowledge".[47] In similar vein Gutas seeks to, "dispel the misconceptions about his [Ibn Sīnā's] alleged progressive 'mysticism', especially in the *Pointers and Reminders*".[48] He does this by emphasising that the discussions of the metaphysics of the rational soul in *The Guidance, The Cure* and *Ishārāt* are, "essentially the same". However, it is at best curious that Gutas does not discuss in detail why Ibn Sīnā should both use the language of Sufism, such as 'arrival' (*al-wuṣūl*) and also seem to echo Sufi claims to experience dimensions of existence beyond verbal expression.[49]

---

[45] *Ishārāt* IV:92-93; tr. by Constantine Shams Inati as *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism: Remarks and Admonitions Part Four* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), p. 88.

[46] *Ishārāt* IV:99; tr. Inati, pp. 88-89, with the substitution of 'ocean' (*lujja*) for her 'clamor' (*lajja*).

[47] Davidson, p. 105, n. 125.

[48] Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 259. Peter Heath, "Ibn Sīnā's Journey of the Soul" *Journal of Turkish Studies* 18 (1994), p. 99, likewise denies any mystical component in the journey of the *'ārif*.

[49] Marmura, "Plotting the Course of Avicenna's Thought" *JAOS* 111 (1991), p. 342, calls this omission "a basic methodological flaw".

It seems wise to avoid too hasty a dismissal of Ibn Sīnā's thought as without Sufi content, or at least Sufi overtones. Goodman advocates "an irenic stance", seeking to reconcile the perceived opposition of rationalism and mysticism in Ibn Sīnā's thought.[50] It is certainly the case that while the end, the discernment of the middle term, would appear to emphasise the rational, the *means*, for Ibn Sīnā, is clearly some kind of direct contact with a higher power. Whether this is the Active Intellect, or can also be God himself, is not always clear.[51] This is particularly so in view of the concluding parts of *Ishārāt*. It seems that for Ibn Sīnā, philosophy and a certain type of mysticism were not mutually exclusive epistemological options but finally combined in his scheme.[52]

It is helpful to distinguish two questions regarding Ibn Sīnā's thought. The first, as to whether it contains Sufi elements, can be answered with a cautious affirmative if we remember that Ibn Sīnā would have understood any mystical component to his thought within the precisely defined categories of his philosophical

---

[50] "If the idea of God is not to remain an opaque virtuality, it must be the object of thoughts which a syllogism merely frames and to which a progression merely points the way, but which are grasped not discursively at all but in a pure intuition, the very intuition that orients any such progression and anchors any such syllogism. An irenic stance, then, is more fruitful than the polemical or dismissive: Rationalism, as Plato understood, must fuse with mysticism, linking the processes of dialectic and experience itself with the pure intuition of reason. Reasoning will validate and describe, sensory and emotional experience will hint and lead the way to what pure rational intuition reveals directly, seemingly timelessly - not by the invasion of eternity by human temporal consciousness, nor even by the viewing of eternity from afar, but by *the incorporation in our very temporal awareness and discursive reasoning of a priori elements* whose operations we can understand only by reference to the eternal and absolute" (Goodman, *Avicenna*, p. 124, emphasis added).

[51] Majid Fakhry, "Three Varieties of Mysticism in Islam" *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 2 (1971), pp. 193-207, argues that Ibn Sīnā's "philosophical mysticism" is characterised by the goal of conjunction with a subordinate entity (the active intellect) rather than vision of or union with God himself. This leads him to characterise Ibn Sīnā's philosophical mysticism as humanist (pp. 202-03). Goodman, however, believes that in regard to *wuṣūl*, in the ninth section of *Ishārāt*, Ibn Sīnā has God, not the active intellect, in view.

[52] Hence the need both to affirm and qualify the words of James Morris, "The Philosopher-Prophet in Avicenna's Political Philosophy" in Charles Butterworth (ed.), *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy: Essay in Honor of Muhsin Mahdi* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 175, who states that, "The supposedly mystical passages at the end of the *Shifā'* and *Ishārāt*... can be read philosophically". "Supposedly" here seems unnecessary, since Ibn Sīnā's system is a philosophy incorporating mystical elements.

system. However, it is more relevant to this enquiry to ask if Ghazālī could have assumed some mystical component in Ibn Sīnā's thought, a component which he could have incorporated in modified form in presenting his own epistemology. It has been argued that there are grounds for taking such a view. This stance receives historical support from the fact that both Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Tusī make the same assumption.[53] It can be argued, then, that when Ghazālī borrows from *Ishārāt,* it cannot be automatically assumed that he regarded Ibn Sīnā as a rationalist philosopher whose thought excluded Sufi elements. Ibn Sīnā's interpretation of the Light Verse occurs in a work where he appears to go furthest in indicating the existence of a realm of experience reaching beyond words and analysis.

7.3 GHAZĀLĪ ON THE LIGHT VERSE

Ghazālī's close engagement with Ibn Sīnā's writings over many years is a complex phenomenon which cannot be surveyed fully here, though some elements of this engagement have been noted in the course of the present study.[54] At this point, a number of passages reflecting this influence in relation to the Light Verse provide wider context for the discussion in *Mishkāt.*

As early as *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* Ghazālī shows his awareness of Ibn Sīnā's link between the faculties of the soul and the Light Verse. After recounting Ibn Sīnā's standard argument that an exceptional capacity for *ḥads* is what distinguishes a

---

[53] Marmura, "Plotting the Course", p. 342. See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* (Cairo, 1325), p. 100, and Tusī, reproducing al-Rāzī's view, in his commentary on *Ishārāt* printed in Dunya's edition, IV: 47.

[54] One further example is that *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* is frequently described as Ghazālī's summary of the teachings of Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī. However, Jules Janssens, *An Annotated Bibliography of Ibn Sīnā 1970-89* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1991), p. 17, describes it as, "a slightly interpretive translation" of Ibn Sīnā's Persian summary of his philosophy, *Dānesh Nāmeh,* with only minor variations. For full treatment of this literary relationship see Janssens, "Le *Danesh-Nameh* d'Ibn Sīnā: un texte à revoir?", pp. 163-177.

prophet Ghazālī adds that such a prophet is described by the words ' *whose oil would almost glow forth of itself though no fire touched it, light upon light*'.[55] Here, however, Ghazālī subtly changes the heart of Ibn Sīnā's idea by writing that the rational speculative faculty (*al-quwwa al-'aqliyya al-naẓariyya*) reduces to *ḥads*, or speed in passing from one thing to another. In other words, Ghazālī collapses *fikra* and *ḥads* into one another completely. Goodman terms Ghazālī's summary "explicitly reductive", and attributes this to the context of the author's polemic against Ibn Sīnā's intellectualism.[56]

Iḥyā' also uses the Light Verse to indicate ideas expounded more fully in *Mishkāt*. In Book I, *Kitāb al-'Ilm*, Ghazālī describes the disparity in people's intellects. After mentioning those who are slow to learn, and brilliant minds, Ghazālī writes of:

> The perfect from whose souls truth emanates without any previous instruction. Thus God said, ' *whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire reached it. Light upon light*'. Such are the prophets to whom recondite things are clarified in their inward thoughts without having learnt or heard anything of the sort. This is expressed by the word inspiration (*ilhām*)... This kind of imparting information by the angels to the prophets is different from explicit revelation (*waḥy*) which involves hearing a definite voice with the ear and seeing the angel with the eye.[57]

In Book XXXV of *Iḥyā'*, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd wa'l-tawakkul*, Ghazālī offers an extended allegory of the traveller (*al-sālik*) who goes in search of knowledge, here personified. 'Knowledge' tells him of the need to have spiritual insight so as to see beyond the outer form of things. The traveller's reaction is anger at his own lack of such insight:

> His oil, however, which was in the niche of his heart, *would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it.* Then Knowledge inspired (*nafakha*) him with all his power, his oil caught fire and became *light upon light*.[58]

---

[55] *Tahāfut*, p. 167.

[56] Goodman, *Avicenna*, p. 181, n. 80.

[57] *Iḥyā'* I: 82, tr. Faris, *The Book of Knowledge*, pp. 234-35, but retaining Pickthall's Qur'anic translation.

[58] *Iḥyā'* IV: 245.

A variant of these interpretations occurs in *Fayṣal*. Here Ghazālī states that the true meaning of unbelief and faith, and of truth and error, are only disclosed to hearts which have been purified, refined, enlightened by *dhikr*; nourished by right thinking and adorned by adherence to the Law to such a degree that:

> The light from the niche of prophecy has inundated them and they have taken on the likeness of a polished mirror, and the light [lamp] of faith has become in the glass of the believer's heart an orient of lights with its oil but illuminant, though untouched by any fire.[59]

There is, then, ample evidence of Ghazālī's interest in this verse. It is in *Mishkāt*, however, that Ghazālī follows Ibn Sīnā's epistemological model in most detail.[60] Table 4 below shows a level of correspondence between Ibn Sīnā's and Ghazālī's categories strongly suggesting significant influence. This is the less surprising given that, as argued in Chapter 2 above, Ghazālī's explanation of the relationship between apparent and inner meanings of verses is presented in terms of al-Fārābī's and Ibn Sīnā's theory of imaginative prophecy. Ghazālī twice describes five types of human spirits, first to outline their characteristics, and then again to explain their correspondences to elements occurring in the Light Verse.[61] In addition to explaining these five spirits, Ghazālī offers interpretations of other aspects of the verse elsewhere in *Mishkāt*, which are also included in Table 4. In this table, the first references to Ibn Sīnā's terms are drawn from *Ishārāt*, the second from *Ithbāt*, summaries of the texts' ideas reproducing those contained in Table 3. Ghazālī's terminology will be explained following the table.

---

[59] *Fayṣal*, p.3 /147.

[60] The following draws on Abrahamov, "Influence", pp. 8-12, and on Davidson, pp. 130-44. In the opening book of *Iḥyā'*, *Kitāb al-'Ilm* (The Book of Knowledge), I: 82 Ghazālī states that the light is the intellect, but does not elaborate on this as he does in *Mishkāt*.

[61] *Mishkāt*, pp. 39-45. Ghazālī links the niche with two different terms in his two descriptions, both of which are therefore given here.

Table 4: A Comparison of Ibn Sīnā's and Ghazālī's Interpretations of Q24:35

Ishārāt / Ithbāt		*Mishkāt al-anwār*
'aql hayūlānī/al-'aql al-hayūlānī	**Niche**	*al-rūḥ al-ḥayawānī/al-rūḥ al-ḥāss*[62]
'aql bi'l-fi'l/al-'aql al-mustafād bi'l-fi'l	**Lamp**	*al-rūḥ al-'aqlī*
'aql bi'l-malaka/that which mediates between the above two faculties	**Glass**	*al-rūḥ al-khayālī*
fikra/al-quwwa al-fikriyya	**Olive Tree**	*al-rūḥ al-fikrī*
ḥads/-	**Oil**	*al-rūḥ al-qudsī al-nabawī*
-/ cogitative power neither purely rational nor purely animal	**Neither from East nor West**	intellectual propositions admit of neither direction nor distance
al-'aql al-fi'āl/al-'aql al-kullī	**Fire**	*al-rūḥ al-ilāhiyya*, the source of *waḥy*[63]
[the perfected form of actual thought] / -	**Light upon Light**	*al-rūḥ al-qudsī al-nabawī* when touched by the Fire.[64]

Two comments are needed before a detailed explanation is given. First, the order in which Ghazālī presents *al-rūḥ al-khayālī* and *al-rūḥ al-'aqlī* is reversed in the table. This is because he states that *al-rūḥ al-khayālī*, the imaginative spirit, is necessary to lead to *al-rūḥ al-'aqlī*, the discursive spirit.[65] Ghazālī's conception of the relationship of these two categories corresponds, as will become clear, to that of Ibn Sīnā, a correspondence which the arrangement of the table therefore reproduces. The

---

[62] Ghazālī uses the first term in his first description (p. 39) and the second in his subsequent interpretation (p. 43), but, as will become clear below, does not intend by this any difference in meaning.

[63] *Mishkāt*, p. 30.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

second point is methodological. It is not only similarity in terminology which might reveal Ghazālī's borrowing from his predecessor. Common or similar understanding of the categories discussed is equally important.

7.3.1 The Niche, Lamp and Glass

As already stated, the niche for Ibn Sīnā represents the human potential, as yet completely unrealised, to receive the intelligibles, or, in *Ithbāt,* to be illuminated.[66] In *Mishkāt* it represents the basic capacity to perceive through the senses, which sets apart animal life from other life-forms, and which is found in even the youngest baby.[67] There is a degree of conceptual overlap here, and a similarity between Ghazālī's *al-rūḥ al-ḥayawānī* and Ibn Sīnā's terms is apparent.

The lamp represents in *Ishārāt,* "the intelligible which has been acquired but is no longer [actually] present" and which, "may come about as if it were actually being observed". Ibn Sīnā terms this *'aql bi'l-fi'l,* or, in *Ithbāt, al-'aql al-mustafād bi'l-fi'l.* According to Ghazālī, the rational spirit, *al-rūḥ al-'aqlī,* likewise represented by the lamp, is concerned with "universal necessary knowledge" (*al-ma'ārif al-ḍarūriyya al-kulliyya*).[68] Again, there is terminological resemblance between Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā, both using the term *'aql* for this faculty.

Regarding the glass, terminological resemblance is absent. However, Ghazālī's *al-rūḥ al-khayālī* has an equivalent function to Ibn Sīnā's *'aql bi'l-malaka.* Ghazālī states that the imaginative spirit deals with information conveyed from the senses, "remembering it as something stored within itself, in order to present it to the rational spirit above it when there is need for it".[69] Similarly, for Ibn Sīnā the intellect

---

[66] *Ishārāt,* II: 389; *Ithbāt,* p. 49. Where separate comment on Ibn Sīnā's two texts are necessary in what follows, the first will be taken from *Ishārāt,* the better known text.
[67] *Mishkāt,* p. 36.
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 37, substituting "necessary" for Buchman's "self-evident".
[69] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

in habitu is the second stage, above the material intellect, necessary to enable the third stage to occur.

7.3.2 The Olive Tree and the Oil

For an enquiry into what Ghazālī wishes to communicate through his interpretation of the Light Verse the most significant area for discussion is the capacities symbolised by the olive tree and the oil. In focus is the relationship between, on the one hand, Ibn Sīnā's reflection and intuition, *fikra* and *ḥads*; and, on the other, Ghazālī's fourth and fifth spirits, *al-rūḥ al-fikrī* and *al-rūḥ al-qudsī al-nabawī*. As already noted, Ibn Sīnā sometimes refers to *ḥads* as *al-quwwa al-qudsiyya*. Once again, the terminological resemblances are striking, but it is more important to probe Ghazālī's intention in using such terms.

As with the other categories, Ghazālī first describes the human spirit, then later explains how it is represented in the Light Verse. Here is his initial description of the fourth, reflective spirit:

> It takes pure rational knowledge and brings about combinations and pairings, deducing therefrom noble knowledge. Then, for example, when it derives two conclusions, it combines the two anew and derives another conclusion. It never ceases increasing in this manner *ad infinitum*.[70]

In his second discussion he adds:

> It begins with a single root and then branches off from it into two branches. Then from each branch grow two branches, and so on until the branches of rational divisions become many. Then, at last, it reaches conclusions that are its fruits. These fruits then go back and become seeds for similar fruits, because some of them can fertilize others so that they continue to bear fruits beyond them. This is similar to what we mentioned in the book *The Just Balance*. Hence it is most appropriate that in this world the similitude of the reflective spirit be the tree.[71]

These passages clearly refer to reasoning using syllogistic logic. Ghazālī adds that the tree must be the olive since this produces oil with the capacity to make lamps radiant.

---

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

In concluding his discussion of the fourth spirit, Ghazālī explains that the phrase "neither from the east nor from the west" points to the fact that the ramifications of these intellectual propositions do not admit of distance or direction. This differs from Ibn Sīnā's remark in *Ithbāt* that the cogitative faculty is neither purely rational nor purely animal, and thus neither wholly in light, represented by the east, nor in darkness, represented by the west. This indicates that Ghazālī is probably following *Ishārāt* rather than *Ithbāt,* since he devises his own interpretation when nothing appears in *Ishārāt*. Whether this echoing of *Ishārāt* derives from Ghazālī's not having read *Ithbāt,* or from knowing both texts and consciously choosing *Ishārāt* is not known.

> Ghazālī describes the fifth spirit, *al-rūḥ al-qudsi al-nabawī,* as:
>
> The holy prophetic spirit that is singled out for the prophets and some of the friends of God. Within it are disclosed flashes of the unseen, the properties of the next world, and some of the knowledge of the dominion of the heavens and the earth, or, rather, some of the lordly knowledge *that the rational and reflective spirits cannot reach* (emphasis added).[72]

Here Ghazālī clearly distinguishes what is accessible via the fifth spirit from what can be attained by the fourth spirit. He adds that this fifth spirit is referred to in Q42: 52,[73] and also emphasises that it is, "beyond the rational faculty (*warā'a al-'aql*)".[74] He terms the spirit *dhawq,* 'experience', or 'tasting', as Buchman translates,[75] and writes that, "Knowledge is above faith and tasting is above knowledge; [this] because tasting is ecstasy."[76] *Dhawq* is implicitly contrasted with *'ilm.*

However, when Ghazālī comes to explain the Light Verse's symbolism for the fifth spirit he appears to blur the distinction between the rationality of the fourth spirit

---

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[73] This verse reads, "And thus have we inspired in thee a Spirit of Our command. Thou knewest not what the Scripture was, nor what the Faith. But We have made it a light whereby We guide whom we will of Our bondsmen. And lo! thou verily dost guide unto a right path"; *Mishkāt,* p. 37.

[74] *Mishkāt,* p. 37.

[75] *Dhawq* and its connotations are discussed below, pp. 226ff.

[76] *Mishkāt,* p. 38 (" *al-'ilm fawqa al-īmān wa'l-dhawq fawqa al-'ilm wa'l-dhawq wijdān*"), substituting "ecstasy" for Buchman's "finding".

and the fifth spirit's being "beyond reason". In explaining why the fifth spirit is represented in the Qur'anic words, " *Whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it*" he states that:

> The fifth spirit is the holy prophetic spirit, ascribed to the friends of God when it is in the utmost degree of purity and nobility. The reflective spirit is divided into [two kinds:] a sort that needs instruction, awakening, and help from the outside so that it may continue partaking of many types of knowledge; and another sort that has such intense purity that it is, as it were, awakened by itself without help from the outside.[77]

These words show Ghazālī introducing a link between the fourth and fifth spirits. The term *al-rūḥ al-mufakkira* is used here to denote a spirit which can be divided into two categories. One aspect of this, reflection, depends on instruction and external supply. This can be taken to apply to the fourth spirit.[78] Another category, however, which is clearly presented as being a *related* phenomenon, needs no such supply, and is the intensely pure *al-rūḥ al-qudsī al-nabawī*. In what way can these two spirits be said to share in a common aspect of the intellect, since previously Ghazālī had been at pains to contrast them? There appears to be some inconsistency here, one possible explanation being that the ambiguity previously mentioned in the relation between these two faculties in some of Ibn Sīnā's works was a direct or unconscious influence on Ghazālī. Another possibility is that Ghazālī deliberately uses apparent contradiction to mask his true ideas. Abrahamov favours this view, drawing attention to a possible parallel in this type of inconsistency in *Kitāb al-Arba'īn*[79] However, as this is the only possible instance of such a phenomenon in *Mishkāt* there seems insufficient evidence to solve the problem definitively in this way.

---

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[78] There is a typographical error in Abrahamov, "Supreme Way", p. 164 n. 106, where it is stated that *al-rūḥ al-mufakkira* refers to the fifth of Ghazālī's human spirits. The text should presumably read "fourth", as stated in Abrahamov "Influence", p. 10 n. 62, where the same point is made.

[79] Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Causality" *SI* 67 (1988), pp. 81ff., 89-94, following the views of Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1952); seven arguments in favour of the view that a hidden message might be concealed by disorderly presentation in some medieval Islamic texts are concisely summarised in Hourani, "Secret of Destiny", pp. 46-47.

The notion that the fourth and fifth spirits are two means to attain the same knowledge is termed the two-fold approach in what follows. This is the stance adopted by Davidson and Abrahamov. Describing the knowers' (*al-'ārifūn*) vision of the 'one real' which subsumes all else, Ghazālī writes:

> Some of them possess this state as a cognitive gnosis (*'irfān 'ilmī*). Others, however, attain this through a state of tasting. Plurality is totally banished from them, and they become immersed in sheer singularity.[80]

Ambiguity exists over whether the knowledge and experience gained by the two methods is the same. They are introduced as such, but "plurality" falling away from the second would seem to represent a substantive difference between the two groups. Another example occurs towards the end of *Mishkāt*, where the author describes those who attain the highest place. This group is subdivided, since some attain their ascent gradually, while for others:

> The revelation of Himself rushes upon them at once... It is likely that the first path is that of the Friend [Abraham], while the second path is that of the Beloved [Muḥammad].[81]

References to the two-fold approach also occur in *Iḥyā'*. In Book XXI, *Kitāb Sharḥ 'Aja'ib al-Qalb*, Ghazālī describes how to bring to actuality the human potential for the highest knowledge:

> This knowledge comes to some hearts through divine revelation (*ilhām ilāhī*) by way of immediate disclosure (*mubāda'a*) and unveiling (*mukāshafa*), and for some it is a thing to be learned and acquired. Sometimes it is gained quickly and sometimes slowly.[82]

Part of the title of Chapter 8 of *'Aja'ib* reads, "The Difference Between the Sufi Way of the Unveiling of Reality (*istikshāf al-ḥaqq*) and that of Speculation (*naẓar*)". Yet this "Sufi way" is described in the terms of the two-fold approach:

> Know that the sciences which are not axiomatic but which come into the heart at certain times, differ in their manner of attainment. Sometimes they come upon the heart as though something were flung into it from a source it knows

---

[80] *Mishkāt*, p. 17.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[82] *Iḥyā'* III: 8, tr. Skellie, *Psychology*, p. 28.

> not. At other times they are gained through deduction (*istidlāl*) and study. That which is not attained by way of acquisition nor through the cunning of proof is called general inspiration (*ilhām*), and that which is attained through inference is called reflection (*i'tibār*) and mental perception (*istibṣār*).[83]

Ilhām here is the equivalent of *ḥads*. It is sub-divided into two types:

> In the first the man is not aware how he achieved it, nor whence; in the second he is acquainted with the secondary cause from which he derived that knowledge, which is the vision of the angel who casts it into his heart. The former is called general inspiration, and inbreathing into the heart. The latter is called prophetic inspiration (*waḥy*).... *Ilhām*, then does not differ from acquiring as regards the knowledge itself, its seat, and its cause, but it differs only in the removal of the veil for this is not accomplished by man's volition. General inspiration does not differ from prophetic inspiration in any of these respects, but only in the matter of the vision of the angel who imparts knowledge.[84]

Ghazālī here minimises any firm distinction between prophets and others. Later he makes explicit the logical implication of this position in discussing Muhammad's ability to speak accurately about the unknown and the future:

> If that is permissible in the case of the Prophet it is also permissible for others. For a prophet is merely a person to whom the true nature of things has been disclosed, and who works for the reformation of mankind. So it is not impossible that there should exist a person to whom the true nature of things has been disclosed, but who does not work for the reformation of mankind. Such a man is not called a prophet, but a saint (*walī*).[85]

This conclusion must follow from the previous statements that there is no difference between prophets and others in the knowledge acquired, but only in the process of its acquisition. This view of prophecy is most probably drawn from Ibn Sīnā. As Morris notes, for Ibn Sīnā, since many classes of people can participate to varying degrees in exercising *ḥads*; "what is unique about prophets is not their simple possession of such psychic capacities, but the particular way or the purposes for which they use such powers".[86] Elsewhere Ghazālī emphasises that, "no item of knowledge is acquired except for two preceding items of knowledge which are related and combined in a

---

[83] *Ibid.*, III: 17, tr. Skellie, p. 70.
[84] *Ibid.*, III: 17-18, tr. Skellie, pp. 70-72, with alterations.
[85] *Ibid.*, III: 24, tr. Skellie, p. 98.
[86] Morris, "Philosopher-Prophet", p.192.

special way",[87] or, in other words, syllogistic reasoning. So is all prophecy received by a process reducible to such reasoning? Much as a neat solution is desirable, perhaps the most that can be said is that Ghazālī had at the time of writing *Sharḥ 'Aja'ib al-Qalb* not yet fully integrated his fascination with Ibn Sīnā's epistomological views with his own ideas.

The two-fold approach also occurs, in a slightly different form, in Book XXXIX of *Iḥyā'*, *Kitāb al-Tafakkur*. Here Ghazālī states:

> The way of using syllogism is obtained either by a divine light in the heart, which is an inborn quality *nūr ilāhi fi'l-qalb yaḥsulu bi'l-fiṭra*, as is the case with most prophets, or by learning and exercising, which is the case with most people.[88]

Here there is a slight difference in the presentation of the relationship of the two methods. The "divine light" does not bypass the need for syllogistic reasoning but rather provides the means to practise it. Abrahamov asks why a prophet would need the ability to understand syllogisms, and answers that Ghazālī believes there to be nothing beyond syllogistic reasoning.[89] Abrahamov uses this conclusion to interpret *Mishkāt*, but in so doing appears to commit the same methodological error which Watt criticises in the work of Jabre. This is to ignore the possibility of chronological development in Ghazālī's thought, and consequently to use one Ghazālī text to interpret another regardless of their apparent date of composition.[90] Although Abrahamov claims too much on the basis of this evidence from *Iḥyā'*, what does emerge is that at the time of writing *Iḥyā'*, Ghazālī did not see a need to adapt Ibn Sīnā's two-fold scheme for acquisition of the highest knowledge to make it fit a more traditional Sufi model which emphasises a realm beyond reason. However, whether

---

[87] *Iḥyā'*, III: 13, tr. Skellie, p. 52.
[88] *Iḥyā'* IV: 412; tr. from Abrahamov, "Supreme Way", p. 162. Jabre draws attention to this passage in *Certitude*, p. 263.
[89] Abrahamov, "Supreme Way", p. 162ff.
[90] Watt, "The Study of al-Ġazālī" *Oriens* 13-14 (1961), p. 127.

the same view occurs in *Mishkāt* is a separate question, to be addressed after other evidence has been considered. [91]

7.3.3 The Fire and Light upon Light

Ghazālī does not refer to the fire in his main discussion of the interpretation of the Light Verse. However, in an earlier section of *Mishkāt* he states that the fire is, "that by which the lamp itself is kindled". [92] He also terms it:

> The high divine spirit that has been described by 'Alī and Ibn 'Abbās, both of whom said, 'God has an angel who has seventy thousand faces; in every face are seventy thousand tongues, through all of which he glorifies God'. It is this angel who stands before all the other angels, for it is said that the day of resurrection is '*the day when the angels and the Spirit stand arrayed*" (Q78:38). [93]

So the fire symbolises the 'Spirit', or an angel of particularly high status. Fire is also described as the symbol for the source of inspiration (*waḥy*) which kindles the Lamp, representing the spirit of a prophet. [94]

It is clear that the function Ghazālī attributes to the fire has some resemblance to the Active Intellect in Ibn Sīnā's scheme - a non-corporeal being which conveys divine communication to humankind. Furthermore, the purest reception of the Active Intellect's transmission is prophecy. [95] Davidson concludes that spirits supernal, an angel or "prototypical divine Scripture" all seem to be "locutions for the active intellect" in *Mishkāt*. [96]

If Ghazālī takes the fire to symbolise a figure equivalent to the Active Intellect, is he advancing a form of emanationist cosmology? Davidson concedes that, for Ghazālī, God may not be the emanating cause of the universe, but notes that the

---

[91] See below, pp. 229ff.
[92] *Mishkāt*, p. 13.
[93] *Ibid.*, Qur'anic translation from Pickthall.
[94] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[95] Al-Fārābī uses the identical image of the sun enabling eyesight to describe the Active Intellect; see *Al-Fārābī on the Perfect State*, p. 202 (Arabic), 203 (English).
[96] Davidson, *Intellect*, p. 142.

incorporeal intelligences nevertheless emanate from one another, and the souls of the spheres from the intelligences.[97] He bases this view on Ghazālī's account of supernal spirits in ascending grades. Immediately following the references to the fire discussed above, Ghazālī writes:

> If the heavenly lights from which the earthly lights become kindled have a hierarchy such that one light kindles another, then the light nearest to the First Source is more worthy of the name "light" because it is highest in level. The way to perceive a similitude of this hierarchy in the visible world is to suppose that moonlight enters through a window of a house, falls upon a mirror attached to a wall, is reflected from the mirror to an opposite wall, and turns from that wall to the earth so as to illuminate it... These four lights are ranked in levels such that some are higher and more perfect than others.[98]

Gairdner denies that such a passage has emanationism in view, stating that it is simply Sufi imagery.[99] Lazarus-Yafeh takes the same view for different reasons, arguing that Ghazālī never introduces the notion of emanation directly into discussions where he uses such language and images.[100] Instead, he simply plays linguistically with the image of light flowing while never entertaining ideas which would have stepped outside orthodoxy.

However, there is a possible parallel to Ghazālī's use of the image of the sun in the writings of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'. They write that the generosity and virtues in God emanate from him just as light and brightness emanate from the sun.[101] Yet elsewhere they make clear that God exercised deliberate choice in the processes of creation and emanation.[102] Ghazālī certainly exhibits a fascination with the concept of radiation or emanation expressed in the term *fayḍ*, also used by the Ikhwān. *Mishkāt* opens with the words, "Praise belongs to God, Effuser of lights (*fā'iḍ al-anwār*).[103] In addition:

---

[97] *Ibid*, p. 136. Davidson, *Intellect*, p. 153, argues that in *Tahāfut* Ghazālī rejects Ibn Sīnā's emanationist explanation of the structure of the universe, but not the structure itself.
[98] *Mishkāt*, pp. 13-14.
[99] Gairdner, "Al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār* and the Ghazālī Problem" *Der Islam* 5 (1914), p. 140.
[100] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, pp. 308-09.
[101] *Rasā'il*, III: 196-197, as noted by Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, p. 35.
[102] *Rasā'il*, III: 338.
[103] *Mishkāt*, p. 1.

> There are in the world of dominion noble and high luminous substances called 'angels'. Lights effuse (*tafīḍu*) from these angels upon human spirits.[104]

Perhaps, then, the Ikhwān are Ghazālī's inspiration for a blend of creation and emanation subtly introduced into *Mishkāt*. As already noted, *Mishkāt* carries other signs of the influence of the *Rasā'il*, making this suggestion at least plausible.

There is an interesting parallel passage in Ghazālī's *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā*, a work clearly earlier than *Mishkāt* since it is mentioned in it.[105] In arguing that, from a certain perspective, all existence is one, Ghazālī writes:

> Everything in existence is a light from the lights of the eternal power (*al-qudra al-azaliyya*) and a trace from its traces. And as the sun is the source of light radiating to (*al-fā'iḍ 'alā*) every illuminated thing, so in a similar fashion the meaning (*al-ma'nā*) which words fall short of expressing - though it was necessarily expressed as 'the eternal power' - is the source of existence radiating to every existent thing.[106]

There is no mention here of a figure like the 'Spirit' symbolised by the fire in *Mishkāt*, yet the same interest in 'radiating' or 'emanating', depending on the interpretation given to Ghazālī's intention, is apparent. It would seem that, in relation to the fire, both Ibn Sīnā and the Ikhwān are an active influence.

Finally, attention can be given to Ghazālī's interpretation of the phrase "Light upon light", which also resembles that of Ibn Sīnā. In *Ishārāt* this phrase is taken to describe when:

> The intelligibles come about actually in [the soul], observed and represented in the mind.... This perfection is called 'acquired intellect (*'aql mustafād*)'.[107]

Ghazālī states that when the transcendental spirit of prophecy is touched by the fire it becomes, "light upon light".[108] Both writers thus take the phrase to be describing the

---

[104] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[105] *Mishkāt*, p. 17. See also Hourani "Revised Chronology", p. 298.
[106] *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā*, p. 24, tr. Burrell and Daher, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names*, p. 46. Abrahamov "Supreme Way", pp. 159-60, draws attention to this passage in the course of a separate discussion. Burrell and Daher, p. 186, n. 33, regard this passage as non-emanationist.
[107] *Ishārāt*, II: 391, tr. Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 164.
[108] *Mishkāt*, p. 13.

high point in human reception of knowledge from the divine realm.[109] This is a further indication of Ghazālī's borrowing specifically from *Ishārāt* rather than *Ithbāt* since he follows one of two possible usages of Ibn Sīnā.[110]

7.3.4 Implications for Ghazālī's View of Reason

Having sought to demonstrate that Ghazālī borrows substantially from *Ishārāt* in his interpretation of the Light Verse, the two questions mentioned at the outset can be addressed. First, to what extent is Ghazālī's borrowing from Ibn Sīnā creative, and secondly what are the implications of Ghazālī's at least partial dependence on his predecessor?

The question of whether Ghazālī's borrowing is creative is not straightforward. Both Davidson and Abrahamov assume that Ghazālī's reliance on Ibn Sīnā exposes his true belief that the fullest knowledge of God is purely intellectual. Davidson states explicitly that there is no mystical component to Ibn Sīnā's exposition of intuition (*ḥads*) and conjunction (*ittiṣāl*).[111] Abrahamov implies the same, stating that Ghazālī believes that "man is capable of attaining the highest stage through his endeavors which cannot be but intellectual".[112] Yet this view rests on the flawed assumption that to identify influences on a text is sufficient to explain the ideas within it.

Davidson's and Abrahamov's conclusion that there is no actual Sufi framework behind Ghazālī's terminology requires them to argue that he uses this terminology in order to conceal his true thoughts on cognition.[113] However,

---

[109] Davidson, *Intellect*, p. 86, notes that Ibn Sīnā uses the term 'acquired intellect' in two different ways. It can mean any human thought, or alternatively the high point of the intellectual process, as it does in al-Fārābī. In *Ishārāt* the second usage is in view.
[110] See also above, p. 217.
[111] Davidson, *Intellect*, p. 105.
[112] Abrahamov, "Supreme Way", p. 165.
[113] Davidson, *Intellect*, p. 180; Abrahamov, "Supreme Way", p. 167.

Davidson's and Abrahamov's accounts of why Ghazālī uses terms such as *dhawq* and *wijdān,* terms usually taken to indicate Sufi thought, are themselves problematic. Davidson argues that Ghazālī understands the 'direct experience' referred to by *dhawq* to consist of recognizing the unity of God, or *tawḥīd:*

> Direct experience is, accordingly, nothing ineffable or ecstatic. It is a heightened human realization that since God alone exists necessarily by virtue of Himself, everything else in the universe, including man, is as naught. If, as I have suggested, the expression *direct experience* is a veiled equivalent of insight, the passages quoted in this paragraph say that only the person of insight can fully comprehend the unity of God.[114]

Davidson here refers to *ḥads* when using the term 'insight'. His summary seems reductive, since, as argued above, Ibn Sīnā envisages some kind of direct contact with a higher power, contact which goes beyond the ability to "fully comprehend the unity of God", whatever Davidson means by that phrase. Hence, even if Ghazālī is merely borrowing Ibn Sīnā's conceptual framework wholesale, it could be argued that direct, supra-rational encounter with the divine - Sufism - could be in view.

Abrahamov writes:

> *Dhawq* in this context is not mystical experience, since the latter is a state, whereas the former is a faculty of the soul...the real meaning of *dhawq* is the best intellectual faculty of the soul which enables man to perceive what could not be perceived by other faculties of the soul.[115]

There are three potential problems with this position. First, Abrahamov seems to place too much emphasis on the distinction between an experience and a faculty of the soul. There is no decisive reason why possessing the faculty of *dhawq* cannot also involve experiences that could be classified as Sufi.

Secondly, Abrahamov overlooks a development in Ghazālī's use of the term *dhawq.* Brewster surveys the references to *dhawq* in *Iḥyā'* and *Munqidh* discussed by Jabre and Watt, and his analysis confirms Watt's view that development occurs.[116]

---

[114] Davidson, *Intellect,* pp. 140-41.

[115] Abrahamov, "Supreme Way", p. 166.

[116] D.P. Brewster, *Philosophical Discussions of Prophecy in Medieval Islam* (Unpublished D.Phil. thesis: University of Oxford, 1975), pp. 268-72. For Watt's view see "Study", pp. 127-28. It is

In *Iḥyā' dhawq* is used in a variety of ways. It can refer to the physical sense of taste,[117] to intuitive apprehension as by a lawyer who distinguishes between two points of law by *dhawq* since the difference is so fine as to evade reason,[118] and to the perception of the true nature of love or death.[119] However, it can also refer to the immediate apprehension of religious truth which yields the inner meaning of a text. This is stated in a passage from *Iḥyā'* Book II, *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id,* in a passage forming part of the account of five categories of secret knowledge discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Ghazālī describes the fourth category as:

> Where man comprehends the thing in a general way and then through verification and experience (*bi'l-taḥqīq wa'l-dhawq*) he understands its particulars so that it becomes part of him... Thus the first is the exoteric or outward, the second is the esoteric or inward. [120]

Elsewhere in *Iḥyā'* there are apparently conflicting statements regarding the role of reason. On the one hand, as referred to earlier, there is a reference to the two-fold approach in *Kitāb al-Tafakkur.*[121] By contrast, as Watt points out, Ghazālī writes in Book XXXII of *Iḥyā', Kitāb al-Ṣabr wa'l-Shukr:*

> Reason grasps nothing of the domain of the Lord. What is in this domain is known by another light, nobler and higher than reason.[122]

Thus, while *dhawq* usually has a non-mystical sense in *Iḥyā',* Ghazālī undoubtedly indicates at points his belief in a domain beyond reason. The use of the term *dhawq* in connection with such a realm in *Munqidh* will be outlined shortly. However, in view of the complex evidence in *Iḥyā'* Abrahamov is unwise to use *Kitāb al-Tafakkur* to

---

possible that the ambiguity in Ghazālī's understanding of the term *dhawq* reflects in some way the ambiguity of Ibn Sīnā's own views. Marmura, "Plotting the Course", p. 341, argues that Ibn Sīnā's use of the term *al-ḥikma al-dhawqiyya* in *On the Rational soul* is ambiguous since it can refer both to the union of the Active Intellect with the prophetic rational soul, and also to the type of progression of the *'ārif* described in the latter stages of *Ishārāt.*

[117] *Iḥyā',* II: 9, IV: 34, 107 (not 108 as Brewster states), 289, 300.

[118] *Ibid.,* II: 291.

[119] *Ibid.,* IV: 340, 445 respectively.

[120] *Ibid.,* I: 102; tr. Faris, *Book Of Knowlege,* p. 46, with alteration.

[121] *Ibid.,* IV: 412; see above, p. 221.

[122] Watt, "Study", p. 127, quoting *Iḥyā'* IV: 112.

interpret *Mishkāt* without regard for the passage of time between their composition, and the possible intervening development in Ghazālī's use of the term *dhawq*.

The third problem with Abrahamov's argument is his statement that *dhawq* enables a person to perceive what otherwise cannot be perceived. However, such a claim undercuts the basis of his own argument. Abrahamov's understanding of Ibn Sīnā's thought requires there to be no difference with regard to knowledge which can be derived from syllogisms and knowledge which is available directly from intuition. Only the means of acquisition differs.[123] Hence Abrahamov's proposed parallel between Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā breaks down, since in Abrahamov's view there is no space in Ibn Sīnā's system for a special faculty which is rational, yet which takes the perceiving subject beyond the scope of other rational faculties, which use syllogisms. It is therefore inconsistent to argue that Ghazālī could both follow Ibn Sīnā closely yet also suggest the existence of such a faculty.

To recapitulate, two assumptions are embedded in the work of Davidson and Abrahamov. First, Ibn Sīnā is in no way a Sufi thinker. Secondly, Ghazālī's apparent reliance on Ibn Sīnā must define the limits of the former's thought. Their conclusion, based on these two assumptions, is that Ghazālī cannot therefore be a Sufi thinker. Yet both of these assumptions are vulnerable to criticism (or perhaps it could be said that their syllogism is based on faulty premisses). It can plausibly be argued that Ibn Sīnā, in *Ishārāt,* gives evidence of describing some form of Sufism. Secondly, whether or not this is accepted, it does not automatically follow that Ghazālī's borrowing of Ibn Sīnā's categories indicates that he moulds his own scheme entirely to fit that of Ibn Sīnā. As part of addressing this second issue, evidence from texts other than *Mishkāt,* in addition to that already cited from *Iḥyā',* can be examined

---

[123] As previously noted, it is arguable that Ibn Sīnā goes beyond his own usual model in the later stages of *Ishārāt,* in describing the progress of the *'ārif.* However, Abrahamov does not have this point in view in his argument.

to help to determine whether Ghazālī's epistemology moves beyond reliance on reason.

7.3.5 Evidence From Other Texts

A full discussion of Ghazālī's views on reason and its limits is beyond the scope of the present discussion. Instead attention will be drawn to a few examples suggesting Ghazālī's belief in the possibility of knowledge available only by supra-rational means.

The first is the frequent references Ghazālī makes to well-known Sufi authors, highlighted in Quasem's brief study of Ghazālī's attitude to al-Bisṭāmī.[124] Quasem shows that Ghazālī not only gives partial affirmation to al-Bisṭāmī, but even goes so far as to explain at what points he agrees and disagrees with this early Sufi. This approach would not seem to fit the view of Ghazālī as a writer who uses Sufi terminology merely as a screen for his own more rationalist views. It must be granted that such evidence, when scattered through a work such as *Iḥyā'*, is contemporary with occurrences of the two-fold approach in that work.[125] Perhaps, as often with Ghazālī, the most that can be said is that the evidence cannot be harmonized. However, this in itself is a more accurate assessment of Ghazālī's thought than attempting a forced harmonization which the evidence resists.

Secondly, Ghazālī's discussion of reason in relation to Sufism in *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā* deserves comment.[126] Ghazālī argues that a saint (*walī*) might discern something unknown to reason, "because reason falls short of it". However, it is

---

[124] Muhammad Abul Quasem, "Al-Ghazālī's Evaluation of Abū Yazīd Al-Bisṭāmī and his Disapproval of the Mystical Concepts of Union and Fusion" *Asian Philosophy* 3 (1993), pp. 143-64. On al-Bisṭāmī see *EI (2)* "Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī " I: 162-63.

[125] See above, p. 19ff.

[126] *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā*, pp. 75-76, tr. Burrell and Daher, pp. 156-58.

impossible for him to discern something contradictory to reason, such as that God might create another being like himself. Ghazālī concludes:

> Whoever cannot distinguish what contradicts reason from what reason cannot attain is beneath being addressed, so let him be left in his ignorance.[127]

This would also seem to be a fair summary of Ghazālī's stance in *Mishkāt*, even though *Mishkāt* lacks such an explicit statement. While it is possible that Ghazālī changed his view between the writing of the two works, the existence of such a statement in an earlier work should at least influence, even if not determine, the interpretation of *Mishkāt*.

In addition to Ghazālī's discussion of earlier Sufis, and the evidence from *al-Maqṣad*, a third source of evidence regarding reason and the Sufi way as paths to the highest knowledge of God is *Munqidh*. As noted in Chapter 2, *Mishkāt* pre-dates *Munqidh*.[128] However, this does not rule out completely the value of *Munqidh* in guiding interpretation of *Mishkāt*, written just a few years before.

As Abrahamov acknowledges, Ghazālī uses the term *dhawq* with a Sufi sense in *Munqidh*. In fact Ghazālī explicitly contrasts demonstration, reason, or the workings of the intellect with experience of God's light on several occasions in *Munqidh*. His peace of mind, enabling him to accept the self-evident data of reason, was restored after two months of confusion:

> My soul regained its health and strength... But that was not achieved by constructing a proof or putting together an argument. On the contrary, it was the effect of a light which God Most High cast into my breast. And that light is the key to most knowledge".[129]

Such comments are echoed elsewhere. Beyond the intellectual stage of acquisition of knowledge there is another stage far removed from it.[130] Reason hands us over to the

---

[127] *Ibid.*, p. 76, tr. Burrell and Daher, *The Ninety Nine Beautiful Names*, p. 158.
[128] See above, p. 47.
[129] *Munqidh*, pp. 13-14, tr. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment*, p. 66.
[130] *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42, tr. McCarthy, p. 97.

prophets as blind people are entrusted to guides.[131] There could be in religious ordinances aspects which can only be perceived by prophecy, not by reason.[132] Indeed Muhammad reached a stage beyond reason.[133] Most significantly for our enquiry, Ghazālī employs the triad of *īmān, 'ilm* and *dhawq* in *Munqidh* in the same way as in *Mishkāt*, again affirming the superiority of *dhawq*. *Munqidh* reads:

> Ascertainment by demonstrable proof leads to knowledge (*'ilm*). Intimate experience of that very state is fruitional experience (*dhawq*). Favorable acceptance of it based on hearsay and experience of others is faith (*īmān*)." [134]

Similarly, *Mishkāt* states that, "knowledge (*'ilm*) is above faith (*īmān*) and experience (*dhawq*) is above knowledge".[135] The term *dhawq* occurs eleven times in *Munqidh*, referring in one instance to the physical sense of taste.[136] On every other occasion it refers to a state of immediate apprehension, a typical comment being that " *Dhawq*... is comparable to actual seeing and handling: this is found only in the way of the Sufis".[137] The point of all these comments is that Sufi experience, which Ghazālī happens to term *dhawq*, is the supreme way to know God. In fact Ghazālī's affirmation of Sufism would appear to be the overriding aim of the whole work.[138]

Abrahamov states:

---

[131] *Ibid.*, p. 46, tr. McCarthy, p. 102.
[132] *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52, tr. McCarthy, p. 110.
[133] *Ibid.*, p. 54, tr. McCarthy, p. 112.
[134] *Ibid.*, p. 40/95-96, with alteration.
[135] *Mishkāt*, p. 38, translating *dhawq* as 'experience' rather than Buchman's 'tasting'.
[136] *Munqidh*, p. 41, tr. McCarthy, p. 97.
[137] *Ibid.*, p. 44, tr. McCarthy, p. 100.
[138] Again it is possible to find echoes of Ibn Sīnā in Ghazālī's writing. Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 196, contends that Ibn Sīnā's main concern in his autobiography is to emphasise the importance of his personal verification (*taḥqīq*) of truth through perceiving the middle term, and so stress his avoidance of *taqlīd*. Thus Ibn Sīnā's purpose in the autobiography is to highlight his "central epistemological theory", and the fact that he developed it independently of any school of thought. Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System*, p. 10, suggests that Ghazālī might have written *Munqidh* partly as a response to Ibn Sīnā's autobiography. There would indeed seem to be similarities between the two works. *Munqidh* also concerns the attainment of personal verification of truth independent of any school of thought, and the concomitant denigration of *taqlīd*. It is clear from *Munqidh*, p. 48, tr. McCarthy, p. 104, that Ghazālī knew Ibn Sīnā's autobiography. An earlier personal account, considered an influence on *Munqidh* by Margaret Smith, "The Forerunner of al-Ghazālī" *JRAS* (1936), p. 65, is al-Muḥāsibī's *Kitāb al-Waṣāya*, some of which she translates in *An Early Mystic of Baghdad* (London: The Sheldon Press, 1935), pp. 18ff.

> The fact that *dhawq* occurs as a Sufic way in *al-Munqidh* should not contradict what al-Ghazālī states in *Mishkāt*. For what one must search for, to use al-Ghazālī's notion, is not words or terms but their real meaning.[139]

The author's point here seems to be that although Ghazālī describes *dhawq*, a common Sufi term, we should interpret its use in *Munqidh* according to its use in *Mishkāt*, as a rational process. However, Ghazālī in *Munqidh* is several times so emphatic in contrasting *dhawq* and reason that such evidence cannot be dismissed without more substantive reasons than those provided by Abrahamov.

Since *Mishkāt* predates the composition of *Munqidh* it might be argued that it represents a transitional phase on the way to the more clear-cut break with reason found in *Munqidh*. Even so, there is insufficient evidence to identify exactly what point in that process of transition *Mishkāt* represents. However, the evidence of the present chapter suggests a more complex picture, rather than a gradual and traceable movement in Ghazālī's thought away from reliance on reason towards emphasis on *dhawq* as Sufi experience. Statements stressing the need to move beyond reason are found earlier than *Mishkāt*, notably in *Iḥyā'* and *Maqṣad*. To maintain that *Munqidh* has no bearing on a reading of *Mishkāt* because of post-dating it by a short period would therefore seem to demand too much from the evidence of dating alone. If *Munqidh* is allowed influence over a reading of *Mishkāt*, it strongly suggests taking seriously the view that for Ghazālī, the oil being touched by the fire represents some kind of experiential encounter with God.

7.4 OTHER INTERPRETATIONS IN *MISHKĀT*

Interpretation of other Qur'anic verses plays a minor role in *Mishkāt* in comparison with the central place of the Light Verse, although there are several brief

---

[139] Abrahamov, "Supreme Way", p. 166.

comments and interpretations in the text. Rather than attempting to survey these exhaustively, attention will be drawn to a few which relate to the themes already discussed, and to others of particular interest.

Ghazālī interprets some verses in a way related to his epistemological scheme outlined via the Light Verse. Hence these can also be said to reflect the influence of Ibn Sīnā, at least in the source of their ideas. For example, Muhammad is named, "*a lamp that giveth light*" (Q33:46) because he is imbued with the holy prophetic spirit.[140] Ghazālī also finds reference to this spirit in the phrase, "*And thus have We inspired in thee (Muhammad) a Spirit of Our command*" (Q42:52).[141] Furthermore, it is not difficult to hear echoes of the epistemological scheme, when, having once read *Mishkāt*, the reader returns to Ghazālī's early comments on the verse, "*Now We have removed from thee thy covering, and piercing is thy sight this day*" (Q50:22). Ghazālī remarks, "This covering is the covering of imagination (*khayāl*), fancy, and other things.

There are also interpretations reflecting the influence of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'. Reference was made in Chapter 5 to Ghazālī's reliance on them in interpreting Q13:17 in *Mishkāt*.[142] In addition, Ghazālī interprets Moses' indirect answers to Pharaoh's question, "*And what is the Lord of the Worlds*?" (Q26:23 and ff.) as a refusal to inquire into God's quiddity (*māhiyya*). This interpretation also seems to be drawn from the *Rasā'il*.[143]

At the end of Ghazālī's chapter on the interpretation of the Light Verse he offers another interpretation which is in a sense the converse of it. He states in relation to Q24:40:

---

[140] *Mishkāt*, p. 13.
[141] *Ibid.*, p. 37. These two interpretations are also found together on p. 30.
[142] *Ibid.*, p. 32; cf. above, Chapter 5, pp. 133-34.
[143] *Ibid.*, p. 28; cf. *Rasā'il*, Epistle 42, III: 513, as noted by Landolt, "Some Notes", p. 29.

> The rational faculties of the unbelievers are inverted, and so are the rest of their faculties of perception, and these faculties help one another in leading them astray. Hence, a similitude of them is like a man "*in a fathomless ocean covered by a wave above which is a wave above which are clouds, darknesses piled one upon the other*".[144]

According to Ghazālī, the terms 'ocean' and 'fathomless' refer to this world. The first wave symbolises those things, "which call out to the bestial attributes, occupation with sensory pleasures, and achievement of the wishes of this world". The second wave refers to attributes causing, "anger, enmity, hatred, malice, envy, boastfulness, vainglory, and arrogance". Ghazālī adds that, "it is appropriate that this is the higher wave, because more often than not anger takes control away from the appetites". There is a combination here of speculative symbolism and carefully formulated reasons for it, characteristic of Ghazālī. The clouds represent, "loathsome beliefs, lying opinions, and corrupt imaginings that have veiled the unbelievers from faith". These waves and clouds, Ghazālī concludes, are appropriately called "darknesses". An echo of the Ikhwān and their interpretation of Q13:17, referred to in three works by Ghazālī, is audible behind this particular *ta'wīl*.

Finally in this survey, there is a striking example of the different treatments Ghazālī can give to a single verse. In *Qisṭās* Ghazālī draws on Abraham's statement, "*I love not the things that set*" (Q6:77) and the surrounding account of Abraham's reactions to the moon, stars and sun, as an example of the Qur'an's inclusion in its text of the second figure of the categorical syllogism.[145] In *Mishkāt*, by contrast, the same Qur'anic account is used to very different purpose:

> There are in the world of dominion noble and high luminous substances called "angels". Lights effuse from these angels upon human spirits... These angels have diverse levels in their luminosity. Hence, it is appropriate for their similitude in the visible world to be the sun, moon, and the stars.[146]

---

[144] *Mishkāt*, p. 42.
[145] See above, p. 180.
[146] *Mshkāt*, pp. 27-28.

Ghazālī then goes on to show that the spiritual traveller (*al-sālik*) ascends from the level of the stars to that of the moon, and then to that of the sun.

7.5 CONCLUSION

As noted both in the previous paragraph and elsewhere, the influence of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' is detectable in *Mishkāt*. However, the most prominent presence shaping the interpretation of the Light Verse itself is Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt*, not the similar interpretation found in *Ithbāt*. What were Ghazālī's intentions in borrowing in this way?[147] Might it indicate Ghazālī's belief that syllogistic reasoning, exercised gradually or grasped through sudden illumination, leads to the highest knowledge of God? In the light of the foregoing discussion, two other options seem more plausible. First, Ghazālī might understand Ibn Sīnā in *Ishārāt* to be advocating a philosophically rigorous form of Sufism. Secondly, Ghazālī might be borrowing Ibn Sīnā's interpretive framework and investing it with new, more Sufi meaning. Some factors in support of Ghazālī's theology having a Sufi element are his willingness to cite as influences the names of well-known earlier Sufis, the evidence of his discussion in *al-Maqṣad*, and the arguments of *Munqidh* that *dhawq* is superior to reason.

There is sufficient evidence to claim that in *Mishkāt* Ghazālī's theology can be described as Sufi, despite the reliance of the interpretation of the Light Verse on Ibn Sīnā. It seems fair to state that Ghazālī was a Sufi by conviction, whether or not he was also one by experience. Davidson and Abrahamov are correct in believing that

---

[147] In "Influence", p. 16, one conclusion Abrahamov draws is that Ghazālī's apparent debt to Ibn Sīnā regarding cognition calls for a re-examination of the authenticity of *Ma'ārij al-Quds*, usually regarded as spurious. However, he retreats from this position in the later "Supreme Way", p. 156 n. 72, rejecting the possibility of Ghazālian authorship and citing Tritton, "*Ma'ārij al-Quds*" BSOAS 22 (1969), p. 353. For a more detailed discussion of the authorship of *Ma'ārij* see Jules Janssens, "Le *Ma'ārij al-Quds fī Madārij Ma'rifat al-Nafs*: Un élément-clé pour le dossier Ghazzālī-Ibn Sīnā?" *Archives D'Histoire Doctrinale et Litteraire du Moyen Age* 60 (1993), pp. 27-55. Janssens provisionally concludes that the work is an authentic but early text by Ghazālī.

Ghazālī was not concerned with the significance of particular terms. However, they overestimate his degree of concern for the implications of the frameworks he constructs or adopts in the course of his arguments. Perhaps Ghazālī understands Ibn Sīnā to be advocating a philosophically rigorous form of Sufism which could accommodate his own ideas, or, as seems equally likely, he borrowed and altered his predecessor's ideas. It is possible that both these assessments of Ghazālī are true. However, it is important to acknowledge that Ibn Sīnā's thinking - at least in *Ishārāt*, the principal source for the *ta'wīl* of the Light Verse in *Mishkāt* - blends philosophy and a form of Sufism. A completely satisfactory harmonization of the different strands of Ghazālī's thought remains out of reach, but Watt's remark is fair: "The conception of a faculty above reason was one line of thought which he followed in certain contexts, and which in his last years was the dominant line".[148]

As outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Ghazālī advocates in several works the complementarity of apparent and inner meanings of a Qur'anic text. In *Mishkāt* his elaboration of this basic point draws on Ibn Sīnā's theory of imaginative prophecy and the consequent need for *ta'wīl*.[149] Immediately prior to his exposition of the Light Verse, Ghazālī writes that, "What is conferred by inspiration in waking vision needs explanation (*ta'wīl*)".[150] In a previous passage he refers to secrets (*asrār*) which special knowledge reveals.[151] In the case of the Light Verse Ghazālī has apparently gained access to these secret meanings with considerable help from Ibn Sīnā. Yet he has used this help to construct a work which can most coherently be read as claiming

---

[148] Watt, "Study", p. 127.

[149] See above, pp. 53ff.

[150] *Mishkāt*, p. 35. The only other occurrence of the term *ta'wīl* in *Mishkāt* is found on p. 22. In discussing the saying "God created Adam in the image of the Merciful" (our translation), Ghazālī remarks that, like other puzzling sayings, it has a *ta'wīl*. The term here refers to the result, not the process, of interpretation, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

[151] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

that the supreme way to know God is through some form of mystical experience.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

> *Ta'wīl* is meddlesomeness, foolishness, immoderation, words held forth in ignorance, and exposure of oneself to danger regarding that which is not called for by necessity.[1]

Ghazālī's ideas on *ta'wīl*, a topic seen by some as fraught with danger, can now be drawn together. Part 1 of this thesis explored six texts dealing with hermeneutical theories. Chapter 2 examined four works exhibiting varying types of Sufi influence, three of which assume that every Qur'anic text has both a *ẓāhir* and a *bāṭin*, an apparent and an inner meaning, which complement each other, rather than being in conflict. Book VIII of *Iḥyā'*, *Kitāb Ādāb tilāwat al-Qur'ān*, employs arguments principally from hadiths and reason to argue for *ta'wīl*, while *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* establishes an elaborate classification for types of Qur'anic verse and corresponding intellectual disciplines. *Mishkāt al-anwār* argues for the necessity of *ta'wīl* on perhaps the most surprising grounds of all - a theory of Qur'anic revelation based on the notions of imaginative prophecy advanced by al-Fārābī and, in particular, Ibn Sīnā. By contrast with these, Book II of *Iḥyā'*, *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'aqā'id*, despite a clear Sufi context for its comments on *ta'wīl*, combines two contrasting approaches. One is that found in the three texts mentioned above, that all Qur'anic verses possess an inner meaning. The second is a non-mystical approach, addressing the interpretive issues raised by non-literal language, in which a text might or might not admit of *ta'wīl*. Ghazālī's combining these two approaches in one discussion without any hint of the different assumptions behind them could show him simply confusing his

---

[1] Ibn Qudāma, *Taḥrīm al-naẓar fī kutub ahl al-kalām*, ed. and tr. George Makdisi as *Ibn Qudāma's Censure of Speculative Theology*, (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1962), p. 32 (Arabic), p. 22 (English).

categories of approach. A more likely explanation is his desire to draw his reader gradually towards a more Sufi understanding.

Chapters 3 and 4 dealt with works indebted to currents of thought other than Sufism. Chapter 3, in its discussion of *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa'l-zandaqa,* focussed on a work not shaped by a particular tradition. This chapter demonstrated that a defensive agenda was at work in Ghazālī's arguments on *ta'wīl,* although, uncharacteristically, Ghazālī does not reveal the issues over which he had been criticised, or attempt to rebut specific criticisms. Instead, he defends himself at the level of presuppositions about interpretation, and their implications for the attribution of unbelief (*takfīr*). Ghazālī develops an elaborate hierarchy of types of existence and corresponding types of interpretation as a means of asserting the alleged objectivity of his unmentioned interpretations which had, presumably, previously elicited a hostile response. He further bolsters the case for his objectivity by an appeal to syllogistic logic, again without detailed application, as a means of determining the legitimacy or otherwise of his five types of interpretation in any given instance. *Fayṣal,* in part a personal *apologia,* argues for a policy of independence in interpretation, but a tightly-controlled independence reliant on specialised knowledge of syllogistic logic for its correct implementation. As such, it appears to be more a rhetorical appeal than a practical guide to Qur'an interpretation.

The discussion of *ta'wīl* in *al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl* serves a very different function. It is a cautious discussion, in the tradition of manuals of *uṣūl al-fiqh,* and is both a handbook for students and a Shāfi'ī criticism of Ḥanafī liberty in interpretation. This work also highlights the fact that the term *ta'wīl* cannot accurately be described merely as interpretation of figurative language, since the phrase 'figurative language' does not adequately cover the semantic range of expressions, involving, for example, pleonasm and ellipsis, which requires *ta'wīl* to be employed.

Furthermore, *Mustaṣfā* shows that *ta'wīl* is not exclusively a process of interpretation, but can also denote the meaning resulting from the act of interpretation. Part 1 of the thesis thus demonstrates the diversity of Ghazālī's theories of *ta'wīl*, shaped primarily by the purpose and target audience of the particular text in question.

Turning from theory to practice, Part 2 of the thesis scrutinised Ghazālī's interpretations in the three works where he makes Qur'anic interpretation central to his concerns. Chapter 5 showed that in *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* Ghazālī introduces a number of his theological concerns into his work via his interpretations of the Qur'an. These concern the nature of the paradise of the *'ārifūn*, the need for *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an, the view that the principles of all intellectual disciplines can be found in the Qur'an, an emphasis on God's necessary rather than contingent being, the idea that this world is the best of all possible worlds, and God's origination of all acts, in opposition to Mu'tazilism. Hence, although the purpose of *Jawāhir* is framed in Sufi terms, its Qur'anic interpretations are in fact largely concerned with non-Sufi ideas. Chapter 5 also demonstrated that Ghazālī draws on both Ibn Sīnā and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'. Furthermore, Ghazālī structures some of his interpretations around the classification of Qur'anic verses he advances in the theoretical discussion in *Jawāhir*. Hence in this respect there is a harmony of hermeneutical theory and practice.

Chapter 6 addressed *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*. This work was shown to be Ghazālī's attempt to integrate the two sources which he believes provide certain knowledge, namely the Qur'an and Aristotelian syllogistic logic as transmitted by Ibn Sīnā. Ghazālī sought to show the Qur'anic basis of this logic in order to popularise it amongst the religious scholars of his day. Despite employing a framework of Sufi language to justify the concept of hidden meanings, Ghazālī goes on to expound interpretations which carry no Sufi assocations. These interpretations centre on finding syllogisms embedded in Qur'anic passages, which Ghazālī manages to achieve

with a generally acceptable degree of accuracy. Whether these passages were ever intended to demonstrate syllogistic logic is doubtful, but in Ghazālī's scheme of ideas the presence of syllogisms in the Qur'an carries a particular importance. This alleged presence not only justifies logic as a legitimate instrument for use by Muslims, but also forms part of Ghazālī's argument that the principles of all types of knowledge are present in the Qur'an. This makes clear that *Qisṭās,* which has puzzled some commentators, is not such a surprising undertaking for Ghazālī as it might seem, fulfilling a number of different functions in Ghazālī's thought.

The treatment of *Mishkāt al-anwār* in Chapter 7 brought fully into view the frequently-glimpsed influence of Ibn Sīnā on Ghazālī's thought. After outlining the dependence of Ghazālī's interpretation of Q24:35, the so-called Light Verse, on the interpretation of Ibn Sīnā in *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt,* it was argued that this did not necessarily mean that Ghazālī's thought had no Sufi component, *pace* Davidson and Abrahamov. Like *Qisṭās, Mishkāt* exhibits Ghazālī's pre-occupation with certain knowledge. In *Mishkāt,* however, in contrast to *Jawāhir* and *Qisṭās,* Ghazālī does indeed unite his Sufi theories of Qur'an interpretation with his interpretive practice, to argue for a Sufi understanding of response to God and knowledge of the spiritual realm.

A number of general conclusions can be drawn from this analysis of Ghazālī's Qur'anic hermeneutics. First, the relationship between Ghazālī's hermeneutical theories and practice is often tenuous. At times he advances a theory, while his interpretive practice in the same work ignores it. Of all the texts discussed, *Mishkāt* reveal the greatest degree of harmony between theory and practice, but this harmony derives from Ghazālī's drawing inspiration from the hermeneutical theory and practice of Ibn Sīnā.

Secondly, Ghazālī does not aim to advance a general or comprehensive theory of *ta'wīl*. Instead he offers a number of discussions which give the impression that they are tailored to the target readership or audience. These discussions are not directly contradictory so much as differing in their presuppositions, Ghazālī advancing Sufi theories in some works, non-Sufi theories in others. However, theories do sometimes ignore each other in their details and implications, even granted this allowance. For example, the discussions in *Fayṣal* and *Mustaṣfā* do not intersect; written in different genres, they can be said to diverge, one arguing for liberty, the other for caution, in interpretation. This is not so much a contradiction as a reflection of the very different concerns of the author at the time of writing. Ghazālī's Sufi hermeneutical theories show greater consistency, with the exception of *Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id*, previously mentioned.

Ghazālī's hermeneutical practice exhibits a similar diversity. He can focus on a range of his theological interests, or a single issue, such as logic. A verse can be interpreted in strikingly different way, notable Q7:200 on *dhikr*, taken as a reference to Sufi practice and to syllogistic logic in different texts. This is unsurprising given the diversity of goals and approaches in Ghazālī's writing.

Influences on Ghazālī's hermeneutics are various. In particular, this thesis has drawn attention to interaction with the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', and, at a more pervasive level of influence, the thought of Ibn Sīnā. This is particularly clear in *Mishkāt*, but while the full flowering of this influence occurs here, its seeds are in evidence in earlier works. Hence, the thesis illustrates another dimension to the complex engagement of Ghazālī with Ibn Sīnā, the figure who is both his opponent, and yet in some respects also his mentor. Gutas' remark that, in relation to logic, Ghazālī was Ibn Sīnā's "collaborator and mouthpiece" is also partly applicable to

Mishkāt.[2] However, Frank's revisionist conclusions regarding Ghazālī's departures from Ash'arism in favour of Ibn Sīnā's views on causality cannot be wholly confirmed by the present study. While *Fayṣal* does seem to be a response to criticisms of Ghazālī's lack of adherence to Ash'arism, Ghazālī's discussions and use of *ta'wīl* in this and other works do not provide clear evidence for Frank's belief in Ghazālī's acceptance of determinate causality. This is partly because Ghazālī does not engage in detailed Qur'anic exegesis in the course of many of his theological discussions; he is not a *mufassir* in the technical sense of that term.

Another aspect of Ghazālī's Sufi theories of *ta'wīl* is their dependence on his bi-partite cosmology. This is not a complex cosmology in its impact on Ghazālī's hermeneutical understanding, but, in positing the interdependence of the visible and invisible realms, provides a justification for approaching the Qur'anic text on two levels simultaneously. Lazarus-Yafeh is therefore correct to draw attention to the importance of cosmology to Ghazālī's Qur'anic hermeneutics in its more Sufi manifestations.[3]

Finally, Rahbar's statement, quoted at the ouset of this thesis, that, "the entire history of Islam is one of exegesis of the Qur'an", needs recalling at this point. How useful has it been to explore Ghazālī's works through the filter of his theories and practice of Qur'an interpretation? There is a degree of overstatement in Rahbar's words, but it is certainly the case that Ghazālī's complex drawing together of a wide variety of intellectual traditions is highlighted by examining his use of the Qur'an. A study of his Qur'anic hermeneutics enhances the sharpness of the picture of the intellectual debts owed, and, more generally, illustrates the way in which apparently unrelated trends can work together in shaping the ideas of an individual writer. However, it has also become evident that care is needed in drawing conclusions from

---

[2] See above, p. 173.
[3] See above, p. 20.

evidence of borrowing. To identify the origins of an approach to the Qur'an is not necessarily fully to explain that approach, as the discussion of Ghazālī's reliance on Ibn Sīnā's interpretation of the Light Verse in Chapter 7 showed.

Ghazālī's well-known elusiveness is also evident in his discussion of the Qur'an. He can no more be tied to one stance on hermeneutical issues than on other questions which scholars debate in relation to his work. The Qur'anic filter has also emphasised Ghazālī's well-known pre-occupation with the attainment of certain knowledge, thus providing further evidence that the Qur'an will tend to be employed as a guarantee of the genuinely Islamic nature of ideas at the centre of a Muslim theologian's concerns. Ghazālī's treatment of the Qur'an in *Qisṭās* and *Mishkāt* amply illustrates this. It could be said that the observation made above that Ghazālī is not a *mufassir*, working systematically through all or extended parts of the Qur'an, limits the value of analysing his interpretations. However, the discussions he does provide often yield clear signs of his opinions (at least in the text in view), his influences, and his core concerns.

Opportunities for further research arise from this study. More exploration of influences on Ghazālī's writing would be valuable in view of the sometimes surprising influences discussed above, in particular the shadow of Ibn Sīnā falling across Ghazālī's work. Additionally, the Qur'anic interpretations in the *Iḥyā'* as a whole invite study so as to compare or contrast them with the material analysed in the present work. The influences of Ghazālī's use of the Qur'an on subsequent thinkers, influences in which Ghazālī was perhaps a link in a chain reaching back before him, could also prove significant. More generally, further studies of Muslim thinkers' engagement with the Qur'an are desirable, since, as this thesis has demonstrated, such engagement can encapsulate the core concerns of a writer. In the case of Ghazālī this

has proven true despite the fact that he is not best-known as an interpreter of the Qur'an.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

Ash'arī, Abū'l Ḥasan al- *al-Ibāna 'an uṣūl al-diyāna,* (Cairo: Idārat al-Ṭabā 'at al-Muniriyya, 1348).

--- *Kitāb al-Lumā',* ed. and tr. R.J. McCarthy, *The Theology of al-Ash'arī* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953).

Bukhārī, Abū 'Abdallah al- Arabic text in *The Translation of the Meaning of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* 9 vols., tr. M.M. Khan, Arabic and English parallel text, (Ankara: Hilal Yayinlari, 1976 2nd edn.).

Fārābī, Abū Naṣr al- *Al-Fārābī on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's Mabādī' Ārā Ahl al-Madīna al- Fādila,* ed. and tr. Richard Walzer, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al- *al-Arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'at al-'Ashriyya, 1344/1926).

--- *Faḍā'iḥ al-bāṭiniyya wa faḍā'il al-mustazhiriyya,* ed. 'A. Badawī (Cairo: Dār al-Qawmiyya li'l-Ṭabā'a wa'l-Nashr, 1383/1964).

--- *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa'l-zandaqa,* Arabic text in H. Mustapha, *Le critère décisif de distinction entre L'islam et le manichéisme* (Casablanca: Editions Maghrebines, 1983).

--- *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn,* 4 vols., (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, n.d.).

--- *Iljām al-'awāmm 'an 'ilm al-kalām* (n.p.: Idārāt al-Ṭabā'at al-Munīrīyya, 1351/1932).

--- *al-Iqtiṣād fi'l-i'tiqād,* eds. I. Çubukçu and H. Atay (Ankara: Nur Matbaasi, 1962).

--- *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya al-Kubrā, 1352/1933).

--- *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa,* ed. S. al-Kurdī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1912).

--- *al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ asmā' al-ḥusnā,* (Cairo: al-Maktabat al-'Āmiliyya, n.d.).

--- *Mishkāt al-anwār;* Arabic text and tr. David Buchmann, *The Niche of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998).

--- *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl,* Arabic text printed in F. Jabre, *al-Munqid min aḍ-Ḍalāl* (Beirut: Commission Internationale pour

	la Traduction Des Chefs-D'œuvre, 1959).
---	*al-Mustaṣfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl,* 2 vols., (Cairo: al-Maṭba'at al-Amīriyya, 1322-24/1904-06).
---	*al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm* in *Jawāhir al-ghawālī min rasā'il al-Imām ḥujjat al-Islām al-Ghazālī,* ed. M. al-Kurdī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1353/1934), pp. 156-203.
---	*Tahāfut al-falāsifa,* ed. and tr. Michael Marmura, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997).
Ibn Māja, Abū 'Abdallah	*Sunan,* 2 vols., ed. M.F. 'Abd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1972).
Ibn Qudāma, Muwaffaq al-Dīn	*Taḥrīm al-naẓar fī kutub ahl al-kalām,* ed. and tr. G. Makdisi as *Ibn Qudāma's Censure of Speculative Theology* (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1962).
Ibn Rushd, Abū'l Walīd	*Faṣl al-maqāl wa taqrīr fī mā bayn al-ḥikma wa'l-sharī'a min al-ittiṣāl,* ed. G. Hourani (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959).
---	*al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla,* ed. M. Ḥanafī (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsat al-Waḥdat al-'Arabiyya, 1998).
Ibn Sīnā, Abū 'Alī	*De Anima,* ed. F. Rahman (London: OUP, 1959).
---	*Fī Ithbāt al-nubuwwāt wa ta'wīl rumūzihim wa amthāihim,* ed. M. Marmura (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār, 1968).
---	*Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*, 4 vols., ed. S. Dunya, 2nd. edn., (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.).
---	*The Life of Ibn Sīnā,* ed. and tr. W. Gohlman (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1974).
Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'	*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā',* 4 vols., (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957).
Makki, Abū Ṭālib al-	*Qūt al-qulūb,* 4 vols., (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Miṣriyya, 1401/1932).
Muḥāsibī, al-Ḥārith al-	*Kitāb al-'Ilm,* in L. Librande, "Islam and Conservation: The Theologian-Ascetic Al-Muḥāsibī" *Arabica* 30 (1983), pp. 125-46.
The Qur'an	Arabic text in *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an,* tr. M.M. Pickthall (Delhi: Kutub Khana Ishayat-ul-Islam, n.d.).
Tirmidhī, Abū 'Isā al-	*Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ,* 5 vols., ed. A.R.M. 'Uthmān (Medina: Dār al-Fikr, 1972 edn.).

II. PRIMARY SOURCES IN TRANSLATION

Aristotle — *The Complete Works of Aristotle,* The Revised Oxford Translation, ed. J. Barnes (Princeton: PUP, 1984).

Ash'arī, Abū'l Ḥasan al- — *al-Ibāna 'an Uṣūl al-Diyāna,* tr. W.C. Klein (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Series, vol 19, 1940).

--- — *Kitāb al-Lumā',* see Section I of Bibliography.

Bukhārī, Abū 'Abdallah al- — *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* see Section I of Bibliography.

Fārābī, Abū Naṣr al- — *Mabādi' Ārā Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila,* see Section I of Bibliography.

--- — *Taḥṣīl al-sa'āda,* tr. Muhsin Mahdi, "The Attainment of Happiness" in A. Hyman and J. Walsh (eds.), *Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1973), pp. 222-32.

Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al- — *Faḍā'iḥ al-bāṭiniyya wa faḍā'il al-mustaẓhiriyya,* tr. R.J. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), pp. 175-286.

--- — *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa'l-zandaqa,* tr. R.J. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), pp. 145-74.

Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn:

--- *Kitāb al-'Ilm* (Book I), tr. Nabih Amin Faris, *The Book of Knowledge* (New Delhi: International Islamic Publishers, 1988 edn.).

--- *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'aqā'id* (Book II), tr. Nabih Amin Faris, *The Foundations of the Articles of Faith* (Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1974).

--- *Kitāb Ādāb tilāwat al-qur'ān* (Book VIII), tr. Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Recitation and Interpretation of the Qur'an: al-Ghazālī's Theory* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1982).

--- *Kitāb al-Samā' wa'l-wajd* (Book XVIII), tr. D.B. Macdonald, "Emotional Religion in Islam as Affected by Music and Singing" *JRAS* 1901, pp. 195-252, 705-748, 1902, pp. 1-28.

--- *Kitāb Sharḥ 'ajā'ib al-qalb* (Book XXI), tr. W. J. Skellie, *The Religious Psychology of al-Ghazālī* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: Hartford Seminary, 1938).

--- *Kitāb al-Tawba* (Book XXXI), tr. M.S. Stern, *Al-Ghazālī on Repentance* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1990).

--------- *Kitāb Dhikr al-mawt wa mā ba'duhu* (Book XL), tr. T.J. Winter, *Al-Ghazālī on Death* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society), 1989.

--------- *al-Iqtiṣād fi'l-i'tiqād,* partial tr. by Abdu-r-Rahman Abu Zayd, *Al-Ghazali on Divine Predicates* (Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1970).

--------- *al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ asmā' al-ḥusna,* tr. D. Burrell and N. Daher, *The Ninety Nine Beautiful Names of God* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1992).

--------- *Mishkāt al-anwār;* see Section I of Bibliography.

--------- *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl,* tr. R.J. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), pp. 61-114.

--------- *al-Qistās al-mustaqīm,* tr. R.J. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment,* pp. 287-332.

--------- *Ibid.,* tr. D.P. Brewster, *The Just Balance* (Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1978).

--------- *Tahāfut al-falāsifa,* see Section I of Bibliography.

Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, al- *Bayān al-farq bayn al-ṣadr wa'l-qalb wa'l-fu'ād wa'l-lubb,* tr. N. Heer, "A Ṣūfī Psychological Treatise" *MW* 51 (1961), pp.25-36, 83-91, 163-72, 244-58.

Ibn Qudāma, Muwaffaq al-Dīn *Taḥrīm al-naẓar;* see Section I of Bibliography.

Ibn Rushd, Abū'l-Walīd *Kitāb Faṣl al-maqāl,* tr. G. Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (London: Luzac & co., 1961).

--------- *al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla,* tr. I. Najjar, *Faith and Reason in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001).

--------- *Tahāfut al-tahāfut,* tr. S. van den Bergh, 2 vols., (London: Luzac & co., 1954).

Ibn Sīnā, Abū 'Alī *Fī Aqsām al-'ulūm al-'aqliyya,* tr. M. Mahdi, "On the Divisions of the Rational Sciences" in Lerner and Mahdi (eds.), *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook,* pp. 95-97.

--------- *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt,* tr. M. Marmura, "On the Proof of Prophecies and the Interpretation of the Prophet's Symbols and Metaphors", in R. Lerner and M. Mahdi (eds.), *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 112-21.

--------- *Dānesh Nāmeh,* Part I, tr. F. Zabeeh, *Avicenna's Treatise on*

Logic (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971).

--------- *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*, Part I, tr. Constantine Shams Inati, *Ibn Sīnā: Remarks and Admonistions. Part One: Logic* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984).

---------- ------ Part IV, tr. Constantine Shams Inati *Ibn Sīnā on Mysticism* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996).

--------- *Kitāb al-Shifā': al-Qiyās*, Books V-VIII, tr. N. Shehaby, *The Propositional Logic of Avicenna* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1973).

--------- ------ *al-Ilāhiyāt* Book X, Chapter 2, tr. M. Marmura, "Healing: Metaphysics X" in Lerner and Mahdi (eds.), *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, pp. 98-111.

Niẓām al-Mulk *Siyāsat-Nāma*, tr. H. Darke (London: Curzon, 2002).

Plotinus *Plotinus*, vol. IV (*Enneads* IV. 1-9), tr. A.H. Armstrong, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1984).

The Qur'an See Section I of Bibliography

Shahrastānī, Abū'l-Fatḥ al- *Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal*, partial tr. A.K. Kazi and J.G. Flynn, *Muslim Sects and Divisions* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1984).

Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-dīn al- *Jahd al-qarīha fī tajrīd al-naṣīha*, tr. Wael b. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

III. SECONDARY SOURCES

Abrahamov, B. "Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to Know God" *SI* 77 (1993), pp. 141-68.

--------- "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Causality" *SI* 67 (1988), pp. 75-98.

--------- "Ibn Sīnā's Influence on al-Ghazālī's Non-Philosophical Works" *Abr-Nahrain* 29 (1991), pp. 1-17.

Abū Zayd, N. *Mafhūm al-naṣṣ: dirāsa fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āma li'l-Kitāb, 1990).

--------- "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Interpretation" *Journal of Osaka University of Foreign Studies* 72 (1987), pp. 1-25.

--------- Review of Amīn al-Khūlī, *Manāhij al-Tajdīd fi'l-Nahw wa'l-Balāgha wa'l-Tafsīr wa'l-Adab* (Cairo: 1961) in *Bibliotheca*

Orientalis 58, column 233.

Adamson, P. "Aristotelianism and the Soul in the Arabic Plotinus" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (2001), pp. 211-32.

Agius, D. and Netton, I. (eds.) *Across the Mediterranean Frontiers: trade, politics and religion, 650-1450* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997).

Ali, M.Y. *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics* (London: Curzon Press, 1999).

Arberry, A.J. *Reason and Revelation in Islam* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957).

Arifin, M.B. *The Principles of* 'Umūm *and* Takhṣīṣ (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1988).

Arkoun, M. "The Notion of Revelation" *Die Welt des Islams* 28 (1988), pp. 62-89.

--------- "Révélation, vérité et histoire d'après l'œuvre de Ġazālī" *SI* 31 (1970), pp. 53-69.

Aydin, M.S. "Al-Ghazālī on Metaphorical Interpretation" in Bisschops and Francis (ed.), *Metaphor, Canon and Community*, pp. 242-56.

Ayoub, M. *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, vol. I (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1984).

Bello, I. *The Medieval Islamic Controversy Between Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989).

Birkeland, H. *Old Muslim Opposition Against Interpretation of the Koran* (Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos Jacob Dybvad, 1955).

Bisschops, R. and Francis, J. (eds.). *Metaphor, Canon and Community: Jewish, Christian and Islamic Approaches* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999).

Black, D. *Logic and Aristotle's* Rhetoric *and* Poetics *in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990).

Bouyges, M. *Essai de chronologie des œuvres de al-Ghazali*, ed. M. Allard (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1959).

Bowering, G. *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: the Qur'anic Hermeneutics of the Sufi Sahl al-Tustarī* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980).

Brainard, F.S. "Defining 'Mystical Experience'" *JAAR* 64 (1996), pp. 366-79.

Brewster. D.P. *Philosophical Discussions of Prophecy in Medieval Islam* (Unpublished D.Phil. thesis: University of Oxford, 1975).

Brunschvig, R. — "Pour ou contre la logique Grecque chez les théologiens-juristes de l'Islam: Ibn Ḥazm, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taimiyya" in *idem, Etudes d'Islamologie* (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1976), I: 321.

Bulliet, R. — *The Patricians of Nishapur* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972).

Burnett, C. (ed.). — *Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts: the Syriac, Arabic and Medieval Latin Traditions* (London: the Warburg Institute, University of London, 1993).

Butterworth, C. (ed.) — *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Muhsin Mahdi* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

Campanini, M. — "Al-Ghazzālī" in S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman, (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy,* Part I, pp. 258-74.

Chejne, A. — *Ibn Ḥazm* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1982).

--------- — "Ibn Ḥazm of Cordova on Logic" *JAOS* 104 (1984), pp. 57-72.

Chelhot, V. — "'*Al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm*' et la connaissance rationelle chez Gazālī" *Bulletin D'Etudes Orientales* 15 (1955-57), pp. 1-36.

Chittick, W. — *The Sufi Path to Knowledge* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1989).

Corbin, H. — *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital,* tr. W. Trask (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960).

--------- — "The Ismā'īlī Response to the Polemic of Ghazali" in Nasr (ed.), *Ismā'īlī Contributions to Islamic Culture,* pp. 69-98.

Daftary, F. — *The Ismā'īlīs: Their history and doctrine* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990).

--------- (ed.) — *Medieval Ismā'īlī History and Thought* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).

Davidson, H. — *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect: their cosmologies, theories of the Active Intellect, and theories of human intellect* (New York: OUP, 1992).

--------- — "Avicenna's Proof of the Existence of God as a Necessarily Existent Being" in Morewedge (ed.), *Islamic Philosophy and Theology,* pp. 165-187.

Encyclopædia of Islam — First edition, 4 vols., (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1913-).

--------- — Second edition, 11 vols., (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960-).

Endress, G. "The Defense of Reason: the Plea for Philosophy in the Religious Community" *ZGAIW* 6 (1990), pp. 1-49.

Esack, F. *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: an Islamic Perspective* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997).

Fakhry, M. "Philosophy and Scripture in the Theology of Averroes" *Medieval Studies* 30 (1968), pp. 78-89.

--- "Three Varieties of Mysticism in Islam" *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 2 (1971), pp. 193-207.

Frank, R. *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School* (London: Duke University Press, 1994).

--- *Creation and the Cosmic System* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992).

--- "Al-Ghazālī's Use of Avicenna's Philosophy" *REI* 55-57 (1987-89), pp. 271-85.

--- Review of Bello, *The Medieval Islamic Controversy,* in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 49: 3-4 (1992), columns 545-46.

Gairdner, W. "Al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār* and the Ghazālī-problem" *Der Islam* 5 (1914), pp. 121-53.

Galli, A. "Some Aspects of al-Maturidi's Commentary on the Qur'an" *IS* 21 (1982), pp. 3-21.

Galston, M. *Politics and Excellence* (Princeton: PUP, 1990).

Genequand, C. *Alexander of Aphrodisias* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000).

Gil'adi, A. "On the Origin of Two Key-Terms in Al-Gazzālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*" *Arabica* 36 (1989), pp. 81-92.

Goldfeld, Y. "The Development of Theory on Qur'anic Exegesis in Islamic Scholarship" *SI* 67 (1988), pp. 5-27.

Goldziher, I. *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law,* tr. A. and R. Hamori (Princeton: P.U.P., 1981).

--- "The Attitude of Orthodox Islam towards the Ancient Sciences" in M. Swartz (ed.), *Studies in Islam,* pp. 185-209.

--- *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1920).

--- *The Zāhiris: Their Doctrine and Their History,* tr. W. Behn (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971).

Goodman, L. — *Avicenna* (London: Routledge, 1992).

--- — "Did al-Ghazālī Deny Causality?" *SI* 47 (1978), pp. 83-120.

Götz, M. — "Māturīdī und sein *Kitāb Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*" *Der Islam* 41 (1965), pp. 27-70.

Gutas, D. — "Aspects of Literary Form and Genre in Arabic Logical Works" in Burnett (ed.), *Glosses and Commentaries on Arabic Logical Texts*, pp. 29-76.

--- — *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988).

--- — *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998).

Gyekye, K — Al-Ghazālī on Action" in *Ghazālī: la raison et le miracle*, pp. 83-91.

--- — "The Term *Istithnā'* in Arabic Logic" *JAOS* 92 (1972), pp. 88-92.

Hallaq, W. — *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001).

--- — *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997).

--- — "Logic, Formal Arguments, and Formalization of Arguments in Sunnī Jurisprudence" *Arabica* 37 (1990), pp. 315-58.

--- — "*Uṣūl al-fiqh:* Beyond Tradition" *JIS* 3 (1992), pp. 172-202.

Hammad, A.Z. — *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's Juristic Doctrine in al-Mustaṣfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*, 2 vols., (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of Chicago, 1987).

--- — "Ghazālī's Juristic Treatment of the *Sharī'ah* Rules in *al-Mustaṣfā*" *AJISS* 4 (1987), PP. 159-77.

Heath, P. — *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

--- — "Creative Hermeneutics: A Comparative Analysis of Three Islamic Approaches" *Arabica* 36 (1989), pp. 173-210.

--- — "Ibn Sīnā's Journey of the Soul" *Journal of Turkish Studies* 18 (1994), pp. 91-102.

Heer, N. — "Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's Esoteric Exegesis of the Koran" in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi* (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), pp. 235-57.

Heinrichs, W. "Contacts Between Scriptural Hermeneutics and Literary Theory in Islam: the case of *majāz*" *ZGAIW* 7 (1992), pp. 253-284.

--- "On the Genesis of the *Ḥaqīqa-Majāz* Dichotomy" *SI* 59 (1984), pp. 111-40.

Hillenbrand, C. "The Power Struggle Between the Saljuqs and the Ismā'īlīs of Alamūt, 487-518/1094-1124" in Daftary (ed.), *Medieval Ismā'īlī History and Culture*, pp. 205-20.

Hodgson, M. *The Venture of Islam*, 3 vols., (London: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

--- *The Order of the Assassins* (The Hague: Mouton & co., 1955).

Hourani, G. "Ibn Sīnā's Essay on the Secret of Destiny" *BSOAS* 29 (1966), pp. 25-48.

--- "A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings" *JAOS* 104 (1984), p. 289-302.

--- (ed.). *Essays in Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1975).

Hovannisian, R. and Vyronis, S. Jr. (eds.). *Islam's Understanding of Itself* (Malibu, California: Undena Publications, 1983).

Hunsberger, A. *Nasir Khusraw: the Ruby of Badakhshan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000).

Hussein, T. *The Days*, one volume English edition, tr. E.H. Paxton *et al.*, (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1997).

Izutsu, T. *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology* (Tokyo: Keio University, 1965).

Jabre, F. *Essai sur le lexique de Ghazālī* (Beirut: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1970).

--- "La Biographie et l'œuvre de Ghazālī reconsiderées à la lumière des *Tabaqāt* de Sobki" *MIDEO* 1 (1954), pp. 73-102.

--- *La notion de certitude selon Ghazālī* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958).

--- *La notion de la ma'rifa chez Ghazālī* (Beirut: Lettres Orientales, 1958).

Jansen, J. *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974).

Janssens, J. *An Annotated Bibliography of Ibn Sīnā 1970-89* (Leuven: University of Leuven Press, 1991).

---------- "Le *Danesh-Nameh* d'Ibn Sīnā: un texte à revoir?" *Bulletin de Philosophie Medievale* 28 (1986), pp. 163-77.

---------- "Ibn Sīnā's Ideas of Ultimate Realities: Neoplatonism and the Qur'an as Problem-Solving Paradigms in the Avicennian System" *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 10 (1987), pp. 252-71.

---------- "Le *Ma'ārij al-Quds fī Madārij Ma'rifat al-Nafs:* Un élément-clé pour le dossier Ghazzālī-Ibn Sīnā?" *Archives D'Histoire Doctrinale et Litteraire du Moyen Age* 60 (1993), pp. 27-55.

Jomier, J. and Caspar, R. "L'exegèse scientifique du Coran d'après le Cheikh Amīn al-Khūlī" *MIDEO* 4 (1957), pp. 269-280.

Kamali, M.H. *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991 revd. edn.).

Keddie, N. "Symbol and Sincerity in Islam" *SI* 19 (1963), pp. 27-63.

Kemal, S. "Al-Ghazālī, Metaphor and Logic" in D. Agius and I. Netton (eds.), *Across the Mediterranean Frontiers*, pp. 205-23.

Kleinknecht, A. "*Al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm:* Eine Ableitung der Logik aus dem Koran" in S.M. Stern, A. Hourani and V. Brown (eds.), *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition*, pp. 159-87.

Kresic, S. (ed.). *Contemporary Literary Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Classical Texts* (Ottawa: Ottawa University Press, 1981).

Lameer, J. *Al-Fārābī and Aristotelian Syllogistics: Greek theory and Islamic practice* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994).

Landolt, H. "Ghazālī and 'Religionswissenschaft': Some Notes on the *Mishkāt al-Anwār* for Professor Charles J. Adams" *Asiatische Studien* 45 (1991), pp. 19-72.

Laoust, H. La Pédagogie d'al-Ġazālī dans le Mustaṣfā" *REI* 44 (1976), pp. 71-79.

Larkin, M. *The Theology of Meaning* (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1995).

Lazarus-Yafeh, H. *Studies in al-Ghazzālī* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975).

Leaman, O. "Ghazālī and the Ash'arites" *Asian Philosophy* 6 (1996), pp. 17-27.

Lerner, R. and Mahdi, M. (eds.) *Medieval Political Philosophy: A sourcebook* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972).

Lewis, B. "The Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam" *SI* 1 (1953), pp. 43-63.

McCullough, W. (ed.). *The Seed of Wisdom: essays in honour of T.J. Meek* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964).

Macdonald, D.B. "The Life of al-Ghazzali, with special reference to his Religious Experiences and Opinions" *JAOS* 20 (1899), pp. 71-132.

Madelung, W. Review of Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 10 (1999), pp. 391-92.

Madkour, I. "La logique d'Aristote chez les Mutakallimūn" in Parviz Morewedge (ed.), *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 58-68.

Makdisi, G. "Al-Ghazālī, disciple de Shāfi'ī en droit et en théologie" in *Ghazālī: la raison et le miracle*, pp. 45-55.

--- "The Non-Ash'arite Shāfi'ism of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzali" *REI* 54 (1986), pp. 239-57.

--- "The Sunnī Revival" in D.S. Richards (ed.), *Islamic Civilization*, pp. 155-68.

Malamud, M. "Sufi Organizations and Structures of Authority in Medieval Nishapur" *IJMES* 26 (1994), pp. 427-42.

Margoliouth, D.S. "The Discussion Between Abū Bishr Mattā and Abū Sa'īd al-Sirafī on the Merit of Logic and Grammar" *JRAS* 1905, pp. 79-129.

Marmura, M.E. "Avicenna's Theory of Prophecy in the Light of Ash'arite Theology" in W. McCullough (ed.), *The Seed of Wisdom*, pp. 159-78.

--- "Ghazālī's Attitude to the Secular Sciences and Logic" in G. Hourani (ed.), *Essays in Islamic Philosophy and Science*, pp. 100-11.

Ghazālī's Chapter on Divine Power in the *Iqtiṣād*" *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 4 (1994), pp. 296-315.

--- "Ghazālī and Demonstrative Science" *JHP* 3 (1965), pp. 183-204.

--- "Ghazālī on Ethical Premises" *Philosophical Forum* 1 (1968), pp. 309-403.

--- "Ghazālian Causes and Intermediaries" *JAOS* 115 (1995), pp. 89-100.

--- "The Islamic Philosophers' Conception of Islam" in Hovannisian and Vyronis (eds.), *Islam's Understanding of Itself*, pp. 87-102.

---	"Plotting the Course of Avicenna's Thought" *JAOS* 111 (1991), pp. 331-42.
Mates, B.	*Stoic Logic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961).
Melchert, C.	"The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E." *SI* 83 (1996), pp. 51-70.
Mitha, F.	*Al-Ghazālī and the Ismā'īlīs* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001).
Morewedge, P.	"The Logic of Emanationism and Sūfism in the Philosophy of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Part I" *JAOS* 91 (1971), pp. 467-76, and "Part II", *JAOS* 91 (1972), pp. 1-18.
--- (ed.)	*Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1979).
Morris, J.	"The Philosopher-Prophet in Avicenna's Political Philosophy" in Butterworth (ed.), *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy,* pp. 153-98.
Nakamura, K.	"Imam Ghazālī's Cosmology Reconsidered with special reference to the Concept of *Jabarūt*" *SI* 80 (1994), pp. 29-46.
---	"Makkī and Ghazālī on Mystical Practices" *Orient* 20 (1984), pp. 83-91.
Nasr, S.H.	"Ibn Sīnā's Oriental Philosophy" in Nasr and Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy,* I: 247-51.
--- (ed.)	*Ismā'īlī Contributions to Islamic Culture* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977).
Nasr. S.H. and Leaman, O. (eds.)	*History of Islamic Philosophy* Part I (London: Routledge, 1996).
Netton, I.	*Allah Transcendent* (London: Routledge, 1989).
---	*Muslim Neoplatonists* (Edinburgh: EUP, 1991 edn.).
Nicholson, R.	"A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufiism, with a list of definition of the terms 'Sūfī' and 'Taṣawwuf', arranged chronologically" *JRAS* 1906, pp. 303-48.
Ormsby, E.	*Theodicy in Islamic Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
Palmer, R.	"Allegorical, Philological and Philosophical Hermeneutics: Three Modes in a Complex Heritage" in Kresic (ed.), *Contemporary Literary Hermeneutics,* pp. 15-38.

Pawan Ahmad, I — *The Epistemology of Revelation and Reason: the views of al-Fārābī and al-Ghazālī* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1998).

Pines, S. — "Quelques notes sur les rapport de l' *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* d'al-Ghazālī avec la pensée d'Ibn Sīnā" in *Ghazālī: la raison et le miracle,* pp. 11-16.

Poonawala, I. — "Ismā'īlī *Taw'īl* of the Qur'an" in Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an,* pp. 199-222.

Qariballah, H.M.F. — *The Influence of al-Ghazālī upon Islamic Jurispruence and Philosophy with special reference to period* [sic] *1100-1400 A.D.* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1969).

Quasem, M.A. — "Al-Ġazālī's Conception of Happiness" *Arabica* 22 (1975), pp. 153-161.

--- — "Al-Ghazālī in Defence of Ṣūfistic Interpretation of the Qur'an" *IC* 53 (1979), pp. 63-86.

--- — "Al-Ghazālī's Evaluation of Abū Yazīd Al-Bisṭāmī and his Disapproval of the Mystical Concepts of Union and Fusion" *Asian Philosophy* 3 (1993), pp. 143-64.

--- — "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Qur'an Exegesis According to One's Personal Opinion" in *International Congress for the Study of the Qur'an* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1980), pp. 69-90.

Rahbar, D. — "Reflections on the Tradition of Qur'anic Exegesis" *MW* 52 (1962), pp. 296-307.

Rahman, F. — *Prophecy in Islam* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1958).

Reinhart, A.K. — *Before Revelation* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1995).

Rescher, N. — *The Development of Arabic Logic* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964).

Richards, D.S. (ed.). — *Islamic Civilization, 950-1150* (Oxford: Cassirer, 1973).

Rippin, A. — "Introduction" in *idem,* (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an,* pp. 1-9.

--- (ed.) — *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

Sabra, A. — "The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: a Preliminary Statement" *History of Science* 25 (1987), pp. 223-43.

Sayyed, A. al- — *Al-Ghazālī's Views on Logic* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1981).

Shehadi, F. — *Ghazālī's Unique and Unknowable God* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964).

Smith, M. — *An Early Mystic of Baghdad* (London: The Sheldon Press, 1935).

--- — "The Forerunner of al-Ghazālī" *JRAS* (1936), pp. 65-78.

Speight, R.M. — "The Function of *ḥadīth* as Commentary on the Qur'an as seen in the Six Authoritative Collections" in Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, pp. 63-81.

Stebbing, L.S. — *A Modern Introduction to Logic* (London: Methuen, 1930).

Stern, S.M., Hourani, A. and Brown, V. (eds.) — *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Cassirer, 1972).

Stroumsa, S. — "Paradise in the Thought of Avicenna and Maimonides" *Medieval Encounters* 4 (1998), pp. 51-77.

Swartz, M. (ed.) — *Studies in Islam* (New York: OUP, 1981).

Tibawi, A.L. — "Al-Ghazālī's Tract on Dogmatic Theology Edited, Translated, Annotated and Introduced" *IQ* 9 (1965), PP. 65-122.

--- — "The *Ikhwān as-Ṣafā'* and their *Rasā'il*: a review of a century and a half of research" in his *Arabic and Islamic Themes* (London: Luzac and co., 1974), pp 161-80.

Tuft, A. — "The *Ru'ya* Controversy and the Interpretation of Qur'an Verse VII (*Al-A'rāf*): 143" *Hamdard Islamicus* 6 (1983), pp. 3-41.

UNESCO (ed.). — *Ghazālī: la raison et le miracle* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1987).

Van Ess, J. — *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥārit al-Muḥāsibī* (Bonn: Orientalischen Seminar der Universität, 1961).

--- — "Quelques remarques sur le *Munqiḍ min aḍ-ḍalāl*" in *Ghazālī: la raison et le miracle*, pp. 57-68.

Versteegh, C. — Arabic Grammar and Qur'anic Exegesis in Early Islam (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993).

Wansbrough, J. — *Qur'anic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: OUP, 1977).

Watt, W.M. — *Muslim Intellectual* (Edinburgh: EUP, 1963).

--- — "The Authenticity of the Works Attributed to Al-Ghazālī" *JRAS* 1952, pp. 24-45.

--- — "A Forgery in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt* ?" *JRAS* 1949, pp. 5-22.

--- — "The Study of al-Gazālī" *Oriens* 13-14 (1961), pp. 121-31.

Weiss, B. — "Knowledge of the Past: the Theory of *Tawātur* According to Ghazālī" *SI* 61 (1985), pp. 81-105.

--- — *The Search for God's Law* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992).

--- — *The Spirit of Islamic Law* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

Wensinck, A.J. — "Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār* (Niche of Lights)" in *Semietische Studien uit de Natatenschap van Professor Dr. A.J. Wensinck* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatchappij N.V., 1941), pp. 192-212.

--- — "On the Relation Between Ghazālī's Cosmology and his Mysticism" *Mededeelingen Der Koninklijke Adademie Van Wetenschappen* Afdeeling Letterkunde, Deel 75 (1933), pp. 183-209.

--- (ed). — *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane*, 7 vols., (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1933-).

Wheeler, B. — *Applying the Canon in Islam: the Authorization and Maintenance of Interpretive Reasoning in Ḥanafī Scholarship* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1996).

Wolfson, H.A. — "The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic and Hebrew Philosophic Texts" *HTR* 28 (1935), pp. 69-133.