



Reflections of Al-Ghazali's Thought Spectrum on The Scholarship of East and West

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ABSTRACT

Research on the development and convergence of philosophical ideas has increased significantly in the past decades. Though, this scholarship has concentrated mostly on western philosophical developments, and a plethora of eastern scholarly work on metaphysics has been overruled by the western researchers. On the other hand, a few of the western scholars have emphasized on Muslim thoughts, writings and metaphysical works, denoting it as source for western envisage and conceptualizations. This paper composes reflections of various western and eastern scholars about one of such influential scholars Al-Ghazali in the historical journey of mystical and philosophical developments. A critical review on Al-Ghazali's influence on various dimensions and perspectives have been presented towards end of the discussion. It is anticipated that this conjectural examination will stimulate more informed research among writers and thinkers, who have a global and comparative philosophical interest.

Introduction

Islamic philosophy has imprinted a great impact on the Europe and westernized literature and philosophy. We can find a significant influence of Muslim philosophers in the western debates of metaphysics, psychology and natural philosophy¹, which was revolutionized through translation of Islamic philosophical literature in Latin in the medieval era. The most renowned and influential personalities of Islamic philosophy include Al-Farabi (872-951 AD), Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 AD), Ibn Rushd (1126-1198 AD), Ibn Al-Arabi, (1165-1240 AD), and Ibn Khaldun, (1332-1406 AD),

from whom Al-Ghazali, is considered to have the most significant and wider impact on the both Islamic and Western theology and philosophy.

Al-Ghazali is one of the great thinkers of the Islamic world. His name is Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad Al-Ghazali. He was born in a town in Tus. In the Western world he is also known as his Latinized name Algazelus or Algazel. He was only 24 years old when the Caliph of the time, seeing his ability and intelligence, appointed him as the head of the University of Nizamiyah in Baghdad. At the Nizamiyah University, he showed the strength and breadth of his knowledge and abilities. As the educational system continued, he realized that peace of mind and heart could not be found through mere worldly knowledge and intellect. Then he went to different places for attaining peace of mind and finally he concluded that the path of divinity is only in spirituality. He had explicitly narrated this story in his book *Al-Munqaz Min Al-Dhalal*.

Imam Ghazali was a trainer, a philosopher and by conviction a mystic. He can be truly called a scientific mystic whose religious experiences followed his intense intellectual efforts and rational judgments. He is thus, regarded as a Mujaddid or reviver, and Imam or leader by millions of Muslims today, for the combating the paganistic trend of his days and he was the torch- bearer of rationalistic Muslim renaissance².

The Philosophical Spectrum of Al-Ghazali

It is a significant phenomenon that Imam Ghazali has produced literature on very diverse and multidimensional aspects of life. Impacts of Ghazali's thought were not limited to religion or ethics and morality, but his works influenced the politics of his time to a significant level. He was authorized to formulate the rules and principles of governance and politics by Abbasid Caliphate Mustazhar Billah (1078-1118). For this purpose Ghazali compiled a detailed compendium of rules of governance and politics under the title of "Al-Mustazhari". In this way his political thoughts were accepted as a source of guidance by the contemporary rulers. The same book was equally effective for the rebuttal of dogmatic beliefs of that time and for the presentation of actual essence of Islamic thoughts according to the original sources of the Islam, the Quran and the Sunnah of Holy Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu alaihe wasallam. As mentioned by Bashir

Ahmad Dar (1996)³ Ghazali was highly revered in the courts of Muslim rulers of his time including Seljuks and Abbasids. He was highly respected and rightly known as “Hujjatl-al-Islam” which means logical-defender of Islam, instead of any spiritual title like Qutb or Ghauth, because of his intellectual work for social and human development and providing learned guidance in state affairs for the rulers. His work on economic philosophy and quantum physics has been honoured and respected by the modern era Muslim and western philosophers⁴,

Impacts on the development of modern rationality and logics

Ghazali has influenced the philosophy to a great extent and theological dialect of his time with his progressive and dynamic views and wisdom. His work was accepted, quoted, and referred by the great scholars of Islam like Maulana Rumi (Rumi), Ibn Rushd (Averos), Shaikhul Ishraq, (master of illumination) and Shah Wali-Ullah, the gap who have reflected the rational ideas of Ghazali in their works. He effectively worked for bridging between the tents of Islam and the prevailing philosophy and scientific knowledge. And was accepted and mentioned as a synergizing and integrating power between the eastern and western logic and philosophy. He began his study of the philosophical sciences with logic. He wrote a treatise on the basics of theology and philosophy in which he defended Islam against philosophers such as Ibn Sina.

Influence on Poetry and theological writings

On the other side, various renowned poets and writers like Shaykh Attar, Saadi Sherazi, Hafiz and Iraqi obtained their motivation and creativity from the works of Ghazali. Such scholars studied numerous thoughts of Ghazali and presented in their poetry and writings. Thus Ghazali is known as bridge between the Islamic teachings and contemporary philosophy and science⁵. Ghazali is also considered to be the main source of mysticism in the Persian literature and poetry. (Thomas Adam, 1949) ⁶

Annemarie Schimmel has shown his tribute and respects to Al-Ghazali. She has quoted and mentioned Al-Ghazali's views in her works at various places, directly and indirectly. According to her, Al-Ghazali is the last

highly attributed person in the line of orthodox and classical Sufism. Other than his various renowned works, Al-Ghazali wrote "Ihya ul Uloom" (the Revival of the Religious Sciences), a far reaching work. That set up moderate enchantment against the developing theosophical patterns which would in general liken God and the world and accordingly molded the possibility of millions of Muslims⁷.

While there are similarities between Kant and Imam al-Ghazali in some matters, there are also differences in some issues. For example, like al-Ghazali, and Kant distinguished between phenomena and numina and regarded the physical world of which alone the scientific knowledge in true as the world of phenomena as one categories which to him are equally subjective, applicable, causality, substance, and attribute being excepted by al-Ghazali like him. This close resemblance in philosophical thoughts indicate that Kant was impressed by the ideas and works of Al-Ghazali.

By the twelfth century, most of Imam al-Ghazali's books had been translated into various languages. Although, there are various similarities between the philosophical discussions of Imam al-Ghazali and Kant, but still there are numerous disagreements between their works and thoughts. On the other hand, Lenin's philosophy is a further extended version of Al-Ghazali's thoughts and works⁸. In particular, his renowned book Al-Munqiz was translated into Latin long ago. In addition, his books on logic, physics, and meta-physics were translated into European languages in Europe during and before the twelfth century⁹.

It is important to note that there are many Orthodox mystics, among which Al-Ghazali is considered as one of the most significant mystics. Ghazali was very keen to follow in the field of philosophical and metaphysical systems and its subjects. He wrote various books on theology and metaphysics, which were widely translated and published in various European languages, including Latin. The book Al-Munqiz minad Dalal contains logic, physics and metaphysics, which are very important in the study of ethics and personal development. According to Alfred Guillaume the Christian West was founded by the Evansina aristoteles. The Encyclopedia of Pengetahuan Al-Farabi and Al-Ghaazal, the Gundisals were informed about the many Arabs"¹⁰.

One of Al-Ghazali's significant contribution towards knowledge extension is to revitalize the orthodoxy mystical thoughts and practices¹¹. Al-Ghazali did his best to explore the various philosophical and theological systems, and extend that works in modern lines for his society, which were accordingly translated into a number of European languages, including Latin. His works on Physics Metaphysics and logic was introduced to Europe through the translators till twelfth century A.C. According to Alfred Guillaume, the Christian world became acquainted with Aristotle in the West through Al-Ghazali's work on Ibn-e-Sina, which argued that rationalist ideology gives it a divine connection providing a special spiritual power¹².

Ghazali's reverence in Christian scholarship

Al-Ghazali is highly revered not only by his Muslim contemporaries but also in the Christian scholarship and intellect. According to Alfred Guillaume (1949) Ghazali is among the very rare Muslim scholars who have significant and prominent influence on the west. Known as Hujja tul Islam or the convincing proof of Islam, Ghazali was a light house for several religious and intellectual developments of his time. He was at the same time a mystic, septic, scholar, poet, and writer. It was Ghazali who gave that right place to mysticism. He not only worked in the field of spirituality and ethics but also in enlightened the world by his multidimensional work in law philosophy and theology. In Islamic thought philosophy and literature, Ghazali has gained a high level of reverence as St. Aquinas is considered in Christianity. His works and thoughts are so enormous, universal and un-biased that he is never identified as a Muslim by his works except when talking about religious comparisons.

Veneration of Al-Ghazali in Orthodox Mysticism

The great researcher and author Alfred Guillaume has described al-Ghazali as one of the most authentic writers of Islam. To him, Al-Ghazali is distinguished among other righters of his time for his unmatched thoughts, philosophies and reflections in the field of law, theology of his time. Being professor at Nizamia University of Baghdad he was venerated and regarded by the scholars of all religions and sects of his time, for his impartiality and knowledge ability. While finding books in the support of

orthodox practices and faith, the only writer which one can rely on is Al-Ghazali. You can find various similarities and mutual approvals between Al-Ghazali's work and the renowned orthodox writer St. Thomas on the topics like values of human reason in explicating the truth about divine things, the concept of necessity and contingency and logical and rational proofs of the existence of God.

Sir Thomas Adam urges, that Al-Ghazali has been highly successful in the formation and development of orthodox mysticism, which was apparently almost impossible, otherwise. Al-Ghazali introduced a strong but a tolerant version of conservative thoughts of orthodoxy, open enough to accept humanitarian and contemporary scholastic and scientific reasoning. Thomas Adam says that al-Ghazali's experience of spiritual journey had the status of a classical literature. al-Ghazali considered the prophetic revelations as a substantial source for fundamental human knowledge Imam al-Ghazali traveled to different parts of the world in the search of truth and peace of mind. Eventually he found peace of mind through spirituality

Adam says that Al Ghazali has rightfully presented the concept of souls as a substance in which the qualities and characteristics of God are reflected or mirrored. These characteristic gave him a divine connection by which he gains strength and faces no danger in the physical world. There can be no doubt that Ghazali's works would be among the first to attract the attention of these European scholars. It has now been fully realised that Christian school activism and medieval Christian mysticism derived certain conceptions from Muslims writers among whom Al-Ghazali was included¹³. According to Thomas Adam, The story of Ghazali's Conversion to Sufism, as told by himself, is based on classic of its kinds. Thomas Adam, Sir, *Mysticism, the legacy of Islam* edited by Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume, London, Oxford University press, 1949¹⁴. Tritton is another known admirer of Al-Ghazali and his work on metaphysics and mysticism. He says: Ghazali was acclaimed as the restorer of his age, the great renewed the proof of Islam: hence for word mysticism, rooted on the pillars of Islam, was part of religion¹⁵.

Al-Ghazali is a towering figure in Islam his influence is enormous. Many theologians consider Ghazali as the most influential theologian of

medieval Islam¹⁶. Miguel Asin Palacios wrote the biography of Imam Ghazali with the title of Algazel. He offered the analytical of Ihya-ul-Uloom in his book algazel. He translated of some parts from Tuhaf-ul-Falsafa in Algazel. H. Bauer translated totally Ihya-ul-Uloom-Uddin, he also translated principle of theology (قواعد العقائد) which is the chapter of Ihya-ul-Uloom in his book Die Dogmatic al-Ghazali's H.A. Hames also published a bridged edition of Ihya-ul-Uloom.

Impact on Western Rationalism and Scholastic Works

Raymond Martin has shown high regards for Al-Ghazali's Tuhafa-al-Falsafa, or ambiguity of the rationalists and consolidated an extraordinary agreement for it, which may be a questioning against the rationalists and scholastics of Islam. Raymond has interpreted and explained Algazel's assault on the contemporary rationalists. The religious and mental approach of Al-Ghazali has been accepted and promoted by various Christian scholars, and we can find his name and work referred and quoted in the Christian works at numerous places. Among Algazel's works was a composition on the spot of reason as applied to disclose and the philosophical doctrines. This work presents numerous equals in its contentions and ends with the work of St. Thomas, a reality which can scarcely have more than one clarification.

Impact on Cartesian philosophy

Muslim way of rational thinking had entered to a good extent into the west much before Descartes times. A large portion of Al-Ghazali works had been converted into Latin during the first half of 6th century. Ghazali's thoughts and work has broadly affected the Jewish and Christian scholasticism. The Dominican Raymond Martin had openly utilized the Hebrew interpretation of Tuhafat al-Falsafah, another of al-Ghazali's works and joined a lot of it in his reasons and rationality. Similarly we find that Pascal was profoundly influenced by the considerations and ideas of Al-Ghazali. The impact that al-Ghazali had on present day European idea has not so far been completely valued.

Yet, there is such a lot of inside proof in the most astounding work with Descartes' talk about technique, imprinted in 1047/1637 that is gets difficult to prevent its effect on the dad from getting present day reasoning

in the West. His collection of memoirs has frequently been contrasted with the admissions of St. Augustine. His extraordinary work, the restoration of the strict science and his more modest however vital spiritualist work. The Niche of the Light (مشكوة الانوار), contains the product of his life's works. It is a through assertion of overbearing, good, austere and illuminative religious philosophy and has no adversary in the philosophical writing of Islam.

It is fairly bizarre that Europe had focused on the works of Al-Ghazali and preserved the priceless philosophical thoughts given by him. Although most of Al-Ghazali work was already been translated into latin language till 1150 and was highly influential to form the western thought and philosophical bases, but his masterpiece "al munqidh mina Dalal" was not translated till Descartes times. We can find a great deal of Al-Ghazali's views and beliefs in Descart's work, which provided foundations to the modern philosophy of the west.

Al-Ghazali's autobiography has frequently been contrasted with the confessions of St. Augustine. His incredible work, the restoration of the strict science and his more modest yet vital spiritualist work. The Niche of the Light (مشكوة الانوار), contains the best output of his life's works. It is a thorough assertion of fanatical, good, parsimonious and illuminative philosophy and has no adversary in the religious writing of Islam¹⁷. It becomes surprising to know that overall European scholars have highly regarded the writings of Al-Ghazali as philosophical assets which is well-conserved by Europe till today.

Influence on logic, Physics and metaphysics:

One of the significant aspects of Al-Ghazali's is Algazel set himself to study afresh the several systems of philosophy and theology and embodied his results in works which were translated into Latin. His books on logic, physics, and metaphysics became known through the translators of Toledo in the twelfth century, though so far as concerns metaphysics Alghazel's influence did not equal that of Avicbron, which, being in the main stream of Spanish thought, was firmly established among the Latin until Averroes and St. Thomas drove it into backwater.

Al-Ghazali's role in revival of Islamic Thought

Ibn-ul-Asir mentioned that the masterpiece of Ghazali "Ihgya-ul-Uloom", which he wrote during the tour, had changed the outlook of the religion and society in various ways through such a revolutionized and influential way. All the divines secrets were revealed to him which were unknown to him. This was because of the purification of the heart through passionate and dedication in prayers and devotion to Almighty Allah.

Many of the scholars admired the personality of the Ghazali. Even Allama Nawawi mentioned in his book "Bustan" that despite the busy routine, Ghazali was a very creative and fertile writer. Ghazali wrote a book named as "Ihya-ul-Uloom", in which the content is written by following the Quranic approach. That's why Ihya-ul-Uloom is counted in those books which has the nearest approach to Quran and was read by almost every single person whether it is Muslim, Jew or Christian. That book "Ihya-ul-Uloom" is so much powerful that even Thomas Aquinad and Blaise Pascal were influenced.

Although one can find a lot many dissimilarities and contradictions among Al-Ghazali and Angelie Doctor, yet in any case, they shared a lot of practically speaking. Their aim their feelings and their inclinations were basically something similar. He finished work on broad lawful standards al-Mustasfa, His summary of standard philosophical tenet converted into Spanish. Ghazali, without a doubt, is probably the best scholar of Islam who has enormously added to developing the social, political, moral, and magical viewpoint of Islam. Some of the renowned orientalist include Watt WW¹⁸, Macdonald D.B¹⁹, Smith M, Miguel Asin²⁰ and M. Wall²¹, who specifically highlighted the work of Al-Ghazali and regarded it as a great source of intellectual discourse.

Margret Smith wrote a book by the name of Al-Ghazali. She narrated in her book the influence of al-Ghazali on Jewish scholars in these words: " Upon medieval Jewish though al-Ghazali had a considerable influence. since his ethical teaching was of a closely resemble that of Judaism, and his works was carefully studied by Jewish scholars, not only those writings dealing with philosophy, which had a wide-spread interest and discussion

in Jewish circles, being studied by Maimonides among others, but his mystical works also, and within a century of his death”.

The Book of Imam Ghazali *Mishkat al-Anwar* also influenced Jewish thinkers. So Margaret Smith writes: “The *Mishkat al-Anwar* also around great interest among Jewish thinkers”. Isac Alfost translated *Mishkat al-Anwar* and Musa bin Habib referred this book in 16th century. In the concept of Jewish Qubala also narrated Imam Ghazali's thinking, Margret Smith writes about this resemblance Jewish thinkers and Imam Ghazali in her book. The grouping of the safirot of which the three highest represent the intelligible world of creative ideas, the second the moral world of creative for motion and the third the material world of creative matters. Correspond in some measure to al-Ghazali *Islam al-Malakut*, the *alam al-Jabarut* and the *alam al-Mulk wal-Shahada*. (Al-Ghazali, P.218)

Barhebraeus follows al-Ghazali very closely and quotes frequently from the *Ihya-Uloom-ad-Din*. It seems probable too that he was acquainted with the *Mizan al Amal* and this is likely enough, since it was well-known to Jewish circles and certain of his expressions suggest an acquaintance also with Al-Ghazali's *al-Risalat al-Ladunniyya* and the *Kimiya al-Saadat*. The truth, then lay with the mystics and it was Ghazali's personal experience of this truth that inspired the great religious revival and example of his works, notably the *Ihya* brought about in circles hitherto unfriendly to mysticism. Al-Ghazali's greatest work is the revival of the religious sciences. In 40 books he explained the doctrines and practices of Islam and showed how these can be made the basis of a profound devotional life, leading to the higher stages of Sufism²². He is prominent Islamic jurist theologian and, mystic, and was one of the most powerful minds and important figures in the history of Islam.

Western scholars were so attracted by his account of his spiritual development that they paid more attention to his work than other Muslim Thinkers. Von Hammer published the book of Imam Ghazali *Ayyuh-al-Walad* (أيها الولد) with original text of translation. Abraham bar chosdai translated in Hebrew language of *Bidaya Tul Hidayah* (بداية الهداية) and *Mizan-ul-Amal* (ميزان العمل) which published in 1839. Barbier de Maynard translated

Al-Tafarqa Bain-al-Islam Wal-Zandaqa (التفرقه بين الاسلام و الزنداقه) in French language.

Conclusion:

Imam Ghazali was not only a philosopher but he was also a great mystic, spiritualist and metaphysic. Imam al-Ghazali not only revitalized the knowledge and study of Sufism but also eradicated the flaws and glitches found in it. Because of his revivalist ideas, Metaphysics and spirituality which gained a central place in Islamic thought. These supreme ideas of Imam Ghazali's influenced not only Muslim thinkers but also non-Muslim thinkers who benefited greatly from his books, thoughts and works. We can find uncountable points and issues where Non-Muslim thinkers referred to Imam al-Ghazali's renowned books of metaphysics and spirituality, including *Ihya-ul-Uloom*, *Meezan-ul-Amal*, *Ayyuhal-Walad*, and *Al-Munqid-minad-Dalal*, etc. It was only a century after his demise, that his books were translated into many languages. He not only bring about this revolution in mysticism, but he also reformed and renewed these sciences by removing the flaws found in Greek philosophy, logic and theology. Hence, based on the literature, we can say that not only did the East benefit from Imam al-Ghazali's ideas, but the West also benefited greatly from his great ideas.

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