

ON THE “PSYCHOLOGICAL DIALECTIC” OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ REGARDING PHILOSOPHERS, OR DID IBN SĪNĀ DRINK WINE?

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Abstract

Al-Ghazālī, one of the most influential figures in the history of Islamic thought, criticized the prominent religious paradigms of his day. In this regard, his settling of accounts with philosophers from whom he benefitted in terms of methodology is particularly significant and consists of three stages: first, the identification; then, the description; and finally, the judgment of the philosophers by means of dialectic criticism. There are comprehensive studies on the theoretical aspects of this struggle between al-Ghazālī and the philosophers; nevertheless, his psychological dialectic, which he advances in a manner that addresses the common feelings of Muslims, is often overlooked. This paper examines al-Ghazālī’s allegation that Ibn Sīnā used to drink wine, since it is one of the most impressive examples of the conception that al-Ghazālī tried to establish regarding philosophers and philosophy by showing how weak the relationship is between philosophers and Islam. The objective is to obtain a deeper view of the content and construction of al-Ghazālī’s psychological dialectic.

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Introduction

Al-Ghazālī (b. 448/1053, d. 505/1111) has been one of the most competent authorities in the Sunnī tradition since his lifetime and particularly during the Seljukian and Ottoman eras. Even today, al-Ghazālī is the principal reference for the ranks of preachers and religious scholars who are influential with the public, especially in relation to Sufism.

When the world of Islam underwent the process of colonization in the 19th century, it truly confronted the modern West, and this confrontation brought along intellectual depression and inquiries; due to his abovementioned characteristics, al-Ghazālī was, not surprisingly, one of the central figures in this period. The issue became even more prominent since “technology,” “science,” and, evidently, “philosophy” were the most important problems in the modern era with regard to religious essences and the inseminated values of Islam. Indeed, in terms of the relationship between intellect and revelation (*al-‘aql* and *al-wahy*), al-Ghazālī advanced a severe and profound criticism of the philosophical and scientific tradition of his time; his critical perspective, which takes shape particularly in *Tabāfut al-falāsifah* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*), created a strong tradition that has extended from his time to our day. As indicated above, al-Ghazālī is still the main reference for current responses generated by today’s scholars and preachers, who form the conception of Islam among the public and who often represent the conventional Sunnī paradigm with regard to “philosophical thought” or the “position of scientific knowledge.”

On the other hand, the authority of al-Ghazālī does not merely consist in his scientific competence. His struggle with the philosophers is not limited to theoretical aspects. Indeed, he opted to show his foes as sinners and even hypocrites who are not at all pious and who do not abide by the commandments and prohibitions of Islam in the eyes of devout Muslim consciousness. We will call this attitude the “psychological dialectic.”

The theoretical criticisms of al-Ghazālī have been influential in intellectual circles; *Tabāfut al-falāsifah* became one of the essential references that nourished Sunnī kalām against the Mashshāʿī philosophy for centuries. Nevertheless, the physics and metaphysics discussed in *Tabāfut al-falāsifah* have evidently become rather meaningless in the Muslim world, which has been confronted by the modern West. However, the primarily negative core of al-Ghazālī's comments about "philosophy" and "philosophers" survives in a strong manner, particularly among conservative Muslims.

This paper analyzes the "psychological dialectic" with the case of Ibn Sīnā, since we think that the example is capable of explaining how al-Ghazālī still influences assessments of "philosophical thought" and "philosopher" among the average scholars and the public.

I.

Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl (*Deliverance from Error*) deserves closer attention with regard to this theme, since it is one of the last works by al-Ghazālī and includes extensive autobiographical information. *Deliverance* shows that there are two aspects of the struggle between al-Ghazālī and the philosophers. The first one is a theoretical dialectic and consists of two stages: recognition and cognition, and al-Ghazālī's *Maqāsid al-falāsifah* (*Aims of the Philosophers*) corresponds to the first aspect. The second aspect is advanced in *Tabāfut al-falāsifah*, where the theoretical criticism actually becomes apparent. The methodological similarity between al-Ghazālī and modern orientalism is striking, as it functions in recognition, definition, and transformation, although this similarity is irrelevant for the subject of this paper; indeed, such a similarity deserves a separate, comprehensive analysis.

In any case, a closer look at the introduction of *al-Munqidh* reveals certain problems. For example, *Maqāsid al-falāsifah*, which belongs to the stage of recognition, is an almost literal Arabic translation of *Dānīshnāma-ʿi ʿAlāʾī* written by Ibn Sīnā in Persian; nonetheless, al-Ghazālī tries to present this work as if it belongs entirely to him. Therefore, another significant problem appears. In fact, al-Ghazālī explains his purpose in writing the *Maqāsid* as an ordered and concise introduction to the sciences of the philosophers. However, there is a mystery in need of clarification as to why al-Ghazālī – at the cost of a kind of plagiarism of Ibn Sīnā – took the

pain of writing a work to explain the knowledge/sciences of the philosophers, instead of the clear, comprehensible, systematic, and even popular texts such as *al-Najāt* or *‘Uyūn al-ḥikmah* of Ibn Sīnā.

Maqāṣid al-falāsifah of al-Ghazālī was probably grounded in his notes on the *Dānishnāma-’i ‘Alā’ī* of Ibn Sīnā and the work was therefore not original; nevertheless, the originality of *Tabāfut al-falāsifah*, which corresponds to the second stage and which is constructed with a systematic dialectic, is unquestionable. Indeed, al-Ghazālī evidently attained a certain success by demonstrating that certain essential judgments of Mashshā’ī metaphysics, which he considers controversial in Islamic faith, are not apodeictical; in other words, the judgements are not based on conclusive evidence or, at least, al-Ghazālī obtained such a status in the history of Islamic thought. By means of this work, the point of view that positions religion in terms of philosophy, an approach often observed in al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, was damaged, and al-Ghazālī paved the way for the possibility of positioning philosophy according to religion in a persuasive manner. However, despite all its glory, is this powerful theoretical dialectic sufficient on its own to explain the profound influence of al-Ghazālī’s criticism of the philosophers for centuries?

Certainly, a serious philosophical education is required to read and comprehend *Tabāfut al-falāsifah*. Consequently, it is highly difficult to assert that even the medium and lower group of preachers, who are particularly influential with the common people, let alone the common people, evaluated and eventually refused the content of Mashshā’ī metaphysics and its position in relation to Islam after duly analyzing and understanding *Tabāfut al-falāsifah*.

Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī seems to be very successful in ensuring that the words “philosophy” and particularly “philosopher” are understood as almost non-Islamic or even anti-Islamic among average Sunnī scholars, preachers, and the public. If his theoretical dialectic is not sufficient to explain the secret of this achievement, where else should we look for the correct answer?

To answer the above question, it is necessary to pay attention to the third stage that is inherent in the introduction by al-Ghazālī, although it is not directly mentioned: first, recognition and comprehension; second, criticism through the theoretical dialectic; and finally, definition and introduction. The first two stages, as indicated above, require a certain level of philosophical knowledge

and accordingly address the upper intellectual classes. The final stage in turn particularly addresses the common people with weak theoretical thinking and education.

The style of struggle referred to here as a "psychological dialectic" comes to light at the stage of "definition and introduction." In *Tabāfut al-falāsīfab*, al-Ghazālī examines a total of twenty carefully chosen problems: he shows the refutability of the philosophers' assertions through his theoretical dialectic and puts them into a dismissible position due to their lack of reasonable certitude. In the end, al-Ghazālī demonstrates that the arguments of the philosophers that contradict the explicit statements in revelation – such as the issue of *istiwā'* – definitely lack the capacity to lead to an elucidation (*ta'wīl*) of the dogmas. Thus, al-Ghazālī locates himself in a position from which he definitely determines the position of the philosophers with regard to Islam and considers the philosophers to be outside of Islam by declaring them unbelievers (*takfīr*) regarding three metaphysical issues.

At this point, it is worth noting that the excommunication or *takfīr* of philosophers by al-Ghazālī consists of two layers: faith-related excommunication, which becomes possible by means of theoretical dialectic, essentially comprises the quality of an explanation and legitimization with regard to the intellectual class. On the other hand, al-Ghazālī is not content with a faith-related excommunication of philosophers: he also sees and shows them as being outside of Islam in terms of their acts and deeds.

The "psychological dialectic" appears in this second layer. Whenever al-Ghazālī mentions philosophers, he repeats that the philosophers do not abide by the commandments and prohibitions of shari'ah; according to him, this indifference is due to their peculiar conception of "religion" and "prophethood" in light of their metaphysics. This description, which will be discussed below in a more comprehensive manner and which is repeated on numerous occasions, can be summarized as follows: The philosophers believe that they attain "wisdom" not through imitation but through their own reason. Their sciences and disciplines, such as mathematics, physics, and metaphysics, and above all logic, both lead to and nourish this misleading self-confidence of the philosophers. Indeed, sciences that are methodological, such as logic, or that are based on exact argumentation, such as mathematics, steer the philosophers towards

the misconception that they also possess exact knowledge in metaphysics. Accordingly, philosophers are convinced that shari‘ah, which is postulated by the prophets to restrain the common people and to prevent people from engaging in conflicts and murders because ambitions and desires are the origin of evil, are not binding on the philosophers. Indeed, philosophers think that they attain truth in apodeictical terms, beyond the addresses of the prophets to the common people. Therefore, even if an expert in philosophy appears to be Muslim to the outer world, in other words, even if he worships, reads the Qur‘ān and praises the shari‘ah, he cannot refrain from committing major sins (*fisq*). Indeed, a man of philosophy has not internalized the commandments and prohibitions of shari‘ah, and he appears to be Muslim only for the sake of his social status and safety.

However, it is easy to determine that the above arguments by al-Ghazālī are not based on theoretical thinking. In fact, the theoretical dialectic, which demonstrates the theoretical incoherence or contradictions with Islam in the metaphysics of al-Fārābī or Ibn Sīnā, is evidently related to a field that is entirely different from issues such as abandoning *ṣalāh* or drinking wine. Nevertheless, the “psychological dialectic” of al-Ghazālī is a process of “introduction” that merely consists of the generalization of – uncertain – individual examples and an eloquent account of a judgment that is grounded (or that is allegedly grounded) on al-Ghazālī’s observations and that is therefore taken for granted by the addressee. In fact, the manner of the introduction, which is based on an abandonment of worship, drinking or adultery, can be easily adapted to any group or class, unlike theoretical criticism.

Nonetheless, this utterly confident description by al-Ghazālī has a weak point: How many philosophers had al-Ghazālī actually met and known so intimately that he witnessed their major sins? Moreover, when he asked about their attitude, who among them responded that shari‘ah is not binding for the philosophers but only for the common people? Who are these so-called “philosophers” that take the pain of caring about rituals and praising Islam to maintain their individual safety and status but who dare make such risky confessions to the renowned master of Nizāmiyyah Madrasah of Baghdād? Moreover, what is the proportion of such philosophers who confess their hypocrisy and which school are they from?

Consequently, the value of al-Ghazālī's demonstration of the philosophers' hidden blasphemy is equal to the confidence in his honesty: in the Muslim world, these demonstrations became widespread to the extent of al-Ghazālī's reputation. However, al-Ghazālī is evidently not the inventor of such a demonstration. In fact, the accusing of opponents of underestimating the commandments of the sharī'ah and committing major sins (*fisq*) has been a common method since the early period of Ahl al-ḥadīth and, above all, since the Ḥanbalīs. As is well known, the victims of criticism and accreditation (*al-jarḥ wa-l-ta'dīb*) books and individual refutations vary greatly and include al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfah or even the Mu'tazilī leaders, who are charged with alcoholism.¹ The Ḥanbalī records about how al-Ash'arī did not perform the *ṣalāb* or how he performed it without ablution are one of the most significant examples of how to discredit opponents through the disclosure of their alleged sins.²

¹ For a good example of a defamation of al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfah through *qīl wa-qāl* (gossip), see Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim Ibn Qutaybah al-Dīnawarī, *Ta'wīl mukbtalif al-ḥādīth*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Aṣfar (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1999), 62-65.

² In his work on al-Ash'arī, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Yazdād al-Ahwāzī (d. 446/1055) writes the following: "I heard about Abū Sahl ibn al-Ṣābūnī al-Nīsābūrī – in Damascus in 393; (besides) I heard about Abū Usāmah Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Harawī al-Muqri (narrating) through him (Abū Sahl) – in 395; they said: 'I heard al-Imām al-Faqīh Ibn Abī Sahl al-Su'lūkī saying thus in Nishapur: 'Sometimes I used to meet al-Ash'arī and write something from him. I came to him (again) on a Friday; we'd just performed afternoon *ṣalāb* [*ṣallaynā l-ʿaṣr*]. I saw him urinating through a door ajar. Once he was done, he came near us and asked, 'Did you perform afternoon *ṣalāb*?' 'Yes,' I replied. Then he stood up and performed *ṣalāb* without prior ablution. Thereupon I left his place and burnt all I had written of him. I never returned to him (ever again).'" Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Yazdād al-Ahwāzī, "Mathālib Ibn Abī Bishr," in Michel Allard, ed., "Un Pamphlet Contre al-Aṣ'arī," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 23 (1970), 161. In the same work, Abū l-Faḍl ibn al-Baqḳāl cites Abū 'Alī ibn Jāmi' as follows: "I was a friend of al-Ash'arī for about twenty years, but I never saw him performing *ṣalāb*. On a day of Eid, I accompanied him until the *ṣalāb* area in Baṣrah; (on our way) we were passing by a derelict when he went in and urinated. He came out without touching his hand [he didn't clean]. I said, 'What will you use for ablution? On the way, there is nobody with water or anything cool (for ablution).' 'No,' he replied, 'you cannot spoil a feast day with mere urination (I don't need ablution).' When we arrived at the place of *ṣalāb*, he

Therefore, the “psychological dialectic” of al-Ghazālī, originally an Ash‘arī, cannot be considered a genuine form of demonstration; nevertheless, it is impossible to deny the profound influence of such a discourse among the common people. In addition, according to available records, young al-Ghazālī was familiar with this kind of a struggle and combat.³

performed his prayer without ablution. Abū ‘Alī ibn Jāmi‘ said, ‘As we came back, I left him and burnt whatever I had written of him; I never returned to him and entered the service of someone else.’ This Abū ‘Alī ibn Jāmi‘ was among the virtuous men of Basrah.” Ibid., 159. Therefore, the *gossip* by al-Ahwāzī – in the form of authentic reports – attains the status of clear evidence. Nevertheless, any reader may note how much the accuracy of the narrative is affected by the contradiction that one continues to be a disciple of someone for twenty years even though one never sees him performing the *ṣalāh* and that one abandons his master upon witnessing al-Ash‘arī performing the *ṣalāh* without ablution on the morning of an Eid.

- ³ In his early work, *al-Mankbūl*, al-Ghazālī writes the following about al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfah in a chapter called “Evaluation on *mujtabids* by Companions, Followers, and others:” “As for Abū Ḥanīfah, he was not a *mujtabid* since he could not speak Arabic. His words, ‘Even if he threw (the Mount) Abū Qubays’ are the proof of this. He did not know ḥadīths either; this is why he tended to accept weaker ḥadīths and refuse authentic ones. He was not a *faqīh* either; he probably and inappropriately pretended to be clever, as his references of style (demonstrate). Hereby (determination) becomes apparent through abuse of his views, about which we will provide a chapter at the end of the book;” Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankbūl min ta’liqāt al-uṣūl*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Haytū, 3rd ed. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1998), 471. The Abū Qubays issue, which al-Ghazālī mentions, is actually as follows: al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was asked to give his opinion on a person who threw a piece of a rock at the head of another person and killed him; thereupon, he indicated that no retaliation was applicable, adding, “Even if he threw Abū Qubays.” In this phrase attributed to al-Imām al-A‘zam, there is “bā” as *ḥarf al-jarr* before the word “Abū,” and therefore the word should be “Abī” instead of “Abū.” Allegedly, al-Imām made this mistake due to his incompetence in Arabic. Ahl al-ḥadīth harped on this ambiguous report and has often quoted this anecdotal story to humiliate al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Accordingly, Ibn Qutaybah quotes the same incident when he attacks al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfah; see Ibn Qutaybah, *Ta’wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, 134. The passage where al-Ghazālī, at the end of his book, tries to demonstrate that al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfah “violated, was

Certainly, this dialectic is not logical but literally "psychological." Moreover, this "psychological dialectic" is presented in every work of al-Ghazālī whenever he mentions philosophers: it is presented so ingeniously and repeated so implicitly that it has attained an influence that is still extant today. In fact, the general influence of this "psychological dialectic" has been much stronger than the influence of *Tabāfut al-falāsifah*, which is a truly first-class philosophical work.

II.

Now, we can start a comprehensive examination of the passage in *al-Munqidh* by al-Ghazālī, since we consider this passage to be the best example of the mentioned "psychological dialectic" of al-Ghazālī.

In the beginning of the text that is cited below, al-Ghazālī narrates that he resumed teaching after a decade of seclusion because he observed the corruption and distortion of faith with regard to the essence and truth of prophethood and the deeds postulated by the same. Having returned from seclusion as an enlightened man, al-Ghazālī analyzes the reasons for the distortion of faith and the weakness in reasoned faith among the public and associates this degradation with four fundamental reasons. The distortion of faith is caused by:

- (1) Those who are lost in the science of philosophy
- (2) Those who are lost on the path of Sufism
- (3) Those who are members of *Ta'limiyyah*
- (4) Behaviors of the so-called '*ulamā'*' among the public

Al-Ghazālī assures us that the above determinations are not theoretical but that they are the results of his observations and experiences regarding people. He actually emphasizes that if one does not fulfil the requirements of his faith, then he, in fact, has no faith. Accordingly, al-Ghazālī quotes certain conversations with persons who are allegedly lost in earthly matters despite their claim to having faith in the afterlife:

confused, and distorted shari'ah" (pp. 500-504) is not included here since it is too long.

Later on, I examined people one by one, asking them about their doubts about those who err in obedience to sharī‘ah and analyzing their creed and secret. I asked one, “Why do you err against sharī‘ah? If you do not prepare for the afterlife and enjoy this world at the expense of the afterlife even though you believe in the latter, this is mere foolishness! Indeed, you cannot spend one at the expense of two; why do you waste endless days for the sake of numbered ones? If you don’t believe, then you are an unbeliever! You don’t disclose in order to look fine and seem honorable by mentioning faith and sharī‘ah; think, however, about the reason for your secret blasphemy behind your apparent or inapparent daring by asking yourself.”⁴

Thus, the investigation by al-Ghazālī is significantly important. On what grounds do allegedly Muslim persons cover and even legitimize their insincerities? At this stage, al-Ghazālī picks five persons among those who he talks to in person to represent the classes that point to the essential reasons behind the secret blasphemy, in line with the four reasons indicated above.

(1) For some of the people, it is not necessary to abide by religious commandments and prohibitions since they observe the scholars who know the religion as well as anyone; they drink wine, do not perform the *ṣalāh* and sink into *ḥarām*.

(2) Some of the people assert that they have a good grasp of Sufism and that they have attained a position where worship is no longer necessary.

(3) Some of the people who deviated from the path of Sufism have begun to claim that all is nonobligatory [*ibāḥab*].

(4) Ismā‘īlīs, in turn, are *Ta‘līmīyyah* or *Aṣḥāb al-ta‘līm*, and they imitate their leader; they fulfil the commandments and prohibitions of the innocent Imām.

(5) Some other people consider themselves free of the restrictions of sharī‘ah on the grounds that they are familiar with philosophical knowledge and do not need to imitate others.⁵

⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl wa-l-mūṣil ilā dbī l-‘izzah wa-l-jalāl*, ed. Jamil Ṣalībā and Kāmil ‘Ayyād (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1967), 118.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

As stated above, al-Ghazālī mentions five persons who correspond to the four groups that, for him, are the sources of weakness in faith. Indeed, the third and fourth persons above have opted for Sufism; accordingly, they represent the deviation caused by the second source, namely, those people involved in Sufism.

Another significant issue is that al-Ghazālī reverses the order of reasons behind the weakness in faith when he talks about the persons that he met. In advance, we see the person who corresponds to the fourth and last group, namely, the person who does not refrain from *ḥarām* since scholars commit sins as well; then, we meet two men who abandon the commandments of sharī'ah under the pretext of Sufism; later on, al-Ghazālī observes an Ismā'īlī (Bāṭinī) and finally those persons who are sunk in sin because of philosophy.

Following the response by the Ismā'īlī, the last person is the one who is subject to weakness in faith due to his occupation with philosophy and who does not obey the commandments and prohibitions of sharī'ah. Interestingly, al-Ghazālī does not show the words of (1) the person who asserts that he attained a position in Sufism where worship is no longer necessary and (2) the person who deviates from the path of Sufism and sinks into *ibāḥah*, even though he mentions them as examples of the reasons for weakness in faith due to Sufism. Instead, al-Ghazālī contents himself with one phrase each to describe their situation. The words of the witless, who is lax in the fulfilment of religious commandments following the pertness of *'ulamā'*, and those of the Bāṭinī, each constitute one concise sentence. However, al-Ghazālī allows the anonymous philosopher to talk for much longer and in a much more detailed manner than the others and comprehensively comments on the philosopher. Presumably, al-Ghazālī reversed the order and let the philosopher talk as the last person to make way for his long explanation of the philosopher.

Al-Ghazālī asks how a person who does not refrain from sins despite his alleged faith in Islam, in other words, a person who does not practice his belief, can continue sinning even though he believes in a painful punishment for such sins. In his response, the philosopher says:

I am not practicing this (religion) through imitation. I studied the science of philosophy and comprehended the truth of prophethood. The essence (of prophethood) originates from wisdom and interest;

the purpose of worship (commanded by him) is to prevent and restrict common people from conflict, combat, and lust. However, I am not among the common people to be included under the obligations (of *sharī'ah*). I am among the people of wisdom; therefore, I am subject to wisdom. I have a good grasp of wisdom and do not need imitation in this respect!⁶

Al-Ghazālī transforms the foregoing into perfect grounds for disclosing the hypocrisy of the inner world philosophers and advances his argument through the even more allegedly interesting conversations between the two:

(Now) this is the final destination of the faith of those who study the philosophy of *ilābiyyūn* [Mashshā'is]; this he learns from the books of Ibn Sīnā and Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī. They are among those who use Islam only for appearances. Sometimes you may see one of them reading Qur'ān, present among the congregation for *ṣalāh*, or praising *sharī'ah*. Nonetheless, he does not abandon drinking wine (*kbamr*) and various major sins (*fisq*)! When he is asked, "Why do you perform *ṣalāh* if prophethood is not precise (*sahīh*)?" he replies, "In order to train the body, respect the tradition of our public, and protect my family!" Sometimes, he says, "Sharī'ah is precise and correct, and prophethood is true!" Then, when asked, "Why then do you drink wine (*kbamr*)?" he replied, "(The Prophet) forbade drinking wine (*kbamr*) because it leads to hostility and enmity. Thanks to (my) wisdom, I am protected from this; my aim (in drinking) is to sharpen my intelligence." In fact, Ibn Sīnā mentioned (this) in his will and wrote that he made an agreement with Allāh on this and that in order to honor the provisions of *sharī'ah*, not to be at fault in religious worship and "to drink (*shurb*) for treatment and recovery and not for pleasure." His final destination with regard to purity of faith and commitment to worship is the exception of drinking wine (*kbamr*) for health purposes. Here is the faith of those from whom some claim faith. A community is misled because of them; the weakness of objections against them increased the deception (among the deceived). Indeed – as we explained before – (their opponents) objected to them through combat against the

⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

sciences under their possession (sciences that provide exact knowledge), such as geometry, logic, and others.⁷

A perfect example of the "psychological dialectic" by al-Ghazālī against philosophy is clearly observed in the above passage. The consequences of this conversation are easy enough for everyone to comprehend; the passage is a disclosure of the hypocrisy of the philosophers who do not actually have faith in God and who consider themselves superior to and free from shari‘ah. Certainly, it is impossible to assert the complete absence of such persons among philosophers in those days. Nevertheless, if we generalize the test of "sincerity" that is – righteously – applied by al-Ghazālī to philosophers, it becomes inevitable to question whether the "hidden blasphemy" and "hypocrisy" that al-Ghazālī observes among philosophers arises from the nature of philosophy – and therefore, philosophical thought – particularly in consideration of the fact that Sufism, as al-Ghazālī indicates in person, can yield similar consequences.

III.

The first question to answer at this point is exactly when did the conversation with the philosopher take place? According to the introduction by al-Ghazālī in *al-Munqidh*, the conversation must have taken place during the time when he observed faith-related laxness among people and when he identified the four reasons behind the weakness in faith, following almost a decade of seclusion after he left his post as the Madrasah scholar in Baghdād.⁸

However, this introduction actually includes certain strange contradictions. In a chapter that addresses philosophy in *al-Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī clearly indicates that he began to study philosophy when he was a scholar at the Nizāmiyyah Madrasah in Baghdād where he lectured three hundred disciples. Displaying a significant effort, al-Ghazālī set about learning the philosophical sciences through books: he learned the sciences of the philosophers in a most comprehensive manner without any teacher or master in less than two years and only when he was not writing or lecturing; then, he contemplated these

⁷ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

disciplines for about a year.⁹ Since it is impossible to criticize philosophers without knowledge about the disciplines of philosophy, he must have written *Tabāfut al-falāsifah* following this busy schedule of study. In such a case, however, the passage about the hidden blasphemy of the philosophers in the very beginning of *Tabāfut*, which is almost identical to that in *al-Munqidh*, as well as the relevant conversations and determinations,¹⁰ must have been written or carried out before al-Ghazālī left Baghdād for seclusion: in other words, almost a decade before the date that is indicated in *al-Munqidh*.

This contradiction in terms of dates can be explained by the assumption that al-Ghazālī may have had conversations with other philosophers and in the same context during his time in Baghdād. However, such a well-intentioned estimate is also subject to the same question: Why would a philosopher who takes such great pains to perform *ṣalāh* together with the congregation, reading the Qurʾān, and praising Islam and the Prophet for the safety of life and property, disclose and narrate the secret blasphemy in his heart to the head scholar of Nizāmiyyah in Baghdād, the stronghold of Ahl al-sunnah?

All aside, the inconsistency in the dates in the presentation of al-Ghazālī is unfortunately too evident to be explained through such reasoning. From the *Jawābir al-Qurʾān*, one of the latest works of al-Ghazālī, we get the impression that he was very close to “philosophers” in his youth, long before writing *Tabāfut al-falāsifah*, and we can see that he had a similar insight about them in a very early period and in a manner very different from his introduction in *al-Munqidh*:

As we have observed on several occasions, the groups who consider themselves very (clever and) competent – even though they aren’t – are confused by the wordings (of Qurʾānic verses) and have certain sparks of objection (in their mind) about them, and they imagined

⁹ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

¹⁰ “Then again, I saw a group who considered themselves superior to their peers and equals through quicker comprehension and stronger intelligence. They abandon duties imposed by Islam about worshipping and insulted religious maxims such as the obligation of *ṣalāh* and avoidance of the forbidden; they disdain the deeds of subjects and restrictions ordered by sharīʿah ...” Al-Ghazālī, *Tabāfut al-falāsifah*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Egypt: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1966), 59.

things that contradict (apparent aspects of) Qur'ānic verses. As a result, their faith with regard to religion became corrupted. This (fact) led them to secretly deny resurrection, heaven and hell, and return to Allāh after death. They disclosed this denial only in the depths of their selves, and their bridles and bonds of piety were loosened and lost. They continued to seek earthly things, sink into *ḥarām*, and adopt lust; they focused on seats and assets as well as earthly pleasures. They undervalued pious people and considered them ignorant ... All this was because the gaze of their mind was stuck on the forms and phenomena of things and could not grasp the spirit and truth of things. Consequently, since they could not comprehend the equilibrium between the phenomenal world and the divine world, the apparent aspects of problems (about wordings of Qur'ānic verses) looked contradictory to them; thus, they went astray and led others astray. They neither understood anything of the world of souls as elites nor could have faith in the invisible, like common people. In the end, their acute mind exhausted them. Indeed, an innocent is closer to salvation than a trimmed mind and incomplete reason (like theirs). We were not far from this (position). We had practiced such heresies for a while because of evil friends and our relationship with them until Allāh, in the end, drew us away from their outcry and protected us against their mistakes ...¹¹

A careful examination of the above text shows that the only difference between the description above and al-Ghazālī's descriptions of the philosophers in *al-Munqidh* and *Tabāfut al-falāsifah* is the word "philosophers." Therefore, the determinations of al-Ghazālī regarding the philosophers, that is, that they abide by Islam only in appearance and that they consider themselves free from the bonds of sharī'ah thanks to their alleged wisdom through their superior minds, are most likely associated with the relationships that young al-Ghazālī had with philosophers, who he eventually described as evil friends, even though the content of such relationships is completely unknown.¹²

¹¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Jawābir al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā al-Qabbānī, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm, 1990), 60-61.

¹² For an elaborate analysis of the relationship of al-Ghazālī with philosophy circles in his youth, see Frank Griffel, *al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 25-31, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195331622.001.0001>.

In the end, the following question springs to mind: Why does al-Ghazālī date his meeting with and contemplation on philosophy to a much later period, namely, during his post as the head scholar at Nizāmiyyah Madrasah in Baghdād? A reasonable explanation is that al-Ghazālī wanted to demonstrate his relationship with the philosophers as being shorter and more recent than they actually were for the fear of reactions from the conservative circles. Nevertheless, this view means accusing al-Ghazālī of concealing the truth to maintain his position.

In any case, al-Ghazālī's negative approach to the philosophers' conception of religion seems to have begun after he met certain anonymous philosophers in person, became friends with them and was influenced by them. Even though the identity of these persons is completely unknown, they were definitely not al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, considering the time and date. Therefore, al-Ghazālī's firm conviction regarding the "hidden blasphemy" of philosophers cannot be the sins that he observed in person in the religious life of Ibn Sīnā or al-Fārābī. On the contrary, his friendship with some anonymous persons, who apparently read and studied the works of these two philosophers, led al-Ghazālī to determine certain faults in their religious practices and finally convinced him about their "hidden blasphemy of philosophers" in an irrevocable manner.

The problem, however, has yet to be eliminated. Indeed, there is a difference between the analyses of Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī on "religion" and "prophethood" and the interpretations of these analyses – which may evidently contradict each other. Therefore, in the eyes of al-Ghazālī, the point is not the "hidden blasphemy of philosophers" in general but the hypocrisy of some anonymous philosophers who were known to him. It is worth noting that similar contradictions also apply regarding mystic or rational disciplines such as Sufism and Kalām, respectively, and the ideas of a Sufi or a Kalām scholar may be taken as extreme by eventual interpreters. The same applies to religious practices as well: various sinners may emerge among the followers of a Sufi or Kalām master after one or more generations. Therefore, serious study is required to determine who should be accused based on which circumstances and what evidence. Nevertheless, the "psychological dialectic" of al-Ghazālī does not allow for such objections and opts for a general accusation.

IV.

The above-cited text in *al-Munqidh* by al-Ghazālī is a perfect example of his "psychological dialectic." He presents the context so ingeniously that when the reasoning, which comprises the conversation within the passage and which is blended with wonderful equilibrium, is considered as a whole without being broken into its elements, the "hidden blasphemy" of the philosophers actually seems to be proven.

To attain a complete understanding of what al-Ghazālī does here, it is necessary to pay attention to how disturbing is the reply of the addressed philosopher for a sincere Muslim. Indeed, al-Ghazālī's presentation comprises three abhorrent aspects blended into one another:

(1) First, we have a person who does not have faith because he thinks himself superior to the Prophet; certainly, no one likes to see his faith and the Prophet, to whom he adheres, undervalued, and refused.

(2) On the other hand, this man of philosophy is a hypocrite who present himself as a Muslim – for the sake of interests such as social status and the safety of his life and property – even though he actually has no faith at all; evidently, no one likes to be deceived.

(3) Finally, the essential reason for the hypocrisy would truly hurt a Muslim heart: The philosopher does not take the commandments of Islam into account on the grounds that such commandments are for the common people, whereas he is "smart" and superior; indeed, no one likes to be considered weak-minded and defamed.

As we can see, al-Ghazālī appears to speak thus on purpose to attract the reactions of Muslims – particularly the common people – against the philosophers, just as al-Ahwāzī (d. 446/1055) did against al-Ashʿarī. However, al-Ghazālī is distinguished from the rude style of al-Ahwāzī through his eloquence, as he ascribes the words that reveal the truth about philosophers by an anonymous philosopher to a great philosopher, namely, Ibn Sīnā – who al-Ghazālī identifies as his archenemy. Thus, al-Ghazālī creates the illusion that the statements by the anonymous philosopher that arouse the rightful hatred of believers are synonymous with the words of Ibn Sīnā. Consequently, the feeling of hatred that arises from the quoted conversation with the hypocrite philosopher is directly transferred to Ibn Sīnā and made his.

The power of al-Ghazālī's "psychological dialectic" lies in the construction of this connection, which requires a very careful examination.

The account of al-Ghazālī flows in four stages that are truly combined with one another in a perfect manner.

(1) First, the "truth about philosophers," which al-Ghazālī already knows in an exact manner, is expressed through the words of a philosopher in person. In a sense, we see the projection of the way of thinking which, according to al-Ghazālī, previously stirred him to write the *Aims of the Philosophers*: Above all, it is necessary to understand and advance the perspective and thesis of the opponents in a correct and explicit manner. Accordingly, al-Ghazālī does not present his personal observations or evaluations; instead, he transmits the viewpoint of the philosophers through one of them. The point to consider here is that al-Ghazālī is a completely passive questioner: He asks a philosopher why he does not act in line with what he says he believes and listens to his essential judgment. The explanation of the inner world of the philosopher is transmitted without any addition or deletion, and al-Ghazālī expects us to believe this exactitude.

Nonetheless, al-Ghazālī prevents us from inquiring into the accuracy of this quote, since he cites the words of an anonymous philosopher. Evidently, al-Ghazālī knows that according to logic, a nonquestionable judgment, except an axiom, means nothing but a presumption if it is accepted as true in advance. Since a man is an imperfect being, we should understand how or to what extent the anonymous philosopher, who provides al-Ghazālī with answers to confess his hypocrisy, understood or followed al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, the two philosophers who – reasonably enough – we do not come across in the works of al-Ghazālī. Is it not truly possible that this anonymous philosopher possibly misunderstood or misinterpreted al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā in line with his personal desires or interests? As a result, how are we expected not to have any doubts about the extent to which this anonymous philosopher represents the philosophers?

Al-Ghazālī seems to say, "I know the inner truth about the philosophers, for I came together with them, asked them questions, and here are their answers." Accordingly, as indicated above, the accuracy of this demonstration equals confidence in al-Ghazālī as a person. Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī is, after all, just another human

being who may react in an emotional way, and he may have exaggerated, overlooked or misunderstood something, or his memory may have even been misled.

(2) Right after the response by the anonymous philosopher, al-Ghazālī leaves his passive position and begins speaking. He proceeds from the stage of recognition to the stage of introduction. His first sentence about the response is very important in this regard: *"(Now) this is the final destination of the faith of those who study the philosophy of ilābiyyūn [Mashshā'īs]; this he learns from the books of Ibn Sīnā and Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī."*

Thus, the original connection between the anonymous philosopher and Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī is expressed in the second stage; this is an implicit statement about the doubt that occurs in the mind of the reader regarding the demonstration in the first stage. In other words, there is some information, albeit uncertain, about the identity of the philosopher who is only known by al-Ghazālī and who is completely unknown to us. This philosopher is a person who learns from the books of Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī that he is superior to sharī'ah, which is for common people. In this case, the anonymous philosopher relates not his opinion but the view of the two great Mashshā'ī philosophers. Thus, as the anonymous interviewee of al-Ghazālī retreats into background and is thrown out of focus, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, the two renowned philosophers whose ideas are available in their respective books, come to the forefront.

We can, however, address another question to al-Ghazālī at this stage. If the philosopher who believes that he is free from the sharī'ah imposed by the prophethood on the common people attained this conviction through the works of Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī, should not al-Ghazālī show us an exact quote? Which book of Ibn Sīnā or al-Fārābī includes the phrases cited by the anonymous philosopher or expressions in the same sense?

(3) Certainly, the speech of al-Ghazālī never contemplates this question. He makes a very smart turn and instead of pointing out the exact references from Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī, he returns to the beginning and describes the response of the anonymous philosopher in an even sharper style. Nevertheless, the subject of this second description is not the anonymous philosopher known to al-Ghazālī, but "them," namely, the philosophers who refer to Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī. Thanks to this leap, there is no more distinction between the

anonymous philosopher and al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā; consequently, it becomes possible to ascribe the hidden blasphemy, confessed by the anonymous philosopher, to al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā.

Indeed, al-Ghazālī lays stress on a single point in his description: the philosophers do not actually believe in Islam; instead, they maintain their individual and social status by pretending to be Muslim and even attract sympathy. The voice of al-Ghazālī, which directly addresses the reader and deliberately uses the second-person singular for a higher impact, takes on a serious tone of warning: “They are among those who use Islam only for appearances. Sometimes you may see one of them reading Qurʾān, present among the congregation for *ṣalāb*, or praising sharīʿah. Nonetheless, he does not abandon drinking wine (*kbamr*) and various major sins (*fisq*)!”

As indicated above, we return to the beginning. Now, the problem from the beginning is before us once again: How can we prove that a philosopher, who, despite not being actually a Muslim, manifests himself as Muslim, takes the pains to worship and even praise sharīʿah, is not a sincere Muslim – beyond his confessions to al-Ghazālī? More importantly, if a reader of al-Ghazālī occasionally sees one of these persons among the congregation for *ṣalāb* or sees them reading the Qurʾān and praising sharīʿah, what is the need for all these determinations and close examinations by al-Ghazālī?

Certainly, we have to intervene in al-Ghazālī’s speech to be able to ask him these questions; however, he speaks so fast by means of the premise about the “hypocrisy of philosophers,” which is reinforced through repetition and definitely accepted, that it is almost impossible to disrupt the reasoning in his text.

It is necessary to pay particular attention to why al-Ghazālī especially mentions “drinking wine (*kbamr*)” to comprehend the key point. Why does not al-Ghazālī content himself with saying that “he wouldn’t abandon various major sins” but primarily mentions “drinking wine (*kbamr*)”? Indeed, drinking wine is one of the various major sins; thus, what is the use of mentioning this sin in a separate manner? If al-Ghazālī aims at narrating the situation of the philosophers, why does he mention the particular (drinking wine [*kbamr*]) before the universal (*fisq*/major sin)? In addition, why does al-Ghazālī mention only drinking wine among all the other major sins such as adultery, homicide, theft, etc.?

Considering the text, it is easily observable that al-Ghazālī chose the example of "drinking wine (*kbamr*)" on purpose; indeed, drinking wine (*kbamr*) is the only linking element that constitutes the connection between the anonymous philosopher and Ibn Sīnā.

Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī ingeniously and surreptitiously builds a dialectic flow to complete his link with the persuasion about the hypocrisy of the philosophers. Before us is a philosopher who performs *ṣalāb* together with the congregation, reads Qurʾān, and praises sharīʿah. First comes question one: "Why do you perform *ṣalāb* if prophethood is not precise (*saḥīḥ*)?" This question makes sense only in case the prejudgment, which al-Ghazālī continuously repeats since the beginning, namely, the hypocrisy of the philosophers, is deemed correct. Otherwise, how can a person be asked why he performs *ṣalāb* even though he does not believe in prophethood, while he performs religious rituals and expresses his obedience to sharīʿah, if he is not a philosopher?

According to dialectic reasoning, which is based on a yes-no, two answers can be given to this question, namely, by accepting or refusing the precision/rightfulness of prophethood. The first response to this essential question is nothing but a confirmation of prejudgment: "In order to train the body, respect the tradition of our public, and protect my family!" In brief, the philosopher confesses that he actually refuses the authenticity of prophethood and that he continues worshipping and lauding sharīʿah for his social safety.

Our repeated question, however, is still unanswered. More precisely, why and how does a person who performs *ṣalāb* with the congregation and praises sharīʿah for the purposes of disguise confess his hypocrisy to al-Ghazālī? This is why the anonymous philosopher should express the opposite to his response when he confesses his secret blasphemy to answer the question in our minds as to why his hypocrisy should be exhibited once again. Thus, the situation of the philosopher, who does not directly confess his hypocrisy, is unearthed by means of another indirect question. Here, we hear the second response. Upon hearing the question, "Why do you perform *ṣalāb* if prophethood is not precise (*saḥīḥ*)?" the philosopher sometimes – when he wants to conceal himself – replies as follows: "Sharīʿah is precise and prophethood is true!" This response refuses the prejudgment of al-Ghazālī as the negative aspect

of the dialectic setup, and the philosopher clearly pronounces his faith. Well, can such a clear admission save the philosopher?

Under normal circumstances, an interrogation should come to an end when the interrogee admits that he is a Muslim and that he performs worship; nevertheless, al-Ghazālī makes use of “drinking wine” to ask the crucial second question to disclose the hypocrisy, despite the apparent response of the philosopher. “If you believe in the certitude of sharī‘ah and the truth of prophethood, why then do you drink wine (*kbamr*)?” Al-Ghazālī does not ask, “Why do you commit major sins?;” instead, he exploits the particular element, namely, wine (*kbamr*), which he highlights in his general demonstration through prioritization.

The philosopher’s reply, once again, is nothing but an acknowledgement of the prejudgment of al-Ghazālī: “(The Prophet) forbade drinking wine (*kbamr*) because it leads to hostility and enmity. Thanks to (my) wisdom, I am protected from this; my aim (in drinking) is to sharpen my intelligence.”

As all roads lead to Rome, we are once again back to the beginning. Indeed, there is no difference between these statements and the first answer of the philosopher, except for the use of the particular concepts such as “drinking wine” and the general concepts such as “major sin.” Consequently, it does not matter whether the philosophers perform rituals, declare their faith, or even praise or revile prophethood and sharī‘ah. Al-Ghazālī is so convinced about the hidden blasphemy of the philosophers that his questioning of them always leads to the same conclusion.

(4) Now, we are at the final stage of the account. As the hidden blasphemy of philosophers is demonstrated through the anonymous philosopher, we are capable of passing a judgment on Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī, the two references of the anonymous philosopher. Nevertheless, this capability does not emerge in an expected way. Al-Ghazālī does not refer to any text where, having attained wisdom through their reason, Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī consider themselves superior to the sharī‘ah that is stipulated by the Prophet to restrain the common people. In fact, there is no such text. Neither al-Fārābī nor Ibn Sīnā ever uttered the words of the anonymous philosopher of al-Ghazālī. However, al-Ghazālī manifests the equivalence between the origin and the product by means of discovering a serious connection

between the statement of the anonymous philosopher about "drinking wine" and a phrase by Ibn Sīnā in his *Risālat al-‘abd*:

When asked, "Why then do you drink wine (*kbamr*)?" he replied, "(The Prophet) forbade drinking wine (*kbamr*) because it leads to hostility and enmity. Thanks to (my) wisdom, I am protected from this; my aim (in drinking) is to sharpen my intelligence." In fact, Ibn Sīnā mentioned (this) in his will and wrote that he made an agreement with Allāh on this and that in order to honor the provisions of shari‘ah, not to be at fault in religious worship and "to drink (*sburb*) for treatment and recovery and not for pleasure." His final destination with regard to purity of faith and commitment to worship is the exception of drinking wine (*kbamr*) for health purposes.¹³

Indeed, the foregoing narration includes a significant distortion. The question by al-Ghazālī and the reply by the anonymous philosopher include the word *kbamr*, namely, "wine that leads to intoxication." Nevertheless, the sentence quoted by al-Ghazālī from Ibn Sīnā only includes the word لا يشرب (*lā yasbrab*), namely, "doesn't drink."

Al-Ghazālī, then, alters Ibn Sīnā's phrase in a peremptory but underhanded manner: "His final destination with regard to purity of faith and commitment to worship is the exception of drinking wine (*kbamr*) for health purposes." Al-Ghazālī apparently repeats the phrase by Ibn Sīnā; nonetheless, the object of the word *sburb* in the text of Ibn Sīnā is altered by a direct intervention because al-Ghazālī fabricates that *kbamr* is what "is drunk only for treatment and recovery."

Then, did Ibn Sīnā actually drink wine?

V.

Before answering whether Ibn Sīnā actually drank wine, we have to clarify the following matter: Given our knowledge about the life and personality of al-Shaykh al-Ra'īs Abū ‘Alī Ibn Sīnā, we know that he enjoyed wealth and riches during his childhood and youth. Ibn Sīnā was raised in a wealthy family, educated by tutors, and obtained a post at the court at an early age, because he was a physician. Given such a lifestyle, Ibn Sīnā was clearly used to riches and even luxury.

¹³ Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 119-120.

The statements of witnesses to his life indicate that Ibn Sīnā had a habit of wearing good clothing and consuming high-quality food and drink; indeed, his disciple ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Jūzjānī indicates that al-Shaykh al-Ra’īs was keen on sexuality and took certain aphrodisiacs that eventually led to his terminal illness.¹⁴

Ibn Sīnā clearly did not lead an ascetic life like Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, who lived on one dirham per day as a night watchman. Instead, the life of Ibn Sīnā is similar to the luxurious and pompous life of al-Ghazālī before his departure from Baghdād and his seclusion and orientation towards Sufism. However, the life standards and lifestyle of Ibn Sīnā are a problem regarding his ascetism and piety, and this problem has nothing to do with the claims that he drank wine (*khamr*) – and even the claims asserting that sharī‘ah is for the common people and not for elite like him. This second problem is the point to concentrate on.

Al-Ghazālī claims that Ibn Sīnā drank wine (*khamr*) and that even when he repented and reconciled with Allāh, he made wine (*khamr*) an exception on the condition of “recovery and treatment.” In the eyes of al-Ghazālī, such discourse means an underestimation of sharī‘ah and a denial of the essence of prophethood and, therefore, a “hidden blasphemy.” Certainly, al-Ghazālī may be considered rightful by a Muslim consciousness in this respect. In fact, the use of alcoholic beverages – only to the extent that the use is actually required and until recovery – because of the risk of dying of thirst or starving or even for treatment by certain expert and pious Muslim physicians in the absence of another available medication, has been debated among Muslim jurists. Nevertheless, if no such necessity is in question, a person who thinks that alcoholic drinks are permissible – even by considering himself above the commandments of the religion – is clearly subject to his sensual desire. In case a person who

¹⁴ Indeed, there is another significant allegation about this famous tendency of Ibn Sīnā towards sexuality. Accordingly, the records available at al-Jūzjānī that Ibn Sīnā did not quit sexual intercourse even during his terminal illness with a cramp are distorted in some ways. Therefore, the introduction of Ibn Sīnā as a lascivious man is a description that is made on purpose. For a convincing and illustrative article on the issue, see Joep Lameer, “İbn Sīnā’nın Şehveti [Avicenna’s Concupiscence],” trans. Serdar Cihan Güleç, *Kutadgubilig* 30 (2016), 1047-1059. I would like to express my gratitude to M. Cüneyt Kaya, a dear colleague who informed me about this paper.

says that he drinks wine (*kbamr*) for the sake of health, treatment, and keeping his mind alive is asked why he does not seek a remedy and clarity of mind through *ḥalāl* drinks, it is easy to demonstrate that the point of the person is to actually abide by the lustful desires of the self.

Therefore, does Ibn Sīnā actually drink wine (*kbamr*) and expressly confess this under certain pretexts? It is necessary to examine the only concrete evidence, namely, the short quotation by al-Ghazālī from Ibn Sīnā, to find an answer to this question.

Prior to an examination of this text, however, there is another problem to be underlined. Despite its presentation by al-Ghazālī, *Risālat al-‘abd* is not a text of repentance that Ibn Sīnā wrote by himself. This is why *Risālat al-‘abd*, which is a kind of philosophical oath or text of ratification or oath similar to Hippocratic oath, includes the pronoun هما, which means “those two;” indeed, they are the tutor who promises to Allāh and disciple of this tutor.¹⁵ Therefore, it is worth noting that the account by al-Ghazālī where, knowingly or unknowingly, Ibn Sīnā is shown as a wine addict before eventually repenting for the drinking – except for the purposes of health and recovery – is untrue as well.

Nonetheless, if we examine the *Risālat al-‘abd* by Ibn Sīnā, we can see that the phrase reported by al-Ghazālī is true. The link established by al-Ghazālī, however, turns out to be misleading, since it clearly includes perversion, given the entirety of the passage where this clause can be found. The exact passage by Ibn Sīnā reads as follows:

As for flavors, they will be used for the rehabilitation of nature (disposition), the sustainability of an individual or species – and reminding this is done on purpose – and the intelligible self to be the administrator – and administration. Indeed, the power of lust invites one to flavors; then, the intelligible self becomes subject to them, which creates nuisances (about the continuation of an individual and species) and excuses for it. However, the intelligible self must play a trick (about pleasures) to the extent that it does not make the status of

¹⁵ Mahmut Kaya, “İbn Sīnâ’nın Filozof Yemini: İbn Sīnâ and the Philosopher’s Oath,” in *Uluslararası İbn Sīnâ Sempozyumu: Bildiriler II [International Ibn Sina Symposium Papers II]*, ed. Mehmet Mazak and Nevzat Özkaya (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür A. Ş. Yayınları, 2008), 156.

certain pleasure an ordinary thing about the self for its own personality. The same applies to affairs regarding prevailing and gaining reputation. As for drinks, he will forbid their consumption for fun and may drink them for recovery, treatment or reinforcement. As for the things heard ...¹⁶

As we can see, Ibn Sīnā does not talk about intoxicating wine but rather about a beverage without alcohol, which corresponds to *meşrubat* (i.e. drinks; *mashrūb* in Arabic) in modern Turkish. The word *al-mashrūb* (المشروب) in the text is in a singular form; nevertheless, the article that signifies the kind provides the general meaning to include the type of beverage.

In fact, upon reading the entire passage above, anyone familiar with Mashshāʿī terminology can easily understand that Ibn Sīnā is not talking about drinking wine but all beverages – in the broad sense – which have a taste, whether salty or sweet. Here, Ibn Sīnā means nourishment through the sustainability of the individual and sexuality through the sustainability of the species. These characteristics, which humans have in common with animals and plants, are necessary for direct, that is, individual, and indirect, namely, species continuation of the biological structure of human beings, who have an earthly existence.

According to Ibn Sīnā, the impulses of eating, drinking, and reproduction, which are naturally accompanied by sensual pleasures according to divine wisdom, steer the intelligible self towards bodily pleasures; nevertheless, the intelligible self should not abide by lust, but the other way around. Lust, which is a faculty of our self, calls the intelligible self that guides and drives human will to eating, drinking, and sexuality. Obeying these instincts, the intelligible self accepts the invitation of the power of lust since the self comprehends the reasons in line with wisdom, such as the maintenance of health, preservation of balance of the body, and ensuring the continuity of human species. Nevertheless, the charm of flavors bears the risk of making the bodily pleasures central over the course of time and transforming the reasons arising from divine wisdom into pretexts. Thus, man is directed towards eating, drinking, and having sex for the sake of

¹⁶ Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Alī Ibn Sīnā, “Risālat al-‘ahd,” in *Majmū‘at al-rasāʾil*, ed. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ṣabrī al-Kurdī (Egypt: Maṭba‘at Kurdistān al-‘Ilmiyyah, AH 1328), 207.

pleasure and control becomes out of the question. Then, one should taste these flavors according to the purposes of creation and not for pleasure, in other words, reason and should not surrender to lust. For this purpose, the intelligible self should deceive its impulses and be able to move at least certain flavors away from its character on the condition of maintaining balance. Apparently, Ibn Sīnā uses "to deceive" here as an ascetism supported by theory.

Therefore, Ibn Sīnā indicates in a very clear and comprehensible manner that one has to promise Allāh to eat, drink, and have sex only to the extent that such behavior complies with divine wisdom, displays minimum frequency to preserve the individual and the species, and above all, does not make pleasures the essential purpose of one's deeds.

Moreover, Ibn Sīnā writes as follows in the *Risālat al-ʿabd*, just after the abovementioned passage: "Then, he shall not lapse in respect for the rules of sharīʿah and divine laws and in the performance of physical worship." How should the abovementioned words by Ibn Sīnā, who is well aware of the Qurʾānic verse that describes alcoholic drink (*kbamr*) as one of the tricks used by Satan to deceive man, be interpreted?

VI.

There is one possible objection here: Let us suppose that al-Ghazālī was wrong to use the passage by Ibn Sīnā in *Risālat al-ʿabd* regarding the consumption of wine by this philosopher as evidence and that this is a question of a misunderstanding/incorrect description. Nevertheless, is it not the case that the judgment of al-Ghazālī is confirmed, since there are expressions in other references about the fact that Ibn Sīnā underestimated the sharīʿah and continued drinking wine?

To respond to such an objection, we will examine the essential biographical source of Ibn Sīnā. This is his autobiography, which Ibn Sīnā had his disciple al-Jūzjānī write, and which the latter completed after the demise of his tutor.

The autobiography, which Ibn Sīnā had a disciple partly write, includes two occasions on which Ibn Sīnā drank *sharāb*. The first event is recounted by Ibn Sīnā himself, while the second is recounted by al-Jūzjānī, who wrote the autobiography under guidance of Ibn Sīnā before completing it after the death of the latter. Regarding the

first occasion, Ibn Sīnā talks about the period when he learned the science of medicine:

... I was also interested in *fiqh* and had debates about it; I was sixteen back then. For the next one and a half years, I completely concentrated on science and reading and resumed reading all aspects of logic and philosophy. For this period (of one and a half years), I never slept for an entire night and did nothing else during the day. I got some pages in front of me and identified the syllogistic premises in each proof I analyzed as well as the layout (of these premises) and their possible conclusions. I took into account the conditions of the premises (of problems I studied) until I was certain about the correctness of the relevant problem. Because of the problems that surprised me and (for which) I could not (comprehend) the middle term of the syllogism, I often went to the mosque, performed *ṣalāh* and begged the Creator of All (*al-Mubdiʿ*) so that He would make the closed open and the difficult easy for me. At night, I came back home and got my oil lamp ready; I used it to read and write. Once sleep got the better of me or I felt weakness in my mind, I set my sight on drinking a glass of “*sharāb*” – in order to gather my strength – before resuming my study. Once I fell asleep, I had dreams about the essences of related problems; numerous issues have been revealed to me in my sleep.¹⁷

Indeed, Ibn Sīnā uses the word *sharāb* (الشرب) in a very explicit and unhesitating manner. However, if we understand *sharāb* of Ibn Sīnā as *khamr* like al-Ghazālī did, then three problems emerge. First, as Ibn Sīnā recounts, he is just a boy of seventeen at the time. This is a strange and odd situation involving a young prodigy from an upper-class family in those days. This leads to the inevitable question of how back in those days and in a reputable family, the consumption of

¹⁷ William E. Gohlman, ed. and trans., *The Life of Ibn Sina: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), 28, 30. Besides, M. Cüneyt Kaya published a meticulous translation of the autobiography based on its earliest available copy (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Library, Nadir Eserler MS 4755, 308r-317v); see Abū ‘Ubayd ‘Abd al-Wāhid ibn Muḥammad al-Jūzjānī, “Büyük Üstat [İbn Sīnâ’nın] –Allah ona rahmet etsin– *Sergüzeşt* Olarak Bilinen Hayatı, Kitaplarının Listesi, [Yaşadığı] Hallerin ve Hayat Hikâyesinin Anlatımı,” trans. M. Cüneyt Kaya, www.academia.edu/37630881/Ibn_Sinânin_Hayatı_Sîretüŝ-Şeyhir-reîs_Autobiography_of_Ibn_Sina_, accessed May 25, 2019.

wine (*kbamr*) by a boy of 17.5 years can be understood and how Ibn Sīnā himself can comfortably talk about this incident. Second, it would be very odd for a young man who frequents the mosque at night, performs the *salāt al-ḥājib* and begs Allah to find a solution to the problems he cannot solve or understand, and then attains a spiritual guide in his dreams to drink wine (*kbamr*) – even though it is strictly forbidden by Islam. The third question is directly related to wine: anyone familiar with intoxication knows that wine and other alcoholic beverages do not revitalize a tired mind; on the contrary, they perplex thoughts and intoxicate. The cost of relief and joy through alcohol is oblivion, numbness of consciousness, and a blackout. Therefore, how can Ibn Sīnā obtain assistance from alcohol to revitalize his mind during his studies of very difficult and abstract issues?

Then again, how can we explain the statement by Ibn Sīnā that he drank *sharāb* at such an early age? Indeed, the text explains itself: Ibn Sīnā, who initially informs us that he is interested in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and who even participates in debates about *fiqh*, is evidently aware of the provisions regarding wine (*kbamr*). Then, it is easier to see what Ibn Sīnā meant by the word *sharāb* if we determine which *fiqh* he adhered to.

In the very beginning of his autobiography, Ibn Sīnā talks about Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Nātilī, his tutor of logic and philosophical disciplines: “Before he arrived, I busied myself with Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and frequented Ismā‘īl al-Zāhid; I was among those who asked the best questions. As jurists (*faqīh*) usually do, I became very familiar with ways of questioning and objection against the responder.”¹⁸ As we can see, Ibn Sīnā set out on his journey in science through *fiqh*, led by Ismā‘īl al-Zāhid, one of the prominent Ḥanafī *faqīhs* of the time. Evidently, Ibn Sīnā, who obtained a well-grounded religious education since his childhood and who particularly studied *fiqh*, knew very well that according to the Qur’ān, *kbamr* is among the tricks used by Satan to mislead man. Therefore, by the word *sharāb*, Ibn Sīnā only means a beverage-like date juice (*nabīdh*), which is made of various fruits and cereals, including must (*şıra* in modern Turkish) and *boza*, and which among the four madhhabs are considered *ḥalāl* only by the Ḥanafī.

¹⁸ Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina*, 20.

As a matter of fact, an interesting and significant reference confirms the abovementioned fact. In a chapter on Ibn Sīnā in his *Tatimmat Şiwān al-ḥikmah*, al-Bayhaqī (d. 556/1169) repeats the autobiography of Ibn Sīnā – albeit in third-person singular – except for occasional interferences where the author speaks himself. In this passage, al-Bayhaqī clarifies that the word *sharāb* in the original text is actually *nabīdh*, staying in total compliance with the autobiography: “When sleep got the better of him or he worried about weakness in his nature, he drank a glass of *nabīdh*.” Following this quotation, al-Bayhāqī steps in and, leaving aside the autobiographical text, writes the following phrase in person: “Plato and similar ancient philosophers were devotees. However, Abū ‘Alī amended their *sunnab* and manners; he was fond of drinking wine (*kbamr*) and relieving his lustful faculties. His followers abided by him in major sins and addictedness.”¹⁹

Here, we have the same problem once again: The text by Ibn Sīnā, and not any other third person, includes no statement that he drank wine (*kbamr*) and considered this *ḥalāl*; it is impossible to accuse him of such a confession, except for the confusion due to the word *sharāb* being used synonymously with *nabīdh*. Even al-Bayhaqī, who does not actually like Ibn Sīnā, mentions *nabīdh* as he quotes the autobiographical text; it is only after this quotation that al-Bayhaqī accuses Ibn Sīnā of deviating from the devout path of the ancient philosophers, drinking *kbamr* and being fond of sexuality. Therefore, there is no confession by Ibn Sīnā; instead, we have an accusation – the truth of which should definitely be questioned by al-Bayhāqī, given the influence of the propaganda regarding the sinner and wine-addict Ibn Sīnā – probably after the lifetime of al-Ghazālī (448/1053-505/1111). Indeed, al-Bayhāqī apparently aims to clear the names of Plato and other ancient philosophers by introducing Ibn Sīnā as the first-ever philosopher to leave ascetism for alcoholic drink (*kbamr*) and the major sins to mislead his followers.

VII.

Certainly, a careful consideration of this the problem of *nabīdh* is much more important than meets the eye. Indeed, al-Imām Abū

¹⁹ Abū l-Ḥasan Ṣāḥir al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Zayd ibn Muḥammad al-Bayhaqī, *Tatimmat Şiwān al-ḥikmah*, ed. Muḥammad Shafī‘ (Lahore: Panjab University Oriental Publications, AH 1351 [1935]), 41.

Ḥanīfah and, evidently, the Ḥanafīs were subject to severe accusations for the issues on which they split away from three other madhhabs based on Ahl al-ḥadīth; for example, they were accused of "accepting a new sharī'ah" for applying the method of *Murji'ah* or *istiḥsān* (a preference for the most convenable provision at the expense of the *qiyās*) since they did not consider the deed as part of the faith. Likewise, the Ḥanafī school is the only madhhab to accept drinking the *nabīdh* as permissible, whereas the same is considered *ḥarām* and found in dissolute persons by Ahl al-ḥadīth. Consequently, during the fourth and fifth centuries AH, when madhhab conflicts were at their peak, the problem of the *nabīdh* constitutes an important chapter in the attacks against the Ḥanafī in the form of heavy criticism and even defamation. Therefore, it is very understandable that Ibn Sīnā, as a Ḥanafī, uses the word *sharāb* in the sense of *nabīdh* – in line with the traditions of his time and region; on the other hand, a refusal to accept the accusation of drinking *khamr* against him means, unfortunately and even today, a defense of the Ḥanafī school.

However, a more attentive observation of Ḥanafī references to Islamic jurisprudence shows that the statement in *Risālat al-‘abd* by Ibn Sīnā is repeated in an identical way but in a jurisprudence-related form. Therefore, the phrase by Ibn Sīnā that "as for drinks (*masbrūb*), he will forbid partaking in them for fun but maybe drink them for health, treatment, and gathering his strength" is a very "Ḥanafī" sentence.

For instance, al-Marghīnānī (511/1117-593/1197) writes as follows in his *al-Hidāyah*: "*al-Mukhtaṣar* reads: Each *nabīdh* of date and raisin is *ḥalāl* if it is boiled at a minimum level despite being tangy or if the consumer is convinced it is not intoxicating and it is consumed without dance or music (*min gbayr labw^m wa-lā ṭarab^m*). This is how it is considered by Abū Ḥanīfah and Abū Yūsuf – may Allāh rest the souls of both. It is, however, *ḥarām* according to Muḥammad and al-Shāfi‘ī – may Allāh rest the souls of both."²⁰ The terminological similarity between the sentence patterns of Ibn Sīnā and al-Marghīnānī is very clear, primarily because they both indicate the word *labw* for drinking *sharāb* and *nabīdh*. In addition, there is

²⁰ Abū l-Ḥasan Burhān al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Abī Bakr al-Marghīnānī, *al-Hidāyah sharḥ Bidāyat al-mubtadī*, ed. Ṭalāl Yūsuf (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1995), IV, 396.

another interesting expression, namely, "... convinced it is not intoxicating." Indeed, drinks such as *nabīdh*, must and *boza* evidently provide the mind with some comfort, and this is what Ibn Sīnā means by "eliminating mental fatigue." Nevertheless, Ḥanafīs leave the decision to the person who drinks the *nabīdh*, finding the "conviction it is not intoxicating" sufficient. The condition of not drinking *nabīdh* for fun and pleasure grounds this characteristic of the *nabīdh*.

In any case, it is also necessary to note the difference between the *fatwā* of *ḥalāl* for must-like drinks – which become alcoholic – and *fatwā* for the prevention of drinking for fun to avoid evil (*sadd al-dharāʾiʿ*). A similar provision is in place for squeezed grape juice, which is the raw material for wine (*khamr*):

When the squeezed grape juice is boiled until its two-thirds evaporated, it is *ḥalāl* despite being tangy. This is how it is for Abū Ḥanīfah and Abū Yūsuf – may Allāh rest the souls of both. According to [al-Imām] Muḥammad, Mālik, and al-Shāfiʿī – may Allāh rest their souls – it is *ḥarām*. This dispute is about drinking in the sense of devotion; as for drinking for the sake of fun/play (*lahw*), it is not considered *ḥalāl* by anyone.²¹

Here again, we see the word *lahw*, which corresponds to meaningless and sinful play/fun and which is also used by Ibn Sīnā; moreover, there is an interesting correlation between the denotation of this act through the expression "in the sense of devotion" by al-Imām al-Marghīnānī and through the phrase "for health and treatment" by Ibn Sīnā.

Consequently, by means of his statement in *Risālat al-ʿabd*, Ibn Sīnā actually orders *sharāb*, in other words, *nabīdh*, to be drunk in compliance with Ḥanafī jurisprudence!

Certainly, the confusion with respect to *sharāb* and *nabīdh* is too significant to be underestimated. Another example of this interesting confusion is observable in the meticulous inquiry by Dimitri Gutas into the madhhab of Ibn Sīnā:

The indirect evidence – the indications, that is, that Avicenna, by elimination, could not have been anything but Ḥanafī – is equally unambiguous. First, it appears absolutely clear that he belonged to

²¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 397.

none of the other three Sunnī *maḏhab*s. Positive proof of that is the fact that he and his associates not only drank wine but also exhibited no compunction in openly stating it. Both the act itself and its mention could only have taken place in an environment where there was no official or even unofficial disapproval of it, and this could have taken place only in a Ḥanafī environment. It is sufficient to refer here to the explicit mention of this act in a source that is contemporary and roughly colloquial with Avicenna, the *Ṣiwān al-ḥikmah*, where it is said of Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī that "although drinking wine is a controversial subject, he would partake of it on the grounds that he belonged to the Ḥanafī rite."²²

The above reasoning by Gutas is definitely correct and based on primary evidence. Nonetheless, since Gutas makes use of the English translation of *The Muntakhab Ṣiwān al-ḥikmah*,²³ he paves the way for another serious confusion by overlooking the fact that the word *wine* in the English edition corresponds to *kbamr* in Arabic. Considering Gutas's statement, it is as if only the Ḥanafī consider drinking wine (*kbamr*) permissible; accordingly, as if the comfort and ease of statements about Ibn Sīnā's drinking of wine (*kbamr*) prove that he is a Ḥanafī.

However, the original text reads exactly as follows:

كان قديم الدرس للفقہ أيام الشبيبة متمسكا بطريقة العفاف والسداد
وكان يتناول من الشراب المختلف فيه تناولاً على أنه حنفي المذهب.²⁴

The exact translation of the foregoing is as follows: "From of old, he had classes of Islamic jurisprudence on certain days, as he followed the path of chastity and righteousness. During the class, he used to drink various kinds of *sharāb*, for he was of Ḥanafī school."

The meaning of the above passage, which is the first phrase in the chapter on the biography of al-Sijistānī, is clear: al-Sijistānī is a Ḥanafī

²² Dimitri Gutas, "Avicenna's *Maḏhab* with an Appendix on the Question of His Date of Birth," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5/6 (1987-1988), 331.

²³ D. M. Dunlop, ed., *The Muntakhab Ṣiwān al-ḥikmah of Abū Sulaimān as-Sijistānī: Arabic Text, Introduction, and Indices* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), lines 2850-51, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110806823>.

²⁴ Abū Sulaymān Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir ibn Bahrām al-Sijistānī, *Ṣiwān al-ḥikmah wa-thalāth rasā'il*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān, 1974), 311.

jurisprudent who is also a man of chastity and righteousness and who abides by religious commandments and prohibitions. Accordingly, his habitude of drinking various kinds of *sharāb* – even during classes – cannot be found strange since he is from the Ḥanafī school.

Presumably, there were several accusations back then of al-Sijistānī as well for being light and drinking *sharāb*, and this is why the phrase above is included; this must be the reason for the careful statement that he lectured on Islamic jurisprudence “as he followed the path of chastity and righteousness.” As emphasized before, other madhhabs of Islamic jurisprudence, and the Ḥanbalī school above all, made extreme accusations since, for them, there was no difference between drinking *nabīdh* and *khamr*, and since they had absolute faith in the accuracy of their opinion.

In any case, since there is no dispute between all madhhabs of Islamic jurisprudence, including Ḥanafī, about the fact that the consumption of wine (*khamr*), which is clearly described in Qurʾān as a “Satanic smear,” is *ḥarām*, this text explicitly demonstrates that back then, the word *sharāb* was employed synonymously with *nabīdh*, which was seen as permissible in Ḥanafī eyes. This is why, even though the evidence and reasoning by Gutas is correct, the problem about what Ibn Sīnā actually drank remains unsolved, since the word *sharāb* in translated into English as “wine” – which actually corresponds to *khamr*.

In fact, the venerable Turkish translator of Gutas’s article has added the following explanation in the footnotes for clarification:

The autobiography of Ibn Sīnā and referential texts about Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī, to which Gutas refers about the problem of “wine/act of drinking,” actually use the word *sharāb* and not *khamr*, which is clearly declared *ḥarām* in the Qurʾān through a strong maxim. Although Gutas chooses to correspond this word with wine in the sense of *khamr*, it seems inappropriate to translate the word as wine in the sense of *khamr*. Indeed, as is known, the Ḥanafī stipulated various provisions with respect to drinks made of raisin, dried date, barley, millet, honey, etc., except for grape-based *khamr*, depending on their time of immersion, whether they are boiled, the time of boiling, stages of foaming and becoming alcoholic, or being pure or mixed. According to Abū Ḥanīfah and Abū Yūsuf, it is not *ḥarām* or should not be forbidden to partake certain drinks in the abovementioned group on the condition of not getting drunk. In this

regard, drinking *sharāb* and not *kbamr* by Ibn Sīnā may be construed as evidence of his adherence to the Ḥanafī madhhab.²⁵

Moreover, it would be incorrect to assume that the problem of *sharāb/nabīdh* constituted a problem only for Ibn Sīnā. In the beginnings of his *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) writes about the mistakes of historians; accordingly, he criticizes the reports that Hārūn al-Rashīd used to set up assemblies and drink wine (*kbamr*), saying the following: “al-Rashīd exclusively drank date juice (*nabīdh*) in line with the practice of Ahl al-‘Irāq madhhab. Their *fatwās* about this issue are renowned. As for (his drinking of) wine (*kbamr*), there is no way of accusing him of this deed or reciting groundless reports about this act.”²⁶ Needless to say, Ibn Khaldūn means the Ḥanafī school with the expression “Ahl al-‘Irāq.”

The second mention of *sharāb* in the autobiography of Ibn Sīnā, this time in the part written by al-Jūzjānī, clarifies the situation even further. On this occasion, al-Jūzjānī describes an account that he witnessed to show the genius of Ibn Sīnā: Al-Shaykh al-Raʿīs wrote a work on logic called *al-Mukhtaṣar al-asghar fī l-mantiq* – which he would eventually add to the beginning of *Deliverance* – during his sojourn in Gorgan. A copy of this work reached Shīrāz, whereupon certain scholars in the city examined the book before writing several questions about some disputable issues and sending them to Ibn Sīnā by means of Abū l-Qāsim al-Kirmānī. On a hot summer afternoon, Abū l-Qāsim meets Ibn Sīnā and presents him with the pamphlet of questions. In a noisy environment where everyone is talking to one another, Ibn Sīnā analyzes the questions and asks al-Jūzjānī for paper. The latter prepares and brings fifty pages. Al-Jūzjānī describes what happened next:

We performed night *ṣalāb*; he got his candle ready and ordered *sharāb*. He told me and his brother to sit down and to drink *sharāb*; then, (he) started responding to the mentioned questions. He was writing and drinking until midnight. Once I and his brother were overcome by sleep, he told us to leave. In the morning, he called for me through his messenger; when I arrived (near him), he was on a

²⁵ See footnote 28 by M. Cüneyt Kaya, in *İbn Sîna'nın Mirası* by Dimitri Gutas, comp. and trans. M. Cüneyt Kaya (Istanbul: Klasik, 2004), 23.

²⁶ Abū Zayd Walī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, ed. Aḥmad al-Zu‘bī (Beirut: Dār al-Arḩam, n.d.), 50.

prayer rug, and the five fascicles (fifty pages) were in front of him. He said, "Take these to al-Shaykh Abū l-Qāsim al-Kirmānī and say to him, 'I wrote in a hurry so the messenger would not be late.' When I handed the pages to him, he was astonished and sent a messenger to the scholars (of Shīrāz) to inform them. This incident went down in history among the public!"²⁷

Once again, we face a personal testimony about Ibn Sīnā's drinking *sharāb*. However, just a brief reflection makes it apparent that the *sharāb* in this report is very unlikely to mean *khamr*. How can Ibn Sīnā, who performs night *ṣalāb* together with the congregation, drink *khamr* until the morning and write a text of fifty pages about the particulars of logic – even more, questions that were asked of him about his own work? If we look closely, it is not just "a glass of" but continuous drinking; indeed, it is very difficult to identify *sharāb* as *khamr* for a person who is even slightly aware of the effects of alcohol. In addition, because al-Jūzjānī finds Ibn Sīnā on a prayer rug just after the morning *ṣalāb*, this is the clearest evidence that the author does not mean *khamr* by *sharāb*. Indeed, it is not at all reasonable to imagine this regarding a person who performs the night prayer together with the congregation, who bends his elbow until the morning while he writes for almost the entire morning about the weightiest theoretical problems and who then moves on to the morning *ṣalāb*. However, if the word *sharāb* is comprehended as *nabīdh*, all problems are solved, just like they are solved with al-Sijistānī.

On the other hand, we need to remember the deserved reputation of Ibn Sīnā in the history of the world as a physician. Therefore, it is very illustrative to determine in which sense he uses the word *sharāb*. Let us leave aside the chapters about *sharāb* in the famous *The Canon of Medicine* where he mentions dozens of kinds. For example, in his *Risālah fī daf' al-maḍārr al-kullīyyah* on sanitation, Ibn Sīnā explains the points to consider and the common mistakes as to the preservation of human health; after talking about the weather, temperateness of the climate and nutrition, he proceeds to talk about *sharāb*:

As for *sharāb*, its temperateness is, likewise, similar to aspects indicated [about foods]. *Sharāb* is used in the sense of water,

²⁷ Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina*, 80.

intoxicating [drink] and *rubūb*²⁸ and fruit juices. What we mean here is "water" and the last one [about *rubūb* and fruit juices].²⁹

Therefore, what prevents us from comprehending and accepting that Ibn Sīnā uses *sharāb* in the sense of *nabīdh* because he already declares using the word in three meanings in technical terms?

In addition, the attitude of al-Ghazālī towards philosophers in the person of Ibn Sīnā includes another, hitherto unmentioned contradiction. Let us assume that Ibn Sīnā is a wine (*kbamr*) addict and that the purity of his faith cannot go beyond allowing him to drink wine (*kbamr*) for the sake of health and treatment. Accordingly, he would evidently be accused of underestimating sharī‘ah. In such a case, al-Ghazālī or any of us would be fair and just accuse anyone who has committed the same deed. However, is this the case here?

Siyāsatnāmah, written in Persian by Niẓām al-mulk, who discovered and patronized al-Ghazālī and who appointed him the head scholar of the Niẓāmiyyah of Baghdād, includes an interesting point on the topic of wine (*kbamr*). The title of part fifteen reads as follows: "On attention to verbal orders given under insobriety and sobriety." It is clearly inappropriate for a sultan to give sudden orders without thinking when he is "drunk;" accordingly, it is normal for Niẓām al-mulk to indicate his warnings about the matter. Why then does the famous vizier not express a total refusal and warning against intoxicating drinks?

In consideration of the title and content of chapter thirty in the *Siyāsatnāmah*, it is easy to understand why Niẓām al-mulk contents himself with warnings about orders given during insobriety and remains silent on the avoidance of drinking in general: "On gathering of an assembly of *sharāb* and fulfilment of conditions in every affair." In this passage, *sharāb* is clearly used in the other sense, namely, *kbamr*. Indeed, this chapter includes explanations about the "wine assemblies" of the sultan, recommendations on manners, and even

²⁸ *Rubūb* is the plural form of word *rub* and means the cooking of squeezed grape juice in such a manner that only a very small amount or one-third is wasted. Two of the abovementioned quotations from al-Marghīnānī already show that this was the "*nabīdh*," namely, date juice, which was considered *ḥalāl* by Ḥanafīs.

²⁹ Ibn Sīnā, *Risālah fi daf‘ al-maḍārr al-kullīyyah* (Istanbul: Nuruosmaniye Library of Manuscripts, MS 4894), 308v.

warnings regarding the ways of supplying snacks by Niẓām al-mulk. Moreover, this passage is entirely about drinking for “fun and play” with no mention of making an exception for “health and treatment.”

Given that al-Ghazālī was very close to Niẓām al-mulk, can we assume that he had read *Siyāsatnāmah* or even that he was already familiar with the text during the process of writing? We do not know. However, if so, how can we evaluate the way that Niẓām al-mulk handles wine in the sense of *khamr*, which he mentions as comfortably and carelessly as Ibn Sīnā, considering the perspective of al-Ghazālī in *al-Munqidh* – a perspective that is highly appreciated by Niẓām al-mulk? If al-Ghazālī was shown the abovementioned passages of *Siyāsatnāmah*, would he assert that they definitely included a “hidden blasphemy”? Alternatively, would Niẓām al-mulk be exempt from the aggression against Ibn Sīnā, since the vizier is a Shāfi‘ī and Ash‘arī?

VIII.

There is one more significant question to be answered: As al-Ghazālī was more than capable of analyzing and noticing all these problems, why does he not content himself with theoretical criticism, and why does he insist on seeing and showing Ibn Sīnā as a wine-addict sinner, taking advantage of the equivocal use of *sharāb*?

Al-Ghazālī observed several weaknesses in some persons who introduced themselves as philosophers; accordingly, these observations play a part in leading him to such a verdict. This explanation, however, is not sufficient to explain al-Ghazālī’s fierce hatred of the “philosophers.” If this were the only reason, a similar hatred of his should have been directed at persons who adhered to Sufism or at various Kalām madhhabs, who showed the same weaknesses. Al-Ghazālī, however, never attacks Sufism or proposes its prohibition because of the Sufis who claim sharī‘ah is not binding for them because of their spiritual superiority. His radical rage is directed exclusively at philosophers.

Therefore, we need other explanations; in this regard, the abovementioned incident told by al-Jūzjānī constitutes interesting and significant grounds for thinking about this problem. According to al-Jūzjānī, the response of Ibn Sīnā to the relevant questions through the work of fifty pages written in a single short summer night went down

in “history” among the public; in other words, it was an astonishing achievement that became very famous and popular.

There is an important point to consider at this stage: Ibn Sīnā wrote a work of logic in Gorgan in northeastern Iran; his book was reviewed in Shīrāz in south Iran by the ‘ulamā’, including the *qāḍī*, and their questions were communicated to Ibn Sīnā. The locations of these cities can be checked on a map of Iran. This event is a good example of how rapidly and seriously the works of Ibn Sīnā had spread at the time and what a great impact they made on the ‘ulamā’ and intellectual circles.³⁰

Here, we have a portrait of Ibn Sīnā as a genius who can write a work overnight, who is famous among the ‘ulamā’ and the public for his genius, and whose work reaches everywhere in a short time. Indeed, Ibn Sīnā maintained his image as a kind of “Luqmān al-Ḥakīm” in Turkish, Persian, and even Arabic literature, despite the attacks by al-Ghazālī and his followers: he continued living as a hero in folk stories – where he occasionally performed miracles – named after him.³¹

Despite all such *takfīr* and defamations, the influence of Ibn Sīnā on the senior ‘ulamā’ remained intact: his system continued to dominate Ottoman madrasahs in the fields of metaphysics, physics,

³⁰ For the extraordinary influence of Ibn Sīnā, see Dimitri Gutas, “The Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 1000 — ca. 1350,” in *Avicenna and His Heritage: Acts of the International Colloquium, Leuven-Louvain-La-Neuve, September 8-11 1999*, ed. Jules Janssens and Daniel de Smet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 81-97.

³¹ For a classical reference on this problem, see the chapter titled “İbn Sīnâ Folklorları ve Bazı Parçalar” that consists of a total of five papers within the compilation called *Büyük Türk Filozof ve Tıp Üstadı İbni Sina: Şahsiyeti ve Eserleri Hakkında Tetkikler* published by Türk Tarih Kurumu [Turkish Historical Society] for the first time in 1937, and particularly the paper entitled “Şark Folklorunda İbn Sīnâ Hakkında Yaşayan ve Kaybolan Efsaneler” by A. Süheyl Ünver (pp. 577- 607). Also see Cahit Öztelli, “Halk Hikâyelerinde İbni Sīna,” *Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı - Belleten* 16 (1968), 213-219. *Hikâya-’i Abū ‘Alī İbn Sīnâ*, published on various occasions in Egypt and Istanbul, and the story about Ibn Sīnā in the renowned *Mukhbayyālât-i ‘Azīz Efendî* comprises echoes of the representations of Ibn Sīnā in our classical literature, particularly among the common people.

cosmology, and logic until modernity, and this ongoing influence may help us imagine his extraordinary influence in earlier periods.

We can mention another interesting example in this regard. Abū l-Baqāʾ al-Kafawī (d. 1094/1684), a renowned Ottoman scholar, writes the following about “reason” in his famous *al-Kullīyyāt*:

Intellects vary in degrees because of “the nature on which Allāh creates men,” as is unanimously accepted by the intellectual. (As a matter of fact), the intellect of our Prophet (pbuh) is definitely not identical with the intellect of other prophets. According to some, the intellect of Ibn Sīnā is superior to most; it is reported that he used to eat two small vessels of salt every morning and evening.³²

A late classical Ottoman scholar, and also a *qāḍī*, describes the superior intellect and mentions the Prophet Muḥammad among the prophets, just before mentioning Ibn Sīnā, who used to take two scales of salt every morning and evening because of his superiority in intellect; this example reflects the ongoing profound reputation of al-Shaykh al-Raʿīs. This epic image of Ibn Sīnā provides the balance after the heavy blows of the theoretical and particularly “psychological dialectic” of al-Ghazālī. If it had not been for the opposition of al-Ghazālī, it is hard to imagine how highly Ibn Sīnā would be respected.

Thus, it becomes comprehensible why al-Ghazālī, maybe rightfully in his own way, started to attack Ibn Sīnā in such an extreme manner. It is easy to imagine how strong an opponent Ibn Sīnā was, given that – like al-Ghazālī – his works were neither casual nor one-dimensional; rather, he provided a project for man in the context of intellect and revelation. In fact, Ibn Sīnā wanted to construct a paradigm that would blend Kalām and Sufism around the center of philosophy; the project of al-Ghazālī, on the other hand, sought to blend Kalām and philosophy, with Sufism in the center.

Therefore, the problem with Ibn Sīnā is not the lack of piety; on the contrary, he is too pious. If Ibn Sīnā had built a system that preserves the independence of philosophy and does not interfere with the domain of religion as much as possible, as did al-Fārābī, he

³² Abū l-Baqāʾ Ayyūb ibn Mūsā al-Kafawī, *al-Kullīyyāt: Muʿjam fi l-muṣṭalaḥāt wa-l-furūq al-lughawīyah*, ed. ʿAdnān Darwīsh and Muḥammad al-Miṣrī, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah, 2011), 521.

probably would not be subjected to such a negative reaction. Ibn Sīnā, however, wrote an entirely philosophical exegesis for some Qurʾān chapters and verses, including al-Fātiḥah and the verse about light; explained the benefits of visiting the tombs of holy persons in a philosophical manner; and advanced a philosophical analysis about the virtues and necessity of *ṣalāb*, prayer, and *dhikr*. Ibn Sīnā wrote – still-influential – philosophical works on the demonstration of necessary existent (*itbbāt al-wājib*) and the essence and demonstration of prophethood and, more dangerously, he included in his doctrinal philosophy some significant issues, such as the circumstances of afterlife or even Sufi subjects such as the seats of the wise; all these efforts caused significant unease, particularly among Kalām experts. Indeed, all these activities mean the melting of Kalām and Sufism into philosophy, and they reveal how “dangerous” the philosophical system of Ibn Sīnā is with regard to the conception of religion that he proposes to the Muslim world.

In this case, it is inevitable for al-Ghazālī to activate the philosophical dialect examined here and to disclose the “hidden blasphemy of philosophers,” in which he apparently and strictly believes since the very beginning.

Today, however, the conception of religion proposed by Ibn Sīnā poses no more risks; therefore, the time has come and even passed to reconsider the criticism of philosophers by al-Ghazālī once again from a calmer perspective after a thousand years. Did we, then, attain a sufficient level to carry out such an evaluation and to apply the principle of “avoiding imitation and attaining verification,” as al-Ghazālī always warns?

IX.

Apparently, it is not easy to give an affirmative answer to this question, given the ongoing influence of the psychological dialect in *al-Munqidh* by al-Ghazālī on not only common people or preachers but also on Turkish academic circles.

As a simple but essential example, let us remember the paper called “Was al-Ghazālī right to declare philosophers as unbelievers?” by Mahmut Kaya, one of the significant founding figures in the philosophy of Islam in the Turkish academy. After a concise and elaborate evaluation of three problems subject to *takfīr*, Mahmut Kaya responds to this question with insight, saying that “therefore, it

is impossible with regard to the three mentioned problems to claim the existence of evidence that will show al-Ghazālī rightful in his insistence on the *takfīr* of philosophers. As indicated above, his approach toward philosophers in these issues is political rather than religious.”³³

Thus, at first glance, we finally arrive at the point already indicated by Averroes some eight centuries ago. Indeed, an inquiry into the theoretical dialectic of al-Ghazālī against the philosophers is necessary to determine whether this dialectic had the content to justify the attempt to expel al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā from Islam. In case it is concluded that al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, who are considered the principal representatives of philosophers, are within the sphere of Islam, then it will become possible to reassess philosophy and philosophical thought, and therefore science, and their potential beyond the modern impositions of today’s intellectual Muslim world.

Nevertheless, we should also note that at this stage it is obligatory to overcome the barriers established by the “psychological dialectic” of al-Ghazālī, particularly considering its influence on the common people. Indeed, the Muslim world, which has become ahistorical because of its imitation of the West and which suffers under the heavy pressure of modernity, cannot attain independence or generate new solutions for humankind unless the connection between the mentality that considers “philosophy” synonymous with an abjuration of religion and the perspective that restricts “knowledge” (*‘ilm*) by Qur’ānic exegesis, ḥadīth, and Islamic jurisprudence is duly questioned.

Nonetheless, a few years before his abovementioned words, Mahmut Kaya released a brief analysis and an entire translation text of the *Risālat al-‘abd* on the occasion of another international symposium. The mentioned translation called the “Philosopher’s Oath by Ibn Sīnā” by Mahmut Kaya begins as follows: “Besides, the statement that ‘they shall partake in alcoholic drinks not for joy but for health, treatment, and recovery’ (article 7) has been subject to severe criticism and even mockery of al-Ghazālī.” Indeed, the

³³ Kaya, “Gazzalī Filozofları Tekfir Etmekte Haklı mıydı?” in *900. Vefat Yılında Uluslararası Gazzālī Sempozyumu: Milletlerarası Tartışmalı İlmî Toplantı*, ed. İlyas Çelebi (Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2012), 50.

translator, who accepts the introduction of al-Ghazālī in *al-Munqidh* regardless of the text available in front of him, translates the relevant passage of the text as follows: “They shall partake in alcoholic drinks not for joy but for health, treatment, and recovery.”³⁴

This paper has already sufficiently indicated the fallacy of this translation, which lacks any grounds except for the substitution of the word *al-masbrūb* by *kbamr* by al-Ghazālī. Unfortunately, however, the translation of *Risālat al-‘abd* by Mahmut Kaya, one of the founding fathers of philosophy of Islam in Turkey, is often quoted and used in Turkish academic circles despite the above discussed mistake that introduces Ibn Sīnā exactly in the manner desired by al-Ghazālī.³⁵

Let us assume that you only open the *İslam Felsefesi Sözlüğü* [Dictionary of Islamic Philosophy] in Turkish and begin reading *Risālat al-‘abd* under the title of “İbn Sīnâ’nın Filozof Yemini [Philosopher’s Oath by Ibn Sīnâ],” which is added just after the credits and titles and even before the preface to pay respect to Ibn Sīnâ. As you proceed in a spiritual and even pious atmosphere, you turn the page and come across the following statement: “They shall partake in alcoholic drinks not for joy, but for health, treatment, and recovery.”³⁶ Any faithful Muslim who reads this text will inevitably think that Ibn Sīnâ and all the philosophers, or anyone related to, interested in or sympathetic to philosophy, or even anyone with a positive attitude towards the word “philosophy,” are by no means pious.

Another striking example of the ineliminable mark of al-Ghazālī’s “psychological dialectic” is observable in the most common Turkish translation of the autobiography of Ibn Sīnâ, in the passage where the

³⁴ Kaya, “İbn Sīnâ’nın Filozof Yemini,” 156.

³⁵ However, the translation of *Risālat al-‘abd*, edited by Mehmet Ali Aynî in 1937, is much more accurate, despite being slightly difficult to understand today; if only Mahmut Kaya examined this translation. For the translation, see Mehmet Ali Aynî, “İbn Sīnâ’da Tasavvuf,” in *Büyük Türk Filozof ve Tıp Üstadı İbni Sina: Şahsiyeti ve Eserleri Hakkında Tetkikler*, 3rd ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2014), 194-197. Aynî – accurately – translates the phrase in which al-Ghazālī accuses Ibn Sīnâ of drinking wine as follows: “As for drinks (*masbrūb*), the promiser (*mu‘ābid*) shall drink them not to kill time but for recovery (*tasbaffî*), treatment, and gathering his strength (*taqawwî*).”

³⁶ Mehmet Vural, *İslâm Felsefesi Sözlüğü* (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2016), 6.

abovementioned word *sharāb* is used. Ibn Sīnā says, “whenever I felt drowsy or weak, I drank a glass of wine, and went on reading.”³⁷ Aware of the oddness of the text, the translators add the following footnote to the word “wine” (*sharāb*): “This word, which is *sharāb* also in Arabic, may look suitable for translation as ‘[soft] drink’ at first glance; however, in his *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, al-Ghazālī indicates that Ibn Sīnā actually means wine.”

Apparently, the eloquence of al-Ghazālī continues to influence perceptions despite the explicit distortion. The words of Ibn Sīnā are interpreted through an accusation by al-Ghazālī. Indeed, the translators should have contented themselves with reflecting the literal meaning of the text. Thus, a translation that disregards the conditioning by al-Ghazālī and “may look suitable ... at first glance” would have definitely preserved the original and true meaning.

Another striking example is the article entitled “İbn Sina'nın Hayatı, Eserleri ve Düşünce Sistemi Üzerine [On Life, Works, and System of Thinking of Ibn Sīnā],” prepared by Mesut Okumuş and added to the beginning of *eş-Şeybu'r-Reis İbn-i Sīnâ [al-Shaykh al-Ra'is: Ibn Sīnâ]*, an important book of fifteen articles recently published by the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs. The article provides structured information on the biography of Ibn Sīnā and includes a passage under the title “Dinî Yaşantısı [His Religious Life]” where two problems are discussed: First, is Ibn Sīnā Shī'ī or Sunnī? Second, how pious was Ibn Sīnā in his daily practices?

Following certain serious and appropriate evaluations, Okumuş adds:

Most evidence shows Ibn Sīnā was a pious man and a sincere Muslim in his individual life. Reportedly, advice by the philosopher in his letter to Abū Sa'īd ibn Abī l-Khayr is thought to reflect this fact ... “Bear in mind that *ṣalāh* is the most beautiful of all acts, fasting is the most perfect and virtuous among worship, alms is the most useful among favors, toleration and patience are the purest of all secrets and ways of living, while hypocrisy is the most erroneous and void of all

³⁷ Ibn Sīnā, *Risāleler*, trans. Alparslan Açıkgöç and M. Hayri Kırbasoğlu (Ankara: Kitâbiyât Yayınları, 2004), 13.

attitudes."³⁸ In the same letter, the philosopher recommends consuming drinks not for joy and pleasure but for health and treatment. Ibn Sīnā uses the same expressions in his *Risālah fī l-'abd* where he presents his promises to Allāh; in this work, he promises in the presence of Allāh not to consume drinks except for health and treatment."³⁹

It is indeed very sad to see such a contradictory conclusion, of which the writer is perhaps not entirely conscious, in a serious biographical compilation on Ibn Sīnā that is highly regarded considering both its official publisher (TDİB/Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey) and content.

At first, the author informs the reader in an accurate and prudent manner that based on available evidence, Ibn Sīnā led a pious life in obedience to religious commandments and prohibitions. Certainly, one of the most significant pieces of evidence about this conviction is Ibn Sīnā's meetings and correspondence with Abū Sa'īd Abū l-Khayr, the well-known ascetic and Sufi of the time. As is appropriately noted, Ibn Sīnā thinks and states in written form that *ṣalāh*, fasting, and alms are the most valuable deeds and – interestingly enough – that hypocrisy is the greatest fallacy.

While we are thus convinced about the piety of Ibn Sīnā in his life practices, the author argues that in the same letter, Ibn Sīnā recommends "consuming (alcoholic drink) not for joy and pleasure, but only for treatment and health." Once again, the word *sharāb* is transformed into "drink," which is understood as an "alcoholic drink."

Nevertheless, the mentioned letter by Ibn Sīnā includes no such expression, implication, or even a word.⁴⁰ Why? What is the point of

³⁸ Ibn Sīnā, "Maktūb Abī Sa'īd ilā l-Shaykh wa-jawābuh," in *Rasā'il Ibn Sīnā: Ibn Sīnā Risāleleri*, ed. Hilmi Ziya Ülken (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1953), II, 38.

³⁹ Mesut Okumuş, "İbn Sīnā'nın Hayatı, Eserleri ve Düşünce Sistemi Üzerine," in *eş-Şeybu'r-Reis İbn-i Sīnā*, 2nd ed. (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2015), 30-31.

⁴⁰ The quotation by the author from the letter of Ibn Sīnā is available in his references. However, as we said before, the same letter by Ibn Sīnā includes no such statement that "he recommends drinking alcohol not for joy and amusement but only for health and treatment." Nevertheless, upon observing the reference for the Arabic translation of the letter, namely, *Rasā'il Ibn Sīnā* published by

mentioning exceptional situations that permit the drinking of alcoholic drinks in such a letter that Ibn Sīnā apparently put to paper in a sincere manner and that praised the pious ways of living?

Therefore, why did Okumuş produce a (actually nonexistent) proof about the consumption of alcoholic drink by Ibn Sīnā? The answer can be found in the following phrase: “Ibn Sīnā uses the same expressions in his *Risālah fi l-‘abd* where he presents his promises to Allāh; in this work, he undertakes in presence of Allāh not to consume drinks except for health and treatment.” As we can see, the author is so obsessed with the famous statement in *Risālat al-‘abd*, which is falsified by al-Ghazālī to create evidence for the consumption of wine by Ibn Sīnā, that he creates the illusion of the existence of the same expressions in the abovementioned letter of Ibn Sīnā – even though they are not there.

The problem here is the same as that of the Turkish translators of Ibn Sīnā’s autobiography. It is worth noting once again that *Risālat al-‘abd* is not a text of repentance and that the phrase distorted by al-Ghazālī does not include the word *khamr*. However, mostly due to al-Ghazālī, the information that Ibn Sīnā drank wine, even conditioned by his repentance with the exception of “health and recovery,” has become so widespread that this report has penetrated into almost all descriptions and conceptions of Ibn Sīnā through the direct association with the words “philosophy” and “philosopher.” Therein lies the weakness of the biography prepared by Mehmet Okumuş. Indeed, scientific studies may tolerate inattention to some extent; nevertheless, the information and impression provided to readers through a biography that is published in thousands of copies and assured by an official institution is truly challenging.

Hilmi Ziya Ülken under İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları in 1953, we came across such distorted and misread passages that we examined the original version of the letter in the fear that Mesut Okumuş could be right. This letter is available in foil no. 247 of manuscript compilation no. “Nuruosmaniye 044894” that includes 144 books and pamphlets by Ibn Sīnā. Accordingly, the original version comprises no such statement and gives no indication of such an implication. I would like to express my gratitude to my young colleague Maruf Toprak for his assistance in the provision and analysis of the copy of the mentioned manuscript.

Consequently, the conclusion remains almost unchanged since what al-Ghazālī did in *al-Munqidh*: A sincere Muslim with an interest in and sympathy for philosophy learns that the predilections of Ibn Sīnā for wine addiction and consumption of alcohol are “proof positive.” At this stage, it is not difficult for the reader to comprehend the relation between this addiction of Ibn Sīnā and his philosopher identity – and therefore philosophy.

Conclusion

Al-Ghazālī is certainly one of the greatest geniuses of the Muslim world. Accordingly, it is not surprising to see that his system of religious thinking, created with extraordinary hard work and sincerity, has maintained its influence and inherent authority for centuries. Once again, we should note that during the first confrontations with colonialism of the modern West, the “conception of religion” that held the Muslim community together was substantially established under the influence of al-Ghazālī. This being the case, it is meaningful that the first generation of orientalist, who served as a branch of colonialism, concentrated on al-Ghazālī and pointed him out as the target for the underdevelopment of the Muslim world, together with, interestingly, the Turkish rule. Indeed, whether al-Ghazālī played a part in the disruption of philosophical and scientific progress in the Muslim world is another point for debate; on the other hand, he is definitely one of the greatest obstacles to the Westernization and modernization of the Muslim world – in other words, its fall under the domination of the Western paradigm.

The most important outcome of this fact is that any criticism against al-Ghazālī in the Muslim world includes double-sided and severe risks. On the one hand, the necessity to preserve tradition and find a solution for the depressions of the modern world doubles the difficulty of settling accounts with al-Ghazālī. Nevertheless, it is evidently obligatory to attain or at least draw some near-certain conclusions today. First, the intentional orientalist allegations that al-Ghazālī caused the exclusion of philosophy and science in the Muslim world have profound and calculated weaknesses. Neither Averroes nor al-Ghazālī are truly the persons introduced and described by Ernst Renan. In addition, recent significant studies have advanced that philosophical thought and science had somehow

continued in the Muslim world even after the criticisms of al-Ghazālī.⁴¹

Nevertheless, an intellectual or a political approach is not sufficient either to actually face al-Ghazālī. Unfortunately, it is often overlooked that his system and authority do not consist of his theoretical criticisms or analyses. The “psychological dialectic” of al-Ghazālī was created for its own era and probably led to an influence and side effects beyond his imagination; however, such an influence is still extant and decisive regarding not only the conception of “religion” but also of “philosophy” and “science” among, above all, the common people.

In this modest paper, we concentrated on *al-Munqidh* to examine an example of the “psychological dialectic” carried out by al-Ghazālī to discredit Ibn Sīnā. Al-Ghazālī condemns the conception of religion among philosophers and even accuses them of a kind of hypocrisy by means of a phrase that he decontextualizes and even distorts himself. A closer look, however, shows that this is not the case.

On the other hand, it is truly sad to see distinguished experts who wrote the biography of Ibn Sīnā and refused the *takfir* of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā in theoretical terms or at least respected his personality as a faithful Muslim, take al-Ghazālī’s description of Ibn Sīnā as the *sharāb* (wine) addict for granted.

If Muslim societies, which keep losing strength in the face of the seductive effects of modernity and the major political and cultural crises caused by the colonialist powers, want to succeed in the preservation of their self and provide universal suggestions for the salvation of mankind, then they evidently have to overcome al-Ghazālī’s psychological dialectic – not only in theory – to establish a more solid conception of “philosophy” and “science.”

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

⁴¹ For a greatly informative reference on the problem, see Griffel, *al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*.

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