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Al-Ghazali Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty

Al-Munqidh Min Al-Dalal

English Translation with Introduction by **Muhammad Abūlaylah**
and Critical Arabic text established with **Nurshīf Abdul-Rahīm Rif'at**
Introduction and Notes by: **George F. McLean**

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Abbreviations

- AGth: G. Anawati and L. Gardet, *Introduction à la Thèologie Musulmane* (Paris: Vrin, 1948).
- BM: M.C. Barbier de Meynard, "Traduction . . . Le Préservatif de L'erreur", *Journal Asiatique* VII (1977), 5-93.
- F: C. Field, *The Confessions of al-Ghazali* (London: Wisdom of the East, 1909).
- J: C.M. Jabre, *Al-Munqidh min adalal* (Beyrouth, 1959).
- Ja: C.M. Jabre, Arabic text of al-Ghazali, *al-Munqidh min adalal* (see above).
- M: D.B. MacDonald, "Emotional Religion in Islam . . . Iya, Bk XVIII" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1901-1902), pp. 195-252, 705-748, 1-28; "The Life of al-Ghazali, with Special Reference to His Religious Experiences and Opinions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, XX (1899), 71-132.
- Sch: A. Wensinck, *La pensée de Ghazzali* (Paris, 1940).
- VDB: S. Van den Bergh, *Averroes Tahafut al Tahafut* (London: Luzac, 1969).
- VR: Laura Veccia Vagliere and Robert Rubinacci, *Scritti scelti di al-Ghazal* (Torino: Unione Tipografico-Editrici Torinese, 1970).
- W: J. Watt, "The Authenticity of Works Attributed to al-Ghazali," *JRAS* (1952), 26-27.

Translator's Introduction

Mohammad Abulaylah

Life of Al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali's full name is Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Tusi al-Ghazali (450-505 A.H./1058-1111 A.D.). In Latin his name was Algazel. He was known as the proof and ornament of Islam. He was an encyclopedic author, polymath, a great jurist, theorist, philosopher, theologian, moralist, critic, comparative religionist; above all he was a religious reformer and spiritual revivalist who sacrificed himself completely to his belief and ideal.

He was born in Tus near Mashad, Persia (now Iran). Having gained an excellent reputation as a scholar, he was appointed in 484 A.H. (1091 A.D.) by the Seljuk minister Nizam al-Mulk to teach at Nizamiyya Academy which was founded by him in Baghdad. At this great city al-Ghazali's followers grew in number until they outnumbered even the retainers of the emirs and magnates (al-Safadi, al-Wafi, bi al-Wafayat, ed. H. Ritter et al. [Wisbaden, 1962], pp. 274-277). Al-Ghazali proved a great and influential lecturer in that institute. But in the month of Dhu'l Qa'da in the year 488 A.H. (1095 A.D.) after enduring a personal crisis he gave up the entirety of his worldly position and led the way of renunciation and solitude. He performed the pilgrimage, and, upon his return visited Syria and lived there for sometime in the city of Damascus. Thereafter he visited Jerusalem passing his time in worship, learning contemplation and writing. After a life filled with great intellectual and spiritual achievements al-Ghazali died on Monday, the fourteenth of Jumada al-Akhira in the year 505 (1111) at Tabaran, the citadel (qasba) of Tus, where he was interred.

Al-Ghazali's writings, whether biographical or of general academic content, hold a faithful mirror to the society of his time and to his own person. From his writings we may glean not only details of his life, but also valuable information about his psychology and character.

Al-Ghazali is not a merely theoretical writer. He illustrates his arguments with real examples, and his advice is based on his own experience. He was writing to people who were known to him and whose needs he knew very well. He was one of the greatest Imams in the field of reformation, and as such he suffered from what we may call the sickness of his society and paid for it.

Great reformers have their sicknesses and sorrows, not because of their own state of health, but because the state of their nation drags them down and makes them feel ill. Their illnesses come from the social, moral and behavioral sicknesses of their society, from the sickbed of the nation, when it strays from the right path.

Great people have suffered more from this kind of illness than from their own physical symptoms. Any physical sicknesses they had were slight compared with the sickness that came to them from contemplating their society.

The great man is a gift from God to his society, and a gift from God may be accepted or denied. Al-Ghazali was both son and father to his society. He gave to it more than he took out. He continued his struggle against evil forces, ill-thinking, and false assumptions which traded in the name of Islam until death forced him to stop. He was not defeated by the persecution which his efforts brought upon him. He did not buckle under criticism; rather, it gave him added strength to stand his ground and to make his voice heard in all places and at all times.

If moralists had not been able to rouse themselves, they would not have been able to defend the higher ground of their convictions. The system of morals would have collapsed; virtue would have been buried alive; civilization would have become bankrupt.

Al-Ghazali was "sick" from the people of his time. They were a trial to him. He was not a politician but he suffered the bad symptoms that afflict those who deal in politics. He was attacked by the germs of hypocrisy which surrounded his fellow scholars. He suffered because of the unhealthy differences which existed between Muslim sects, between Sunni and Shi'ite which had reached a dangerous zenith in his day, and because of the corruption among the adherents of Sufism and the theologians.

In his time, the sects that claimed to be part of Islam were at war among themselves. Shia, Sunna, Mutazilite, Ismaili, theologians, the patrons of the Brothers of Purity, and the natural philosophers, all these, for their differences, were ranged on one side, and al-Ghazali on the other.

Knowing that al-Ghazali suffered all his life from these major symptoms and maladies of his society, his own personal maladies seem to us slight in comparison. The great Imam was well aware of the link between his own poor health and the sickness of the society which besieged him.

As a child and as a young man before the age of twenty, he was recklessly ambitious and daring. He says that he thirsted after comprehension of things as they really are. This was his obsession from an early age; it was instinctive, part of his Godgiven nature, a matter of temperament not of choice or contriving. But the more he progressed into the fields of academic and religious thinking of his society, the more he suffered, to the point that at a time of his greatest success, when he occupied the highest academic chair in al-Nizamiyya University in Baghdad, teaching 300 students, he lost all desire to continue.

As has been mentioned before, al-Ghazali writes about himself, his society, his religion and his sufi experience. His writings shed light on each aspect of his time and display even the trivial details of history and the social disparities of his time. In his voluminous encyclopedic work "The Revival of the Religious Sciences" he wrote about the religious branches of knowledge and the religious communities of his time. We have translated the *Book of Knowledge*, which is the first book of this work and provided it with an introduction.

Al Munqidh min al-Dalal "The Deliverance from Confusion" may be categorized as autobiographical in nature. In this book, al-Ghazali profiles some highly important information about himself as a man and as a thinker, and about his evaluation of contemporary religious thinking and trends. For this reason the book is of prime importance. We shall have the opportunity to discuss it later.

In his book *Bidayat al hidaya* (*The Beginning of Guidance*) also, al-Ghazali includes information about himself and the academic community of his time. Al-Ghazali observed how people received his book, *Ihya*, and replied to criticism of it. He wrote a book about the different kinds of boasters, dividing them into groups, discussing and analyzing each in his own way. He wrote *Mi'yar al Ilm* (*The Yardstick of Knowledge*) to help confused students and academics perceive what knowledge is false, what genuine: what should be accepted, what should be rejected. This led the Imam on to write *Mizan Al-'amal* (*The Yardstick of Action*) and *Tahafut al Falasifa* (*Contradictions among the Philosophers*).

We have listed these titles not in orders to show how many books al-Ghazali wrote, but rather to show how each volume was intended to deal with a problem and with problem-makers of his time.

Although Imam Ghazali lived in difficult times we should not overlook the fact that this gave rise to his greatness. If his time was one of political upheaval and internal dispute in religion and

sectarian factions, it was also a time of great scholars, and a time when knowledge was honored and learned men were respected and well paid. It was a time when a few chosen scholars could silence the hypocritical masses and purveyors of falsehood.

Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal reflects al-Ghazali's life and his own spiritual experience and development. There is no doubt at all about its authorship, but some critics have argued against its value as a historical document, as we shall see later.

Al-Ghazali took issue with the scholars of the Batinyya sect, criticizing their principles and doctrines. He wrote several books about them and refers to some of them in the book translated here. This should add to his credibility as a sign of his courage in facing up to such dangerous opponents. We should keep this in mind when we turn to al-Ghazali's political stance, which some critics have not taken into account. Defence of religion means defense of the state and of society as a whole.

From the title and introduction we can draw further insights. Al-Ghazali was familiar with the causes of the confusion and error that had befallen the nation. He says that most of the mistakes of the thinkers of his day came from believing what they had heard and were familiar with from childhood, having received it from their fathers, teachers and people regarded as virtuous. Al-Ghazali had come to doubt what he had been told, and he urges others to doubt, as the reader of the present work will find.

Moreover, al-Ghazali says that "anyone who does not doubt will not investigate, and anyone who does not investigate cannot see, and anyone who does not see will remain in blindness and error." Al-Ghazali, here as elsewhere, considers skepticism as a source of knowledge and discovery because anybody who blindly accepts is not investigating or fathoming what he accepts. As a matter of fact, the Qur'an urged people to doubt their father's beliefs, traditions and customs. Many verses of the Qur'an say that Allah, referring to Himself, asks people if they have any doubts about His creations. This means that Allah expects people to doubt. Doubt can lead to a firmer belief, unless it is a symptom of a mental illness or spiritual disturbance. Faith in Allah can be deep-seated in the heart, but the heart still requires psychological reassurance, as in the case of Abraham when he asked Allah how he could give life to the dead. Allah told him, "Don't you believe?" "Yes indeed, but my heart needs to be at peace." This Gnostic method featured later in the work of Descartes, in fact is central to Descartes's philosophy.

Al-Ghazali occupies a unique position among Islamic philosophers in recommending doubt within the boundary of faith. He was original and pioneering.

As we have already said, some critics have argued about the historical value of the *Deliverance from Error*. Some went as far as to say that it was intended as novel, with himself as the central figure of the novel, a *Bildungsroman* (a development novel) as the Germans call this genre. These critics regard the book not as a true record of his real life and development, but as a fictional account written when he had finished developing. For example, Abd Al-Daim al-Baqari says that al-Munqidh is neither an *Apologia pro vita sua* nor an autobiography, but a novel with a message, a sort of *roman à thèse*, with al-Ghazali himself as the hero. He was trying to "leave to posterity a fictional image of his personality and give an interpretation of his life which would give him an unrivaled place in all the domains of thought and of the life of the Muslims of his time, including especially the knowledge and practice of *Tasawwuf* (Sophism). With a dosage of avowals insinuations which without being totally false would not correspond to historical reality." The crux of this argument is that al-Ghazali himself said that his actions were not directed towards Allah, but towards his own quest for fame and prestige.

Al-Baqari makes these avowals the explicative principle of the whole life of al-Ghazali, his actions, movements, repose and intentions, not only before his withdrawal, but even after." (*Itirafat al-Ghazali*, Cairo, 1943; McCarthy, p. xxvi). This, in our view, is an untenable criticism. It stretches the text too far from its context and the author's psychology and career.

Al-Ghazali's confession should add to his reputation, rather than detract from it. Great people are never self-satisfied. Prophets look at their own work critically, unless it is revelation from God.

Once a phrenologist looked at a bust of Socrates and said, "This man is controlled by lust and imperfection." People responded vehemently that "this was the most virtuous man on earth." But Socrates said, "No, it is true. What he said is true about my nature, but I have striven to overcome the imperfections."

If al-Ghazali told us about something in his inner self we should not take it as a means to attack him or to doubt what he says. In this case, we should look at the man's actions and his efforts to improve himself, not at his confession and hold it against him.

To doubt the reliability and historical value of al-Ghazali's books, moreover, entails saying that al-Ghazali was attempting in fictional form to prove the inferiority of the mind and the evidence of the sense compared with the illuminating light which Allah reveals to worthy men. This cannot be true when one sees al-Ghazali's sincerity and devotion. The book itself cannot support this interpretation. In no way does it give the impression of being affectation. This is one reason, perhaps a psychological reason.

Secondly, all al-Ghazali's other books and recorded conversations support what he says in this book, e.g., his conversation with the contemporary historian Abd Al-Ghafir al-Farisi preserved by Ibn-Asakir in his book *Tabyeen kadhīb al-Muftari* as referred to in my introduction to the Arabic text.

Indeed, as a writer, the art of writing may cause one to shift emphases in the presentation. But the book holds a faithful mirror to the natural development of al-Ghazali's character and knowledge.

Here we may refer to two poems written by al-Ghazali himself at the time of his spiritual and intellectual doubts.

*With light the face of Your Majesty was revealed.
And I wondered
And in You all-manifest, lay my confusion.
O You are the nearest of things.
You have revealed Yourself, filling my view.
With Your manifestation of light, but becoming hidden
in a way which nearly left me without faith.
When You hid Yourself You threw between mind
and senses a difference that brooks no compromise.
If mind claims to know Your Presence and denies the
sense, who called it impossible.
The senses say to the mind stop here.
This is because the senses deny You O God as a
picture to be seen and the mind sees You through abstract evidence
...
Indeed I am so busy with the cultivation of my soul
and my business helps me to control myself.*

*The doubt of transitory things has been cast away from me
 By a witness that comes like a beacon to me.
 By it I have seen the Godly light very clear
 from behind delicate screens that cover things,
 then I became certain about the things.
 That previously I doubted.
 And I have seen what was secret and hidden [to me]
 And I have known the aim of my creation, the reason for my existence.
 My death and my resurrection
 By the mirror of the soul in whose bright surface there appeared
 this world and the hereafter, the whole truth, the every aspect of the truth.
 I know that no shade of doubt remained with me about the things
 that make some people very doubtful.
 The soul took its travelling staff and became sure that my light had
 shone on the right road for me . . .
 My light had shone over the face of my resting place as
 evidence of what I have said there is the state of sleep,
 when the senses slip away while you rest, and the tablet of the unseen faces the soul like two
 bright
 mirrors, and what the tablet contains is reflected into the soul.
 Then my soul takes its knowledge from there,
 and the knowledge that I have is a copy of what is there.*

This example can of course be multiplied. Al-Ghazali was quite aware of his greatness, and we cannot take this as false self-importance.

He did show signs of arrogance and boastfulness, especially in his youth. Here and there he mentions something concerning his personality and experiences, not only in writing but also in conversation as referred to above. Moreover the earliest of his biographers, Abd Al-Ghafir al-Farisi (d. 529 A.H./1134 A.D.) wrote the following eighteen years after al-Ghazali's death.

He related to us on certain nights what his circumstances had been from the time he first openly followed the path of godliness and the mystical experience overcame him after he delved deeply into the various branches of knowledge and that he had behaved arrogantly to everybody, when he spoke boasting of how God's favor had singled him out, enabling him to master many kinds of knowledge and research them.

He continued in this way until he felt disgust with the Arabic sciences which were not concerned with the hereafter and final goal, and what benefits and helps in the hereafter.

He had begun his asceticism under the guidance and companionship of al-Farmadhi. From him he learned how to open up the gates to Sophism -- *Tariqa* -- and followed his instructions about the performance of the duties of worship, of extra night-prayers, and of continual invocation of God's name.

He continued in this way until he had overcome all these obstacles. He took on these burdens, but he did not achieve what he wanted. Then he related that he had studied every branch of knowledge and delved deeply into all aspects of learning and experience, and had again put all his strength and made every effort to study every complicated part of the sciences.

He proceeded to the interpretation of these works and continued to do so until he had unlocked the doors to every branch of knowledge.

He also told us that he became for a certain time busy with the counterbalancing of the proofs *Takafu' al Adilla* and the minute details of the problems. Then he told us that a door of the fear of God opened before him and took all his attention, forcing him to abandon everything else, until it became easy for him to accept the other way of religious practice and he then became perfectly disciplined and the reality of things became clear to him, and he turned into what we expected of him, behaving well with a good character, exact insight. This was the sign of the happiness which God had allocated to him before time began.

Then we asked him about how he had wished to leave his home and return to resume what was required of him in Nishabour (to teach in al-Nizamiyyah Academy). He said apologetically, "There was no way that my religion would permit me to refuse a request to spread God's message for the benefit of students, and indeed it was my duty to reveal the truth and speak about it and call others to it."

Later he abandoned teaching and returned to his home. He built a school beside his house where he could receive seekers after knowledge and provide a hostel for Sufis. Thereafter he divided his time according to those who would come to him, sometimes reciting the Qur'an, sometimes sitting with the Sufis, sometimes teaching, so he did not waste a single moment of his time nor of the other people's time.

In his late years al-Ghazali occupied himself with the study of *Hadith*, especially *Al Bukhari's and Muslim's Sahih*s, and shortly before his death, al-Ghazali was reading in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, and it was reported that he died while the book was still in his hand. Al-Farisi, adding to the statement above, mentioned that, "had al-Ghazali lived longer he would even have ranked higher than most eminent in the [Muslim] tradition. Here we shall assemble some of Abd Al-Ghafir's statements about al-Ghazali, not necessarily in the order in which they occur: "He is a proof that Islam works as a system . . . the tongue of Islam . . . the Imam of the Imams of religion . . . eyes have never seen another like him in his ability to speak, his eloquence, expression, quick understanding and natural command." (Ibn Asakir, *Tabin Kadhhib al-Muftari* [Beirut, Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1979], pp. 291ff.)

In Nishabour al-Ghazali attended Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni's lectures and studied hard and graduated in a short time. He outstripped his fellows. He committed the Qur'an to memory while still young and became the most able debater of his time and outstanding among the students of Imam al-Haramayn. His fellow students benefitted from his teaching and guidance, and he never stopped learning. He began to write books. Imam al-Haramayn, despite his high rank and his ability to talk fluently, did not regard al-Ghazali with favor when they were alone together. This was because al-Ghazali was quick to understand and his teacher was not happy that his student had started to compose books so early, although as his teacher it would reflect credit on him.

This is human nature, though the teacher appeared proud of al-Ghazali in public and encouraged his success, but in his heart he nursed jealousy.

This situation persisted until Imam al-Haramayn died in 478 A.H. (1085 A.D.). And then al-Ghazali went to Nishabour and attended the assembly of the minister Nizam al-Mulk. The minister welcomed him because he ranked high as a scholar among the scholars and great Imams who gathered at the minister's court.

Al-Ghazali, no doubt, had benefited from this great assembly of rival scholars. His name rose over the horizon. Later al-Ghazali moved to Baghdad to teach again in the academy during the ministry of Fakhr al-Mulk. Everybody there admired his teaching and skill in debating, and he did not find anyone his equal. After he had been the Imam of Khurasan he became by then the Imam of Iraq. In this time al-Ghazali wrote excellent books about Fiqh, Islamic Jurisprudence and its

methodology. His fame now ranked higher in Baghdad so that it even outranked that of princes and official of the caliphate administration.

But suddenly everything turned. He abandoned it all and gave up everything he suffered to attain in life and occupied himself wholly with religious duties and activities directed to the hereafter. He went to perform pilgrimage; then he went to Syria and remained there for ten years. While there he wrote such well-known and original writings as *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, *the revival of religious knowledge*.

He strove against his soul and his own behavior in order to perfect his own character and to cultivate his manner. Every bad quality in al-Ghazali turned into a good one. He turned away from seeking fame and material gain and clothed himself in the garments of the righteous.

He scaled down his hopes in this world and devoted his time to guiding people to do what would benefit them in the hereafter, to make this world abhorrent to them, and to make them prepare for the long journey to the everlasting abode.

When he went back home, he busied himself with contemplation. He was visited by many people. He was a treasure supplying people's hearts with piety and guidance. His writings and books were widely disseminated and there was no contradiction between what he taught and how he lived.

No one objected to his teachings, and when Fakhr al-Mulk became a minister and heard of al-Ghazali and admired his extensive knowledge, virtuous character, pure faith, and sociability, he sought blessings from him, attended his classes and listened to his lectures. Then he asked him to return to teaching in the academy, so that his precious knowledge and fruitful learning should not be locked away without benefitting anyone. He begged him to accept his request and al-Ghazali finally fulfilled his wishes and went to Nishabour to teach in al-Nizamiyyah.

This statement is a very important one which has not been given enough attention by al-Ghazali's biographers and critics. It is unfortunate that we cannot put a precise date between al-Ghazali and Abd Al-Ghafir. However it is possible to say that it occurred before al-Ghazali finally withdrew from public life, and it is clear that no reference is made in this statement to al-Ghazali's book *al-Munqidh* either as already written, nor did he mention any intention of writing it.

This is a definite indication that the book dates from later in al-Ghazali's life. Even more importantly Abd Al-Ghafir asked him why he left his post in Baghdad and stopped teaching in al-Nizamiyya. This is the precise question that appears at the beginning of *al-Munqidh*, and the whole conversation is more or less reproduced in the introduction of the book.

Al-Ghazali tells us in the very first line that he wrote his book in response to a brother in the faith who had requested him to do so. We feel quite justified in saying that this brother in the faith was a real person not a fiction, or a literary device as McCarthy suggests, and not al-Ghazali himself as Abd al-Jalil al-Baqari assumed. We may even venture to assert that the brother in faith was Abd al-Ghafir al-Farisi himself or at least one of the people who attended the same meeting.

Another line of criticism which is leveled against al-Ghazali is that he did not take an active part in the wars between the crusaders and Muslims in his time. The army of the crusaders entered Antioch in Syria in 491 A.H. (1097 A.D.) 100,000 Muslims were killed in 495 A.H. (1101 A.D.). The Western forces captured Jerusalem and remained in control there for eleven years, but there is no mention of this in the writings of al-Ghazali. This is strange when one bears in mind that he did mention dates close to these when speaking of his own career. He did speak about eminent figures such as Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Hazm, Ibn Taymiyya, who were prominent in the struggle against political decay and corruption among the caliphs. I do not personally agree with the critics who accuse al-Ghazali of ignoring political events. He did care about the Muslim nation, it's

religious stand and political supremacy. It is absurd to say that al-Ghazali welcomed the invasion of Syria or felt happy about the mass killing of Muslims; it would be naive to think this.

A great personality can be perfect in one or more areas of life or of knowledge. This is true of al-Ghazali's personality when it is examined closely. His character blossomed in the fields of scholarship, religion and social reform, particularly education. He was effective in restating the intellectual and spiritual basis of his time. He stood firm against the eminent representatives of the various sects and the authorities of his time (specially the Batinites, who threatened the lives of their opponents with violence and assassination). In support of this point it is useful to refer to Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi (d.429 A.H./1037 A.D.) who said that in his time the Batinites presented the most evil force and dangerous threat to Islam and Muslims (Usul al-Din, p. 329-331).

Al-Ghazali was uncompromising in his attitude toward them. He wrote several books attacking the Batinites. In turn, they must have attacked him and even threatened his life -- his constant move from place to place may lend support to this. Bearing this in mind, such a man cannot be accused of cowardice or opting-out. Al-Ghazali took issue with the scholars of his time, especially the corrupt ones, emphasizing the importance of a good education for children since they are the basis and the new force of society. A society can be made strong through its children. Neglect of their education leads to a hypocritical, careless, faithless and loose generation of adults, corrupt rulers and cowardly army officers.

The author under review seems to have concentrated his attention on the source of corruption and decay in society, rather than upon the symptoms.

Al-Ghazali had a good relationship with the rulers of his time but did not hesitate to advise them when he saw fit. It should be noted, however, that as a Sufi he criticized the scholars for consorting with rulers, but cannot be criticized for doing this very thing due to his integrity and drawing no advantage from their company. He lived a hard life until his death and never accepted the gifts of money that were offered. Rulers have to be supported, advised and corrected. They must not be left without scholarly and religious guidance, lest their views become narrow and they be surrounded by hypocrites and faithless opportunists. Reforming the society, correcting the rulers and defending the people's human rights is the responsibility of the scholars and learned men. (See al-Subki, *Tabaqat*, vol. 4, p. 110. Also F.R.C. Bagley al-Ghazali's *Book of Council for Kings* [London, 1964].)

Another trend of criticism leveled at al-Ghazali is that he retreated from public life for eleven years, leaving his people without the benefit of his advice.

He should not be blamed for this, for he was preparing himself for a greater role later. Prophets and scholars of higher repute withdrew from society for long periods. It is obvious that our great Imam was inclined by nature to keep his distance. He perceived that mixing with people brings trouble. In his book *Ihya* he wrote about the privileges of seclusion.

According to al-Manawi, al-Ghazali says in a poem, "In mixing with people there is no benefit, and ignorance about the reality of things is not like a scholar. You who ignorantly criticize me for keeping away from people, my reason [for doing this] is engraved on my ring." When they read the inscription on his ring they found this verse, "For the most of them we did not find any commitment to principle. We find that most of them are faithless" (Qur'an 7: 102).

Intellectual Milieu

Following the intellectual climate vividly referred to by al-Ghazali, one is much impressed to see that al-Ghazali became a meteor in the galaxy of the greatest scholars and divines of his time.

To cite but a few examples of al-Ghazali's great contemporaries: Imam Al-Haramayn, Abu al-Ma'ali Abd al-Malik Al-Juwayni (d. 478 A.H./1085 A.D.), the mentor who discovered the young genius in al-Ghazali and is rightly his moral and scholarly patron, as well as of the Nishapur Academy, established also by Nizam al-Mulk, in addition to heading many other institutions of teaching.

Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi (418 A.H./1027 A.D.) who also headed Nazamia academy at Baghdad.

Abd al-Salam Ibn Yusuf of Nishapur, Ibn Yusuf al-Qazwini (d. 482 A.H./1089 A.D.), the head of the Mu'tazilite school, who wrote a commentary on the Qur'an in seven hundred volumes.

Abu Turab, the head and the *Mofti* of Asharite in Nishapur (d. 492 A.H./1098 A.D.).

Abu Muhammad al-Misri (d. 486 A.H./1093 A.D.).

Abu Ali Ibn Ahmad al-Waqidi (d. 468 A.H./1075 A.D.).

Abu Bakr al-Bayhaqi (d. 458 A.H./1065 A.D.).

Abu Ali al-Husayn Ibn Abd Allah, Ibn Sina, known in the West as Avicenna, the greatest of Muslim philosophers, (370-428 A.H./980-1037 A.D.), and his disciple Abu Abd Allah al-Masumi about whom Ibn Sina says, "Al-Masumi is to me what Aristotle is to Plato" (*ibid.*, p. 230).

Omar al-Khayyam, the Persian Astronomer and poet already mentioned in the introduction.

On the Sufi side, al-Ghazali was a contemporary and quite aware of the following great figures:

Abu Ali al-Daqqaq (d. 415 A.H./1024 A.D.).

Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami the Sufi Qur'an interpreter, historian and chronicler.

Abu al-Abbas al-Qassar.

Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri, the writer of the celebrated *Risala* (Epistle) on Sufism and the sufis. It is worth noting that the author of *al-Munqidh* made reference to only two of the most eminent Muslim philosophers: Abu Nasr al-Farabi (d. 339 A.H./950 A.D.), usually called the second teacher, after Aristotle, and al-Muallim al-Thani, known in the West as Averroes and as an interpreter of Aristotle.

Ibn Sina deserves special attention here, since he is al-Ghazali's contemporary, and was singled out by him as a specimen for moral criticism when he pinpointed the will in which Ibn Sina recorded his confession of drinking alcohol and his pledge that he would never take the draught unless as medicine.

It is evident that Ibn Sina was fond of banquets, luxury and being entertained. He used to deliver his lectures at night time and at the end of his lectures ordered a banquet to be laid and music to be played for the pleasure of his guests and pupils. He used to drink to excess until his health began to deteriorate. As a cure he took a powerful medicine which broke down his health. When he felt that his death was eminent, he stopped drinking and repented and asked God's forgiveness. Like al-Ghazali Ibn Sina died in his middle years. Yet it should not be overlooked that he was brought within the precincts of the Islamic tradition. He memorized the Qur'an when he was ten years of age. He mastered Islamic and Arabic literature by the time he reached sixteen and became well-known in the whole of the Islamic world both as a physician and as a philosopher.

It is to the credit of Ibn Sina that he did not succumb to adverse sectarian influences. And he himself said that his father often read the epistle of the brotheren of purity, *Rasail Ikhwan al-Safa*, yet was not influenced by them in any notable way. This in itself was a great sign of the independent mind and free-thinking he envisaged at an early stage of his life. In the same way as al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina was noted for his consistency from the beginning to the end of his life. The weight and style of his books in old age C say in his fifties C are as powerful and effective as those he wrote in youth.

The first topic that appears immediately after al-Ghazali's introduction to the *al-Munqidh* is sophistry: which is more or less a system of learning that misleads pupils or followers on narrow scales. In this section:

- 1st, al-Ghazali, in his search after certitude was ushered into false views.
- 2nd, When he resorted to reason, he discovered no distinction between his experience and the dream world.
- 3rd, He reverted to the guidelines of reason.

Al-Ghazali began his career with the study of theology, but theology failed to satisfy him. Its objectives were the protection of the *sunnah*, tradition, and its defense against the deviations of the heretics; it did not serve his purpose, which was the search for truth.

But it is striking that he placed the speculative theologians, Mutakalimun, at the top of his list. The reason, as far as we can understand, is that this group of thinkers predominated over the rest and attracted people's attention. As they exercised immense influence upon the illusioned society, it was al-Ghazali's role to disillusion them from their own sophist illusionment.

The eminent Sunnite scholars attacked the speculative theology of al-Kalam and strongly warned Muslims against preoccupation with it as an undesirable innovation. Al-Ghazali himself wrote in more detail about the Kalam in his book *al-Ihyya*. As an illustration, he says, "Tawhid" the oneness of God is the term which has changed its meaning. It now means the craft of theology, knowledge of methods of arguing and confronting adversaries, boasting, multiplying questions, and casting doubts on matters, showing down opponents. This is true to the point that some practitioners, i.e., Mu'tazilites, called themselves the people of justice and pure monotheism.

In his search for truth, Imam al-Ghazali turned to philosophy, including the natural sciences, which gave him a penetrating insight into the marvels of creation. In the view of al-Ghazali no one who had studied anatomy could fail to notice the perfection of human and animal organs and to recognize in them evidence of the creator's master hand. He found himself unable to go along with the natural scientists, in particular he emphatically rejected their denial of resurrection and sensual pleasure. But it should be noted that he does not reject philosophy and science altogether, he still believed that there was much truth in Aristotle, whom like Plato and Socrates was regarded as a "theist". The Imam sums up his view of the philosophers and scientists by pointing out that they served neither to prove nor disprove the existence of God. Al-Ghazali urged that the majority of people should be protected from potentially harmful ideas: he refers to the Epistles of the Ikhawan al-Safa and then says in warning, "Just as the poor swimmer must be kept from the slippery banks, so must mankind be kept from reading these books" and by analogy all similar books that can mislead and harm the average Muslims. After examining philosophy al-Ghazali stepped out of it and continued his search for truth.

True knowledge is derived from divine inspiration (from faith, rather than from the dictates of dry logic). Out of this combination of guiding reason and inspiring and unflickering Faith in the Divine, al-Ghazali emerged. From this station he became the triumphant exponent of the religion of Islam, and thus was fittingly called Hujjat ul Islam, the proof of Islam.

Translations and Editions of Al-Munqidh

The text of al-Munqidh was rediscovered in 1842 A.D. by the scholar, Augste Schmolders, who found the text, translated it into French and published it for the first time in Paris. Sixty-seven

years later in 1909, the text appeared in English, translated by Claude Field under the title, *The Confessions of al-Ghazali*. This translation reads well for the most part, but could be more faithful and precise. Professor Watt's translation tried to improve on Field's version. It was published under the title, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazali* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953). We have already said something about this version. The third and most recent translation into English is by Richard Joseph McCarthy S.J. and bears the title, *Freedom and Fulfillment* (Boston, 1980).

The volume also includes related texts by al-Ghazali translated by McCarthy. His translation reads well and is painstakingly clear and accurate. He benefited from previous translations and scholarly works on al-Ghazali, drawing heavily on the studies by Boggs and Jabre. In his lengthy introduction of sixty pages (the text of the translation is fifty-three pages) and plentiful footnotes, McCarthy emphasizes the uniqueness of al-Ghazali and the importance of studying his thought.

McCarthy based his translation not only on the well-known edition, but also on a new manuscript given to him by Father Boggy dated 509 A.H (1036 A.D), i.e. five years after al-Ghazali's death and about ten years after *al-Munqidh* was composed. This is the covert form, for McCarthy is fully aware that there is no serious difference between this early manuscript and the one used by Salibah and Ayyad, Jabre and Watt. In editing our Arabic text we have checked other manuscripts and several other editions of *al-Munqidh*.

McCarthy read the previous translations and decided that there was still a need for his new one. He tells us that his translation was written while he was reading *al-Munqidh* to his students at Oxford. He came up with some ideas that he thought worth publishing. McCarthy believes that his translation reads better and gives a more fair reflection of al-Ghazali's life than do previous versions.

Reading that translation and the footnotes, we may say that the translation is good, but still not perfect; it has not deterred us from our decision to make yet another translation. Beyond doubt, McCarthy has done justice to the text, illuminating its meaning and making it available to speakers of English. His footnotes, in general, serve the text well and enable us to understand al-Ghazali's statements.

Nevertheless, on some occasions the footnotes are too bulky, incorporating irrelevant material, and addressing the general reader rather than the specialist. He refers to secondary sources and does not refer the *Hadiths* back to their respective authorities; in several cases he failed to identify al-Ghazali's sources. McCarthy's translation of the *Hadith* about the division of the Muslim nation into sects is incomplete and incorrect. Occasionally he confuses his reader when he refers to the authority of a certain *Hadith*.

We therefore intend to introduce our own translation, feeling that it is needed and will prove useful. I will not try to justify this decision, beyond saying that Allah directed me to produce this translation which is directed wholly and sincerely to Him.

Our translation takes into consideration the other translations in English, particularly M. Watt and McCarthy, and also the fragments of *al-Munqidh* that are in circulation in the writings of the orientlists.

We have noted some differences in understanding the text and we have differed also from Farid Jabri's French translation (Beirut, 1969), which appears in the bibliography. We have sought to give the most lucid rendering -- one that we consider much closer to al-Ghazali's text and trend of thought.

We have read and checked the available outstanding Arabic editions of this remarkable text. Two rare manuscripts: first, Shahid Ali Pasha, no. 1712, Istanbul, which is complete and well-written, and which dates from 509 A.H.-510 A.H. (1115 A.D.-1116 A.D.), five years after the

death of the author. This manuscript was dedicated directly to al-Ghazali. The second one is Talat, Cairo, Dar al-kutub, no. 637, which is important yet incomplete.

Two outstanding Arabic editions deserve special comment: The Arabic text first published in Damascus (1956) by Jamil Salibah and Shukry Ayyad is good in the main; it is not the first edition of *al-Munqidh* from the chronological point of view, but to a great extent it is the most readable and tolerable version. The authors based their edition on the available extant Arabic versions. As they remarked, it was only by chance that they struck upon a single manuscript which lends authenticity to the Arabic version on which we are working. It should be noted, however, that the manuscript they had in hand was recently copied from an unknown and unverified version.

But luckily enough the difference between the printed, published version, on the one hand, and the extant available manuscript, on the other hand, is not serious in many cases. Hence, our work and painstaking effort is to bring out a better, more critical and perfectly readable text. This can be seen from our Arabic version, appended here, if read against other versions in circulation.

The second version to attract our critical attention is the version of *al-Munqidh* by his Eminence Sheikh Abdul Halim Mahmoud (Cairo, Dar-al Maarif, 1988). Sheikh Abdul Halim is a leading exponent of Sophism in modern times, and was known among his followers as the Ghazali of Egypt. He was an eminent scholar, well respected in Egypt and worldwide. I am proud to have had him as my mentor and to have received his special attention while still an undergraduate at Al-Azhar University.

Notwithstanding his erudition and practical Sophism, when he took upon himself to publish a new version of the *al-Munqidh* he concentrated his attention on a long introduction explaining the theory of Sophism, rather than focusing on the textual evaluation of the prototype version. His introduction covers almost 320 pages in comparison to al-Ghazali's original book which has only 80 pages, excluding the space given to the footnotes.

Al-Ghazali's name did not appear on the cover and title pages. Its first mention is on p. 138, in the context of his "Fatwa" quoted in full by the editor. The second is on p. 214 in the context of his challenge to the principles of knowledge.

After the Sheikh's exhaustive explication of Sophism from its original sources to its modern time, he devoted the fifth section of his introduction to al-Ghazali and his milieu, pages 269-323. The information given about al-Ghazali is based almost entirely on quotations and soon digresses from *al-Munqidh* to *Ihyya Ulum al-Din* by the same author as an independent subtitle occupying 33 pages. Nothing is said about the *al-Munqidh*.

It must be noted that there are editorial mistakes in Sheikh Abdul Halim's version, which still appear in its third edition (Cairo, Dar al-Maarif, 1988). Some editions of *al-Munqidh* have not escaped editorial mistakes/errata, yet are tolerably acceptable. To save time and energy, however, it is expedient to turn to the main point of the present work.

Content and Value of *Al-Munqidh Min Al-Dalal*

Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal is not only the greatest, but the crown of all al-Ghazali's work. It is small in size, but as a document is great in scholarly and historical value. It sheds light on al-Ghazali's personality and provides unique details about his life, milieu and other related issues.

Al-Munqidh does not limit itself to one approach to its subject. It starts from one point and aims toward one goal, but explores many roads to this end. This book may be loosely categorized as autobiographical, although it was not intended to be an autobiography in the strict sense. Islamic literature did not include such a category in the way that it developed in the West. This may be

because Islam forbids anyone to boast of his own achievements or to talk about himself. Some early biographical information is implied in the philosophical and literary writings of Muslim scholars as indicated elsewhere in this introduction, but there is no class of autobiography as such. This may be the reason why al-Ghazali did not give more information about himself in the book under focus. If he had not been bound by the conventions of his time, what fascinating details he could have given us.

The facts that he does give about his own life are impressive and phrased in a masterly fashion and highly developed spiritualism. They are scattered in many of his works. If assembled in one place they would be enjoyable and rewarding. For example, in *al-Munqidh* he spoke of sophism as his last permanent home, and gave the reasons for preferring it above other systems. In other writings he describes how he virtually became a Sufi himself and took the Sufi way and developed his experience of sophism.

Al-Munqidh has three major dimensions; first, the autobiographical dimension which is indispensable in understanding al-Ghazali's works and milieu; secondly, the psychological and intellectual graph which records al-Ghazali's inner experience, intellectual endurance and response to the power of the moment; and thirdly, investigating the religious and intellectual trends of the time and milieu, analyzing and rectifying them from his position as a philosopher and religious reformer.

Al-Ghazali wrote *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* at the age of fifty. The precise date of this book is not written, but it is not impossible to identify. He wrote it between 499 A.H./1105 A.D.) and 500 A.H./1106 A.D., about five or six years before his death. This in itself indicates that al-Ghazali was very active up to the very end of his life.

So far as is known to scholarship, it is the last of his long life's work. It is therefore not surprising that it encapsules all aspects of his spiritual and intellectual experience and output. Therefore, it is full of re-capitulatory references epitomizing his major works. In essence, it is the flower and fruit of his journey in his short life span.

In 1842 *al-Munqidh* was discovered and translated into French for the first time by Auguste Schmolders. The book itself bears two titles. The first is *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal wa al-Mufsih an al-Ahwal*. (*The Deliverance from Error and the Revealer of the Mystical States of the Soul*). The second is *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal wal Muwassil ila Dhi Izza wal Jalal* (*The Deliverance from Error and the Deliverer to the Possessor of Power and Glory*).

There is good reason to believe that these titles were concurrent. In his book, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* (Cairo, Subayh, 1978, p. 9), Ibn Tufayl (d. 581 A.H./1185 A.D.) refers to *al-Munqidh* under the first of the two long titles with an insignificant variant of the preposition -- using *bi* in place of *ann*. The two different forms of the title both start with "Deliverance from Error", showing that al-Ghazali himself had experienced the confusion of being wrong, or rather had been part of a society in error. He was exploring the way to set his foot on the right path, looking for the kind of character which would choose the right path. We may ask why al-Ghazali chose to call his book "*Deliverance from Error*". *The Prophet Muhammad* (Peace be upon him) says, "I have left two things for you. If you take hold of them you will never go astray. They are the book of Allah and my *sunnah* (i.e. my example)."

First there are some points to raise about the title which appears in two forms. One is *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal wa al-Mufsih an al-Ahwal* (What Saves from Error and Displays the States [of the Soul]). The other is *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal wa al-Muwassil ila Dhi al-Izza wa al-Jalal* (What Saves from Error and Unites with the Possessor of Power and Glory).

The two different forms of the title both start with "Deliverance from Error", showing that al-Ghazali himself had experienced the confusion of being wrong, or rather had been part of a society in error. He was exploring the way to set his foot on the right path, looking for the kind of character which would choose the right. We may ask why al-Ghazali chose to call his book "Deliverance from Error". The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) says, "I have left two things for you. If you take hold of them you will never go astray. They are the book of Allah and my example."

There is no doubt that al-Ghazali knew this *Hadith* and had strong faith in the Qur'an and the *sunnah*. Eminent scholars such as Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and Abu al-Hassan al-Ashari had guided people along this path and had formulated the Muslim articles of faith. The phrase "deliverance from error" might be applied to their teaching; how, then, did al-Ghazali choose it for his own book? Al-Ghazali certainly did not propose his book as a substitute for the Qur'an and Sunnah. Close reading of his book reveals that there is no true guidance outside the book of Allah and the life of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). But we should read his book in the context of the society of his time. Corruption was rampant, as were secular claims and theories, sectarian arguments, underground movements and false ideas dressed in Islamic clothing. Al-Ghazali prepared to attack all these elements by approaching them in their own way, using their own methods. His aim was to set up a model and criteria for testing other theories. Titles of other books by him reflect this approach -- they included "The criteria . . .", "The way to measure . . .", "The straight path . . ." and so on.

From al-Ghazali's title and introduction here we note that first, he emphasizes that he lived in a time of error, his society was going astray, especially those who claimed to be scholars eminent in religious studies; his age was in urgent need of a savior to deliver them from error. This was perhaps the reason why al-Ghazali wrote his book, to emphasize two points at one and the same time: his credibility as a person to lead the people from destruction to a pure life and a strong faith, and at the same time to show the method of deliverance. Secondly, we note that al-Ghazali explained spiritual and intellectual corruption and psychological maladies as resulting from ignorance and blind conformity. Thirdly, Muslim society at the time of al-Ghazali was divided into many sects. The most persistent and damaging was the Batinyya teaching, which presented a threat to the Muslim Caliph and his officials. They aimed not merely to spread their doctrine, but to assassinate the major figures among their opponents. Nizam al-Mulk and Fakhr al-Mulk, the ministers who were al-Ghazali's patrons, were assassinated by them.

The book comprises an introduction and eight main topics. The addressee in al-Ghazali's customary *khutba*, introduction, is not directly mentioned and some scholars think that it is properly a generic salutation. But close reading of data at our disposal gives the strong impression, if not a real clue or a clear allusion, that the addressees were either Abd al-Farisi his biographer (al-Subki, *Tabaqat al-Shafiyya*, Cairo, vol. 3, p. 137), or Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi (d. 543 A.H./1148 A.D.), who evidently had met al-Ghazali shortly before he embarked on the writing of *al-Munqidh (al-Awasim min al-qawasim)*, Algeria, vol. 1, p. 30). A little-known fact about *al-Munqidh* is that al-Ghazali states in his introduction that he wrote the work at the request of a brother in faith who asked him to reveal the sciences, the evil, and the depths of the schools of thought. What prevails with most scholars is that it was meant for a type of reader, and not for a particular individual. This vast majority, beating around the bush, have come nearer to the point but have fallen short of grasping it.

In brief, we can summarize al-Ghazali's meaningful introduction in two cardinal points. First and foremost, from the earliest stage of his life, al-Ghazali had been known as a fearless, sagacious, uncompromising seeker after truth. Secondly, al-Ghazali's time was an epoch of vigorous

intellectual activity and spiritual fecundity, so much so that for the average Muslim layman the controversies and sectarian cerebral confrontations resulted in little more than a welter of confusion and perplexities. For this very reason, *al-Munqidh* offered itself as means of provoking intellectual impetus and kindling spiritual intuition, to the end of pronouncing sentence on faulty sects.

Renown

Through Western translations and scholarship on *al-Munqidh*, al-Ghazali is well-known to the scholars and reformers as a magnanimous, indefatigable and inexhaustible source of inspiration and impetus in exploring the higher realm of learning and scholarship. Some of al-Ghazali's works were translated into Latin, e.g., his book *al-Iqtisad fil Itiqadin* in the Middle Ages and later into several modern European languages. Hardly do we find a book on Islamic civilization without reference to al-Ghazali. A good number of orientalists have produced several works of outstanding value on his life and milieu. Many others have dealt with al-Ghazali within the scope of their writings and research. The output of the crop of orientalist writings on al-Ghazali is so voluminous as to defy classification in our present work. Baron Caradivo, e.g., wrote a book on al-Ghazali, (tran. into. Arabic by A. Ziatar [Cairo: al-Halabi, 1950]) in which he explored the real position of the author of *al-Munqidh* in Sufi literature and practices. He noted that "*al-Munqidh* is a great psychological document of al-Ghazali's time"

D.B. Macdonald summed up the significance of al-Ghazali and the pioneering role he played in Muslim thinking in four main points. First, he discarded empty abstract scholastics and dogmas, and substituted them with direct contact with the Qur'an and Sunnah (tradition). Secondly, he laid emphasis on the fear of Allah by urging moral rectitude and to avoid the punishment of hell. Thirdly, it was he more than any other that established Islam on a firm and assured ground. Fourthly, he brought philosophy and theology within the grasp of the ordinary mind. (See *Aspects of Islam* [New York Books for Libraries Press, 1971], pp. 36, 139, 194, 196-201; also *The Life of al-Ghazali*, JAOS 20 [1899], pp. 70-133.) This statement sounds scholarly but cannot pass without comment. Regarding the first point, it is absolutely correct that al-Ghazali brought the message of the Qur'an and Sunnah to ordinary life in clearer insight and practicality, i.e., from the ivory tower of scholasticism to the tangible and palpable reality of religion. To establish this al-Ghazali had to wrestle with exponents of sectarian thinking and speculative theologians and jurists.

Concerning MacDonald's second point it is worth noting that al-Ghazali, through emphasizing the importance and effect of the fear of Allah, also emphasized, on the other hand, the importance of hope in salvation. In his own simile, "Hope and fear are like two ways by which one can fly and attain the divine satisfaction and solace. They are like two mounts on which every steep ascent of the paths of the next world is traversed."

A deeper insight of al-Ghazali's literature on fear is that the fear of the creator leads to an even greater hope in Him; and hope alone, without fear, cannot lead to bliss and paradise. Fear is a natural propensity without which, man cannot attain his equilibrium.

Indeed, it is true that al-Ghazali's analysis of fear is more elaborate than that of hope, and that he devoted a great deal of his book to it. This is partly because of his belief that fear has the greater relevance in the contemporary situation, but it is also accounted for by its place in al-Ghazali's Gnostic or mystical themes, and its importance for his theology of which predestination is the cornerstone. To our Imam fear is well connected with the knowledge of God: when knowledge of God is perfected, the majesty of fear and the conflagration of the heart are produced. Then the

trace of conflagration rushes from the heart to the body and behavior (*ibid.*, p. 27). It is perhaps because of this mode of writing that Malise Ruthven sees in al-Ghazali's writings a sense of sadness and seriousness; he says, "Ghazali's work lays down the role of an earnest, somewhat joyless religiosity, pregnant with *gravitas* and unleavened by humor" (*Islam in the World* [London: Penguin Books, 1991], p. 241). To illustrate this, he refers to the following *hadith* cited by al-Ghazali in his book *al-Ihya'*, "The man who speaks a word to make his friends laugh is thereby hurled into the pit of hell for seventy years."

In his book, *Islam* p. 94, H.A.R. Gibb, says that al-Ghazali, "is a man who stands on a level with Augustine and Luther in religious insight and intellectual vigor." Yet in our view, he stands head and shoulders above them since he is more universal than restricting himself to one creed.

To Ignaz Goldziher al-Ghazali, "is one of the most epoch-making personalities."

In his contribution to *Religion in the Middle East: Sufism*, Martin Lings holds al-Ghazali as the most famous among those Sufis who had bridged the chasm between Sufism and the rest of the Islamic community. Lings says, "Al-Ghazali . . . the great Shafi'i canonist and theologian who devoted his latter years to mystic paths and who wrote an autobiographical treatise, *The Savior from Error (al-Munqidh min al-Dalal)* in praise of Sufism as the only sure antidote to skepticism and as the highest way to life" (vol. II, p. 264).

To Montgomery Watt who has translated *al-Munqidh* together with *Bidayat al-Hidaya* into English, "Al-Ghazali is one of the Muslim thinkers, though, perhaps over-esteemed in the West." The reason in Watt's statement that the Westerners find it easier to be sympathetic with him requires more explanation. Certainly, al-Ghazali deserves to be loved and appeals to all who have noble and fair minds. Watt himself nuanced his statement as appears in his article on al-Ghazali in the new edition of the *Islamic Encyclopedia*.

Referring to the appeal of *al-Munqidh*, Watt stated there that "this again is largely due to the charm of his *apologia pro vita sua*, entitled *Deliverance from Error*, which he completed two or three years before his death in December 1111. To fill out our understanding of the Islamic world up to 1100 it is well worth looking more closely at al-Ghazali." In his work the *Deliverance from Error*, al-Ghazali relates how, after a period of skepticism, he resolved to make an active research for ultimate (religious) truth among the rational theologians, the philosophers, the Batinites (i.e., Ismailites) and the Sufis or mystics (*The Majesty That Was Islam* [London: Sidwiche and Jackson, 1974], p. 252f).

Richard Joseph McCarthy who brought out another translation of *al-Munqidh* holds *al-Munqidh* as unique in whole classical Arabic and Islamic literature. But McCarthy doubts whether this outstanding book is the first of its kind. Al-Ghazali's originality in *al-Munqidh* is in the great tradition of Muslim autobiography or quasi-biographical literature. It is true that before al-Ghazali, Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi wrote his *Ring of the Dove*, *Tuq al-Hamama* and *al-Akhlaq wa Siyar*, in which he provided much autobiographical information. This can be taken in one way or another as internal evidence that al-Ghazali was influenced by Ibn Hazm in this field. Ibn Sina, and al-Farabi before al-Ghazali both had written a large amount of autobiographical material. (Ibn Abi Usibi'a *Vyunal-Anba*, vol. 3, pp. 3-29 and 223-233.) It is to be noted that autobiography is not an independent Islamic genre or branch of knowledge.

The rhetoric and genre of al-Ghazali in *al-Munqidh* was favorably compared with that of the English academic theologian and activist, John Henry Newman, of the nineteenth century Oxford movement. Though Frick more cautiously refers to it as an *apologia pro doctrina sua*, McCarthy still thinks that *al-Munqidh* possesses its own uniqueness for reasons which are self-evident and self-proclaimed.

As to McCarthy's own translation, it is accompanied by a long and useful introduction about al-Ghazali and *al-Munqidh*, and with appendices and annotations. The introduction is sixty pages, the translation fifty-three pages, the annotations of twenty-eight pages, and the indispensable appendices stretch from p. 145 to p. 297 of the book containing a translation of other works by al-Ghazali mentioned in the book.

McCarthy's annotations are useful for lay readers and non-academics. They introduce some biographical information about the personalities mentioned in *al-Munqidh*. In some instances McCarthy overburdens the text with comments which are merely superficial. Most of the time he refers the reader to secondary sources. McCarthy attempts to refer the *hadith* to their original source, but often fails, e.g., he misinterpreted the *hadith* concerning the Muslim sects in a way that contradicts the original. Sometimes the notes complicate, rather than elucidate.

McCarthy worked intensively on Jabri and Burgi's translation (e.g., vide p. xxlx) and utilized to a certain extent the available translations of *al-Munqidh*, including those in Dutch and Turkish. He specifically mentioned Field's and Watt's translations.

He based his translation on the Arabic text printed by Jamil Salibah and Kamel Ayyad, which was used also for Jabrie's French translation and Watt's translation. Notwithstanding all this, he perused the Shahid Ali Basha's manuscript dated 509 A.H. (1115-1116 A.D.) i.e. five years after al-Ghazali's death, which we have also used in our translation together with another good, yet incomplete manuscript (Taymur, Bash, Egypt-National Library).

For the first time, I am introducing my edition of *al-Munqidh* in its Arabic original; the translation here is based on my own edition.

This translation, though not the first one, certainly is the first by a Muslim who stands very close to al-Ghazali's personality and spirit. The translation, it is hoped, reads smoothly and carries much of al-Ghazali's style, warmth and stamina in the sphere of learning and truth.

Editor's Introduction

George F. McLean

The Context

In order to understand a person's life it is usually helpful to know something of his or her social, political and cultural contexts. How important this is depends, on the one hand, upon theoretical considerations and, on the other hand, upon the person him or herself. The theoretical issue is the extent to which a person is understood in terms of interiority vis-à-vis in terms of openness and relation to others. Indeed, deep reflection suggests that the degree of one's interiority and reflective self-possession is the key to one's ability to relate to others with that free and passionate sense of justice which is the fruit of love.

This is important for a personal history. Without this balanced sense of the person, on the one hand, a life would be interpreted simply in terms of external events or powerful political authorities, in relation to whose concerns the individual is but a marionette. Worse still, any claim to personal and free decision making would be interpreted as fraud or deceit. On the other hand, that same life could be interpreted in a simply self-reflective manner, reducing it to egoistic self-seeking, missing its social concern and impact, and -- even more -- losing the significance of personal and religious interiority for the life of society as a whole.

All of this is especially true in the concrete case of Ghazali who lived at the center of an intensely religious culture, the understanding and development of which was his central concern and major accomplishment. D.B. MacDonald described him as "the greatest, certainly the most sympathetic figure in the history of Islam, and the only teacher of the after generations ever put by a Muslim on a level with the four great Imams." For W.M. Watt "al-Ghazali has sometimes been claimed in both East and West as the greatest Muslim after Muhammad, and he is by no means unworthy of that dignity." To H.A.R. Gibb he was "a man who stands on a level with Augustine and Luther in religious insight and intellectual vigor."¹

In this light the socio-political, indeed the geo-cultural context, can be seen in its true importance. To do this it is helpful to take up the suggestion of Marshal G. Hodgson, at the beginning of the first volume of his *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*.² He argues effectively that to understand not only Islam but world civilization it is necessary to break free from Eurocentrism. One must appreciate that in the Middle Ages the central drama of world civilization was not being played out in the small kingdoms of Western and Southern Europe. Rather it consisted in the emergence of Islam in confrontation with Byzantium to the East, from the Nile to the Oxus, where the Irano-Semitic culture is found. In this context, the Roman Empire and Western Christianity is put in perspective in relation to the importance of the emergence of Islam to the East.

Prior to Ghazali Islam had undergone an explosive development. In the century after the life of the Prophet Muhammad 570-632 A.D., it expanded with remarkable swiftness across Africa to Spain in the West and far to the East within 100 years of the Prophet. The unity of religious and social authority in Muhammad and in the Islamic community faced heavy challenges during the second century of Islam when the spiritual authority of the Caliph was submerged by the military, and hence political, power of the Sultans. The early orthodox Caliphate of Uthmân and others was succeeded by the Umayyad caliphate and this, in turn, by the 'Abbasid caliphate. It was during the

later, declining period of this caliphate that Ghazali lived (1058-1111 A.D., or the years 450-505 A.H. counting from Muhammad's Hegira or trek from Mecca to Medina).

The guard of the Abbasid Caliphs, which was drawn from foreign, especially Turkish, elements assumed the real political power. They were replaced by the Persian Buwayhides from 945-1055, who were replaced in turn for a century by the Turkish Seljoukides, when the Caliph al-Qa'im, recognized Toghrul Beg as Sultan in Baghdad. This began a line which for a century would rule the vast expanse from the Mediterranean to Afghanistan.

During this time, which was that of Ghazali, a strong attempt was underway by the Fatmides of Egypt to supplant the sunnite Abbasid Caliphs in order to assume the religious and political leadership of all Islam. Claiming to be descendents of Ali, successor of Muhammad, and Fatima, his daughter, they brought together the shi'ite Alides and conquered North Africa, where Cairo became their capital. Their intent was to dominate Iraq, Syria, Khorasam and the entire Abbasid empire. To this end Hassan b Sabbah, founder of *Batinism ta'limite*, a new form of Ismaélism, sent emissaries against the sunnite Moslems.

Among these there were assassins whose most famous victims were Nizam al-Mulk, Wazir to Sultan Malikshah, and his son, Fakhr al-Mulk. It had been the custom of the learned Nizam al-Mulk to have among his court a group of famous jurists and theologians. By teaching Shafé'ism and Ash'ariam they provided a counterforce against the Shi'ism of the Fatimides in favor of the sunnite Abbasids and the Seljoukides. To this end he founded many schools, led by that in Baghdad. It was precisely as director of this school that he appointed al-Ghazali in 484/1091. In the religio-political complex of Islam at that time, this was the critical post.

Life of Ghazali

The earliest biography of Ghazali is by 'Abd al-Ghafir al-Farisi³ who knew personally "Muhammad son of Muhammad son of Muhammad Abā Hamid al-Ghazali." He was born in Tās (450/1058) and began his studies in *fiqh* (Islamic law) there in the school of Radkana. Hence, he moved to Forjan under Abu'l-Qasim al-Isma'ili. Finally he became an outstanding student at Nīshapār under, among others, al-Juwayne', sunnite Imam al-uramayn. His studies included law, jurisprudence, dialectics, religion and logic, reading works on hikma and falasifa.

After some time he experienced some distaste for the abstract sciences and turned toward the Sufi religious approach under Faramdhi, (died 477), one of the most famous shaykhs of the time. Though he followed the religious practices of cult and ejaculatory prayer and overcame the obstacles, he did not achieve the religious experiences he sought, so he returned then to the abstract sciences.

In epistemology he held all proofs to be equally valid, which left him bemired in casuistry: a brilliant dilettante, but without bases for certitude regarding the three great truths, namely, the existence of God, the last judgment, and prophecy. *Fiqh* does not justify these fundamental beliefs, but supposes them. Ghazali excelled in reasoning (*anzar*) and argumentation and early began to write his own works. But this dilettantism may have been the reason why his famous teacher al-Juwayne came to be somewhat put off by the brilliant but aggressive argumentation of his student.

Upon the deaths of Faramdhi and of al-Juwayn in 478, his education was complete. He was the sole major heir to the cultural tradition of his native Khorasan, which excelled in both thought and Sufi religious experience. Soon he joined Nizam Al-Mulk at his 'Askar or military-political base. There he brought together in brilliant discussion the many visiting leading ulemas, imams

and men of letters so that his fame spread widely. At 34 he was appointed by Nizam head of the Nizamiyya School in Baghdad which he led with great distinction 484-488 (1091-1095).

At the beginning he was still the brilliant dilettante. Later, from the position of a mature wisdom and holiness, he would apologize for the arrogance with which he pursued argumentation in that earlier less mature period, when his search was too centered upon honor and fame.

Farisi reports that at the Nizamiyya he undertook important study in three major directions. He researched the science of the roots or sources of jurisprudence (*'ilm al-usāl*); he redeveloped the school of Shafi'ite jurisprudence; and he carried out *al-khilaf* or comparative jurisprudence. On all of these he wrote works and acquired a surpassing fame and an entourage.

This attention to sciences concerned with the concrete and the practical,⁴ suggests Jabre, gave him the illusion of standing on solid ground and contributing to the realization and defence of a human-divine kingdom in this life. He had joined Nizam al-Mulk in his battle against the threat of *Ta'limism* as a new form of shi'ite batinism which stressed the essential importance of the teaching of the Immam in a different line of succession which went back to very early Muslim times.

This effort received a shattering blow on 10 Ramadan 485/1092 when Nizam al-Mulk, Wazir or Prime Minister of the Seljoukide Sultan and patron of Ghazali, was assassinated by a young Batinite, as would be the son of Nizam, Fakhr al-Mulk, in 500/1107 fifteen years later.

According to abā Bakr ibn'al-'Arabi it was early the next year (486/1093-1904) that al Ghazali made a definitive conversion to Sufism and turned from the sciences of things here below to those of the hidden, transcendent aspects of religion. The character and content of this conversion is the centerpiece of the *Munqidh*. It is no exaggeration to say that all else in the book has been chosen and ordered precisely in order to explain that conversion and the new dimension of knowledge which was opened to him by the Way of the Sufis.

It is not possible to say what weight the political facts of his day, particularly the assassination of Nizam, had on the conversion of Ghazali. He himself does not refer to them in the *Munqidh*. There he holds to the description of the alternate orders of knowledge or of religion proposed by others and to his own thorough investigation and critique of them. By their exclusion he points to the Way of the Sufis. This was based not simply on its being the sole remaining speculative alternative, but also on the distinction of theory and practice and its implication that it was necessary to move beyond speculation to a higher level of experience. This experience provides its own positive warranty.

Some would want to hold only to his own spiritual experience and suggest that the fear which he mentions at this time was not fear of a fate similar to that of Nizam, but fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom.⁵ This would seem to separate Ghazali from the circumstances of his time in which -- if one recognizes the role of sunnite vs shi'ite theology as the coordinating matrices of the conflicting temporal regimes of the time -- he was centrally engaged.

Further, this position separates violently soul from body to focus entirely upon disincarnate mind. But it is no derogation of the soul and its spiritual journey to place it firmly in matter or body, in time or history. That one learns true values by reflecting on the death of others or upon the circumstances which threaten one's life is as common an occurrence as taking part in a burial or even visiting a hospital. It is then not surprising that his earlier attempt to practice Sufism was taken up once again with a renewed vigor by Ghazali. His sincerity in this is testified by the decade-long ascetic retreat which he would soon take up and which he would never really abandon.

In the *Munqidh* he writes at length on a long debate within himself about making a definitive break with his present life of honor and adulation by students and leaders. Did this begin from the

death of Nizam or, as would seem more probable, had it begun before, been catalyzed by the death of Nizam, and come to a conclusive decision in 486 AH. If so was the subsequent time in Baghdad concerned only with tactics for carrying out his decision to leave his post there.

At any rate, in 488/1095 he left Baghdad as part of a plan to definitively abandon his post there and the country as a whole, but letting on only that he intended to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. He wandered as a hermit in Damascus, Jerusalem, Hebron (and possibly Alexandria) for nearly two years. During that time he made the 489/1095-1096, pilgrimage to Mecca. Ibn'al-'Arabi reports seeing him in Baghdad in Jumada 489/1095-1096, engaged in teaching, investigating the doctrines of the philosophers and writing. If he is correct about that date, later that year Ghazali made a definitive break from Baghdad. By 491, or 492/1094 at the latest, he returned to his home in Tās where he lived a life of prayer, worship, meditation and study.

This retreat lasted some ten years when the son of Nizam al-mulk, Fakhr al-Mulk, who was trying to lay down a firm line of defence against *Batinism ta'limite* summoned him to return once again to his earliest teaching post at Nīshapur.

At this point, Ghazali reports, he was coming to the conclusion that, due to the pervasive corruption in society, interior prayer was not enough; to it the work of teaching must be added. The invitation added an external impetus to his interior inclinations, and he took up his teaching once again in 499/1106. This was to be of short duration, for the following year Fakhr al-Mulk too was assassinated. Soon Ghazali returned to his home in Tās. There at the side of his home he built a school for teaching *fiqh*, which always had been his main area of teaching, as well as a Sufi monastery for those in search of prayer, spiritual learning and ascetic practice. Ghazali himself undertook for the first time intensive study of *hadith* or the traditions regarding the prophet. He continued writing till his very last days and passed away on Monday 14 Jumada II, 505.

Works

The writings of Ghazali, like that of many great thinkers of his day, are very vast, both in breadth and in overall length. A few notes on the categories of his works might convey some sense of their scope.⁶

1. *The Islamic Sciences of fiqh and Kalam*: *fiqh* was the center of his teaching and some of his writing in this field remain classics to the present day. On *Kalam* his only work is *al-Iqtīād fī l-I'tīqād* (*The Golden Mean of Belief*), which is a fine summary of its main theological questions. He seemed to place little trust in *Kalam* or apologetic theology. Indeed, his very last work was *Iljam al-'Awamm 'an al-khaw fī 'Ilm al-Kalam* (*Restricting the Masses from Engaging in the Science of Kalam*).

2. *Against Batinism*: combatting Batinism, especially the Ta'limites, was a major political and cultural campaign of the time. Ghazali played a central role in the intellectual dimension of this effort by his teaching and through a number of sharply written works.

3. *Philosophy*: Ghazali speaks of the need to understand thoroughly the ideas of philosophy and in *Maqaid al-Falasifa* (*The Aims of the Philosophers -- Intentiones Philosophorum*) produced a classic summary of Greek logic, physics and metaphysics as presented by the Islamic philosophers of his day. The work was much used in the Middle Ages, especially in the West, as a definitive handbook of philosophy. However, Ghazali's intent in the work was to lay there the groundwork for the decisive attack on philosophy which he carried out in *Tahafut al-Falasifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers; Destructio Philosophorum*). Despite Averroes's reply in *Tahafut*

al-Tahafut some decades later, Ghazali succeeded in quite marginalizing philosophy, especially in Sunnite Islam, and thereby terminating the tradition of Islamic work in Greek philosophy.

The *Munqidh min al-Dalal*, the center of concern here, is a semi-autobiographical work. Through a tour of the intellectual horizons of the day, it leads the reader to Sufism as the only sure access to truth.

The title used here is a combination of two titles: *Munqidh min al-Dalal wa l'mufi 'an al-Ahwal* (What Saves from Error and Unveils the [Mystical] States [of the Soul]) and *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal wa l-Muwassil ila Dhi l-'Izza wa l-Jalal* (What Saves from Error and Unites with Power and Glory).

4. *Spiritual Guidance: The Iya' 'Ulém al Din* (The Revitalization of the Sciences of Religion) is his great spiritual work. Where the *Munqidh* leads one to the Sufi Way, this work enters into detail in describing what is discovered as one proceeds along this Way -- the savored experience itself, of course, remaining beyond words. The *Ihya* is composed of four parts, each having ten books. Part I begins with a book on knowledge which is followed by books on "The Five Pillars of Islam", i.e., the profession of belief, the canonical prayers, almsgiving, fasting and pilgrimage. Part II concerns 'adat, or ways of acting regarding food, marriage, etc. Part III treats *al-muhlikat* (the things that lead to damnation). It begins with a psychological masterpiece on the mysteries of the heart and follows with books on ascetical practices for overcoming the appetites. Part IV concerns *al-munjiyat* (the things that lead to salvation) and constitutes his spiritual masterpiece. It treats repentance, gratitude, fear, hope, poverty, love, openness to God, spiritual awareness, the review of conscience, meditation, death and the next life. All this is written with such great beauty that McCarthy cites an ancient author to the effect that "the *Iya* would supply for all Islamic literature if the latter were to be lost" for it conveys "all that is best and most appealing in Islam as a religion and as a 'revelation' of God's love for man and the heights attainable by man's love for God."⁷

Analysis of *Al-Munqidh Min Al-Dalal*

The Work

Al Ghazali wrote the *Munqidh* between 499/110 and 500/1107 in Nisphapér. He was fifty years old at the time and about to return to teaching. As a personal testimony it calls to mind Augustine's *Confessions*, Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and Newman's *Apologia pro vita sua*. Its complex intellectual structure and purpose makes it one of the most outstanding works in world literature. Al Ghazali states in the introduction that he wrote the work at the request of a brother in the faith who asked him "to reveal . . . the purpose of the sciences, the evil and the depths of the schools of thought." This could be a real account and/or a literary device; in any case, most agree that it was meant for a type of reader, not for only one individual. The work is intended to explain how he first established the bases and limits of reason, and later broke beyond reason to find the Way to definitive certitude and spiritual fulfillment. By a process of exclusion his review of the competencies and limits of *kalam*, of philosophy and of the doctrine of the ta'limites led him to Sufism. There he found the Way which could take him to the prophetic light beyond what "there was no other light on the face of the earth."⁸

Proximately, he was worried by the Bainites who wished to propose, as an infallible Imam, the Fatimid Caliph of Cairo. Ghazali considered this prerogative to have belonged only to Muhammad himself. Like the Ash'ari facing the Mu'tazilites two centuries earlier, he was forced

to rethink for himself and his contemporaries sunnite dogma, and thereby to renew the religious spirit. It was, moreover, a task which it had been prophesied would be needed at the beginning of each century.

To appreciate this project it may be helpful to look first at its structure, especially as analyzed by Farid Jabre,⁹ and then to consider its meaning and accomplishment.

General Introduction (pp. 63)

Ghazali notes that from his early youth, before the age of 20, he had been concerned with the problem of certitude and had examined critically all the roads leading not only to religious conviction, but even to nihilism. Rather than accept the easy but blind conformism of *taqlid*, however, he attempted to seize the deep basic reality of things, especially of human nature itself as it opened to the divine. In this regard what he sought was certain knowledge, which he described as a state of soul so bound to, and satisfied by, its object that nothing could detach it therefrom.

The First Crisis: Sophistry and Denial of All Knowledge (pp. 66)

In search of this perfect certitude he turned first to sense knowledge but soon recognized the illusions it generated. When he turned to reason and its first principles, however, he had difficulty distinguishing their certitude from that which he had experienced in dreams; indeed for the Sufis the whole of this life was a dream. After two months of despair with regard to knowledge he regained confidence in the directives of reason. This confidence, however, came not as a clear deduction from any methodical reasoning, but by light which God projected into his heart.

Evaluation of Other Ways (p. 70)

Long after -- his education having been completed, and now at the head of the school at Baghdad -- he returned once again to this issue of certitude. Now, however, it was not merely the general question of how certitude could be had in any reasoning, rather it was how one could be bound irrevocably in blessed union with God. As truth is sought by four different groups each proposing its own path, some time after 484/1091 and over a period of years at Baghdad Ghazali set about studying each in depth to see which provided the true Way to God.

1. *Kalam*: (pp. 71) Through the Prophet God revealed the body of true beliefs upon which depends man's happiness in this life and the next. Because some deny this and attempt to disturb the faith of the believers, an apologetic approach (the *kalam*) was developed. This seeks to argue from premises which these unbelievers do admit in order to show the contradictions into which they are led by their unbelief. *Kalam* is of little service, however, for it can serve only those with a strong sense of the first and necessary principles of reason, but generally these persons limit their convictions solely to such principles. In time *kalam* broadened its concerns to search into the deep reality of things through the use of such philosophical categories as substance and accidents, but it could attain little sure knowledge.

2. *Falasifa*: (pp. 73) Thinking that this had never seriously been studied, in Baghdad Ghazali spent two years reading the works of the *Falasifa* and a third in organizing his thoughts. He divided the *Falasifa* into three categories and quickly rejected the first two: the nihilists (*dahriyyān*) or *Zanadiqa* who deny the existence of God, and the naturalists (*tabi'īyyun*) who believe in a powerful and wise being, but reject life after death.

In contrast, he gave extensive attention to the third category, the theists (ilahiyiyyān), which include especially not only the Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, but the Islamic philosophers, Avicenna and al-Farabi. Ghazali does not propose rejecting all their positions: mathematics, logic, physics, politics and ethics could be accepted with care and prudence. The difficulties of the philosophers come especially in the field of theodicy where they did not have success in furnishing the kinds of proofs demanded by their logic.

He warns against the dangers in either totally accepting or totally rejecting the philosophers, arguing strenuously for an open attitude to truth wherever it appears. Truth is not contaminated by being juxtaposed to errors, nor does it become false when included in books which contain errors on other matters. Thus, similarities between revealed truths in his works and elements in the works of some philosophers do not render the revealed matters any less true.

In sum, however, *Falasafa* will not suffice because reason is unable to know the basic truths of things, especially (but not only) with regard to the spirit in man and its union with God.

3. *The Theory of Teaching* (pp. 84): A competing claimant to provide a sure way to God -- and one most obtrusive in his day, even to the point of assassinations -- was the company of those who claimed that such truth could not at all be approached by reason, but only through instruction by a teacher, particularly by the infallible Imam of the *shi'ites*. Ghazali proceeded to develop a clearer statement of their principles than could they themselves, but he did so in order to refute them. He accepted the principles of the *ta'limites* regarding the need for a doctrine and for an infallible teacher, but turned this against them by pointing out that such a teacher was only Muhammad. More basically, however, he rejected the general skepticism regarding reason implicit in their argument and their reduction of faith to blind conformism.

With regard to the contingent social order Ghazali considered error to be always possible, but not to have eternal implications. Where teaching has been received from an infallible but now dead teacher it should be followed; otherwise jurisprudential judgement (*ijtihad*) must suffice.

With regard to the fundamental truths of belief, these exist in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunna* or community. As shown in his book, *The Just Balance*, these truths can be argued. But, as was true even with Muhammad's teaching, there is no guarantee that all persons will be convinced.

Ghazali argues that the *ta'limit* position is not consistent, for the authority of any text which would affirm the existence and infallibility of their Imam would need to be based on prophecy and certified by miracles. The appreciation and application of such certification, however, requires precisely the kind of reasoning capability rejected by that position.

The Mystical Way of Sufism (pp. 91)

By exclusion he then turned to the way of Sufism which he notes to be both a knowledge and, even more fundamentally, a practice which constitutes a yet deeper knowledge. As practice, its goal is detachment from all else for the purpose of attachment to God. He attained information and some understanding of Sufism by reading the works of Makki, Muhasibi, Junayd, Shibli and Bistami. But he noted that the essence of Sufism was a matter not of knowledge, but of lived experience described as savoring the truth.

Hence he had to reorient himself from an outward search for objective truth to the realization of an inward state of soul; it was not a matter of knowing the definition of detachment, but of becoming detached step by step. This spiritual turn was for him a matter of great drama and pain. He had always held the three great truths: The Existence of God, Prophecy, and Resurrection or the Last Day, and had stoutly taught and defended them. But he notes with regret that he had done

so with attachment to worldly honor, even to the point of treating others harshly. If, however, eternal happiness depended not on attachment but on detachment, then he had a crucial choice to make: to remain with all the attachments of his life as leader of the school in Baghdad or to break away.

The pressure of the growing awareness of this choice progressively paralysed him over a six months period beginning from Rajab 488 to the point at which he could neither speak nor eat. At that point, by God's help, he was able to make the break. For the rest of his life he led the life of prayer. He was a hermit for two years in Syria and Palestine; he notes especially his time in the minaret of the mosque in Damascus. Family cares recalled him once again to his home, which he left but briefly to teach at Nîshapur. But with progressive practice of the Sufi Way of self-denial, prayer and meditation in Tās the spirit of God suffused him entirely.

He recounts the stages of the Sufi Way as the purification of the heart of all that is not God and total absorption in God through annihilation of Self. Each interior step of the heart is accompanied by a corresponding step of knowledge unveiling and contemplating the truth. These take one to a proximity with God, but this is not yet the state of inherence or true union. For that it is necessary to proceed by lived, even savored, experience. This has three levels: (1) knowledge by faith or belief based on the good opinion one has of one's spiritual masters or teachers; (2) indirect knowledge by verification with the help of reasoning; (3) direct knowledge by taste, which he describes as tasted or savored in order to insist upon the subjectivity of an interior appreciation of God as present beyond any objective, exterior knowledge.

All these levels are permeated by the notion of prophecy; it is the Prophet who achieves most vividly the direct experience of God which is the goal of the Sufi Way. Hence at this point he undertakes a detailed progressive analysis of the nature of prophecy in order to be as clear as possible regarding the reality of the divine union which is both the Way and the truth, both knowledge and practice, and, beyond all, life divine.

The Nature of Prophecy: An Urgent Human Need (pp. 98)

Here Ghazali mounts a major effort to communicate to his readers/friends the character of the lived experience to which the Sufi Way leads. He begins with a detailed sequence of the development of the various senses, followed by the ability to discern things beyond the sense level at seven years of age, and then the ability to grasp abstract notions, i.e. things as necessary, possible or impossible. Finally, there opens the eye of prophecy which grasps a domain beyond reason. He exemplifies the transcendence of this world beyond that of reason by comparing the latter to the insensitivity of a blind person before colors or of reason before the world of dreams. This capacity of the human for trans-rational experience is a special gift of God.

He treats three questions regarding prophecy: its possibility, its existence and its realization in a particular person. Its possibility is illustrated by knowledge of the laws of medicine and astrology. These are known to be true but are not subject to rational deduction. Moreover, dreams testify to the fact of a realm of knowledge beyond reason. Prophetic knowledge exists in the experience which can be developed by following the Way of Sufism.

Like knowledge of whether someone is authentically a doctor or jurist, recognition of the existence of prophecy in a particular person requires first some sense of the nature of prophecy. This can be had by meeting such persons and considering their teaching and actions. But the life of the Prophet is its own best witness. More than external miracles, which upset the laws of nature, prophecy is itself a miracle which perfects nature beyond anything to which nature of itself could

aspire.¹⁰ Thus it is by being with Sufis that one comes to know that the higher experience has been attained by some and thus that it does exist and can be attained by their Way.

Practical Problems and the Return to Teaching (pp. 102)

The remainder of the work focuses on the practical problems or difficulties in bringing the Way into more general practice.

In their substance humans are both body and spirit or heart. The latter is the proper place of knowledge of God, but like the body it too can die if it lacks knowledge of God or falls ill through disobedience to Him. What is more, just as the body is healed by medical properties which the reason cannot understand, so the heart can be healed by practices of cult which only the higher experience of the prophet can appreciate.

Ghazali explained the nature of prophecy by leading the reader step by step toward experiences that transcend both the senses and reason. But in order to be attracted toward such a goal one needs to experience it in others. Here, the difficulty is precisely the bad examples of those supposedly learned persons who should be practicing it, or the defects and bad examples of others who do attempt to practice the Way. The result is a general tepidity.

Ghazali responded both in theory and in practice. Regarding theory or truth to those whose tepidity is due to:

- *ta'limism*, as a virus aggressively promoted in his day and proposing passive dependence on an infallible Imam, Ghazali directs that they read his work: *The Just Balance*.

- the teaching of the *falasifa*, who aggressively extend the realm of reason and reduce all else in the *Qur'an* to mere allegory, Ghazali directs that they review his teaching on prophecy as transcending the capacities of reason.

- the arguments of the libertines, Ghazali directs that they read his work, *The Alchemy of Happiness*.

- the claim that prophecy is only for the common people, but not for those who can understand its contents and develop an empirical ethics (*hakim*) based on God, Ghazali teaches that in fact they reject prophecy because they reduce what is distinctive about it, namely, its transcendence of reason, to the level of a sage usage of reason.

But Ghazali is conscious that holiness as an inner reality can be betrayed above all from within, that those who should exemplify the experiences achieved from the Way in fact may be impeded by various temptations and therefore generate scandal rather than constituting beacons for others. Ghazali attempts to protect against this by assuring: (1) that all have knowledge of the difference between good and evil and should not be misled by anyone who falls before temptations which everyone experiences, and (2) that knowledge of the Way is itself a corrective for it directs one to repent and move on, not to remain in sin.

But Ghazali had a practical response to make as well. Seeing that tepidity seemed to be spreading he became convinced that a strenuous effort at education was needed. He made a last effort in that direction by accepting the invitation of the son of Nizam to take charge of the school at Nîshapâr. When this was cut short by the assassination of his patron, he moved his effort to his home in Tâs, where he built a school and monastery to teach and promote the practice of Sufism.

Meaning of the *Munqidh*

The above analysis of the structure of the text has attempted closely to follow its structure. The text, however, is not simply autobiographical, but a somewhat stylized ordering of the elements of his life and hence of his Sufi experience. In this his goal, he says, is to respond to the question of the purpose of the related sacred sciences and the evil and depth of the relevant schools of thought. Hence, in order further to unfold the import of the *Munqidh* it may help to add here some reflections upon the different philosophical issues involved.

Epistemology

The issue of knowledge¹¹ and its competencies is basic here, for his purpose is to show not only what reason can do in order progressively to lead toward the Way, but even more what reason cannot do in order, through contrast, to make manifest what is distinctive and indispensable in the mystical Way of the Sufis. Moreover, beyond the issue of the way to personal perfection, Ghazali's understanding of knowledge was the key to his work on *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahafut al-Falasifa*) which played a central role in the Islamic rejection of its heritage of work on the Greek philosophers' classic elaboration of reason. This may be related, on the one hand, to the troubled history of the relation of religion to the processes of modernization derived from the scientific elaboration of reason. On the other hand, it may relate also to the mystical direction of Islamic thought and its potential for contributing to the present renewal of the search for spiritual meaning in response to the loss of meaning in our increasingly rationalized society.¹²

To see how this can be so one should note with Farid Jabre that while the work was written toward the end of Ghazali's life its literary point of view is rather that of the period of his leadership of the school at Baghdad. Particularly, it reflects the point at which he comes seriously to investigate the adequacy of the sciences and schools of thought. From this point of view the work -- and his life -- clearly divide into two parts: the first is preliminary and is devoted to the basis for scientific reasoning, the second main section is devoted to questioning these bases with a view to showing the need, the nature and the goal of the Way of the Sufis.

Each phase is marked by a personal crisis, the first of which foreshadows the second. McCarthy downplays the first as the relatively universal step of the late adolescent forced to take up responsibility for his or her own capacity of knowledge.¹³ In contrast, Jabre,¹⁴ as it were, places a magnifying glass on this first crisis in order to uncover much more precisely the nature of the epistemology which Ghazali developed for human reason. This would remain with him throughout his life and would be the point of reference against which he would delineate the further step to the mystical and the prophetic.

Further, because Ghazali later notes that he never doubted the great truths of the faith, Jabre would distinguish this first crisis from Descartes's universal doubt and limit it to the motives of credibility of faith before the judgment of reason. But if Descartes could stress the importance of keeping one's fundamental beliefs even while applying the technique of his methodic doubt,¹⁵ the young Ghazali could claim to have done no less in his own general state of initial confusion.

Jabre would focus Ghazali's early crisis on the rational means or motives which justify belief and considers that this defines all that follow. In contrast, Ghazali himself seems there to describe a more general crisis regarding the validity of reason. This is but an introductory first step toward the general epistemological question which he evolves later in the main body of the text. It is there

that he treats the nature and ability of reason to achieve the real nature, or by spatial analogy, the deep reality (*haqiqa* or pulp) of things as opposed to merely their surface appearance.

To this spatial analogy of levels on the part of the object, there corresponds in Ghazali's thought a parallel set of levels on the part of the self. The deepest level is the transrational goal of the Sufis, but this can be illumined through contrast to the more surface or preliminary levels, which are those of sense and reason that Ghazali lists in his section on prophecy. Let us attempt a more precise delineation of his notion of reason; by contrast this could provide insight not only into his perception of the nature of the goal of the mystical Way, but also into the limitation of the sciences. Through the *Tahafut* this forces the break of the subsequent Islamic tradition from its earlier work in the Greek tradition.

In Aristotle's logic, which ruled his development of the structure of the sciences, all begins from first principles such as that of non-contradiction first sketched out by Parmenides. These have absolute and universal value from the beginning of the work of reason. In this light, by a process of induction from the particular to the universal, the natures of things are abstracted and with these the deductive syllogism is constructed in the various sciences, each with their distinctive universal principles.

Jabre suggests that Ghazali took only the form of such syllogistic reasoning (via the Arab *qiyas*), and into this poured a quite different content. This was not simply the results of induction from concrete sense experience, even in the cases of the positive sciences. For Ghazali the intellect does see, but its objects are not simply human constructs. Absolute judgments regarding the necessary, the possible and the impossible are always present, but with regard to other judgments the human intellect is only a capacity. Hence, it needs to be enlightened by the *hikma*, of which the greatest is the word of God, especially the *Qur'an* by which vision is accomplished.

What then of "the first principles"? For Ghazali these are grasped directly in and for themselves; they have an unchangeable character which is imposed with necessity upon the mind. Their purpose is to prepare the mind by providing an anticipated experience of necessity, which truly is had only by God and the truth of the Prophet. Despite even this, however, they could yet be considered a mirage or illusion, for their definitive truth is had only when they are envisaged in terms of, that is, in and by Islam.

To understand this seeming affirmation and yet negation of the competency of reason it is necessary to recall that epistemology is essentially dependent upon metaphysics for an understanding of the nature and origin of its object, since knowledge too is a reality and subject to the laws of being. McCarthy points out that in his metaphysics Ghazali was always a convinced occasionalist. God in creating nature and mankind remained the one truly Real Being and hence the source of all action. Men may act, but the reality or being of the effect was the result of the activity not of man, but of God. For knowledge this means that man may think, but that the reality of knowledge and truth is the effect not of man, but of God.

An intermediate position was held by the Christian Platonists of the School of St. Augustine for whom a special light or illumination was needed in order to explain the universality and necessity of the human knowledge which man drew from particular and changing reality. In response to this position, it was the contribution of Thomas Aquinas to see that the power of God implied that his creatures be self-sufficient. This meant that in their own (created) right they possessed all the competencies needed in order to realize all the actions which were in accord with their nature.¹⁶ This extended the power of God proportionately and by participation to all His work.

(This was an important corrective by Thomas to one of the main defects which Ghazali found in Averroes. Ghazali was concerned that too close a following of Aristotle led Averroes to attenuate the reality of the individual's spiritual soul and to an inadequate affirmation of the resurrection on the Last Day. This Ghazali classified as heretical.)¹⁷

For Ghazali the conviction that the realization of truth was the effect of God, not of man, meant that the first truths could be looked upon in two ways. If seen in relation to the truth about God and constituting part of knowledge about God, they received therefrom truly definitive power.

The first principles could, however, be looked upon in another way, namely, as principles for any reasoning to God, or indeed for any reasoning whatsoever. Such knowledge is not certain. This is expressed by the phrase "the equivalence of proofs" (*takafu' al-adilla*) indicating that "falsehood on the part of a proof does not entail the falsity of the object it proves." It can apply either to the necessary principles and to all properly speculative knowledge or only to the latter, all which it blankets with doubt.

Up to 28 years of age, during the period when Ghazali was introduced to philosophy, *kalam*, *fiqh* and all the sciences, his mind was molded according to this pattern by his teacher, Juwayni, who was among the initiators of this view, which Ibn Khaldān considers the distinguishing doctrine between "the ancients" and "the moderns". It is not surprising then that Ghazali would be the one to write the *Tahafut al-Falasifa* and thereby the major figure in the discontinuation of the Islamic strain of Greek philosophy. Averroes's belated effort to answer in his *Tahafut al-tahafut* was destined beforehand to be ineffective, for no reasoned reply could be effective when reason was no longer held to provide knowledge that was certain.

The Metaphysics of Mysticism

Ghazali's epistemology did not change in the second period of his life, beginning from the age of 34, when he was placed in charge of the Nizamiyya School in Baghdad. Writing as he does from this epistemological perspective, Farid Jabre tends to down play the philosophical significance of this second period.¹⁸ He sees it as but a repetition of the first period, though now in psychological and phenomenal terms describing Ghazali's lived experience of the limitation of reason. To McCarthy, however, it is just the opposite; having reduced Ghazali's first crisis to being simply a universal experience of passing from adolescence, he places all the meaning in the second phase of his life,¹⁹ which all agree to be the main focus of the *Munqidh*.

It is suggested here that the truth lies between these two positions.²⁰ That is, the main lines of his epistemology can indeed be traced in the earlier period, as Jabre has so effectively done. He is correct in observing that during that earlier period Ghazali did not advance beyond the realm of reason and that it lacked definitive certainty. But if that be so, when in the second period he does actively apply himself to the Way that leads beyond reason, identifies its veracity, and then applies himself in a ten year retreat to the assiduous practice of the Way from which results his *Ihya*, the landmark of Islamic spirituality, certainly something of the greatest moment has taken place. It is hardly a mere "répétition de la première . . . sous un autre form,"²¹ as claims Jabre. His failure to appreciate the distinctive reality of the achievement of the second phase of Ghazali's life would seem to result from seeing it only in psychological terms as the flow of phenomena of a human order, rather than appreciating it in metaphysical terms, e.g., of a Heidegger, as the unveiling of Being Itself through the intentional life of *dasein*, or in the properly mystical terms which McCarthy approaches with great respect, even awe, as before a sanctuary of the divine. This

enables McCarthy to grasp the tremendous fascination of the religious event lived by Ghazali and described in the main body of his text.²²

If the *Munqidh* has a consistent message, it is that at its highest reason remains insufficient and that even in its efforts to defend religion in the *Kalam* it is weak and largely ineffectual.

One cannot come to the reality of the divine in the depth of the human heart by mere belief according to dogmatic formula, for they remain surface, brittle and subject to dissolution. The approach to the divine is rather by ascetic and ritual practices which progressively remove the chains that bind the heart so as to allow it to open before the corresponding unveiling of the divine. It is in this that one comes to certain knowledge (*yaqin*), rising above religious conformism (*taqlid*) through actively savoring the experience of God. Here, reason as prepared by the practices of cult and informed by meditation upon the prophetic teaching, has only to reflect upon itself as a concrete reality.

In contrast to the objective and relatively exterior stance of pure speculative reason which can lead only to *I'tiqad*, Ghazali insists that in the mystical Way of the Sufi's the divine is seized immediately and savored. He stresses thus the interiority and lived subjectivity of this process. This accords with his description of certainty as a state of soul so bound to, and satisfied by, its object that nothing could detach it therefore. Even more, it is real union with God and definitive fulfillment, of which the certainty is but a sign.

In this light it is possible to appreciate more deeply the meaning of the *Munqidh*. It is not only a gripping account of a psychological drama with deep sonorities lived by Ghazali in Baghdad. His discovery upon their review that all other ways were wanting -- philosophy, *kalam* and especially *talqid* -- and his being led thereby to the Sufi Way of self-abnegation and union with God was not only the progression of the life of one person. Beyond this it is a description of the Way of continued emergence of the divine in time through prophecy and of the opening of hearts thereto through the mystical path. It is truly an account of God with us, which transforms human life and history.

One who appreciated the implications of this less thoroughly and less deeply than Ghazali would have worked out some pragmatic compromise allowing him to stay in Baghdad -- after all, as a spiritually sensitive director he would be better for the school than he had been when he acted too much on the basis of human reason and for the too human motives of fame and honor. It is testimony to his sincerity and charity that he could not act on the basis of any such compromise. In turn, it suggests responses to problems raised from a number of directions.

Ghazali himself was conscious that some would suggest that he was being led by his ego to attempt to become the reformer of his century, according to the prophecy that each century would begin with a major reformer.²³ But if ever human reason could conceive such a hope it would certainly be based upon his position as director of the great Nizamiyya school in Baghdad, not as a hermit enclosed in the minaret of the mosque at Damascus or in his hometown of Tās.

Others would cite his phrase that all his prior life had been led by the search for fame, that his teaching "had not been directed towards God the Almighty alone . . . (but to) seek glory and renown."²⁴ Based on this they would question the sincerity of his conversion and hence of this account.²⁵

But the remark would be meaningless except in the context of conversion from such motivation. There are those who would question the sincerity of Descartes's references to God and in effect eviscerate Books III-V of his *Meditations* in order to protect the forced reductionism of their materialist reading of Books II and VI. Similarly, there are critics who, in order to protect their own overly literal and out-of-context reading of a very few lines, would reject the seriousness

of Ghazali's account of his conversion and by implication the authenticity of the whole teaching of his massive *Iya' 'Ulām ad-Din*. But they must be guided by something other than Ghazali's text or his life.

Still others²⁶ would see his departure from Baghdad not in the spiritual terms in which he depicts it, but rather as fear generated by the assassination of his sponsor, *Nizam* al-Mulk. Certainly, the Nizamiyya school at Baghdad was the key intellectual battlefield and Ghazali was its key figure. He does not hide the element of fear, which was not unnatural in the circumstances. But Ghazali places it within the context of the much broader and deeper sweep of the challenge of conversion in his life. Undoubtedly, the assassination of the patron of his School was too great and threatening a happening to be ignored, but this account, written when he was an advanced Sufi, naturally describes all in terms of his awareness of the Providence of God, rather than as simply the machinations of mere humans. The description of his life is in terms of his search for the Way and of what can be communicated of this that has meaning for a broad class of readers interested in the Way to truth. In these terms the assassinations and other turmoils of his particular time are of marginal importance.

It might be noted further that even late in his ten year period of retreat, when he was considering how to respond to the tepidity abroad in Islam, he considered it important to have an authoritative patron. This could be taken as an issue of protection, but it seems more probable that it was considered important as an element in the plan of *Nizam* to develop an alliance of faith and political power which could protect against Batinism and promote the Sunnite Islamic faith. The assassination of *Nisa* meant, of course, the sudden collapse of this worldly hope. The *Munqidh* then may not be adequate history, for which reason this had to be supplied at the beginning of this introduction. But the work has survived because it focused not upon surface events that happen only once, but upon what is essential in the human pilgrimage and gives it ultimate meaning.

One would hope then that he would have written much more extensively about his lived experience of the Way during his retreat following his departure from Baghdad. But, of course, he has done this brilliantly and in the greatest detail in the 40 books of the *Iya*; it is there that one must turn for the enduring harvest of his life of faith.

The Impact of the *Munqidh*: Past and Present

For Islam the impact of the *Munqidh* was decisive, especially if one includes the pattern of work it reflects, including Ghazali's decisive critique of philosophy in the *Tahafut*, his description of the discovery of the mystical way through a critique of the sciences, including *kalam*, in the *Munqidh* itself, and the massively imposing *Iya* with its detailed exposition of the spiritual wisdom gained from his decade long Sufi retreat. It is not without reason that Ghazali has been described as the greatest Muslim after Muhammad himself.

As the classical sciences of *kalam* and *fiqh* had come to appear respectively as too apologetic and too external, there was urgent need to renew access to the religious wellsprings of Islam. The obvious candidate for such an expedition was reason. This had been developed to a high state by the Greeks, whose major works had been translated into Arabic. It had been richly developed by such ingenious Islamic thinkers as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Averroes. But was reason enough -- particularly as developed in terms of a culture of the ancient Greek gods, rather than the revelation of the One God? Three responses were possible.

The first, by Ibn Sina and Averroes, was that reason could be of great assistance in this effort to discover the religious meaning of life and to order all life in that light. Indeed, their great works illustrate this point so well that no external certification of their significance need be added to that which shines from within.

There is, however, a fatal weakness in human reason. As human it is limited and can never be adequate to the divine which transcends it. Yet, as reason it looks for universal principles and laws which order all and render all intelligible to a limited mind. This tension shows up most in the Platonic and neo-Platonic line of Greek reasoning upon which, especially, the Islamic philosophers drew. The result was a tendency to tailor such realities as the "assemblage" or resurrection" of the body on the last day and the personal spiritual principle to categories which were not really adequate to the task. Ghazali drew up a list of twenty such points, three of which he cites in the *Munqidh*. Ghazali's judgment in the *Tahafut* that this avenue was simply too dangerous to the integrity of revelation and should effectively be abandoned was accepted, despite the somewhat later protestations of Averroes.

The second was that of Ghazali himself. In three years of work on the philosophers he quite mastered their work and indeed wrote one of the major summaries of their thought for his time, the *Maqasid al-Falasifa*. In the end he felt, nonetheless, that he needed to abandon that avenue as well as *Kalam*, his teaching of *fiqh* and, of course, the position of the *ta'limites*, for by exclusion he could see clearly that he must devote himself to the mystical Way of the Sufis. This led precisely beyond objective reason to an interior path of abnegation until his heart could open to a divine embrace so intimate and life giving that it could actively be savored.

The impact upon Islam of this step, so effectively presented in the *Munqidh*, was of the highest order. Matching the turn away from Greek philosophy, there came a new appreciation of the spiritual and mystical dimension of Islam. However, while Ghazali's work leaves no question about the need to go beyond the sciences in faith, it is not iconoclastic. That is, its objective is not to destroy these sciences or to impede people from their study. He is at pains to plead against this and to stress the need to look for truth everywhere, to accept it wherever it is found, and to recognize that it can be found even in the presence of error. Hence, upon discovering for himself the Way of Sufi he remained ever the teacher of *fiqh*, and indeed returned to that work formally at the end of his life.

In assessing the impact of his life, then, scholars speak of it not as an attack on the sacred sciences, but as aiding to overcome their arid scholasticism, as narrowing the gulf between them and the wellsprings of the spirit, and even as discovering ways to infuse this new life into the old sciences.

To this should be added then a corrective of the commonplace that scholarship ended with, and even by, Ghazali. Though this may be true largely of the field of Greek philosophy, scholarship in Islam took on a new mode. Spiritually it became more deep and rich and corresponded more to the intensive life of faith of the people. Or perhaps this should be put the other way round, namely, that Ghazali's strong religious mark on the subsequent cultural history of Islam reflects, second only to Muhammad himself, the pilgrimage made by Ghazali and described in his *Munqidh*.

If so, this certainly is due in part to the fact that Ghazali recognized, explored and effectively presented a dimension of Islam not previously given so great a place. Some, writing from the individualistic Anglo-Saxon perspective, refer to this as an individualization of the Islamic faith, but the closed, self-centered character of individualism hardly does justice to the Sufi Way through the self to the Infinite source and goal of all. By abnegation one truly dies to self in order to be opened to the transcendent. Hence it would seem more true to speak not of an individualization,

but of a personalization of the life of faith. This would no longer be the affair only of great leaders -- caliphs or sultans -- but of the millions of persons who practiced this religion. And if these cultic practices are carried out in unison by large bodies of persons they are seen by Ghazali as making the heart flexible and nimble for the Way which each must follow toward union with God. In other words, all was given new life by Ghazali's work which described the Way to the divine Source and Goal of life. In turn this marks the character of each of the faithful and hence of the community of believers, Islam, as a whole.

There is, however, a possible third response to the relation of reason to this path of faith. We have seen the first response, that of Ibn Sina and Averroes, which gave primacy to reason in an attempt to reconcile it with faith. We saw also the second response, that of Ghazali, which did not move against reason, but was concerned above all with how this needed to be transcended in the Way to God.

The third response comes not from Islam, but from Christianity. This honored the works of the Arabic philosophers, not least Ghazali's *Maqasid al-falasifa*, which may have been the most effective summary of Greek line of philosophy for the times.

In the Christian medieval context there were both those who greatly admired this philosophy and others who, with Ghazali, pointed to its defects with regard to the spiritual dimension of the person, resurrection, etc. It was the proper contribution of Thomas Aquinas during the following century to work out a resolution of these problems. He did do so neither by simply repeating Aristotle nor by abandoning his metaphysics, but by appreciating the deepened sense of being unveiled in a cultural context marked by faith. The creative work to heal the discrepancies between Greek philosophy and a faith-filled vision of life and meaning could be considered quite properly a continuation of the work of the Islamic philosophers.

On the one hand, its thrust was not to oppose Ghazali, as had Averroes in his *Tahafut al Tahafut*, but to respond positively to his concerns for the literal integrity of the faith. With Ghazali, it acknowledged the inadequacy of Greek thought for the vision of man in this world and the next which had emerged under the light of faith. But it then went about the creative and properly philosophical work of resolving these conflicts by developing philosophy itself. In this sense it moved philosophy forward into an era of faith, Islamic and Christian.

On the other hand, with the philosophers, Thomas acknowledged the need to reconcile reason and faith, rather than simply to surpass reason. For though faith was more than reason, it did not contradict reason, but was aided by it. Thus, the work of Thomas included very detailed commentaries on the works of Aristotle. Aquinas's *Disputed Questions* and *Summa Theologiae* constitute a detailed philosophy of the human person and an ethics.

While Thomas thus provided the context in which a spiritual theology could be constructed, it is notable that R. Garrigou-Lagrange, an eminent Thomist, in actually carrying out such a construction drew notably on the mystic experience of Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross.²⁷ This may suggest that this third alternative of Thomas Aquinas did not succeed in adequately integrating the first approach by objective reason with the second by mystical interiority, and that Ghazali's work has a further major role to play in any such integration.

Nevertheless, this third response by Thomas Aquinas, by resolving the problems pointed out by Ghazali in the first alternative by Ibn Sina and Averroes made it possible to continue to mine the vein of Islamic-Greek philosophy with its primacy on reason. This opened the way for developments which before long would evolve into the development of the sciences and their accompanying technology that have characterized the modern age. Indeed, to the degree that the modern developments of scientific thought are especially Platonic in character they correspond

more to the Platonic character of Islamic philosophy than to the ultimately Aristotelian character of Thomas's own thought.

Commonly it is noted, however, that in modern times attention to reason has degenerated into rationalism, accompanied by a desiccating lack of adequate attention to the life of the spirit. Indeed, the triumphs of rationalism in the 20th century have been characterized by an oppressive totalitarianism and a deadening consumerism. These deficiencies of rationalism call for Ghazali's clear proclamation of the distinctive character of the spirit, and of the Way which leads thereto. Healing our times must begin with the Spirit and the Way, for only in their higher light can we face the unfinished task of working out the relation of reason to the fullness of the human spirit.

This suggests then that the goal of Ghazali for our times would be that reason be inspired by, and directed to, life in the Spirit. This, in turn, would enable the progress of reason truly to serve men and women, not only as images, but indeed as intimates of God. This is the central message of Ghazali's *Munqidh*, if not for his day, then certainly for ours.

Notes

1. Richard Joseph McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), pp. xii-xiii and xlvii-xlviii.
2. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 3 vols, especially the Introduction and General Prologue in Vol. I, pp. 30-99.
3. McCarthy, pp. xiv-xx.
4. Farid Jabre in al-Ghazali, *Al-Munqidh min Adalal (Erreur et Délivrance)* tran., intro., notes par Farid Jabre (Beyrouth: Commision Internationale pour la Tradâction des Chefs-d'Oeuvre, 1959), pp. 21-22.
5. McCarthy, pp. xxxv-xlii.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. xxi-xxiv; Jabre, p. 53.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. xxiii.
8. *Munqidh*, chapter 4.
9. Jabre, pp. 27-41.
10. Gerald Stanly, "Contemplation as Fulfillment of the Human Person", in George F McLean, ed., *Personalist Ethics and Human Subjectivity*, Vol. II of *Ethics at the Crossroads* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1995), appendix, pp. 365.
11. Jabre, pp. 41-51.
12. V. Havel, "Address in Philadelphia", July 4, 1994 in *The Washington Post*, July 6, A 19.
13. McCarthy, pp. 121-122, nn. 43-44.
14. Farid Jabre, pp. 41-47.
15. R. Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, III.
16. G. F. McLean, "Philosophic Continuity and Thomism" in *Teaching Thomism Today* (Washington: Catholic University, 1963), pp. 23-28.
17. *Munqidh*, chapter 2, part 2.
18. Jabre, p. 48.
19. McCarthy, p 121, note 43.
20. Hodgson, vol. II, p. 186, note 18, points insightfully in this direction noting that the philosophy/theology of Paul Tillich may be the best modern correspondent to the thought of Ghazali on how "reason leads to the need for ultimate faith, but awaits revelation to carry it further.

. . . (This) is not a matter of supplementing reason on its own level, but of complementing it in total experience."

21. Jabre, p. 48.

22. McCarthy, pp. lvi-lx.

23. McCarthy, pp. xxvi-xxix.

24. *Munqidh*, chap. 2, part 3.

25. 'Abd al-Da 'im al-Baqari, *I'tirafat al-Ghazali, aw kayfa 'avrakla al-Ghazali nafsahu* (The Confessions of al-Ghazali) (Cairo: 1943). See McCarthy, pp. xxvi-xxix.

26. F. Jabre, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 22-23. See McCarthy's response, pp. xxxv-xlii.

27. R. Garrigou Lagrange, *Christian Perfection and Contemplation* according to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross, trans. M.T. Doyle (London: Herder, 1937); *The Three Ages of the Interior Life, Prelude to Eternal Life*, trans. M.T. Doyle (London: Herder: 1947).