

# **BOOK REVIEW:**

## **Imam Abdul Hamid Al-Ghazali (Imam Ghazali). Ihya Ulum Id-Din (Revival of Religious Learning), Vol. I. The Book of Worship. Translated by Fazlul Karim. Darul Ishaat, Urdu Bazar, Karachi, Pakistan, 1993.**

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### **Abstract**

This book provides a review of the book “Ihya Ulum Id-Din (Revival of Religious Learning Vol 1)” the work of Islamic scholar Imam Abdul Hamid Al-Ghazali (Imam Ghazali Translated by Fazlul Karim. Darul Ishaat, Urdu Bazar, Karachi, Pakistan, 1993. This is an original contribution, explained in informative content and written in clear language that is accessible to knowledgeable readers.

### **Introduction**

Sheikh al-Islam, Imam Abdul Hamid Al-Ghazali was born in 1058AD in the city of Tus, in Persia at that time. He died in the year 1111AD in this same city. The translator of the above-mentioned work writes: “Imam Abu-Hamid al-Ghazali is unquestionably the greatest theologian of Islam and one of its noblest and most original thinkers. He reproduced in his religious experience all the spiritual phases developed by Islam. It is therefore appropriate to inquire in this work and in many other ones that he has contributed to the pale of Islamic thought and worship (ibadah) as to what constitutes the centric focus of Islam regarding self and the world-system of Islamic belief and construction.

This is how the idea of the sure reality (haqq ul-yaqin), meaning the divine resilience of knowledge, life, and thought can be discovered by deep understanding and practice of the knowledge from the Qur’an, sunnah (prophetic guidance), and the ulul amr (learned ones in the primary sources, Qur’an and sunnah) regarding the essential

reality of non-physicalist and physicalist events. Such unraveling of the essential reality by the progress of knowledge to inquire with soul and mind, is termed here as the sure reality (Qur'an 69:1-3). *Ihya Ulum Id-Din* thereby comprises of four volumes. These are (1) The Book of Worship; (2) The Book of Worldly Usages; (3) The Book of Destructive Evils; (4) The Book of Constructive Virtues. This book review is of Book 1. Other book reviews of *Ihya* are to follow subsequently in future issues of JOCRISE.

## Discussion

Imam Ghazali was a Sufi for a good part of his life until he turned a vehement critic of the peripatetic study of Islam by the rationalists and dialecticians. This critique from the philosophical and theological approach comprises his *Tahafat al-Falsafa* (Refutation of the Philosophers). His lifetime being of such a devotion in its excellence, Ghazali's mind, demeanour, and scholastic contributions were mostly devoted to the Islamic prescription of self in relation with other fellow creatures. Such a construction of behavioural conduct of mind and moral practice of values was nonetheless at the micro-social level. Thus, if the social holism is sought from Ghazali's theology and philosophy for humankind, the implication we derive is of aggregation of ideal puritanical reformed self of individual citizens within the social whole. Accordingly, the social order (S) erected by the puritanical wholeness of conduct, behaviour, relations, preferences, and continuity, altogether denoted by the  $X(.)$ -vector, can be of two kinds. The linear aggregation of preferences of perfectly moral individual citizens results in the social wellbeing ( $W(.)$ )-function derived from Ghazali's consideration of the perfect state. Such a social wellbeing objective can be formalized as,  $W(S(.)) = \sum_i 1n[aiUi(.)]$ .  $Ui(.)$  denotes individual utility functions comprising the  $X(.)$ -vector taken either in additive or complex form;  $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$ .

In the second case, Ghazali's approach to the configuration of the moral individuals comprising society at large, showed an early delineation of the complex forms of the otherwise linear utilitarian and libertarian ideas of latter days' classical socio-economic scholasticism. Ghazali's social thinking could therefore, be categorised as the richly complex, systemic, and dynamically nonlinear aggregation of perfectly moral individuals of God and the entire ethicised social order.

The puritanical presentation of Ghazali's methodological self-reformation of individuated beings comprising society at large, resembles the Greek ethical thought based for example, on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and Politics. The Greek ethical political state in its Aristotelian framework of linear aggregation of preferences, i.e. the  $X(.)$ -vector is explained in the following way: Ultimately, the city-state is composed of individual citizens who, along with natural resources, are the 'material' or 'equipment' out of which the city-state is fashioned. (Aristotle's Political Theory (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Furthermore, with the  $\{a_i(.)\}$ ,  $i=1,2,..,n$  denoting ethical weights of the morally reformed individuals of the Islamic society in Ghazali's definition, the expression,  $W(S(.))$ , in terms of the linear aggregation of individual weighted utility functions,  $\{a_i U_i(.)\}$ ,  $i=1,2,..,n$ , makes Ghazali's micro-social treatment to be of the utilitarian and libertarian type. But this featuring of Ghazali is how his mindset was narrowly conceived by the Muslim writers at large. If so, then such a mindset compares Ghazali with the classical social and economic thinkers (Hammond, 1989; Harsanyi, 1955). But such a depiction of Ghazali's thought in the light of the Qur'an and sunnah that he advanced, is flawed.

Ghazali's social model based on linear/non-linear aggregations of the artifactual  $X(.)$  vector can be configured in expression (1) in the two given cases:

$$W(S(.)) (1)$$

↓

$$\{U_i(X_1(.), X_2(.), ..., X_m(.))\}; i=1,2..n$$

Case (1.1):  $\sum_{i=1}^n a_i U_i(X(.))$ , as linear aggregation of individual utility functions each of all elements of  $X(.)$ .  $\partial U_i / \partial U_j = -(a_j / a_i)$ , obtained by optimizing this linear function. In the utilitarian case,  $a_j / a_i = (1+r_i) / (1+r_j)$ .  $r$ 's denote the time-value of money (yield rates on cash-flows).

or

Case (1,2):  $A(.) \prod_{i=1}^n U_i(X(.)) = A(.) \prod_{i=1}^n \prod_{j=1}^m X_j^{b_j}(.)$ . With  $b_j$ ,  $j=1,2,...,m$ , the function given here becomes dynamic and non-linear, estimable in the logarithmic form. By considering the  $i=1,2,...,n$  individuals endowed by

their compounded utility functions in the  $m$ -number of variables in the differentiated vectors  $X_{ij}(\cdot)$ , we can write in this case,

$$W(S(\cdot)) = A(\cdot) * \prod_{i=1}^n \prod_{j=1}^m X^{bij}(\cdot), i=1,2,\dots,n; j=1,2,\dots,m. (2)$$

Imam Ghazali epitomised all the great values of Islam in the Qur'an and sunnah to mankind at large. We name a few here to find out what the consequences of such  $X(\cdot)$ -values and of  $X^{bij}(\cdot)$ -values can be found in the individualistic and the interactive forms in social reconstruction. The principal areas on which Ghazali wrote and preached on Ihya Vol. 1 were (1) Knowledge (q), (2) Articles of Faith (X1), (3) Secrets of Purity (X2), (4) Secrets of Prayer (X3), (5) Secrets of Alms-giving (X4), (6) Secrets of Fasting (X5), (7) Secrets of Pilgrimage (X6), (8) Rules of Quran-reading (X7), (9) Rules of invocations and supplications (X10) and (10) observance of daily duties according to fixed times (X11). The intrinsic relationship between the individual and social collective interrelations between these moral values, rituals, and self purifying practices establish the fact that, such intrinsic values sustain physicalist and non-physicalist sustainability in the worldly and other-worldly contexts comprising total planetary wellbeing.

The analytical consequence of intra-systemic interactions between the components of the vector  $X^{bij}(X1, X2, \dots, X11)$  for  $i=1,2,\dots,n; j=1,2,\dots,11$ , can be explained by expression 1 and Figure 1 based on the dynamics of circular-causation interrelations. From this formulation based on the revolutionary original moral-material interactive, integrative, and evolutionary learning worldview premised on the foundation of the qur'anic monotheistic law (Tawhid, thus Tawhidi law), the grand revolutionary foundation of critical realism in its moral-material complementary form can be derived in our formalism. Thereby, the resulting milestone of the most recent post-modernist thinking in socio-scientific thinking can be put in methodological formalism. We define the circular causation knowledge-induced circular causation model so derived from Ghazali's simple moral-material formalism of Case (1,2) of expression (1); and thereby, the deconstruction of expressions (1), (2) and of Figure 1 shown below, is now formalized as follows:

$$\text{Evaluate } W(S(\theta)): \text{Case (1,2)} \quad (3)$$

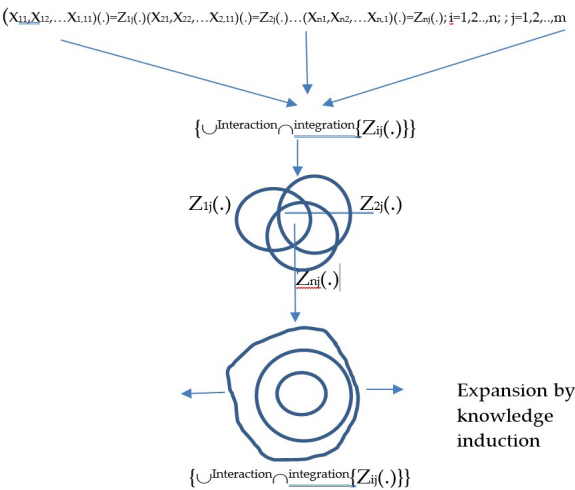
$$\text{Subject to, } X_r(\theta) = f_r(X_s(\theta)); r,s=1,2,\dots; r \neq s.$$

$W^{\wedge}=\square^{\wedge}=F(X(\square))$ , as linear approximation of the complex form of  $W(S(\square))$ .

The complexly dynamic and nonlinear nature of the derived model from Ghazali’s moral-material objectivity of wellbeing in the construction of the societal holism from the individual choices, is a substantively extensive reformulation of the individual configuration of Ghazali’s utilitarian and libertarian interpretation. Therefore, Ghazali’s *Ihya* went beyond the sheer outlook of Greek philosophy of the ethical state in terms of its formulation of the linear social wellbeing in respect of the linear and non-complex nature of Aristotle’s meaning of social ethicality.

The supreme most factor of the sure reality that Ghazali instilled in the qualification of the many elements of the vector  $\{Z_{ij}(\cdot)\}$ , is the knowledge-flow emanating from the central Critical Realism of Truth and Reality premised in divine monotheism. This most reduced primal ontology of being is referred to as Tawhid. Tawhid as the critical realism of the sure reality is the qur’anic law of ‘everything’. We denote this complete premise as the law of universal completeness by  $W$ .  $W$  is the ultimate seat of the primal ontology of unity of knowledge that, as the universal law, configures the world-system of ‘everything’. Thereby, by denoting by knowledge-flows by  $\{q\}$   $W$ , the bracketed symbol  $(\cdot)$  is now completed as  $(q)$ .

**Figure 1:**  
**The Tawhidi (Critical Realism) knowledge-induced explanation of circular-causation model**



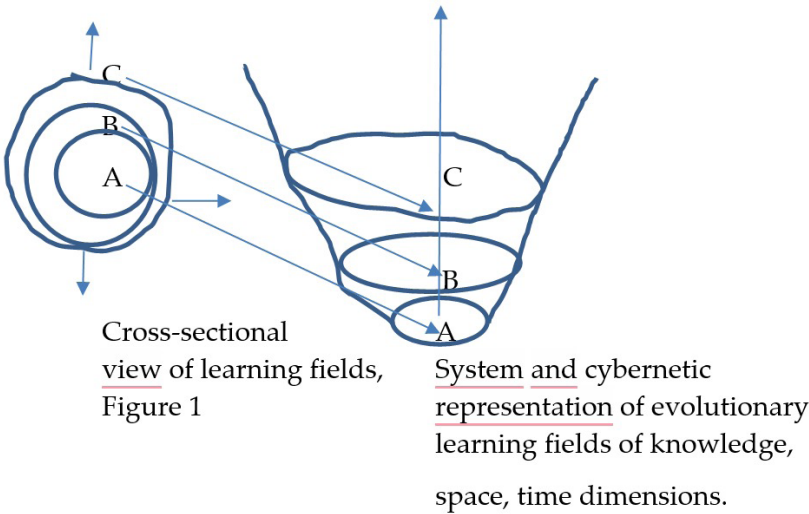
Imam Ghazali was morally unshakable as he was deeply learned in Tawhid and knowledge embodying as the dynamics underlying all explanations. In the *Ihya*, He writes resiliently on the nature and function of knowledge as derived from Tawhid as law according to its primal ontological premise of unity of knowledge: (1) "TAWHID: This is to rely firmly that, all things come from the Principal Cause of all causes, with no attention to the secondary causes but to the First Cause. It is not to look to the means or intermediaries but to the original and primary cause. It is that, all causes come from Him (God) and that everything is within His control and power. It is that everything is subject to His will and nothing has got any will of its own. If one has got sure faith in this meaning of Tawhid, his wrath on others, hatred for others and jealousy for others, vanish away, and God will remain supreme in his mind. Then to him, the means or intermediaries become like the hand and pen. He does not express gratefulness to hand and pen as he considers them as weapons and means. This certain faith is highest in rank. Then he understands that the sun, moon, stars, animals, plants, and all creatures are subject to His (God's) order, that the pen moves under the control of the Writer who moves them. (2) From this, his faith that God provides every man with subsistence, grows. God says: There is no moving animal in the earth whose provision is not upon God (Qur'an 9:8). He believes that, what has been pre-ordained for him, must come to pass. The result of this certain faith is that he will not regret for anything he loses. (3) Then he believes firmly in the following: Whoever does an atom weight of good will find it and whoever does an atom weight of evil will find it - (Qur'an 99:7). That is a faith of reward and punishment. As there is connection of bread with satisfaction of stomach, and punishment with sins or poison with loss of life, so he finds connection of good deeds with rewards of evil deeds with punishment."

Ghazali's conception focused on knowledge derived solely from the monotheistic ontological primacy, is further translated by Fazlur Karim: "All the doors of faith are not kept in order except with knowledge, condition is born. Knowledge is the basis; action is its fruit. Another name of condition is God reliance.... It has many doors, but it is placed on two doors – Tawhid and God reliance." Knowledge in its most majestic meaning of God reliance by Tawhid, is further expressed by Imam Ghazali: "When knowledge was puffed up in his heart, his oil was enkindled. Then light upon light came to

him. Then knowledge said to him: Value this moment greatly. Open your eyes, so that you may find the path. When he opened his eyes, he found the pen of God as described. It is not made of reed; it has got no head. It is incessantly writing in the mind and soul of men. He said being surprised at it: What a good thing is knowledge. I don't consider this pen as that of the material world."

The revolutionary contribution of Ghazali's devotional writings in the *Ihya* was hinged solely to knowledge as derived from the Tawhidi ontological foundation. This centerpiece was the foundation of critical reasoning in Ghazali's thought. Without the phenomenological glue of unity of knowledge, {q}Î W, merely by the Case (1,1) would not be possible. Yet in Ghazali's predominant thought is not this. Rather, the Case (1,2) abides in the profound outlook of evaluation of planetary wellbeing, subject to the k recomprehension of the evolutionary world-system results in the derivation of Figure 2 from Figure 1.

**Figure 2:**  
**Derivation of system and cybernetic fields of evolutionary learning from Ghazali's peripatetic of sixty echelons of knowledge, inducing space and time dimensions**



From the above explanation of the original contributions of Imam Ghazali in Ihya, particularly in respect of circular causation and inter-system complementary relations between knowledge and knowledge-induced explanatory variables and their functions, we can exemplify the working of expression (3). We take the case of the knowledge-flow (q) and three variables, say, prayer ( $X1(q)$ ); fasting ( $X2(q)$ ); zakat (a take on wealth for specific forms of philanthropy,  $X3(q)$ ); Qur'an reading ( $X4(q)$ ). How do these interrelate for attainment of wellbeing (maslaha, falah) in respect of the moral-material induction by knowledge,  $[\{q\} \hat{I} W]$ ?

To explain this, although Imam Ghazali was not aware of the immensely original contribution he had made for the planetary wellbeing in the light of the knowledge of the Qur'an and sunnah, his contribution was essentially of the comprehensive social nature. Contrarily, in the absence of such an understanding of his work, Imam Ghazali would be looked upon in the light of a utilitarian and libertarian peripatetic cleric and philosopher. This is the failure of the latter generations. They failed to understand the substantive core of Ghazali's social thought with individual participation signified by various Islamic prescribed values and practices.

In the light of the social perspective of individual interactions, integration, and evolutionary learning in moral choices, the complementary interrelations between our choice of variables,  $\{X1, X2, X3, X4\}[q\hat{I}W]$ , as noted above, suggest the following: Prayer taken not simply as a personal devotion, rather as a social duty comprehends a vaster domain of devotional commitment to the vista of other responsibilities to self and other in complementary mold.

This relationship causes  $X1(q)$  to depend upon the participative relationship. Thereby, each of the variables becomes socially sensitised:  $X2(q)$  as fasting is comprehensively a social devotional responsibility for all other targets in need as well-wishing activity of prayer and related practices and values. This forms the wide context of and by  $X3(q)$ , zakat as social giving comprising an impactful consequence of prayer and other values in their widest contexts.  $X4(q)$ , Qur'an reading taken in the socially-wide devotional sense implicates development of moral consciousness in the context of intellection and application of the widest possible ways of raising planetary wellbeing. Interrelations of these types span the whole moral-material, knowledge-induced, abstracto-empirical field spanning the socio-spiritual potentialities of  $Z(q) = \{X1, X2, X3, X4\}[q]$  by the conscious knowledge-induced

participation of individual entities in the entire social interrelations. We thereby, write in the format of inter-variate circular-causation relationships that address the moral-material inclusiveness of the operational feature of expression (3) in light of the explanations given by Figures 1 and 2.

Imam Ghazali's profound contribution to the then unfelt intellection of the monotheistic knowledge potentiality in describing the details and generality of the world-system, enriches the field of artificial intelligence in the area of systems and cybernetic of today's age of technological boom. Thereby, Imam Ghazali's mindset projected in the *Ihya* Vol. 1 on Knowledge, cannot be read off as a linear, non-complex, and non-dynamic understanding of Case (1,1) as a framework of socio-economic formulation of utilitarianism and libertarianism, with constancy of the coefficients of the independently additive variables of the  $Z(q)$ -vector.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this technical review of Imam Ghazali's profound contributions to the field of moral inclusiveness of the moral-material consciousness endowed construction of the Islamic world-system in its micro-orientation combined with the macro-social world-system, is a rare one. The nature of this review is invoked by the topic of understanding the meaning of the sure reality of Tawhid as law in the context of the theme of Critical Realism in Socio-Economics (JOCRISSE). Besides, the authentication of Imam Ghazali's contribution in the field of the monotheism induced ontology of unity of knowledge as his most focused and revered intellectual contribution, results in authentication yet unravelled facts regarding the Scientific Research Program (SRP) of present socio-scientific inquiry. In such areas of the most richly endowed intellection, Imam Ghazali and his contributions remain immortal pedestal of reverence.

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