



## AYYOHA'L-WALAD

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**AYYOHA'L-WALAD**, a short treatise by Abū Ḥāmed Moḥammad Ġazālī Ṭūsī (fl. 450-505/1058-1111), originally composed in Persian, but, except for one line of Persian poetry, only its Arabic translation is extant. It was written sometime after his *Eḥyā' 'olūm al-dīn* to which it makes many references. The introduction, written by a later commentator, states that Ġazālī wrote this tract to answer a pupil who had enquired about which science would benefit him most in the hereafter and other matters. However, more probably Ġazālī chose to address his views in this manner in order to give the work a more personal touch and to give more liveliness to some of the views expounded in detail in his *Eḥyā'*. The pupil also asked about submissiveness, trust in God, and sincerity. Some questions Ġazālī did not answer, either because they were answered in the *Eḥyā'* and other writings or because he could not.

Ġazālī's answer to the question about the real knowledge which would be most beneficial in the hereafter is the knowledge that leads one to follow the right path, i.e., the Sufi way. Ġazālī thinks that theoretical knowledge does not lead to salvation. Knowledge must be combined with action and both must be kept in conformity with the *Šarī'a*—Law. To be on the right path, one needs to observe the four obligations of pure belief, sincere repentance, satisfaction of adversaries, and acquiring the necessary amount of knowledge of the *Šarī'a* and some other useful science.

Arriving at this stage, the disciple can start his initiation in Sufism which is defined as righteousness with God and magnanimity with men. Here the disciple needs a Shaikh (i.e., a master) to direct him. The disciple's respect for



his master must be absolute and total. After combining submissiveness, trust in God, and sincerity with his total respect for the Shaikh, the disciple is instructed what to avoid (arguments, becoming a preacher, accepting gifts, and mingling with princes) and what to perform (in connection with God, other people, himself, and possession of goods).

Although the tract allows for some digression in its structure, the quarternary units that prevail in it grant it some coherence. It is full of quotations from the Qur'ān, the Hadith, the Gospels, the sayings of outstanding Sufis, and poems. Some scholars have tended to treat *Ayyoha'l-walad* as a treatise on education. It emphasizes the spiritual aspect in education in contrast to scientific worldly knowledge. In some respects it can be anti-educational in conveying a rather negative attitude towards the sciences in particular, and temporal life in general.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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For information about manuscripts, editions, translations, and commentaries, see Brockelmann, *GAL*, S. I, pp. 750 (no. 32), and A. Badawi, *Les oeuvres d'al-Ghazali* (in Arabic), Cairo, 1961, pp. 179-83.

See also F. H. Foster, "Ghazali on the Inner Secret and Outward Expression of Religion in his "Child"," *Muslim World* 23, 1983, pp. 378-96.

M. Ben Cheneb, "Lettre sur l'éducation des enfants," *Revue africaine*, 1901, pp. 101-10.

The text used in this study is the one published with a French translation by Toufic Sabbagh, Beirut, 1959.

*Search terms:*

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