

# An Introduction to Mysticism and Sufism in Ghazali

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## ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:** *Sufism,*  
*Ash'ari school,*  
*Kalam, Ghazali*

## ABSTRACT

Imam Muhammad Ghazali, a famous theologian and jurist, is a world-renowned scholar of Islamic thought. He has left a lasting impact on thought and the course of thought in the Islamic world with his writings. As an Ash'ari theologian, he is considered one of the greatest Ash'ari theologians, along with Baghalani, Imam al-Haramain Juwayni, and Fakhr al-Razi. He has sought to systematically defend the fundamental beliefs of Islam and the Sunni religion by writing books such as *Al-Iqtisad fi al-'Itiqad*. And he has been largely successful in this regard. He considers the science of theology to be obligatory and considers his main goal to be the defense of Islamic beliefs and the Sunni religion. In this regard, he does not shy away from arguing with the ideas and sects that, in his opinion, oppose this idea, and has rejected their ideas with numerous writings. In fact, he considers the science of theology to be a therapeutic and protective status. On the other hand, in Ghazali's view, Sufism is not a science, but rather a practical method for achieving faith.

In this article, we aim to provide definitions and explanations of the Ash'ari school and mysticism, and then discuss Ghazali's theological method.

### Introduction:

One of the most important Islamic sciences in discussing the beliefs and foundations of the Islamic religion and the attempt to provide a rational defense that is acceptable to other sects and different religions and is based on a common basis, which is reason, is Islamic theology and its various schools. Al-Ghazali also dealt with theology extensively, considering the centrality of this defense in his thought. However, his thoughts and his general view towards theology in his various works at different periods of his life are different. At the beginning of his intellectual journey, he dealt with theology extensively. However, this has faced a transformation in the course of his life, in such a way that in his later works, he increasingly distances himself from theology and refers to it as abhorrent, or he considers it a tool and considers its status to be as a guardian and protector. Is there any contradiction or discord in Al-Ghazali's thought in light of this journey? Or is he free from contradiction and has only expressed different opinions in this regard at different periods of his life. Or is there no contradiction or fundamental change in Ghazali's thought, but rather his answers should be understood in the context of the conditions of the time and the differences in his audience, as well as the change in Ghazali's position?

On the other hand, mysticism, or as Ghazali calls it, Sufism, was also widely prevalent in the Islamic world, and in Ghazali's time, Sufis also claimed to achieve truth and the core of faith and human happiness, and they based it on a kind of personal conduct and asceticism and an effort to connect to the main source of knowledge and the end of happiness, which is God. Given the individuality of conduct and the impossibility of measuring the validity of the Sufis' claims, deviation can easily penetrate and spread in such a matter. Considering the main goal that is the focus of his works, which is the effort to defend Islamic beliefs, Ghazali was tolerant and had a sympathetic view of Sufism despite such a possibility, and in his various works he also recognized Sufism as a way to achieve happiness. Now the question is, was his view of Sufism comprehensive and generalizable to all different classes of people, or did he consider it specific to certain individuals? Is Sufism, according to Ghazali, a superior way to reach truth and happiness, or is it a way alongside other ways? How is the effectiveness of this way compared to other different ways? And can Sufism be considered as an alternative to theology or can it only be a better way in some cases? And what is the relationship and comparison between these two, namely Sufism and theology, based on Ghazali's thought?

The desired goal of sciences and faith according to Ghazali

To understand Ghazali's view and opinions on theology and mysticism or Sufism, and in general, Ghazali's view on theology and mysticism or Sufism, several introductions must first be considered. The first introduction is the desired goal and end for man, which, according to the influence of Aristotle and also religious thought, is happiness from Ghazali's point of view. Therefore, all human efforts are to achieve such an end, happiness is achieved through faith, and its important pillar in Ghazali's thought is faith in God and His Prophet, following their instructions, and in a word, belief in the religion of Islam. In Ghazali's thought, faith is achieved in two ways: knowledge and action. However, knowledge has a higher rank and action is placed in a lower rank, in such a way that action is known as a kind of complement and supplement to knowledge and brings the scholar to a position that is worthy of him. (Ghazali, 1376: 19-28) Knowledge and action in Ghazali's thought are necessary and essential for achieving happiness and salvation. However, in his view, knowledge has a higher position and he mentions the verse "To Him rises good speech and good deeds, He raises it up" (Fatir 10) as a confirmation of his words. The good speech in this verse is knowledge that reaches a high position and action, like a servant, elevates it and gives it elevation. And he considers this as a confirmation of the high position of knowledge. (Ghazali: 1376, 28) Although in the Measure of Action, Ghazali sometimes approves of imitative faith (Ghazali, 1376, 30), at the end of that book he condemns

imitativeness and blind following and considers the way to escape from destruction and misguidance to be independence of thought and opinion and explicitly states that if there is nothing in the path of these words that creates doubt in you regarding the inherited belief so as to place it in the path of your search, you will not benefit from it because the one who does not doubt has not considered, and the one who has not considered does not see, and the one who does not see remains in blindness and misguidance (Ghazali, 1376: 163). Therefore, considering the opposition to philosophy and consequently to philosophical discourse, Ghazali attaches special importance to the independence of thought and opinion. (Dinani, 1379: 8 and 343)

In response to the question of which one should one turn to in the era of the abundance of sciences and various types of actions: knowledge or action? Should one follow the path of imitation and is mere verbal testimony or a test of the heart without knowledge and awareness sufficient for faith? Is there a single method for achieving faith and happiness for different times, people with different inclinations, and different matters and facts? The answer to this question should be understood in his view of different classes of people.

Differences in levels of people and different degrees of truth

The second introduction is the difference in levels and degrees in the areas of the addressees of the science of theology or, more generally, the addressees of the divine message and truth. Among them, some are intermediaries between the divine message and the addressees. The most important intermediary is the Prophet, but since he is not present at all times, scholars have the duty to explain to them the divine message that has been communicated to the people through the Prophet. The people and individuals who are the addressees of this message have different levels of talents, and it is with these talents in mind that Al-Ghazali explains to different classes of people how to achieve correct beliefs and faith. To make his point clearer in this area, he often turns to allegory. Regarding theology, this is a therapeutic-guardian allegory. In the therapeutic allegory, the theologian is likened to a physician whose intention is to cure and treat diseases related to the beliefs of individuals. These diseases occur to believers or Muslims with the passage of time and the connection and influence of other sciences and religions. For example, the relations between Muslims and followers of other religions and the doubts that the scholars of these religions raised about the religion of Islam caused a group to defend the beliefs of Muslims and respond to these doubts. Also, the presence of some hypocrites and followers of pre-Islamic beliefs and the raising of doubts in religious matters prompted a group of Muslim thinkers to respond to these doubts. And in this regard, they tried to benefit from the premises that were approved by the enemy. From the perspective of this parable, if these doubts did not exist, there would be no reason for the existence, progress, and proficiency in the science of theology. Accordingly, according to this parable, the main role of the science of theology is treatment. This treatment is for the pains that arise from the doubts of the opponents of a religion, and these doubts create a disturbance in the person's beliefs and beliefs, and therefore disrupt his happiness, and must be treated.

Considering this parable, he believes that the science of theology is merely a sufficient obligation and knowing it is not obligatory for everyone. Its necessity as a sufficiency is also such that "it becomes necessary to create innovations" (Ghazali, 1384: 1: 56). In such a view, the science of theology is "to protect the hearts of the common people from the imaginations of innovators" and the position of the theologian and "his status in religion is that of a guardian" (Ghazali, 1384: 1: 56). Both ideas that Ghazali expressed in *Ihya* had been previously mentioned in the book *Al-Iqtasad fi al-I'tiqad*; namely, both the idea of the science of theology being therapeutic (21, p. 8) and the idea of its obligatory sufficiency (Ghazali, 1990: 11). However, in the case of some people, it must be said that the science of theology lacks value and importance and it is even necessary for them to abandon the science of theology (Ghazali, 1409: 8) According to Al-Ghazali, some people do not have the right to engage in the science of theology. In this book, he considers the type of evidence that theologians use to prove

religious beliefs to be like medicines that are prescribed and recommended by a doctor to treat a patient. He believes that the medicines in the prescriptions of theologians cure heart diseases, which in his opinion must be innovations and doubts. If an unskilled physician provides a medicine to a patient, the corruption caused by that medicine is much greater than the benefit it may have (ibid.). Thus, Al-Ghazali believes that only the medicine of a skilled physician is health-giving, and if the physician places the medicine at the disposal of someone who does not show any signs of illness, or if a healthy person takes the medicine, this action will certainly lead to his illness. "If Al-Ghazali finds theology ineffective in instilling religious faith, he does not consider it completely useless in dispelling doubts and doubts, and he often points out that the science of theology is like medicine. It is beneficial when prescribed by a physician and taken in the amount necessary. If he himself, in his book "Al-Iqtads" in describing the arguments of the theologians, confines himself to discussing the essence and attributes, the issue of prophecy and resurrection, and what is related to these issues, it is apparently due to this focus on observing limits and observing necessity" (Zarin Koob, 1369: 119).

In this regard, Ghazali, based on his jurisprudential understanding, departs from the theological approach and recognizes the difference in levels of people. From Ghazali's perspective, people are divided into two categories: first, people who are followers of imitation and have considered themselves to be free from discussion and search; and second, patients who do not imitate physicians and are striving to reach the level of physicians. (Ghazali, 1990: 31) Ghazali believes that the second path is very far, long, difficult, and difficult, and only a few special people can safely pass through it in any era. (Ibid.) Ghazali does not mention the invalidity of the path of imitation here, but he emphasizes that he will inform the reader of what will bring him out of the abyss of imitation and show him the right path. (Ibid.) Then he resorts to psychology and considers the soul to have two powers: the active and the rational. The theoretical power of the soul is capable of acquiring various sciences and it achieves them either through divine inspiration or through education and acquisition. After that, the practical intellect or the active power calls the human body to certain actions by planning. (Ibid.: 31-40) Therefore, regarding the science of theology, Al-Ghazali believes that four groups of people should be distinguished:

-1Someone who believes without having any doubts or suspicions in his heart about the object of his faith. Such a person should not have his mind disturbed by theological disputes. The lack of attention of the companions of the Prophet to this knowledge was also due to this reason (Al-Ghazali, 1990: 9)

-2Someone who has turned to disbelief and innovation. Al-Ghazali believes that if such a person is biased, theological arguments and proofs will have no effect on him, but will increase his insistence and stubbornness against the truth (Al-Ghazali, 1384, p. 9)

-3Someone who believes in imitation, habit, and inheritance, but has a high intelligence and asks questions about religion. A variety has entered his mind, in such a way that he has become calm and composed. Ghazali says in this regard that one should show kindness towards such a person and remove his doubts. Of course, in Ghazali's view, once the doubts are removed, one should not disturb him with additional evidence and more doubts (Ghazali, 1990: 10). 4-Someone who is astray and has other beliefs is an intelligent and thoughtful individual. Such a person is expected to search for evidence and adhere to it. Therefore, Ghazali says that kindness towards these people and their guidance is necessary. Of course, one should not show prejudice and argue because it will make them run away from the truth. In Ghazali's view, "the ignorant The "people of truth" with their prejudice and contempt for other beliefs are the main causes of the spread of false beliefs among people (Ghazali, 1990: 10). Thus, Ghazali concludes from this discussion that the discussion of theology is necessary and beneficial only for the third group, and only to the extent that it removes the doubts in their minds. According to Ghazali,

what is obligatory upon all people is only dogmatic affirmation and purification of the heart from doubt and hesitation in faith, and mastering the science of theology and engaging in it are among the sufficient obligations. Of course, if someone is in doubt about religious teachings, it is an objective obligation upon him to remove that doubt (Ghazali, 1409: 11). If someone were to ask, considering the numerous disadvantages and harms of theology, why did Ghazali consider it a sufficient obligation and why did he not consider it highly recommended and even forbidden? Ghazali replies that although people rarely need theology, it is still necessary to remove doubts and doubts about religious beliefs, and the issue of calling people to the truth with evidence is an important matter. If at some point, the people of innovation rise up and try to deceive the people of truth by instilling doubts among them, it is necessary for some to resist their seduction by discovering and opposing them, and such resistance is only possible with the science of theology (ibid.).

#### Levels of Truth; Another Explanation for Ghazali's Viewpoint

Although the difference in levels regarding the sciences, and specifically the science of theology, sheds some light on Ghazali's true position regarding his view of the science of theology, in addition to this, and in order to fully explain the issue and answer it, it is necessary to mention the different levels of knowledge and understanding from Ghazali's perspective. Al-Ghazali believes that truth and knowledge have different degrees and levels among humans. He also resorts to an analogy to explain this issue. He mentions two analogies in this regard: first, the analogy of ants and second, the analogy of an elephant. In his first analogy, Al-Ghazali mentions the degrees of knowledge and scholars as follows: Their example is like an ant that walks on paper and sees the paper turning black and a pattern appearing on it. It looks, sees the pen, rejoices and says: "I have recognized the truth of this work, this pen is drawing." [...] Then another ant came, whose eyes were wider and whose vision was greater, and said: "You are mistaken, I see this pen as a tool, and beyond it is a I see something else that this painting of his does." And he was happy and said, "The truth is that I knew that the painter is the finger, not the pen, and the pen is the mockery of the finger"... (Ghazali, 1382:1:75). He also writes in the parable of people, about the different levels of knowledge and being a scholar: Their example is like a group of blind people who, having heard that a camel has come to their city, turn to recognize him, and they think that they can recognize him by his hands: his hands are in his possession. One hand touched his ear, and one his leg, and one his thigh, and one his tooth. And when they came with the other blind men, and asked them about the description of the elephant, the one who had placed his hand on the leg said, "The elephant is like a pillar." And the one who had placed his hand on the ear said, "It is like a carpet." And the one who had placed his hand on the tooth said, "It is like a pillar

And he said, "It is like a stone"... (Ghazali, 1382: 1: 95) In the first parable, Ghazali believes that there are different levels on the path to discovering truth and knowledge. In his view, the difference between people stems from the fact that everyone can reach a level of truth: from its low and superficial level to its higher and deeper level. These two extremes are a range in between which there are many degrees and levels. In Ghazali's view, those blind men "all spoke the truth and all made a mistake, thinking that they had found the elephant's nest, but they had not" (ibid.: 95). Ghazali believes that when humans see a part of the truth, they think that they have understood all the truth: "The most common contradiction among people is that everyone speaks the truth in some way, but some see and think that everyone has seen it" (ibid.: p. 75).

In the matter of theology, these degrees are presented in a way. Al-Ghazali believes that a group reaches inner intuition (the highest level of which is revelation), a group reaches learning (through experience or rational arguments), and another group reaches faith and firm affirmation of truths (Al-Ghazali, 1382: 1: 30-13). Each of these has its own value, but in relation to each other, their value is different, such that at the top of this hierarchy is divine

inspiration (Campanini, 1996: 852). This theory can be derived from Plato and his famous allegory, the Allegory of the Cave, to explain the different levels of truth.

Different levels of aptitude of individuals as theologians

Ghazali believes that the science of theology is a necessary and sufficient requirement (Ghazali, 1990: 11 and Ghazali 1384: 1: 46). In his view, the purpose of the science of theology is to safeguard religious beliefs and confront the wrong beliefs of those who are infidels and innovators. And since it is always possible for a group to turn to beliefs of infidelity and innovation, some people must be present to defend the beliefs of Muslims, dispel doubts, and reject false beliefs. From Ghazali's perspective, the absence of such individuals among Muslims and their community is essential because in their absence, believers may turn to infidelity and innovation (Ghazali, 1990: 11). Therefore, theologians are essential for the community of Muslims. But who should be a theologian? In other words, who should be well-versed in the historical and intellectual evidence of religion and be able to defend people's religious beliefs and refute the doubts of their opponents?

Al-Ghazali considers the general public exempt from the study of theology and even warns them against engaging in it. In his view, the general public should only turn to the definitive affirmation of faith and cleanse their hearts of any doubt and suspicion (Al-Ghazali, 1990: 11). Al-Ghazali maintains this initial position, although he expands it. In *Al-Jam*, which is his last book, he devotes the first chapter to the duties of the general public towards religious beliefs, which is a kind of expansion of that initial thought. These seven duties are: sanctifying God from physicality..., heart-affirmation, acknowledging one's inability to understand the true meaning of matters related to God, avoiding questioning (silence), avoiding interfering with and possessing the words contained in revelation (restraint in interpretation, interpretation, division, division, addition and subtraction), avoiding internal reflection on these matters (*kaf*), and surrendering to the people of knowledge. It is very important to pay attention to the last duty of the general public. The general public is obliged to surrender to the "people of knowledge." It seems that the people of knowledge are those who can learn the science of theology; not only can they learn, but they are also required to learn it adequately. In addition to being messengers, Ghazali calls the people of knowledge great, The Companions are considered to be the friends of Allah and the firm scholars (Ghazali, 1985:48 and 28-16). Such people have special characteristics: they do not seek the world and its desires; they avoid wealth, position, fame, and worldly pleasures; they are completely sincere in knowledge and action; they act on their knowledge; they are people of worship and the pious; Only God is important to them, and the world (and even the hereafter) is of no value to them (Ghazali, 1985: 76-86). Of course, in Ghazali's view, these "sages" are not equal in knowledge and closeness to God, although in any case, they are much superior to the common people (Ghazali, 1985: 58-68). In *"Ihya' al-'Ulum"*, Ghazali, in discussing the objective sciences, states that the first obligation for a mature, intelligent person is to learn the two words of testimony and understand their meaning, without requiring him to discover and express them through discussion and contemplation, but rather his dogmatic confirmation and belief is sufficient, and such confirmation can be achieved by imitation alone, without discussion or obtaining proof (Ghazali, 1375: 47). Al-Ghazali further states that if someone has doubts about monotheism, it is obligatory for him to learn what can dispel that doubt, and if he has no doubts and dies before believing in religious beliefs such as the antiquity of theology, etc., he has died according to the consensus of Muslim scholars (*ibid.*: 49-50). If theology is prevalent in a city and innovations are widespread, the people of that city should be protected from innovation by instilling the beliefs of truth from the beginning of puberty, "for if falsehood reaches his ears, it is obligatory to remove it from his heart, and it is permissible that it be difficult. And this obligation is the same as if this Muslim convert was a marketer and the usury transaction was common in the city, it would be obligatory for him to learn to beware of usury" (*ibid.*: p. 50)

While Al-Ghazali pointed out two different ways to achieve happiness, considering this superficial difference in talent and levels of knowledge that he recognized, he does not provide a single answer, but recommends different methods according to the different levels of people and their needs. He stated that whoever has a tendency to conduct himself and has reached old age, it is better to be content with the way of the Sufis - taking care of worship and cutting off interests - because studying business sciences to gain a stable queen in the soul is a difficult task that is possible only in the prime of life. If the "young man" does not find in himself the intelligence and talent to understand the precise truths of science, he should also follow the path of Sufism and know that his occupation with theoretical sciences is useless. Even if someone is intelligent and worthy of science, he should only engage in learning if he has access to an independent and knowledgeable scholar, otherwise it is better to engage in practice (Ghazali, 1376: 49-50). At the end, Ghazali has some advice for the latter group: "A young man who has a vigilant nature should seek knowledge and suffer in understanding all kinds of sciences. Such a person is capable of both paths and it is better to prioritize learning. From the "And the proof is that which man can comprehend through diligence and learning, and then he withdraws from creation and turns his back on the world and turns to God alone and waits. Perhaps in this way, what has not been made clear to the followers of this path will be revealed to him." (Ibid.: 50) In some of his works, Ghazali considers the first duty of people to be simply learning the two words of testimony and understanding their meaning, and he clarifies that affirming these meanings and dogmatic belief in them (without resorting to argument or evidence, even by simply imitating and hearing) is sufficient, provided that this affirmation is not mixed with doubt, hesitation, and anxiety of the soul (ibid., 1375: 47). According to Al-Ghazali's views in "Mizan al-Amal" and "Ihya' al-Ulum", although he initially considers imitation in theological discussions permissible, he considers acquiring knowledge and overcoming the abyss of imitation obligatory for everyone. Despite his great emphasis on the superiority of divine knowledge, he sometimes also approves of pure imitative faith and considers it the cause of salvation in the hereafter. In "Ihya' al-Ulum" – which Ghazali wrote after that remarkable spiritual transformation and inclination towards Sufism and escape from all previous interests – he considers the faith of the common people, which is purely based on imitation, as the first level of faith. However, since there is no discovery, insight, or revelation of the heart in the matter of the common person who imitates, Ghazali does not include him among the close ones (Ghazali, 1421 AH:3:15). On the other hand, Ghazali considers the superiority of reason in that it is the instrument of wisdom and knowledge. He considered the soul to be the mine of knowledge and wisdom and its source, and he believes that potential knowledge and wisdom exist in everyone's nature, like fire in a stone or water in the heart of the earth or palm in the kernel of a date palm, and something must be done to express it (Ibid., 1376:120). He gives an analogy in this regard and says: Just as water may flow without human action, sometimes water is in the heart of the earth and must be extracted by digging and enduring pain, and sometimes water is obtained with little pain. Knowledge is like water in the souls of humans in such a way that sometimes an uneducated person turns from potential to action, like the situation of the prophets (peace be upon them) whose knowledge is revealed by the Almighty through human beings, and in some other souls, a lot of effort is required to express and manifest it, like the situation of the general public and especially the ignorant who have spent many years of their lives in neglect and ignorance and have not received education in childhood. In others, such as intelligent children, a little effort is enough to acquire knowledge (ibid.). In another place, al-Ghazali, who seeks to express some of the unlimited wonders of the world of the heart, considers the nobility of the human heart to be due to the existence of two aspects: knowledge and power, and considers the greatness and greatness of man to be in the field of knowledge, sometimes through the external sciences and through the senses, which is attainable for everyone, and sometimes through the opening of the heart to the kingdom, and sometimes

through the study of knowledge, in which knowledge is obtained for man through education. He also considers this path to be great, but he considers it to be brief in comparison to the path of prophecy and the knowledge of the prophets and saints, which is revealed from God to the hearts of some without the intermediary and without the instruction of humans (Ghazali, 1380: 1, 31-27). Ghazali emphasizes that the correctness of the path of knowledge can be understood both through the experience of many people and through rational proof. He advises those who are neither of taste and personal experience nor have attained knowledge through intellectual proof to at least believe and acknowledge these methods so that they are not deprived of all degrees and ways of acquiring knowledge (ibid.: 31). However, even in the *Revival*, written after the spiritual transformation, Ghazali accepts that the perception of truth through intellectual proof is not impossible, although it is not achieved except by a few. In expressing the manner of the common people's acknowledgement and faith, Ghazali believes that the common people should know that behind these words there is a meaning and intention that is worthy of the glory and greatness of God, and the Prophet's statement in describing the Prophet of Truth in that hadith is also true. Therefore, the common man believes in that hadith and is certain that what God and the Prophet said is true, and therefore he declares that "we are trustworthy and truthful" means what God has described Himself with and the descriptions of God's Prophet about Him are in accordance with the truth, with the same meaning that they themselves have intended; although the common man himself does not understand the truth of that meaning (Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, p. 45). Ghazali continues to consider these issues as open to discussion, saying that "Tashdiq is after conception and faith after understanding. If a servant does not understand the meaning of words, how is it possible to believe in the truth of the one who says it?" He replies that it is not impossible to confirm matters that are understood in general. Every wise person knows that every name has a name and that a specific meaning has been intended from these words. He can believe that the speaker of that statement is truthful and is reporting the reality, so he can understand and acknowledge the general and non-detailed meanings from those words. Hence, the one who hears from God, "The Most Gracious is above the Throne" (Taha, 5). In general, he understands that there is a specific relationship between God and the Throne. He can acknowledge this general relationship without knowing whether this relationship is a relationship of establishment or an inclination towards creation or a forcible domination over them? (Ghazali, *Ihya*). But in such a conversation, what benefit do people gain from listening to words they do not understand at all? Al-Ghazali's answer is that the purpose of this address in such cases is to explain its meaning to its people (the saints of God and those firmly established in knowledge), and they sometimes understand its meaning. The condition for wise people to speak is not that everyone (even the common people, children, and even mystics) understand what they are saying. Children have a duty to ask adults about what they do not understand, and it is also obligatory on elders to tell them that such matters are above your dignity and you should do something else (Al-Ghazali, 1414 AH: 45-46).

Is it possible to understand the meaning of this address in such cases only by reasoning with religious beliefs?

Do they feel inclined to provide a proof for them? If such a thing is permissible, then in fact he has also been given permission to think and comment. After raising this question, Ghazali answers that it is permissible for a common man to hear proofs in several cases: knowledge of the truth and its oneness, the truthfulness of the Messenger, and the truthfulness of the Day of Resurrection. Of course, in this position, two conditions must also be met: one - only the proofs that are in the Quran should be told to him and he should hear only these; two - he should not argue or debate about that proof and should not think about its meaning, except in a simple and clear way. He should not delve too deeply into the discussion (ibid.: 57). Then, for each of the topics that, in his opinion, the common people can only hear evidence about, Ghazali gives examples from the Quranic evidence (ibid.: 57-59).



Here another question arises: These Quranic arguments that you have deemed permissible for the common people to hear are the same ones that theologians have discussed and explained their implications. In fact, the theological arguments of the interpretations are the same Quranic arguments, so why do you prevent the common people from presenting theological arguments, especially since the Quranic arguments are also understandable from a rational perspective? So, if the door of opinion and thought is open to the general public, it must be open absolutely and in all cases, or the general public is obliged to imitate even in the case of Quranic evidence. Al-Ghazali states in response that there are two types of implication: an obvious implication that is understood at first glance and is easily understood by the general public, and an implication that requires thinking beyond the ability and accuracy of the general public. In the case of Quranic evidence that implies clear meanings, it does not threaten the general public in any way (Al-Ghazali, 1414 AH: 59). For further explanation, Al-Ghazali resorts to the following analogy: "Quranic evidence is like food that everyone benefits from, and verbal evidence is like food that everyone benefits from." They are like medicine that only the sick benefit from, while many others are harmed. It can even be said that Quranic evidence is like water that everyone, from a baby to a strong man, uses, and theological evidence is like food that only benefits the strong, and some get sick from these foods, while others, like children, do not benefit from them at all (ibid.).

Ghazali believes that the Messenger of God and the Companions did not follow the method of the theorists in arguing and arguing with people, of course, not in the sense that they were incapable of such a course, but if they saw any benefit and advantage in this work, they would certainly have gone beyond the extent they went into explaining theological evidence in matters of religious rulings and obligations (ibid.: 60).

Ghazali forbade the common people from any kind of discussion and exchange. Opinion on matters of faith has been prohibited, but God Himself has commanded all His servants to know Himself and other matters. On the other hand, none of these matters are necessary (obvious), so they must be acquired, and the only way to acquire any knowledge is the existence of evidence and opinion on those evidence, and discernment in the way those evidences indicate and the quality of their production, and these are also possible only in the form of knowing the conditions of the proofs and the order of the premises, etc. On this basis, both the science of theology is needed by people, as is the science of rationalities or philosophy. In addition, when a general person acknowledges a prophet, he also needs a reason that distinguishes the prophet from other claimants to prophethood, and this is also possible only by looking at the miracle and its truth and the theoretical discussions of prophethood in the science of theology. Therefore, it must be said that the common man needs the knowledge of the word and the rational in performing his duties towards God and knowing the Prophet (Ghazali, 1414 AH.: 78-79). After raising these objections, Ghazali has mentioned that only faith in these matters is obligatory for people, and faith is the same as the absolute confirmation that there is no doubt about it. Although absolute confirmation has six levels, some of its intermediate levels can also be obtained with narrational and verbal evidence, so it is not appropriate for the common man to go beyond the Quranic evidence (ibid.: 79). Ultimately, Ghazali considers human happiness and well-being as the ultimate goal of all knowledge, and he portrays it as follows: "Whenever the image of the truth is imprinted in someone's heart, happiness is achieved. It does not matter whether the useful reason is in the form of proof or persuasion or a statement that is accepted out of good faith for the one who believes in it, or is merely an imitation, or has no reason at all. What is desirable is the benefit, not its guide. Therefore, whoever believes in the truth of the truth and believes in God, His attributes, His messengers, and the resurrection is blessed, even if these beliefs are not based on verbal evidence. Therefore, God Almighty has obligated creation only with faith and firm affirmation" (ibid., 82). Of course, in the end, Ghazali does not find it undeniable that the mystic is superior to the imitator, but the one who imitates the

truth is also considered a believer like the mystic (ibid., 82). Some consider the book "Al-Jam al-Ulum" to be Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's last written work and believe that he completed it only twelve days before his death (Zarin Koob, 1369: 180).

#### Classification of Sciences According to Ghazali

Another introduction to understanding the position of theology and Sufism is the classification of sciences presented by Ghazali, which is religious sciences and rational sciences. In his book "Al-Mustafa'i min 'Ilm al-Usul", Ghazali believes that sciences are divided into two categories: rational sciences such as medicine, arithmetic, geometry; religious sciences such as theology, jurisprudence, principles of jurisprudence, the science of hadith, and the science of interpretation. Each of these two sections is divided into general and specific sciences, and among religious sciences, the general science is the science of theology (Ghazali, 1382: 1: 5). Because while the exegete only deals with the meaning of the book, the hadithist only deals with the proof of hadith, and the jurist only deals with the rulings on the actions of the obligated, and the usuli only deals with the evidence of religious rulings, the theologian also looks at the generality of things – existence. The theologian first divides the existing into the ancient and the accidental, and then the accidental into essence and extension, and after explaining the types of essence and extension, he deals with the ancient attributes of the Exalted and the attributes and rulings that are obligatory or impossible for Him, and after discussing the origin, he deals with the discussion of prophecy and the necessity of the sending of messengers (ibid., pp. 5-6). In Ghazali's view, after this, there is no more room for the intellect and its judgments to be occupied, and transmission (Shari'ah) speaks about what the intellect does not understand independently in the matter of God and the Day of Judgment. In Ghazali's view, the discourse of transmission can never raise a matter that the intellect has declared impossible. Further, Ghazali emphasizes that theology is the proof of the principles of religious sciences, and for this reason, theology is considered a supreme and universal science for religious sciences (ibid.: pp. 6-7). In "Ihya' al-Ulum", when discussing the types of sciences, Ghazali mentions the following about the intellectual sciences: "As for the intellectual sciences: that which is dictated by the instinct of the intellect and which is not found in imitation and hearing... And as for the religious sciences: that which is taken by imitation from the prophets, may God's prayers and peace be upon them, and that is achieved by learning the Book of God Almighty and the Sunnah of His Messenger and understanding their meanings after hearing" (Ghazali 1421: 3: 15-16). With such a definition of religious sciences, at least that part of theology that is a serious field of intellectual activities – and not narration – cannot easily be considered a religious science. In his view of these sciences, Al-Ghazali strongly opposed the popular theological discourses of his day by prescribing discussion and examination of beliefs. From his perspective, "The theologians' fault was that in this knowledge they relied on premises that they had taken from the enemy (the rulings), and what forced them to submit was either imitation, or consensus, or the mere agreement of the Quran and the narrations with those premises. Most of their effort was to discover the contradictions of the enemy and then convince and crush them with the weapon of their own certainties..." (Ibid., 1360, p. 29). In this way, Ghazali opposes both the reliance of theology on Greek philosophical ideas and the polemical nature of its method (Qaramaleki: 1378: 53-57). Ghazali believes that if a group of people and Sufis have criticized reason, it is because they have called theological debates and arguments the same as reason, "and the Sufis could not determine for them that they had made a mistake in naming it because it was common in the languages and was not desired to be erased from the hearts, so they criticized reason and the reasonable, and their intention was that controversy. But how can the light of inner insight, by which the Almighty God can be recognized and the truth of the prophets can be known, be criticized? If they criticize it, what should they praise? And if it is praised by the law, by what can the truth of the law be known? If reason is not condemned, and it is not trusted, then the law would not be condemned either" (Ghazali, 1375: 201-202). Some

sources of the theology intended by Ghazali have considered it to be an Islamic or revealed ontology based on the Quran, which, unlike the common defensive theology, has an epistemological identity (Qaramaleki, 1378: 90-93). According to Ghazali, the science of the hereafter is limited to the science of revelation (the science of the inner self) and the science of transactions (the science of the state of the heart). In contrast, a science such as jurisprudence is considered a secular, religious science, but theology cannot be considered a religious science (Ghazali 1990: 59-64). In his opinion, some theological topics are clearly in the Book and Sunnah, and despite them, there is no need for theology, and some others are topics that the Quran and the Hadiths have not addressed. Such topics are either reprehensible arguments and fruitless and misleading matters, or they involve entering into a matter that has nothing to do with religion. However, now, considering the prevalence of innovations and doubts, its ruling has changed: "What innovations are born from the Quran and Sunnah, and a group has arisen to combine doubts for them and make a statement of authority, so (in this case) it is "excused by" necessity "permitted"" (ibid.: 64). Therefore, in the conditions of the spread of innovations, engaging in the science of theology is even considered a sufficient obligation, but nevertheless, regarding its value and credibility, he has stated that "then theology became one of those arts that is considered sufficient to protect the hearts of the common people from the imaginations of innovators, and it becomes necessary to give birth to innovations." And the theologian himself must also know that he has no mission or duty other than to protect and safeguard the sanctity of religion (Ghazali, 1375: 65). Here, Ghazali again resorts to the metaphor of a guard, which shows his view on the religious community's need for theologians. In this analogy, the theologian is like the guardian of the Hajj caravan, from his point of view, "just as there is a need to escort the caravan due to the oppression of the Arabs and their banditry on the Hajj route, and if the Arabs were to commit an offense, hiring guards would not be a condition of the Hajj route. Similarly, if an innovator were to engage in idle talk, there would be no need to increase the amount of talk that was common during the era of the Companions" (ibid.). Ghazali then uses this analogy and says: "So the theologian should know his limits by the fact that his status In religion, the status of a guard is on the way to Hajj. So, if a guard confines himself to guarding, he is not a pilgrim, and if a theologian confines himself to debating and defending, and does not become a follower of the path to the Hereafter, and does not engage in the commitment of the heart and its reformation, he is not at all one of the scholars of religion" (ibid.). Regarding the distinction of a theologian from the common people, Ghazali explicitly states that "a theologian has nothing but a belief in which the common people share with him, and he is distinguished from the common people by the art of debate and guarding" (ibid.). In other words, "the theologians must know their relationship with religion. A guard who follows the Hajj caravan, if he does nothing but guard, will not be one of the pilgrims, and a theologian who is only engaged in debate and advocacy, and does not walk on the path of the hereafter and does not examine the conditions of the heart, will not be among the scholars of religion in the first place" (Soroush, 1373: 110-111). The theologian should not think that he has deeper beliefs than the common people, because according to Ghazali, "knowledge of God, His attributes and actions, and all that I have mentioned in the science of revelation, cannot be obtained from the science of theology" (Ghazali, 1375: 65). In addition, in comparing the theologian and the common people, Ghazali says that not only is the science of theology not conducive to achieving the science of revelation and the heartfelt knowledge of God, His attributes and actions, but "it is close to being a veil for it and an obstacle to it" (Ghazali, 1375: 65). However, in Faisal al-Tafragh bin al-Islam wa al-Zindiqah, al-Ghazali considers engaging in theology to be forbidden due to the harms that arise from it, except for one of these two purposes: First, a person who has a doubt in his heart and is unable to dispel that doubt with ordinary, preachy words and reports transmitted from the Messenger of Allah. Such a person can use theological sayings and arguments to ward off his illness; Second, a person who has a

complete intellect, a firm foothold in religion, and a steadfast faith, and wants to cure the illness of people who have doubts in their hearts by learning this knowledge, or to convince them to commit innovations, or to protect his belief from the seductive attacks of innovators (ibid.: 94). In the same book, Ghazali somehow prefers the faith of the common people to the faith derived from the arguments of the Madrasah: "Whoever accepts the teachings of the Prophet and the content of the Quran with firm faith is considered a believer even if he does not know the logical reason for it. On the contrary, the faith derived from the arguments of the Madrasah is extremely weak and is at risk of collapsing at any moment due to the introduction of minor errors and flaws" (ibid.).

#### Examining the Disadvantages of theology

Considering the division of sciences from Ghazali's perspective and giving this science an instrumental status, Ghazali also takes a pessimistic view of theology in some of his works and also lists the disadvantages of theology. It seems that there is a contradiction in Ghazali's thought between considering the science of theology as universal and considering it as its guardian, and considering the science of theology as forbidden. To examine this contradiction, it is necessary to examine the disadvantages of theology in more detail. Some of these disadvantages have been mentioned earlier: One of the most important of them was the degradation of reason in the eyes of others due to the fruitless debates of theologians. Because reason, as Ghazali mentions, is the most important means for man to achieve faith and, as a result, happiness. However, limiting faith for ordinary people to dogmatic affirmation may be correct at first glance, but considering the fragility of such certainty in the face of the slightest doubt, it justifies the necessity of addressing theology. Deviation from certainty is a side effect of expanding into theology, not one of its inevitable consequences. If theology is defended against the doubts of its opponents, it is possible that a person who becomes familiar with theology will himself be caught in the trap of those doubts after a while. This is because theology, which initially sought to answer doubts, gradually became the subject of attack by believers, because expressing doubts in society is considered a form of doubt-casting. It is even possible for the theologian himself to doubt. This is why Al-Ghazali, at one point, bitterly recalls his experience with theology, in a way that seems to indicate regret: "And accept advice from someone who has spent a long time of his life on it, and has done more in it than his predecessors in composition, research, debate, and exposition. So God Almighty cast the right path into his heart, and informed him of the flaws of this art, until he abandoned it and became preoccupied with his own ego (Al-Ghazali 1384: 1: 201-101)

With this view, even the great may suffer from the study of theology and their faith may be in danger, let alone the general public (Al-Ghazali 1985: 86). On the other hand, pursuing this science is futile, The knowledge of God and His attributes and actions "does not come from the science of theology, but rather it is close to being its veil and an obstacle to it" (Ghazali 1384: 1: 56). He believes that what is beneficial from this science can also be obtained from verses and narrations, and therefore there is no need for it. However, what is not beneficial from it is merely uncondemned debate that the Imams consider to be an innovation (Ghazali, 1384, 1: 56). In addition to the negative effect of the science of theology in creating doubts in society (and in the heart of the individual theologian), another problem is that the science of theology is an innovation. Al-Ghazali, citing various narrations and relying on his jurisprudential background, considers every innovation as misguidance and its end is hellfire (Ghazali, 1985: 19-29). Al-Ghazali considers theology to be an innovation for two reasons: The first reason is that the Prophet and his companions did not address the issues of theology; whereas, firstly, other religious issues, such as interpretation, hadith, jurisprudence, and religious ethics, were extremely important to them and they addressed them in detail. And secondly, they also dealt with them in confronting the opinions of other religions and infidels, but they never felt the need for theology (ibid.: 28). However, this has the following flaw: during the time of the

prophets, infidels and other followers of divine religions did not go beyond a few who lived in the vicinity of Muslims in Medina and Najran, and Muslims were not yet familiar with the flood of various and complex ideas of the Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Indian religions, and they had not encountered the great philosophical system of the Greeks, which later found its way into Islamic thought through Arabic translations. Therefore, if the Prophet and his companions did not address these issues in their defense, there is no reason why Muslims would not address them later. Secondly, Al-Ghazali himself distinguishes between the Prophet and others in knowledge. The Prophet is a jurist by nature, and what scholars attain by following a difficult path, he understands by connecting to revelation. Therefore, his method of dealing with doubts cannot be prescribed for other periods.

The second reason is that the Prophet and his companions warned others against dealing with theological issues (such as the issue of predestination and destiny, etc.) (ibid.: 36-46 and 39-59). Therefore, Al-Ghazali considers the science of theology to be an innovation (ibid.: 18) because the righteous predecessors did not deal with it (ibid.: 09) and the right path is their path (ibid.: 35). However, it seems that the Prophet and his companions were warned against dealing with issues such as predestination and destiny as a political matter, and the narrations related to this matter were later added in the Umayyad period, considering the need to justify the legitimacy of the rule. The Umayyad school of thought, as well as the intellectual effort to provide a legal basis for it, has been fabricated. Because the Prophet based his call on rational matters and the call to thought, and the denial of thought in specific matters contradicts this basis.

To better examine the contradiction in Al-Ghazali's thought in the field of theology, it is necessary to examine his different stages of thought, because one of the conditions for contradiction is unity in time. It is possible that Al-Ghazali had a different view of theology at different stages of his life and his opinion changed over time. Therefore, the following discusses Al-Ghazali's different stages of thought.

Different stages of Ghazali's spiritual development:

In the first period of his scientific life - during his studies and teaching in the schools and scientific centers of Tus, Jurjan, Nishapur and during the completion of the Baghdad Nizamiyya - Ghazali was a diligent student in the field of religious sciences and the sciences of his time. He was interested and diligent in learning and then teaching the official sciences of his time. During this period, Ghazali was a Shafi'i scholar in jurisprudence and an Ash'ari scholar in theology. This made him a successful scholar, a famous teacher, a capable author, and a close friend of the Sultan and Caliph. He wrote important books such as "Maqasid al-Falasifah", "Tahafat al-Falasifah", "Fada'ih al-Batniyyah" and "Al-Iqtad fi al-'Itqad". The common aspect of these books can be considered an attempt to consolidate and defend the jurisprudential, intellectual and historical foundations of Shafi'i jurisprudence and the Abbasid government, which was faced with the onslaught of the Ismaili Fedayeen and the threat to the Fatimid Caliphate from Cairo.

The second period - In 488 AH, a great intellectual transformation occurred for Al-Ghazali, as a result of which he abandoned all his previous interests and rebelled against all the official sciences of his day. By escaping from the theological and jurisprudential schools, he turned to Sufism, which in his opinion could compensate for his lost certainty. During this period, he wrote his most important book, "Ihya' al-Ulum". This transformation could not only have had an intellectual root, but political factors also played a role in it, among these factors can be considered the threat of the Ismaili Fedayeen.

The third period, which took place after the period of major threats, saw Ghazali resume teaching at Nizamiyya from 499 AH onwards, and until 503 AH, when he was forced to leave teaching after the incitements of the jurists of Nishapur against him, he continued to teach

formal sciences, and during this period he authored works such as "Faisal al-Tafragh", "Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal" and "Al-Jam al-Awam an 'Ilm al-Kalam". Some have considered the period of doubt as an independent period and have therefore spoken of three periods: before doubt, the period of doubt, and the period after doubt (Al-Shami, 2002:96). One of the important points that is pointed out in this distinction is Al-Ghazali's turning away from the science of theology and its negation. Al-Ghazali has explained the turning away from the science of theology well and stated its reasons in both *Al-Munqidh* (Al-Ghazali, 1992:93-04) and *Al-Ihya'* (Al-Ghazali 1384:101-1/201). This has led not only the general public but also commentators and commentators of his works to conclude that Al-Ghazali had shied away from the science of theology and considered it inadequate for his purpose (Al-Shami, 2002:47 and Homaei 1342:9 and Zarrin Koob 1381:121 and Ibn Khaldun, 1385:9)

Ghazali's main view on the subject of theology

Ghazali, on the one hand, considers the science of theology to have a therapeutic and protective status, and on the other hand, he considers it an innovation, dangerous, or at least useless. At first glance, this is a contradiction in Ghazali's thought that is affected by his spiritual transformation. In other words, it seems that that spiritual transformation has also led to an intellectual transformation. If this is the case, then in the study of Ghazali's views, one should not refer to the works before his spiritual transformation, except for research purposes (Homaei, 1342:10). But it seems that this is not the case and a better explanation can be based on his division of sciences and the differences in the levels of people and the different levels of knowledge, as well as the role of theology in teaching and explaining beliefs. With this view, Ghazali's spiritual transformation did not lead to a fundamental transformation in his thought, and the effects of the period before and after his transformation are equally important. And more should be taken into account the political conditions and the circumstances of the time in the different ways he took a position on theology.

In this explanation, despite the criticisms, in Ghazali's view, theology is essential. As mentioned, in his view, this science is one of the prerequisites of theology. On the one hand, theology is considered an innovation, dangerous or useless, and on the other hand, the prerequisite of theology, is this a contradiction in Ghazali's thought? Based on this explanation, it seems that Al-Ghazali is not caught in a contradiction. Rather, his thought is precise and analytical and far from general rulings, in the sense that he does not issue a general ruling regarding theology, but rather analyzes different aspects of the subject and rules in this regard with regard to the differences in the levels of people and theologians, as well as the different levels of knowledge. From the perspective of the audience, he rules with regard to their differences in the level of theology, and from the perspective of theologians, he examines theology with regard to their level of knowledge, as well as their purity and freedom from hypocrisy. And from the perspective of the different levels of knowledge, he considers theology to be a general science that has a protective and therapeutic aspect, and one should not abandon the principle, which is the effort to achieve certainty and faith.

From this perspective, the narrative that there is a contradiction in Ghazali's views and that the root of this contradiction lies in his spiritual transformation has a practical implication for the reader, namely that the works of the period before the transformation were not valued much and that ignoring them has no particular impact on understanding Ghazali's true perspective. However, this narrative is not very accurate. Rather, as mentioned, a cross-sectional and simultaneous examination of Ghazali's works on specific topics, such as his perspective on theology, shows that his ideas have not undergone a fundamental transformation. In fact, there is a kind of continuity and coherence in his views. The apparent differences in the text can be explained if viewed from the perspective of Ghazali. For example, in the case of theology, the issuance of an analytical-separate ruling in relation to the audience and the theologian, at different levels, and Al-Ghazali's deep belief in the degrees of truth opens the way to

understanding many of his views. It seems that the entirety of Al-Ghazali's views on theology have a special implication for religious education. Today, religious education is explained based on a theological approach. According to Al-Ghazali's works, his view is completely opposed to religious education based on a theological approach. This is why Al-Ghazali considers it inappropriate for the general public to engage in theology and believes that they should not be involved in theological matters in any way. In fact, Al-Ghazali's ruling is a ruling prohibiting theology for the general public. In discussing public duties, Al-Ghazali considered one of the cases to be avoidance of thought in relation to some cases of theology, as mentioned above. He believes that the common man should not involve his mind in these matters, and if someone's mind becomes polluted with these matters, he should think about other matters; for example, he should study grammar, medicine, or jurisprudence, or he should engage in business. Al-Ghazali goes so far as to say that if the common man's mind is constantly occupied with these theological matters, it is better to engage in games and entertainment, and even for the common man, turning to sin is better than being polluted with the science of theology, because the ultimate course of a sinner is depravity and repentance and forgiveness, but the consequence of engaging in these matters for the common man is polytheism and disbelief that remains with a person until the end and there is no forgiveness (Al-Ghazali 1985: 77-87). This prescription can be derived from a deep familiarity with Al-Ghazali was familiar with the complexities of theology. Considering his jurisprudential background and teaching, he had come to the certainty from experience that the common mind is not capable of understanding the complexities of theology. Therefore, in practice, theology is not medicine for him, but a deadly poison. On this basis, he ruled that theology should be banned for the general public.

It may be said that a learned teacher who is familiar with the complexities of theology can teach students with this approach, but Al-Ghazali explicitly forbade such a thing not only for teachers who are aware of theology but even for “people of knowledge” (Ghazali, 1985:76). It may be said that such a thing would block the way for any kind of education, for or against religion, in schools, and even the way for any kind of teaching about religion from an intellectual perspective. But the point at issue here is not the negation of religious education, but the prohibition of the use of theological approach in religious education. It is clear that, considering the idea, one cannot turn away from religious education because religious education deals with the issue of faith, and faith is the concern for eternal salvation. What Ghazali says is the rejection of the use of theological approach in general religious education.

#### **The Relationship Between Sufism and Theology in Ghazali's View**

Ghazali has suggested another way to acquire knowledge, in addition to the way of scholars. He says that Sufis have not incited the acquisition of knowledge and the study of books and textbooks in search of the truth of matters, but rather have said that the way to acquire knowledge is to prioritize the struggle to eliminate bad traits and cut off all attachments and turn towards God Almighty with all effort. When someone attains this status, God's mercy will be bestowed upon him, and the secrets of the kingdom will be revealed to him, and the truths of affairs will become clear to him. The seeker on this path must only prepare himself for the purification of the soul, and be present with intention, sincere will, and full thirst, and wait and watch for the things that God will make clear to him out of His mercy (Ghazali, 1376: 45). In Ghazali's opinion, although the observers (experts) have not denied the existence of the Sufi path and the possibility of reaching the goal through this path, they have considered this path difficult and considered it unlikely that it will reach the goal, and they have thought that such a struggle is like an impossible task, and if it is achieved at some point, its stability seems more unlikely than its achievement. A person may acquire fantasies and think that they are truths that have been revealed to him (ibid.: 46). The Prophet, without *ijtihad*, was a jurist of the soul, but if a disciple wants to reach his level by mere asceticism, he has set unrealistic expectations.

Thus, although Ghazali also recognizes the path of Sufism, he is well aware of its potential for deviation and for individual flaws to be considered right when they are wrong.

In the history of Islamic thought, the debate between mystics, Sufis, and theologians is a familiar one. The debate also extended to the issue of faith (Shabestari, 1379: 12). Sufis have considered it inappropriate to base faith on reasoning and have considered faith to be based primarily on the heart and religious feelings. On this basis, faith deals primarily with the human heart, and the mind and organs have a secondary connection with it. Al-Ghazali also agrees with Sufism in this regard. The basis of his argument is historical reasoning and analogy with history. In his opinion, people in the era of the Prophet never believed in the Messenger through rational proof and logical arguments. What drew them to the Prophet and what caused them to accept the call of divine revelation were non-rational matters, not rational arguments, such as the calm and reassuring appearance of the Messenger, his good character and sincerity, hearing the message of God, etc. After faith, the Messenger did not ask them to think about theological issues and their evidence (Ghazali, 1985: 117). Ghazali emphatically states that faith is a divine light that is shone on the hearts of people and has nothing to do with reasoning. Sometimes by inspiration to the heart, sometimes by a dream in a dream, sometimes by seeing a believer or even hearing the stories of the true believers, sometimes by sitting together and associating with people of the heart, and things like this, a person turns towards faith. (ibid.: 38) Ghazali's argument is in conflict with the difference he makes between different levels of people, and also that the appeal to historical reasons can easily be rejected due to changing conditions of time and society.

Ghazali mentions in *Al-Munqidh* the way he entered the field of Sufism as follows: After I graduated from the sciences of Sharia, I wrote the book (*Arba'in*) and collected the sciences of ancient philosophy in the book (*Maqdis al-Falasifah*) and also composed the book (*Al-Tahafat*). Then, by studying the books of Sufism and mysticism, I realized that their method and style begin with knowledge and action, and the result of their work is the cessation of moral vices and purification from morals and reprehensible qualities, so that by doing so, the heart becomes empty of other than God and the sweetness and sweetness of remembering God is achieved. It was at this time that I realized that it was easier to become aware of their beliefs and practices than to adopt and behave in their practical ways. So I began to study mystical books such as: *Qutb al-Qulub* by Abu Talib Makki (may God have mercy on him), the books of Harith al-Muhasibi, and various treatises by Sheikh Junaid al-Baghdadi, Shibli, Abu Yazid al-Bastami, and a number of other books and views of this people. I used their words and opinions like someone who wants to research a school or religion. So I came to this conclusion that the only way to reach the truth of their words and views is possible and not possible except through the taste and desire of the heart and the exchange of their mystical qualities and states. It was after this that I realized this truth that they (Sufis) are the owners of the state and perfection, not the companions of the saying. So I realized that Sufis are the true seekers of God and travelers towards God Almighty, and it is true that their way and manner are the best, most perfect and correct way for a servant to reach God. And it is true that their noble ethics are the highest and most perfect ethics. Rather, if the intellect of all the wise, the wisdom of all the sages, and the knowledge of all the scholars of humanity, if they wanted to express an ethics and a higher level than the ethics of Sufis, they would achieve nothing other than helplessness and inability in this regard, because all their ethics and behavior, their outward and inward, are derived from the light and lamp of prophecy and mission, and there is no light on earth greater and brighter than the light of prophecy and mission that sheds light on the world and creatures. With all these characteristics, for me, It has become clear that the sect and sect are truly the saviors and the redeemed. What is the researcher's opinion about a school and religion whose first condition is to completely and completely purify the heart and interior from anything other than God, and whose pillar and key is prayer at the time of the takbir of ihram, which encompasses the entire



being of the seeker, being immersed in the greatness and majesty of God, and whose final stage is becoming immortal in the supreme attributes of God? (Ghazali, 1992: 145)

Here it is observed that Ghazali considers the path of the heart to be more direct than any other path in discovering the truth. In his statement, the heart is the sum of the supreme spiritual life, to which the senses and the soul are subordinate, and the intellect is also considered a part of it. The highest degree of the heart belongs to the prophet, who considers knowledge to be through divine inspiration in the way of discovery and without acquisition, and the ranks of saints, sages, and scholars each indicate their ranks.

The heart can encompass all the secrets and mysteries of the universe, discover the truth of trust, and reach the highest degree of faith, which is the faith of the mystics, and this type of faith is necessary for the explanation of Sadr. Al-Ghazali does not address only Sufis. He considers Muslims in general and tries to clarify religious issues for them in general and from the perspective of the mystics and Sufis. For example, in the discussion of Sama', he follows the same method, and therefore, in the fatwa resolving the issue of haram and halal, he does not resolve it only for Sufis, but rather considers the general audience and, taking into account their circumstances, whether they are mystical or non-mystical, issues a special ruling and pays attention to the psychology of Sama': (Pour Javadi: 1381: 14)

Conclusion: Ghazali has a very sympathetic and lenient view of mystics and Sufis. The reason for this, in addition to his good opinion of Sufis, should also be sought in several other matters. First, his skill in theology is greater than in Sufism. Because Sufism, as Al-Munqidh mentioned at the beginning, consists of knowledge and practice, and Ghazali is more familiar with the theoretical ideas of the described ones. He has not delved much into their practical path, but he is one of the greatest Ash'arite theologians regarding theology, and after years of teaching, he is well acquainted with the complexities and difficulties of theology, and therefore he is more familiar with its dangers. The second reason can be seen in the light of the duty that Ghazali, as a Sunni Ash'arite scholar, received in defending the political system and beliefs of his time, dominated by the Abbasids and Sunni jurisprudence. This thought and system of governance had a great enemy in Ghazali's time, namely the Fatimids in Egypt. Al-Ghazali devoted a large part of his writings to rejecting the ideas of the esotericists and their intellectual foundations, as well as philosophers whose views conflicted with these two important matters. Theology was also hated and rejected by Al-Ghazali because it could have played a role in weakening the beliefs of Muslims through the spread of doubt, and therefore caused a kind of weakness against esoteric thought. He only recognized it as a means of protection and treatment, but he did not see such a threat hidden in Sufism. Sufis emphasized silence and concealing their thoughts and beliefs from non-believers, therefore they did not introduce any fundamental doubt into the beliefs of Muslims. On the other hand, the emphasis on action and following the path limited them to rare individuals.

In Ghazali's view, Sufism is not a science, but rather a practical method for achieving faith, while theology is a general science, whose function is to guard and cure doubts and false beliefs. Therefore, although it can play a helpful role, it will never lead to certainty.

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