

AL-GHAZĀLĪ ON DIVINE ESSENCE: A TRANSLATION FROM
THE *IQTIṢĀD FĪ AL-IṬIQAD* WITH
NOTES AND COMMENTARY

by

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THE FIRST INTRODUCTION

[6.6; A 31] Explaining that involvement with this science is important for the faith.

[6.7] Know that to squander attention on something that is of no import and to waste time on something that has no point to it is the height of error and the ultimate ruin, whether this has to do with things theoretical or things practical. God preserve us from the study of useless sciences!

[6.10] The most important thing for the whole of mankind is to obtain eternal happiness and to avoid endless misery. And prophets have come forth, and they have informed all creatures¹⁰³ that God most high imposes duties upon his slaves and has expectations¹⁰⁴ for their actions, their words, and their beliefs. Thus, the person whose tongue does not speak faithfully, whose spirit does not respect the truth, and whose bodily members are not adorned with equity—his end will be hellfire, and his fate will be destruction.

[6.13] But the prophets have not limited themselves just to delivering this

message, but they have provided a testimony of their veracity by doing uncommon acts and wondrous works that break with the habitual course [A 32] [of nature], far from what is possible for men to do. So when someone has seen such things, or has heard of their happening through a succession of corroborative reports,¹⁰⁵ the possibility of their veracity occurs to his intellect;¹⁰⁶ indeed, it is probable that that thought occurs to him the first time he hears [such reports, even] before [his] reason is able to discern between genuine miracles and fabricated wonders. This spontaneous impression and inevitable suggestion are sufficient to tear peaceful security from the heart and to fill it with fear [7] and trembling and to move it to study and pondering. [They can] snatch [the heart] from peace and stillness, and frighten it with the danger to which one is exposed while living in negligent ease. [They can] convince him that death will surely come and that what comes after death is hidden from the view of men, and that what those prophets have said is not at all outside the realm of possibility. The realistic thing to do is to forsake one's state of negligence in [an effort] to unveil the reality of this affair. For, [even] before any inquiry [can be undertaken] to verify the reality of what the prophets say, the marvels that they have shown in

[support of] the possibility of their veracity are no less worthy of credit than the words of some person who informs us that we ought to get out of our house and fixed dwelling because there is a possibility that a lion has gotten into it, telling us: "Beware, and be careful to stay away from it." [7.7] Upon merely hearing their warning, upon the mere thought that what that person is saying is [A 33] within the realm of possibility, we would not step forward to enter the house. Rather, we would go out of our way to take precautions.

[7.8] Now, death being our destiny and our inevitable homeland, how could it not be important to take precautions concerning whatever lies beyond it? Therefore, the most important thing of all will be for us to investigate what [the Prophet] has said, the possible truth of which the mind avers at first glance and prior to any theoretical reflection. Might it truth be impossible in itself, or is it an indubitable truth?¹⁰⁷

[7.11] Now, one of the things that the Prophet says is, "You have a Lord who has rightfully imposed certain obligations upon you; and he punishes you for neglecting them, and he rewards you if you do them. He has sent me as a messenger to you so that I can make this clear to you." And so, the obligation is

incumbent upon us to know whether or not we have a Lord. And if there is a Lord, is it possible that he is a being endowed with speech such that he can command and prohibit, impose duties and send messengers? And if he is endowed with speech, is he powerful so as to be able to punish and reward according as we disobey or obey him? And if he is powerful, [A 34] then is this very person truthful in saying, "I am the messenger sent to you"?

[8.2] And once all of this has become clear for us, we would then undoubtedly be obliged—if we were rational¹⁰⁸—to take our precautions and reflect upon our souls and despise this transitory world in comparison with that other, everlasting realm. Thus, the rational man reflects on his destiny and is not deceived by his own works [here below].

[8.5] Now then, the object of this science is to establish apodictic proof of the existence of the Lord most high, his attributes, his works, and the truthfulness of the messengers [he sends], as we specified in the summary. Thus, all of this is unavoidably important, to any reasonable man.

[8.7] You might say, "I am not denying this impulse from my soul to find out [about these things], but I do not know whether it is the result of a natural

disposition and [my] physical constitution, or whether it is a demand of reason, or whether it is a duty imposed by the religious law. For, people dispute about the source of obligations.”

[8.9] This will only be made known at the last part of the book, where we turn our attention to the source of the obligation. To get involved with this right now is unproductive. But, there is no other course, once the impulse to find out [about these things] has occurred, than to instigate a quest for salvation. The person who turns from that is like the man who is bitten by a viper or a scorpion that is about to strike again [A 35] and who, though he is able to get away, nevertheless remains there to see whether the viper has come to bite him on the right or on the left.¹⁰⁹ Such is the doing of fools and imbeciles. God save us from laboring for that which is of no use while neglecting matters of fundamental importance!

Notes

¹⁰³ *Al-khalaq*: Literally, “the creation,” but the traditional use intends that portion of God’s creation who are answerable to him—that is, humanity.

¹⁰⁴ *Wazāʿif*: I translate this as “expectations” based on the context; but other glosses, such as “dispositions,” “assignments,” or “appointments” are also possible, conveying again the idea of God’s absolute sovereignty over his creatures.

¹⁰⁵ *Bil-akhbār al-mutawātira*: *Tawātur* is a technical term used in hadith criticism. Difficult to render with any single gloss in English, it carries the sense of “a tradition with so many transmitters that there could be no collusion, all being known to be reliable and not being under any compulsion to lie” (J. Robson, “Ḥadīth,” 325). For a fuller discussion of the concept as used specifically by Ghazālī, see Weiss, “Knowledge of the Past,” and the translator’s introduction.

¹⁰⁶ The root here (*ʿaql*) is what in other contexts is translated as “reason.”

¹⁰⁷ Asín has a note at this point which reads:

The topic briefly alluded to here by al-Ghazālī is a theme in nearly all ascetic works. The passages from the *Ihyaʿ*, *Mizān*, and *al-Arbaʿin*, where he develops them more fully, can be read in [Spanish] translation in my section entitled *Los precedentes musulmanes del pari de Pascal* (Santander, “Boletín de la biblioteca de Menendez y Pelayo,” 1920).

¹⁰⁸ The Arabic term here, *ʿuqalāʿ*, is cognate with the important term *ʿaql* which I usually translate as “reason” or “intellect.”

¹⁰⁹ Asín provides a note at this point which reads, “The theme of this analogy seems to be drawn from that of the legends of Locman [*Luqmān?*], entitled, *La gacela y el xorro* (The gazelle and the fox), and *El niño que se ahoga* (The boy that

drowns).” Qur’ān 30, *ṣura* “Lokman,” is named for a man “of old” who is noted as having received wisdom from Allah and then imparting it to his son. This might be the same Lokman al-Ḥakīm (“the wise”) of pre-Islamic Arabic tradition to which Asín is referring, but further investigation of Asín’s enigmatic allusion is warranted. It lies, however, beyond the scope of this study.

THE SECOND INTRODUCTION

[9.2; A 36] Showing that although involvement in this science, is [generally] important, it is actually not so for certain people; indeed, the important thing for them is to leave it alone.¹¹⁰

[9.4] Know that the proofs we will be adducing in this science are like medications by which diseases of the heart are treated. If the doctor that uses them is not skillful, having keen intelligence and sound judgment, he might do more harm than good with his medication. Let anyone know, then, who desires to get some result from the contents of this book and some benefit from this science, that there are four kinds of people.

[9.9] THE FIRST GROUP had faith in God, acknowledged his messenger, believed him to be true and cherished him in [their] hearts. They engaged in both the devout life as well as work with their hands. Such persons ought to be left alone just as they are, and their beliefs [left unshaken,] by [not] insisting that they study this science. In fact, the giver of the divine revelation (God's blessing and

peace be upon him) in his discourse with the Arabs never required anything more of them than [A 37] belief, without distinguishing whether that be faith through trusting authority,¹¹¹ or conviction based on apodictic proof.

[9.13] This is one of the things that is known with certainty, because of the powerful increase in faith among those rustic Arabs who [first] believed [the Prophet]. It was not through investigations, nor by apodictic proofs, but rather simply through circumstance or through some sign that passed into their hearts and moved them to submit to the truth and to believe the truthfulness [of the Prophet's message]. Thus, those people [in this group] are true believers, and one must not confound their beliefs. For if the apodictic proofs were to be related to them along with the difficulties that can be raised in opposition to those proofs, and the resolution thereof, there is no assurance that one or another of those problems might not lodge in their mind and seize them, and not be erased by anything that might be mentioned in order to resolve them. That is why there is no evidence that the companions of the Prophet ever occupied themselves in the study of this science—neither by personal study, nor by oral teaching, nor by the editing of works. Rather, their sole occupation was the devout life and inviting

others to practice it, exhorting the people to their guidance, their benefits, their actions, and their [manner of] living.

[10.5] THE SECOND GROUP: This set is comprised of all those who incline away from belief in the truth, such as the unbeliever and the innovator. The crude and boorish among them—weak of mind, [A 38] blindly obedient of imitative belief from his first breath up to his old age—is helped by nothing but the whip and the sword. The majority of the unbelievers became Muslim under the shadow of the sword; for, with the sword and the spear God brings about what does not come about through proof. That is why, when the pages of history are studied in detail, one never encounters a fight between Muslims and unbelievers that has not resulted in a group of the people of error bowing down to the stipulations [of Islam]. On the other hand, one never encounters a group for theological discussion and argumentation that has not resulted in an increase of recalcitrance and obstinacy [among the ignorant].¹¹² And do not think that what we have said is to close our [eyes] to the [high] estate of reason and its proofs.¹¹³ But the light of reason is a divine gift that God does not bestow except upon a few of his [choosing] while [most] people struggle in backwardness and ignorance. Such

people, due to their insufficiency, do not comprehend the decisions of reason, just as the light of the sun does not reach the eyes of bats. Such persons would be hurt by such learning, just as the rosebud is hurt by the beetle. It is like the saying of al-Shāfiʿī (may God be pleased with him and give him contentment), “He who gives knowledge to the ignorant wastes it. And he who prevents those who deserve it acts unjustly.”

[11.3] THE THIRD GROUP: This consists of those who believe [A 39] the truth on the basis of authority and through what they hear; but, endowed as they are with acumen and perceptiveness, they become aware by themselves of problems that disturb their faith and shake their confidence. Or some specious sophistry assailed their ears and lodged within their hearts. It is important to treat these with benevolence in order to restore their confidence and dissipate their doubts through whatever arguments are likely to be sufficiently effective for them, whether through stigmatizing and denouncing [the idea], or by reciting a verse [from the Qurʾān], or relating a tradition [of the Prophet], or speaking a sentence from a well-known person whom they hold in esteem. If that much is sufficient to remove the doubt, then it will not be necessary to address them with proofs

written according to dialectic protocols. For such proofs might open other doors to problems. Now, if we are dealing with someone very perceptive and alert who will only be content with reasoned arguments that result in settling the dispute, then it will be appropriate to elucidate a proof of the truth for him; but only to the extent that it is needed, and on the specific subject of the doubt in question.

[11.14] THE FOURTHH GROUP: This is comprised of people in error in whom may [nevertheless] be detected signs of acumen and perceptiveness and for whom it might be expected, therefore, that they will [yet] accept the truth, [12] whether through their being freed of doubts regarding their beliefs, or because their hearts are softened [A 40] by those doubts so as to accept [resolution of] the problems due to their natural disposition and temperament. These should also be treated with benevolence so as to win them to the truth and guide them to true belief; not with vehement and fanatic argumentation, for that only increases the impulse to go astray and arouses a stubborn obstinacy and willfulness. Most errors take root in the hearts of the common person only because of fanaticism on the part of some group of ignorant true believers who expound the truth with an air of confrontation and argumentation, looking upon their weak opponents with

contemptuous and disdainful eyes, which causes in their hearts an impulse to be obstinate and contrary, and so their false beliefs take even deeper root in their souls. [Thereafter] it is more difficult for kindly disposed ulama to erase those errors despite the obvious manifestation of their corruption. Fanaticism has even lead a sect to claim to believe that the words a man pronounces in the present moment are of everlasting duration, even after he falls silent.¹¹⁴ Were it not for Satan's seizing control through the obstinacy and fanaticism [of persons] with heretical whims, such a belief would not be found lodged in the hearts of a madman, much less in the hearts of intelligent people. Contrariety and [A 41] obstinacy are quite simply a sickness that has no cure. So let the religious person guard against them with all care, avoid hatred and rancor, and look upon God's creatures with eyes of benevolence. Use gentleness and love as means to guide fellow believers who are in error, and keep from harshness, which, for one in error, only stirs the impulse to go [further] astray. Be sure that to arouse the impulse to willfulness through obstinacy and fanaticism is the thing that will most surely help [13] willfulness to take root in the soul, and the one responsible for having lent such "help" will be held to account on the day of judgment.¹¹⁵

Notes

¹¹⁰ The editors of the Arabic text at this point have a note that reads, “Compare this with what is found in *Fayṣal al-tafriqah*,” in particular pp. 69–71 of the Cairo 1319/1901 edition.” Ghazālī’s final work, *Iljām al-‘awāmm ‘an al-khawḍ fī ‘Ilm al-kalām* (Curbing the Masses from Engaging in the Science of Kalam) must also be mentioned in this regard.

¹¹¹ Here the idea of *taqlīd* is used in a positive sense.

¹¹² For some reason Asín omits the rest of the paragraph from this point on. The ellipses he inserts here indicate that this was deliberate, but I cannot discern any obvious reason for his decision.

¹¹³ Ghazālī’s comment here is sometimes read as a critique of all kalam schools, including even the Ash‘arites, to claiming that they are ineffective at accomplishing one of their primary objectives, which is to credibly ward off attacks and to convince detractors of the validity of the Islamic creed. As I read his statement here, however, Ghazālī seems to be saying simply that even the most orthodox and intelligent theological minds will not be able to convince unbelievers and innovators (who are obstinate by nature) of the correctness of a given position, and that it will be a waste of time to try; but there are other kinds of persons for whom kalam will be a genuine benefit, thus justifying the position that it is a duty for the community of believers generally to cultivate experts in kalam insofar as possible.

¹¹⁴ Asín includes a note at this point which reads: Al-Ghazālī alludes to the doctrine of extreme orthodox [Sunni ?] theologians who explained the eternity of the word of God—meaning the Qur’ān—in such a literal and irrational sense that they even considered the words of the Qu’ānic text pronounced by a man to be eternal and uncreated. On the history of the aforementioned polemics on this subject, see Goldziher, *Le dogme et la loi de l’islam*, 93, ff.

¹¹⁵ For a broader treatment by Ghazālī of this subject, Asín recommends *Iljām al-‘awām*. Asín treats this material in his *La psicología de la creencia según Algazel*.

THIRD INTRODUCTION

[13.3; A 42] Explaining that involvement in this science is [only] an obligation for those who are qualified.¹¹⁶

[13.4] Know that to become immersed in this science and involved in all it entails is not an obligation for individuals. Rather, it is an obligation for the qualified.

[13.6] As pertaining to its not being an obligation for individuals, the demonstration of this would have already become apparent to you in the second introduction, where it was shown that nothing was obligatory for the common people except to affirm true conviction and to purify their hearts of all doubt or uncertainty concerning the faith. So, in reality, arriving at a point where doubt is eliminated is a duty devolving [primarily] upon the people who are accosted by doubt [themselves].

[13.9] Someone might say, "How can this be an obligation for the qualified when you previously said that the majority of those classes of people would be

harmed by this [study] rather than it benefiting them?"

[13. 11] Know that, as was previously [A 43] stated, to eliminate doubts about fundamental dogmas is an obligation that ought to be fulfilled. That a doubt should arise is not impossible, though it happens only rarely except among those of keen intellect. The call to the truth through rational proof to whoever is languishing in error and who carries within his intellect the capacity to understand is of religious importance. Furthermore, it is not unlikely that a heretical innovator will influence and entice orthodox believers¹¹⁷ into error, suggesting doubts to them. Therefore it is indeed indispensable that someone should rise up to unmask his sophistry and put a stop to his enticement by showing its evil. Now, that [14] cannot happen except by this science. And as there is no country anywhere that is free from such threats, there must be, in every region and territory, a defender of the truth who is involved in this science to stand up to the heretical innovators who are attracting those who are wavering from the truth and resolve the doubts that arise in the hearts of the orthodox. If there were no one in the region who could attend to this need, the inhabitants of an entire region would be in dire straits, just as they would be if

there were no doctors or jurists at all. However, if there were no one that professed either canon law or theology and someone were disposed to study only one of the two sciences for lack of sufficient time to study both together, and if we were asked which of the two sciences he ought to choose, we would say that he [A 44] should study canon law, because the need for it is more general and there are more cases to be handled in this discipline. For, there is never a lack of someone day or night who does not need legal counsel, while, by comparison there is much less frequent need to alleviate dogmatic doubts through the study of theology. Likewise, if there is no one in the whole country that practices medicine or cannon law, it would be more important to concentrate on the study of the jurisprudence, since it is needed by the masses and common people alike, while the healthy do not need a physician, and the sick are fewer in number relative to them; the sick person, on the other hand, cannot do without the jurisprudence, just as he cannot do without medicine, since the need he has for medicine is to save his mortal life, while he needs the canon law for his everlasting life, and the difference between those two lives is substantial.

[14.12] When you compare the fruit of medicine with the fruit of jurisprudence, you can see how great the difference is between the one and the other. That jurisprudence is the most important of the sciences will be shown to you in the fact that the Companions of the Prophet applied themselves to its study in their councils and conferences. Nor should you let yourself be misled by the high-sounding name given by those who would give primacy to the art of kalam [A 45] as being the root and jurisprudence one of its branches. It is indeed correct, but it is still of no use for the topic that presently concerns us. The root, really, is correct belief and sure faith, which faith is acquired [simply] by submission to authority and only rarely by resorting to apodictic proofs and dialectical subtleties. The doctor would also cloud the issue saying, "Your existence, your health, the existence of your body rely upon my art. Your life depends on me. Life and health are the main things; then after that comes involving yourself with religion." Nevertheless, the meaning behind these words of misrepresentation by the sophist is not hidden from anyone, as we have previously alluded.

Notes

¹¹⁶ *Farḍ kifāyya*: This refers to an obligation within Islam that is incumbent upon the few who are qualified to perform it for the sake of the community as a whole.

¹¹⁷ *Ahl al-ḥaqq*, literally, “the people of the truth”; this was a common way the Ash‘arites referred to themselves.

THE FOURTH INTRODUCTION

[15.8] Explaining the methods of proof that we have used in this book

[15.9] Know that there are a variety of demonstrative methods. Some of them we have already noted in *The Touchstone of Theoretical Reflection on Logic*, and we have studied them in greater depth in *The Standard of Knowledge*.¹¹⁸ But in this book, we will bypass the abstruse ways and the more obscure methods with the purpose of seeking clarity, looking for conciseness, and [A 47] trying to avoid prolixity. We will therefore limit ourselves to studying just three methods.

[15.12] THE FIRST METHOD is disjunctive reasoning.¹¹⁹ It consists of our reducing the question to just the two parts into which it divides; then we declare one of them false and deduce from that the affirmation of the other. So, for example, we say: The world is either temporal or it is eternal; but it is absurd that it should be eternal; therefore it follows indisputably [16] that it is temporal.¹²⁰ This is the necessary conclusion we sought; it is the cognition that we intended to derive from two other cognitions.¹²¹

[16.3] One of them is our saying, “The world is either temporal or it is eternal”; for, the judgment resulting from that restriction¹²² is a cognition.

[16.4] The second of them is our saying, “It is absurd that the world should be eternal.” This is another cognition.

[16.5] The third is the one that necessarily follows from the other two. It is what we were seeking—that the world is temporal. No cognition that is sought can be obtained by any other means than by deduction from two cognitions, which are its two premises.¹²³ But not just any two premises will suffice. Rather, it is also crucial that there be a certain connection between the two from a particular standpoint and under particular conditions. Once the connection is made according to its condition, it will give rise to a third cognition, the one being sought. This third cognition we will call a *claim* when we have an opponent and *desired outcome* when we have no opponent, for it is just what is *desired* by the one who is making the inquiry. We will [also] call it *benefit* and *branch* because of its relationship to the two *root premises*;¹²⁴ for, it results from both [A 48] of them. No matter what the opponent admits of the two root premises, he will also necessarily and unavoidably have to admit the branch that

derives from both of them, and that is the truth of the claim.

[16.11] THE SECOND METHOD consists of stating the two premises from a different standpoint, such as when we say, "Everything that is not devoid of temporal things is temporal." This is one premise. "The world is not devoid of temporal things." This is the other premise. From both of them follows necessarily the truth of our claim, which is that "the world is temporal," and that is the desired conclusion.¹²⁵

[16.15] Consider whether it is possible to imagine that the opponent would allow the two premises. Then, if it is possible, let him [try to] deny the truth of the claim, and you will know for certain that that is impossible [for him to do so].

[17.2] THE THIRD METHOD consists of our proposing not to demonstrate the truth of our claim, but rather to prove the impossibility of the opponent's claim by showing that it leads to an absurdity and that whatever leads to absurdity must undoubtedly be absurd.¹²⁶

[17.5] For example, we could say, "If what our opponent affirms were true, that the revolutions of the sphere have no end, it would necessarily follow that one would also be stating the truth when he said:

[17.6] “Something that has no end has been destroyed and come to an end.”¹²⁷

But it is well known that this result is absurd; therefore, from this it indubitably follows that what gives rise to this absurdity is also [itself] absurd—that is to say, the thesis of the opponent.” Here also there are two premises.

[17.8] One of them is our saying, “If the revolutions of the sphere have no end, then something that has no end has been destroyed.” The judgment that necessarily follows from the destruction of something that had no end, based on the statement affirming that the revolutions of the sphere have no end, is the cognition that we claim and judge [to be so]. It is possible to suppose [however] that the opponent might admit it or deny it, saying, “I do not concede that this result necessarily follows.”

[17.11] The second [premise] is our saying, “This result is absurd.” And it can also be supposed that [the opponent] will reject this, saying, “I concede the first premise, but I do not concede this second one,” (that being the impossibility that something that has no end should be destroyed). But if the opponent admits the two premises, then the admission of the third cognition that follows from both of them will follow necessarily—the third cognition being an acknowledgement of

the absurdity of his premise which lead to that absurd conclusion.

[17.16] These are the three clear methods of demonstration that produce evidence that indubitably yields knowledge. And the knowledge that is obtained is the proposition that was sought and desired to be proven. The pairing of the two premises which necessarily resulted in that knowledge is called, "proof." Knowledge of the manner [by which] the thing sought results from the pairing of the two premises is knowledge of the manner by which the proof indicates [its conclusion]. Your thought by which you bring the two premises into consideration and seek how to infer from both of them the third term is theoretical reflection.

[18.4] Therefore, in order to acquire the knowledge sought, you must fulfill two tasks: The first is to bring the two premises to your mind; this is called thought. The other is to try fervently to understand the way to derive the desired conclusion from the relation between the two premises.¹²⁸ This is called investigation. Therefore, those who attend only to the first of these [A 50] two requirements say, in defining theoretical reflection, that it is thought; and those who attend only to the second requirement say, in defining theoretical reflection,

that it is to seek the most probable cognition or opinion; but those who attend to both requirements at the same time say, in defining theoretical reflection, that it is thought which investigates¹²⁹ the most probable knowledge or opinion.

[18.10] Therefore, this is what ought to be understood by proof, the proven, the method for proving, and the true essence of theoretical reflection. And after this, leave behind you all of the pages blackened with so many prolix and repetitive admonitions that are of no use to satisfy the longings of the inquirer and do not satiate the thirsty. For, the meaning¹³⁰ of these precise technical terms may only be penetrated by someone who, after perusing many works, realizes the futility of his endeavor. For if you wanted now to find the truth about everything that has been said to define what theoretical speculation was, that inquiry would demonstrate to you that, after long reasoning, you would have not come up with any useful result at all. On the other hand, if you know that there are only three cognitions, two of which are premises that must be related one to another in a particular way, and a third [19] that necessarily follows from them; and [furthermore, if you know that for all of this] you need to observe but two requirements: one, to have the two premises in mind; and the other, to seek

the way to derive from them the cognition of the third; then after that, you are free to choose any of the definitions [A 51] of theoretical reflection—whether you take it to mean thought (that is, the presence of the [first] two cognitions [in the mind]), or inquiry (which is seeking to understand, from the standpoint of the third cognition, how it necessarily follows [from the first two]), or both of these operations together; for [all] these explanations work, and there is no need to make too much of the technical conventions.

[19.6] You might say, “But my purpose is to know the technical terms of the theologians—that is, can they explain [what they mean by] ‘theoretical reflection’ or not?”

[19.7] Know that when you hear someone define theoretical reflection as thought, and another as a search, and another as the thought by which a search is undertaken, then you will not be left with any doubt that the differences in their technical terms reduce to those three senses. It would be amazing if someone still did not understand this and attributed to kalam a definition of theoretical reflection that confused the issues because he felt obliged to choose one of the definitions without noticing that there is no [significant] difference in the basic

meaning of what is said on these issues, and that there is no significance to the differences between the technical terms. Therefore, if you consider theoretical reflection carefully and allow yourself to be guided on the right course, you will know for sure that most captious questions arise from the errors of those who seek for meaning in words when in truth they ought first to establish the ideas and then, second, examine words.¹³¹ [Such persons] should know that intelligible concepts do not [A52] change based on the technical terms used to express them; but it is those to whom success [from God] is denied that turn their back on the path and reject the truth.

[20.1] But you still might say, “I do not doubt that the truth of the claim is necessarily inferred from the two premises as long as the opponent admits their truth. But what would compel the opponent to admit them? And how are these admitted premises (whose admission is necessary) to be grasped ?

[20.3] Know that there are various sources [of cognition], but we will endeavor in this book to limit ourselves to six:

[20.5] First: Sensations—I mean, [objects of knowledge] attained [either] by external or internal observation. For instance, if we were to say, for example,¹³²

“Every temporal thing has a cause; and there are temporal things in the world; therefore, these necessarily have a cause.” Our affirmation, “There are temporal things in the world” is one premise whose truth must be admitted by the opponent, for by the evidence of the external senses he perceives temporal things such as individual animals and plants, clouds, and rains; and also accidents such as sounds and colors. And although he imagines that these accidents transfer [from one subject to another], the transfer [itself] is also a temporal event. For, we do not claim anything but that there are temporal things without specifying whether they are substances or accidents, transferences, or something else. So also, by the evidence of the internal senses he knows the temporality [A 53] of pains, joys, and the burdens of his heart. He would thus be unable to deny [this].

[20.13] Second: Pure intellect—when we say that the world is either temporal or eternal and that beside these two alternatives there cannot be a third, every intelligent man must necessarily recognize the truth of this assertion. If we say, for example, “That which is not prior to temporal things is temporal; and the world is not prior to temporal things; therefore it is temporal,” then the first premise, saying “that which is not prior to temporal things is temporal” must

necessarily be admitted by the opponent, because that which is not prior to temporal things must be either simultaneous with them or subsequent to them, with no possibility of a third hypothesis. And if the opponent should claim a third hypotheses, he would end up negating something with it that is obvious to the intellect. And if he should deny that what is simultaneous or subsequent to what is temporal is not temporal, he would also be denying what is immediately self-evident.

[21.5] Third: Corroborative reports. For example, we could say that Muḥammad (the blessings of God and peace be upon him) was truthful¹³³ because everyone that brings forth a miracle is truthful; he brought forth a miracle; therefore he was truthful.

[21.8] If someone were to say, “I do not concede that [Muḥammad] brought forth a miracle,” we would respond, [21.9] “He brought forth the Qurʾān;¹³⁴ the Qurʾān is a miracle; therefore he brought forth a miracle.” [The opponent] might concede one of the two premises (that the Qurʾān is a miracle) either spontaneously or after seeing proofs and then want to reject the other premise (that [Muḥammad] brought forth the Qurʾān), saying, “I do not concede that the

Qur'ān was brought forth by Muḥammad" (the blessings of God and peace be upon him). [A 54] But he could not do this, because corroborative reports give us this knowledge, just as they give us the knowledge of Muḥammad's existence [in the first place], and of his prophetic mission, and of the existence of Mecca, and the existence of Jesus, Moses, and all of the other prophets.

[21.14] Fourth: That the premise is already proven by means of another syllogism that is based on one or several of the other steps—whether that be [22] evidence of the senses, intellection, or unbroken historical testimony. That which branches from the root can become the root of yet another syllogism. Thus, for example, after we have demonstrated that the world is temporal, it is possible for us to place the temporality of the world as the premise of a new syllogism, saying, for example, "Every temporal thing has a cause; the world is temporal; therefore, the world has a cause." For they¹³⁵ cannot deny the world's being temporal after we have already established it with proofs.

[22.5] Fifth: Things that are heard.¹³⁶ For instance, we may claim, for example, to demonstrate that acts of disobedience exist by the will of God and say, "Everything that exists does so by God's will; acts of disobedience exist;

therefore they exist by God's will." Now, the existence indicated by our saying "everything that exists" is known by sensory evidence; and that they are acts of disobedience is known through the revealed law. If an opponent denies our affirmation that "everything that exists does so by God's will," he may be refuted either by means of revelation—as long as he acknowledges revelation—or by rational demonstration. But we would prove this premise through the unanimous consensus of the [A 55] Islamic community that holds as true the following sentence: "That which God wills [to exist] exists, and that which he does not will, does not exist." It will be the hearing [of this statement] that impedes the denial of the aforementioned premise.

[22.12] Sixth: The premise taken from what the opponent believes or concedes.¹³⁷ For, although its proof is not established for us by sensory or rational evidence, we could benefit from it by taking it for the premise of our syllogism without the opponent being able [23] to reject that which is destructive of his belief. Examples of this kind abound and it is not necessary to single out any one in particular.

[23.2] You might say, "Might there not be some difference between these

cognitions in terms of their usefulness for syllogistic, speculative reasoning?"

Know that they are differentiated in terms of the pervasiveness of their benefit.

The truths of intellectual and sensible evidence are generally acknowledged by

all people, except those who have no intelligence or [are lacking] a sense, the

premise being known [to others] through the sense [he] has lost.¹³⁸ An example of

this would be a premise that is known through the sense of sight. If used with a

blind person, it will be of no benefit. And if the blind person is the one engaged

in theoretical inquiry, he cannot use it as a premise. The same holds true with the

deaf for what [is known] through hearing.

[23.7] The criteria of corroborative reporting [A 56] is also useful, but only [in establishing] the truth for those to whom the corroborative reports have come.

For, if someone comes to us in the condition of being from a distant place, not

having heard of the Prophetic call [of Muḥammad], then no matter how much

we wanted to show him by means of [these] corroborative reports that

Muḥammad (may the blessings of God and peace of all peace be upon him)

showed his calling by [revealing] the Qurʾān, it could not be done without our

first allowing [the newcomer] sufficient time to be informed by those

corroborative reports, the Lord willing that the tradition be established without rebellion.¹³⁹

[23.11] The statement of al-Shāfiʿī (may God be pleased with him) on the question the killing of a Muslim for [his] killing a *dhimī*¹⁴⁰ is known through corroborative reporting according to the Islamic lawyers who followed him, but not for the commonality of [traditional] imitators. How many a question in [al-Shāfiʿī's school] concerning individual questions is not considered to be known through corroborative reports for most of the Islamic lawyers [of other schools]!

[23.13] As for the premises whose truth is based on a prior syllogism, they are not useful except with those for whom the truth of that syllogism is secured.

[23.14] As for the admitted premises of the [various] schools of thought, they are of no use to one engaged in theoretical inquiry except to be used in theoretical inquiry with someone who adheres to that school of thought.

[23.15] As for [premises] from things that are heard, they are not useful except for persons who accept them as valid criteria.

[24.1] These are the criteria for knowing the premises that, through their proper placement and order, generate cognition of matters sought for but

heretofore unknown. And with this we conclude the initial introductions. Let us now concern ourselves with the cardinal themes that are the purpose of this book.

Notes

¹¹⁸ These are *Miḥāk al-naẓar fī al-manṭiq* and *Mʿiyār al-ʿilm*. Asín gives an analysis of the contents of these two manuals on logic in the second appendix to his translation of the *Iqtiṣād*. He also notes that in the introduction to the *Mustasfa*, Ghazālī summarizes the doctrine of the aforementioned manuals and that in the first seven chapters of *Qistas* he also discusses the rules of the categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive syllogism. Finally, the first book of *Maqasid* is dedicated to logic per se. This last work was known to the scholastics, having been translated into Latin at Toledo.

¹¹⁹ *Sabr wa al-taqṣīm*. This is a form of argument used mostly by the *mutakalimūn* which involves enumerating all the alternatives to a proposition and showing all but one to be invalid.

¹²⁰ More detailed arguments against the eternity of the world are offered later in Part 1. See 27.7, for example.

¹²¹ This is an interesting use of the term (*ʿilm*), which is usually translated as science or knowledge here. Sometimes, however, the context demands a different rendering, and I have chosen “cognition,” because it carries the connotative meaning of “understanding” while preserving an etymological connection to “knowledge.” For another example of a translator who opted for this term, see Richard J. McCarthy’s translated excerpt from *ʿAjāʾib al-qalb* in appendix 5 of *Deliverance*, 312.

¹²² That is, the restriction to the two given alternatives.

¹²³ This awkward phrasing reflects awkwardness in the Arabic.

¹²⁴ *Aṣl*, the word here translated as “premise,” is more literally translated as “root,” a basic connotation that Ghazālī was clearly exploiting in developing the analogy he does at this point.