

The Thought of Al-Ghazali in Tahafut Al-Falasifah and Its Relevance to Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT

This study provides an in-depth examination of Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's philosophical ideas and critiques in Tahafut al-Falasifah, a monumental work that significantly shaped the development of classical Islamic thought. The work emerged during a period when Islamic philosophy strongly influenced by Aristotelian and Neoplatonic traditions through the ideas of Ibn Sina and al-Farabi was experiencing substantial growth. Al-Ghazali presented twenty sharp criticisms of the metaphysical system of these philosophers, highlighting three doctrines that he believed were fundamentally incompatible with the principle of tawhid: the eternity of the world, God's ignorance of particulars, and the denial of bodily resurrection. This work provided a new direction for the development of Islamic epistemology, strengthening the position of revelation as the highest source of truth while still allowing reason to function proportionally. The relevance of al-Ghazali's thought can still be felt today, especially in modern education systems that are often dominated by secular rationalism and neglect ethical-spiritual dimensions. Thus, this work offers important inspiration for building an integral and holistic Islamic scientific paradigm.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a word derived from the word "leader." A leader is often referred to as the head of an organization. The term "leader" is defined as the ability to influence or influence. Etymologically, "leader" comes from the word "pimpin," meaning to guide or mentor. The word "pimpin" can be derived from the word "pimpin," meaning to guide and mentor. In this discussion, a leader is viewed from three categories: first, leadership is a process of influence. A leader cannot simply rely on a functional position but must also fulfill their duties as a leader. Second, a leader must have the ability to manage an organization to achieve common goals. And finally, a leader must be a leader. must maintain good relations with all its members as well as with external parties. In terms of influence, a

kyai can form an exemplary model for interacting with all students, motivating and providing innovation.

There are five activities in leadership: planning, assigning tasks, often called organizing, implementing, motivating and innovating, and evaluating. These five stages shape character and provide insight to subordinates, enabling them to become more skilled in carrying out their duties. There are various types of leadership. However, there are generally four: authoritarian, democratic, charismatic, and military. Some kyai (Islamic scholars) choose a spiritual style of leadership, identified with religious values. However, many kyai still rely on charisma to lead. Charisma is derived from the Greek word meaning a divinely inspired gift. The influence of a kyai is not based on authority or tradition, but rather on their knowledge. Charisma emerges during a social crisis, where a leader emerges with a radical vision that can provide a satisfactory solution. Charismatic leadership is more than just belief in faith; it also possesses supernatural abilities. Subordinates, as part of charismatic leadership, not only trust and respect the leader but also idolize and worship him as a spiritual figure.

There are several characteristics of charismatic leadership. The first is knowledge. A leader must possess competence in the field they lead and understand the ins and outs of their field of activity, both internally and externally. The second characteristic is courage and initiative. Courage is the inner ability to acknowledge fear but be able to face danger or obstacles calmly and decisively. One leader who usually has a charismatic type is the leader of an Islamic boarding school. The word "pesantren" is often used in everyday language with the addition of the word "pondok" to become "pondok pesantren." Linguistically, the words "pondok" and "pesantren" are not fundamentally different because essentially, an Islamic boarding school is an Islamic educational institution. According to the term, an Islamic boarding school is a traditional Islamic educational institution for studying, understanding, deepening, internalizing, and practicing Islamic teachings, emphasizing the importance of religious morality as a guideline for daily behavior.

2. METHODS

This research employed a qualitative methodology. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, and several previous studies. To identify problem patterns in this study, the researcher employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The primary data were collected from several informants, community and religious leaders. This data was also supported by previous studies relevant to this topic. Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and documentation.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Philosophical Critique in Tahafut al-Falasifah

Tahafut al-Falasifah represents al-Ghazali's systematic effort to respond to the extreme rationalism that characterized the golden age of Islamic philosophy. At that time, the ideas of Ibn Sina and al-Farabi were highly influential, shaped by Aristotelian and Plotinian metaphysics. Although these philosophers made significant contributions to knowledge, some of their views, according to al-Ghazali, exceeded the limits of Islamic doctrine. He argued that "the philosophers claim to pursue truth, yet they often merely follow Greek philosophers without evaluating them through the standards of the Sharia." Al-Ghazali formulated twenty criticisms focusing primarily on metaphysical issues. His three central objections the eternity of the universe, God's ignorance of particulars, and the denial of bodily resurrection were considered grave violations of Islamic creed. Interestingly, al-Ghazali did not reject philosophy blindly. His method was an internal critique, using philosophical reasoning to dismantle the arguments of the philosophers. This demonstrates that al-Ghazali valued philosophy as a discipline but insisted it must remain within the boundaries of revelation.

Epistemology and the Limitations of Reason

At the core of al-Ghazali's critique is his rejection of the absolutization of reason as the highest source of truth. For al-Ghazali, reason is important but inherently limited. He wrote, "Reason cannot

judge matters of divinity; it is a tool, not the source of truth." Al-Ghazali proposed a hierarchy of knowledge in Islamic epistemology: revelation holds the highest authority, followed by reason and spiritual intuition (dhawq). Rejecting the philosophers' elevation of reason, he maintained that metaphysical realities can only be understood through a combination of reason and divine guidance. His critique of causality is among his most influential ideas. The philosophers believed in necessary causal relations, but al-Ghazali argued that causality is merely a pattern established by God. This reinforced Ash'ari theology, which places divine will at the center of all events.

Educational and Spiritual Dimensions

Al-Ghazali's work also emphasizes the integration of ethics and spirituality in education. He insisted that knowledge must lead to moral and spiritual refinement. This principle shaped classical Islamic education, where schools such as the Nizamiyyah integrated rational sciences with religious sciences. Modern scholars such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas also draw inspiration from al-Ghazali's educational philosophy, especially regarding the Islamization of contemporary knowledge.

Historical Significance and Influence

The influence of *Tahafut al-Falasifah* is profound both within and beyond the Islamic world. In Islam, the work marked a shift from pure philosophical dominance toward a synthesis between theology and rational inquiry. Ibn Rushd responded with *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, creating one of the most important intellectual debates in Islamic history. In the West, al-Ghazali influenced medieval Scholastic thought, including that of Thomas Aquinas, demonstrating the global reach of his intellectual legacy.

Integration of Reason, Revelation, and Spirituality within the Framework of Modern Islamic Education

One of al-Ghazali's greatest contributions, often overlooked, was his attempt to construct an epistemological framework that was not only philosophical but also had a direct impact on the world of education. In *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, al-Ghazali demonstrated that the pursuit of knowledge must begin with a balance between reason and revelation. He did not reject reason, as is often misunderstood; rather, he emphasized that reason is a crucial tool, but it should not be the sole source of truth. In the context of modern Islamic education, this concept is highly relevant. Today's education system tends to be trapped in a technocratic, rational orientation that measures success solely through intellectual prowess. Al-Ghazali warned that knowledge not coupled with ethics, spirituality, and manners will produce a generation that is intelligent but immoral. Therefore, education needs to integrate cognitive, moral, and spiritual dimensions in a balanced manner. Al-Ghazali's proposed educational model was neither anti-science nor anti-rational. Rather, it allowed for the use of logic, critical methods, and rational study, as long as they did not exceed the boundaries of revelation. This is reflected in his view that reason can strengthen faith and lead humans to a knowledge of God. Therefore, Islamic education should not simply add religious instruction to the curriculum, but rather develop a scientific paradigm that views all knowledge as part of an effort to bring humans closer to God.

Al-Ghazali's Concept of Causality and Its Implications in Scientific Learning

Al-Ghazali's critique of causality is a highly influential idea in the Islamic tradition. By rejecting the necessary cause-and-effect relationship, al-Ghazali sought to assert that God's power is above natural law. Although often considered anti-scientific, this idea actually holds profound educational value. From a pedagogical perspective, the concept of *adatullah* can teach students that natural phenomena do not exist in isolation but are under God's control. This fosters theological awareness, ensuring that science is not understood mechanistically, but rather as knowledge connected to spiritual values. In the modern context, this approach helps prevent students from the secularization of knowledge, which separates scientific facts from religious values. Furthermore, al-Ghazali's concept actually trains critical thinking because he rejects the automatic justification of philosophical theories without in-depth analysis. This critical attitude is what needs to be developed in learning: the ability to question, evaluate, and understand the limits of human knowledge.

The Relevance of Al-Ghazali's Critique of Extreme Rationalism in Contemporary Educational Challenges

Al-Ghazali's critique of philosophers can be used as a mirror to reflect the state of education today, where extreme rationalism often neglects moral and spiritual aspects. In many cases, modern education focuses too much on academic achievement and logical intelligence, while tending to neglect character formation and divine awareness. Al-Ghazali's ideas remind us that education must produce individuals who not only master knowledge but also possess moral integrity. When knowledge is separated from divine values, it loses its direction and purpose. In this context, al-Ghazali's critique is no longer merely a philosophical discourse on history, but is relevant for formulating a model of Islamic education capable of facing the challenges of globalization, moral crises, and the tide of secularism.

The Contribution of Tahafut al-Falasifah to the Formation of the Paradigm of Islamic Science

Historically, Tahafut al-Falasifah marked a turning point in the development of the Islamic scientific paradigm. This work demonstrated that philosophy should not be rejected, but rather should be placed in its proper place within the epistemological hierarchy. This is what sets al-Ghazali apart from other figures: he did not close the door on philosophy, but rather straightened the direction of its use. In the contemporary academic realm, the paradigm developed by al-Ghazali can serve as a foundation for efforts to reconstruct knowledge based on Islamic values. Efforts such as the Islamization of knowledge or the integration of knowledge into Islamic higher education are actually a continuation of al-Ghazali's intellectual legacy. By combining revelation, reason, and spirituality, this paradigm seeks to create knowledge that is not only logically correct but also morally and spiritually meaningful.

4. CONCLUSION

Leadership is the process of influencing and guiding a group of people toward a specific goal. In the context of Islamic boarding school leadership, a kiai plays a central role as a spiritual leader and moral role model. He not only performs administrative functions but also serves as a figure who shapes the character, spirituality, and morals of his students through practical example, religious guidance, and the reinforcement of Islamic values. A kiai's leadership can be categorized into several styles, such as charismatic and spiritual. The charismatic style is characterized by personal magnetism and the ability to influence through vision and scholarly integrity, while the spiritual style emphasizes religious values, sincerity, and transcendental responsibility. These two styles are very dominant in Islamic boarding school leadership because they reflect a deep relationship between leader and followers based on trust, moral influence, and spiritual closeness. The Raudlatul Qur'an Al-Hasani Islamic Boarding School, run by Kyai Haji Moh Rahmatullah, is a concrete example of leadership based on spiritual and charismatic values. Through memorization (tahfidz) education, teaching of the yellow books, and practicing daily worship, this Islamic boarding school produces students who are not only proficient in religious knowledge but also mature in character and morals. Thus, the primary strength of Islamic boarding school leadership lies in the figure of the kiai as a leader capable of serving as a spiritual guide and role model, producing a generation that is knowledgeable, moral, and contributes positively to society.

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