

Introduction

Al-Ghazālī, one of the foremost Muslim thinkers in Islamic history, was a brilliant jurist gifted with an incredible fluency and dexterity of ideas that flowed effortlessly from his mind. As a result of his personal crisis toward the end of the fifth Islamic century, he applied his talents to the service of his grand project, namely the reform (*Iḥyā ʿulūm al-dīn*) of the *ummaḥ* (the community of the faithful)—indeed the age. Al-Ghazālī wrote on a range of subjects that generated interest amongst scholars of Islam and his intellectual legacy continues to have an impact on Muslims today. Al-Ghazālī is a unique and difficult person to assess; just mentioning him brings to mind a multitude of personalities instead of just one.¹ When one speaks of Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sīnā, or Ibn Taymiyyah, one has a singular image of each personality in mind. This is why we should clearly state which al-Ghazālī we are referring to. Are we speaking about the sufi mystic; the Shāfiʿī jurist; the philosopher; or the philosophy critic?

This paper discusses the reasons that brought about al-Ghazālī's crisis and led to his departure from Baghdad at the high point of his career. There was little precedent² for it at the time; the apex of his crisis was 1095 (AH 488).

The modern re-assessments of recent writers³ on al-Ghazālī do not stray from those given by MacDonald,⁴ Jabre,⁵ and Watt.⁶ Their conclusions, however, are varied and often riddled with

¹ The late Shaykh al-Azhar Muṣṭafa al-Marāghī in the introduction to A. Farīd al-Rafai's book on al-Ghazālī, p. 9.

² Save a few exceptional sufis that will be mentioned in the paper.

³ Including accounts by A.A. al-ʿAsam, ʿĀrif Tāmer, al-Baqarī and ʿUmar Farūkh.

⁴ D.B. MacDonald, "The Life of al-Ghazālī with Especial Reference to His Religious Experiences and Opinions," *Journal of American Oriental Studies*, XX (1899) pp. 71–132.

⁵ Farid Jabre in his introduction to the French Translation of *al-Munqidh min al-dalāl*.

⁶ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963).

unsubstantiated claims that are not always compatible with the framework of al-Ghazālī's life. This study will concentrate upon two issues: al-Ghazālī's alleged fear of Ismā'īlī assassins, and *al-Munqidh min al-dalāl*⁷ [Deliverance from error] as a work of autobiographical fiction.

Al-Ghazālī's story is that of the making of a reformer of the twelfth century who left an indelible mark not only on his era, but far beyond. As he put it, he was not afraid to swim the deep oceans with "the sharks," indeed, to go beyond them where no one dared to venture. He had reached the limit and stood at the edge of human comprehension. He says of his search for truth,

In the bloom of my youth and the prime of my life, from the time I reached puberty before I was twenty until now, when I am over fifty, I have constantly been diving daringly in the depths of this profound sea and wading into its deep water like a bold man, not like a cautious coward. I would penetrate far into every murky mystery, pounce upon every problem, and dash into every mazy difficulty. I would scrutinize the creed of every sect and seek to lay bare the secrets of each faction's teaching with the aim of discriminating between the proponent of truth and the advocate of error, and between the faithful follower of tradition and the heterodox innovator.⁸

In fact he hit the proverbial brick wall, perhaps similar to the one Wittgenstein mentions at the end of his *Tractatus*.⁹ In order for al-Ghazālī to go beyond that wall, he had to make a

⁷ Translated by W. Montgomery Watt in *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953). Also see a more recent translation by R.J. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfilment: An Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl and other Relevant Works of al-Ghazālī* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980). The Arabic version used is: Ahmād Shamsuddin, ed., *Majmū'at rasā'il al-imām al-Ghazālī* [The collected treatises of al-Imam al-Ghazālī] (Beirut: dār al-kutub al-'ilmīyah, 1988) vol. 7.

⁸ See the Arabic in Shamsuddin, pp. 24–5, Jabre, p. 10, and in English, McCarthy, p. 63.

⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden with an introduction by Bertrand Russell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974). Some of the *Tractatus* takes on new meaning in the context of al-Ghazālī's life. Al-Ghazālī mentions that there are things that must be experienced and cannot be talked about; a similar idea is mentioned in the *Tractatus*, where Wittgenstein states "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must

radical change in his life. He had to prepare himself for those experiences that no one can speak about and must be shown, that is, experience first-hand, or indeed, as he eloquently phrased it—must be tasted “*dhwaq*.”¹⁰

I argue that it is al-Ghazālī’s unwillingness to change that caused his personal crisis.¹¹ His personal crisis should not be confused with his epistemological crisis. This essay clearly shows the distinction between the two incidents, and this is necessary because the confusion between the two events leads to false conclusions about the personality of al-Ghazālī. I will distinguish between the two crises and call the first a crisis of the mind and the second a crisis of the heart.¹²

In fact, al-Ghazālī’s episode of epistemological crisis was an outcome of his epistemological methodology. He advised students not to adopt any school of thought blindly, but to contemplate and analyze: “He who does not doubt (or inquire) does not contemplate, he who does not contemplate does not perceive and he who does not perceive lingers in the abyss of darkness and ignorance.”¹³

be silent.” (p. 74) Also, “he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.” (p. 6.5.4)

¹⁰ See Eric L. Ormsby, “Taste of truth”

¹¹ He mentions this in *al-Munqidh min al-dalāl*. See the Arabic in Shamsuddin, vol. 7, pp. 59–61, Jabre, pp. 36–8, and in English, McCarthy, pp. 91–3.

¹² I do this for the sake of simplicity. It is my view that the crisis of the mind did in fact bring about the crisis of the heart, exacerbated by several other factors mentioned in the paper. I also argue that political factors played a lesser role in bringing about the crisis than other authors assert.

¹³ S. Dunya, ed., *Mīzān al-ʿamil* [Criterion for action] (Cairo: dār al-maʿārif) p. 409. See the end of his book.

A Critical Outline of al-Ghazālī's Life¹⁴

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī¹⁵ al-Ṭūsī was born in the village of Ṭabarān near Ṭūs¹⁶ in northeast Iran in 1058, and died on Monday morning, December 18, 1111 (AH 450–505). He came from a modest background. His father died¹⁷ when he and his younger brother Aḥmād were still young, leaving them with little money, in the care of a sufi friend of meager means. When their father's money ran out, their caretaker suggested that they enroll in a *madrasah*.¹⁸ The *madrasah* system enabled them to have a stipend, including room and board. Al-Ghazālī then studied *fiqh* in his hometown, at the hands of a sufi named Aḥmād al-

¹⁴ See Appendix 1 for a chronology of major events in his life.

¹⁵ Biographers mention that his name is spelled with either one or two z's—sometimes a *shaddah* is used to denote emphasis (a double letter that is enunciated but never written). Agreement seems to be on not using the emphasis, or using one z, and that is how it is used here and throughout this paper. See al-Subki pp. 191–192 and the footnotes therein.

¹⁶ Yaqūt al-Hamawī, *Mʿujam al-buldān* [Dictionary of countries], ed. F.A.A. al-Jundī (Beirut: dār al-kutub al-ʿilmīyah, 1990). See the entry on Ṭūs (vol. 4, pp. 55–57, no. 8006), a city in Khurāsān province which is actually two cities, Tabaran (vol. 4, p. 3–4, n. 7811,) and Nooqan (vol. 5, p. 360, no. 12185).

¹⁷ As the story goes, his father was a man of modest means who had given up the hope of becoming a scholar because he had a family to provide for, though he enjoyed the company of scholars, jurist, and sufis. When he was in the midst of jurists he would pray to have a son who is jurist and when in the company of sufis he would pray to have a son who is sufi. His prayers were answered, as Abū Hāmid became a famed jurist, and Aḥmad became a sufi.

¹⁸ This system of teaching was widely available by the time of al-Ghazālī. Niẓām al-Mulk is given credit for starting this system. See also *Encyclopedia of Islam*, article on *madrasah* in the second edition.

Rādhakānī. Then he traveled to Jurjan¹⁹ and studied under al-Ismāʿīlī, not Abū Naṣr as has been reported.²⁰

Al-Ghazālī returned home for a brief period, where some accounts say he committed to memory all that he had learned thus far.²¹ He then traveled to Nīshāpūr to study with an outstanding scholar, Imām al-Ḥarāmaīn al-Juwaynī (d. 1085 / AH 478) at the Nizāmiyyah²²

¹⁹ Why al-Ghazālī would travel to Jurjan, which is much farther away than Nīshāpūr (see Appendix 3 for a map of al-Ghazālī's *riḥla*; journey for knowledge) is a cause of some concern. Some other concerns are as follows: the name of al-Ghazālī's teacher is mistakenly cited; ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī does not mention him going to Jurjan at all. It is farther in distance than Nīshāpūr is from Ṭūs. One of the reasons given by Moosa (in an e-mail communication in April 2002) is that he went to Jurjan for his preliminary education and to hone his skills before going to Nīshāpūr (a school for advanced studies) in order to study with the master Shāfiʿī jurist. It could also be that the school was not fully functional at that time.

²⁰ According to al-Subki, vol. VI, p. 195, al-Ghazālī's teacher in Jurjan was Abū Naṣr al-Ismāʿīlī. His full name was Muḥammad ibn Aḥmād ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ismāʿīl (d. 1014 / AH 405). The actual teacher's full name was Ismāʿīl ibn Masʿadah ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Aḥmād ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ismāʿīl (d. 1084 / AH 477). Many modern authors pointed this out, including Jabre. (al-ʿUthmān, p. 17). Abū Naṣr was the cousin of Abū al-Qāsim's grandfather (Abu Sway by e-mail Nov. 2001). Many thereafter copied the mistake that originated with al-Subki. It is quite possible that it was a transcription error that crept into the manuscripts and made its way to the scribes of al-Subki's work. Further, having the surname al-Ismāʿīlī does not denote that he was a follower of the Ismāʿīlī sect, but a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad's family through his grandson al-Ḥussein.

²¹ Some accounts claim that on his journey home the caravan was met with highway robbers who stripped them of everything. Al-Ghazālī ran to the head of the gang to demand his notebooks. The leader acquiesced to al-Ghazālī's demands, and left a lasting impression on the young al-Ghazālī. Thereafter, al-Ghazālī spent time committing his notes to memory.

²² Nizām al-Mulk founded the Nizāmiyyah colleges throughout the Seljūq empire to teach *Sunni* Islam (Shāfiʿī jurisprudence and ʿAshʿarī theology), and offset the spreading tide of the Fātimid-sponsored Shīʿī dawah that was perceived as a danger at the time. It is worth noting that later Sunni historians still considered the Fātimid an

College; al-Ghazālī remained his student until al-Juwaynī died. Al-Ghazālī was one of al-Juwaynī’s most illustrious students, and referred to him as an ocean of knowledge.²³ Al-Ghazālī’s star was rising; with the death of al-Juwaynī, it continued to ascend.

Very little is known about al-Ghazālī’s family, though some biographers mention that he got married at Nīshāpūr, while others mention that he was married in Ṭūs prior to leaving for Nīshāpūr. Some accounts mention that he had five children, a son who died early and four daughters.²⁴ It also seems that his mother lived to see her son rise to fame and fortune.²⁵

After the death of al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī went to the camp (*al-mu^caskar*²⁶) of the Seljūq *wazīr* Nizām al-Mulk (d. 1192 / AH 485). He stayed at the camp, which was a gathering place for scholars, and quickly distinguished himself among such illustrious company. Nizām al-Mulk recognized the genius of al-Ghazālī and appointed him a professor at the famed Nizāmiyyah College of Baghdad.²⁷

illegitimate claimant to caliphate. See al-Suyuti’s *Tarīkh al-khulāfā*’ [History of caliphs], in which he calls them al-Abdiyyan and does not include them in his history.

²³ Al-Subki, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā* [] ed. A.F. Helo and M.M. Tanji (Maktabat al-ḥalabī, first edition), vol. 6, p. 196.

²⁴ His *kunyah* (Abū Ḥāmid) would indicate that his son was named Ḥāmid, but this is not conclusive. Al-Subki also mentions the four daughters, vol. 6, p. 196.

²⁵ Mentioned by MacDonald, *JAOS*.

²⁶ This is *mu^caskar* Nīshāpūr (the camp at Nīshāpūr) mentioned in Yaqūt al-Hamawī’s *Mʿujam al-buldān*, vol. 4, p. 140, no. 8405.

²⁷ See the events of 484 CE. Nizām al-Mulk gives him the title “*zayn al-dīn sharaf al-dawla*” [the beauty of the faith and the honor of the state]. Ibn al-Jawazī, who is a Ḥanbalī scholar from a rival school of jurisprudence and theology states: “His words were acceptable and extremely bright.” (*wa-kan kalāmahu ma-qubulan wa-dhakahu shadīdan*). His was assigned in Jumada I, AH 484 / June 1091.

Al-Ghazālī left for Baghdad in 1091 and stayed there for four years—a very exciting time for him to be in the heart of the Islamic Empire. At the Nizāmiyyah College he had many students, three thousand by some estimates.²⁸ This was also a prolific period in which he wrote a great deal, including *al-Maqāṣid al-falsifah*, *Tahāfut al-falāsifah*, *al-Mustazharī*, and other works.

In Baghdad, an emotional crisis plagued al-Ghazālī, and was the cause of his eventual departure. He left for hajj and did not return to his teaching post,²⁹ indeed, he left fortune, fame, and influence behind. He was beloved by his numerous students and had many admirers, including the sultan; he also had many who envied him. Had he made his intentions public, he would not have been allowed to leave everything as he did.

After leaving Baghdad, he changed direction and headed toward Damascus,³⁰ literally disappearing from the intellectual scene for ten years. He did not teach or lecture, and only did some occasional writing.³¹ This period of isolation inspired the writing of his famed *Iḥya' ulūm al-dīn* (Revival of the religious sciences).³² During this period, he was not totally isolated; he completed a pilgrimage to Mecca and went home to his family on more than one occasion.

Al-Ghazālī, after some consultation with his ‘brethren’, decided that it was time to come out of his ‘self-imposed exile’ and return to teaching and lecturing. He headed home after

²⁸ See al-Munqidh p.

²⁹ See al-Munqidh p. , McCarthy, p. 92; Jabre (in Arabic p. 37 ; in French p. 98); Watt, p. 58; Shamsuddin, p.61.

³⁰ His choice of Syria is not a concern of this paper. It is worth mentioning at this juncture that al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl is the only source for this information; all other sources mention that he went to hajj and then to exile. Al-Ghazālī’s reasons for revealing this information is a source of some mystery. See below.

³¹ This is disputed by Abu Sway who believes that he only participated in sufi rituals; other biographers have him writing during this period, see Watt, Bogyes and al-Badawī.

³² Hereafter referred to as *Iḥya*.

stopping briefly at a sufi lodge opposite the Nizāmiyyah College of Baghdad. Nizām al-Mulk's son, Fakhr al-Mulk, requested that he accept a teaching position at his old school, the Nizāmiyyah of Nīshāpūr. He left this position as well, stating that 'I left them before they leave me.' Then he established a school and a sufi lodge in his hometown to continue teaching and learning. He died shortly thereafter, in 1111.³³

Historical Sources on al-Ghazālī's Life³⁴

The earliest source on al-Ghazālī's life is the autobiographical material that he mentions in *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (Deliverance from error).³⁵ Some scholars have argued against its historical value as such. I will discuss this in some detail later in this paper.

Another source is the biography by ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (1059–1134 / AH 451–529) a student and contemporary of al-Ghazālī.³⁶ However, al-Fārisī does not include some of the details of al-Ghazālī's life that we get in other sources; namely his trip to Jurjan and the sequence of his leaving Baghdad to al-Shām (Greater Syria) and Mecca. Although this account is very sympathetic to the second half of his life (read post sufi conversion³⁷), it is quite critical of his

³³ Al-Subki, p.

³⁴ See Appendix 2 for a table listing original sources of al-Ghazālī's biography. See also the author's website on al-Ghazālī for these texts, www.ghazali.org.

³⁵ The definitive Arabic edition (although still not a critical edition, as the editors did not take into account all available manuscripts) of this work is the one by Jamil Saliba and Kamil ʿAyyad, (Beirut: dār al-āndalus, 1967). The Arabic of this edition is the basis for the dual language (Arabic-French) edition of Farid Jabre. There are many editions; I used Jabre's Arabic and Shamsuddin's edition. I am working on a critical edition of this work.

³⁶ Al-Fārisī's work on al-Ghazālī is recorded in full in al-Subki's *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, al-Uthman p. 41.

³⁷ See Kojiro Nakamura, "An approach to Ghazālī's Conversion," *Orient* XXI (1985) pp. 46–59.

early years and specifically the period at Nizāmiyyah in Baghdad. This is in marked contrast to the account given by Ibn al-^cArabī (mentioned below); al-Fārisī's account paints a picture of al-Ghazālī's conversion to sufism, highlighting the stark contrasts of before and after, e.g. of being asleep and then awakened.³⁸ The account relates how the fear of God brought al-Ghazālī to his senses; how he was saved from the clutches of materialism; how he gave up all his wealth out of the fear of Almighty God and ran to Him.

There are some biographical remarks by Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-^cArabī³⁹ (1075–1148 / 468–543) in *al-ʿAwasim min al-qawāsim*⁴⁰ [Fortitude from disaster]. Ibn al-^cArabī was probably the first openly hostile critic of al-Ghazālī that committed his criticisms to writing. Al-Ghazālī certainly had other critics during his lifetime, but none of their criticisms reached us.⁴¹

³⁸ Al-Subki, p. There is also a hadith that says, “humanity is asleep, until they die they awake.”

³⁹ This author is not Muḥyī al-dīn ibn al-^cArabī, the famous sufi responsible for such works as *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* [Bezels of wisdom] and *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah* [the Meccan Revelations]. They are both of Andalusian origin. Al-Saghir mentions that ibn al-^cArabī made remarks in his now missing book: *Tartīb al-riḥla* [Organizing of the journey]—excerpts can be found in *al-Ansab wa maʿfakhan al-barber* [The genealogies and the notable berbers], author unknown (See manuscript K 1275, p. 173, al-khazana al-āma, in Rabat). Also see al-Saghir's *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī: dirasāt fikrhu wa ʿasruhu wa taʿthirhu* (Rabat: munshrāt kullīyat al-ādab wa al-ʿulūm al-insaniyah bi al-Rabat, Muhammad V University 1988). It should be mentioned here that al-Saghir wrote an article for the conference titled: “The political dimension of ibn al-^cArabī's criticism of al-Ghazālī's *taṣṣawuf*.”

⁴⁰ I used the edition of M.U. al-Khatīb, M.M. al-Istanbuli, and others, under the guidance of M. J. Ghazi, (Beirut: dār al-jīl, 1994). This is a critical edition that makes use of manuscripts as well as printed copies. The book as a whole is a refutation of shīʿa claims about the events following the death of the Messenger and the assumption of caliphate by Abū Bakr and his party up to al-Ḥussein's death. This material is not available in all editions. It is mentioned by al-Badawī in the appendix to his *Muʿalafāt al-Ghazālī*.

⁴¹ Except al-Ghazālī's answer to the critics of the *Iḥya ʿulūm al-dīn: al-Imla ala ishkālāt al-Iḥya*. Published in the final volume of the *Iḥya ʿulūm al-dīn* in some editions.

Ibn al-^cArabī harshly criticized anyone he disagreed with on any opinion. He calls the literary Ibn Qutaybah an ignorant person (*jāhil*), and the historian al-Maṣ^cūdī even worse.⁴² He does, however, look favorably on the historian al-Ṭabarī—this is because of al-Ṭabarī’s meticulousness in reporting traditions and historical accounts.

It has been pointed out that Ibn Rushd’s harsh statements concerning al-Ghazālī may have originated with Ibn al-^cArabī.⁴³ Because Ibn al-^cArabī was the one who introduced al-Ghazālī’s works to the Islamic West, he probably felt compelled to attack him even more harshly than others.⁴⁴ Ibn al-^cArabī’s father was on a mission to ask the Islamic East for help, as well as to get a *fatwā* (legal Islamic ruling from scholars) to fight against the ‘Party Kings’ (*mulūk al-ṭawā’if*) of Andalusia. Al-Ghazālī did in fact write the *fatwā* that Ibn al-^cArabī’s father obtained for Yūsuf ibn Tashfīn,⁴⁵ the leader of the Murābiṭs (r. 1065–1134 / AH 457–528). Ibn al-^cArabī was initially impressed with al-Ghazālī, until al-Ghazālī’s conversion to sufism.⁴⁶

⁴² He calls him a sly innovator (*al-mubtada’ al-muhatal*). Ibid, pp. 261–262.

⁴³ This is of course in addition to or even through Ibn Ṭufayl. See L. Goodman, *Ibn Ṭufayl’s Ḥayy bin Yaqzān*, (New York: Twayne Publishers 1972).

⁴⁴ Though this sounds like reverse logic, in this context it is the correct logical assumption by Ibn al-^cArabī.

⁴⁵ Yūsuf ibn Tashfīn (d. 1061), was asked by the people of Andalusia for help during the reign of the Party Kings. Ibn Tashfīn needed a *fatwā* to fight against Muslims who were receiving help from the Christians and fighting their fellow Muslims in Andalusia. Ibn al-^cArabī’s father died in the Islamic East and did not personally deliver the *fatwā* to Ibn Tashfīn.

⁴⁶ Al-Saghir, p. 175–177. Ibn al-^cArabī criticized his shaykh to stop this trend towards Ismā^cīlīsm, according to the belief of those of ‘puritan’ faith, that any small innovation would lead to heresy. He saw sufism as an innovation of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, who were Ismā^cīlī; and believed that it was part of an overall plan by Ismā^cīlīs to hijack ‘true’ Islam.

The reason that Ibn al-^ʿArabī rebukes al-Ghazālī is twofold; first, because he believed that there was a connection between sufism and Ismā^ʿīlīsm⁴⁷ and he envisioned sufism as a foreign element (perhaps even as Neo-Platonist philosophy); a continuation of Ismā^ʿīlī / *baṭinī* thought into Sunni Islam. The other is al-Ghazālī’s usage of weak narration of hadith⁴⁸ in the *Ihya*. But more than these reasons, is the fact that al-Ghazālī’s *Ihya* was a clear call to sufism, which Ibn al-^ʿArabī perceived as akin to Ismā^ʿīlīsm. Ibn al-^ʿArabī did not see droves of Muslims taking on mystical tendencies, but envisioned a wholesale Muslim conversion to Shī^ʿī Islam. So it was not strange to see the Islamic West burning copies of the *Ihya* along with other heretical works.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Note on usage: in this context the terms *Ismā^ʿīlī*, *baṭānī*, and *shī^ʿa* are used interchangeable, because at the time, they did refer to the same thing—a united front coming from the west assaulting Sunni Islam in the east. According to al-Sharastani in his book *al-Milāl wa al-nihāl*, eds. Amir Ali Mahna and Ali Hasan Fa’our (Beirut: dār al-ma^ʿārifā, 1998) p. 229, in the section on *baṭānīya*: “In Iraq they are called “*al-baṭānīya*, *al-qaramita* and *al-mazdakiya*” and in Khurāsān “*al-ta^ʿlīmīya* and *al-mulhida*.” They say: “we are Ismā^ʿīlīs because we distinguish [or differentiate] from the shī^ʿa sects with this name and this [particular] person.” Note that al-Ghazālī refers to them according to how they were understood in the given locale for whom he wrote his books, for example, *al-Mustaẓharī* was written for Iraq, and they are referred to as *al-baṭānīya*.

⁴⁸ Some of the hadith used by al-Ghazālī are weak, and some are even fabricated. According to Ibn al-Jawazī, al-Ghazālī was a *nighttime woodcutter* when it came to hadith sciences. However, among scholars of hadith, there are two prevailing schools of thought: one that allows for the use of weak hadith for *wā^ʿiz* (sermons), but not in jurisprudence or other subjects, and another school (many Ḥanbalī, like Ibn al-Jawazī) that does not allow its use at all, under any circumstance. Al-Ghazālī was aware of this; to prove that his use of these hadith was conscious, he used strong hadith in other works; see his *al-Mustasfa min ʿilm al-ʿusul*. He says of himself in *al-Imla ala ishkalāt al-Ihya* that his knowledge of hadith is “*bidayyātī mizja*” (a mixed trade). See the Qur’anic reference to Sura Yūsuf 12:24) printed as an appendix to *Ihya*.

⁴⁹ Al-Saghir states that the incident of book burning is in need of re-evaluation.

The next author is the famous historian Ibn ʿAsākir (1105–1176 / AH 499–571). In his book *Tabyīn kadhib al-muftari fīma nasib ʿalʿa Imām Abū al-Ḥasan al-Āshʿarī* [Elucidation on the lies of the innovator concerning what has been attributed to the master Abū al-Ḥasan al-Āshʿarī]⁵⁰ Ibn ʿAsākir mentions ʿAbd al-Ghāfir’s al-Farīsī’s account as well as a reported dream.⁵¹

Ibn al-Jawazī (1126–1200 / AH 510–597) also includes a biography⁵² of al-Ghazālī in his history, *al-Muntadhim fī tarīkh al-muluk wa al-umam* [The system in the history of kings and nations]. Ibn al-Jawazī’s account is critical of al-Ghazālī’s sufism and his use of weak hadith, without being hostile. He calls him *ḥaṭāb layl* “a nighttime wood cutter” in hadith sciences.⁵³ This account set the standard for many critics, including Ibn Taymiyyah, another Ḥanbalī jurist. Ibn al-Jawazī praises al-Ghazālī’s other works as original and well organized. It

⁵⁰ Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tabyīn kadhib al-muftari fīma nasib ʿalʿa Imām Abū al-Ḥasan al-Āshʿarī* [Elucidation on the lies of the innovator concerning what has been attributed to the master Abū al-Ḥasan al-Āshʿarī] ed. al-Qudsi, (Maṭbʿat al-tawfīq, AH 1347) pp. 291–306. Al-Ghazālī belonged to the School of Āshʿarī theology; this has been questioned lately by Nakamura and Frank. See the section on Āshʿarīsm online (www.ghazali.org/site/asharism.htm).

⁵¹ In al-Sawī’s dream, he read *Qawāʾid al-ʿaqāʾid* (from al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā ʿulūm al-dīn*) in the presence of the Messenger Muhammad who was happy with it. Al-Subki’s account also includes many dream reports.

⁵² Ibn al-Jawazī, *al-Muntadhim fī tarīkh al-muluk wa al-umam* [The system in the history of kings and nations], vol. 9, pp. 168-170, no. 277, Hyderabad edition; the entry for the death notices for the year 505.

⁵³ Meaning that one who cannot distinguish what he has, might pick up a poisonous reptile thinking that it is wood when in fact it could bring about his demise. Ibn al-ʿArabī, p. 260, n. 488.

should be noted that al-Jawazī authored two books about the *Ihya*; one is a summary⁵⁴ and elucidation on some of its points, and another is a critical review.⁵⁵

Yaqūt al-Hamawī (d. 1228 / AH 626) includes a brief biography of al-Ghazālī in his geographical dictionary *Mʿujam al-buldān* [Dictionary of countries], in the entry on Ṭūs. It is a short account of al-Ghazālī's life that includes some *rithā'* (eulogy) poetry.

Ibn Khalkan (d. 1211–1282 / AH 681), in his biographical dictionary *Wafyat al-ayan wa anba' abna' al-zamān* [Obituaries of the notables and the biographies of the children of the age] includes a brief, neutral biography of al-Ghazālī in which he mentions a small list of works, as well as poetry attributed to al-Ghazālī and the eulogy quoted by Yaqūt al-Hamawī.

In his biographical dictionary *Sīr al-lam al-nubla'* [Biographies of the notable wonders], Imām al-Dhahabī's (d. 1348 / AH 748) biography of al-Ghazālī is a generous sized entry that is neither a scathing criticism nor full of praise. He mentions that al-Ghazālī was extremely intelligent and was a wonder of the ages.⁵⁶ Although his commentary on al-Ghazālī is neutral, he does quote a number of sources who are downright vicious toward al-Ghazālī's person.

The remaining biographers after this period quote the above mentioned sources, but add very little in value, till we reach two accounts by scholars who studied al-Ghazālī. One account is by al-Subkī,⁵⁷ the Shāfi'ī jurist (1327–1370 / AH 727–771) who is famous for writing a

⁵⁴ Called *Minhaj al-qasdān* [Methodology of seekers], it is in two volumes that was further summarized by al-Maqsī in one smaller volume, which is now a widely circulated book.

⁵⁵ Titled *'Ilam al-'Ayah' bi-'Aghlat al-Ihya* [Informing the living about the errors of the revival]; he also reports about it in his book *Talbis iblis* [Devil's deception].

⁵⁶ Imām al-Dhahabī, *Sīr al-lam al-nubla'* [Biographies of the notable wonders] vol. 19, pp. 322–346, no. 204.

⁵⁷ Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'īyya al-kubrā*, eds. A.F. Helo and M. M. Tanji (Maktabat al-ḥalabī, first edition, vol. 6, pp. 191–?). In the alternate print edition, vol. 3 pp. 416–536, entry 694.

grand biography of famous Shāfiʿī jurists. He of course had much to say on al-Ghazālī being one of the Shāfiʿī luminaries. His is by far the most comprehensive biography of al-Ghazālī up until the time of Murtada al-Zubidi, author of the famed *Tāj al-urūs*, the grand commentary of *al-Qamūs*. Al-Subki mentions in his biography that he wants to be fair⁵⁸ with al-Ghazālī by quoting accounts of both admirers and detractors.

Al-Subki mentions al-Ghazālī's life in detail and lists many of the legends that have grown around his life and rejects some as false. Some of the reports are from al-Ghazālī's teacher; al-Subki mentions that he went back to the original sources and could not verify the claims of al-Ghazālī's teacher.⁵⁹ The account is overly positive and it is unusual that he does not quote from al-Ghazālī's *al-Munqidh*, but he does quote al-Fārisī's account in full. In fact, his citation of al-Fārisī's report is the only complete source we have for that first hand report.⁶⁰

Al-Subki's account does not deal with any of the 'troubling' facts of al-Ghazālī's life. This is where, as will be mentioned in this paper, *al-Munqidh* does offer us unique insight into the psychological dimensions of al-Ghazālī's life.⁶¹ Notably, al-Subki's account is the source of

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 203–204.

⁵⁹ Ibid., see pp. 197–198. His teacher, al-Dhahabī, mentions that al-Ghazālī stayed in Greater Syria for 20 years (!) according to Ibn ʿAsākir, when al-Subki checked on Ibn ʿAsākir, he could not find the quotation and thus rejected the report.

⁶⁰ Others have it in a condensed and reworded format, see Ibrāhīm al-Siyarī's condensed version of ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī's *al-Siyāq li tārikh Nīshāpūr* [History of Nīshāpūr] titled: *al-Mutakhab min al-siyāq li-tārikh Nīshāpūr* (Beirut: dār al-kutub al-ʿilmīyya, 1998).

⁶¹ Although *al-Munqidh* was written in retrospect it should not be dismissed as a simple conversion narrative or autobiographical sketch similar to Ibn Sīnā's account or even to Ibn Khaldūn's longer autobiography, rather it should be seen as a multifaceted work on the lessons of life, on a par with, if not superior to Ibn al-Jawazī's *Said al-khaṭīr* (Beirut: 1998).

one error on al-Ghazālī's life, and it is quite possible that it was not intentional, rather a mere copyist error.⁶² Al-Subki's biography of al-Ghazālī became the de-facto standard to which all scholars of al-Ghazālī refer.

The other account is by Murtada al-Zubidi⁶³ (d. AH 1205), who has nothing but praise for al-Ghazālī in his introduction to a grand commentary on the *Iḥya*. His admiration, even love of al-Ghazālī, is the most prominent feature of the work. Al-Zubidi cites all the historians mentioned, and numerous other accounts, but overall adds little to our understanding of al-Ghazālī and his crises.⁶⁴

Critical Modern Biographies of al-Ghazālī's Life

There are numerous biographies of al-Ghazālī, written at different periods, and varying in their degrees of criticism or praise. I would like to shed some light on the more controversial critical biographies.

One such biographical account is mentioned in the PhD thesis of Zaki Mubarak,⁶⁵ who wrote about *al-Ākhlāq 'and al-Ghazālī* [Ethics according to al-Ghazālī].⁶⁶ The most controversial

⁶² He states that the name of al-Ghazālī's teacher in Jurjan is Abū Naṣr al-Ismā'īlī, see below for a discussion of this issue.

⁶³ Al-Zubidi's commentary on al-Ghazālī's *Iḥya 'ulūm al-dīn ithāf al-sādah al-muttaqin bi sharḥ asrār iḥya 'ulūm al-dīn*. The old Egyptian printed version has al-Idrawis's *Tarīf al-ahya' bi Fadīl al-Iḥya'* and the *Iḥya 'ulūm al-dīn* itself (starting on p. 53 of vol.1) printed on the margins because the commentary does not include the full version. Also printed is al-Ghazālī's *al-Imla ala ishkalāt al-iḥya*, his answer to his critics. The biography is in vol. 1, pp. 6–53.

⁶⁴ MacDonald makes generous use of this biography in his article on al-Ghazālī.

⁶⁵ Submitted to Cairo University and dedicated to King Farouk of Egypt.

⁶⁶ Zaki Mubarak, *al-Ākhlāq 'and al-Ghazālī* [Ethics according to al-Ghazālī] (Cairo: al-maktaba al-tijāriyya).

biographical statement made by Mubarak is that al-Ghazālī makes no mention of the crusades in any of his surviving works. This claim has caused a storm among al-Ghazālī supporters. I found one booklet written specifically to refute Mubarak.⁶⁷ As to the issue itself, al-Ghazālī may have spoken out against the dangers of the crusades, but did not write about the topic, or, none of that writing survived to our day. Alternatively, he may not have spoken out because the Muslim world had many internal problems and without adequately addressing those, he may have believed that there was no way to rectify the external problems. Al-Ghazālī may have perceived of the crusades as a temporary danger; once Muslims became organized, they could easily defeat the crusaders.⁶⁸

Next is a short work in which the author, °Abd al-Dayim al-Baqarī, vehemently attacks al-Ghazālī and claims that *al-Munqidh* is a work of biographical fiction—this is quite clear from the title of the work: *‘Itarifat al-Ghazālī: aw kayfa ar-akha al-Ghazālī li nafshi*. [Confessions of al-Ghazālī: or how al-Ghazālī wrote his own biography].⁶⁹ This paper discusses some of al-Baqarī’s points concerning the veracity of *al-Munqidh*.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ This is a small, privately printed booklet by Ḥussein Ramaḍān al-Khālidi, *al-Ākhlāq °and nabaghāt al-°as°ar*, [Ethics according to the genius of ages]. A copy is available at Princeton’s Firestone Library and it is rapidly deteriorating.

⁶⁸ See al-Kilāni’s, *Ṣalaḥ al-dīn*, IIIT.

⁶⁹ °Abd al-Daayim al-Bāqarī al-Ansari (dār al-nahḍa al-°arabiyya). The book is of modest size with an introduction by Zaki Mubarak, and it seems to be a privately printed copy in which the last twenty or so pages are advertising with pictures of the author’s works and charitable organizations that he formed. Taysir Shaykh al-°Arid, in his biography of al-Ghazālī, quotes quite liberally from this work, as al-Bāqarī’s work is out of print.

⁷⁰ See below.

Al-Baqarī's work was refuted by A. B. A. Razzaq in *Ma' al-Ghazālī fī Munqidh*⁷¹ [With al-Ghazālī in his deliverance {the book}] and by McCarthy in *Freedom and Fulfillment*, in which he takes issue with al-Baqarī's account. McCarthy generously quotes an article by Father Boggi that refutes al-Baqarī's main thesis.⁷²

Another work is 'Umar Farūkh's *Tarīkh al-fīkr al-ʿarabī* [History of Arabic thought]⁷³ In the chapter on al-Ghazālī, he claims that al-Ghazālī's *al-Munqidh* is not a diary, but a memoir that was written partly during his illness; he does not give any supporting argument, and states it as if it were a matter of undisputed fact.⁷⁴ He also diagnoses al-Ghazālī as suffering from a psychological disorder, dementia.⁷⁵ Abū Sway refutes his claims in an article about al-Ghazālī's spiritual crisis.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Abū Bakr 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Ma' al-Ghazālī fī munqidhi* [With al-Ghazālī in his deliverance] (Cairo: dār al-qawmiyya li al-tab'a wa al-nashr, 1966).

⁷² See McCarthy, pp. xxvi-xxix.

⁷³ See the entry on al-Ghazālī in 'Umar Farūkh, *Tarīkh al-fīkr al-ʿarabī* [History of Arabic thought] (Beirut: dār al-ʿilm li al-malalin, 1966) pp.485–514. 'Umar Farūkh has an article on Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' that was published in the *History of Muslim Philosophy*.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 491.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 494–496. This is devoted to describing the symptoms of the illness without offering any proof that al-Ghazālī suffered from it.

⁷⁶ Mustafa M. Abu Sway, "Al-Ghazālī's 'Spiritual Crisis' Reconsidered," *Al-Shajara*, nos. 1–2 (1996): pp. 77–94. This article is available online at (www.ghazali.org/site/on-crisis.htm).

A work that was published in the nineteen eighties by the late ʿĀrif Tāmer, is not friendly to al-Ghazālī, as Tāmer is a well known Syrian Ismāʿīlī.⁷⁷ Tāmer also published work on the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ (Brethren of Purity) and edited some Syrian Ismāʿīlī manuscripts for publication.⁷⁸ His short biography of al-Ghazālī titled *al-Ghazālī bayna al-falsafah wa al-dīn* [Ghazālī between philosophy and theology]⁷⁹ is full of unsubstantiated arguments.

In the introduction, Tāmer calls al-Ghazālī a “sick and disturbing personality;”⁸⁰ elsewhere he simply calls him a “coward.”⁸¹ His main thrust is that al-Ghazālī was afraid of the mighty, powerful, and all reaching hand of the Ismāʿīlīs.⁸² Al-Ghazālī’s retreat from teaching at Baghdad was nothing but running away from the Ismāʿīlīs, and his work, *al-Munqidh*, is nothing but a fictional account aimed at self-aggrandizement.

Tāmer also makes an unfounded claim, that al-Ghazālī was “secretly Ismāʿīlī”, under the influence or control of al-Juwaynī, since he was “disturbed” even after al-Juwaynī’s death and could not shake his influence.⁸³ Tāmer strays even further by stating that the Seljūq / ʿAbbāssid

⁷⁷ See his *Ḥaqīqat ikhwān al-ṣafaʾ wa khulān al-wafaʾ* (Beirut: dār al-mashriq, 1988) p. 8. He calls the Fāṭimids “The great Islamic state whose message spread in every place.” On p. 23 he calls the ʿAbbāssid’s “evil ones.” The author is not attempting to “poison the well,” but to mention facts.

⁷⁸ See Farhad Dafarty’s *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge University Press, 1990) pps. 28, 334, 442.

⁷⁹ ʿĀrif Tāmer, *al-Ghazālī bayna al-falsafah wa al-dīn* [al-Ghazālī between philosophy and theology] (London: riyāḍ al-raʾīs, 1987).

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 53, where he states that al-Ghazālī “...played the role of ‘cowardly’ scholar...”

⁸² Ibid., p. 55.

⁸³ As if this influence was a ghost of the past. Ibid., p. 54.

regime knew about this “secret” and who better to refute the Ismāʿīlīs than one of them!⁸⁴ He leaves it to the reader to assume that since al-Ghazālī studied with al-Ismāʿīlī (this is erroneous) early in life, that he was in fact an Ismāʿīlī, but Tāmer never cites any facts to this effect. For supporting evidence, Tāmer states: “We must go back to the sources that agree with our opinion.”⁸⁵

Tāmer also states: “I am certain ‘*yaqīn*,’ that he feared poverty and going back to a life of scarcity. His nerves could not stand even the memory of those bleak [*sawād* lit. black] days in which he tasted despair and misery. It is this that made him answer every beck and call or a command by force, even though he had a turbulent psychological state that included a critical conscience, uncertainty and fear.”⁸⁶

Tāmer does not offer much to prove his point, other than the strong feelings and sentiments just quoted—this is personal conjecture and nothing more. He says that he does not agree with Farūkh’s diagnosis, and simply states that Farūkh was not scholarly. I believe he would have liked to claim that al-Ghazālī was “mad,” but he stops just short of that.⁸⁷

Al-Ghazālī’s Crisis in Perspective

Al-Ghazālī’s crisis, although of primary importance to him personally, occupied only a small part of his life. It should be noted here that a clear distinction has to be made between his episode

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 56.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 59.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 54. It is possible that Tāmer is projecting his own fears onto al-Ghazālī’s life, given the author’s background and the political situation in modern Syria.

⁸⁷ See his section entitled *Bayna maraḍ wa al-junūn* [Between sickness and madness], pp. 58–61. He calls the malady a phobia.

of epistemological doubt and the psychological crisis that led him to leave Baghdad. That said, it is also noted that the cure⁸⁸ of the epistemological doubt could have led to the psychological crisis⁸⁹ that was a major turning point in his life and career. One could envision what his career might have been had he not been plagued by this crisis. Perhaps he would have written a great juristic work on Shāfiʿī fiqh,⁹⁰ or had a longer and more luminous teaching career. Instead, this crisis re-oriented his interests and reset his priorities; his major work, the *Ihya*, was written the way that it was as result of his crisis and his new outlook on life.

Some have argued⁹¹ that he was not cured, but continued to have episodes of doubt and crisis. They point to works attributed to him that have left writers on al-Ghazālī confused as to his position on certain issues.⁹² These accounts are even more conjectural than the previous, and not based on circumstantial events. Here I would emphasize that these writings are of suspect attribution to him at best.⁹³ Even if one considers that al-Ghazālī has written these works, they

⁸⁸ The cure, which was a “divine light,” led him to give up worldly attachments.

⁸⁹ Abu Sway, p. 81.

⁹⁰ He did in fact have an illustrious writing career. He wrote several works on Shāfiʿī fiqh including *al-Wajiz*, *al-Basīt*, *al-Wasit*, and *Khulaṣa al-mukhtaṣir* (Abu Sway in an e-mail communication).

⁹¹ Farūkh, p. 491, and Tāmer, who considered him “sick.”

⁹² This has had quite an impact on revisionist writings on al-Ghazālī that do not consider him an Āshʿarī theologian but a follower of Ibn Sīnā. See Richard Frank’s “Al-Ghazali and the Ashʿarite School” (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994). Also see Ahmad Dallal’s extensive review of this work in “Ghazali and the Perils of Interpretation” *JAOS* 122:4 (10–12, 2002) pp. 773–787.

⁹³ Zaki Mubarak states that it is possible that the work in question: “*al-Madunun bihi ala ghayri ihlahi*” is a section of another work of al-Ghazālī. Nasurollah Pourjavady proved that the work is indeed a section of *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*. He found an old manuscript in al-Maragha seminary in Iran that is one of the earliest dated manuscripts

would not necessarily point to a crisis but to a vibrant scholar who has re-worked and reformulated issues over and over again.⁹⁴ It is perhaps thanks to this resilient quality that al-Ghazālī was not afraid to re-visit issues that he had already dealt with in his previous works or in his youth. He has indeed done this re-working as with the *‘usūl* (fundamentals of jurisprudence), *firaq* (heresiographies), and *fiqh* (jurisprudence).

Al-Ghazālī’s crisis was not only important to his personal development as a scholar, it also had implications on his major works—namely the *Ihya*—that were completed both during and after his self-imposed exile. Two other works are of prime importance—*al-Munqidh* and *al-Mustasfa min ‘ilm al-‘usul*, his work on *‘Usul al-Fiqh*. *Al-Munkhul* was written before coming to Baghdad, and praised by al-Juwaynī, however it is *al-Mustasfa min ‘ilm al-‘usul*, his latter post-crisis work, that is more important. Other important works written before his crisis were the *Maqāṣid al-falsifah* [Aims of philosophers] and *al-Tahāfut al-falāsifah* [Incoherence of the philosophers].

An Overview of Writings on the Crisis

To understand the reasons behind the onset of the crisis, one must make use of other sources as well as al-Ghazālī’s own writing. Of particular importance are his biographers, contemporaries, and the historical records of the period. There have been many analyses of his crisis and what brought it about, and more than one re-assessment, as well as re-assessments of the re-assessments.

that we have of *al-Madun*. This, however, does not resolve the issue of the other existing manuscripts with that title.

⁹⁴ Moosa, in an e-mail communication in April 2002.

Few scholars⁹⁵ have pointed out that al-Ghazālī's psychological crisis is often confused and joined with his period of epistemological doubt that he alludes to in *al-Munqidh*. A majority of scholars do not differentiate between the two incidents, and not only see a strong relation between them, but see them as the same event or one as the continuation of the other. The lack of a careful and thoughtful look at the two incidents as separate is key to understanding not only what happened to al-Ghazālī, but the entirety of his life, work, and contributions.

Al-Ghazālī's own assessment of the crisis is found in his heavily autobiographical work, *al-Munqidh*; he also drops some autobiographical hints here and there in his other works. Assessments of the crisis by al-Ghazālī's admirers tend to support the view as laid out in *al-Munqidh*. Others who are less sympathetic, or flat out antagonistic, naturally do not support al-Ghazālī's assessment and his personal account. They offer many less plausible theories that are highly unlikely to have taken place.

Also not unique to Ghazālīan studies are sharp positions and opinions regarding him and by proxy his crisis and his personality specifically. While some biographers of al-Ghazālī were not ardent fans, others were staunch supporters blinded by strong admiration, even adoration, for him. Al-Ghazālī's strong personality shines through his writings and has such an effect on people; one scholar once declared that there are no neutral biographers of al-Ghazālī.

Therefore, depending on the source, one is liable to find many different, as well as opposing, viewpoints that are not sympathetic to their subject. Al-Ghazālī is one such personality that elicits such variant responses and provocative reading of his life from people. One only needs to read some of Ibn Rushd's comments in the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* [Incoherence of the

⁹⁵ Nakamura and Abu Sway.

incoherence]⁹⁶ to get an idea of the heated rhetoric that took place. Recently, al-Jabari has compared al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al falāsifah* to an inquisition of freethinkers by a state ideologue.⁹⁷

A Critique of the Role of Ismā'īlī Fear in the Crisis

Undue emphasis has been placed on al-Ghazālī's alleged fear of Ismā'īlī assassins. So much so that many now consider it an unquestionable fact that is part and parcel of al-Ghazālī's biography. For example, a recent work on Ibn Rushd states this allegation about al-Ghazālī in a brief one-paragraph biography.⁹⁸ I believe that this alleged fear is unwarranted and misplaced.

In the words of one of his contemporary biographers, 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, “a door of fear was opened for him.”⁹⁹ It was the fear of the divine—the day of reckoning and the hereafter—not fear of others that sparked al-Ghazālī's departure from Baghdad. Jabre understood it as a fear of Ismā'īlīs—indeed, it is referred to in his introduction to the translation of *al-Munqidh*,¹⁰⁰ and was taken out of context. The earliest western source to mention this fear is Macdonald's 1899 article about the life of al-Ghazālī.¹⁰¹ Fear of Ismā'īlī assassins was more

⁹⁶ See Ibn Rushd's comments about al-Ghazālī in *Faṣl al-maqāl* and *al-Kashf an minhaj al-idla*; both of these works have been translated recently. *Faṣl al-maqāl* has been translated more than once in English. See the link for Ibn Rushd on the Muslim philosophy web site for a complete listing.

⁹⁷ See his introduction to Ibn Rushd's *Faṣl al-maqāl*, edited by Muhammad 'Abd al-Jabari (Markaz darasāt al-wiḥda al-'arabiyya, 1997) p. 40. See also on page 21, where he calls him the state ideologue.

⁹⁸ This is just an example of the persistence of this idea. See R. Arnaldez, *Averroes: A Rationalist in Islam*, trans. D. Streight (Notre Dame Press, Indiana University) p. 152.

⁹⁹ “Futiḥa 'alayhi bābun min al-khawf.” See al-Subki, vol. 6, p. 209. This is also mentioned by Abu Sway, p. 90.

¹⁰⁰ Jabre, p. ?

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 78 and 80

appropriate for political leaders of that period—it is they who were assassinated. Several facts contradict this provocative theory. Namely, that al-Ghazālī continued to write anti-Ismāʿīlī works during and after his period of exile. Therefore, fear of Ismāʿīlīs could not have been a contributing factor to the cause of his crisis. Ismāʿīlī political power continued to increase after al-Ghazālī’s crisis, leading al-Ghazālī to write more works that are anti-Ismāʿīlī in nature. Had there been any fear for his life, he would not have continued to write in this vein—who wants more trouble than he could handle?

Many have cited the assassination of Nizām al-Mulk as another cause for al-Ghazālī’s fear of the assassins. This is not plausible given the fact that al-Ghazālī wrote the first anti-Ismāʿīlī / taʿlīmī work three years after the assassination of Nizām al-Mulk. Clearly, if he were afraid of Ismāʿīlīs after Nizām al-Mulk’s assassination, he would not have written the work. Further, the assassination of Nizām al-Mulk¹⁰² has been questioned, and may not have been from an Ismāʿīlī hand, rather a result of inter-court tensions.¹⁰³

Had there been any real fear of Ismāʿīlī reprisals against him, al-Ghazālī would not have written further tracts on the issue. Al-Ghazālī, throughout the rest of his life, would write at least

¹⁰² Recently by Moosa, see Ibn Kathīr’s account of the events of 485. See 12:148–149 and an overall biography on pages 149–151. An al-daylami youth was assassinated shortly after, in what could have been a plot by Malik Shah or by Zubidah Khaton in order to secure the position of her husband. He died shortly thereafter and she made a short-lived, successful bid for her five-year-old son to rule. Al-Ghazālī was one of the few scholars who disapproved of her son’s rule. There was a fight and her side lost; this further enhanced al-Ghazālī’s political status.

¹⁰³ It has been stated that there were strong feelings against Nizām al-Mulk at Alp Arslan’s court; that some wanted to get rid of him because he had become too powerful to control. It could have been these forces, and not the Ismāʿīlīs, that plotted and carried out the assassination. The fact that the assassination looked like the work of the Ismāʿīlīs was a God-send to them.

five more anti-Ismāʿīlī¹⁰⁴ tracts (seven total in his lifetime).¹⁰⁵ Even if he was “forced”—as MacDonald and others alleged—by the *khalifah* al-Mustanʿir bil-lāh (who had no political power of his own) to write the first tract, this does not explain why he continued to write them.

In *al-Munqidh* al-Ghazālī declares:

My present aim is not to show the wrongness of their doctrine, for I have already done that: (1) in my book *al-Mustazhiri*; (2) in my book *The Proof of the Truth*, an answer to some of their arguments proposed to me in Baghdad; (3) in my book *The Detailed Exposition of the Disagreement*, which contains twelve sections, and is a reply to arguments proposed to me in Hamadhan; (4) in my book *al-Drj al-marqum bil-jadawl*, which deals with some feeble arguments of theirs proposed to me in Tūs; (5) in my book the *The Correct Balance*, an independent work aimed at explaining the scale for weighing knowledge and showing that he who fully understands it has no need of an infallible Imam.

Rather my main point here is that the Taʿlīmīes have no cure which saves anyone from the darkness of conflicting opinions.¹⁰⁶

As a matter of fact, he wrote against them every chance he could, without any fear of reprisal, as is demonstrated from the quote above.

Furthermore, al-Ghazālī would not have ventured to areas under heavy Ismāʿīlī influence. Had al-Ghazālī truly feared the Ismāʿīlīs, he would not have returned home where their influence was greater.¹⁰⁷ In fact, three outstanding scholars met their end in 502 in modern-day Iran, where

¹⁰⁴ This is mentioned in *al-Munqidh*, vol. 7, p. 54.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Abu Sway p. 89. cff. p. 48 for a complete listing and A. al-Badawī’s *Muʾalafāt al-Ghazālī*. See also the introduction to al-Badawī’s edited edition of *al-Mustazharī (fadiyah al-batinyah)*. Al-Badawī mentions that only three of these works survived. D. P. Brewster translated the other popular work, *al-Qistats al-mustaqim* [The just balance] (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1978). See also McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*.

¹⁰⁶ McCarthy, p. 88. The insertion of numbers are added for emphasis by the author.

¹⁰⁷ Namely going to Greater Syria and even venturing out into Egypt as far as Alexandria. See Abu Sway, p. 89.

Moosa pointed out that al-Ghazālī was in disguise (traveling anonymously) as a sufi mystic. This, however, would

al-Ghazālī was living at the time.¹⁰⁸ Even after Nizām al-Mulk’s son Fakhr al-Mulk was also assassinated at Ismā‘īlī hands, al-Ghazālī continued to write against them.

An incident from al-Ghazālī’s youth demonstrated his bravery. Upon his return from Jurjan, one of his educational trips, bandits attacked the caravan and looted everything including his class notes. Al-Ghazālī bravely—or recklessly—went to the leader of the bandits demanding his notes.¹⁰⁹ This incident should at least indicate that later on in life, al-Ghazālī was not likely to turn and run at the first sign of trouble.

According to historical accounts of the years that al-Ghazālī spent in Baghdad, there was no fear of Ismā‘īlīs concerning the scholars.¹¹⁰ The scholars that died during that period died of natural causes, none of them at the hands of assassins.¹¹¹

I would argue that fear of the political climate did not contribute to al-Ghazālī’s crisis and did not adversely affect al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī was dealing with his own internal demons, not external ones. In spite of terrible political strife, al-Ghazālī was doing very well and left Baghdad at a high point in his career. The fact that he did not wait till things got worse to leave is a testament to his political acumen. It was easier for him to leave then than at any other point in his

not stop a professional assassin from going after his family or even assassinating him, though it would throw off lay people (including students and scholars) and his motive was to travel anonymously. Note that the meeting with his student ibn al-‘Arabī happened after he came out of his retirement.

¹⁰⁸ See al-Badawī’s introduction in *al-Mustaẓharī (fadhāh al-batīnyah)* (Cairo: dār al-qawmiyya li nashr, 1964) p. ١ who quotes *Shuṭḥart al-dhahab* vol. 4, p. 4. They are: At Hamadan, Obeidullah ibn ‘Alī al-Khatibi; at Isphahan, Abū ‘Alā’ Sa‘īd al-Bukhārī; at Amol, al-Qaḍī abū al-Mahasan al-Riwayni.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Subki, p. 195.

¹¹⁰ Or politicians for that matter, as long as one stayed in Baghdad it was safe, note that Nizām al-Mulk was assassinated on the road in Khurasān.

¹¹¹ See Ibn Kathīr’s *Bidya wa al-nihaya*, vol. 12, events for the years 484–488.

life. Had he waited, he would not have been able to leave his family as well off as he did. He alludes to this fact in *al-Munqidh*, that it was God who made it easier for him leave. So, al-Ghazālī must have seen all these events as facilitating his leave. Had there been any fear or real concern he would not have run, or would at least have taken his family to safety. He would not have left his brother in a highly visible position and run out of fear for his own life.

The fact that al-Ghazālī left his brother in his place as a *wāʿiz* (religious orator) is a sort of subtle hint of the changes that al-Ghazālī went through. It is a message telling people that they have become too intellectual and need to be brought back to earth, or in this case back to heaven. It is a subtle sign to his students that this is the path of useful knowledge and my brother will show you the way.

Furthermore,¹¹² the timing must have been just right; it was a coincidence that it was almost the time of hajj and that he announced his intention late in the season. I assume he did this, because otherwise others would have followed him (i.e. his students, friends, and admirers). A last minute decision explains his sudden departure—he said he was going to hajj and he never came back. This is how it must have seemed in retrospect to his students. As a matter of fact one of his students, Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī, saw him and asked him about his sudden departure. This leads one to think that this was the trigger to write the autobiographical portions of *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, or to begin to consider it.¹¹³

Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl: An Authentic Source on the Crisis:

¹¹² It is interesting that Murtada al-Zubidi in his commentary on al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā ʿulūm al-dīn ithāf al-sādah al-muttaqin bi sharḥ asrār iḥyā ʿulūm al-dīn*, notes that al-Ghazālī went to hajj and then headed to Syria. See 1:7.

¹¹³ It was most likely a question, after he started teaching at Nīshāpūr once again. See ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī's account as cited by al-Subki.

A work can have historical value even though it might not be chronologically ordered or sequentially accurate. There are many examples of autobiographical accounts that are not chronological, such as 'Usamah bin al-Munqidh's account.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, a work can have literary value and still have historical value, and be in itself a work of history. *Al-ʿAqd al-farīd* by Ibn ʿAbd Rabihi—the history of al-Andalus set in verse, is one such example.

The language that al-Ghazālī utilizes in *al-Munqidh* is highly personal and typical of his other works, even terse works such as *Tahāfut al-falāsifah*. Marmura notes,

Al-Ghazālī is a master of Arabic prose. His style, however, is very personal and highly idiomatic; it carries with it nuances that are difficult to recapture in a translation. As such, the difficulties it often poses are not so much due to lack of clarity. For the most part, his presentation of complex and subtle arguments is remarkable for its clarity. But there are also lapses. Ambiguities do occur. And there are times when what is stated is so condensed that its intention is not immediately clear.¹¹⁵

Critics¹¹⁶ of al-Ghazālī have noted that *al-Munqidh* (his quasi-autobiography) is not of historical importance, while others have maintained the opposite opinion.¹¹⁷ I believe that it is of immense historical value¹¹⁸ to anyone studying al-Ghazālī. At the very least, it illustrates how al-Ghazālī wanted others to see him in this period. Al-Ghazālī emphasized his crisis and analyzed

¹¹⁴ 'Usamah bin al-Munqidh, *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades*, trans. Philip K. Hitti (Columbia University Press, 2000), with an introduction by Richard W. Bulliet.

¹¹⁵

¹¹⁶ Ormsby claimed that even his episode of methodical doubt occurred in his youth! Further he claims that *al-Munqidh* is work of literary fiction written in *saja'*, whereas Nakamura states that it is written in an easy and simple manner.

¹¹⁷ Al-Badawī, in *Mu'alafāt al-Ghazālī* uses it as a guide to construct a chronology of his works; he would not have been able to do this if it lacked historical value. See his introduction pp. 9–19.

¹¹⁸ *Al-Munqidh* can also be considered as psychological study of al-Ghazālī himself.

himself on a psychological level, in addition to writing a biting social commentary on the occupation of teachers, their social position, and civic duty. It is the equivalent of al-Ghazālī sitting on the proverbial couch in retrospect since he wrote it many years after the crisis.

Al-Ghazālī's own assessment of the events as he lived them, as he wrote in *al-Munqidh*, is of vital importance to understanding his crisis and personality; even though it does not offer us a complete *raison d'être* of all his works during and after his crisis. The realization that he had to totally alter the course of his life at that time directly influenced his output. This alteration led him not only to change his whole lifestyle but to sort out his priorities as well.

MacDonald, who wrote on al-Ghazālī's alleged fear of Ismā'īlīs, was firm in his belief that *al-Munqidh* represents the true state of al-Ghazālī's affairs. MacDonald says about *al-Munqidh*: "...[T]he result of a careful study of it has been to convince me of the essential truth of the picture which al-Ghazālī there gives us of his life."¹¹⁹

Watt however, disagrees with this position and is supported by Jabre and others. McCarthy provides support and goes into great detail to prove *al-Munqidh*'s veracity in his book *Freedom and Fulfillment*. He cites many arguments both for and against it. He states in his introduction, "I see no reason why they [the biographical passages from *al-Munqidh min al-*

¹¹⁹ MacDonald, p.

ḍalāl] should not be accepted literally, despite al-Baqri¹²⁰ and ... Jabre.” McCarthy also cites additional sources to support his position; there is no need to repeat them here.¹²¹

Although al-Ghazālī did state clearly that he was going to hajj, he went directly to Syria instead, according to his account of this event. He did perform hajj two years later and visited the holy places. This strategy was to prevent others from thwarting his plans to leave Baghdad altogether. This unusual strategy and frank honesty has caused some critics to question the truth of *al-Munqidh*, not to mention of al-Ghazālī himself. McCarthy, as well as others, answered these criticisms by stating that al-Ghazālī had little choice in this matter, given his position at that time. So many people were attached to him politically and as students, that he would not have been allowed to leave altogether.

Even though Watt did not consider *al-Munqidh* historically valid, he did accept its basic premise, namely, that al-Ghazālī’s “conversion” to the mystic life was genuine.¹²² Margaret Smith, in her biography of al-Ghazālī said: “The reasons for the abandonment of his career and for the rejection of all that the world had to offer him—a decision which astonished and perplexed all who heard of it—al-Ghazālī sets forth in his *apologia pro vita sua* [*al-Munqidh min*

¹²⁰ See the entry in the bibliography, in which the author questions the veracity of the work by offering two explanations, one that in his *Ihya*, al-Ghazālī allows lying for the overall good (however in the *Ihya* lying is mentioned as acceptable when one is trying to reconcile people—*iṣlah* *that al-bayan*—and not to forge a personal history to look good or even to win the world over to sufism). The other white lie that al-Ghazālī admits to, is trying to leave Baghdad. He ? does not believe that al-Ghazālī was telling the truth the whole time.

¹²¹ McCarthy, pp. xxix and thereafter.

¹²² Watt, p. 140.

al-dalāl].”¹²³ Nakamura says that *al-Munqidh* is “ ‘by and large genuine and reliable’ and that his two crises are historical facts beyond doubt with no evidence to the contrary.”¹²⁴

Critics also charge that al-Ghazālī was made to know that he was no longer desired at the Nizāmiyah of Baghdad. Al-Ghazālī had anticipated this charge and answered it in *al-Munqidh*:

Thereupon people got involved in devising explanations of my conduct. Those at some distance from Iraq thought that I was acting so because I was afraid of the authorities. But those close to the authorities, who saw their attachment and devotion to me, and how I shunned them and paid no attention to what they said, were saying: “This is something supernal: its only cause is an evil eye which has afflicted Muslims and the coterie of the learned!”¹²⁵

Al-Ghazālī was still desired and very much in demand as many years later he was welcomed back on his way home, when the son of Nizām al-Mulk invited him to accept a position at the Nizāmiyah of Nīshāpūr.¹²⁶ Critics have also stated that there was a general decline in education due to the depressed and charged political atmosphere. The fact remains that the political crisis did not have an immediate effect on the educational and intellectual environment of al-Ghazālī’s time; the Nizāmiyah continued to flourish for many years after his death.

Secondary Factors Contributing to the Crisis

Many other reasons given by scholars about what brought about al-Ghazālī’s crisis should be considered secondary, contributing factors. One such issue is his background: he was from a poor family from a small village, and rose to fame and renown in a short time period. The

¹²³ Margaret Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic* (London: Luzac, 1944) p. 23.

¹²⁴ Nakamura, p. 49.

¹²⁵ McCarthy, p. 93.

¹²⁶ His *alma mater* as well as the position once held by his teacher al-Juwayni.

argument being that his sudden move to the city from such a rural area was an additional contributing factor to his departure. There have been cases in which scholars of fame and renown came from poor backgrounds, and suffered no affect whatsoever on their mind. One such scholar is Murtada al-Zubidi, the author of *Tāj al-urūs*, a commentary on *al-Qamūs* and a commentary on al-Ghazālī's *Iḥya*. I want to point out that al-Zubidi did not go into crisis, until his wife died.¹²⁷ Fame and fortune were not the cause of his crisis, rather the loss of a loved one.

Some have suggested that al-Ghazālī's life had become too complicated, too cosmopolitan for him to handle, and he longed for the simple existence that his earliest teacher had taught. This makes for a nice, romantic view of al-Ghazālī, but it was his early teacher that recommended that al-Ghazālī and his brother join a school; in order for them to escape this 'simple,' meager standard of living. A more plausible explanation would be that his brother's lectures finally got through to him, for his brother was a famous *wā'iz*.¹²⁸

A second contributing factor is al-Ghazālī's study of philosophy. Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned that Ibn Sīnā's *al-Shifa* made al-Ghazālī sick¹²⁹ and contributed to his crisis. *Al-Shifa* could have contributed to his skepticism and epistemological doubt. While this theory is very interesting and insightful, it has its weaknesses. Certainly, Ibn Sīnā, who wrote the work, did not get sick writing it, and many scholars studied philosophy and did not suffer a psychological breakdown. None of the major Muslim philosophers seem to have had any trouble; namely, Ibn

¹²⁷ See the editor's introduction to *Tāj al-urūs* (Beirut: dār al-fikr). Also note that Ibn Khaldūn spent a lifetime seeking fame, fortune, and positions of power and authority and this was never factored into his integrity as a scholar, why should this be the case for al-Ghazālī?

¹²⁸ See below.

¹²⁹ *Majmū' aāt fatawy ibn Taymiyyah*, see the volume on *al-ādāb wa al-taswaf, kitāb 'ilm al-sulūk*. He was asked about al-Ghazālī's *Iḥya 'ulūm al-dīn* and al-Muḥāsibī's *Qūt al-qulūb*.

Sīnā, al-Fārābī, and al-Kindī.¹³⁰ For example, Ibn Taymiyyah himself, as well as al-Rāzī, author of the famed *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, were not affected in any way by their study of philosophy.

The earliest critic of al-Ghazālī, namely Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī stated that “our Sheikh al-Ghazālī swallowed philosophy and could not regurgitate it [get it out of his system]” meaning that it stayed in his system. Here, we have to know what ibn al-ʿArabī meant by philosophy. Did he mean the study of metaphysics and other ideas that al-Ghazālī considered forbidden or did he consider philosophy anything foreign to Islam, such as Aristotelian logic? Clearly, it is the latter. Al-Ghazālī held that Greek philosophy is to be categorized—some of which is acceptable and some of which is to be rejected. He considered logic to be an essential science even in jurisprudence. As for other philosophical ideas such as ethics and politics, al-Ghazālī simply states that even though we got them from the Greeks; the Greeks got these ideas from prophets and messengers that were sent to them [from God].¹³¹

Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyyah disagreed with al-Ghazālī; they considered anything foreign unnecessary. If it is not in the Qurʾān and Sunnah, they do not want it. For them, the famous saying, *al-ḥikma ḍalat al-muʾmin* (‘wisdom is the lost treasure of the believer’) is invalid. Ibn Taymiyyah wrote a multi-volume work against Greek logic alone, not to mention his criticism of other branches of philosophy.

¹³⁰ Ibn Taymiyyah could argue that by al-Ghazālī’s standard they left the faith, whereas Ibn Rushd studied philosophy in depth, and remained an observant Muslim and a *qādī*. So the argument that philosophy or specific books cause illness seems ludicrous for anyone, why should it be valid for al-Ghazālī?

¹³¹ See the introduction to *Tahāfut al-falāsifah*, ed. Michael E. Marmura (Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University Press, 1999) pp. Clearly al-Ghazālī had no qualms about borrowing from others. Al-Kindī also has done this type of borrowing, see Alfred I. Ivry’s *On First Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981) pp. The often quoted tradition of the Messenger Muhammad says, ‘Wisdom is the lost treasure of the believer, wherever he finds it, it is his.’

Turning back to al-Ghazālī's account of his crisis in *al-Munqidh*, we are led to critically re-assess the events of his life in harsh tones from a skewed (sufi /spiritual) perspective—even though it is al-Ghazālī's perspective. He states in *al-Munqidh*:

Next I attentively considered my circumstances, and I saw that I was immersed in attachments which had encompassed me from all sides. I also considered my activities—the best of them being public and private instruction—and saw that in them I was applying myself to sciences unimportant and useless in this pilgrimage to the hereafter. Then I reflected on my intention in my public teaching, and I saw that it was not directed purely to God, but rather was instigated and motivated by the quest for fame and widespread prestige. So I became certain that I was on the brink of a crumbling bank and already on the verge of falling into the Fire, unless I set about mending my ways.¹³²

This, I would argue, is a very harsh criticism of oneself through one's inner feelings at the time the work was written, not only of his life. What al-Ghazālī did in his life was not wrong, even by his own standards, and there was no shame in it. He was very much like any other professor or scholar of his time. No matter how hard we look at his life, we cannot find any major faults because they simply did not exist.¹³³ It was not al-Ghazālī's outward actions that caused his problem; the problem itself was internal and psychological in nature.

Al-Ghazālī knew the problem, the malady, and the cure. He knew all the theories he needed to diagnose his problem. He was one of the best jurists of his time. The doctors who came to look at his condition only re-affirmed to him the severity. He only needed to implement the cure. The cure came from the divine, in the moment in which the divine made it easy for him to leave, as he state in *al-Munqidh*.

Al-Ghazālī's brother Ahmād was a master *wa'iz*, and a sufī known for his sermons; they were so powerful that men were led to cry and turn to God in repentance. Ahmād would often

¹³² McCarthy, p. 91.

¹³³ They did not exist or we do not know because the available sources do not discuss these aspects (Abu Sway).

remind al-Ghazālī, his brother, of the importance of the next life. These repeated talks and reminders by his brother finally affected al-Ghazālī as well.¹³⁴

In a similar vein, is the 1093 (AH 486) visit to Baghdad of the famous sufi, Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿAbbadi; he had quite an effect on students and scholars of that time. According to Ibn Kathīr’s account “more than thirty thousand men and women were present at his circles, many people left their livelihood, many people repented and returned to mosques, wines [intoxicants] were spilled and [musical] instruments were broken.”¹³⁵

Al-Ghazālī’s abandonment of everything should be seen in light of other famous sufis such as al-Muḥāsibi (d. 857 / AH 243) who took similar actions.¹³⁶ Al-Junayd (d. 910 / AH 298)¹³⁷ had doubts of his worthiness to lecture, Abū Bakr Dulaf al-Shibli¹³⁸ (d. 946 / AH 334), the governor of Deoband, renounced his position, and asked the inhabitants for forgiveness. Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī¹³⁹ (d. 874 / AH 261) gained his knowledge ‘on a hungry belly’ and Abū Talib al-Makki al-Ḥarithi (d. 996 / AH 386) lived on a diet of wild herbs.¹⁴⁰ These names are the ones

¹³⁴ Al-Subki alludes to this in his *Ṭabaqāt*.

¹³⁵ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidya wa al-nihaya*, vol. 12, events for the year 486, p. 144. This was the visit by Ardashir ibn Mansur Abū al-ḥussein al-Abbadi in 1093 / AH 486.

¹³⁶ Ibn Khallikan, *Wafyat al-ayan wa anba’ abna’ al-zaman*, trans. De Slane, ed. S. Moin al-Haq (New Delhi: Kitāb Bahvan, 1996) 2:157–8, no. 145.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 2:128–131, no. 140

¹³⁸ Ibid., 2:308–310. no. 217 and Ibn Kathīr’s vol. 11 pp. 229–230, events for the year 334.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 2:474, no. 290.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 4:279–280 no. 604. See also Shaqīq al-Balkhi who also abandoned his possessions and engaged himself in pursuit of knowledge; see Ibn Khallikan 2:435, no. 276. For al-Juwayni, see vol. 3, no. 353, al-Jawazī no. 345. Al-Ghazālī’s brother is listed in vol. 1 no. 37.

that al-Ghazālī cites as sources for his sufi research in *al-Munqidh*. So it is not strange that al-Ghazālī followed the example of these past masters.

Others during al-Ghazālī's time, on the outside looking in, considered his leaving a curse on the Muslim world. The Muslim world did not deserve such a scholar and he was gone as quick as he came. As soon as his star was shining it disappeared—or so it seemed to chroniclers of the time.

Al-Ghazālī states in *al-Munqidh*: "... what they said... 'This is something supernal: its only cause is an evil eye which has afflicted Muslims and the coterie of the learned!'"¹⁴¹

Al-Ghazālī must have tried to cure himself, but without much success. He finally realized, deep inside himself, that he had to abandon his current environment altogether; he had no choice but to make the sacrifice. He literally walked out, leaving everything behind: his fame, his family, his fortune, and the world. Ten years later, he realized that he had proved to himself, and to the whole world, that he had become a changed man.

¹⁴¹ McCarthy, p. 93.