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Al-Ghazali Abu Hamid

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Al-Ghazali Abu Hamid (1058 - 1111)

Abu Hamed Mohammad ibn Mohammad al-Ghazzali, known as Algazel to the western medieval world, born and died in Tus, in the Khorasan province of Persia (modern day Iran) was a Persian Muslim theologian, jurist, philosopher, and mystic.

Ghazali has sometimes been referred to by historians as the single most influential Muslim after the Islamic prophet Muhammad. Others have cited his movement from science to faith as a detriment to Islamic scientific progress. Besides his work that successfully changed the course of Islamic philosophy—the early Islamic Neoplatonism developed on the grounds of Hellenistic philosophy, for example, was so successfully refuted by Ghazali that it never recovered—he also brought the orthodox Islam of his time in close contact with Sufism. The orthodox theologians still went their own way, and so did the mystics, but both developed a sense of mutual appreciation which ensured that no sweeping condemnation could be made by one for the practices of the other.

Life

Al-Ghazali was born in 1058 in Tus, a city in Khorasan province of Persia (Iran). His father, a traditional sufi, died when he and his younger brother, Ahmad Ghazali, were still young. One of their father's friends took care of them for the next few years. Later in 1070, Ghazali and his brother went to Gurgan to get enrolled in a madrassah. There, he studied fiqh (islamic jurisprudence) next to Ahmad ibn Muhammad Radkani and Abu'l Qasim Jurjani. After approximately 7 years of studying, he returned to Tus.

His first important trip to Nishapur occurred around 1080 when he was almost 23 years old. He became the student of the famous Muslim scholar Abu'l Ma'ali Juwayni, known as Imam al-Haramayn. After the death of Al-Juwayni in 1085, Al-Ghazali was invited to go to the court of Nizamul Mulk Tusi, the powerful vizier of the Seljuq sultans. The vizier was so impressed by Al-Ghazali's scholarship that in 1091 he appointed him as chief professor in the Nizamiyya of Baghdad. He used to lecture to more than 300 students, and his participations in Islamic debates and discussions made him popular in all over the Islamic territories.

He passed through a spiritual crisis in 1095 and abandoned his career and left Baghdad on the pretext of going on pilgrimage to Mecca. Making arrangements for his family, he disposed of his wealth and adopted the life of a poor Sufi. After some time in Damascus and Jerusalem, with a visit to Medina and Mecca in 1096, he settled in Tus to spend the next several years in seclusion. He ended his seclusion for a short lecturing period at the

Nizamiyyah of Nishapur in 1106. Later he returned to Tus where he remained until his death in December, 1111. He had one son named Abdu'l Rahman Allam.

School affiliations

Al-Ghazali contributed significantly to the development of a systematic view of Sufism and its integration and acceptance in mainstream Islam. He was a scholar of orthodox Islam, belonging to the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence and to the Asharite school of theology. Ghazali received many titles such as Sharaful A'emma , Zainuddin, and Hujjatul Islam, meaning "Proof of Islam".

He is viewed as the key member of the influential Asharite school of early Muslim philosophy and the most important refuter of Mutazilites. However, he chose a slightly different position in comparison with the Asharites; his beliefs and thoughts differ, in some aspects, from the orthodox Asharite school.

Works

Incoherence of the Philosophers

His 11th century book titled The Incoherence of the Philosophers marks a major turn in Islamic epistemology. The encounter with skepticism led Ghazali to embrace a form of theological occasionalism, or the belief that all causal events and interactions are not the product of material conjunctions but rather the immediate and present will of God.

The Incoherence also marked a turning point in Islamic philosophy in its vehement rejections of Aristotle and Plato. The book took aim at the falasifa, a loosely defined group of Islamic philosophers from the 8th through the 11th centuries (most notable among them Avicenna and Al-Farabi) who drew intellectually upon the Ancient Greeks. Ghazali bitterly denounced Aristotle, Socrates and other Greek writers as non-believers and labeled those who employed their methods and ideas as corrupters of the Islamic faith.

In the next century, Averroes drafted a lengthy rebuttal of Ghazali's Incoherence entitled the Incoherence of the Incoherence; however, the epistemological course of Islamic thought had already been set.

Autobiography

The autobiography Ghazali wrote towards the end of his life, The Deliverer From Error (Al-munqidh min al-?alal; several English translations) is considered a work of major importance. In it, Ghazali recounts how, once a crisis of epistemological skepticism was resolved by "a light which God Most High cast into my breast...the key to most knowledge," he studied and mastered the arguments of kalam, Islamic philosophy, and Ismailism. Though appreciating what was valid in the first two of these, at least, he determined that all three approaches were inadequate and found ultimate value only in the mystical experience and insight (the state of prophecy or nubuwwa) he attained as a result of following Sufi practices. William James, in Varieties of Religious Experience, considered the autobiography an important document for "the purely literary student who would like to become acquainted with the inwardness of religions other than the Christian" because of the scarcity of recorded personal religious confessions and autobiographical literature from this period outside the Christian tradition.

The Revival of Religious Sciences

Another of Ghazali's major work is Ihya' Ulum al-Din or Ihya'u Ulumiddin (The Revival of Religious Sciences). It covers almost all fields of Islamic sciences: fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), kalam (theology) and sufism. It contains four major sections: Acts of worship (Rub' al-'ibadat), Norms of Daily Life (Rub' al-'adatat), The ways to Perdition (Rub' al-muhlikat) and The Ways to Salvation (Rub' al-munjiyat). Many admirable comments were made

regarding this book: "If all Islamic sciences were disappeared, they could be taken back from Ihya'u Ulumiddin." He then wrote a brief version of this book in Persian under The Alchemy of Happiness (Kimiya-yi sa'adat).

The Jerusalem Tract

At the insistence of his students in Jerusalem, Ghazali wrote a concise exposition of Islam entitled The Jerusalem Tract.

Ghazali's influence

Ghazali had an important influence on both Muslim philosophers and Christian medieval philosophers. Margaret Smith writes in her book Al-Ghazali: The Mystic (London 1944): "There can be no doubt that Al-Ghazali's works would be among the first to attract the attention of these European scholars" (page 220). Then she emphasizes, "The greatest of these Christian writers who was influenced by Al-Ghazali was St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who made a study of the Arabic writers and admitted his indebtedness to them. He studied at the University of Naples where the influence of Arab literature and culture was predominant at the time." In addition, Aquinas' interest in Islamic studies could be attributed to the infiltration of 'Latin Averroism' in the 13th century, especially at [the University of] Paris.

Ghazali's influence has been compared to the works of St. Thomas Aquinas in Christian theology, but the two differed greatly in methods and beliefs. Whereas Ghazali rejected non-Islamic philosophers such as Aristotle and saw it fit to discard their teachings on the basis of their "unbelief," Aquinas embraced them and incorporated ancient Greek and Latin thought into his own philosophical writings.

Ghazali also played a very major role in integrating Sufism with Shariah. He combined the concepts of Sufism very well with the Shariah laws. He was also the first to present a formal description of Sufism in his works. His works also strengthened the status of Sunnite Islam against other schools. The Batinite (Ismailism) had emerged in Persian territories and were gaining more and more power during Ghazali's period, as Nizam al-Mulk was assassinated by the members of Ismailis. Ghazali strictly refuted their ideology and wrote several books on refutation of Baatinyas which significantly weakened their status.

Works in Persian

Al-Ghazali wrote most of his works in Arabic and few in Persian. His most important Persian work is Kimyayé Sa'adat (The Alchemy of Happiness). It is Al-Ghazali's own Persian version of Ihya'ul ulumuddin (The Revival of Religious Sciences) in Arabic, but a shorter work. It is one of the outstanding works of 11th-century-Persian literature. The book was published several times in Tehran by the edition of Hussain Khadev-jam, a renown Iranian scholar. It is translated to English, Arabic, Turkish, Urdu and other languages.

Apart from Kimya, the most celebrated of Ghazali's works in Persian is Nasihatul Muluk (The Counseling Kings), written most probably for Sultan Ahmad Sanjar ibn Malekshah. In the edition published by Jalaluddin Humayi, the book consists of two parts of which only the first can reliably be attributed to Ghazali. The language and the contents of some passages are similar to the Kimyaye Sa'adat. The second part differs considerably in content and style from the well-known writings of Ghazali. It contains the stories of pre-Islamic kings of Persia, especially those of Anoshervan. Nasihatul Muluk was early translated to Arabic under the title al-Tibr al-masbuk fi nasihat al-muluk (The Forged Sword in Counseling Kings).

Zad-e Akherat (Provision for the hereafter) is an important Persian book of Ghazali but gained less scholarly attention. The greater part of it consists of the Persian translation of one of his Arabic books, Bedayat al-Hedaya (Beginning of Guidance). It contains in addition the same contents as the

Kimyayé Sa'adat. The book was most probably written during the last years of his life. Its manuscripts are in Kabul (Library of the Department of Press) and in Leiden.

Pand-nama (Book of Counsel) is another book of advice and probably attributed to Sultan Sanjar. The introduction to the book relates that Ghazali wrote the book in response to a certain king who had asked him for advice. Ay farzand (O son!) is a short book of counsel that Ghazali wrote for one of his students. The book was early translated to Arabic entitled ayyuhal walad. His another Persian work is Hamaqati ahli ibahat or Raddi ebahiyya (Condemnation of antinomians) which is his fatwa in Persian illustrated with Quranic verses and Hadiths.

Faza'ilul al-anam min rasa'ili hujjat al-Islam is the collection of letters in Persians that Ghazali wrote in response to the kings, ministers, jurists and some of his friends after he returned to Khorasan. The collection was gathered by one of his grandchildren after his death, under five sections/chapters. The longest letter is the response to objections raised against some of his statements in Mishkat al-Anwar (The Niche of Light) and al-Munqidh min al-dalal (Rescuer from Error). The first letter is the one which Ghazali wrote to Sultan Sanjar presenting his excuse for teaching in Nizamiyya of Nishapur; followed by Ghazali's speech in the court of Sultan Sanjar. Ghazali makes an impressing speech when he was taken to the king's court in Nishapur in 1106, giving very influential counsels, asking the sultan once again for excusing him from teaching in Nizamiyya and refuting the accusations made against him for disrespecting Imam Abu Hanifa in his books. The sultan was so impressed that ordered Ghazali to write down his speech so that it will be sent to all the ulemas of Khorasan and Iraq.

Criticism

Praise for al-Ghazali not withstanding, he also received criticism from within Islam:

Ibn Taymiyyah states:

" If we assume that someone narrated the view of the salaf but what he narrated is far removed from what the view of the salaf actually is, then he has little knowledge of the view of the salaf, such as Abu'l-Ma'aali, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Ibn al-Khateeb and the like, who did not have enough knowledge of hadith to qualify them as ordinary scholars of hadith, let alone as prominent scholars in that field. For none of these people had any knowledge of al-Bukhari and Muslim and their hadiths, apart from what they heard, which is similar to the situation of the ordinary Muslim, who cannot distinguish between a hadiith which is regarded as sahih and mutawatir according to the scholars of hadith, and a hadith which is fabricated and false. Their books bear witness to that, for they contain strange things and most of these scholars of 'ilm al-kalam (science of kalam) and Sufis who have drifted away from the path of the salaf admit that, either at the time of death or before death. There are many such well-known stories. This Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, despite his brilliance, his devotion to Allah, his knowledge of kalam and philosophy, his asceticism and spiritual practices and his Sufism, ended up in a state of confusion and resorted to the path of those who claim to find out things through dreams and spiritual methods."

Ibn Rushd (Averroes), a rationalist, famously responded that "to say that philosophers are incoherent is itself to make an incoherent statement." Rushd's book, The Incoherence of the Incoherence, attempted to refute Al-Ghazali's views, though the work was not well received in the Muslim community.

Eserleri:

Theology
al-Munqidh min al-dalal (Rescuer from Error)
Hujjat al-Haq (Proof of the Truth)
al-Iqtisad fil-i`tiqad (Median in Belief)

al-maqsad al-asna fi sharah asma' Allahu al-husna (The best means in explaining Allah's Beautiful Names)
Jawahir al-Qur'an wa duraruh (Jewels of the Qur'an and its Pearls)
Fayasl al-tafriqa bayn al-Islam wa-l-zandaqa (The Criterion of Distinction between Islam and Clandestine Unbelief)
Mishkat al-Anwar (The Niche of Lights)
Tafsir al-yaqut al-ta'wil
Sufism
Mizan al-'amal (Criterion of Action)
Ihya'ul ulum al-din, "Revival of Religious Sciences", Ghazali's most important work
Bidayat al-hidayah (Beginning of Guidance)
Kimiya-yi sa'adat (The Alchemy of Happiness) [a résumé of Ihya'ul ulum, in Persian]
Nasihat al-muluk (Counseling Kings) [in Persian]
al-Munqidh min al-dalal (Rescuer from Error)
Minhaj al-'Abidin (Methodology for the Worshipers)
Philosophy
Maqasid al falasifa (Aims of Philosophers) [written in the beginning of his life, in favour of philosophy and presenting the basic theories in Philosophy, mostly influenced by Avicenna's works]
Tahafut al-Falasifa (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), [in this book he refutes the Greek Philosophy aiming at Avicenna and Al-Farabi; and of which Ibn Rushd wrote his famous refutation Tahafut al-tahafut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence)]
Miyar al-Ilm fi fan al-Mantiq (Criterion of Knowledge in the Art of Logic)
Mihak al-Nazar fi al-mantiq (Touchstone of Reasoning in Logic)
al-Qistas al-mustaqim (The Correct Balance)
Jurisprudence
Fatawy al-Ghazali (Verdicts of al-Ghazali)
Al-wasit fi al-mathab (The medium [digest] in the Jurisprudential school)
Kitab tahzib al-Isul (Pruning on Legal Theory)
al-Mustasfa fi 'ilm al-isul (The Clarified in Legal Theory)
Asas al-Qiyas (Foundation of Analogical reasoning)

The Causes of Anger and Its Medicine

Know, O dear readers, that the medicine of a disease is to remove the root cause of that disease. Isa (Jesus Christ) -peace be upon him- was once asked: 'What thing is difficult?' He said: 'God's wrath.' Prophet Yahya (John the Baptist) -peace be upon him- then asked: 'What thing takes near the wrath of God?' He said:'Anger'. Yahya -peace be upon him- asked him:'What thing grows and increases anger?' Isa -peace be upon him- said:'Pride, prestige, hope for honour and haughtiness'

The causes which cause anger to grow are self-conceit, self-praise, jests and ridicule, argument, treachery, too much greed for too much wealth and name and fame. If these evils are united in a person, his conduct becomes bad and he cannot escape anger.

So these things should be removed by their opposites. Self-praise is to be removed by modesty. Pride is to be removed by one's own origin and birth, greed is to be removed by remaining satisfied with necessary things, and miserliness by charity.

The prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: 'A strong man is not he who defeats his adversary by wrestling, but a strong man is he who controls himself at the time of anger.'

We are describing below the medicines of anger after one gets angry. The medicine is a mixture of knowledge and action. The medicine based on knowledge is of six kinds:

(1) The first medicine of knowledge is to think over the rewards of appeasing anger, that have come from the verses of the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet (pbuh). Your hope for getting rewards of appeasing anger will restrain you from taking revenge.

(2) The second kind of medicine based on knowledge is to fear the punishment of God and to think that the punishment of God upon me is greater than my punishment upon him. If I take revenge upon this man for anger, God will take revenge upon me on the Judgement Day.

(3) The third kind of medicine of anger based on knowledge is to take precaution about punishment of enmity and revenge on himself. You feel joy in having your enemy in your presence in his sorrows, You yourself are not free from that danger. You will fear that your enemy might take revenge against you in this world and in the next.

(4) Another kind of medicine based on knowledge is to think about the ugly face of the angry man, which is just like that of the ferocious beast. He who appeases anger looks like a sober and learned man.

(5) The fifth kind of medicine based on knowledge is to think that the devil will advise by saying: ' You will be weak if you do not get angry!' Do not listen to him!

(6) The sixth reason is to think: ' What reason have I got to get

angry? What Allah wishes has occurred!'

Medicine based on action

When you get angry, say: I seek refuge in God from the accursed evil (A'oudhou billaahi min as shaytaan ir rajeem). The prophet (pbuh) ordered us to say thus.

When Ayesha (RA) got angry, he dragged her by the nose and said: ' O dear Ayesha, say: O God, you are the Lord of my prophet Muhammad, forgive my sins and remove the anger from my heart and save me from misguidance.'

If anger does not go by this means, you will sit down if you are standing, lie down if you are sitting, and come near to earth, as you have been created of earth. Thus make yourself calm like the earth. The cause of wrath is heat and its opposite is to lie down on the ground and to make the body calm and cool.

The prophet (pbuh) said: Anger is a burning coal. Don't you see your eyebrows wide and eyes reddish? So when one of you feels angry, let him sit down if standing, and lie down if sitting.

If still anger does not stop, make ablution with cold water or take a bath, as fire cannot be extinguished without water.

The prophet (pbuh) said : ' When one of you gets angry, let him make ablution with water as anger arises out of fire.' In another narration, he said:' Anger comes from the devil and the devil is made of fire.'

Hazrat Ali (RA) said:
The prophet did not get angry for any action of the world. When any true matter charmed him, nobody knew it and nobody got up to take revenge for his anger. HE GOT ANGRY ONLY FOR TRUTH.

Al-Ghazali Abu Hamid