

## The Study of al-Ghazālī and its Problems (I)

by Kojiro NAKAMURA

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) being one of the greatest Muslim thinkers comparable to St. Augustine or Thomas Aquinas in the Christian tradition, there is no wonder that so much attention has been paid to him and so many studies have been done on him by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. Even in Christendom, the study of al-Ghazālī (Algazel), or interest in his works at the least, goes far back to the Middle Ages when the Christian world was busy with transplanting the Greek philosophy through the Arabic translations.

Al-Ghazālī's *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*, his compendium of philosophy (*falsafah*) was first put into Latin toward the end of the 12th century, and he was mainly known in Europe throughout the Middle Ages as the author of this work, and therefore supposed by mistake to be a "philosopher" (*failasūf*) himself. This misunderstanding is ascribed to the unfortunate fact that his "preface" to this *Maqāṣid* dropped from its most Latin manuscripts for some so far unknown reasons during their circulation, so that it was little known that the compendium was but a preliminary step to his refutation of philosophy (in his later work, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*).

This *Tahāfut* was also introduced to Europe in the meantime, but it did not so much contribute to improve the situation as to increase the confusion all the more among the scholars. Thus the myth of "a philosopher Algazel" itself lasted almost unimpaired until S. Munk finally demythologized it in the middle of the 19th century by correctly identifying al-Ghazālī's true intention and thought.

As more writings of al-Ghazālī came to be printed and published toward the end of the century, the study of al-Ghazālī made much progress. Profiting from all this study and that on Islamic history in general, D. B. Macdonald published his monumental study on al-Ghazālī at the turn of the century in an article, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī" (1899), which laid the foundation for the subsequent study in this field. He also spotted and gave some proper pioneering discussions to the essential questions involved in the study, such as the problems of his "esoteric teachings," the authenticity of his writings, the causes of his retirement, and so forth.

(To be continued)