



**A Methodological Exploration of Reason and Mysticism in Defining Divine Revelation: The Perspectives of Ibn Sīnā and Al-Ghazālī**

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**Abstract**

This article delves into the contrasting conceptions of divine revelation as articulated by two significant figures in Islamic thought, Ibn Sīnā and Al-Ghazālī, within the framework of metaphysical and epistemological processes. Ibn Sīnā views divine revelation as a metaphysical process situated at the apex of intellect. He posits it as an abstract reflection of divine knowledge conveyed to the prophet's imaginative faculty through the Active Intellect, a process philosophically grounded in the maturation of human intellectual capacity. Conversely, Al-Ghazālī understands divine revelation as a mystical experience, a divine encounter that surpasses the boundaries of human reason. For Al-Ghazālī, divine revelation manifests as an expression of God's speech, occurring solely through divine volition and inherently resistant to full rational comprehension. His Sufi-oriented perspective considers divine revelation integral to spiritual development. Through a comparative analysis of these two thinkers' understandings of divine revelation and metaphysics examining the points of convergence and divergence between Ibn Sīnā's rational approach and Al-Ghazālī's intuitive and inspirational Sufi approach this study offers an in-depth exploration of the evolution of the concept of divine revelation within Islamic theology and philosophy, underscoring the distinct contributions of each thinker to this intellectual tradition.

**Keywords**

theology; divine revelation; metaphysics; Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna); Al-Ghazālī

**Abstrak**

Artikel ini mengupas tuntas konsepsi yang saling bertentangan mengenai wahyu ilahi sebagaimana diartikulasikan oleh dua tokoh penting dalam pemikiran Islam, yaitu Ibn Sīnā dan Al-Ghazālī, dalam kerangka proses metafisika dan epistemologi. Ibn Sīnā memandang wahyu ilahi sebagai sebuah proses metafisika yang berpusat pada puncak akal. Ia menganggapnya sebagai refleksi abstrak dari pengetahuan ilahi yang disampaikan kepada daya imajinasi nabi melalui Akal Aktif, sebuah proses yang secara filosofis berakar pada kematangan kapasitas intelektual manusia. Sebaliknya, Al-Ghazālī memahami wahyu ilahi sebagai sebuah pengalaman mistis, sebuah perjumpaan ilahi yang melampaui batas-batas akal budi manusia. Bagi Al-Ghazālī, wahyu ilahi terwujud sebagai ekspresi firman Allah, yang terjadi semata-mata melalui kehendak ilahi dan secara inheren resisten terhadap pemahaman rasional sepenuhnya. Perspektifnya yang berorientasi Sufi menganggap wahyu ilahi sebagai bagian integral dari perkembangan spiritual. Melalui analisis komparatif terhadap pemahaman kedua



pemikir ini mengenai wahyu ilahi dan metafisika dengan meneliti titik-titik pertemuan dan perbedaan antara pendekatan rasional Ibn Sīnā dan pendekatan intuitif serta inspirasional Sufi Al-Ghazālī studi ini menawarkan eksplorasi mendalam tentang evolusi konsep wahyu ilahi dalam teologi dan filsafat Islam, sembari menggarisbawahi kontribusi unik masing-masing pemikir terhadap tradisi intelektual ini.

**Katakunci:**

theology; divine revelation; metaphysics; Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna); Al-Ghazālī

**Introduction**

The concept of divine revelation (*wahy*) holds a central role in Islamic thought, having been deeply examined from both philosophical and theological perspectives. Two distinct schools of thought have approached it in different ways. Among Islamic philosophers, Ibn Sīnā (980–1037) stands out as a thinker who grounds divine revelation in intellectual and metaphysical processes, whereas the theologian Al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) considers it a mystical experience and a source of divine knowledge. Both thinkers employ their own epistemological and metaphysical approaches to explain the concept of divine revelation. The primary aim of this article is to elucidate how Ibn Sīnā's and Al-Ghazālī's conceptions of divine revelation differ and converge within the framework of their metaphysical and epistemological foundations. This study seeks to contribute to an understanding of how these two thinkers' views on the processes of divine revelation help establish the balance between reason and intuition in Islamic thought. Additionally, one of the main objectives of this work is to analyze how philosophical and theological approaches add depth to the concept of divine revelation. This study will draw upon an examination of the fundamental works of these two thinkers to shed light on their metaphysical and epistemological approaches.

The sources utilized throughout this study consist of both classical works from the Islamic world and academic research from the Western world. Despite representing different approaches within the history of Islamic thought, Ibn Sīnā and Al-Ghazālī share several important commonalities. Both thinkers engaged in profound explorations of metaphysics and epistemology, evaluating the concept of divine revelation within this framework. While Ibn Sīnā sought to understand the nature of divine revelation through a philosophical approach that prioritized reason and logic, Al-Ghazālī defined the boundaries of reason and divine revelation, emphasizing the importance of mystical and theological experience. Both thinkers acknowledged the role of reason in humanity's pursuit of truth. However, Al-Ghazālī, arguing that reason alone is insufficient, advocated for the necessity of divine knowledge or divine revelation. In this context, Al-Ghazālī, in his work *al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*, criticizes the views of the philosophers, particularly those of Ibn Sīnā, with the following words:

“It is in the metaphysical sciences that most of the philosophers' errors are found. Owing to the fact that they could not carry out apodeictic demonstration according to the conditions they had postulated in logic, they differed a great deal about metaphysical questions”. (Ghazālī 2000, p. 67; 1980, p. 10)

Although Ghazālī generally criticizes the philosophers here, he was influenced by Ibn Sīnā's rational philosophy and sought to balance philosophy with Sufism and theology.

How can divine revelation be accurately conveyed from an infinite and omniscient God to a limited and fallible human being? This is a critical theological and philosophical question. Is the human intellect sufficient for fully comprehending the divine message? Can the clarity of divine revelation be compromised due to differing perceptions among individuals and their cultural or psychological biases? The necessity for God to deliver His message in a manner comprehensible to human understanding, and whether humans are prepared to grasp this message, raises fundamental questions regarding the comprehensibility of divine revelation.

One of the significant epistemological barriers to understanding divine revelation is the limited nature of human intellect and the cultural and psychological prejudices that accompany it. When receiving divine messages, the human mind may fail to fully comprehend divine revelation due to its cognitive limitations and inherent conditioning. These barriers can lead to distortions in interpreting divine knowledge. Moreover, reason may be inadequate in perceiving metaphysical realities, which complicates the direct and clear understanding of divine revelation. This raises the critical issue of whether human intellectual capacity is sufficient to grasp divine revelation.

One of the theological obstacles to understanding divine revelation is the moral state and will of the individual. Morally corrupt or spiritually unprepared individuals may fail to comprehend the deeper meanings of the divine message. When the human will is not aligned with the divine will, accepting and acting upon divine revelation becomes difficult. Consequently, for effective comprehension of divine revelation, one must undergo moral and spiritual purification and orient their will towards divine truths. The capacity to properly perceive God's message is closely linked to one's spiritual and moral readiness (King 2008, pp. 131–37).

From the perspective of the psychology of religion, understanding divine revelation in Islam presents unique challenges due to its complex nature, both cognitively and spiritually. Divine revelation, as understood in Islam, is seen as divine communication transmitted through prophets, which involves metaphysical realities that transcend ordinary human experiences. One of the primary difficulties lies in the human mind's ability to grasp abstract and transcendent concepts. Psychologically, individuals may struggle with accepting or internalizing these metaphysical truths, especially in a modern secular context where empirical evidence is often emphasized over spiritual or supernatural explanations. Moreover, the personal and emotional dimensions of faith can also affect how individuals comprehend divine revelation. The concept of divine revelation requires a degree of spiritual openness and emotional receptivity, which can be influenced by an individual's psychological disposition, personal experiences, and cultural background. In some cases, psychological barriers such as doubt, cognitive dissonance, or even past trauma may hinder the ability to fully embrace the idea of divine revelation as a divine truth. Additionally, for believers, there may be a tension between rational analysis and spiritual conviction, creating an internal conflict that further complicates the comprehension of divine revelation (Bulut 2022, pp. 605–39).

In addressing the obstacles to understanding divine revelation, the two Islamic thinkers analyzed in this study, Ibn Sīnā and Ghazālī, approach the matter from different perspectives, each providing solutions to overcome these challenges.

Ghazālī views divine revelation as divine knowledge that transcends the limits of human reason. According to him, reason cannot fully grasp divine revelation because it excels only in understanding the material world; when it comes to divine truths and metaphysical realities, reason falls short. Ghazālī argues that divine revelation can only be understood through spiritual purification, intuition, and inspiration. In this sense, both the heart and the mind must be engaged in comprehending divine revelation, as divine knowledge originates from a source beyond reason. On the other hand, Ibn Sīnā addresses the philosophical challenges surrounding divine revelation by asserting that it occurs at the highest level of human intellect, with divine knowledge being transmitted to the prophet's mind through the Active Intellect (al- 'aql al-fa'āl).

The Active Intellect serves as a universal intellectual power that conveys divine knowledge to the human mind. Prophets, in turn, establish a direct connection with the Active Intellect, allowing them to receive this knowledge. The imaginative faculty (al-mutakhayyilah) enables prophets to transform abstract divine knowledge into concrete images and symbols. This faculty allows prophets to present divine revelation in a form that can be understood by their communities. According to Ibn Sīnā, these two faculties ensure that divine revelation can be comprehended and communicated, thereby overcoming the limitations of human intellect.

## **Method and Conceptual Framework**

Before delving into the main subject of this study, key concepts mentioned throughout the text will be defined, establishing the theoretical and analytical boundaries of the research. Clarifying the essential terms necessary for understanding and evaluating the topic demonstrates how the subject is approached and analyzed. This framework is also crucial for contributing to a clear understanding of the methods and theoretical approaches employed throughout this study, ensuring that the research progresses in a coherent and structured manner.

### **Divine revelation**

in Ghazālī's approach, divine revelation is a direct transmission of divine knowledge from God to the prophets (Watt 1996, p. 60). This knowledge originates from a source beyond reason and reaches humans directly through intuition, inspiration, or mystical unveiling. According to Ghazālī, divine revelation manifests as a manifestation of God's attribute of speech and is implanted in the hearts of prophets. This knowledge cannot be fully comprehended through reason alone; rather, it is understood through the purification of the heart and the attainment of spiritual depth. Therefore, Ghazālī regards divine revelation as a source of knowledge that transcends reason and finds meaning through one's spiritual experiences. In this sense, Ghazālī stated the following:

“The transmission of divine revelation occurs when the soul perfects its essence and is thus purified from the filth of nature and the mud of fleeting desires. This purified soul turns with its entire being towards its Creator and Sustainer, relying on Him, and firmly grasps His grace and the overflow of His light. Allah, in His gracious beneficence, turns wholly towards this soul and

gazes upon it with a divine regard, using it as a tablet. He takes a pen from the universal soul and engraves all knowledge upon this soul. The universal intellect acts like a teacher, while the sacred soul becomes like a student. Thus, this soul acquires all knowledge effortlessly, without the need for learning or thought, and all forms are imprinted within it. This is the truth behind what Allah says to His prophet". (Ghazālī 2006, pp. 248–49)

In Ghazālī's understanding of divine revelation, he often references the Qur'anic verse, "We have sent you as a mercy to the worlds." This verse emphasizes that prophets are sent to the world with divine knowledge and guidance, underscoring their role in imparting mercy and illumination through divine revelation.

Ibn Sīnā also defines divine revelation as a reason-based process. According to him, divine revelation is divine knowledge transmitted to the minds of prophets through the Active Intellect. In this process, prophets reach the highest level of their intellect and unite with the Active Intellect, receiving divine knowledge. In Ibn Sīnā's approach, divine revelation is a metaphysical process that occurs at the peak of human intellectual capacity. Prophets convey this knowledge to society by transforming abstract concepts into concrete images through their imaginative faculty. Divine revelation is a rational operation that establishes a connection between the human mind and the Active Intellect. Ibn Sīnā states the following:

"Divine revelation is a manifestation of this divine flow, and the angel is the power that receives and transmits this flow. It is as if this flow is continuously poured into it through the constant overflow of the universal intellect. However this flow occurs indirectly for the angel, not directly; the angel functions like a mirror that receives this flow". (Ibn Sīnā 1926, p. 124)

### **Divine Knowledge**

Metaphysical processes involve the study of realities and entities that exist beyond the physical world and pertain to divine or abstract truths that cannot be directly perceived by reason or the senses. These processes examine the relationships between existence and knowledge, focusing on matters that transcend the material world (Ibn Bājjāh 1983, p. 30).

According to Ghazālī, metaphysical processes are events guided by divine will that occur beyond the limits of human reason. Ghazālī asserts that the intellect cannot fully comprehend metaphysical realities, as such knowledge originates from a divine source. Metaphysical knowledge is granted as a divine grace through divine revelation and intuition to prophets and finds its place in the depths of the human soul (Ghazālī 1980, p. 29). Ghazālī's approach is based on a Sufi perspective; he advocates for the purification of the soul and the attainment of divine truths through the heart. According to him, God's absolute will shapes metaphysical realities, and these processes are entirely dependent on divine will. A person can only approach these processes through inspiration and discovery (Frank 1994, pp. 26, 132; Griffel 2009, p. 115).

Ibn Sīnā's metaphysical understanding is based on the hierarchy of existence and the theory of the Active Intellect originating in the works of Aristotle and Plotinus. According to him, metaphysical processes are the gradual emanation of beings, beginning from God and reaching humans through the Active Intellect. Ibn Sīnā posits that beings emanate from God through a process of *ṣudūr* (emanation), which is structured across ten distinct levels of intellect. The Active Intellect occupies

the final step in this chain of being and serves as the primary intermediary in transmitting divine knowledge to humans. Prophets establish a direct connection with the Active Intellect, receiving divine knowledge in an abstract form, which they then convey to humanity. Ibn Sīnā argues that humans can comprehend metaphysical realities through reason and that access to this knowledge is possible through intellectual development (Gutas 2014, p. 280).

### **Divine Intellect**

Ghazālī, while recognizing reason as an important tool for acquiring knowledge, emphasizes its limitations in comprehending divine truths and divine revelation. According to him, reason is a powerful instrument for understanding worldly events and objects, but it is incapable of fully grasping divine experiences such as divine revelation. Ghazālī argues that reason is limited and insufficient for apprehending divine knowledge. Therefore, he asserts that for humans to reach the truths of God, they must attain spiritual depth through intuition, inspiration, and the heart (Frank 1994, p. 26; Griffel 2009, p. 115). According to him, reason may be sufficient in understanding the material world; however, it is limited in accessing metaphysical and divine knowledge.

According to Ibn Sīnā, reason is the highest faculty of the human being and plays a central role in comprehending divine knowledge. In his philosophy, reason progresses through various stages: potential intellect, actual intellect, acquired intellect, and the Active Intellect. The highest stage, the Active Intellect, is where humans are capable of receiving divine knowledge. In Ibn Sīnā's conception of reason, divine revelation and divine knowledge can be understood through the highest functioning of the intellect. Reason is intrinsically linked to metaphysical processes and serves as a fundamental tool for transferring knowledge from God to the human mind through the Active Intellect. In this process, reason is not merely a vessel for knowledge but also a metaphysical tool that establishes a connection between God and humans (Rahman 1958, p. 302).

### **Divine Mind**

Descartes defined the mind as a “thinking thing” and argued that it is not a material entity. In this context, the mind, while interacting with the body, is considered to have an independent nature separate from the physical body (Descartes 2008, p. 25). The concepts of mind and reason are crucial for understanding human cognitive and intellectual functioning. While both terms are associated with the thinking process, they carry distinct meanings in different contexts. The mind is typically defined as the entirety of human faculties involved in thinking, perceiving, remembering, feeling, and decision-making. In contrast, reason is more specifically regarded as the faculty of logical thinking, problem-solving, and knowledge production (Descartes 2008, p. 24). The mind is the center of human sensory and cognitive processes. It encompasses sensory perceptions, experiences, memories, and conscious thought processes. The mind is not limited to logical reasoning but also includes emotional responses, imagination, and intuition. In this sense, the mind can be seen as an internal mechanism through which humans interact with and make sense of the world.

### **Active Intellect**

The Active Intellect, in the metaphysical theories of Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā and Al-Fārābī, is regarded as a universal source of knowledge that

transmits abstract knowledge to the human mind. The Active Intellect functions as the organizer and transmitter of knowledge in the universe, facilitating the perception of divine knowledge by humans. It plays a central role in both the flow of divine revelation and intellectual knowledge (Griffel 2009, p. 137; Gutas 2014).

However, according to Ghazālī, divine revelation is not a product of human intellect but is directly the word of God, with no possibility of human intellectual capacity intervening in the process. Ghazālī rejects metaphysical intermediaries like the Active Intellect and asserts that divine revelation reaches prophets solely as a result of divine will. For him, divine revelation is a source of knowledge beyond reason and, therefore, it cannot be fully comprehended by human intellect. In this context, Ghazālī opposes Ibn Sīnā's intellect-based understanding of divine revelation and emphasizes that divine revelation is delivered to humans solely by God's absolute will.

### **Imagination Faculty**

The imaginative faculty is the ability of the human mind to perceive and process abstract concepts and knowledge through concrete images. This faculty allows individuals, particularly those with a high intellectual capacity such as prophets, to transform abstract divine knowledge into more comprehensible forms for communication and understanding (Ghazālī 2000, pp. 64, 156).

Ibn Sīnā regards the imaginative faculty as one of the most important abilities of prophets. According to him, prophets transform the abstract divine knowledge they receive from the Active Intellect into concrete images through their imaginative power. This process of concretization enables prophets to share divine knowledge with society. In Ibn Sīnā's thought, the imaginative faculty allows prophets to present the knowledge they acquire through divine revelation in the form of symbols and images that can be understood by the broader community (Davidson 1992, p. 19; Griffel 2009, p. 337; Gutas 2014, p. 188).

Ghazālī does not attribute as much significance to the imaginative faculty as Ibn Sīnā does. According to Ghazālī, divine revelation comes directly from a divine source, and neither the intellect nor the imaginative faculty plays a decisive role in this process. For Ghazālī, divine revelation is an experience that transcends human reason and is accepted as the knowledge that comes directly from God, beyond the capabilities of human intellect (Ghazālī 2000; Griffel 2009). Thus, the role of the imaginative faculty in the process of receiving divine revelation does not hold a central place in Ghazālī's thought. Divine knowledge is conveyed to prophets solely by God's will, and human mental capacities play only a limited role in this process. For Ghazālī, divine revelation is entirely a result of divine will, and the involvement of human faculties, like the imaginative faculty, is secondary or minimal (Ghazālī 2000, p. 164).

### **Prophethood (*Nubuwwah*)**

Prophethood refers to the divine mission given to prophets to convey divine knowledge to humanity. Prophets receive knowledge directly from God and communicate it to their communities. This process highlights the divine origin of prophethood within Islamic thought.

In Ghazālī's understanding of prophethood, it is viewed entirely as a divine intervention. The selection of prophets occurs through God's absolute will, and human intellectual capacity is not decisive in this process. According to Ghazālī, prophets are special servants chosen by God, and the divine knowledge given to them is placed directly in their hearts through God's absolute will. Prophethood is a divine

grace beyond human comprehension, and prophets receive divine revelation through intuition, inspiration, and mystical unveiling (*kashf*) (Ghazālī 1993, p. 109). Ghazālī views the prophets' ability to receive divine revelation as a function of them being instruments who act solely according to God's will, asserting that this process is entirely a divine intervention. For Ghazālī, prophets are not independent agents in this matter but are fully guided by the will of God in receiving and transmitting divine knowledge (Frank 1994, p. 79).

Ibn Sīnā approaches prophethood with a more philosophical and intellect-based perspective. According to him, prophets are individuals who have reached the highest level of human intellect. Prophethood becomes possible through the ability to unite with the Active Intellect at the peak of intellectual development. For Ibn Sīnā, prophets receive knowledge from the Active Intellect, which they then render into concrete forms through their imaginative faculties and transmit to society. In Ibn Sīnā's system, the process of prophethood is grounded in the individual's intellectual capacity; prophets are those who have reached the zenith of both intellectual and spiritual abilities. Thus, divine revelation reaches prophets via the Active Intellect, and they convey this knowledge to humanity (Corbin 2013, p. 306).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Ibn Sīnā's Understanding of Divine Revelation and Metaphysical Process**

Ibn Sīnā's understanding of divine revelation is rooted in a philosophical and metaphysical foundation, with the relationship between the Active Intellect and the prophet's perceptive faculties at its core. According to Ibn Sīnā, divine revelation is a metaphysical process in which divine knowledge is transmitted to the mind of the prophet. This process is explained through the theory of emanation (*ḥayḍ*), where the Active Intellect plays a central role as the source of this knowledge. The Active Intellect serves as the intermediary through which divine knowledge flows to the prophet, enabling the reception and communication of divine revelation (Davidson 1992, p. 54).

According to Ibn Sīnā's theory of *ḥayḍ* (emanation), everything in the universe comes into existence through a process of overflow from God. In this process, all beings and intellects emerge in a hierarchical order, starting from God. At the highest level is the First Intellect, and from this intellect, other intellects, universal souls, and the material world are generated. The tenth intellect, known as the Active Intellect, is the one that directly interacts with the human intellect. For Ibn Sīnā, the Active Intellect plays a crucial role in bridging divine knowledge and human understanding, facilitating the reception of intellectual and metaphysical insights (Corbin 2013, p. 429; Gutas 2014, pp. 9, 21).

The Active Intellect serves both as an organizer of the universe and as a bridge that transmits divine knowledge to the human mind. Through the Active Intellect, humans develop their capacities for thinking and perception. Divine revelation is received through the special connection that prophets establish with the Active Intellect. In this process, the Active Intellect acts as a mediator, conveying knowledge from God to the prophet's mind. The prophet's intellectual capacity is developed to a level where it can directly receive this knowledge from the Active Intellect, allowing divine truths to be communicated to humanity (Davidson 1992, p. 58). According to



Ibn Sīnā, prophets possess perceptual abilities that are stronger and more developed than those of ordinary people. These enhanced faculties enable them to receive knowledge from the Active Intellect more directly and clearly. The perceptual abilities of prophets can be divided into two main components:

- **The Intellectual Faculty:** This faculty allows prophets to receive abstract, universal knowledge from the Active Intellect without the need for sensory input or external stimuli. It enables prophets to comprehend divine truths that are beyond the reach of ordinary human intellects (Corbin 2013, p. 406; Gutas 2014, pp. 187–88).
- **The Imaginative Faculty:** This faculty transforms the abstract knowledge received from the Active Intellect into concrete symbols, images, and forms that can be understood and communicated to others. It allows prophets to convey divine knowledge in ways that are accessible to the broader community (Rahman 1958, p. 36).

These two faculties work together to allow prophets to bridge the gap between the divine and the human, making it possible for them to receive and transmit divine revelation. According to Ibn Sīnā, the process of divine revelation is an event that occurs when the human mind reaches its highest level of intellectual capacity. This process happens when the prophet establishes a complete union (*ittiṣāl*) with the Active Intellect. Divine revelation is the direct reception of knowledge from God through this union. The functioning of divine revelation can be explained through the following steps:

a. **Knowledge from the Active Intellect:** The divine knowledge, originating from God as the source of divine revelation, flows into the prophet's mind through the Active Intellect. The Active Intellect transmits this knowledge to the prophet's intellect in the form of abstract concepts (Corbin 2013, p. 319).

b. **Collaboration of Intellect and Imagination:** The prophet's intellect receives these abstract concepts and, through the imaginative faculty, shapes them into concrete representations. The imaginative faculty translates the abstract knowledge into tangible images, symbols, or narratives, making the information communicable to others. The prophet consciously manages this process, ensuring that the divine knowledge is conveyed in a form that can be understood by people (Inati 2014, p. 185).

c. **Transmission of Divine Revelation:** The prophet communicates the received knowledge to society through language and symbols. At this stage, the prophet's ability to convey abstract knowledge to people is achieved through the collaboration of both the intellect and the imaginative faculty. This partnership allows the prophet to effectively translate divine truths into understandable forms that can be grasped by the community (Rahman 1958, p. 36).

According to Ibn Sīnā's understanding of divine revelation, the Prophet is a person who attains divine knowledge through the Active Intellect, perceives this knowledge, and communicates it to society through the power of the imaginative faculty. In Ibn Sīnā's philosophical system, divine revelation represents the highest functioning of the human intellect and the attainment of divine knowledge. This metaphysical process operates effectively due to the prophet's advanced intellectual and imaginative faculties, which enable the reception and transmission of divine truths (Davidson 1992, p. 20; Gutas 2014, p.188; Inati 2014, p.61). According to Ibn Sīnā,

the angel is an entity that transmits divine knowledge to the prophet's mind through the Active Intellect. This transmission process is made possible through the prophet's perceptive abilities and the imaginative faculty. The angel acts as a bridge between God and the prophet, delivering divine knowledge. Ibn Sīnā describes angels as immaterial beings positioned within a metaphysical hierarchy. In this hierarchy, the angel serves as a channel that conveys knowledge from the Active Intellect to the prophet. The abstract concepts coming from the Active Intellect are transmitted to the prophet's mind through the mediation of the angel, and the prophet's mind is capable of receiving this knowledge (Davidson 1992, p. 120).

Ibn Sīnā defines the role of the angel in the process of divine revelation as not only transmitting knowledge from the Active Intellect but also organizing and preparing this knowledge in a form suitable for the prophet's mind. The angel assists the prophet in making the divine knowledge comprehensible. This knowledge is implanted in the prophet's mind in the form of concrete images and symbols through the imaginative faculty. The prophet then expresses this knowledge through language, effectively communicating the divine truths to society (Rahman 1958, p. 74).

In Ibn Sīnā's epistemology, divine revelation is considered the highest form of intellectual functioning. Divine revelation is the process by which the prophet unites with the Active Intellect and gains access to divine knowledge, which is seen as the pinnacle of knowledge acquisition. According to Ibn Sīnā, the human mind undergoes various stages of intellectual development, and prophets, having reached the highest level of these stages, possess the ability to receive divine revelation. Ibn Sīnā explains the process of knowledge acquisition through four fundamental intellectual faculties: *hayūlānī* intellect (potential intellect), *bilfi'l* intellect (actual intellect), *mustafad* intellect (acquired intellect), and *fa'āl* intellect (Active Intellect). Among these, the Active Intellect is the ultimate source that transmits divine knowledge to humans, facilitating the highest form of intellectual and metaphysical understanding (Corbin 2013, pp. 292, 447; Gutas 2014, p. 486). Ibn Sīnā describes divine revelation as a phenomenon that occurs at the pinnacle of these intellectual processes, where prophets establish a direct union (*ittiṣāl*) with the Active Intellect. This connection allows them to receive divine knowledge, marking the highest achievement of human intellect in the process of divine revelation.

Ibn Sīnā emphasizes that divine revelation comes directly from God through the Active Intellect. The Active Intellect serves as both the organizing force of the universe and the intermediary that transmits knowledge to the human mind. The prophet receives knowledge directly from the Active Intellect, and this knowledge reaches the prophet's mind as a pure and abstract truth (Gutas 2014, p. 372). Prophets, unlike ordinary people, possess the ability to perfectly comprehend and transmit this knowledge. Their direct connection with the Active Intellect allows them to reach the highest stage of intellectual processes. According to Ibn Sīnā, the prophet's ability to access knowledge is dependent on the advanced development of his intellect and perceptive faculties. The prophet's union with the Active Intellect signifies that he has reached the pinnacle of knowledge acquisition. Prophets receive knowledge as abstract truths from the Active Intellect and, through their imaginative faculties, are able to translate this knowledge into concrete forms that can be communicated to others (Rahman 1958, p. 38). This process demonstrates that, in epistemological terms, prophets are intellectually superior to other people and their access to divine

knowledge represents pure knowledge directly from God. Ibn Sīnā's epistemological system is grounded in metaphysical principles, focusing on the relationship between the Active Intellect and God as the source of knowledge. Divine revelation is the process by which divine knowledge flows from the Active Intellect to the prophet's mind. This knowledge is processed in perfect harmony with the prophet's perceptive and intellectual faculties and then conveyed to society.

In summary, within Ibn Sīnā's epistemological framework, divine revelation is defined as the highest functioning of the intellect (Table 1). The prophet's access to knowledge occurs through a direct union with the Active Intellect, indicating that the prophet's intellect has reached its highest potential. These epistemological foundations in Ibn Sīnā's philosophy reveal how divine knowledge reaches the human intellect in its purest form and how the prophet perceives and processes this knowledge.

Level	Explanation
Emanation (Fayḍ)	The order of existence in the universe follows the process of emanation from God, with all beings deriving from this source.
The First Intellect	The first entity emanated from God. From this First Intellect, other intellects, souls, and the material world are generated.
The Active Intellect	The Active Intellect is central to the process of divine revelation, acting as the intermediary that transmits divine knowledge to the prophet's mind.
The Angel (Mediator)	The angel transmits divine knowledge from the Active Intellect to the prophet's mind, transforming abstract concepts into comprehensible forms.
The Prophet's Cognitive Faculties	The prophet possesses extraordinary cognitive faculties that enable him to receive and comprehend divine knowledge. These faculties are divided into two main components, namely the intellectual and the imaginative faculties.
Intellectual Faculty	This faculty allows the prophet to grasp abstract and universal truths from the Active Intellect without reliance on sensory input.
Imaginative Faculty	This faculty transforms the abstract knowledge into concrete images, symbols, and narratives that can be communicated to others.
Reception of Divine Revelation	The prophet, upon uniting with the Active Intellect, receives divine knowledge as abstract concepts.
Collaboration of Intellect and Imagination	The prophet's intellectual faculty receives abstract knowledge, while the imaginative faculty converts it into tangible forms for communication.

Transmission of Divine Revelation	The prophet conveys the received divine knowledge to society through symbols, language, and imagery, making the divine truths accessible to people.
Communication to Society	The prophet delivers divine knowledge in a form that can be understood by the community through effective communication and symbolic expression.

**Table 1** outlines Ibn Sīnā's understanding of divine revelation through a hierarchical structure, tracing the process from God as the ultimate source of divine knowledge down to its reception and communication by the prophet. The table emphasizes the roles of the Active Intellect and the prophet's cognitive faculties, particularly the collaboration between the intellectual and imaginative faculties in transforming abstract divine truths into communicable forms.

#### **Al-Ghazālī's Understanding of Divine Revelation**

Al-Ghazālī's understanding of divine revelation is shaped by a blend of theological and mystical thought. As an important theologian within Islamic thought, Ghazālī addresses issues such as God's attribute of speech and the uncreated nature of the Qur'an (*ghayr-i makhlūq*) in line with the Ash'arī theological tradition. His approach integrates the doctrinal aspects of divine revelation with a mystical emphasis on divine experience, underscoring the transcendent nature of God's communication with prophets (Ghazālī 2004, p. 73).

According to Ghazālī, divine revelation is a manifestation of God's attribute of speech (*kalām*), through which divine knowledge is transmitted to the prophets. In this context, the Qur'an is emphasized as God's eternal speech, meaning it is uncreated (*ghayr-i makhlūq*). Ghazālī examines God's attributes within a theological framework, giving detailed attention to the attribute of speech. For him, the attribute of *kalām* is an eternal characteristic intrinsic to God's essence, and the Qur'an represents the most concrete manifestation of this divine attribute (Frank 1994, p. 48). The attribute of *kalām* encompasses God's eternal knowledge and will, and thus the Qur'an is an expression of God's speech that transcends creation. According to Ghazālī, God's attribute of speech is distinct from created things because it is united with God's essence and is not subject to the limitations of time and space. This attribute, being eternal, exists beyond the confines of creation, and the Qur'an, as a manifestation of this attribute, reflects the divine reality that is uncreated and infinite (Griffel 2009, p. 115).

When defending the idea that the Qur'an is uncreated, Ghazālī asserts that God's speech has no temporal beginning and has existed eternally. In this respect, Ghazālī aligns with Ash'arī theologians and upholds the view that the Qur'an is not created (*makhluq*). According to this understanding, the Qur'an is an eternal expression of God's attribute of *kalām*, and therefore it is not subject to creation. This position underscores the belief that God's speech, as manifested in the Qur'an, is timeless and unchanging, existing beyond the confines of temporal reality (Ghazālī 2000, p. 233; Jackson 2002, p. 27). This issue has been a subject of significant debate among theologians in Islamic thought. Following the Ash'arī tradition, Ghazālī asserts that the Qur'an is God's eternal speech. This stance opposes the view held by the Mu'tazilites, who argued that the Qur'an was created. Ghazālī rejects the idea of God's speech being created, as it would imply that divine attributes are temporary and finite.

For Ghazālī, such a notion contradicts the eternal and unchanging nature of God's attributes, particularly His speech (Davidson 1992, p. 138). He accepts that the Qur'an is eternal and uncreated, as this belief aligns with the doctrine of God's absolute attributes. In this context, Ghazālī emphasizes that the Qur'an is not merely a divine message but is an eternal attribute of God's speech (*kalām*) that exists alongside His essence. Through divine revelation, this divine speech is conveyed to the prophets, who then transmit it to humanity. The uncreated nature of the Qur'an underscores its status as an infinite and absolute divine source, highlighting its transcendence beyond temporal and created reality (Griffel 2009, p. 115).

Ghazālī does not limit his understanding of divine revelation to a purely theological phenomenon; he also approaches it from a mystical perspective. For him, divine revelation is not merely a method of acquiring knowledge unique to prophets, but it also represents the opening of the heart to divine knowledge through mystical experiences. In Ghazālī's Sufi approach, the human heart is nourished by sources of divine knowledge, just as revelation is rooted in divine reality. As explained in his works on mysticism, divine revelation is not only a theological concept but also part of a spiritual journey. Ghazālī's thoughts on divine revelation and the attribute of *kalām* are shaped by the Ash'arī theological tradition but are enriched by mystical depth. He views divine revelation as a gateway to the human soul, asserting that such experiences can also be accessed by individuals outside of prophecy through inspiration and intuition. This connection between divine revelation and mystical experience is a recurring theme in Ghazālī's Sufi writings. He emphasizes that divine revelation serves as a door to divine truths, not only for prophets but also for those who engage in spiritual practices that allow their hearts to receive divine insights (Ghazālī 2004, p. 71).

In his Sufi teachings, Ghazālī emphasizes that a person can reach divine truths through the "eye of the heart" (*baṣīrah*). While divine revelation is the direct reception of divine knowledge by prophets from God, mystical experiences allow individuals to approach these truths. According to Ghazālī, access to such truths is possible through purification and the cleansing of the heart. Divine revelation becomes a gateway of inspiration that can open to a person when their heart is purified and oriented toward God. This spiritual path of purification enables individuals to draw closer to divine realities, though not in the same manner as prophets, yet through inspiration and insight (Griffel 2009, p. 115). Ghazālī argues that in this process, divine revelation is a divine source of knowledge, but he also maintains that intuition and inspiration attained through mystical experiences are similarly connected to this source. He suggests that while divine revelation is unique to prophets, the insights gained through spiritual practices and mystical experiences are linked to the same divine reality, allowing individuals to access aspects of this sacred knowledge through intuition and inner enlightenment (Jackson 2002, p. 99).

In Ghazālī's Sufi understanding, intuition (*firāsah*), inspiration (*ilhām*), and unveiling (*kashf*) are key concepts in comprehending divine revelation. These terms point to the human capacity for directly perceiving divine truths. Ghazālī emphasizes that through spiritual purification and inner insight, individuals can gain access to divine knowledge, albeit in a way that complements and parallels the knowledge received through divine revelation by prophets.

- **Intuition (*Firāsah*):** According to Ghazālī, intuition is the ability to directly perceive divine truths through the purification of the heart. This ability is illuminated by a divine light from God, much like the knowledge prophets receive through divine revelation. Intuition serves as an important gateway to discovering God's mysteries and allows individuals to approach a level of truth that is akin to the knowledge received by prophets. Through intuition, the heart becomes receptive to divine realities, making it a significant tool for accessing deeper spiritual insights (Ghazālī 2000, p. 162).
- **Inspiration (*Ilhām*):** According to Ghazālī, inspiration is wisdom and truth that God directly imparts to the heart. Unlike divine revelation, which is exclusive to prophets, inspiration can be granted to non-prophetic individuals as well. Ghazālī views inspiration as a special grace bestowed by God upon His beloved servants (*awliyā*). It provides limited access to God's eternal knowledge, manifesting within the human heart, offering profound insights and spiritual understanding (Ghazālī 1993, p. 109). Inspiration (*ilhām*) can also be conceived as a lower form of the divine revelation received by prophets. It is a type of divine knowledge that is disclosed to individuals through intuition, offering a subtler manifestation of divine truths. While it does not carry the same authority or scope as prophetic divine revelation, inspiration serves as a way for individuals to access and understand aspects of divine wisdom through spiritual insight (Griffel 2009, p. 115).
- **Unveiling (*Kashf*):** In Ghazālī's thought, *kashf* is the process through which an individual uncovers truth through spiritual experience. *Kashf* is defined as the ability to see and understand the hidden realities of God. During the Sufi journey, as the heart becomes purified and the influences of the ego diminish, one gains access to God's secrets. Ghazālī describes *kashf* as the lifting of veils from the heart, enabling the individual to reach profound truths and draw closer to God (Ghazālī 1980, p. 63).

Ghazālī asserts that, apart from prophethood, individuals can also access divine knowledge through a mystical journey. In this process of acquiring knowledge, intuition, inspiration, and unveiling play significant roles. In this context, Ghazālī proposes that divine knowledge can be attained by those whose inner vision (*baṣīrah*) has been opened, independent of prophethood. However, he maintains that divine revelation is pure divine knowledge that comes through prophets, while mystical experiences function as a part of this knowledge. According to Ghazālī, God's knowledge is absolute and eternal; this knowledge reaches humans either through divine revelation or through intuition and inspiration. Thus, it is evident that Ghazālī's understanding of mystical experience establishes a deep connection with divine revelation. His Sufi approach broadens the concept of divine revelation, emphasizing that divine knowledge is an accessible gateway for everyone. Ghazālī argues that this divine knowledge can be opened to individuals through *ma'rifah* (gnosis or spiritual insight). By establishing a balance between the intellect and the heart, Ghazālī suggests that divine revelation is a source of knowledge that activates not only the intellectual capacity of humans but also their spiritual depths (Ghazālī 1993, pp. 33–34).

*Ma'rifah* is a type of knowledge that enhances a person's closeness to God in their spiritual journey. This perspective underscores the importance of spiritual purification in accessing divine truths and deepening one's relationship with the divine (Ghazālī

1993, pp. 33–34). This knowledge cannot be attained solely through theoretical reasoning; rather, one must reach the truths of God through spiritual experience and inner exploration. Ghazālī emphasizes that a genuine understanding of divine realities requires an active engagement with one’s spiritual journey, enabling individuals to experience and perceive the divine in a profound and meaningful way.

Al-Ghazālī, establishing a balance between the intellect and the heart, argues that both faculties offer different sources of knowledge to individuals. He posits that the intellect is a necessary tool for understanding the material and physical world; however, it is insufficient for attaining true knowledge. In contrast, the heart is an essential means for comprehending spiritual knowledge and divine truths. In Ghazālī’s works, the heart is viewed as the place through which a person can directly access the truths of God by undergoing profound spiritual experiences. This perspective highlights the complementary roles of both the intellect and the heart in the pursuit of holistic understanding and divine knowledge (Ghazālī 1993, p. 234). According to Ghazālī, the purification and cleansing of the heart are essential conditions for the divine light to fill the human being. When the heart becomes pure, it becomes open to divine knowledge and can attain the truths of God through *ma’rifah*. In this process, the intellect shifts from being merely a tool in the face of divine revelation to becoming a limited structure used to comprehend a part of the truth. This highlights the importance of spiritual purification in enhancing the heart’s capacity to receive and understand divine insights, thereby enabling a deeper connection with God (Ghazālī 2004, p. 45; Griffel 2009, p. 69).

In Ghazālī’s epistemology, the balance between the intellect and the heart forms his holistic understanding of knowledge (Table 2). The intellect is employed to gather and analyze information about the world, while the heart provides access to higher, spiritual knowledge. According to Ghazālī, for an individual to truly know God and understand divine revelation, these two faculties must function in a balanced manner. The heart allows for direct access to divine knowledge, while the intellect is used to comprehend and evaluate the reflections of that knowledge in the material world. In Ghazālī’s epistemological approach, divine revelation is a source of knowledge that transcends reason, and for a person to access this knowledge, their heart must be purified through *ma’rifah*. This highlights the importance of spiritual development in achieving a deeper understanding of divine truths (Ghazālī 1993, p. 63). This approach lies at the core of Ghazālī’s Sufi thought, defining divine revelation as a truth that can be comprehended through both the intellect and the heart. He emphasizes that a holistic understanding of divine realities requires the integration of rational inquiry and spiritual insight, allowing individuals to grasp the multifaceted nature of divine revelation. In this way, Ghazālī underscores the importance of both faculties in the pursuit of spiritual knowledge and enlightenment.

#### **Comparison of Ibn Sīnā and Al-Ghazālī**

Ibn Sīnā and Ghazālī approached the concept of divine revelation based on metaphysical foundations; however, there are significant differences between the two thinkers’ perspectives. While Ibn Sīnā primarily explained divine revelation within a philosophical framework as a metaphysical process, Ghazālī addressed it from both theological and Sufi dimensions, emphasizing mystical experience. For Ibn Sīnā, the Active Intellect served as an intermediary. In his philosophical system, the Active Intellect acts as an intermediary that transmits knowledge from God to the human

intellect. The Active Intellect conveys pure knowledge from God to the prophet's mind, which the prophet receives as abstract concepts. In the process of divine revelation, the prophet's imaginative faculty transforms these abstract concepts into concrete and sensory forms, enabling the prophet to communicate this knowledge to society. This highlights how Ibn Sīnā viewed divine revelation as a structured intellectual process, while Ghazālī integrated a mystical understanding, suggesting that both rational and spiritual dimensions are essential for grasping the full essence of divine knowledge (Davidson 1992, pp. 93, 316). Ibn Sīnā's understanding of divine revelation is characterized by the idea that the human intellect reaches its highest level to receive the pure knowledge that comes from God. In this process, prophets establish a direct connection with the Active Intellect, gaining access to divine knowledge. This process is closely related to the development of the individual's intellectual and cognitive capacities. Thus, divine revelation is a metaphysical manifestation of the ability of the human intellect to access knowledge from God. It highlights the interplay between intellectual advancement and the reception of divine truths, emphasizing the role of human faculties in the process of understanding divine revelation (Ibn Sīnā 2005, p. 7).

In Ghazālī's understanding of divine revelation, it is regarded as a divine source of knowledge that transcends reason. He asserts that divine revelation is a truth accessible to humans through the purification of the heart and soul. Ghazālī approaches divine revelation from both a theological perspective and a mystical dimension. According to him, divine revelation is a manifestation of God's attribute of speech (*kalām*), representing the direct impartation of divine knowledge to the prophets. However, he contends that divine revelation is not solely a source of knowledge exclusive to prophets; rather, he argues that individuals can also approach divine truths through intuition, inspiration, and mystical unveiling (*kashf*). This perspective highlights the accessibility of divine knowledge to all who pursue spiritual growth and understanding (Frank 1994, p. 113). In Ghazālī's Sufi understanding, the path to attaining divine knowledge does not solely pass through reason; the purification of the human heart and the attainment of spiritual depth are also essential. Ghazālī argues that individuals can reach the truth of God through *ma'rifa* (gnosis or spiritual insight). This notion reflects the strong connection Ghazālī establishes between mystical experience and divine revelation, emphasizing that both play crucial roles in the pursuit of understanding divine realities. By highlighting the importance of the heart's purification in conjunction with intellectual inquiry, Ghazālī illustrates how spiritual experiences can enhance one's comprehension of divine truths. Both thinkers regard divine revelation as a source of divine knowledge. According to Ibn Sīnā, divine revelation is pure knowledge that comes from God, while for Ghazālī, divine revelation is a process of imparting information to prophets through God's attribute of speech (*kalām*). Both Ibn Sīnā and Ghazālī acknowledge that prophets are special individuals capable of receiving this divine knowledge. Ibn Sīnā emphasizes that prophets possess advanced intellectual and imaginative faculties, whereas Ghazālī asserts that they receive divine revelation due to their spiritual depths. This distinction highlights the differing emphases in their approaches to understanding the nature of prophecy and divine revelation.

The understandings of divine revelation by Ibn Sīnā and Ghazālī reflect significant metaphysical and epistemological differences. These distinctions in their approaches



illustrate the diversity of theological and philosophical schools within Islamic thought. Both thinkers explain the effects of divine revelation on humans through different metaphysical and epistemological frameworks. Ibn Sīnā's approach focuses more on intellect and cognitive processes, positing that divine revelation fosters intellectual development and enhances abstract thinking abilities. In contrast, Ghazālī emphasizes the spiritual growth and closeness to God facilitated by divine revelation. While Ibn Sīnā's understanding of divine revelation is grounded in philosophical and metaphysical foundations, Ghazālī's perspective is rooted in mystical and Sufi dimensions. Moreover, the implications of their understandings of divine revelation diverge in terms of the human mental and spiritual structure. Ibn Sīnā views divine revelation as an attainment of the highest level of human intellect, whereas Ghazālī regards it as a means for spiritual development and a pathway to God. Ibn Sīnā highlights the effects of divine revelation on cognitive processes, while Ghazālī underscores its transformative impact on the spiritual structure of the individual. Together, the approaches of these two thinkers demonstrate how the concept of divine revelation is treated multifacetedly in Islamic thought. This situation reflects the philosophical and mystical nuances of their perspectives and showcases the diversity of epistemological approaches based on reason and intuition within Islamic scholarship.

The fundamental concept emphasized by both philosophers for understanding revelation is development. According to Ibn Sina, this is possible through cognitive development, whereas for Ghazali, it can be achieved through both cognitive and spiritual development. In developmental psychology, development is understood as multifaceted, encompassing physical, mental, moral, social, and emotional dimensions (Shaffer 1996). Development is, therefore, a holistic process, meaning that it cannot be considered in isolated parts but rather as an intertwined spiral. A disproportionate development in one dimension while neglecting others is seen as limiting. In other words, if an individual develops mentally but fails to develop emotionally or spiritually, this limitation also hinders mental development. This demonstrates that development is multidimensional. Additionally, development is multi-layered. Across various developmental theories whether cognitive development (Piaget 1929), moral development (Kohlberg 1971), or faith development (Fowler 1988) stages are always discussed within each framework. It is believed that understanding revelation is possible at the higher stages of multifaceted development. Although research on mystical experiences has rapidly expanded in fields such as psychology, philosophy, metaphysics, and neuroscience (Ashbrook 1984; Cunningham 2011; James 1985; Newberg 2018; Steven 1978), it is still important to note that the available data remains limited. It must be acknowledged that the debates these two philosophers engaged in concerning this topic, given the era in which they lived, reflect an epistemological depth.

## **Conclusion**

Ibn Sīnā and Ghazālī are two prominent thinkers who have thoroughly examined the concept of divine revelation within Islamic thought. Both regard divine revelation as a means for humanity to attain divine knowledge; however, they adopt different metaphysical and epistemological approaches to explain this process. Both Ibn Sīnā and Ghazālī accept divine revelation as a source of divine knowledge. Divine

revelation is defined as knowledge that comes from God, with prophets playing a central role in its transmission. Each thinker asserts that divine revelation is knowledge conveyed to society through prophets. While Ibn Sīnā emphasizes the superiority of the cognitive faculties of prophets, Ghazālī argues that prophets receive divine knowledge through their spiritual depths. Ibn Sīnā views divine revelation as an intellect-based process, describing it as a flow of knowledge occurring through the active intellect, whereas Ghazālī associates divine revelation with mystical experiences such as intuition, inspiration, and discovery, treating it as a source of knowledge beyond intellect. Ibn Sīnā's understanding of divine revelation is grounded in Aristotelian and philosophical principles, while Ghazālī's perspective is shaped by theological and Sufi dimensions. Ibn Sīnā defines divine revelation as the highest level of operation of the human mind, whereas Ghazālī considers it a spiritual experience and knowledge that God directly imparts to the human heart. Ibn Sīnā's approach to divine revelation has developed a theory of knowledge based on intellect and metaphysical processes within Islamic philosophy. His theory of the active intellect has established an important paradigm regarding how intellectual knowledge is acquired in the Islamic world. The idea that divine revelation can be understood through reason elevates Ibn Sīnā to a significant position among philosophers. Ghazālī, on the other hand, has made substantial contributions to Islamic thought by shaping his understanding of divine revelation within a theological and Sufi framework. He views divine revelation as a source of knowledge that can be comprehended not only through reason but also through the heart, emphasizing the role of mystical experiences in the acquisition of knowledge. This approach has allowed for the development of a profound theory of knowledge within Islamic mysticism. The philosophical foundations of Ibn Sīnā and the Sufi teachings of Ghazālī are significant in demonstrating the diversity and depth within Islamic thought. The differences in the emphasis that Ibn Sīnā and Ghazālī place on reason and intuition present a profound area of research for future studies on divine revelation and the theory of knowledge. The epistemological approaches of these two thinkers can be examined in a broader context by comparing them with modern theories of knowledge.

#### **Institutional Review Board Statement:**

This study did not involve human or animal subjects. Therefore, ethical approval was not required.

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