مطالعات عرفانی (مجله علمی)
دانشکده ادبیات و زبان‌های خارجی دانشگاه کاشان
شمارهٔ چهل‌وسوم، بهار و تابستان ۱۴۰۵، ص۳۹۵ـ۴۲۲

# Divine Accompaniment in the Thought of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and Ibn ʿArabī

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Received: ۱٤۰٤/۱۱/۰۳
Accepted: ۱٤۰٥/۰٥/۲۱

**Introduction**
Divine accompaniment is a key concept in Islamic philosophy, theology, and mysticism. From the perspective of historical semantics, religious concepts retain their fundamental meanings while acquiring new networks of signification within changing intellectual systems, including theology, mysticism, and Sufism. During the fifth and seventh Islamic centuries, the concept developed under the influence of theological and mystical transformations. In the fifth century AH, Ashʿarī thought dominated much of Islamic theology, and divine accompaniment was generally interpreted within the framework of divine incomparability. Emphasizing the transcendence of the Divine Essence, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (٤٥٠–٥٠٥ AH) rejected every corporeal interpretation of accompaniment. He understood it as God's all-encompassing knowledge and continuous sustaining power over creation. Ibn ʿArabī (٥٦٠–٦٣٨ AH), however, interpreted it within his doctrines of divine self-disclosure and the unity of being, thereby offering an ontological explanation. Since these thinkers present different understandings of God's presence with creation and employ distinct terminology, this study seeks to answer the following questions: How did al-Ghazālī and Ibn ʿArabī mystically interpret divine accompaniment, and where do their views converge and diverge?

**Findings**
Both Al-Ghazālī and Ibn ʿArabī classify divine accompaniment. Al-Ghazālī identifies four types: the accompaniment of body with body, accident with accident, accident with genus, and sustaining accompaniment. He considers God's relation to creation to be sustaining accompaniment. God is essentially the Self-Subsisting

10.22052/se.2026.255746.1183

Sustainer, upon whom the existence of all things depends. Meanwhile, Ibn ʿArabī distinguishes two general accompaniment forms. The first is universal or existential accompaniment, meaning God's existential encompassment of all things. The second is particular accompaniment between God and human beings, which has three levels: God's accompaniment with humanity in general; His accompaniment with the purified elect through the granting of purity and self-disclosure; and His accompaniment with the prophets through confirmation of their missions.To explain the relationship between God and creation, al-Ghazālī employs the expressions "the existent that appears nonexistent" and "the nonexistent that appears existent." Ibn ʿArabī uses the doctrine of the unity of being to explain sustaining accompaniment. He regards the universe and all contingent beings as manifestations of the divine names and attributes. God is manifest in everything, yet nothing is identical with the Divine Essence. Al-Ghazālī denies that divine accompaniment is corporeal, spatial, or temporal and strongly stresses God's transcendence from such limitations. He also uses the metaphor of light to explain it. Ibn ʿArabī combines divine incomparability with similarity, arguing that an exclusive emphasis on incomparability limits God, whereas an exclusive emphasis on similarity leads to polytheism. Drawing on the hadith of nearness through obligatory and supererogatory acts, both thinkers also discuss God's particular accompaniment with human beings. The saints serve as intermediaries of divine grace between God and creation; Ibn ʿArabī describes such saints through the concept of the Perfect Human. Al-Ghazālī defines the human–divine relationship within servitude and worship, whereas Ibn ʿArabī explains it ontologically through divine self-disclosure and the unity of being.

**Conclusion**

Divine accompaniment occupies a prominent place in the works of al-Ghazālī and Ibn ʿArabī. Al-Ghazālī employs the concept of sustaining accompaniment and strongly emphasizes divine incomparability. He accepts similarity only within the limits permitted by the Qurʾān, particularly through the metaphor of light. His approach is spiritual, ethical, and educational, connecting divine accompaniment with obedience, servitude, and practical mysticism. Ibn ʿArabī offers an ontological analysis grounded in the unity of being and the manifestation of the divine names. In his thought, divine accompaniment is the point at which incomparability and similarity converge. It is neither merely an external presence nor an entirely abstract concept, but a synthesis of both. Accordingly, while al-Ghazālī and Ibn ʿArabī both affirm God's accompaniment with creation, they explain it through different perspectives and conceptual frameworks.

**Keywords:** Ibn ʿArabī; Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī; divine accompaniment; sustaining accompaniment; unity of being.