

Al-Ghazālī's Methods of proof in his *al-Iqtisād fil-I'tiqād*

Wan Suhaimi Wan Abdullah

Al-Ghazālī mentions three methods of proof in his *al-Iqtisād fil-I'tiqād*, particularly in its fourth introduction. He summarized them basically from various methods which had been used or mentioned in the earlier work of Kalam. These three methods, according to al-Ghazālī, are clear, perceivable, and sufficient for people to acquire knowledge and to understand issues related to their faith, at least from the theological point of view. This article presents the methods together with an English translation of the related text from *al-Iqtisād fil-I'tiqād*. It also proposes that these methods could be widened in scope to apply to other fields of study.

Keywords: Al-Ghazālī; *al-Iqtisād fil-i'tiqād*; methods of proof; argumentation; Kalam.

Introduction

The strength and validity of all sciences, ideas, and even religious faiths depend essentially on the soundness of their proofs. Human beings will rationally accept and support scientific theories, philosophical notions, and religious beliefs so long as they clearly understand and realize the validity of the arguments. Any inconsistency occurring or discovered on any part of the related argument leads to at least a state of doubt and creates epistemological problems which may end in the rejection of such traditions. This paradigm explains the endless exploration and reinterpretation of various scientific, philosophical, and religious issues in human intellectual history.

Consequently, when we talk about methods of proof and the validity of any specific argument, questions arise. Some of these are related to the very nature of the method while others are due basically to the claims made by

Wan Suhaimi Wan Abdullah is Associate Professor at Department of 'Aqidah and Islamic Thought, Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur; Email: wansuhaimi@um.edu.my. The author would like to thank Dr Atif Suhail Siddiqui who read the earlier version of this article and Dr Muzaffar Iqbal for his constructive suggestions.

various schools of thought that seek both to propose their own method and challenge the bases of others'. But, is there a single argument or method valid for all problems? Or are these assessments relative, depending on the topic of discussion as well as those who deal with it?

All sound sciences require certainly sound proofs and arguments, and in order to reach such sound arguments, sound method or methods of proof and argument are essential. On the other hand, it is observed that certain sciences deal with similar topics, or at least that their ultimate goal is to reach the same reality and to solve the same problems, but with different approaches and from various backgrounds and tendencies. All these differences, if they could be placed properly in a broader system leading towards a comprehensive understanding of that particular topic or in reaching to that ultimate goal, should not be considered but as a partial and supportive element of the broader system. If this superstructure can be established, then every valid approach, field, and tendency can be seen as important and complementing elements of inquiry.

Key to this understanding is the question of methods of proof and its significance in establishing truth. Al-Ghazālī has much to offer on this question. Speaking of knowledge of God, its possibility, and the role of Kalam, al-Ghazālī affirms that the dignity (*sharf*) of knowledge is due to the dignity of its subject. As God is the Highest and the Greatest to be known, knowledge of God is the highest and the noblest form of knowledge in Islam. He also emphasizes that this knowledge, though it is noble and perfect in its essence, does not deny the place of other sciences as its premises. In fact, these other sciences are among the prerequisites of knowledge of God.¹ Thus, all knowledge or science must lead towards reaching the ultimate reality of God, to the extent possible given human capabilities.² The potentialities of human knowledge are affirmed by

1. See al-Ghazālī, "al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah" in Che Zarrina Sa'ari, *al-Ghazālī and Intuition: An Analysis, Translation and Text of al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah* (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Aqidah and Islamic Thought, University of Malaya, 2007), 162-163 and 35-36. On al-Ghazālī's classification of knowledge and how it is based on the degree to which it contributes to the salvation of the Muslim, see Shigeru Kamada, "System of Knowledge in Islam and its Transformation" in *Ishraq Islamic Philosophy Yearbook* 1 (2010): 143-145 and 146-147.

2. In his *Risāla fī bayān ma'rifat Allāh*, al-Ghazālī emphasizes that no one could actually reach a 'true' knowledge of God, i.e. in His Veryself, except God Himself. This limitation is understandable, for only God knows Himself; and, as no one had reached the reality of God, then no one could possibly know God in His Very Essence. He gives an analogy by saying that similarly only a king knows who a king really is and only a prophet knows who a prophet is, and so on. This means that a man before he becomes a king knows nothing about what actually being a king is all about. But this does not mean that knowledge of God is

Islam in its recognition of various registers and abilities, including external and internal senses, reason, intuition, and revelation.³ Moreover, all knowledge must be established with certainty,⁴ because only this high standard will provide basis for other certain knowledge. Only certain premises will lead to certain knowledge of God. Based on this overview, it is clear that methods of proof play an important role in assuring the validity of knowledge—something especially essential when dealing with knowledge of God. Muslim theologians, attentive to the importance of method, subjected any such method to intense scrutiny in the field of Kalam. Such debate may bear fruit in other fields as well: if certain methods are appropriate in discussion of the divinity, they may be appropriate also in other fields.

This study deals with al-Ghazālī's methods of proof based on his *al-Iqtisād fīl-I'tiqād*, especially the fourth introduction of the book. It tries to demonstrate a form of method of proof proposed by al-Ghazālī in the field of Kalam, a field of science that deals, among others, with knowledge of God and His Attributes based on human rational intellection. It aims to establish how the rational and logical method, independent of intuition and revelation, could also lead to a level or a form of certainty even when it deals with metaphysical matters. It attempts to propose how these instruments of proof could be made functional in other fields of study, especially for solving epistemological problems. We provide a literal English translation of the related texts in order to make these discussions of method applicable also in other contexts, other fields. The fact that al-Ghazālī himself tends to use general Arabic terms when discussing

impossible, because man could know God from His attributes, actions, and names, though not His Very Essence. To this effect he quotes and explains a saying of Abū Bakr, who says: "To acknowledge the failure to know God (i.e. in His Very Essence) is actually a knowledge (*al-ʿajz ʿan dark al-idrāk idrāk*)." This shows that whenever a man finally reaches a limit of knowledge about God, in which he acknowledges that it is impossible for him to imagine God, then at that particular point he has actually reached the limit of human knowledge and the highest perfection of man. See al-Ghazālī, "Risāla fī bayān maʿrifat Allāh" in al-Ghazālī, *Thalath rasāʾil fīl-maʿrifat lam tunshar min qabl*, ed. M.H. Zaqqouq (Cairo: Maktabah al-Azhar, 1979), 15 and 18. Cf. al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fī sharḥ maʿāni asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, ed. Bassām ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Jābī (Cyprus: al-Jaffān and al-Jābī lil-Ṭibāʿa wal-Nashr, 2003), 48-49 and Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima* (Cairo: Dār al-Shaʿb, n.d.), 423-525. See also on this topic Fadlou Shehadi, *Ghazali's Unique Unknowable God* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1964), especially the third chapter.

3. See Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2001), 14-15.
4. By certainty here is meant the recognition of the position of truth, that is, to recognize "that there are limits to the meaning of things in the way they are meant to be known" because a "true knowledge is...knowledge that recognizes the limit of truth in its every objects." Ibid.

questions of methods seems to reveal a similar approach. The present translation, then, seeks to avoid binding itself to particular English technical terms, again in order that it might find application in other fields of study.

Before proceeding, a brief overview of existing studies of al-Ghazālī's *al-Iqtisād* in English is opportune. Among the most significant contributions is Abdur-Rahman Abu Zayd's study, entitled *al-Ghazālī on Divine Predicates and their Properties*.⁵ He presents a complete English translation of the second pivotal point (*al-quṭb al-thānī*) of *al-Iqtisād* which deals with seven Attributes of God and their properties (*ahkām*), together with the related introduction. In his later dissertation on the topic, Dennis Morgan Davis comments that Abu Zayd did not complete his translation of this section of *al-Iqtisād*⁶—although the parts claimed to be missing in Abu Zayd's work, that is, on God's power and al-Ghazālī's discussion of the first property, are indeed included under the first and the seventh chapters of the texts.⁷ Davis covers another important part of *al-Iqtisād*, namely, the first pivotal point (*al-quṭb al-awwal*) on the Essence of God, together with all four introductions. He translates the text with notes and introduction. Thus, with both studies, the first half of *al-Iqtisād* is translated into English. In our present translation of the fourth introduction of *al-Iqtisād*, significant variations from Davis's translation are noted in footnotes.

Islamic Theological Methods of Proof

Kalam, as with other Islamic religious sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-sharʿiyya*), is based both on revelation (*al-naql*) and rationality (*al-ʿaql*), which includes the senses (*al-ḥawās*). In addition to intuition (*al-ḥads*), these three important sources are generally accepted as the sources of knowledge in Islamic epistemology, although there are discussions on the authority and the credibility of each of them when referring to a particular topic or field of study.⁸ In the history of

5. *Al-Ghazālī on Divine Predicates and their Properties: A Critical and Annotated Translation of These Chapters in al-Iqtisād fil-Iʿtiqād* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1970).

6. Dennis Morgan Davis Jr., "Al-Ghazālī on Divine Essence: A translation from the *Iqtisād fī al-Iʿtiqād* with notes and commentary" (PhD diss., Department of Language and Literature, University of Utah, 2005), 6.

7. See Abu Zayd, *Al-Ghazālī on Divine Predicates*, chapter one: "The Second Pivotal Point Concerning the Attributes," 1-24, and chapter seven: "The Second Section of this Cardinal Point," 65-76. Here Marmura's translation of the section on Divine Power in *al-Iqtisād* does not really provide what is missing in Abu Zayd, as stated by Davis, although it does present a refined translation of the text. See Michael E. Marmura, "Ghazālī's Chapter on Divine Power in the *Iqtisād*," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 4 (1994): 279-315.

8. See further discussion on sources of knowledge in Islamic epistemology for example, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Nature of Man and the Psychology of the Human Soul* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1990) and

Kalam, for instance, there was a lengthy debate on the place and the authority of reason and rational argumentation in theological discussion.⁹ This debate, which had brought out different point of views among different theological schools, led to a serious and critical diversity in Islamic theological thought. Without going into detail in this problem and without concentrating on any particular Islamic theological school, we introduce briefly the methods of proof used by the theologians in their argumentation.

Kalam, as demonstrated by most definitions,¹⁰ has two major purposes, that is, to establish religious faith and to refute all related accusations or obscurities (*al-shubhāt*) that opponents bring to invalidate such faith. In order to assure and establish both purposes the theologian (*al-mutakallim*) uses various methods of proof. Apart from developing the methods from the very sources of Islam, namely the Qurʾān and the Prophetic Traditions, these methods were also adopted from various sources and traditions including Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*)¹¹ as well as Aristotelian logic.¹² In this presentation, we first overview the major methods used by the theologians in their arguments and then provide a translation of al-Ghazālī's introduction concerning theological methods of proof in his *al-Iqtisād*.

There are three major methods of proof used by the theologians in their theological discussion. By these theological methods we mean the instruments used in their arguments for supporting the accepted faith of Islam. In other words, the reality and the faith they are establishing were already revealed and accepted by them as facts and truths based on other authentic sources, namely, revelation. The theologians, in this sense, first believe and accept the faith and then try to establish the supporting evidences of the belief. In doing so, they use

Sari Nuseibeh, "Epistemology" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1996), vol. 2, 824-840.

9. For the place of rational and revelation argument in Islamic theology, see for example H.M. al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Madkhal ilā dirāsāt ʿIlm al-Kalām*, (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1991), 137-171 and H. Ḥanafī, *Min al-Aqidah ilā al-Thawrah* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Madbuli, n.d.), vol. 1, 388 ff.
10. See, for example, ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif fī ʿIlm al-Kalām* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Mutanabbī, n.d.), 7; M. A. al-Fārūqī al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn*, ed. L. A. al-Badīʿ (Cairo: al-Muʾassasa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma, 1963), vol 1, 30-31 and al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Madkhal*, 19-21.
11. On the relationship between uṣūl al-fiqh and Kalam, see Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, n.d.), 418-422. On the connection between uṣūl al-fiqh and logic, see Wael B. Hallaq, "Logic, Formal Arguments and Formalization of Arguments in Sunni Jurisprudence," *Arabica* 37, no. 3 (Nov. 1990): 315-358.
12. On the place of Aristotelian logic in Kalam, especially in its later development, Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 430-431. Also al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Madkhal*, 198-206 and Abu Zayd, *Al-Ghazali on Divine Predicates*, xxiii-xxiv.

any available and appropriate means and methods of their time.¹³

This, however, does not mean that their belief is blind or merely imitation without any supporting and authentic sources. The fact that the authority of the Prophet has been established and both the Qurʾān and the authentic Prophetic traditions are accepted as true and justifiable is sufficient for their faith. Their projects of argumentation thus form auxiliary and ancillary approaches to presenting religious truths, especially for those who do not accept any form of argumentation on faith except from rational demonstrative argument.¹⁴ Where certain weaknesses are found in the proposed argument, it will not affect their faith and certainty because they have already affirmed it based on other religious argumentation. Moreover, the Sufis hold that theological arguments in faith may lead to confusion instead of certainty.¹⁵ This reality of theological argument however gives Kalam a dynamic space to be developed and improved further, especially with regard to the methods of argument. As a science of faith, the dynamism of Kalam has made it relevant even in the modern day.¹⁶

Certain methods of proof, as observed in the writing of Muslim theologians and especially those of the Ashʿarī school, could be presented along the following three lines. As a dynamic tradition, and as alluded to below, Kalam provided the intellectual resources both for theorists to advance these methods

13. See ʿAbd al-Muʿī Bayyūmī, *al-Falsafa al-Islāmiyya min al-mashriq ilā al-maghrib* (Cairo, n.p., 1982), vol. 1, 48.

14. In this context, Ibn Rushd (while interpreting *al-Naḥl*: 125) explains how people are of three groups in their way of accepting truth; among these three are those who depend only on rational argumentation. See Ibn Rushd, *Kitāb Faṣṣ al-Maqāl*, ed. G. F. Hourani (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959), 12-13.

15. A good example to demonstrate this situation is the intellectual correspondence between Ibn ʿArabī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in which Ibn ʿArabī expresses his view on the limitation of a purely rational intellection in comparison to one that incorporates intuitive knowledge. He stresses that the knowledge of God (*al-ʿilm bil-Lāh*) is different from the knowledge of His existence (*al-ʿilm bi-wujūd Allāh*) where the former is higher and cannot be acquired by reason alone. Interestingly, he clearly states that this major approach by the theologian, i.e. in focussing mainly on rational intellection, is somehow not the case with al-Ghazālī. Ibn ʿArabī asserts that “he (al-Ghazālī) is with us in these issues”. See Ibn ʿArabī, *Risāla al-Shaykh al-Akbar ilā al-Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, published by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān H. Maḥmūd (Cairo: ʿĀlam al-Fikr, 1987), 10-13.

16. See in this context Yunnā T. al-Khūlī, *al-Ṭabīʿiyyāt fī ʿIlm al-Kalām* (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa lil-Naṣr wal-Tawzīʿ, 1995) and several articles by Adi Setia on Taskhīr, al-Rāzī’s physics, and theologico-scientific research. See *Islam and Science* 2, no. 1 (2004): 7-32; vol. 2, no. 2 (2004): 161-180; and vol. 3, no. 2 (2005): 127-152.

of proof and to heavily criticize their use in matters of theology.

i. Analogy between the Unseen Reality and the Visible Thing

(*Qiyās al-ghā'ib 'alā al-shāhid*)

This analogy is used mainly by the jurists for establishing religious practical laws (*al-aḥkām al-shar'īyya al-'amalīyya*) from authentic sources. It is an analogy that is concerned with similarities between the visible (*al-shāhid*) and the unseen (*al-ghā'ib*). The theologians have borrowed this method and tried to adopt and apply it in the field of theology. They propose this method based on the assumption that there is a sort or degree of similarity in some aspects between worldly and divine reality. To ensure that this method is justly applied in the field of theology, and in order to reach to the most exact analogy, they investigate and emphasize the common ground between the unseen (*al-ghā'ib*) and the visible (*al-shāhid*), especially in terms of realities (*al-ḥaqā'iq*), arguments (*al-adilla*), conditions (*al-shurūṭ*), and causes (*al-'ilal*).¹⁷

In the history of Kalam, this analogy was used by various theological schools including the Ḥashawī (al-Ḥashwiyya), the Mu'tazilī, and the Ash'arī.¹⁸ However, the appropriateness of the application of such analogy in theological discussion was questioned, especially when considering that the subject-matter of theology is completely immaterial—and thus perhaps incomparable to the practical legal issues which can be judged by means of empirical argument. This is the most observable weakness of such analogy and this is why many scholars and theologians criticized its application in theological discussion.¹⁹ Among those who criticized this method are Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī,²⁰ al-Juwaynī,²¹ al-Ghazālī,²² Ibn Ḥazm,²³ and Ibn Rushd.²⁴

17. Al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Madkhal*, 175-176.

18. Ibid., 176-179.

19. Ibid., 179-183.

20. See A.A. al-Fattāḥ al-Maghrabī, *Imām Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā'a Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī wa Ārā'uhū al-Kalāmīyya* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1985), 67-68. Also Mustafā Ceric, *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam: A Study of the Theology of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944)* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), 102-105 and 125-128.

21. Fawqīyya H. Maḥmūd, *al-Juwaynī Imām al-Ḥaramayn* (Cairo: al-Mu'assasa al-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma, n.d.), 140.

22. Al-Ghazālī, *Mi'yār al-'Ilm*, ed. S. Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1961), 165-168.

23. Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fil-milal wal-ahwā' wal-niḥal*, ed. M. Ibrāhīm Naṣr and 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umairah, (Beirut: Dār al-Jayl, 1985), vol. 2, 331-332.

24. Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, ed. S. Dunyā, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1981), vol. 2, 644-45 and Maḥmūd Qāsim, *Naẓariyyat al-Ma'rifa 'indā Ibn Rushd wa ta'wīlūhā ladā Tūmas al-Aqūmī* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Anglo al-Miṣriyya, 1969), 151.

ii. Induction (*al-Istiqrāʾ*)

To establish a conclusion based on observation and contemplation of selected samples or particulars (*al-juzʿiyyāt*). This conclusion is then generalized onto other similar particulars. There are two categories of induction: complete induction (*al-istiqrāʾ al-tāmm*), in which all the related particulars are examined; and incomplete induction (*al-istiqrāʾ al-nāqis*), in which only some selected samples are examined to represent the rest.²⁵

This method has been used successfully by scientists in their experiments and observations on natural objects and it facilitates many significant achievements. However, as the topic of theology lies beyond the material realms, it is inappropriate and inaccurate to apply this method in this field. Both forms of induction not accepted in theological problems, especially in issues related to divinity.

Many theologians such as al-Ghazālī and al-Āmidī criticized the validity of these methods in theology.²⁶ Incomplete induction is rejected because it can only establish uncertain conclusions (*al-natīja al-zannīyya*), since it relies basically on selected objects and evidences. In this case, the excluded and unexamined evidence might reveal different opinions or facts and affect prior conclusions. While conclusions derived from complete induction seem comprehensive in that they cover all observable particulars, there remains the possibility of missing certain related evidences or aspects of argument, especially when dealing with non-material issues. Again, the difference from the natural sciences makes it impossible to ensure that all aspects of questions are listed and examined. Thus, this method of proof is considered unsound in theological discussion.²⁷

iii. Rejection of the Sense for the Absence of its Proof

(*Intifāʾ al-madlūl li-intifāʾ daliluhu*)

This method is one of the methods originally used in Islamic jurisprudence. It is said that al-Bāqillānī is the one who introduced and used this method in the Ashʿarī theological school²⁸ although he is not actually the first theologian who

25. See details on the induction method in al-Ghazālī, *Miʿyār*, 160-165 and M. Riḍā al-Muzaffar, *al-Manṭiq* (Beirut: Dār al-Taʿāruf li al-Maḥbūʿāt, n.d.), 264-267. See also L.S. Stebbing, *A Modern Introduction to Logic* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1930), especially chapter 21 of part 2, 400-19 and David Baird, *Inductive Logic Probability and Statistics* (N. Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1992).

26. Al-Ghazālī, *Miʿyār*, 162-165 and al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-Marām fi ʿilm al-kalām*, ed. H.M.A. al-Latīf (Cairo: al-Majlis al-Aʿlā lil-Shuʿūn al-Islāmiyya, 1971), 45-47.

27. See al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Madkhal*, 183-185.

28. See Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 515, Muṣṭaphā ʿAbd al-Rāziq, *Tamhīd li Tārīkh al-Falsafa al-Islāmiyya*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Lajnah al-Taʿlīf wal-

applied the method.²⁹ The method suggests that whenever there is no proof (*al-dalīl*) or the given proof is unsound, then it is necessary that the proven truth (*al-madlūl*), which relies on it, becomes invalid. This method again is appropriate and acceptable for dealing with sensible issues or human acts, but not with theological problems. In fact, many theologians have criticized the application of this method in theology.³⁰ They argued that it is not necessary to assert that the proven truth is invalid simply because we found the given proof unsound, since the validity of the former, i.e. the proven truth (*al-madlūl*), could be established by other valid arguments. For instance, the theologian usually establishes the existence of God by saying that the universe could not exist by itself and therefore that there must be a Creator who created this universe before time. But, supposing that this universe did not exist from the very beginning, should this affect the very existence of God? Surely it would not, because the existence of God could be established by many other arguments.³¹ Furthermore, if the existence of God is established solely based on the existence of universe, this simply means that the very existence of God depends substantially on the existence of universe, which is absurd and a kind of vicious circle.

These are some of the methods used by the theologians in their arguments, particularly in certain schools or periods of Islamic theology. It is clear from the above presentation that a majority of theologians have criticized these methods and doubted their validity especially in dealing with theological problems. Before proceeding to al-Ghazālī's methods of proof in his *al-Iqtisād*, it is worthwhile to observe the place of dialectical method (*manhaj al-jadal*) in Islamic theology as an introduction to the discussion.

The dialectical method of Kalam is normally based on premises which have been accepted as true according to the opponent's position, although in themselves they might be false or incorrect. The pattern (*uslūb*) used in such dialectical method is based on division (*al-tashqīq*) and the listing of a number of possible arguments or proofs. The main purpose of the method is to overwhelm the opponent's view. This is not usually done by arguing the matter directly, but rather by establishing the unsoundness of the opponent's

Tarjama wal-Nashr, 1966), 294.

29. Al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Madkhal*, 187-188.

30. See for example, al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wal-'Adl* (*Ru'yat al-Bārī*), ed. M.M. Ḥilmī and A.W. al-Ghanīmī (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya li al-Ta'lif wal-Tarjama, n.d.), vol. 4, 342. Also al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Madkhal*, 185-189.

31. See al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Madkhal*, 185-186. This also explains the differences in approach among various schools of thought in Islam when dealing with God in general and with argumentation on the existence of God in particular. See, for instance, Ibrāhīm Madkūr, *Fī al-Falsafa al-Islāmiyya: Manhaj wa taṭbīq* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1983), vol. 2, 21-88.

argument.³² These are the criteria of the dialectical method of Kalam; and as we can see below, all these criteria can be clearly observed in al-Ghazālī's method of proof as demonstrated in his *al-Iqtisād*.

Al-Ghazālī's methods of proof in his *al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*

Al-Ghazālī in his *al-Iqtisād* mentions three methods of proof which he summarized basically from various methods used or mentioned in the earlier works of Kalam. These three methods, as indicated by al-Ghazālī,³³ are clear, perceivable, and sufficient for everyone to acquire knowledge and to understand issues related to their faith, at least from a theological point of view.

The first method of proof is what he called the method of examination and division (*al-sabr wal-taqṣīm*). This method, according to al-Ghazālī, is a syllogism known as the conditional disjunctive syllogism (*qiyās sharṭī al-munfaṣil*).³⁴ It proposes, first, that we must enclose the available possible solutions and answers to the problems examined into two comprehensive groups of answers in the sense that there would be no third possibility. Each of these groups should be divided such that it cannot be both true or false, but whenever one of them is true then the other must be necessarily false. Once such division is performed, then we can examine the validity and the soundness of both groups of answers one after another. In this case, while these are two contradictions, the establishment of one means the rejection of the other. In other words, when we find that one of these two possibilities is false, it becomes evident that the other is true. This conclusion, due to different perspectives, is known as the claim (*da'wā*) or the required or sought (result) (*al-maṭlūb*), or benefit (*fā'ida*), or branch (*far'*).

The second method is a kind of logical syllogism (*qiyās*).³⁵ In this method, a kind of arrangement comprised of two statements has to be made in order to establish a conclusion, which is derived actually from the present statements. The argument begins by declaring a general proposition which is believed to be true and which later on serves as a basis for a conclusion. For instance, in order to establish the origination of the universe, we put forward the proposition that "All things that are not free from any temporal reality (*al-ḥawādith*) are originated." In this general proposition, the relationship between the concept

32. Al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Madkhal*, 190. On dialectical methods in Islamic theology, see 189-198.

33. See al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1983), 12 and 14.

34. Al-Ghazālī, *Mi'yār*, 156-158. Also Hallaq, "Logic," 316-317. Davis translates this as "disjunctive reasoning" and M. Asin Palacios, as mentioned by Davis, translates it a "dilemmatic speculation". See the discussion on the correct translation of this method in Davis, "Al-Ghazālī on Divine Essence," 21-23.

35. A.A. Sayf al-Naṣr, *al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād lil-Imām al-Ghazālī* (with annotation and commentary) (Cairo: Maṭba'a al-Jabalawī, 1988), 64.

of origination and temporal realities or things (*al-ḥawādith*) is established. Everything that is temporal, in whatsoever degree, is necessarily originated and could not possibly exist eternally, because an eternal existence cannot consist of any temporal realities.

Having declared this proposition, the argument examines whether or not the universe is free of temporal realities, concluding that it is not (based on evidence from various philosophers and theologians). Thus it can necessarily conclude that “The universe is originated”. The first, universal preposition upon which this argument is based further presupposes a hierarchy in which all particulars are included in the general term “all things”. Al-Ghazālī emphasizes that no one would possibly reject the conclusion of this argument so long as he accepted the truth of both universal and particular propositions.³⁶

The third method is similar to a syllogism known as *qiyās al-khulf*.³⁷ Instead of demonstrating the proof directly while applying previous methods, al-Ghazālī begins by establishing the unsoundness of the opponent’s claim based on their own arguments in a kind of immanent critique. Thus he indirectly affirms his own, opposite claim. This method is known as the opposition (*al-mu‘ārada*) in the discipline propounding the proper etiquettes of research and debate (*‘ilm adab al-baḥṭh wal-munāẓara*).³⁸

These are three methods used by al-Ghazālī in his *al-Iqtisād*. It is evident, according to al-Ghazālī, that these three methods will lead towards knowledge. He emphasizes that in these methods always contain three terms: two premises and one derivation. In order to establish the conclusion, two processes or assignments are required. The first assignment is to perceive and realize the validity of the two bases. By realizing the validity of these bases, one will clearly understand and accept how the conclusion is derived from them. Thus, the second assignment is to contemplate and realize how this derivation is deduced.³⁹

The fourth introduction of *al-Iqtisād*: “In explaining the methods of proofs we followed in this book”⁴⁰

Be informed that indeed the methods of proofs are manifold (*mutasha‘‘iba*)⁴¹;

36. Al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād*, 13. For a detailed exposition of this method, see Abu Zayd, *Al-Ghazālī on Divine Predicates*, xxiv-xxviii.

37. Al-Ghazālī, *Mi‘yār*, 158-160.

38. See al-Nasr, *al-Iqtisād lil-Imām al-Ghazālī*, 65.

39. See al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād*, 14. For further discussion, see al-Ghazālī, *Mihakk al-Nazar*, ed. M. Badr al-Dīn al-Na‘sanī (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-Ḥaditha, 1966), 74-80.

40. This translation is based on the edition published by Dār al-Baṣā‘ir (Cairo, 2009) where the related texts are at pages 99-113. Significant variations from Davis’s earlier English translation are noted.

41. Davis: “a variety of demonstrative methods.”

and we have mentioned some of them in *Mihakk al-Nazar*⁴² and discussed them in depth in *Mi'yār al-'Ilm*.⁴³ But in this book, we avoid ambiguous approaches (*al-ṭuruq al-mutaḡhalliqa*) and complicated procedures (*al-masālik al-ghāmiḡa*) for the sake of clarification and for the purpose of brevity and avoiding prolixity. Thus, we confine them to three methods:

The first method: the method of examination and division⁴⁴ (*al-sabr wal-taqṣīm*). In this method we restrict the matter into two divisions; later we invalidate one of them, subsequently from which the establishment of the second is necessitated. For instance, we say: The universe is either temporal (*ḡādīth*) or eternal (*qadīm*). It is impossible⁴⁵ for it to be eternal; therefore, it is certainly temporal.

This necessary result (*al-lāzīm*) is actually our quest (*maṭlūbunā*) and it is indeed our intended knowledge which we derive from two other terms: the first is our statement “The universe is either eternal or temporal”—where the determination of this restriction⁴⁶ is [itself] a knowledge. Second is our statement “it is impossible [for the universe] to be eternal”—this is another knowledge. The third is the necessary result (*al-lāzīm*)—which is what is sought (*al-maṭlūb*)—from both [former terms]: “it is temporal.”

All desired knowledge (*'ilm maṭlūb*) will not be acquired except from two knowledges—they are the two roots⁴⁷ (*aṣḡlān*), and it is not any two roots, but those which have pairedness⁴⁸ (*izdiwāj*) between them in a certain manner (*wajḡh*) and with a particular condition (*shart*). When the pairedness occurs in accord

42. The book basically discusses the syllogism (*qiyās*) and the definition (*al-ḡadd*). Both topics are important according to al-Ghazālī because they are considered forms of instrumental knowledge (*al-ālat*); see al-Ghazālī, *Mihakk*, 8-10.

43. One of two purposes of composing this work is to provide a standard intellectual system of measurement for people to gauge the soundness of their thought (*fikr*) and rational proof (*nazar*); see al-Ghazālī, *Mi'yār*, 59-60. The book, which is actually a logical part of *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, contains detailed discussion on logic.

44. Davis: “disjunctive reasoning.”

45. Davis: “absurd.”

46. That is, that there are only two possible positions on the particular issue, i.e., that it is either eternal or originated, and that there is no other possible division. This in itself is a knowledge that one must realize and attain certainty.

47. Davis: “premises.” This is a technical term in syllogistic logic normally termed *muqaddima*. However, we translate it as “root,” a literal translation from *aṣḡl* as used by al-Ghazālī, in order to widen its concept and not limit it to purely Aristotelian logical terms.

48. Davis: “connection.” Here the connection between two roots is not just any connection, but is one of a pair of roots in which a third is not imaginable.

with the condition, then the third knowledge, which is the desired knowledge (*al-maṭlūb*), will be derived. This third [knowledge] is named ‘claim’ (*da‘wā*) in the presence of an opponent⁴⁹; it is called ‘the quest’ (*al-maṭlūb*) when there is no opponent, because it is a ‘quest’ (*maṭlūb*) of the reflective person; and we call it ‘benefit’ (*fā’ida*) and ‘branch’ (*far‘*)—that is, in relation to the two roots, since it is derived from both of them. Indeed, whenever the opponent acknowledges the two roots,⁵⁰ it is necessary for him to acknowledge the branch derived from them, and this is the soundness of the claim.

The second method: We arrange two roots in different arrangement, for instance, we say: “All which is not free from temporal realities (*al-ḥawādith*) is originated”; this is a root; and “The universe is not free from temporal realities” is another root; from these roots necessitates the validity of our claim that “the universe is originated.” This is the desired knowledge, so do contemplate upon this. Is it conceivable that the opponent would deny the validity of the claim after acknowledging the two roots as true? Believe that this is certainly impossible.⁵¹

The third method: We are not arguing here to establish our [own] claim, but we demonstrate the impossibility of the opponent’s view by explaining that their statement will lead towards an inconceivable fact (*al-muḥāl*). Consequently, anything that leads towards an inconceivable fact (*al-muḥāl*) is necessarily impossible. For example, we state that if the opponent’s claim were true, that “the circular motions of the celestial sphere are infinite (*dawrat al-falak lā nihāyat lahā*)”⁵², it will necessitate the validity of someone’s claim that “something which is infinite has been terminated”⁵³ (*inqadā*) and is brought to an end.” This necessary conclusion is evidently impossible and, therefore, it is perceivable that the conclusion (*al-muḥāl ilayhī*), which is the opponent’s claim, is necessarily impossible.

Thus, here are two roots [premises]:

The first one is our statement, “If circular motions of the sphere are infinite, then the infinite has been terminated (*inqadā*).” Here, the judgment that the infinite has been terminated is necessitated from the statement which denies the finite state of the circular motions of the sphere; it is a knowledge we claim and judge by [as true]. However, it is perceivable if the opponent

49. That is, if it is meant to refute the view of the opponent.

50. Davis: “No matter what the opponent admits of the two roots premises....”

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

52. Davis: “the revolutions of the sphere have no end.”

53. Davis: “has been destroyed.”

instead affirms his refutation [of the claim]⁵⁴ by saying: “I do not accept that it necessitates that.”⁵⁵

The second is our statement, “This necessary conclusion is impossible.” This is a root which is also perceivable if the opponent refutes it and affirms that,⁵⁶ “I acknowledge the first root but not the second one”, which is the impossibility of termination of infinity. Apparently, whenever the two roots were acknowledged, then the acknowledgement of the third knowledge, which is necessitated from the former [acknowledgement], is obligatory in itself—this is actually acknowledgement of the impossibility of his belief (*madhhab*) which leads to this impossible conclusion.⁵⁷

These three methods of proof are crystal clear and to deny the occurrence (*ḥuṣūl*) of knowledge from them is impossible. Hence, the knowledge that

54. Davis: “It is possible to suppose however that the opponent might admit it or deny it,” based on Atay’s edition: *yataṣawwar fīhi min al-khaṣm iqār wa inkār*, whereas our text says: *wa lakin yataṣawwara fīhi min al-khaṣm iqār inkār*.

55. That is, the infinite circular motions of the sphere necessitates the termination of the infinite.

56. Davis: “be supposed that the opponent will reject this” from Atay’s *yataṣawwaru fīhi inkār*, whereas our text reads *yataṣawwaru fīhi inkār wa iqār*.

57. Davis claims that this method is similar to what is known as *reductio ad absurdum*. He also believes that the example given by al-Ghazālī here is “not easy to follow and seems a rather weak demonstration of the method” and “ambiguous”. He mentions that “it would seem that [al-] Ghazālī simply intends to give a foretaste of the kind of *reductio ad absurdum* argument he will be using, without making any attempt at this point to answer the various objections and ambiguities that his chosen example seems to contain problems he would have to address if he were really trying to establish his claim,” Davis, “Al-Ghazālī on Divine Essence,” 24-25. If Davis implies that al-Ghazālī is presenting a weak demonstration of the method when he failed or did not make an attempt to answer the various objections and ambiguities here, he should realize that al-Ghazālī’s purpose in this section is just to briefly present his methods of proof. In fact, Davis himself acknowledges this when he states that “this section is valuable in its own right as a precis of demonstrative methods, perhaps the briefest of several that [al-] Ghazālī penned over the span of his career,” 20. Moreover, if he reads carefully what has been explained by al-Ghazālī in *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, ed. S. Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1987), 99-100 and 115-117, he would be able to justly appreciate al-Ghazālī’s approach here. In fact, the discussion and explanation on this issue was known among earlier thinkers since al-Kindī; see al-Kindī, “Risāla al-Kindī fī ṭlāḥ tanāḥā jirm al-‘ālam” in al-Kindī, *Rasā’il al-Kindī al-falsafīyya*, ed. M.A.H. Abū Ridāh (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1978), vol. 1, 137-146 and H. al-Alūsī, *Hiwār bayn al-falāsifa wal-mutakallimīn* (Baghdad: Dār al-Shu‘ūn al-Thaqāfiyya al-‘Āmma, 1986), 106-108 and 111-134.

occurs is the desired and the proven knowledge (*al-maṭlūb wal-madhlūl*); the combination of the two roots that necessitates this knowledge is the proof (*al-dalīl*); while the knowledge of the mode by which this desired knowledge is necessitated from the combination of the two roots is the knowledge of the mode of the proof's indication⁵⁸ (*ilm bi wajh dalāla al-dalīl*). Your thought, that is, your effort in presenting the two roots in the mind and your struggle in contemplating the mode by which the third knowledge is necessitated from the two basic knowledges, is [what is called] reflection (*al-naẓar*).

Thus, to acquire the desired knowledge, you must fulfill two tasks: first, to present the two roots in the mind, which is called “thought” (*fikr*); and second, to eagerly contemplate the mode by which the desired knowledge is necessitated from the combination of the two roots, and this is called “quest”⁵⁹ (*ṭalab*). Therefore, one who considers only the first task while he defines reflection (*al-naẓar*) says that it is “thought” (*al-fikr*), whereas one who considers only the second task when defining reflection says that it is a quest for knowledge (*ṭalab 'ilm*) or [for] a most likely belief (*ghalabat ḡann*).⁶⁰ But one who considers both tasks together says that it is the thought through which the reflective one seeks knowledge or probable belief.⁶¹

Now, this is what you suppose to understand the proof (*al-dalīl*), the proven knowledge (*al-madhlūl*), the mode of indication (*wajh al-dilāla*) and the reality of reflection (*ḥaqīqat al-naẓar*). You should rebuff all the lengthy and repetitive expressions mentioned in the extensive literature that neither quenches the thirst of the seeker nor calms the desire of the desirous. The significance of these brief words (*al-kalimāt al-wajīza*) may only be acknowledged by those who have disappointedly given up their quest after reading too many works.

Hence, if you revert now (i.e. after knowing this reality) to find the truth from what has been said on the definition of reflection (*al-naẓar*), this simply shows that you are not actually liberated from this discussion and, thus, could not reach its outcome (*ḥāṣil*).⁶² In fact, when you realize that there is nothing but three terms here—two of them are the roots arranged in a specific configuration, and the third is necessitated from both of them—and that you have only two tasks [for finding the truth]—first, to present the two terms in your mind and second, to understand the mode by which the third term is derived from both of them—thus, the option for you is to use the word reflection (*al-naẓar*) for

58. Davis: “knowledge of the manner by which the proof indicates its conclusion.”

59. Davis: “investigation.”

60. Davis: “it is to seek the most probable cognition or opinion.”

61. Davis: “that it is thought which investigates the most probable knowledge or opinion.”

62. Davis: “that inquiry would demonstrate to you that, after long reasoning, you would have not come up with any useful result at all.”

expressing either thought (*al-fikr*), which means to present the two terms, or eagerness (*al-tashawwūq*), which is to acquire understanding about the mode by which the third term is necessitated, or both of them. All these expressions are possible while all terminologies proposed are incontestable (*lā mushāḥa fī hā*).⁶³

If you contend: “My purpose is to know the technical terms of the theologians and what they mean by reflection (*al-naẓar*),” then know that when you heard someone defining reflection as “thought” (*al-fikr*), and the second as “quest” (*al-ṭalab*), while the third as “the thought by which he quests [the rational proof],”⁶⁴ don’t be confused about the differences of their technical terms described in these three modes.⁶⁵ What is surprising here is the one who does not understand this fact but yet imposes his opinion for defining reflection (*al-naẓar*).⁶⁶

The controversy: Someone would still look for a proof on the validity of any of these definitions because he does not realize that there is actually no disagreement on the intelligible meaning related to these issues; and therefore it is meaningless to disagree on the technical term.⁶⁷ In fact, if you examine closely and are rightly guided towards the path, you will definitely know that most of the misleading perceptions are derived from being misguided in the quest for the meanings of the terms. Instead, he should first figure out the meanings and secondly consider the terms; then he will know that they are merely technical terms and [their usage] will not change the intelligible concepts. However, those who are prohibited from the prosperity (*al-tawfiq*) [of God] will find it hard to accept the path and be exhausted from reaching the truth.⁶⁸

If you then argue: “I have no doubt that the validity of the claim is necessarily derived from these two roots if the opponent actually accepts both of them in this manner, but on what basis should the opponent acknowledge them? From where will he look for these accepted and acknowledged roots?”⁶⁹

63. Davis: “all these explanations works, and there is no need to make too much of the technical conventions.”

64. That is, he defines rational intellection as both the thought and the quest.

65. Davis: “then you will not be left with any doubt that the differences in their technical terms reduce to those three senses.”

66. Davis: “It would be amazing if someone still did not understand this and attributed to kalam a definition of theoretical reflection.”

67. Davis: “that confused the issues because he felt obliged to choose one of the definitions without noticing that there is no significant difference in the basic meaning of what is said on these issues, and that there is no significance to the differences between the technical terms.”

68. Davis: “but it is those to whom success from God is denied that turn their back on the path and reject the truth.”

69. Davis: “But what would compel the opponent to admit them? And how are

Be informed that there are various [knowledge] capacities (*madārik*)⁷⁰ for this, but what applied in this book are diligently defined by us are not more than six capacities:

The first is the sensations (*al-hissiyāt*), that is, cognition by means of external and internal observation (*al-mushāhada al-zāhira wal-bāṭina*). For instance, when we say: “Every temporal thing has a cause; in this universe there are temporal things; ergo, they necessarily have causes”. Our statement “in this universe there are temporal things” is a root that should be acknowledged necessarily because of the origination of individual animals, plants, clouds, and rains, and [because of] many accidents like sounds and colors that are perceived by external observation. If you imagine that they move, then the movement itself is temporal. Here we are establishing the [idea of] origination and we are not concern with identifying the originated thing as to whether it is a substance or an accident or whether it moves or whatever else. Similarly, through internal observation the origination of pains, happiness, and sadness in one’s heart and body are perceived. Thus, he (the opponent) cannot deny this.

The second [capacity] is pure reason (*al-ʿaql al-maḥḍ*). This is when we say: “The universe is either temporal or eternal” and there is no third category other than these two; all intelligent men must acknowledge this. For instance, you say: “Everything that does not precede all temporal existence, is originated; the universe did not precede temporal existence; thus, it is originated.” Here one of the roots is our saying, “Anything that does not precede all temporal existences is originated.” It is necessary for the opponent to acknowledge this fact because anything that does not precede all temporal existences either exists simultaneously with the originated things or comes subsequently later, and there would not be the third possible division of it. If someone claims that there is a third division of it, he is actually denying what is rationally self-evident (*badīhi*). Similarly, if he denies that ‘anything which exists simultaneously with or subsequently after the temporal things is originated’, he is also denying the self-evident fact.

The third is the successive reports (*al-mutawāṭir*); for example when we say, “The Prophet Muḥammad is truthful (*ṣādiq*),” because: anyone who came with a miracle is truthful; and he came with a miracle; ergo, he is truthful. If someone argues: “We do not believe that he came with a miracle,” we say: “He came with the Qurʾān, and the Qurʾān is a miracle, therefore indeed came he with a miracle.” Here if the opponent acknowledges the first of these roots, which is “the Qurʾān is a miracle,” either willingly or based on proof, but still wishes to deny the second root, which is that “he (Muḥammad) came with the Qurʾān” and argues that “I do not acknowledge unquestionably that the Qurʾān is what Muḥammad, peace be upon him, came with,” he would be

these premises admitted whose admission is necessary to be grasped?”

70. Davis: “various sources of cognition.”

arguing an impossibility, because this truth is established through successive reports, as is similarly the knowledge of his existence (i.e. Muḥammad's) and his claim of prophecy, and of the existence of Mecca, Moses, Jesus and all other Prophets (peace be upon them).⁷¹

The fourth [capacity] is when the root is established through another syllogism which depends—to a certain degree—either on sensation, or reason, or successive reports.⁷² Any branch derived from two roots can be made a root in another syllogism. For example, after establishing the argument regarding the origination of the universe, we can have the statement that “the universe is originated” as a root in the structure of another syllogism. For instance, we say, “Every originated existence must have a cause; the universe is originated; then it too must have a cause.” Here the opponents could not possibly deny that the universe is originated after we have established its origination with another proof.

The fifth is the traditions (*al-samʿiyyāt*).⁷³ For instance, “the acts of disobedience are due to the Will of Allah”; and we argue, “Every existent (*kāʾin*) is due to the Will of Allah; and acts of disobedience are existents; therefore, they are due to the Will of Allah.” Regarding our statement, “they are existents”—that they exist is evidently known through the senses, and that they are acts of disobedience is known through the revealed law (*al-sharʿ*). Hence, if the opponent denies our statement, “Every existence is due to the Will of Allah,” Islamic law will reject that because it is affirmed by the law or by the proof that establishes it.⁷⁴ In fact, we establish this root through the consensus of the community (*ijmāʿ al-umma*) which affirms the truthfulness of the saying, “That which Allah wills exists, and that which He does not will, does not exist.” Thus, this tradition becomes a hindrance to [the opponents'] denial.⁷⁵

The sixth is when the root is derived from the beliefs of and the facts accepted (*musallamāt*) by the opponent. These facts, though they are not established for us neither through any proof nor through sense or reason, we can still benefit from by making use of them as one of the roots in our syllogism. [In this case] it is impossible for them to deny [the roots] because the denial of it would undermine their own belief. Examples of this kind [of argument] are

71. That is, all these facts are also established through the successive reports.

72. Davis: “that the premise is already proven by means of another syllogism that is based on one or several of the other steps—whether that be evidence of the senses, intellection, or unbroken historical testimony.”

73. Davis: “Things that are heard.”

74. Davis: “If an opponent denies our affirmation that ‘everything that exists does so by God’s will,’ he may be refuted either by means of revelation—as long as he acknowledges revelation—or by rational demonstration.”

75. Davis: “It will be the hearing of this statement that impedes the denial of the aforementioned premise.”

abundant and it is not necessary to mention them here.

If you ask, might there not be any difference between these capacities [of knowledge] in terms of their benefit in measurement of theoretical speculation (*al-maqāyīs al-naẓariyya*)?, be informed that they are beneficial in general with various qualifications. The rational and sensational capacities are common to everyone except for those who lack reason and senses. The root which is known through a sense, for those who lack it—such as that which is known through sight perception, if it is proposed to someone blind by birth—is indeed not beneficial. The person blind by birth, if he is one who contemplates [on such matters], could not have this as a root. Similarly in the case of audibility for the deaf.

As for the successive report, it is beneficial only for those who have successively received the report. For those who do not receive it, like those coming to us in this state from far away where the Islamic call did not reach, if we explain to him based on a successive report that our Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) had challenged the people with the Qurʾān, we will not be able to convince him unless we allow him some time so that the fact becomes successive to him. Indeed, there are many things successive for some people but not for others.⁷⁶ On this occasion, what was said by al-Shāfiʿī regarding the issue of retaliated killing on a Muslim for killing a *dhimmi*⁷⁷ is successive among the jurists of his school and not among the general masses of the common followers, and similarly in many schools there are several unique problems which are not successive according to most other jurists.

As for the root which is established from another syllogism, it is not beneficial except for those who accepted it due to [affirmation of] the truth of that syllogism. As for the accepted facts (*musallamāt*) of the school, they are not beneficial for those who are contemplating the issue but for those who are debating the person who believes in the idea. And, as for the traditions (*al-samʿiyyāt*), they are not beneficial except for those who acknowledge [the truth of] the tradition (*al-samʿ*).

These are the [knowledge] capacities for knowing these roots, from which—with proper arrangement and order—the knowledge of the desired unknown things is derived.

Concluding Remarks

This is a preliminary presentation of al-Ghazālī's methods of proof proposed in *al-Iqtisād* as valid instruments in reaching a certain degree of knowledge in theology. As we can read from the history of Kalam, these instruments were

76. Davis: "the Lord willing that the tradition be established without rebellion."

77. The *dhimmi* or *ahl al-dhimma* is the free non-Muslim who lives in the Muslim polity and enjoys safety and protection contingent upon a capital tax.

tested and proven to be valid in theological epistemology, at least in al-Ghazālī's Kalam. As we emphasized earlier, Kalam, as a dynamic tradition, welcomes any revision or addition on its method of proof. Indeed, this is an ongoing responsibility of theologians. If such methods are applicable in fundamental, weighty issues, they should also be applicable as well in other issues with less or similar responsibility, be they political, social, scientific, or philosophical, and even in inter-religious dialogue.

For example, in the realm of inter-religious dialogue, there are many issues that are not properly placed in a system of proof such as that outlined by al-Ghazālī above. The problems raised are therefore not really comprehensive as there is always some element that is left behind and either unconsidered or improperly approached. Therefore, the outcomes of the dialogue are not always accepted and respected by all parties. This means that the issues remain unsettled and therefore another dialogue is needed.

In applying the method of examination and division (*al-sabr wal-taqṣīm*), al-Ghazālī teaches us, we should sincerely ask ourselves, have we really examine all aspects of the problems? Have all possible solutions and answers of all problems being properly and comprehensively grouped together? Furthermore, has every single solution and answer been examined and validated objectively, thereby facilitating a just and true judgment on each question? Are these approaches really free from any form of contradiction? What kinds of harmonization can be proposed among accidental differences among such methods? Such questions abound, while the promise of proper method is nothing less than the possibility of establishing a basis common to all for sincere and objective discussion and argumentation.