

# Summary and analysis of al- munqidh min ad-dalal



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Al Ghazali is an influential thinker of medieval Islam. He describes his education and his intellectual crisis, which left him so full of doubt and questions, to the extent that he he resigned from his professorship in Baghdad, and felt the need to retire from the world. However, his faith returned after years of questioning and seeking, during which he achieved direct knowledge of God in the form of the experience of the Sufis. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali's ' Al-Munqidh Min Ad-Dalal' successfully allows the reader a brief and revealing window into the life of a great intellectual.

It is an autobiographical account of Ghazali's struggle during a period of spiritual unrest in his life that begins with him as a teacher at a prestigious academic institution at the age of thirty-three, and continues through his severe journey of questioning and curiosity, and ends upon his return to his teaching career but instead being a complete God-orientated man. The book opens with Ghazali replying to a colleague who had questioned him regarding " the aims and inmost nature of sciences and the perplexing depths of the religious systems" and the reasons for Ghazali's actions at this stage of his life.

He is a curious man who focuses on everything using his analyzing eye. This habit and custom he describes as " a God-given nature, a matter of temperament, and not of my choice or contriving. " With this attitude he starts to question the different types of knowledge around him. He systematically and thoroughly deals with each science which influences man's spiritual and religious state of mind, covering the four main sciences of the time: theology, authoritative instruction, philosophy and mysticism. All four

continue to play significant roles today. The analysis is carried out in detail, unbiased and authoritatively.

He analyzes each science like a trained surgeon and then transports his results and evaluations with accuracy and care. Included in this book is a passage which expresses the core of his spiritual journey and can be found in section four " The Ways of Mysticism" : " I learnt with certainty that it is above all the mystics who walk on the road of God; their life is the best life, their method the soundest method, their character the purest character; indeed, were the intellect of the intellectuals and the learning of the learned and the scholarship of the scholars, who are versed in the profundities of revealed truth, brought together in the attempt to improve the life and character of the mystics, they would find no way of doing so; for to the mystics all movement and all rest, whether external or internal brings an illumination from the light of the lamp of prophetic revelation; and behind the light of prophetic revelation there is no other light on the face of the earth from which illumination may be received. " A chapter on the nature of prophecy follows this passage, and highlights its persuasive need.

He discusses the physical and rational observations, their development in humans from simple to complex, and they end where divine inspiration and revelation begin. The methodology used to explain this range of perceptions is both simple and effective and allows the reader to follow the thought pattern of the writer. A concluding chapter on Ghazali's return to teaching successfully deals with possible denial of the theory that he claims the need for prophetic leadership. As an expert in each of the fields his replies to the

various groups are from their own teachings, doctrines and own methodologies.