

Al-Ghazali's Theory of Real Knowledge: An Exploration of Knowledge Integration in Islamic Epistemology through Contemporary Perspectives

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Abstract

Al-Ghazala's theory of knowledge is based on his distinction between two types of knowledge: knowledge of the senses and knowledge of the intellect. Knowledge of the senses is based on someone's perception of the external world and knowledge of intellect is on our rational understanding of the world. His theory of knowledge has been influential in Islamic thought. It has been used to justify the study of both religious and secular knowledge. This research aims to explore Al-Ghazali's theory of real knowledge and elucidate the concept of knowledge and its integration features in grounding Islamic knowledge according to the contemporary theories of epistemology. The study delves into Al-Ghazali's perspectives on knowledge, analyzing and interpreting them in light of modern knowledge theories. The research finds that the cognitive integration features in Al-Ghazali's philosophy lie in the integration of knowledge sources, methods, sciences, and scholars. This is achieved through a comprehensive review of some of Al-Ghazali's works, as well as relevant studies, books, and research about his contributions to Islamic epistemology. Al-Ghazali encourages scholars to collaborate and integrate their knowledge to attain true understanding, a principle evident in this research through the exploration of modern epistemological concepts. The research utilized both inductive and descriptive methods to identify the characteristics of knowledge and demonstrate its integration aspects in Al-Ghazali's teachings. The research is structured into an introduction and three main sections: the first section introduces Al-Ghazali and his era, the second section explores the concept of knowledge and its integration in Islamic epistemology according to Al-Ghazali, and the third section examines knowledge sources, methods, types of knowledge, and scholars in Al-Ghazali's philosophy.

Keywords: *Al-Ghazali, Knowledge, Knowledge Integration, Sources And Methods*

INTRODUCTION

The exploration of knowledge has been a central concern for thinkers in both the past and the present, representing a vital facet of civilization. Knowledge stands as the highest function of humanity, setting humans apart from other creatures and forming the foundation of their stewardship on Earth. The subject of knowledge has captivated numerous Muslim scholars, philosophers, and theologians, leading them to delve into its various aspects and produce extensive works on the subject.

Among the prominent figures in Islamic thought, Al-Ghazali stands out as one of the early pioneers who laid the foundations and principles of knowledge. Driven by an insatiable thirst for scientific truth amidst conflicting opinions and discordant factions. Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) was a Persian Muslim theologian, jurist, philosopher, and mystic. He is considered one of the most influential thinkers in Islamic history. His work has been studied and debated by scholars for centuries. One of al-Ghazali's most important contributions to Islamic thought was his theory of real knowledge. In this theory, al-Ghazali argues that there are two types of knowledge: knowledge of the senses and knowledge of the intellect. Knowledge of the senses is based on what we perceive through our senses. Knowledge of the intellect is based on reason and reflection. Al-Ghazali argues that knowledge of the senses is not sufficient for real knowledge. He writes: The senses are like a mirror that reflects the world to us. But the mirror does not understand what it reflects. Only the intellect can understand the world. Al-Ghazali also argues that knowledge of the intellect is not sufficient for real knowledge. He writes: The intellect can only understand the world through concepts. But concepts are like shadows. They are not the real thing. Al-Ghazali

argues that the only way to achieve real knowledge is to integrate knowledge of the senses and knowledge of the intellect. He writes: The intellect must use the senses to perceive the world. But the intellect must also use reason to understand the world. Only then can we achieve real knowledge. Al-Ghazali's theory of real knowledge has been influential in Islamic thought for centuries. It has been used to justify a variety of approaches to education and scholarship. It has also been used to explain the relationship between faith and reason. Al-Ghazali's theory of real knowledge is still relevant today. It can be used to help us understand the nature of knowledge and the relationship between faith and reason. It can also be used to help us develop a more integrated approach to education and scholarship. In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in al-Ghazali's work. This is due in part to the growing interest in Islamic philosophy and theology. It is also due in part to the growing interest in the integration of knowledge. Al-Ghazali's work can provide us with valuable insights into the nature of knowledge and the relationship between faith and reason. It can also provide us with valuable insights into the integration of knowledge.

Al-Ghazali dedicated himself mentally, academically, and intellectually to address every problem and examine each group of his era. His objective was to distinguish between truth and falsehood and thereby provide Islamic knowledge that would benefit the Muslim community from his time to the present day.

Al-Ghazali expounded on his theory of knowledge in several of his works, such as "Ihya Ulum al-Din", "Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal", "Mizan al-'Amal", and "Al-Qistas al-Mustaqim". In these writings, he discussed the measure of knowledge and refuted the theories of knowledge put forth by esotericists and philosophers. His understanding of knowledge emerged through the clarification of its concept and integration features in grounding Islamic knowledge, encompassing its possibility, sources, methods, and the integration of its sciences. Al-Ghazali also called upon scholars, in all their disciplines, to embrace integration—a feat that other scholars, including philosophers and theologians, were unable to attain and articulate as effectively as Imam Al-Ghazali did.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts analytical and descriptive research approach to investigate Al-Ghazali's theory of real knowledge and its integration features within the context of Islamic epistemology, while also drawing comparisons with contemporary epistemological theories. To begin with, a comprehensive review of Al-Ghazali's original works forms the foundation of this research. His relevant writings, treatises, and philosophical works are thoroughly examined to gain insight into his conceptualization of knowledge and the underlying principles of its integration. Additionally, other relevant scholarly literature, studies, books, and research related to Al-Ghazali's contributions to Islamic epistemology are consulted to ensure a comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of the subject matter.

The research primarily focuses on qualitative analysis, where Al-Ghazali's ideas are meticulously examined and interpreted in the light of modern epistemological concepts. This qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the cognitive integration features in Al-Ghazali's philosophy concerning the amalgamation of knowledge sources, methods, sciences, and scholars. Furthermore, this study employs an inductive method to identify and derive characteristics of knowledge as elucidated by Al-Ghazali himself.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ghazali,s complete name is Zain Al-Din Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Tusi, known as Al-Ghazali, the Shafi'i scholar, the author of numerous works, and an exceptionally intelligent individual. Al-Ghazali was born in Tus in the year 450 AH / 1058 CE. The name "Al-Ghazali" is attributed to the village of Ghazl al-Suf or Ghazala, a village near Tus where he was buried. He passed away in the year 505 AH, in Tus. (Dahabi, 1900, vol,19, p.322vol,19, p.322-323).

Imam Al-Ghazali initially acquired knowledge in his hometown before journeying to Nishapur in the company of a group of students. There, he became a companion of Imam Al-Juwayni, excelling in jurisprudence in a relatively short period. He also demonstrated exceptional skills in rhetoric and debate, which made him widely recognized and admired. He then engaged in scholarly writing and subsequently moved to the Sultan's camp, where he caught the attention of Nizam al-Mulk. Impressed by his knowledge, Al-Ghazali was appointed to teach in Baghdad when he was around thirty years old. He began to compose works in various fields, including principles of religion, jurisprudence, theology, logic, philosophy. (Alijumaa, 2002, 786).

Al-Ghazali was an exceptional prodigy, displaying dedication in his studies, memorization, and profound comprehension, leading him to excel in various fields such as jurisprudence, dialectics, theology, principles of religion, principles of jurisprudence, logic, philosophy. (Alijumaa, 2002, 788). His brilliance and insightful vision allowed him to delve into the subtle meanings and spiritual guidance, harmonizing between apparent knowledge and deeper truths while engaging in persuasive arguments. (Dahabi, 1900, vol,19, p.322vol,19, p.786-788).

Regarding his journeys, after the passing of Imam Al-Juwayni, Al-Ghazali left Nishapur for the court of Nizam al-Mulk, intending to teach at his institution in Baghdad. He impressed the scholars there and was highly esteemed and honored by Nizam al-Mulk, who appointed him to teach at his Madrasah. Eventually, he embarked on a pilgrimage to the Holy Kaaba and sought the counsel of his brother regarding teaching. Upon his return, he traveled to Damascus, where he immersed himself in learning at the mosque's corner. Later, he traveled to Jerusalem and devoted himself to worship, distancing himself from people and seeking solitude. He then proceeded to Egypt and resided in Alexandria for some time. He had intended to sail to the Maghreb region to meet Yusuf ibn Tashfin, the ruler of Marrakech. However, he changed his plans upon hearing the news of his death and returned to his hometown, Tus, where he focused on learning, worship, and writing books. (Dahabi, 1900, vol,19, p.322vol,19, p.786-788).

The Era of Imam Al-Ghazali:

Al-Ghazali is considered one of the prominent figures of the fifth century AH (11th century CE). The fifth century AH was marked by significant social, intellectual, cultural, and political developments. The Abbasid caliphate had declined, leading to weakness and disintegration in its later stages, with the caliphs being controlled by princes and courtiers. Furthermore, the proliferation of preachers and greedy leaders contributed to the political weakening of the state. The prevalence of various conflicting ideas and opinions, from Mu'tazilites to Ismailis and multiple philosophical schools, added to the overall chaos and distancing from the true understanding of the Quran, its Sharia, and led to corruption and political unrest. This situation resulted in fierce disputes and conflicts among the diverse groups and sects, including Hanbalis, Shiites, Shafi'is, Hanafis, Sufis, and Ash'aris. (Faiz Ahmad,1988, p. 32).

One of the significant developments in Islamic intellectual thought during the fifth century AH was the rise of Ash'ari theology.(Al-Maghribi, 1986,p.49). It became the dominant intellectual movement in Islamic knowledge, with Imam Al-Ghazali being one of its prominent pioneers. Due to their broad cultural background and the Ash'ari method of thought, they were able to

engage with the challenges of their time and address the requirements of progress, leading to the crystallization of a knowledge-based intellectual thought consistent with the Quran and the Prophet's traditions.(Al-Kilani,1985, p.159).

From this backdrop emerged a formidable and eloquent figure, wielding significant influence over people's hearts. Imam Al-Ghazali observed the myriad of sects, factions, and civilizations present in society, studying them and Islam's position before them. He became the Hujjat al-Islam, Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, a powerful advocate and authority in Islamic thought.(Ghareeb,1997, p.23).

Concept of Knowledge and its Integration in Al-Ghazali's Islamic Epistemology:

To comprehend the concept of knowledge and its integration in Al-Ghazali's Islamic epistemology, it is necessary to study his views on knowledge, analyze them, and examine them in the light of contemporary epistemological theories. Knowledge is a pivotal issue upon which Al-Ghazali based his theory. Thus, it is essential to clarify it based on the principle that judgment stems from one's perception.

In terms of language and terminology, "*Alma'arifah*" is derived from the verb "arafa," signifying a state of certainty and contentment with what is known, contrary to "*nukr*," which implies ignorance and denial. Some scholars have considered "*arafa*" as the opposite of "*nakr*."(Ibn Faris,1399, vol, 4, p.281). Al-Fayruzabadi defined knowledge as knowing something, i.e., having knowledge about it.(Al-Jawhari,1990,vol, 4, p.1401).

In the Quran, the term "*Alma'arifah*" is not explicitly mentioned, but its derivatives are found in various forms. For instance, it appears in the past tense as in the verse:

وَجَاءَ إِخْوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ

“And the brothers of Joseph came [seeking food], and they entered upon him; and he recognized them, but he was to them unknown” (Yusuf 58).

It also appears in the present tense, as in the verse:

يَعْرِفُونَ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُونَهَا وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

"They recognize the favor of Allah; then they deny it. And most of them are disbelievers." (An-Nahl 83).

In these verses, knowledge is described as perceiving something through contemplation and understanding its effects.(Al-Isfahani,1996,p.560).

In the terminology of Al-Ghazali, knowledge is defined as certain knowledge that does not admit doubt. It is derived from "*nakira*," signifying name of knowledge, where the prefix "*nakira*" is added to emphasize its quality. Al-Ghazali considered knowledge as related to emotions, manifested in the heart's influence, which then impacts the physical senses. He expressed knowledge as: It is the same as closeness, which takes hold of the heart and leaves an impression on the physical senses. Thus, knowledge is like seeing fire, and recognition is like feeling its warmth. Knowledge, in comparison to mere information, penetrates deeper into the heart and permeates the physical senses.

Meaning of Knowledge:

Al-Ghazali defined knowledge by saying: Knowledge is the science that does not accept doubt, and in custom, it is the name of the science presented as a sphere.(Al-Ghazali,n.d. p.111). He considered knowledge to be related to emotions, where it manifests as the heart being affected in a way that extends to the limbs. He expressed it by saying: As for knowledge, it is the same as closeness, which seizes the heart and affects it, and this impact extends to the limbs. So, knowledge is like seeing fire, for example, and recognition is like being burnt by it. However, knowledge delves deeper than mere information, as it penetrates the hearts and flows through the limbs. (Al-Ghazali,n.d. p.111).

Definition of Knowledge and Science According to Al-Ghazali:

In his book "Al-Mustasfa," Al-Ghazali presented various definitions of knowledge and, after analyzing them, rejected them, providing an alternative definition. He excluded the verbal definition of knowledge on the basis that a definition must indicate the essence. He also rejected defining science by its requisites but attempted to distinguish it from other mental states such as ignorance, belief, imitation, and conjecture. He defined it as: Firm belief that leaves no room for doubt, in line with the known and based on insight, unveiling, and expansion. It is characterized by stability in the face of skepticism. (Al-Ghazali,1983, p.24-25). This definition distinguishes knowledge and science from other mental states like will, doubt, ignorance, and imitation. For instance, to differentiate it from will, he stated that it is a belief, and to distinguish it from doubt, he emphasized that it is a firm belief. Moreover, to set it apart from imitation, he said it is based on insight and unveiling and declared that belief must remain steadfast when faced with doubt, as a person who changes their belief in something they did not know beforehand is not considered knowledgeable. (Al-Ghazali,1983, p.25-26).

Contemporary Scholars' Definition of Knowledge:

Knowledge is the acquisition of truths, ideas, and sciences that concern the understanding, nurturing, teaching, and perfecting of humans, progressively utilizing the means available within the society's beliefs and culture. It involves intellectual efforts made and being made by scientists, thinkers, and researchers in discussing multiple aspects of epistemological issues. Scientific knowledge changes as a result of the conclusions reached by epistemological and psychological research, leading to changes in the process of knowledge in terms of its objectives, content, and methods.(Ali,2005,p.22). and (Shuhat, 2003,p.2).

Knowledge is in a continuous state of change and growth, necessitating educators to be aware and knowledgeable of all the new developments. This epistemic change will impact the educational curricula presented to students. However, knowledge in the Islamic world faces the problem of balancing between imparting knowledge and instilling values. The epistemic dilemma lies in the widening gap between providing abstract knowledge and instilling values. The roles of schools and universities in imparting knowledge and information have diminished, considering that the task of instilling values is carried out by other institutions like families and mosques. (Ali,2005,p.23-24).

In the contemporary Arab and Islamic world, knowledge is facing various crises, the most significant being the clash between authenticity and modernization, and between tradition and modernity. This highlights the need for sincere introspection and self-awareness, adhering to the innate disposition we were created upon, calling upon Allah to guide us towards formulating a new understanding of our knowledge to bridge the epistemic gap between the East and the West and to keep up with the contemporary civilization in our world. We can draw inspiration from our rich, authentic heritage, which is based on the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). (Al-Kurdi,1912, p.41).

Knowledge and Science According to Imam Al-Ghazali:

In Al-Ghazali's view, knowledge is related to conceptualization, expressed by his statement: Knowledge is the conception of the speaking, reassured self of the realities of things and their abstract forms, detached from their material aspects, their essence, qualities, quantities, jewels, and substances, if they are individual. (Al-Ghazali, 1328h, p.224). He obtains knowledge through two ways: human education and divine education. (Al-Ghazali,1328h. p.230).

In general, knowledge is synonymous with cognition and means perceiving something as it is. Al-Baqillani defined it as: knowing something as it is. (Al-Baqillani, 1947 p.60). Al-Jurjani defined it as firm belief corresponding to reality or a stable attribute by which the general and particular are known. (Al-Jurjani,n.d. p.157). Here, we notice that knowledge has acquired a subjective aspect, while science has acquired an intellectual and sensory aspect. Another aspect

of their distinction is that knowledge is preceded by ignorance, and it may refer to science that follows ignorance. It is often related to something that was previously absent from the heart but is later recognized. When it is recognized, it is said to be known. An example is the verse about Prophet Joseph:

وَجَاءَ إِخْوَتُهُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ

“And the brothers of Joseph came [seeking food], and they entered upon him; and he recognized them, but he was to them unknown” [Yusuf: 58]

On the other hand, science is not like that, and that is why Allah is called 'Alim,' not 'Aarif,' and denial is the opposite of knowledge, as one of its meanings is affirmation and acknowledgment, unlike science's opposite, which is ignorance. (Al-Kurdi1992, p.49-50).

Similarly, science is divided into necessary knowledge, such as necessities, and acquired knowledge, such as theories. Acquired knowledge requires evidence, and the limits are the means through which all required sciences are acquired. (Al-Kurdi1992, p.110-111).

According to Al-Ghazali, knowledge affects emotions, making the heart feel reassured about what is known. Human knowledge, regardless of its source, engages both the mind and the heart, and influences the limbs. This distinguishes it from science in its general philosophical sense, especially in the West, where it heavily relies on natural phenomena and sensory experience. According to realists, human thought can only grasp perceptible and empirical phenomena and their laws. Their highest level of certainty is achieved in empirical sciences. (Butros,1973, p.90-91). Beyond that, they dismiss matters that are not observable, considering them beyond the scope of science. This limited view negates the comprehensive concept of knowledge in Islam, which encompasses all types of human knowledge, whether they originate from reason, revelation, or perception. (Al-Kurdi1992, p.63).

Despite that, Al-Ghazali elevated knowledge to the highest level of science, distinguishing it by two points: Firstly, it is knowledge that does not accept doubt. Secondly, it surpasses the stage of conceptualization. (Al-Ghazali,n.d. p.224). While science, as he said, is the conception of the self about the realities and abstract forms of things, knowledge is not bound by this description. It lies in the emotional perception of closeness to what is known, particularly, closeness to Allah, as he stated: There is no doubt that the best and highest knowledge, the most noble and superior, is knowledge of Allah. Knowledge of Allah relies on emotional intuition of His existence, rather than mere intellectual knowledge. This aspect is not extensively discussed in general creeds, where matters related to Allah's existence mainly focus on reasoning rather than feelings. (Al-Ghazali,n.d. p.230). The justification provided by creed scholars, relying on reason, is that Allah guides people to know Him through contemplating themselves and their surroundings and urges them to pursue this path. He strongly condemns those who neglect it. Allah has promised to show His signs to people, allowing them to discern the truth through observation and contemplation. As stated in the Quran:

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ

“Then do they not look at the camels - how they are created? And at the sky - how it is raised? And at the mountains - how they are erected? And at the earth - how it is spread out?” [Al-Ghashiya: 17-20]

If this level of perception were not achievable for all people, the Quran would not have addressed them in a general sense. (Al-Najjar, 1997, p.52-53).

The Possibility of Knowledge and Al-Ghazali's Attempt to Build Sound Scientific Knowledge:

Like other Muslim scholars, Al-Ghazali acknowledged the validity of sciences and knowledge, but as known, he went through stages of doubt as described in his book *Al-Munqidh Min al-Dalal* Initially, he doubted the knowledge acquired through imitation (taqlid), then his skepticism evolved to include intellectual knowledge. Eventually, his doubts were dispelled, but

not solely through intellectual proofs; rather, it was through the certainty inspired by Allah in his heart. His sensory and intellectual knowledge was reinstated, and his belief in them was reaffirmed. (Al-Ghazali, 1990, p.12-14).

Al-Ghazali argued that doubts can lead to the truth because without doubt, there would be no inquiry, without inquiry, there would be no insight, and without insight, one remains blind and lost. (Al-Ghazali, *Meezan al-'Amal* p.409). He emphasized the importance of relying on certainty and introduced doubt as a starting point for questioning fundamentals and reaching true scientific knowledge. For instance, regarding celestial bodies, one might perceive them as small as a coin, but geometric evidence suggests that they are larger than the Earth. Similarly, both sensory and intellectual knowledge, such as knowing that two is greater than one and that a person cannot be in two places simultaneously, can lead to certainty.

According to Al-Ghazali, the treatment for doubt and error lies in understanding proper methods of inference and being aware of fallacies and contradictions. Sensory errors can be rectified through rational thought unless the rational faculty itself is corrupted, in which case, it requires adherence to logical rules. (Al-Ghazali, *Me'yar al-'ilm fi al-mantiq*, n.d, p.218-219).

Overview Of Certainty-Based Knowledge And Its Foundation:

Al-Ghazali attempted to define certainty and elucidate its conditions that distinguish it from doubt and conjecture. He noted that certainty is a term with various meanings. It can mean the negation of doubt in general or the negation of suspicion and possibility, which is its specific meaning. He defined doubt as the state in which affirmation and denial of a proposition are equal, and suspicion or possibility as the inclination of the soul to affirm a proposition or its negation while feeling the possibility of the opposite. (Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* 1423, p.64).

Al-Ghazali cited examples of certain knowledge in his view, such as knowledge acquired through valid proof, sensory perception, and innate knowledge or primary rational principles. He asserted that rational necessities are accepted with complete trust and certainty, not through organized evidence and systematic arrangement but through the divine light that Allah throws into the heart. He emphasized that those who believe that revelations are dependent on external evidence have restricted Allah's vast mercy. (Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* 1423, p.65). In response to a question about the meaning of enlightenment in a Quranic verse, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) described it as a light that Allah casts into the heart, leading to a clear distinction between the abode of arrogance and the abode of eternity. This divine light should be sought diligently until the seeker reaches a stage where they pursue things beyond ordinary human endeavors. (Ibn Kathir, 1999, p 1420).

Al-Ghazali succeeded in reaching the shores of certainty-based knowledge sources and reconstructed knowledge anew. He was convinced that the fundamental principles he initially doubted, namely sensory, intellectual, and innate knowledge, are fixed and certain, and thus, trustworthy. However, unlike rationalists, he believed that Allah is the Guide, the One who grants guidance, and the One who enables the servant to trust in those principles and make them suitable for such trust. As for these principles themselves, they have no influence. Indeed, they are the means through which Allah connects the servant to certain knowledge. (Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, 1423 Juz' 1, p. 65-66.).

The Contribution of Imam Al-Ghazali to Knowledge:

Al-Ghazali was one of the most prominent scholars of the 5th century who stood out for his abundance of contradictions and was immersed in political, social, and cultural events that significantly impacted his life. He made significant contributions and left a profound impact in the field of knowledge. His contributions can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, he wrote in a foundational manner about various issues in knowledge, almost approaching the formulation of general theories applicable to different domains. Secondly, he

emphasized the concept of servitude (ubudiyah) and linked worship to scientific knowledge in a precise manner.

Imam Al-Ghazali is revered as one of the leading thinkers in human history who attained a distinguished status during his life and after his passing, and his works are held in high regard. He is renowned among Muslim philosophers and has had a profound influence on Islamic knowledge in general and Islamic mysticism (Sufism) in particular. His philosophical circles and thoughts were diverse and marked by numerous contradictions, shaped by the prevalent political, social, and intellectual circumstances of the 5th century AH. The weakening and decline of the Abbasid Caliphate during that period, coupled with the abundance of ideas, opinions, sectarian divisions, and straying from the Quran and Sunnah, left evident imprints on Al-Ghazali's studies, thoughts, and views. (Al-Khatib, 1995, p.442-444).

Al-Ghazali's knowledge was influenced by three main sources: knowledge in Islamic jurisprudence (Sharia), Sufism, and philosophy. As a result, his intellectual output was vast and diverse. He left behind over seventy works in various fields of knowledge, including jurisprudence, philosophy, logic, and education. Many of his works focused on jurisprudence, debate, refuting philosophers, and defending religion. (Al-Khatib, 1995, p.444).

The knowledge presented by Al-Ghazali covered areas like psychology and mental health, sociology, philosophy of knowledge, and the goals of knowledge. His perspective on the universe, human nature, society, ethics, and happiness was evident. He also addressed knowledge applications in the educational process, such as the curriculum of knowledge and the performance of knowledge methods and general principles that knowledge is built upon. (Al-Khatib, 1995, p.444-448).

The Epistemology of Al-Ghazali:

The philosophical framework of Al-Ghazali's thought is based on the integration of matter and soul, considering them as interconnected aspects of the universe and life. Accordingly, Al-Ghazali's epistemological philosophy focuses on the quest for a distinguished Islamic personality that takes the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a role model, guided by faith in Allah both in theory and practice. Thus, Al-Ghazali's epistemology is rooted in principles and beliefs derived from this faith. (Ayoub, 1996, p.97).

The fundamental basis of Al-Ghazali's epistemology is the achievement of happiness for human beings. He elucidates the concept of happiness and its attainment in various instances throughout his works, dedicating a specific book called "Kimiya al-Saadah" to this subject. Al-Ghazali posits that happiness is the outcome of struggling against and purifying the heart from reprehensible traits, and the secret of this happiness lies in returning to Allah in this world and knowing Him. The key to knowing Allah is to first know oneself, for one who knows oneself truly has known one's Lord. (Al-Ghazali, Kimiya al-Sa'adah, vol.5, p.190-193).

The happiness referred to here is the ultimate bliss in the afterlife, encompassing all that is desirable. Al-Ghazali emphasizes: The greatest of all things, in the eyes of humans, is eternal happiness, and the best of things is what leads to it. (Al-Ghazali, 1989, vol, 1, p.23). This happiness can only be achieved through knowledge and action, and one cannot engage in action without knowledge of how to act. Thus, the essence of happiness in this world and the Hereafter lies in knowledge. How can it not be so when the virtue of a thing is known by the honor of its fruit, and the noblest fruit is closeness to the Lord of the worlds? (Al-Ghazali, Meezan al-'Amal, n.d.p. 13-14).

To attain the desired happiness, one must combine knowledge with action. Al-Ghazali asserts that many people with immoral conduct may acquire knowledge, but they remain far from comprehending true religious knowledge, which brings happiness. (Al-Ghazali, Meezan al-'Amal, n.d.p. 117). He exemplifies this by saying: How many seekers of knowledge with bad morals have gained knowledge? How far you are from understanding true religious knowledge,

which brings happiness.(Al-Ghazali, Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Vol. 1, p. 23) What a person with bad morals can achieve is a mixture of words spoken by his tongue and actions performed by his heart, and he may repeat those words, but if the light of knowledge shines on his heart, his character will improve. Al-Ghazali believes that this change in behavior can only be achieved through knowledge, making the profession of knowledge one of the noblest professions. He emphasizes that knowledge must be closely linked to the needs of society, creating individuals who strive to establish a social life that aligns with the natural laws and follows the commandments of Allah. They should willingly engage in the tasks assigned to them without feeling embarrassed or hesitant because the reward is based on the quality of the work rather than the type of work. This implies that there is a diversity of competencies and equality of values and standards. For if the tailor, the weaver, and the cupper did not believe that their professions required inclination, they would leave them, and everyone would pursue the noblest crafts. The multiplicity of professions would cease, and if the sweeper knew the value of his work, the scholars, rulers, and saints would have to do it themselves. Likewise, the tanner, blacksmith, farmer, and all other professions. If it were not for Allah instilling the love of jurisprudence, grammar, phonetics, and medicine in the hearts of groups, these sciences would remain inactive, and the overall system would be disrupted." (Al-Ghazali, Meezan al-'Amal, n.d.p. 137-139).

The Objectives of Knowledge According to Al-Ghazali:

Al-Ghazali considers the ultimate goal of knowledge to be drawing closer to Allah Almighty. He establishes this point by emphasizing the pursuit of knowledge and virtues of good character. (Morsi, n.d. p. 322). It is evident that Al-Ghazali's conceptualization of the objectives of knowledge stems from his clear perspective on the existence of human beings and their life. He focuses on the noble aim of knowledge, which is seeking the pleasure of Allah, His worship, and obedience through the pursuit of knowledge and all actions leading to it. (Al-Ma'man²⁰⁰², p. 615-616). He emphasizes the importance of intention and purpose in seeking knowledge, directing them solely towards Allah. This element, unfortunately, seems to be missing in contemporary knowledge, depriving it of its quality and blessings.(Al-Ghazali, 1985, p. 105). Al-Ghazali states in his letter: Oh, my child, how many nights have you spent staying awake in the pursuit of knowledge and reading books, depriving yourself of sleep! I do not know what prompted you to do so. (Al-Ghazali, Meezan al-'Amal, n.d. p. 36). If your intention was to seek worldly fame, accumulate its belongings, achieve high positions, and show off to peers and equals, then woe unto you! However, if your intention was to revive the Prophet's (peace be upon him) teachings, refine your character, and restrain yourself from evil.(Al-Ghazali, 1989,p. 66).

Al-Ghazali succinctly describes the objective of knowledge as the attainment of human perfection, which involves drawing closer to Allah and subsequently attaining happiness in this world and the Hereafter. He says: We seek, through knowledge, the perfection of the self, the purpose and ultimate goal of knowledge is internal purification and beautification with virtues, leading to nearness to Allah, the Exalted. The function of knowledge is to prepare individuals to contribute to achieving social life, such that each person willingly engages in the tasks assigned to them without feeling embarrassed or hesitant. The reward is based on the quality of execution rather than the type of work. (Al-Ghazali, Meezan al-'Amal, n.d. p. 117-118).

Al-Ghazali's Knowledge of the Universe:

Al-Ghazali's perspective on the universe aligns with the Islamic view of this vast cosmos. He views the universe as an act and creation of Allah, encompassing all creation by His name, including everything apart from Allah Himself. This implies that everything existing in the universe is an act of Allah's creation, demonstrating His wisdom, power, majesty, and greatness. It is impossible to enumerate these acts, nor can one encompass all the creations of Allah. They can be categorized into two groups: the first group consists of things whose origins are unknown and thus cannot be comprehended. Many existences fall under this category, as the states: And

the horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and [as] adornment. And He creates what you do not know. (Surah An-Nahl 16:8). The second group includes things whose origin and general structure are known, but their intricate details remain unknown. Humans can contemplate and reflect on these detailed aspects. This group includes the observable universe, such as the heavens, the earth, and everything in between, and the unseen world, encompassing angels, jinn, devils, the Throne, the Chair, and others. . (Al-Ghazali, 1989, vol.4, p. 461).

Some have criticized Al-Ghazali's categorization of the universe into the seen and unseen worlds and the physical and metaphysical aspects, claiming that he was influenced by Plato's division of existence into the world of the senses and the world of ideas. However, when Al-Ghazali presented his division of existence, he based it on Quranic verses, for instance, Surah Al-Baqarah 2:164, Surah Aal-E-Imran 3:190, and Surah At-Talaq 65:12. Al-Ghazali argued that contemplating the signs of Allah in the universe is highly encouraged, and he referred to various Quranic verses that urge people to reflect on the signs of Allah in the cosmos without relying on the views of Plato or others. (Al-Jayar, n.d.p.132).

The Concept of Human Nature According to Al-Ghazali:

Al-Ghazali emphasizes that human personality is acquired and inherited, and that the environment in which a person lives and the culture with which they interact shape their individuality. He also saw human will as positioned between determinism and free will, adopting a middle ground in the debate over the freedom of the will. (Al-Ghazali, 1989, vol, 1, p. 471-473).

Regarding the issue of free will, Al-Ghazali adopted a balanced stance, synthesizing various perspectives until he embraced the doctrine that the actions of a servant, even though they are a product of their own doing, are ultimately intended by Allah. According to Al-Ghazali, nothing happens in the kingdom and sovereignty of Allah except through His divine decree, power, will, and providence. Throughout his writings on human nature, Al-Ghazali reaffirms what is stated in the Holy Quran and the Hadith, emphasizing that human beings are integral and complete entities, composed of both material bodies and spiritual souls. This dual nature is not accidental or secondary to human beings; rather, it is inherent in their creation, as Allah designed them to be successors on Earth since the creation of Adam.

Al-Ghazali asserts that the human soul consists of two elements: the first being the physical body, and the second being the metaphysical self or soul. He clarifies that the soul represents the hidden heart that pertains to the realm of the unseen, distinct from the visible flesh seen with the naked eye. Al-Ghazali emphasizes the necessity for individuals to strive to understand this hidden heart through spiritual discipline, as knowledge of the wonders of the world can only be attained through the senses, which rely on the body. A weak body is susceptible to its instincts, such as hunger and thirst, as well as external dangers like fire and water.

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali categorizes the human body into two armies: the apparent army, which encompasses desires and anger, situated in the hands, feet, eyes, ears, and all other bodily parts, and the internal army, located in the brain, which consists of the faculties of imagination, reflection, memory, and illusion.(Al-Qardawi, 1998, p.76).

Al-Ghazali also employs the term "nafs" (soul) with two meanings: the first refers to the encompassing force of desires and lusts within a person, which necessitates self-discipline, as stated by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): Your most formidable enemy is your nafs that lies between your two sides.(Al-Suyuti,n.d. p.20). The second meaning refers to the divine subtlety and spirituality within a person, which is affected by the varying conditions of the soul. When the soul is at peace, having overcome its desires, it is called the tranquil soul. When it resists and opposes the appetitive soul, it is known as the self-reproaching soul.

However, when it abandons resistance and surrenders to desires and the illusions of Satan, it becomes the soul that enjoins evil.(Al-Ghazali, 1989, vol. 3, p.5).

Concerning the term "qalb" (heart), Al-Ghazali uses it to signify both the sensory and spiritual aspects. The sensory heart is a pine-shaped flesh located on the left side of the chest, common to both living beings and animals. However, the spiritual heart is a celestial, ethereal entity to which the sensory heart is connected, and it is the essence of a person, the aware, knowledgeable, and accountable entity within. The spiritual heart is the addressee, the judge, the rebuker, and the demander. (Al-Ghazali, 1989, vol. 3, p.3).

Additionally, Al-Ghazali uses the term "ruh" (spirit) with two meanings: firstly, as a subtle body originating from the cavity of the physical heart and spread through the veins and arteries throughout the body, animating its organs and bringing light to the senses of sight, hearing, and smell, akin to the light emitted from a lantern throughout the corners of a house. (Al-Ghazali, 1989, vol. 4, p.5). Secondly, the spirit represents the aware and knowledgeable entity within a person, and the purpose of human existence is connected to this meaning. Al-Ghazali stresses that knowledge of the spirit is extremely challenging, as the religion does not provide a clear path to attaining it, as indicated in the Quran: And they ask you about the spirit; say, "The spirit is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind has not been given of knowledge except a little. (Al-Ghazali, 1989, vol. 3, p.60).

The Concept of Ethics According to Al-Ghazali:

Al-Ghazali's understanding of ethics is rooted in an Islamic Sufi perspective. It is a practical knowledge, not merely theoretical, focusing on actions and what one ought to do to align their behavior with the spirit of Sharia law. According to Al-Ghazali, the virtues of good character are those that conform to the teachings of the Quran. He views virtue as a state of balance and moderation between two vices, adhering to the Quranic principle of "the best of all matters is the middle course." For instance, courage, as the middle ground, lies between recklessness and cowardice. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that the means to cultivate good ethics is through nurturing the character, which involves training oneself to embody virtuous traits. He states that anyone with insight into their own faults can easily remedy and rectify them. Thus, the treatment of moral flaws lies in striving and accustoming oneself to their opposite virtues. For instance, stinginess can be addressed through generosity, ignorance through education, and arrogance through humility. Al-Ghazali maintains that a child is a trust to their parents, with a pure and precious heart, impressionable and inclined to any quality imprinted upon it. The acquisition of good ethics, if not inherent in one's nature, can be achieved through habitual practice and association with those who possess such virtues, sometimes even through scholarly knowledge. (Al-Ghazali, 1989, vol. 4, p.3).

The Knowledge of Education According to Al-Ghazali:

In the realm of education, Al-Ghazali's conception is tied to moral and behavioral meanings, including refinement and guidance. It expresses the process of refining and instructing individuals, rectifying their affairs, and managing their conduct. Al-Ghazali emphasizes the significance of seeking a mentor or guide in one's educational journey, as Allah sent messengers to guide people on the path of righteousness. After the departure of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his successors served as guides to lead others towards Allah. (Al-Ghazali, 1989, vol. 3, p.60).

Al-Ghazali condenses the concept of education into two elements: "takhliyah" (refinement) and "tahliyah" (embellishment). The teacher acts as a mentor and guide, refining undesirable traits and replacing them with good character (takhliyah) and embellishing the individual with virtues (tahliyah). Al-Ghazali considers character as an all-encompassing term for the virtues one must embody, whether in the acquisition of knowledge or in cultivating behavioral traits. He illustrates this by using the term "tahdhib" (refinement) in his work "Ihya'

Ulum al-Din" when he states that seeking knowledge is to revitalize the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and refine one's character, breaking the domination of the soul's inclination towards evil. Al-Ghazali also stresses the importance of considering precedence and proportion in the process of rectifying bad ethics, as the older and more practiced vices are the most challenging to change and address. (Al-Ghazali, Meezan al-'Amal, n.d. p. 36).

Knowledge Sources According to Al-Ghazali:

Al-Ghazali identifies four sources of knowledge, which he ranks as follows: Ghazali believes that one of the sources of knowledge is the senses. He categorizes the senses into different stages. First, the sense of touch is the earliest to develop in humans. Through it, one perceives various qualities of objects like heat, cold, humidity, and hardness, but it lacks the ability to perceive colors and sounds. Then, the sense of sight develops, enabling the perception of colors and shapes, expanding the realm of sensory experiences. Afterward, hearing develops, allowing the perception of sounds and melodies. Finally, the sense of taste is created, leading to the understanding of matters beyond the sensory world. This stage of discernment emerges around the age of seven, and it involves grasping things beyond the material realm. (Al-Ghazali, 1990, p.41).

Regarding his experiential knowledge through the senses, Al-Ghazali mentions that he initially gathered information through the senses. (Al-Ghazali, 1990, p.12). He mastered these acquired sciences and then deeply scrutinized them to determine their reliability and potential for error. He sought true knowledge based on certainty, which leaves no room for doubt or comparison with possibilities of falsehood and illusion. He believed that seeking truth required a standard, and that standard was the absence of error. If any knowledge lacks this certainty, it cannot be considered as certain knowledge. (Al-Ghazali, 1987, p.47).

The Second Source is Reason (Intellect): Al-Ghazali identifies four meanings of "reason" that collectively form the concept of the intellect:

1. Reason as a distinguishing characteristic that sets humans apart from other animals. It is the faculty that enables humans to accept theoretical sciences and manage hidden intellectual processes.
2. Reason as the knowledge that emerges in a distinguished individual, capable of grasping logical conclusions and impossibilities, such as knowing that two is more than one or that one person cannot be in two places simultaneously.
3. Reason as the knowledge derived from experiences and circumstances, leading to the distinction between those who possess it (the wise) and those who lack it (the ignorant).
4. Reason as the faculty that enables one to comprehend the consequences of actions, control immediate desires, and prioritize long-term benefits. When one acquires this faculty, they are considered rational in terms of assessing the consequences of their actions.

Based on this understanding, Al-Ghazali divides reason into two categories: instinctive reason and acquired reason. Instinctive reason refers to the innate capacity in humans to accept theoretical sciences, which he names "The Light of Insight." Acquired reason, on the other hand, is the knowledge obtained from sciences, either through intuitive revelation or after distinguishing the necessary sciences from those that are unknown.

Similarly, the third Source is Prophecy (Prophethood): Al-Ghazali sees prophethood as a divine revelation sent by Allah to chosen individuals from among His servants. (Al-Ghazali, 1990, p.12-13). Prophethood relates directly to the prophets, and through it, divine messages are conveyed to people. (Al-Ghazali, 1994, p.51-53). The understanding of prophecy and the most profound contemplation of the Quran and authentic traditions grant the necessary knowledge that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) occupied the highest degree of prophethood. (Al-Ghazali, 2003, p.137).

The Fourth Source is Al-Kashf (Inspiration), Al-Ghazali considers Al-Kashf as one of the sources of certain knowledge, through which Allah instills divine illumination effortlessly into the heart. This divine light is the key to most of the knowledge. He believes that limiting knowledge to rational evidence narrows Allah's vast mercy. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) referred to it as "Al-Sharh" (expansion). When asked about its meaning in the verse "Is he who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?" (Al-An'am: 125), the Prophet replied, "It is a light that Allah Almighty casts into the heart." When asked about its signs, he said, "Abandoning the abode of delusion and turning to the abode of eternity. (Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol, 2 p.166).

This divine light should be sought through Al-Kashf, as it emanates from the divine bounty at times. The heart is the place of knowledge, like a mirror where the images are imprinted. The truth is imprinted and becomes clear in the mirror of the heart. Therefore, the knower is the heart, where the realities of things are realized, the known is the realities of things, and knowledge is the attainment of examples in the mirror of the heart. (Al-Ghazali, 1990, p.13-14).

According to Al-Ghazali, "Al-Ma'rifa Al-Kashfiyya" is the light that appears in the heart when it is purified and cleansed from blameworthy qualities. From this light, many matters become clear, leading to the real knowledge of Allah's essence, attributes, actions, wisdom in the creation of the world and the Hereafter, the order of the Hereafter over the world, and the meanings of prophethood, revelation, angels, demons, and others. (Al-Ghazali, 1989, vol, 3, p.19-20).

It seems that his heart-based "Kashfiyya Ma'rifa" is tied to the knowledge and love of Allah. Therefore, the mystic (Arif) can reach true knowledge through the Sufi path, influenced by the Sufi school he belongs to. Al-Ghazali emphasizes the relationship between reason and inspiration. Reason does not contradict inspiration; rather, sometimes due to its weakness, it cannot provide an opinion on a certain matter. In such cases, divine revelation or inspiration helps clarify it. At times, reason grasps the wisdom, and at other times, it fails to understand it. (Al-Ghazali, Al-Risalah Al-Laduniyah, n.d, p.114). This indicates that reason should not be wholly discarded but rather be a facilitator for inspiration. Al-Ghazali's works show some support for Sufi perspectives, presented after adhering to the theory of Sufi Kashf. He did not express his revelations explicitly but enveloped his theories under the patronage of reason. (Al-Ghazali, 1987, p.150-156).

His mention of "Sufi knowledge" does not negate knowledge derived from prophecy or reason; it merely acknowledges that each has its own path to knowledge. Al-Ghazali presented his theory of knowledge based on a philosophical foundation, evident in his book "Mishkat al-Anwar" (The Niche of Lights), explaining the verse, "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth" (An-Nur: 35), interpreting this light sometimes as the essence of existence and other times as the essence of knowledge. These interpretations do not contradict each other because knowledge is inherent to existence. (Janzurli 1994)

According to Al-Ghazali, the foundation of Islamic knowledge rejects limiting it to rational means alone or empirical methods based solely on senses. Instead, Allah made knowledge contingent upon both senses and reason with His guidance. He did not restrict it to either alone. (Al-Ghazali, 1990, p.13-14).

Thus, Al-Ghazali's concept of knowledge involves using systematic doubt as a methodology to reach certain knowledge. He does not believe in absolute certainty or the human capacity to attain it. He denies the human ability to grasp the true nature of things fully. Therefore, he tests the senses and reason, and although senses are considered sources of knowledge, they are not reliable on their own. He doubts reason due to the variation in human minds. Consequently, knowledge

gained through reason is relative because another ruling power governs reason. The heart is considered one of the instruments of certain knowledge, as it receives divine illumination effortlessly, and heart-based knowledge is dependent on knowledge and love of Allah. The relationship between reason and divine law (Sharia) is complementary, where both work together, and Ghazali believes in two types of knowledge: heart-based *Kashfiyya* and mind-based knowledge. Both are interrelated, and the mind should be guided by divine law towards certain knowledge. Al-Ghazali, also known as *Hujjat al-Islam*, advocates the integration of various sources of knowledge, as no single source can fully provide knowledge. The senses, reason, prophecy, and *Kashf* are all complementary sources that work together. He regards prophecy and *Kashf* as stronger sources of knowledge than reason and senses. (Al-Rashdan, 2004, p.456).

The Epistemological Methods of Al-Ghazali:

According to Al-Ghazali, there are two ways to acquire knowledge: the first is human knowledge, and the second is divine knowledge. Human knowledge encompasses the realm of intellect, senses, and human experience, serving as a path to understand the physical world (the world of dominion). On the other hand, divine knowledge includes revelation and inspiration, acting as a means to comprehend the spiritual world (the world of sovereignty). True knowledge is found in the realm of sovereignty. Al-Ghazali believes that knowledge is relative and based on concrete, tangible examples. It surpasses mere human reason, as there are certain truths that the intellect cannot grasp. In other words, human knowledge, which involves intellect, senses, and human experience, leads to understanding the material world. In contrast, divine knowledge through revelation and inspiration provides insight into the spiritual realm. True knowledge exists in the world of sovereignty.

Al-Ghazali further discusses two types of knowledge: innate knowledge and acquired knowledge. Innate knowledge lies dormant within the human soul and requires stimulation and activation to manifest. He compares this innate knowledge to a seed in the earth or a gem deep within the sea or a metal's core. Seeking knowledge and learning is the process of extracting this knowledge from potentiality to actuality. The innate knowledge referred to by Al-Ghazali as "necessary sciences" arises when the soul recognizes what lies dormant within it, emerging when the appropriate conditions are met. Such knowledge is not derived from the external world but rather exists inherently within the soul, and its manifestation depends on self-recognition. (Al-Ghazali, 2013, p. 247-248). Al-Ghazali believes that among innate knowledge, knowing Allah stands prominent. He firmly maintains that "faith is embedded in souls by nature" and supports this claim with a verse from the Quran: "So set your face to the upright religion in pure devotion to Him. This is the natural disposition He has set in mankind" (Al-Rum: 30). Thus, according to Al-Ghazali, every human heart is naturally inclined towards knowing Allah and recognizing truths. However, the degree of this recognition may vary among individuals due to divine wisdom. (Al-Ghazali, 1989, vol, 1, p.86).

Methods of Acquiring Knowledge According to Al-Ghazali:

The pathways to acquire knowledge in Al-Ghazali's philosophy consist of two aspects: the first is human learning, and the second is divine learning: Human learning encompasses two elements: external acquisition through teachers and educators, which is the acquired human knowledge, and internal engagement through contemplation, which resembles learning from within. Al-Ghazali elaborates on the divine learning process. Divine learning is the internal acquisition of knowledge through comprehension, contemplation, and immersion in the state of awe and inspiration. Al-Ghazali introduces the concept of divine inspiration as an additional source of knowledge. (Al-Ghazali, *Al-Risalah Al-Laduniyah*, n.d, p.111-115).

It becomes evident that Al-Ghazali emphasizes the significance of divine inspiration as a conduit for profound knowledge. He asserts that this type of knowledge emerges after mental

equilibrium, citing the Quranic verse: "And by the soul and He who proportioned it" (Ash-Shams: 7). The path to divine inspiration includes three dimensions: first, acquiring various sciences and gaining a greater share of knowledge; second, sincere devotion, proper observation, and devotion to Allah; and third, contemplation. When the soul learns and embraces knowledge and then contemplates its understanding with the conditions of profound thinking, the doors of the unseen open to it. It is said that "an hour of contemplation is better than sixty years of worship. (Al-Ghazali, Al-Risalah Al-Laduniyah, n.d, p.30).

The Categorization of Scholars by Al-Ghazali:

Al-Ghazali divides scholars into four groups. The first group is the "Mutekallimun," who claim to be people of reasoning and contemplation. Al-Ghazali explains that the main purpose of theological knowledge (Kalam) is to preserve and protect the creed of the Sunnah from the confusion introduced by innovators who deviate from the Sunnah. Consequently, a group of Mutekallimun emerged to defend the Sunnah by employing theological knowledge to refute the innovators. They were skilled in defending the Sunnah and refuting the innovators' arguments. However, they heavily relied on premises accepted from their opponents, and their efforts mainly revolved around exposing contradictions in their opponents' arguments, which Al-Ghazali deemed of limited benefit and insufficient to dispel the doubts arising from various perspectives. (Al-Ghazali, 1990, p.19-20).

The second group is the "Batiniyya," who claim to be the educated ones specializing in quoting from the infallible Imam. Al-Ghazali rebuts their claim by affirming the necessity of relying on a knowledgeable and infallible teacher, and he identifies Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the infallible teacher. When the Batiniyya argue that the Prophet is no longer physically present, Al-Ghazali points out that their own teacher (the infallible Imam) is also absent. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that after acquiring complete knowledge, the teacher's death does not diminish the benefit of their teachings, similar to how the teacher's absence does not negate the benefit of their guidance. (Al-Ghazali, 1990, p.120-121).

The third group is the "Faylasufa" (philosophers), who claim to be experts in logic and demonstration. Al-Ghazali classifies them under three categories: the "Dahriyyun," who deny the existence of a Creator and attribute the world to self-existence (atheists); the "Tabi'iyun," who extensively study the natural world and the wonders of living beings and acknowledge the existence of a Creator but fail to understand the immortality of the soul and the concept of the afterlife; and the "Ilahiyyun," who are later philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Al-Ghazali refutes the arguments of the Dahriyyun and Tabi'iyun, but he still condemns the Ilahiyyun and considers them misguided in some aspects of their beliefs. (Al-Ghazali, 1989, p.62-71).

The fourth group is the "Sufis," who claim to be the privileged ones with direct experiences and spiritual revelations. After critiquing the other three groups, Al-Ghazali turns to Sufism, which he considers the path leading to true happiness and certainty. He studied their books thoroughly and found satisfaction in the Sufi path, as it provided him with the ultimate goal of attaining spiritual bliss and true knowledge. Al-Ghazali believes that Sufis are the true scholars of the hereafter, distinguished from those scholars who seek worldly gains and status. (Al-Ghazali, 1989, p.58-82).

Al-Ghazali calls for unity among all scholars and discourages them from belittling or looking down upon each other. He emphasizes that scholars should complement each other in their quest for knowledge, and each teacher should encourage their students to learn from other scholars. This approach leads to the ultimate goal of knowledge, which is the knowledge of Allah and can only be achieved through the collective efforts and cooperation of all scholars following the Islamic methodology. (Al-Ghazali, 1989, p.57-58).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research has reached several key findings regarding Al-Ghazali's views on knowledge and its sources. The Ash'ari school of thought produced prominent scholars, with Al-Ghazali standing out as a leading figure in the Islamic intellectual landscape of that era. Throughout his journey, Al-Ghazali's understanding of knowledge evolved, culminating in his adoption of the Sufi concept of revelation. He employed the method of doubt (shakk) in his search for truth and certain knowledge.

Al-Ghazali identified four sources of knowledge: sensory perception, reason, prophethood, and revelation (kashf). To attain true knowledge, these sources must integrate within the realms of empirical knowledge and the unseen world. The paths to knowledge in Al-Ghazali's perspective are twofold: heart-based revelatory knowledge, granted by Allah through revelation, and intellectual knowledge derived from religious sources, individual acquisition, consciousness, and observation. The guidance of religious teachings is essential to direct the intellect toward certain knowledge.

Despite the diverse branches of knowledge in Al-Ghazali's thought, he emphasized the importance of their integration to achieve the ultimate goal of knowing Allah in truth, culminating in attaining certain knowledge.

Based on these findings, the researcher presents some recommendations. Firstly, a comparative study between classical Islamic thought and its integrated knowledge and contemporary intellectual trends, exposing the deviations and shortcomings of the latter, should be conducted. Secondly, an examination of modernity's views on knowledge, contrasting Al-Ghazali's integrated perspective with contemporary approaches and highlighting the deficiencies of the latter, is needed to refute these theories.

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