

IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS INSTITUTE
DEPARTMENT OF CIVILIZATION STUDIES

MASTER'S THESIS



**IMAM AL-GHAZALI'S UNDERSTANDING OF
HUMAN ONTOLOGY AND BEHAVIOR**

CEMRE ATEŐÇİ

JULY 2019

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İmza:

ABSTRACT

IMAM AL-GHAZALI'S UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN ONTOLOGY AND BEHAVIOR

ATEŞÇİ, CEMRE

MA in Civilization Studies

Thesis Advisor: Prof. Dr. Recep ŞENTÜRK

July 2019, 111 Pages

This study aims to scrutinize Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali's (d. 1111) understanding of human ontology within a psycho-spiritual system as well as his explanation about the formation of human behavior. It also analyzes the spiritual formation of a human being with presenting certain spiritual constituents which are the reason-intellect (*'aql*), heart (*qalb*), spirit (*ruh*) and self (*nafs*). The heart, which is the subtle tenuous substance and the essence of the human beings according to Ghazali, is under the influence of both the interactions among these spiritual elements and the external factors like angels, demons and other human beings. Depending on the interactions and influences, this study investigates how and for what reason the psychological state of human beings changes based on the levels of the self (*maratibu'l nafs*). In light of this, it, then, presents the ideas of Ghazali about how behaviors of human beings are produced and about the motives behind the behaviors. For Ghazali, all the behaviors stem from the heart, so the state of the heart is the essential determinant in behaving in a certain way.

Keywords: Human being, heart, intellect, levels of the self, behavior, Ghazali

ÖZ

GAZALİ'NİN İNSAN ONTOLOJİSİ VE İNSAN DAVRANIŞINA İLİŞKİN ANLAYIŞI

ATEŞÇİ, CEMRE

Medeniyet Araştırmaları Yüksek Lisans Programı

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Recep ŞENTÜRK

Temmuz 2019, 111 sayfa

Bu çalışma, İmam Muhammed Gazali'nin insan ontolojisine dair anlayışını psiko-spritüel bir sistem içinde ele alırken, insanın davranışının oluşumuna dair de bir açıklama getirmektedir. Ayrıca, kalp, ruh, akıl ve nefsen oluşan insanın spiritüel bileşenlerini sunarak insanın spiritüel oluşumunu analiz etmektedir. Gazali'ye göre, insanın özü ve *latifeyi rabbaniye ruhani* olan kalp, hem sözü geçen spiritüel bileşenlerin etkileşiminin hem de diğer insanlar, melekler şeytanlar gibi dış etmenlerin etkisi altındadır. Bu etkileşimleri ve etkileri temel alarak, bu çalışma insanların psikolojik durumlarının nasıl ve ne sebeple değişiklik gösterdiğini, bunu da nefis mertebelerine dayandırarak incelemektedir. Bu doğrultuda, Gazali'nin insan davranışının nasıl oluştuğuna ve davranışların arkasında yatan sebeplerin neler olduğuna dair fikirlerini sunmaktadır. Gazali'ye göre bütün davranışlar kalpten sudur olmaktadır; bu sebeple kalbin durumu belli bir şekilde davranırken en önemli belirleyici faktör olmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimler: İnsan, kalp, akıl, nefis mertebeleri, davranış, Gazali

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first thank my thesis advisor Prof. Recep ŞENTÜRK for directing me to this topic and providing his valuable guidance for me. I really benefitted from his lectures and his great knowledge throughout the years at the Alliance of Civilizations Institute. I would also like to thank Prof. Süleyman DERİN, Assoc. Prof. Burhan KÖROĞLU and Dr. Naoki Qayyim YAMAMOTO for their precious comments.

There are also invaluable people in my life that I would like to thank each one of them for their presence in my life and their various kinds of support all the time. Duygu KUTLU and Figen KURT have always been with me, and they have endured all my spiritual and emotional fluctuations during this process. My sincere thanks would go to Reyhan Lütfiye OKUMUŞ and Elif DEMİRÜREK for their help and for their kind friendship. Also, Zehra HALİLOĞLU was my academic coach alongside with her joyful friendship. My ISAM team and the MEDIT family with my friends, teachers, staff and the place deserve to be appreciated as well. I have learnt a lot from all my professors and my friends, and I am grateful to meet all these people and to have been at this institute.

Last but not least, I would like to present my appreciation to my family, my mother and my brother, for their constant support and urge to complete this thesis. My mother always provided me with her psychological support and her *duas*, so I would like to pay my respect to her by dedicating this thesis to her.

'Alhamdulillah 'alaa kuli haal'

All praise and thanks are only for Allah in all circumstances.

May Allah make us better human beings.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZ	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLE AND FIGURES.....	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: Spiritual Constitution of a Human Being	25
1.1. Upon The Duality of Human Ontology.....	26
1.2. Armies of the Heart.....	29
1.3. What Differentiates a Human Being?	32
1.4. Four Different Dimensions of Human Nature	34
1.5. The Heart as a Mirror	37
1.6. Importance of Knowledge in Relation to Heart.....	39
1.7. The Idea of Microcosm and Macrocosm in Relation to the Notion of Human Being	41
CHAPTER 2: Internal Relations and Conflicts among the Spiritual Components of a Human Being.....	43
2.1. The Self That Commands Evil (<i>Al-Nafs Al-Ammarah</i>)	49
2.1.1. Outward Implications of the Self That Commands Evil.....	52
2.2. The Self – Reproaching Soul (<i>Al-Nafs Al-Lawwamah</i>)	57
2.2.1. The Basic Attribute of This Self: Regret and Repentance	58
2.3. The Tranquil Self (<i>Al-Nafs Al-Mutmainnah</i>).....	60
2.3.1 The Tranquil Self as an Abode for the Good Character.....	62
2.4. Example Cases for the Levels of the Self.....	67
CHAPTER 3: External Relations of the Heart.....	71
3.1. Entrances of the Satan into the Heart	74
3.2. Effects of Angels on the Heart.....	81
3.3. Influence of Society upon the Heart.....	83
CHAPTER 4: The Relation between Human Ontology and Human Behavior	87
4.1. Formation of Behavior According to Ghazali	89
4.2. The Nature of the Good and Bad Character	93
4.3. Is it Possible to Change One’s Character or Is It Unchangeable?	97
CONCLUSION	102
REFERENCES	107



LIST OF TABLE AND FIGURES

Table 1.1: The Armies of the Heartpage 31

Figure 2. 1: Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needspage 65

Figure 4. 1: Ghazali's explanation about the formation of the human behaviorpage 92



INTRODUCTION

Understanding human being is the objective of the modern science today although it would not be wrong to say that solving the puzzle of human beings has been at the center of every field throughout history. Since every attempt would contribute to the understanding of human existence in this world and eventually leads us to find the meaning of life, almost all scholars have been engaged with the question of what makes a human. Ghazali is no exception in this sense and he has produced much literature on this issue alongside with many other Muslim scholars being affected by who was before him and affecting the ones who have come after him.

Just like any other scholar from different civilizations, drawing on the Islamic legacy Ghazali was concerned with the following questions: ‘What does it mean to be a human being? What constitutes a human being spiritually? What differentiates a human being from other existent beings? What is the true nature of human beings? What are the motives behind the actions of human beings?’ These are the questions that my study intends to answer taking Ghazali’s works as its basis, yet my main question under which all the other questions gather is ‘Why does a human being behave in a particular way?’ Therefore, the subject matter is the understanding of Ghazali's human ontology within the scope of spiritual psychology and how he defines the spiritual constitution of a human being analyzing their psychology by delving deep into it and how he brings a better understanding upon the motivation of human behaviors.

As these questions are also discussed in many fields like psychology, philosophy, sociology, neuroscience etc. understanding them holds a great significance in today’s world. The answer is important for it will lead us to a related question ‘What should a human being do in this world?’ and ‘How should a human being behave?’ because there are wars, massacres, destruction of the earth, animals and plants, and a continuous corruption over the world practiced by humans. It can be seen that on the one hand the world is both physically and morally deteriorating because of human beings; and on the other hand there are people who are striving to do their best to save the humanity from poverty, famine, effects of wars, global warming and to beautify the world around them by helping people in need. Although these seem to

be modern issues, I believe Ghazali's perception on the human ontology can explain why there is a huge gap between these two types of actions and humans. Because he explains the human existence quite effectively and brings answers to both spiritual and psychological problems of humans and the problems of the world, understanding Ghazali's interpretation of human ontology might potentially bring better understanding and solutions to these problems. To this aim, I will try to find answers and solutions to the aforementioned questions and problems under the guidance of Ghazali throughout my thesis.

Ghazali is a prominent and a prolific writer in many different fields. He approaches the concept of human being from a psycho-spiritual perspective. He also suggests the illnesses and the remedies regarding the health of the spiritual state of humans. The reason why he puts so much emphasis on the human ontology is that the person who knows his self knows his Lord. That means when humans learn more about themselves and know more about their essence, they will reach the divine knowledge of Allah eventually (*Ma'rifatullah*), which is the reason for their creation according to Islam. So, the study of human beings holds a crucial place in giving a meaning to the lives of humans and reaching the true knowledge of Allah (*Ḥaqīqah*) in Ghazali's teachings.

Getting to know the human soul, according to Ghazali, starts with the knowledge of the heart. That is, when you know your heart, you will know yourself, and when you know yourself, you will know the Creator, Allah. Note that in Ghazali's works the heart (*qalb*) is used synonymously with the intellect (*'aql*), spirit (*rūḥ*) and self (*nafs*). In other words, all these four concepts are at the center of Ghazali's perception of human ontology, and they all have one meaning that is used to mean the essence of the human being. This one meaning is the subtle tenuous substance (*latifa rabbaniya ruhaniya*). Other than this one meaning for which these concepts are used synonymously, each one also has a different meaning which has a role in Ghazali's system of human ontology, as well. In this regard, my argument in this thesis is that the heart is an encapsulation of the other spiritual constituents in Ghazali's explanation of the human ontology. All the spiritual conflicts and external influences happen in this encapsulation just like a battle-field.

In addition, the body is a tool and an instrument of the heart for Ghazali. The heart uses the body as its abode. While the body belongs to this world, the spirit (*rūḥ*) belongs to the world of command (*ʿĀlam al- malakut*). Hence, the purification of the heart by disciplining the bodily needs and desires will separate the self from the worldly concerns and will direct it to the divine knowledge connecting it to the divine world.

Literature Review

To begin with, the concept of human being is at the center of every discipline even today, and modern science has been offering research and findings regarding the very beginning and end of humanity. The scientists are continually analyzing humans both in micro level and macro level. With every discovery of their research, we, as humans from different cultures, religions and races, cannot hide our amazement for our material designs. Then, we see that there is still much more knowledge waiting to be discovered than what we have in our hands. At this point, we also need to mention an old discussion that humans are not just bodies, but they consist of both body and spirit. And it is noteworthy to state that discovering the spirit has not been as easy as knowing about our concrete material body. Yet, there are many studies on discussing the spiritual dimension of human being in relation to Allah i.e. theological anthropology or in relation to psychology and philosophy. Many thinkers have always been intrigued by the idea that there is something beyond our material and biological bodies, and many of them asserted that there is nothing other than what we see, perceive and discover by science. In Islamic intellectual history, besides many other thinkers, Ghazali delves into the nature of man in a detailed way and brings explanations with regard to the spiritual components of man and his inner battles lucidly.

Early Muslim scholars contributed to human psychology a lot even though the term ‘psychology’ did not exist at that time. It was a part of philosophical writings back then. In Amber Haque’s article¹, in which he presents the contributions of early Muslim scholars to psychology, he remarks that Muslim scholars used the term *nafs* (self or soul) to mean individual personality and the term *fitrah* for human nature. And they directly or indirectly contributed to the study of the ‘self’.² So, he says the

¹ Amber Haque, “Psychology from Islamic perspective: Contributions of early Muslim scholars and
² Haque, “Psychology from Islamic perspective,” 358.

written accounts of early Muslim scholars about the description of the self and human nature can be traced back as early as 800 AD until year 1100 AD.³

Hisham Abu-Raiya also mentions the names of distinguished Muslim scholars and philosophers who worked on the issues like the psyche, personality, psychological health, psychopathology and psychological treatment. Among these scholars are al-Kindi (801-806), Al-Razi (864-932), Al-Farabi (870-950), Ibn Sina (980-1037), Ibn Rushd (1126-1198) and Ibn Arabi (1164-1240)⁴, and the number of the scholars can be increased more. Among the ones who address the issue of soul, the spiritual self and its differentiation from the beastly self, Shahab al-Din ‘Umar ibn Muhammad Suhrawardi⁵ (1144-1234), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah⁶ (1292-1350), Imam Harith ibn ‘Asad al-Muhasibi⁷ (781-857) can be cited. There is also a need to mention Hasan al-Basri (d. 728) whose concern was the purification of the heart to reach the knowledge of Allah with his idea of *‘Ilm al-qulūb* (the knowledge of the Hearts). Removing anything from the heart which is repugnant to Allah is the key to become closer to Allah and repentance (*tawba*) is regarded as essential for the cleansing of the self according to Basri.⁸ Besides, al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi, (d. 869) is one of the early Sufis, and he has a work named *Bayan al-Farq Bayn al-Sadr wa al-Qalb wa al-Fu'ad wa al-Lub*⁹, in which he focuses on the fact that a spiritual journey is an inward journey that passes through concentric circles of the heart.

While there is a great number of works in Islamic Intellectual History concerning the psychology of human beings with regard to their spiritual dimensions and taking the spiritual Heart at their center, the field of Western psychology, which is comparatively a new field, has looked at the human ontology from a different point of view due to being affected by secularism or positivistic science. As Mustapha Achoui also stresses, the spiritual aspect connected with faith hardly finds any

³ Ibid., 360.

⁴ Hisham Abu-Raiya, “Towards a Systematic Qura’nic Theory of Personality,” *Mental health, Religion and Culture* 15, No. 3, (2012): 217.

⁵ Shahab al-Din ‘Umar ibn Muhammad Suhrawardi, *Awarif al-Ma’arif*, 2nd Reprint (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1991), 1-298.

⁶ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Spiritual Diseases and Its Cure*, ed. Sheikh Zakariya ‘Amiraat (London: Al-Firdous Ltd, 2006), 1-260.

⁷ Margaret Smith, *Al-Muhasibi, An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, trans. Margaret Smith (Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1935), 1-311.

⁸ Natalie A. Pavlis, “An Early Sufi Concept of Qalb: Hakim al-Trimidhi’s Map of the Heart,” (Master’s Thesis, McGill University, 2001), 9-10

⁹ Tirmizî, Hakîm. *Bayan al-Farq Bayn al-Sadr wa al-Qalb wa al-Fu'ad wa al-Lub*. Ed. Nicholas Lawson Heer. (Kahire: Dâru İhyai'l-Kütübi'l-Arabiyye, 1958), 1- 111.

followers in modern psychology. Modern psychology theories consider the human being from a narrow viewpoint limited by biological factors (hereditary and biochemical) and social and environmental determinants,¹⁰ which I aim to give references at related points throughout my thesis.

There are countless studies and theses in Turkish and English literature regarding Ghazali and his works. Firstly, I would like to present the theses to indicate which dimensions they include and discuss. Other than the theses, there is a need to present the ideas of certain eminent scholars from different disciplines who give a place to the study of human ontology, human nature, and human psyche so that the subject matter of this thesis can be comprehended in a certain framework. For instance, philosophy, psychology, and modern science are only some of the fields that put the essence of human beings at their center. I will focus on only the leading figures of these fields to be able to draw a framework in which I can compare and contrast the understanding of Ghazali on the issue of human ontology within the Islamic cosmology and spiritual psychology. Following, I will also present the ideas of eminent scholars of Islamic Intellectual History both from classical and modern period.

In Turkey, there are some theses which are directly related to this study more or less in terms of human ontology and behavior. The first one is a master thesis written by Ismail Yağmur titled '*Findings of Human Psychology in Ghazali's System of Thought.*'¹¹ It gives a general overview for making the connection between psychology and Ghazali's analysis of human being. It presents the development of psychology throughout the history alongside with the specific psychology schools. Further, it discusses the topics such as what is man, the spiritual mechanisms of a human, human behaviors and learning process according to Ghazali. This master thesis makes a connection between religion and psychology by presenting the western understanding of psychology and Islamic view of human psychology and behavior. Specifically, it takes Ghazali's perceptions of human psychology within the Islamic framework as its center.

¹⁰ Mustapha Achoui, "Human Nature from a Comparative Psychological Perspective," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 15, No: 4 (1998): 82.

¹¹ İsmail Yağmur, "Gazali Düşüncesinde İnsan Psikolojisine İlişkin Bulgular," (Master's Thesis, Cumhuriyet University, 2007).

There are two other master theses that specifically focus on *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* by Ghazali. ‘*The Relation between the Heart and the Intellect in Ghazali*’ is written by Fatih Acun, and it studies the relation between the intellect and the heart by presenting them as separate and opposing beings¹². It analyzes these two spiritual parts alongside with *rūḥ* and *nafs* concluding that the heart of a human being carries great significance since the heart steps in to grasp the metaphysical realities that the intellect is not able to grasp. Yet, to achieve the metaphysical realities, the heart is needed to be cleansed from its worldly concerns. The other master thesis is ‘*The Relation between the Heart and the Intellect in Ghazali’s Ihya*’¹³ by Ceren Cennet Çavuş. This study examines the heart and the intellect separately and looks into them in the Quran, Hadith and the classical works of Sufism. It focuses mostly on the modern argument that there is a conflict between the intellect and the heart. However, it asserts that they are not in a state of conflict for Ghazali; rather they are two different names of one essence. With this in mind, it can be seen that these two theses are not directly related to psychology, but they only analyze the concepts of the heart and intellect relation in the Quran and Hadith literature, in the works of Sufism and then specifically in Ghazali’s works.

Another master thesis is ‘*The Basic Concepts for Defining the Human Being in Ghazali*’¹⁴ by Turgay Yazıcı. In this thesis four concepts which are *qalb*, *aql*, *rūḥ* and *nafs* are basically analyzed both in Quran and Hadith literature and Islamic tradition alongside with presenting Ghazali’s close study of these four terms. It gives a sum of definitions and explanations of these terms analytically. It emphasizes the vital place of knowing oneself in reaching the Divine knowledge of Allah. It is a comprehensive work examining all four terms with regard to the levels of soul (*maratib al-nafs*) and purifying the heart, as well. The writer includes the psychological dimensions of Ghazali’s analysis upon the psychological states and behaviors of human beings, which I think is a great contribution.

One other master thesis is ‘*The Stages of the self in Ghazali*’¹⁵ by Murat İsmailoğlu completed in 2016. It is an inclusive work discussing the concept of *nafs* (the self) in

¹² Fatih Acun, “Gazzali’de Akıl-Kalp İlişkisi,” (Master’s Thesis, Fırat University, 2012).

¹³ Ceren Cennet Çavuş, “İmam Gazali’nin İhyasında Akıl ve Kalp İlişkisi,” (Master’s Thesis, Marmara University, 2014).

¹⁴ Turgay Yazıcı, “Gazzali’de İnsanı Tanımlayan Temel Kavramlar,” (Master’s Thesis, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, 2014).

¹⁵ Murat İsmailoğlu, “Gazzali’de Nefsin Mertebeleri,” (Master’s Thesis, Ankara University, 2016).

accordance with the Quran, Hadith and Sufism in detail. In addition, it psychologically looks into the illnesses of the heart and the process of purifying the heart by presenting the levels of the self. The writer associates some of the psychological modern problems with the illnesses of the heart which are addressed by Ghazali. For instance, he associates the epidemic of Narcissism with *ujb*, arrogance and pride, and commodity fetishism with love of the material world.

Last but not least, there is another master thesis titled '*The concept of the heart in Ghazali*'¹⁶ by Nurbol Abubakirov written in 2009. He examines the heart as a concept and its importance for the meaning of human existence. Further, the basic functions of the heart such as cognition (*idrak*), feelings and knowledge are discussed within the framework. He also puts emphasis on the illnesses of the heart and the ways of purification of the heart. He deals with the subject matter from the perspective of Sufism efficiently enough combining the works of other Sufi scholars on the conception of the heart. It is also emphasized in this thesis that the heart is vulnerable and open to both internal and external influences. In other words, the hearts of other people, committing sins, angels and demons all have an effect on the heart either blackening the heart or bleaching and polishing it. I have also included these effects into my thesis and discuss them in my third chapter, as well.

There are still some ongoing works in Turkey about Ghazali's understanding of human nature and psychology. Also, it should not be forgotten that Ghazali is one of such scholars whose works have always been at the center of academic studies in different disciplines like philosophy, Islamic theology, logic, Islamic jurisprudence, psychology, ethics etc. Nevertheless, my aim is not to present all of the literature about Ghazali, which would be unrelated to my subject matter. So, I will only stick to the ones that pertain to the conception of the heart, the levels of the self, purifying the heart, and to the notion of human being and behavior.

As for the works that are done in English, there is a need to first mention the translations of Ghazali's works. They were written generally in the middle of the 20th century. They are, in fact, PhD theses, so they include an inclusive introduction in which the writers compared and contrasted with the ideas of other scholars and analyze the content of the work profoundly.

¹⁶ Nurbol Abubakirov, "Gazzali'de Kalp Kavramı," (Master's Thesis, Selçuk University, 2009).

First of all, there is a PhD thesis by Walter James Skellie, titled '*The Religious Psychology of Ghazali*'. It was completed in 1938 and is a translation of *Aja'ibu'l Qalb* as *The Wonders of the Heart*¹⁷ in Ghazali's '*Revival of the Sciences of Religion*' (*Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*). He presents the translation with a comprehensive introduction where he studies the texts used in translation and examines the psychological dimension of the work of Ghazali. This thesis is one of the primary texts in English to which I resort for my thesis.

Another important work was done in 1958 by Yusuf Easa Shammās: '*The Ascent to the Divine through the Path of Self-knowledge*'¹⁸. It is a psychological approach to theology and again contains a very comprehensive introduction and translation of the work of Ghazali: '*Ma'arij al-Quds fi Madarij Ma'rifat al-Nafs*'.

These theses are a translation of some parts of *Ihya*, but they put a psychological emphasis on the contents of these parts.

One other notable and related work was done by Abdelmalek Yamani in 2017 at California Institute of Integral Studies. It is titled as '*The Muslim Psyche: A Journey from Wholeness to Holiness*'.¹⁹ Its main aim is to explore the psyche from an Islamic perspective putting its examination in conversation with East and West psychology. It also looks for the interaction between the elements like *nafs*, *heart*, *aql* and *jism* (body) in a psychic system. Yamani presents a detailed schema of the Muslim psyche through looking at the ideas of certain Islamic scholars such as Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Ghazali and Ibn Al-Qayyim. According to his study, the Islamic self is composed of the spirit (*rūh*), the mind ('*aql*), the heart (*qalb*) and the body (*jassad*). Since he adopts a psychological perspective on his study, he includes the related levels of consciousness, which are *iman*, *Islam*, *taqwa* and *ihsan*.²⁰ After giving information about the three states of the *nafs* and indicating four different scenarios in order to show how this psychic system functions, he focuses on the journey that the Muslim psyche undertakes on these levels of the self, namely from *al-nafs al-ammārah* to *al-nafs al-mutmainnah*.

¹⁷ Al-Ghazali, Imam Muhammad, *The Marvels of The Heart*, trans. Walter James Skellie. (Canada: Fons Vitae, 2010).

¹⁸ Yusuf Easa Shammās, "The Ascent to the Divine Through the Path of Self-Knowledge: Mearij al-Quds Fi Madarij Ma'rifat al-Nafs," (PhD Diss., The Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1958).

¹⁹ Abdelmalek Yamani, "The Muslim Psyche: A Journey from Wholeness to Holiness," (PhD diss., California Institute of Integral Studies, 2017).

²⁰ These are Islamic terms and they mean faith, surrendering to Allah, piety, and perfection respectively.

In addition, there is a great work titled '*Al-Ghazali's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul*' by Timothy J. Gianotti. Since even the emissary of Allah, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is not permitted to speak of the spirit, Gianotti's focus is on how Ghazali addresses the issue of the secret of spirit and in doing so he mostly focuses on Ghazali's work *Ihya*. The issue of self-knowledge is at the center of Ghazali's masterpiece, *Ihya*, and since the quiddity of human beings is the spirit (*rūh*), the issue of spirit and studying it gains importance. After establishing the bases for how to understand Ghazali's approach to his formulation of the soul in the beginning of his book, Timothy Gianotti analyzes Ghazali's theory of human soul in three stages, which are theological, philosophical and mystical explanations of the human soul. What is included in this work other than the theory of the soul is also the eschatology of Ghazali, the hereafter and the situation of the soul after death.²¹

There have also been notable scholars who addressed the issue of the heart and human nature from different angles within the context of Islamic thought. Some take the issue in terms of philosophy and others put emphasis on the heart and soul in terms of *tasawwuf*.

I would like to present the ideas of some scholars who are somehow related to Ghazali on the issue of the heart to be able to draw a framework for the discussions of the subject matter. Firstly, Abū Tālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), who also had an impact on the formation of Ghazali's ideas, discusses the notion of the heart. In his famous book titled 'Nourishment of the Hearts' (*Qūt al-qulūb*) he explains the various kinds of functions which are attached to the heart. The heart is considered to be a moral judge and the linkage between the human and the Divine for him. In addition to expressing the manners and duties of Muslims in his book, he stresses the heart especially in explaining that humankind is capable of differentiating evil from good and of choosing the right one, thereby putting the heart at the center of all external and internal instruments just like being a king.²² He always presents quotes from the Quran and Hadith literature to indicate his points. He remarks that the devil is the enemy of humans and humans are to be aware of this enemy. Using the metaphor of mirror for the heart, he emphasizes the significance of repentance

²¹ Timothy Gianotti, *Ghazali's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul: Unveiling the Esoteric Psychology and Eschatology of the Ihya*, (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2001).

²² Saeko Yazaki, *Islamic mysticism and Abu Talib al-Makki: The Role of the Heart*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 53.

against the devil for repentance will erase the dot which occurs after making a mistake.

It is not possible for us to present all of Al-Makkī's ideas here, yet another noteworthy contribution he made is that he believes Allah created everything in pairs to have a better understanding of the other. To put it in a more specific way, three pairing instruments are introduced by him;

The first pair is the self (*nafs*) and the soul (*rūḥ*). These are places to encounter the enemy and the angel, immorality and Allah-fearingness. The second is reason (*'aql*) and desire (*hawā*). They act as assistance and temptation in accordance with the will of Allah. The third is knowledge (*'ilm*) and belief (*īmān*), which are apportioned by Divine mercy. These are the instruments of the heart and its hidden commended qualities.²³

It is worthwhile to mention Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 502 / 1108) who is a contemporary of Ghazali and is thought to influence him to a certain extent in his ideas on describing human beings. Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī puts human beings and happiness at the center of his conceptualization of ethics. For Iṣfahānī, the human being is considered to be a small model of the universe and he points out human being's natural, animal-like and rational sides.²⁴ Before delving into the ways that will enable man to be happy, he finds it crucial to explain what kind of a being the human is. Hence, he comments that the human being comprises an object that is observed with the eye and a soul (*nafs*) that is conceived with the intellect.²⁵ In the context of spirit and body relationship, he thinks both the spirit (*rūḥ*) and the body belong to different worlds and they are two different substances. He bases this idea in the following verse from the Quran;

So mention when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I am going to create a human being from clay. So when I proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration."²⁶

Besides using the same metaphors like Ghazali for describing the place of the spirit (the subtle substance) over the body, he clinches the point that the human being is created between the levels of animals and angels; therefore, he can be inclined to

²³ Ibid., 52.

²⁴ Anar Gafarov, "Ragib el-Isfahani'de Insan Tasavvuru," *Marmara University Faculty of Theology Journal*, (2006): 192.

²⁵ Ibid., 192.

²⁶ The Qur'an, 71: 72.

animalistic (beastly) behaviors due to his nature whereas he can be inclined to the angel-like behaviors due to his will (*irada*). At this point comes the significance of the religion (*sharī'ah*) as regulating and guiding the human life in this material world in order to enable him to gain blessings in the Hereafter according to Rāghib al-Isfahānī.²⁷

From the near history, I will also present the contributions of Shaykh Muhammad Emin Er (1914-2013) on the issue of inner (*batini*) side of human beings because he is one of the contemporary scholars who analyzed the heart of human beings from a spiritual perspective in today's world where there is a great deal of effort to serve to the eyes of humans. He has a book titled '*Laws of the Heart: A Practical Introduction to the Sufi Path*' in which the reader is introduced to the foundations, practices and fruits of the Islamic science of spiritual psychology. The goal is to present a detailed schema for the treatment of the diseases of the heart. He remarks that the ego-self i.e. the lower self (*nafs*) is the seat of the diseases and has to be treated under the supervision of a spiritual physician.²⁸ Muhammad Emin Er mentions two types of law, one of which is the outer law dealing with the actions of worship, marriage, judicial rulings, criminal law etc. and the other of which is the inner law dealing with the human heart and its matters like repentance from sins, embellishment with virtues and good character while keeping away from evil traits.²⁹ As for the *nafs*, he states the knowledge of *nafs* is an important affair for everyone. Further, *nafs* is a subtle substance coming from the realm of the Lord and he connects some of the actions like disobedience, heedlessness, every type of passion and idolatry to the *nafs* (self) which leads to the idea of disciplining the self (*tazkiya al-nafs*). In this regard, Muhammad Emin Er talks about seven stages to strive against the *nafs*, which are the tyrannical self, the regretful self, the tranquil self, the inspired self, the self that is well pleased with Allah, the self that is well pleasing to Allah and the completed self.³⁰

To sum, it can be seen that Ghazali is such a scholar that his ideas and contributions are still being studied today and inspiring more to study. And the issue of the heart, its role for the human being as well as the concept of the human being has always

²⁷ Gafarov, "Ragib al-Isfahani," 195.

²⁸ Muhammad Emin Er, *Laws of the Heart: An Introduction to the Spiritual Path in Islam*, trans. Joseph Walsh, (Atlanta: Shifa Publishing, 2008), 8.

²⁹ Ibid., 44-45.

³⁰ Er, *Laws of the Heart*, 21.

been of value, and I could include only a limited literature into my thesis although there is a great amount of it waiting to be studied.

The Primary Sources

My primary sources for this thesis are ‘The Marvels of the Heart’ (*‘Ajaib al-Qalb*)³¹ and ‘Disciplining the Soul’ (*Riyadat al-Nafs*)³² from The Revival of Religion’s Sciences (*Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*) by Imam Muhammad Ghazali. I will also take advantage of Ghazali’s other books like ‘The Ascent to the Divine’ (*Maarij al-quds*)³³, *Al-Risala Al-Ladunniyya*³⁴, and *Minhaj al-Abideen*³⁵ since he also touches upon the concept of the human beings and their attributes in these works, as well.

Significance and Contribution of the Thesis

The issue of the heart, human soul and explaining what makes a human being has always attracted scholars from various disciplines. They all strive to give an answer for the question of ‘What is a human being?’ from their own angles. As mentioned above, there are a number of studies and theses examining the perspective of Ghazali on similar topics like the stages of the self, the concept of the heart, the psychology of humans, motivation of human behavior and the issue of the spirit. It is not possible for me to include all of the Islamic scholars in this study. Yet, as can be seen, there is no such study on the focus of analysis of human being spiritually and in an ontological basis including the functions of the heart on reigning over all the spiritual faculties in man, how it changes and is affected by inner spiritual battles and by external factors, all of which give rise to human behavior. Therefore, my study not only addresses an inclusive perspective on Ghazali’s human ontology and behavior by examining it psycho-spiritually but also it offers an alternative understanding for today’s concept of human being and his behavior with regard to Western modern psychology.

³¹ Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of The Heart*, trans. Walter James Skellie, (Canada: Fons Vitae, 2010).

³² Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *On Disciplining the Soul and Breaking the Two Desires*, trans. T. J. Winter (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1995).

³³ Yusuf Easa Shammās, “The Ascent to the Divine Through the Path of Self-Knowledge: Mearij al-Quds Fi Madarij Ma’rifat al-Nafs,” (PhD Diss., The Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1958).

³⁴ Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali, “Al-Risala Al-Ladunniyya,” trans. Margaret Smith, *Journal of Royal Asiatic Studies*, (1938).

³⁵ Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Minhajul ‘Abideen*, trans. Iqbal Hussain Ansari. (Karachi: Darul Isha’at, 1998).

Methodology

I aim to find an answer to the question of why human beings behave in a particular way based on the explanation of Ghazali about human ontology. So, as an idea how prominent scholars find an answer for this question, especially Ghazali will be analyzed throughout the thesis. Therefore, I will follow the method of history of ideas in this thesis, which will be through textual analysis. I will analyze Ghazali's 'The Marvels of the Heart' (*'Ajaib al-Qalb*) and 'Disciplining the Soul' (*Riyadat al-Nafs*) as the primary sources.

The methodology covers firstly gaining the insight into the explanation of human ontology by Ghazali, in relation to both the material and the spiritual world, and secondly it covers the attempts to present how Ghazali divides the self into developmental levels psycho-spiritual-wise including its inner dynamics and outer influences. Then, how the human behavior as a constituent of the good or bad character is motivated based on the articulation of Ghazali and Western psychological perspectives will be addressed with relevant conclusions drawn at the end. I focus on the texts of 'The Marvels of The Heart' and 'Disciplining the Soul' by constant references to the Quran and Hadith texts and the basic references of Western psychology.

Limitation and Scope of the Thesis

This study is primarily on the Islamic literature and more specifically about the works of Ghazali. So, the primary sources are in Arabic; and the English and Turkish translations will be used. However, as it is known translations may not clearly convey the intended meaning from one language to another, to minimize this problem, I will use both the transliterated words and the English counterparts that are the most suitable.

In addition, the scope of my study is to cover Ghazali's understanding on the human ontology and the motivation of behaviors. To be able to reach this aim, I will address the related concepts like heart, intellect, spirit and soul to indicate how the human beings are defined and what happens beyond its material body in the spiritual realm. In this sense, discussion of the human ontology in terms of philosophy and theological anthropology comparatively or going into the endless discussions of *al-rūh* (the spirit) and its essence both in Islamic thought and in Western thought, or

answering the question of ‘What is mind?’ or such issues are beyond the scope of my thesis and I do not intend to cover them.

Outline of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four main chapters with an introduction and conclusion. To set a brief outline of the thesis, in the introduction part there will be the methodology of the thesis and the literature on the perception of human beings and the issue of the heart in the analyses of various scholars and thinkers. Following it, the terminology that is utilized by Ghazali in his works related to the perception of the human being will be indicated ending with the life of Imam Muhammad al-Ghazali.

The first chapter is based on the analysis of the spiritual constitution of a human being as Ghazali addresses in ‘The Marvels of the Heart’ as well as in his other works cited above. Here, it is aimed to explore the spiritual elements of human nature, which are *qalb*, *nafs*, and *aql* alongside with the reciprocal relationship between them. The focus is to indicate that human beings are not only a matter of a material body and reason, but it is asserted by Ghazali that human nature has a way more important spiritual dimension to be discussed and understood.

The second chapter is about how these relations among and between the aforementioned spiritual components, namely *aql*, *qalb* and *nafs* are established and altered. In other words, Ghazali presents a detailed schema and an ontological spiritual system in his masterpiece, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, of those non-material components concerning the inner conflicts of a human being to establish a systematic transcend of a human being and to be able to reach *haqiqatu'n nafs* (true knowledge of the self) and *ma'rifatullah* (true knowledge of Allah) in the end. For this, he touches upon three levels of the self (*nafs*) taking their base from the Qur'anic verses. These states of the self are called the state of the self that incites evil (*al-nafs al-ammarah*), the state of the self that censures and blames itself (*al-nafs al-lawwamah*) and the state of the tranquil self (*al-nafs al-mutma'innah*). In every state of the soul, according to Ghazali, the system among the intellect, heart and soul changes, one of them is taking the leadership every time. There is a great war happening, so to say, among them. Also, to make these levels clearer, I will show an example case in which there are different psychological states and behavioral outcomes in accordance with the states resulting from the three stages of the self.

The third chapter is about the external influences affecting this system. They can stem from two main resources. One of them is the demon or satan (*shayṭān*) and the other one is the angel (*mal'ak*). The suggestions coming from the demon are called 'waswasa' (satanic whispering) and the others coming from the angels are called 'ilham' (inspiration). In addition to two opposing sources affecting the hearts of human beings, there is another factor to be considered, which is the society and the milieu of the human beings. That means humans have to be on alert against the expectations and norms of the society that they live in because they should filter and check before these ideas enter and affect their spiritual system. In this sense, it is also emphasized by the Sufis that humans around you and the states of their heart can influence your heart in a positive or negative way leading you either to perform good deeds and remembering Allah or bad deeds and moving you away from Allah.

The fourth chapter focuses on the relation between human ontology and human actions and behaviors. It will be about how Ghazali explains the causes and motives of behavior and the process of action. Besides, it will include the importance of having a good character and of the struggle to tame the blameworthy qualities and replacing them with the praiseworthy ones. So, talking about purification of the self and heart will be of great significance in this chapter.

Terminology

Before starting the discussion of the study, there is a need to explain the certain terminologies that are at the center of this study. These terminologies include *qalb*, 'aql, rūḥ, nafs, jism (body) 'ilm (knowledge). They will be explained according to Ghazali's usage in his work *Ihya*.

In the third volume of *Ihya* by Ghazali, in the part of the Marvels of the heart, he presents four terms that are basically significant for our understanding of human being. They are the heart, intellect, soul and spirit. He gives two meanings for each of them stating that one meaning of each term is the same and it is what the essence of human being is.

To begin with, the heart (*qalb*) means a cone-shaped organ of flesh which is at the left side of the chest. Animals and the dead also have this heart of flesh and this meaning does not concern Ghazali since that part of the body is the work of the

physicians and it belongs to the visible material world.³⁶ The second meaning of the heart is a subtle tenuous substance of an ethereal spiritual sort (*latifa rabbaniya ruhaniya*). Ghazali claims that this ethereal substance has some kind of relation with the physical heart. This relation is described as the relation between an accident and a substance; user of a tool and a tool; occupier of a place and a place. Besides, this second meaning of the heart which is the subtle tenuous substance is the true essence of the human being for Ghazali. So, it is of great significance and at the center in defining the human being ontologically for him. It is this one which is addressed, punished, reproached and held responsible by Allah.

Moreover, the term *qalb* (heart) and its plural form *qulub* are used nearly 130 times in the Quran. Its root meaning in Arabic means “to alter, turn, invert”.³⁷ Yet, the heart, being a spiritual gem, is virtually the king of the realm which is the body both physically and spiritually. The brain, as a center of thought, produces ideas in the shade of emotions that arise from the heart.³⁸ According to the explanation of Ethem Cebecioğlu, the heart is the gnosis of human beings; it is where the material and the spirit meet, where Allah gazes upon and where the reason and the spirit are manifested.³⁹ In the same way that the human being is the essence of the universe having tendencies towards good and evil, the heart also has these opposite propensities. It can be claimed that the heart is a battlefield of good and evil, piety and impiety, angelic and devilish forces.⁴⁰ About the significance of caring the heart, Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273) states as follows;

Do not look to overfeed your body and ripen it, for in the end it is but a sacrifice for earth. Look to feed your heart! That is the one to fly to soaring heights and receive honor.

Feed your body only little of greasy and sugary stuff. As those who feed the body in excess, fall in the pit of their desires and perish in disgrace.

Feed your spirit with spiritual foods. Serve it mature thought, a refined understanding and provisions of the spirit so that it can go to where it is bound to go, full of health and vigor.⁴¹

³⁶ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the Heart*, 6.

³⁷ Yazaki, *Islamic mysticism*, 36.

³⁸ Osman Nuri Topbaş, *Sufism: A Path Towards The Internalization of Fatih (Ihsan)*. (Istanbul: Erkam Publications, 2011), 163.

³⁹ Ethem Cebecioğlu, *Tasavvuf Terimleri ve Deyimleri Sözlüğü*, (Ankara: Rehber Publications, 1997), 422.

⁴⁰ Topbaş, *Sufism*, 165.

⁴¹ Topbaş, *Sufism*, 164.

It is also given importance for it is this heart that the human being ‘comprehends’, just as he sees with his eyes and hears with his ears according to its usage in the Quran. In relation to this, in the Quran, it is said that “*It is not their eyes that are blind, but the hearts in their breasts.*”⁴²

The image of the heart has a vital place in the history of Sufism, as well. To set an example, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728), who is a famous ascetic in the Umayyad period says ‘*Cleanse ye these hearts (by meditation and remembrance of Allah), for they are quick to rust.*’⁴³ Besides, Al-Ḥarīth Al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857), who is considered to be a distinguished ‘religious psychologist’ among the early Sufis, takes heart as an essential esoteric organ and states that the heart can hear both the voice of Allah and the whisperings of satan; therefore it is the heart that has the power to decide between two voices.⁴⁴ He regards the *qalb* as the essence of the self, which is immaterial, controlling the conscious nature of human being and an instrument, which enables reality to be perceived and interpreted.⁴⁵

There are, also, many Hadith concerning the issue of the heart and one of them states:

There lies within the body a piece of flesh. If it is sound, the whole body is sound; if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted. Verily, this piece is the heart.⁴⁶

This Hadith itself is worth to separate a whole thesis, yet within this study it is mentioned in relation to indicate the explanation of the system of Ghazali’s human ontology.

The second term is the spirit (*rūḥ*) and it has two meanings, as well. One of them is a subtle body whose source is the gulf of the physical heart and it spreads with the help of pulsative arteries over the rest of the body. When the physicians use the term ‘spirit’, they mean that it is a subtle vapor generated by the heat of the heart. That meaning is of no concern for Ghazali’s explanation of human being, either. There is another meaning for the spirit which is the subtle tenuous substance in human being

⁴²The Qur’an 22: 46

⁴³Yazaki, *Islamic mysticism*, 36.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁵ Mohamed Safiullah Munsoor, “The Soul (Heart) and its Attributes: An Islamic Perspective with Reference to Self in Western Psychology,” *Afkar* 16 (2015): 98.

⁴⁶ Sahih al-Bukhari 52, Vol. 1, Book 2, Hadith 50

that knows and perceives.⁴⁷ This meaning is the same with that of the heart in being a lordly (*rabbani*) affair.

Besides, in the book of *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism*, which is one of the basic sources in the history of tasawwuf, it is stated that as long as the human bodies have the spirit, they remain alive. These spirits are, in fact, subtle essences and the human being is a combination of this spirit and the body. They are subjugated to each other.⁴⁸ According to 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 1330), who is one of the most important authors of the dictionary of Sufi terminology, defines the spirit as an abstract human subtlety.⁴⁹ It is generally discussed under three categories, which are the basis of movement-action, the basis of life and the basis of cognizance (*idrak*). The first one is the most general meaning for the spirit. The second one is possible to apply for the plants, as well. And the last one is what is unique to the human being. All the cognitive actions like knowledge, will, thinking, conscience occur in this spirit.⁵⁰

Note that the spirit is a subtle entity that humans should not inquire it deeply. It is given in a verse of the Quran about the ones who are asking about the spirit; "Say: 'The spirit is by my Lord's command. Little indeed is the knowledge vouchsafed to you.'"⁵¹ So, thinking about the nature of the spirit is not permitted, but to be able to know it better, learning about its attributes is needed to know the essence of human being.⁵²

The next term *nafs* which can be translated into English as 'self' and will be used like this throughout the thesis has more than one meaning, yet only two of them are explained by Ghazali being related to the topic. Firstly, it covers both the faculty of anger (*ghadab*) and faculty of appetite (*shahwa*) in the human being. This meaning is quite predominant among Sufis when they use the term for blameworthy qualities within the human being that are to be fought against and broken. Yet, the second meaning of the *nafs* is again this subtle ethereal substance according to Ghazali that is mentioned before. It is the soul and self of the human being and his essence. But it

⁴⁷ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the Heart*, 7.

⁴⁸ Abu'l Qasim al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala al-Qushayriyya fi 'ilm al-tasawwuf*, trans. Alexander D. Knysh, (Lebanon: Garnet Publishing, 2007), 110.

⁴⁹ Abdurrezzak Kaşani, *Istilahatu's Sufiyye*, trans. Abdurrezak Tek (Bursa: Bursa Academy, 2014), 88

⁵⁰ Ethem Cebecioglu, *Tasavvuf Terimleri ve Deyimleri Sözlüğü*, 598-599.

⁵¹ The Qur'an, 17: 85

⁵² For more information about the issue of spirit in Ghazali, see; *Ghazali's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul* by Timothy Gianotti.

can be defined by different names according to its different states; the self at rest (*al-nafs al-mutma'innah*), the upbraiding self (*al-nafs al-lawwamah*) and the self that commands to evil (*al-nafs al-ammara bil-sui*), on which I will explain more in my second chapter.

In the Arabic language, a thing's 'soul' is its being and its self. But, al-Qushayrī (d. 1073) states that when the Sufis use this word, they do not imply simply the being or a physical body. They mean the deficiencies of one's character traits and immoral deeds.⁵³ It is also called by the philosophers as the animalistic self and it is seen to be an instrument between the body and the heart, which is the rational self (*al-nafs al-natiqah*).⁵⁴

The fourth term is the intellect or reason (*'aql*) and it has many meanings that Ghazali explains in the Book of Knowledge in *Ihya*. Yet, two of them are taken as being related to his aim. The first is the one that which knows the real nature of things and its seat is the heart. The second one is used for perceiving the knowledge and used synonymously with the heart in the sense of being the subtle tenuous substance.⁵⁵ Besides, Süleyman Uludağ emphasizes that the intellect is important for Sufis in that it leads one to Hereafter by restricting one's bodily desires and appetite. It directs someone to obey the religious rules and commands, so can be regarded as the biggest gift after the faith of Islam. Moreover, in the Islamic intellectual history putting the intellect across from the bodily desires is a common understanding. This approach is influenced mostly by Al-Ḥarīth Al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857) and Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 869)^{56 57}

Thus, when we look at the terms and their meanings that Ghazali utilizes, we can comprehend that for each one there is a different meaning and their second meanings are all the same and used to mean one meaning, which is the subtle ethereal substance (*latifa rabbaniya ruhaniya*) that perceives knowledge and knows Allah and needs to be praised.

⁵³ Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala*, 109.

⁵⁴ Kaşani, *Istilahat-ı Sufiyye*, 45.

⁵⁵ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the Heart*, 8-9.

⁵⁶ Süleyman Uludağ, "AKIL", TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/akil#3-tasavvuf> (24.06.2019).

⁵⁷ For further information see; *el-Akl ve Fefmu'l-Kur'an* by Al-Ḥarīth Al-Muḥāsibī and *Kitabu'l-'Akl ve'l-heva* by Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī.

There are some other important concepts that are related to our subject matter and need to be explained so that the terms become clarified as they will be transferred from Arabic. With this in mind, *jism* in Arabic means body and it belongs to the subject of physics. All bodies in nature consist of matter as place and a form which dwells in the matter. Bodies have some essential features and without them they cannot exist and have some secondary qualities, whose absence does not destroy them, but affects their integrity. There are various ideas that are firmly related to the idea of body, which is the movement and rest; time and place; vacuity; finity and infinity; contract and adherence; continuity or succession. About the composing matter of bodies, there have been disputes among philosophers and *mutakallim*-theologians, as well⁵⁸ leaving a great literature on the philosophical and theological understanding of the corporeal bodies.

Another concept to be explained is '*ilm*' in Arabic. In the broadest sense it means knowledge. According to Sufis, and also for Ghazali, there are two types of knowledge. The first one is obtained by oneself, and it is acquired through education and such. The second one is given into the heart by Allah. The first one is attained by the intellect and the latter is given either to the Prophets as revelation or to both prophets and saints as inspiration.⁵⁹

In conclusion, the terms that I believe to be related to the content of my thesis are *qalb*, *aql*, *ruh*, *nafs*, *jism*, and *ilm*. Although they can be explored more deeply, I only presented how Ghazali explained them in order to use them in his explanation of the human ontology and how other additional sources explain their meaning.

Ghazali's Life and Historical Background

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad aṭ-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī was born in Ṭūs, Persia which is known today as Iran in 450/1058, three years after the establishment of Seljuq regime in Baghdad. Not much information is known about his early education life, but according to the sources his father wanted him and his brother to take good education and sent them to his Sufi friend for religious sciences. For this, Ghazali says they proceeded to knowledge not for the sake of Allah, but for the sake of

⁵⁸ Vaux, B. Carra De, "Djism." In *First Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1049-1050. Vol. II. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987.

⁵⁹ Cebecioğlu, *Tasavvuf Terimleri*, 392.

food.⁶⁰ To say this sentence he experienced his father's death at an early age and their father left Ghazali and his brother, Ahmed some small legacy to be exhausted for their education. When this legacy finished, they went to continue in a *madrassa*. Still being a boy, he studied jurisprudence in Tūs under Shaykh Ahmed b. M. al-Radhakani al- Tūsī. Then, he went to Jurjan to study under the Imam Abu Nasr al-Ismaili.⁶¹ After his education there, he went to Nishapur to study with Imam al-Juwayni, who is the most outstanding Muslim scholar of his time, an authority in both Muslim law (*fiqh*) and theology.⁶² Ghazali attended al-Juwayni's classes until the death of Imam al-Juwayni. There, he studied theology, philosophy, logic, dialectic and natural sciences and possibly learned about Sufism.⁶³ Up to that time, he had already involved in the politics and had known the ruling class. During that time, he was also joining the circle of a significant Sufi of his time, Abu Ali al-Farmadhi, who is a disciple of a noted Sufi Abu'l Qasim al-Qushayri in the early Seljuq period.⁶⁴ As can be understood, Ghazali is influenced by both scholarly education and Sufi education. Afterward, he joined the traveling court and the assembly of scholars that the vizier Nizam al-Mulk kept around him. He had gained fame as being an expert scholar and debater, and was given the titles of 'Imam of Khorasan' and 'Imam of Iraq'. Then, he was appointed as the head of the *Nizamiyya* College in Baghdad⁶⁵ by the vizier Nizam al-Mulk.⁶⁶ During this time he was heavily engaged with writing most of his books and lecturing.⁶⁷ He gained a notable reputation and while he was teaching to about three hundred students, he was studying the philosophy and *Batiniyya* at the same time in order to write books containing counter-arguments to refute them.⁶⁸

At some point in his life, he began to doubt everything; even the proof of his senses and turned out to be a skeptic for a while. Over time, he overcame it with the help of

⁶⁰ Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26.

⁶¹ Margaret Smith, *Al-Ghazali The Mystic*, (Lahore: Hijra International Publishers, 1983), 13.

⁶² Griffel, *Philosophical Theology*, 29.

⁶³ Smith, *Al-Ghazali the Mystic*, 15.

⁶⁴ Tobias Mayer, *Al-Ghazali a Letter to a Disciple*, (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2005).

⁶⁵ In Baghdad of that time there were many public and private libraries, all were open to students of knowledge. In Baghdad not only theology was being taught, but also medicine and philosophy were taught and the school of Baghdad was characterized by its scientific spirit and the lectures at Baghdad were attended by Muslim scholars from all parts of Empire.

⁶⁶ Mayer, *Letter to a Disciple*, xvi.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Xvi

⁶⁸ Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Al-Ghazali's Path to Sufism: His Deliverance From Error (Al-Munkidh min al-Dalal)*, 2nd edition, (Louisville, Fons Vitae, 2000), 44.

Allah and reached equilibrium mentally. Then, he engaged himself with deep studying of the writings of the scholastic theologians, the philosophers and of the Sufis. He was in search of the truth and thought that one of those groups must have attained it. As mentioned above slightly, he rejected the first two and concluded that the mystics are the seekers for the truth and only they reached their purpose in search of the truth.⁶⁹ While he continued his lectures attracting increasing numbers of students, he reached a spiritual and intellectual crisis and Margaret Smith puts this into the words like below:

At the height of his reputation, with a brilliant future behind him, and all that the world could offer at his feet, the young professor suffered a complete physical breakdown and for a time was incapable of lecturing. When he recovered, he announced that he was going on pilgrimage to Mecca. ... He gave away all his wealth except the small amount necessary to maintain his family, and in 488/1096 he left Baghdad, with the intention never to return thither.^{70 71}

Upon announcing that he was going to perform the pilgrimage (*Hajj*), he first went to Damascus in order to be a disciple of a great contemporary Sufi master Nasr al-Maqdisi. There he dedicated himself to -in his own words- 'seclusion and retreat (*khalwa*), spiritual exertion (*riyada*) and struggle, devoting myself to the purification of my soul, cultivating virtues and cleansing my heart for the remembrance of Allah the Exalted, as I had learnt from the Sufis' writings.'⁷² Smith, also, points out that Ghazali, then lived like an ascetic, was wearing coarse clothes. He was mostly spending his time for devotion. Besides, he had time for his writings and among them he started to write his greatest work *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (The revival of the religious sciences).⁷³ In *Ihya*, Ghazali presents spiritualization of the religion from every point of view and it has maintained its great importance and popularity in the Muslim world up to now.⁷⁴ He was also wandering and visiting different shrines and sanctuaries, still living the life of an ascetic, trying to purify his soul by self-discipline and good works.⁷⁵ But then, at the request of Fakhr al-Mulk⁷⁶ Ghazali thought this as the will of Allah, too and he returned to Nishapur. In his intellectual

⁶⁹ Smith, *Al-Ghazali: The Mystic*, 22.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷¹ For more of a political situation of that period, see; *The First Islamic Reviver* by Kenneth Garden.

⁷² Mayer, *A disciple*, xix.

⁷³ Smith, *Al-Ghazali: The Mystic*, 28.

⁷⁴ Mayer, *A Disciple*, xix.

⁷⁵ Smith, *Al-Ghazali: The Mystic*, 29.

⁷⁶ The Son of Nizam al-Mulk. After Nizam al-Mulk, he ascended to the throne.

biography '*Al-Munkiz Min al-Dalal*'⁷⁷, he states that he consulted some men of good counsel, devotion and visions, and they all came to the conclusion that he should renounce the retreat and depart for Nishapur.

So, at the end of eleven years of seclusion (*inziwa*), in the month of *Dhu'l Qa'da* of the year 499/1106, he went back to Nishapur and his earlier job of teaching. At this point, he specifies that he is not the same person teaching with the same purposes as the person teaching years ago; his concern is now only Allah.⁷⁸ Yet, he stayed in Nishapur for a short period of time. Since he was after a life of seclusion, he departed for his city of birth, Tūs. There, he constructed a *madrasa* next to his house and was engaged with teaching Islamic jurisprudence, holding discussion and reading circles, reading the Quran and worshipping Allah.⁷⁹ After four years, at the age of fifty-three Ghazali died in 1111 AD and was buried in a graveyard in the town of Taberan in Tūs leaving behind him a great heritage which continues to attract discussions and studies still today.^{80 81}

Ghazali's life is worth analyzing in this study for his life itself contains search for a meaning in his life leading him to write his magnum opus *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* which this thesis is based upon. That is to say, Ghazali also wrote his own intellectual biography, *Al Munqidh Min Al-Dalal*⁸² (Deliverance from Error), to indicate the crisis of his life, its causes and eventually how it ended by presenting the reader a historical background for his time. At one point in his life, Ghazali quit everything and left them behind, and he travelled for the *Hajj*. He was at the peak of his career, earning well, had a prosperous reputation with a great number of students in the most famous *madrasa* of his time, which is the *Nizam al-Mulk Madrasa* in Baghdad. However, he gave up all he had in terms of fame, money and position, and set out to find the spiritual dimension of him and what is expected from him as a human being in this world. He questioned his existence –ontology- and wanted to find answers to fill the ontological gap inside him so that he could conduct accordingly in this world.

⁷⁷ Al-Ghazali, *Al-Munkidh min al-dalal*, 64.

⁷⁸ Al-Ghazali, *Al-munkidh min al-dalal*, 69.

⁷⁹ Hatice P. Kemahli, "Four Inclinations in Human Nature: Evaluated in Light of Al-Ghazzali's Concept of the Heart," *Spiritual Psychology and Counseling* (2017): 11.

⁸⁰ Kemahli, *Four Inclinations*, 11.

⁸¹ Mayer, *Letter to a disciple*, xxii.

⁸² Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Al-Ghazali's Path to Sufism: His Deliverance From Error (Al-Munkidh min al-Dalal*, 2nd edition, (Louisville, Fons Vitae, 2000), 44.

So, I believe to look through even his biography will contribute to our understanding of the human being and how we should conceptualize it.



CHAPTER 1: Spiritual Constitution of a Human Being

This chapter is about the spiritual dimensions of a human being. What spiritual components human beings have and how those components function in a spiritual psychic system are answered in this chapter. I basically focus on Ghazali's work of *Ihya*, specifically on the first chapters of 'The Marvels of the Heart' and I aim to present how Ghazali examines the soul and self of the human being by getting into the very deep of human psychology.

Ghazali, in the parts of the Marvels of the Heart, states that most of the people are ignorant of knowing their heart and *nafs* (their self). So, knowing your heart and its features is the essential requirement of Islam. Ghazali also gives the details of *latifa rabbaniya ruhaniya*, namely the *qalb*, which I have addressed in the terminology part that the heart is the essence of human beings and is the subtle ethereal thing. Yet, he still warns the reader that the main goal is not to unearth the truth of the heart which is forbidden by Hadith and the Quran; "*They ask you concerning the spirit: say, 'The spirit is of my Lord's command. Of knowledge, what you have been given is little.'*"⁸³ But his purpose is to give information about the qualities and states of the heart. He is such a great writer that about this abstract issue of the heart, in order to reach more people, he always uses metaphors and similes for the functioning of the spiritual components of a human being.

In the terminology part, the terms are explained one by one and the meanings of the four terms i.e. *qalb*, *'aql*, *rūh* and *nafs* are also explained as covered by Ghazali in *Ihya*. The important point to be emphasized here, in this chapter is that all those four terms have at least two meanings, one of which is always the same one meaning: the subtle tenuous substance (*latifa rabbaniya ruhaniya*). This one is the quiddity of the human being according to Ghazali and it is the one that is addressed by Allah and held responsible in the religion. So, I would like to specify that when I refer to the nature of human beings, it is this subtle tenuous substance, generally called as the heart (*qalb*).

⁸³ The Qur'an, 17: 85

1.1. Upon The Duality of Human Ontology

Human being is a body which is observed by the senses plus being a spirit which is comprehended by the *'aql* according to al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī. Further, in most of the Islamic resources, human being is regarded between the angels and the animals according to the levels of existence (*maratibu'l wujud*). However, human beings have the ability and the potential to transcend the angels with the help of their *'aql* and religion. The reverse is possible, as well. That is to say, human beings can fall under the level of animals, losing the excellence created in their nature. Allah states in the Quran⁸⁴ that man is created in the most beautiful and excellent manner. He carries the breath of Allah, so he is always praised in the Holy book, Quran. Human being is the best creation of Allah and he is placed on the highest of the hierarchy in terms of spirituality. In this regard, Allah ascribes human being to be His vicegerent (*khalifah*) on the earth. All other things created in the heaven and earth, are of service to him.

It is also revealed in the Quran that human beings have a dual nature; body and spirit (*rūḥ*);

Behold! Thy Lord said to the angels: "I am about to create man, from sounding clay form mud moulded into shape; "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him"⁸⁵

Therefore, all human beings who are the progeny of Adam are made up of two elements; the physical body, which represents clay and which is mortal, and the *rūḥ* (the spirit), which is immortal and leaves the body after the death of an individual.⁸⁶

Regarding the soul and body relationship in Ghazali, the human being is evidently composed of a soul and a body. This soul in Ghazali is the essence of man, which is a divine spiritual entity (*latifa rabbaniya ruhaniya*). The terms that are used in this context are *qalb*, *ruh*, *aql* and *nafs*. The soul is a substance (*jawhar*) and can exist by itself. Yet, the body depends on the soul for its existence and cannot exist by itself. The difference between them is that the spirit is from the world of command and the body belongs to the material world.⁸⁷ In the chapter *Man's Nature and Aim* from the

⁸⁴ The Qur'an 95.

⁸⁵ The Quran, 15: 28-29.

⁸⁶ Razak, "Human nature in Islam," 67.

⁸⁷ Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazali: A Composite Ethics in Islam*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 44.

book, *The Ethics of al-Ghazali* by Muhammad Abul Quasem, he states that Ghazali considers the spirit to be of the same origin as the angels, so its origin and nature is divine.⁸⁸ Regarding his discussions and theory of basic natural disposition or basic nature of the soul, Abul Quasem delivers from Ghazali that inclination towards good and aversion from evil is, in fact, innate in man's spirit. He states as follows;

At birth, it is a clean and pure substance with the essence of the angels. Inclination towards evil (which is produced in it after the creation of desire) is against its original nature. It is devoid of all knowledge but possesses a capacity for it; this is the characteristics of the human soul.⁸⁹

In a similar vein, Ghazali also makes a distinction between the soul's inclination towards the demands of one's desires and ugliness, and the inclination towards wisdom, love, knowledge and worship of Allah. He remarks that this inclination of the soul to the ugliness and to what separates soul from Allah is unnatural, something strange and not part of its nature. It is like a tendency to eat mud and earth, which is not natural and is strange. Yet, the tendency to eat and drink food is what is normal. In the same way, the heart's natural food is wisdom, knowledge and love of Allah although it is distracted and changed after it is affected by some -spiritual- diseases.⁹⁰

Abul Quasem, then, continues in commentating on the body-soul linkage based on Ghazali as follows;

Every soul is given a body so that with its help it may acquire provision for eternal life. The soul is the core of man and the body is merely its instrument for acquiring 'provision' and perfection; the body is very necessary for the soul, and care must be taken of it.⁹¹

Additionally, Ghazali, in his other book *Al-Risala Al-Ladunniyya*, explains that human being is created from two different things; one of them is the body which is evil, gross, subject to generation and corruption, composite, made up of components, earthly and that which is incomplete without something else. The other of them is the soul which is a substance (*jawhar*), simple, enlightened, comprehending, acting, moving, giving completion to instruments and bodies.⁹² It is important that when

⁸⁸ Quasem, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazali*, 44.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁹⁰ Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *On Disciplining the Soul and Breaking the Two Desires*, trans. T. J. Winter (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1995) 34 -35.

⁹¹ Quasem, *The Ethics*, 46.

⁹² Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali, "Al-Risala Al-Ladunniyya," trans. Margaret Smith, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (1938): 193.

Ghazali mentions the soul, he does not mean the force which seeks for sustenance, nor the force which stirs up to lust and passion, nor the force which resides in the heart, producing life, which issues in sensibility and activity from the heart to all the members because this force is, according to him, the animal spirit. Feeling, movement and appetite, and anger are among its soldiers. What is intended by the soul is the perfect, simple substance which is engaged in only remembering, studying, reflection, discernment and contemplation.⁹³

Ghazali also states that this one substance, although it is given different names by different group of people, is the one which acts, comprehends and so on:

Now, the rational soul, by which I mean this substance, has a special name with every group of people: the philosophers call this substance “the rational soul (*al-nafs al-natiqah*)” and the Quran calls it “the soul at rest” (*al-nafs al-mutmainnah*) and “the spirit which is of the *amr* of Allah” (*al-rūhal-Amr*) and the Sufis call it “the spirit” and sometimes “the heart”, but though the names differ the meaning is one, it does not differ.⁹⁴

Note that when discussing the body-soul relationship, for Ghazali it is still the same one meaning with that of the heart. Although the terms are different, what is intended is the same and it is the essence of human beings; the subtle tenuous and ethereal substance.

As for the views of philosophers on what makes a human being, it is noteworthy to include the stance of Ibn Sīnā in Islamic intellectual history. He is among the prominent Muslim philosophers who studied the human intellect and the human body-soul relation presenting a systematic theory about them. According to Gutas⁹⁵, Ibn Sīnā addresses the issue of human soul in three categories of philosophy; physics, ethics and metaphysics.

First of all, for the study of physics, Ibn Sīnā, following Aristotle, delves into the different faculties of human soul and explains the process of conceiving material things in an abstract form. He reveals that because human beings are capable of perceiving theoretical abstract knowledge, the nature of human soul must be immaterial. Secondly, the study of ethics is related to the fact that there is an evil tendency through the human soul’s connection to the material world, from which the

⁹³ Al-Ghazali, “Al-risala Al-ladunniyya,” 194.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 194.

⁹⁵ Dimitri Gutas is a leading contemporary scholar in studying the ideas of Ibn Sīnā.

human soul is to be saved with the help of religious laws which assist the salvation of the soul via the knowledge of divine world. Lastly, to disclose the concept of human soul in the discipline of metaphysics, Ibn Sīnā links the nature of human soul to the divine world. In other words, he asserts that there is a possibility for the human soul to obtain direct conjunction with the divine light and can reach the happiness of the divine Intellects in their relationship with Allah.⁹⁶

In addition, it is noteworthy to cover Ibn Sīnā's division of the souls, in which he adopts Aristotelian tradition. That is to say, he remarks that the soul is a power in the body that functions through three basic faculties. There is a vegetative soul which handles the growth and the nourishment of the body, and there is an animal soul which leads the sensory, imaginative and estimating faculties, and finally there is the rational soul which is in charge of the other two souls and forms human knowledge.⁹⁷

1.2. Armies of the Heart

Ghazali, by putting the heart in a vital place in his system to explain the human ontology, posits that there are armies (*junud*) of the heart to help and serve it. This allegory of armies of the heart is based on the 31st verse of Surah Muddaththir in the Quran, which states that there are many soldiers of Allah. Based on the fact that knowing your heart enables you to know yourself; and then knowing yourself paves the way for knowing your Lord, Ghazali delves into the qualities and features of the heart from the very beginning.

So, about the armies of the heart there are the ones which can be seen physically and the ones which cannot be observed by eyes. The physical ones which are hands, feet, eyes, ears and so on, have to obey the heart and the heart can utilize them however it wants. Herein, Ghazali makes an analogy asserting that the obedience of the organs to the heart resembles to the obedience of angels to the Lord with only one difference; that of angels is by conscious and that of the organs is lack of conscious.⁹⁸

The heart is like the king and the armies are like the servants and helpers. These armies help the heart in its journey to Allah, which is the reason for its creation. Thus, given the importance of the heart, body is its vehicle, knowledge (*'ilm*) is its

⁹⁶ Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought: Abd Al-Jabbar, Ibn Sina and Al-Ghazali*, (London: Routledge, 2006), 90.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 91

⁹⁸ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the heart*, 13.

procurement and the righteous deeds are a way for the heart to reach its procurement in this journey and to get benefit from this procurement. At this point comes the importance of body and the need for preserving it. Caring and preserving the body happens in two ways, according to Ghazali. The first one is conveying the supply such as food and other things to it and the second one is warding off the causes of destruction.

For the provision of the food and for repelling the things which are the reasons for its destruction, the body needs two armies for each. To provide food for the body, the body needs an internal army which is the appetite, and an external army which is hands and the members that provide food.⁹⁹ In the same way, for diffusing the dangers and destruction, there are two armies which the body needs. Firstly, an internal army of anger (*ghadab*) helps avert the things that can give rise to body's destruction and helps avenge upon its enemies. Secondly, the body needs an external army which performs the anger via hands and feet and so on.

Although these armies of procurement and warding off the destruction serve the heart in protecting and catering for the body, they are, in fact, not enough without the ability of recognition of the food and recognition of the danger. In other words, the heart needs two more armies for this knowledge and recognition; one is internal which is the perception of sight, taste, smelling, hearing and touch; and the other is external including the eye, ear, nose and so on.¹⁰⁰

All of these armies together can be classified under three classes, which are the will (*irada*), the power (*qudra*) and the knowledge and perception (*'ilm and idrak*). The first class moves and incites for achieving what is profitable and beneficial with the help of appetite (*shahwa*). Additionally, it refrains what is harmful and destructive with the help of anger (*ghadab*). The second class is the power. It is what moves the members to obtain those desired ends. The power is scattered throughout the body members, muscles and tendons in particular.¹⁰¹ The third class is called knowledge and perception which are in charge of perceiving and gathering information like spies. All the armies can be summoned up as in the table below;

⁹⁹ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the heart*, 14.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 15. For more of these armies, see *The Book of Patience and Thankfulness* in Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 15.

The will	Appetence	Incites for what is profitable
	Anger	Avoids from what is destructive
The power	The members of the body; especially muscles and tendons	Moves the members in order to get the desired ends
The knowledge and perception	The power of five senses divided among certain appointed members	Perceives and gathers information

Table 1: The armies of the heart

To expand more on the third class of perception and knowledge, Ghazali remarks that it is placed both on the five senses and on the lodges of the brain, which are also five. For instance, when a person sees an object and closes his eyes, he perceives its image within himself. This is called retentive imagination (*khayal*). This image stays with him by a reason of something which perceives it. This is called the army of memory. Then, the man thinks about what he remembers and connects it with others. If there is something he forgets, he recollects it. Then, he gathers together all the meanings of his sense impressions in his retentive imagination with the help of the common sense (*Sensus communis*). Hence, all of these powers are called internal armies and can be counted as follows;

- Imagination __ Takhayyul
- Memory _____ Hifz
- Reflection ____ Tafakkur
- Recollection __ Tadhakkur
- Common Sense _Hiss mushtarak ¹⁰²

As a result, it can be seen that there are various armies that work for the heart by protecting and caring for the body. They consist of both physical parts of the body and the nonphysical armies. All of them contribute to the human ontology with their duties and beings.

¹⁰² Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the heart*, 16.

1.3. What Differentiates a Human Being?

After presenting the armies of the heart including the body, to differentiate the human being from other existent beings, Ghazali continues on stating that animals as well, have appetite, anger and the senses both outer and inner. For instance, the sheep sees the wolf with its eyes and knows in the heart that it is its enemy; as a result the sheep escapes from the wolf. But, especially what characterizes the human heart and gives great honor drawing the human being near to Allah is based on knowledge and will. This knowledge is beyond the sense perception, and the animals are lack of this knowledge. That is to say, this knowledge covers the knowledge of this world and the world to come, and it deals with the intellectual realities. Also, knowledge of axioms and universals stems from the specialty of the intellect. For example, although a man does not know all the individuals in the world and know only some of them by his sense perception, he deems that it is impossible for an individual to be in two places at the same time.¹⁰³

Upon this differentiation of human being from the other beings, Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) also contributes a lot, and I see it significant to include his philosophical ideas about the features and different faculties of the human soul here. For Ibn Sīnā, the most important feature of human soul is the capability to reach the knowledge about the world with its connection to the divine upper and superior world. Also, the soul for him is the power to initiate thinking and reflection.¹⁰⁴ He believes that rational knowledge is related to the soul and the body is only an instrument used by the soul.¹⁰⁵ Besides, he emphasizes the individuality of the soul in saying that the soul is an independent power in the body through which humans can perceive knowledge, and he connects the happiness of the soul to its earthly intellectual activity that it experiences in the body.¹⁰⁶

As for the will, Ghazali states that this will is different from that of appetite and that of animals for power. He defines will in the following way that a man conceives the results of an act by his intellect and knows the best side of it, and then a desire rouses within his self to get into the auspicious way through using the will to reach this end.

¹⁰³ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the Heart*, 21.

¹⁰⁴ Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought*, 91.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

Hence, Ghazali puts the emphasis on the knowledge and will for they are the special characteristics of the human heart, which separates humans from animals. He then clinches upon this point in remarking that it even separates the heart from the youth because of their immaturity since the humans in their youth are deprived of these two although they have the external and internal senses, appetite and anger potentially. There are two stages for the youth to attain them. The first stage is that he must apprehend the knowledge of axioms and the first principles such as the knowledge of the impossibility of impossible things and the possibility of possible things.¹⁰⁷ Ghazali likens this situation of the youth to the situation of a writer who knows the inkstand, pen and letters, yet has not achieved to learn writing. The second stage is that he reaches the knowledge through experiment and thought, and then he can go back to this knowledge and use it whenever he wants. This is like the situation of a writer who is skilled in writing. Even if he is not engaged in writing physically for the time being, he is called a writer because of his writing ability and experience within himself.

As a result, it can be seen that the specialty of the human heart lies in the will, knowledge and wisdom. Furthermore, the noblest kind of knowledge is the knowledge of Allah, His attributes and His deeds. In that case, the body is a vehicle for the soul and the soul is the seat of knowledge.¹⁰⁸ The importance of knowledge comes from the fact that “knowledge is the end destined for man and his special characteristic for which he was created.”¹⁰⁹

According to Ghazali, there are some attributes which human beings share with animals; but there are some others by which he is distinguished from them; and those special characteristics put human being among the angels by drawing near to Allah. To put it in a different way, human being is placed between the ranks of beasts and the angels. Man is regarded as a plant in terms of nourishment and reproduction; he is regarded as an animal in terms of sense perceptions and movement by the free will; and he is regarded as a relief figure on the wall in terms of his figure and stature. However, the distinguishing characteristic for man is his experiential knowledge of the real nature of things.¹¹⁰ So, when the man uses all of his members

¹⁰⁷ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the Heart*, 22.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

and powers in the way of reaching knowledge and wisdom, he is counted among the angels and is worthy to be one of them and of a lordly being. Nevertheless, when the man is seeking after bodily pleasures and spends all his energy in eating etc., he is brought down to the low depths of the beasts and;

He becomes ignorant as an ox, gluttonous as a hog, greedy as a dog, malevolent as a camel, vain as a lion, or sly as a fox. Or he may unite all of these and become a rebellious demon.¹¹¹

1.4. Four Different Dimensions of Human Nature

In another part of the *Marvels of the Heart*, Ghazali divides human nature into four categories which are inclined to four different sides explaining the qualities and metaphors of the heart. These qualities together make up the human nature. They are the beasts of prey (*sabuiyya*), brutish qualities (*bahimiyya*), demonic qualities (*shaytaniyya*) and lordly qualities (*rabbaniyya*).¹¹²

According to Ghazali, these four qualities are represented respectively by a pig, a dog, a demon and a wise. Ghazali does not draw these similes to despise the animals; yet his aim is to draw attention to the most basic qualities of those animals since they are attached to the spirituality of human beings, which Ghazali elaborates more in his book, *Ihya*. So, he expands on them as follows; when anger captures man, he is under the influence of the deeds of a beast of prey. For example, he has enmity and detestation, so he attacks people by beating and cursing them. When appetite comes over human, he follows the brutish acts of gluttony, greed, carnal desire and so on. If the dominant quality is the lordly one in his nature, the human proclaims mastery, superiority and exclusiveness. He wants to be the only ruler and has a desire to all the branches of knowledge. When he is acknowledged as knowledgeable, he becomes exulted; on the other hand, when he is seen as ignorant, he becomes sad. When the human inclines to the demonic qualities, he uses the faculty of discernment in search for the ways of evil. He seeks to reach his goals by guile, deceit and cunning. Moreover, he considers the evil as if it were good, which is the characteristics of the demons.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the heart*, 25.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 29.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

These four inclinations carry importance in that human beings are inclined to them in many ways since they mould the behaviors of humans for they make up the human being's nature. In every human being they are together as a mixture, thereby this is not to say that some people lack one or more of them. They are all in interaction with one another and are seated inside the heart. As represented being a pig, a dog, a demon and a wise, the representations all bring about certain characteristics, and they are always in fight for the leadership in the heart.

The pig represents appetite because of its covetousness, voracity, and greed. The dog is anger due to its savagery, enmity and slaughter being reflected from its spiritual bestial quality. The demon, in the same way, helps the appetite of the pig and the wrath of the beast. It sets one against the other and makes the dog and pig's dispositions appear good to them.¹¹⁴ The wise, on the other hand, is the intellect and in charge of controlling the pig and the dog by setting them against each other and by stopping the plots of the demon.

To able to put Ghazali's explanation of human nature into a contrasting framework, I will bring here the explanations of certain schools of Western psychology, which have a great role within the history of psychology.

There have been divergent theories on human nature due to the changing paradigms in the study of psychology in the West. Therefore, different schools of thought in Western psychology, at times, oppose one another or sometimes they agree with each other.¹¹⁵ Although psychology at the very first beginning studied the soul, the influence of empiricism and rationalism gave rise to scientific psychology in the 18th century. Wilhelm Wundt, John Watson, Skinner are among the related names. Yet, it could also be seen that the influence of positivists and the process of secularization caused to eliminate the metaphysical elements from the natural and human sciences and the moral and spiritual aspect of the man¹¹⁶, which in the end led to the dehumanization of the human beings.

Based on the differences of contemporary psychology whose grounding is in the secular worldview, I address the three schools of psychology on the issue of human nature. According to psychoanalysis school of psychology, whose founding father is

¹¹⁴ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the Heart*, 30.

¹¹⁵ Razak, "Human Nature and Motivation," 505.

¹¹⁶ Haque, "Psychology from Islamic Perspective," 372.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the human nature is considered to be pessimistic and deterministic. Freud thinks that the human being is evil and selfish by nature alongside with the belief that the human being is an intellectual beast destined to the destruction. For him, the human being is naught but an animal enslaved to his sexual impulses. With this in mind, Freud asserts that the human being has two types of instincts in him. The first one is the life instinct (Eros) and the latter is the death instinct (Thanatos).¹¹⁷ According to Freud's theory of human nature, the human being is always driven by his sexual and aggressive impulses that originate from the *id* without giving the human being any freedom of choice, which eventually makes his theory a deterministic one.¹¹⁸

As for the behaviorist school of psychology, which emerged at the same time as the emergence of psychoanalysis, it takes its roots from John Locke's (1632-1704) theory of associationism.¹¹⁹ Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936), J. B. Watson (1878-1958) and B. F. Skinner (1904-1990) are among its prominent figures. Watson shares the same idea with Locke in saying that a child's mind is a '*tabula rasa*' at birth, which is to be so pure and clean, and it waits to be written on by its own experiences. This school of psychology claims that human being does not have any innate knowledge. More importantly, it regards the human being nothing more than a mechanical object that can be conditioned and programmed to do any task.¹²⁰ This mechanical view of human beings is different from what Ghazali states about the psycho-spiritual dimension of human beings when he talks about the satanic and angelic influences on the hearts of the human beings, thereby on their behaviors. Ghazali's and other Sufis' emphasis on the struggle of the soul against the beastly self also does not find a place in this view.

Another significant school of psychology is humanist psychology which is the third force in Western psychology and came into existence after the first two schools. The philosophical ideas of existentialism and phenomenology affected the ideas of humanist psychology on the human being. Humanist psychology was against Freud's concept of human nature that describes the human being as an animal filled with

¹¹⁷ Razak, "Human nature and Motivation," 508.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 509.

¹¹⁹ Associationism is the idea that mental processes operate by the association of one mental state with its successor states. It holds that all mental processes are made up of discrete psychological elements and their combinations, which are believed to be made up of sensations or simple feelings.

¹²⁰ Razak, "Human nature and Motivation," 510.

sexual and aggressive energy that causes him to be wild and reckless in the pursuit of his selfish motives. Misiak and Sexton explain this point as follows:

The movement can be viewed as both a protest and a new programme, even as a new school and a system. Its protest is directed against the entire orientation of psychology since Hobbes and Lock, against its Newtonian and Darwinian models of man, against its mechanistic, deterministic and reductionist character. While both Freudian and Behaviorism emphasize man's continuity with the animal world, Humanistic psychology pays special attention to the characteristics and capacities which make man uniquely different from animal.¹²¹

As can be seen, as an opposition to what is asserted by psychoanalysis and behaviorism, humanist psychology draws an optimistic and positive image of man in saying that the human being is good by nature.

1.5. The Heart as a Mirror

To be able to explain how vulnerable the heart is to the internal and external influences a simile is used frequently in both Ghazali's works and Sufi textures as well. The heart is regarded as a mirror. If the praiseworthy factors reach the heart, they contribute to the clearness, shining and brightness of the mirror. It becomes such a heart that it becomes the one referred by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the Quran;

Whenever Allah wills good for man, He causes his heart to exhort him.¹²²

The man whose heart is his exhorter has a protector from Allah over him.¹²³

So, this is the heart in which there is the remembrance of Allah. But, if the blameworthy effects cover the heart, they will be like darkening smoke on its face. After a while, it will rise up to the mirror of the heart and this dark smoke will be accumulated so much that the heart eventually stops receiving the divine light and it is veiled from Allah entirely.¹²⁴ It is mentioned in the Quran as follows;

Nay, but that which they have earned is rust upon their hearts.¹²⁵

If We will, We can afflict them in their sins, and imprint their hearts, so that they hear not.¹²⁶

¹²¹ H. Misiak, V. S. Sexton, *Phenomenological, existential and humanistic psychologies*, (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1973), 115.

¹²² Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the Heart*, 32.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹²⁵ The Qur'an, 83: 14

¹²⁶ The Qur'an, 7: 100

So, it can be said that when the sins increase, the heart becomes corroded and sealed so much that it cannot see the reality and cannot perceive the good practices of the religion. It now does not give importance to the world to come and the only thing it cares and its only concern becomes this world. In other words, anything about the world to come does not find a place in the heart and nothing can spark for repentance or compensations for bad behaviors, which is the result of the blackening of the heart by sins.¹²⁷

Maymun bin Mihran says reporting from the Prophet ﷺ;

Whenever a man commits a sin, he makes a black spot upon his heart, and whenever he turns away from it and repents, the spot is polished away, and if he returns to sin, it increases until it covers the heart.¹²⁸

Therefore, it can be clearly understood that when someone performs an act of disobedience, his heart blackens; on the other hand when someone performs a good deed after doing an evil one, its effect is erased. His heart does not get darkened, but the light of it is decreased.

Further, in Ghazali's work four kinds of the heart are mentioned based on a Hadith. The first one is the believer's heart, which is stripped clean and in which a lamp can shine. The second one belongs to the unbeliever whose heart is black and upside down. The third type is that of a hypocrite, who has a hardened heart bound in its sheath of evil. Finally, there is the fourth heart which contains both belief and hypocrisy, either of which can have the possibility to abound. This heart is evaluated according to whichever of the two gains mastery in the heart.¹²⁹

Being related to what is presented above, in the Quran Allah says; *"Indeed, those who fear Allah, when a thought touches them from Satan, they remember Allah and at once they have insight."*¹³⁰ Based on this verse, it can be said that the clearness of the heart and its perspicacity is achieved through the practice of remembrance i.e. *dhikr*.

¹²⁷ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the Heart*, 32-33.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹³⁰ The Qur'an, 7: 201

1.6. Importance of Knowledge in Relation to Heart

As for the knowledge in relation to the heart, its importance stems from the fact that it is seated in the heart according to Ghazali. For the knowledge to appear in the heart Ghazali draws a comparison upon the appearances of the things on the mirror. To put it in a simple way, the things with its all colors have appearances and those appearances can appear on the mirror. In the same way, every intelligible has a specific nature and this nature also has a form (appearance) that can be reflected in the mirror of the heart. In other words, there is the mirror, the forms of the things and representation of their image in the mirror. Therefore, there is the heart, the specific nature of things and representation and presence of them in the heart.¹³¹ For instance, one knows fire, but fire itself does not come into his heart; in fact definition of fire and its real nature that corresponds to its form is what is present in the heart.¹³²

In this context, there are five reasons for the mirror not to reflect the forms, namely for the heart not to reflect the knowledge. The first reason is a defect in the formation of the mirror like its first form in iron before shaping and polishing. The second is despite its perfection in shape, the mirror may be dirty and rusty. The third reason is that the mirror may not be directed towards the object, but it is turned away from it. The next one is that there is a veil between the object and the mirror and the last reason is the negligence of the object which is desired thereby leading to the impossibility of positioning and directing the mirror towards the object.

Likewise, since the heart is like a mirror, there are five reasons for the true nature of reality of all things not to be reflected in the heart. The first is the imperfection of the heart in nature like that of a youth. The second is the dullness and filth that prevent the purity and cleanness of the heart. It stems from the acts of disobedience and lusts that are heaped upon the face of the heart. In other words, the more it becomes dark and filthy, the less the reality is manifested in the heart. In this regard, the way to brighten and purify the heart is, then, through the obedience to Allah and opposing the demands of the appetites.¹³³ The third reason is that the heart may not be turned towards the reality which it seeks. That is to say, even though the man has an obedient and good heart, he will not direct his mirror to the Real since he is not engaged with it. Probably he is only interested in bodily submission and earning his

¹³¹ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the Heart*, 35.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 36.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 36.

livelihood. Because he does not contemplate on the divine realities, what is revealed to him is only what he thinks about.¹³⁴ The fourth one is the veil. Here, Ghazali touches upon the issue of following blindly (*taqlid*) and explains it. For instance, the obedient person may overcome his appetites and engage himself with only a specific reality. Yet, he might be veiled from the true nature of the Real because of a belief that he adopted in his young ages as good faith. The last reason is not to know from which direction the thing which is sought can be obtained. It is not possible for the seeker of knowledge to seek after and obtain what is unknown.

It is striking that Ghazali remarks every heart is capable of knowing the real nature of things innately since the heart is a lordly and noble thing, which makes it special among the other substances in the world. Therefore, the aforementioned reasons are that which hinder the heart from knowing the real nature of things. In relation to this, there is a reference in the statement of Allah;

Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it, but man [undertook to] bear it.¹³⁵

It is understood that man has a special characteristic for this possession, which discerns him from the heavens, the earth and the mountains. This trust, according to Ghazali, is the gnosis and divine unity (*tawhid*).¹³⁶ In this regard, the Prophet ﷺ said; “*Every child is born with a natural conformity to religious truth, and it is only his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian.*”¹³⁷ In addition to this, the Prophet ﷺ states that “*Were it not that the demons hover over the hearts of the children of Adam, they would turn their eyes toward the heavenly kingdom.*” In another Hadith that comes from Ibn Umar, he says “*The messenger was asked ‘O Messenger of Allah, where is Allah in the earth or in heaven? He replied, ‘In the hearts of His believing creatures.*”¹³⁸ Besides, there is a Hadith Qudsi¹³⁹ that Allah, the Exalted, said, “*My earth cannot contain me, neither my heaven, but the tender and calm heart of my servant can contain Me.*”¹⁴⁰ In another narration the Messenger

¹³⁴ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the Heart*, 37.

¹³⁵ The Qur’an 33: 72

¹³⁶ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the Heart*, 39.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 40

¹³⁹ Hadith Qudsi, refers to a saying (hadith) of the Prophet Muhammad in which the meaning is revealed by God and the phrasing is formulated by the Prophet. Unlike prophetic hadith (hadith nabawi), the chain of transmission is traced back directly to God instead of ending with the Prophet.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

of Allah ﷻ was asked “*Who are the best of men?*” and he replied, “*Every believer whose heart is cleansed.*” They asked, “*What is the cleansed heart?*” He answered, “*It is the Allah-fearing, pure heart, in which there is no fraud, nor iniquity, nor treachery, nor rancor, nor envy.*”¹⁴¹

It can be understood that when the veil between the human being and Allah is removed, the form of the material world (*al-mulk*) and of the world of spirits (*al-malakut*) is openly manifest in human being’s heart. Therefore, the purpose for all the acts of obedience and actions of the members is the purification, improvement, and enlightenment of the heart. “*Prosperous is he who purifies it.*”¹⁴²

1.7. The Idea of Microcosm and Macrocosm in Relation to the Notion of Human Being

I would like to include in this chapter the notion of microcosm and macrocosm with regard to discussing the ontology of human beings since it bears significance within the Islamic cosmology and also it has a place in Ghazali’s understanding of the human being.

In Takeshita’s book named, “*Ibn Arabi’s Theory of the Perfect Man and Its Place In the History of Islamic Thought*”, where he discusses a full chapter on microcosm and macrocosm in the Islamic thought, he asserts that the origin of this idea traces back to the Pythagoreanism. Shahrastani (d. 1153)¹⁴³ in his book *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* quotes Pythagoras saying;

Man stands in correspondence to the entire universe by virtue of his natural disposition, and he is a microcosm (*alam saghir*) and the universe is a big man (*insan kebir*). Therefore his luck pertaining to the soul and the intellect became more ample. Thus whoever improves the soul and refines the character and purifies his condition can reach the knowledge of the universe and the manner of its composition.¹⁴⁴

Kindi (d. 873)¹⁴⁵ is considered to be the first using this motive of man’s being the microcosm. In his letters he explains his concept of man by drawing a similarity

¹⁴¹ Al-Ghazali, *The Marvels of the Heart*, 40.

¹⁴² The Qur’an 91: 9

¹⁴³ Al-Shahrastani, Abu 'l-Fath Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karim b. Ahmad, Taj al-Din, thinker and historian of religious and philosophical doctrines, who lived in Persia in the first half of the 6th/12th century.

¹⁴⁴ Masataka takeshita, *Ibn Arabi's Theory of the Perfect Man and its Place in the History of Islamic Thought*. (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1987), 75.

¹⁴⁵ Abu Yusuf Ya‘qub ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi (ca. 800–873 CE) was the first self-identified philosopher in the Arabic tradition. He worked with a group of translators who rendered works of Aristotle, the Neoplatonists, and Greek mathematicians and scientists into Arabic.

between man and nature as follows; the three forces of the universe exist in man, as well. Namely, the man consists of the characteristic of the plants which is growth, the characteristic of the animals which is animality and the characteristic of the angels which is rationality.¹⁴⁶

Based on what Takeshita states in his book, Ghazali mentions the correspondences of macrocosm and microcosm in some of his works, i.e. *Imla* in the *Ihya*, *al-Madnun al-Saghir*, *Kimiya-yi Sa'adat* and *Marvels of the Heart* in *Ihya*. In the *Madnun al-Saghir*, he likens Allah's control over the universe to the human being's control over his body;

It becomes clear that the form of the heart, as the center of the human kingdom, resembles the Throne of Allah; the brain resembles His Footstool; the senses resemble the angels who obey Allah by their nature without being able to resist Him; the nerves and the members resemble the heavens; the power of the hands resembles the servile nature localized in the bodies; the paper, pen and ink resemble the elements which are the receptive matrices of union, mixture, and separation; the mirror of the imagination resembles the Well-Preserved Tablet.¹⁴⁷

To sum up, the purpose of this chapter is to address what constitutes a human being, what discerns a human being from other beings and what is the place of human being in the Islamic cosmology. To this end, it is firstly presented that a human being is not only a body; rather it is a body and a soul. Then the spiritual elements of the human being are analyzed in the name of armies of the heart as Ghazali calls it. Since the heart as being the quiddity of the human being has a vital place in explaining Ghazali's ontological system of human being, the heart is examined in depth along with what leads it to become darkened or lightened. Some of the Western psychological perspectives, though being limited, are also included in order to indicate the contrasting angles in explaining the human nature. In addition, to be able to know things and reach the knowledge of Allah is merely unique to the human being, therefore, the importance of knowledge and wisdom is placed in this chapter, as well. The second chapter will commence on the dynamics among the spiritual components of human beings and how they lead to certain psychological states, namely the levels of the self (*maratibu'l nafs*).

¹⁴⁶ Takeshita, *Ibn Arabi's Theory*, 76.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

CHAPTER 2: Internal Relations and Conflicts among the Spiritual Components of a Human Being

In this chapter, the main motive will be to present the inner conflicts of a human being in the spiritual dimension. Thus far, what constitutes a human being spiritually has been presented and certain terms have been explained in relation to the essence of human being. The main concepts for explaining the human being for Ghazali are the heart, intellect, spirit and self. In this regard, some comparisons as Ghazali addresses them have been articulated delaying their details upon this chapter. Here, main focus will be on the three levels of the soul, on what determines these levels, what are the dynamics inside and between these levels, how they change from one state to the other. The texts that are more central to this chapter are *Marvels of the Heart*, and *Disciplining the Soul and Breaking the Two Desires*. ”

Initially, based on the part in *Marvels of the heart*, the similes and metaphors that Ghazali draws will be presented. The aim is to set an explanation on what is happening beyond the human body in spiritual realm. The conflicts among the spiritual parts of the human being will be demonstrated over the similes, and following it, how the relationship changes among the spiritual components of the human being will be set forth according to Ghazali.

The merit of the good character and the condemnation of the bad character, and how to refine the character and the ways to recognize the behaviors that can lead someone for the good or the bad will also be included mostly depending on the text *Kitab Riyadhat al-Nafs (Disciplining the soul)*. This carries importance in Ghazali’s system of human ontology and his explanation of human behavior because to be able to discipline the self and to define the levels of the self one should know which habit stems from the good character and which stems from the bad character. In other words, the bad habit or behavior is a sign that the heart is diseased and one should be able to recognize the disease and diagnose it so as to find the ways for its cure. A special emphasis, in effect, is put on the fact that the good character seeks for the level of *nafs al-mutmainnah*, i. e. the tranquil self and the place of bad character is the level of *nafs al-ammarah* i. e. the self who commands evil (the tyrannical self). To be able to beat the *nafs* – the self (*nafs al-ammarah bissu’*) and for the heart to be the

ruler it is crucial both to avoid the habits of bad character and to adopt the habits of good character as part of personality. This struggle mostly happens in the level of *nafs al-lawwamah*, i. e. the regretful self. So, at this point the part of *Ihya*, *Tazkiyatu'n nafs*, i.e. disciplining the soul carries importance.

Further, in my first chapter it is set forth that the essence of the human being is the heart, i.e. the subtle tenuous substance (*latifa rabbaniya ruhaniya*). Thus, watching after the heart, protecting it from the spiritual illnesses, and from the habits of bad character is, in fact, through disciplining the self since those habits of bad character occupy the heart and make it ill.

By taking its core the fact that natural impulses of the soul are not to be destroyed but the goal is to bring them into an equilibrium that can pave the path for the human being to get close to Allah without distraction,¹⁴⁸ Ghazali in the book of *Disciplining the soul* first defines what is good character and how it is exemplified by the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ, then shows the ways of disciplining the self and refining the character.

It is not only needed to know the essence of the heart, but also it is needed to know these diseases that will put the heart into a situation of continuous destruction. So, Ghazali touches on how to recognize the diseases of the heart and ways of knowing the faults in it with offering the cures for these diseases and faults, as well. Note that Ghazali spares a separate part on breaking the two desires which are appetite and anger. This indicates that he puts so much emphasis on breaking and disciplining these desires because disciplining them will give rise to refining the character directly, thereby getting away from the bodily desires and getting close to Allah spiritually.

In this sense, it is commonly known that goodness of the character is the attribute of the Master of Messengers ﷺ and is also the most righteous action of the Truthful Saints. In truth, it comprises half the Faith, and it is the fruit of the self discipline of the people of constant worship and the pious.¹⁴⁹ Ghazali warns that bad character is a 'mortal poison' and it is definite that when you follow its path, it will surely lead you to perdition and humiliating disgrace, which will cause a distance between the human being and Allah eventually. Because of the open vices and the foul practices, the

¹⁴⁸ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the Soul*, VI.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

human being will be urged to pursue the path of satan, the accursed. Then, it will cause the wrath of the Allah as enunciated in the Quran as follows; “*Allah’s stroke-up fire, which rises over men’s heart.*”¹⁵⁰

It is clearly expressed by Ghazali that foul characteristics are the very illnesses of the hearts and the diseases of the souls, and it results in the human being’s deprivation of felicity in the everlasting life. This being the case, he continues in saying that to learn the origins and reasons of these sicknesses and the ways to cure them is essential for all men of sense since there is not a single heart which is free of diseases.¹⁵¹

To draw attention to the duality and potentiality created in the self as well as the nature of the self, the verses in the *surah* of *Shams* in the Qur’an are examined thoroughly in the book *Spiritual Purification in Islam* by Gavin Picken. The verses in question are as follows;

And [by] the soul (*nafs*) and the One Who proportioned it; then He inspired it [to discern between] its iniquity and its righteousness; indeed, he who purifies it has succeeded; and indeed, he who defiles it has failed.¹⁵²

So, herein we can clearly perceive that the self is capable of receiving inspiration and insight, taking its source from Allah to be able to tell the difference between the right action and the wrong. It is also an indication of the self’s free will, which leads to the responsibility and accountability of the self. In other words, inspiration helps the self to choose between iniquity and righteousness, which is actually a moral dilemma in which the intellect plays a role alongside with the influence of the heart.¹⁵³

In these verses, it is also seen that purifying the soul will enable the humans to acquire Allah’s good grace and to enter His paradise in addition to true success, prosperity and salvation. It is also worth to note that the divine (Allah), the human intellect (Prophets/Messengers) and the humble worshipper (the human being) should be in relation in that there is the divine guidance and inspiration, human moral, spiritual excellence and example, and firm will, certitude and extreme effort that should be altogether for achieving the desired end.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ The Qur’an, 104: 5,6

¹⁵¹ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the Soul*, 5.

¹⁵² The Qur’an, 91.

¹⁵³ Gavin Picken, *Spiritual Purification In Islam: The Life and Works of al-Muhasibi*. (New York: Routledge , 2011), 139-140.

¹⁵⁴ Picken, *The Spiritual Purification*, 141.

In my first chapter, the peculiarities of the human heart are clarified and it is stated that humans are between the animal beasts and the angels within the levels of existence (*maratibu'l wujud*). The human being has the qualities of both, and what distinguish the human being from the animals are the knowledge/wisdom and the will. It is now clear that the human being will be like an angel when he uses his body parts for obtaining knowledge and practicing it accordingly. Nevertheless, the human being is cited among the animals when he spends all his effort for bodily pleasures like eating and drinking. As can be seen there are levels between animals and angels and the focus is now on how these levels are defined so that the human beings can see their place among them and gets to know themselves eventually.

The heart is not alone and it is befriended with anger and appetite (*ghadab* and *shahwa*). Sometimes, these two armies of anger and appetite are obedient to the heart providing a good company for it. But sometimes they gain control over the heart, which results in the servitude of the heart to both. In this regard, the armies of wisdom, knowledge and reflection are utilized by the heart against anger and appetite. When anger and appetite are on the side of satan, the human should get help from wisdom, knowledge and reflection. If he does not follow the wisdom side, then he will suffer from his actions by following his anger and the appetite which are now the servants for the satan.

The first simile to make this point clear by Ghazali is given as following; the subtle tenuous substance that can be called as the heart or soul is like a king in his kingdom. Here, the body is like his kingdom and abode. The members of the body and the other powers are like craftsmen and laborers. Besides, the intelligent reflective power is like a trustworthy adviser and intelligent minister. Appetence is like an evil slave whose duty is to provide food and provisions to the city. Lastly, anger (*ghadab*) and ardor (*hamiyya*) are like the chief of police and safeguards. The king should consult the intelligent wise minister and take his advice instead of the vile slave. He should not submit himself to the hands of the deceiver and liar slave who presents himself as a sincere adviser. The king should charge the chief of police for disciplining the slave. Only after taking the evil slave under the authority, and counseling the advice of the minister, then will the rule of the kingdom be righteous and peaceful and the justice will be ordered.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, when the heart takes the aid of the intellect and

¹⁵⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 18.

is disciplined by the ardor of anger, which will be used to empower over appetite, the powers will be in harmony. But, Allah indicates in the Qur'an the one who turns aside from this path as following;

Have you seen he who has taken as his Allah his [own] desire, and Allah has sent him astray due to knowledge.¹⁵⁶

And, followed his lust and his likeness was as the likeness of a dog; if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants.¹⁵⁷

On the other hand, about the one who constrains his soul from lust, Allah says;

[But] as for he who feared standing before his Lord, and restrained his soul from lower desires, then indeed Paradise will be [his] refuge.¹⁵⁸

As for the second example, the body is like a city and the mind (reason), i.e. the perceptive power in the human being is like a ruler over it. Its perceptive powers of senses, both external and internal, are like its armies and helpers. Its members are like the people of the city. The self that commands to evil and which contains anger and appetite is like an enemy who disagrees with him in his kingdom and endeavors to devastate his people. Hence, the body is seen as a frontier outpost and the guards are deployed in his soul. If the guards protect the city from the enemy and defeat him, then when he returns to the Presence (Allah), his deeds will be praised.¹⁵⁹

In the following verse, Allah states;

And those who strive in Allah's way with their wealth and their persons, Allah has preferred those who strive with their wealth and their persons a rank above those who sit still.¹⁶⁰

Yet, if he loses the city, the frontier, and neglects his duty, he is blamed and vengeance will be taken against him when he meets Allah.

The next analogy is that the intellect is like a horseman who goes hunting. His appetite is his horse and his anger is his dog. When the horseman is skilled and his horse is obedient, and his dog is well trained, then he is able to succeed. But, when the horseman is clumsy, his horse is uncontrollable, and his dog is vicious, then he himself is obliged to perish rather than gain what he is seeking. We can draw a

¹⁵⁶ The Qur'an, 45: 23

¹⁵⁷ The Qur'an 7: 176

¹⁵⁸ The Qur'an, 79: 40-1

¹⁵⁹ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 19.

¹⁶⁰ The Qur'an, 4: 95

similarity between the clumsiness of the horseman and the ignorance of a man, paucity of wisdom; between the contumacy of the horse and the victory of appetite; between the viciousness of the dog and the victory of anger.¹⁶¹

In general, it can be seen that Ghazali likens anger to the dog and appetite to the pig. The subtle tenuous substance is sometimes called as the heart, sometimes the intellect and sometimes the self. It is important to know that all three terms are, in fact, used to mark one and only meaning – the subtle Divine substance.

It can be summed by looking at the examples that when the intellect uses the dog to break the appetite of the pig, or uses the pig to break the anger of the dog, then there will be justice because the intellect is in charge of the system. But, if the reverse happens, then the anger and the appetite take the intellect under their control and the only strive of the intellect becomes serving the anger of the dog and the appetite of the pig. Besides, when the human being serves to anger and appetite, actually he becomes the servant of the satan, instead of Allah, the Exalted.

The heart of every human being has the potential to know the real nature of things insofar as the heart is noble and from the Lordly affair. Also, based on the Hadith mentioned earlier; “*Were it not the demons hover over the hearts of the children of Adam they would turn their eyes toward the heavenly kingdom.*”¹⁶², it can be inferred that there is an original state of the heart, which is conveyed to us through the Hadith and the Qur’an. One can and should reach this state of consciousness by disciplining his self by worshipping and good deeds. Allah, the Exalted created the human beings in the most beautiful and excellent manner, yet He has left the refinement of the character to the struggle of human beings and encouraged them by warnings and fearful promises.

In relation to what is discussed above, roughly three levels of the self can be cited to show the inner struggle of human beings throughout their life. They are the self who commands evil (the tyrannical self), the self-reproaching soul (the regretful self) and the tranquil self. In fact, there are not only three levels of the self, but we can extend it to seven stages. After the tranquil self, there come the inspired self, the self that is well pleased with Allah, the self that is well pleasing to Allah and lastly the

¹⁶¹ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 20.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 39.

completed self. However, my focus will be only on the first three levels since they will be a good example to indicate the dynamics between the heart, intellect and self.

2.1. The Self That Commands Evil (*Al-Nafs Al-Ammarah*)

There are countless discussions on this level of the self by the Islamic scholars and mostly Sufi scholars because it is clearly indicated in a Hadith¹⁶³ that this self *al-nafs al-ammara* is an enemy and has to be tamed in this world.

In this stage, the person is always after the worldly and bodily pleasures even if they are forbidden by the Islamic law. Referring to and remembering the similes that Ghazali sets, it can be stated that in this stage the intellect, i. e. *'aql* is the servant of the self that commands evil, namely the *nafs*. As mentioned earlier, the word *nafs* has two meanings, and other than the meaning of subtle tenuous substance, which is also the synonym of the heart, intellect, and spirit, it means an existence wherein all the evil attributes gathered. When the Sufis use the word *nafs*, they mean all of the blameworthy attributes.

In *Mearij al-Quds*, Ghazali explains this level of the self that those lower themselves until they reach the lowest level of beasts, even lower than them and they can be considered as a standing and speaking dog or donkey because they are stripped of human virtues. The only thing common with mankind is their outward form. This type of self is like a servant of a stone, a brick, a beast or a *zaima* (woman). This is what Allah calls as the self which is indeed prone to evil.¹⁶⁴ It is elucidated in the following verse;

I do not absolve my own self [of blame], as indeed, the human soul is prone to evil, except when my Lord bestows mercy, as indeed my Lord is the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.¹⁶⁵

With this in mind, the exaggerative form of *ammara* in the name of this self describes the *nafs* as ‘constantly urging, always demanding, inciting and instigating’. In the same vein al-Jurjānī¹⁶⁶ explains the self being inclined to evil as follows;

¹⁶³ “Consider your ego-self to be an enemy since it rises up against Me.”

Arthur F. Buehler, *Revealed Grace: the juristic sufism of Ahmad Sirhindi*, (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2011), 170.

¹⁶⁴ Shammas, “The Ascent to the Divine,” 24-25.

¹⁶⁵ The Quran, 12: 53

¹⁶⁶ ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, also called al-Sayyid al-Sharīf, (born 1339, Tājū, near Astarābād, Iran—died 1413, Shīrāz), is a leading traditionalist theologian of 15th-century Iran. His best-known work is the *Kitāb at-taʿrīfāt* (“Book of Definitions”), a short dictionary of technical terms from theology, philosophy, and philology (first edited by G. Flügel in 1845).

It is the one that inclines to bodily nature, ordering the pursuit of physical pleasures and appetites, attracting the heart to base levels; as such, it is an abode of every evil and the source of blameworthy characteristics.¹⁶⁷

In a way when we look at the relation between *nafs*, *'aql* and *qalb*, it can be seen that in this level of the self *'aql* is under the control of *nafs*, and it is reigned by this appetitive and animal self. So, the heart is affected by this relation eventually all serving to the wishes of the appetitive self. The *aql* searches for the ways all the time to please this self in terms of appetites and anger, becoming like a servant of it.

In the analysis of human psyche, Abdelmalek Yamani considers *nafs* to be the encapsulation of the human psychic system since he equates the human psyche with the *nafs*. He emphasizes that at this level of the self the *'aql* and the *qalb* functions biologically, yet they fall short to function psychologically. That is, the roles of the *'aql* and the *qalb* are now overtaken by the power of the *nafs*. In addition, it is important to note here that this *nafs* displays the indications of a material self and a pure ego, and it is deprived of a social and spiritual self according to Yamani.¹⁶⁸

In the book *The concept of Tazkiya Al-Nafs in Islam*, it is noted by Gavin Picken that the human being is engaged in the fulfillment of his own needs and desires; the appetites of his self. The limits set by Allah are made secondary.¹⁶⁹

Further, Ahmad al-Fārūqī al-Sirhindī (d. 1624), who is one of the foremost scholars of *Naqshbandi*¹⁷⁰ way, speaks about *al-nafs al-ammarah* in his letters to his disciples that the human ego-self inciting to evil is inherently donated with a love of social status and domination. Its intention is to feel superior to others wishing for other creatures to be dependent upon it for everything. It does not need anyone or to be under one's control and command. Sirhindī says; “*This is a pretense to being Allah and to sharing Allah's incommensurability*”.¹⁷¹

The lowly world is accursed because worldly gain supports the procurement of the ego-self's desires. For instance, giving it what it desires like status, domination,

¹⁶⁷ Picken, *The Spiritual Purification*, 135.

¹⁶⁸ Yamani, “The Muslim Psyche,” 68.

¹⁶⁹ Picken, *The Spiritual Purification*, 135.

¹⁷⁰ The Naqshbandi or Naqshbandiyah is a major Sunni spiritual order of Sufism. It got its name from Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari and traces its spiritual lineage to the Islamic prophet Muhammad through Abu Bakr, who was father-in-law, companion, and successor of Muhammad.

¹⁷¹ Arthur F. Buehler, *Revealed Grace*, 170.

superiority and pride basically empowers this Allah's enemy, which is the self commanding evil.¹⁷²

It is important to note that there are certain outward implications of *al-nafs al-ammarah*. They are behavioral outcomes originating from inner feelings that are embedded in this self. These characteristics are undoubtedly the blameworthy ones that are to be watched after and tamed in order to pass the level of the self. In this level of self i. e. *al-nafs al-ammarah bissui*, the behaviors are stemming from the *nafs* only. The 'aql and qalb, namely the reason, intellect and the heart are under the reign and service of *nafs*. This *nafs* is that which other Sufis describe as the animalistic self. In other words, *nafs* also represents the body and the bodily desires. The behaviors and actions are fruits of this inner self, namely the commanding self for the evil doings.

There are certain emotions and behaviors that Ghazali discusses in depth in the third quarter of *Ihya, The Quarter of Destructives* and these behaviors and psychological states belong to the level of evil commanding self. He explains these common blameworthy qualities so that the human beings will recognize whether they have them. If so, then they should endeavor to struggle against them. In this regard, Ghazali, first, gives the definition and explanation of a blameworthy quality. Then he presents why it is regarded as a vile action, following he shows the ways and the remedies to eradicate that vice action replacing it with the corresponding virtue.

In this vein, Ghazali counts the blameworthy emotions and the behaviors which arise from these feelings explaining the very details of every vice attribute in the quarter of destructives in *Ihya*. They are an obstacle for having moral character and they are the diseases of the heart to be cured to ascend to the level of *nafs al-mutmainnah*. They are termed as follows: satiety, lust, disputation and argumentation, loud-mouthing-shamelessness- foul language, cursing, mockery, disclosure of secrets, breaking the promises, telling lies, backbiting, tale bearing, rage and its fruits envy and rancor, indulgence in the world, niggardliness, miserliness and greed for wealth and property, covetousness, love for praise, majesty, fame and reputation, showing off, arrogance, boasting and vanity, and conceit.¹⁷³ The qualities may not be limited to

¹⁷² Arthur F. Buehler, *Revealed Grace*, 171.

¹⁷³ Al-Ghazali, Imam Abu Hamed. *Revival of Religion's Sciences*. Trans. Mohammad Mahdi al-Sharif. Vol. III. IV vols. (Lebanon: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, 2011).

what is counted above, yet Ghazali explains and comments on them so elegantly that the baseness of these actions and why they belong to the evil commanding self is grasped eventually.

2.1.1. Outward Implications of the Self That Commands Evil

To begin with, Ghazali speaks about the evils of the tongue.¹⁷⁴ That is to say when the *nafs* is in charge of the other spiritual components, certain actions and behaviors will flow from the diseased and deformed heart. And evil actions originated from the tongue are a case in this point.

Surely, the tongue has benefits given by Allah for the human beings; however, its field is expansive and limitless, and can cover both good and evil according to Ghazali.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, it can be the strongest tool that satan can utilize to subjugate human beings. The messenger of Allah ﷺ states that *“He who safeguards himself against the evil of his belly, tongue and private parts has indeed safeguarded himself against all kinds of evils.”*¹⁷⁶ Another Hadith reported from Tirmidhī is when Uqbah Ibn Amir asked the Prophet ﷺ *“O Messenger of Allah! How one should be saved? He said: Keep your tongue, and stick to your house, and continue to weep in regret for your sins.”*¹⁷⁷

There are many other Hadith that show us how important to watch out our tongue and speech, yet it is not my aim here to list all the Hadith, but it is to give a glimpse of its significance through certain ones.

Further, this ego-self loves engaging in disputes and argumentation. Disputation means to object one’s speech by showing fault in it, and argumentation means to silence the other, incapacitate and discredit him by slandering his speech attributing it a shortage and ignorance. Through argumentation and dispute one shows his superiority to the other. It results from the desire to show one’s knowledge and supremacy, and the other’s shortcomings. These are internal desires; the first one belongs to the Divine while the latter ensues from the brutal nature.¹⁷⁸ In Prophet

¹⁷⁴ What is meant by the tongue here is not the physical tongue, but the ability and potentiality of speaking and uttering that this physical tongue enables.

¹⁷⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religion's Sciences*. Vol. III, 182.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 182

¹⁷⁷ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religion's Sciences*. Vol. III, 183.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 197.

Muhammad's ﷺ sayings it is advised to keep silence and leave the dispute and argumentation as in the following;

Whoever keeps silent would be saved.¹⁷⁹

Wisdom lies in silence, and only a few among men who do it.¹⁸⁰

Do not dispute with your brother, nor make fun of him, nor give him a promise and then break it.¹⁸¹

He who leaves argumentation although he is on the right, a house in the highest portion of the Garden will be built for him; and he who leaves disputation and he is on the false, a house in the middle portion of the Garden will be built for him.¹⁸²

As can be seen, leaving disputation and keeping silence in an argument is what is praised and to be achieved by fighting against the self in this sense. In addition, whether or not one is right or false in his or her argument, if they quit the dispute, they are on the winning side against their ego-self because they have left what their evil commanding self, *nafs*, desires; namely to win the argument and show off its supremacy by oppressing his opponent is what it wishes for.

Another side effect of the tongue that manifests itself as a behavior is shamelessness, foul language and cursing. According to Ghazali, these behaviors result from wickedness and baseness within the spiritual system of human being. One should not curse a man, an animal or a non-living being; they are all blameworthy qualities. In a Hadith narrated by Ibn Masud, it is enunciated “*The faithful believer never slanders (others) nor curses, nor uses foul language, nor is he naughty in speech*”.¹⁸³ About cursing there is also the saying “*The faithful believer is not he who always sends curses*”.¹⁸⁴ Hence, speaking in a shameless way, using foul language and cursing words are a sign of a bad character and a diseased heart, which means a deformed spiritual system.

In addition to them, disclosure of people's secrets and breaking the promises are among the evils of the tongue and can be observed in this level of the self. Ghazali says that the tongue always hastens to make promises although the soul might not be

¹⁷⁹ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religion's Sciences*. Vol. III, 183.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁸³ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religion's Sciences*, 3rd Vol. 203.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 205.

willing to execute the promise. Eventually, this can lead one to break their promise, and it is a sign of hypocrisy (*riya*).¹⁸⁵

Regarding the vices of the tongue, one important outcome of the fact that *nafs* is the ruler with the help of the '*aql*' is telling lies in words and oaths. Indeed, it is among the odious sins and shameful defects. In a Hadith it is clearly stated that;

The sign of a hypocrite¹⁸⁶ is to have those three characteristics...even if he offered the prayers, observed the fasts, and claimed to be a Muslim: If he talked he would tell a lie; if he made a promise, he would break it; and if he was entrusted, he would prove to be treacherous.¹⁸⁷

This ego-self, as mentioned in my first chapter, is inclined to its desires and ugliness. Therefore, it manifests itself in humans' behaviors and intentions accordingly. In addition, based on the fact that human nature is composed of four different attributes, which are predacity (*sabuiyya*), brutality (*bahimiyya*), demonic quality (*shaytaniyya*) and the Divine-Lordly quality (*rabbaniyya*), it can be asserted that the behaviors are, in fact, the result of these four qualities of human nature. For instance, when Ghazali speaks about the evils of the tongue, he touches upon ridicule and mockery. Taking its root from the following verse;

O you who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): nor let some women laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness, (to be used of one) after he has believed: and those who do not desist are (indeed) doing wrong.¹⁸⁸

Hence, since mockery gives harm to the person, it is forbidden whether you do it through imitating one's words or deeds or through reference or hinting.¹⁸⁹ Moreover, there are other vices related to the tongue deriving from baseness of the self such as backbiting (gossip) and tale bearing (*nemime*). They are all a sign of a diseased heart, and manifested in the behaviors of the human beings, which will eventually affect both the spiritual life of the human being and the other humans in the society.

¹⁸⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religion's Sciences*, 3rd Vol., 219.

¹⁸⁶ Hypocrite is a Munafiq or Munafik and it is a terminology in Islam which refers to those who pretend to follow religious teachings but actually do not admit it in his heart.

¹⁸⁷ Sahih al-Bukhari 2459, Vol.3 Book 43, Hadith 639.

¹⁸⁸ The Qur'an 49: 11

¹⁸⁹ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religion's Sciences*, 3rd Vol., 217.

Another attribute that affects humans' behaviors in a destructive way if not tamed is anger. Rancor and envy are the results of this rage for Ghazali. Yet, if one is at this stage of the self, *nafs al-ammarah*, he or she displays the deeds of anger either in an excessive (*ifrat*) way or in a defective way. Being angry is not totally wrong.

At this stage, the self loves boasting and arrogance although it is one of the most blameworthy qualities and heart diseases. Upon this quality, Allah, the Almighty says in the Qur'an;

Undoubtedly, Allah does know what they conceal and what they reveal: verily He loves not the arrogant.¹⁹⁰

Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of right, them will I turn away from My Signs: even if they see all the Signs, they will not believe in them.¹⁹¹

Arrogance can have two facets; internal and external. The internal one is rooted in the character and in the self, and the external arrogance can be observed through the acts, works and deeds of individuals. Arrogance is about considering oneself superior to the other and thinking the other to be inferior to one. It differentiates from vanity (*ujb*) in that arrogance requires someone else to display superiority whereas vanity does not require someone else to feel boastful.¹⁹² Yet, all of them are the faults of the heart and should be fought against. As Ghazali puts it, arrogance reveals itself in such behaviors that an arrogant person despises others, scorns them, and disdains to sit with them or to share food with them. The reason is that he sees them as a servant to him. He hastens to precede him in the streets, expects others to be the first to greet him etc. He looks down upon the laymen and humiliates them.¹⁹³ These instances can be multiplied, but the saying of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ clarifies this point: “None shall enter the Garden in whose heart there is an atom's weight of arrogance.”¹⁹⁴ Considering this Hadith it is remarkable to note that having arrogance in the heart makes the heart ill, and eventually it manifests itself in the actions and behaviors of the arrogant human being so that he hurts other people with his actions. If one is arrogant, he is not able to like for the other believers the same as he likes for himself,

¹⁹⁰ The Qur'an 16: 23

¹⁹¹ The Qur'an 7: 146

¹⁹² Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religion's Sciences*, 3rd Vol., 557.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 557.

¹⁹⁴ Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol. 1, Book 1, Hadith 59.

and he is not able to behave humbly which is the first and foremost of all the good characteristics of the pious when he feels supercilious.¹⁹⁵

The other attributes which are related to the property and wealth, and which stick to this level of the self inciting evil is niggardliness, miserliness and the greed for wealth. This self can be easily tempted to worldly gaining and afflictions. Property itself is not good or bad, yet it has merits and demerits that man has to be careful about even if he is lack of it or he is available to it. He is always put into trial in terms of this property and how he behaves with it.

The wealth and property has merits such that one can spend his money on himself for an act of worship, or one can spend the money on people in the form of alms, benevolence, and employing others, or one can spend the wealth on behalf of a public interest such as building mosques, bridges, hospitals and other places for the service of people. On the other hand, property can be a demerit in the hands of this self in that it can lead to disobedience and committing sins, and it can divert the human being from remembering Allah.¹⁹⁶ These are religious disadvantageous of property. There are worldly effects of it that can result in blameworthy qualities in someone's character, too. One can be niggard and miserly because of the fear of losing his property, and one can be covetous and greedy for the wealth. These qualities are all blameworthy characteristics inside the self, and they lead one to behave in accordance with his ideas on gaining money, preserving it just for himself, spending less in fear of losing the amount of his property. This self never thinks of being bounteous, and spending the wealth on the good of people.

To sum, there are more indecent actions and behaviors that Ghazali deeply analyzes in his works to be able to open a path for people to recognize these actions and to know themselves in the end. But my purpose is to indicate what kind of characteristics the self that is prone to evil has at this level of the self. In general, this self only thinks and acts for itself even though its actions can do harm to other humans and beings. Further, the most striking attribute of this self is that it commits evil and it is conscious of this evil, even it commits the evil act thinking that it is good.

¹⁹⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religion's Sciences*, 3rd Vol. 558.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 391-392.

2.2. The Self – Reproaching Soul (*Al-Nafs Al-Lawwamah*)

The most distinctive feature of this level of the self is that there is a great deal of conflicts between *'aql* and *nafs*. Now a certain kind of consciousness of the behaviors begins to appear with repentance (*tevbe*). The heart as an encapsulation for the *'aql* and *nafs* is like a battle field. With regard to this, Ghazali states that this self is in a situation of war, and it fights against and disputes with its faculties and powers. It fluctuates between them in such a way that sometimes the heart controls them, but other times it loses the control. Therefore, its state is not steadfast; sometimes it inclines towards intelligences and is perseverant in obedience to Allah; and sometimes it is invaded by the beastly powers and falls down to the lowest stage of beasts.¹⁹⁷ It is always in-between and fluctuates between the appetitive self and the intelligence, the *'aql* in the field of heart.

In a similar vein, Dr. Javad Norbakhsh states in his book *The Psychology of Sufism* that the heart is a battleground between the armies of spiritual characteristics and a praiseworthy temperament, and the characteristics of the *nafs* and a blameworthy temperament. The heart becomes dead if it surrenders for the *nafs* and its attributes although the heart will become alive if it is full of spiritual and human attributes. Yet, he continues in saying that many people's hearts are in a state of flux; they fluctuate between being dead heartedness and live heartedness. Nevertheless, hearts of many people tend to have the former whereas only a few tend to have the latter.¹⁹⁸

Upon the battle of good and bad inherent in the self, a Cherokee¹⁹⁹ native Indian narrative delivers a similar message with Islam;

An old Cherokee teaches his grandson about life: "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego." He continued, "The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too." The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?" The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Shamma, "The Ascent to the Divine," 23-24.

¹⁹⁸ Dr. Javad nurbakhsh, *The Psychology of Sufism*. (London: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1992), 77.

¹⁹⁹ Cherokee people are North American Indians of Iroquoian lineage who constituted one of the largest politically integrated tribes at the time of European colonization of the Americas.

²⁰⁰ Munsoor, "The soul and its Attributes," 113.

So, it is true for Cherokee people, as well to be between two powers embedded in the nature of human beings. For them the human being is pulled back and forth between the good and bad, but for Ghazali, this in-betweenness is experienced mostly at this level of the self, which is the self-reproaching soul. At the level of evil commanding self, the human being, namely his core- the heart- renders himself to the hands of the *nafs*, the bad wolf while at the level of tranquil self, the human being renders himself to the hands of the peaceful heart, the good wolf.

As mentioned earlier, the heart is like a ruler on the land of body. While the '*aql*' is the intelligent and wise vizier, the appetite is like an evil slave, thus the heart should take into account what the wise minister suggesting and should not follow the instructions of the evil slave so as not to be dragged towards the destruction and fall spiritually. But here the self is inclined towards two sides. When it chooses following its worldly and bodily desires, it becomes regretful and after the act, it blames itself for what it has opted for promising not to do it again or erasing it by making a good deed. This is why it is called 'self-blaming soul'.

In this state of the self, according to one meaning of *al-talawwum*, it shifts repeatedly and it is described by its changeability, fickleness, capriciousness and inconsistency. It does not truly stay steadfast on one state. Yet, it can be said that it is mindful than heedless, loves than hates, is obedient than disobedient, righteous than immoral. It alters always from one state to another and never really achieves equilibrium.²⁰¹

It is also a state of constant awareness. That means *nafs* is in a state of change and flux. So, it constantly examines and scrutinizes its actions and deeds; and it fights against the baser desires.²⁰² It is always in a moral conflict and at this level the human being watches after the moral aspects of any of his actions owing to the state of consciousness it has gained in this level.

2.2.1. The Basic Attribute of This Self: Regret and Repentance

There is always a conflict and tension at this stage due to the appearance of a state of consciousness in the self. The person starts to develop a certain kind of conscience and the ability for insight and inner vision generally through repentance. Repentance means being sorry and seeking forgiveness from the Lord. When the heart is

²⁰¹ Picken, *The Spiritual Purification*, 136.

²⁰² Zafar Afaq Ansari, *Qur'anic Concepts of Human Psyche*. (Islamabad: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992.), 9.

darkened by the blameworthy actions, the repentance can help to erase this darkness from the heart. It is evidently indicated in a Hadith of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as follows;

When a servant commits a sin, a black dot is struck onto his heart. If he abandons that sin and turns to repentance, his heart is polished. But if he does not do so and returns to committing the sin, the black dots grow and eventually cover the entire heart.²⁰³

In the Surah of al-Mutaffifin, Allah says;

Nay! Rather, what they used to do has become like rust upon their hearts.²⁰⁴

To be able to purify the heart from its spiritual dirt that has appeared in the level of *al-nafs al-ammarah bissui*, now repenting for the bad deeds gains significance.

Osman Nuri Topbaş, in his book *Sufism*, addresses this matter as below;

To awaken sleeping hearts and to provide them with a cure for their spiritual diseases, Allah, glory unto Him, invites His servants to repent, proclaiming, “O you who believe! Turn to Allah a sincere turning; maybe your Lord remove from you your evil and cause you to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow...”²⁰⁵

This leads one to realize the vices and blameworthy qualities he has at the level of *al-nafs al-ammarah*. Here comes the feeling of regret and blaming himself for his actions and behaviors. Sense of shame, being guilty and sinful frequently appears at this stage. The leading feature of this stage is that there are constant changes, fluctuations and transformations. Since the person is always in conflicting psychological states, he sometimes follows his bodily desires and sometimes he performs behaviors in accordance with religion and morality.²⁰⁶

Ghazali states in the fourth volume where he discusses the saviors for humans that;

Devotion to pure goodness is a trait of the angels close to Allah. Devotion to uncorrected evil is the nature of devils. But, return to good after stumbling in evil is inevitable in human beings.²⁰⁷

Human being is the one who rectifies evil through returning good. Hence, human nature conjoins two traits and has a duality of dispositions in itself. Every human

²⁰³ Topbaş, *Sufism*, 184.

²⁰⁴ The Qur'an, 83: 14.

²⁰⁵ Topbaş, *Sufism*, 187.

²⁰⁶ Prof. Hayati hökelekli, *İslam Psikolojisi Yazıları*. (Istanbul: Değerler Eğitim Merkezi Publications, 2009.) 37.

²⁰⁷ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religion's Sciences*, 4th Vol., 3.

being either sets a relationship with Angel, Adam or the Devil. Adam is associated here with repentance. He is the first human being who repented and prayed;

Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if Thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers.²⁰⁸

2.3. The Tranquil Self (*Al-Nafs Al-Mutmainnah*)

This level is the praised one and the one that is to be achieved by all the human beings. Ghazali explains it that when the soul turns to the right direction, divine influences descend upon it. It reaches a state of rest through the remembrance of Allah and the divine mystical knowledge (*maarif ilahiya*). It flies to the highest horizon of the angelic realm.²⁰⁹

At this point, now the *'aql* is in charge of the *nafs*, and *nafs* is controlled by the intellect and they all help the heart in actualizing itself, completing the aim for which it is created. The heart now knows itself, it has overcome its deficiencies, gained a state of consciousness through repentance and it is ready to reach the knowledge of Allah (*ma'rifatullah*).

It is called the tranquil self because it has gained tranquility from establishing Allah's obedience. It has accepted His promise of threat of punishment and promise of reward in Paradise. It is pleased with His decree. This self knows now the sweetness of faith and takes pleasure of communicating with its Lord and it is not after any other worldly substitute. It is not affected by the circumstances that can cause a change in the psychology of the human being. It has now ceased to be attracted by the ornamentation of the worldly life.²¹⁰

This soul is the result of *tazkiya*, namely the result of the process of purifying the heart, self-disciplining the soul and the struggle against the animalistic and ego self. It has reached the spiritual safety through following the Divine commands and prohibitions. Hence, there is now real and steadfast faith, which leads to genuine happiness, peace and tranquility in the soul. The one with the tranquil self has now substituted his immoral traits with the positive moral characteristics by following the exemplary character traits of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This tranquil self is an advanced level of self-maturity after one ascends to it through a process of spiritual

²⁰⁸ The Qur'an, 7: 23

²⁰⁹ Shammas, "The Ascent to the Divine" 23.

²¹⁰ Picken, *The Spiritual Purification*, 137.

training. While it is a precious gift, according to Sufis, it is also a huge responsibility at the same time.²¹¹

As in the self inciting to evil, there are outward implications of this soul at rest, as well. The behavioral outcomes and the feelings at this level are totally reverse and different from what is manifested in the ego-self. The peace, tranquility, and the steadfast faith are revealed in the behaviors of the human beings. Ghazali cites these attributes of the character that are reached at this level as follows; first and foremost the repentance, then patience, gratitude, sincerity, intimacy, truth, forgiveness, bounteousness-generosity, altruism, humbleness, gentleness (*hilm*), and contentment (*qana'ah*).²¹²

To be able to grasp how a person who has this tranquil self behaves, I will draw a framework through explaining the attributes above. For instance, patience is gained at this level. That is, it is ingrained in the character of the human being. Indeed, patience is unique to human beings within the levels of existence. Animals lack of this patience and angels do not have it due to their perfection. Animals always follow their desires for their appetites and do not have a mechanism to resist against their desires consciously. Angels, on the other hand, do not have desires and appetites, so do not need a mechanism to resist those desires.²¹³ Therefore, patience is that one characteristic which is unique to human beings and discerns them among the levels of existence.

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, Ghazali talks about two extremes of a quality, and he says what is appreciated is the middle way for every characteristic. Therefore, at this level of the self, the middle states of the attributes are gained and manifested in the behaviors. For instance, humbleness is the middle way and the praiseworthy characteristic of two extreme sides, which are arrogance and baseness.²¹⁴ So, the tranquil heart of a human being, after all those spiritual struggles, does not have arrogance and baseness in it. It is pure humble towards all the beings.

Another example is being bounteous and altruistic. It is one of the good manners of the Prophets, as well. Ghazali states that if someone is not wealthy, he should keep away from miserliness and greed by devoting himself to satisfaction. If someone is

²¹¹Topbaş, *Sufism*, 155.

²¹² Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religion's Sciences*, 4th Vol.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 91.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 597.

wealthy, one should keep away from niggardliness and covetousness by devoting himself to doing favors, altruism and bounteousness.²¹⁵ Altruism is important in that it is the highest level of bounteousness because one gives out his money even though he himself is in need of it.²¹⁶ Hence, it can be seen that at this self, one does not regard himself to be the first whose needs are to be met, but he always considers other people's needs to be the first even if he is in need.

2.3.1 The Tranquil Self as an Abode for the Good Character

There is a need here to discuss how worthy having a good character is in our context based on the main Islamic sources, which are the Qur'an and the Hadith and why it is important in this study. I mentioned that the abode for good character is the *nafs al-mutmainnah*, the tranquil self. Thus, having good character is of great significance in the Qur'an and Hadith literature as well as in the Sufi works.

As a perfect example in everything for all humans, the character of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is praised in the Quran as follows; '*Assuredly, thou art of a tremendous character.*'²¹⁷ Further, Aisha (may Allah bless her and grant her peace) is recorded to have said; '*The character of the Emissary of Allah ﷺ was the Quran.*'²¹⁸ In this regard, He ﷺ also said; '*I was sent only to perfect the noble qualities of character.*'²¹⁹ We can conclude that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is a great example for all people to understand good character and we must try to adopt his character in our lives by following his behaviors and actions.

For expressing the importance of good character, Ghazali further conveys another Hadith; '*The heaviest things to be placed in the Scales*'²²⁰ *shall be the fear of Allah and good character.*'²²¹ The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was once asked '*O Emissary of Allah! Which believer is best in faith?*' and he answered '*He who is best in character.*'²²² Another Hadith is that *bad character corrupts one's works just as vinegar corrupts honey.*²²³ There is also a praying (*dua*) that He ﷺ used to say as

²¹⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religion's Sciences*, 4th Vol. 401.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, 422.

²¹⁷ The Qur'an, 68: 4

²¹⁸ Al-Adab Al-Mufrad, Dealings with people and good character, Book 14, Hadith 308.

²¹⁹ Al-Adab al-Mufrad Book 14, Hadith 273.

²²⁰ Al-Mizan: on the day of judgement the good and evil deeds will be weighed against each other.

²²¹ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 7.

²²² Jami' at-Tirmidhi 1162, Vol. 1, Book 7, Hadith 1162.

²²³ Ebu'l-Hasen el-Heysemî, *Mecma'u'z-zevâ'id ve menba'u'l-fevâ'id*, VIII, 54.

Abu Ma'sud al-Khudri conveys to us: *'O Allah! Thou hast made good my creation (khalqi), therefore make good my character (khuluqi).*²²⁴

In a similar vein, a man said to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ;

'Give me some advice'. He replied, 'Fear Allah wherever you may be.' 'Give me more', he said. 'Follow a sin with a good deed, and you will erase it' he answered. 'Give me more', the man said, and he replied 'When you deal with people, do so with goodness of your character.'²²⁵

In addition, the Prophet ﷺ used to pray frequently: *'O Lord Allah! I ask Thee for health, contentment with my lot, and good character.'*²²⁶ These are, in fact, some of the common praying that Muslims should include into their praying in order to ask for good character and the true path from Allah, the Exalted.

To be able to grasp more of the place of good character in Islam, we can look into many Hadith in this regard. The Prophet ﷺ said, as Anas²²⁷ (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) transmitted from him, 'One day, when we were with the Emissary of Allah ﷺ, he said, *"Good character melts away sin just as the sun melts ice."*²²⁸ Another saying of the Prophet ﷺ is, *'The most beloved of you to me on the Day of Arising, and the ones who shall sit closest to me, will be the best of you in character'*.²²⁹

Like the other Sufis, who gives a great role to good character in Islam, Ghazali also emphasizes that without good character, the praying and practicing of the religion will be incomplete and he continues to give examples from the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. He quotes from Al-Fudayl at the beginning of *Disciplining the Soul* that the Emissary of Allah ﷺ was once told that a certain woman fasted all day and prayed all night, but was possessed of a bad character, so that she injured her neighbors with her words. *'There is no good in her,' he said, 'She is of Hell's people.'*²³⁰

²²⁴ Ibn Hanbel, el Müsned, I, 403

²²⁵ Riyad as-Salihin, The book of Miscellany, Book 1, Hadith 61.

²²⁶ Al-Adab Al-Mufrad, Dealings with people and good character, Book 14, Hadith 307.

²²⁷ Anas ibn Malik ibn Nadr al-Khazraji Al-Ansari (c.612-c.712) was a well-known sahabi (companion) of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ.

²²⁸ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 10.

²²⁹ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 10.

²³⁰ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 8.

In this regard, another Hadith states: ‘*The rightly guided Muslim attains the degree of him who fasts and prays at length merely through his good character and noble nature.*’ Also, Anas quotes;

The Emissary of Allah ﷺ said, ‘A bondsman may attain through his good character high and noble degrees in the Afterlife, even though he be feeble in his worship.’²³¹

From these examples one can reach the conclusion that practicing the religion and fulfilling the basic requirements, and having a bad character are actually two contrasting sides. Namely, if a practicing Muslim has a bad character and does not strive for refining it, then he or she is on the verge of losing piety.

Besides, there is an emphasis that even though a Muslim is weak in his or her praying and practicing, his or her good character will surely help and save him or her from Hellfire. Hence, it is important that both the practicing of the religion and the good character must be hand in hand to bring the human the eternal felicity.

One can find in Hadith sources and Sufism textures that there is a great literature on praising the good character, but my aim here is not to give the detailed accounts of good character. My goal is to draw a framework wherein the reader can put good and bad character in the right places within the struggle of the *nafs* and the levels of the self.

As can be seen the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ lays so much emphasis on the good character that every Muslim has to endeavor to possess good character by cleaning their hearts from the spiritual illnesses as a result of disciplining their souls.

To sum up, all the praiseworthy qualities gather at the tranquil self and they are manifested in the behaviors. The heart has now reached peace and serenity. All spiritual components, which are the heart, the intellect, the self and the spirit, are working as they are supposed to. The heart is the ruler, and it takes the advices of the intellect which successfully controls the self now. It is this spiritual system that is to be achieved by all human beings according to Ghazali.

Upon analyzing the system of Ghazali about the spiritual dynamism of human beings based on the levels of the self, I will now utilize the system of Abraham Maslow about the personality development of human beings as a contrast case in order to

²³¹ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 11-12.

draw a related framework and to indicate the comprehensiveness of Ghazali's system. According to Abraham Maslow, who is the founder of the humanist school of psychology, the human beings are intrinsically good, and they can regulate and control themselves towards a fully functioning person and also towards self-actualization.²³² He bases his theory on the self-fulfillment or self-actualization of human beings presenting a hierarchy of needs schema.

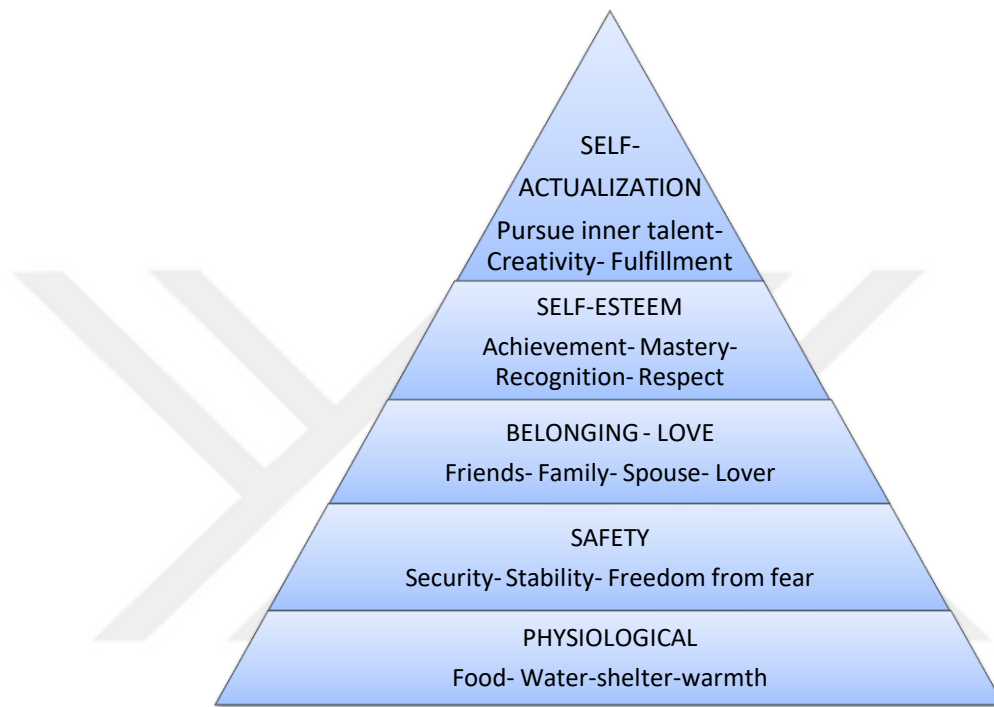


Figure 2. 1: Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs²³³

For him, the basic needs are the first stratum; the physiological needs. And if they are not satisfied and met, the human body cannot function optimally. Yet, for Ghazali restricting the bodily and physical needs are of great significance since saving the body from material dependence and focusing on the spiritual needs carries importance in the journey of the self towards its perfection. That is, the bodily and worldly pleasures are the fruits of the self which is prone to evil according to Ghazali, therefore it should be the goal of the psychic system in which the intellect and the reason are in charge so as not to let the body to pursue and fulfill its desires completely and blindly.

After the safety needs, then comes the stratum of social needs. The feelings of friendship, intimacy, acceptance, being part of a group are only some examples of it.

²³² Razak, "Human Nature and Motivation," 514.

²³³ Ibid., 515.

In the esteem level, esteem for oneself and desire for reputation and respect from others like prestige and status, are to be gained and important especially for children and adolescents according to Maslow. On the other hand, it is mentioned earlier in this chapter that the desire for reputation and status can actually be an outward implication of the self which commands evil and which is the first level without the consciousness of his being for Ghazali, and as it will be discussed in my third chapter, it can easily be a way for the satan to enter the heart and to make it ill in Ghazali's spiritual system of human ontology.

A human being always naturally tries to meet the first four levels of needs according to Maslow. The last and the highest level of self actualization is about seeking personal growth and peak experiences. It is a desire *to become everything one is capable of becoming*.²³⁴ For him, a person is always becoming and never remains static in his life. When he reaches the self-actualization level, he comes to find a meaning to the life.

Although Maslow's theory of self-actualization of the human being is an indicative of development of the self from a lower state to a more evolved state of being and maturity²³⁵, it asserts only a limited explanation of self-development compared to the Islamic version of spiritual and personal development. The aim in the humanist psychology is to fulfill the unique potential as a human being. Because every individual is unique, the motivation for self-actualization directs people in different dimensions.²³⁶ For some people self actualization can be attained by creating works of art or literature, for others through sport or some other activities. Maslow describes the self-actualization in his own words as follows:

It refers to the person's desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. The specific form that these needs will take will of course vary greatly from person to person. In one individual it may take the form of the desire to be an ideal mother, in another it may be expressed athletically, and in still another it may be expressed in painting pictures or in inventions.²³⁷

²³⁴ Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and personality (3rd ed.)*. (Delhi: Pearson Education. 1987), 64.

²³⁵ Mansoor, "The soul and its attributes," 107.

²³⁶ D. T. Kenrick, S. L. Neuberg, V. Griskevicius, V. D. Becker, & M. Schaller, "Goal-Driven Cognition and Functional Behavior The Fundamental-Motives Framework." *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 19 No: 1 (2010): 63-67.

²³⁷ Abraham Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review*, 50 No: 4 (1943): 382-383.

While Abraham Maslow presents the strata of how to reach self-fulfillment for human beings, he is also criticized from certain points. First and foremost, his assertion that without meeting the needs of lower levels, one cannot be capable of meeting the needs of the next levels is, in effect, not applicable to the humans universally and may not be always the case.

This being the case, the humanist psychology, though it emphasizes the unique potentials of human beings still falls short of offering a comprehensive explanation of human nature and bringing a better understanding regarding the spiritual dimension of human beings. It only focuses on the reality of the present life and adopts the 'here and now' viewpoint.²³⁸ On the other hand, within the Sufi context while there are stages of advancement through which the human psyche passes on its journey to perfection, Ghazali's system of human ontology deals with the human beings both physically and spiritually. It offers the stages of the self (*maratib al-nafs*) based on gaining the consciousness of his creation and watching after his heart, which is at the core of the spiritual being of humans. Thus, it can be evidently seen that what Ghazali presents with regard to the understanding of human ontology and behavior is an all-encompassing one that is true for all human beings.

2.4. Example Cases for the Levels of the Self

I would like to present an example case to be able to make more clear how one behaves and which psychological states he experiences at these levels. Imagine there is a university student named Duygu. She has to wake up early to go to a lecture, so she sets an alarm clock to get up early in the morning.

In the first case, Duygu is in bed and hears the alarm clock at 7:00 am. She gets up, walks in the room and turns the alarm off. She thinks of getting prepared, having a breakfast, and revising her notes for the lesson. Then she hears an inner voice calling her: "it is too early, go back to sleep". But if she goes back to sleep, she will be late for the lecture and has to disturb her friends and the teacher by entering the class in the middle of the lesson. She does not care about the other people, she listens to her inner voice and goes back to sleep even if she knows that she will be late to the lecture. This scenario depicts a human being who is under the control of her *nafs* to follow what her body needs without considering the people around her or what she is supposed to do. It is the soul commanding evil among the levels of the self.

²³⁸ Razak, "Human Nature and Motivation," 513.

Therefore, her *'aql* decides to listen to the *nafs* which is also triggered by the call of the inner voice and the *qalb* is in a dormant state leaving the rule of the body kingdom to the *nafs* and its servant *'aql*. There is no virtue in her behavior; there is just self-care of the ego.

In the second case, Duygu is in bed, she hears the alarm clock at 7:00 am. She gets up, walks in the room and turns the alarm off. She thinks of getting prepared, having a breakfast, and revising her notes for the lesson. Then she hears an inner voice telling her: "It is too early, go back to sleep". She is about to accept the offer of the inner voice, yet then hears another inner voice telling her: "You did the same thing yesterday and were late to the lecture. Do not go back to bed. Go, get prepared and revise your notes." There are two ways and options for Duygu at this point; either she will listen to the first inner voice and go back to sleep, eventually being late to the lecture, or she will listen to the second inner voice, get prepared and go to the lecture on time. There is an inner struggle for Duygu now between her *nafs* commanding what is evil for her and her *'aql* commanding what is good for her. She is indecisive about which one to choose. A virtue or a foul act will occur according to her decision. This is *al-nafs al-lawwamah*. *'Aql* is striving to fight against the *nafs al-ammarah bissui* to enable the peace in the heart and to pull the human being to the Divine. Duygu may choose the calling of her *'aql* and perform a responsible act. On the other hand, she may decide to go back to bed and in the end she can be late for the lecture as a result of listening to the calling of her *nafs*. But, she will feel regret immediately after she wakes up. She will scorn herself for what has happened and she wished to have chosen the other way. She will promise to herself not to do this kind of action again, but since she experiences *nafs al-lawwamah*, she will live through the same inner battle again. And sometimes her *'aql* is going to win the battle and sometimes her *nafs* in the battle leading her to self-regret.

In the third case, Duygu is in bed, she hears the alarm clock at 7:00 am. She gets up, walks in the room and turns the alarm off. She thinks of getting prepared, having a breakfast, and revising her notes for the lesson. Then she hears an inner voice telling her: "It is too early, go back to sleep". She is about to accept the offer of the inner voice, yet then hears another inner voice telling her: "You did the same thing yesterday and were late to the lecture. Do not go back to bed. Go, get prepared and revise your notes". She thinks that if she is late for the lecture, she will disturb her

friends and her teacher by entering the class late and making noises when sitting on a chair. Plus, it will not be a proper manner of conduct. Therefore, she gets up, has breakfast, revise her lecture notes to be fully prepared for her lesson both physically and psychologically. In her case, her heart is the ruler of her spiritual system, and the 'aql takes decisions to satisfy the qalb, not to satisfy the nafs and the body. There are still callings from the nafs, but since 'aql is in charge, it only answers these calls as it is supposed to get. It does not surrender to the nafs. So, there is peace and serenity in this heart. It fulfills its responsibilities rationally, socially and individually reaching a psychological equilibrium. This soul is the nafs al-mutmainnah, which Allah, Almighty expects us to attain in this world.

I aimed to exemplify all three levels of the self (nafs) through one ordinary example, yet it is clear that on a daily basis all the human beings are experiencing one of these levels. Ghazali emphasizes that there are few people whose souls have reached tranquility, rather most of the human beings are ignorant their hearts and its diseases, so they generally have the first two levels.

Moreover, it can be seen that there is a great deal of happenings inside the spiritual realm of the human being just like there is a great amount of work in the biological body of the human being without the knowing of the human being. In order to attain a healthy psycho-spiritual state, one should know his or her heart, and should be able to recognize it when it has a spiritual disease. After diagnosis of the disease, it is important to make an endeavor for its treatment. This treatment happens, according to Ghazali, through self-purification and disciplining the soul (tazkiyatun nafs) and he shows the ways of how to struggle against the foul characteristics of the nafs al-ammarah in Riyadatun nafs in the third volume of Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din.

One last thing to note before moving to the third chapter is that the inner voice in every level of the soul is, in fact, called as khawatir i.e. the involuntary suggestions that leaks into the heart either coming from angels or coming from satans, which will be analyzed in detail in the next chapter.

To sum up this chapter, it dealt with the explanations of Ghazali upon how the spiritual system that constitutes the human ontology should be and when this system actually becomes deformed. This is exemplified through the similes Ghazali utilizes in his works to explain the relation among the heart, the intellect and the soul.

Besides, the dynamics among these spiritual constituents are examined through three levels of the self (*maratib al-nafs*), which are the self that commands evil, the self-blaming soul and the self at rest and tranquility. Further, the possible outward implications of all three levels are discussed. The levels are clarified through three example situations of a person. After presenting the inner conflicts between these spiritual components of the human being, the next chapter will be about the external factors that have somehow also an impact on the heart.



CHAPTER 3: External Relations of the Heart

Upon presenting the inner conflicts of the heart and the relations between the *qalb*, '*aql* and *nafs* in relation to the states of the self, here my aim is to address what are the external influences on the heart and in what ways they affect the heart.

Initially, the heart is like a house that has many doors from which the resultant effects are poured into this house or like a target unto which arrows are shot from every direction or like a pool into which different streams of water flows.²³⁹ So, it can be said that the heart is constantly in a state of change and under the influence of secondary causes. In this chapter, these secondary causes which can be either from the satan and the angels or from the society and individuals will be under scrutiny in the light of Ghazali's explanations in *Ihya*, taking its base from the last parts of *The Marvels of the Heart*.

These influences can enter the heart either from without; like the five external senses or from within; like imagination, appetite, anger and characteristics that stem from the temperament of the human being. The influences that come into the heart are called involuntary suggestions (*khawatir*) because they come into the mind when the heart is unmindful of them.²⁴⁰

These involuntary suggestions are classified into two categories, one of which leads to evil and a harmful result; and the other of which leads to good and a profitable situation both in this world and the next. The blameworthy one is entitled as prompting to evil (*wiswas*) and the praiseworthy suggestion is named as general inspiration (*ilham*) respectively. In addition, the cause of the general inspiration that directs to good is called an angel (*malak*) and the cause of the suggestion of prompting to evil is called a demon (*shaytan*).²⁴¹

The angel is created and compelled to bestow benefits, serve knowledge, and reveal what is real, true and right, and command good by Allah. On the other hand, the satan is created for the opposite of all things to promise evil, to command excess and to threaten with poverty whenever the person would like to do good. As a result, the

²³⁹ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 77

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 78

²⁴¹ Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Minhajul 'Abideen*. trans. Iqbal Hussain Ansari. (Karachi: Darul Isha'at, 1998.), 186.

heart is open to be attracted by both the demon and the angel.²⁴² In this regard, the Prophet ﷺ said:

The heart has two calls. The one is from the angel and it is a promise of good and belief in the divine Reality; and whoever finds this, let him know that it is from Allah, praise be to Him, and let him give thanks to Allah. The other call is from the enemy and it is a promise of evil, a denial of the divine Reality, and forbidding of good; and whoever finds it, let him take refuge with Allah from Satan the Accursed.²⁴³

The heart in its original innate condition is open to accept both the influences of the demon and angel equivalently, without a predominance of the one over the other. The superiority of the one over the other is gained, however, through whether or not there is surrender for the desire and the appetites. Based on the Hadith, we know that everyone has a demon insofar as in every heart there is appetite, anger, miserliness, covetousness, hope of long life and other similar human qualities that take its origin from the desire²⁴⁴. In other words, whenever the heart is occupied by the thought of the present world due to the demands of desires, the demon finds a spot to leak into the heart and can prompt to evil. On the contrary, when the heart is committed particularly to the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, the demon is warded off and the angel comes and inspires.²⁴⁵ This is briefly how external factors touch upon the heart according to Ghazali.

To explain this point more, there is a constant battle between two forces of the angels and demons inside the heart. One of them conquers the heart and resides therein until the other confiscates it. According to Ghazali, most of the hearts are captured by the troops of demons, thereby resulting in the preference of the present world and neglecting the Afterlife. This is because of following the appetites and desires. Then, without cutting the nourishment of the demon which is the desires and the appetite, the heart cannot be recaptured and reformed with the help of remembrance of Allah, as being the place of angelic influence. To put it in another way, the demon does not enter the heart which is deprived of desires. Yet, as it is mentioned in the Quran, there are people who follow their desires and they become a servant of their desires,

²⁴² Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 78, 79.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁴⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 80.

and cease to be a servant of Allah. Allah says; “*Have you seen the one who takes his desire as his Allah?*”²⁴⁶

Ghazali explains that everything other than Allah and other than what is connected with Him may possibly become a field for the Satan’s activity.²⁴⁷ The safe solution is the remembrance of Allah, taking refuge with Him and disdaining strength and power. In a verse of the Qur’an Allah, the Exalted says;

Indeed, those who fear Allah, when a thought touches them from Satan, they remember [Allah] and at once they have insight.²⁴⁸

The link between the remembrance of Allah and the evil prompting of the satan is like the mutual hostility between day and night, or between light and darkness. In a Hadith that is quoted by Anas (may Allah be pleased with him), it is stated;

Satan places his snout on the heart of the son of Adam; if he remembers Allah, the Exalted, satan slinks away, but if he forgets Allah, the Exalted, satan gobbles up his heart.²⁴⁹

In another Hadith it is stated;

Verily satan courses through the son of Adam just like the circulation of the blood, so make his coursings difficult by means of hunger.²⁵⁰

This is because satan finds a way to the body through appetites and one can break the appetence through hunger.

Thus, it can be summed that there is no exception of a human being who is free from the effects of the satan and the difference between people shows up based on whether they obey the satan or turn him down.

Human beings can recognize the evil of enemy through experience; however, Allah, the Exalted, also clarifies in many parts of His Book the enmity of the satan so that human beings will know him and take their guard against him. Some of the verses are below;

Satan is a enemy to you, so take him as a enemy. But he only invites his party to be among the companions of blaze.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ The Quran, 25:43

²⁴⁷ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 82.

²⁴⁸ The Quran, 7:201

²⁴⁹ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 82.

²⁵⁰ Sahih al-Bukhari 3281, Vol. 4, Book 54, Hadith 501.

Did I not enjoin on you, O children of Adam that you not serve Satan? Indeed he is to you a clear enemy.²⁵²

Another point that needs to be discussed herein is the importance of disciplining the self so that one can close the doors for the evil promptings of the satan and only keep the door of angelic inspiration open. In this regard, the involuntary suggestions (*khawatir*) can be classified as follows; the ones that invite to good are evidently general inspiration; the ones that invite to evil are indubitably evil promptings; and there are the uncertain ones which are not clearly known to come from the angel or the demon. In fact, it is one of the ways of the satan to introduce the evil as if it were good. To be able to discern between them is a profound problem and Ghazali says most of the people are not able to recognize what the source of suggestion is.²⁵³ Therefore, what is required from the humans is that they should stop at every intention that is suggested to them and try to resolve whether they are the call of the angel or the call of the demon. This has to include the true insight, and it cannot happen with the worldly desires of the human nature. Moreover, this insight can be attained in light of piety and abundant knowledge.²⁵⁴

To be aware of the deceit of the *nafs* and the wiles of the satan is an individual obligation (*fard 'ayn*) for every human being; nevertheless, humans ignore it and engage in the sciences that will enable the satan to gain authority over them and eventually forget the enmity of the satan, and the ways of guarding against him.

3.1. Entrances of the Satan into the Heart

The ways to take in the evil promptings are the five external senses and the inner doors which are appetites and the ties to the present world. As an example, even if someone get rid of the door of the senses by leaving himself in solitude and by detaching himself from his kin and money, there still remains entrances for the satan in the imaginings that flow through the heart, which can only be prevented by engaging the heart with the remembrance of Allah. Nevertheless, the satan keeps trying to divert the heart from remembering Allah. Hence, it can be comprehended that there is no escape from struggling against him since this struggle continues until

²⁵¹ The Qur'an 35:6

²⁵² The Qur'an 36:60

²⁵³ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 85.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

death.²⁵⁵ And the difficulty is that there are many doors to the heart for the satan, yet there is one single door for the angels. The purified heart, the abundant knowledge based on the Book of Allah and the *Sunnah* of the Messenger help this single door, as well.

In order to know oneself better, one should know the satan's ways of entering the heart and should be on guard against him all the time because as long as one lives, the satan does not give up struggling to divert the human being as mentioned earlier. Ghazali draws an analogy saying that the heart is like a fortress and the satan wants to enter and occupy it through the doors and entrances. Unless one knows the doors, he cannot keep it safe from the satan. So, to be able to get rid of him, one must obtain the knowledge of his entrances to the heart. The entrances and the doors are as many as the qualities of the servant, but Ghazali talks about the great ones that are large enough for the armies of the satan to enter.

Firstly, one entrance is through the anger and appetite. That is to say, anger destroys and cancels the intellect (*'aql*) and when the army of the intellect turns weak, then the army of the satan attacks more.

The second door of the satan to penetrate into the heart is through envying (*hasad*) and greed (*hirs*). When the human is greedy and envy of something, he becomes blind and deaf of the truth. In fact, what makes the entrances of the satan known is the light of insight (*basirah*). Nevertheless, the envy and greed covers it up so that the human being cannot see through. Eventually, it leads the satan to find an opportunity to leak in, and then the satan causes everything to appear good and beautiful for the human being although they are, in fact, immoral and condemned.²⁵⁶

The third door of the satan is to eat until reaching the feeling of satiety even though what the human being eats is all *halal*.²⁵⁷ For satiety reinforces the appetite, the appetite becomes a useful weapon for the satan. In this regard, Ghazali quotes six damages of eating too much in his book to warn the humans against its destructiveness as below;

1. It drives the fear of Allah from one's heart.
2. It drives from one's heart compassion toward humankind.

²⁵⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 87.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁵⁷ The word '*halal*' literally means permissible and in translation it is usually used as lawful.

3. It makes obedience and performing deeds a burden on the servant.
4. If one hears wise speech, it does not soften his heart.
5. Even if he speaks wisely, it does not have an impact on other people.
6. It incites some important diseases, as well.²⁵⁸

The fourth door for the satan to enter the heart is the love of adornment in furnishings, apparel and house. Once the satan finds out that the human being has this deficiency, he settles in his heart and busies the human being with building new houses and enlarging them, adorning them and their apparel. Being enslaved with all these desires, it is worrying that the human being could die following his desires while being in the way of the satan.²⁵⁹

The fifth great door is the covetous desire (*tama'*). When this covetous desire rules over the heart, the satan uses cheating and hypocrisy in certain ways to make humans love what they overly desire in a way that what they desire becomes what they worship eventually. By leading them to praise what they do not possess, the satan prevents them from commanding to do good and from forbidding evil.²⁶⁰

Among the entrances of the satan to the heart, there is also the sixth door of haste. The Prophet ﷺ said “*Haste is from Satan, and deliberate action from Allah, the Exalted.*”²⁶¹ Allah says;

“Man was created of haste.”²⁶²

“And man is ever hasty.”²⁶³

“Do not hasten with [the recitation of] the Quran before its revelation is completed to you.”²⁶⁴

This is because actions should be done after clear understanding and experiential knowledge. For clear understanding, firstly one should reflect and measure his actions before acting. Yet, being hasty hinders all of these steps. When the human being behaves hastily, the satan uses his evil promptings to contribute to haste with his *wiswas*.

²⁵⁸ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 94.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 94.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 95.

²⁶¹ Jami' at-Tirmidhi, Vol. 4 Book 1, Hadith 2012.

²⁶² The Qur'an 21:37

²⁶³ The Qur'an 17:11

²⁶⁴ The Qur'an 20:114

The seventh way of the satan getting through the heart is ‘gold and silver’ for using in the place of money, and other types of possessions, goods, estates and livestock according to Ghazali. To explain it more, what exceeds the daily sustenance and the need is actually an instrument for the satan. The one who has only his daily provision does not have to worry about gaining a livelihood in his heart since this heart will not be occupied with the worries of earning a living. Ghazali exemplifies this psychological state that if the human being finds one hundred *dinars* (golds) on the road, then he would start thinking of more desires in his heart. Even what he has found does not satisfy him, and it will lead him to think of more wishes, so he thinks that he will need nine hundred more *dinars* to reach his desires. But, before finding one hundred golds, he was already self-sufficient. Now, he is in need of other one hundreds that can be blended in the hands of the satan to impact this person in every way he wants.

The eighth of his great doors is through stinginess and the fear of poverty. This fear prevents the human being from giving alms and attracts him to store up his goods and money, which results in painful punishment in hereafter. As the Quran says, the painful punishment is promised to the ones who become rich without caring to earn money in a *halal* or *haram* way. Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 778) remarks that the fear of poverty is such a weapon for the satan that if the human being accepts it, he busies himself with vain deeds, moves away from his Lord, always talks in vain and even supposes evil of his Lord.²⁶⁵

The ninth of his great entrances is sectarian and partisan prejudices, secret hatred of opponents and looking down on them.²⁶⁶ To defame someone and to busy one’s self with people’s shortcomings are among the savage characteristics of the human being that is an inborn disposition. If someone is inclined to these characteristics, the satan makes him believe what he is engaged is good. In this way, the person believes that he is struggling in favor of the religion, yet he is, in fact, helping the satan. For instance, someone introduces himself as a devoted partisan of Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq (d. 634), but he is all corrupted, takes part in that which is unlawful and does not refrain himself from talking nonsense and in falsehood. Ghazali states that if it were possible

²⁶⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 97.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

for Abū Bakr to see this person, he would be the foremost enemy of him.²⁶⁷ Because Abū Bakr was such a person that he put pebbles in his mouth so that his tongue must be silent about what did not concern him. Thus, it can be seen that being a partisan of Abū Bakr, yet not caring about the character of him and the praying of Islam is what harms the heart with the help of the satan. It is the same for the partisans of the schools of *Imam*. If one is attached to one school of Imam, but does not live his life according to his manners of life, then this imam also will be his opponent on the day of resurrection.

The tenth way of the satan to enter the heart is to urge common people who do not have much knowledge about the science of theology to think about the essential nature and attributes of Allah, the Exalted and about the topics which they cannot comprehend profoundly so that they will doubt the principles of religion. To explain it more, by thinking in this way, a human being becomes an unbeliever or an innovator although he is still happy for what he has achieved through his intelligence. He believes that he has the gnosis and insight, and something is revealed to him due to his perspicacity and intelligence.²⁶⁸ But actually the satan is busying him with the issues that he does not have much and deeper knowledge and insight leading him to go astray eventually.

The eleventh great door of the satan is thinking evil of Muslims (*su' al-zann bi-l-muslimin*). In the Qur'an, it is said that “*O you who believe, avoid suspicion as much as possible, for suspicion in some cases is a sin.*”²⁶⁹ It should be known that if someone indulges in an evil judgment on another person through conjecture, it is actually from the satan to perish him by putting him in a situation of backbiting. This can lead the person to disdain the other and see himself much better than the other. Furthermore, the Prophet ﷺ warns us saying that “*Beware of places of accusations.*” So, guarding against supposing evil of one another and against accusing evil men is important in that it shows the wickedness of that person and that his heart is corrupt and sick. The believer should look for excuses, not the faults and should be sound-hearted towards all creatures.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 99.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 102

²⁶⁹ The Quran, 49:12

²⁷⁰ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 104.

Now that the great entrances of the satan into the heart have been revealed, it can be seen that there is no evil characteristic that is not a tool for the satan to enter the heart of the human beings. To fight against the Satan, it is not enough only to remember Allah since one should know these entrances first, and then close them by purifying his heart. This, surely, does not happen overnight. Further, even if man closes all the doors, Satan would still be able to cause suggestions in the heart although he does not have an abode to settle in. So, the remedy, at this point, should be the remembrance of Allah which is established upon piety and cleanse of all blameworthy qualities. Allah, the Exalted says about the special characteristics of the God-fearing person “*Indeed, those who fear Allah, when a thought touches them from Satan, they remember [Allah] and at once they have insight.*”²⁷¹

In this vein, Ghazali makes it clear with an analogy. Namely, Satan is like a hungry dog and if you do not have any bread or meat in your hands, you can get rid of it only by saying ‘go away’, so the voice will be enough to fend it off. Yet, if you have some meat in your hands and the dog is hungry, it will go for the meat and you will not be able to stop it by mere talk. Therefore, it can be deduced that the satan can be removed by the remembrance of Allah when the heart is deprived of his food. But when the appetite occupies the heart, the satan settles down at the center of the heart so the remembrance of Allah moves away from the core to the marginal regions of the heart losing the control of the core of the heart.²⁷²

In other words, remembrance of Allah is like a medicine, and piety, namely purifying and cleansing the heart from appetite is like abstinence. So, taking the medicine after dieting will not have the same effect with taking the medicine without making a diet. That is to say, after cleansing your heart from appetite, the satan will be warded off from the heart and the heart will be cured through the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted.

Also, there is an important point that if someone helps the satan by his work and behaviors, he is a follower of him even though he makes mention of Allah with his tongue.²⁷³ In this regard, as quoted in *Ihya*, Ibrahim bin Adham (d. 777)²⁷⁴ was asked

²⁷¹ The Qur’an 7:201

²⁷² Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 105.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 107.

why their *dua*'s are not granted although Allah, the Exalted says '*Call upon me, I will answer you*'²⁷⁵. He answers '*Because your hearts are dead*' and then he cites eight reasons for the dead hearts;

1. You have known Allah's right over you but have not done your duty toward him.
2. You have read the Qur'an but have not acted according to the limitations it has imposed.
3. You have said, 'We love the Messenger of Allah' ﷺ but you have not followed his law (*Sunnah*).
4. You have said, 'We fear death' but you have not prepared for it.
5. The Exalted said, *Indeed Satan is an enemy to you, so you take him as an enemy* (35:6) but you have agreed with him upon acts of disobedience.
6. You have said, 'We fear the Fire,' and constrained your bodies to enter it.
7. You have said, 'We love Paradise,' but have not labored to gain it.
8. When you have risen from your beds, you have cast your faults behind your backs and spread the faults of other men before your faces. You have angered your Lord, so how can He answer your prayers?²⁷⁶

As can be understood, what is important is not to talk about the deeds, but it is crucial to implement and perform in our behaviors what we yearn for and talk about.

When we look at what is suggested by other scholars, Ahmad al-Fārūqī al-Sirhindī (d. 1624) sheds light upon trappings of the outer world that can easily be an entrance to the heart for the Satan, and can affect the heart in a negative way making it ill and driving it away from Allah. Sirhindī also warns against the outer world, and puts the inner world in a praiseworthy place. He clearly defines a useless human activity as any activity that is not directly involved with salvation.²⁷⁷ To be able to tame one's ego-self, one should do what pleases Allah, instead of what pleases himself. About the external-outer world, he writes to his disciple as follows;

Oh son! The world is a place of trials and tribulations. Outwardly it is adorned with all kinds of lies and falsehoods, the appearance of which is made beautiful by imagining it to be the mole, cheek, tress, and face of the beloved, seeing the imagined sweetness, moistness, and freshness. But in truth, it is a perfumed corpse, a heap of garbage filled with flies and worms, a mirage appearing as water, poison tasting like sugar, and entirely devoid of good qualities.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁴ Ibrahim Bin Adham (d. 777) was a Sufi Saint and was born in Balkh on the east of Khurasan. His family was from the Kufa and were descendants of the second Caliph Omar bin Khattab. He was the king of Balkh but abandoned the throne to become a Sufi saint.

²⁷⁵ The Qur'an, 40: 60.

²⁷⁶ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 109.

²⁷⁷ Buehler, *Revealed Grace*, 172.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

He emphasizes that what keeps you from Allah is this world, and he counts women, children, wealth, status, power, amusements, knowledge not being advantageous to the Hereafter, and being occupied with worthless pursuits among the aspects of the world.²⁷⁹

Upon the kinds of jinn and humans, the Prophet ﷺ says, as quoted from Abū al-Dardā' (d. 652),

Allah has created the jinn of three sorts. One sort is snakes, scorpions, and creeping insects of the earth. Another is like the wind blowing through the sky. The third sort is subject to reward and punishment. Allah, the Exalted, has also created three kinds of humans. One kind is like the beasts, as the Exalted said, '*They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray*'. (7:179) Another kind has bodies that are those of human beings and spirits that are those of demons. A third sort are those who will be in the shade of Allah, the Exalted, on the day of resurrection, the day when there is no shade save His shade alone.²⁸⁰

So, it can be concluded that human beings, though, have the appearance of a human being, they can be as dangerous as the Satans.

However, in *Awarif al-Ma'arif*, Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi (1144-1234) remarks that there are such humans that their hearts are firmly established due to the serenity of their *nafs*. Hence, when the human being reaches this level of tranquility, the Satan loses hope about influencing it. Yet, if the *nafs* loses this steadfastness, the purity of the heart will become disrupted by leading an open door for the Satan to draw near the human. Further, according to al-Suhrawardi this purity of the heart can only be maintained through *dhikr*, the remembrance of the Allah and disciplining the soul. Indeed, the Satan escapes the light of the *dhikr* as a person fears from the fire.²⁸¹

3.2. Effects of Angels on the Heart

As for the relation and linkage between the angels and humans, in general it can be stated that angels are subtle ethereal divine beings that fulfill the Divine Law without any refusal and rebellion and that they are chosen to be messengers by Allah. In the Qur'an this relation is frequently enunciated. Besides their other duties, angels are

²⁷⁹ Buehler, *Revealed Grace*, 173.

²⁸⁰ Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the heart*, 111-112

²⁸¹ Shihab al-Din Abu Hafs, Umar b. Muhammad al-Suhrawardi. *'Awarif al-Ma'arif (The Gifts of Gnosés)*. Translated by Prof. Syed Ahmad Saeed Hamadani. Lahore: Oriental Publications, 2011.) 471

also mediators to deliver the message of Allah to humans. They are the friends of those who know and love Allah both in this world and hereafter. It is stated in the Quran that angels are the first ones to be informed by the creation of human being, namely Hadrat Adam²⁸². Further, divine revelation is descended upon the heart of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ by Gabriel, who is one of the chief angels. In surah Fussilat, they say, “*we are your (believers) allies in worldly life and in the Hereafter.*”²⁸³ So, they remind humans what is good and beautiful.²⁸⁴ So, it is clear that there is some influence on the hearts of human beings by the angels as understood from the Quran.

Ghazali explains the effects of external companions on the spirituality of human beings, namely the devil and the angel in his other works, as well. In *Mearij al-Quds*, firstly he remarks that there are three main sources for virtues and vices in human beings, which are the faculty of imagination (*tahayyul*), physical desires-appetites (*shahwa*) and ire (*ghadhab*).²⁸⁵ After explaining in detail how the faculty of imagination works, he states that this faculty of imagination is not the same in every human being. That is to say, it changes from person to person and has different levels. Ghazali states that for this reason angels descend to this person who has a beautiful way of imagination and devils descend to the person who has an ugly way of imagination. The angels continue descending to the person and affecting him until the person speaks with their speech, sees with their eyes and hears with their ears. It is as if they were angels who walk on the earth with tranquility now.²⁸⁶ They are depicted in the Quran as truly those who say ‘*Our Lord is Allah, and afterward are upright, the angels descend upon them.*’²⁸⁷

In the same way, the devilish satans continue descending to those who have bad and ugly kind of faculty of imagination. They affect these humans until they speak with the tongue of the devils, they see with the eyes of the devils and they hear with the ears of the devils. It is as if those were like human satans who walk on the earth flaming.²⁸⁸ The following verse depicts that kind of people. “*Shall I inform you upon*

²⁸² The Qur’an 2: 30

²⁸³ The Qur’an 41: 31

²⁸⁴ Adem Ergül, *Kur’an ve Sünnete Kalbi Hayat*. (Istanbul: Altınoluk, 2000), 316-317.

²⁸⁵ Shammas, “The Ascent to the Divine,” 130.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁸⁷ The Quran, 41: 30

²⁸⁸ Shammas, “The Ascent to the Divine,” 135.

whom the devils descend? They descend upon every sinful liar. They pass on what is heard, and most of them are liars.”²⁸⁹

In sum, whenever there is uprightness in the condition of the retentive imagination, it will be an abode for angels. Yet, whenever there is deviousness in the condition of retentive imagination, it will be a base for the devilish satans.²⁹⁰

3.3. Influence of Society upon the Heart

Other than the angels and the demons, the heart of a human being is also open to the influences of the society and the other individuals. That is, society and traditional acceptations can also direct one to behave in this way or that way, yet one has to be aware of these societal expectations and what he should follow morally by controlling and knowing his heart.

In addition to the effects of *shaytan* and angels on the heart in the shape of *khawatir*, one, namely one’s heart, is vulnerable to the individuals surrounding him. To be more specific, the people around us can shape our will, inclinations, actions and behaviors. According to the recent research on psychology of the masses, it can be understood that masses are important in that they affect the inclinations of the heart²⁹¹, namely a human’s way of thinking and how he behaves. In this regard, in the Quran it is emphasized that believers should act in unity and solidarity as in the following verses;

And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided.²⁹²

So, it is worthwhile to remember a Hadith at this point. It is narrated from Abu Huraira that;

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Every child is born with a true faith of Islam (i.e. to worship none but Allah Alone) and his parents convert him to Judaism or Christianity or Magianism."²⁹³

²⁸⁹ The Qur’an 26: 221-222-223

²⁹⁰ Shammas, “The Ascent to the Divine,” 135.

²⁹¹ Ergül, *Kalbi hayat*, 342.

²⁹² The Qur’an 3: 103

²⁹³ Sahih al-Bukhari 1385, Vol. 2 Book 23 Hadith 467

It is indicated in this Hadith also that the human being is born to be vulnerable to both sides, either doing good or doing bad deeds. But his or her family, the society in which he or she lives and his or her social milieu will have an effect on the character development and behavior formation of the human being. They contribute to determining a certain mindset for the human being. This is evidently indicated in the works of Ghazali, which has been a hot topic of discussions in the field of psychology under the title of 'Nature-Nurture effect on the human being'.²⁹⁴ He talks about this effect of society on the character and the heart of the child in the part of '*Disciplining the soul*'.²⁹⁵

On other related Hadith that Ghazali quotes in his works compiles up what factors drives the heart of a Muslim;

The believer is beset with five afflictions: a believer who envies him, a hypocrite who hates him, an unbeliever who makes war on him, a devil who misguides him, and a soul which struggles against him.²⁹⁶

In this sense, Ghazali quotes from Yahya ibn Mu'adh al-Razi and he says that:

Man has three enemies: the world, the devil and the soul. Be on your guard against the world through renunciation, against the devil by disobeying him, and against the soul by abandoning desire.²⁹⁷

It can be concluded from these two quotations that the heart of the human beings has enemies from within and from outside. The external enemies are obviously the devils and the world. The world is always denigrated in the works of Sufis. Actually, being fond of the world and worldly desires is what is discredited because the world can be benefited in earning the Hereafter, as well. And Ghazali is no exception in warning about the dangers of the world. He mentions the harms of this world in some of his works like *Kashf al-Qulub*²⁹⁸, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Minhajul Abideen*. But the point is that worldly and material attractions are one of the sources to make the heart ill. Besides, other humans can be a motive behind the chaos in the spiritual system of a human being. That is to say, the spiritual components, which are the intellect, heart,

²⁹⁴ The nature versus nurture debate involves the extent to which particular aspects of behavior are a product of either inherited (i.e., genetic) or acquired (i.e., learned) influences. Francis Galton, Arthur Jenson are among the first names to raise and contribute to this issue.

²⁹⁵ For further information see *Disciplining the soul*, p. 75

²⁹⁶ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 56.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁹⁸ Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *An Exposition of the Hearts "Mukashafat Al-Qulub"*. trans. Maulana Muhammad Muhammady, (Karachi: Darul-Ishaat, 2007).

soul and spirit, can be afflicted by other people's spiritual systems and also by their behaviors in terms of responding them.

Additionally, humans are under the influence of people whom they are together with either in a positive or negative way. The Prophet ﷺ states that

The example of a good companion (who sits with you) in comparison with a bad one, is like that of the musk seller and the blacksmith's bellows (or furnace); from the first you would either buy musk or enjoy its good smell while the bellows would either burn your clothes or your house, or you get a bad nasty smell thereof.²⁹⁹

That means if you have a good friend, he or she will definitely have an effect on you when you are with him or her and when you leave him or her. Based on the Quran and sayings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, it is always advised that one should be careful about his or her friends because they have certain influence on the human being. To be able to acquire good behaviors one should spend time with those who has good behaviors and deeds. As in the Hadith; *"One believer is a mirror to another."*³⁰⁰ And in the Quran it is stated; *"O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are true."*³⁰¹

Ghazali emphasizes that being social and having company with various kinds of people can lead one to get his friends' attributes and characteristics without even realizing it. It can cause greater sins since accompanying those who forget about....

Another perspective in influencing the spiritual system of a human being according to Ghazali can be following the traditional and societal expectations. What is meant by these expectations is that for instance, building wealth is generally praised and desired by the people. One's family or friends can direct him or her to become rich, to invest his or her money, and have a car and a house. Even if one has one house, people continue in saying 'Have now a beach house, or a farm house'. Because humans have greediness in nature, and without self-discipline this attribute is not tamed, they will always wish for more and direct their acquaintances for more. In this sense, for Ghazali, like other Sufis, having more than what one needs as commodity or wealth is a potential door for the satan to enter the heart and use the feeling of possession for the destruction of the spiritual system of the human being or

²⁹⁹ Sahih al-Bukhari 2101, Vol. 3, Book 34, Hadith 314.

³⁰⁰ Sunan Abi Dawud 4918, Book 42, Hadith 4900.

³⁰¹ The Qur'an 9: 119

a potential trump for the soul to manipulate the intellect and have an overall destructive effect on the heart.

In the same way, being famous, having fame and reputation and having the best job position is what other people wish for and desire. Yet, without self-discipline and the struggle against the soul the fame and a prosperous job can open the ways for breakdown of someone's spiritual life and system. They are also useful instruments for the demon to influence the heart.

Overall, it can be stated that the purpose behind the creation of the heart is the know Allah, always be with the Allah and love Allah. When the heart functions in line with its creation purpose, it becomes healthy. However, when the heart is filled with bodily and worldly desires and ambitions, or when the heart is befriended with the human who have bad deeds and a bad character because of their corrupted and diseased hearts, this heart also becomes diseased, corrupted and forgets its creator and purpose of creation.

In conclusion, this chapter deals with the external effects upon the heart. These affects can stem from the satan, and from the angel or from the hearts of other people surrounding the human being. Ghazali warns in most of his works, especially in the *Marvels of the Heart* in *Ihya* against the tricks and entrances of the Satan into the hearts of humans. To take care of the heart is of great significance for it is the essence of the human beings and via the hearts the humans find their way to Allah, know Allah and love Allah. So, to protect it against its enemies that are made obvious to us by Quran and Hadith and the ways of how to protect it is emphasized by Ghazali in most of his works.

CHAPTER 4: The Relation between Human Ontology and Human Behavior

After presenting how the heart of a human being can be affected by the external factors like society, satans and angels, in this chapter I will focus on how Ghazali explains the relation between human ontology and human behavior alongside with the driving motives of the behavior. In other words, what leads a human being into a certain kind of behavior according to Ghazali is the main objective of this chapter. Further, I also include the explanations of certain schools of psychology about the motivation of behavior so as to indicate where Ghazali's understanding finds a place among them.

First of all, it is important to note that it is the heart – the subtle tenuous substance – that serves Allah, the Exalted and that is rebellious to Allah, too. This heart is unique to human beings and it is the gnosis of the human being. And the body parts, all follow the heart, hence what is manifested in the behaviors basically stems from what is happening in the heart. To put it differently, to which way the behaviors are inclined is the direction that the heart is inclined to, as well.³⁰² It means by observing the behaviors, one can understand the psychological state of the heart. According to Ghazali, the heart directs and causes behaviors although the brain is accepted to be the directing and controlling mechanism of behaviors in modern psychology.

According to Hasan Laggulung (1934-2008), besides examining the human soul as a substance/entity, Ghazali investigates its multifaceted functions in the human body that produce human action and behavior. Yet, unlike Ghazali's understanding of human nature, modern psychology only focuses on human's overt behavior without considering the fact that all of man's actions and behaviors emanate from his soul.³⁰³ Here, although Langgulung says it is the soul, I have stated that actually it is the heart which is the source of the behaviors and actions. But he uses 'soul' for the core of the human beings, so it can be said that what is meant is the same. Further he argues in his books that western schools of psychology are depended on the materialistic, atheistic and secularist philosophies that do not consider important to include the study of the human soul when examining the human behaviors and

³⁰² Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*.

³⁰³ Razak, "Human nature and motivation," 506.

actions. He thinks that compared to western psychology, Islamic psychology covers and fosters the discussion on the spiritual dimension of the human being and the element of *al-rūh* (soul). This is what is neglected in Western psychology in understanding human beings and their behavior.³⁰⁴

In Western psychology there are various explanations regarding the motivation of human behavior. For example, the psychoanalysis school of psychology which is founded by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) considers the human being as an animal enchained to his sexual impulses. Each human being is enslaved to the psycho-sexual development of his or her life. Based on this personality theory, Freud suggests two types of instincts for leading the motivation of human behavior. The first one is the life instinct (Eros) and the latter is the death instinct (Thanatos).³⁰⁵ In addition, since Freud divides the human psyche into three parts – the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious -, he believes the motivation of behavior stems from the *id*³⁰⁶ impulses which seat in the unconscious.³⁰⁷ There is an instinctual drive which works as a motivating factor behind every human behavior according to Freud. He basically tells that the biological or metabolic part of man enables the energy for the instincts to manifest through behavior.³⁰⁸

When it comes to the school of behaviorism, it is mentioned before that it regards the human being as a mechanical object that can be conditioned because it gives importance to the environment as a core determining factor of behaviors. And by applying the scientific approach in psychology, the behaviorists assume that any human behavior can be studied in the laboratory through observation and experimentation. Further, since they think the behaviors of animals and humans are essentially the result of learning experiences, they emphasize the classical and operant conditioning in terms of producing the desired behavior. Therefore, all human behaviors can be explained by stimulus-response reactions.³⁰⁹ That is to say, human behaviors and actions are the result of physic-chemical process and they are

³⁰⁴ Razak, "Human nature and motivation," 507-508.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 508.

³⁰⁶ The id is the primitive and instinctive component of personality. It consists of all the inherited (i.e., biological) components of personality present at birth, including the sex (life) instinct – Eros (which contains the libido), and the aggressive (death) instinct - Thanatos. The id is the impulsive (and unconscious) part of our psyche which responds directly and immediately to the instincts.

³⁰⁷ Razak, "Human nature and motivation," 509.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 510.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 511.

linked to physiological and neurological reactions in the human body. So, environmental factors that provide the stimuli for the human responses are the dominant determinants for the human behaviors and personality.³¹⁰ Additionally, in behaviorism human behavior and motivation can be increased or diminished through positive and negative reinforcement as a result of the learning process.³¹¹ In other words, for the behaviorists, the behavior is formed by learning, which means the external factors. Therefore, they are not concerned with inner drives and tensions that move human beings, which cause them to deny the innate (hereditary) and internal (subjective) factors that direct the human beings to reach some objectives. In light of this idea, Skinner believes that an objective is not individual, but societal.³¹²

There is also the humanist psychology, which emerged as a protest against the school of psychoanalysis. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which is discussed in the second chapter, actually forms the basis for motivation of behaviors for Maslow.³¹³ Every individual is driven by two types of motivation in life based on this hierarchy of needs. The first one is the deficiency motivation and the latter is the growth motivation. The lower four levels of the hierarchy are the deficiency motivation and the fifth level of the hierarchy, which is the top and self-actualization step represents the growth motivation.³¹⁴ To this end, it can be stated that in humanistic psychology human motivation is ultimately related to the need of 'self-actualization'.

Upon presenting briefly the three important schools of Western psychology on the human motivation and behavior, my focus will be on Ghazali's explanation of human behavior and motivation. All the three schools consider the human being and his nature differently; as a result they suggest different reasons for behavior formation.

4.1. Formation of Behavior According to Ghazali

In relation to human ontology, Ghazali remarks in his *Ihya* that this world is, in fact, an essential requirement for humans to achieve Allah. That is to say, one cannot reach Allah without coming into this world and live here because this life is a farm field for the hereafter. The material body of this world is an instrument of the heart, and the procurement of the heart is the knowledge and wisdom. Hence, the good

³¹⁰ Razak, "Human nature and motivation," 511.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 512.

³¹² Achoui, "Human Nature from a Comparative Psychological Perspective," 90.

³¹³ Razak, "Human nature and motivation," 514.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 515

deeds and behaviors are a path for one to achieve this knowledge and get benefit from it. This explanation gives a meaning of life for human beings since the ultimate purpose is to reach the Divine knowledge of Allah (*ma'rifatullah*) for human beings. In this sense, protecting and taking care of the body which is the material dimension of the human being as well as the heart which is the spiritual dimension of the human being has a vital role in Ghazali's explanation of the ontology of humans. However, we can see that there is no such division as this world and the hereafter in Western psychology, which eventually affects their point of view regarding the human ontology and behavior. So, I believe Ghazali's explanation can offer an all-encompassing human ontology with motivation of behavior for Western psychology.

One important point to consider when analyzing Ghazali's system of generating behaviors is that the armies of the heart, which are examined in the first chapter, can be the motives behind certain behaviors. In other words, the soldiers of the heart are classified into three categories and these categories can give rise to either good behaviors or bad behaviors. For instance, the anger and appetite are the soldiers that are created for the good and the service of the heart and these two use the body parts to help them. Sometimes this anger and appetite work for the Satan by employing the intellect for themselves. In this way, the human being behaves in a way that it will cause his eternal destruction. Namely, the human will always have a bad character and behaves accordingly such as adultery, lying and showing off. To attain a good character and to do good deeds, the heart of the human has to get help from the faculties of knowledge, wisdom and contemplation. These soldiers can help the heart in fighting and controlling the anger and the appetite.

One exemplary point that can be linked to the formation of behavior is when Ghazali speaks about the child rearing. That is to say, the heart of a child is pure, lack of stains and a clean one. This heart is able to cover and learn anything; whichever path one drives it, it is open to go that direction. Ghazali says if you teach this heart to conduct good deeds, it will grow upon this goodness.³¹⁵ From this standpoint it can be perceived that a child can develop a character and perform behaviors based on the teachings of his or her milieu and surroundings. For instance, a child who is born into a family who are thieves and consider stealing and robbing as a usual deed will learn robbery from childhood. And s/he will not regard it bad since s/he is taught to do

³¹⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 75.

robbery in his own family until s/he is taught that it is wrong by someone else. This is an example for how behaviors can result from learning according to Ghazali.

In a similar vein, the four inclinations in the human nature, which are mentioned in the first chapter, can also be a cause for human behaviors according to Ghazali. As mentioned before there are four attributes in the human nature, which are *sabuiyya*, *bahimiyya*, *shaytaniyya* and *rabbaniyya*. In human nature they are together as a mixture, yet one can be sometimes inclined to one of them more to satisfy what that one attribute asks for. Thus, these four attributes can manifest themselves in the behaviors of human beings and if one is in the service of only three attributes, which are *sabuiyya*, *bahimiyya* and *shaytaniyya*, he or she will perform bad characteristics. On the other hand, if one is inclined to the attribute of *rabbaniyya*, which is represented by the intellect (*aql*), then the other attributes will be under the control of *rabbaniyya*; as a result, the behaviors of the human being will become the good deeds administered by the knowledge and wisdom.

From another perspective to explain the process of behaving, Ghazali also talks about the involuntary suggestions (*khawatir*) that come to the heart, which are mentioned in the third chapter. They can be either from the angel and lead one to praiseworthy behaviors or can be from the Satan and lead one to the blameworthy behaviors. Ghazali, upon this matter, remarks that it is these involuntary suggestions that inciting the will, which will end up with behaviors. To explain it more, he establishes a system showing how *khawatirs* give rise to behaviors. First, the *khawatir* prompts the aspiration – wish. Then the aspiration incites the resolution. The resolution is followed by the intention and then the intention moves the body parts and the deed occurs according to Ghazali. Herein, he makes a distinction between the features of the involuntary suggestions of the angels and the satans. The purpose of the creation of the angels is to command what is good, suggesting the knowledge, calling human beings for the goodness. Nevertheless, the Satan works for the reverse for humans, and desire and appetite is the Satan's weapons against the human beings. Therefore, it can be understood that the motives and sources behind humans' behaviors can also be either angels or satans. They have a certain effect on the hearts of the people, thereby flowing from the heart into the actions of humans.

In the part where Ghazali addresses the issue of purifying the heart and disciplining the soul, he forms a schema through which he aims to show the relation between the heart and the behaviors.

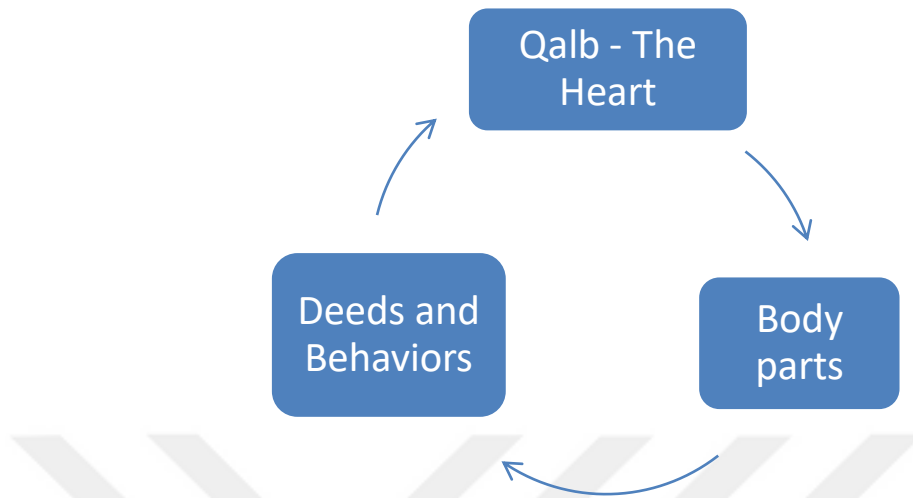


Figure 4. 1: Ghazali's explanation about the formation of the human behavior

He emphasizes that this relation is a continuous cycle in which one can learn a good behavior and turn it into a good character trait through self-discipline (*riyadhat*). Yet, it is a good example to show how a behavior is generated according to Ghazali. He remarks that firstly, an attribute appears in the heart. Then, this attribute affects and triggers the body parts. The body parts by responding to this calling of the heart inevitably, performs actions and behaviors. Lastly, these actions have an influence upon the heart. In other words, when a human being wants to pursue the path of self-disciplining and purifying the heart, he or she wishes to have an attribute of a good character. This attribute based on the wish appears in his or her heart. Then, the human forces himself to conduct that behavior although his or her *nafs* does not fancy doing it. (Here remember the entire inner struggle that is discussed in the previous chapters). Yet, when the decision is taken by the heart and the intellect to conduct a deed, the body parts have nothing to do but obey the heart as mentioned earlier. After some time performing the related action continuously and forcefully, its effects rise up to the heart, and the attribute of that behavior becomes embedded in the heart. As a result, the related behavior now flows naturally from this heart due to the fact that its attribute now fixed and settled in the heart.

This is Ghazali's explanation on how to acquire a behavior and to turn a good deed into a habit through forcing oneself via self-discipline. Nevertheless, the reverse is

also possible since this cycle works for producing any behaviors and making it a habit.

In addition to this way of formation of the behavior, Ghazali also talks about two other ways of acquiring behaviors. One is through the primordial disposition (*fitrah*). That is, one's nature is so pure owing to its innate disposition that he or she only manifests the behaviors coming from his or her nature. He gives examples of prophets who are protected from committing sins and bad deeds when mentioning the way and effect of primordial nature in acquiring the good character and behaviors. The other way is to keep company of people who perform certain kind of behaviors.³¹⁶ This technically includes not only social learning but also the spiritual influences of the behaviors of people whom the human being keeps company on his or her heart, which will eventually give rise to similar types of behaviors of those accompanying people.

Therefore, it can be seen that in Ghazali's system the behaviors rise from three sources and can turn into a good or bad character. They are roughly the primordial innate nature (*fitrah*), through disciplining the soul and by the effect of people accompanied. He discusses them under the title of forming and having a good character; nonetheless, it is applicable also for having a bad character, as well.

In addition, there is a need to include the importance of good character (*akhlaq*) so as to put it in line with the human ontology and his actions. In other words, the ultimate goal of human beings should be to acquire a good character and display good behaviors accordingly. It has a crucial role in that one's character is manifested in his or her behaviors. Since the behaviors get their resource from the heart, according to Ghazali, and the heart is at the center of Ghazali's human ontology, the exemplary behaviors carry significance at this point.

4.2. The Nature of the Good and Bad Character

When it comes to expressing the true nature of good character and bad character, Ghazali truly gives a detailed schema so as to define what good character is. It seems he wants to make sure that in the third level of the soul-self, what should be gained as a result of refining the character and disciplining the soul should be set properly.

³¹⁶ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 38.

Firstly, he discerns between the creation (*khalq*) and the character (*khuluq*). He states as follows;

We say, for example, that ‘So-and-so is good in his creation and in his character’, meaning that both his outward and inward aspects are good. ‘Creation’ refers to the external, and ‘character’ to the internal, form. Now man is composed of a body which perceives with ocular vision (*basar*), and a spirit (*ruh*) and a soul (*nafs*) which perceive with inner sight (*basira*). Each of these things has an aspect and a form which is either ugly or beautiful. Furthermore, the soul which perceives with inner sight is of greater worth than the body which sees with ocular vision.³¹⁷

Then, he stresses that Allah, the Exalted ascribes the spirit to Himself and the body to the clay in His following statement;

I shall create a man from clay; and when I have fashioned him, and have breathed into him something of My spirit, then fall ye down before him in prostration.³¹⁸

Herein, we understand that the subtle tenuous substance is called both spirit and soul and is much more worthy in that it carries something from the Lord of the Worlds. In relation to this, it can be asserted that good character has significance because of being the breath of Allah, and since the character reflects the soul, not the body; our behaviors, actions and deeds become more important in light of the religion. Further, Ghazali defines the character in the following way: “A *trait of the character is a firmly established condition of the soul and actions flow from it easily and without any need for thinking or forethought.*”³¹⁹ It has to be firmly established, according to Ghazali, because, for instance, a human being cannot be defined as generous if he gives some of his fortune rarely. The criteria for being counted as having a good character is that it has to be firmly established and fixed in the heart, and the actions should proceed from a human being easily and without thinking.³²⁰ Acting a good deed just for once doesn’t count as good character in the eyes of Ghazali.

In this respect, Ghazali cites four elements for having a good character to bring better understanding on this point. The first one is the doing of something beautiful or ugly. The second one is the ability to act. Thirdly, there is the cognition of the act and

³¹⁷ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 16.

³¹⁸ The Qur’an 15:29

³¹⁹ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 17. This definition is common in Islamic discussions of ethics.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

lastly the condition of the soul through which it inclines to one side or the other and which interprets the beautiful or the ugly thing easy to do.³²¹

To make these aspects more clear, here are some examples he gives. He says good character is not the same as action because there are rich people who donate from their wealth not out of their generosity but out of ostentation or gaining reputation, thereby not being counted as generous while there are also people who cannot make donations from their wealth because they have no affluence or for some other obstacle, yet still are generous in the character. This means only by looking at the action, we cannot say that one person is i.e. generous or so. In addition, having the ability to act doesn't require essentially having good character and, for example either withholding or giving because every person is created to be capable of withholding or giving by disposition (*fitra*), hence it can be deduced that having the ability to withhold or to give, for instance doesn't bring about an avaricious act or a generous character. This deduction is the same for the cognition of the act, as well since it touches upon both the beautiful and the ugly. Yet, it is the fourth aspect with which the character is identified, namely it is the condition through which the heart prepares itself for the issuing of giving or withholding. So, the character is related to the condition and inner aspect of the soul.³²²

In this regard, Ghazali also puts forward four things to accomplish the full refinement of the character, emphasizing that they should be in equilibrium and balanced and also be in correct proportion. These are the rational faculty (*ilm*) the irascible faculty, the appetitive faculty and the faculty which sets a just relation between the three faculties.

What is meant by the rational faculty is that it should be able to discern honesty from lies in speech, the truth from falsehood in questions of belief, and beauty from ugliness in actions. When this faculty is sound and good, then it gives birth to wisdom (*hikma*)³²³ and it is the essential of the good traits of character. Concerning its importance, Allah, the Exalted states, “*And whosoever is granted wisdom has truly been granted abundant good.*”³²⁴

³²¹ Ibid.,18.

³²² Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 18.

³²³ *Hikma* in Islam means ‘wisdom’ in the traditional sense, i.e. “the kind of understanding which allows one to hit the mark, attaining the perfection.”

³²⁴ The Qur’an 2: 229

As for the irascible faculty and the appetitive faculty, when they are held within the boundaries that are set by Wisdom, which is actually the command of Law and the intellect, they will be sound and good. For the faculty of setting a just equilibrium, it is to subjugate desire and anger under the command of the intellect and the Law. To make it more understandable, Ghazali makes use of analogies in that the intellect is like a guiding counselor and the faculty of just equilibrium is the actualizing power (*kudrah*) by carrying out the orders of the intellect. The irascible faculty is then like a hunting dog which needs to be trained while the appetitive faculty is like a horse which someone rides during a chase and can be sometimes well-disciplined and sometimes intractable. Hence, for whomever all these characteristics are sound and balanced, and then he or she is counted as having good character. If some of them are balanced and others are not, the man will be counted as possessing good character in respect of his balanced traits only.³²⁵

Based on the faculties Ghazali suggested, he continues to expand them in order to lay the foundations of good character in four attributes. They are the moderate aspects of four faculties that are in sound and balanced conditions. Besides, he states that other good traits of character stem from these four essential behaviors.

It takes the name of ‘courage’ (*shujua’a*) when the irascible faculty is sound and balanced, namely in moderation, yet if it goes to the extremes, it is called ‘recklessness’ (*tahawwur*). On the other hand, if it falls short, it is termed as ‘cowardice’. In a similar vein, when the appetitive faculty is sound and moderate, it is called ‘temperance’ (*iffa*). However, if it goes to the point of excess, it is called ‘cupidity’ (*sharah*), while it is called ‘indifference’ (*jumud*) when it inclines to insufficiency. As for the faculty of just equilibrium, when it dysfunctions, it has no extremes of excess or defect, yet it has an opposite which is tyranny. When the wisdom exceeds its boundaries for corrupt ends, it is a behavior of ‘swindling’ and ‘fraud’. When it moves to the side of insufficiency, it is named as ‘stupidity’.³²⁶

Herein, it can be seen that the mean is the praiseworthy behavior. Whereas the two extremes (*ifrat and tafrit*) are blameworthy vices, the mean is what constitutes virtue according to Ghazali.

³²⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 19-20.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

4.3. Is it Possible to Change One's Character or Is It Unchangeable?

For Ghazali, there is a probable claim by the man who is under the effect of being sloth that the traits of a man's character cannot be altered and the human nature is unchangeable. The reason of his claim is that he finds any spiritual struggle, discipline and refinement of the character undesirable, so his soul tries to find a way to show the struggle is in vain and not truly possible. For this, he asserts that the character is the form of inner side of man just as the created form of man is the form of external side of man. And a person is not able to alter his external appearance i.e. a short man cannot make himself tall or an ugly man display himself as handsome. So, it is the same with the inward ugliness.³²⁷ That is, one cannot change their traits of character, either according to this man. Secondly, he asserts that good character is achieved only by eradicating the anger and the appetite according to scholars; on the contrary, as a result of long struggles this person has seen that these things are parts of one's character and nature, and cannot be separated from human nature. Thus, striving to get rid of them is a useless effort and a waste of time, he says. This is what someone who is uneager to change his character and discipline his worldly soul.

Yet, as an answer for those people, Ghazali acknowledges that if the characters were unchangeable, then all the advices, sermons and counsels would be invaluable. Further, the Prophet ﷺ wouldn't have said "*Improve your characters!*" We cannot think of this for humans if it is even possible for an animal to be tamed, to change and to earn good qualities by self-restraint. For instance, a falcon can be tamed on its savagery; a dog can leave the prey for his owner by restraining its greed for food, a horse can be transformed from defiance to docility and obedience.³²⁸

Upon this point, Ghazali continues to state that the existent things are composed of those upon which human beings and their volition have no impact like the earth, stars, the outside and inside parts of the body, and other organs of living things, namely everything which is already complete in its existence and perfection³²⁹ and those which are in an incomplete form, yet have the potentiality to be perfected if the conditions which may be related to man's volition are met.³³⁰ To exemplify this point, Ghazali enunciates that a date-stone is not an apple tree of a date-palm.

³²⁷ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 24.

³²⁸ Ibid., 25.

³²⁹ Ibid., 25.

³³⁰ Ibid., 25.

Nevertheless, it is created to grow into a date-palm when it is nurtured properly with the intervention of man. It cannot ever become an apple tree even if it is nurtured. Just as the seed accepts some qualities and not some others, anger and appetite are like this situation, as well. That is, man doesn't have the power to destroy anger and desire totally, still he has the potential to render them obedient and docile through self-discipline (*riyadhat*) and struggle (*mujahada*), which we are commanded to do so for our salvation.³³¹

Concerning this issue, Ghazali talks about the variance of temperaments in that some accept the change rapidly while others do not. Firstly, there is the man who maintained the primordial disposition (*fitra*) with which he was created. He is innocent, yet has no discernment with regard to telling truth from falsehood and beautiful actions from foul ones. He is not a follower of any doctrine and his desire has never completely been awakened by the worldly pleasures. This kind of a person is quick to respond to the treatment and only needs a guidance of a master and an internal motivation in order to drive him to the path of spiritual struggle so that his character would be refined in the shortest time.

The second type of a man is that he knows what an ugly and unpleasant act is, yet he does not have the habit of acting righteously. Even, his evil actions seem fine for him. He is under the control of his desires. On the other hand he knows that he should not be acting the way he acts. This man has a much harder task than that of the first one in terms of refining the character. Initially, he must eradicate his habitual inclination to corruption, which is fixed in his soul, and then must place therein the habituation of righteousness. If he is serious and determined, he is open to the effects of self-discipline.³³²

Thirdly, there is the man who believes that ugly traits of character are right, preferable and beautiful. He has been brought up in this way, so the treatment of this type of man is almost impossible. There is a slight possibility for him to incline towards reform and piety since the reasons of misguidance accumulate in him a lot. Fourthly, the man is used to act in corruption as well as is boasted of abundant iniquity. This is, according to Ghazali, the most difficult degree. Thus, he comments on this;

³³¹ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 25.

³³² *Ibid.*, 26.

The first of these men is simply ignorant, while the second is ignorant and misguided, the third is ignorant, misguided and corrupt, while the fourth is ignorant misguided, corrupt, and evil.³³³

Ghazali cites two reasons for his division of humans into four categories. The first reason is that at the root of a human being's temperament there lies the power of instinct (*ghariza*), and it is present the whole time. That is, the capacities for desire, anger and pride are all present in the human creature. Among them, the desire is the most difficult one to tackle with and the last one to be disciplined since it is the oldest one. In a child, desire is the first thing to be created and present, and after seven years it is followed by anger, and then eventually comes the power of discernment.³³⁴ Secondly, a human finds a trait of his character pleasant and satisfactory and acts in accordance with it all the time so that that trait is reinforced so strongly. As a result it becomes too difficult to wipe it out.

Ghazali emphasizes that the point is not to eradicate the anger, desire and this kind of other attributes from the human nature. It is not the purpose of spiritual struggle to suppress these attributes completely and wipe them off. Although this is the claim of some of those groups, in fact these attributes are created for a purpose and cannot be torn from human nature. For instance, were it not the desire for food, mankind would die; were it not the desire for sexual intercourse, mankind would become extinct; were it not the feel for anger, man would not be able to defend himself against the threats for his life. He explains it as follows;

What is required is not the total extirpation of these things, but rather the restoration of their balance and moderation, which is the middle point between excess and defect. With regard to the trait of anger, what is needed is sound ardour, which lies in the avoidance of both recklessness and cowardice, and generally to be strong in oneself but nevertheless under the control of the intellect.³³⁵

In the Quran, also, their extermination is not mentioned, yet the fact that they should exist and how they should exist is enunciated. For example, Allah, the Exalted says, '*Severe against the unbelievers, compassionate amongst themselves.*'³³⁶ Here, Allah, the Exalted, describes believers as severe, and severity can only stem from anger. If

³³³ Ibid., 27.

³³⁴ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 26.

³³⁵ Ibid., 27-28

³³⁶ The Qur'an 48: 29

anger is completely eradicated, then there will be no jihad.³³⁷ In another verse Allah, the Exalted, says; ‘*And those that suppress their rage, and are forgiving toward people.*’³³⁸ What is striking here is that Allah does not state that those that have no anger, but states those that suppress it.

Another example in the Quran again shows us that it is the moderation which is to be acquired in the traits of character rather than one of the two extreme lies. Generosity is a case in point. It is praised by the Law in Islam and it is the middle point between the two extremes of avarice and extravagance. Besides, Allah, the Exalted says, “*And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor grudging; and there is ever a middle point between the two.*”³³⁹ Also, “*Let not thy hand be chained to thy neck, nor open it completely.*”³⁴⁰ It is the same for the desire for food. There should be moderation other than greed or indifference. Upon this, there is the verse, “*Eat and drink, but be not extravagant, for Allah loves not the extravagant.*”³⁴¹ In the same vein, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “*The best of affairs is the middle course.*”³⁴²

Overall, it suffices to note that anger and desire are not to be destroyed but it is possible for them to be disciplined and broken so that they go under the control of the intellect. Generally, desire and appetite dominate human being and leads him to evildoings, but Ghazali remarks that it is possible to restore the desire to the position of moderation by means of self-discipline and struggle. This is what is meant by the change and reform of the character as an answer to the views of abovementioned groups.

To conclude how behaviors are interpreted by Ghazali, it can be seen that there is more than one way for behavior formation. However, they all have a common starting point; the heart. What a human being has in his or her heart will be manifested through his or her behaviors. So, it can be stated that the behaviors of a human being that can be observed, in fact, stem from the heart, which is evidently shown throughout this thesis that it is the quiddity of human being, and that it hosts certain spiritual components. These spiritual components as discussed earlier are always fighting and in a state of conflict. According to the winner, the behaviors

³³⁷ Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 28.

³³⁸ Qur’an 3: 134

³³⁹The Qur’an 25: 67

³⁴⁰ The Qur’an 17: 29

³⁴¹ The Qur’an 7: 31

³⁴² Al-Ghazali, *Disciplining the soul*, 29.

become either good and praiseworthy ones or bad and blameworthy ones. At this point, Ghazali keeps emphasizing that human beings are created for performing the good behaviors so that they can get closer to their Creator and reach Divine knowledge. They need to know their heart in order to identify its illnesses and through self-disciplining and purifying the heart they need to leave blameworthy characteristics. For this reason, I included into this chapter Ghazali's ideas on the nature of the good and bad behavior to be able to recognize them and the possibility of character change to indicate that there is an open door for every human being to alter themselves in a desirable way.



CONCLUSION

To make a definition of who we are based on religions, science, philosophy, psychology etc. has always been an act of human beings throughout the history because when we have the true definition, it will make it easy for us to know ourselves in this world and/or Hereafter. In my thesis, I focused on how Ghazali, who is a great Islamic scholar and contributed a lot in various Islamic fields with his ideas and insightful thoughts, perceives and conceptualizes 'human being' and 'human behavior'. I analyzed how he approaches to human ontology in the spiritual and material realm. Initially, I would like to find answers to the questions like 'What makes a human being? What differentiates a human being from other beings? What dynamics are included in the spiritual system of human ontology according to Ghazali? What are the motives for human behavior based on Ghazali's explanations?' So, I pursued my analysis in accordance with these questions.

For Ghazali, the ultimate purpose of humans is to be able to know Allah and the path of knowing Allah crosses the path of knowing oneself. Knowing oneself is possible only through knowing the heart, namely the essence of the human being. In this sense, my argument was that the heart is the encapsulation of the spiritual system that is explained by all its internal conflicts and the external effects upon it in Ghazali's understanding of human ontology.

Ghazali asserts that the essence of the human being is the subtle tenuous ethereal substance (*latifa rabbaniya ruhaniya*), which can be called the heart, the intellect, the soul/self and the spirit from time to time though most of the time Ghazali calls it as the heart. Because the heart has an important place in Ghazali's explanation of human ontology, I examined all the concepts alongside with the heart. Besides, this spiritual heart is open to diseases and effects, therefore human beings should be able to recognize these illnesses of the heart, and he should be on a constant alert all the time examining his heart and searching for the ways of curing it.

Ghazali says that being human is divine and he/she carries the breath of Allah, and although all the people have the appearance of a human being, he claims not all of them have the attributes of being a human according to his system of human ontology. This kind of human being is said to serve to his *al-nafs al-ammara* *bissui* inside and the Satan outside. They are, in fact, the ones who destroy the earth, cause

the wars and massacres; live recklessly because their only concern is this world and what is inside it in terms of fame, money, every kind of capital that will cherish their beastly *nafs*. Ghazali explains more on this point by delving into the very psychology of human beings and addressing their nature and behaviors. And I, in this thesis, endeavor to indicate Ghazali's approach to the spiritual system of human ontology and when it malfunctions, it affects the human being and the people around him in a harmful way. Yet, when this system has a healthy functioning without the diseases, it affects the human being and the people around him in an assisting way.

As can be pursued throughout the thesis, Ghazali always exemplifies the relations among the abovementioned spiritual components and uses similes and metaphors in order to deliver his message clearly and more concretely. Basically, the heart is the ruler in the land of the body with the vizier of the intellect and with a bad servant of the self in general. If the ruler listens to the wise advises of the vizier, there will be peace and welfare in the land. But if the heart is cheated by the bad servant and when together they misdirect the ruler, there will be chaos in the land. From this metaphor, it can be comprehended that the intellect and the soul are always in a state of conflict having an influence on the heart.

Further, Ghazali expands this spiritual interaction of human being to the levels of the self (*maratib al-nafs*) and the inner struggles that a human goes through, which I examined in my second chapter. These stages of the self take their source from the Qur'an. And they are the self that commands evil, the self-blaming soul and the self that attained tranquility, which I explained profoundly in my second chapter. I also included the journey of the self according to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs in order to reveal one of the important viewpoints of modern psychology by contrasting it to the Ghazali's explanations about the levels of the self. The reason to choose Abraham Maslow is that he is the representative of humanist psychology, which has a great effect on the evolving of today's psychology and that it offers a self-actualization process just like the levels of the self offered by Ghazali.

The self that is prone to evil is ruled by the *nafs*, and the intellect is the servant of this *nafs* in searching for the ways of satisfying its worldly desires and bodily pleasures like eating, fame, and sexual pleasures. There is no consciousness of being a human nor is there an effort to be. The actions flowing from this *nafs* is well pleasing to the human being and he sees no need to change his actions in a good way.

When the human being moves to the other stage, which is the self-blaming level, the heart starts to gain consciousness and to feel sorry and regretful if it performs a bad deed. At this stage there is a great deal of fluctuations and a war between the intellect and the soul that commands evil. The heart of the human being is sometimes drawn to the good deeds and behaviors while sometimes it is drawn to the desires of the self. When the heart listens to the self and acts in accordance with it, it conceives that it is in the wrong way, so immediately it repents what has happened. For this reason, it is called the self-reproaching soul.

The last level of the self is where the heart finds peace and reconciliation among its conflicting constituents. Herein, the intellect is in charge of the system and it controls the desires of the evil commanding self. The only concern of the heart now is to be closer to Allah, and nothing other than what pleases Allah can find a place in this heart.

Upon presenting what Ghazali covers about the psycho-spiritual interaction of a human being with regard to the levels of the self, I put an example case from daily life (Duygu's example) in order to make what is addressed more understandable. I aimed to show how one's decisions and behavioral outcomes change in accordance with the levels of the soul and the related psychological states.

In addition to the inner conflicts and relations among the spiritual parts of a human being, there are also external influences upon the states of the heart, which I discussed in my third chapter. These influences either stem from the source of blameworthy characteristics, i.e. the satan or stem from the source of praiseworthy characteristics, i.e. the angel. The human being should watch after his heart and should have a sensitive heart so as to recognize from whom the involuntary suggestions (*khawatir*) are flowing. Other than the angels and the satans, the heart can be under the influence of society and the people who surround him, as well. The heart of the human being can easily be afflicted with other people's hearts. In other words, when the human is befriended with someone whose heart is commanding the evil deeds, his heart will reflect these deeds and starts to adopt them at some point. On the other hand, if the human is a friend of a human whose heart is purified and cleansed, then he or she will resemble to this human in character and behaviors, and his heart being like a mirror will manifest the similar and same characteristics.

Upon analyzing both the inner and outside interactions of the heart, I looked at how Ghazali explains the formation of the human behavior in relation to the human ontology in the fourth chapter. Basically, his idea is that what is inside the heart, i. e. how the spiritual system functions will be manifested through humans' behaviors and in the character. Therefore, the heart has to be purified and the self has to be disciplined so that the calling of angels can be heard and the intellect can be in charge of the spiritual system. On the other hand, since it also requires looking into the explanations of eminent schools of Western psychology when it comes to the formation of behavior, I indicated the standpoints of three schools of Western psychology about the motivation of behavior. In this part, I also addressed the matter of having a good character or a bad character, which will manifest itself through the human's behaviors as well as the possibility of changing the behaviors and the character eventually.

Taking a step back and looking at this study, my aim was to examine how Ghazali deals with the concept of human being and brings an explanation of human behavior. Throughout my readings and studies on his works, the titles of the chapters appeared so as to explain the system of human ontology and behavior that he establishes by linking it to the main sources of Islam, which are the Qur'an and Hadith, and to the psycho-spiritual dimension of the human being, which is mainly the heart as being the encapsulation of this system. Further, he is not only concerned to define the human being and leave it there, but also he is engaged with his outward manifestations like behaviors and actions in practical life. Additionally, giving a mere explanation about the formation of the humans' behaviors is not his purpose, either. So that the heart functions and the human being lives in accord with their creation of purpose, Ghazali dwells much upon achieving the good character (*akhlaq*) and eradicating the blameworthy characters from the heart and the behaviors, which can flow from the satan, who is the greatest enemy of human beings and from the animalistic self.

Considering all of these ideas of Ghazali and this thesis, I would like to conclude that my study covers only a small drop from the oceanic knowledge of Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali. I studied his understanding of human ontology and behavior so as to offer an alternative conception of human being in today's materialistic world and for its positivistic perspectives on the human being and related issues. For further

research, it can be said that what is mostly ignored today is the spiritual dimension of the human being, and for this reason Ghazali's ideas can be analyzed and expanded to other disciplines by doing more comparative studies in such fields like psychology, philosophy and *tasawwuf*.



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