Classification of Sciences: A Comparative Study of Ihya' ulum al-din and al-Risalah al-laduniyyah

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Classification of Sciences:
A Comparative Study of Iḥyā’ ʿulūm al-dīn and al-Risālah al-laduniyyah

Che Zarrina Sa’ari

Abstract: Al-Ghazālī expressed many ideas on the theory of knowledge in his different works including Iḥyā’ ʿulūm al-dīn as well as al-Risālah al-laduniyyah. The former work is accepted by the scholars as securely attributed to al-Ghazālī, while the authenticity of the latter has been questioned by them. This article tries to compare al-Ghazālī’s views on the classification of sciences between the theory revealed in these two works to show their similarities and differences. In order to assess the mentioned purpose, this article attempts to divide the sciences explained in the Iḥyā’ and the Risālah into three different but linked categories, i.e., sciences which "come upon one" (ḥuḍūrīyyah) and sciences which are acquired (ḥuṣuliyyah); revealed (sharīyyah) and rational (aqliyyah) sciences; theoretical (nazariyyah) and practical (’amaliyyah) sciences. This article argues that both works have similarities as well as differences.

Al-Ghazālī’s view on classification of sciences is well known especially in his magnum opus, Iḥyā’ ʿulūm al-dīn.1 He has also written several other works on the same subject like Miṣyār al-ʿilm and Maqāṣid al-falāsifah which are confidently attributed to him. The theory is also presented in al-Risālah al-laduniyyah2 the authenticity of which as al-Ghazālī’s work is doubted by many modern scholars including M.A. Palacios, W.M. Watt and Abd al-Rahmān al-Badawī.3 This study is aimed at providing a comparison between the

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Ihyā’ and the Risālah in terms of the classification of sciences, so as to bring out the similarities and differences between them.

The Risālah discusses sciences in three different but inter-linked categories as follows:5

1. Sciences which come upon one (ḥudūriyyah) and sciences which are acquired (ḥusūliyyah).
2. Revealed (shar’iyyah) and rational (‘aqliyyah) sciences.
3. Theoretical (nazariyyah) and practical (‘amaliyyah) sciences.

Al-Ghazālī in his Ilḥār also classifies knowledge into three categories: sciences "which come upon one" and sciences which are acquired,6 revealed and non-revealed (ghayr shar’iyyah)/rational (‘aqliyyah) sciences;7 theoretical and practical sciences;7 but the Iḥyā’ makes another kind of division, farq āyn and farq kifāyah8 which is not mentioned by the Risālah.

Division into ḥudūriyyah and ḥusūliyyah Sciences

A study of the ways of acquiring types of knowledge in the Risālah and the Ilḥār shows that the means of gaining knowledge is classified into that which comes upon one (ḥudūriyyah) and that which is acquired (ḥusūliyyah). Both works accept the standard ṣūfī view that sciences which are gained by the soul differ in accordance with the states of the heart. The Risālah devotes one chapter to explaining "levels achieved by the soul in acquiring knowledge."9

You should know for certain that each of these branches of the arts and each of these sciences requires a number of conditions so that they may be engraved on the souls of those who seek [knowledge].10

The Iḥyā’ also writes:

Know that the cognitions which are not necessary, but simply come to be in the heart in certain states (ahwāl), differ in the way they come to be.11

The knowledge which is obtained through revelation and inspiration in the discussion of the Iḥyā’ and the Risālah can be regarded as knowledge which come upon one (ḥudūriyyah). It embodies the prophetic knowledge (‘ilm al-nabawī) from revelation (wahy) and the knowledge of the saints from inspiration (ilhām) which is also known as knowledge of spiritual intuition (al-‘ilm al-ladunī) as in the Risālah,12 or knowledge of unveiling (‘ilm al-mukāshafah) as found in
the Ihyā'. On the other hand, knowledge which is achieved through the process of learning and reflection can be regarded as acquired knowledge.

To purify the soul in order to attain knowledge of spiritual intuition (al-ilm al-laduni), the Risālah puts forward a process of three stages. They are:

First, the attainment of all types of knowledge; the second, genuine spiritual exercise (riyāḍah) and true contemplation (murāqabah)... the third, reflection (tafakkur). When the soul has studied and exercised itself with the knowledge, then has reflected on its known things according to the conditions of reflection, the door of the unseen world is opened to it, ...he will be one of those who possess an intellect (lubb) and a window of the unseen world will be opened in his heart.

The first stage [i.e. the attainment of knowledge] conflicts with al-Ghazālī in the Munqidh who rejects the opinion that one of the processes of gaining knowledge of spiritual intuition (al-ilm al-laduni) is through the attainment of all types of knowledge:

It became clear to me that their [the ūfīs] most distinctive characteristic is something that can be attained, not by study (al-taʿallum), but rather by fruitional experience (al-dhawq) and the state (al-ḥāl) and the exchange of qualities (tabaddul al-ṣifār). How great a difference there is between your knowing the definitions and causes and conditions of health and satiety and your being healthy and sated.

However, as far as the second stage of the Risālah [i.e. the spiritual exercise and true contemplation] is concerned, we find that for al-Ghazālī in the Ihyā' it is the first stage. The Ihyā' writes:

They [the ūfīs] claim that the way to [obtain inspiration] is first of all the entire cutting off of worldly attachments and emptying the heart of them... Then one retires alone with himself to some nook and confines himself to the religious duties and supererogatory duties.

The third stage of the Risālah [i.e. reflection (tafakkur)] agrees with the second stage in the Ihyā', but al-Ghazālī in the Ihyā' describes it more fully. The latter writes:

He sits with heart empty and attention concentrated (majmūʿ al-hamm), his reflection (fikr) not dispersed by any recital of the
Qur’ān or any exegetic consideration (ta’ammul) or any book of Tradition or anything else. Rather, he exerts himself that nothing may occur to his mind save God Most High. After he sits down in seclusion, he unceasingly says with his tongue “Allah, Allah” without interruption concomitantly with the presence of his heart until...its trace disappears from his tongue and he finds his heart steadily applied to remembrance of God... He becomes exposed to the gusts of God’s mercy and it remains for him only to await the mercy which God will open to him as He opened it to the prophets and saints by this way.17

Ways of Acquiring Various Types of Knowledge

Not only does knowledge vary in kind, but the channels through which knowledge is obtained are different. Like the Iḥyā’, the Risālah also defines knowledge in this way. Both works regard man as gaining knowledge through two methods, that is from God i.e. divine learning (al-ta’allum al-rabbānī) or human learning (al-ta’allum al-insānī). The Iḥyā’ writes:

Know that the cognitions which are not necessary, but simply come to be in the heart in certain states (aḥwāl), differ in the way they come to be. At times they surprise the heart as though cast into it from where it knows not; and at times they are acquired by way of inference and the process of learning (al-ta’allum).18

And the Risālah writes:

Know that human knowledge is acquired by two methods: first, human learning; and second, divine learning.19

(a) Human Learning (al-ta’allum al-insānī)

In the Risālah, human learning is divided into two types, learning (ta’allum) and reflection (tafakkur). It writes:

Human learning consists of two kinds, one of them from outside, which is acquisition by learning, and the other from inside which is busying oneself with reflection.20

It is the same with the Iḥyā’ which when it discusses the duties of the teacher also indirectly explains that human learning is of two types. The Iḥyā’ writes:

Man occupies four states in relation to knowledge... First, there is the state of seeking knowledge in which man is acquisitive; another
is that of having knowledge in which state he would not need to inquire of others; a third is that of reflection (tafakkur) wherein he would contemplate and enjoy his achievement; and last, there is the state of teaching wherein he imparts his knowledge to others.  

The two works differ, however, in explaining the meaning of learning and reflection. The Risālah makes use of philosophical terms in explaining the meaning of reflection, as it is knowledge which derives from the Universal Soul (al-nafs al-kulliyyah). It writes:

Learning is for one person to derive benefit from [another] particular person (al-shakhṣ al-juz‘ī), whereas reflection is for a soul to derive benefit from the Universal Soul.  

And in the Ihyā’, al-Ghazālī describes the process of reflection too. He, however, writes only:

It is no secret that reflection (tafakkur) is a key of lights and a beginning of insight (istibṣār), and it is a net (shabakah) for types of knowledge and for gnosis (ma‘ārif) and understanding (fuḥūm)… Thought (fikr) means the provision of two forms of knowledge (ma‘ārifatayn) in the heart so that a third form of knowledge (ma‘ārifah) will benefit from them. For an example, to know that the hereafter is better than the present world is through two ways; the first, …through taqlīd; the other way is to know that it is more appropriate to choose what is everlasting; and then to know that the hereafter is everlasting. Then, from these two pieces of knowledge, the third knowledge will be achieved, that the hereafter is better to choose than the present world. And it is impossible to achieve the knowledge that the hereafter is better to choose [than the present world] unless there are the two former types of knowledge. And the appearance of these types of knowledge in the heart is named reflection (tafakkur), consideration (iḍṭibār), remembrance (taḥakkur), speculation (naẓar), contemplation (ta‘ammul), meditation (taḍabbur).  

And al-Ghazālī also says:

That which eventuates through inference (istidlāl) is called consideration (iḍṭibār) and insight (istibṣār)… It is peculiar to the ‘ulamā’.  

From the statements given above, it can be deduced that the Ihyā’ makes consideration (iḍṭibār), remembrance (taḥakkur), speculation (naẓar), contemplation (ta‘ammul), meditation (taḍabbur) and insight
(istibsār) synonymous to reflection (tafakkur). It can also be understood that learning and reflection have a mutual relationship in the process of acquiring types of knowledge. This kind of idea is also found in the Risālah when the latter writes:

Study needs reflection, for man is unable to learn all particulars or universals and all known facts, but rather he learns something and gains some [types of] knowledge by reflection... For the soul cannot learn all its particular and universal matters by study; rather [it learns] some of them through acquisition and some of them by speculation (naẓar), like seeing people’s customs and deriving some of them from his mind (damātriḥt) through the clarity of his thought.25

The two works also have a quite similar epistemology, the Risālah writes:

[Types of] knowledge are implanted in the root of souls with virtuality (bi al-quwwah), like the seed in the earth and the jewel in the bottom of the sea or in the heart of the mine. And learning is the [process] of searching for the emergence of that thing from virtuality to actuality (al-fāʿil). And education is bringing it out from virtuality to actuality.26

And the Iḥyā’ mentions:

Every human being is born with [an inherent] knowledge of reality; inherent since it is readily disposed to perceive reality... Thus, remembrance which is in accordance to the knowledge which is installed by nature (fitrah) in man is of two kinds; the one is to recall a picture which once existed in one’s mind but has disappeared; while the other is to recall a picture which is inherent in one’s mind by nature.27

From the statements mentioned above, it can be seen that the two works hold that knowledge of reality can be acquired through learning and education. These kinds of processes will bring such knowledge from virtuality to actuality. The two works, however, differ in explaining the circumstances of the knowledge. The Iḥyā’ acknowledges two kinds of circumstances: one of them is a process of recalling knowledge which has disappeared after being installed by nature; and the other is a process of recalling knowledge which exists permanently in man by nature. The Risālah mentions only the second process of the Iḥyā’, i.e. a process of recalling knowledge which is inherent in man by nature.
The Risālah and the Ihya‘ differ in the way of explaining the examples of reflection, because the Risālah illustrates its examples by giving "what is reflected by learned men" instead of "what people should reflect" as the Ihya‘ does. The Risālah writes:

The engineer does not learn all the things, ...but he learns the universal [principles] of his science and its premises... Likewise, the physician cannot learn the particulars of people’s diseases and their remedies,...Likewise, the astronomer studies the universals pertaining to the stars,...So also the jurist and the man of letters (adīb) in the matter of the marvellous works of art.28

And the Ihya‘ writes:

You should know that reflection is concerned both with religious matters and other matters. We shall confine ourselves with what is connected with religious affairs and leave the other part. We mean by religious matters the relationship (mu'āmalah) between a servant and God; either what is connected with a servant, his characteristics and his states or what is connected with God, His attributes and His actions. It is not possible to go further than these two parts.29

It is obvious that the two works differ from each other in illustrating modes of reflection. The Ihya‘ gives more details on reflection on religious matters, while the Risālah gives details on other matters.

(b) Divine Learning (al-ta‘allum al-rabbānī)

Divine learning according to the Ihya‘ and the Risālah occurs from revelation (wahy) and inspiration (ilḥām). Revelation is regarded as the first method of gaining the esoteric knowledge which is restricted to the prophets and the apostles.30 And inspiration is a knowledge of God which comes not from revelation but is a direct enlightening of the heart of the prophets, the apostles and the saints which is regarded as the second method of attaining esoteric knowledge.31

Al-Ghazālī in the Ihya‘ describes revelation (wahy) and inspiration (ilḥām):

That which [i.e. knowledge] occurs without acquisition (iktisāb) and demonstration (dalṭī) is called ilḥām...The occurrence [of knowledge] in the heart without demonstration, learning (ta‘allum) and the use of reason by man is divided into [knowledge] which man does not know how and from where it comes to him and [knowledge] which informs [man] at the same time of the cause (al-sabāb) from which that knowledge is gathered. The latter is the direct witnessing (mushāhadah) of the angel who alights upon the heart. [Of these two
kinds of ilhâm] the former is [also] called ilhâm and it is disclosed to us in the heart. The latter is called wahy and it is peculiar to prophets, while the former is peculiar to saints (awliyâ‘ wa asfiyâ‘).... Indeed, knowledge [ilhâm and wahy] only occurs in our heart through the mediation of the angel.32

From the above statement, it is stated that revelation can only be received by the prophets, whilst inspiration is received by the saints. The Ilhâ‘yâ admits the difference between revelation and inspiration, even though, in one place, it mentions that inspiration can also be received by the prophets. It writes:

Such are prophets to whom recondite things are clarified in their inward thoughts without having learnt nor heard anything of the sort. This is expressed by the word inspiration (ilhâm).... This kind of imparting information by the angels to the prophets is different from explicit revelation (wahy) which involves hearing a definite voice with an ear and seeing the angel with the eye.33

And from the statements given above, it can be understood that the Ilhâ‘yâ explains the process by which knowledge of revelation (wahy) and inspiration (ilhâm) occurs is through the mediation of the angels, even though their methods of reception are different [i.e. for example, inspiration does not involve hearing voice with an ear, while revelation involves hearing a definite voice with an ear]. The Ilhâ‘yâ proceeds to describe that process by saying:

The light of knowledge is not made to shine upon the heart of man except through [the instrument of] the angels, and it is not possible for any man to have any communication with God except through revelation (wahy) or through a veil or through a messenger whom God sends and instructs to declare His will. Similarly, whatever knowledge is sent by the grace of God to the human heart is transmitted by the angels who have been entrusted (muwakkalûn) with this responsibility. They are angels who have been made holy, pure and free from all blameworthy traits.34

In the Risâlah, it describes revelation (wahy) as only coming from the Universal Intellect (al-‘aqîl al-kullî) and inspiration (ilhâm) as coming only from the Universal Soul (al-nafs al-kulliyyah) by a process of emanation (fayd).35 Even if it is possible to interpret the Universal Intellect as an angel, the Risâlah does not ever mention the angels in this context as the Ilhâ‘yâ does. The Risâlah describes the revelation by saying:
It is that when the soul is perfected in its essence, the defilement of nature, the filthiness of greed and transient desire vanish from it. And it turns towards its Creator (Bārī') and Author (Munshi') and takes hold of the bounty of its Creator (Mubdi') and relies on His Grace and the outpouring (fayd min) of His Light. And God Most High by His Most Excellent providence accepts that soul with full acceptance. And He looks upon it with His Divine Sight and He makes of it a Tablet and from the Universal Soul, He makes a pen and inscribes on it all [types of] knowledge, and the Universal Intellect becomes like a teacher and the sanctified soul becomes like a pupil. Then all [branches of] knowledge will accrue to that soul and all the images will be inscribed upon it without study and contemplation... And from the outpouring (ifādah) of the Universal Intellect will emanate revelation (wahy).36

And it describes the process of inspiration (ilhām) as:

The awakening by the Universal Soul of the individual human soul, commensurate with its purity, its receptivity and the degree of its readiness... and from the radiation (ishrāq) of the Universal Soul will emanate inspiration (ilhām).37

Nevertheless, the Risālah also contradicts itself by mentioning that knowledge of revelation and inspiration can be received directly from God without any mediation:

The knowledge of the prophets is more dignified in rank than all the [types of] knowledge of mankind because it has been received from God Most High, directly and without mediation...38 The knowledge of spiritual intuition (al-īlm al-ladunf) is that which is attained without any mediation between the soul and the Creator and it is like the radiance from the lamp of the unseen, which enters into the heart which is pure, unoccupied and subtle.39

The Ilḥār, however, occasionally alludes to inspiration (ilhām) in terms which imply some form of communication by emanation which does not include the mediation of angels. It writes:

What can truly be said of it (ilhām) is that the heart is predisposed for the disclosure in it of the truth of reality (ḥaqqat al-ḥaqq) present in all things. Interposition between it and them is due simply to one of the five causes previously mentioned.40 These are like a veil lowered and interposing between the mirror of the heart and the Preserved Tablet on which is engraven all that God has decreed until the Day of Resurrection. The irradiation (tajallā) of the realities of
cognitions from the mirror of the Tablet into the mirror of the heart resembles the impression of an image from one mirror on another facing it.41

**Division into Revealed and Non-revealed Sciences**

As mentioned earlier, in the *Risālah*, knowledge is divided into revealed (*sharī'iyah*) and rational (*'aqliyyah*). The *Risālah* says "that knowledge is divided into two parts: The first is revealed (*sharī'ī*) and the other is rational (*'aqlī*)." It writes that "most revealed knowledge is rational for those who know [through study] (*'ālim*) and most rational knowledge is revealed for those who have intuitive knowledge (*'ārif*)."42 It appears that the *Risālah* asserts that the one who, without intuitive knowledge, can look at revealed (*sharī'iyah*) knowledge and see it as rational (*'aqliyyah*), while the one who has intuitive knowledge, can look at rational knowledge and see that in fact it is revealed.

This twofold division (i.e., revealed-rational) is similar to the division of knowledge mentioned in the third volume of the *Iḥyā'.* Al-Ghazālī speaks of:

> The heart with its nature is prepared to receive truths of known things, ...but [types of] knowledge which are held in it, divide into rational (*'aqliyyah*) and revealed (*sharī'iyah*).43

In the first volume of the *Iḥyā',* it uses the term non-revealed (*ghayr sharī'iyah*) instead of the term rational (*'aqliyyah*). It writes:

> It should be known that a necessary duty (*fard*) is not distinguished from other duties except when the different [types of] knowledge are enumerated. These are divided into revealed (*sharī'iyah*) and non-revealed (*ghayr sharī'iyah*) knowledge.44

However, the *Iḥyā'*s treatment of this non-revealed knowledge is similar to its treatment of rational knowledge.45

The *Risālah* appears to consider that the source for attaining non-revealed/rational knowledge is through human learning (*al-ta'allum al-insānī*) (i.e. learning and reflection) and the source of revealed knowledge is through divine learning (*al-ta'allum al-rabbānī*) (i.e. revelation (*waḥy*) and inspiration (*ilḥām*).46 Al-Ghazālī in the *Iḥyā'* points out that the source of rational knowledge is intellect (i.e. it is not acquired through *taqlīd* and [learning through] hearing (*samā') and
revealed knowledge is attained through revelation (i.e. by taqlīd and samā'). The Iḥyā' writes:

Rational [knowledge] (ʿaqliyyah): we mean by it what the natural disposition of intellect requires and it does not obtain through blind acceptance (taqlīd) and [learning through] hearing (samā')... And religious (dīniyyah) knowledge: is taken by the means of blind acceptance from the prophets, that is obtained by studying the Book of God Most High and the Sunnah of His Prophet and understanding their meaning after hearing [them].

The Iḥyā' also claims that this intellect and revelation are never contradictory:

Rational (ʿaqliyyah) knowledge is not sufficient for the safeness of the heart and it needs revealed (sharīyyah) knowledge...but it is impossible to understand revelation after hearing it without intellect. Thus, intellect is indispensible for revelation, and revelation is indispensible for intellect.

(a) Revealed (sharīyyah) Knowledge

The Iḥyā' defines revealed knowledge as:

What has been acquired from the prophets and is not arrived at either by intellect like arithmetic, or by experimentation like medicine, or by hearing like language.

The Risālah, however, does not give any definition for revealed knowledge as in the Iḥyā' does. It only divides revealed (sharīyyah) knowledge "into two types; The first is fundamentals (uṣūl)... The second is knowledge of branches (furū').

The Iḥyā' mentions that "revealed (sharīyyah) knowledge is divided into praiseworthy (mahmūdah) and blameworthy (madhmūmah) sciences." It says that "the praiseworthy sciences comprise fundamentals (uṣūl), branches (furū), preludes (muqaddimāt) and supplementary (mutammimāt). To elaborate the science of fundamentals, the Iḥyā' writes:

Fundamentals (uṣūl)...are four in number: The Book of God Most High, the Sunnah of His Prophet, the Consensus (ijmā') and the sayings of the Companions (athār).

From the above statement, it can be understood that al-Ghazālī in the Iḥyā' (as well as other Muslim scholars) mentions the primary sources of attaining revealed (sharīyyah) sciences are the Qur'ān, the
Traditions, the consensus and the sayings of the Companions. In the Risālah, it only mentions the sources of gaining revealed knowledge as three: the Qur’ān, the Traditions and the arguments of analogy (qiyās) without including the sayings of the Companions and the consensus as the Iḥyā’ does. The Risālah mentions that the most important subject of revealed knowledge is tawḥīd. In tawḥīd it includes all the main themes of theology (al-kalām) (i.e. as concerned with the attributes of God, circumstances of life and death, eschatology and the states of the Prophets and the Companions).

In the Iḥyā’’s definition of revealed (sharī‘iyah) knowledge, it appears to mention that the linguistic sciences are not within revealed knowledge because they are obtained by learning. But it mentions them as the science of preludes (muqaddimāt). The Iḥyā’ writes:

The third type of revealed (sharī‘iyah) knowledge is that of preludes (muqaddimāt). These act as the instrument for the revealed knowledge. Thus linguistic science and syntax are but instruments for the knowledge of the Book of God and the Sunnah of His prophet.

The Iḥyā’ also makes clear that although, in itself, linguistic knowledge is not a revealed (sharī‘iyah) knowledge, inasmuch as it is one of the preludes (muqaddimāt) to revealed knowledge proper, it may, for the purpose of classification, be included under the category of the latter.

In the Risālah itself, the author includes linguistic science in revealed (sharī‘iyah) knowledge. The Risālah puts it under the elucidation of the science of fundamentals (uṣūl), while the Iḥyā’ describes it as the science of preludes (muqaddimāt). They both regard linguistic science as an instrument and a ladder to the revealed sciences. They mention that linguistic science is the most important source of attaining the knowledge of the Book of God and the Traditions.

However, in the Iḥyā’, al-Ghazālī adds a further classification of the revealed sciences which is not contained in the Risālah. The Iḥyā’ divides the furū‘ or the “derivatives” of the revealed sciences into two kinds. It writes:

The branches (furū‘) are of two kinds: The first pertains to the benefits of this world. It is contained in the books of jurisprudence (fiqḥ) and is the responsibility of the lawyers (al-fuqahā’)...The second pertains to the benefits of the next world; states of the heart,
praiseworthy and blameworthy morals, what is pleasing and what is hateful to God. From it is knowledge of what the heart infuses (yatarashshah) into the limbs in terms of the worship (‘ibādāt) and customary law (‘ādāt).\(^{60}\)

Thus, the *Iḥyā‘* seems to see the activities of the law in the branches (*furū‘*) as being at two levels. When they are formally carried out, they bring benefits to society (dunyā'īyyah). However, when the heart infuses these branches (*furū‘*), they bring the individual benefits in terms of the hereafter (ukhrā'īyyah); that is, the individual will earn heavenly rewards as a result of the heart inspiring his actions with the love of God.

Although as discussed above, the *Iḥyā‘* seems to indicate that the actions of jurisprudence when infused by the heart involve other worldliness (ukhrā'īyyah), in the main, it tends to emphasise the distinction between the revealed sciences of the world and the revealed sciences of other worldliness. The *Iḥyā‘* mentions:

> The knowledge by which we approach the hereafter is divided into the knowledge of unveiling (al-mukāshafah) and the knowledge of behaviour (al-mu’āmalah).\(^{61}\)

Regarding the knowledge of unveiling, al-Ghazālī in the *Iḥyā‘* refuses to deal with it. The *Iḥyā‘* mentions:

> That kind of knowledge is not permitted to be recorded in writing and the prophets spoke only figuratively through signs and symbols, because they realised the inability of man’s intellect to comprehend it. Since the learned men are heirs of the prophets, they cannot but follow in their footsteps and emulate their ways.\(^{62}\)

However, the *Risālah*’s treatment of this kind of revealed sciences is quite similar to the *Iḥyā‘*’s. The former writes:

> The science of branches comprises three duties: The first is the duty to God Most High which is the pillar of religious observances (‘ibādāt)... The second is the duty to [one’s] fellow beings. This comprises the categories of customary law (‘ādāt) and has two aspects; one of them is transactions (al-mu’āmalāt)... The second is contractual obligations (al-mu’āqādat)... The term jurisprudence applies to these two obligations... The third is duty to oneself. This is the knowledge of moral qualities (‘ilm al-akhlaq), and moral qualities are either blameworthy or praiseworthy.\(^{63}\)

In describing praiseworthy or blameworthy qualities, the *Iḥyā‘* does
not seem to have used the phrase 'ilm al-akhlaq for ethics. Rather it uses the words "knowledge of the states of the heart" ('ilm ahwāl al-qalb). This description follows the šūfīs. In the Risālah, the term ethics ('ilm al-akhlaq) is clearly used.

By regarding ethics as evolving out of obligations to the self, the Risālah does not consider ethics as coming either within formal obligations to God or formal obligations to one's fellow men. Thus it does not regard ethics as coming within the realm of politics or family life. Similarly, al-Ghazālī in the Iḥyā', by regarding knowledge of the states of the heart as the study of ethics also puts it outside the scope of politics and family life.

The Iḥyā’ gives reasons for this view, whilst the Risālah does not. The Iḥyā’ mentions that the ideal government in the Islamic community is based on the rules of jurisprudence. These rules are divided through man’s intellect (al-‘aql) from the four roots (usūl) of the Shari‘ah, i.e. the Qur‘ān, the Traditions of the Prophet, the sayings of the Companions and the consensus (ijmā‘). The existence of the rules of jurisprudence is for the good ordering of worldly affairs. The jurists supply the ruler with laws with which to govern the people to make justice and peace prevail in the country. However, these rules have no concern with man’s well-being in the life to come (yawm al-akhirah) which is the central problem of ethics. It also writes that the consideration of the rightness or wrongness of actions directed towards God and towards men from the viewpoint of otherworldly well-being is outside the discussion of jurisprudence and consequently, of politics; it belongs solely to ethics. Thus the laws of politics (qawānīn al-siyāsah), which are among the rules of jurisprudence are separate from ethical rules. However, they are useful to morality in the sense that by the good ordering of worldly affairs, they facilitate the cultivation of morality and religion. In this way, politics and jurisprudence have only an indirect connection with ethics.

(b) Non-revealed (ghayr shar‘īyyah) Rational (‘aqliyyah) Knowledge

The Risālah enumerates the rational sciences as follows:

It is divided into three classes: The first class...is the knowledge of mathematics and logic. As for mathematics, it includes arithmetic..., numbers and geometry..., figures and cosmology...from it are derived the science of astrology and the rules for the times of births and horoscopes..., the science of music.... As for logical knowledge,
it examines by means of definition (ḥadd) and description (rasm) ... presentation (tasawwur)...analogy and proof., verification (tasdiq) ...simple terms,...compound terms, propositions, syllogism and its parts....The second class..., is natural science...examines the unrestricted substance, the basic elements of the world, substances and accidents, motion and rest, the states (ahwāl) of the heavens and matters of action and reaction., the states of the classes of existent things, the types of souls, physical constitutions, the number of the senses and the particular circumstances of their perception., consideration of medical science... Among its branches are the science of meteorology, the science of mineralogy and the knowledge of the intrinsic nature of things and ...the science of alchemy... The third class..., is the consideration of existent, then its division into the necessary [self-existent] and the potential, the consideration of the Creator..., the celestial beings, simple substances, distinct intellects, perfect souls, the states of angels and devils, ...the knowledge of Prophecy, the matter of miracles (mu'jizāt), the states of miracles (karāmāt)..., the states of sacred souls, the state of sleep and wakefulness and the stations of dreaming, ...the science of talismans and incantations.70

And the Iḥyā' defines rational/non-revealed knowledge as follows:

It is divided into praiseworthy (mahmūdah), blameworthy (madhmūmah), and permissible (mubāh). Praiseworthy sciences are those on whose knowledge the activities of this life depend such as medicine and arithmetic. They are divided into sciences the acquisition of knowledge of which is fard kifayah and into science the acquisition of knowledge of which is meritorious (faḍilah) though not obligatory (fardah). Sciences whose knowledge is deemed fard kifayah, comprise every science which is indispensable for the welfare of this world such as: medicine., arithmetic., division of legacies and inheritances., the fundamental industries such as, agriculture, weaving, politics, cupping,.and tailoring... The blameworthy sciences are magic, talismatic, juggling, trickery. The permissible sciences are poetry, history etc.71 ...Know that all that science of theology (‘ilm al-kalām) has become permissible...and one of the disciplines which are deemed a fard kifayah... As to philosophy., it comprises of [four sciences]: the first includes geometry and arithmetic, both of which are permissible. The second is logic...which is included under theology. The third is divinity (al-īlāhiyyāt) which is included under theology. The fourth is natural sciences (al-ṭabi‘īyyāt).72

From the above quotations, it can be seen that the Risālah and the
Ihyā’ give a quite different theory of rational/non-revealed knowledge. According to the Risālah rational knowledge contains three classes. It writes that the first class contains the science of mathematics and logic as the lowest class in rank; the second class consists of natural science as the middle class; and the third class comprises science of metaphysics as the highest class.73

However, the Ihyā’ uses a completely different system of division. In order to distinguish between true sciences and false or dangerous sciences al-Ghazālī, in this work, applies the standards of praiseworthy, blameworthy and permissible. By praiseworthy sciences he means "those on the knowledge of which the activities of this life depend, such as medicine and arithmetic." He applies the concepts of fard kifāyah to the praiseworthy forms of knowledge which comprises every science which is indispensable for the welfare of this world. He gives medicine as an example, which is necessary for the life of the body, and arithmetic, which is necessary for daily transactions and the division of legacies and inheritances, and also agriculture, weaving, politics, cupping and tailoring.74 He also includes logic into this category.75 These are the sciences the absence of which could reduce a community to serious straits.76 It seems that none of the Ihyā’s praiseworthy rational sciences is fard ʿayn.

From the ways of dividing knowledge in the Risālah and the Ihyā’, it appears that the Ihyā’ begins its division with practical sciences, followed by theology and ending with philosophy. In the division of philosophy, the Ihyā’ gives the order as beginning with geometry and arithmetics, followed by the science of logic and then divinity (al-ilāhiyyāt) as the third rank which are both also included under theology. After divinity, it puts natural sciences as the fourth rank. However, the Risālah seems to give a more systematic division. It puts the theoretical background in the first rank, followed by physical sciences and ending with metaphysics as the highest in rank.77

Al-Ghazālī in the Ihyā’ regards the praiseworthy and the permissible as similar in the sense that these two standards can be applied to the same subject. By permissible, the Ihyā’ seems to indicate that certain sciences should only be studied in moderation in order to acquire benefit from them. The Ihyā’ writes:

Every one of these [sciences whose knowledge is praiseworthy] has three stages: first limitation (iqtiṣār) which stage is the primary, second moderation (iqtiṣād) which is the intermediary, and third thoroughness (istiṣqād) which is a sequel to moderation and which
goes on and on during the entire life of the seeker.\textsuperscript{78}

Concerning the permissible part, the Iḥyā’ defines it as:

That whose knowledge is praiseworthy within a certain limit, that of sufficiency, but beyond that it ceases to be praiseworthy.\textsuperscript{79}

It includes in it the science of geometry and arithmetic,\textsuperscript{80} astronomy,\textsuperscript{81} natural sciences\textsuperscript{82} and music. The Iḥyā’ accepts music as an aid to religious life and mystical devotion. It is regarded by it as a means of pleasurable, aesthetic enjoyment and as an effective moral agent.\textsuperscript{83}

The Iḥyā’ defines blameworthy rational/non-revealed sciences as:

The knowledge of which is blameworthy, whether it be in part or \textit{in toto}…The part whose partial and total knowledge is blameworthy is that which has no use either in the realm of religion or in the domain of life because its harmfulness exceeds its utility, such as the science of magic, talismans and astrology, parts of which are no use whatever and to spend one’s life, the most precious thing a man possesses, in them is sheer waste; and to waste anything precious is blameworthy.\textsuperscript{84}

It writes, however, that knowledge is not held to be blameworthy in itself.\textsuperscript{85} It is only regarded as such in the eyes of men for one of three reasons, as follows:

(i) When it leads to any harm, whether the harm should befall its practitioner or someone else besides, for which reason the science of magic and talismans is held blameworthy.\textsuperscript{86}

(ii) When it is usually (\textit{ft ghālib al-amr}) harmful. The Iḥyā’ gives the study of the stars\textsuperscript{87} as an example which is not in itself blameworthy, because it is of two parts:

a. The first is mathematical in reference to which the Qur’ān has pronounced that by it the courses of the sun and the moon are reckoned, i.e. astronomy;

b. The second is astrology (\textit{ahkām}), by which future events can be known.\textsuperscript{88}

(iii) When the pursuit of that kind of knowledge does not give the practitioner any real scientific benefit.\textsuperscript{89}

With regard to (ii. b) astrology, the Iḥyā’ claims it as blameworthy
because.

(i) It is harmful to most people, because by foretelling future events this would lead people to think that the stars influence the course of events.

(ii) Astrology is pure guess-work as the influence of the stars cannot be determined either with certainty or even with probability. Thus it could be regarded as a form of ignorance and is therefore blameworthy because of this ignorance.

(iii) It is of no use at all and it leads to useless things and is a waste of time.

However, the *Risālah* merely includes the science of astrology, the rules for the times of births and horoscopes as derivatives of mathematics without any condemnation.

**Division into Theoretical and Practical Sciences**

Throughout the classification of revealed knowledge in the *Risālah* and the *Ihya’s*, knowledge is also divided into theoretical (*naẓariyyah*) and practical (*ṭamaliyyah*). In the *Risālah*, it clearly states that knowledge is either theoretical or practical. It applies this twofold theoretical and practical division to the fundamentals (*usūl*) and branches (*furū’*) of revealed knowledge. The *Risālah* states:

That is to say, knowledge is either theoretical or practical. And the knowledge of fundamentals is theoretical, whereas the knowledge of the branches is practical. This practical knowledge comprises three duties: The first of them is the duty to God Most High...; the second of them is the duty to [one’s fellow beings...; the third of them is duty to oneself... The first type [of revealed knowledge] is in the fundamentals, and it is the knowledge of tawḥīd.

Like the *Risālah*, the *Ihya’s* also applies the theoretical and practical division to its definition of revealed knowledge, but it appears to refer them to the branches of revealed knowledge only, instead of referring them to both the fundamentals and the branches of revealed knowledge. The *Ihya’s* writes:

The knowledge by which we approach the hereafter is divided into the knowledge of unveiling (*al-mukāshafah*) and the knowledge of behaviour (*al-muḍāmalah*). By the knowledge of unveiling, I mean knowledge and only knowledge. By the knowledge of behaviour, I
mean knowledge as well as action in accordance with that knowledge... The knowledge of behaviour is merely a path which leads to unveiling and only through that path did the prophet of God communicate with the people and lead them to Him. Concerning knowledge of unveiling itself, the prophets spoke only figuratively and briefly through signs and symbols, because they realised the inability of man's intellect to comprehend.94

The *Ihya'* also writes:

Furthermore, the knowledge of behaviour is divided into outward knowledge, by which is meant that of the functions of the senses, and inward knowledge, by which is meant that the function of the heart. The bodily organs perform either usages of life (‘ādah) or acts of worship (‘ibādah), while the heart, because it is removed from the senses and belongs to the celestial world is subject to either praiseworthy or blameworthy [influences]. Inevitably, therefore, this knowledge divides itself into two parts, outward and inward. The outward, which pertains to the senses, is subdivided into the acts to worship and usages of life; the inward, which relates to the conditions of the heart and the qualities of the soul (al-nafs) is subdivided into things which are praiseworthy and things which are objectionable.95

In regard to the above quotations, it can be seen that the Risalah and the *Ihya'* do not give similar treatments to the theoretical division of the sciences. The *Ihya'* only mentions that the theoretical part is applied to the knowledge of unveiling (al-mukāshafah), but does not elaborate on it, because, according to al-Ghazālī in the same work, knowledge of unveiling (al-mukāshafah) is not permitted to be recorded in writing, although it is the ultimate aim of the saints. On the contrary, the Risalah discusses this theoretical division in detail.

It would also appear that the Risalah and the *Ihya'* do not make any concerted attempt to apply the theoretical-practical division to the rational sciences. Nor do they give any reason for this omission. They seem to believe that the distinction between revealed and rational knowledge is more fundamental than the distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge. Perhaps that is the reason why both of them deal comprehensively with the former division compared with the latter division.

**Conclusion**

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the theory of
knowledge as presented by al-Ghazālī in his authentic and famous work *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* and in his doubted work the *Risālah al-laduniyyah* have both similarities and differences. However, the similarities between these two works on this theory are regarded by Margaret Smith as the reason of her acceptance of the authenticity of the *Risālah* as belonging to al-Ghazālī.⁹⁶

**Notes**


4. Of these three categories, the *Risālah* deals at length with the first division, i.e. sciences which come upon one (ḥudūriyyah) and the acquired sciences (ḥusūliyyah). Its discussion of this division can also be seen elsewhere, especially in sections five and seven, see *al-Risālah*, 102-107, 110-111). It also discusses second category, i.e. revealed and rational sciences, which it discusses in section three (*al-Risālah*, 96-101). The *Risālah*’s discussion of the latter incorporates the first and also the third category, i.e. theoretical and practical sciences, of which it gives only a brief explanation (*al-Risālah*, 99).

5. *Iḥyāʾ*, 3:18ff. See division into sciences which come upon one (ḥudūriyyah) and sciences which are acquired (ḥusūliyyah) for further discussion.

6. Ibid., 1:13ff, and 3:16ff. See division into revealed (sharīʿiyyah) and non-revealed (ghayr sharīʿiyyah)/rational (ʿaqliyyah) sciences for further discussion.

7. Ibid., 1:3ff. See division into theoretical and practical sciences for further discussion.


10. Ibid., 101.
11. *Ihya’*, 1:55.


18. *Ihya’*, 3:18. Al-Ghazālī’s theory of ways of acquiring knowledge, while more developed than that of al-Muhāsibī, resembles it very closely in its essentials. Al-Muhāsibī also distinguishes between types of knowledge; the knowledge which comes from the revelation made by God to the Prophets which is found in the Sharī‘ah, and that which comes through the use of reason. Al-Muhāsibī, *Kitāb al-‘ilm* (Tunis: Dār al-Tunisiyyah, 1975), chapters 4 and 5; cf. Margaret Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad* (London: Luzon Press, 1935), 99.


20. Ibid., 102.


23. *Ihya’*, 4:425 - 426. In al-Muhāsibī’s work, he mentions that reflection, speculation, remembrance, consideration will lead to all types of good knowledge, for they enable man to know whether he is serving God or committing sins, and he will know which of the two duties comes first and to choose the right one. See al-Muhāsibī, *Al-Rifā‘iyah li ḥuquq Allāh* ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah (Cairo: Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīth, 1982), 14f.


26. Ibid., 102.


Al-Ghazālī writes: "To this is the allusion in God's Most High's utterance, 'It is not fitting for a man that God should speak to him except by revelation (waḥyān), or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a Messenger to reveal, with God's permission, what God wills: For He is the Most High, the Most Wise (42:51).'" Ihya', 3:19; McCarthy, Freedom and Fulfillment, sec. 48, p. 379.

33. Ihya', 1:88; Book of Knowledge, p. 234.

34. Ihya', 1:49; Book of Knowledge, pp. 126 - 127.

35. Watt sees this as a particular reason for rejecting the authenticity of the Risālah as a work by al-Ghazālī, Watt, "Authenticity," 34.


37. Ibid., 105, 105-106.

38. Ibid., 104.

39. Ibid., 105.

40. i.e., (i) a natural defect of the heart as the heart of a child; (ii) impurities of sins owing to lusts; (iii) when the heart is diverted to worldly matters; (iv) when the heart is veiled by its lusts; (v) when the heart is full of ignorance. Cf. Ihya', 3:13-14.


42. al-Risālah, 96.


44. Ihya', 1:16; cf. Book of Knowledge, 36; Sherif, Ghazali's Theory, 8.

45. Prior to al-Ghazālī, Ibn Sinā is also known to have accepted the distinction between revealed and rational sciences. He wrote a short treatise entitled Fi aqsām al-ulūm al-aqlīyyah to answer someone who asked him to present a summary account of the rational sciences. See Ibn Sinā, "Fi aqsām al-ulūm al-aqlīyyah" in Tīr rasa'il al-hikmah wa al-tabi'iyyāt (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-Arabī, 1908), 105, 107-108; Sherif, Ghazali's Theory of Virtue, pp. 5, 7; R. Lerner and M. Mahdi (eds.) Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook (Toronto: The Free Press of Glencoe 1963), 96; Osman Bakar, Classification of Knowledge in Islam (Kuala Lumpur: Institute Kajan Dasar, 1992), 223. Al-Fārābī also uses the term revealed knowledge in his classification of knowledge and distinguishes it from the philosophical sciences, see al-Fārābī, Kitāb al-millah wa nuṣūṣ ukhrā, (ed.) M. Mahdi, (Beirut: Dār al-Masreq Publisher, 1968), 46-47; 'Uthmān Amīn (ed.), Ihṣā'
al-‘ulûm (Cairo, Dâr al Fikr al-‘Arabi, 1949), 102-103; Sherif, Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue, 5; Bakar, Classification of Knowledge, 223.

46. al-Risâlah, 102, 103, 105.

47. Ihyâ’, 3:16-17.

48. Ibid., 3:17.

49. Ibid., 1:16; cf. Book of Knowledge, 36 - 37.

50. al-Risâlah, 96, 99.


52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., 1: 38-40; see also Ibn Khaldûn, Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldûn, (Tehran, Intishârât Istiqlâl, 1315 A.H.), 436; Bakar, Classification of Knowledge, 223.

54. al-Risâlah, 96.

55. Ibid., 96f.


57. For al-Ghazâlî, linguistic science is the knowledge of the Arabic language. He says that it is appropriate to include linguistic science under the category of revealed knowledge, because Arabic is the language of the sacred Law of Islam. See Ihyâ’, 1: 17; cf. Book of Knowledge, 39.

58. al-Risâlah, 98.


60. Ihyâ’, 1: 16 - 17; cf. Book of Knowledge, 36.

61. Ihyâ’, 1: 3-4; Book of Knowledge, 6. Indeed, al-Ghazâlî deals in the entire first half of the Ihyâ’ with the first part of it, i.e. exoteric knowledge which concerns knowledge of the effect of the states of the heart on the members of the body when practising acts of worship (‘ibâdât) and customary laws (‘âdât). (Cf. Ihyâ’, Vols. 1, 2). In the entire second half of the Ihyâ’ he deals with the second part of it, i.e. esoteric knowledge which deals with the states of the heart (‘ilm aḥwâl al-qalb). (Cf. Ihyâ’, Vols. 3, 4)


63. al-Risâlah, 99.

64. Ihyâ’, 1:14.


66. al-Risâlah, 99.

68. Al-Ghazālī writes that however, those jurisprudents, who do not devote themselves exclusively to the science of jurisprudence but who are also employed in the science of the soul and observance, are regarded as learned men of the hereafter (ʿulamaʾ al-ākhirah). He lists the five well-known and widely followed Muslim jurisprudents, Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Shāfīʿī, Mālik, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and Sufyān al-Thawrī. Ibid., 1: 22-26.


73. *Ihyāʿ*, 1: 22; *al-Risālah*, 100 - 101.

74. *Ihyāʿ*, 1: 16; *Book of Knowledge*, 37.

75. Perhaps this is concluded from al-Ghazālī's affirmation that logic is an essential tool of scholastic theology. (See *Ihyāʿ*, 1: 22; *Book of Knowledge*, 54).

76. *Ihyāʿ*, 1: 16; *Book of Knowledge*, 37.

77. *Ihyāʿ*, 1: 22; *al-Risālah*, 100 - 101.

78. *Ihyāʿ*, 1: 39; *Book of Knowledge*, 100.

79. *Ihyāʿ*, 1: 38; *Book of Knowledge*, 98.

80. *Ihyāʿ*, 1, 22; *Book of knowledge*, 53.

81. *Ihyāʿ*, 1: 29ff; *Book of Knowledge*, 74ff. Al-Ghazālī's clarification of astronomy refers to mathematical astronomy as it has been defined by al-Fārābī. See McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, sec. 33, p. 73.

82. *Ihyāʿ*, 1: 22; *Book of Knowledge*, 54; McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, sec. 45, p. 76.


85. This view is similar to the *Risālah* which regards knowledge as noble in its essence and perfect in itself. See *al-Risālah*, p. 89.

86. *Ihyāʿ*, 1: 29; *Book of Knowledge*, 73.

87. The criticism of the knowledge of astrology from the point of view of the
Ḫazm (d. 456/1064), the Andalusian jurist and theologian. They were critical of astrology; al-Fārābī puts this discipline among the occult sciences like Ibn Ḥazm and both do not consider it as a part of natural science. Ibn Ḥazm was in fact more categorical in his rejection of astrology. He differs from Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī in rejecting altogether the validity of astrology as knowledge. (cf. Bakar, Classification of Knowledge, 215; see also al-Fārābī, Iḥṣāʿ al-ʿulūm, p. 84; A.G. Chejne, Ibn Ḥazm (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1982), 180-184.

88. Cf. Iḥyāʾ, 1:29; Book of Knowledge, 72-73.
89. Iḥyāʾ, 1:30; Book of Knowledge, 77.
90. Iḥyāʾ, 1:29-30; Book of Knowledge, 72-76.
91. al-Risālah, 100.
92. Ibid., 99.
93. Ibid., 96f.
94. Iḥyāʾ, 1:3-4; Book of Knowledge, 6.
95. Iḥyāʾ, 1:4; Book of Knowledge, 6-7.