

Chapter IV / MYSTICAL VIRTUES



Ghazali and Mysticism

THE virtues appropriate to the few who seek ultimate happiness in the hereafter, that is, the vision of God, are established by Ghazali on the basis of a careful and elaborate interpretation of the hidden meanings of the divine commandments. This interpretation can be mastered by the truly learned men ('*ulamā*') only. These are not jurists, theologians, or philosophers, but only the mystics (*sūfiyyah*); and Ghazali identifies himself with the mystics:

I learned with certainty that it is above all the mystics who walk in the path of God; their life is the best life, their method the soundest method, their character the purest character (*wa akhlāqum azkā al-akhlāq*).¹

Relating how he came to accept mysticism, Ghazali points out that he found that this discipline includes both knowledge and practice. It was relatively easy for Ghazali to acquire the mystics' knowledge. In a statement about his sources, he begins with al-Makkī's work, the *Food of Hearts* (*Qūt al-Qulūb*), which he seems to consider his textbook of mysticism. Then he mentions "the works of al-Muḥāsibī," followed by "the various scattered sayings (*mutafarriqāt*)" of al-Junayd, al-Shiblī, and al-Bisṭāmī, and finally "the discourses" of unnamed mystics.² Ghazali starts with al-Makki and al-Muḥāsibī, two mystics known for their effort to reconcile mysticism with Islamic religious teachings. Al-Bisṭāmī, who was known for his mystical heresies, is mentioned last. The reference to the "discourses" of unnamed mystics may refer to other mystics with

1. *Munqidh*, p. 101, where Ghazali's admiration of the mystical character traits culminates in his assumption that what is worthwhile in philosophic ethics is borrowed from the teachings of the mystics (cf. *Munqidh*, p. 81).

2. *Munqidh*, pp. 95-96: "I began to acquaint myself with their belief by reading their books, such as the *Food of Hearts* (*Qūt al-Qulūb*) by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (may God have mercy upon him), the works of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, the various scattered sayings (*mutafarriqāt*) of al-Junayd, al-Shiblī, and Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (may God sanctify their spirits), and other discourses of their leading men."

the reputation of al-Bisṭāmī.¹ Ghazali, therefore, identifies himself more specifically with a tradition of mysticism which stood for synthesizing mystical and Islamic religious ideas. Al-Makkī's book, in particular "is of primary importance, as being the first and a very successful attempt to construct an overall design for orthodox Sufism."² Ghazali quotes extensively from the *Food of Hearts* in the *Revival*, especially in Quarter IV, which deals with the mystical virtues. Whole sections are simply reproduced, and even the sayings of earlier mystics and learned men, prophetic traditions, and the traditions of the Companions, are set forth as presented by al-Makkī.³ This book, then, appears to be one of the sources through which Ghazali acquainted himself with the "scattered sayings" of early mystics.⁴

Ghazali's originality can be seen in his selection, arrangement, and synthesis of the material he extracted from al-Makkī. Ghazali achieves a degree of clarity in his presentation of the basic features of mysticism by introducing a rational, theoretical framework to explain certain otherwise inexplicable aspects of mysticism. He had learned the language of the philosophers and theologians before he acquired a personal experience of the mystical life and was ready to perfect the work begun by al-Makkī and mystics like him.⁵ The speech (*kalām*) of the mystics, Ghazali points out, is incomplete and sometimes even defective because it is the habit of each one of them to give an account of his own spiritual state alone, without any regard for the states of others; consequently, their explicit statements diverge markedly. Because of this, Ghazali feels

1. On al-Bisṭāmī see 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Shaṭḥāt al-Ṣūfiyyah I. Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyyah, 1949), pp. 21-29; cf. R.C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 86-134.

2. A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950), p. 68.

3. Especially Books 1-7 of Quarter IV of the *Revival*. cf. al-Makkī *Qūt al-Qulūb* (2 vols.; Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1961), I, 364ff., II, 1-164; Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 68, where he says that *Qūt al-Qulūb* "was carefully studied by al-Ghazali and exercised considerable influence on his mode of thought and writing"; L. Massignon, "al-Makkī," *Et II*, 174, where he points out that whole pages of the same book have been copied by Ghazali in the *Revival*. The commentator on the *Revival*, al-Zabīdī, shows that Ghazali was influenced in his mystical views in a substantial way by al-Makkī; see his *Ithāf*, I, 30; VIII, 499; the same view was expressed by an earlier authority on Ghazali, al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, IV, 126.

4. Ali Hasan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd* (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1962), p. 55.

5. Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 68.

that rational knowledge is capable of giving a better and more objective account of spiritual experience.¹

Comparing the mystical and rational ways of achieving happiness, Ghazali remarks that the validity of the mystical way cannot be disputed. It brings those who practice it to their goal, which is the sublime state enjoyed by saints and prophets. But this kind of discipline is not without serious dangers. The mind may be adversely affected, the health of the body destroyed, and melancholy may ensue:

If the soul has not been exercised in the sciences that deal with fact and demonstration, it will acquire mental phantasms and suppose that truths are descending upon it. Many a Sufi has continued for ten years in one such fancy before escaping from it, whereas if he had a sound scientific education he would have been delivered from it at once.²

Thus, mysticism is accepted by Ghazali as a superior way to true happiness, but it must always be rooted in and remain under the control of trained reason. For this reason he uses mysticism to explain and modify the philosophic and religious-legal paths to happiness and at the same time clarifies the mystical approach through the use of Islamic teachings and the philosophic tradition. He points out continuously that the mystic must always observe religious law and practice, making this the sign of the first resting place of those who are travelling the road to God (*'alāmāt al-manzil al-awwal min manāzil al-sā'irīn*).³ In Ghazali's view, the so-called earlier theorists of Sufism, such as al-Makkī, al-Sarrāj, and al-Qushayrī, did not fully succeed in their effort to reconcile mysticism with the tenets of Islam and at the same time clarify the mystical spiritual experiences. His own rational, theoretical explanation of these experiences is meant to give a clear account of them and, in addition, to synthesize or harmonize them with both Islamic and philosophic teachings in a homogeneous whole with a single ultimate end.⁴

1. *R*, IV. 3. 2316.

2. *C*, p. 46; cf. *R*, III. 1. 1379; Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1965), p. 110.

3. *C*, p. 204.

4. Ghazali's rational approach to mysticism in general was perceived and commented upon by some later Muslim thinkers as well as by his contemporaries. Ibn Taymiyyah, for example, states that "Ghazali was inclined toward philosophy, presented it in a mystical form, and expressed it in Islamic terminology" (Ibn Taymiyyah, *Naqd*, p. 56; *Radd*, p. 195). Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī, a friend and one-time student of Ghazali, maintains that Ghazali had penetrated deeply into philosophy, and when he wanted to leave it, he could not. (Quoted by Ibn Taymiyyah in his *Muwāfaqat* I, 2.) On the basis of this statement, 'Abd al-Rahmān Badawī concludes that Ghazali's

Characteristics of Mystical Virtues

It has already been mentioned in the Introduction to this study that the core of Ghazali's mystical doctrine can be considered not only an ethical theory but also a theory of virtue. Ghazali distinguishes between the "knowledge of revelation" and the "knowledge of devotional practice." The former, in his view, cannot and must not be expressed or laid down in writing. Since only the latter can be expressed, and because Ghazali equates that with ethics in general and virtue in particular, the study of Ghazali's mysticism means essentially the study of the mystical virtues. The few, with whom Ghazali is concerned, on the highest level of moral refinement, are the mystics whose end is not knowledge or paradise, but nearness to God. The special "qualities" which these few can acquire for their special kind of ultimate happiness, therefore, lie beyond the specific limits of philosophic and religious-legal virtues. These qualities of the few which we call "mystical virtues" are concerned in the first place with the spiritual well-being of the individual in his special relation to God.

Ghazali discusses these mystical virtues in Quarter IV of the *Revival*. He also deals with them in a summary way in the fourth part of the *Book of the Forty, Concerning the Principles of Religion* (*Kitāb al-Arba'in fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*), which is an abridgement of the *Revival*. A longer summary in Persian known as the *Alchemy of Happiness* (*Kīmīyā-yi Sa'ādat*) deals with the same mystical virtues. However, the number and the order of these virtues differ from one book to the other. The arrangement of

opposition to philosophy meant the rejection of Aristotelianism in favor of Neoplatonism; see his article "al-Ghazālī wa Maṣādiruh al-Yūnāniyyah," *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī fī al-Dhikrā al-Mi'awīyyah al-Tāsi'ah li Milādih*, ed. Zakī Najīb Maḥmūd (Cairo: al-Majlis al-A'lā li-Ri'āyat al-Funūn, 1961), pp. 221-37; the same article appeared in his book: *Dawr al-'Arab fī Takwīn al-Fikr al-Awribbī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb, 1965), pp. 150-73. Simon van den Bergh, on the other hand, tries to trace Stoic and Neoplatonic sources for at least two mystical qualities discussed by Ghazali, namely, gratitude and love; see his articles, "Ghazali on 'Gratitude towards God' and its Greek sources," *Studia Islamica*, VII (1957), 77-98; and "The 'Love of God' in Ghazali's Vivification of Theology," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, I (1956), 305-321. Although inquiring into the possible Neoplatonic or Stoic philosophic origin of Ghazali's mysticism may be important and useful in clarifying certain issues, the first question which the student of Ghazali must face is not whether he borrowed this or that particular idea, but how he understands the views he holds and what use he makes of them. To answer this question, it is necessary to reconstruct and obtain a comprehensive view of Ghazali's thought and understand the way he synthesizes the different traditions whose sources are already present in the writings of Muslim philosophers, theologians, and mystics.

mystical virtues in these books is given in Table 2¹ (p. 159).

Ghazali's various arrangements of mystical virtues can also be compared with those of other mystical writers who preceded him, such as al-Kharrāz, al-Sarrāj, al-Makkī, al-Kalābādhī, al-Qushayrī, and al-Anṣārī al-Harawī, which are given in the table of the Sufi's lists of mystical virtues (Table 3, p. 160).²

We pointed out in Chapter II above that Ghazali uses the expressions *khuluq ḥaṣan* and *khuluq maḥmūd* to mean the same things as *faḍīlah*, i.e., virtue. When dealing with the religious-legal virtues, however, he uses the first two terms more often than the third. This can be explained by the fact that, for the Islamic traditional moralists, virtue is known as *khuluq maḥmūd*, *khuluq ḥaṣan*, or *khuluq karīm*, while *faḍīlah* is the term commonly used by Muslim philosophers for virtue.³ In dealing specifically with mystical virtues, Ghazali calls them "commendable character traits" (*akhlāq maḥmūdah*). In the introduction to the *Revival*, he says "As for 'The Quarter on Things Leading to Salvation (*Rub' al-Munjiyāt*)' I shall mention in it every commendable character trait (*khuluq maḥmūd*)";⁴ and in the *Book of the Forty*, he uses the same expression as the title of the fourth part, which deals with the mystical virtues.⁵ He also calls these mystical virtues the "qualities of salvation" (*al-ṣifāt al-munjiyāt*).⁶

1. The order of mystical virtues in the *Alchemy of Happiness* is given according to the Tehran edition (Ghazali, *Kīmīyā-yi Sa'ādat* [2 vols., 2d ed., Tehran: Kitāb-furūshī va Chāpkāne-yi Markazī, 1333/1954], II, 507-977); but according to Badawī the manuscript of the *Alchemy of Happiness* in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah MSS, 13 Mysticism, has the same order of these virtues as the *Revival*; see Badawī's *Mu'allafāt*, p. 176.

2. Abū Sa'id Aḥmad Ibn 'Isā al-Kharrāz, *Kitāb al-Ṣidq*, ed. by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, n.d.), pp. 24-87; Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, ed. by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Ṭāha 'Abd al-Bāqī Surūr (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1960), pp. 65-97; al-Makkī *Qūt*, I, 364ff., II, 1-164. Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Kalābādhī, *al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Ṭāha 'Abd al-Bāqī Surūr (Cairo: 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1966), pp. 86-134; Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, ed. by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd bin al-Sharīf (2 vols.; Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1966), I, 252-408, II, 421-632; 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī, *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, ed. by S. de Laugier de Beaurecueil (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1962), pp. 9-113.

3. Bishr Fāris, *Mabāḥith 'Arabiyyah* (Cairo Maṭba'at al-Ma'ārif, 1939), pp. 21-31, where he discusses the term *khuluq karīm* and gives an account of the traditions about *makārim al-akhlāq*.

4. *R*, p. 4; cf. *R*, I. 1. 36.

5. *Arba'in*, p. 175.

6. *R*, IV. 9. 2811.

Furthermore, he calls these virtues "stations" or "stages" (*maqāmāt*), terms which are more at home in the mystical tradition.¹ Thus, to identify virtue, Ghazali moves from *faḍīlah*, which is more commonly used by the philosophers, to *khuluq ḥaṣan* or *khuluq maḥmūd*, which are preferred by the Islamic traditional moralists, to *ṣifah* and *maqām*, which are better known to the mystics. The term *khuluq ḥaṣan*, however, seems to be the central expression which connects all the other terms, since it is used throughout Ghazali's treatment of philosophic, religious-legal, and mystical virtues.

Ghazali's identification of the virtues, character traits, and qualities of salvation is more than mere terminological usage. The mystical qualities, like the philosophic virtues, comprise the means to attain happiness. The philosophers understood passions as the stuff of virtue. Yet, most of the mystical qualities (in particular fear, hope, and love) are basically passions. Love, the last of these, is the highest mystical virtue man can acquire during his life.

According to Aristotle, the passions are: "desire, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendship, hatred, longing, jealousy, pity, and generally those states of consciousness which are accompanied by pleasure or pain."² He argues that:

Neither the virtues nor the vices are passions, because we are not called good or bad on the ground of our passions, but are so called on the ground of our virtues and our vices, and because we are neither praised nor blamed for our passions (for the man who feels fear or anger is not praised, nor the man who feels anger blamed, but the man who feels it in a certain way), but for our virtues and our vices we are praised or blamed.³

Only when a passion is felt in a certain way can it become a virtue. Virtue is a state of character. It is concerned with passions and actions, in which both excess and deficiency are blamed, while the intermediate is praised and is a form of success; and being praised and being successful are both characteristic of virtue, which is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean relative to us.⁴

Ghazali follows this Aristotelian approach when dealing with the philosophic virtues, as we saw in Chapter II above.⁵ But when dealing

1. R, IV. 2. 2179.

2. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 2. 5. 1105b20-22.

3. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 2. 5. 1105b29-1106a2.

4. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 2. 5. 1105b25-35.

5. R, III. 2. 1441.

with mystical virtues, he diverges sharply from it. Making use of the more elaborate and detailed treatment of the passions in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*,¹ Ghazali takes the same passions which are used as the basis for the philosophic virtues, and looks at them in the light of his views of nearness to God. This is the genesis of Ghazali's "new" virtues which we have called mystical. For example, because the philosophers regard death as the object of the greatest human fear, they conclude that fear is a defect for which the corresponding virtue is courage. Ghazali, on the other hand, looks at the same passion in the light of man's relation to God, who ought to be feared both in this life and the next, and concludes that the right state of character is "fear of God." Thus the passions are raised to higher levels beyond the usual low rank assigned to them in the treatment of "philosophic virtues." In the same way, Ghazali frequently takes a disposition generally understood in terms of man's relation with his fellow men, abstracts it from the political context, and reformulates it in terms of his concept of nearness to God. For example, he takes "trust" as exercised by man toward his fellow men, and modifies it in terms of man's special relation to God, thus establishing the mystical virtue of "trust in God."

In addition, Ghazali establishes these mystical virtues through methods similar to those by which the philosophic virtues are established. The only change he introduces concerns the object and the end of virtue. The ultimate end, according to him, necessitates purifying the soul and freeing it from the body as far as possible, so that it may devote itself entirely to the highest passion, namely, love of God. Since this highest passion is private, the end of the mystical virtues transcends political activity: they free man, not only from the body, but from the city as well.

After establishing the mystical qualities as virtues, Ghazali emphasizes what he calls their basic characteristics. In his view, each one of these virtues comprises three elements which follow one another consecutively. The first is knowledge, which produces the second, a positive disposition (*ḥāl*), which in turn causes the third, action.² This distinction reflects

1. Aristotle *Rhetoric* 2. 1. 1378a-11. 1389a. It is likely that Ghazali had access to the discussion of the passions in the writings of Avicenna. See, e.g., Avicenna's *Fī al-Akhlāq wa al-Inf'ālāt al-Nafsāniyyah* in *Memorial Avicenna IV Miscellanea*, contribution de M. L. Massignon, Mme Denise Remondon et M. G. Vatom (Cairo: Publications de l'Institut Français d'Archeologie Orientale, 1954), pp. 23-26.

2. Ghazali mentions these common characteristics in several places in Quarter IV of the *Revival*; cf. R, IV. 2. 2179, 2305. I have translated *ḥāl* here as a "positive disposition" rather than "a state" because in this context Ghazali means by *ḥāl* a per-

Ghazali's independence from earlier Sufi accounts of these virtues inasmuch as he uses nonmystical doctrines to explain mystical notions. This kind of analysis of the essential components of the mystical virtues obviously belongs to the philosophic tradition. However, whereas he enumerated four basic elements in connection with the philosophic virtues—namely, faculty, knowledge, positive disposition, and action—he eliminates the category, faculty, in relation to the mystical virtues. He does not give his reasons for doing so. One can only assume that, while a psychic faculty is of importance in a system which depends primarily on unaided reason, it is of secondary importance in relation to a discipline which relies on divine assistance. Moreover, in his discussion of philosophic virtue, Ghazali maintains that virtue applies only to the positive disposition from among the four above-mentioned elements, whereas here he considers three of these as necessary components of mystical virtues. It seems that Ghazali's emphasis on all the three basic elements, here, is a theoretical orientation which he introduces into his discussion in order to clarify these mystical virtues, which are usually extremely vague in the mystical manuals. Nonetheless, in the course of his detailed discussion of some of these virtues, Ghazali himself singles out the positive disposition as that which is most properly called virtue; knowledge is something which leads to it, and action is its product.¹

Ghazali's independence from earlier Sufi accounts is also revealed in his manipulation of mystical terminology. Although he chooses certain technical terms current in mystical literature, he tends to define them in his own way. Station (*maqām*) was usually distinguished by earlier mystics from state (*ḥāl*). According to al-Qushayrī, a station signifies a spiritual plateau in the novice's progress to God, which is the result of the mystic's personal effort and endeavor, whereas a state is a spiritual mood depending, not upon the mystic, but upon God: " 'States' are gifts; while 'stations' are earnings."² In general, Sufi authors insist upon the effort of the soul as it approaches the station, just as they emphasize the received character of the state. Furthermore, stations are

manent character trait in the soul and not "a passing state." *Ḥāl*, here, is similar to the term *hay'ah*, which Ghazali uses in his discussion of the philosophic virtues. *Hay'ah* is also a positive disposition which results from knowledge and, in turn, produces action; cf. *R*, III. 2. 1441.

1. *R*, IV. 2. 2180, where Ghazali applies the term "patience" to the "positive disposition."

2. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, I, 193.

permanent, while states are transitory.¹ Al-Sarrāj, the author of a well-known early Sufi manual, regards stations as moral habits and states as psychological conditions of mind.² According to Ghazali, in contrast, the difference between states and stations is one of degree and not of kind. When a character trait of the soul becomes permanent and persists, it is a station; if, on the other hand, it occurs sporadically, it is a state.³ This definition is reiterated in the *Dictation* (*al-Imlā'*), a book Ghazali wrote to defend the *Revival* and explain the mystical terms used in it.⁴ This view of states and stations shows that only stations can be regarded as virtues, since stability is an essential characteristic of virtue. It is for this reason that Ghazali calls mystical virtues stations.⁵

Because of the fact that various stations and states are closely related to each other, and each Sufi has his own doctrine of spiritual refinement, mystical writers differ with regard to the definition and arrangement of these stations and states.⁶ Ghazali, likewise, presents his own arrangement of these stations, but he does not enumerate a specific number of them as do some of the Sufi writers who preceded him. (Al-Makkī, for instance, maintains that they are nine).⁷ Nevertheless, Ghazali preserves the notion of order or hierarchy in mystical virtues, that is, which virtue must be acquired first, which one should follow, and, finally, which is the highest virtue which one can acquire. He agrees with most of the earlier Sufis in regarding "repentance" (*tawbah*) as the first station for the novice. At the other pole, he follows al-Makkī in regarding love (*maḥabbah*) as the highest station possible for man in this life. In his view, repentance, patience, gratitude, hope, fear, poverty, asceticism, divine unity, and trust, in this order, all lead to love; whereas yearning, intimacy, and satisfaction are the fruits (*thimār*) or the by-products of love.⁸

1. L. Gardet, "Hāl," *IEI*, II, 83.

2. al-Sarrāj, *Luma'*, pp. 65-66; cf. al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb*, trans. by Reynold A. Nicholson (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1911), p. 180-81.

3. *R*, IV. 3. 2316.

4. Ghazali, *al-Imlā'* 'alā *Ishkālāt al-Ihyā'* in *Mulḥaq Ihyā'* 'Ulūm al-Dīn (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyyah al-Kubrā, n.d.), p. 16.

5. For example, he calls them the "stations of those who travel the way to God" (*maqāmāt al-sālikīn*) (*R*, IV. 3. 2316), and the "stations of religion" (*maqāmāt al-dīn*) (*R*, IV. 3. 2360). By religion (*dīn*), Ghazali says, "we mean the relation of devotional practice (*mu'āmalah*) between man and his Lord" (*R*, IV. 9. 2810).

6. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif in *Mulḥaq Ihyā'* 'Ulūm al-Dīn, p. 225.

7. al-Makkī, *Qūt*, I, 364.

8. *R*, IV. 6. 2580.

These virtues, which are also known as stations, are the principal mystical virtues because they are presented as the major plateaus to be reached by the few in their pursuit of ultimate happiness. In this, Ghazali agrees with al-Makkī.

In addition to these mystical virtues, Ghazali enumerates six more qualities of the soul which he does not specifically call stations. These are not presented by al-Makkī as stations, although he deals with some of them as separate and independent mystical attributes.¹ Nevertheless, they are mystical virtues in the sense that they are attributes and qualities of salvation which must be acquired by the mystic. According to Ghazali, these six mystical virtues can be classified in three groups. They are ordered as follows: resolve, sincerity, truthfulness; vigilance, self-examination; and finally, meditation.

Ghazali deals with these six virtues at the end of the *Revival*, after completing his discussion of love and its by-products. There is no transition in his presentation between love and resolve, the first of these virtues. Indeed, he does not mention any of the six mystical virtues when describing the order of the virtues that lead to love of God.² In the *Alchemy of Happiness*, however, Ghazali (who orders these six virtues in the same way as in the *Revival*) places all of them after "asceticism" and before "divine unity,"³ but in the *Book of the Forty*, Ghazali places the first three of these virtues between gratitude and trust, and does not mention the other three virtues at all.⁴ That Ghazali moves these six virtues back and forth together and that in every case he presents them as a group in the same order, suggests that they form a cohesive group somehow outside the principal mystical virtues. Ghazali describes the mystical virtues in question as a means of bringing about, supporting, and perfecting the principal mystical virtues. In this respect they pertain equally to all principal mystical virtues. Thus, a man may be truthful in his repentance and, when he acquires love, he may become truthful in his love. Finally, although this group of mystical virtues shares with the principal mystical virtues the characteristic of being directed toward

1. al-Makkī, *Qūt*, II, 311, where he discusses "sincerity."

2. *R*, IV, 6, 2580. The six mystical virtues in question are discussed in Books, 7, 8, and 9 of the fourth Quarter of the *Revival*. The arrangement is the same in *RB* and *RM*.

3. *Kīmīyā-yi*, I, 855-911. However, Badawī quotes a Cairo manuscript of the same work (Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah MSS, 13 Mysticism) as having the same order Ghazali assigns to these six mystical virtues in the *Revival*; see his *Mu'allafāt*, p. 176.

4. *Arba'in*, pp. 206-217.

God, they seem to be primarily concerned with the internal relationships of the faculties within the soul.

Therefore, the basic characteristic of these six mystical virtues is to prepare the way and provide the psychological basis for the major mystical virtues. To distinguish between these two groups, we call the major ones principal mystical virtues and the others supporting mystical virtues. The function of these supporting mystical virtues in preparing the soul for the fulfillment of a perfect acquisition of each principal virtue suggests the desirability of dealing with them first.

Supporting Mystical Virtues

We mentioned above that these mystical virtues are particularly concerned with the internal relationships of the faculties of the soul. They make it submissive and obedient to the will of God, and enable the mystic to struggle against the whims of the soul and seek its purification so that it can ascend through the spiritual "stations." These six supporting mystical virtues can be divided into three groups following Ghazali's own division in the *Revival*. The first includes resolve (*niyyah*), sincerity (*ikhhlās*), and truthfulness (*ṣidq*), all of which are the subject of Book 7 of Quarter IV of the *Revival*. The second group is composed of vigilance (*murāqabah*) and self-examination (*muḥāsabah*), dealt with in Book 8 of Quarter IV of the *Revival*. The third is meditation (*tafakkur*) which is the sole subject of Book 9 of Quarter IV of the same work.

RESOLVE

This is the first of the three virtues in the first group; it is inseparable from the other two since according to Ghazali resolve is useless without sincerity, and sincerity is nothing unless truthfulness is connected to it and perfects it.¹ For him, resolve is the basis of action in that action needs a special resolve to become good; resolve, however, is good in itself even if no action results from it. Although Ghazali says that resolve, will (*irādah*), and intention (*qaṣd*) are all words which are used to mean one and the same thing, his assertion that it is good with or without action suggests that he means by resolve "good intention." In this he is clearly thinking of resolve in terms of *niyyah* as understood in Islamic law, especially in connection with performing religious ritual duties.

1. R, IV. 7. 2694; cf. *Arba'in*, p. 206, where he says that "sincerity" has three elements which lead to one another, namely, resolve, sincerity, and truthfulness.

For example, the first principal obligation with regard to the act of prayer is *niyyah* in the sense of deciding in one's mind what kind of prayer this is and that it is for the sake of God. It is because of this usage that Ghazali says that resolve is a virtue confirmed by the Koran and prophetic tradition.¹

As a mystical virtue, resolve is composed of the three elements characteristic of mystical virtues, namely, knowledge, positive disposition, and action, but Ghazali modifies the terminology slightly here to emphasize its resemblance to the states of the soul. Thus, will replaces the positive disposition, and power the action, whereas knowledge is the same. When man knows with certainty that something is valuable and must be done, then the will for doing it emerges and, in turn, incites the powers which move the members of the body to action. Since Ghazali equates resolve with will, this means that he identifies resolve as a mystical virtue with the positive disposition.² The relation between resolve as a positive disposition and the action which results from it is of special interest to Ghazali. In his view, voluntary action may be done because of either one or two motives. When there are two motives for an action, the second motive may be a comotive, an associate, or an aid. After describing the relationships possible between resolve and action in terms of the motive or motives of an action, Ghazali interprets the prophetic tradition, "the resolve of the believer is better than his action" as supporting his view that resolve without action is superior to action without resolve.³ He intends thereby to establish the view that the activities of the soul or the heart (*a'māl al-qalb*) are more important than the actions of the members of the body. Moreover, among the states of the soul, resolve is regarded as the most excellent because it means the inclination of the soul to what is good.⁴

For resolve to be a mystical virtue, the mystic must have the necessary knowledge which leads to it; he will not acquire the resolve for

1. R, IV. 7. 2694.

2. R, IV. 7. 2700.

3. R, IV. 7. 2702; however, al-Hāfiẓ al-'Irāqī in his *Mughnī*, p. 2702, says that the prophetic tradition quoted by Ghazali is "weak" (*ḍa'if*).

4. R, IV. 7. 2704. According to Ghazali, resolve plays different roles in relation to the different kinds of actions. If the action in question is that of disobedience and evil, having a resolve for it does not make it good. However, resolve is necessary with respect to actions of obedience, without which they cannot be good. Finally, resolve elevates permissible action to the level of those that bring man near to God; cf. R, IV. 7. 2708-2710.

doing something merely by uttering the words expressing his intention to act. Ghazali insists that the mystic must give undivided attention to all the actions he contemplates doing and must act only after truly resolving to undertake a particular thing. Some men resolve to do good deeds out of fear and others out of hope. But once a man has attained spiritual refinement, he will intend by all his actions the pleasure of God alone.¹

SINCERITY

When an action is motivated by one intention alone, the state of the soul is called sincerity, that is, single-mindedness in purpose, whether the purpose is good or bad. But in Islamic religious terminology the word "sincerity" (*ikhhlās*) is used only when the intention is nearness to God, unadulterated by any wordly or selfish motive. Ghazali points out that the merit and excellence of sincerity is confirmed by the Koran and prophetic tradition. Particularly important in his view are the verses which deal with Satan's power in leading men astray because, according to the Koran, all men are considered potential victims of the devil's intrigues, with the sole exception of those who are sincere.²

As a mystical virtue, sincerity means that man's actions are only motivated by a desire to approach God. In other words, sincerity requires that there be one basic resolve for man's actions. When this is mixed with other intentions, such as when a person fasts for the sake of health as well as for reverence, the situation becomes complicated. To attain sincerity means to transcend the pleasures of this world and to dedicate one's life to the world to come. When an action is not purely for the sake of God, but mixed with some worldly desires, it cannot be characterized by sincerity.³ Therefore, while remorse means good intention, sincerity means specifically intending nearness to God as the basic and sole resolve which stands behind all of man's actions.

TRUTHFULNESS

Truthfulness is the last of the three virtues of the first group of supporting mystical virtues. Ghazali enumerates six aspects of truthfulness

1. R, IV. 7. 2716.

2. R, IV. 7. 2721; cf. Koran 38:82-83: "Satan said: 'Then by Thy power, I will beguile them all, save Thy sincere servants among them.'"

3. R, IV. 7. 2724-31.

in general, namely, truthfulness in speech, in intention, in resolution, in executing a resolution, in action, and in accomplishing all the spiritual "stations," i.e., the principal mystical virtues. Although we are primarily concerned with the last aspect of truthfulness, a very brief statement about each of the first five may be helpful: (1) Truthfulness in speech consists in making a statement which is not only true but is also unequivocal, so that the person who hears it cannot interpret it in a different way, and this is the first kind of perfect truthfulness in speech, with certain exceptions being permitted in those situations when telling the truth may cause harm.¹ The second kind requires that man observe truthfulness in the words he uses when he is conversing (*munājāh*) with God. He should not use any word unless he knows that it truly expresses his spiritual state. This truthfulness reaches ultimate perfection when the person becomes free from all worldly things and occupies himself completely with God.² (2) Truthfulness in intention is related to sincerity in that it applies to the case when man has only one aim for whatever he does and in that this aim is nearness to God. (3) Truthfulness related to a resolution (*'azm*) means the intention to accomplish a lofty purpose which is contingent upon circumstances which do not presently exist, e.g., to resolve that "should an occasion present itself, I will gladly lay down my life in the service of God." The truthful man is he whose resolution for all good things is always accomplished with full power and no hesitation. (4) Truthfulness in the execution of a resolution requires that when the time to act arrives one carries out what he has resolved to do. (5) Truthful action lies in the perfect correspondence of the inward state of the person with his outward action without the slightest indication of hypocrisy.³ (6) The highest truthfulness is that which accompanies the full and complete realization of the various mystical stations such as fear, hope, asceticism, satisfaction, trust, and love.⁴ Since each of these stations has a beginning and a higher limit, truthfulness in each of them means to reach their utmost limits. Thus when a man reaches perfection with regard to repentance, he acquires truthfulness in repentance. In this sense one

1. *R*, IV. 7. 2738; Ghazali mentions three occasions in which one is allowed to compromise with untruth; they are: war tactics, restoring good relations between two people, and keeping good relations between husband and wife.

2. *R*, IV. 7. 2739.

3. *R*, IV. 7. 2740-42.

4. *R*, IV. 7. 2744.

can speak of "truthful fear," "truthful hope," and so on. It is rare, however, to find a mystic who has attained truthfulness with regard to all the principal mystical virtues. But when such a person is found, he is the "truthful one" (*ṣiddiq*) who has attained the highest virtuous station possible for a human being on this earth.¹

VIGILANCE AND SELF-EXAMINATION

The fourth and fifth supporting mystical virtues form the second group. They are related to each other because both apply to the states of the soul in its inner struggle against its baser faculties. Attainment of vigilance and self-examination as mystical virtues requires knowledge of God and of the day of judgment. When man knows that he has to account for everything he does in this life, he will watch over his desires and examine his motives so as to guard against what may bring God's wrath upon him in the hereafter.²

In order to understand Ghazali's analysis of these two mystical virtues, it is necessary to know what he means by "self" (*nafs*) in this context. In his discussion of the soul in Book 1 of Quarter III of the *Revival* which is an introduction to the second half of the whole work, Ghazali says that "self" has two meanings. One is the meaning which applies to the faculties of anger and appetite; this he says is the usage common among the Sufis who mean by "self" the source of evil qualities in man, and therefore man must strive against it. The second meaning is synonymous with "soul."³ According to Ghazali the virtues of vigilance and self-examination are two of six steps which man has to go through in his struggle to subdue his "self" as understood in its Sufi meaning: (1) The first step, known as preconditioning (*mushārāḥah*), is to assign special duties to the self for the purpose of purifying it. This step helps man to know what to expect from his self. (2) Vigilance (*murāqabah*) is the second step in which man watches over the execution of what he has assigned to his self. (Literally, *murāqabah* means to watch another; here, however, it means being alive to the conviction that God sees man even if man does not see Him.) The knowledge that God knows everything that lurks in man's heart as well as everything that he does, brings about the positive disposition of vigilance which, in turn, produces actual watching over one's self. There are two degrees of vigilance: the

1. R, IV. 7. 2745.

2. R, IV. 8. 2749.

3. R, III. 1. 1351.

higher consists in being fully occupied with observing God's majesty alone. This degree of vigilance is restricted to the activities of the soul, to the exclusion of the actions of the body. For Ghazali, this is the degree of those who are near to God (*muqarrabūn*) and who are altogether oblivious to everything other than God. They do not perform even permissible bodily actions and hence they are in no need to watch over such actions. The lower degree of vigilance is that of men of piety who are fully conscious that God knows everything about them, both their inward and outward activities, and they do not execute any act except after making sure that it is religiously approved. It is because of this that men of piety are in constant vigilance over their outward actions. Thus, the basic requirement for both degrees of vigilance is to make certain that one's activities, whether inward or outward, are carried out for the sake of God and in accordance to His satisfaction.¹ (3) The third step that man must take in his struggle to subdue his "self" is self-examination (*muḥāsabah*). Thus, the second of the two virtues in question here follows the first immediately. After executing the action, man must examine in detail how far it has been fulfilled in accordance with the conditions originally imposed on the self and, in particular, to what extent errors entered into the action.²

In the restricted sense, self-examination does not go beyond giving a detailed account of all aspects of the finished action; however, the realization of shortcomings automatically calls forth the last three steps essential to subdue the self. Thus, if one finds that his self has committed mistakes, he should not be lax in chastising it; otherwise it will transgress more easily the next time. (4) Punishment (*mu'āqabah*), therefore, should immediately follow the realization that a transgression has been committed. It should be appropriate to the transgression; e.g., if a man has eaten food from a dubious source, he should punish himself by hunger. (5) The fifth step is known as striving for virtuous purification (*mujāhadah*). If one finds that his self did not commit any vice and is only deficient in fully executing virtuous actions, then he must force it to do more difficult and severe actions of this same variety. In the event that he finds this too difficult, he can overcome his weakness by accompanying pious men or, if none are to be found, by reading reports about

1. R, IV. 8. 2754-64.

2. R, IV. 8. 2767-70. Ghazali's discussion of self-examination is influenced by al-Muḥāsibī, see Josef van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥārīt al-Muḥāsibī* (Bonn: Das Orientalische Seminar der Universität Bonn, 1961), pp. 139-43.

their experiences.¹ (6) The final step for subduing the lower faculties of the soul is continuous reproach (*mu'ātabah*). According to Ghazali, the "self," i.e., anger and appetite, is the most invidious enemy against which man must constantly guard. Thus, in addition to the five above-mentioned steps of controlling and examining the activities of the self, man must rebuke it so that it remains subjugated to the rational part of the soul. The way to rebuke the self (*tawbīkh al-nafs wa mu'ātabatihā*) is to stress its ignorance, inferiority, and insignificance. Ghazali quotes at length an account of the manner in which unnamed earlier learned men (*al-qawm*) used to reproach and rebuke their selves.²

It is significant that in his treatment of vigilance and self-examination, Ghazali follows the philosophic analysis of the soul, particularly the distinction between the rational faculty on the one hand, and the concupiscent and irascible faculties on the other. He identifies the "self" with the two lower faculties and examines and explains the mystical way of purifying the soul on this basis. This approach clarifies the mystical teachings with respect to self-examination and other related psychic experiences which otherwise are ambiguous and vague.

MEDITATION

Ghazali considers meditation a major element underlying all the virtues related to the special states of the soul and, consequently, to all the mystical virtues. Meditation, according to Ghazali, is the source of all three of the characteristics which the mystical virtues have in common: it produces knowledge, which in turn, produces the positive disposition of the soul that brings about action.³ Ghazali uses the two terms *tafakkur* and *fikr* to mean meditation; however, in order to preserve his distinction in terminology, we shall render the latter term as "reflection." According to Ghazali, reflection consists of bringing together two ideas in order to produce from them a third one, e.g., in

1. R, IV. 8. 2770-84. This explains why Ghazali mentions a large number of stories about the way earlier prophets and mystics purified their soul.

2. R, IV. 8. 2789ff. In its form, style, and sometimes even content, this account corresponds to the *Book of Rebuking the Self* (*Kitāb Mu'ādhlat al-Nafs*), which belongs to the Hermetic literature (cf. Badawī, "Al-Ghazālī wa Maṣādiruh," pp. 225-29). It is said that the Sufi Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 861) was familiar with Hermetic wisdom (Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 50). If this is so, then Ghazali may have had some access to such Hermetic writings through this mystic whom he mentions in many places in the *Revival* as well as in other works.

3. R, IV. 9. 2808.

order to know that (3) the hereafter is more worthy of choice, one has to know that (1) eternal things are better objects of choice, and (2) that the hereafter is eternal.¹ This syllogistic reasoning, in Ghazali's view, depends both on man's having some knowledge to start with as well as being acquainted with the process by which a conclusion is produced. When a conclusion is reached, it can, in turn, be joined to another proposition for the sake of producing yet another conclusion; and this syllogistic process goes on until it is terminated by death.

Ghazali emphasizes the importance of reflection by quoting the prophetic tradition "An hour's meditation is more excellent than a year's worship."² Since everything can be an object of meditation, to enumerate such objects would be an impossible task. The only possible approach is to investigate in general the ways of reflecting about objects, especially as they relate to the mystical "stations." With [respect to the spiritual practice directed toward God, reflection may be either about man, his character qualities, and states, or about God, His attributes, and His works.³

In Ghazali's view, the most important kind of meditation that man must engage in with respect to himself is to reflect upon his character traits and actions in order to distinguish what is good from what is bad. The good and the bad are in turn divided into external and internal qualities, and thus four themes result from this division: acts of obedience, acts of disobedience, qualities that lead to salvation, and qualities that lead to destruction. The first two are related to the religious-legal duties. The qualities that lead to salvation must be carefully considered in order to find out what is essential in bringing man nearer to God, whereas reflection on the qualities that lead to destruction helps man to avoid what impedes nearness to God. This outline of meditations on character qualities and actions reflects the general theme of the *Revival*.⁴ It shows how the *Revival* can help man to effective reflection on himself. But Ghazali maintains that this reflection, though superior to other acts of worship, is not the true aim of the few who seek God alone and occupy their souls with Him to the point of being unconscious of themselves and of their mystical states. These few meditate only on God's majesty and greatness.

1. R, IV. 9. 2806-2807.

2. R, IV. 9. 2803.

3. R, IV. 9. 2810.

4. R, IV. 9. 2810-14. In his enumeration of these qualities Ghazali indicates the Quarter and Book of the *Revival* where they can be found.

Now, reflection on God's majesty and greatness can be achieved in two ways. The highest is to meditate on the essence of God, His attributes, and the meaning of His glorious names. But since the human intellect is so limited that it cannot grasp the reality of God directly, Ghazali asserts that men have been forbidden to follow this higher method.¹ Instead, they are advised to reflect on God's mysterious and wonderful works as manifested in His creations because all these show His glory, majesty, knowledge, and power. Ghazali divides created things into two categories. The first includes those which cannot be known at all and consequently man cannot reflect on them. The second category includes things which can be known. Some of these, however, cannot be seen with the eye, such as angels, genii, and Satan. Others, such as the sky, the earth, and what is between them, can be seen with the eye. To reflect on these works of God for the sake of knowing Him, one should begin by reflecting on his own being, and then proceed to the wonders of the universe.² As a mystical virtue, meditation is the means through which the soul performs its "natural" role of reflecting on the highest truth. Since this can only be expected of a soul which has subjugated its lower faculties, meditation is a virtue which ranks higher than self-examination, and indeed is the highest of the supporting mystical virtues.

The discussion of these virtues shows that we are dealing here with a special kind of psychological ethics, one which aims at nearness to God. Ghazali associates these virtues particularly with the states of the soul as he endeavors to establish a psychological basis for the principal mystical virtues. In so doing, he clearly adheres to the analysis of the soul as understood in the philosophic tradition. His study of the first three supporting virtues, namely, resolve, sincerity, and truthfulness, is primarily a study of intentions. The fourth and fifth, i.e., vigilance and self-examination, are related to the analysis of appetite and anger and, consequently, to the method of subordinating them to the rational faculty. The sixth virtue, meditation, is connected with the rational faculty and shows the role of this faculty in helping the one who seeks God by reflecting on His creation. The attainment of these supporting mystical virtues, therefore, brings about a complete and integrated state of the soul in all its faculties. This state can be the basis which

1. *R*, IV. 9. 2820.

2. *R*, IV. 9. 2822-44.

prepares the few to acquire the principal mystical virtues and, ultimately, achieve nearness to God.

Principal Mystical Virtues

These are the mystical qualities which Ghazali calls "stations" in order to underline the importance of their hierarchy. Each of these virtues is looked at as a consequence of the one which precedes it and as a step which leads to the one after it. The first principal mystical virtue in Ghazali's hierarchy is "repentance" and the highest is "love." Between these two he arranges the rest of the mystical virtues in such a way as to help the mystic in the end to acquire "love." Most of the earlier mystics paid great attention to the arrangements of mystical stations, and emphasized that the mystic cannot acquire a station unless he has mastered the one which precedes it. But these earlier mystics differed in their arrangements of such stations. In his treatment Ghazali takes issue with the earlier mystics, including al-Makkī, not only in his arrangement of these stations, but also in the way he defines and justifies them. Unlike the earlier mystical authors who do not usually go beyond registering their own experiences or the experiences of other famous mystics about these stations, Ghazali explains the essential elements of each station and emphasizes the role this station plays in the mystical refinement of the few. He takes into consideration those special characteristics we mentioned in the introduction to this chapter and thereby provides a coherent framework for these mystical virtues and clarifies their precise nature which was often left vague in the writings of earlier mystics. The significance of these general remarks will become clear if we examine the way Ghazali analyzes each of the principal mystical virtues.

REPENTANCE

Repentance (*tawbah*), which is the starting point of the path of those who seek God, i.e., the mystics, is the first principal virtue that must be acquired by the few.¹ Repentance here means a kind of conversion, a conscious resolve on the part of the novice to abandon worldly life and devote himself completely to the service of God. It is thus that Ghazali

1. *R*, IV. 1. 2078. Repentance is the subject of the first book of the fourth quarter of the *Revival*. It is the first of the "Things Leading to Salvation" in the *Revival* as well as in the *Book of the Forty* and the *Alchemy of Happiness*.

himself, after achieving a great reputation as a jurist and a theologian, turned away from formal religious learning and declared himself to be a Sufi.¹

According to the Islamic religious teachings, the repentance which is required of Muslims is the abandoning of any action which violates the religious law and resolving not to commit a similar act in the future. Furthermore, the Muslim must atone for his sins in the special way prescribed by the religious tradition. The meaning of repentance as a mystical virtue, however, extends beyond this. Ghazali applies it to actions other than those which are merely violations of the religious law. In this sense, repentance means abandoning everything which stands between man and his ultimate goal of nearness to God. The mystic must repent for doing anything or thinking of anything other than what leads to this goal.

Instead of appealing to an eminent Sufi for definition of repentance, as was the procedure of earlier mystical writers, Ghazali formulates his own definition of this virtue by considering how it is composed of the three elements he established as characteristic of all mystical virtues, namely, knowledge, positive disposition, and action.

The knowledge is the recognition of the great harmfulness of sins, and of the fact that they are the veil between man and all he loves. If his knowledge of this is certain and sure, and his heart is convinced, there springs from his knowledge a heartfelt pain for the loss of what he loves . . . The name we give this pain caused by an action which resulted in the loss of the beloved, is remorse (*nadam*). If this pain constrains the heart and holds it in thrall, then it produces . . . resolve to act.²

Knowledge, remorse, and resolve are three distinct elements which make up a single complex notion. The term "repentance" properly refers to the whole notion, although often it is used to mean remorse only, that is, the positive disposition. Repentance looks to the past in terms of renouncing a sin, and to the present and future in terms of resolving to accomplishing reparation.

Ghazali maintains that all men should acquire the virtue of repentance in the broad sense, and that both reason and religious teachings confirm this obligation. Tradition must guide those whose rational capacity is not yet fully developed; however, men of intellect will perceive by themselves that true happiness consists in nearness to God and that repentance is essential to achieve this nearness. Ghazali maintains further that

1. *Munqidh*, pp. 98-102; cf. Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 75.

2. *R*, IV. 1. 2080.

repentance is an obligation for man as man, because it is of the essence of the human soul that it is made up of higher and lower faculties. The perfection of the soul occurs when the rational faculty subordinates the concupiscent and irascible faculties to its control, and it is not the simple destruction of these lower faculties. Repentance is a perpetual obligation and has its basis in the eternal tension between good and evil (i.e., domination of the soul by its higher or lower faculties) which characterizes the human condition. Ghazali here goes beyond traditional Islamic teachings which require repentance when a specific sin has been committed. Unlike the Christian understanding of repentance based on original sin inherited from Adam, Ghazali explains his doctrine in terms of a psychological analysis of human nature which is derived from the philosophic tradition.¹

Because repentance means basically to refrain from committing sins, Ghazali regards knowledge of what a sin is to be crucial for the realization of this virtue. In general, sin includes anything which distorts the relation between man and God. There are various kinds of sins and various ways of avoiding and atoning for them. The variety of sins gave rise to the famous theological debates about grave and venial sins (*al-kabirah wa al-saghirah*), which were current among the early Islamic schools of dialectical theology (*kalām*). Dissatisfied with the earlier views, Ghazali argues that since the ultimate aim of the religious law, which is to lead men to God, can only occur as a result of knowing Him and His prophets, and since such knowledge can only be attained in this life, therefore both preservation of life and knowledge of God are essential for attaining nearness to Him. Whatever obstructs knowledge of God is infidelity and should be considered the gravest sin, followed by any act which shortens man's life or deprives man of what he needs to preserve his life, such as theft, etc.²

After realizing what sins are, man must repent immediately. He should recall all his past sins, reflect upon them one by one, minute by minute, and discard each and every one. If a man has, for example, neglected any religious duty, he should discharge it. For sins against God, one should grieve and seek pardon from Him. If there are sins against one's fellow man, one should atone for them all. If one has injured another he should comfort him and make up for his suffering. If one

1. R, IV. 1. 2081.

2. R, IV. 1. 2103-2110.

has deprived anyone of his possessions, one should restore what he took and ask for forgiveness. According to Ghazali, atonement for sins can be made through the heart, speech, or the body. Atonement by the heart is the core of repentance. It is done by seeking forgiveness from God. By speech one atones by acknowledging transgression and by reciting formulae of forgiveness. The body atones by performing good deeds and certain types of devotional practices.¹ Ghazali discusses in detail religious practices of repentance and how to accustom oneself to performing them. He points out that repentance for transgressions of the body and for the nonperformance of religious practice is decidedly less difficult than the task of the mystic, which is repentance for errant thoughts and the anxiety of his heart. In this sense repentance is present throughout the process of conversion from worldly to otherworldly desires; it must also accompany the mystic throughout his life or he risks falling short of his ultimate goal.

This doctrine is most striking in its consequences for the way of life of the few. Even if a man is free of sins committed by his body, he will still have anxiety for his sins; even if he is free from this anxiety, he will still be subject to deficiencies and neglect in the remembrance of God; even if he is free of these shortcomings, there will still be inadequacies in his knowledge of God, His attributes, and His works.² Thus, as a mystical virtue, repentance is something without which the mystic cannot even begin traveling the path to the nearness to God, and to attain the most noble kind of repentance, the mystic needs both knowledge and patience. In addition to showing the mystic the necessity of repentance, knowledge is the best means of guarding against obstinacy in postponing repentance. Patience, on the other hand, helps the mystic to resist bodily and worldly desires which continuously interfere with every effort of preserving repentance, and because patience is a prerequisite for the highest form of repentance, Ghazali discusses it as the second mystical virtue.³

1. R, IV. 1. 2152.

2. R, IV. 1. 2148-51.

3. R, IV. 1. 2171; cf. *Kīmīyā-yi*, II, 77. This is in agreement with al-Makki, *Qūt*, I, 217. In the *Book of the Forty*, however, Ghazali classifies "fear" as the second virtue (it follows after repentance) and "patience" as the fourth virtue (it follows "asceticism"); see *Arba'in*, p. 182.

PATIENCE

While patience (*sabr*), like the other mystical virtues, is composed of the three elements, knowledge, positive disposition, and action, Ghazali maintains that the expression patience applies particularly to the positive disposition; knowledge in this case is an introduction to the positive disposition, and action a result of it. To define patience, he again gives the analysis of the soul derived from the philosophic tradition and replaces the philosophic terms with others which are common in the Islamic tradition. Man possesses two powers: one, the motive of religion (*bā'ith al-dīn*), is reason (*'aql*); the other, an irrational motive, is known as passion (*hawā*) and includes both appetite and anger.¹ Patience is the persistence of reason in its effort to control the passions. When all passions are subdued and reason reigns supreme, man achieves the highest rank of patience. Thus understood, patience is strictly a human habit, and does not apply to angels or animals.²

There are many kinds of patience and they can be classified on the basis of the objects they treat. Endurance of bodily hardships and pains is a lower kind of patience. The most perfect and commendable kind of patience consists in steadfastly resisting the demands of the passions. Patience can thus be found in conjunction with other virtues, and consequently may be given different names according to the circumstances in which it is manifested. Ghazali asserts further that man needs patience at every step of his life. This is so because life presents only two types of situations: those which are congenial to man's natural inclinations, and those which are not. Examples of the former are health, safety, wealth, and honor, and man needs patience so as not to indulge them excessively. The situations which oppose man's inclinations are divided into three categories: (1) Those in which man must choose between obedience and disobedience. To perform the former and refrain from the latter, man needs a great deal of patience; (2) Those whose occurrence is not subject to man's will in which he can choose to react correctly. For example, to resist the desire for revenge, once a

1. *R*, IV. 2. 2180. Ghazali uses these two terms, i.e., the motive of religion and reason, interchangeably; see also *R*, IV. 2. 2181, 2189. In the *Supreme Purpose*, Ghazali says patience is "the persistence of the motive of reason (*'aql*) or religion (*dīn*) against the motive of appetite and anger" (*Maqṣad*, p. 97). This attitude confirms the view of Ibn Taymiyyah that Ghazali expresses philosophic ideas in Islamic terms; see his *Naqd*, p. 56.

2. *R*, IV. 2. 2181, 2188.

man has been harmed by speech or deed, requires patience; (3) Occurrences which are not subject to man's control in any way, such as the death of a beloved person or loss of wealth or health. Ghazali considers patience displayed in these situations to be the highest. In such circumstances the patient man does not indulge in a violent outburst of passion; rather, he expresses satisfaction with God's decree.¹

As a mystical virtue, patience is particularly important for the mystic who seeks complete subordination of the passions and isolates himself from social life. In his isolation, the mystic needs patience to endure the hardships of loneliness and to train himself in carrying out practices which bring him nearer to God. Even if the mystic perfectly masters all essential spiritual practices, he still needs patience to guard against the whims of his thoughts which cannot be completely controlled until the soul is overwhelmingly engaged with God alone.²

Patience and gratitude are the two mystical virtues that are in addition attributes of God.³ Patience is the only virtue which Ghazali treats both in the context of philosophic as well as mystical virtues, but his treatment of it as a philosophic virtue is brief and follows the Muslim philosophers such as Avicenna and Miskawayh, for Aristotle does not regard patience as even a quasi-virtue. Ghazali's rather detailed discussion of patience as a principal mystical virtue reflects his interest in the mystics' analysis of it as a spiritual station, especially as it is presented by al-Makkī.⁴

Ghazali links patience with gratitude by dealing with them in the same book in the *Revival* and presenting them as the two fundamental responses of man to what befalls him. In affliction he must be patient; in prosperity he must be grateful. Thus gratitude, as a mystical virtue, follows patience in a logical way.⁵

GRATITUDE

As a virtue, gratitude (*shukr*) describes man's best response to favorable events. Ghazali asserts that all previous discussions of gratitude fail to

1. R, IV. 2. 2191-98.

2. R, IV. 2. 2199-2201.

3. R, IV. 2. 2176; *Maqṣad*, p. 97.

4. al-Makkī, *Qūt*, I, 396-413.

5. In all the three books that deal with mystical virtues, i.e., the *Revival*, the *Book of the Forty*, and the *Alchemy of Happiness*, Ghazali deals with "gratitude" after "patience." This agrees with al-Makkī's *Qūt*, I, 411-413.

define it completely, and in order to improve them he seeks in gratitude the three elements characteristic of the mystical virtues. Gratitude consists, according to him, of (1) knowledge of the gift, (2) the positive disposition of joy caused by the gift, and (3) an action which will please the one who bestows the gift.¹ Knowledge will take account of (a) the gift itself, (b) the man who receives it and how it is a benefit to him, and (c) the benefactor who chose to bestow the gift. All of this must be known about gifts in general. As to the gifts of God, the knowledge that God is truly the one and only benefactor completes the understanding of His uniqueness, for only then can man understand that everything which exists in the world receives its being from Him, that everything is His gift, and that consequently, gratitude is appropriately due to him above all else. This knowledge is sufficient to bring about the positive disposition of joy in relation to the benefactor. This joy can be considered true gratitude only if it is concerned neither with the gift nor with the giving, but only with the benefactor. (a) Joy in terms of the gift contains no gratitude whatsoever, because it is not related to the benefactor. (b) Joy in relation to giving involves a kind of gratitude because giving embodies the notion of a benefactor, but the benefactor is at most a secondary consideration for this kind of joy. This category includes men who are grateful to God for the sake of His reward. (c) Only in the third case does man acquire true joy by rejoicing in God as the only benefactor (*mun'im*). The action resulting from the positive disposition of joy expresses itself through the heart, the tongue, and the limbs: through the heart by searching for the good, through the tongue by extolling God's glory, and through the limbs by making use of God's bounty for acts in obedience to His will.²

After establishing the definition of gratitude in general and gratitude toward God in particular, Ghazali is faced with the problem of how man, the creature, can thank the Creator who creates everything including the gratitude of the creature. His general solution of this problem was discussed in Chapter III. God is the creator of everything and man is the vehicle and place (*maḥall*) of God's act; man's actions, then, become his own through his "acquisition" of them, which means that they are created by God but man is responsible for them. Thus, if a man is grateful, he is the receptacle of gratitude and not the creator of it. According to the ordinary understanding, the giver of a gift expects

1. R, IV. 2. 2212.

2. R, IV. 2. 2213-16.

something in return for it. But this is impossible in relation to God, for two reasons. First, He is too sublime to be in need of man's praise or his service. Secondly, the gratitude which man offers is itself a creation and gift of God. Ghazali admits that gratitude for a benefit which will require the benefactor to bestow another is problematical and one of the most obscure puzzles of mystical knowledge. He suggests that true knowledge of gratitude is only possible for him who perceives God's unique reality and knows that He is both the one who causes gratitude and the one to whom gratitude is extended. Understanding this, Ghazali says, means showing the highest gratitude to God.¹

Genuine gratitude demands that one understand the purpose for which all gifts are given and makes proper use of them as he strives to reach the Benefactor. In order to be truly grateful, therefore, man must know what God approves and disapproves. Ghazali mentions two general ways of knowing God's designs. One is through the religious teachings contained in the Koran and prophetic traditions. The other is through rational inquiry which discerns God's purpose in everything created. At times this purpose is evident and at times it is hidden.² Such an eschatological view of all worldly things is clearly introduced for the purpose of showing that, to be grateful toward God, man must use everything according to its natural end which is to lead men to God.

To clarify the nature of gratitude, Ghazali turns to examine the bounties (*ni'am*) which are its proximate causes. He maintains that true good, pleasure, or happiness must be identified with the happiness of the hereafter; otherwise these words are being used either erroneously or metaphorically. They may, however, be applied in a less strict sense to anything that contributes, more or less directly, to ultimate happiness. On the basis of this understanding, Ghazali gives an elaborate classification of the bounties of this life. He includes every virtue, spiritual and material, to show that the bounties of God are so immense that they cannot be estimated.³

1. *R*, IV. 2. 2218-24.

2. *R*, IV. 2. 2225-35. Evident, for example, is God's purpose in the creation of the sun in order to separate night and day. Hidden, according to Ghazali, is God's purpose in creation or allowing the creation of money. Ghazali shows at length what the benefits of using money are. It is evident that he is in part influenced in his discussion by the philosophic tradition, particularly by Aristotle's discussion of money in relation to justice in the sixth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

3. *R*, IV. 2. 2244-58.

Since gratitude means man's response to all acts of God, Ghazali raises the question of how to be grateful in the case of affliction (*balā'*). Affliction, he says, is either absolute or relative. Absolute afflictions are such things as being deprived of nearness to God in the hereafter and being a sinner or an evil man in this life. Relative afflictions include such things as poverty and sickness. Gratitude has to do with benefits and there can be no gratitude for absolute afflictions. However, man must be grateful for relative afflictions. Worldly goods are good for oneself or for others only because they serve the purpose God has in everything He creates.¹ Thus, as a mystical virtue, gratitude is directed toward God alone. The mystic thanks Him for everything that comes from Him, and uses his worldly situation in a way which pleases God and leads to nearness to Him.

HOPE AND FEAR

After gratitude, Ghazali discusses hope and fear as the next two mystical virtues. He relates them to each other in the same way as patience and gratitude. They are the subject of Book 3 of Quarter IV of the *Revival*. This same arrangement of hope and fear after gratitude is presented in the *Alchemy of Happiness*, and it is also in agreement with al-Makkī's arrangement of mystical stations.² However, in the *Book of the Forty*, Ghazali deals with hope within his discussion of "fear," which he classifies immediately after "repentance" as the second principal virtue.³ Furthermore, he explicitly mentions in this book that fear should follow after repentance; whereas in both the *Revival* and the *Alchemy of Happiness*, Ghazali does not state explicitly that hope and fear should follow gratitude, nor does he mention what virtue should follow them.⁴ In his introduction to the discussion of these two virtues, Ghazali says: "Hope and fear are two wings by means of which those who are brought near (*al-muqarrabūn*) fly to every commendable station (*kull maqām maḥmūd*)."⁵ This means that, in addition to being stations themselves, hope and fear help the few to acquire other stations. Thus, by being silent about the relationship of these two virtues with what precedes them and what

1. *R*, IV. 2. 2289-92.

2. al-Makkī, *Qūt*, I. 432, 457, where he considers hope as the fourth spiritual station and fear the fifth.

3. *Arba'in*, p. 182.

4. *Arba'in*, pp. 181-82; cf. *R*, IV. 3. 2316, 2342, 2369.

5. *R*, IV. 3. 2316.

follows them, Ghazali seems to point to this special relation they have to all of the mystical virtues and not to some of them only.

Moreover, hope and fear differ from the mystical virtues we have discussed thus far, in that they are "passions" in their basic characteristics. These passions are well known in the philosophic tradition; and Ghazali's general definitions of both virtues, as we shall see, reflect the influence of this philosophic tradition.¹ Therefore, while dealing with hope and fear according to Ghazali's arrangement in the *Revival*, we shall keep in mind their special relation to all other mystical virtues and that they are basically passions.

HOPE

Ghazali defines "hope" (*rajā'*) as the sentiment of the heart when it anticipates something desirable.² When the sentiment results from a reasonable appraisal of the probability of receiving that thing, it is correct to call it hope. However, anticipation directed towards an improbable occurrence is more properly called self-deceit or stupidity. If receiving something desirable is not impossible in itself, but the manner in which this may be brought cannot be ascertained, anticipation of that thing is called wishful thinking, because the term hope does not apply to what is determined. Therefore, hope properly refers to the expectation of something desirable when the means to attain that thing which are within human control have been discerned, and only that element beyond human action has been left to God.³

Applying this general meaning of hope to the particular case of the mystic who seeks nearness to God, Ghazali states that whoever obeys God and properly performs those devotional actions within his power should expect God to complete his efforts by bestowing on him His bounties. It is in this sense that Ghazali considers hope as a mystical virtue. He regards it as composite of the three elements characteristic of all mystical virtues, namely, knowledge, positive disposition, and action. As a positive disposition, hope results from the knowledge that God will fulfill the hopes of those who seek His nearness, and, in turn, it results in the action of further engagement in devotional practices.⁴

1. Aristotle *Rhetoric* 2. 5. 1382aff.; Avicenna, *Fī al-Akhlāq wa al-Infī'ālāt*, p. 24.

2. *R*, IV. 3. 2317; cf. Avicenna, *Fī al-Akhlāq wa al-Infī'ālāt*, p. 24.

3. *R*, IV. 3. 2317.

4. *R*, IV. 3. 2319.

Hope, therefore, is a praiseworthy sentiment because it impels men to action; despair, on the other hand, is objectionable because it enervates them. In this sense, despair and not fear, opposes hope, for fear impels men to action just as hope does. According to Ghazali, two kinds of men are in extreme need of hope. Firstly, those who, despairing of God's mercy, have ceased worshiping Him. Secondly, those who, dominated by excessive fear of God, devote all their time to worship and thereby neglect their duty towards their own well-being and that of their families. These two kinds of men incline away from moderation (*i'tidāl*) and therefore they are in need of hope which will restore moderation.¹

Hope and fear are the only two mystical virtues to which Ghazali applies the doctrine of the mean. It is with regard to hope in particular that he reminds his reader that "what is sought after in all character traits is the mean."² The reason seems to be that hope and fear are passions. Since Ghazali starts with passions in this case, and analyzes them with a view to man's relation to God, he has to emphasize their mean state to guard against the problems involved in their extremes of excess. A too hopeful man may neglect spiritual practices necessary for mystical refinement and consequently fail in his purpose. If the extreme of defect dominates, Ghazali mentions two methods which can successfully bring the mean of hope. One method is reading Koranic verses and prophetic traditions which describe God's mercy and providence. The other method is reflection. By reflecting upon all of God's bounties and His care for men in this world, man will realize that such a majestic Creator will be even more generous with His servants on the day of judgment.³

After discussing hope as a mystical virtue which helps man to engage wholeheartedly in devotional practices, Ghazali begins his discussion of fear as the virtue which follows after it. He does not state why fear should follow after hope. In fact, he specifically says that actions on account of hope are of higher rank than those on account of fear, and on this basis, one might conclude that the order of these two virtues should be reversed.⁴ However, Ghazali seems to think of them as two qualities which are closely related to each other and consequently should

1. R, IV. 3. 2323.

2. R, IV. 3. 2323.

3. R, IV. 3. 2324.

4. R, IV. 3. 2330; cf. al-Makki, *Qūt*, I, 456, where he says "although hope is a way that leads to God, fear is nearer to it, and what is nearer, is higher."

be treated together. Nevertheless, the fact that Ghazali devotes more than three quarters of Book 3 of Quarter IV of the *Revival*, in which he discusses these two mystical virtues, to the discussion of fear alone, together with the fact that in the *Book of the Forty* he mentions fear by itself as a principal character trait, shows that he attaches a special importance to fear.¹

FEAR

Like hope, fear (*khawf*) is related to something in the future which affects the soul. It differs from hope, however, in that this expected thing is dreadful and harmful. The knowledge that this thing can happen to one produces a certain positive disposition which is called fear.² Thus, fear is the expression for the soul's suffering when it anticipates something dreadful. Ghazali's general definition of fear corresponds to that of the philosophers. It is the "passion of fear,"³ and in making use of this expression in order to establish fear as a mystical virtue, Ghazali has the following observations. He says that he wants to explain that fear, in a certain context, is commendable but it is false to suppose that all fear is commendable, or that the more powerful and frequent it is, the more commendable. Only if it is understood as a mean between two extremes can fear be considered a good character trait. A person who is deficient in fear tends toward effeminate softness. Whenever he sees a fearful thing, he is afraid, but when nothing terrifying is visible his soul returns to hardness. A person with excessive fear inclines to hopelessness and despair. Excessive fear stultifies action and may result in sickness, depression, and intellectual atrophy. In its mean state fear is the means by which men are led to persevere in knowledge and action so that by means of both of these they may attain their ultimate happiness.⁴

As a mystical virtue, fear here signifies the relationship between man and God. For Ghazali, fear in this context is essentially "fear of God" and not fear simply. He is concerned with discussing this human passion

1. For example, Ghazali treats hope in *R*, IV. 3. 2316-38, while he treats fear in *R*, IV. 3. 2339-96.

2. *R*, IV. 3. 2339-40.

3. Avicenna, *Fī al-Akhlāq wa al-Infī'ālāt*, p. 26; Avicenna, *al-Shifā': al-Manṭiq* Vol. VIII: *al-Khaṭābah*, ed. by Muḥammad Salīm Sālim (Cairo: Wizārat al-Ma'ārif al-'Umūmiyyah, 1954), p. 138; cf. Aristotle *Rhetoric* 2. 5. 1382 1a1-3.

4. *R*, IV. 3. 2336-39.

with respect to man's view of God, and not of society or anything else. To explain what fear is as a mystical virtue, Ghazali discusses the three elements which characterize all mystical virtues, i.e., knowledge, positive disposition, and action, in their relation to God. With regard to knowledge, fear of God may sometimes be due to knowledge that God as the Lord of everything could decide to destroy the world out of indifference and nothing could interfere. Sometimes fear may result from a knowledge of human acts of disobedience which will call forth God's punishment. Or, this knowledge could involve a combination of both of these. The strength of man's fear of God is in proportion to the knowledge of his own sins and of the majesty of God. The positive disposition of fear which results from such knowledge produces, in turn, certain actions. In the body, fear produces pallidness, fainting, shrieking, weeping, and may even lead to death. It restrains the members of the body from disobedience, binds them to deeds of obedience, and makes them repair what is defective. As to character, fear stifles the passions and slackens the pleasures so that disobedience becomes abhorrent. The intensity of that fear pervades the character and is responsible, according to Ghazali, for the various ranks of mystical refinement. (1) Fear may cause man to resist the influence of his lower desires; this is temperance and it is the lowest degree. (2) It may restrain man from what is forbidden by religious law; this is abstinence. (3) It may discourage him from what is possibly forbidden; this is piety. (4) And at its utmost strength, fear may evoke in man thoughts of God during all his activities, however insignificant; this is truthfulness which is the highest rank. It is the most commendable product of fear, provided that it does not lead to sickness of the body or atrophy of the mind.¹

Since the objects to be feared are of two kinds—those which are feared in themselves (such as hellfire), and those which are feared because they bring about what is dreadful (such as sins)—there are at least two categories of men who achieve the station of fear. (1) There are those whose hearts are dominated by what is not essentially dreadful but dreadful because of its consequences. Ghazali gives several examples of these things and discusses two of them at considerable length. One of these is the fear of being marked as an evil man at the time of death. This he calls the evil end (*sū' al-khātimah*). The other is being marked as an evil man in preexistence. This he calls the "evil beginning" (*[sū']*

1. R, IV. 3. 234⁰-44.

al-sābiqah).¹ (2) The second category includes those who fear things dreadful in themselves, such as the terror of resurrection, hellfire, or being veiled from God (*al-ḥijāb*); the last is the highest fear and is characteristic of the mystics while the former two characterize men of piety.

From these two categories of fear emerge two ranks of fear of God. (1) The first is the fear which the multitude has of God's punishment in the hereafter; this fear is inferior because it results from negligence and weakness of faith. (2) The second is fear of being veiled from God and being denied nearness to Him. Indeed, whoever ascends to the apex of knowledge and knows God, fears Him of necessity, and has no need of a regimen which induces fear, just as whoever knows the lion and sees himself falling into its claws has no need of a regimen to induce fear; rather, he fears of necessity, whether he wills it or not. Thus, whoever knows God, knows that He does what He wills, and fears Him accordingly.²

As is the case with other mystical virtues, Ghazali seeks to prove that fear of God is praiseworthy on the basis of Islamic religious teachings as well by citing Koranic verses, prophetic traditions, and sayings of earlier companions and learned men. Rational consideration, however, is a more important method because it explains not only that fear of God is good, but also why. According to Ghazali, rational consideration shows that the excellence of anything is in proportion to its ability to lead to nearness to God in the hereafter. This ultimate goal can be realized only when the love of worldly things is completely uprooted from the heart. This can be done only when man subdues his base desires. Subjugation of these desires is best achieved under fear.³

It has been mentioned above that Ghazali considers fear next in rank to hope. However, he says that one must acknowledge that fear is more essential than hope in the same way that bread is more essential than oxymel, that is, because disobedience and self-deceit are more dominant traits of mankind. Thus, in his discussion of fear as a mystical virtue, Ghazali shows how it is related to hope, and both are considered by him not only as mystical virtues, but also as means which help the mystic to acquire the other principal mystical virtues. Ghazali therefore does not relate either of them to any other virtue in particular, and in concluding his discussion of fear, he does not specifically state which

1. R, IV. 3. 2344-47.

2. R, IV. 3. 2361-62.

3. R, IV. 3. 2347-48.

mystical virtue should follow after it. Instead, he just begins dealing with "poverty" as the sixth principal mystical virtue.

POVERTY

While al-Makkī considers asceticism (*zuhd*) the sixth mystical station which follows fear, and treats poverty (*faqr*) as part of it, Ghazali regards poverty and asceticism as separate mystical virtues which follow one another.¹ He classifies poverty after fear and before asceticism. But he discusses it together with asceticism in Book 4 of Quarter IV of the *Revival*, to indicate the close relationship between the two virtues: both deal with the same subject matter, that is, absence of worldly possessions.² To distinguish between poverty and asceticism, Ghazali states that the true mystic should turn away from worldly things and cut himself off completely from all aspects of this life. This can take place in two ways: either material goods never present themselves and this is poverty, or a man deliberately turns away from them and this is asceticism. In this sense, poverty is defined as "the lack of things needed.... If what is needed exists and can be had, then he who needs it is not called poor."³

In Ghazali's view, everyone other than God is poor. The few, in particular, must realize that since everything needs God for its existence and preservation, God alone is rich (*ghaniyy*), and Ghazali calls this condition of all men "absolute poverty." Yet he asserts that his intention is not to discuss absolute poverty but to deal instead with a more restricted kind of poverty, namely, lack of needed wealth (*māl*). A man is called poor when he cannot get the things necessary for his sustenance,⁴ but poverty as a virtue does not mean the lack of wealth simply; rather, it is a lack of wealth qualified by man's attitude toward it, and a poor man can be displeased or contented with his condition. The highest and most commendable attitude toward poverty is what Ghazali calls the state of indifference to wealth. A person who is indifferent to possessing

1. R, IV. 4. 2389-99; cf. al-Makkī, *Qūt*, I, 528. However, Ghazali's view of poverty as a separate virtue agrees with other earlier mystics such as al-Qushayrī, who regards "poverty" as a separate "station"; see his *Risālah*, II, 536-49.

2. R, IV. 4. 2398. However, in the *Book of the Forty*, Ghazali deals with poverty within his discussion of asceticism; see *Arba'in*, p. 187. Cf. al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, IX, 262, where he points out the difference between Ghazali and al-Makkī with regard to "poverty." In his commentary on the *Revival*, al-Zabīdī, following al-Makkī, does not call poverty a "station"; he regards "asceticism" as the sixth station.

3. R, IV. 4. 2399.

4. R, IV. 4. 2399-2400.

or lacking wealth will not be pleased or pained by material things, and he is rich because he is free from the distractions of wealth whether he possesses it or not. But he is rich in a qualified sense, since it is only God who is truly rich. The state of indifference characterizes the man who seeks nearness to God, because he is not occupied with anything other than God. Hating and detesting worldly goods as well as seeking them means to be occupied with something other than God. Hating wealth, however, can give way to indifference and, subsequently, nearness to God, whereas seeking wealth turns one away from God.

Comparing poverty and riches, Ghazali considers poverty superior and more virtuous. Even if the rich man is liberal and gives away his wealth to those who are in need, he is still inferior to the poor man, because possessing wealth inevitably makes a man preoccupied with worldly affairs, and distracts him from nobler pursuits. Indeed, possessing wealth increases a man's love of this world, while poverty causes him to shun it and consider it a prison from which he must free himself.¹

Although Ghazali emphasizes that all mystical virtues are composed of three elements, namely, knowledge, positive disposition, and action, he does not mention these in connection with poverty, nor does he call this virtue a "station." But this does not mean that poverty is not a mystical virtue, because he implies the existence of the three elements in what he calls the conditions of poverty. The virtue of poverty requires the knowledge that God is the source of everything that affects him and therefore a man must not detest being poor. This is the minimum requirement for anyone who seeks to acquire the positive disposition of poverty. Higher than this disposition is satisfaction with poverty; and the highest level is seeking to be poor and being pleased with poverty because one realizes the dangers of richness. As to action, one should never complain about his poverty, but should hide it. More importantly, the one who seeks the virtue of poverty must not neglect or diminish his devotional practices; he must give what is beyond his immediate needs to those who need it, and should try not to accumulate possessions for more than one day's needs. Failing that, he may accumulate them for forty days' needs, or one year's needs at most.²

The usual way for a poor man to satisfy his necessary needs is to work for them. Because the few are engaged in higher and more important duties, Ghazali allows them to satisfy their needs without working. This

1. *R*, IV. 4. 2423-24.

2. *R*, IV. 4. 2425-27.

can be done in one of two ways. (1) They may receive free gifts without asking for them. In accepting free gifts, the mystic must make sure that he is qualified to receive them and that he will be under no obligation in return. More importantly, however, he must consider this gift as a gift from God and not from the giver, who is only an intermediary for God's bounty. (2) Or they may satisfy their needs by begging. Ghazali emphasizes that, in principle, begging is only permitted in extreme cases of want. This is so because it implies dissatisfaction with God's decree, forces man to humble himself to someone other than God, and embarrasses those from whom he begs. However, the mystic who is poor may beg for his food when he is hungry and for medicine when sick; but he should not beg for less important or unnecessary needs.¹

Thus poverty as a mystical virtue does not mean that a person happens to be poor and is therefore virtuous. Rather, it requires that the person know the right attitude toward worldly affairs and fulfill the above-mentioned conditions. Ghazali gives a detailed account of the character traits of poor learned men to emphasize the importance of this virtue. Nevertheless, in his view, poverty can only be a virtue for someone who has always lacked possessions. It is inferior to the excellence of the man who has had possessions and rejected them. This is asceticism, with which he deals next.

ASCETICISM

Ghazali has no reservations about calling asceticism (*zuhd*) one of the noble mystical virtues. He calls it a station and analyzes it according to the three constituents of the mystical virtues, i.e., knowledge, positive disposition, and action. Asceticism is so important for him that he gives it particular attention in the *Deliverer* to show how mystical virtues in general are experienced.²

Asceticism requires a knowledge of the relative excellence of things which produces the positive disposition of turning away from lower things to those which are superior. But this knowledge is a general one which produces a general asceticism that applies equally to many things. For the realization of asceticism as a mystical virtue one must know that the pleasure of nearness to God and of the world to come is incalculable, durable, and real, while the pleasures of this life are only transitory and

1. *R*, IV. 4. 2422-26.

2. *Munqidh*, p. 97.

illusory.¹ Ghazali maintains that the term asceticism applies particularly to the positive disposition, even though knowledge is also necessary. He differentiates various levels of asceticism on the basis of the positive disposition. To renounce everything other than the desire for nearness to God is absolute asceticism. Below this is renouncing worldly goods for the pleasure of the world to come. To renounce some worldly goods and desire some is not asceticism, although it has some merit in training one for it. To renounce forbidden and evil things is not asceticism at all because, as a mystical virtue, asceticism applies only to the renunciation of permissible things. Moreover, the thing renounced must be within the reach of the ascetic; otherwise his condition will be due to his inability to acquire certain things and not to asceticism. The action which results from the positive disposition of asceticism is refraining from enjoying the things renounced and engaging in worthier activities.²

Thus, asceticism, unlike poverty, can only be attained by someone who has worldly possessions. In addition to distinguishing asceticism from poverty, Ghazali distinguishes it from other virtues that may tend to be erroneously identified with it. For him asceticism is not merely renouncing wealth or giving it away for the sake of liberality or magnificence. Rather, it is renouncing this world as insignificant when compared to the value of the hereafter. Giving wealth for the sake of liberality, for example, can be expected from those who are concerned with this world alone, as well as from those who seek happiness in the hereafter, but asceticism can only be attained by those who direct all their attention to happiness in the hereafter.³

To illustrate the essence of asceticism, Ghazali selects a statement of Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī: "We have heard much about asceticism. According to us, it is the renouncing of everything which distracts from God."⁴ Thus, the meaning of renouncing this world for God is to come to God with a heart filled with remembrance and meditation. But remembering God and meditating on His majesty are only possible as long as man is alive and life can only be preserved if man has some minimal means for his survival. Therefore, if a man limits himself to those worldly things that preserve his life while intending to use his life for

1. *R*, IV. 4. 2444.

2. *R*, IV. 4. 2444-45.

3. *R*, IV. 4. 2448.

4. *R*, IV. 4. 2464; cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, I, 295.

devotional practices, then he is in fact a true ascetic completely occupied with God.¹ Ghazali enumerates food, dress, and dwelling as necessary for survival and in agreement with asceticism and gives a detailed account of how the minimum amount of each, acquired for the shortest time, is what agrees with true asceticism. The true ascetic accumulates nothing; according to Ghazali, he does not even save some of his lunch for his supper.² It is for this reason that he emphasizes that the highest rank of asceticism becomes perfect by the attainment of trust in God. Ghazali states explicitly that trust in God, as a mystical virtue, necessarily follows asceticism.³

DIVINE UNITY AND TRUST

We shall discuss divine unity (*tawhīd*) and trust (*tawakkul*) together since Ghazali maintains that the former is the basis of the latter, that is, divine unity is the knowledge which produces trust, the corresponding positive disposition. (Divine unity means the state of awareness of the oneness of God and not simply the abstract notion of the unity of God.) Thus, while classifying divine unity as a separate mystical quality, Ghazali deals with it as a part of the mystical virtue of trust. This agrees with his approach in the *Book of the Forty*, as well as with the doctrine of his favorite mystical writer, al-Makkī, but the fact that he allocates a special section to divine unity conforms to the viewpoint of other earlier mystical writers, such as al-Qushayrī and al-Harawī who, however, make it a separate station.⁴

In discussing divine unity as the knowledge which produces trust, Ghazali states that those who profess belief in it are of four ranks. (1) Those who profess the unity of God with their lips but have no faith in their hearts. (2) Those who believe on the basis of authority and tradition, that is, they pronounce with their lips the formula "there is no deity but God" with the same devotion as the multitude of the Islamic community. (3) Those who believe God to be the only cause of all that exists on the evidence of discursive thought and through the

1. R, IV. 4. 2465.

2. R, IV. 4. 2466-83.

3. R, IV. 4. 2488, where Ghazali says: "Since asceticism can only be complete by trust (*tawakkul*), then let us begin by explaining it."

4. R, IV. 5. 2494. Indeed Ghazali says that "trust" is a "station" which comes after "asceticism," thus dropping any mention of "divine unity" (R, IV. 5. 2543-56). *Arba'in*, p. 218; al-Makkī, *Qūt*, II, 3-75; cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, II, 581-88; al-Harawī, *Manāzil*, pp. 110-13.

light of intuition. (4) Lastly, those who have risen to the realization that nothing exists except God. Their hearts are filled with God and they even become unconscious of their own identity. This is the state of those who are truthful and have attained the stage of annihilation in divine unity (*fanā' fi al-tawhīd*), because they see only God and are oblivious to everything else including their own existence. Of these four grades of belief in divine unity, the last is the highest but, because it belongs to the knowledge of revelation, and because trust, as a mystical virtue, is not based on this level of knowledge alone, Ghazali does not discuss it in this context. In the first or the lowest rank there is only hypocrisy, and in the second, the believer has the same status as the multitude who have faith. Although the second level of belief in divine unity is the one discussed by the dialectical theologians, Ghazali maintains that it can never produce the mystical virtue of trust. It is the third rank which truly produces the positive disposition of trust. This is so because the believer realizes that God is the only doer and that man in his actions is but a "channel" of God's action. In this way, as a mystical virtue, trust is understood as trust in God alone.¹ Lest this knowledge lead simply to naive resignation, Ghazali emphasizes that belief in divine unity must include the belief that God is the creator of everything that exists and that the whole world is the best possible world, that nothing can be added to it or taken from it to make it more perfect.²

Knowledge of divine unity combined with belief in the perfection of the existing world produces the positive disposition of trust in God or reliance of the heart on God alone. Once a man is convinced that God is the only doer, and that He has complete knowledge and power over men together with absolute mercy and providence, then his heart will inevitably rely on Him and have complete trust in Him.³

In order to explain the action which results from this positive disposition, Ghazali describes three levels of trust in God by giving examples from daily life. (1) Trust in God may resemble the relation between a man and the lawyer who represents him in a dispute. This is the weakest level of trust because man is always checking on and preparing part of the work of his lawyer. (2) Next is trust in God which resembles the

1. *R*, IV. 5. 2494-2513. It is here that Ghazali again discusses the problem of the seeming contradiction between God's act and man's choice. Since this question has been already discussed in Chapter III, there is no need to repeat it here.

2. *R*, IV. 5. 2517.

3. *R*, IV. 5. 2518-20.

relation between a child and his mother, for the child knows only his mother and calls for her help alone. A man who trusts God in this way is unaware of possessing this virtue; he simply has complete trust in God. (3) Finally, the highest level of trust in God characterizes the man who recognizes God's mercy with a certainty beyond any shadow of doubt, regards himself as a mere corpse, and would not even move a limb without the will of God. This man does not appeal to God for anything because of his complete trust in Him, whereas a man in the second level may ask for what he needs, but only asks from God.¹

Ghazali, now, raises the problem of how far personal thought and effort are consistent with trust in God and faith in divine unity, since the various levels of trust in God mentioned above ought to issue in corresponding actions. This question does not arise with regard to the last level, because man in this level feels that he is inert flesh in the hands of God. Personal thought can enter in at the second level but man's only action consists in prayer to God for help. Personal effort is much more extensive at the lowest level of trust in God where man exerts himself in a way analogous to a client's cooperation with his lawyer. Such activity is not inconsistent with his trust in the lawyer; for distrust would result in seeking the aid of someone else, and Ghazali emphasizes that trust does not require man to abandon all action. At the same time, those actions which originate in a sense of power or control over events are inconsistent with trust in God. Rather, a man must perform whatever actions he is capable of, but depend on the will of God for the outcome.²

The balance between human action and trust in God, according to Ghazali, can be clarified according to the ends they aim at. These are (1) securing what is useful for sustenance, (2) preserving what one already possesses, (3) guarding against possible future evils, and (4) opposing present evils.³ In a detailed discussion of these classes of actions, Ghazali shows that sometimes trust in God consists only in the knowledge that the thing is from God, while at other times, trust includes a positive disposition and action. Thus, as a mystical virtue, trust in God does not reject all action indiscriminately; rather, it rejects only those which are essentially contrary to man's reliance on God in what he does. However, according to Ghazali, the greater man's trust

1. *R*, IV. 5. 2521-22.

2. *R*, IV. 5. 2523-26.

3. *R*, IV. 5. 2529-66.

in God, the less he will desire to accumulate provisions or worry about harmful evils because of his conviction that, ultimately, God will supply his basic needs and protect him from what may harm him.¹

Therefore, while accepting a number of essential human activities as consistent with trust in God as the virtue of the few, Ghazali considers that the mystic who acquires this virtue in its highest form will be constantly aware of his state as a helpless thing in the hands of God. In this sense, trust in God is an important mystical virtue which makes the method followed by the few in acquiring mystical virtues consistent with the theological virtues discussed in the first section of Chapter III above. Thus, trust in God teaches the mystic to gear all his activities to what pleases God and to rely completely on His providence. Ghazali discusses trust in God as the last of the mystical virtues before love. Although he does not specifically state that this mystical virtue should be followed by love, he discusses love immediately after trust in God in all three works which deal with mystical virtues.²

LOVE

By dealing with love (*maḥabbah*) immediately after trust, Ghazali departs from the method of al-Makkī who places satisfaction (*riḍā*) after trust, and then follows it with love.³ For Ghazali, satisfaction, together with yearning (*shawq*) and intimacy (*uns*), are the fruits of love, that is, its consequences. Indeed, Ghazali calls Book 6 of Quarter IV of the *Revival*, in which he discusses love, "The Book of Love, Yearning, Intimacy, and Satisfaction," and so reveals the relative order he assigns to these mystical virtues. In spite of this, however, he agrees with al-Makkī that "love of God is the final aim and the highest station"⁴ and emphasizes that any station beyond love of God, such as yearning, intimacy, or satisfaction, is but its product, and the stations before it, such as repentance, patience, asceticism, and the others mentioned above, only lead to and prepare for it.⁵

1. R, IV. 5. 2544-46, 2567-71; cf. Ghazali, *Ayyuhā al-Walad* in *al-Jawāhir al-Ghazālī* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'ādah, 1934), p. 69, where Ghazali defines trust in God as complete reliance on Him alone with regard to all things that may affect man.

2. R, IV. 5. 2577; *Arba'in*, p. 225; *Kimiyā-yi*, II, 922-42.

3. R, IV. 6. 2580; *Arba'in*, p. 227; *Kimiyā-yi*, II, 943; cf. al-Makkī, *Qūt*, II, 99. Cf. al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, IX, 544, where he points out the difference between Ghazali and al-Makkī with regard to the order of love among the mystical virtues.

4. R, IV. 6. 2580; cf. al-Makkī, *Qūt*, II, 99.

5. R, IV. 6. 2580.

Therefore, love as a mystical virtue is understood as love of God. In Ghazali's view, it is the most important mystical virtue but it is also one of the controversial mystical virtues. Some Islamic religious thinkers had contested the possibility of its existence and doubted its compatibility with Islamic teachings. Before analyzing such an important virtue, therefore, Ghazali considers it necessary to establish its existence and compatibility with Islam. Although Aristotle affirms that there can be no love between man and God because the distance between them is too great, Ghazali's argument against those who deny the love of God is primarily directed against Muslim traditionalists and certain dialectical theologians.¹ These thinkers interpret the Koranic verses "He loveth them and they love Him," and "Those who believe have stronger love for God," to mean not love but some other duty such as obedience.² They argue that love of God is impossible, because love exists only between members of the same genus and God is too high above us to inspire human emotions. According to Ghazali, this interpretation of love in terms of obedience is misleading because obedience is a consequence of love and love precedes it. On the basis of these Koranic verses and a score of prophetic traditions, and what he believes to be a unanimous agreement (*ijmā'*) in the Islamic community that love of God is a religious duty, Ghazali assures us that love of God is not only compatible with Islamic religious teachings but required by them. For him, objections to love of God are usually caused by a misunderstanding of its definition. To obtain a perfect definition of love of God, one must know what love is in general, its conditions, and finally its applicability to God.

What man perceives in the world can be divided into three classes: (1) what is harmonious with his natural disposition and, thus, produces pleasure and then love in the beholder; (2) what conflicts with his natural disposition, produces pain, and is therefore hated; (3) what is neutral and thus neither loved nor hated. A man of sound nature will love and seek that which gives him pleasure, and hate and avoid the

1. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 8. 7. 1159a3-4. However, a Muslim philosopher such as Miskawayh acknowledges love of God by the gnostic (*al-ʿārīf*) who acquires true knowledge of Him; see his *Tahdhīb*, p. 147. Ghazali mentions one Aḥmad Ibn Ghālib, known as Ghulām al-Khalīl, as an example of the dialectical theologians who reject love of God because it may imply anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*); see *R*, IV. 6. 2655-56.

2. *R*, IV. 6. 2581; Koran 5:59, 2:160.

painful. Therefore, "love is the inclination of nature (*mayl at-tab'*) to that which gives pleasure."¹

There are five classes of pleasurable objects of love: those perceived by the five senses. Such pleasures can be shared by all animals. Were there no other senses, then God could not be loved, because He cannot be perceived by the senses or represented by images. But there is another, sixth sense, which characterizes man and differentiates him from animals. This may be called "intellect," or "light," or "heart," or something else. It is an inner sight, stronger than external sight. Its perceptions are more powerful, and the beauty of what is perceived by it is greater. The delight of the heart in perceiving sublime divine objects is, therefore, superior to the pleasures derived from the five senses.²

Ghazali discusses five categories of love. (1) Every living being loves itself first. Self-love means that by nature every living being has a desire to persevere in its existence and avoid death. Since that which is loved by nature is what is agreeable to the lover, and nothing is more agreeable to him than his own self, man loves his own existence and fears death, not only out of fear of pain or of punishment in the hereafter, but because death will put an end to his existence. This love naturally extends to the perfection of an individual's existence and everything that helps to preserve that perfection. Thus, each man's first love is for himself; then for the soundness of his members; then his property, children, kinsfolk, and friends. These things are only loved, in this sense, because man's existence and perfection depend on them. Ghazali gives an example of how man's love of his children is related to his self-love. He says that man loves his children when he does not receive any benefit from them, because they continue to exist after he does. The continuity of the existence of offspring is a kind of continuity of the existence of one's self. Still, if a man were motivated only by this natural disposition (*wa kāna tab'uhu 'alā i'tidālih*) and had to choose between being killed himself or having his child killed, he would choose his own existence rather than that of his child because the life of his child only resembles his own.³ (2) The second category of love is benefit. Man loves those who

1. R, IV. 6. 2584.

2. R, IV. 6. 2584-85.

3. R, IV. 6. 2585-86. It must be noted here that Ghazali gives this example to show the exact nature of self-love. He deliberately uses the expression "when man is motivated by his natural disposition alone" in order to warn against confusing this meaning of self-love with other grounds of love. Van den Bergh in his "The 'love of God,'" p. 311, regards this example as "immoral."

benefit him and can thus love a stranger to whom no blood ties bind him. This second object of love concerns only the means to one's own existence. It is in the nature of the love of the means that, once the aim is attained, the means lose their value. (3) Man may love something other than himself for its own sake, not for any benefit he may receive from it. This love by itself causes him happiness. It is a true and perfect love, inasmuch as its object is beyond a man's own existence. Beauty, for instance, is loved in this way: for the perception of beauty is a delight, loved for its own sake and not for the satisfaction of physical desires. Verdant plants and running water are loved in themselves apart from their usefulness for man's survival.¹ (4) Man loves beauty in general. The term "beauty" (*ḥusn*) can be applied to things not perceived by the senses as well as to well-proportioned shapes and agreeable colors. Beauty in anything means that there exists in it the perfection that befits it. Thus, when we speak of a beautiful character of a man, for example, we refer to the good qualities which are not perceived by the senses but by the inner sight. Thus, the one who loves the saint or the prophet, loves him because of the beauty of his character. (5) The fifth category of love is the mysterious, hidden relationship (*al-munāsabah al-khafiyyah*) which exists between two persons, not because of beauty or any advantage, but solely as a result of a certain spiritual affinity between them.²

Were one man to have all five qualities which evoke love, he would inspire more intense love than someone endowed with only one or two qualities. However, only in God are all five qualities in their perfect form united. Hence, it is only God who is an object of love in the ultimate sense. For, although individual men may be objects of love in one of the five ways, that any human evokes love in all five ways is mere illusion.³ Ghazali then applies these five categories to love of God. (1) As to man's love of his own existence, he who knows himself and God knows absolutely that his existence, survival, and perfection depend on God alone. Nothing exists by itself; everything receives its existence through God who truly exists by Himself. If a man does not love God, it is because he does not understand himself and because of his love of himself. (2) Love of benefit must lead man to love of God once he knows that God is the ultimate cause of all benefit. In the last analysis,

1. R. IV. 6. 2586-87.

2. R. IV. 6. 2589-91.

3. R. IV. 6. 2591.

a man bestows favors only on himself, never on others. When he gives to others, he aims at a reward such as entering paradise. Therefore, no man has a right to be thanked and loved for favors since it is God who enables him to act and since in doing good deeds he really seeks to benefit himself. (3) True love for a benefactor without expecting any favors from him also requires the love of God, because God is the benefactor of the whole of creation and all things created. Ghazali cites several examples of God's special favors for men and asks, how could there be another benefactor in addition to God? (4) As to the love of beauty for its own sake, he who loves the prophet or a saint does not love him for his external beauty but for the inner beauty which his actions and character suggest. But, in reality, the good qualities which form such inner beauty belong, in their most perfect state, to God alone. Being created implies being imperfect. All perfection but God's is relative. (5) Spiritual affinity is based on something visible or hidden. Ghazali says that this affinity also exists between man and God, but it cannot be expressed because of its relation to the knowledge of revelation, and only when one experiences the higher mystical station can he have a "taste" (*dhawq*) of love of God based on this affinity. However, Ghazali maintains that this kind of love is metaphorically mentioned in a prophetic tradition in which Muḥammad relates that God says: "My servant continues to approach Me with supererogatory practices till I love him, and when I love him, I become the hearing through which he hears, the sight through which he sees, and the tongue by which he speaks."¹

This discussion of the objects of love in general and the way they can be applied to the love of God has been pursued in some detail in order to show how Ghazali uses nonmystical sources to explain a mystical virtue. It is clear that he appeals to the philosophic tradition, especially that of Aristotle, for an exposition of love in general which he applies to his analysis of the love of God.² In order to see how this procedure contributes to the systemization and clarification of a mystical virtue, one need only compare Ghazali's account of love of God with that of al-Makkī and al-Qushayrī.³ However, the philosophers do not regard love as a virtue but rather as a passion.⁴ By considering love of God

1. *R*, IV. 6. 2601.

2. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 9. 4. 1166a1-8, 1169b2.

3. *R*, IV. 6. 2580-2655; al-Makkī, *Qūt*, II, 99-141; al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, I, 610ff.

4. Aristotle *Rhetoric* 2. 4. 1380b-1381b; Avicenna, *Fī al-Aḥlāq wa al-Infī'ālāt*, p. 24.

as a mystical virtue, Ghazali shows how such a passion can become not only another mystical virtue, but also the highest mystical virtue. For this purpose, he relates this passion of love to God through the highest form of knowledge, that is, knowledge of Him.

In his discussion of love of God, Ghazali does not mention explicitly the three components of the mystical virtues, i.e., knowledge, positive disposition, and action. However, his discussion of the necessary relation between knowledge and love of God, which is obviously a positive disposition as he defines it, and his accounts of the activities of those who are experiencing love show that these three elements are assumed in this mystical virtue. The element of knowledge deserves special attention because, although knowledge, according to Ghazali, is an element in all mystical virtues, it is most prominent in his discussion of love of God, and we are even given hints of an esoteric (*bāṭin*) knowledge which is not to be written down in books. On the other hand, Ghazali does not deal with an independent mystical virtue called "knowledge" as al-Qushayrī, for example, does.¹

When he speaks of knowledge of God Ghazali means an intuitive theoretical knowledge which produces a joy and a pleasure that do not end with death.² He distinguishes two ways which lead to this highest knowledge. (1) The way of those who are strong in their apprehension and devotion. These know God first and then know other things through Him. (2) The way of the weak, who know God's works first and, through these, gradually ascend to some perception of the Creator. The first way, according to Ghazali, is the esoteric knowledge which cannot be expressed in writing. Although he calls the second the way of the weak he says it is actually very difficult in itself. It can only be achieved through meditation which requires freedom from desires of worldly things. Because of the infinity of the objects to be known, this process can never be complete, but it can produce love of God.

Ghazali emphasizes that love of God can only be attained in this life, although it assures man of ultimate happiness in the hereafter. Ultimate happiness admits of degrees in proportion to the strength of man's love of God. Vision of God (*ru'yat Allāh*) is the highest happiness that man can attain in the hereafter if his love of God reaches the utmost degree in this life. The purification of the heart from worldly things is

1. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, I, 601-609, where he deals with "knowledge" (*ma'rifah*) immediately before dealing with "love."

2. R, IV. 6. 2604-2606.

attained through careful training in the mystical life. When this is done, knowledge of all that is God's is the means of securing, preserving, and strengthening the love of God.¹

Since men differ in their desire for worldly things and their capacity for knowledge, it is natural that they differ in their love of God. Love of God and desire for worldly things pull man in opposite directions, so that love of God increases when the desire for worldly things decreases and vice versa. In contrast, there is a certain correspondence between love of God and knowledge in general; the more man understands, the greater his love will be.² Therefore, one reason for imperfect love of God is weakness in man's knowledge of Him. If God is the most evident of all things, then the knowledge of Him ought to come first in time and be the easiest to obtain. Nevertheless, things do not happen in this way. The reason, according to Ghazali, is that knowledge of God comes late in man's development, after he has acquired certain moral and intellectual habits. Furthermore, our intellects are too weak to grasp the majesty and splendor of God which illuminate everything. It seems strange that God's evidence is the cause of His being hidden. Generally, however, things are understood by means of their opposites. If some things indicated God's existence while others denied it, it would be much easier for us to perceive the difference. If the sun never set and if we lived in perpetual light, we would never be able to know the existence of light, which we learn only through its negation, darkness.³ Therefore, a mystic who sets out to seek the highest mystical virtue, i.e., love of God, must achieve knowledge of God after he has already purified his soul from love of anything other than Him.

To distinguish true love of God from apparent love, Ghazali enumerates a large number of signs through which true love can be known. For example, a man who truly loves God will desire to meet Him and, consequently, will not fear death but love it. Hating death is a sign of incomplete love of God. But there is one case in which the man who loves God may not desire to die for the time being, namely, when he is not quite prepared to meet his Beloved and wishes to prepare himself better by means of more devotional practices. He who loves God will also prefer God's will to what he himself desires and will find obedience to God pleasing. Indeed, he who loves God will love to be alone so as

1. *R*, IV. 6. 2612, 2616-22.

2. *R*, IV. 6. 2623.

3. *R*, IV. 6. 2625-27.

to meditate upon Him, and will find pleasure in isolation and pain and discomfort in associating with others. He will love all those who obey God and hate all His enemies.¹ The different signs of true love of God and the examples of how true lovers of God behave show that there are infinite degrees of love of God. But Ghazali is interested in demonstrating the essential characteristics of the true love of God which is based on knowledge of Him. This is the love of God which is the highest mystical virtue. When this love of God is achieved, it leads to the vision of God in the hereafter, which is the highest rank of ultimate happiness, higher than the happiness of paradise. It is in relation to these two levels of ultimate happiness that Ghazali says there are two kinds of love of God: love of Him because of His majesty alone and love of Him because He is the true Benefactor.²

As to the question whether God loves His servants, Ghazali's approach changes when he ends his treatment of man's love of God. He admits that there are Koranic verses as well as prophetic traditions which speak of God's love of man, for example, the Koranic verse quoted above: "He loveth them, and they love Him." While he opposes the theologians and traditionalists who seek to interpret man's love of God as obedience, he himself maintains that as to the question of God's love of His creatures, the word love cannot have the same meaning as when it is applied to man. This is so because all the words we use have a different sense when applied to God and can be applied to God only metaphorically. Love in man implies a need and a deficiency, which are impossible for God, who possesses all perfection, all beauty, and all majesty eternally and necessarily. Therefore, God loves only Himself. What is said about His love of His servants must be taken in a metaphorical or allegorical sense, that is, it means that God lifts the veil from their hearts so that they can know Him and are enabled to draw nearer to Him, and that He wills this from eternity. God's love for man means that He brings man to His nearness, repels his sins, purifies his soul, and lifts the veil so that he can see Him with his inner sight.³

This discussion of God's love of man is meant to make clear that it is man's love of God which is the subject of the highest mystical virtue and not God's love of man. There remain only the mystical virtues which result from love of God and are, consequently, controlled by it.

1. *R*, IV. 6. 2640-48.

2. *R*, IV. 6. 2649, 2654-55.

3. *R*, IV. 6. 2635-37, 2639.

Of the specific virtues which follow from love of God, Ghazali mentions yearning, intimacy, and satisfaction, and discusses them in this order.

VIRTUES PRODUCED BY LOVE

YEARNING

Yearning (*shawq*) can be defined as seeking and longing for something. By nature, man yearns toward the object of his love when it is not present or is partly perceived, for one does not long for what is present and fully grasped. As a mystical virtue, yearning, therefore, is only possible for those who acknowledge the existence of love of God.¹ Ghazali points out two ways of yearning for God. The first is the way the gnostics (*al-‘arīfūn*) perceive divine unity and is not absolutely pure, but mixed with some fancies characteristic of this life. Perfect clarity can only occur through the direct vision of God which occurs in the hereafter. Thus, those who have achieved perfect knowledge of God still “yearn” for full clarity in the hereafter. The second type of yearning arises from the fact that the number of divine things is limitless. An individual person can discover only some of them, while an endless number remains unknown to him. The mystic knows that such things exist and that they are all known to God and hence he yearns to know these unknown things. Therefore, while the first kind of yearning can be satisfied in the hereafter, through encountering God and having a vision of Him, the second kind does not seem to be satisfied either in this world or in the world to come because it is impossible that man should know all that God knows.²

INTIMACY

Ghazali regards intimacy (*uns*) as somewhat higher than yearning since yearning is characterized by restlessness. Intimacy is the cheerfulness and joy of the heart when it contemplates the beauty of the beloved. As a mystical virtue, intimacy is attained when the mystic is overwhelmed with the joy of nearness to God. The sign of being intimate with God is to be annoyed when associating with fellow men and delighted when contemplating God alone.³

1. R, IV. 6. 2628-30; cf. al-Makkī, *Qūt*, II, 120, where he mentions it in passing.

2. R, IV. 6. 2629-30.

3. R, IV. 6. 2656-58.

SATISFACTION

The most important of the three virtues produced by love of God is the mystical virtue of satisfaction (*riḍā*) with whatever God decrees. Ghazali considers love of God as a necessary precondition of satisfaction. He deals with satisfaction after love directly or indirectly in all three books in which he treats mystical virtues.¹ He thus differs from al-Makkī who regards satisfaction as the eighth mystical station which immediately precedes the ninth and the final station, namely, love.² Both thinkers consider love as the highest station, higher than satisfaction but al-Makkī, on the other hand, seems to distinguish between two kinds of satisfaction—the first is produced by trust and therefore precedes love; the second comes after love, but he does not discuss it in detail nor does he regard it as a station.³ Ghazali regards only this second kind of satisfaction as a mystical virtue because one has to love God first before he can truly be satisfied with His works.

The attainment of love of God is, therefore, the necessary and sufficient condition for the emergence of satisfaction; once a man loves God, he must necessarily be satisfied with God's works. In order to demonstrate this, Ghazali discusses the case of man's acceptance of and satisfaction with pains and hardships that may befall him. He suggests that there are two ways of being satisfied with these matters. (1) One may enjoy the love of a certain object to such a degree that he does not feel pain or hardship coming from other sources and thus, still more, he does not feel the pains which come from the beloved object. (2) Alternatively, a man may accept immediate pain and even desire it despite his natural aversion to pain because he expects pleasure to replace this pain in the future. Such is the case of a sick man who accepts the pain of surgery for the relief which will follow.⁴ If man can be satisfied with what opposes his desires and natural disposition, then he is even more likely to find satisfaction in those things to which he is naturally inclined, and if this is possible with regard to worldly affairs, it is even more likely in connection with love of God and the pleasures of the hereafter.

1. R, IV. 6. 2663; *Arba'in*, p. 227, where he calls it the ninth principle of character traits; *Kimiyā-yi*, II, 974; cf. al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, IX, 646.

2. Al-Makkī, *Qūt*, II, 76-91.

3. al-Makkī, *Qūt*, II, 151. Other mystics who classify "satisfaction" before love are: al-Qushayrī, al-Sarrāj, al-Kalābādhī, and al-Harawī; al-Kharrāz, however, classifies it immediately after "love," followed by "yearning" and "intimacy"; see Table 3, p. 160.

4. R, IV. 6. 2669-70.

In his discussion of satisfaction and of the other two virtues produced by love of God, namely yearning and intimacy, Ghazali does not mention specifically the three elements necessary for every mystical virtue, i.e., knowledge, positive disposition, and action. However, in his discussion of satisfaction in particular, Ghazali deals with the positive disposition of satisfaction as well as the action produced by it. Knowledge is left out because satisfaction is a by-product of love of God and this love is impossible without the knowledge of God. As a positive disposition, "satisfaction" means delight in submitting to God's will. Ghazali enumerates three levels of such delight. (1) The first is hope of reward in the hereafter. (2) Next is cheerful acceptance of whatever befalls man because it is due to the will of God. (3) The highest level is reached when man's desire for anything becomes the same as God's will and gives rise to the highest joy.

Ghazali raises some questions about the action which is produced by the positive disposition of satisfaction. (1) Since man seeks to be completely satisfied with God's decree, this may lead to abandoning all actions, even acts of obedience, or else to licentiousness since all actions ultimately originate in God. If God is the source of all good and evil, should a man who is pleased with God welcome sin and evil in himself and in others? According to Ghazali, though evil is ultimately traceable to God, man should be neither pleased with it nor with the one who commits it. Only ignorant and feeble-minded people regard acceptance of evil as the virtue of satisfaction. A sin is an act of God in the sense of ultimately originating in Him, and, from this viewpoint, man should express his satisfaction in "knowing" its origin. However, since man acquires his capacity to act from God, he is in a qualified sense responsible for sins which must, therefore, be rejected and despised. (2) The second question is related to supererogatory practices such as supplication (*du'ā'*). Since the man who loves God must be satisfied with whatever He decrees, does supplication conflict with this mystical virtue? Ghazali's answer is a clear no. Indeed, believers have been divinely commanded, through the Koran and prophetic traditions, to ask God for forgiveness as well as for aid to help them attain what is good and refrain from what is evil. Muḥammad himself constantly used to supplicate God in spite of the fact that he had achieved the highest degree of satisfaction.¹ Thus recommended and praiseworthy actions do not conflict with satisfaction. Ghazali finds it necessary in connection with the relation

1. R, IV. 6. 2677.

of action to "satisfaction," to comment on a well-known prophetic tradition in which Muḥammad forbade fleeing from a plague-stricken place. In Ghazali's view, fleeing from a plague does not in itself convey dissatisfaction with God's decree; the tradition merely indicates that some healthy persons must remain in the stricken place to look after the sick and the dead. Indeed, Ghazali says that in general it is a "decree" and order of God to flee from harmful things.¹

In order to show the superior merit of satisfaction as a mystical virtue, Ghazali compares the attitudes of three men toward death. The first prefers death because he yearns for an encounter with God. The second chooses to continue living so that he may serve God. The third says that he does not choose, but rather will be satisfied with whatever God chooses for him. The cases, Ghazali says, were presented before a well-known gnostic (*ʿārif*), who sided with the one who displayed "satisfaction."² Therefore, satisfaction is the highest mystical virtue produced by love of God which is truly the highest principal mystical virtue.

Conclusion

Ghazali's analysis of the mystical virtues occupies all of Quarter IV of the *Revival*, the largest quarter of the entire book. In his analysis, Ghazali emphatically asserts that the mystical virtues are *the* virtues par excellence, not because they describe man's relation to God, but because they are primarily the virtues of the few. Although he says that by the few he means the mystics, he points out in several places of Quarter IV of the *Revival* that the mystics have failed to reach a scientific understanding of these virtues. It is for this reason that he introduces the rational theoretical framework which he calls the tripartite characteristic of the mystical virtues. Ghazali also had recourse to other philosophic doctrines, such as the distinction between the rational psychic faculties on the one hand and the irascible and concupiscent on the other, which underlies many mystical virtues, especially those related to the states of the soul, namely, the supporting mystical virtues.

It is clear that Ghazali's "theoretical" approach to the mystical virtues is derived from the philosophic tradition. However, many of the specific features of his discussion, his ordering these virtues into a hierarchy, and regarding them as stations or spiritual states, all belong to

1. R, IV. 6. 2681.

2. R, IV. 6. 2682.

the mystical tradition with which Ghazali identifies himself. Ghazali's discussion of mystical virtues resembles in a certain way his discussion of the philosophic virtues. In the latter case, the generally accepted interpretation is that Ghazali rejects the philosophic tradition; however, as his treatment of philosophic virtues develops, it becomes clear that he accepts the essential features of all the philosophic virtues while modifying them in terms of the religious-legal tradition and mystical teachings. In contrast, it is generally accepted that Ghazali accepts the mystical tradition completely; however, his method of dealing with the mystical virtues reveals his dissatisfaction with the usual mystical understanding of these virtues. By having recourse to the teachings of the philosophers, Ghazali creates a new framework within which the mystical virtues can be explained more consistently and precisely.

In addition to his attempt to explain certain aspects of the mystical virtues in terms of philosophic concepts, Ghazali deals with these virtues as essentially based on the Islamic religious tradition. In his view, and in the view of his major Sufi source, al-Makkī, these mystical virtues are nothing but the interpretation of the hidden meanings of the divine commandments; the only difference between these and the religious-legal virtues extracted from the external meanings of the divine commandments is the fact that the former are for the few, whereas the latter are for the many.¹ We have mentioned in the beginning of this chapter that, in selecting material for his mystical virtues, Ghazali singles out those mystics known for their effort to reconcile mysticism with Islamic teachings. He, in turn, tries to synthesize the mystical and Islamic traditions by showing that mystical virtues admit of degrees of excellence. The lower degrees are usually assigned to pious religious men, whereas the higher degrees can only be acquired by the mystics; it is to these higher degrees that the term mystical virtue most properly applies. In the cases of open conflict between some mystical virtues and Islamic teachings, Ghazali seeks to reconcile them by interpreting the religious teachings through the perspective of the mystical virtues.

In his description of the mystical virtues, Ghazali begins with everyday social or moral qualities, religious teachings, and human passions, abstracts them from their original context, and reformulates them in terms of the way of life of the few in search of nearness to God. It is particularly important to note, for example, that the first principal

1. al-Makkī, *Qūt*, II, 150.

mystical virtue, repentance, is a well-known Islamic religious practice which Ghazali develops beyond its original religious limits to make it a virtue of the few. The highest mystical virtue, love of God, on the other hand, is a human passion discussed by the philosophers but never developed as a virtue. Ghazali begins with this passion in its accepted philosophic sense and directs it toward a new object, God, thus making it the ultimate virtue which can be acquired by man during this life.

TABLE 2
GHAZALI'S LIST OF MYSTICAL VIRTUES

	<i>Revival IV</i>	<i>Forty IV</i>	<i>Alchemy IV</i>
<i>Tawbah</i>	Repentance	Repentance	Repentance
<i>Ṣabr</i>	Patience	Fear	Patience
<i>Shukr</i>	Gratitude	Asceticism	Gratitude
<i>Rajā'</i>	Hope	Patience	Hope
<i>Khawf</i>	Fear	Gratitude	Fear
<i>Faqr</i>	Poverty	Sincerity	Poverty
<i>Zuhd</i>	Asceticism	Truthfulness	Asceticism
<i>Tawhīd</i>	Divine Unity	Trust	Resolve
<i>Tawakkul</i>	Trust	Love	Sincerity
<i>Maḥabbah</i>	Love	Satisfaction	Truthfulness
<i>Shawq</i>	Yearning		Vigilance
<i>Uns</i>	Intimacy		Self-examination
<i>Ridā</i>	Satisfaction		Meditation
<i>Niyyah</i>	Resolve		Divine Unity
<i>Ikhhlās</i>	Sincerity		Trust
<i>Ṣidq</i>	Truthfulness		Love
<i>Murāqabah</i>	Vigilance		Yearning
<i>Muḥāsabah</i>	Self-examination		Satisfaction
<i>Tafakkur</i>	Meditation		

TABLE 3
SUFIS' LISTS OF MYSTICAL VIRTUES^a

AL-KHARRĀZ <i>al-Sidq</i>	AL-SARRĀJ <i>al-Luma'</i>	AL-MAKKĪ <i>Qūt</i>	AL-KALĀBĀDHĪ <i>al-Ta'arruf</i>	AL-QUSHAYRĪ <i>al-Risālah</i>	AL-HARAWĪ <i>Manāzil</i>
1 Repentance	1 Repentance	1 Repentance	1 Repentance	1 Repentance	2 Repentance
6 Asceticism	3 Asceticism	2 Patience	2 Asceticism	6 Asceticism	3 Self-examination
7 Trust	4 Poverty	3 Gratitude	3 Patience	8 Fear	5 Meditation
8 Fear	5 Patience	4 Hope	4 Poverty	9 Hope	12 Fear
10 Gratitude	6 Trust	5 Fear	6 Fear	15 Trust	16 Asceticism
11 Love	7 Satisfaction	6 Asceticism	8 Sincerity	16 Gratitude	19 Hope
12 Satisfaction	1 Vigilance	7 Trust	9 Gratitude	18 Patience	22 Vigilance
13 Yearning	3 Love	8 Satisfaction	10 Trust	19 Vigilance	24 Sincerity
14 Intimacy	4 Fear	9 Love	11 Satisfaction	20 Satisfaction	27 Trust
	5 Hope		14 Intimacy	24 Sincerity	31 Patience
	6 Yearning		17 Love	25 Truthfulness	32 Satisfaction
	7 Intimacy		27 Divine Unity	36 Poverty	33 Gratitude
				41 Divine Unity	35 Truthfulness
				44 Love	46 Intimacy
				45 Yearning	48 Poverty
					61 Love
					63 Yearning
					100 Divine Unity

^a The Sufi manuals are given in a chronological order. Only mystical virtues which correspond to Ghazali's lists are given, and the numbers indicate the place of the given virtue in the order of virtues in the respective manual.

Ghazali's Theory of Virtue



MOHAMED AHMED SHERIF

1975

State University of New York Press
ALBANY

Mohamed A. Sherif is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy,
University of Tripoli, Tripoli, Libya

Ghazali's Theory of Virtue

First Edition

Published by the State University of New York Press

99 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12210

Copyright © 1975 State University of New York

All Rights reserved

Printed in U.S.A.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Sherif, Mohamed A.

Ghazali's theory of virtue.

Bibliography: p.

1. al-Ghazālī, 1058-1111. 2. Virtue.

I. Title.

B753.G34S54 179'.9 71-38000

ISBN O-87395-206-5

ISBN O-87395-207-3 (microfiche)