



## The Alchemy of Happiness

*Abu Hamid al-Ghazali , Elton D. Daniel , Claud Field*

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Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazzali (1058-1111) is one of the most important religious figures in Islamic history. He is particularly noted for his brilliant synthesis of mysticism and traditional Sunni Islam.

Ghazzali's "The Alchemy of Happiness", written toward the end of his life, provides a succinct introduction to both the theory and practice of Sufism (Islamic mysticism). It thus offers many insights into traditional Muslim society. This translation is fully annotated for readers unfamiliar with Ghazzali and includes an introduction to his life and historical milieu.

## The Alchemy of Happiness Details

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## From Reader Review The Alchemy of Happiness for online ebook

### Mariyah says

An engaging and heart-felt book, very profound, a book to rediscover yourself in the journey of finding the happiness as the author claims : "He who knows himself is truly happy."

I will rate it 4 stars, just because my views on music and dancing differ.

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### Ghadeer Sobhan says

"Forms follow functions"

A great saying that has a full description of why we've been created. Happiness is all about finding/knowing yourself, and Imam Alghazali has described that in a manner of great islamic scholar. Loved the essences and sensations found in this book. Doubtable not to read!

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### Suzanne Merchant says

I read The Alchemy of Happiness as translated by Claud Field as part of an exploratory paper that I was writing to complete my undergraduate program(!). It was short (8 chapters long) and helpful for my paper as it's content complimented another of Al-Ghazali's writings, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife*. There were some great portions that helped me understand various aspects of Islamic eschatology, theology and cosmology; these parts (which constitute 7 out of 8 chapters) were excellent and I recommend reading them as Al-Ghazali had an astute understanding of how they related to cultivate a profound devotional life.

There was also a not great part to this book. As many of the female readers have noted, there is a chapter of marriage and women called "*Marriage as a Help or Hindrance to the Religious Life*" and in this chapter, Al-Ghazali makes it clear that the cultivation of a profound devotional life, where one observes the Law, follows the Path, and is thus able to come face-to-face with the Truth...is the domain of men alone. Al-Ghazali might make exceptions for a few women, but in general, he believes that the Sufi path is for men, that women are generally confined to the Law and men are responsible for keeping women "in the path of the Law". I confess, I spent the reading of this chapter laughing because the content was that absurd.

But what does this mean? Should women eschew reading this book? I would say no. Al-Ghazali may have had a fine intellect, but that does not mean that he's infallible and the chapter on marriage makes that clear. Sometimes, I feel the Muslim community places too much value on the words of great scholars and seem to forget that they are human. There's still a lot of value that can be learned from this book; just because Al-Ghazali does not believe that a profound devotional life is something that women can/should pursue doesn't mean he's right. If anything, he's just wrong on this score.

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### Susan Devy says

I can't believe that this book was from 12th century yet it was such brilliantly well written that I find it's hard to compare this book with any books that written by nowadays scholars.

I began to believe that almost all works of the scholars nowadays are base from Al-Ghazali's

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### **Shahd Fadlalmoula says**

A hallmark in the literature of Sufism, written in a very practical and approachable manner. Despite the dated translation that comes off as a hindrance to grasping the already intricate ideas Al-Ghazzali presents, this was a breeze to read. The essence of it is simple, happiness is in the Love of God. To love God, you must know Him, know your Self, and know the world; then elevate these knows to realizing the ultimate love. Al-Ghazzali doesn't necessarily give the reader a road map to maneuvering this knowledge, and threading the path of life to realize said love. However, he offers a tap into the reader's conscience and attempts to awaken her/his intuition. Personally, I found this book inspiring and meditative; it came as a sharp but welcome reminder to look for balance in one's life.

That said, I found the chapter on marriage very onerous to get through. Despite being a brilliant mind, and a thinker ahead of his time, Al-Ghazzali was not immune to the sexism of his age. It is not until you get to that chapter that you realize he is really only talking to men, as if spiritual duties were a gendered thing. He speaks of women as if they couldn't mentally and intellectually develop enough to grasp, let alone realize his message. If you can excuse this to a mere consequence of reading a book that is at least a millennium old (despite which, its message remains relevant and novel), you will find great value in this book.

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### **Alex Kartelias says**

His talent lies in making illuminating analogies for spiritual and ethical points, and hence makes a great teacher. Problem is he gives the impression that these are only analogies, not Realities within their own right. Like many Sufi's and mystics in general, he explains how our deeds will be shown to us 'personified' before us on the day of judgement, how dreams and waking Visions can Perceive different Levels of Reality. However, his overly-cautious agnosticism when it comes to these and other mystical Realities diminishes his potential to take these things more seriously, rather than merely talking about the possible effects of these Realities upon the soul.

But despite of his limitations, to take his wisdom seriously and to See his analogies with the transmuted Eye of The Heart, is to be close to the goal- submission to and peace in, The Real.

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### **Sabrina Elk says**

An engaging read until the chapter about marriage. I recognise this was written hundreds of years ago but it irked me nonetheless. Otherwise, this book would have received 5 stars from me. Alghazzali has an interesting perspective on spirituality which shines through in the analogies he uses. A good read for all spiritual seekers regardless of creed.

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### Alex Knipp says

“Man was intended to mirror forth the light of the knowledge of God.”

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### Adil Raja says

This is a brilliant book. I read it during the period between 2006 and 2007 in Limerick, Ireland. The book touches almost every sphere and aspect of human life and has valuable advice for that. Written by one the most influential Muslim scholars of medieval times, Imam Ghazzali, this book is undoubtedly a master piece. Everyone should have it on their book shelves.

In many ways it is the equivalent of "The Conquest of Happiness" by Bertrand Russell. It addresses how to handle human emotions such as anger, greed, spite and jealousy. It also advocates about a simpler and fuller lifestyle and how to deal with mundane to important diurnal issues. This is a must read.

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### Saima says

This was part of the reading curriculum for the Jerusalem trip. Each day, we would read chapters and the scholars would then explain it in the context of Islam in today's America. A discussion would often follow.

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### Asma Almalki says

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### Ahmed Abdul rehman says

As a writer Al-Ghazali is quite talented, the point he wants to convey he does so effortlessly and with simplicity. His knowledge of literature and sayings of Prophets and saints is amazing and he uses them perfectly to explain the point he wants to convey. Perhaps this is his greatest ability to quote from revered sources rather than imposing his own thoughts, even if he might have a bias.

I can recommend this book, it is a simple book and has its charms here and there. Some of his thoughts are extremely orthodox but as this book was written almost a thousand years ago, so had other authors of his time; despite that, the plethora of knowledge that he is, I am sure there is some wisdom for everyone in the book.

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## Farhad says

The quest for happiness has always been part of the human condition. Countless number of books have been written on the topic, and Al-Ghazali's Alchemy of Happiness is no exception. This book, "Kimiae Saadat", was used as an abridgement to his magnum opus, the "Ihya".

The modern world is all about 'be yourself, know yourself, discover yourself, assert yourself' but it doesn't really tell us what the 'self' is. Only religion can do so, where it constantly reminds us that the truth is found inside of us. Al-Ghazali breaks down his book in four parts: knowledge of the self, knowledge of God, knowledge of this world as it really is, knowledge of the next world as it really is. This book is a gem but I don't recommend this edition of the book (the one with a cover of a miniature) as it contains numerous punctuation and spelling mistakes.

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## Shirin Yasar says

One of its most enigmatic passages:

But as Islam consists essentially in believing and confessing the Lord God and the future world, it becomes our duty to acquire a knowledge of the future world as far as the thing is possible. There is, however, a mystery regarding the future world, which the holy law has not authorized to be explained or to be mentioned, because it could not possibly be understood. Seeing then that the knowledge of the future world cannot possibly be acquired, until that mystery is revealed, strive that it may be revealed in your own soul by pious endeavor, self-denial and divine guidance. You cannot learn it by any possible efforts from any other person by the hearing of the ear. Many persons have heard this mystery, which represents one of the attributes of God, but they did not acknowledge it as true, and said that it was impossible, not because it was in its nature exempt from being known, but because it was an unemployed mystery. It is not named either in the Koran or in the Traditions. God commanded the prophets not to inform the people of the essence of his attributes, saying "for they will not understand them, will accuse you of falsehood, and will do injury to themselves."

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## Asaad Mahmood says

This is a book that can easily be unappreciated. The advice seems like the same advice we have been hearing being a part of conservative circles, though this is something that needs to be reminded and stressed over and over again.

The struggle towards how we can achieve a connection with The Divine. We have to stop deluding ourselves with the attachment of this world. Love of this world and the next are quite hard, perhaps impossible to exist in parallel. We need to somehow lift the curtain of delusion from our eyes with regards to the temporality of this world and somehow start believing in the hereafter as a grave and forthcoming reality.

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