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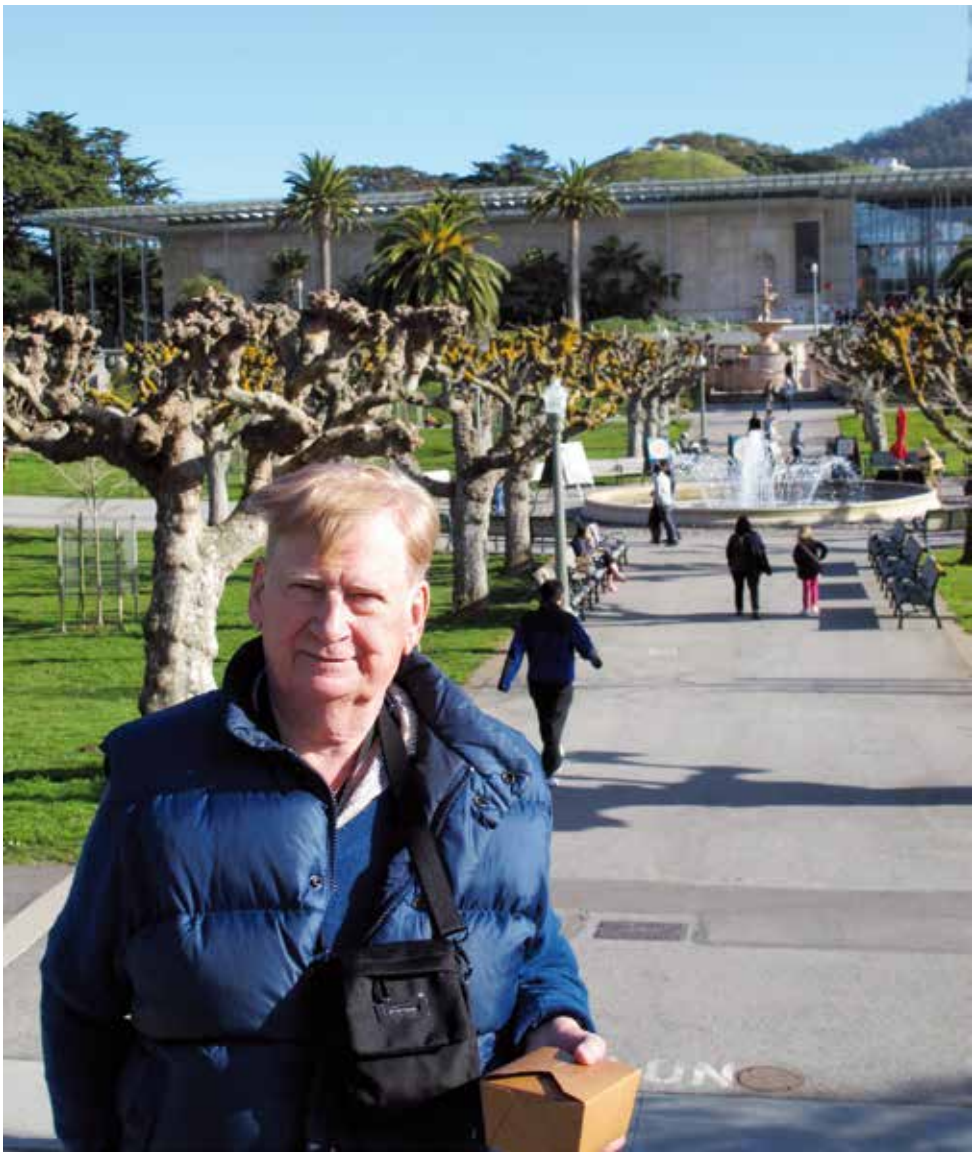

Professor Roman Sławiński
(1932–2014)

Contens

FIELD STUDY REPORT

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Introduction

Dear Readers!

We are presenting you yet another, already the 28th, issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* devoted to the countries and culture of Asia. Over the years of its activity the journal started to be issued in English and it has hosted on its pages many eminent experts on Asia, yet still it remained faithful to its formula which was proposed thirty years ago by Professor Roman Sławiński, the founder of the journal and its permanent editor in chief. This formula stipulated that the Asian cultures should present themselves in the journal and talk directly with their own voice. The idea was both: to include in the group of authors and editors of the magazine scientists who grew up in Asian cultures, as well as to publish materials based on or referring to the texts – philosophical, linguistic, historical, sociological, religious studies or political studies – which were created by the Asian culture. These could be proper names as an object of linguistic research, religious texts, political documents, ideological declarations, but also biographical materials, historiographical elaborations, experience of meeting other cultures and mutual acculturation phenomenon resulting from the relations.

Professor Roman Sławiński left us in November 2014. The more time passes from his death, the more I feel his absence and the more I realize how unique a character he was in the world of research on China. Professor Marianne Bastid-Bruguière, a prominent French scholar from Institut de France in Paris, who met Roman Sławiński in the times of his studies in Beijing, writes about that fact. Most striking is the variety of interests and multidimensionality of research on China which he ran. He was trained as a linguist, and he knew perfectly well not only the classical language, but also many dialects. There was even a time it was appreciated by Mao Zedong himself. Roman Sławiński was interpreting a conversation of the Chinese leader with the Polish state authorities. During the conversation Mao Zedong changed as usual from the classical language to the dialect of Hunan province, which was his place of origin. When he realized he was using the dialect, he noticed that it was not a slightest problem for the interpreter to understand his statements. Then he asked: „Who is that young man who understands the Hunan dialect?" It was known that many Chinese from the surroundings of the Chairman did not understand him when he spoke in the native dialect. It so happened, that Roman Sławiński knew the dialect.

He was interested not only in the language. History, politics, culture as well as China's economy were the subject of his interest and research. His views, opinions and insights on these matters were the inspiration for many researchers of China, some of which are the authors of the materials contained in this issue. Of the many research interests of Professor Sławiński in recent years at least two may be mentioned. First one became Confucianism, especially its latest colours and shades. Professor persistently sought and discovered them in the texts of Chinese scientists, government documents, archives and everyday citizens of China. In this regard he was a dedicated explorer and a keen observer. Even the slightest detail was important to him. Minor personnel changes on the bureaucratic ladder were important for the formation

of general conclusions. From my conversations with him, I got the impression that he was rather skeptical about the possibility of a revival of Confucianism under the supervision of the communist authorities. So he concluded after examining many texts of the so-called new wave of Confucianism in China. His works on the latest Chinese historiography constitute an invaluable contribution to global research on contemporary China. His second passion was the research on the minorities of China Southern. The field research among the peoples of Miao and Tujia that he ran and in which I had the opportunity to participate assumed getting to know the nature of change in the cultural identity of these minorities in the era of globalization and accelerated socio-economic transformation in China. These studies had not been completed, and we can only hope that one of the students of Professor will continue them in the near future.

The arrangement of contents offered to you in the 28th issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* refers to the research passions of Professor Sławiński. The first article, written by Stanisław Tokarski – Indologist and long-time associate of Professor Sławiński, concerns dialogue between the East and the West and the possibility of mutual understanding and agreement. Understanding another culture is also the ability to read the symbols contained in the letters and that aspect of the intercultural dialogue interested Professor Sławiński in particular. The question of so-called Asian values – presented in the articles written by Adam Jelonek, Adam Raszewski, Artur Kościański and Larisa Zabrovskaia – was very close to Professor Sławiński and he dealt with it for many years as part of his research on the so-called new Confucianism. The issue of Chinese migration in the world was also in the interests of Professor – mainly in the context of global economic and social phenomena. This part of the research on China is presented in the article on the Chinese migration to France by Nicolas Levi. The issue of Chinese language was obviously important for Professor Sławiński as a linguist and he always welcomed in the columns of *Acta* the authors writing about language and linguistic issues. This area of research is presented in the current issue in the article on Chinese names written by Irena Kałużyńska. On the other hand, the artistic part of the culture is referred to in the articles by Izabella Łabędzka, Lidia Kasarełło, Ewa Chmielowska, Fu-sheng Shih and Diana Wolańska. The first three of these articles relate to Taiwan, where Professor conducted research for many years which resulted among others in a monograph *History of Taiwan*. The further three articles penned by Waldemar Dziak, Iwona Grabowska-Lipińska and Anna Mrozek-Dumanowska refer to the political sphere. Political sphere is inextricably linked with the ideology which was also the case of China. Confucianism and the new Confucianism emerged and developed in the shadow of the emperors, presidents and chairmen of the Chinese Communist Party. Researching them without the analysis of the political scene was not possible. The part of articles is closed by two texts unrelated with China, but with the Middle East. Their authors – Dorota Rudnicka-Kassem and Marcin Styszyński present materials based on the Middle Eastern sources and thus relate to the traditions of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*. The issue is closed by the report from field research in southern China by Professor Sławiński and me. For me it was a unique opportunity to get to know at least a little piece of China – a unique one, because my guide was Professor Sławiński – such a great scholar and such a seasoned expert on Asia.

I would like to thank the authors – students, colleagues and friends – for participation in the preparation of the issue, and the Directorate of the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences for the possibility to dedicate the anniversary issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* to Professor Sławiński.

Jerzy Zdanowski

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DOROTA RUDNICKA-KASSEM

Searching for the Truth: The Life and Work of Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī

Abstract

The paper describes an interesting intellectual venture of Al-Ghazālī in his quest for the truth. In the process, he came to doubt the senses and even reason itself as the means of attaining truth and fell into a deep skepticism that lasted about two months. However, he was eventually delivered from this with the aid of the divine light, and thus recovered his trust in reason. Al-Ghazālī's extensive studies in Islamic law, tradition, theology, philosophy and Ṣūfīsm, together with his long period of self-discipline led him, using his method, described as that of "courage to know and the courage to doubt," to present his position with regard to various schools of Islamic thought of his days. In his quest for the truth he carefully examined various "seekers after the truth", that is theologians, philosophers, authoritarians (the Ismā'īlīs whom he called the party of or authoritative instruction) and finally the Ṣūfīs, or mystics. Because of these studies, he reached the conclusion that there was no way to ascertain knowledge except through However, in order to reach this ultimate truth of the Ṣūfīs, it was necessary to renounce the world and to devote oneself to mystical practice.

Key words: *falsafa*, *kalām*, Bāṭinism, party of *ta'līm,* Ṣūfīsm, *mujaddid*

Abū Ḥamīd Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1055–1111), one of the most influential philosophers, theologians, jurists, and mystics of Sunni Islam,[1] occupies a unique position in the history of Islamic thought and his contribution to its development is tremendous. He was a reputable scholar at a time when Sunni theology had just passed through its consolidation and had entered a period of intense challenges from both the Shī'a Ismā'īlite theology and the Arabic tradition of Aristotelian philosophy (*falsafa*). In his worldview, he combined an extensive knowledge, a deep spirituality, a rigid fundamentalism and an extraordinary independence of mind that enabled him to become a veritable challenge to the philosophies of Aristotle, Plotinus and their Muslim followers, namely Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Al-Ghazālī understood the importance of *falsafa* and developed a complex

[1] Al-Ghazālī's life and work is discussed by E. Ormsby in his book: *Ghazali: The Revival of Islam,* Oxford: Oneworld, 2008. Also refer to: H. Algar, *Imam Abu Hamid Ghazali: An Exponent of Islam in its Totality,* Oneonta, New York: iPi, 2001, pp. 3–43; M. Marmura, *Probing in Islamic Philosophy: Studies in the Philosophies of Ibn Sīnā, Al-Ghazālī, and Other Major Muslim Thinkers,* Binghamton: Global Academic Pub., Binghamton University, 2005.

response that rejected and condemned some elements of its teaching, while also allowing him to accept and apply part of it. His teaching, originality and influence cannot be fully understood without knowing the story of his life in a socio-political context.

Al-Ghazālī was born in the town of Ṭūs, near modern Mashhad in Eastern Iran and began his early education in his hometown. When he was fifteen, he went on to pursue his studies in Gorgān, a place in the southeast corner of the Caspian Sea. Subsequently, at the age of nineteen, he went to Nishapur, where he was admitted to the famous Niẓāmīya College under ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (died 1085), known as Imām al-Ḥaramayn, one of the leading religious scholars of the period. Although Al-Ghazālī focused on jurisprudence, he was also introduced to Ashʿarī theology and encouraged to read the philosophical treaties of Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna). Soon, he was recognized as a rising scholar and asked to help with teaching at the College. After the death of his teacher Al-Juwaynī, Niẓām al-Mulk, the powerful vizier of the Seljuq Sultans invited him to join his court.

In 1091, when Al-Ghazālī was about thirty-three, he was appointed to the main professorship at the Niẓāmīya College there. His scholarly work focused on both lecturing on Islamic jurisprudence and writings aiming at refuting heresies and responding to questions from all segments of the community. In the political confusion following the assassination of Niẓām al-Mulk and the subsequent violent death of Sultan Malikshah, Al-Ghazālī himself fell into a serious spiritual crisis and finally left Baghdād, renouncing both his scholarly career and the world.[2]

This event marks the beginning of a new stage in his life, that of retirement (1095–1111). which also included a short period of teaching at the Niẓāmīya College in Nishapur.[3] After leaving Baghdād, he wandered as a Ṣūfī into Syria and Palestine before returning to Ṭūs, where he was engaged in writing, Ṣūfī practices and teaching his disciples until his death. The inner development leading to his conversion is discussed in his autobiography*, al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (1108, The Deliverer from Error), which he wrote when he was about fifty.

As Al-Ghazālī explained in his book, it was his habit from an early age to search for the truth. In the process, he came to doubt the senses and even reason itself as a means of attaining truth and fell into a deep skepticism that lasted about two months. However, he was eventually delivered from this with the aid of 'the divine light', and thus recovered his trust in reason. Al-Ghazālī's extensive studies in Islamic law, tradition, theology, philosophy and Ṣūfīsm, together with his long period of self-discipline led him, using methodology described as the "courage to know and the courage to doubt," to present his position with regards to the various schools of Islamic thought of that time.[4] In his quest he carefully examined various "seekers after the truth," that is theologians, philosophers, authoritarians (the Ismāʿīlīs whom he called the party of *taʿlīm* or authoritative instruction) and finally the Ṣūfīs, or mystics. Because of these studies, he reached the conclusion that there was no way to ascertain knowledge except through Ṣūfīsm. However, in order to reach this ultimate truth of the Ṣūfīs, it was necessary to renounce the world and to devote oneself to mystical practice. Al-Ghazālī came to this realization through an agonizing process of decision making, which led to a nervous breakdown and finally to his departure from Baghdād.

[2] For Al-Ghazālī's political theology see: Y. Said, *Ghazālī's Politics in Context*, Abingdon–Oxon–New York: Routledge, 2013.

[3] About the significance of learning institutions, see: G. Makdisi, 'Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad', *BSOAS*, Vol. 24 (1961), pp. 1–56: *The Rise of the Colleges*, Edinburgh, 1981.

[4] See: M. Sharif (ed.), *History of Muslim Philosophy,* Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1983.

His first encounter was with the *mutakallimūn*, that is the Ash'arī rational theologians, by whom he was trained and among whom he was reckoned. In *Iḥya''ulūm al-dīn* (1096/1097), *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*) he criticized the scholar-jurists, including theologians. According to Watt, Al-Ghazālī simply supported "the vigorous criticism of the worldliness of the rulers of the Islamic empire and of those scholars who were prepared to take office under such rulers", expressed on many occasions by the ascetic and mystical movements in Islam.[5] However, the vehemence of his expressions could suggest that this was more likely an expression of his strong personal feelings. In the preface to *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* Al-Ghazālī said:

> The science of the road of the world to come, on the other hand, and the learning, wisdom, knowledge, illumination, light, guidance and direction as God calls them in scripture, by which the noble Muslims of old lived their lives, has become rejected among men and completely forgotten. Since this is a grave weakness in a religion and a black mark against it, I thought it is right to busy myself with composing this book, out of concern for the revival of the religious sciences, to show the practices to the former leaders, and to make clear the limits of the useful sciences in the eyes of the prophets and the noble Muslims of old.[6]

In his book, Al-Ghazālī never allows his reader to forget his critical attitude towards the scholar-jurists of the day, including theologians, focusing on five key-points. He accused them of preoccupying themselves with worldly affairs instead of devoting their attention to the preparation of man for the life of the world to come, of justifying their, at times, inappropriate conduct on religious grounds and of being primarily concerned with their professional qualifications as a means of gaining wealth, power, and position. Furthermore, he expressed his conviction that the true scholar would have nothing to do with rulers, would not take offices from them, and instead should teach freely without any remuneration. Finally, he pointed out that it is important not to forget that man's true destiny is the world to come, and in light of this, to allow the usefulness of each branch of religious knowledge to determine the extent to which it is studied.[7]

In *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl* Al-Ghazālī complains that the reasoning of the Ash'arī theologians is based on certain presuppositions and assumptions which they never try to justify, but which he cannot accept without some justification. In effect what happened was that he found in philosophy a way of justifying some of the bases of Ash'arī theology. This can be seen in *Al-Iqtiṣad fī al-I'tiqād* (1095, *The Golden Mean in Belief*),[8] where he introduced many philosophical arguments, including one for the existence of God. However, one should note that the theological position expressed in both *Al-Iqtiṣad fī al-I'tiqād* and his other important work, *Al-Risāla al-Qudsīyya* (1097, *The Jerusalem Epistle*),[9] is Ash'arīte, and there is no fundamental difference between Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arīte school.

One should point out that *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl* also reveals Al-Ghazālī's attitude towards theology from the after crisis period. In this book, Al-Ghazālī's views focused on

[5] W. M. Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of Al-Ghazali,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963, p. 109.

[6] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥya''ulūm al-dīn* [The Revival of the Religious Sciences], Vol. 4, Cairo: Al-Matba'a al-Azhariya, 1898, Vol. 1, p. 2. English translation Cf. Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*..., p. 112.

[7] Ibid., pp. 113–114.

[8] It was composed towards the end of his stay in Baghdad and after his critique of philosophy.

[9] It was composed soon afterwards in Jerusalem.

two important points. Firstly, he maintained that the aim of theologians was to defend dogma against heretical aberrations and innovations. Secondly, he accused them of failing to meet the logical demands of those who had studied Aristotelian logic, since their arguments were directed against those who already shared their own point of view to a considerable extent. In conclusion, he felt that theology contributed nothing to the actual practice of religious life. However, it is important to point out that despite the fact that one may notice some changes resulting from the influence of philosophy and Ṣūfīsm, until the end of his life he seemed to have maintained that Ash'arī theology was true.

It is worth noting that although Al-Ghazālī was dissatisfied with theology because it contributed little or nothing to the attainment of that goal of the individual life which he described as"salvation" or the bliss of Paradise, he believed that it had a prophylactic function in the life of the community. Furthermore, despite the fact that Al-Ghazālī was rather convinced that the importance of theology had been greatly exaggerated, he continued to take up a theological position which was broadly Ash'arīte.[10] With regards to Al-Ghazālī's contribution to the later development of theology, one should point out the conscious-based arguments on syllogistic logic and the attention to objections from a Neo-platonic standpoint. With time, according to Watt, he gradually influenced other scholars and "from now onwards all the rational theologians in Islam wrote in a way which assumed a philosophical outlook in pre-theological matters, and often explicitly discussed such matters".[11] In conclusion, one may say that this new perspective, introduced by Al-Ghazālī into Islamic theology, became an aspect of its permanent nature.[12]

The second encounter in Al-Ghazālī's intellectual journey in search for the truth was with philosophy (*falsafa)*[13] and, in particular, with the Muslim Neo-Platonism of Al-Fārābī[14] and

[10] The date, which has been found for a small work called 'The Restraining of the Commonalty from the Science of Theology', marks the completion of this work only a few days before his death (Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*..., p. 119). For a thorough account on Al-Ghazālī's theological views refer to: R. Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School,* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994.

[11] Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*..., p. 123.

[12] See: F. Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

[13] Islamic philosophy (*falsafa*) has been one of the major intellectual traditions in the Islamic world, and it has influenced and been influenced by many other intellectual perspectives including scholastic theology (*kalām*) and doctrinal Ṣūfīsm (*ma'arifa*). It developed as a result of Muslim philosophical reflection on the heritage of Greco-Alexandrian philosophy. During the period from the eighth to tenth centuries in Baghdād, under the patronage of the 'Abbāsids, the more or less correct translations of philosophical treaties of Plato, Aristotle, Neo-Platonists (predominantly Plotinus) into Arabic were prepared. These translations gave Muslim scholars, immersed in the teachings of the Qur'an and living in a universe in which revelation was a central reality, the basis and the starting point to prepare original commentaries and eventually their own original philosophical systems. In contrast to the Greeks, Muslim philosophers focused on "prophetic philosophy". The Qur'an, as well as the *ḥadīth*, served as the central source of Islamic philosophical speculation for centuries. In later Islamic philosophy the sayings of the Shī 'ī imam also played a major role. Far from being simply Greek philosophy in Arabic, Persian or Turkish, Islamic philosophy integrated certain elements of Greek philosophy into the Islamic perspective, creating new philosophical schools. One may say that Islamic philosophy became an original and productive assimilation of Greek thought created by open-minded scholars of very different cultural traditions, including Arabic, Persian, Turkish, as well as an attempt to make a "foreign", namely Greek element an integral part of Islamic tradition.

[14] Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn al-Farakh al-Fārābī (870–950), was a famous philosopher, scientist, cosmologist, logician, and musician of the Islamic Golden Age. He became well known

Ibn Sīnā.[15] It should be pointed out that this particular group of seekers primarily engaged his polemical attention and his criticism had an impact on the further development of the *kalām* and perhaps even the destruction of neo-Platonic philosophy in the East.

According to the scholars, it is difficult to say whether he is responsible for the "death" of philosophical studies in Islam. It is true that after his death philosophical studies rather ceased to exist in the East.[16] However, one may observe these studies in the Islamic West, where Islamic philosophy had its famous representatives, such as Ibn Bajja,[17] Ibn Ṭufayl,[18] and Ibn Rushd.[19]

As for Al-Ghazālī's knowledge of philosophy, it should be mentioned that he began philosophical studies in his early years in Nishapur, where he had probably been introduced to the subject by Al-Juwaynī. However, the main focus on such studies was during his professorship in Baghdad, which is evidenced by his treaties on logic and *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa*. Al-Ghazālī was the first Muslim theologian who undertook serious polemics with the philosophers and who realized that in order to refute the system, one should acquire a deep knowledge of it or else would act blindly.

In *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl* Al-Ghazālī presents his discussion on philosophy. His main attack on philosophers and their practices came later, namely with the powerful critique *Tāhāfut al-Falāsifa* (1095, *Incoherence or Auto-destruction of the Philosophers*).[20] Al-Ghazālī's critique of twenty points in this particular book is a significant landmark in the

among medieval Muslim intellectuals as 'The Second Teacher', that is, the successor to Aristotle, 'The First Teacher'. For a thorough discussion on the philosophy of Al-Fārābī see: M. Fakhry, *Al-Fārābī, Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism: His Life, Works and Influence,* Oxford: Oneworld, 2002; M. S. Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy,* with a foreword by Charles E. Butterworth, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

[15] Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Sīnā (980–1037), known as Ibn Sīnā and as Avicenna, was a Persian philosopher, medical doctor, and scientist. His most famous works are *The Book of Healing*, a vast philosophical and scientific encyclopaedia, and *The Canon of Medicine*, which was a standard medical text at many medieval universities in Europe. See: J. McGinnis, *Avicenna*, *Great Medieval Thinker*, New York–Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works,* Leiden–New York: E.J. Brill, 1988.

[16] There was an important Persian tradition of the theosophical philosophy.

[17] Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn al-Ṣā'igh al-Tūjībī (1085–1138), known as Ibn Bajja (or Avempace in the West) was one of the most important philosophers of Muslim Spain. See: M. Chemli, *La philosophie morale d'Ibn Bâjja (Avempace) à travers le Tadbîr al-mutawaḥḥid (Le régime du solitaire),* Tunis: Impr. N. Bascone & S. Muscat, 1969.

[18] Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭufayl (1105–1185) was an Andalusian philosopher and novelist, most famous for writing the first philosophical novel, *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan*. See: Z. A. Siddiqi, *Philosophy of Ibn Tufayl,* Faculty of Arts Publication Series, No. 18, Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University, 1965.

[19] Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Rushd (1126–1198) commonly known as Ibn Rushd or by his Latinized name Averroës, was a Spanish Andalusian Muslim philosopher, theologian, jurist, and scientist. He was a defender of Aristotelian philosophy against Ash'ari theologians led by Al-Ghazālī, whom he attacked in his famous work *Tahafut al-tahafut*. See: M. Fakhry, *Averroës (Ibn Rushd): His Life, Works and Influence,* Oxford: Oneworld, 2001.

[20] See: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahāfut al-falāsifa), A Parallel English-Arabic Text,* translated, introduced, and annotated by Michael E. Marmura, Provo, UT: Birmingham Young University Press, 2000.

history of philosophy, as it advances the nominal critique of Aristotelian science developed later in 14th century Europe. In his discussion of Muslim philosophers, he focuses on the third group, namely theists, represented by Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Their neo-Platonism adapted to Islamic monotheism allows them to claim to be Muslims. According to Al-Ghazālī everything that they transmitted falls under three headings, namely (1) what must be counted as unbelief, (2) what must be counted as heresy and (3) what is not to be denied.

Al-Ghazālī considers six philosophical sciences, i.e., mathematics, logic, natural science, metaphysics or theology, politics and ethics.[21] As for metaphysics, he criticizes it severely: "here occur most of the errors of the philosophers." Most of the other philosophical sciences he regards as neutral in themselves. In the case of mathematics, according to Al-Ghazālī, none of its results are connected with religious matters. As for logic, nothing in this science is relevant to religion by the way of denial and affirmation.[22] With regard to natural science, similar to medicine, in the view of Al-Ghazālī, it should not be rejected, except for some points. As for politics, he believes that this discussion is taken from the Divine Scriptures. Finally, in the case of ethics, people should rather refrain from the reading of these books because they contain a "mixture" of the sayings of the prophets and mystics and the philosophers' own ideas, and, therefore, according to Al-Ghazālī, it is difficult for an unprepared person to distinguish between truth and fallacy.

What are the philosophical issues and debates in the *Tahafut al-falāsifa*? Al-Ghazālī explains his purpose for writing the *Tāhāfut al-falāsifa* in his religious preface and short introductions. In the preface he inveighs against certain pseudo-intellectuals of his time who were "impressed" by such 'high-sounding names' as Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato and Aristotle have become mere imitators of their philosophy without having any real knowledge or insight of their own. What is more, using the example of such philosophers, they rationalize their own disregard for the rituals and obligations imposed by religious law, opting, in effect for unbelief (*kufr)*.[23] In the introductions that follow, he makes a number of basic points. He states that his quarrel is not with the philosophers' mathematics, astronomical sciences or logic, but only with those of their theories that contravene the principles of religion.[24]

As he states in his book, the truth of the positive facts of religion neither can be proved nor disapproved and to do otherwise leads philosophers to take quite nonsensical positions. Al-Ghazālī attacks the philosophers because many of their particular arguments are logically false and the various positions that they take in their systems as a whole are inconsistent with one another. Furthermore, some of their assumptions are unfounded. According to Al-Ghazālī, these assumptions neither can be demonstrated logically nor are self-evident through intuition.

The philosophy of religion has to accept the facts of religion as given by religion. It is worth noting that although Al-Ghazālī's whole polemic is derived from the Ash'arite theology, his method is a philosophical one. In his critique of the philosophers, he stands firmly upon the revelation and strongly opposes the philosopher's exclusive reliance on reason.[25] The philosopher is convinced that there are things beyond the grasp of intellect

[21] Refer to: Ibid., pp. 161–225.

[22] The Aristotelian logic, and in particular syllogism impressed Al-Ghazālī. He also wrote several books on logic.

[23] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*..., pp. 1–3.

[24] Ibid., pp. 4, 8.

[25] For a thorough discussion on the issue of reason and revelation see: A.J. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam,* London: Allen & Unwin, 1957.

and they have to be accepted as they are given by revelation. The philosophical methods should not enter here.

One by one Al-Ghazālī brings the points on which the philosophers can be convinced of incoherence and shows that they are unable to give logical proofs for their metaphysics.[26]

He attacks them as concerns the twenty points, beginning with the creation and ending with inevitable finality. On seventeen points, he accuses them of being heretics. He demonstrates the weaknesses of their arguments concerning the existence of God, specifically his unity and incorporeality. He attacks their rejection of God as a simply perceived entity without quiddity and attributes, and their conception of 'His knowledge' and some of their assertions about heaven and the human soul. On the three remaining points, Al-Ghazālī regards the philosophers as infidels. These points are as follows: (1) the eternity of the world,[27] (2) a denial of God's knowledge of the particulars, [28] and (3) a denial of bodily resurrection.[29] As he pointed out in the conclusion of the *Tahafut al-falāsifa*, these three theories are in violent opposition to Islam and to believe in them is to "accuse the Prophet of falsehood; to this no Muslim sect would subscribe". Concerning the other points, Al-Ghazālī approximates the position of the philosophers to that of Mu'tazila.

The problem to which Al-Ghazālī gives special consideration is the eternity of the world. The orthodox could not possibly accept the philosopher's claim. There is nothing eternal, but God, and all else is created. Therefore, anything co-eternal with God means violating the strict principle of monotheism. It is worth noting that, as he stated at the conclusion of his critique of the philosophers four proofs for the world's pre-eternity, to refute their position was the main purpose behind writing *Tahafut al-falāsifa*. As he stated:

> We have not endeavored to defend a particular doctrine, and as such we have not departed from the objective of this book. We will not argue exhaustively for the doctrine of the temporal origination [of the world], since our purpose is to refute their claim of knowing [its] pre-eternity. As regards the true doctrine, we will write a book concerning it after completing this one – if success, god willing, comes to our aid – and will name it *The Principles of Belief.* We will engage in it in affirmation, just as we have devoted ourselves in this book to destruction. [30]

Al-Ghazālī's challenge to the Muslim philosophers, in the form of a well-elaborated and very critical study of their doctrines rendered them increasingly defensive. The results of his critique became a vibrant element in the *kalām*. Therefore, Al-Ghazālī is credited with providing Islamic theology with sound philosophical foundations.[31] In addition, Al-Ghazālī legitimized and popularized the study of one philosophical science, namely logic and in this way made the Greek modes of thinking more accessible, as compared to the more

[26] See: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*..., pp. 12–160.

[27] See: Ibid. ('First Discussion: On Refuting their Doctrine of the World's Past Eternity'), pp. 12–46.

[28] See: Ibid. ('Thirteenth Discussion: On Refuting their Statement that the First does not Know Particulars'), pp. 134–143.

[29] See: Ibid. ('Twentieth Discussion: On refuting their denial of bodily resurrection'), pp. 208–226.

[30] Ibid., p. 46.

[31] See: W.M. Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology,* Edinburgh: University Press, 1962; H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.

traditional Muslim ones.[32] His attack evoked replies and the most important, i.e., *Tahafut al-Tahafut* was written in the West by Ibn Rushd. With Al-Ghazālī begins the successful introduction of Aristotelianism or rather Avicennism into Muslim theology. After a period of appropriation of the Greek sciences in the translation movement from Greek into Arabic and the writings of the *falāsifa* up to Ibn Sīnā, philosophy and the Greek sciences were "naturalized" into the discourse of *kalām* and Muslim theology. Al-Ghazālī's approach to resolving apparent contradictions between reason and revelation was accepted by almost all later Muslim theologians and had, via the works of Ibn Rushd and Jewish authors, a significant influence on Latin medieval thinking.

It has been customary to see Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī as a vehement critic of philosophy, who rejected it in favor of Islamic mysticism. However, over the past few years such a view has come under increased scrutiny. Alexander Treiger, the author of the recently published study (2012), namely *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation*, argues that Al-Ghazālī was instead, one of the greatest popularizers of philosophy in medieval Islam. The author supplies new evidence showing that Al-Ghazālī was indebted to philosophy in his theory of mystical cognition and in his eschatology. Moreover, within these two areas he even accepted those philosophical teachings, which he ostensibly criticized. Arguing that despite overt criticism, Al-Ghazālī never rejected Avicennian philosophy and that his mysticism itself is grounded in Avicenna's teachings, the book offers a clear and systematic presentation of Al-Ghazālī's "philosophical mysticism". [33]

The third encounter was with a section of Ismā 'īlīya, which held that true knowledge was to be gained from an infallible imam. It is worth noting that with regard to the Ismā 'īlīs, Al-Ghazālī's views were close to that of Niẓām al-Mulk, and he shared his concerns about the growth of their influences.[34] Therefore, after the assassination of the vizier in 1092, he had no hesitation in responding to the request of the young caliph Al-Mustaẓ'hir (1094–1118), stating that he should write a book refuting the doctrines of the Ta'līmites or Bāṭinites. The book, commonly known as the *Mustaẓ'hirī*, was completed before Al-Ghazālī left Baghdād in November 1095.[35] He subsequently wrote several other works directed in whole or in part against the Bāṭinites.

In the *Mustaẓ'hirī*, Al-Ghazālī is focused on exposing inconsistencies with the esoteric doctrine of the Bāṭinites.[36] This enabled him to not only criticize the doctrine but also to explain the need of refuting it. For example, he argues that it is practically impossible to consult the imam or his representative in every case. Furthermore, he points out that although the Bāṭinites claim to abandon reasoning, they cannot avoid surreptitiously making use of it. Furthermore, as underlined by Watt, there is a considerable difference between the *Mustaẓ'hirī*

[32] About Greek philosophy, as translated and commented on by Muslims, see: R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic. Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Harward University Press, 1962.

[33] A. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation,* London–New York: Routledge, 2012.

[34] For a thorough account on Al-Ghazālī's polemical engagement with the Ismā'īlīs see: F. Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis: A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam,* Ismaili Heritage Series, 5, London: I. B. Tauris, in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001.

[35] Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*..., p. 82.

[36] *Bāṭin* is defined as the interior or hidden meaning of the Qur'ān. See: M. Ghālib, *Al-Ḥarakāt al-bāṭinīyah fī al-Islām,* Bayrūt–Lubnān: Dār al-Andalus, 1982.

and *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl* with regard to Al-Ghazālī's attitude and "appreciation" of the Bāṭinite doctrine. The caliph commissioned the first work and, therefore, it was obvious that the author focused on rather destructive criticism. As for the second work, as Watt says, it is clear that Al-Ghazālī, "had realized that part of their success was due to the fact that they satisfied, however imperfectly, the deep demand in men's hearts for an embodiment of the dynamic image of the charismatic leader."[37] Therefore, whilst being aware of such a demand, he insisted that Muslims already had such a leader, namely the Prophet Muḥammad and "he has his living expositors (presumably the scholar-jurists), just as the hidden imam has his expositors, the accredited agents".[38] Here Watt brings our attention to a very important point, namely to the issue that is "untouched" or "omitted" by Al-Ghazālī. He says:

> It is perhaps worth calling attention here to what Al-Ghazālī does not say. Though the ʻAbbāsid caliphs had originally claimed to have charismata, he does not attempt to make them into imams of the Bāṭinite type... neither does he attempt to attribute any charismata to the scholar-jurists... Had he wanted he could have referred to the tradition that the scholar-jurists were the heirs of the prophets... His later thought...tended to view that there was an elite who, could obtain an insight into the divine truth comparable to that of the prophets. It is perhaps in parts of his later works, apparently unconnected with contemporary problems, that we find his real and effective answer to the challenge of Ismāʻīlism, which, even if it had little effect on the ruling institution, enabled Islamic society to preserve its characteristic structure and manner of life.[39]

Al-Ghazālī's final encounter was with Ṣūfīsm. As for Islamic mystical tradition, it is worth noting that from the life of Muḥammad onwards there were Muslims to whom the element of piety or spirituality in the Qur'ān had strong appeal. In the earliest days, such Muslims were nearly all Arabs. With the conversion of the inhabitants of Iraq, came into Islam many people familiar with Christian mystical traditions. It is among non-Arabs that mysticism in the strict sense developed. Among the most prominent Ṣūfīs of the early period, one should mention Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (643–728), Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 874–875 or 848–849), Al-Junayd (d. 910) and Al-Ḥallāj (d. 922). There was much mysticism during the tenth and eleventh centuries. It is worth noting that in those days Ṣūfīsm was not something isolated, as some Western accounts may suggest, but had become a part of the ordinary life of the Muslim *ʻumma*. One of the important aspects of the early Ṣūfī movement was its relation to contemporary history and to social conditions. In other words, the early ascetic trends were a reaction to the wealth and luxury of the leaders and a little later, the Ṣūfīs began to attack the worldliness and hypocrisy of the scholar-jurists.[40] These men, "supported" by the "strong argument" taken from the standard collections of "sound Traditions" by Al-Bukhārī (d. 870) and Muslim (d. 875), formed a closed co-operation and from the times of *Miḥna* or the Inquisition of (833–849), were, with hardly any exceptions, wholly subservient to the government.

The period from around 900 to 1100 saw fresh vicissitudes. For half a century or more after 945, Baghdad was under the rule of the Shīʻite Buwayhid sultans. Although the

[37] Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*..., p. 85.
[38] Ibidem.
[39] Ibid., pp. 85–86.
[40] Ibid., p. 131.

Sunnite scholar-jurists continued to have official recognition, their power was decreasing and they became involved in court intrigues. After the turbulent years that followed the Buwayhids decline, the advent of the Seljuqs in 1055 brought a measure of peace. When their government, guided by Niẓām al-Mulk, decided to support and promote Ash'arism, the dependence of the scholar-jurists on the rulers was increased. One of the results was the succumbing of the scholar-jurists to the politicians' disease of worldliness and materialism, an "epidemic to which criticism bear witness.[41] Under these circumstances, the movement flourished. However, the sources of worldliness were so strong in political and judicial circles that it was impossible for mystics to express their spiritual aspirations in public life. One may say that, in this situation, it seemed quite natural that the higher spiritual aspirations should seek to express themselves through the cultivation of the inner life. Thus, the adoption of the mystic life by some members of the intellectual circles did not simply mean a refusal to face difficulties, but as Watt pointed out, "the spiritual vision which had hitherto guided the development of Islam was itself pointing to a greater concentration on the inner life".[42]

After four years in Baghdād, Al-Ghazālī felt himself so involved in the worldliness of his milieu that he was in danger of 'going to hell'. The profound inner struggle he experienced caused a psychosomatic illness in 1095. Dryness of the tongue prevented him from lecturing and even from eating, and the doctors could do nothing to alleviate the symptoms. After about six months, he decided to leave the professorship and adopt the life of Ṣūfī. To avoid any attempts to stop him, he let it be known that he was setting out on a pilgrimage to Mecca. In November 1095, Al-Ghazālī left Baghdad heading to Damascus and lived there for a while. Towards the end of 1096, he went to Jerusalem. During the months of November and December 1096, he was engaged in the pilgrimage to Mecca, perhaps visiting Alexandria on the way. He went back to Damascus, but no later than June 1097 did he return to Baghdad. He spent some time there, but possibly, around 1099 returned to his native town Ṭūs.

There Al-Ghazālī established a *khānāqā* where some young disciples joined him in leading a communal Ṣūfī life. Around 1105 or early 1106 Fakhr al-Mulk (the son of Niẓām al-Mulk) the new vizier of the Seljūq prince, offered him the professorship at the Niẓāmiyya college. One should underline that this was the eleven month of the Muslim year 499. The year 500, which began on September 2nd, marked the beginning of a new century. According to traditions, Muḥammad was reported to have said that God would send a *"mujaddid"* (a "renewer") of his religion at the beginning of each century. Some friends assured Al-Ghazālī that he was the "renewer" for the six century. Therefore, he accepted the invitation of Fakhr al-Mulk, went to Nishapur, and there he assumed his duties around July or August of 1106. After about three or four years of working there, Al-Ghazālī returned to Ṭūs, where he died in 1111.

In his autobiography *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, Al-Ghazālī said that he had turned to the study of Ṣūfīsm only after he found no satisfaction in his study of theology, philosophy, and Bāṭinism. However, it should be pointed out that this was not his first encounter with the Muslim mystics. Al-Ghazālī was in contact with them much earlier. The guardian to whom he and his brother were entrusted to upon his father's death, was a Ṣūfī.[43] While he was a student at Ṭūs, he had a spiritual leader who was also a Ṣūfī. In Nishapur, Al-Juwaynī, under

[41] Ibid., p. 133.
[42] Ibidem.
[43] Ibidem.

whom he was studying theology, was sympathetic to Ṣūfīsm. In addition, Al-Fārmadhī, the professor of jurisprudence under whom Al-Ghazālī worked, was a recognized leader of the *Ṣufīs* in Ṭūs and Nishapur.

As mentioned by Watt, in light of *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, during both his student days and the subsequent years, Al-Ghazālī was particularly concerned with the quest for the truth. His first crisis, while he was a complete sceptic, arose from his conclusion that the methods he had been employing did not give him absolute certainty. He had probably begun to study philosophy before this crisis, and he may have reached the point of seeing that in theology and metaphysics, the philosophers did not follow a strictly logical method. At the close of this period of skepticism, he found himself able to accept some basic principles because of a "light from God." One may say that he saw this light directly or had an immediate intuition, that the principles were true. In 1095, when the second crisis came upon him, he already had a steadfast faith in God, in prophethood and in the Last Day.[44] Although in *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl* Al-Ghazālī speaks about a personal search for the truth in his study of Bāṭinism, it may seem that he was rather fulfilling a duty imposed by the caliph.

The close examination of the doctrine of the Bāṭinites also proved beneficial. However, this time Al-Ghazālī's aim was not to find intellectual certainty but rather to achieve a satisfying life, a life worthy of Paradise. He had already realized that this mysticism entailed not only intellectual doctrines but also a way of life. At the beginning of the ninth chapter from *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl* he said:

> Lastly I turned to the ways of the mystics. I knew that in their path there has to be both knowledge and activity...Knowledge was easier for me than activity. I began by reading their books... Then I realized that what is most distinctive of them can be attained only by personal experience (taste – dhawq), ecstasy and a change of character.[45]

The importance of Islamic mysticism in also explained by Al-Ghazālī in *Iḥya''ulūm al-dīn* (1096/7, *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*), considered to be his greatest work.[46] It is divided into four "quarters." Each "quarter" consists of ten books. The first quarter isentitled "matters of service (sc. of God)." The first book, intended as an introduction, is divided into seven chapters and is focused on presenting which subjects of study or science are, according to Al-Ghazālī, important for a pious Muslim. The second book is devoted to the presentation of the basic principles of the creed and contains:

> (a) an elaboration of the Confession of Faith – "I bear witness that there is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God; (b) a discussion of education in matters of doctrine; (c) a statement of the Islamic doctrine in four sections, each with ten points; (d) a discussion of the relation between the faith and Islam, that is between being a believer and being a Muslim.[47]

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[44] Ibid., p. 134.

[45] Al-Ghazālī *Al-Munqidh min ad-Dalal* [Deliverance from Error], Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-Anglo-Misriya, 1962, p. 34. Cf. Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*..., p. 135.

[46] A small part of it, namely *Al-Risāla al-Qudsīyya* (1097, *The Jerusalem Epistle*) was probably written separately during his stay in Jerusalem in 1096 (Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*..., p. 151).

[47] Ibid., p. 152.

The remaining eight books deal with ritual purity (ablutions before worship, etc.), formal prayers or worship, tithing, fasting, the pilgrimage to Mecca, the recitation of the Qur'ān, private prayer and extra-canonical devotions. Each practice is usually introduced by the Qur'ānic verses and the Traditions justifying it.

With regard to the second quarter entitled "customs," Al-Ghazālī discusses the external aspects of ordinary life outside the practice or cult. There are books about various aspects of everyday life, such as eating and drinking, marriage, earning one's living, and engaging in business, relations with relatives and friends, the life of retirement, traveling, the use of music, and about reforming society and improving the reciprocal relations between people. Furthermore, Al-Ghazālī also discusses the issue of "lawful and unlawful," which is a sensitive issue of conscience. It is worth noting that for Muslims all the aspects of their lives are connected with the reviled law. Therefore, although in this quarter the author deals predominantly with rather secular matters, one may say that he never "loses sight of the contribution of the things he discusses to man's spiritual growth".[48]

The third and fourth quarters are devoted to matters related to man's inner life and are respectively entitled "things leading to destruction" and "things leading to salvation". The third quarter begins with an introduction on the "mysteries of the heart", followed by a book discussing the matter of improvement of character. In his subsequent eight books, Al-Ghazālī considers issues such as the control of appetites for food and sexual intercourse, the weakness of 'the tongue', anger, worldliness, avarice, hypocrisy, and love of fame, pride, vanity and self-deception. The books of the fourth quarter are respectively on repentance, on patience and gratitude (to God), fear and hope, poverty and self-discipline, asserting God's unity and trusting in him, love (for God) and approval (of his decrees), sincerity and purity of intention, on self-examination, on meditation, and on death and the life to come.

In light of *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, one may conclude that Al-Ghazālī Ṣūfīsm signified much more than devoted prayer and a cultivation of ecstatic states. His adherence to Ṣūfīsm absolutely convinced him and made him constantly aware of the fact that the life he lived was only a preparation for the life to come. In addition, since the prelude of the life to come was the Last Judgement, Al-Ghazālī was very concerned with the improvement of his own character. Therefore, he believed that some experience of mystical ecstasy should not be the ultimate goal, but that it could only help support and make it easier to improve one's character and reach a higher degree of reward in the life to come.

Al-Ghazālī's great works, and in particular *Iḥya' 'ulūm al-dīn* and *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, provide both a theoretical justification of his position and a highly detailed elucidation, both of which emphasized the deeper meaning of the external acts. In this way in both his writing and in his own life, this outstanding scholar showed how a profound inner life can be combined with a full observance of *sharī 'a* and a sound theological doctrine. The consequences of the life and works of Al-Ghazālī was that religious scholars in the main stream of Sunnism had to look more favorably on the Ṣūfī movement, and this made it possible for ordinary Muslims to adopt moderate Ṣūfī practices.

[48] Ibid., p. 153.

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