

Ethical Ideas of Al-Ghazali: The Role of Knowledge in Moral Development

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Received Date: May 05, 2026; Accepted Date: May 18, 2026; Published Date: May 25, 2026

Citation: Munira Fayzulloeva Sh (2026), Ethical Ideas of Al-Ghazali: The Role of Knowledge in Moral Development, *Clinical Trials and Clinical Research*,5(4); DOI:10.31579/2834-5126/151

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Abstract

This article discusses the ethical views of Al-Ghazali, who believed that the study of science and the obtaining of knowledge are essential for human moral development. Al-Ghazali believes that knowledge is the root of good morality, and this outlook is similar to the following view of ancient Greek philosopher Socrates: "There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance".

Keywords: human; morality; science; knowledge; education; kind character

Introduction

Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058-1111) is one of the outstanding medieval thinkers who left behind a rich spiritual legacy. He is the author of numerous works and writings, which encompass theology, philosophy, logic, and Sufism. Al-Ghazali also analysed ethical issues, which he expressed in his works "Instruction for rulers" (Nasihah-ul-muluk), "The revival of the science of religion" (Ihya-ulumiddin), "Elixir happiness" (Kimāi saodat), "Letter to the son", "The Priceless Secrets of the Heart", etc. Al-Ghazali's ethical ideas cover concepts of ethics like love, justice, respect, tolerance, charity, fairness, contentment, humility, chastity, friendship, eloquence, mercy and compassion, benevolence, modesty, and truthfulness. In his teachings, the philosopher describes the etiquette of dealing with parents and relatives, the etiquette of hospitality and the etiquette of eating and travelling. Speaking about marriage and family, he evaluates them as a means of moral purity and transparency. He also considers the necessary study of science, the art of politeness and labor to be mandatory for humans. In his research, Muhammad al-Ghazali divides character into animalistic, barbaric, and angelic, with the first two behaviors being the cause of sorrow, unhappiness and the last behavior being the cause of joyfulness and happiness. He praises kind qualities and explains them as the cause of human well-being, and the bad qualities of anger, greed, stinginess, rudeness, and injustice as human shortcomings. The scientist notes that controlling emotions and self-governing create good behavior and lead a person to pleasure, satisfaction and a good mood. Muhammad al-Ghazali himself was a prominent scholar who attracted special attention to the importance of science and its study, calling it "knowledge of a blessing". He explains the value of science, exactly that science is a guide in life, a person should realize his knowledge into practice; science is a method of knowing the truth; science brings respect and peace to human and elevates him to the rank of virtuous; through science,

a person understands his own rights and those of others; science is manliness, and only wise people love science. The scholar recalls that the first word of the Creator was regarding the study of science: "Read in the name of your Lord who created. He created man from a clot of blood. Read: and your Lord is Most Generous..." (96:1-3). This is a call that shows the high status of knowledge, inspires the learners of science and declares war against ignorance. Through science, human becomes cognize of the truth, and on this basis, morality is perfected. Muhammad al-Ghazali mentions that studying and teaching science is the most virtuous act, because with science, a person can differ, distinguish truth from falsehood, good from evil. He emphasizes that no one is born a scholar from his mother, and knowledge is acquired through the hardship of learning. The human body can exist with food and his heart with knowledge. The strength of a person does not lie in physical strength, courage, bravery, eating, or lust. Because a camel is superior to a human in strength, an elephant in body, a predator in fearlessness, a pig in eating, and a bird in lust. Knowledge is a companion in solitude, a helper in joy and sorrow, a friend among strangers, a guide in life. It is written in the holy book "Whoever is given knowledge, has indeed been given a great good" (Qur'an, 2:269). The hadith states that acquiring knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim, male and female. If someone sets out on a journey in search of knowledge, such a person is on the path of truth until he returns. Muhammad al-Ghazali quotes Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah have mercy on him) as saying: "Knowledge is better than wealth, if you protect wealth, knowledge will protect you". Al-Ghazali considers necessary to study medicine, mathematics, geometry, astronomy, and so on, without which people will face difficulties. Engaging in poetry and poetics, historiography, and the like are elective, optional. The ethics of communication should be taught, which teaches patience, gratitude, sincerity, etc., which are the source of piety and etiquette. A person becomes

self-confident only when he is literate and well-mannered. Al-Ghazali considers the enjoyment of knowledge to be happiness and the ignorance, illiterate to be misfortune. Illiteracy is the worst defect, and the illiterate heart is a disease that no one feels, is always in danger, makes mistakes, and ignorance brings him regret. The ancestors say that the purpose of knowledge is humanity, that is, the intention of learning is to do good. Al-Ghazali reminds: "If you study science for a hundred years, memorize a thousand books, but do not do good, you will not be rewarded with God's mercy. Knowledge without goodness is madness, and good actions without knowledge are impossible". Al-Ghazali instructs that in learning science, a person must first listen, memories, then act on it, and teach it to others. A teacher should not hide knowledge, as it is unacceptable behavior; a teacher should be kind and soft-spoken to their learners, students, and purify their heart by teaching them knowledge. However, a teacher should teach knowledge to someone who appreciates it. The role of a teacher is effective in developing a human's personality. Every person learns knowledge and skills from a teacher. Therefore, Muhammad Al-Ghazali notes that the status of scientists and those who possess knowledge and enlightenment is higher than that of all other classes in society, and the study of science is more valuable and useful than any other endeavour. A scientist, like a lamp of society, who enlightens everyone with their knowledge and transmits the truth to people. He quotes several scholars in this regard: "Abul-Aswad (may Allah be pleased with him) said that kings should rule over people, while scholars rule over kings. Sufyan al-Sawri (may Allah be pleased with him) said that an honest king should seek counsel and advice from scholars. Al-Hasan al-Basri confirms that without scientists, people would become a group of cattle". A perfect scholar is one who benefits himself and others and is not satisfied with his knowledge, i.e. learns science. Everyone, even the "low-minded, low consciousness" person, should respect a scientist because of his knowledge. Because it is greatness to honour the great. The death of a scholar is a loss, the position of a scholar is only filled by his successor, and the scholar's name is not forgotten. Al-Ghazali mentions the instruction of Luqman Hakim: "Sit with scholars more often. May the earth be nourished by rainwater and the heart be revived by knowledge". Al-Ghazali also advises that a person should attend the meeting of scholars and the righteous, as it gives spiritual strength. Enjoying an hour of lectures by scholars and wise people is a one of form of worship. A rational conversation removes sorrow from the heart. A person should listen carefully to the words

of a scholar and ask him something useful. However, a person should not waste time in a conversation with a scholar whose actions do not match his words. Because every breath is a jewel, human capital, and wasting it unnecessarily is wastefulness.

Conclusion:

The moral ideas of Muhammad al-Ghazali are among the unique sources of the science of ethics and have a special place in the upbringing of a person. Morality is a historical and social phenomenon through which the world is understood. Morality is the difference between humans and other creatures on Earth. Moral is wisdom and a means of happiness, and an integral part of the human worldview. Morality is the most invaluable phenomenon of spiritual life that moves society forward. Decent morality leads to peace and harmony, the development of the nation and state, and the unity of people. Morality is a set of norms by which a person lives. Therefore, learning and knowing morality is inevitable for everyone. The essence of life is also in moral formation.

The importance of studying science and acquiring knowledge in human moral development was revealed by Al-Ghazali in his ethical views. The essence of morality is virtue and humanity, which every prudent person should strive for. The holy book states the following: "Verily, Allah loves those who do good" (3:134).

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