



Al-Ghazzali On Knowing Yourself and God

By Abû Hâmid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazâlî

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Al-Ghazzali begins his masterful Alchemy of Happiness with the topic based on the famous Tradition of the Prophet, "One who knows one's self, knows one's Lord." In al-Ghazzali's view, everything begins by knowing who you are. He says that you should know that you are born with an outer form and an inner essence and it is that inner essence or the spiritual heart that you have to come to know in order to know who you are.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Al-Ghazâlî (c.1056 1111) was one of the most prominent and influential philosophers, theologians, jurists, and mystics of Sunni Islam. He was active at a time when Sunni theology had just passed through its consolidation and entered a period of intense challenges from Shiite Ismâ'îlite theology and the Arabic tradition of Aristotelian philosophy (*falsafa*). Al-Ghazâlî understood the importance of *falsafa* and developed a complex response that rejected and condemned some of its teachings, while it also allowed him to accept and apply others. Al-Ghazâlî's critique of twenty positions of *falsafa* in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahâfut al-falâsifa*) is a significant landmark in the history of philosophy as it advances the nominalist critique of Aristotelian science developed later in 14th century Europe. On the Arabic and Muslim side al-Ghazâlî's acceptance of demonstration (*apodeixis*) led to a much more refined and precise discourse on epistemology and a flowering of Aristotelian logics and metaphysics. With al-Ghazâlî 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 *falâsifa* up to Avicenna (Ibn Sînâ, c.980 1037), philosophy and the Greek sciences were naturalized into the discourse of *kalâm* and Muslim theology (Sabra 1987). Al-Ghazâlî's approach to resolving apparent contradictions between reason and revelation was accepted by almost all later Muslim theologians and had, via the works of Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126 98) and Jewish authors a significant influence on Latin medieval thinking. -- Griffel, Frank, "Al-Ghazali", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

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