

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S USE OF THE CONCEPTS OF MIRACLE,
HABIT, AND MERCY TO CRITIQUE INDUCTIVE
EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE

by
ALI JAMAL MANSOUR

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Approved by:

	Signature
George Saliba, Professor History and Archaeology	Advisor
	Signature
Raymond Brassier, Professor Philosophy	Member of Committee
	Signature
Lyall Armstrong, Assistant Professor History and Archaeology	Member of Committee

Date of thesis defense: April 28, 2023

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Science bases its premises and results on induction that is believed to form reliable truths of worldly phenomena. The problem of induction, however, postulates that we cannot, at any point, exhaust an experiment ad infinitum to create certitude in its results. Yet, inductive inquiry remains the means of attaining scientific knowledge till date, making its subject matter an essential topic to investigate both philosophically and historically. Imam al-Ghazālī is probably one of the earliest thinkers to make use of the concept of induction, utilizing it to justify religious phenomena. This thesis explores how al-Ghazālī employed induction to develop his theory of causality and shows, through various of his works, that it is more difficult to claim that al-Ghazālī was a strict occasionalist than it is to claim that he held a compromised idea on causality. This conclusion is reached by studying the chronology of al-Ghazālī's works in relation to changes, if any, in his ideas on causality. Also, this thesis formulates philosophical interpretations and definitions to terms that were either directly expressed by al-Ghazālī, or that can be inferred from his writings, that comprehensively state and express his theory of causality, its significance, and the reasons behind his rigorous defense of religious concepts. The terms that require philosophical expressions are 'agency,' 'power,' 'mercy,' 'miracle,' 'impossibility,' 'habit,' and 'disruption of habit.' A fundamental value of the thesis is its extraction of the concept of 'God's mercy,' which has not been adequately addressed in previous works, from the seventeenth discussion, by showing that it constitutes a significant component of al-Ghazālī's theory of causality, playing a pivotal role in his critique of the philosophers. Thus, this thesis emphasizes and elaborates on the concept of 'God's mercy,' using various of al-Ghazālī's books, to argue that al-Ghazālī's response to the philosophers concerning God's creation of a human habit and his refraining from the regular interference with this habit is an act of his mercy upon humanity. This in turn, gives meaning to al-Ghazālī's motivation for formulating a theory of causality whose rationale is based on revelation and the justification of religious issues. Finally, the thesis addresses the historical value of al-Ghazālī's account on causality through its interaction with the philosopher Ibn Rushd, and its relevance and similarity to the more recent philosopher David Hume.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the most influential figures in Islamic history, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī (d.1111/505 AH), is considered by Muslims the *Mujaddid* (‘renewer’) of the Islamic religion of the 5th Islamic century.¹ Al-Ghazālī was captivated and challenged by philosophy yet, he was nonetheless provoked by certain claims made by the philosophers concerning the means of gaining theological knowledge.² Greek philosophy, which is generally believed to have been partly incorporated into Islamic theology, influenced the interpretations of some Muslim thinkers on certain religious matters.³ Muslim philosophers, the likes of al-Kindī (c. 801–866/ 185-253 AH), al-Fārābī (c. 870–950/256-339 AH), and Ibn Sīnā (c. 980–1037/ 370-428 AH) were prominent advocates of Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic philosophy. Ibn-Sīnā, for example, claimed that philosophy, through reasoning and effort, could provide an alternative path to the true nature of knowledge, that is, “knowledge of the highest truths from its divine source.”⁴ Thus, the elite individuals can access theological knowledge while engaging with critical thinking and philosophical contemplation whereas the general masses gain such access through revelations and prophets that interpret metaphysical realities into intelligible

¹ Mohd Rosmizi Bin Abd Rahman, and Salih Yucel, “The mujaddid of his age: Al-Ghazālī and his inner spiritual journey,” *Umran-International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies*, (2016): 1.

² Wilferd Madelung, “Al-Ghazālī’s Changing Attitude to Philosophy,” in *Islam and Rationality*, (Brill, 2015), 23.

³ Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A study of al-Ghazālī*. (Cambridge University Press, 1963): 25-26. According to Watt, the details on how much influence Greek philosophy had on Islamic theology are still quite obscure.

⁴ Madelung, “Al-Ghazālī’s Changing Attitude to Philosophy,” 23.

ones.⁵ According to al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, some claims among others, made by the philosophers include the belief in the world's past eternity, the belief in God's immediate knowledge of particulars, and the denial of bodily resurrection.⁶ These claims contradict the orthodox teachings of Islam. Islam, for example, commits its advocates to believe in the day of judgment i.e., the belief that the world is not eternal and thereby, accompanied with resurrection. Before responding to the claims made by the philosophers, al-Ghazālī delved deep into the science of philosophy since, as he claimed in his autobiographical work *al-Munqidh min aḍ-ḍalāl* (*The Deliverance from Error*), 'one cannot recognize what is unsound in any of the sciences unless he has such a grasp of the farthest reaches of that science that he is the equal of the most learned of those versed in the principles of that science.'⁷ Thus, al-Ghazālī embarked into the field of philosophy, restating the claims of the philosophers without providing his opinion in his *Kitāb Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* (*On the intentions of the Philosophers*), and later responding and attacking them (the claims of the philosophers and not philosophy), taxing some of them with unbelief in his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*).⁸ The *Tahāfut* is perhaps, considered one of the most potent attacks on Neo-Platonism, its impact promoting the Medieval Muslim Aristotelian, Ibn Rushd, to write his book, *Tahāfut al- Tahāfut* that was specifically designed to rebut (point by point) al-Ghazālī's arguments. Ibn Rushd may be one of those who criticized al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* yet, he did so with philosophical intentions and beliefs. Yet, other criticisms that had political

⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁶ Check Al-Ghazālī, Discussions one, thirteen, and twenty respectively in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, A parallel English-Arabic text translated by Marmura Michael, ed. Parviz Morewedge, 2nd ed., (Brigham Young University Press).

⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *The Deliverance from Error*, trans. Richard J. McCarthy, (Boston, Twayne, 1980), 6-7.

⁸ It is usually understood that when Al-Ghazālī mentions the word 'philosophers,' he is referring to the Muslim philosophers and in particular, Ibn-Sina and Al-Farabi.

and socio-scientific intentions rose against the *Tahāfut* that ultimately affected Al-Ghazālī's reputation.

It has almost become a general belief among critics that Al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* was the reason behind the demise of Islamic science.⁹ This reasoning is based on the 'classical narrative' which assumes that the Islamic civilization was a desert civilization with little chance of development on its own, and relied on other ancient civilizations to develop its scientific thought.¹⁰ The classical narrative goes on to hypothesize that the demise of the Islamic sciences took place in the 11th or the 13th century either due to Al-Ghazālī's impact on the religious environment, or due to the Mongol invasion of Baghdad respectively.¹¹ However, in his *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*, Saliba provided another narrative, which he titled, the 'alternative narrative' that challenged and responded to the claims made by the proponents of the classical narrative. Saliba's narrative takes a thorough revisionist approach, focusing on what had happened after the 11th and 13th centuries, respectively. In his response, Saliba claimed that those who held that the demise took place in the 11th century, the advocates of the Al-Ghazālīan theory of scientific decline, assumed that there existed a conflicting relationship between science and religion termed the 'conflict model,' an archetype that is based on the European understanding that science and religion are inconsistent together.¹² The European understanding of the matter is that Al-Ghazālī, acting as the arch-representative of Islam (*hujjat al-Islām*), promoted the orthodox religious thought, which was championed by his

⁹ Saliba, "Questions of Beginnings I," 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1-2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, "Age of Decline: The Fecundity of Astronomical Thought," 236.

¹² *Ibid.*, 243.

Tahāfut, against the scientific rational thought.¹³ Thus, Al-Ghazālī's book, the *Tahāfut al-falasifa*, was held responsible for the demise of science due to the challenges it postulated to the philosophers on the grounds that they could not provide rational explanations to metaphysical arguments. It is Al-Ghazālī's book, they added, that halted critical thinking in the Islamic world, thereby, gradually decapitating the sciences. In response, Saliba claimed that the conflict model does not apply to the post-Al-Ghazālī period because we witness the rise of several men of science that held official religious positions such as judges and free-jurists, all present in post-Al-Ghazālī time.¹⁴ Prominent scientists and religious men such as Jazarī (d.1206/ 602 AH), Mu'ayyad al-Dīn al-'Urḍī (d.1266/664 AH), Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī (d.1274/672 AH),¹⁵ Qutb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d.1311/710 AH), Ibn al-Baiṭār (d.1248/646 AH), Ibn al-Nafīs (d.1288/687 AH) and Ibn al-Shatir (d.1304/704 AH),¹⁶ to name a few of them, all operated and worked in the post-Al-Ghazālī time.¹⁷ Moreover, the 13th through 16th centuries (post-Al-Ghazālī period) witnessed the most sophisticated achievements in the field of Astronomy such that Saliba considered that period to be the Islamic Golden age of Islamic Astronomy.¹⁸ The thread of scientific inquiry stretched all the way to the sixteenth century forming a link with Western science. Sixteenth-century Western Astronomy was found to be strongly

¹³ Ibid., "Questioning the Beginnings I," 2-3.

¹⁴ Ibid., "Age of Decline: The Fecundity of Astronomical Thought," 243.

¹⁵ Ibid., "Science between Philosophy and Religion: The Case of Astronomy," 182.

The Tusi couple is a mathematical device discovered by Tusi that transforms circular motion into linear motion, an advancement to Ptolemaic astronomy.

¹⁶ Ibid., 277ff.

Ibn al-Shatir, as described by Victor Roberts, is considered the pre-Copernican Copernicus. The lunar model we have from Copernicus is closely similar to that of Ibn al-Shatir's.

¹⁷ Ibid., "Questions of Beginnings I," p.21.

¹⁸ Ibid, 23.

connected and traced back to thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Islamic Astronomy. The works of Ibn al-Shatir and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī showed close similarities with the works of the Renaissance astronomer and mathematician, Nicolaus Copernicus (d. 1543/950 AH).¹⁹ Other disciplines such as medicine also showed scientific advancement in the Islamic world during the post-al-Ghazālī period. This being said, the influence of al-Ghazālī quite certainly didn't hamper the growth of the Islamic sciences in the century after his death. A similar argument could be made against the demise theory of the thirteenth-century Mongol invasion (the siege of Baghdad). The most famous observatory in the Islamic civilization was built in the city of Marāgha just one year after the destruction of Baghdad.²⁰ In light of these claims, the alternative narrative presented itself with a powerful argument against the classical narrative such that it becomes really difficult to pin down al-Ghazālī or the Mongol invasion as causes to the demise of science.

Now that an elaboration on certain historical accounts that relate to the role of al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* are made, we can narrow the scope and focus on the seventeenth discussion of the *Tahāfut* as its subject matter seems to represent what is usually considered the crux of the conflict theory between science and religion. Of the several issues discussed by al-Ghazālī in his *Tahāfut*, the concept of causality is considered one of the most crucial because it creates much space for controversy concerning al-Ghazālī's thoughts on occasionalism, and it touches on a major argumentative field concerning the relationship between science and religion. al-Ghazālī devoted significant space to his views on causation as seen in his seventeenth discussion, formulating his own understanding of causality through philosophy and theology. In this discussion, al-

¹⁹ Ibid., "Islamic Astronomy defines itself: The critical Innovations," 154.

²⁰ Ibid., "Islamic Science and Renaissance Europe: The Copernican Connection," 202. The Maragha observatory is located in North-west modern-day Iran.

Ghazālī developed a position that challenged the philosophers’ understanding of causation, one that was later translated or understood as ‘the problem of induction.’

1.1. The Problem of Induction

The foundations of modern science rely on inductive experimentation. Induction in philosophy is the process where limited observations of particulars are taken and made universal such that the conclusions drawn from premises and made facts. Experience and observation show that certain events occur conjointly. An event ‘A’ “causes” an event ‘B’ provided that ‘A’ and ‘B’ always occur sequentially. The process of induction assumes two principles; the first is a presupposition that the sequence of events in the future shall occur as they did in the past, and the second is that a certain number of observations of particular properties of a certain event come together to produce a generalized property of that event. An example of the former principle is fire burning cotton upon contact while an example of the latter is assuming that all swans are white prior to witnessing a black swan. In the field of science, causation may be expressed using the gas laws. Let ‘A’ be the temperature and ‘B’ be the pressure of a gas. If we increase the temperature ‘A,’ the pressure ‘B’ will also increase in correspondence with Boyle’s law. If this particular experiment is repeated several times, the same result will be generated thus, leading to the formation of a scientific law. Hence, experimentation and observation have made it factual that whenever Boyle’s experiment is repeated, a similar result will be produced. It is this method that scientists followed in formulating their theories and laws.

This notion of causality had been criticized by the 18th century English philosopher David Hume (d.1776) due to the implication it generates, one that creates

psychological certainty in individuals, making them believe that events occur the way they do ad infinitum. The issue of necessary causation had been denied by Hume for its conclusive premise that an event ‘A’ shall always result in an event ‘B’ provided that it did so in the past. If, for example, every time a person ‘X’ coughs the weather gets cloudy, and that the weather indeed followed this pattern for several years, will it be logical to assume that the weather is changing because ‘X’ coughed? Although one might find this example ridiculous, it is not any different from Boyle’s experiment when it comes to judging the sequential occurrence of the events in both experiments. Hence, the tenuous notion of necessity generated by induction consequently led to the problem of induction, which holds that making inductive inferences in the world around us cannot be reasonably justified. With the problem of induction still without a solution, one may ask, how can we find certainty in experimental science? Certainty is the firm conviction that something is the case it is such that ‘that’ thing is the reliable truth and not any other. Certain knowledge, according to Al-Ghazālī, is “that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility.”²¹ To be certain about something is to be confident that that thing has no doubt to its reliability, truth, and consistency.

The problem of induction may be traced back to Al-Ghazālī on account of its similarity to his seventeenth discussion on causation and miracles in *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*. In his seventeenth discussion, Al-Ghazālī claimed that it is not a necessity to have a connection between a ‘cause’ and an ‘effect’ in that neither the affirmation nor the

²¹ Al-Ghazālī. *The Deliverance from Error*, 3.

negation of any of them affirms or negates the other.²² Their connection (cause and effect), he added, is due to their prior decree by God who creates them side by side, and not due to their inseparability or necessity.²³ That causes result in other causes is not a problem to al-Ghazālī as long as the chain of causes goes back to God. The problem though lies in the claim that causality is ‘necessary,’ which in turn assumes that there is no alternative scenario to causal relationships but the natural occurrence of events as they take place. Al-Ghazālī refutes this proposition, as this thesis shows, claiming that it is the ‘accustomed habit’ developed in people that make them believe that causal relationships are necessarily inseparable. ‘The burden of proof,’ as Goodman claimed, is heavier on the philosophers than it is on al-Ghazālī because with induction as a generalized thesis, the philosophers will have to demonstrate what makes it impossible for causes and effects to be inseparable, and what logical reasoning is required to prove this inseparability.²⁴ Al-Ghazālī’s task on the other hand, is easier than the philosophers’ task because all he has to do is show that causes and effects are not in the strict sense, inseparable. Science, as we know it, is based on expectations and assumptions that depend on observation and repetition. Some scientific theories might be modified due to their insufficiency, some might be thrown away for being outdated and outclassed by alternative theories, and others might just be valid without any rules or laws that justify their reliability, such as the witnessing of fire burning objects. Thus, one might as well question when exactly do

²² Al-Ghazālī, “Seventeenth Discussion,” in *The incoherence of the philosophers*, A parallel English-Arabic text trans. Marmura Michael, ed. Parviz Morewedge, 2nd ed., (Brigham Young University Press, 1997), 166.

²³ *Ibid.*, 166.

²⁴ Lenn Evan Goodman, “Did Al-Ghazālī Deny Causality?,” (Studia Islamica, Brill, 1978), 84. The connection between cause and effect, as Goodman claimed, is a connection ‘observed in existence’ rather than the connections in the divine realm of existence which al-Ghazālī usually referred to as Malakut.

we know that a scientific theory has attained certain validity such that we cannot exhaust it anymore to doubt its result.

Now, if we assume that inductive inferences generate ‘certain’ knowledge which we call science, then religion is placed in a fragile situation that calls for questioning one of its major building blocks, namely, the belief in miracles. Miracles can only exist if and only if, causes and effects are not necessarily connected for the exception to take place. Thus, the implications that induction bestows on religion made al-Ghazālī endeavor to prove that causality is not a feasible tool for gaining certain knowledge of the world around us, at least as discussed by the philosophers. The seventeenth discussion is thus, a utilization of philosophy as a tool to create room for religion to coexist with scientific inquiry through a vivid attack on the philosophers concerning their understanding of causality.

Later in the 18th century, Hume in his book, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, tackled the same problem of induction and held a similar opinion as al-Ghazālī that we cannot unite a cause with its effect since the “necessary connexion is not discovered by a conclusion of the understanding (i.e., by reasoning), but is merely a perception of the mind.”²⁵ Hume published another book that preceded the *Treatise* titled, *Enquiry to Human Understanding*, where he held a similar opinion on causality to his former opinion, claiming that one cannot generalize causal relationships from ‘*known qualities*’ of objects since causes and effects are not necessarily connected rather, and in his own words, “they seem conjoined, but never connected.”²⁶ Later in the 20th century, the

²⁵ David Hume and L.A. Selby-Biggie, *Treatise of Human Nature*, (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1896), 405-406.

²⁶ David Hume, “Section VII: On the Idea of Necessary Connection,” *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Edited by Peter Millican, (Oxford University Press, 2007), 54.

philosopher Edmund Husserl (d.1938) in his book, *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction*, claimed that “Hume had shown that we naively read causality into this world and think that we grasp necessary succession in intuition.”²⁷ Thus, the problem of induction had been discussed by different philosophers over the lapse of the last few centuries, and still remains an ongoing topic that arouses religious and scientific questioning till today.

1.2. Literature review: The opinions of Scholars on Al-Ghazālī’s Occasionalism

As they endeavor to make sense of revelation, Muslim theologians have had the task to interpret the verses of the Qur’an to come about explanations to cosmological theories and the nature of human actions. One major issue that rose was the conflict between God’s omnipotence and human responsibility to carry out actions, which we might understand as the conflict in opinion concerning whether humans have free-will or are predestined by God’s [determinism]. This conflict brought about the initiation of different theological systems and schools of thought in Islam. The Mu‘tazilites, for example, argued that humans have the freedom of choice to obey or disobey the commands of God.²⁸ Contrarily, the Ash‘arite theology that was initiated by al-Ash‘arī, maintained that God possessed absolute authority over his creation, a belief that was later recognized as occasionalism.²⁹ Occasionalism is the doctrine that defines God as the only

²⁷ Edmund Husserl, “The transcendental’ motif in rationalism: Kant’s conception of a transcendental philosophy,” in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr, (Northwestern University Press Evanston, 1978), 93.

²⁸ Frank Griffel, “Cosmology in Early Islam” in *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), 124.
The Mu‘tazilite theology rose in the second/eight century and was later followed by the Ash‘arite theology that rose in the fourth/tenth century.

²⁹ Ibid., 125.

immediate cause of everything in the universe such that no creature can participate in the cause of any event.³⁰ According to occasionalism, when one event seems to cause another, it is actually God or the divine force that is causing both events to occur simultaneously. Occasionalism is one explanation that was devised by theologians to make sense of human actions with respect to God's omnipotence as explained in revelation. Thus, it is important to establish al-Ghazālī's stance on occasionalism since it helps us formulate a better understanding of his philosophical and theological views and beliefs. Al-Ghazālī is considered to have shaped the development of Islamic thought and rationality thus, his views help in understanding issues such as free will, moral responsibility, and the nature of causation and agency.

Much research has been done on al-Ghazālī's status of occasionalism and his thoughts on causation. In fact, al-Ghazālī's stance on the subject matter is debatable among the scholars with some scholars maintaining that he preserved an Ash'arite orthodoxy, while others maintaining that he rejected it in certain cases. According to Peter Adamson, this controversy among scholars is one of the "most long-running" in philosophy of the Islamic world.³¹ One reason for this controversy may lie in the dialectical design of the seventeenth discussion that can be interpreted in more than one way. al-Ghazālī can reject the Avicennian necessitarian theory using Ash'arite occasionalism or a compromised idea of secondary causality that is beneath yet subject to God.³² Hence, he might as well leave both options open to discussion since his main

³⁰ Omar Edward Moad, "Al-Ghazālī's occasionalism and the natures of creatures," in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, (National university of Singapore, Springer 2005), 95.

³¹ Peter Adamson, "Miracle Worker- Al-Ghazālī against the Philosophers," in *Philosophy in the Islamic World, A history of Philosophy without any Gaps*, (Oxford University Press, 2016), 152.

³² Ibid., p.153.

objective in the seventeenth discussion was to bury the Avicennian theories rather than promote his own doctrines.³³ Michael Marmura also pointed out to Al-Ghazālī's use of a 'second causal theory' in his seventeenth discussion, concurring with Adamson that its formulation was an attack on the philosophers and not a promotion of his own ideas.³⁴ Yet, Marmura stepped out of the *Tahāfut* and delved into al-Ghazālī's *Iqtisād*, which also discusses causation, to tackle and judge al-Ghazālī's causal theory externally. Marmura claimed that Al-Ghazālī made no use of a second causal theory in his *Iqtisād*, contrary to the *Tahāfut*.³⁵ Rather, al-Ghazālī sided with Ash'arite explanations to situations that necessitate God's intervention such as the doctrine of *al-ajal*, the predestined term of life of an individual.³⁶ Marmura's conclusion was that the *Iqtisād* showed conformity with the Ashar'ite causal doctrine and that the presence of a second causal theory in the *Tahāfut* was simply to show that even if the philosophers are granted the premise that natural inanimate elements have causal efficacy, the existence of miracles is still possible.³⁷ Hans Daiber, on the other hand argued that al-Ghazālī's concept of causality is a result of his 'philosophical theology' that is based on both his Ash'arite theology and his knowledge of Avicennian Neoplatonism, which he later criticized.³⁸ Ilai Alon suggests that one needs to define 'cause' prior to stating whether Al-Ghazālī actually opposed causality or not since 'causality' as a term can be interpreted differently

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Marmura Michael, "Al-Ghazālī's second Causal theory in the seventeenth discussion of his *Tahāfut*," in *Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, (University of Toronto, 1981), 107.

³⁵ Ibid., 106.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 107.

³⁸ Hans Daiber, "God Versus Causality: Al-Ghazālī's solution and its Historical background," in *Islam and Rationality*, Edited by Georges Tamer, (Brill), 1-2.

sometimes.³⁹ Alon argued that upon critically reading al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut*, we come to find a compromise in his opinion not only on causality, but also between orthodoxy and Sufism, and religion and philosophy.⁴⁰ Simon Van Den Bergh claimed that al-Ghazālī, in certain cases, abandoned the Asha'rite theory of 'denial of causation' and reverted back to rational theories of the Muslim philosophers that is originally derived from stoicism, for justifying supernatural events.⁴¹ Yet, among the scholars who tackled al-Ghazālī's thought, Giacaman and Bahlul exceptionally added another dimension to al-Ghazālī's understanding of causality, arguing that he did not need to reject the necessary connection between cause and effect because he devised a way to uphold that miracles exist in a world of necessarily connected causes if and only if God manipulates the laws of nature.⁴² This idea of God manipulating causes and effects to generate an optical illusion in what is believed to be a miracle, paves the way to question al-Ghazālī's non-occasionalist path. The implication of the statement is that we are brought to believe that causes do not generate effects due to God's manipulation, whereas in reality, causes generate effects always. Frank Griffel, like Adamson, also commented on the dialectical language of the seventeenth discussion, claiming that the language used can easily be associated with

³⁹ Ilia Alon, "Al-Ghazālī on Causality," Vol. 100, No. 4, (Journal of the American Oriental Society, 1980), 397

Alon uses Courteney's article to describe causality as follows: "When we speak of critique on the principle of causality' therefore, we are referring to questions about the necessity, demonstrability and knowability of particular causal relationships (especially within the natural order), that is, that events have definable causes, or that causal sequences are predictable."

⁴⁰ Ibid., 397.

⁴¹ Ibn Rushd, *The Incoherence of the incoherence*, Vol. I&II, trans. Simon Van Der Bergh, (Gibb Memorial Trust, Cambridge, 1987), p.326 ff.7 corresponding to p.182 of notes section.

Van Der Bergh here, is referring to the section in the *Tahāfut* where Al-Ghazālī in a second answer to the philosophers, concurs with them that "in fire there is created a nature which burns two similar pieces of cotton which are brought into contact with it." Yet, he still regarded the exceptional case (i.e., Abraham's miracle of surviving immolation) as possible. (Check p.326).

⁴² George Giacaman and Raja Bahlul, "Al-Ghazālī on Miracles and Necessary Connection," (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 45.

occasionalism which had made many believe that al-Ghazālī argued in favor of it.⁴³ However, Griffel added, a closer look into al-Ghazālī’s seventeenth discussion shows that al-Ghazālī cautioned his readers not to subscribe to consequent occasionalist interpretations of ‘physical processes.’⁴⁴ Likewise, Griffel added that al-Ghazālī alerted the Muslim scholars that are attracted to philosophical explanations from the mistakes they make when talking about necessity and possibility.⁴⁵ Griffel’s conclusion on the *Tahāfut* is that al-Ghazālī did not deny the existence of causal connections, i.e., causality, but rather he remained uncommitted on whether worldly causes actually have effects.⁴⁶ Finally, Edward Moad also stepped out of the *Tahāfut*, utilizing a passage from al-Ghazālī’s *Iqtisād* to argue that al-Ghazālī’s conception of power subscribes to distinctive occasionalism.⁴⁷ It is this conception of power, Moad added, that provides an understanding of al-Ghazālī’s theory of causality. Yet, other than holding an opinion concerning al-Ghazālī’s occasionalism, Moad is probably the only expert in the field who attempted to philosophically define certain terms such as ‘power,’ ‘agent,’ and ‘impossibility,’ from al-Ghazālī’s works, to articulate an argument or stance for al-Ghazālī’s occasionalism using philosophical premises.

As seen, the debate about al-Ghazālī’s connection to occasionalism persists with various perspectives and views. It might seem as though the seventeenth discussion, which is basically about a two dozen-paged essay, can be read depending on what the

⁴³ Griffel, “The Seventeenth discussion of the incoherence of the Philosophers,” 149-150.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 150.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁷ Edward Omar Moad, “Al-Ghazālī on Power, Causation, and ‘Acquisition,’” (University of Hawai’i Press, 2007), 1.

reader wants to believe or extract from it, since it is subject to a variety of scholarly opinion. On a separate note, it is important to remain meticulous while reading it to differentiate between al-Ghazālī's transition from first person to third person speech, as he usually does, to avoid choosing texts out of context that might confuse what he believed and what he claimed the philosophers believed. Also, one ought to bear in mind that al-Ghazālī's ultimate motif in his seventeenth discussion was to prove the existence of miracles more so than to prove that God is the cause of all events in the world. Thus, whether he is required to be an occasionalist or not is not as crucial to him as it is to disprove the philosophers on their denial of miracles, at least while being engaged in his seventeenth discussion. Furthermore, al-Ghazālī also discussed certain aspects of causality in his *Al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, making it necessary to evaluate his stance therein. In his *Maqṣad*, al-Ghazālī is seen to side with secondary causality in his hierarchy of causes as expressed in God's attribute of 'the most-high,' which I elaborate on when discussing agency. This will thus, widen the scope on al-Ghazālī's thoughts on causality and occasionalism. More importantly, the *Maqṣad* is a book written by al-Ghazālī after the *Iqtīṣād* and *Tahāfut* respectively.⁴⁸ This fact will track al-Ghazālī's growth concerning the idea of occasionalism and will help check for differences, if any, in his opinion through his writings.

Thus, the methodology of the thesis is carried out in a threefold procedure; elaboration, definition and utilization. I aim at elaborating on the concepts already discussed by Moad in his article, *Al-Ghazālī on power, causation, and 'acquisition*, and use al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut*, *Iqtīṣād*, *Maqṣad* and *Ihya' a* to formulate broader definitions if

⁴⁸ George F. Hourani, "A revised chronology of Al-Ghazālī's writings," (Journal of the American Oriental Society, 1984), 298.

possible. I make it necessary to elaborate on the term ‘agent’ because the understanding of causality itself relies on who or what the agent is, be it God, nature, or a supernatural power. In the case of al-Ghazālī, the agent is God hence, the terms ‘power,’ ‘mercy,’ and ‘impossibility’ become necessary characteristics that need to be defined to determine the limits and capabilities of God as he exercises his authority in the causal nexus. The term ‘miracle’ on the other hand is necessary because it represents the main reason behind al-Ghazālī’s attack on the philosophers in his seventeenth discussion, which is to prove their existence. Miracles are important in religion because without them, causality becomes *natura law* and religion loses part of its credibility. Most importantly, I give more attention to the terms ‘habit,’ and ‘mercy,’ which are possibly the most essential terms, for establishing al-Ghazālī’s theory of causality. These terms have not been properly treated in other sources especially when it comes to their philosophical meanings. Hence, I define and utilize them into the corpus of al-Ghazālī’s theory of causality due to the importance they bear in formulating it. All definitions elaborated and added follow philosophical premises extracted from al-Ghazālī’s works, and are in accord with Moad’s philosophical methodology. I believe it is crucial to philosophically synthesize these terms because al-Ghazālī utilized philosophy to reach out to his audience and portray his thoughts on causality.

1.3. Aims and purpose of the research

1.3.1. God’s mercy, human habit and the need for miracles

The primary purpose of this thesis is to investigate al-Ghazālī’s need for miracles in religion and the reasons why he needed to justify their existence. Thus, I define a miracle, its importance to al-Ghazālī, and its impact on his philosophical reasoning in his

seventeenth discussion of the *Tahāfut*. Concerning the concept of mercy, since not much has been said about it nor has it been properly defined philosophically, I define and utilize it extensively, using various of al-Ghazālī's works, to demonstrate that it postulates a possible explanation to al-Ghazālī's claim that God created for us the knowledge that He shall not enact random or illogical possibilities in nature. Likewise, I emphasize the importance of the concept of 'habit' in formulating al-Ghazālī's attack on inductive inquiry. This permit questioning the roles of revelation and philosophy in shaping al-Ghazālī's opinion on causality.

1.3.2. Agency and occasionalism

Another purpose of this study is to investigate al-Ghazālī's opinion and attitude on causality by extracting how he read and understood experimental science. It might be a prerequisite to delve into al-Ghazālī's thoughts on occasionalism to describe his understanding of the agent and thus, his overall thoughts on causality. Hence, I give much attention to the order in which al-Ghazālī's books, the *Tahāfut*, *Iqtisād*, *Ihya'a* and *Maqṣad*, were written to check for changes, if any, in his opinion on causality. To do so, I utilize George Hourani's article, *A Revised Chronology of Al-Ghazālī's Writings*, to indicate specific turning points (phases) in al-Ghazālī's life in order to trace the development and growth of his thoughts on causality, and to discuss possible factors that might have brought about the changes to his opinion, if any. With this, I argue that it is more difficult to suggest that al-Ghazālī was a strict occasionalist than it is to suggest that he held a compromised understanding of causality that combined occasionalism and Neoplatonism.

1.3.3. Elaboration and definition of major terms related to Al-Ghazālī's causality

This thesis elaborates on certain terms that have already been defined by Edward Moad, such as 'power (bil-quwwa),' 'agent,' and 'impossibility' to generate broader meanings to them. In addition, I define other terms that were not defined by Moad such as 'habit [*Al 'Adah* (العادة)],' 'disruption of habit,' 'mercy,' and 'miracle' that help in formulating a philosophical chain of expression for al-Ghazālī's theory of causality. Thus, I implement Moad's methodology of philosophical expression to define all concepts, even those he did not mention.

1.3.4. Historical value of causality

Certain similarities may be extracted from al-Ghazālī's and Hume's accounts on causality. Whether al-Ghazālī's answer to the philosophers and his resolution to the issue on miracles is applicable to the criticisms made by Hume is a question worthy of answering, considering that the latter is a much more recent philosopher. Thus, I compare the positions of these philosophers on major concepts such as causality, habit, and miracle, and create some sort of dialogue between them that joins the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries together, generating historical and philosophical values of the theme of induction.

1.4. Significance of the research

I believe it is significant to discuss and elaborate on al-Ghazālī's philosophical and theological ideals since his character and thoughts have been inflicted with controversy, with various scholars having different interpretations of his ideas and thoughts on causality, and others bestowing upon him criticisms such as him being

responsible for the decline of Islamic sciences. Also, al-Ghazālī may be considered anti-scientific if he is believed to be an opponent of inductive science. Thus, it is essential to determine his intentions in writing the seventeenth discussion of his *Tahāfut*, since it points out to his opinion on scientific inquiry.

Important as well is the historical context of induction that I establish using the relationship between al-Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd and Hume. Ibn Rushd was well-aware of al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* since he provides a response to it in his *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*. On the contrary, it is not certain whether Hume read, or came across al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* since he does not mention anything about al-Ghazālī in his *Enquiry*. Yet, there might be some chain of philosophers who have actually adopted certain thoughts from al-Ghazālī and in turn, have influenced some ideas of Hume. Thus, a historical importance of this thesis is its integration of the ideas of al-Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd, and Hume in questioning causality which in turn, ties the twelfth century to the eighteenth. Whether Ibn Rushd provided a sufficient response to al-Ghazālī's theory of causality, and whether Hume's criticisms on miracles can be answered using al-Ghazālī's understanding of habit, mercy, and miracle, are both vital in creating some sort of connection between these philosophers, thereby pointing to the growth in philosophical thinking on causality.

CHAPTER 2

AGENT (*AL-FĀ'IL*) AND OCCASIONALISM

2.1. Causality, Historiography, and Chronology in Al-Ghazālī's works: Religious and political factors that might have affected his writings

Tracing the chronological progression of al-Ghazālī's writings is crucial for understanding the development of his ideas, as well as the impact of significant personal, intellectual, communal, religious, and political events on his thinking. In order to gain a historical insight into al-Ghazālī's perspective on causality, a close examination of the chronology of his works -*Tahāfut*, *Iqtiṣād*, *Ihyaa*, and *Maqṣad*- may be beneficial especially when analyzing the initiation and completion dates of these works in relation to the events that occurred in his life. This analysis may possibly provide a more nuanced view of al-Ghazālī's thoughts on occasionalism which helps suggest that he might have not been a strict occasionalist.

The investigations and conclusions drawn here are heavily dependent on the work of George Hourani who, in his *A Revised Chronology*, drew upon the contributions of noted scholars in the field such as Goldziher, Massignon, Asin Palacios, Watt, Bouyges, Badawi, and Yahfeh, reevaluating their findings and incorporating his own observations to provide a thorough understanding of al-Ghazālī's chronological works.⁴⁹ Hourani's methodology in establishing a chronology is centered on analyzing al-Ghazālī's own cross-referencing of his books in his writings, and on al-Ghazālī's autobiographical work,

⁴⁹ Hourani, "A revised chronology of Al-Ghazālī's writings.", 289.

the *Munqidh*.⁵⁰ Hourani formulated a four-phased classification of al-Ghazālī's life, each phase corresponding to a specific period of time in relation to al-Ghazālī's academic pursuits and retirements. The first phase includes al-Ghazālī's early teaching and writing career, starting before the death of his teacher, Juwayni (d. 1085/86), and ending with his departure from Baghdad towards the end of 1095.⁵¹ The second phase was an extended period of retirement, lasting eleven lunar years, from his departure from Baghdad in November 1095 until his return to teaching in Nishapur in July 1106. From the *Munqidh*, we learn that al-Ghazālī's nervous crisis became serious in July of 1095.⁵² As a result, we infer that the cause of his retirement from teaching and departure from Baghdad was due to the crisis he faced, which is understood as the struggle between materialism and spirituality ('the contending pull of worldly desires and the appeals of the afterlife') that in turn, had him determined to leave from Baghdad to Damascus for good.⁵³ The third phase is al-Ghazālī's resumption back to teaching in Nishapur in July of 1106. Hourani's suggestion is that this phase probably lasted till 1109 since al-Ghazālī completed a book on jurisprudence titled *Mustasfa* during the same year, which is not a subject that suggests retirement.⁵⁴ The last and fourth phase, is the final retirement of Al-Ghazālī until his death

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 290.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Juwayni was titled Imam al-Haramayn until his death in 1085/6.

⁵² Al-Ghazālī. *The Deliverance from Error*, 20.

⁵³ Al-Ghazālī's second crisis was a mental state similar to delirium where he refrained from eating or speaking. Anxiety filled his heart according to his explanation of the situation in his *Munqidh*. The crisis was related to his intentions of teaching, which he described as 'not directed purely to God.' Rather, he claimed that the purpose and motivation he had for teaching was directed towards fame and prestige (paragraph 85). As a result, his mind became clouded with the idea of moving away from Baghdad (paragraph 86). Al-Ghazālī's expression, 'God put a lock upon my tongue' (*habs Allah lisany*) was a reflection of the severity and struggles he faced while stuck between the two forces pulling him (paragraph 88).

Ibid., 19-20.

⁵⁴ Hourani, "A revised chronology of Al-Ghazālī's writings," 291.

in 1111. Thus, I trace Al-Ghazālī's changing attitude towards causality by infusing Hourani's four-phased classification into Al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut*, *Iqtisād*, and *Maqṣad* since they all tackle certain aspects of causality.

2.1.1. Causality and Chronology in the *Tahāfut*

Al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* was designed to refute twenty philosophical claims held by certain Muslim philosophers such as ibn Sīnā and al-Farabi. The seventeenth discussion in specific, is wholly dedicated to causality, making it al-Ghazālī's most thorough and direct approach to the subject based on value of content. Yet, its understanding among scholars differs, as mentioned in the literate review, with the majority of the scholars designating it with a compromised understanding of causality, i.e., an understanding that reconciles between occasionalism and secondary modes of causality.⁵⁵ The minority of scholars who claim that al-Ghazālī was an occasionalist usually use the *Iqtisād* as their basis, rather than judging the *Tahāfut* alone. Marmura, for example, used al-Ghazālī's *Iqtisād* to conclude that al-Ghazālī may be considered an occasionalist regardless of whether there exists more than one understanding to his causal theory in his seventeenth discussion, since the presence of another causal theory serves the function to provide an alternative reply or plausible answer to those Muslims who believe in natural causation.⁵⁶ On the other hand, other scholars have interpreted the presence of more than one causal theory as part of a trend that al-Ghazālī implemented when reconciling opposing views.

⁵⁵ Secondary causality is the belief that causes are not the immediate or primary cause of an event which is usually the primary cause, but rather are factors that contribute to the overall outcome. Thus, secondary causes play a supporting or intermediary role in causality.

⁵⁶ Marmura Michael, "Al-Ghazālī's second Causal theory in the seventeenth discussion of his *Tahāfut*" 107.

Watt for instance, claimed that al-Ghazālī was seeking to reconcile the tensions that existed back in his time, such as the tension between theology and philosophy, or revelation and reason.⁵⁷ Likewise, he was seen to reconcile between Sufism and orthodoxy.⁵⁸ Unlike most theologians who saw philosophy as a dangerous field of study, al-Ghazālī studied it, understood it, and was even ready to accept it had it given him the satisfaction and answer to the truth he sought.⁵⁹ Al-Ghazālī's desire for seeking the truth is witnessed in what is considered as his first crisis (search for 'truth') as discussed in his *Munqidh*, which was a state of doubt concerning the means of gaining knowledge from the sense and reason data.⁶⁰ This being said, three criteria may be used to investigate al-Ghazālī's thoughts on causality in his *Tahāfut*; Al-Ghazālī's intellectual background, the content of his *Tahāfut*, and the political background of its time of writing.

In philosophy, ontology is the field of metaphysics that discusses existence, the nature of being, and the reality of things. Towards the beginning of his seventeenth discussion, al-Ghazālī provided two ontological claims; the first declares that the relationship between a cause (سبب) and an effect (مسيب) is neither inseparable nor connected, and the second is that the existence or non-existence of any one of them (i.e.,

⁵⁷ Watt, *A study of al-Al-Ghazālī*. 172.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 175.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 172.

⁶⁰ In his *Munqidh Minal Dalal*, Al-Ghazālī described two crises he went through in his life. He became skeptical about the questions of certainty, truth, and reality. He had proven to himself that the senses are not reliable for establishing the truth and that the faculty of reason is a much better scale for assessing true knowledge. But, the faculty of reason can also be fooled since a person during his/her dream cannot identify the reality around him/her. Hence, dreams are false realities that are justified by the faculty of reason when asleep. It is only when the dreamer awakes from his/her dream that he/she becomes aware that the state he/she had experienced was nothing but an illusion. So, this poses a question: Is the world we live in a reality, or is it another greater dream, making the sleeping dream a dream within another dream? This was the state of crisis experienced by Al-Ghazālī and as he claimed, it was God that cured his mind with His light.

Al-Ghazālī, 'The deliverance from Error,' 4-5.

cause and effect) does not indicate the existence or non-existence of the other.⁶¹ Yet, it is crucial to note that although al-Ghazālī in the *Tahāfut* did not accept that causal relationships are necessary, he accepted that they were concomitant in the sense that they were created by God to follow one another but never necessarily. A necessary connection implies that causes and their effects are ‘consistently’ connected thus, cannot be substituted or altered (*lā taḥtamīlu al-tabdīl wa al-taghyīr*) as Zarkasyi phrases it.⁶² On the other hand, a concomitant association between causes and their effects refers to relationships that are not necessary, but naturally accompanying, and therefore can be altered or substituted.⁶³ As Adamson mentioned, it is one thing to affirm that causes do not ‘necessitate’ their effects and another thing to say that causes do not ‘at all’ generate effects.⁶⁴ This difference between concomitance and necessity is seen in Al-Ghazālī’s differentiation between the existence of something ‘with’ another thing and ‘by’ another thing respectively. He says that if “something exists *with* a thing, it does not justify that it exists *by* that thing.”⁶⁵ To exist *by* another thing is to rely and completely depend on that thing. In this sense, Al-Ghazālī held that causal relationships cannot be described as inseparable since they exist *with* one another and not *by* one another. An affirmation to this is al-Ghazālī’s example of a man who, right from birth, is blind and has never come to hear from others what the difference is between night and day. If we assume that the man got back his sight in the daytime, the man would believe that the agent causing the

⁶¹ Al-Ghazālī, “Seventeenth Discussion,” 166.

⁶² Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, “Epistemological Implication of al-Ghazālī’s Account of Causality,” (Intellectual Discourse, 2018), 56.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁶⁴ Adamson, “Miracle Worker- Al-Ghazālī against the Philosophers” 152.

⁶⁵ Al-Ghazālī, “Seventeenth Discussion,” 167.

apprehension of forms is his eyes. Yet, when the sun sets and nighttime appears, the man will notice that the sun was the source of light that illuminated his eyes, enabling vision.⁶⁶ This example distributes causality into primary and secondary modes where the man's eyes (that exist *with* his sight) served as the secondary cause for sight while the sun (existence *by*), as the primary cause. Yet, this example is hypothetical and made for the sake of expression alone because in no case does al-Ghazālī claim any other than God as the primary cause. Yet, it is al-Ghazālī's classical example of 'fire burning cotton' that expresses his opinion on causality. From the *Tahāfut*, we may infer a probable relationship between his classical example and the miracle of Abraham, father of monotheism. Abraham is mentioned twice in the seventeenth discussion, and is religiously believed to have survived and remained completely unharmed when thrown into a blazing fire.⁶⁷ Hence, the fire-cotton example used by al-Ghazālī might play the role in justifying Abraham's miracle and at the same time attend to the widest audience of monotheism. This might as well open the discussion to justifying miracles as a phenomenon. Al-Ghazālī begins his argument by providing a wider spectrum of possibilities concerning the relationship between fire and cotton. Other than the possibility of fire burning cotton upon contact, there is the possibility that they come into contact yet cotton remains unburnt, or the possibility that they do not come into contact and cotton is seen to turn into ashes.⁶⁸ According to al-Ghazālī, the philosophers reject the other two possibilities because they consider fire the agent of burning. Fire, according to the philosophers, is an agent by nature and not by choice since it is incapable of

⁶⁶ Ibid., 168.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 169.
For Abraham's miracle, check Qur'an 21:68-70.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.167

“refraining from acting according to what it is in its nature after contacting a substratum receptive of it.”⁶⁹ The Muslim philosophers, in specific, are left with either considering the verses on miracles as metaphors or accepting that some unknown exterior factor brought about certain changes to natural properties. As in the case of Abraham, they proposed various scenarios to explain the phenomenon such as, the external exposure of talc to Abraham’s skin which in turn would prevent it from burning, the removal of heat from fire upon contact with Abraham, or the changing of Abraham’s form and composition to withstand heat from fire.⁷⁰ These beliefs are blasphemous to al-Ghazālī since, concurring with such claims would deny the existence of the miracle itself. Moreover, it would also deny the fact that God can cease the creation of ‘burning’ on the interface of contact between Abraham [cotton] and the fire. In other words, accepting that God can alter the characteristics of an element is different from accepting that God can keep the element's characteristics intact, yet prevent that element from its occasional function. The former suggests an explainable act that might have been unknown to the witnesses while the latter suggests a non-explainable act that transcends human logical understanding. Consequently, the philosophers that hold fire as the agent have failed to consider, from a Al-Ghazālīan perspective, that the only proof they have that fire burns cotton is 'observation,' which "proves simultaneity, not causation."⁷¹ Also, the philosophers cannot prove that fire is the only cause of burning because “Observation (*mushāhada*) alone points towards a concomitant occurrence (*al- ḥuṣūl ‘indahū*) but not

⁶⁹ Ibid., 167.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 169.

⁷¹ Giacaman and Bahlul, “Al-Ghazālī on Miracles and Necessary Connection,” 42.

to a combined occurrence (*al-ḥuṣūl bihi*).”⁷² Griffel explained the meaning of a ‘combined occurrence’ by giving the example of a child whose efficient cause is not only reliant on his parents but also on other hidden causes. This is seen in the fact that when his parents cease to exist through death, the child remains alive. Thus, the child’s existence is not *by* his parents. Similarly, fire is created side by side with its function of burning such that objects burn *with* it, not *by* it. Thus, from the content of the *Tahāfut*, it is not entirely clear that al-Ghazālī championed occasionalism due to the distinction he made between necessary and concomitant connections, which is understood as his distinction between *with-by* existences. Also, the analogies proposed by al-Ghazālī espouse a concurrence with secondary causality.

The political background of al-Ghazālī’s time may add another dimension to the compromised understanding of causality. According to Hourani, the *Tahāfut* was completed on January 21st 1095.⁷³ This completion date places the *Tahāfut* within the timeframe of al-Ghazālī’s first phase of life, during his time of teaching and prior to his second crisis (impediment in speech). Of the several factors that might have affected al-Ghazālī’s intentions and ideas of writing, the socio-political milieu might have served as a significant one. Al-Ghazālī established a close relationship with Nizam al-Mulk (A.H. 408-A.H. 324), the powerful vizier of the Seljuq Sultan, and enjoyed a distinguished position for a period of six years in the vizier’s camp-court. Nizam al Mulk was considered a primary defender of Sunni Islam against Shi’a groups such as the Fatimid

⁷² Griffel, “The seventeenth discussion of the Incoherence of the Philosophers,” 152.

⁷³ Hourani, "A revised chronology of Al-Ghazālī's writings," 292-3. Hourani built on Al-Ghazālī’s autobiographical work, the *Munqidh*, to suggest that the *Tahāfut* was probably written in 1094 and finished in 1095. This is due to Al-Ghazālī’s claim in *Munqidh* that he had spent one year reflecting on philosophy after about two years spent in understanding it.

caliphs and Isma'ili militants.⁷⁴ He subscribed to the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence and Ash'arite school of theology and thus, appointed al-Juwayni in the Nizamiyya school of Nishapur and al-Ghazālī in the Nizamiyya school at Baghdad as professors to teach in this accord.⁷⁵ Al-Ghazālī was appointed chair of Shafi'ite law at the Nizamiyya College in Baghdad, where he taught for about four years (1091/92-1095).⁷⁶ What we know is that during this period, al-Ghazālī was brought to a prominent position of religious power through political involvement. Considering his duties, it is safe to say that he was meant to promote the Ash'arite doctrine of faith. Thus, one might assume that the *Tahāfut* should have followed an explicit occasionalist theory of causality that abides by the Ash'arite creed, which it does and doesn't. Hence, we are left with questioning why he emphasized an alternative theory of causality as demonstrated above, that does not promote an occasionalist stance, especially that he could as well attain his goal by emphasizing the latter. Scholars have proposed certain suggestions on the subject matter such as the audience of the *Tahāfut*, and the intellectual background of Al-Ghazālī. Alon, for example, suggested that a possible reason behind al-Ghazālī's reconciliation of Kalam and philosophy, which can be understood as the compromise theory here, may partly lie in the intellectual background of al-Ghazālī's time. Both philosophy and Ash'arite Sunnism have reached their apex during al-Ghazālī's time, with the former during Ibn Sīna's, and the latter, just prior to al-Ghazālī's.⁷⁷ Hence, it would be difficult to assume that al-Ghazālī was left without any impressions from philosophy. On a separate note,

⁷⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād* trans. Alladin Yaqub, (University of Chicago Press), translator's introduction, p. xviii.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, xix.

⁷⁶ Hourani, "A revised chronology of Al-Ghazālī's writings," 290.

⁷⁷ Alon, "Al-Ghazālī on Causality," 397-8.

Van Den Bergh believed that we shouldn't look for consistency in al-Ghazālī since "his mysticism comes into conflict with his dogmatism, and he himself has been strongly influenced by the philosophers, especially Avicenna, and in many works, he comes very near to the Neoplatonic theories which he criticizes."⁷⁸ Yet, it remains a fact that al-Ghazālī's theory of causality in the *Tahāfut* was not entirely influenced by his political status. Also, his opinion in the *Tahāfut* is probably his earliest on causality, and hence, other works need to be integrated to check for changes in his opinion to understand his true intentions and beliefs.

2.1.2. Causality and Chronology in the *Iqtiṣād*

Al-Ghazālī's *Iqtiṣād* was designed to create, as the name implies, a moderation in belief between two extremes: 'excess and deficiency in relying on reason.'⁷⁹ According to Yaqub, one aim of the *Iqtiṣād* is to caution ahl al-Sunna to refrain from neglecting reason by literally interpreting revelations, or ignoring revelation and relying entirely on reason.⁸⁰ Yaqub added that the intended audience of the *Iqtiṣād* seems to be those average believers, those troubled with many questions about God and his attributes, and those who long for finding answers and conclusive proofs.⁸¹ There isn't much controversy among scholars concerning al-Ghazālī's stance on causality in his *Iqtiṣād*, as he is generally believed to subscribe to occasionalism in most of his doctrines. Yaqub stated that almost all the central doctrines of the *Iqtiṣād* have their basis on Ash'arite theology.⁸²

⁷⁸ Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al Tahāfut* Traslators Introduction, p. xii.

⁷⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtiṣād fī al-I'tiqād* trans. Aladdin Yaqub, (University of Chicago, 2013), p. xxv.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. xxv.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., p. xviii.

Yaqub added that al-Ghazālī formulated a framework that resembles ethical egoism in his *Iqtīṣād*. This framework, along with the seven divine attributes that al-Ghazālī established (namely power, knowledge, will, life, hearing, sight and speech), form an unfettered divine freedom for God that is only limited by logical impossibility.⁸³ This promotes an occasionalist understanding of causality to the *Iqtīṣād*, in accord with Marmura’s and Moad’s claims. Regardless of the opinion of scholars, and based on the content of the *Iqtīṣād*, particularly the sections concerning the divine attributes of ‘power’ and ‘will’ ascribed to God, it can be inferred that al-Ghazālī espoused occasionalism. This is seen in the section on God’s attribute of ‘will,’ where al-Ghazālī emphasized that all occurrences in the world originate from God’s power which in turn requires a will. He claimed:

Given this exposition of the basis of the divine will, you ought to know that, according to us [al-Ghazālī referring to himself], it attaches to all the occurrences. It has become apparent that every occurrence is originated by God’s power, and whatever that power originates requires a will to direct the power to the object and to assign it to it. Hence every object of power is willed, and every occurrence is an object of power, therefore every occurrence is willed...⁸⁴ Whatever God wills is, and whatever he does not will is not.⁸⁵

Concerning chronology, the *Iqtīṣād* mentions the *Tahāfut* and is mentioned in *Ihya* ‘ thus, situating itself between both works.⁸⁶ Almost all scholars agree that the *Iqtīṣād* was written while al-Ghazālī was still in Baghdad, i.e., in 1095.⁸⁷ According to Hourani,

⁸³ Ibid., p. xxvii.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 109-110.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 110.

⁸⁶ Hourani, "A revised chronology of Al-Ghazālī's writings," 293-294.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 294.

Bouyges claimed that the *Iqtīṣād* should be a work done in Baghdad since it coincides in meaning and content to the *Tahāfut*, and follows the *Maqāṣid* and *Tahāfut* as a third philosophical work. Lazarus

it is quite difficult to find a book on Kalam written during al-Ghazālī's first conversion into Sufism which happened after his departure from Baghdad. As a result, he favored that the *Iqtiṣād* should have been finished towards the end of 1095, during al-Ghazālī's second crisis, since al-Ghazālī did not state that he was unable to write but was only unable to speak. Thus, I infer that the *Iqtiṣād* is situated in the first phase of al-Ghazālī's life based on Hourani's classification. It might only appear as a thought that al-Ghazālī's second crisis might have possibly clouded his writing of the *Iqtiṣād* since he was going through a mental breakdown, but there is no evidence to validate this idea. Thus, it remains an idea to contemplate al-Ghazālī's spiritually triggered state on one side, and his antipathy towards worldly desires on the other, which might possibly sway his opinion towards religious conformity on certain issues. This though, is still insufficient evidence to hold on to. Hence, due to absence of scholarly consensus regarding the specific temporal circumstances surrounding the composition of the *Iqtiṣād*, whether it was written before or during the second crisis, its chronology does not furnish adequate rationale for its preference towards an occasionalist perspective to causality.

2.1.3. Causality and Chronology in the Maqṣad

Al-Ghazālī's *Maqṣad* was designed to discuss all ninety-nine names of God based on the traditional listing, to clarify the Qur'anic names that mention God, and to provide a council (*tanbīh*) for those believers who would like to have a share in the divine attributes in order to please God.⁸⁸ The intended audience of the *Maqṣad* seems to be

claimed that the *Iqtiṣād* was a product of al-Ghazālī's work in Baghdad without providing any explanation, and Badawi remains silent on the subject. Although most scholars agree that the *Iqtiṣād* was established in Baghdad prior to al-Ghazālī's departure, there is no consensus concerning whether it was written before or during al-Ghazālī's crisis.

⁸⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, Arabic text, ed. Fadlou A. Shehadi, (Dar el-Machreq Editeurs, Beyouth, 1971), p. VIII.

those Muslim believers who seek to understand the names and attributes of God. Accordingly, the expressions in the *Maqṣad* should be easier than those utilized in the *Iqtisād* which is a book that is usually considered difficult to understand. This is not to suggest that the *Maqṣad* is free from philosophical interpretation. Unlike the *Iqtisād* that is more selective when discussing certain attributes of God, the *Maqṣad* discusses all the known attributes of God without exception, giving an explanation and a religious council to each. Concerning causality in the *Maqṣad*, al-Ghazālī portrayed a compromised theory [reconciliation between occasionalism and secondary causality] that elaborates more profoundly on the difference between primary and secondary modes of causality in his explanation of one of God’s attributes, namely *al-‘Alī* (The Most High) where he devoted decent space in explaining the attribute. In a passage, *Al-Ghazālī* claimed that:

And al-‘illah (cause) and al-ma‘lul (effect), and al-fa‘il (actor) and al-qabil (receiver of the act), and al-kamil (complete) and al-naqis (deficient). Once you have determined a thing is a cause of a second thing, and that second thing a cause of a third, and the third of a fourth-up to ten steps, for example- the tenth occurs in the last rank, and it is the lowest, the most inferior cause. The first occurs in the first rank according to causality, and it is the highest. So, the first is above the second-above in meaning, not in place, and height is identical with the quality of being above.

والعلة والمعلول ، والفاعل والقابل ، والكامل والناقص . فإذا قدرت شيئاً ، فهو سبب لشيء ثان ، وذلك الثاني سبب لثالث ، والثالث لرابع ، إلى عشر درجات مثلاً ، فالعاشر واقع في الرتبة الأخيرة ، فهو الأسفل الأدنى . والأول واقع في الدرجة الأولى من السببية ، فهو الأعلى . ويكون الأول فوق الثاني فوقية بالمعنى لا بالمكان ، والعلو عبارة عن الفوقية⁸⁹

From this passage, we get the impression of a form of hierarchy in al-Ghazālī’s understanding of causal chains. The passage distinguishes between inferior and superior causes, giving each cause a certain degree of authority based on its ranking. The passage

⁸⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 116.

also proposes that caused causes also generate effects and are hence, secondary causes. A caused cause is inferior to its cause and lower in rank to it. The passage continues with al-Ghazālī's affirmation that all *causes* and *caused causes* are initiated by God who is the highest in rank above all causes.⁹⁰ Now, in what follows, Al-Ghazālī relates the rational division of objects to the division found in existing things. He claimed:

And an example of rational division can be found in objects' [existents] being divided into causes and effects, so that the cause is above the effect—above in rank; yet only the cause of causes is above absolutely. Similarly, Existing things can be divided into animate and inanimate, and animate things into those that have only sensible perception and those that have both sensible and rational perception. Those who have rational perception are divided into those who have passion and anger to resist what they know (men) and those whose perception is free from such troubling opposition, while those who are free are divided into what can be afflicted but are endowed with safe keeping from this, like the angels, and what is impossible to be afflicted, which is God, may He be praised and exalted.⁹¹

ومثال قسمة العقل أنّ الموجودات تنقسم إلى ما هو سبب وإلى ما هو مسبب، والسبب فوق المسبب فوقيّة بالرتبة . فالفوقية المطلقة ليست إلا المسبب الأسباب . وكذلك ينقسم الموجود إلى حي وميت ، والحي ينقسم إلى ما ليس له إلا الإدراك الحسي ، وهو البهيمة ، وإلى ما له ، مع الإدراك الحسي ، الإدراك العقلي . والذي له الإدراك العقلي ينقسم إلى ما يعارضه في معلوماته الشهوة والغضب ، وهو الإنسان ، وإلى ما يسلم إدراكه عن معارضة المكدرات . والذي يسلم ينقسم إلى ما يمكن أن يُبتلى به ولكن رزق السلامة ، كالملائكة ، وإلى ما يستحيل ذلك في حقه ، و هو الله، سبحانه وتعالى

Reflecting back to al-Ghazālī's classical example of fire and cotton, fire according to this hierarchy does not even fall within the category of animate existence, which is in the 'lowest grades of perfection,' talk less about its capability of having any sort of rationality, sensibility, will, or choice. Upon examining other related attributes of God in

⁹⁰ Ibid., 116.

⁹¹ Ibid., 115-116.

the *Maqṣad* that might suggest some relationship with causality, the following is found. The fifty-fourth attribute, al-Qawī (the strong) boasts about God's perfect and unparalleled power but does not mention anything related to causality.⁹² Similarly, the attributes of al-Muhsī (the knower of all things) and al-Badī (the absolute cause) show no connection to a theory or understanding of causality. In al-Badī, al-Ghazālī spoke about God's eternal essence such that nothing exists before him.⁹³ It is in the attributes al-Qadir (the all-powerful) and al-Muqtadir (the all-determiner) that al-Ghazālī expressed certain intentions towards causality by establishing meanings to God's power and will. Al-Ghazālī claimed that the all-powerful is "one who does what he wills, or does not act if he so wills, and is not so conditioned as to will necessarily."⁹⁴ He added that if God willed the day of resurrection to take place now, it shall come to be. And, the reason why it does not come to be is because God did not will it yet, since his knowledge has already fixated the right time for the day to come.⁹⁵ We may as well compare this example with the likeness of causality in that effects follow their causes since God wills it, but if God does not will it, then by his power he shall breakthrough the natural phenomenon to create a miracle. Al-Ghazālī concluded his council by suggesting that God placed all causes at the service of man's power.⁹⁶ It can be inferred that the placement of causes in man's power, which is understood as the ability of man to form certain connections of natural phenomena such as creating fire out of friction on materials that burn, is a possible suggestion of a secondary mode of causality that reconciles God's will and power to

⁹² Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 140.

⁹³ Ibid., 158-159.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 145.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

control causes and their effects at any time [occasionalism], and natural events taking place occasionally since God allows man to take control over causes [secondary causality]. Yet, according to al-Ghazālī's understanding of God's will, God's granting of power to man is temporary since if God wills, he can retrieve it back.

To specify a chronological boundary for the *Maqṣad*, we need to identify al-Ghazālī's books that cross-referenced it. It is quite necessary to specify the chronological order of the *Iḥyā'* since the *Maqṣad* mentions it. Hourani's final verdict concerning the beginning and completion of the *Iḥyā'* is 1096-97 based on external evidence and accounts of contemporaries to al-Ghazālī.⁹⁷ This corresponds to al-Ghazālī's second phase, the retirement phase. We know from Hourani that the *Iḥyā'* mentions the *Iqtīṣād* and is mentioned in *Maqṣad*.⁹⁸ Thus, the *Maqṣad* is chronologically situated after the *Iḥyā'*, which is situated after the *Iqtīṣād* and the *Tahāfut* respectively. Likewise, we know from al-Ghazālī's *Jawahir al-Qur'an* that the *Maqṣad* was probably completed no later than July of 1106, which corresponds to the third phase of Hourani's classification. This is because the *Jawahir* was mentioned in *Mustasfa* prior to al-Ghazālī's return to teaching in Nishapur.⁹⁹ Concerning the second phase, we might as well claim that it was probably the most stable in al-Ghazālī's life, bringing him fulfillment of desire to attain spiritual health and cure from his crisis. We might as well suggest that his thoughts and ideas were pure from restrictions and obligations such as political involvement. With al-Ghazālī's *Maqṣad* chronologically situated after the *Tahāfut* and *Iqtīṣād*, its verdict possibly holds greater value, and might suggest what al-Ghazālī actually believed concerning causality.

⁹⁷ Hourani, "A revised chronology of Al-Ghazālī's writings," 297.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 298.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 299.

It is typically more beneficial to consider al-Ghazālī's most recent work when evaluating his ideas on causality as it represents his most current perspective on it. Also, and as seen in the content of the book, the *Maqṣad* highlights certain conformity with what is understood as the compromised theory of causality, making it more difficult to conclude that al-Ghazālī was a strict occasionalist.

2.2. A Conclusion on Al-Ghazālī's stance on occasionalism from the *Tahāfut* to the *Maqṣad*

In summary, the *Tahāfut* distinguishes between necessary and concomitant relationships ('with' and 'by' relationships) between things, highlighting the problem of induction as a method mostly reliant on observation. The prevailing view among scholars is that the notion of causality in *Tahāfut* indicates a compromised theory. Daiber, for example, claimed that unlike the Ash'arite thought that denied natural causes, holding God in charge of all causes and unlike Avicenna's ideology that holds nature in charge of causal relationships, al-Ghazālī formulated his own concept of agency in the *Tahāfut* that combined God's necessary involvement in all causal relationships and nature's contingent secondary participation in the causal chain.¹⁰⁰ Most importantly, al-Ghazālī's opinion in the *Tahāfut* is highly essential because he dedicated the title and content of the discussion directly to causality. At the same time and to my knowledge, he does not reformulate another chapter or discussion in any other book that tackles causality with such brevity and clarity. On the contrary, it is generally believed that Al-Ghazālī's *Iqtiṣād* promotes an occasionalist outlook towards causality based on certain terminologies defined in the book, such as allusions to God's 'will' and 'power,' which imply

¹⁰⁰ Daiber, "Al-Ghazālī's solution and its Historical background," 15.

occasionalism. As for the *Maqṣad* on the other hand, scholars usually do not mention or cite it when formulating arguments related to al-Ghazālī's understanding of causality. Nevertheless, the *Maqṣad* contains significant elements that may help determine al-Ghazālī's intentions and thoughts on causality. For example, the *Maqṣad* appears to share some similarities with the *Tahāfut* regarding its conception of causality when employing the attribute of God, "the most-high," to propose a compromised theory of causality. With the *Tahāfut* and *Maqṣad* assuming a certain compromise between primary and secondary modes of causality, it is reasonable to assume that al-Ghazālī did not adhere to strict occasionalism since these two books express reservations about occasionalist ideas and beliefs. Thus, it is safe to say that it is harder to hold onto the belief that al-Ghazālī was an occasionalist than it is to hold that he reconciled both primary and secondary causality, bringing occasionalism and nature's causes together and forming his own understanding of causality. The main reasons for this conclusion are the *Tahāfut*'s brevity in tackling causality on compromised grounds along with its focus on the subject matter directly, and the *Maqṣad*'s concurrence with the *Tahāfut* on suggesting a compromised form of causality along with its chronological location that was written much later in al-Ghazālī's life, making its verdict essential.

2.3. The definition of agent and act

Al-Ghazālī formulated the seventeenth discussion for several reasons, one of which was to attack the philosophers for denying that effects and their causes are separable. This reason is crucial for al-Ghazālī because it gives God the authority to intervene between all causal nexuses. If it cannot be established as so, God would be deprived of his authority as the unceasing creator of causes, which is blasphemous to the

orthodox Muslim religion and in turn, creates space for questioning the validity of miracles. Hence, one of al-Ghazālī's primary objectives in the seventeenth discussion was to justify that God can disrupt the natural flow of events, thereby creating miracles either by refraining a cause from its occasional function if he wills it, or preventing the occurrence of an effect from its cause. Thus, it is essential to underscore al-Ghazālī's understanding of God's agency and his attributes, and define the term 'agent' according to him since it gives further meaning to his theory of causality.

Concerning the definitions of *act* and *agent*, Aladdin Yaqub defined 'act' (*fī'l*) in a footnote, as something performed by an agent (*fa'il*).¹⁰¹ What remains is to define the (*fa'il*). In his third discussion of the *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazālī elaborates on the characteristics that he considered an agent must have. From his *Tahāfut* a passage reads:

Regarding [the aspect pertaining to] the agent, it is incumbent that He should be a willer, a chooser, and a knower of what He wills, so as to be the agent of what He wills.¹⁰²

We say: 'Agent' is an expression [referring] to one from whom the act proceeds, together with the will to act by way of choice and the knowledge of what is willed...The agent, however, is not called an agent and a maker by simply being a cause, but by being a cause in a special respect—namely, by way of will and choice—so that if one were to say, "The wall is not an agent; the stone is not an agent; the inanimate is not an agent, action being confined to animals," this would not be denied and the statement would not be false.¹⁰³

فنقول: الفاعل عبارة عمَّن يصدر منه الفعل مع الإرادة للفعل على سبيل الاختيار ومع العلم بالمراد.

¹⁰¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 83.

¹⁰² Al-Ghazālī, "Third Discussion: On refuting their obfuscation in saying that God the world's enactor and maker, that the world is His handiwork and act," in *The incoherence of the philosophers*, 55.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.56.

ولكن الفاعل لم يسم فاعلا صانعا بمجرد كونه سببا بل بكونه سببا على وجه مخصوص، وهو على وجه الارادة والاختيار حتى لو قال القائل، الجدار ليس بفاعل والحجر ليس بفاعل والجماد ليس بفاعل وإنما الفعل للحيوان، لم ينكر ذلك ولم يكن قوله كاذبا.

In the context of this passage, al-Ghazālī criticizes the philosophers for depriving God from his will to act by enforcing him with ‘compulsory necessity.’ Compulsory necessity refers to a concept in philosophy where certain events or things are necessary and must occur inevitably, without the possibility of their nonoccurrence. It is often contrasted with contingency, where events or things could happen or not happen. From the passage above, we can formulate a definition for agency in a similar fashion to the way Edward Moad formulated his definition of the agent. Moad defined an agent and an act as follows:

Agent: “For all x and y, x is an agent of y if and only if x causes y by knowingly willing and choosing y.”¹⁰⁴

Act: “For all y, y is an act if and only if: there is an x such that x causes y by knowingly willing and choosing y.”

The definition I assign to the agent is not entirely philosophical but also theological since al-Ghazālī’s agent is God. The following premises can be extracted from al-Ghazālī’s ideology:

- a. The agent must be the necessary existence.
- b. The agent must be the primary cause of all chains of causes, and must be capable of intervening between intermediary causes whenever demanded.
- c. The agent must be animate, sensible and rational, and free from corruption to attain the highest possible hierarchy of existing things.
- d. The agent must have a will to perform actions willingly.

¹⁰⁴Edward Moad, “Al-Ghazālī on Power, Causation, and 'Acquisition,’” 3.

- e. The agent must act by way of choice (*ikhtiyār*) not by way of nature: in other words, the agent must have the choice to act, which necessitates it to have a specified course of action.
- f. The agent must have knowledge (*‘ilm*) of whatever it causes. And
- g. The agent must have the attribute of mercy (*Rahma*).

Concerning statement ‘b,’ the fact that an agent must be capable of intervening within secondary causes is a theological necessity to prove the existence of miracles. Statement ‘g’ is also theologically necessary since mercy is attributed of God and not to an agent. These premises lead to the following definitions formulated according to al-Ghazālī’s thought.

- ***The first definition of the agent***

An agent is an animate, necessary existence that has the choice to decide, the power to act, the knowledge to comprehend, and the will to cause an action.

- ***The second definition of the agent***

An agent is the primary first cause of all causes whose action results in the chain of worldly causes yet, whose will and power permit it to intervene between any intermediary cause and its effect whenever it demands.

The implications of these definitions were subject to criticism by the philosophers as al-Ghazālī stated in his seventeenth discussion. The philosophers proposed that if the agent is animate and has a choice and will, the agent might end up performing random actions such as changing, evolving, or disordering matter around us. Hence, humans fall into the anxiety of living a life that is chaotic and filled with anxiety. Al-Ghazālī’s response is what I have supposed as premise ‘g,’ the necessity of the agent to have the attribute of mercy. I elaborate on this argument when discussing ‘mercy,’ and state the

reasons why I believe that this attribute provides the best possible explanation to al-Ghazālī's response to the philosophers. As for now, I include the concept of 'mercy' into the definition of the agent to provide a comprehensive explanation. Thus, a third definition would be;

- ***The third definition of the agent***

An agent is a being that must be endowed with the attribute of mercy, since having only a will and a choice will entail a world of random existence and chaos within causal relationships.

Now, using Moad's philosophical expressions of the agent in combination with what had been extracted from al-Ghazālī's works, I define al-Ghazālī's agent as follows:

- ***Combined definition of the agent***

For all x and y, x is the agent of y if and only if x is an animate, necessary and primary existence that has the choice to pick 'y,' the power to act on 'y,' the knowledge of 'y,' and the will to cause 'y.' X must necessarily have the attribute of mercy on y to sustain 'y,' and prevent 'y' from experiencing random occurrences that might affect the natural and habitual state of 'y.'

Certain terms used in this combined definition are not yet properly established. The 'power' that permits the agent to interfere, and the 'mercy' that the agent is attributed with, need to be expressed to formulate a better understanding of the agent and eventually, a concise understanding of al-Ghazālī's causality.

CHAPTER 3

POWER, MERCY, AND IMPOSSIBILITY

3.1. Power: An attribute of the agent

As seen in the previous definition of al-Ghazālī's agent, the term 'power' is required to underscore a main characteristic of the agent, namely the authority to break through the natural flow of events. The concept of 'power' is established in al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* as the distinction between those things that are within God's capability (miracles included), and those that are not (i.e., logical impossibilities).¹⁰⁵ Al-Ghazālī does not define explicitly, the term 'power of the agent' in his *Tahāfut* but rather, he does so in his *Maqṣad* and *Iqtiṣād*. In the *Maqṣad*, al-Ghazālī defined 'power' in two entries concerning the attributes of God namely *Al-Qādir* (The all-powerful) and *Al-Qawī* (The strong). The definition al-Ghazālī gave in *Al-Qādir* was that

Power is equivalent to the intention by which a thing comes into existence according to a determinate plan of will and knowledge, and in conformity with both of them.¹⁰⁶

"والقدرة عبارة عن المعنى الذي به يوجد الشيء متقدراً بتقدير الإرادة والعلم ، واقعا على وفقهما."

The essence of this definition is that God's power, knowledge and will do not conflict with one another. If God wills an act to happen, such a will is based on his knowledge. The act only happens through God's power.¹⁰⁷ As for the attribute, *Al-Qawī*, al-Ghazālī

¹⁰⁵ Al-Ghazālī, "Seventeenth Discussion," in *The incoherence of the philosophers*, 172.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 145.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.145.

proposed a theological understanding of God's strength without any philosophical explanation or elaboration.¹⁰⁸

On a separate account, another understanding of 'power' can be extracted from al-Ghazālī's thirty-fifth book of *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, where he used 'human power' as an example to establish a criterion that expresses the power of God. Al-Ghazālī reduced the gap between voluntary and involuntary motion in people, claiming that although people have the power to act voluntarily in certain situations, these acts are still subject to the ultimate power of God.¹⁰⁹ To express the limit of human power, al-Ghazālī gave an example of how our eyelids open and close voluntarily yet, when a sharp needle is brought close to the eye, the eyelids close involuntarily.¹¹⁰ This does not imply that humans have no power to act according to their choices because accepting this would deprive humans of their will to act. Frank Griffel elaborated on this matter further in his al-Ghazālī's *Philosophical Theology*, claiming that al-Ghazālī believed that humans have the power to choose what actions to perform yet, their decisions are based on a number of outcomes that are pre-knowledgeable by God.¹¹¹ Since all possible outcomes are known by God alone, nothing can happen without God's knowledge. If we think of a situation that is a possible future event, the idea remains a thought and a "possibility with regard to itself" yet, an "impossibility with regard to something else."¹¹² Humans have the choice

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.140.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Ghazālī & A'lama Zeinaddin Abil Fadl al-Iraqi, "Kitab al-Tawhid wal Tawakul" in *Ihya' Ulum id-Din*, first edition, (Dar ibn Hazm Beirut, 2005), 1612.

¹¹⁰ Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology: Causes and effects in the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 217

¹¹¹ Ibid., 218.

¹¹² The phrase "an impossibility with regard to something else," is referring to those things that are impossible by divine will and foreknowledge. In other words, if that possibility is not within divine power and will, it shall never happen. All possible thoughts within human mind are known by God. Ibid. 218.

(*ikhtiyār*) to pick between alternatives yet, the outcome of their choice is based upon a decision made by the intellect (*‘aql*). Thus, human decision is made based on the most agreeable and beneficial result, which is thus, limited to choice.¹¹³ Hence, even human choice, no matter its outcome, is foreknown by God. It only seems realistic to humans that they have freedom of choice because God “puts all the existing causes at the service of man’s power” (*hayya ‘a lahu jamī‘ asbāb al-wujūd li-maqdūrihi*).¹¹⁴ Once again, we find Al-Ghazālī compromising between two ideas namely, human power and God’s power, as far as the *Ihya* is concerned.

Yet, the most profound meaning of power is extracted from al-Ghazālī’s *Iqtisād* where we get a direct solid definition. According to al-Ghazālī,

the attribute additional to the essence through which He (the agent God) [becomes prepared] for [bringing about] the existing act we call “power”; since "power," according to the convention of language is an expression of the attribute by which the act is rendered ready for the agent and through which the act comes about.¹¹⁵

As Moad noted, the implication of this definition is as though the act exists prior to the intention required to carry out its existence.¹¹⁶ What al-Ghazālī probably meant by the statement ‘the act is rendered ready,’ is to emphasize how everything [that can act] succumbs and prepares itself to abide by God’s command. The ‘readiness of the act’ is to highlight that God’s command is always answered, and that which is commanded is always ready to respond correspondingly. From al-Ghazālī’s definition, we know that power (1) is an attribute of the agent, (2) it needs an intention or will to be carried out,

¹¹³ Ibid., p.219.

¹¹⁴ Daiber, “Al-Ghazālī’s solution and its Historical background,” 13.

¹¹⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I‘tiqād*, 84.

¹¹⁶ Edward Moad, “Al-Ghazālī on Power, Causation, and 'Acquisition,’” 2.

and (3) it needs its performer to have the knowledge to decide on the right time of execution. According to Moad, when one claims that all events come about by God's power, this does not mean that all events are caused by God but rather, it means that all events are caused by God willingly, intentionally, and knowledgeably.¹¹⁷ God's will is based on His knowledge and He alone knows when it's right to perform His action. Hence, the 'readiness of the act' is a suggestion of God's decision and knowledge on when to perform an action. The term 'power' is crucial to al-Ghazālī's causal theory because it answers part of the question as to why God can intervene within causal chains to perform miracles. With al-Ghazālī's statements and Moad's definition of power, I formulate the following definition:

- **Definition of power:**

For all x and y such that y is an act of x, power is the objective of x to perform y, intentionally, knowledgeably, and willingly whilst y is necessarily ready and prepared for whatever conditions x bestows on it.

It has been observed that al-Ghazālī's definition of power varies across his works depending on his writing objectives, yet it has the same implication in that God is capable of anything and is thus, omnipotent. In the *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazālī aimed to propose that God can intervene in causal relationships, and power is only restricted to logically impossible scenarios. The *Maqṣad* and *Iqtisād* present comparable perspectives on power, where God's power is defined by its alignment with his will, knowledge, and intention to carry out an action. However, in the *Ihya'*, God's power is portrayed more or less in a compromised form between God and humans, with God granting humans the ability to control causes. Nevertheless, this power remains subject to God's foreknowledge of the

¹¹⁷ Edward Moad, "Al-Ghazālī on Power, Causation, and 'Acquisition,'" 4.

future, and its plausibility is inevitably confined by God's awareness of what will occur in the future. As noticed, al-Ghazālī's conception of 'power' has one common trait in all his books which is to back up revelation by emphasizing God's authority.

3.2. Mercy (Raḥma): Another attribute

3.2.1. al-Ghazālī's argument in the *Tahāfut* in relation to God's mercy

Although the term 'mercy' is not explicitly mentioned in the seventeenth discussion of the *Tahāfut*, it is an essential principle that relates to how al-Ghazālī framed his argument against the philosophers when questioning irregularities in nature. In turn, 'mercy' as a term helps generate a possible understanding of al-Ghazālī response.

As mentioned earlier, the seventeenth discussion of the *Tahāfut* describes a dialogue between al-Ghazālī and the philosophers concerning God's omnipotence and His capability of creating irregularity and randomness in nature. Al-Ghazālī proposed a possible argument that the philosophers may suggest concerning God's capability to intervene within causal chains using an 'if-then' converse statement. The argument the philosophers may employ is, "if one denies that effects follow necessarily from their causes, and relates them to the will of the creator [God]," then "the will having no specific designation" will allow the possibility of anything random to pop into existence at any moment in time.¹¹⁸ This argument presupposes that a negative outcome can result from such a possibility, since all the examples given by al-Ghazālī indicate a negative connotation. Some possibilities that al-Ghazālī described include: "the possibility of there being in front of us ferocious beast, raging fires, high mountains, or enemies ready with

¹¹⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *The incoherence of the philosophers*, 169.

their weapons to kill.”¹¹⁹ Thus, these possibilities, as taken from the context of the argument, are problematic because they create a world where suffering and anxiety befalls humanity due to the uncertainty of events. Progress becomes based on random accidents such that anything can pop into existence at any moment in time and life becomes momentous and chaotic since it is absolutely reliant on God’s choice, will, and power that have no defined course. Al-Ghazālī responded to this problem by noting that “God created for us the knowledge that He did not enact these possibilities.”¹²⁰ He added that if we define ‘what is possible’ as that which “cannot be created for man knowledge of its nonbeing,” then the possibility of random things happening cannot be possible since they are not within the knowledge of man.¹²¹ The two key questions that rise from this position are; why should God create in mankind the knowledge that he shall not enact random possibilities, and, why should God follow regularity in creation? Al-Ghazālī offered insights into how these questions could be addressed in his *Ihya’* and *Maqṣad*.

In his *Kitab al-Tawḥīd wal-Tawakkul* in *Ihya’*, al-Ghazālī claimed that one ought to rely on God not just by believing in his oneness [monotheism], but also by having faith in his mercy and wisdom. He claimed:

فهذا هو القدر الذي رأينا الرمز إليه من التوحيد الذي يورث حال التوكل ولا يتم هذا
إلا بالإيمان بالرحمة والحكمة، فإن التوحيد يورث النظر إلى مسبب الأسباب،
والإيمان بالرحمة وسعتها هو الذي يورث الثقة بمسبب الأسباب، ولا يتم حال التوكل

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 169-170.

Al-Ghazālī presented several other possibilities, all of which have a negative connotation such as, the possibility that a book change to a house, dog, or horse, the latter defiling the library, a jar of water into an apple tree etc.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 169.

¹²¹ Ibid., 170.

- كما سيأتي - إلا بالثقة بالوكيل وطمأنينة القلب إلى حسن نظر الكفيل، وهذا الإيمان أيضاً باب عظيم من أبواب الإيمان وحكاية طريق المكاشفين فيه تطول¹²²

That is the extent to which monotheism (Tawhīd) summons the state of reliance (Tawakkul) [On Allah Almighty] that could be achieved only with faith in the mercy and wisdom. Tawhīd summons the consideration of the causer of causes, whereas faith in mercy and its vastness summons the confidence (trust) in the causer of causes; and anyone could rely but on him of whom he is confident, and his heart is reassured. That is indeed one of the greatest doors of faith, and the journey of the spiritual seekers on this path is endless.

Certain connections can be made from this passage with the seventeenth discussion of the *Tahāfut*. Al-Ghazālī in this passage encourages the believer to trust God's mercy and wisdom because having faith in these two attributes, as expressed, provides relief in the heart of the believer [tama'ninat al-qalb]. As mentioned earlier in the *Tahāfut*, God created in us the knowledge that he shall not enact random possibilities [or causes] in order to prevent negative effects [such as anxiety due to uncertainty, and suffering]. In other words, the confidence and trust we place in God's mercy and wisdom, as al-Ghazālī described in the *Ihya'*, correlate with the belief that God [the causer of causes] shall not enact random causes as described in the *Tahāfut*. Having faith in God's mercy gives humanity a sense of comfort that keeps humanity from anxiety. Furthermore, having confidence in God's wisdom makes humanity believe that knowledge created by God can be trusted.

When we turn to the *Maqṣad*, we find a clearer link to God's mercy in relation to the statement made in the *Tahāfut* that claims that 'God created in us the knowledge that he shall not enact irregularities.' In his discussion of the attribute *ar-Raḥman* (the Most

¹²² Al-Ghazali & A'lama Zeinaddin Abil Fadl al-Iraqi, *Ihya' Ulum id-Din*, 1217.

Merciful), al-Ghazālī described God as he who loves men by “first creating them, second, by guiding them to faith and to the means of salvation, third, by making them happy in the next world, and fourth, by granting them the contemplation of His noble face.”

فالرحمن [هو] العطوف على العباد ، بالإيجاد أولاً ، وبالهداية إلى الإيمان وأسباب
السعادة ثانياً، والإسعاد في الآخرة ثالثاً والإنعام بالنظر إلى وجهه الكريم رابعاً¹²³

Here once again, al-Ghazālī linked the faith in God’s mercy to the means of attaining salvation and happiness. Now, from a second passage, al-Ghazālī referred to a hadith which says that God said, ‘My mercy precedes my anger.’¹²⁴

و اجله قال الله , عز و جلّ : "سبقّت رحمتي غضبي " . فغضبه إرادته للشر ، والشر بإرادته .
ورحمته إرادته للخير والخير بإرادته . ولكن إذا أراد الخير للخير نفسه ، وأراد الشر لا
لذاته ولكن لما في ضمنه من الخير ، فالخير مقضي بالذات . والشر مقضي بالعرض ،
وكلّ بقدر . وليس في ذلك ما ينافي الرحمة أصلاً . فالآن ، إن خطر لك نوع من الشر ،
لا ترى تحته خيراً ، أو خطر لك أنه كان تحصيل ذلك الخير ممكناً لا في ضمن الشر ،
فاتهم عقلك القاصر " في أحد الخاطرين . أما في قول إنّ هذا الشر لا خير تحته ، فإن هذا
مما تقصر العقول عن معرفته¹²⁵

Here the saying of God- great and glorious- is a propos: “My mercy precedes my anger.” His anger is His intending evil, so evil is by His intention, while his mercy is His intending good, [so good is by His intention]. But if he intended good for the good itself, yet intended evil not for itself but because there is some good within it, then good is accomplished essentially but evil is accomplished circumstantially, and each according to divine decree. So, nothing here contradicts mercy at all. So, now, if the thought of a certain type of evil comes to your mind and you do not see any good within it, or if you think that the acquisition of that good was possible without the presence of evil, then blame your limited intellect. As for saying that there is no good within this evil, then this is one of the things that the intellect is incapable of knowing."

¹²³ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad*, 66-67.

¹²⁴ Hadith Qudsi; Bukhari (7453) and Muslim (2751), *Sahih Muslim*, book of repentance, a chapter on the vast mercy of God
صحيح مسلم كتاب التوبة باب في سعة رحمة الله تعالى وأنها سبقّت غضبه

¹²⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad*, 68-69.

Al-Ghazālī's interpretation of the hadith assumes that God's mercy is God's intention of doing good while his anger is his intention of doing evil. The primary assumption made by al-Ghazālī is that whenever God intended to do evil, he does it for the good within it, whereas whenever he intended to do good, He does it for the good itself.¹²⁶ Thus, al-Ghazālī held that God is responsible for evil. This is explicitly stated in his *Iqtisad*, where he claimed that everything is willed by God including sin, unbelief and evil.¹²⁷ Yet, from al-Ghazālī's perspective, what is believed to be evil by the human mind is actually a lesser form of good that prevents greater evil. Furthermore, al-Ghazālī claimed in a separate passage that one ought not to deceive oneself by thinking that someone who desires evil for the sake of evil and not for good is deserving of the name Merciful. In other words, if God desires evil for the sake of evil, he is not worthy of being considered merciful.

فاتهم عقلك في هذين الطرفين ، ولا تشكَّن أصلا في أنه أرحم الراحمين ، وفي أنه سبقت
رحمته غضبه ، ولا تستريبنَّ في أن مرید الشر للشر لا للخير غير مستحق لإسم الرحمة¹²⁸

Now, the relationship between 'God's mercy' in the *Maqṣad* and 'God creating in us knowledge that he shall not enact random possibilities' in the *Tahāfut* lies in al-Ghazālī's conceptions of good and evil. Earlier, al-Ghazālī's statement in the *Tahāfut* was formulated into an if-then statement: If God created in us the knowledge that he did not

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.68.

¹²⁷ Al-Ghazālī, Second treatise in *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, 110. Al-Ghazālī criticized the idea proposed by the Mu'tazilah that evil and sin are committed against God's will because it leaves God impotent and deficient considering his attributes of omnipotence and omniscience. Hence, it would be logical to claim that al-Ghazālī would most probably refute Augustine's idea of evil emanating from human-will alone.

¹²⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad*, 69.

enact random possibilities, then we are free from randomness and irregularities that result in psychological anxiety. In philosophical notation, let 'p' be the statement: 'God created in us the knowledge that he did not enact random possibilities,' and let 'q' be the outcome statement of 'p': 'we do not suffer the burden of contemplating randomness or anxiety.' Thus, the statement becomes (if 'p' then 'q'), with both 'p' and 'q' being an act and an outcome of goodness respectively. Given that al-Ghazālī's presupposition that randomness in nature can cause evil, then taking the inverse statement of al-Ghazālī's claim, the sentence becomes: If God creates for us the knowledge that he *shall* enact these possibilities, then we are left with the problem of facing anxiety and suffering (if not 'p' then not 'q'). From the *Maqṣad*, we know that for God to be all-merciful, according to al-Ghazālī, God must act in such a way that the final outcome must lead in goodness regardless of whether the act is good or evil. The implication of the inverse statement (if not 'p' then not 'q') generates a situation where God deliberately leaves his creation to suffer psychologically, knowing fully well [since he is al-'Alīm, the omniscient] that his lack of attention to his creation shall leave them with psychological and mental pain [evil]. In other words, the inverse statement results in an act ($\sim p$) by God that is evil and whose resulting outcome ($\sim q$) is also evil, depriving God of his attribute of mercy. This outcome does not abide by al-Ghazālī's understanding of God's attribute of mercy as described in the *Maqṣad*, making the statement made in the *Tahāfut* (if 'p' then 'q') a good description of what God ought to do according to al-Ghazālī's definition of mercy in relation to goodness and evil. Thus, God's mercy in relation to his goodness explains why God creates in us knowledge of regularities, an act that is 'good,' to generate a result that is also 'good' namely, to prevent anxiety and suffering. Al-Ghazālī's presupposition that negative outcomes may be generated from the statement ($\sim p$) is the essential link that

binds God's mercy with the statement (p) made in the *Tahāfut*. Concerning the question stated earlier on why (p), the answer from the *Tahāfut* is to prevent (~q), which as seen from the *Maqṣad*, is related to raḥma because al-Ghazālī discussed goodness and evil in the entry ar-Raḥman, and as seen from the *Ihya'*, is related to al-Ghazālī's encouraging the believers to trust God's mercy and knowledge for a reassured heart. Thus, I allege that the attribute of God that most closely fits or describes the actions of good and evil in relation to the statement (p) proposed in the *Tahāfut* is God's mercy.

One might think that other attributes of God might as well relate or explain why God gave us the knowledge that she shall refrain from irregularities. Attributes such as al-Wadūd (the loving/kind), al-Ghaffār (He who is full of forgiveness), al-Ghafūr (the all-forgiving), and al-Ra'ūf (the all-pitying) may all be possible explanations. Yet, if we read through the entries al-Ghaffār and al-Ghafūr, we find nothing related to al-Ghazālī's conception of goodness and evil as we did in his entry of ar-Raḥman.¹²⁹

Concerning the entry al-Wadūd, al-Ghazālī claimed that its meaning is similar to 'the Merciful' but different in that the latter presupposes that there being someone that is weak and in need of mercy while the former does not, implying that God's mercy is more encompassing than His loving.¹³⁰ This is because mercy includes acts of compassion towards those who are weak, needy or distressed, while love is not necessarily dependent on such conditions. So, while both traits involve good intentions towards all creation, Ar-Raḥman goes beyond that to include helping those in need, while Al-Wadūd is not necessarily conditional on a recipient's weakness or neediness. In his *Tanbih*, al-Ghazālī reflected on the idea that 'God's mercy precedes his anger' by claiming that those who

¹²⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad*, for al-Ghaffar check p.85-86 and for al-Ghafur check p.114.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 132

would love to exercise the traits of love and kindness need to perfect the virtue such that neither their anger nor hatred surpasses their kindness.¹³¹ It has already been established though, that al-Raḥman encompasses al-Wadūd and thus, the latter attribute is seen to fall under mercy. Thus, al-Ghazālī returns to the concept of mercy where he connects the love of God with the mercy of God. Likewise, the attribute, al-Ra’ūf, as al-Ghazālī explained is an intensification of mercy and thus, a derivation of it.¹³² Al-Ghazālī does not mention any relationship with goodness and evil as this term is concerned. Thus, once again, al-Ghazālī returned to the concept of mercy, an indication to its superiority over other related attributes. This being said, it becomes more definitive that mercy is the most suitable and possible explanation as to why God gives us knowledge that he shall stick to regularity, and this is why I believe that the best possible explanation to al-Ghazālī’s response to the philosophers is the attribute ar-Raḥman (the most merciful). God spares us from skepticism by following a routine of regularity, of course with the exception of miracles, which builds in us the habit or expectation of future occurrences that gives us the serenity of certitude (*bard al-yaqīn*) that things ought to follow regularity. Since a miracle is an example of God disrupting the regularity of things, then the presence of constant regularity requires a reason which I translate as ‘mercy.’ Human accustomed habit, on this basis, is what was given to mankind by God to relieve man from knowledge of the occurrences of illogical possibilities.

¹³¹ Ibid., 133.

¹³² Ibid., 152.

3.2.2. The problem of evil: an alternative argument that calls into question the concept of mercy

Another argument that may be postulated against al-Ghazālī, which is not mentioned in the seventeenth discussion, but calls into question God's mercy is the well-known 'problem of evil.' The problem of evil might stand as an argument against the entire concept of God's mercy firstly because if God can intervene to create miracles, he may as well intervene to prevent evil. Secondly, the problem itself may pose a threat to al-Ghazālī's understanding of mercy because it argues that if God is all-Merciful, omnipotent, and omniscient, there should be no evil or chaos in the world since God can put an end to all misery and suffering. But, based on what we experience, there is suffering and evil. Although al-Ghazālī does not incorporate this discussion in his dialogue with the philosophers in the *Tahāfut*, he does so, yet indirectly, in his *Maqṣad*. While discussing God's perfect mercy, Al-Ghazālī in his *Maqṣad* provided an argument that can be translated as an alternative response to the 'problem of evil,' which was also tackled by Saint Augustine (d.430).¹³³ Al-Ghazālī's unintended attention to what may be

¹³³ Augustine, *Confessions*, Translated and Edited by Albert C. Outler, (Perkins school of Theology), 2005.

Augustine's resolution to the problem of evil does not deprive God of his attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and Omni-benevolence since depriving God of any of these attributes would pose threats to the understanding of the Abrahamic God and the scriptures that speak about God having such attributes. St. Augustine addresses the problem of evil in his work "The Confessions", specifically in Book 7 chapter III, where he reflects on the nature of evil and the role of God in its existence. In this work, Augustine claims that evil is the result of the free will of human beings, who have chosen to turn away from God and towards sin (p.82). He asserts that God allows evil to exist as a consequence of human free will. St. Augustine's reflections on the problem of evil can be found in various parts of Book 2 and Book 7 of "The Confessions". A specific reference to the problem of evil is found in book 7 Chapter V, where Augustine poses certain questions such as, "Whence comes evil?" "Whence does it come and how has it crept in? What is its root and what its seed?" It is important to note that according to Augustine, evil is not emanated from God since God is good. Hence, it is emanated from human free-will. Another reference to Augustine's idea of the origin of evil and its separate entity from God is found in his *City of God*.

(Augustine, *City of God Against the Pagans*, ed., and trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Book XI. Chapter 22, p.476-477.)

In his *City of God against Pagans*, Augustine defined evil as the "name for nothing other than the absence of good."

understood as an answer to the problem of evil was in the form of a reference to the person who questions God's attributes of mercy and power that are capable of attending to those afflicted with sickness, injury, and torment, but are nonetheless left without attendance. Al-Ghazālī's posited that, despite possessing the ability to alleviate or nullify all afflictions that befall his servants, God chooses to test them with hardships.¹³⁴ Humans base their definition of mercy on what they believe is good for them. Hence, mercy is relative to what we consider and understand as mercy. Now, and as aforementioned, al-Ghazālī maintained that no evil exists in the world without having some good within it.¹³⁵ "Were the evil to be eliminated, the good with it will be nullified" and what we perceive as evil might rather be considered good since it prevents greater evil. Hence, in evil there is good because if it is not present, greater evil may result.¹³⁶ Once again, it may be essential to state that this ideology on 'goodness and evil' is most probably gotten from the hadith concerning God's mercy preceding his anger.

Considering al-Ghazālī's world, where God can intervene within causal chains, the presence of evil requires justification since God can as well intervene and prevent evil from happening in a similar way he may intervene to perform miracles. Hence, al-Ghazālī's defense of miracles and their necessary existence makes it an obligation for him to find a solution to the presence of evil in the world since evil represented and still represents what most people find arguable considering God's intervention within the

¹³⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad*, 67.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹³⁶ Al-Ghazālī gives an example of a mother and a father who treat their son differently. The mother desires to prevent the child from sadness or pain therefore, she keeps him away from undergoing cupping. The father though forces the child to do it. An ignorant might believe that the compassionate is the mother whereas, in reality, the compassionate is the father who agreed to have his child go through temporary pain to prevent future complicated diseases and suffering. *Ibid.*, p.68.

material world. Regardless of whether al-Ghazālī's answer to the presence of evil is convincing or not, the topic is brought up to suggest the importance of God's mercy to the concept of miracles and its relationship with God's ability to intervene within causal chains. As noticed, al-Ghazālī implemented the Hadith and Qur'an on several occasions in his *Ihya'* and *Maqṣad* when expressing his thoughts on God's mercy. Thus, he relied mostly on revelation to answer an argument [the problem of evil] that might be used against the justification of miracles and their possibility. It is no surprise to find a religious motif behind al-Ghazālī's justification of evil in the world, since he is usually considered to hold that true knowledge is derived from revelation which is from God.¹³⁷ Thus, revelation played a crucial role in formulating al-Ghazālī's understanding of God's mercy which, in turn, what I have suggested as a characteristic that expresses a certain concept related to his theory of causality.

3.2.3. *The definition of God's attribute of mercy according to al-Ghazālī's writings*

To define God's mercy, I implement the *Ihya'* and *Maqṣad* only since they offer precise interpretations to the term as discussed earlier whereas the *Tahāfut* does not offer any definition to it nor does it mention it per se. It is quite crucial to extract a meaning to God's mercy in philosophical terms from al-Ghazālī's works to underscore its relevance to him and to his theory of habit. Starting with the *Ihya'*, we notice al-Ghazālī's attachment to the notion of God's mercy from a theological perspective. Al-Ghazālī devoted the last section of his *Ihya'* to describing God's mercy [not philosophically but rather, theologically], quoting the Qur'an and hadith on several occasions to emphasize it

¹³⁷ Madelung, "Al-Ghazālī's Changing Attitude to Philosophy," 27.

as a primary and main attribute of God.¹³⁸ Much of what is stated in this section of *Ihya'* is related to religious belief rather than philosophical interpretations. With 'God's mercy' taking place in the final conclusive section of the *Ihya'*, we may suggest that al-Ghazālī held this attribute as vital to the Islamic religious doctrine of faith. It is in his *Maqṣad*, though, that al-Ghazālī offered a more philosophical sense to God's mercy through an elaboration and explanation of two of God's names (attributes), namely, *Ar-Rahmān* and *Al-Rahīm*.¹³⁹ Mercy, according to al-Ghazālī,

Requires an object of mercy, and no one is an object of mercy unless he be in need of it. Yet, the one by whom the needs of the needy are fulfilled will not be called merciful if that is accomplished without intention, volition, or concern for the one in need. Nor is one called merciful who wants to fulfill their needs yet does not meet them even though he be able to fulfill them, because if the will were there he would have carried it out... The mercy of God is both perfect and inclusive.¹⁴⁰

الرحمن الرحيم إسمان مشتقان من الرحمة. والرحمة تستدعي مرحوماً ، ولا مرحوم الا وهو محتاج، والذي ينقضي بسببه حاجة المحتاج من غير قصد وإرادة وعناية بالمحتاج لا يسمى رحيماً. والذي يريد قضاء حاجته ولا يقضيها ، فإن كان قادراً على قضائها لم يُسم رحيماً ، إذ لو تمت الإرادة لوفى بها ، وإن كان عاجزاً فقد يسمى رحيماً باعتبار ما اعتوره من الرقة ، ولكنه ناقص. وإنما الرحمة التامة إفاضة الخير على المحتاجين وإرادته لهم عناية بهم. والرحمة العامة هي التي تتناول المستحق وغير المستحق . ورحمة الله ، عز وجل ، تامة وعامة. أما تمامها ، فمن حيث أراد قضاء حاجات المحتاجين وقضاها . وأما

¹³⁸ Al-Ghazālī & A'lama Zeinaddin Abil Fadl al-Iraqi, "Kitab al-Tawhid wal Tawakul" in *Ihya' 'Ulum id-Din*, (Dar ibn Hazm Beirut), first edition, 2005, 1934.

Al-Ghazālī cites the hadith on God's attribute of mercy using the example of those who do wrong deeds and are ultimately fated with hell fire. Al-Ghazālī stated that God's mercy is what releases the wrong doers from the fire of hell and places them in paradise.

¹³⁹ According to Al-Ghazālī, al-Rahman is more specific than al-Rahim in that it is only applicable to God whereas the latter can apply to others. Al-Rahman is mercy that is beyond the powers of worldly affairs, one that is related to the afterlife.

Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad*, 54.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

عمومها ، فمن حيث شمل المستحق و غير المستحق, وعم الدنيا و الآخرة , و تناول
الضرورات و الحاجات و المزايا الخارجية عنهما. فهو الرحيم المطلق حقاً¹⁴¹.

From this excerpt, I extract that the characteristics required to be entitled with mercy are intention (will), volition (power), and concern. Mercy, as seen in the passage, is divided into two categories namely perfect mercy and inclusive mercy. Perfect mercy, al-Ghazālī claimed, “is pouring benefaction to those in need and directing it to them, for their care” while inclusive mercy is when mercy is welcomed whether the one needing it deserves it or not. al-Ghazālī maintained that God’s mercy is both perfect and inclusive (*tāmma wa-‘āmma*).¹⁴²

Now, to define ‘mercy,’ I extract the following statements from al-Ghazālī’s excerpts;

- Mercy is the attribute of the agent needed to prevent the agent from random action.
- The merciful requires an object of mercy that is in need of mercy.
- The merciful must have the intention, volition, and concern to show mercy.
- The merciful must not only have the intention to show mercy, but must also fulfill it otherwise the title does not befit Him.
- The all-merciful must have mercy that is perfect and inclusive.
- **Definition of mercy:** The agent is all-merciful if and only if it fulfills its intention to exercise mercy, and has the volition and concern to do so to those who are in need of it, regardless of whether they deserve the mercy or not.

¹⁴¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad*, 65.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 65-66.

- **Mercy:** for all ‘x’ and ‘y,’ such that ‘x’ is the agent of ‘y,’ ‘x’ is all-merciful if and only if ‘x’ fulfills its intention [will] to exercise mercy on ‘y’, and has the volition [power] and concern to do so to ‘y,’ whether ‘y’ deserves the mercy or not.

As mentioned earlier, al-Ghazālī’s account on God’s power and authority over causal chains is such that it requires an explanation as to why we find regularity in a world where there is equal chance of finding irregularity. With what I have suggested concerning God’s attribute of mercy and its correlation with his attributes of power and will, an explanation can be given concerning al-Ghazālī’s statement (p) in the *Tahāfut*. What al-Ghazālī is trying to suggest is that despite the possibility of God being able to disrupt the habitual nature of things, God does not do so not because he cannot, but because he would not, due to the fact that He created for us knowledge that he shall not do so. This, I interpret, due to God’s attribute of mercy.

3.3. What is possible and impossible for the agent

For the context of the seventeenth discussion, it is crucial to define what is impossible for the agent to do for three reasons; the first is to establish what is possible and what isn’t by God in correspondence with his power, will, and choice. The second is to show that God will not create things suddenly or arbitrarily due to his attribute of mercy as argued earlier, and not due to the impossibility of the fact. And, the third is to establish that miracles are within the possibility of existence. Concerning miracles, al-Ghazālī claimed that a prophet can only access the privilege of performing a miracle if and only if the miraculous phenomenon is possible itself, and is through God’s consent. As a result, we find al-Ghazālī questioning the philosophers in his *Tahāfut* on why they judge the

miracles of prophets such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus impossible.¹⁴³ In response to this, he defines what is actually impossible for God to do thereby, leaving everything out of this definition a possibility within the capability of God. Al-Ghazālī claimed that

The impossible is not within the power [of being enacted]. The impossible consists of affirming a thing conjointly with denying it, affirming the more specific while denying the more general, or affirming two things while negating one [of them].¹⁴⁴

From this definition, we say that what is not impossible is within the power of the divine, and what does not reduce to this definition is impossible. To explain this, we use al-Ghazālī's example of combining blackness and whiteness together as properties of an object. If we affirm that an object is black, we need to negate that it is white because if we affirm that it is also white, then we are left with both an affirmation and a negation for the same property. Another example is the impossibility of an individual to be in two different places since being in one place negates being in the other. A third is an impossibility to create knowledge in inanimate matter such as fire, since by definition, fire, being inanimate, means that it does not have apprehension or reason. Earlier, the agent was given the attribute of knowledge so as to affirm that the agent apprehends what it is creating. It is thus, impossible for the agent to be attributed with ignorance since it is affirming and negating the attribute of knowledge that is required by the agent. There might be many things that God is capable of, most of which we are yet to conceive that fall under the category of possibility. Since we cannot conceive of a color different than the ones we can see does not mean that God cannot create an additional color or simply

¹⁴³ Al-Ghazālī, *The incoherence of the philosophers*, 172.

Al-Ghazālī mentioned the raising of the dead and the changing of the staff into a snake, which are miracles performed by Jesus and Moses respectively according to Islamic theology.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 175

give us a vision that can apprehend a wider spectrum of light. This, for example, is within God's power. This being said, I define impossibility from al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* as follows;

- ***The first definition of impossibility:*** The impossible is that which is not within the power of being enacted [by the agent] since everything that is possible is within divine power [the agent's power].

The second definition of impossibility: The impossible is the affirmation of a thing conjointly with denying it.

Combined definition: Impossible is defined as the affirmation and negation of a thing conjointly such that anything that does not reduce to this definition is not impossible and thus within the power of being enacted by the agent [God].

This can be restated as follows:

Impossibility: For all x and y, x being the agent of y and y being an event or act, y is possible if and only if y is within the enacted power of x, such that y cannot be affirmed and denied simultaneously to generate a contradiction.

Hence, looking back at the definition of power, we need to consider that the intention of the agent to perform an act must be within the agent's enacted power such that no contradiction results, regardless of whether the agent is ready and prepared to perform the event or act. It is important to note that *Al-Ghazālī* defined the term impossible to render the possibility of miracles since he considered miracles to be within the enacted power of God, and since their possibility does not reduce to the definition of what is impossible. Thus, an 'impossibility' is not a limitation to the power of the agent but rather, it is a contradiction that does not abide by logical reasoning.

CHAPTER 4

MIRACLE AND ITS NECESSITY, HABIT AND ITS DISRUPTION

4.1. The necessity of miracles in religions

The belief in miracles is a core criterion of faith in all mainstream Abrahamic religions. Be it Judaism, Christianity, or Islam, each religion obligates its believers to testify that their prophets did wonders and miracles by God's intervention. Thus, al-Ghazālī took it upon himself, similar to what he labeled as *fard kifaya*, to defend his theological beliefs from the threats postulated by the philosophers concerning the existence of miracles, since the subject matter attacks his own faith.¹⁴⁵ Interestingly though and contrary to what might be assumed, al-Ghazālī does not mention any miracles performed by Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, throughout the seventeenth discussion. Rather he famed the miracles of Abraham, Jesus, and Moses, as mentioned earlier. It is in his *Iqtisād* that he actually mentioned and defended Muhammad's prophethood through miracles. Thus, we find another reason for al-Ghazālī to defend miracles, namely to justify the prophethood of Muhammad. Although al-Ghazālī claimed that God's assigning of prophets is contingent rather than impossible or obligatory, he still established the prophethood of Muhammad to respond to three sects whom he claimed,

¹⁴⁵ According to *Al-Ghazālī*, knowledge can be deemed either *fard a'yn* or *fard kifaya*. *Fard A'yn* is an individual obligation bestowed as an ordinance by God upon every Muslim. Examples include prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and zakat. *Fard Kifaya*, on the other hand, is a communal obligation that the entire Muslim community is responsible for until the deficiency is discharged. For example, the obligation to remain in quarantine during a pandemic to protect others from harm, and the obligation to quest for knowledge to solve religious dilemmas such as finding the direction of Mecca for prayer are both deemed *Fard kifaya*. It is only when the problem is solved that this obligation is discharged, and it is enough for one person in the Umma (nation) to solve the problem for it to be discharged. (Al-Ghazālī & A'lama Zeinaddin Abil Fadl al-Iraqi, *Kitab al-Tawhid wal Tawakul in Ihya 'Ulum id-Din*, (Dar ibn Hazm Beirut), first edition, 2005, p.21-25).

disbelief in the prophet.¹⁴⁶ According to Yaqub, the sects that al-Ghazālī discussed are the *'Aysawites*,¹⁴⁷ who claim that Muhammad is a prophet only for the Arabs and not for other communities or nations, the Jews who deny the prophethood of Jesus and Muhammad, and the Christians.¹⁴⁸ In response to these sects, al-Ghazālī espoused two ways to justify Muhammad's prophethood; the first is related to the eloquence, poetry, and style of the Qur'an, which are considered to be unchallenged by the greatest poets of its time, and the second is through the hadith collection of certain miracles that were believed to be performed by Muhammad.¹⁴⁹ The former might provide a suggestion as to why al-Ghazālī did not mention Muhammad in his *Tahafūt*. Al-Ghazālī considered the Qur'an a miracle itself as seen in his *Iqtisād*, therefore his use of Abraham's miracle, or any other, as an example in his *Tahafūt* is simply the reference to a miracle that is considered valid due to its presence within the greater miracle (Al-Ghazālī considered the Qur'an one of the greatest miracles) that is attested to Muhammad.¹⁵⁰ Concerning why al-Ghazālī used Abraham more than once as an example in the *Tahāfut*, the reason may lie in the latter's appeal to a wider audience, namely all three Abrahamic religions. It is only towards the final part of the seventeenth discussion that we are properly informed as

¹⁴⁶ Al-Ghazālī, Third Treatise seventh proposition in *Al-Iqtisād*, trans. Alladin Yaqub, p.188.

¹⁴⁷ Alladin Yaqub, in a footnote, used al-Shahrastānī's explanation of the *al-'Aysawiyya*, defining them as "a group of people who broke away from mainstream Judaism." Abū 'Īsā Ishāq ibn Ya'qūb al-Aṣfahānī, initiator of the sect, claimed prophethood. He believed himself to be the liberator of the Jews from their unjust kings and sinful kingdoms. Abū 'Īsā was active during the reign of the second 'Abbāsīd caliph, Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr. According to al-Shahrastānī, Abū 'Īsā forbade his followers from eating dead flesh and commanded them to pray ten times a day. (See Fourth treatise first chapter in *Al-Iqtisād*, 199).

¹⁴⁸ Al-Ghazālī, fourth treatise first chapter in *Al-Iqtisād*, 199-202.

¹⁴⁹ Prophet Muhammad had been credited with certain miracles such as the splitting of the moon, gushing of water from behind his fingers, multiplying food, etc. Such miracles are referred to in the Hadith and not the Qur'an. *Ibid.*, 205.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 202

to why Al-Ghazālī was so invested in justifying miracles. The ultimate reason why miracles are needed, according to al-Ghazālī, is for spreading goodness in the world and maintaining the order of revealed law by God.¹⁵¹ Al-Ghazālī believed that God will only make an exception for a miracle to take place when its existence is a necessity for spreading ‘the good,’ which is basically to have people restore their faith rightly and or to have them trust a prophet's prophethood. Thus, miracles are required by religion and not philosophy. Al-Ghazālī resorted to philosophy to answer the criticisms of the philosophers, yet he also maintained a theological approach to his ideology since his major concern throughout the discussion was to justify religious concepts and beliefs. Thus, Al-Ghazālī may find it necessary to argue for miracles for the following reasons; to justify Muhammad’s prophethood and the orthodox teachings of Islam, to justify God’s power to intervene within causal chains, and to suggest that the presence of miracles is essential in spreading goodness in the world.

4.1.1. Al-Ghazālī’s definition of miracle

From the *Iqtisād*, we understand that a miracle is an unmet challenge a prophet bestows upon mankind to verify his prophethood.¹⁵² Thus, the *Iqtisād* gives us one characteristic for a miracle that is, a challenge that cannot be met. As noticed, the *Iqtisād* elaborates on miracles theologically, particularly in relation to revelation. Contrarily, the *Tahāfut* approaches miracles from a philosophical perspective since the objective there is to criticize the philosophers.

¹⁵¹ Al-Ghazālī, *The incoherence of the philosophers*, 172.

¹⁵² Al-Ghazālī, “fourth treatise first chapter” in *Al-Iqtisād*, 202. Al-Ghazālī uses the Qur’an as an example to show how the Arabs could not meet its criteria of eloquence, poetry, and prose, bearing in mind that the Arabs were masters of literary eloquence, and were at the same time, eager to refute Muhammad’s prophethood by any means.

In the *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazālī claimed that every action performed by God is a miracle. Yet, what we consider to be a miracle is relative to the time that God decides to create one, since if created at a time that is apprehended and expected by humans, the miracle is no longer considered so, but is rather viewed as a natural event.¹⁵³ What separates actions from being considered normal or miraculous is how such actions are perceived by humans depending on their time of occurrence. For example, people are accustomed to the fact that the sun rises in the East and sets in the West. If this fact is suddenly changed, it will be considered a miraculous phenomenon. That is one explanation for a miracle. Another way of explaining a miracle according to al-Ghazālī is the change in molecular arrangement of matter similar to a change in the genus of species, ant to an elephant for example, or a change in matter from animate to inanimate such as a horse to a book. The following definitions of ‘miracle’ are extracted from al-Ghazālī’s thought;

- ***The first definition of a miracle***

A miracle is the time (t) in which God [the agent] disrupts the natural or habitual occurrence of events such that the disruption is perceived as a breakthrough in the norm of habit that people are accustomed to.

Otherwise, it can be stated as follows;

- For all x and y, such that x is the agent of y, a miracle is performed by x when y perceives a disruption in its accustomed habitual nature.

¹⁵³ Al-Ghazālī, *The incoherence of the philosophers*, 171.

- *The second definition of a miracle*

A miracle is the change in molecular arrangement of matter [or change of state] either from animate to inanimate or simply through the change of a species to another species.

The first definition fits the miracle performed by Abraham surviving immolation with fire, while the second fits Moses's miracle of turning the scarf into a snake. From an Aristotelian sense, matter has essential and unchanging characteristics such that a wooden log cannot change into a living animal.¹⁵⁴ This reasoning though, does not adhere to the mainstream Muslim interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an concerning miracles such as that of God turning the insolent disbelievers into apes.¹⁵⁵ al-Ghazālī's justification to the first definition is philosophical as seen in his classical 'fire-cotton' example, where he challenged the philosophers to provide an explanation to why effects shall necessarily follow from their causes. Concerning the second definition, his justification was theological, linking God's mercy to the absence of sudden random changes in matter. Yet, al-Ghazālī provided a third definition to miracles that might have both theological and philosophical implications.

A miracle, as understood from al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut*, is the speed of time cycles in matter, such that matter changes through its stages from its naturally anticipated and or

¹⁵⁴ Griffel, "The seventeenth discussion of the Incoherence of the Philosophers," 148.

¹⁵⁵ Quran 7:166 reads, فلما عتوا عن ما نهوا عنه قلنا لهم كونوا قردة خاسئين which translates, "so when they were insolent about that which they had been forbidden, We said to them, "Be apes, despised." Sayyed Houssein Nasr, in his commentary on the Qur'an claimed that God in this verse was referring to the violators of the Sabbath and their punishment for continuously violating the Sabbath. The punishment is to 'be apes, outcast.' The majority of the Muslim commentators believe that the verse is referring to the physical transformation of the violators into apes. Hence, if understood from the perspective of the majority of commentators, we find a situation where God changed matter and its essential characteristics, contrary to the Aristotelian theory of immutable matter. Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph EB Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom. "The Study Quran." A new translation and commentary (HarperCollins Books). p.464.

allotted time to a foreign time that is either slower or faster. What this implies is that matter goes through a growth cycle over a specified time period depending on certain characteristics such as mitosis, cellular composition, genus, and species. This growth cycle of matter takes place in stages as al-Ghazālī described it, and each stage has a certain time for growth. An example of a naturally occurring change in matter is given by al-Ghazālī in the following passage from *Tahāfut*:

Thus, earth and the rest of the elements change into plants, plants—when eaten by animals—into blood, blood then changing into sperm. Sperm is then poured into (the womb and develops in stages as an animal; this, in accordance with the habit, takes place over a lengthy period of time.¹⁵⁶

The example given above is considered to be natural and habitual because the time taken for each stage in the process is what is usually apprehended, out of experimental induction, and thus considered natural. If we consider each stage per se without considering the entire process, the result is a miracle in each case according to the second definition. Earth changing into plants, plants into blood, and blood into sperm are all considered phenomenal processes. Yet, because we have always been exposed to such events right from birth, we consider them natural. Hence, concerning the third explanation, a miracle is relative to the habitual nature of humans. In other words, if an action is performed at a time that is not expected and is viewed as abnormal relative to the habitual nature of man, that action is considered a miracle. An example of this would be witnessing a seed grow in ten seconds, becoming a tree, while it assumingly needs ten years to do so. Hence, al-Ghazālī asked that if such a process is considered natural under the time we are accustomed to, why then don't we agree that God could accelerate the time taken for the same process to happen? In other words, and according to what al-

¹⁵⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *The incoherence of the philosophers*, 172.

Ghazālī defined as impossible, it is within God’s power and capability to alter or accelerate the timeframe of events since such an action does not create a contradiction. We are accustomed to witnessing various rates of change in various animals and we have made it a generalized truth that so and so requires ‘x’ amount of time for change. This generalized truth whose source is inductive experimentation is the actual problem that al-Ghazālī is referring to. We find it normal to witness a five-thousand-year-old Pine tree yet miraculous to find a five-thousand-year-old human. From al-Ghazālī’s reasoning, if no human had lived that long that does not imply that God cannot make it happen. The problem, al-Ghazālī noted, lies in our accustomed habit of the things around us based on how God had created them. Had God made the pine tree live for five days, it would be natural to see it so. Our accustomed nature to the specified times ordained by God makes us call events that occur in their time of action, habitual. Whereas, when such events occur in times that have not been anticipated, they become considered miracles. Since God has the power to create a cycle of events in the manner we witness them and create in us the knowledge of grasping such cycles in such a habitual manner, then it would make sense to say that God has the power to make the cycles of events much faster such that the intermediate events become barely noticeable. So, if 'A' results in 'B,' 'B' in 'C,' 'C' in 'D,' and 'D' in 'E,' the speed cycles of events that God can establish is to have people witness 'A' resulting in 'E' since 'B,' 'C,' and 'D' will all be shrunk to take place without anyone noticing. Thus, the third definition of a miracle is as follows;

- ***The third definition of a miracle***

A miracle is the acceleration of time cycles in matter, such that matter changes through its stages from its naturally anticipated or allotted time to a foreign time

that is either slower or faster thereby, becoming noticeable by people and foreign to their accustomed habit.

4.2. The theory of Habit (*'ādah*)

The first couple of lines of the seventeenth discussion bring to attention the concept of 'habit' and its connection to causality. In fact, when describing causes and effects, al-Ghazālī considered them both influenced by habit.¹⁵⁷ The term habit was also used by al-Ghazālī when formulating his defense for miracles. The definition of a miracle requires the concept of habit to differentiate between what people consider noticeable and what they consider imperceptible with regard to the occurrence of events. As mentioned earlier concerning God's mercy, that God does not disrupt the natural flow of events to prevent human anxiety is based on the concept of habit. Habit is what makes things seem unchanging or natural.

The term habit or *al-'ada*, as used explicitly by al-Ghazālī, is at the core of his philosophical argument on causal relationships because it gives meaning to al-Ghazālī's understanding of induction. For al-Ghazālī, we cannot necessitate habit because it excludes the possibility of miracles.¹⁵⁸ Habit, whose philosophical basis relies on observation, repetition, and sequencing of natural events, links causes and effects in a way that makes them as though inseparable. In fact, it may be said that the concept of habit is what generates the problem of induction whereby people assume with full confidence the outcome of a specific cause due to their past observation of witnessing the same effect. Hence, it is human habit that creates a psychological state of certitude such

¹⁵⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *The incoherence of the philosophers*, 166.

¹⁵⁸ Binyamin Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's theory of causality," *Studio Islamica*, (Brill), 95.

that when, for example, we decide on meeting tomorrow we feel so confident that the meeting shall take place without any feeling of dubiety. From al-Ghazālī's *Munqidh*, we learn that human habit is "an instinctive, natural disposition" placed in the makeup of humans by God, "not something due to human choosing and contriving."¹⁵⁹ Al-Ghazālī in his *Munqidh* was referring to his innate habit, given to him by God, that permitted him to breakthrough his servile conformity with his inherited beliefs thereby, giving him the characteristic of seeking the truth.¹⁶⁰ It is important to note that al-Ghazālī held a similar understanding of habit in his *Tahāfut* and *Munqidh*, with both books expressing the innate tendency in humans to link things with regularity. Thus, from the *Tahāfut*, I define habit as follows;

The first definition of Habit: Habit is the unshakable fixation [serenity of certitude] or the psychological assured certainty [*bard al-yaqīn*] in people's minds, given to them by God, that makes them accustomed to the fact that an event will generate the same effect, repeatedly and continuously, when subjected to a specific cause according to past induction.

Habit: For all x and y, x being the agent of y and y being all animate beings subject to inductive experimentation, habit is the unshakable fixation given to y by x, that makes y accustomed to the fact that an event [cause] shall always generate an effect repeatedly.

Al-Ghazālī described the reassured psychological feeling as the serenity of certitude (*bard al-yaqīn*) which is created in humans by God whose mercy is not precedented. Hence, human habit (‘āda) is an example of God's mercy upon humanity, where humans

¹⁵⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *The deliverance from Error*, 3.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.3.

are privileged with psychological stability and serenity of mind, such that they remain fixated on the assumption that events shall always follow according to their natural occurrence. Humans have thus developed habits of expectations, according to al-Ghazālī, that is thanks to God’s following his regular habits and having things happen inductively yet, with the sole exception of when he (God) wants to perform a miracle. Hence, habit can also be defined using the conception of miracles, where habit becomes the rate at which events occur at their accustomed time. The definition can be formulated as follows;

The second definition of Habit: When the speed cycles [natural time of occurrence] of events occur at the accustomed rate such that no changes are felt, and such that everything feels natural and anticipated, such events are considered habitual and therefore, in accordance with human custom.

Habit: for all y, y being all animate beings subject to inductive experimentation, habit is the natural time cycles of events that is anticipated and considered naturally occurring to y.

4.3. Disruption of Habit [*khāriq lil-‘ādah*]

Giacaman and Bahlul postulated two meanings to *khāriq lil-‘ādah*; the first is to have a ‘cause without its normally expected effect,’ thereby, having God violate (abolish or suspend) the ‘laws of nature.’¹⁶¹ An example of this would be fire not burning cotton yet both fire and cotton retaining their properties and characteristics of burning and the capability of being burnt, respectively. The other meaning is to have a cause without its normal effect yet, without God violating the laws of nature but rather, with God utilizing the laws of nature to make impressions in the minds of people (those around a prophet)

¹⁶¹ George Giacaman and Raja Bahlul, “Al-Ghazālī on Miracles and Necessary Connection,” 44.

in such a way that they believe that a miracle had occurred.¹⁶² A plausible scenario would be God manipulating human sight in such a way that the human eyes see fire tranquil towards cotton whereas in reality, neither the fire nor the cotton are present to act upon one another. Giacaman and Bahlul claimed that the second meaning of *khāriq lil-‘ādah* applies to the passage in *Tahāfut* where al-Ghazālī assumed it ‘possible that a prophet may be thrown into the fire without being burned either through a change in the quality of the fire or through a change in the quality of the prophet, and that either through God or through the angels there should arise a quality in the fire which limited its heat to its own body.’¹⁶³ What is exceptional though, about the second definition is that al-Ghazālī does not need to make it a necessity that miracles exist through the inseparability of causal relationships. Important as well is that the second meaning does not nullify or substitute the first. In fact, the first meaning is still required to justify other ways that miracles were established and mentioned in Qur’anic scripture.¹⁶⁴ This being said, disruption of habit may be defined as the moment in time (t°) where the accustomed habit is disturbed [disrupted] by the interference of an agent such that the events occurring at the time t° become noticeable and therefore considered miraculous. Hence, (t°) is the time when a miracle is brought into existence.

¹⁶² Ibid., p.44.

¹⁶³ Al-Ghazālī, *The incoherence of the philosophers*, 171.

¹⁶⁴ The second meaning to *khariqah li'l aada* most closely suits Jesus's Crucifixion as described in the Qur'an 4:157 which reads: And [for] their saying, "Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah." And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain." What the traditional Muslims understand here is that God manipulated the sight of those who thought Jesus was crucified. In this sense, God created a miracle by saving Jesus without those around him noticing.

The first definition of disruption of habit: for all x and y, such that x is the agent of y, the disruption of habit is the time (t°) that x chooses willingly and knowledgeably to disrupt the habitual sequence of events such that y becomes aware of the noticeable change.

The second definition of disruption of habit: for all x and y, such that x is the agent of y, the disruption of habit is the time (t°) that x chooses willingly and knowledgeably to manipulate y such that y believes that the natural sequence of events had been broken (whilst in reality, nothing had been changed), and thus, resulting in a miracle.

CHAPTER 5

CAUSALITY FROM AL-GHAZĀLĪ TO HUME

Al-Ghazālī's works may have influenced several philosophers in later centuries in formulating their own understanding of causality. Philosophers like Ibn Rushd, St. Thomas Aquinas, and David Hume have all discussed causality in terms that might have some similarities or connection to al-Ghazālī's, indicating that the latter has had some influence on these philosophers. Ibn Rushd, for example, is well-versed with al-Ghazālī's works especially the *Tahāfut*, since he dedicated his book, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, to respond to all of al-Ghazālī's discussions. It is also believed that St. Thomas Aquinas (d.1274) had come across certain of al-Ghazālī's writings through the works of the Dominican Raymund Martin (d.1285). In his article, *Al-Ghazālī and Aquinas on Causation*, Shanab claimed that al-Ghazālī's works have shaped the philosophic ideas of Aquinas, who was engaged with Islamic philosophy and its philosophers.¹⁶⁵ During the early twelfth century, al-Ghazālī's works were translated into Latin in Toledo, Spain. His works influenced the ideas of Christian and Jewish thinkers, one of which was Raymund Martin.¹⁶⁶ According to Shanab, Martin's work, *Pugio Fidei* (The Dagger of Faith), integrates several ideas that show great similarity with those of al-Ghazālī's such as God's knowledge of particulars, creation ex nihilo, and immortality of the soul.¹⁶⁷ According to some scholars, Aquinas, a contemporary to Martin, is considered to have borrowed many

¹⁶⁵ Robert Shanab E.A., "Al-Ghazālī and Aquinas on Causation," (The Monist Oxford University Press, 1974), 148.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 148.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

ideas from the *Pugio Fidei* because it is noticed that his *Summa Contra Gentiles* has several passages that resemble those from the *Pugio Fidei*.¹⁶⁸ Likewise, it may be the case that Hume had come across some of al-Ghazālī's works or ideas through channels of philosophers who have borrowed or read al-Ghazālī's works. On another account, Van Der Bergh, in his translation of the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, believed that Nicholas of Autrecourt (the medieval Hume) might have possibly been influenced by some of al-Ghazālī's theories since he held, in a similar fashion as al-Ghazālī did, that causes and effects are not connected and that God is the sole cause of all action.¹⁶⁹ As a matter of fact, Nicholas quotes al-Ghazālī's metaphysics concerning these issues.¹⁷⁰ In his *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume references the philosopher John Locke on multiple occasions, suggesting a level of familiarity with his ideas.¹⁷¹ Some scholars, like Moad, have drawn comparisons between Locke and al-Ghazālī in terms of their epistemologies of power. On this subject matter, Moad held that al-Ghazālī is closer to Locke than he is to Hume, who he is usually associated with.¹⁷² This might help draw some connection between al-Ghazālī and Hume yet, establishing a direct link through the intermediary of Locke would require further investigation beyond the scope of this thesis. Possible factors to consider include Hume's personal library, his exposure to Islamic philosophy and

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

According to Shanab, Aquinas shows agreement with al-Ghazālī on some issues such as the role of reason in demonstrating God's existence, the divine knowledge of particulars, the names of God, God's simplicity, creation ex nihilo, and the resurrection of the dead. Some of these ideas are also in agreement with Martin's views.

¹⁶⁹ Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al Tahāfut* trans. Simon Van der Bergh, p.xxx.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.xxxi.

¹⁷¹ David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Edited by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton, (Oxford University Press, 2007), 408.

On several occasions, Hume discusses Locke's opinion on human nature, and human mind as seen when discussing passions as a kind of human instinct (p.408).

¹⁷² Edward Moad, 'Al-Ghazālī on Power, Causation, and 'Acquisition,' 8.

thinkers, and his engagement with Locke’s writings. This aside, I do not intent to delve into this matter since it is outside the scope of my thesis. Rather, I focus on Hume’s perception of miracles, agency, and habit, and how they compare to those of al-Ghazālī’s since both philosophers discuss these concepts quite similarly. Also, I discuss Ibn Rushd’s rebuttal of al-Ghazālī’s seventeenth discussion in light of how different their approaches were, with respect to causality.

5.1. A comparison between Ibn Rushd and Al-Ghazālī on the concepts of habit and miracle

The Andalusian polymath, philosopher and jurist, Ibn Rushd (d.1198), dedicated his *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* to attack and fundamentally object to al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut*. On causality, Ibn Rushd held that efficient causes cannot be denied since if denied, we “can no longer acknowledge that every act must have an agent.”¹⁷³ He added that things ought to have specific natures, attributes, and essences that determine their special functions if not, nothing will have a name or definition and all things become one and the same.¹⁷⁴ Also, Ibn Rushd held that through logic, we infer that the knowledge of effects are only rendered perfect through the knowledge of their causes. If we deny the knowledge of causes, we are denying knowledge, and denying knowledge implies that nothing can even be known.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al Tahāfut*, 318.

Ibn Rushd held that anyone who denied the existence of efficient causes is carried away with sophistry.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 318.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 319.

On miracles, Ibn Rushd acknowledged their existence as fundamental to religion, such that they formulate the principles upon which religion is based, and religion as the principles upon which virtues are based.¹⁷⁶ However, he asserted that a learned philosopher, as opposed to the heretical Muslim philosophers mentioned by al-Ghazālī, do not to engage or dispute in religious principles, as denying them is denying the very existence of humans.¹⁷⁷ Ibn-Rushd's reason for this is that every science has its own principles that must be acknowledged by its students. As a practical science, religion is no exception. This is why he noted that the ancient philosophers did not mention miracles in their writings, despite witnessing such events in their time.¹⁷⁸ As it seems, and considering the idea that certain periods of time had prophets that performed visible miracles, Ibn Rushd brought into argument the Qur'an as an everlasting miracle, a justification for those who did not witness visible miracles. Ibn Rushd claimed that the Qur'an is the clearest and most superior of all miracles since it is neither an interruption in the course of nature nor a presence that is fixated by a timeframe.¹⁷⁹

Ibn Rushd's central argument against al-Ghazālī's theory of causality is his attack on the latter's concept of habit, since its conception poses several questions such as the actual meaning of habit, whether it is an attribute of man, of God, or of nature, and or whether anything can give the possibility for such a habit to be considered affirmative.¹⁸⁰ One may as well add another question; what number of times a sequence must be observed for a habit to be formed? For al-Ghazālī, habit through experience and

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 322.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 322.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 322.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 315.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 320.

experimentation with the world is knowledge that is neither necessary nor certain. It is only the knowledge received from God that is certain, i.e., revelation. Contrarily, Ibn Rushd had an opposing view; knowledge given to us by God is considered certain if and only if it corresponds to knowledge of the nature around us. What we see as regularity and predictability are all parts of God's wisdom that enacts such consistency unto nature so as to testify to the knowledge that God had given to us. Building his argument, Ibn Rushd cites the Qur'an where God says that humans "shalt not find any alteration in the course of God, and they shall not find any change in the course of God."¹⁸¹ This Qur'anic quote was mentioned by Ibn Rushd to maintain that God cannot have a habit since a habit is a custom that is acquired through repetitive action.¹⁸² In addition, if God is given a habit, he shall rule like a 'tyrannical prince' with no standard to his custom.¹⁸³ Permanent True knowledge, as defined by Ibn Rushd, is that which abides by the agent and the substratum such that a thing is what it is in reality.¹⁸⁴ Thus, concerning al-Ghazālī's claim that God had created in us the knowledge that he shall not create random uncertainties in nature, Ibn Rushd rejected it and claimed that human knowledge is created out of its exposure to nature since a thing is considered to be true if it is so in reality.¹⁸⁵ It is God's wisdom, according to Ibn-Rushd, that makes scientific knowledge possible through consistency and repetition such that models, theories, and laws can be made and studied for advancement.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 320.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 325.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 325.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 326.

This being said, we are faced with two different models concerning the means of attaining knowledge with Ibn-Rushd maintaining demonstrative science while al-Ghazālī maintaining revelation. The contingency of knowledge destroys the scientific method which relies on inductive experimentation. As a result, Ibn-Rushd insists that miracles and other religious supernatural events are beyond the discussion of the natural and material world. Yet, as it seems, taking Ibn Rushd's standard explanation on treating religious phenomena (miracles) and beliefs without questioning them poses a problem concerning their reliability. As it may sound, Ibn Rushd does not bother questioning miracles as he has taken their existence to be within the realm of the supernatural and thus, in a separate field of knowledge that is different than the material realm. Thus, miracles may be seen as events that are caused by a higher power, namely God, and are thus not contrary to reason or logic even though they cannot be explained by natural phenomena because they still follow the principle of causality [caused by God]. Therefore, the idea of causes follow necessarily from their effects is not incompatible, in this sense, with the existence of miracles. Contrarily, al-Ghazālī believed that miracles cannot be considered events that are explainable through natural causes but are rather caused by God's will. Thus, a miracle is not the result of a natural causal relationship but rather an expression of God's intervention in the world. As mentioned, al-Ghazālī's resolution to the issue of God's will being inscrutable is through a conception of God sticking to regularity (out of his mercy on his creation) in accordance with human habit. Yet, it cannot be denied that al-Ghazālī's theory of causality was relevant to future philosophers such as Ibn Rushd because it challenged the prevailing Aristotelian view of causality and prompted new ways of thinking about the relationship between God, reason, and revelation. Ibn Rushd felt compelled to respond to al-Ghazālī and in the process,

contributed to promoting an ideology that combines Aristotelian rationalism with Islamic religious doctrine. As a result, al-Ghazālī is seen to have influenced the development of the understanding of causality and thus, paved the way for new developments in Islamic philosophy.

5.2. Hume on causality and Habit: In the footsteps of Al-Ghazālī

In Western philosophy, David Hume (d.1776) is well known to have denied the idea of causality in a similar fashion that his predecessor, al-Ghazālī did. As a result, Hume's account of causality is very often compared to al-Ghazālī's. In his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Hume divided human enquiry or reasoning into two kinds namely, *relations of ideas* and *matters of fact*. Relations of ideas are intuitive and demonstrably certain; they are truths that are necessary. Those things that are part of *relations of ideas* are geometry, Algebra and Arithmetic.¹⁸⁶ *Matters of fact*, on the other hand, are things which we cannot be certain about and which we cannot prove. An example, according to Hume, is the proposition that the sun shall rise tomorrow.¹⁸⁷ The fact that the sun rose today and yesterday is not sufficient to conclude that it shall rise tomorrow. According to Hume, reasoning that belongs to *matters of fact* is based on the relation between causes and effects.¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, causes and effects are discoverable by experience and not by reason.¹⁸⁹ Thus, to understand Hume's idea of causality, we need to elaborate on his understanding of *matters of fact* i.e., *causes and*

¹⁸⁶ David Hume, "section IV" in *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Peter Millican, (Oxford University Press, 2007), 18.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

effects. Let's take Newton's Third Law of motion as an example, and apply it to two billiard balls as they strike one another. Ball 'A' strikes ball 'B' with both balls receiving an action and a reaction. If we repeat the experiment hundreds of times, we get the same result. Yet, in no experiment can we claim that the cause (ball A striking) and the effect (ball B being struck) "suggest the idea of power or necessary connection," according to Hume.¹⁹⁰ Rather, he claimed, what we observe is a constant conjunction of the cause and its effect, such that there isn't any argument that is convincing to us that objects which have been frequently conjoined by our experience shall remain conjoined in the coming trials.¹⁹¹ The following excerpt from the *Enquiry* properly elaborates on Hume's account on causality. According to Hume,

When we look about us towards external objects and consider the operation of causes, we are never able, in a single instance, to discover any power or necessary connexion; any quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other. We only find that the one does actually, in fact, follow the other...¹⁹² All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another; but we never can observe any tie between them. They seem conjoined, but never connected. And as we can have no idea of anything which never appeared to our outward sense or inward sentiment, the necessary conclusion seems to be that we have no idea of connexion or power at all, and that these words are absolutely without any meaning, when employed either in philosophical reasonings or common life.¹⁹³

We perceive regularities in experience but Hume says that we can never know whether these regularities are routed in the 'secret powers of things' or are just mere conjunctions in the level of our experience. For example, when fire burns cotton, is it the essence of

¹⁹⁰ Hume, *Enquiry*, section VII, Of the idea of necessary connection, 46.

We can infer that the term 'power,' according to Hume, is the binding force or glue that makes a cause necessarily connected to its effect.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, section XII, 116.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, section VII, 46.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, section VII, 54.

the fire to burn or the essence of cotton to be burnt or is the experience a conjunction of accidents that are contingent properties? For us to know the definition of something, we ought to know the essence of that thing. Thus, since we do not know the essence of fire or cotton due to the fact that we created none of them, we cannot necessarily define that fire shall always burn cotton. Thus, Hume's description of causality is seen to be in accordance with al-Ghazālī's, with both philosophers agreeing that causal relationships are cojoined rather than connected. In fact, the similarity extends further with Hume giving the same example that al-Ghazālī gave on fire burning objects. Hume suggested that "heat is a constant attendant of flame" yet, there is no connection between the flame (fire) and its act of burning (heat) except for what we see or imagine.¹⁹⁴ He added that what we learn is based on experience and experience teaches us "how one event constantly follows another; without instructing us in the secret connection, which binds them together, and renders them inseparable."¹⁹⁵

Concerning habit, Hume proposed a very similar definition to al-Ghazālī's, claiming that whenever a particular act is performed repetitively and has the propensity to generate the same result without being influenced by any form of reasoning or understanding, such a propensity is the effect of habit or custom.¹⁹⁶ This habit, which is difficult to resist may be 'fallacious and deceitful,' Hume added.¹⁹⁷ An excerpt from the *Enquiry* reads,

When we have lived any time, and have been accustomed to the uniformity of nature, we acquire a general habit, by which we always transfer the known to the unknown, and conceive the latter to resemble the former. By means of this general habitual principle, we regard even one experiment

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 47.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 48.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., section V, 32.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., section XII, 116.

as the foundation of reasoning and expect a similar event with some degree of certainty, where the experiment has been made accurately, and free from all foreign circumstances.¹⁹⁸

The phrase, ‘transfer of the known to the unknown,’ is the projection of knowledge known by experimentation to knowledge known with certainty with the assumption that the latter must look like the former. In other words, we may infer that human habit, in Humean terms, allows people’s reasoning to transition from *matters of fact* to *relations of ideas*. Thus, and in agreement with al-Ghazālī, Hume believed that habit is an essential factor that makes humans so assured or certain that an event in the future shall happen in a similar way it did in the past based on induction. Accordingly, we may claim that causality is thus, a mental construction of events that places causes and their effects in conjunction with one another as though they are necessarily connected due to the concept of habit. For example, if we take Pavlov's theory of classical conditioning, we come to witness how experiences in life can be conditioned based on repetitive occurrences. Pavlov's dog becomes accustomed to the fact that every time a bell rings, it is given a treat to eat. This, in turn, has conditioned the dog to salivate whenever the bell rings because the dog's mind has become wired to believe that the sound of the bell (senses) implies the serving of food.¹⁹⁹ The bell's sound creates the image of food in the dog's mind, a causal relationship that is in accord with Hume's theory of induction which holds that human evidence is weighed according to human custom.²⁰⁰ Human custom on the other hand is reliant on the exposure to sense data. There is a possibility that a bell is rung mistakenly or deliberately yet without the serving of food to the dog, which would have

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., Hume’s Endnotes, 126.

¹⁹⁹ Windholz George, *Pavlov on the Conditioned Reflex Method and its Limitations*, (University of Illinois Press, 1995), *The American Journal of Psychology*, 578-580.

²⁰⁰ Hume Enquiry, Introduction (16. Section X: Of Miracles), p. xlix.

the dog salivate based on a misled expectation. Pavlov's conditioning theory is a reflection of Hume's (and al-Ghazālī's) understanding of causality when applied to life experiences. As a result, Hume held that certitude can only be found in the science of mathematics whose acquisition is sensible, clear, determinate, without ambiguity and or variations, and is clearly apprehensible using the senses.²⁰¹ For example, there is no such possibility that a triangle will ever be circular in shape. Once again, we find another similarity between Hume and al-Ghazālī, this time concerning their opinion on the science of mathematics. Both of them praised mathematics as a worthy science due to its clarity and consistency. In his *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī stated that mathematics, when understood, cannot be denied due to its precision.²⁰² Yet, Hume has a problem that al-Ghazālī does not seem to have when discussing mathematics. Hume differentiates between mathematics when treated alone, and mathematics when involved with or assisted by natural philosophy. The former is what had been discussed earlier whereas the latter ('mixed mathematics' as Hume phrases it) is what creates a problematic in that it proceeds from the supposition of certain laws in nature.²⁰³ For example, modern mathematical physics applies relations of ideas to matters of fact to generate accurate predictions about empirical events. Newton's laws of motion are not derived from observation but are rather deduced from mathematical relations between concepts. Yet, we use these laws to build flying machines that are utilized regularly. Thus, Hume refers to the limitations of using mathematics, in specific geometry, in combination with natural philosophy because although geometry is helpful in determining dimensions and sizes of objects, it is incapable of comprehending ultimate causes.

²⁰¹ Ibid., section VII, 44.

²⁰² Al-Ghazālī, *The deliverance from Error*, 9.

²⁰³ Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, section IV, 22.

5.3. Hume on miracles

Hume had a different perspective than al-Ghazālī on miracles, as he argued that there is no justification for their occurrence. He devoted a complete section entitled *On Miracles* in his *Enquiry* to propose that the possibility of the occurrence of miracles is negligible to the possibility of their non-occurrence when examined rationally, and according to deductive experimentation and experience. Hume's proposition is based on a probabilistic approach, which considers it highly uncertain that miracles exist when subjected to the principle of probability. A "wise man," according to Hume, is one who weighs the expectations of results such that his judgment is based on the more probable outcome by examining the "greater number of experiments."²⁰⁴ For example, if we drop a book from any altitude, it shall fall to the ground based on our understanding of the law of gravity. Repeating the experiment over and over produces a similar result which in turn, makes it legible to assume that a book shall almost always fall from an altitude. Thus, Hume's 'wiseman' would conclude that miracles almost always do not occur probabilistically.

Another reason why Hume argued against the unlikelihood of miracles is related to the means of attaining knowledge of their occurrence, namely through the testimony of others in the past.²⁰⁵ The problem, according to Hume, is that if we are to compare truth derived from miracles to truth derived from the senses, the former is much weaker than the latter because the former relies on the eye-witness and hearsay of those who were

²⁰⁴ Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, section X, 80.

²⁰⁵ Hume, *Enquiry*, section X Of Miracles, 79.

The phrase, 'others in the past' suggest that Hume might have held that miracles no longer existed in his time nor in the times that shall come if not, we wouldn't need the testimony of those in the past. Also, if we are considering miracles from the Christian belief, those whose testimonies are taken are the apostles, according to Hume, who were eye-witnesses to the miracles performed by Jesus.

present during the emanation of the miracle in the past, while the latter relies on our direct witness of events as comprehended.²⁰⁶ Moreover, many philosophers, the likes of al-Ghazālī, Descartes, and Hume, have argued that we cannot trust knowledge derived from the senses since they might create false sensations of reality a times.²⁰⁷ If our senses are not trustworthy, it becomes more difficult to believe the testimony of those in the past, who relied on their senses to portray to us the occurrence of miracles. In other words, if we consider the senses as part of the subjective truth, and ‘the reason’ as part of the objective truth, then testimony would be a weaker subjective truth since it requires the belief in another person’s subjective experience. We find a similar criticism on knowledge gained from the senses in al-Ghazālī’s *Munqidh*, where al-Ghazālī criticized such knowledge for its invalidity and championed knowledge gained through reason. Yet, al-Ghazālī’s belief in miracles comes from revelation and religious scripture, which does not conflict his doubts on knowledge gained through the senses.

Other than the senses, Hume believed that the testimony for miracles is based on the reliability of the witnesses, which relies on many factors such as the presence of opposing accounts, the character, ‘unquestioned good-sense,’ education, and number of

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 79.

Hume attacked the Christian religion in specific, as seen in his *Enquiry*, probably because Christianity was the religion mostly praised and practiced in his time and place, or because he was raised up in a Christian family. Core to the Christian religion is the belief that Christ was crucified and raised back from the dead on the third day (Bible, 1Corinthians 14:24). As the Apostle Paul says to the Corinthians, if one is to believe that Christ has not been raised, then ‘preaching is useless and so is faith.’ Hence, one of the building blocks of the Christian belief is founded on the miracle of the resurrection of the dead. Hume’s attack also encompasses the Islamic traditional doctrine of faith, which as mentioned earlier, is Al-Ghazālī’s main concern in his seventeenth discussion of the Tahāfut. On a side note, it is interesting to discern why the Corinthians, according to certain inferences that can be made from the letter sent by Paul (Corinthians 14:24, *15 The Resurrection of Christ*), probably disbelieved in the raising of the dead. Whether this is related to their belief in miracles or not is outside the scope of this research.

²⁰⁷ Hume in (Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, p.111), Al-Ghazālī in (*Munqidh* p.4) and Descartes in (Descartes. Rene, *Meditations on First philosophy*, A New Translation by Michael Moriarty, Oxford World’s Classic, 2008, p.17).

witnesses, and the manner of the transmission and communication of their information.²⁰⁸ These, he claimed have not been fulfilled since miracles were chiefly verbalized in nations that were barbaric and ignorant,²⁰⁹ and the number of people who had witnessed them are insufficient.²¹⁰ Hence, Hume believed that human testimony alone is not sufficient or convincing as evidence for the occurrence of a miracle, and that all things being equal, (such as fire burning cotton), a minimal probability may be assigned to the occurrence of an event that violates a law of nature. This aside, Hume proposed two definitions for miracles, the first as

A violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience have established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.²¹¹

This definition is quite similar to what was labeled earlier as al-Ghazālī's first definition of miracle with Hume's phrase, 'the violation of the laws of nature,' similar to the phrase, the 'breakthrough of habitual [natural] occurrence of events.' In this definition, Hume does not mention any agent involved with the initiation of a miracle, contrary to the other definition he gave in his endnotes where he claimed that,

A miracle may be accurately defined, as a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent. A miracle may either be discoverable by men or not. This alters not its nature and essence. The raising of a house or ship into the air is a visible miracle. The raising of a feather, when the wind wants ever so little of a force requisite for that purpose, is as real a miracle, though not so sensible with regard to us.²¹²

²⁰⁸ David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, section X, 81-84.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

²¹⁰ One might question what number of people is sufficient for a miracle to be considered valid, and what actually is a barbaric nation in the Humean sense.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

²¹² *Ibid.*, Hume's Endnotes, 127.

Here, Hume proposed an [invisible] agent or deity in charge of fulfilling miracles through volition or power. Hume distinguished between miracles that are noticeable and are in discord with habit, and those that aren't and are in accord with habit by giving the example of raising a ship and a feather into air respectively. Thus, according to Hume's understanding, a miracle might be any event we normally consider as natural, and humans separate events based on their accustomed habit.

Hume's argument might face some criticism in that it might 'beg the question' concerning its validity when perceived from a Ghazālīan viewpoint. To explain why the argument may be considered so, let's take, for example, the possibility of walking through fire without being burnt. Humean philosophy would suggest that such an idea is absurd since out of past experience, we know that whoever is brought close to fire shall be burnt by it. The expectation we form in our minds is based on past experiences whose likelihood shall provide us with an image of an expected future. Yet, the problem is that we are not asking ourselves whether nature will actually follow its usual course of action but rather, we are assuming that it does so. If we assume that our past experiences are the criteria for making judgments and decisions about future events, then it is plausible to say that nature shall always follow its course of action in the future as seen from our past, which in other words is to assume that miracles have never existed in the past since we are yet to witness any miracle in our present. Eventually, 'the present' of our today will become 'the past' of our tomorrow. The problem here is that this ideology generalizes and projects the concept of induction into the past that we have not seen by assuming that that past is similar to our past since our present is not changing. To take as a general rule that miracles exist is to say that sometime in the past, a breakthrough in the natural occurrence of events had happened. Thus, if we are to generalize those observations around us as relevant, we

need to beg the question that such observations had always been relevant in the past even though we were not there to witness them. From a Ghazālīan perspective, it is the human habit that has made humans believe that such past experiences shall always be the same in the future. Hume still cannot be completely wronged since he implemented a probabilistic approach to miracles which is translated as the likelihood of occurrence not the certitude of lack of existence. For example, the probability of aliens landing on earth is still greater than the probability of fire refraining from its function of burning because the possibility of the former is based on a supposition and unknown knowledge whereas the latter, on experimentation and scientific induction that is at least, practiced and experimented. What we understand from Hume's definition is that the probability of a miracle taking place without an 'invisible agent' is zero since miracles do not rely on unknown knowledge but rather, on the violation of known knowledge, and for such a violation to take place, an external factor must initiate it. Hence, we may phrase out that according to Hume, a miracle [the violation of the laws of nature] is an event that is probabilistically impossible [the probability of its occurrence is zero] in the natural world, its possibility only made legitimate if and only if an invisible agent [deity] authorizes its occurrence. Both Hume and al-Ghazālī have emphasized the need for an agent to carry out miracles, yet they part ways when it comes to believing in them.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

6.1. Results

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the development of al-Ghazālī's attitude and understanding of causality across three major works: the *Tahāfut*, *Iqtīṣād*, and *Maqṣad*. To gain a clear understanding of al-Ghazālī's theory of causality, it was necessary to provide clarifications and explanations of important terms, such as 'mercy,' 'habit,' 'agency,' 'miracle,' 'power,' and 'impossibility,' by implementing Edward Moad's philosophical approach. The objectives of the thesis were to achieve several outcomes, including an evaluation of al-Ghazālī's reliance on miracles and how this affects his theory of causality, an examination of his concept of agency and its impact on his views on occasionalism, an assessment of the chronology of his books according to George Hourani's classification that raises questions about external factors that might have influenced his views on causality, and an analysis of the historical significance of his notion of causality as perceived by later philosophers such as Ibn-Rushd and David Hume. Therefore, this section is subdivided into headings to address each outcome separately.

- **The thesis shows that it is more plausible to claim that al-Ghazālī reconciled between two extremes, occasionalism and causality in nature [as understood without any form of intervention], more so that it is so claim that he held a strict occasionalist perspective to causality. This conclusion was based on al-Ghazālī's books, the *Tahāfut*, *Iqtīṣād*, and *Maqṣad*.**

Each book presents a distinct perspective on occasionalism that raises questions about various factors that may have influenced al-Ghazālī's views. The seventeenth discussion of the *Tahāfut* was dedicated directly to addressing causality, as its title and content indicate. As observed in the literature review, the *Tahāfut* is generally considered to suggest a compromised view of causality, bringing occasionalism and natural causation into discussion. Most scholars concur with this conclusion. Upon meticulously reading through the *Tahāfut*, it is seen that al-Ghazālī distinguished between necessary and concomitant relationships, i.e., 'with-by' relationships between causes and effects, which points to his middle-ground position. The *Iqtisād* on the other hand, written after the *Tahāfut*, is believed to present an occasionalist outlook towards causality based on certain terminologies defined in the book, such as allusions to God's 'will' and 'power,' which imply occasionalism. Yet, the *Maqṣad* addresses aspects of causality that lean towards a compromised theory [a reconciliation between primary and secondary causality] as seen in al-Ghazālī's account on God's attribute 'the Most High.' Therefore, even if we assume that the *Iqtisād* presents a firm occasionalist account of causality, it is still challenging to conclude that al-Ghazālī was a strict occasionalist, given that his other two books demonstrate a reconciliation between occasionalism and causation from nature. Factors such as al-Ghazālī's socio-political, intellectual, and religious background, may have influenced his evolving views on causality. It is evident though, that al-Ghazālī's ideas on causality are primarily influenced by revelation as seen in his ultimate objectives, and from his frequent quoting and referencing of the Hadith and Qur'an. An example is his primary objective in the seventeenth discussion of the *Tahāfut*, which was to defend religious doctrines and ideas such as the existence of miracles, and the ability of God to intervene within causes.

- **I argue, using the *Maqṣad* and *Iḥya*,‘ that al-Ghazālī’s concept of ‘mercy’ is a plausible explanation to his statement in the *Tahāfut* that God created in us the knowledge that he shall not enact irregularities to prevent anxiety in his creation.**

From Al-Ghazālī’s manifestation of human habit and his idea that God only creates knowledge of logical assumptions in man, one is left but to question why God will not create illogical irregularities in nature since he has the power and will to do so. Also, since a miracle is an example of such an irregularity in habit, why should we not expect irregularities to happen in other times? As a result, I argue that al-Ghazālī’s reply that God refrains from intervening in the causal nexus arbitrarily or irregularly (i.e., in opposition to human habit), to attend to human psychological and mental wellness that is in conformity with nature, is an act of God’s mercy upon his creation. Across al-Ghazālī’s works, the meaning and function of ‘mercy’ are contextualized differently. Nonetheless, all books emphasize its theological importance. The *Tahāfut* does not explicitly mention the term ‘rahma’, so extracted the term from the books, the *Iḥya* ‘ and *Maqṣad* to show that: having faith in God’s mercy and wisdom creates relief and reassurance in the believers heart, according to al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥya* ‘, that corresponds to having faith in God’s knowledge and what he creates. And, utilizing al-Ghazālī’s understanding of the concepts of ‘the good’ and ‘the evil,’ that are mentioned under the entry ar-Raḥman, indicate that the statement of the *Tahāfut* and its consequence are both acts of God’s goodness. God cannot be merciful if he does an evil act for an evil outcome. Thus, I argue in philosophical terms, that the statement made by al-Ghazālī in the *Tahāfut* corresponds to his reasoning in the *Maqṣad* where he mentions God’s mercy. Other than that, I formulated a philosophical definition of God’s mercy using two entries or attributes of

God, 'al-Raman' and 'al-Rahim'. The definition formulated is in relation to God's will and power. On habit, al-Ghazālī utilizes the concept to show that induction is a man-made phenomenon that in actuality, is reliant on the sequencing and repetition of events. Human habit is a creation of God that gives humans the serenity of certitude that all things shall happen the way they did in the past. Overall, the concepts of 'mercy' and 'habit' are seen to have major theological implications that have their basis derived from revelation.

- **This thesis emphasizes that a miracle, according to Al-Ghazālī, is a possibility within divine power, and its ultimate purpose is to spread 'the good' through revelation. And, that al-Ghazālī was so invested in defending miracles because they prove the prophethood of a prophet, and comprise a major part of revelation, which he considered is the true means of attaining knowledge.**

The seventeenth discussion of the *Tahāfut* is mostly about miracles and their justification. As noticed, the discussion does not mention the prophet of Islam performing any miracles but rather, it mentions miracles attributed to other prophets such as Abraham, Jesus, and Moses. A possible reason to this probably lies in the audience al-Ghazālī wants to address. Abraham, for example, is mentioned the most, and is a reference to all three Abrahamic faiths, thus appealing to a wider audience. It is in the *Iqtisād* though, that al-Ghazālī established the miracles performed by Muhammad, with the aim of proving his prophethood through them. Thus, we consider that in the *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazālī was focused on proving that miracles exist in general by appealing to the widest audience possible, and to philosophical argumentation, whereas in the *Iqtisād*, he was more focused on proving Muhammad's prophethood in specific, through miracles. Yet, al-Ghazālī ultimately invested in defining and justifying miracles primarily because he believed that they were necessary for spreading "the good" and restoring people's faith. This is

achieved by breaking through the human habit, namely, *kharq al-'ada*, such that a miracle becomes a breakthrough in the accustomed habit that creates an illogical occurrence in nature. Additionally, miracles are extremely important to religion and revelation since their negation implies falsehood of revelation. Now, for God to be capable of performing miracles, he must have the power and will to do so. This makes al-Ghazālī's concept of God's power a necessity to discuss. As noticed, al-Ghazālī gave God the authority over natural and unnatural causes, miracles included. In the *Tahāfut*, God's power is limited to impossibilities, such that God is capable of performing anything except that which is logically impossible. Hence, al-Ghazālī distinguished between those things that are possible to be performed by God, and those that aren't to show that miracles are within the possibility of existence. The concept of impossibility as mentioned earlier, was also discussed to show that God is capable of performing everything that does not lead to a contradiction, and finally, to show that God will not create things randomly since he is merciful and not because such random acts are impossible for him to perform. From the *Maqṣad* and *Iqtisād* though, a philosophical explanation of God's power is given with respect to its compatibility and alignment with his will, knowledge, and intention to carry out an action. The *Ihyā* on the other hand, describes God's power in relation to human power, where humans have the ability to control causes unless God decides on intervening at any time by taking back control over causes. Again, the concept of power is seen to differ depending on its function in each book. This being said, we find a solid reason for defining all the main terms that were discussed in this thesis since they all, in some way, correlate with each other.

- **This thesis shows that the terms agency, power, mercy, miracle, habit and impossibility together formulate a summary of al-Ghazālī’s causal theory. The thesis uses Edward Moad’s methodology and al-Ghazālī’s works to philosophically define all the terms.**

Upon extracting meanings to all the essential terms from the various books by al-Ghazālī, I formulate the following philosophical definitions to key components that summarize and properly establish his theory of causality.

<u>TERM</u>	<u>DEFINITION ACCORDING TO AL-GHAZĀLĪ’S ACCOUNTS</u>
AGENT	For all x and y, x is the agent of y if and only if x is an animate, necessary and primary existence that has the choice to pick 'y,' the power to act on 'y,' the knowledge of 'y,' and the will to cause 'y.' 'X' must necessarily have the attribute of mercy on y to sustain 'y,' and prevent 'y' from experiencing random occurrences that might affect the natural and habitual state of 'y.'
POWER	For all x and y such that y is an act of x, power is the objective of x to perform y, intentionally, knowledgeably, and willingly whilst y is necessarily ready and prepared for whatever conditions x bestows on it.
MERCY	for all 'x' and 'y,' such that 'x' is the agent of 'y,' 'x' is all-merciful if and only if 'x' fulfills its intention [will] to exercise

	mercy on 'y', and has the volition [power] and concern to do so to 'y,' whether 'y' deserves the mercy or not.
IMPOSSIBILITY	For all x and y, x being the agent of y and y being an event or act, y is possible if and only if y is within the enacted power of x, such that y cannot be affirmed and denied simultaneously to generate a contradiction.
MIRACLE DEFINITION 1	First definition: A miracle is the time (t) in which God [the agent] disrupts the natural or habitual occurrence of events such that the disruption is perceived as a breakthrough in the norm of habit that people are accustomed to.
MIRACLE DEFINITION 2	Second definition: A miracle is the change in molecular arrangement of matter [or change of state] either from animate to inanimate or simply through a change of species to another species.
MIRACLE DEFINITION 3	Third definition: A miracle is the acceleration of time cycles in matter, such that matter changes through its stages from its naturally anticipated or allotted time to a foreign time that is either slower or faster thereby, becoming noticeable by people and foreign to their accustomed habit.
HABIT DEFINITION 1	First definition: For all 'x' and 'y,' 'x' being the agent of 'y' and 'y' being all animate beings subject to inductive experimentation, habit is the unshakable fixation given to 'y' by 'x,' that makes y accustomed to the fact that an event [cause] shall always generate an effect repeatedly.

<p style="text-align: center;">HABIT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DEFINITION 2</p>	<p>Second definition: for all ‘y,’ ‘y’ being all animate beings subject to inductive experimentation, habit is the natural time cycles of events that is anticipated and considered naturally occurring to ‘y.’</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">DISRUPTION OF</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HABIT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DEFINITION 1</p>	<p>First definition: for all ‘x’ and ‘y,’ such that ‘x’ is the agent of ‘y,’ the disruption of habit is the time (t°) that ‘x’ chooses willingly and knowledgeably to disrupt the habitual sequence of events such that ‘y’ becomes aware of the noticeable change.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">DISRUPTION OF</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HABIT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DEFINITION 2</p>	<p>Second definition: for all ‘x’ and ‘y,’ such that ‘x’ is the agent of ‘y,’ the disruption of habit is the time (t°) that ‘x’ chooses willingly and knowledgeably to manipulate ‘y’ such that ‘y’ believes that the natural sequence of events had been broken (whilst in reality, nothing had been changed), and thus, resulting in a miracle.</p>

- This thesis shows that al-Ghazālī’s theory of causality has posed historical and philosophical significance as seen in his conceptions of habit and miracle. These concepts have influenced the ideas and causal theories of later philosophers, challenging and bringing into discussion various dialogues between theology and philosophy.**

Al-Ghazālī’s impact on the evolution of the theory of causality within the field of philosophy is widely recognized, as evidenced by the influence he exerted on various philosophers who either responded to, concurred with, or refuted his assertions. Philosophers like Thomas Aquinas, Nicholas of Autrecourt, Ibn-Rushd, and David Hume,

among others, are acknowledged both as contributors to the development of the philosophical discourse on causality and as having been influenced, either directly or indirectly, by al-Ghazālī's theory. With specific emphasis to Ibn Rushd and Hume, this thesis shows that certain similarities and disparities exist between these philosophers. Al-Ghazālī's and Hume's accounts of causality for instance, concur in depicting a theory of causality where causes and effects are not necessarily connected. Similarly, their conceptions of habit, and their attitude towards the science of mathematics add to the idea that there might be certain interconnectedness between their thoughts. In contrast to them, Ibn Rushd's account on causality favors a theory that holds efficient causes as necessarily present. It is the need to gain 'true knowledge' that has brought about such a disparity in their opinions. As mentioned, Ibn Rushd held that knowledge is acquired through demonstrable science (Aristotelian rationalism), al-Ghazālī held that it is acquired through revelation, and Hume through 'relations of ideas.' On miracles, al-Ghazālī and Ibn-Rushd both held the Islamic orthodox perspective that miracles exist. Yet, Ibn-Rushd does not engage in a discussion to justify them, but rather believed in them based on his religious principles his idea of a necessary causal theory. Al-Ghazālī though, advocates to justify miracles using philosophy and theology since he had to be consistent with his idea of an unnecessary causal theory. Hume on the other hand, endeavored to claim that miracles are the least possible and probable phenomena present since they carry very little probability and their knowledge is transmitted through hearsay of those in the past or revelation that is to some degree weaker than the knowledge gained from the senses. I bring about the discussion on Hume and Ibn-Rushd to emphasize how much attention has been given to the topic of causality, and in specific al-Ghazālī's conception of it. We witness high engagement and development with the concept of causality from al-Ghazālī

to Hume that ought to be investigated to appreciate its growth as a topic. The ideas and contributions of these philosophers to the field of philosophy continue to influence modern thought and inspire discussions and debates to this day. The attack on inductive experimentation may be considered one of the reasons behind the initiation of the school of phenomenology, whose aim is to provide an alternative explanation to the Cartesian system of the outer reality in relation to the individual experience of reality. Major proponents of this school are German philosophers Edmund Husserl (d.1938) and Martin Heidegger (d.1976).

6.2. Conclusion

This thesis tackled al-Ghazālī's thoughts on causality from philosophical and theological perspectives to understand why he compromised, in certain cases, between primary and secondary modes of causality, and why he needed to justify miracles through God's mercy and the concept of habit. The implications of the thesis are theological, philosophical and historical since the concept of induction does not only encompass religious issues as tackled by al-Ghazālī, but also philosophical issues such as authority over agency, scientific issues such as knowledge gained through pragmatism and induction, and historical issues such as the development of causality as a concept from Al-Ghazālī to Hume. Science relies on inductive inferences and pragmatism to form generalized truths of reality. Yet, this method of conclusive investigation has a drawback of begging the question that a future event shall always occur sequentially and in line with past experience. The greater assumption though is the idea that past experience had always been the same as what is witnessed in the present. These ideas are the main principles that have formulated the 'problem of induction' such that it has become discussed and critiqued in various fields of study. For instance, theologians might argue

that God alone has knowledge of the unseen (*‘Īlm al-ghayb*) and that God alone can intervene in the causal nexus, inductive skeptics might argue that induction begs the question of assuming future events following from past experience, philosophers might argue with theologians and inductive skeptics on fundamentally any concept, while scientists might argue that pragmatism is the caliber for measuring worldly phenomena. Thus, causality as a topic is important since it tackles an idea that stretches over several domains of study.

The importance of al-Ghazālī’s discussion on causation is crucial because it opened a field of study that was later tackled by philosophers such as Ibn Rushd, Hume and more recently by Kant and Husserl. With Ibn Rushd, we have seen how causality developed through criticisms and responses to al-Ghazālī’s theory. With Hume though, we have seen how causality may be tackled from a philosophical approach without theological intentions. Each philosopher was motivated differently in tackling causality; al-Ghazālī attacked induction because it posed threats to his religious beliefs while Hume attacked it because it sought knowledge a posteriori rather than a priori. This being said, to appreciate al-Ghazālī’s impact on philosophy, I quote Akdogan who claimed that,

Al-Ghazālī’s scope of vision is such that he not only anticipated the main ideas of Descartes, the father of the modern philosophy, but also preceded Hume’s work on causality which in turn inspired Kant, the supreme philosopher, to achieve the greatest revolution in modern philosophy by relinquishing the correspondence theory of truth.²¹³

The establishment of modern philosophy pays some credit to al-Ghazālī’s ideas of the 12th century that influenced thinkers of the 18th and 19th centuries. Hence, al-Ghazālī’s impact was not limited to the scope of religion since his ideas found their way in

²¹³ Cemil Akdogan, *Al-Ghazālī, Descartes, and Hume: The Genealogy of Some Philosophical Ideas*, (Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad), 502.

philosophy and modern scientific inquiry. This being said, one still cannot deny the significance of induction as a powerful weapon for advancement in the scientific and technological domains. Humanity had improved in all fields of inquiry such as medicine and engineering due to the aid of science and its method of inquiry. The scientific system or methodology, according to Ibn-Rushd, helps us gain knowledge of the world around us through pragmatism. We cannot gain knowledge whatsoever if at every instant, we wait to question whether a specified cause causes a different effect. Although it is true that we cannot advance or gain knowledge without holding onto induction, we still cannot claim that such knowledge gained is certain and always necessarily true. Al-Ghazālī did not dismiss scientific inquiry through induction as meaningless, but rather, he addressed its validity and implications that ultimately clashed with religious beliefs, if taken at face value. Al-Ghazālī's critique though, was not entirely philosophical but rather and as seen, it was heavily theological. As a result, al-Ghazālī's theory of causality may or may not be a sufficient reply to those who seek to resolve the problem of induction from philosophy alone. Although the importance of induction and experimentation cannot be denied, "it may surely be allowed a philosopher to have so much curiosity at least to examine the principle of human nature."²¹⁴ Since there are still unresolved issues to inductive inquiry, it is interesting to come up with newer models of inquiry, if possible, concerning the reality of worldly phenomena.

²¹⁴ Hume, *Enquiry*, section IV, 26.

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