IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS INSTITUTE
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MASTER'S THESIS

SEEKING CERTITUDE: *IKTISĀB* AND *ILHĀM* IN IMAM AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

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by

SHEEBA ARIF

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APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Civilization Studies.

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ABSTRACT

SEEKING CERTITUDE: *IKTISĀB* AND *ILHĀM* IN IMAM AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

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This thesis explores the two paths to *'ilm* (knowledge) in Imam al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge—*iktisāb* (acquisition) and *ilhām* (inspiration). In Imam al-Ghazālī's thought, these two paths relate to the two domains of knowledge—*'ilm al-ẓāhir* (exoteric knowledge) and *'ilm al-bāṭin* (esoteric knowledge) respectively. *'Ilm al-ẓāhir* of the *sharī'ah* (Revelation) and of Reality is acquired through *iktisāb* of the senses and the reason, while *'ilm al-bāṭin* is attained through divinely granted *ilhām*. Imam al-Ghazālī designates *'ilm al-ẓāhir* as the primary domain of the *sharʿī* sciences, while *'ilm al-bāṭin* is the domain of *'ilm al-mukāshafah* (the science of unveiling) more commonly referred to as *taṣawwuf*. A primary focus of this thesis is to apply Imam al-Ghazālī's terminology and explore the methods of *iktisāb* of knowledge employed in the *sharʿī* sciences, which we have classified as three distinct epistemic paths: the historical-empirical path of *ḥadīth*, the rational path of *kalām*, and the joint historical-empirical and rational path of *fiqh*. This thesis also explores the nature and means of *ilhām* in Imam al-Ghazālī's formulation of *'ilm al-mukāshafah* which we classify as the fourth major epistemic path in Islamic thought. This thesis argues ultimately that while Imam al-Ghazālī identifies and esteems two separate paths to knowledge—*iktisāb* and *ilhām*—which relate to the two forms of knowledge—*'ilm al-ẓāhir* and *'ilm al-bāṭin*—it is knowledge of the *bāṭin*, granted through divine gifts of *mukāshafah* directly unto the heart-soul of Man which constitutes the highest forms of all knowledge and certitude possible for Man—*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*. Such *yaqīn* corresponds to the *mushāhadah* of *tawḥīd* and, we argue, represents a state of true ineffability in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought.

Keywords: al-Ghazālī; epistemology; *iktisāb*; *ilhām*; *yaqīn*; ineffability

ÖZ

İMAM GAZZÂLÎ'NIN BİLGİ TEORİSİNDE İLME GİDEN İKİ YOLU: İKTİSAB VE İLHAM

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Eylül 2021, 167 sayfa

Bu tez, İmam Gazzâlî'nin bilgi teorisinde ilme giden iki yolu araştırır: İktisab ve ilham. İmam Gazzâlî'nin düşüncesinde, bu iki yol iki bilgi alanıyla, sırasıyla "zâhirî ilim" ve "bâtınî ilim" ile ilgilidir. Şeriatın (vahiy) ve hakikatin zâhirî ilmi, duyuların ve aklın iktisabı ile elde edilirken, bâtınî ilim ilahî olarak bahşedilen ilham ile elde edilmektedir. İmam Gazzâlî, zâhirî ilmi şer'î ilimlerin aslî alanı olarak belirlerken, bâtınî ilim ise daha yaygın olarak tasavvuf olarak adlandırılan "ilm-i mükâşefe"nin alanıdır. Bu tezin esas odak noktası, İmam Gazzâlî'nin terminolojisini uygulamak ve hadisin tarihî-tecrübî yolu, kelâmın aklî yolu, fıkhın tarihî, deneysel ve aklî üç ayrı epistemik yolu şeklinde sınıflandırdığımız, şer'î ilimlerde kullanılan bilgi iktisâbının yöntemlerini araştırmaktır. Bu tez aynı zamanda İslam düşüncesinde dördüncü büyük epistemik yolu olarak sınıflandırdığımız İmam Gazzâlî'nin ilm-i mükâşefe formülasyonundaki ilhâmın mahiyetini ve vasıtalarını da incelemektedir. Bu tez nihai olarak, İmam Gazzâlî'nin, iki bilgi biçimiyle -zâhirî ilim ve bâtınî ilim ile- ilgili olan bilgiye giden iki ayrı yolu—iktisab ve ilhamı—tanımlayıp takdir ederken, bunun insan için mümkün olan tüm bilgi ve kesinliğin en yüksek formlarını oluşturan mukâşefenin ilahî armağanları aracılığıyla doğrudan insanın kalp-ruhuna verilen bâtın bilgisi olduğunu iddia eder (hakk-ı yakîn). Böyle bir yakîn, tevhidin müşâhadesine tekabül eder ve bize göre İmam Gazzâlî'nin düşüncesinde gerçek bir anlatılamazlık durumunu temsil eder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gazzâlî, Epistemoloji, İktisab, İlham, Yakîn, Anlatılamazlık.

For my mother and Sohaib bhai, who were and remain two of the great lights in my life.

In the name of Allah, *al-Raḥmān*, *al-Raḥīm*.

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and prayers and peace be upon our master Muhammad, and his family, and his companions, and those who followed him.

This thesis is not what I expected it to be. It has gone through many, many iterations. Rather than one cumulative, focused effort, this project became a living record and a reflection of myself, my growth, and the directions my intellectual and spiritual inclinations led me. What is presented here is only a snapshot of one part of the process of education and reflection and growth that I have undergone and am undergoing. It represents my attempts to synthesize my years of learning and living, to make sense of this pursuit of 'knowledge' which has taken me around the world, physically and spiritually. Writing this thesis has been a complicated process, because the more I read and studied, the more I realized how little I know. Eventually, however, I accepted this project as a necessary step in the consolidation and affirmation of the knowledge that I have indeed, by the Grace of Allah, and through the tutelage of many benevolent teachers, been guided to. There are many, too many people to whom I am indebted for making this journey possible.

First and foremost are my rahmetli mother, Zubeda bint Zahir al-Din and my father, Ghulam Arif who were the means through which I was brought into this world, who raised me with love and care, and who allowed and encouraged me to pursue a path that was different from my peers'. *Allah sizden razi olsun*, my loves. I pray that any *khayr* I achieve by His will in this world, be yours in the next.

Next are my sisters and brothers who supported me and, even if they did not always understand me, questioned me only for my sake. Especially to Sarosh and Cyrus who, in making space for me in their home, made space for my dreams and never allowed me to feel alone.

To the true friends who have been by my side even when they were far away, who reminded me that humans are not meant to be self-sufficient, but rather that they are in constant need of support and good company, who comforted and assured me when I was weak, and motivated me to be better than I am—to you, Nimet and Ruwa, who are my mirrors, my soulmates. And to Reehab and Zakariya, who taught me so much and guided me, mostly without realizing, and mostly without words. May we remain by each other's side in this life and the next.

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I truly would not be who or where I am without you all. I am grateful to Allah for having granted me the great blessing of meeting you in this life, and I only pray to be able to return to you even a portion of what I have gained from and through you all.

To Dr. Recep Şentürk, my esteemed teacher and advisor whom I first met in 2014 at the 'Pearls of the Quran' conference in Virginia, with whom I first read from *Iḥyā' ulūm al-Dīn*, who impressed upon me to the importance of *futuwwah* with one's self, one's peers, one's family, one's teachers, and the world,—when I met you, I did not speak any Turkish, nor had I ever considered Istanbul as an option for my future studies, but you invited me nevertheless to come study at EDEP and MEDIT. I did not know then how many doors would be opened through you, through that invitation. It was a great blessing and sign of *tawfīq* that Allah crossed my path with yours all those years ago.

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It is impossible to name all those to whom I am indebted—all the great imams, scholars, and saints whose books and efforts I benefited from, the teachers of my teachers and their teachers all the way back to the Prophet *alayhi as-ṣalātu wa's-salām*, my parents and their parents and their parents' parents, and all our *ajdād* through whom we received the link to this *dīn*—May Allah have mercy on and reward them all.

For them, *al-fātiḥāh*.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

It might be said that the basis and the core of all philosophical thought boils down to three questions: Who am I? What is the world? And how is a connection between myself and the world possible? These questions refer to the concepts of the Soul, the Cosmos, and the possibility or necessity for a Divine Being respectively. The answers to these fundamental questions and the formulation of these three concepts of Self/Soul, World/Cosmos, and Ultimate Truth/Divine Being are the seeds from which spring forth the fruit of all civilization and all thought. The direction a civilization takes, its sciences, its arts, its modes of being and interacting with the earth, with other peoples, necessarily derive from the convictions its people hold regarding these most fundamental metaphysical questions. The modern and postmodern conceptions of Self, World, and Truth have resulted in a scientistic civilization which rejects the nature of Man and the world as anything other than matter subject to physical and biochemical laws, which doubts that there is a reality knowable to Man outside of his own reason or immediate senses, that at times denies the possibility that reality is knowable at all. It leads, in its materialism, skepticism, and arrogance to various forms of relativism, uncertainty, doubt, and insecurity, and the destruction of the human psyche, society, and the earth. This civilization which believes that true and certain knowledge is solely that which can be observed with the senses and ordered through rationalization and schematization, is constantly seeking 'progress' which can only be achieved through the repeated falsification of its own doctrines.[1]

But Islam offers different answers. Islam affirms first that there is an established and eternal Truth, and Reality which is the necessary existence of a Creator who created the world. This Reality is knowable by the human soul, an entity which has both internal and external faculties which allow it access to true knowledge and certainty. Islam does not deny the place of the senses nor of rationality nor of intuition nor inspiration, but rather unifies them in light of Divine Revelation as the various means to true knowledge. And it is this journey towards true knowledge, *'ilm* and striving towards certainty, *yaqīn* which has characterized Islamic

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[1]S. M. Naquib Al-Attas explores these dynamics in a clear and useful way in his philosophical work especially in *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islām* (Kuala Lampur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1995).

civilization from its very inception, from the moment when Muhammad ibn Abdillah was first commanded by the Archangel Jibreel in the Cave of Hira, "*Iqra'*!".

As it was upon the Prophet's heart that the Divine Word was bestowed, it is the heart which is considered the center of life, the soul, and intellection in Islamic thought. While the physical heart is associated with the metaphysical heart or *qalb*, the metaphysical *qalb* is associated with the inherent power of intellection or '*aql* which Man has been endowed as a part of his inherent nature.

In this thesis we will explore Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) theory of knowledge and some of the central concepts which frame his understanding of Reality and Man's access to knowledge of it, in order to try and understand what he, as a central and formative scholar and philosopher of knowledge in Islam, regarded to be the domains, paths, and ranks of the different sciences and the knowledge they lead to.

Imam al-Ghazālī, as well shall refer to him, is regarded as one of the most influential thinkers in classical Islamic thought. Trained in all the major *shar'ī* and auxiliary sciences as well as philosophy and *taṣawwuf*, Imam al-Ghazālī's works became a cornerstone in the development and flourishing of Islamic thought in the 13th century and onward. Imam al-Ghazālī's influence is felt not only through the many pedagogical and moral texts he wrote, but also in the overarching philosophy of knowledge which left a deep impression upon Islamic thought and civilization in his wake. For this reason we have chosen to focus in this thesis on Imam al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge, its forms, paths, and the ways in which they relate to each other despite the fact that there are several other foundational figures associated with the tradition of *taṣnīf al-'ilm* (classification of the sciences) in Islamic intellectual history. [2] Imam al-Ghazālī's ideas are so widely accepted by renowned scholars of every science who came after him that in most major areas, his views can be considered to be the views of Sunni Muslims traditionally. [3] In order to

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[2]For deeper discussion about Imam al-Ghazālī's place in this tradition, as well as the place of figures like al-Jurjāni, al-Taftazanī, al-Razi, Qutb al-Dīn al-Shirāzī, and Taskopruzade, see: Ömer Türker, "İslam Düşüncesinde İlimler Tasnifi." *Sosyoloji Dergisi* 3, no. 22 (2011): 533–66.

[3]Though there are of course finer points of philosophy—such as the status of the soul as a *jawhar mujarrad*--on which Imam al-Ghazālī developed his own opinions which did not become widespread or gain ubiquitous acceptance. For more on Imam al-Ghazālī's centrality in Islamic thought see: Frank Griffel's *Al-Ghazali's*

better understand his theory of knowledge, it would be beneficial to first offer a brief introduction as to who Imam al-Ghazālī was and how his personal journey came to influence his analytical and philosophical mind. We will then introduce some of the concepts and terms most relevant in understanding and framing Imam al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge in the context of this thesis: the human intellect, *'ilm al-ẓāhir*, *'ilm al-bāṭin*, *iktisāb, ilhām,* and *yaqīn*.

0.1 Imam al-Ghazālī

Born in Tūs in 1058, Imam al-Ghazālī was orphaned at a young age and forced to enter the *madrassah*, not as it seems for the sake of knowledge itself, but rather "for the sake of food."[4] Eventually Imam al-Ghazālī found himself at a major *madrassah* in Nishapur where he studied under the tutelage of the great Abu al-Maʿāli ʿAbdallah al- Juwaynī (d. 1085/478) who was considered to be "the most outstanding Muslim scholar of his time, an authority in both Muslim law (*fiqh*) and theology."[5] Though Imam al-Ghazālī was widely known as one of Imam al-Juwaynī's best and brightest students, there were also known by some to be arrogant with "a vain pride…and the pursuit of glory."[6] Imam Al-Ghazālī studied under Imam al-Juwaynī until his death, after which he was invited by Nizām al-Mulk to teach Shafiʿī law at the prestigious Nizāmiyyah college of Baghdad where he rose quickly through the ranks of Islamic scholarship.

Despite his prolific writing and success as a member of the *'ulamā'*, Imam al-Ghazālī became disillusioned by what he saw as a general air of hypocrisy within the scholarly community of his time. "Rather than humbly serving God by seeking to enlighten and fortify their brothers and sisters" he felt that his colleagues (and he, amongst them) "had become enamoured with themselves, setting themselves up as celebrities and authorities in all fields, engaging in public

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Philosophical Theology (Milton Keynes UK: Lightning Source UK Ltd., 2018) and M. S. Ozervarli's "Ottoman Perceptions of Al-Ghazālī's Works and Discussions on His Historical Role in Its Late Period." In *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of Al-Ghazali: Papers Collected on His 900th Anniversary*, edited by Frank Griffel, 253–82. Brill, 2016; as well as the introductions to Honerkamp's translation: *The Book of Knowledge (Kitāb Al-'Ilm)*, by Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī trans. by Kenneth Lee Honerkamp, xxix-xxxv. (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2016) and Hamza Yusuf's "Imam Al-Ghazālī: the Proof of Islam" in *The Book of Knowledge (Kitāb Al-'Ilm)*, by Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī trans. by Kenneth Lee Honerkamp, x-xxv. (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2016).

[4] Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (Milton Keynes UK: Lightning Source UK Ltd., 2018), 26.
[5] Griffel, 29.
[6] The words of ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 1135 C.E.), a biographer of al-Ghazālī, as quoted in Griffel's, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology,* p. 29.

debates for their own glory."[7] In his own accounts, Imam al-Ghazālī does not try to distance himself from this general culture of insincerity and pretense, but rather notes that his engagement in it compelled him to spiritual crisis.

He realized that while his outward behavior and "knowledge" were guided by the *sharī'ah*, his inward intentions were attached to the celebrity and glory he had attained in the world. Due to this dissonance he experienced a spiritual crisis which culminated in a full nervous collapse which left him unable to speak, with no choice but to resign from the Nizāmiyyah.

After leaving Baghdad, he began a solitary and winding journey, intending to visit the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah. It was during this time that he began his spiritual journey of purification and during which he wrote his magnum opus, the *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (Revival of the Religious Sciences) in which he, with great power and eloquence, synthesizes the outward and inward sciences of Islamic knowledge what he calls, *'ulūm al-ẓāhir* and *'ulūm al-bāṭin*. Through the *Ihyā'*, Imam al-Ghazālī showed mainstream Sunni Muslims the absolute necessity of sincerity and inwardness for actualizing the outward, that is the importance of *taṣawwuf* for realizing the *sharī'ah*. He thus gave thus *taṣawwuf* a central place in mainstream Islam while also denying its excesses and divergences from the outward Truth.[8] He eventually returned to Nishapur and spent the rest of his life there. For the great contributions and synthesis he brought to Islamic knowledge and culture, he has been renowned amongst Sunni Muslims as *ḥujjat al-Islam* and its *mujaddid*, that is both the Proof of Islam and its Renewer. His influence on Islamic thought runs so deep that it is common for historians and practitioners of Islamic science to classify Islamic thought into classical, pre-Ghazālīan and post-classical, post-Ghazālīan eras.

0.2 Imam al-Ghazālī's Concept of the Human Soul and Intellect

Of particular interest in this thesis will be Imam al-Ghazālī exploration of epistemology across several of his works. In Book XXI of *Ihyā'* entitled *Kitāb sharḥ 'ajā'ib al-qalb* (The Book of

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[7] Timothy J. Gianotti, *Al-Ghazālīs Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul: Unveiling the Esoteric Psychology and Eschatology of the Ihyā'* (Leiden etc.: Brill, 2001), 4.

[8] David Buchman, "Translator's Introduction," in Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt Al-Anwār)*, trans. David Buchman (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), xxvii.

Explication of the Marvels of the Heart) Imam al-Ghazālī focuses particularly on the place and significance of the heart-soul in Islamic knowledge and epistemology. In order to understand Imam al-Ghazālī's conception of the human heart-soul, which brings together Greek philosophical as well as earlier Islamic notions,[9] we must explore four closely related terms: *qalb* (heart), *rūḥ* (spirit), *nafs* (soul), and *'aql* (intelligence). While these four terms all have unique significations in Imam al-Ghazālī's works, they also share an underlying and common meaning.

The *qalb* refers to both the physical heart of flesh in the body of an organism, Man or animal as well as to the immaterial, subtle substance by which Man is able to know and perceive. The physical and spiritual *qalb* are connected in ways which though acknowledged by scholars are traditionally left unexplored due to the hypothetical and uncertifiable (by means of revelation or reason) nature of this connection.

The *rūḥ* refers to a "refined material substance which is produced by the blood in the left cavity of the heart and which rises up to the brain… carrying the animal powers of life and sense perception."[10] *Rūḥ* also refers to the spiritual essence of *qalb.*

The term *nafs* can either refer in general to the *psyche* of Greek philosophy or more specifically in Imam al-Ghazālī's work (and in *taṣawwuf* broadly), to the appetitive soul wherein reside the animal attributes of Man like *ghaḍab* (anger) and *shahwah* (lust/desire). Imam Ghazālī in *Mizān al-'amal* distinguishes between *al-nafs al-ḥaywaniyyah* (the animal soul) and *al-nafs al-insāniyyah* (the human soul), the former being the seat of the physical and appetitive qualities of Man while the latter, which is also often referred to as *al-nafs al-nāṭiqah* (the rational soul), being seat to the rational and perceptive powers of man. From this distinction, and the way he has chosen to name the latter, it is clear that Imam al-Ghazālī regarded the rational attributes as the most definitive attributes of Man. Imam al-Ghazālī also uses the term *nafs* to refer to the true essence of Man.

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[9] For a deeper investigation of the possible Greek influences on Imam al-Ghazālī's thought see: Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation* (London: Routledge, 2012).

[10] Walter James Skellie, "Translators Introduction," in *The Marvels of the Heart (Kitāb sharḥ 'ajā'ib Al-Qalb)* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2010), p. viv-xxxv, xxiii, xvi.

The fourth and final term of importance is '*aql*. Conventionally translated as "reason" or "intellect," the '*aql* refers to both Man's knowledge of the true nature of things as well as his capacity to know and to perceive, which is the same as the subtle substance which constitutes the essential nature of Man. It is this *essential nature* of Man encapsulated by these four terms that Imam al-Ghazālī explores in his '*Ajā'ib al-qalb.* Kellie summarizes Imam al-Ghazālī's concept of the heart-soul "as that subtle tenuous substance, spiritual in nature, which is the perceiving and knowing essence of man, and in reality is man. Its seat is the physical heart. It is immaterial and immortal. It is created directly by God, capable of knowing Him, and is morally responsible to Him."[11]

The "intellect" of Man then must be understood as a unified whole consisting of Man's rational faculty (also referred to as '*aql*), as well as his spiritual capacity for intuition and inspiration, forms of knowledge which in the texts of the philosophers and the Sufis are referred to as *dhawq, ishrāq, mukāshafah, basīrah*, and *badīhah*.[12] While rational knowledge is an indirect knowledge, based upon syllogistic thinking and mental concepts which may exist in the mind without ever having been experienced in reality, intuitive and inspired knowledge are forms of knowledge founded in immediate, personal unveiling and experience.[13] Although there is a distinction in the methods of attaining the different forms of knowledge, they are not seen as contrary to each other. Rather, the rational faculty of Man and his intuitive faculties are considered complementary to each other and serve different purposes.

In order to understand what Imam al-Ghazālī believes the human intellect to be capable of, it is also important to understand a bit about his cosmology. The most basic element of Imām al-Ghazālī's conception of the universe is that he sees the world, *al-ʿālam*—that is, everything outside of God Himself—as existing on two separate planes, "spiritual and corporeal (*rūḥānī wa jismānī*)."[14] Imam al-Ghazālī refers to these distinct realms of existence or two "worlds" as the

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[11] Skellie, "Translators Introduction," xvii.

[12] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Intellect and Intuition: Their Relationship from the Islamic Perspective," *Studies in Comparative Religion* 13, no. 1 & 2 (Winter 1975): 2.

[13] See Sachiko Murata's introduction to *The Tao of Islam.*

[14] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt Al-Anwār)*, trans. David Buchman (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 25. (Note: This is a parallel Arabic text and translation. I have referred to both the Arabic text and also the translation, though in some cases I have adjusted the translations if my renderings differed from Buchman's. Henceforth will be referenced as *Mishkāt*.)

ʿālam al-malakūt (the world of the dominion) and the ʿālam al-mulk (the visible or corporeal world), respectively. Though he posits these two worlds as distinct in form, he maintains that they are united in essence such that they constitute different levels of one Divinely planned and structured reality. The ʿālam al-mulk is the ẓāhir dimension of reality, while the ʿālam al-malakūt represents al-bāṭin. Imam al-Ghazālī considers these two worlds to be parallel to each other such that the existence of things in the ʿālam al-mulk can be considered a similitude for things which exist in the ʿālam al-malakūt. Imam al-Ghazālī believes that this similitude across the levels of reality makes it possible for Man to proceed from knowledge of the ẓāhir to the bāṭin—from the outward forms to the inner meanings. The levels of this Reality are knowable to Man through his different faculties, to different degrees. While Man is able to gain knowledge of the ʿālam al-mulk or al-ẓāhir through his senses and reason, knowledge of the ʿālam al-malakūt or al-bāṭin is only attainable through unveiling of his heart-soul.

0.3 The Primary Paths to Knowledge in Islamic Thought

Over the course of history, distinct disciplines of intellectual inquiry developed in Islamic civilization which served different purposes and thus prioritized the various methods of attaining knowledge in different ways. Generally speaking, there are four primary paths to knowledge in Islamic thought: *fiqh* (jurisprudence)*, kalām* (theology)*, taṣawwuf* (Sufism), and philosophy.[15] The *sharʿī* disciplines of *fiqh* and *kalām* rely primarily on a logical, proof-based methodology and internally do not accept intuition or inspiration as a source of certain and universifiable *ʿilm*. *Taṣawwuf* on the other hand, not only accepts, but elevates inspired knowledge to the highest level of *yaqīn*. All three of these paths—*fiqh, kalām, and taṣawwuf*—recognize and value the intellect for its ability to comprehend and expound the inner (in the case of *taṣawwuf*) and outer (in the case of *fiqh* and *kalām*) aspects of Revelation. Thus, it is Revelation—that is the Qurʾān and the prophetic *sunnah*—which constitute the basic means for the attainment of truth, and which illuminate the *ʿaql* allowing it to function properly.

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[15] See Ömer Türker's "İslam Düşüncesinde İlimler Tasnifi." *Sosyoloji Dergisi* 3, no. 22 (2011) for more detailed discussion about the other views on this.

As for the Islamic philosophical traditions, they ranged from the more rational and "precisely argumentative philosophy"[16] of the *mashshā'iyyah* to the more mystical or intuitive philosophy of the *ishrāqiyyah*, such that different traditions and different thinkers align in different ways with the other epistemic schemes of knowledge. Yet, while Islamic philosophy was both deeply sophisticated and embedded within the Islamic worldview, it was not necessarily bound to nor motivated by Revelation in the same way as *fiqh, kalām,* and *taṣawwuf.* For this reason, there is a distinction to be made between philosophy and the other paths we have mentioned—namely the paths of the *shar'ī* sciences represented by *kalām, fiqh* (and *ḥadīth* upon which they are built) and *taṣawwuf.*

In this thesis we will explore the epistemic paths of the *shar'ī* sciences and *taṣawwuf* or what Imam al-Ghazālī calls *'ilm al-mukāshafah* and his conception of them with relation to each other and to knowledge in general. Imam al-Ghazālī holds that these paths complement and complete each other in order to illuminate the various dimensions of Revelation, which is the embodiment of the *sharī'ah* on earth. Those invested in knowledge-seeking through these paths took seriously the responsibility upon them as interpreters (and in the case of the *shar'ī* sciences, interlocutors) of God's Word on earth. There were often differences of opinion and methodology which arose amongst them, but seekers selected the path they thought most worthy and most likely to lead to the necessary truths. It was only natural therefore that they argued for the viability of their respective paths and the knowledge they attained through them with the utmost vigor whilst yet acknowledging, as a matter of principle, their own potential fallibility. In Imam al-Ghazālī's thought, the ideal scholar of Islam sought not just knowledge, but *yaqīn* (from *y-q-n*; to be sure, certain, have conviction)—the highest possible level of certitude—or as close as he could possibly get to it, in the matters deemed most important and most necessary.

0.4 The Levels of *Yaqīn*

Insofar as knowledge is concerned, there is a distinction to be made between that which is known and that which is known with absolute certitude. There are three levels of *yaqīn* which are cited in

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[16] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Intellect and Intuition: Their Relationship from the Islamic Perspective," *Studies in Comparative Religion* 13, no. 1 & 2 (1979), 5.

the Qur'ān: *'ilm al-yaqīn* (knowledge of certainty/certain knowledge), *'ayn al-yaqīn* (vision of certainty) and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (truth of certainty).

The lowest level, *'ilm al-yaqīn*, consists of the knowledge reached through *'aqlī* and *naqlī* proofs –or what Imam al-Ghazālī also refers to as *naẓar* (logical speculation) and *istidlāl* (proofs-based argumentation). There is no direct experience or *mushāhadah* (witnessing) of this kind of knowledge, rather it is simply knowledge that is known intellectually, in the mind or heart.

To reach the level of *'ayn al-yaqīn,* something already known intellectually/mentally *(*i.e. *'ilm al-yaqīn*) must be reaffirmed through perception of the outward senses and experience. That which is witnessed firsthand is more convincing and certain than that which is simply theoretical, so *'ayn al-yaqīn* occupies a higher epistemological rank than *'ilm al-yaqīn*.

Ḥaqq al-yaqīn is considered the highest level of certitude i.e. knowledge. This kind of knowledge is only possible through the direct perception, experience, and witnessing of truths known rationally (*'ilm al-yaqīn)* or experientially through the outward senses (*'ayn al-yaqīn*). If *'ilm al-yaqīn* can be described metaphorically as hearing the description of fire, and *'ayn al-yaqīn* as seeing the fire with one's own eyes, then *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* is one's touching and being consumed by the fire directly.

For Imam al-Ghazālī the ultimate object of all worthy and true knowledge is God. God's nature and attributes are however, entirely separate from anything humans can conceive of. Thus *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, in its highest and purest form, corresponds to *ilhām* or *mukāshafah* which occurs not through a physical perception or witnessing of a physical truth (which is a lower form of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*), but rather a *mushāhadah* (witnessing) through inner sight of the *qalb* of *ḥaqā'iq* (intelligible realities, metaphysical truths) closer to the heart of *tawḥīd.* Imam al-Ghazālī believed that this level of *yaqīn* (certitude) is possible for Man to attain and that attaining it should be the goal of all true scholars of Islam.

0.5 *Sharī'ah*, *Ṭarīqah*, *Ḥaqīqah*

In classical discourse the paths to knowledge are often referred to as *sharī'ah*, *ṭarīqah*, and *ḥaqīqah* and conceived as different levels of existence or, different modes of manifestation of the one Truth. These three paths also correspond also to the dimensions of Man's self-actualization of knowledge (of Revelation and Reality) *īmān* (from *'-m-n,* to believe, be safe; belief)*, islām* (from *s-l-m*, to be safe, sound; submission)*, iḥsān* (from *h-s-n,* to be beautiful, good; beautiful mastery).[17] For Imam al-Ghazālī the *sharīʿah* is understood to be a reference to the formal, exoteric sciences (*'ibāratun 'ani'l-zāhir)* while the *ḥaqīqah* is a reference to the inner knowledge (*wa'l ḥaqīqata 'ibāratun 'ani-l'bātin*) which concerns not the outward actions of body nor professed beliefs so much as the inner meanings and the according states of the heart-soul.[18] Imam al-Ghazalī uses "*sharīʿah"* as such to refer to the laws which bind both the acts and the professed creed of Muslims, what he calls "*a'māl"* of body and heart. In terms of these *a'māl* of the heart*,* what is required of Man is simply "*al-qubūl wa'l-taṣdīq"* (acceptance and belief) by the heart, without the necessity of comprehending the true meanings and realities, as such comprehension is beyond the capacity, and thus outside the requirement of most people (*fa'in dhālika la yakun yukallaf bihi kāffatu-l-khalqi*).[19]

Ṭarīqah is a path one can tread safely only with the guidance of an experienced wayfarer who has already trodden the path. *Ṭarīqah* is understood as a reference to the paths of spiritual purification and *taṣawwuf* in which the shaykh-*murīd* (from *r-w-d*, to want, to desire, to seek), teacher-disciple relationship is central. The great Sufi and poet, Mawlāna Jalal al-Dīn al-Rumi likened the *sharīʿah* to a torch, the *ṭarīqah* to the path one takes with the torch in hand, and the *ḥaqīqah* to the final destination. One must hold fast to the torch and not drop it or allow it to become extinguished, for without the light of the torch, one would not be able to see the path, and without the path, one cannot reach the ultimate destination.[20] Thus, ultimately the idea is that

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[17] See Chapter 9, "The Role of Philosophy," in *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr.*
[18] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, "Qawā'id Al-'Aqā'id," in *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm Al-Dīn*, vol. I (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011), pp. 329-460, 366.
[19] Ibid., 367.
[20] For a more thorough discussion about the formulations of this conceptualization and the relationship between *shari'ah* and *haqiqah* (which only later came to include *ṭarīqah* as an intermediary) see the entry on "Hakikat," in TDV Islam Ansiklopedesi at: https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/hakikat

without proper understanding and submission to either the *sharīʿah* or the *ṭarīqah*, no seeker can ever reach the full culmination of knowledge, which is the *ḥaqīqah*.

In other terms, the *sharīʿah* can be likened to the matter and the *ṭarīqah* to the spirit, and the unification of the matter and spirit, outer and inner, *sharīʿah* and *ṭarīqah* leads to Ultimate Truth or *ḥaqīqah*, which in the Islamic worldview is the reality of *tawḥīd*.

In line with this perspective, Imam al-Ghazālī considers knowledge and Reality to have many dimensions, beginning with the outer forms or husks and unfolding unto deeper levels of Reality (and the corresponding perception of it), at whose core is the heart or the *lubb* of Truth and Existence—*tawḥīd.* These dimensions of Reality can be perceived by Man through the outer senses, the rational faculty, and Revelation—which includes both Divine revelations made through prophecy and those made directly to Man's heart-soul. Imam al-Ghazālī argues therefore that there are two primary paths to knowledge: *iktisāb* (acquisition) and *ilhām* (inspiration).

Knowledge attained through exertion of the human senses and reason is the knowledge of *iktisāb* while knowledge that is revealed to Man without his agency in it is considered the knowledge of *ilhām. Ilhām* is a general category in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought which entails many forms of revelation and inspiration including prophetic inspiration or *waḥy*. Imam al-Ghazālī refers generally to the various forms of *ilhām* possible for non-prophets as *mukāshafah*—the unveiling of the inner truths of the *sharīʿah* and Reality (i.e. *ʿilm al-bāṭin*). Though his terminology is often shifting, the highest form of *mukāshafah* in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought is the *mushāhadah* of *tawḥīd*.

For Imam al-Ghazālī *ilhām* constitutes a window into the *bāṭin* which only God can open unto Man. Imam al-Ghazālī believes that the most Man can do to attain such openings is to discipline and train his *ʿaql* and his *nafs* such that he is able to prepare himself for the reception of such knowledge of the *bāṭin* if God chooses to bestow it upon him. As one trains and purifies his *ʿaql* (intellect), however, Imam al-Ghazālī believes he becomes capable of perceiving and comprehending various dimensions and meanings of the *ẓāhir* and even penetrate the outer dimensions of the *bāṭin*—both as relates to the Revelation (i.e. the *sharīʿah* as embodied by the Qur'an and *sunnah*) and as relates to Reality. In addition to the knowledge of the *sharʿī*

sciences—that is *'ilm al-ẓāhir* of the *sharī'ah* and Reality—Imam al-Ghazālī considers any knowledge attained through such exertion and training to constitute part of the knowledge of *iktisāb* (from *k-s-b*; to acquire, to gain, to earn).

Men range in how much they are able to perceive of the outer and inner meanings, but even the greatest and most thoroughly trained intellects cannot access the deepest levels of the *bāṭin,* through the *iktisāb* of the *'aql* alone. Rather Imam al-Ghazālī considers the insight into the deepest, most sophisticated knowledge of the *bāṭin* to be a matter of Divine grace. Such knowledge of the *bāṭin* is only granted by direct favor from God to select few in the world through *mukāshafah.* In Imam al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge, the experiential knowledge of Reality gained through *mukāshafah* and *mushāhadah* is considered the pinnacle and the purpose of all knowledge-seeking as it relates to the highest ontological object: God. It alone qualifies as *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* while all other sciences and the knowledge they lead to can result in *'ilm al-yaqīn* at best.

Imam al-Ghazālī argues further that though the heart-soul may perceive and experience the deepest levels of Reality, the human *'aql* cannot entirely access or encompass those realities (i.e. *'ilm al-mukāshafah*). The heart-soul of Man, alone amongst all creation, can experience the magnitude of these truths, which culminate in *mushāhadah* of *tawhid.* Imam al-Ghazālī argues that as the layers of truth and reality draw closer in proximity to the *lubb* of Reality, they become more and more baffling for either the mind to comprehend or language to express, such that the ultimate reality of *tawḥīd* which Man can experience/witness, can never be fully understood or expressed through logic or language. *Tawḥīd* represents the heart of all existence and thus knowledge, and represents a state of true ineffability which Imam al-Ghazālī only hints at in his works.

In this thesis I will argue therefore that while Imam al-Ghazālī identifies and esteems two separate paths to knowledge—*iktisāb* and *ilhām*—which relate to the two forms of knowledge—*'ilm al-ẓāhir* and *'ilm al-bāṭin*—it is knowledge of the *bāṭin,* granted through divine gifts of *mukāshafah* directly unto the heart-soul of Man which constitutes the highest forms of all

knowledge possible for Man—*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*. Such *yaqīn* or certitude corresponds to the *mushāhadah* of *tawḥīd* in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought and represents a state of true ineffability.

0.6 Plan of this Work and Methodology

In addition to this introduction, this thesis consists of four chapters and a conclusion. We begin in the first chapter by outlining the basic foundations of the Islamic worldview within which Imam al-Ghazālī operated and discussing the centrality of Revelation within the pursuit of *'ilm* in Islam. We then establish more fully the concept of *'ilm* and discuss its different forms as well as the category of *yaqīn*, its highest and most foolproof form according to the Qur'ānic usage. In this chapter we draw on both primary sources from the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, as well as some secondary sources including the works of Seyyid Hossein Nasr and Syed Naquib al-Attas to establish the basic framework of the Islamic worldview and the place of *'ilm* within it.

In chapter two, we move from a general discussion of the Islamic worldview to a discussion of Imam al-Ghazālī's classification of the sciences presented in the introduction and Books I and XXI of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*. We also establish that in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought, the paths of *shar'ī* sciences which center the *'aql* and logical, systematic argumentation (*istidlāl)* align with his notion of *'ilm al-ẓāhir* and *iktisāb,* while the knowledge of unveiling aligns with *'ilm al-bāṭin* and *ilhām* (i.e. *mukāshafah* and *mushāhadah).*

The third chapter explore the epistemological paths of the *shar'ī* sciences of *ḥadīth*, *kalām*, and *fiqh* which align with *iktisāb* of *'ilm al-ẓāhir* in Imam al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge. For the most part, our treatment of the *shar'ī* sciences in this chapter is descriptive and not argumentative as our purpose is to show how the scholars of the Islamic sciences sought and seek to attain knowledge and increase their certainty in it, in order to then situate this information into the broader framework of Imam al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge as relates to the nature and methods of *iktisāb*. We classify the paths of *shar'ī* sciences as the historical-empirical path of *ḥadīth*, the logocentric path of *kalām*, and the joint historical-empirical/logocentric path of *fiqh*. Our primary argument is that these disciplines developed organically out of the theological and practical needs of the Muslim ummah over time and that they both complemented and relied

on the others in the overarching pursuit of knowledge in Islam. From a Ghazālīan perspective, these branches of knowledge represent *'ilm al-ẓāhir* of different dimensions of *sharī'ah* through various means of *iktisāb*.

In order to understand how these paths sought knowledge, we selected pedagogical texts widely used in Ottoman *madrassahs* as well as contemporary Ilāhiyāt programs in Turkey as authoritative representations of the methods and approaches of the *sharʿī* sciences of *ḥadīth, kalām* and *fiqh*. These texts (both the classical and the contemporary) are still accepted and utilized today in the instruction of students of the *sharʿī* sciences in modern Turkey and beyond, and so constitute a legitimate record of the sciences themselves and their methods as accepted by practitioners of those sciences. It is important to note, however, that the texts utilized in and taught in *madrassah* differed across Islamic civilization based on geography and *madhhab*. While it would have been possible to select texts popular in for example Maghrib, Cairo, Hejaz, or India during any era of history, for the purposes of this thesis we have limited the scope of sources to those regularly taught in post-Classical Ottoman *madrassahs* as a part of a standard education. Though many have argued that there was little ingenuity in post-Classical Ottoman thought and that their scholasticism led to an insular and pedantic formalism,[21] the focus of our inquiry is not the intellectual output of the Ottoman intelligentsia necessarily, but rather the methods and parameters Muslim scholars generally accepted as standard in the various fields of Islamic intellectual inquiry. As such, concerns about the stagnation of the Islamic science under the Ottomans or the more recent arguments in favor of an alternative view which opposes this as a misconception are not of immediate interest in this thesis.[22]

The contents, organization, and sequence of the *madrassah* curriculum (as well as the contents, organization, and sequence of the individual texts it imbibes) can be taken as a representation of

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[21] Ali Uğur has presented this critical view in *The Ottoman ʿulemā in the mid-17th century : an analysis of the Vakāʾiʿ ʾüʾl-fużalā of Meḥmed Şeyḫī Ef.* (Berlin:Klaus Schwarz Verlag,1986), lxxii–lxxiii. For an overview of this stance see also: Ekmeleddin Ihsanogulu, "The Madrasas of the Ottoman Empire ," *Foundation of Science, Technology, and Civilization*, April 2004, pp. 1-17, 15. Others have represented the Ottoman scholarly output as narrow and dogmatic in comparison to the Safavids and the Mughals such as F. Robinson, "Ottomans-Safavids-Mughals: Shared Knowledge and Connective Systems," Journal of Islamic Studies 8(1997):151–184. and S.F.Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[22] See for example: Khaled El-Rouayheb, "Introduction," in *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth CENTURY: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 1-10.

not only the way in which Muslim scholars believed knowledge should logically proceed, but also of what they considered to be most important and worthy of study. It is important to note therefore that there was some degree of variability in which texts were taught and in what order, as the program of study at any particular *madrassah* was decided and set by its founders and heads.[23] Despite this variability, there were some texts which gained particular prominence and repute across the Ottoman institutional landscape for their clarity, efficiency, and sophistication.[24] It is from this category of commonly-taught classics that we have selected sources to analyze in this thesis.

Another point to note here is that while Imam al-Ghazālī's own works were not always included in the instruction of the formal sciences, the abundance of commentaries, translations and citations made to his writings demonstrate that Imam al-Ghazālī was an influential figure in Ottoman intellectual circles. He became significant not just as the author of reputable pedagogical texts in many of the Islamic sciences, but also as a model for how to harmoniously theorize and synthesize various forms of knowledge within a holistic framework.[25] For this reason *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* received a great deal of scholarly attention, through translations and commentaries. It was also widely quoted and even emulated in Ottoman works, such as the famous works of prominent Ottoman scholars like Ṭaşköprüzade and Birgivi.[26] As such, the post-Classical Ottoman *madrassah* curriculum itself was reflective of what might be referred to as an advanced Ghazālīan paradigm of knowledge, and examining the methodologies of the different sciences (as represented by Ottoman pedagogical texts) facilitates this dissertation's goal of making more general and comparative statements about the concepts of *ʿilm* and *yaqīn* through *iktisāb* in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought.

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[23] See Hamza Karamali's, *The Madrasa Curriculum in Context* (Abu Dhabi: Kalam Research & Medi, 2017) for more about the institutional structure and social context of the Ottoman madrassa.
[24] In *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics. How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition*, though he restricts his inquiry to Egypt and the Arab East, Ahmed El Shamsy also discusses how certain books rose and fell in prominence due to the innovations of the printing press such that some books considered classics today, were likely not in wide distribution during the height of the Ottoman florescence and only came into prominence in the 19th century when the printing and distribution of older, rarer texts became possible.
[25] M Sait Ozervarli, "Ottoman Perceptions of Al-Ghazālī's Works and Discussions on His Historical Role in Its Late Period," in *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of Al-Ghazali: Papers Collected on His 900th Anniversary*, ed. Frank Griffel (Brill, 2016), pp. 253-282, 259.
[26] Ibid.

In chapter four our discussion moves from the path of *iktisāb* to the path of *ilhām* as represented by Imam al-Ghazālī's formulation of *'ilm al-mukāshafah* which encompasses the pinnacle and the culmination of all knowledge or what he refers to as *ḥaqq al-yaqīn.* This chapter is divided into two sections. The first is devoted to exploring the place of *ilhām* within the Sufi epistemic scheme of knowledge which centers the *qalb* and experiential knowledge in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought. This path of *ilhām* seeks openings into the *'ilm al-bāṭin* by way *mukāshafah* and *mushāhadah*, and for Imam al-Ghazālī constitutes the only path to true *yaqīn*. In this chapter we also discuss Imam al-Ghazālī's reflections about the other paths to knowledge and the status of their knowledge with reference to his estimation of *ilhām* within his overarching theory of knowledge. We look at passages from Imam al-Ghazālī's own works, especially *Kitab al-'ilm*, *Kitāb qawā'id al-aqā'id*, and *Kitāb sharḥ 'ajā'ib al-qalb*, Books I, II, and XXI of the *Iḥyāʾ* respectively, as well as the more esoteric *Mishkāt al-anwār* in which he discusses the nature of *yaqīn* from a theoretical perspective. When he does veer away from theory and ventures into the actual metaphysical content of *'ilm al-mukāshafah*, there is a clear and often professed tension between silence and speech about what this content entails. This tension exists both within and across Imam al-Ghazālī's works such that sometimes what remains unclear in one passage or one text is clarified by his discussion in other texts. In second part of chapter four we therefore introduce some basic theoretical terms and concepts about ineffability and analyze the nature of Imam al-Ghazālī's treatment of these matters across Books I, II, and III of the *Iḥyāʾ* and *Mishkāt* especially with regards to the nature of language and expression, and develop a framework for understanding how (in)effability functions in his thought. We will argue that ultimately for Imam al-Ghazālī, the only reality (and thus knowledge) which completely defies logical and thus linguistic containment is the Reality (and experiential knowledge) of *tawḥīd*.

From a methodological standpoint, when approaching Imam al-Ghazālī's writings, it is important to remember that each of his works is written with a particular purpose, for a particular audience. Imam al-Ghazālī himself writes in many different fields, drawing freely from the terminology and discourses of different disciplines and also establishing his own. He writes about, critiques, and engages in discourses of *kalām* and philosophy, but to call him primarily a *mutakallim* or philosopher seems unsatisfactory as he is often very critical of *kalām* and its practitioners on the one hand, and his writings are generally pedagogical in nature and not

expository on the other—though he does venture into philosophical discourse about the nature of Reality (ontology) and Man's ability to perceive it (epistemology), especially in his more esoteric writings like *Mishkāt.* Imam al-Ghazālī's works as such transcend the divisions between the different disciplines and he often treats the same subject in different works, presenting it from different angles depending on his purpose, the context, and his intended audience. In order to have a fuller understanding of the parallel discussions of any given subject in Imam al-Ghazālī's works, one must reference different works in which he treats the same subject. It is through cross-referencing Imam al-Ghazālī's works and the ways in which he expresses his position on major issues that we can establish a more holistic and thus more accurate understanding of Imam al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge despite his shifting terminology and often elusive style (especially as regards the content of *'ilm al-bāṭin).* In this thesis, we take into account and present several of his major discussions on the subject of knowledge, its classifications, the paths to its attainment, and the relative status of branches of knowledge in order to obtain, through their juxtaposition and comparison, a more nuanced picture about his positions. It was important also to approach his works with an understanding that his thought is consistent and that the texts do not contradict each other, even if the terminology he employs and his mode of presentation at times seem to. By assuming this consistency it is possible to focus on his larger arguments about knowledge and place them with reference to each other within the overarching framework of his thought.

In terms of Imam al-Ghazālī's pedagogical style, it is important to recognize that Imam Al-Ghazālī was professedly concerned with helping his audience attain *ma'rifat Allah* (the cognition of God) in this life, *sa'ādah* (felicity) in the afterlife, and if these higher goals were not possible, then helping them attain at least *najāh* (salvation) from punishment, which is a lesser form of felicity in the afterlife.[27] These were the goals which constitute the *telos* of Imam al-Ghazālī's entire system and why most of his writings are not expository as philosophical and theoretical treatises generally are, but pedagogic, aimed at guiding his readers step by step, to the realization of the Islamic message, to the highest degree accessible to them. Generally speaking, he separates his possible audience in two categories: the *'awāmm* (commoners) and the *khawāṣṣ*

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[27] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī , *The Book of Knowledge (Kitāb Al-'Ilm)*, trans. Kenneth Lee Honerkamp (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2016), 215.

(elect). At times a third, more elite category is also referenced, whom Imam al-Ghazālī refers to by many names such as *khawāṣṣ al-khawāṣṣ* (the elect of the elect), *al-wāṣilūn* (those who have arrived), *al-aḥrār* (the free ones), and *al-ʿārifūn* (the knowers/gnostics). The commoners of Imam al-Ghazālī's works are not always or simply unlettered Muslims, for it is very likely that they would have no access to Imam al-Ghazālī's works in the first place. Rather, very often it seems that the *ʿawwām* refers to a class of learned people, *ʿulamāʾ* who, despite their formal studies often lack the deeper insight, spiritual and ethical discipline, and philosophical training which Imam al-Ghazālī holds are necessary to attain entry into the elect, the most elite of whom he also calls "the perfect ones."[39] *Mishkāt al-anwār* as such is written as an epistle to a *mukhaṭab* (addressee) "whose breast" Imam al-Ghazālī believes "has been opened up by God through light (*mashrūḥ al-ṣadri billahi bi'l-nūr*)."[28] For this reason, he is willing to delve into deeper discussion about metaphysical matters of *ʿilm al-bāṭin. Iḥyāʾ,* on the other hand, is primarily written as a guide for average Muslims on how to fulfill their duties in their relations with God and Man in order to attain felicity in the *ākhirah* (hereafter). This is the knowledge of what he calls *ʿilm al-muʿāmalāt*, and he clearly states at the outset of *Iḥyāʾ* that as this is his purpose, he will focus only on practical knowledge of *ʿilm al-muʿāmalāt* and avoid philosophical discussions of *ʿilm al-mukāshafah*, even though he considers the latter to be a higher and more desirable branch of knowledge.

Because Imam Al-Ghazālī believes that the intellectual goals for each class cannot be the same, he approaches them differently. He believes that just as one cannot feed an infant solid food, otherwise do it harm, one cannot present those who are unprepared spiritually or intellectually with the more sophisticated contents of *ʿilm al-bāṭin*. Such a disclosure, in Imam al-Ghazālī's opinion, would cause more damage than good.[29] In reading Imam al-Ghazālī's works, therefore, it is important to recognize the possibility that he may not be disclosing his full beliefs on a particular subject, but rather only that which he deems necessary and most beneficial for the majority of his intended readership. His frequent and elusive remarks about what can and cannot

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[28] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt Al-Anwār)*, trans. David Buchman (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 87. (Note: This is a parallel Arabic text and translation. I have referred to both the Arabic text and also the translation, though in some cases I have adjusted the translations if my renderings differed from Buchman's. Henceforth will be referenced as *Mishkāt*.)

[29] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt Al-Anwār)*, trans. David Buchman (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 22, 35.

be said suggest that this is indeed the case (e.g. "this subject is deeper than what this book can bear").[44] It is precisely this tension between silence and speech in his works as relates to the deeper, higher contents of *'ilm al-mukāshafah* which we shall try to make sense of in the second part of the fourth chapter.

The dissertation concludes by looking at the larger implications of the discussions about the paths of *iktisāb* and *ilhām* and the ultimate epistemological status of Imam al-Ghazālī's thought and offering offer insight into what accepting his theory of knowledge means for a seeker of knowledge today.

A note on the academic context of this thesis:

Of the many Western scholars who have explored the place of the Sufi epistemic scheme and knowledge in Islamic thought which has been labeled as "mystical," "intuitive," and "sapiential" by those such as such as Schimmel, Nasr, Murata, Chittick,[30] Treiger is the most relevant in discussions specifically about Imam al-Ghazālī's epistemology. Treiger's works contribute many useful translations of both Arabic and Persian passages from Imam al-Ghazālī's more philosophical works, however his primary focus is to prove an Aristotelian foundation for Imam al-Ghazālī's philosophical thought rather than engage him on his own terms. Treiger is also almost exclusively concerned with the content and ontological status of "intuitive" and "inspired" thought in Imam al-Ghazālī's works insofar as they complement or contradict Aristotelian and peripatetic doctrines. Thus while the works of Treiger and the other scholars mentioned have helped set the general academic framework for this inquiry, in this thesis we will focus on Imam al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge primarily as it pertains to his own oeuvre. We are more concerned—as Imam al-Ghazālī was—not with definitively establishing the contents of *ilhām*, but rather in establishing the epistemological status they occupy as *'ilm al-yaqīn* in Imam al-Ghazālī's larger conception of knowledge as it relates to Reality.

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[30] See for example Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*; Nasr's *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, The Mystical Tradition of Islam* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989)*, Sufi Essays* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1972)*,* and *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origins to Present*; Murata's *The Tao of Islam: a Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2010); and Chittick's *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007).

On the topic of ineffability in Islamic thought, very little has been written. Discourses on ineffability and religious thought tend to focus on religious mysticisms, which in the study of Islam have also been scant and very often apologetic. While many Islamicists have produced valuable translations of Sufi texts (often classified as "mystical"), published discussions of silence and ineffability in Islamic thought have been limited. The notable exception is Michael Sells' *Mystical Languages of Unsaying, a* study of apophasis in Greek, Christian, and Islamic texts, which includes two chapters on Ibn al-ʿArabī. In this thesis we specifically analyze the nature of Imam al-Ghazālī's treatment of questions about reality, perception, and expression across Books I, II, and XXI of the *Ihyā'* and *Mishkāt al-anwār*. We look at how he addresses the nature of language and expression in these works in order to develop a basic framework for understanding how (in)effability functions in his thought and contribute to the scholarly corpus on both Imam al-Ghazālī's thought, as well as ineffability in Islamic thought more generally.

1

THE PLACE OF *'ILM* IN ISLAM

In order to comprehend the nature of any body of '*ilm* (knowledge) cultivated within Islamic civilization—including the works of Imam al-Ghazālī—it is first necessary to understand the fundamental principles of the Islamic faith from which it springs forth. *Kalām, fiqh*, the paths of *taṣawwuf*, philosophy, and the various other natural and religious sciences in which Imam al-Ghazālī engaged and which flourished in Islam civilization were developed by individuals and groups who were imbedded within a distinctly Islamic worldview, founded upon the guidance and grace of God as revealed in the Qur'ān and illuminated through the prophethood of Muhammad. The different paths to knowledge established and developed by Muslim thinkers and scholars reflect their intellectual responses to the challenges of the world, based upon the principles laid out in Revelation as best they could understand them. Drawn from the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* of the prophet, these principles were understood to be universal, for all peoples across time and space, and it was from these ideals that the parameters for social, ethical, cultural, and intellectual life were drawn in the Islamic world. The Divine Word was thus considered the spiritual fount as well as the unwavering light which guided and sustained all intellectual activity across the various disciplines of Islamic thought, which could each be seen as a distinct but complementary approach to the Word. It was this commitment to the Islamic vision as set forth in Revelation that made these sciences 'Islamic' in nature.

In this chapter we will begin first by expounding in more detail what this Islamic vision entails before then discussing the centrality of Revelation within the pursuit of knowledge in Islam. We will then establish more fully the concept of '*ilm* according to the Qur'an and *sunnah*, and discuss briefly the concept of *yaqīn*, its highest and most reliable form.

1.1 The Islamic Worldview

In order to establish the basics of the Islamic worldview, we can return to the questions with which we began this project: Who am I? What is the World? And how is a connection between me and

the world possible? That is what is the human Soul? What is the Cosmos? And what is the nature of the connection between the Soul and Cosmos? Rather than beginning with the first question, we will begin with the third, as this is the truth with which all philosophers, and all true intellectuals of all great traditions and civilizations are occupied, including the intellectuals of Islam.

The Islamic worldview begins, first and foremost with the conviction to the fact that Islam is a truly revealed religion. It is not simply a philosophy or culture which develops according to the subjective values and the visions of the people who live it, but rather Islam is a *dīn*[31], a way of life whose original source and point of constant reference is Revelation.

Revelation as the Divine Word of God does not change, and thus the essence of the *dīn* cannot change, but rather Islam is accepted as the continuation, the completion, and the perfection of all forms of true religion which preceded it. It is the final culmination of true *dīn* on earth which was revealed by God to humanity by way of the Prophet Muhammad, the heir and the seal to all prophets who came before him.

The essential doctrines and practices of Islam were revealed through the Qur'ān, interpreted and modeled by the Prophet in his speech and actions which comprise the *sunnah*. The development of Islam after the Prophet's time is to be understood as a process of interpretation and also of elaboration of Revelation which itself will remain unchanged and un-extended after the passing of the Prophet until the end of time. The growth and expansion of knowledge in Islam can be likened to the unfurling of the leaves and the blossoming of the flowers and fruits of the tree whose seeds are Revelation. Thus, the identity of Islam lies in its identity as a revealed religion, characterized by its acknowledgement and commitment to the unchanging Truth.

In the vision of Islam, that Truth is established with all certainty and all finality as *tawhīd*, the affirmation of the absolute, incomparable, Oneness of God, Who exists without partner. Beyond this, or rather, from this most fundamental and solitary Truth, Islam affirms also the Revelation by

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[31] See Chapter 1, "Islām: The Concept of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality," in Al-Attas's *Prolegomena* for an enriching philosophical, philological, and sociological discussion regarding the vast semantic range of the word '*dīn*' in Arabic and the ways this encompasses and informs notions about *dīn* in Islam.

which the nature of the Divine, of the Human Soul, the Cosmos, and of course Knowledge of any and all are made known to Man who, unlike other creatures is endowed with unique intelligence, *'aql* to grasp the meanings and the truths of Reality.

Revelation must further be understood as being two-fold, in the form of the revealed Word of the Qur'ān and also in the form of the *sunnah* of the prophet. The prophet's *sunnah* consists of his speech, his actions, and also his silence, which constitute a necessarily finite body of reference as to the Truth and the meaning of Revelation. The sincere pursuit towards understanding and applying the tenets of Revelation with as much certainty as possible thus resulted in the birth of the various disciplines and sciences of Islamic civilization, some of which—*'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *kalām,* and *taṣawwuf*—we will explore in chapter two of this thesis.

1.1.1 Islamic Conception of God

As for the Islamic conception of God, it is different from the pagans who accepted multiplicity of the Divine and also from that of the philosophers who understood the Divine to be simply the Prime Mover or First Cause, compelled by His nature to create, but not directly involved in the affairs of creation thereafter. The God of Islam is a free and sovereign agent choosing to create and creating at every moment, perpetually, and while His essence is beyond the total comprehension of Man, He is yet knowable, with attributes that have been revealed to Man through His own Speech. Sayyid Naquib al-Attas sums up the orthodox view of God in Islam as follows:

> The conception of the nature of God in Islam is the consummation of what was revealed to the Prophets according to the Qur'ān. He is one God; living, self-subsistent, eternal and abiding. Existence is His very essence. He is one in essence; no division in His essence, whether in the imagination, in actuality, or in supposition is possible. He is not a locus of qualities, nor is a thing proportioned and divisible into parts, nor is He a thing compounded of constituent elements. His oneness is absolute, with an absoluteness unlike the absoluteness of the natural universal, for while being thus absolute He is yet individuated in a manner of individuation that does not impair the purity of his absoluteness nor the sanctity of His oneness. He is transcendent, with a transcendence that does not make it incompatible for him to be at once omnipresent, so that He is also immanent, yet not in the sense understood as belonging to any of the paradigms of pantheism. He possesses real and eternal attributes which are qualities and perfections which He ascribes to Himself; they are not other than His essence, and yet they are also distinct from His essence and from one another without their reality and distinctness being separate entities subsisting apart

from his essence as a plurality of eternals; rather they coalesce with His essence as an unimaginable unity. His unity is then the unity of essence, attributes, and acts, for He is living and powerful, knowing, willing, hearing, and seeing, and speaking through His attributes of life, power, knowledge, will, hearing and sight, and speech; and the opposite of these are all impossible for Him.[32]

Having thus established the nature of God's Being in the Islamic worldview, we can move on to the nature of the Human Soul, the dignity which it has been granted by God amongst all creation, as well as the corresponding responsibilities upon it.

1.1.2 Man in the Qur'ān

Just as with the attributes and nature of God, it is through revelation that mankind has received the most definitive account of his own nature and creation. The Qur'ān in particular affirms four distinct aspects of humanness: the physical, the spiritual, his natural disposition (*fiṭrah*), and his inner light.

God says in the Qur'ān that He crafted Adam with His own two hands.[33] Because it cannot be taken literally, generally commentators of the Qur'ān have argued that this reference to the creation of Adam by God's own "hands" is a metaphor for the distinct and unmitigated fashion in which God created Adam.[34] In other verses it is revealed that God fashioned Adam from *ṭīn* (clay) or *turāb* (dust), and then breathed into him of His own spirit (*wa nafakhtu fīhī min rūhī)*, before commanding the angels to bow down before him.[35] The angels, recognizing God's command, and also the dignity of Adam as recipient of a portion of the Divine spirit bow down before him, while Iblīs refuses. When God questions Iblis, "What prevented you from bowing down as I commanded

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[32] S. M. Naquib Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islām* (Kuala Lampur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1995), 12.

[33] 38:75

[34] See for example tafsir of Al-Jalalayn and Ibn Kathir for 38:75.

[35] 15:28—"Your Lord said to the angels, 'I will create a mortal out of dried clay, formed from dark mud. 29When I have fashioned him and breathed My spirit into him, bow down before him,' 30 and the angels all did so. 31But not Iblis: he refused to bow down like the others. 32God said, 'Iblis, why did you not bow down like the others?' 33 and he answered, 'I will not bow to a mortal You created from dried clay, formed from dark mud.' 34'Get out of here!' said God. 'You are an outcast, 35rejected until the Day of Judgement.'" Note that all translations of Qur'ānic verses are taken from: M. A. Haleem, *The Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

you?" Iblis responds, "I am better than him: You created me from fire and him from clay."[36] But it is clear from Iblīs' response that he recognizes only one part of Adam's constitution—the lowly, earthly constitution crafted from dust and clay. He does not acknowledge the magnitude and the dignity of Adam's spirit, which has been bestowed upon him as a portion of God's own spirit. This spiritual essence of Man, is however that which elevates him above all creation. It is through this essence that he is able to comprehend and reflect the Divine attributes and realities. It is this essence of Man, which at the point of his creation, is endowed with knowledge by God. Upon his creation, God tells the angels:

> 'I am putting a successor a on earth,' they said, 'How can You put someone there who will cause damage and bloodshed, when we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your holiness?' but He said, 'I know things you do not.' *31* He taught Adam all the names [of things], then He showed them to the angels and said, 'Tell me the names of these if you truly [think you can].' *32* They said, 'May You be glorified! We have knowledge only of what You have taught us. You are the All Knowing and All Wise.' *33* Then He said, 'Adam, tell them the names of these.' When he told them their names, God said, 'Did I not tell you that I know what is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and that I know what you reveal and what you conceal?' *34* When We told the angels, 'Bow down before Adam,' they all bowed. But not Iblis, who refused and was arrogant: he was one of the disobedient.[37]

In this passage we see a reference to many important elements of Man's nature. He is designated by God as his *khalīfah* (from *kh-l-f,* to follow, succeed), and taught "all the names," knowledge of which is unknown even to the angels. This knowledge of the names is actually a knowledge of the realities of all existing things, as one cannot name an entity unless he knows something of that entity which separates it from another. Likewise, the Islamic tradition holds that the names of Allah reflect the Divine attributes which form the basis of all Existence. Each name has a unique Reality, which may or may not be fully knowable to Man, though it is manifest in Creation and in Man's own soul. And so we see that this spirit of Adam's which is a portion of God's own spirit bestowed upon him by God directly, is that which ennobles him by virtue of its Divine nature, and its ability to learn and know the realities of things.[38] This spirit of Man and its ability to know which is

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[36] 7:12

[37] 2:30-34

[38] Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi offers a more in-depth explanation of this verse as follows: "....(when I have) breathed of My spirit into him...." = "....(when I have) cast a reflection of My Divine characteristics on him.... " This shows that the soul of man implies "life, knowledge, power, will, discretion and other human characteristics in the aggregate. These are in reality a slight reflection of Divine characteristics that has been cast on the human body, which was originally created from dried clay. And it is this Divine reflection on the human body which has raised him to the position of the Vicegerent of Allah and made him that worthy being before whom angels and every

possible through his exposure to the *names* of things is closely linked to Man's capacity for language. The Qur'ān associates the emergence of *insān* with God's imparting to the human being the gift of *bayān*, articulate thought and speech: "He has created *insān* and has imparted unto him *bayān*."[39] Without *bayān*,—which only Man amongst animals has received—Man would not be Man.

Once the human has been animated by the spirit, he can undertake his primary purpose: namely, to worship and to know his Lord. We read in the Qur'an, "I have not created the jinn and humankind except that they worship Me (*li ya'budūn*)."[40] Many *mufassirūn* (exegetes of the Qur'ān) mention that this verse can also be interpreted to mean "*li ya'rifūn*" ("that they know Me"), and some scholars also take this one step further and argue that the true meaning of "*li ya'budūnī*" is "*li yuwahiddūnī*" or "that they know my Oneness."[41] Thus seeking knowledge of God, the culmination of which is *tawḥīd*, is the ultimate purpose of Man's existence in the Islamic worldview, and it is part of his natural disposition or *fiṭrah* to know and to affirm this Truth. God commands the prophet in the Qur'ān,

> So [Prophet] as a man of pure faith, stand firm and true in your devotion to the religion. This is the natural disposition God instilled in mankind (*fiṭrata Allahi faṭara al-nās alayhā)*—there is no altering God's creation—and this is the right religion (*al-dīn al-qayyim*), though most people do not know it (*lā ya'lamūn).*[42]

The classical commentators of this verse interpret "*fiṭrata Allahi*" here to mean *dīn*, that is Islam. Others took it to be more specifically a reference to the *mithāq* or the covenant taken by all souls before God, when He asked them, "Am I not your Lord? And they said, 'Yea!'" (*'ahd alladhi akhadha Allahu alayhim bi qawlihi: alastu bi-rabbikum).*[43] It is to be understood from this verse that Man's true nature is to affirm the Oneness and the Lordship of God, that this knowledge and

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earthly thing should bow down." Full commentary at: Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi, "Commentaries for 15.9," Qur'ān X, accessed November 20, 2020, https://quranx.com/Tafsirs/15.9.

[39] 55:3-4

[40] 51:56

[41] See references to Mujahid, al-Tha'labi, al-Kalby in Qurtuby's tafsir at: al-Qortobi, "Sura 51, Aya 56," القرآن الكريم - تفسير القرطبي - تفسير سورة الذاريات - الآية 56 ,accessed November 26, 2020, https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/qortobi/sura51-aya56.html#qortobi.

[42] 30:30

[43] See reference to Baghawy's tafsir at: Baghāwī, "Surah 30, Aya 30 ," القرآن الكريم - تفسير البغوي - تفسير سورة الروم - الآية 30, accessed November 26, 2020, https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/baghawy/sura30-aya30.html#baghawy.

this affirmation is written into his *rūḥ* (spiritual essence), imbedded from the time before his *rūḥ* entered his body. If Man seeks knowledge and acts in harmony with his true nature and disposition in the world, he will ultimately be led to affirmation of and submission to *tawḥīd*. Submission to *tawḥīd*, leads naturally to submission to God's *sharī'ah*. This submission is the true meaning of *dīn* in the Islamic worldview.[44]

1.1.3 The Concept of Knowledge in the Qur'ān

The Qur'ān is full of references to the importance of knowledge, reflection, thinking, deliberation as a means to ultimate salvation. But it is not only the seeking of knowledge that is required to achieve ultimate success, rather it is the bringing together true *'ilm* (knowledge) with *'amal* (proper action) that allows Man to achieve his purpose and realize his full potential.

Al-'aql is used in the Qur'ān to denote the encompassing human intellect, which imbibes all Man's rational and intellective powers. One of the primary meanings of *'-q-l* is to bind or to restrain, and within the wider framework of Islamic thought, it is the human *'aql* (which is used to refer to the essence of his nature and also the culmination of all his intellective faculties), which binds him to knowledge of and thus Reality, itself. The Qur'ān thus refers to those who deny Truth and rebel against true religion as those who "do not use reason" (*la ya'qilun)* and constantly asks with reference to those who are presented with the Truth through signs (*āyāt*) from God, "Will you not use your reason?" (*afalā ta'qilun).*[45] Those who do not use their reason, which is the defining attribute of their humanity are considered "the worst beasts in the sight of God" and the recipients of God's wrath. [46]

In the Islamic worldview, the culmination of all knowledge is knowledge and certainty (*yaqīn*) of *tawḥīd*, and the most defining step in Man's journey to knowledge is then his affirmation and witnessing of the *kalimat at-Tawhid* "*Lā ilāha illa Allah*" which encompasses the metaphysical Truth of Reality; that there is no God and ultimately no reality independent of the Divine Reality,

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[44] See al-Attas's first chapter, "Islām: The concept of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality," in *Prolegomena* for a deeper exploration of the linguistic roots of the word *dīn* in Arabic as well as the concept of man's covenant with God and his role as *khalifah* on earth.
[45] See for example 2:172, 21:11, 2:243, 28:61
[46] See for example 8:23, 10:101

that is the existence of God alone. The act of witnessing this truth is an act in which God, the angels, and "those of knowledge" (*ulu'l-'ilm)* all partake, thus this knowledge and this witnessing go hand in hand.[47] Those who deny the truth of *tawḥīd*, who ignore God's signs (*āyāt*), or refuse to witness it, on the other hand, are considered liars and the losers in the grand scheme of existence.[48] For this class of humanity, their unwillingness to accept the Truth, that is, their rejection of true knowledge results in the nullification of their deeds, also. This is why they are considered the losers of existence.[49]

1.2 Two Forms of Knowledge: Sacred and Mundane

In the Qur'ān there are several verbs which are used to reference human faculties of perception, modes of acquiring knowledge and different forms of human cognition. For example, *'-l-m, '-r-f, d-r-y, f-q-h, f-h-m, f-k-r,* etc. However, it is *'-l-m* which appears most often in the Qur'ān as a root,[50] and it is also a verb root which is used to express both the knowledge of God and the knowledge of Man. The Qur'ān makes it clear, however, that while human knowledge and Divine knowledge are not the same, human knowledge stems from Divine knowledge, and Man may only know that of which God has granted him knowledge.[51]

The Qur'ān affirms three organs of the body through which Man may access knowledge: the eye, the ear, and the heart.[52] Though the Qur'ān does not speak about the particulars of mundane knowledge, which may be attained through physical observation of the world, testing and trial, including the technical and technological knowledges, it is generally accepted that there are two primary forms of knowledge: that which is required for the health and vitality of Man's soul, and

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[47] [3:18] Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge – [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise. Also [4:166] But Allah bears witness to that which He has revealed to you. He has sent it down with His knowledge, and the angels bear witness [as well]. And sufficient is Allah as Witness.

[48] See for example 3:61, 7:9

[49] 18:105

[50] In his book *Knowledge Triumphant,* F. Rosenthal presents a statistical analysis of the frequency of certain verb roots in the Qur'ān. According to Rosenthal, *'-l-m* makes up about 1 percent of the Qur'ān's entire vocabulary, and while there are other roots like *'-m-n* which appear more often than *'-l-m*, but the forms of *'-m-n* which appear in the Qur'ān do not have as close semantic values as the derivations of *'-l-m*. Rosenthal argues that "every single occurrence of the root forms part of a plan to condition receptive minds to "knowing" as a basic force in the new religion…we have here a concept in which religion and secular terminology came together…" (Rosenthal, 22)

[51] 2:255-256

[52] 32:8, 67:23

that which is required for the health and vitality of Man's body—the physical and the social—in the world. This second kind of knowledge is of a deductive and discursive nature and refers to objects of pragmatic import. Al-Attas beautifully summarizes the relationship between these distinct though intertwined forms of knowledge as follows:

> The first knowledge unveils the mystery of Being and Existence and reveals the true relationship between man's self and his Lord, and since for man such knowledge pertains to the ultimate purpose for knowing, it follows that knowledge of its prerequisites becomes the basis and the essential foundation for knowledge of the second kind, for knowledge of the latter alone, without the guiding spirit of the former, cannot truly lead man in his life, but only confuses and confounds him and enmeshes him in the labyrinth of endless and purposeless seeking…The individual man must limit his individual quest for knowledge of the second kind to his own practical needs and suited to his nature and capacity so that he may set both the knowledge and himself in their right places in relation to his real self and thus maintain a condition of justice.[53]

By justice here, al-Attas means justice with oneself and God in the sense that Man recognizes his place as servant of God while affirming God's ascendancy over him and all that he has. It is also a reflection of Man's justice within himself which he achieves only by elevating his rational soul (*nafs al-nāṭiqah*) over his animal soul (*nafs al-ḥaywāniyyah*), thus making him a truly free and truly intelligent being capable of witnessing God's oneness and fulfilling his covenant with God as *khalīfah* on earth.

While the Qur'ān does not discuss the particulars of pragmatic and worldly knowledge, it makes clear that all knowledge has moral value, and will be measured according to whether the it is taken as affirmation or contradiction of Truth. The Qur'ān reveals therefore that the eye, the ear, and the heart which may be means to Man's acquisition of knowledge[54] will be held responsible for the ends to which they are put, that is, whether they are used to affirm or to deny Truth.[55] Those who reject Truth and refuse to believe are often described metaphorically as those who are "deaf, dumb, and blind," who are unable to use their reason (*lā ya'qilun*)[56] and thus understand nothing. As the heart is considered the seat of Man's intellect with which he can perceive Reality, the Qur'ān asks about the disbelievers, "Have these people [of Mecca] not travelled through the land with hearts

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[53] Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2014), 147.
[54] 32:8, 67:23
[55] 17:36
[56] 2:172

to understand and ears to hear? It is not people's eyes that are blind, but their hearts within their breasts."[57] Thus the Qur'ān affirms that while Man may have full use of his physical faculties and acquire "knowledge" through them, he remains fundamentally ignorant and unknowing as long as he denies the Truth in his heart.

The traditional concept of *'ilm* (pl. *'ulūm)* in Islamic thought encompasses all knowledge and all knowledges, both religious and mundane. The different *'ulūm* are simply considered different paths to access the Truth. That is, they are paths which led to *'ilm* of different aspects of the *sharī'ah* and Reality. Thus the traditional *'ulūm* though they differed from each other in subject matter and the finer points of methodology were considered interdependent and unified in essence.

In the Qur'ānic paradigm, then, while there is reference to two primary forms of knowledge: secular/worldly or mundane knowledge, and sacred knowledge of the Divine/Reality, it is the latter which constitutes the highest culmination, and the ultimate goal of all knowledge attainable to Man. Sacred knowledge of the Divine, which is synonymous with knowledge of Reality, is both the beginning and the end of all worthy pursuits of *'ilm*, though men may lose their path out of greed and ignorance. Knowledge of Reality became as such a focal point in the Islamic worldview and civilization as did how to properly seek it and how to achieve *yaqīn* (certitude) in it.

1.3 Knowledge as *Hidāyah*

In the Qur'ān, while knowledge may be acquired through human endeavor, it is ultimately within God's power to bestow it upon whomever, and in whatever portion He chooses. Divine guidance (*hidāyah*) thus becomes another central notion in the Qur'ānic conception of knowledge and knowledge-seeking. While this *hidāyah* is ultimately considered a favor upon Man which depends entirely upon God's will, the Qur'ān also affirms Man's own role in seeking and earning that favor.[58] Man's sincere pursuit of knowledge, his faith in the Truth, and his own actions all factor

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[57] 22:42
[58] 47:17, 64:11, 29:69

into his ultimate attainment of guidance, which entails also, Knowledge of the path, that is knowledge of the *sharī'ah* of God.[59]

1.4 Knowledge and Submission

Of those who attain such knowledge and guidance, there are two types: those who submit to it, and those who do not. The word 'Islam' itself is derived from the Arabic *s-l-m* whose primary signification is to surrender or submit. Thus Islam as a *dīn* should be understood as the process of submitting oneself to Truth and whatever it entails. As such, the Qur'ān disparages those who do not submit and instead follow their own whims as for example the Jews and the Christians who abandoned the guidance of God: "And never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion. Say, "Indeed, the guidance of Allah is the [only] guidance." If you were to follow their desires after what has come to you of knowledge, you would have against Allah no protector or helper."[60]

In this way, the Qur'ān establishes that *submitting* to knowledge and guidance is separate from receiving it, and that there is no hope for those who reject what comes to them from God and His messenger. The Qur'ān informs us further that of those who are presented with Truth (i.e. the Revelation), and choose not believe, "We have put covers on their hearts that prevent them from understanding it, and heaviness in their ears. When you mention your Lord in the Qur'ān, and Him alone, they turn their backs and run away."[61]

As for those who seek and strive for knowledge, after believing in it (*īmān*) and submitting to it (*islām*), God grants them more knowledge, guides them along the path, and rewards them.[62] Thus seeking knowledge becomes the most worthwhile and most fitting aspiration for mankind, and as Rosenthal puts it, "the true synonym of religion."[63] Knowledge (*'ilm*) must therefore be founded

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[59] 4:162, 28:80, 29:69
[60] 2:120, see also: 47:16, 2:145
[61] 17:45-46
[62] 29:69, 4:162
[63] Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant* (E.J. Brill, 1970), 32.

in faith (*īmān*) and further affirmed by good actions (*al-ʿamal al-ṣaliḥ*) in order for Man to realize his true purpose as *ʿabd* and attain salvation.

To sum up then, within the Qurʾānic paradigm, the path to Knowledge (*ʿilm*) begins with Revelation (*waḥy*). The Qurʾān contains all truths and *ʿilm* necessary for Man's existence and salvation, and embodies also the foundations of Divine Law (*sharīʿah*) which must constitute the path to Man's success (*najāh*) in this life and the next. The first resource Man has in understanding the Qurʾān, which is the embodiment of *ʿilm* and the *sharīʿah* is the Prophet Muhammad, his speech, and his acts. The next and greatest tool Man has is his own *ʿaql* (intellect), by which, Revelation must be understood.

Man has a choice in his pursuit of *ʿilm* and agency also. If he chooses submission and guidance, God may bestow upon him greater knowledge and guidance. The act of willfully submitting in light of the Truth is seen as the necessary result of the process of human reasoning and intellection, and those who rebel are considered those who do not use their intellect. Every endeavor towards knowledge in Islamic civilization then becomes an endeavor to understand and to express the true import—both inner and outer—of God's word. These are the central ideas from which the notion of *ʿilm* blooms in the Islamic paradigm, and from which all enterprises of learning spring forth in Islamic civilization, whether *kalām*, *fiqh*, *taṣawwuf*, philosophy, statecraft, music, architecture, the arts, etc.

1.5 Levels of Knowledge and *Yaqīn*

The Qurʾān also establishes a system of classification and a hierarchy for knowledge. Thus we find in the Qurʾān references to *shakk* (doubt), *ẓann* (conjecture), and *yaqīn* (certainty),[64] all of which though used to refer to the type of the knowledge, can refer also to one's state with reference *to* the knowledge, or rather to the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*).[65] In the classical dictionaries, *al-ḥaqq* is considered to be the highest and purest form of *yaqīn* which is a particular kind of *ʿilm* achieved through verification of a matter (*taḥqīq al-amr*). Because *yaqīn* is thus considered to be an

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[64] See 4:157 in which all three types of knowledge are referenced with regards to those who told the story of Jesus' crucifixion, though he was not crucified.
[65] See 53:28

acquired knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ḥāṣil)*, God's knowledge is never referred to as "*yaqīn.*" *Yaqīn* is also defined as the removal and/or the opposite of *shakk* just as *'ilm* is the opposite of *jahl.*[66]

There are three levels of *yaqīn* which are cited in the Qur'ān: *'ilm al-yaqīn* (knowledge of certainty/certain knowledge), *'ayn al-yaqīn* (vision of certainty) and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (truth of certainty). These three levels of *yaqīn* refer to increasing levels of certainty one may attain in the knowledge that one has and are often depicted metaphorically as one's hearing the description of fire, one's seeing the fire with his own eyes, and one's experiencing and being consumed by the fire.

In addition to the gradations of knowledge, the Qur'ān also references different dialectical processes through which knowledge can be attained by human beings. Words like *shāqqa and jādala* "to dispute," are used in conjunction with terms like *dalīl, ḥujjah, bayyinah*, and *burhān* which refer to indicators, evidences, and logical proofs and which come to take on particular technical signification as the traditions of Islamic discursive thought develop.[67]

As we shall see in coming chapters, the concept of *yaqīn*, how it is to be defined, and how it is to be best and most reliably approached is of central importance in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought. Each of the Islamic disciplines of *kalām, fiqh,* and *taṣawwuf* rely on different methods to attain *'ilm* and have different notions about what constitutes *yaqīn*. Having now established the general Islamic worldview within which Imam al-Ghazālī's thought unfolds, we will move to a discussion in the next chapter of how classifies the disciplines of Islamic science.

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[66] See for example: "يقن," The Arabic Lexicon, accessed November 20, 2020, http://arabiclexicon.hawramani.com/%d9%8a%d9%82%d9%86/#948567 and http://arabiclexicon.hawramani.com/%d9%8a%d9%82%d9%86/#9eed68

[67] See Chapter 2 in Rosenthal's *Knowledge Triumphant* for a more thorough discussion of the different terms used in the Qur'ān.

IMAM AL-GHAZĀLI'S CLASSIFICATION OF THE SCIENCES

These disciplines of knowledge rely on the three sources of knowledge open to Man: his senses, reason, and revelation. "Revelation" as such refers to knowledge revealed to Man through prophecy or unveiling of truths upon the heart-soul, what Imam al-Ghazālī also called *ilhām* and *mukāshafah*. The revelation through prophecy consists of the revealed Book and the prophetic *sunnah* which constitute the *sharī'ah.* In the Qur'an God says to Prophet Muhammad, "We have sent down to you the Remembrance that you may make clear to mankind what was sent down to them."[68] The prophet's interpretation, application, and explanation then, is taken as a key to comprehension of the Book. Thus to preserve Revelation means not only to preserve the literal words of the Qur'an and *hadith*, but also to preserve the prophetic interpretation and spirit which illuminates them. These two aspects taken together represent the outer and inner dimensions of the *sharī'ah*.

The primary meaning of *sharī'ah* in the Arabic language is either the waterhole or a path to it. Water is necessary to survival and the flourishing of life anywhere, but due to its scarcity, it is especially precious in the desert. Desert-dwellers who have no knowledge of the sources of water or the paths which lead to them cannot hope to survive long. As such to refer to divine Revelation as *sharī'ah* is to reflect on the absolute necessity of divine Revelation to Man's ultimate salvation. Without the *sharī'ah* Man has no chance of survival, let alone success in this life or the next.

For this reason, Imam al-Ghazālī holds the fundamental purpose of Islamic science to be the preservation of the *sharī'ah*: its words, its meanings, the intellectual rigor with which they are established, and the correct application of its tenets. The various sciences in Islamic thought developed to aid in the accomplishments of these tasks. The centrality of the *sharī'ah* as a source of knowledge does not, however, discount the place of the human powers of intellection and reason. The relationship between Man's reason and Revelation is not one of conflict, rather the

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[68] 16:44

former is illuminated and guided by the latter. It is the rational faculty of Man which allows him to discern truth from falsehood and set a course for correct thought and action in the world based on his discernment of the Truth such that he may succeed in this world and the next.

Given the centrality of seeking knowledge, we find in the Islamic intellectual tradition a long and deep literature devoted to the discussion of knowledge and its classifications, taking into account the subject matter, the purposes, and the methods involved in each science, as well as how they relate to one another. The overarching purpose of this corpus in Islamic thought seems to be twofold: to establish what kinds of knowledge are possible to man and through what means, and to establish which of the knowledges possible for Man are the worthiest objects of pursuit. The general relationship between reason and Revelation as they relate to Man's access to Reality was at the heart of these discussions. The other aspect of concern was whether sciences were purely theoretical, for the sake of knowledge, or practical for the purposes of application in the real world. As such, classifications of knowledge often took the form of dichotomies such as: philosophic (*hikmiyyah*)-religious (*shar'īyyah*), rational (*'aqlī*)-transmitted (*naqlī*), theoretical (*naẓarī*)-practical(*'amalī*), religious(*shar'ī*)-non-religious (*ghayr-shar'ī*).[69] Some scholars even offered multiple different classifications of knowledge across their own works, depending on the purpose and perspective of each work.

Imam al-Ghazālī is considered to be one of the foundational figures in the traditions of classification of knowledge, and the classifications of later scholars—the most sophisticated amongst which is often considered to be that of Ottoman scholar and biographer Ṭaşköprüzade ʿIṣamad- din Aḥmed (d. 968/1561), which brings together discussions about ontology, epistemology, in order to explore the status of different forms of knowledge—are often seen as continuations and culminations of the tradition which he in many ways shaped.[70] As such, Imam al-Ghazālī offers several different schemes which incorporated and responded to all of the above dichotomies in different ways across his works. At times his classifications seem to be at odds

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[69] For more detailed exploration of the different trends in the classification of the sciences see: Ömer Türker, "İslam Düşüncesinde İlimler Tasnifi." *Sosyoloji Dergisi* 3, no. 22 (2011): 533–66. See also: Ahmet Meydan, "Kutbüddin-i Şirazi'nin İlimler Tasnifi ve Dil İlimlerinin bu Tasnifteki Yeri," *İhya Uluslararası İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 1 (January 20, 2020): pp. 41-69.

[70] Ömer Türker, "İslam Düşüncesinde İlimler Tasnifi." *Sosyoloji Dergisi* 3, no. 22 (2011): 533–66, 554.

with one another, however upon closer examination of how he defines his terms, it becomes clear that these classifications and his overarching theory of knowledge within which they are situated never contradict each other in essence.

2.1 Classification I: *Muqaddimah* of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*

In the introduction to his great *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (*Revivification of the Religious Sciences*) Imam al-Ghazālī identifies two primary branches of knowledge: *'ilm al-dunyā* (science of the world) and *'ilm al-ākhirah* (science of the hereafter), the latter of which he takes as his focus and the core of all true and essential knowledge for Man's ultimate salvation.

Imam al-Ghazālī divides *'ilm ṭarīq al-ākhirah* into a theoretical and a practical branch, which he designates as *'ilm al-mukāshafah* (the science of unveiling) and *'ilm al-mu'āmalāt* (the science of proper conduct), respectively. It is expounding the contents of the latter which he designates as the primary object of *Iḥyā'*. As we already mentioned, Imam al-Ghazālī believes that there are many levels and dimensions of reality which are accessible to Man through different means to different degrees. Imam al-Ghazālī also believes this is the case with the *sharī'ah* which is a divine record of Reality as it exists. While Man is able to gain knowledge of the *al-ẓāhir*—of Reality and of Revelation—through his senses and reason, knowledge of the *al-bāṭin* is only attainable through unveiling of his heart-soul.

For Imam al-Ghazālī, there is therefore two branches of knowledge which constitute *'ilm al-mu'āmalāt*: a branch which addresses the outer or *'ilm al-ẓāhir* of the *mu'āmalāt* and that which addresses the inner or *'ilm al-bāṭin*. The domain of the former is the *a'māl* (functions, deeds) of the *jawāriḥ* (bodily limbs) while the domain of the latter is the *a'māl* of the *qalb*.[71] By *a'māl al-jawāriḥ* Imam al-Ghazālī means "*'ibādah wa 'ādah*" (acts of worship and those which pertain to custom) while *a'māl al-qalb* is *"muta'alliqu bi-aḥwāli'l-qalbi wa akhlāqi'l-nafsi"* (that which is linked to the states of the heart and the attributes of the spirit), though the true and mysterious nature of the heart itself is not a topic of direct discussion in his works.[72] Knowledge of outer

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[71] *Kitāb al-'ilm,* 14.
[72] Ibid.

forms of *al-muʿāmalāt* is the domain of the *sharʿī* sciences, while knowledge of inner dimensions is the domain of *taṣawwuf*. *ʿIlm al-mukāshafah* refers to the deepest levels of knowledge of *al-bāṭin* which Man can access only through divine unveiling or *ilhām*, a matter we shall explore more below.

2.2 Classification II: *Kitāb al-ʿilm*

In Book I of the *Iḥyāʾ, kitāb al-ʿilm* (The Book of Knowledge), Imam al-Ghazālī further establishes a *sharʿī-ghayr sharʿī* framework for his classification of the sciences which fall under *ʿilm al-muʿāmalāt* (or the science of proper conduct).

For the *sharʿī-ghayr sharʿī* schema, Imam al-Ghazālī begins first by dividing the knowledges into the categories of *farḍ ʿayn* and *farḍ kifāyah;* that is the knowledge whose acquisition is incumbent upon each individual and the knowledge whose acquisition is incumbent upon the community at large such that if one member acquires it, he has fulfilled the collective obligation upon the community.

Within the context of *ʾilm al-muʾāmalāt*, there are three primary areas of which knowledge is to be considered *farḍ ʾayn*: beliefs, works, and prohibition (*tark*). With regard to the first, Imam al-Ghazālī holds that it is sufficient for an individual of mental capacity to learn the words of the *shahādatayn* and their meaning. If he both attests and believes in the *shahādatayn*, then he has fulfilled the obligation upon him and is not required to study or investigate the premises upon which they are built. That is to say, if he believes unequivocally in and attests to the Oneness of God and in the prophethood of Muhammad, he has fulfilled his obligation, whether he can provide proofs for these beliefs or not.

In terms of knowledge which pertains to his acts, Man is only required to learn that which applies to the acts which are obligatory upon him. Thus, a poor man who has no wealth of his own, is not necessarily required to learn the minutia of the laws regarding *zakāh,* whereas the man whose wealth does meet the basic requirements for *zakāh* is required to learn of its particulars as they apply to him. So too, is the mandate for knowledge of prohibitions dependent

upon the limits of circumstance which would require them (i.e. they need not be learnt unless they become applicable). Imam al-Ghazālī gives the example of the mute who, because he cannot utter speech, is not required to learn about the boundaries between lawful and unlawful speech.

Imam al-Ghazālī then divides the second category of knowledge within *'ilm al-mu'āmalāt*, the *farḍ kifāyah*, into two branches: the *sharʿīyyah* (religious) and the *ghayr sharʿīyyah* (non-religious). The *sharʿī* sciences are those which have been acquired by way of the prophets, not by way of reason (e.g. arithmetic) nor experimentation (e.g. medicine) nor convention (e.g. the linguistic and rhetorical sciences). The *ghayr sharʿī* sciences are those upon whose knowledge the activities and the practicalities of life depend such as medicine and arithmetic. This class of knowledge is divided further into three categories: the *maḥmūd* (praiseworthy), the *madhmūm* (blameworthy), and the *mubāḥ* (permissible). Of these sciences, those which are indispensable for the sustenance of a people such as medicine, agriculture, even certain crafts like weaving and smelting can be considered praiseworthy. While arithmetic, too, is a praiseworthy science, Imam al-Ghazālī recognizes that deep and sophisticated studies in it may not be indispensable for a people. The potential benefit and efficacy which may arise through these kinds of deep and specialized studies is thus considered meritorious though not obligatory. The sciences which are blameworthy, consist of magic, the science of talismans and the like.

The *sharʿī* sciences are all praiseworthy and divided into the *uṣūl*(sources), *furūʿ* (branches), *muqaddimāt* (auxiliary), and the *mutammimāt* (supplementary). The *uṣūl* consist of the Qur'ān, the *sunnah*, the *ijma'* (consensus of the community), and the *āthār al-ṣaḥabah* (traditions relating to the companions of the prophet, both in speech and action). The *furūʿ* are those sciences which draw from and build upon the foundations of the *uṣūl*, through interpretation and expansion of the literal meanings of the original sources. Through the use of systematic reason and analogical thinking, these sciences are able to address challenges and topics which are not directly addressed in the *uṣūl*, but which must necessarily refer back to them.
The *muqaddimāt* are those sciences which are instrumental to the *uṣūl* and *furūʿ*. The study of *ṣarf* (morphology) and *naḥw* (syntax*)* are for example not strictly religious sciences, however, the study and the exegesis of the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* which have been revealed and

transmitted in the Arabic language would be impossible without their mastery. From this category is also the study of *manṭiq* (formal logic) which lays the groundwork for rational thought and argumentation.

The *mutammimāt* are those sciences which are not fundamental to, but rather supplementary to the others. In the context of the Qur'ān, for example, Imam al-Ghazālī refers to the knowledge of the *qira'āt* (the various readings of the Qur'ān) and the knowledge upon which the exposition of the Qur'ān can be approached, i.e. *uṣūl al-fiqh*. He also includes such branches of knowledge as the science of *rijāl* through which the biographies of the narrators of the *ḥadīth* were compiled, authenticated, and transmitted and through which the reliability of the *ḥadīth* sciences is established.

As we can see through his classification in *Kitāb al-ʿilm* of the *sharʿī* sciences as *uṣūl, furūʿ, muqaddimāt* and *mutammimāt,* Imam al-Ghazālī, conceives of all the disparate *sharʿī* sciences (and all *ghayr sharʿī* sciences, also) as parts of a unified whole. Each science has its own role and its own status with reference to the other sciences, knowledge, and what is required of Man in general. The purpose, the methods, and the content of these sciences decide whether sciences are worthy or unworthy, permissible, forbidden, or required. The worthy sciences as such are distinct and yet complementary to each other in the greater pursuit of *ʿilm* which is essential to the existence and self-actualization of Man.

2.3 Classification III: *Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb*

In Book XXI of the *Iḥyāʾ*, *Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb* (The Book of Explication of the Marvels of the Heart) Imam al-Ghazālī offers another, complementary classification of the sciences in which he separates branches of knowledge according to their means of acquisition. He identifies the two general paths to knowledge: *iktisāb* (deduction) and *ilhām* (inspiration) and upon this distinction speaks of the benefits and the potential drawbacks of both paths. Knowledge which is gained through any kind of human endeavor, physical or rational, deductive or inductive, is considered knowledge of *iktisāb* (from *k-s-b*; to acquire, to gain, to earn). Sciences like *ḥadīth, kalām,* and *fiqh* which depend on human empirical and intellectual effort and *taʿallum* (devoted

training and study)[73] are considered *iktisābī*, while the knowledge of what he calls *‘ilm al-mukāshafah* which is bestowed upon individuals by God, without their agency in it, is considered *ilhām*. For Imam al-Ghazālī, the knowledge of *iktisāb* generally relates to the outer forms and *‘ilm al-ẓāhir* of the *sharī‘ah* while *ilhām* is taken as insight into the deeper meanings and realities of *‘ilm al-bāṭin* of Reality which converge ultimately on the Reality of *tawḥīd*.

In Imam al-Ghazālī's general theory of knowledge, these highest and deepest levels of knowledge attained through *ilhām* correspond to *‘ilm al-mukāshafah*. Though there is no "*rukhsah*" (precedent) for committing the *'ilm al-mukāshafah* to writing, Imam al-Ghazālī considers it to be the truest and loftiest branch of all knowledge and the "*ghāyatu maqṣidi al-ṭālibīn wa maṭmaḥu naẓari'l-ṣiddīqīn*"[74] (ultimate goal of seekers, and that upon which the longing gaze of the saints is trained) as it leads to attainment of the cognition of God (*ma‘rifat Allah*) in this world and *najāh* (salvation) and *sa‘ādah* (felicity) in the next.[75]

Another defining feature of Imam al-Ghazali's thought is that he believed the ideal scholar of Islam should seek not just knowledge, but *yaqīn*—the highest possible level of certitude—or as close as he can possibly get to it, in the matters deemed most important and most necessary (i.e. *‘ilm ṭarīq al-ākhirah*). It is not simply that scholars seek to understand the true intent and proper interpretation of the Revelation, but that traditionally they sought to verify and corroborate it, to seek and prove as systematically as possible, the level of reliability and certitude in their opinions, which as a matter of principle, they nonetheless accepted could always be mistaken. This complex relationship between certitude and the awareness of one's own intellectual fallibility before others, and more importantly before God has always been a defining feature of Islamic thought. For Imam al-Ghazālī one of the key areas in which his contemporaries failed was their inability to recognize the limitations of their own sciences and comprehend the wholistic nature of knowledge and its ultimate goal which he holds to be the attainment of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* through *mukāshafah,* which we will explore more thoroughly in chapter four.

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[73] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, "Kitāb Sharḥ ‘Ajā‘ib Al-Qalb," in *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*, (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011), pp. 7-170, 67. (Note: Henceforth cited as *‘Ajā‘ib.*)
[74] *Kitāb al-‘ilm,* 14.
[75] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī , *The Book of Knowledge (Kitāb Al-'Ilm)*, trans. Kenneth Lee Honerkamp (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2016), 215.

2.4 The Two Domains of Knowledge

For Imam al-Ghazālī true knowledge is ultimately knowledge of God, or that which leads to it. This is because the quest for knowledge is a quest for the *truth*, which is necessarily a quest to understand *reality* as it is. As we have established, in the worldview of Islam, the Ultimate Truth of Reality is that there is no God and ultimately no 'reality' or 'existence' independent of God. That is, the pure existence of God alone *is* Reality. Thus, knowledge of God and awareness of the centrality of God always motivates and underlies any quest for true knowledge in the world. Given that worthy knowledge (that which leads to or reflects the Truth of Reality) is both a means *and* an end, the best of knowledge then is knowledge which leads to attainment of the cognition of God (*maʿrifat Allah*) in this world and *najāh* (salvation) and *saʿādah* (felicity) in the next.[76]

In the Ghazālīan framework, the fundamental purpose of Islamic science the preservation of the *sharīʿah*—its inner and outer meanings, interpretation, and application. The various sciences in Islamic thought developed to aid in the accomplishments of these tasks. As such the pursuit of knowledge, that in Ghazālīan thought and (Islamic civilization more generally), multi-layered and differentiated as it is, is ultimately unified. Just as there is *tawḥīd* in the Islamic worldview, so too is there *tawḥīd* of knowledge which shapes and motivates the various Islamic discourses and disciplines of knowledge.

Another way to look at the Islamic sciences therefore, is through the lens of the operative epistemological schemes employed in the paths towards seeking it. These we can classify in two categories drawn from Imam al-Ghazālī's usage—those which relate to *ʿilm al-ẓāhir* of the *sharīʿah* and those which relate to *ʿilm al-bāṭin.* The epistemic schemes or paths which operate in the domain of *ʿilm al-ẓāhir* are the historical-empirical path of *ḥadīth*, the rational/logocentric path of *kalām*, and the joint historical-empirical and rational path of *fiqh*. The fourth major epistemic path which operates in the domain of *ʿilm al-bāṭin*, is the path of unveiling which incorporates experiential and suprarational knowledge obtained through *ilhām* often translated as

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[76] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge (Kitāb Al-'Ilm)*, trans. Kenneth Lee Honerkamp (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2016), 215.

"revelation" or "inspiration." Though we may refer to this fourth path also as the path of *taṣawwuf*, it is important to note that in Imam al-Ghazali's thought, the knowledge which might be classified as that of *taṣawwuf* is of two sorts: practical and theoretical. The practical knowledge of *taṣawwuf* is the moral knowledge of the states of the heart and the purification of its vices, while the theoretical branch refers to the deeper contents of *'ilm al-mukāshafah.* In the fourth chapter, our discussion will focus on the latter as it exists and operates in Imam al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge. While this classification based on the epistemic schemes is not one which appears directly in Imam al-Ghazali's thought, it is compatible with his constructions and classifications. The paths of the *sharʿī sciences*—*ḥadīth*, *kalām* and *fiqh*—constitute branches of *iktisābī* knowledge of the *'ilm al-ẓāhir* of the *sharī'ah* while knowledge gained through *mukāshafah* of the *'ilm al-bāṭin* constitutes the knowledge of *ilhām*.

For Imam al-Ghazālī the path of *iktisāb* is closely related to if not generally synonymous with *naẓar* and *istidlāl*, while the path of *ilhām* centers *mukāshafah* and *mushāhadah.* Imam al-Ghazālī explains that the *mutakallimūn,* and the *fuqahā'* rely upon *naẓar* and *istidlāl,* while the *ahl al-taṣawwuf* rely on the intellective powers of the *qalb* (heart-soul) and God-granted *mushāhadah* in order to attain knowledge. Within Imam al-Ghazālī's overarching theory of knowledge, it is this latter knowledge—gained through direct experience that constitutes the culmination of *'ilm al-bāṭin* as well as *ḥaqq al-yaqīn.* All other forms of knowledge fail to reach this epistemic rank, though they serve a purpose and have a place in the greater framework of knowledge as it relates to Revelation and Reality. In his holistic theory of knowledge, Imam al-Ghazālī grants each knowledge, and each legitimate path its own place and rank amongst the sciences—whether they relate to the inner or outer dimensions of the *sharī'ah*—but believes that they can sometimes lead to distraction and misguidance, if the practitioners of these sciences forget the overarching Reality which should always be the ultimate purpose and goal of any form of knowledge seeking. In Imam al-Ghazālī's thought and (Islamic thought more generally), the pursuit of knowledge, multi-layered and differentiated as it is, is ultimately unified. Just as there is *tawḥīd* in the Islamic worldview, so too is there *tawḥīd* of knowledge which shapes and motivates the various Islamic discourses and disciplines of knowledge such that the true knowledge of different disciplines and domains of knowledge to which they relate—*'ilm al-ẓāhir* and *'ilm al-bāṭin* can never be in conflict with each other.

In chapters three and four, we will explore these two domains of knowledge—*ʿilm al-ẓāhir* and *ʿilm al-bāṭin*—and the paths to seeking them—*iktisāb* and *ilhām*—as represented by the *sharʿī* sciences and the sciences of unveiling in order to understand better Imam al-Ghazālī's arguments about their place in his overarching theory of knowledge.

3

IKTISĀB **IN THE** *SHARʿĪ* **SCIENCES**

As we have discussed, the fundamental purpose of Islamic science in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought, is the preservation of the *sharīʿah*—its inner and outer meanings, interpretation, and application. The various sciences in Islamic thought developed to aid in the accomplishments of these tasks. Imam al-Ghazālī considered the disciplines which dealt in the preservation and the comprehension of the outer forms and meanings of the *sharīʿah* to be the sciences of *ʿulūm al-ẓāhir*, while those which dealt in the inner meanings and realities of the *sharīʿah* constitute the *ʿulūm al-bāṭin*. Generally speaking, Imam al-Ghazālī argues that the *ʿulūm al-ẓāhir* are attained through the methods of *iktisāb*, namely *naẓar* and *istidlāl* while the *ʿulūm al-bāṭin* depend upon *ilhām* through *mushāhadah* and *mukāshafah*. In this chapter we will explore the methods of *iktisāb* in the domain of the *sharʿī* sciences or what Imam al-Ghazālī classified as the *ʿulūm al-ẓāhir*. We will begin first by offering a brief historical overview of how the *sharʿī* sciences developed and then moving to a discussion of the methods employed in each science to attain *ʿilm* and increase *yaqīn* in it.

3.1 Development of the *Sharʿī* Sciences

After the departure of the Prophet Muhammad from the world, the primary concern for the nascent Muslim community was preserving the Revelation, and spreading its truth. Thus one of the first tasks of the first *khalīfah*, Abu Bakr was to compile the verses of the Qurʾān into one volume, which the third *khalīfah* ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān would eventually formalize and send forth into the newly incorporated territories. The first scholarly task of the Muslim community then was to faithfully identify and record the verses of the Revelation, and the first *ʿulamāʾ* (from *ʿ-l-m*, scholars, learned people) of the Islamic world were the *qurrāʾ* (from *q-r-ʾ*, reciters) who had preserved the knowledge and the recitation of the Qurʾān by heart. Recording the Prophet's traditions was of the next highest importance for the community as he was the link between Man and God, and his speech (*qawl*), action (*fiʿil*), and tacit approval (*taqrīr*) were accepted as the true interpretation and the embodiment of the Revelation and thus the *sharīʿah*.

Because Arabic was the language of the prophet, his people, and most importantly, the Qur'ān, serious philological and grammatical study and preservation of the Arabic language became important foundations of Islamic knowledge in all its forms. Arabic was the key to understanding the Revelation, and its preservation was considered to be of utmost importance. Those who wanted to study the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* could not do so, without proper and deep instruction first in the *'ulūm* (sciences) and conventions of the Arabic language as it existed in the time and in the context of the prophet. Thus, the philological sciences developed and progressed alongside the transmission of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*.

These efforts were critical in the preservation and faithful transmission of knowledge established during the Prophet's life and by those who witnessed his prophecy. But as Islam expanded and circumstances which were not addressed directly in the Revelation arose, Muslims were presented with the challenge of accurately interpreting and applying the principles of the Revelation to address their unprecedented circumstances. This need in the community thus gave rise to efforts devoted to establishing reliable and consistent methods for the proper interpretation of the transmitted sources based on knowledge of those sources (Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*), of the Arabic language, and also familiarity with the methods of deductive and analogical reasoning (*ra'y*).[77]

With the expansion of Islam and its borders, the corpus of *ḥadīth* expanded and many popular beliefs and practices not necessarily based in accurate knowledge or transmission of the sources also increased. As political tensions and dissent arose against the Ummayyad caliphs in the third century, different parties sought to establish their causes by invoking the prophetic teachings and precedent. The proliferation of many false and misleading *ḥadīth* grew rampant and as conflicts emerged—intellectual and political—and individuals from all points of the spectrum invoked prophetic teachings to bolster their own agendas, a stark need arose to be able to establish the status and the trustworthiness of one's own position as well as to disprove the positions of one's opponents.

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[77] In *Methodology of Islamic Sciences,* Fazlur Rahman offers a deeper discussion of how exactly the early Muslim community came to accept the place and the necessity of human reason in interpreting the *sunnah* which became established "as being rather a pointer in the direction than an exactly laid-out series of rules," which ultimately led to the notion of "Ideal Sunnah" and the necessary complements of *ijtihad* and *ijma'*. (12-14)

These factors gave rise to a mass effort to systematize the way in which the prophetic teachings, and the practices and beliefs within the community were differentiated and authenticated. This required the systematic investigation of sources which had become difficult to distinguish—the Qur'ān, the prophetic *sunnah*, the *sunnah* of the *ṣaḥabah* (from *ṣ-ḥ-b,*companions of the prophet), and the *sunnah* of the *al-khulafā' al-rāshīdūn* (the 'Rightly Guided' caliphs),[78] constituted a general and undifferentiated foundation for the practice and beliefs of the Muslim community—as well as the establishment of a hierarchy by which to order these sources. These twin needs to distinguish and rank the sources naturally led to the establishment and growth of various disciplines in *uṣūl al-ḥadīth* or *'ulūm al-ḥadīth, uṣūl al-fiqh*, and *tafsīr* (especially *al-nāsikh wa'l-mansūkh*, i.e. abrogation).[79]

As the frontiers of Islamic civilization expanded Muslims also came into contact with diverse peoples of various religious and intellectual heritages. This contact with other civilizations naturally aroused in Muslims an intellectual and cultural interest in the traditions of the people they encountered and came to rule. It also aroused in the Muslim community a need to properly and systematically articulate as well as defend the basic principles and foundations of Islamic creed. This interest combined with this need opened the path for the introduction of many new areas and methods of learning into the Islamic intellectual space. With the establishment of *Bayt al-Hikmah* in Baghdad and the rise of the translation movement in the 8th-10th centuries, Muslims were able to engage with the deep and sophisticated intellectual traditions of Greek/Hellenistic, Iranian, and Indian civilizations amongst others. This engagement resulted perhaps most significantly in the introduction of formal Greek logic into the developing Islamic episteme. While some opposed the introduction of logic as such into the Islamic sciences, others steadfastly defended its usefulness and necessity as a tool and instrument for scholarly activity of any sort.[80] Logic was considered both a craft (*ṣina'ah*) as well as a science (*'ilm*) in its own right, albeit of an auxiliary status, by which certain knowledge (*'ilm al-yaqīn*) could be produced (or

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[78] These are the first four caliphs who succeeded the prophet. They are considered the 'Rightly Guided' caliphs in Sunni Islam: Abū Bakr (632–634), 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, (634–644) 'Uthman ibn 'Affān (644–656), and 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (656–661).

[79] Daniel W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13.

[80] Gürkan Dağbaşı, "Abbasi Dönemi Çeviri Faaliyetleri," *Eskiyeni* , no. 27 (2013): pp. 177-187, 178-9.

attained).[81] The introduction of formal logic also sparked the formalization of the existing Islamic sciences in their own methodologies and terminologies.[82]

The *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *kalām* traditions were heavily influenced by logic given that they provided methodologies for interpretation and argumentation aimed at attaining the highest possible degree of certitude in any matter of religious import. This pursuit of dependable knowledge, even where absolute *yaqīn* was not possible, was taken very seriously as the intellectuals of Islam considered their roles as interpreters of the *sharī'ah* to be both an *amānah* (divine trust) and a *farḍ kifāyah* (communal trust) upon them. As the scholars were considered the inheritors of the prophet and thus the guides for the rest of the ummah in matters of religious importance, their methods had to be clear, systematic, and dependable, just as their intentions had to be sincere, in order for them to avoid the dangers of being misled and in turn misleading the ummah.[83] The methodological commitments they held were also important in the sense that they allowed for cross-examination and peer-reviewing amongst the scholarly community. The scholars as such, though they acted independently, did not act in isolation, but rather they were bound to each other in their commitment to the sources, as well as their commitment to seeking truth, which though it led them each on their own paths to verification and certitude, in the end, either corroborated or contradicted the opinions of other scholars and thus became part of the ever-expanding corpus of knowledge. This dynamic naturally developed into a rich dialectical culture within and across disciplines, as well as over time, as the scholars of different disciplines, as well as those of latter generations depended upon and engaged with the work and contributions of their peers.

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[81] Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant* (E.J. Brill, 1970), 195.

[82] See Rosenthal, Chapter 7 in *Knowledge Triumphant* for a deeper discussion of the role of Greek logic on the burgeoning Islamic disciplines.

[83] Ḥadīth 3461 in Sunan Abī Dawūd: "Abu Darda reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Whoever travels a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him the path to Paradise. Verily, the angels lower their wings for the seeker of knowledge. The inhabitants of the heavens and earth, even the fish in the depths of the water, seek forgiveness for the scholar. The virtue of the scholar over the worshiper is like the superiority of the moon over the stars. The scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets. They do not leave behind gold or silver coins, but rather they leave behind knowledge. Whoever has taken hold of it has been given an abundant share." This ḥadīth is often quoted in books of knowledge and also relayed in the ḥadīth collections of Abu Dawūd, At-Tirmidhī and Ibn Hibbān. While it is not relayed in the Sahih al-Bukhari, it is referenced in Imam al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, Book I, Chapter on "Knowledge Precedes Speech."

Pronounced as the preoccupation was with establishing rigor and reliability in the methods by which knowledge was attained and verified in Islamic scholarly disciplines, the introduction of logic became a defining event in their development. It influenced *ḥadīth* scholars and historians in their methodologies pertaining to the verification of *akhbār* and their classification, and also had a profound effect on the disciplines of *kalām* and *fiqh*. Epistemology eventually came to occupy a foundational role in books of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *kalām*.[84]

Each science thus developed its own (though often interdependent) methodology and system of classifying information which led to the establishment of hierarchies of knowledge within each discipline, and there arose also a deep-rooted preoccupation with the classification of the sciences and the establishment of a hierarchy of knowledges across the disciplines.[85]

In the remainder of this chapter we will explore the operative epistemic schemes in the *shar'ī* sciences and how *'ilm* and *yaqīn* were conceived and acquired in the paths of *ḥadīth, uṣūl al-fiqh,* and *kalām.*

3.1 The Epistemic Schemes of the *Shar'ī* Sciences

As we have discussed, the concept of *'ilm* in Imam al-Ghazālī's discourse refers to both religious as well as secular knowledge, and in the broader sense to both the totality and the specificity of knowledge.[86] The term *'ilm* thus incorporates the various methods of knowing according to the different disciplines in traditional Islamic thought. But even as the separate paths to and methodologies of attaining knowledge, that is the *'ulūm*, flourished, Imam al-Ghazālī did not believe they were separable from *'ilm* as a whole because in essence, true and beneficial sciences were interdependent and sought the same ultimate end—comprehension of the *sharī'ah*. They were unified in essence, though they differed in the lenses and methods through which they sought this knowledge. Thus, there developed an attitude of non-discrimination and mutual

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[84] Rosenthal, 195-6.
[85] For more detailed exploration of the different trends in the classification of the sciences see: Ömer Türker, "İslam Düşüncesinde İlimler Tasnifi." *Sosyoloji Dergisi* 3, no. 22 (2011): 533–66. See also: Ahmet Meydan, "Kutbüddin-i Şirazi'nin İlimler Tasnifi ve Dil İlimlerinin bu Tasnifteki Yeri," *İhya Uluslararası İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 1 (January 20, 2020): pp. 41-69.
[86] Rosenthal, 44.

respect towards all branches of legitimate knowledge within Islamic civilization, though Imam al-Ghazālī and others like him believed that they could and should be classified based on the degree of necessity and certainty of the knowledge they produced.

In this way, the various science which developed in Islamic civilization can be seen as categories of knowledge which represent distinct yet complementary epistemic schemes in Islamic thought. That the sciences of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh,* and *kalām* developed into separate disciplines or 'paths' is reflective of the difference in their subject matter, their methodology, and the practical purpose they served.

The purpose of *ḥadīth* sciences was to develop the methods to identify and protect the true traditions of the Prophet Muhammad who was the link between Man and the *sharī'ah*, as well as its embodiment and interpreter on earth, a calling which led its scholars to proclaim it as one of the most preferred paths to draw near to God (*min afḍal al-qurab ilā rabb al-'ālamīn*).[87] The *ḥadīth* sciences focused on verifying the traditions of the prophet as narrated by his companions and successive generations of believers. This kind of knowledge was *naqlī* (transmitted), depending upon the networks and chains of *ḥadīth* scholars and narrators through whom it could be attained. As such *ḥadīth* sciences were based upon the accumulation of a particular kind of 'historical-empirical' knowledge relating to the biographies and reputations of transmitters as well as the context and factors of transmission in order to establish the veracity and consistency of the texts of the *sunnah* themselves. Different scholars of *ḥadīth* had different standards for verification and evaluation of the chains of transmission, but insofar as they all dealt with a finite body of possible, historically verifiable narrations, they contributed to a unified and cross-referential corpus of *ḥadīth* which formed, in conjunction with the Qur'ān, the basis of all *shar'ī* sciences, including *fiqh* and *kalām*.

The *mutakallimūn* (theologians) prioritized the use of reason, in the form of *qiyās* (analogy or syllogism) to interpret and expand on matters referenced in the texts. Where *kalām* differed epistemically from the sciences of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*, however, was in its acceptance of the agency

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[87] Al-Ḥafidh Jalāl al-dīn al-Suyūti, *Tadrīb Al-Rāwī Fi Sharḥi Taqrīb Al-Nawawi* (Damascus: Dār al-Kalimi al-ṭayyib, 2010), 50.

and the authority of rational argumentation in delimiting religious dogma and the articles of belief without reference to the texts (though the conclusions could never be in contradiction with them). In other words, the practitioners of *kalām* accepted the role of *manṭiq* (formal logic) as a tool in not only the acquisition/deduction of *yaqīn (*certain knowledge), but also its production. In the logocentric epistemic scheme of *kalām*, *manṭiq* thus opened the doors to a unique and fruitful discourse with parameters different from either *ḥadīth* (or *fiqh*, as we shall see) in that they were not founded in Revelation alone. For this reason, *kalām* discourses were able to establish a sophisticated and technical terminology not applicable to, nor found in the other *shar ʿī* sciences.

In the development of *fiqh*, scholars focused their efforts on reconciling the 'historical-empirical' knowledge of *ḥadīth* (and the associated sciences of grammar, philology, biography, etc.*)* with rational categories of knowledge. The primary goal of the scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* was to identify the principles and methods for interpreting and implementing the *sharīʿah* as revealed through the Qurʾān and *sunnah*. While the epistemic scheme of *ḥadīth* sciences held that all truth attainable to Man was contained in the revealed text, the *uṣūlīs* defended the ability of the ʿ*aql* to logically extrapolate truths whose basis are found *within* it. So while the domain of *ḥadīth* sciences was limited to the *form* of the transmitted texts that constitute the *sunnah*, the jurisprudential sciences focused rather on establishing a reliable methodology to guide the enterprise of rationally deducing meaning from the *substance* of those texts. Thus the epistemic scheme or 'path' of *fiqh* can be considered jointly historical-empirical and rational.

In the following sections we will explore the methods of *iktisāb* of knowledge employed in the historical-empirical path of *ḥadīth*, the logocentric path of *kalām*, and the joint historical-empirical/logocentric path of *fiqh*.

3.2 The Historical-Empirical Path of *Ḥadīth*

The purpose of the *ḥadīth* sciences (sometimes referred to collectively as *uṣūl al-ḥadīth* or *'ulūm al-ḥadīth*) was to establish the principles and methods for transmitting the *sunnah* of the prophet with as much certainty and reliability as possible. This was considered to be a great and weighty task, as the *sunnah* of the Prophet constitutes one of the two cornerstones of the *sharī'ah*. As the prophet was no longer present amongst the *ummah* to answer their questions, his *sunnah* was the only record of his interpretation, application, and explanation of the *sharī'ah*. His *sunnah* in turn could only be known through the recorded and transmitted *ḥadīth*. Thus, the *ḥadīth* sciences became a foundation for all *shar'ī* sciences, which necessarily depended upon the firm belief and acceptance of *ḥadīth* as a reliable representation of the *sunnah*.

While the conventional meaning of *sunnah* is a well-worn path (*al-ṭarīqah al-mu'tādah*) which can lead either to good or to evil, though it is often associated with good,[88] the term '*sunnah*' had different technical usages in the various Islamic disciplines. Within the sciences of *ḥadīth* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the *sunnah* refers to that which has been narrated of the Prophet's *qawl* (speech), *fi'l* (actions), and *taqrīr* (tacit approval) which is also sometimes classified as his *ḥāl* (his apparent attitude or state).[89] In their notion of *sunnah*, the *ḥadīth* sciences also include the *sīrah* and descriptions of the prophet (of his character or his physical appearance and presence), while in *kalām* discourses, the term *sunnah* is used specifically in reference to the firmly established traditions of the prophet which relate to the matters of *i'tiqād* (creed/belief).[90] The *sunnah* as such was preserved and transmitted by the *ṣaḥabah* who took great pains to faithfully memorize, understand, and apply the content of the *sunnah* during the course of their lives and propagate it within the *ummah*.

For the most part, the *sunnah* was transmitted orally until the third century of Islam by which time the corpus of *ḥadīth* and chains of transmission had expanded alongside the borders of Islam. As a result, *ḥadīth* transmissions multiplied and became complicated, countless false

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[88] *Sharh samt al wuṣūl*, 185.
[89] Ibid. In *Fiqh* proper, *sunnah* is a term used to refer to an act which the prophet persisted in regularly but which he sometimes left off without excuse/explanation (*ma wādhaba 'alayhi al-nabi ma' al-tark ahyānan bilā 'udhur*)
[90] See Shadee Al-Masri's, *Sciences of Ḥadīth*, Chapter 1.

reports mingling with authentic ones. Recognizing the danger of such false reports to the health of Islam, scholars undertook the huge task of verifying and compiling the *ḥadīth* in written form. The purpose of the early scholars of *ḥadīth* then was to sift through the corpus of *ḥadīth* by focusing primarily on the *isnād* (chains of transmission), a fundamental feature of knowledge transmission which has been unique to Islamic civilization.[91] The *sanad* (chain) was of such central importance that the great scholar of *ḥadīth*, ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak (d.181/797), who earned the title *Amir al-Mu'minin fi al-Ḥadīth*, said, "The *isnād* is from the religion; were it not for the *isnād* anyone could say anything they wanted."[92]

Muslim scholars thus established the *isnād* as the primary method of verifying *ḥadīth* and ensuring the authenticity of sacred knowledge. Muslims, they believed, should not accept purported *ḥadīth* uncritically, rather it was vital that they recognize which *ḥadīth* were clearly fabricated, especially in the case of those *ḥadīth* which veered from the true prophetic wisdom and practice. While there might be benefit in *ḥadīth* which were unverifiable, Muslims were only bound to obey *ḥadīth* which had been reliably transmitted from the Prophet through rigorously certified *isnād*. Thus while the *ḥadīth* sciences did result in the purging of the *ḥadīth* corpus to a great extent, (most estimates of verified *ḥadīth* are around 30,000 total), the methodological authentication and dependence upon the *isnād* ensured the trustworthiness of what became canon. The celebrated scholar and saint, 'Shah Wali Allah Dehlawi devoted an entire book to celebrating the unique place and triumph the *isnād* in Islam, stating that, "If the *Isnad* had not been a basic principle, then the Shariah would not have survived."[93]

Given the gravity of their task of recording and transmitting the *sunnah*, without alteration or fabrication, the scholars of *ḥadīth* aimed always to reach the highest level of certainty, even if they could not establish full *yaqīn* when transmitting reports. Even the slightest doubts in either the narrators or the texts led them to downgrade the status of the reports (*akhbār*) with which they dealt. As such the *ḥadīth* sciences represented a highly sophisticated, concerted effort on the part of individuals and communities, historians, and scholars across time and space. The effort

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[91] Jonathan Andrew Brown, *Misquoting Muhammad: the Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2014), 40.
[92] Ismail Lutfi Çakan, *Hadis Uṣūlü* (Istanbul: Marmara Universitesi Ilahiyat Fakultesi Vakfi, 1991), 33. "Isnad dindendir. Eğer isnad olmasaydı, herkes aklına geleni rastgele rivâyet etmeye kalkışırdı."
[93] J. Brown, 56.

exerted in Islamic civilization to preserve the *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad was of a sophistication and rigor unprecedented in the course of human history. The words, actions, and habits of no other historical figure have ever been preserved as diligently by as vast of a collective ever.

While it is not within the scope of this thesis to explore deeply the history, methods, and significance of the various branches of knowledge which are subsumed within the umbrella of *'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, we will offer a brief introduction to the main branches of knowledge upon which the edifice of *ḥadīth* depends. These branches dealt mainly with the establishment of a system of classification and grading of *ḥadīth* based on the classification and grading of their narrators and the chains through which they were narrated. As such, these branches come together to form the foundation of the the larger historical-empirical epistemic scheme of *ḥadīth* upon which the other epistemic schemes of Islamic knowledge—namely *kalām* and *fiqh*—rely.

3.2.1 The Anatomy of Ḥadīth

There are two parts of *ḥadīth*: the *sanad* (chain of transmission) and the *matn* (text). As far as *ḥadīth* scholars are concerned, the *ḥadīth* is the *sanad*. Thus, if a single text surfaces through three different chains, then that one text is considered as three separate *ḥadīth*. For the *fuqahā'* and the *mutakallimūn* who are concerned with the substance rather than the form of the *ḥadīth*, this *matn* though it has been transmitted through three chains is considered one *ḥadīth*. For the scholars of *ḥadīth*, there are two features of import within the *sanad*: the identity and reliability of the narrators and the *sīghat al-naql* (the expression/tense used to reference the nature of transmission). The latter is a simpler matter in that the terms used for transmission are classified according to their reliability. The four strongest terms are: 1) *haddathanā* (he narrated to us), 2) *akhbaranā* (he informed us), 3) *sami'tu fulānan yaqūl* (I heard so-and-so say)*, 4) qāla liyya fulān* (so and so said to me). Because these four terms reference the fact that the transmitter himself heard first-hand the reports, they are considered stronger than other variants such as *'an* (on the authority of) which semantically can entail both first and secondhand knowledge.

3.2.2 Examining the *Sanad*

The *sanad* thus forms the primary locus of intellectual inquiry and activity within the *ḥadīth* sciences and came to be evaluated on several different levels. First, there is a consideration of how many chains the *ḥadīth* was transmitted by, then there is the consideration of how long or short, that is how direct or indirect, the chains going back to the prophet were. Then there is also the level of analysis of the individual narrators themselves, who they were, where they came from, their reputation in knowledge and as members of society.

The reliability of *ḥadīth* depends upon the reliability of its narrators. As such, a *ḥadīth* is only as strong as its weakest *rāwī* (narrator). Even if each individual *rāwī* in a chain can be considered strong, there is another level of analysis which focuses on the possibility and the likelihood of the narrators actually having met in their lifetimes, based on where they lived and traveled and the dates of their biographies.

3.2.2.1 Classification of Ḥadīth: *Mutawātir* and *Āḥād*

In terms of the number of chains by which they have been transmitted, *ḥadīth* fall into two categories: *mutawātir* and *āḥād*. The term *mutawātir* is derived from *tawātur* whose conventional meaning is "*tatābu' al-umūr waḥidun ba'd wāḥidin min ghayri an tanqat'*" (the succession of matters one from another, without any break).[94] Though the term *āḥād* is derived from the Arabic *wāḥīd* (one), rather than referring to *ḥadīth* which are transmitted by only one chain, its technical usage designates all *ḥadīth* which do not reach the level of *tawātur*.

The *sanad* of the *ḥadīth mutawātir*, the strongest category of *ḥadīth* must fulfill two conditions: the narrators are too numerous at each generation to be counted, and they belong to a people the possibility of whose collusion upon a lie is unfathomable. Upon these bases, the *ḥadīth mutawātir* is considered as a source of *yaqīn* (certain knowledge), the rejection of which is

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[94] Al-Ḥafidh Jalāl al-dīn al-Suyūti and Badī' al-Sayyid al-Laḥḥām, *Tadrīb Al-Rāwī Fi Sharḥi Taqrīb Al-Nawawi*. (Damascus: Dār al-Kalimi al-ṭayyib, 2010).

tantamount to rejection of the Quran itself, i.e. *kufr*. Given the undeniable strength of mass narration, this category of *ḥadīth* falls outside the realm of *tanqīd* (critique and scrutiny).

The *mutawātir* is further divided into two categories: that which is mass-transmitted *lafẓan* (verbatim) and that which is mass-transmitted *ma'nan* (not in form, but in meaning).

Outside of the *mutawātir*, there is no category of *ḥadīth* which is granted the epistemic status of *yaqīn*, however, due to the fact that only a small portion of *ḥadīth* reaches this status,[95] the scholars of *ḥadīth* developed a system of classification and grading for the reliability of the non-*mutawātir,* that is the *ḥadīth aḥād*, which constitute the vast majority of the corpus.

3.2.2.2 Determining the Reliability of the *Āḥād*

The *āḥād* is divided into three levels according to *siḥḥah* (soundness): the *ṣaḥiḥ* (sound), *hasan* (good), and *ḍā'īf* (weak). The *siḥḥah* of *ḥadīth* is determined by analyzing five key aspects:

1) *ittiṣāl,* the unbrokenness of the *sanad*; a *ḥadīth* which is narrated through an unbroken chain as such is called *mutaṣṣil,*

2) *'adl* (the uprightness of character) of the *rāwī*, especially as relates to the likelihood of his/her lying in matters of *dīn,*

3) *ḍabṭ,* consistency and accuracy of the narrator's ability to transmit, as determined by *cross*-referencing his *ḥadīth* with the *ḥadīth* of others, as well as through testing of his knowledge of *ḥadīth* and their chains, which may have been transmitted by him or others,

4) the nature of the report, i.e. whether or not the report of a *thiqah* (trustworthy) narrator is at odds with the reports of other narrators of similar status; i.e. whether or not a *ḥadīth* is *shādh* (strange) with reference to similar *ḥadīth*,

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[95] See Chapter 4 of Çakan's *Hadis Uṣūlü* for reference on the likely number of *mutawātir ḥadīth* according to various classical scholars.

5) whether the *sanad* is free from any *'illah* (pl. *'ilal*), that is, whether it is free from underlying or hidden defects which only experts of *ḥadīth* are able to identify, such as the mixing up of the *kunya* (nickname) of a narrator in a chain, or the improper attribution of words or phrases to either the prophet or his companions due to a confusion in the way the narration was transmitted. Another example would be if a strong chain was attributed to a known text, but that text was only known by other chains, such that no other *ḥadīth* could corroborate the *ḥadīth* by the chain in question.

The *ḥadīth ṣaḥiḥ* is *mutaṣṣil*, related by a chain of narrators who all meet the requirements of *'adl* and *ḍabṭ*, which is not *shādh*, and contains no *'illah*. The *ṣaḥiḥ* is also split into two categories: *ṣaḥiḥ li-dhātihī* and *ṣaḥiḥ li-ghayrihī*. Any *ḥadīth* which fulfills these conditions without compromising the standards upheld in any category is considered *ṣaḥiḥ li-dhātihī*. A *ḥadīth* which does not quite meet the highest standard in these categories but which is corroborated by other *ḥadīth* of similar standing is considered *ṣaḥiḥ li-ghayrihī*. This latter category overlaps with the next rung of the *āḥād* after the *ṣaḥiḥ*, the *hasan*.

The only difference between a *ḥadīth ṣaḥiḥ* and a *ḥadīth hasan* is that the narrators of the *hasan* do not meet the highest standards of *ḍabṭ* which the narrators of a *ṣaḥiḥ* do. *Hasan* narrations are also classified as either: *hasan li-dhātihī* or *hasan li-ghayrihī*. The *hasan li-dhātihī* are those *ḥadīth*, which when taken together with *mutābi' ḥadīth* whose wording closely follows theirs, are considered *ṣaḥiḥ li-ghayrihi*. *Hasan li-ghayrihī* is the category of *ḥadīth* which are transmitted by *narrators* who are less reliable but not suspected of lying, nor of such poor memory that they make many mistakes. This kind of *ḥadīth* while not far removed from the *ḍā'īf* category, only rises to the *hasan* status because it is corroborated by other narrations of similar or higher standing. Rather than standing on its own merit, this category is normally used as epistemic support to corroborate other narrations (*i'tibār*).

The last rung of the *āḥād* is the *ḍā'īf* which can be categorized as such on two accounts: 1) there is a *inqitā'* (break) in the *sanad* or 2) there is a problem with the reliability of one or more than

one of its narrators. The first category is divided into at least five rungs, the strongest of which is the *mursal*.

The *mursal* is a *ḥadīth* which a member of the *tābiʿūn* (the generation following the *saḥābah*) narrates without mentioning the *saḥabī* from whom he received it. Any break or gap in the *sanad* of a *ḥadīth* is enough to cast doubt upon its veracity for the scholars of *ḥadīth*. Thus, the majority of the scholars of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, and *uṣūl al-fiqh* rejected the validity of the *mursal* as a proof for legal matters. Because of the high standing of the *tābiʿūn* in Islamic civilization, some scholars like Abū Ḥanīfah and Imam Mālik, however, accepted the *mursal* narration of a trustworthy *tābiʿī* as a *ḥujjah* (we will discuss the idea of *ḥujjah* more thoroughly in the section on *uṣūl al-fiqh)*. Imam Shāfiʿī likewise accepted the validity of the *mursal* of the trustworthy *tābiʿī* as a *ḥujjah* if it was corroborated by other narrations.

3.2.2.3 Determining the (Un)Reliability of Narrators

The questionability of narrators results on two accounts also: there is some problem ascertaining either their *ʿadālah* or their *ḍabṭ*. Because the verification and transmission of *ḥadīth* depended so much upon the relationships between the great *shuyūkh* and their students, the major circles of *ḥadīth* were quite well-known and guarded. The reputation of students was important in teachers' decisions to accept them, and the reputation of *shuyūkh* was even more important insomuch as students sought teachers of high repute and vast knowledge. Thus, the community of *ḥadīth* scholars regulated itself in a general way.

For scholars who came to study and verify the chains of transmission, the general assumption was that all narrators are ʿ*ādil* (upright), as long as no accusations or reports of lying, immorality, innovation, or ignorance are recorded against them. Thus the default assumption is always in favor of the ʿ*adālah* of the narrators. On the flipside, however, if there were unreliable individuals who were new or unfamiliar in the circles of *ḥadīth*, such that their inconsistency or immorality was unknown, their reliability and uprightness were also unknown and unvouched for. Figures like these were considered *majhūl* (unknown) and their transmissions were not accepted within *ḥadīth* circles.

Ḍabṭ was determined by cross-referencing the various transmissions of a narrator against other transmissions by other narrators or even himself. The *shuyūkh* of *ḥadīth* had many students who fell into various ranks. The closest and most trustworthy of a *shaykh*'s students were well-known for their reliability and their consistency in relaying their teacher's *ḥadīth* faithfully. Others were slightly less consistent, but still generally reliable, while others came to be known as consistently unreliable. Those seeking to learn *ḥadīth* would always prefer to take them from the more reputable scholars, and so in each generation there arose a group of scholars who were prominent in the chains of transmission.

Because the entire edifice of *ḥadīth* depends upon the knowledge of the transmitters, there arose specific literatures that dealt extensively in their individual biographies, and also in the classification of the *ṭabaqāt* (strata/generations) of transmission. The biographies of the transmitters contained information about four key areas:

1) the names and titles by which the narrator was known, including any *laqab* (nickname) or *kunyah* (a title that refers to one as 'the father/son of' so-and-so); if there were other narrators known by the same or similar names, the biographers would clarify which amongst them was the subject,

2) where the narrator lived, traveled, and from whom he took *ḥadīth* (his *shuyūkh*),

3) those who took *ḥadīth* from the narrator (his students),

4) the assessment of the narrator by his own peers, favorable and unfavorable,

5) the date of his death.

It is important to note also the subjective nature of the accounts contained within the biographies, which at times conflicted with each other. The compilers of these biographies depended upon another branch of knowledge which dealt specifically with determining the status of narrators, *jarḥ wa taʿdīl* (*jarḥ* literally means to hurt or wound, while *taʿdīl* means to find someone *ʿādil*). The scholars of this branch of knowledge took very seriously the responsibility to protect the tradition by way of exposing any possible flaws and immoralities amongst the narrators. They

did not see this as slander, but rather as a duty of the highest order to protect the prophet's teachings from alteration and adulteration, and to preserve the reliability of the *hadīth*.

Though it may seem on the surface that the existence and inclusion of contradictory accounts of the same individuals in these volumes is a proof of the unreliability of the science (and thus *ḥadīth* in general), the fact that these scholars faithfully recorded both the positive and the negative assessments rather than hiding them, is rather a proof in the favor of the reliability of the corpus, because it is proof that the biographers did not conceal matters even where they could be problematic. Rather than decreasing, it increases the level of epistemic certainty, that is the *yaqīn*, in the corpus as a whole.

In total, this literature surveys about twenty-thousand narrators, the vast majority of whom lived within the first four centuries of Islam.[96] It was only within context of all the available reports that the status of a *rāwī* could be designated, thus we find that in the literature, the same narrator may have been considered of the highest caliber (*thiqatun thiqah, saddūq,* always truthful*)* by some and of a lesser caliber (*thiqah* or *thābit*, firm) by others. Some narrators were also designated as reliable when it came to the transmission of *ḥadīth* from specific scholars, while less reliable when it came to transmission from others. For example, a *rāwī* might be known to be a long-time student of one *shaykh* and very reliable (*thiqatun thiqah*) in his transmission from the *shaykh*, while being less reliable, or even unreliable (*ḍāʿīf)* in transmissions from another *shaykh*. It was very rare, however, that there would be accounts of one scholar that conflicted to such extent that he was simultaneously considered both *thiqah* (trustworthy) and also *kadhdhāb* (liar), the worst of all possible designations in the science of *ḥadīth*.

Another body of literature tangential to the biographies is the literature of the *ṭabaqāt* which classifies narrators either by geographical region or by generation. This literature relies on the same information as the biographies but compares the narrators with their contemporaries to ascertain which generation each narrator belonged to. The first five generations, beginning with the *Ṣaḥabah* (h.110), *Tābiʿūn* (180) and the *Tabiʿ al-Tabiʿīn* (220) until the end of the third century are the focus of this literature as it was by the end of the third century that the period of

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[96] Çakan, 79-82.

transmission was considered to have closed and most of the major collections of *ḥadīth* had been compiled.

3.2.3 Genres of *Ḥadīth* Literature

Aside from these, there were many other types of books which added breadth and depth to *ḥadīth* literature, including:

1) the *musnad* (books of *ḥadīth* organized by the companions who narrated them such as the *Musnad* of Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal (d. 241))*,*

2) the *ṣaḥiḥ* (books which only included *ḥadīth* which met the highest standards of authentication, like collections of Bukhārī (d. 256) and Muslim (d. 261)),

3) the *sunan* (books which incorporated only the *ṣaḥiḥ* narrations in legal matters, but were more flexible in other matters where they included *hasan* and *ḍāʿīf* narrations; the famous *sunan* are those of Ibn Mājah (d. 273), Abu Dawūd (d. 275), Tirmidhi (d. 279), Nasā'ī (d.303), and Bayhaqi (d. 485)),

4) the *mustadrak* (literature which applied the rigorous standards of verification used in the *ṣaḥiḥ* books to authenticate more *ḥadīth* and expand the *ṣaḥiḥ* corpus)*,* and finally the

5) the *mustakhraj* (books which took up the task of tracing the *ṣaḥiḥ* narrations of Bukhārī and Muslim back to the prophet by alternative chains).

Amongst all the genres of *ḥadīth* literature, the *mustakhraj* was perhaps the most important in reaffirming the epistemic value and reliability of *ḥadīth* as a whole. This is because the *mustakhraj* showed that even were the *ṣaḥiḥ* collections of Bukhārī and Muslim not to exist, the *ḥadīth* contained therein would still be verifiable by the highest standards of scrutiny. In doing so, the *mustakhraj* also reinforced the authority of the *ḥadīth* contained within the *ṣaḥiḥ* literature, and thus the entire enterprise of *ḥadīth*. In other words, this particular genre of *ḥadīth* literature reaffirmed the possibility of *yaqīn* in *ḥadīth*, especially in the *ṣaḥiḥ*, as a reliable record of the *sunnah* of the prophet and a basis for *'ilm* in Islam.

3.3 The Rational Path of *Kalām*

As we have seen, the early Muslim community expended a great deal of effort on the collection, the authentication, and the preservation of the *ḥadīth* of the prophet in order to establish and affirm the status of the *ḥadīth* as a reliable record of the *sunnah* of the prophet and a basis for *'ilm* in Islam. The efforts of those engaged in *ḥadīth* sciences were focused exclusively on the historical-empirical scrutiny and verification of the *isnād* of hadith, whereas the actual *matn* of the *ḥadīth* fell outside their epistemic domain. The method and the goal of the *ḥadīth* sciences sought as such to prove the historical authenticity and reliability of the *ḥadīth* by way of the *isnād*. Their ultimate purpose was to establish, without doubt, that *ḥadīth* could be relied upon as the authentic representation of the *sunnah* of the prophet because of his centrality in interpreting, embodying, and clarifying the *sharī'ah* on earth. If there was a problem with the meaning of a *ḥadīth* text such that it blatantly contradicted the clear teaching of the prophet or the text of the Qur'ān, then the default position of the *ḥadīth* scholars was that there must be some underlying problem with the *isnād* itself, whether it was apparent or not. Because of the Qur'ānic warning against the overreliance of Man upon his *'aql*, during the first two centuries of Islam, the early Sunni community maintained a preference for reliance on *ḥadīth* and the text of the Qur'ān as means to the acquisition of knowledge over rational devices. Over time, however, the community came to accept that just as the *sunnah* was necessary to clarify the true meaning of the Qur'ān, so too, was the human *'aql* necessary to clarify the true meaning of the *sunnah*.

3.3.1 Abū Ḥanīfah and *Ahl al-ḥadīth*

The great Kufan scholar-jurist, Abū Ḥanīfah (d.767) was one of the most important figures in the shift towards the acceptance of greater rationalism in Sunni Islam. Entrenched in the cultural and political soup of cosmopolitan Kufa, Abū Ḥanīfah turned to the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīth* he deemed to be reliable by the highest standards, the teachings and wisdom of the Kufan *ṣaḥabah*, and finally, to his own reason in order to solve the legal questions of his age. By his time, the proliferation of many false and misleading hadiths was rampant and as conflicts emerged in the community—intellectual and political—and individuals from all points of the spectrum invoked prophetic

teachings to bolster their own agendas, a stark need arose to be able to establish the status and the trustworthiness of one's own position as well as disprove the positions of one's opponents. Thus, there grew a mass effort to systematize the way in which the prophetic teachings and the practices and beliefs within the community were differentiated. This required the establishment of a hierarchy of the sources which led to the establishment and growth of various disciplines in *ḥadīth* sciences, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and *tafsīr* (especially abrogation).[97]

For Abū Ḥanīfah, the truest and most reliable anchor for the Muslim community was the Qur'ān itself, which had been faithfully preserved as the record of God's *sharī'ah* without alteration. Thus, the verses of the Qur'ān and the rulings based upon them were the most certain and binding of all knowledge and could not be questioned or challenged except by the most rigorously authenticated *ḥadīth* in which there could be no admissible doubt (i.e. in which there was *yaqīn*), which did not contradict the established and true practice of the community which was seen as a living record of the prophetic *sunnah*. In terms of authenticating hadith, however, Abū Ḥanīfah and his followers consulted the Qur'ān, the *ijmā'* (consensus of the scholars), and their own reason to determine whether or not a *ḥadīth* was authentic and should be accepted or not. If its contents did not stand when tested against these criteria, the *ḥadīth* was deemed a forgery regardless of how strong its chain of narrators appeared to be. In other words, while the corpus of *ḥadīth* collectively played an indispensable role in Abū Ḥanīfah's epistemic scheme, individual *ḥadīth* had no epistemic value in seeking *'ilm* unless they could be verified not only to the highest standards of the *ḥadīth* sciences, but also his own.

3.3.2. *Ahl al-ra'y* and *ahl al-ḥadīth*

Abū Ḥanīfah's approach which employed human reason in establishing which *ḥadīth* were authentic set him and his followers apart from the more conservative, *isnād*-oriented members of the community. This led to a distinction between those who became known as *ahl al-ra'y* (the partisans of reason) and *ahl al-ḥadīth* (the partisans of tradition). For the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, Abū Ḥanīfah's proposition about the place of human reason in the discussion of properly ascertaining the meaning of the *sunnah* conflicted with their understanding of the relationship between the

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[97] D. Brown, 13.

two scriptures. The *ahl al-ḥadīth* had given epistemic precedence to the Qur'ān as the Word of God, over the *ḥadīth*. But Abū Ḥanīfah's and his followers suggest that *ḥadīth* (i.e. the *sunnah* of the prophet) was the *lens* through which the Qur'ān was to be understood, rather than the other way around. As such the *sunnah* by way of the *ḥadīth* could add to and clarify the body of the Qur'ānic text. Thus, although a certain *ḥadīth* might appear to be in contradiction with the Qur'ān, such a *ḥadīth* might in fact be a clarification of the true meaning and intent of the verses.

The second issue at stake for *ahl al-ḥadīth* was that they believed the limited human *'aql*, was not capable of grasping the immensity and breadth of God's power, justice, or truth. As such, they questioned how the human *'aql* could ever set the standards by which to test the wisdom and decree of a prophet who was more trustworthy than Man's reason in understanding God's will.[98]

This attitude of *ahl al-ḥadīth* had a great impact especially on how early Sunnis viewed *kalām* (speculative theology), which was at that time represented primarily by the rationalist school of the Muʿtazilah.

3.3.3 *Ahl al-kalām* (Muʿtazilah)

The Muʿtazilah, sometimes referred to *ahl al-kalām* in the early literature, represented a third and more radical epistemological path in the early centuries of Islam. While accepting in principle the status and authority of the *sunnah* in determining the tenets of the faith, they rejected the idea that the *ḥadīth* accurately and reliably represented the *sunnah.* Thus because the veracity no *ḥadīth* could ever be definitively proven beyond the shadow of a doubt, no *ḥadīth* could be allowed to rule over the Qur'ān.

The Muʿtazilah as such developed unique and radical doctrines regarding God's nature and attributes, including His speech and Justice. Their rationally-derived assumptions about what was and what was not conceivable about God led them to figuratively interpret anthropomorphic verses in the Qur'ān and to reject outright any *ḥadīth* that described God in familiar terms.[99]

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[98] See Chapter 2, "A Map of the Islamic Interpretive Tradition," in Jonathon Brown's, *Misquoting Muhammad* for a more thorough discussion.
[99] David Brown, 13-14.

While there was some overlap between the ranks of *ahl al-ra'y* (followers of Abū Ḥanifah) and the Mu'tazilah, generally speaking, the early Sunnis (including the followers of Abū Ḥanīfah who eventually came to be associated with the Maturīdī school of theology) vehemently opposed the epistemic approach and the doctrines of the Mu'tazilah.

3.3.4 The Position of Sunni Traditionalists

In the context of early Sunni thought, it was accepted that there were many issues regarding God's nature, His will, the afterlife, whose true nature could never be grasped by Man's mind, because Man's mind is limited to cognition based on what he has known or experienced in some form, whereas it is repeatedly stated in the Qur'ān that "there is nothing like unto Him,"[100] i.e. that Man cannot have encountered anything similar to God to know Him by. This approach emphasized the *tanzīh* of God's nature such that it was considered to be completely beyond the pale of human conception. Early Sunnis thus believed that it was the duty of Muslims to simply affirm what was contained in Revelation regarding the nature of God and the *ghayb*, without probing into the particulars (*bi lā kayf*).[101]

Abū 'īsa al-Tirmidhī, one of the great scholars and compilers of *ḥadīth*, expressed this traditional Sunni position when he said that true scholars accepts that narrations "dealing with God's attributes and the Lord Most High's descending every night to the lowest heavens, [and] these narrations have been established and are to be believed." Rather than allowing people to ponder too deeply these narrations and open themselves up to doubt and confusion, the most appropriate approach to these narrations according to al-Tirmidhī, was to "take them as is without asking how."[102]

This is not to say, however, that believers could not seek and accept explanations of Qur'ānic verses or *ḥadīth*. Sayings of the prophet and his early companions were considered to be reflections of true, revealed teaching, and not reflections of their own respective (and human) speculation. Insofar as these teachings could be traced back to the prophet and his companions

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[100] 42:11
[101] See Chapter 2 in Jonathan Brown's *Misquoting Muhammad*; and Chapter 1 in Daniel Brown's *Rethinking tradition* for deeper discussion of this history.
[102] As quoted by Jon Brown in Misquoting Muhammad, p. 39.

reliably, they were admissible and necessary to establishing correct faith and practice. Thus, if somewhat ironically, the explanations offered by the *sunnah* for verses which defied literal interpretation resembled the rationalist explanations given by the Mu'tazilah as in the case of the verse "And He is with you wherever you are."[103] Both the Mu'tazilah and the companions argued that the verse could not be accepted on a literal basis, and had to be understood as a reference to God's *omnipotence* and *awareness* of all things and all matters related to His creation, regardless of where *they* are.[104]

Just as they supplemented the Qur'ān in law, the founders of Sunni Islam believed that *ḥadīth* could add new tenets of theology, such as those that dealt with the afterlife, the grave, and matters of the *ghayb*. While these *ḥadīth* came to inform central tenets of Sunni theology, the Mu'tazilah, who initially accepted no epistemological commitment to *ḥadīth* (because of the possibility of a defect in the transmission), had no qualms dismissing them as either fabrication or allegory.[105]

Despite their radical nature, the views of the Mu'tazilah were argued so systematically that they were difficult to refute without similarly methodological arguments. Thus, Sunni traditionalists were forced to reckon with the growing intellectual challenges presented by the Mu'tazilah by mastering and incorporating their methods. Only through solid logical refutation and argumentation could the traditionalists defeat the dangerous doctrines of the Mu'tazilah and defend their own. The irreconcilable doctrinal disputes between the early Sunnis and the Mu'tazilah thus resulted in a reconciliation and a synthesis of their methods within the Sunni episteme.[106]

3.3.5 The Great Epistemic Synthesis of Sunni Islam

This synthesis began in the early tenth-century with a Mu'tazilah scholar from Basra named Abū Hasan al-Ash'arī, who dreamt a dream in which the Prophet bade him to accept the teachings of the traditionalist scholar-jurist, Ibn Ḥanbal. Al-Ashʿarī renounced his Mu'tazilah doctrines and

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[103] 57:4
[104] J. Brown, 39.
[105] D. Brown, 15.
[106] J. Brown, 55.

embarked upon a campaign to defeat the doctrines of the Muʿtazilah and defend orthodox Sunni theology by employing the Muʿtazilah's own rationalist methods.

Al-Ashʿarī began by affirming unquestioning belief in the anthropomorphic verses and *ḥadīth*. He then adopted the Muʿtazilah's strategy of figurative interpretation for such texts. By making reference to the established conventions of Arabic poetry, al-Ashʿarī was able to argue strongly in favor of the metaphorical usage of phrases such as God's "hand," to signify rather than a corporeal hand, God's power. So, too, God's "face" and "sight" should be understood as metaphors for His being and His awareness of His creation.[107]

For al-Ashʿarī and the early Sunnis, the greatest heresy of the Muʿtazilah was their overreliance on their own *ʿaql*. In terms of *ʿaqīdah*, this had led the Muʿtazilah to develop doctrines about God's *ʿadl* (justice) which compromised His *irādah* (will) and *qudrah* (power). They insisted also that God Himself was a rational being and as such, 'right and wrong' must also be rationally-discernable, objective realities. As God was a 'just' being, it was inconceivable that God could act in a way that did not align with the 'objective' morality that the Muʿtazilah themselves had delineated. Thus, they came to limit God's actions based on their own conceptions of justice and morality which, did not (in orthodox Sunni belief) encompass Him.

Al-Ashʿarī and his students responded by reaffirming the supreme unboundedness of God's power and establishing God's own will as the direct source and measure of all true morality. They considered God's knowledge to be preeternal and hypostatic, and argued that the human *ʿaql* had no place in determining matters not specifically revealed in the texts. Al-Ashʿarī thus developed the famous and characteristic doctrine of "*bi-la kayf*" regarding matters of Divine nature and action. That is to say, he established a tradition of acknowledging the essence of God, His will, and His actions while avoiding on principle the discussion of any particulars as related to the Divine. Al-Ashʿarī's theological approach also influenced the development of later legal epistemology, in which law is understood to be "the literal act of the will of God directed

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[107] Ibid, 53.

towards the conduct of man," and in which the ultimate sanction for legal doctrines is Revelation, not reason.[108]

For Al-Ashʿari and his followers as such, the human *ʿaql* could not determine on its own what was 'good' or 'bad,' moral or immoral. Rather these categories could only be made known to Man by God Himself through revelation, prophecy, and the sincere efforts of legal scholars to understand and illuminate the subtler aspects of His *sharīʿah* as revealed within the sacred sources.

Though this Ashʿarī position might seem anti-rational and hyper-conservative, it was crucial in their strategy to construct an intellectual and epistemological framework that would be wide and flexible enough to address the challenges to Islamic faith and practice and unify the quickly expanding and diversifying ummah under the *sharīʿah* without compromising the authority of the sources. Eventually the Maturīdī school of theology came to occupy a third, more balanced position in recognizing that while the moral quality or status of certain works *can* be rationally apprehended, there are other acts whose moral status cannot be apprehended except through Revelation.[109]

Though the legal schools distinguished themselves in terms of their methodologies, and the various scholarly disciplines themselves were diverse in their methods and purposes, there were certain commitments which bound them to one another: commitment to the Revelation, and commitment to seeking true *ʿilm* and comprehension of the Revelation. We have already discussed how the different disciplines came to incorporate and view the two scriptures: Qurʾān and *sunnah* in light of each other. The collective and ultimate goal of the Islamic sciences was to glean the meaning and the truth of the *sharīʿah* as it applied to Man with as much certainty as possible. They came to develop and incorporate various interpretive devices over time and space, some favored over others by different schools, but each school and each system was capable of producing sophisticated and consistent arguments for the positions they held to be true. Despite their differences in methodology and terminology, there came to be another common thread

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[108] Dahlen, 39.

[109] See pp. 50-59 in Akmal al-dīn Muḥammad al-Bābartī, *Sharḥ Waṣiyyat Al-Imām Abī Ḥanīfah,* (Dār al-Fatḥ, 2009).

which wove its way through the tapestry of Islamic knowledge, especially in the rational epistemic scheme of *kalām*: formal logic.

3.3.6 The Place of *Manṭiq* in Islamic Science

The term '*manṭiq*' comes from the Arabic *nuṭq*, which means "speech." The term was used by Arabic scholars and translators of Greek texts to refer to the Greek '*logos*,' and the moniker '*ilm al-manṭiq* was given to the branch of knowledge associated with Aristotelian logic. While linguistically, *nuṭq* could be used to refer to speech, with the development of '*ilm al-manṭiq* the term became differentiated from *kalām* (speech) and its second signification was established as the art of correct discernment amongst matters, whether in science or craft or even business affairs.[110]

Manṭiq came to be accepted as an *ālah* (instrument) for all logical speculation (*naẓar*), as it established the universal rules that formed the foundation for sound rational thought and argumentation. Insofar as it was a science involved in ascertaining the applicability and the validity of all statements, *manṭiq* came to be considered the scale by which all human knowledge could ultimately be judged. In time, it came to occupy a central place in *madrassah* education and its mastery was considered to be a necessary prerequisite for any serious engagement in the *shar'ī* sciences because it gave Man access to the skills required to establish methodologically sound evidence for the existence of God, his prophet, and the tenets of faith and the *sharī'ah*.

While the sciences were distinct in their methodologies and in their purposes, logic established the technical framework and the general standard by which any arguments could be judged and validated within and across disciplines. Because it taught Man how to discern logically sound statements from unsound statements, i.e. truth from necessary falsehood, '*ilm al-manṭiq* came to regarded as the '*ilm al-'ilm* (the science of science) and the '*ilm al-'ulūm* (the science of the sciences). As true knowledge (of reality and the *sharī'ah*) was considered the stepping stone to success in this world and the hereafter, '*ilm al-manṭiq* became indispensable as the stepping stone to true knowledge.[111]

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[110] Rosenthal, 203.
[111] Ibid, 204.

'Ilm al-manṭiq was, as we have mentioned, based on Aristotelian logic as it became known through translations of classic Greek texts. One of the major logical texts which circulated amongst Muslim circles was Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī's (d. 663/1265) *Matn Isāghūjī fi'l-Manṭiq* which more than being a simple commentary on the Neoplatonist Porphyry's *Isagoge*, was a logic text which synthesized the works of Aristotle, al-Farābi, and Ibn Sina alongside Prophyrys.[112]

'Isagoge,' an Arabicized term derived from the Greek '*eisagoge'* (introduction) was an introductory level text, which addressed all the major areas of logic from the five universals (*voces*), or the *kulliyāt al-khamsah* as they came to be known in the Islamic episteme, to *dalālāh* (signification), the structure of the *qaḍiyyah* (proposition), and *qiyās* (syllogism). Al-Abharī's volume briefly and in simple terms defined the categories: *jins* (genus), *naw'* (species), *faṣl* (difference), *khāṣṣah* (property), and *'araḍ* (accident), as well as other important terms (like *mufrad, kullī, dhātī, 'aradī, hadd, rasm,* etc.) upon which the art of *manṭiq* is built. *Isāghūjī's* pedagogical approach was to begin from the basics of how the universals related with one another in order to explain then how terms are properly determined and defined, to how propositions could be formed and how knowledge could be derived through proper and productive combination of true propositions consisting of true terms. Because of its brief though comprehensive form, al-Abhari's *Isāghūjī* became an institution in the madrassah system as the first text pupils studied, and numerous commentaries were written on it.[113]

Despite the widespread purchase *manṭiq* eventually gained, its validity and place in the Islamic episteme was originally debated. Because the science of logic was taken from Greek sources, Muslim scholars and society were not necessarily keen to accept it as canon within the realm of the *shar'ī* sciences. It is not uncommon therefore to find that books of logic, especially the commentaries on the primary sources, begin with a *tamhīd* (preface) about the permissibility of the study of logic. Even famous works like Mahmūd b. Hasan Al-Maghnīsi's *Mughni at-ṭullāb*, a late-nineteenth century commentary on al-Abhari's *Īsāghujī* begins with such a *tamhīd*.

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[112] Abdulkuddus Bingöl, "ÎSÂGÛCÎ - TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi," TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi, 2000, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/isaguci.

[113] Esiru'd-din el-Ebheri, *Mantık Isagoci tercümesi & Mantık Terimleri sözlüğü*, trans. Talha Hakkan Alp (İstanbul: Yasin Yayınevi, 2012), 11.

3.3.7 On the Permissibility of Studying *Manṭiq*

Though Al-Maghnisī (d. 1222/1807) was writing several centuries after logic had already become well-entrenched in the Islamic sciences, he takes the time to articulate the various positions regarding the permissibility of the "*ishtighāl*" (engagement) with the science of logic: *taḥrīm* (prohibition), *jawāz* (permissibility), and *farḍ kifāyah* (communal obligation). Amongst those who prohibited engagement with ʿ*ilm al-manṭiq* are Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), Imam al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), and al-Suyūti (d. 911/1505)—all of whom were scholars primarily associated with *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* (though they, like all classical *ʿulama'*, received training and were often masters in all major sciences). Ibn al-Salah states in his *fatwah* regarding the issue that *manṭiq* is the entry point to philosophy, which itself is the fount of *"al-ḥayrah wa'l-ḍalal wa mathār al-zaygh wa'l-zandaqah"* (uncertainty and error and the motivating force behind aberration and atheism). He argues that ʿ*ilm al-manṭiq* is the *"madkhal al-falsafah"* (entry-point to Greek philosophy) and that *"madkhal al-sharri sharrun, wa laysa al-ishtighāl bi-taʿlīmihī wa taʿallumihī mimmā abāha al-shāri'"* (the entry-point to evil is evil and engagement in its study or instruction is not included in that which God has made permissible).[114] As such, because it was mixed up with the *ḍalāl* (error) of Greek philosophy which could cause doubt and confusion in the hearts and belief of Muslims, it was the opinion of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ that the study of logic should be avoided for the *maṣlaḥah* (good) of the community at large.

The scholars who defended its *jawāz* did so only for those who were confident in their intellectual abilities and secure in their knowledge and familiarity with the Qur'ān and the sunnah.[115] Thus in their opinion, it was only permissible for one to engage in the study of logic after thoroughly studying the Quran, sunnah, *fiqh*, when he could be sure that "*yarsakhu fi dhihnihi al-ʿitiqadātu al-saḥiḥatu wa taʿdhīm al-sharīʿah*" (the tenets of true belief and the respect for the law were well-established in his mind), and under the tutelage of an upright teacher of sound belief also.[116]

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[114] Mahmūd b. Hasan Al-Maghnīsi, *Mughnī Al-Ṭullāb Sharḥ Matn Īsāghūjī Li-Athīr Al-Dīn Al-Abharī*, ed. Iṣām b. Muhadhab al-Subuʿi (Damascus: Dār al-Bayrūtī, 2009), 23.
[115] Ibid, 31.
[116] Ibid.

The third group of scholars, amongst whom is Imam al-Ghazālī, held the study of logic to be *farḍ kifāyah*, because it was a means to help save the community from being misled by false arguments and falling into error. Because it is incumbent upon the scholars to defend the true belief of the Muslims in face of doubt and misguidance, such as that which the doctrines of philosophy and heterodoxies could result in, it was also incumbent upon scholars to engage in this science, a case which Imam al-Ghazālī most thoroughly makes in his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*.[117] The fact that Al-Maghnīsi wrote *Mughnī al-ṭullāb* and rearticulates these opinions as late as the nineteenth century is a reflection of how much Muslim intellectuals had been affected by the onslaught of modernity which had destroyed many of the institutions of Islamic society and education. It was in an attempt to revive the *'aqlī* sciences that treatise like *Mughīi al-ṭullāb* were written.

3.3.8 *'Ilm al-'ilm*

In terms of the actual corpus of Islamic logic texts, it is concerned with only one matter—*'ilm*, how it can be attained, and how its true character identified and defended in face of falsehood and contradiction. As it is not within the scope of this thesis to fully explain the strategies which *'ilm al-manṭiq* employs to produce knowledge, suffice to offer a brief overview of the path it lays, and the different kinds of *'ilm* which can be reached through it.

Though the subject matter of *'ilm al-manṭiq* is itself *'ilm* or 'knowledge,' the term as such is not generally defined in the works of logic. Knowledge was defined in different ways within different disciplines but the most important and influential definitions came from the *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *kalām* traditions because their methodologies and goals came to rely on these definitions. In the realm of logic, however, the more operative and significant terms to be defined were *taṣawwur* (perception/conceptualization) and *taṣdīq* (apperception/assent), the two primary forms knowledge can take.

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[117] Ibid, 27.

Taṣawwur is that which the mind grasps of the essences or quiddities of things, while *taṣdīq* is a judgement the intellect makes to which a truth-value can be assigned.[118] The subject of *taṣawwur* is thus generally a *mufrad* (single) or a *murakkab* (composite) term in which each individual term can be defined, whereas the subject of the *taṣdīq* is a *qaḍiyyah* (proposition) to which can be assigned a truth-value.

For one to be able to attain knowledge through propositional logic, the most important thing is to properly define the terms, which is only possible through differentiation. If the terms are properly defined, they can then be placed in relationship to each other (*tarkīb*) in the context of propositions which each carry a truth-value, and the propositions themselves can be combined in different ways to produce new knowledge through the discovery of a middle term (*ḥadd al-awsaṭ*). This process of combination of propositions is called *qiyās* (syllogism). Because the syllogism necessitates or negates knowledge, it is through *qiyās* that Man is able to arrive at previously unknown truths, prove the truth of existing claims, and also uncover underlying falsehood, incoherence, and contradiction in claims which were unfounded. If *qiyās* incorporates only true statements which contain no doubt, then it can only give rise to knowledge which contains no doubt, that is *yaqīn*.

The most significant adjustment Muslim scholars—who came to adopt Greek logic almost without alteration—made when incorporating logic into their own methodologies was expanding its epistemological basis to include the necessary category of Revelation as a source of knowledge. A brief introduction to the epistemological basis of true knowledge thus became a standard feature in works of both *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, whose practitioners sought to establish the basis of *sharī'ah* on as definite grounds as possible.

3.3.9 *Asbāb al-'ilm*

In the works of *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the sources of knowledge were three: the outward senses (*ḥawāss*), human reason (*'aql*), and what was referred to as either as *al-khabar al-ṣādiq* or

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[118] Mai Sabry Saleh, "The Four Isomorphic Couplets Passive Mind/Active Mind, Definition/Syllogism, Tasawwur/Tasdiq and Perception/Thinking," *American Journal of Applied Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2015): pp. 43-46.

khabar al-ṣādiq, that is a trustworthy report or the report from a trustworthy source. In either case, the trustworthy report was also considered to be a source of verifiable knowledge. Very often in books of *kalām* and *usūl*, certain knowledge in which there is no possible doubt is referred to not as '*yaqīn*,' but simply as '*'ilm*'. For example, in *Sharḥ al-Aqā'id*, though Sayyid Sharīf al-Taftazāni clarifies that the only knowledge with which he deals is verifiable knowledge such that when he uses the term ''*ilm*' he is in fact referring to *yaqīn*. Al-Taftazani also refers to other possible sources of knowledge such as *hads* and *ilhām*, but notes that knowledge gained through these means cannot be considered '*'ilm*' or the basis of *'ilm* in the definitive sense or within the framework of *kalām,* which deals only with knowledge gained through the aforementioned sources.[119]

While philosophers and the *ahl al-taṣawwuf* do accept *ilhām* as a source of *'ilm*, the *mutakallimūn* and the *fuqahā'* are concerned only with knowledge which is based in the sources, can be deduced from them, or corroborated by them rationally. Any knowledge of that latter sorts, because it does not appear directly in the sources has to be reached and *demonstrated* systematically—in the case of *kalām*, the arguments are rational, extending from the universal principle of logic and *ḍarūrah* (necessity) while in *fiqh*, knowledge has to be reached methodologically according to the *uṣūl* of each school which applies a different type of 'logic' i.e. methods by which they prioritize and interpret sources and proofs in their legal argumentation.

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[119] See pp. 109-116 (especially Ramadan's commentary) in Sa'ad al-Dīn al-Taftazānī, *Al-Majmū'at Al-Saniyyah 'Alā Sharḥ Al-'Aqā'id Al-Nasafiyyah*, ed. Mur'ī al-Rashīd, comment. Ramadān Efendi, Al-Kastalī, and Al-Khayālī, I (Beirut: Dār Nūr al-ṣabāḥ, 2012).

3.3.10 The Place of *Istidlāl* in *Fiqh* and *Kalām*

Though their knowledge pertains to different realms, scholars of both *kalām* and *fiqh* thus incorporate and rely on logical argumentation and proofs, that is *istidlāl*, as a means to attaining knowledge and certainty. Where *yaqīn* cannot be established, even through solid rational proof, the language and strategies of logic provide the basic tools scholars need to reinforce their positions as methodically as possible. As long as one stays consistent in his *istidlāl* (argumentation) based on the *uṣūl* of both logic and the respective science in which he is engaged, the results of his *ijtihād* (intellectual endeavor) are to be considered valid and on par with any other opinion reached through similarly consistent and rigorous *ijtihād*.

Scholarly opinions, therefore, cannot be dismissed except through methodical dispute and grounded defeat of the proofs or the rationale upon which they stand. For the *mutakallimūn*, the matter is simpler in the sense that the matters of *iʿtiqād* (definite creed) are limited in number, and can be proven definitively on solely rational grounds. The domain of *ʿamal* (human action and interaction) is much more complex than the domain of *iʿtiqād* in that socio-cultural, political, geographical diversity across time and space resulted in complex issues and considerations not immediately apparent in the *sunnah*.

Every school of law, accepts the central role of the *sunnah* in the derivation of the *sharīʿah*, and believes sincerely that it its own methods and principles are in accordance with that *sunnah*. The schools are not in disagreement about whether the prophet should be followed, but how to best follow him. As such, the *fuqahāʾ* developed a rich dialectical tradition in which every solidly grounded opinion was valid unless disproven on methodological grounds.

Because the Qurʾān and *sunnah* establish clear and definitive *ahkām* (rulings) on only a handful of matters, outside of these issues, *yaqīn* is rarely possible. Thus, while the enterprise of *fiqh* came to be regarded as sophisticated and rigorously methodological, it was constituted primarily and necessarily of *naẓar* (speculation). This resulted in the development of *ijmāʿ* (consensus) as a central and fortifying pillar in the reliability and authority of the collective enterprise of *fiqh*.[120]

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[120] D. Brown, 20.

Unlike the *fuqahā'*, the *mutakallimūn* are not engaged in speculative *naẓar* but rather in conclusive *'ilm,* which in their discourse is synonymous with *yaqīn*. In *kalām,* 'knowledge' is that which is absolutely true with no possibility of falsehood, which corresponds truly to reality, and which is of such a nature that it cannot be overturned. This kind of certain knowledge is of two kinds: the *ḍaruriyāt* and the *naẓariyāt* (or *iktisabiyyāt*, from *k-s-b;* to acquire).

3.3.11 The *Ḍaruriyāt*

The *ḍaruriyāt* are those facts which are known without the necessity of any *naẓar* (logical reasoning) or *tafakkur* (deliberation). An example of a *ḍarūrī* fact would be that a whole is greater than its part. *Naẓari* knowledge on the other hand, relies as its name implies, upon reasoning and reflection in order to be reached, even if the necessary process of reasoning seems intuitive or even imperceptible. An example of a *naẓarī* conclusion is that there is only one Creator, which though it may seem intuitive to some, relies upon some degree of reflection even in those who are quick to accept it. It is the job of the *mutakallimūn* then to systematically prove and reaffirm the tenets of faith like *tawḥīd* (the oneness of God) such that they hold up against rational argumentation and challenge, and also to disprove the false claims of those like the philosophers and the Mu'tazilah who respectively hold doctrines about the *azaliyyah* (eternal nature) of the universe and the limitations upon God's actions based on a rationally-deducible morality. For the *mutakallimūn*, the *burhān* is considered the strongest and most conclusive level of proof in argumentation. The *burhān* is a syllogism composed from two or more certain, true propositions, which necessarily gives way to a certain, true conclusion or *yaqīn*.

3.3.12 The *Yaqīnīyyāt*

Knowledge which is considered both *yaqīni* and *ḍarurī* from which a *burhān* can be constituted is divided into six categories:

Awwaliyyāt: knowledge which is apparent solely by considering the terms involved, without the necessity of any intermediary reasoning or link. e.g. The whole is greater than its parts.

Mushāhadāt/ḥiṣṣiyyāt: Knowledge attained through the use of the outer senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste). E.g. Steel is hard. Certain knowledge of this type can only, however, be reached by one with sound senses. The visual observations of someone who has weak or compromised eyesight does not, for example, give rise to certainty. In addition to *ḥiṣṣiyyāt*, there are also *wijdāniyyāt* which rely upon the inner senses.

Mujarrabāt: This type of certain knowledge is reached through the continuous repetition of observation and experience over time. e.g. Turmeric can act as an antiseptic and anti-inflammatory when applied to wounds.

Ḥadsiyyāt: Conclusions which can be reached quickly and intuitively from mental propositions. The classic example of *ḥads* is that the moon reflects the light of the sun. This knowledge is reached through the observation of the moon in its various phases with reference to and in relation with the sun.

Mutawātirāt: Certain knowledge which is derived from numerous mutually substantiating reports transmitted by members of a trustworthy society. This type of society is one which is known for its reliability to such an extent that it is impossible to fathom their collusion or collaboration in falsehood.

Fiṭriyyāt: knowledge which is reached through a simple *qiyās (*syllogism) very quickly because the necessary 'middle term,' is so inherent in the mind by nature, that there is no need for contemplation in order to reach the conclusion. Because of the seemingly direct access to this kind of knowledge, man may consider it to be from the *awalliyyāt*, when in

reality it depends upon a syllogism so simple that is imperceptible, which becomes apparent only upon inspection. e.g. Two is half of four.

3.3.13 Two Types of *Dalīl*

In terms of proof, the scholars of *kalām* categorized the *dalīl* in two ways; first, with reference to the kind of information the *dalīl* takes into account; and second, with reference to the type of knowledge the *dalīl* leads to.

3.3.13.1 *Dalīl 'Aqlī*

In the first case, the *dalīl* can either be *'aqlī* or *naqlī*. The *dalīl 'aqlī* is one which either relies upon logic or is reached through logical reasoning. In other words, it is the conclusion reached through a sound syllogism consisting of two or more true premises. In classical logic this kind of *dalīl* is purely rational, consisting of rational propositions such as: "If the universe is changing, and every changing thing is created, then the universe is created," and "The whole is greater than its parts" are examples of the *dalīl 'aqlī*.

If a *dalīl 'aqlī* consists of certain knowledge, it is called *burhān*. If it consists of *ẓannī* knowledge it is called *khiṭābah.* The *burhān* is generally addressed to scholars, intellectuals, and individuals with specialized knowledge which enables them to follow and comprehend it, while *khiṭābah* is a more accessible form addressed to laymen. For the *mutakallimūn*, the matters of *i'tiqād* cannot be extrapolated solely from a *dalīl 'aqlī*, rather the *dalīl 'aqlī* is considered as an aid in properly understanding and proving that which is established through a *dalīl naqlī*.

3.3.13.2 *Dalīl Naqlī*

The *dalīl naqlī* is derived entirely from revealed knowledge. Because this knowledge was transmitted orally especially during the early period, it is also referred to as '*dalīl sam'ī* ' and '*dalīl lafẓī.*' For *ahl al-sunnah*, any proof from the Qur'ān and *sunnah* is considered *naqlī*. The scholars of *kalām* unanimously accept both the Qur'ān and *mutawātir ḥadīth* (whose *thubūt* and

dalālah are both clearly known) as a *dalīl*. The place of *ḥadīth aḥād* or *khabr al-wāḥid* as a *dalīl* is, however, debated. While the Muʿtazilah were the first to discount *aḥād ḥadīth* as proofs in matters of *iʿtiqād*, the Maturīdīs and the Ashʿarīs adopted the same position. Likewise, although *ijmāʿ* is considered a *dalīl* in matters to do with practice and worship, it is not considered as such in matters of *iʿtiqād*; rather *ijmāʿ* is taken as a secondary, supporting evidence to the *naqlī* proofs drawn from the Qur'ān and sunnah which are considered to be the only legitimate sources for matters of *iʿtiqād*.[121]

In the instance of a contradiction between ʿ*aqlī* and *naqlī* evidence, the majority of Sunni scholars (like the Muʿtazilah before them) give precedence to the ʿ*aqlī*, and accept that it is through the lens of the *dalīl* ʿ*aqlī* that the *naqlī* should be interpreted. While for the Sunnis, this consideration is made only when there is a clear contradiction, the Muʿtazilah give methodological and epistemic precedence to the *dalīl* ʿ*aqlī* as a principle. For the Muʿtazilah, the hierarchy of *dalīl* begins with the ʿ*aql* followed by the *kitāb*, *sunnah*, and *ijmāʿ*.

3.3.14 Status of the *Dalīl*

The second method of categorizing evidence from the sources—that is, from both the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* (i.e. *ḥadīth*)—analyzes the epistemological reliability of proofs across two axes: *thubūt* and *dalālah*. Epistemological reliability ranges from certainty to doubt. That which is definitively certain is considered *qaṭʿī* (definitive) and that which is not so is considered *ẓannī*. The latter is a category which ranges from that which is more probable to that which is less probable (i.e. that which is doubtful), but any evidence in which there is a possibility of doubt is considered *ẓannī* (speculative).

Thubūt refers to how reliable the historical transmission of a source is, and applies only to *ḥadīth* as there is no doubt about the transmission of the Qur'ānic verses. The vast majority of *ḥadīth* which qualify even as *ṣaḥiḥ* are only considered ʿ*ẓannī* of *thubūt,* as the strength of the chains of even *ḥadīth* which were widely transmitted, was still not sufficient enough to establish total epistemic *yaqīn* regarding their authenticity. The philosophical certainty of the *ḍāʿīf* (weak) and

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the *mawḍūʿ* (clear forgeries) was even weaker such that the *ḍāʿīf* were often considered ineffectual as evidence while that which was proven to be *mawḍūʿ* was categorically inadmissible.

Dalālah refers to the level of clarity or ambiguity of the meaning or signification of a text. Sometimes the ambiguity of one text can be clarified by another text of equal or stronger epistemic standing, but often as in the case between ambiguous verses of the Qurʾān, even the corroborating texts from the *sunnah* are only considered probable in their *thubūt* or perhaps even lower if the *ḥadīth* is *ḍāʿīf*.

3.3.14.1 The *Dalīl Qaṭʿī*

The *dalīl qaṭʿī* is that which has both clear *thubūt* (there is no doubt as to its transmission) and *dalālah* (there is only one possible signification). Another way to define this class of *dalīl* is that through which the possibility of the reverse (of the conclusion) is disproved and overturned, i.e. the opposite conclusion is impossible. This class of *dalīl* is also referred to as 'dalīl yaqīnī,' because it gives rise to truth and certainty without any possible doubt. The opposite of *yaqīn* is *shakk* or doubt. Thus, by its nature, *yaqīnī* knowledge precludes the possibility of doubt.

A *dalīl qaṭʿī* can be either *ʿaqlī* or *naqlī*. In order for a *dalīl ʿaqlī* to reach the status of *qaṭʿ* (conclusiveness), all of the premises upon which it is based must be *yaqīniyyāt*. Proofs which consist of only *yaqīnī*, i.e. indubitable, certain premises are in turn called *burhān*, the highest and only categorical form of logical proof.

Because *naqlī* proofs which are established as *qaṭʿī* of *thubūt* are authoritative and true by their nature as the word of God and His prophet, the knowledge they imbibe is also considered to be *qaṭʿī*. In order for a *dalīl naqlī* to reach the status of *qaṭʿ*, it must however, meet certain standards:

1. the wording of the *dalīl naqlī* (Qurʾān and sunnah) must be known precisely, word by word.
2. The proper syntax as well as the correct *iʾrāb* (diacritical markings) of the words must be known.

3. There must be certainty that the narrators did not make a mistake in their narration. (Çekimlerini rivayet edenlerin yanlış yapmamış olması gerekmektedir.)

4. The words contained in the *dalīl* must not be *mushtarak* (have more than one possible meaning); there must only be one possible *haqīqī* meaning for every word contained within it.

5. The words cannot be *majāz* (metaphor).

6. Both the tense and the subject/object of the words must be specified.

7. No indistinct pronouns may be included.

8. There cannot be any instance of *ta'khīr* or *taqdīm* in the text.

9. The text must not be abrogated.

10. The text cannot be subject to logical objection or contradiction.[122]

If a text fulfills all of the above criteria, it is considered to be *qaṭʿī* of *thubūt* and also of *dalālah*. Such a text is considered a *dalīl naqlī qaṭʿī* (a definitive, transmitted proof). The only two types of text which fall into this category are *muḥkam* verses of the Qur'ān and *mutawātir ḥadīth* whose meanings are clearly and unequivocally established. For the scholars of *kalām* it is only a *dalīl* from this category (*naqlī qaṭʿī*) that is taken into consideration for creed. Outside of this category, *naqlī* proofs are not considered *qaṭʿī* and therefore cannot be employed as evidence in matters of *iʿtiqād*.

If that which is known definitively is considered *qaṭʿī* (i.e. there is *yaqīn* in its authenticity and meaning) then that which is known less than certainly is considered *ẓannī* (speculative).

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[122] Şahin, 463.

3.3.14.2 The *Dalīl Ẓannī*

Epistemologically speaking, *ẓann* lies between *yaqīn* and *shakk* (doubt). If something is not known with certainty to be true, but it is more likely that it is true than not, then it is considered *ẓann*. If the likelihood that it is true is overwhelming, then it is called *al-ẓann al-ghālib* (from *gh-l-b*; predominantly, mostly). Conversely, if the truth of a matter cannot be ascertained, but it is more likely not to be true, than it is considered *wahm* (conjecture). If no valid guess can be made as to whether something is more or less likely to be true, then it is classified as *shakk*. A *dalil ẓannī* then is that which can only go so far to prove an argument, but which leaves open the possibility that the opposite may also be true. In other words, while the *dalīl ẓannī* can be a strong support that an argument is more than likely to be true (even overwhelmingly so), it cannot categorically overturn the possibility that its opposite is true. Thus, as its name suggests, the *dalil ẓannī* can only lead to *zann* and never *yaqīn*. This kind of *dalīl* is also referred to as '*iltizāmī*' or '*iqnā'ī*' (persuasive but not binding).[123]

As with the *dalīl qaṭʿī*, the *dalīl ẓannī* can be either '*aqlī* or *naqlī*. The *adillah ʿaqlīyyah* which are not *qaṭʿi*, i.e. imbibe any degree of *ẓann*, are called *ẓanniyāt*.

3.3.14.2.1 The *Dalīl ʿAqlī Ẓannī*: the *Ẓanniyāt*

Like the *yaqīniyyāt*, the *ẓanniyyāt* are also classified under six separate headings: *mashhurāt*, *maqbūlāt*, *musallamāt*, *wahmiyyāt*, *maẓnūnāt*, and *mukhayallāt*.

> *Mashhurāt* are widespread ideas that are accepted as true by all or the vast majority of society. An example would be, "Justice is good and oppression is bad." Because these kind of ideas can be either true or false, they do not give certain knowledge in themselves. Of all non-certain propositions, the *mashhuraāt* are considered those with the highest likelihood of being true, and thus after *yaqiniyyāt*, the *mashhurāt* constitute the strongest *dalīl*.

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[123] Ibid., 460.

Maqbūlāt are the statements of the leaders and authorities of a society which are accepted by the people because of their belief in the trustworthiness of the speakers.

Musallamāt are propositions made in a debate which are accepted as true by the opposing party. In a debate, one may concede his opponent's premise simply in order to then build his own argument upon it and thus silence his opponent.

Wahmiyyāt are misleading propositions drawn from invalid assumptions or sense data where they do not apply. *Wahmiyyāt* are false and unfounded generalizations, based on misperceptions and misconceptions of one's mind, senses, and outward experience. Because *wahmiyyāt* are based on misapprehension and illusion, they are not valid propositions. An example of this kind of statement is, "If something exists, it can be seen."

Maẓnūnāt are propositions, which though they are based on *ẓann* (not *yaqin*) are rationally acceptable, though their inverses may also potentially be true. *Maẓnūnāt* could be statements like that of someone who observes a mysterious figure roaming the streets at night, if he were to reason: "He is a thief, because if he were not a thief, he would not be roaming around at night." Because these statements rely heavily upon *ẓann*, they are mostly fallacious and do not constitute strong proofs.

Mukhayyalāt are statements which may be true or false, but which are proposed with the particular intent of inspiring either love or hate, attraction or disgust in the listener. These statements are put forth in order to affect the listener psychologically and emotionally. Whether they are true or not is not a matter of concern. *Mukhayyalāt* are commonly used in poetry to impart particular emotions to and establish a particular mood in the audience. "Honey is precious like liquid gold," and "honey is the repulsive vomit of insects" are both examples of *mukhayyalāt*.

3.3.14.2.1.1 The Five *'Aqlī* "Arts"

All *'aqlī* proofs are composed of propositions drawn from the *yaqiniyyāt* or *ẓannīyāt*, whether they are *qaṭ'i* or *ẓannī*. Proofs that can be drawn from propositions as such fall into five

categories, or what are also known as the five *ṣana'āt* (arts): *burhān, jadal, khiṭābah, safṣaṭah (mughālatah), and shiʿir*. As mentioned above, the strongest, most reliable type of *dalīl ʿaqlī* is the *burhān*, which is comprised of *yaqīniyyāt* only. *Jadal* is a form of *qiyās* comprised of *mashhurāt* or *musallamāt; khitābah* is comprised of *maqbūlāt* and *maẓnūnāt; safṣaṭah (mughālatah)* is comprised of *wahmiyyāt*; and the *qiyās* comprised of *mukhayyalāt* is called *shiʿir*.

According to the *mutakallimūn*, all *dalīl* outside of *burhān* fall into the *ẓannī* category of the *ʿaqlī* proofs.

3.3.14.2.2 The *Dalīl Naqlī Ẓannī*

When it comes to the *dalīl naqlī*, every *dalīl* which is less than certain in either its *dalālah* (signification) or its *thubūt* (transmission), or both is considered *ẓannī*. Scholars have categorized *ẓannī-naqlī dalīl* into three groups:

i)   *Qaṭʿī'l-thubūt, ẓannī fi'l-dalālah*: this includes Quranic verses and those *mutawātir ḥadīth* whose meaning cannot be understood with certainty from the text.

ii)   *Ẓannī'l-thubūt, qaṭʿī fi'l dalālah/maʿna*: includes *aḥād ḥadīth* whose meanings can be established with certainty.

iii)   *Ẓannī'l thubūt wa'd-dalālah*: this includes *aḥād ḥadīth* whose neither meaning nor transmission can be established with certainty.

Qur'ānic verses whose meanings are not clearly established, which carry different possible interpretations as well as all *ḥadīth* which can be interpreted in more than one way are considered *naqlī-ẓannī* proofs. Because these texts do not reach the level of epistemological *yaqīn*, the *mutakallimūn* do not accept them as proofs in matters of *iʿtiqād*.

3.3.15 Methods of *Istidlāl* in *Kalām*

Having now briefly explained the ways in which the *mutakallimūn* approached the question of certainty and knowledge and how they categorized and ranked different kinds of information, it

is beneficial to briefly explain how they used the knowledge available to them to reach further knowledge. In other words, it is beneficial to look at the logical strategies the *mutakallimūn* employed in order to craft solid arguments and expand knowledge from what was already known and established into further realms.

The logical enterprise of ascertaining the truth of propositions by providing proofs, or the arranging of such true propositions in a logical way which necessitates a new logical conclusion is called *istidlāl*. While any form of argumentation is an exercise in *istidlāl* (whether weak or strong, founded or unfounded), there are some prevalent strategies which the *mutakallimūn* particularly employed over the centuries. The *mutakallimūn* of the earlier generations employed various forms of *istidlāl*, including that which relied upon what would by later scholars be considered less-than certain, i.e. *ẓannī*, knowledge.

For example, the *mutaqaddimūn* (early scholars) of *kalām* who were not versed in the formal logic of the ancients, often made generalizations based on the similarity between different issues, such that if A is similar to B in such a way, and A is correct, therefore B must also be correct. The *mutaqaddimūn* also often referenced *muʿjizāt* as proofs and employed *inʿikas al-adillah* (using the defeat of a proof as a proof of the defeat of a conclusion) as a strategy in their argumentation. Later scholars of kalam who studied and refined formal Greek logic systematized their own methods of *istidlāl* accordingly. Imam al-Ghazali and Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1064) are two of the most prominent figures associated with this shift in *kalām*. They accepted logic as a discipline which was both necessary and prior to any other *sharʿī* science. From this point onwards, formal, scientific *istidlāl* relied solely upon sources of certain knowledge (*yaqiniyyāt*) in order to reach further knowledge, with certainty.[124]

Imam al-Ghazālī in particular criticized the methods of his predecessors in favor of the more reliable and systematic methodology of the philosophers who, though many of their basic assumptions were incorrect, employed clear and systematic reasoning in their argumentation which gave rise rational certitude (which came to be referred to both as *ʿilm* and *yaqīn* in *kalām* discourses). This shift towards a more logical-rational methodology resulted in three main

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[124] Ibid, 468.

strategies amongst *mutakallimūn*: logical deduction based on established facts (*taʿlīl, qiyās*), logical induction (*istiqrāʾ*), and analogy (*tamthīl*).[125]

3.4 The Joint Historical-Empirical and Rational Path of *Fiqh*

In the development of *fiqh*, scholars focused their efforts on reconciling the 'historical-empirical' knowledge of *ḥadīth* (and the associated sciences of grammar, philology, biography, etc.) with rational categories of knowledge. The primary goal of the scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* was to identify the *uṣūl* or the principles and methods by which to extrapolate legal rulings the *sharīʿah* as revealed through the Qur'ān and *sunnah*. While the epistemic scheme of *ḥadīth* sciences held that all truth attainable to Man was contained in the revealed text, the *fuqahāʾ* and the *usulīs* defended the ability of the *ʿaql* to logically extrapolate truths whose basis are found *within* it. So, while the domain of *ḥadīth* sciences was limited to the *form* of the transmitted texts that constitute the *sunnah*, the jurisprudential sciences focused rather on establishing a reliable methodology to guide the enterprise of rationally deducing meaning from the *substance* of those texts. Thus, the epistemic scheme or 'path' of *fiqh* can be considered jointly historical-empirical and rational.

As we have seen, *kalām* is concerned only with logically demonstrable and necessary, *ḍarurī* knowledge while *fiqh* is concerned with knowledge that is *muktasab* (acquired) from the sources through *ẓann*. Thus, unlike the *mutakallim* who adopts a distinctive dialectical methodology concerned with *yaqīnī* knowledge, the scholars of *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* work primarily in the domain of *ẓann*. How knowledge of the latter nature is to be faithfully and dependably acquired from the sources, is the concern of *uṣūl al-fiqh* literature.

3.4.1 The Four *Usūl*

In *fiqh*, the *dalīl* for a *ḥukm* (legal judgement) is essentially the source from which it is drawn. For this reason there is a common pith in *fiqh* that the *uṣūl* of *fiqh* are its proofs ("Fıkhın uṣulü, fıkhın delileridir").[126] It was not until the third century of Islam, subsequent to the establishment

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[125] Ibid.
[126] Hacı Yunus Apaydın, *İslam Hukuk Usulü* (BİLAY, n.d.), 37.

and growth of the major schools of *fiqh* and their respective legal corpuses that the *uṣūl* literature arose in order to retroactively identify and systematize the guiding principles which legal scholars had employed for several generations. This literature identifies four *uṣūl* (primary sources) for the derivation of *sharīʿah*: *al-kitāb*, *al-sunnah, ijmāʿ* (scholarly consensus)*,* and *qiyās* (analogical reasoning).[127]

3.4.1.1 *Al-naṣṣ* and *Ijtihād*

In the early period, these *uṣūl* were classified generally as: *al-naṣṣ* (the primary text) and *al-ijtihād* (from *j-h-d* which means to struggle, strive). In the context of *fiqh*, *ijtihād* refers to the full intellectual exertion by a scholar to arrive at a *raʾy* (opinion) regarding a *ḥukm sharʿī,* i.e. the independent process of reasoning through which a *faqīh* seeks the *ḥukm* for a legal question not referenced in the corpuses of the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, or *ijmāʿ*.

These terms, *al-naṣṣ* and *ijtihād,* became the foundation of an epistemological system of legal derivation which distinguished between the *aṣl* (the source) and the conclusion which is logically derived from the source itself i.e. the *maʿqūl al-aṣl*. The *naṣṣ* (pl. *nuṣūṣ*) or the *aṣl* (pl. *uṣūl*) consists of *al-kitāb* and *al-sunnah*, while *al-ijtihād* or *maʿqūl al-aṣl* is attained through three primary methods: *qiyās*, *istiḥsān, istiṣlāḥ*.

3.4.1.2 *Ijtihād* and its Methods

Qiyās is the process of analogical reasoning by which the *mujtahid* (legal scholar) derives a *ḥukm* for a matter based on the existing *ḥukm* on another matter. In the process of *qiyās*, there is a source text which deals with a primary matter considered to be the *aṣl*, and a secondary matter or branch, *farʿ*, which resembles the original *aṣl* in some essential way. This essential resemblance between the *aṣl* and the *farʿ* is called the *ʿillah* (*ratio legis*) which becomes the rational basis for the extension of the *ḥukm* from the *aṣl* to the *farʿ*.

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[127] Note that *qiyās* here is used differently than in the discussion of *manṭiq*, where *qiyās* is the formal term used for logical 'syllogism.'

Although *qiyās* is often included as one of the *uṣūl* of *fiqh*, according to the original understanding about the distinction between the *naṣṣ* and its *maʿqūl*, the actual ontological status of the *qiyās* is not the same as that of a true *dalīl*, because in the early conception of *fiqh*, the *naṣṣ,* as the unadulterated Revelation (whether in the form of Qurʾān or *sunnah*) was the only *dalīl*. The *maʿqūl al-naṣṣ,* however, was the product of human thought and deliberation. The human element in the process of *ijtihād* means that there is always the possibility and the risk of fallacy, no matter how methodologically-sound the arguments are. Thus, the early scholars did not hold that *ijtihād* of individuals could never give rise to *yaqīn*, but rather that it was to be identified solely with *ẓann*.

The other two primary methods of *ijtihād* were *istiḥsān* and *istiṣlāḥ*. *Istiḥsān* (from *ḥ-s-n;* to be good, beautiful, pleasing) is the principle of 'juristic preference' which allows for exceptions to be made in legal deliberation in favor of *maṣlahah* (public welfare, good). *Istiḥsān* allows the scholar to abandon a strict precedent, even if it is strong, in favor of a weaker one in order to achieve the true purpose of the law. As a principle in law-making, *istiḥsān* creates space for dynamic and progressive interpretation, and became prominent amongst Ḥanafī jurists though it was rejected as a method of *ijtihād* by the Shafiʿīs.[128]

Istiṣlāḥ (from *ṣ-l-ḥ;* to be good, right, proper) is the principle of 'seeking public interest' which is regarded as the purpose of Islamic law. Ibn Ḥanbal employed this principle in seeking solutions for legal issues which were most favorable in the general interest of the Muslim community. Though its use is limited to contexts in which there is a particular *ḍarurah* (necessity), *istiṣlāḥ* often entails the reinterpretation of the relevant texts (i.e. *uṣūl/nuṣūṣ)*. While *istiṣlāḥ* was incorporated as a defining principle of Mālikī methodology (and also a feature of Ḥanafī methodology), it was rejected by the Shafiʿī school.[129]

Ijtihād technically falls outside the bounds of the actual *uṣūl* (sources) of *fiqh* and is rather considered as a collection of methods by which *aḥkām* can be derived from the true sources.

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[128] Ali Bardakoğlu, "İstihsan," TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, 2001, accessed December 10, 2020, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/istihsan)

[129] Şükrü Özen, "İstislah," TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, 2001, accessed December 10, 2020, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/istislah)

Ijmāʿ on the other hand, is considered to be in itself a source of law. The concept of *ijmāʿ* (from *j-m-ʿ;* to bring together, collect), which refers to the clear consensus of the *mujtahid* community on a particular matter was accepted by the Sunnis as a conclusive proof of the soundness and bindingness of a *ḥukm*. Given the fact that the independent *qiyās* of scholars could differ greatly on the same issues, *ijmāʿ* became a central doctrine in the scholarly efforts to unify the Muslim ummah across time and space. *Ijmāʿ* occupied such an important role in matters of religion (*all* matters because from the Islamic perspective all human acts are subject to a *ḥukm sharʿī*) that it came to be considered "the firm pillar on which the religion is founded."[130]

3.4.2 *Ijmāʿ*

Ijmāʿ is divided into two categories: *ṣariḥ* (clear/manifest) and *sukūkī* (silent). *Ijmāʿ ṣariḥ*, is quite rare, and only applies to the most basic tenets of Islamic practice, i.e. the *uṣūl a*nd not the *furuʾ* (branches) of the *dīn*. It is considered to be a definitive proof for the validity of a *ḥukm* and thus is granted the status of *qatʾ*. The status of the *ijmāʿ sukūtī* as a *dalīl*, is, however, debated. The Ḥanafī school eventually came to accept both the *ijmāʿ ṣariḥ* and the *ijmāʿ sukūtī* as conclusive and binding proofs, while the Malikīs and the Shafiʿīs rejected the latter as a proof in matters of legal significance.[131] All three schools, however, accept the matters of *ijmāʿ ṣariḥ* as *yaqīn*, the renunciation of which is tantamount to *kufr*.

What qualifies as *ijmāʿ* is also subject to certain standards and conditions, the most basic of which is that the *ijmāʿ* is the consensus of the *mujtahidīn* on a matter*,* not of the laypeople.[132] Because *ijmāʿ* is not a direct source of *fiqh* through Revelation in the same way that the Qurʾān and *sunnah* are, its permissibility as a proof (*ḥujjah*) in matters of law itself had initially to be proven. The standing of *ijmāʿ* as a *ḥujjah* in matters of *fiqh* was thus established by reference to various *āyāt* and *ḥadīth* which emphasized the status and nature of the Muslim collective as a protection against deviation and falsehood. For example, God reminds the *ummah* that "We have made you [believers] into a just community, so that you may bear witness [to the truth] before

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[130] Jonathan Brown, 17.
[131] Apaydin, 69.
[132] Although there were some like Baqillani who argued that *ijmāʿ* was not limited to the *mujtahidun* and encompassed all people of *karamah*, that is honor and respectability. (Apaydin, 71)

others and so that the Messenger may bear witness [to it] before you,"[133] and that they the"[Believers], you are the best community singled out for people: you order what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in God."[134] In terms of the ḥadīth which were often used as a proof of the validity and bindingness of *ijmā*ʿ, scholars often cited "My ummah will never unite upon error" and similar *ḥadīth* to support *ijmā*ʿ as a binding source of law."[135]

3.4.3 *Al-kitāb* and *Al-sunnah*

In terms of epistemological standing, the Qur'ān and *sunnah* are given precedence over *ijmā*ʿ which occupies the third rung in the hierarchy of *adillah*, though some hold that this order reflects a hierarchy of *sharaf* (dignity) only, and not epistemological strength, because unlike the Qur'ān and *sunnah*, *ijmā*ʿ itself is not open to *naskh* (abrogation) or *takhṣīṣ* (delimitation/specification), or any other form of critique or interpretation.[136] In a certain sense, even the *sunnah* itself can be considered to be validated through the *ijmā*ʿ of the scholars.[137]

3.4.4 *Qiyās*

The fourth source in *fiqh* is *qiyās*. In order to establish the permissibility of *qiyās* as a source of *fiqh,* the scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* had to first establish that the *naṣṣ* itself was open to *taʿlīl* (justification/explanation on the basis of an ʿ*illah*). That is to say, they had to first establish that the *sharīʿah* as expressed in the *naṣṣ* could be explained in such a way as to allow for the identification of an ʿ*illah* by which the *ḥukm* could be extended to other matters sharing in that ʿ*illah*.

The majority of Sunni scholars of *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* argued therefore in favor of the possibility of *taʿlīl* of the texts, on the basis that there was an underlying Divine *ḥikmah*

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[133] 2:143
[134] 3:110
[135] "Jami` at-Tirmidhi Book of Al-Fitan Hadith 2167 - Muflihun," Muflihun.com, accessed May 26, 2021, https://muflihun.com/tirmidhi/33/2167.
[136] Apaydin, 74.
[137] See Danial Brown's first chapter in *Rethinking tradition in Modern Islamic though,* for a more thorough discussion of the ways in which *ahl al-ḥadīth* and *ahl al-raʾy* came to influence each other and how, "tradition" came to be validated through doctrines like *ijmā*ʿ and vice versa.

(wisdom) and *maṣlaḥah* in all of God's acts and decrees—even if there was some uncertainty or unclarity in the texts themselves. The fact that Divine decrees could be subject to * taʿlīl* did not, however, necessitate the idea that *all* decrees were subject to *taʿlīl*. Thus, there developed in *uṣūl* literature a distinction between the texts that are open to *taʿlīl* and those that are not. The latter category are understood to be texts which cannot be explained or understood by way of reason, but are rather accepted on the basis of *taʿabbud*. The term *taʿabbud* comes from *ʿ-b-d* which signifies worship within the semantic field of duty and obligation as of a servant or slave unto his master.[138] Matters, such as the number of cycles in a prayer or the number of wives allowed to a man, came to be considered *taʿabbudī* in *fiqh*. As such they were accepted on face value, without recourse to *taʿlīl*, because they fell outside of the realm of logical rationale and analysis.

Thus the *naṣṣ* came to be separated into two categories, as well: *maʿqūl al-maʿna/muʿallal/taʿlīlī* or *taʿabbudi*.[139] This was not to say, however, that *taʿabbudī* matters could not be rationalized in any way, but rather to say that where the *ḥukm* was *taʿabbudī*, it was not permissible for the scholars to challenge it, nor to build *qiyās* upon it. In other words if a *ḥukm* is *taʿabbudī*, it means that it imbibes no *ʿillah* which can be determined. If there is no *ʿillah* to be determined then there can be no *qiyās* drawn from it, because there is no shared basis from which to develop an analogy between two matters.

In general, the scholars seemed to accept that matters of *ʿibādah* were to be considered *taʿabbudī* while matters of *muʿāmalāt* were *taʿlīlī*.[140] Thus the domain of *taʿlīl* and *qiyās* was vast, encompassing almost all of human (inter)action on the individual and the communal level.

As for *qiyās* itself, it falls into two categories: *ʿaqlī* and *sharʿī*. As the terms imply, *qiyās ʿaqlī* relies on human reason, while *qiyas sharʿī* accepts as its basis an *aṣl* that is revealed in the *sharʿ* (i.e. the Revelation/*naṣṣ*). The only thing which separates the *qiyās sharʿī* from the *ʿaqlī* is that the *sharʿī* is based on an *āyah* or *ḥadīth*. Aside from this, the process of *qiyās sharʿī* is not different from *qiyās ʿaqlī*. The scholars of *kalām* engaged in both kinds of *qiyās*, though their

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[138] Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic (Arabic-English)*, ed. J. Milton Cowan (Urbana, IL: Spoken Languages Services, 2002), s.v. " ʿ-b-d."
[139] Apaydin, 87.
[140] Ibid., 88.

ultimate purpose was to defend the basic tenets of faith like *tawḥīd* and *nubuwwah* purely rationally, through which they established also the logical foundation for all other tenets which were known only through Revelation.

In *fiqh*, *qiyās* is defined as the analogical process by which the *ḥukm* established in an *aṣl* (*āyah*, *ḥadīth*, or *ijmāʿ*) is extended to a *farʿ* (branch) with which it shares an *ʿillah*. Though it may be a subtle point, in the epistemic scheme of *fiqh*, *qiyās* is considered a process of *iẓhār* (uncovering) of an existing *ḥukm* rather than the *ithbāt* (establishment) of a new one.[141] That is, *qiyās* is a process of bringing to light a *ḥukm* established by God on a matter, which heretofore had remained hidden or unknown.

3.4.4.1 The Justification for *Qiyās*

Given that *qiyās* relies on human comprehension and rationale, and applies to matters of *muʿāmalāt* which are also complex and multifaceted, the entire process can at best give rise to *al-ẓann al-ghālib.* The scholars justified their reliance on *qiyās* in matters of legal import based on various verses, *ḥadīth*, matters of *ijmāʿ* and also through the example set by the *ṣaḥabah*. Primary among these proofs was the verse which declares, "We have left nothing out of the Book."[142] The scholars used this verse as a conclusive proof that *qiyās* was permissible because, while it claims that no matters have been left out of "*al-kitāb*," the vast majority of matters relating to human existence are not mentioned explicitly in it. In fact, of the approximately six-thousand verses in the Quran, only about five-hundred are considered to be verses of legal import.[143] That is to say, the actual *naṣṣ* of the Quran—even if we consider it to be extended through the prophetic *sunnah*—is quite limited with regard to its scope and the *aḥkām* it clearly and explicitly establishes, such that most considerations in Man's life, unless their *aḥkām* are derived from principles contained therein, cannot be considered to be contained within it. As the verse affirms, the Qur'ān has not omitted any matter, the only logical conclusion, therefore, must

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[141] Ibid., 90.
[142] 6:38
[143] Apaydin, 313.

be that while there is guidance on all matters of Man's existence contained within the Qur'ān, that guidance simply needs to be sought out and where necessary, unveiled.

Another verse which is commonly used to support the case of *qiyās* as a source of law is the verse which commands the *ulū'l-abṣār* (those of insight) to consider the precedent set by the case of those who came before them, and seek insight for their own affairs.[144] The ḥadīth of Muʿādh is also used as a strong proof for the permissibility of *qiyās*. The narration goes as follows:

> When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) intended to send Mu'adh ibn Jabal to the Yemen, he asked: How will you judge when the occasion of deciding a case arises?
> He replied: I shall judge in accordance with Allah's Book. He asked: (What will you do) if you do not find any guidance in Allah's Book? He replied: (I shall act) in accordance with the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).
> He asked: (What will you do) if you do not find any guidance in the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and in Allah's Book?
> He replied: I shall do my best to form an opinion (*ajtahidū ra'yī*) and I shall spare no effort. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) then patted him on the breast and said: Praise be to Allah Who has helped the messenger of the Messenger of Allah to find something which pleases the Messenger of Allah.[145]

Through proofs like these, the *fuqahā'* established the place of *qiyās* in their methodology.

3.4.4.2 Necessary Conditions for *Qiyās*

The scholars of *uṣūl* later clarified the conditions under which *qiyās* is permissible:

1) the ḥukm of the aṣl is not *makhṣūṣ* (specific/limited) as in to the prophet or to a particular member of society in a particular context,

2) the ḥukm of the aṣl is not *taʿabudī* nor an *istithnā'* (exception to the general rule) as in the case of one who mistakenly consumes water during his fast; under normal circumstances the consumption of anything would nullify one's fast, but there is an

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[144] 59:2
[145] Sunan Abi Dawud, Book of al-ʿAqdiyah, 11; also in Jami' al-Tirmidhi, Book of al-Ahkam, 7.

exception to this general rule in the case of one who genuinely forgets he is fasting and consumes something,

3) the *ḥukm* which is to be extended from the *aṣl* to the *far'* is clearly established in the *naṣṣ,*

4) the *far'* itself does not diverge from the *aṣl* in either its *'illah* or *ḥukm,*

5) during the process of transferring the *ḥukm* from the *aṣl* to the *far'*, the *ḥukm* does not undergo any *taghyīr* (alteration),

6) there is no *naṣṣ* which gives a *ḥukm* for the *far'* in itself.[146]

The *'illah* itself is defined as a *waṣf* (attribute/property) of the original *ḥukm* which must be: *munāsib* (applicable) both by *shar'ī* and *'aqlī* rationale (i.e. the link between the *ḥukm* and the *'illah* must be clearly deducible), *ẓāhir* (clear), and *munḍabit* (constant/unchanging).[147]

3.4.5 *Istinbāṭ*

The process by which the *'illah* is derived from the *naṣṣ*, is the same as the process by which the *ḥukm* is derived. This process is referred to as '*istinbāṭ*' in the literature of *uṣūl.* Linguistically, the term '*istinbāṭ*' means to derive water from a well, and in *uṣūl* literature, it refers to the derivation of a *ḥukm* (legal ruling) or *'illah*, through any method of *ijtihād* for an issue on which there is no existing *naṣṣ*.[148]

The scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* developed a very sophisticated methodology for deriving the *aḥkām* (and also the *'ilal*) from the *naṣṣ*, focused necessarily on the *lafẓ* (word) itself. In *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the *lafẓ* of the Qur'ān and *sunnah* are analyzed in terms of both form (*lafẓ*) and meaning (*ma'nā*). While there came to be two distinct paths in *uṣūl al-fiqh*—what came to be known as *tariqat al-mutakallimīn* (associated with the Shafi'ī school) and *tariqat al-fuqahā'* (associated with the

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146 Apaydin, 100-2.
147 Apaydin, 195.
148 Ferhat Koca, "İstinbat," TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, 2001, accessed December 10, 2020, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/istinbat)

Ḥanafī school), —the general discussions about *istinbāṭ* revolved around the same issues in both circles.[149]

The terms *istinbāṭ*, *ijtihād*, *qiyās*, *ra'y*, and even *fiqh* which are all used to refer to the processes by which *aḥkām* can be rationally extrapolated from the *naṣṣ* thus came to overlap in many ways. Another closely related term is *istidlāl*. Linguistically, *istidlāl* (from *d-l-l* to guide, to demonstrate, to lead) means to seek out a path or guidance. In *uṣūl* terminology, *istidlāl* refers specifically to the process by which the meaning of the Qur'ān and *sunnah* comes to be known. This process of interpretation of the meaning relies on the *dalālah* (signification) of the *lafẓ* (word/sign) and the *naẓm* (structure) of the text with regards to the actual *ma'na* (meaning/signified). With the ultimate goal of reaching understanding of the true meaning of the texts, the scholars of *uṣūl* developed a very sophisticated, multiplex approach to interpreting the *dalālah* of the *lafẓ*.

3.4.6 *Istidlāl Lafẓī*

The first consideration in approaching the Qur'ān or the *sunnah* with the intention of deducing from them legal rulings, is of course correctly understanding the language of the *naṣṣ* itself. In order to clearly identify the true meaning of the *naṣṣ*, the *mujtahid* must have a solid grasp on the precise signification and implication of the words themselves, when taken individually and when taken together. It was for the purpose of guiding the *mujtahid* through this process then that the scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* developed their methodology for the classification of words and their usages through *istidlāl* from the text.

The primary basis for this type of *istidlāl* was established through the study of linguistic conventions of the Arabic language, not the *shar'*. As such, the branches of knowledge associated with this kind of textual *istidlāl* are not considered to be *sharʿī* sciences, but rather fall

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[149] For a more thorough discussion on this see: Davut İltaş, "Fıkıh Usūlü Yazımında 'Kelamcilar Yöntemi Ve Fakihler Yöntemi' Ayrımlaşmasının Mahiyeti Üzerine," *Bilimname* XVII, no. 2 (2009): pp. 65-95.

into the category of auxiliary sciences which are necessary to aid the *'ulama'* in their process of understanding the *sharī'ah*.

In the case of texts which are *ẓāhir* (self-evident) in terms of their true meaning and implication, there is generally no need for *ijtihād*. The vast majority of issues dealt with in *fiqh,* however, are not referenced in clear and explicit terms in any *naṣṣ*. The function of the *mujtahid* then is to try to understand the *naṣṣ*, based on the linguistic indications contained therein, in order to discover the intention of the *shāri'* (Lawgiver). In *fiqh* then, seeking the *ma'nā* of a text always refers to the process of trying to understand and interpret the *murād* (intention) of the *shāri'* (i.e. God) from it.

This process of *istidlāl* only applies to the interpretation of that which is not *ẓāhir*. Thus, the ultimate goal of the *mujtahid* is to determine (and prove as methodically as possible), the intent of the Lawgiver in matters which have been left unexpressed or undefined by Him, through necessary inference from the context of the text.

The scholars of *uṣūl* came to analyze *al-lafẓ* across three axes: *shumūl* (scope), *wuḍūḥ* (clarity)*, and *isti'māl* (usage) to convey a particular meaning.

3.4.6.1 *Shumūl*

In terms of *shumūl*, words are classified as: *'āmm* (general), *khāss* (limited/specific), *mushtarak* (homonym), or *mu'awwal* (derived/interpreted). This classification takes into account the semantic value of words with reference to concepts, i.e. whether a word signifies one or more than one meaning and whether a word carries a general or specific import. In the case of *mushtarak* words which may signify more than one concept, the intended meaning must be inferred based on the context clues and indicators in the text as well as outside of it, such as the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (reason or incidence for the revelation of a text). This process of inference and deliberation on the possible meanings a word can imbibe in order to identify the most likely *murād* in a given context, is called *ta'wīl*. The *mushtarak* word whose intended meaning in a

particular context becomes clear through the *ta'wīl* of a *mujtahid* rises to the status of *mu'awwal*.[150]

While there is general agreement that the *khāṣṣ* is *qaṭʿī* (definitive/conclusive) in its import, the scholars have differed as to whether the *ʿāmm* is *qaṭʿī* or *ẓanni* (speculative). While in the Ḥanafī school, the application of *ʿāmm* to all that it includes is considered *qaṭʿī*, the Shafiʿīs, Mālikīs and Ḥanbalīs, maintain that the *ʿāmm* is subject to *takhṣīṣ* (specification/limitation) and *ta'wīl* depending on the context, i.e. it does not necessarily apply to all its constituents in all cases.

Because there is always a possibility that certain individuals generally included within the scope of *ʿāmm* can be excluded from it on some basis, the *hukm* of the *ʿāmm* is not *qaṭʿī* (definitive). The result of this disagreement becomes clear when a conflict arises between an *'āmm* of the Qur'ān and a *khāṣṣ* of *ḥadīth*, especially where the *ḥadīth* is *aḥād*. The majority view holds that an *aḥād ḥadīth* can delimit a general provision of the Qur'ān because the *'āmm* of the Qur'ān is *ẓannī*, while the *khāṣṣ* of a *ḥadīth*, though *qaṭʿī* (definitive) in *dalālah*, is *ẓannī* (speculative) in *thubūt*. What is *ẓannī* may however be specified by that which is of equal or higher epistemic standing, i.e. by either a *dalīl qaṭʿī* or another *dalīl ẓannī*.[151]

For the Ḥanafīs, however, the Qur'ānic *'āmm* is considered *qaṭʿī* while the weak or solitary *ḥadīth*, or even *qiyās*, is considered *ẓannī*. Thus, following the maxim that the *qaṭʿī* cannot be limited or specified by the *ẓannī*, the Qur'ānic *'āmm* takes epistemic precedence in this case.[152]

Muṭlaq (from *ṭ-l-q*; to loosen, disengage, free) denotes a word which is unspecified and unqualified in its usage and application. When we use words like 'girl,' 'tree,' or 'food' each is considered a generic noun which can apply to any girl, tree, or food without restriction. The *muṭlaq* differs from the *'āmm* in that the latter encompasses all individuals to which it applies

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[150] Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī , *Sharḥ Samt Al-Wuṣul Ilā 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl* (Damam, Saudi Arabia: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 2010), 136.
[151] Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2011), 105.
[152] Ibid.

whereas the former applies to one individual within a possible multitude of individuals, but not necessarily to all.

When the *muṭlaq* is qualified it becomes *muqayyad* (from *q-y-d*; to restrain, limit), i.e. qualifying 'a girl' to 'a tall girl' or 'a tree' to 'a maple tree.' The *muqayyad* differs from the *khāṣṣ* in that the former implies an individual (or individuals) in possession of a certain attribute or qualification who remains unspecified beyond this, i.e. any individual possessing these qualities falls into this category. The latter, that is the *khāṣṣ*, specifies the individual constituent or constituents precisely.

3.4.6.2 *Wuḍūḥ*

In terms of *wuḍūḥ* (from *w-ḍ-ḥ*; to be/become clear, plain, manifest), the scholars of *uṣūl* have categorized the *lafẓ* into two main categories: *ẓāhir* (clear) and *khafī* (unclear/ambiguous), each of which comprises four sub-categories. Words, as such, are graded as anywhere from *mutashābih* (doubtful/obscure), the lowest rung of the *khafī*, to *muḥkam* (precise, definitive), the highest rung of the *ẓāhir*.

This eight-tier system of classification is especially important in ascertaining the bounds of and implications of *al-amr* (imperative) and *al-nahy* (prohibition) as they appear in the text. The task of evaluating what exactly is entailed by a command (or prohibition) and for whom relies on the ability of the *mujtahid* to ascertain as precisely as possible what can be inferred from the linguistic form of the text itself through which it is conveyed.

A word which conveys a concept clearly, i.e. the *ẓāhir*, is intelligible without recourse to interpretation or explanation. A *ḥukm* expressed in *ẓāhir* terms thus constitutes the basis of obligation, without occasion for *ta'wīl* (from *'-w-l*; to return to, spring from, derive from; interpretation). An ambiguous or unclear word, however, cannot form the conclusive basis for a *ḥukm* unless its meaning is clarified. Thus, a *khafī* text in need of clarification cannot be used to mandate *'amal* (acts).

If, however, the *murād* of a *khafī* word can be clarified through *ta'wīl* based on evidence found outside of the text, that is in the conventional usage of the people, or circumstantial information that might have impacted the text then the word is considered *mu'awwal* and can be used as a *dalīl ẓanni* for *istinbāṭ* of a *ḥukm*.

Ta'wīl refers to the process by which a term is designated a meaning other than its *rājiḥ* (primary) or *ẓāhir* (manifest) signification, where there are grounds for such a departure. *Ta'wīl* is limited as such to the interpretation of a word based on its semantic and syntactic possibilities, and anyone who has knowledge of the language can engage in *ta'wīl* to an equal degree.

Ijtihād, however is a more general term used to refer to the processes by which the *aḥkām* are derived from the texts through various methods of analysis and reasoning (that are not solely linguistic). Because *ijtihād* is a complex and multifaceted activity, many factors can affect one's ability and proficiency in it. For example, the *ijtihād* of the *ṣaḥabah* is given preference over the *ijtihād* of later generations because they were closer in proximity to the prophet and thus had deeper and more direct knowledge of the *aḥkām* as he interpreted and applied them in his own life.

3.4.6.2.1 The *Ẓāhir* and its Rungs

Returning then to the discussion of the classification of the *lafẓ*, the '*ẓāhir*' is divided into four ranks beginning with *ẓāhir* which is clear in itself but can be subject to further clarification or delimitation through *naskh* (abrogation), *ta'wīl*, and *takhṣīṣ* (specification/delimitation). While ʿamal is obligatory upon the *ẓāhir* meaning, the possibility of its *ta'wīl* by the *mujtahid* means that epistemologically speaking the *murād* of such a text cannot be known with *yaqīn* (*yajibū bihi al-ʿamalu dūn al-ʿilm*). In other words, one may believe that the true *murād* and thus the true *ḥukm* of a text is other than that which it is interpreted to be by the *mujtahid*, though they are not absolved of acting upon the *ḥukm* of the *mujtahid*.

The next class of *ẓāhir* words is *naṣṣ* (determinate, explicit). The *naṣṣ* is the same as the *ẓāhir* in terms of that which it compels (*al-ʿamal dūn al-ʿilm*), and that to which it is subject (i.e. *ta'wīl*,

takhṣīṣ, *naskh*). The only reason it is given precedence over the *ẓāhir* in its standing, is because the *naṣṣ* appears in a text of which it is the primary subject. That is, the text seems to have been revealed in order to describe the term in question, i.e. the *naṣṣ*.

The next rung of the *ẓāhir* is occupied by the *mufassar* (from *f-s-r*; to be explained, elucidated, unequivocal). Unlike the *ẓāhir* and the *naṣṣ*, the *mufassar* is a term which was formerly *khafī*, but has been definitively explained and clarified through either *bayān al-tafsīr* or *bayān al-taqrīr*. *Bayān al-tafsīr* refers to an explanation or clarification of an ambiguous (*mujmal*) word, while *bayān al-taqrīr* refers to a definitive explanation or clarification of an 'āmm word such that it is no longer open to *takhṣīṣ*, or of a *khāṣṣ* word such that it is no longer open to *ta'wīl*. This kind of *tafsīr* is similar to *ta'wīl* in that serves to clarify an ambiguous text and to uncover the *murād* of the *shāri'* but rather than being an interpretation proffered by the *mujtahid, tafsīr* is a clarification the text made by the *shāri'* Himself through another text (or a continuation of that same text). It is thus referred to as *tafsir tashrī'ī*, and is considered an integral part of the law. Beyond this, there may be another form of *tafsīr* deduced from the indications contained within the text itself (not from an outside source), which constitute a necessary and logical part of it. Any other explanations of ambiguous texts (i.e. *ta'wīl*), which do not derive directly from the *shāri'* are necessarily the result of *ijtihād* and as such do not constitute an integral parts of the law.

The highest rank of *alfāẓ* in terms of *wuḍūḥ* is the *muḥkam* (definitive). This category of words supersedes the *mufassar* because unlike the latter, the *muḥkam* is not subject to *naskh*. That is, its *ḥukm* cannot be abrogated.

The scholars held that although *'amal* upon the *aḥkām* contained with the *ẓāhir* texts is mandatory, firm belief that the conclusions of the scholars (in matters of *ta'wīl* and *ijtihād*) reflects the true *murād* of the texts is not. Rather, it is incumbent upon the believer to accept the truth of the *murād* itself, whether he believes it has been sufficiently understood and articulated through the *ijtihād* of the *fuqahā'* or not.

3.4.6.2.2 The *Khafī* and its Rungs

As for the *khafī*, it too is divided into four categories depending upon whether the ambiguity is a result of the nature of the word itself, or whether the ambiguity arises from some *'āriḍ* (external factor): the *khafī, mushkil, mujmal,* and *mutashābih*.

Of these, the *khafī* is the least ambiguous. The word in itself has a clear meaning, yet due to some *'āriḍ* outside of the text, an ambiguity arises. The classic example of a *khafī* term is "*al-sāriq*" in verse 5:38. The word itself is clear in terms of its meaning "thief," however, there arises a question about whether other forms of theft such as pick-pocketing and grave-robbing also fall under the category of theft which is addressed in this verse.

The *mushkil* is that which is less clear than the *khafī* due to an ambiguity in itself. In other words, what the term itself signifies is not clear. A classic example of this kind of term is "*annā*" in 2:223. Linguistically, the term can mean with "how" or "where," and thus there arises a need for clarification before any *ḥukm* can be deduced. In both the case of the *khafī* and the *mushkil*, the inherent ambiguity of terms can be clarified by means of *ṭalab* (research into the possible meanings) and *ijtihād* such that they can rise to the status of *ẓāhir* or *naṣṣ*. When the ambiguity cannot be resolved by *ta'wīl* of the *mujtahid*, and can only be addressed by *tafsīr* from the *shāri'*, the word falls to the rank of *mujmal* (ambivalent) or *mutashābih* (obscure).

The *mujmal* refers to a word or text which is inherently unclear and for which no indication as to its *murād* exists within or without the text, and cannot be gleaned except through the *tafsīr* of the *shari'*. An example of a *mujmal* term would be a *mushtarak* word which can denote more than one possible meaning without any indication as to which of the possible meanings is the correct one. Another type of a *mujmal* is a word which is used by the *shāri'* in a novel way which diverges from its primary signification as established in the conventional usage of the language. Words like *ribah* and *ṣalāh* fall into this category. In conventional usage, *ribah* (from *r-b-w*) signifies general growth or increase. Through the *ḥadīth* and *sunnah*, however, *ribah* came to take on a technical and juridical meaning which applied to certain kinds of usurious interest in certain types of interactions. In the case of *ṣalāh*, the term originally meant to pray or supplicate, but came to be established through the *sunnah* as the five daily prayers which were to be

performed in a particular way. Thus, this type of *mujmal* word came, through the *shar'*, to signify other than that which had formerly been its primary linguistic or literal meaning. After *tafsīr* through the *sunnah*, *mujmal* terms like *ribah* and *ṣalāh* are considered *mufassar*.

The most ambiguous of all *alfāẓ*, the *mutashābih* denotes a word whose meaning is a completely unknown. There is no indication provided in the text in which they which suggests their possible meaning. An example of a *mutashābih* word are *al-muqaṭṭa'āt* which appear at the start of certain surahs in the Qur'ān. The *al-muqaṭṭa'āt* are words formed by unfamiliar sequences of letters which have no conventional signification in the Arabic language. There is no indication in the *nuṣūṣ* as to the meaning of these abbreviated letters, some of which appear in the same formation across different chapters (i.e. *alif lām mīm, alif lām rā'*). Rather, they remain a complete mystery relegated to the realm of Divine knowledge alone. Thus, though the *mutashābih* is allotted a place in the methodological framework of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, it is not in itself a matter of interest in discussions of *fiqh* and *istidlāl* or *ijtihad*. Rather, the correct action of *mujtahid* when he encounters a *mutashābih* term is, *tawaqquf* (from *w-q-f*; to stop, cease, halt).

For *khafī* terms, just as *ẓāhir* terms, the ultimate ruling is to believe in the truth of the *murād*, whether or not clarification as to what the *murād* is can be reached, and where applicable, to try and reflect upon its true meaning, and seek it out through reason and analogical interpretation.

3.4.6.2.3 The Purpose of Ranking Words by *Wuḍūḥ*

The primary purpose for establishing this complex system of interpretation and epistemological ranking was to identify which words (in the source texts) are open to *ta'wīl*, (i.e. which words can admit a meaning other than their apparent meaning, and whether or not they are open to *naskh*). If a word cannot accept either of these possibilities, then its primary meaning is established as the only possible meaning without the option of alternative interpretation. This is also the default position—to assume that any given text is meant to communicate its most apparent meaning unless there is a reason to assume otherwise. The terms which fall within the range of *ta'wīl* are the *ẓāhir,* the *naṣṣ*, the *khafī,* and the *mushkil*, while all other categories of *alfāẓ* do not. The *mufassar* and the *muḥkam* fall outside of the realm of human *ta'wīl* because

they have been clarified sufficiently by the *shāriʿ*, while the ambiguity of the *mujmal* and the *mutashābih* is so profound that it cannot be clarified except by the *shāriʿ*.

The secondary purpose for establishing this framework is to provide guidelines for the resolution of conflicts between words of different epistemic standing. Words take interpretive and legal precedence based on their epistemic ranking in the hierarchy of *alfāẓ*. The clearest and most definitive of all words, the *muḥkam,* prevails over the *mufassar* and the *mufassar* over the *naṣṣ* and so on. This order of priority is only applied if the conflicting text both appear in the Qurʾān.

3.4.6.3 *Istiʿmāl*

There are two forms of *istiʿmāl* (usage): *ḥaqīqah* (literal sense) and *majāz* (metaphor). When a word is used to denote its literal or primary meaning, it is considered *ḥaqīqah*. When a word is used to denote other than its literal meaning but with which there is some *munāsabah* (logical correlation), it is considered *majāz*.

While it is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss the many possible forms of metaphorical usage a word may take, suffice to say that as a principle in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, while both *ḥaqīqah* and *majāz* are possible in any text, they are not possible simultaneously. That is, a single text cannot be interpreted as both *ḥaqīqah* and *majāz*, rather it is the work of the *mujtahid* to ascertain which of the two is more likely the case. As noted, by default, words denote their literal meaning and thus in the context of *fiqh*, it is the *haqīqī* usage of words which takes precedence over the *majāz* wherever possible. Unless there is a clear reason as to why the literal sense cannot apply in a given context, the literal sense is accepted as the only interpretation.

The *ḥaqīqah* and *majāz* are also subject to classification based on how directly they are expressed: *ṣariḥ* (direct, unambiguous) and *kināyah* (indirect, allusive). If a speaker expresses his intent directly, such that there is no occasion for doubt or interpretation, his words are considered *ṣariḥ*. If he speaks in an indirect way which obscures or at least does not clearly express his intent, his speech is considered *kināyah*.

Whether a text can be classified as *ṣariḥ* or *kināyah*, is separate from the *haqiqah-majāz* consideration. Thus, any text which is understood as *haqiqah* can be *ṣariḥ* or *kināyah* and so too for any *majāz*.

For example, there can be a clear metaphor such as, "Her smile is like the sun," where the subject, "her smile," is likened to the sun for its brightness, warmth, and uplifting effect on those around her. When used to describe a non-Turk, the metaphor, "She is a Turk," however, is less direct. There may be either a positive or a negative connotation to "Turk-ness" in the mind of the speaker. Depending on how the speaker intends such a metaphor, he may be associating certain qualities like generosity, hospitality, politeness with Turk-ness or he may be associating other qualities. In either case, the *majāz* is not straightforward and requires context and possibly clarification and so is considered *kināyah*.

The (epistemic) strength and bindingness of a *ḥukm* is to a large extent determined by the type of language in which it is communicated or from which it is derived. Legal scholars must distinguish between words and establish an order of epistemic precedence in order resolve contradictions or conflicts in the sources when they arise.

Even with standards and guidelines to help classify words in place, the scholars may differ in how they interpret texts. The purpose of *uṣūl al-fiqh* is to help systematize the methods by which scholars interpret texts such that, though human interpretations of the nature and meanings of words are necessarily a matter of *ijtihād* and thus *ẓann,* all such interpretations are at least based thoroughly in logical rules of interpretation which make it possible to entertain discussions amongst scholars about the *truth* of the *murād* of the sources and the *ahkām*.

3.4.7 *Dalālah*

In addition to the aspects we have already discussed—*wuḍūḥ*, *shumūl*, *istiʿmāl*—the text is also analyzed on the various levels of possible meaning which can be deduced from it, i.e. its *dalālah*.

The scholars of *usul* identified four primary levels from which a text's *dalālah* can be inferred: *al-'ibārah* (verbal expression), *al-ishārah* (allusions/indications), *dalālat al-naṣṣ* (inferred meaning), and *al-iqtiḍā'*(required/necessitated meaning).

Another, perhaps clearer way to conceive this axis of analysis is to conceive it as *istidlāl* through these four levels of analysis, i.e. *istidlāl bi-'ibārat al-naṣṣ, istidlāl bi-ishārat al-naṣṣ, istidlāl bi-dalālat al-naṣṣ, istidlāl bi-iqtiḍā'al-nass*.

3.4.7.1 *'Ibārat al-naṣṣ*

Istidlāl bi-'ibārat al-naṣṣ is *istidlāl* through the words and syntactic structure of the text. It is the clearest, most definitive, and thus the most authoritative level of analysis. The meanings derived through *istidlāl bi-'ibārat al-naṣṣ* take precedence over meaning derived from the other three forms of *dalālah*. Beyond this level of primary and explicit signification, a text may contain certain indications and allusions from which a secondary level of signification can be deduced. This level of signification is called *ishārat al-naṣṣ*.

3.4.7.2 *Ishārat al-naṣṣ*

This level of signification may be quite obvious to the reader upon first encounter, but it also may require some level of investigation into and reflection upon the signs contained with the text itself. The *ishārat al-naṣṣ* does not represent the primary theme of the text, but rather a necessary inference from it. The concept of *ishārat al-naṣṣ* can be understood through the example of the verse in the Qur'ān concerning the support and maintenance of children, "*wa 'ala'l-mawlūdi lahu rizquhunna wa kiswatihinna bi-l-maʿrūf.*" Based on the pronoun "*lahu*" in the *'ibārah*, we can conclude that it is the father's duty to maintain his child. To conclude that it is *solely* the father who bears this duty, or that the child's descent and identity must be attributed *solely* to his father cannot be concluded based on the *'ibarah* alone. This meaning must be derived rationally through *istidlāl* based on subtle indicators, that is *dalālah*, contained in the text.

3.4.7.3 *Dalālat al-naṣṣ*

The third level of signification is not actually indicated by anything contained within the text itself, but which is a complementary meaning understood from the logical and *sharʿī* context and spirit of the text. Unlike the meaning derived from the *ʿibārah* and the *ishārah*, the *dalālat al-naṣṣ* is not indicated by the words and signs present within the text. There are two types of *dalālat al-nass*: *mafhūm al-muwāfaqah* and *mafhūm al-mukhālafah*.

For *mafhūmu al-muwāfaqah*, there is a text, which has a clear and explicit meaning. Analysis of the text allows for the identification of an *ʿillah* from which an analogy can be drawn to infer another level of meaning which encompasses a matter which shares the same ʿ*illah*. Due the similarity between this second matter and the first, in terms of its *ʿillah*, the second matter (not referenced in the original text) is considered *muwāfaq* (from *w-f-q*; *corresponding*, analogous) to the first. An example of this form of *istidlāl* is the prohibition of physically hitting one's parents in light of the verse which commands man, "*la taqul lahuma uffin*."[153] The verse explicitly prohibits the saying even of "uffin," i.e. scoffing at ones parent's. Scoffing at or speaking words which express impatience with one's parents is prohibited, because it can be unkind, harsh, and disrespectful to them. Based on this reasoning, then, the act of physically hitting or harming one's parents which is much harsher and more disrespectful than *ta'fīf* (scoffing), must be even more emphatically prohibited. Hitting one's parents shares the same ʿ*illah* as *ta'fīf* and is thus prohibited on the same basis, and even more strongly than the latter. This conclusion then that hitting one's parents is prohibited is considered to be the *dalālat al-naṣṣ* as understood through *mafhūm al-muwāfaqah*. This type of *istidlāl* is accepted accross all schools *bi'l-ijmāʿ*.

Mafhūm al-mukhālafah (from *kh-l-f;* contradictory, opposing) refers to the logical deduction of the *ʿaqs (*opposite *ḥukm*) for what is *not* mentioned in the text (söyleyenden söyleyenin aksinin hükmüne geçmek). For example, from the *naṣṣ* which mentions that *ṣā'imah* (domestic) animals are subject to *zakāh*, it can be deduced that non-*ṣā'imah* animals (i.e. grazing animals) are *not* subject to *zakāh*. Hanafis do not accept *mafhūm al-mukhālafah* as a definitive form of *istidlāl/hujjah*, while the other schools do.

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[153] 17:23

Due the technical similarity between *istidlāl bi-dalālat al-naṣṣ* (especially *mafhum al-muwāfaqah*) and *qiyās* (analogical deduction), some scholars have equated the former with *qiyās jalī* (obvious analogy).

3.4.7.4 *Iqtiḍā' al-naṣṣ*

The final level of the meaning of a text is approached through analysis of the *al-iqtiḍā'* of the text, i.e. that meaning which logically proceeds from analysis of the text. This is a meaning which the text makes no allusion to, but without which the texts true objective and purpose cannot be gleaned. For example, while the word "*nikāh*" does not appear in the verse "…unlawful to you are your mothers and your daughters,"[154] the verse can only be understood correctly if we read "marriage" into it. Another example of a meaning known through *iqtiḍā' al-naṣṣ*, is the meaning of the *ḥadīth* "*rufiʿa ʿan ummatī al-khaṭā'u wa'l-nisyān wa mā ustukrihū ʿalayhi.*" If we were to understand the text based on the *ʿibarah* alone, we could come to the conclusion that Allah has lifted *al- khaṭā'u wa-l-nisyān* from the ummah of Muhammad, i.e. that his ummah will not make mistakes nor be forgetful. However, given that no human is infallible, such a meaning would go against the teachings of Islam and therefore cannot be true. Thus, the scholars interpret this *ḥadīth* to mean, "the *blame* has been lifted from my community for that which [they have committed] mistakenly, or mindlessly, and under force or duress." Though the word "blame" appears nowhere in the actual *ḥadīth*, only by reading it into the text can the text's true *murād* be understood.

3.4.7.5 Multiple Levels of *Dalālah*

Any legal text can be analyzed on any or all of these levels independently or in conjunction with each other. Each level of analysis adds a shade of meaning which can aid the *mujtahid* in his attempt to understand the text as well as the *sharʿī* and *ʿaqlī* conclusions which are necessarily drawn from it.

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[154] 4:22

This system of *istidlāl* based on the various levels of *dalālah* also establishes a hierarchy of signification to guide the *mujtahid* when there is a conflict between the 'ibarah and the *ishārah*. In such a case, priority is given to the 'ibarah, which embodies the clearest and most conclusive level of meaning. Similarly, the *isharat al-naṣṣ* takes precedence over the *dalalat al-naṣṣ*, and the *dalālat al-naṣṣ* over its *iqtiḍā'* in the case of conflict or contradiction.

In the grand scheme of *usūl al-fiqh,* analysis and *istidlāl* through the language of the text—whether it be on the level of individual words, that is in terms of their *wuḍūḥ, shumūl,* and *isti'māl,* or through their *dalālah*—is considered prior to (and given precedence over) *qiyās* and other forms of legal reasoning (like *istihsān* and *istiḥbāb).* Epistemologically speaking, the only texts which necessitate 'ilm (i.e. *yaqīn*), are those whose meanings are definitively known and established. Any texts that are less than decisive—which constitute the vast majority of texts—remain open to *ẓann* and *naẓar* through the form of independent interpretation (*ta'wīl*) and reasoning (*ijtihād*), and while never gain the status of certainty (*qaṭ'*), they yet form the basis for most knowledge and practice in Islam.

3.4.8 Classifying the *Sunnah*

As one of the four primary *uṣūl* of fiqh, the *sunnah*, what it is, and how it can be verified are also central topics in the *uṣūl* literature. While the scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* accept the basic standards of verification established in the *ḥadīth* sciences which are concerned with the *isnād*, they also analyze *ḥadīth* based on their content in order to ascertain which texts are authentic and which are not. Thus, the scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (and of course those engage in *fiqh* itself, for whom such classifications were originally developed) classify *ḥadīth* as: *al-mutaṣṣil* (the connected) and *al-munqaṭi'* (the disconnected, severed).

3.4.8.1 The *Mashhūr*

In addition to the categories of *al-mutāwātir* and *al-aḥād* which we have already discussed, the *fuqahā'* also give a special place to what is classified as the *mashhūr* (from *sh-h-r*; to be well-known, prominent). The *mashhūr* is a *ḥadīth* which was originally *aḥād* but which in the second (or third) generation of Islam became prominent, meeting the essential standards of *tawātur*. The fact that the *mashhūr* only reaches this status in the second or third generation, however, constitutes a *shubhah* (doubt) in its *sūrah* (form). As such, the existence of this *shubhah* in the *isnād* results in the downgrading of the epistemological status of the *mashhūr* from that of the *mutawātir*. While the scholars accept the *mutawātir* as the basis of *yaqīn*, they established a secondary classification of knowledge known through the *mashhūr*: *al-'ilm al-ṭuma'nīnah*.

The scholars define *al-'ilm al-ṭuma'nīnah* (from *ṭ-m-n;* to quiet, appease, pacify) as "*'ilmun taṭma'inu bihi al-nafs*" (knowledge through which the soul reaches peace/satisfaction). This kind of knowledge is so reassuring, that some may confuse it with *yaqīn*, but upon further inspection realize that it is not actually *yaqīn*, but rather *ẓann*.[155] That is why some define *al-'ilm al-ṭuma'nīnah* as *ẓann al-yaqīn* as opposed to *'ilm al-yaqīn*. Others refer to it as "yakine benzer zan" (conjecture which resembles certainty).[156]

3.4.8.2 The *Munqaṭi'*

The *munqaṭi'* is divided into two branches: *ẓāhir* (manifest) and *bāṭin* (hidden). If the *inqiṭā'* (break) is in the *isnād* of the *ḥadīth*, it is considered *ẓāhir*. If the *inqiṭā'* occurs in the meaning of the text or in an underlying weakness of one of the narrators, it is considered *bāṭin*.

In the context of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, this category refers specifically to the *ḥadīth murṣal* which are attributed to the prophet but which leave out one or more narrators from the chain, i.e. the *murṣal* of a *tābi'ī* (second generation) is a *ḥadīth* which he narrates without mentioning any direct

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[155] al-Āqḥiṣārī, 191.
[156] H. Yunus Apaydın, "Meşhur," TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi, 2004, accessed December 16, 2020, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/meshur)

companion. The *murṣal* is divided into four categories: *murṣal* of the first generation (a companion relates a ḥadīth he did not hear directly from the prophet by omitting another companion), of the second and third generation (of the *tābi‘īn* or *tābi‘ī tābi‘īn*), of any generation after the third, and the *murṣal* which is relayed also through another *muttaṣṣil* chain. The *murṣal* of the *ṣahābah* are accepted by *ijmā‘*. Abū Ḥanīfah also accepts the *murṣal* of the second and third generations as a proof for legal reasoning, though the status of the *murṣal* of any generation after the third is debated. The *murṣal* which is corroborated by a *musnad* (*muttaṣṣil*) narration is accepted as a proof by most scholars.

As for the *inqiṭā‘ bāṭinī* there are two possible cases. In the first case, there is a *nuqsan fi’l-nāqil* (lack/want in the transmitter), i.e. there is a problem ascertaining either his ‘*aql, ḍabt, ‘adālah*, or Islam. Because the narrator is problematic, the *ḥadīth* itself is considered problematic and classified as *munqaṭi‘*.

In terms of a conflict which arises from the meaning of a text, this can be a conflict with either: the Qur’ān, a *sunnah ma‘rūfah* (well-known tradition of the prophet), a *hādithah mashhūrah* (well-known and oft-repeated incident which many *ṣahabah* were witness to), or if the first generation had disagreement about it. The first two cases are clear, but an example of a *ḥadīth* which conflicts with a *hādithah mashhūrah* (also referred to as ‘*umūm al-balwā*) is Abū Huraira’s narration about the prophet reciting the *basmalah* aloud in prayer. Although all of the <u>sahabah</u> were witness to the prayers of the prophet, no other *sahabah* reports the prophet’s doing so. As such, Abū Hurairah’s account actually conflicts with other accounts which do not reference the prophet ever doing such a thing.[157]

In the case of a conflict regarding a *ḥadīth* amongst the first generation, we can look to the example of the prophet’s *ḥadīth* about the property of the orphan “*ibtaghou fi māli’l-yatāma khayra*.” Based on these words, the *ṣahabah* differed as to whether *zakāh* was required on the property of orphans or not. Because there was *ikhtilāf* even amongst the *ṣaḥabah* who were the

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[157] See: al-Āqḥiṣārī p. 297. Also: Mustafa Baktır, “Umûmü'l-Belvâ,” TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi, 2012, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/umumul-belva.

closest witnesses and thus the most reliable interpreters of the *sunnah*, this *ḥadīth* is considered *munqaṭiʿ*.

Both types of *inqiṭāʿ bāṭinī* —*nuqsān fiʾl-nāqil* and *li-muʿāriḍin*—are *mardūd* (rejected) amongst the scholars. Thus the *ḥadīth munqaṭiʿ* is not accepted as a basis for deriving *aḥkām* in *fiqh*. That is, it is not accepted as the basis for *ʿilm*.

3.4.9 Weighing the Strength of *Adillah* Against Each Other

Having explained the basis for *istidlāl* amongst the *fuqahāʾ*, it would be beneficial to offer a brief summary of the epistemological value and rank of these *adillah*, and how they are weighed against one another in the light of *taʿārruḍ* (conflict).

The basic principle established in *uṣūl al-fiqh* regarding *taʿārruḍ* (from *ʿ-r-ḍ*; to be opposite, incompatible, to conflict) is that the validity of a *dalīl* can only be challenged or brought into question based on a *dalīl* of the same or higher epistemic standing. That is, the *qaṭʿī* can only be brought into question by another *dalīl qaṭʿī*, never a *dalīl ẓannī*, as in the case of two verses of the Qurʾān, which seem to be in conflict, or an *ayāh* and a *ḥadīth mutawātir* whose *dalālah* is clearly established.

It is important to note here that within the epistemic scheme of *fiqh,* this kind of conflict between *qaṭʿī* proofs is not considered a real conflict, but rather it is understood as a manifestation of the inability or gap in the understanding of the purveyor as to the real meanings of the texts in question. That is to say, the Qurʾān and the authentic *ḥadīth* can never be in true conflict with each other (or themselves), because they constitute the Revelation itself. Rather, any apparent conflicts or inconsistence on the apparent level, can and must be resolved through a rational investigation of when the texts were revealed. Based on the dates of *nuzūl* (revelation), a temporal relationship between the proofs can be established by which to make a case for the *naskh* of the earlier text. This is even more so the case for *ẓannī* proofs like the *aḥād* narrations.

3.4.9.1 Three Possible Cases of *Ta'ārruḍ*

There are three possible situations for *ta'ārruḍ*: one *dalīl* is inherently stronger than the other (e.g. an *ayāh* and *qiyās*), one *dalīl* is stronger than the other in a particular aspect (*waṣf tābi'ī*) (e.g. two *ḥadīth* but the *rāwi* of one is a *faqīh* and so as he is considered stronger than the other, his narration also takes precedence), or they are equal in standing.

In the *ta'ārruḍ* of two proofs of equal standing the *faqīh* looks to:

1) the dates of *nuzūl* (or '*wurūd*' for *ḥadīth*) to ascertain which of the two is the *mansūkh* (abrogated);

2) if the dates of *nuzūl/wurūd* cannot be established, the *faqīh* looks to see whether the two proofs can be reconciled, if they can, then the *ḥukm* is '*amal* upon both, if not, then:

> 1) in the case of two seemingly conflicting verses, the *faqīh* will refer to the *sunnah* to establish the *ḥukm* based on the prophet's own understanding and application,
>
> 2) in the case of conflicting *ḥadīth*, the *faqīh* looks to the *ṣaḥabah*'s words and actions or to *qiyās* for guidance as to which of the proofs should be given *tarjīḥ* (preference/precedence);

> 3) if it is not possible to consult the *ṣaḥabah*'s opinions and *qiyās* is not possible, then the *faqīh* resorts to understanding the *ḥukm* based on the *aṣl*, which is *ibāḥah* (permissibility).

Because the clear and *qaṭ'ī* texts are so limited in number, the widest domain of *fiqh* is necessarily the domain of *ijtihād*. Though the conclusions of proper *ijtihād* are binding upon believers in terms of '*amal*, their epistemic status remains less-than-*yaqīn*. Through intricate and sophisticated methodologies of *istidlāl* and *qiyās*, the *fuqahā'* attempt to raise the level of confidence their arguments can impart, but ultimately the best and highest status a *mujtahid*'s opinion can achieve is only *ghālib al-ẓann* (overwhelming likelihood; also referred to as *al-ẓann al-ghālib*).

While he may indeed understand the *murād* of the text as the *shāri'* intended, in himself, the *faqīh* remains bound by logical and methodological limitations which can only take him so far. Thus, outside of what is clearly established in the texts, and unlike the *mutakallim*, the *faqīh* can never, through rational argumentation or analogy achieve or express anything more than his own *ẓann*.

3.4.10 Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed the various epistemic schemes and methods of *iktisāb* of knowledge which characterize the *shar'ī* sciences which Imam al-Ghazālī designates as the domain of *'ilm al-zāhir*. We discussed first the historical-empirical path of *ḥadīth*, then the rational path of *kalām*, and finally the joint historical-empirical and rational path of *fiqh*.

The purpose of the *ḥadīth* sciences was to establish the principles and methods for verifying the historical transmission of the *sunnah* of the prophet with as much certainty and reliability as possible. The knowledge *ḥadīth* sciences relied upon was of a *naqlī* nature, relating to the networks and chains of *ḥadīth* scholars and narrators through whom it could be attained. As such *ḥadīth* sciences were based upon the accumulation of a particular kind of 'historical-empirical' knowledge that dealt with the biographies and reputations of transmitters as well as the context and factors of transmission in order to establish the veracity and consistency of the texts of the *sunnah* themselves. The efforts exerted by scholars of *ḥadīth* to verify and preserve the authentic *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad was of a sophistication and rigor unprecedented in the course of human history. Though there is a possibility that any given *ḥadīth,* even one verified by the highest standards as *ṣaḥīḥ,* could be inauthentic, the *ḥadīth* sciences flourished in an effort to establish and reaffirm *yaqīn* in the overall corpus of *ḥadīth* as a reliable record of the *sunnah* of the prophet and a basis for *'ilm* in Islam.

Though their knowledge pertains to different realms—the realm of *ḍarurī* (or *yaqīnī*) *knowledge* in *kalām*, and the realm of the *ẓannī* knowledge in *fiqh*—scholars of both *kalām* and *fiqh* incorporate and rely on sophisticated methods of logical argumentation and proof, that is *istidlāl*, as a means to attaining knowledge and increasing certainty. In *fiqh* as we have seen, this attempt

to prove one's position entails engagement with both the form and the substance of the sources and resulted in refined and multiplex frameworks of hermeneutical and rational investigation which are utilized in conjunction with each other to guide the human process of gleaning knowledge of the intent of the *shāri'* from His Word. Where *yaqīn* cannot be established, even through solid rational proof, the language and strategies of logic provide the basic tools scholars use to reinforce their positions as methodically as possible. As long as one stays consistent in his *istidlāl* (argumentation) based on the *uṣūl* of both logic and the respective science in which he is engaged, the results of his reasoning (especially in *fiqh*) are to be considered valid and on par with any other opinion reached through similarly consistent and rigorous *ijtihād*. Despite the sophistication and precision of their methods and principles in seeking knowledge, the *'ulamā'* of Islam operated with the understanding that the human *'aql* though powerful is ultimately fallible. They developed therefore concepts and systems of discursivity, referentiality, and peer review to strengthen knowledge and increase *yaqīn* in the fundamental tenants of Islam and its sources, all the while recognizing that for the most part, the majority of their efforts and the knowledge they produced would necessarily be relegated to the domain of *ẓann* and *naẓar*.

For Imam al-Ghazālī, this is a key feature which separates the *shar'ī* sciences from the sciences of unveiling—the practitioners of the former rely upon *iktisāb* through their own senses and reason to attain knowledge of the *'ilm al-ẓāhir,* while adherents of the latter rely on the intellective powers of the *qalb* and divinely-granted *ilhām* in order to attain knowledge of *'ilm al-bāṭin* which corresponds to the inner dimensions of the *sharī'ah* and Reality. Within Imam al-Ghazālī's overarching theory of knowledge, it is this latter knowledge—gained through direct *mukāshafah* and *mushāhadah* of Reality that constitutes the culmination of knowledge or *ḥaqq al-yaqīn.* All other forms of knowledge, including the methodologically sophisticated knowledge produced in the various branches of the *shar'ī* sciences fail to reach this epistemic rank, though they serve a purpose and have a place in the greater framework of knowledge and the path to the comprehension of Revelation and Reality.

In chapter four we will move from our discussion of *'ilm al-ẓāhir* and the path of *iktisāb* to *'ilm al-bāṭin* and the path of *ilhām* as represented by Imam al-Ghazālī's formulation of *'ilm al-*

mukāshafah which encompasses the pinnacle and the culmination of all knowledge or what he

refers to as *ḥaqq al-yaqīn.*

4

Ilhām in the Path of Unveiling

Until now we have discussed the place of *'ilm* in Islam and given an introduction to Imam al-Ghazālī's classifications of science which he ultimately as consisting of two general categories of knowledge: *'ilm al-zahir* and *'ilm al-batin.* In chapter two we focused on expounding the basic methods of *iktisāb* of knowledge employed in the *sharʿī* sciences which Imam al-Ghazālī classifies as *'ulūm al-ẓāhir*. Though Imam al-Ghazālī does not use this precise terminology or schematization, we argued that these sciences constitute distinct epistemic paths namely, the historical-empirical path of *ḥadīth*, the rational path of *kalām*, and the joint historical-empirical and rational path of *fiqh*. The fourth major epistemic path within Islamic knowledge, is the path of unveiling or what Imam al-Ghazālī refers to as *'ilm al-mukāshafah*. This branch of knowledge is more commonly recognizable by the moniker of *taṣawwuf*. Some scholars of Islamic philosophy and *taṣawwuf* have classified this path to knowledge as a "mystical," "sapiential," and "intuitive" epistemic path because it incorporates experiential and suprarational knowledge obtained through *mukāshafah* and *ilhām,* often translated as "unveiling" and "revelation" or "inspiration."[158]

Some argue that the epistemic scheme of the *taṣawwuf* "developed moderately in opposition to the grain of Islamic logocentrism as well as nomoscentrism" and "challenged the validity of [the historical-empirical and logocentric] epistemologies in relative terms" because it allowed for not only the introduction but also the extolled the supremacy of esoteric knowledge.[159] Buchman, Winter, Nasr and others disagree and argue—like Imam al-Ghazālī—that the Sufi epistemic scheme, which depends upon and seeks *baṭinī* knowledge was indeed operative (and fundamental) within the earliest intellectual stages of Islam by way of the prophets, *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (the righteous forebearers), and the *awliyā'* (from *w-l-y*, to be near, close, to be a friend) of God who, it was generally believed, were granted insights into the heart of Reality and the

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[158] See for example the works of Dahlen, Murata, Chittick, Nasr, Buchman. Dahlen uses "mystical." Murata and Chittick prefer "mystical" and "sapiential" while Nasr uses both "intuitive" and "mystical" depending on context. Buchman also prefers "mystical".

[159] Dahlen, 39.

sharī'ah. These insights are considered *ilhām* (inspiration) and take the form of *waḥy* (revelation) for the prophets and *mukāshafah* (unveiling) and *mushāhadah* (witnessing) for the *salaf* and the *awliyā'*.[160]

Imam al-Ghazalī explains in Book XXI of the Ihyā' that unlike the *mutakallimūn,* and the *fuqahā'* who rely upon *naẓar* and *istidlāl,* the *ahl al-taṣawwuf* rely on the intellective powers of the *qalb* (heart-soul) which he does not fully explained nor, as we shall see in our discussion on ineffability, does he believe to be explicable. Imam al-Ghazālī states as such that "al-*kashfu al-ḥaqiqīyyu*" (true unveiling) is "*ṣifatu sirri'l-qalbi wa bāṭinihi* (an attribute of the mystery of the heart and its inward part)."[161] This emphasis on the unspoken *sirr* and the *bāṭin* of true intellection in Sufi epistemology is what has scholars to label this form of cognition by turns as "pre-logical", "post-rational," "irrational," "paralogical," and "mystical."[162] We prefer the term, "suprarational" in accordance with Imam al-Ghazālī's view that it is a form of intellection experienced by the *qalb* (or the *rūḥ*), which itself is the encompassing whole of which the limited rational faculty of Man is simply a part.

Suprarational cognition then, as articulated and explained by Imam al-Ghazālī, involves *mukāshafah* of the *qalb* or *rūḥ* (unveilings of the heart-soul). Because it is not a form of knowledge accessed through the rational faculty of Man, *'ilm al-mukāshafah* involves no *taṣawwur or taṣdīq,* only *taḥqīq* (verification through experience/witnessing) of *ḥaqā'iq* (metaphysical truths, realities). In Imam al-Ghazālī's ontology and the ontology of *taṣawwuf* generally, at the most fundamental level, the only true *haqīqah* (Truth/Reality) is God. Nothing

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[160] In his commentary on the *Ihyā'* Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī's [d. 1791] states that *wahy* (inspiration) can occur in three ways: through the tongue of an angel who can be seen, by hearing the voice of an angel without seeing him, through a casting into the heart either in wakefulness or sleep. (See Skellie, footnote 6, p. 53)

[161] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, "Qawā'id Al-'Aqā'id," in *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm Al-Dīn*, vol. I (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011), pp. 329-360, 367. (Note: Henceforth cited as *Qawā'id*.)

[162] See for example, Rosenthal, Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam, 97; and Von Grunebaum, Introduction to *Taʿlīm al-Mutaʿallim: Ṭarīq al-Taʿallum* - Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning, 12, and Ask Dahlen, 39; Alexander Treiger's *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation;* and Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 96. Nasr will occasionally use "mysticism," to refer to Sufism, but prefers terms such as "gnosis," "esotericism," and "sapiential." See, for example: *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, The Mystical Tradition of Islam* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), *Sufi Essays* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1972), and *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origins to Present*.

else has pure existence, but rather all things outside of God exist only contingently through God's decree and facilitation. Many Sufis thus accept the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the unity of existence) as the Ultimate Truth of Existence. Knowledge of *waḥdat al-wujūd* is only possible through *mushāhadah* (witnessing) once unity is achieved between the knower (the gnostic), the known (God), and the knowledge itself. Self-proclaimed adherents of the path of *tasawwuf* like Imam al-Ghazālī are considered orthodox and reformist because they reject this doctrine as a false notion regarding the *perception* of unity with the Divine, while maintaining individuality of the knower in the face of *tawḥīd*. [163]

The knowledge upon which *taṣawwuf* relies and which it seeks to realize is of a *baṭinī* and suprarational nature and within the Sufi epistemic scheme, there is no applicable (or possible) criteria for judging the validity of, or accurately transmitting knowledge of this kind. Such knowledge must be experienced directly through an unveiling or a revelation in the heart of the seeker—or in some cases, one who does not "seek," but is granted knowledge by God for reasons known only to Him. This kind of self-validation or -authentication of Truth is what is referred to as *taḥqīq*.

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[163] For this reason we avoid classifying Imam al-Ghazālī (and his formulation of Sufi epistemology) as "mystical". Some scholars of religion do, however, categorize Imam al-Ghazālī as a "mystic," because their operative definitions of mysticism generally include the possibility of "divine union" or "nondual" experiences of Reality. In spirituality, "nondualism" or "non-duality" refers to a mature state of consciousness, in which the dichotomy of I-other is "transcended", and awareness is described as "centerless" and "without dichotomies". While such "centerless"-ness does characterize Imam al-Ghazālī's descriptions of the state of *ittiḥād*, in Imam al-Ghazālī's writings, he emphasizes that such an experience is not true *ittiḥād* with the Divine, but rather "*shubhu'l-ittiḥād*" that it is simply the perception and affirmation of the soul of *tawḥīd*. Though the seeker may lose consciousness of himself (*fanā'*) in that moment of revelation, he does not actually cease to exist. The dichotomy of I-other is still maintained as it is (theo-)logically impossible for Man and God to be unified in actuality. Rather, the one experiencing this state becomes aware of the Real-ness of the Existence of God as starkly separate from the metaphorical and derivative existences, which seem by comparison as non-existence before it. It is not that nothing else exists, but rather, that the truth of God's existence as the *only* true existent independent of all else becomes manifest in such a decisive way that everything else fades or seems to burn up/away in its light. For these reasons, though he self-identifies as a Sufi, and though he does not fully renounce the ecstatic utterances of Sufis who experience the state of *ittiḥād* or *fanā'* (because he sees them as utterances which make sense within the framework of the experience/intellection of *ittihād/tawḥīd* which must be logically ordered after a return to consciousness), Imam al-Ghazālī is less "mystical" than other Sufi figures who do not as cogently establish or discuss the metaphorical nature of *ittiḥād* as a state. His reluctance to admit the possibility of *ittiḥād* with the Divine and his insistence that man is not capable of fully knowing the divine nature mark Imam al-Ghazālī as other-than mainstream "mystic". He is rather, a Sufi who reorients (false) *perceptions* of "mystical union" within the orthodox Sunni framework of Divine transcendence and *tanzīh*.

Though language is often considered a barrier and obstruction to the communication of true or verified knowledge in the Sufi epistemology, Imam al-Ghazālī is one of the few, great thinkers of Islam who is able to powerfully articulate the inner or Sufi (what others have referred to as mystical or sapiential) dimension of the *sharī'ah* using a language that is acceptable to many Muslims who otherwise might view Sufism only in line with its excesses. He demonstrated to his mainstream Sunni contemporaries the absolute necessity of sincerity and inwardness for actualizing the outward—that is, the importance of *taṣawwuf* (or *ṭarīqah*) for realizing the fullness of the *sharī'ah* and achieving *ḥaqīqah*. He thus gave *taṣawwuf* and *'ilm al-bāṭin* which is sought, a central importance in mainstream Islam while also denying its excesses and divergences from the outward Truth of Revelation.[164]

4.1 Imam al-Ghazālī's Classification of *Ilhām* Amongst the Sciences

 "Supra-rational" knowledge, or what Imam al-Ghazālī refers to generally as *ilhām* and more specifically *'ilm al-mukāshafah*, occupies the highest place in his general classification of knowledge—of which he offers several variations across the span of his many works. To recapitulate what we discussed in chapter two, Imam al-Ghazālī conceives of all the disparate *shar'ī* sciences as parts of a unified body of religious knowledge which is part of a greater body of all *possible* knowledge. From this body of possible knowledge, there are branches which are considered necessary and those which are considered supplemental, useless, and even forbidden.

The knowledge which is required is of two types: *farḍ kifāyah* and *farḍ 'ayn.* Imam al-Ghazālī's also characterizes sciences as those which fall into *'ilm al-dunyā* (the science of the world) or *'ilm ṭarīq al-ākhirah* (the science of the path to the hereafter). Imam al-Ghazālī considers *'ilm ṭarīq al-ākhirah* to be the epitome and the culmination of all worthy knowledge and science, the true science or "*fiqh*" (from *f-q-h*, to understand, comprehend) of the *salaf*, and it is the science which he seeks to revive in the *Iḥyā'*.[165] As we have seen, Imam al-Ghazālī designates the majority of the enterprises of formal *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *kalām* (theology), two branches of

[164] David Buchman, "Translator's Introduction," in Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt Al-Anwār)*, trans. David Buchman (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), xxvii.

[165] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, "Kitāb Al-ʿIlm," in *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm Al-Dīn*, vol. I (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011), pp. 17-327, 120. (Note: Henceforth cited as *Kitāb al-ʿilm*.)

knowledge which were considered the core of the *shar'ī* sciences amongst his contemporaries, as belonging to *'ilm al-dunyā* rather than *'ilm ṭarīq al-ākhirah*, a matter we shall explore more in the coming sections.

Imam al-Ghazālī divides *'ilm ṭarīq al-ākhirah* into a practical and a theoretical branch, which he designates as *'ilm al-mu'āmalāt* (the science of proper conduct) and *'ilm al-mukāshafah* (the science of unveiling) respectively. *'Ilm al-mu'āmalāt* deals with the outer *a'māl* (functions, deeds) of the *jawāriḥ* (bodily limbs) and the inner *a'māl* of the *qalb*.[166] Imam al-Ghazālī defines *'ilm al-mukāshafah* as "*'ilmu'l-bātini wa ghāyatu'l-'ulūm* (the knowledge of the inner dimensions and the culmination/goal of all the sciences)[167]

In Book XXI of the *Iḥyā'*, *Kitāb sharḥ 'ajā'ib al-qalb* (The Book of Explication of the Marvels of the Heart) Imam al-Ghazālī further separates branches of knowledge according to their means of acquisition. He identifies the two general paths to knowledge: *iktisāb* (acquisition) and *ilhām* (inspiration) and upon this distinction speaks of the benefits and the potential drawbacks of both paths. Sciences like *ḥadīth, kalām,* and *fiqh* which depend on human empirical and intellectual effort and *ta'allum* (devoted training and study)[168] are considered *iktisābī*, while the knowledge of *'ilm al-mukāshafah* which is bestowed upon individuals by God, without their agency in it, is considered *ilhām*. The knowledge of *iktisāb* generally relates to the outer forms and *'ilm al-zahir* of the *sharī'ah* while *ilhām* by way of *mukāshafah* is taken as insight into the deeper meanings and realities of *'ilm al-batin*.

Though Imam al-Ghazālī's believes there is no "*rukhsah*" (precedent) for committing this *'ilm al-bāṭin* (i.e. *'ilm al-mukāshafah*) to writing, he considers it to be the truest and loftiest branch of all knowledge and the "*ghāyatu maqṣidi al-ṭālibīn wa maṭmaḥu naẓari'l-ṣiddīqīn*"[169] (ultimate goal of seekers, and that upon which the longing gaze of the saints is trained) because it leads to

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attainment of *maʿrifat Allah* (the cognition of God) in this world, and *najāh* (salvation) and *saʿādah* (felicity) in the next.[170] He describes it as:

> … a light that appears in the heart when it is cleansed and purified of blameworthy traits. Through that light, certain matters are unveiled (*yankashifu*). Previously, one used to hear the names for these matters, and then imagine (*yatawahhamu*) vague meanings (*maʿānī mujmalah*) for them without clarity. Then, at the moment [the meanings] become clear such that a true realization of the essence of God Most Glorified (*maʿrifat al-haqiqiyyah bi-dhāti'llāh subḥānahu*), and His eternal consummate attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-bāqiyyāt al-tāmmāt*), His works (*af'ālihī*), His wisdom in the creation of [this] world and the hereafter, and His preference for the hereafter (*al-ākhirah*) over [this] world (*al-dunyā*). A realization (*maʿrifah*) is also obtained of the meaning (*maʿnā*) of prophecy and the prophet, [as well] as the meaning of revelation (*waḥy*) and the connotation of the terms angels and devils; the nature of Satans's enmity towards humankind, and how the angel [Gabriel] appeared to the prophets, and how revelation reached them; as well as the realization (*maʿrifah*) of the dominions of the heavens and the earth (*malakut al-samā' wa'l-arḍ*), realization of the heart (*al-qalb*), and how the legions of angels and satans clash therein, as well as the realization [of how] to differentiation the inspiration of an angel (*lamatu'l-malak*) from the inspiration of Satan. [This light affords] knowledge of the hereafter; of paradise (*al-jannah*) and the fire (*al-nār*), the punishment of the grave (*ʿadhāb al-qabr*), the traverse (*ṣirāṭ*), the scales (*mizān*), the calling to account (*ḥisāb*)…[It will afford them as well] the meaning of encountering God (*liqā'-illāh*) Most Mighty and Majestic, and beholding His noble countenance (*al-naẓar ilā wajhihi al-karīm*), the meaning of proximity to Him (*al-qurbi minhu*) and residing in His highest assembly, and association with the angels and the prophets. It will afford them as well] the meaning of the diverse degrees of the people of the gardens until they perceive one another there… and beyond this is what would entail a lengthy explanation (*ma yaṭūlu tafṣīlihī*).[171]

From this passage, we can see that Imam al-Ghazālī's designates *maʿrifah* in the domain of 'ilm al-mukāshafah to four general areas:

1) God, His attributes, and His acts, as well as the forms of gnosis and perception of His *wajh*,

2) Cosmology, including the structure of the different realms of existence and how they are related both in terms of the *dunyā* and the *akhirah* as well as the *malakut al-samā' wa'l-arḍ* (dominions of the heavens and earth),

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[170] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī , *The Book of Knowledge (Kitāb Al-'Ilm)*, trans. Kenneth Lee Honerkamp (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2016), 215. (Note: Henceforth cited as *Book of Knowledge*)
[171] *Book of Knowledge,* 49-50.

3) The nature and means of prophethood and prophecy,

4) The Unseen including the nature and actions of the angels, the devils, the heart-soul,

4) The Hereafter including the nature of paradise and the fire, as well as *'adhāb al-qabr*, the *ṣirāṭ*, the *mizān*, and the *ḥisāb*

Imam al-Ghazālī believes that knowledge of these matters is not possible except through *mukāshafah*. There are paths and practices which focus on eradicating the vices of Man's spirit which can veil him from knowledge and help prepare him for the reception of such knowledge (the knowledge of which is subsumed within *'ilm al-muʿāmalāt*). Ultimately, however, whether one is able to gain knowledge of these realities is a matter of divine Grace through gifts of *ilhām*. As such, Imam al-Ghazālī considers the path of *ilhām* to be more difficult and less certain than the path of *iktisāb*, though he considers the fruits of the former to be higher and closer to heart of Reality than the latter, a matter we shall explore in our section on Imam al-Ghazālī's cosmology. Imam al-Ghazālī even suggests that in light of the difficulty of the path of self-purification or *taṣawwuf*, "to busy one's self in the path of learning (*taʿallum*) is a surer and easier means of attaining the aim [of true knowledge]."[172]

According to Imam al-Ghazālī, even the scholars of *fiqh* and especially *kalām* who engage solely in *naẓar* (speculative reasoning) and rational argumentation, without seeking the *'ilm al-bāṭin* of *mukāshafah*—whom he refers to emphatically as "*nuẓẓār"*

> have not denied the fact that this way does exist, that it is a possibility, and that it does, in rare instances, lead to the desired end. Indeed this has been the way of most prophets and saints. But they consider it a difficult way, and think it slow in bearing fruit, and feel that the fulfilment of all its conditions is very improbable…since the slightest evil prompting or involuntary suggestion disturbs the heart.[173]

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[172] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *The Marvels of the Heart (Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib Al-Qalb)*, trans. Walter James Skellie (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2010), 56. (Note: This is an English translation and wherever I felt it necessary to include the original Arabic terms for clarity, I have consulted and included in parenthesis the original terms in transliteration as taken from: Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, "Kitāb Sharḥ ʿAjāʾib Al-Qalb," in *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm Al-Dīn*, (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011). Henceforth will be cited as *Marvels* only.)

[173] *Marvels,* 55.

Ultimately, for Imam al-Ghazālī, while the path of *ilhām* is more difficult, and reaching the desired destination is less certain, the knowledge of *ilhām* granted through *mukāshafah* is nevertheless, *more* certain.

4.2 *Ilhām* as *Ḥaqq al-yaqīn*

The scholars of Islam identified three levels of certitude or *yaqīn* based on the Qur'ānic usage of the phrases *'ilm al-yaqīn, 'ayn al-yaqīn,* and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn.* In Imam al-Ghazālī's thought, the lowest level, *'ilm al-yaqīn*, consists of the knowledge reached through *'aqlī* and *naqlī* proofs (or what Imam al-Ghazālī also refers to as *naẓar* and *istidlāl*). There is no direct experience or *mushāhadah* (witnessing) of this kind of knowledge, rather it is simply knowledge that is known intellectually, in the mind or heart. For example, one might know through various reports and photographs that there is a famous lake in Michigan called Lake Michigan, but he has never seen it for himself. His knowledge of the existence of Lake Michigan is a form of '*ilm al-*yaqīn.

'Ayn al-yaqīn is knowledge reinforced through sense data. To reach the level of *'ayn al-yaqīn,* something already known intellectually or mentally (i.e. *'ilm al-yaqīn*) is reaffirmed through perception of the outward senses and experience. That which is witnessed firsthand is more convincing and certain than that which is simply theoretical, so *'ayn al-yaqīn* occupies a higher epistemological rank than *'ilm al-yaqīn*. Going to Michigan and seeing Lake Michigan for oneself after having only known of its existence through reports is an example of *'ayn al-yaqīn*.

Ḥaqq al-yaqīn is considered the highest level of certitude i.e. knowledge. This kind of knowledge is only possible through the direct perception, experience, and witnessing of truths known rationally (*'ilm al-yaqīn)* or experientially through the outward senses (*'ayn al-yaqīn*). The knowledge one gains when one is *submerged* in the lake is *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*.

For Imam al-Ghazālī the ultimate object of all worthy and true knowledge is God, thus *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, in its highest and purest form, corresponds to *ilhām* or *mukāshafah* which occurs not through a physical perception or witnessing of a physical truth (which is a lower form of *ḥaqq*

al-yaqīn), but rather a *mushāhadah* (witnessing) of *ḥaqā'iq* (intelligible realities, metaphysical truths) through inner sight of the *qalb*.

In order to better orient ourselves with regards to the mechanisms of unveiling or *ilhām* which lead to *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* in Imam al-Ghazālī works, we must first establish the basic principles of his cosmology which directly influence his epistemological framework.

4.3 Imām al-Ghazālī's Cosmology

The most basic element of Imam al-Ghazālī's conception of the universe is that he sees the world, *al-ʿālam*—that is, everything outside of God Himself—as existing on two separate planes, "spiritual and corporeal (*rūḥānī wa jismānī*)."[174] Imam al-Ghazālī refers to these distinct realms of existence or two "worlds" as the *ʿālam al-malakūt* (the world of the dominion) and the *ʿālam al-mulk* (the visible or corporeal world), respectively. Though he posits these two worlds as distinct in form, he maintains that they are united in essence such that they must be conceptualized as different levels of one Divinely planned and structured reality.

In *ʿAjā'ib al-Qalb*, Imām al-Ghazālī discusses what he views as the four *marātib* (level/degrees) of existence. The cosmological model he offers brings together ontology and epistemology, and helps to explain his understanding of how facets of Reality (i.e. intelligibles) become known to Man. These four degrees represent the levels of existence that are possible and how they proceed from God's knowledge to ours:

1. the ideal existence inscribed upon *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* (the Preserved Tablet);
2. *ḥaqīqī* (actual) existence;
3. existence *fī'l-ḥiss wa'l-khayāl* (sensory and imaginal); and
4. the intellectual existence, i.e. the presence of the form in the heart.

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[174] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt Al-Anwār)*, trans. David Buchman (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 25. (Note: This is a parallel Arabic text and translation. I have referred to both the Arabic text and also the translation, though in some cases I have adjusted the translations if my renderings differed from Buchman's. Henceforth will be referenced as *Mishkāt*.)

The primary level of existence in *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* (the Preserved Tablet). Imam al-Ghazālī considers a*l-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* to be the blueprint (*nuskhah)* of the *ʿālam*, drafted by God with the *qalam* (the metaphysical "Pen" mentioned in the Qurʾān)[175] before the actual creation of the universe. It is in accordance with the blue-print recorded in *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* that God subsequently brought the *ʿālam* into existence. The *qaḍāʾ* (Divine decree) from the beginning of creation till the *yawm al-qiyāmah* (Day of Judgment) is inscribed upon the *lawḥ* as the Qurʾān is inscribed upon the heart of a *ḥāfiẓ* (one who has committed the Qurʾān to memory).[176] Thus existence in the *lawḥ* is a reference to the existence of all things in God's knowledge. Imam al-Ghazālī also describes the *lawḥ* metaphorically as a mirror upon which is "engraved all that God has decreed." In Imam al-Ghazālī's ontological vision, the human heart and the *lawḥ* are thus like two metaphysical mirrors facing one another such that "the reflection of the real nature of knowledge from the mirror of the tablet upon the mirror of the heart is like the reflection of an image from one mirror to another mirror opposite it." [177]

As the record of all of God's Revelation and the content of His decree for creation, *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* thus represents a portion of God's knowledge and contains a reflection of every existent thing—both physical and metaphysical. The existence of a thing in the record of *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* thus precedes its secondary or *ḥaqīqī* existence, but it is also simultaneous with it. That is, existence in the *lawḥ* endures as long as the *lawḥ* itself endures, regardless of how long the *ḥaqīqī* or external existence of a created thing endures. Reality as such has several ontological

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[175] See Appendix A, "The Pen and the Tablet" in Treiger's *Inspired Knowledge*, 105-107.

[176] "Everything that God had predestined (*qaddarahū*) from the beginning of the creation of the world until the end is recorded (*masṭūr*) upon an entity created by God (*khalq khalaqahū llāh*) which is sometimes called [the Preserved] Tablet (Q. 85:22), sometimes the Clear Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*, Q. 6:59), and sometimes a Clear Model (*imām mubīn*, Q. 36:12), as stated in the Qurʾān. Everything that has occurred in the world and everything that still is to occur is written and engraved (*manqūsh*) upon it in a way not observable by the [physical] eye. Do not think that this Tablet is made of wood, metal, or bone, or that this Book is made of paper or parchment. You must have a decisive understanding that God's Tablet is not similar to human tablets and God's Book is not similar to human books, just as His essence and attributes are not similar to human essence and attributes. If you would like to hear a similitude (*mithālan*) which will bring it closer to your understanding, you should know that the way in which the predestined events (*maqādīr*) are fixed in the Tablet is similar to the way in which words and letters of the Qurʾān are fixed in the brain and heart of a person who has it memorized (*ḥāfiẓ al-qurʾān*), for [the Qurʾān] is recorded there and when he recites it, it is as if he looks at this [recording]. Yet if you were to examine his brain piece by piece you would not be able to see even one letter from this writing. Just as there is no visible writing or observable letter[s] there, in the same fashion you should also understand how the Tablet is engraved (*manqūshan*) with all that which God had predestined and decreed (*qaddarahū ... wa-qaḍāhu*)." in *Kitāb al-ʿilm*.

[177] *Marvels*, 52.

levels and can thus be perceived on several levels—both through the internal (rational/spiritual) and external (sensory) senses of Man. Once a facet of reality is perceived, this perception comes to exist in the *khayāl* (imagination) and if actualized, in the *qalb* (heart-soul) of Man. The distinction between the between the existence of a thing in the imagination versus its existence in the heart-soul is, however, significant as in Imam al-Ghazālī's spiritual psychology, the imagination is a faculty of the mind or brain,[178] but true knowledge is a quality of the immaterial heart-soul, which is the true agent of knowing. Perception of reality only becomes *knowledge* of reality when it is inheres in the heart-soul. Thus, for Imam al-Ghazālī the degrees and dimensions of possible knowledge which correspond to the degrees and dimensions of existence, correspond also to the degrees and dimensions of Man's intellectual capacity.

4.4 Imam al-Ghazālī's Epistemology

For Imam al-Ghazālī, there are two "*bābān*" (doors) by which knowledge opens onto the heart of Man: "One door opens toward the world of spirits (*ʿālam al-malakūt*)...the other door opens toward the five external senses that are tethered to the visible material world (*ʿālam al-mulk wa'l-shahādah*)."[179] While the physical body tethers Man to the material world, the *ʿālam al-mulk wa'l-shahādah*, his *rūḥ* can convene with the immaterial world of the *malakūt*. Just as his physical body parallels his spirit, so too does the physical world parallel the world of *malakūt*.

Because Imam al-Ghazālī believes that the higher levels of existence (the unseen, *ruḥāni*, *maʿnawī*, *ghayb*) are intertwined with the lower levels (seen, *jismānī*, *shahādah*), he believes also that the former can be accessed by way of the latter. He states in *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, one of his most esoteric works in which he analyzes the famous Light Verse and the Ḥadīth of Seventy Veils:[180]

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[178] Walter James Skellie, "Translators Introduction," in *The Marvels of the Heart (Kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib Al-Qalb)* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2010), p. viv-xxxv, xxiii.
[179] *Marvels*, 60.
[180] Buchman explains in his introduction to *Mishkāt al-Anwār* that Imam Al-Ghazālī's purpose in writing *Mishkāt* is to "outline basic principles of Islamic cosmology and psychology and to demonstrate the human obligation to attain proximity to God through perfecting oneself by sincere practice of Islam." (xxxi) The text is inspired by and uses the language of the Qurʾān and the *hadīth* to provide "a worldview and conception of the human self compatible with Islamic teachings [which does not]…not simply quote and employ the terminology of Islam's foundational documents. Rather it is Qurʾānic because it is based upon the central Muslim principle of *tawhid*." He goes on to

> The visible world (*'ālam al-shahādah*) is a ladder to the world of dominion (*'ālam al-malakūt*), and traveling on the "straight path" [1:6] consists of climbing this ladder. One may refer to this traveling as "religion" (*al-dīn*) and the "waystations of guidance" (*manāzil al-hudā*). If there were no connection between the two worlds, climbing from one world to the other would be inconceivable. Hence, the divine mercy (*al-raḥmah al-ilhiyyah*) made the visible world parallel to the world of the dominion; there is nothing in this world that is not a similitude of something in the world of dominion. [181]

While we will discuss the concept of "similitude(s)" in our section on ineffability, it is important to establish here that Imam al-Ghazālī believes the relationship between the two worlds and the dimensions of existence to be one of hierarchy. He depicts the relationship between the dimensions of existence through a metaphor about the degrees of refraction of light:

> The way to perceive a similitude of this hierarchy in the visible world (*'ālam al-shahādah*) 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. You know that the light on the earth comes from that on the wall, the light on the wall from that on the mirror, the light on the mirror from that in the moon, and the light in the moon from the light in the sun, since light shines from the sun to the moon. These four lights are ranked (*murattabah*) in levels such that some are higher (*a'lā*) and more perfect (*akmal*) than others. [182]

Imam al-Ghazālī explains in this same passage that the higher lights are "more perfect" in that they are "nearest to the First Source (*al-manba' al-awwal*) [and thus] more worthy (*awlā*) of the name 'light'." [183] Though these lights (or intelligibles) vary in their degree of proximity to the First Source, Imam al-Ghazālī considers it possible for Man to perceive them even at their highest level. Perception and knowledge of the intelligbles which exist across the dimensions of the two worlds enter Man's conscience through the two doors we mentioned above.

Imam al-Ghazālī refers to these "*bābān*" also as the two "lights" by which Man perceives: the *ḥissī* (material/sensorial) lights of the universe and "*al-anwār al-'aqlīyyah al-ma'nawīyyah*" (the rational and metaphysical lights). [184] In this context, Imam al-Ghazālī defines "*nūr*" or "light" as:

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explain that though certain ideas "may be found to parallel neoplatonic notions, this treatise remains fundamentally Islamic insofar as …[it does] not contradict *tawhid*."

[181] *Mishkāt*, 27.
[182] *Mishkāt*, 14.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid, 19.

an expression for that through which and for which things are unveiled, and in a higher sense, it is that through which, for which and by which things are unveiled.[185]

The perception of the physical and metaphysical realities made possible through these two forms of light he calls *baṣar* (eyesight) and *baṣīrah* (insight) respectively.

Baṣar is the perception of the *ẓāhirī* or physical world made possible through the diffusion of light from the physical sources of light in the universe. It is through the light of the sun, stars, moon, etc. through which we are able to perceive the manifest world and through which physical realities become apparent to us. This kind of light and sight corresponds to the lower, material world of *al-shahādah*. The other sensory faculties—hearing, smell, touch, taste—are also considered "lights" in the sense that it is through them that Man is able to perceive and glean knowledge of the material world.

Baṣīrah (inner sight/insight) is a form of perception of *bāṭinī* meanings and metaphysical realities made possible through "*al-anwār al-'aqlīyyah al-ma'nawīyyah*."[186] The human *'aql* is considered a light because it can penetrate and perceive the *ḥaqiqat al-ḥaqā'iq* (the inner reality of realities). It can even perceive its own self, and its own perception of itself, etc. This ability to perceive itself also allows it the ability to perceive that which is outside itself such that: "no realities whatsoever are veiled from the rational faculty (*'aql*)."[187] Imam al-Ghazālī notes that "it is inconceivable that the objects of knowledge (*ma'lūmāt*) be finite" and so the *'aql* has the potential then to perceive "*mā lā nihāyah lahū*." This potential allows it to transcend the "ladder" of lights which leads ultimately to the highest realm of existence and knowledge which Imam al-Ghazālī calls *mamlakat al-fardāniyah*, "the kingdom of singularity":

> The final end of the creatures' ascent is the kingdom of singularity. Beyond it, there is no place to climb. Climbing is inconceivable without plurality since climbing is a sort of relation that demands something away from which one climbs and something toward which one climbs. But when plurality disappears, oneness is actualized, relationships are nullified, and allusions are swept away. There remains neither high nor low, descending

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[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid, 6

nor ascending. Climbing is impossible, so ascent is impossible. Hence, there is no highness beyond the highest, no plurality alongside oneness and no ascent when plurality is negated. If there is a change of state, it is through descent to the heaven of this world—that is through viewing the low from the high…[188]

Thus, Imam al-Ghazali establishes the unparalleled nature of Man's intellect to penetrate, even if it cannot fully comprehend, the greatest mystery and the Truth of the Universe—*tawḥīd.* While he establishes the strength of Man's *'aql* as a metaphorical light by which Reality is illuminated and perceived, Imam al-Ghazālī also emphasizes that God is the First, only, and True Light:

> In the true sense (*al-ḥaqīqī*) light is that through which, from which, and by which things are unveiled and beyond which there is no light from which this light could be kindled and take replenishment. Rather it possesses light in itself, from itself, and for itself, not from another….only the First Light (*al-nūr al-awwal*) has these qualities.[189]

Given the similarity between the human *'aql* as a derivative light "through which and for which things are unveiled," Imam al-Ghazālī even refers to it as "*anmūdhaj min nūr Allah* (sample of the light of God)."[190]

4.4.1 Levels of Perception

The different "lights" through which Man perceives and gains knowledge of Reality are also hierarchical. Knowledge, as such, generally proceeds from the lower levels of perception (i.e. light) to higher levels. Imam al-Ghazālī explains that the acquisition of knowledge proceeds through stages, beginning with the lowest form of knowledge—sensory knowledge gained through the five senses—then rational knowledge,[191] and finally culminating with experiential knowledge or *mushāhadah* of *ḥaqā'iq* (metaphysical realities).[192] Each of these stages of knowledge corresponds to a level of intellection or "light" inherent to Man's nature by which he is able to perceive Reality. While each "light" corresponds to a facet of the human soul, Imam al-Ghazālī also refers to them each as a *rūḥ* in itself.

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[188] Ibid, 21.
[189] Ibid, 6.
[190] Ibid.
[191] He does this clearly in *Mishkāt* and also in the fourth *bāb* of *'Ajā 'ib al-qalb* (pp. 21-23 in Skellie's translation).
[192] *Mishkāt*, 36-37.

In *Mishkāt,* Imām al-Ghazālī refers to these levels as *marātib al-arwāḥ al-bashariyyah al-nūrānīyyah* (the levels of the luminous human spirits)[193] which consist of:

1. *al-rūh al-ḥassās* (the sensible spirit), which receives that which the five senses bring;

2. *al-rūh al-khayālī* (the imaginal spirit), which makes sense of sensorial data and stores it in order for it to be processed by the rational spirit;

3. *al-rūh al-ʿaqlī* (the rational spirit), which perceives meanings outside of the senses and imagination, and what Imam al-Ghazālī considers to be "*al-jawhar al-insī al-khāṣṣ"* (the substance/essence specific to Man);

4. *al-rūh al-fikrī* (the reflective spirit)*,* which takes pure rational knowledge and produces syllogistic knowledge; and,

5. *al-rūh al-qudusī al-nabawī* (the holy prophetic spirit), to which are disclosed flashes of the unseen (*tatajallī lawāʾiḥ al-ghayb*) which cannot be reached through the lower spirits.

What Imam al-Ghazālī calls "rational knowledge" is of two types: *al-maʿārif al-ḍarūriyyah al-kullīyyah* which is self-evident knowledge discerned by *al-rūh al-ʿaqlī* and *al-ʿulūm al-ʿaqlīyyah al-maḥḍah* "pure rational knowledge" which is accessed by *al-rūh al-fikrī*. The latter corresponds to syllogistic knowledge achieved through *al-rūh al-fikrī* "[bringing] about combinations and pairings, deducing therefore noble knowledge…it derives two conclusions, it combines the two anew and derives another…it never ceases increasing in this matter *ad infinitum*."[194] Sensory and rational or syllogistic knowledge realized through the joint efforts of the lower *arwāḥ*—that is through the sensible, imaginal, rational, and reflective spirits— aligns with *iktisāb* while the experiential or suprarational knowledge of *mushāhadah* is accessed only through *al-rūh al-qudusī al-nabawī* and limited to the prophets and the *awliyāʾ* (who share some elements of this *rūḥ*). Imam al-Ghazālī refers to this knowledge as *ʿilm al-mukāshafah,* and describes it as:

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[193] Ibid, 36.
[194] Ibid.

flashes of the unseen (*lawāʾiḥ al-ghayb*), 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 (*al-maʿārif al-rubbāniya*) that the rational and reflective spirits (*al-rūḥ al-ʿaqlī wa-l-fikrī*) cannot reach.[195]

Thus, for Imam al-Ghazālī, knowledge of higher, unseen Realities of the *ghayb* are inaccessible by the rational intellect and conveyed only in "flashes" to those who have been deemed worthy of receiving it.

Thus, even while Imam al-Ghazālī honors the *ʿaql*, as such, he is also aware of its limitations and skeptical of those who grant it too much confidence. He believes that the *ʿaql* is only capable of clarity and insight when it "disengages itself from the coverings of fancy and imagination (*tajarrada ʿan ghashāwat al-wahm wa al-khayāl*)," a state which "only becomes perfected after death, when the wrappings are lifted (*yankashif al-ghiṭāʾ*), [and] the mysteries are disclosed (*tanjalī al-asrār*)." While it is possible for Man liberate his *ʿaql* from some of the veils and coverings which cloud it whilst in the world, the process is strenuous and requires great intellectual and spiritual training. For the few who are able to reach this state of intellectual liberation and unveiling, "it is inconceivable (*lam yutaṣṣawur*) that [their *ʿaql*] can commit an error. On the contrary, it will see things as they are in themselves."[196]

In order to understand then, what Imam al-Ghazālī means by a liberated and lucid intellect, we must explore the veils which can cloud it.

4.5 Unveiling of the *ʿAql*

In *Mishkāt*, Imam al-Ghazali lists what some of the veils upon the intellect are and how they present in different kinds of people. He separates these veils into three general categories:

1) appetitive veils: "appetites which call out (*al-shahawāt al-dāʿīyah)* to the bestial attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-bahīmīyyah*), occupation with sensory pleasures (*al-ladhdhāt al-*

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[195] Ibid, 37.
[196] *Mishkāt*, 42.

ḥissiyah), and achievement of the wishes of this world, so that people will eat and
enjoy just as cattle eat,"

2) <u>temperamental or impulsive veils</u>: "attributes of predatoriness (al-ṣifāt al-sabuʿīyah),
which send forth anger, enmity, hatred, malice, envy, boastfulness, vainglory, and
arrogance…[and] anger (al-ghaḍab) [which] is the ghoul of the rational faculty
(ʿaql)…"

3) <u>intellectual veils</u>: "loathsome beliefs, lying opinions, and corrupt imaginings that have
veiled the unbelievers from faith (al-īmān), knowledge of the Real (maʿrifat al-ḥaqq),
and the gaining of brightness through the light of the sun of the Qur'an (nūri shamsi-
l-qur'ān) and the rational faculty (ʿaql)."[197]

Liberating oneself from these veils constitutes a form of mukāshafah achieved through iktisāb
rather than ilhām. This lower form of mukāshafah enables the ʿaql to see things as they truly are
in the realm of the ẓāhir, such that it does not err in its judgement of the ʿilm al-ẓāhir of
Revelation or Reality. To extend Imam al-Ghazālī's metaphor, the removal of these veils allows
the mirror of the heart-soul to gleam such that the content of al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ will become
manifest upon it. Imam al-Ghazālī believes this can occur both during sleep and wakefulness,
though the latter is much rarer as in wakefulness the mind is generally occupied with processing
sensory data. How one might achieve such an extrication from the first two types of veils and
liberate his spirit and ʿaql (what he refers to also collectively as qalb) through strict bodily and
spiritual discipline is the concern of Imam al-Ghazālī's ʿilm al-muʿāmalāt which constitutes the
subject of the Iḥyā'. How he might liberate himself from the third type is the specific purpose of
his explicatory works in the rational sciences and philosophy like Miʿyār al-ʿilm, Mihakk al-
naẓar, al-Iqtiṣād fi'l-iʿtiqād, and Tahafūt al-falāsifāh amongst other works.[198]

Ultimately, however, Imam al-Ghazālī affirms that the highest unveilings of the intellect (or
illuminations according to the allegory of light and darkness) are only possible if God allows
light to enter the heart of Man. He reminds his mukhāṭab therefore that,

> Since the source of all lights is the First Light (al-nūr al-awwal), the Real (al-
> ḥaqq)…then it is appropriate that each person who has realized the unity of God

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[197] *Mishkāt,* 42.
[198] Imam al-Ghazālī references these texts himself as resources on this matter in *Mishkāt* (9).

(*muwaḥḥid*) believe firmly that "to whomsoever God assigns no light, no light has he [24:40][199]

For Imam al-Ghazālī then, the first step in the path of unveiling is through Man's own *iktisāb* which takes the form of the purification of the soul and the preparation of the *'aql* through physical, spiritual, and intellectual training.

The second means of unveiling is not laborious or *iktisābī* in any way, but Imam al-Ghazālī posits that it occurs instantaneously when the curtain between the heart and the *lawḥ* are removed by the "winds of divine favor" as opposed to the removal of veils "by [human] hand."[200] Removal by the "winds of divine favor" here must be read as Imam al-Ghazali's reference to *ilhām*, while removal by "the [human] hand" is a reference to Man's own *iktisāb* through spiritual and intellectual training. When Imam al-Ghazālī says he sees no difference "in the knowledge itself, its seat, and its cause," but rather holds that "it differs only in the removal of the veil for [removal by the winds of divine favor] is not accomplished by man's volition,"[201] it seems he is referring only to the unveilings which grant knowledge of the lower levels of *'ilm al-bāṭin* which can be penetrated by the liberated *'aql* even whilst the *lubb* of Reality is only knowable through divinely-granted *mushāhadah*. Thus, in this context, the sole distinction Imam al-Ghazālī draws is in the means by which the veils are removed.

Imam al-Ghazālī likens this higher forms of *mukāshafah* and *mushāhadah* of Reality to *dhawq* (taste) and argues that even if "all the rational thinkers who are masters of taste came together to make [him who lacks it] understand the meaning of taste, they would not be able to," and warning,

> O you who cling to the world to the rational faculty (*al-'ākif fī 'ālam al-'aql*)— there is another stage beyond the rational faculty within which there becomes manifest that which does not become manifest to the rational faculty…beyond discrimination and sensation (*tamyīz wa'l-iḥsās*), within which marvels and wonders are unveiled…[202]

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[199] *Mishkāt*, 43.
[200] *Marvels*, 52
[201] Ibid, 53.
[202] *Mishkāt*, 37.

While both forms of unveiling (or illumination) occur through the perception of the heart-soul, *ilhām* by way of *mushāhadah* is a form of perception (of facets of the Unseen and Ultimate Reality) which occurs directly, in the moment of unveiling, or what Imam al-Ghazālī also refers to as "*lawāʾiḥ*" (flashes).[203] This type of *mukāshafah* is not accessible to all seekers of knowledge, and is rather, reserved for the prophets and whomsoever God selects as his *awliyāʾ*. It is the clear, effortless, immediate, and non-discursive realization of intelligible realities which constitutes the culmination of knowledge, that is *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* in which there is no possibility of error.

In Imam al-Ghazālī's epistemic scheme, the highest knowledge of *ilhām* is thus far superior to any knowledge of *iktisāb* through which only *'ilm* and *'ayn al-yaqīn* may be attained. The central *sharʿī* sciences of *fiqh* and *kalām,* which are *iktisābī,* and which give rise only to *'ilm al-yaqīn* and even the *'ilm al-muʿāmalāt* which has a practical focus on *'amal*, therefore occupy a lower status in Imam al-Ghazālī's hierarchies of knowledge.

4.6 *Mushāhadah*

For Imam al-Ghazālī, the "marvels and wonders" of existence culminate in the greatest wonder of all, which is the *mushāhadah* (witnessing) of the absolute Singularity of (God's) Existence, what he refers to also as ascension into the *mamlakat al-farḍāniyyah*, "the kingdom of singularity." He describes the experience of those who reach this point—upon whom he bestows many names including, *arbāb al-baṣīrah* (the people of insight) and *al-wāṣilūn* (those who have arrived) and *al-aḥrār* (the free ones), and *al-ʿārifūn* (the knowers/gnostics)—in the following way:

> The gnostics (*al-ʿārifun*), after having ascended to the heaven of reality (*samaʾ al-ḥaqīqah*), agree that they see nothing in existence save the One, the Real (*al-wāḥid al-ḥaqq*). Some of them possess this state as a cognitive gnosis (*kana lahu hadhihi al-ḥāl ʿirfānan ʿalīman*). Others, however, attain this through a state of tasting (*ḥālan dhawqīyan).* Plurality is totally banished from them, and they become immersed in sheer singularity. Their rational faculties become so satiated that in this state, they are, as it were, stunned (*ka'l-maḥbūṭīn*). No room remains in them for the remembrance of any other than God, nor the remembrance of themselves. Nothing is with them but God.[204]

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[203] Ibid.
[204] *Mishkāt*, 18.

This second state of tasting (*ḥālan dhawqīyan*), if it overcomes the seeker, is also called *fanā'* (extinction) in relation to the one who possesses it (i.e. the seeker become "extinct/effaced") in which

> He is conscious neither of himself in that state, nor of his own unconsciousness of himself. If he were conscious of his own unconsciousness, then he would [still] be conscious of himself. In relation to the one immersed in it, this state is called "unification" (*ittiḥād*) according to the language of metaphor (*majāz*), or is called "declaring God's unity" (*tawḥīd*) according to the language of reality (*ḥaqīqah*).[205]

This state of *fanā'* is what Imam al-Ghazālī also describes as *al-dhawq al-khāṣṣ,* by which *'ilm al-mukāshafah* is achieved. While this experience and the knowledge it imparts is limited to the prophets and the elect amongst the *awliyā'*, he explains that typically

> [A person first] perceives something in general terms (*jumlatan*) and then [perceives it] in detail through realization (*taḥqīq*) and tasting (*dhawq*), so that it becomes a state he experiences firsthand (*ḥālan mulābasan lahū*). These two types of knowledge (*al-'ilmāni*) are hierarchical: the first is like the husk (*al-qashr*), the second like the kernel (*al-lubb*). The first is like the outer appearance (*al-ẓāhir*), the second like the inner reality (*al-bāṭin*)… [*al-dhawq*] is not the opposite (*ḍidd*) of the first [type of knowledge]. Rather it is its perfection (*istikmāl lahū*).[206]

Thus, we see from this passage that Imam al-Ghazālī does not consider *dhawq* (that is *mushāhadah* of inner meanings and knowledge) to be a separate let alone a contradictory form of knowledge to rational, syllogistic, or what he refers to as *iktisābī* and *ẓāhirī* knowledge. Rather he considers *dhawq* to be the *istikmāl* (perfection) of all other forms of knowledge. He goes on to establish that there is a hierarchy of knowledge which correlates to the spiritual and intellectual development of believers:

> Knowledge (*al-'ilm*) is above faith (*al-īmān*), and tasting (*al-dhawq*) is above knowledge; [this] is because tasting is a finding (*wijdān*), but knowing is a drawing of analogies, and having faith is a mere acceptance through imitation (*fa'l-dhawqu wijdānun wa'l-'ilmu qiyāsun wa'l-īmānu qubūlu mujarradin bi'l-taqlīd*).[207]

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[205] Ibid.

[206] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *The Principles of the Creed (Kitāb Qawā'id Al-'aqā'id)* , trans. Khalid Williams (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2016), 51. (*Qawā'id,* 374.)

[207] *Mishkāt*, 38.

In this passage Imam al-Ghazālī places *al-dhawq* (experiential knowledge of the unseen or *mushāhadah/ilhām*) above rational knowledge gained through *qiyās* (syllogistic knowledge)—the noblest of which are the sciences of *sharī'ah* including *kalām* and *fiqh*—which he ranks above *taqlīd*. This triad of *taqlīd-istidlāl-mushāhadah* represents the different levels of actualization of knowledge one may attain. While Imam al-Ghazālī clearly establishes the supremacy of the experiential knowledge of *mushāhadah* as the *istikmāl* of *'ilm*, his language is dismissive, at times disparaging of purely logocentric knowledge, sciences, and its practitioners.

And yet, Imam al-Ghazālī is also revered amongst Muslims as one of the staunchest and most eloquent champions of rational, systematic thought. In fact he wrote extensively on how to properly utilize rational strategies and devices within the *shar'ī* sciences, to strengthen and standardize them.[208] In *Iḥyā'* Imam al-Ghazālī seems at times to openly support the path of formal learning over *taṣawwuf* as a means of attaining insight and knowledge, [209] and even extols, on the basis of Qur'ānic usage and reference, the necessity and importance of *ma'rifat Allah* by way of *dalīl*, *burhān*, and *ḥujjah* in *jadal* (argumentation, debate) with non-believers.[210]

One not familiar with Imam al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge and ontology might see this as a contradiction in his thought, however, it seems that rather than a contradiction, this tension is a sign of Imam al-Ghazālī (re)affirmation of his epistemological and ontological commitments that there *is* knowledge as there is *existence* beyond the material and rational realm of perception and existence, it is just more difficult to achieve than other forms of outer, *ẓāhirī* knowledge. The scholars he often derides as "*nuẓẓār*" (from *n-ẓ-r;* theoreticians, those engaged in speculation) are those who remain bound to *'ilm al-ẓāhir* they attain through their own *iktisāb*, without appreciating, let alone striving for, *'ilm al-bāṭin* and *ilhām*.

4.7 *Naẓar (Istidlāl)* vs. *Mushāhadah*

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[208] For example in *kalām*: *al-Iqtisād fi'l-i'tiqad* (The Golden mean of belief) and *Iljām al-'awwam 'an 'ilm al-kalām* (Restraining the common people from the science of theology); in *fiqh*: *Al-basīt fi al-furu' al-madhhab* (A simple discussion of the branches of the school of law) and *Al-mustasfā fī uṣūl al-fiqh* (A clear discussion of the principles of jurisprudence)*;* in philosophy *Maqasid al-falāsifa* (The objectives of the philosophers) and the *Tahāfut* (The incoherence of the philosophers).
[209] *Marvels,* 56.
[210] *Qawā'id*, 350.

Before engaging his critiques of the *nuẓẓār* it is important to reiterate that Imam al-Ghazālī believes that the domains of the *shar'ī* sciences necessarily differ from the domain of *mukāshafah* as they serve different purposes. He explains that *fiqh* deals primarily with matters of the *dunyā*, in establishing the proper bounds of action and interaction in the world and draws attention to the fact that the *dunyā*-minded *faqīh* is necessarily concerned with the outer, *ẓāhirī* aspects of acts without addressing the inner, *baṭinī* aspects of intention, emotion, and thought. He reminds his reader therefore to,

> Know that the jurist discusses three issues [that are] closely related to actions for the hereafter. These are Islam [itself], the prayer, and the lawful and the forbidden. Therefore, if you ponder the ultimate aims of the jurist, you will know that he does not go beyond the boundaries of [this] world to [address] the hereafter…
>
> As for Islam, the jurist speaks of that which renders it sound and that which corrupts it, and of its conditions, he takes into account only the [affirmation of the] tongue. [211]

While it is not a fault on his part per se, the *qalb* "is beyond the mandated authority of the jurist."[212] And yet, even as the *'ilm al-ẓāhir* of the *sharī'ah* that the *faqīh* provides through his rulings and prescriptions is necessary, Imam al-Ghazālī reminds that "as for the hereafter, [professed] statements [of faith] will be of no benefit there; only the illumination, inner secrets, and sincerity of the heart will avail." [213] Thus, Imam al-Ghazālī reiterates the fact that in his theory of knowledge, the *bāṭin* is of higher and deeper concern than the *ẓāhir*.

As the inner aligns with the *ākhirah*, so the outer with the *dunyā* and for this reason, while it is not a condemnation of the *fuqahā'* necessarily, Imam al-Ghazālī refers to them as being amongst the *ulamā' al-dunyā*. This is a distinction he makes in order to remind that there are also *ulamā' al-ākhirah*, whose knowledge is of a different nature and serves a different purpose which is not opposed to, but rather complements and completes the knowledge of *ulamā' al-dunyā*. Thus, Imam al-Ghazālī reminds his readers in *Iḥyā'* that matters of the heart "are not aspects in the domain of jurisprudence" and that "should a jurist delve into them, it would be as if he delved

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[211] *Book of Knowledge*, 44.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.

into theology or medicine, which would both be beyond the scope of his discipline."[214] Imam al-Ghazālī believes that such an effort would be misguided and misplaced. Rather than encouraging the *faqīh* to enter into such discourses, the purpose of Imam al-Ghazālī's discussion seems to be to reaffirm the need and the place of scholars who engage the domain of *'ilm al-ākhirah* by seeking *'ilm al-bāṭin* of the *sharī'ah* in order to complement the *'ilm al-dunyā* attained through *'ilm al-ẓāhir*. The ideal situation for Imam al-Ghazālī is that the scholar brings together these two forms of knowledge and unites them in harmony. He notes, however, that in his time there are few scholars of *'ilm al-ākhirah* and that most "scholars" are not true scholars who bring together both the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin*, but rather simple *nuẓẓār*.

For Imam al-Ghazālī, the great offenses of the *"nuẓẓār"* are that they 1) overestimate the *iktisābī* knowledge they acquire, 2) without acknowledging the significance of true knowledge, which Imam al-Ghazālī holds can only be *experienced*. For Imam al-Ghazālī, the *mutakallim* who seeks knowledge solely through his reason and the *faqīh* who even in his sophistication can never, through rational argumentation or analogy achieve or express anything more than his own *ẓann*, fail to reach the culmination of knowledge which is *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*. For Imam al-Ghazālī, this is due to the overreliance and the overconfidence of the *'ulamā'* of these sciences in their own rational devices at the expense of other forms of knowledge and intellection through unveiling.

4.8 *Yaqīn* of the *Nuẓẓār* vs. *Yaqīn* of *Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*

Imam al-Ghazālī explains therefore that there are two, separate definitions of *yaqīn*; one which is employed by the *nuẓẓār* and one which is employed by the Sufis. For the *nuẓẓār*, Imam al-Ghazālī states that *yaqīn* is a rational category which

> … comprises verifiable realization attained by way of demonstrative argumentation in which there is no doubt whatsoever, nor is doubt even conceivable therein; when the existence of any doubt or its possibility are negated, this knowledge is called certitude (*yaqīn*) in their terms…all knowledge assimilated in this manner is termed by those scholars [of speculation] (*nuẓẓār*) knowledge of certitude: [regardless of] whether it was acquired by speculation… or by way of sense perception, or by means of the natural disposition of the intellect, such as knowledge of the impossibility of a phenomena

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[214] Ibid.

without a cause; or by way of unanimous narration from reliable sources… or by way of direct observation… or by evidence.[215]

Imam al-Ghazālī argues that because the condition of employing the term '*yaqīn*' (certain knowledge, certitude) is "the non-existence of doubt (*shakk*) in their terminology" then the *mutakallim* considers every knowledge in which there is no *shakk* to be *yaqīn*. Furthermore, because there are only two states of knowledge for the *mutakallim*—there is doubt in it, or there is no doubt in it—Imam al-Ghazālī argues that their concept of *yaqīn* "cannot be qualified with the attribute of weakness, as there are no variant degrees in the negation of doubt."[216] Doubt, on the other hand can have many possible levels ranging as we discussed in previous chapters from *ẓann* to *wahm* to *shakk*.

The adherent of *taṣawwuf*, Imam al-Ghazālī argues, takes a different approach to knowledge. For him, *yaqīn* is not a category of rational or deductive knowledge, "attained by way of demonstrative argumentation," but rather a state of the *qalb*. This, he argues, is also the case for the *faqīh*, who though he deals primarily in the realm of *ẓann*, maintains that despite the fact that his reason may be flawed, there is a *true meaning* (*ḥaqīqah*) of the Revelation (Qur'ān and *sunnah*) known and intended by God and that whether or not one chooses to *believe* in the *faqīh*'s opinion, '*ilm* (i.e. *yaqīn*) of this reality is *wājib* (obligatory). This knowledge is not, however, identical to that which the Sufis refer to as *yaqīn*. The *yaqīn* of *taṣawwuf*, Imam al-Ghazālī argues, is that which is only attainable through direct experience (by way of *mukāshafah* or *mushāhadah*) of the unseen, deeper, and ontologically higher levels of Reality from God, while the '*ilm* (i.e. the *yaqīn*) of *faqīh* refers to certain belief or *īmān* in the reality and truth of the word of God through which He reveals His *sharī'ah*.

Nevertheless, for Imam al-Ghazālī, the concepts of *yaqīn* amongst *ahl al-taṣawwuf* and the *fuqahā'* are closer to each other than the concept of *yaqīn* amongst the *nuẓẓār* and the *mutakallimūn* who use the term "to express an absence of doubt." Imam al-Ghazālī suggests that the *yaqīn* of the Sufis "is not at all involved with considerations of probability or doubt; on the contrary, it involves the manner in which this knowledge overwhelms and prevails over the

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[215] Ibid, 216.
[216] Ibid, 217.

heart."[217] Thus in Imam al-Ghazālī's epistemology there can be varying degrees of *yaqīn*

according to its: "weakness and strength, decrease and increase, hidden and apparent

[nature]."[218] In his view, the highest level of *yaqīn* is only achieved when Man

> Know[s] that the totality of that which the prophets and messengers have brought, from
> the first to the last are the currents that derive from certitude (*min majārī al-yaqīn*) for the
> word 'certitude' (*yaqīn*) [itself] alludes to a specific realization (*maʿrifah makhṣūṣah*) and
> is associated with known objects by which laws (*al-sharāʾiʿ*) are obtained. One could
> never hope to enumerate them all, yet…the most essential of them…is unity (*tawḥīd*),
> which is that one perceives all things coming from the Cause of all causes and lends no
> credence to means…one who asserts the veracity of this (*al-muṣaddiq*) is a person of
> faith (*muʾmin*). Then if he has negated any possibility of doubt (*imkān al-shakk*) from his
> heart filled with faith, then one becomes a person of certitude (*mūqin*) according to one of
> the two meanings of the term. Then if his heart is completely overwhelmed (*ghalaba ʿalā
> qalbihi*) with faith, there ceases to be any anger in him towards the means, or any
> contentment with them and gratitude for them…Such a person is a person of certitude
> (*mūqin*) in accordance with the second meaning of the term, and this is the loftier of the
> two, and it is the fruit of the first certitude (*al-yaqīn al-awwal*), its spirit (*rūhuhu*) and
> consequence (*fāʾidatuhu*)."[219]

While Imam al-Ghazālī suggests that "the degrees of certitude between strength and weakness

have no end," he argues that the "person of certitude" belongs to the highest of three possible

classes of people: those who know with *yaqīn* (i.e. those who have ascended to the highest

realms of intellection and experienced the unity of God's existence), those who do not *know* but

believe in the possibility of *knowing* as such, and those who do not know and do not even *believe*

in the possibility of knowing as such. A "person of certitude"—who may be learned or unlearned

in worldly sciences—belongs to the first of these categories.

Accordingly, even a learned person or *ʿālim* may fall into the last category, if he is a scholar who

not only has not attained knowledge of a suprarational nature (i.e. *mukāshafah*), but who also

denies its *possibility* while reaffirming the supremacy of his own empirical and logocentric

knowledge. This is the one Imam al-Ghazālī addresses as *al-ʿākif fī ʿālam al-ʿaql* who, Imam al-

Ghazālī holds, has not been able to extricate himself from the veils of worldliness and

argumentation, who as such has not realized the full intellective power of his heart-soul and

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[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid, 219. (*Ihyāʾ*, Vol. I, 274)
[219] Ibid, 221, (*Ihyāʾ*, Vol. I, 275-276)

remains bound by the limits of his rational and reflective soul. This *ʿākif* is from the *ʿulamāʾ al-dunyā* (whom Imam al-Ghazālī also refers to as *ʿulamāʾ al-ẓāhir*) who Imam al-Ghazālī believes have no share in the *ʿilm al-mukāshafah* (which corresponds to *ʿilm al-bāṭin*), which is the highest and purest form and the *ghāyah* of all knowledge. Such a one, he argues, cannot even conceive of knowledge beyond what he himself knows. This is the class of scholars who Imam al-Ghazālī argues cannot understand him when he says that:

> It is not [normally] conceivable to see, in the state of friendship [with God], something that is beyond reason by virtue of its impossibility (*yuqṣī al-ʿaql bi- istiḥālatihi*). However, it is conceivable that one can see something that reason does not reach, meaning that [the intellect alone] will not keep up with it.[220]

In this passage, Imam al-Ghazālī is clarifying that that which is "beyond reason" is not *unreasonable.* That is, even the *ḥukamāʾ* and the *awliyāʾ* who are granted a portion of experiential and otherwise restricted knowledge, do not normally "see" anything which is *impossible* in the (theo-)logical sense, though what they witness may not adhere to the known and established laws of the natural world, and in this sense may not be comprehensible to the solely rational, *dunyā*-oriented mind trained on *al-ẓāhir*.

In accordance with this passage, Imam al-Ghazālī insists that suprarational states can only be accessed or experienced by individuals upon "*ḥayrah*" or "*daḥshah*," that is when "they become intoxicated with such an intoxication that the ruling authority of their rational faculty is overthrown (*fa sakarū sakran dafaʿa dūnihi sulṭāna ʿuqūlihim*)." In such circumstances, he argues, that it is not uncommon for the gnostic to make ecstatic utterances such as

> "I am the Real!" (*annā al-ḥaqq*), "Glory be to me, how great is my station!" (*Subḥānī ma aʿdham shānī!*) and still another, "There is nothing in my robe but God!" (*ma fī'l-jubbah illa Allah*).[221]

Imam al-Ghazālī insists, however, that "*kalām al-ʿāshiq fī ḥāl al-sakr*" (the speech of lovers in the state of intoxication) should be "concealed" (*yuṭwā*) and not be related (*la yaḥkī*) to others—a matter we will discuss more thoroughly in our section on secrets and silence. Given the nature of

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[220]As translated from Imam al-Ghazālī's *al-Maqṣad al-asnā* by Makas in: Rebecca Makas, "In Spite of Their Thoughts Their Words Require Interpretation: Silence and Ineffability in Medieval Islamic Mysticism" (PhD diss., Emory University, 2018), 170.
[221] *Mishkāt*, 18.

the utterances of "the lovers" which seem to outwardly contradict the essence of *tawḥīd*, these utterances can and *must* be subject to rational analysis after "the lover" returns to a state of normal consciousness. Imam al-Ghazālī reminds us, therefore, that

> When this intoxication subsides, the ruling authority of the rational faculty (*sulṭān al-'aql*)—which is God's balance (*mizān*) in His earth—is given back to [the lovers]. They come to know that what they experience was not the reality of unification (*lam yakun ḥaqīqatu'l-ittiḥād bal shubhu'l-ittiḥād*).[222]

By reflecting upon and scrutinizing the experience, one will realize that any perception of a "*ittiḥād*" with God is impossible and thus a *mis*perception. Imam al-Ghazālī does not, however, reject the experiences of those who claim to have achieved this *ittiḥād*. Rather, he criticizes their inability to properly situate their experiences in the framework of the formal, *ẓāhirī* theological Truth upon return into the world of reason and the insufficiency of the verbal expressions to represent that which lies beyond rational and thus linguistic containment. Only one who has reached the heights of intellectual and spiritual development, he argues, is able to reach such a state *and* make proper sense of it.

As we have already discussed, in Imam al-Ghazālī's view, effective training of the *'aql* starts with training and discipline the physical urges and pleasures which can cloud its judgement. Liberation of the *'aql* through training and purification of the material body (or by the terminology presented in *Mishkāt*, *al-rūḥ al-ḥassās* and in the terminology of *Iḥyā'*, *al-nafs al-ḥaywāniyyah*) can occur prior to, in tandem with, or after the training and purification of one's rational spirit (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*) from its false perceptions and unsound beliefs. Through physical and intellectual purification, the *'aql* can progress to higher levels of perception and intellection.

Given that the *qalb* (heart-soul) is the seat of the *'aql* and the true agent of all intellection in Imam al-Ghazālī's epistemology, such a training is actually considered training of the *qalb*. When the *qalb* has been sufficiently disciplined, it leads to purification, which leads to its unveiling. The culmination of the unveiling of the *qalb* is the ultimate experience of *ittiḥād* (or what Imam al-Ghazālī also refers to as *tawḥīd*). Such a heart-soul, Imam al-Ghazālī, argues is

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[222] Ibid.

incapable of making a false judgment about *anything*, including a mistake about its experience of *ittiḥād*. The unveiling of its latent intellective powers can occur if and only if its training is undertaken in strict accordance with the *sharī'ah* (as illuminated through the prophetic *sunnah)* such that it does not veer from it in even the smallest matters.[223] Imam al-Ghazālī refers to the possessor of such a heart-soul (i.e. such an *'aql* or intellect) as "the perfect one" emphasizing that: "the perfect one (*al-kāmil*) does not allow himself to leave aside a single prescription of the *sharī'ah*, even though he has perfect insight (*kamāl al-baṣīrah*)."[224]

4.9 The "Perfect Ones"

For Imam al-Ghazālī, a sign of the perfection of this "perfect one" is his ability to harmoniously synthesize the inner and the outer knowledges of *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhirah*, *al-ẓāhir* and *al-bāṭin*. Such a soul (or a heart or an intellect—we can use any term here) is able to interpret meanings across the various levels of text and existence and glean both the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin* of God's *ayāt* (signs, verses) in harmony with each other and with Reality.

Imam al-Ghazālī believes that people are at different *maqāmāt* (stations) with regards to how deeply and with how much certitude they are able to penetrate the *'ilm al-bāṭin* and how well harmoniously they are able to reconcile it with *'ilm al-ẓāhir*. He catalogs them by explaining that:

> Some perceive that all things related to [the contents of *ilm al-mukāshafah*] are allegories (*amthilah*). As to that which God has prepared for His righteous servants, eyes have not seen it, ears have not hear it, nor has it occurred to human minds/hearts (*la khaṭaru 'alā qalbi basharin*). People know nothing [of the realities] of paradise but attributes and names (*al-ṣifat wa'l-asmā'*).

> Some people consider that a part of these matters are allegories and a part correspond to their meanings (*ḥaqā'iqihā*) as understood from the verbal expressions (*al-mafhūmah min alfaẓīha*).

> Likewise, others see that the highest degree of realization of God (*muntahā ma'rifati'llāhi*) Most Mighty and Majestic, is realizing ones absolute inability to attain realization of Him (*al-i'tirāf bi'l-'ajzi 'an ma'rifatihi*).

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[223] Makas, 155.
[224] Nol, 33.

Some make pretentious claims (*yadda'ī umūran 'aẓīman*) concerning the realization of God.

Some say, "The limit of our realization of God (*haddu ma'rifati'llahi*) Most Mighty and Majestic, is where the common folk (*jamī'i'l-'awwām*) have halted their beliefs (*i'tiqād*), which is that He exists (*mawjūd*), is omniscient (*'ālim*), omnipotent (*qādir*), all-hearing (*samī'*), all-seeing (*baṣīr*), and speaks (*mutakkalim*).[225]

In this passage, Imam al-Ghazālī establishes a spectrum between those who: 1) cannot perceive the meanings behind the *alfāẓ* and thus relegate the words themselves to the realm of allegory; 2) those who can understand something of the reality of the Unseen based on their comprehension of the words which have been revealed to describe it; 3) those who have true understanding of the depth of the innermost meanings and reality which correspond to *tawḥīd*; 4) those who make "pretentious claims" about the nature and content of their *ma'rifah*; and 5) those who limit their understanding of *ma'rifah* to the most *ẓāhir* understanding of basic theological doctrines. By those who make grave and pretentious claims about the *ma'rifah* of God, it seems Imam al-Ghazālī is referring to ecstatic Sufis like al-Hallāj who claim to have become one with God, a matter we will discuss in more detail below. These are the gnostics who have experienced spiritual *mukāshafah* and *mushāhadah* to different degrees, but who are unable to properly understand the content and context of their experience properly within the fundamental theological framework of Islam. In other words, these are those who have knowledge of *'ilm al-bāṭin* but are unable to reconcile it with the *'ilm al-ẓāhir* of Revelation and Reality. The last category constitutes a class of people who are the precise inverse of the previous class. That is, Imam al-Ghazālī's usage here seems to be a reference to not only the simple *'awwām,* but also the general class of *'ulamā'* of the *shar'ī* sciences who remain bound by the outer formulations of the *sharī'ah* without being able to penetrate its inner meanings.

Imam al-Ghazālī explains that amongst the intellectuals of his time, there are two interpretive extremes:

Nullifying the outward meanings (*ibṭāl al-ẓawāhir*) is the view of the Bāṭinites, who have one blind eye and look only at one of the two worlds, not recognizing the parallel between the two or understanding its significance. In the same way, nullifying the inner

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[225] *Book of Knowledge,* 50.

mysteries (*ibṭāl al-asrār*) is the path of the literalists (*hashawiyyah*). Hence…those who bring the two together are perfect (*kāmil*).[226]

Though he did not consider most '*ulamā*' of his day to occupy the extreme end of the intellectual and interpretive spectrum (represented by the *hashawiyyah*), Imam al-Ghazālī does emphasize that they do fall into the category of '*ulamā*' *al-ẓāhir* because their scholarly focus is always trained upon the "*qishrān*" (shells) of '*ilm* rather than its "*lubb*" (core, pith, heart).[227] Another defining characteristic of '*ulamā*' *al-ẓāhir* Imam al-Ghazālī points out is that consist of those who "*yashtaghilu bi'l-munāzara ma'a'l-khusūm fi'l-masā'il al-fiqhiyyah wa ghayrahā*" (occupies himself in technical debate with his adversaries over the minutia of *fiqh* and other issues)[228] and those who focus on "*sinā'ah al-kalām wa ma'rifat tarīq al-mujādalah*" (playing with words and knowledge of the strategies of formal debate).[229] Thus Imam al-Ghazālī felt that while most scholars of his day were skilled wordsmiths and logicians, trained rigorously in their fields, very few ever reached a state of (intellectual) perfection. Rather, the great majority of those engaged in the *shar'ī* sciences—or by his other usage, '*ulūm al-ẓāhir*—fall into the latter category and join the ranks of Imam al-Ghazālī's "*nuẓẓār*".

Not only does their penetration of the *sharī'ah* remain superficial, but these "*nuẓẓār*" also overestimate the *iktisābī* (and *ẓāhirī*) knowledge they acquire without acknowledging let alone seeking the epistemologically higher, *baṭinī* levels of knowledge which can only be *unveiled* by God.

For Imam al-Ghazālī, the *mutakallim* who seeks knowledge solely through his reason and the *faqīh* who focuses his efforts only on the *ẓāhir* and who, even in his discursive sophistication, can never, through rational argumentation or analogy achieve or express anything more than his own *ẓann*, fail to reach the culmination of knowledge which is *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*. Imam al-Ghazālī believes that this is due, as we have noted, to the overreliance and the overconfidence of the '*ulamā*' of these sciences in their own rational devices and more importantly, to their exoteric

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[226] Ibid, 32.
[227] *Kitab al-'ilm*, 82.
[228] *Kitab al-'ilm*, 124. Honerkamp translates this as "exaggerated debate with his adversaries over the minutia of fiqh rulings and their like." (90)
[229] Ibid. 125. Honerkamp translates this as "theology, knowledge of the means of debate" (91)

and formalistic approach to *'ilm*. The "perfect ones," however, are those who bring together *'ilm al-ẓāhir* with the *'ilm al-bāṭin* in order to comprehend the Reality of the *sharī'ah*. Imam al-Ghazālī believes that for this class of intellectuals, *yaqīn* is not simply a category of rational or deductive knowledge, but rather a state of the heart which is only attainable through direct, experiential knowledge of *ilhām* or *mukāshafah* from God.

4.10 Secrets, Speech, and Silence

Throughout Imam al-Ghazālī various works, and especially in *Mishkāt* there is a clear tension between silence and speech on metaphysical matters, i.e. *'ilm al-mukāshafah*, the contents of which Imam al-Ghazālī refers to collectively as "*al-asrār*," the secrets or mysteries of existence. The knowledge of *al-asrār* is bestowed upon *arbāb al-basā'ir*[230] (the masters of insight), directly from God and consists of the understanding of the similitudes across the worlds:

> It may be that one thing [in the visible world] (*'ālam al*-shahādah) is a similitude for many things in the world of dominion (*'ālam al-malakūt*), and that one thing in the world of dominion has many similitudes in the visible world. A thing is only similitude (*mathal*) when it is like and corresponds to something by virtue of a certain kind of likeness (*mumāthalah*) and correspondence (*muṭābaqah*). To enumerate all these similitudes would call for an exhaustive study of the totality of the existent things found in both worlds in their entirety…[231]

Thus while Imam al-Ghazālī does not delve into an enumeration of these secrets, he offers the example of the celestial lights of the sun, moon, near and far stars as similitudes of the intellectual lights of the angels "*jawāhir nūrānīyyah sharīfah 'ālīyah* (high luminous substances)" which have "*marātib fī nūrānīyatiha mutāfāwitah* (diverse levels in their luminosity)" in accordance with the rank of the angels and their proximity with God and the world. He explains the *mukāshafah* (unveiling) or *ma'rifah* (realization) of such similitudes across the dimensions of reality as,

> "the crossing over" (*al-i'tibār*)—that is, the crossing from one thing to another, and from the outward (*al-ẓāhir)* to the mystery (*al-sirr*).[232]

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[230] Ibid, 26.
[231] *Mishkāt*, 27.
[232] Ibid, 33.

Only those who have purified and perfected their intellects—from the prophets and those who have actualized elements of the prophetic spirit within themselves—are able to achieve such a "crossing-over." Imam al-Ghazālī explains that

> the low, dense, imaginal world became for the prophets a glass (*zujājah*), a niche for lights (*mishkāt li'l-anwār*), a purifier of the mysteries (*misfā' li'l-asrār*), and a ladder (*mirqāh*) to the highest world (*al-'ālam al-a'lā*). Through this it comes to be known that the outward similitude is true and behind it is a mystery."[233]

Though he mentions only the prophets in this passage, it is clear from his explanations throughout *Mishkāt* that such insights are also manifest in the hearts of the "perfect" ones who have attained *ma'rifah* and *yaqīn* through direct *mushāhadah* of the *ghayb*. But even amongst those who reach this pinnacle of intellectual perfection and experience, there are ranks, and there are rules as to what can and cannot be communicated about their knowledge, with whom, in what form, and to what extent. Before we can discuss what it means when Imam al-Ghazālī says that something cannot (or should not) be said (or written), it would be beneficial to briefly orient ourselves with the theoretical terms operative in discourses about speech, silence (the absence of or abstention from speech), and ineffability (the impossibility of speech).

4.10.1 Two Types of Ineffability

What does it mean to say that something can 'be said'? What does it mean to say that something '*cannot* be said?' The act of 'saying'—what we call 'speech'—is one we carry out through 'language.' There is no 'speech' without 'language' and so in a sense when we ask "what is speech (and also what are its capacities and its limits)?" we are really asking "what is language (and what are its capacities and its limits)?"

These are very complex questions which philosophers and later Sufis and *mutakallimūn* have occupied themselves with for as long as language itself has existed. Some modern disciplines like linguistics, cognitive psychology, computer science as well as philosophy focus on language as an individual process, linked primarily to the mind and cognition. Other disciplines like

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[233] Ibid, 34.

sociology, social psychology, sociolinguistics, and anthropology discuss language as an entirely social process dictated by social conditions and the nature of interactions between individuals.[234] Though theorists from diverse fields have offered diverse definitions of language, the simplest parameters seem to be that a language is 1) a system of symbols that is 2) used to communicate.

As a system then, any given language has a set of rules which governs how symbols are associated with, and how they can be combined to represent meanings (or in technical terms, semantic values). By understanding and utilizing these symbols according to the rules of a given language, a speaker of that language can express his thoughts. We can refer to this model which emphasizes the systematic and logical nature of language as the 'logical model' of language. The logical model of language focuses on the structural nature of language and grammar. According to the logical model, language is built up cumulatively, beginning with the most basic units of meaning which we call words (or terms, or in Arabic usage, *alfāẓ*). These molecular units of meaning can then be combined in different ways to produce more complex units which we refer to as sentences or propositions. The grammar or more specifically, the syntax of any given language governs this process of combination.

Meaning (*ma'nā* or sometimes *murād*), however, is a separate area which is governed by the *semantic* rules of a language. Each term in the proposition has a certain semantic value and refers to some aspect of reality while the proposition taken together refers to a state of affairs which can be either true or false. Within this paradigm of language, the words we speak (whether terms or propositions) can only be considered 'speech' (*kalām*) (i.e. 'saying something') if we follow the syntactic and semantic rules of that language. Thus, it is the valid expression itself which 'says something'. If the expression fails to follow the parameters of the language in which it is expressed, then the result would be '*not* saying something.'[235]

A second notion of language is that it is any medium of *communication*—spoken, written, non-verbal, visual, musical, etc.—which is used to express thoughts and/or bring about actions.

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[234] Herbert H. Clark, *Using Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009), 3.
[235] For more on this: Sebastian Gäb, "Ineffability: the Very Concept," *Philosophia* 48, no. 5 (2020): pp. 1825-1836, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-020-00198-2.

Communication, as an *action*, whether carried out for example through verbal or non-verbal language amongst humans or through visual, tactile, auditory, or chemical cues (as in the natural world amongst animals and plants)[236] generally entails three primary features: 1) a message/information; 2) a sender; and 3) a receiver. Intentionality is also generally considered as a necessary feature of communication on part of both sender and receiver, especially in human language which is a particular type of human behavior. For example, an infant who has not yet learned to speak may vocalize the syllables "ma-ma" without knowing or intending any meaning therein. But if a child, learning to speak, vocalizes those syllables while looking at and reaching out for his mother, with the purpose (intention) of addressing her, then this is an example of communication.

The same would be the case for speakers of different languages. If I, a speaker of Urdu, say "*ājāo*" (imperative, "come") with the intention of calling my child to me, then this is considered an example of communication, whether the child comes or not. But if an English speaker who has no knowledge of Urdu utters the same two syllables, the result would be a meaningless vocalization, "*ā"-"jāo*." According to this model, language can only be understood within the context of time, place, and what is occurring (action). The meaning (semantic value) of linguistic expressions (utterances) can only be understood properly if the context in which those expressions are made is taken into account. The speaker's intention and the communicative function an expression performs determine the meaning of that expression. Thus, it is not simply the expression itself, and whether its individual parts conform to syntactical and semantic rules that is considered in the act of 'saying something,' but rather there is an entire process associated with 'saying something' in which the *speaker* says something by way of the expression. Because it focuses on the communicative function of language, this second model can be referred to as the 'communication model' of language.

Thus, there are two distinct yet complementary notions of what language entails—either it is the result of a *proper combination* of elements/symbols in a language system (a grammatically and semantically correct expression of a proposition), or it is a type of *action* (communication)

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[236] See Chapter 8, "Communication: Basic Principles," in Wilson's *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* for more on communication amongst animals, plants, and microorganisms.

performed by individuals who speak the same language in a particular context. This ambiguity in the notion of what effective language (i.e. being able to 'say something'/effability) means is reflected in the notion of *not* being able to say something (ineffability),—the concept in which we are now interested with regards to Imam al-Ghazālī's epistemology.

We can therefore explore 'ineffability' on two separate planes: 1) the plane of inexpressibility or 2) incommunicability.[237] In the first case, the ineffable is that which cannot be expressed in a given language due to the formal constraints of that particular language (i.e. no terms/symbols to express the proposition exist, or the rules of combination (syntax) of the language do not allow for its expression). In the second case, the problem lies not with a particular language, but rather with the ability to properly communicate a concept, because it is impossible for any sign/word to encompass the intended meaning (i.e. the ineffable). This type of ineffability is more specific than the ineffability of inexpressibility (what we might call 'weak ineffability') because while there may be a concept, which cannot be expressed in a given language because no word exists for this concept in that language, it is possible that a word could be created to express it. If, however, there is a problem with mentally grasping the concept itself then the problem is of a higher degree. Incommunicability (what we might call 'strong ineffability') is the inability to form a mental significate that represents the state of affairs one is trying to express. Because the capacity for linguistic expression is dependent upon a prior capacity for mental representation of a given concept (intelligible, meaning, *maʿnā, ḥaqīqah*), that which cannot be mentally represented or conceptualized can have no linguistic expression.

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[237] Gab refers to these as "weak ineffability" and "strong ineffability" respectively.

4.10.2 Ineffability in Imam al-Ghazālī's Thought

In the case of Imam al-Ghazālī, we see that he alludes to both 'weak' and 'strong' ineffability in his works, especially *Mishkāt* and *al-Qawāʿid fi'l-ʿaqāʾid*. In *Mishkāt*, 'weak ineffability' is attributed mainly to the *asrār* of the similitudes across the realms of existence, while the 'strong ineffability' is reserved for only *ḥaqīqat al haqāʾiq*—which is the Singular, Independent, Incomparable existence of God (i.e. *tawḥīd*) and that which is directly related to it. The tension between silence and speech in *Mishkāt* is complicated by layered considerations regarding Imam al-Ghazālī's notions about: 1) the necessity of etiquette with God not to divulge what He has entrusted to His *awliyāʾ*; 2) the capacity of the *mukhāṭab* (the addressee of speech) to comprehend his intended meanings; 3) the inadequacy of language to properly express the intended meanings (inexpressability); or 4) the sheer impossibility of language to contain and convey the intended meanings (incommunicability).

The first consideration aligns with silence, that is the absence of (or the abstention from) speech, than with "ineffability" as such, while the second is a matter of Imam al-Ghazālī's judgement and pedagogical priorities as to the state and capacity of his *mukhāṭab* to receive and comprehend the knowledge which he possesses in the forms in which it is possible to impart it.

In the opening paragraphs of *Mishkāt* Imam al-Ghazālī reminds his *mukhāṭab*,

> You have knocked at a locked door that is not to be opened except for the firmly rooted possessors of knowledge (*li'l-ulamāʾ al-rāsikhīn*). What is more, not every mystery is to be unveiled and divulged (*laysa kullu sirrin yukshaf wa yufshā*), and not every reality is to be presented and disclosed (*wa la kullu haqiqatin tuʿraḍ wa tujallā*). Indeed, "the breasts of the free are the graves of the mysteries (*ṣudūr al-aḥrār qubūru al-asrār*).[238]

Though he does not define their characteristics here, it seems that by "*al-ulamāʾ al-rāsikhūn*" Imām al-Ghazālī refers to those scholars who have firm foundation in the rational and *sharʿī* sciences, who have purified their *ʿaql* and *rūḥ* through discipline in accordance with the laws of reason but more importantly in accordance with the laws of *sharīʿah*. For Imam al-Ghazālī, these

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[238] *Mishkāt*, 2.

are the *'ulamā'* who, when their knowledge is perfected through *mukāshafah* of *'ilm al-bāṭin* from God, become the *aḥrār* (whom he also refers to as the perfect ones, *al-muqarrabūn* and *al-siddīqūn* in other passages).[239]

Imam al-Ghazālī argues that the knowledge of these *aḥrār* is not accessible nor comprehensible to those who are arrogant or those who are blinded by their reason, even from amongst the believers and the *'ulamā'*. As such, Imam al-Ghazālī notes that the *bāṭinī* knowledge of *al-aḥrār* cannot be expressed openly but must be concealed and protected from misunderstanding and distortion.

In order to emphasize the importance of "[preserving] the coverings upon the face of the mysteries (*wajaba ḥifdh al-astār 'alā wajhi al-asrār*)" Imam al-Ghazālī even goes as far as to quote the words of an "*'ārif* (gnostic)" who proclaimed that "To divulge the mystery of Lordship is unbelief (*ifshā'u sirri al-rabūbiyyah kufrun*)."[240] In fact, the only reason Imam al-Ghazālī gives for writing the *Mishkāt* is that he recognizes his *mukhāṭab* (addressee) as one "whose breast has been opened up by God through light (*mashrūḥ al-ṣadri billahi bi al-nūr*) and whose innermost consciousness has been kept free of the darknesses of delusions." Thus Imam al-Ghazālī feels morally compelled to share this delicate and restricted knowledge with his *mukhāṭab* whom he sees as capable of receiving it, though he acknowledges that he can and must do so only by "alluding to sparks and flashes (*bi al-ishārati ilā lawāmi' wa lawā'iḥ*) or giving symbols of realities and subtleties (*wa'l-ramzi ilā haqā'iq wa daqā'iq*)."[241] He thus requests his *mukhāṭab*, to "be satisfied with abridged allusions and brief hints (*faqni' bi ishārat mukhtaṣṣarah wa talwīḥāt mujizah*)," a request which Imam al-Ghazālī repeatedly makes throughout *Mishkāt* whilst shying away from long discussions or explanations of the *asrār* he alludes to.

His professed avoidance of *bayān* or *sharḥ*[242] of these secrets is, however, an affirmation of Imam al-Ghazālī's position that these secrets *are* effable—that is, that they *can* indeed be expressed and explained in language.[243] For example, when explaining the power of the

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[239] See for example Book I, *Bab II* of the *Iḥyā'*.
[240] Ibid, 2.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid, 22.
[243] Ibid, 3, 22, 43.

mysterious human *'aql* to extrapolate *ad infinitum*, he truncates his explanation and informs his addressee that "behind this lies a mystery which would take too long to explain (*wa warā'ahu sirrun yaṭūlu sharḥihi*)."[244] At other times he cuts his explanations short, because he thinks that his *mukhāṭab* is "incapable of bearing anything greater,"[245] such as when he refers to the experiences of certain Sufis whose ecstatic exclamations "are in need of explication (*yaftaqir ilā ta'wīl*)" just as dreams "are in need of interpretation (*yaftaqir ilā ta'bīr*)."[246] Rather than either denouncing these exclamations or providing a thorough explanation for them, he simply establishes that such an explanation is possible and necessary. Thus Imam al-Ghazālī establishes a boundary between what he is willing to express and what is in itself 'expressable,' without denying its expressability in the least.

If we can consider this kind of inexpressabilty as a 'weak ineffability' then there is also allusion to "strong" ineffability[247] in Imam al-Ghazālī's work, which rather than an inability to express a concept, refers to the fundamental inability of the speaker to *communicate* a concept. This in*communic*ability is due to the fact that there may be certain concepts (intelligibles, meanings, *haqā'iq)* which though they can be experienced or *represented* mentally, cannot be *conceptualized*. Because they cannot be conceptualized, no "word" or "sign" can be attached to them and therefore cannot be expressed linguistically. Given that only conceptual mental contents are communicable 'incommunicability' (i.e. strong ineffability) then refers to the inability to form a mental significate that represents the state of affairs one is trying to express— or in Imam al-Ghazālī's terminology, the inability of the *al-rūḥ al-khayālī* (the imaginal spirit) to identify a similitude (*mathal*) for a state of affairs. While there are different degrees of ineffability in Imam al-Ghazālī's work, this type of ineffability applies to only one state of affairs in all existence, which he believes is essentially the *only* true state of affairs in all existence— *tawḥīd*.

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[244] Ibid, 6-7.
[245] Ibid, 22.
[246] Ibid, 35.
[247] This, of course, has consequences for the concept of ineffability: we should expect ineffability to exhibit the same distinction we encountered in the concept of language. Therefore, we need to distinguish two different meanings of 'ineffable': (a) weak ineffability or inexpressibility. What is weakly ineffable is ineffable in terms of a theory of meaning: a given language L does not contain any expression that (according to the semantic rules of L) designates what is to be expressed. (b) Strong ineffability or incommunicability. If something is strongly ineffable, it is ineffable in terms of a theory of meaningfulness: it is impossible to create a sign which carries the meaning required to express the ineffable. As a consequence, what is strongly ineffable cannot be communicated.

In Book II of *Ihyā', Kitāb qawā'id al-'aqā'id* (The Principles of the Creed), Imam al-Ghazālī entertains a deeper theoretical discussion about the different degrees of (in)effability as they apply to *al-asrār* which only the *muqarrabūn* (those brought nearest to God) can perceive. He states that most people have no share in this knowledge and that those who do, "*yamtani'ūna 'an ifshā'ihā ilayhim*" that is, they either refrain from or are prevented from divulging it to those who do not.[248] These five categories are as follows:

1) *"An yakūn al-shay'u fi nafsihi daqīqan takillu akthar al-afhām 'an darkihā"* (The thing in itself is subtle and beyond the comprehension of most minds). This category of intelligibles is perceived only by the "*khawāṣṣ*" (the elect) and they are required not to divulge them to anyone who cannot perceive or is not prepared to comprehend them (*ghayri ahlihā)* as such a divulgence would result in a "*fitnah*" (tribulation) for them. This is a category of knowledge contains matters upon which the Prophet even kept his silence, for it refers to a state of reality "that minds cannot comprehend, (*takillu al-afhāmu 'an darkihā)* nor can imaginations conceive of its nature (*wa taqṣiru al-awhām 'an taṣawwuri kanhihi*). With reference to the inability to glorify the Majesty of God sufficiently, Imam al-Ghazālī clarifies "*laysa al-ma'niyyu bihi annī a'jazu 'ani'l-ta'bīri 'ammā adraktuhu, bal huwa i'tirāfun bi'l-quṣūri 'an idrāki kanhi jalālihi"* (this does not mean the inability to express what I comprehend but rather an admission of the inability to comprehend the essence of the majesty of God).

From this category are also "*sirr al-rūḥ*" (the secret of the *rūḥ)* and "*ba'ḍu ṣifāt Allahi ta'ālā*" (some of the attributes of God Most High).

2) "*al-khafiyyāt*" are hidden things, which the prophets and the *ṣiddīqūn* (veracious ones) refrain from mentioning/divulging. These are "*mafhūmun fi nafsihi la yakillu al-fahmu 'anhu wa lākin dhikruhu yaḍurru bi-akthari al-mustami'īn*" that is, things which are intelligible in themselves and which the mind does not fail to grasp, but whose mention is harmful to most hearers, though it does not harm the prophets or the *ṣiddīqūn*. Though

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[248] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, "Kitāb Qawā'id Al-'Aqā'id," in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn*, vol. I (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011), pp. 329-460, 367. Note: Henceforth *Qawā'id*.

Imam al-Ghazālī does not openly state it in *Kitāb qawāʿid al-ʿaqāʾid*, the prophets and the *ṣiddīqūn* presumably may speak about these things amongst *ahlihā*.

He gives the secret of predestination (*sirruʾl-qadri*) as an example here.

3) That which would be understood and which would cause no harm if it were to be spoken plainly (*law dhukira ṣarīḥan lafuhima wa lam yakun fīhi ḍarar)*, but which is expressed indirectly (*yuknā ʿanhu*) through the means of metaphor and symbols (*ʿalā sabīl al-istiʿārah waʾl-ramzi*) so that it leaves a deeper impression upon the heart of the listener (*li-yakūna waqʿuhu fī qalbiʾl-mustamiʿ aghlab*").[249]

    Imam al-Ghazālī argues that the capacity of men to comprehend such metaphorical language varies greatly and only some will be able to cross from the *ẓāhir* of the words to *al-sirri waʾl-bāṭin*. To ascertain whether the meanings of words are meant figuratively (*ʿalā khilāf al-ẓāhir*) or literally one must follow the indications of his reason or the law (*bi-dalīl ʿaqlī aw sharʿī*). One can only abandon the *ẓāhir* meaning if a literal interpreation is not possible. If a *ẓāhirī* interpretation is possible, but one believes it must be interpreted metaphorically, one must produce a *dalīl sharʿī* (i.e. *dalīl naqlī*) to this effect.

4) The knowledge attained through *taḥqīq* and *dhawq*. Imam al-Ghazālī posits that there is a difference between the knowledge of *taṣdīq* (belief in something) and that of *taḥqīq* (realization).

    He likens the former to the knowledge for example of passionate love (*ʿishq*) or illness. One may have heard they exist, and so know something of them, and yet his knowledge will not be complete until he *experiences* or 'tastes' them. Thus, while language can express these states, it does not fully impart their reality to the listener unless the listener, too, has experienced them and can glean from inadequate expression, the true meaning. Imam al-Ghazālī refers to these two types of knowledge metaphorically as the *qishr*

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[249] Ibid, 371.

(rind) and the *lubb* (pith, core) respectively. The first is something exterior, the second (*dhawq*) is interior and states that "the second case is not the opposite (*ḍidd*) of the first. Rather it is its perfection (*istikmālun lahū*)."[250]

5) The fifth category applies to abstract concepts which are expressed in concrete words (lit. when the language of experience is expressed through spoken language: *an yu'abbara bi-lisān al-maqāli 'an lisān al-ḥāli*). The person with limited understanding (*al-qāṣiru'l-fahmi*) goes no further than the outward meaning while the person of deep insight (*al-baṣīru bi'l-ḥaqā'iq*), on the other hand, perceives the secret (*al-sirr*) within it. [251] Imam al-Ghazālī states that the *arbāb al-zawāhir* and the *arbāb al-baṣā'ir* vary greatly in their ability to glean the difference between the outward and the inward meanings and realities (*mufāraqatu'l-bāṭin li'l-ẓāhir*).[252]

Imam al-Ghazālī gives the example of the earth and other inanimate objects attesting to God's power and glorifying him in the Qur'ān as examples of this category. While one could understand these on face value, he argues, it is only the "*balīd*" (dull-witted person) is limited enough to believe that this is a reference to *al-jimād* (inanimate object) having life (*ḥayāt*), intelligence (*'aql*), and speech (*nuṭq*).[253] Imam al-Ghazālī clarifies that there are extremes when it comes to this category—those who take only the literal meanings and reject all figurative interpretations (Mu'tazilah), those who reject all literal meanings in favor of only figurative interpretation of matters such as the speech of the angels Munkar and Nakīr, and the *mizān* and the *ḥisāb* of the reckoning, and then there are those who follow the path of moderation (*al-iqtiṣād*), accepting literal meanings in some places while opting for figurative interpretation in other places, i.e. the Ash'aris.[254]

Only the first of these categories can be considered true ineffability or incommunicability in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought. This is because Imam al-Ghazālī believes that only the first category

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[250] Ibid, 374.
[251] Ibid, 375.
[252] Ibid, 376.
[253] Ibid, 375.
[254] Ibid, 377-379.

relates to God and those things which are directly linked to His nature—His attributes and the human *rūḥ* which God "breathes into [Man] from [His] own *rūḥ*" (38:72). Because God is completely removed from anything in existence, from anything Man can imagine, Imam al-Ghazālī argues that there is no similitude, no possible likeness for the human mind to draw from any of the worlds for the human *'aql* to engage with. Thus, neither can the *'aql* fully contain such a singular reality, nor can Man ever express it in language. Imam al-Ghazālī describes the baffling state of those who have witnessed *tawḥīd*, for whom even the Divine names become contradictory when taking into account the absolute incomparability of the Divine essence. He refers to these souls as "*al-wāṣilūn*" (from *w-ṣ-l;* those who have arrived) and explains that,

> To them it has been disclosed that the One who is obeyed is described by an attribute that contradicts sheer oneness and utmost perfection. [This] belongs to a mystery which is beyond the capacity of this book to unveil…Hence the august glories of His face—the First, the Highest—burn up everything perceived by the sights (*baṣar al-nāẓirīn*) and the insights of the observers (*wa baṣīratihim*). Thus, they find Him too holy for and incomparable with all that we described earlier." (51)

For Imam al-Ghazālī, this is a state of true ineffability. Thus even when the *wāṣilūn* do speak of their knowledge, he believes they (must) do so only under the shade of veils and metaphor, through symbols and allusions, and only amongst themselves, for they recognize that all language as all existence is simply a reflection and refraction of the Singular Existence of God, and that only those who *know* this can appreciate the inability of words to *express* it. Imam al-Ghazālī seems to imply that the *wāṣilūn* are aware of the bewildering reality that the Truth of all Truths, the Reality of all Reality, which is *tawḥīd*, is at complete odds with any and all linguistic expression, because it is at complete odds with any and all rational or mental conceptualization and containment. Imam al-Ghazālī argues that the *wāṣilūn* recognize that the rational faculty on its own cannot comprehend its magnitude, and that it is only the heart-soul—which is bestowed upon Man from God's own *rūḥ*—which is capable of *experiencing* it and that too only in temporary bursts and flashes.[255]

For Imam al-Ghazālī, the possessor of such a heart, which has been purified and trained, to whom the *asrār* have been unveiled and for whom Reality has been illuminated, is the one who

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[255] *Marvels*, 52-53.

will use language according to his perception of Reality and "make the meanings (*al-maʿānī*) a root (*aṣlan*) and the words (*al-alfāẓ*) a follower (*tābiʿan*)," such that the knowledge of Reality unveiled to him will always inform his usage of language. Those who have *not* arrived at this station, however "become bewildered (*taḥayyara*) by the multiplicity of the words (*kathrat al-alfāẓ*) and imagine many meanings (*kathrat al-maʿānī*)." They are considered the weak ones (*al-ḍaʿīf*) intellectually, as "they search for the realities from the words" (*yaṭlubu al-maʿānī min al-alfāz*). [256]

The "perfect" ones then are those who comprehend the different levels of existence, of perception, and thus of language. They are the masters of *ʿilm al-ẓāhir* and *ʿilm al-bāṭin* who have perfected their *ʿaql* to perceive and comprehend *al-ḥaqāʾiq* across all levels of existence, and they are the ones who have mastered the use of language to best represent that which has been unveiled to them.

4.11 Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored Imam al-Ghazālī's formulation of *ʿilm al-bāṭin*, which he also calls *ʿilm al-mukāshafah*. *ʿIlm al-mukāshafah* which we have also referred to as the epistemic path of unveiling, centers experiential and suprarational knowledge obtained through *mukāshafah* and *ilhām*. This path is also generally identifiable as the path of *taṣawwuf*.

Unlike the epistemic paths of *mutakallimūn,* and the *fuqahāʾ* who rely on historical *khabar*, *naẓar* and *istidlāl,* the *ahl al-taṣawwuf* rely on the intellective powers of the *qalb* (heart-soul) to reach true *yaqīn*. In his classifications of knowledge, Imam al-Ghazālī, designates *ʿilm al-mukāshafah* as the epitome and the culmination of all possible knowledge, and the only knowledge which reaches the epistemic rank of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*.

Imam al-Ghazālī believes that there are degrees and dimensions of possible knowledge which correspond to the degrees and dimensions of existence—from outward to the inward, the *ẓāhir* to the *bāṭin*. These degrees and dimensions of knowledge correspond in turn to the degrees and

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[256] *Mishkāt*, 26.

dimensions of Man's intellective capacity, which can perceive even the innermost realities of existence. While perception of the *ẓāhir* and even some of the outer dimensions of the *bāṭin* is possible through strict training of the mind, spirit, and body, the deepest and highest realities are only knowable through divinely granted *ilhām*.

In Imam al-Ghazālī's thought, *ilhām* is a general category which includes the *mukāshafah* and also *mushāhadah*. The former correlates to the unveiling of *asrār,* that is, the mysteries of the similitudes across the realms of existence, while the latter is reserved for only *haqīqatu'l ḥaqā'iq*—which is the Singular, Independent, Incomparable existence of God or the essence of *tawḥīd*. This latter category also incorporates the *sirr* of the human *rūḥ* and of the attributes of God. As such, *mushāhadah* (which Imam al-Ghazālī also refers to metaphorically as *dhawq)* is the ultimate experience of *ittiḥād* (unification) or what Imam al-Ghazālī clarifies as *tawḥīd*. It does not constitute a separate, let alone, a contradictory form of knowledge to rational, syllogistic knowledge or what he refers to as *'ilm al-ẓāhir*. Rather he considers *dhawq* to be the *istikmāl* (perfection) of all other forms of knowledge and the sole means to *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*. For Imam al-Ghazālī, true *yaqīn* is not a category of rational or deductive knowledge, but rather a suprarational state of complete certitude of the *qalb*. Knowledge therefore proceeds from *īmān* to *'ilm* to *'yaqīn* through *taqlīd, istidlāl*, and finally *mushāhadah*.

Though *mushāhadah* refers to a witnessing of the heart-soul which occurs only through *ḥayrah* and *daḥshah* (bewilderment) of the *'aql*, its contents *must* be subject to rational analysis upon one return to a state of normal consciousness. Only those who have perfected their *'aql* and mastered both *'ilm al-bāṭin* and *'ilm al-ẓāhir* are able to understand and make sense of their *mushāhadah*.

The knowledge of these "perfect" ones is of two types: that which is effable and that which is fundamentally ineffable. There are various degrees and forms of (in)effability which appear throughout Imam al-Ghazālī's works which become apparent whenever he references the contents of *'ilm al-bāṭin* i.e. *'ilm al-mukāshafah.* These categories range from that which can be expressed clearly to that which can and must be expressed only through metaphor, allusions, and symbols. The latter category can be classified as a state of "weak ineffability" or inexpressibility.

In Imam al-Ghazālī's thought the state of fundamental or "strong" ineffability or incommunicability is *tawḥīd*. Imam al-Ghazālī argues that because God is completely removed from anything in existence, from anything Man can imagine, there is no similitude or possible likeness for Man's mind to draw from any of the worlds for his *'aql* to engage with. Neither can the *'aql* contain such a singular reality, nor can Man ever express or communicate it adequately in language. The state of true ineffability in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought corresponds to the deepest level of knowledge which corresponds to the deepest level of Reality (which only the *waṣilūn* have experienced), which itself is the greatest paradox of all language, knowledge, and existence—the ineffability, incomprehensibility, and incomparability of *tawḥīd*, which for Imam al-Ghazālī is the *only* true object of knowledge, because it is the *only* true Reality.

Conclusion

In this thesis we have sought to explore the paths to knowledge in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought—*iktisāb* and *ilhām*. In Imam al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge these two paths relate to the two domains of knowledge—*'ilm al-ẓāhir* and *'ilm al-bāṭin* respectively. *'Ilm al-ẓāhir* of the *sharī'ah* and of Reality is acquired through *iktisāb*, while *'ilm al-bāṭin* is attained through divinely granted *ilhām*. Imam al-Ghazālī designates *'ilm al-ẓāhir* as the primary domain of the *sharʿī* sciences, while *'ilm al-bāṭin* is the domain of *'ilm al-mukāshafah* more commonly associated with *taṣawwuf*. The *sharʿī* disciplines rely primarily on logical, proof-based methodology in order to establish the outer (or worldly) requirements and bounds of Man's speech, actions, and belief in the realm of *muʿāmalāt* with God and Man. While the *sharʿī* sciences do not accept intuition or inspiration as a source of certain and universifiable *'ilm*, *taṣawwuf*—which deals in the inner meanings of the outer speech, actions, and belief as established by the *sharī'ah*—not only accepts but elevates *ilhām* (by way of *mukāshafah*) to the highest level of *yaqīn*.

Imam al-Ghazālī considers Reality to have many dimensions, beginning with the outer forms or "*qishrān*" and unfolding unto deeper levels of Reality, at whose core is the heart or the *lubb* of Truth and Existence—*tawḥīd.*

In Imam al-Ghazālī's thought, the degrees and dimensions of possible knowledge correspond to the degrees and dimensions of existence. The degrees and dimensions of possible knowledge correspond also to the degrees and dimensions of Man's intellective capacity. Through physical and intellectual training and purification, Man can progress to higher and deeper levels of perception and knowledge.

Imam al-Ghazālī believes that men range in how much they are able to perceive of the outer and inner meanings or realities, yet even the greatest and most thoroughly trained intellects cannot access the deepest levels of the *bāṭin,* through the *iktisāb* of the '*aql* alone. Rather Imam al-Ghazālī considers insight into the deepest, most sophisticated knowledge of the *bāṭin* to be a matter of Divine grace. Such knowledge of the *bāṭin* is only granted by direct favor from God to select few in the world through *mukāshafah.* Imam al-Ghazālī's considers the experiential

knowledge of Reality gained through *mukāshafah* and *mushāhadah* to be the *ghāyah* (culmination, purpose) of all knowledge-seeking as it relates to the highest ontological object: God. It alone gains the epistemological rank of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* in Imam al-Ghazālī's theory of knowledge, while all other sciences and the knowledge they lead to can result in *'ilm al-yaqīn* at best.

In analyzing Imam al-Ghazālī's discussions about *'ilm* and *yaqīn*—the paths to seeking it, and its classifications—two aspects of interest arise. Because *mushāhadah* is the means of attaining *yaqīn* in his thought, anyone who is granted this experience by God can attain *yaqīn*. But there is a caveat—just as the one who has been granted *mushāhadah* and through it *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* has no agency in attaining *mushāhadah,* so too has he no agency in achieving *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* which, Imam al-Ghazālī posits, is only possible through *mushāhadah*. But the attainment of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* is only one amongst the many categories of possible actualization which Imam al-Ghazālī puts forth. In fact, the attainment of *yaqīn* does not necessarily seem to entail the perfection of one's *'aql* in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought. This is because *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* which is attained through *mushāhadah*, relates only to *'ilm al-bāṭin* whereas in Imam al-Ghazālī thought there are two domains of knowledge: *'ilm al-bāṭin* and *'ilm al-ẓāhir*. One cannot attain true perfection in Imam al-Ghazālī's estimation unless he has mastered both. For Imam al-Ghazālī, the perfection of the "perfect one" therefore lies in his ability to synthesize the inner and the outer knowledges of *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhirah*, *al-ẓāhir* and *al-bāṭin* such that he is able to interpret the meanings across the various levels of text and existence and glean both the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin* of God's Revelation in harmony with each other and with Reality.

To help summarize and orient what we have thus far discussed, we can employ the common Sufi metaphor of 'Revelation'—that is the message or record by which God has made Reality known to Man—as consisting of three separate but complementary "books" or texts which imbibe knowledge of the *sharī'ah* and Reality: the book of the Revelation (Qur'ān and *sunnah*), the book of the Cosmos (macrocosm), and the book of the Soul (microcosm).[257]

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[257] This metaphor, thought it appears in the works of many Sufis is most famously associated with Ibn al-'Arabī's cosmological doctrines as presented in *Futūḥāt al-Makkīyyah*. For secondary source see Chittick's *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabī's Cosmology*, (Albany: State University of New York Press.)

Recognizing, reading, correctly interpreting, and applying the contents of the *ayāt* (signs, verses) which constitute the Revelation (which is the revealed record of Reality) is the ultimate goal of all worthy human intellectual endeavor in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought (and Islamic thought more generally). It is through these *ayāt* that one reaches comprehension of the Revelation and Reality, which in the Islamic worldview, is *tawḥīd*. Just as there are different levels of text, there are different levels of interpretation. Imam al-Ghazālī believes these levels of interpretation can be accessed through different epistemological paths which approach and illuminate the texts from different angles. Every "book" amongst the three "books"—the Revelation, the Cosmos, and the Microcosm—imbibes both an inward and an outward aspect, though the inner is considered to be closer to the heart of reality than the outer. That is to say, the more outward or *ẓāhir* a "text," the further it is from the *lubb* of Reality and vice versa.

The most *ẓāhir* dimension of "text" as relates to the three "texts" of the Revelation, the Cosmos, and the Soul is the dimension of the physical, *ẓāhir* "books" of the material world; the human body; and the created (and transmitted) *lafẓ* of the Qur'ān (and *sunnah*). The most *bāṭin* dimension, is the dimension of the metaphysical world (*al-ghayb*); the *qalb* or *rūḥ* of Man; and the *maʿnā* (spirit and meaning) of the text of the Qur'ān (and *sunnah*). Imam al-Ghazālī believes that through intellectual and spiritual training Man can unveil and illuminate the intellective powers of his soul and learn to read the signs written into each "book" across the various levels of existence and interpretation. The knowledge of the deepest realities, however, can only be granted or bestowed by God unto the heart of Man.

The scholars of Islam developed and honed extremely sophisticated methodologies to guide their investigation of the texts and ensure the consistency and replicability of seeking knowledge and increasing certitude in it. This applies to both what Imam al-Ghazālī classifies as *ʿilm al-ẓāhir* and *ʿilm al-bāṭin* of the texts. Knowledge of the *ẓāhir* levels of the three books is attained through *iktisāb* by way of the physical senses and the rational faculty of Man. Imam al-Ghazālī considered the methods and the paths of the *sharʿī* sciences of *ḥadīth*, *kalām*, and *fiqh*—which focus on establishing *yaqīn* in the *ḥadīth* as a reliable record of the prophetic *sunnah* through the historical-empirical verification of their transmission; of comprehending the verified sources and conclusively proving their truth through the honing and implementation of strict logical methods

of syllogistic reasoning and argumentation in *kalām*; and in bringing together the historical-empirical and the rational methods of investigation and reasoning to unveil the true meaning and intent of the *sharī'ah* as manifest in the revealed texts of the Qur'ān and *sunnah*, respectively—to constitute the branches of *'ilm al-ẓāhir*. The domain of *'ilm al-ẓāhir* as such centers the *'aql* in its pursuit of the *ẓāhir* knowledge, interpretation, and application of the *sharī'ah*.

Because the human *'aql* is fallible, the *'ulamā'* of Islam also developed concepts and systems of discursivity, referentiality, and peer review to strengthen knowledge and increase *yaqīn* in the fundamental tenants of Islam and its sources. The account of one narrator's reliability is strengthened and corroborated by another account to the same effect. The soundness of one *ḥadīth* is corroborated and strengthened by the existence of other *ḥadīth*. The *ijtihād* of one *faqīh* is strengthened and corroborated by the acknowledgement and concurring *ijtihād* of others. This is what *ijmā'* means and why it is so significant for the preservation of the Truth and the establishment of *yaqīn* for the ummah. Those matters which Muslim scholars of repute have proven and accepted independently come together to form the collective basis of *yaqīn*. Outside of this rare, unanimous confluence of the methodological reasoning of independent scholars, no form of *ẓann* or *istidlāl* can necessitate such epistemic certainty in the realm of the *shar'ī* sciences i.e. *'ilm al-ẓāhir* of the *sharī'ah.* For this reason, Imam al-Ghazālī believes that the knowledge of these sciences, while necessary for the preservation and interpretation of the *sharī'ah* in its outward forms, is epistemically weaker than the knowledge of *mukāshafah* which floods the heart with undeniable certitude.

Imam al-Ghazālī believes therefore that *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* is not attainable through *istidlāl* or *ijmā'* (or *taqlīd* thereof). *Ḥaqq al-yaqīn* cannot be verified, corroborated, or transmitted amongst people as can *'ilm al-yaqīn*, but rather it must be witnessed first-hand by individual hearts. For Imam al-Ghazālī there is no certain path to attaining *'ilm al-bāṭin* and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (which he considers to be the culmination and the result of *'ilm al-mukāshafah*) as such knowledge is always unveiled directly to Man as a matter of God's grace, without Man's agency in it. The methods of purifying the body and the spirit in order to prepare Man for attaining *'ilm al-bāṭin* fall into the realm of *'ilm al-mu'āmalāt* which entails both adherence to the outward forms of the agreed upon *sharī'ah* and the realization of the inner meanings thereof—what is more

recognizable as *taṣawwuf*. *Taṣawwuf* is the branch of knowledge which focuses on the elucidation and mastery of the inward meanings of the "text" of the human soul in order to attain comprehension and mastery of the outward "texts" of Qur'ān and the cosmos. In his formulation of *taṣawwuf*, Imam al-Ghazālī thus focuses on the inner aspects of knowledge and action in order to reach perfection of the outer. That is, he employs knowledge of the proper acts of conduct— both the *ẓāhir* (of the body) and the *bāṭin* (of the heart)—to attain spiritual purification and through that purification, intellectual unveiling and illumination which culminates, if God wills, in the experiential knowledge of Reality through *mushāhadah* (also referred to as *dhawq*, which is the highest form of *mukāshafah*). Thus, Imam al-Ghazālī extols the place of the practical knowledge of *'ilm al muʿāmalāt* to reach the pure knowledge of *'ilm al-mukāshafah*, while recognizing that even if Man fails to achieve *mukāshafah* in this world, by following and implementing the outward prescriptions of *'ilm al-muʿāmalāt*, he ensures his attainment of *najāh* and *saʿādah* upon the final unveiling which will be achieved through death. Thus, while Imam al-Ghazālī honors *'ilm al mukāshafah* as the highest form and the goal of all knowledge, he does not suggest that it is possible for all men to attain it. Rather, he recognizes that only a very few *khawāṣṣ* amongst the prophets and the *awliyā'* will achieve this level of knowledge whilst living in the world, and for this reason focuses the majority of his scholarly efforts including his magnum opus, on expounding *'ilm al-muʿāmalāt* instead.

Imam al-Ghazālī posits furthermore that knowledge which is directly gained through *mushāhadah* perfects and supersedes lower forms of knowledge and *yaqīn* which are attained on the basis of *taqlīd* or *istidlāl*. Imam al-Ghazālī also discusses how *nūr al-yaqīn* (the light of certitude) which is attained only through *mushāhadah* gives life and light to other aspects of existence and the *sharī'ah*, such that the outward prescriptions and tenants of *fiqh* and *kalām* are illuminated in ways impossible for the *'aql* to reach. For Imam al-Ghazālī the rulings of the *sharʿī* sciences are as *al-qashr* while, the knowledge of *mukāshafah* forms the *lubb* of true knowledge. Only through bringing them together does he believe that can one attain perfection in his comprehension of the *sharī'ah* and Reality.

Imam al-Ghazālī also argues that the *bāṭin* and the *ẓāhir* can never be in conflict. If it seems outwardly that there is some conflict between them, then the only possible explanation is that

there are aspects of one or both which have not become manifest to the one who perceives them. Any seeming conflict as such is simply a misunderstanding due to the lack of one's own heart to perceive the "text" or the ability of his *'aql* to properly make sense of it. Seeking knowledge of the *bāṭin* of the *sharī'ah* requires deep introspection and personal spiritual and intellectual training and development such that each path to true knowledge is as unique as the heart of the one who treads it. Knowledge of the *ẓāhir*, on the other hand, requires verification and acceptance by agreed upon standards of analysis and argumentation which apply to the entire community of scholars and intellectuals. The dynamic between *'ilm al-ẓāhir* and *'ilm al-bāṭin* then reflects also the dynamic between the collective and the individual, between head and heart, between *ẓann* and *yaqīn*, which is only fully illuminated and synthesized through the unifying experience of *ittiḥād* or *tawḥīd* across each of these levels of knowledge and existence.

For Imam al-Ghazālī, such an *ittiḥād* cannot or sometimes, should not be expressed in words. As such just as the levels and dimensions of existence correlate to the levels and dimensions of knowledge and interpretation across the various levels and dimensions of the "text"—be it the Revelation, the Soul, or the Cosmos—these levels and dimensions of knowledge also correlate to different levels and dimensions of linguistic (in)communicability or "(in)effability" in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought. That which is closest to the heart of Reality (most *bāṭin*), is least communicable. And that which is furthest removed from it (most *ẓāhir*) is most communicable. Thus, the most *ẓāhir* dimension of knowledge (which corresponds to the most *ẓāhir* dimension of "text" and Reality) can be gleaned through just the physical senses and the *'aql* and is easily expressed in conventional language. The most *bāṭin* of knowledge, represents the deepest and the most sophisticated level of knowledge in Imam al-Ghazālī's thought which corresponds to the deepest and the highest ontological levels of Reality. This is knowledge which can never be truly grasped through the outer senses or the *'aql* alone, but which Imam al-Ghazālī suggests, can only be witnessed by the heart-soul which itself derives from and convenes with the divine *rūḥ* in a mysterious, unspoken way not addressed in Revelation and which remains beyond the comprehension of the *'aql*. The human heart-soul is able to perceive the *asrār* (secrets) of existence which culminate in the witnessing of *tawḥīd* which it alone amongst all creation can bear without crumbling. Just as every upwards step upon the ladder of metaphysical lights entails a moving towards what Imam al-Ghazālī calls the "*mamlakat al-fardāniyah*" so too does it

entail, for Imam al-Ghazālī, a moving away from the two worlds and the self which perceives them—a movement from the *ẓāhir* to the *bāṭin*, from the form to the essence, from the reflection and manifestation to the Reality.

While Imam al-Ghazālī believes that such an *i'tibār* (crossing over) is only fully possible upon death, when the soul disengages from the body and all veils are removed from its vision of Reality, he argues that there are those who achieve some degree of it whilst living in this world. These are the ones whom Imam al-Ghazālī calls *al-wāṣilūn*, who have arrived at the highest level of perception and witnessing of Reality. For Imam al-Ghazālī, the *yaqīn* of *al-wāṣilūn* constitutes the highest and purest form of all knowledge and certitude which exceeds rational containment and thus falls outside also of the realm of language. It is this knowledge which represents the state of true ineffability, which corresponds only to the incomparable, incomprehensible Reality of *tawḥīd*.

If we accept the principles set forth in the overarching framework of Imam al-Ghazali's theory of knowledge and Reality, we as men are left in an interesting conundrum. We must rely on our outer senses and our reason to lead us along the ladder of lights and knowledge to the highest levels of Reality which, by design, he argues, the human *'aql* is incapable of containing or expressing. Thus, even in our conversation about *'ilm* and *yaqīn* we—as Imam al-Ghazālī—are limited in what we can actually 'say' about true *'ilm* whose ultimate object must always be Ultimate Reality and the *yaqīn* which can only be tasted. And so, it seems that for Imam al-Ghazālī the deepest, worthiest knowledge begins at the point where language ends.

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