

The Similarities Between al-Ghazālī's Science of the Hereafter and *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Safā'**

Gazālī'nin Ahiret İlmi ve *Ihvân-ı Safâ Risâleleri* Arasındaki Benzerlikler

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ABSTRACT

In Munqidh, al-Ghazālī states that there were four classes of seekers of truth: theologians, followers of the doctrine of Ta'līm, philosophers, and Sufis. He depicts himself here as a Sufi who denounces the others, especially the philosophers. This image of al-Ghazālī became the major perception of him from the beginning. This perception changed in the twentieth century. The most recent scholarship views him as a scholar who was heavily influenced by philosophy and disseminated its teachings in disguise. However, the focus is given mostly to the philosophy of Avicenna while searching the source of this influence. While not denying the influence of Ibn Sinā, this study argues that Rasā'il Ikhwān Şafā' must be taken seriously as a major source of philosophical influence on al-Ghazālī's thought despite the negative remarks he makes about them. For its purpose, this study considers al-Ghazālī as a philosopher whose main concern was to direct the attention of his readers to their inner states and the behaviors resulting from them. This concern led him to search for and develop an ethical theology in which the theory of the soul and its purification played a role of utmost importance. For this purpose, al-Ghazālī presented a new science in İhyā. This study tries to show that al-Ghazālī found the essential ingredients of this theology in Rasā'il, gave it a new form with a new name, "the Science of the Hereafter" with its two subdivisions: the science of practice and the science of unveiling.

Keywords: al-Ghazālī, Rasā'il Ikhwān Şafā', the Science of the Hereafter ('ilm al-āhīrah), the science of practice ('ilm al-mu'āmalah), the science of unveiling ('ilm al-mukāshafah)

ÖZ

Dalâletten Kurtuluş'ta Gazālī, hakikatin peşinde koşan grupları kelamcılar, Bâtıniler, filozoflar ve mutasavvıflar şeklinde dört sınıfa ayırmakta ve kendisini de diğerlerini beğenmeyip tasavvufa bağlanan bir kimse olarak sunmaktadır. Onun kendisi hakkında sunduğu bu imaj, başlangıçtan itibaren onun daha çok bir mutasavvif olduğu algısının ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Fakat bu algının yirminci yüzyılda tamamen değiştiği görülmektedir. Modern araştırmalar, Gazālī hakkındaki bu algıya meydan

okumakta ve onu felsefeden önemli ölçüde etkilenen ve bu etkiyi örtülü bir şekilde İslam düşüncesinin bütün alanlarına yayan bir ilim adamı olarak görmektedir. Fakat Gazâlî üzerindeki felsefi etkinin kökenleri araştırıldığında doğal olarak dikkatler İbn Sînâ üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Gazâlî üzerindeki İbn Sînâ etkisini reddetmemekle birlikte Gazâlî'nin onlar hakkındaki olumsuz ifadelerine rağmen *İhvân-ı Safâ' Risâleleri*'nin de onun üzerindeki felsefi etkinin önemli bir kaynağı olarak dikkate alınması gerektiğini iddia etmektedir. Bu amaçla bu çalışma Gazâlî'yi temel endişesi okurlarının dikkatini onların içsel durumlarına ve bu durumlardan kaynaklanan davranışlara çekmeye çalışan bir filozof olarak kabul etmektedir. Bu endişe Gazâlî'yi içerisinde nefis teorisinin ve nefsin temizlenmesinin merkezi bir yer işgal ettiği etik bir teoloji arayışına ve böyle bir teoloji geliştirmeye yöneltmiştir. Bu hedefe yönelik olarak Gazâlî *İhyâ'da* yeni bir ilim ortaya koymuş ve hayatının geri kalan kısmında bütün çabasını bu ilmi yaymak için harcamıştır. Bu çalışma, Gazâlî'nin bu arayışı neticesinde "Ahiret İlimi" şeklinde ortaya koyduğu ilmin temel malzemelerinin bir kısmını *İhvân-ı Safâ Risâleleri*'nde bulunduğunu göstermeye çalışmaktadır. O bu malzemeyi almış, muamele ve mükâşefe şeklinde ikiye ayırıp yeni bir forma sokarak ona ahiret ilmi ismini vermiş ve bu yeni bir formla birlikte onu yeniden piyasaya sürmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gazâlî, *İhvân-ı Safâ Risâleleri*, Ahiret İlimi (*ilmü'l-âhire*), muamele ilmi (*ilmü'l-muâ'mele*), mükâşefe ilmi (*ilmü'l-mükâşefe*)

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Dalâletten Kurtuluş'ta (*el-Münkız mine 'd-dalâl*) Gazâlî, hakikatin peşinde koşan grupları kalamcılar, Bâtınîler, filozoflar ve mutasavvıflar şeklinde dört sınıfa ayırmakta ve kendisini de diğerlerini beğenmeyip tasavvufa bağlanan bir kimse olarak sunmaktadır. Onun kendisi hakkında sunduğu bu imaj, başlangıçtan itibaren onun daha çok bir mutasavvıf olduğu algısının ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Gazâlî'nin oluşmasında büyük pay sahibi olduğu kendisi hakkındaki bu algının geçerliliğini hala sürdürdüğünü söylemek mümkün olmakla birlikte yirminci yüzyılda bu algıya yönelik bazı şüphelerin yöneltildiği görülmektedir. Özellikle batıda yapılan modern araştırmalar, Gazâlî hakkındaki bu algının gerçeklikle ilişkisini sorgulamakta ve Gazâlî'yi felsefeden önemli ölçüde etkilenen ve bu etkiyi örtülü bir şekilde İslam düşüncesinin bütün alanlarına yayan bir ilim adamı olarak yeniden önümüze koymaktadır. Fakat bu araştırmalarda görüldüğü üzere, Gazâlî üzerindeki felsefi etkinin kökenleri araştırıldığında doğal olarak dikkatler İbn Sînâ ve onun felsefesi üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. Halbuki Gazâlî'nin hem kendisi hakkındaki algıyı şekillendiren otobiyografisinde hem de *Filozofların Tutarsızlığı* (*Tehâfütü 'l-Felâsife*) gibi diğer eserlerinde İbn Sînâ dışında başka filozofları da meselenin içinde dahil ettiği ve onları da mevzu bahis yaptığı görülmektedir. Eğer Gazâlî üzerinde bir felsefe etkisinden bahsedilecekse İbn Sînâ dışında ismi geçen diğer filozofların ve ekollerin de değerlendirmeye alınması hem Gazâlî'nin düşüncesinin anlaşılması hem de Gazâlî'nin etkisi göz önünde bulundurulduğunda Gazâlî sonrası İslam düşüncesinin gelişim seyrinin takibi bakımından büyük önem arz etmektedir.

Bu çalışma, Gazâlî üzerindeki İbn Sînâ etkisini reddetmemekle birlikte Gazâlî'nin onlar hakkındaki olumsuz ifadelerine rağmen *İhvân-ı Safâ' Risâleleri*'nin de onun üzerindeki felsefi etkinin önemli bir kaynağı olarak dikkate alınması gerektiğini iddia etmektedir. Bu amaçla

bu çalışma Gazâlî'yi temel endişesi okurlarının dikkatini onların içsel durumlarına ve bu durumlardan kaynaklanan davranışlara çekmeye çalışan bir filozof olarak kabul etmektedir. Bu endişe Gazâlî'yi içerisinde nefis teorisinin ve nefsin temizlenmesinin merkezi bir yer işgal ettiği etik bir teoloji arayışına ve böyle bir teoloji geliştirmeye yöneltmiştir. Bu hedefe yönelik olarak Gazâlî *İhyâ*'da yeni bir ilim ortaya koymuş ve hayatının geri kalan kısmında bütün çabasını bu ilmi yaymak için harcamıştır. Bu çalışma, Gazâlî'nin bu arayışı neticesinde "Ahiret İlmî" şeklinde ortaya koyduğu ilmin temel malzemelerinin bir kısmını *İhvân-ı Safâ Risâleleri*'nde bulduğunu göstermeye çalışmaktadır. O bu malzemeyi almış, muamele ve mükaşefe şeklinde ikiye ayırıp yeni bir forma sokarak ona ahiret ilmi ismini vermiş ve bu yeni bir formla birlikte onu yeniden piyasaya sürmüştür.

Gazâlî ve İhvân-ı Safâ arasındaki bazı benzerliklere dikkat çekmeyi amaçlayan bu çalışma iki kısım halinde tasarlanmıştır. Birinci bölümde Gazâlî'nin ahiret ilmi hakkında söyledikleri üzerinden onun bu ilmi ne şekilde tasavvur ettiği ve içeriğine dair söyledikleri ortaya konmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu yapılırken öncelikle onun en önemli eseri olan *İhyâ-u 'ulûmi'd-dîn* dikkate alınmış, bazı durumlarda *Cevâhirü'l-Kur'ân*'a başvurulmuştur. Konuyla ilgili olduğu düşünülen pasajlar metnin içerisine bütün halinde yerleştirilmeye çalışılmıştır. Gazâlî'nin bu ilimle ilgili önemli bilgiler içeren *Kimyâ-yı Saadet* adlı çalışması ise ayrıca çalışılmak üzere bu yazının kapsamı dışında bırakılmıştır. Yazının ikinci bölümünde ise *İhvân-ı Safâ' Risâleleri* taranarak onların Gazâlî'ye kaynaklık edebilecek düşünceleri ortaya konmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu minvalde *Risâleler*'in yazarlarının Gazâlî'nin Ahiret İlmine benzer bir şekilde ahirete giden bir yol tasavvuruna sahip oldukları görülmüştür. Tıpkı Gazâlî'de olduğu gibi *Risâleler*'deki ahirete giden yol tasavvuru da nefsin temizlenip ilahi bilgiyi edinmesi düşüncesine dayanmakta ve bunun yolu da hem pratik hem de teorik bilgiden geçmektedir. Fakat *Risâleler*'in felsefî metinler olduğu açık olduğundan dinî bir boyutu bulunan bu tasavvurun felsefî kökenlerinin daha belirgin olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Gazâlî ve İhvân arasındaki bu benzerliklerin gözlemlenmesinden hareketle yazının birinci kısmında metnin içerisine yerleştirilerek okurun zihninde Ahiret İlminin belirginleşmesini sağlamasını umduğumuz pasajların benzerleri *Risâleler* içinde tespit edilmiş ve metnin içerisinde bunlar bir anlam bütünlüğü çerçevesinde nakledilmiştir. Böylelikle aynı zamanda Gazâlî'nin Ahiret İlmî ile *Risâleler* arasında herhangi bir benzerliğin olup olmadığına okurun kendisinin de karar verebilmesi için bir zeminin oluşması hedeflenmiştir. Çalışmanın ulaşmaya çalıştığı hedeflerden biri de "Gazâlî problemi" olarak bilinen ve Gazâlî'nin entelektüel kişiliğinin belirlenmesi etrafında yürütülen tartışmalara *İhvân-ı Safâ' Risâleleri*'nden hareketle yeni bir boyut daha eklemektir.

1. Introduction

Even though modern scholars clearly demonstrated al-Ghazālī's indebtedness to philosophy by showing that his own account of historical events, and especially what he narrated about his relation with philosophy, was not always credible, they focused their attention mostly on the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā. Their concentration on Ibn Sīnā caused them to ignore one important detail of al-Ghazālī's story, that is his attitude towards *The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*), about which he talks in several places in *Deliverer*.

Al-Ghazālī says in *Deliverer* that he read *the Epistles* of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'. Initially we see the name, Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', in the section of the doctrine of Ta'lim. According to al-Ghazālī he collected everything available about this sect and tried to understand their doctrine as much as possible. It is possible to say that the works of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' were among the works al-Ghazālī collected.¹ In addition to this, al-Ghazālī repeats the name Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' in the section he devoted to philosophy.² When explaining two dangers of different attitudes towards philosophy, the only name al-Ghazālī uses is their name from among the several schools of philosophy while he talks about the rest as "the others." In these passages, the Ikhwān and their works, *Rasā'il*, seem to be always at the center of his investigation. Al-Ghazālī openly expresses that *Rasā'il* is full of truth derived from legitimate sources mixed with false beliefs by their writers. To help his readers to understand, al-Ghazālī materializes *Rasā'il*'s case with the examples of the cupping-glass, snake, and forbidding waters of the ocean. His examples have been used by modern researchers without referring to *Rasā'il* and Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' to demonstrate Ibn Sīnā's influence over al-Ghazālī.³

By comparing al-Ghazālī's works with *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, this study hopes to show that despite al-Ghazālī's negative comments about them, *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* was one of the philosophical sources that moulded al-Ghazālī's intellectual world. The study will also try to point out that during his search, al-Ghazālī derived some essential ingredients to his thought from the work of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', put it into a new form, and presented it with a new name, "the Science of the Hereafter." By identifying these similarities between al-Ghazālī's new science and the thought and theology of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', the study intends to provide another angle to the problem which is known in the literature as "the al-Ghazālī problem."

2. Al-Ghazālī's Science of the Hereafter

In the final days of his life in Baghdad, al-Ghazālī had exhibited his discontent toward the traditional structure of the scholarly activities of his time. During this period, it seems that

1 Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, in *Majmū'at Rasā'il al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, ed. by Aḥmad Shams al-Din (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1997), 55; W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazālī* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), 53.

2 Al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh*, 46–47; Watt, *Faith and Practice*, 41–42. The fact that the section on philosophy comes before the section on the doctrine of Ta'lim does not matter here.

3 See for example Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 96–101.

he was searching for a more convincing and meaningful system of living. The beginnings of his search are visible in the works he wrote at the time.⁴ The outcome of his search was his declaration of the Science of the Hereafter, which he divided into two parts: the science of practice (*'ilm al-mu'āmalah*) and the science of unveiling (*'ilm al-mukāshafah*). *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* was intended to be the practical component of this new science.⁵ However, the *Revival* also includes valuable information about the theoretical part⁶ of this science as well. To determine the precise nature of this science, we must look at the information al-Ghazālī provides about it in *Revival* and *The Jewels of the Qur'ān* (*Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*).

Al-Ghazālī lays out the foundation of the Science of the Hereafter at the beginning of *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*. However, before presenting this science, he creates a sense of spiritual and religious crisis.⁷ The cause of this crisis is the scholars who are the imitators deceived by Satan with the immediate riches of the world. These imitators present three kinds of knowledge to people and claim that none exists beside their sciences. The three sciences are the rulings of the government (*fatwā*) used by the judges, the methods of theological dispute (*jadāl*) used by the seekers of fame, and the art of embellished speech (*ifhām* or *saja' muzakhrāf*) used by the preachers.⁸ According to al-Ghazālī however, these are not the sciences of the righteous forebears (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). Their science is the Science of the Hereafter, which God describes as understanding (*fiqh*),⁹ guidance, wisdom, righteousness, and light. Al-Ghazālī's intention was to show the methods of the former leaders of religion (*al-a'imma al-mutaqaddimīn*) and the sciences of the prophets and the righteous earlier generations, which he calls the Science of the Hereafter.¹⁰

The Science of the Hereafter constitutes two parts: the science of unveiling (*'ilm al-mukāshafah*) and the science of practice (*'ilm al-mu'āmalah*). The science of practice is about the acquisition of knowledge revealed by the science of unveiling as well as acting in accordance with it. The knowledge mentioned together with practice seems to be a part of the science of unveiling that was revealed gradually by the prophets and saints to ordinary men to

4 Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *Fadā'ih al-Bātinīyyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Badawī (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Qawmiyyah li al-Tibā'ah wa al-Nashr), 198–199; Kenneth Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 53–55.

5 Kenneth Garden argues that the Science of the Hereafter was al-Ghazālī's own invention and major vehicle of his revivalist agenda. See his *First Islamic Reviver*, 63.

6 I do not feel completely satisfied in defining this science as theoretical, since al-Ghazālī's presentation of it is ambiguous. But theoretical seems the most convenient term for it.

7 Here we must notice that al-Ghazālī's praise of God and invocation of prayer for the Prophet is shorter than usual. For a discussion of this issue, see Murtadā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-Sādat al-Muttaqīn bi-sharḥ Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, (Egypt: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), v. 1, 56. According to Garden, al-Ghazālī wants to shock the reader with a sense of crisis, see *First Islamic Reviver*, 105–107; see also his "Al-Ghazālī's Contested Revival: *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* and its Critics in Khorasan and the Maghrib" (Chicago: University of Chicago, PhD Dissertation, 2005), 19.

8 Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, 1/10.

9 Here he uses the word *fiqh* as the thorough understanding of religion. The first hadith he reports in "the Book of Knowledge," that is the first book of *Revival*, is that "If God wishes good for one, He gives him understanding in religion (*yufaqqihhu fī al-dīn*)." *Ihyā'*, 1/14.

10 Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, 1/11.

provide a basis for action. If followed correctly with the guidance of the scholars, the action may result in the acquisition of the science of unveiling.

Al-Ghazālī gives more detail about the Science of the Hereafter in the Book of Knowledge (*Kitāb al-'ilm*), the first book of *Revival*, even though he states that the information he gives does not include all of its details. He restates the major division of the Science: the science of unveiling and the science of practice.¹¹

According to al-Ghazālī, the science of unveiling is the science of the internal (*bāṭin*) and the utmost aim of all sciences. This science is the guarantor of salvation for the one who attains it, and the heretics, the arrogant, or those who endlessly desire this world through the pursuit of the worldly sciences. The least punishment of the denier of this science is that he will never taste its results.¹²

The science of unveiling is the science of the righteous ones (*ṣiddīqūn*) and those who get close to God (*muqarrabūn*). It is the light in the heart which shines (*nūr yazharu fī al-qalb*) after the clearance and purification of the heart from its blameworthy characteristics. The light unveils (*yankashifu*) the darkness, and gradually the things heard before and accepted on the authority of hearing appear more evidently in detail.¹³ The knowledge revealed by this science and gained by its holder are elucidated in the following excerpt:

“Through it, these truths are clarified until the true knowledge of the essence of God is attained together with that of His eternal and perfect attributes, His works and wisdom in the creation of this world and the hereafter as well as the reason for His exalting the latter over the former. Through it also is attained the knowledge of the meaning of prophecy and prophet and the import of revelation. Through it is obtained the truth about Satan, the meaning of the words angels and devils, and the cause of the enmity between Satan and man. Through it is known how the Angel appeared to the prophets and how they received the divine revelation. Through it is achieved the knowledge of the heart and how the angelic hosts have confronted the devils. Through it is gained the knowledge of how to distinguish between the company of heaven and the company of the Devil, a knowledge of the hereafter, Paradise, and hell fire, the punishment of the grave, the bridge (*al-ṣirāt*) across the infernal fire, the balance of the judgment day, and knowledge of the day of reckoning. Through it also is comprehended the meaning of the following words of God: “Read thy Book; there needeth none but thyself to make out an account against thee this day,” and “Truly the hereafter is life indeed, if they but knew.” Through this same light is revealed the meaning of meeting God and seeing His gracious face; the meaning of being close to Him and of occupying a place in His proximity; the meaning of attaining happiness through communion with the heavenly hosts and association with the angels and the prophets. Through it also the distinction between the ranks of the people in the different heavens is determined until they see one another in the same way as a shining star is seen in the middle of heaven.”¹⁴

11 Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, 1/32.

12 Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, 1/32.

13 Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, 1/32.

14 Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, 1/32–33; the excerpt is taken from Nabih Amin Faris, “The Book of Knowledge” (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service), 40–41.

According to al-Ghazālī, people first come across the content of this science by hearing and interpret it differently. Some believe that these are examples given by God to illustrate what He prepared for his righteous believers, while others think of them as true realities of afterlife. Some acknowledge their incapacity to know the true reality and of nature God, while others claim to have true knowledge about Him. For some, the only knowledge one can have about God is what the manuals of creed contained, such as that He is ever-existing (*mawjūd*), all-powerful (*qādir*), all-knowledgeable (*ālīm*), all-seeing (*baṣīr*), all-hearing (*samīʿ*), and with the attribute of speech (*mutakallim*).¹⁵

All speculations about the exact nature of these will come to an end after the lifting of the veil, they will appear clearly without any doubt as if they were witnessed through the eyes (*yajrī majrā al-ʿiyān alladhī lā yashukku fih*). And this is what al-Ghazālī means by the science of unveiling. What is attained in this condition cannot be written in books and be communicated to anyone save those worthy of it.¹⁶ Al-Ghazālī maintains that achieving this level is possible in the essence of humans (*hadhā mumkin fī jawhar al-insān*) when they clean the impurities and the rust of the world from the mirror of the heart (*mirʾāt al-qalb*).¹⁷ It is possible to clean the rust and impurities from the heart by refraining from worldly desires and following the footsteps of the prophets as much as possible. Accordingly, the content revealed to the heart will be proportional to the dirt cleaned from it. The Science of the Hereafter is the science that shows how to polish the heart.¹⁸

The second part of the Science of the Hereafter is the science of practice, which is concerned about the states of the heart. Al-Ghazālī lists the praiseworthy and blameworthy states of the heart in the second part of the *Revival*. He tells that the praiseworthy states are the sources of obedience which bring one closer to God. On the other hand, the blameworthy states are the birthplace of immoral behavior and the gardens of corruption. The Science of the Hereafter is the knowledge of their definitions, realities, causes, results, and cures. This science, for al-Ghazālī, is obligatory for everybody (*fard ʿayn*).¹⁹

A similar account of the Science of the Hereafter is given by al-Ghazālī in *The Jewels of the Qurʾān*. Although the context is somewhat different in this book, there is not any considerable change in doctrine. Al-Ghazālī resembles the Qurʾān to an ocean with secret treasures and jewels. They represent the sciences extracted from the Qurʾān. There is a hierarchy among them according to their proximity to the aim (*fī al-qurb wa al-buʿd min al-maḥṣūd*). Al-Ghazālī then likens the verses of the Qurʾān to a single seashell (*ṣadaf*), and this example more clearly

15 Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyāʾ*, 1/33.

16 It is generally considered that al-Ghazālī revealed the content of this knowledge in his esoteric works. This point will be discussed in the following pages.

17 Again, heart means soul in his terminology.

18 Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyāʾ*, 1/33. It is important to keep in mind that instead of mentioning the science of unveiling here al-Ghazālī mentions the Science of the Hereafter, which includes the science of practice as well. This suggests that the border between the science of unveiling and the science of practice is transitional.

19 Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyāʾ*, 1/33–34.

explains his meaning. For some, the seashell comprises only the external shell. But others break the shell and examine the interior pearl carefully. In agreement with this simile, al-Ghazālī divides the sciences into the sciences of the shell (*ṣadaq*) and the sciences of the pith (*lubb*).²⁰

The sciences of the shell are concerned with the language of the Qur'ān and its transmission.²¹ The sciences of the pith are divided similarly into two parts again: those of lower grade (*al-ṭabaqat al-sufā*), and those of higher grade (*al-ṭabaqat al-'ulyā*). Like he does in the exordium and the first book of *Revival*, al-Ghazālī again lists story telling (*ma'rifat qiṣaṣ al-Qur'ān*), religious dispute (*'ilm al-kalām*), and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as the three branches of the lower grade.²²

The higher grade of the sciences conforms exactly to the Science of the Hereafter al-Ghazālī describes in *Revival*. He elucidates the higher grade as follows:

- “(1) The higher grade of the sciences of the pith consists in those important sciences which are the precedents and roots (*al-sawābiq wa al-uṣūl*). The noblest of these higher sciences is knowledge of God and the Last Day (*al-'ilm bi-Allāh wa al-yawm al-ākhir*), for this knowledge is of that which is intended (*'ilm al-maqṣad*). Below this is knowledge of the straight path and of the manner of traversing it (*al-ṣirāt al-mustakīm waṭarīq al-sulūk*). This is the knowledge of purification of the soul and removal of the obstacles of the destructive qualities, and of making the soul beautiful with the saving qualities. We discussed these forms of knowledge in the books of *The Revival of the Religious Sciences... Revival* comprises forty books, each of which will guide you to one of the obstacles of the soul together with the method of its removal, and to one of the veils of the soul along with the method of lifting it. This is a science which is above the sciences of jurisprudence, theology, and what is before these... (2) The highest and noblest knowledge is the knowledge of God (*'ilm ma'rifat Allah*), because all other forms of knowledge are sought for the sake of it and it is not sought for anything else. The manner of progression in regard to it is to advance from divine acts to divine attributes, and then from divine attributes to divine essence; thus there are three stages. The highest of these stages is the knowledge of divine essence (*'ilm al-dhāt*), and it is not possible for most people to understand this... (3) This is the noblest of all forms of knowledge, and it is followed in excellence by knowledge of the life to come (*'ilm al-ākhirah*), which is knowledge of the final return to God (*'ilm al-ma'ād*), as we have already mentioned in our discussion of the three divisions. This knowledge is connected with the science of gnosis (*'ilm al-ma'rifah*), and its real meaning is knowledge of man's relation to God at the time of being drawn near to Him through knowledge or being veiled from Him by ignorance (*maḥjūb bi al-jahl*). Some of the principles of these four types of knowledge, i.e. knowledge of divine essence, attributes and acts, and knowledge of the future life and their confluence, which are that measure of knowledge with which we have been provided despite our short life, many efforts and calamities and few helpers and companions, we set forth in some of our works but did not disclose. Most people's understanding would be wearied by it, and the weak, and who are shallow in knowledge would be harmed by it.

20 Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān wa Duraruh*, ed. Hadījah Muhammad Kāmil and 'Iffat al-Sharqāwī (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Kutub wa al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyyah), 78.

21 Al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, 78–81.

22 Al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, 81–83.

Its disclosure is only beneficial to him, who has brought his knowledge of outward acts to perfection, and has followed the path to God by the removal of evil qualities from the soul and the methods of mortification, with the result that his soul has become trained and is on the straight path so that he has no longer any pleasure in the world and only searches for the True One... It is unlawful for those into whose hands that book falls, to disclose it except to one who has these qualities.”²³

Although he does not say it explicitly in these three paragraphs, al-Ghazālī here describes the Science of the Hereafter.²⁴ The first (1) paragraph corresponds to the science of practice, which is the subject of *Revival*. The second (2) and the third (3) paragraphs is equivalent to the science of unveiling, which al-Ghazālī informs the reader that he had written a book (or books) about it. But he withholds its content from public distribution.²⁵

Al-Ghazālī divides the verses of the Qur’ān into six parts in the second chapter of *Jewels*. When he explains the first three parts, he provides similar information about the Science of the Hereafter. The first part (1) is knowledge of God, his essence, attributes, and actions. The second part (2) is about the knowledge of the straight path. The third part (3) is knowledge of what the traveler comes upon at the time of his arrival.²⁶ In this classification, the first (1) and the third (3) parts are similar to the science of unveiling while the second part (2) seems to be the science of practice. The second part includes some of the specific ideas of the Science of the Hereafter and is informative about its nature. The passage, for this reason, is useful to be quoted in detail:

“The second division concerns the definition of the path of advancing towards God. This is by devoting oneself to the service of God as he said “Devote yourself to Him very devoutly.” Devotion to Him is achieved by advancing towards Him and turning away from things other than Him; and this is expressed in His words, “There is no God but He; so take Him for a guardian.” Advancement towards Him can only be achieved by perseverance in remembrance of Him, while turning away from things other than Him is affected by opposing passion, by cleansing oneself from the troubles of this world (*kadūrāt al-dunyā*), and by purification of the

23 Al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur’ān*, 83–85; the translation is taken from Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Jewels of the Qur’ān: al-Ghazālī’s Theory* (Malaysia: National University of Malaysia, 1977), 42–44

24 According to Alexander Treiger as well, this passage is one of the various places in which al-Ghazālī describes his highest theoretical science. See his “al-Ghazālī’s Classifications of the Sciences and Descriptions of the Highest Theoretical Science,” *Dīvān: Disiplinler Arası Çalışmalar Dergisi*, v. 16, no. 30, 2011/1, 10–11.

25 This work is known as “*al-Maḍnūn bih ‘Alā Ghayr Ahlih* (that which is to be restricted from those not fit for it). See al-Ghazālī, *al-Arba ‘in fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Jābir (Egypt: Maktabat al-Jundī), 23. According to M. Afīf al-Akiti, this work “sits at the top of al-Ghazālī’s theological curriculum and represents the most sophisticated expression of his theological project. It is in this corpus that al-Ghazālī reveals the extent to which his theologizing has developed: by relying on the scientific and philosophical community, he has constructed a unified theological system giving a reasoned explanation of the world but expressing his ideas in traditional terms.” See his “The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly of *Falsafa*: al-Ghazālī’s *Maḍnūn*, *Tahāfut*, and *Maqāṣid*, with Particular Attention to Their *Falsafī* Treatments of God’s Knowledge of Temporal Events,” in *Avicenna and His Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy*, ed. Y. Tzvi Langermann (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2009), 55.

26 Al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur’ān*, 69.

soul (*tazkiyat al-qalb*) from them. The result of this purification is prosperity in the Hereafter as God said, "He indeed has achieved prosperity who has purified himself and remembers the name of his Lord and so performs the ritual prayer." Thus the path is supported by two matters, namely, perseverance in remembrance of God and opposition to that which diverts from Him. This is the journey towards God (*al-safar ilā Allāh*).

In this journey to God there is movement both from the side of the traveler and from the side of Him to Whom he travels... The truth is that the seeker and the Sought are comparable to a picture present in a mirror (*mithāl sūrah hāḍirah ma'a mir'āh*): The picture is not revealed in it because of rust (*ṣada'*) on its surface; when, however, you polish the mirror the picture is revealed in it (*fa-matā ṣaḡaltahā tajallat fihā al-ṣūrah*), neither by the movement of the picture towards it nor by its movement towards the picture, but by the removal of the veil. God is revealed by His essence and is not concealed, for concealment of light is impossible, and by light everything which is concealed becomes obvious, and God is the light of the heavens and the earth (*Allāh nūr al-samāwāt wa al-arḍ*). The concealment of light from the pupil of the eye is only caused by one of two matters; either by turbidity in the pupil of the eye, or by weakness in it since it is unable to tolerate the great dazzling light just as the eyes of bats are unable to tolerate the light of the sun. Nothing, then, is incumbent upon you except to cleanse turbidity from the eye of the soul (*'ayn al-qalb*) and to strengthen its pupil. In that case God will be in the soul as the picture is in the mirror, so that when He suddenly reveals Himself in the mirror of the soul, you hasten to say that He is inside the soul and that the human nature (*nāsūt*) has put on the divine nature (*lāhūt*), until God strengthens you with a firm word so that you realize that the picture is not inside the mirror, but reflected in it. If the picture were to rest inside the mirror it would be inconceivable that it could be reflected in many mirrors at one time; rather at that time when it rested inside one mirror, it had moved from another. Such, however, is not the fact in the least, for God reveals Himself to so many of the Gnostics (*al-'arīfūn*) at the same time. It is true that He reveals Himself to some mirrors most perfectly, most obviously, most directly, and this is commensurate with the clarity of the mirror, its polish, the correctness of its shape and the right width of its surface."²⁷

These passages and explanations clearly assert that the science of practice is the method which leads one to the true knowledge of the content of the science of unveiling. The content of the science of unveiling may be known by the use of other sciences as well, however it seems that for al-Ghazālī, they hardly provide true cognition.²⁸ The knowledge acquired through other sciences depends on the bodily organs, such as the ears of the body or the eyes of the body.²⁹ To acquire true cognition of these subjects, one must see with the eyes of his soul, which is his true being. The soul can get to this level if one immerses himself in practice according to the instructions given in *Revival*.

27 Al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, 72–73; *Jewels of the Qur'ān*, tr. Muhammad Abul Quasem, 25–27.

28 For example, the attributes of God, which are part of the science of unveiling, are readily available in the books which are devoted to the sciences of lower grades, such as *kalām*. Anyone who can read them knows that God is alive, all-knowing, all-powerful, etc., but al-Ghazālī sees this kind of knowledge as worthy of ordinary people.

29 Al-Ghazālī says in the *Scale* that man is the combination of a body which sees with its eyes and a soul which comprehends with intellect and sees with insight (*baṣīrah*). The soul is something divine (*min al-umūr al-ilāhiyyah*) and loftier than the base material of this world. See *Mizān al-'Amal*, 24.

3. The Path to the Hereafter in *Rasā'il*

In the previous section, we presented the main features of al-Ghazālī's Science of the Hereafter. This science seems to be al-Ghazālī's own invention.³⁰ This looks plausible, since al-Ghazālī, as he himself states in the exordium of *Revival*, was the first scholar to present its features and divisions systematically. However, the fundamental ideas of this science are easily visible in *Rasā'il* to such an extent that one might think of them as the possible source of al-Ghazālī's science. We will try to substantiate this claim in this section.

The most constant theme in *Rasā'il* is the purification of the soul through knowledge ('ilm) and righteous action. The Ikhwān consider their every epistle as a contribution to the purification of the soul and its refinement.³¹ The purification of soul through knowledge is the path to the hereafter (*ṭarīq al-ākhirah*).³² For them, the description of the path to the hereafter and salvation in the life to come is the reason for the existence of all religions and sects which, according to them, are medicines for the diseases of the soul.³³ The objective of their intellectual efforts is identical with the objective of religion. This point appears obviously with the allegory of a man who owns a lovely garden and wants to share its fruits with other people.

The Ikhwān think of the man of knowledge who possesses the *Rasā'il* as a man with a beautiful garden at the beginning of *Rasā'il*. This man desires to benefit the fellow members of his kind with the fruits of his garden and invites them to join him. He brings some fruits from the garden and offers them to others. When they taste the delicious fruits, they desire to taste the whole garden. If the owner sees that they are sincere in their desire, he allows them to get inside without restriction.³⁴

Like the garden, *Rasā'il* as well must be presented to those who are worthy and forbidden to those who are unworthy. This is because they are like the great theriac. Like the theriac, they cause disease when they do not remedy; they lead to damnation when they do not lead to salvation, and they might destroy when they do not revive. However, the reason for this is not that their properties change from person to person, but because of the different conditions of the receivers. *Rasā'il* are also like food and light. Food should not be given to a child who cannot eat it until he is ready, and one who stayed in darkness for a long time should not be exposed suddenly to the light.³⁵

30 Kenneth Garden, *First Islamic Reviver*, 63.

31 Ikhwān al-Safā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Safā' wa Khullān al-Wafā'*, edited by 'Arif Tāmīr (Beirut and Paris: Manshūrāt 'Uwaydāt, 1995), 1/75.

32 *Rasā'il*, 1/78.

33 This information is taken from the catalogue of Buṭrus Bustānī's edition of *Rasā'il*, which was published in Beirut by Dār Šādīr, see 38. The catalogue was written by the Ikhwān themselves, and in Tāmīr's edition it is incomplete. For the sake of consistency, I will otherwise continue to refer Tāmīr's edition.

34 *Rasā'il*, 1/75–76. In his footnote to this allegory, Tāmīr states that the garden is the symbol of heaven promised in the hereafter by God to his righteous servants.

35 *Rasā'il*, 1/76–77. This passage is reminiscent of al-Ghazālī's restricted works. *Rasā'il* thus share a common feature with al-Ghazālī's oeuvre, which is the condition of revealing their content gradually. Also, al-Ghazālī uses the same ideas expressed in this part in his *Munqidh* while defending his involvement with philosophy. The Ikhwān liken their *Rasā'il* to "the great theriac" (*al-tiryāq al-kabīr*), and al-Ghazālī likens himself to a skilled snake charmer who extracts the theriac for those who are in need of it. See al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, in *Majmū'at Rasā'il al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, ed. by Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1997), 47; W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazālī* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), 43.

The Ikhwān as well present their *Rasā'il* as a guide for gradual progress in the path to the hereafter like al-Ghazālī and his Science of the Hereafter. They say that the ultimate objective of education in sciences is the improvement of the soul, its refinement, completion, and perfection.³⁶ They, however, immediately add that those who desire to stay in the world forever are unaware of the hereafter.³⁷ They forget their origin and fall asleep with the sleep of ignorance even though they are awake and very alert in the material world. This is because that they are unaware of the true nature of man.

The Ikhwān see man as the combination of a physical body (*jasad jismānī*) and a spiritual soul (*naḥs rūḥānī*). Each component of this combination is an independent substance with opposing states and different qualities. They only participate in changing attributes and accidental actions. Because of his physical body man pursues this world and longs to stay in it forever, and because of his soul he desires the hereafter and wishes to reach it. Like these two opposing substances, man's conditions and actions always take the shape of a binary opposition such as life and death, wakefulness and sleep, knowledge and ignorance, remembrance and negligence, intelligence and stupidity, health and sickness, and so on. Man is rational and alive because of his soul, and mortal because of his body (*huwa ḥayy nāṭiq mā'it*). His sleep is caused by body while his wakefulness is due to soul.³⁸

The body is a physical substance that changes, decays, and becomes corrupt in time, and returns to the four elements after death.³⁹ On the other hand, the soul is a spiritual, celestial and luminous substance which is essentially alive, potentially knowledgeable, and naturally efficient (*ḥayyah bi-dhātihā, 'allāmah bi-al-quwwah, fa'ālah bi-al-ṭab'*). It is capable of learning and acts on the material substances until it returns to its origin either victorious or regretful.⁴⁰

Since man is the combination of two different substances, the things he acquires as property are two in nature: they can be either material properties for the benefit of his body, such as wealth and money, or immaterial properties for the benefit of his soul, such as knowledge and religion. While wealth and money become a tool for the pleasures of this world and fatten the

36 The title of the epistle is *fī al-ṣanā'ī' al-'ilmīyyah wa-al-gharaḍ minhā* (on the scientific arts and their objectives). The Ikhwān give a classification of sciences in this epistle.

37 *Rasā'il*, 1/253. This opposing dualist presentation is in agreement with their principle that the only thing which is truly unique in every aspect (*wāḥid bi-al-ḥaqīqah min jamī' al-wujūh*) is God, and the rest of existence is dual in nature (*kull mā siwāh min jamī' al-mawjūdāt mathnawīyyah*). *Rasā'il* communicate their underlying message always from this dualist perspective. See *Rasā'il*, 1/246.

38 *Rasā'il*, 1/253–254.

39 *Rasā'il*, 1/254.

40 As seen above, al-Ghazālī's opponents accused him of holding this opinion of the philosophers during the Nishapur controversy. See al-Ghazālī, *Makātib-e Fārsī-ye Ghazālī be-nam Faḍā'il al-Anām min Rasā'il Ḥujjāt al-Islam*, ed. 'Abbās Iqbāl (Tehran: Ketab-furūshi-ya Ibn Sīnā, 1333), 12. The Ikhwān understand verse 23:115 ("Did you think we created you for nothing and you would not return back to us?") as proof for spiritual resurrection only. They deny the bodily resurrection in the afterlife. This is one of the three issues on which al-Ghazālī labels the philosophers as apostates. But his own position regarding this subject is a source of controversy. See, for example, Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 9, 92.

body, religion and knowledge illuminate and heal the soul and become a guide in the path to the hereafter. Similarly, there are two kinds of session (*majlis*): a session of eating for the benefit of the body, and a session of learning for the benefit of the soul. And again, people are two kinds: those who seek the sessions of eating for the benefit of their bodies and those who seek the sessions of learning for the benefit of their souls.⁴¹ The latter try to comprehend religion thoroughly and to improve the conditions of their souls to rescue them from the darkness of the world. They do this because they look for the path to the hereafter that saves one from the material world and takes him to the celestial world, which is the original place of the soul.⁴²

The Ikhwān present a classification of sciences as a guide for those who want to strengthen their soul after making this connection between the salvation of soul and knowledge.⁴³ This is because the soul desires to acquire sciences just as the body craves for different kinds of material pleasures.⁴⁴ The Ikhwān encourage the owner of *Rasā'il* to inform his relatives and friends about their content. He should urge them to acquire knowledge and renounce the world, thus guiding them towards the path to the hereafter. This is the way taken by the prophets, wise men of knowledge, and the virtuous and righteous scholars.⁴⁵

The Ikhwān divide the sciences at first into three categories: 1) practical sciences,⁴⁶ 2) religious sciences,⁴⁷ and 3) philosophical sciences.⁴⁸ They designed the epistles according to this classification and every epistle represents a particular science mentioned in the details of classification.⁴⁹ The last part of classification is the metaphysical sciences (*al-'ulūm al-ilāhiyyāt*), which they consider as the ultimate goal of all knowledge and cognition.⁵⁰ They describe it in another epistle as the knowledge of the prophets.⁵¹ Their presentation of these sciences is closely identical with al-Ghazālī's science of unveiling. They present them in five categories:

“The first is the cognition of the Creator (*ma'rifat al-bārī*), the Most Glorious and Generous, and the description of his uniqueness, and how he is the Cause of Existence, and the creator

41 Man's place in the universe is in between the angels and the animals. Those who strengthen their souls by abandoning blameworthy deeds and by studying true sciences get closer to the angels while those who chase material gains get closer to the animals. *Rasā'il*, 2/153–154; see also *Mizān al-'Amal*, 30–31.

42 *Rasā'il*, 1/255–256; compare with al-Ghazālī, *Mizān al-'Amal*, 24–25.

43 This is not the only classification they present in *Rasā'il*, but it seems to be the most comprehensive. See, for example, *Rasā'il*, 1/81–82, 107–108.

44 *Rasā'il*, 1/259.

45 *Rasā'il*, 1/266.

46 They call it *al-riyādiyyah*. It includes the sciences of worldly activities by virtue of which people make their living like occupational trades and crafts.

47 They call it *al-shar'iyyah al-waḍ'iyyah*. It includes the religious sciences such as knowledge of the Qur'ān, hadith, jurisprudence, and the science of exhortation.

48 They call it *al-falsaf'iyyah al-ḥaqīq'iyyah*. It includes mathematical, logical, physical, and metaphysical sciences.

49 *Rasā'il*, 1/108, 261, 266.

50 “*Al-ulūm al-ilāhiyyah alladhī huwa aqṣā' gharāḍ al-ḥukamā' wa-al-nihāyah allatī ilayhā yartaqī bi al-ma'arif al-ḥaqīq'iyyah*,” *Rasā'il*, 1/103; “*al-ilāhiyyāt wa huwa al-gharāḍ al-aqṣā' wa-al-ghāyah al-quṣwā'*,” *Rasā'il*, 3/333; “*al-ilāhiyyāt allatī hiya al-ghāyah al-quṣwā' fī al-ulūm wa-al-ma'arif*,” *Rasā'il*, 3/343.

51 *Rasā'il*, 2/288. They repeat here that it is the ultimate aim of all sciences and brings man close to the level of angels.

of creation, and the source of generosity, and the giver of existence, and the origin of virtue and goodness, and the protector of order, and the provider of permanence, and the regulator of all, and the knower of the unseen and the seen. Not absent from his sight is an atom's weight within the earth and heavens, and the ultimate beginning of all things, and the ultimate end of all things, and the capable master of all externals, and the competent knower of all internals... The second is the knowledge of spiritual beings (*'ilm al-rūhāniyyāt*), which is to say the cognition of the simple intelligible substances which are knowledgeable agents. They are the angels of God and his sincere servants. They are forms without materials which act on matter and give order to it. This [knowledge] is also the cognition of their connection to each other and how they emanate from one another. They are the spiritual spheres that surround the material spheres.

The third is psychology (*'ilm al-nafsāniyyāt*). This is the cognition of souls and spirits which pervade the material spheres and the physical world beginning from the primum mobile to the utmost center of the Earth, and the cognition of how they rotate the spheres and set in motion the stars and how they cause growth in animals and plants, and how they descend on the bodies of animals and how they ascend from them after death.

The fourth is politics (*'ilm al-siyāsah*) and it has five divisions...⁵²

The fifth is the knowledge of the final destination (*'ilm al-ma'ād*). This is the cognition of the true nature of the next creation (*al-nash'ah al-ukhrā'*) and how the souls will awaken after their long sleeps and be resurrected from the darkness of bodies, and how they will congregate on the day of resurrection and rise on the straight path to be reckoned on the day of religion. And this is the cognition of the true nature of the reward of those who are righteous and the punishment of those who are evil."⁵³

The subject of each classification seems clear. The first part is about God and his attributes, the second part addresses the basic structure of the universe known as cosmology,⁵⁴ the third part discusses psychology, and the fourth part handles eschatology.⁵⁵

Although this is the most comprehensive account of the content of metaphysical sciences, it is not the only discussion in *Rasā'il*. *Rasā'il* is replete with discussions of the metaphysical

52 Translating this part seems unnecessary since al-Ghazālī does not say anything about politics in the science of unveiling.

53 *Rasā'il*, 1/264–265. The description of the metaphysical science given here is similar to the ten foundations on which, according to the Ikhwān, the originator of religion must rely at the time of originating his religion. This means that they view the metaphysical sciences as the same as the theological sciences. See *Rasā'il*, 4/113–114.

54 This might not be clear at first sight. But the Ikhwān consider the universe as a hierarchical structure emanating from more spiritual to less spiritual. They consider the celestial spheres as the abode of spiritual beings. The decrease of spirituality is the cause for the existence of matter in the sublunar world. But there is still some influence of spirituality in this world which is the cause of its existence and order. Their expression "They are forms without materials which act on matter and give order to it" supports my point that this part is a description of their cosmology. For the structure of the universe, see *Rasā'il*, 1/138. For an illustration of my point, see epistle twenty, entitled *ft māhiyyat al-ṭabī'ah* (on the quiddity of nature), 2/121–136. In this epistle, they say that the philosophers call angels the spirits of the celestial spheres.

55 According to Carmela Baffioni, the metaphysics of the Ikhwān comprises 1- the knowledge of God and His attributes, 2- the knowledge of the soul, and 3- the knowledge of resurrection and of closeness to God. See her "From Sense Perception to the Vision of God: A Path Towards Knowledge According to the Ikhwān al-Safā'," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, v. 8 (1998), p. 216. This is because she bases her discussion on *Rasā'il*, 3/247–248.

sciences. However, one of the discussions exemplifies the soul's importance as the most important instrument in the acquisition of the metaphysical sciences like al-Ghazālī's discussion of the subject. It deserves to be quoted for this reason.

“The intention of the wise philosophers with the study of the practical sciences is through them to reach the physical sciences. Their intention with the study of the physical sciences is to reach the metaphysical sciences, which is their ultimate aim and the utmost of the point of accession before the true cognitions (*al-ma'ārif al-ḥaqīqiyyah*). But the first degree of study in the metaphysical sciences is the cognition of the essence of soul, the search for its origin and where it was before its attachment to the body, the inquiry of its return after its leaving the body, which is called death, and the nature of the rewards of the virtuous in the spiritual world and the punishment of the evil in the abode of the hereafter. And another feature is also that since man gravitates towards the cognition of his Lord, there is no path for him to His cognition except through the cognition of his own soul.”⁵⁶

The classification of the sciences in a hierarchical manner and the soul's ascension in the hierarchy in the passage is reminiscent of al-Ghazālī. In addition to this, the highest degree placed at the top as the aim is almost identical in *Rasā'il* and in al-Ghazālī's science. Alexander Treiger's assessment of al-Ghazālī's science of unveiling backs this position. According to him, al-Ghazālī's science of unveiling is essentially a theological discipline that is revealed to prophets and saints through illumination. He identifies the areas this science covers as four: 1) God, 2) cosmology, 3) prophetology, religious psychology and angelology, and 4) eschatology.⁵⁷ The arrangement made by the Ikhwān about the metaphysical sciences also comprises these four areas in a hierarchical structure.

Apart from these similarities, there exist other discussions in *Rasā'il* that resemble al-Ghazālī's discussion of the Science of the Hereafter. Al-Ghazālī uses the example of the seashell in *The Jewels of the Qur'an* to illustrate the superiority of his science above other religious sciences. He equates the religious sciences of the time to the shell, while his science serves as the pearl inside (*lubb*). This is the science of the chosen and those firmly grounded in the sciences.⁵⁸ A similar discussion appears in *Rasā'il* when the Ikhwān talk about the orders of religious sciences.

Everything in this world, according to the Ikhwān, has an external and an internal side. The external side is like the shell and the bone while the internal resembles the kernel (*lubb*) and essence. This two sidedness applies in the same way to the religious sciences as well. They constitute both the external regulations and commands which are immediately known by the men of knowledge and by the legal scholars either chosen or ordinary, and the mysterious internal regulations and commands which are not known by anybody except by the chosen and those firmly grounded in the sciences.⁵⁹

56 *Rasā'il*, 1/103.

57 Treiger, “al-Ghazālī's Classifications of the Sciences,” 8.

58 Al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'an*, 78.

59 *Rasā'il*, 1/311.

The purpose in this dual character of the religious sciences is that religion is sent both for the benefit of this world and the hereafter. Like the shell and the pith, these two worlds are separate from each other in attribute and essence, and there are people suited for each state as well. The difference of the religious sciences is the result of taking the different natures of humans into consideration.⁶⁰ But forming the religious sciences both for the people of this world and the people of the hereafter does not indicate that both groups are going to achieve the salvation in the hereafter, even though they comply with the commands and prohibitions of religion equally.⁶¹ Achieving salvation is not possible without acquiring the internal side of these sciences.⁶² And this, for the Ikhwān, is the knowledge of the true nature of the hereafter which is the kernel of the kernels.⁶³

We have tried to show the similarity between al-Ghazālī's science of unveiling and *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān up to this point. Al-Ghazālī's Science of the Hereafter, however, has another subdivision, that is the science of practice. In the passage quoted in the previous section from *The Jewels of the Qur'ān*, al-Ghazālī gives the principal ideas of this science in detail. What he conveys in that passage is almost equivalent with the passage below.⁶⁴ The Ikhwān say:

“Oh brothers! Know that God Almighty created the creation, straightened it, planned its happenings and set everything in motion. He then sat down on His Throne and elevated it. But, out of his infinite grace, He chose a few of His servants and permitted them to draw near to Him, and He revealed some of His hidden secrets to them. They were then sent to summon all men to repent and to disclose to the rest of Mankind some of those mysteries, so that they might awaken from their slumber of ignorance and live the life of the wise and blessed, and reach the perfection of Paradise and eternal life...

And know, oh brothers, that there are only two ways to get there: the purity of soul (*ṣafā' al-nafs*) and the straightforwardness of the path (*istiqāmat al-tarīqah*). Now then, one is the purity of the soul because the soul is the essential substance of human nature. Man is the name of the thing which consists of a body and a soul. The body is visible and consists of flesh, blood, bones, veins, sinews, skin and the like. All of these substances are the materials of earth; they are dark and heavy, and subject to change and decay.

However, the soul is a heavenly substance; it is spiritual, alive, luminous, and light. It animates the body and is not subject to change. It is endowed with intelligence and perceives the forms of the things. Its likeness in grasping the perceptible and the intelligible existence is that of a mirror. If the mirror is symmetrical and clean of surface, it reflects the forms of material objects proper to their true nature. But if the mirror is twisted, it reflects the forms

60 *Rasā'il*, 1/311.

61 *Rasā'il*, 3/236. They consider those who accept these truths by imitation (*taqlīd*) without certainty (*yaqīn*) and mental perception (*baṣīrah*) as veiled (*maḥjūb*), and classify them with Satan and his followers. Identical with al-Ghazālī, they are veiled because of their ignorance. See al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, 84.

62 *Rasā'il*, 1/311–313.

63 *Rasā'il*, 3/246, 248. The Ikhwān say that they are the possessors of this knowledge and one who wants to acquire its content must ask them and consult their work.

64 Al-Ghazālī uses the expression “*al-safar ilā Allāh* (the journey towards God)” in order summarize his description of this science. The title of epistle forty three is “*fi māhiyyah al-tarīq ilā Allāh* (on the quiddity of the path towards God).”

of material objects inappropriate to their true nature. And also, if the surface of the mirror is covered by rust, it definitely does not reflect anything.

So is the situation of the soul as well. If it is knowledgeable not suffocated by ignorance, and clear of substance not contaminated by bad deeds, and pure of essence not rusted by destructive behaviors, and if it is well-disposed not twisted by heretical views, then it reflects the true nature of the spiritual things which are indeed part of its own abode, and grasps them by their true nature. And it witnesses the invisible matters (*al-umūr al-ghā'ibah*) from its senses with its intelligence and the purity of its essence just like its witnessing of the material objects with its senses given that its senses are healthy and good. But, on the other hand, if it is ignorant, impure of essence, contaminated by evil actions and destructive behaviors, twisted by heretical views, and persistent in this situation, then it is veiled from grasping the true nature of spiritual beings, and unable to reach to the presence of God, and is left behind by the felicity of the hereafter.⁶⁵

This passage contains most of the major topics of *Rasā'il* and manifests the redemptive nature of the philosophy of the Ikhwān. The expressions and the notions used in the passage are nearly identical with al-Ghazālī's expressions when he describes the science of practice. Al-Ghazālī, like the Ikhwān, regards the cognition of God and the hereafter as the ultimate point of sciences. For him, one must have the knowledge of the straight path to reach it, and that is the knowledge of the purification of the soul and the removal of its destructive traits. If one is successful in practicing this science, the true natures of God and the hereafter are revealed to his soul, and, according to the Ikhwān and al-Ghazālī, this state is the attainment of the highest level. Al-Ghazālī repeats the analogy of the mirror in several of his works to illustrate his point,⁶⁶ and the same analogy is essential in the discourse of the Ikhwān as well.⁶⁷

This passage includes the main division of al-Ghazālī's science of practice as well. As already stated before, the science of practice given in *Revival* comprises two grades, one for the exterior of man which is the body and the other for his interior which is the soul. The grade for the interior also comprises two grades. The first is the cleaning of the soul from destructive behaviors and bad deeds, which al-Ghazālī calls *muhlikāt*. The second is the straightening and polishing of the interior with saving qualities and good deeds, which al-Ghazālī calls *munjiyāt*.

The Ikhwān do not demand intellectual efforts only in their encouragements for the purification of soul. Religious practice as well is an important part in their prescription. They name the second method "the straightforwardness of the path (*istiqāmat al-ṭarīq*)"⁶⁸ and intend by it the alternative given by the prophets, that is religion.⁶⁹ In a different epistle where they expound the saving qualities of believers, they reiterate the essentials of this passage and

65 *Rasā'il*, 4/7–8; *The Epistles of the Sincere Brethren: An Annotated Translation of Epistles 43–47*, trans. Eric van Reijn (Onehunga: The Artful Publishing Company, 1988), 1–3.

66 al-Ghazālī, *Mizān al-'Amal*, 35; *Ihyā'*, 3/17; *al-Maḥṣad al-Asnā' fī Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah), 8; *al-Mustaṣfā' min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth), 26–27.

67 *Rasā'il*, 2/316; 4/7, 8, 86, 340.

68 They use both *ṭarīq* and *ṭarīqah*. See *Rasā'il*, 4/7, 9.

69 *Rasā'il*, 4/10.

advise those who wish to receive the inspiration of angels (*ilhām*) to remove the bad traits that their characters have amassed since early childhood and to take a straight path (*sāra šīraṭan 'ādilatān*) as outlined by religion.⁷⁰ Then the strategy of the Ikhwān, like the strategy of al-Ghazālī, calls for religious practice as well.⁷¹

The discussion of the Ikhwān matches up with the discussion of al-Ghazālī as well when it comes to the representatives of this path. Like al-Ghazālī, the Ikhwān say that the scholars who know the true nature of the hereafter are the heirs of the prophets.⁷² What they took over from the prophets was not the riches of the world, such as gold and silver coins,⁷³ but faith, piety, and knowledge. They too get celestial inspiration and support like the prophets and lead an ascetic life by repudiating the world and wanting to reach to the hereafter. They prefer hardship rather than comfort in this world and clash with the desires of their passions.⁷⁴ Because of their imitation of His attributes, they are the ones who are closest to God.⁷⁵ The Ikhwān consider them to be the true guides in the path to the hereafter because of these characteristics.⁷⁶ And this is another similarity al-Ghazālī shares with them.

4. Conclusion

After leaving his enviable life in Baghdad under unclear circumstances, al-Ghazālī returns to public life with his monumental work, *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*. He champions with the publication of this work a new method for the attainment of felicity, which he names the Science of the Hereafter. He divides this new science into two parts, the science of practice and the science of unveiling, and devotes the *Revival* to the first part which is the science of practice. When followed correctly, the science of practice leads one to the second science, a science that reveals the complete truth about God, the universe, and human's destiny in this world and the world to come. However, the second part is not designed for public distribution and can be shared only by those who are worthy of it. Attaining the content of this science is the sign of attaining salvation. As the originator of this science, al-Ghazālī thinks of himself as the authorized distributor of the method, that is the science of practice, and the final content, that is the science of unveiling, of the Science of the Hereafter.

70 *Rasā'il*, 4/103, 116. See also *Rasā'il*, 2/154.

71 al-Ghazālī states in *Revival* that others as well have written books on some of the topics he deals with in his book. He claims that his book is the most concise and methodical. *Ihyā'*, 1/12. What he means becomes clear when one compares the content of the epistles, especially epistle 9, entitled *fī bayān al-akhlāq wa asbāb ikhtilāfihā wa anwā'i 'ilalihā wa nukat min 'ādāb al-anbiyā' wa zubad min akhlāq al-ḥukamā'* (on the explanation of moral characters and their differences and the reasons for the differences and the anecdotes from the good manners of prophets and the extracts from the morals of wise) 1/285–355; and epistle forty six, entitled *fī māhīyat al-imān wa kḥiṣāl al-mu'minīn al-muḥaqqiqīn* (on the quiddity of faith and the special characteristics of true believers) 4/57–106, with the second part of his book which is dedicated to the destructive qualities (*muhlikāt*) and the saving qualities (*munjiyāt*).

72 *Rasā'il*, 1/345; 3/287, 317.

73 *Rasā'il*, 4/59.

74 *Rasā'il*, 1/347.

75 *Rasā'il*, 4/75. The Ikhwān qualify them with the word *muta'allih* (divine and heavenly).

76 *Rasā'il*, 3/248.

Al-Ghazālī constructs this new science of the hereafter on the difference of this world and the hereafter. He continuously reminds the reader that life in this world goes quickly and comes to an end in a very short time. However, according to him, this does not mean that life itself comes to an end with the death of material body. In fact, true component of man, which is his soul, goes on to live forever, either joyfully in reward or regrettably in punishment depending on the investments he makes during his life in this world. If he pursues the investments of this world and abandons the needs of his soul like most people, then he will end up being miserable in the hereafter and be one of those who does not attain eternal happiness.

While this science can be considered as an innovation of al-Ghazālī, its principal concepts and ideas share some commonalities with the philosophy of Ikhwān al-Şafā'. The Ikhwān, like al-Ghazālī, also present their work, the *Rasā'il*, as a guide in the path to the hereafter. According to them as well, the soul is the essential component of man. The wellbeing of the soul in the afterlife depends on the choices one makes in this world. If one prefers the needs of his body and neglects his soul, then the soul returns to its origin in pain and sadness after the death of his body. Similar to al-Ghazālī, the Ikhwān also declare that providing for the needs of his soul must be the priority of man. So then, it is possible to say in conclusion that the Ikhwān promoted al-Ghazālī's Science of the Hereafter way before al-Ghazālī himself did.

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