All praise is due to God, who is great and greatest of all; who is eternal and most original of all; who is the knower of all things and whose knowledge is most comprehensive; who is wise and the wisest of all; who is merciful and the most merciful of all beings; who is benevolent and the most benevolent; who is forgiving and the most forgiving; 'He who imparted knowledge through the Pen and taught man what he did not know before'—'Upon thee hath God (bestowed) great favours.' I recite His praises on His great benedictions and offer thanks to Him for His incessant gifts. I bear witness to the fact that there is no God but Allah; He is all alone and there is nobody to share power with Him; and that Mohammad (may God bestow His peace and benedictions on him) is His servant and messenger, he who was endowed with pure character, brilliant miracles, mighty proof, and naked sword. May God bestow His peace and blessings on him and his progeny and companions who were persons of high aspirations and endowed with many praise-worthy qualities and excellences. Further, all the companions of the Prophet and their successors may enjoy God's blessings till the Day of Judgment, and they may enjoy it in abundance.
May God grant you eternal life and perpetual happiness.
You have asked me to convey to you whatever I can of the
principles ('secrets') of the Philosophy of Illumination
taught by (our) master, the great Abū 'Ali Ibn Sīnā. Know
then that one who has a desire for an unambiguous truth
must seek it and strive his utmost for its attainment.

Your question has created in me a condition which,
thank God, has led me to the observation of a state which
had not hitherto come under my experience. It has been the
cause of my access to a stage which is so strange that
neither tongue nor language can express it because it pertains
to a way which is different from these ways, and is related
to a world which is other than their world. However, this
state is full of such joy and ecstasy, such pleasure and
contentment that whosoever reaches it and finds access to
any of its boundaries, finds it impossible to conceal its
reality and to hide its secrets. Such an ecstasy and joy
overpowers him that he is compelled to give expression to
that condition although he may not be well versed in learning.

This expression is in outline, not indetails. He talks
about these things without learning any sciences. Thus
some of them said in this condition: "I am Holy, How great is my status!" Some one else said:
("I am the Truth")\(^4\). Another said: ("There is nobody in my clothes except God")\(^5\). As for (our) master Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī (may peace of God be on him), he used this couplet to express his condition on reaching this state:

نَفَانِمَا كَانَ مَالَسَتُ اِذْكَرْهُ
فَضَّلَ شَهْرًا وَلَا خَالِ عَنْ الْخَيْرِ

("What has happened has happened; I do not talk about it. Think of it in a favourable way but do not ask me about its report.")

In fact, the enlightenment had made him regardful of proper limits and knowledge had given him true insight.

Also consider the statement of Abū Bakr b. al-Sa‘īgh\(^6\) which he has made in connection with the discussion of the attribute of being united (with God). He says:

"When the meaning intended through this writing is understood, it will be clear that all the teachings of the current sciences cannot be of the same level. A person who understands this meaning attains to a position where he finds himself in opposition to all previous immaterial beliefs. And this condition is too great to be related to physical life. In fact, it is one of those states of the
blessed ones which are free from the complexity of physical life and which deserve to be called the Divine states which God (Holy be His name) bestows on whomsoever of his servants He likes."

This is the position to which Abū Bakr Ibn al-Sā'igh has alluded and which is reached through theoretical knowledge and conceptual investigation. And there is no doubt that Ibn al-Sā'igh had reached this stage but had not advanced beyond it.

As regards the position to which we have alluded in the beginning, it differs from this state - although the two are the same in that nothing is revealed in that state which is contrary to what is revealed in this one. However, they differ in respect of the greater clarity (of the state we have described), and the observation of the latter state is possible by means of something that can be described as a 'faculty' in only a metaphorical sense. For we do not find words either in the vocabulary of the common people or in the terminology of the specialists which could describe what it is by means of which such an observation is performed. So the state to which we have referred, and for which your question has stirred our yearnings, is one of those things to which Ibn Sīnā has drawn our attention in these words:
"When the yearnings and efforts (of the seeker) reach a particular stage he catches glimpses of the light of Truth—these pleasant glimpses are like flashes of lightning appearing to him in all splendour at one moment and disappearing at another. As he advances in his endeavours these flashes of light have greater frequency, and at last he is overtaken by them without any efforts on his part. Whatever now he may see his attention is thence directed to the realm of sanctity. For it reminds him of some of the (divine) things, which gives him an overwhelming experience on account of which he sees God in everything. His endeavour now brings him to a position in which his time is changed into Peace and Tranquility for him. One who was bewildered formerly acquires intimate understanding and the flashes (of the Divine light) that used to meet his eyes now change into clear and steady light. And he attains to an enduring knowledge of God which may be described as an enduring company. This condition endures until he passes through the graded phases described by Ibn Sīnā, and finally attains to the position where the Mystery (i.e. the heart) within him becomes a bright mirror for him to hold up towards the Divine Truth. Then the most excellent pleasures descend upon him, and he is pleased with himself on account of the impressions the Divine Truth has produced on him. In this state, he has a vision of himself on one hand, and
the vision of God, on the other. This causes him to be confused and vacillating for a while. Then he loses sight of himself, attending to the realm of sanctity alone. Now if he looks back upon himself, he does so because he sees the self as an observer of God. At this stage is the Union (with God) realised."

So these are the states Ibn Sīnā (may God be pleased with him) had to describe. What he meant by all this was that such states are to be experienced intuitively — not by means of theoretical comprehension that comes as a result of deductions in the form of syllogism, or as a result of arranging the premises and drawing the conclusion.

Now to take an illustration that will show you the difference between the knowledge that is possessed by these people and the one possessed by others. Try to imagine the condition of a man blind since his birth. Suppose, that (inspite of this disability) his nature is sound, his judgement mature, his memory strong, and his mind steady and balanced. Suppose that this person, since his birth, has lived in a particular city, and with the help of his other senses he has been acquainted with various citizens, with many species of animals and minerals, with the streets in the city and with the highways that lead to it, and with
the houses and the market places in it. He knows all these things so well that he is able to walk unguided in any part of the city, and he recognizes any one whom he meets on his way, taking care to be the first to offer greetings.

Further, he even recognizes the colours with the help of their descriptions and some terms which signify those colours. On reaching this stage suppose he is endowed with sight and visual perception. Now he takes a walk, going all around in the city. But he does not find anything contrary to what he has believed all the time. He does not find it necessary to question anything in his new experience. He finds the colours conformable to the marks by which they were formerly represented to him. However, his new experience is marked by two important things one of which follows from the other. Those two things are great clarity, and intense pleasure.

Now, those persons who have not yet attained to the stage of sainthood (الَّذِينَ) are in a state comparable to the condition of this man when he was blind. The 'colours' they know in this state, from their descriptions, are those things which Abu Bakr b. al-Sa'igh found too great to relate to the physical life, and which (he said) are vouchsafed by God to whomsoever of His servants He pleases.
On the contrary, the latter state of the blind man (to whom vision has been restored) is comparable to the condition of those observers who have attained to sainthood, and on whom God has bestowed what we said can be described as a 'faculty' in only a metaphoric sense. And sometimes, although rarely, a man is found who has always been in possession of penetrating insight, open eyes, and who might therefore have no need for theoretical knowledge. When I speak to you (may God honour you with His love) of the knowledge possessed by the people who depend on theoretical methods, I do not mean things of the physical world that may be known to them. Nor, in speaking of the knowledge possessed by saints do I mean the metaphysical things that may be known to them. These two objects of knowledge are very different from one another and neither can be confused with the other. On the contrary, by the knowledge in possession of those who depend on theoretical methods I mean the metaphysical things known to them, as was the case with Abū Bakr. It is necessary that this knowledge of theirs should be true and valid. Only then this knowledge can be theoretically compared with the knowledge of the saints who concern themselves with the same things - with the addition of greater clarity and intense pleasure. Abū Bakr has disparaged the saints for their references to this (additional) pleasure, and he thinks that it is a product
of fantasy. He has promised that he would give a clear exposition of the state of those who have attained to Highest Happiness. It would be only proper if we said to him, "Do not pass judgment on the permissibility of a thing which you have not tasted. Do not tread upon the necks of the devotees of Truth (صديقين)." As a matter of fact, this man did nothing of the sort, and he never fulfilled his promise. Perhaps, as he has said, he had little time at his disposal, and perhaps the preoccupations of his stay at Wehran (وهران) came in his way. Or he might have thought that if he described these things, he would perhaps have to disclose many facts which could lend substance to criticisms of his life and career, or which would contradict the views (he was known to hold) - on how people should be induced to aim at more and more of wealth, employing all kinds of devices in order to gain possession of it.

Our discourse has gone (but not without some necessity) into questions other than what you sought to know. However, it has been made clear that the thing you are interested in must he identified with one of the following two purposes.

First, you may enquire concerning what is perceived by the people who have attained to sainthood, and to whom
direct observation or intuition or 'immediate presence' can, therefore, be vouchsafed. This is something the nature of which cannot be described in a book. Whenever someone intends to describe it, and uses elaborate words in speech or in writing to that end, his description will change its nature - into something that belongs to the other kind of (i.e. theoretical) knowledge. For that experience, when it is clothed in words or sounds and is thus drawn closer to the phenomenal world, cannot retain any feature or aspect of its original condition. It is for this reason that it has been described in diverse ways, and many people who spoke of it went astray from the straight path — wrongly thinking, however, that it was others who have gone astray. And all this has been due to the fact that this experience is unlimited and that it leads up to the Divine presence which reaches out far and wide and which encompasses other things but is not encompassed by them.

Now to explain the second one of their purposes beyond which, we said, your question could not go. What this means is that you can seek to define the state in question after the manner of the masters of the theoretical methods. This, may God honour you with His friendship, is something which is susceptible of being set forth in books
and which can be described in various ways. But it is more rare than red brimstone — particularly in our part of the world. For it is of such a strange character that the little of it that can be mastered, is mastered only by a few individuals one after another. And one who has mastered it will henceforth speak of it to people only in symbols. For the upright Islamic Faith and the shari'at revealed to Muḥammad have discouraged and forbidden all enquiries into it.

You should not suppose that the philosophy which has reached us through the books of Aristotle and Abu Naṣr al-Ṭabarī and through Kitāb al-Shifa can meet the need you have felt. Nor has any one of the philosophers of Andalusia expressed himself on this subject in an adequate manner. Men of superior nature, who lived in Andalusia before the spread of Logic and Philosophy, devoted their lives to mathematical sciences. They attained to a high position in these sciences but it was not possible for them to attend to other sciences. Their successors made some advance over them in Logic; but even their enquiries failed to lead them to real perfection. One of them has said:

بِيْحَ بِنْ عَلِيمِ الْبَرْزِي
أَنْتَا مَا حَيْثًا مِنْ مَزِيد
حَقَيْقَةَ يَعْجِزُ تَحْصِيلَهَا
وَيَأَتِ اللَّهُ تَحْصِيلَهَا
"I have come to the realisation that all our knowledge is of two kinds; One, that aspires for Reality which defies all attempts to know it, and the other that aims at the Unreal whose knowledge serves no purpose."

After them other people came who were more profound and who could take a closer view of reality. Of these, Abū Bakr b. al-Sa'īgh had the most penetrating mental powers, the soundest methods of enquiry, and the truest insight. But the world diverted his attention (from Philosophy), and his life came to an end before he could have displayed the treasures of his knowledge or revealed the hidden elements of his wisdom. Most of his works which are available are fragmentary and incomplete, eg. his 'Kitāb al-Nafs' the Tadbīr al-Mutāwḥhid, and works on Logic and Physics. As regards his complete works they are short tracts and reductions. Making a clear reference to his own limitations in this respect he has said that the meanings he had sought to demonstrate in his treatise on Union (رسالة الإتصال) will not be quite apparent from his words without diligent efforts and hard strivings (on the part of his readers). Further, he admits that in some cases the arrangement of what he has to say in that book is not perfect, and that, if time had permitted he would have been prepared to change
it. So this is what we have learnt about the knowledge possessed by this man. We did not meet him personally. Nor have we come across any books written by some persons who might not be considered as his equals, but who might have been his contemporaries. As regards the next generation (i.e. our own), some persons who belong to it have yet to develop, or their development has stopped short of the fullness (of its measure). There may be some others but we have received no information about them.

As regards the works of Abū Naṣr (al-Ṭabarī) which are available to us, most of them are devoted to Logic. His writings on Philosophy are full of many doubts. In his al-Millat al-Fādilah (the Virtuous Community), he has asserted that the viscious souls subsist for ever — amidst ever-lasting pains — after the death (of the bodies). On the other hand, in his al-Sīyāsāt al-Madāniyyah (Politics), he asserts that only the perfect souls are immortal, whereas the viscious ones succumb and pass into nothingness (after physical death). In his Ethics, he has described what man's Happiness consists in. According to him, it is realized in this life on the earth. This is followed by works which purport to say that any other thing (than the kind of Happiness in which he believes) that may have been mentioned (by some one else) must be considered as nonsense
or as old wives' tales. This shows that he would have
call mankind despair of God's mercy; for in consigning both
the virtuous and the wicked to non-Being, he has placed
them on one and the same footing. This is too great a
mistake to allow its after effects to be redressed, too
deep an injury to allow the wounds to heal. There are
some other things, e.g. the hypercritical character of
his belief in prophecy which he asserts to be ascribable
only to the faculty of imagination (ترب خياله), and which
he considers as inferior to philosophy, which have been
stated by him in clear terms, but which we need not discuss
at present.

As regards Aristotle's works Shaikh Abū 'Ali (Ibn
Sinā) has taken upon himself the task of interpreting them,
and following his point of view. In his Kitāb al-Shifā he
has actually subscribed to Aristotle's views, making the
latter's philosophical methods his own. But in the begin­
ing of that book he has also made it clear that the
contents of that book must be distinguished from the Truth
as he knew it, for he has written that book after the
manners of the Peripatetic philosophers. He has further
said that one who sought after the indisputable truth must
refer to his work on the Oriental Philosophy. Any one
who takes care to read Ibn Sinā's Kitāb al-Shifā and
Aristotle's works will see that in most cases the two are in agreement — although the Shifa contains many things which cannot be traced back to Aristotle. In any case, if one takes in all the teachings of Kitāb al-Shifa and of Aristotle's works, in the apparent sense of their contents, without their hidden meanings dawning upon his mind, even then (as Ibn Sīnā warns us in the Shifa) perfection will be beyond his reach.

As regards the works of Shaikh Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, the fact that they have been addressed to the masses of men has caused him to bind something in one place and to loosen it in another. He calls a thing heretical in one place, but regards it as permissible in another. For instance, two of the opinions of the Philosophers on account of which he has subjected them to Takfīr (or verdict of heresy) in his Tahāfut al-Falsāfīya are their denial of the resurrection of bodies, and their attempt to confine Reward and Punishment (in the Hereafter) to the souls alone. However, in the beginning of his book called the Mīdhān he tells us that these very opinions are held by the leading Sufīs. And in his book called al-Munqīd min al-Dalāl ʿal Mufassīhāl. Ahwāl (Means of Deliverance from Ignorance and the way of the Eloquent Expression of the Mystical States) he says that his own beliefs are like those of
the sufīs, and that he had arrived at that position as a result of prolonged investigations. So there are many things of this kind which can be perceived by such readers of his books as many study them closely and intently. Actually, he has tried to explain his practice (in this respect) in the latter part of his book Mīdhan al'Amal. For he says that opinions are of three kinds. First, there are opinions which represent a man's attempt to go with the masses with regard to all they may believe. Secondly, there are those opinions that represent what one would say to persons who ask him questions and make enquiries with a view to being enlightened. Thirdly, there may be opinions which pass between a man and his own self, and which cannot be shared by any one else unless the two should be co-believers in it. Having given all these explanations, Al-Ghazālī says:

"Even if these words contribute nothing but such as may throw your inherited beliefs in doubt, that would be no mean advantage to gain. For he who does not doubt does not think, and he who does not think cannot see. And he who does not see remains in the state of blindness and bewilderment."
Finally, he quotes the following lines by way of illustration:

(Take what you see, and give up what you may have heard.

When the splendour of the Sun is in sight, you have no need for the light of Saturn.)

Such, then, are Ghazali's teachings. Most of them have been expressed in symbolic and indirect terms. Hence they are quite uninstructive to his readers --- unless they should be able to bring their own insight to bear upon them, and should have heard them from their author, or should be prepared to understand them by means of their excellent natures which are responsive to the slightest hint. In his Kitāb al-Jawāhir Ghazali tells us that he has written some books which ought to be withheld from unqualified persons, and which are devoted to the Truth in the most explicit terms. Here in Audalusia we have no knowledge of these books. There are some books which have been claimed by some persons to be the 'withheld' books; but the claim is not true. One of these books is called al-Ma'ārif al-'Aqliyah (Particulars of Rational Knowledge). Another is called Kitāb al-Nafkh w'al Taswīyah. In addition to
there is also a collection of short treatises. Although these books contain some suggestive things, they do not add very much to what is already known (about Ghazâlî's teachings from the ideas interspersed in his well-known works. For instance, his al-Maqsad al-Asna contains thoughts which are profounder than the teachings of these books; and Ghazâlî has indicated in explicit terms that the Maqsad is not one of the 'withheld' books. It follows, then, that the books in question (which have come to us) are not the 'withheld' books.\textsuperscript{13}

Some of Ghazâlî's successors have been misled by a passage in the latter part of his book al-Mishkâ\textsuperscript{14} which has caused them to imagine that its author must have fallen into grave error whence he could not have escaped. This refers to the passage in which Ghazâlî describes those people who have lost sight of the divine Light. From this description Ghazâlî has proceeded to describe those people who have come very close to the divine Light. Speaking of them, he says that they must have realized that this Magnificent Being is characterized by an attribute that is incompatible with pure Unity. His critics have made use of these words to show that he believes in some sort of plurality within the divine Being (may He be exalted far above what unjust men say of Him).
For our part, we have no doubt that Shaikh Abū Hāmid (Ghazālī) is one of those persons who have attained to the highest degree of Happiness, and who have arrived at these noble and sacred positions (i.e. stages in mystical progress). But his 'withheld' books which are devoted to esoteric knowledge, are not available to us. Hence the Truth to which we have attained has not been gathered from them. All the knowledge we possess has been derived from a comparative study of the writings of Ghazālī and of those of Shaikh Abū 'Ali (Ibn Sīnā). Further more, we have tried to view these thinkers in relation to the opinions which have appeared in our own times, and which have found favour with those who pursue philosophical studies. As a result of all these things, the Truth made itself clear to us by theoretical methods in the first instance. Lastly, however, we have acquired in a small measure this familiarity with the method of direct observation which we possess at present. It is for this reason that we consider ourselves well equipped to express our views in such a way that they may be recorded for posterity. And you render us a service, O Interrogator, in that you are the first person to whom we proffer as a gift whatever we may possess, and whom we take into confidence with regard to it. We are doing it because of the sincerity of your friendly attitude and the outstanding
qualities of your honesty. However, we must warn you that our presentation of things that we have come to know shall be of no avail if we speak to you of its final results, without showing you how its basic principles have been established. The only thing such a presentation can give you will consist of a mere outline of dogmatic beliefs. And even this much you will get because your friendly and benevolent feelings for us will make you have a favourable opinion of us, without realizing that you should accept our words as they deserve to be accepted. It does not give us pleasure or satisfaction to see you take such an attitude. We want to see you on a higher level; for this lower point of view is not sufficient for salvation even—not to talk of the attainment of the Highest stages. We want to lead you through ways we have already traversed in the course of our wanderings (mystical experiences), and to swim with you across oceans we have learnt to cross—so that all this experience may lead you whithersoever it has led us. And then you will observe and realize, through your insight, what we have observed and realized. This will enable you to know things in your own way, independently of our knowledge of them.

But all this must take a definite and adequate period of time, and it is necessary that you should pursue
it in complete freedom from distractions and through the concentration of all the enthusiasms you may devote to it. Should your resolve be genuine, and your intention to devote all your energy to this problem sound, then at the break of dawn your vigilant activity will find its gratification, and you will gather the blessed effects of your diligence. You will have striven to please your Lord, and He will be pleased with you. And I am at your service with regard to whatever you may be seeking and whatever may have attracted your attention and choice. And I hope that in the quest that follows I may help you to find your way to the path of supreme Meditation which is the safest and the most free from danger and mishaps. And now if you can betake yourself for a short while to things which encourage and call for an approach to such a path, I am going to tell you the story of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan (the Living One, son of the wakeful) and of Asāl and Salamān whom Shaikh Abū 'Ali (Ibn Sīnā) has mentioned. For in their stories there is an instructive example for those who possess intelligence and "a reminder to one who has a heart, and devotes (his) hearing (to the truth), and bears witness to it."
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The last two sentences have been borrowed from the Qur'an. Ibn Ṭufayl often fits the Qur'anic verses in his own language. The original verses are as follows:

الذى علم بالقلام عبد الإنسان ماله يعلم، وكان فضل الله علیه عظیما

2. It was customary with these philosophers to preface the exposition of their philosophies with a question from a real or imaginary friend. The same we find in Al-Ghazālī, Ibn Sīnā and others.

3. The reference is to Ba Yazīd Bustāmī.

4. These are the words of Mansūr Hallāj.

5. The reference is to Junaid of Baghdad. The real words attributed to Junaid are: لِمَا فِي جَمِيعِ سَواةَ But Ibn Ṭufayl has modified them a little.

6. Abū Bakr Ibn al-Sā'igh (d. 1138), an elderly contemporary of Ibn Ṭufayl, is better known as Ibn Bājja or Avempace as he is called in Europe.

7. See Ibn Sīnā's Kitāb al-Ishārat w'al Tanbīḥāt ed. by Sulaymān Dunyār, Cairo 1947, Part iii, Section 9 (Maqāmāt al-'Ārifīn), p. 225 ff. (Ibn Ṭufayl omits some parts of the passage he has cited and there are some discrepancies between the version he has given and the printed text).

9. The reference to "al-Millat al-Fādilah" does not seem to be correct. On the contrary, we find the following passage in al-Madinat al-Fādilah which clearly lays down that the ignorant and the viscious will be completely annihilated.

اما اهل مدن الجاهلية فان ألسهم تبقى غير مستكملة وهو بالاضافة هم الحاكون والمتصرين الى العدم على ما يكون عليه البشائر والسباع والا فاع


10. Here the reference is to al-Fārābī's Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics, as we do not find any independent work written by him on Ethics.

11. Here Ibn Tufayl's criticism of al-Fārābī does not seem to be justified. If we take al-Fārābī's works as a whole we will find that he believes in the possibility of realising Happiness in this life as well as in the next. Its realization in this life is partial and temporary; while in the next life one may have its complete and permanent realization. The case is very much like that of Nirvana of Buddhism.

12. Al-Ghazālī brands the Philosophers with Infidelity for:
   (i) their belief in the eternity of the universe;
   (ii) their denial of God's knowledge of particular things;
   (iii) and their denial of the possibility of the resurrection of the dead.
13. On the authenticity of these books, see W. Montgomery Watt, "The authenticity of the writings attributed to al-Ghazālī", JRAS, London 1952, pp. 24-45.

14. (The Niche of Light) {مشكورة النور} 

15. III: {بوسف} 

16. ٣٤٢: {ق