

THE HARMONY OF REASON AND SPIRIT: Al-Ghazali's Concept of Consciousness in Modern Philosophical Discourse

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ABSTRACT

Al-Ghazali's thought bridges the gap between classical Islamic teachings and modern philosophical inquiries, presenting a holistic view of consciousness that transcends mere neural activities. His insights emphasize the integration of reason and spirituality, reflecting his profound influence on Islamic philosophy and Sufism. This research seeks to delve into Al-Ghazali's understanding of consciousness, identifying its key aspects and contributions to modern discussions on the subject. By examining his works, the study aims to reveal how his conceptual framework can enrich contemporary debates on consciousness. This is a literature-based study that analyzes Al-Ghazali's primary texts along with secondary sources. The research employs content analysis to dissect and categorize the core elements of his thoughts on consciousness, comparative analysis to position his views within broader philosophical contexts, and interpretive analysis to apply his insights to current discussions. Al-Ghazali's view of consciousness is multi-faceted, encompassing rational, spiritual, and moral dimensions. He posits that true understanding and inner peace arise from a harmonious balance between reason and faith. His approach underscores the significance of spiritual discipline and moral integrity as essential components of conscious awareness. Al-Ghazali's integrative perspective on consciousness provides valuable insights for contemporary philosophical discourse. His emphasis on the interplay between rationality, spirituality, and morality offers a comprehensive framework for understanding human consciousness. This study highlights the enduring relevance of Al-Ghazali's thought, advocating for a balanced approach to philosophical inquiries into the nature of consciousness.

Keywords: *Al-Ghazali, Consciousness, Sufism, Philosophy, Islamic Thought*

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental nature of consciousness has been a longstanding philosophical and scientific debate, with proponents of dualism arguing that consciousness is a distinct substance separate from the material world, while materialists contend that consciousness arises from the physical processes of the brain.¹

Dualists, such as Descartes, have posited that the mind and body are separate entities, with the mind being a non-physical substance that interacts with the physical world.² In contrast, materialists assert that consciousness is not a distinct substance, but rather emerges from the complex neural activity and information processing within the brain.³

Recent developments in neuroscience and cognitive science have shed light on the relationship between consciousness and the physical brain, challenging the traditional dualist perspective. Some theorists have proposed that consciousness arises from the dynamic interplay between the brain, body, and environment, rather than being reducible to a specific neural mechanism.⁴

This view suggests that consciousness is not a separate entity, but rather a process that is inextricably linked to the physical embodiment of the human organism. Nonetheless, the precise nature of the relationship between consciousness and the material world remains a topic of ongoing debate and investigation.

Exploring the intricate connection between our subjective experience of the world and the underlying physical processes in the brain is a profound and captivating question that has long been the subject of intense philosophical and scientific inquiry. Consciousness, the very essence of our subjective experience, appears to arise from the complex neural activities

¹ Donald D Hoffman, "Conscious Realism and the Mind-Body Problem" 6, no. 1 (2008): 87–121.

² Mark Johnson, "Mind Incarnate: From Dewey to Damasio," *Daedalus* 135, no. 3 (July 2006): 46–54, <https://doi.org/10.1162/daed.2006.135.3.46>.

³ Gerald M. Edelman, "Naturalizing Consciousness: A Theoretical Framework," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 100, no. 9 (April 29, 2003): 5520–24, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0931349100>.

⁴ Jeffrey Pugh, "The Disappearing Human: Gnostic Dreams in a Transhumanist World," *Religions* 8, no. 5 (May 3, 2017): 81, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel8050081>.

within our brains, yet the precise mechanisms by which this occurs remain elusive.⁵

One perspective views consciousness as a distinct entity, separate from the material world, suggesting that it is not a product of brain activity but rather interacts with the physical realm. However, an alternative view, known as conscious realism, posits that the objective world consists of conscious agents and their experiences, which can be scientifically explored and modeled.⁶ This framework suggests that consciousness is not a separate substance, but rather an emergent property that arises from the dynamic interactions within the brain's neural networks.⁷

The phenomenon of conscious perception illustrates this intriguing relationship. Neuroscientific research has revealed that the brain can process a vast amount of sensory information in parallel, but only a subset of this information becomes consciously accessible. This selectivity in conscious access seems to depend on the engagement of a widely distributed brain network, which may play a crucial role in determining what aspects of our environment we subjectively experience.⁸

Proponents of the view that consciousness is grounded in the physical brain argue that it is the specific patterns of neural activity, rather than consciousness itself, that are the primary causal factors in our actions and experiences.⁹ This suggests that our subjective experience of the world arises from the complex dynamics within the brain, shaped by its structural and functional characteristics.¹⁰

Ultimately, the question of how consciousness relates to the physical world remains a subject of ongoing debate and investigation. While progress has been made in identifying neural correlates of conscious perception, the precise mechanisms by which subjective experience emerges from the material substrate of the brain continue to challenge our

⁵ Edelman, "Naturalizing Consciousness"; Gaëtan Sanchez et al., "Decoding across Sensory Modalities Reveals Common Supramodal Signatures of Conscious Perception," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117, no. 13 (March 31, 2020): 7437–46, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1912584117>.

⁶ Hoffman, "Conscious Realism and the Mind-Body Problem."

⁷ Pugh, "The Disappearing Human."

⁸ Sanchez et al., "Decoding across Sensory Modalities Reveals Common Supramodal Signatures of Conscious Perception."

⁹ Edelman, "Naturalizing Consciousness."

¹⁰ Pugh, "The Disappearing Human."

understanding.¹¹

One promising approach to understanding the nature of consciousness is the field of neurophenomenology, which seeks to integrate first-person accounts of subjective experience with third-person neuroscientific observations.¹²

The question of whether consciousness is unique to humans or if other animals possess it as well has been a subject of intense philosophical and scientific debate for centuries. The implications of this debate are far-reaching, as they could significantly impact our understanding of morality and ethics.

A key challenge in addressing this question is the measurement problem of consciousness - how can we reliably determine the presence and properties of consciousness in both humans and non-human animals?¹³ Researchers have noted the difficulty in applying indicators of conscious and unconscious processing in humans to the identification of consciousness in other organisms, as well as the challenge of extrapolating such indicators to artificial systems.¹⁴

Despite these measurement challenges, there have been attempts to shed light on the nature of consciousness through the study of artificial intelligence (AI). Some have argued that understanding the governing principles of biological consciousness and its various embodiments could lead to the development of sentient AI technologies.¹⁵ Moreover, metrics of consciousness could be used to quantitatively study how human intelligence differs from current machine intelligence.¹⁶

Ultimately, while the measurement problem poses significant difficulties, the ethical

¹¹ Edelman, "Naturalizing Consciousness"; Sanchez et al., "Decoding across Sensory Modalities Reveals Common Supramodal Signatures of Conscious Perception"; Pugh, "The Disappearing Human"; Hoffman, "Conscious Realism and the Mind-Body Problem."

¹² Robert Hanna and Evan Thompson, "Neurophenomenology and the Spontaneity of Consciousness," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy Supplementary Volume* 29 (2003): 133–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00455091.2003.10717597>.

¹³ Heather Browning, Walter Veit, and University of Arkansas Press, "The Measurement Problem of Consciousness," *Philosophical Topics* 48, no. 1 (2020): 85–108, <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtopics20204815>.

¹⁴ Browning, Veit, and University of Arkansas Press.

¹⁵ Xerxes D. Arsiwalla et al., "The Morphospace of Consciousness" (arXiv, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.1705.11190>.

¹⁶ Arsiwalla et al.

urgency of understanding consciousness in non-human animals and intelligent machines means that we cannot wait for certainty. As such, a precautionary principle may be warranted to avoid unintentional harm.¹⁷

The implications of the consciousness debate for morality and ethics are significant.¹⁸ If non-human animals and artificial intelligences are found to possess consciousness, it could challenge our traditional notions of moral status and the boundaries of our ethical obligations. Recognizing consciousness in other beings may require us to extend moral consideration beyond the human realm, with potentially far-reaching consequences for our understanding of ethics and our treatment of the natural world.

Al-Ghazali, also known as Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Tusi al-Shafi'i, was a renowned Islamic scholar, theologian, and philosopher who lived from 1058 to 1111 CE. His life and work have had a profound impact on Islamic thought and spirituality.

Al-Ghazali was born in Tus, a city in modern-day Iran, to a family of weavers. As a young man, he received a traditional Islamic education, studying subjects such as jurisprudence, theology, and philosophy. He excelled in his studies and eventually became a professor at the Nizamiyyah University in Baghdad, where he gained a reputation as a brilliant and influential thinker.

Despite his academic success, Al-Ghazali experienced a profound spiritual crisis that led him to abandon his prestigious position and embark on a period of intense introspection and mystical exploration.¹⁹ This experience was chronicled in his autobiographical work "Deliverance from Error," in which he described his spiritual journey and the ultimate attainment of "mystical union with the Almighty."²⁰

After his spiritual transformation, Al-Ghazali became a prominent advocate of Sufism, the mystical tradition within Islam. He developed a comprehensive approach to mental health

¹⁷ Browning, Veit, and University of Arkansas Press, "The Measurement Problem of Consciousness."

¹⁸ Patrick Butlin et al., "Consciousness in Artificial Intelligence: Insights from the Science of Consciousness" (arXiv, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.2308.08708>.

¹⁹ Ghazzālī, Nūrshīf 'Abd al-Raḥīm Rif'at, and George F. McLean, *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty =: Al-Munqidh [Sic] Min al-Ḍalāl*, Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change, v. 2B (Washington, D.C: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2001).

²⁰ Ghazzālī, Rif'at, and McLean.

and well-being, emphasizing the importance of spiritual practices such as mujahadah (self-struggle), riyadah (spiritual discipline), and tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul) in achieving inner peace and happiness.²¹

Al-Ghazali's prolific writing output included numerous influential works on a wide range of topics, including theology, philosophy, jurisprudence, and ethics. Some of his most notable works include "The Incoherence of the Philosophers," a critique of the Aristotelian philosophy prevalent in his time, and "The Revival of the Religious Sciences," a comprehensive treatise on the various aspects of Islamic thought and practice.²²

In his writings, Al-Ghazali stressed the importance of integrating spiritual and intellectual pursuits, arguing that true knowledge and understanding could only be achieved through a combination of reason and faith.²³ His ideas on the nature of knowledge and the role of education in cultivating human perfection and closeness to God have had a lasting impact on Islamic thought and the development of Islamic educational systems.²⁴

Al-Ghazali's legacy continues to be celebrated and studied by scholars and practitioners of Islamic thought and spirituality. His emphasis on the importance of moral and spiritual development, as well as his ability to reconcile the demands of the intellect and the heart, have made him a revered figure in the Islamic tradition.

Al-Ghazali is renowned for his extensive body of work that seamlessly blends elements of philosophy, theology, and Sufism.²⁵ Through his vast writings, he has provided a

²¹ Aliah B. Purwakania Hasan and Abas Mansur Tamam, "The Implementation of Mental Health Concept by Imam Al-Ghazali in Islamic Counseling Guidance," *Journal of Strategic and Global Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 20, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.7454/jsgs.v1i1.1000>.

²² Zainul Arifin, "Al-Ghazali's Thought of Islamic Education And It's Relevance with the Modern Education," *Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education* 2, no. 1 (February 20, 2018): 1, <https://doi.org/10.24036/kjie.v2i1.18>; Mohd Hasrul Shuhari et al., "Elements of Integrity within Muslim Individuals According to the Thought of Al-Ghazali," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 8, no. 10 (October 31, 2018): Pages 270-278, <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v8-i10/4732>.

²³ Arifin, "Al-Ghazali's Thought of Islamic Education And It's Relevance with the Modern Education."

²⁴ Arifin; Muhammad Fadhlulloh Mubarak, "Ilmu Dalam Perspektif Imam Al-Ghazali," *Kontemplasi: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 8, no. 1 (August 25, 2020): 22–38, <https://doi.org/10.21274/kontem.2020.8.1.22-38>.

²⁵ David B. Burrell and Journal of Islamic Philosophy, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Ontology Revisited:," *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 6 (2010): 45–66, <https://doi.org/10.5840/islamicphil201063>; Arifin, "Al-Ghazali's

comprehensive understanding of the concept of consciousness, drawing from these diverse yet interrelated fields.²⁶

Al-Ghazali's philosophical approach is evident in his ability to analyze and synthesize complex ideas, often drawing upon the works of ancient Greek thinkers.²⁷ His theological expertise is reflected in his deep understanding of Islamic teachings and his efforts to reconcile them with rational thought.²⁸ Moreover, Al-Ghazali's Sufi inclinations are manifested in his emphasis on the spiritual and mystical dimensions of human existence, particularly in his exploration of the journey towards self-realization and union with the divine.²⁹

By skillfully weaving these elements together, Al-Ghazali presents a holistic view of consciousness that transcends the boundaries of traditional academic disciplines.³⁰ His comprehensive approach enables a deeper understanding of the human condition, encompassing both the rational and the spiritual aspects of our existence.³¹

Al-Ghazali's insights on the nature of consciousness are particularly relevant in the modern era, where the pursuit of material wealth and technological advancement often overshadows the importance of inner growth and spiritual fulfillment.³² His teachings serve as a reminder that true happiness and well-being can only be achieved through a harmonious balance between the material and the spiritual realms, and that the journey towards self-

Thought of Islamic Education And It's Relevance with the Modern Education"; Ismail Jalili and Fadillah Ulfa, "AN ANALYSIS OF AL-GHAZALI'S THOUGHT ON HAPPINESS THROUGH HIS BOOK: THE ALCHEMY OF HAPPINESS," *Psikis: Jurnal Psikologi Islami* 9, no. 1 (May 10, 2023): 30–39, <https://doi.org/10.19109/psikis.v9i1.16263>; Louis Brenner and Annemarie Schimmel, "Mystical Dimensions of Islam," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 9, no. 3 (1976): 477, <https://doi.org/10.2307/216858>.

²⁶ Ghazzālī, Rif'at, and McLean, *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty* =.

²⁷ Ghazzālī, Rif'at, and McLean.

²⁸ Arifin, "Al-Ghazali's Thought of Islamic Education And It's Relevance with the Modern Education."

²⁹ Jalili and Ulfa, "AN ANALYSIS OF AL-GHAZALI'S THOUGHT ON HAPPINESS THROUGH HIS BOOK"; Arifin, "Al-Ghazali's Thought of Islamic Education And It's Relevance with the Modern Education."

³⁰ Ghazzālī, Rif'at, and McLean, *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty* =.

³¹ Burrell and Journal of Islamic Philosophy, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Ontology Revisited"; Jalili and Ulfa, "AN ANALYSIS OF AL-GHAZALI'S THOUGHT ON HAPPINESS THROUGH HIS BOOK."

³² Hasan and Tamam, "The Implementation of Mental Health Concept by Imam Al-Ghazali in Islamic Counseling Guidance."

discovery is a crucial aspect of the human experience.

This research aims to explore the definition and conceptualization of consciousness put forward by Al-Ghazali, a leading Islamic thinker. Starting by exploring Al-Ghazali's understanding of the nature of consciousness, this study then analyzes the dimensions of consciousness that he elaborated. Furthermore, the contribution of Al-Ghazali's thought to contemporary philosophical discourse on consciousness will be identified and studied in depth.

The significance of this research lies in two main things. First, this research provides valuable insight into the thinking of one of the great scholars in the Islamic tradition, especially regarding his conceptualization of consciousness. Second, it is hoped that the findings of this research can open up space for cross-cultural and cross-tradition dialogue in understanding the complex and multidimensional concept of consciousness.

Through this research, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding of Al-Ghazali's thoughts regarding consciousness can be obtained, as well as his contribution to contemporary philosophical discourse. It is hoped that this study can trigger critical and constructive thinking in understanding the nature of human consciousness and its relevance in modern life.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a literature research methodology, this study utilizes a wealth of written sources, including books, journal articles, and Al-Ghazali's own classic works, to uncover his understanding and conception of consciousness. The data analysis technique used in this study combines content, comparative, and interpretive analysis. Relevant primary and secondary texts will be carefully reviewed to explore the deepest meaning of Al-Ghazali's thoughts on consciousness. Content analysis will be carried out by dissecting and categorizing key concepts related to consciousness in Al-Ghazali's works. This aims to identify the fundamental elements of his thoughts on consciousness and how these elements are interrelated. Comparative analysis will be carried out by comparing Al-Ghazali's thoughts on consciousness with the thoughts of other philosophers, both from the Islamic tradition and

the Western tradition. This aims to understand the uniqueness and contribution of Al-Ghazali's thoughts in the discourse on consciousness. Interpretative analysis will be carried out by interpreting the deepest meaning of Al-Ghazali's thoughts on consciousness. This aims to understand how his thinking can be applied in a contemporary context and how his thinking can contribute to our understanding of human consciousness.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Aspects of Consciousness According to Al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali viewed consciousness as multidimensional, involving; Rational Aspect, Al-Ghazali used philosophy to analyze and understand complex ideas, indicating that he saw reason and logic as essential elements in consciousness; Spiritual Aspect, Al-Ghazali's approach to consciousness was heavily influenced by Sufism, which emphasized spiritual experience and the journey to enlightenment. This suggests that he saw consciousness as something that transcends the rational mind and includes a deep spiritual dimension, and; Moral Aspect, Al-Ghazali's works often deal with morality and human behavior, indicating that he saw consciousness as something that is closely related to morality and ethics.

First of all, Rational Aspect. Al-Ghazali is widely recognized for his profound contribution to the reconciliation of faith and reason within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Through his philosophical works, Al-Ghazali demonstrates a deep understanding of complex ideas, showcasing his ability to analyze and comprehend them using both reason and logic as essential elements of his intellectual awareness.³³

Al-Ghazali's approach to understanding the Quranic maqasid (higher objectives) exemplifies his embrace of reason and logic as vital components of his scholarly methodology.³⁴ In his exploration of the higher objectives and underlying wisdom of the Quran, Al-Ghazali employs a systematic, analytical framework that draws upon both scriptural sources and rational inquiry.³⁵ This integration of revelation and reason is a

³³ Abdul Mufid, "Menguak Metode Penggalan Maqasid Al-Quran Perspektif Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1996 M/1416 H)," *Dialogia* 18, no. 1 (June 18, 2020): 39–58, <https://doi.org/10.21154/dialogia.v18i1.2036>.

³⁴ Mufid.

³⁵ Mufid.

hallmark of Al-Ghazali's intellectual legacy, as he sought to harmonize the spiritual and the intellectual dimensions of the Islamic faith.³⁶

Al-Ghazali's philosophical acumen is further evident in his engagement with the arguments of the Muslim theological scholars, as documented in the works of Al-Farabi. By critically examining the logical underpinnings of the theologians' arguments, Al-Ghazali demonstrated his mastery of philosophical reasoning and his willingness to subject even established theological positions to rigorous scrutiny.³⁷

The centrality of reason and logic in Al-Ghazali's thought is also reflected in his conceptualization of the elements of individual integrity within the Muslim tradition.³⁸ He identified key virtues, such as truthfulness (al-sidq), trustworthiness (al-amanah), and responsibility (al-mas'uliyah), as essential characteristics of a person of integrity, underscoring the importance of rational deliberation and ethical reasoning in the cultivation of moral and spiritual excellence.

In the context of Islamic education, Al-Ghazali's emphasis on the integration of reason and revelation is particularly salient. As articulated in the works exploring his educational philosophy, Al-Ghazali emphasizes the need for a balanced curriculum that nurtures both the spiritual and intellectual faculties of the students, ensuring that they develop a comprehensive understanding of the Islamic faith.³⁹ Al-Ghazali's philosophical approach demonstrates a deep appreciation for the importance of reason and logic in the acquisition of knowledge and the development of individual and social well-being.

Secondly, Spiritual Aspect. Al-Ghazali's perspective on consciousness was profoundly

³⁶ Arifin, "Al-Ghazali's Thought of Islamic Education And It's Relevance with the Modern Education."

³⁷ Kwame Gyekye, "Al-Fārābī on the Logic of the Arguments of the Muslim Philosophical Theologians," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27, no. 1 (January 1989): 135–43, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.1989.0001>.

³⁸ Shuhari et al., "Elements of Integrity within Muslim Individuals According to the Thought of Al-Ghazali."

³⁹ Guntur Gunawan and Ayunia Lestari, "Al-Ghazali's Thoughts on Education and Its Relevance to Islamic Education in the Millennial Era," *AJIS: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1 (June 10, 2021): 103, <https://doi.org/10.29240/ajis.v6i1.2091>; Hasan and Tamam, "The Implementation of Mental Health Concept by Imam Al-Ghazali in Islamic Counseling Guidance."

influenced by the Sufi tradition, which emphasizes spiritual experience and the journey towards enlightenment. This suggests that he perceived consciousness as something that transcends rational thought and encompasses a profound spiritual dimension.⁴⁰

Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy was rooted in the pursuit of human perfection, which he saw as leading to a closer relationship with God and a life of happiness in both this world and the hereafter.⁴¹ His approach to mental health and counseling guidance was grounded in the Sufi concepts of mujâhadah (spiritual struggle), riyâdhah (spiritual discipline), and tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul), which he believed could address a range of social and emotional challenges⁴²

The Sufi influence on Al-Ghazali's thought is evident in his emphasis on the integration of faith and dedication to one's beliefs as a means of enhancing one's spiritual well-being and achieving a state of tranquility.⁴³ By incorporating these Sufi principles into his educational and counseling frameworks, Al-Ghazali sought to guide individuals towards a deeper understanding of the self and a more profound connection with the divine.⁴⁴

Thirdly, Moral Aspect. Al-Ghazali has made significant contributions to the understanding of human behavior and the relationship between morality and ethics. His works often delve into the realm of human conduct, suggesting that he viewed consciousness as inextricably linked to moral and ethical considerations.⁴⁵

According to Al-Ghazali, human beings consist of two forms: behavior and character (Salamun and Rahman 2022). Behavior refers to the physical manifestation of an

⁴⁰ Jalili and Ulfa, "AN ANALYSIS OF AL-GHAZALI'S THOUGHT ON HAPPINESS THROUGH HIS BOOK"; Hasan and Tamam, "The Implementation of Mental Health Concept by Imam Al-Ghazali in Islamic Counseling Guidance."

⁴¹ Arifin, "Al-Ghazali's Thought of Islamic Education And It's Relevance with the Modern Education."

⁴² Hasan and Tamam, "The Implementation of Mental Health Concept by Imam Al-Ghazali in Islamic Counseling Guidance."

⁴³ Jalili and Ulfa, "AN ANALYSIS OF AL-GHAZALI'S THOUGHT ON HAPPINESS THROUGH HIS BOOK."

⁴⁴ Arifin, "Al-Ghazali's Thought of Islamic Education And It's Relevance with the Modern Education"; Hasan and Tamam, "The Implementation of Mental Health Concept by Imam Al-Ghazali in Islamic Counseling Guidance."

⁴⁵ Arifin, "Al-Ghazali's Thought of Islamic Education And It's Relevance with the Modern Education."

individual, while character represents the spiritual dimension.⁴⁶ Islamic ethics, from Al-Ghazali's perspective, is rooted in the soul and manifests itself through human actions.⁴⁷

The element of al-sidq, or truthfulness, is a crucial aspect of integrity within the individual according to Al-Ghazali. This element encompasses not only the spoken word but also the alignment of intent, will, determination, and their realization. Moreover, Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance or priority between spiritual and physical practices, as well as cultivating noble qualities.⁴⁸

In addition to the emphasis on character and morality, Al-Ghazali also recognized the significance of habituation in the process of moral education. He believed that the cultivation of virtues could be achieved through habituation, a process of repeated practice and reinforcement. However, Al-Ghazali also acknowledged the role of divine assistance, recognizing that there is no certain causal relationship between moral education and habituation, and that one must rely on God's grace.⁴⁹

The educational approach proposed by Al-Ghazali reflects his understanding of human nature and the interplay between the physical and spiritual realms. He envisioned two ultimate goals for education: the achievement of human perfection leading to a self-approach to God, and the attainment of happiness in both this world and the hereafter.⁵⁰

Al-Ghazali's insights on the connection between human consciousness, morality, and ethics continue to be relevant in the modern context.⁵¹ His emphasis on the importance of spiritual well-being, the cultivation of noble character, and the balance between physical and

⁴⁶ Hailan Salamun and Asyraf Ab Rahman, "Leadership Values and Understandings from an Islamic Perspective," in *Leadership in a Changing World [Working Title]* (IntechOpen, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.101989>.

⁴⁷ Salamun and Ab Rahman.

⁴⁸ Shuhari et al., "Elements of Integrity within Muslim Individuals According to the Thought of Al-Ghazali."

⁴⁹ Mohammad Attaran, "Moral Education, Habituation, and Divine Assistance in View of Ghazali," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 24, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 43–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10656219.2015.1008083>.

⁵⁰ Arifin, "Al-Ghazali's Thought of Islamic Education And It's Relevance with the Modern Education."

⁵¹ Hasan and Tamam, "The Implementation of Mental Health Concept by Imam Al-Ghazali in Islamic Counseling Guidance."

spiritual practices offer valuable guidance for addressing the challenges of materialism and promoting holistic human development.

Philosophical Implications

Al-Ghazali has profoundly explored the intricate relationship between human consciousness and ethical conduct. His profound insights suggest that consciousness, particularly the awareness of God and one's own self, serves as a powerful driver for individuals to live with unwavering moral integrity.

Al-Ghazali's conception of the human being consists of two intertwined domains: behavior and character. While behavior refers to the physical aspect of the individual, character encompasses the spiritual dimension.⁵² This duality is central to his understanding of Islamic ethics, which is firmly rooted in the soul and manifested through human actions. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that such noble character can be cultivated through diligent practice and training.⁵³

The elements of integrity within the Muslim individual, according to Al-Ghazali's thought, include al-sidq (truthfulness), al-amanah (trustworthiness), and al-mas'uliyah (responsibility).⁵⁴ Al-sidq, or truthfulness, encompasses the alignment of one's words, intentions, will, determination, and their realization, as well as the balance between spiritual and physical practices, and the embodiment of noble qualities.⁵⁵ Al-amanah, or trustworthiness, and al-mas'uliyah, or responsibility, are equally crucial in shaping the individual of integrity.

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali's conception of mental health is closely tied to the individual's spiritual well-being and the development of noble character.⁵⁶ He advocates for the evaluation of various aspects, such as the solidity of one's faith, the liberation from spiritual ailments, the cultivation of virtuous character, the establishment of positive social

⁵² Salamun and Ab Rahman, "Leadership Values and Understandings from an Islamic Perspective."

⁵³ Attaran, "Moral Education, Habituation, and Divine Assistance in View of Ghazali."

⁵⁴ Shuhari et al., "Elements of Integrity within Muslim Individuals According to the Thought of Al-Ghazali."

⁵⁵ Shuhari et al.

⁵⁶ Hasan and Tamam, "The Implementation of Mental Health Concept by Imam Al-Ghazali in Islamic Counseling Guidance."

relationships, and the attainment of happiness in this world and the hereafter.⁵⁷

In this context, Al-Ghazali's insights suggest that consciousness, particularly the awareness of God and self, serves as a powerful catalyst for ethical conduct and moral integrity. This profound understanding underscores the importance of cultivating spiritual and ethical dimensions in the pursuit of holistic human well-being.

Al-Ghazali argued that consciousness is the pathway to ultimate truth.⁵⁸ This perspective challenges the reductionist view that dismisses consciousness as merely a mental or neurobiological phenomenon.⁵⁹ Al-Ghazali believed that through the cultivation of consciousness, individuals could uncover the profound wisdom and power of the divine creation.⁶⁰

In contrast to the purely rational approach advocated by some philosophers, Al-Ghazali emphasized the sacred nature of knowledge and the centrality of the spiritual perspective in the pursuit of truth.⁶¹ He contended that revelation should guide the study of philosophy, as it provides the highest form of truth.⁶² This integrated perspective on knowledge and values is crucial for contemporary Islamic educational thought, as it seeks to overcome the dualism that has plagued traditional educational frameworks.⁶³

Al-Ghazali's vision of Islamic education aimed to cultivate human perfection, leading not only to a closer relationship with the divine but also to happiness in this world and the

⁵⁷ Hasan and Tamam.

⁵⁸ Nader El-Bizri, "Falsafa: A Labyrinth of Theory and Method," *Synthesis Philosophica* 31, no. 2 (February 10, 2017): 295–311, <https://doi.org/10.21464/sp31205>.

⁵⁹ Abdelghani Tbakhi and Samir S. Amr, "Ibn Rushd (Averroës): Prince of Science," *Annals of Saudi Medicine* 28, no. 2 (March 2008): 145–47, <https://doi.org/10.5144/0256-4947.2008.145>; Yousef Casewit, "Al-Ghazālī's Virtue Ethical Theory of the Divine Names: The Theological Underpinnings of the Doctrine of Takhalluq in al-Maqṣad al-Asnā," *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 4, no. 1–2 (December 15, 2020): 155–200, <https://doi.org/10.1163/24685542-12340042>.

⁶⁰ Arifin, "Al-Ghazali's Thought of Islamic Education And It's Relevance with the Modern Education."

⁶¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, The Gifford Lectures 1981 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981).

⁶² Tbakhi and Amr, "Ibn Rushd (Averroës)."

⁶³ Francesca Bocca-Aldaqr, "How Can Education Be Islamic? Al-Attas and Al-Farūqī's Frame Works in Contemporary Debate," *JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* 8, no. 4 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.15640/jehd.v8n4a7>.

hereafter.⁶⁴ To this end, he prescribed specific educational methods, such as mujahadah (spiritual struggle), riyadah (spiritual discipline), and tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul), which he believed could nurture holistic mental health and spiritual growth.⁶⁵

In the millennial era, where materialism and individualism have become dominant, Al-Ghazali's emphasis on the integration of the spiritual and the material, and the centrality of consciousness in the pursuit of truth, offer a compelling alternative. By recognizing the profound philosophical implications of consciousness and truth, Islamic education can provide a pathway to a more balanced and fulfilling understanding of the human condition.

Comparison with Other Thinkers

Al-Ghazali presented a nuanced understanding of the human consciousness that differed significantly from Descartes' well-known dualistic approach. While Descartes famously posited a clear separation between the mind (*res cogitans*) and the physical body (*res extensa*), Al-Ghazali's conception of the self was more holistic, encompassing both the spiritual and the corporeal aspects of human existence.⁶⁶

Descartes' philosophical framework, as articulated in his seminal work "Meditations on First Philosophy," was built upon the principle of mind-body dualism, in which the mind (or the soul) is considered distinct and independent from the physical body.⁶⁷ This paradigm, which has had a profound impact on Western philosophy, assumes that the essence of the self is inherently mental and spiritual, rather than being inextricably linked to the physical realm.

In contrast, Al-Ghazali's understanding of consciousness and the self was more

⁶⁴ Arifin, "Al-Ghazali's Thought of Islamic Education And It's Relevance with the Modern Education."

⁶⁵ Hasan and Tamam, "The Implementation of Mental Health Concept by Imam Al-Ghazali in Islamic Counseling Guidance."

⁶⁶ Tamara Albertini, "Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Descartes (1596-1650)," *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 1 (January 2005): 1-14, <https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2004.0038>.

⁶⁷ Sarah Broadie, "Soul and Body in Plato and Descartes," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society (Hardback)* 101, no. 1 (June 2001): 295-308, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0066-7372.2003.00032.x>; Johnson, "Mind Incarnate."

inclusive, drawing from the rich tradition of Islamic thought and spirituality.⁶⁸ His conception of the self, known as the "nafs," was not limited to the purely mental or spiritual realm, but rather incorporated the bodily aspects of human existence as well.⁶⁹

This difference in the conceptualization of the self has significant implications for the way in which these two thinkers approached questions of knowledge, certainty, and the nature of reality. Descartes' emphasis on mathematical certainty as the foundation for knowledge stands in contrast to Al-Ghazali's notion of "ilm al-yaqini," or religious-based certainty, which he derived from a deep engagement with Islamic theology and mysticism.⁷⁰

In conclusion, the comparison of Al-Ghazali's and Descartes' perspectives on consciousness and the self-highlights the diversity of philosophical approaches to understanding the human experience. While Descartes' dualistic framework has had a lasting impact on Western thought, Al-Ghazali's more holistic conception of the self-offers a unique and insightful alternative that deserves further exploration and consideration.

The philosophical traditions of al-Ghazali and Husserl have often been compared for their shared emphasis on the centrality of consciousness in understanding the human experience. While both thinkers grappled with the nature of the self and its engagement with the broader world, their conceptual frameworks and underlying motivations differed significantly.

Al-Ghazali situated his exploration of consciousness within a religious worldview, drawing upon the Sufi tradition and its emphasis on the purification and enlightenment of the soul.⁷¹ In contrast, Husserl's phenomenology emerged from a Western philosophical lineage, with its focus on the systematic study of lived experience and the structures of

⁶⁸ Albertini, "Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Descartes (1596-1650)."

⁶⁹ Taneli Kukkonen, "Receptive to Reality: Al-Ghazālī on the Structure of the Soul," *The Muslim World* 102, no. 3–4 (October 2012): 541–61, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2012.01412.x>.

⁷⁰ Albertini, "Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Descartes (1596-1650)."

⁷¹ Abū-Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn-Muḥammad al-Ġazzālī and William Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazālī*, Reprinted, Oneworld Classics in Religious Studies (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007); Albertini, "Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Descartes (1596-1650)."

consciousness.⁷²

Despite these divergent origins, both al-Ghazali and Husserl recognized the importance of subjective experience and the role of the individual in shaping their understanding of reality. Al-Ghazali's concept of the "receptive soul" resonates with Husserl's notion of the transcendental ego, which serves as the locus of intentionality and the foundation for intersubjective understanding.⁷³

Crucially, al-Ghazali's view of the self was more inclusive of the physical body, whereas Husserl tended to emphasize the primacy of the conscious mind.⁷⁴ This difference in their conceptions of the self reflects their broader philosophical aims - al-Ghazali's quest for spiritual enlightenment, and Husserl's pursuit of a rigorous, descriptive phenomenology grounded in the structures of consciousness.⁷⁵

Ultimately, the comparison between al-Ghazali's and Husserl's perspectives on consciousness highlights the diversity of philosophical approaches to understanding the human condition. While their frameworks differed, both thinkers made significant contributions to the exploration of the self and its relationship with the world.

Meanwhile, Al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina held differing perspectives on the nature of consciousness and the human soul. While Al-Ghazali emphasized the spiritual and religious aspects of the soul, Ibn Sina's view was more grounded in philosophical rationality.⁷⁶ Despite these differences, their complementary ideas offer a nuanced understanding of the human

⁷² Nevad Kahteran, "Anthony F. SHAKER: Reintroducing Philosophy: Thinking as the Gathering of Civilization According to Contemporary, Islamic and Ancient Sources," *Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (September 10, 2021): 343–50, <https://doi.org/10.4312/as.2021.9.3.343-350>; Kukkonen, "Receptive to Reality."

⁷³ Kukkonen, "Receptive to Reality"; Alfred Schutz, "The Problem of Transcendental Intersubjectivity in Husserl," in *Collected Papers III*, by Alfred Schutz, ed. I. Schutz, vol. 22, *Phaenomenologica* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1970), 51–84, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-3456-7_4.

⁷⁴ Albertini, "Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Descartes (1596-1650)."

⁷⁵ Bence Peter Marosan, "HUSSERL'S CONTEXTUALIST THEORY OF TRUTH," *HORIZON / Fenomenologicheskie Issledovanija/ STUDIEN ZUR PHÄNOMENOLOGIE / STUDIES IN PHENOMENOLOGY / ÉTUDES PHÉNOMÉNOLOGIQUES* 9, no. 1 (2020): 162–83, <https://doi.org/10.21638/2226-5260-2020-9-1-162-183>.

⁷⁶ Samira Heidari, Fatemeh Vojdani, and Afzal Sadat Hosseini, "Explaining the Views of Ibn Sina and Al-Ghazali on Games and Physical Exercises and Their Relation to the Relationship Between Body and Soul," *Dinamika Ilmu*, December 1, 2020, 357–66, <https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v20i2.2536>.

condition.

Al-Ghazali's conception of the self was more expansive than Descartes', as it encompassed both the physical body and the spiritual soul.⁷⁷ He believed that human behavior and character were inextricably linked, with the soul manifesting through physical actions.⁷⁸ For Al-Ghazali, the path to knowledge and certainty was rooted in religious faith and divine revelation, rather than the mathematical rigor prized by Descartes.⁷⁹

In contrast, Ibn Sina's approach to the soul was more philosophical, drawing on the Aristotelian tradition. He viewed the relationship between the body and soul as a two-way interaction, where physical activity could impact the soul and vice versa. This dynamic interplay between the corporeal and the spiritual is a key point of convergence between Al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina's respective frameworks.

Despite their differences, the ideas of Al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina are ultimately complementary, offering a multifaceted understanding of human consciousness and the nature of the self. By reconciling their perspectives, we can gain a richer appreciation for the complexity of the human experience, balancing the spiritual and the rational, the physical and the metaphysical.

The intersection between the philosophical ideas of Al-Ghazali and Mulla Sadra has long been a subject of intrigue and scholarly exploration. While these two eminent Islamic thinkers held distinct perspectives on the nature of the soul and consciousness, their views can be seen as complementary, each offering valuable insights into the complex and multilayered nature of human existence.

Al-Ghazali is widely recognized for his profound explorations of the human psyche and the role of consciousness in spiritual enlightenment. His notion of the "Self" encompassed both the physical and the metaphysical, with a broader understanding of the individual than the Cartesian model favored by Descartes. Al-Ghazali's emphasis on the

⁷⁷ Albertini, "Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Descartes (1596-1650)."

⁷⁸ Salamun and Ab Rahman, "Leadership Values and Understandings from an Islamic Perspective."

⁷⁹ Albertini, "Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Descartes (1596-1650)."

interconnectedness of the body and the soul, and his conception of "certain knowledge" ('ilm al-yaqini) derived from a religious context, stand in contrast to Descartes' focus on mathematical certainty as the standard of evidence.⁸⁰

In contrast, Mulla Sadra, the 17th-century Iranian philosopher, developed a comprehensive metaphysical system centered on the primacy of existence (wujud) as the fundamental reality underlying all phenomena. Sadra's ontology, which posits the dynamic and ever-changing nature of existence, has been recognized for its affinities with the thought of Thomas Aquinas, another influential philosopher who grappled with similar questions.⁸¹

While Al-Ghazali and Mulla Sadra held distinct perspectives, their ideas can be seen as complementary, each offering unique insights into the nature of consciousness and the human experience. As the Mulla Sadra Institute's gathering in Tehran highlighted, Sadra's work has the potential to extend the standard narrative of Islamic philosophy, making room for both Sunni and Shia thinkers, while also repositioning Al-Ghazali as a central figure in this recasting of the history of Islamic thought.⁸²

Ultimately, the interplay between Al-Ghazali's concept of consciousness and Mulla Sadra's metaphysical framework provides a rich tapestry for understanding the complexities of the human condition, and the ways in which Islamic philosophy has grappled with these fundamental questions over the centuries.

Table.1: Table summaries of research results that includes the main findings on Al-Ghazali's views on consciousness

| Aspect | Key Findings | Information |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Rational Consciousness | Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of reason in understanding reality and truth. | Reason is considered a tool to achieve a deep understanding of the world and to guide human actions in accordance with moral principles. |
| Spiritual Awareness | Spiritual awareness is at the heart | Through spiritual disciplines such |

⁸⁰ Albertini.

⁸¹ Burrell and Journal of Islamic Philosophy, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Ontology Revisited."

⁸² Burrell and Journal of Islamic Philosophy.

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| | of Al-Ghazali's thought, where the relationship with God (Allah) is of utmost importance. | as dhikr, prayer, and meditation, one can achieve inner enlightenment and closeness to God. |
| Moral Awareness | Moral integrity is an inseparable part of consciousness according to Al-Ghazali. | Morality is not only a social rule but a manifestation of true individual consciousness. |
| Harmony of Reason and Faith | True consciousness according to Al-Ghazali is the result of harmony between reason and faith. | An imbalance between the two can lead to deviations in understanding and behavior. |
| Spiritual Discipline | The practice of spiritual disciplines such as dhikr and meditation is highly emphasized by Al-Ghazali to achieve full awareness. | This practice helps individuals control their passions and draw closer to God, which in turn increases inner awareness. |
| Moral Integrity | Moral awareness is reflected in daily actions that are in line with religious teachings and universal ethical principles. | Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of consistent moral action as a reflection of true consciousness. |
| Practical Implications | The application of Al-Ghazali's concepts in the context of modern education and therapy can improve mental well-being. | The spiritual principles proposed by Al-Ghazali can be applied in therapy and teaching methods to strengthen mental health. |
| Interdisciplinary Dialogue | Al-Ghazali's views open up space for dialogue between Eastern and Western philosophy regarding consciousness. | Al-Ghazali's integrative approach encouraged interdisciplinary studies involving philosophy, theology, and modern science. |

CONCLUSION

From the results of the analysis that has been done, this study reveals that Al-Ghazali offers a multi-dimensional view of consciousness, including rational, spiritual, and moral

aspects. Al-Ghazali sees consciousness as the result of a harmonious interaction between reason and faith, where the balance between spiritual discipline and moral integrity is the key to achieving true understanding and inner peace.

The main contribution of this study to the philosophical discourse is to introduce Al-Ghazali's holistic and integrative perspective on consciousness. His thoughts enrich the modern debate on consciousness by emphasizing the importance of spiritual and moral aspects in addition to rational aspects. Al-Ghazali's views also open up space for cross-cultural and cross-traditional dialogue, expanding the scope of the study of the philosophy of consciousness.

This study recommends that the study of consciousness in modern philosophy consider views from non-Western traditions, such as those offered by Al-Ghazali, to gain a more comprehensive understanding. In addition, the integration of neurophysiological studies and spiritual studies can produce new, deeper insights into the nature of human consciousness. Further research is also recommended to explore how the spiritual principles proposed by Al-Ghazali can be applied in modern educational and therapeutic contexts to improve mental health and well-being.

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