

# SENSE—MIND RELATIONSHIP IN GHAZALI' S EPISTEMOLOGY

(Part II)

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We now arrive at the next phase of our discussion, namely, the human perceptive faculties. The most detailed systematic exposition of this matter is in his *Ma'arij al-Quds*.<sup>41</sup> Elsewhere, he has broached this topic only in a cursory manner so as to make clear his purpose of discussion. As far as the human being is concerned, al-Ghazali holds the view that only two levels/aspects of the soul are directly related to knowledge and its acquisition, the sensitive-animal soul (*al-nafs at hayawaniyyah*) and the rational soul (*al-nafs al-natiqah*). In the former, there are mainly two faculties; the motive (*al-muharrakah*) and the perceptive (*al-mudrikah*) powers., Only the second sensitive faculty is relevant to the epistemological discussion whereas the first one is treated particularly in psychology and ethics as it relates more'to action and practices. In al-Ghazali's understanding, there are two inter-dependent perceptive powers of the sensitive soul, that is to say, the external senses (*al-hawass*) and the internal senses (*quwa mudrikah min batin*). The former refers specifically to those five ordinary human senses, viz., the senses of sight, hearing, smelling, taste and touch. Each of them

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<sup>41</sup> For a detailed exposition of these human faculties, see al-Ghazali's *Ma'arij al-Quds fi Madarej Ma'rifat al-Nafs*, translated into English with introduction, analysis and summary by Yusuf Easa Shammās under the heading of *Al-Ghazali's the Ascent to the Divine Through the Path of Self Knowledge*. (Michigan: U-M-I, 1987), a Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the Hartford Seminary Foundation in 1958; hereafter abbreviated as MQMMN. For an excellent concise summary or reformulation of this particular book of al-Ghazali together with some comparisons with Avicenna's works on psychology and epistemology, refer to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Nature, of Man and the Psychology of the Human Soul*. (KL: ISTAC, 1990); henceforth cited as NM: and also the book by Muhd, Yasir Nasution, *Manusia Menurut al-Ghazali*. (Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 1988). Chapters III and IV; hereafter cited as MMG, which is originally his post-graduate dissertation submitted to the Post-graduate Faculty of IAIN "Syarif Hidayatullah", Jakarta. The brief description of the human perceptive faculties as given in this paper is solely based on the above-mentioned three sources.

perceives a specific particular information or object of the physical external existence, In other words, each has its distinctive specific function and its performance and activity is only confined to such a role. Thus, the salient feature or the very characteristic of these five external senses is particularity and independency in perception.

In addition to these external senses, the sensitive soul also possesses the internal senses which altogether consists of five powers or capacities, namely, the common-sense (al-hiss al-mushtarak), the representation (al-quwwah al-khayaliyyah), the estimation (al-quwwah al-wahmiyyah), the retention-recollection (al-quwwah al-hafizah wa'ldhakhirah) and the imagination (al-quwwah al-mutakhayyilah or almufakkirah). Al-Ghazali holds that the existence of these internal senses is established by way of intuition (al-wijdan) which is to be understood in this particular context in its general sense, that is to say, intuition based on introspection. All of these internal senses operate and function in the human brain; the commonsense is posited on the anterior side of the brain, the representation still on the front side but behind the position of the common sense, the estimation on the center in front of es which is the location of the imagination, and finally the retention-recollection which is located on the posterior side of the brain.

According to al-Ghazali, the information or data extracted or received from the sensible physical external world will go through all the above-mentioned stages of human perceptive faculties before they al finally reach the level of intellectual abstraction which is solely the characteristic of the human rational soul. This pre-intellectual level of ; operation can be simplified as follows. Each of the external senses r perceive objects of external existence individually-independently and t during this act of perception, two conditions are vital, namely, the distance between the senses and the external object, and the specific s conditions underlying both. AL-Ghazali has emphasized that it is not the object itself that is taken into the heart-soul or being apprehended but only the image or representation of it <sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> In order to simplify this complexity, he cites an analogy of a mirror, an object and the representation or reflection of the object in the mirror\_\_ three different but inter-related states. He then proceeds to base his conviction that the soul is in reality the seat of knowledge, on such an example. For the knowledge is the representation or image of the reality of the object in the heart and knowing is when such-an image is reflected in the

Moreover, the external senses do not perceive the object as it is, but as determined by the manner or conditions of their contacts and interactions with it. As can be inferred from al-Ghazali's explanation, this case might be due to the fact that each sense has a very specific defined role, thus, that which is perceived is not the entire reality, on the contrary, only part of the totality.

These separated-individual sense-data are transferred to the common-sense for further processes. This latter internal sense combines the then isolated-individual data which is further passed to the representation whose function is to preserve the form or image of the object thus perceived. Here, the two conditions as required in the case of the perception of the external senses are no more necessary. Nevertheless, its perception still includes the accidents and additional attributes such as quality and quantity. From this stage, the estimation perceives only the particular meaning of such a form or image ---- already freed from accidents and additional attributes — which is further preserved in the retention-recollection for future use. The highest power of the sensitive soul is the imagination whose very feature is the capacity to compose and discompose the data received from the previous levels of abstraction. As to the synthesis, that is to say, the result of the activities of the imagination, if it is of the particular forms, then that synthesis is apprehended by the common-sense, and if it is of the particular meanings, then it will be grasped by the estimation.

All the data thus processed are still particular both in their features or forms (*surah*) and meanings (*ma'na*). Therefore, what is apprehended or perceived up to this extent is not yet the most essential-fundamental information concerning the object. The universalization generalization of the meanings of these particular data is specifically left and confined to the faculties of the rational soul. Here, what is apprehended is the essential aspect of the information concerning the object, namely, the knowledge of something as it is, which is also termed as concept (*tasawwur*) and which is the basic atomic unit for higher intellectual formulations and activities,

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mirror of the heart. And the act of perception-knowing is a process of abstraction for an object in its external existence is not without accidents and additional attributes; see KH, pp. 28-29; and SAQ, p. 14.

This highest quality-aspect of human soul, that is to say, the rational soul, consists of two aspects, the practical ('amilah) and the theoretical (alimah) intellects. Only the latter is directly related to the process of the accumulation of knowledge. The theoretical intellect is subject to four levels of development, namely, the lowest, material intellect (al-'aql al-hayulani), then the habitual-possessive intellect (al-'aql bi'l-malakah), after that the intellect-in action (al-'aql bi'I fi'l) and finally, the highest level- or limit, the acquired intellect (al-'aql almustafac).<sup>43</sup> From all these four stages-activities of the intellect, only the habitual intellect and the intellect-in-action are directly involved in the accumulation-acquisition of knowledge through the path of abstraction-extraction which concerns with the physical external world. From al-Ghazali's expositions, the material intellect is solely potential whereas the acquired intellect is not occupied with this material-physical world, on the contrary, it is primarily connected with al-Ghazali's conception of the intuitive knowledge.

In al-Ghazali's formulation, the habitual intellect is also known as possible intellect (al-'aql al-mumkin). It is characterized by its possession of the axiomatic primary necessary knowledge (ulum aldaruriyyat) which is the rudimentary knowledge to be further utilized in expanding the stock of knowledge, This knowledge is also identified by him as the intellectual instinct (gharizat al-'aql) and also as the first intelligible (al-ma'qulat al-ula) which are to be used as major premisses in the valid syllogism. On the other side, the intellect-in-action is active in extending one's scope of knowledge by utilizing the knowledge gained from the preceding levels. Thinking, which is the peculiar activity of this level/aspect of theoretical intellect, is carried out with the assistance of the imagination by means of syllogism in the course of producing more complicated, composite and higher knowledge structures, mainly the secondary intelligible (al-ma'qulat al-thaniyah). In this particular

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. al-Ghazali's *Kitab al'Ilm* translated into English by Nabih Amin Faris under the title of *The Book of Knowledge*. (Lahore Sh: Muhammad Ashraf, reprinted 1991), pp. 225-231; hereafter cited as KI. In this particular hook of his celebrated *Ihya' ' Ulum al-Din*, al-Ghazali's exposition concerning the four distinct meanings of the word 'intellect' ('aql) actually refers to the four levels-qualities of the development of human intellect. There are many similarities between each of the former with each level of the development of the theoretical intellect although al-Ghazali does not use explicitly and directly those terms utilized in his MQMMN.

performance of the intellect, the imagination is used in order to acquire the middle term of the syllogism for its main feature, as stated previously, is to compose or discompose the information or data already received, The intellect will then grasp or perceive the necessary conclusion of such a composition. In this manner, the imagination has two aspects, an organized fixed order (muntazam) and a relatively indetermined order (ghayr muntazam). Only the former is possessed by the animals, whereas, human beings possess both features of the imagination. The latter, which is known as al-mufakkirah, functions under the command and instructions of the intellect for intellectual purposes.

This particular conception of al-Ghazali does not undergo any significant changes in his other writings, mostly being cursory summaries intended and coherently deliberated within different contextual frameworks of discussion. If there is any discrepancy whatsoever, most of the time, the difference is only terminological-linguistic rather than semantic and conceptual. For instance, in his *Sharh Kitab 'Aja'ib al-Qalb*, after justifying his believing consistently and firmly in the soul or heart as the essence of human being, he goes on to explain the faculties of the heart, generally consisting of the external and interior ones. His detailed exposition of the former is the same with the content of his explanation regarding the external senses of the perceptive faculty as briefly described in the preceding lines of the paper, and similarly, that of the latter, with both the internal senses of the perceptive faculty, and the motive faculty.<sup>44</sup> From his elaboration the latter consists of three capacities:<sup>45</sup>

1. The instigating and inciting ability, either to attain the useful and suitable, such as the appetite or desire, or to repel the harmful and the incompatible, like anger or irascibility, This capacity can be designated by the will (al-iradah).

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<sup>44</sup> See the English translation of some parts of this *Sharh Kitab 'Aja'ib* 52

al-Qalb as Appendix V by McCarthy in the previously stated *Freedom and Fulfillment*. pp. 368-370; hereafter cited as A5.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

2. The power (al-qudrah) which is the capacity to move the members to acquire the above-said aims, and which includes soldiers scattered about in all the members, especially the muscles and tendons.
3. The perceptive which gets to know and uncovers things, and it is designated by the knowledge and perception (al- 'ilm wa'l-idrak).

**In explaining the third category, he says that it is,**

...divided into what is lodged in exterior positions viz. the five senses ... and what is lodged in interior positions, viz. the cavities of the brain, These are also five, For after seeing a thing a man shuts his eye and perceives its image [form: sura] in himself: this is the imagination [al-khayal]. Then that image stays with the man by reason of something which preserves it: this is the preserving [conserving, memory] soldier. Then the man reflects on what he remembers and joins part of it to another part then recalls and returns to what he has forgotten, then unites a group of concepts of sensibles in his imagination by means of a sense [perception?] common to the sensibles. So {in man's} interior there is a common sense ..., and the imagination, and thought [reflection], and recalling [remembrance], and preservation [memory].<sup>46</sup>

When discussing the stages of the development of man's perceptive faculties, al-Ghazali in his al-Munqidh<sup>47</sup> maintains that in the beginning, that is to say, in man's original condition; his essence is created in blank simplicity

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 370.

<sup>47</sup> See al-Ghazali's *Al-Munqidh mina'l-Dalal* translated into English by McCarthy in the above-mentioned *Freedom and Fulfillment*. pp. 96-97; hereafter identified as MMD. However, his exposition of the stages of the development of the external senses in *Ma'arij* is somewhat different. There, the order of the natural development in terms of priority is given as the sense of touch (hassat al-lams), then the sense of smell (hassat al-Shamm), after that the sense of taste (hassat al-dhawq) which is followed by the sense of sight (hassat al-basar) and lastly, the sense of hearing (hassat al-sam'). Although the detailed elucidations of the development of the five external senses are different, al-Ghazali is consistent in holding that the external senses are the first perceptive faculty of the sensitive-animal soul that develops naturally. Whether his statement in *Munqidh* refers exactly to the natural-biological aspect of the development or to the priority-importance aspect of the function of each external sense needs further studies. See also his *Kitab al-Shukr of Ihya'*.

without any information about the “worlds” of God. For him, the first perceptive power to develop in man is the sense of touch. After that the sense of sight takes place, This is then followed by the sense of hearing, and afterwards, the sense of taste. Al-Ghazali does not specifically mention about the sense of smelling, but it can be implied as if he treats this sense to be the last one which develops in man. Each of these external senses perceives only the “world” of the sensibles, namely, the physical external world, and thereby, the man may get to know a “world” of the existents. “Worlds” in this particular al-Ghazali’s contextual understanding refer to the categories or classes of existing things. Moreover, each sense only perceives certain classes of existents of the world sensible, thus, if each is taken independently and individually, the realm of existents that is covered is limited so much so that other realms seem not to exist, For instance, the sense of sight by which he perceives colours and shapes, and this is the most extensive of the “worlds” of the sensibles, could not perceive sounds, smoothness, hotness etc.

Next, when that individual has approached the age of seven, discernment (al-tamyiz) starts to develop in him. At this stage, the man is able to grasp things beyond the “world” of the sensibles, none of which are found in the “world” of sensation <sup>48</sup> Then, his intellect (al-’aql) begins to develop, and at this level, he perceives the necessary, the possible, the impossible and things not found in the previous stages. Nonetheless, al-Ghazali affirms the existence of another stage beyond the level of intellect, and this is in fact regarded by him as the highest noble phase.

In another place, namely in his Sharh Kitab ‘Aja’ib al-Qalb, al-Ghazali adds a few more things to the development of man’s faculties. There, he affirms that by and large, there are two qualities of man’s heart that bestow upon him his immense dignity and his closeness to God Most High, viz, Knowledge (al-ilm) and will (al-iradah). On the contrary, the appetites (al-

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<sup>48</sup> Al-Ghazali does not elaborate in detail this particular stage which precedes the development of the intellect. However, in line with his other expositions, we can justifiably claim that what he really means by al-tamyiz is in fact the perceptions of the internal senses especially the common-sense and the estimation for there is no intermediary perceptions between those of the external senses and the intellect except the ones by the internal senses. In addition, al-Ghazali also uses the same term in his Mishkat, and from its context, it is definitely clear that my inference here is correct, See AR, pp. 77-78.

shahwah), anger or irascibility (al-ghadab) and both the external and internal senses (al-hawas al-zahirah wa'l-batinah), as confirmed by him, are possessed by both the animals and human beings even the small child. Nevertheless, the will intended here is not to be confused with the wills of appetites and animals. Instead, it is a desire (shawq) which springs from a man's essence (dhat) when he perceives intellectually the consequences of something and the advantageous way to deal with it. In short, it is an intellectual will.<sup>49</sup>

He then continues to state that both of these characteristics of man's heart could be found neither in the other animals nor in the child at the beginning of his natural constitution (al-fitrah). They develop in the latter only when he has reached the age of puberty or reason (ba'da'l-bulugh), and there are altogether two stages that he must go through before he comes to have those cognitions (al-'ulum) in himself,<sup>50</sup> namely:

1. The stage in which his heart begins to possess all the necessary and primary cognitions (sa'ir al-'ulum al-daruriyyah al-awwaliyyah) such as the knowledge of the impossibility and the possibility of the things that are patently impossible and possible, Nevertheless, speculative cognitions (al-'ulum alnazariyyah) about them at this stage have only become possible, but not yet present. This state of the child in relation to cognitions is comparable to the condition of a writer who knows of writing only the pen, the inkwell and the single-unarranged letters. This individual has not yet reached the state of writing in its truest sense, on the contrary, he is only near to it.<sup>51</sup> This stage also conforms with the second distinct meaning of "intellect" given in his Kitab al-'Ilm,<sup>52</sup> and with al-Ghazali's understanding of the habitual-possessive—possible intellect.

2. The stage in which he possesses the cognitions (al-'ulum almuktasabah) which are as though they are stored up in him but which are in fact acquired through experiences and thought (al-tajarub wa'l-fakr). Here, he can return or refer to those cognitions whenever he wishes. This stage is similar in al-

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<sup>49</sup> A5, pp. 372-373; and SA Q, p.9.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 9; and A5, p. 373.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 373; and SA Q, p. 9.

<sup>52</sup> KI, p. 227.



Ghazali's analogy to the state of a real writer's ability even though he is not at present writing. Moreover, this stage is considered by him as the ultimate level of humanness (*ghayah darajat al-insaniyyah*). Nevertheless, it consists of innumerable degrees in which men "differ by reason of plurality and paucity of cognoscibles, and nobility and baseness of cognoscibles and the way of acquiring them (*yatafawut alkhalq fiha bi kathrat al-ma'lumat wa qillatiha wa bi sharaf alma'lumat wa khistiha wa hi tariq tahsiliha*)"<sup>53</sup> The third distinct meaning of the word "intellect" as expounded by al- Ghazali in *Kitab al-Ilm*, and also his conception of the intellect-in-action somewhat correspond to this second stages.<sup>54</sup>

However, it is necessary to stress the fact that it is the man's essence — the soul — that possesses those perceptive faculties when it comes into contact with the physical body, and not inherently possessed by the latter. Unless the latter is governed by the former, it will remain as the other "dead" natural physical entities. This might be the reason underlying his discussion in *Mishkat* where he restricts himself to the elaboration of the levels/aspects of human spirit which is stated at the beginning of this particular\_ treatise as interchangeably termed as the soul and the intellect.<sup>55</sup> There, in a special section concerning the psychology or the Human Soul and its five faculties or spirits, al-Ghazali identifies five gradations of human Spirits,<sup>56</sup> namely:

(1) Sensory spirit (*ar-Rub al-Hisas*);

This spirit is, for al-Ghazali, the root and the origin of the animal spirit, and it constitutes the differentia of the animal genus. It is for this reason that this spirit is the one which receives the sensory information or data.<sup>57</sup> According to al-Ghazali, this aspect/level of the spirit is already sound even at the stage of the infant at the breast,<sup>58</sup> and its light come through several apertures, -the

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<sup>53</sup> A5, p. 373; and SA Q, p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> KI, p.227. The reasons for the disparity of men's intellect in this particular level has also been explained by al-Ghazali in his *Kitab al'Ilm of al Ilya'*. See pp. 231-235.

<sup>55</sup> MA, p. 83.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 143-154.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144 and AR, p. 76.

<sup>58</sup> MA, p. 144.

eyes, ears, nostrils, etc.<sup>59</sup> We can infer from the peculiar characteristics of this spirit that al-Ghazali might mean by this the common-sense and the estimation of the sensitive-animal soul.

## (2) Imaginative Spirit (ar-Ruh al-Khayali);

This is the recorder of the information conveyed by the senses through the sensory spirit. It stores the sensory information and is ready to hand it to a higher level of spirit, namely, the intelligential spirit, whenever the information is called for. This aspect of the spirit is not found in the infant at the beginning of its natural evolution. This absence is considered by al-Ghazali as the reason for the infant's wanting to get hold of a thing when he sees it, and forgetting about that thing when it is already out of his sight. Therefore, unless he gets a little older, no conflict of desire arises in his soul for something already out of sight because its image is not yet preserved in his imagination<sup>60</sup> It is as if al-Ghazali is referring to the representation and the retention-recollection of the sensitive-animal soul.

Furthermore, according to al-Ghazali, this spirit has three peculiarities:<sup>61</sup>

(I) Its stuff is the same with that of which this gross lower world is made Its object are within the scope or categories of direction, quantity and distance Nonetheless, this gross substance still has the property of being opaque to the light of pure intelligence which transcends the above-mentioned categories.

(II) When this potentiality or property is actualized, mainly through clarification, refinement, discipline and control, this particular substance "attains to a corresponding with and a similarity to the ideas of the intelligence, and becomes transparent to light from them."

(III) Moreover. in the beginning stages, the imagination is necessarily required to control the intelligential knowledge so that the latter: will not be

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 144; and AR, p. 76.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 79-80; and MA, pp. 150-151.

disturbed, unsettled, and dissipated, thus get out of hand In this respect, the imagination supplies images which hold together the knowledge provided by the intellect.

(3) Intelligential spirit (ar-Ruh al-'Aqli):

This is specifically a human faculty (al jawhar al-insi al-khass) which apprehends ideas beyond the reach of sense and imagination. Those ideas are axioms of necessary and universal application (al-ma'arif al-daruriyyah al-kulliyah<sup>62</sup>). This spirit is neither possessed by the lower animal nor yet attained by the children.<sup>63</sup> This spirit is in many respects in accordance with al-Ghazali's illustration of the habitual-possessive-possible intellect.

(4) Discursive or ratiocinative spirit (ar-Ruh al-Fikri);

The logical operation of combining data of pure reason (al-'ulum al-'aghiyyah al-mandah), arranging them as premisses and deducing from them informing conclusions, is solely, the power of this level/aspect of spirit. Those conclusions are then used by it in the manner done to the data of pure reason, to produce advanced knowledge. This logical operation goes on multiplying ad infinitum,<sup>64</sup> It is therefore obvious that this aspect-level of the spirit corresponds with the intellect-in-action. Nevertheless, according to al-Ghazali, this thinking spirit (al-ruh al-mufakkirah) could be further divided into two categories; on the one hand, most of it needs teaching, explanation and assistance from without such that it remains to pursue various kinds of sciences (ma yahtaj ila taslim wa tanbih wa madad min kharij hatta yastamirr fi anwa' al-ma'arif). On the other, there are some of its kind which due to its intense purity become as if self-awakened from within (wa ba'diha yakunu fi shiddat al-safa'ha annahu yatanabbihu bi nafsih min ghayr madad min

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<sup>62</sup> In another place in this same book, these axioms are even called by al-Ghazali as the noble divine knowledge (al-ma'arif al-sharifah al-ilahiyyah), see AR, p. 80.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 77 and 80; and MA, p. 145.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 145-146, and 152; and AR, pp. 77, and 80-81.

kharij). It is this second category that is included in the following fifth level of spirit.<sup>65</sup>

(5) The transcendental prophetic spirit (ar-Ruh al-Qudsi an-Nabawi);

It can be said that the main objective of his composing this book is to explain quite elaborately certain important aspects of this specific realm. Nevertheless, it is not the concern of this article----as we are at present mainly concerned about the ordinary abstraction of human knowledge to delve into this level which is within the boundary of intuitive knowledge.

Al-Ghazali then goes on to stress the fact that,

... the five human spirits (al-arwah al-khanisah)... they are all of them Lights, for it is through their agency that every sort of existing thing is manifested, including objects of sense and imagination. For though it is true that the lower animals also perceive these said objects, mankind possesses a different, more refined, and higher species of those two faculties, they having been created in man for a different, higher, and more noble end. In the lower animals they were only created as an instrument for acquiring food, and for subjecting them to mankind. But in mankind they were created to be a net to chase a noble quarry through all the present world; to wit, the first-principles of the religious sciences. For example, a man may, in perceiving with his visual sense a certain individual, apprehend, through his intelligence, a universal and absolute idea (idh al-insan idha adraka bi'l-hiss shakhsan rnu'ayyanan iqtab'asa 'agluhu minhu ma'nana 'aman mutlagan)...<sup>66</sup>

Al-Ghazali also states accordingly that,

... inasmuch as the lights of the human spirit are graded rank on rank, then that of Sense comes first, the foundation and preparation for the Imagination

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>66</sup> MA, p. 149; and AR, pp. 78-79.

(for the latter can only be conceived as superimposed after Sense); those of the Intelligence and Discursive Reason come thereafter ...<sup>67</sup>

It is thus clear that al-Ghazali relates his epistemological understanding with some of his ontological outlook. Both could not be separated with a clear-cut demarcation for at one time, the one is derived from the other and at another instance, the case is vice-versa. His epistemological discussion which has direct relations with the existence at the level of al-Lawh al-Mahfuz could be found in his various sufistic and esoteric writings dealing mainly with the nature of the prophetic-intuitive knowledge. The rest of his theory of knowledge especially that which concerns with the levels of the abstraction. extraction process corresponds with the types and degrees of existences as described above, starting, first of all, from the sensations or sense. perceptions which result in the sensible existence. There is no level of abstraction corresponding with the existence at the level of the physical external world. Despite this lack of correspondence, it is the latter that provides the materials out of which the images are abstracted and accordingly processed through the levels of human perception and, cognition, the lowest being the perception of external senses, then followed by the five internal senses before reaching the highest stage, that is to say, the intellect.

Accordingly, as a result of each level of processes, there is a corresponding abstraction which is termed by al-Ghazali as the level or degree of existence. Hence, from the perception of the external senses, the level of the sensible existence comes about; from the apprehension of the internal senses, the level of the imaginary existence is brought into the scene; and from the grasp of the intellect, the level of the mental existence is effected. In short, each level of existence insofar as al-Ghazali is concerned represents a level of abstraction — the highest being that of the mental abstraction-existence. Nevertheless, from our previous illustration of human perceptive faculties, it is obvious that each level of abstraction is not simple, rather, it is complex and consists of various activities and functions. Therefore, al-Ghazali's exposition of the degrees of existence is not representative of the whole processes of abstraction. On the contrary, only a single function is taken to be the representative-characteristic abstraction as

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 81; and MA p. 154.

the case is in the imaginary existence which is actually the result of the activities of the common-sense and the representation both of which solely perceives and preserves the particular image-form of the physical object.

In addition to the previous levels, the remaining three degrees of existence, namely, the internal verbal existence, the external verbal existence and the written existence, are to be considered as secondary or even tertiary levels of existence. They are no longer parts of the process of abstraction-extraction but are merely the externalization-manifestation of the highest level of that process. The first being the intermediary step between the purely conceptual existence, and the verbal and the written existences. Therefore, these three levels of existence are actually stages in human communication and they have their significations only when they are in relation with the preceding process of abstraction-extraction.

AL-Ghazali has also discussed aspects of the perception in his

Mishkat al-Anwar. Although his primary intention in that book is to elaborate the Ultimate Light, his initial discussion being on the . phenomenal world nevertheless depicts the importance of properly understanding this particular level of existence in connection with other orders or degrees of existence in al-Ghazali's philosophical-metaphysical framework. His discussion on the phenomenal world is quite straightforward. In his understanding, the phenomenal world is to be comprehended in relation to or within \_ the context of the threefold significations of the world "light" with a particular reference to the meaning employed by the Many. For him, among the main features of this level is relativity. In his words,

Here the world light indicates a phenomenon. Now a phenomenon, or appearance, is a, relative term, for a thing necessarily appears to, or is concealed from, something other than itself; thus its appearance and its non-appearance are both relative. Further, its appearance and its non-appearance are relative to perceptive faculties; and of these the most powerful and the

must conspicuous, in the opinion ‘of the Many, are the senses, one of which is the sense of sight.<sup>68</sup>

It seems interesting enough that al-Ghazali gives a special emphasis and an extra attention to the sense of sight. He must have understood really or at least correctly anticipated the essence or substance of the empirical method and observation-experiment of the modern science in which this particular human sense occupies a central vital dominant position besides human reasoning.

In his further discussion and elaboration, al-Ghazali approaches this particular subject by clearly identifying, analyzing and relating the components of sight, to wit, the subject (i.e. the sense of sight, the eye). the object of sight and the medium or intermediary of sight (namely, the light). With regard to the object of sight, al-Ghazali identifies three categories of things<sup>69</sup>, that is to say: .

- (1) that which by itself is not visible;
- (2) that which is by itself visible, but cannot make visible anything else;
- (3) that which is by itself visible, and also makes other things visible.

He therefore concludes that the term “light” in its first ling signification is only properly attributed to this third category. Al-Ghazali also states that,

... the very essence of light is appearance to a percipient; and that perception depends on the existence of two things - light and a seeing eye. For, though light is that which appears and causes-to-appear, it neither appears nor causes-to-appear to the blind. Thus percipient spirit is as important as perceptible light qua necessary element of perception; nay, ‘its the more important, in that it is the percipient spirit which apprehends and through which apprehension takes place; whereas light is not apprehensive, neither does apprehension takes place through it, but merely when it is present. By the

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., pp. 80-81.

word light, in fact, is more properly understood than visualizing light which we call the eye.<sup>70</sup>

... You understand, then, that percipient spirit is called light; and why it is so called; and why it is more properly so called. And this is the second signification, that employed by the Few.<sup>71</sup>

Nevertheless, after detailed scrutinization, al-Ghazali finds out that even this second signification as understood by the Few, namely, the physical sight, cannot be really called the Light or real Eye for it is marked by seven inherent defects. On the contrary, the one that should be called the Real Eye or Light is the one that transcends and is free from these seven defects, and it can only be the Intelligence (i.e. the eye of the mind) which is also interchangeably termed as Spirit and Human Soul. Intelligence, as understood by al-Ghazali, is that by which the rational man is distinguished from the infant in arms, from the brute beast, and from the lunatics. In fact, this particular understanding of intelligence corresponds to al-Ghazali's first definition of "intellect in his Kitab al-Ilm."<sup>72</sup>

In a summarized way, the seven distinctive points that distinguish the strength of the eye of the mind (i.e. the Intelligence) from the weaknesses of the ordinary physical eye<sup>73</sup> are:

- (1) The eye does not behold itself, but the intelligence does perceive itself as well as others;
- (2) The eye does not see what is very near to it nor what is very far away from it; but to the intelligence near and far are indifferent;
- (3) The eye does not perceive what is behind the veil. The realities of things stand unveiled to the intelligence. Its only veil is one which it assumes of its

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 81.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 82.

<sup>72</sup> KL, pp. 226-227.

<sup>73</sup> MA, pp. 82-91.



own sake, which resembles the veil that the eye assumes of its own accord in the closing of its eyelids;

(4) The eye perceives only the exterior surfaces of things, but not their interior; nay, the mere moulds 'and forms, not the realities;

(5) The eye sees only a fraction of what exists, the parts and not the whole;

(6) The eye does not see what is infinite;

(7) The eye makes many mistakes in its seeing, for what is large appears to its vision small; what is far, near; what is at rest, at motion; what is in motion, at rest.

Therefore, al-Ghazali is of the view that which really apprehends, i.e. that which sheds light on something, is the one that should be called the Light. Thus, rather than considering ordinary phenomenal light and the eye, he treats the intelligence as the real light. However, al-Ghazali is also conscious, while elucidating all those differentiating points, of such an objection which sounds,

... We see those who are possessed of intelligence making mistakes nevertheless.<sup>74</sup>

### **His reply being that,**

Their imaginative and phantastic faculties often pass judgements and form convictions which they think are the judgements of the intelligence. The error is therefore to be attributed to those lower faculties. See my account of all these faculties in my *Mi'yar al-Ilm* and *Mahakk al-Nazar*. But when the intelligence is separated from the deceptions of the phantasy and the imagination, error on its part is inconceivable; it sees things as they are. This separation is, however, difficult, and only attains perfection after death.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

Based on some portions of *Mi'yar* as translated previously<sup>76</sup> and also the clear confirmation of al-Ghazali just quoted, we could also find al-Ghazali's discussion of the same subject matter there. However, in *Mi'yar*, in a somewhat summarized description, he only alludes to three kinds of judges or perceptive powers in human beings, namely, the senses, the imagination-estimation, and the intellect. The former two precede the latter in the natural evolution-development of a human being, and it is this natural familiarity that from time to time hinder the human's soul from relying on the intellectual perception which is, for al-Ghazali, the truest and most reliable one. Al-Ghazali then goes on to display the inherent weakness and the natural limitations of these two non-intellectual perceptions. Nevertheless, his exposition of the shortcomings of the sense-perceptions merely amounts to a detailed enumeration of instances or cases rather than stating the substance of such weaknesses. If considered together with those information provided in his *Mishkat* summarized before, the examples listed by al-Ghazali can be reduced to points supporting his seventh charge against the ordinary physical eye, or the sense of sight or light as understood by the Few. It is to be noted here that al-Ghazali also concentrates on the sense of sight as the primary determinant, the most extensive in coverage and the main representative of the whole external sense-perceptions. Furthermore, the same argument concerning the weakness of the external senses is also given by al-Ghazali in his *al-Munqidh*, though in a very concise and cursory manner.<sup>77</sup>

As to the imaginative-estimative perceptions, it is limited by the formal aspects as determined by the previous perceptions, namely, the sense-data. In short, it is confined to the sense-perceptions of the various aspects of the space-time bound world—the physical world. Moreover, al-Ghazali does not stipulate in details various functions-aspects of the internal senses here. On the contrary, he only identifies the whole internal senses, either as representative imagination [or representation] (*al-khayal*) or estimation (*al-wahm*)<sup>78</sup> This somewhat cursory, sketch or overview results in a partial

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<sup>76</sup> Please refer to Q1 and Q3.

<sup>77</sup> MMD, pp. 64-65.

<sup>78</sup> For another article discussing in substantial details the meaning of *al-wahm* as understood in the traditional texts, please refer to D.B. MacDonald's "Wahm in Arabic and its Cognates" in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London: RAS, October 1922) Part IV, pp. 505-521.

description of the characteristic limitations of the perceptions of the internal senses, to wit, materially, formality and particularity of their various functions, and thus, perceptions. In short, all aspects of the imagination-estimation have a strong inclination towards the data as given by the sense of sight which perceives mainly colours and forms, that is to say, the domain of dimension and its concomitant qualities.

Moreover, there also, al-Ghazali has pointed to the locus of the imagination and estimation as being in the brain though not illustrated as specifically as in his *Ma'arij*. He also touches those functions which specifically belonged to the power of imagination, to wit, the ability to compose or discompose the data thus received either naturally, in which case it is termed as *al-mutakhayyilah*, or under the command of the intellect, in which case it is known as *al-mufakkirah*. He also affirms that the existence and functions of the internal senses are only proven through inference and neither through perception of the external senses nor by the common-sense or imagination. For this last faculty is still bound to the data perceived by the external senses. However, in his *al-Munqidh*, no argument against the imagination is given, on the contrary, the imagination during the dream or sleeping is forwarded by him as a counter-argument against the supremacy of the reason-intellect in order to prove the possibility of a higher state of knowledge, namely, mystical intuition.<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, in his *Mi'yar*, he also discusses in short the approach usually resorted to by the intellect in tackling the tricky weaknesses of both the senses and the imagination-estimation. He describes this intellectual solution as the mental-logical processes mostly related to area of discussion concerning the matters and forms of syllogism\_ the former deal with the content of the premisses and the latter, with the arrangement or order of the premisses — so as to derive certain conclusions. There, we find that he gives some bases of validity and strength to the sense-perception, besides the necessary knowledge (*al-daruriyyah*), both of which are acceptable to and not disputable by majority of people. These premisses based on sense-perception are also accepted, necessarily, by imagination-estimation for it is the nature of the latter to really rely on the preceding data forwarded by or contained in

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<sup>79</sup> MMD, p. 65.

the former. Furthermore, he alludes to the fact that both the intellect and the imagination-estimation are active and work together in arranging the premisses, the latter having greater role in the arrangement, and the former in conceiving the conclusion necessarily derivable from such an arrangement. Such true and acceptable conclusions derivable through the cooperation of the senses, the imagination-estimation and the intellect are then used by the intellect to proceed towards abstruse matters concerning which both the nature of the senses and the imagination-estimation are in conflict with the intellect, so as to refute and dominate them.

It is thus clear that those three aspects of the sense-mind relationship as appear in his *Mi'yar* are coherently discussed by al-Ghazali within a broader framework or system of knowledge. This system can only be understood when his explanation and analyses in his other writings are taken into account, scrutinized and subsequently synthesized. Some aspects are discussed in considerable details in *Mi'yar* compared to those in his other works such as the enumeration of the cases in which the weaknesses of the perception of the physical sight are apparent. In another instances, the complexities and elaborate analyses expounded in his other books are simplified in this particular treatise. In this manner, the former, taken together, provide in return the contextual background, philosophical framework and commentary of the latter as it is the case with regard to the levels of abstraction-existence and the functions-aspects of human perceptive powers.