

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

MASTER THESIS

**THE LIGHT OF INTELLECT AND SPIRITUAL VISION
IN AL-GHAZALI'S MISHKAT AL-ANWAR**

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**THESIS SUPERVISOR:
ASST. PROF. MUHAMMET İKBAL BAKIR**

ISTANBUL, 2022

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by

ALMARIN ADEMI

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Philosophy**

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ASST. PROF. MUHAMMET İKBAL BAKIR

ISTANBUL, 2022

APPROVAL PAGE

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

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ÖZ

GAZALİ'NİN MİŞKAT EL-ENVER'İNDE AKIL VE SEZGİ

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Bu tez olma-bilme perspektifinden hareketle bilginin ne olduğunu tartışmaya çalışıyor ve içsel epistemoloji için en temel örnek olarak gösterilebilecek olan Ebu Hamid el-Gazali'nin Mişkât'ul Envar kitabını analiz etmeye çalışıyor. Her insan farkındalığını dışsal yanıt içsel ilgi/alaka üzerinden kurar ve insanın bilgisi bu ayırım tarafından koşullanır. Dışsal ilgi olarak bilgi, ya faydacı ya eleştirel olabilir; halbuki sadece içsel ilgi varlıkla ilişki kurabilir. Böylece, algı dışsallıktan kurtulduğunda varlık kendini kendi olarak inşa eder. Bana göre, Mişkât el-Envar kitabından Gazali bu türlü bir dışsallıktan kurtulmanın epistemolojisini yapıyor. Gazali varlıkla aynı şey saydığı bilen Işığın 'peygamberi ruh'tan geldiğini ve bunun akıl melekesini aştığını iddia eder. Olma-bilme'den iki türlü bilgi çıkar: ilki ayrı varlıkların kendilerini tezahür ettikleri bağlamsallık, diğeri ise varlığın kendini bir ve ayrımsız bütün olarak gösterdiği bilgi. Bu hakikat ancak içe dönüş, keşf, tecelli ve varlığın zevki (tat) kavramları üzerinden anlaşılabilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Mişkât el-Envar, içsel ilgi, keşf, tecelli, tat (zevk).

ABSTRACT

THE LIGHT OF INTELLECT AND SPIRITUAL VISION IN AL-GHAZALI'S MISHKAT AL ANWAR

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In this thesis, I discuss the whatness of knowledge through a 'being-knowing' perspective and analyze the Mishkat al Anwar (The Niche of Lights) of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, as a prime example of a Sufi epistemology derived through relating internally to oneself. The seeking of knowledge is preceded by the experience of existential doubt that is to be found in knowledge, and for al-Ghazali, certainty was to be found in Sufism and their experiential knowledge. As such the Sufi ways of knowledge that are based on Unveiling (kashf), Taste (dhawk), and the manifestation of Being (tajalli) are presented in the Mishkat al-Anwar of al-Ghazali as such an epistemology. Thus, when perception is clear of externality, which is causality and outward forms of bodies, being reveals itself to perception with all its ontological attributes. Ghazali proposes that knowing Light, which he equates with Being, comes from the 'holy prophetic spirit' which is a stage that is beyond the rational and reflective faculties. Two types of knowledge come through 'being-knowing', a contextual knowing to which separated beings manifest themselves, and a knowledge whereby Being manifests itself as a unified reality with no separation. Knowledge of such realities come through the turning inward, the unveiling, manifestation, and taste of being.

Keywords: Niche of Lights, Relating Internally, Unveiling, Manifestation, Taste

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

DOUBT, KNOWLEDGE, AND CERTAINTY

IN AL-GHAZALI

Certainty, or the conviction of the heart is a state which according to Ghazali is arrived at by a knowledge which does not leave room for doubt, a knowledge in which the reality is revealed in such a way that no possibility of error or illusion is present, and that the mind doesn't even entertain such a possibility.¹ This state seems to be the departing harbor of every quest for knowledge and truth. Such a state of doubt, however, for Ghazali, as for all human beings, comes as unease and misery as experienced throughout life, so much so that Ghazali had to go through a period of not being able to even speak through the spiritual constriction experienced after putting his intentions for knowledge at question, while being in a high teaching position in the prestigious Nizamiya school of Baghdad. Nevertheless, why are we uncertain (doubtful) in the first place? Human beings start in a state of complete unfamiliarity with the chaotic being that they perceive as a complex unity of phenomena, relations, and emotional/spiritual tastes, remaining outside of themselves. Such unfamiliarity with these ontological relations is usually navigated through the adaptation of identities. These adapted identities give a pre-set tool-kit for a representation that is easily accessible, and that works with other human beings who also are unfamiliar with the same realities, while giving a safe sense of established relations. However, it also gives a deceitful sense of certainty and ease with being. The establishment of this identity, however, also creates something 'else', in a process that takes place through the superficial and readily accessible help of the senses. I do not say the 'other' but 'else' because the creation of identity is an adaptation of functionality rather than a recognition of subject. Functionality then, always serves the senses separated from the subject, since its departing point are the senses themselves, and its most basic need for food as the visible tool, or the visible

¹ W. Montgomery Watt, *Al-Munqidh Min Al-Dalal (Deliverance From Error)* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1952), 21-22.

cause, to keep the constitution of 'self' at an intended shape. This relation to existence usually proliferates as multiple identities that create what Jungians call the 'persona', which is the social expression of the ego² - the state of being conscious of an individual about his thoughts, memories, and emotions.³ This process however is at the core of being human. The human being in a state of such ontological unfamiliarity is always at unease with the question of the possibility of its becoming and the unclarity of the actuality of its being. This is why Heidegger called Dasein the being for whom its being is always an issue,⁴ because of this relation to its whatness,⁵ which can either be possible or actual. Two key terms at this point are critical for further analysis, them being 'self' and 'relation'. However, they have an essential togetherness, since for Kierkegaard, 'self' is the relation which relates to itself.⁶ The critical detail however is that the self is not established by itself, and as such it is the third term which relates to that which has established the whole relation.⁷ Accordingly, the self is grounded in that which has established this relation.⁸ This leads us to establish that doubt is a symptom of the way of relating to itself and the whatness of that relation. Thus, relating to itself shows the symptom of doubt when such a relationship is built upon the possibility of becoming instead of the actuality of its being, or the reality and attributes of its being. This type of doubt is a deeper existential doubt which includes the doubting of the constitution of the self. This deeper type of doubt is what Ghazali himself experienced, in contrast to the scientific doubt of someone who tests the objects of knowledge from a distance while his self is untouched in a safe space of not being questioned. Such self-doubt, however, or the potential of one's becoming, shows up as fear regarding the whole experience of life. The reason for this hesitancy in the face of life is not entirely clear. For Nietzsche, this fear is relational to other human beings. He believes that men are lazy and fear the inconveniences that unconditional honesty would burden them in relation to their neighbors.⁹ As for Ernest Becker, the impulse is more primordial, since the real fear of humans is death, or not being existent, and the

² "Jungian Terms", *Jung Platform*, <https://jungplatform.com/jungian-terms>.

³ Dr. Saul McLeod, "Carl Jung", *Simply Psychology*, 2018, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/carl-jung.html>.

⁴ John C. Brady, "What Is Dasein?", *Epoché*, 2017, <http://epochemagazine.org/09/what-is-dasein/>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death* (Penguin Classics, 1989), 76.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

whole of his activities are to deny death and remain immortal, through what he calls cultural heroism,¹⁰ or becoming culturally immortal among human beings. As for the perception of death, or becoming non-being, that is where the ultimate issue of the self takes place. Human beings constantly project and affirm their 'selves' to avoid non-being. Human beings are always haunted by the possibility of non-being of their selves in a functional and identity sense, but most intensely because of the ambiguous phenomenon of death, which seems to be the end of their most essential 'selves', or their bodies, or the externally established self, or their real selves for that matter. Human beings, however, because of their doubt with regards to the unknown, grandiose, unified, and lively experience of life, aim to the possibility of becoming a function or identity, and thus affirm possible becoming rather than what exists. As such, relating to becoming is always relating to a possibility, and by which doubt is always implied. Consequently, doubt ultimately implies death because of becoming a non-being, which is the experience of the anxiety of knowing that one is, and will not be. In addition, going back to the shame of one's neighbors and the possibility of death, there is a strong relationship between the two. It is other human beings who bring us through instruction from complete oblivion of childish lack of knowledge to a model of understanding the world which gives us the basic tools of securing a life. However, sometimes the instruction is either not present enough, or there are many contradictory instructions about life, which naturally bring about doubt and alienation.

The natural remedy for doubt always seems to be true knowledge of reality. This intuition was felt by Ghazali as well, who immersed himself in all theoretical, speculative, and philosophical knowledge that was available to him, to have the certainty of not only the given subject but the existential type of certainty that we discussed above. That is why, both *The Deliverance from Error (Munkidh min al-Dalal)* and *The Revival of Religious Sciences (Ihya Ulum al-Din)* have as one of their themes, the certainty that comes through knowledge, and the type of knowledge that fulfills the condition of certainty. However, the question that arises is, what is the relation of certainty to knowledge, and why is the prior, important as a condition of affirming the latter? And consequently, what is that knowledge that embodies that

¹⁰ Ernest Becker, *The Denial Of Death* (London: The Free Press, 1973).

full certainty that leaves no room for doubt? The relation of certainty to knowledge, or aspiring knowledge to gain certainty, is not a matter that may relate to simple curiosity, or some noble aspiration for knowledge per se. The issue of the motivations for knowledge has been a topic of discussion for both Ghazali and Nietzsche. This issue is important because motivations alter the content of what is considered knowledge, but they also alter the behavior towards knowledge.

One of the fundamental questions that Nietzsche asked is why would philosophers have a will to truth, and why not a will to untruth?¹¹ And what in us wills the truth?¹² These are questions that are foundational to the understanding of the whatness of knowledge. Nietzsche went on to write extensively on the topic of the will to truth, and in his conclusions, he mocked philosophers for being led to dogma through life-preservation instincts while talking of their philosophies as well-crafted, unconscious auto-biographies,¹³ and philosophers themselves as dishonest advocates.¹⁴ Nietzsche's importance in the discussion of the will to truth cannot be underestimated, taking into account his self-proclaimed ability to read between the lines of the philosophers,¹⁵ and his psychological approach to deconstructing topics of philosophy so that impulses and aims of the proponents of a science or theory would be revealed. This is exactly what Nietzsche does while being humorous and cynical about explanations of the faculties of Kant, of the idealistic and romantic spirit of Germans, and their turning of truth into an ideal, of the philosophy of stoics, and Plato, and Socrates, and of Epicurus. A short example of this type of psychological scrutinizing would be Nietzsche's analysis of what he calls physicists, physiologists, and Darwinists, explaining how their beliefs about 'self-preservation' of the species, actively turn into an attitude of efficiency of the principle of the 'smallest possible force', thus creating the exact philosophy needed for a machinist type of people of the future.¹⁶ It could be easily claimed that Nietzsche is the most extreme example of the problem of the intentions of knowledge. However, the problem of the intentions of knowledge becomes a problem also through its consequence. Nietzsche himself would mock such an attitude of 'truthfulness'

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5.

¹² *Ibid*, 5.

¹³ *Ibid*, 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 16.

because for him it is the main cause of nihilism in Europe,¹⁷ even though it is an ideal of Christianity that turned against itself, through a teleological questioning of itself. So, the call of Nietzsche is essentially a call for personal honesty. He conclusively states that his will to health and life is what constitutes his philosophy, a completely different aim from that of truth, one more immediate than it might seem.¹⁸ The question that arises, however, is whether there is any health and life outside reality. This question comes because real knowing should affirm the vitality of the necessity of being, in contradistinction to the lack of the affirmation of reality which should maintain the human in a state of illusion and conflict, thus tolerating his demise while he is unaware of it. Why bring truth and life/health in a conflicting dichotomy? For Nietzsche, it is the discursive presentation of truth, which is problematic, and it appears as both philosophical and psychological anomalies. The philosophical element is that truth cannot be limited to cognitive discursive representations which stand in opposition or are separated from the physiological processes of life by the simple reason that you cannot separate being and have an accurate representation of it. Whereas the psychological element to it is that the universalization of truth, is the universalization of the autobiography of the philosopher, meaning, a tendency towards convincing and conforming, i.e., being an advocate. For, what value does an objective truth have if not related to the life of the human? For Nietzsche, truth serves life, and as Jordan Peterson points out, that is different from the idea that the purpose of knowledge is the accurate representation of the objective world.¹⁹ So, it is Nietzsche who is the first, who seriously philosophized on the intentions of knowledge, and claimed that there is always an intent to it that stands beneath and drives all our search. The ultimate importance of Nietzsche to the introduction of this thesis is that he brings to the attention, by being philosophically detailed, the problem of the goals of knowledge, thus taking philosophy away from a discussion of a cognitively isolated truth to the exploration and articulation of a living self, as a philosophical psychology that maximizes life through the affirmation of it. Affirmation and maximization of life for Nietzsche too, go hand in hand, and not only the affirmation of the objective facts of life, as they stand at a distance from the

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), 10.

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo - How to Become What You Are* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xxiv.

¹⁹ "You Won't Get Passed The First Two Phrases ... Nietzsche's Beyond Good And Evil", *Youtube*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9niKCbxdxuk>.

knowing observer, but the affirmation of one's fate (*amor fati*).²⁰ Accordingly, philosophy for him was a voluntary quest for even the most notorious sides of existence.²¹ For him, the real standard of value was, how much truth can a spirit endure, and error was considered cowardice.²²

A similar analysis to that of Nietzsche was also conducted by Ghazali in the 'Book of Knowledge' of the *Ihya ulum al-din* (Revival of Religious Sciences, which I will further refer to as 'Ihya'). One of the main topics of the 'Book of Knowledge', is its repeated interest in the spiritual characteristics and aims of scholars and how they affect their topics and the quality of their knowledge. Even though the language used in the book is not philosophical, the whole of Ghazali's argument presented in the *Ihya* is interested in making a connection between intentions in learning and the dissemination of knowledge, and the transformation of the meaning of concepts that take place in the public discourse. Compared to Nietzsche, Ghazali's analysis in *Ihya* or *Munkidh min al Dalal (Deliverance from Error)* is not aimed at any person mentioned by name, but at himself. He straightforwardly says that he considered his life and realized that he was caught in a lot of attachments and that his motive for teaching was not God but the impulse for an influential position and public recognition.²³ He does not go further than this explanation either in *Deliverance from Error* or in the *Ihya* and ends up being descriptive rather than offering a philosophical or psychological analysis of the issue of the motivations for knowledge. What Ghazali offers - like Nietzsche - is showing that motivations towards knowledge alter the content of knowledge. In the book of Knowledge of the *Ihya*, Ghazali goes on to talk about how different terms were changed for what he calls corrupt reasons, to mean something polemical in the circles of scholars from what they originally meant to the righteous predecessors.²⁴ Ghazali takes the example of how essential concepts to the religion of Islam, such as jurisprudence, knowledge, *tawhid* (unity), and wisdom (*hikma*), have been altered and have become completely unrecognizable to

²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), 536.

²¹ *Ibid*, 536.

²² *Ibid*, 536.

²³ W. Montgomery Watt, *Al-Munqidh Min Al-Dalal (Deliverance From Error)* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1952), 56.

²⁴ Al-Ghazali, *The Book Of Knowledge Of The Revival Of The Religious Sciences* (Louisville, KY, USA.: Fons Vitae, 2015), 86.

their real meaning.²⁵ For example, the concept of Unity (*Tawhid*), had come to mean theology and the ability to debate, refute, and make arguments, whereas originally it designated a state of being of trust that took place by turning the attention away from secondary causes, which was brought by a vision that all affairs come from God.²⁶ Accordingly, theologians just did not comprehend the meaning expressed above.²⁷ So for a concept and knowledge to have become polemical, while losing its personal character, for Ghazali is tantamount to becoming instrumental of building a scholarly career, thus leading to Nietzsche's argument for the exclusive usefulness of purely cognitive conceptualizations in the process of life preservation.

The natural question that follows from the above analysis of Ghazali and Nietzsche is: what is knowledge? Is knowledge only a pragmatic and functional tool for self-preservation or is it a means towards the increase of health as it was for Nietzsche? or is it a thing, which is standing by itself, either separate, or encompassing all beings, and which must be grasped or reached, by the knowledge faculties who have the power to do so? If so, what is the substance of that knowledge? Even more, how is the relation of such knowledge to doubt? What is the knowledge that leaves no room for doubt? These questions come because knowledge of reality must be able to shun doubt simply by it being real, therefore not leaving room for conflicting versions or multiple representations of reality.

Earlier I presented that Al-Ghazali had explored all the available theoretical, philosophical, and speculative knowledge that was available to him. Ghazali gives a brief presentation of all these types of knowledge in *Munqidh* and describes the relation of this knowledge to his doubt. Accordingly:²⁸

I came to regard the various seekers (sc. after truth) as comprising four groups: (1) the *Theologians (mutakallimun)*, who claim that they are the exponents of thought and intellectual speculation; (2) the *Batiniah*, who consider that they, as the party of 'authoritative instruction' (*ta'lim*), alone derive truth from the infallible imam; (3) the *Philosophers*, who regard themselves as the exponents of logic and demonstration; (4) the *Sufi or Mystics*, who claim that they alone enter into the 'presence' (sc. of God), and possess vision and intuitive understanding.

²⁵ Ibid, 86.

²⁶ Al-Ghazali, *The Book Of Knowledge Of The Revival Of The Religious Sciences* (Louisville, KY, USA.: Fons Vitae, 2015), 91.

²⁷ Ibid, 91.

²⁸ W. Montgomery Watt, *Al-Munqidh Min Al-Dalal (Deliverance From Error)* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1952), 26-27.

Ghazali answers the questions of the whatness of knowledge from within the Islamic context of knowledge. First of all, for him, the aim of theology (*ilm al-kalam*) was the preservation of the creed of the religion of Islam from innovations.²⁹ So the science was speculative and apologetic so “they based their arguments on premises which they took from their opponents and which they were compelled to admit by naive belief (*taqlid*), or the consensus of the community, or bare acceptance of Qur’an and Traditions.”³⁰ According to Ghazali, such knowledge was of little use to someone who only accepted logically necessary truths, while pointing at himself.³¹ Another type of knowledge that Ghazali studied was the knowledge of philosophy. For Ghazali, philosophy meant knowledge that included mathematics, logic, physics, metaphysics, politics, and ethics.³² Accordingly, the most problematic was the knowledge of metaphysics because “they are unable to satisfy the conditions of proof they lay down in logic, and consequently differ much from one another here.”³³ Thirdly, Ghazali goes on to argue against the authoritative instruction of the infallible imam while arguing for the instruction of the prophet, and the inability of humans to escape independent opinion.³⁴ However, no new epistemological link is given concerning the whatness of knowledge compared to his descriptions of theology, and philosophy. Finally, Ghazali gives his opinion on Sufism and states the following:³⁵

I began to acquaint myself with their belief by reading their books, such as *The Food of the Hearts* by Abu Talib al-Makki (God have mercy upon him), the works of al-Harith al-Muhasibi, the various anecdotes about al-Junayd, ash-Shibli and Abu Yazid al-Bistami (may God sanctify their spirits), and other discourses of their leading men. I thus comprehended their fundamental teachings on the intellectual side, and progressed, as far as is possible by study and oral instruction, in the knowledge of mysticism. It became clear to me, however, that what is most distinctive of mysticism is something which cannot be apprehended by study, but only by immediate experience (*dhawq-literally* ‘tasting’), by ecstasy and by a moral change. What a difference there is between *knowing* the definition of health and satiety, together with their causes and presuppositions, and *being* healthy and satisfied! What a difference between being acquainted with the definition of drunkenness-namely, that it designates a state arising from the domination of the seat of the intellect by vapours arising from the stomach and being drunk! Indeed, the drunken man while in that condition does not know the definition of drunkenness nor the scientific account of it; he has not the very least scientific knowledge of it. The sober man, on the other hand, knows the definition of drunkenness and its basis, yet he is not drunk in the very least. Again the doctor, when he is himself ill, knows the definition and causes of health and the remedies which restore it, and

²⁹W. Montgomery Watt, *Al-Munqidh Min Al-Dalal* (Deliverance From Error) (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1952), 27-28.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 28.

³¹ *Ibid*, 28.

³² *Ibid*, 32-33.

³³ *Ibid*, 37.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 43-53.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 54-55.

yet is lacking in health. Similarly there is a difference between knowing the true nature and causes and conditions of the ascetic life and actually leading such a life and forsaking the world. (...) I apprehended clearly that the mystics were men who had real experiences, not men of words, and that I had already progressed as far as was possible by way of intellectual apprehension. What remained for me was not to be attained by oral instruction and study but only by immediate experience and by walking in the mystic way.

In addition to making a brief introduction to the Sufi epistemology, Ghazali also praises the Sufis by saying that “their life is the best life, their method the soundest method, their character the purest character”.³⁶ It can be concluded that towards the latter part of his life, Ghazali clearly gave an epistemological preference to the Sufi methodology compared to theology, philosophy, and what he called ‘authoritative instruction’. For Ghazali, the reality was to be known through the Sufi path and practice.

1.1. Introducing *Mishkat al Anwar* (The Niche of Lights)

It is in this context of existential and epistemological doubt that Ghazali developed as a thinker and wrote his biggest life works, including the *Mishkat al Anwar* (The Niche of Lights). The *Mishkat* is considered to be a book that Al-Ghazali wrote towards the end of his life,³⁷ as a response to a request of a friend of his who asked to give some answers on the intricacies of the light verse of the Qur’an and of the veils *hadith* (prophetic tradition). The Qur’ānic verse reads as follows:³⁸

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things.

The *hadith* of the veils reads as follows:³⁹

God has seventy veils of light, and darkness; were He to lift them, the august glories of His face would burn up everyone whose sight perceived Him.

Ghazali’s response to his friend is what Ismail Anqarawi described as the setting down of “various types of gnosis in the language of the philosophers.”⁴⁰ In addition,

³⁶ W. Montgomery Watt, *Al-Munqidh Min Al-Dalal (Deliverance From Error)* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1952), 60.

³⁷ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), xxi.

³⁸ "Surah Nur (The Light), Verse 24:35.", *Quran.Com*.
<https://previous.quran.com/24:35?font=v1&translations=131%2C20/>

³⁹ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), xvii.

⁴⁰ Ismail Anqarawi, *The Lamp Of Mysteries* (Oxford, UK: Anqa Publishing, 2011), 43.

even though the presentation is short and philosophical in its presentation, it stands out in its usage of Sufi epistemological concepts and the exposition of affirming a knowledge which is beyond reason, and which comes directly from God. Ghazali does not simply give a commentary of the above verse and *hadith*, however, he gives a different perspective of ontology and epistemology through their commentary. In it, Ghazali makes an epistemological distinction between the speculative, apologetic, and rationalist knowledge that is to be found either in theology or philosophy and the Sufi ethical and experiential epistemology. The whole of the book revolves around the understanding of the concept of ‘Light’, its meaning, and existential modalities. First, he establishes an understanding of the meaning of ‘Light’, equating it with perception on the one hand, and with Being on the other.⁴¹ As such, Ghazali establishes a hierarchy of lights or that which allows for perception to take place. He starts with an epistemological comparison between the perception of the physical eye with what he calls ‘the eye’ of rationality, describing the superiority of the latter in grasping matters of reality.⁴² However, he goes on to present different types of lights, such as prophecies, that climb up to a higher light than the light of rationality, being able to grasp more realities, and ultimately rising to the source of all the lights.⁴³ Consequently, Ghazali equates darkness with non-being, because of the inability of non-being to manifest.⁴⁴ As such, what manifests is only that which exists. However, either a thing can have existence in itself or through something else, and the latter’s existence is borrowed and cannot have support in itself, and if viewed in itself it is non-existent.⁴⁵ Conclusively the first source is the only existent, and that is the being which manifests itself to perceptions that are higher than rationality, by making also everything else manifest, and thus being also is the ultimate and the only Light. Epistemologically speaking, Ghazali talks about two types of knowledge. First, it is knowing through beings’ contextual and spontaneous symbolic expressions to perception. Secondly, it is the knowledge of Being in its unified state of existence, which accordingly, as will be presented, is a knowledge that cannot be grasped by reason. Accordingly, there is a direct relationship between symbols, which belong to

⁴¹ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998).

⁴² *Ibid*, 5.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 16.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 16.

the visible world, and spirits which belong to the dominion or the invisible world,⁴⁶ so one way of knowing, is through contextual symbolic representations that arise from the beings and the context itself, in the form of images to the imaginative faculty. As for the second type of knowledge, he calls it an attribute of the ‘holy prophetic spirit’, and accordingly, it is a characteristic of prophets and some of the friends of God.⁴⁷ At this level “are revealed knowledge from the unseen, the next world, and knowledge of God, of which the rational and reflective spirits cannot reach”.⁴⁸ Finally, Ghazali talks about the veils of darkness and the veils of light. Accordingly, all veils block the vision of that unified being which is God. Conclusively, the whole of Ghazali’s epistemological exposition in the *Mishkat* is an exposition of a type of knowledge that comes from beyond reason, in the form of unveiling and ecstatic spiritual taste, through the precedent shining of the Light of God to perception. The process through which the Light of God comes to shine within the faculty of perception takes place through the clearing of the perceptive power from attachments that one creates to beings that are other than God. I will give a detailed analysis of the epistemology of the *Mishkat* in a later chapter, but first, it is necessary to properly locate the epistemological thought of Ghazali in the *Mishkat* in the broader Sufi context of thought.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 25.

⁴⁷ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 37.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 37.

CHAPTER II

THE MYSTICAL BACKGROUND OF THE *MISHKAT*: SUFISM UNTIL AL-GHAZALI

2.1. Defining Sufism

Defining Sufism is usually the first task of all the literature concerning the topic. However, such a task is usually not an easy one, and as presented by Ahmed Zarruq, a master in the Shadhili school of Sufism, he had encountered around two thousand definitions of Sufism.⁴⁹ However, defining Sufism has become a task of describing the goals, behaviors, and attitudes of the Sufis, to arrive at a general understanding of what Sufism means. As such, the characteristics that can be located in literature as the foundational attributes that form 'Sufism', are detachment from what is called "the world", moral perfection, a beautiful behavior or *adab*, a turning inwardly from the visible to the mystery, and the experiential reaching of the understanding of the oneness of God, or *Tauhid*. Firstly, from the early days of Sufism, asceticism and a disconnection from the world, whether that meant, a conceptual disconnection or even a physical one, was one of the main characteristics of Sufism. So, freedom is one of the consequential identifying elements and concepts that is also stressed.⁵⁰ However, that is a freedom from the so-called 'world' and its trappings and from the ego-self.⁵¹ As such it has been described by Sufis that "Sufism is to possess nothing and to be possessed by nothing."⁵² Secondly, an attitude of morality and generosity is a pronounced element of Sufism. Al-Junayd, one of the great early Sufis equated Sufism with morals by saying that "who surpasses you in good moral qualities

⁴⁹ Zaineb Istrabadi, *The Principles Of Sufism (Qawaid Al-Tasawwuf): An Annotated Translation With Introduction* (Indiana University, 1988), 53.

⁵⁰ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions Of Islam* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 14-15.

⁵¹ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000), 8-9.

⁵² Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions Of Islam* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 15.

surpasses you in Sufism.”⁵³ Thirdly, turning inwardly has been one of the defining characteristics of Sufism. In the early period, Sufism meant the “interiorization of Islam, a personal experience of the central mystery of Islam, that of tauhid, to declare that God is One.”⁵⁴ Accordingly “Sufism represents the living heart of Islam, the inner dimension of the Revelation given to Muhammad, and not an arbitrary form of occultism.”⁵⁵ More explicitly, Sufism is to access that which is hidden, or the hidden world, in comparison to the world which is accessible only by sight.⁵⁶ Fourthly, Sufism is the finding of reality or the mystery, or the oneness of God, through psychological and experiential proximity to it.⁵⁷ In the process of finding the hidden treasure of this mystery, the mystic realizes that he is not,⁵⁸ and is submerged as part of that bigger reality. Finally, “Ghazali denoted *taṣawwuf* to be the way of reality.”⁵⁹ To sum up a definition, it can be generalized that Sufism is good morals outwardly, but a turning inwardly through renunciation of the world, or the visible, in order to experientially know the reality of the oneness of God.

2.2. Knowledge in Sufism

Above I described that Sufism means knowledge of the inner mystery of the oneness of God. Such knowledge of mystery is differentiated in character in comparison to the outer, at the level of sight and forms. As such, “being the “knowledge of the inner” (*‘ilm al-bātin*), as opposed to exoteric knowledge (*‘ilm al-zāhir*), it proposes an alternative and paradoxical explanation of the world, which most often is incomprehensible to exoterists.”⁶⁰ Sufism can also be described as “an inner quest to understand and attain reality.”⁶¹ In addition, “The “external” knowledge was viewed by the Sufis as inferior to *‘ilm al-batin*’—an assumption that aroused the ire of many

⁵³ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions Of Islam* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 15.

⁵⁴ Ibid 17.

⁵⁵ Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction To Sufism: The Inner Path Of Islam* (World Wisdom, 2010), 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁷ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000), 1.

⁵⁸ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions Of Islam* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 16.

⁵⁹ Emrah Kaya, "KNOWLEDGE IN THE MAIN SOURCES OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF SUFISM IN THE PRE-GHAZZĀLĪ PERIOD", *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, 2020, 1.

⁶⁰ Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction To Sufism: The Inner Path Of Islam* (World Wisdom, 2010), 7.

⁶¹ Mukhtar H. Ali, *Philosophical Sufism: An Introduction To The School Of Ibn Al-Arabi* (Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2022), 1.

Muslim traditionalists who revered the letter of the Divine Law.”⁶² But, what does being inner mean philosophically? I argue that for Sufis in general, and Ghazali specifically, being inner means neglecting the senses and causality, or what is often called among Sufis and in theology as secondary causality. The first, that is going beyond the world of the senses (*mulk*), into the world of spirit (*malakut*), and then into the world of the Divine (*jabarut*).⁶³ To go inwardly “the mind and body must be kept silent and the outward senses must be obliterated in order to develop the inward senses.”⁶⁴ The main problem that Sufis associate with sensory perception is the superficial understanding that comes from them. For them, the shapes that are represented to perception through the eye, or the sounds that are transmitted to the ear, do not transmit the whole reality of what an expression contains, because transmission embodies also meaning and intention. That is why for ibn Ata’allah al-Iskanderi “actions are but external forms, only given life by having true sincerity in them.”⁶⁵ Ghazali would be epistemologically critical to all the information coming from the senses and especially from the sense of sight. Besides his short critical approach towards information that comes from the senses which he gives in *The Deliverance from Error*,⁶⁶ Ghazali gives a detailed philosophical comparison between the senses and the rational faculty in the *Mishkat*.⁶⁷ Secondly, stemming directly from a sense-perception epistemology is the belief in the power of entities to freely create effects by intentionally causing them. This worldview has been radically opposed by Sufis in their metaphysical formulations. For Sufis, existence is a world of necessity in which all beings necessarily express the reality of their being. However, because of their going inwardly, they do not perceive specific entities which are separated from one another, but they perceive the oneness of Being, or God, in everything,⁶⁸ as the being from whose unified essence and attributes everything else takes their being. As such, “Necessity is intrinsic to Being but accidental with respect to quiddities that are in need of Being for their realization in the external world.”⁶⁹ Causally speaking,

⁶² Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000), 16-17.

⁶³ Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction To Sufism: The Inner Path Of Islam* (World Wisdom, 2010), 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 179.

⁶⁵ *Sharh Al-Hikam Al-`Atā'iyya* (The Guiding Helper Foundation, 2004), 15.

⁶⁶ W. Montgomery Watt, *Al-Munqidh Min Al-Dalal (Deliverance From Error)* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1952), 23.

⁶⁷ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 6.

⁶⁸ Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction To Sufism: The Inner Path Of Islam* (World Wisdom, 2010), 15.

⁶⁹ Mukhtar H. Ali, *Philosophical Sufism: An Introduction To The School Of Ibn Al-Arabi* (Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2022), 38.

this worldview expresses that the outer is established by the inner, or more specifically, the outer is established by the ontological expression of the oneness of God, from whose Being and attributes everything else takes place.

For the Sufis, such knowledge of the inner mystery does not happen through a rational process of reflection but through an intuitive spiritual taste and unveiling of the self-manifestation of God. In fact:⁷⁰

There was an epistemological divide that was already fomenting in Islamic culture, namely, the divergence between reason and intuition. Those who inclined towards esotericism held that true knowledge can only be attained by spiritual experience, inspiration and unveiling. Whereas those who inclined towards the exoteric, such as the legalists, theologians and philosophers, relied upon either textual evidence, rational proofs or a combination of both

It had become a common way of distinguishing the two paths presented above, and Sufism separated itself with rational speculation and discourse from the very beginning. Sufism has been distinguished by what sometimes scholars call the supra-rational, which is a non-dual vision of the world that goes beyond the tendencies of the rational for duality and separation.⁷¹ This supra-reason has been called among the Sufis the ‘stage that is beyond reason’ (*al tawr warā al aql*).⁷² In addition, the essence of such mystical teaching has been described to be very subtle to be put in words and conveyed.⁷³ Moreover, Sufism as “a path of awakening, a path destined to develop the higher states of consciousness of being”,⁷⁴ “cannot be reduced to a theoretical philosophy.”⁷⁵ For this very reason, the Sufis have most famously resorted to poetry to express their experiences, because of the ability of poetry to “carry emotional, rather than factual content.”⁷⁶ But what are these Sufi experiences? Sometimes Sufism within the epistemological context “has been called since its beginnings ‘the knowledge of the hearts’ or the ‘knowledge of spiritual states’.”⁷⁷ Epistemologically speaking, the Sufi experience can be contained within the concepts of Unveiling (*kashf*), manifestations of God (*tajalli/tajalliyat*), and Taste (*dhawq*). Epistemologically speaking, “Sufism is above all a matter of tasting

⁷⁰ Mukhtar H. Ali, *Philosophical Sufism: An Introduction To The School Of Ibn Al-Arabi* (Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2022), 1.

⁷¹ Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction To Sufism: The Inner Path Of Islam* (World Wisdom, 2010), 7.

⁷² *The Zubdat Al-Haqāiq Of Ayn Al-Qudah Al-Hamadani* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 2000), 22.

⁷³ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000), 151.

⁷⁴ Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction To Sufism: The Inner Path Of Islam* (World Wisdom, 2010), 7-8.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 7-8.

⁷⁶ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000), 150.

⁷⁷ Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction To Sufism: The Inner Path Of Islam* (World Wisdom, 2010), 6.

(*dhawq*).⁷⁸ But what is to be tasted? Part of what is considered Sufi epistemology is also the unveiling (*kashf*) of the spiritual realities or “the act of tearing away the veil that separates man from the extraphenomenal world.”⁷⁹ What is manifested from spiritual realities, are the manifestations of God Himself, which Sufis call the self-manifestation of God, or the *tajalli* of God.⁸⁰ Accordingly, “Divine self-revelation (*tajalli*) descends upon the seeker like “dawn,” giving him an immediate and certain knowledge that surpasses all arguments and proofs, be they rational or traditional.”⁸¹ So what is tasted, is the *tajalliyat* occurring internally that are also characterized by different spiritual states and stations,⁸² and which can be described as emotional and intuitive. As such, Qushairi presents in his Sufi manual that:⁸³

Among the words that they use are “tasting” and “drinking”. They use these words to describe the fruits of God’s self-manifestation, the results of God’s self-unveiling and God’s unexpected visitations, which they experience. The first of these is tasting, then comes drinking and, finally, the quenching of thirst (*riyy*).

As for unveiling, those are the unveilings of these self-manifestations. Sufis consistently describe unveiling as “lightning-flash that allows them an insight into the world of mystery, where rational arguments are replaced by God’s “evidential proof””.⁸⁴ Unveiling is also described as:⁸⁵

a bolt of lightning that illuminates the consciousness and fixes itself upon the latter through its intense flashing and clarity, this “unveiling” leads to the vision of certainty (*yaqīn*) and to the direct perception (*‘iyān*) of spiritual realities, which evaporates the doubt associated with the speculative sciences.”

Finally, knowledge of unveiling is not reached through effort. This type of knowledge distinguishes itself from the operations of reason and is called knowledge given by divine grace (*al-‘ilm al-wahbi*) to even the unlettered, a simple farmer, or a craftsman.⁸⁶ In fact, as we will see in more detail later, lack of effort is considered a condition for this type of knowledge. That is because the effort is the intentional trying to move and control the self-manifestation through directing it, therefore, constricting its natural behavior and expression of its reality. Conclusively, the

⁷⁸ Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction To Sufism: The Inner Path Of Islam* (World Wisdom, 2010), 8.

⁷⁹ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000), 311.

⁸⁰ *Al-Qushairi's Epistle On Sufism* (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 2007), 96.

⁸¹ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000), 312.

⁸² *Al-Qushairi's Epistle On Sufism* (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 2007).

⁸³ *Ibid*, 95.

⁸⁴ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000), 312.

⁸⁵ Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction To Sufism: The Inner Path Of Islam* (World Wisdom, 2010), 7.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 8.

difference between the scholar who understands through rational examination and someone who understands through taste and unveiling is that for the latter the object of knowledge is not loved as an object of knowledge, but it is loved through its state of manifestation. Thus, God is not loved through the pleasure of conceptual knowing which is the same as every other object of knowledge, including mathematics, or medicine.⁸⁷ Such contemplation of God, gives rise to intimacy (*uns*) which is the realization of the beauty of God, and awe (*haybah*), which arises from the contemplation of the majesty of God.⁸⁸

2.3. The Sufi Predecessors of al-Ghazali

Scholars of Sufism such as Annemarie Schimmel⁸⁹ and Alexander Knysh,⁹⁰ divide the history of Sufism into the formative period and the period of consolidation. Arberry on the other hand categorizes the history of Sufism in the period of the ascetics, then the period of mystics, and then the period of the theorists of Sufism.⁹¹ Additionally, Arberry's categorization is in line with the development of Sufism in the presentations of Schimmel and Knysh. It is proper to the intentions of this study, which is epistemological, to be short, thus focusing on the historical account of Knysh. Knysh's study is primarily historical and gives a detailed analysis of the key figures of Sufism before al-Ghazali. In addition, Knysh gives a clear account of the conceptual and behavioral development of Sufism, thus helping us to locate al-Ghazali in the general Sufi landscape.

At the beginning of the formative period of the tradition, the main Sufi tendencies were a focus on asceticism and unsystematized mysticism. The origins of Sufism are traced back to the early Islamic community, in the second generation of Muslims, with Hasan al Basri and his circle.⁹² Other figures mentioned during this very early

⁸⁷ *The Zubdat Al-Haqāiq Of Ayn Al-Qudah Al-Hamadani* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 2000), 77.

⁸⁸ *Sufi Terminology: Ibn Arabi's Al-Istilah Al-Sufiyyah* (Oxford, England.: Muhiyiddin Ibn Arabi Society, 1984), 33.

⁸⁹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions Of Islam* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1975).

⁹⁰ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000).

⁹¹ A.J.Arberry, *Sufism - An Account Of The Mystics Of Islam* (Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 1950).

⁹² Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000), 35.

period are Ibrahim ibn Adham, who adhered to extreme piety, ibn al Mubarak who was more inner-worldly focused and community-oriented, and Fudayl ibn Iyad who gave up his professional commitment in the field of *hadith* to undergo an ascetic lifestyle of distance from emerging theological and juridical schools.⁹³ Following them was also Rabia al Adawiya who besides her ideas of exclusive love towards God, may be considered among the first to bring about early understandings and expressions on self-annihilation (*fanna*) and unveiling (*kashf*).⁹⁴ There is also Shaqiq al Balkhi who associated with Ibrahim ibn Adham, and who took scrupulousness (*wara*) and reliance on God (*tawakkul*) to extreme forms.⁹⁵ Shaqiq is among the first who tried to systematize the mystical experiences in various stations in his treatise “The Rule of Worship” (*Adab al-'ibàdàt*).⁹⁶ While Shaqiq clearly gives merit to asceticism, for him it was just the beginning of the path, and the peak of it was proximity and love of God.⁹⁷ There was also Abu Suleyman ad-Darani who talked about knowledge of God (*ma'rifat Allah*), and his student al-Antaki who was more focused on introspection and mystical psychology, so much so, that the latter was called ‘the spy of the hearts’ by his teacher.⁹⁸ One of the most interesting figures of this generation was Dhu ‘l-Nun al-Misri, who was from Egypt, and who is accredited to be among the first who talks about states (*ahwal*) and stations (*maqamat*).⁹⁹ In Addition, Dhu ‘l-Nun is among the first to talk of God as a friend and a lover. Closely linked to this intimate experience with God, Dhu ‘l-Nun talks about a privileged and intuitive knowledge of God that is given to God’s friends (*awliya*).¹⁰⁰ There is also Al-Muhasibi who talked of hypocrisy and vainglory.¹⁰¹ Al-Muhasibi was especially focused on self-examination of the intentions of piety.¹⁰² It is during the period of al-Muhasibi, that al-Junaid appears, and we see a more mystical focused Sufism. Even though expressed in a symbolic language, al-Junayd’s teachings revolved mostly around the idea of unification with the origin in God and living in him.¹⁰³ In this process, “the human self is completely shattered by the

⁹³ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000), 24-25.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 26.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 33.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 34-35.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 34.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 37-39.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 40-41.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 41.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 45.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 45.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 54.

encounter with of the Divine Reality, which leads it to a mystical union with the Divine.”¹⁰⁴ Junayd’s style of expressing the idea was more obscure and it was served in the form of commentaries of Qur’anic passages, compared to the more ‘intoxicated’ version of expressing these ideas by al-Bistami, al-Hallaj, and lesser extent by al-Nuri, Samnun, and Shibli.¹⁰⁵ It is Bistami’s teachings that can be seen as the delimitating point between asceticism and the turn to the focus on the mystical experience of the annihilation of the self in God.¹⁰⁶ His most famous saying, “Glory be to me, how great is My majesty” is widely famous as a representation of these mystical experiences and of this intoxicated type of Sufism. There was also Abu Talib al Makki, “whose monumental book “Nourishment for the Hearts” had a profound influence on al-Ghazali’s Revivification of the Religious Sciences.”¹⁰⁷ Then there was also al-Tustari who talked of unveiling and witnessing of God (*mukashafa*) and of the light of certainty (*nur al yaqin*) which God gives to those who are loyal to Him.¹⁰⁸ Tustari also wrote about the inward meaning of the Qur’an and presented God as pure light.¹⁰⁹

Then, “in less than one century, between 967 and 1074, there appeared dozens of treatises, histories, and manuals that covered all the major aspects of Sufi science (*ilm al tasawwuf*).”¹¹⁰ As such, “the late tenth century was above all a period of construction and consolidation of the Sufi tradition.”¹¹¹ Among the works of this period we find more apologetical works on Sufism, works which detail the Sufi terminology, the history of the early Sufis, and detailed accounts of states and stations that are to be found within the Sufi science. There is al-Sarraj and his *Kitab al Luma*, Kalabadhi’s ‘Introduction into the Doctrine of the Sufis’ (*Al-Ta'arruf li-madhab ahl al-tasawwuf*), who are regarded as apologetic, thus linking Sufism with the prophet and authentic Islamic teaching, and which detail some technical Sufi terminology.¹¹² Sulami’s and Abu Nu’aym al-Isfahani’s works are mainly historical,

¹⁰⁴ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000), 54.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 53.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 71.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 85.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 85.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 86.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 116.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 116.

¹¹² Ibid, 119-123.

thus giving the biographies of pious individuals that are described as ‘Sufis’.¹¹³ Of the most important works of this period is Qushairi’s ‘Epistle on Sufism’ (*al-Risala fi ‘l-Tasawwuf*). In comparison to other works that focus on moralizing statements and biographies of the Sufis, Qushairi gives a complete account of the theoretical structure of Sufism.¹¹⁴ The book gives a biographical account of the famous Sufis, and a long section on Sufi terminology.¹¹⁵ There is also Hujwiri’s ‘Unveiling of that which is Hidden’ (*Kashf al-Mahjub*), which presents some controversial issues of Sufi science in a watered-down manner.¹¹⁶ Accordingly, “Although al-Hujwiri does discuss the theory of the annihilation of the human self in God (*fanà*), he phrases it very carefully in order not to be accused of preaching a substantive union of two essences, human and divine.”¹¹⁷ Hujwiri, also is the first to present Sufis according to schools and divided them into twelve schools.¹¹⁸ Finally, there is also al-Harawi who was a mystic and a theorist who wrote: “Stations of the Travelers” (*Manazil al-Sa’irin*), in which he enumerates one hundred stations on the path to God.¹¹⁹

2.4. The *Mishkat* as a Work of Sufi Epistemology

In this chapter, I first defined Sufism as a phenomenon of understanding within the Islamic context and then explored the general character of knowledge in Sufism. Secondly, I brought a short historical account of the development of Sufi interests, behaviors, and concepts. However, the task of this whole study is to arrive at an understanding of the whatness of knowledge as presented by al-Ghazali in the *Mishkat al-Anwar*. As such, I will first argue that the *Mishkat* of al-Ghazali is a typical example of a Sufi epistemological framework. There is a general lack of studies that present the epistemology of the *Mishkat*, let alone a detailed and rigorous philosophical study that would delve into the concepts of light, being, and unveiling. Most of the studies on the *Mishkat* are descriptive, thus merely repeating the general topics of the *Mishkat* and discussing them in the general context of religious studies

¹¹³ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism - A Short History* (Brill, 2000), 131, 125-128.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 131.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 132.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 133.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 134.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 134.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 137.

or Ghazalian studies, such as Gairdner¹²⁰ and Landolt¹²¹ do. Wensinck on the other hand, in his study on the *Mishkat* is mainly concerned with cosmology and only briefly becomes descriptive on the epistemological side of the work.¹²² Watt completely puts into question the section of ‘the veils’ for whom it shows a non-Ghazalian character and according to whom is a forgery, not written by Ghazali himself.¹²³ It should be noted that there is no real ground for putting the section into question but Watt’s impression is that there is an inconsistency between the sections of the book, and a cosmological inconsistency between the veils section and the general cosmological understanding of al-Ghazali.¹²⁴ Treiger’s work¹²⁵ on monism and monotheism in *Mishkat* touches upon epistemology very briefly, describing the correspondence between the spiritual world and the outer world that Ghazali proposes in the *Mishkat*. The only work that focuses exclusively on the epistemology of the *Mishkat* is the study of Hesova.¹²⁶ While she locates the *Mishkat* within the Sufi epistemological framework, she does so only descriptively and without a philosophical analysis of the epistemology offered by Ghazali. There is another study by Treiger¹²⁷ which is a general study on ‘inspired knowledge’ in al-Ghazali. There, Treiger traces back the concept of ‘unveiling’ (*kashf*) of al-Ghazali to its Sufi origin in Tustari and Sarraj who equated the concept with certainty.¹²⁸ In addition, he mentions Qushairi’s *risala* and the usage of Unveiling in it, but also the commentary of the light verse of Qur’an in which Qushairi argues that “unveiling signifies one of the stages of the outpouring of divine light on the Sūfī adept.”¹²⁹ Treiger, however, also traces the Ghazali usage of the concept of Taste (*dhawk*) and argues that it comes from Avicenna. He cites four instances of Avicenna (Ibn Sina) in praise of knowledge that comes from direct experience and taste and makes a connection that

¹²⁰ Gairdner, *Al-Ghazali's Mishkat Al-Anwar And The Ghazali Problem*, 1914.

¹²¹ Hermann Landolt, *Some Notes On The Mishkat Al Anwar For Professor Charles J. Adams* (McGill University, n.d.).

¹²² Wensinck, *Ghazali's Mishkat Al-Anwar (Niche Of Lights)* (Leiden, 1941).

¹²³ Montgomery Watt, *A Forgery In Al-Ghazali's Mishkat?*, n.d.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 21.

¹²⁵ Alexander Treiger, "Monism And Monotheism In Al-Ghazali'S Mishkat Al-Anwar", *Journal Of Qur'anic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2007): 1-27.

¹²⁶ Zora Hesova, "THE NOTION OF ILLUMINATION IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF GHAZALI'S MISHKAT AL-ANWAR", *Journal Of Islamic Thought And Civilization* 2, no. 2 (2012): 65-85.

¹²⁷ Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge In Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazali's Theory Of Mystical Cognition And Its Avicennian Foundation* (Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012).

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 138.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 139.

he calls “a clear connection”, from which Ghazali took the concept.¹³⁰ Interestingly, Treiger does not look for the usage of the term ‘taste’ (*dhawk*) in Sufi sources, especially because it is one of the core concepts of Sufi epistemology. This is especially the case because Treiger used Qushairi’s *risala* to trace to Sufism the concept of unveiling (*kashf*). Treiger also uses the concept of taste (*dhawk*) in parallel with what he calls ‘intellectual pleasure’, which for ibn Sina is superior to the pleasures of copulation and chewing food.¹³¹ However, the key epistemological distinction between what Treiger is positing here through ibn Sina, and the Sufi usage of the term *dhawk*, is that for ibn Sina there is pleasure associated with arriving at knowledge, or with the results of knowledge, whereas for the Sufis, taste (*dhawk*) is an essential concept in the process of knowing. For Sufis knowing is arrived through spiritual taste, and as such, you classify knowledge through the taste that knowing arises to perception. It can be easily posited that the pleasurable taste that ibn Sina is talking about is the taste of conviction upon a certain matter of knowledge, or about the achievement of knowledge, however, he is not talking about taste (*dhawk*) as an essential categorizing principle for knowledge. That is why we mentioned earlier that the pleasure of knowledge gives equal pleasure to all objects of knowledge, whereas a ‘taste’ in its Sufi meaning is the love or the bitterness that arises upon the spirit upon the manifestation of something in its reality. Nevertheless, there is also the work of Geoffroy,¹³² who talks of Sufism in general, but continuously comes back to the Sufi insights of epistemology, putting them as an essential part of Sufism because of the core Sufi aim of knowing God (*marifa*).¹³³ As such, he places Ghazali completely within the Sufi framework of knowledge and locates the concepts of Unveiling (*kashf*), Inspiration (*ilham*), and Taste (*dhawk*), all within this context.¹³⁴ Geoffroy mentions *the Mishkat* specifically as an example of a Sufi epistemology.¹³⁵ Finally, Anqarawi also mentions the *Mishkat* in his work and says that Ghazali “set down there in various types of gnosis in the language of the philosophers”, thus categorizing it as primarily mystical.¹³⁶ All the other work on the

¹³⁰ Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge In Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazali's Theory Of Mystical Cognition And Its Avicennian Foundation* (Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 191-200

¹³¹ Ibid, 191-192.

¹³² Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction To Sufism: The Inner Path Of Islam* (World Wisdom, 2010).

¹³³ Ibid, 12.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 84.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 85.

¹³⁶ Ismail Anqarawi, *The Lamp Of Mysteries* (Oxford, UK: Anqa Publishing, 2011), 43.

Mishkat, just as mentioned by Buchman, is mostly focused on cosmology¹³⁷ and does not serve this study.

Conclusively, epistemologically speaking, the *Mishkat* is a prime example of a Sufi understanding of knowledge. Firstly, it fulfills the condition of asceticism when Ghazali talks about the removal of the veils of darkness. These veils are of the people who seek the pleasures of the world which include the gathering of property, seeking fulfillment in women, honor, and fame, gaining political power, gathering followers through claiming knowledge, and finding a cause of existence within the world.¹³⁸ Secondly, the knowledge that Ghazali proposes has an inward turning, thus it is esoteric.¹³⁹ Ghazali continuously talks in the *Mishkat* of the world of the dominion which is the inner world, or like the kernel, compared to the visible world which is like the shell.¹⁴⁰ Two are the characteristics of turning inwardly. First, it is the recognition that causes do not occur outwardly between bodies. Secondly, all that occurs in the visible world, has its cause on the inside. With regards to the relationship between the outer and the inner, Ghazali calls this relationship like that of effect with the secondary cause.¹⁴¹ Moreover, it can be said that the perception of causality is the most detrimental to the process of unveiling since the human consciousness at that level stays at an imaginal perception which gains images from the senses and focuses perception on strict separations with causal powers on one another. Thirdly, Ghazali talks about the knowledge that is beyond intellectual reflection, that is acquired through the ‘holy prophetic spirit’ and which is a characteristic of prophets and of some of the friends of God.¹⁴² Fourthly, Ghazali talks about unveiling and taste as the primary cognitive ways of the ‘holy prophetic spirit’, and through which God and realities are perceived.¹⁴³ So instead of a representation theory of knowledge which defines knowledge as a cognitive representation of reality, Ghazali presents knowledge as the witnessing that takes place through the light of the manifestation of being to the faculty of perception. Finally, Ghazali talks of intuitive-based and effortless knowing through visions of

¹³⁷ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), xxvii-xxxii.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 44-51.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 10.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 10.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 12.

¹⁴² Ibid, 37.

¹⁴³ Ibid, unpagged.

contexts, and the unification with God, as the final product-knowledge of the activities of unveiling and taste.¹⁴⁴ Further, I will give a detailed philosophical analysis of all these epistemological concepts to understand the whatness of knowledge in the *Mishkat* of Ghazali.



¹⁴⁴ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998).

CHAPTER III

THE MYSTICAL EPISTEMOLOGY AS REPRESENTED IN THE *MISHKAT*

3.1. The Topics of *Mishkat*

It can be said that the *Mishkat* discusses three broad interrelated topics. These topics are being and its manifestation, knowledge beyond reason, and the human relationship to being. It is important to explain the usage of the word ‘being’ at this point. Firstly, I may use the word ‘being’ instead of God, because just as presented earlier in the introduction to the *Mishkat*, Ghazali himself equates Light with Being, and ultimately attributes these qualities to God alone.¹⁴⁵ Secondly, I may use the word being in a generic sense to mean the unified reality of a thing. The common understanding between both meanings is that both usages of the word represent unified realities of either existence as a whole or a thing in particular. As such I will use the word interchangeably as it fits the context. Most important to our goal is the focus on the epistemological concept of ‘manifestation’ that results from understanding reality, or a reality, through its unity that the concept and the word ‘being’ offer. While reading the *Mishkat*, one will see that Ghazali’s terminology is highly religious, however, because the analysis and objective of this study is philosophical, I will try to be minimal in the religious and symbolical terminology so that to minimize arbitrary bias and being descriptive of topics. In the following chapters, I will address and analyze each of the following topics separately, but always with a focus on the epistemological question of the whatness of knowledge. Thus, I will present the *Mishkat* as an example of relating internally, and the epistemology it offers as an epistemology derived through going beyond reason through Unveiling, Taste, and witnessing of being.

¹⁴⁵ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 16.

3.2. Perceiving That Which is Beyond Reason

One of the key articulations in the *Mishkat* is the event of manifestation. The first key element during the event of manifestation is the finding of the ability to perceive. Manifestation presumes the ability to perceive. However, manifestation first presumes that which becomes manifest, or the manifested being which is the existent thing. Whereas perception, even though existent itself, remains only in possibility without manifestation. At this point, the being that manifests is an unknown entity and barely initiates the light of perception. As such, without manifestation, perception is possible and not actual. As for perception itself, according to Ghazali, manifestation to perception is the spirit of light.¹⁴⁶ As such, that which allows for perception to take place is what is called by the name 'light'. For example, one definition of light could be that which is perceived and through which other things are perceived, such as the sun.¹⁴⁷ However, the eye which does not see light does not make anything manifest. So the perceiving faculty, because of its support to perception is equivalently worthy to the name light.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the second light is even more worthy of the name, since it is closer to perception given that perception takes place in it compared to the first being only support to perception.¹⁴⁹ But there is a third level of worthiness for the name light, and that is that which allows other things to perceive, and which perceives itself and others.¹⁵⁰ It is the second type of perception which is limited because it is a potential perception, whereas the third type of perception is an actualized perception through the presence in it of that which is perceived. This is the case since one cannot give for others to perceive what he doesn't have. Perception as such, is an inherent attribute of that which manifests, meaning that perception and manifestation are one in essence. As such perception is a possibility without that which is perceived, and what the recognition of perception indicates, is the actual recognition of the perceived. It follows that any talk of perception, even of the ability to perceive, is equivalent to the manifestation of that which is perceived. In addition, there are external and internal perceptions that occur through that which manifests outwardly like forms, and that which manifests

¹⁴⁶ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 4.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 4.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 4.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 12.

inwardly like spirits, such as love, liveliness, or fear. Ghazali too makes this specific distinction in the *Mishkat* when he talks about the outward and inward eye. He¹⁵¹ also adds that the relationship between the two is like the relation of the shell to the kernel, or the form in relation to the spirit, or like the shadow in relation to that which throws it.¹⁵²

However, there is a complication that takes place with the explanation that al-Ghazali does about the rational faculty (*aql*) and its relation to internal perceptions. It must be said, that the whole of his discussion on the rational faculty stems from his equating of the rational faculty with spirit.¹⁵³ At the beginning of the book, Ghazali makes a comparison between the physical eye and the rational faculty to show how the latter is more worthy of the name light because of its superiority in the abilities of perception. He gives seven following specific comparisons on why the rational faculty is more perceptive and therefore more worthy of the name light. First, the physical eye cannot see itself, whereas the rational faculty perceives other things and its own attributes.¹⁵⁴ Second, the physical eye does not see what is far and extremely close, and for the rational faculty, they are equal.¹⁵⁵ Thirdly, the physical eye does not perceive what is behind the veils, whereas no realities are veiled from the rational faculty.¹⁵⁶ Accordingly, veiling occurs due to the imaginings, fancies, and beliefs, that people suppose are properties of the rational faculty.¹⁵⁷ Fourthly, the physical eye perceives the manifest or the surface of things, whereas the rational faculty penetrates the non-manifest, and the mysteries of it, perceiving their realities and spirits. Fifthly, the physical eye does not perceive sounds, odors, flavors, heat, and cold, nor does it perceive, joy, happiness, grief, sadness, pain, pleasure, passionate love, power, desire, appetite, and knowledge, whereas rationality does.¹⁵⁸ The sixth comparison is that the physical eye does not see that which is infinite, whereas the rational faculty has the potential to perceive the infinite, and its proof is that it perceives numbers, and numbers are infinite.¹⁵⁹ And seventhly, the physical eye sees

¹⁵¹ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 10.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 12.

¹⁵³ *Ibid* 5.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 9.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 7.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 8.

large things as small, whereas the rational faculty perceives approximations of their size in a more accurate manner, such as the size of the sun.¹⁶⁰ There are problems associated with this explanation of the rational faculty that Ghazali proposes in the *Mishkat*. Firstly, the comparisons of ‘seeing near and far’ (2nd), and ‘seeing small as big’ (7th), only come through the experience of outward-looking of the physical eye, and have nothing to do with the rational per se. These comparisons describe the functions of memory, even though Ghazali calls the sub-faculty of memory one of the mechanisms of the rational faculty.¹⁶¹ Secondly, the comparisons that rationality perceives itself (1st), and it perceives infinity (6th) are only true if we were to equate rationality with the possible perception. However, Ghazali goes on to equate that perception with soul, and spirit.¹⁶² In the *Ihya*, he does the same thing by equating it with soul (*nafs*), spirit (*ruh*), and heart (*qalb*).¹⁶³ The equating of such terminology, is unusual, especially when the notion of heart, is used for taste-based epistemologies that exaggerate taste-based realities like love and desire. As for the rational faculty, just as Ghazali points out in the *Mishkat*, it is concerned with what he calls self-evident knowledge such as:¹⁶⁴

the knowledge that thing cannot be both eternal and created; both existent and non-existent; that a statement cannot be both true and false; that when a judgement about a thing has been made, the same judgement can be made for similar things; and that when a more specific thing exists, the more general must exist. Thus, if blackness exists, colour must exist; and if man exists, animals must exist. (...) There are also other self-evident statements pertaining to necessary, possible, and impossible things.

Several things should be noted in the above paragraph on rationality. First, it is the external tendency of rationality in creating dichotomies of the eternal and the created, existent and non-existent, as mutually exclusive events, whereas in fact, both can be true regarding two different relations. The second is the universalizing tendency of rationality, in talking about the specific and the general, that blackness is a sign of color, and human is a sign of the animal. This too is a function of memory that generalizes sensual experience, whereas the role of rationality is to instrumentally categorize through function and attributes, just as Ghazali points out in the first comparison (1st). Thirdly, purely externally speaking, a statement cannot be true and

¹⁶⁰ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 8.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 8.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁶³ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels Of The Heart Of The Revival Of The Religious Sciences* (Louisville, KY, USA.: Fons Vitae, 2010), 5-9.

¹⁶⁴ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 10.

false, however, a statement can be true and false with regards to two different relations, like the statement of al-Hallaj when he claimed that he is the Truth (*al-Haq*, one of the names of God) - and which we will analyze later. As such it is concluded about what Ghazali calls self-evident knowledge, that it is self-evident only through relating externally through senses, or outward manifestation. All the self-evident knowledge either has to do with categorization which takes place in memory, or with language, of the reality of which is unnecessary to talk here. So, rationality deals with matters of memory, therefore image, and with language, with categorization, with functions/attributes, with the necessary, the impossible, and the possible. Out of all these, it is the category of the possible which is most closely related to the attribute of infinity, and it is the main function of imagination. This function creates what we called in the introduction as becoming, which is one of the key operating ways of relating to externality. As for numbers, they are infinite, because they are a language and are conceptual, ultimately representing separations. As such, the rational does not perceive what Ghazali points out in the fifth (5th) comparison, which is joy, happiness, love, desire, and others. Memory can remember the events that initiated those instances within the human spirit, so it is the photographic storehouse of the events that seemed to initiate specific spiritual states. However, the rational does not in any way deal with them, and it is only concerned with the above-mentioned functions. This is the case why there can be no definition for the substances of desire, passion, or love, but only functional definitions that describe the behaviors of someone who feels love or the other states. This is exactly why for ibn Arabi, all the rational sciences of the philosophers are only descriptive knowledge.¹⁶⁵ And lastly, comparisons three and four where Ghazali says that the rational faculty perceives beyond veils and surfaces into the non-manifest and mysteries, are partly true. That is because, the rational faculty finds out the attributes/functions of something, including in that which is internal, and it separates into parts. However, it does not get the spirit of something as Ghazali indicates, because the spirit of these matters must be tasted in order to be known.

Rationality is the a-priori and spontaneous perception of separations/attributes externally. For Ayn al-Qudah, the intellect is created to perceive a-priori matters for

¹⁶⁵ "Eric Geoffroy: Some Aspects Of "Supra-Reason" In Ibn 'Arabi's Epistemology", *Youtube*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EE5MoVGwdiE&t=2463s>.

which one does not need to use premises.¹⁶⁶ For William Chittick, reason/rationality is contained within the activities of reflection (*fikr*) and consideration (*nadhar*), and accordingly:¹⁶⁷

"Reflection" (*fikr*) is the power of thought or cogitation, the ability of the soul to put together the data gathered by sense perception or acquired from imagination in order to reach rational conclusions. It belongs only to human beings. "Consideration" (*nazar*) refers to the specific activity of reason when it employs reflection. It is the investigation of phenomena as well as the thought processes whereby reason reaches conclusions.

If we were to analyze the above-mentioned comparisons of al-Ghazali and the description of self-evident knowledge, through the definition of the above-mentioned definition of rationality, we would be able to make much more sense concerning perception. In that case, we would be able to distinguish between a part of the perception which has the responsibility and the function of distinguishing, on the one hand, and the other, a part of perception which is higher than it, and which adds the component of Taste of being. This type of perception creates a more complete vision of reality which involves states of being, rather than the exclusive quality of description that is the only outcome of perceiving attributes. That is why, because of the ability to conclude through separations for a creator through creation, the rational perceives the existence of a creator God as independent and separate. However, such a perception is merely descriptive and in no way indicative of the being of that creator. Therefore, it can be said that the side of perception through which a conclusion through separate external separations is reached, is not the same as the side of perception whereby a state is tasted.

However, the subtle distinction is that Ghazali's perceptive faculty in the *Mishkat*, which he calls the 'rational faculty', includes that higher side of perception that perceives states of being that are beyond reason. This is the case because, in the mentioned comparisons Ghazali talks about the ability of the faculty in perceiving spirits and states, and not only the self-evident knowledge. Ibn Arabi, calls the perceptive faculty 'the heart', however he doesn't assign to it the above-mentioned characteristics of self-evident knowledge.¹⁶⁸ Accordingly, the heart is a mirror

¹⁶⁶ *The Zubdat Al-Haqāiq Of Ayn Al-Qudah Al-Hamadani* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 2000).

¹⁶⁷ William C. Chittick, *Ibn Al-'Arabi's Metaphysics Of Imagination: THE SUFI PATH OF KNOWLEDGE* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 159-160.

¹⁶⁸ Ibn Arabi, *The Openings Revealed In Makkah Al-Futuhat Al-Makkiyah* (New York: Pir Press,

polished, and the cloudiness rising over it is when it preoccupies itself with secondary causes and as such is prevented the *tajalli* (manifestation) of the True to the heart.¹⁶⁹ Ghazali too, in the *Ihya*, regards the heart — even though according to him is synonymous with spirit, and intellect/*aql* in their second sense of the word — as a subtle tenuous substance of a spiritual nature that functions as a mirror.¹⁷⁰ However, accordingly, the mirror is one thing, the forms of individuals another, and the representation of their image in the mirror is another thing.¹⁷¹ Accordingly, knowledge/intelligence (*al-ilm*) is an expression of the image in the mirror.¹⁷² Here too, we can tell a very representational understanding of the heart as a mirror, with that which is reflected in it being only images and representations of the images of the thing which is known. This understanding is even closer to a definition of knowledge as representation compared to the definition of the ‘rational faculty’ given in the *Mishkat*. Surely, the idea of the mirror is a metaphor for trying to understand the main qualities of perception, however, that does not mean that perception is only able to reflect representative images, which would equate perception with the faculty of imagination. Moreover, there is a huge difference between a reflection of a representative image and a *tajalli* which is a whole manifestation of being itself. The latter option is true because, even though perception in one way stands in opposition to that which is perceived so that it reflects it just like a mirror does, on the other way, it is a part and a quality of the manifestation of being itself. When the perceptive mirror stands in a separated opposition vis-à-vis being, it is rebelling against it while being controlling and judgmental. This separated opposition asserts itself alone and as such, knowledge becomes the third thing that separates from being, and which covers the free self-manifestation of being. As such, the perceptive mirror must be understood as a comprehensive ability to reflect all the realities of being itself, and that is the only way that perception can reflect the reality of the manifestation of being. It can also be said that the heart is not a processor of knowledge but a place for the unveiling of being and revelation.¹⁷³ The proof that

2021).

¹⁶⁹ Ibn Arabi, *The Openings Revealed In Makkah Al-Futuhat Al-Makkiyah* (New York: Pir Press, 2021).

¹⁷⁰ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels Of The Heart Of The Revival Of The Religious Sciences* (Louisville, KY, USA.: Fons Vitae, 2010), 35.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 35.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 35.

¹⁷³ Ibrahim Kalin, *KNOWLEDGE IN LATER ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY: Mulla Sadra On Existence, Intellect And Intuition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 218.

perception reflects not only representations but states of being too, is to be found in Taste (*dhawk*), or the fact that the subject who has perception also perceives love, desire, anger, fear, and other states which are not matters of representations of images. An example of the direct perception of states is given by Suhrawardi when he says that the pain of a cut is in no need for a transformation into a mental representation to be perceived, and as such its essence is enough for it to be perceived or to have a relation of presence¹⁷⁴ to perception. For Ghazali, this is true even in the case when he talks of the perception of the Ultimate Light, which is God, the Being, or the only Existent,¹⁷⁵ and from who's Light all other lights borrow their existence,¹⁷⁶ and from whose Light itself we perceive its Light. Thus, the Ultimate Light is a Light that allows other things to perceive and perceives itself and others. This is only possible when perception is an essential part of manifestation itself, and there is no essential difference between that which manifests and that which perceives. This according to Ghazali is characteristic of the 'holy prophetic spirit'¹⁷⁷ — which is part of perception beyond the stage of reason — and all the lights in between it and the First Source of Light, descend from this First Lightning Source.¹⁷⁸ Thus, the prophet is called by Ghazali 'a light-giving lamp',¹⁷⁹ and what this indicates about the prophet is the presence of Light in its perception, thus making knowledge the manifestation of that which is perceived.

3.3. Knowledge as Representation and Knowledge as Light in the *Mishkat*

Knowledge as representation, or the theory that knowledge is a rational representation in perception, or the mental impression¹⁸⁰ of the object of knowledge, is one of the byproducts of an epistemology that bases itself on externality, on causality, and on the separation of perception and that which is known/perceived. Accordingly:¹⁸¹

Some of al-Ghazali's criticism in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers* centers on questioning

¹⁷⁴ Ibrahim Kalin, *KNOWLEDGE IN LATER ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY: Mulla Sadra On Existence, Intellect And Intuition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 170.

¹⁷⁵ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 16.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Ibrahim Kalin, *KNOWLEDGE IN LATER ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY: Mulla Sadra On Existence, Intellect And Intuition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 170.

¹⁸¹ Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 178.

the ontological connection between the formal structure of the world and the formal structure of our knowledge. Averroes (d. 595/1198), for instance, who shared Avicenna's realist epistemology, was surprised by al-Ghazali's effort to defend an occasionalist position with the argument that human knowledge may become disconnected from the world it aims to describe. That cannot be the case, Averroes says, "because the knowledge created in us is always in conformity with the nature of the real thing, since the definition of truth is that a thing is believed to be such as it is in reality." Yet this conformity is precisely what al-Ghazali argues against. Since there is no proof of the necessity of the connection between a cause and its effect, there is also no proof of the necessary conformity of our knowledge with the world. The mere possibility of a disconnect between the two proves that there is no formal—and thus necessary—coherence between the world and our knowledge of it.

Even though Ghazali criticizes such knowledge in the '*Incoherence*', he seems to have a mixed relationship with knowledge as representation. On the *Mishkat*, no clear indication of the representation theory of knowledge is given, simply because he is interested in showing that knowing reality takes place inwardly through the light of God, as the most intense and pure form of light (being). However, Ghazali talks of what he calls the 'reflective spirit', being just above the rational spirit, and he says the following about it:¹⁸²

The fourth level is the reflective spirit. It takes pure rational knowledge and brings about combinations and pairings, deducing therefrom noble knowledge. Then, for example, when it derives two conclusions it combines the two anew and derives another conclusion. It never ceases increasing in this manner *ad infinitum*.

The reflective spirit is the rational knowledge actively making combinations based on premises, and as such can be best related to *nadhar* (consideration). Such activity must base itself on consistency and deduction, and as such is a purely rationalizing tendency that is similar and related to the creation of cognitive representations.

However, apart from the reflective spirit that Ghazali posits, there is no other tendency towards representative knowledge in the *Mishkat*. Ghazali continues describing another spirit that is to be found above the reflective spirit and he calls it 'the holy prophetic spirit'.¹⁸³ In describing this layer of cognition he says:¹⁸⁴

The fifth is the holy prophetic spirit that is singled out for the prophets and some of the friends of God. Within it are disclosed flashes of the unseen, the properties of the next world, and some of the knowledge of the dominion of the heavens and the earth, or, rather, some of the lordly knowledge that the rational and reflective spirits cannot reach.

For Ghazali, this knowledge that is particular to what he calls 'the holy prophetic spirit' has two specific characteristics, and they are the relation to the properties of

¹⁸² Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 37.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 37.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 37.

the unseen, first, and second, that they are flashes of light that relate to that unseen. As for the first, we have established in the first part of this thesis what it means to relate internally, so I will be very short in supporting the internal orientation of the *Mishkat*. As for that which characterizes the unseen and which Ghazali calls 'the properties', those are characteristics that are to be found as attributes of being. Ibn Arabi mentions the following regarding the properties:¹⁸⁵

Hence denotations have two faces, though they are one in entity. Their affirmation (*thubut*) denotes the temporal origination of the cosmos, while their negation denotes Him who brought the cosmos into existence. When man considers with this consideration, he says, "I have come to know (*marifa*) God through the denotations which He has set up for us to know ourselves and Him. They are the 'signs' (*ayat*) set up upon the horizons and within ourselves that it may become clear to us that He is the Real, and it has become clear to us." This is what we call "self-disclosure" (*tajalli*), for self-disclosure is put there in order to be seen.

The flashes of light pertaining to *tajalli* or manifestations of being occur through the inward. Ghazali in the *Mishkat* goes on to posit that 'light' is in fact an ontological manifestation of being or a *tajalli*. That is because there is no darkness more intense than that which does not exist, since perception cannot reach a non-existent. Additionally, if a thing is not manifest itself, it cannot become manifest to any perception.¹⁸⁶ As such, *tajalliyat*/manifestations are ontological realities that have both an inward and outward in themselves, or what Ghazali calls in the *Mishkat*, a face that is turned towards God (unified being), and a face that is turned towards itself, and as such delimited and non-existent.¹⁸⁷

3.4. The Inward Orientation of Knowledge in the *Mishkat*

Turning inwardly is one of the main conditions for the *tajalliyat* to occur. Ghazali explicitly addresses this occurrence in the *Mishkat*.¹⁸⁸

You should know that just as everything becomes manifest to eyesight through outward light, so also everything becomes manifest to inward insight through God. God is with everything and not separate from it. Then he makes everything manifest. In the same way, light is with all things, and through it they become manifest.

¹⁸⁵ William C. Chittick, *Ibn Al-'Arabi's Metaphysics Of Imagination: THE SUFI PATH OF KNOWLEDGE* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 164.

¹⁸⁶ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 16.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 17.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 23.

Ghazali also states the following:¹⁸⁹

The outward eye derives from the world of sensation and visibility, while the inward eye derives from another world — namely, the world of dominion. (...) In this world there are wonders in relation to which the visible world will be disdained. (...) The visible world in relation to the world of dominion is like the shell in relation to the kernel, the form and mould in relation to spirit.

The epistemology that Ghazali describes in the *Mishkat* has its turning inwardly. Two are the main characteristics of turning inwardly. The first characteristic is the recognition that causes do not occur outwardly or turning away from the secondary causes. Secondly, all that occurs on the outside has its cause on the inside. With regards to the relationship between the outer and the inner, Ghazali calls this relationship, like that of effect with the secondary cause.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, the perception of causality is the most detrimental to the process of unveiling/manifestation, since the human consciousness at such a level is stuck at an imaginal perception which gains images from the senses and focuses perception on strict separations with causal powers on one another.

As for the inward that has been cut away from seeing causes, two things occur simultaneously concerning the modes from which knowledge takes place. For Ghazali, the first is *kashf* (unveiling) from the veils of darkness and the veils of light, and the second is the occurrence of *tajalli*, or the manifestation of the so-called Light of God. All of this happens to the individual perceptions' innermost layer, the 'holy prophetic spirit'. Further, I will provide a detailed analysis of the process of unveiling (*kashf*), what a veil entails, and the different types of veils. Secondly, I will provide an explanation of being as it relates to the *tajalli* of the separate entities in existence, on the one hand, and the ultimate witnessing of God as a unified being itself. Accordingly, *tajalli* is a term that relates to both ontology and epistemology and understanding the self-disclosure of being (*tajalli*) is essential to the question of how the being makes itself known to perception. When expressing the view of ibn Arabi on the matter, William Chittick writes:¹⁹¹

Hence the term *tajalli* may be employed in the context of ontology, epistemology, or as more commonly happens, without any distinction being implied between the two domains. In the Shaykh's view, existence and knowledge are two names for the same reality.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 10.

¹⁹⁰ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 12.

¹⁹¹ William C. Chittick, *Ibn Al-'Arabi's Metaphysics Of Imagination: THE SUFI PATH OF KNOWLEDGE* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 91.

3.5. Veils (*Hijab*) and Unveiling (*Kashf*)

Kashf (unveiling) is one of the two most important concepts that relate to knowing as expressed in the *Mishkat* by al-Ghazali. Ghazali does not provide a specific definition of what a veil means, however, it can be easily understood in his writing that for him, whatever covers the perception of the unified being (God) is a veil. Ghazali goes forth to describe three types of people who are veiled, and they are those who are veiled by veils of darkness, those who are veiled by a combination of veils of darkness and light, and those who are veiled by veils of light.¹⁹² The first category is people who are veiled by veils of darkness. The first type of them according to Ghazali are atheists of two types. The first search for a cause of the world in nature, and nature consists of a quality embedded in bodies, and the second, who do not search for the cause at all and are only occupied with their appetites.¹⁹³ In addition to these two, there are those who aim to achieve pleasure through women, food, and clothing.¹⁹⁴ The next type of people sees felicity in domination, taking control, killing, capturing, and imprisoning.¹⁹⁵ The next group wants to gather an abundance of property.¹⁹⁶ And finally, there is a group that goes above the other groups and pretends to have the rational faculty, however, they want to expand their reputation, fame, and followers.¹⁹⁷ Accordingly, their only concern is eye-service and the cultivation of things upon which observers cast their glance.¹⁹⁸ Next, are those who are veiled by darkness and light, and they are those whose darkness comes out of senses, those whose darkness comes out of imagination, and those whose darkness comes out of rational comparisons.¹⁹⁹ Accordingly, they are worshippers of idols, worshippers of beauty, worshippers of light, worshippers of fire, of planets, of the sun.²⁰⁰ The common principle of all of them is that they believe in a lord whom they must prefer over their souls, however, he must be perceived by the senses, because in their view, whatever is not perceived by the senses is meaningless.²⁰¹ As for those

¹⁹² Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 44-51.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 45.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 45.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 45.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 46.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 46.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 46.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 47.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 47

²⁰¹ Ibid, 48.

who are veiled by imagination, they worship an existent thing sitting on the throne.²⁰² And finally, among them are those who are veiled by corrupt rational comparisons and they worship a god who is hearing, seeing, speaking, knowing, powerful, desiring, and living, however, they understand these attributes as they stand in relation to their own attributes.²⁰³ And finally, are those who are veiled by lights. Accordingly, the very first ones are those who assign these attributes of life, desire, speech, and knowing, to the god that they worship, and they recognize that assigning these attributes to God is not as assigning them to human beings.²⁰⁴ The second type of them assigns movers to the creation of heavens and earth, and for them, God is the mover of the furthest celestial body.²⁰⁵ The third assigns God the movement of everything, but not through direct contact which would imply service for him.²⁰⁶ Ultimately, Ghazali talks of those who have arrived. Accordingly, to them it has been revealed that being obeyed contradicts sheer oneness and utmost perfection.²⁰⁷ Accordingly, at this level of perception are those who remain themselves while everything else is annihilated and they see the beauty of divine presence.²⁰⁸ However, some become extinct to themselves, so they cease observing themselves, and nothing remains but divine presence.²⁰⁹ Moreover, there are also those for whom the path is not long, and what dominates others at the end, dominates them at the beginning.²¹⁰

Several conclusions about human behavior and its connection to knowledge can be reached from the above-mentioned description of people as they stand in relation to unified being. First, according to Ghazali and the internal turn of knowledge, different type of living is symptomatic of different depth perception of being. The people who mainly perceive through their senses live through accumulation and try to achieve fulfillment through bodies. Epistemologically speaking, they live in confusion through causality-based understandings. What is also important about the above categorizations is the descriptions of those who are veiled by imagination and reason. Accordingly, the ones who are veiled by imagination go beyond the senses,

²⁰² Ibid, 49.

²⁰³ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 49-50.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 51

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 51.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 51.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 51.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 52.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 52.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 52.

however, they still perceive their deity as a shape sitting on a throne. As for those who are veiled by the rational faculty, they see attributes such as speech, desire, and knowledge, in the deity that they worship, while relating to the attributes of being as they relate to their attributes, thus imagining him through their attributes. However, some recognize such attributes in the god that they worship through the rational faculty, however, they do not make any comparison as to how these attributes are because of unwillingness to relate these attributes to the shapes of human beings. So human beings constantly project an understanding of the world through their selves. It is at this level that rationality recognizes its limitation in cognition, and for Ayn al-Qudah, this is the delimitating point where gnosis, or knowledge which is from the beyond of the stage of reason begins.²¹¹ As for others who go beyond reason and who are veiled by pure light, they still perceive movement, because they still perceive themselves and others, thus implying separation. Conclusively, we see a definite separating nature of everything that comes from senses, imagination, and rational faculty. As such, reason by its nature constricts and binds reality, thus it is merely a name given to the cognitive act of distinguishing between ourselves and God.²¹² As such, reason has a delimitating role even when it is not instrumentally used in the process of knowledge, and that is in making the perception of a spiritual self separate from God.

As understood by the three types of veil categorizations of the *Mishkat*, veils could be also categorized into the three following groups: veils that pertain to the senses, veils that pertain to the imagination, and veils that pertain to the rational faculty. All the veils of the first group but two of them relate to the everyday life of human beings. Those are the seeking of fulfillment in women, food, clothing, dominating others, and the gathering of property and resources. As for the veils that directly relate to the process of knowing, the veils of senses first include the tendency to gather the attention of other human beings through appearing knowledgeable and claiming rational faculty to achieve fame, reputation, and followers. This is the life-preservation instinct in the process of accumulating knowledge. Secondly, there was the finding of a cause for existence in nature or bodies, in which a body or

²¹¹ *The Zubdat Al-Haqāiq Of Ayn Al-Qudah Al-Hamadani* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 2000).

²¹² William C. Chittick, *Ibn Al-'Arabi's Metaphysics Of Imagination: THE SUFI PATH OF KNOWLEDGE* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 238.

appearance is established as a foundational mode of thinking and whereby a paradigm is established. Secondly, the veils of imagination are closely connected to the veils of the senses. Imagination brings forms and combines them either through speech or by visual cognition in infinite possible combinations, and as such it creates veils. Such a tendency to come up with possible combinations is also a tendency of overcoming the forms themselves. As such, the spirit comes up with its forms while becoming reactionary towards the established forms of existence. Thus, a human being operating through imagination will be reactionary and not find himself grounded either in appearances or in functions, thus floating in an infinite space of potentiality. This positioning makes him the quintessential being who operates through potential and becoming. Thirdly, there are the veils of the rational faculty who still are not able to detach themselves from appearances even though they start separating and categorizing that which appears. The motivation for this separating tendency is becoming, the creation of new forms/appearances, or possessing pre-existing appearances. Thus, rationality is never separated from appearances either. That is why, when Ghazali mentions the universal character of rational knowledge, he claims that “the universal necessity of these judgments cannot be wholly taken from the outside world.”²¹³ This is also where distinguishing functions take place, and the activity by which it takes place is called ‘reflection’ (*fikr*). All these cognitive tendencies are cut off from the witnessing of being, however, there is an ascension that takes place from the senses to imagination and rationality, and a cutting off from ‘cognition as appearances’. And finally, one is always at the edge-point of the end of rationality, since even when there are unveilings of being taking place, if there is a reflection (*fikr*) there is a perception of self. That is why for the great mystic al-Junaid, God’s existence appears when losing self-existence.²¹⁴ Conclusively, a veil plays the function of something appearing. Moreover, a veil can be equated with appearance. As such, it can be said that appearing is a function of being and becoming visible of that which is, however, an appearance is that which hides that being. Thus, an appearance behaves as appearing, thus having a function of disappearing or hiding, or being a veil.

²¹³ Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 206.

²¹⁴ *Al-Qushairi's Epistle On Sufism* (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 2007), 98.

Veils are appearances that choose to hide the spirit of that which appears. In this definition veils, three activities take place. First, a veil arises from the act of choosing. Choosing is either an activity of imagination that creates its forms that stand in opposition to the pre-established forms, or it is the activity of the rational faculty who selects attributes based on pre-selection from the faculty of imagination. As such, the role of choosing is that of forcing and implementing what is given to it from imagination or the rational faculty. This shows that imagination and reflection (*fikr*) ultimately serve a tendency for forcing the world of senses and forms to manifest what they choose through their remembrance of what is fulfilling. As such, any science, or a gathering of thoughts that is presented as knowledge, that comes from the spaces of imagination and rational faculty, is instrumental in controlling the existing world of forms or externality or establishing another type of it. Thus, it can also be said that such knowledge is always a tendency for life-preservation and control and is not reality-based knowledge. Secondly, inside this definition of what a veil entails, there is also the choice of hiding. Additionally, choosing is in itself hiding because of its unwillingness to accept on the one hand, but also its tendency to create on its own image and selectivity of attributes. However, there is also one intentional hiding that takes place through choosing an appearance. This tendency is the unwillingness to acknowledge and accept the presence of what is, which occurs in the state of the separation of forms that takes place at the perceptive level of senses. Such an unwillingness to acknowledge and accept the subtleties of the presence of being comes from the loudness of the sensual perception of appearances. When appearances create noise and are accompanied by visual exaggerations, there occurs a conflict in perception that creates doubt. Usually, because appearances tend to be loud, are more convincing in a conflict in which noise and subtlety are weighed against one another. However, this only happens to a perception that is focused on choosing, and which is competing in the world of forms through images. This type of perception may occasionally perceive subtleties, but in general, it is too focused on creation and competition to recognize them, or it doubts them through the mentioned conflict. As such, the creation of appearances becomes also a tool in trying to deceive oneself and others while neglecting the natural subtleties of the expression of being as small and unimportant. Thirdly, in this process of veiling, there is the ‘appearing’ of the spirit that is chosen to be veiled. As such, that which appears comes through appearances, however, it is not an appearance itself but the spirit and

the being of that which appears. Thus, appearing is always an a-priori ontological self-revelation, or the appearing of that which is that unfolds itself by the necessity of being it. Also, that which is is that which appears, and as such that which is known. Because whatever is, is immediately known without any intermediary, because that which is, is always appearing to perception. That knowing, or perception of what is, is always there at the moment when appearing occurs. As such, everything that takes place cognitively before or after it is a reflection (*fikr*), or the subdivision into elements of that which appears. Thus, if that which appears is not only left untouched as a knowing and a memory, it is a creation of an appearance through choice. Heidegger talks about appearances and ‘appearing’ in the context of knowing, or what he calls ‘the phenomenological method of investigation’.²¹⁵ However, to Heidegger, the usage of the word ‘appearing’ is equivalent to appearance, in one sense, although, he uses the concept of ‘showing itself’, the same way I am using ‘appearing’ to denote the self-expression of being. Accordingly:²¹⁶

So again the expression ‘appearance’ itself can have a double signification: first, appearing, in the sense of announcing-itself, as not-showing itself; and next, that which does the announcing (*das Meldende selbst*) — that which in its showing-itself indicates something which does not show itself. And finally one can use “appearing” as a term for the genuine sense of “phenomenon” as showing-itself.

Heidegger continues:²¹⁷

“Phenomenon”, the showing itself-in-itself, signifies a distinctive way in which something can be encountered. “Appearance”, on the other hand, means a reference-relationship which is in an entity itself, and which is such that what does the referring (or the announcing) can fulfil its possible function only if it shows itself in itself and is thus a ‘phenomenon’.

For Heidegger, a ‘phenomenon’ is what I name as ‘appearing’, or a self-manifestation (*tajalli*), whereas an appearance for him is only a referring to, or an announcing through something which is itself a phenomenon only if it shows itself in itself. It should be added that a thing can be a phenomenon only when relating to a larger unity and that means through its appearing at its moment, in its context, when it appears by itself, and through the appearance of its appearing. Thus, an appearance is never a phenomenon, unless that appearance carries the being of that which appears through itself. As such, it can also be concluded that a being’s appearance only turns into a phenomenon or into an ‘appearing’ when relating internally to its

²¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being And Time* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 52-59.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, 53.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 54.

being without separation, since the unified being is its reality. Therefore, a 'phenomenon' for Heidegger, or that which shows itself, is at the same time an 'appearance' or an emanation of something which hides in the appearance.²¹⁸ Because the first principle of existence is that unification, knowledge takes place through it and in it. Whereas the only things that cannot be known, are those that do not exist, thus, an image can never be known, since it never exists, and thus cannot appear. The paradox lies in the fact that an image is the loudest in its announcing of its presence, however, it is only a form that disrupts the calm and underlying 'appearing' that takes place through the manifestation of being.

Finally, that which is appears by itself, when perception becomes accepting. In this conclusion we have two occurrences taking place, the first is an accepting, non-reflective perception, and the second is the 'appearing' of that which is. First, in the accepting path of perception, we see a dropping of choosing. Consequently, the imaginative and the rational faculty are put to their natural functioning, or in the spontaneous discernment of separations and functions. As pointed out by William Chittick:²¹⁹

The ideal rational faculty is that which accepts from God the knowledge of Him that He gives to it and does not try to go beyond its own limitations by reflecting upon Him. Hence the virtue of reason is to accept or receive (*qabul*) unveiling and revelation.

One of the criticisms that may arise from this worldview, especially from the proponents of reflection, is that this may lead to some form of traditional conformity and epistemological blindness. However, it should be said that traditional conformity is the coming together of human beings through their basic human needs and their making of reason instrumental to securing them. As such, the very idea of going beyond reason is a terrifying first-person experience for someone who has lived an institution/reason-based construction of delivering life to him. This awareness makes going beyond reason a freedom-allowing activity, that is also a non-compulsive non-conformity that touches the depths of the experience of being. Apart from this wrong analytic intuition, reason and imagination become spontaneous discerners only when they become innocently observing of the self-revelations of being. By innocence of

²¹⁸ Ibid, 54.

²¹⁹ William C. Chittick, *Ibn Al-'Arabi's Metaphysics Of Imagination: THE SUFI PATH OF KNOWLEDGE* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 238.

the perceptive observation, I mean the lack of form-creation that imagination tends to enforce externally. A non-reflecting perception is that to which Being/a being expresses itself, and this happens because of a lack of forcing at the side of the perception. Heidegger's definition of phenomenology is helpful to a further understanding of the perception which does not force being. Accordingly, the terms 'phenomenology' is comprised of the term '*phenomenon*' which means to show itself in itself,²²⁰ whereas '*logos*' is a discourse that lets something be seen in its togetherness.²²¹ This letting be seen is the taking out of hiddenness of that which one is talking about, so they are seen as something unhidden and discovered.²²² Additionally, another term that Heidegger mentions along with '*logos*' is '*noein*', which is a term describing the activity of intellection. According to him, '*noein*' is the perception of the simplest determinate ways of being which entities possess, and it perceives them just by looking at them.²²³ In addition, '*noein*' can never be covered up, it can never be false, and at worst is non-perceiving.²²⁴ And finally, the function of '*logos*' lies merely in letting something be seen.²²⁵ In this conceptual context, "phenomenology" for Heidegger is to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself.²²⁶ It is this specific definition of Heidegger, which is the bridge between the accepting perception and the appearance of that which is. Phenomenology, accordingly, has no specific object of research, and to have a science of phenomena means to know its object in a way that everything which is discussed must be treated by demonstrating it directly.²²⁷ Demonstrating directly is the direct appearance of being to perception without the intermediary need for representation, just as we talked before about the pain of a cut. Only in this accepting mode of perception being shows itself, and Heidegger points this out when he says that ontology is only possible as phenomenology.²²⁸ As for what ultimately comes out of the hidden:²²⁹

Yet that which remains hidden in an egregious sense, or which relapses and gets covered up

²²⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being And Time* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 51.

²²¹ Ibid, 56.

²²² Ibid, 56-57.

²²³ Ibid, 57.

²²⁴ Ibid, 58.

²²⁵ Ibid, 58.

²²⁶ Ibid, 58.

²²⁷ Ibid, 59.

²²⁸ Ibid, 60.

²²⁹ Ibid, 59.

again, or which shows itself only 'in disguise', is not just this entity or that, but rather the Being of entities, as our previous observations have shown. This Being can be covered up so extensively that it becomes forgotten and no question arises about it or about its meaning.

Similarly, Ghazali, when talking about the lights which kindle the 'holy prophetic spirit', goes on to argue that the lights of dominion are to be found in a hierarchy.²³⁰

Additionally:²³¹

Know that this hierarchy does not go to infinity. Rather, it climbs to the First Source, which is light in itself and by itself and to which no light comes from any other. From this light all the lights shine forth, according to the hierarchy. Consider now if the name "light" is more appropriate and worthy for that which is illuminated and borrows its light from another, or for that which is luminous in itself and which bestows light upon everything else. (...) Thus, it is verified that the name "light" is more appropriate for the Furthest, Highest Light, beyond which there is no light and from which light descends to others.

In both Heidegger and Ghazali, we can see the two specific arguments posited at the beginning of this paragraph. It is the non-reflective, non-judgmental²³² perception that lets a thing itself show itself in itself and by itself that perceives being through its manifestation. In addition, that which is, are not only the entities coming forth, but their Being, or the furthest Light from which all the other lights come. As such, everything that 'the phenomenological method of investigation', or 'unveiling' (*kashf*) entails, is the witnessing of this being through its uncovering from and through appearances, or from that which tries to veil its manifestation. That is why, for Mulla Sadra, knowledge is presence without any veil.²³³ Further, a closer look must be given to that which appears, to the individual existents and how they relate to being, and to the unified being itself as the ultimate vision of unveiling (*kashf*).

3.6. Contexts, Unified Being (*Wujud*), and Their Manifestations

Two types of being perceptions are given by al-Ghazali in the *Mishkat*, and those are the perception of an 'appearing' which is contextual, and the perception of the unified being itself. What is common to both these types of knowledge is that they are revelations of being that come from beyond causal relationships and focusing on attributes. Moreover, they are given to perception and not arrived at through effort. Additionally, I talked about knowledge being a necessary manifestation of what is.

²³⁰ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 14.

²³¹ Ibid, 14-15.

²³² Martin Heidegger, *Being And Time* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 57.

²³³ Mulla Sadra, *Metaphysical Penetrations* (Brigham Young University, 2014), 56.

As such, the conviction of these matters because of their self-manifestation, takes place all along their manifestation, unless through choice one desires a parallel existence in the potential landscape of imagination and rational functioning.

The first type of perception is the ‘appearing’ of the properties of a contextual occurrence or the being-knowing of a context. By ‘context’ I mean a separated occurrence of life that does not pertain to the knowledge of the essence of being itself, but of the everyday life of human beings. Thus, as Heidegger pointed out in explaining ‘*noein*’, the mere sight of something will suffice for perception to gain all the ontological properties of the context, and as such know what the context entails. Such a knowledge is also expressed in the *Mishkat* when Ghazali talks about a vision of the prophet when he saw one of his companions entering the garden. Accordingly:²³⁴

The Messenger said, “I saw Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf entering the Garden crawling.” Do not suppose that he did not witness it with his eyesight in just this manner. On the contrary, he saw it in wakefulness, just as a sleeping person would see it in a dream, even if, for example, Abd al-Rahman himself was asleep in his house. Sleep has an effect on witnessings such as these because the ruling authority of the senses forces the person to turn away from the inward divine light, since the senses keep him occupied and attract him toward the world of sense perception, turning his face away from the world of the unseen and the dominion.

In the paragraph presented we can see a typical contextual occurrence, or a vision of a human entering the garden, while physically speaking he is sleeping at his home. In this specific situation, three things occur epistemologically and require separate analyses. These three epistemological occurrences are the vision itself, the different ways in which the senses, imagination, and the rational faculty realize meanings through beings’ manifestation, and the context. First, there is the occurrence of vision taking place while the prophet is awake and seeing what a normal person would see while asleep. The senses remain as they are for the prophet too and they do not become dim for him, however, the difference is that the prophet is not willing to claim ownership over the forms and does not seek fulfillment for himself through the forms. In this case, the senses fall into their natural function of merely perceiving forms and other appearances. In addition, the perceptions that come through the senses, are not as vivid that they may overpower the perceptions that come through other faculties of perception. Secondly, imagination for a prophet is a tool of

²³⁴ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 34.

representing through forms meanings that are beyond it and not a creator of forms. As such, for Ghazali, imagination is like clay and is very dense, becoming a veil between perception and lights, however, when cleansed it becomes like a “glass” that not only doesn’t obstruct but points to and preserves the lights.²³⁵ In addition, because of a witnessing, meaning radiates in the imaginal spirit where it takes a form that resembles this meaning.²³⁶ As such, for any contextual meaning to create a real visual presentation upon the imaginal spirit, attributes are to be localized by the rational faculty, and its spiritual states are known beforehand, for a specific vision to occur about Abd al-Rahman. This combination of different types of perception creates a larger unity of being and meaning, which is packed within and presents itself as a vision. Accordingly:²³⁷

But when it dwells in the utmost limit of perfection, his perception is not confined simply to the seen form. Rather, he crosses from it to the mystery. Then it is unveiled to him that faith attracts to a world that is called “the Garden,” while riches and wealth attract to the present life, which is the lower world. If that which attracts to the business of this world is stronger or it resists the other attraction, then the person is blocked from journeying to the Garden. If the attraction of faith is stronger, the other attraction will result in difficulty and slowness in his journey. Hence, the similitude for this journey from the visible world is “crawling”. In this way, the lights of the mysteries are disclosed to the viewer from behind the pieces of glass that are the imagination.

It should be noted, that if imagination is capable of presenting being in its own way, then the rational faculty is also capable of being presented with contextual manifestations of being and making sense of them in its own way. According to Ibn Arabi:²³⁸

A perception through reflection of Him is false, and a perception through intellect of Him from the path of reflection is false. But because it is an intellect, its defining boundary is that it thinks with the intellect and captures what comes to it. The true may bestow *ma’rifah* (gnosis) of Him and the intellect will think about it, because it is an intellect; but you should acknowledge that it didn’t come from the path of reflection. This thinking about what the Divine gave you as a gift is not something we are forbidden to do. This *ma’rifah* (gnosis) which the True gives to whom He desires of His creatures is not the intellect independently perceiving her, though it does receive her. No proof or demonstration arises to regard her, as she is beyond the limit of the perceptive range of the intellect (this is the concept of *wara tawr al-aql*).

As for the contexts themselves, they are separated because they present a specific reality such as the entering of a garden by a human being. However, they are an

²³⁵ Ibid, 34.

²³⁶ Ibid, 35.

²³⁷ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 35.

²³⁸ Ibn Arabi, *The Openings Revealed In Makkah Al-Futuhat Al-Makkiyah* (New York: Pir Press, 2021), 333-334.

initiator that makes the perception take place since they precede perception. As such, the context is a unified ontological experience that is given before the witnessing, the meaning, and the vision. The context, however, is not essentially separated from the unified being, and only perception separates it for practical purposes which pertain to turning it into a function or to distinguish the contrasts of being. Finally, it should be said that the whole epistemological scenario presented above with regards to contexts allows for the expression of the being itself in itself through itself, just as pointed out earlier. The difference is that, even though Heidegger recognizes the primary importance of the manifestation of being itself to perception, he doesn't go into detail in describing how that perception of being molds as it passes through the mentioned faculties of perception. However, to him, *noein* is sufficient as a quick witness of the properties of being. A similar concept to *noein*, has been the concept of *firasa*, or translated from Arabic as 'insight'. *Firasa* specifically has been related to this contextual perception, and it is presented in al-Qushairi's *Epistle of Sufism* as follows:²³⁹

The human heart is incapable of opposing insight, no matter how hard it tries. The strength of insight corresponds to the strength of one's faith: the stronger one's faith, the stronger one's insight. Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz said: "He who sees with the light of insight, sees with the light of God; the substance of his knowledge comes from God unmixed with either negligence or forgetfulness. The decree of God thus flows freely from the tongue of His [faithful] servant." His phrase "he [the servant] sees by the light of God" means that he sees by a light which God has bestowed specifically upon him. Al-Wasiti said: "Insights are flashes of light that illuminate the heart; they are a firmly established knowledge that carries the hearts of men into the realms of the Unseen, from one realm to the other until they begin to see things in such a way as God – praise be to Him – wants them to see these things; they thus speak straight from their innermost hearts."

In addition:²⁴⁰

Al-Husayn b. Mansur said: "The person with insight hits his target with the first shot; he is not diverted [from it] by a far-fetched interpretation (*tawil*), guessing or presupposition." It is said: "The insight of the beginners (*muridun*) is a guess that requires verification (*tahqiq*), whereas the insight of the gnostics (*arifun*) is the verification that requires the True Reality (*haqiqqa*)." Ahmad b. Asim al-Antaki said: "If you attend the gathering of the truthful (*ahl al-sidq*), be truthful with them, for they are the spies of hearts."

The two above paragraphs on *firasa* (insight) present an almost synonymous concept to contextual perception, and *noein*. The first paragraph presents an epistemological situating of *firasa* in the context of light, being (God), and the manifestation of the unseen. As such, the reality of faith which is trust/certainty, as opposed to possible

²³⁹ *Al-Qushairi's Epistle On Sufism* (Reading, Uk: Garnet Publishing, 2007), 242.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 246.

becoming, has as its by-product the contextual perception which is *firasa* (insight). As for the second paragraph, we see the way *firasa* looks more closely with the two main components assigned to it. First, it is that mere sight to which being reveals itself which is clear from interpretation, guessing, and presupposition, which knows on the first shot. Secondly, it is the typical contextual element of the paragraph, upon which people are warned that those who are truthful are spies of hearts or people who on the first shot of perception know through that which being reveals to them of a human being, or of a context. Conclusively, the prophet knew of the situation of Abd al-Rahman through his *firasa* (insight) as it was presented to him through being in a form of a vision, in his glass-like clear imaginative faculty.

The second type of knowledge that is presented in the *Mishkat* is the unveiling of being in its unified reality or God. Moreover, everything that is not a perception of the unified being itself, is a contextual perception, since relationships occur in contexts and separations, whereas in unified being all is one. As such, all relationships are overthrown and the unified being remains the only existent being in perception. It is in this context that al-Ghazali introduces unified being as the ultimate manifestation of being and as such, the only real existent being.²⁴¹

From here the gnostics climb from the lowlands of metaphor to the highlands of reality and they perfect their ascent. Then they see — witnessing with their own eyes — that there is none in existence save God and that “Everything is perishing except His face” (28:88). (...) When the essence of anything other than He is considered in respect of its own essence, it is sheer nonexistence. But when it is viewed in respect of the “face” to which existence flows forth from the First, the Real, then it is seen as existing not in itself but through the face adjacent to its Giver of Existence. Hence the only existent is the Face of God.

The above paragraph is the description of the unified being of God and its ontological manifestations. However, there is an epistemological recognition that the manifestations are metaphoric, in that they point to the unified being. Metaphorical existence as such has an ontological component that Ghazali calls the face directed towards the First, from whom existence flows forth. The same idea is also expressed in the more philosophically explicit understanding of Mulla Sadra that the “relation between *wujud* (*being*) and quiddity is not causal but ontological. *Wujud* (*being*) does not simply precede quiddity and other states of existence in terms of temporal

²⁴¹ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 16.

priority; it does so through a generative act.”²⁴² An ontological relation implies an essential unification of the entity with being, and of being with all entities, whereas a creative relation implies the essential separation of the creator and the entities which are created from him. Put differently, being is unified with an entity through that entity’s being, and an entity unifies with being through its recognition of the existing ontological unification with unified being. These two perspectives are crucial for a further understanding of the relationship between being and entities. First, the being’s relationship to us is our relationship to ourselves since being self-expresses through our entity. Even though from the point of view of being the entity is inexistent, for us it is the most complete manifestation of being. Moreover, within the creation of a witnessing relationship to ourselves as the being’s most complete manifestation to us internally, we recognize the unity of being which even though underlying in its hiddenness, permeates all entities. In addition, through the affirmation of the being within ourselves, we recognize that we are not identities or outward separations. However, through that introspection, we recognize a being who exists beyond these identities and which Ghazali calls “a being (*wujud*) who every knower has within himself, and which is a self-existing principle.”²⁴³ As for everything other than the unified being, its existence is completely a manifestation of the unified being and it cannot be by itself and in separation, and as such it is non-existent by itself, and as itself. There is a paradox that takes place through the affirmation of self on the one hand, and the denial of self on the other. However, affirmation is a matter of recognition and acceptance, whereas denial and renunciation are necessary in case of identifications that create a conceptual self, or an identity that is expressed externally. Recognition and acceptance of self and its states lead to certainty, and to knowing through beings’ manifestation, whereas the creation of identities leads to separations externally. This is what Ghazali means with his distinguishing of the self with regards to its own essence as non-existent, and of the self with regards to the face to which existence flows from the First. Ultimately, beyond all separations that imply relating, identities, and functions, the following can be said:²⁴⁴

²⁴² Ibrahim Kalin, *KNOWLEDGE IN LATER ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY: Mulla Sadra On Existence, Intellect And Intuition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 37.

²⁴³ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels Of The Heart Of The Revival Of The Religious Sciences* (Louisville, KY, USA.: Fons Vitae, 2010), 9.

²⁴⁴ Ibrahim Kalin, *KNOWLEDGE IN LATER ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY: Mulla Sadra On Existence, Intellect And Intuition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 223-224.

Sadra considers the essence of the mystical understanding of the transcendent unity of existence (*wahdat al-wujud*) as a move toward seeing things through the eyes of unity. To bring this point home, Sadra quotes al-Ghazali this time. ‘The fourth level of Divine unity,’ says Ghazali, ‘is to see nothing but one in existence.’ But how can one see nothing but oneness when we continue to see the heavens, the earth, and all other beings that point to multiplicity rather than unity? The answer is that ‘this is the penultimate goal of the sciences of unveiling. Verily, what really exists is only one. The multiplicity [that you see] in it is only for the one who separates his vision. But the vision of the unifier (*al-muwahhid*) is not separated [from oneness] by the multiplicity of the heaven, the earth, and other beings. He sees all things as one single thing.

Later in the *Mishkat*, Ghazali states the following paragraph that presents the two epistemological pathways one gets to know unified being:

The gnostics, after having ascended to the heaven of reality, agree that they see nothing in existence save the One, the Real. Some of them possess this state as a cognitive gnosis. Others, however, attain this through a state of tasting. Plurality is totally banished, from them, and they become immersed in sheer singularity. Their rational faculties become so satiated that in this state they are, as it were, stunned. No room remains in them for the remembrance of themselves. Nothing is with them but God. They become intoxicated with such an intoxication that the ruling authority of their rational faculty is overthrown.

Two pathways are mentioned in the above paragraph through which unity is recognized. They are cognitive gnosis (though the Arabic word translated as ‘cognitive’, is used as *ilm* by Ghazali) and Tasting. Consequently, there is also the third element which is the consequence of these two pathways, which is the satiation and the stunning of the rational faculty or perception. First, the cognitive aspect of unification is losing sight of separations through the understanding that any separation is by itself inexistent, and its existence is solely through being. This has been best expressed by Ghazali in the *Ihya* as follows:²⁴⁵

... The vision of divine unity (*bi-ayn al-tawhid*). This vision gives absolute knowledge that He is the One Who gives thanks and the One Who is thanked; He is the One who loves and the beloved. This is the perspective of a servant who knows that there is none other than He in existence, that everything perishes save His countenance, and that this is true in every state, always and forever. For a being other than God to exist, it would have to subsist through itself. Such a being does not exist; in fact, it is impossible for it to exist. Real Being (*al-wujud al-muhaqqaq*) is that which is self-subsistent (*al-qa'im bi-nafsih*). That which cannot subsist through itself, cannot exist through itself. If it is sustained by an other, then it exists through an other. In itself, it has no existence at all. That which exists (*al-mawjud*) is that which is self-subsistent, and the self-subsistent is that which remains in existence when others cease to be. If in addition to its self-subsistence, it is the cause of its own existence and the existence of others, then it is the self-subsisting (*qayyum*); there is only One Who is the Self-Subsisting (*al-Qayyum*) and it cannot be otherwise conceived. Thus in existence, there is only the Ever-Living One (*al-Hayy*), the Self-Subsisting (*al-Qayyum*), He is the One (*al-Ahad*), the Eternal (*al-Samad*). From the viewpoint of this station, you will know that all things emanate from Him as their source, and to Him they return. He is the Thankful and the One thanked; He is the Lover and the Beloved.

²⁴⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Patience And Thankfulness Of The Revival Of The Religious Sciences* (Islamic Texts Society, 2011), 81-82.

Secondly, there is gnosis through Taste. Taste (*dhawk*) cannot be described, however, there are two aspects of it, one that pertains to *kashf* (unveiling) and the second that pertains to *noein* or *firasa*. The unveiling aspect that pertains to taste is that behind every veil there is a taste and the two go hand in hand since every unveiling reveals a taste of being through its *tajalli*. Secondly, it is passive, in that it comes through the radical and full acceptance of that principle of being that one finds in oneself. Through such a station, one finds unity expressed in being through the *noein* or *firasa*, as they are given to perception without any effort in unified gnosis. Thirdly, satiation does take place through the cognitive gnosis, however, being stunned only takes place through the aspect of taste that may be attached to that gnosis. This takes place because perception does not precede being, and when one identifies with being through the recognition of the essential unity, being takes precedence through the recognition of itself. As such, perception is itself forgotten through essential identification, and one may fall into bewilderment and intoxication. Typical examples of intoxication that Ghazali mentions are the statements of al-Hallaj who said “I am the Real”, and of Abu Yazid al-Bistami who said, “Glory be to me, how great is my station!”.²⁴⁶ According to Ghazali, such speech should be hidden since when intoxication leaves and the rational faculty comes back, the lovers recognize that they did not experience unification but something similar to it.²⁴⁷ I note that the matter is more complicated if we establish that the being of entities is a result of the emanation from the only existing being, or in other words when there is an ontological relationship between being and entity. The reality of being and perceiving oneself as an entity means that the entity is not the unified being, however, internally speaking, the entity itself is non-existent and as such, all that remains is essential being. As such, the reality of an entity requires a separated outward perception, and the reality of being requires unification with itself. Moreover, since the unification of being precedes, it is the only ontological reality, whereas everything else as an entity, is an imaginal, or functional being. So, Ghazali’s conclusion that what the mystic experiences is not unification but something similar, is partially true, but only from the perspective of being an entity, and from a rationalist perspective, from which Ghazali makes the analysis. However, while entities are expressions of being, there is an essential unity that takes place

²⁴⁶ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 18.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 18.

with the essence of being in the entity. As such, unification is not a matter of achievement whereby being becomes the entity or entity becomes the being but is a matter of the recognition of that essential unity. Ghazali points this out too when he says that ‘unification’ is a term that is metaphorical to the declaring of God’s unity.²⁴⁸ However, his concern about the expressions of unity is a societal concern, just like he points out in the *Ihya* when talking about the harm this type of speech has on the common people.²⁴⁹ It also can be said that Ghazali identifies with a more sober type of Sufism. With regards to witnessing the essential unity through the inner path, Ghazali constantly points to it, but coming from a sober mindset, he seems to be hesitant in making statements when compared to other Sufi authors. For example, with regards to witnessing being in oneself Ibn Arabi claims that for the seeker of “the Being of the True, to perceive *hu*, return to your *dhát* (essence); in you is the True - so stay there!”²⁵⁰ or the following statement of Ismail Anqarawi also expresses a similar worldview:²⁵¹

If you, O traveller on the spiritual path, desire to witness this greatest and all-encompassing Light, in which all [other] lights are completely immersed, then you must strive hard so as to obliterate your essence, attributes and actions in the Real. For *fana* is the [station of] obliteration of all that is other than the Real in the Real, a station where all besides Him turns into absolute non-existence; so much so that none but the Real remains worthy of [bearing] a name, an attribute and an essence. The significance of this station appears to be substantiated in this verse: ‘God bears witness that there is no god but He.’ That is, the Oneness of His Essence is [witnessed] by His Essence.

When talking about ‘His Essence’, which is the taste of the unity of being, we should notice that such an ontological reality is the most buried through the veils that appear above it. Ghazali mentions in the *Mishkat*, that when the Gnostics reach that furthest point where all is unified, they find God incomparable with everything.²⁵² For Ibn Arabi, unity (*tahwid*) by itself, contradicts everything from any known perspective, because there is no relation between God and creation.²⁵³ For Heidegger:²⁵⁴

Being, as the basic theme of Philosophy, is no class or genus of entities; yet it pertains to every entity. Its ‘universality’ is to be sought higher up. Being and the structure of Being lie

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 18.

²⁴⁹ Al Ghazali, *The Book Of Knowledge Of The Revival Of The Religious Sciences* (Louisville, KY, USA.: Fons Vitae, 2015), 99.

²⁵⁰ Ibn Arabi, *The Openings Revealed In Makkah Al-Futuhat Al-Makkiyah* (New York: Pir Press, 2021), 205.

²⁵¹ Ismail Anqarawi, *The Lamp Of Mysteries* (Oxford, UK: Anqa Publishing, 2011), 50-51.

²⁵² Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 51.

²⁵³ Ibn Arabi, *The Openings Revealed In Makkah Al-Futuhat Al-Makkiyah* (New York: Pir Press, 2021), 328.

²⁵⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being And Time* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 62.

beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess. Being is the *transcendens* pure and simple. And the transcendence of Dasein's Being is distinctive in that it implies the possibility and the necessity of the most radical individuation. Every disclosure of Being as the *transcendens* is transcendental knowledge. Phenomenological truth (the disclosedness of Being) is *veritas transcendentalis*.

First, what we see in the above paragraph is the issue of essence and attributes. What is understood about the witnessing of essence is that essential attributes cannot be expressed as they are foreign to resemblance and analogy. As such, for a *logos* communication of these attributes to take place, both perceptions should have known these attributes through *kashf* (unveiling).²⁵⁵ The rational faculty, when discussing the topic divides between essence and attributes. However, as Ayn al-Qudāh points out, attributes are the essence itself when one views them from the point of view of unity, whereas attributes are not the essence when considered separately.²⁵⁶ This is because being exists in unity, whereas it is perception through the tendencies of choosing which focuses on attributes and separations. Comparison as such is a rational tool, so incomparability doesn't mean the lack of attributes, but a negation of the rational path to witnessing unity. So, incomparability is the inability to express the essence itself. Thus, the only way to the essence is through the essence, or through the self-expression of unity itself, and perception's passivity. The only speech that may be part of such an expression is *logos* as a direct expression of the subject in a unified sense. Finally, that type of knowledge is only found in oneself, as pointed out by Ibn Arabi. Or as understood by Heidegger, that knowledge of being requires radical individuation.²⁵⁷

Conclusively, being is only known through the taste that occurs through its unveiling and manifestation to perception. This knowledge is not a mental representation so that it could be understood by others who may hear a speech about it. This knowing is a witnessing that envelopes perception in its totality, so it doesn't leave space for doubt in it. This occurs in contrast to the tendencies of perception to grasp being and understand it through its delimitation. In addition to taste, there is also the cognitive aspect of unity, which establishes a being who is independent, the only existent, and who is in a state of singularity, whereas everything that appears as something else, is through its being.

²⁵⁵ Ibn Arabi, *The Openings Revealed In Makkah Al-Futuhāt Al-Makkiyah* (New York: Pir Press, 2021), 334.

²⁵⁶ *The Zubdat Al-Haqā'iq Of 'Ayn Al-Qudāh Al-Hamadāni: An Annotated English Translation From The Arabic* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 2000), 93.

²⁵⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being And Time* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 62.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In finalizing this study, I say that I have reached three main conclusions. The first conclusion pertains to the doubt of al-Ghazali. Secondly, I have broadly defined Sufism and presented the type of knowledge that the Sufis are concerned with. Thirdly, having established the Sufi notion that knowledge is the unveiling and taste of the manifestations of God, I analyze the *Mishkat al Anwar* (The Niche of Lights) of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali as a prime example of such an epistemology with the main goal of exploring the question of the whatness of knowledge. Through the epistemological analysis of the *Mishkat*, all the conclusions can be classified to pertain either to the rational faculty and its knowledge or to the being-knowing (unveiling, taste, manifestations) and its knowledge.

First, the type of doubt al-Ghazali talks about includes the whatness of its being and is not merely a conceptual doubt. Kierkegaard explains that the self is a relation that is established through that which establishes the relation. I also mentioned Heidegger with its definition of a human being as a being for whom its being is always an issue. That being moves back and forth in his uncertainty of its being and the potentiality of its becoming. Thus, for the human being, it is that concern for becoming which is all at once a symptom and a source of the maintenance of the issue with its being. From that perspective of having an issue with their being, humans create what Nietzsche and Ghazali call useful knowledge in the process of life preservation. That knowledge is expressed as universal knowledge. As such, both Nietzsche and Ghazali talk of this knowledge as a will to control existence. However, certainty is still to be found in the knowledge of reality, and this very simple intuition was true for al-Ghazali too. However, Ghazali only found the knowledge that gives certainty within the knowledge of Sufism.

Secondly, Sufism is defined as ascetic freedom from the world, and subsequently going inwardly to know the mystery of the oneness of God. Further, knowledge in

Sufism is beyond the stage of reason and beyond causality, and thus has its turning inwardly. Knowledge in Sufism is effortless and comes through the grace of God. This knowledge is an intuitive experience that takes place through the unveiling (*kashf*) and taste (*dhawk*) of the manifestations of God (*tajalliyat*). These concepts developed within the context of Islamic asceticism which detached itself from the more rational sciences such as jurisprudence and theology. Later, Sufism developed into a mystical movement and a formalized science of the Sufi experience. I argue that the *Mishkat* is developed within the conceptual framework of Sufism and presents itself as a mature work of sober Sufi epistemology.

Thirdly, through the mentioned understanding of Sufi epistemology, I analyze the *Mishkat al-Anwar* of Al-Ghazali as a prime example of an epistemology that takes place through relating to the self internally. From this point of view, I present the ideas of al-Ghazali concerning senses, imagination, and the rational faculty. Even though there is an affinity of al-Ghazali with regards to the rational faculty, whereby he equates it with perception, I argue that perception is a more inclusive capacity that perceives not merely rational knowledge, but states of being as well. Nevertheless, perception does not exclude rational knowledge, but it finds its proper place through its spontaneous discernment of the attributes of being. In addition, there is enough evidence in the *Mishkat* that shows that Ghazali too, offers a ‘being’ epistemology when he equates being with light. Ghazali presents a higher faculty of perception called ‘the holy prophetic spirit’ which perceives these lights, something that the rational and reflective faculties cannot do.

Further, I explore the Sufi epistemology as represented in the *Mishkat*. The most important principles of the epistemology of the *Mishkat* are going beyond reason and perception as it is presented with the concepts of *kashf* (unveiling), *dhawk* (taste), and *tajalli* (manifestation). Firstly, I present Ghazali’s ideas of light and manifestation, then discuss his ideas on the superiority of rational reflection compared to sensual perception, thus leading the way to his argument that there is also knowledge beyond the rational spirit which is superior to it. Accordingly, it is only this ‘holy prophetic spirit’ that can perceive the knowledge beyond reason,

which for Ghazali it is the light of God itself.²⁵⁸ Then, I present the inward orientation of the *Mishkat*, or the process of going beyond causality as the main characteristic that allows for a being-knowing to take place. Additionally, I introduce the ideas of al-Ghazali about veils of darkness and light, and I offer a synonymous categorization of the veils as they pertain to senses, imagination, and rational faculty. For Ghazali, whatever veils the unity of God is a veil. However, I try to bring a more philosophical definition that includes the manifestation which constantly takes place. As such, veils can also be defined as appearances that choose to hide the spirit of that which appears. As such, three important processes are found in the process of veiling, them being the choice of hiding, the expression of appearances through that choice, and the intention of hiding. Such veiling is the tendency to hide the manifestation of being through choice, to achieve a pre-established vision in one's imagination. Heidegger offers an important analysis of appearances and 'appearing'. Accordingly, appearances veil the so-called 'phenomenon' which is the 'appearing' of being by itself. Ultimately, the only way of understanding being and its manifestations (phenomenon), is through phenomenology, or through the manifestation of being. I argue that the idea whereby knowledge is presented as a manifestation of being, is the same as what Ghazali argues in the *Mishkat*.

After establishing that knowing through manifestation takes place beyond the stage of reason, Ghazali mentions two types of knowledge in the *Mishkat* that are a product of this epistemology. These two types of knowledge are the contextual intuitive knowledge, and the knowledge of the unified being. Firstly, Ghazali mentions the case of the prophet having a vision of his friend Abd al-Rahman entering the garden crawling, while awake, similar to what one would see when asleep. This vision, Ghazali argues, gathers multiple realities of faith and doubt that are presented to the prophet's clear imaginative faculty in a symbolical form. This vision can be best analyzed through the concepts of *firasa* (insight) and of *noein*, which are the grasping of the properties of being in a simple way, by only looking at entities. Thus, I conclude that the prophet, saw in his clear imaginative faculty through *firasa/noein*, the reality of Abd al-Rahman. Secondly, Ghazali presents the self-revelation of God as a unified being. He says that such knowledge is arrived at

²⁵⁸ Al Ghazali, *The Niche Of Lights* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 13.

either as cognitive gnosis or through Taste. Elsewhere, Ghazali goes on to argue the exact way in which the unity of being is to be understood cognitively, by establishing a self-sufficient being through which all other beings come from, and without which their being would be impossible. Ultimately, I argue that the essence of such a being is most completely known through the taste of its essence.

Conclusively, the study shows that all the knowledge that takes place as an externality is pragmatic and descriptive, meaning that, even though it claims to represent being, it does not. As such, it is concluded that knowledge of reality must be found beyond causality, reason, and reflection. As such, the faculty of reason is only an observer of such knowledge, together with all perception itself. It is also concluded that at such instance one must turn inwardly to know being. Then one must allow being to present itself through the unveiling of the veils of externality, and through the taste of its manifestation. Only as such being overwhelms and takes hold of all perception. As such, knowledge is best described as the witnessing, either contextually or in a unified state, of being, through the presence and taste which is found through its unveiling.

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