

Al-Ghazālī's Perspective on Human Spiritual Components: Heart, Spirit, Soul, and Intellect

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Abstract: This study examines Al-Ghazālī's perspective on four fundamental human spiritual components: the heart (qalb), spirit (ruh), soul (nafs), and intellect ('aql). Using qualitative methodology through literature analysis focused on Al-Ghazālī's primary works, particularly 'Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din,' this research explores how these components form the architecture of human spirituality in Islamic thought. The findings reveal that Al-Ghazālī conceptualizes each component with dual dimensions - material and spiritual - while establishing their interconnections within his integrated philosophical-Sufi framework. The heart functions as both a physical organ and a divine subtle essence capable of knowing God; the soul represents both lower tendencies requiring discipline and the essential human nature; the intellect serves as the distinguishing human faculty with both theoretical and practical capacities; and the spirit exists as both biological life force and divine essence. This research contributes to understanding Al-Ghazālī's holistic approach to human spiritual development, where purification of these four components leads to spiritual perfection and divine knowledge, offering valuable insights for contemporary Islamic psychology.

Introduction

Humans have many definitions depending on which aspects scientists research and study them. Some scientists argue that humans are social creatures because they look at their social aspects. Others argue that humans are intelligent animals that suckle, responsible beings, or creatures that read and laugh.¹ The definition of human beings according to KBBI is a creature that has reason (able to control other creatures). In English it is called man (the origin of the word from the Anglo-Saxon language), which can be basically associated with mens (Latin), meaning 'someone who thinks'. According to M. Dawam Raharjo, human terms expressed in the Qur'an such as basyar, insān, unās, ins, 'imru' or those that contain the meaning of women such as imra'ah, nisā' or niswah, or in personality characteristics such as al-atqā, al-abrār, or ulū al-albāb, as well as as part of social groups such as al-asyqā, zū al-qurbā, al-ḍu'afā or al-mustaḍ'afin, all contain clues about the nature of human beings in concrete form.²

To understand the definition of humans, there are three words that are often used in the Qur'an, namely insān with all its models (ins, al-nās, unās, or insān), the word basyar, and

¹ Alfi Sukrina and Wedra Aprison, "Human Nature in the View of the Philosopher Al-Ghazali," *Jurnal Al Burhan* 4, no. 1 (2024): 31–41, doi:10.58988/jab.v4i1.291.

² Mohamed Amine Hocini, Mustaffa Abdullah, and Fouad Bounama, "THE QUR'ĀNIC CONCEPT OF HUMAN BEING: A THEMATIC STUDY," *Malaysian Journal Of Islamic Studies (MJIS)* 4 (February 25, 2020): 17–28, doi:10.37231/mjis.2020.4.1.115.

the word *bani Adam* or *zurriyyāt Adam*. *Al-Basyar* contains the understanding that human beings will have offspring, undergo the process of sexual reproduction, and always strive to meet their biological needs, require space and time, and are subject to the law of *sunnatullāh*. *Al-Insān*, according to ‘Āisyah bint al-Syāṭi’, points to the height of human status which makes him worthy of being a caliph on earth and able to bear heavy burdens and be active in religious duties and *amānah* of life. *Al-Nās* refers to humans as social beings and is mostly described as a certain group of humans who often perform *mafsadah*. The Children of Adam are the descendants of Adam (as). Thus, the meaning of human beings in these various terms reflects the characteristics and perfection of God’s creation of human beings, not only as biological and psychological beings but also as religious, social, moral and cultural beings.

Within man there is the heart (*qalb*), the spirit (*rūḥ*), the soul (*nafs*), and the intellect (‘*aql*). These four terms have a related meaning even though they are different from each other. This is what Islamic philosophers and other philosophers have studied.³ To explain the meaning of the soul, it is necessary to highlight the four terms in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding. Each of the four terms has two meanings at once, namely material and psychological meaning. Therefore, it is also a debate between Western psychology and Islamic psychology. A view according to KBBI is a person or someone who is viewed (respected, respected), the result of the act of viewing as knowledge or opinion. So, it can be said that the view is the opinion of the result of the view.

In the book by Muh. Arif and Munirah (2020) stated that the heart (*qalb*), spirit (*rūḥ*),

soul (*nafs*), and intellect (‘*aql*) have a relationship of meaning even though they are different from each other. This opinion is the basis of interest to examine what if the four terms are discussed in one study with the views of one of the leading figures, Al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī as a philosopher, theologian, and Sufi has produced monumental works dealing with the concepts of the human heart, soul, soul, and intellect, especially in his great work *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. Through his approach to Sufism, Al-Ghazālī provides a comprehensive view of the four concepts that influence Islamic thought to this day.

The purpose of this research is to find out how Al-Ghazālī views the concept of the human heart, soul, and intellect. In addition, this study also aims to analyze the relationship between the four concepts in Al-Ghazālī thought and their relevance to contemporary Islamic psychology. By examining Al-Ghazālī’s thoughts on these four concepts, it is hoped that it can provide a deeper understanding of the nature of human beings from the perspective of Islamic Sufism.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach that focuses on the analysis of Al-Ghazālī’s thought on the concepts of heart, soul, soul, and intellect. Primary sources of data come from the works of Al-Ghazālī especially *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, *Mizān al-‘Amal*, and *Kimiya’ al-Sa’ādah*, while secondary sources include literature that discusses Al-Ghazālī’s thought from various perspectives. Data collection is carried out through an in-depth study of these works, while data analysis uses content analysis techniques and hermeneutical approaches to interpret the key concepts of Al-Ghazālī by taking into account their historical and intellectual contexts, classifying them, and synthesizing them to

³ Hatice P. Kemahli, “Four Inclinations in Human Nature: Evaluated in Light of Al-Ghazzālī’s Concept of

the Heart,” *Spiritual Psychology and Counseling* 2, no. 1 (2017): 9–30, doi:10.12738/spc.2017.1.0016.

produce a comprehensive understanding of Al-Ghazālī's views on the four concepts.

Results and Discussion

Biography Al-Ghazālī

Imam Al-Ghazālī's full name is Abū Ḥāmid Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Syāfi'ī Al-Ghazālī. He was born in 1058 AD (450 H) in Khurasan, Iran. His parents gave him the real name Muḥammad bin Muḥammad bin Aḥmad. After being blessed with a son named Ḥāmid, he was called Abū Ḥāmid. The name Al-Ghazālī comes from the name of the village where he was born, and is also sometimes associated with his father's work as a weaver selling woven cloth known as 'gazzāl'.⁴

Al-Ghazālī's family lived in simplicity. His father was a lover of knowledge who had big ambitions. Before his death, his father had entrusted and entrusted Al-Ghazālī and his brother Aḥmad to one of his companions, a benevolent Sufi. Furthermore, the two received guidance in various branches of knowledge until their father's inheritance was exhausted. After that, Al-Ghazālī and his brother began to wander to several cities to gain knowledge.

Al-Ghazālī lived in his hometown until the age of twenty. There he studied fiqh from Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Rāzkānī and Sufism from Yūsuf al-Nassāj, a famous Sufi at that time. In 470 AH, Al-Ghazālī moved to the city of Jurjan to study with Imam Abī Naṣr al-Ismā'īlī. There he also studied Arabic and Persian. In 471 AH, Al-Ghazālī set out for the city of Naisabur, near Tus, because he was interested in the Nizamiyah college. There he studied with a great scholar Abū al-Ma'ālī Ḍiyā'u al-Dīn al-Juwainī

who was better known as Imam Ḥaramain, the leader of the college. From him, Al-Ghazālī studied the Science of Kalām, Fiqh, Uṣūl Fiqh, Rhetoric, Mantīq, and studied philosophy.⁵

Al-Ghazālī began his career as a lecturer at Nizamiyah University Naisabur at the age of 25. After Imam Ḥaramain died, Prime Minister Niẓām al-Mulk appointed Al-Ghazālī as his successor when he was only 28 years old. Furthermore, Al-Ghazālī was asked to give regular recitations once every two weeks before dignitaries and experts in the city of Mu'askar and was given the position of advisor (muftī) to the Prime Minister. Thus, Al-Ghazālī had a great influence in the politics of the government of Prime Minister Niẓām al-Mulk.

Al-Ghazālī kemudian menjabat sebagai rektor Universitas Nizamiyah Baghdad atas permintaan perdana menteri. Meskipun sukses dalam karirnya, Al-Ghazālī mengalami kegoncangan batin dan keraguan selama di Baghdad. Dalam kitabnya "Al-Munqiz min al-Dalāl", beliau menceritakan keraguan yang sulit dihilangkan selama hampir dua bulan. Pada puncak keraguannya, Al-Ghazālī mempertanyakan hakikat pengetahuan sejati, apakah diperoleh lewat indra, akal, atau jalan lain.⁶

After going through a long spiritual search, Al-Ghazālī finally chose the path of Sufism after studying other methods of searching for the truth. He left Baghdad and spent about two years in the tower of the Jami' Mosque at the end of 488 H. Then he traveled to Palestine, Cairo, Alexandria, and performed the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. Al-Ghazālī then returned to Naisabur in 499 AH to accept

⁴ William Montgomery Watt, "Al-Ghazālī," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/al-Ghazali>.

⁵ "The Role of Imam Aljuwayni (DOB: 478AH/1085AD) in the Development of the Educational Movement in Nishapur," *Journal of the College of Education for*

Women 35, no. 3 SE-Articles (September 30, 2024): 70–79, doi:10.36231/coedw.v35i3.1758.

⁶ Sobhi Rayan, "Al-Ghazali's Method of Doubt," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 38, no. 2 (May 1, 2004): 162–73, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23062806>.

the position of Chancellor of Naisabur Nizamiyah University at the request of the Prime Minister. Al-Ghazālī spent the rest of his life establishing madrasas for ulama and khānaqah for Sufis. He spent his days completing the Koran, conversing with Sufis, and teaching his students. Al-Ghazālī died in the arms of his younger brother, Ahmad Al-Ghazālī, on Monday, 14 Jumādī al-Ākhir 505 H, or 9 December 1111 AD.⁷

The Works of Imam Al-Ghazālī

Al-Ghazālī was one of the Muslim intellectuals and writers who produced many works throughout his life. He continued to write and compose both as a state official in Mu'askar and as a professor in Baghdad, as well as during a period of skepticism in Naisabur and on his spiritual journey to find the truth, until the end of his life.

In the introduction to the book by Imam al-Ghazālī entitled “Mukhtaṣar Ihya’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn”, it is stated that As-Subki in the book Ṭabaqāt al-Shafī’iyyah mentions the writings of Imam al-Ghazālī as many as 58 works. Meanwhile, the ḥāji Khalifah (Kubra Zadeh) in “Miftāḥ al-Sa’adah wa Miṣbāḥ al-Siyādah” states that his works reached 80 pieces. He said: “His books and treatises are innumerable and it is not easy for a person to know the titles of all his works. Until it is said that he has 999 writings. This is indeed unbelievable. But whoever knows him, he will probably believe.”

According to Ahmad Daudy, the most recent research on the number of books written by Al-Ghazālī was that of Abdurrahman al-Badawi, the results of which were collected in a book entitled “Mu’allafāt al-Ghazālī”. In the book, Abdurrahman classifies the books related

to Al-Ghazālī’s work into three groups: first, the group of books that can be confirmed as the work of Al-Ghazālī consisting of 72 books; second, the group of books that are doubtful to be his original work consists of 22 books; and third, the group of books that are certainly not his works, consists of 31 books. The books written by Al-Ghazālī cover various fields of science that were popular in his time, including the interpretation of the Qur’an, the science of kalām, uṣūl fiqh, Sufism, mantīq, philosophy, and others.

Among the titles of his famous books are “Ihya’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn” (discussing religious sciences), “Ṭabāfut al-Falāsifah” (explaining the opinions of philosophers from a religious point of view), “Al-Iqtisād fī al-I’tiqād” (the essence of kalām knowledge), “Al-Munqiz min al-Ḍalāl” (explaining the purpose and secrets of knowledge), “Jawābir al-Qur’ān” (the secrets contained in the Qur’an), “Miṣṣan al-’Amal” (on religious philosophy), “Al-Maqāṣid al-Asnā fī Ma’āni Asmā’ Allāh al-Ḥusnā” (on the meaning of the names of God), “Faiṣal al-Tafrīqah Baina al-Islām wa al-Zindīqah” (the difference between Islam and Zindiq), and “Al-Qisṭas al-Mustaqīm” (the way to overcome disagreements).

Sufism Thoughts of Imam Al-Ghazālī

Al-Ghazālī, after going through his spiritual wanderings in search of the truth, finally chose the path of Sufism as his way of life. According to him, the Sufis are the most true seekers of truth. In the book “Al-Munqiz min al-Ḍalāl”, Al-Ghazālī explains that the path of the Sufis is a combination of knowledge and charity, and the fruit is morality.⁸ Al-Ghazālī also revealed that learning the knowledge of the Sufis through their works is easier than practicing, and

⁷ Zainul Arifin, “Al-Ghazālī’s Thought of Islamic Education And It’s Relevance with the Modern Education,” *Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education* 2, no. 1 (2018): 1–20, doi:10.24036/kjie.v2i1.18.

⁸ Abū Ḥamid Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Munqiz Min Al-Ḍalāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1967), 38.

that the special privileges of the Sufis cannot be attained by study alone, but must be by inner revelation, spiritual state, and change of character. Thus, according to him, Sufism is a kind of real experience and suffering.⁹

1) al-Ṭarīq

According to Al-Ghazālī in *‘Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*”, there are several levels (maqāmāt) that a prospective Sufi must pass. First, repentance (repentance). It includes three things: knowledge, attitude, and action. Knowledge is one’s knowledge of the dangers caused by great sin. That knowledge gives birth to an attitude of sadness and regret that gives birth to the act of repentance. Repentance must be done with full conscience and promise to oneself not to repeat sinful deeds.¹⁰

Second, patience. Al-Ghazālī mentioned in *‘Kīmīyā’ al-Sa’ādah*” that there are three powers in the human soul, namely the power of reason, the power that gives birth to the impulse to do good, and the power that gives birth to the impulse to do evil. If the soul force that gives birth to the impulse to do good can affect the power that gives birth to evil deeds, then a person can already be categorized as patient.¹¹

Third, fakiran (faqr). Al-Ghazālī explained that poverty is trying to avoid things that are necessary. That is, even if the prospective Sufi is in need of something, such as food, the food given to him must be carefully examined whether it is halal, haram, or syubhat (doubtful of its halal or haram). If it is haram or syubhat,

he must refuse the food, even though it is very necessary.¹²

Fourth, zuhud. Al-Ghazālī explained that in this state a prospective Sufi should abandon worldly pleasures and expect only ukhrawi pleasures.¹³ Fifth, trust. According to Al-Ghazālī, the attitude of tawakal is born from a firm belief in the omnipotence of Allah. As the creator, He has the power to do anything to humans. Al-Ghazālī stated that man should surrender to his Lord with all his heart.

Sixth, ma’rifat. In *“Misykāt al-Anwār”*, Al-Ghazālī defines ma’rifat as knowledge of the secrets of Allah and His rules about all that exists. The knowledge obtained from ma’rifat is of higher quality than the knowledge obtained by the intellect. This ma’rifat then gives rise to mahabbah (loving God).

2) Ma’rifah

Ma’rifah is the essence of taqarrub (approach to God). In *‘Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*”, Al-Ghazālī explains that ma’rifah is the result of the absorption of the soul that affects the condition of the soul of a servant which will ultimately affect all physical activities.¹⁴ Al-Ghazālī likened ‘ilm to seeing fire while ma’rifah is like light emanating from the flame.

Ma’rifah to Allah in itself is dhikr to Allah because ma’rifah means to be present with Him and deliberate with Him. Al-Ghazālī mentions in *“Al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah”* that the signs of ma’rifah, initially, were the appearance of flashes

⁹ Neli Agustin Saifullah, “Pengaruh Tobat Terhadap Akhlak Perspektif Al-Ghazali,” *Istiqamah: Jurnal Ilmu Tasawuf* 4, no. 1 (2023): 17–45.

¹⁰ Ali Ridho, “Konsep Taubat Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali,” *Jurnal Manthiq* 5, no. 1 (2019): 24–48.

¹¹ Hensa Primalita and Alfina Hidayah, “Konsep Sabar Dalam Perspektif Al-Ghazali Dan Implementasinya Pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19,” *Academic Journal of Islamic Principles and Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (May 25, 2021): 43–58, doi:10.22515/ajipp.v2i1.3637.

¹² Ahmad Zaini, “Pemikiran Tasawuf Imam Al-Ghazali,” *Esoterik* 2, no. 1 (2017): 146–59, doi:10.21043/esoterik.v2i1.1902.

¹³ Ahmad Fauzi, “Konsep Zuhud Menurut Al-Ghazali,” *Proceeding International Seminar on Islamic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1295–99.

¹⁴ Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*” (Beirut: Dār al-Ma’rifah, n.d.).

of brilliance of lawā'ih, tawālī', lawāmi', and barq.¹⁵

3) Human Level

Al-Ghazālī divides mankind into three groups in the book “Faiṣal al-Tafrīqah”. First, the laymen (al-'awāmm), whose way of thinking is simple. Second, the elect (khawāṣṣ), whose intellect is sharp and thinks deeply. Third, the debaters (ahl al-jadl). Al-Ghazālī explains in “Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn” that the layman with his simple intellect cannot grasp the essences. They have a tendency to trust and obey. This group should be faced with an attitude of giving advice and guidance (al-mau'izah). The elect whose intellect is strong and profound must be faced with the attitude of explaining the wisdoms, while the debaters with the attitude of breaking the arguments (al-mujādalah).

4) Happiness

Al-Ghazālī argues in “Mizān al-'Amal” that happiness is the ultimate goal of the Sufi path, as the fruit of the knowledge of Allah. According to Al-Ghazālī, the path to happiness is knowledge and charity. He explained that happiness in this world and the hereafter comes from knowledge, and that happiness is impossible to achieve without charity.¹⁶

The Concept of the Heart According to Imam Al-Ghazālī

The heart (qalb) according to Al-Ghazālī has a very important position in the structure of human spirituality. In his monumental work “Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn”, Al-Ghazālī divides the definition of the heart into two interrelated meanings.¹⁷ The first meaning is the liver in the physical sense (jismānī), which is the flesh

shaped like the fruit of ṣanaubar (elongated round shape) located on the left side of the human chest. Inside there are cavities that channel black blood and act as a source of human life. Al-Ghazālī explained that the heart in this sense exists in animals as well as in dead humans.¹⁸

The second meaning is the heart in the spiritual sense (rūḥānī), which is something subtle (laṭīfah) and divine (rabbāniyyah). Al-Ghazālī explained that the heart in this second definition describes the essence of the human self, which functions to feel, recognize, and know a matter or knowledge.¹⁹ According to Al-Ghazālī, the physical heart is closely related to the spiritual heart, but he does not review the relationship between these two types of heart at length because it is included in the science of mukāsyafah (the science of revelation) which not everyone is able to understand.

Al-Ghazālī affirms that the heart is king over all the human limbs, and all the limbs are subject to the heart's commands. In “Bidāyat al-Hidāyah”, he states that the goodness of all the limbs depends on the goodness of the heart, and the damage of the whole body also depends on the damage of the heart.²⁰ With regard to the nature of the heart, Al-Ghazālī explains in “Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn” that the heart is reciprocal (taqallub). When the devil took control of him and led him to evil, then he woke up when the angel turned him away from the devil, and vice versa. Al-Ghazālī takes the basis from the Qur'an, Surah al-An'am verse 110 which means: “We turn their hearts and their views around.”

Al-Ghazālī divides the heart into three types based on its condition:

¹⁵ Abū Ḥamid Al-Ghazali, “Al-Risālah Al-Laduniyyah,” in *Majmū'at Rasā'il Al-Imām Al-Ghazālī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1986), 68.

¹⁶ Abū Ḥamid Al-Ghazali, *Mizān Al-'Amal* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1964).

¹⁷ Al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

¹⁸ Al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

¹⁹ Al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

²⁰ Bidāyat Al-Hidāyah, Abū Ḥamid Al-Ghazālī (Beirut: Dār al-Minhāj, 2004), 47.

1. A clean heart (qalb salīm), that is, a heart that is awakened with strong faith and piety and full of praiseworthy morals. Al-Ghazālī stated that this heart would not be easily fascinated by the deception of the devil. This type of heart, after reaching the level of excellence and cleanliness from destruction, will give birth to gratitude, patience, fear (khauf), rida, tawakal, and so on.
2. A dirty heart (qalb mayyit), that is, a heart that is filled with lust, full of reprehensible morals, and easy for the devil to enter. Al-Ghazālī explained that this heart is full of the temptations of the devil and lust. All actions that are revealed from man are the result of the submission of the heart to lust. This heart does not know its God and never wants to worship Him.
3. A heart that is constantly going back and forth (qalb marīḍ) between good and evil. Al-Ghazālī explained that this heart sometimes becomes a clean heart that tends to the love of Allah, faith, sincerity, and trust in Him, which ultimately gives peace and happiness. However, at other times it becomes a dirty heart that is inclined towards love to lust, desire, envy, pride, and making havoc on the earth, which leads to destruction and destruction.²¹

Al-Ghazālī also explains in “Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn” that the heart is a place of knowledge (ma’rifah) about Allah. He likened the heart to a mirror; The cleaner the mirror, the clearer the reflection of the image will be.²² Likewise, the heart is the purest from the stains of immorality

and pleasure, the more it is able to grasp the essence of truth.

In conclusion, the heart according to Al-Ghazālī is one of the elements that has advantages, namely if used correctly, it will benefit a person. However, if used in a way that is not in line with the teachings of Islam, it will cause people to stray from the path of Islam. The heart has a very big role because with a clean heart, humans can understand knowledge, know Allah SWT, and strengthen a complete faith in themselves.

The Concept of the Soul According to Al-Ghazālī

The soul (nafs) occupies a fundamental position in Al-Ghazālī’s thought. In his various works, Al-Ghazālī pays special attention to the concept of the soul (nafs) with a comprehensive and profound approach. In the book “Ma’ārij al-Quds fī Madārij Ma’rifat al-Nafs”, Al-Ghazālī explains that the term nafs has two interrelated meanings.²³

In the first sense, nafs refers to the power of anger and orgasm in humans. This definition is often used by Sufism scholars who state that nafs is the source of all evil and mental ills. In “Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn”, Al-Ghazālī explains that nafs in this sense need to be controlled and trained (riyāḍah) in order to attain spiritual perfection.²⁴

The second meaning, nafs is interpreted as the essence and nature of humans, namely the soul which is gentle (laṭīfah) and is an immaterial substance that stands alone. Al-Ghazālī emphasized in “Al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah” that nafs in this sense is a spiritual substance (jawhar rūḥānī) that cannot be seen with the physical eye

²¹ M Ulum and Muhammad Fahmi, “The Concept of Qalbu Education According to Imam Ghazali,” *Maharot: Journal of Islamic Education* 7 (December 30, 2023): 190, doi:10.28944/maharot.v7i2.1405.

²² Al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*”.

²³ Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazali, *Ma’ārij Al-Quds Fī Madārij Ma’rifat Al-Nafs* (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1975), 17.

²⁴ Al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*”.

and cannot be measured materially.²⁵ It is this soul that knows Allah, approaches Him, does good deeds for Him, strives towards Him, and approaches His presence.

Al-Ghazālī clearly distinguishes the soul from the body. In “*Kimiyyā’ al-Sa’ādah*”, he asserts that the soul is neither a body nor a material attribute, but is a separate substance that stands alone. The soul is not in space and time, and cannot be divided physically. According to Al-Ghazālī, the soul was created by Allah in a perfect state and has a natural tendency to know the truth.

In “*Ma’ārij al-Quds*”, Al-Ghazālī explains that the soul has a functional relationship with the body, like the relationship of a king to his kingdom or the relationship of a master to his slave. The soul uses the body as a vehicle (*markab*) to achieve perfection and happiness. However, Al-Ghazālī emphasizes that this relationship is temporary, because when the body is damaged at death, the soul remains and does not perish.

Al-Ghazālī membagi daya-daya jiwa (*quwā al-naḥs*) dalam “*Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*” menjadi tiga bagian:

1. The vegetable soul (*al-naḥs al-nabāṭiyyah*), which is the lowest level related to biological functions such as eating, growing, and reproducing. This power is possessed by humans, animals, and plants.
2. Animal soul (*al-naḥs al-ḥayawāniyyah*), which is the power related to movement and sensing. This power is possessed by humans and animals, including the driving power (*al-quwwah al-muḥarrikah*) which is divided into generating power (*al-bā’ithah*) and implementing power (*al-fā’ilah*), as well

as the perceiving power (*al-quwwah al-mudrikah*) which includes the five senses, both physical and spiritual.

3. The human soul (*al-naḥs al-insāniyyah*) or rational soul (*al-naḥs al-nāṭiqah*), which is a power that only humans have. This power allows humans to think, reflect, and consider their actions. Al-Ghazālī divides the power of the human soul into theoretical power (*al-’ālimah*) whose function is to know the essence of everything, and practical power (*al-’āmilah*) whose function is to move the body according to the demands of knowledge.²⁶

Al-Ghazālī also explained that the soul has qualities called the soldiers of the heart (*junūd al-qalb*). These armies are divided into two: the visible (*ẓāhir*) in the form of limbs, and the hidden (*bāṭin*) in the form of the qualities and states of the soul. These qualities can be commendable traits (*faḍā’il*) such as knowledge, wisdom, belief, and despicable traits (*radhā’il*) such as anger, envy, and arrogance.

In order to achieve the perfection of the soul, Al-Ghazālī emphasizes the importance of purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-naḥs*) through spiritual practices (*riyāḍah*) and self-control (*mujāhadah*). In “*Minhāj al-’Ābidīn*”, he explains that the perfection of the soul is realized when the soul can be free from the tendencies of orgasm and lust, and has noble morals.

Thus, the concept of the soul according to Al-Ghazālī is a combination of philosophical and sufistic approaches. He sees the soul as a spiritual substance that has the ability to achieve perfection through self-knowledge and purification. The soul, according to Al-Ghazālī, is the true essence of man and is the main

²⁵ Al-Ghazali, “*Al-Risālah Al-Laduniyyah*.”

²⁶ Al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*.”

instrument in man's spiritual journey towards God.

The Concept of Reason According to Al-Ghazālī

Reason ('aql) has a special position in Al-Ghazālī's thinking. In his various works, Al-Ghazālī pays special attention to the function, capacity, and limitations of reason in gaining knowledge. Al-Ghazālī explains that the word 'aql has several interrelated meanings. First, reason is a trait that distinguishes humans from animals and enables them to receive theoretical knowledge and regulate intellectual activities. Al-Ghazālī calls it al-gharīzah, an innate nature that enables humans to gain theoretical knowledge.²⁷

Second, reason is a science that develops in young children that enables them to distinguish between what is possible and what is impossible. Al-Ghazālī calls it al-'ulūm al-ḍarūriyyah (necessary knowledge), which is axiomatic knowledge that does not require proof. Third, reason is knowledge gained through experience. Someone who has a lot of experience is called intelligent. Al-Ghazālī explains that this type of knowledge develops through interaction with the environment and other people.

Fourth, reason is an instinctive power that enables a person to know the consequences of all actions and control the urges of lust that demand momentary pleasure. Al-Ghazālī calls it quwwat al-tamyīz (discriminating power) that enables a person to consider their actions.

Al-Ghazālī emphasizes that reason is an immaterial substance that refers to the essence of humans. Reason, according to Al-Ghazālī, is something subtle that is the essence of humans, the same as al-qalb, al-nafs, and al-rūḥ, the only

difference is the name. Even reason is a soul entity that is involved with intelligence, in this case it can also be called "intellect". Al-Ghazālī distinguishes between substance and power.⁷ Reason is substance, while power is divided into two, namely inner power and external power that covers all body parts. Reason is an immaterial substance that moves the power of perception from within, such as the power of imagination, reminder, estimation, representation, and common sense, all of which are located in the cavity of the human brain. Al-Ghazālī divides the human soul in relation to reason into three, namely the vegetative soul, the sensitive soul and the rational soul of the human soul. In the sensitive soul or animal mind there are the five inner powers, including the three main powers, namely the driving power, the power of will, and the power of capturing knowledge. Animal reason is shared by humans and animals, meaning that these powers are not unique to humans. Meanwhile, the essence that distinguishes humans from animals is precisely in the rational soul (al-'aql), namely in the dimensions of 'ilm and irādah when humans are able to distinguish causal relationships and optimize thinking so that they are able to capture the essence of knowledge behind something. Al-Ghazālī explains that humans have two powers of reason, namely theoretical power that functions to know and practical power that functions to move.²⁸

Although Al-Ghazālī gave a high position to reason, he also acknowledged its limitations. Al-Ghazālī explained that the ability of reason to capture the truth is not without weaknesses. This is because reason is influenced by the senses which are only able to capture material objects, while reason itself is only able to capture

²⁷ Fahrul Rozi and Fathurrahman Mukhtar, "Peran Qalb Dan Fu'ad Dalam Pendidikan Islam Menurut Al-Ghazali," *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan* 9, no. 3 (2024): 1611–16, doi:10.29303/jipp.v9i3.2361.

²⁸ Mubarak Taswin, "Refleksi Pemikir Islam Tentang Ontologi Jiwa Dan Relasinya Di Dalam Al-Qur'an," *Ushuluddin* 24, no. 2 (2022): 252–67.

concepts and relationships. Especially in capturing the essence of metaphysics and eschatology, reason will experience a dead end so that it requires revelation (syar'). Al-Ghazālī emphasized that in concluding good and bad values, reason is only able to know globally, while revelation knows globally and in detail. Reason and revelation support each other, there is no conflict between them. Therefore, according to Al-Ghazālī, functioning the role of the heart to accept revelation is the door to guidance.²⁹

Konsep Ruh Menurut Al-Ghazālī

The spirit (rūḥ) in Al-Ghazālī's view is a key concept in understanding the spiritual dimension of humans. In *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Al-Ghazālī mentions two meanings of spirit. First, the spirit as a subtle mass that flows from the physical heart to the entire body, is called the animal spirit (al-rūḥ al-ḥayawānī), the source of life and physical activity. Second, the spirit as a divine laṭīfah (rabbānī), namely the true human essence capable of knowing the truth, is identical to the qalb in the spiritual sense, as mentioned in the QS. Al-Isra: 85. This spirit belongs to the realm of al-amr which only Allah knows fully.

In *Misykāt al-Anwār*, Al-Ghazālī divides the spirit into five levels:

1. Ar-Rūḥ al-Ḥassās (receiver of the senses),
2. Ar-Rūḥ al-Khayālī (store of sense impressions),
3. Ar-Rūḥ al-'Aqlī (understanding of the essence),
4. Ar-Rūḥ al-Fikrī (processor of knowledge), and

5. Ar-Rūḥ al-Qudsī al-Nabawī (prophetic spirit who is able to grasp magical meanings).

In *Kimiya' al-Sa'ādah*, the soul is seen as a divine secret that cannot be reached by reason except through sharia. Meanwhile, in *Al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah*, the soul has two sides: divine (rabbānī) and creature (composed creation). Al-Ghazālī also emphasized that the soul is eternal, surviving after the death of the body, as explained in *Minhāj al-'Ābidīn*. Thus, according to Al-Ghazālī, the soul is the divine nature of humans, enabling humans to achieve true knowledge and closeness to God, although its essence remains God's secret.

Conclusion

Based on this research, it can be concluded that Al-Ghazālī provides a comprehensive and profound conceptualization of the human heart, spirit, soul, and intellect. The heart (qalb) has dual meanings: physical (a flesh organ) and spiritual (a divine subtle essence that perceives truth). The soul (nafs) is understood as both the lower self with negative tendencies and the essential human nature as an immaterial substance. The intellect ('aql) is seen as a distinguishing trait between humans and animals that enables theoretical knowledge acquisition, while also acknowledging its limitations in grasping metaphysical truths. The spirit (ruh) is described as both a physical life force and a divine essence representing the true human spiritual core. These four concepts are interconnected in Al-Ghazālī's thought, forming a holistic understanding of human spiritual architecture where purification of each component leads to spiritual perfection and knowledge of God. His approach uniquely integrates philosophical reasoning with Sufi

²⁹ Ahmad Arisatul Cholik, "Relasi Akal Dan Hati Menurut Al-Ghazali," *Kalimah* 13, no. 2 (2015): 287, doi:10.21111/klm.v13i2.290.

spirituality, offering a framework that remains relevant for contemporary Islamic psychology and spiritual development.

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