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The Post-Munqidh al-Ghazali's Position

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Abstract:

This paper examines al-Ghazali's intellectual journey after his spiritual awakening, marked by the Munqidh event. With a particular focus on Mishkāt al-Anwār, one of al-Ghazali's later work, this paper attempts to analyse al-Ghazali's post-Munqidh epistemology and metaphysics. It explores al-Ghazali's views on the ontology of lights and its subsequent cosmological system, highlighting its parallelism with Neoplatonism. The paper also contrasts his post-Munqidh views with his earlier criticisms of Peripatetic philosophy in Tahāfut al-Falāsifah, arguing that the post-Munqidh view represents his real and final position.
Kata Kunci: Epistemology, Metaphysics Mishkāt, Munqidh, Neoplatonism, Post-Munqidh.

Abstrak:

Makalah ini meneliti pengembaraan ilmiah al-Ghazali seusai mengalami kesedaran kerohaniannya, yang ditandai dengan peristiwa Munqidh. Dengan tumpuan khusus kepada kitab Mishkāt al-Anwār, antara kitab terakhir yang dihasilkan al-Ghazali, makalah ini berusaha untuk mengkaji epistemologi dan metafizik al-Ghazali pasca-Munqidh. Ia meneroka pandangan al-Ghazali terkait ontologi cahaya dan sistem kosmologi yang terbentuk sebagai natijah daripadanya, menggariskan kesejajarannya dengan Neoplatonisme. Makalah ini juga membandingbezakan pandangan al-Ghazali pasca-Munqidh dengan kritikan awalnya terhadap falsafah Peripatetik dalam Tahāfut al-Falāsifah, dengan menegaskan bahawa pandangan al-Ghazali pasca-Munqidh mewakili pendirian sebenar dan terakhirnya.
Kata Kunci: Epistemologi, Metafizik Mishkāt, Munqidh, Neoplatonisme, Pasca-Munqidh.

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Introduction

Al-Ghazali readers would be able to grasp why *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (Deliverance from Error) stood as an important departure in al-Ghazali's intellectual history – indicating the beginning of a transformative spiritual journey following a momentous declaration. It might be apt and appropriate to bring forth a rapid summary of his autobiographical work. According to him, the paths of philosophers, mutakallim, and esoterists will not bring one to the ultimate truth. He declared then, that the best mode (*aḥsan al-siyar*) and the most righteous way (*aḥsan al-ṭuruq*) was sufism, and it is superior than the other three. Al-Ghazali further argues, that,

> "were one to combine the insight of the intellectuals (*'aql al-'uqalā'*), the wisdom of the wise (*ḥikmat al-ḥukamā'*), and the lore of scholars versed in the mysteries of revelation (*'ilm al-wāqifīn 'alā asrār al-shar' min al-'ulamā'*) in order to change a single item of sufi conduct and ethic and to replace it with something better, no way to do so would be found." 9 Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali, 1973).

It is the path that he opted and wanted to universalise so other people would be able to feel the tasting of truth (*dhawq*). Now following his declaration in *Munqidh* upon returning to Nishapur in 1106, al-Ghazali continues to produce a number of works. Among the important treatises produced in this phase, but somehow does not enjoy the same attention like that of voluminous *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Revival of Religious Sciences) or *Kimiya-e-Saadet* (The Alchemy of Happiness) was *Mishkāt al-Anwār* (The Niche for Lights), to which we shall devote our attention in this paper. In fact, *Mishkāt* was probably among the last works he composed before his demise in 1111, and it begins where his *Munqidh* leaves off.

It is also important to mention that Ghazalian scholars differed in determining the chronology of his works. The only useful and reliable methodology in the process of periodising his works accordingly is textual reference, and that was done by analysing al-Ghazali's self-allusion to his text in various works, his address to a particular individual or event that can be traced in history, as well as mentioning by other scholars and its association with a certain event or period. Therefore, it is nearly impossible by this method alone to conclude the chronology of his works with utmost certainty (*yaqīn*), as was done by George Hourani (George Hourani, 1959). However, in general, scholars studying the text of *Mishkāt* like Gairdner (William Henry Temple Gairdner, 1924), Buchman (David Buchman, 1998), among others are of the opinion that the work was indeed produced towards the end of his life, owing to his spiritual journey in different stages throughout his sojourn

in al-Quds, the Hijaz and today's Syria. By applying discourse analysis, more lights shall be casted as to where *Mishkāt* stood in the history of al-Ghazali's ideas. It essentially addressed a question on the meaning of verse 35 of surah al-Nūr by offering an esoteric exegesis of the verse, on which a new metaphysical framework of the ontology of lights was established. I say "new" because, as we shall see, al-Ghazali's spiritual experience reveals a transformative *weltanschauung* on God and the universe. Now both the contextuality and textual reference are pointing to later period of al-Ghazali's life. It could be said therefore that the book was written somewhere between 1095 and 1111.

The aforementioned significant transformations can be perceived by comparing the post-Munqidh al-Ghazali with his pre-Munqidh, with more attention given to his epistemology and metaphysics. Now it is imperative to clarify what do we mean by "post" in the term post-Munqidh here. Though at the outset it seems to point to the period after *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* was composed, that is 1106, however, in this discourse, we are referring to *Munqidh* as the moment when al-Ghazali attained the spiritual enlightenment, so to speak, that is the ultimate permanent realisation that the reality that our experiences of this world of sense perception are limited, and that another state, more lucid than the waking state, exists. In other words, we are speaking about *Munqidh as an experience* rather than a book. Al-Ghazali could have discovered the Sufi way as a "deliverance from error" even before the autobiographical *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* was written, by keeping the intimate experience only to himself. On that note, we shall commence the discussion on post-Munqidh al-Ghazali's epistemology and metaphysics.

Post-Munqidh Epistemology: Integrating Reason and Revelation

One of the unique features of post-Munqidh al-Ghazali was his proper treatment on epistemology via engagements with different schools. This was a notably absent discourse in his previous works, with the exception to *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* (The Aims of the Philosophers). The debate concerning the foundations of knowledge, sense perception, reason, and intuition, the hierarchy of certainty and scepticism, is a philosophical discourse that he introduced in his later works such as the *Iḥyā', Munqidh* and *Mishkāt*. But as we shall see, the post-Munqidh effect had al-Ghazali developed his epistemology with an esoteric flair.

The sense perception has an important role to play in deriving sense data to arrive at knowledge. However, it has to be sorted together with the power of the intellect. For that reason, to al-Ghazali, the eyes and the intellect have a unique relationship.

Reminiscing the intromission theory,[1] al-Ghazali regarded eyes as spies to the intellect, as it gathers intelligences from the "grossest of its treasure," namely colours and forms, before submitting them to the intellect. It therefore does not possess the liberty to process or interpret the data; only the intellect will be able to verify the data in accordance with the dictates of its penetration and judgment (Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali, 1990). Modern neuroscience confirms images are produced in the brain rather than the eyes, with receptors in retina convert the light into electrical signals to be channelled to the primary visual cortex. For that reason, the intellect is considered by al-Ghazali as superior than the sense perception in the epistemological hierarchy. But there is more to that vis-à-vis the metaphysical world.

The intellect has the ability to apprehend the reality in a way the senses are not able to. The strongest among the senses is identified as the sense of sight. Yet, the eyes always send the data obtained to the intellect in a spurious manner. This was shown by al-Ghazali by pointing to the size of a planet viewed through the naked eyes which appears as small as the size of a dinar(Al-Ghazali). To him, the eyes commit many errors in vision, and he outlined seven weaknesses inhered in the eyes which causing the mistakes.[2] Hence, al-Ghazali declared, that "in the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data, the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion." (Al-Ghazali, 1973) The senses then must be under direct supervision of the intellect, which al-Ghazali described as a monarch (*al-malik*), who constrains senses to its service (Al-Ghazali, 1973).

Now, does the intellect possesses an infallible strength? Apparently not, as the intellect may commit errors too, owing to the faculty of imagination (*khayālāt*) and fantasy (*awhām*) that coexist within itself. Therefore, al-Ghazali argues, errors should be attributed to these lower faculties instead, and not to the intellect per se. He even argues hypothetically, that if the intellect is separated from the deceptions of imagination and fantasy, the intellect will be able to see things as they really are. However, that state of intellect may only be acquired after death.[3]

[1] Ibn al-Haytham made groundbreaking discovery through empirical experiments, confirming the intromission theory in his work *Kitāb al-Manāẓir* (The Book of Optics) in contrast to extramission theory held previously by Euclid and Plato.

[2] The weaknesses are as follows: that the eyes does not behold itself like the intellect, that it cannot see what is very near to it or what is very far from it, that it cannot perceive what behind the veil, that it only perceives the exterior of things, that it only see a fraction of what exists for concepts and precepts are beyond its vision, that it cannot see what is infinite, and finally the eyes apprehend the large as small. See al-Ghazali, *Mishkāt*, p. 28-35.

[3] Here, al-Ghazali was alluding to a Quranic verse, "We have stripped from you the veil that covered you, and your vision this day is piercing" (surah Qaf, verse 22).

Then, al-Ghazali continues by elucidating what the intellect possesses from within itself and from without. From within itself, the intellect possesses a kind of innate knowledge that was present to it prior to experience, such as axiomatic truths (*al-ʻulūm al-ḍaruriyah*) (Al-Ghazali, 1973). This includes the "exclusive or," that is the mutually exclusive statement of which the value of truth is asserted only to one if they are both different, such as the statement a thing cannot be eternal or new at the same time, or exist and do not exist; the "principle of identity," that is if the proposition is true for a thing, it follows that it must be true for things which are identical; and the "principle of subset," that is granted the existence of the particular (*al-akhaṣṣ*), the universal (*al-aʻamm*) must follows. For example, if there is black, there must be colour. If there is a man, there must be animal. But conversely arrange, it is not necessarily true. For the existence of colour, does not necessarily imply the existence of black, and if there is animal, it does not follow that man must exist (Al-Ghazali, 1973).

There are also things that occur on the intellect from without, with its the ability to enlighten the intellect. Instances of such propositions are theorems of speculation (*naẓariyyāt*) from the philosophers which radiated the light of wisdom (*ishrāq nūr al-ḥikmah*) to the intellect. Since the greatest wisdom of all is the Qur'an, al-Ghazali relate it to the intellect like the sun to the eyes – it renders sight possible (Al-Ghazali, 1973). Therefore, there are two eyes, those are physical and inner eyes, and there are two suns, and those are sensible sun and the Qur'anic wisdom (Al-Ghazali, 1973). Just as the eyes unable to see without the reception of light, so does the intellect in order for it to see spiritually, the divine revelation is needed. As revelation emanates divine light to the soul, another eye is opened. By this light-possessing eye (*ʻayn lahā nūr*), man sees the hidden, what will take place in the future, and other things from which the intellect is far removed as the power of discernment (Al-Ghazali, 1973). What this framework projects is an epistemological system that integrates reason with revelation, as well as the incorporation of the inner eye of spirituality into the scheme as an equally important source of knowledge. Notice how the Qur'an (and Hadith) was not regarded as a separate fountain of knowledge more commonly known as *khabar ṣādiq* – a Kalamic epistemological component deserves a treatment of its own as can be seen in the works of pre-Munqidh era, but now that is altogether absent in the post-Munqidh corpus – rather treated as an integral aspect to the inner eye.

Post-Munqidh Metaphysics: A World of Light and Shadow

Al-Ghazali held a worldview of dualism in his conception of reality. Just as there are two eyes – a physical and a spiritual one – and two kinds of light, it follows that there are two different worlds: the celestial world (*ʻālam al-malakūt*) and the world of sense perception (*ʻālam al-shahādah*) (Al-Ghazali, 1973). The celestial world also named as the supernal world (*ʻālam al-ʻalawī*), the world of spirit

(*ʻālam al-rūḥānī*), and the world of light (*ʻālam al-nūrānī*), while other names for the world of senses are the world beneath (*ʻālam al-suflānī*), the world of matter (*ʻālam al-jasmānī*) and the world of darkness (*ʻālam al-ẓulmānī*) (Al-Ghazali, 1973), a reminisce of Platonic allegory of the cave, where this visible world is but a shadow casted by real object. All of these expressions are near to each other, and the difference is merely from the aspect of viewpoint (Al-Ghazali, 1973). If it is in the viewpoint of the worlds in themselves, then it is the first expression. If it is in the viewpoint of the organs that perceives them, then it is the second expression. There is a correspondence between the two; if there were not, it would be impossible for man to ascend from the one into the other.

According to al-Ghazali, there are marvels (*ʻajāʾib*) in the celestial world which are incomparable to the world of sense perception. To ascend (*miʻrāj*) to the celestial world in order to draw closer to the Divine presence (*ḥaḍrat al-rubūbiyyah*) is the object of focus of every spiritual pilgrim (*sālik*) (Al-Ghazali, 1973). The Prophet is one of them who managed to ascend and reach the celestial world, and the ascent resembling that of the Prophet is the possible closest connection between a servant and his God. There, one will have the knowledge of the secrets because one who is in the celestial world is with God who holds the keys of the unseen (Al-Ghazali, 1973). This is how the prophets have a slightly different worldview which is more comprehensive compared to normal people. Since the sensible world is the platform from which one departs to the ideal world, there must be relationship between (*ittiṣāl*) the two, for if the two worlds are not connected, ascent will be impossible, and the journey to the presence of God and moving closer to Him will be severed (Al-Ghazali, 1973). The higher world (*al-ʻālam al-murtafiʻ*) is beyond the apprehension of senses. The sensible world is the point of departure (*mirqāt*) ascending up to the unseen world (*ʻālam al-malakūt*), and the comparison to that is the journey of the straight path (*suluk al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) (Al-Ghazali, 1973).

It has been decreed that mankind shall be consigned by God to the lowest of low (*asfal al-sāfilīn*). However, he was equipped with free will and that shall determine his fate whether to remain in the lowest of low, or to rise to the world of the highest high (*al-ʻālam al-aʻlā*). This is different from the angels who are part of the celestial world, and who do not possess free will, while they reside permanently in the presence of the transcendence (Al-Ghazali, 1973). Therefore, anyone from among mankind with no apparent efforts to leave his current poor condition to travel to the celestial world, while he in this state, allowing himself to be imprisoned by the desires and whims of the world of sense perception, is condemned to be akin to that of a beast, or worse than them (Al-Ghazali, 1973). Thus, one must close the sensual eyes before the worldly things by acquiring the inner eyes which everyone but which a few only make use of. The soul must get

accustomed to contemplating beauty of the higher truth. Hence, one must attain piety and restraining oneself from passion, the beginning of which was to sever one's heart attachment to the world by withdrawing from this abode of delusion (*dār al-ghurūr*) and turning to the abode of immortality (*dār al-khulūd*) with total devotion to God (Al-Ghazali, 1973). The attainment of the higher truth was indispensable from the prophets, for upon their arrival at meanings, they shall return to the people to deliver the message. Hence the term *sirājan munīrā* (illuminating lamp), a quality belongs to the souls of the prophets because of their noble character of effusing lights of wisdom to the created world (Al-Ghazali, 1973). To al-Ghazali, the scholars may attain this higher truth too,[4] and subsequently carry the responsibilities in a succession model to the prophets, though he said the difference between them is incalculable (Al-Ghazali, 1973).

One of the distinctive features of post-Munqidh al-Ghazali's metaphysics was his special treatment of the ontology of lights, a feature that shall later become the hallmark of Suhrawardi's metaphysics of *Ishrāq*. According to al-Ghazali, lights are divided into several grades in a hierarchical order. Light is being shed from the highest grade to the lower one through illumination. Providing ground for his metaphysics based on verse 35 of surah al-Nūr, which reads:

> God is the Light of the heavens and the earth; the likeness of His Light is as a niche wherein is a lamp, the lamp in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star kindled from a Blessed Tree, an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West whose oil wellnigh would shine, even if no fire touched it; Light upon Light; God guides to His Light whom He will. And God strikes similitudes for men, and God has knowledge of everything.

Thus, the source of light from the illuminating lamp comes from the fire, while the terrestrial fire received its light from the Supernal Light (*anwār 'alawiyah*). The "light upon light" (*nūr 'alā nūr*) was, to al-Ghazali, referring to the souls of the prophets. Their souls were characterised with olive oil, which is luminous in itself despite not catching fire. But once it catches fire, it becomes "light upon light." (Al-Ghazali, 1973) Another analogy introduced by al-Ghazali to elucidate the gradation of lights was the sight of the moonlight. A man sees the moonlight coming through the window of his house, falling on a mirror fixed on a wall, which reflects the light to another wall, from which in turn reflected on the floor that it becomes illuminated. The light on the floor owed to the light on the wall, and the light on the wall owed to the light of the mirror, and the light of the mirror owed to the light of the moon, and the light of the moon owed light from the sun

[4] In some of the Peripatetic philosophers, *nubuwwah* is related to the activity of Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa''āl*).

(Al-Ghazali, 1973). The same applied to the celestial lights (*al-anwār al-malakūtiyah*) beyond the sun, which are also ranged in order as in the previous analogy of the moonlight. And that the highest is the one who is nearest to the ultimate light (*al-nūr al-aqṣā*). Therefore, as we trace vertically across the hierarchy of lights, we shall arrive at the final origin, the fountainhead (*manba' awwal*) of all lights, who is light in Himself and by Himself. No light from external source occurred to Him, and from Him effused every light according to degrees (Al-Ghazali, 1973), which to al-Ghazali is the most deserving to be called *nūr*.

Now since the word *nūr* was used by mankind in daily conversations to refer to objects or phenomena other than the real primary light (*al-nūr al-awwal*), al-Ghazali considered its usage as purely metaphor (*majāz maḥḍ*). The argument is that, should these substances considered in themselves by themselves, they have no light at all. Their light is borrowed from a foreign source (*musta'ārah min ghayrihi*). Al-Ghazali sought to explain this phenomenon by offering an analogy of a man riding a borrowed-horse. Do we consider the borrower (*al-musta'īr*) to be rich, or is it the owner of the horse who lends it (*al-ma'īr*)? There is no doubt the latter is true. The borrower remains poor, while the rich one is the lender, who can lend and take the horse back (Al-Ghazali, 1973). The true light (*nūr al-ḥaqq*) is therefore refers to the owner of everything, including light, who, at the first place casts light (*al-ināraḥ awwalan*) then sustains it (*al-idāmah thāniyan*) (Al-Ghazali, 1973).

Now darkness is that which is not seen by the sight, even though it by itself has existence. And in the degrees or gradation of lights, the darkest of all dark things is the non-existent (*al-'adam*). Hence, in comparison to that, being is light. They can be divided into two categories: (1) that which exists by itself (*mā lahu al-wujūd min dhātihi*), and; (2) that which derives its existence from others (*mā lahu al-wujūd min gharihi*). The first is called the necessary being, while the second the contingent being (Al-Ghazali, 1973). The second category has no existence by itself, in fact its existence is borrowed from outside (*wujūduhu musta'ār*). If its existence is to be counted only by itself, the result will be pure non-existent (*'adam maḥḍ*). Therefore, it is not a real being at all. The real being (*mawjūd al-ḥaqq*) is only God. It must be mentioned here that this categorisation of beings into two categories of necessary and contingent is a major agreement on al-Ghazali's part with that of Ibn Sina's metaphysics.[5]

The ascent by the gnostics (*al-'ārifūn*) will eventually reach the verity of verities that there is no being except God alone, and that "everything perishes except his

[5] The categorisation of beings into necessary and contingent is an original contribution of Ibn Sina to Peripatetic philosophy to demonstrate God's existence.

wajh." (Surah al-Qasas, verse 88). According to al-Ghazali, everything must perish sempiternally (*azalan wa abadan*) because they could not be conceived except as always perishing. This is probably an aspect of Kalam that he applied in his new metaphysics i.e. the concept of *khalqun jadīd*. That the universe experiences constant recreation is a feature of finite things. Of course, all finite things perish should their existence is viewed from its own essence. Therefore each thing other than God when considered in and by itself, is a pure non-existent. But, if it is viewed from the *wajh,* the aspect or manifestation, to which existence flows from Him, it is viewed as existing, but not in itself, rather from the *wajh* that derives its existence from God (Al-Ghazali, 1990).
It follows that everything has two *wajh*: (1) an aspect to itself (*wajh ilā nafsihi*), and; (2) an aspect to its God (*wajh ilā rabbihi*). With respect to the aspect to itself, it is a non-existent (*'adam*). With respect to the aspect to God, it exists (*mawjūd*). Therefore, there is no being except God, and His aspect. And therefore, everything perishes except His aspect. For example, the term "Allahuakbar" should not be understood as Allah is greater than something else. This is because there is no other being that He is greater than, for He is the only true Being. The only other that exists is His *wajh,* which follows Him (*alladhī yalīhi*). The fact that His *wajh* exists does not mean that He is greater than His own *wajh,* which is inconceivable. Great here means He is too great than any possible relational comparison. He is too great that His essence is unable to be comprehended by prophets or angels, the mystery of God-*an-sich*, a noumenal Deity unknown to none except God Himself. The fact that God is the only light implies that there are no other true lights except Him, while all other lights are only lights from the *wajh* which follows Him. That is meant by the verse, "wherever you turn yourselves, there is the *wajh* of God." (Surah al-Baqarah, verse 115).

Al-Ghazali then proceeds, as it is apt now, to address the tawhidic phrase "there is no God but Him" (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*). According to him, the word "God" in it implies the meaning of the One towards whom all faces (*wujūh*) are directed in worship and in confession that He is God. By faces, he means the faces of people's hearts (*wujūh al-qulūb*), for they are indeed lights. The declaration then means, there is no he except Him (*lā huwa illā hu*), for "he" is an expression for something which one can indicate (*al-ishārah*). But in every time and case, we can only indicate Him, so much so that every time you indicate something, your indication is actually refers to Him. The visible analogy to that is to point to the sunlight, while in reality he is only pointing to the sun. The relation of the sum of things to God is the relation of light to the sun. therefore, to al-Ghazali, *lā ilāha illā Allāh* is the tawhid of the masses (*al-'awwām*), while *lā huwa illā hu* is the tawhid of few (*al-khawāṣ*). While the former is more general, the latter is more particular, comprehensive, exact and more apt (Al-Ghazali, 1990).

Elaborating on the semiotics of language, al-Ghazali asserted that the verities (*al-ḥaqā'iq*) should not be comprehended solely on the basis of terminologies (*al-alfāẓ*), for otherwise one shall be puzzled by the multiplicity of terms used. In fact, terms should not be used as anchor. Those who were disclosed to them the verities have made the meanings as their anchor (*al-ma'ānī aṣlan*), while the terms follow afterwards (*al-alfāẓ tābi'ah*). The weak minds seek meanings from the terms (*yaṭlubu al-haqā'iq min al-alfāẓ*) because to them, the term is the source from which meanings proceed (Al-Ghazali, 1990). While in reality, the verities are sometimes inexplicable by words – what was called as "incommunicable mystery." There is a huge difference between knowing the definition of health and satiety on the one hand, and being healthy and sated on the other (Al-Ghazali, 1973).

Concerning the gnostics' grasp of the verity of verities, some of them comprehend this fact intellectually, while others comprehend it via tasting of the truth (*dhawq*). As for those who experiences it through tasting, their rationality is lost in the abyss, and they become dumbfounded. No capacity left in them to remember other than God, not even themselves (Al-Ghazali, 1990). In this state of ecstasy, nothing remained in them except God, and they became drunken, while their rational authority perishes. This is when words like "I am the Truth" was spoken. Al-Ghazali however, opined that such words uttered by the passionate lovers (*al-'ashshāq*) during this state should be hidden, not spoken (Al-Ghazali, 1990). So when the ecstasy starts to dissipate, and the faculty of reason returns, they realise that it was not actually a unification (*al-ittiḥād*), rather something else resembling a unification. It is called the state of metaphorical unification (*bi lisān al-majāz*) (Al-Ghazali, 1990). It is interesting here how al-Ghazali anticipated the emergence of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the unity of being) and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* (the unity of witnessing).

Now those people with insights (*arbāb al-baṣā'ir*) can be divided into two categories. The first are those who never seen any object except after seeing God, while the second are those who see objects and later, in and through the object see God. The first group is alluded by the Qur'an "does it not suffice that my Lord sees all?" (Surah Fuṣṣilat, verse 53) while the second group is also alluded in the same verse, "We shall show them our signs in the world and in themselves." The first are those who possess direct intuition (*ṣāḥib al-mushāhadah*), the truth (*al-ṣiddīqīn*) while the second one is those who infer Him from His signs (*ṣāḥib al-istidlāl bi al-āyāt*), and the scholars with established knowledge (*al-'ulamā' al-rāsikhīn*). Just as everything is manifest to man's sight by the means of light, the same goes to everything is manifest to man's insight by means of God (Al-Ghazali, 1990).

These are among al-Ghazali's salient theses in epistemology and metaphysics, which are deeply embedded in gnosticism as a result of post-Munqidh effect after his attainment of verities. We now wish to conclude by offering a few critical evaluations on the aforementioned ideas.

Concluding Thesis

Al-Ghazali's devastating critique of the philosophers in his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) should be contained within its specific scope and politically-driven purposes, that is a targeted assault on a number of specific points in Peripatetic philosophy that appears to be in contradiction to the literal meanings of the Quran, the Sunnah, and the positions of the mutakallim of the day, as well as to deter the rising influence of the neighbouring Fatimid dynasty, of whom prominent Peripatetic philosophers were tacitly considered as representation and symbol owing to their affiliation in one way or another with Shiism, the dynasty's official ideology,[6] although this may not necessarily be the case.

Despite that, what you will not discover in the critique, however, is al-Ghazali's critique of Neoplatonism, particularly that concerning the ontological scheme of the chain of beings, to which al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, the recipients of al-Ghazali's admonishments, were publicly known as subscribing. Instead, as we have seen in post-Munqidh al-Ghazali's metaphysics, the doctrine of emanation resurfaces explicitly, particularly in *Mishkāt al-Anwār*. Al-Ghazali's conscious choice of designation for God, "*fā'iḍ al-anwār*" (the Effuser of Lights) from the very beginning in his introduction is also a direct engagement with al-Farabi and Ibn Sina's theory of emanation (*fayḍ*). It is even claimed by some that *Mishkāt* could be styled as a resumé of Neoplatonism viewed from the two ideas of light and sight (Arent Jan Wensinck, 1941). The emergence of various philosophical theories and doctrines resulted from what we term as cosmogonical *ijtihād*, is a healthy phenomenon that is common to many as an attempt to explicate the relationship between God and the universe with all its constituents. However, al-Ghazali's subscription to Neoplatonic emanation signals a departure from the Asharite cosmogonical position. Now this is entirely fine except for the fact that al-Ghazali has previously criticised the exact position held by the Muslim Peripatetics. Probably the only thing al-Ghazali remained consistent in his post-Munqidh metaphysics with *Tahāfut* is his rejection of the eternity of the universe. Supposedly he solved this issue in a new metaphysics by introducing the concept of The Obeyed One (*al-Muṭā'*), who commands all things especially with the setting of the heavenly spheres into motion, but contrary to Gairdner's verdict

[6] The historical analysis of al-Ghazali's political zeitgeist and its influence on his works is a recurring theme to which a separate research should be devoted.

(Gairdner, W. H. T, 1924), this concept does not vindicate al-Ghazali from obvious Neoplatonism.

As discussed previously in post-Munqidh metaphysics, al-Ghazali alluded to God as the origin of all lights, the fountainhead from whom gradation of lights was produced to signify different levels of beings (Al Ghazali, 1990). The first emanation so to speak, was The Obeyed One, who is related to pure Being as the sun to sunlights. Ibn Sina has famously stated before that, "from one thing only one thing could proceed." (Abu 'Ali ibn Sina, 1984). He contends, the only plausible explanation for the universe deriving its multiplicity from a single cause is to envisage a continuous series of individuals of various kinds proceeding from other causally prior entities, which serve as intermediaries between the First (*al-Awwal*) and the universe. The intermediaries, ranging from the immaterial 'first intelligence' to the lowest of material things, would eventually account not only for the tremendous diversity of the world-system, but also for its causal origin and dependence upon God.

For that reason, the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Rushd argued in his *al-Kashf 'an Manāhij al-Adillah*,

> "then he (al-Ghazali) comes on with his book known as *Mishkāt al-Anwār* and mentions therein the grades of the knowers of Allah; and says that all of them are veiled except those who believe that Allah is not the mover of the First Heaven, He being the one from whom this mover of the first heaven *emanates*: which is an open declaration on his part of the tenet of the philosopher's school in the science of theology; although he has said in several places that their science of theology is a set of conjectures." (Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Rushd, 1998).

One may be flabbergasted by al-Ghazali's apparent enigmatic quality. He has the ability to produce differing views grounded in solid arguments and evidences, that at one time he seemed to be strongly refuting natural causality, while at another's he seemed to be affirming it. To no surprise, al-Ghazali's himself admits that his arguments in *Tahāfut* may not represent his real opinion, it is a work of refutation. He also once stated that every "perfect" man has three sets of opinions: (a) those of his own environment, (b) those he teaches to inquirers according as they are able to receive them, and (c) those which he believes in secret between himself and Allah, and never mentions except to an inner circle of friends or students (Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali, 1964). Therefore, as enigmatic as he can be, doubt can be dispelled as we put into perspective that the young vibrant al-Ghazali used to be an adept of the (Avicennan-inspired) philosophy in his

student days (Jules Janssens, 2003). Jules Janssens when discussing al-Ghazali's *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* noted how the philosophical positions presented in the work often do not correspond to those criticised in the *Tahāfut*. Gabriel Reynolds stated, "the *Intentions* reads as a systematic and faithful exposition of philosophy." (Gabriel Reynolds, 2002).

As he moved away from Peripatetic metaphysics and getting accustomed with Kalam, he still finds himself in the quagmire of eternal debates with the philosophers and inadequately satisfying.[7] After the Munqidh event, al-Ghazali was said to have found the higher truth by following the footsteps of the pilgrims to spiritual attainment. And as demonstrated in this journey, he found himself to a certain extent in substantial coherency with the *Falāsifah*, and this was arguably his real and final position.

[7] Al-Ghazali, *Munqidh*, p. 36-7. In fact, the later Asharites are placed so low in the categories of those who are veiled by light and darkness. See, al-Ghazali, *Mishkāt*, p. 97.

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